

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe Rabinowitz zt"l

פרשת ויקהל - פיקודי

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נתנדב לרגל נישואי נכדת המחבר
אלימלך ודינה פערזיכרט
יה"ר שיזכו לבנות בית נאמן בישראל
ולעילוי נשמת אהרן דוב בן חיים משה
יוסף בן צבי אלימלך

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ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל (ל"ה א')

The Difference Between Animal and Man

In his introduction to Parshas Vayakhel, Rabbeinu Bechaye discusses the four levels of life that inhabit this world. There is a *Domem* – an inanimate object, such as a stone; there is *Tzome'ach* – plant life, which grows from the ground; *Chai* – a living organism, such as insects and animals; and a *Medaber* – one who can speak, which is none other than mankind.

If we look closely at the last two – animals and man – we will observe that the physical makeup of the two is rather similar. They both need to eat and drink, they both need sleep, and they carry out many other bodily functions in similar manners. However, there is one great distinction between the two: Man possesses intelligence. Man doesn't just act by instinct; Man can think, Man can make decisions, Man can communicate.

I remember once walking through the primate section at the Bronx Zoo. As you walk down the path that leads through the exhibit, you see a number of fascinating animals: orangutans, chimpanzees, gorillas... And then, towards the end of the path, there's a large sign that reads: "The most dangerous animal in the world awaits you," or something to that effect. I watched all the visitors running towards the thick bars that were under the sign, looking ahead excitedly, hoping to catch a glimpse of the world's most dangerous creature. But once I approached the cage, I saw what was being displayed within: nothing but a large, blank mirror. "Yes, us humans are the most dangerous creatures in the world," the sign said.

Wow, what a message they were sending. We're all animals, albeit some a little more gifted than others.

I recently heard from Rabbi Akiva Tatz that in New Zealand, they recently passed a new law: gorillas will henceforth have rights. The parliament of that country argued that the difference between gorillas and humans is so minute, that they deserve to have their own rights. Even if one were to argue that they can't talk, so they would have no way of representing themselves in court to fight for their rights – that doesn't matter. Good lawyers can always talk on their behalf. I guess in New Zealand, the *halacha* is that we always say טענין.

The More We Grow, the Bigger the Difference Becomes

The truth is, I understand these people. If you would put a gorilla next to the Steipler Gaon, *lehavdil*, you wouldn't see the slightest resemblance between the two. Yes, there may be some diminutive biological similarities between the two – but they are negligible when compared to the number of differences there are. However, if you put a *goy* together with a nice old primate – they're strikingly similar. In fact, the similarities far outweigh the differences.

When the Steipler was nearing the time of his passing, his family flew in a top doctor from England to care for him (I believe his name was Dr. Stein). At one point, the doctor was trying to get the Steipler's heart rate to go up a bit, so he asked the family members to bring the patient something that he liked – something that would normally make his heart race. The Steipler's family members shrugged their shoulders; there was no food or other physical item that could possibly get their father excited. Then, one of the tzaddik's grandchildren ran to fetch his Tallis and Tefillin. The moment the Tallis bag was placed on the Steipler's chest, his heart rate began to shoot upward.

Clearly, by the Jewish nation, human life is an entirely different type of existence than that of the *goyim*.

Can You be Jealous of a Horse?

I was spending the summer in Sackett Lake, and there was a secular Jew that lived nearby who would somehow manage to 'accidentally' tear down the Eruv with his tractor every Friday. One day, I decided to approach him while he was out on his tractor. I asked him why he was bothering the frum Yidden; after all, we all know that Hashem gave us a Torah, and they're the ones that are actually following it! "Why would a good man like you try to get in their way?" I asked him.

But the man smirked at my words. He began to mumble something about the Torah being given for people who are poor and unsuccessful, not for people like him who have a great life, are wealthy, and are self-sufficient. He then said something to this effect: "I don't need divine laws to make me happy – unlike you people. I have all of the good things in life; I don't need to grope in the dark in search of a purpose." I didn't understand his rationale at all, and I doubted whether he actually had one; but I definitely felt the strong sense of haughtiness in his voice, and the illusory belief that life's pleasures are a purpose worth living for.

