

מאת מנ"ה ברוך הירשפלד שליט"א
רב דקהל אהבת ישראל, קליבלנד הייטס

הלכה למעשה

A SERIES IN HALACHAH
LIVING A "TORAH" DAY

SHAVUOS AND HALACHA: The Role of Learning Halachah as Part of the Yom Tov Experience.

The Yom Tov of Shavuos is the annual celebration of *Matan Torah* - giving of the *Torah*, in the year 2448 after Creation. The crowning moment of this event was *Clal Yisroel's* unanimous verbal acceptance of the *Torah* when they declared: "נעשה ונשמע" - WE WILL DO AND WE WILL LISTEN. As a reward for their acceptance, each and every Jew was rewarded with 2 spiritual crowns. Today, celebrating the Yom Tov of Shavuosis really to recommit ourselves to the declaration that we made then. The high point of this commemoration is by *Krias Hatorah* on the first morning of Yom Tov.

It is clear from the language of the declaration, "WE WILL DO" that "doing" *Torah* (i.e. practical fulfillment of *Torah* and *mitzvos*) is of prime importance. This means that a person must slowly but surely, day by day, learn about the practical deeds and commandments that he is required to do with precision.

"כל השנה הלכות" The *Gemara* says: *Importance of Halacha.* "One who learns halachos every day is assured a portion in the world to come." This awesome statement is said as part of the daily davening in *Nusach Sefard* and even by many who daven *Nusach Ashkenaz*, especially in Israel. On *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* everybody says it. The use of the plural word "הלכות" seems to indicate that one should learn at least 2 *halachos* daily. This can be done by learning 2 *halachos* from *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, *Mishna Brurah*, or any other *Halacha sefer* in any language. This should preferably be done at a set time daily such as after *Shacharis* before taking off one's *Tefillin* (which also accomplishes the special preference of learning *Torah* every day while wearing *Tefillin*), or at a meal (which likewise

accomplishes the conduct mentioned in *Pirkei Avos* of learning *Torah* at a meal). One should also grab every opportunity to attend *shiurim* in *halacha*, hear *halacha* tapes, participate in the massive *halacha* learning schedules of *Dirshu*, *Hilchoso Leyoma*, *Daily Kitzur* etc., and read the many *halacha* papers distributed in the *shuls* every week.

Gearing Learning of Halacha to Actual Application. Apart from having in mind to fulfill the general *mitzvah* of learning *Torah*, one should make a conscious effort to put into action each *halacha*. If any particular *halacha* doesn't apply to him, he should still try to see if he can use it to help inform others to whom it may apply. Even if that might not be relevant, he can still have another "*Halacha L'maaseh*"-type intention. *Chazal* tell us that if one learns about a *Korbon* it is like he actually brought a *Korbon*. Others extend this to other *mitzvos* and *halachos*. One can have in mind to perfect his soul and body by fulfilling all 613 *mitzvos* and *halachos* in this way.

The Ramban's Lesson (as interpreted by this writer). The *Ramba'n* in his famous letter of inspiration (אגרת הרמב"ן) teaches that one can actually turn all of his learning into practical *halacha*-type learning. For example, when learning stories of the great sages and their sterling character traits, one can think about how to do this in his circle of friends and activities. When learning the serious *Gemara* discussions about monetary matters he should be just as serious in his monetary dealings. When one learns *Kodshim* (Laws about sacrifices) he can learn (as the שו"ע א"ח צ"ח does) how to daven, which corresponds to the *Korbonos*. This also applies to attire, concentration, posture, place of prayer, etc. The *Ramba'n* therefore advises that before closing a *sefer* and walking away, one should quickly summarize what he has just learned and how he can apply it.

הוא היה אימר ...

R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern ZT"L (Kotzker Rebbe) would say:

"The Almighty chose Mount Sinai upon which to give the *Torah*, for it was the lowest of the mountains. Why didn't *Hashem* choose a valley in which to give the *Torah*? To be considered an 'undistinguished' valley and not boast about it, is not a remarkable characteristic. But if one is considered a 'mountain' possessing the same virtues and distinctions of which others boast, and yet does not behave with conceit and vanity - that is considered extraordinary humility!"

