

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Vayikra



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Torah Wellsprings - Vayikra

Hashem Loves Us

Before Hashem spoke to Moshe, Hashem called to him, as it states at the beginning of the parashah (1:1) וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו "He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him."

Rashi writes, "Whenever Hashem spoke to Moshe, and for every command, Hashem would first call to him, which is a לשון חיבה, it expresses love."

The Rebbe of Piacezna zt'l hy'd (in his sefer Eish Kodesh) asks why Rashi writes this information here, in this week's parashah, instead of other places that the Torah uses the expression וַיִּקְרָא. For example, in (Shemos 3:4) it states וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּפֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה "Hashem called out to him from amid the bush and said, 'Moshe, Moshe', and he replied, 'Here I am.'"

Also it states (Shemos 19:3) וּמֹשֶׁה עָלָה אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים "Moshe ascended to Hashem, and Hashem called to him from the mountain, saying..."

Rashi could have written over there that וַיִּקְרָא is an expression of love! Why did Rashi wait to write this specifically at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra?

Eish Kodesh answers that this week's parashah discusses korbanos, and the primary korban is the Yid, himself. As it states (1:2) אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה "When a man sacrifices..." This means the Yid is the korban, as it states מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה, from among you, will be the korban. The animal placed on the mizbeiach is merely a representation of the person who wants to come close to Hashem, as if he were a korban.

Particularly, when one fasts, it is considered to be a korban. There is the tefillah for a fast day, שִׂידָא חֲלָבִי וּדְמֵי שְׁנַתְמַעֵט הַיּוֹם, כחלב מונח על גבי המזבח לפניך "My fats and my blood that become less this day [due to the fast] should be like the fats that were placed

on the mizbeiach before You." This is indicated in the words אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה, the korban is מִכֶּם, from the Yidden themselves, with their fast days.

Furthermore, writes the Eish Kodesh, the same applies to all yesurim that a person endures. The *yesurim* are like a korban before Hashem.

Therefore, since Rashi writes לשון חיבה, over here, we have to know that fasts and yesurim are the primary korbanos; they are וַיִּקְרָא, an expression of love. Never should we think that yesurim means that Hashem doesn't love us. On the contrary, וַיִּקְרָא, it is Hashem calling to us, to draw us near to Him. It is Hashem's expression of love to His nation.

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz zt'l teaches a similar lesson. וַיִּקְרָא is written with a small alef. The אל"ף represents Hashem, the אלופו של עולם, "The master of the world" Who is hardly revealed to him. Hashem is seldom seen in his life. He is suffering yesurim. This small alef is *davka* in the word וַיִּקְרָא, which is an expression of love. We must know that yesurim are Hashem's love to us.

It states, (Tehillim 139:8) אִם אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אַתָּה "If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in the lowest depths, behold, You are here." The beginning of the pasuk is discussing a person who has a lot of success, אִם אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם, "If I ascend to heaven meaning everything is going well for him. At this time, שָׁם אַתָּה, "You are there." It doesn't state "You are *here*." It states "there". This is like when one points to something that is far away, and he says, שָׁם, it is over there, distant from him.

However, when one is going through hard times, as implied by the end of the pasuk, וַאֲצִיעָה שְׂאוֹל, "I make my bed in the lowest depths", at this time Hashem is closest, as it states הִנֵּה, "You are *here*."

We think that when everything goes well, Hashem is close to us, and when we have tzaros, Hashem is far away. Actually, Hashem is closest to us when we are going through hard times.

Similarly, it states (Shir HaShirim 5:4) דודי שָׁלַח יְדוֹ מִן הַחֹר, "My Beloved sent forth His hand from the hole..."

We can explain that החור represents when one feels that he has holes in his heart because things aren't working out well for him. His tzaros make him feel that Hashem is distant from him. The pasuk states דודי שָׁלַח

יְדוֹ מִן הַחֹר, at this time, Hashem is דודי, my friend, my Beloved. He puts his hand through all these holes to console me and to tell me that He is close with me.¹

For the Good

The truth is that a person, with his weak mind, doesn't know what is good for him and what is bad. He has to accept the way Hashem leads him, and to rely on Hashem that Hashem is leading him in the best way. One must believe דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, that everything Hashem does is for the good.²

1. The concept of yesurim being the greatest chesed can be compared to a father that takes away his crying baby's bottle to refill it. When the father took the bottle, the child cried even louder. The child thought that his father was taking away something so important from him. He doesn't have the mental capacity to recognize that his father "took" to be able to "give". The same occurs with us. There are times that Hashem takes something away from us. We think we are losing, but in reality, Hashem is giving. It prepares us for a greater chesed that will come.

Another mashal is seen from a jigsaw puzzle. Each piece is cut in such a way that it fits with another piece of the puzzle. If the shape of the edges were slightly larger or smaller or cut in some other manner, the puzzle would remain incomplete. Similarly, there are times when something seems to be missing in life, and we wonder why we need this problem. But you must know that the pieces you receive are precisely cut to size. If your issues and troubles were any larger or smaller, your entire existence and mission Hashem sent you on in this world would be incomplete.

