

# אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה  
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר  
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*Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe  
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

פרשת פקודי  
פורים

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לעילוי נשמת  
ר' ישראל בן  
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## פרשת פקודי

אלה פקודי המשכן (שמות ל"ח א')

*These are the accounts of the Mishkan*

### **Building the Mishkan Includes the Entire Torah**

The Ohr Hachaim says: "כולן ישנן במצות", כל המצוות שבתורה שנצטוו משה, כולן ישנן במצות "המשכן" - all of the *mitzvos* in the Torah are included in the commandment of erecting the *Mishkan*. He learns this from the words "פקודי המשכן", whose numerical value totals to 615 - referring to the 613 commandments and the two *luchos*.

Now, how can any person fulfill all 613 *mitzvos*? Some are for men, some are for women; some are for *kohanim*, others are for *Yisraelim* - it would seem to be impossible for one person to execute all of the *mitzvos*. Says the Ohr Hachaim: when a Yid fulfills the commandment of "ואהבת לרעך כמוך", he is effectively doing every *mitzvah* in the Torah.

### **Hillel's Approach**

The Gemara relates a well-known story of a prospective convert who came to Shammai Hazaken and told him that he wished to become a *ger*. There's no question that Shammai initially accepted him very warmly. After all, Shammai is the one who says in Pirkei Avos: "הוי מקבל" - "את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות" - accept each person with a positive look on your face! What, then, went wrong in that story? The *goy* made a ridiculous condition for his conversion - Shammai had to teach him the entire Torah while he was standing on one foot. Upon hearing this, Shammai threw him out of the building - and rightfully so. The Torah is not a joke; it requires intense dedication for a lifetime to fully appreciate its many laws and concepts.

But Hillel had a different approach. Hillel was the one that said "הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן: אוהב את הבריות ומקרבת לתורה" - be from the disciples of Aharon Hakohen: love all people, and bring them closer to the Torah. Hillel doesn't use the wording of 'accept every person' like Shammai; rather he says 'love all people'. Love works very differently; a person who

loves can look past misdeeds and imperfections. So, Hillel was able to look past this fellow's outlandish demand, and was able to find a solution: "מה דעלך סני לחברך לא תעבד" - what is hateful unto you, do not do to others. If you are able to adhere to this timeless message, of considering your own feelings before you affect others - then you will surely be able to achieve the entire Torah.

From this story, we definitely see that the entire Torah depends on the *mitzvah* of "ואהבת לרעך כמוך", as the Ohr Hachaim explained. How, then, does this relate to the Mishkan?

### **Hashem's Finishing Touch in the Building of the Mishkan**

To understand this concept, perhaps we must first clarify another point. The Ohr Hachaim says that when a person would look at the completed Mishkan, it would appear to him as though one person fashioned each one of its many facets and details. In truth, there were numerous women that were involved in sewing the *yerios* together, and many men aided Betzalel in developing the vessels and building the structure - but it still appeared all the same. What does he mean by this? Let's give a *mashal*:

*A person walks into a custom suit store with his recently purchased suit, and approaches the manager. He shows him that the lining wasn't stitched properly; a piece of the fabric was slightly protruding. The manager examines the suit closely, and says, "This is Harry's work; I'll give it back to him and make sure he mends it."*

How does he know exactly which of his workers tailored that specific suit? Because when things are handmade, there are inevitably going to be specific styles and imperfections; every person has their own signature way of performing the task. Similarly, we learn in Bava Metzia that when a person finds a loaf of bread, if it's from the bakery - then he may keep it, but if it's a homemade loaf - then he must announce the finding and try to return it. Why? Because homemade items are bound to have specific details and imperfections that can be used as *simanim* (indicators) for their owners to claim them; factory products, on the other hand, all come out looking exactly the same.

Says the Ohr Hachaim: by the Mishkan, Hashem made a miracle - there were no signs of personal craftsmanship that could have been traced back to specific people. It all appeared to have been produced by

one person or by one factory. The question is: what was the purpose of this miraculous phenomenon? Although there is a *halacha* that a *sofer* is supposed to try to complete a *sefer torah* and not switch off with another *sofer* in the middle, because there is a certain beauty in things being consistent and uniform - still, is this benefit so important that it deserved such a big miracle?

