

# אור פני משה

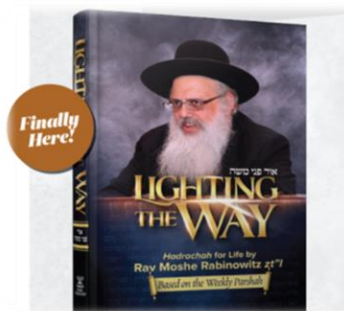
שיחות מוסר על התורה  
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר  
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

*Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe  
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

## סוכות - שמחת תורה

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ברוב שבת והודאה לה' יתברך



SEE BACK FOR DETAILS

## סוכות

בארבעה פרקים בשנה המוכר בהמה לחברו צריך להודיעו,  
אמה מכרתי לשחוט, בתה מכרתי לשחוט (משנה חולין פרק ה' משנה ג')

*At four points in the year, one who sells an animal must inform the buyer: 'I sold its mother for slaughter!'; 'I sold its child for slaughter!'*

### The Concern of אותו ואת בנו When Purchasing Meat

The Gemara (חולין פ"ג) tells us an interesting *halacha* regarding to various different Erev Yamim Tovim of the year. The *halachah* pertains to the *mitzvah* of אותו ואת בנו, in which the Torah forbids slaughtering an animal and its child on the same day.

### Ordinarily, One Need Not be Concerned for an Inadvertent Transgression of אותו ואת בנו

Ordinarily, the *halachah* is that without clear knowledge of the prior *shechitah* of an animal's mother or offspring on a given day, there is no concern over such an occurrence. Thus, one who purchases an animal and wishes to *shecht* it may do so without concern about the possible *shechitah* of the animal's mother or offspring on that day.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the seller of an animal is not obligated to inform the buyer about the prior sale of the animal's mother or offspring.

### The Exception of Erev Yom Tov

There is an exception, however, to the above *halachah*. On various Erev Yamim Tovim of the year, *shechitah* was performed [in

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<sup>1</sup> The reason for this is that too many necessary factors are in question for there to be an actual concern for the prohibition. Firstly, perhaps the animal has no living mother or offspring. In addition, even if there is a living mother or child, perhaps it was never purchased with the intent of *shechting* it. And further, even if it was purchased with such intent, perhaps the buyer was not planning on *shechting* it on that specific day. Based on these factors of doubt, one may *shecht* a purchased animal without concern of inadvertently transgressing the prohibition. (ש"ך יו"ד סימן ט"ז סק"ז)

olden times] on a large scale by many individuals in preparation for Yom Tov. Therefore, on those days, there was a real concern for occurrences of this scenario, and a measure of caution was necessary. Accordingly, Chazal enacted a safeguard against this by requiring the seller of an animal on those days to inform the buyer if he had previously sold the animal's mother or child on that day. In regard to this exception, there are specifically four days of Erev Yom Tov mentioned. They are **1) Erev Pesach, 2) Erev Shavuot, 3) Erev Rosh Hashana, and 4) Hoshana Rabba/Erev Shemini Atzeres.**

Noticeably absent from the above list, however, are **Erev Sukkos**, and **Erev Shevi'i Shel Pesach**. Why did Chazal not include them in their halachic enactment? In regard to Erev Shevi'i Shel Pesach, the omission is understandable. After all, there was already a *mitzvah* of eating meat throughout the first day of Yom Tov and Chol HaMoed, and by the last day of Chol HaMoed, there would certainly be meat from animals that had already been *shechted* beforehand. The rush on *shechitah* was therefore lesser on that Erev Yom Tov. What needs explanation, however, is Erev Sukkos. Why would there be any less *shechitah* on that day over all other Erev Yamim Tovim?

### **Erev Sukkos is Too Busy with Mitzvos for People to Concern Themselves with Purchasing Meat for Yom Tov**

Tosfos addresses this question and explains that although the need for meat on Sukkos was indeed equal to the other Yamim Tovim, there was still a mitigating factor to counteract it. On Sukkos, explains Tosfos, people were preoccupied with their other pressing Yom Tov needs, namely preparing their *sukkah* and *arba minim*. Consequently, the need for Yom Tov meat was overshadowed somewhat by the preparation for these other *mitzvos*, and people therefore did not *shecht* as many animals on that day as on other Erev Yamim Tovim.

