



Ki Teitzei

As Althea and I are both working from home, I have had an opportunity to learn much more about her professional life. There is a real difference between knowing what someone does in theory and living in their workspace for an extended period of time.

Sharing a workspace with Althea has also given me a window into the world of marketing, and the opportunity incorporate some of those insights into the way I perform my own roles.

I am now paying much more attention to our communications, branding, and tracking the impact of our engagements with the community. Our office now performs regular reviews of key statistics tracking progress on Zoom, Mailchimp and social media.

Baruch Hashem, the results are impressive and improving. For example, while we have not yet hit my target of 500 participations in Shiurim each week, we are now consistently over 400 participations a week (not including when multiple individuals join a Shiur on the same device) and steadily growing. This number does not include the number of participations in extra or one-off events, which like this past week can reach many hundreds more. Look out in Mizrahi Matters for upcoming events and learning opportunities as we approach the Yamim Noraim.

As co-Vice President of the RCV, I am also involved in ambitious and exciting cross-communal plans under the banner of "Project High Holydays", which was featured on the front page of the Jewish News this week. While nobody knows what restrictions will apply after 13 September, we are planning for different scenarios together with government representatives, so we can provide clear guidance for our communities for how we can operate this year within the letter and the spirit of public health guidelines. David Southwick and Josh Burns have both been very helpful and supportive.

As our 'Seudah Shlishit' contributor this week, Althea shares some of her own reflections on how her experiences at work relate to our understanding of the Teshuva process.

Wishing you a peaceful, safe and meaningful Shabbat,

Rabbi Danny Mirvis



Rabbi Mirvis

"Remember that which Hashem your Go-d did to Miriam on the way when you were going out from Egypt" (Devarim 24:9).

The Mitzva at the end of this week's Parsha – to remember what Amalek did to us on our way out of Egypt – is very well known. However, the Mitzva to remember what Hashem did to Miriam, which appears only one chapter before, is less well known. This Mitzva refers to the events in Parshat Beha'alot'cha, where Miriam is punished with Tzara'at (a form of leprosy, which was a physical manifestation of a spiritual malaise) for speaking Lashon Hara about her brother Moshe. According to our Sages, she was critical of his decision to separate himself from his wife, Tzipora, in order to receive prophecy. After all, she (Miriam) and others also received prophecy, but did not need to leave their spouses.

Of all the great achievements and contributions of Miriam the Prophetess, why are we commanded to remember this one negative experience? Surely, Miriam should be remembered for convincing her parents to remarry (which led to the birth of Moshe), waiting for baby Moshe by the reeds of the Nile or leading the women in song after crossing the Yam Suf. Why are we commanded to remember her punishment for speaking Lashon Hara?

Rambam explains the significance of this Mitzvah:

"Behold it (The Torah) is saying: consider what happened to Miriam the prophetess who spoke about her brother who was a few years younger than her, who she brought up on her knees, and endangered herself to save him from the sea and she did not even speak negatively of him – she just erred and equated him with other prophets (who did not have his level of prophecy and did not need to leave their spouses), and he did not even mind about these things (that she said), as it says, 'And the man Moshe was the humblest of all men' and nevertheless she was immediately punished with Tzara'at. How much more so (is it wrong) for the evil and stupid people who are wont to speak great and wondrous things" (Rambam, Hilchot Tumat Tzara'at 16:10).

Rambam highlights that the intention of the Mitzva is not to remember Miriam negatively, but to learn from her mistake. If the great Miriam who did so much for Moshe Rabbeinu could be punished for an error of judgment which did not even offend her younger brother, how much more so should we be careful with our words.

By remembering what Hashem did to Miriam, we should remember that none of us are too great to make mistakes or too holy to sin.



Reb Leor Broh

This Week's Riddle:

Find a word whose interior letters form a reptile while the exterior letters form a Mitzvah.

Answer to Last Week's Riddle (Shoftim):

I am described both in the feminine gender and the masculine gender. What am I?

