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בס"ד

Parashat 'Eqeb Part II *Vehayah Im Shamo'a Tishme'u*

1. On the Linkage Between the *Vehayah* Passage and that of *Shema'*

After reciting the Decalogue, Moses presents the *misvot* segment of the covenant reaffirmation that he was leading the nation through. The *misvot* are mostly “precepts of the heart” focused on the relationship with the commander and the first two commandments. The first verse of this sector was the *Shema' Yisrael* proclamation. After more than five chapters he concludes this subsection (aside from a short addendum) with the *Vehayah Im Shamo'a Tishme'u* passage (Deut. 11:13-21). The latter closely links with the *Shema'* passage, thoroughly reviewing it, quoting, paraphrasing or expanding on virtually its every word. Thus, *Shema'* and *Vehayah* comprise a highly integrated framework for the *misvot* section.

The *Shema'* verse, with its ever-so-brief summary of the first two Decalogue commandments, is the heading of the *misvot* and everything in this section is subsumed under that title verse. Moses concludes this portion of his oration with a “closing of the envelope” by repeating in the *Vehayah* passage all the themes and motifs of the *Shema'* passage. As the heading and central principles around which everything revolves, *Hashem Elokenu Hashem ehad* (“Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one”) constitute the backdrop subjects throughout.

The first part of *Vehayah* is formulated in a conditional mode (if-then), introducing reward and punishment statements. This is in accordance with covenant convention of the time that placed such statements at the conclusion of the stipulations. Although the stipulations continue with the *huqim* and *mishpatim* sections, the *misvot* section – as the foundation of the covenantal program – is substantial enough on its own to warrant such a statement in its

closing paragraph. Indeed, several verses later, just before the beginning of the *huqim* section, there is a brief statement of blessings and curses (11:29-30) with a description of when and where they should be proclaimed in the promised land. Although the customary location for blessings and curses is after completion of the stipulations, and a full statement of them does appear at exactly that point (27:11 ff.), their mention here –and only here – is an acknowledgement of the significance of the *misvot* section.

In *Vehayah's* first verse (v. 13) Moses employs almost all the words of the *Ve'ahabta* verse that immediately follows *Shema'*, albeit in a slightly different form. Thus, וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ (“You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul”) becomes וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם...בְּכָל-לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁכֶם, using the plural in place of the singular. This was obviously intended to indicate comprehensiveness, that these precepts are addressed to the nation as well as to the individual. This is especially appropriate when dealing with instances of national reward and punishment that would impact each individual, which is here the case.

The final phrase of the *Ve'ahabta* verse, וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ (“with all your utmost”), is not attested in our context, while the word וּלְעַבְדוֹ (“and to serve Him”) appears here but not in *Ve'ahabta*. Clearly, “and to serve Him” added to “to love Him” (וּלְעַבְדוֹ בְּכָל-לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכָל-) replaces וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ, and is a substitution of one type of intensification for another. In the *Shema'* passage *ubkhol me'odekha* expanded the call “to love Him” (or “be loyal to Him”) beyond what is called for with *bekhol lebabekha ubkhol nafshekha* (“with all your heart and all your soul”). Here, adding “and to serve Him” to the phrase “to love Him” just before the intensifying clauses of “with all your hearts and with all your souls,” expands the call in another manner,

perhaps more potently. “With all your hearts and with all your souls” now applies to both “to love Him” as well as “and to serve Him.”

The second verse of *Vehayah* begins a four-verse articulation of consequences for obedience or disobedience. The focus is on agricultural success or failure based on whether G-d provides the necessary rainfall in the proper time. (The promised land’s agriculture is extremely dependent on rainfall in the proper time.) The dreaded disobedience is the people being lured to violation of the fundamental covenantal principle, namely, the service of other gods. The statement of the transgression – וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם (“and you serve other gods and bow to them”) – is formulated in words of the Decalogue.

It is noteworthy that in the two verses of reward Moses speaks in G-d’s name, that is, he quotes G-d, blending the divine words in as a continuation of his own previously spoken words, without indicating the transition with an introductory note. This is a practice he sometimes utilizes in Deuteronomy. (Although it generally is clear from the context that He is quoting G-d, perhaps in such cases he employed voice modulation or some nonverbal cue to elucidate the point.) The first verse of warning, which does not make mention of the punishment, could be understood as either Moses continuing to quote G-d or reverting to speaking his own words. The next verse, in which the punishment is articulated, is in Moses’ words. One wonders about his strategy as well as the fuller meaning in such cases. It seems that he felt since his own words were spoken under divine inspiration it was acceptable to incorporate G-d’s direct words in his speech.

