



The Fantastic Connection between Shabbas HaChodesh and Parshas Shemini

The Ideal Way to Serve HKB"H is "זה"-- to Please Him Not "זאת"-- for the Sake of Reward

On the auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh, we will bless the new month of Nissan. It is called **Shabbas HaChodesh** signifying that in addition to the regular weekly Torah-reading, we add the following passage from parshas Bo as the Maftir (Shemos 12, 1): "החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים, ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה"—**this month shall be for you the beginning of the months; it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.** In this passage, Yisrael were given the mitzvas asef of establishing the month of Nissan, the month of the exodus from Mitzrayim, as the first of the twelve months of the Jewish calendar year.

Thus, it is fitting that we find a connection between the weekly parsha, parshas Shemini, and parshas **HaChodesh**. We will begin by focusing on the following passuk in parshas Shemini (Vayikra 9, 6): "ויאמר משה זה: "הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו וירא אליכם כבוד ה'—**Moshe said, "This is the matter that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you."** Here is a translation of what our blessed sages expounded on this passuk in the Sifra:

Moshe said to Yisrael, "Remove that yetzer hara from your hearts, so that you will all serve the Omnipresent with the same yirah and purpose . . . If you do this, then the glory of Hashem will appear to you." The commentaries strive to clarify which specific yetzer hara Moshe Rabeinu was referring to. For, it is as if Moshe is pointing his finger at a specific nefarious yetzer hara that he is instructing them to get rid of. Furthermore, where is this alluded to by the words: **"This is the matter that Hashem has commanded you to do"?**

The Entire World Was Only Created for "Zeh"

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a fascinating passage from the Gemara dealing with the wisdom of Shlomo HaMelech in sefer Koheles. Initially, our blessed sages intended to censor it until they realized that it begins and ends with words of Torah. Here is the pertinent passage (Shabbas 30b): "ביקשו חכמים לגנוז ספר קהלת, מפני שדבריו סותרין זה את זה, ומפני מה לא גנזוהו, מפני שתחילתו דברי תורה וסופו דברי תורה, תחילתו דברי תורה, דכתיב מה יתרון לאדם בכל עמלו שיעמול תחת השמש, ואמרי דבי רבי ינאי תחת השמש הוא דאין לו, קודם שמש יש לו. סופו דברי תורה, דכתיב סוף דבר הכל נשמע את האלקים ירא ואת מצוותיו שמור כי זה כל האדם. מאי כי זה כל האדם, אמר רבי אלעזר, כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא בשביל זה." **The sages sought to conceal Sefer Koheles (and not include it in the Ketuvim), because its statements contradict one another. So, why did they not conceal it? Because its beginning consists of "divrei Torah," and its conclusion consists of "divrei Torah." Its beginning consists of "divrei Torah," for it is written (Koheles 1, 3): "What profit does man have for all his labor which he toils beneath the sun?" And the Academy of Rabbi Yanai said (interpreting this passuk): It is under the sun where man has none (profit), but when he labors for that which precedes the sun (Rashi: the Torah preceded the sun), he does indeed profit. Likewise, its conclusion consists of "divrei Torah," for it is written (ibid. 12, 13): "The sum of the matter, when all has been considered—fear G-d and abide by His mitzvos, for this is all of man (man's sole duty)." What is meant by "for this is all of man"? Rabbi Eliezer**

says: The entire world was only created for this person (“zeh”). We will endeavor to explain why Shlomo HaMelech chose to conclude Sefer Koheles with this unique term “זה”, which the Gemara interprets as man’s sole purpose in life.

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation for this enigmatic statement of Chazal’s. I found an excellent interpretation of this passage in the sefer Marpeh Lashon, authored by Rabbi Rephael HaKohen (the Chief Rabbi and head of the Beis Din in Altona-Hamburg-Wandsbek). He explains why the sages specifically chose these two pesukim as the basis for keeping Sefer Koheles among the books of Ketuvim rather than removing it.

