



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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THE TRUTH ABOUT SHEKER

When Yaakov came before his father in an attempt to usurp the berachos designated for his brother Eisav, Yitzchok sensed that something was amiss and asked him to identify himself. Because the berachos were rightfully his, and more importantly, he knew that giving them to Eisav could prove disastrous, Yaakov answered "Ani Eisav bechorecha" (I am Eisav your first born). Clearly, this was a lie, and Yaakov, more than anyone else, was particular to always tell the truth. Accordingly, Rashi explains that since these three words could be punctuated differently and read "Ani. Eisav bechorecha." ([It is] I. Eisav [is] your first born.), Yaakov's statement was actually true.

This begs explanation. Certainly by Yaakov trying to mislead his father and trick him into giving him the berachos he was guilty of sheker. He may have been entitled to do so, but of what use is it that it is possible to re-punctuate Yaakov's declaration as if it somehow transforms a sheker into emes?

HaRav Eliyahu Meir Block zt"l explains that saying a falsehood is something difficult for a person to do. Often, one feels he has reason to do so but he lacks the ability to do so if it is entirely untrue. If however, he has a way of explaining his sheker, he will be armed with the confidence to tell a lie. When someone is deceitful or acts falsely, it affects him and leaves a mark on this neshama. The effect on his soul highly correlates with the degree of the sheker. Saying an outright lie damages a person's neshama much more than when he simply bends the truth or exaggerates the facts, and so in an effort to retain the purity of his pristine neshama, Yaakov avinu sought a way to portray himself as Eisav is a way that wasn't one hundred percent false.

What emerges from all of this is that we are affected by what we say. Even when we are permitted or even mandated to bend the truth, it doesn't become hefker and we need to realize that the things we say affect us and impact on our neshamos.

Since Sunday is rosh chodesh, this week's haftarah is preempted by "machar chodesh" which relates the story of Dovid's escape from his father-in-law Shaul who wanted to kill him. In an attempt to ascertain the facts before he fled, his best friend and brother-in-law Yehonoson went to find out while he hid in the forest. Yehonoson returned to tell him to run for his life but communicated this information by way of a prearranged signal of how he would shoot arrows and instruct the boy who would gather them. After the boy left, Dovid emerged and the two embraced and parted their ways. Seemingly, Yehonoson could have simply told Dovid "my father wants to kill you so run" as they were going to meet anyway. The Musar HaNeviim and the Gra both explain that even though Yehonoson was obligated to convey this information, saying lashon hara or speaking negatively about his father was something to be avoided as much as possible.



אמר רבי יצחק: למה נמשלה תפלתן של צדיקים כעֶתֶר — מה עֶתֶר זֶה מֵהַפֶּךָ הַתְּבוּאָה מִמְקוֹם לְמִקוֹם, כִּי תִפְלֵתָן שֶׁל צַדִּיקִים מֵהַפֶּכֶת מִדוֹתָיו שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִמֵּדֶת רִגְזוֹת לְמֵדֶת רַחֲמָנוּת. (יבמות סד.)

The Torah refers to Yitzchok's beseeching Hashem for children with the word "vaye'atar" which seems to be a derivative of "atar" - a pitchfork. This is because the tefilos of tzadikim have the power to turn over Divine decisions from top to bottom just like a pitchfork is used to turn over the grains and stalks in a pile.



From the desk of
the Rosh Kollel...

Welcome to all our new subscribers!



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. **If you would like a copy, consider entering the Chanuka-Purim raffle campaign and select the November Super Special package!**

