

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

Shmuessen from
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פרשת כי תבא

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לעילוי נשמת
ידידנו היקר והצנועה ר' אפרים
בן ר' שלמה אביגדור רבינוביץ
זצ"ל

פרשת כי תבא

וְעִנִּיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֲרָמִי אָבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִם (דברים כ"ו ה')

And you should announce and say, [Lavan] the Arami tried to destroy my father [Yaakov], and he went down to Mitzrayim...'

וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּעֵרַתִּי הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִן הַבַּיִת (שם פסוק י"ג)

And you should say in front of Hashem your G-d 'I have rid the Kodesh from the house...'

Viduy Bikkurim and Viduy Maasros – and the Difference in the Manner of their Recitations

This *parshah* begins with two *mitzvos*, both of which culminate in a special recitation, called *Viduy*. The *parshah* first discusses the *mitzvah* of *Bikkurim*. For this *mitzvah*, one brings the first of his fruits to the Beis Hamikdash, where the fruit is given to the *kohanim*. After the owner of the field presents the food to the *kohen*, he recites the *Viduy Bikkurim*, consisting of the *parshah* of אֲרָמִי אָבִד אָבִי. In these *pessukim*, the landowner describes the events which led to his ownership of his land. He mentions how Hashem took the Bnei Yisroel out of slavery in Mitzrayim, and how Hashem brought them from there to Eretz Yisroel, the Land flowing with milk and honey, in which such luscious fruits grow. After the man concludes his recitation of thanksgiving to Hashem, he bows to Hashem and takes his leave.

The second *mitzvah* in the *parshah* is *Biur Maasros*. This refers to the obligation during the third and sixth years of the *Shemittah* cycle to rid one's home of any outstanding *terumah* and *maaser* that have not been given to their proper recipients. After one has properly fulfilled the various *mitzvos* of *Maasros*, he then recites a declaration called *Viduy Maasros*, beginning with the words בִּיעֲרַתִּי הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִן הַבַּיִת. In this *Viduy*, he affirms that he has indeed fulfilled the *mitzvos* in the precise manner as was required. He then davens to Hashem to bless Klal Yisroel in the *zechus* of the *mitzvos* of *Trumos* and *Maasros*.

Although these two *Viduyim* appear quite similar in nature, the *meforshim* tell us that there was a difference between them concerning the manner of their recitation. Regarding *Viduy Bikkurim* the *passuk* instructs us, וְעִנִּיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ / *And you should announce and say*. Rashi explains that the word וְעִנִּיתָ implies that one should recite the *Viduy* in a loud voice. In regard to *Viduy Maasros*, however, the *passuk* merely states וְאָמַרְתָּ / *And you should say*, without the preceding word וְעִנִּיתָ. The Rosh and the Daas Zekainim infer from this that the *Viduy Maasros* was not said in a loud voice, but rather a soft voice. What is the reason for this distinction?

Mentioning the Kindnesses One Performed vs Those that One Received

On a simple level, we can explain that the Torah here is conveying to us an important lesson pertaining to the way we interact with others. This lesson applies to all different sorts of relationships, whether marriage, co-worker, sibling, *chavrusa*, shul member, etc. Within such relationships, each partner will oftentimes find himself on the receiving end of favors from his counterpart. Likewise, many other times, the role will be reversed. This same person contributes his own share to the relationship, and he will perform kindnesses from his end.

A defining factor in the quality of these relationships is, whose kindnesses and favors does each party mention? Does each one constantly remind the other about the favors that he himself did, or, on the contrary, does he constantly mention the favors which he received?

Chaim has a beautiful relationship with his wife. Throughout the day, he thanks her for her running of the house, her cooking meals, her caring for the children etc. Chaim's wife looks forward to his return at the end of each day. She, in turn, thanks him for his hard work on behalf of herself and the children. There is a warm, harmonious atmosphere in their home.

Yankel and his wife act in the opposite manner than the one described. Yankel always makes sure to remind his wife how hard he works. When he does an extra errand, his wife does not hear the end of it. Sometimes she decides not to ask him for favors, if only to avoid his continuous nagging. His wife too, makes sure to remind him about her hard work in running the house. The atmosphere in their home is often one of tension and bickering.

