

אור פני משה

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

*Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

פרשת בהעלותך

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יה"ר שיזכנו לבנות בית נאמן בישראל**

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עַל פִּי ה' יִחַנו וְעַל פִּי ה' יִסְעוּ אֶת מִשְׁמַרְתְּ ה' שְׁמְרוּ עַל פִּי ה'
בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה (במדבר ט' כ"ג)

וְהָמָן כְּזָרַע גַּד הוּא וְעֵינָו כְּעֵין הַבְּדֹלָח (י"א ז')

רס"י: כלומר ראו באי עולם על מה מתלוננים בני

Two Opposite Middos We Learn from the Parshah

In this *parshah*, we are taught an important lesson for our lives, concerning a *middah* which appears in this *parshah*, on the two opposite ends of the spectrum. We find an instance in which Klal Yisroel receives praise and approval for having achieved the positive side of this *middah*, and conversely, we find an incident in which they failed (according to their level) and are held accountable in the very same *middah*. Let us discuss this *middah* and its two applications in our *parshah* according to the order they are taught in the Torah.

Following the Cloud of the Shechina in Every Situation

The *pesukim* describe how Bnei Yisroel followed the Cloud for the 40 years that they were in the *midbar*. Various scenarios are described, and regarding each one the *passuk* concludes על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו / *By the word of Hashem they would camp, and by the word of Hashem they would travel.*

Sometimes, says the *passuk*, the Cloud would rest in the evening, and by the next morning it was already on the move.

The mefarshim explain that this could cause them considerable inconvenience. As they had camped, they had begun to unpack their bags for their stay in this new location. Then, as soon as they had begun to unpack, the Cloud started to move again! Now they would need to immediately pack everything again and continue. There was no time to breathe!

Or sometimes, the *passuk* relates, the Cloud would rest for a full 24-hour period, and afterward begin to move again.

As the Ramban explains, this scenario could be even more difficult than the previous one. In this instance, they had enough time to unpack completely and begin to settle in their tents. Just as they had finally completed their work, they would need to start packing all over again! There was no time to relax and rest up a bit!

There were other times that the opposite sort of scenario occurred. The Cloud remained fixed in one place for an entire month, or, at times even for a full year or more, without moving at all.

The Ramban explains that this could occur even when the location was an undesirable one for any particular reason.

'Come on, can we go already? I'm done with this place!'

Regarding all these scenarios, the *passuk* teaches us that Bnei Yisroel complied with Hashem's exact words. They would travel as Hashem decreed, and they would camp as Hashem decreed. As the *passuk* continues, משה ביד משה על פי ה' שמרו את משמרת ה' / *The responsibility to [the decree of] Hashem they observed, according to the word of Hashem through the hand of Moshe.*

Desiring the Will of Hashem

The Ohr Hachaim understands in these *pesukim* that the level for which Bnei Yisroel are praised was much more than that of simply following Hashem's decree. Not only did they obey Hashem's decree, but they did so willingly and happily. In the words of the Ohr Hachaim, וללמד ה' / *to teach us the praise of Yisroel that they desired that which Hashem desired.* Whatever situation Hashem decreed for them; they desired that very situation.

Within a large group, there are always various types of people.

Some people prefer to 'stay put'. You can part ways with them for 35 years, and yet, when you meet them all those years later, their daily routine has not changed one iota. They have their seat in shul, their daily sederim or times of work, their mealtime, and their time at the gym. They attend the same shiur and learn with the same chavrusa. They scarcely make any change in their daily lives or schedules.

Other people are the exact opposite of the one described. They cannot stay in one place for any stretch of time before they get restless. They want to change jobs, change apartments, change

shuls, change chavrusas, etc. Nothing can remain the same for too long.

We can assume that within Klal Yisroel, both sorts of people existed. And we understand as well, that within the various scenarios played out by the Cloud, both sorts of situations emerged. When the Cloud engaged in continuous movement, this certainly proved quite difficult for those who thrived on regularity and routine. Likewise, when the Cloud remained stationed in one location for a lengthy period of time, those whose natures were of movement and change certainly experienced a sense of difficulty and burden.

The Ohr Hachaim tells us that with all these different reasons to be resentful of Hashem's commands, the reality was not that way. Klal Yisroel were not only not resentful of them, but they went beyond even merely accepting them. They actually desired Hashem's commands.

When they began traveling immediately after they had settled down, their reaction was, "Great, we can travel now! We'll move on to a new place! This is the perfect time!"

And when the Cloud remained stationary, they said, "This is such a great location to be! It is good that we are not moving; now we can take full advantage of this place!"

