

פִּי־תֵצֵא

KI TETZEH/WHEN YOU GO OUT

Devarim/Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19

In the midst of many miscellaneous commandments about inheritance, rebellious sons, oxen, marriage violations and escaping slaves, we find often overlooked verses:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 23:7 " You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. ⁸ "The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of יהוה.

These verses are very interesting when you compare the strict commands concerning the “Ammonites” and the “Moabites” a few verses earlier:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 23:3 " An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of יהוה; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of יהוה forever, ⁴ "because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

The reasons for excluding the Ammonites and the Moabites:

- They did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt
- They hired against you Balaam ... to curse you

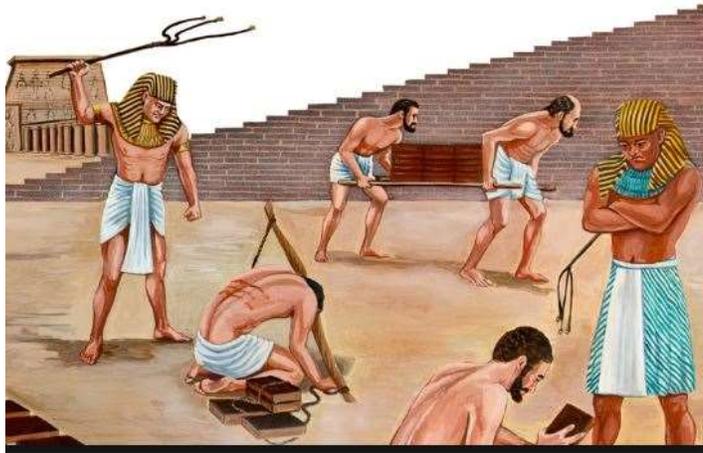
The Ammonites and the Moabites did not come to the Israelite’s aide during their time of need. They missed out on their opportunity to display kindness. And then they literally tried to curse the chosen ones. Balaam brought sin into the camp through his counsel to Balak, king of the Moabites. Which is deadlier? The enemy who attacks from without, or the enemy who attempts to bring sin into the camp? Thus, the harsh consequences for the Ammonites and the Moabites.

“Edom” (Esau) is said to be “**your brother.**” Esau’s twin brother was Ya’acov/Israel (Jacob). So indeed, Edom and Israel are brothers (twins). יהוה intends on honoring that relationship even though Esau at one point had vowed to “kill” Ya’acov. Yet, like Ammon and Moav, Esau/Edom had also refused to let Israel pass through his land:

Bereshith/Genesis 27:42 When the words of her older son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent for her younger son Ya’acov and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you.

Bemidbar/Numbers 20:21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

Still we ask, why the favor for Egypt? Why would יהוה ask the Israelites not to “**abhor the Egyptians**”? After all, the Egyptians had enslaved them, beaten them and afflicted them with hard labor, forced them to eat the bread of affliction, and thrown their male babies into the river. It is even said that they used Israelite babies as filler in the cement for their buildings. They did not provide straw for making bricks, making the job almost impossible. Had יהוה forgotten that they were wondering around in the wilderness because they were escaping Egyptian persecution? If anything, the Egyptians owed the Israelites. Had not Yosef sustained them during the days of famine? Could the Almighty really be asking the Israelites to be grateful for their hospitality?



Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has very interesting thoughts on why the Israelites, in their journey for freedom, are asked to give up their hatred for Egypt:

“To be free, you have to let go of hate. That is what Moses is saying. If they continued to hate their erstwhile enemies, Moses would have taken the Israelites out of Egypt, but he would not have taken Egypt out of the Israelites. Mentally, they would still be there, slaves to the past. They would still be in chains, not of metal but of the mind – and chains of the mind are the most constricting of all.

You cannot create a free society on the basis of hate. Resentment, rage, humiliation, a sense of injustice, the desire to restore honor by inflicting injury on your former persecutors – these are conditions of a profound lack of freedom. You must live with the past, implies Moses, but not in the past. Those who are held captive by anger against their former persecutors are captive still. Those who let their enemies define who they are, have not yet achieved liberty.

The Mosaic books refer time and again to the exodus and the imperative of memory: ‘you shall remember that you were slaves in Egypt’. Yet never is this invoked as a reason for hatred, retaliation or revenge. Always it appears as part of the logic of the just and compassionate society the Israelites are commanded to create: the alternative order, the antithesis of Egypt. The implicit message is: Limit slavery, at least as far as

your own people is concerned. Don't subject them to hard labor. Give them rest and freedom every seventh day. Release them every seventh year. Recognize them as like you, not ontologically inferior. No one is born to be a slave.

Give generously to the poor. Let them eat from the leftovers of the harvest. Leave them a corner of the field. Share your blessings with others. Don't deprive people of their livelihood. The entire structure of Biblical law is rooted in the experience of slavery in Egypt, as if to say: you know in your heart what it feels like to be the victim of persecution, therefore do not persecute others.