### **What about the Mitzvah of Meat for Yom Tov?**

This explanation would seem difficult on two accounts:

Firstly, while it is true that the period before Sukkos is a busy one, is it busier, though, than the period of Erev Pesach? After all, the period prior to Pesach is such a busy time with all the myriad Yom Tov preparations – whether in those related to the disposal of chametz, or for the *mitzvos* of matzah and maror and all the other needs of the Seder. Indeed, were a survey to be conducted about which of the two

periods of Erev Pesach and Erev Sukkos is the busier one, surely the results would be an even draw! Why is it then that on Erev Pesach there is still an extra-large amount of meat *shechted* despite the general busyness of the time period, while on Sukkos there was not?

The second difficulty with Tosfos' explanation is that true, there were other *mitzvos* on Erev Sukkos which demand attention. Is eating meat on Yom Tov, though, not a *mitzvah*?! It is a Yom Tov *mitzvah* just like *sukkah* and *arba minim*! If so, why is there less focus on *shechitah*? How many areas must be taken care of before Pesach, and yet each year Torah-true Jews manage to fulfill all of them? All the various Pesach preparations indeed take much time, but Klal Yisroel recognizes the obligation of each one and undertakes all of them with *simchah*! Why on Erev Sukkos is there suddenly a phenomenon of one *mitzvah* being overshadowed by others?

### **Knowing how to Choose Between Different Mitzvos**

It would seem that these questions reveal to us an important concept in relation to the fulfillment of *mitzvos*. There are many different actions which fall under the category of a '*mitzvah*', each clearly sourced in the Torah and *halachah*. And yet, a true *Yerei-Shamayim* perceives that certain *mitzvos* carry more weight at certain times.

- *When one attends a chasunah, there is a mitzvah of bringing joy to the chassan and kallah by participating in the dancing and well-wishing. There is also a mitzvah of not allowing food to go to waste and come into a situation of bal-tashchis. With which mitzvah will a person primarily occupy himself?*

*One individual at the chasunah is aware of his purpose in attending the simchah, and he does his utmost to bring joy and share in the simchah of the baalei simchah. A different person spends most of his time seeing to it that there is absolutely no violation of bal-tashchis from any dish on his table, nor in any remaining plates in the kitchen. He has second and third helpings, all in the name of not wasting a morsel of food.*

*It seems self-evident which of these two directions is the proper one. True, there is a mitzvah not to allow food to go to waste, but that is not where one should place his primary focus at that time. Rather than focusing on the pleasurable, easy mitzvah of*

*eating every piece of food in sight, let one bring himself out of his comfort zone, and exert himself for the chessed of gladdening the baalei simchah.*

- *At the Pesach Seder of my parents z"l, I remember two distinct 'programs' occurring simultaneously. We, the children, were largely preoccupied with the 'shiurim'. We had posters and diagrams in which the necessary volume for each mitzvah of was spelled out, and we meticulously saw to it that we fulfilled each mitzvah with the proper amount. My father, however, was busy remembering his own personal yeshuah from the Nazis and from Siberia. He would smile at us children putting so much effort into our shiurim, as he would retell the miracles of HaKadosh Boruch Hu with great feelings of joy and gratitude.*

*In the years of my youth, I did not fully understand the behavior of my father zt"l. Is it not important, I wondered to myself, to have the appropriate shiur for each mitzvah? After all, one who ate less than the required amount has not fulfilled his obligation! How could he ignore those halachos?*

*Looking back, however, I have come to appreciate my father's practice. Certainly, it is important to have the proper shiur. Where, though, does one invest his primary energy? My father understood that the feeling with which one should leave the Seder is with chizuk in Emunah and hakaras hatov to Hashem. True, we must fulfill each mitzvah with the required shiur – as a means to receive the proper Emunah from the Seder. My father placed his concentration in the overall goal of the Seder, fulfilling the detailed halachos as they were intended to be fulfilled – as aids in achieving the intended goal.*

### **The Lingering Elevation of Yom Kippur Helps to Properly Discern which Mitzvos Deserve Precedence over Others**

With this concept, we can understand the peculiar *halachah* of purchasing meat on Erev Sukkos, as mentioned earlier. Sukkos follows immediately after the elevation of Yom Kippur, where we rose completely above our physical needs, and we resolved to go through the year with an elevated sense of *ruchniyus*. Over the four days following Yom Kippur, Klal Yisroel busies themselves with the intense

preparations for the Yom Tov of Sukkos. In such a backdrop, which *mitzvos* will be at the forefront, and which will be relegated to the background? A yid who experienced such an elevation of *ruchniyus* over Yom Kippur understands that the *mitzvos* are meant to bring him *ruchniyus*. Even those *mitzvos* involving food and drink are not meant as a goal in themselves, but to elevate even his *gashmiyus* into *ruchniyus*. Indeed, by partaking of a festive Yom Tov *seudah* with meat and wine, he brings all aspects of himself into the *simchah* of Yom Tov, through which he *shteigs* in his closeness to Hashem. With such an attitude, is it not clear that the yid's primary focus will be on the *mitzvos* which are directly related to *ruchniyus*? True, he will have a delicious Yom Tov *seudah* – but only as an added means in attaining the proper *simchah* in *ruchniyus*. As such, he will place less of a focus on the *mitzvah* of eating meat – even if it means that he may have less of it. Better that he should subsist on a smaller quantity of Yom Tov meat, than to have an inferior *sukkah* or *lulav*.

