

1 Devarim 28:47. 2 Tehillim 100:2. 3 Tehillim 2:11.

The Gemara in *Brachos* (5a) makes a *gezeirah shavah* from two *pesukim* that contain the word “ברית” — one in *Sefer Vayikra* about *karbonos* and one in our *parashah* about *yissurim*:

וְכָל־קֶרְבֵּן מִנְחָתוֹ בְּמֶלַח תִּשְׁבִּית מֶלַח בְּרִית אֱלֹקִים מִעַל מִנְחָתוֹ: (ם)

And all your *korban minchas* salt with salt and don't leave out the salt, the *bris* of your G-d from [being placed] on your *minchas*.⁴

אֱלֹהֵי דְבָרֵי הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה לְכַתֹּב אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב מִלִּבְּרֵי הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־כָּתַב אֶתָּם בְּחֹרֵב: (פ)

These are the statements of the *bris* that Hashem commanded Moshe to ratify with Bnei Yisrael in the land of Moav, besides the *bris* that He had made with them at Chorev.

The Gemara says that the connection between these *pesukim* is as follows: Just as salt sweetens the meat, so too, *yissurim* sweeten the *guf*. The Sfas Emes explains that when we serve Hashem through *yissurim* (as we discussed above), the *yissurim* are in effect helping us serve Hashem, just like the salt helps the *kohen* bring the *korban*. We can also say that *yissurim* “sweeten” the *guf* by minimizing it, because the *guf* has an inverse relationship with the *neshamah*, as we will discuss below, meaning that when the *guf* is up, the *neshamah* is down, and when the *neshamah* is up, the *guf* is down.

Another *pasuk* in the *tochachah* (28:29) says:

וְהָיִיתָ כַּמִּשָּׁשׁ בַּצְהָרִים כַּאֲשֶׁר יִמְשֵׁשׁ הָעוֹר בְּאִפְלָה וְלֹא תִצְלִיחַ אֶת־דְּרָכֶיךָ וְהָיִיתָ אֶךְ עֹשֶׂק וְגוֹל כָּל־הַיָּמִים וְאֵין מוֹשִׁיעַ:

You will grope at midday the way a blind man gropes in the darkness, and you will not succeed your ways; you will be only the victim of wrangling and robbed all the days with no savior.

Why will we be groping in the darkness if we don't use our *middos* to serve Hashem as explained above? The Sfas Emes explains that it is because we, *Bnei Yisrael*, were created to light up this dark world, as it says in *Yeshayah* (42:6):

אֲנִי ה' קְרָאתִיךָ בְּצֶדֶק וְאֶחָזֵק בְּיָדְךָ וְאֶצְרֶךְ וְאֶתֵּנָה לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּר גּוֹיִם:

I, Hashem, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a *bris* as a nation that will be a light to the other nations.

How do we light up this dark world? The Sfas Emes explains that Hashem gave us two tools to accomplish this: Torah and mitzvos, as it says in *Mishlei*, אִור וְתוֹרָה אִור — For a *mitzvah* is a candle and Torah is the flame.⁶ The purpose of the mitzvos is to take the spiritual ideas and have them lead us to do physical actions with our bodies, to pull the light of the Torah (which is also within our *neshamah*) into our *guf*. Through this process, the light of our *neshamah*, which is the light of Torah, radiates and shines through our body to the extent that it can literally

be seen if one knows how to look. That is the purpose of the *neshamah* — to bring light to the *guf*.

The purpose of the *guf* is the opposite — to darken the *neshamah*. As it says in *Koheles*: וְהַכְסִיל בַּחֹשֶׁךְ הוֹלֵךְ — The fool [referring to the *guf*] walks in darkness.⁷ The *guf* is aligned with the general darkness of our physical world. However, with the power of Torah and mitzvos, *Klal Yisrael* can bring intense light and illumination to the physical world, as the *pasuk* in *Yeshayah* (58:10) says:

וְחָפַק לְרֹעֵב נַפְשְׁךָ וְנָפֵשׁ נַעֲנָה תִשְׁבִּיעַ וְזָרַח בַּחֹשֶׁךְ אוֹרְךָ וְאִפְלָתְךָ בַּצְהָרִים:

And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light will rise in [the] darkness and your darkness will be like daytime.⁸

Conclusion and Practical Takeaways

The Sfas Emes concludes with a sobering observation that is all the more true now over a hundred years later, but which also provides great encouragement for us. He writes that now, when we are in *galus*, even though we have the Torah and we toil in Torah, we do not *feel* the light of the Torah, and as it says in the *pasuk* above, we are groping for the light of Torah like a blind man groping in the darkness. However, we cannot let that reality of our times stop us or discourage us. We need to keep groping in the darkness for the light of Torah, because we know that when a blind man is groping in the darkness, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* helps him find his way. And for this we daven in *Tehillim*:

גַּלְעָיִי וְאַבְיָטָה נִפְלְאוֹת מִתּוֹרָתְךָ:

Open my eyes [Hashem], so that I can see the wonders of Your Torah.⁹

These ideas will help us in our preparations for the upcoming Yamim Nora'im and equip us to focus on using our *middos* to serve Hashem by: 1. Having more *simchah* from our *ruchniyus* than we do from our *gashmiyus* (*ahavas Hashem*); and 2. Being more concerned about our *ruchniyus* than our *gashmiyus* (*yiras Hashem*); for example, instead of worrying about whether we are going to win that new client, we should be worrying if we are learning enough each day.

B'ezras Hashem, in doing so the light of our *neshamos* will be stronger than the darkness of our *guf*, such that the light of our *neshamos* will shine brightly out of our bodies for all the nations to see, lighting up this dark world.

Let us not be discouraged by the *yeridas hadoros* and the state of our current *dor* in that process. As the Sfas Emes says, all we need to do is desire the light of the Torah — and Hashem will help us find it.

4 Vayikra 2:13. 5 See also 49:6. 6 6:23. 7 2:14. 8 See also 60:2-3. 9 119:18.