

From the Kli Yakar Jacob Solomon

In his final address, Moshe guarantees the Israelites that they will not go hungry in the Promised Land:

You will eat and you will be satisfied. You will bless G-d for the good land that He gave you (8:10).

Yet immediately he adds a warning:

Be careful not to forget G-d... lest you eat and be satisfied, you build nice homes and settle... and everything you have will prosper... and you say to yourself "I produced this wealth all by myself..." (8:11-17).

The Land, Moshe tells them, will support all their needs. V'ACHALTA V'SAVATA - You will be eat and you will be satisfied." Yet almost in the same breath, he warns the Israelites to be careful not to forget G-d PEN TOCHAL V'SAVATA - lest you eat and be satisfied". On one hand, Eretz Yisrael and its yields of good produce are gifts. On the other hand, the Israelites are told to be wary when enjoying those gifts.

In response, the K'li Yakar observes that V'SAVATA can be translated in two different ways. It can mean "you will be satisfied", the VAV changing the tense from the past to the future. It can also mean "and you have already become satisfied", the VAV meaning simply "and". The rest of the phrase remains in the past.

Thus the K'li Yakar understands those

passages in a different way. After Moshe assures the Israelites that their needs will be taken care of: "You will eat and you will be satisfied", he warns them to be careful not to forget G-d PEN TOCHAL V'SAVATA - lest you eat, having already been satisfied". UVATIM TOVIM NIVNEH V'YASHAVTA - and having settled down, you continue to build homes".

In other words, Moshe is saying that the Land will supply all your needs, but beware of using the Land's resources to produce more than your needs, with selfish objectives. You can only eat one meal at a time. You can only sleep in one home at a time. Beware of piling up wealth for the sake of being rich, and devoting life to being wealthier and wealthier: "I produced all this wealth myself", and thus forget G-d and His requirements and service.

The Torah does not promote living as an ascetic. Your material needs are genuine and it is good to live comfortably: "You shall eat and be satisfied." It is when satisfaction turns to greed and money-making becomes one's god rather than one's support line that there is a danger of putting money-making first and foremost, forgetting G-d in the process. 🙏

FOR PARSHAT R'EI

'You are G-d's children. Do not mutilate yourselves and do not make a bald patch in the middle of your head as a sign of mourning'

is immediately followed with:

'For you are a holy people to the Lord your G-d. G-d has chosen you from all nations on the face of the Earth to be His am segula - own special nation' (14:1-2).

Rashi makes the connection between the two verses. You are My children, says G-d. With that status, you should take pride in your appearance even when grieving the death of close relatives. In addition, he continues, self-mutilation was forbidden as it was a mourning practice of the idolatrous Canaanites.

The S'forno explains that Torah does not permit such excessive mourning for the reason that Israel is a holy nation. The self-mutilation mentioned here has two causes. One is the deep concern for the soul of the person that died. The other is the profound sense of loss felt by the mourners.

The Torah urges moderation in mourning: "For you are a holy people". Every Israelite including the person that just died has a share in the World to Come, where "one hour of spiritual happiness is better than all the joy this world has to offer" (Avot 4:22). The soul, which is the essence of the dead

person, is on the way to that ultimate fulfillment. That should be a source of comfort. All the more so, as the Israelites are AM SEGULA. The K'li Yakar translates SEGULA as having a very special place in the World to Come. And the tears genuinely shed over the dead person are in spiritual terms counted and placed in the deceased's reserved place in the World to Come (based on Tehillim 56:9).

"You are G-d's children" are also words of support to the mourners. G-d, our Eternal Father, is still with us even in the hard times of the death of a loved one.

The S'forno's and the K'li Yakar's explanations emphasize that death is not a full stop, but a comma. All people survive death in spiritual form (c.f. Kohelet 12:7). The essence of the person is immortal. Thus a period of mourning is appropriate. But life continues. Even with Moshe Rabeinu, that period of mourning was 30 days only (34:8).

In addition, this prohibition reflects a fundamental Torah attitude towards living. Those who disfigure themselves permanently are giving a message to the rest of society. The message is that they are living in the past. Life was better before, and can never be the same again.

This contrasts with the Torah attitude, expressed by Moshe: "Choose life, so that you and your children may live" (30:19). Every day presents a different challenge. A range of opportunities

once missed may never come again. They should not be obscured by idle and self-indulgent nostalgia. As Kohelet puts it: "Do not say that times long ago are better than today. Putting that idea forward is not wise" (Kohelet 7:10).

Thus Torah attitude to mourning is expressed with:

"For you are a holy people to the Lord your G-d." Mourners have to come to terms with death in that frame- work. The current shiva practices need to be within that spirit. These include tears, but also reviewing the posi- tive events and lessons from the deceased's life, and emulating them in future generations. It would certainly include the well-established practices of learning mishnayot dedicated to the soul of the deceased. And where possible, to contribute and enrich the ongoing life of the community with projects in the name of deceased. ¶¶