

# אור פני משה

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

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*Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe  
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## פרשת יתרו

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לעילוי נשמת  
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## פרשת יתרו

לֹא תַחְמַד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ, לֹא תַחְמַד אִשְׁתּוֹ רֵעֶךָ, וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאִמָּתוֹ וְשׂוֹרוֹ  
וְחִמְרוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ (שמות כ"י"ד)

*You shall not covet your friend's house. You shall not covet your friend's wife, his servant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, and anything that belongs to your friend.*

### לא תחמוד – לא תתאוה

This *issur* of jealousy, is described by the *Torah* in two ways. In the *Aseres Hadibros* of this week's *Parshah*, the *Torah* uses the word תחמוד, *you shall not covet*. However, in *Parshas Va'eschanan*, when the *Torah* repeats the *Aseres Hadibros*, it uses a different word. It says: *You shall not covet your friend's wife, and you shall not desire your friend's house*. In addition to the *issur* of *chemdah*, of coveting, there is also an *issur* of *taavah*, of desiring.

What is the difference between *לא תחמוד* and *לא תתאוה*? The Rambam (הלכות גזילה ואבידה פ"א ה"ט) explains: *Lo Sachmod* is with an action, whereas *Lo Sisaveh* is in the heart. If someone covets his friend's things, and he pressures him into selling them, he has transgressed *Lo Sachmod*. However, the *issur* of *Lo Sisaveh* applies even if he doesn't actually do anything. Simply by desiring his friend's things in his heart, he has already transgressed *Lo Sisaveh*.

If the *Torah* was to prohibit even merely desiring our friend's things in our hearts, then why wasn't that *issur* mentioned here in *Parshas Yisro*?

The *Aseres Hadibros* of *Parshas Yisro* represent the first set of *Luchos* which we received after *Maamad Har Sinai*. These *Luchos* were subsequently broken by Moshe Rabeinu. The *Aseres Hadibros* of *Parshas Va'eschanan* represent the *Luchos shniyos*, the second set of *luchos*, which we received after *Yom Kippur* when *Hashem* forgave us for the *cheit ha'eigel*. The *issur* of *Lo Sisaveh* is only mentioned in *Parshas Va'eschanan*. Thus, it would seem that the extra *issur* of

jealousy which includes even just desiring our friend's things in our hearts, was only added in the *Luchos Shniyos*. Why is that so? What change occurred with the advent of the *Luchos Shniyos* which caused the *Torah* to prohibit even jealousy in the heart? (This does not mean to imply that all the changes in the *Aseres Hadibros* of *Va'eschanan* were not included in the *Luchos Rishonos*. However, the very fact that the *Torah* did not include these differences in the first set of *Aseres Haibros*, and these changes were only made in the second set, is clearly teaching a lesson.)

### **The Torah Does Not Require from Us Things which are Too Difficult to Fulfill**

The *Torah* says: *כי תצא למלחמה על אויביך...וראית בשביה אשת יפת תואר וחשקת בה ולקחת לך לאשה (דברים, כ"א י"א)* *When you go out to war against your enemies...And you will see among the captives a beautiful woman and you will desire her, you may take her for yourself for a wife.* Rashi explains that *לא דברה תורה אלא כנגד יצר הרע*, *The Torah spoke because of the Yetzer Hara*. The *Torah* understood that this *nisayon* of going to war and seeing a beautiful woman would be too difficult to withstand. Therefore, the *Torah* permits marrying this woman.

R' Chatzkel Abramsky said that from here we see that we have the capability to fulfill everything else which the *Torah* requires of us. There is no *issur* in the *Torah* which is impossible to keep. In the instance where the test would be too difficult, the *Torah* permits it. It follows that whatever is prohibited by the *Torah* is within our capacity to fulfill.

According to this we can answer our question. We can say that if the *Torah* only gave the added *issur* of jealousy in the heart in the *Luchos Shniyos*, it is because after the *Luchos Rishonos* it would have been impossible to keep. It would be too much to require of a person that he not harbor any jealousy in his heart. Therefore, the *Torah* only prohibited jealousy with an action. The *issur* of *Lo sachmod*, was within our capacity, but the *issur* of *Lo Sisaveh* was too difficult. It was only after we received the *Luchos Shniyos* that it became within our capacity to withhold jealousy even in our hearts.

