

Parashas Shavuos

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י"ל ע"י
קהילת שבתי בבית ד'
בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הר"צ
רבי גמליאל הכהן
רבינובין שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

Glorifying Hashem through the Torah

טיב המערכת

The Medicine of Life

There was once a man suffering from a serious illness that caused him to have difficulty breathing. He consulted doctors and went to specialists, but his condition continued to worsen, and his breathing became more difficult by the day. The doctors indicated that his life was in danger, and if no cure was found soon, his days were numbered.

The man researched and made enquiries, hoping that somewhere in the world there was a cure for his condition. He would gladly give up everything he owned if he would only find a cure for his disease.

He was about to give up when he heard about a doctor in his own area who had developed a medicine that could cure his condition. Imagine his joy on the day he took the medicine, which restored his breathing to normal! He felt like he had received the gift of life itself.

Every day we say in our tefillah (in the berachah before the evening Shema), "כי הם חיינו וארך ימינו" – "For they [the words of Torah] are our life and the length of our days." Have you ever stopped to ask yourself what these words mean? Have you ever thought about their deeper meaning?

When we say "for they are our life," we are saying that our lives are literally dependent on the words of Torah, like that sick man whose life depended on his taking the medication that eventually cured his illness.

Shavuos is the day when we receive the Torah, our life-saving medication, and it's the time to appreciate that if we want to continue living, we must obtain a large amount of this medicine — "for they are our life and the length of our days." Yes, even the "length of our days" is dependent on the amount of Torah we attain and learn.

This is why we beseech HaKadosh Baruch Hu every day (in the berachah before the morning Shema), רחם עלינו ותן בלבנו להבין ולהשכיל... והאר שיינינו בתורתך... – "Have mercy upon us, instill understanding in our hearts to understand and elucidate...and enlighten our eyes in Your Torah..." We are not only asking Hashem to enlighten us with Torah, but we are actually begging Him for our life! And here we are referring not only to our life in this world, but to life that is even longer — much, much longer: eternal life!

The Gemara relates (Shabbos 88b) that when Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to Heaven to receive the Torah, the angels protested before Hashem: How could the treasured Torah, hidden away since before Creation, be given to mere human beings? Hashem told Moshe to answer them. Strengthened by holding onto the Heavenly Throne, Moshe explained that the Torah was specifically meant for humans living in the physical world. The mitzvos speak about experiences unique to people — leaving Egypt, resisting idol worship, working and resting on Shabbos, conducting business honestly, and honoring parents. Since angels do not face these challenges, the Torah was not intended for them.

ה' (Hearing this, the angels accepted Moshe's argument, and said (Tehillim 8:10) "אֲדֹנֵינוּ מִה אֲדִיר שִׁמְךָ – "Hashem, our Master, how great is Your Name"

When we examine this Gemara it makes us wonder why the angels craved the Torah so much without even knowing what was in it. And if they knew what was in it, then why did they crave it? And if they knew, then how is Moshe's response to be understood?

We can say that the angels knew that the Torah is in the category of Malchus (Kingship), and that its essence is that it is up to the recipient to follow its decrees and statutes. By following them, they enhance the "Glory of Heaven," like enhancing the glory of a king of flesh and blood. In addition, the angels knew that all the Laws of the Torah sanctify those who keep them, bringing them closer and enabling them to cling to the Giver. Since this is so, the angels never envisioned that the Torah would be given to people, since they knew "כִּי יֵצֵר לֵב הָאָדָם רָע מִנַּעֲרֻו" – "that the nature of man is bad from the time of his youth" (Bereishis 8:21), and he is drawn to and desires materialism. Therefore, the Creator did not want to give mankind the Torah, as He was almost certain they would turn it upside-down because of their materialistic nature. If they failed to keep the decrees of the Creator, there would be no glory to our Creator; there would be rebellion against the Kingdom of Heaven.