Just then, I noticed a horse grazing on his property. "I hope you won't take this personally," I began, "but let me ask you a question, just for argument's sake: Is there any real difference between you and that horse?"

The man guffawed. "No comparison whatsoever! That horse eats dry and tasteless hay. I eat delicious delicacies each and every day," he said matter-of-factly, as though this was obviously a substantial distinction between the two.

"I don't understand your answer," I challenged. "Let's say your friend doesn't like meat – his preferred protein is tuna. Are you better than him because you dine on steaks while he eats tuna sandwiches? Of course not. This type of food talks to you, and that type of food talks to him. The same goes for you and the horse; to him, hay is a delicacy, while steak is an unappetizing piece of a dead animal."

He nodded his head a bit, as though he somewhat agreed to my argument. Then I pressed on: "How about your sleep? Do you also sleep in a manner that is superior to the horse?"

"Of course!" he answered. "I sleep with a down pillow and blanket, and I have the most comfortable bed you could ever imagine! That horse, on the other hand, sleeps on the floor in the smelly barn every night."

*"Interesting," I said. "But did you ever see the horse tossing and turning in the middle of the night, trying to find the perfect position? I don't think so. He just curls up and falls asleep. You, however, must experience that difficulty from time to time, as many humans do." I then moved on to the next *mashal*. "He also isn't inferior to you with regard to dress. You have to constantly update your wardrobe and invest time and energy into looking your best; the horse has no such struggle. He just stays the way he is every day, without getting dressed, and he manages just fine." I paused, and then I continued: "And what if you get a call from the IRS, saying that they want to examine your income records to ascertain that you were being honest with your taxes? The horse knows nothing of that fear –"*

"Rabbi, stop right there," the man interjected, visibly getting uncomfortable at that point.

"But listen," I continued, "the horse doesn't know of marital struggles either! He finds a female horse and he stays with her. End of story! No complicated disagreements." This struck a chord within him as well, seeing as he was divorced and living alone for quite some time himself.

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"You know, maybe you're right. The horse really does have a lot going for him," the secular Jew concluded.

"But don't be jealous of the horse, my friend," I concluded. "If you live by the belief that you described, then you are a horse yourself."

Says Rabbeinu Bechaye: When a person allows his mind to overpower his physical nature, then he becomes a צבאות ה' מלאך – *an angel of Hashem's heavenly legions*. However, if he allows his physical nature to overpower his mind, then he is נמשל כבהמות נדמו – *he is compared to animals that are mute (alternatively: that fall asleep)*.

כָּל נָדִיב לְבוֹ יְבִיֵאֶהָ אֶת תְּרוּמַת ה' (ל"ה ה')

The Intent Behind the Mitzvah

The *pasuk* says "כל נדיב לבו יביאה" – *All who have a generous heart shall bring her [Terumah] for Hashem*. The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh asks: why does the Torah refer to the donations with a לשון נקבה – *shall bring her*? In fact, the *pasuk* could have simply said יביא – *he shall bring*, without adding a לשון נקבה or a זכר!

The Ohr Hachaim answers with a fundamental rule about *Avodas Hashem*. Each time a Yid does a *mitzvah*, there are two aspects of the action: the מעשה – the act itself, and the שכל – the thought process behind it. Therefore, the *pasuk* is coming to teach us that when one does the *mitzvah* of contributing to the building of the *Mishkan*, as well as any other act of giving *tzedakah*, he must do the יביא – which is simply the act of giving, and also the יביאה – the thought process behind it.