2. The Imrei Emes (first days of Pesach, 5670) explains that the Rasha's question at the seder, מַה הָעֲבוּדָה זֹאת לָכֵם, "What is this work for you?" is the same question that the yetzer hara asks a Yid. The yetzer hara says, "Why are you engaged in avodas Hashem? What connection do you have with Torah and mitzvos? You are on a very low level, steeped in gashmiyus! Why do you think avodas Hashem is for you?" We answer the yetzer hara as we answer the rasha (Shemos 13:8) בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם, "It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Mitzrayim." The Imrei Emes explains that we tell the rasha, "Behold, also at yetzias Mitzrayim it was so. We were at the 49th gate of tumah. Yet, Hashem rescued us; He took us out of Mitzrayim and gave us the Torah. So, you see that avodas Hashem is for us. Being on a low level isn't a reason to feel distant from Hashem's service. Hashem will lift us on the wings of eagles, prepare us, and enable us to receive the Torah.

Tzaddikim say that the month of Nisan is mesugal for (Shemos 12:2) הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֵם, to begin anew and start all over. Even if until now we were lacking in our avodas Hashem, Nisan is the time to begin serving Hashem.

The Or Hachaim writes on the pasuk הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֵם רֵאשׁ הָרִשִׁים as follows:

"The pasuk is saying that Yisrael will be considered the "Head", and they will no longer be despised and low." This applies to both spiritual and material matters. We will become רֵאשׁ, a head. We will no longer be on a mediocre level. This month, we have the potential to rise and become a רֵאשׁ, and rise to phenomenal levels.

Reb Chaim Zeitchik zt'l (Mashgiach of Novardok, Poland, in Or Chodosh vol.3) quotes from the Chida that the Ibn Ezra yearned to meet and speak with the Rambam. He travelled to Mitzrayim and went to the king's courtyard, where the Rambam served as the king's personal doctor. When the Rambam saw him, he refused to greet him and instead instructed his assistant to take the Ibn Ezra and put him into a tiny dark

room and to provide him with just a limited amount of bread and water. The assistant did as commanded, and the Ibn Ezra suffered tremendously there. Not only was he unable to speak with the Rambam, but he was also locked up like a common criminal. Distressed, he cried a lot. The Rambam asked his assistant to bring a small jug into the room, so that the tears would fall into the jug. Sometime later, the helper brought out the tear-filled jug and brought it to the Rambam. The Rambam called for the Ibn Ezra, and he honored him and treated him with love, and they spoke words of wisdom together.

The Ibn Ezra asked the Rambam why he had caused him so much distress when he arrived, and why he treated him like a criminal. The Rambam replied that when he saw the Ibn Ezra when he arrived at the king's courtyard, he saw that he had become ill and was going blind. This was caused by his intense yearning to meet with the Rambam. The yearning resulted in this illness. The only cure was that he should cry a lot. This is why the Rambam put him through that terrible ordeal.

The Rambam then showed him the jug filled with tears, and it had many worms in it. They had to get out of the Ibn Ezra's eyes, and that happened through the tears he shed.

Reb Chaim Zeitchik concludes with the following lesson: The Rambam's actions seemed strange and confusing, initially, but they were for the Ibn Ezra's benefit. Certainly, when a person goes through difficult times, he shouldn't question Hashem. Everything is definitely for his benefit.

Reb Shmuel Birnbaum zt'l, rosh yeshivas Mir in America, would talk about his rebbe, Reb Shlomo Heiman zt'l, rosh yeshiva of Torah v'Daas, who didn't have children. Once, his rebbetzin poured out her bitter heart before him. Reb Shlomo Heiman replied, "Are we baalabatim of the world...? And even if we were, it would be better for us to allow Hashem to run the world."

I heard the following story from the baal hamaaseh:

Last year, Thursday of Parshas Vayakhel, someone traveled with his family to Tzefas. They would spend Shabbos in Tzefas. Friday morning, they traveled to Meron to daven Shacharis. They also went to the supermarket in Meron to buy all their groceries for Shabbos. They planned to take the #5 bus, which leaves Meron for Tzefas at 10:30 a.m. Standing at the bus stop with all their packages, another bus arrived. It wasn't a #5 bus, but the screen on the front of the Bus stated "Tzefas." The head of the family asked one of the yungerleit who were at this bus stop whether this bus goes to the Meor Chaim neighborhood in Tzefas, which is where they were staying. He knew that the #5 bus goes to Meor Chaim, but he wanted to know whether this bus also goes there. "Definitely," the yungerman replied. "It goes to Meor Chaim."

But when they were on the bus, he discovered that the bus goes to the central station of Tzefas and does not stop in Meor Chaim. He was upset at the person who misled him. Now he will have to carry all the packages onto another bus to get to their destination. Furthermore, they still had to cook for Shabbos. Now, it would take longer before getting back to their apartment, to begin preparing for Shabbos. The yungerman apologized for making this error; however, in his heart, he didn't forgive him.

As they were on the bus, headed to the central station, a friend, the gaon Reb B. L. Shlita, who is a magid shiur in Ashdod, called and said that the day before, he was in Meron for the chalachah of his grandson. They began their return trip on a bus that went from Meron to Carmiel, and from there, they traveled on to Ashdod. But his wife forgot an expensive purse on the bus to Carmiel. In the purse was a camera and other precious items. They called the bus company, and they said that the purse would be in the central station in Tzefas, and they can pick it up before 12 o'clock noon on Friday. He asked whether he could do him this favor and go to the central station to pick up the purse.

