

והיית לנו לעינים

“...and you *shall be* as eyes for us...”

a view from a GER

יונתן נח בן אברהם

yonason noach *BEN AVRAHAM*

Parashas Devarim ... Consider the following offerings of Torah:

Rashi, Devarim 1:1 – These are the words Since these are words of rebuke and he [Moses] enumerates here all the places where they angered the Omnipresent, therefore it makes no explicit mention of the incidents [in which they transgressed], but rather merely alludes to them, out of respect for Israel...

Vayikra 19:17 “...you shall reason with [rebuke] your neighbor, and not allow sin on his account.”

Yechezkel 3:17-19 “son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore **hear the word at My Mouth, and give them warning from Me.** When I say to the wicked, *You shall surely die*; and you give him not warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; **but his blood will I require at your hand.** But if you warn the wicked, and he turns not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have saved your soul.” Cf. *Yechezkel 33:7-9*

Rambam, Hilchos De’os 6:7, “It is a mitzvah for a person who sees that his fellow Jew ... is following an improper path to correct his behavior as [*Vayikra 19:17*] states, ‘*You shall surely admonish your brother*’ ... If he accepts [the rebuke], it is good; if not, he should rebuke him a second and third time. **Indeed, one is obligated to rebuke a brother ... until the latter strikes him and tells him, ‘I will not listen.’**”

Rabbeinu Bachya, Introduction to Parashas Devarim, “*He who rebukes a man will find favor, [more so] than he who flatters with the tongue*” (*Mishlei 28:23*). Solomon was in the habit of rebuking everybody – through his writings – and he warned everybody who was fit to rebuke others to follow in his place ... It is well known that most rebukes are directed at the average person, the masses; the masses have different views, are not homogeneous. If they would all be of one mind [*“like one man with one heart”*?] and had similar outlooks they would ... not [be known as the] masses ... Rabbi Tarfon (*Arachin 16*) said, ‘*I am convinced that there is hardly a person nowadays willing to respond positively to rebukes*’ ... People like to be flattered, not criticized ... *Kesuvos 105* [teaches us that] young scholars enjoy more popularity than their senior colleagues [because] the former refrain from rebuking people’s religious misconduct ... [Shlomo] wanted to encourage people, especially leaders, who would live after him not to commit the error attributed to the young scholars in *Kesuvos 105* by complimenting their parishioners rather than pointing out areas in which they should improve. Ultimately, only severe rebukes will have an effect ... and save them from the results of their errors ... *Mishlei 27:6*, ‘*wounds inflicted by a loved one are long lasting; the kisses of an enemy are profuse.*’”

Mishlei 13:24 “He who spares his rod hates his son; but he who loves him disciplines him early.”

Mishlei 23:13-14 “Withhold not correction from the child; for if you beat him with the rod, he shall not die. If you beat him with the rod, you shall save his soul from *Sheol*.”

Mishlei 29:15 “The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”

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Miscellaneous Teachings of Rabbeinu Bachya

This author’s comments will (*for the most part*) be relegated to the footnotes

Rabbeinu Bachya, Bamidbar 31:14 “Moshe became angry at the commanders of the troops ... the chiefs of the thousands and the chiefs of the hundreds.”... (*Sifri* on our *passuk*) “The verse teaches that misconduct by the common people is **always blamed on their leaders**, the ones who have the authority and power to stop such misconduct by the people and who fail to do so.”²⁴

[Regarding the often heard saying at the end of their *drashos* by many of our Rabbis, “...until the greatest *simchah* with the coming of the *Mashiach Tzidkenu*, *A'mein*,”²⁵ consider:]

Rabbeinu Bachya, Bamidbar 30:3 “when a man vows a vow unto the Lord,”²⁶ “If someone overhears a second person swearing an oath or making a vow ... and he [the listener] wishes [the speaker’s words] to apply to himself also, he only has to say ‘*A'mein*’ in answer to what he heard the first party say ... [E]ven if the person formulating the vow or oath was a minor of a non-Jew, the word ‘*A'mein*’ by the Jew who overheard him obliges him to fulfill the terms of such a vow or oath (*Rambam, Hilchos Shevuos*, 2:1-2) ... What applies to oaths also applies to vows, i.e. **heart and mouth must be in tandem**. However, this rule does not apply if one had said ‘*A'mein*’ confirming someone else’s vow or oath. If that third party come to a judge claiming he made a slip of the tongue and **what he said was not**