His fascinating explanation concurs with the following teaching in the Gemara (Pesachim 50b): **רבא רמי, כתיב כי גדול מעל שמים חסדך, הא רבא רמי, כתיב כי גדול עד שמים חסדך, וכתיב כי גדול מעל שמים חסדך, הא** **—Rava pointed out a contradiction. It is written in one passuk (Tehillim 57, 11): “For great until the heavens is Your kindness”; and it is written elsewhere (ibid. 108, 5): “For great above the heavens is Your kindness.” How can this be? The second passuk speaks of those who perform a mitzvah “I’shma”; and the first passuk speaks of those who perform a mitzvah not “I’shma.”** Rashi explains: **Those who perform “I’shma” are rewarded above the heavens, while those who perform not “I’shma” are only rewarded until the heavens; for, he performed a mitzvah, nevertheless.** In other words, when a person studies Torah not I’shma, the Torah he studied remains in Olam HaZeh; it does not reach above the heavens. Conversely, Torah that is studied I’shma ascends reaches Hashem above the heavens and pleases Him immensely.

Accordingly, the Marpeh Lashon explains the remarkable common thread connecting these two statements of Shlomo HaMelech cited by Chazal. We are taught in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 105b): **“לעולם יעסוק אדם בתורה ומצוות אפילו שלא לשמה, שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה”**—**a person should always engage in Torah-study and the performance of mitzvos, even if it is not I’shma (i.e., it is done with ulterior motives), because**

from doing things not I’shma, he will eventually end up doing them I’shma (with pure, sincere motives). Understood in this light, in the first passuk cited: **“What profit does man have for all his labor which he toils beneath the sun?”**—Shlomo HaMelech is asking what benefit accrues to a person who studies Torah with ulterior motives—not I’shma. For, as explained, it remains below the sun in Olam HaZeh and does not reach Hashem. Yet, undoubtedly, a person has to develop and climb the spiritual ladder until he is able to study Torah I’shma; it does not happen immediately.

Hence, after beginning Sefer Koheles with this discouraging question, he concludes Sefer Koheles with a definitive answer: **“The sum of the matter, when all has been considered—fear G-d and abide by His mitzvos, for this (‘zeh’) is all of man.”** In other words, if a person studies Torah not I’shma, he is assured that he will ultimately study Torah and perform mitzvos I’shma. For this reason, the passuk specifically employs the term **“מצוותיו”**—**“His mitzvos”**—indicating that the person is doing these things simply because this is what Hashem commanded and not for supposed honor and accolades. This is the gist of his remarkable insight.

A Wonderful Insight from the Ahavas Shalom

Following this line of thought, we will now explain why Shlomo HaMelech chose to conclude Sefer Koheles with the phrase including the term **“zeh”**: **“כי זה כל האדם”**. We will refer to what the esteemed Rabbi Menachem of Kosov, zy”a, writes in Ahavas Shalom (Vayeishev) with regards to the Gemara (Berachos 3b) that teaches us that David HaMelech used to study Torah all night long: **“כיון שעלה עמוד השחר נכנסו חכמי ישראל אצלו, אמרו לו אדונינו** **—at the break of day, the sages of Yisrael would enter his quarters and say to him, “Our master, the King, your people, Yisrael, require parnasah.”** He would reply to them, **“Go and derive sustenance from one another (‘zeh’ from ‘zeh’).”**

The Rabbi of Kosov explains in his own sacred way that the term **“זה”** alludes to the male, the influencer, as

per the passuk (Shemos 32, 1): **“כי זה משה האיש לא ידענו מה—for this Moshe, the man (who guides us and influences us,) who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we do not know what became of him!** In contrast, the term **“זאת”** alludes to the female who is the recipient, as per the passuk (Bereishis 2, 23): **“לִזְאֵת יִקְרָא: אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לִקְחָהּ זְאֵת”**—**to this you shall call woman, for from man she was taken.**

For instance, a wealthy person who gives tzedakah to a poor person exemplifies the notion of **“זה”**—he is the influencer. Whereas the poor person receiving the tzedakah from the wealthy person exemplifies the notion of **“זאת”**—he is the recipient. In truth, however, we are taught in the Midrash (V.R. 34, 8): **“יותר ממה שבעל הבית עושה עם העני, העני עושה עם בעל הבית—more than the householder (the wealthy person) does for the poor person, the poor person does for the householder.** Thus, it turns out that both are actually influencers, as it is written (Devarim 15, 10): **“נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו: כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשיך ובכל משלח ידך—more than the householder (the wealthy person) does for the poor person, the poor person does for the householder.** This then is the profound message David HaMelech conveyed to the sages with the response: **“לכו והתפרנסו זה מזה”**—both the wealthy man and the poor person are performing a function of **“זה”**—they are both benefitting from each other and being enriched.