*He may find himself needing to rely on the leftover kreplach from Erev Yom Kippur to fulfill his obligation of eating meat. It is still more important to him to make sure that the sukkah and arba minim are up to par, rather than sacrificing on their level of hiddur in order to have the proper meat for Yom Tov.*

This is not to say that there is no *mitzvah* of eating meat on Yom Tov. It is certainly a *mitzvah*, and perhaps an absolute obligation. Indeed, on all other Erev Yamim Tovim, the demand for meat was so great that a special enactment was required to safeguard against inadvertent transgressions of *אֹתוֹ וְאֵת בָּנוֹ*. On Erev Sukkos, however, when the extra level of *ruchniyus* achieved on Yom Kippur is still fresh within people, there was an appreciation for which *mitzvos* must be given priority over other *mitzvos*.

### **Our Attitude and Goal in our Fulfillment of Mitzvos**

The lesson for us from this *halacha* is in what we take away from our *mitzvah* fulfillment. There are many *mitzvah* acts in our lives – on Yom Tov and throughout the year – many involving our physical bodies. On what is our focus while performing these *mitzvos*? Are we looking to satisfy our physical pleasures as much as possible, or do we seek to *shteig* in our *ruchniyus*? If we seek to *shteig*, there is so much available for us every *mitzvah* from which we can become more

elevated in *Avodas Hashem*. If, on the other hand, our focus is on our pleasures r"l, there is precious little growth that we will achieve.

*Over the Yom Tov of Sukkos, there are many mitzvos and inyanim which we fulfill. There are the mitzvos of eating and sleeping in the sukkah, the arba minim, the Ushpizin, Hallel, Simchas Bais HaShoevah. If we approach the mitzvos properly, there is so much opportunity through which we can shteig in our ruchniyus – and achieve a wonderful state of simchah in Avodas Hashem. If, however, we approach the Yom Tov with a spirit of hefkerus and a desire to simply enjoy ourselves, the very same actions can drag us down chas v'shalom.*

Let us see to it that we utilize the *ruchniyus* we attained over Yom Kippur bez"H, to maintain our proper focus and goals as we fulfill the *mitzvos* of Yom Tov.

### **The Halacha of אוֹתוֹ וְאֵת בְּנוֹ in Regard to a Chasunah**

In the continuation of the *mishnah* about אוֹתוֹ וְאֵת בְּנוֹ, there is another *halachah* from which we can draw a lesson regarding the elevation of Yom Kippur.

### **The Seudos of a Chassan and Kallah**

The *mishnah* teaches the *halachah* that in the event of a *chasunah*, where the seller sold a mother animal to the family of the *chassan* and the child to the family of the *kallah*, he must inform the second buyer of the sale of the first animal. In this case, the reason for this *halachah* is quite evident – both animals are intended to be *shechted* for the same wedding meal and will most likely be done on the same day. The point of note is the apparent assumption that the larger, mother animal is given to the family of the *chassan*, while the smaller, child animal is given to the family of the *kallah*. The Bartenurah explains that the family of the *chassan* commonly made a larger *seudah* than the family of the *kallah*.<sup>2</sup>

This norm that the Bartenurah mentions seems puzzling. After all, one invites to a *chasunah* all family friends with whom it is

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<sup>2</sup> Apparently, each side made a separate *seudah* for their own acquaintances.

appropriate to share one's *simchah*. Why would there be an assumed different number of friends for the *chassan's* family than the *kallah's*? Did the families with a large number of friends only have sons and no daughters?! What can be the explanation for this custom?

### **Taking Leave of the Kallah Vs Retaining Contact with the Chassan**

It would seem that this was a norm that developed based on the common practice at that time that the *chassan* would take the *kallah* with him to reside in his hometown. Therefore, all who attended – or did not attend – the *chassan's* meal knew that they would continue to have him live in their proximity. Their attendance or lack thereof would not go unnoticed or be overlooked. Those attending the *simchah* of the *kallah*, however, were in effect saying goodbye. They would not see her again, or certainly not frequently. It was therefore less of a risk if one missed her *simchah* because one would not need to subsequently face her.

