



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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SPARKS AND KISSES

The Torah reports that when Yaakov Avinu was sold into slavery, he was transported to Mitzrayim by Arab merchants who were carrying perfumes and other fragrant spices. Noting that this has always been out of character for Yishmael's descendants who most often transport oils and tars which have a more offensive scent, Chazal explain that this was a chesed of the Ribono shel Olam who arranged this so that Yosef wouldn't have to endure the foul odors of the cargo during his ride.

Basically, what Chazal are saying is that Hashem was so to speak smiling at Yosef, letting him know that He was with him. On the surface however, this is difficult to understand. Yosef was being torn away from Yaakov who was not only his father, but chavrusa and mentor. He was being plucked from his familiar surroundings which was the epitome of kedusha and was sold as a slave, now being transported to Mitzrayim, one of the most morally depraved nations in the entire world. This was tragic. How then, was a pleasant aroma supposed to relieve Yosef of this traumatic experience?

HaRav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l explains that this was exactly the point. As Yosef was being led away, he saw his world become darker and then crumbling away completely. Such a realization could drive a person to complete despair and depression, at best. It seemed to Yosef that Hakadosh Boruch Hu had chas v'sholom abandoned him completely. In order to show Yosef that Hashem was still with him, He sent arab perfume merchants to take him to Mitzrayim. Yosef then understood that certainly his experiences were not without reason; although he couldn't foresee or understand them, He knew without question that Hashem had not just abandoned him.

This, explains R' Chaim, is the lesson of Chanuka. A cursory reading of 'al ha'nisim' indicated that at the time we were miraculously saved from annihilation. Yet, the symbol of Chanuka is the menorah which celebrate the miraculous find of the oil and the fact that it burned eight times as long as it should have. Moreover, the gemara seems to indicate that Chazal instituted hallel because of this miracle and not because we won any battles. Furthermore, the neis of the oil was only witnessed by those in the Beis HaMikdash and its experience wasn't really so relevant for the masses. On the surface, being saved from destruction played a greater role in the lives of every Jew. So why then, do we celebrate the fact the miracles associated with the menorah? The answer, he explains is because although our lives were spared, we were still living in dark times. We might have told ourselves that although we won the battle, Hashem isn't really interest in us, but when He made a tiny amount of oil burn for eight days, the Ribono shel Olam showed us that He was still here with us. Hashem has his reasons for everything we endure, but He often sends us little "light messages" to rekindle the sparks within us. If understand that this is a kiss from Hashem, we can ignite our drive to persevere.

נוח לו לאדם שיפיל עצמו לתוך כבשן האש ואל ילבין פני חבריו ברבים מגלן מתמר הפך נא. (סוטה י:)

In order to save her life, Tamar only alluded to Yehuda that the child she was carrying was his, because it is easier to jump into a furnace than embarrass someone else. The reason embarrassing another person is not included among the three cardinal sins is because one is not required to give up his life, but embarrassing someone is considered to be a major character flaw in that one should ideally be inclined to do so.

TORAH TEMIMAH



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the Rosh Kollel...

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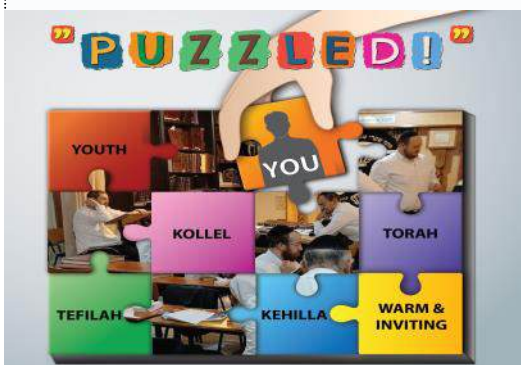
In honor of reaching our 16th year, I am publishing the Shabbos derashos on the haftarah and parsha which were said within the walls of our beis medrash. This is a second volume to the edition published upon our 10th anniversary five years ago. Dedication opportunities are available. Contact us at info@torahkollel.com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