...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

BENTCHING ON SHABBOS - EREV ROSH CHODESH

When Rosh Chodesh is on Sunday, the regular haftarah is usually replaced with "machar chodesh", the story of Dovid and Yehonoson and the latter's father's pursuit of Dovid. This is [only] usually the case because sometimes a different haftarah such as parshas ha'chodesh or of the three weeks etc., takes precedence. There is however another question of halacha that arises every time erev Rosh Chodesh falls out on Shabbos: The prevalent custom in k'lal Yisroel (especially in winter months) is to begin seudas shlishis (preferably) before shki'ah and recite birkas ha'mazon only when Shabbos is more or less over. In a normal Shabbos, we tend not to question whether or not we should be reciting "retzai" (the additional paragraph for Shabbos). After all, this is the third of the Shabbos meals, and as such it is most appropriate, if not imperative, to say it. However, when Sunday is also Rosh Chodesh, we must ask ourselves if we should be adding "yaaleh v'yavo". After all, in a matter of minutes, we will begin Maariv when we will be adding it. Reciting both might be somewhat of a contradiction. On the other hand, it is already Rosh Chodesh, but how could we leave out retzai; after all, this is one of the three obligatory Shabbos meals? Indeed, many people try to make an extra effort to eat an earlier seudas shlishis on a Shabbos such as this one. However this can be especially challenging in the winter months and even in the summer time, requires some forethought and advance planning. What, then, should one do when faced with this type of situation?

The Rosh (in a teshuva) writes that even on an ordinary Shabbos, if one didnot bentch before nightfall, he should omit retzai from birkas ha'mazon. As proof, he cites the gemara (which is also the halacha) regarding a person who forgot to daven Mincha on Shabbos afternoon: When he makes up his missing tefilah at Maariv, he recites two weekday shemoneh-esrei's. Although the second one is meant to serve in place of his Shabbos Mincha, since it is no longer Shabbos, he davens a weekday tefilah. So too, reasons the Rosh, since it is no longer Shabbos, how can we allow him to recite retzai?

The Hagaos Maimonios however takes issue with this ruling. After all, one who accepts Shabbos early recites a Shabbos shemoneh-esrei although it is still Friday afternoon. It seems that the same applies to birkas ha'mazon, even if he eats quickly and bentches before sunset. Clearly, since for all intents and purposes it is Shabbos for him, he recites retzai. The same should apply to a meal eaten at the end of Shabbos, so long as he has not yet called an end to Shabbos by davening Maariv or reciting havdala. As for the Rosh's proof from the person who forgot to daven Mincha, on the contrary, the reason why he doesn't recite a Shabbos tefilah is because he has ended Shabbos with his first shemoneh esrei. His second one, is a make-up tefilah, but it is definitely no longer Shabbos.

Both the Shulchan Aruch and Rema (in Darkei Moshe) write that the halacha follows the Hagaos Maimonios. However, they speak only of a regular Shabbos when retzai is the only addition that should possibly be

added. Our question of what to do if motzei Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh still remains.

The Tosefta (Berachos) however, rules that one who began eating on erev Shabbos (a weekday meal, without accepting Shabbos early) and bentched on Shabbos, must recite retzai in birkas ha'mazon "because he recites bentching on Shabbos". As such, it would seem that in our scenario, one should recite ya'aleh v'yavo and not retzai. After all, if is certainly Rosh Chodesh now (especially if he recites bentching after tzei ha'kochavim). Indeed this is the ruling of the Magen Avraham who writes that reciting both is not an option for how can one contradict himself by saying it is Shabbos and at the same time Rosh Chodesh which isn't until Sunday?.

The Bach however maintains that the ruling of Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 188) is absolutely correct; everything depends on when he began eating. As such, retzai is most appropriate for this meal. This would seem to be especially true since, as mentioned above, this is a Shabbos seudah. (The reason why one who forgets retzai during seudas shlishis is not required to repeat bentching is not because it might already be motzei Shabbos, but rather because we rely – b'dieved – on the opinions that do not require one to eat bread for seudas shlishis, and the halacha remains the same even if one eats and bentches well before sunset. As such, l'chatchila, this is a Shabbos meal.)

The Taz, takes a third approach and says that while it is true that the beginning of the meal is the main determining factor, one should also recite that which is appropriate at the time birkas ha'mazon is recited, since "the additional kedusha of the day has begun". It is for this reason that the Tosefta requires the addition of retzai for a meal that began on Friday. Therefore, when Rosh Chodesh falls on Sunday, one should recite both retzai and ya'aleh v'yavo. There is no need to be concerned that this appears to be a contradiction just like havdala is recited as part of kidush when yom tov is on motzei Shabbos.

