

PARSHAS KI SAVO

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Parshas Ki Savo

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Today's Learning:

Tanach: Divrei Hayamim I 1-2

Pe'ah 7:2-3

O.C. 534:2-535:1

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Avodah Zarah 14

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Terumot 13

The Midrash Tanchuma comments on the verse in our parashah (26:16), "This day, Hashem, your Elokim, commands you to perform these decrees and the statutes, and you shall observe and perform them with all your heart and with all your soul," as follows: Thus it is written (Tehilim 95:6), "Come! Let us prostrate ourselves and bow, let us kneel before G-d, our Maker." Says the midrash: "Prostrating" is "bowing," and "bowing" is "prostrating"! Why then does the verse list [three forms of essentially the same act] "prostrating," "bowing" and "kneeling"? Because Moshe saw through ruach hakodesh that the Bet Hamikdash would be destroyed and bikkurim / the first fruits [the subject of the preceding verses] would no longer be brought; therefore he established that the Jewish People should pray three times a day. [Why?] Because prayer is more beloved to Hashem than all good deeds and all sacrificial offerings, as it is written (Tehilim 141:2), "Let my prayer stand as incense before You; the lifting of my hands as an afternoon offering." [Therefore,] although Moshe Rabbeinu had performed every possible good deed, when he was prohibited from entering the Land, he prayed. Hashem told him (Devarim 3:26), "Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter. Ascend to the top of the summit . . . and see with your eyes." [Until here from the midrash]

R' Avraham Meir Rosen z"l (Warsaw; 19th century) explains: The midrash is bothered by the phrase, "This day, Hashem, your Elokim, commands you . . ." Was that the first day that Hashem commanded regarding the mitzvot? Therefore, the midrash understands the Torah to be teaching that even "this day"--i.e., whenever one reads the verse, even after the Temple was destroyed--there is a way to draw Hashem's blessings into the world, a function once served by the mitzvah of bikkurim. Just as

one who brought bikkurim would bow before Hashem (see 26:10), so bowing in prayer three times a day can accomplish this goal. (Beur Ha'amarim)

"Ve'hayah / It will be when you enter the Land . . . You shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground . . . and you shall go to the place that Hashem, your Elokim, will choose . . ." (26:1-2)

R' Chaim Zvi Teitelbaum z"l (1881-1926; rabbi and chassidishe rebbe in Sighet, Hungary) writes: Man was created to not be satisfied with what he has. The reason he was created so is in order that he will always seek spiritual growth. When it comes to material matters, however, we are taught in Pirkei Avot (ch.4), "Who is wealthy? One who is satisfied with his lot." Thus King David prayed (Tehilim 86:4), "Gladden the soul of Your servant," i.e., he prayed that his happiness would come from spirituality, not materialism.

Our Sages say that a verse that begins with the word "Ve'hayah" indicates a happy event. Thus our verse teaches: When it comes to matters relating to the Land, "ve'hayah" / be happy. Take the first fruit, which tempts you to look forward to more, and elevate it to the place which Hashem will choose. Elevate your nature to desire more to spiritual use. (Atzei Chaim)

"Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed over you . . ." (28:10)

In the kinot for Tishah B'Av we refer to "The glorious crowns with which You bedecked Your servants." What does this mean? Do servants wear crowns?

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) explains: This passage refers to tefilin shel rosh / the tefilin worn on the head. These are the most conspicuous and unequivocal testimony that a Jew belongs to G-d. The Gemara (Berachot 6a) says, likewise, that the verse, "Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed over you," refers to the tefilin shel rosh. The tefilin are a manifestation of our being Jewish and a testimony that, in spite of our travail and persecution, we belong to G-d.

R' Soloveitchik continues: The tefilin are a crown on our head, and they teach us that there is a power above us. The Torah teaches that the King of Israel is to wear a crown, but this crown is not a symbol that the king is an absolute sovereign. Rather, it is a symbol that there is an authority above the king. Modern political philosophy speaks of a "sovereign state" which means that the state has the power to formulate its own policies, that the source of authority is within the state, and that there is no source of authority above the state. From the Jewish perspective, this view is idolatrous. Even the state, even the absolute monarch, is committed to a higher power, and that higher power is symbolized by the tefilin shel rosh. Every Jewish man wears a crown, not because he is powerful, but because he is committed; not to enhance his power, but to limit it. (Quoted in Kinot Mesoret

Harav p.232)

Teshuvah

R' Moshe Zvi Neriah z"l (1913-1995; rosh yeshiva in Kfar Ha'roeh, Israel, and one of the early leaders of the Bnei Akiva youth movement) writes:

The various thoughts of teshuvah which pass through a person's mind make him think that he has already repaired what needs to be repaired. In reality, however, we all know that there is a wide gulf between thought and deed.

