בעזהשי"ת

The Way of Emunah

Collected Thoughts
on the Weekly Parshah
From
Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum shlita

Vayeitzei



The Way of Emunah

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Parshas Vayeitzei

Sweetening Decrees Through Emunah/A Promise of Parnassah/Gashmius to be able to Learn Torah/Saved in the Merit of Silence/The Presence of the Shechinah in the Merit of Silence/Long Life in the Merit of Silence/An Abundance of Goodness in the Merit of Silence/Becoming a Partner with Hashem/Saved From Several Sins/ Protected From Suffering/Transforming Middas Hadin to Rachamim

וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וגו' (כח, יב)

And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the ground and its top reached to Heaven; and behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending upon it. (28:12)

Sweetening Decrees Through Emunah:

Sefer Tiferes Shmuel states that this *pasuk* alludes to a great lesson.

The Mishnah (Brachos 9:5) says: "A person is obligated to make a blessing on the bad just like he is obligated to make a blessing on the good."

The Tiferes Shmuel explains that it is an obligation upon every Jew to believe with complete faith that nothing big or small ever occurs that is not ordained by Hashem. Hashem is the One who rules and guides the entire world, and He is the only power that has the ability to do anything. And everything He does is good. Since He is the source of everything, and everything He does to us is for our benefit, it is obvious that even when it appears that we are being judged strictly and treated

harshly, everything that is happening is actually for our own good. **When one has such a level of *emunah*, all judgments from Hashem will be sweet for him. He will realize that strict judgements are actually Divine kindnesses.**

We are currently in the midst of a long and bitter *golus*. We are faced with many troubles and difficulties every day. Our only solution is to have strong *emunah* in Hashem and trust that everything that happens comes from Him and is meant for our benefit.

This is what Hashem showed Yaakov in his dream: He saw a ladder standing on the ground. This was a representation of *golus,* and all the pain and suffering Klal Yisroel would go through when they would be down on the ground and stuck in the mud. Still and all, the top of the ladder reached to the Heavens. This represented the fact that *emunah* can sweeten the suffering, allow us to realize that it is all Hashem's kindness, and raise us up to great heights.

This idea is stressed by Chazal (Brachos 60B) with the statement: "One should accustom himself to say that everything Hashem is for the good." Chazal are emphasizing that **every single thing that Hashem does,** with no exceptions, is for the good.

וְהִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וּשְׁמַרְתִּיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ וגו' כִּי לֹא אֶעֱזָבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם עָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ (כח, טו)

Behold, I am with you, and I shall protect you in all your goings... for I will not forsake you until I have done what I said to you. (28:15)

A Promise of Parnassah:

The Divrei Yisroel asks why Hashem had to promise Yaakov that He would keep His word. Of course Hashem always fulfills His words!

He answers that Yaakov only received material blessings many years later, after leaving the house of Lavan. In the meantime, he was very poor. He crossed the Jordan with nothing other than his walking stick (Bereishis 32:11). Lavan then cheated him out of his pay many times. Thus, he needed sustenance during that time, before the fulfillment of the brachos. Regarding this, Hashem said that He would not forsake him until He fulfilled His words, meaning that even during the time before the fulfillment of the brachos, He would still provide for him.

This is a lesson for us all. **Every Jew believes that Hashem will send his ultimate salvation. However, even before the big salvation arrives, people also need "small" salvations to survive from day to day, and Hashem provides that as well.** This is in line with the well-known Yiddish expression: "Biz'n kretchma darf mel oich a trink branfen." (Until we get to the tavern, we also need a drink of whiskey.)

וַיִּדַּר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר וגו' וְנָתַן לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ (כח, כ)

And Yaakov made a vow, saying, "If G-d will be with me and protect me on this road…and give me bread to eat and clothing to wear. (28:20)

Gashmius to be able to Learn Torah:

Chazal say (Avos 3:21): "If there is no flour, there is no Torah. If there is no Torah, there is no flour." The Alshich *zt"l* (see Alshich Tehillim 4:6 and Mishlei 3:1) asks which of these comes first. If neither can exist without the other, which one preceded the other?

He writes that this was the debate between Hashem and Klal Yisroel. Hashem said that if they immerse themselves in Torah, He will promise them *parnassah*. Klal Yisroel responds that they can't start learning unless they have *parnassah* first.

The Imrei Noam (Ois 33) writes that this is the meaning of the verse (Tehillim 118:8): "It is better to trust in Hashem than to trust in people." This means that it is better for people to trust in Hashem to give them *parnassah* after they learn Torah than for Him to trust that people will learn after He grants them this *parnassah*. This is because Hashem is obviously more trustworthy than people, as He never fails to fulfill His promises.

