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The Greatest Preparation for the “*Seder* Night” Is to Open Our Own Hearts

True *Malchus* Comes from Complete *Bittul* to Hashem

Every Mitzvah Needs Proper Preparation

We’re now in midst of preparing for the *heilige* Yom Tov of Pesach, when we’re commanded the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך, to transmit the story of the exodus from Mitzrayim to our children.

One of the great *yesodos* that we are taught by the Ba’al Shem Tov and his students is that of *hachanah*—properly preparing ourselves before performing a mitzvah. Before davening, we should learn as preparation for *tefillah*; prior to Shabbos Kodesh, we should place ourselves into the Shabbos atmosphere; and so forth, every mitzvah has its unique *hachanah* that enables us to perform the mitzvah with completeness and a full heart.

Essential to the Mitzvah

When we speak about a *hachanah* for a mitzvah, some may think that it’s solely a matter of enabling ourselves to have “good feelings” or “lofty levels” when performing the mitzvah. But this isn’t correct. **We must make a *hachanah* in order to perform the mitzvah in its most basic sense!** The fact is that if we’re lacking in the *hachanah* to the mitzvah, **we lack the technical ability to perform this mitzvah properly.**

This is very important for us to know, even though it may be unpleas-

ant to hear, because when people “fall into” a mitzvah unprepared, they may tell themselves, “Perhaps I am missing some of the special aura of the mitzvah... perhaps I didn’t perform the mitzvah on the most lofty level... but don’t tell me that I haven’t performed the mitzvah on a basic level.”

One who thinks this way is fooling himself.

The Ba’al Shem Tov’s intention was not merely to tell people how to attain the loftiest levels (although he also intended this); primarily, **the Ba’al Shem Tov came to teach us how to be ehrliche Yidden! Our great masters**, the *talmidim* of the Ba’al Shem Tov whose *sefarim* we study, **teach us how to perform mitzvos in the simplest sense!** They have taught us that the more we prepare for a mitzvah, the more we will be able to perform the mitzvah properly.

The Seder Night Requires a Special *Hachanah*

When we talk about the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך, everyone knows that it’s important to prepare warm words to relate at our *Seder*. Before Yom Tov begins, an *ehrllicher Yid* has already prepared what he will tell his children on the *Seder* night.

But when we expand on this mitzvah and on the power the Ribbono shel Olam gave us so that we can fulfill this mitzvah, we will see that to fulfill the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך it isn’t enough to prepare one day before Yom Tov. **It’s a great *avodah* that must take place long before.**

Let us broaden this *inyan*. First, we will introduce the teachings of *chassidische sefarim* with regard to this special and unique mitzvah, and later, we will speak in our own practical language about how we can apply it in our own lives—for although these *yesodos* are important not only for this mitzvah but also to many other mitzvos, it very strongly pertains especially to the mitzvah of סיפור יציאת מצרים on Pesach night.

A Mitzvah Performed with Our Mouths

We begin with the observation that the organ with which we perform this mitzvah is the mouth.

The *Sefarim HaKedoshim* have categorized the mitzvos according to which organs we use to perform them. There are mitzvos that we perform with our hands, and so forth. This enables us to better understand the mitzvah, because one who understands which limb he must use, also understands how to prepare himself for the mitzvah.

Speech Is a Heavenly Power

The power of speech the Ribbono shel Olam has given all of us is a very lofty and Heavenly power. There are other abilities that humans have that can be found in animals as well—but speech is unique to us humans, and it is a very elevated faculty. **The Ribbono shel Olam gave us mamash Heavenly kochos** by giving us the power of speech.

Just as we understand that the power to give birth is a Heavenly phenomenon: The Ribbono shel Olam has given us the power to give birth and bring children into the world, it isn't something of This World, but rather a Heavenly gift! So too is the power of speech another of the Heavenly powers we have been given by Hashem. For this reason, a person is called a מדבר, *a species who can talk*. **He isn't just another creation: he is in a completely different category.**

This lofty power is referred to in *sefarim* as the מדת המלכות, *the measure of Malchus*. **The power of speech is connected to the middah of Malchus**, as it says in: פתח אליהו: **Malchus-Peh**.

Middas HaMalchus Bequeaths Shefa to the World

There are many ways to explain this connection between *Malchus* and *peh*, the mouth of a *Yid*—and we will seek to explain it here. We will explore how this connection is crucial for every *Yid* who wishes to fulfill the mitzvah לבנוך on Pesach night, and how it is instrumental in *chinuch* throughout the entire year.

We know that there are *Middos*, Attributes, through which Hashem conducts the world. The first is *Chessed*/Mercy, then come *Gevurah*, *Tiferes*, *Netzach*, *Hod*, *Yesod*, and, finally, *Malchus*. When the Ribbono shel Olam wishes to bequeath *shefa* to the people of the world, that *shefa* goes

through each of the *Middos*—and **it is the attribute of *Malchus* that directly brings the *shefa* to This World.**

This is mirrored in the human anatomy: His entire head—his brain, his eyes, his nose, his ears—all have desires and thoughts—but **it is the mouth**, the lowest feature on the head, **that expresses these thoughts and desires in the form of speech.** A person has an idea or a technical concept in his mind (for example, he wants his friend to fetch something for him), and **this is where the power of speech comes in.** The *peh* has the unique ability to bring out and explain and transmit to others ideas and concepts that were previously locked in his mind.