The Torah is teaching us this lesson. When thanking HaKadosh Boruch Hu during the *mitzvah* of *Bikkurim*, we do so in a loud, powerful tone. We announce loudly and clearly that we have received kindnesses from Hashem and that we are thankful for them. When, however, we affirm our own participation in Hashem's will, a lower tone of voice is correct. This behavior that we are to follow regarding these *mitzvos*, will teach us to conduct ourselves this way in our own personal lives. When thanking others, we should do so often, and with enthusiasm. When we must state our own doings, let us not do so with a loud edge in our voice, and let us keep these statements to a minimum.

Rebbitzen Abramsky a"h, the wife of Rav Chatzkel Abramsky zt"l used to come to our home in Eretz Yisroel quite often. On one occasion, she related the following incident:

Reb Chatzkel lived with his family in the small apartments in the Bayit Vegan neighborhood of Yerushalayim. The apartments did not have any room for ovens, and all baked products were purchased from the local bakery companies.

It happened one Erev Shabbos there was a shortage of challos in Angell's Bakery. Many families in Eretz Yisroel were going to have to manage without challah that Shabbos, using matzos for lechem mishnah. The rebbitzen could see that Reb Chatzkel was distraught at the thought of not having proper challos lichvod Shabbos. She decided that they would have challos, come what may.

"But how will you make challos?" Reb Chatzkel protested. "We don't have an oven!"

"Don't worry," was her reply. "We will have challos!"

At this point we must mention that many of the families in Bayit Vegan had a device called a wonder-oven. Rebbitzen Abramsky herself had one which she had taken with her when she moved from America. The wonder oven was a small pot-like machine which was placed directly over the stove, and one could use it for minor baking-like activities. It was certainly not designed for baking full loaves of bread! However, Rebbitzen Abramsky tried her hardest, and after much effort and toil, she managed to produce challos out of the wonder-oven. She happily presented them to her saintly husband, who was delighted to be able to have challos for Shabbos.

Rebbitzen Abramsky told us that for weeks afterward, her husband would boast, "My wife can bake challos without an oven!"

Reb Chatzkel understood that everyone appreciates a compliment, and that there is no such thing as overdoing it. His wife had done something special, and he made sure that she felt and heard his appreciation for it.

Keeping our Accomplishments in *Ruchniyus* Quiet

Regarding our *Avodas Hashem*, we are specifically enjoined to keep our accomplishments quiet. When we advertise our accomplishments and our positive practices, we stand to lose so much, both in the level of our devotion and in the sincerity of our actions.

Rav Shimon Schwab zt"l would tell a mashal of a thermos full of hot water. The purpose of a thermos is to insulate; the heat of the water is thus not meant to be felt from the outside of the thermos. If one can feel the heat of the water, that is an indication that there is a defect in the thermos, and another one will have to be used.

Similarly, our own 'fire' and drive in our *Avodas Hashem* is meant to be had on the inside but hidden from view of people around us. When we start to flaunt our *madreigos* in *ruchniyus*, a serious flaw is indicated, and we may be advised to back up a few steps to revamp our path of *Avodah*.

We Begin *Avodas Hashem* with our Efforts and Hashem Carries Us Further

Perhaps we can suggest *bs"d* another approach to understand the difference between the manners of how *Viduy maaser* and *Viduy Bikkurim* were recited.

The *parshah* details the wonderful *brachos* that we are promised if we will fulfill the *mitzvos* of the Torah. These *brachos* are prefaced with the following *passuk*. וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל ד' אֱלֹקֶיךָ. This *passuk* is literally translated as follows: *And it will be if you will surely listen to the Voice of Hashem your G-d, to keep, to fulfill all His mitzvos that I am commanding you today, and Hashem your G-d will place you supreme over all the nations of the earth.* The Ohr Hachaim is perplexed by the ו' of the word וְנִתְּנָךְ / *and Hashem will place you*. That portion of the *passuk* is seemingly a new clause, in which the *passuk* begins describing the reward for keeping the *mitzvos*. If so, should the *passuk* not have used the words יִתְּנָךְ / *Hashem will place you*, without the 'and' that seems to render it a continuation of the previous clause?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the *passuk* is meant to be read differently. The clause does not begin with the word וְנִתְּנָךְ, but with the word תִּשְׁמַע / *you will listen*. The *passuk* is read as follows: וְהָיָה / *If you will listen*, i.e. you will learn the Torah and make an effort to observe the *mitzvos* contained within it, תִּשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל ד' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצֹוְךָ הַיּוֹם וְנִתְּנָךְ ד' אֱלֹקֶיךָ עֲלֶיךָ, *[then] you will [be granted the strength and ability to] listen [fully] to the Voice of Hashem your G-d, to keep, to fulfill all His mitzvos that I am commanding you today, and Hashem will place you supreme over all the nations of the earth.*