How then can a person know where he stands? How can one know if any change has really occurred within him? If we were dealing with empirical facts, it would be easy enough, but we are not. Our relationship with G-d is necessarily abstract, for He has no body and no form of a body (paraphrasing one of Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Faith).

The answer, R' Neriah writes, is that the barometer of where one stands in his relationship with Hashem is where he stands in his relationship with his fellows. If one wants to know how he is doing with respect to "I have placed G-d before me always" (Tehilim 16:8), let him look at how he is doing with respect to "Love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18).

Why is this so? R' Neriah explains that all sins come from one of two sources, either because one does not see Hashem, or because he does see himself, i.e., his selfish interests and desires control him. Instead of applying "Ain od milvado" / "There is nothing besides Him" to Hashem, he applies it to himself.

Seeing Hashem is very difficult, but not "seeing" oneself is somewhat easier. One does this by beginning to notice those around him, by thinking of the needs of others and giving in, by understanding, giving of oneself, and feeling love. When a person becomes accustomed to these practices, he gradually ceases to worship his avodah zarah / idolatry, i.e., himself. In turn, when he is faced with a sin against G-d, it is easier to overcome that temptation as well.

Perhaps, R' Neriah concludes, this is what Rabbi Akiva was referring to when he said, "Love your fellow as yourself" is the major principle in the Torah." (Me'orot Neriah: Elul V'Tishrei p.23)

"A Good Present"

The Gemara (Shabbat 10a) teaches: One who gives a gift to another must tell him. Thus, Hashem said to Moshe, "I have a good present in My storehouse, and its name is 'Shabbat.' I want to give it to the Jewish People; go tell them!" In what case must one inform the recipient? Only when it will not

become known eventually. However, if it will become known anyway, the giver need not tell the recipient. [Why then did Moshe have to tell Bnei Yisrael about the gift of Shabbat? They would certainly have found out when they would have heard the commandment!] Nevertheless, they would not have known the reward unless Moshe had told them. [Until here from the Gemara.]

In what way is Shabbat a special gift more so than other mitzvot? R' Ze'ev Wolf Schorr z"l (rabbi of Skalat, Poland; early 19th century) explains: The midrash records that King David said, "I considered the reward for mitzvot and the punishment for aveirot / sins, and I decided to walk in Your ways." Does this mean that King David served Hashem out of a desire for reward or because of a fear of punishment, both lowly levels? It does not! Rather, the explanation is as follows:

We are taught that when a person performs a mitzvah or commits a sin, he creates a good or bad angel, as the case may be. What this means is that a spirit of holiness (or, G-d forbid, the opposite) envelopes him which induces him to perform the same mitzvah (or sin) again with greater devotion (or impurity). This is the true meaning of the teaching in Pirkei Avot, "A mitzvah begets a mitzvah; a sin begets a sin," R' Schorr writes. This does not mean that one who performs mitzvot will be inspired to perform mitzvot in general; rather, it means that he will be inspired to perform the same mitzvah again and again, but with greater devotion each time. (The same applies to sins.)

When are these angels created? Only after one has performed the deed in question. Only after one completes a mitzvah does the associated spirit of holiness envelope him. There is one exception--Shabbat. The spirit of holiness of Shabbat--the "neshamah yeteirah"--enters a person as soon as he begins to observe the holy day. However, only one who is attuned to this holiness will notice it. This is the gift, the reward, of which we would not have been aware if Moshe Rabbeinu had not informed us.

This explains why there is a custom to welcome Shabbat, unlike yom tov or any other mitzvah. Usually, we take the first step, and then the holiness of the mitzvah comes to us. Shabbat is the opposite; its holiness comes to us first. Nevertheless, we want to make a gesture, and so we go to welcome Shabbat. This, concludes R' Schorr, is the meaning of the midrash which relates: "Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said: Shabbat said before Hashem, 'To everything you have given a match, but to me you have not given a match.' Hashem responded, 'Yisrael will be your match'." Every mitzvah creates a reaction, except for Shabbat, whose effects are felt even before the mitzvah is performed. "Yisrael," a reference to those imbued with emunah, love and awe of G-d, and purity will be your match, for in them the neshamah yeteirah will be most pronounced. (Sefer Ha'drushim)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **[Torah.org](https://torah.org)** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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