

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

The Sleeping Lion

Allow me to share with you what took place in Yerushalayim with the Pearl family on Rechov Rappaport.

Rebbetzin Pearl came home after a tiring day out of town, and she wanted to go to sleep. She waited for her children to come home from yeshiva at 9:30, and she went to go to sleep. Suddenly and unexpectedly, though, a woman who frequently came to their house to eat knocked on the door. This woman was very downtrodden, and it was also difficult for the family when she came. She had many demands. "This is good, this is not good. Open the door, close it..." The family had to spend time with her, and it wasn't easy.

This woman was now knocking on the door, and through the peephole the children saw her. Between themselves, the children decided not to open the door. The mother heard this, and got out of bed and said, "What's the matter? We must know that whatever we do for another is really helping ourselves!" "Aren't you tired?" replied the children. "Don't you want to sleep?" The mother remained undeterred. "This woman came a long way to eat, and now she'll return without food. We can't let that happen. You want to help up? Come, let's prepared food!"

The woman ate there to her heart's content, and spent quite a while of time with the family. As she was leaving, she wished them well and blessed them that the house should

be safe, and then she went on her way.

As the mother was escorting the woman out, a young daughter came running and said, "There's a snake in the bedroom!" The mother laughed, and tried calming her down. "There's no snake, it's nothing," replied the mother. But the girl insisted that it's a snake. "How do you know what a snake looks like?" "I saw a picture," the daughter explained. But the mother couldn't understand. "How could a snake get in there! It must be a mouse!"

She sent one of the older children to go check what was going on. The child came running back, confirming, "It's a snake!" They quickly went and shut the door tightly, and ordered an exterminator. By the time the exterminator arrived, they all saw through the window that it was indeed a long snake. And the snake was spread out across the mother's whole bed. The exterminator entered and saw that it was a poisonous snake.

Had the mother been in bed, Hashem should have mercy what could have happened.

What does this mean?

The snake had been there, but when the poor woman knocked on the door and the mother got up to welcome her in, that act of generosity, hospitality, and ayin tova saved her. The Zohar writes that R' Elazar, son of R' Shimon, says, "A person who is beloved by Hashem, even when there is a decree on him, Hashem sends him a gift. What is the gift? The poor person, because through that act of tzedakah, he will

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save himself from death.”

A similar story happened with R' Akiva's daughter. The stargazers said that she will pass away on the night of her wedding. Later, when she removed her jewelry from the wall, she found a dead snake. In our day and age, such a story happened on Rechov Rappaport in Yerushalayim!

This is a lesson for all areas of life, whether you have a neighbor who keeps knocking on the door, or anything else. We must realize that whatever we do is paid back to us by Hashem for our own benefit.

The Torah, in depicting the blessings recited by Bilaam, compared the Jewish people to a lion which crouches and lays down. The Chiddushei HaRim explains that a lion, even while sleeping, is a lion. Even when we have a spiritual downfall, we must remain lions. We must renew ourselves. When we feel elevated, it's much easier and ordinary to act like a lion. The uniqueness is that after we have fallen, we still remain as strong and bold as a lion.

Chazal also instruct a Jew to be as “light as an eagle.” Why is this the analogy? There are a lot of lighter birds or other objects than an eagle.

Why not say that we should be as “light as a tissue”?

The answer is that a tissue is light to fall down, whereas an eagle is light to rise up. The eagle is a heavy bird, and although it's hard, just like the eagle, we must rise above and strengthen ourselves.

The Kretchinive Rebbe zt”l, after leaving the mikvah and entering into a tisch, said that he saw a sign in the mikvah: “When going down a step, be careful not to slip.” He took these words to mean that even when we experience a downfall, we must renew and strengthen ourselves. This is the foundation of a Jew, who is as strong as a lion, even when he is crouched down and sleeping.

The Torah states, “For six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth.” The Ohr HaChaim asks why the Torah says that Hashem created the world “for six days” instead of stating “in six days.” In fact, it took six days for Hashem to create the world; it wasn't that He created the world to only last for six days?

The Ohr HaChaim answers that, in truth, Hashem created the heavens and the earth to last only for six days. The language of the Torah is

exact. And this is true every week. Keeping Shabbos instills the power for the world to last another six days. Were there to be one Shabbos, without people keeping it, the world would be destroyed.

