

NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM
THE TEACHINGS OF **RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l**

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM
FROM THE PARSHAH

The Kingly Servant

לְבַלְתִּי רוּם לָבוֹ מֵאֶחָיו. (דברים יז, כ)

So his heart shall not rise up above his brethren. (*Devarim* 17:20)

The king is commanded not to be haughty over his fellow Jews, due to his royal status.

What is a king, and why does he have royal authority?

A king does not sit on the throne for his own sake. It is not for his personal pleasure and glory that he rules the kingdom. And this applies not just to the king but to all who rise to high positions.

There is a story in the *Gemara* about two great *Tannaim*, R. Elazar Chisma and R. Yochanan ben Gudgada. They possessed such awesome wisdom that they knew how to estimate how many drops of water there are in the sea. Yet, they were desperately poor. They didn't have food to eat or clothing to wear. Rabban Gamliel sought to appoint

them to high positions so they would be entitled to public stipends.

He sent for them to come, but they refused to come. Due to their great humility, they did not wish to accept elevated positions. Rabban Gamliel sent for them again, and this time they came. He said to them:

Do you think I am giving you prominence? I am giving you servitude, as it says, וַיִּדְבְּרוּ אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר, – “They spoke to him, saying, ‘If today you will be a servant for this people¹.’”²

The true purpose of kingship is to be a

1 I *Melachim* ch. 12.

2 *Horayos* 10a.

servant of *Hashem's* people and to minister to their needs. Serving *Hashem's* beloved children is the greatest merit and prestige and glory that a person can attain. This is what being a Jewish king means.

However, since people often see things backwards and upside-down, the Torah specifically commands the king that “his heart shall not rise up above his brethren.”

Chazal, too, enacted special requirements for the highest public servants in order to humble them more than everyone else. Regular Jews bow when reciting the *Amidah* in the blessings of *Avos* and *Modim*. But the *Kohen Gadol* bows at the beginning of every blessing. And the king, once he makes his first bow, remains bent over until the end of the *Amidah*.

The greater a person is, the more he needs to humble himself.

This idea is not limited to lofty positions of ancient times when we had a king and a *Kohen Gadol*. Also today, there are “kings” among the Jewish people. There was a certain *chacham* who addressed the *Rabbanim* as follows:

“Kings, peace unto you; Kings, peace unto you.”

They replied, “How do you know

that *Rabbanim* are called ‘kings?’”

He answered, “Because it says בְּיָמֵי מְלָכִים – “Through me [i.e., the Torah] shall kings rule.”³

Talmidei chachamim are actually “kings.” And what does their “kingship” consist of? Taking care of *Hashem's* beloved children to the best of their ability.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to the Jewish people, “I have desire for you, because even when I bestow greatness upon you, you diminish your importance before Me. I granted greatness to Avraham, and he said before Me, ‘I am dust and ashes.’ To Moshe and Aharon, and they said, ‘What are we?’ To David, and he said, ‘I am a worm and not a man.’”⁴

This is an awesome point. It tells us the main reason why *Hashem* loves the Jewish people: “I have desire for you, because even when I bestow greatness upon you, you diminish your importance before Me.”

And this point applies to every Jew who learns Torah and keeps *mitzvos*. The more he grows in Torah, the humbler he should be. Then he will be beloved and precious in the eyes of *Hashem* and of all his Jewish brethren. ●

3 *Mishlei* 8:26.

4 *Chulin* 89a.

לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמָת

מוֹדֵד מוֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבוֹרָגָה ז"ל
וּמוֹדֵד בְּרוּךְ זֶאֵב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְרֵאוֹס ז"ל

נִדְבַת נִדְרֵיהֶם ~ עֲטַרְת זָקִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפְאֵרַת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם

Life With Hashem

תַּמִּים תְּהִיָּה עִם ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ: (דברים יח, יג)

Be wholehearted with *Hashem* your G-d. (*Devarim* 18:13)

Go with Him wholeheartedly and hope to Him and do not attempt to know future events, You should rather accept wholeheartedly whatever comes upon you, and then you will be with Him and will be His portion. (*Rashi*)

Rashi is teaching us a wonderful thing here. It is something we should tell ourselves over and over again: If you have *bitachon*, you will merit being with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, under the protective wings of the *Shechinah*.