The Difference Between Jewish and Gentile Kings

When we discuss the idea of *Malchus*, there is a great difference between Jewish kings and their *goyishe* counterparts. One of the fundamental differences is as follows:

Ask any person whether a king is generally more connected to the attribute of haughtiness or to humility, and he will tell you that a king is the epitome of *ga'avah*. After all, a king is a king! Nothing can stop him! He rules the entire land, and everyone must adhere to his wishes.

At the same time, David HaMelech, the great king of the Jewish People proclaimed, *וְאֲנֹכִי תוֹלַעַת וְלֹא אִישׁ, חֲרַפְתָּ אָדָם וּבִזוּי עַם, But I am a worm and not a man, scorn of humanity despised of people (Tehillim 22:7).* David HaMelech is using some of the greatest expressions of modesty and humility! It seems incongruent and counterintuitive: **The *middah* of humility would seemingly not have any connection to kingship!**

True Kingship Means Recognizing: “I Am Nothing”

But the truth is precisely the opposite. This is a fundamental error in understanding *Malchus*.

In *Sifrei Kabbalah*, we learn that that the *middah* of *Malchus* is referred to as *לית לה מגרמה כלום*, *it has nothing from itself*. During *Kiddush Levanah* we proclaim, *דוד מלך ישראל חי וקיים*, —because, just like the moon that doesn't

have any of its own light but takes all its light from the sun, David HaMelech knew that true *Malchus* means knowing that we have nothing on our own!

But why is this? Isn't kingship indeed diametrically different from the moon?! Doesn't kingship connote power and hubris?!

But this is precisely the difference between the *Yiddishe* concept of kingship and the *goyish* one!

Gentile Kingship Is Untethered from the Ribbono shel Olam

A gentile who attains royalty and kingship **disconnects from the Creator**. He proclaims that *he is in charge* of it all! He behaves with hubris, and he expects everyone to bow to him and his wishes.

Conversely, a pious *Melech Yisrael* is exceedingly humble—for a *ba'al ga'avah* cannot reside together with Hashem. אין אני והוא יכולים לדור, *Hashem says that he [the ba'al ga'avah] and I cannot live together*. If he is a king with hubris, he becomes distanced from the Ribbono shel Olam. And therefore, the mission of a king is to have complete and utter *bittul* to Hashem.

Bittul to a Jewish King Is *Bittul* to Hashem

When the Jewish People look up to their king and honor him; when they serve him and nullify themselves to him—as the Torah states that we must nullify ourselves to the king and accord him tremendous honor, otherwise we may be punished by death, *chas v'shalom*—this *bittul* is in essence a *bittul* to the Ribbono shel Olam! For **if the great king is himself nullified to the Ribbono shel Olam, then our *bittul* to him is essentially a *bittul* the One to Whom he has nullified himself.**

Just as the moon accepts light from the sun and has nothing of his own, so too the *Melech Yisrael* is completely nullified to the Ribbono shel Olam. The moon has none of its own light, and yet when we walk outside at night, we enjoy its light—it has now become a vessel to transmit

the light of the sun, even when it's dark—so too it is with a Jewish king. He is a vessel for *bittul* to Hashem that can illuminate for all those who nullify themselves to him. And thus, one who lacks humility cannot be a *Melech Yisrael*.

A *Yid* Can Serve Only a King Who Has Submitted to Hashem

Shaul HaMelech was the chosen by Hashem. He was pure of any sin, and we have no inkling of the lofty levels that he attained. But when there was a matter in which he disregarded the wishes of Hashem, he was immediately told that he can no longer be king. Because **a *Melech Yisrael* must be utterly and completely submitted to Hashem**. Only then can he transmit and mirror the light of Hashem to the Jewish People!

If he isn't sufficiently submissive, he cannot be king. For we know the rule that a *Yid* may only be a servant to Hashem, and not the subject of a servant. Thus, how can we serve a human being? *Only* if the king ליה ליה כלום, *מגרמיה כלום*, has *nothing of his own*. He is merely a mirror, a clear window that brings the light of Hashem to the people. **This is the definition of *Malchus!*** This is *true Malchus!*

And with this *yesod*, we can understand that while the *Melech Yisrael* may seem to be haughty and mighty, his sole claim to dominion over his Jewish subjects is the fact that he is completely nullified to the Ribbono shel Olam. **This is the true understanding of *Middas HaMalchus*.**

True *Malchus* Exists Only with *Yiddishe Kinder*

True kingship doesn't exist for *goyim*—no matter how splendid a king may seem. **They have the *kelipah* of *Malchus***. They have taken *Malchus* and made it an entity in itself—and therefore it has no benefit.

In today's democratic world, we don't have the concept of *malchus* in any case—but *they* never really had it. For **true *malchus* that the Ribbono shel Olam created belongs to the Jewish People: It is solely a vessel to help us become submissive to the Ribbono shel Olam.**

Malchus Regarding Tzaddikim

But true *Malchus* does still exist today: the tzaddikim of our generation are wholly submissive and nullified to the Ribbono shel Olam—truly knowing that they have nothing—and the *Yidden* who follow them and are subservient to them glean from the light of Hashem through them.

Of course, we daven three times a day that *Malchus* should be revealed through the House of David in its full glory, as **now, in galus, it is hidden. But when Mashiach comes, it will be revealed.** *Malchus* is like the moon; It has phases. We are currently in a darker phase.

