



Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFKA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

In memory of R' Shmuel Shmelka ben HaRav Moshe Kizelnik z"l

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PERSONALIZED AVODAS HASHEM

After the mabul, Noach returned to a new world that needed to be settled in so many different ways. The posuk tells us that the first thing he planted was a vine and his choice to do so, ultimately led to his downfall after he became intoxicated from the wine it produced. Indeed, Chazal are very critical of him and Rashi tells us that he should have planted something else first. Others understand that Noach was criticized for partaking of the fruits of the vine first instead of offering it as a korban or libation on the mizbayach. The baalei musar use this episode to demonstrate the significance of whatever someone does first and that it can have a tremendous impact on everything that comes after it. The truth is though, that this wasn't the first thing Noach did after he left the teivah; earlier, the chumash tells us that upon exiting, Noach built a mizbayach and offered korbanos from the kosher species he saved from the flood waters.

The Chasam Sofer posits that while it is true that Noach offered korbanos, he didn't receive full credit for offering them. This isn't just because he understood that this was the reason why Hashem had commanded him to take so many "extra" kosher animals on to the already cramped teivah, but because he missed a fundamental lesson in the avodah of korbanos, and of serving Hakadosh Boruch Hu, in general:

In parshas Bereishis, when Kayin and Hevel offered korbanos, each one offered a korban which they were more connected to: Kayin spent time working the land and so he brought fruits as an offering to Hashem Yisbarach. Hevel, on the other hand, was a shepherd and so he brought an animal sacrifice. Although Kayin was faulted for not doing more, we can still learn from his korban. What Noach should have realized, explains the Chasam Sofer, was that both Kayin and Hevel brought korbanos which they identified and connected with. Noach, the Torah tells us, was an "ish adamah" - a man of the land. As Chazal tell us, Noach invented the plow, presumably, not just because he sought to help civilization, but because he was connected to agriculture. Accordingly, Noach should have included some sort of fruit - in whatever form - in his korbanos. Instead he chose to offer animal sacrifices and then return to his own life's interests, separating the two.

The lesson is relevant for all of us. We tend to compartmentalize our lives as follows: We define avodas Hashem as wearing tefillin, davening, studying Torah, shaking lulav, etc. and then, we have our own interests and talents, but nothing could be further from the truth. Hashem endowed each of us with talents and interests in order that we should use them for good and incorporate them into His service. Indeed, Chazal tell us that a person should honor Hakadosh Boruch Hu with whatever he has, be it money, a good voice, or any other talent. That is the reason why He blessed us with them and we should find a way to utilize them to connect to our Creator, because it is for this reason that He blessed us with them.

ואמר רבי ירמיה בן אלקעזר מאי דכתיב {בראשית ח"א} והנה עלה זית טרף בפייה אמרה יונה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבוננו של עולם יהיו מזונותי מרורין קזית ומסורין בידך ואל יהיו מתוקין כדבש ותלויין ביד בשר ודם קתיב הכא טרף וקתיב התם {משלי ל:ח} הטריפני לחם חוקי. (עירובין יח:)

When Noach sent the dove out to see if the water level had gone down, it returned with an olive branch. Clearly, this was a supernatural phenomenon as the entire world and all its vegetation has been destroyed in the mabul. Indeed, Chazal tell us that the dove took the olive branch from just inside the entrance to Gan Eden. Accordingly, Noach wondered, "why an olive branch?"; it could have been any other type of growth and so Noach understood that there must be a message contained within - that a bitter olive branch directly from Hashem is 'sweeter' than anything else!

TORAH TEMIMAH



From the desk of
the Rosh Kollel...

Welcome to all our new subscribers!

Boruch Hashem Yomim Noraim in the kollel was uplifting! From a strong Elul z'man leading into the tefilos of Rosh Hashana, carrying through Succos with our annual simchas beis ha'shoeiva, and culminating on Simchas Torah, energies were high and inspiration was even higher! Thank you to all our wonderful baalei tefilah and mispalelim. B'ezras Hashem we are gearing up for another great winter z'man in the kollel.