This Ohr Hachaim fits perfectly with the Halachic importance of the thought process or intent behind each *mitzvah*. The *P'sak Halacha* in Shulchan Aruch (או"ח סי' ס') is that מצוות צריכות כוונה – *mitzvos require intent*. Nonetheless, The Mishna Berurah cites an important provision to this *halacha* from the Chayei Adam: the obligation to have *kavanah* while carrying out a *mitzvah* is only applicable to actions that can be regarded as mundane or random behaviors rather than a specific commandment from Hashem. For example, if someone takes a taxi and pays the driver before exiting the vehicle, he will not receive the reward for the *mitzvah* of "ביומו תתן שכרו" – *compensate him that day* – unless he has express *kavanah* to achieve that *mitzvah*. Otherwise, the act could simply be defined as ordinary behavior. (Indeed, I have heard that the Chofetz Chaim was very *makpid* to have this *kavanah* before paying his wagon driver.) On the other hand, if someone dons a pair of *tefillin* in the morning but fails to have *kavanah* for the *mitzvah* – he will nonetheless receive the reward, since the act itself is inherently a *mitzvah*.

According to this *p'sak* from the Mishna Berurah, we can fully appreciate the answer of the Ohr Hachaim: giving *tzedakah* is an action that can easily be perceived as mere kindness, prompted by either selfish or neutral motivations, rather than the will to accomplish Hashem's directive. Therefore, a person must expressly intend to do the action *leshem mitzvah* in order to receive its proper reward.

Becoming Partners with Hashem

The Ramban takes a different approach to explaining the wording of this *pasuk*. He learns that the word *יביאה* transforms the *יביא* into a plural, to teach us that when a person brings his donation – he brings the *Shechinah* along with him. (This thought is echoed in the Ramban's *pirush* in Parshas Shemos, when he explains the wording in the *pasuk* when Basya discovers Moshe floating in the river. The *pasuk* there says “ותפתה ותראהו והנה נער בוכה” – *She opened it and she saw him, and behold! A child was crying*. It would seem that the word “ותראהו” is out of place; it should have just said that she opened the box and saw a child crying, not that she saw “him”, and *then* that she saw a child crying. There, too, the Ramban explains that the pluralization in the verse was referring to the *Shechinah*.)

We learn from this Ramban that when a person chooses to do a *mitzvah*, he immediately acquires a partner in the act – the Ribono Shel Olam Himself! The *Shechinah* escorts our *mitzvos* up to the *Kisei Hakavod*, where they are safekept for eternity. We must remember this every time we are about to do a *mitzvah*; Hakadosh Baruch Hu is there beside us, partnering with us and aiding us to follow through with the action. What an honor and a *zechus* it is to *כביכול* work alongside the Eibishter!

I was once in a Shul in Toronto, and the Gabbai called me up to do Hagbah. He was then mechabed R' Moshe Reichman with Gelilah. After davening, I quipped to R' Moshe: “Rabbi Reichman, you and I are partners!” He smiled, then quickly feigned a stern look and replied firmly: “Only for Hagbah Gelilah.”

Isn't this an amazing insight? When you give *tzedakah*, says the Ramban, you're doing it *b'shutfis* with Hashem! What a *kavod* it is to be partners with the Ribono Shel Olam! In fact, this is one of the explanations for the *minhag* to stand up when a *chosson* and *kallah* walk into a room. It's not that we're being *mechabed* them – rather, we are giving *kavod* to the *Shechinah* which is accompanying them, because they're in the midst of doing a *mitzvah*.

They say over in the name of Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky *zt"l* that we stand by “ויברך דוד” because the *Gabbai* walks around with the *pushka* at that point, and being that there are people in the room that are doing the *mitzvah* of giving *tzedakah* – we stand up for them. And I think that we are saying the same *nekudah* as Rav Yaakov *zt"l*, only we're taking it a step further: it's not just that we're paying respect to the *עושי מצוה*, but rather that we are standing up for the *Shechinah* that enters the room the moment people start opening their hearts to do a *mitzvah*.