The Yid replied that there is no *tirchah* at all because he was on the way to the central station. He also told the person who gave him the wrong information regarding the bus route that it ended up being for the good, and that he had a part in the mitzvah of hashavas aveidah.

He went to the office at Central Station, and in a few moments, received the purse.

This is because Hakadosh Baruch Hu directs people where they will go (as we say המוכין מצעדי גבר), and there are no mistakes. Everything is arranged with hashgachah pratis, down to the smallest details.

The Gemara (Moad Kotton 25b) states, "Rav Chanin... didn't have children. He davened and had a child. But on the day Rav Chanin's child was born, Rav Chanin died. At the *hesped*, someone said, 'The joy turned to sadness. On the day of his joy, he moaned. On the day the child was born, the father died...'"

The Iyun Yaakov explains what occurred. There was a heavenly decree on Rav Chanin that he was destined to die, r'l. This decree was sweetened and instead of death, he would not bear children. This is because the Gemara (Nedarim 64b) says that someone who doesn't have children, it is like he is dead. However, "Since he prayed so much that he

merits children, his tefillos were answered... and he received the decree of literal death..."¹³

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l taught this lesson from the pasuk (Tehillim 30:2) אָרוּמָךְ ה' כִּי דָלִיתָנִי וְלֹא שִׂמְחָתָהּ אֵיבֵי לִי, "I will exalt You, Hashem, for You have דָלִיתָנִי, and not let my foes rejoice over me." The literal translation of דָלִיתָנִי is that Hashem raised and elevated the person. He praises Hashem for raising him above his enemies. The Chofetz Chaim says that דָלִיתָנִי can also be translated as poverty, from the word דל. The person is praising Hashem for making him poor. The reason is that the Gemara (Nedarim 64b) says that being poor is like being dead. If someone is destined to die, sometimes he becomes poor. With this exchange, he can live. Therefore, אָרוּמָךְ ה' כִּי

3. The question now is, why should a person daven? Perhaps he should accept Hashem's will, whatever it is, for it is always for the best?

We can answer this with a vort that Reb Shmuel Rozovsky zt' l taught. One of the brachos at Sheva Brachos is שמחה תשמח רעים אהובים כשמחך יצריך בגן עדן מקדם "Hashem should bring joy to the beloved couple as Hashem gave joy to His creations in Gan Eden." The *brachah* refers to the great joy that Hashem gave Adam and Chavah in Gan Eden. Chazal (Sanhedrin 59b) tell us, "Adam HaRishon reclined in Gan Eden, and the malachim were roasting meat for him and sieving the wine (from sediments)." Reb Shmuel Rozovsky asks why we request this great level of joy for the chasan and kalah! Is it possible that they will be relaxing in Gan Eden and the malachim will be roasting meat and preparing the wine for them? But the answer is that when one davens, he should daven for the maximum, and Hashem will give what He sees fit. Hashem is כל יכול, and He will make certain that nothing negative will come from his tefillah.

A person can think about what he needs and what he desires, and he can request these matters, but only during the time of his tefillos. However, whenever he isn't occupied in tefillah, he must be happy with his lot, and praise Hashem Who loves him and always gives him everything he needs. As is stated (Yeshayah 55:8) כִּי לֹא מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי מַחְשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם וְלֹא דַרְכֵיכֶם דְרָכַי, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not My ways." Hashem knows what is truly good for us, even when we cannot grasp it with our minds. Nevertheless, when it is time for tefillah, we can, and we should pray for the very best.

The *Hafla'ah* (Introduction, פתחה זעירא ב) explains the pasuk (Tehillim 145:19) רָצוֹן יִרְאֶוּ יַעֲשֶׂה וְאֵת שְׁעָתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיִשְׁעֵם יִשְׁמַע, "The will of those who fear Him He will do, and their cry He will hear, and will save them." He explains the pasuk with a mashal of a son who asked his father for something that the father knows isn't good for the son. The father doesn't want to give it, but the son, who doesn't realize that it isn't good for him, wants it very much, and he has a lot of tzaar that it wasn't given to him. The father has *rachmanus* on his son and sees that his son's tzaar from not receiving his request is even greater than the damage it will do if he receives it. Therefore, the father gives in to him and grants his request, and afterwards, he finds a way to clear him of the damage caused by receiving his request. Similarly, the *Hafla'ah* explains, when a person davens for something that isn't good for him, Hashem gives him his request, and then Hashem finds a way so that the matter won't harm him.

This is the meaning of the pasuk רָצוֹן יִרְאֶוּ יַעֲשֶׂה, Hashem provides the person with his desires, even if it isn't good for him, because וְאֵת שְׁעָתָם יִשְׁמַע, Hashem sees that the person is crying and shouting for this matter. Hashem understands that if it isn't given to him, he will have immense tzaar. And then, afterwards, וְיִשְׁעֵם יִשְׁמַע, Hashem saves him from the tzarah.

