

PESACH #1

by Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky

There is a section in the Maharal's work on Pesach and Yetziath Mitzraim, GEVUROTH HASHEM, that indirectly provides a conceptual framework for one of the elements that relate to gender differences, which is our topic in Perek 1 Mishnah 5. In addition to relating to Pesach, it sheds light on one of the more difficult areas in the Maharal's presentation of gender differences -- and the principles seem to be in line with the scientific research in those differences. (It will be left to the politicians to debate whether the observed and measurable differences are fundamentally innate, or are the result of social conditioning.) I will therefore devote this week's shiur to that section, and to the insights into it that Rav Goldvicht, zt'l, presents in his work "Asufath Ma'arachoth" (Sukkot, Ushpizin of Moshe).

I received a couple of responses to the shiur on Perek 1 Mishna 5. The more controversial material is yet to come. I would ask those who have joined these shiurim only recently to please try to access some of the early shiurim from the archives, especially the Maharal's introduction to Avoth. (Yaakov - can you explain how this is done?) From these you will see the approach of the Maharal in how one is supposed to critically analyze the words of Chazal, understanding that they are providing us with transcendent truths written with utmost precision, as opposed to "personal opinions on how things might be, given their cultural and social environment." It is much easier to appreciate this in Mishnayoth with no political overtones, and may enable us to then apply these standards of analysis to the Mishnayoth that may lead to conclusions that are contrary to the current political climate, yet that reflect eternal truths. I may be overly sensitive to how people will view the rest of our explanation on Mishna 5, but following some of the discussions on women's issues on Mail.Jewish and other lists with a Torah orientation, I know this to be an explosive topic, and WHATEVER we write will ruffle SOMEONE'S feathers. My approach has long been to extract our ideology from the words of Chazal, demanding the same standards of "good pshat", utilizing the same tools of analysis, and relying on the same authorities that we do in any Halachic discussion or issue of Hashakafa. (I feel this is too often lacking both on the "right" and on the "left.") So much for my meanderings.

In his ongoing attempt to convince G-d that he is not the person suitable to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt (Shemoth ch. 3 and 4) Moshe Rabbeinu says to G-d (4:10): "...Please G-d, I am not a man of 'devarim' (words or things, which is the root of the word "dibur" which means speech) not yesterday, not the day before yesterday...for I am 'heavy of mouth' and 'heavy of tongue'."

The Maharal in chapter 28 of Gevuroth HaShem asks: Moshe was blessed with all the virtues and superiorities, both physical and spiritual. How is it that he had the specific deficiency of not being a "man of speech"?!

(Consistent with the Maharal's approach that we have been trying to present in analyzing teachings of the Torah and the Rabbis, we must learn to go beyond the simplistic and superficial. Moshe Rabbeinu certainly knew that it wasn't his oratorical powers that were going to make a difference in whether Paroh would accede to his request "shalach ami..." or not. There is something much deeper going on in the particular excuse chosen by Moshe, as well as in the specific defect that we find in him -- the famous story of the hot coal and diamond in Paroh's house notwithstanding.)

The power of speech in the human being, explains the Maharal, is connected closely with the physical/material side ("chomer"), in comparison with other activities such as the powers of vision or hearing which are more abstract and depend less on the power of physical action and the material dimension. Moshe Rabbeinu's dimension of "chomer" was underdeveloped, as he was almost completely "sechel," spiritual/intellectual. As one detached from the physical world, his power of speech was impaired.

It is specifically the power of speech which defines a human being (in contrast to either angels or animals). Speech is the manifestation of the intimate and unique combination of the spiritual dimension in the physical body, "neshama" combined with "guf". It is the ability to translate abstract realities in to concrete terms. The Torah (Breishith, 2:7) describes man's creation from dust followed by G-d breathing in the breath of life, and it concludes with the result that "Man became a living personality." Unkelos explains this last phrase to mean that G-d put in him the power of speech.

The Jews in exile in Egypt were deeply attached to the physical world, both as slaves as well as by the nature of Egypt, the most materialistic of cultures. The purpose of this exile, explains Rav Goldvicht, was for the Jew to elevate the materialism of Egypt by infusing it with kedusha, a spiritual dimension. The exodus and redemption from Egypt was to be the successful completion of this mission.

But Moshe Rabbeinu, who was detached from the physical world, lacked the ability to bridge the two worlds, the materialistic and the spiritual. So his claim to G-d "I am not a man of 'devarim'" wasn't a claim of modesty or of his trying to shirk his responsibility. Rather it was a deep recognition that he was not the appropriate person for the mission that needed to be undertaken. His limited power of "dibur" was a manifestation of his detachment from the material world, a serious handicap in the mission of elevating the material.

(How could G-d have originally commanded Moshe to be the redeemer? What did G-d think? These are questions that need to be addressed, but are well beyond the scope or format of this forum.)

What was the solution? Shemoth 4:14. "...Behold, Aharon your brother, the Levi; I know that HE IS ABLE TO SPEAK..." (Emphasis added.) Then in verse 15: "And you will speak to him, and you will place

the "devarim" in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will instruct [both of] you on what you are to do." And verse 16: "And he will speak for you to the nation; and he will be a mouth for you, and you will be for him the guide."

Aharon was the perfect COMBINATION (synthesis, if you will) of the spiritual (neshama/sechel) and the material (guf/chomer). (We will have more to say about Aharon and this combination in Mishnah 12, when we are taught to be students of Aharon.) It was he who was to be the one to speak, to connect with the nation in their deep state of materialism, fulfilling the mission of elevating the chomer, the material, by imbuing it with kedusah, with spirituality.

Aharon was the implementer. This is the ability of the "chomer," to take an abstract principle and implement it in the real world. But he needed the guidance and direction from Moshe, who was completely attached to the guiding spiritual dimension. Aharon alone may have been diverted by his connection with the material/physical. Yet Moshe alone could not actualize the mission of the spiritual dimension in the material world, lacking any connection with the chomer, the "matter" which is necessary for any implementation in the real world.

This is the relationship between "chomer," the matter, and "tzurah," the shape and direction given to that matter, which is spoken about in numerous places in the works of the Maharal. It serves as a good introduction to these concepts which we will encounter a number of times in the future.

The class is taught by [Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky](#), Dean of [Darche Noam Institutions](#), Yeshivat Darche Noam/Shapell's and Midreshet Rachel for Women.
