



Parsha Encounters

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Rosh Hashanah – Rabbi Moshe Katz

The Pomegranate's Message

The *Meiri* in *Horayos* explains that the "simonim", symbolic foods eaten at the *Rosh Hashana* table, are meant to inspire us and to help us focus on *teshuva*, repentance. Today we might use the term "*spiritual visual aids*".

One of the most popular of the *simonim* is the *pomegranate*, over which we say, "*y'hi ratzon sheyirbu zechuyasenu*", "may our merits be many". This request is difficult to understand. How can we ask *Hashem* that we have many merits? The number of merits we have is totally up to us. It depends on the decisions we make with our *bechira*, our free will.

The story is told of a person who went to a great *tzadik* and asked him to *daven* on his behalf, that he do *teshuva*. The *tzadik* closed his eyes as if he was deep in prayer and then told the person, "*Hashem* says that it's okay with *Him* if you do *teshuva*!" Likewise, it's okay with *Hashem* that we have many merits. However, He leaves it up to us!

Perhaps we can understand this *bakasha* of *sheyirbu zechuyasenu* as asking *Hashem* to *focus* on our merits. Even though we know that we have many failings, we ask of *Hashem* that He, so to speak, look away from them and focus *only* on our merits.

Is this a reasonable request of *Hashem*? Our being deemed worthy of *Hashem* focusing on our merits would seem to depend on how we relate to other people. If we constantly focus on

people's shortcomings and overlook their merits, we have no right to ask *Hashem* to act differently with us. However, if we overlook their shortcomings and focus only on their good points, then we can ask *Hashem* to do so for us.

The *Gemorah* in *Erachin* says that the *me'il*, the long robe worn by the *Kohen*, atones for the sin of *lashon harah*, gossip. The reason for this is not obvious. Rav Hirsch suggests that the connection between *lashon harah* and the *me'il* may be attributed to the woolen *pomegranates* attached to the hem of the *me'il*. He quotes *chazal* who say even *raykanin shebecha*, even the Jews who seem to be empty of *mitzvos*, are really full of *mitzvos* like the seeds of a *pomegranate*. We speak *lashon harah* because we tend to focus on people's shortcomings. But the *me'il* proclaims to us, "think of the *pomegranate*!" Don't focus on people's shortcomings. Even when you don't see any merits, look *deeper* and you will find them!

So we take the pomegranate on *Rosh Hashanah* to remind ourselves of its lesson. Only then do we ask *Hashem*, *yirbu zechuyasaynu*, please *focus* on our merits. May the *pomegranate* inspire us to improve and may it strengthen our *bakasha*, "*sheyirbu zechuyasenu*"!

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Halacha Encounters

Shnayim Mikra

Rabbi Yisroel Langer

The Gemara in Berachos (8A) tells us that a person should always complete the Torah portion of the week with the congregation, reading the Hebrew text twice and the Targum¹ once.² The Shulchan Aruch³ holds that this is an obligation (on every male), and not just a nice minhag. There are 2 methods mentioned in the Achronim as to how one may fulfill his obligation. Method #1) Read each posuk twice followed by the Targum on that posuk. Method #2) Read each segment (until the letter "peh"-a parsha p'sucha, or "samech"-a parsha stuma, or a place where a new topic begins) twice, followed by the Targum.⁴ One may not read the Targum before the Hebrew text. If one read the Targum after reading the Hebrew text only once, it is good b'dieved.⁵

What qualifies as Targum?

To fulfill ones obligation of reading "Targum" one cannot merely read a literal translation of the text. Rather the translation must explain and interpret the text. The translation that meets this criterion is Targum Onkelos.⁶ One can also fulfill his obligation of Targum by reading the commentary of Rashi. However, those pesukim that Rashi does not comment upon must be read a third time.⁷ A G-fearing person should do both Targum Onkelos and Rashi.⁸

When is the proper time for one to fulfill his obligation?

One can begin to fulfill his obligation as soon as the tzibur begins to read that parsha. Therefore one can already start reading the week's parsha after mincha of the previous Shabbos.⁹ It is best to finish the parsha before one sits down to eat his seuda.¹⁰ If this can not be done he should finish it before mincha on Shabbos. There is a dispute amongst the poskim as to what is meant by "mincha." Some Poskim say that it means from when the individual davened mincha (and heard Krias Hatorah).¹¹ Others hold that it means Minchah Gedolah, regardless of when the individual actually davened.¹² B'dieved if one did not read it before mincha on Shabbos, he can read it through Tuesday of the upcoming week.¹³ If this is not possible he should at least finish before parshas V'zos Habracha is read on Simchas Torah. Parshas B'reishis may start being read after the tzibbur reads it on Simchas Torah.

