

NEFESH SHIMSHON

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

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Go Ask

וכי ימוך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והחזקת בו. (ויקרא כה, לה)

If your brother becomes impoverished and he falters with you, you shall hold him up. (*Vayikra* 25:34)

This *pasuk* speaks about the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*.
The Rambam writes:

We must be more careful with the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* than with all the positive *mitzvos*, because giving *tzedakah* is a sign of a *tzaddik*, a sign of *Avraham Avinu's* descendants.... Anyone who shows mercy, mercy will be shown to him, as it says, ונתן לך רחמים ורחמך והרבך – “He will give you mercy and have mercy on you and increase you”^{1,2}

Chazal say that if a person gives *tzedakah*, he merits increased wealth. *Hashem* blesses his endeavors. And *David Hamelech* says in *Tehillim*:

אשרי משכיל אל דל ביום רעה ימלטהו ה':

ה' ישמרהו ויחיהו ואשר בארץ ואל תתנהו
בנפש איביו:

ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי כל משכבו הפכת
בחליו:

Fortunate is he who gives thought to the needy; on a bad day, *Hashem* will rescue him. *Hashem* will protect him and grant him life, and he will be fortunate on earth, and You will not give him over to the desire of his enemies. *Hashem* will support him on the bed of illness. You will overturn the sickbed of his illness.³

If a person is having a “bad day,” even if he is very

1 *Devarim* 13:18.

2 *Mishneh Torah*, *Matnos Aniym* 1:1-2.

3 *Tehillim* 41:2-4.

sick and likely to die, in the merit of the *tzedakah* that he always gave, *Hashem* will turn around his sickness and he will live.

But if we look carefully at the *pasuk* we will see that it is not enough to just have mercy on the needy. We need to “give thought to the needy” – מְשַׁכֵּיל אֶל דָּל. The *Dubner Maggid* explains what this means:

There are two kinds of benefactors who have mercy on the poor. The first waits for the poor person to come to him and tell him about his difficulties and ask for help. Then he shows mercy on him and gives him a generous donation. The second kind “gives thought to the needy.” He takes the initiative to go and ask the poor person how he is faring and whether he has everything he needs, and what help could be offered to him.

The difference between these two types of benefactors emerges when the poor person falls ill and can’t go to knock on the doors of the wealthy, or if the poor person is the sort who is too embarrassed to request help. The first benefactor only helps when he is asked, and since the poor person can’t come to ask, he might perish in his troubles. But the second benefactor, the one who “gives thought to the needy,” will inquire about the poor person’s welfare, find out where he is, pay a visit to him and attend to his needs.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu responds to these two

types of benefactors according to their own behavior. One *pasuk* says יקראני ואענהו – “He will call out to Me and I will answer him.”⁴ Another *pasuk* says והיה טרם יקראו ואני אענה – “Before they call out, I will answer.”⁵

What’s the difference between the two?

Sometimes a time of trouble comes to the world, and the Heavenly gates of prayer are closed, and *tefilos* are not being answered. Or a person could suddenly fall very ill or get in an accident and be unable to *daven*. The first *pasuk* says that “he will call out to Me,” and only then “I will answer him.” If the person can’t get a *tefilah* through to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, he is in trouble. This *pasuk* applies to the benefactor who waits until the poor person comes to him and asks for assistance.

But if the benefactor’s practice is not to wait for the poor person to come knocking on his door, he rather “gives thought to the needy” and goes to see how he is doing, then the second *pasuk* applies to him. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will come to his assistance even before he prays for it. “Before they call out, I will answer.”

If we show that extra care for the needy and inquire after their needs, then *midah k’neged midah*, *Hashem* will help us in every situation. ●

4 *Bid* 91:15.

5 *Yeshayahu* 65:24.

