
פרשת נח

פרק ז פסוק יא

הָבָה גִּרְלָהּ וְנִבְלָה לָשׁם שְׂפָתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שִׁפְתֵי רֵעֵהוּ:

רש"י ומושג

בְּבֵית דִּינּוֹ נִמְלָךְ מֵעֲנוּתָנוּתוֹ יִתְרָה:

Translation:

Hashem consulted His court due to His exceeding humility.

Explanation:

Although we had previously learned the lesson of humility when Hashem said *בַּעֲשֵׂה אָדָם*, the Torah here is teaching that one should be exceedingly humble.

The first lesson was to include others in a decision that affects them even though you have the ability to act without their consent. Thus Hashem consulted the angels regarding the creation of man as they might be jealous. The Torah here is teaching that one should aspire to even higher levels of humility, and never judge others by himself, but always seek the insight of others as well. An additional lesson regarding judging others was taught in a previous Pasuk – *וַיִּרְדּוּ ה' לִרְאוֹת* - in which Rashi teaches the importance of judging others only after we personally see and thus understand the situation.

Looking in the Pasuk:

Our Musag is commenting on the fact that the Pasuk uses the plural form when Hashem speaks of going down to mix the languages of the tower builders.

Who, wonders Rashi, was Hashem consulting with, and why would He feel a need to consult them in His decision?

NOTES

The first difficulty we encounter with Rashi here is his use of the word *exceeding* humility. As we will see in similar commentaries, Rashi did not add the word exceeding; we wonder why he felt the need to do so here. However, much more difficult is to find Rashi's source. There is no Chazal which matches Rashi's explanation, leaving us truly perplexed as to from where Rashi learned this?

This Pasuk is referenced in the (סנהדרין לה:): גמרא which teaches:

אמר רבי יוחנן: כל מקום שפקרו המינים תשובתן בצידין, נעשה אדם בצלמנו (ואומר) ויברא אלהים את האדם בצלמו. הבא נרדה ונבלה שם שפתם, וירד ה' לראת את העיר ואת המגדל....

The גמרא teaches us that every Pasuk in the Torah which a heretic might use to prove his heresy (by saying there is more than one God) the refutation to his claim is written immediately afterwards.

The גמרא brings a number of examples, one being our Pasuk and another a previous Pasuk in פרשת בראשית. The גמרא continues and asks why the Torah would use wording which seems to infer that God acts in partnership with others. The גמרא answers:

דאמר רבי יוחנן: אין הקדוש ברוך הוא עושה דבר אלא אם כן נמלך בפמליא של מעלה, שנאמר (דניאל ד') בגזרת עירין פתגמא ובמאמר קדישין שאלתא.

Rav Yochanan says Hashem does not act unless He consults with His Heavenly Court, as it is written, "The matter is by the decree of the angels, and the sentence by the word of the Holy Ones"

We thus learn that when deciding whether to punish the builders of the tower, He will consult with the angels before acting. Why He would do so is, however, not stated. Rashi inserts the reason as being a result of Hashem's exceeding humility. Again, we ask, where did Rashi learn this from?

There is a somewhat similar Rashi found in פרשת בראשית where he explains the first Pasuk brought by the above גמרא, in which Hashem says (פרק א פסוק כו) נעשה אדם. Rashi there also explains why the plural term is used:

כעשה אדם. ענותנותו של הקדוש ברוך הוא למדנו מפאן, לפי שהאדם הוא בדמות המלאכים ויתקנאו בו, לפיכך נמלך בקהם... אף פאן בפמליא שלו נוטל רשות, אומר להם, יש בעליונים בדמותי, אם אין בדמותי בתחתונים, הרי יש קנאה במעשה בראשית:

נעשה אדם. אף על פי שלא סיעוהו ביצירתו, ויש מקום לאפיקורסים לרדות, לא נמנע הכתוב מללמד דרך ארץ ומדת ענוה, שהיא הגדול נמלך ונוטל רשות מן הקטן. ואם פתב 'אעשה אדם' לא למדנו שהיה מדבר עם בית דינו, אלא עם עצמו. ותישבות המינים פתובה בצדו (בפסוק הבא) 'ויברא אלהים את האדם', ולא פתיב 'ויבראו':

In the above passages from Rashi (I do not know why Rashi splits them into two sections), Rashi mentions twice the idea of Hashem's humility. In fact, Rashi stresses the point that the Torah felt that the lesson of humility was so critical that it should be taught even at the risk of giving heretics ammunition for their heresy. Here too, however, we are challenged to understand from where Rashi knew this.

