



# MISHNAS CHAYIM

# משנת חיים

## MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת האזינו תשס"ט 5769 Parshas Haazinu

### A PATRIOTIC P'SHAT

#### IDENTITY EXPOSED

It is told of the great Ramban that he once had a disciple whose apple, unfortunately, fell very far from his mentor's tree. This disciple, whose name was Avner, ceased observing *mitzvos* and became a heretic. He stooped so low that he did not desist even from mocking his former *rebbe*.

The Ramban had taught that everything is contained in the Torah; even the names and fates of every individual. With no small measure of cynicism and contempt, Avner challenged his *rebbe* to show him the verse wherein he, Avner, was identified.

The Ramban responded by pointing to a *passuk* in this week's *parshah*. The Torah states (*Devarim* 32:26): אֶפְאַיֶהֶם אֲשַׁבִּיתָהּ מֵאֲנוּשׁ זָכְרָם (I will leave them to abandon, and obliterate their memory from existence). "Check the third letter of each of these words," he instructed, "and you will discover your identity." (אֶפְאַיֶהֶם אֲשַׁבִּיתָהּ מֵאֲנוּשׁ זָכְרָם = אֲבִנֵר)

Avner was shaken by this find. His 'personal' *passuk* contained quite a sobering message regarding his eventual fate. This was enough to convince the errant disciple to repent from his wicked ways. He undertook a self-imposed exile for the remainder of his life.

This is but one out of an infinite number of examples of the all-encompassing nature of the Torah. In one form or another, every detail about every creature, every drop of true wisdom, the answer to all of life's questions, is contained therein. As the Mishnah in Avos (5:22) sums up:

הִפְךָ בָּהּ וְהִפְךָ בָּהּ, דְּכֵלָּא בָּהּ.

"Delve into the Torah, for it contains *everything*."

As a product of the Omniscient Hashem, Whose wisdom, abilities, and essence are boundless, the breadth of knowledge contained in the Torah is also of a limitless quality.

In the above illustration, the particular details of that individual and his life were expressed in the Torah in the form of an allusion. Yet, there are numerous instances where the Torah contains quite revealing information in even an explicit manner. Let us take an example — also from this week's *parshah* — where it appears that the Torah spells out the basic history of the nations of the world, down to contemporary times:

#### AMBER WAVES OF GRAIN

In comparison to other countries, America seems to be without equal. From the basics of food and security, to the overall prosperity and power of this nation, perhaps no other country on the planet can claim to be so blessed. Did you ever stop to wonder why that is? Some may want to attribute it the form of government, or to this or that other factor. It appears, however, that the true answer is to be found in the Torah. The *passuk* says (*ibid.*, v.8):

יִצַב גְּבֻלַת עַמִּים לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

"Hashem shall firmly establish the borders of the nations according to the number of *bnei Yisrael*."

The Chafetz Chaim (*Chafetz Chaim al Hatorah*) explains the verse according to its simple meaning. The welfare of a given country is dependent on the number of Jewish people it sustains. The greater the number of Jews the country accommodates, the greater success and expansion it will attain.

The Chafetz Chaim points to an unfortunate and ironic situation that seems to recur throughout history. Quite often, when a particular locale would tolerate, in some cases even invite, the Jewish

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# משנת היום

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people, the benevolent hosts would soon reap the benefits. A period of uncanny territorial and economic expansion would result, often with the assistance of Jewish aides and advisors. Lulled into a false sense of security and ability, the nation would begin to feel that they could get along just fine without the talents of their Jewish residents. Suddenly, their tolerance would run out, and they would issue the dreaded edict of expulsion. Others would effect a mass exodus of their Jewish population through harsh persecution.

What would then happen to such a country? Inevitably, it would *plotz* (undergo basically irrevocable decline). The glorious Spanish Empire, for example, went the way of the dodo bird by following this pattern.

The tragic irony of this situation lies in the fact that the nations themselves should be aware of the true key to their success or failure. The Torah has been translated by the various nations into their own languages. This *passuk* and the formula it contains are open and available for their perusal. And yet, time and again, they ignored it, as well as the numerous historical models that occurred throughout time. Instead of trying to bring more Jews in — which would shore up their borders — they resorted to chasing the Jews out. As a result, they met with their predicted demise.

America, however, is a different story altogether. R' Chaim Volozhiner declared (in the beginning of the nineteenth century) that the United States will become the final 'way-station' and resting place for the Jewish people in *galus* before the arrival of Moshiach. And it has proven to be quite a hospitable one for the Jews, perhaps more so than any other country in the history of *galus*. R' Moshe Feinstein described the United States as a regime of kindness and uprightness, which protects its Jewish citizenry. "We should constantly pray for the success of this republic," he stated. (*Sefer Yagel Ya'akov*, pp. 261-4)

Particularly when compared to the standard fare offered by other host countries past and present (expulsions, pogroms, discrimination, terrorism, etc.), it seems clear that the United States is certainly fulfilling its end of the deal of accommodating the "numbers of *bnei Yisrael*." Is it mere coincidence, then, that this country is one of the most powerful, prosperous, and advanced nations the world has ever seen?

From the Ten Commandments to the most specific detail of any particular *halachah*, from the course of history to the fate of individuals, Hashem included every bit of true knowledge in His Divine work. As we have seen from our *parshah* alone, the Torah's scope is truly breathtaking, sometimes manifested in hints, and sometimes in explicit statements. And we touched upon only two examples of the Torah's revelations. The others are out there, just waiting for our discovery.

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