



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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HOW TO BECOME A NAVI

Chazal tell us that although there never was, nor will never be a prophet as great as Moshe Rabeinu, this is only true among the Jews. Hashem did however, grant the nations of the world a prophet whose received prophecy on the level of Moshe Rabeinu. This was not because they deserved it, but to preempt a nonsense defense that had they been given a leader like Moshe, they would have also run to do the will of Hashem.

This begs explanation. Bilaam was not at all like Moshe. He might have had prophetic visions like Moshe Rabeinu, but he was nothing like him. How then, could having a prophet like Bilaam dispel the notion that the other nations are just victims of circumstance? Moreover, had Bilaam proved successful in leading and influencing his own people, what would it have helped to quiet down everyone else, and even though he didn't, how does this apply globally?

HaRav Boruch Sorotzkin zt"l explains that our questions are based on a false premise. We think that Moshe Rabeinu was so great because he was a navi who spoke to the Ribono shel Olam face to face. The nations of the world also thought so, and therefore, they claimed, that it would stand to reason that if they had a prophet similar to Moshe, he would also lead his people to great things. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Moshe was great because he had worked hard to perfect himself and sought to help and teach others to greatness. Therefore, he was worthy of Divine revelation which would lead him to further greatness. Had Moshe not achieved anything of greatness before Hashem appeared to him, he would not have been Moshe Rabeinu. When Hashem appeared to Bilaam, He showed the nations of the world that one doesn't become great from prophecy. Since he hadn't worked on improving himself first, nevuah made no impact on Bilaam as a leader. He continued to pursue his own lusts and desires and the world would now realize that it isn't ruach ha'kodesh which makes someone holy, but rather one who makes the kedusha, brings about ruach ha'kodesh.

Often, our neshamos yearn for kedusha. This is a good thing, but we have to realize that it likely won't happen in a vacuum. We may realize this and look around for inspiration. While wanting to be inspired is commendable, we need to realize that real kedusha begins with our own efforts to improve and grow. If we work to achieve this, we will merit kedusha and the Divine presence.

למה נסמכו אהלים לנחלים, דכתיב: "כְּנַחֲלִים נָטְיוֹ כְּגִנּוֹת עָלֵי נָהָר כְּאֵהֳלִים נָטַע וְגו'" לומר לך: מה נחלים מעלין את האדם מטומאה לטהרה אף אהלים מעלין את האדם מכף חובה לכף זכות: (ברכות 20.)

Why does the posuk juxtapose rivers to tents? It is to teach you that just like a river can serve as a purifying mikva, so can Torah study which is studied in a tent of Torah, bring tremendous merit to a person.

TORAH TEMIMAH



From the desk of
the Rosh Kollel...

Welcome to all our new subscribers!

Boruch Hashem the war with Iran appears to be over and life in Eretz Yisroel has returned to normal. Please increase your commitment to Torah study, tzedaka and chesed, as a zeechus to maintain and improve the current situation and protect K'lal Yisroel worldwide

Exciting things are happening in the kollel! - We are in the final stretch of our 16th year since the kollel was established. The kollel, its beis medrash, and kehilla continue to be a real asset to the community on so many levels. We have reached the final stages of organizing and cataloging our vast otzar ha'seforim (around 3,000 volumes). This new system will not only improve learning in the kollel, but with benefit the broader community as well.

THE SEFER IS OUT! - *In honor of reaching our 16th year, I have published 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. To find out how to get your own copy, email me at: rabbi@torahkollel.com*

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 sefer, 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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Sugyas ha' Sedra

KRIAS SHEMA K'VASIKIN

The Gemara (Berachos 12b) tells us that (because of the posuk that says that k'lal Yisroel lays down like a lion) Chazal wanted to include parshas Balak in the mitzvah of kri'as Shema, but did not because of the tremendous tircha that it would cause the tzibur. Let us take this opportunity to examine the most opportune way of reciting krias shema in the morning.

The Gemara (Berachos 9b) tells us that although the earliest time for reciting kri'as shema (except under extenuating circumstances [1]) is from the moment there is enough natural light [2] to discern an acquaintance from the distance of four amos, the 'vasikin' (people who aimed to do mitzvos in the most optimal way - Rashi) would finish reciting kri'as shema with the sunrise and begin shemoneh esrei immediately thereafter, at the beginning of the day.

The Rishonim differ in understanding their motivation. Most (see for example, Rosh, Rashba, Rabeinu Yeruchem) explain that their primary motivation was to recite the shemoneh esrei at the earliest optimal moment, neitz ha'chama (sunrise). In order to juxtapose the beracha of geulah (go'al Yisroel...) to the shemoneh esrei, kri'as shema was recited just before. The ruling of Shulchan Aruch appears to follow this approach.