Sefer Torah is described in 17:19 with both genders:-

וְהִיְתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בּוֹ כְּלִי-יְמִי תַּיִו

The Ramban learns that the feminine gender refers to the Torah as a guide "she shall constantly be with him", "Torah" being a feminine noun.

The masculine gender refers to the Sefer (Book) which he must read, "Sefer" being a masculine noun.

Refer also Ozneyim LeTorah, Einei Yesharim (quoted in Iturei Torah) and other commentaries.



Rabbi Kennard

Amongst the very many mitzvot found in the parasha of Ki Tetze, we find this (Devarim 23:4-5):

(4) An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of Hashem (i.e. cannot marry a Jew, even after conversion) . . .

(5) because they didn't meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you left Egypt, and because they hired

(ד) לֹא יָבֹא עַמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי בְּקִהְלֵה ה' . . .
 (ה) עַל דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קָדְמוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּלֶחֶם
 וּבַמַּיִם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם
 וְאֲשֶׁר שָׂכַר עֲלֵיךְ אֶת בְּלֶעָם בֶּן בְּעוֹר מִפְתּוֹר
 אֲרָם נְהָרִים לְקַלְלָךְ.

(ז) לֹא תִדְרֹשׁ שְׁלָמִים וְטַבָּתָם כָּל יְמֵיךָ לְעוֹלָם.

against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

(7) You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

Yet when we compare Devarim 2: 26-29, in which Moshe describes his request to Sichon to pass through his land, it seems that the Moabites *did* provide food and water.

(26) I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying,
 (27) "Let me pass through your land: I will go along by the highway, I will turn neither to the right hand nor to the left.
 (28) You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only let me pass through on my feet,
 (29) as the children of Esau who dwell in Seir did to me, **and as the Moabites who dwell in Ar**; until I shall pass over the Jordan into the land which Hashem our God gives us."

(כו) וְאֶשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים מִמְּדִבְרַת קַדְמוֹת אֶל סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הַשְּׁבוֹן דְּבַרִי שְׁלוֹם לֵאמֹר.
 (כז) אֶעֱבְרָה בְּאַרְצְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֵלַי לֹא אֶסּוּר יָמִין וְשְׂמֹאל.
 (כח) אֲכַל בַּכֶּסֶף תִּשְׁבְּרֵנִי וְאֶכְלֵתִי וַיְמִים בַּכֶּסֶף תִּתֶּן לִי וְשִׁתִּיתִי רַק אֶעֱבְרָה בְּרַגְלִי.
 (כט) כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לִי בְנֵי עֵשׂוּ הַיִּשְׁבִּים בְּשַׁעִיר וְהַמּוֹאָבִים הַיִּשְׁבִּים בְּעַר עַד אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱבֹר אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נָתַן לָנוּ.

The **Ibn Ezra** (12th century Spain) (on Devarim 2:29) says that the Moabites did not provide the travelling Jews with bread and water for free, but they did sell food to them. Their crime, however, was that they did not take the initiative "לֹא קִדְמוּ אֶתְכֶם" but waited for the Israelites to come to them.

In fact, the picture is more complicated. Not only is there evidence that one of the two nations listed (Moav) was not guilty of not providing food, the other nation (Ammon) was certainly not guilty of the other sin mentioned - hiring Bilaam to curse the Jews. Yet the verse seems to blame both nations for both sins.

The **Sforno** (16th century Italy) says that both Ammon and Moav failed to provide bread and water for free, but Moav was not so inhospitable in that they did sell food for money (as indicated in 2:29) as the Israelites passed through their land. On the other hand, Moav hired Bilaam to curse the Jews, while Ammon did not. Therefore each of the nations committed one crime and they are classed, and punished, together.

The **Ramban** (12th century Israel) rejects completely the notion that the Moabites sold food. First, he says, it would have been impossible for them to sell to such a huge number of Israelites all that they would need. Furthermore, he says that the Jews did not enter in Moav at all (perhaps based on Shoftim 11:17-18, though). And if the Moabites did sell food, but are punished for not taking the initiative, why are the Edomites not similarly punished, given that 2:29 says that they acted in precisely the same way?