But when the angels saw it was not necessarily true that mankind would fail to keep the decrees, they reconsidered, and when Moshe went up to receive the Torah, they were concerned. They wanted to question their Creator, and remind Him of the nature of those below, which is why they used a double expression, מִה אֲדֹנֵינוּ מִה אֲדִיר שִׁמְךָ – "What is a mortal that You should remember him or the son of man that You should recall him?" (Tehillim 8:5). The word enosh alludes to the sin in the generation of Enosh when mankind was drawn to nonsense. The word adam refers to a specific man, Adam HaRishon, who could not resist enticement and stumbled over the single mitzvah he was given.

Why give the Torah to people such as these, who would not achieve the purpose of the Torah? It would be better to give it to the angels, who are spiritual, and would fulfill the decrees of their King, thereby enhancing the Glory of Heaven.

The view of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, however, was different from that of the angels, and He asked Moshe to respond. Moshe gave the angels a general answer, arguing that Yisrael deserved the Torah. He explained that mankind, possessing a yetzer hara, would have to subdue their will and negate it to the will of their Creator, which would surely enhance the Glory of Heaven. The angels, who have no will other than the will of the Creator, cannot enhance the Glory of Heaven as can materialistic people.

This is what Moshe told them: "The Torah that You are giving me, what is written in

‘אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם? I am Hashem, your God, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.” Moshe said to the angels: “When the Creator here mentions His Godliness over Yisrael, He glorifies the fact that He is the God of Yisrael, who was once distant from Him and had reached the 49th level of impurity. There was hardly a difference between Yisrael and the Egyptians, who were drawn to lowly levels of immorality and to materialism. Even so, they were able to bring glory to their Creator and His Kingdom by accepting his will, and subduing their own will. But you angels, did you descend to Egypt? Did you serve Pharaoh? You cannot relate to materialism at all, so why should the Torah be for you?!”

Moshe continued to enumerate the other Commandments that Hashem had given, all of which were in opposition to the desires of the yetzer hara. He explained to them how the natural will of a person goes against the command, and that the purpose of the command is to change man’s nature and have him go against his own will, for this is the only way man might enhance and sanctify the Name of Hashem.

Even though the Creator knew that Yisrael was destined to sin, making a chillul Hashem, this was not a reason to withhold the Torah from them. To the contrary, sin testifies to the materialistic nature of a person, and when he repents and overpowers his yetzer hara, he increases the glory of the Creator, for this person proves that he is now distant from his previous lowly nature, and that he has strengthened himself and accepted the

yoke of his Creator.

This is what Yisrael meant when they preceded “Naaseh – We will do,” to “Nishma – We will hear.” With this, they meant to say that they had no need to first hear what was written in the Torah. The purpose of the Torah is to forego the personal will. As such, it is irrelevant whether or not they like the directives. In any case, they were prepared to negate their will for His will.

In summary, Kevod Shamayim, the Glory of Heaven, is promoted in the world when we subdue the yetzer hara and nullify it in submission to the statutes of the Torah; this is the purpose of the “Giving of the Torah.”

Having truly merited to negate our essence with the giving of the Torah, it is always incumbent upon us to remember the responsibility that has been placed upon us. On the one hand, we need to acknowledge our materialistic nature and adverse will. On the other hand, we are obligated to go against the desires of our will.

This can only be done when one is accustomed to learning the holy Torah. Chazal said (Kiddushin 30b), ‘So said HaKadosh Baruch Hu to Yisrael, “My son! I have created the yetzer hara and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you immerse yourselves in Torah, you will not be delivered into its hand.”’

