

PSHUTO SHEL MIKRA

From the Teachings of Rav Yehuda Copperman zt"l

PARSHAT HAAZINU

The Power of Seeing

עֲלֵה אֶל הַר הָעֵבְרִים הַזֶּה... וּרְאֵה אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶחָזָהּ

Ascend this Mountain of Avarim ... and see the Land of Canaan that I am giving to B'nei Yisrael (Devarim 32:49)

The Purpose of Moshe Rabbeinu Seeing the Land

The decree that Moshe will not be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael has been sealed. However, Hashem allows him to ascend the mountain and look upon the Land. It is worthwhile contemplating: What is the meaning of this opportunity to look upon the Land, and what was its goal? Is this some form of partial compensation, whereby if Moshe was not actually able to enter the Land, at least he was allowed to see it?

Moreover, the opening *pesukim* of *Perek* 34 tell us that Hashem showed Moshe **the entire Land**, “from Gilad to Dan ... all of Naftali ... the entire Land of Yehudah as far as the Western Sea ... the Negev ... the Valley of Yericho etc.” This occurred through a miracle, since it is impossible to view all of those places from one spot. Why was all of this necessary? Will Moshe Rabbeinu not be consoled unless he is miraculously shown every location within Eretz Yisrael?

The *Seforno* (s.v. *u're'eh*) addresses this matter in his classic brief style:

And see the Land of Canaan: To bestow your blessing there.

In other words, showing Moshe the Land was not done primarily for Moshe's sake, but for that of B'nei Yisrael, so that he may bestow his *berachah* there! In order for a *berachah* to achieve its effect, there has to be some form of contact between the one giving the *berachah* and the one receiving it, in order to establish a connection between the two. This contact can be either physical or, when that is not possible, visual. With this in mind we can understand why it was important to show Moshe the entire Land in as much detail as possible, in order to maximize his visual contact with all the places that would be settled by B'nei Yisrael.

The *Seforno* expands on this idea in his *peirush* to the beginning of *Parshat Vezot HaBerachah* (33:1, s.v. *vezot*):

Moshe bestowed these blessings upon Yisrael at the time when Hashem showed him the Land before he passed away, in order that he (Moshe) bless the Land and Yisrael who would occupy it. And this was Moshe's (own) intention when he requested (Devarim 3:25), "אָעֲבֹרָה נָא וְאָרְאָה אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה" – Let me cross over and see the good Land."

According to the *Seforno*, Moshe's *berachot* to B'nei Yisrael, which make up most of *Parshat Vezot HaBerachah*, were said while standing on Har Ha'Avarim as he was shown the Land by Hashem. With the Land in his sight, the potency of his *berachot* was maximized. Moreover, we see from the *Seforno* that this was what Moshe was requesting in the beginning of *Parshat Va'Etchanan* when he entreated Hashem to allow him to "cross over and see the Land." In other words, at this stage, Moshe was no longer asking that he be able to cross over and live there, but asked that at least he be able to enter it and see it from within, in order that his connection with the Land be further strengthened, and his *berachah* be all the more effective.

Earlier Berachot: Yaakov and Yosef's Sons

The importance of establishing some form of contact between the one giving the *berachah* and the one receiving it is discussed by the *Seforno* earlier on, in the end of *Chumash Bereishit*. *Perek* 48 discusses the *berachot* Yaakov gave to his grandsons, Menashe and Ephraim. Pasuk 10 states:

וַעֲיִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּבְדוּ מִזְקֵן לֹא יוּכַל לְרֹאוֹת וַיִּגַּשׁ אֹתָם אֶלְיוֹ וַיִּשָּׂק לָהֶם וַיַּחֲבֹק לָהֶם

Yisrael's eyes were heavy with age, he was unable to see; he brought them near to him and he kissed them and embraced them.

