

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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This week's Insights is dedicated in memory of Leila Applebaum.

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"May her Neshama have an Aliya!"

20 TISHREI

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

SUCCOS

Dancing with the Bride

The Torah that Moshe commanded us is a heritage to the Congregation of Jacob (33:4).

Simchas Torah is a day in which we celebrate the Torah. Why did Chazal see fit to designate a separate day for Simchas Torah? Would not Shavuos, the day we received the Torah, be a more appropriate time for this celebration?

The Talmud instructs a father that as soon as his child is able to speak, he should teach him, "The Torah that Moshe commanded us is a heritage to the Congregation of Jacob." Why is this the verse selected when there are earlier verses in the Torah that convey a similar message, such as "This is the Torah that Moshe placed before Bnei Yisroel"?

The last four *parshios* in the Torah record the events that transpired on the day of Moshe's death. A major event that ensued was the new covenant in *Parshas Nitzavim*. The concept of "each Jew is a guarantor for his fellow Jew," in regard to *mitzvos* and *aveiros*, is introduced as a result of our responsibility for the covenant.

The general concept of a guarantor is discussed by the Talmud. The Talmud teaches that one who accepts upon himself to repay a loan should the borrower default is required by Torah law to honor his commitment to pay. The commentaries raise the following difficulty: Legally, for a person to be liable to perform a service, there must be consideration, such as money.

What is the instrument that obligates a guarantor to honor his commitment? The Ritva answers that although the guarantor does not receive money, he nevertheless receives the satisfaction that the lender is relying upon his credibility to issue the loan. This benefit serves as the instrument for the transaction in lieu of money. In light of this explanation, the following difficulty arises: Why are Bnei Yisroel bound to their commitment of *arvus*? What were they receiving that they did not already have?

To begin answering the aforementioned questions, we must analyze another concept that was introduced on the day that Moshe died: "Torah is no longer in the Heavens." While Moshe was alive he consulted with Hashem concerning all difficult Torah legislation. Therefore, Hashem was the final arbiter for Torah legislation. Thus, as long as Moshe was alive, Torah was still in the Heavens. On the day of Moshe's death, Bnei Yisroel were given unilateral authority over all Torah legislation. This is what is meant by "The Torah is no longer in the Heavens." This new authorization that Bnei Yisroel received is the instrument that obligates them to honor their commitment to be guarantors.

At Sinai, when Bnei Yisroel received the Torah, Chazal describe the relationship formed as that of a bride



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and groom. Hashem was the groom and Bnei Yisroel was the bride. On the day that Moshe died a new relationship was formed; Bnei Yisroel became the groom and the Torah was the bride. This is alluded to in the verse, "Torah tziva lanu Moshe morasha kehillats Yaakov." Chazal see in the word "morasha" an allusion to the word "meorasa," which means "betrothed" (i.e. the Torah that Moshe commanded us is also betrothed to us). The notion of the Torah not being in Heaven and the Torah becoming the bride to Bnei Yisroel are one and the same. The Talmud instructs a father to begin teaching his son Torah with the verse that reflects this new relationship.

Shavuos celebrates Bnei Yisroel becoming a bride to Hashem, while Simchas Torah celebrates Bnei Yisroel becoming betrothed to the Torah. This is reflected in the customs of the day. In most Jewish communities, a representative is chosen to be the "chassan Torah," the groom to the Torah. We also dance with the Torah as a groom dancing with his bride.

To Rule is Divine

He became King over Yeshurun (33:5).

The Ibn Ezra renders the verse “*He became King over Yeshurun (i.e. became King over Yeshurun, Israel)*” as a reference to Moshe being the King of Israel. The Ramban points out that this interpretation contradicts the following Talmudic discourse: A major component of the Rosh Hashanah prayers is a section known as “*malchiyos*,” which declares the existence and total sovereignty of Hashem. One of the verses that the Talmud lists should be recited within this section is the verse, “*Vayehi Bishuran Melech*.” Clearly, the King being referred to in the verse is Hashem, not Moshe. How does the Ibn Ezra resolve this apparent contradiction?

A more striking contradiction can be found in Rashi’s commentary on the

Torah. When explaining the verse “*He became King over Yeshurun*,” Rashi defines “*King*” as Hashem. In *Parshas Behaaloscha*, Hashem commands that a set of trumpets be fashioned for Moshe’s exclusive use. Rashi comments that they were used in a manner befitting a king. Here Rashi cites the verse, “*He became King over Yeshurun*” to prove that Moshe had the status of king.

The Talmud teaches that, although a scholar may waive the honor that is due to him, a king is not permitted to do so. The Mordechai, one of the early Talmudic codifiers, sheds some light on the reason for this. A scholar, who earns the right to be honored, may relinquish this right. However, the honor due to a king is Hashem’s

honor: “For sovereignty belongs to Hashem.” Therefore, a king has no right to waive the honor due to him. The Jewish notion of monarchy is that the king functions as a conduit for Hashem’s sovereignty over the world. This is what is meant by sovereignty belonging to Hashem.

Moshe Rabbeinu epitomizes the notion of the Jewish king being the conduit for Hashem’s sovereignty over this world. As Chazal say, “The Divine Presence spoke through Moshe’s mouth.” Therefore, there is no contradiction in interpreting the verse “He became King over Yeshurun” as referring to both Hashem and Moshe, for Moshe’s sovereignty is, in reality, the sovereignty of Hashem.

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