Back to Basics:

The Foundational Texts of Courage, Resilience, and Perspective

Rabbi Jason Fenster, The Symposium, Congregation BJBE October 5, 2021—29 Tishrei 5782

בּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קְדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתְיו וְצִוְנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדְבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la-asok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who makes us holy and commands us to busy ourselves with words of Torah.

Courage

1. Deuteronomy 31:6-8

(ו) חִזְקוּ וְאִמְצֹׁוּ אַל־תִּירְאָוּ וְאַל־תַּעַרְצִוּ מִפְּנֵיתֶם כִּי וּ יְהֹוֶה אֱלֹהֶׁיךּ הָוּא הַהֹלֵךְ עִפֶּׁךְ לָא יַרְפְּדָּ וְלָא יַעַזְבֶדָ: (ז) נַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לִיהוֹשַׁע נִיּאמֶר אַלָיו לְעִינֵי כְל־יִשְׁרָאֵל **חָזִק וָאֱמְץ** כִּי אַתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶת־הָעֶם הַּזָּה אֶל־הָאָרֶר אֲשָׁר נִשְׁבְּבְּ יְהֹוֶה לִאֲבֹתָם לָתַת לָתֶם וְאַתָּה תַּנְחִילֶנָּה אוֹתָם: (ח) נִיהֹנְה הָוּא וּ הַהֹלֵךְ לְפָנִיךְ הְוּא יִהְיָה עִפְּׂדְ לָא יַרְפְּדָּ וְלָא יַעַזְבֶדָּ לָא תִירָא וִלְא תָחַת:

(6) Be **strong and courageous**, be not in fear or in dread of them; for the ETERNAL your God marches with you: God will not fail you or forsake you. (7) Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel: "Be **strong and courageous**, for it is you who shall go with this people into the land that the ETERNAL swore to their ancestors to give them, and it is you who shall apportion it to them. (8) And the ETERNAL will go before you. God will be with you; God will not fail you or forsake you. Fear not and be not dismayed!"

2. Sifrei D'varim 29:7

וצו את יהושע - אין צווי אלא זירוז, שנא' (דברים ל״א:ז׳) ויקרא משה להושע בן נון ויאמר אליו לעיני כל ישראל **חזק ואמץ** חזק בתורה ואמץ במעשים טובים:

"And charge (*tzav*) Joshua": "charging" (*tzivui*) is prompting to zeal, as it is written, "And Moses called to Joshua and he said to him before the eyes of all of Israel: '**Be strong and firm**'": "Be strong" in Torah, "and be firm" in good deeds.

3. Sifrei D'varim 305:2

באותה שעה נתגבר כחו של משה והיה מחזק את יהושע לעיני כל ישראל, שנאמר (דברים לא, ז) ויקרא משה ליהושע ויאמר אליו לעיני כל ישראל **חזק ואמץ** .הנה עם שאני מוסרם לך עדיין גדיים ועדיין תינוקות הם, אל תקפיד עליהם על מה שעשו, שנאמר (הושע יא) כי נער ישראל תקפיד עליהם על מה שעשו, שנאמר (הושע יא) כי נער ישראל ואוהבהו. (רבי נחמיה אומר, אין לי רשות הא יש לי אכניסם בתוך אהלי רועים אמר מר שיהיו דורשים בו).

At that time the strength of Moses increased and he strengthened Joshua before the eyes of all of Israel, as it is written (Deut. 31:7) "And Moses called to Joshua and he said to him before the eyes of all of Israel: 'Be strong and firm!'" Behold, the people that I am giving you are still kids, still infants. Do not be censorious of what they do, for neither was their Master, viz. (Hoshea 11:1) "For Israel was a youth and I loved him," and (Song of Songs 1:8) "And graze your kids by the dwellings of the shepherds" — Take them into the shepherds' tents. Variantly: (*Ibid.*) "beikvei hatzon" — They were trodden down by the heel (*ekev*). "And graze your kids".

Resilience

4. Deuteronomy 10:1-2

(א) בָּצַּת הַהָּוֹא אָמַר יִהֹנָה אַלֵּי פְּסָל־לְךְּ שָׁנֵי־לוּחָת אָבָנִים ֹבֶּרָאשׁנִּים וַעֲלֵה אַלֵי הָהָרָה וְעָשִׂיתָ לְּדֶּ אַרְוֹן עֵץ: (ב) וְאֶרְתֹּב עַל־הַלָּחָת אָת־הַדְּבָרִים אָשֶׁר הָיָוּ עַל־הַלֶּחָת הָרִאשׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבְּרָתָּ וְשַׂמְהָּם בָּאָרְוֹן:

(1) Thereupon the ETERNAL said to me, "Carve out two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain; and make an ark of wood. (2) I will inscribe on the tablets the commandments that were on the first tablets that you smashed, and you shall deposit them in the ark."

5. Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 14b

וְאִידַּהְ נָמֵי מִיבְּעֵי לֵיהּ לְהָכִי אֵין הָכִי נָמֵי אֶלָּא שִׁבְרֵי לּוּחוֹת דְּמוּנָּחִין בָּאָרוֹן מְנָא לֵיה נָפְקָא לֵיה מִדְּתָנִי רַב יוֹסֵף דְּתָנֵי רַב יוֹסֵף אֵשֵׁר שַׁבַּרָתַּ וְשַׂמָתַּם מָלָמֵד שֵׁהַלּוּחוֹת וְשִׁבָרֵי לוּחוֹת מוּנַחִין בַּאַרוֹן.