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- Rabbi David Lewin

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Sugyas ha' Sedra

KEDUSHAS NER CHANUKA

There is debate in the Gemara (Shabbos 22a) as to whether or not one is permitted to light one [Chanuka] candle from another. Rav prohibits this, and Shmuel is lenient. The Gemara further investigates the basis of their dispute: Perhaps Rav's reasoning is that drawing fire from the existing flame with a match or the like constitutes a lack of respect for the mitzva [of the existing flame]. (This is known as bizuy mitzva) If so, one may light another candle directly from an existing flame, provided the wicks are long enough to facilitate this. If this is the case, then according to Shmuel it would be permissible lighting a second candle via a match or intermediary candle. However, perhaps Rav is concerned that lighting one candle off of another one appears as if he is removing a part of the mitzva (this is known as ak'chushei mitzva). If so, then even Shmuel might only permit lighting from one candle to another when transferring directly. The Rishonim debate if the halacha follows Rav or Shmuel and whether the concern is bizuy or ak'chushei mitzva. Still, all agree that it is indeed permitted to light one candle directly from another. (Either because the halacha follows Shmuel, or because even Rav agrees that there is no real issue of ak'chushei mitzva.) However, since only the first flame is the real mitzva, one cannot light the other lights from it as they are (comparatively) non-mitzva flames. (Darkei Moshe quoting the Mordechai.)

However, if two people light in the same location (such as neighbors who light at the entrance of their common chatzer) the second person may light his Menorah directly from the first. [This is indeed the ruling of the Mishna Berura, but does not apply to two people lighting in the same house since the basic mitzva is only one candle per household.] See however Tosfos (Shabbos 23a - [d"h shema mina]) who writes that although this is technically permissible, the custom is to be stringent and never light one candle from another. Accordingly one should avoid doing so even in the case of two neighbors lighting in a common entrance.

The Tur quotes the Sefer HaTeruma that since the halacha follows the opinion of Shmuel, one is permitted to draw fire from a Chanuka flame to light a candle to be used for a different mitzva such as Torah study etc. Since they are both mitzvos, using the flame for another mitzva does not constitute a lack of respect for the first mitzva. [Even according to those Rishonim who rule like Rav's opinion, it would still be permitted to light the second candle if lighting directly from the first.]

See however Biur HaGra who disagrees. He writes that the opinions which forbid using the Menorah's light to learn or perform other mitzvos rule as such because they understand this to constitute a bizuy mitzva. Therefore, drawing from its flame is no different. See Mishna Berura who appears to rule stringently.

Although Chazal declared Chanuka as days of hallel and hoda'ah, and did not give it the bona fide status of a yom tov, prohibiting melacha, women¹ have a custom to refrain from melacha while the candles [of the Menorah] are burning. Although several opinions understand this to mean until the candles actually go out, the custom is to refrain from melacha only for the first half hour since this is the basic obligation. While it is unclear as to what is considered a melacha as far as this minhag is concerned, the prevalent custom seems to be that women should refrain from any activities prohibited on Yom Tov but are permitted to cook or bake.²

SPARKS OF SHABBOS

The Nesivos Sholom explains that although the Torah mentions Shabbos at the conclusion of Creation, it refers to it as 'the seventh day'. This is because it is a result of the previous 6 days and is very much connected to them. We knew about this through the times of avos and still while under Pharaoh's rule. After we left Mitzrayim, Hashem introduced us to 'Shabbos' which is a completely different level where we live on a different realm, detached from this world. Hashem calls it a 'matana tova' - a great gift and the Zohar says that Shabbos is Hashem's name.



The Zohar tells us that one who davens, cries, and screams ("tze'ahkah") to the point that his lips cannot move, has davened a complete tefilah which will not go unanswered. Rav Shimshon Pinkus explains that this screaming does not necessitate a loud voice and in truth is really inaudible. Rather, when someone is desperate and becomes hysterical, he realizes that only Hakadosh Boruch Hu can help and turns his full attention to Him. In truth, a person's very existence in this world is precarious and if we realize this and "scream" to Hashem for His assistance, we have reached a pinnacle in tefilah and it will surely be accepted.

L' maaseh...