The Mishna Berura cites both the opinion of the Magen Avraham and the Taz without making a clear ruling. It is important to remember that this is all provided a person ate bread both before and after nightfall; if he ate before shki'ah and merely continued (by eating other foods or drink) into the night the poskim rule that he should recite only retzai. Similarly, if didn't wash until after shki'ah, reciting retzai (in this case) is questionable and many poskim recommend following the ruling of the Magen Avraham and not the Taz l'chatchila daven mincha only after the time of mincha ketana has arrived.

SPARKS OF SHABBOS

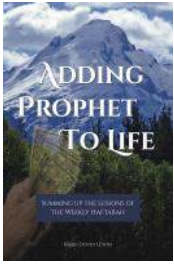
Every yom tov has its unique mitzvos. On Rosh Hashana, we blow shofar, on Pesach, we eat matzah, and on Succos we sit in a succah and shake lulav. R' Shimshon Pinkus explains that the reason for this is because we must create the kedusha of yom tov. Without these mitzvos and their corresponding 'instruments', the yom tov lacks kedusha. However, Shabbos is different. It is a gift to us from Hashem yisbaracha. Its kedusha is automatic and we don't need any such kli to experience this. Rather, it is by preparing delicious foods and bathing, getting dressed, and shining our shoes that we demonstrate how we wait for the Shabbos with excitement. Then, we can truly feel and experience its kedusha.

L' maaseh...

When Rav Aharon Bakst was a bochur, he was offered a shiduch to a girl who was orphaned from her illustrious father, however, the girl's mother nixed the idea because she felt that her daughters should only marry boys who would end up being roshei yeshiva or the like, and from her research, it seemed that R' Aharon was likely destined to go into business. Many years later, after R' Aharon had married another girl, he had developed into a tremendous talmid chacham, and the Alter of Slabodka offered him a job as rosh yeshiva of Slabodka, one of the most prominent yeshivos in the entire world. R' Aharon responded that he would have to get back to him. Eventually he refused because after doing a little bit of research, he found out that original almanah who didn't want him as a son-in-law was still alive, and yes, although her daughter ended up getting married, her husband wasn't a rosh yeshiva. "If I take this position" explained R' Aharon, "the poor woman will likely hear about it and will beat herself up that she refused to take me for her daughter so many years ago." This was something that he was not prepared to do, and so he forgo a tremendous opportunity in order to spare an almanah the pain of regret.



The posuk tells us "vaye'atar Yitzchok l'Hashem l'nochach ishto" - that Yitzchok beseeched Hashem in tefilah. Chazal note that the posuk uses the word "vaye'atar" and understand that it is synonymous with an "atar" - a pitchfork because the tefilos of a tzadik turn over Hashem's anger to mercy. In the sefer Beis Elokim, the Mabit explains that when it came to Yitzchok, there was no anger. On the contrary, Hashem desired to hear his tefilos. In Yitzchok's case, his tefilos turned over the natural order as both he and Rivka were unable to have children, but it was this act of a tefilah turning thing upside down that became ingrained in the DNA of K'lal Yisroel that gives us, their children, the ability to turn Hashem's wrath of anger into love and compassion through tefilah.



DIVREI HA'NAVI - ADDING PROPHET TO LIFE

Most of us are familiar with the story: Shaul had displayed a certain amount of animosity to his son-in-law, Dovid and Dovid wasn't exactly sure how serious a threat he was and so he sent his closest friend Yehonoson, who was also Shaul's own son, to find out exactly where he stood. Yehonoson went to the royal rosh chodesh seudah and Shaul proclaimed in no uncertain terms, that he sought to eliminate Dovid. As they had prearranged, Yehonoson made his way to the forest where Dovid was hiding and shot arrows, instructing his servant to go and fetch them. Dovid knew that if his friend would shout out that the arrows are right here, he was safe, but if he told the servant to go further, it meant that Dovid should run for his life. Yehonoson shot the arrows a great distance and after the arrows were gathered, he sent his servant home and Dovid came out from hiding to say goodbye to his very best friend.

