



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 GOLDEN DANCE

When the Ribono shel Olam told Moshe that the Jewish people had fallen by building a golden calf and worshipping it, he grabbed the luchos and descended the mountain to see this with his own eyes, at which point, he threw the luchos on the ground, smashing them into many pieces. It would seem as if Moshe somehow doubted Hashem's report about what was going on and wanted to see for himself. This is difficult to accept. One approach is that instead of leaving the luchos up in Heaven, he wanted to smash them before their eyes, but this is also hard to understand, as why would producing a shock effect be sufficient reason for Moshe to take the holy luchos down from shomayim where they now seemingly belonged.

HaRav Boruch Sorotzkin zt"l explains that initially, when Moshe heard that the B'nei Yisroel had built an eigel and were worshipping it, he thought that they had simply erred in understanding and that their actions were probably rooted in the same mistake that some of the earliest idol worshipers had made: They believed that Hashem Created and world and continued to run it, but saw themselves as physical beings who are too lowly to connect directly to Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Instead, these 'pioneers' of idol worship felt that they were better off serving the sun and the stars which were celestial beings, as a sort of bridge between the physical and spiritual realms. Of course this is a mistake, and the Ribono shel Olam wants us to connect with Him directly, but Moshe felt that if he would go and speak to them, he would be able to show them the Torah and the luchos and influence them. Ultimately, he believed, that he could convince them that despite the fact that we are physical, Hashem wants us to approach Him directly in Torah and tefillah. However, when Moshe saw how the people were dancing and celebrating around the eigel, he realized that they weren't looking for truth. No, they hadn't built a golden calf because they wanted to connect with Hashem but didn't know how, but rather, were looking for ways to fulfill their physical desires. If this was their focus, talking words of Torah and mitzvos - positive or negative - would not sufficiently impact on them and get them to change, and so Moshe threw the luchos to the ground, as he would have to find some other way.

There are two important lessons here. First, that Hashem wants us to connect with Him directly. Despite our physicality, we can achieve spiritual heights by approaching the Ribono shel Olam and forging a close relationship with Him through Torah and tefillah. Yet, if we fail and don't feel we are worthy of this, Torah and mitzvos have the ability to show us that we are, and how we can do so. However, we must realize that if the source of our lack of connection is that we are pursuing a luxurious life, nothing will help. This is a lesson in our own avodah, in the chinuch of our children, and in kiruv. Perhaps this is one of the biggest challenges of influencing others today. We live in a very affluent world, and while there is nothing wrong with having wealth and luxury, it must be enjoyed and dispensed with discipline because otherwise we can become entangled in pursuit of satisfying our physical desires which will inhibit the power of kedusha to penetrate our hearts.

לעשות את השבת - תניא, ר', אלעזר בן פרטא אומר, ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת לעשות את השבת, מלמד שכל המשמר את השבת כאלו עשאה. (מכילתא)

All mitzvos are uniquely recognizable both while fulfilling them, and after the mitzva is complete. For example, one can look at tzitzis or a shofar and see it is an object used in performance of a mitzva. Shabbos is different in that it is neither recognizably different than any other day except that certain acts are forbidden but one could just sit and do nothing anytime. In this way, Shabbos is really what a person makes of it. If he honors it as he should, both physically with food and clothing, and spiritually with tefilos, zemiros, and Torah, then it becomes discernable from the rest of the week, and it is he who has kept Shabbos, and 'made' Shabbos.

TORAH TEMIMAH



From the desk of
the Rosh Kollel...

