

# אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה  
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר  
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*Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe  
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**פרשת מטות - מסעי**

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לעילוי נשמת  
מנחם צבי בן חיים יהושע ז"ל

## פרשת מטות - מסעי

וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת מוֹצְאֵיהֶם לְמַסְעֵיהֶם עַל פִּי ד' וְאֵלֶּה מַסְעֵיהֶם  
לְמוֹצְאֵיהֶם (במדבר ל"ג ב')

*Moshe wrote down the places from which they came - to the destinations to which they travelled; and these are the destinations to which they travelled - according to the places from which they came.*

The Parsha of Masei begins by listing the different *masa'os*/travels of the Bnei Yisroel during their forty years in the *Midbar*. The passuk tells us ויכתוב משה את מוצאיהם למסעיהם על פי ד' ואלה מסעיהם למוצאיהם *Moshe wrote down the places from which they came to the destinations to which they travelled – and these are the destinations to which they travelled according to the places from which they came.* The language of this passuk seems difficult; after stating that Moshe wrote *the places from which they came to the destinations to which they travelled*, why does the passuk then repeat that *these are the places to which they traveled according to the places from which they came*? Furthermore, the Ohr Hachaim questions, why is the order of the passuk's wording in each phrase reversed; in that the passuk first mentions their place of origin before their destination, and then the passuk mentions their destination before their place of origin.

### Building Madreigos of Ruchniyus

Perhaps we can understand bs"d what the passuk is alluding to as follows:

A person has many points of *aliyah*/growth in his life. He learns Torah, he davens, he says *brachos* before he eats his food, and he performs various *mitzvos*. He works on his *midos* and *derech eretz*, and he also focuses on his love of Hashem.

The above mitzvos are those that a person encounters on a daily basis. In addition to them, there are also the occasional points of *aliyah*. Each year, as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur approach, a person tries to engage in self introspection and do *teshuva*; during each of the *Shalosh*

*Regalim*, a person tries to have the proper *simchas yom tov*, as well as focusing on the specific *avodah*, unique to each *yom tov*.

In addition to the mitzvot of Yon Tov which at least happen on a regular, scheduled basis, a person sometimes receives rare opportunities to perform *mitzvot* that he normally does not come across. In short, a person's life can, and should, be comprised of constant growth in his *ruchniyus*; until a beautiful structure is constructed.

*A person leaves his summer bungalow at the end of the season, not to return until the following summer. There is a structure being built near the campgrounds, which at the time of his departure, is still in the very early stages. When he returns the next summer, the building is completely finished. He is so taken by the beautiful structure that has 'suddenly' appeared.*

*If that same building were to be constructed in a location near the man's residence throughout the year, he would not be as 'shocked' when he finally sees it completed, because he had a view of the entire, gradual process. As each small detail was added and perfected, he did not take notice.*

Similarly, we may not notice our growth in *ruchniyus* because we experience each step of the gradual process, and each small step seems minor and not noteworthy. However, in truth a person is constructing a gigantic edifice of *ruchniyus*, of which he will reap the reward when he reaches *Olam Haba*.

### **Maintaining One's Level of Ruchniyus**

The above depiction of a person's life can and should be true in the ideal setting. However, there are things which hinder, and even reverse, a person's gains which he has acquired.

*If a building is in the process of being constructed, but after each floor is built, it is knocked down, the building will never get completed. It cannot make any progress.*

Similarly, as important as it is for people to acquire levels of *ruchniyus*, it is equally important to take steps to retain them. When a person has a *his'orerus*/inspiration, he must strive to implement it into his daily life through a practical improvement in his *avodah*, which he will accept upon himself; otherwise, the fleeting moment of inspiration will be gone forever. Even after a person has successfully incorporated his

*aliyah* into his general level of *avodah*, the *yetzer hara* seeks to cause him to slacken off in that area, or in other areas, bringing down his level of *ruchniyus*. Without constant vigilance against the tactics of the *yetzer hara*, a person will, many times unknowingly, fall in his *madreigos*, never allowing him to reach any significant levels of achievement.

