

YOU GOTTA BELIEVE (IN YOURSELF)!

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Ki Savo

You Gotta Believe (in Yourself)!

This week's parashah tells us (28:9), "You shall walk in His ways," teaching that a person, through his good deeds, actually can walk in Hashem's footsteps. R' Eliezer Zvi Safran z"l (1830-1898; Komarno Rebbe) observes, though, that most of us don't believe this, that is, we don't believe in our own spiritual potential.

For example, how often do we pray, and, when we see that we aren't answered, we assume that our prayers can't really make a difference? The Ba'al Shem Tov z"l (died 1760) teaches that this is the result of excessive self-deprecation. One must believe that his prayers have untold consequences in the heavens, even if he doesn't see those effects. If one believed this, the Komarno Rebbe adds, how joyously would he pray! How carefully would he pronounce every letter, every syllable!

If one believed that he is (in the words of Bereishit 28:12) "a ladder standing on the ground with its head in the heavens," that every movement, every word, every step and every business deal makes a spiritual impact on the world, he would do them all for the sake of Heaven. Also, the Zohar comments, "If people knew the love with which Hashem loves the Jewish people, they would roar like lions in their eagerness to follow Him."

On the other hand, if one thinks that he can't make a difference, he should know that he is on the road to heresy. If he thinks that way, it's a sign that the yetzer hara has succeeded with him and will soon deprive him of life in this world and in the next.

Rather than despair, one can learn from Yaakov, who said (Bereishit 35:5), "I lived with Lavan and I delayed until now." The letters of "Lavan" are the reverse of the letters of "naval" / "degenerate one," a reference to the yetzer hara. Why was Yaakov successful in turning around the "naval," and "whitening" it (from "lavan" / "white")? Because "I delayed until now," that is, because he did not expect immediate results from his prayers and mitzvot, but rather had faith that the results would come with time. (Zekan Beto, p.216)

"It will be when you arrive at the Land that Hashem, your Elokim, gives you as an inheritance . . . You shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your Land that Hashem, your Elokim, gives you . . ." (26:1-2)

R' Mordechai Leifer z"l (1824-1894; Nadvorna Rebbe) explains this verse as follows: "When you arrive at" the understanding that "the Land" i.e., material things, are also part of what "Hashem, your Elokim, gives you as an inheritance" and that they can be elevated to a spiritual state, you can accomplish this if you "take of the first" - the loftiest, spiritual part - "of every fruit," that is, if you look for spirituality in everything and aim to elevate your interactions with the material world. (Divrei Mordechai)

A related thought:

R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato z"l (Italy; 1707-1746) writes: There are two parts to man's service of Hashem: those things which man does because he is commanded to do them, and those things which he does because they are necessary. This latter category covers man's use of the material world for his own needs.

The first rule relating to the second category of Divine service is that man should stay within the boundaries that Hashem has set - for example, not eating things which Hashem has prohibited [for example, non-kosher food] or which Hashem has limited [for example, not eating before davening].

A second rule is that man should eat only things which are good for his health, and which will sustain him in the best possible way [i.e., healthy, but tasty]. One should not, however, eat whatever his material body lusts for. A person's intention when eating should be to make his body fit and ready to serve the Creator. If a person does that, fulfilling his material needs itself becomes part of his Divine service. (Derech Hashem I 4:7)

"Hashem shall give you bountiful goodness, in the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your animals and the fruit of your ground . . ." (28:11)

The Gemara (Ta'anit 8b) relates that there once was a famine and a plague simultaneously. The sage Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said, "One cannot pray regarding two troubles [i.e., famine and plague] at once. Pray that the famine end because Hashem will not send plenty only to have it go to waste. When He sends plenty, He necessarily will give life also." [Until here from the Gemara]

R' Yaakov Yisrael Halevi Stern z"l (18th century; maggid /preacher in Kremenets, Volhynia, now Ukraine) writes that, in this light, we may understand our verse as follows: "Hashem shall give you bountiful goodness." And, in order that that bountiful goodness not go to waste, he also will bless "the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your animals and the fruit of your ground"-more than you

asked. (Sefat Emet: Mishlei 10:20)

Teshuvah

Last week, we quoted R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993), who explained that there is teshuvah / repentance which is accepted because of G-d's Attribute of Mercy, and there is teshuvah / repentance which is accepted because of G-d's Attribute of Justice, i.e., justice demands that the sinner be forgiven. This week, we present R' Soloveitchik's explanation of man's right to forgiveness.