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- Rabbi David Lewin

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Sugyas ha' Sedra

NETILAS YADAYIM - HACHANA L'SEUDAH

The Chasam Sofer writes that just like we find that the kohanim washed their hands from the kiyor before doing the avodah, we also must prepare for our meals by first washing our hands before eating bread. He explains that at the root of our desire to enjoy food is the same yetzer hara for forbidden physical pleasures as well. By first washing netilas yadayim, we sanctify our meals and distance ourselves from this yetzer hara. One who treats this mitzvah lightly, will ultimately be led to follow his desires and, in the words of the Tana d'bei Eliyahu, Hashem will not forgive him easily. Indeed, several of the halachos of netilas yadayim are derived from the kohanim washing from the kiyor in the Beis HaMikdash. See also the Aruch Hashulchan who understands the words "asher kidishanu b'mitzvosav" (in the beracha on netilas yadayim) were included here since cleanliness brings one to purity which leads to kedusha.

As a rule, berachos recited over the performance of mitzvos, should be recited before doing the mitzvah. The gemara (Pesachim 7a) tells us that the beracha for tevila (in a mikva) however, is recited afterwards. Tosfos understands that the gemara is only referring to the tevila of a ger (convert), who could not recite the beracha before (since he only becomes Jewish after his immersion) and this is indeed the ruling of the mechaber in Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 200) - that women recite the beracha prior to immersing in the mikva after becoming a nidah. Tosfos however concludes that perhaps the gemara is referring to all tevilos. The reason for this is that since a ger could not possibly recite the beracha before hand, Chazal did not want to differentiate between different types of tevilos, and mandated that the beracha "al ha'tevila" be recited afterwards in all cases. By extension, Tosfos suggests that the same is true regarding netilas yadayim, since one's hands are not always clean enough to recite the beracha before. In addition, he adds that since drying the hands is also part of the mitzvah (of netilas yadayim) the mitzvah is not complete until the hands are dried.

In hilchos netilas yadayim, the mechaber writes that although one

SPARKS OF SHABBOS

Everything manifests itself on three levels: olam, shana, v'nefesh (place, time and soul). The Nesivos Sholom explains that the Shechina dwells amongst us on all three: In the Beis HaMikdash, when we do His will and merit "v'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'socham"; on Shabbos, which is "os hi beini u'vein b'nei yisroel", and the Torah which Chazal describe in terms of our marriage to the Ribono shel Olam. While we don't have a Beis HaMikdash, our shuls and our homes qualify as a mikdash me'at and if we permeate our surroundings with kedusha and Torah on Shabbos, we can merit to have the Divine presence visit us on all three levels, an extremely potent beracha.

L' maaseh...

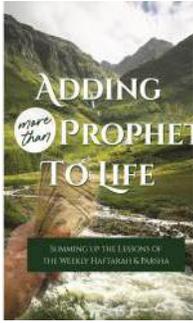
In certain communities, people are careful to only use water which was drawn before Pesach, considering freshly drawn water 'chometzdik'. R' Aharon Leib Shteinman zt"l was one of those people who were strict in adhering to this chumrah. One Pesach, his wife forgot to prepare an ample supply of water to last them through the entire Pesach and she was extremely distraught. R' Aharon Leib assured her that there was nothing to worry about, since that was an old custom based on the reality in Europe, but now that they were in Eretz Yisroel, there was no reason to be particular about this. He had only kept up the practice because that is what he was used to, and so the Shteinman family used water from the faucet for Pesach that year. The next year, R' Aharon Leib made sure that they didn't prepare any water in advance, and this went on for decades, until the Pesach after the rebetzin was no longer in this world, at which point, he asked his family to prepare water in advance of yom tov. He explained that had returned to his original custom at any point while his wife was still alive, she would have realized that he was only being lenient for her sake, and she would have felt bad for forgetting so many years before.

