

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

*Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

פרשת בשלח

Volume 7 Issue # 16

In honor of
Khal Tiferes Shimon
Inaugural Building Campaign

SEE BACK FOR DETAILS

פרשת בשלה

וַיֵּגֵד לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם כִּי בָרַח הָעָם וַיִּהְיֶה לִבּוֹ פָּרֻעַ וַעֲבָדֵיו אֶל
הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מַה זֹּאת עָשִׂינוּ כִּי שְׁלַחְנוּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעֲבָדֵנוּ

(שמות י"ד ה')

And it was told to the king of Mitzrayim that the nation fled, and the heart of Paraoh and his servants became transformed regarding the people, and they said, "What have we done that we sent away Yisrael from serving us."

Rashi explains: The heart of Paraoh was transformed because originally he had said, "קומו צאו מתוך עמי", *Get up and go out from among my nation*", and now he was chasing them to bring them back to serve him. The hearts of his servants were also transformed because originally they had said "עד מתי יהיה זה לנו למוקש שלח את האנשים ויעבדו" *Until when will this be a snare for us? Send the men and they will serve Hashem their G-d.*" and now they were chasing them to bring back the money which they lent them.

This was indeed a great transformation. When *Klal Yisrael* was sent out of Mitzrayim they were chased away. The *mitzriyim* got up in the middle of the night and shouted: "Go out! Take everything, including your sheep and your cattle, and go! Just go!" It says: ותחזק *And Mitzrayim imposed itself strongly on the nation to hastily send them out of the land, because they said, "We are all dying"*. They had seen enough and were afraid that things would get worse. They were so happy to see *Klal Yisrael* go. They said, "Finally we have gotten rid of *Klal Yisrael*, look what terrible trouble they have caused us!"

However, only five days later, while the nation was still reeling from the terrible calamities which had befallen them, they changed their minds. They chased the *yidden* to bring them back. Paraoh wanted them as slaves, and his servants wanted their money. An extreme turnaround indeed.

How do we understand this? Were they really crazy? Didn't they realize that *Klal Yisrael* was the cause of all their untold suffering?

When they chased them away it was done with great haste and intensity. They didn't want the *Yidden* around for an extra moment. They begged the *Yidden* to leave lest they all die. What possessed them to make such an extreme about-face in so short a time and to try to bring *Klal Yisrael* back?

Mr. Shapiro's commitments

There was a yid, whom we will call Mr. Shapiro, who lived in my father's apartment building. He was a mechallel Shabbos but nevertheless he and my father had a friendly relationship. One day Mr. Shapiro suffered a heart attack, and my father came to visit him in the hospital. When he saw my father he said, "Rabbi, Hashem sent me just what I needed. If I make it out of here, I will straighten out my life. I will join your congregation, and I will be the best member. I will begin keeping Shabbos and kosher. Just promise me that I will make it out."

Thankfully, he made it out in good health. However things didn't turn out quite the way he promised. The first Shabbos after he came out of the hospital he came to shul for all three tefillos. The second week, he came for minchah only. By the third week he stopped coming entirely. Not only did he not follow through with his commitments, but he was even found a short while later washing his car outside my father's shul on Shabbos morning. My father was upset with him, and he asked him, "Why must you wash your car right outside our shul? Do you have no better place to wash it?" To this Mr. Shapiro retorted angrily, "I have a right to wash my car wherever I want! Stay out of my business!"

What happened to Mr. Shapiro? Why didn't he keep his word, and turn his life around? The answer is that his commitments were made under pressure. He was stuck in the hospital, and he needed a *yeshuah*. Feeling that he had no other choice, he reluctantly committed to change himself. However, such commitments do not last. As soon as the pressure was lifted, he took it all back.

This is what happened with Paraoh and the *mitzriyim*. They were forced to let the *yidden* go. They understood that if they didn't

free them they would all die. They were therefore quite forceful in chasing the *yidden* out. However, this was a commitment made under pressure. As soon as the pressure was lifted they began to have second thoughts....

