



Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFa & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

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



*From the desk of
the Rosh Kollel...*

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- Rabbi David Lewin

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תשפ"ו

BERACHA WHEN BERACHA DOESN'T FLOW

Every year parshas during the week of parshas Beshalach everyone makes a big deal about the parshas ha'mahn, but the truth is, that many of lessons learned from there, are more explicit in parshas Eikev, where the Torah devotes an entire section to telling us how Hashem sustained us in the midbar and the lessons we are supposed to learn from it.

The posuk states: "vaya'ancha va'yarivecha" - that Hashem oppressed us and made us hungry - and fed us the mahn 'in order to teach us that a person doesn't live on bread alone, but rather by the word of Hashem'. If He hadn't done so, continues the Torah, we would become arrogant, forget Hashem, and attribute our success to our own efforts. The Alter from Kelm notes that the posuk here says "v'amarta" - and you will say, which has overtones of certainty, instead of the usual "lest you say", because man is naturally inclined to take credit for his own success. Only if a person contemplates and internalizes the lessons of the mahn can he avoid reaching this point of gaavah.

In summation, the Torah says, we must realize that all of our success is from the Ribono shel Olam. So much so, that the Targum translates "Hu ha'nosein lecha koach la'asos chayil" (He gives you the strength to succeed) to mean that Hashem is the One who puts ideas into our head as to which business investments and purchases we should make.

In short, Hashem sustained with a daily portion of mahn in order that we realize our ultimate dependence on Him. Yet, twice the Torah refers to the system of mahn which was in place as "inui" - oppression, and compares it to the musar a father might give to his child. The Meshech Chochma notes that this is very much in line with the words of Chazal (Chagiga 9b) who say that poverty is a most appropriate thing for the Jewish people. This needs to be understood on two counts. First, what does this mean? Moreover though, Chazal also tell us (Bava Basra 116) that living in poverty is a more difficult experience than living through fifty plagues. Why then, does Hakadosh Boruch Hu see this as fitting for His nation?

In one approach, the Ben Yehoyada answers that there are two types of

poverty: First, there are those who are destitute, who literally have nothing and are starving. This is indeed an extremely difficult experience, perhaps more than multiple plagues, and is certainly not a "midah tova" as represented by the gemara in Chagiga.

Then, there is a second type of poverty, where a person has his basic need taken care of, at least today. He is not sure how he is going to afford things tomorrow, but today, he manages. This, explains that Ben Yehoyada, is a midah tova because it strengthens our relationship with Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Just like when the B'nei Yisroel subsisted on the mahn, we too, must turn to Hashem each and every day.

Many of us live in similar circumstances. While we may have parnasa from our jobs and business, things don't always flow at the same pace, and there are time during the year and different points in our lives at which the expenses run high, and it is at these points that we are forced to turn to Hashem to ask Him for help. This, Chazal tell us, is a very good thing.

Everyday we recite a beracha of asher yatzar to thank the Ribono shel Olam that our bodies are working as they should. The beracha ends off with the words "mafli la'asos" - that Hashem created this wondrous apparatus we know as the human body. The wonder, explains the Rema, is that the neshama, which is something completely spiritual, connects to and resides within the body which is a completely physical entity. These are two opposite forces, and yet they coexist. In a similar vein, the Ozneyim la'Torah explains that we are all made up of two opposite forces; the neshama and the guf, but the bottom line is that, at least it appears as if the body has the upper hand. A person can daven and learn all day long, but he won't stay alive if he doesn't eat. Yet plenty of people stay alive without ever doing anything spiritual for their neshamos. So it appears as if the physical and material is stronger. In order to dispel this myth, Hashem sustained us on mahn, which was a spiritual food which descended from the heavens. The lessons we learned from the mahn were intended to accompany us into Eretz Yisroel and to remain with us in golus

What emerges from all of this is that the difficulties and challenges we experience in the way of parnasa are actually considered a beracha, but the challenge is to shift our focus and realize that Hashem sometimes withholds the flow of beracha so that we should realize that it is only He, Who is responsible for our success. Once we come to that humbling realization, He can shower us with beracha, just like a father who wants to give generously to his child.

וְתֹאמַר צִיּוֹן עֲזָבָנִי ה' וְאִדְנִי שָׁכַחָנִי: (ישעיה מ"ד)

Although through our long golus and various difficult situations of persecution and destruction, it can appear as if Hashem has, chas v'sholem forsaken His people, He has not, and we will be redeemed and enjoy His warm and radiant light. So the haftarah opens with a complaint that it appears that we have been forgotten. To this, Hashem answers that He has not forgotten us and has in fact carved us into the palm of His hands.

