

# אור פני משה

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

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*Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe  
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

פרשת וישב

חנוכה

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נתנדב לכבוד  
כ"א כסלו – יום ההצלה של בעל  
דברי יואל מסאטמאר זי"ע

## פרשת וישב

וַיִּתְּלֵם יוֹסֵף תְּלֹם וַיַּגֵּד לְאָחָיו וַיּוֹסְפוּ עוֹד שָׁנָא אֹתוֹ (בראשית ל"ז ה')

וַיִּתְּלֵם עוֹד תְּלֹם אַחֵר וַיִּסְפֹּר אֹתוֹ לְאָחָיו... וַיִּקְנְאוּ-בּוֹ אָחָיו

וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדָּבָר (פסוקים ט, י"א)

Yosef had two dreams which he shared with his brothers. In the first dream he and his brothers were gathering bundles in a field, and the bundles of the brothers bowed to Yosef's bundle. The brothers reacted to this dream with *sinah*, hatred, as the *possuk* says, וַיּוֹסִיפוּ עוֹד שָׁנָא אֹתוֹ עַל חֲלוֹמוֹתָיו וְעַל דְּבָרָיו. Yosef then related his second dream, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing to him. This time the brothers reacted with *kinah*, jealousy, as the *possuk* says, וַיִּקְנְאוּ בּוֹ אָחָיו וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת הַדָּבָר.

The *bais haleivi* notes this difference in the reaction of the brothers to the first dream and the second dream. The term *kinah*, jealousy, seems to connote a more intense feeling than *sinah*, which is hatred. Why did the second dream which was about the sun moon, and stars bowing to Yosef illicit such an intense reaction as jealousy, while the first dream about the bundles bowing to Yosef merely caused them to hate him? In both dreams the message was the same, whether it was bundles bowing or stars bowing the idea was that Yosef would be king and his brothers would be subjugated to him. The props in each respective dream would seem irrelevant in regard to the message the dreams conveyed, so why did the second dream about stars cause an added level of jealousy?

The dream about the bundles signified the subjugation of their money to Yosef, whereas the dream about the stars signified the subjugation of their souls. When Yosef related the first dream about the bundles of the brothers bowing to him, they understood this to mean that their money would be enslaved to Yosef. Yosef would be rich and they would be poor, and they would have to come on to Yosef to receive their sustenance. This caused a feeling of hatred. However even if their money would be enslaved they themselves would not be. If one person's wallet is thicker than another's, it doesn't make him a better person than the other.

*Reuven was a successful businessman and was very wealthy. He was constantly surrounded by a group of followers who listened*

*to his advice and laughed at his jokes. He seemed to have many relatives as everyone found some sort of connection with him. (He's my brother in-law's mechutan's nephew!) As is the way of the world the wheel of fortune turned and soon enough Reuven found himself penniless. Suddenly he wasn't surrounded by followers and he no longer seemed to be related to so many people. He even found that people were no longer laughing at his jokes! He turned to his wife and exclaimed, I may have lost my money but I am still the same person with the same sense of humor!*

There is much more to a person than just his money, and thus a dream about the subjugation of their money, while significant enough to cause hatred, did not arouse feelings of jealousy in the brothers.

The second dream was about stars bowing to Yosef. Stars signify spirituality (as we find in the concept of *mazalos*). Thus the dream about the stars meant that the *ruchniyus*, the very souls of the brothers would be enslaved to Yosef. This was too much to bear. To the brothers the entire focus of their life was their *ruchniyus* and when they were told that even regarding this they wouldn't be in control they were devastated.

This concept cannot be overstated. The importance of spiritual health far outweighs the importance of material health. Our *neshamos* last forever and consonantly when one does a *mitzvah* or holds himself back from an *aveirah* the effects last forever. Conversely our physicality is fleeting and certainly does not last forever. Material gains or losses only effect the moment, and what we have today has no bearing at all on tomorrow.

This is the difference between stars and bundles. Bundles are here today and gone tomorrow whereas stars last forever. When Yosef mentioned bundles the brothers became uncomfortable, but when he mentioned the stars they were crushed.

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וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַתַּעֲשֶׂא אִשָּׁת אֲדֹנָיו אֶת עֵינֶיהָ אֶל יוֹסֵף  
(בראשית ל"ט ז')

### Hoping for Nisyonos

What is the *pasuk* referring to when it says אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה? The *pashtus* of the *pesukim* appears to be referring to the events preceding this episode: Yosef getting sold into slavery and eventually becoming a successful servant of Potiphar. However, the Midrash says that the word אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים over here is referring to דְּבָרִים שְׂבֹלֵב – the thoughts that were passing through Yosef's mind before the *nisayon* with Potiphar's wife took place. The Midrash says that Yosef was thinking about how his father Yaakov went through severe tests with Lavan and Esav; how his grandfather Yitzchok went through the trials and tribulations with the *akedah* and the wells; and how his great-grandfather Avraham passed the *nisyonos* with flying colors. Yosef took note of the fact that they all seemed to have done very well with their *nisyonos*, and they actually grew immensely through them; so, he thought to himself, "Wouldn't it be great for me to experience a difficult *nisayon* as well?"

