

English

בסייעתא דשמיא

Zera Shimshon



Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmeni zy"l, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.

תשפ"ד Re'eh

• Zera Shimshon - the Limud that brings Yeshuos •

גלין 305

אמרות שמשון

The Forbidden Ritual of Setting the Table for Gad

הַשְׁמֵר לָךְ פֶּן תִּנְקֹשׁ אַחֲרֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵי הַשְׁמָדָם מִפְּנֵיךְ וּפֶן תִּדְרֹשׁ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר אֵיכָה יַעֲבֹדוּ הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֶת אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה כֵּן גַּם אֲנִי. לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כֵּן לָהּ אֱלֹקֶיךָ, כִּי כָל תּוֹעֵבַת ה' אֲשֶׁר שָׁנָא עָשׂוּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם וכו' (דברים יב ל-לא)

Beware for yourself, lest you be attracted after them, after they had been destroyed before you, and lest you seek out their gods saying, "How will these nations worship their gods and I will do the same". You shall not do so to Hashem, for everything that is an abomination of Hashem, that He hates, have they done to their gods...

In this Passuk, Moshe warns the Jewish People that after they will conquer the Land of Canaan and wipe out its inhabitants, 'they must not be drawn to the Canaanite idolatry rites and say, "How will these nations worship their gods and we shall do the same", for these rites are hateful to Hashem'.

Moshe's words are difficult to understand. Firstly, because Moshe was quoting what the Jews might say 'after the Nations had been destroyed', why did he quote the Jews using a future tense, *How will these nations worship their gods*; he should have rather quoted them using a past tense, 'How **had** these nations worshipped their gods'; for it's obvious that the Canaanite People had worshiped their idols only before they were wiped out, but could no longer do so after being wiped out. Secondly, why did

Moshe warn the Jews that they shall 'not do so to Hashem, for everything that is an abomination of Hashem, that He hates, have they done to their gods', which makes it appear that they are to refrain from this practice only on account of it being a hateful abomination of Hashem; hadn't the Torah already so strictly and severely forbidden any idol worship?

When the prophet Yeshaya reprimanded the Jewish People and censured them for their evil behaviors, he told them as follows. 'ואתם עוזבי ה', השכחים את הר קדשי, הערכים לגד שלחן וכו'. You who have forsaken Hashem, who have forgotten

My holy mountain, who set a table for Gad... When the prophet reprimanded them for 'setting the table for Gad', it was a reference to the ritual of setting a table with food and drink that was designated for the constellation called Gad. It was believed that this constellation brought good fortune upon its worshippers, and thus when one was in a specific need for good fortune, he would follow this ritual and 'set the table for Gad'.

This custom of 'setting the table for Gad' was performed by Bilaam before practicing sorcery; as the Zohar explains that it was in reference to this very ritual of 'setting the table' that the name of Bilaam's city was 'Pesorah', which in Aramaic means 'table'. Similarly, we find the Beis Yosef (י"ד ס' קכ"ט ס"ז) who quotes Rabbeinu Yerucham who says that his teachers protested against the custom of setting a table with a variety of food the

night before a circumcision, in order to draw good fortune upon the baby who was to be circumcised, for it is reminiscent of the repulsive rite of 'setting a table for Gad'.

We can explain that when Moshe warned the Jewish People not to be drawn to the Canaanite form of worship,

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In light of this we can also understand why Moshe used the future tense when quoting what the Jewish People would say after conquering the land of Canaan, '*How **will** these nations worship their gods*'. For Moshe wasn't concerned that the Jews would be drawn to the idol worship that the Canaanites practiced before they were slain, but rather was only concerned that they would be drawn to the practice of 'setting the table for Gad', which would be practiced by the few remaining Canaanites who wouldn't be killed by the Jewish warriors, and who would want to draw upon themselves some good fortune after seeing the majority of their Canaanite brethren being wiped out. Thus, when Moshe wanted to warn the Jewish People to refrain from being drawn to this practice, which although isn't forbidden on account of idol worship, nevertheless is forbidden on account of it being an abomination of Hashem, he told them ever so *astutely* - *Beware for yourself, **lest you be attracted to them after they had been destroyed by you, and lest you say, "How **will** these nations worship their gods and I will do the same". You shall not do so to Hashem, for it is a hateful abomination of Hashem...***

זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות ב

We need to understand the specific choice of words that the Torah uses in this Passuk. When the Torah describes the mitzvah of tzedakah, it does so in a repetitious form, נתון תתן לו - *Giving, you shall give him*; what is the Torah trying to teach us through this reiteration? Secondly, when blessing the one who gives tzedakah, the Torah says, כי בגלל הדבר, 'for **because of this matter**, Hashem will bless you'; it seems that the Torah is specifically excluding some other good deed which doesn't necessarily bring about Hashem's exclusive blessing.

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The fundamental mitzvah of Tzedakah is for one to take from his own money and give it to his Jewish brother who is in need. Although this Mitzvah applies to every Jew in every situation, there are nevertheless two factors upon which the observance of this mitzvah is dependent.

The first factor is the giver's financial means; for every Jew is commanded to give tzedakah according to his resources. Accordingly, one who is blessed with abundance is required to contribute abundantly, according to his wealth, while one who is blessed with less, is also required to only give according to his financial means. There is however an additional factor, for which one gives tzedakah even more than that which his financial status would generally require of him. When the funds that were contributed according to the giver's means don't suffice to fill the needs of the deprived, one should give even more than his standard requirements.

In summary, we can say that the first obligation is dependent on no factor other than one's personal financial blessings and success, while the second obligation isn't dependent at all on the means of the giver, rather is dependent solely on the needs of the poor.

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When the Torah repeats the commandment of giving tzedakah, it is actually a reference to these two obligations. The first expression, נתן - *giving*, refers to the general obligation where one is obligated to give tzedakah according to his financial means, while the second expression, תתן לו - *you shall give him*, refers to the circumstance where one should give according to the needs of the poor people. It is for this reason indeed, that when referring to the second factor, the Torah writes תתן לו - *you shall give him*, for this obligation isn't dependent on the means of the giver, rather is dependent solely on the needs of the one accepting the tzedakah.

According to this we can explain the ensuing blessing which follows the Torah's directive of the second element of the Mitzvah of Tzedakah, כִּי בִגְלַל הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה יִבְרַךְ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ - *for because of this matter, Hashem will bless you*, which clearly seems to be excluding another good deed for which one doesn't necessarily receive Hashem's exclusive blessings. This is because when one gives tzedakah according to his financial success, there is no reason for him to expect any additional blessing, as he only contributed according to the blessings which he has already been blessed with. It is only when one fulfills the second obligation and gives above his means, essentially contributing beyond his current blessings, that the Torah tells him that he can expect Hashem to bless his earnings, so that his financial blessings should increase to match the bracket according to which he contributed. זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות ז

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