Kabbalists teach that the first set of Luchot--the ones Moshe later broke-- had the entire Torah engraved on them, while the second Luchot had only the Aseret Ha'dibrot. In place of the comprehensive first Luchot, Torah She'be'al Peh / the Oral Law was given with the second Luchot. What does this signify?

R' Soloveitchik explains: We find that the concept of hekadesh / consecrating an item for the Temple can take two forms. One is kedushat damim / sanctification of the item's value, while the other is kedushat ha'guf / sanctification of the item itself. [A donation for the upkeep of the Temple falls in the first category, while an offering on the altar falls in the second category.]

Among the legal differences between the two categories, notes R' Soloveitchik, is this: If a person makes personal use of an item with kedushat damim, that item loses its sanctity. On the other hand, if a person makes personal use of an item with kedushat ha'guf, he must pay a penalty, but the item's status is unaffected. Why? Because the latter item has inherent sanctity which is not easily removed from the item. In contrast, the sanctity of the former is external and any act inconsistent with sanctity destroys that sanctity.

R' Soloveitchik continues: A similar difference exists between a person who has studied the Oral Law and a person who has studied only the Written Torah. The Written Torah is found in books; it is external to the person studying it. Thus, while it creates sanctity, it is not a sanctity that can withstand sin. Only through G-d's Mercy can such a sinner be forgiven and regain his sanctity. This is why the Written Torah (including the Prophets) is "unaware" of teshuvah except as a function of G-d's Mercy (see last week's issue).

In contrast, when one studies the Oral Law, it necessarily becomes part of him since [ideally] the Oral Law is not written and has no physical manifestation. Thus, when such a person sins, his inherent holiness remains untouched. From this it follows the even Justice demands that his teshuvah be accepted.

When were the second Luchot given? On Yom Kippur. This is why Yom Kippur is associated with

teshuvah--because it was on the day that the Oral Law was given that we attained the inherent sanctity which makes atonement more achievable. (Divrei Ha'Rav p.123)

"What will we eat in the seventh year?"

We explained last week that the practice of creating an "Otzar Bet Din" / "Judicial Storehouse" enables farmers to observe the mitzvah of declaring their produce hefker / ownerless and the prohibition on commercial harvesting during the shemittah, but allows food to be distributed to consumers who can't come themselves to harvest the hefker produce. Below is the text of an Otzar Bet Din contract authored by R' Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz z"l (the "Chazon Ish"; 1878-1953) prior to the shemittah of 5702 (1951-52). It is reprinted in the works Otzar Bet Din by R' Yerucham Fishel Adler and Chut Hashani by R' Nissim Karelitz.

1. [Name1] [Name2] and [Name3] agreed to serve as a bet din in the city to establish an Otzar Bet Din for the needs of the public.
2. After having established the bet din, they have agreed with Mr. [Name4], may his light shine, that he will be their agent to supervise his own field and others under his control and to perform any necessary, permitted labors, either himself or through hired workers, so that nothing will be wasted or destroyed.
3. The afore-mentioned gives the bet din the right to gather the fruits of the above-mentioned fields into his own storehouse, and to the [specified, e.g.,] southern part of his shed, and to store them there.
4. The above-mentioned field is in the village of [Place1] and the shed is also there.
5. The bet din hereby designates that above-mentioned location as the Otzar Bet Din.
6. The bet din hereby designates _____ [originally 150 Israeli Lira] as the salary of the afore-mentioned and also as rental for his property [i.e., the storehouse and shed].
7. The afore-mentioned will collect his salary, plus a proportionate share of his out-of-pocket expenses, from the buyers of the produce. 8. We have signed this, on [date] at : [Name1] [Name2] and [Name3]. [End of contract]

As explained last week, this agreement fulfills the Torah's requirements because it: (1) prevents the farmer from hoarding "his" produce, (2) prevents the farmer from profiting from "his" fields, and (3) ensures that produce is available to the public. At the same time, it guarantees employment for the farmer who otherwise would be out of work during the shemittah year and also ensures that the

fields are left in the hands of those who best know how to preserve them. Note that paragraph 2 limits the farmer to performing only labors that are permitted during the shemittah.

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

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