Rav Shalom Schwadron *zt"l* used to say that a Yid is always doing either a *mitzvah* or an *aveirah*. If you're walking down the street towards the supermarket in order to buy food for Shabbos, you're doing a *mitzvah*; you're transcending the mundane act of walking into something great. So too, if you're taking a walk in the park or playing a game of basketball in order to rejuvenate yourself – then you're doing a *mitzvah* as well. Conversely, if you're sitting idly and wasting time while you could be accomplishing – then you're doing a form of an *aveirah*. Well, with that thought in mind, let's think about the aforementioned Ramban for a moment. If a person chooses to steer clear of actions that fall under the category of *aveirah* – then he is basically doing *mitzvos* all day. If so – that means he has the presence of the *Shechinah* escorting him throughout his entire day! His incredible Partner is accompanying him with every step that he takes. Shouldn't that thought make us all dance?

May we all be *zoche* to feel the Ribono Shel Olam in our lives, and merit to see the *Shechinah* with the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days.

פרשת פיקודי

אלה פקודי המשכן מעדת אשר פקד על פי משה (ל"ח כ"א)

The Mishkan Was a Kapparah For the Cheit Ha'eigel

The Ohr Hachaim writes that the purpose of the building of the Mishkan was to atone for the *Cheit Ha'eigel*. This is based on the teaching of the *Midrash*: "If someone has done bundles of *aveiros*, he should do in their place bundles of *mitzvos* [to atone for them]". The building of the Mishkan served as a *kapparah* for *Klal Yisrael's* having sinned with the *Cheit Ha'eigel* in this way, as we shall explain.

Klal Yisrael craved a connection to an '*avodah zarah*', and they atoned for this by creating a place to connect with Hashem.

They built a *mizbeiach* on which to bring *korbanos* to the *Eigel*, and they atoned for this by building a *mizbeiach* to bring *korbanos* to Hashem.

They gave of their gold to fashion the *Eigel*, and they atoned for this by donating their gold, silver, and other valuable items for Hashem.

They removed their nose-rings for the creation of the *Eigel*, and they atoned for this by removing *all* of their jewelry [more than just their nose-rings] to be used in the Mishkan.

They appointed people to make the *Eigel*, and they atoned for this by appointing Betzalel to build the Mishkan.

בא אלה וכפר על אלה

The Ohr Hachaim concludes with one more comparison between the *Cheit Ha'eigel* and the Mishkan. When *Klal Yisrael* made the *Eigel* they said "אלה אלהיך ישראל", *These are your gods, Yisrael*. This was atoned for in the building of the Mishkan as it says "אלה פקודי המשכן", *These are the counting's of the Mishkan*.

How was the counting of the donations to the Mishkan a *kapparah* for the *Cheit Ha'eigel*? On a simple level it would seem that the counting was simply for the purpose of transparency. By counting all the donations, and specifying what each of them was used for, it was clear that Moshe Rabeinu did not take anything for himself. However, if this was the entire purpose of the counting, then it is difficult to understand how this was a *kapparah* for the *Cheit Ha'eigel*. It seems that there must have been a deeper meaning to the counting of the donations, and in some way this counteracted the ill effects of the *Eigel*.

I heard from R' Shabsi Yudelevitch z"l that we can explain this with the following story.

R' Shabsi was once by a certain tzaddik for Yom Kippur. The whole congregation was in the shul, and they were ready to begin Kol Nidrei. However, the rav of the shul would not allow them to begin before he spoke with the person who was in charge of the poritz's dog.

This lowly, drunken goy was brought into the shul, and all of the congregants, in their white kittels and talleisim, took a step back. The rav, however, called this goy to the bimah, and he began to ask him many questions about the poritz's dog.

"Where did they buy the dog?"

"An emissary was sent to Paris, and this dog was handpicked by an experienced group of dog trainers"

"How much did it cost?"

"10,000 rubles"

"What does he eat?"

"He has a group of chefs that constantly monitor what he eats, and he gets only the freshest and finest food in the country."

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This went on for quite some time, and the entire congregation heard of all the myriad details which went into caring for the dog. They heard about where he slept, and how he was bathed. They heard about the clothing he wore, and they were baffled to hear that he even had a birthday party!

Once this interrogation was over, and the goy had left the shul, the Rav allowed the Chazzan to commence with Kol Nidrei. After davening, the Rav explained his peculiar behavior to the members of the shul.