On **Pesach night, the moon is at its peak** (as it is the fifteenth of the month) **and indeed, the Middas HaMalchus shines very brightly on that night.** Hence the *avodah* of *Malchus-peh* on this night.

“A Beautiful *Levanah* on Pesach Night”

There was a well-known Stoliner *chassid*, Reb Avraham Elazar Zenwirth, who was a descendant of the Ropshitzer Rav and other tzaddikim. In Williamsburg, he was close to the Stoliner Rebbe, Rav Yochanan Perlow *zt”l*. One Pesach night before the *Seder*, the Rebbe remarked to him, “**You see? There is a nice *levanah* out tonight.**”

In these words lie hidden depth—alluding to the *avodah* of the *peh* of this night, and the corresponding reference to *Malchus* and the moon.

Indeed, in the *Haggadah*, we say: יכול מראש חודש, *one might think that we can recite the Haggadah from Rosh Chodesh....* But it is too early. The moon is yet too small at the beginning of the month. We must wait for this great *avodah* until the *levanah* is at its brightest. *This* is when we can engage in the *avodah* of transmitting the light to our children.

The Power of Speech of the Tzaddikim Had Nothing to Do With Linguistic Abilities

The True Meaning of the Power of Speech

Let us delve further and seek to understand **the connection between**

***Middas HaMalchus* and our ability to express ourselves through speech.**

The obligation of *והגדת לבנך* is a mitzvah that the Ribbono shel Olam has given to every single *Yid*, beginning at bar mitzvah. From that moment, a *Yid* is obligated in this mitzvah. This is the *halachah*. One who doesn't have a child must tell the story to another person, and one who doesn't have another person must say the story to himself: **Every *Yid* must employ his *koach hadibbur*, his power of speech, on that holy night.**

The Power of Speech Among the Nations of the World

To understand the connection, let us examine the contrast in speech— which draws from the *Middas HaMalchus*— between *Yidden* and the nations of the world.

We see among the *goyim* extremely talented orators, high in demand, who command exorbitant sums for their speeches. A former president of the United States can ask for 250,000 for a speech.

We also see the concept of *goyim* who have tremendous oratorical skill and talent. Sometimes we hear quips and sayings from non-Jewish orators that people repeat years later. There exists among them the *koach hadibbur*, the power of speech.

The Words Themselves

L'havdil, when we're talking about great tzaddikim who spoke holy words to their followers, we never speak about their abilities or their oratorical talent, saying that the tzaddik could keep his audience spell-bound for four hours....

Of course, there's such a thing as a good *ba'al darshan*—and there's nothing wrong with that. There are people who can tell a story and hold their audience enthralled because they're so pleasant to listen to, **but this is not what we live on**. When we speak about our *rebbeim*, *ba'alei ruach hakodesh*, who were utterly and completely nullified to the Ribbono shel

Olam, and we repeat their holy words, **we live from their Torah, not from the way in which their words were delivered!**

Furthermore, there were tzaddikim who were barely audible, especially in their old age. It was very difficult to hear their *divrei Torah*. There were those who didn't possess clear speech, and it wasn't very pleasant to listen to them—**but no one looked at any of that!**

Beyond the Words

This underscores a very deep point:

Sometimes, there is a person who delivers a beautiful *derashah*, *mamash* exceptional. Everyone says that in the last ten years they haven't heard such a strong *derashah*. **But this speech may fall into the category of the "malchus of the nations of the world."** The kingship of the nations of the world emphasizes the *kingship itself!* Similarly, these people are impressed by the speech itself and the way in which it was delivered.

Conversely, among *Yidden*, we don't concentrate on the *derashah* itself. **The main thing is what happened later! How much *yiras Shamayim* penetrated the hearts of the listeners?** What impression did it leave for later? *This is Malchus Yisrael. This is the true power of utilizing Middas HaMalchus*, the power of speech.

A Good Speech: How Much Light of Hashem Did It Generate?

The *tachlis* is not that the speech itself should be beautiful—for the power of speech is just like the *levanah*; it has nothing in and of itself. **The measure of a beautiful *levanah* is in how much it mirrors the beautiful light of the sun.** It's not the thing itself; it's measured in how much *bittul* it brings to the *Ribbono shel Olam*.

When people say that they were awed and inspired by a speech, they're reporting what they feel in the moment. **Right at that moment, they were overwhelmed by what they heard.** It was very pleasant to listen to. This only means that the *koach haddibur* of the orator was good,

but a *Yid* must understand that the true measure of *Middas HaMalchus* is in how much it succeeds in bringing down the light of the sun that it reflects.

The moon is merely a mailman—delivering a package from elsewhere. The *Malchus Peh* doesn't have any of its own power. It is a *middah* that the Ribbono shel Olam placed into the creation so there should be light in the world.

The *Ikkar* Is the *Purpose* of the Words

In other words, if we want to know whether a *derashah* was good or not, we can't know this in its immediate aftermath. If you mean to say that the *derashah* itself was a masterpiece, this indicates *Malchus* of the nations of the world. **They make a big deal about the delivery.**

The true measure of a successful *derashah* is in a year's time. Then we can analyze whether it has succeeded in bringing the "light of the sun" into the hearts of the listeners. This is how we know whether it was effective.