Biblical ethics is based on repeated acts of role-reversal, using memory as a moral force. In Exodus and Deuteronomy, we are commanded to use memory not to preserve hate, but to conquer it by recalling what it feels like to be its victim. "Remember" – not to live in the past, but to prevent a repetition of the past. (end of quote)

So in other words, the Israelites who came out of Egypt, were not to create another type of Egypt. Their God-given task was to create a new kind of society, with יהוה in its midst and respect for human dignity as its aim. The Israelites were far from perfect. In reading our Parasha this week, we note they had to address soldiers who fall in love with the daughters of their enemies, fathers who favor one wife and one son over another, and stubborn and rebellious children. These are ordinary human situations, and through Torah instruction, our Heavenly Father asked them to respond correctly.

יהוה never wanted the Israelites to forget their origins. He wanted them to remember their past, but without hate or desire for revenge. What יהוה wanted them to recall was the pain of being a slave, not the anger they felt towards their slave masters. The Egyptians had treated them badly but they in turn were to treat others with respect – the opposite of what they endured in Egypt. Be an example of using justice and compassion, rather than power. Be considerate of the poor. Don't let your decisions be guided by sexual desire. Don't hand a runaway slave back to his master. Do not humiliate your brother.

Yeshua made the same points:

Matthew 7:12 "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Torah and the Prophets.

Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

Now there's one more people group mentioned this week – the "**Amalekites.**"

Devarim/Deuteronomy 25:17 " Remember what **Amalek** did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, ¹⁸ "how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the

stragglers at your rear, when you *were* **tired and weary**; and **he did not fear Elohim**.¹⁹
"Therefore it shall be, when יהוה your Elohim has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which יהוה your Elohim is giving you to possess *as* an inheritance, *that* you will **blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven**. You shall not forget.

After just one attack, why should the Amalekites deserve to have their “**remembrance blotted out from under heaven**”? Why should they not be forgiven in the same way as He was asking the Israelites to forgive the Egyptians?

Jewish teaching implies that there was a difference between the Amalekites and the Egyptians. There was a rational, though not a justified, reason why the Egyptians feared the Israelites:

Shemot/Exodus 1:9 And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we;¹⁰ "come, **let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us**, and *so* go up out of the land."

The Egyptians feared the children of Israel because they had become numerous. Historians tell us that this was not groundless fear. They had suffered invasions of outsiders in the past who had taken over parts of their land. Thus, it was not an irrational fear, even though the Israelites had absolutely NO thoughts of taking over Egypt.

BUT...what about the Amalekites? Their hatred for Israel was purely irrational, groundless, and baseless. Amalek attempted to destroy the Israelites right after they left Egypt, the place where they had been treated lower than the lowest slave. The place where they had been beaten, starved, persecuted, killed, and finally liberated. Amalek attempted to take away all their hope. He wanted to destroy their new faith.

Amalek attacked those who were “**stragglers at the rear**,” i.e., those who were “**tired and weary**.” The Amalekites had no fear of Divine retribution. In fact, **Devarim 25:18** tells us that they “**did not fear Elohim**.” They had absolutely no reason to hate the Israelites – we call this irrational hatred.

Therefore, their remembrance is to be “**blotted out**.” יהוה has declared that “**He**” will wage war against Amalek from “**generation to generation**”:

Shemot/Exodus 17:16 for he said, "Because יהוה has sworn: **יהוה will have war** with Amalek from **generation to generation**."

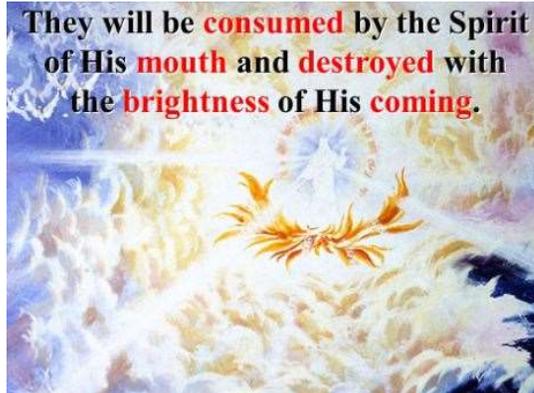
Anti-Semitism is the paradigm case of irrational hatred. In 1897, Theodor Herzl wrote:

“We have sincerely tried everywhere to merge with the national communities in which we live, seeking only to preserve the faith of our fathers. It is not permitted us. In vain

are we loyal patriots, sometimes superloyal; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to enhance the fame of our native lands in the arts and sciences, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In our native lands where we have lived for centuries we are still decried as aliens, often by men whose ancestors had not yet come at a time when Jewish signs had long been heard in the country....If we were left in peace...But I think we shall not be left in peace.”

Yes, irrational hatred has not died, because Amalek has not been wiped out. Daily there are multiple, unprovoked incidents against Jewish people, both in Israel and in other countries. And we see it also against those who dare to live by the commandments of Torah. But remember יהוה said “**HE**” will wage war against Amalek. The darkness will be defeated by the Light. May it be so, and in our day!

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then the Torahless one will be revealed, whom **Adonai will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.**



Shabbat Shalom!
Ardelle