Someone who trusts in *Hashem* is not anxious about future events. He doesn't worry how he will marry off the children. And if we live this way, we will be with *Hashem* and will be His portion.

In the Lithuanian *yeshivos* during the period of the *Haskalah* there were *bachurim* who were immersed in Torah learning, and there were those who learned a profession and gained general secular education. The worst epithet that could be said about a *bachur* in those days was that he is a *veltischer*, that he is "worldly." Such a *bachur* lived in the big, wide world. Yes, he also studied *Gemara*, he *davened*, he kept *mitzvos*, but where was he? What world was he immersed in? He was a *veltischer*!

The opposite of a *veltischer* is a *HashemYisboracher*. Such a person is under the sheltering wings of the *Shechinah*.

How does a person become a *veltischer*? It happens when he doesn't want to live

his life under the sheltering wings of the *Shechinah*. And why doesn't he want this? Because he lacks *bitachon*. When a person lacks *bitachon*, he is driven to go out to the big, wide world.

There are people who feel they must keep up with the news. When they don't have a newspaper, they look at the neighbor's newspaper. And if the neighbor doesn't have a newspaper, they feel they are out of it. They feel that when they have a newspaper, they are in control of the world's events. They know what people are doing, what people are thinking, what they are eating, how they are making money. But if they just go into the *beis midrash* and ignore all this, who will help them? *Hashem*?! *Hashem* alone will take care of things for me?!

To live under the sheltering wings of the *Shechinah* means to sit down in front of a *Gemara* and stay there. To feel that *Hashem's* embrace is enough to take care of my needs and facilitate my growth and even get me and my children married off. I have only *Hashem*. I am in good hands. I don't need to know what is happening out there in the world. I am עמו ולחלקו – I am with *Hashem* and am His portion! ●

The month of *Elul* is part of *kedushas hazemanim*. It is part of the yearly cycle of holy times. It is by nature an *eis ratzon*, a time of Divine favor, and a time of *rachamim*, Divine mercy.

Many people think that *Elul* is just a time when it is a good idea to get ready for *Yamim Nora'im*. But this is a mistake, as we will explain.

The *Yamim Nora'im* themselves are full-fledged *Yamim Tovim*, and are part and parcel of the essential nature of the world. Over them we bless **המבדיל בין קודש בין אור לחושך וגו' לחול**. Just as the difference between light and darkness is a basic aspect of the world, and is an objective fact – it is not a matter of personal feeling – so is the difference between the holy and the mundane.

The holy days of the year are fundamentally and objectively different from the regular weekdays. What a person can build on the days of *kedushah*, he absolutely cannot build on mundane weekdays.

This applies to *Elul* as well. Although the days of *Elul* are not *Yamim Tovim*, they are indeed days of Divine *rachamim*. This is their essential and objective nature.

We can see this from what the Ramban wrote about *Elul*. He says that the Zodiacal

sign associated with this month is **בתולה** (Virgo, “maiden”) and it shows *Hashem's* special love for the Jewish people at this time.

This reflects the essential nature of the world, because the Zodiacal signs represent the constellations that are seen in the skies above and that are dominant in that month. It's not a spiritual sensitivity that you develop; it is an objective phenomenon based on astronomical facts. It's part of the world's nature as *Hashem* created it.

The fact that *Elul* is a time of *teshuvah* is not something that someone cooked up a couple hundred years ago. The source for it is in *Chazal*, in *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*, where we see that it is actually a tradition handed down from the time that the Jewish people were in the *Midbar*, after leaving Egypt. They did *teshuvah* during the forty-day period that *Moshe Rabbeinu* ascended to Heaven to bring them atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. Then *Chazal* enacted that the *shofar* should be blown for *Elul*.

All this shows that *Elul* is a time of *rachamim* by its very nature. It has a great and tremendous *siyata d'Shmaya* and this is baked into the essential nature of the world. We can build and rectify and turn darkness into light during *Elul* in a way we cannot during the rest of the year, no matter what. ●