לעילוי נשמת

אמינו מרת חיה זיסל עלקא בת ר' שמעון דויטש ע"ה

ומרת אסתר רויזא בת אברהם יחיאל דויטש ע"ה

ומוה"ר משה בן אליעזר ע"ה ומרת חוה בת דוד האמבורגער ע"ה

ומוה"ר ברוך זאב בן נפתלי ע"ה ומרת גיטל צביה בת מרדכי קראוס ע"ה

ומוה"ר שמעון בן צבי דב ע"ה ומרת בלומא בת אפרים מעגלו ע"ה

נדבת משפחת מרדכי דויטש

Infinite Effort

אם בַּחֲקָתִי תֵלְכוּ. (ויקרא כו, ג)

If you will go in My statutes. (*Vayikra* 26:3)

We see that if a person works on a certain detail in his *avodas Hashem*, or works on a certain *mitzvah*, he can eventually get it down. He can get a hold of it. Once he acquires it as a habit, he doesn't need to constantly work on it.

It's different with Torah learning. Here, he needs to always work on it and toil over it. Even after extended effort, he never gets to a place where he is used to learning already, and he doesn't need to battle with himself in order to learn.

There is a reason for this. It is because Torah and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* are one – תורה דא קוב"ה – as *Sefer Nefesh Hachayim* phrases it.¹ Torah is infinite

which is why one can never make an acquisition on it and get it down. A person always needs to put effort into learning, until the end of his life.

Chazal hinted to this when they said² that the heritage of Yaakov is a נחלה בלי מצרים, a boundless heritage. *Yaakov Avinu* is the pillar of Torah, and Torah is boundless and limitless.

This is why, even when *Yaakov Avinu* wished to dwell in tranquility, *Hashem* did not grant it to him. It's because Yaakov's special quality is Torah, and it's just not possible to have both Torah learning and a state of tranquility. Torah always needs work and effort because it's infinite. ●

¹ *Shaar* 4.

² *Shabbos* 118a.

PARSHA TOPIC

The Promise of Eretz Yisrael

The Torah begins, as we know, with בראשית ברא. אלקים. "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth." And Rashi notes that the whole story of Creation ostensibly didn't even need to be told. The Torah should have begun with the first *mitzvah*, because the Torah is about *mitzvos*. Why did it begin with the story of Creation?

Because of *Eretz Yisrael*. It's so everyone will know that the world belongs to *Hashem*, as He created it, and He took *Eretz Yisrael* away from

the nations who lived there and gave it to us, the Jewish people.

So the Torah opens with *Eretz Yisrael*, and then moves relatively quickly on to *Avraham Avinu*. When *Hashem* made a *bris*, a covenant, with *Avraham Avinu*, what was the big promise that Avraham received? *Eretz Yisrael*. לזרעך נתתי – את הארץ הזאת. "To your offspring I gave this land."¹

¹ *Bereishis* 15:18.

Count Up

It doesn't say that *Hashem* promised Torah and *mitzvos* to Avraham. The only thing He promised him was the right to *Eretz Yisrael*. When *Avraham Avinu* circumcised himself, he received *Eretz Yisrael* for it.²

Later, *Moshe Rabbeinu* was sent to bring the Jewish people out of Egypt. The goal was to release them from slavery and bring them to *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem told him, at the burning bush, **וָאֵרָדָּה לְהַצִּילוֹ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וְלְהַעֲלוֹתוֹ מִן הָאָרֶץ, הֲהִיא, אֶל אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרוּחָבָה אֶל אֶרֶץ זֶבֶת חֶלֶב וְדִבְשׁ, אֶל מְקוֹם הַכִּנְעֲנִי וְהַחֲתִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי** – “I will descend to save them from Egypt and bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey....”³

Eretz Yisrael once again.

