

True Pleasure

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The Mishnah assumes that the only way to err regarding another person's *orlah* tree would entail the additional prohibition of stealing. Is this so? Is eating the forbidden fruit the only way to err with the fruit of *orlah*? If we assume that *birkas ha'ilanos* is not recited on an *orlah* tree, that introduces another possible error. A passerby who sees the fruit tree budding may recite a *brachah*, not realizing that it is an *orlah* tree—a *brachah l'vatalah*. The Mishnah must hold that *birkas ha'ilanos* is recited on *orlah* trees as well.³

The *Chavos Yair* asks,⁴ how could R. Shimon ben Gamliel suggest that there is no way for passersby to benefit from *orlah* fruits without stealing them? That may be true regarding some fruits, but when it comes to fruits that give off a good smell, such as an esrog, people may stop to smell them. Since it is forbidden to derive any benefit from *orlah*, we should mark off the fruits to warn people not to smell them.

Before stating the halachah of an *orlah* tree, the Mishnah first opens with a similar halachah regarding grapevines of the fourth year, *kerem revai*. They are marked using clods of mud to warn people to keep away. Generally, it is assumed that the Mishnah does not intend to be specific—the term *kerem revai* is used throughout the Mishnah to refer to all trees of the fourth year. However, the *Melech Shlomo* departs from this idea. He writes that the Mishnah speaks specifically about grapevines because only with grapevines are we concerned that people will mistakenly use the

fruits. While other trees grow tall and it would take effort to pick from the fruit, grapevines are low and extend across the fences, making it more likely that passersby might accidentally partake of the fruit.

According to the *Melech Shlomo* (who understands that the Mishnah is only discussing grapes), the *Chavos Yair's* question is resolved. Nobody pursues grapes for their scent—the only concern is that one may steal the grapes for eating. If the Mishnah is only relevant to grapes, the Tchebiner, as well, will lose his proof. Grapes do not blossom in Nissan, and *birkas ha'ilanos* is never recited over them. Again, the only remaining issue would be that one might steal the grapes for eating.

In *birkas ha'ilanos* we use the phrase לְהִתְנַאוֹת בְּהֵן בְּנֵי אָדָם—a phrase that we do not use in any other *brachos*. What does this signify? Chazal explain⁵ that by the mitzvah of *orlah* we atone for the sin of Adam Harishon. Adam was commanded not to eat from the Eitz Hadaas, and immediately transgressed the commandment. By waiting three years to eat from the fruits of a tree, we rectify this sin.

In *birkas ha'ilanos* we mention בְּנֵי אָדָם to allude to this point. Besides the sensory pleasure that will be gained from the fruit, there is spiritual pleasure as well. Obeying Hashem's command helps us practice restraint and delivers great spiritual pleasure.

If the *brachah* of *birkas ha'ilanos* includes mention of the spiritual pleasure

derived from *orlah*, we should certainly recite the *brachah* even on an *orlah* tree.

According to this, we can understand why, in the *brachah*, we refer specifically to fruit trees as אֵילָנוֹת טוֹבוֹת, good trees. Aren't all trees good? Trees have many purposes other than their fruit. They may be harvested for their wood; they provide shade; thorn bushes can serve as a fence. What makes "good trees" a reference to fruit trees? We can understand that fruit trees are "good trees" because they help us rectify the sin of Adam Harishon. By refraining from the fruit of *orlah*, we correct his mistake. Only fruit trees are able to provide this spiritual benefit; only they are worthy of the title.

In the *brachah* we thank Hashem for creating טוֹבוֹת בְּרִיּוֹת, good creations. Shouldn't such a high praise be reserved for special people, *baalei tzedakah* perhaps? Why do we mention this in regards to trees? It's true we can understand בְּרִיָּה as referring to people. As Chazal say⁶, Hashem called to the *malachei hashareis* and told them about Shaul Hamelech, "Come and take a look at the בְּרִיָּה I created in My world."

The entire world was created as a means to test us on our success in serving Hashem. Each situation calls for a different form of *avodah*. Will we serve Hashem properly in each one? There is no difference between one who makes a *brachah* and partakes of a fruit, or one who withholds because Hashem commanded them so. They both remember that there

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3 A grandson related that the Tchebiner regretted publishing an answer to Rabi Akiva Eiger's dilemma based on an explicit Mishnah. It's as if to suggest that when pondering the question, Rabi Akiva Eiger didn't consider the Mishnah—an absurd proposal.