Why is that? What change occurred when we received the *Luchos Shniyos* which gave us added capabilities?

### **The Concept of Toiling in Torah is a Result of the *Luchos Shniyos***

The *gemara* (ערובין נד.) says: Had the first set of *luchos* not been broken, Torah would not be forgotten from Yisrael. Before the *cheit ha'eigel*, the Torah was given as a *matanah*, as a gift. We did not have to exert ourselves to understand it, and once learned it would never be forgotten. The intense toil which is required to understand Torah, and the concept of forgetting Torah, was a direct result of the first *luchos* being broken. With the advent of the *Luchos Shniyos*, Torah would no longer be given as a *matanah*. It would now require tremendous effort to learn and retain Torah.

Let us take this one step further.

The *possuk* says: לא בשמים היא...כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך *The Torah is not in the heavens... Rather it is very close to you, it is within your mouth and your heart to perform it.* I once heard from my Rebbi, Rav Yitzchok Feigelstock that if it was obvious that the Torah was not in *Shamayim*, the Torah would not need to tell us that. The Torah told us that it is not in *Shamayim*, because otherwise we would have assumed it was.

*If someone tells his friend: "This table is not made from wood", it is obvious that his friend would have otherwise thought that the table was wooden. If it was clearly plastic, he wouldn't need to tell his friend that it wasn't wooden.*

The same is true regarding Torah. The intense labor which is required in order to acquire Torah would make it seem as though the Torah actually is in *Shamayim*. Therefore, it was necessary to tell us that although it is difficult, it is still within reach. It is not quite in *Shamayim*.

From this it seems as though Torah is one step away from *Shamayim*. However, the *possuk* continues and says "It is within your mouth and your heart to perform it." This implies that it is easy to acquire Torah. How do we understand this? First it implies that the Torah is extremely difficult, but it is just within reach. It is but one step

away from *Shamayim*. Then it says that it is easy. It is right there in your mouth and your heart. So which one is it? Is it hard or easy?

*Someone might say to his friend: "Do you see that cinder block? It does not quite weigh fifty pounds, rather it weighs forty five pounds." However, nobody would say: "That load does not weigh fifty pounds, rather it weighs three ounces." If it only weighs three ounces, it is inconceivable that anybody would think it weighed fifty pounds.*

However, regarding Torah, it seems like it says just that. "The difficulty of acquiring Torah is not insurmountable, rather it is extremely easy." What is the meaning of this?

### **The First Step is Difficult, But the Rest Becomes Natural**

The *Sefas Emes* explains that with *mesirus nefesh*, the Torah becomes easy. At first it requires tremendous effort to acquire Torah. However, once the effort has been made, what follows is easy.

*Yankel has trouble getting up in the morning. To sleep longer is so enticing, and it requires a herculean effort to fight it off. He often finds himself at a late shacharis minyan, and his whole morning is rushed. One day, he committed to getting up right away, no matter how hard it may be. The next morning, true to his word, he jumped right out of bed at the first ring of his alarm. He was able to go through his morning routine without rushing. He davened on time, ate a nice breakfast, and even got to work a few minutes early. He was pleasantly surprised to find that he had little difficulty doing this despite the fact that he had woken up an hour earlier than usual.*

*From where did he get all that energy? Just a day ago his mornings were a disaster. He had very little strength, and he could barely drag himself out of bed. How was he suddenly able to get through his morning with ease? The answer is that by extending himself in the beginning, he was able to do the rest easily. The hard part was getting out of bed. Once he passed that hurdle the rest became natural.*

The same is true regarding Torah. It requires tremendous *mesirus nefesh* to plumb the depths of the Torah, but once the effort

has been made the rest flows naturally. At first the Torah is so difficult that it seems as though it is in *Shamayim*. The Torah needs to tell us that as difficult as it seems, it is still within reach. However, after passing that first hurdle it becomes natural, it is within our hearts and our mouths to perform it.

Based on this idea the *Sefas Emes* explains the concept of *Naaseh V'nishma*. The demands of the Torah were too great for *Klal Yisrael* to realistically be able to accept it. However, they were able to accept it by first saying *naaseh* and then saying *nishma*. The effort expended in the *asiyah* would bring the Torah within reach, thus allowing them to accept the Torah in its entirety. Once they would begin, the rest would flow naturally. By saying *naaseh*, it became conceivable to say *nishma*.

