

אור פָּנָי מָשָׁה

שיחות מוסר על התורה
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר
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*Shmuessen from
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פרשת וארא

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לעילוי נשמת
האשה החשובה
חנה הענניה
בת ר' נפתלי ע"ה

פרק ו' ורא

ויאמר למחר, ויאמר לך לך למען פדע כי אין בה אלוקנו
(שמות ח ו')

The Terrible Tendency of Saying 'Machar'

Makkas Tzefarde'ah was a rather stressful time for the Egyptian people. The midrashim are replete with repulsive experiences the Egyptians had gone through with these little amphibians. From hopping into their mouths and bathtubs to causing an incessant racket, the frogs must have been way too much to handle.

Yet, when Moshe Rabbeinu asks Pharaoh when he should rid the land of the frogs, he receives an unexpected response. "מחר - Tomorrow". Why tomorrow? Your people are suffering from nausea and disgust right now. Shouldn't Pharaoh have answered something more like "yesterday"?

There are Meforshim who learn that Pharaoh was suspicious that perhaps Moshe was just very keen-eyed, and he was able to detect the exact moment when the frogs' population decline was beginning. He therefore told Moshe to get rid of them the next day, so that the Makkah will already have begun waning way before he went out to daven, thereby catching him in the lie. But perhaps we can try another mehalech.

A friend of mine once called me after listening to one of my tapes. He related the following story which he had read in a popular Jewish newspaper:

A young police officer and his wife, who were in the midst of making their journey back to Yiddishkeit, approached their rabbi.

"G-d must really not want me to become a Baal Teshuva," the officer began.

"Oh? What made you feel that way?" the rabbi inquired.

"Well, first off: the first Friday night we tried to be shomer shabbos as a couple, we left the house for Shul, only to discover that it was raining heavily. How were we supposed to walk like that? G-d was practically asking us to drive. But that was child's play. Listen to this: there is a non-kosher restaurant that we both love dining at. We knew that if we were going to start keeping kosher, we'd have to say

goodbye to it. So, we decided to go there one last time before starting to keep a kosher home.

“Anyway, we get to the restaurant, and it’s pretty empty. So we sat down and order food. A few minutes later, this middle-aged walks into the store and makes his way over to our table. He asks if we mind if he joins us.

“We knew that it was a socially-off question, but we didn’t want to be impolite, so we agreed. The guy sat there and schmoozed with us for a while. It turned out to be a really nice conversation.

“Before he left, he asked us: ‘Do you guys eat here often?’ Not wanting to bring up the whole kosher thing, I answered that although we like the place a lot, we probably won’t be coming much anymore, because it was too pricy.

“Well, guess what the guy said? He pulled out a coupon that read ‘lifetime free meals’ and handed it to us. ‘I’m actually the owner, and I like you two. Can’t wait to see you back again soon!’

“So, as you can see, rabbi, G-d really doesn’t seem to want us to become religious.”

Now, the rabbi in that story gave them a whole rundown about nisyonos, and that when Hashem gives us a hard test, it just comes to show how highly he thinks of us. But perhaps there’s something else to be said here.

Postponement: The Yetzer Hara’s Scheme

With regard to the first episode, we can agree that it was a good old *nisayon*. But the explanation for the second account lies in the Mesillas Yesharim.

The Mesillas Yeshorim (Perek 7) in the *middah* of *zrizus* refers to the events preceding Shlomo’s coronation as king of Klal Yisroel. Dovid HaMelech said to Benayahu, the head of the Sanhedrin: “**והורזתם אותו אל גיהון**” - Take Shlomo down to the Gichon spring and have him anointed as king. And Benayahu responded: “**אםן, כן יאמר ה'**”, meaning that he would daven that Hashem give him success in carrying out the task. Asks the Midrash Rabbah: Was it not already stated in a prophecy that “**הנה בן נולד לך והוא יהיה איש מנוהה**”, that Hashem affirmed that Shlomo will reign? Why did he need to do this rushed process, and why did Benayahu need to *daven* that Hashem should hasten his success?

Answers the Midrash: “אלא הרבה קטינגרין יעמדו مكان ועד גיחון” - many accusers can arise from here until Gichon. It may seem right around the corner, but we never push things off; anything can happen.

We never postpone a *mitzvah*. There's a whole array of things the satan can do to prevent a good deed or a positive life-change from taking place.

Rav Eli Goldschmidt learned in his younger years in Bais Medrash Govoah, before he became a Mashgiach in South Fallsburg. Prior to his arrival at BMG, he was studying to become a doctor. That's years and years of college. But then, right at the end, he got inspired to go learn Torah. Now he was faced with a dilemma: should he go straight to Yeshiva, or first finish up the last few months of courses, delivering him a valuable degree for the rest of his life?

The young Rav Goldschmidt approached Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l and voiced his deliberations. Rav Aharon answered: If you don't drop everything and apply to Yeshiva right now in the midst of your inspiration, then you never will. The excitement will dissipate, and so will your chance for acquiring eternity.