Both a Man and a Woman Must Fulfill the Role of “זה”

It now behooves us to explain how this matter relates to every Jew—man or woman. In fact, the Ahavas Shalom (Vayigash) applies this concept both to men and women; they both need to function as influencers—**“zeh”**—and not just as recipients—**“zot.”** If they function in this manner, their house will be endowed with berachah, and they will enjoy a plentiful livelihood. Here is summary of his sacred words:

The male is represented by the term “zeh”—an influencer—reflecting “chesed.” The female is represented by “zot”—a recipient—reflecting

“din.” Their roles need to be intertwined; the woman cannot be only a recipient, chas v’chalilah. For, then she would not have the ability to influence the head of the household in return, in keeping with the statement of Chazal: “More than the householder does for the poor person, the poor person does for the householder.” Hence, their roles need to be interchangeable. Thus, the name “yud-kei” will dwell among them, and the force of “din” will be ameliorated. “Zot” will be transformed into “zeh,” drawing “rachamim” and goodwill, resulting in “parnasah” (ample livelihood).

To summarize, the holy Ahavas Shalom teaches us an important principle. For a husband and wife to mitigate the forces of **“din”**—divine judgment—and to draw divine mercy and goodwill to their home, they must both fulfill the role of **“zeh,”** influencing one another appropriately. To explain this concept, let us refer to the Gemara (B.M. 59a): **“אמר רבי חלבו, לעולם יהא אדם זehיר בכבוד אשתו, שאין ברכה מצויה בתוך ביתו של אדם אלא בשביל אשתו, שנאמר ולאברם הטיב בעבורה, והיינו דאמר להו רבא לבני מחוזה אוקירו לנשייכו כי היכי דתתעתרו.”** **Rabbi Chelbo said: A man should always be careful about his wife’s honor, because blessing is found in a person’s house only on account of his wife, as it states (Bereishis 12, 16): “He treated Avram well on account of her.” Thus, Rava told the people of Mechoza: Honor your wives, so that you may become wealthy.**

Thus, it should be extremely clear that a woman also functions in the role of **“zeh.”** For, it is on account of her that HKB”H bestows berachah on a household. This emphasizes the importance of Rabbi Chelbo’s admonition: **“A man should always be careful about his wife’s honor.”** This is also critical for the wealthy man to understand; the pauper is actually doing him a greater service than he is doing for the pauper. Thus, the profound advice of David HaMelech also applies to a husband and wife: **“Go and derive sustenance ‘zeh’ from ‘zeh.’”** For, when a husband comprehends that his wife also fulfills a role of **“zeh,”** and he respects her appropriately, their home will most certainly be a place of berachah on account of his wife.

**"החודש ה'זה' לכם ראש חדשים"
—"Zeh" rather than "Zot"**

With this illuminating introduction, we can now explain the significance of the reading of parshas HaChodesh. In relation to the passuk: **"החודש הזה לכם—ראש חדשים"**—Rashi comments that HKB"H pointed to the moon with his finger, so to speak, and said to Moshe: **"כזה ראה וקדש"**—**see it like this ("zeh") and sanctify it.** The Ahavas Shalom (Vayeishev) explains the matter beautifully based on the fact that the sun is like a male influencing the moon, the recipient of its intense, brilliant light like a female. Based on what we have discussed, the sun performs the role of **"zeh,"** and the moon performs the role of **"zot."**

Yet, we are familiar with the teaching in the Gemara (Chullin 60b): **"רבי שמעון בן בזי רמי, כתיב ויעש אלקים את שני המאורות הגדולים, וכתיב (שם) את המאור הגדול ואת המאור הקטן. אמרה ירח לפני הקב"ה, רבוננו של עולם אפשר לשני מלכים שישתמשו בכתר אחד, אמר לה לכי ומעטי את עצמך."** Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi notes a contradiction. The Torah initially states (Bereishis 1, 16) that G-d created two great lights, the sun and the moon — suggesting that they were created of equal size and stature. Subsequently (ibid.), it refers to the greater light and to the lesser light — indicating that they were no longer equal. **The moon addresses HKB"H: "Master of the Universe, can two kings utilize the same crown?" He responded to the moon: "Go and diminish yourself."**

We learn from this Gemara that the moon was only diminished and began to depend on the sun for its illumination after it objected that it is impossible for two kings to wear the same crown. It is our task to help restore the original situation—for there to be two great sources of light once again. The navi articulates this fact as follows (Yeshayah 30, 26): **"והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה—and the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun.** In other words, in the future, the moon will also be an influencer like the sun, performing the role of **"zeh."**

This then is the meaning of **"החודש הזה לכם"**. It is our main job to restore the situation to that in which the light of the moon is equivalent to the light of the sun—to fulfill the role of **"zeh."** This is what HKB"H

was demonstrating to Moshe when He said: **"See it like this ("zeh") and sanctify it."** If we sanctify ourselves to be worthy of the future geulah, at that time the moon will be transformed from its current status as a recipient—a **"zot"**—back to its original status as an influencer—a **"zeh."** This is the gist of his fantastic explanation.