There is a (ח:ח) מדרש רבה which is most probably Rashi's source:

רבי שמואל בר נחמן בשם רבי יונתן אמר בשעה שהיה משה כותב את התורה היה כותב מעשה כל יום ויום, כיון שהגיע לפסוק הזה שנאמר ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו אמר לפניו רבון העולם מה אתה נותן פתחון פה למינים? אתמהא? אמר לו כתוב והרוצה לטעות יטעה! אמר לו הקב"ה משה, האדם הזה שבראתי, לא גדולים וקטנים אני מעמיד ממנו? שאם יבא הגדול ליטול רשות מן הקטן ממנו והוא אומר מה אני צריך ליטול רשות מן הקטן ממני? והן אומרים לו למוד מבוראך שהוא ברא את העליונים ואת התחתונים, כיון שבא לבראת את האדם נמלך במלאכי השרת.

While not explicitly using the word ענוה, the Midrash does teach us that the lesson the word נעשה was coming to teach was one of humility. The second passage of Rashi is clearly taken directly from the Midrash as is evidenced by the use of the words הגדול נוטל רשות מן הקטן. In addition, Rashi seems to be referencing the above גמרא as well when he comments that תשובת המינים כתובה בצידי

However, the first passage of Rashi is baffling. While the idea of humility can be traced to the מדרש רבה, the entire conversation between Hashem and the angels is not found anywhere in Chazal. Perhaps we might answer that Rashi created the dialogue to explain how the Midrash could apply the lesson of the הקטנים רשות מן הגדולים. The entire idea of asking permission is only applicable if the other party cares. Why, wondered Rashi, might the angels care if God creates Man? The

answer, explains Rashi, is that the angels might be jealous of something else being created in God's image. For this reason God 'consults' with the angels - נמלך בהם - at the same time taking permission - נוטל רשות - not really asking for their permission but explaining to them why He is creating man: יש בעליונים כדמות וכו'. Thus we learn that even though one might be more powerful than his fellow and can do as he wishes, if the weaker party will be affected, it is a מדה טובה to consult and explain.

We may now understand the Rashi on our Pasuk and our Musag. Rashi explains the usage of the plural in the word נרדה in the same vein as the word נעשה. Both are used to teach humility. However, there are two problems that Rashi must deal with. First, if the Torah already taught us this lesson in נעשה אדם, why should the Torah write it again? Why give the heretics more ammunition? Second, in the case of נעשה אדם it made perfect sense to consult with the angels as the decision to create Man impacted them directly. But why should the angels care if Hashem decided to mix up the languages of the tower builders? Why include them in the decision?

Rashi answers the two questions with one simple answer; מענותנתו היתרה. In truth there is no need to ask the angels for the reason we mentioned above. However, even so Hashem felt that there was a lesson to be learned. The lesson is that one should be exceedingly humble and ask others for their opinion even if they will not be affected by the decision. This is, therefore, a higher level of humility than the one learned from נעשה אדם, and an important lesson for the Torah to teach.

One should always be aware of the fact that the way he sees a certain situation may not be the way that others see it. This lesson is taught in ר' ישמעאל (פרק ד משנה ה) where teaches: אל תהי דן יחיד, שפי' דן יחיד אלא אקד. Even though Hashem can judge by Himself, he uses this opportunity to teach this lesson of exceeding humility to others.

This Pasuk thus becomes the second in this event in which Hashem teaches a lesson to all those who judge others. The Torah in פסוק ה had taught of the need for every person to never draw conclusions about another's behavior until he sees the situation firsthand and understands the factors that led to that decision, as Rashi comments¹: כדי שיראו ויבינו. This lesson as well is taught in ואל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו: רבן גמליאל (פרק ב משנה ד) where

Questions for Further Thought:

- Why do you think that it is specifically here that the Torah chose to teach lessons in judging others?
- Do you think there is value in asking for the opinions of others if you do not plan on listening to their advice?

¹ The Midrash Tanchumah (סימן יח), which is Rashi's source reads:

ללמד לבריות שלא לגמור את הדין ושלא לומר דבר מה שלא רואין.

Interestingly, Rashi adds the word ויבינו in his commentary, explaining why it is important for the judge to see for himself, as that is the only way he may truly understand the situation and accurately evaluate the action.