He told them of a poor man in a nearby city, who we will call Yankel, whose daughter became a kallah. Yankel could not afford the wedding expenses, and he had to go around collecting tzedaka. He went from shtetl to shtetl collecting small donations from the townsfolk, but alas, times were hard and the people could not help him with much.

This went on for two years, and the time had come for Yankel to return to his home and his family so they could begin preparing for the wedding. Unfortunately however, the poor man was returning empty-handed. The meager alms he had collected were barely enough to get him by from day to day, and he had hardly anything left over with which to pay for the wedding.

Yankel simply could not bring himself to enter his home with nothing. He imagined the looks of anguish he would be greeted with by his wife and daughter when they heard that the past two years had been totally unfruitful. They had been alone, without their husband and father for two years, and they were hoping that upon his return their future would be brighter. When they would find out that he had nothing, and that their dreams had gone up in smoke, they would be filled with a horrific sense of grief.

Unable to go home, he sat on a street corner and he began crying. As he was sitting there, weeping uncontrollably, the poritz happened to pass by. Upon hearing the pitiful sobbing of this wretched, downtrodden fellow, the poritz's heart melted. He called the yid over and asked him what was bothering him.

Yankel explained to the poritz what had happened, and how he simply could not return home with nothing. The poritz then asked him how much money he needed to cover all of the wedding expenses, and he responded that he needed 30,000 rubles. In an unusual display of generosity, the poritz handed the entire sum to the poor yid, and he rode off.

The Rav concluded this story by saying that he feared this would be a terrible kitrug on Klal Yisrael. A yid was making a wedding, and with no help from his fellow yidden, he was instead helped by a lowly goy. The rav was afraid that this would not bode well for the yidden, and he therefore sought to downplay the chesed of the poritz.

By demonstrating that the poritz was willing to pay an astronomical sum just to buy and support his dog, it was made clear that his chesed wasn't so special. After all, if he was willing to do so much for simple animals, he should surely do so much more for people. However, this was not the case. What he had done for this yid paled in comparison to what he did regularly for his dog.

Thus, the counting of the frivolousness of the poritz, was a kapparah on that which the yidden did not pay for the poor man's wedding.

R' Shabsi Yudelevitch explained that the same applies with the counting of the donations to the Mishkan. There was a terrible *kitrug* on *Klal Yisrael* when they excitedly gave of their valuables to create the *Eigel*. Therefore, Moshe Rabeinu made a point to count the donations to the Mishkan. He demonstrated that our enthusiasm and eagerness to build the Mishkan far outweighed the enthusiasm which went into the creation of the *Eigel*. The sin of the *Eigel* was thus downplayed as it was clear that *Klal Yisrael* attached far more importance to *Avodas Hashem* than to other endeavors. This is the meaning of the words of Chazal that the counting of the Mishkan was a *kapparah* for the *Cheit Ha'eigel*.

Demonstrating the Primary Goal

This is a very important lesson for us. How much time do we spend on *ruchniyus*, and how much time do we spend on *gashmiyus*? How much money do we spend on *ruchniyus*, and how much do we spend on *gashmiyus*?

There should be no comparison between the way we treat our mundane pursuits, and the way we treat our *ruchniyusdige* endeavors.

- *A person may feel an urge to spend extra money on brand name shoes, and if he can afford it then this is not so terrible. However, if he does so, he should certainly be willing to pay extra for a nice esrog!*
- *Someone may want to pay for his children to have music lessons, which is fine. However, if he does so, he should certainly be ready to pay extra for his children's chinuch!*
- *If a person is willing to drive for a half-hour to get to a fancy restaurant, he should certainly not become nervous if the chazzan davens a bit too slow!*

If one demonstrates clearly that his primary goal is his connection to Hashem, and the bulk of his energies are expended toward that end, then his other leisurely pursuits can be 'overlooked'. However, if he is willing to spend time, effort, and money pursuing *gashmiyus*, but as far as *ruchniyus* goes he gets by with the bare minimum, then unfortunately even what he does do will lose its significance.

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