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פרשת בהעלותך

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ומחזיקי התורה

פרשת בהעלותך

דִּבֶּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ אֶת הַנֵּר (במדבר ח' ב')

The Feeling of His'chadshus

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh in the beginning of our Parsha explains the well-known *medrash* of Hashem comforting Aharon Hakohen with gifting him the *mitzva* of lighting the Menorah. His explanation goes as follows:

When a person purchases a new item, he is very excited about it. Let's take a new car, for instance. When the buyer sits in the driver seat for the first time, he is filled with joy. The cushy chairs just came off the assembly line, diffusing the fresh aroma of leather through the air. There is not a speck to be found in the cup holders or the glove compartment; the floors are so clean, they can be licked. Every one of the car's features are functioning perfectly; it will be a while until his next visit to the mechanic.

I recently spoke with someone who was fortunate enough to purchase a brand new car. He shared with me that although he was initially filled with excitement, and was treating his new automobile with the utmost respect and care - the feeling didn't last more than two weeks. "I thought I would get at least a month out of that feeling," he said. "I didn't think it would be over in two short weeks."

The Nesi'im were given the tremendous *zechus* of bringing their קרבנות on a freshly built מזבח. The vessels of the Mishkan were all newly fashioned; there wasn't a hint of ash or blood of previous sacrifices anywhere in sight. This was surely an elevated experience; the Nesi'im must have felt very excited and honored to be able to utilize the brand new Mishkan for their *avodah*.

Now, this definitely could have caused Aharon some distress. Had he rushed to bring his own offering, just as the other Nesi'im had, he too could have merited to serve Hashem in this fresh and inspiring fashion. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu reassured him: "Your *mitzva* will be

greater than theirs." How so? Because the feeling the Nesi'im were experiencing wasn't going to last for a long time; nothing stays fresh forever. Eventually, just as we depicted in the *mashal* of the new car, the excitement wears off. However, the *avodah* of lighting the Menorah stays new forever.

The Ohr Hachaim brings that there are differing opinions regarding the *mitzvah* of *hatovas haneiros* - preparing/cleansing the lamps. Some say that the *neiros* were actually detached from the Menorah, and the Kohen would take each *ner* down on a daily basis in order to clean it. Others say that the Menorah was indeed a single entity; however, the gold was pliable, and the Kohen would bend each arm downward in order to clean it out. After the *ner* was clean, the Kohen would then bend it back up to its upright position. Whichever opinion we go with, Aharon HaKohen was always lighting a Menorah that was brand new. Besides the fact that it was freshly cleaned, it was also freshly assembled - almost like he was lighting a new Menorah each and every day.

Applying this to Learning

There is a similar point to be made when it comes to learning. When you have a Gemara that you have learnt through numerous times, you may think that you already know it so well that there's almost no point in learning it again. Perhaps you'd be better off spending your time learning new *sugyos*; It's a lot more exciting to delve into uncharted territory. Everyone craves the feeling of *hischadshus* - doing *avodas Hashem* in a fresh and new fashion - so why review an old *sugya* when you can start a new one?

But this is a mistake. Even when you know a *sugya* well - you reviewed it ten times for a *farher*, or you said *sheva brachos torah* on it - it shouldn't get old and worn out in your eyes. Because every time we learn a *sugya* from scratch, more *chiddushim* come to mind. When a Ben Torah learns, his creative juices begin to flow; each time he goes through the subject, he is *mechadesh* something new. And just like Aharon HaKohen was able to experience the *geshmak* of igniting a 'brand new' Menorah every single day by simply bending and cleaning it, so too the average Yid can study Torah with tremendous *cheshek* - even when he's learnt the topic dozens of times - by enhancing the

sugya with his new insights each time. So, write your new ideas down in the margins, or in a notebook; they give you a newfound delight in your learning, and they have tremendous value in Olam Habah.

וַיְהִי הָעַם כְּמִתְאַנְנִים רַע בְּאַזְנֵי ה' (במדבר י"א א')

Let's move on to another topic in this week's Parsha. Let me begin by sharing the following anecdote:

There was once a couple who had a pretty decent relationship. They barely ever got into intense arguments, and rarely got upset at each other. One day, however, the wife was in a particularly unhappy and surly mood. The children were acting up all afternoon, and she had had enough. The husband, in the meantime, was having a terrible day at work. He had displeased his boss for the third time that week, and he was getting lots of heat for it. When he came home, he collapsed into his armchair, trying to push away the thoughts of inadequacy and downright failure that have been prancing around in his head all day.

After about ten seconds of quiet, his wife marched into the living room, in no way hiding her peevish mood. "Why did you come home so late?" she yelled. But before he could give an answer, she moved on to the next complaint: "And why did you not take out the garbage this morning? How many times do I have to remind you of these basic things? It's no wonder the kids don't hear a word I say - they get it from you!"

The husband was in no mood for this attack right now. His response was immediate, and rather hurtful: "With all that weight above your lips, one would imagine that you wouldn't use your mouth so much!"

This woman always had a pimple near her nose. Her doctor had told her years before that it was not removable, so she had to learn how to live with it. Over the years, her husband had reassured her that it was hardly noticeable, and that it was nothing to lose sleep over. She had come to the point that she barely paid any attention to it. Until that biting remark from her husband, that is.

From that moment on, this couple's Shalom Bayis took a nosedive. The husband tried everything to appease his wife, but to no avail. Eventually, he went to his Rav to seek guidance. The Rav asked to speak with his wife, and told her the following: "Your husband really regrets the comment he said. He wishes things can go back to normal. Can't you accept his teshuvah?"