After receiving a terrible diagnosis from his son's doctor, a man rushed to Rav Moshe Feinstein to ask for a beracha. Not wanting to tell the Rosh Yeshiva about the terrible news, he simply asked for a beracha for his son. R' Moshe however realized that the father looked very disturbed and urged him to tell him why. The father broke out in tears and related that the boy was ill and the doctor said that there was very little to do about it. R' Moshe grabbed the man's hands and cried with him for several minutes, adding that 'how could it be that two Jews cry together and Hashem won't listen?'. To the surprise of the doctors, the minimal medical hishtadlus that was made cured the boy completely.

The Maharil cites a custom to observe the first and last days of Chanuka as a yom tov, abstaining from melacha on the first and eight days. The Shiltei Hagiborim, also writes that women had the custom of not doing any melacha throughout the entire Chanuka. He is adamant that this practice be abolished since being unproductive brings one to boredom and depression. As somewhat of a compromise he suggests observing the restrictions of melacha on the first and eighth days only, since the Torah mandates such a yom tov for Pesach and Succos.

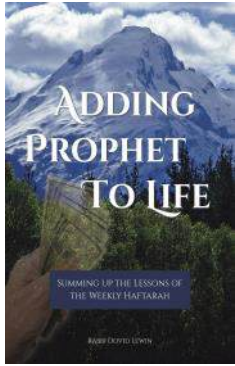
Whether or not one who has such a custom is bound to continue observing it is a matter of debate: The Gemara (Pesachim 51a) tells us that in places where the local custom is to be stringent regarding things or actions that are indeed permitted, the people who live there are obligated to observe these stringencies. The Tur applies this concept to places where people refrain from melacha the entire day of Chanuka as well. However the Beis Yosef takes issue, claiming that this rule applies only where the custom was established to ensure that one does not transgress the real prohibition (for instance by adding time to an existing prohibition). However, since melacha is permitted throughout the entire Chanuka, the custom is clearly an error and one may encourage its abolishment. See Biur HaGra who seems to support this view. The Shulchan Aruch however, does not mention the custom of completely refraining from melacha, but does state both approaches regarding abstention by women while the candles are burning.

The reason why women have this custom more than men is because the miracle was brought about through the hands of a woman. Yochanan the Kohein Gadol had a very beautiful daughter, whose name was Yehudis, who seduced the enemy king. She fed him cheese dishes and he became very thirsty and drank a lot of wine. When he was in a deep sleep, she cut off his head and brought it to Yerushalayim. When the army generals saw that their king had been killed, they fled. Since dairy foods played a role in this miracle, some have the custom to eat dairy foods on Chanuka as a commemoration of this miracle.

Regarding Chanuka mesibos (parties) and other such celebration, the Levush explains that unlike Purim, we k'lal Yisroel was saved from imminent physical danger, during the times of Chanuka, it was our ruchnius that was in danger. As such, when Chazal instituted Chanuka, they mandated that it be days of hallel and hoda'ah, spiritual expression of thanks. Nevertheless, the midrashim record that the construction of the mishkan in the midbar was actually completed on the 25th of kisleiv. For reasons that are not clear, it was not erected until Nissan. When Chazal later established the days of Chanuka, they included the celebration of the original mikdash (i.e. mishkan) in their decree. This itself is reason to celebrate.³ (Darkei Moshe) The Rema also adds that any meal focussed around song and praise of Hakadosh Baruch Hu has the status of a seudas mitzvah. Nevertheless, one should realize that the ultimate praise of Hashem is to dedicate his extra time to studying His Torah, especially during Chanuka, when the Yevanim fought so hard to stop us from doing exactly that!

1. The Maharil however, understands this custom to apply to men as well.
2. See, however, Rivavos Efraim who quotes Dayan Y. Y. Fisher zt"l that the old minhag of Yerushalayim was to abstain from cooking and performing any melachos that are prohibited on Shabbos.
3. Although the mishkan is also a spiritual matter, Chazal were only concerned that celebration for spiritual salvation be of a spiritual nature

This week's halachic discussion has been adapted from the Rosh Kollel's English commentary of Sefer Chaye Adam on hilchos Chanuka and Megilla Available in seforim stores in America or in Israel by emailing: rabbi@torahkollel.com.