### **The Universe Comes to a Grinding Halt**

The Midrash teaches that during *Matan Torah*, the entire universe came to a complete standstill. The birds stopped chirping, the bodies of water stood still, the blowing of the wind ceased; even the *malachim* stopped singing and praising Hashem. If there would have been a single sign of power in display besides for Hakadosh Baruch Hu at that moment - then Klal Yisroel would not have been able to fully grasp “אנוכי” - “השם אלוהיך” - that Hashem is the only true power in the world. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz said that this was the reason why the *Satan* couldn’t sabotage Klal Yisroel’s experience of *Kabbalas HaTorah* in any way (which he surely would have done, had he gotten the chance) - because if nothing in the entire universe was able to make a peep, including the myriads of *malachim*, then neither could he.

So, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz asks an interesting question on this Midrash: is it true that *everything* in the universe stopped? What about the receivers of the Torah - Klal Yisroel themselves? If each and every individual Yid, with their various personalities and mindsets, were in attendance - then their minds had to be working! You can’t accept something you are being told without having your mind switched on; you have to be fully cognizant of what is being said, and choose to listen and willingly receive the commandments. So, how is it correct to say that every single individual creation stopped functioning on their own, when hundreds of thousands of Yidden were contemplating Hashem’s words by their own volition?

### **Unity is Integral for Accepting Hashem’s Oneness**

The answer is that although each Yid has his own unique individuality, there was another unprecedented occurrence at the foot of Har Sinai. The *passuk* teaches us “ויהיו שם ישראל נגד ההר” - which Chazal say was referring to the phenomenal amount of *achdus* we had at that time: we were “כאיש אחד בלב אחד”, like one man with one heart. Of course, each

Yid had his own opinions and tendencies, but they managed to achieve this lofty level of complete *bittul* to each other; they melted into one unit, viewing each and every one of their brethren as themselves.

*Let's say someone is sitting near you in Shul, and he has his three-year-old there with him. The kid keeps climbing onto his father's head, knocking his Siddur down, whispering way too loudly - he's totally disrupting your davening. At one point, you want to just turn to your friend and tell him: "Excuse me - this is a Shul, not a babysitting service. I'm sure your wife needs some sleep, and you're trying to help out - but you're disturbing the entire Tzibbur. Can you please get this kid out of here?"*

*However, what if this fellow is your brother. You know the ins and outs of his Shalom Bayis situation and his parenting techniques; you know what a busy week he had, and you understand the importance of him investing some time with his child. Whatever the case may be - it's a completely different story. You're not sitting there the entire time, thinking of how to tell him off for disrupting the tefillos. You care for him, and you hope the issue is resolved soon - but out of love for him, not because you are annoyed at him.*

This was the kind of relationship the Yidden had for each other during *Mattan Torah*. They were a single unit; they viewed each other's pain, struggles and accomplishments as their very own. This kind of unity was essential for the Yidden to accept the Torah. In order to accept Hashem's words as obligatory and totally binding, the Yidden had to be capable of achieving total *bittul* to Him; they each had to put aside their particular mindsets and *mishigassen* in order to uniformly accept the Torah as one nation, devoid of any doubts or objections. So the answer to the original question is that yes, the Yidden were functional creatures at the time of *Kabbalas HaTorah*, but their individual minds weren't whizzing and whirring, dissecting each specific *mitzvah* and deciding how they viewed it; rather, they were unanimously accepting Hashem's words. So, although they were fully aware of what was going on, they were still pretty stationary in a certain way, much like the rest of the world.

### **חטא העגל The Mishkan and the**

Now let's return to our discussion about the miracle Hashem performed with the fashioning of the Mishkan. The Ohr Hachaim

mentions numerous times over the past few *parshiyos* that the building of the Mishkan was supposed to bring a *kapparah* for the חטא העגל. The severity of the חטא העגל was enormous; can you imagine what it was like? Hashem took us out of servitude; he performed hundreds of incredible miracles in Egypt, at the Yam Suf, and in the desert; what more could Klal Yisroel have asked for? They were treated like a beloved, only child, being handled with extreme devotion and care! And yet - they made a golden calf, and proclaimed "אלה אלוקיך ישראל". It's heartbreaking to think about it.