²⁴ In this author’s on-going quest to have *Yidden* focus on the *Ikkar* (HaShem) rather than the *tofel* (ANY of His messengers/servants) he understands that any change has to come from the top down ... Thus he challenges the leaders of this generation who might read this to carefully consider the material here-in, realize the importance of who is commenting (*Rabbeinu Bachya*), the ramifications of his commentary, and then determine the need to speak out accordingly which, hopefully, will result in a *hashkafah* change by *Klal Yisroel* to recognize that **HaShem is our ONLY King, Redeemer, and Savior**.

²⁵ If one is to prioritize the elements that will make up the End of Days: universal recognition and knowledge of HaShem; all *Yidden* keeping the 613, all non-Jews keeping the Seven laws of Noach; world peace: “swords,” “chariots,” and nuclear weapons being made into plowshares; the rebuilding of the *Bais HaMikdash*; the ingathering of the *Yidden* from our *Gallus*; the eventual Resurrection of the Dead; **that day when “HaShem will be King over all of the world, He will be One and His Name will be One;”** *et al.* Anyone who would place having a “king” of flesh and blood at the head of this list and as the greatest *simchah*? One (specifically this author) has to wonder. It is tantamount to having a rich uncle living in a far-off land who has offered to pay-off all of your bills and make you and your entire family financially secure, and all one hears you say is, “The greatest *simchah* will be when the mailman arrives.” And as far as the apologetics for this phrase go, please read the following footnotes regarding “what we say” v. “what we ‘really’ mean.”

²⁶ Admittedly, this may be apples & oranges, but please consider our usage of *Rabbeinu Bachya*’s teaching “spiritually” as we apply it to our concerns.

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what he meant, the person who said ‘A’mein’ cannot be absolved from his oath as what he had said ‘A’mein’ to had corresponded to what he thought he said ‘A’mein’ to.”²⁷

Rabbeinu Bachya, Introduction to Commentary, Parashas Mattos, “Shlomo warns man to fear the Lord, HaShem, first and foremost ... [T]o fear [a] mortal king only as someone subordinate to HaShem ... This is a warning not to display more fear for the visible terrestrial king than for the invisible celestial King ... **The difference between G-d and a mortal king is as great as the difference between day and night.**”

Rabbeinu Bachya, Bamidbar 28:15 “... When the moon referred to the inability of two kings wearing the same crown, it meant that **anything which appeared like power-sharing would reflect negatively on G-d**. If two luminaries were to wear the same crown **it would appear as if G-d were unable to create two servants, each of whom had the ability to generate its own light without relying on an outside force, a ‘companion’ to assist Him**” ... The moon’s error was the suggestion that G-d did not know what He had been doing when he created the universe as the moon had found it. One does not second-guess G-d, the Creator.”²⁸

²⁷ In this author’s opinion, people say what they think, and think what they say (and usually mean what they say, too). Again, this may not be the perfect example to cite, but recently UPI’s Helen Thomas was quoted as saying that **the Jews need to “get the hell out of Palestine” and go home to Germany, Poland, and the United States**. This is what she said, but when controversy erupted, she said, “*I deeply regret my comments ... They do not reflect my heart-felt belief...*” Now, does any Jew actually believe that Ms. Thomas did not say what was in her heart in her first offering of words? Only when she was challenged, only when she was given the opportunity to further consider her words, did she attempt to alter those original “heart-felt” words.

L’havdil. When *Yidden* focus on the *tofel*, and all but ignore the *Ikkar* – specifically with their words concerning “Who” will be our “Redeemer,” “Who” will be our “In-Gatherer,” and then offer the apologetic, “Oh, when I say the *Mashiach*, I really mean HaShem,” how should this author understand what is in their heart-of-hearts?