DIVREI HA'NAVI - ADDING PROPHET TO LIFE

Towards the end of our haftarah, the navi asks "hayishag aryeh" - 'will the lion roar in the forest and he has no prey, will the cubs cry from their place and they have not been trapped? Will a bird fall to the ground for no reason, will a shofar be sounded and the nation won't tremble? Will there be tragedies in the city and Hashem did not cause this?' "Ki lo yaaseh Hashem Elokkim davar ki im galah sodo el avadav ha'neviim" - 'Has Hashem not done this but only revealed his secret to his servants the prophets?' Then the navi concludes "aryeh sha'ag mi lo yirah, Hashem Elokim dibeir mi lo yinavei!" - The lion has roared and who will not fear, Hashem has spoken, who won't prophesize?'

The Daas Sofrim explains that initially the navi presents five mashalim which drive home the point that things happen because Hakadosh Boruch caused them to happen, but then the navi shifts into speaking about prophecy.

The medrash (Medrash Rabbah and Yalkut Shimoni) teaches that first, Hashem tells his secret to those who fear him, as the posuk in Tehilim says "sod Hashem l'yerei'av". Then, He informs the upright, as it says in Mishlei "v'es yesharim sodo". Afterwards, He reveals it to the nevi'im as the posuk in our haftarah says "ki los asah Hashem Elokim davar ki im galah es sodo el avadav ha'neviim". The words of the medrash are short and cryptic. It teaches a clear chronological order; yereim, yesharim, and then neviim. It cannot be that Chazal are simply telling us that Tehillim comes before Mishlei which is before Trei Asar. Everyone knows that Dovid Hamelech lived before Shlomo and that they were both before Amos. Why then does the medrash stress the order?

Perhaps this medrash is the key to understanding the shifts in these pesukim, as follows: Ultimately, a person should look at the world around him and understand what Hashem wants from him. As the navi says, the lions roar for a reason, etc. If we are on the right level, our Torah and yiras shomayim will enable us to hear Hashem's messages and do His ratzon. If we aren't, then Hashem has to disrupt the natural order of things. The yesharim, or people who are straight, have their worlds turned a bit crooked because when things go wrong, we start to realize that Hashem is in charge. If we still don't get the message, then Hashem has to send prophets to tell us outright. The navi concludes by stating that the lion has roared, who won't be afraid, which is very similar to the opening statement except that there it is posed as a question. Perhaps this is because while we should realize that the lion roars for a reason, if we don't, Hashem will make him roar for no reason. Then, everyone will be afraid.

It is incumbent upon us to look around us and see the messages in Creation and in world events. Hashem is constantly speaking to each and everyone of us. We just need to be tuned in to be able to hear His messages.

When Yehuda ordered that Tamar be taken out to be burned, she didn't want to embarrass him by publicly stating that she was carrying his child, but rather sent a discreet message "hakeir na" - do you recognize these items and know to whom they belong?. The Targum Yonoson explains that it was actually the malachim which delivered these words, 'hakeir na', which were the same words Yehuda used when he presented Yosef's blood stained cloak to his father, asking if he recognized it, insinuating that Yosef had been killed by a wild animal. Now Yehuda was hearing the same words and understood that he must to teshuva for it.

Everything we hear or see is a message. With the right level of yiras shomayim we can be zocheh to understand the messages. If we do, we can avoid the need for havoc and disaster.

In rosh chodesh bentching we ask for 'chayim she'yeish bahem yiras shomayim v'yiras cheit' (a life of fear of Heaven and fear of sin) and then we ask for a life of honor and wealth, and a few lines later ask that we should have ahavas Torah and yiras shomayim. Seemingly, we already asked for yiras shomayim. Perhaps our requests here are a backwards progression from the order of the navi: First we ask for the level of yiras shomayim which is associated with cheit, i.e. the navi who warns and admonishes us. Then we ask that our lives should be good and not upset (yashar), but finally we ask that we should have "banu" (in us) Torah and yiras shomayim, that we should understand the ratzon of Hashem on our own, without having to hear the messages.