The Offspring of Tzaddikim Are Their Good Deeds

This is why Chazal tell us, תולדותיהן של צדיקים מעשים טובים, *the offspring of tzaddikim are their good deeds*. When we plant a tree, we can't tell immediately whether it was successful. **Much later, when the fruit comes forth, we know that something came from our efforts.**

It is the same regarding a tzaddik: How do we know if he succeeded in bringing *kedushah* into the world through his words? After many years, often long after he has departed This World, **we see what kind of fruits he left behind, what kind of *yiras Shamayim* remained due to his words!** Ah! Now, we understand that the tzaddik had a true *koach hadibbur*, a true *Middas HaMalchus*.

The Impression of Holy Words Remains Forever

For this reason, we can often hear people wondering, "I don't know

why... in the lifetime of this tzaddik we didn't see very much, but now, look what's happening; there's so much fervor around his words and teachings."

It's really very simple. In his lifetime, this tzaddik was planting. The blossoms weren't here yet: **This we see only later, when we reflect on how many Yiddische homes and yeshivos and kollelim were built with the koach of this tzaddik!**

Now, **forty and fifty years later, we see Yidden drawing yiras Shamayim from people who you couldn't even hear when they were alive.** Do you know why? Because the tzaddik had the *true* power of speech! He was completely nullified to Hashem!

The tzaddik was under no illusion that he is a master orator. He was well aware that he may have been difficult to understand. But he didn't care—because he wasn't selling *himself*! He was selling *Yidden* on *avodas Hashem* and *yiras Shamayim*!

Chassidische Sefarim Aren't Books of Parables

In general, we seldom hear *chassidische Yidden* talk about how sweet the Rebbe's *mashal* was or that he used a nice *mashal* to explain a certain concept. We don't find too many *meshalim* in the *chassidische sefarim* altogether. **This wasn't their thing.** Elsewhere, there were *maggidim* who presented very nice parables, and we find many *meshalim* in their *sefarim*. But regarding the *chassidische tzaddikim*, this wasn't a thing.

When we hear the titles of the great luminaries such as the Mezericher Maggid, the Chernonyler Maggid, or the Koznitzer Maggid—some may think that we're talking about people who said nice *vertlach* and parables... but when you open their *sefarim*, you won't find anything of the sort.

Tzaddikim Had the True Power of Speech

Why is it indeed so difficult to learn some of these *sefarim*? **Because these tzaddikim had the true koach of speech**—proof of this is that

we're repeating and learning their Torah two hundred years later! If we're able to draw *chiyus* for an upcoming Yom Tov from a *shtickel Avodas Yisrael*, then this tzaddik was surely a Maggid! This is true sign of a *koach hadibbur*!

The holy Me'or Einayim of Chernobyl didn't allow his *chassidim* to transcribe his Torah that he remembered. "If I can remember it, then maybe it has too much to do with *me...*," he said. If so, he didn't want it in the *sefer*. The Torah that he *didn't* remember, this he allowed to be transcribed. **This Torah is from a true *koach hadibbur*.**

Nothing Remains of Secular Kingship

This is the koach haddibur. Everything else is surrounding the dibbur. The true power of speech is the power of *Middas HaMalchus* that exists in Klal Yisrael. We implore Hashem to have mercy and compassion on the *Malchus* of the House of David... for *he* possessed real *Malchus; bittul* to Hashem. Our perceived royalty is worthless.

All the kings and royals of the world are preoccupied with leaving "a legacy" – **because they know that nothing will remain of their kingdom the moment they cease to rule.** And so, they spend all their years in office engaged in trying to matter, passing significant laws and bills, and so forth, so that *something* will remain from their kingship. But then someone else takes over, and nothing remains from their tenure. He was elected because he speaks well, and in the end, nothing remained from all the speeches.

Conversely, the words of a tzaddik are eternal—even one hundred or two hundred years later. This is because the tzaddik wasn't speaking his own words. He was speaking the words of Hashem—bringing eternity down to This World for millennia to come.

The Mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* Isn't Only for Orators

On Pesach Night, We Don't Call the Best Storyteller

As this concept relates to us: When the Ribbono shel Olam gave us the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך, every *Yid* received the *koach haddibur* from the **Aibishter**. No one said, "We need to have the best storyteller on Pesach night to tell the story of יציאת מצרים."

One might think that—just as on Rosh Hashanah we look for an expert to blow the *shofar* beautifully and smoothly—we should also seek the same for the mitzvah of סיפור יציאת מצרים. **But on Pesach night, it doesn't work this way—every *Yid* has the power of *dibbur*.**

You Only Need Heart!

People may say, "How can I conduct a Seder? I am not a person who can tell stories. I don't know how to do it." But we tell this person: "You don't understand the point. You must grasp that this isn't what the *koach haddibur* is all about!"

What is the *koach haddibur*?! Chazal have told us this: דברים היוצאים מן הלב נכנסים אל הלב, *words that emanate from heart enter the heart*. It is very simple to understand. **The effectiveness of words is measured by whether they're able to illuminate the heart of another.**

Remembering the *Point* of Telling the Story

Sometimes, a person feels that he *does* have it... he prepared to tell his young children all about the blood and the frogs, and so forth... he makes a big to-do about it, and the children loved it. **But even this isn't necessarily the *tachlis*.** We don't mean to minimize this, but we must understand: What are we seeking here?

Sometimes, a person may feel down about himself. *This person who knows how to speak must have the most amazing seder, he thinks. His children must be sitting with their mouths agape, listening to how he tells the story of*

the Makkos... and this may be the case in that person's home. **But this is still not necessarily the essence of the *koach haddibur!***

It's *How* You Say It

There are *kehillos* in which **the *minhag* is not to speak at all during the entire *Seder***. Some would raise their eyebrows at this and say: It's all well and good to have *minhagim*... but *you need to fulfill the basic mitzvoah of* והגדת לבנך!