The *passuk* is teaching us that if we merely apply the initial effort in our *Avodah*, Hashem will lead us to continue performing the *mitzvos* in the possible manner. We only need to make the firm decision to follow the path of the Torah, and we need to begin. The rest is up to Hashem; He will bring a person down the proper path. Moreover, after leading the person on path of Torah and *mitzvos*, Hashem, in His great kindness, will then reward the person for performing the *mitzvos*, notwithstanding the fact that he was only able to do so with Hashem's all-encompassing assistance. Chazal teach us that Hashem says to Klal Yisroel כְּחֹדֶה שֶׁל מַחֲטָא וְאֵינִי פוֹתַח / *My children! Open for me a doorway [to your hearts] the size of a needle, and I will then open doorways for you through which wagons with oxen can enter!* All Hashem asks is that we begin.

Not only in our outward, physical acts are we dependent on *siyatta d'shmaya* from Hashem, but even in regard to our internal feelings in our *Avodah*, the same reality holds true. The Sfas Emes teaches us that even an individual's love and fear of Hashem are a present from Him. A person can

only feel the initial desire and intent to harbor such feelings, but the true *ahavas Hashem* and *yiras Hashem* are not in his control. If he merits, Hashem will grant these things to him as a gift.

A Means for Hashem to Reward Us

The idea that we are learning is that all our *Avodas Hashem* is merely a means for Hashem to be able to reward us. As the Mesillas Yesharim explains in the first *perek*, Hashem created the world in order to bestow His boundless goodness upon others. The Torah and *mitzvos* are the means for Hashem to do so. Hashem therefore just asks us for the smallest effort on our part, all so that He will then be able to reward us with the greatest of rewards.

A father knows that his son, Yossi, has been wishing for his own set of Mishnayos. The father would be delighted to present such a gift to his son, but he feels that is still proper that his son should 'earn' it.

He calls over his son and says to him, "Yossi, if you can say over the perek of Mishnayos that we learned without mistakes, I will buy you the set."

Yossi is excited about the offer, but his father is even more. Each day, the father encourages Yossi to review, and he helps him along as well.

The time of the 'farher' arrives. Yossi does his best, and when he forgets a little, his father coaches him along, dropping significant hints about what the mishnah is saying. In the end, Yossi knows the perek fairly well, and that is good enough for his father. His father presents him the Mishnayos with great excitement and joy.

Similarly, Hashem desires to bestow goodness and reward upon us in an infinitely greater level than we ourselves desire. Hashem has boundless love for us, and only wants to see us succeed, accomplish and attain reward. Hashem therefore seizes upon any opportunity of which He can utilize as an 'opening' to be able to help us succeed and thereby reward us. As soon as we just put in a measure of desire and effort from our end, that is enough for Hashem. Now, Hashem can take over and carry us through to the end.

Not Taking Credit for our Achievements in Ruchniyus

With the realization that Hashem is the One Who really brings us to our success, we can certainly understand why we do not recite *Viduy Maasros* in a loud voice. How can we 'announce' our achievements in such a proud, smug fashion, when they do not belong to us? Without Hashem's input, we would never have reached where we did, and it is therefore certainly not appropriate to broadcast our share, as if demanding recognition for it. Hashem, in his great goodness, commanded us to declare what we have accomplished in order that He should credit us, but from our perspective, we do so in a low voice, out of recognition and admission that the credit does not truly belong to us.

This concept is demonstrated in the following incident in the life of the Chofetz Chaim:

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l used to contemplate thoughts of mussar to himself in vivid and graphic detail. To arouse himself to teshuvah, he would lock himself in his room and envision for himself scenes of the Yom Hadin which would take place for him after his death. As the Chofetz Chaim was hard of hearing, he would speak to himself in a tone that was quite audible to those in the vicinity. Many powerful lessons could be gleaned from those dialogues that the Chofetz Chaim would have with himself.

During one such instance, Rav Mendel Zaks was able to hear the Chofetz Chaim playing out the scene of his death.

"Hut ihr gehert? [Have you heard?]" the Chofetz Chaim could be heard imitating. "Yisroel Meir was niftar!"

"Really? When is the levayah?"