Are we any different?

Let us take a closer look at ourselves. Are we so different than Paraoth and the *Mitzriyim*? Can we write them off as crazy people who flip-flopped from one extreme to the other, but we would never act that way? Was the story of Mr. Shapiro just an extreme, one-of-a-kind story? Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Rav Chatzkel Levenstien once approached a freshly married yungerman who seemed unhappy, and he asked him what was bothering him. The yungerman explained that he felt that his wife wasn't living up to her obligations, and she hadn't followed through with the commitments she had made before their marriage. R' Chatzkel then asked this yungerman if he had followed through with all his commitments he had made during the previous Yom Kippur. When the yungerman sheepishly responded in the negative, R' Chatzkel exclaimed: "Wow! What a great shidduch! Invei hagefen b'invei hagefen! You both don't fulfill your promises!"

In truth, this is an all too familiar phenomenon. It is very common for people to make *kabbalos* in a moment of inspiration, but then they drop them just as quickly.

*Sruly was experiencing terrible stomach pain, and he was rushed to the hospital. The doctors feared that his appendix might burst and as soon as he got to the hospital he was rushed in for an emergency surgery. His parents and siblings were reciting tehillim feverishly, and they rallied their community to do the same. They accepted upon themselves *kabbalos* in *shemiras halashon*, as they waited with bated breath to hear the results of the surgery. When the doctors came out, the family was quite relieved to hear that it was nothing more than a severe case of indigestion. A few tums was all Sruly needed, and he would be back to good health shortly. They all breathed a sigh of relief and they were happy to resume life as usual.*

Within a few short days the whole story was forgotten, along with their kabbalos in shemiras halashon.....

Reuven, swept up in the intensity of the day, davens his Yom Kippur tefillos with great fervor. Inspired as he was by the rav's fiery drasha, and with a keen understanding of the magnitude of the day, he sincerely undertakes to begin taking his learning more seriously. He will start a daily seder, and he accepts upon himself not to let anything get in its way. The day after Yom Kippur he begins the seder with a bang, but within a few short days it doesn't quite look the same.....

What happened in the above stories? Were the *kabbalos* not made with sincerity? Why couldn't they be held on to? Is it because *kabbalos* which are made in the pressure of the moment are not real? I don't believe that is the answer. I believe that when someone makes a *kabbalah* in an intense moment, he really does mean it. And even as time goes on, he really does want to continue to uphold his *kabbalah*. What then stops us from making lasting change? Why does it seem so difficult to maintain our goals?

We need to Make the Change in our Hearts

What caused Paraoh and his servants to change their minds? The answer can be found in the wording of the *possuk*. It says, " ... ויהפך **לִבָּ** פרעה ועבדיו And the hearts of Paraoh and of his servants became transformed." When Paraoh committed to change, he did not make the change in his heart. He sent the *yidden* out, but he did so reluctantly. He did not *want* to send them out, he *had* to send them out. Therefore when the pressure lifted, his heart caused him to revert back to his old ways.

In order to effect lasting change, it is not enough to accept it on oneself. If the change doesn't happen in the heart, it will not last. It is not enough to perceive the goal as virtuous, and to yearn to attain it. Rather, we must work on ourselves to develop the drive to do what it takes to achieve it.

Many bochurim say they want to learn, but they find it too difficult. A friend of mine used to tell these boys: "You don't want to learn. You want to want to learn!" If they wanted to learn they would learn. Nothing is stopping them. In truth they

don't want to learn, they want to play. However, they understand that learning is what really counts, and they therefore wish that they wanted to learn.

Effective change can only happen if the heart truly desires it. It is not enough to want to be a *masmid*, one has to actually want to learn.