Hashem did mention, in passing, that they would receive Torah and *mitzvos* at *Har Sinai*. However, the Torah was not specified as the purpose of the Exodus from Egypt, but rather as a sign that they are going to *Eretz Yisrael*. **וְזֶה לָךְ הָאוֹת כִּי אֲנִי שֹׁלְחֲתִיךָ, בְּהוֹצִיאֲךָ אֶת הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם** – “And this is the sign for you that I sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d on this mountain.”⁴

Survival in Galus

What we just said needs to be explained. The Jewish people have been in *Galus* for about two thousand years now, without *Eretz Yisrael*. And we have not only survived but been productive. These were not “two thousand years of nothingness.”⁵ A lot of Torah understanding came to be. Many of the *Tannaim* lived after the destruction of *Beis Hamikdash*. All the *Amoraim*,

who gave us the *Talmud Bavli* and the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, lived after the *Churban*. And so did the *Rishonim* and the *Acharonim*. They were all eternally great people, each in his generation.

The whole world, from the six days of Creation, was prepared for the coming of Abaye and Rava, for the Rashba and the Ramban, and also for the Chasam Sofer and the Chofetz Chayim. Within the purpose of Creation was *Hashem's* intention to create R. Akiva Eiger. It's not a *bedi'eved*, it's not since something went wrong and we ended up in *Galus*, that there needed to be all these *Gedolim* during the *Galus*.

On the contrary, the Chofetz Chayim says that when *Mashiach* comes, we will tell him, “Until you came, we made Torah.” The existence and the purpose of the Jewish people is the Torah. So why does the Torah talk about *Eretz Yisrael* all the time?

Sefiras Ha'omer

The Torah tells us to count forty-nine days from Pesach to Shavu'os. But the Torah doesn't actually connect this count either to Pesach or to Shavu'os. It says we count from the bringing of the *Korban Ha'omer*, which takes place on the second day of Pesach, until the bringing of a new grain offering, *minchah chadashah*, which takes place on Shavu'os.

So the Torah doesn't actually tell us the reason for *Sefiras Ha'omer*. It doesn't tell us why we should make this count. We do generally know something about the reason for the *mitzvos* we do. For instance, we know that *Shofar* brings up our remembrance before *Hashem*. We know that *Sukkah* represents the *Ananei Hakavod* in which *Hashem* housed us when we left Egypt. But what about *Sefiras Ha'omer*?

Sefer Hachinuch writes⁶ that the main reason

2 See Rashi, Bereishis 17:2.

3 Shemos 3:8.

4 Ibid v. 12.

5 See Sanhedrin 97a.

6 Mitzvah 306.

we were redeemed from Egypt was to receive the Torah and fulfill it. Consequently, the goodness we attained when we left Egypt came to fruition when we received the Torah at *Har Sinai*. We therefore have a *mitzvah* to count the days from Pesach to the day of *Kabbalas Hatorah*. We thereby show how much we long for this glorious day.

This is surely a wonderful explanation, but it doesn't even state in the Torah that Shavu'os is the time when we received the Torah. And it doesn't say that the counting we do is a preparation for Torah. The *pasuk* speaking of *Sefiras Ha'omer* talks about counting the days between the offering of the *Omer*, which was from barley, to the new grain offering of wheat.

The Greatness of Eretz Yisrael

There are teachings of *Chazal* that seeming contradict each other. It says in the *Mishnah*⁷ that "Torah study is equal to all the *mitzvos* put together." Torah learning is the most important thing.

On the other hand, the *Gemara* discusses which is greater, learning or deeds, and it concludes that "Learning is greater because it brings one to do deeds."⁸ So the benefit of Torah learning is in that it brings us to perform good deeds, to do *mitzvos*. This points to *mitzvah* observance as being the most important thing. That which brings a person to *mitzvah* observance has the greatest value. Along the same lines, *Chazal* say that "the goal of wisdom is *teshuvah* and good deeds."⁹

But if the goal is *teshuvah* and good deeds, why did they say that "learning is greater"?