The Chofetz Chaim then began playing out the scene of his trial in front of the Heavenly Court. The Chofetz Chaim, who had a keen understanding of what constitutes true merits and their opposites in Shamayim, began detailing what he felt were his accomplishments in his lifetime. He mentioned how he had traveled from town to town to inspire Jews to return to Yiddishkeit, he mentioned his authorship of the sefer Chofetz Chaim, and several other of his great accomplishments in ruchniyus, both for himself and for the klal.

Noticeably absent from the Chofetz Chaim's list of his own accomplishments, however, was the sefer Mishnah Berurah that the Chofetz Chaim had written. This was quite surprising to Rav Mendel zt"l, as out of all the Chofetz Chaim's great accomplishments, the sefer Mishnah Berurah was perhaps the monumental one of all. It had taken him over 25 years to produce, and it was a sefer that covers the entire Orach Chaim in clarity and depth. It became accepted throughout Klal Yisroel as the foremost posek in those matters. Why had the Chofetz Chaim omitted this massive achievement from his own list?

Rav Mendel wished to pose this question to the Chofetz Chaim, but there was a problem. The 'conversation' was officially a 'private' one that the Chofetz Chaim had had with himself and no one else! He could not simply tell the Chofetz Chaim that he had been listening in! The only way to get the answer to this puzzle would be by asking the Chofetz Chaim seemingly 'out of nowhere'.

Rav Mendel waited until he found what seemed like an appropriate occasion, and he casually mentioned to the Chofetz Chaim, "The sefer Mishnah Berurah was a tremendous achievement. Surely it will stand you in good stead in Shamayim!"

Upon hearing this comment, the Chofetz Chaim immediately silenced Rav Mendel. "I do not get any credit for the Mishnah Berurah!" he insisted. "It was completely from the Hands of Hashem!"

To appreciate the wonder of this incredible outlook that the Chofetz Chaim maintained, we must realize how much superhuman effort the Chofetz Chaim placed into the writing of the Mishnah Berurah, both in its actual content, and in the circumstances of his own life while writing it.

He wrote the Mishnah Berurah under conditions of extraordinary mesiras nefesh. Many times, he had absolutely no money in his home, while he could have easily earned a living as a rav in many different large communities. In fact, there was one incident in which a guest had visited his home, and there was absolutely nothing for the Chofetz Chaim's wife to offer the guest. When the guest had left, the Chofetz Chaim's wife pleaded with him to make a change in their situation.

The Chofetz Chaim turned away from his wife and lifted his eyes heavenward. "Satan," he declared, "you are not going to stop me!"

The Chofetz Chaim's dedication in producing suitable content for the Mishnah Berurah was mindboggling in its own right. Rav Hershel Zaks zt"l used to say that it is about seforim such as the Mishnah Berurah that one receives reward for each single word of Torah that he learns. The Chofetz Chaim was so meticulous that every single word should be precise and correct, that each word acquired the status of Torah on its own.

The Chofetz Chaim once explained that he wanted the sefer to be accessible to both talmidei chachamim and simple Jews. He therefore could not allow for any vagueness's or ambiguities, and certainly not any clear errors. So much practical halacha and Torah were to be learned from the sefer by Jews of all levels, and the Chofetz Chaim could not allow for mistakes as a

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פרשת כי תבא

result of his words. He therefore applied himself completely to ensure that a proper sefer would result.

After all this tremendous mesiras nefesh in producing the Mishnah Berurah, the Chofetz Chaim felt that he deserved no credit for it whatsoever!

While the Chofetz Chaim had a deep perception in regard to how his actions and accomplishments were viewed in *Shamayim*, a perception to which we are not privy, the message is still there for us. We should not assume that our accomplishments are our own; rather we must ascribe them to Hashem, Who assists us in all our *Avodas Hashem*. As the Gemara teaches us יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום ומבקש המיתו, שנאמר צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו, ואלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו אין יכול לו, שנאמר אלקים לא יעזבנו בידו / *A person's yetzer hara strengthens itself upon him each day, and were it not for Hashem's help, a person would not be capable of defeating it.* Let us realize that our defeating of the yetzer hara is only possible through the *siyatta d'shmaya* of Hashem.