This attitude is a lesson for us about how we should ideally live our lives at all times. Whatever the situation or circumstance that befalls us, we should accept it and rejoice with it. We understand that Hashem only does for us what is in our best interest, and therefore, even when it appears difficult, or not in the way we may have envisioned it, we are happy in the knowledge that it is truly what is best for us. Moreover, it is what Hashem wants, and that itself should ideally be sufficient reason for us to rejoice.

Although, as stated, this is the ideal *madreigah*, it is certainly a challenge to achieve this, and it requires many years of effort in working on one's character before a person will reach a level of perfection in this *madreigah*. However, we must at least begin by refraining from engaging in the opposite form of behavior, as we will see later in the *parshah*.

Complaining about the *Mann*

After the Bnei Yisroel began traveling away from Har Sinai, they started to complain about the *mann* that was their meal each day.

"We remember the fish that we used to eat in Mitzrayim free of charge," they grumbled, "those cucumbers and watermelons... but now we only have the *Mann!*"

This complaint was not grounded in reality, as Chazal teach us. There was no possible notion that their days in Mitzrayim were actually better than what they had in the *midbar* – even regarding their food regimen.

A family lives in abject poverty. There is no money for food, clothing, medication... The situation is dreadful. A certain ba'al chessed was apprised of the situation, and he took their plight to heart. He raised money for them, until they were able to live in comfortable, respectable conditions. He bought them a house, a new car, and paid for all their current necessary medical expenses. The father had a nice job, the children were well-fed and clothed, and they even had money for extras.

A few months after this took place, as the family is eating supper together, one child reminisces, "Remember those days when we had that stale bread and those rotten vegetables to eat? That was such delicious food that we found from the local garbage dumps. Oh, those were the good old days.... Now look at this awful situation we're in. Oy, maybe we should go back to our old conditions..."

Those good old days?! Obviously, it is total nonsense.

Aside from the absurdity in their desiring their days in Mitzrayim, the *passuk* tells us that there was an inherent fault in their actual complaining about the *mann*. After relating the words of their complaint, the *passuk* continues, והמן כורע גד הוא ועינו כעין הבדלה / *And the mann was round as a coriander seed and its color was like the color of a crystal*. The *passuk* continues to describe how Bnei Yisroel would gather it and bake it into delicious cakes which had the taste of a dough rich in oil. What is the intended message of these *passukim*?

The Value of the Mann

Rashi explains that HaKadosh Boruch Hu was proclaiming, ראו בני עולם על מה מתלוננים בני / "See people of the world, over what my children are complaining!"

The Torah is teaching us this message. 'You are complaining about the mann? What's the problem? That you cannot taste the taste of a few specific foods? That is such a minor detail about the mann! Why not focus on the wonderful gift that the mann is?'

As the *passuk* continues, each day Hashem specifically wrapped the *mann* between two layers of dew, one layer below the *mann* and one layer above it.

The job of a caterer in a banquet hall consists of far more than simply cooking tasty meals. The presentation is equally important. He needs to prepare the food to look pleasing to the eye, and the various dishes must be then arranged on the dinner plates in an artistic and appetizing fashion. Without this component, a caterer would quickly lose popularity, as tasty and delectable as the food may be.

When Hashem gave Bnei Yisroel the mann each day, it was in a beautifully presented package. They did not need to kick the mann out of the way as they opened their door in the morning. It was a gift box specifically delivered to their door. They would open the wrapping and see a handsomely arranged meal, pleasing both to the eye and the palate.

The *mann* was such a wonderful gift presented to them by Hashem each day, the same food as consumed by the *malachim*, and yet, the Bnei Yisroel became caught in details about it which bothered them, rather than focusing on the overall gift and treasure that was in their possession.

Complaining over Details While Losing Sight of the Big Picture

This lesson is so relevant in our lives. How many times do we lose our focus from the *bracha* that we have, and specifically look for that detail about which we can complain? The *passuk* describes the action of Bnei Yisroel as (י"א ד')/התאוו תאוה/They desired a desire. This refers to this *middah* of seeking something for which to complain. How many times are we guilty of this trait?

Rav Avrohom Pam zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas speaks about this lesson at length in his *Sefer Ateres L'Melech* (page 128). We will bs"d present here some of the examples which he describes in his *Sefer*.

1. A Messy House

Yanky comes to his home at suppertime after a full day in the Bais Medrash or workplace. He had a hard day and he had been anticipating a nice, clean, calm home, with supper ready to be served. He would enjoy a pleasant meal, conversing with his wife and children about the events of their day.

What scene does he encounter as he enters his home? There are toys everywhere, the couch is moved out of place, and most of the dining room chairs are upside-down. Two children eagerly bombard him with their projects and accomplishments of the day, while two other children are in the midst of a big argument which needs to be refereed. The baby is crying loudly, waiting to be fed. His wife is exhausted from the afternoon, and she has not yet prepared supper. As soon as she sees him, she collapses into the couch – wrong location and all – hoping that he will ‘take over’ the situation.