The Imrei Noam writes that this was true in earlier generations. **In our times, however, when we face new difficulties every day, we lack the strength to learn Torah and serve Hashem unless He provides us first with a good livelihood. Therefore, in the merit of our *bitachon* and reliance on Him, we ask Him to first grant s *parnassah* before we engage in avodas Hashem.**

He uses this concept to explain the words of Shlomo Hamelech

(Mishlei 31:11): "The heart of her husband trusts in her." Hashem, the "husband" of Klal Yisroel, trusts in her to fulfill their end of the bargain after He provides for them. In this way "an abundance is never lacking", as He always gives us what we need.

This is also as Yaakov Avinu said: "And give me bread to eat… and I will return in peace." He asked to first be given whatever *gashmius* he needs, and then says that "Hashem will be to me as G-d", meaning that he will serve Him afterwards.

וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת רָחֵל וַיִּשְׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ וגו' וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת רַחְמָהּ (ל, כב)

And G-d remembered Rochel and He heard her… and He opened her womb. (30:22)

Saved in the Merit of Silence:

It is stated in the Medrash (Siman 6): "If one sees a nice-looking person, what blessing should he make? Our teachers taught that one who sees good-looking creations or nice trees should say, 'Blessed is He who has these in His world.'

"There was no one as beautiful as Rochel. Yaakov wanted to marry her because of her beauty. He sent gifts for Rochel, but Lavan gave them to Leah. And Rochel was silent.

"Rav Shimon ben Gamliel said: My entire life, I grew up amongst wise men, and I never found anything better for the body than silence. Rochel remained silent, and she planted with silence. She saw her gifts in the hands of her sister, and she

kept quiet. The stone of her son Binyonim in the Efod was the '*yispeh'*. She knew about the sale of Yosef, and she kept quiet. This is '*yispeh'* – '*yesh peh'*. She had a mouth but was silent.

"This trait was also by her offspring. Her descendant Shaul did not speak about being appointed king (1 Shmuel 10:16). Esther, her descendant, did not reveal her heritage (Esther 2:10).

"Rav Yehuda said: Silence is great because in the merit of Rochel's silence, she merited having two tribes of Yisroel – Menashe and Efraim – come from her. Why was she silent? Rav Shimon bar Yochai says: If I tell Yaakov that my father gave my sister the present he sent for me, my father still won't allow me to marry him and I will be distanced from this *tzadik*.

"Hashem said to her: **You were silent. I promise that I will remember you in the merit of this silence. This is as is stated: 'And Hashem remembered Rochel."**

The Presence of the Shechinah in the Merit of Silence:

Chazal (Bereishis Rabbah 51:6) similarly understand the pasuk (Bereishis 9:29) that says that Hashem remembered Avrohom and saved Lot. They state: "What did Hashem remember? He remembered how Lot was silent when Avrohom said that Sarah was his sister."

The Presence of the Shechinah in the Merit of Silence:

Silence is so powerful that it can elicit the presence of the Shechinah.

The Medrash Tanchuma (Mikeitz, Siman 10) says that when Yosef found the goblet and Binyomin was suspected of stealing it, his brothers struck him on the shoulders and said, "You are a thief, the son of a thief. Your mother shamed our father in the same way with an act of theft." Yet he remained silent.

As a result of the strikes Binyomin took on his shoulders, he merited having the Shechinah dwell there, as is stated (Devarim 33:12): "And it will dwell between your shoulders."

We see that Binyomin remained silent so as not to contradict his brothers and make it seem like they had stolen the goblet. In this merit, he was rewarded with the Bais Hamikdosh being in his portion.

The Shlah Hakadosh (Meseches Yoma, Perek Derech Chaim Tochachos Mussar, Ois 77) writes: "The benefit of silence is infinite. The word 'has' refers to silence, as in (Bamidbor 13:30): 'Vayehas Kalev. (And Kalev was silent.)' The *gematriah* of this word is the same as Hashem's name of Ado-. This indicates that Hashem's glory dwells upon one who remains silent and only speaks about Torah matters…

"Rabenu Hai Gaon writes in Sefer Mussar Haskil that one should keep his tongue locked in his mouth, and he should act like he is mute, similar to how a lion is locked up in a cage. If the lion is allowed out, it will eat people. So too, if one's tongue is let loose, it will cause damage."

Long Life in the Merit of Silence:

The Chida *zt"l* (Sefer Lev Dovid, Perek 23) quotes Rav Chaim Vital *zt"l* as saying that the air one breathes is the life of a person. The proof of this is that when a person dies, he no longer emits any breath. Thus, when one speaks, and air comes out of his mouth, part of his life is leaving him. Therefore, it is very important not to waste one's words on nonsense.