I was thinking that perhaps the only way for the Yidden to really make up for this egregious sin was to return to the lofty level of "כאיש אחד" that they were on just a few weeks prior to the story with the עגל. If this exceedingly high level of oneness and *bittul* to the *Ratzon Hashem* sufficed for them to be worthy and capable of accepting the Torah, then it would probably be worthwhile for them to do so while they were trying to appease Hakadosh Baruch Hu for their terrible sin. Therefore, they worked in total harmony and love for Hashem while they rushed to fashion all of the vessels and erect the structure of the Mishkan. However, it wasn't enough until Hashem added the finishing touch - making all of the work appear to have been made by one person.

### **Individuality and Unity**

There is a big lesson to be learnt from this. Every person has his own characteristics, mannerisms and capabilities that set him apart from everybody else. It is also true, though, that in many ways we are quite the same; there is a considerable amount of overlap in our personalities. And that is precisely how it's supposed to be: we should aspire to be similar in our goal of being *marbeh k'vod shomayim* in the world, yet to achieve it by utilizing the various skills and capabilities Hashem has planted within us.

This is so true when it comes to *chinuch*. Rav Hutner *zt"l* used to always say to his *talmidim*: "We don't want a *Sedom bett'l*" (a bed from Sedom). He was referring to the tactic the people of Sedom used to use when a person would come to their city seeking a place to stay. They would tell the person to lie in a bed, in order to see what size bed he needed. Then, the torture would begin: if he was too tall to fit in the bed, they would cut his feet off so that he would properly fit the 'mold'; if he was too short to fit the bed perfectly, then they would grab him from

either side and pull - as if to stretch out his body, causing him excruciating pain. Rav Hutner would say that a Yeshiva's purpose isn't to be a mold that carves out many copies of the exact same product; it's supposed to hone and develop the skills of each individual *talmid*, producing *Bnei Torah* who accomplish their *Avodas Hashem* in their own unique way.

Wedding bands are beautiful to listen to when all of the musicians work together harmoniously. The drum, the clarinet, the violin, the tuba - they all add their own unique sound, joining together to create a masterpiece. But imagine a band that consisted of seven violinists. It wouldn't have the same effect, no matter how in sync the players are with each other; the beauty of the orchestra is how all the various sounds join as one. Imagine a band that consisted of ten drummers - you'd make your way straight for the door! The same goes for Klal Yisroel - as a nation, we need each other; the *rebbeim*, the *rabbonim*, the barbers and the CEOs. When we can all sit together and look past the differences, but instead - focus on the shared goals and the many similarities - then we will be ready for the Bais Hamikdash Hashlishi.

### **A Side Note: Music and Pain**

Talking about wedding bands - I recently heard an amazing story about the Chofetz Chaim, and although it is totally unrelated to our discussion, it has a powerful message:

*A wedding was taking place in the city of Radin, hometown of the Chofetz Chaim zt"l. Everything seemed to be going to plan; but, to the family's chagrin, the band didn't show up. It turned out that the train they were supposed to be taking got canceled unexpectedly, leaving them no way to get to Radin in time for the wedding. The bachurim of the Radin Yeshiva tried to put together a makeshift band using pots and soup ladles from the Yeshiva's kitchen, so that the Chosson and Kallah wouldn't be b'tzaar. They definitely deserved an 'A' for effort, but it didn't really accomplish much; it ended up being a musicless wedding.*

*During the wedding, the Chofetz Chaim said: "A wedding without an orchestra is like a lifetime without pain."*

The Chofetz Chaim viewed pain like the musical accompaniment at a wedding. The music puts us in the right mode and gets us excited for the happiness of the occasion; it leads us through the wedding, step by step, guiding us from escorting the *chosson* to eating the meal and

dancing, all at the proper time. The pain we experience throughout our lives has a similar mission: it wakes us up to strengthen ourselves when we are weak, it reminds us to *daven* to Hashem, it brings atonement for our sins... A life that seems perfect - lacking any struggle, loss or anguish - is really an imperfect life. It is a life that is not accompanied by any opportunities for growth and connection. The Chofetz Chaim understood what was truly the beauty of life, unlike so many others, who dream of a life devoid of challenges and hardships.