They also said (Kiddushin 30b): It was taught in the academy of Rabbi Yishmael: “My son, if the yetzer hara engages you, draw him into the study hall; if he is like a stone, he will crumble; and if he is like

iron, he will shatter. As the navi states (Yirmiyahu 23:29): ‘הֲלוֹא כֹה דִּבְרִי בָאֵשׁ נָאֵם ה' – ‘Are not My words like fire, says Hashem, and like a hammer that shatters rock? If it is stone it will crumble,’ as it is stated (Yeshayahu 55:1), כָּל צָמָא לָבו, – ‘All who are thirsty go to the waters.’ And water wears down stone, as it says (Iyov 14:19), אֲבָנִים שֹׁחֲקוּ מִיָּם, – ‘Water wears down stone.”’

I remember hearing something noteworthy from Rav Meir Grossman, z”l, decades ago. He was then known mainly for his involvement in communal needs, but when he spoke with me, it became clear that he was quite knowledgeable in Torah and appreciated Torah. Recognizing me, he called out, “Gamliel, come close to me!” I approached him and then he said, “A young man came into my beis midrash, took out a Gemara and sat down to learn “Shor shenagach es haparah – If an ox gored a cow” (Bava Kama 46a). Did that young man have an ox or a cow? Does even know the difference between an ox and a cow? Probably not! Still, when he studies these words, he burns up and totally destroys his yetzer hara.”

His words, coming from the heart, entered my heart and are etched there to this very day. Whenever I need to be motivated, I vividly remember Rav Meir’s words and feel encouraged.

May Hashem Yisbarach help us be immersed constantly in Torah, understanding our will and knowing well the will of our Creator. And along with this, may we always merit to fulfill Naaseh Venishma.

רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל מְכּוּבְתֵינוּ

A Complete Healing for All Our Afflictions

Sharp pains pierced the left side of my body — pains that literally kept sleep from my eyes. I could not sleep continuously, and needless to say, sleeping on my left side was completely impossible.

Adding to all the trouble, the chiropractor whom I had known for many long years had just flown to America for a two-month period, so there was no one to turn to at all.

I davened to Hashem that He redeem me from my suffering, if it was good in His eyes.

Every morning, despite the pain, I did not give up my fixed times for Torah, and I went to the shiurim with mesirus nefesh.

In the middle of the shiur, trying to find a comfortable position, I shifted and stretched in my chair. Suddenly, the chair broke, and I crashed to the floor with a strong and very unpleasant blow, my feet striking the underside of the table.

I got up, thanked Hashem, and sat back down to continue learning as usual. That night — wonder of wonders — I slept through the night without pain and without waking up every few minutes. The same happened the second night, and the third as well. Now, after four days, the pains have almost completely disappeared ever since the “personal treatment” that

Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave me through falling from the broken chair.

Wonder of wonders! A person thinks he received a blow, but in truth he received healing for his injury!!

Since I already mentioned the shiur, I would like to take this opportunity to say that I never give up my fixed times for Torah Study under any circumstances. This week, one of the bus companies called me and asked me to take a route that would begin during the time of the shiur. Despite my desire to accept it, I told him that there was absolutely no possibility of doing so, even partially at the expense of the shiur, and all his pleading and urging did not help.

As soon as I finished the shiur, he called again and said that a new route had come in from one in the afternoon until nighttime. The job included transporting a group, waiting several hours on location, and then bringing them back.

In the end, the group finished early, and I received full pay for all the hours, with plenty of extra time to listen to shiurim until they returned to the bus. The route originally offered to me had been difficult and annoying and, now, behold — in the merit of the yoke of Torah, which I refused to give up, I received an easier and better paying job — and with joy. (by N.B.).

שיב והשגרה

The guest thanked the wealthy man from the depths of his heart, and after tasting the pastries and sipping the warm drink, he began to relate his story and the purpose of his visit. He briefly told of the difficult events of his life, of his extremely strained financial situation, and how for several years he had been unable to provide for his household.

He added: "I have not come here to request a donation or charity; I want to make a 'revolution' in my finances and solve the problem from its root! I want to open a profitable business and begin earning in a big way! For this purpose," concluded the poor man, "in order to implement this great plan, I need an immediate loan of one thousand gold dinars, so that I can invest this large sum in the business I wish to establish. Then, after a certain period, when the business begins to flourish and produce good profits, I will, with Hashem's help, repay the debt!"