Yanky looks at the scene in such frustration and anger.

“Why can’t you run the house the way you’re supposed to?” he lashes out at his wife. “If you need help, tell me, and we’ll pay for help! But this is just not a functional way to keep a house!”

The rest of the evening then passes in a terrible state of tension for the whole family.

!ראו באי עולם על מה מתלוננים בני!
See, people of the world, about what this man is complaining!

‘How many people’, says Rav Pam to ‘Yanky’, ‘do not have a job and cannot make a *parnassah*, or are unable to afford learning in kollel? You, on the other hand, are fortunate enough to be able to leave the house to earn money for your household, or spend your day learning! How many people are so anxiously awaiting the time when they will find their proper *shidduch*? You, Yanky, have a loving and caring wife, who awaits your homecoming so eagerly! How many couples do not have children, and would give anything for lively children to come mess up their spotless home in which everything is in perfect order? You are blessed with beautiful, healthy, lively children who are using the energy that Hashem gave them! *ly”H* when they grow older, they will be able to use this energy for great accomplishments!

“True, the house was not found in the way you would have liked. Maybe there is even a valid complaint that can be voiced to your wife at the right time, in a respectful and gentle tone of voice. But to feel that anger and irritation? Focus on that with which you are blessed in your life, rather than getting caught up in the minor detail that is not to your liking! Yes, it is an extremely minor detail, in comparison to the overall, wonderful picture that is your life!”

2. Walking Down the Aisle

Two sets of parents are eagerly preparing for the day in which they will be marrying off their children to each other. As the long-awaited day approaches, and the preparations reach the final stages, the excitement continues to mount.

The joyous day finally arrives, and each family makes its way to the hall for pictures. The kaballas panim and smorgasbord begin, when suddenly, a terribly important question arises. How will they walk their children down to the chuppah?

The father of the chassan declares that he will walk down the aisle with his mechutan and son. This is the way it is done, and he will absolutely not publicly shame himself by walking down the aisle with his wife! Such a bizayon! He has an important position, and he cannot bring dishonor to his good name!

The father of the kallah emotionally cries that he has been waiting for so many years to bring his daughter to the chuppah. He has finally reached this milestone, and this great pleasure will be taken from him? He will not stand for it! The minhag in his family has always been that each set of parents walks their own child to the chuppah, and he will not depart from this time-honored way of doing it. A chutzpah to think otherwise!

How much discomfort or worse is unfortunately brought to the simchah, until one side will finally give in!

***!ראו באי עולם על מה מתלוננים בני!
/See, people of the world, about what these parents are complaining!***

Says Rav Pam to these parents, ‘Your children are getting married – such a beautiful *simchah*! The *chuppah* will happen. Both mothers will lead the *kallah* as she circles the *chassan*; and both fathers will stand beside the *chassan* as he places the ring on the *kallah*’s finger. So the walking down will not be how you are used to. True, your *minhag* is

important to you. Is it, however, really worth losing the entire *simchah* of the *chasunah* on its account? So you may *chas v'shalom* have to walk near your wife! Or, you may *chas v'shalom* not be near your daughter as she actually walks down the aisle! These are such minor details compared to the *simchah* that you privileged to be having!

3. A Son 'In Learning'

Rav Pam discusses a scenario in which a father wants his son to learn a profession while the son wants to continue in his learning.

ראו באי עולם על מה מתלוננים בני! /See, people of the world, about what this father is complaining!

'True,' says Rav Pam, 'you feel that your son will be in a better situation if he goes to work. But look at how he is taking his Yiddishkeit so seriously! He is passionate and alive, with a goal and a purpose in his life. Focus on the *brachah* that you have, rather than becoming upset about his choice that he made. Be happy about the fact that he is making real choices and living a full, beautiful life, which will ultimately bring you the most *nachas*!'

Overcoming the Tendency to Complain

We must learn to absorb this lesson for every situation of our lives. If we choose to live our lives as complainers, we will always find 'details' over which to complain. In fact, even when everything is going in the way we would have planned, we will actually change our wants, all in order that we can be unhappy and satisfy the inner tendency to complain. If, however, we overcome this tendency, we can eradicate so much unhappiness from our own lives.

I was involved in a story in which a man passed away, leaving behind his wife and newly married daughter. Within the next few months, a baby boy was born to the new couple. The new grandmother naturally desired that the baby be named after his grandfather, her late husband. The son-in-law, however, wanted very strongly to name the child after his rebbe to whom he had been very close.