*This brings to mind a story of one of the Talmidim of Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l:*

*This Talmid was a tzaddik and talmid chacham, who was well-known throughout the Torah world in Europe. Apparently, his saintly personality had an influence even on some non-religious maskilim who maintained contact with him and helped him when needed.*

*At the time of our story, this tzaddik had fallen ill, and his end was drawing near. Many of his talmidim and chaverim came to pay him a final visit, and a certain influential maskil with whom he had dealings also came to his home. The tzaddik's condition was grave, however, and not many people were allowed into his personal room. Suddenly, a message was sent from the room. The tzaddik wished to speak to the maskil who had come to visit! Those feeling of surprise was tangible as people wondered why this maskil, out of all people, was chosen by the tzaddik.*

*The maskil himself enjoyed his sudden recognition, and he gave a smug glance around the room. He could almost be heard saying to himself, "See what really counts. What good is all their Torah and mitzvos? When all is said and done, the man*



*with the money is the one called into the room! Even the tzaddik on his deathbed recognizes it!"*

*The maskil walked in with a proud air about him and sat down at the bedside.*

*The tzaddik turned to him and began to speak. "Schmerel," he asked, "do you know why I chose to call you in, over everyone else?"*

*"I sure do," the maskil replied arrogantly. "On your deathbed, you recognize what really counts!"*

*The tzaddik continued. "I'll tell you why I called you in. You see, everyone else here spends their lives in the pursuit of Torah and mitzvos, and it can be assumed that we will all have some place in Gan Eden. If so, I am not really taking a full-scale leave from them. In a few years, we will meet again in Gan Eden, each person when his time comes."*

*At this point, the tzaddik suddenly sat up in his bed. He looked sharply at the maskil and continued. "But as for you," he said, "this is the last time I will see you! I called you in to say goodbye!"*

*The sharp words of the dying tzaddik pierced the heart of the maskil who went on to undergo a complete transformation into a true Torah-observant Jew.*

### **Not to 'Take Leave' of Yom Kippur**

Let us now apply this idea to our theme in regard to Yom Kippur. As we transition from Yom Kippur into the year, let us see to it that we do not take our leave of and 'say goodbye' to Yom Kippur. Rather, let our attitude resemble the friends of the *chassan*, who paid their respects with the intention of subsequently continuing their relationship. Let us make every effort to have the *ruchniyus* of Yom Kippur stay with us, as we try ever so hard to cling to our *kabbalos* and *madreigos* that we merited.

Bez"H we should be *zoche* to maintain our *madreigos* and continue to *shteig* in our *ruchniyus* throughout the year.

## שמחת תורה

אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל (דברים ל"ד י"ב)

*That Moshe Performed in Front of the Eyes of the Entire Bnei Yisroel.*

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם (בראשית א' כ"ו)

*And Hashem said, "Let us make a man."*

There is a *minhag* in Klal Yisroel that when one makes a *siyum* on a unit of Torah, he gives a unique style vort, called a 'Hadran'. In this vort, the *darshan* draws a connection between the end of the unit that was learned and its beginning. This *minhag* has been applied to the *siyum* of *Torah Shebichsav* on Simchas Torah as well, and many Rabbanim throughout the generations have expounded on connections between the end of Parshas V'zos Habracha and the beginning of Parshas Beraishis. Bez"H we would like to present such a connection in this shmuess.

### אשר עשה משה לעיני כל ישראל / That Moshe Performed in Front of the Eyes of the Entire Bnei Yisroel.

The last words of the Torah are אשר עשה משה לעיני כל ישראל / *that Moshe performed in front of the eyes of the entire Bnei Yisroel*. This means that the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu was demonstrated, not in secret, but in front of the entire Klal Yisroel. To which specific demonstration of Moshe's greatness does the *passuk* refer? The Ramban and Ohr Hachaim explain that this refers to the splitting of the Yam Suf and the receiving of the *Luchos* which were alluded to earlier in the *passuk*. These events indeed demonstrate the overall greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu, who was chosen as Hashem's messenger to perform the greatest miracles of all times, and to be the intermediary between Hashem and the Bnei Yisroel in becoming His Chosen Nation.

### שבירת הלוחות / The Breaking of the Luchos

Rashi, however, explains the *passuk* as referring to a different occurrence altogether. According to Rashi, the *passuk* refers to the time when Moshe smashed the *Luchos*. He had come down from Har Sinai ready to give them to Bnei Yisroel, when the terrible sight of people serving the *Eigel* greeted him. This sight caused Moshe to become terribly

angry. In his rage, he grasped the heavy, sapphire *Luchos* with his hands, and he flung them at the ground so forcefully that they smashed into pieces. It is this feat of sheer strength that the final words of the Torah praise about Moshe.