In honor of reaching our 16th year, I am publishing the Shabbos derashos on the haftarah and parsha which were said within the walls of our beis medrash. This is a second volume to the edition published upon our 10th anniversary five years ago. Dedication opportunities are available. Contact us at info@torahkollel.com for more information.

...Boruch Hashem, we recently expanded our premises (slightly) by enclosing the porch off of the beis medrash, and plans are underway for major improvements in the coming months. If you would like to take part in the zechus of our makom Torah, please contact us at info@torahkollel.com.

The current situation worldwide is still frightening. Please increase your commitment to Torah study, tzedaka and chesed, and of course daven for all the captives, soldiers and the general situation.

From the early hours of the morning, until late at night, the beis medrash is and active asset to the community at large. Mosdos Avahas Yehonoson - "Torah Kollel" continues to impact on the community at large in many ways and exists thanks to the benevolence and generosity of its supporters around the world. Consider having a part of this tremendous zechus by sponsoring a bookcase, a day, week or month of the Torah Kollel. Contact us at info@torahkollel.com for further information.

- Rabbi David Lewin

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Suqyas ha' Sedra

SHEVISI HASHEM L'NEGDI TAMID !

At the beginning of Shulchan Aruch, the Rema writes that one should always be aware of Hashem's presence and as tzadikim, always walk 'before Hashem'. There, the Biur HaGra cites Noach, Chanoch, and later the Avos, as people who exemplified this. Based on the [scattered] word of the Sefer Hachinuch, the Chayei Adam compiles a list of six mitzvos of the heart which apply constantly, and is quoted by the Biur Halacha. The following is adapted from the [not yet published] translation & elucidation of the first section of Chayei Adam:

The following are the mitzvos of the heart; the obligation is constant, and one should not stop thinking of them for even a moment. By thinking of them, one fulfills a mitzva and there is no end to the reward he will receive from fulfilling them: **(1) To believe that there is one God** in the world, and He created all that exists, and that all that is, was, or will be, exists only through His desire and will.¹ He is the one who took us out of Egypt and gave us the Torah. None of this was by happenstance, but was Divinely ordained, as He directs everything in all worlds. This is a positive commandment as it says "I am Hashem, your God Who took you out of Egypt..." meaning, 'know and believe that the world has a God who supervises over everything, [like you saw when] I took you out of Egypt.' **(2) Not to believe² in any other god or power** other than Hashem, as it says "You shall not have any other gods...". Even if one understands that Hashem rules the world, but believes that He gave over some of its control to angels, constellations, or people, he is guilty of idol worship³ and has denied the powers of Hashem. Rather, one must believe that Hashem Himself supervises over all worlds and no angel or star has any power to do anything without His will. It is for this reason that Hashem is called "the God of gods". **(3) To unify⁴ Hashem**, as it says "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad". This is to be understood as follows: 'Listen Israel and know that Hashem Who willed everything into existence, is our God who oversees the entire universe. He is one, without any partner or aides.' The nature of these 3 mitzvos is to develop firm belief that this is the absolute truth and that anything else is not possible. Even if one sees wonders which appear to prove otherwise, he should know that these wonders are absolutely false, as it says in parshas Re'eh "If a prophet rises among you... and brings signs and wonders... do not listen to this prophet... for Hashem is testing you⁵ to see if you love Him..." The tradition that which we have received from our fathers is the absolute truth: Adam HaRishon saw the beginning of the world's creation and passed this [knowledge] to Mesushelach, and he to Noach, Noach to Sheim, and [then] to Avraham, down to Moshe Rabeinu. Even Moshe Rabeinu was not believed by the people of his generation because of the signs and wonders that he performed, but rather because of what they saw when they received the Torah. This is why the Torah does not refer to Moshe's actions as 'wonders' but rather as 'signs'⁶ except in his dealings with Pharaoh, where it says) "...give you a sign..."⁷ There, at the great and awesome, holy assembly at the foot of Har Sinai, all were all witness to [Hashem giving us the Torah], as the pasuk states "It was shown to you, so that you should know that Hashem is the God in the Heavens and above..."⁸ "Keil" (one of Hashem's names) is used to connote strength, as we find that "eilei ha'aretz" means the strong ones of the land. [Another example of this is] (Tehilim 136:2) "Hodu l'Elokei ha'elokim" - give thanks to the God of gods, meaning, the power of all powers.⁹ These 3 mitzvos include believing in yetzias mitzrayim¹⁰ including all the signs and wonders Hashem performed through Moshe, and [believing in] matan Torah - that we received both the written and oral tradition, that any Jew must give up his life and suffer terrible death as thousands have done throughout the generations, rather than deny even a small part of the Torah, both written and oral.¹¹ [The oral tradition,] primarily the Gemara, is an integral part of Torah.¹² It is the interpretation of the written Torah which Hashem gave to Moshe Rabeinu on Har Sinai. Moshe gave it over to Yehoshua and so it was passed down through the generations. We also accept upon ourselves and future generations to give our lives and maintain this as our firm belief. **(4) To love Hashem**, as it says "And you shall love Hashem..." This means that one should focus all of his thoughts and goals at loving Hashem. He should think to himself that all the pleasures of this world, wealth, children, honor, pale in comparison to the love he has for Hashem. The way to reach this level of love is through the Torah study.¹³ This is alluded to by the fact that immediately after the Torah's command to love Hashem, the pasuk states "and these words [of Torah] shall be on your