Rav Bunim of Peshischa *zy"a* explains Rav Shimon ben Gamilel's statement that "nothing is better for the body than silence" by quoting ancient sefarim that say that every person has a set amount of words to speak in his lifetime. Once he has used up all his words, his life must come to an end. Thus, **if one minimizes the number of words he says, he is lengthening his life.** That is why nothing is better for the body than silence.

An Abundance of Goodness in the Merit of Silence:

The Chida *zt"l* (Sefer Devash L'Fi, Maareches Shin, Ois 3) quotes Sefer Eretz Chaim (on Tehillim, Mizmor 19) as saying in the name of the Zohar Hakdosh that if one has the middah of silence, he can turn "*pesha*" (transgression) into "*shefa*" (abundance). He explains that it is stated in Mishlei (10:19) that "a lot of words do not lack *pesha*". If one speaks a lot, he will inevitably come to sin. But if one is silent, he will avoid that and transform the *pesha* into a *shefa*.

Becoming a Partner With Hashem:

The Medrash (Tehillim, Mizmar 86) states: "**If one is cursed and could complain yet remains silent, he becomes a partner with Hashem."** This is because Hashem also hears the nations of the world cursing Him, and he could destroy them, yet He remains silent. Dovid Hamelech also had this trait of remaining silent when cursed, and he asked Hashem to protect him in the merit of being a chasid who acted this way (Tehillim 86:2).

Thus, one who remains silent when he is insulted becomes a partner with Hashem and, therefore, he is able to make use of this partnership by taking an abundance of good for himself.

Saved from Several Sins:

Sefer Orchos Tzadikim (Shaar Hashetikah) writes: "One who is careful to remain silent is saved from several aveiros – flattery, mockery, lashon hara, and falsehood. When people insult him, if he would answer back, he would be doubling the problem. A wise man said, 'When I hear a bad thing, I am quiet.' When he was asked why, he said, 'If I answer those who shame me, I am afraid that they utter worse curses than before.' He said, 'When a fool argues with a wise man and the wise man is silent, it is a great answer for the fool. The fool is more hurt by the silence of the wise man than he would be if he had answered him in kind.'

"Regarding this, it is stated (Mishlei 18:21): 'Life and death is in the hands of the tongue.' A man can do more harm with his

tongue than with a sword. A person can stand in one place and 'kill' his friend in another place with words, whereas a sword can only harm a person who is nearby. This is why a person is born with two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and only one mouth. This is to teach us that one should speak sparingly.

"The general rule is that just like a person has a door on his home which sometimes is open and sometimes is closed, one should also have a door on his mouth that he closes… One must be very careful with the door to his mouth. One should watch his tongue as much as he watches gold, silver, and precious gems…

"**Silence is also a means to retain yiras Shomayim, as it is impossible to fear Hashem if one talks too much."**

Protected From Suffering:

It is known that one who guards his mouth and tongue is protecting himself from suffering, as one can cause harm to himself if he is not careful with his words. The Chofetz Chaim *zt"l* writes in a letter: "We can learn from the holy Avos how much one must be careful with his words. Yaakov uttered a curse when he told Lavan (Bereishis 31:32) that whoever stole his terafim should die. As a result, Rochel died before he time. However, when the Shevatim told their father that the ruler of Egypt (who was Yosef) was a bad man who suspected them of being spies and commanded them to bring Binyomin, Yaakov did not curse the ruler. Instead, he told them to bring him a present of honey. He

was very careful with his words and said, 'The G-d of mercy should grant you mercy before this man.' This was a great thing because if he had cursed the man, he would have killed Yosef, his son."

Transforming Middas Hadin to Rachamim:

It is stated in Idra Zuta: "Praiseworthy is he who watches his words."

The Kamarna Rebbe *zy"a* (Sefer Damesek Eliezer) writes that one can rectify his entire body through his mouth, and **through silence one can transform *middas hadin* into *middas harachamim* for himself and for all of Klal Yisroel."**

One year on Rosh Hashanah, when it came time to blow the *shofar*, the Chozeh of Lublin *zy"a* was secluded in his room, and he did not come out for a long time. Finally, he emerged with much joy and blew the *shofar*. When his students asked him for an explanation, he said that he was looking for a *zechus* with which he could go before the *Kisei Hakavod* to ask for mercy, but he couldn't find one. Then he recalled that his *shamash* was late one morning in bringing him water for *netilas yodayim*. He was unable to get out of bed as he waited for a long time for the shamash to appear. Still and all, he overcame his desire to rebuke him, and he didn't say a word. With this *zechus*, he was ready to blow *shofar*.

From this story, we see that refraining from speaking in anger is such a great *zechus* that

the Chozeh of Lublin *zy"a* used it as a means to arouse Divine mercy for Klal Yisroel.



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