



דרכים בפרשה

מטות - מסעי



ויקחו את-כל-השלל ואת כל-המלקוח באדם ובבהמה

They gathered all the spoil and all the booty, human and animal

When the Yidden returned from the war, they brought back all of the spoils of war to Moshe Rabbeinu. Rashi explains מגיד שהיו כשרים וצדיקים, ולא נחשדו על הגזל לשלח יד בבזה שלא ברשות - *This tells us that they were pious and righteous men and were not suspected of robbery by stretching out their hand against the spoil without permission.*

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (Darash Moshe v.2) wonders why there is even a discussion of גזל - *stealing* when we are talking about spoils of war. As discomfoting as the rules of war may be, in the end, one cannot call it stealing. A simple answer may be that all the spoils would have belonged collectively to the Klal Yisroel, and the possuk is teaching us that no one took anything for themselves, thus stealing from the other Yidden.

Rav Moshe offers a beautiful idea. There are many types of גזל. It can be performed by physically taking something from another person but it can also be performed by stealing from Hashem. How does one steal from HaShem if everything is His? The gemara in Masechta Brachos gives an example: if one eats without making a bracha, it is as if he has stolen from Hashem. But what does this mean?

Rav Moshe explains that our lives are a gift. Every moment and each and every breath

that we take in this world is unique and cannot be purchased with all of the money in the world. When the time comes, there will not even be an extra breath available.

If a parent gives a child twenty dollars to buy a few items in the store and the child spends it on bubble gum, the child had used the money inappropriately, thus stealing from the parent. Now it is true that while the money is the child's hand, the child has free choice and can spend it how he sees fit, but that will not change the end result which is that the money was given for a different purpose, thus now considered stolen. When one squanders away the time allotted in this world, being unproductive or even worse, misusing it, in a sense that is stealing from HaShem. (In such a case, even when making the most beautiful bracha, it would be stealing.) Time may indeed be ours but only to the extent that we are *baalei bechira* and can choose how to spend it. The moment we misuse it, we are that child that bought bubble gum instead of what our parents needed.

Interestingly, Rav Moshe adds that after all of the *viduys* that we cry out during *ne'ila*, the final confession we make is למען נחדל מעושי ידינו *so that we may refrain from the injustice in our hands.* This normally refers to stealing or perhaps, not paying an

employee in a timely manner. As grave of a sin as it may be, one must wonder why this is the very last confession we make. But according to what we have explained, that misusing our time is also stealing, it all makes sense. At the final moments of Yom Kippur, as the day is slipping away, we confess that we did not spend our time wisely and we hope to do better in the coming year.

But then there are times when we may look at our neighbour and feel like we wish we had what they have. All the thoughts of “if only I had this and that” may begin to flood in. Next, some thoughts of this injustice and the other begin to arrive, leaving us feeling shortchanged. Why do they have it and not me? Or perhaps if I do it this way I can outmaneuver and get ahead of someone else? By not accepting what HaShem gives us and instead focusing on what we do not have, that is also a deeper level of stealing. איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו - A truly wealthy person will see the riches in all that HaShem has given him.

The Sfas Emes makes a fascinating observation in the beginning of Parshas Maasei. **ויכתב משה את־מוצאייהם למסעייהם על־פי ה' ואלה מסעייהם למוצאייהם** *Moshe recorded the starting points of their various stations as directed by Hashem. Their stations, by starting points, were as follows.* There were forty two stations; some hinting at positive encampments and some negative (see Rashi). Why should we even mention the negative

stations? Why did they all become part of the encampments of Klal Yisroel as if to advertise, here is the place that we really messed up, and this is where another sin was done? Of course we should mention the good, but why do we also include the bad? The Sfas Emes suggests that the Torah is teaching us that each of us go through many stations in life. Not always do we have everything that we want or desire. If we manage to stay strong during the difficult times, those too become a zechus for us.

When we are faced with a challenge and we refrain from making the wrong choice, that bad moment gets brought with us into *Olam Haba*. Any time that we desire something down here that we do not have and we manage to overcome it, that “item” ends up with us in the World to Come as well. The word **מוצאייהם** can also mean “to take out”. The stations that we go through in life, whether good or bad, grants us many opportunities to “take out” with us as our real estate in the World to come. If we insist on having what we are not meant to, we will not have it in *shomayim*. However, with the right outlook, our greatest disappointments in life can be turned into a beautiful share in *Gan Eden*.

Good Shabbos,

מרדכי אפפל



ALL PARSHA
A PRODUCT OF THE
DOWNLOAD ALL PARSHA!
the new free parsha app

Download on the **App Store** | GET IT ON **Google Play**