### **Applying this Concept to Tefillah**

Getting back to our original discussion: this point of being individuals while simultaneously being one unit can be used to explain an important factor of *Avodas Hashem: Tefillah*. Every morning before *davening* with the *Tzibbur*, the Arizal used to say the following: “הריני מקבל” - “על עצמי לקיים מצות ואהבת לרעך כמוך” - “I hereby accept upon myself to fulfill the *mitzvah* of loving your fellow Jew like yourself.” Many Yidden have kept this *minhag* of the Arizal till this day; the *nusach* is actually printed in many *siddurim*. What is the explanation behind this *minhag*?

According to what we discussed previously, it should be self-understood. Of course, throughout the day, we must live our lives as individuals, and utilize our unique skill sets for our *avodah*; however, when it comes to proclaiming Hashem king over the entire universe, then we must melt into one unit. We each have our own mindsets and dispositions, but when it comes to “אין עוד מלבדו” - there’s no room for differences. The acceptance of Hashem’s oneness must be unanimous. That is why Hashem miraculously added the finishing touch to the Mishkan - to teach us, for generations to come, that true acceptance of Hashem’s glory must be done “כאיש אחד בלב אחד”; all nuances and opinions must be swept aside.

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## פורים

לֹא הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר אֶת עַמָּהּ וְאֶת מוֹלְדוֹתָהּ כִּי מְרַדְּכִי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִגִּיד: וּבְכָל יוֹם וַיּוֹם מְרַדְּכִי מְתַהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי חֲצַר בֵּית  
הַנָּשִׁים לְדַעַת אֶת שְׁלוֹם אֶסְתֵּר וּמָה יַעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ: (אסתר, ב: י-יא)

*Esther did not reveal her nationality or her birthplace, because Mordechai instructed her not to tell. And every day Mordechai would walk in front of the courtyard of the women to learn about Esther's well-being and what would become of her.*

### The Contradictory Behavior of Mordechai

Why did Mordechai instruct Esther not to reveal her nationality? Rashi explains that this was so that people should think she was embarrassed to tell. They might thus assume that she was from a lowly family and send her away. On the other hand, had they known that she was from the royal family of Shaul Hamelech they would definitely keep her.

Why did Mordechai walk by the women's courtyard every day? Rashi explains that Mordechai was sure that Esther was taken to live with Achashveirosh so that she should be in the position to save *Klal Yisrael*. Esther was a great *tzadekes*, and if she was abducted and forced to live with a *goy* it could only be that there was a Grand Plan. Mordechai understood that Hashem was 'pulling strings' and he therefore wanted to know what would become of Esther.

These two ideas seem to contradict each other. On the one hand, Mordechai insisted that Esther shouldn't reveal her nationality because he thought this might free her from the palace. On the other hand, Mordechai was sure that Hashem wanted Esther to be in the palace in order to save *Klal Yisrael*. If he was so sure that Hashem had an important plan for Esther, and that it was vital that she should be in the palace, then why did he try to free her?

My rebbi, R' Yitzchok Feigelstock answered as follows. Mordechai knew that Hashem had a plan for Esther but there was nothing he could do about it. He was not given any instructions on how to 'help'. If Hashem had a plan, it would come to fruition without Mordechai's intervention. Therefore, Hashem's plan was not Mordechai's concern.

The only 'instructions' which Mordechai had were to do what is right. A Jewish woman may not marry a *goy*. If a Jewish woman is caught in the hands of a *goy*, we must do everything we can to save her. It didn't matter that Mordechai understood that Hashem wanted Esther in the palace. Even so, Mordechai's duties to save a *yid* remained unchanged.