4 142.

5 *Bereishis Rabbah* 21:7, *Vayikra Rabbah* 25:2.

6 *Vayikra Rabbah* 26:7.

An Ear for Ears

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Yet a voice is not a package. If one person cannot handle hearing Hashem's voice, how could it help to have another person hear it with him? The second person does not lessen the burden to make it any easier!

The *Sfas Emes* answers⁸ that when Klal Yisrael is together as one, they are more capable of hearing the words of Hashem. The 600,000 who stood at Har Sinai were not 600,000 individuals, they had the combined strength of a *tzibbur*. Moshe alone was able to hear what the *tzibbur*, as a whole, couldn't. When Hashem called—"וַיִּקְרָא"—He called to Moshe alone.

What is the power of hearing? When Shaul Hamelech failed to listen to Hashem and eradicate Amalek, Shmuel told him (Shmuel I 15:22), הַחֲכִיץ לָהּ בְּעֵלּוֹת, "He cut off her hearing."

וְזָבְחִים כְּשִׁמְעַת בְּקוֹל ה' הִנֵּה שִׁמְעַת מִזְבֵּחַ טוֹב לְהִקְשִׁיב מִחֶלֶב אֵילִים – *Does Hashem delight in olos and zevachim as in obedience to the voice of Hashem? Behold! to obey is better than a choice offering, to be attentive [is better] than the fat of rams.* Even more important than offering the best *korbanos* is listening and heeding His word.

Shlomo Hamelech writes (Mishlei 15:30), מְאֹר עֵינַיִם יִשְׂמַח לֵב שְׂמוּעָה טוֹבָה, הַחֲכִיץ לָהּ – *Enlightened eyes will gladden the heart; good news will fatten a bone.* The Rishonim explain:⁹ The eye is exquisitely precious, and what is seen with the eye can gladden the heart. Yet it stops there. The benefit derived from sight is external. The ears, however, provide benefit that penetrates. When one hears good news, it permeates the body; it fattens all his bones.

The Maharal writes further: וְקַבְלָה¹⁰ (acceptance) is only found in connection to hearing. Sight is fleeting; what one sees is soon forgotten, but what one hears stays with him. He is *mekabel*. This is why the Gemara (Bava Kama 85b) tells us that if one blinds another's eye, he must compensate the value of the eye; yet when one makes another lose his hearing, he must pay the full value of the person. One who can't hear loses his status as a human being.

A person has eyelids so that he can close his eyes and not see what is inappropriate; yet ears have no lids. The Gemara (Kesubos 5b) tells us that a person's fingers are tapered at the tips to enable him to plug his ears. Although the ears do not have their own lids, Hashem incorporated in the body a special plug

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8 *Likutim*. See *Imrei Emes* in *Kisvei Chassidim*, where he writes a similar answer. It is quite probable that he was quoting his father, the *Sfas Emes*.

9 Rabbeinu Yonah in *Shaarei Teshuvah* 2:12, Rabbeinu Bachye on Shemos 4:11, Chassid Yaavetz on Avos 6:2.

10 *Nesivos Olam*, *Nesiv Hatznius* 2.

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is a *Ribbono Shel Olam*; they are both serving Hashem properly.

(בְּרַכַּת הָאֵילָנוֹת וְלֵיל שַׁבַּת קוֹדֵשׁ וַיִּקְרָא תַשְׁפִּי"ג)

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Another possible understanding of בני אדם in *birkas ha'ilanos*:

וַיֵּרַד ה' לִרְאֹת אֶת הָעִיר וְאֶת הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם – *Hashem went down to see the city and the tower that the sons of man had built* (Bereishis 11:5). The pasuk discussing *Migdal Bavel* calls those who rebelled against Hashem בְּנֵי הָאָדָם. Rashi asks:

Aren't all people sons of man? Who else would they be sons of, donkeys or camels? Rashi answers that we are stressing that they are descendants of Adam Harishon. Just as their forefather, Adam, acted as an ingrate when he blamed Hashem for giving him Chavah, so too, those who built *Migdal Bavel* acted as ingrates. Hashem had saved them from the *Mabul*; they should have been grateful and listened to His every command. Yet they acted as ingrates and rebelled.