*Chaim developed a condition in his stomach, and he knew he should keep away from dairy foods. He was willing to give it a try, but when it came down to it, the challenge proved too difficult. He was at a community melaveh malka and someone brought him a big piece of a scrumptious-looking cheesecake. He couldn't resist and he ended up eating more than one piece. The effects were felt the rest of the night when he couldn't sleep due to acid indigestion.*

*Two weeks later, he was at another melaveh malka, and he was confronted by another piece of cheesecake. This time, although it was difficult, he withstood the challenge. He ate nothing but a piece of sponge cake. His efforts payed off. He came home that night and slept like a baby.*

*Looking back, he understood that it was worth the effort. The difficulty of resisting the cheesecake didn't compare to the discomfort he would endure had he given in. The benefits of his resistance made the difficulties involved seem petty. From then on, the challenge became much easier.*

This is a phenomenon that proves true in all areas. In the beginning, our undertakings may seem too tough, and we feel that we cannot possibly sustain them. However, that is before we start. Once we take the plunge and we put in the effort, it no longer seems as difficult. Once we reap the benefits of our hard work, it becomes much easier to continue.

### **Our Capabilities Grow alongside our Efforts**

Based on this, we can answer our original question. Why would the commandment not to be jealous in our hearts have been too difficult after receiving the first *luchos*, but then after receiving the second *luchos* it became doable? Perhaps this is because the first *luchos* were given as a *matanah*, and it did not require such strenuous effort to fulfill the obligations of the Torah. As such, our capabilities were limited. Since less *mesirus nefesh* was required to accomplish what we needed to, we would be unable to reach such a high level of greatness. It is only through our tremendous exertion to fulfill our obligations that these *madreigos* become within reach.

The more effort we expend to accomplish what we need to do, the greater our capabilities become. Once we taste the fruits of our labor, it no longer seems so hard to stand up to the challenge. By extending ourselves, and going beyond our comfort-zones, we open up a new world of possibility.

To fulfill the commandment of *Lo Sachmod* after receiving the first *luchos* did not require such *mesirus nefesh*. Therefore, the Torah could not expect of us to reach the *madreigah* of not even harboring any jealousy in our hearts. Once the *luchos* were broken however, it became much harder to fulfill the commandment of *Lo Sachmod*. It requires *mesirus nefesh* to eradicate even this lower form of jealousy in action. This *mesirus nefesh* can bring us to an even higher *madreigah*, and we can even be expected to eradicate jealousy from our hearts.

*I once met R' Chaim Brim outside the yeshiva. It was time to pay the yungerleit and he did not have the funds. He was desperately looking for someone to lend him a large sum of money.*

*Later in the week, I said to him, "We need to devise a better system. It doesn't make sense that you should be frantically searching for a way come up with the money on the day it is due." He replied, "I'm going to take in two more yungerleit. If it so difficult it must be that it does not require enough mesirus nefesh." I didn't think he was serious, and I was absolutely astounded when he did exactly that! He was having difficulty with the payroll, and he deliberately made it harder!*

R' Chaim understood that by obligating himself to do more, he was not pushing his goals further from his reach, but rather he was bringing them closer. By stretching himself even more than he had up until then, he was actually making his job easier.

This is a very important lesson. If we are looking for the easy road, our obligations actually become more difficult. If we try to get away with the bare minimum, and we are not *moser nefesh* to fulfill our obligations properly, they will seem burdensome and difficult. However, if we are *moser nefesh*, and we spare no efforts in doing what it takes, we will taste the sweetness of *avodas Hashem*. It will make all the effort seem well worth it, and it will become natural to continue on this path.

*If someone is careful to daven Kabbolas Shabbos with geshmak, he will feel the kedusha of Shabbos to a greater degree. It will thus become easier to refrain from speaking about his business on Shabbos. He will naturally feel that the kedusha of the day should not be profaned with this pettiness.*

The same is true regarding every aspect of our *avodah*. The effort we expend in the beginning makes the rest flow naturally. By plunging in and doing our utmost despite the difficulties involved, we can bring ourselves to previously unimagined levels.

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