Another subsequent apologetic says, “But HaShem will redeem us THROUGH the *Mashiach*, therefore we can credit flesh and blood because HaShem will accomplish these things with/through the *Mashiach*.” This is tantamount to crediting the oven for the *Shabbos challah* that your wife made you last week. See the Rambam’s 5th Principle on “Who” should be exalted, as well as Rav Friedlander “**Faith and Divine Providence**” *** on why HaShem works through “messengers,” if the reader doubts the applicability of the oven/wife analogy. Also, consider the concepts of “*Shittuf*” and/or “*L’vado*” before crediting any being/entity other than HaShem. [This author has written extensively on these subjects, and any reader who would like to see these writings can contact me.]

²⁸ *Olam Hazeh* is the place of free-will where HaShem tests us and then rewards us in *Olam Habah* based upon how we do in our own individualized tests (just as no two people have the same finger-prints, no two people undergo the same “test”). HaShem created this world in a way that it would provide us with a true test of whether or not we desire a relationship with Him, or with one of His “messengers” (sun, moon, an angel, Moshe, *Mashiach*, et al), and He did so in a way that is expressed in this section of His Torah, and that has been beautifully illuminated by Rabbeinu Bachya. This author has written a *chiddush* on the *Gemara (Chullin 60)* where one opinion has HaShem asking that a *korban* be brought on His behalf to ‘atone’ for His having diminished the size of the moon (see Rashi, *Bamidbar 28:15*). We will not cite the entire *chiddush* here, but we will present some of the areas of Torah that comprise the “meat” of our *chiddush*:

1) **Shemos 11:3** “And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover **the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants, and in the sight of the people.**”

2) **Shemos 14:31** “And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and **believed the Lord, and His servant Moses.**”

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Rabbeinu Bachya, Introduction, Parashas Balak “The title [Melech²⁹] ‘melech’ is simply not appropriate for someone who does not have a (willing) people at [His] his disposal. It follows that the [seating upon the Throne of Heaven³⁰] self-confidence of a king, i.e., [His ‘ability’ to do good for them/bless them] his faith is bound up with the people at his command. **This is the reason that G-d did not really want that the Jewish people should have a king. If his faith would be placed in the people under him, how could he be faithful to the Lord above him and make Him the focus of his trust?! Not only that! The people, too, would place their trust and faith in the visible king instead of the Lord ... [We] have been commanded ‘fear the Lord your G-d,’ (*Devarim* 6:13). We have also been commanded not to fear the Canaanites (*Devarim* 7:18, et al). Seeing the Torah has forbidden us to fear mortal man and has commanded each one of us to place our trust exclusively in the Lord it follows that if we truly keep this commandment not only do we have no need for a mortal king, but we would be far better off than if we did have a king of flesh and blood ... **Actually, the very demand for a mortal king should have been considered a sin by the people seeing that when G-d took the people out of Egypt,****

3) **Bamidbar 21:5** “And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, nor is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread.” (see Rashi where this *passuk* is cited as an example of *shittuf*, Moshe and HaShem being equal, being “partners.”)

4) **Shemos 32:1** “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, Arise, make us gods, which shall go before us; and as **for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt**, we do not know what became of him.” (See Rashi, *Shemos* 16:6 and *Shemos* 20:2-3 [mitzvos #1 & #2, heard directly from HaShem, as opposed to from HaShem through Moshe] regarding Who took us out of Egypt.) Cf. *Sanhedrin* 63, *Maharsha*, *Sanhedrin* 63 on *shittuf b’shogeg*; Rashi, *Bamidbar* 14:4.

5) **Shemos 20:16-17** “And they said to Moses, **Speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.** And Moses said to the people, Fear not; for **God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before your faces,** that you sin not.”

6) **Bamidbar 27:18, 23** “And the Lord said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay your **hand** upon him ... And he laid his **hands** upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.” Cf. *Shabbos* 112b on the diminishment of each generation.

7) **Bamidbar 27:20** “And you shall put **some** of your honor upon him, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may be obedient.”

Rashi, Bamidbar 27:20 “**some of your majesty** But not all of your majesty. Thus, we learn that the face of Moses was [radiant] like the sun, whereas the face of Joshua was like the moon. [*Sifrei Pinchas* 23, *Bava Basra* 75a].”