It is true that this isn't the *minhag* all over, and in most places, they tell the סיפור יציאת מצרים with flair and at great length—but this only illustrates the point of what we're attempting to say: It may be that a father will speak for three hours—keeping the children spellbound all the while—and he hasn't necessarily accomplished all that much.

Conversely, there may be a *Yid with a broken heart for the Ribbono shel Olam* who said his few words from the heart—and **it deeply penetrated the heart of his listeners!** The holy Apta Rav says that on Pesach night there is a special *segulah* and power that the words that emanate from our hearts will penetrate the *neshamah* of our children—illuminating their hearts so that the words will accompany them for life.

Of course, if a person has the talent, he should certainly utilize it—but he should always know and remember, “What am I looking for?” **Ensure that you will have** דברים היוצאים מן הלב, and it will surely enter the hearts if your listeners.

The Greatest Preparation for Pesach Is a Pure Heart

People are accustomed to preparing for the *Seder* with nice *vertlach* and purchasing nice *Haggadahs*. This is wonderful, because a person must have vessels, receptacles, in which to deliver the words—the *vertlach* and stories are like the vessels for the illuminations. But **we must remember that this is merely the external preparation for the *Seder* night**. If you prepare your heart, your words will emanate from the heart. **If you cry out to the Ribbono shel Olam to have the proper words, you will have a pure heart to transmit to your children.**

Praying for Heart

The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz would journey to Meron every year prior to Pesach to beseech the Ribbono shel Olam in the merit of Rabbi Shimon that he should be *zoche* to a proper *Seder* night.

He would cry out to Hashem because he understood that the *avodah* of Pesach night is to be a mailman; he is merely delivering the words... they're not *his* words! **I should come and tell *my* stories?! They won't leave any impression!** This won't give me the *koach haddibur* to illuminate when it is dark.

A truly beautiful moon must be able to illuminate the darkness. **A true *koach haddibur* must leave an impression on a child that will never depart him.** This can happen only when there's a *true dibbur*—like the words of a tzaddik, which leave an everlasting impression.

A *Yid* must be able to say in his old age., **"I can never forget the warmth that I felt as child on the Seder night."** He may not remember the story or the *mashal* that his father told, but he'll remember the warmth and the heart of those bright nights.

Memories Based on Emotion

We see an interesting phenomenon: The Ribbono shel Olam calibrated humans so that **the memory of a person is closely linked with his emotions.**

People don't easily remember technical information and knowledge. You tell a person a phone number, and he forgets it a moment later. But emotions are remembered well. People remember a time when they became very emotional. They can't forget where they were standing in those moments. It so overcame him, and tears were streaming down his face in those moments. **He remembers it years later.**

Why is this? Because it was a situation of *לב אל הלב*. That is why he became so emotional. And if it entered the heart, then it must have been a true *koach hadibbur*. **A true word out of his heart has the power to get into the heart very deeply. This is the power of *dibbur*!**

Pure Words Are Forever

The *eitzah* to attain this *koach hadibbur* is that the words should יוצא מן הלב, emanate from the heart. Therefore, we must first and foremost know what we are seeking to achieve—our intention is to ensure that the words will penetrate the hearts of our children and remain with them for generations.

This is the power of true words. They have the power to cause a person to remember—enabling him to fulfill ה' כל מצוות ה', to remember all the mitzvos of Hashem. **A word spoken in purity is forever. It penetrates the heart, and it refuses to leave.** It is for this reason that the words of a tzaddik leave a long-lasting impression.

One Word Gave *Chiyus* for Three Years

In this vein, there's a story about the Beis Aharon of Karlin that we will do well to remember in these days before Pesach night:

A *chassid* of the Rebbe didn't come to the Rebbe for three years—and when he finally did come, the Rebbe asked him about his long absence.

The *chassid* explained that the last time he was in Karlin, he heard words from the Rebbe—and these words continued to serve him in his *avodas Hashem* throughout these three years, such that there was no reason for him to return until now!

When the Rebbe asked what it was that he heard from him all those years ago, he said: **“Which creation can dare to serve Hashem? But how good is it to serve the Ribbono shel Olam however we want, whenever we want, and with whatever we want!”**

The Power of Speech Comes from *Bittul* to Hashem

These words have tremendous depth, and we can analyze and study them at length. But one may say, “Now that I know these words, I can surely repeat them to others and give them *chiyus* for three years!” It's obvious that it doesn't work this way. It only works when it emanates from the heart of a tzaddik. **When the tzaddik says it, and they ema-**

nate from a holy heart, it settles into the heart of the listener, and it remains there.

Their power of speech stems from their *bittul* to the Ribbono shel Olam. *Koach haddibur* means that **the Yid invests efforts for his own heart to have utter *bittul* to the Ribbono shel Olam**, and he davens that the words should enter the hearts of his children.

The Ribbono shel Olam says to every *Yid*: I want you to use your *koach haddibur* on Pesach night, and I'm telling you this on Rosh Chodesh—immediately with the appearance of a new moon. **Ensure that on Pesach night there will be a “beautiful *levanah*.”** Your *koach haddibur* should shine bright and illuminate for your children.