*Shimon is rushing through a train station to catch his train. The departure time is nearing, until Shimon realizes that if he does not make it up the stairs soon, he will miss the train. The problem, however, is that all the staircases and escalators are completely packed with people, many who are trying to catch the same train as he is.*

*Shimon's only recourse is to take the downward escalator up to the upper level. He is capable of running up fast enough to reach the upper level before the throngs of people, and he will be able to secure a comfortable seat on the train.*

*What will happen though, if while Shimon is on the downward escalator, he stops to rest? He will be brought back downward, losing any of the advances he made while he was running.*

### **Not Interrupting Our Momentum of Ruchniyus**

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz z"l would extend this concept to a deeper level. Not only is it important not to destroy or negate our previous growth, we must also not allow for interruptions in the progression of our growth, through which we lose the momentum necessary to make changes in ourselves. Rav Chaim used to say quite clearly, that the reason we don't see people in our times growing in their learning to the levels found in the people of previous generations, is not because the actual learning is less intense or on a lower academic level; it is rather because nowadays we do not give ourselves enough time for the growth to take effect. We have too many hefsekim/breaks in our *aliyah*.

*Rav Chaim would give a mashal of water that is boiling. After the water reaches boiling temperature, it changes its whole essence; boiled water is different from non-boiled water in many different aspects. In fact, even after the water cools off, it still retains its status as boiled water. If, however, the water is removed from the fire just before it can begin boiling, the water will remain completely unaffected. Even if the process is repeated 100 times, there will still be no change in the water. The water can only reach*

*the boiling stage if it is left on the fire long enough to reach boiling temperature without interruption.*

Similarly, in order to reach *madreigos* of greatness in Torah, one must apply himself with diligence for a period of time long enough for the Torah to enter into him and make a change in him. By learning for long periods without interruption, he can indeed be transformed. If, though, he takes a break every few minutes, or if he leaves the *yeshiva* every few days/weeks, etc., the Torah he learns will lose the momentum, and thus have minimal effect on him.

Our pasuk is hinting to this concept. A person must continually strive to reach new heights in *ruchniyus*, and then, without *hefsek*, strive for even further heights. Therefore, the passuk says: מוצאיהם למסעיהם – We leave our current *madreigah* and reach a new one. From there, we move on **without a hefsek**, as it says: ואלה מסעיהם למוצאיהם – these destinations to which we reached are only to move on past that *madreigah*, and strive to reach the next one.

### **A Momentum of Aveiros**

What we have explained until now regarding the continuity necessary in a person's positive growth, holds true on the negative side as well. As a person falls in *ruchniyus*, *r"l*, he will be led to fall even lower.

We say in the bracha of המעביר שנה each morning: ואל תביאנו לא לידי – *Do not bring us to the hands of sin, nor the hands of nisayon*. The order of this *tefillah* would seem somewhat puzzling. Doesn't the *nisayon* come before the *aveirah*? We should say, "Do not bring us to *nisayon*, nor to the hands of sin"! Why do we ask first for sin, then for *nisayon*?

The answer is that in truth, many – and perhaps most – times it is the sin which leads to the subsequent *nisayon*.

*When we walk by a MacDonald's, none of us has a nisayon to buy a cheeseburger. Why is this? We can assume it tastes good – we see many people spending money to enjoy it. So why are we not even tempted to do so? The answer is that we have ingrained into ourselves that eating non-kosher is completely unthinkable.*

### **Brought Ourselves into Aveirah**

Now, let us discuss the *nisyonos* which each one of us does, in fact, face; i.e. *bittul Torah*, *loshon hora*, davening without *kavanah*, etc. Why is it that we do face these *nisyonos*? We know that they are the wrong things to do; why can't we just ingrain into ourselves that there is no option whatsoever to transgress these *aveiros*?

The answer will many times be that we brought our own selves into the *nisayon*. When the *aveirah* would present itself to us in a minor degree, we would rationalize that it's not so terrible. By even minimally engaging in the *aveirah* we have brought ourselves closer to it, and through that we will subsequently be unable to withstand the temptation to commit the *aveirah* on a more substantial level.