SPARKS OF SHABBOS

Shabbos is a day of rest, but this does not mean that we are simply resting from work and on vacation. Certainly, there is a higher purpose and goal in that which we cease from our regular weekday activities. Rav Matsiyahu Salomon zt'l notes that Chazal tell us that Shabbos is "m'ein olam ha'ba" - a taste of the world to come. While the experience of Shabbos isn't anywhere near it, by contemplating the essence of olam ha'ba, we can understand how what we are trying to emulate through our Shabbos observance. The Rambam writes that in olam ha'ba we will neither eat nor drink, but rather, that the tzadikim will sit and enjoy the radiance of the Shechina. Accordingly, the goal of Shabbos is to enjoy being in close proximity of Hakadosh Boruch Hu which is accomplished by remaining calm and tranquil, forgetting about our troubles and worries, and spending the time in Torah and tefilah.

L' maaseh...

When the Bluzhever rebbe was in Bergen-Belsen, he and a few other Jews submitted a request for permission to bake matzos for Pesach. To their surprise, their request was granted, and a small amount of matzos were prepared for the first night of Pesach. There were thousands of Jews in the camp; no where near enough matzos to satisfy the needs of everyone, and the question became, who, other than the small group of bakers, would get to eat from those matzos. A woman came forward with a request that her four small children be given a small piece of those matzos. Everyone was surprised by the request because clearly, priority should be given to Jews over bar or bas mitzva who would actually fulfill their obligation of eating matzos. However, the woman explained that these children would b'eizras Hashem survive and she wanted that they should know and appreciate the taste of the mitzvah of matza; they were the future of the Jewish people and as such, their partaking of these matzos would be crucial for the future generations. After the war, the Bluzhever rebbe who was so impressed by her attitude, took her as his second wife after losing his entire family in the war.

heart...". By contemplating Torah, a person's heart will become filled with love for Hashem. One who [unnecessarily] fills his mind with physical matters for the sake of pleasure or honor alone, transgresses this mitzva and will be duly punished.¹⁴

(5) To fear Hashem, constantly maintaining His fear before him as the pasuk says "You shall fear Hashem, your God". Yirah means that one must know that although Hashem is hidden from our view, He nevertheless sees all of our actions and understands all our thoughts. He understands our hearts and knows all that is hidden [from other people], as the pasuk says "Can a man hide in hidden places that I will not see him?".¹⁵ **(6) Not to stray after our thoughts and eyes**, as it says "Do not stray after your hearts or after your eyes." Chazal explain that 'after your hearts' refers to heresy¹⁶ and 'after your eyes' refers to promiscuity.¹⁷ Heresy includes all thoughts that are contrary to Torah, and promiscuity includes all worldly desires,¹⁸ for if one turns his attention to fulfilling any single desire, he will be drawn to constantly desiring it. One can fulfill these mitzvos every single moment. When he does so, he will also fulfill the mitzva of 'l'davka bo' - clinging to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.¹⁹

1. See Sefer HaChinuch (mitzva 25) who adds that part of the mitzva of emunah in Hashem is to realize that no matter how hard one tries to understand the ways and workings of Hashem, he will never gain full understanding. Indeed, even Moshe Rabeinu's request of this nature was denied.