### **Why Do We End the Torah on a Seemingly Inglorious Note?**

The obvious question is, is that the praise with which we must take our leave of Moshe Rabbeinu? True, the act was necessary at the time, but why must it be mentioned now? Is there nothing better to say? Seemingly, the Torah should instead end with an action in which Moshe helped Bnei Yisroel achieved greatness – such as receiving the *Luchos*. Smashing them, on the other hand, seemingly diminished the greatness of Klal Yisroel, and of Moshe in turn. Why is the ostensibly shameful – and better covered up – event of the smashing of the *Luchos* chosen as the act in which we must walk away remembering Moshe Rabbeinu?

*On Pesach night, the halacha that we impart to the chacham is אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן – Nothing may be eaten after the Afikomen. The reason for this halacha is that the taste of the Afikomen should linger in our mouths. What one partakes of last in his meal – the dessert – will have the strongest lingering taste, and Chazal established that we should reserve that 'taste' for the mitzvah of Afikomen.*

Similarly, the final praise with which the Torah describes Moshe Rabbeinu will have that distinction of its 'lingering' in our minds. Why must the breaking of the *Luchos* be chosen for that 'honor', rather than an act of greatness which would also serve to highlight the greatness of Bnei Yisroel?

I would like to suggest bs"d two different approaches to explain how the smashing of the *Luchos* conveyed a unique aspect of greatness in Moshe Rabbeinu, for which it is singularly important for the Torah to specifically end while focusing on it.

## **Sacrificing Oneself for the Truth of Torah**

### **The Story of Shimon Ha'amsuni**

For our first explanation, let us begin by discussing the well-known Gemara (ב"ק מ"א:) about Shimon Ha'amsuni.

*Shimon Ha'amsuni [or Nechemia Ha'amsuni] had a clear view regarding the word את in the Torah. Although in the plain meaning of the passuk, the word would seem to be placed for*

*purely grammatical or stylistic purposes without teaching any novel halacha or lesson, Shimon Ha'amsuni felt that this simply could not be. If the word appears in the Torah, there must be an extra teaching which the word alludes to, which we would otherwise not have known.*

*Having advanced this view, Shimon Ha'amsuni had his life's work set out before him. After all, the word אַת appears thousands of times in the Torah, and according to the view of Shimon Ha'amsuni, there was a new teaching intended to be uncovered in every single instance. Not one to take the easy way out, Shimon Ha'amsuni began his work in earnest. He pored over each passuk in the Torah, discovering great teachings and halachos alluded to in each occurrence of the word. With time, he had amassed an enormous storehouse of such teachings, each one acquired after much toil and effort. He further developed these teachings into vast sugyos, and he imparted many shiurim to his talmidim based on the ideas that he had worked so hard developing. He soon became well-known for the great treasure in Torah-understanding that he had merited to uncover.*

*All was going well in Shimon Ha'amsuni's learning and teaching, until he encountered what seemed to be an absolute roadblock. He had reached the passuk אַתָּה ד' אֵלֶיךָ תִירָא (דברים י' י"ג) / You shall fear Hashem your G-d. Here, Shimon Ha'amsuni was utterly mystified. What could the passuk possibly be coming to include in this mitzvah, as akin to fear of Hashem Himself? There is obviously nothing even remotely comparable. In Shimon's mind, this mystery was so great, that it seemed abundantly clear that his entire life's work was threatened. After all, if nothing were being hinted at in the word אַת in this passuk, it would then be demonstrated that the word was not necessarily written in the Torah to teach a novel halacha. All his previous derashos would be called into question.*

*After working on the problem for some time, Shimon Ha'amsuni reached his fateful conclusion. He was indeed mistaken. He retracted all his previous derashos, in which he had invested so much effort. All the shiurim were declared mistaken, ready for the Shaimos box. Shimon Ha'amsuni would begin learning from scratch.*

*His talmidim could not understand how he could simply draw back from all the effort and toil that he had invested. "Rebbe," they protested, "what will become of all the derashos that you composed?"*

*Shimon Ha'amsuni's answer was calm and confident. "Just as I received reward for composing the derashos, so will I receive reward for retracting them."*

*This was the end of the story, until Rebbi Akiva came and expounded. The word אַתָּה in the passuk אַלֹּוֹקִיךָ תִירָא/You shall fear Hashem your G-d – was written to include fear of Talmidei Chachamim in the mitzvah along with fear of Hashem.*

The story seems to have a 'happy ending', with Rebbi Akiva 'saving the day' by uncovering the hidden teaching within the *passuk*. The question, though, is that Shimon Ha'amsuni – having spent so much of his life mastering the wisdom in darshening a *passuk* – could also have thought of this *derashah*. In fact, we can almost certainly assume that he did think of this *derashah* – but discarded it after concluding that it was not satisfactory. He had surely reasoned that even the fear of *Talmidei Chachamim* can in no way be likened to the fear of HaKadosh Boruch Hu Himself. What, then, did Rebbi Akiva see that made him think differently and conclude that the *passuk* was likening the two fears?