R' Shlomo Hakohen Rabinowitz of Radomsk ZT"L (Tiferes Shlomo) would say:

"We find that Rus converted to Judaism and accepted the *Torah*. But even before she had a chance to fulfill any *mitzvos*, Boaz informs her '*May Hashem reward your deed and may your payment be in full from Hashem.*' He was telling her that *Hashem* would reward her in full as if she had fulfilled all the *mitzvos*. In fact, *Hashem* does this for every Jew. He considers one's intentions to do a *mitzvah* as if he had actually done it. When we accept the yoke of *Malchus Shomayim* (Heavenly Sovereignty) wholeheartedly and with the intention of fulfilling each and every *mitzvah*, *Hashem* will repay us in this world and in the World-to-Come."

A Wise Man would say:

"Wisdom usually comes with age, although I know some people for which age comes alone."

לעילוי נשמת ר' אברהם יוסף שמואל אלתר בן ר' טובי ז"ל ורעייתו רישא רחל בת ר' אברהם שלמה ע"ה

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בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו

לכבוד
יום
טוב

שבת קודש פרשת נשא - פרק ו' דאגות - חג השבועות - זמן מתן תורתנו Shabbos Parshas Naso - Sixth Perek - Chag HaShavuos

ד' ו' - ז' סיון תשס"ח - June 7, 9-10, 2008

הדלקת נרות שבת - 8:08 *	(Monsey, NY)	מנחה גדולה / שבת - 1:33
זמן קריאת שמע/מ"א - 8:34	~~~~~	שקיעה של יום השבת - 8:27
זמן קריאת שמע/ הגר"א - 9:10	~~~~~	צאת הכוכבים / מעריב - 9:17
סוף זמן התפילה / להגר"א - 10:25	~~~~~	צאתה"כ / לשיטת רבינו תם - 9:39

* פלג המנחה בע"ש בשעה 6:53 - מי שמדליק מוקדם, אין לאחר זמן עצם קבלת השבת (משיאמר "בואי כלה")

מאת הרב שלום פערל שליט"א
נו"נ ביישיבת הגר"צ קושלבסקי

מאצרותיו של המגיד

לקחי חיים ודברי התעוררות
נסדרו עפ"י פרשיות השבוע

איש או אשה כי יפליא לנדר נדר נזיר להזיר לה' וגו' (ו-ב)

ולהשכיל [עוין שם], א"כ נמצא שהמילה היא מבוא למילת הלב, שעל ידה מתאפשר לו להבין ולהשכיל בתורה ובמצוות. וא"כ יש לומר ד"אם לא בריתי" היינו ג"כ מילה, וש"יך לכתוב עליה "יומם ולילה", שהכוונה דעליו בא לשערי תורה שהוגה בה יומם ולילה". וביאור הדבר שהתורה היא רוחנית, ורק אדם רוחני יכול להשיגה, ולכן ע"ה המילה שעל ידה נימול ג"כ ערלת לבו, ונחלש כוח התאווה החומרית, ונהיה רוחני, מתאפשר לו להשיג אור הנפלא של התורה. ובזה יש לפרש הטעם שניתנה התורה במדבר, כדי ללמד שהתורה ניתנת רק למי שדומה למדבר - ללא חומריות.

ולפי"ז מבאר הרב מפנוביץ זצ"ל את ההלכה בנויר, שהאב שעליו להכניס את בנו לעמל התורה ולרוממו (ע' קידושין כ"ט), ניתנה לו האפשרות להדיר את בנו בנויר, שעל ידי זה תבטל משיכתו אל החומר, ויגששה רוחני, ויוכל ליכות לאור התורה.

ולכן התחדש דין זה רק לגבי הבן ולא לגבי הבת, כיון שאינו מוטל על האב להכניס בתו לעמל התורה (שם), אין כל צורך להדירה בנויר. וגם התחדש כח זה אצל האב ולא אצל האם, כי עליה לא מוטלת החובה להכניס את בנה לעמל התורה (שם) ואין לה כל צורך בדין הזה.

השנה אנו קוראים פרשת נשא לפני שבועות, שבו מבואר עניין הפרישות, שעליו נוכל ליכות לקבל את התורה בחג השבועות.

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The *parsha* in which *Matan Torah* is read is *Parshas Yisro*, which incorporates many lessons of proper conduct and moral ethics, leading up to the revelation at Sinai; running away from honor, giving tribute to one's elders, how to teach *Torah* publicly, and respecting the rights of individuals. *Chazal* learn out from this the lesson of "דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה" - "*Proper conduct precedes Torah study.*" Before the *Torah* could be given to *Klal Yisroel*, it was necessary for them to imbue this all-important prerequisite, without which *Torah* could have no firm footing.