2. The intent of the Torah's command not to have other gods clearly is that one should not believe in other gods. Had the Torah meant that one should not construct idols and the like, it would have never used the term 'elohim acheirim' (other gods) implying that they are somehow challilah, similar to Hashem Yisborach. (Ramban Shemos ??:??)

3. Serving other powers with an awareness that they are agents of Hashem is known as avodah zara b'shituf. Whether or not non-jews are forbidden from this type of worship is debated by the Rishonim and is beyond the scope of this work.א

4. i.e. that Hashem actively runs the entire world and all of its workings "singlehandedly". That which we declare that Hashem is "one" does not mean that He is one and not two, but rather that He is everything and there is no place in the world in which He is not to be found.

5. This does not necessarily mean that Hashem sends the false prophets on a mission to test us. Were this the case, the false prophet would perhaps not be liable for his false prophecies. Rather, it means that Hashem does not interfere with the false prophet's ability to perform wonders as a way of testing our faith in Him. (Ohr HaChayim Hakadosh).

6. See Shemos 4:30. See also commentary of the Ramban to Devarim 13:2 who points out and explains this difference in terminology.

7. See the Chayei Adam's commentary on the hagada where he expounds upon this.

8. No other religion claims a divine revelation to the entire people. Fabrication of such a story is highly unlikely. The fact that we have a clear tradition that this happened i.e. that the entire nation stood at the foot of Har Sinai at matan Torah bears testimony to this fact. (Introduction to Sefer HaChinuch)

9. See Rambam Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah perek 1 who discusses this at length. i.e. that which Hashem is "one", being the Creator of everything and the only power that controls the world, and that believing otherwise is heresy.

10. Belief in yetzias Mitzrayim is a fundamental principle in Torah. Indeed, many mitzvos of the Torah are in remembrance of, or in some other way tied to, yetzias Mitzrayim.

11. With the exception of murder, idolatry and illicit relations, one must choose to transgress any aveira in order to preserve his own life. However, if the intent of the non-jew who is threatening him is to cause him to deviate from his beliefs or observance, he may choose to surrender his life. If he is being forced to sin in public, he must give up his life. Additionally, in times where there is a decree against the masses, one must give up his life rather than violate even as much as a Jewish custom. (Yoreh Deah 157:1)

12. Without it, much of the written Torah cannot be understood at all. For example, the Torah commands us to place "totafos" between our eyes. It is only because of the oral tradition that we know that this is a reference to tefillin and that we know all of the intricate halachos about making them.

13. The study of Torah is unlike other intellectual pursuits. When one learns Torah, he becomes spiritually connected with Hashem. While this can be experienced on many different levels, the basic premise is that Torah is communication from Hashem.

14. One must realize that although often vacations and other activities are necessary in order to break up the stress of daily life, these activities should not become end-goals in and of themselves. Ultimately, our purpose is to serve Hashem by studying His Torah and doing His mitzvos. Our involvement in business and other dealings is in order to sustain ourselves and our families so that we can continue living a life of Torah and mitzvos. Luxuries and vacations are meant to ease these experiences and relieve us of stress etc.

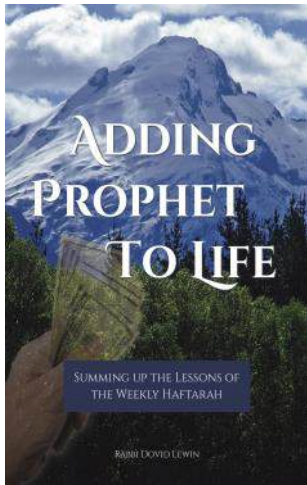
15. One who is constantly aware of Hashem's presence will be more successful in resisting the temptations of his yetzer hara. The Gemara (Berachos 28b) tells us that R' Yochanan ben Zakai blessed his students that they should fear Heaven as much as they fear their peers. After all, often when people are about to sin they check to make sure no one is watching.