Accordingly, says the Agra D’Kallah, one can annul anything on Shabbos. This is what the Gemara means that “Anyone who recites ‘V’yechulu’ on Friday night becomes a partner with Hashem in the creation of the world.” What does it mean “A partner” when the world is already standing? Without your recitation of V’yechulu and keeping Shabbos, there would be no world. As such, it becomes that you are an active partner in the creation of the world for the next six days.

In a business, if you ask someone how much percent they have as a partner, they will tell you that it depends on how much percentage they have invested. When we invest in the holiness of Shabbos more and more, then we merit six joyous days following Shabbos.

Rabbi Avrum Mordche Malach

Speed Bumps Ahead

Sometimes when you're driving on a road, whether it be next to schools or in a neighborhood, you have speed bumps.

There was once a person living in a small city and he had never before seen a bump on the road. As such, the first time this man was driving with his friend, and they came across a bump, he began to laugh. “The city here is crazy!” he remarked. His friend asked him to explain what he thought was so insane about having speed bumps.

“Look,” explained the fellow,

“when you drive on the street, you first see a sign that there will be a ‘Bump in a thousand feet.’ Then, you continue onward, and all of a sudden, you have a new sign: ‘Speed hump ahead’. You continue further, and now you have another sign, ‘Speed Hump.’ Then finally you come to the bump itself. The bump has three white lines of paint on the floor in the shape of the letter ‘V’.

“What is going on with this city?” asked the man. “Isn't this taking tax-paying money and throwing it in the garbage? Tons of money is spent on these signs. They need to be printed,

paint them, and then have people put up the signs. Every year also, the city needs to refresh the paint, again and again and again. For half of the price, the city could just straighten out the bump. There would be no bumps and no problems whatsoever.”

Now it was the friend's turn to start laughing. “Do you really think that this bump just came to be by itself? This bump was planned to be there by the city. There is a good reason why the bump is here. But the same city which decided to

place the bump there will provide you with enough signals and support that you can move over the bump without sustaining any damages.”

Sometimes we have a feeling, “Hashem, why should serving You be so hard? Just take away the yetzer hara. Why can't I wake up in the morning and only be exposed to appropriate and holy things? Why can't I go to shul, earn my living and go about my life in a way that doesn't lead me to so many tests and challenges with the internet? Why can't I be surrounded by holy people?” We ask why.

Hashem tells us, “I put these bumps in the road. They are pre-planned. There is a reason for them. But I want to tell you one thing: Your grandfathers and your great grand-

fathers were not faced with these tests like you are. I gave them to you.”

Hashem trusts us with such tests in our life. We are Hashem's army; we are His soldiers. And He tells us, “My dear children, ‘I will give you these bumps in your life, but remember one thing. If I've given you the bumps, that means that I have given you the strength to withstand the damage from these bumps. I am granting you the potential to not succumb and fall because of these bumps. I will give you enough signals. Open your eyes and see how close I am to you.’”

An incredible piece of advice whenever you are on the street or elsewhere and face a test, and you look away, is to maximize the moment. At that moment when you

overcome the temptation and test, you have incredible potential in Heaven. Use that time. Use the moment. Daven for someone who is sick or pray for the success of your children. Every time someone looks away and refrains from looking at something inappropriate, for those minutes, you are the tzaddik ha'dor (righteous person). You have tremendous power at that moment. Take advantage of the opportunity. Close your eyes when you turn your eyes away and say a chapter of Tehillim for someone. You won't believe what this can accomplish.

We are all Hashem's children and He wishes to grant us only good. We can create the means to have those blessings rain down upon us.

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger

The Blind Violinist

We have a tradition that the two months of Tammuz and Av correspond to the right eye and left eye. All of the crying of Tisha B'av is rooted in the verse, “My eyes, my eyes, shed tears” (Eicha 1:6). At this time of the year, it is a very propitious time to fix and repair our eyes.