דליתני, a person praises Hashem for the poverty, because לא שמחת איבי לי, the foes won't rejoice over me. The *malach hamaves*, the angel of death, won't have joy to take the soul, because death was exchanged for poverty.⁴

It states (Yeshayah 56:3) וְאֵל יֹאמֶר בֶּן הַבְּרִיָּה אֵל ה' יֹאמֶר הַבְּרִיָּה יְבִדִילְנִי ה' מֵעַל עַמּוֹ יֹאמֶר הַכֹּהֵן הוּא אֲנִי עֵץ יָבֵשׁ, כִּי כֹה אָמַר ה' לְסָרִיסִים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת שְׁבֻתוֹתַי וּבָחֲרוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר "Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to Hashem, speak, saying, 'Hashem will utterly separate me from His people,' and let not the barren one say, 'Behold I am a shriveled tree.' For thus said Hashem to the barren ones who observe My Shabbos and choose what I desire and grasp My covenant tightly." Reb Chaim Zeitchik zt'l asks, why is keeping the Shabbos mentioned in these pasukim? Behold it states וּבָחֲרוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר הִפְצֵתִי, "[they] choose what I desire", which refers to the entire Torah. Why is keeping Shabbos mentioned separately?

The answer is that this פָּרִיס barren one is complaining about the way Hashem leads the world. He is unhappy with the tzaros he goes through in life. He says, הוּא אֲנִי עֵץ יָבֵשׁ, "I am a shriveled tree," meaning, "If I knew the secrets of creation, the reasons why I have to

undergo these hardships, I would accept them with joy. But behold הוּא אֲנִי עֵץ יָבֵשׁ, I don't know these matters. Therefore, he complains and is unsatisfied with his life. The navi tells him that this isn't an excuse to complain, because behold, he keeps Shabbos. Shabbos expresses emunah that Hashem created the world and leads it with *hashgachah pratis*. That knowledge should be enough for you to accept Hashem's judgment. Even if you don't know why you suffer, the realization that Hashem *does* know means that you can rely on Him and believe that He is certainly leading you in the best way.

This is the meaning of the pasuk, כִּי כֹה אָמַר ה' לְסָרִיסִים, Hashem says to the people who claim that they are barren and they don't know the secrets of Hashem's ways, to be able to know why everything is for their good, אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת שְׁבֻתוֹתַי, that it should be enough that they keep My Shabbosim. The Shabbos testifies that Hashem is leading the world, and therefore, you should rely on Me. וּבָחֲרוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר הִפְצֵתִי, therefore, you should choose and desire that which I choose. Even if you don't know the reasons, you desire what Hashem desires, because Hashem knows what's best.⁵

4. The Mishnah writes (Avos 2:4), בְּטֵל רְצוֹנְךָ מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנוֹ, "Annul your will for Hashem's will." You might want something, but if Hashem wants differently, accept Hashem's will because He knows what is best for you.

The Imrei Chaim zt'l said that this lesson is alluded to in the *pasuk* (1:3) יִקְרִיב אֹתוֹ לְרְצוֹנוֹ לִפְנֵי ה'. This can be translated that a person should sacrifice רְצוֹנוֹ, his *ratzon*, his desire, and he should accept and rejoice with what Hashem gives him. As the Rosh (Orchos Chaim 69) says, רְצֵה כְּאֲשֶׁר יִרְצֶה יוֹצֵרְךָ, "Desire what your Creator desires." This means to accept Hashem's choices and decisions, because this is certainly what is best for you.

5. A poor chassid of Reb Michel of Zlotchev zt'l had to raise money to support his family and to cover the costs of his son's *chasunah*. He asked the Rebbe for a *hamlatzah*, a letter of approbation, which appeals to wealthy people to give generously to the cause.

Reb Michel of Zlotchev replied, "I don't give *hamlatzos*."

The chassid pleaded, but the Rebbe repeated that he doesn't give *hamlatzos*.

The chassid said, "I accept the Rebbe's wishes, but please tell me the reason. Why doesn't the Rebbe want to write up this letter?"

The Zlotchever Magid replied, "What will you do if you go to a wealthy person with my letter and he gives you just a few pennies, or perhaps nothing at all?"

"I would slap him twice," the chassid replied. "He is disgracing the Rebbe. He saw the Rebbe's letter; why doesn't he give generously?"

The Zlotchever Magid replied, "That is exactly why I don't want to write this letter. In heaven, there is a list of people who will help you and exactly how much each person will give. If someone doesn't give you, that doesn't mean he is a cruel, uncaring person. It is just that his name doesn't appear on the heavenly list. If you believed this, you wouldn't be angry when someone doesn't give you money."

The chassid said, "I accept what the Rebbe is teaching me, and if someone won't give generously, I will know that it wasn't *bashert*."

Reb Michel said, "Now I can write you a *hamlatzah*."

The chassid went to a wealthy chassid of Reb Michel of Zlotchev and showed him the letter. After reading the letter, the wealthy man gave just a few coins and wished him a good day.

The poor chassid was very disappointed and on the verge of anger, but he remembered the Rebbe's lesson. Under his breath, he repeated to himself over and over, "He isn't on the Rebbe's list. He isn't on Hashem's list. He isn't on the list in heaven."

The wealthy person asked him what he was mumbling.

"It's nothing. It's just something private between the Rebbe and me."

"No. You said something about me not being on the Rebbe's list and not being on Heaven's list! What type of list is it? Perhaps you mean the list of the living, or perhaps it is the list of the wealthy! What will happen to me if I'm not on the list?"

"It is nothing. It is just a private matter between the Rebbe and me."

The wealthy person was worried, so he said, "I will give you all the money you need; just tell me what you meant."

"I will tell you after you give me the money," the poor man replied.