Notwithstanding, his sacred comments deserve further clarification. Indeed, le'asid la'vo, the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the moon will no longer need to be illuminated by the sun. But how will it be elevated to the status of **"zeh"**? How will it influence the sun, since the sun has its own light and will not require any of the moon's light? This is especially true le'asid la'vo, since it is written (ibid.): **"והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה ואור החמה יהיה שבעתים כאור שבעת הימים—the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times as strong as the light of the seven days (of Creation).**

Our Goal Is to Serve Hashem in the Role of "Zeh" to Provide HKB"H with a Pleasing Influence

Let us continue to clarify the words of the righteous Ahavas Shalom. We have learned from his sacred words that in the relationship between a husband and a wife, they must both fulfill a role of **"zeh."** The same applies to the union of HKB"H with the people of Yisrael, so to speak; they are also like a husband and wife, as it is written (ibid. 62, 5): **"ומשוש חתן על כלה ישיש—עליך אלקיך—and like a bridegroom rejoicing over his bride, so will your G-d rejoice over you.**

So, just like a husband is obligated to support his wife; similarly, HKB"H supports and provides abundant good for Yisrael, who are His bride on earth. Seen from this perspective, HKB"H is fulfilling the role of the influencer, **"zeh."** Hence, in Shiras HaYam, Yisrael declared (Shemos 15, 2): **"זה אלי ואנוהו—this ("zeh") is my G-d, and I will beautify Him.** Conversely, Bnei Yisrael are the recipients of HKB"H's abundant good; their role is **"zot."**

This, however, is not the ideal. It is essential that Yisrael also influence HKB"H, so to speak, by pleasing Him. In the words of the Midrash (Eichah Rabbasi

1, 33): **When Yisrael act in accordance with the will of HKB"H, they add strength to the gevurah above, as it says (Bamidbar 14, 17): "And now, may the strength of my Lord be magnified."** So, even though HKB"H does not need mankind's deeds, nevertheless, in the place of His greatness, you find His humility. He created in Himself the will and desire to receive pleasure and gratification from the deeds of Bnei Yisrael. Thus, when Yisrael serve HKB"H by studying Torah and performing mitzvos, they give Him pleasure and satisfaction. This is described in the Midrash as **"adding strength to the gevurah above."** This is what is meant by (Bereishis 8, 21): **"וירח ה' את ריח הניחוח"**—**Hashem smelled the pleasing aroma.** Thus, not only is HKB"H fulfilling the role of **"zeh,"** but so are Yisrael. They are influencing each other.

But this is only true when Yisrael are performing the will of the Omnipresent with the intent of pleasing Him. When their sole intent, however, is to receive His bounty, they are merely recipients and not influencers—**"zot"** but not **"zeh."** This evokes the forces of **"din,"** chas v'shalom. As stated by the Ahavas Shalom cited above, it is not commendable to only be a recipient, since that is associated with **"din."** This is the lesson taught by the Mishnah (Avos 1, 3): **"אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס, אלא הוו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס"**—**do not be like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; rather, be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward.**

Additionally, in our sacred sefarim, HKB"H is compared to the sun, in keeping with the passuk (Tehillim 84, 12): **"כי שמש ומגן ה' אלקים"**—**for a sun and a shield is Havaya Elokim**—with His brilliant, divine light He influences and illuminates Yisrael, who are analogous to the moon. Now, in Olam HaZeh, all Jews are not always on the level of **"zeh"**—serving Hashem not for the sake of being rewarded. They are often on the level of **"zot"**—serving Hashem for the sake of being rewarded. Therefore, in a parallel fashion, the light of the moon was also diminished; it does not possess any light of its own to exert influence; it only possesses the light it receives and reflects from the sun, like a **"zot."**

Hence, Yisrael must strive to elevate themselves to serve Hashem l'shma, not for the sake of being rewarded, and their sole intent should be to please and satisfy HKB"H. Then, they will merit the future geulah, and they will be rewarded in kind, **"midah k'neged midah,"** as promised by HKB"H: **"And the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun."** Yisrael will no longer be only recipients like the moon is today, but they will provide influence, like the moon le'asid la'vo, by providing HKB"H pleasure and gratification.