How to "Catch Up"

If one falls behind and has to read this week's parsha and last week's parsha, the Maharsham¹⁴ holds that one reads this week's parsha first and then last week's parsha. Others hold that one should do last week's parsha first and then this week's parsha.¹⁵

Miscellaneous

- If Yom Tov falls out on Shabbos, the regular parsha of the week is pushed off for the Yom Tov Kriah. In this instance one should not do Shnayim Mikrah... of the forthcoming parsha prior to Yom Tov.¹⁶
- The proper time to begin Parshas V'zos Habracha is from Hoshana Rabbah or Shmini Atzeres.¹⁷

- The preferred time of doing Shnayim Mikrah... is during the daytime, and Thursday and Friday evenings.¹⁸

The gemara (Brochos 8B) tells us that anyone who completes the parsha with the tzibbur will have his days lengthened. Perhaps one of the reasons why this halacha is shown such great importance is because it was instituted by Moshe Rabbeinu himself. (This is according to the Aruch Hashulchan). As Rosh Hashanah approaches it would behoove everyone of us to re-examine our method of fulfilling this very significant mitzvah. Perhaps in view of some of the details mentioned above we may find room to improve in this area and through this be zoche to a kesiva v'chasima Tova.

¹ Targum is Aramaic interpretive translation on the Torah composed by Onkelos.

² This is known as Shnayim Mikrah Vechad Targum.

³ O.C. 285

⁴ M.B. 285 sk2

⁵ Shaar Hatzion 285:10

⁶ If one doesn't understand Targum Onkelos, some Poskim say that he has not fulfilled his obligation unless he does the commentary of Rashi. (letter written by Chofetz Chaim quoted in sefer Birur Halacha 285:22 p.58; Harav Dovid Zucker shlita in the name of Hagaon Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ZT"L) If one cannot do Rashi he should at least read a translation that explains the text in accordance with the Rishonim (ex: Living Torah, Artscroll, R'Hirsch). Other Poskim (Harav Shmuel Fuerst shlita, Harav Efraim Greenblatt shlita) say that one should try his best with Onkelos even if he doesn't understand all of it, rather than resorting to another translation. See Halichos Shlomo quoting Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Ch. 12; Dvar halacha 48) that even if one isn't fluent in his understanding of Targum Onkelos he has still fulfilled his obligation.

⁷ M.B. 285 s.k. 5

⁸ O.C. 285:2

⁹ The Pri Migadim and Kitzos Hashulchan (Siman 72) are in doubt whether one could fulfill his obligation on the previous Shabbos (after mincha) and hold that perhaps one must wait until Sunday. The Birur Halacha (285:24) brings many Rishonim who hold that you can't begin until Sunday. However the Psak of the Mishna Berura is that one may fulfill his obligation from Mincha the week before.

¹⁰ O.C. 285:4

¹¹ Kitzos Hashulchan(72), Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ZT"L (Halichos Shlomo 12:35) and Hagaon R' Chaim Kanievsky shlita (quoted in Taarich Yisroel p.367)

¹² Hagaon R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv shlita (quoted in Bichurey Chaim p.56 footnote 20) Hagaon R' Chaim Pinchus Sheinberg shlita (quoted in Taarich Yisroel, ibid), Harav Shmuel Fuerst shlita, see M.B. sk 10 and Shmiras Shabbos Kihilchasa Ch. 42 footnote 218.

¹³ See Kitzos Hashulchan 72, and Halichos Shlomo (ch. 12 in Dvar Halacha: 46), that it's better to finish it on Shabbos (even after Mincha) than during the week. See M.B. 285 sk 12 that seems to hold like this as well.

¹⁴ Volume I, 213 just like by tefillah where you do the Tashlumin ("make up tefillah") after the regular tefillah.

¹⁵ Kitzos Hashulchan

¹⁶ Hagaon R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"L (quoted by Rav Shmuel Fuerst shlita)

¹⁷ see M.B. 285 s.k. 18 and 669 sk4

¹⁸ See Shaarei Teshuvah (285) that the Talmidei Ari were machmir regarding Thursday night. However others (Ben Ish Chai Parshas Pikudei, 7, Yesod V'shoresh Havodah) are lenient with regards to Thursday night.