After he handed over a very large sum of money, the poor man explained. "The Rebbe told me that Hashem has a list of who will give me money and exactly how much they will give. If someone doesn't help me, he is obviously not on that list. But now, we have discovered that you were indeed on Hashem's list in heaven!"

This lesson applies to us all. People tend to complain about others, "Why doesn't he help me?" Realize that there are lists in heaven, and everything is *bashert*. So why be angry at others? It is just that he isn't on the list. It wasn't destined for him to help you.

Reb Elchanan Wasserman *zt'l hy'd, rosh yeshivas* Ohel Torah in Baranowitz, came to America to raise funds for his yeshiva. In one *beis medresh*, he spoke about the importance of supporting Torah, and he described to the congregation the poverty and lack of food the yeshiva *bachurim* were subjected to. Then he made his pitch: "For \$11.43, you can sponsor one day in the yeshiva. For \$80.00, you can support one week in the yeshiva. Please, become our partners, and support a week, or at least a day in the yeshiva."

Then the *rav* of the *beis medresh* got up to speak. He wanted to help Reb Elchanan, but he made a major mistake. This *rav* spoke about the great privilege of giving even just one dollar to the yeshiva. Reb Elchanan set the bar at \$11.43, or hopefully at \$80.00, and the *rav* lowered it to a dollar.

Reb Elchanan didn't earn much in that *beis medresh*, and the *rav* asked *mechilah* on his behalf and on behalf of his congregation.

Reb Elchanan told him, "Hashem told Moshe to appoint Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur of *shevet* Yehudah to build the Mishkan. Imagine the following scene:

"Moshe Rabbeinu comes down from the mountain and asks someone, 'I need to find Betzalel ben Uri. Are you Betzalel ben Uri?'"

The reward will be great, as it states in the next pasuk (ibid. 56:5) וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם בְּבֵיתִי וּבְחוֹמֹתַי יָד וְנֶשֶׁם טוֹב מִבְּנִים וּמִבָּנוֹת שֵׁם עוֹלָם אֲתֶן לּוֹ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּרֵת "In My house and within My walls, I will give them a place of honor and renown, which is better than sons and daughters; eternal renown will give them, which will never be terminated." This is the reward that Hashem will give to all those who recognize that Hashem is leading them in the best way, although they don't know why and how.

Also, with Ruchniyus, all is for the Good

The same applies to *ruchniyus*. Some people must go out and earn a living, although their deepest desire is to remain in the beis medresh as long as possible, studying Torah. They wonder, "Why do I have to suffer? Why is this my portion? Why can't I be like some of my friends who have the privilege to study Torah all day long,

and are constantly enjoying the sweetness of Torah and of Hashem's presence?" He must know that Hashem has a reason, and therefore, וּבָחַרוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר הִפְצֵתִי "choose what I desire". Hashem has a plan and a system, and even if we don't understand why and how, and we wish for something else, we accept and we believe that ultimately, Hashem knows what is best, and Hashem is leading us in the best way.

This lesson especially applies at this time of year, when people are cleaning for Pesach. Some men feel upset and ask, "Why do I have to do all this cleaning? Wouldn't it be better if I were in beis medresh now, studying Torah?"

They are wrong on two accounts. One of their mistakes is that they don't understand that cleaning for Pesach is a great privilege. It cleanses a person from all his aveiros, and

"I'm Shimon."

"Moshe asks another person, 'Perhaps you're Betzalel ben Uri?'"

"Sorry, I'm Aminadov."

"Will Moshe be upset with them for not being Betzalel ben Uri? Of course not! They weren't the person he was searching for. Similarly, why should I be upset with you or your beis medresh for not helping the yeshiva? It is destined in heaven who will help the yeshiva, and obviously, the members of your beis medresh weren't on the list. I have no reason to be angry with you. I just have to go elsewhere to find the one who is on the list of helpers."

Once, Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky *zt'l* asked Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* why he appeared extraordinarily happy that day. Reb Moshe told him what occurred:

"Three months ago, a financial dispute came before me, and I *paskened* according to the Torah law. Later that same day, I got a call. The caller said, "I'm the person whom you obligated to pay money in your ruling. Be aware that you ruled erroneously..." and he let loose some disrespectful words.

"Today, this man came to me again and asked me to give him a *haskamah* for *shechitah* (a letter certifying that he can be a *shochet*). I wanted to tell him to leave. A few months ago, he spoke disrespectfully to me, and now he wants a favor from me! But I remembered that Yom Kippur had passed since that cruel, unfortunate episode, and I had forgiven him since then. I tested him on the laws of *shechitah*. He knew the laws fluently, so I wrote a letter stating that he is fit to be a *shochet*. After giving him the letter, I rebuked him for how he spoke to me some months before. I explained to him that it wasn't proper to speak that way.

"He didn't know what I was talking about. He told me that he never called me on the phone, and never complained about the *psak*... We then understood that another person (who was upset with the results of the din Torah) called up and impersonated him.

"Now you understand the reason I am happy," Reb Moshe told Reb Yaakov. "I may have held a grudge against this person forever, and it would be for naught."

he is performing the mitzvah of preparing for the holy yom tov with its mitzvos.⁶

6. The Chasam Sofer (7th of Adar, 5560) says that cleaning the home for Pesach and the mitzvah of biur chametz bring kedushah to the entire home.

Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuzh zt'l (Botzina d'Nehora 21) explains the pasuk (Shemos 13:5) וְעִבְדְתָּ אֶת ה'עֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה, "You shall perform this service in this month". He explains why the pasuk states here הַזֹּאת and הַזֶּה. He explains that the month of Nisan is called הַזֶּה, as it states (Shemos 12:2) הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֵם רֵאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months..." He also explains that the month of Tishrei is called הַזֹּאת, as it states (Vayikra 16:3) בְּיוֹמֵי הַזֹּאת יָבֵא אֶת־הַקֹּרְבָּן. This pasuk refers to the korbanos of Yom Kippur, which are brought in Tishrei.

Thus, the pasuk (Shemos 13:5) וְעִבְדְתָּ אֶת ה'עֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה, "You shall perform *this* service in *this* month" means that we should perform the avodah of Tishrei, called הַזֹּאת, when we do this avodah of בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה, in the month of Nisan. The concept is that our avodah in Nisan is precious to Hashem and as important as our avodah in Tishrei.

We understand from this lesson that cleaning the house in Nisan carries great importance, similar to the holy avodos and yomim tovim of Tishrei.

In the year 5657, the Rebbe Reshab of Lubavitz zt'l established his yeshiva, Tomchei Temimim. Students wanting to join the yeshiva were interviewed by the *hanhala* of the yeshiva. The interviewer would write down some notes on the bachur's personality and of the impression he made, and send the notes to the Reshab, and he would decide whether to accept that student or not. Once, regarding a certain bachur who wanted to join the yeshiva, the Reshab read the following character report: "He has a mind like iron, very clever, and he is extremely talented, too. He is a great lamdan (talmid chacham), but he is very מגושם (he enjoys gashmiyus a lot), and has coarse middos. His face appears extremely *gashmiyusdig*..."

The Reshab thought deeply, and then said, "The days of Pesach are approaching. There is a lot of work to do. Accept him into the yeshiva, and give him all the hard jobs to do. This bachur should grind the wheat kernels into flour for the matzos, etc." The bachur joined the yeshiva, and they immediately gave him a lot of chores to do. They didn't give him any respite. Morning, afternoon, nighttime, without letup. He had to grind the wheat, and he did so with a lot of effort and strength. It was extremely hard work. Then they gave him the job of kneading the dough to make matzos. When it was erev Pesach, they told him that it was his job to do bedikas chametz and burn all the chametz. This work took him all night, until it was almost the morning, and then he went to sleep. At seven in the morning, he was awakened and instructed to prepare the wood for the oven and to prepare a fire, because in the afternoon, the oven would be used to bake matzos.

On the final day of Pesach, when the Reshab sat together with his students for נעילת החג (a seudah at the end of a yom tov), this student was also there. The Reshab said to his son, the Rebbe the Rayatz, "See the greatness of sweating for a mitzvah. He now has a new face. We don't see a *gashmiyusdig* face anymore. Now he looks like a human being should."

We learn from this episode that we should work hard cleaning for Pesach and all the other preparations. Perhaps, thereby, we, too, will attain a human face.

Rebbe Eliezer of Lizhensk zt'l (son of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l) explained the Gemara (Megillah 13b) when Haman said to Achashveirosh (Esther 3:8) וְאֵת דְתֵי הַמְּלֶכֶת אֵינָם עֹשִׂים, which means that Haman claimed that the Yidden don't work for the king. He said דְמַפְקִי לְכוּלָא שְׁתָּא בְשַׁבַּת הַיּוֹם, פִּסְחָא הַיּוֹם, the entire year, they say "Today is Shabbos, and I can't work"... "Today is Pesach, and I can't work." Reb Eliezer of Lizhensk explains that Haman wasn't referring to Shabbos and Pesach alone, because that wouldn't be לְכוּלָא שְׁתָּא, the entire year. Rather, he was referring to the preparations that Yidden do before Shabbos and the preparations for Pesach, and for all the other yomim tovim, until the entire year they are occupied preparing for mitzvos. Haman mentioned this because it bothered him so much that Yidden were always busy with the mitzvos.

The rule is that we can learn lessons in avodas Hashem from the yetzer hara. So, if preparation for the mitzvos bothered Haman so much, this indicates how precious these deeds are to Hashem.

I heard from a talmid chacham the explanation to the words חגים וזמנים לששון. חג is a circle (As it states, Yeshayah 44:13, ובמחוגה יתאדו, see Rashi). So, we can explain חגים וזמנים means that the preparation for the זמנים, for the yomim tovim cause a person's mind to go around in circles (as alluded to in the word חגים). He also has to go around in circles to buy items for the yom tov, even then בששון, do so with joy and happiness.

In addition, he is making another error. We should ובחרו באשר הקפצתי, choose what Hashem desires. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Who says throughout the year to study in beis medresh, now says, "Now do My will and clean the home... Now do My will and go to the supermarket to buy cleaning material..." When he does so, with emunah that Hashem knows what's best, he is ובחרו באשר הקפצתי, choosing what Hashem chooses

and desires, and in this manner, he creates a nachas ruach for Hashem yisbarach.

Before the petirah of Reb Tzvi Hirsh of Riminov zt'l, he said, "Behold this is the primary point of the holy Torah: To know that Hashem yisbarach is (Devarim 32:4) א"ל אמונה, ואין עול צדיק ואשר הוא "A G-d of faith without iniquity, righteous and fair is He." This means to believe that Hashem leads us in the best way, and everything is for the good.