The more you have *bittul* to the sun, the more you have *bittul* to *tzadikim*, to the Torah, to the Ribbono shel Olam—the more you will fashion your heart, a heart that will later be able to influence the hearts of all those who listen to you.

The Mitzvah Is for Our Own Good

Mitzvos Were Given to Us for *Our* Completeness

This is a *yesod* that we must reiterate over and over: There's not a mitzvah in the Torah that was given for us to help the Ribbono shel Olam—everything is so that we should thereby come closer to the Ribbono shel Olam.

The mitzvah of *tzedakah* wasn't given to us because the Ribbono Shel Olam needs our help to feed the pauper, and *kimcha d'Pischa* isn't because there's *nebach* a person who doesn't have money for Yom Tov. **Every Yid is an only child in the Ribbono shel Olam's eyes.** He has more money and much more compassion for this person—but **He also has *rachmanus* on you!**

Hashem wants *you* to be an *ehrlicher Yid*—and this is why He gave you *kimcha d'Pischa*. He has compassion for you, and He wants you—through this *tzedakah*—to be spared from all misfortune.

The Mitzvah of Chinuch Isn't for Your Child—It's for You

The same applies to the *chinuch* of our children—and the *koach hadibur* that we receive from Above on this exalted night.

The Ribbono shel Olam didn't ask a person to speak with his children about *emunah* on the *Seder* night because He needs the *child* to become a *ba'al emunah*. He has enough ways to accomplish this. He can give the child an inspiration from Above or ensure that he'll find the right *sefer* to inspire him—and He has done so for so many people! The Ribbono shel Olam can make your child into a true *ba'al emunah* and *bitachon*—and He has many better ways to accomplish this than through the *vertlach* that we say at the *Seder*.

The Ribbono shel Olam commanded us to tell this story once a year on Pesach night—**because He has compassion on your soul!** He wants *you* to be an *ehrlicher Yid*.

The Key to Your Child's Heart Is in Your Hands

The Aibishter says to a person: “*Tzaddik'l*, come here for a moment. I'm asking you to speak to your children on Pesach night.” The person asks, “What does this mean, that I should talk to him?” And the answer is, “Look into the *chassidische sefarim* and how they discuss the *koach hadibur*, and you'll understand what it means.”

The *Yid* looks and says, “Ah, I understand that speech means the type of speech that will penetrate the heart... this is the *tachlis*. The *tachlis* isn't simply to find a nice *mashal* or a *gematria* to say over. But how can I accomplish this? I don't have the key to my son's heart! I know him... he's unfortunately not willing to hear anything... how can I make my words have power and potency?”

For this Chazal tell us: הלב נכנסים אל הלב מו היוצאים. But how is this accomplished?

And this person is answered from Above, “We didn't wait until Pesach night to tell you about this—we tell you about this special night in

advance, and that **the Ribbono shel Olam is waiting for you to prepare your heart, a broken heart...** to do *teshuvah*. To daven for a *koach haddib-ur*. You should meditate and reflect on what it is you want to say. Later, your words will enter the hearts of your listeners."

Why We Like to Hear Firsthand Stories

We see that people enjoy hearing stories from the people involved in it. "Really?! You were there?! I must hear it again! Tell me the story again!"

Maybe it's because we want to hear the story accurately, firsthand. But it really goes deeper.

The reason that we want to hear the story from the person involved is because **then the story has much more heart!** This person says the story with all the drama and emotion.

He Draws the People into His Emotions

When we hear a story from five hundred years ago about a *Yid* who went into the forest and got lost, it doesn't take over our heart so much. We don't follow along with his emotions.

When the subject himself tells the story, **he draws the person into his heart with his feelings!** Because the story happened to him, and therefore he invests his heart in it when he tells the story. When a person tells the story of his own past, **he will always say it with more heart**, and this is why his story enters the heart.

Relaying the Story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* with Heartfelt Emotion

Every *Yid* has experienced events in which the Aibishter brought him freedom. Everyone has experienced their own exodus to freedom. We must be able to give this over with feeling.

There's one way to do it: When a person says to his children on Pesach night, "Children, I want to share with you how the Ribbono shel Olam brought me salvation," that's one way.

But according to what we have shared here, there's another *mehalech*. Even if a *Yid* doesn't speak during the entire Seder, or if he doesn't want to share his personal stories with his children—but he wants to transmit *emunah* to his children—he can transmit this *emunah* by preparing his heart, so it should be “words that emanate from the heart.”

The main thing is for a *Yid* to have these feelings in his heart, to become moved by the words that we say. He davened to the Ribbono shel Olam before Yom Tov, he reiterated words of *emunah* to himself before Yom Tov—he is now ready to speak words of *emunah* on the *Seder* night.

When a person prepares himself before Yom Tov to build up his heart with *emunah*—so that the *emunah* will overtake him—he builds vessels that enable him to fulfill the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך on Pesach night in the most spectacular way, with results that will last within his children and their children for eternity.



The Ribbono shel Olam Lovingly Speaks to Every *Yid*

Calling Out with Love

Parashas Vayikra begins with the words ויקרא אל משה וידבר ה' אליו מאהל מועד, and He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying (*Vayikra* 1:1). Says Rashi: Every saying from Hashem is preceded by a “calling,” **an expression of endearment**, an expression that the Heavenly angels utilize, as it says, ויקרא זה אל זה, and one called out to the other.

Let us analyze this: Why is “calling out” an expression of love? When someone calls you, do you feel loved?! When a *bachur* is told that the *meshgiach* in yeshivah is calling him, does he feel love or dread? How does a call to a person illustrate connection and love?