The Ramban's own interpretation is as follows: the founders of the nations of Ammon and Moav were the two sons of Lot, who had been the beneficiary of Avraham's kindness when he rescued Lot from captivity (Bereishit chapter 14) and prayed for him to be saved from S'dom (Bereishit chapter 18). Therefore Ammon and Moav had a debt of kindness to repay to Avraham's descendants, but, instead they mistreated them.

The Ramban reads the verse as differentiating between the two nations; it lists Ammon and Moav, and then lists two sins, apportioning the first sin (not meeting with bread and water) to the first nation (Ammon) and the second sin (hiring Blaam) to the secondly listed nation (Moav). Conversely, Ammon was not involved in hiring Bilamm, and Moav did indeed meet the Israelites with bread and water. In this way he resolves the contradiction between 23:5 and 2:29 (and explains why Ammon is not mentioned in 2:29).

This might explain why Ammon is mentioned first (which associates that nation with the sin listed first) even though Moav was the older of the two (see Bereishit 19:37-38)

The **Ktav VeKabbalah** (19th century Germany) rejects the distinction that the Ramban makes between Ammon and Moav, saying that they are treated equally in 23:5, (and "לא קָדְמוּ אֶתְכֶם" - "they did not meet you" is in the plural, referring to both nations) and also in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 103b). Elsewhere in the Gemara (Yevamot 76b), we learn that only a male Moabite cannot marry into the Jewish people, but a female can (as did Rut, from whom is descendent David HaMelech and ultimately the Mashiach) because it is not the way of women to go out to greet with bread and water, and therefore it must be that both Ammon and Moav failed to perform this task. (The Ramban finds an alternative rendering of this Gemara in the Yerushalmi, (Yevamot 8:3) which says "it is not the way of women to hire", thus supporting his interpretation, that the Moabites were only guilty of hiring Bilaam and not of failing to offer food).

Another question is why does 23:5, when listing reasons for the Jews to distance themselves utterly from the Moabites, not mention a much greater misdemeanour than either failing to provide food or hiring Bilaam. After all, we read (Bemidbar 25:1-3):

- (1) Israel stayed in Shittim; and the people began to behave immorally with the daughters of Moab:
- (2) (The women) called the people to the sacrifices of their gods; and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods.
- (3) Israel joined itself to Baal Peor: and the anger of Hashem was kindled against Israel.

(א) וַיָּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשֵׁטִים וַיַּחֲלֵה הָעָם לְזָנוֹת אֶל בָּנוֹת מוֹאָב.
 (ב) וַתִּקְרְאוּן לָעָם לְזִבְחֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶן וַיֹּאכְלֵהָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶן.
 (ג) וַיִּצְמַד יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר וַיַּחַר אַף ה' בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.

Is not enticing the Israelites into immorality and idolatry even worse than not being on time with the provisions?

Rashi (11th century France) addresses this by reading the words על דְּבַר at the start of 23:5 as meaning not just "because" but, more literally, as "because of the word". This "word"

refers to the advice that Bilaam gave to the Moabites to seduce the Israelite men into idolatry (Rashi states that the events in Shittim were encouraged by Bilamm - see his comments on Bemidbar 24:14 and Bemidbar 31:8). The **Divrei David** (17th century Poland) explained that Rashi is reading the verse as if it read “עַל דְּבַר וְאִשָּׁר לֹא קִדְמוּ אֶתְכֶם” (with an extra vav meaning “and”) and making clear that עַל דְּבַר is an additional reason. Therefore the crime of luring the Jews into idolatry - a more serious sin than failing to provide food - is indeed included in the reasons for ostracising the Moabites.