The answer is that our *avodas Hashem* is mainly about developing a relationship with

Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Whatever it is we may be doing or involved in, we need to remember *Hashem* and bring Him into the goal and purpose of it. *Hashem* created the whole world so we will recognize Him and fear Him. So we will feel that we are standing before the King. So we will fulfill *ואני קרבת אלקים לי טוב* – "For me, closeness to G-d is the greatest good."¹⁰

Sefer Nefesh Hachayim explains how great Torah learning is, and that learning Torah *lishmah* means learning it for its own sake, for the sake of the learning itself.¹¹ However, the goal of learning Torah *lishmah* is so that by attaching ourselves to Torah, we will attain a strong attachment to the Giver of the Torah. This is what it says there:

A person should intend to attach himself, by his learning, to the Torah, to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. That is, to attach himself with all his strength to the word of *Hashem*, to Torah study, and he is thereby truly attached to *Hashem*, so to speak. Because *Hashem* and His Will are one, as it says in the *Zohar*. Every law and every *halachah* in the holy Torah is His Will....¹²

Chazal are presenting us with the proper way to reach the goal of closeness to *Hashem*. One way is direct and practical. By doing good deeds, a person can attain closeness to *Hashem*. This what *Chazal* meant when they said that good deeds are greater. However, the *Gemara* comes to the conclusion that only by means of Torah learning can a person attain this goal. Thus they said that learning is greater. Because it is the greatest means by which a person draws close to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

Attachment to *Hashem* is found more in

⁷ *Peah* 1:1.

⁸ *Bava Kama* 17a.

⁹ *Berachos* 17a.

¹⁰ *Tehillim* 73:28.

¹¹ *Nefesh Hachayim* 4:3.

¹² *Ibid* ch. 6.

Torah than in all the practical *mitzvos*. If not for learning, one would not come to good deeds. It is impossible to draw close to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* without Torah learning. The goal of closeness and attachment to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* can be attained only by putting effort into Torah study. This is what gives practical *mitzvah* observance its power.

Now let's get back to the subject, which is *Eretz Yisrael*. We can understand the point through a metaphor. Let's say a person gives a blessing to his friend that he should "build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*." What is he saying? Does he mean that the house is the most important thing? What about *shalom bayis*? What about the furniture and appliances in the house? What about health and *parnassah*? Why does he emphasize the house?

Because everything is included in "*bayis ne'eman*." When he says the word "house," he means everything that comprises it and goes along with it.

It's the same with *Eretz Yisrael*. It is the "house" that holds within it all the virtues of Torah and *mitzvos*. Just as a house is where one lives practically, including deeds that require privacy, so *Eretz Yisrael* is the place where the life of Torah and *mitzvos* takes place, the life of attachment to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Our attachment and closeness to *Hashem* are an intimate matter. They require a "house." That's *Eretz Yisrael*.

And that's what *Hashem* was saying to *Moshe Rabbeinu*. The time has come to save the Jewish

people and take them out of the slavery of Egypt and bring them up to a "good and spacious land." When we get to *Eretz Yisrael*, we will be able to live a full Torah life. We will dwell there together as one family in one house, so to speak, and there will be perfect *deveikus* between *Klal Yisrael* and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. "And this is the sign for you," this is the sign that such wonderful *deveikus* is possible. The proof is, "You shall serve G-d on this mountain."

The Giving of the Torah, which is the reality of a life of wonderful attachment and closeness to *Hashem*, is the sign of the goal of connection and *deveikus* between the Jewish people and *Hashem*.

This is why the *Avos*, too, were promised *Eretz Yisrael*. Because the goal of it all is to live together with *Hashem*. That requires a "house" to live in, which is *Eretz Yisrael*. However, the actual connection and *deveikus* comes through Torah and *mitzvos*, of course. *Eretz Yisrael* without this is nothing. It's like an empty four walls.

Sefiras Ha'omer counts from the *Omer* offering to the new grain offering. The *Omer* was of barley. Barley is animal fodder. The new grain offering on Shavu'os was of wheat. Wheat is human food. The count-up from animal fodder to human food is the spiritual growth and progression from a natural, animalistic state to a spiritual state. Only humans have the capacity for spirituality and attachment to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Between Pesach and Shavu'os we grow into the spirituality that we were created for. It is the state of *deveikus* to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. ●