

DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

PARSHAS BO

Nishar and Nosar

Concept: Synonyms in Lashon Hakodesh

וְאָכַל אֶת יֶתֶר הַפְּלִטָּה הַנִּשְׁאַרְתָּ לָכֶם מִן הַבָּרָד

[The locusts] shall consume the remnant that was left over for you from the hail.¹

Our verse uses the word “נִשְׁאַרְתָּ” to describe the produce that remained from the plague of hail. By contrast, verse 15, which describes the plague, states: “וַיֹּאכַל אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב הָאָרֶץ וְאֵת כָּל פְּרֵי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר הִותִיר הַבָּרָד – it consumed all the grass of the land and all the fruit of the tree that the hail left over.” We see that the second verse uses the word “הִותִיר” to denote the leftover produce. What is behind this shift?

The Malbim explains that the two terms “*nishar*” and “*nosar*” reflect two ways that something can be left over:

- ▷ נותר – refers to something which simply remains on account of the fact that whatever happened did not affect everything. For example, if one is eating something but simply does not finish it, what is left is called “*nosar*”.
- ▷ נשאר – refers to something that was specifically set aside. In the above example, if one set aside from the outset a portion that was not be consumed, that would be called “*nishar*”.

In our instance, the first verse refers to the produce of the field that was left over from the hail. As the Torah informs us at the end of last week’s parsha, the wheat and spelt were specifically spared from that plague, hence they are referred to with the term “*nishar*”. The later verse, however, refers to the fruit of the trees that was left over from the hail. There, the trees were not excluded from the plague of hail, rather, it simply it did not destroy every single piece of fruit. Hence, the term used for whatever fruit was left is “*nosar*”.

Perhaps we may use this distinction to illuminate another matter. In next week’s parsha, we are told that waters of the Yam Suf covered over Pharaoh’s army to the extent that “לֹא נִשְׁאַר בָּהֶם עַד אֶחָד – There did not remain of them even until one.” The Mechilta records a dispute as to whether the word “עד” is meant to be taken as meaning “up to and including” (i.e. not even one remained), or “up to and excluding” (i.e.

¹ Shemos 10:5.

What's the Story on Seder Night?

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוּר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם

You shall tell your son on that day saying, 'For this Hashem did for me when I left Egypt'.³

This verses is the source of the mitzvah of telling story of the Exodus on Sefer Night. The Mishnah in Maseches Pesachim⁴ informs us that the way to tell the story is, “מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח” – *One begins with the negative and ends with the positive.*⁵ The Mishnah does not specify exactly what the “negative” and “positive” are. In this matter we find a dispute among the rabbis of the Talmud:

- ▷ Rav holds that the negative is the fact that “מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותנו” – *Initially our forefathers were idol-worshippers,*” and the positive is, “ועכשיו קירבנו המקום לעבודתו” – *and now the Omnipresent has drawn us near to His service.*”
- ▷ Shmuel holds that the negative is “עבדים היינו” – *we were slaves,*” and the positive is “ויוציאנו” – *Hashem took us out of slavery.*”

Of these two opinions, Shmuel’s clearly seems to be the more intuitive. Surely, the focus on Pesach should be on the events which took place on Pesach! Why, then, does Rav insist that the story on this night is much broader, beginning generations prior to our descent to Egypt and concluding after we had left?

Perhaps the answer can be found by taking a closer look at our verse which, as we noted, is the source for the mitzvah of telling the story. Although we would loosely translate the verse as commanding us to tell the story of the Exodus, we note two elements within its phraseology:

1. The verse commands to tell the son “בעבור זה” – for this,” i.e. the focus of the story is not the Exodus per se, but why it occurred.
2. The focal events in the verse are not those of the Exodus itself, but rather, that which “Hashem did for me when I left Egypt,” i.e. the events which accompanied the Exodus.

With these observations in mind, we can better understand Rav’s position. The verse is telling us to relate to our sons, not just the story of the Exodus, but the reason why it occurred which was to enter into Hashem’s service. Moreover, to this end, we are to relate that which happened when we left, referring to the miracles that accompanied the Exodus. The goal of those miracles was to establish our connection with Hashem as the Sole Ruler of the world. The reason we required those miracles was to remove any latent impediment to that connection, due to the fact that “Initially our forefathers were idol-worshippers.” That is the basis of Rav’s formulation of the story.

3 Shemos 13:8.

4 116a.

5 According to the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (Shemos loc. cit.), this progression is also alluded to in our verse, which begins with the word “וְהִגַּדְתָּ” and ends with “לֵאמֹר”. Rashi (Shemos 19:3) informs us that the term “הגדה” has a somewhat harsh connotation, while “אמירה” has a much warmer connotation. Hence our verses is instruction to begin with the harsher aspects of the story (“וְהִגַּדְתָּ”) and to move on from there to the more positive aspect (“לֵאמֹר”).