The **Kli Yakar** (17th century Bohemia) rejects Rashi’s interpretation on the basis that he is reading too much into one word, but offers his own answer with the following insight. He claims that it is unreasonable to punish two nations so severely for a failure to provide bread and water, but the real crime is certainly enticing the Jews into sin. As Bemidbar 25:2 makes clear, the trigger for the misdemeanor was *eating* from the idolatrous sacrifices, and the failure to provide bread by way of hospitality was designed to induce hunger and thirst, and thereby bring the Israelites to the forbidden food. That led to immorality and then to idolatry itself. As the Gemara (Sandhedrin 106a) says, one who is exhausted and hungry cannot distinguish between permitted and forbidden and will eat or drink whatever is offered to them. Thus the mention in the verse of the lack of bread is in fact referring to the much more serious seduction into sin.

This also explains why 23:5 castigates Moav for a crime (not providing food) that has not been mentioned before in the Torah. In the Kli Yakar’s view, since it was a part of the seduction process, it is effectively mentioned in Bemidbar 25:2.

The Jewish people have, alas, been beset by enemies throughout our long history. We have met several nations or individuals who have committed the relatively small offence of not offering hospitality. But however blameworthy that may be, it pales into insignificance compared to the antisemitism that involves plans, schemes and laws. When a nation behaves in that way, it is beyond redemption. No descendant can ever join our people.



Althea Mirvis
Head of Brand and Communications, Moula
The Continuous Improvement Cycle of Teshuva

Last week I ran a session on Digital Marketing for Leibler Yavneh College’s Year 10 Leadership Program, during which we spoke about the Continuous Improvement Cycle which underscores Agile project management.

'Agile' has become a big buzzword in the tech world. It's a way for teams to function with a focus on continuous improvement and has become an integral part of how many startups maintain innovation within their teams.

In my team (a handful of marketers, including both analysts and creatives), we work in two-week 'sprints'. We plan out all the work that we want to complete within a sprint, and then spend two weeks focussed solely on what has been scoped for that two-week period. Towards the end of each two-week cycle, we review, plan, and hopefully, ensure a cycle of continuous improvement from sprint to sprint.

A couple of years ago I was introduced to a meeting concept called a 'retro', and I was hooked. A retro is a candid session which you run at the end of a sprint to look retrospectively at what you achieved. The structure of a retro is simple: each person takes a wad of post-its and a pen, and writes down what worked well, what didn't, and what ideas they have for how things could be done better next time. After about 10 quiet minutes of thinking and writing, you talk through all the positives, the negatives, and the ideas for improvement.

The first time you do this is a little awkward, as you sit in silence scribbling down some uncomfortable truths, but the exercise also forces you to search for positives and highlight them. People quickly get accustomed to sharing and hearing feedback, and with time, the entire focus of the team shifts towards an expectation of continuous improvement. I often think about this cycle as being embedded in our approach to Teshuva. Teshuva is cyclical; not linear, and we repeat it at regular intervals. In fact, although we tend to be especially focused on Teshuva during Elul and Tishrei, Teshuva should ideally be as much a part of our daily lives as our daily acts of Tefillah and Tzedaka.

Before marrying an Ashkenazi, I used to follow Nusach Edot Hamizrach, which includes doing Vidduy each night with Kriyat Shema. One is supposed to spend that time pondering the mistakes you made that day, regretting them, and resolving to do better. Of course, the next day, you rinse and repeat the process. The source for this custom is Rabbi Eliezer's teaching that you should do Teshuva the day before you die, which is discussed in the Gemara in Shabbat 153a:

תנן התם, רבי אליעזר אומר: שוב יום אחד לפני מיתתך. שאלו תלמידיו את רבי אליעזר: וכי אדם יודע איזהו יום ימות? - אמר להן: וכל שכן, ישוב היום שמא ימות למחר, ונמצא כל ימיו בתשובה

It is taught there (in the Mishna in Avot), Rabbi Eliezer says, "Repent one day before you die". Rabbi Eliezer's students asked him, "But does a person know the day on which he will die?" He said to them, "All the more so (this is correct), lest he die tomorrow; and as a result, one will spend his entire life in a state of repentance.

It's clear that Teshuva is supposed to be a continuous improvement cycle; not something we're supposed to set and forget, and not something we ever finish doing during our time in this world.

Wishing everyone a Ketiva Vechatima Tova, and may we all merit to return to Hashem B'teshuva Shelema, every day.