The Rabeinu Yonah and others understand that their primary intent was to in order be able to recite kri'as shema before neitz ha'chama, the most optimal time for reciting it (mitzva min ha'muvchar). [3] In order to be able to say kri'as shema with its berachos and then juxtapose it to shemoneh esrei, they would recite it just before sunrise and start shemoneh esrei shortly thereafter (instead of just saying kri'as shema earlier). The Shulchan Aruch HaRav seems to rule in accordance with this approach. [4] Others (Rabeinu Tam, [see also Rabeinu Chananel]) maintain that the vasikin, in their zeal to fulfill mitzvos in the best possible way, actually erred in their calculation. They maintain that the proper time to recite kri'as shema is only after sunrise, and not before.

[1] Then, one can recite krias shema as early as alos ha'shachar (72 or 90 minutes before sunrise)

[2] In modern times, this can be difficult to discern due to the presence of electrical illumination. Although many calendars

and z'manim charts set this time to be about an hour before sunrise, others estimate it to be closer to 40 minutes before [sunrise]. According to R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l, the time may vary each day depending on the weather conditions in any location on any particular day.

[3] See also Beis Yosef (O.C. 59) who explains that the position of the Rambam is that the optimal time for reciting krias shema is just before neitz hachama, even if it is not in the context of smichas geulah l'tefillah. (i.e. even if he is saying krias shema without the berachos) See however Darkei Moshe who disagrees with his approach in understanding the Rambam.

[4] See there that he rules that one should recite krias shema before neitz hachama even if he is not reciting the berachos and even if he is not wearing his tallis and tefillin at the time (something that is usually very much discouraged). This is also reported to have been the custom of R' Moshe Feinstein. See however Teshuvos v'Hanhagos who recommends only doing so with a t'nai (condition). He further recommends that one recite the beracha "hamekadesh shimcha ba'rabim" at the time in order that he will be reciting krias shema with some sort of a beracha. (The Rishonim at the beginning of meseches Berachos discuss at length what to do if one recited the night time krias shema before nightfall. While for the most part they agree that one must repeat the three paragraphs of the shema, most of them search far and wide for a beracha to recite at the time of its repetition. (Some go as far as to introduce new berachos: "asher kidishanu b'mitzvosav... ..al mitzvas krias shema. Others say that one should repeat the beracha of Ahavas Olam.) Although the halacha is clear that one should repeat krias shema without any berachos, in our case (i.e. the morning) it would seem that one who recites "hamikadesh shimcha barabim" at the time is to be commended; When Chazal instituted the recital of berachos before the performance of mitzvos, they were not making a separate decree or reciting liturgy. Rather, the beracha is intended to add to the kedusha of the mitzvah and enhance it. Therefore, a mitzvah performed without a beracha is not the same as one done with the beracha. Therefore, in the case of doubt we always try to find a way to make a beracha (such as being yotzei by listening to someone else's beracha) rather than just doing the mitzvah without the beracha.

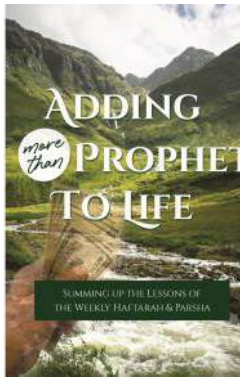
[5] Rabeinu Chananel disagrees with Rabeinu Tam that the vasikin "made a mistake". On the contrary, he argues that the vasikin did the right thing by saying krias shema at neitz hachama. (He understands the Gemara's words "hayu gomrim osa" (usually understood to mean 'they would finish it) to mean that 'they would read it' - at neitz ha'chama!)

SPARKS OF SHABBOS

One should anxiously await the coming of Shabbos. A Jew should yearn for Shabbos all week long, but especially on erev Shabbos as he prepares for it. The Nesivos Sholom explains that this is the source for the minhag to say Shir Hashirim on erev Shabbos where to pesukim speak about a tremendous desire and yearning for closeness with our beloved, meaning Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Shabbos is our time with Him and we should look forward to it with desire and passion. However, it is incumbent on us to yearn for Shabbos all week long and we should constantly prepare for Shabbos, every day of the week. This is what the posuk means 'la'asos es ha'Shabbos' - to make Shabbos; by focusing on Shabbos and preparing for it all week long we make Shabbos that much greater.

L'maaseh...