Humility is a Necessary Factor for a Favorable Judgement on Rosh Hashana

This idea is particularly relevant as the *din* of Rosh Hashana draws near. It is so important that we approach the judgement in a mindset of humility, without thinking that we are deserving or owed any reward or payment from Hashem. The Gemara tells us כל שנה שרשה בתחלתה מתעשרת בסופה / *Any year in which Klal Yisroel render themselves as 'poor' [in merits] in the beginning of the year, will be a year in which they will merit 'riches' in the year's end.* We need to recognize that Hashem has done only kindness for us, for which we have certainly fallen terribly short in our debt of gratitude to Hashem. Moreover, even where we did achieve in our Torah and *mitzvos*, it was only possible with Hashem's help.

With the humility that will be generated within us as a result of this outlook, we will find favor in the Eyes of HaKadosh Boruch Hu, and bez"H we should all be *zoche* to a *shanah tovah umesukah*.

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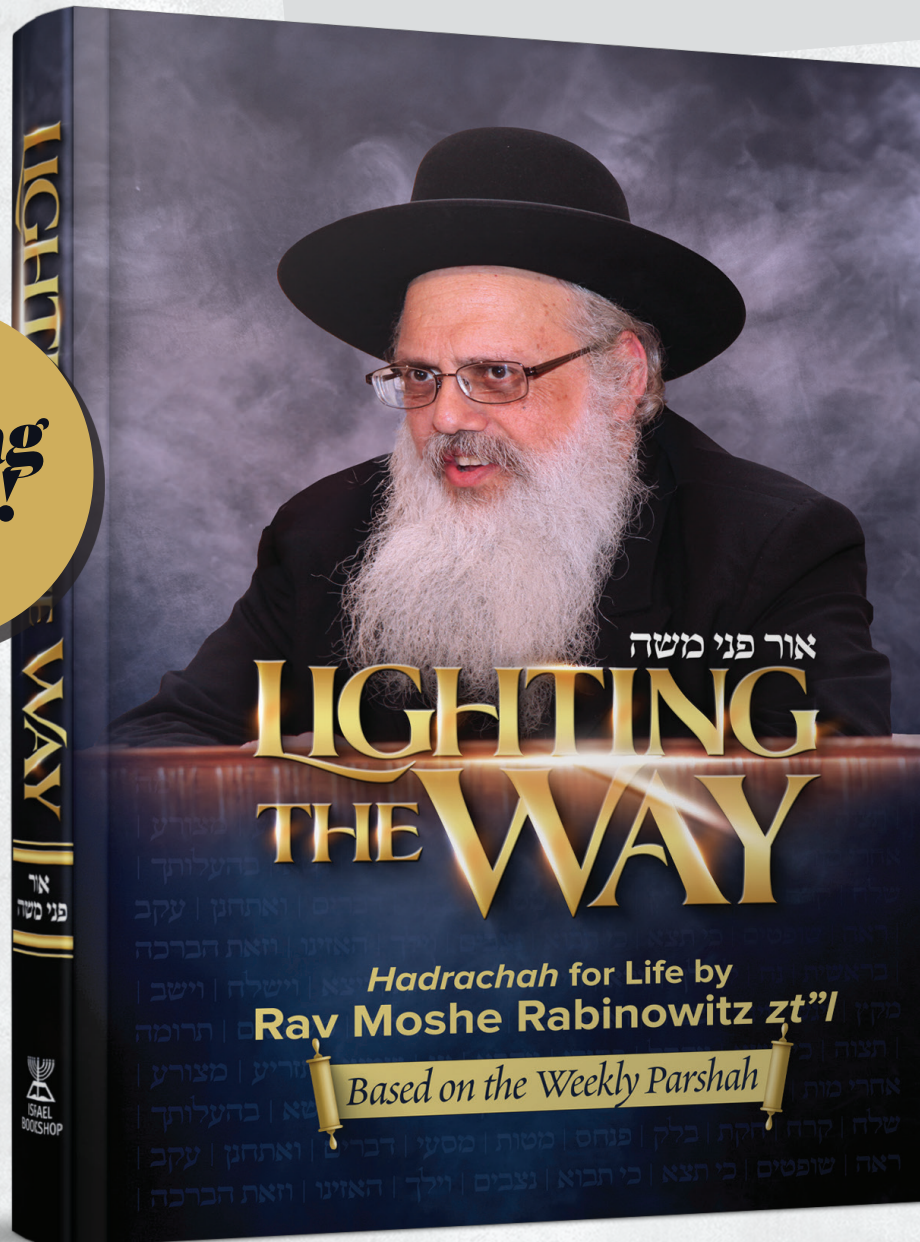
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