### **Rebbi Akiva Perceived the Greatness of Shimon Ha'amsuni**

Rav Mordechai Gifter zt"l explained that what Rebbi Akiva saw was the very action of Shimon Ha'amsuni. If Shimon Ha'amsuni was able to retract his entire life's work for the sake of his understanding of the truth, a new *madreigah* in the greatness of *Talmidei Chachamim* is demonstrated. He is not one who is bound to his earthly, egotistical feelings, but one who can rise beyond the natural emotions of this world. If so, he is indeed worthy of our greatest reverence, even comparable to the fear of Hashem Himself, Who is completely above all of Creation.

*Through the generations of Klal Yisroel, there have been individuals who the strength and courage to recognize an error of theirs and retract it, even at the cost of nullifying much of their previous efforts and investments.*

*There was a certain Rav in Toronto who was originally a major activist for the Reform movement. Toward the end of his life, he recognized the truth of Torah and he completely abandoned his*

*previous work. He became a Torah-true Jew, and a staunch supporter of Agudas Yisroel.*

### **Moshe Was Prepared to Give Up All His Greatness and his Leadership for the Sake of Truth**

Let us now return to the explanation of Rashi at the end of the Torah. According to Rashi, the closing words of the Torah praise Moshe Rabbeinu for the breaking of the *Luchos*. In line with our discussion, we can understand that Moshe's breaking of the *Luchos* carried the same admirable quality of giving up on one's crowning life achievement for the sake of truth. After all, Hashem had originally informed Moshe that all the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* were for one purpose only: בהוציאך את העם / *When you bring the Nation out of Mitzrayim, you will serve Hashem on this Mountain*. The purpose of all the miracles was to lead to the climax of receiving the Torah at Har Sinai. Moshe was their leader throughout their experiences, achieving ever-greater heights based on the ascending *madreigos* of Klal Yisroel. Should the event of *Kabbalas HaTorah* be nullified *chas v'shalom*, then, Moshe's leadership and the greatness that he achieved would go along with it. Moshe still broke the *Luchos* – not because he knew there would be a second chance; he had not been given any such assurance. His reason for breaking them was purely based on an understanding of truth to which he arrived, through a *kal v'chomer* that he made: The *halacha* is that one who serves *avodah zarah* may not eat even from a mere *Korban Pesach*. If so, Moshe understood, such a person should certainly not be able to receive the entire Torah. Thus, Bnei Yisroel at the time who were guilty of the sin of *avodah zarah*, were unworthy of receiving the *Luchos*. Based on this understanding, Moshe hurled the *Luchos* at the ground – and seemingly with them, his past and future great leadership.

### **The Greatness of Moshe's Selflessness in Breaking the *Luchos* Surpassed the Miracles of Krias Yam Suf and Receiving the Torah**

This act of Moshe Rabbeinu, then, was one of giving himself over completely for the sake of the truth of Torah. The Torah concluded with this praise of Moshe, because it indeed surpasses all other acts of greatness performed by Moshe. True, he was Hashem's messenger in splitting the Yam Suf and in receiving the Torah – but those acts served to bring Moshe and the Bnei Yisroel to greatness. The smashing of the *Luchos*, in contrast, was an act that at the time seemed to mar and ruin his greatness, all for the sake of the Truth. The deed demonstrated the

ultimate greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu, and it is this greatness which is given the distinction of the 'Afikomen' in the Torah, for which we are to walk away with its memory lingering in our minds.

## **Making the Creation of Man Worthwhile**

In our second explanation, we will bs"d develop this idea to an even deeper dimension, and with this we will draw a connection to Parshas Beraishis.

### **יישר כחך/Your Strength should be Rejuvenated Because You Broke them!**

Let us begin by focusing on the words that HaKadosh Boruch Hu used to convey to Moshe that his breaking of the *Luchos* was the correct course of action. As Rashi concludes, Hashem said, יישר כחך ששברת / *Your strength should be rejuvenated because you broke them!* The question is, the expression of יישר כחך or 'Shkoyach' is familiar to us; it used as a way of saying 'Thank you'. The meaning behind it is that the strength used by the doer benefactor in helping the receiver of a favor should be restored. However, we do not find a *beracha* initiated with the words יישר כח!