It was so important to the almanah that her husband's name be remembered, and she was at a loss over how she could possibly convince her son-in-law to respect her wish. She was advised to go

and ask a shailah together with her son-in law. The two of them went to the son-in-law's own rav, and he paskened that the almanah was in the right. After all, this rebbe already had many people named after him, whereas the niftar had no one named after him as of yet. Furthermore, the fact that it was within the year of the petirah, coupled with the fact that he was the baby's grandfather, all made it appropriate for the grandfather to become the namesake of this boy.

The almanah left the rav, relieved that her wish would be granted. The bris came, with the almanah eagerly anticipating the naming of the baby. The time finally came – and the father named the baby after his rebbe! Apparently, his own wish in the matter was so important to him, and he could not bring himself to follow the psak of the rav.

The almanah/grandmother was crushed. She had been looking forward to the name with such eagerness, and her son-in-law's action was a tremendous blow to her. She left the bris in a daze, and she could not get back to herself. She could not look at the baby, and for the next few weeks, refused to have any contact with the couple.

After a few weeks, friends of the family tried to bring shalom between the almanah and the couple. I was asked at that point by one of the friends if there was any message I could give him to tell this grandmother in order to try and pacify her.

The idea that I gave over to him to tell this woman was the one we have been discussing.

"True, you had really wanted your grandson to be named after your husband, and true as well, that this was the psak. However, focus on the whole picture. You have a healthy baby grandson who can bring you so much nachas. Your daughter and son-in-law can bring you nachas as well. So the name wasn't what you wanted. ly"H there will be more grandchildren. But to break off all contact? Be moichel; be mevater! Don't lose your entire connection to your children and grandchildren because of a name!"

Desiring the Will of Hashem in our own Lives

In all these examples, we have been dwelling on the idea of not losing focus on the whole picture because of a specific 'complaint', which is insignificant in comparison to the whole picture. This is the lesson we learn from the complaining of Klal Yisroel regarding the *mann*. However, the higher level in each instance is to behave as Klal Yisroel did regarding their *masa'os*/travels. As the Ohr Hachaim stated, **שהיו הפצים באשר יהפויז** 'ה/They desired the will of Hashem. Not only did they not complain, but they desired what whatever situation Hashem to which Hashem led them, because it was the will of Hashem.

In each situation, we should realize that Hashem does only goodness for each person, and His will is the very best thing that can happen. Oftentimes, we ourselves can discern the goodness in what occurred, if we will only allow ourselves to do so.

In the above story of the almanah, we let her recognize that although she was clearly wronged by her son-in-law, it is still ultimately in her best interests to allow him to make his own decision. He is the father who will be responsible for this child's daily upbringing, while she is only the grandmother who is watching from the sideline. True, given the circumstances, it was proper for him to honor her wish, and this is what he should have done. However, had he done so against his will, he may have resented it for a long time afterward. By allowing him his right of choosing to name his child as he sees fit, he will be able feel that connection that he needs in order to give over his full love to the child.

My rebbe, Rav Elya Roth zt"l was a master of this middah. His life was full of all different conceivable hardships. He had terrible health problems, he had problems within his home, and he lived in abject poverty. Any one of these issues were enough to make a common person into a bitter, broken man; but not so, Rav Elya. He lived with such a simchas hachaim, thanking Hashem for all the gifts He gave him.

He used to wake up in the morning and exclaim, "Thank you Hashem for giving me a sun to provide me light and warmth!"

When others pointed out to him that the sun was enjoyed by everyone in the world, [i.e. so why was he acting as though the sun

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was a gift specifically for him?], he simply responded, "It should bother me that others can also enjoy this gift?!"

Even when he was undergoing terrible yissurim, he thanked Hashem for them with such joy. He understood that Hashem was doing what was absolutely best for him, whether for a kapparah or other reasons unbeknownst to him, and he thanked Hashem for this and loved Him because of it.

Was Rav Elya 'fooled' into naively accepting a life of suffering? On the contrary! He lived a happy, content life. So many people used to come seek his advice and guidance because they recognized the wisdom that he possessed in his heart.

Our State of Happiness is in our own Hands

Living a life of contentment, then, is wholly not based on that which occurs in a person's life – events which are largely beyond his control. It is rather based on a person's own attitude.

If a person follows his automatic instincts, he will live a life of one complaint after another, even when he has so much goodness for which he can be thankful. **ראו באי עולם על מה מתלוננים בני / "See people of the world, over what my children are complaining!"**

If, however, a person lives his life with the attitude of **הפצים באשר / יהפוך ה' / desiring that which Hashem desires**, and with the realization that Hashem only does goodness for him and for the world, he will live a life of happiness and contentment, regardless of what situation he will find himself.

Let us begin working on ourselves to achieve the level of desiring Hashem's will, and *iy"H* we should be *zoche* to the *bracha* of the mishnah in Avos (ב', ד), **עשה רצונו כרצונך / Make His will your will, so He will make your will into His will.**

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