

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Re'eh 5785

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Two important lessons are taught in one pasuk.

בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא תַתְּגַדְּדוּ וְלֹא-תַשְׂיִמוּ קָרְתָּה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמֵת:

“You are children to Hashem. You shall not create a gash nor shall you create a bald spot between your eyes, for a deceased.” (Devarim 14:1).

Why does the Torah call Bnei Yisroel children and then give these two other rules? Is the tearing oneself – making a gash – done specifically over the dead, too?

The Torah rarely uses the father - son relationship with Bnei Yisroel and Hashem. It usually refers to Bnei Yisroel as His people. (Shmos 3:7). The other time in the Torah it uses the father - son dynamic is when Moshe tells them that any bad that befalls them is their own doing because of sin. “To Hashem you repay Him thusly? You are a disgraceful people, and not wise. Is it not that He is your father who has acquired you?” (Devarim 32:6). Moshe was telling Bnei Yisroel that Hashem does not want evil to befall the people. It is their own doing that caused it. Hashem is their father and as a father, He does not want harm to befall His child. Like a father, Hashem may discipline but He will not abandon or destroy.

Our pasuk and the next one are one small segment (between two closed breaks). The next pasuk reads, “Because you are a holy nation to Hashem, your Lord. And in you Hashem chose to be to Him a treasured nation from all the other nations, that are on the face of the earth.” (Ibid 14:2). First it calls Bnei Yisroel children then it calls them a nation. The word “in you” explains the nuance. Earlier, Moshe told Bnei Yisroel that they were chosen because Hashem loved their forefathers. (Ibid 4:37). Now, Moshe says that Bnei Yisroel were chosen because of something intrinsic in them. They earned it. Bnei Yisroel is Hashem’s nation because the people of Yisroel are His children.

Bnei Yisroel should take extra caution not to make a rift between themselves. The easiest way to make a rift is to follow different customs or halachic rulings that show one is not part of the klal. As the Gemara teaches, following different rulings within the same town creates a rift. (Yevomos 13b). If there are multiple Batei Din and the city is large enough to house more than one, then following different customs is acceptable. This is true, too, for different countries and locations. However, the prime example given for violating this rule is when members of the same town follow different parts of Sefiras Haomer for the quasi-mourning rituals. There is a custom not get a haircut for certain days of Sefiras Haomer. Some rule the first 33 days. Others rule from Rosh Chodesh Iyur to Rosh Chodesh Sivan. In the same town, one should not get a haircut while others are in their quasi-mourning. That creates a rift because he shows he does not grieve with them. Wearing tefillin on Chal Hamoed, however, does not fall under this rule. While some poskim say that if one person wears tefillin all should – so it can be uniform – others

rule that it is okay for some to wear and others not. After all, the people are all davening in the same minyan. Surely making a person who wears tefillin stop wearing it, daven elsewhere, or have to wear it behind a mechitza is a violation of this rule. It makes the person not feel welcome in the minyan. And that might be his regular shul. (Eretz Yisroel, with its strongly established minhag hamokom, is a discussion beyond the scope of this work).

The second part of the pasuk does not allow one to bald his or her head in grief over the dead. The Torah already taught not to shave the corners of the head. (Vayikra 19:27). Bald spots on top are allowed, but not for grief. One may grieve over bad times and loss, but it has to be in way that does not go against the Torah or make him stand apart. Even with loss, a child looks upon his father. A Yisroel is never a full orphan as Hashem is also his father.

The not making a gash is not related to the grief. It is to self-harm. It also means not to make a rift among Hashem's children. The self-harm hints at what the person can do if he makes a rift in Klal Yisroel, making a family rift.

Another lesson learned in his pasuk is where to place tefillin shel rosh—head tefillin. The Torah says to place tefillin “between your eyes.” (Shmos 13:9). Just as this pasuk says a bald spot “between your eyes” and that must refer to the head as one cannot make a bald spot literally between his eyes (most people do not have a unibrow, and even so, that is not a “bald spot”), so too, tefillin are placed on the head there. The pasuk also refers to making a bald spot between the eyes because that is where a person will pullout hair in grief. It is front and central and it shows, and it is the place of tefillin. Tefillin should be a lesson in faith and he is ignoring it.

The common theme is the causing self-harm and division. Self-harm takes one out of the klal. Public grief in a self-harm way by making a bald spot shows the person is inner focused. And the prohibition of *lo sisgodedu* not to act in a public way that makes division also shows one person or group feels they are not with the klal. That is why the example given is the haircuts during the Sefiras Haomer period. It is taking oneself out of the klal who are in quasi-mourning. He is not standing with his brothers in grief.

Since Bnei Yisroel are children, they are all one family. Even if others join or some go astray, they will always be family. Family is connected even if they are apart. There is a bond amongst brothers. They share the same father. Citizens who share a ruler can quarrel. Let the king decide who is correct. In a family, there is no quarreling or jealousy. Sure, siblings may be jealous or fight. However, there is a connection that surpasses mutual interest. This is what Bnei Yisroel have.

Grief and simcha should be felt in a uniform way. One must be careful to act to show that they are part of the klal. Joining a minyan, public Tehillim, public fasts, and demonstrations are helpful. However, one must not purposely show he is not part of the klal by standing in eyesight of a public event and not joining, or blast music while others are keeping the bein hametzorim. Bnei Yisroel are children, which means one big family. Each individual can always rely on the klal because they also fellow children of Hashem. it is a bond that surpasses time and geolocation.