The answer is that *speaking* can be a very technical medium of speech—used for transmitting information. A person will tell his friend, “Grab the table on the other side so it doesn’t fall.” There is no connection forged between the two over this type of speech; they’re simply communicating. One doesn’t need to know the other person in order to communicate with him along these lines. We didn’t become friends, and we didn’t become any closer through this type of speech.

The Spirit of Speech

When Hashem spoke to Bilaam, it was very transactional. “What do you need to know? Such and such? Here is your information.”

But, in truth, speech can be used for so much more—far beyond transmitting information. When two people converse, their words emanate

from deep within their *nefesh*—as *Targum Onkelus* says on the words ויהי חיה אדם לנפש חיה, *and man became a living being*, לרוח ממללא, *a spirit of speaking*. Thus, we learn that speech and words have a strong connection to the *nefesh*. Given that it emanates from the *nefesh*, it is understandable that speech breeds connection when two people speak.

We can hear people saying, “I spoke to this person for two hours... boy, was that wonderful. You remember that Friday night when we were in that place and we talked?” He remembers the conversation for a long time....

Conversation Breeds Connection

This is because, while speech itself is technical and used for transmitting information, it is a complete aside to what the person really wants: “**I want you! I want to be connected to you.**” A conversation may begin with a technical request—but very soon it devolves into connection. “Which Friedman are you? Who were your grandparents? In which yeshivah did you learn?” Why is he asking all these questions? Because he wishes to talk to—to connect with—the other person.

When two *Yidden* meet, they may begin with transactional talk—but very soon they begin inquiring about each other—until **the conversation turns into an end rather than a means.**

The Most Powerful Connection

This shows us the incredible power of speech to breed connection and closeness between two people. We see that one of the strongest bonds is the one between a *rebbe* and a *talmid*—so much so that if a *talmid* must go into exile (for killing a person inadvertently), we exile the *rebbe* along with him (*Makkos* 10a). This is because the closeness between them is so great.

Why do you feel so close to your *rebbe*? Can you explain it? Yes, he transmitted lots of information to you. Yes, he indicated to you this *Rashba* and that *Sfas Emes*—so you can go and look up those sources. What’s the big deal? But no! Words penetrate deeper and deeper until a tremendous closeness is forged.

Hashem Calls Us

And so, when the Ribbono shel Olam came to teach the *parashah* of *Korbanos* to Moshe Rabbeinu, He preceded it by saying: “I am not here simply to give you information.” If anyone thinks that the *parashah* of *Vayikra* is simply information, he is making a serious error, and he can close the *Chumash* immediately.

When the Ribbono shel Olam speaks with a *Yid*, He precedes this by calling out to him! Why does He call out to him? **Because Hashem wishes to show the *Yid* that He cares about speaking with him— that He enjoys speaking with him, regardless of *what it is* they’re speaking about. The speech is an end in and of itself— not just a means to communicate.**

If a person simply wants to provide information to his friend, he can send a message to him with that information. But if he calls to him, “Come here, I want to sit and speak with you,” this means that he wants the closeness. He wants *you!* This is the meaning behind ויקרא אל משה.

Speaking Through *Shefa*

And here we see a tremendous *yesod*. The Ribbono shel Olam communicates with us our entire lives. The *way* that He communicates with us is by giving us *shefa*—be it food, money, wisdom to solve problems, etc., and even when He gives us those very problems. **Each and every thing that Hashem sends a person is a form of *shefa*.** Sometimes, this problem that is sent especially for him is miraculous; it makes no logical sense that he encountered this problem... but the Ribbono shel Olam is talking to him.

When the Ribbono shel Olam gives a person his sustenance, it is an act of love. Just as a child nurses from his mother face to face—because feeding the child is an act of love and connection (*Berachos* 10:1), and it is very different from the way animals get their food—so too, Hashem giving us our food is a gesture of love.

The Rod and the Staff

This is what David HaMelech tells us in *Tehillim* (23:1) ה' רועי לא אחסר, *Hashem is my shepherd, I shall not lack*. Giving you *shefa* is really an act of love and connection—just like a shepherd does with his flock. But, David continues, שבטך ומשענתך, *the rod and the staff, they will comfort me*. Whether we're talking about the staff—which supports a person—or whether it is a rod, which suggests punishment—He is still speaking to us! Even when He punishes us, he is still speaking to us. **He speaking to us because we're His children! We're the nation that accepted His Torah! We're a nation of kings and priests.**

Thus, every time the Ribbono shel Olam speaks to a *Yid*—no matter *what it is* He is saying (even if the conversation is harsh, *R"l*)—it is still an expression of love. This is not only because Hashem loves every *Yid*, and everything that Hashem does for him is for his good—but simply because the Ribbono shel Olam loves being connected with us! He derives pleasure from talking to us.

A Caress from Above.

We see this in the pleasure that we derive in speaking to HaKadosh Baruch Hu through *tefillah*. It's not a technical conversation; the person feels קרבת אלוקים through this! Why? Because he has a closeness and a connection to the Ribbono shel Olam through his davening. And **from this we learn that when the Ribbono shel Olam speaks to us, He likewise derives pleasure from it.**

When a person understands that the Ribbono shel Olam is always talking to him and deriving pleasure from it, he will understand that even when painful things happen, he is really receiving a caress from Above.