The gemara (Taanis 4a) tells us that this carving was actually a response to a not-so-proper request; in Shir Hashirim, we ask Hashem to place us as a "choseim al libecha, k'choseim al zeroecha" - a seal on His heart and arm. However the heart and arm are not always visible as they are often covered. Instead, Hakadosh Boruch Hu engraves us into the palm of His hands, a place which is always visible to all.

The Chasam Sofer quotes his rebbe, the Hafla'ah, who explains that there is an additional advantage to being carved into Hashem's palms: If one holds an object in his hands, even if he maintains a firm grip, the item may eventually fall, especially if he turns his hands over and back and forth several times. If however, that object is stuck to the person's hands, or better yet carved into them, he can make wild motions all day long and the item will remain stuck to his hands. The message is that no matter how rough and turbulent the world becomes, k'lal Yisroel is firmly attached to the Ribono shel Olam. Not only are we at the forefront of His mind, but we remain firmly attached to Him.

But the real one posing this question is not just the Jewish people, but Tzion - Eretz Yisroel: How is it possible for a land that lay desolate for so long to flourish once again? This seems to border on the impossible. To this, navi replies that we only need look at where we came from. Avraham and Sarah were both barren and naturally unable to have children, yet they rose above nature. So, it is built in our DNA to do the impossible: As the navi concludes, we can flourish as a nation, and turn the mourning over a desolate land and cities which became ruins into rejoicing and celebration of our restored home which resembles the likes of Gan Eden.

There is a longstanding minhag for women to bake challos for Shabbos. Aside from the fact that bread is a mandatory main staple at every Shabbos seudah and by baking challos, one is preparing for Shabbos in a very real and practical way, there are two main reasons why this custom developed:

In many European communities, the people relied on the non-Jewish baker to supply them with their bread throughout the week. While according to normative Ashkenazi p'sak halacha this was fine (assuming there are no other kashrus concerns in the ingredients of keilim - which is often no longer the case), the poskim write that on Shabbos one should be careful to only eat pas yisroel, and so it became the norm for women to bake their own bread for Shabbos. Most explain that the reason for this is because of the kedusha of Shabbos, one should be machmir, and accordingly, it applies to all baked products (such as cakes, cookies, crackers, pretzels). A minority opinion maintains that it only applies the challos used for lechem mishna, but one could certainly supplement with pas palter (kosher commercial bread) if he or she prefers it, and would certainly not apply to cakes and the like. Either way, it is not an absolute halacha, and in the absence of anything else one may use pas palter even for lechem mishna.

The other reason for baking challos as opposed to buying them is in order to give women the opportunity to separate challah from a batch of dough, which is a tikun for the Chava and her descendants for having partaken of the fruits of the eitz ha'daas (and encouraging Adam to do so as well). Some maintain that a woman should bake challos specifically on Friday (as opposed to Thursday night or earlier) because the cheit of the eitz ha'daas occurred on erev Shabbos, however others are not so particular.

In order to separate challah with a beracha, a dough must contain roughly 5 lbs of flour, which is a significant amount of challah for a couple eating by themselves. (Almost every couple starts out this way, and hopefully, at some point, will end up b'ezras Hashem, living this way as well some years down the line.) Accordingly, some women have the custom of kneading dough every two or three weeks according to their needs, and freezing the rest, either as dough, or as the final baked product. Although some maintain that doing so would render the batch "a dough intended to be divided" and would be exempt from hafrashas challah - at least with a beracha - most poskim are not concerned that this is the case. (They maintain that this only applies to a large dough which is kneaded and then divided between several people or families.) Nevertheless, arguably, there is merit for one who wishes to make a smaller batch of dough and separate challah without a beracha, but not if the batch doesn't require hafrashas challah with absolute certainty. (Meaning if one makes a batch of a single pound of flour, while she has ensured that her family will be eating pas yisroel, nothing has been accomplished by way of repairing the cheit of Chava.)

After the challah is separated, it should be set aside and either wrapped up and discarded or burned outside; baking it to a crisp or burning it in the oven or on the stovetop (especially when done at the same time as other foods are cooking or baking) can create major kashrus concerns. This is because, for all intents and purposes, the separated dough is tamei and not fit for even a kohein. As a forbidden food item, its taste can be absorbed into kosher dishes and appliances, rendering them forbidden as well.

One should groom and bathe in honor of Shabbos. This includes haircuts and shaving and cutting one's nails. The poskim write that one should not cut their nails on Thursday, but rather on erev Shabbos because the nails typically grow on the third day after they are cut. Contrary to widespread misconception, there is nothing inherently forbidden about nails growing on their own. It is rather that grown nails cause a person to look unkempt. According to kabbalah, one should not cut their toe nails on the same day as their finger nails, and therefore on the contrary, it is customary for people to cut their toes nails on Thursdays, since they are not visible for others to see.