In past we have discussed why Yehonoson couldn't just relay the message in a more direct fashion, but now, let us focus on the shooting of the arrows themselves. So far, we have described the storyline of the haftarah the way it appears to be, and this indeed seems to be the approach of most of the meforshim. Rashi, however, explains that Yehonoson shot the arrows as a way of seeking a sign from Heaven as to whether or not Dovid should run for his life. In other words, even though Shaul was very clear about his intentions, it was not clear whether or not Dovid should run for his life or not. This needs to be understood.

The gemara in Chulin (95b) cites Rav as ruling that any "nichush" which is not like that of Eliezer eved Avraham or like that of Yehonoson, does not qualify as a forbidden form of nichush, and is permitted. The reference to Eliezer is that when he went to seek a wife for Yitzchok, he davened to Hashem that if she offers water to the camels, it should be considered a clear sign that this girl (Rivka) is the one for Yitzchok. The nichush of Yehonoson of course, refers to our haftarah, as per Rashi's understanding that he shot arrows as a way of determining whether or not to run.

What emerges is that any sort of seeking a sign from above which is less than these two instances is permitted, but implies that both should have been forbidden. This is difficult to understand and the Bach and Levush explain that Eliezer really relied on the fact that he had ascertained her yichus and that she demonstrated her desire to do chesed. Yehonoson had already determined that his father wanted to kill Dovid, and this was really what made him reach the decision to flee. Their respective acts of nichush per se, however, would have been forbidden. Accordingly then, we need to understand why they sought a sign from above to seal their decisions.

To be sure, nichush is a bona fide Torah prohibition, and everyone agrees that taking something which happened as a sign from above is a violation thereof. Therefore, one who sees a black cat cross his path and understands it as a bad sign has transgressed. In short, superstition is a real prohibition. The question is exactly how far this extends and the Rambam writes that one who asks for a sign from above like Eliezer did is liable to receive malkus. This is also more or less the understanding of Tosfos.

There is however, another approach in understanding the gemara. Perhaps when the gemara says that any nichush that doesn't resemble that of Eliezer or Yehonoson isn't considered nichush, it wasn't referring to the prohibition of such, but rather that one shouldn't rely on such things as a clear sign. The Raavad champions this approach, claiming that the Rambam made a terrible mistake in understanding the gemara, and the Gra sides with the Raavad, explaining that certain things can qualify as a sign and not just a superstition if they already happened, but these are limited to the list of the gemara (a house, a woman, a child). However, when it comes to asking Hashem for a sign, one may do so and this is the basis for making a "goral ha'Gra".

We also find several gemaros where amoraim asked children which posuk they were learning and understood it as a sign from above. This however, possibly only refers to the desire to access a message from Hashem about something which already happened and this is echoed by the words of the Rema in Shulchan Aruch. He then cites the opinion of the Raavad, adding that some (Rambam and others) forbid seeking a sign from above about what to do, adding that one who is tamim and trusts in Hashem will be surrounded by chesed, implying that it is worthwhile to be machmir.

The Sefer Mishbetzos Zahav quotes the Leshem who discusses Shaul's preoccupation with eliminating Dovid. Without getting into too much detail, he explains that Shaul felt that doing so would hasten moshiach's arrival who would come quicker if the malchus remained in his own family. The Ramad Vali writes that the reason Yehonoson shot chitzim (arrows) because it is associated with the word "chitzonim" which are outer spiritual entities. While both of these concepts are well above our comprehension, perhaps this allows us to understand why Dovid and Yehonoson sought out a siman; even though it was clear that Shaul wanted to kill Dovid and for any of us, fleeing would be the obvious choice, they reasoned that perhaps the true ratzon Hashem was otherwise. Because of this, they sought a sign from above, but for the rest of us, ein lanu eisek ba'nistoras, and we should follow logic and daas Torah. Then we will be zocheh to the beracha of the Rema: v'chesed Hashem, yesovevenu!