In his youth, the great **R' Akiva Eiger ZT"l** earned a widespread reputation as a remarkable genius who had already achieved mastery over all areas of the *Torah*. For such a youth, it wasn't too difficult to find willing suitors who would be happy to have such a prodigy for a son-in-law. A certain wealthy man ended up with this privilege and during the engagement period he invited his future son-in-law to his town so he could show him off before the local scholars.

Everyone was overjoyed and excited to meet the renowned scholar and they surrounded him with all types of questions and intricate difficulties in learning. However, the groom just sat there silently; he could not answer a single question. All the scholars were stunned, what happened to the great scholar they were told about? The father-in-law, too, was greatly disappointed and suffered no small amount of scorn in his community. He even considered annulling the engagement and mentioned it to his future son-in-law. The groom apologized for having caused his father-in-law anguish, but asked him to wait a couple of days before making a decision. Grudgingly, he agreed.

Two days later, the young scholar walked into the *Beis Medrash* and immediately engaged a number of older scholars in an intricate piece of Talmud. This time, he demonstrated a mastery of the topic at hand. He answered each and every question put to him and resolved any and all doubts that arose. He proved his expertise and razor-sharp mind, and everyone was awed. But what had happened a few days earlier? Why had he shut off his wells of wisdom until then?

Even this difficulty he resolved. Upon his arrival in town, he met another groom blessed with very fine qualities, though far removed from his own genius. His father-in-law, too, wished to show off his future son-in-law to the community, and indeed, the young groom was well received in town and made an excellent impression on all who met him. Rightfully, he earned a very warm welcome in town. The young Akiva Eiger felt that this groom deserved his due and did not want to overshadow him in any way. He therefore presented himself as an ignoramus until the other groom left. Only after the first groom had departed did he reveal his greatness in *Torah*. *Derech Eretz* must take precedence even to *Torah*!

משל למח הדבר דומה

ויהי ביום השלישי בהיות הבקר ויהי קולות וברקים.... ויחדר כל העם אשר במחנה וגו' (יתרו יט-טז)

משל: There was once a *chasid* who was newly appointed to the position of *Rov* in his town. This was a great honor and he wanted very much to share this celebration with his *Rebbe*. However, although in the past he always traveled to his *Rebbe* to spend the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos* there, this year he decided not to go. On *Shavuos*, masses of *chassidim* flock to be near the *Rebbe*, he reasoned. The *Beis Medrash* will be jammed. If I want to speak with the *Rebbe* privately, I'm better off staying home for *Shavuos* and going to the *Rebbe* the following week. By then things will have quieted down.

Shavuos passed uneventfully and the next week, true to his word, the *chasid* made his visit to the *Rebbe*. The *Rebbe* inquired, "Nu, so how was *Yom Tov*?"

Realizing that the *Rebbe* had sensed his absence over the *Yom Tov*, he replied a bit sheepishly, "*Rebbe*, I thought it would be preferable for me to call on the *Rebbe* after *Yom Tov*, when the crowds have dispersed. Then I would have a better opportunity to speak in

private and absorb the *Rebbe's Torah* discourses."

"Now I realize why there are so many rabbis who don't know how to learn," the *Rebbe* retorted. "At *Matan Torah*, a huge throng - the entire nation - gathered at the foot of *Har Sinai*. Well, it was certainly possible that a few individuals were turned off by the huge crowds. Why be squashed like that? Let's wait until tomorrow. The big event will be over, and it won't be so crowded. Then we'll come and learn *Torah*." The *Rebbe* gazed into the eyes of his *chasid* and concluded, "So they came the next day. But by then, it was all over!"

במשל: Our whole life is about making decisions that we must live and prosper with. But sometimes we overthink - we become an "*Oiber-chacham*" - too smart for our own good. This is not the way of the *Torah* and this is not what *Hashem* wants from us. This *Yom Tov* of *Kabbolas HaTorah*, let us use our time wisely in the pursuit of *Torah* study and *Avodas Hashem*. Otherwise, we will wake up in the morning - and it'll be too late!

ועבר עליו רוח קנאה וקנא את אשתו והיא נטמאה או עבר עליו רוח קנאה וקנא את אשתו והיא לא נטמאה (ה-יד)

The whole "*Sotah ordeal*" seems to be extraneous. All throughout the *Torah*, we employ a rule that if two witnesses come and testify, we believe them. Why, then, in the case of the *Sotah*, is she forced to undergo an entire ritual to determine if she is righteous and pure or if she has truly defiled herself with another man?