Immediately following the statement of consequences, the *Vehayah* passage returns to expounding the balance of the *Shema*’ passage. The sixth verse begins with, וְשַׂמְתָּם אֶת-דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהִים עַל-לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל-נַפְשְׁכֶם (“You shall place these words upon your hearts and upon your souls”), a paraphrase of the *Shema*’ passage’s וְהָיוּ עָלֶיךָ (“These words ... shall be upon your heart”). Of course, both these verbal expressions – “shall be upon” and “place upon” – are metaphoric, meaning “concentrate upon” and “take seriously.” However, the later וְשַׂמְתָּם (“and you shall place”) implies a more active responsibility, as if to say “do something so that these words should be upon your

hearts and souls.” In addition, the “upon your heart” phrase of the *Shema*’ passage (עַל-לִבְבְּךָ) is here supplemented with עַל-לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל-נַפְשְׁכֶם (adding “and upon your souls”), further intensifying the demand for seriousness.

The continuation of the verse in *Vehayah* is וְקִשְׂרֹתֶם אֹתָם (“you shall bind them”), a parallel to the וְקִשְׂרֹתֶם verse of *Shema*’ (6:8). Both prescribe the binding of “these words” as a sign on one’s hand and as a frontlet upon one’s forehead, except that here it is in the plural. (The *tem* suffix here reflects the plural audience being addressed, while the following *otam* refers to the words; in the *Shema*’ passage the וְקִשְׂרֹתֶם is singular with the *tam* suffix meaning “them,” referring to the words.)

The sequence of instructions is here reversed. In the *Shema*’ passage, before Moses prescribed instructions for binding these words – the ritual of *tefillin* (phylacteries) as it is traditionally known – he taught the responsibility to teach these words to the children. Here, the teaching follows *tefillin*. Such reversal is a usual occurrence in scriptural citations from the scriptural corpus although in cases such as ours there usually is an apparent reason for the change.*

The seventh verse of our passage, וְלַמְדַתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת-בְּנֵיכֶם (“You shall teach them to your sons”) corresponds to וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבְנֵיךָ (which also means to teach your sons) of the *Shema*’ passage (6:7). Regardless of whether וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם (*veshinantam*) is derived from the root for “sharpen” or from “repeat,” it definitely implies teaching the children diligently. The word וְלַמְדַתֶּם (*velimadtem*), on the other hand, the standard word for teaching, does not in itself connote an especially competent instruction. However, the requirement to teach is greatly intensified with the immediately following וְדַבַּר בָּם (“to speak in them”), which replaces the וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם (“and you shall speak in them”) of the *Shema*’ passage. As expounded in the Talmud in the name of Rabbi Josiah, the *lamed* at the beginning of וְדַבַּר בָּם connects with and comments on *velimadtem*, rendering the meaning of the clause, “Teach your sons in such a way that they will be able to engage in speaking about these words” (*b. Ber.* 13b). Such a successful result is only possible if the words were taught diligently, repeatedly and with dedication so that the children understood well what they learned. Thus, the *Vahayah* formulation equals or

surpasses the teaching requirement of *veshinantam* of the *Shema* passage: it evaluates the teaching by its successful outcome, that the child “speaks in these words.”

The remainder of the verse – בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלֶקְחֶךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וְגו' (“when you sit at home and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you arise”) – is an exact quote from the *Shema* passage (6:7), a point underscored by the otherwise inexplicable sudden and strange shift from plural to singular. In the *Shema* passage formulation, these phrases expand the call to the recipient of Moses’ address to speak in these words “when you sit at home and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you arise.” Here, however, these phrases are attached to לְדַבֵּר בָּם, that is, to the responsibility to teach one’s sons to speak in these words. The intention seems to be to equate the sons to the fathers. The sons should speak in these words as the fathers were instructed to do: “when you sit at home and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you arise.” Such a literary device implies the ideal of perfect transmission.

The next verse (v. 20), וּכְתַבְתֶּם וְגו', prescribes the writing of these words on the doorposts of home and gates. This is identical with the *mezuzah* verse of the *Shema* passage. Since the end of the preceding verse was an exact quotation, and being that this verse is to correspond with the last verse of the *Shema* passage thereby closing the envelope, Moses continued to quote, thereby confirming and concluding the correspondence.

Our passage’s final verse (v. 21) is לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ יְמֵיכֶם וְיַמֵּי יְרֵבּוּ יְמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאָרֶץ וְגו' (“In order that your days and the days of your children be lengthy upon the land”). This concludes the *Vehayah* paragraph and (except for the four-verse “addendum” passage that follows) the *misvot* segment of laws with an optimistic vision. Fulfillment of the prescribed instructions will enable the present generation and its children to dwell continually in the promised land, “which Hashem swore to your forefathers to give to them, as the days of the heavens upon the earth.”

2. On the Liturgical Unit

The *Shema* and *Vehayah Im Shamo'a* passages provide a distinguished framework for the section that

is the core of the covenant. It is very understandable that they together became the heart of the daily liturgy. (This is apart from the fact of their containing the words “when you lie down [to sleep] and when you arise,” which the sages expounded to indicate the requirement for reciting them evening and morning.) As the Mishnah puts it, these two passages represent “acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven” and “acceptance of the yoke of the laws,” respectively (*m. Ber.* 2:2). These terms are strikingly similar to the ancient “oath of loyalty” to the suzerain and to his stipulations, which often were framed in terminology strikingly analogous to those in Deuteronomy.