should indeed recite the beracha before washing, the custom is to wait "since often, one's hands are not clean enough to recite the beracha". The Rema however forwards the second reason of Tosfos - that the mitzvah is not complete until after the hands are dry - as the main reason for this halacha. The Taz however questions how this could be the main reason since according to most opinions, often (such as if one washed each hand with a full revi'is) drying one's hands is not really necessary? Yet the Magen Avraham maintain that here too, the beracha was instituted after washing since in many cases, washing one's hands requires drying them as well. Although others argue (see Yad Efraim), the Levush cites both explanations of Tosfos as bona fide reasons and concludes that it is for this reason that the beracha recited is "al netilas yadayim" (on the washing of the hands) and not "litol yadayim" (to wash the hands). The Aruch Hashulchan adds that although one need not dry his hands in many instances, it is nevertheless considered not nice to eat with wet hands. Therefore, he reasons that drying one's hands is also a continuation of the mitzvah, even if it is not a necessary part of it. The Biur HaGra however understands the first reason of Tosfos (because sometimes one's hands are not sufficiently clean) to be the main reason why we recite the beracha after washing.

If one did not recite the beracha before drying his hands, the Yam Shel Shlomo writes that he may still recite it until he makes a "hamotzi". The Taz disagrees, arguing that once the mitzvah is complete (i.e. he has dried his hands as well) there is no way he can recite a beracha. Although most poskim rule that one may follow the ruling of the Maharashal (Yam shel Shlomo) and recite the beracha even after one's hands are dry, one should be careful to recite the beracha right away while his hands are still wet.



Chazal refer to tefilah as a conversation, and as such it behooves us to understand what this means and to approach davening in this way. A conversation takes place between two individuals. However, they need not both speak, and if one is listening attentively to the other, they spoke, even if they can't really see each other. Reuven can call Shimon and speak for several minutes as long as he knows that Shimon has answered the phone. Mission accomplished. When we daven, we need to make sure that Hashem has answered our call. If we seek to connect to Him, then He will be there to listen, but we must first demonstrate our desire for this connection by properly preparing ourselves for davening in mind, and in deed. Once we have reached out to connect to our Creator, He will answer our call. (Based on She'arim b'Tefilah, R' Shimoshon Pikus zt"l)



DIVREI HA'NAVI - ADDING PROPHET TO LIFE

The neviim of the Baal attracted many Jews to their avodah zarah and Eliyahu challenged them with the famous words, "ad masai atem poschim al shtei ha'seifim" - for how long will you go on straddling both sides of the fence - if Hashem is G-d, follow Him and if the Baal, go after it!". The Rashba notes that there seems to be an absence of a few words here and the posuk should have better read "...and if the Baal is G-d, go after it". This needs to be explored.

Eliyahu proceeds to challenge the nevi'ei ha'baal to a contest that each should offer a korban without lighting a fire and the one whose korban is consumed by fire will be proven correct. Despite the efforts the idolators made to make sure they came out on top, the entire morning passed and their offering remained intact on top of their mizbayach.

Then Eliyahu proceeded to slowly rebuild the destroyed mizbayacha and erect twelve stones corresponding to the twelve shevatim. Finally, in the late afternoon, Eliyahu offered his korban and his tefillah to Hakadosh Boruch was answered in that a fire descended from Heaven and consumed his korban. It seems from the pesukim that Eliyahu was somehow stalling so that the korban should be offered late in the day, but the wording of the posuk is even more intriguing. The navi expresses the time of hsi korban by saying "vayehi ba'alos ha'mincha" - and it was the time the mincha offering was offered. Mincha, of course, does not refer to the second korban tamid offered, but the flour offering that goes along with it, which should make us ask why we always refer to the second tefilah of the day as mincha. Shacharis is derived from "shachar" which connotes the early hours of the morning, but mincha is a flour offering that has nothing to do with the time of the day, and isn't the main part of the afternoon korban either. So why then, do we refer to it as mincha?

The Gra (Shenos Eliyahu, perek 4 of Berachos) explains that just like there is a hidur to daven shacharis Kvasikin - right after sunrise, so too there is a hidur mitzva to daven mincha at the very end of the day, immediately before sunset, as both are in fulfillment of the posuk "ye'arucha im ha'shemesh". He explains that since the flour offering is the final part of the afternoon korban tamid, we refer to the tefilah as 'mincha', indicating the preference to end off the avodah slightly before the sun sets. Accordingly, it seems that the navi is stressing that Eliyahu offered his korban at mincha time, meaning in the final moments of the day, but we need to understand why.