The Gemara inquires: And doesn't the other Sage, Rabbi Meir, also require it for that? The Gemara answers: Yes, it is indeed so. Rather, from where does he derive that the broken pieces of the first set of tablets were placed in the Ark? The Gemara expounds: He derives this from that which Rav Yosef taught, as Rav Yosef taught a baraita: The verses state: "At that time the Eternal said to me: Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first...and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke, and you shall put them in the Ark" (Deuteronomy 10:1–2). This teaches that both the second set of tablets and the broken pieces of the first set of tablets were placed in the Ark.

: אָשְבּרְתָּי לִישָׁר בּחָדְּ שָּבּרְתָּ לִישְׁר בְּישׁ לְּיְשׁ דְּאָמֵר רֵישׁ לְּקִישׁ אֲשֶׁר שׁבּרְתָּ אָמֵר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּדְ הוּא לְמֹשֶׁה יִישׁר כֹּחַדְּ שָׁשִּבּרְתָּ. The Gemara asks: And what does the other one, Rabbi Yehuda, learn from this verse? The Gemara answers: He requires it for that which Reish Lakish teaches, as Reish Lakish says: What is the meaning of that which is stated: "The first tablets, which you broke [asher shibbarta]"? These words allude to the fact that God approved of Moses' action, as if the Holy One, Blessed be God, said to Moses: May your strength be straight [yishar koḥakha] because you broke them.

6. Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim, 6:1:10

תַּנֵּי. רְבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן לָקִישׁ אָמַר. שְׁנֵי אֲרוֹנוֹת הָיוּ מְהַלְּכִין עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר. אֶחָד שֶׁהָיְתָה הַתּוֹרָה נְתוּנָה בְתוֹכוֹ. וְאָחָד שֶׁהָיִתּה הַתּוֹרָה נְתוּנָה בְתוֹכוֹ הָיָה מוּנַח בְּאֹהֵל מוֹעֵד. הָדָא הִיא דְכְתִיב וַאֲרְוֹן שָׁהָיוּ שִׁהָיוּ שָׁהָיוּ שָׁבְרֵי הַלּוּחוֹת בְתוֹכוֹ הָיָה נִכְנַס וְיוֹצֵא עִמְּהֶן וּפְּעָמִים הוּא מַתְרָה עמהו.

The Gemara elaborates on the topic of the Ark of the Covenant. It was taught that Rabbi Yehuda ben Lakish said: Two Arks would travel with Israel in the desert: One, in which the Torah, i.e., the second tablets that were given to Moses after he broke the first ones, was placed, and the other, in which the shards of the first tablets were placed. That in which the Torah was kept, was the Ark that was placed in the Tent of Meeting, in the Holy of Holies. This is as it is written: "And the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp" (Numbers 14:44). The one in which the shards of the tablets were placed would embark and return with them when they went to war.

Consequently, there were times that it would be seen among them.

Perspective

7. Exodus 33:18-23

(חי) ניאמר הַרְאַנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבֹדֶך: (יט) ניאמר אֲנִּי אַעֲבֶיר כְּל־טוּבִי עַל־כְּנֶידְ וְקַרְאתִי בְשֵׁם יְהֹוָה לְכָּנֵידְ וְחַבּׁתִי אֶת־אֲעֶׁר אָחֹן וְרִחַמְחָי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָבֹחָם: (כ) ניאמר לָא תוּכַל לְרְאָת אֶת־פָּנֵי כְּי לְאֹ־יִרְאָנִי הָאָדָם וָחֵי: (כא) ניָאמֶר לָא תוּכַל לְרְאָת אֶת־פָּנֵי כְּי לְאֹ־יִרְאָנִי הָאָדָם וָחֵי: (כא) הְנָה בְּעְבָרי: (כג) הְנָה בָּנְלְר כְּבֹדִי וְשַׂמְחָיְהְ בְּנְקְרֵת הַצְּוּר וְשַׂכֹּתִי כַבֶּי עָלֶיְהְ עַד־עְבְרָי: (כג) נְהָסְרֹתִי אֶת־צָּחֹרָ, וּכְּנֵי לָא יֵרָאוּ:

(18) He said, "Oh, let me behold Your Presence!" (19) And God answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name Eternal, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show. (20) But," God said, "you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live." (21) And the ETERNAL said, "See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock (22) and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by. (23) Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."

One More for Good Luck

7. Likutei Moharan, Part II, 48:2:7

ַרַיף לעֲבֹר עַל גָּשֶׁר צַר מָאֹד מָאֹד, וְהַכְּלָל וְהָעַקָּר – שֶׁלֹא יִתְפַּחֵד כְּלָל: וְדַע, שֶׁהָאָדָם צָרִיף לִעֲבֹר עַל גָּשֶׁר צַר מְאֹד מְאֹד, וְהַכְּלָל וְהָעַקָּר – שֶׁלֹא יִתְפַּחֵד כְּלָל:

Know, too! a person must cross a very, very narrow bridge. The main rule is: Do not be frightened at all!