The Objective of Mussar

Mr. Klein was a man in his eighties who needed to undergo a complicated surgery in his arm. The doctor was ready to go ahead with the surgery, but he insisted first on determining the condition of Mr. Klein's heart. He explained that if the heart is strong then the body should handle the surgery well, but if the heart is weak it would be too risky.

Just as in the physical realm the heart is the barometer of the general wellbeing of the body, so too in the spiritual realm a man is where his heart is. It is not enough to know the truth in our heads, we can only achieve greatness if we feel it in our hearts. If a person wants to become a *masmid*, it is not enough to sincerely undertake *kabbalos* which require him to learn. He needs to develop an inner drive to learn.

This is the objective of *mussar*. Proper *mussar* is like spiritual heart surgery. It means working on our inner selves and training our desires to be in line with our goals. It is through *mussar* that we can make our dreams a reality.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצוק"ל

פרשת בשלה

וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם כָּל סוּס פָּרְעֹה וְכָבוּ וּפָרָשָׁיו אֶל
תוֹךְ הַיָּם (שמות י"ד כ"ג)

*And Mitzrayim chased and came after them, every horse of Paraoh, his
chariots, and his horsemen, into the midst of the sea.*

Paraoh's foolishness here is indescribable. He had witnessed the Powerful Hand of Hashem with ten awesome *makkos*. He clearly understood that Hashem was fighting for the *Yidden*. Even now as he chased the *Yidden*, all the arrows which were directed at *Klal Yisrael* were swallowed in the *Anan*. Then, Hashem performed the absolutely astounding *nes* of splitting the *Yam Suf*. Did Paraoh not realize that Hashem did this as a *nes* for the *Yidden*? Did he really think that he too would be saved when he went after them into the sea? What was he thinking? What brought him to do such a ridiculous thing?

R' Chaim Shmulevitz explained that once a person is on the road toward an *aveirah*, there is no stopping him. Nothing can be done or said to halt him in his tracks. Once Paraoh began his pursuit of *Klal Yisrael* he would go after them no matter what. It didn't matter that he was drowning himself in doing so, once he started, he couldn't stop.

The Wisdom of Shlomo Hamelech

Another illustration of this concept is in the famous story of the *din Torah* which took place at the dawn of the kingdom of Shlomo Hamelech. (מלכים א': פרק ג')

There were two women living in the same house, and they each had a baby. One of the babies died, and the women were arguing over who was the mother of the live baby. They brought their dispute in front of Shlomo Hamelech. Shlomo's verdict was that because it could not be determined who the real mother was, they would cut the baby in half, and each woman would get half a baby. When one of the women objected and agreed instead to give up the child, Shlomo then concluded that since she displayed true motherly love, she must be the real mother. The verdict was rescinded and the child was given to the real mother. As a result this story, the nation feared Shlomo Hamelech because they saw his great wisdom.

Why did the nation fear Shlomo because of his wisdom? He had a 'good *chap*'. It was definitely a display of wisdom, but why was it a cause for fear?

In order to answer this question, we need to develop a better understanding of the story.

R' Chaim Shmulevitz explained that when Shlomo Hamelech said that the baby should be cut in half, it was the law of the king. It could not be changed. The only way to change the ruling would be if it could be proven with certainty who the real mother was. Since the ruling was given as a compromise due to the fact this was unclear, it follows that if it could be clarified, the ruling could be undone. Otherwise, there was no chance of nullifying the decree of a king.

The Mishnah says "שנים אוזזין בטלית... יחלוקו" If two people are holding a tallis, each one claiming full ownership, they split it." This ruling is a compromise. Since it cannot be determined who the real owner is, we give each one half. Unless of course, it could be proven who is the rightful owner. In that case this ruling would obviously not apply.

Similarly, in our story, the ruling of Shlomo was absolutely binding. However, since the nature of the ruling was a compromise, it was binding only insofar as it was unclear who the real mother was. Once that was clarified, the verdict could be rescinded.