R' Yaakov Kamenetzky ZT"l gives us a brilliant analysis based on a psychological profile. Human nature is such that once a husband is obsessed with jealousy and suspicion towards his wife, no force on earth can allay these emotions. Not even a prophet who claims a Divine knowledge of her innocence will truly satisfy him. Although, according to *Torah* law, the truth of any claim is established based on the testimony of two witnesses, still, such testimony would not satisfy a jealous husband. His doubts can be removed only by one incontrovertible fact - a miraculous sign from *Hashem*.

For this reason, the *Torah* ordains that *Hashem's* Name be dissolved in the water that the suspected woman is then made to drink. Clearly, the entire procedure is not a punishment for any wrongdoing. Rather it is designed to ensure that the innocent wife will be fully accepted as pure and righteous from the start, in her husband's eyes. Then domestic peace will be restored.

This is what *Chazal* teach us: "*Great is the peace between man and wife, for the Torah has permitted the Name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, which is written in holiness, to be erased in the water.*" (חולין קמא)

זאת תורת הקנאת אשר תשטה אשה תחת אשה ונטמאה (ה-כט)
Parshas Naso only rarely falls out before *Shavuos*, but since upon occasion it does - like this very year - it is incumbent upon us to understand the connection of the *parsha* and the *Yom Tov* and the lesson to be learned.

The **Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson ZT"l** asks: The *gemara* (סוטה ג.) writes: "*A person does not commit a transgression unless a spirit of folly enters him. As it says, 'If a man's wife goes astray and commits a sin against him.'*" Why is this sin, of all the many transgressions, the one that most conclusively shows that sin is always irrational? There must be some deeper connection beyond the verbal similarity of "תִּשָּׁטָה" (go astray) and "תִּשְׁטָה" - (act foolish), between an act of infidelity and sin in general.

The answer, says the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is that this sin of adultery is not just an isolated act of dishonor between a husband and a wife. Rather, it is the prototype of all sins. The Jewish people as a whole are regarded as the "wife" of the Almighty and He is our "groom." The bond forged between us and *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* at *Har Sinai* was no less than a marriage between two parties. And so, every time a Jew commits a sin, however slight, he is betraying the covenant, the "marriage contract" between himself and *Hashem*. He is guilty of spiritual infidelity, unfaithfulness to his Divine partner. This is why even a trivial sin is considered שטות - *folly*. Because it brings about a severing of the link between man and the Almighty. Because it is an act of infidelity, intervening in the marriage between *Hashem* and his beloved Jew.

And this is the lesson that we must incorporate from *Parshas Naso* before the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos*. If we intend to renew our "marriage vows" on this special holiday, than we must make sure not to betray our betrothed through unfaithfulness brought about by sin.

ויבאו מדבר סיני... ויהן שם ישראל נגד ה' (וידו יג-ט)

The *gemara* (ובחים קט.) writes that at the time the *Torah* was being given to *Bnei Yisroel*, the nations of the world gathered around *Bilaam Harasha*, and asked him: "Is there a flood coming to the world?" He replied, "ה' עוז לעמו יתן" - "*Hashem will give might to His people.*" To this, the nations responded, "ה' יברך את עמו" - "*Hashem will bless His people with peace.*" (כטיא). We need to understand why the nations thought a flood was being brought upon the world, and why Bilaam and the nations responded as they did?

R' Meir Shapiro ZT"l notes that unity is usually the result of a danger or threat to two parties. Different groups, which would otherwise be enemies, now suddenly become friends to save themselves. Obviously, this is not true unity; as soon as the danger disappears they become enemies once again. Since the flood, until *Matan Torah*, there was no time when such diverse groups had banded together. In the time of Noach, all sorts of animals lived in peace together in the ark, where they were saved from the floods ravaging the earth outside. However, this type of peace is not what we strive for. Instead, we desire peace even when quiet and tranquility are the order.

When *Bnei Yisroel* camped in preparation to receive the *Torah*, it was "*as one man with one heart.*" The nations

that he revealed the story behind the just-witnessed exultation.

The day before, this husband and wife had come to him and insisted that they needed a divorce. The marriage was untenable and the sooner he could give a *get*, the better. R' Meir Simcha heard each side out but neither one was budging and an air of angry desperation enveloped the room. Finally, R' Meir Simcha asked them if they had any children. One young son, was the reply. And who was to become the child's guardian? Who would be taking care of the boy? At that point, the husband and wife hemmed and hawed, explaining that they hadn't made a decision about that issue yet. R' Meir Simcha sighed and told them to come back the next day with their son in tow.