One should bathe or shower in hot water (not just a quick rinse off), and many men have the custom of immersing in a

mikva in honor of Shabbos. Technically, showering on Friday morning is sufficient if it is done in honor of Shabbos, but on long and hot summer months.

Unless it is a mandated fast (such as 10th of Teves), one should not fast on erev Shabbos, so as not to enter Shabbos in a deprived state. Still each person should recognize his or her own metabolism and make sure to go into Shabbos with an appetite for the Shabbos seudah. Unlike erev yom tov, there is nothing forbidden about washing and having bread on erev Shabbos, as long as it isn't a seudah gedolah (large feast). Therefore, one who needs to eat bread often (such as an expectant mother suffering from nausea) should not hesitate to wash and have a slice or two of bread).

According to halacha, one should not travel on erev Shabbos past a third of the day so that he will have ample time to prepare for Shabbos. Even if one is travelling to a destination such as to his or her own home, Chazal were concerned that a last minute arrival will cause stress and pressure which could result in chilul Shabbos. However, practically speaking, this halacha is of little relevance because if one sends a message in advance announcing his arrival, it is permitted, and nowadays, one could accomplish this with a simple phone call. It would however apply, to one who wishes to surprise their friends or family. Nevertheless, one should avoid travelling close to Shabbos, because it does happen that inclement weather or unusual traffic patterns have caused delays of hours, leaving travelers stuck in the middle of nowhere, or arriving dangerously close to the onset of Shabbos.

One should not be involved in work on erev Shabbos after the time for mincha arrives. Although some opinions maintain that this means after 'mincha gedola' which is half an hour after chatzos, most maintain that the intended is mincha ketana which is two and half halachic hours before shkiah. While some write that one who violates this will simply not see beracha from that work, the majority of poskim maintain that it is an actual prohibition. However, it doesn't apply to business such as buying and selling, or anything that is done for the needs of Shabbos. Also, it is only prohibited if done regularly, but a one-time activity is not forbidden. If someone works for someone else, the prohibition does not apply and he only needs to stop working with enough time to get home and prepare for Shabbos. This is the basic halacha. However, one who limits his work activities on Fridays and dedicates his time to preparing for Shabbos, both physically and spiritually, it praiseworthy and will merit tremendous beracha. Included in such preparation is resting and spending time learning Torah so he will be able to greet Shabbos in a refreshed and higher spiritual state. This will not only impact his Shabbos, but will have an overspill effect onto the coming week, as while Shabbos is the source of beracha, it is in our hands to increase the potency of that beracha!



R' BENTZION YADLER

15 Av 5722

R' Yitzchok Zev Goldberg lived with his wife in the town of Myadl in Belarus. He was a wealthy businessman who and a big talmid chacham. He had a burning desire to settle in Eretz Yisroel and so he sacrificed his life of comfort and left his business dealings behind and traveled from Odessa by boat. At the time, the Turks were in control of Eretz Yisroel and they didn't permit 'newcomers', so when they arrived, R' Yitzchok Zev came as a visitor and his wife was smuggled in by hiding in a sack of potatoes. It was another two weeks until they were able to travel to Yerushalayim and when they arrived in November of 1871, his wife went into labor and gave birth to a boy, who they most appropriately named Bentzion, given their arrival to Yerushalayim. Their surname was changed to Yadler because people understood their hometown Myadl mean 'from Yadl'.

Like most children at the time, young Bentzion studied in the famous Eitz Chaim Yeshiva, and in 1894 received semicha from R' Shmuel Salant at the age of 22.

Since he was very young, R' Bentzion had difficulty with his eyesight which made learning from texts challenging. Yet, he persevered and committed a lot of Torah to memory and became especially proficient in understanding and explaining divrei agadata.

In 1902, just before Purim, R' Shmuel Salant appointed R' Bentzion as the official darshan and magid in Yerushalayim. He was also put in charge of community's eruv.

By that time, Jews had begun to settle in other parts of Eretz Yisroel and R' Bentzion would travel from town to town, from village to settlement, to speak words of inspiration and strengthen shemiras ha'mitzvos especially of those relating to the agriculture of Eretz Yisroel.

R' Bentzion also inspired others by personal example; many who witnesses him at the kosel on Tisha b'Av night reported that their personal mourning of the churban was impacted forever.

In 1923, he was appointed to represent the Yerushalayim kehilla at Agudas Yisroel's Knisiya Gedolah in Vienna. He was 53 years old and having never left the holy land, R' Bentzion was apprehensive about traveling abroad, fearing that he might not return. After being reassured that he was going as a shaliach mitzvah, he went and returned, living until the age of 92, when he returned his neshama to his Creator at the chupah of his own granddaughter. His levaya was attended by thousands who escorted him to kevura on har ha'Menuchos.