

Ziering Pardes Community Omer Program: T(orah)ED Talks Thursday, May 14, 2020

Abstracts of 8 (of the 74) *divrei torah* in
Torah of the Mind, Torah of the Heart: Divrei Torah of the Talner Rebbe
 (Urim Publications, Jerusalem 2020)

[#1] No'ach: The Sin of the Generation of "The Tower of Bavel" (1995)

(Genesis 11:4) - *They said: Let us build a city, and a tower which reaches the heavens, and thereby make a name for ourselves; lest we be scattered over the face of the earth.*

- (1) **Rashi** (11th cent.), citing the Midrash: their sin was hubris; they wanted to wage war against God..
- (2) **Rashbam** (12th century): "*God had commanded them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the land" (Bereishis 1:28, 9:1); but they chose one particular place to settle and said: "lest we be scattered." Therefore, He scattered them from there.*"
- Ohr Ha-Chayim** (18th cent.): *God's intention was that they fill the entire world ...*

[#2] Lech Lecha: Avraham's Response to Lot's Captivity (1984)

(Genesis 14:14) - *Avraham heard that his relative had been captured; va-yarek his disciples ... 318 of them, and he pursued [the four kings] ...*

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 32a) cites Rav's interpretation of "**va-yarek**": *He emptied them with regard to Torah.*

The medieval commentators offer two explanations of the Gemara:

- (1) *He taught them Torah.* [Rashi: The imagery is that of a teacher "emptying" his teachings from within himself into the student].
- (2) *He emptied them of the Torah ... he conscripted them.*

[#3] VaYeitzei: Ascending and Descending (1989, 1991, 1993 & 1994)

(Genesis 28:12) - *He dreamed, and behold! A ladder was standing on the ground, and its top reached heavenward; Angels of God were ascending and descending upon it.*

[Rabbi Twersky quoted tangentially his wife's comment: the image of a ladder firmly rooted on earth but reaching heavenward indicates that there is no disjunction between mundane pursuits and spiritual aspirations].

The sequence of angels ascending and then descending is puzzling. Isn't their "home base" in heaven?

The Gemara in *Chullin* (91b) offers one approach: *The angels who had been accompanying Ya'akov ascended and looked upon his image above, and then descended and looked upon his image below.* That is to say: they "ascended" to contemplate the ideal Ya'akov, and then "descended" to see how his real-life image measured up to the ideal.

[#4] VaYishlach: Ya'akov's Two-fold Commitment (1994)

(Genesis 33:18) - *[Ya'akov arrived ... in the city of Shechem] ... va-yichan at the entrance to the city.*

The *Midrash Rabbah* offers two (among other) interpretations of the last clause:

(1) He began to set up carts and to sell merchandise inexpensively. A person has to express gratitude toward a place from which he benefits ...

This approach of the Midrash understands "**va-yichan**" as "he favoured." Ya'akov set up carts at the city's entrance and favored its inhabitants by selling merchandise at a reduced price. One must acknowledge indebtedness to society by contributing toward its welfare.

(2) He entered on Erev Shabbat while it was still daytime, ... Ya'akov observed Shabbos even before it was commanded.

This interpretation understands "**va-yichan**" as "he encamped." Ya'akov set up camp before Shabbos. The Midrash here depicts Ya'akov as a full *shomeir Shabbat*.

[#5] BeShallach: Ve-Anveihu (1988 & 1993)

(Exodus 15:2) – ... *This is my God and “anveihu”, the God of my father and I will exalt Him.*

One of the two interpretations of the verb “anveihu” cited by Rashi is: *I will communicate His beauty to inhabitants of the world ...*

One of the two presented in the Gemara (*Shabbat* 133b) is: *Beautify yourself before Him through mitzvot: Make a beautiful sukkah, a beautiful lulav ... a beautiful seifer-Torah ...*

[#6] Terumah: Creating an Inner Mikdash (Sanctuary) (1997)

(Exodus 25:8-9) - *They shall make for me a Sanctuary, so that I may dwell in their midst. Like ... the form of the Mishkan and the form of all its vessels - so shall you do.*

R' Chayim of Volozhin (18th -19th cent.) in *Nefesh Ha-Chayim*, offers a remarkable interpretation of the seemingly superfluous phrase “so shall you do.”

[#7] VaYakheil-Pekudei: The Mishkan and the World (1987)

(Exodus 40:34-35) - *The cloud covered the Ohel Mo'ed (the “tent of meeting”); and God's glory filled the Mishkan. Moshe could not enter the Ohel Mo'ed because the cloud had settled upon it; and God's glory filled the Mishkan.*

The world is described in similar terms (*Isaiah* 6:3): *His Glory is the fullness of the entire world.*

[#8] *Ki Tisa: Shabbat Shabbaton* (undated)

(Exodus 20:9-10) - Six days **shall you toil, and do all your work**. The seventh day is a day of **rest from work (Shabbat)**, [dedicated] to God, your Lord ...

(Exodus 31:15) - Six days **shall work be done**, but the seventh day is one of **complete rest from work (Shabbat Shabbaton)**, holy to God ...

(Exodus 35:2) - Six days **shall work be done**, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, one of **complete rest from work (Shabbat Shabbaton)**, [dedicated] to God ...

(Leviticus 23:3) - Six days **shall work be done**, but the seventh day is one of **complete rest from work (Shabbat Shabbaton)** ...

(Deuteronomy 5:13-14) - Six days **shall you toil, and do all your work**. The seventh day is a day of **rest from work (Shabbat)**, [dedicated] to God, your Lord ...

The two verses that describe “*melachah*” (activities prohibited on Shabbat) in the active voice, refer to the seventh day as merely *Shabbat*.

The three verses that describe “*melachah*” in the passive voice, refer to the seventh day as *Shabbat Shabbaton*.

Rashi (on Ex. 31:15) explains the phrase *Shabbat Shabbaton* as: “*total rest, not casual rest.*”