The distinguished wealthy man, in the generosity of his heart, agreed to the request of his poor friend. He entered his inner chamber and brought out the full amount of dinars. He then said to the poor man with a warm and kindly expression: "Take the loan as you requested. You do not need to feel pressured regarding the time of repayment. Begin your business, and when Hashem sends you His good blessing and you prosper, you will be able to repay the loan whenever it is comfortable and suitable for you."

The poor man left the benefactor's mansion with the money, happy and good-hearted. But when he arrived home, he simply locked the money in a special box, and soon returned to his natural state of laziness... He did not use the money at all; he did absolutely nothing with it! He remained in his impoverished state, and the money in the box remained there. Both were "stuck" in the same condition, like a stone that no one ever turns over...

A long time passed, and one day the two friends met. The wealthy man was happy to see him and gently began to inquire about the state of the business... what business he had entered, and whether he perhaps needed additional help in order to further advance it...

But how shocked the benefactor was to hear that all the money had remained lying in the box exactly as it was all that time, and that nothing whatsoever had been done with it!

"Why?!" the wealthy man exclaimed in great astonishment. "Why did you leave the money that way and do nothing with it?!"

What do you care?" answered the poor man simply. "After all, I will be able to repay you the loan in full. All one thousand dinars that I borrowed from you are still there, and I will return everything to you exactly as promised!"

סיב המעשיות

Staying Focused

The Chofetz Chaim zy"a gave a beautiful parable in his sefer Toras Habayis (chap. 8):

A poor acquaintance once came to the door of one of the very wealthy benefactors of Klal Yisrael and asked to speak with the homeowner. The benefactor received him warmly, brought him into the large sitting room, and instructed the attendants to serve his guest refreshments – fine pastries together with a warm drink.

"Oy vey!" cried the wealthy man, striking his hands together in dismay. "Do you know what great profits one thousand gold dinars could have produced over such a long period of time?! With a wise and successful investment, you could have doubled and tripled the amount, and if you had continued investing the money in the right places, you could have become extremely wealthy!"

How could you have neglected such a large and handsome sum of one thousand full-weight gold dinars, leaving them lying in a box and doing nothing with them?!" cried the wealthy man from the depths of his heart.

The Chofetz Chaim zy"a concludes the parable with a clear lesson: Hashem Yisbarach has entrusted us with a pure neshamah from the highest heavens. It breaks forth and descends from the exalted and lofty chambers beneath His Throne of Glory, and He gives it as a faithful deposit into our hands, to bring it down into this lowly world, so that we should wisely recognize its wondrous value. If we would only use it properly, we could accomplish so much good with it — to act and do properly, to guard and fulfill the mitzvos, and to increase the rectification of the world and the rectification of our own souls for good.

But if a person does not act as he is commanded, even if he properly guards himself from sin and does not damage his soul by corrupting it, and he is able to return it to the source from which it was hewn, pure and beautiful as it is — even this will be a great claim against him: "Is it possible that you were given such a holy and mighty soul, and yet you did not act with it to increase Torah and maasim tovim?! With such a neshamah, you could have accomplished great things for Hashem, for His Torah, and for His people Yisrael! You could have hastened the geulah and brought the world closer to its rectification! For what purpose did you keep this precious soul, with all the

mighty powers hidden within it, for seventy or eighty years, closed and sealed away?!"

And what will a person answer on the Day of Judgment to this penetrating question?

A while ago, one of the tzedakah funds in our holy city, Yerushalayim, succeeded in arranging a special tzedakah support framework from one of the fund's great benefactors, who donated on a fixed monthly basis for one of its honorable families. The father of the family would receive each month, under the well-known "Yissachar and Zevulun" arrangement, a respectable support sum of three thousand dollars, deposited directly into his bank account.