Rebbi Akiva: Never Wait

When Rebbi Akiva returned home with 24,000 students, after 12 consecutive years of learning, he overheard his wife saying that she would be thrilled if he went back and learned for another 12 years. Upon hearing those words, he famously turned on his heels and went right back to the Bais Medrash. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz used to ask on this, why couldn't he just go in for a brief moment or two, just to say hello? After all, he just took his 24,000 disciples on a long journey, surely a quick chat and a cup of tea would be appropriate. Well, we all know Rav Chaim's famous answer: two times 12 years is not 24 years. Two dazzling stones whose combined weight is identical to a single gem are worth significantly less than the single diamond. Had Rebbi Akiva gone home, even for an instant, he would have created a separation between the two groups of years—they could have no longer been considered one continuous stretch of Torah study. But perhaps we can give another explanation, in light of our topic at hand:

The moment Rebbi Akiva heard those words from his wife, he was feeling completely inspired and energized to return to the Bais Medrash. Now, if he would have gone inside, and perhaps eaten a nice supper—he could have lost the moment. The Satan could have easily found a way to distract him long enough for the inspiration to dissolve into thin air.

Therefore, the holy Tanna seized the moment and turned right around on the spot.

Let's go back to our police officer friend. Can you imagine a tease like that? They love this restaurant! To be offered a lifetime of free meals, and just walk away? Impossible!

But the truth is, when they came to the point where they felt excited about the idea of keeping a kosher home—their job was to seize it. Just grab the inspiration and hit the road running. But when they chose to first have a goodbye party featuring their nonkosher favorites, they essentially postponed the inspiration, thereby opening the door for the *yetzer hara* to stroll right in and sabotage their plan. This is the timeless message of the Mesillas Yesharim: “אלא הרבה קתיגורין עמדו מכאן ועד גיחון” - many accusers can arise from here until Gichon.

So when you feel ready to make a Kabbalah to perfect yourself—let's say, for instance, in the area of *tefillah*—don't say: “Today's *shachris* was already lousy, so I guess I'll start working on it tomorrow, and I'll do my regular *mincha* today.” That's suicide! It will never happen. You have to start NOW!

We learn this idea from Pharaoh. Pharaoh had a certain mentality etched into his brain: the mentality of “מחר” - tomorrow. At that moment, after suffering from the frogs for days, he may have been ready to experience Hashem's hand and accept his control over nature—but not just yet. Tomorrow. But our Torah teaches us “אתם נצבים היום” - we act today, we don't procrastinate.

ויעש משה ו אהרן פאשׁר צויה ה' אַתֶּם כֹּן עָשׂו (שמות ז ז)

Hashem's Will, Or Your Will?

The pasuk says, “ויעש משה ו אהרן כאשר צויה ה' אַתֶּם, כֹּן עָשׂו” - “Moshe and Aharon did as Hashem had commanded them, so they did.” The wording here seems to be repetitive.

The Ohr Hachaim explains at length that there are two things a person always needs to focus on: **knowing** what Hashem wants, and **doing** what Hashem wants. Sometimes, people act zealously to do what they think Hashem wants, when in reality, it was their own personal rash assumptions of what was right more than anything else.

The Gemara in Yoma brings a dispute about whether the *ketores* was supposed to be put on the coals and then brought into the Bais Hamikdosh, or the *ketores* was brought in separately and then placed on the coals once inside.

The Gemara says that although we *pasken* like the second opinion, the Tzeddukim believed that the first method was correct. They interpreted the *pesukim* to be saying that Aharon was supposed to enter with the finished product.

The Gemara relates that one Tzedduki actually performed the *avodah* in this manner. Upon exiting the Kodesh Hakadoshim, he rejoiced for all to see. His father then approached him and said, "Son, although we are Tzeddukim, we must not revel in joy when we slight the Prushim (the *ehrliche yidden*)—they can seriously harm you."

The son responded: "My entire life I have been waiting to be mekayem this mitzvah in the correct manner. I—אמרתי, מהי יבא לידי ואקיימנו said, when will the opportunity arise for me to do it? I was betza'ar every day that I couldn't accomplish it. Now that I finally managed to do it—should I not rush to do it with happiness?" The Gemara then tells us that this Tzedduki died a terrible death.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz used to cry when he discussed this story. He said that it reminded him of Rabbi Akiva, who used the same words to explain why he was reciting *Krias Shema* as he was being tortured to death. Here, we're talking about a Tzedduki! He was implementing complete *appikorsus*. And yet, he was doing it with such zeal, as though he was doing exactly what Hashem wanted from him. He was ready to put his life on the line for total *sheker*!

This is the lesson the Ohr Hachaim learned from the extra wording in the aforementioned *pasuk*—we must always be like Moshe and Aharon, who ascertained that they were always doing exactly what Hashem wanted. We must never get excited and energized to do any action that we didn't verify that it is 100% the *Ratzon Hashem*.