He understands that the Ribbono shel Olam is speaking with him openly—because he is someone who gets the message.

When the Pain Is So Great

Sometimes, a person takes the pain very hard. Sometimes, a person,

R"l, gets such bad news... it's almost unbearable. He knows that it's from Hashem—because he has lived with *emunah* for so many years. But it's really painful. "To this extent?!" he feels. "I never dreamed that the Ribbono shel Olam will test me to such an extent."

Sometimes it happens that a person undergoes the same type of pain for a second time. He endured *gehinom* with the *chinuch* of one of his children. He invested blood, sweat, and tears into them until his beard turned white. Finally, his son settled down onto a stable footing—only for the father to realize that his next child is sending trouble signals! The entire saga is now beginning all over again! The feeling is terrible. He simply cannot believe what is happening. He was certain that he had already surpassed his *pekel* in life... it's surely behind him... and now he discovers that the trouble is only just beginning.

Always with Love

In addition, sometimes people experience *nisyonos* that are too painful to mention—they *mamash* hurt the heart, and they are often accompanied by great embarrassment—the entire street is talking about it. He already endured it once, and now it begins again. The family name has been tarnished irreversibly, and now no one will ever want to be *meshadach* with him

Yes, sometimes the Ribbono shel Olam speaks to us in this manner—until the person says to himself, "Am I really such a bad person?!" He had felt assured that he's done with the *tzaros*... "I've gotten smacked around enough... I am done," he says. But here he is....

But this person must know that **it will never happen that the Ribbono shel Olam will speak with us in a way that isn't loving. The Ribbono shel Olam has never, and will never, abandon you!** He is merely taking you to a higher level. **He is taking you to such a place where you will feel that you have nothing but Him to rely upon—and this is the greatest place in which a person can be!**

Now the person will say: "I used to depend on this one or that one."

I never dreamed that everyone would abandon me... I truly have only Hashem."

The Ultimate *Nisayon*

David HaMelech speaks often in *Tehillim* about the *nisayon* when everyone is upset with him. וירחיבו עלי פיהם אמרו האח האח ראתה עינינו, *and they opened their mouths broadly against me; they said Aha! Aha! Our own eyes have seen [his misfortune]!* (*Tehillim* 35:21). His enemies expressed joy at his misfortune... they pursued him... they laughed at him, and they abandoned him.

It is very difficult for a person when someone goes to war with him. There's a person who's convinced that you wronged him, and he says, "I don't forgive you for all eternity." And he must carry on as though nothing happened. This is a tremendous *nisayon*—David HaMelech tells us this, and this what experience shows. It's very hard to go about life calmly when you feel that another person is fuming at you.

Merely a Messenger

But it's good for the person. It's an expression of love. It may take time to grasp that it's indeed good, for this person is filled with feelings of guilt. He says, "I must have caused him pain—even if it wasn't my fault. This person feels pain because of me. I have always wanted to be a person about whom people will say, 'he never hurt a fly.'"

Know that, quite possibly, the Ribbono shel Olam is closer to you than in any other *nisayon*, because now you're truly broken. He knows that this will truly bring you a broken heart. In this situation, a person can become so close to the Ribbono shel Olam. The sufferer knows that this other person is merely a messenger.

The bottom line is that **a person must be able to take even the most difficult *nisayon* and understand that this, too, consists of words from Hashem, and they too are words of love.** If a person believes in *Hash-gachah Pratis*, he knows that the Ribbono shel Olam directly sent him this situation. **When the Ribbono shel Olam speaks to us, it's never transactional—it's always love.**

The Greatest Kindness

The rule is that the Ribbono shel Olam often awakens a person by behaving with him *מדה כנגד מדה*, *measure for measure*. This is the greatest kindness that Hashem does, giving a person an awakening in This World so he will have only good in the Next World.

The Ribbono shel Olam calls out to us for our good. He aids us in purifying ourselves—as we see from the *parashah* of *Korbanos*, which was given to Klal Yisrael for their atonement and forgiveness, and was preceded by a call of love.

The Ribbono shel Olam says to us: **The greatest love that I can express is when I chart a path of your return to Me.** If you have sinned, I have given you a *Mishkan* where you can bring *Korbanos* and be forgiven.

And so, know that what Hashem is speaking to us here is not technical speech. In *Shir HaShirim*, we read all about the great expressions of love inherent in the *Mishkan*. **In which way is all this love expressed? In the fact that Hashem charts our way of return.**

Hearing What He's Saying

With this understanding, a person can strengthen himself in the most difficult of circumstances—because he will remember that it is all an expression of love.

Sometimes, a person receives a phone call from a friend to whom he hasn't spoken in years. He answers with excitement... but the phone connection isn't good. "I hear you, but I can't hear what you're saying," he says. "Perhaps go over to the window where the connection is better...."

Sometimes we hear that the Ribbono shel Olam is speaking to us, but we don't get the message clearly. I know that this is love, but I don't grasp it. I am confused... I am in the dark. "The connection isn't good." But a *Yid* must say: "I know that the problem is on *my* end. I am now in a place with a bad connection.... But, Ribbono shel Olam! I implore You to call me back so I can hear You!"

If a person understands the picture and speaks to the Ribbono shel Olam in this way, He will certainly agree to speak with you with clarity. **One must daven for clarity in understanding the Ribbono shel Olam.... to understand what he's being told. And the Ribbono shel Olam—our great Teacher—will surely assist us and bring us closer to Him.**