### **The End Does Not Justify the Means**

*Chaim wants to be mekarev estranged yidden. He feels that in order to build a relationship with them he needs to first connect on their level. He therefore attends parties with college students and he 'joins the fun'. Although these parties are far from kosher, he feels they are necessary in order to reach these yidden. He says to himself, 'the ends justify the means'.*

We learn from Mordechai that this approach is wrong. Hashem will take care of His own problems, they are not our concern. Our only concern is to do what is right. Surely, we should be *mekarev* other *yidden* if we can. But it certainly should not be done at the expense of our own *frumkeit*.

*"But what of these hundreds of estranged yidden? Wouldn't it be worth it in the long run if we could bring them closer to yiddishkeit? Surely it is the ratzon of Hashem that I lower myself in order to raise up all these yidden. It is a yeridah l'tzorech aliyah, I am going down solely for the purpose of elevating!"*

The answer to this is that if there is nothing we can do about it, then it is not our business. Hashem is quite capable of taking care of His children. Our job however, is only to follow the Torah. There are many things which we can and must do to be *mekarev* other *yidden*. We certainly must *daven* for them. There are also many ways to do other forms of *kiruv* without lowering our standards. All of these are things which the Torah commands us to do. However, if a specific form of *kiruv* means deviating from the Torah even one iota, then it is off limits.<sup>1</sup>

This is true in all areas of our lives. Even if one is convinced that in a specific instance it would actually be the will of Hashem that he

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that there are many *kiruv* organizations which follow rabbinic guidance. We are not referring to these worthy institutions. We are referring only to people who engage in questionable activities in the name of *kiruv* without guidance from a competent *Rav*.

deviate from *halacha*, it still may not be done. Our only concern is following the word of Hashem and adhering to every letter of *halacha*. Hashem will make sure that His will is fulfilled. Our job however, is only to follow what it says in the Torah. The end does not justify the means.

### **The Story of the Tanur Achnai**

The Gemara (בבא מציעא נט:) tells a fascinating story which demonstrates just how far this concept goes.

*Rebbi Eliezer was involved in a machlokes with the other chachamim regarding the tumah status of a Tanur Achnai (a certain type of oven). Rebbi Eliezer brought a great number of proofs to the correctness of his position, but the Chachamim were unmoved. He then performed natural wonders which demonstrated that he was correct.*

*He said: "If the halacha is in accordance with me, let this carob tree prove it!" The tree jumped out of the ground and went back one hundred (some say four hundred) amos. Even so, the Chachamim were unimpressed. They said: "One cannot bring proof from a carob tree."*

*R' Eliezer then performed another miracle. He said: "If the halacha is in accordance with me, let this body of water prove it!" The water immediately began to flow backward. However, the Chachamim were still unmoved. They said: "One cannot bring proof from a body of water."*

*R' Eliezer then performed yet another miracle. He said "If the halacha is in accordance with me, let the walls of the Beis Medrash prove it!" The walls began tipping, and were about to fall. R' Yehoshua rebuked them and said: "If talmidei chachamim are winning one another in halacha, why must you be involved?" The walls did not fall due to the honor of R' Yehoshua, but they also did not straighten due to the honor of R' Eliezer.*

*Finally, R' Eliezer declared, "Let it be proven from Shamayim that I am correct!" A Bas Kol (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 R' Eliezer! However, even this did not faze the chachamim. Rebbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and announced לא*

בשמים היא, "The Torah is no longer under Shamayim's jurisdiction!"  
The gemara explains: the Torah explicitly states: אחרי רבים להטות (שמות, כג: ב), the halacha always follows the majority. Thus, they did not follow R' Eliezer's opinion since the majority had ruled it out. They said: "We need not pay any attention to the Bas Kol!"

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

This gemara illustrates with utmost clarity that our sole obligation is to follow the directives of the Torah. Even if according to our perception the will of Hashem would dictate that we do otherwise, nevertheless that is not our concern. What better proof can there be as to the will of Hashem than an explicit Bas Kol from Shamayim? Even to this, R' Yehoshua was unfazed. He understood that the Torah is the only source from which we may derive the *halacha*. Anything else, no matter how compelling, is to be completely ignored when it goes against the mandates of the Torah.

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