Before we go on, I'm just wondering – aren't these words of the Midrash difficult to understand? Yosef had already passed some very difficult *nisyonos* at that point! He was shunned by his brothers. They sold him into slavery! The Ohr Hachaim in Parshas Vayigash says that when the *shvatim* pulled Yosef out of the pit and handed him over to the spice merchants, and Yosef was begging them to stop – "לֹא כִהְתָּה עֵינָיו מִן הָאֲחוּה", he did not lose an iota of his brotherly love to them. Wasn't that a *nisayon* that Yosef passed on the highest level? We can all imagine what it would be like if one of our acquaintances cheated us behind our back. We wouldn't want to look at him in the face ever again. And here, Yosef maintained his brotherly love? It's remarkable!

But anyway, it appears from the Midrash that Yosef wanted more. He desired another opportunity for *shteiging*. Well, the Midrash concludes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "You want a *nisayon*? I'll give you a very difficult one indeed."

### Yosef and Dovid: Didn't they Both do the Same Thing?

I have a big question regarding this Midrash. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz used to quote the Chazal that teaches that Dovid HaMelech requested a *nisayon*, and Hashem presented him with the test of Batsheva

– which it seems that ultimately he did not pass. Rav Chaim used to talk at length about this; he would stress that the lesson from the story of Dovid HaMelech and Batsheva is that we should never ask for *nisyonos*. A Yid's job is to do whatever he can to stay away from *nisyonos*. He should never say, "I'll live with the test, and I'll succeed – and I will grow from it." Stay away, says Rav Chaim! My question is: didn't Yosef do the same thing that Dovid did according to this Midrash? And yet – he passed the test! Isn't this Midrash a שווערע קשיא on Rav Chaim Shmuelewitz's *yesod*?

I think perhaps the answer is that there is a slight difference between what Chazal tell us about Yosef and what they say about Dovid. Yosef only entertained the notion in his mind; Dovid, however, had asked for his *nisayon* verbally. When you express something through speech, it takes on a far more tangible and concrete existence. Let me illustrate what I mean.

### **Thoughts Aren't the Same as Words**

The Noam Elimelech writes in the *Tzetil Katan* that when you are struggling to clear your mind while attempting to learn or *daven*, you should imagine the following:

*A large fire is burning before you. A shaiget is standing in front of you with a knife in his hand, and threatening you as follows: "Proclaim that you do not believe in Hashem! Say that you believe in the powers of an Avodah Zarah. Otherwise, I will throw you into this fire!"*

*Of course, you immediately answer that you will do no such thing. The goy threatens you once more, but you persist in your strong refusal. Now, imagine how he throws you into the fire... the flames begin to consume you from all sides... the pain is enormous. Picture how much pain you experience when you burn just one finger – and just imagine that all over your body. Think about that feeling: how you're burning... you're burning for Hakadosh Baruch Hu.*

This reminds me of the Gemara that tells of a Tanna who wished to know who will be on the same level as him in Olam Habah. So, one night, he had a dream about a certain butcher. The next day, he went to visit this fellow – and couldn't help but notice how overweight the man was. And not only was he clearly very heavy – but he was also eating lots of fattening foods as the Tanna was in his home. So the Tanna asked him:

"Aren't you concerned about the amount of food that you're consuming?" The butcher answered: "I'm trying to gain weight." The Tanna was puzzled by his response. "Why would you intentionally cause yourself to be heavier?" he asked.

The butcher explained that his father had been burned alive על השם by *goyim* who were trying to coerce him to abandon his Yiddishkeit. Being that it was a שעת השמד, the butcher believed that soon they would be coming for him as well. "You see, my father was a scrawny fellow. When they burned him, the entire process took a couple of minutes, and there was soon nothing left of him. I don't want that to happen when they burn me – I want to be a real *korban*. I want there to be a long-lasting fire that will produce a true ניהוה להשם; that's why I'm trying to accumulate as much fat as possible before that day comes."

Either way, the עצה טובה suggested by the Noam Elimelech is just a way to merit the *z'chus* of having a clear mind for Torah – but it isn't the real thing. The thought can get you closer, but the *ikkar* is the actual Torah and the verbalized *tefillah*. Of course, the levels that a person can attain through using his mind are astronomical; but the main thing is using our mouth. That's when something becomes concrete.