Over time, a close and affectionate bond developed between them, and their relationship grew steadily stronger. The wealthy man, on his part, greatly appreciated the Yerushalmi talmid chacham and his family, who were very special and elevated people. They too, on their part, were deeply grateful for his kindness, and would regularly send him letters of holiday wishes before the Yomim Tovim and the like. Whenever he would come to the Holy Land, he always made an effort to visit them, and over the years these traditional visits became festive occasions.

On one occasion, the wealthy man and his wife came for a short visit to Eretz Yisrael, and of course made sure not to miss the festive supper at the home of the Yerushalmi family. While they were there, the benefactress noted that the furniture in the house was already old and worn and was not fitting for such an honorable family. On the spot, the distinguished benefactor promised that the following month he would send them a double amount so that they could replace the furniture. And indeed, he kept his word and deposited into the family's bank account a sum double the regular monthly support, so that they now had six thousand dollars altogether.

Immediately the day after the deposit, the father of the family and his wife sat down and wrote a special thank-you letter for the three thousand dollars that had been sent to replace the furniture. They thanked the wealthy man and his wife from the depths of their hearts for their goodness and for paying attention to what needed improvement and repair. They also noted that they intended to proceed immediately with replacing the furniture, to the joy of the children, shetichyu, who had also added several sweet drawings as a sign of thanks and appreciation...

When the letter reached the wealthy man, he was very surprised – for he had deposited six thousand dollars, so why did the letter of thanks mention only

three thousand? Could it be that the managers of the tzedakah fund had used the rest for something else? Impossible! They were known as an extremely trustworthy fund and would not do such a thing without first coordinating with him. He therefore immediately contacted his friend, the talmid chacham in Yerushalayim, and asked what had happened to the remaining three thousand dollars that he had deposited into his account.

The talmid chacham did not understand his surprise and concern. He assured him that the entire six thousand dollars had indeed arrived in his account in full, and even added, "I sent you a thank-you letter immediately the next day. Perhaps the letter did not reach you? According to my calculations, you should have received it several days ago!"

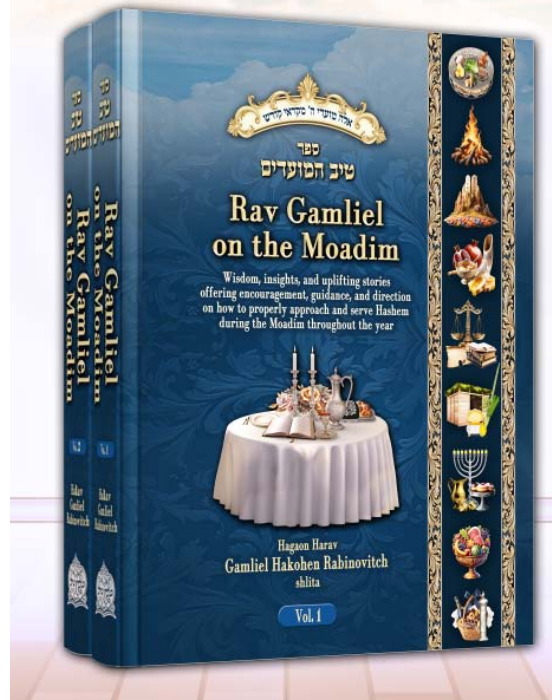
"I did indeed receive your pleasant letter," replied the wealthy man, "including the sweet drawings of the kinderlach, shetichyu. But precisely because of this I ask: why does the letter of berachah mention only the sum of three thousand dollars, while this month I deposited six thousand dollars?"

"Ah!" the man excused himself. "The three thousand have already been coming for many years through the fixed monthly arrangement. I did not think there was a need to offer special thanks and blessings for those as well. Therefore, I sent the thank-you letter mainly for the additional amount that you gave this month..."