The fact that Shlomo did this, said R' Chaim, proves that he knew with absolute certainty that the truth would emerge, and they would yet determine who the real mother was. If he had entertained even a remote possibility that the truth would not become evident, he would never have given this ruling. If the ruling would have been carried out he would be perceived as a fool, and his kingdom would be at risk. He obviously knew that his method was foolproof.

However, it wasn't that simple that the truth would become apparent. When the real mother agreed to give up her child that was an extraordinary act of courage. She knew that it was really her child, and for the rest of her life she would watch him being raised by a different mother.

His name was really Lefkowitz, but he would be known by the name Abramowitz.

It was a great act of selflessness on the part of the real mother when she willingly gave up her son. Even so, Shlomo was certain that she would do it.

However, said R' Chaim, this was not even the hard part of Shlomo's thought process. This was simple in comparison to what Shlomo understood regarding the second woman.

What would have happened had the second woman said the same thing? If she too would have agreed not to kill the baby, they would be back where they started. It would still be unclear who the real mother was, and there would be no way to nullify the king's ruling. They would be forced to cut the baby in half.

It is true that the woman stole the baby, but who was to say that she was willing to kill him? Stealing is bad, but killing is a lot worse! How did Shlomo know with such certainty that the woman who stole the baby would also be willing to kill him?

The answer is that Shlomo understood the nature of a person. Once he starts down the road of an *aveirah*, nothing can stop him. He will do whatever it takes to carry out the deed, and there is no return. Shlomo knew that the woman who stole the baby would also be willing to kill him. He understood that once she had begun and was already in the act of stealing, she would carry it through even if it meant killing the baby.

This was the great wisdom of Shlomo Hamelech. His deep understanding of the nature of people is what caused the nation to fear him so greatly.

The Only Eitzah is to Stay Away from nisayon

We learn from this that the only *eitzah* is to stay away from *nisayon*. Once a person is caught in a situation of *nisayon* it becomes exceedingly difficult to overcome it. Even the slightest move toward the *aveirah* will take him down to the point of no return. Once he starts there is no stopping. Paraoth set out to chase the *yidden*, and he wouldn't stop for anything. He willingly drowned himself in a desperate attempt to carry out his plans. The woman who stole the baby had no intentions of killing him. However, once she began the act

of stealing, there was no stopping her. She came to the point that she was even willing to kill the baby just to carry out her plans.

A smoker was told by his doctor that if he doesn't quit, his lungs will fail. He commits to quit smoking, but he still allows himself to carry a pack of cigarettes. His commitment is obviously doomed to failure! There is no way he can control himself with the cigarettes so close by! The only way he can conceivably kick his habit is by getting rid of the cigarettes entirely. Otherwise it is impossible that he will control himself.

A person has a computer in his home with unfiltered internet. He convinces himself that he only needs the computer for his work, and he will not use it for anything else. This is ridiculous. There is no way that he will be able to control himself. Just by allowing this temptation into his home, he is ensuring his downfall. The only eitzah is to get rid of the nisayon.

If a person has an attraction to something and he wants to control it, his only option is to stay away entirely. If he makes even the slightest move to give in to his temptation, he has already failed. Once he starts, he will not stop.

The mishnah in Avos (פרק ו': משנה ו') lists the virtues which are necessary for kinyan Torah. One of these virtues is המכיר את מקומו, one who recognizes his place. The Baal Hatanya explained: A person must recognize that he cannot control himself. One who assumes that at his level he can control himself is someone who does not recognize his place.

The path to success is not to pass nisyonos, rather it is to stay away from them. Only by recognizing this, and by steering clear from temptation, can we strive to achieve greatness.

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פרשת בשלה

מקל תפדאת שמעון
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מלכה מלכה

Inaugural Building Campaign

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299 MONMOUTH AVE • MAIN AUDITORIUM

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ברכת המזון 10:15PM

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every individual will
make a difference.



Looking forward to seeing you!

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