16. According to Chazal, the heart is the "thinking organ". Therefore, the Torah warns us not to entertain thoughts that are contrary to Torah such as heresy.

17. Rashi there explains that the heart and eyes are the conduits of aveirah; the eyes see and the heart desires. Afterwards, the body commits the aveirah.

18. Sexual desires are the paradigm of zenus. In truth however, zenus includes any physical pleasure that a person sees and lusts after.

19. Since one cannot physically attach himself to Hashem, the intent of the pasuk is that one should focus his thoughts on Him.



DIVREI HA'NAVI - ADDING PROPHET TO LIFE

Sefer Yeshaya begins with prophecies of destruction and suffering, later moving to words of consolation. In its final verses, the navi speaks of our final geulah. In the second to last posuk, the navi tells how after Moshiach's arrival, we will all go to the Beis HaMikdash every rosh chodesh, and every Shabbos. In the final posuk, Yeshaya tells how people will go out and see the corpses of those who continue to sin against Hashem. Their bodies will lay rotting away and it will be a disgrace for all who behold this sight.

When we read the haftarah, we end off by repeating the previous posuk, "v'haya midei chodesh b'chodsho u'midei Shabbos b'shabbato, yavo kol basar l'hishtachavos l'fanai..." - how every month and every week everyone will return to bow to Hashem. On the surface, the reason why we repeat this posuk is simply in order to end off on a positive note. While this is certainly the basis for the minhag, the Chasam Sofer suggests a deeper reason as well. He explains that after Moshiach comes we will be truly thankful for all that Hashem has done for us, and we will thank Him for it. Yet, we won't ask him for more, and we run the risk of thereafter taking everything for granted. So, Hashem will make us pass by the corpses of His enemies, so that we will be afraid lest we suffer a similar fate. This in turn will inspire us to keep thanking Him for all He has done for us, and so, we will return, every month, and every single week to keep expressing our thanks and gratitude to the Ribono shel Olam.

It seems though, that the consensus of the meforshim is that l'asid lavo, there will be a weekly mitzva of aliyah l'regel, plus another mitzva every rosh chodesh to top it off. In the past, we have discussed what exactly this means and how we will all feel about shlepping to Yerushalayim every single week. The Malbim however, doesn't seem to understand it this way, and explains that each week, non-Jews will be inspired and choose to join the Jewish people. They will realize the mistakes of their idolatrous ways and come to the Beis HaMikdash to serve Hashem.

Based on this understanding, perhaps we can suggest a modification of the Chasam Sofer's approach: Initially, there will be those of us who will be inspired by an appreciation of recognizing the malchus of Hashem. This will propel us into His service. Some of us, however, will only be inspired when we see the fate of those who act against Hashem. This is teshuva through pachad as opposed to yiras ha'romemus. Yet these two levels exist today, even before Moshiach's arrival. We can look around us and marvel at Creation and see the yad Hashem and hashgacha pratit in our everyday lives. If we don't, and instead choose to ignore His presence, Hashem will have to inspire us through fear. Will we be among those who are always praising Hashem, every week and every single month, or will only do so after we see tragedy and suffering? The choice is ours.



In tachanun we say "ki hu yada yitzreinu, zachor ki afar anachnu" (for He knows our [evil] inclination, remember that we are [made from] dirt). Seemingly, these are two independent statements and one must wonder what one has to do with the other. The Chasam Sofer explains as follows: At the end of parshas Bereishis, when Hashem 'decided' to bring about the mabul, He proclaimed that "man is made of flesh and blood, and yet they rebel". Rashi comments there that were man made of fire, he would rebel even more, and so, the very fact that man who is made of flesh chooses to rebel, reflects very negatively. What comes out is that the fact that man is formed from dirt and yet rebels, shows an even higher level of rebellion, since he should be humbled by his very essence. However, this is only true when a person's transgressions stem from rebellion. But nobody is perfect and our failures stem from our physicality and temptations of the world. Hashem knows this and so, the fact that we are formed from the ground testifies in our defense and not against us. This itself gives us the right to beseech Hashem for His help despite our actions.