This is, of course, only a parable. A person receives from Hashem Yisbarach each and every day all his needs: life and sustenance, health and clothing — שְׁעָטָה לְכָל צָרָתִי — "Who has provided me with all my needs." Yet somehow, it seems to him that everything is simply coming to him automatically. After all, it is already a fixed support, arriving each and every day... Only when he receives some special gift, at times of simchah and the like, does he remember that he must thank Hashem Yisbarach for the unique gift. But he does not take to heart that in truth he owes thousands upon thousands of thanks for each and every day of his life and sustenance, and for everything he has merited to attain until now!

The child of one of the chassidim of the holy Rebbe, Rav Yochanan of Karlin zy"א, became ill and was bedridden. His fever continued to rise, and he lay in bed for several days — weak and without strength,

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and extremely pale in appearance. His worried parents hovered over him constantly. After several difficult days of illness had passed and no improvement was seen in the child's condition, the father, in his great distress, entered the Rebbe's study and told the Rebbe about his sick son, who had already been struggling for several days with his severe illness.

The Rebbe looked carefully at the kvittel before him, and after deep thought instructed him to take the sick child to a certain doctor. It was an elderly physician who had already retired and was not at all known as a qualified doctor, though in his younger years he had been somewhat involved in medicine. The father wondered why the Rebbe had sent him to this obscure doctor rather than to a great expert physician. But as a faithful chassid, he accepted the Rebbe's words without any question whatsoever. The parents therefore took their sick child and went to the doctor's home.

At first, the doctor tried to avoid becoming involved, saying that he no longer practiced medicine and that it would be better for them to go to more qualified doctors. But when the man insisted and explained that he was coming on the mission of his Rebbe, who had explicitly instructed him to come specifically to him, the doctor agreed to examine the sick child.

He examined him thoroughly from every possible angle, and when the lengthy

examination was completed, he sat down to write a detailed diagnosis. In it, he concluded that after a deep and comprehensive examination, no signs whatsoever of any illness had been discovered. The child's entire body was healthy and functioning properly, and there was not even the slightest concern about any specific disease. He had merely been struck by a certain virus, and within a few days everything would pass as though it had never been, and the child would return to full strength and complete health.

And so it was. The improvement in the child's condition progressed rapidly, and within two days he was already walking around strong and healthy like any ordinary person, as though he had never been ill at all.

The chassid immediately hurried to the house of the tzaddik to inform him of the good and joyful news that the child had already recovered. When the Rebbe inquired and asked about the nature of the illness and how the past days had gone for him, the chassid dismissed the whole matter of the illness and said that during their visit to the doctor to whom the Rebbe had sent them, it became clear that there had been no sickness and no illness at all, and it turned out that there had been nothing there whatsoever.

When the Rebbe heard his words, his holy face became serious, and he said: "Zog nisht azoi! (Do not say that!) Do not say that there was never a problem here. Rather, say that now Hashem Yisbarach, in His great mercy and kindness, has helped us, and now, Baruch Hashem, there is no illness. But at the beginning, your child lay in bed without strength, and you worried and feared greatly for his welfare. Surely it was not for nothing that we needed that doctor... Therefore, we are obligated to thank Hashem Yisbarach and praise Him for having taken us from distress to relief and from darkness to light."

And with this, the Rebbe taught him an important lesson, aside from what he hinted to in his holy words regarding the great wonder that had taken place here — that through his tefillos, the Rebbe had sweetened the judgments and transformed the entire severe illness into nothing more than a minor virus...

That one must always attribute everything to the kindnesses of Hashem Yisbarach and His salvation — that it is He, in His mercy, Who took him out of his distress — and not allow the yetzer hara to confuse his mind with various excuses and rationalizations. It is the way of the world that when a person needs salvation, he cries out and prays to Hashem, and runs to mention his distress before the tzaddikim. But after he is saved, he no longer sees that everything was done with the help of the Creator, and instead tends to attribute his salvation to the ways of nature. Top of Form