*When a person approaches a Gadol for a berachah, he wants to hear a wish for health, for shidduchim, for nachas from his family, perhaps for success in Torah. He certainly does not expect to approach the Gadol and be simply told 'Yasher Koyach!'*

*He would surely reply, 'But I did not do any favor, why are you thanking me?'*

In the story of the *Luchos*, Moshe did a commendable act, worthy of praise and blessing. Why, though, is Hashem thanking Moshe for it, as though it was a personal favor for Hashem Himself?

### **נעשה אדם/Let 'Us' Make a Man' – Discussing with the Malachim**

To understand this point, let us now turn to the *passuk* in Parshas Beraishis in which Hashem introduces the idea of creating man. Hashem began by saying, נעשה אדם / *Let us make a man*'. Chazal focus on the plural term of 'Let us'. With whom was Hashem conversing, and seemingly discussing the idea of creating man?

Chazal explain (סנהדרין ל"ח:) that this *passuk* is hinting to a discussion which occurred between Hashem and the *Malachim* regarding the propriety of man's creation.

*Hashem first broached the idea to one group of Malachim. "What do you think about creating a person?"*

*Before answering the Malachim asked for more information. "What will this creature's actions consist of?"*

*Hashem revealed to them all the different facets of people's characters and behaviors.*

*"If so," they responded, "You should not create him! He is full of evil! (מה אנש כי תזכרנו (תהילים ד' ה') / "What is a human being that You should remember him? He is full of sin and certainly unworthy of creation!"*

*Upon hearing the Malachim's response, Hashem burned that group of Malachim in a fire. The same scene repeated itself for a second group of Malachim, and they, too, were burned.*

*When Hashem asked the third group, they had already learned their lesson. 'Hashem,' they said, 'do as You see fit!'*

*When mankind eventually sinned in the Dor HaMabul and the Dor Haflagah, this final group of Malachim came back to HaKadosh Boruch Hu with a victorious tone of voice. "Did the first two groups of Malachim not argue that it would not be worthwhile to create man? They were clearly correct. See, now, the evil behavior and destruction brought forth by the creation of man!"*

*Hashem did not argue with the Malachim, but instead responded ועד זקנה אני הוא ועד שיבה אני אסבל אני עשיתי ואני אשא ואני אסבל ואמלט (ישעיה' מ"ו ד') 'Until your old age, it is I, until your seniority, I shall tolerate. I have made, and I shall bear and save.' – i.e. Mankind's actions are my own business, and I still see fit to have created him. I will deal with his actions on My own."*

### **The Malachim's Complaint to Hashem**

What emerges from this story is that when human beings sin, the *Malachim* have a seemingly valid complaint against man's creation. After all, the *Malachim* argue, what use is a person with all his rebelliousness and destruction? Hashem does not really give them a clear response in return; only that He has his reasons for Creation, beyond the comprehension of *Malachim*. What about, though, when man acts properly, and controls the evil within himself? At such times, Hashem is able to provide a triumphant response to the *Malachim*. 'You see,



*Malachim*? The creation of man was surely necessary and purposeful! Look at the great heights he can reach with his free choice!

### **Moshe's Noble Act Provided Hashem with a Proper Response to the Malachim**

This brings us back to the story of Moshe breaking the *Luchos*. We asked: Why is HaKadosh Boruch Hu seemingly thanking Moshe for his act? We can now understand that Moshe had, in fact, done a kindness for Hashem כביכול with his act. Now, Hashem had what to tell the *Malachim*. "Look at my son, Moshe, who selflessly broke the *Luchos*, even when seemed that it would cost him his leadership and his greatness. Still, he did so out of his desire for the truth. A *malach* would never be capable of such a deed, because a *malach* only acts exactly according to the mission assigned to it. Certainly then, it was worthwhile to create a man who would use his own understanding and free will to act so selflessly and nobly!"

Indeed, Hashem was expressing appreciation and gratitude to Moshe for granting Hashem a response to give to the *Malachim*. According to our theme, we can suggest that it is for this additional reason that the Torah ends with this praise about Moshe, even over his other acts of greatness. True, Moshe split the Yam Suf, but a *malach* could also have done that miracle. Smashing the *Luchos*, however, was a feat of Moshe using his understanding and free will in a manner beyond the capabilities of *Malachim*. When I mentioned this pshat in Rashi to my Rebbi, Rav Yitzchok Feigelstock shlita, he derived great pleasure from it.