Someone once visited R' Chaim Soloveitchick of Brisk, and began to brag about all the chesed he did and how much he had achieved for others in K'lal Yisroel. After several minutes, R' Chaim, who was well known to be a tremendous baal chesed - so much so that they say that if his house hadn't had a roof it would have qualified as a reshus ha'rabim (public domain) - stopped his guest and asked him if he would like to hear about what he had done that day for K'lal Yisroel. Excited to hear what the gadol ha'dor had accomplished, the man listened attentively as R' Chaim related how he woke up in the morning and said 'modeh ani', proceeded to wash his hands, put on his right shoe before his left, and then tie the left first, etc. As he continued to detail how he had followed every halacha in Shulchan Aruch, the man began to realize that R' Chaim's message to him was that greatness begins with a person's own personal avodah.



DIVREI HA'NAVI - ADDING PROPHET TO LIFE

The Yalkut Shimoni (beginning of Bamidbar) relates that after Hashem had initially spoken to Moshe from the burning bush, and then in Mitzrayim and later on Har Sinai, when He addressed him in the Ohel Moed, Hashem exclaimed how great tzniyus is and from then on, only spoke to Moshe in the private quarters of the Ohel Moed. This should be seemingly difficult, since Torah is supposed to be taught to the masses. Why then should Hashem prefer to teach Moshe privately?

Perhaps we could dismiss this and explain that this referred only to Hashem's conversations with Moshe, but not the teaching of Torah. However, the gemara (Succah 49b) seems to echo this idea as relating specifically to Torah: There, the gemara explains that the reason why the posuk in Shir Hashirim compares Torah to a thigh, is because it is hidden, as the posuk in our haftarah teaches 'hatznaya leches' refers to Torah that should be learned in private.

The Daas Sofrim explains that what this means is that while a child begins learning Torah and mitzvos for ulterior motives like candy or a prize, when he matures, his motivation might be honor or recognition. Yet this too is only a starting point. Ultimately, a person must strive to learn Torah and fulfill mitzvos for the sole reason of serving Hashem. Honor and recognition might be inevitable and so the way to avoid this is 'hatznaya leches' - to conceal his spiritual accomplishments from others.

Yet, we know that this is not always possible, nor advisable. For example, a parent or teacher is best advised to let his children or students know that he or she learns and davens, does chesed, etc. because otherwise they won't know that they should do so as well. Similarly, if one's intention is to inspire others in Torah or mitzvos, keeping his accomplishments a secret is counterproductive, and so at times, Torah should not be kept private.

The gemara's wording (Succah 49b) is that divrei Torah should be "b'seiser". The Ben Yehoyada explains that 'seiser' stands for 'sof' (end), because the thigh is the end of the upper half of the body, 'toch' (in the middle) because it is the middle of it, and 'rosh', because it is the head of the lower half of a person's body. As he is wont to do, the Ben Yehoyada applies this to kabbalistic concepts ('toras nistar'), however perhaps we could suggest that the gemara's choice of wording is to communicate just this; that while Torah should be kept private, sometimes it needs to be exposed as the head or end, but barring any need, ultimately, it is 'toch' - in the middle of the body, to be hidden from the view of others.

Accordingly, perhaps we can understand the words of the Rema at the beginning of Shulchan Aruch where he warns not to pay attention to others who mock him in his service of Hashem, and then adds 'gam b'hatznaya leches' - that one should be private. The commentaries there are bothered by this addition as it seems out of place. Perhaps what the Rema means to say is that even though no one will mock him, and might in fact honor him, his avodas Hashem might be compromised by these other motivating factors, and therefore, modesty is the best policy.



Chazal emphasize the greatness of one who juxtaposes geulah to tefilah. At shacharis, this means not pausing between "go'al Yisroel" and shemoneh esrei. Although we first say "Hashem sefasei tiftach...", the gemara explains that it is considered an extension of tefilah. This seems easy enough to understand. However at maariv, we also add the beracha of hashkiveinu after go'al Yisroel. The gemara say that this is not problematic because it is considered an extension of the geulah. Had the gemara explained that it is an extension of tefilah, we might understand this, since we are asking for Hashem to protect us and the beracha is really a tefilah of sorts. Yet the gemara explains that it is not a tefilah, but a component of geulah. The Rabeinu Yonah explains that during makas bechoros even the tzadikim among us were afraid that perhaps they were not deserving of Hashem's protection and might be included in the gezeira of the makah and so they davened for Divine protection. Since this was an element of their geulah, Chazal included it our beracha for geulah as well. Perhaps what emerges from this is that when we say hashkiveinu, we are davening for protection in the geulah we eagerly await. Although we say "go'al Yisroel, in the past tense, we are davening for the geulah shleimah as well!