The next day, the couple was back, this time with the boy. R' Meir Simcha took the child on his lap and began stroking his head. Then without warning, he began to sob as he told the boy in a quiet, almost inaudible voice, "My child, what is to become of you? Although your parents may be alive, you will be an orphan with no mother and no father! A יתום־חַיִּי - An orphan with live parents, but an orphan nonetheless!" His tears flowed onto the child's hair.

Immediately, the young boy burst into tears and began screaming, "Mama, Tateh! Mama, Tateh!"

What a heart-breaking sight! Whose heart could not be moved by the cries of the *Gadol Hador* and this young child mingled together? And then the dam burst! First, the mother burst into a hysterical shriek, followed by the father's loud sobbing. All four were uncontrollable in their miserable cries.

After a moment, the father announced through his tears that he would do what he could to make the marriage work for the sake of the boy, and his wife immediately concurred. They were not getting a divorce after all!

Suddenly, R' Meir Simcha stood up! His tears were gone, replaced with a huge smile from ear to ear. "Boruch Hashem, what a *gevaldiga simcha*! Let us dance and rejoice!" They all stood up, clasped hands and began singing and dancing. How great is peace between a husband and wife - how joyful is *Hashem* when we make true peace!

מרומם הוא אלקין בקדמא ובתרייתא צבי ואתרעי בן ומסר לן אורייתא וגו' (סדר אקדמות לשבועות)

There was once a *chasid* of the *tzaddik*, R' Moshele of Rozvadov ZT"L, by the name of Yechiel Meir. He was wealthy, well-respected and a prominent *chasid* who was accorded great honor in Rozvadov whenever he visited on *Yom Tov* and other occasions. One year, before *Shavuos*, as he made preparations to travel to his *Rebbe* for the upcoming *Yom Tov*, he received a summons requesting his presence in court for a serious matter pertaining to his business. Yechiel Meir examined the paper in his hand and checked his calendar. Then, he looked again and rechecked his calendar. Yes, there was no mistake. The wealthy *chasid* held a summons requesting him in court on the second day of *Shavuos*.

There was a lot at stake in the trial, for Yechiel Meir of Baranov would be up against a non-Jew in court. But it seemed that a negative verdict was a foregone conclusion - especially because of his destined absence. Worried and distressed, he decided to travel to Rozvadov a few days before *Yom Tov* to consult with his *Rebbe*, while at the very same time, he sent his sons to the city of Shinov and asked them to procure a blessing from the holy **Shinover Rov, R' Yechezkel Halberstam ZT"L** on his behalf.

Incredibly, even before he left for Rozvadov, he received a reply from Shinov. "The *Divrei Yechezkel* says that he expects you in Shinov for *Shavuos*." In Shinov? But Yechiel Meir was expected in Rozvadov. Besides, the *Rebbe* of Rozvadov was a well-known miracle worker. How could he excuse himself from his *Rebbe*'s court this *Shavuos*, the day of the ill-fated trial, to be someplace else?

When he arrived in Rozvadov before *Yom Tov*, Yechiel Meir informed his *Rebbe* of the upcoming court case. "The judge is not favorably inclined toward Jews," he said. "He is sure to rule against me, all the more so since I will be absent. I already asked the *Divrei Yechezkel* for his *berachah*," Yechiel Meir added, "and he told me that I must be with him for *Shavuos*."

R' Moshele of Rozvadov listened attentively to his *chasid*'s predicament. "Go to Shinov," he instructed the surprised *chasid*. And so Yechiel Meir found himself in Shinov for *Shavuos*, where thousands of *chassidim*, *rabbonim*, and communal leaders gathered to absorb the *kedushah* and *Torah* emanating from the saintly Shinover Rov. Due to the throng of people, however, Yechiel Meir felt lost, neglected, and ignored. In Shinov, the prominent Rozvadover *chasid* was a nobody. *Yom Tov* for him, was a bit disappointing.

On the second day of *Yom Tov*, as Yechiel Meir was attending the *Rebbe's tisch*, he suddenly heard his name being

עצמיות

The *Mishna* in *Avos* (א-יד) writes: "אם אין לי מי לי?" - "If I don't care for myself, who will care for me?" "וכשאני לעצמי מה אני?" - "But if all I care about is myself, (self-centered) than what am I?" "ואם לא עכשיו אימת?" - "And if not now - than when?"

R' Moshe Goldberger Shlit'a gives us a fascinating and unique understanding. "אם אין לי מי לי?" - If I do not become all that I can be and use all the talents and attributes that *Hashem* has bestowed upon me - than what good am I? Who am I really? However, "כשאני לעצמי" - When I express my "עצמיות" - my uniqueness, my inner being - by becoming all that I can possibly be "מה אני?" - HOW GREAT AM I? ("מה" as in "מה רבו מעשך ה'" - "*How great are your works, Hashem.*") HOW GREAT is the power of the individual when he utilizes his talents for the service of *Hashem*!