This then is the interpretation of the Ahavas Shalom of HKB"H's pronouncement to Moshe Rabeinu: **החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים**. In order to hasten the geulah, it is incumbent upon us to serve Hashem with the role of **"zeh"**—not for the sake of receiving a reward. The most suitable and auspicious time for this is the month of Nissan, as we have learned in the Gemara (R.H. 11b): **"בניסן נגאלו, בניסן עתידין ליגאל"**—**in Nissan, they were redeemed; in Nissan, they are destined to be redeemed.**

"G-d has made the one in accordance with the other"

Understood in this light, we can suggest a wonderful interpretation of the statement of Shlomo HaMelech (Koheles 7, 14): **"זה לעומת זה עשה האלקים"**—**G-d has made the one in accordance with the other.** In other words, everything that G-d created in this world, He created for one purpose—that we succeed in serving Hashem in the sense of **"זה לעומת זה"**. Just as He exemplifies the role of **"zeh"** by influencing and providing for us; in similar fashion, Yisrael should influence Him by pleasing Him and also acting as a **"zeh."**

Now, this illuminates for us and helps us comprehend the intriguing words of Chazal: **The sages sought to conceal Sefer Koheles, because its statements contradict one another — "זה את זה"**. With this phrase, they are teaching us a valuable lesson. Throughout Sefer Koheles, Shlomo HaMelech compares the wise man to the fool. This could lead us to conclude erroneously, chas v'shalom, they we only need to serve Hashem, without deriving pleasure from Olam HaZeh. In that situation, both HKB"H and Yisrael would both be fulfilling the role of **"zeh."**

To dispel this notion, they go on to say: **So, why did they not conceal it? Because its beginning consists of "divrei Torah," and its conclusion consists of "divrei Torah." Its beginning consists of "divrei Torah," for it is written: "What profit does man have for all his labor which he toils beneath the sun?"** He is inquiring what is the purpose of studying Torah not l'shma, if it remains beneath the sun in Olam HaZeh. **Its conclusion consists of "divrei Torah"**—in other words, Shlomo HaMelech answers his own question: **For it is written: "The sum of the matter, when all has been considered—fear G-d and abide by His mitzvos**—for although one initially learns Torah or performs mitzvos not l'shma, it will ultimately result in one doing both l'shma. Then Shlomo HaMelech concludes: **"For this is all of man (man's sole duty)."** And the Gemara explains: **What is meant by "for this is all of man"? Rabbi Eliezer says: The entire world was only created for this person ("zeh").** In other words, the entire world was created solely for this purpose—that a Jew would serve Hashem as a "zeh."

With this understanding, we can now better appreciate Moshe's statement in this week's parsha: "זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו". He was hinting to the people of Yisrael that the ideal way of serving Hashem is to perform and observe all of the mitzvos l'shma—solely for the sake of Hashem—only because that is what

Hashem commanded us to do, and we aim to fulfill His will. Thus, we will be fulfilling the role of "zeh"—influencing HKB"H by giving Him pleasure.

The Midrash addresses this point and explains: **Moshe said to Yisrael, "Exorcise that yetzer hara from your hearts."** We asked what specific yetzer hara is Moshe Rabeinu referring to? It is the yetzer hara that sees that it has failed to prevent a Jew from performing mitzvos. Hence, it resorts to tempting the Jew to perform the mitzvah in a lesser way—for the sake of receiving a reward—to delight in the pleasures of Olam HaZeh. Thus, the Jew's observance of mitzvos will not qualify as: "זה הדבר אשר צוה ה'"—he will not be influencing Hashem as a "zeh"; he will only be a recipient, a "zot." Then the Midrash proceeds to explain: **You should all serve the Omnipresent with the same yirah and purpose; just as He is unique in the world, so, too, your avodah should be unique before Him.** In other words, our service should be solely to honor Hashem and not for any other ulterior motives. **For it says, "And you shall excise the barrier in your heart,"** i.e., we should not abide by the mitzvos for our own personal benefit and reward in Olam HaZeh. **Why? Because Hashem, your G-d, is the G-d of gods, and the Master of masters. If you do this, the glory of Hashem will appear to you**—the glory of Hashem is when you keep the mitzvos solely to honor Him.

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