8) “Who to learn from” ... An example to learn a lesson from so that one does not repeat the same mistake ... **Rashi, Devarim 11:17** “And if you ask: Was not an extension given to the generation of the flood, as it is said, “and his days will be [i.e., an extension will be given to him for] one hundred and twenty years” (Gen. 6:3)? [The answer is that] the generation of the flood had no one to learn from, but you do have someone to learn from.” Cf. **Rashi, Bereshis 6:4**.

QUESTION/OBSERVATION: Rashi (*Bereshis* 6:4) says that the generation of the flood had who to learn from, the generation of Enosh. Why here (*Devarim* 11:17) does he say that the generation of the flood had no one to learn from? Perhaps the answer has to do with the Revelation at Mt. Sinai. Learning a lesson from observing another group of human beings is no thing, but it cannot be compared to learning “THIS AUTHOR’S LESSON” directly from HaShem! (*Shemos* 20:2-3) Thus there is no comparison, and it was “as if” the generation of the flood had no one to learn from, while *Klal Yisroel* had the Teacher above all teachers to learn from.

In the style of our Sages, “The intelligent reader” will be able to see what this author is getting at.

²⁹ These [bracketed] insertions are those of this author.

³⁰ Cf. ***Tehillim* 22:4** “**But You are Holy, O You Who are enthroned on the praises of Israel.**”

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He had demonstrated that He could do so much more for the people than any king of flesh and blood.³¹

Rabbeinu Bachya, Bamidbar 13:2 "...Rashi explains the words 'send for yourselves' as 'in accordance with your judgment.' G-d meant, 'I am not commanding you to do this, but I leave it up to you.' What Rashi means is that although the dispatch of the spies took place at G-d's 'instructions,' the commandment did not originate in His mind, but was an accommodation to a desire uttered by the people. It is similar to *Devarim* 17:15 where the Torah commands, 'you shall surely appoint a king over you,' and proceeds to describe who is suitable to be king. **The Torah, i.e. G-d, was not enthused about the idea of governing the Jewish people by a king of flesh and blood**, but concurred knowing there would be political pressure to have such a king, and the alternative would probably be worse ... [T]he prophet *Hoshea* 13:11 ('*I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath*') [tells us] that appointing a king for the Jewish people was something that took place against G-d's will....³²

Rabbeinu Bachya, Bamidbar 10:31 "you (Yisro) will act as our eyes" "...Seeing that the Israelites had been journeying exclusively at the direction of the cloud and the cloud showed them the way, what need was there to employ the services of Yisro? The reason Moshe said the words quoted was to reinforce the minds and hearts of the people whose faith in the miraculous guidance of the cloud was something limited, **people who preferred to rely on leaders of flesh and blood.**"

Rabbeinu Bachya, Bamidbar 2:3 "...[I]n the future when the message of the impending redemption will arrive, Yehudah will be the first one to proclaim it as we know from *Yishayahu* 52:7 '*how welcome on the mountain are the footsteps of the herald announcing happiness, heralding good fortune, announcing victory, telling Zion, "Your G-d is King!"*³³,"³⁴

³¹ Is any input from this author of flesh and blood necessary?

³² Cf. *Devarim* 21:10-14, with Rashi ... The non-Jewish woman captured in battle.

³³ Cf. *Yishayahu* 43:1 "But now thus says the Lord who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, Fear not; for **I have redeemed you**, I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

Cf. *Yishayahu* 44:23 "Sing, O heavens; for the Lord has done it; shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; for **the Lord has redeemed Jacob**, and glorified Himself in Israel."

Cf. *Yishayahu* 48:20 "Go forth from Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare you, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say, **The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob.**"

Cf. *Yishayahu* 51:11 "Therefore **the redeemed of the Lord** shall return, and come with singing to Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

Cf. *Yishayahu* 52:9 "Break forth into joy, sing together, you ruins of Jerusalem; for **the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.**" (See Rav Hirsch, *Shemos* 32 re: "His people" v. "Moshe's people v. *Mashiach's* people)

³⁴ **Has this author quoted enough of our Sages yet? Has he written enough yet? When will the reader either cry "Uncle," or follow the lead of the Rambam and "hit this author, and tell him that you (the reader) refuse to listen"?**