### What Was Tamar Thinking?

The Midrash brings in the name of Rav Yochanan that Yehuda did not carry out the *maaseh* with Tamar out of his own volition. Rather, a *Malach* pushed him to do it. This Midrash requires some thought: if this was indeed the case, then what exactly was Tamar thinking? She knew that Yehuda would never fall for such a *nisayon*! Did she know that a *Malach* would come and push him into the act? Furthermore, Chazal tell us that Yehuda was unaware of the fact that this woman was indeed his daughter-in-law, for she would always cover her face while in his home. This shows us the level of *kedusha* that Tamar lived with – but also, the level of Yehuda! He didn't know what his own daughter-in-law looked like; how could Tamar possibly have thought that he would be willing to do an *aveirah* with what seemed to be a *zonah*?

### Rooted in Laziness

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz used to answer this question with a big *yesod*. He would teach that whenever a person says that he's not doing

something that the Torah requires him to do because 'it won't work' or 'it's too difficult for him', then you should know – the root of that logic is laziness. When Hashem wants us to do something, then we say "הנני", and we do it – even if it seems impossible. We may think that the chances of the plan panning out are slim – but if we never try, then we're not giving Hakadosh Baruch Hu the opportunity to give us *siyata dishmaya*. Your job is to do whatever it takes to get it done; if it doesn't make sense על פי דרך, then Hashem will make it work out בסדר.

Tamar strongly desired to be the mother of *Malchus Yehuda*, and she was ready to do whatever it took to acquire that great *z'chus*. Did she think that it was likely for Yehuda to naturally go for her trick? Of course not – but she knew that she had to do *something*. Otherwise, it would just be a matter of laziness. And when you put in the effort, then Hashem makes it work out – sometimes by even sending a *Malach* to change the course of history.

### The Great Test of "צדקה ממני"

Many *meforshim* ask why Yehuda wanted to give Tamar the death penalty. She was a יבמה לשוק – there's no חיוב מיתה for that! The most common answer that is given is that Tamar was the daughter-in-law of a *melech*, and for someone of that stature to become a זנו through מעוברת is a terrible disgrace.

As we know, when Yehuda recognized that she was a מעוברת through him, he famously replied "צדקה ממני" – "*She is righteous; it is from me.*"

Rabbosai, we cannot begin to understand how difficult it must have been for Yehuda to utter those words. There he was, commanding his people to execute Tamar for disgracing the *meluchah* – and then, a moment later, he admitted that it was indeed he that was at fault. Rav Chaim Brim used to say: "It would be easier to die a hundred times than to say the words צדקה ממני."

Sometimes, people try to relate to what Holocaust survivors went through during those terrible years. These attempts are folly; it is impossible for any of us to fathom what it was like to experience the atrocities and the unimaginable pain that these people went through. I think that the same goes for the immense strength that Yehuda displayed in this story. Everybody was gathered – all the *chashuvim*, the *dayanim* – listening to Yehuda's strong condemnation of promiscuity, to the extent

that he was ready to give the death penalty to someone who wasn't Halachically required to meet that fate. And then, without blinking an eye, Yehuda turned the tables on himself. He could have reasoned that it wasn't his fault – the *Malach* forced him to do it! He could have thought that the *Chillul Hashem* would be far greater if people knew that it was the *melech* himself that sinned. But still – Yehuda was *modeh al ha'emes*, living up to his name.

### **Recognizing the Basics Prior to Starting the Journey**

The Midrash says that when Tamar sent the message of "הכר נא" – "Please recognize to whom this signet, wrap and staff belong" – she was actually implying that it was the Ribono Shel Olam's. "Hashem created these things!" she was saying. Rav Nosson Wachtfogel zt"l asked the obvious question on this Midrash: Tamar was trying to get Yehuda to recognize that the items were his, so what connection does this have with saying that Hashem created these things?

Rav Nosson answered with the following *mashal*:

*There was once an internationally acclaimed weight-lifter who was famous for his strong muscles; nobody could lift as much weight as him. One day, he got very sick, and he needed to undergo a serious surgery. Prior to the procedure, the nurse handed him a pen to sign his consent. This world-renowned bodybuilder was very disconcerted when he discovered that he didn't even have enough strength to lift the pen.*

Why was the weight-lifter so dispirited when he couldn't lift the pen at a time of severe illness? Says Rav Nosson: this fellow thought that it required a lot of strength to lift heavy weights – but it didn't require any strength to lift a little pen. He didn't understand how he could be impaired to the point that he couldn't do a basic function. But that's a mistake: it requires lots of *kochos* to lift weights, but it also takes *koach* to lift a pen – just a lot less of it. If he was sickened to the point that his strength was temporarily diminished, then it would make perfect sense that he couldn't lift a pen. If you miss that crucial first step in the calculation – then you will be utterly confused and disheartened.