To enhance the liturgical unit and to have it more completely reflect the Torah’s fuller program, the sages complemented *Shema* and *Vehayah* with the *Vayomer* paragraph of *šišit* (Num. 15:37-41) and prescribed that all three be recited together morning and evening. *Shema* and *Vehayah* are passages that directly result from expounding the Decalogue and the covenant, while *Vayomer* speaks of the goal of becoming holy to G-d (see our study on *Parashat Šišit*). Thus, in the three-part liturgical entity, *Vayomer* represents the attachment of the holiness dimension to the covenant, establishing a more complete representation of the Torah’s fuller intent. (This is analogous to what appears to be the case with the Tabernacle – the *miqdash*, or holy center. The addition of the Tabernacle with its Leviticus legislation to the previous program of the covenant as presented in the book of Exodus, enriches the covenant with the Holiness Code.)

The *Vayomer* passage also serves to conclude the liturgical unit with a verse that makes a clear reference to the Decalogue’s first verse, namely, אָנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם (“I am Hashem your G-d who brought you forth from the land of Egypt” [Num. 15:41]). This intimately links the end of the liturgical unit with its beginning, as we have seen that the *Shema* verse is a compact digest of the first two commandments.

The three paragraphs constitute the Lawgiver’s adjuration to the Israelites. The individual’s recitation of them implies his acknowledgment of the appropriateness of a commitment. However, the recitation does not include an actual statement of commitment. Accordingly, the sages established an

explicit oath formula to immediately follow this recitation. Thus they prescribed the *Emet Veyasib* paragraph to follow the liturgical unit in the morning prayer and the *Emet Ve'emunah* paragraph to follow it in the evening prayer. Moshe Weinfeld maintains that the four basic elements of the *Emet Veyasib* oath formula “[follow] exactly the pattern of the loyalty oath to the suzerain ... as it appears in the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon” (*Commentary on Deuteronomy* 1-11, AB, p. 354). These elements are the formal affirmation of the demands of G-d the sovereign; the declaration of accepting upon oneself His kingdom; the declaration of the equal validity of the obligation upon coming generations; and assertion of the exclusiveness of divine kingship.

Rabbi S. D. Sassoon was of the opinion that the custom to hold the *šišiyot* (fringes of the prayer shawl) in one's right hand during the first part of *Emet Veyasib* originated as a derivative of the practice to hold an item of sanctity in one's hand while taking an oath (*Natan Hochmah Lishlomo*, Heb. section, p. 121).

3. After *Vehayah* (Deut. 11:22-25)

The last four verses of *Parashat 'Eqeb*, which follow the *Vehayah* passage, constitute a final reward-for-compliance statement. The first verse contains the “if” clause while the final three verses employ expression after expression of reward for compliance with the covenant. In this case the reward is wholly focused on conquering the promised land. Indeed, the boundaries of the land are here roughly delineated except for that of the East, since the nation at that moment is stationed on the eastern bank of the Jordan River poised to cross into the land. This paragraph does not counter *Vehayah* being the basic closing of the *misvot* section; rather, it provides a pragmatic thrust for the task immediately at hand. It is in the nature of a short addendum following the “formal” conclusion of a

section, a familiar phenomenon in the Torah; it applies the condition of fulfilling the *misvot* to success in the task immediately at hand that is a major concern on everybody's mind, that of possessing the land.

In the beginning of *Parashat Re'eh* (11:26-32) Moses prescribes a major dramatic recitation of blessings and curses that were to be performed subsequent to his death, after the Israelites had entered the land. The present covenant renewal he was leading the nation through was to be blended with a ceremony of completion and reaffirmation in the altered circumstances of the near future. Since he had just concluded the *misvot* section that was devoted to explication of the most basic precepts of the covenant, this was an ideal time to inform Israel of this important covenant reinforcement detail. No further details or reference to the blessings and curses are provided until chapter 27, following completion of the *huqim* and *mishpatim* sections and formal articulation of the fundamental covenantal relationship.

Endnote

* The reason for the reversal may be as follows. In the *Shema'* passage, *had yiqshertem* (“bind them”) immediately followed *ve'el-lvavkhem*...*ha'aleh*, which does appear to be the more natural and aesthetic sequence of these precepts, it would very possibly have been misunderstood. The *ve'el-lvavkhem* prescription might very well have been interpreted as continuing the theme of *ve'el-lvavkhem* (“upon your heart”) and taken metaphorically as *ve'el-lvavkhem* surely is intended. By placement of the unquestionably literal responsibility of teaching the sons between them, the context enables a literal interpretation of *ve'el-lvavkhem* as intended. Once it was so established in the *Shema'* passage, the *Vehayah* passage employed the more natural order.