The *Seforno* explains (s.v. *lo*):

He was unable to see well enough for his berachah to take effect through him seeing them, as we find (Bamidbar 23:13) "אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶנּוּ מִשָּׁם" — That you may see them

from there,”¹ and similarly, (Devarim 34:1) “וַיִּרְאֵהוּ ה' אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ — Hashem showed him (Moshe) the entire Land,” in order that he may bless it ... therefore, he (Yaakov) kissed them and embraced them, so that his soul might become connected with them and his berachah take effect.

Further Applications of Koach Ha'Reiah

The idea of Hashem showing someone the entire land of Eretz Yisrael can already be found in *Parshat Lech Lecha*, where Hashem says to Avraham (*Bereishit* 13:14):

שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה מִן הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲתָה שָׂם צָפְנָה וְנִגְבָּה וְקִדְמָה וְיַמָּה

Raise now your eyes and look out from where you are, northward, southward, eastward and westward.

There, too, Ramban explains that Avraham was enabled through a miracle to see the entire land in all four directions, as was Moshe later on. However, it appears that even if Avraham experienced a miracle similar to that of Moshe, the purpose of these two viewings was not the same. Whereas in Moshe's case the purpose was of bestowing *berachah*, in Avraham's case it was of enabling a *kinyan* (acquisition) of Eretz Yisrael!

When Avraham acquired the Land it thereby became acquired for his descendants as well. On a simple level, this is because once Avraham had acquired the Land, it was then naturally bequeathed to his descendants. On a deeper level, as we have discussed in an earlier chapter,² each of the Avot as individuals enjoyed the status of Am Yisrael, which means that an acquisition made by them was an acquisition on behalf of the entire Am Yisrael.

The basis of this idea is that Eretz Yisrael was never properly owned by any other nation; they were merely residents there until its owners (B'nei Yisrael) would come to inherit it. Therefore, since the Land was initially ownerless, Avraham was able to acquire it through looking at it, in keeping with the principle that “one may acquire a *hefker* (ownerless) item through looking at it.” (*Bava Metzia* 118a) This initial act of *kinyan* was then consolidated and strengthened by other acts such as Avraham “travelling through the length and breadth of the Land” (*ibid.*, *pasuk* 17).

Yaakov and Esav

In concluding our discussion of the various forms of contact which can serve to establish a connection between the giver of a *berachah* and its recipient, it is worthwhile referring to an additional comment of the *Seforno* which pertains to this matter. In the instance he discusses, and for reasons which he outlines, neither visual nor physical contact were sufficient to

1 These words were said by Balak to Bilaam as a means of enabling him to curse B'nei Yisrael! The *Seforno* explains that from there too, we see that visual contact establishes a connection which allows one party to affect the other, be it in a positive or negative way.

2 See *Parshat Lech Lecha*, Chapter 8.

establish the connection which make the *berachah* effective.

As a prelude to Yitzchak giving the *berachot* to Esav, he requests of him (*Bereishit* 27:3-4):

צא השדה וצודה לי ציד. ועשה לי מטעמים כאשר אהבתי והביאה לי ואכלה בעבור
תברכך נפשי בטרים אמות.

Go out to the field and hunt game for me. Then make me delicacies such as I love and bring it to me and I will eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die.

The **Seforno** (s.v. *va'aseh*) explains the background to this request:

He asked for delicacies so that Esav should occupy himself with kibud av, and (thereby) be deserving that the berachah should be effective. For even though he (Yitzchak) did not recognize Esav's great wickedness, nonetheless he did not feel him worthy to receive the blessing that he had in mind to give him.

Visual and physical contact can both serve to establish a connection between the giver and the receiver of a *berachah*, but they cannot serve to make the receiver worthy of receiving it! Only when the recipient has made himself worthy of *berachah* can the various forms of contact serve as a conduit for transmitting the *berachah*.

B'virvat gmar chatima tova.

This week's divrei Torah are dedicated *le'ilui nishmas*

Tamar bas Aryeh a"h