When a person doesn't step onto the first rung, then he can't hope to ever climb the ladder. Tamar was telling Yehuda: "I know this is a difficult *nisayon* for you, but you must understand – if you don't admit to your mistake, then there will be two unnecessary deaths. Both my and



the unborn baby's lives are at stake... you must remember the most important factor: there's a Ribono Shel Olam!" If Yehuda wouldn't be thinking about the Ribono Shel Olam, then it would be impossible for him to overcome this difficult challenge. The first step would be for him to be in the proper frame of mind – in other words, recognizing that there's a Master of the Universe who is watching to see what he will do. All Tamar was doing was getting Yehuda started on his path to overcome the *nisayon*; once he was already there, the way up was much easier.

### **The Only Way to Get There is to Start the Journey**

Rav Wolbe zt"l used to say that a person needs to know what direction he's heading in. If a person knows that he's on a path of עבירה גוררת עבירה, then he's in bad shape. But once he recognizes this, and chooses to be on the path of מסייעין אותו – then he's on the road to victory.

My father zt"l used to say: if a person is in Lakewood, and he wants to walk all the way to the Bronx – will he ever arrive? Sure he will, eventually. It may take a long time, but in the end, he'll arrive at his destination. Well, what if a person is standing here in Zichron Shneur, and he wants to be in K'hal Chassidim – which is basically a two-minute walk away? If he's just standing, and he's not moving his legs – then he will never get there. You need to start walking if you want to get to your destination. The other fellow will be in the Bronx way before him if he doesn't start moving his legs.

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## חנוכה

### The His'orerus of Chanukah

My Rebbi, R' Elya Roth *zt"l*, once told me (from the *Kadmonim*) the following thought regarding the story of Chanukah:

We all know that the *Yevanim* desecrated Beis Hamikdash by bringing in idols and defiling the vessels. But through pure *nissim*, the Chashmona'im managed to drive them out of Yerushalayim, rededicate the Beis Hamikdash, and purify all of the vessels. Now, why did Hakadosh Baruch Hu orchestrate the Chanukah story to play out in this manner? The answer is because Klal Yisroel was at a low point at that period in history, and the Ribono Shel Olam wanted to give them a *his'orerus* to do *teshuvah*. In order to fight the battles that they did – being vastly outnumbered – the Yidden had to lift up their *madreigah* of *Yiras Shomayim* and *bitachon*. Additionally, by Hashem saving them and restoring the Beis Hamikdash to its original splendor and *kedusha* – all through astounding miracles and supernatural victories – they would have an opportunity to rethink their actions and realign themselves with the תורה הקדושה.

Now, if Hakadosh Baruch Hu just wanted the Yidden to do *teshuvah* – then why was it necessary to cause them so much pain and suffering? Why was it necessary for the Beis Hamikdash to be desecrated? Couldn't Hashem just send a *Navi* to give the Yidden a good *mussar shmuess*, rather than have their enemies persecute them for keeping Shabbos and *Milah*?

Answered R' Elya Roth: the *p'shat* is simple. A good *shmuess* can last for a little bit – but it generally doesn't have a long-lasting effect. R' Chatzkel Levenstein used to say: if a Rebbi gives a *shmuess* before *Maariv*, and some of the *talmidim* retain the *his'orerus* until after *Oleinu* – that's a significant accomplishment. Sometimes, the only way to wake someone up is to put them through harsh circumstances, and have them fight for their Yiddishkeit with tremendous *mesiras nefesh*. That kind of *his'orerus* has the power to last not only for that person's lifetime – but even for generations to come.

### **Maintaining the *His'orerus* by Constantly Remembering it**

I would like to add another point. We know that the *his'orerus* from the miracles of Chanukah didn't end up lasting all that long – the *Churban habayis* was a short time later. It appears that even when there is a tremendous wake-up call, constant *chazarah* is crucial. We can't just get woken up and hope to remain awake forever; we must continuously remind ourselves of the *his'orerus* and remember to stay focused on the goal.

*Let's say a fellow is driving for a long distance on the highway when he notices a little red light on his dashboard. He looks a little closer and notices that it is displaying a picture of a battery with a plus and minus sign on it. If this fellow knows what's good for him, he has to get off the highway and find a mechanic; this symbol is telling him that his battery is not getting recharged, which probably means his alternator is on the fritz. Now, he can reason: "My battery is pretty efficient; it should be able to last me for some time. I may as well keep on driving, and I'll get it checked out once I arrive at my destination." But this would be a foolish decision to make. The car uses a large amount of energy; if the battery doesn't get charged regularly, then it will die. It may last for a couple of hours maximum, but eventually the car will stop in the middle of the highway.*

Rabbosai, this is an extremely important lesson that we can learn from the Chanukah story. A major, life-altering event can have a tremendous impact on a person's life – but a person needs constant *his'orerus*. He can't assume that he will be on an elevated plane for the rest of his life; he has to constantly contemplate the wake-up call and revitalize his connection with Hashem.

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