Nisan

The Avnei Nezer zt'l (*Avnei Nezer, Orach Chaim* 336) writes in a letter, "I received your letter Erev Shabbos close to Shabbos. You asked that I answer some of your questions regarding Pesach. That isn't a small request because these are priceless days when each hour is like a day.⁷ Nevertheless, since you expressed your strong desire that I answer

The Kav HaYashar (ch.90) says, "I have received a kabbalah that whoever works hard in honor of yom tov, and he is tired and exhausted from the work, this work kills all mazikim (kelipos), which are called נני בני אדם." This also means that the hard work removes all tzaros from himself. We therefore should be happy with this toil, because we gain so much from it.

The Berdichever Rav zt'l praised Bnei Yisrael for their diligence in ridding their homes of even the smallest crumb of chametz. He said that these good deeds are compared to blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. This is because the machzor writes that the malachim that come from the shofar come from the קשר"ק (roshei teivos for תקיעה, שברים תרועה תקיעה). These malachim should go up before Hashem's throne to plead for Bnei Yisrael. Similarly, he said, when people clean for Pesach, which is called קערין, קריצין, רייבין, קערין (different expressions of rubbing and cleaning), the malachim that go up from this קשר"ק should go up before Hashem's throne to plead for Bnei Yisrael.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16a) says, "Why do we blow shofar when sitting down and when standing up (or in other words, why do we blow shofar before the Shemonah Esrei of Mussaf and again during the Shemonah Esrei of mussaf)? It is to confuse the Satan. Tosfos quotes a Yerushalmi that the first time the shofar is blown, the Satan is confused, but not entirely. The second time the shofar is blown, the Satan is entirely confused and worried.

Based on the lesson of the Berdichever Rav zt'l, that cleaning for Pesach is like blowing shofar, we can explain (b'derech tzachus) that the first time people clean for Pesach, the Satan is afraid. But then a child (and sometimes an adult too) mistakenly enters a place that was already cleaned for Pesach, holding a cookie in his hand. Now that area must be cleaned again. If people do so and clean the place again, without getting angry or nervous, this confuses the Satan entirely, and he becomes very afraid.

The Berdichever Rav said that with cleaning for Pesach, a Yid can attain ruach hakodesh; only anger prevents it.

The Rokeiach (siman 283, quoted in Be'er Heitav ת"ט ס"א) writes, לא יאמר כמה טורח פסח, a person shouldn't say "it is so hard to prepare for Pesach".

7. In the Avnei Nezer's words, אם כי הקשה לשאול כי ימים אלו יקרי הערך, שעה ליום יחשב

you, and you wrote that it will be your pleasure and *simchas yom tov*, I devoted some time to write this letter..."

The Shem MiShmuel *zt'l* said that his father, the Avnei Nezer, would be מסוכב והולך בעולמות העליונים, "Walking in the upper worlds" throughout Nisan. (*Avir HaRo'im* 264). Once, the Shem MiShmuel heard his father say that during Nisan he doesn't need to sleep due to the holiness of these days (*Avir HaRo'im* 299).

Shulchan Aruch (429:2) states, "We don't say *tachanun* the entire month of Nisan."

The Shlah Hakadosh (*Pesachim, Ner Mitzvah, 7*) explains that this is because the entire month has the kedushah of Rosh chodesh. He writes, "It states, החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים, 'This month is for you *Rosh chodesh*,' which means that each day of Nisan is like ראש חדש, giving us an entire month of *Rosh chodesh*."⁸

The Agra d'Kala (*Pikudei*) teaches in the name of Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* that the first twelve days of Nisan represent the twelve months of the year, and tzaddikim can perceive on these days what will occur in the world in the corresponding months. "The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* would write down what he perceived with his *ruach hakodesh* would happen that year. On א ניסן he wrote what would happen in Nisan. ב ניסן he wrote what would happen in Iyar, and so on. When it was the final year of his life, he only wrote down what would occur up to Av. He didn't write what would happen in the world in the following months because that year, he was *niftar* in Av. This story is known among the Chozeh's students."

Zerizus

We can learn from the matzah to be a *zariz*, to always be occupied with performing mitzvos. This is because one of the halachos of baking matzah is (*Shulchan Aruch* 459:2), לא יניחו, העיסה בלא עסק ואפילו רגע אחד, don't leave the dough idle without working it – not even for a moment." Working with the dough prevents it from becoming chametz. The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* said that this halachah hints at the virtue of always being active in *avodas Hashem*.

Some people have extra time on their hands, and they seek ways to fill it. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* said wittily, "If you have extra time, pass it on my way because I don't have enough time." There is so much to do, and we don't have time to waste.

Being constantly occupied in *avodas Hashem* has two benefits. One is that you will earn many mitzvos. A second benefit is that you won't have time to perform aveiros. As the Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* said to his chassidim, "More than it bothers me when you do aveiros, it upsets me that you had time to perform them."

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt'l* would say, "If you don't have the strength to learn Torah, say *Tehillim*. If you don't have the strength to say *Tehillim*, give *tzedakah*..." There is always something you can do to be occupied with *avodas Hashem*.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 28.) tells us that when Reb Zeira was tired from his studies, he would sit at the doorway of Reb Noson bar Tuvi's *beis medrash*. He said, "When the Rabbanim pass, I will stand up for them and receive reward."