The gemara (Berachos 6b) tells us that one should be particularly careful with mincha because it was then when Eliyahu was answered. As the navi tells us, when he offered his korban, he davened "aneini Hashem aneini", beseeching Hakadosh Boruch Hu to accept his korban and ultimately he was answered favorably. In light of what we have explained, it seems that it was likely specifically because of when Eliyahu davened that he was answered, but we need to understand why this was so. The Ben Yehoyada explains that towards the latter part of the day the nevi'ei ha'baal were in a weakened state and couldn't invoke witchcraft to prevent Eliyahu's success, but the Rashba offers an approach which not only addresses many of our questions, but is relevant to us today. He explains that the nevi'ei ha'baal didn't deny that Hashem created the world. They understood this to be true. However, they argued that after Creation, the Ribono shel Olam gave over control to nature and other forces. This explains why Eliyahu said "if Hashem is Elokim follow Him, and if the baal", because they never said their avodah zarah was instead of G-d, just that it is currently, in control. One of these forces was the sun which is strongest during the day. All day long the nevi'ei ha'baal tried to offer sacrifices at the time when the sun shone and nature was powerful and prominent. When they gave up, Eliyahu deliberately delayed until the final moments of the day, when the sun was least powerful, because at that point nature's power was waning and Hashem's control is more apparent.

It is for this reason that one should be most careful with mincha, and specifically when one davens just before the sun goes down. In the morning, we have a new day in front of us, and at night, we express our emunah in Hashem in the midst of darkness but it is davka in the middle of the day, when we have lived in the natural world but yet feel this feeling of control slipping away, that we turn to the Ribono shel Olam acknowledging that He is the one in control.

It seems that even Moshe Rabeinu wanted to see Hashem manifesting Himself in the natural world. When he reascended Har Sinai to beg forgiveness on behalf of K'lal Yisroel, Moshe asked Hashem "hareini es k'vodecha" - show me Your honor. Hashem denied his request stating that he would remove his hand so that Moshe could see Hashem's back, but could never see His face. Chazal tell us that Hashem showed Moshe the knot of Hashem's tefillin. The Torah Temimah explains that Moshe wanted to see the Ribono shel Olam's tefillin but he only merited to see the knot at the back. Perhaps we can suggest that Moshe was asking to see Hashem's manifestation in this world on a certain level and Hashem answered that even that much is not fully possible.

This ties into our parsha in another way as well. The Bnei Yisroel had lived enslaved in Mitzrayim for generations and the Egyptian ideologies had somewhat penetrated but after experience the makos, yetzias Mitzrayim and krias Yam Suf, the Jewish people now realized that Hashem runs the world in a very proactive way. This was at least what Moshe had thought, but when he came down from Har Sinai and saw that they had built the eigel ha'zahav to serve as Hashem's representative in this world, Moshe quickly realized that the Jews had not yet adequately learned that Hashem is in charge of the world in very real terms. The Meshech Chochma explains that he then understood that if he would have simply announced his arrival and presented the luchos, the people would begin to ascribe power to the luchos and come to worship it in very much the same way, and so, in order to drive this point home, he smashed the luchos as if to say that there can be no physical manifestation of Hashem whatsoever.

We live in a physical world and often fall into the trap of believing in our own strengths and accomplishments as well as those of others. This is always a danger, but when things seem impossible or extremely difficult from a natural standpoint, it behooves us to realize that nothing has anything to do with the natural world, the governments or the economy, and that instead of being pose'ach al shtei se'ifim, we must realize that Hashem hu Ha'Elokim and through that, may we be zocheh to see the day when the rest of the world answers after us, "Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim"!