One of the focuses of Tikun Ha'ainayim (rectifying our eyes by avoiding looking at that which is inappropriate) is when we recite Krias Shema and cover our eyes. We try to connect to the words “Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.” The Sefarim explain that the word ‘Shema’ –spelled with the letters Shin, Mem, Ayin—stand for the acrostic, “Se'u Marom Ein-ey'chem— Lift up your eyes Above” (Yeshaya 40:26). Lift up your eyes to

look at things in a different way.

The truth is that we don't simply have a right eye and left eye. The Pasuk says, “Eye upon eye you will see when Hashem returns to Zion” (Yeshaya 52:8). Eye upon eye—Ayin b'ayin—means that each of us have been given a set of eyes, but we have something that is called Ayin B'ayin, the eye that is within the eye. We look at things on the outside, and we have the ability to look at things from the inside.

When we close our eyes and cover them when we recite the Shema, we are telling Hashem,

Help me to lift my eyes up to see things in a deeper way, to see life in a way that reflects ayin b'ayin. We don't want to look at things with just our physical eyes, but we want to lift our eyes up to Hash-

em (Yeshaya 40:26), to have the eyes of Hashem look down upon us as tzaddikim (Tehillim 34:16), for our eyes to behold Hashem's return to Zion in mercy (Shemonah Esrei), and for our eyes to behold Hashem's majestic sovereignty over the world (Kedusha on Shabbos). We beseech Hashem to help us see what's important in life through our eyes. We pray to have eyes that can see Hashem.

There was a certain Klezmer band that played at weddings in the city of Koritz, led by R' Pinchas Koritzer zt"l. One of the musicians who had recently showed up in town was an old man, and was called Dr Blinder Klezmer, the blind musician. He played the violin beautifully, and was welcomed at many weddings.

When he was dying, R' Pinchas Koritzer went to visit him, and R' Pinchas

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Koritzer revealed afterwards that this Blinder Klezmer was not really blind. He saw very well, in fact. But he was a musician and he said that at weddings when the women sat here and the men sat there, he didn't want his eyes to wander in the wrong direction. He therefore took it upon himself that he would always keep his eyes closed. He lived that way for years, keeping his eyes closed always. R' Pinchas Koritzer in fact remarked that before the Blinder Klezmer passed away, he

remarked that he wanted to see the world one more time. He opened his eyes and looked at R' Pinchas Koritzer, and then he passed away.

The music of this virtuoso violinist came from a holy source. We cannot be on such a spiritual level as the Blinder Klezmer was and close our eyes and pretend that we're not able to see. We can't live that way. But the story tells us that when we work, at least to some degree, to cover our eyes, we can begin to hear music that

we never heard before. We can begin to play music that we never played before. We can begin to see things in a way that we never saw before.

Hashem should help us that we should come to that day when our eyes no longer produce tears, but rather we see Hashem's ultimate kingship with the coming of Mashiach.

Rabbi Eliezer Zeytouneh

Great Advice

Once asked Rav Reuven Feinstein shlita, "How is possible for someone to be a principal, rabbi, husband and father? How can someone balance all these responsibilities to so many people who are reliant on him and he must take care of?" He replied as follows.

"When you are a principal, you are a principal, and when you are a rabbi, you are a rabbi. But when you're a husband, you're a husband. And when you're a father, you're a father. When you are home, do not take those outside phone calls. Give your time and patience to your wife and your children. It's not a question

if you can do this or not, because you can. It's a question of wanting to do it or not."

Wise words for us all.

Rabbi Eliyahu Maksumov

Not a Fit

Imagine you took a look at your friend's latest pair of shoes and your mouth dropped. They look exactly the way you've always imagined your dream pair of shoes to be. Except there's one problem: your friend wears a size 12. You don't.

Would you still be jealous?

They're not your size. You wouldn't want it. You couldn't use it. You couldn't benefit from wearing it.

Everything Hashem gives you in your life fits your size. It is exactly what you need. If you look at everyone else's possessions, and wonder why you don't have what they have, there's an answer: it doesn't fit you. It's not for you. It doesn't fit your

purpose in this life. If it would benefit you, Hashem would have been more than happy to give it to you.

Once we realize this, we can more than cope with all the things we see around us and yet we don't have. The reason: they're not good for us. They're not a good fit.

Something else, something better, will be.

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