

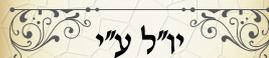
Parashas

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ג' שבט תשפ"ה

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קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ

רבי נמליאל הכהן

רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

במעלת זיכור החומר

The advantage of refining the material

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טיב המערכת

ויקד העם וישתחו

The people bowed and prostrated themselves

A man was informed that he had won a grand lottery and was now wealthy, no longer needing to worry about his livelihood for the rest of his life. The man gathered his entire family and began to thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for His abundant kindness. He naturally expressed gratitude for the good news he had just received, and then he started listing all the past goodness that Hashem Yisbarach had bestowed upon him. Likewise, he thanked Hashem Yisbarach for his wonderful family and for the good children with whom he had been blessed. Those around him were astonished and asked: "We understand why you are thanking HaKadosh Baruch Hu for all the kindness He has shown you from birth until today, but what do all these expressions of gratitude have to do with this particular moment?" The man replied: "Until now, I was always preoccupied with my livelihood and did not pay attention to all the goodness that the Creator Yisbarach grants me at every moment, nor to all the blessings that surround me, all of which come from Him. But now that I have received this good news and my mind has settled, I see and understand that even until now, I was filled with goodness and kindness from the Creator Yisbarach."

Moses gathers the elders of Israel and conveys to them the commandment of the Creator to slaughter the Karban Pesach. He informs them that through the blood of the Karban Pesach, they will be saved from the plague of the firstborn. However, the commandment of the Karban Pesach will remain 'לחק לך ולבניך עד עולם' - 'as a statute for you and your children forever,' (12:24) and even when 'תבואו אל הארץ אשר יתן ה' לכם' - 'you come to the land that Hashem will give you.' (12:25)

When the people of Israel heard these words, what did they do? ויקדו - 'And the people bowed and prostrated themselves.' (12:27) Rashi explains: 'For the tidings of redemption, the coming to the land, and the tidings of the sons they would have.'

We must understand—this gratitude for the news of redemption is entirely understandable, as is the gratitude for entering the land. But gratitude for the tidings of children? What are they thanking for now? After all, they already had children until now, and even more than what is natural, as the women gave birth to six at a time! So what is this gratitude about?

The generation of knowledge teaches us a profound principle about gratitude. A person might think that he needs to give thanks only for a great lottery win or for rare and exciting news. But the truth is that one must express gratitude for everything, whether big or small, that happens to us every single day. As our Sages expounded: "For every single breath, one must praise the Almighty." Bereishis Rabbah 14:9)

ויקרא פרעה אל־משה ויאמר לכו עבדו את ה' רק צאנכם ובקרכם יצג גם־טפכם ילך עמכם: ויאמר משה גם־אתה תתן בידנו זבחים ועלות ועשינו לה' אלקינו: וגם־מקננו ילך עמנו לא תשאיר פרסה כי ממנו נקח לעבד את ה' אלקינו ואנחנו לא־נדע מה־נעבד את ה' עד־באנו שמה: (ויכד-כו)

Pharaoh summoned Moshe and said, "Go, serve Hashem, only your flock and your cattle will stay put, even your children may go with you." Moshe said, "Even you will give in our hands feast-offerings and elevation-offerings, and we will offer them to Hashem, our G-d. And our livestock, as well, will go with us, not a hoof will be left, for from it we will take to serve Hashem, our G-d, and we will not know how we shall serve Hashem until we arrive there." (10:24-26)

As an introduction to our discussion, we will quote from the holy sefer Or HaMeir (Parashas Shemos 'Amnam'), and these are his sacred words:

"Indeed, if your soul asks, how is this possible? A physical man, with a dense and material body, eating and drinking like an animal, attending to his physical needs—how greatly should he tremble and fear, and how should awe rise upon his head, to the extent that all his limbs should quake within him, when he contemplates drawing upon himself the great and holy Name, Hashem Elokim, the full Name over the full world, and declaring that He is his God?"

And even greater than this, we find concerning our holy forefathers, who were in the land—Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, the patriarchs of the world. The holy sefer Reishis Chochmah (Sha'ar HaKedushah, Chapter 16) raises the question: *How could HaKadosh Baruch Hu associate His great Name with mere flesh and blood, as in 'the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov'? They ate and drank and engaged in physical needs—how is this fitting for the honor of the King of kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu?* The essential conclusion from his sacred words is that they sanctified, purified, and refined their bodies, both internally and externally. Even in eating and drinking,

they served the Creator Yisbarach with holiness and purity, refining their bodies to such an extent that they became as the holy ones above, and thus it is appropriate to associate divinity with them.