But this begs the obvious question: How can we live up to our fullest potential? How do we know how far we have to go to achieve this level of greatness? Thus, the end of the *Mishna* answers the question: "ואם לא עכשיו" - "ואם לא עכשיו" - If not now, than when. When? When a person takes every opportunity afforded him to grow, to learn, to do *chessed*, to self-express. This is his true potential.

Similarly, in *Parshas Naso*, we read the exact same words 12 times in a row as each *Nasi* brought the very same *Korbon*. Couldn't the *Torah* have simply written the words one time and included all 12 *Nesiim*? Yet, once again, the *Torah* is teaching us the power of

מעשה אבות סימץ לבנים

ישא'ה פנוי אליך וישם לך שלום וגו' (ו-כו)

According to many *poskim*, just as the *kohanim* have a specific *mitzvah* to bless *Klal Yisroel* with their unique tri-fold blessing, the non-*kohanim* have a similar *mitzvah* to participate in the blessing by concentrating on the words of the *beracha* being said, and answering *Amen* appropriately. Since the last of the Priestly Blessings concludes with a plea for everlasting peace, it is the responsibility of every Jew - not just the *Kohanim* - to instill and ensure in ourselves, our spouses and our children, that *Sholom* - Peace, reigns supreme. In fact, *Rav Chanina Segan HaKohanim* interprets this blessing as such: "וישם לך שלום" - "*He shall put for you peace*" - in your homes.

A visitor to the home of the famed **Ohr Someach, R' Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk ZT"L**, once came across an unusual and unbelievable sight. Entering the *Rov's* inner chamber, he first heard joyous singing and then saw R' Meir Simcha, himself, locking arms with a man on one side, a young boy on the other side, as they were clutching the hands of a third person - a woman! The four individuals were slowly dancing in a wide circle! What an incredible sight! The Ohr Someach, the *Gadol Hador*, was singing and dancing in his private room with what appeared to be a husband, a wife and a small child! What was this all about?

After a few moments, the circle broke up but not the huge smiles and hearty grins on the faces of all those present. It was only when the three took leave of the *Rov*, amidst a showering of blessings, and he settled back into his chair,

דרגה יתירה

ואמר ה' אל משה נשיא אחד ליום נשיא אחד ליום יקדכו את קרבנם וכו' (ו-יא)

individuality, of עצמיות. Each *Nasi*, on his own, chose to bring this *Korbon* which, as it turned out, was identical to the other 12 of his fellow *Nesiim*! Yet, the *Torah* is impressing upon us the beauty and importance of every single individual - even if on the outside, he looks no different than anyone else.

R' Ezriel Tauber Shlit'a said the following: The first 2,000 years of the world's existence were known as "תהו" - "*Emptiness*" since the *Torah* had not yet been given. The second 2,000 years were called "נעשה" - "*Action*" as *Klal Yisroel* received the *Torah* on *Har Sinai* and now knew what they had to do. The last 2,000 years - the period we are in now - is known as "נשמע". This period commenced a new era with Rabbi Akivah, who not only commented on the words of the *Torah*, but even on the crowns on top of the letters. This is the dawn of self-expression, when the *Mishna*, *Gemara* and thousands of commentaries shed their light, ideas and clarifications, on the *Torah*. It is called "נשמע" because everyone hears things differently and each and every person can add their own special sparkle and interpretation to the *Torah*. By remaining 100% true to *Halacha* and *Mesorah*, we can look inside ourselves and find what we can achieve and contribute to our precious *Torah* and *Yiddishkeit*.

This is the lesson of "מה אני" - HOW GREAT is the power of every single individual! We should never underestimate ourselves - each one of us has a unique mission that no one else in this world can fulfill!

3 saw this and thought that perhaps this unity was because of the danger of a flood coming to the world. But Bilaam knew the truth and replied, “*Hashem will give might to His people*” - meaning that this is real unity, the strength and might of the *Torah* is a true unifying force. At this point, the nations replied, “*Hashem will bless His people with peace*” - in other words, this peace is not a result of curse or danger in the world, but instead a result of blessing.

The *Torah* is the true unifying force of the Jewish people: “*Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace*” (משלי ג-יז). By following the instructions laid out in the *Torah* and observing all its *mitzvos*, this will lead to a society functioning perfectly, with each of its members performing his unique role and living in complete harmony with everyone else.