וניאמר ה' אל משה ראה נחתיך אלקים לפרטעה (שמות ז א')

מלך הכבוד: What is True Honor?

The Midrash Rabbah in this week's Parshah (פרק ח' סימן א') asks: **מלך הכבוד—למה נקרא מלך הכבוד?** The Midrash

answers that by a king of flesh and blood, there are many rules: an ordinary citizen is prohibited from sitting on his throne, riding on his horse, wearing his crown and donning his clothing. These kinds of behavior would immediately condemn the perpetrator to death—he's a regular person. However, by the King of the World, things are quite different.

Let's take Hashem's clothing, for instance. The pasuk says, “**לבש ה' עוז התאזר עוז**”, Hashem's clothing is referred to as **עוז**; and yet, the pasuk says, “**השם עוז לעמו יתן**”, Hashem bestows this gift of **עוז** upon his people. In this week's Parshah, Hashem tells Moshe, “**ראה נתתיך אלוקים לפְרָעָה**”—Hashem allows Moshe to assume the title of Elokim, a name otherwise reserved only for the Ribono Shel Olam. Additionally, the pasuk says, “**וישב שלמה על כסא ה'**”, the Navi describes Shlomo Hamelech sitting on Hashem's throne. Unlike the human king, the Melech Malchei Hamlachim gives everything away to his servants. He is called the **מלך כבוד ליראיו** because **מלך הכבוד** - He is the King who doles out honor to those who fear him.

The Sfas Emes explains it this way: suppose a wealthy individual gives a pauper a large sum of money, effectively making him wealthy in an instant. Would it be appropriate for people to begin being *mechabed* this fledgling millionaire for his great wealth? He wasn't the one who earned the money, his benefactor was responsible for that! Clearly, the *kavod* belongs to the source of the fortune, not the one who is holding on to it at the moment. The Giver is the true mechubad. This is why Hakadosh Baruch Hu is called the **מלך הכבוד**—he is the source of all of mankind's *kavod*.

The Baalei Mussar discuss this point at length. We must recognize that a giver is a person who truly deserves honor, whereas one who is always a taker really deserves no respect, no matter how many wonderful gifts he has amassed.

The Two Levels of Loving Your Fellow Yidden

While we are discussing this concept, that one who gives is the one who truly deserves respect, I would like to discuss another point.

The Gemara teaches us: “**אמר רבי עקיבא, ואהבת לרעך כמוך, זה כלל גדול**” —Rebbi Akiva says: love your brother like yourself. This is a great rule in the Torah.” We have all heard these words many times. But R' Shlomkeh of Zvill had a fascinating insight to add to this age-old maxim. When it says **כלל גדול, זה כלל קטן**, this implies that there is another, one that is not as large; there is also a **כלל קטן**.

R' Shlomkeh says that "גְדוֹלָה" and "קָטָן" in this context is referring to the intensity of selfwork the person has to invest in order to reach these lofty goals. If a nisayon is dubbed **כלל גדוֹלָה**, this means that it is extremely difficult to achieve to its fullest.

Well, what then is this **כָלַל קָטָן**? Perhaps it is a test that we all deal with on a constant basis. The **כָלַל קָטָן**, says R' Shlomkeh, is referring to the words of Hillel: "דַעַלְךָ סָנִי לְחֶבְרָךְ לֹא תַעֲבֵד"—do not do to others what you would hate being done to yourself.

Let's take a woman who has been waiting for children for three years. We'll call her Mrs. Friedman. She is living with real bitachon and fully believes that whatever Hashem does is what's best for her. But then there's the Goldbergs that live in the apartment across the hallway. They've been married for the same three years, but the Goldbergs have two sweet little children now.

Now, when the Goldbergs have baby number three, it's already not so easy for Mrs. Friedman to be happy for her neighbor. This is quite understandable. But what about that slight feeling of jealousy? That shred of a thought that can cause an ayin hara?

The Gemara says that out of 100 people, only one dies from natural causes, while the other 99 die from the effects of *ayin hara*. Clearly, it is an extremely dangerous power. Now, it may be difficult for her to be happy for Mrs. Goldberg, but does she have to hurt her with jealousy and *ayin hara*?

Says R' Shlomkeh, these are the two **כָלְלִים**. The smaller, easier level is Hillel's teaching: don't do it to your friend. Don't allow that slight feeling of jealousy to creep into your mind, thereby possibly inflicting him with *ayin hara*. This isn't an easy feat, but it's not as difficult as the next level, the **כָלַל גְדוֹלָה**: loving your friend like yourself. This includes rejoicing for him even when he gets something that you desperately desire for yourself.

You want a child? You're waiting intensely for your daughter to get engaged? You are searching with all of your energy for a job? When your friend gets these things, don't allow this to awaken your **קָנָה**. And try with all your might to be overjoyed for him as well. In the zchus of strengthening ourselves in these two **כָלְלִים**, along with the other points we discussed, may we together bring Moshiach speedily in our days.

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