### **תנורו של עכנאי – The Story of the Oven of Achnai**

I heard a similar explanation from Rav Shlomo Brevda zt"l regarding an incident recorded in the Gemara (ב"מ נ"ט:).

*Rebbi Eliezer was involved in a machlokes with the other chachamim regarding the tumah status of a certain oven. Rebbi Eliezer brought various signs to demonstrate the correctness of his position. Finally, he declared, "Let it be proven from Shamayim that I am correct!"*

*A Heavenly Voice then issued forth exclaiming, "Why are you starting with Eliezer my son, of whom the halacha follows his rulings in every instance?!"*

*The case seemed closed at that point, for after all, Hashem Himself had sided with Rebbi Eliezer! However, even this did not faze the*

*chachamim. Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and announced לא בשמיים היא* "The Torah is no longer under Shamayim's jurisdiction!" i.e. The chachamim of this world determine the halacha!

*The Gemara relates that Rabbi Nosson later asked Eliyahu HaNavi how Hashem reacted to Rabbi Yehoshua's retort. Eliyahu replied that Hashem 'smiled' and said בני נצחוני בני נצחוני/My children have defeated Me!*

The simple meaning of Hashem's remark בני נצחוני was as we mentioned. 'My children have defeated Me!' Rav Brevda זט"ל, however, explained a different meaning in the words of Hashem. בני נצחוני means 'My children have given Me *נצחון*/victory over the *Malachim* in the question about whether man should have been created!' i.e. There is now a justification for the creation of man, because a *malach* can never reach a *madreigah* in which he has the power to 'overrule' Hakadosh Boruch Hu Himself! Only a person can reach such a lofty level, and hence, the *kiddush Hashem* that only human beings can achieve necessitates their creation.

### **It is in the Hands of Every Jew to Make the Creation of Man Worthwhile**

This achievement is not reserved for people on the lofty levels of Moshe Rabbeinu, Yaakov Avinu (see footnote<sup>3</sup>), or the *Chachamim* of the generations of the *mishnah*. This level is attainable for every one of us. Each time a person uses his own free will to control himself against his temptation, he is performing a feat beyond the capabilities of *Malachim*. *Malachim*, like animals, have no free choice, and can only do exactly as they were programmed in Creation. When a Jew forces himself to do as

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<sup>3</sup> See Parshas Vayetze where we explained a Medrash in a similar vein. Chazal there recount the story of the *Malachim* who were initially banished from *Shamayim* after uttering the words *כי משחיתים אנהנו* "We are destroying the city [of Sedom]." They were subsequently granted permission to return to *Shamayim*, after sharing with their fellow *Malachim* their discovery of the face of Yaakov Avinu and recognizing it as appearing on the *Kisei HaKovod*. We explained bs"d that after destroying Sedom for their evil ways, the *Malachim* had called man's creation into question, and they were therefore banished from *Shamayim*. When they later shared their realization that Yaakov Avinu achieved such a level of greatness to have his visage appear on the *Kisei HaKovod*, they were essentially admitting that man's creation was worthwhile, for only he could reach such heights of perfection in *Avodas Hashem*. The time had then come for them to be allowed back into *Shamayim*.

the Torah demands of him, he is achieving a *Kiddush Hashem* for which the entire creation of man is worthwhile.

*Whether it is forcing oneself out of bed to be on time for davening in the morning, refraining from chapping a shmooz in middle of one's learning, or refraining from sharing a particularly juicy piece of loshon hara –a person by behaving properly brings himself to a madreigah completely beyond what a malach can achieve. Each time a person successfully overcomes a nisayon, Hashem says to him יישר כחך / "Thank you for making Creation of man be worthwhile!"*

### **In Conclusion**

Let us remember and internalize these great lessons taught to us by Moshe Rabbeinu's breaking of the *Luchos*:

Let us recall how Moshe was prepared to surrender his greatness and his leadership, all for the sake of the truth of Torah. We, too, must strive to train ourselves to act according our understanding of the *Ratzon Hashem*, even when it seems that there is much for us to lose by doing so. The Truth for which we will be sacrificing our own needs is far more valuable. Moreover, the *madreigos* we will gain as a result will be infinitely higher – like Moshe, whose selfless act of breaking the *Luchos* was placed at the very end of the Torah, where its message will linger in our minds after we conclude the Torah.

Let us remember as well that when we do control ourselves to behave in accordance with the *Ratzon Hashem*, we are thereby making the very of creation of mankind have been worthwhile. Hashem כביכול 'appreciates' our deed, and conveys His thanks to us with a ישר כח.

Bez"H we should reach these *madreigos*.

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