את הדברים האלה דבר ה' אל כל קהלכם בהר מתוך האש הענן והערפל קול גדול ולא יסף וכו' (ואתחנן ה-יט)
“*Rav Yehoshua ben Levi said, ‘What is the meaning of the posuk, ‘His cheeks are like a bed of fragrant spices?’ To teach us that with each one of the Ten Commandments that Hashem spoke on Sinai, the whole world was filled with fragrant spices.*” (שבת פח:)

R’ Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov ZT”L (Bnei Yissaschar), writes that the sin of *Adam HaRishon* involved all of the human senses, with the exception of the sense of smell. The *posuk* in *Parshas Beraishis* (ג-ו) states: “*The woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and it was desirable to the sight, and she took from its fruit and ate And they heard the voice of the Lord.*” The sense of smell is not at all mentioned here and therefore we can surmise that it was not adversely affected by the sin. The sense of smell remains essentially a spiritual sense, one from which the soul, rather than the body, derives pleasure.

The **Shem M’Shmuel, R’ Shmuel Borenstein ZT”L**, elaborates on this theme. *Chazal* teach us that at *Har Sinai*, the stain of sin which had attached itself to man after the sin of *Adam HaRishon*, was eliminated and *Klal Yisroel* again achieved immortality. It was not until the sin of the עגל הזהב - *Golden Calf*, that this was reversed. So as the עשרת הדברות - *Ten Commandments*, were spoken to *Klal Yisroel*, they began to achieve this elusive rectification. This had to begin with the sense that was already most spiritually developed - the sense of smell. Once this correction had begun, it was able to spread from this sense to the other senses, which were damaged by the original sin. Thus, *Chazal* tell us that the world was filled with fragrant spices between each of the Commandments.

This contains an important lesson for us in our daily lives. When one wishes to improve oneself, he needs to start the *Teshuva* process from an unstained point. This may be very hard, but if one searches deeply enough inside his spiritual makeup, one will find some element of his character which is pure. Only from there can the ability to improve spread to the rest of one’s personality.

וידר ה' על הר סיני אל ראש ההר וכו' (יתרוט-ב)
When the *Torah* was about to be given, *Har Tavor* and *Har Carmel*, two of the largest mountains in the region, presented themselves before the Almighty for consideration as the site for *Kabbolas HaTorah* and the Divine Revelation. They imagined themselves more eligible for this honor than any other mountain due to their impressive size. A Heavenly voice rang out and said to them, “Why do you compete with *Har Sinai*? You are full of blemishes.” It was their arrogance and pride which disqualified them and rendered them “blemished” and unfit for this special honor. About this, said Rav Ashi (מגילה כט): “*We learn from here that an arrogant person is deemed a ‘blemished’ person.*”

But whatever happened to these two mountains, Tavor and Carmel? Did they just fade away, quietly swallowed up into the annals of history, to be vilified for all eternity for their “blemish” that disallowed them from participating in the single greatest manifestation of G-dliness on this world - *Kabbolas HaTorah*?

In fact, they did not fade away for all eternity. Rashi in *Navi* (שופטים ה-ג) quotes a *Medrash*: “*Hashem did not deny a reward to (Mts.) Tavor and Carmel after they tried to have the Torah given on them, but ended up leaving in disgrace. Said the Holy One Blessed be He, ‘In the end, I will pay them back doubly.’ At Sinai, it was said, ‘אֲנֹכִי ה' אֵלֶיךָ, - ‘I am Hashem, your G-d,’ whereas on Tavor (by Shiras Devorah), they said, אֲנֹכִי לֵה' אֲנֹכִי, - ‘I am to Hashem, I will sing (to Him)’ and on Carmel (after the miracle with Eliyohu HaNavi), they said, ה' הוּא האֱלֹקִים, ה' הוּא האֱלֹקִים, - ‘Hashem, He is the Lord, Hashem, He is the Lord.’”*

An amazing *Medrash*, indeed! Although they were turned away in disgrace for their arrogance, *Hashem* nevertheless, rewarded them doubly for even attempting to host *Matan Torah*. What a lesson to be learned from here! One never knows the final result of his actions or even of his intentions. Even if one acts without perfect intent - *Hashem* takes into account the entire picture including all the circumstances involved, and rewards accordingly.