8. The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* writes, "Don't think that it is only in Nisan [that the entire month is considered like *rosh chodesh*]. It is the same for all months. If we observe *rosh chodesh* properly, the entire month becomes like *rosh chodesh*. As the saying goes, גופא בתר רישה אזיל, the body follows the head. [If the head, *rosh chodesh*, is good, that influences the entire month]. Therefore, it is proper for the wise to serve Hashem on *rosh chodesh*, which will make the whole month good. Even if just one hour of *rosh chodesh* is kept properly, the entire month will be good [and imbued with the holiness of *rosh chodesh*]."

From this we can learn to always be active in avodas Hashem. Don't let time pass idly. Even when you need to rest, seek to do so in a way that will earn you mitzvos.

Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli *zt'l* said that we can learn three lessons from children: (1) When a child wants something, he cries until he gets it. (2) A child is happy when he gets what he wants. [Adults are not that way; When they get their desires, they are soon dissatisfied again because they want something else.] (3) A child is always active.

We, too, must strive always to be active and engaged in Hashem's service. We learn this attitude from matzah, which one doesn't leave idle. From when the water is poured until it is baked, people are constantly working with the dough.

Reb Eliyahu Dessler would teach his students to take on a small *kabbalah* before Pesach, and he would tell them that even a small *kabbalah* will elevate them to very high levels, and that will prepare them for Pesach. One year, Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* asked a *bachur*, "Which *kabbalah tova* did you accept on yourself as a preparation for Pesach?"

The *bachur* replied that he didn't take on anything. He said he didn't believe a small *kabbalah* could make a big difference.

Reb Dessler told him the following *mashal*:

A person from a third-world country came to New York City and was astounded by the tall skyscrapers he encountered. He stood outside a skyscraper and looked up in amazement.

A passerby told him, "On the top floor, there's an observation deck. You can see the entire city of New York up there."

"Amazing!" the man replied. "I would love to go up there, but I don't have the strength to walk up all those steps!"

"You don't have to take the stairs," the man replied. "You can use the elevator. You just press a button, and you reach a high floor."

The man had never heard of an elevator before and therefore had no idea that he had to press the button of the desired floor when he entered the elevator. After the door closed, and it turned dark, he was afraid that he would be locked inside. Panicking, he pushed the buttons randomly. As it turned out, he hit the emergency button, which alerted the Emergency personnel who freed him from the elevator. He explained that he wanted to go up to the observation deck.

"So why didn't you press the button?" they asked.

"I don't believe in that," he told them. "How can pressing a button bring me up so high?"

Reb Dessler explained to the *bachur* that people think tiny *kabbalos* are insignificant, but they aren't. With each small *kabbalah*, one grows immensely.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* compared it to two people walking towards an escalator. One of them took one step more than his fellow man. That one step made all the difference because it got him onto the escalator, which brought him to the next floor, while his friend, who didn't take that step forward, remained below.

This is the uniqueness of a *kabbalah tova*. It is a small step that brings us very high.

These ideas are alluded to by the small difference between the *heh* and the *ches*, which is the difference between *מצה* and *חמץ*. They both have almost the same letters, just the matzah has a heh and chametz has a ches. The difference between ches and heh is also small, just a drop of ink. This tells us that a small improvement, or a small *kabbalah*, can make all the difference.

This also brings us back to the topic of *zerizus*, to be occupied in avodas Hashem. Perhaps you won't have the *zerizus* of the great *tzaddikim*, but each good deed you do can mean so much. It can make the difference between chametz and matzah, tumah and

kedushah, growing higher, or staying at the same level.⁹

9. It states in *Pirkei Avos* (5:20), "Reb Yehudah ben Teima says, 'Be brazen like a leopard, swift like an eagle, run like a deer, and strong like a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven.'"

An eagle is swifter than a deer. So, after stating that one should be swift like an eagle, why does the Mishnah add "run like a deer"? We should be even quicker than a deer and be as swift as an eagle!

Also, where in *Tanach* do we find that a deer runs quickly, that the *Mishnah* uses it as an example?

Reb Shimon Sofer zt'l replies that the Mishnah is based on the final pasuk of *Shir HaShirim*, which states, ודמה לך לצבי, "Be like a deer..." The Midrash explains that when a deer runs, it keeps turning its head to look back. It is this attribute of the deer that the Mishnah refers to.

Reb Shimon Sofer zt'l explains that the Mishna (5:20) teaches us two important lessons: Be swift in *avodas Hashem* like an eagle, but also be like the deer who always looks back to understand the needs of others. Some people excel in *bein adam l'makom*, but they forget that a primary aspect of serving Hashem is to perform good deeds *bein adam l'chaveiro*. Your desire to serve Hashem shouldn't cause you to lose sight of the needs of your fellow man.

The Gemara (Chagigah 15:) states, "If your rebbe is like a malach, ask him to teach you Torah. Otherwise, don't learn Torah from him."

But how can we know if our teacher is like a malach if we have never seen a malach before?

One thing we do know about malachim is that they are עומדים because they stay at the same spot. They do not rise from level to level.

We should choose a rebbe who is prepared to be an עומד, to stand in the same place. He must be a person who is ready to sacrifice his own growth, if necessary, to help and teach others.