- *In the example mentioned above regarding stepping into a MacDonald's – If a person, for one reason or another, surrendered to his temptation to buy a cheeseburger, from then on, he will, in fact, have a nisayon when he passes by a MacDonald's. Even were he to have only surrendered on a small scale, i.e. he allowed himself to eat a food which he knew had bli'os/(absorptions) from a cheeseburger, he has already brought himself closer to the nisayon, and will find more difficulty keeping away from the actual cheeseburger in the future.*
- *A person has a kvi'us to wake up on time for davening every day, perhaps even holding a seder limud before davening. As long as he does not break his kvi'us, he has the strength and the willpower to continue waking up on time. As soon as he breaks his kvi'us ONCE, each morning becomes a struggle. He opened for himself the possibility of oversleeping, should he be too tired to get up. Each morning afterwards, he will feel that perhaps he is too tired to wake up, and in order to successfully continue his practice, he will have to forcibly fight away that feeling.*

This is how we can understand the *Tefillah* that we daven in the morning. First, we daven that Hashem should not allow us to fall into any form of sin, which can then lead us into further *nisayon* and temptation, of repeating the sin, and even proceeding to committing the sin on a deeper level.

### **Distancing Completely from Aveirah**

The idea that we are discussing can be understood more deeply with the *pshat* of the Ohr Hachaim on a passuk in Parshas Matos (במדבר ל"א ב'). When Moshe tells the nation of Hashem's command to select men to wage war with Midyan, Moshe uses the words ויהיו על מדין *They will be upon Midyan*. Why did he not say this in a clearer fashion; they will fight with Midyan?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the passuk is hinting to us the concept that when a person commits an *aveirah*, he attaches to himself a *ruach tumah*/an impure spirit from that *aveirah*. This spirit tries to continually draw him back into the *aveirah*, and in general, weighs and drags the person down into the depths of impurity. The men who were sent to fight Midyan were completely free of sin and had no association with *tumah*, whatsoever. They were therefore able to 'rise above' the *tumah* which was in the Midyanim, and completely subdue it. This is what is meant by the words ויהיו על מדין – *they will be upon Midyan*. They will actually be on top of the *tumah* of Midyan.

This concept can be applied to our everyday lives.

*Shimon resolves to work especially hard on the aveirah of lashon hara. He learns the halachos thoroughly, and he learns the mussar about the topic, as well. He works on himself until he is convinced that he has finally overcome his yetzer hara on the aveirah. He would never speak lashon hara, even about his worst enemy.*

*One day, he notices a group of his friends sitting around, schmoozing. Shimon takes one look and from the whole appearance of the group, it is clear they are up to no good. There is leitzanus, lashon hara, rechilus, etc. Shimon is curious about the subject of their discussion. He says to himself, 'I won't join in their lashon hara; I just want to find out whom they are talking about. I'm strong; I won't fall into the trap of lashon hara!'*

*Shimon joins their group, and before he realizes it, he is speaking worse lashon hara than the rest of them were. Afterwards, he is so upset with himself. 'I worked so well on the inyan of lashon hara, how could I have fallen in?'*

The answer to Shimon's question is that by bringing himself into the proximity of the *aveirah* at the time when he should have been

distancing himself from it, he attached himself to the *tumah* of the *aveirah*. This brings upon him a powerful force of *tumah* which drags him into the *aveirah*, and it would take almost superhuman *kochos* to abstain from it.

### **In Conclusion**

This, then, is a lesson we can take from the Parshiyos of Matos and Masei. A person is drawn into the direction he has begun leading himself to. This works in the positive and the negative.

On the positive side, a person should strive to allow for this continuity to occur. Even as the *yetzer hara* applies all its energies to break this momentum and interrupt the person's *avodah*, the person must not give in to the temptation of constant interruption. Instead, he must continually push to new heights.

On the negative side, we must learn that when a person commits a sin, ch"v, he is drawn after it, and tempted to repeat it, even on a deeper level. Even by just nearing himself to the sin, he is attaching himself to its *tumah*. We must be so careful to keep away from sin completely, if only just not to fall into a deep, bottomless pit of sin, r"l.

Hashem should help us to stay on the right path.

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