The woman responded with a mashal. "Imagine there's a fellow who has an abnormally long beard. Some jokester walks over to him one day and quips, 'Tell me, when you sleep at night, where do you keep your long beard - under the blanket or over the blanket?'"

"That night, the man with the long beard doesn't get a wink of sleep. All night long, he's trying to figure out what to do with his atypical facial hair. Under the blanket, over the blanket - he just can't make up his mind. From then on, the man simply cannot forgive the jokester; just because he brought this strange question to his attention, he can no longer get any rest!

"The same goes for me. I never really cared about my pimple - I came to terms with it years ago. But now that my husband made it clear that he notices it, I can't stop obsessing over it! I can't face myself in the mirror anymore! How can I forgive him after he caused me such distress?"

Hashem's Wrath: What was so Bad About our Complaining?

When I heard this story, I felt very sorry for this poor woman - and, of course, for the couple's struggle with their *Shalom Bayis*. But I believe there is a secret in our Parsha that can help anybody to cope with what seem to be endless struggles with reality.

The *pasuk* says: "ויהי העם כמתאוננים רע באזני השם" - "*The people took to seeking complaints; it was evil in the ears of Hashem.*" Rashi reveals that the Yidden were finding various reasons to quibble about their state in the wilderness. One of their chief grievances was about the fact that Hashem had rushed them into a three-day journey from Har Sinai, and they found it extremely exhausting. Rashi tells us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu said: "אני הייתי מתכוון לטובתכם, שתכנסו לארץ מיד" - "*My intentions were for your benefit - that you should be able to enter Eretz Yisroel immediately!*" It seems from Rashi that Hakadosh Baruch Hu unleashed His wrath on Klal Yisroel for misinterpreting His kindness and viewing it as hardship. Hashem wanted to swiftly bring the nation into the Promised Land, yet they were complaining about the arduous journey.

Our Shame, or our Blessing?

This is an important lesson for life: we may sometimes feel as though we have been given difficult struggles that are just causing us pain and misfortune - while in reality, they are our biggest blessing. Let me tell you a true story that I heard firsthand to illustrate this point:

There was once a Yerushalmi Yid who had a daughter in shidduchim. This girl had a large pimple on her face that was causing her a great deal of anxiety about her prospects of finding a shidduch. Her parents reassured her numerous times that it wasn't a real issue, but their efforts were in vain; her confidence was in shambles.

The father happened to have been very close with a big Mekubal in Yerushalayim. One day, the girl asked her father: "Tatty, you have such a close relationship with this Baal Mofes - don't you think he can do something for me?" The father was uncomfortable with the idea, but he assured her that he would ask.

Later that week, he approached the Tzaddik and explained the situation. The Tzaddik thought about it for a few moments, then said: "I understand how she feels. Bring her to me this Motzei Shabbos."

The Yid did as he was told and brought his daughter to the Mekubal's house, where he found him eating his Seudas Melave Malka. The Mekubal instructed the girl to lift an apple from the table and make a bracha with kavanah. After that, he wished them 'a gutte voch' and sent them home.

When the girl woke up the next morning, she looked in the mirror - and let out a loud shriek: her pimple had vanished! It was a miracle! She was ecstatic. From then on, her confidence became significantly boosted, and she eventually got engaged.

This young woman did not live to be forty years old. In her late thirties - just a few years ago - she developed a relentless disease, and she wound up succumbing to the ailment, leaving behind a young husband and house full of children.

As she spent the last few days of her life in the hospital ward, suffering terribly, one can only imagine the thoughts that were going through her head: "If only I would have never asked for that miracle so many years ago. Who knows how much shemira the discomfort of the pimple was providing me? And who knows how many zechusim I wasted on that external, insignificant detail?"

My friends, this is the yesod that Rashi was trying to teach us by saying *אני הייתי מתכוון לטובתכם* - and we need to bake it into our bones. There are so many things in our lives that we view as sources of pain and shame. There are so many things that we wish would just disappear in a poof of smoke and never bother us again. It could be a humiliating experience we had at the office; it could be an odd appearance; it could be a severe allergy; and it could be a difficult child, who demands creative and tireless chinuch. Whatever the challenge may be, one can never know what Hashem's intentions truly are. Of course, we must do our *hishtadlus* and *daven* for a *yeshuah* - but we must not lose ourselves and feel frustrated with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *chalilah*. We must recognize that every step of the way has been handcrafted for our benefit and our ultimate success; it is a mistake to get down and crestfallen over our seeming misfortunes.

If I were to meet the woman from our first story, I would tell her: "You're right, it is hard to live with the realization that you have a bit of an odd appearance. It's definitely awkward when you walk into

the doctor's office or the supermarket and you catch people staring at you. But you must recognize that it's all about your perspective. If you choose to focus on the *shemira* and the merits that you're accruing every time you experience humiliation - you will be filled with thankfulness to Hashem."

When my father was fleeing from the Nazis ym"sh, along with a large group of his friends from the Lomzher Yeshiva, he was the only 'unlucky' one to get caught by the Russians; the rest of the group managed to evade capture. My father then suffered in Siberia for a number of years. After arriving in America once the war was over, he was shocked to discover that his entire group of friends were annihilated by the Nazis ym"sh.

My father could have been so jealous of his friends throughout those bitter years in Siberia, while he was fighting off the biting cold; how fortunate they were, having been spared of this unspeakable torture! But in the end, it was obvious that the agonizing pain he had endured was actually his biggest blessing; it meant that he was away from the murderous Germans - it meant that he would survive.

I know this is a difficult *avodah*, but I believe it's the proper *hashkafa* that every Yid should strive for.

to his talmidim felt that he still owes them *hakaras hatov* just for being his talmidim. Let us work on developing this *middah* and through this we can be elevated to great heights.

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