We go out in Nissan and we see the trees blossoming. We recognize that Hashem wants to do good for us. We are countering Adam's sin; we want to be בני אדם the way בני אדם should be. We recognize Hashem's goodness and thank Him for it. With this we will fix the original sin of Adam Harishon. May Hashem help us always see His goodness and thank Him properly. May we then merit *yeshuos* and *niflaos*.

(בְּרַכַּת הָאֵילָנוֹת רֵאשׁ חוֹדֵשׁ נִיסָן תַּשְׁפִּי"ד)

An Ear for Ears

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so one can prevent himself from hearing things he shouldn't.

The Maharal asks: Since hearing is more important than seeing, one would think that man should be created differently. It is more important to block out inappropriate speech than it is to keep out inappropriate sights. The ears should have their own lids, while the eyes

could have a special outside mechanism incorporated in the body. Why do eyes have lids while ears do not?

The Maharal explains that a person must be a receptacle to accept that which he is told. One who is not able to hear is not considered a person. A person must have an eyelid to enable him to choose what to see and what not to see; Hashem

created eyelids to make the human body complete. If a person had a flap covering over his ears, that would be a defect. Although a person must have a way of covering their ears, it cannot be intrinsic to the ear. First, a person must have a complete ear, one that is open to accept what it is told. The method of closing the ear must not be a part of the ear itself.

(ס"ג פרשת ויקרא – זכור תשפ"ד מאמר ב)

Enlisting Shabbos

יְכַפֵּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן לְפָנֵי ה' וְנִסְלַח לוֹ עַל אֲחַת מִכֹּל
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה לְאַשְׁמָה בָּהּ.

The Kohen shall provide him atonement before Hashem, and it shall be forgiven him for any of all the things he might do to incur guilt (5:26).

Rav Mendel of Riminov cites an ancient *minhag*: When the *baal korei* concludes the *parshah* with the words לֹא-ל, the *tzibbur* responds, לְאַשְׁמָה בָּהּ, *to the G-d who rested from all His actions on the seventh day.*¹¹ The *roshei teivos* of these words is לְאַשְׁמָה בָּהּ.

Some explain this *minhag* as a way to close the *parshah* on a good note. We don't want to end on a discussion of Yidden incurring guilt, so the *tzibbur*

rejoins that the *roshei teivos* of these words allude to Shabbos. However, this is not likely, because not every *parshah* ends on a good note, and we don't have such a *minhag* in other places. There must be something deeper here.

וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְשַׁבַּח וְאוֹמֵר מְזֻמָּר שִׁיר לְיוֹם
- הַשַּׁבָּת, לְפִיכָהּ יִפְאָרוּ לֹא-ל כָּל יְצוּרָיו
The seventh day praises and says, "A psalm, a song for the Shabbos day." Therefore, all His creations shall glorify Hashem. How does the seventh day's praise for Hashem allow all Hashem's creations to glorify Him? What is the meaning of this לְפִיכָהּ, *therefore?*

The Chiddushei HaRim heard an answer to this question from the Apter Rav. In truth, it is not possible

for Hashem's creations to praise Him. Hashem is utterly above and beyond the comprehension of any being; there is no way to approach Him and offer praise. Yet once *Shabbos Kodesh* initiates, and says "מְזֻמָּר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת", all creations are then able to step forward and offer their praise. The Chiddushei HaRim related that the sweet taste of this *vort* remained with him for a year and a quarter.¹²

When the *baal korei* reads לְאַשְׁמָה בָּהּ, we rejoin with אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַת לְקַל אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַת. We are reminding ourselves that we ourselves are full of guilt and not worthy of praising Hashem. The only way we can muster the strength is because of Shabbos. Shabbos initiates the praise and we follow.

(קידושא רבא ויקרא – זכור תשפ"ד)

¹¹ Birchos Krias Shema of Shabbos *Shacharis*.

¹² What the Chiddushei HaRim so appreciated was the Apter Rav's question: how could such lowly creatures praise the *Ribono Shel Olam*? Although the Chassidim of Kotzk and Pershischa were known for their sharp wit, inside it was always a broken heart.