6 called. He looked up in surprise. “In the name of the Shinover Rebbe,” the *gabbai* announced, “Reb Yechiel Meir of Baranov is requested to come forward to receive *shirayim* (leftovers from a *Rebbe*’s meal) from the *Rebbe*!” Dazed, Yechiel Meir squeezed through the crowd to receive his morsel of food from the *Rebbe*’s platter. To receive *shirayim* was a great honor and blessing. Face to face with the *Rebbe*, Yechiel Meir opened his trembling hands to accept the *shirayim*. The *Rebbe* handed him the head of a fish, a great honor, with a warm smile. “Take a *kop* (head). You need a *kop*.” Puzzled, Yechiel Meir accepted the small piece of fish.

The day after *Yom Tov*, Yechiel Meir was surprised to see his sons in Shinov. “What are you doing here?” he asked apprehensively. “What was the outcome of the trial?” “The trial did not take place,” they answered excitedly. “The *goy* who you were up against was on his way to the court, and the horse he was riding gave him such a *kop* (kick in Polish) that the man died instantly!”

A *kop*! Suddenly, Yechiel Meir understood the Shinover Rebbe’s words. When the *Rebbe* handed him the *kop*, the head of the fish, the accuser’s horse dealt its master the fatal *kop*, kick. The case was automatically dismissed.

When the Shinover Rov heard the chain of events, he observed with a twinkle in his eye, “Sometimes a miracle is necessary to instill faith in the Creator.”

ורחצתו סכת ושמת שמלותיך עליך וירדת הגורן אל תודעי לאיש עד כלתו לאכול ולשתות וגו' (מגילת רות ג-ג)
At the end of *Megilas Rus*, we read that the great King of Israel, *Dovid Hamelech*, was in fact, a descendant of Rus, the Moavite woman who was widowed from her husband. The *Megilah* details how she converted to Judaism and, in an amazing turn of events, ended up marrying Boaz, the Jewish leader at that time, ultimately giving birth to his child and the future Royal dynasty. The *Seforim Hakedoshim* explain that when a spectacular event is about to happen in this world, *Hashem* will often hide the progression of events so that the Satan should not get wind of it and attempt to disrupt it with his considerable powers of impurity. Hence, the great Davidic dynasty was initiated through a convert to Judaism. Similarly, *Moshiach Ben Dovid* is destined to come from an unlikely source so as to subvert the Satan

When **R’ Sholom Rokeach ZT”L (Sar Shalom)**, who founded the Belzer dynasty, was a young man, he lived in the home of his father-in-law, the *Rebbe* of Skolye. One day, soldiers from the Russian Army came to the town to conscript young eligible men to fight for the motherland. They would snatch young men off the streets and drag them away to the army. Naturally, the young men of the town quickly went into hiding, and the *Skolye Rebbe* begged his son-in-law, who was then still young of years, to do the same.

R’ Sholom did not wish to disobey his father-in-law’s plea, but he had his own idea of how to go about evading the emissaries of the Czar. He immersed himself in a *mikveh*, washed and dressed himself in his finest *Shabbos* clothes, then went out to the garden and sat down to study *gemara*.

His father-in-law observed these actions with bewilderment. He even protested to his son-in-law that he was not properly guarding his life. How could he consider himself hidden if he was out in the open? And in short time, his fears were realized. Without warning, two soldiers burst into the *Rebbe*’s garden and headed straight towards the future *Belzer Rebbe*! His heart sinking, the *Skolye Rebbe* began berating himself for not having seen to it that R’ Sholom had been well hidden, but suddenly, he realized that nothing untoward was happening; R’ Sholom’s melodious voice was still singing the words of the *gemara*.

Incredulously, he looked out and was amazed to see the soldiers in the garden, their vicious expressions transformed into blissful smiles. They were admiring the apple tree in the yard, commenting on the extraordinary beauty of the fruit and the heavenly smell. Ignoring their erstwhile quarry and oblivious to their mission, they ran to the tree and quickly picked from it as many apples as they could, filling their bags with their pickings. When they were done, they cast one last glance at the marvelous tree and then retreated out of the garden, not lifting a finger or even casting a sidelong glance at the young Jewish man who was sitting nearby.

When the *Rebbe* later questioned R’ Sholom about how he had come up with such an unusual plan and in what merit he was saved, he explained that he learned it from a *posuk* in *Megillas Rus* (ג-ג). “When Rus’ mother-in-law, Naomi, came up with the plan to have Rus secretly meet Boaz and persuade him to marry her, she instructed Rus to go to Boaz’s threshing floor, telling her, ‘*Bathe and anoint yourself, don your finery and... do not make yourself known to the man.*’ I just followed her advice. I washed and dressed and knew that I would not be seen or known to any man!”