And how fitting it is for a person to seek counsel for his soul, to understand how to refine his body! All is achieved through our holy Torah, for the light within it illuminates for him the path where light dwells. Corresponding to this, the Torah alludes: 'תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים' - "You shall serve God" (*Shemos 3:12*)—to make from *Elokim* your *Elokecha* (your God). And how is this possible? 'עַל הַר הַזֶּה' - "On this mountain" (*ibid.*)—that is, through the giving of the Torah on this mountain, Mount Sinai, it becomes fitting for you to serve from there *Elokim* as *Elokecha*, as discussed. And scrutinize this well, and you will understand."

From his words, you learn that even if a person constantly engages in Torah and mitzvos, he does not thereby render himself fit for the Creator Yisbarach to dwell upon him unless he also purifies his physical body. For materiality acts as a barrier that separates a person from the levels of holiness. Therefore, as long as a person indulges himself freely in eating and drinking according to his desires, he will not merit to draw upon himself the supreme holiness and will still be considered a body separate from the Supreme Master.

In order to transform the physical into the spiritual, a person must enter into a great struggle with his *yetzer*. For the latter exerts its greatest force to prevent this transformation, as the physical aspect of a person renders him *a slave to his desires*. One who seeks to sanctify himself beyond what is merely permitted is essentially striving for *freedom* from materiality and is considered *a fugitive from his master*. Undoubtedly, his master—the *yetzer*—will employ every possible strategy to bring him back under its control. There is no wisdom or counsel that can overcome this physical inclination other than for the warrior against his *yetzer* to wage an all-out battle, behaving like a rebellious servant who raises his hand against his master without fear or hesitation. This battle must be waged with *self-sacrifice*—meaning, with a firm resolve to nullify

his entire being before his Creator and to abstain from any bodily or material desire that does not honor his Creator.

Then, Hashem will grant him success in conquering his coarse inclination, all barriers separating him from the supreme holiness will be removed, and he will merit to ascend and delight in the radiance of the Divine.

These concepts are hinted at in the *posuk* before us. It is well known from the holy *seforim* that *Pharaoh* represents the *yetzer hara*. When *Pharaoh* saw that the *Bnei Yisrael* yearned deeply to serve their Creator and wished to leave the abominations of *Egypt* through this service, he devised a scheme against them and said, "Go, serve Hashem—only your sheep and cattle shall remain" (10:24). That is, he declared: *From now on, I will not prevent you from serving your Creator through Torah, prayer, and any action done for the sake of Heaven. However, your 'sheep and cattle'—which symbolize physical eating and material indulgence—must remain as before, in their original state, and you shall not seek to abstain from eating for the sake of mere pleasure.* This wicked man imagined that as long as the physical body continued to derive pleasure as before, *Bnei Yisrael* would not merit the hidden light. And when they would fail to attain the sacred light, they would eventually retreat and once again become attached to the abominations of *Egypt*.

However, *Moshe* did not agree to this, for 'הַחֵכֶם עִינָיו בְּרֹאשׁוֹ' - "the wise man's eyes are in his head" (*Koheles 2:14*), and he discerns the scheme of the *yetzer*, which pretends to be good and upright—appearing to release its subjects from bondage while in truth intending to keep hold of them without their awareness. Since the wise person recognizes this, he opposes the notion devised by the *yetzer* and clarifies: "You, too, shall give into our hands sacrifices and burnt offerings, and we shall offer them to Hashem, our G-d" (10:25). In other words, we do not accept this condition. Rather, we seek to subdue all matters related to material pleasures until, in the end, we merit removing all barriers that separate us from spirituality. Then, we will be privileged to delight in the radiance of the *Shechinah*, and eating

will no longer be a burden upon us. On the contrary, at that point, the *posuk* (*Mishlei 16:7*) will be fulfilled in us: 'בְּרִצּוֹת ה' דְּרָבִי' - "When Hashem favors a man's ways, even his enemies will make peace with him." Even you—the *yetzer*—will aid us in eating solely for the sake of Heaven, transforming eating into an act akin to *burnt offerings and sacrifices*. For concerning this, *Chazal* stated (*Menachos 97a*): "A man's table atones for him." Our eating will be like an offering brought upon the *Mizbeach*.

However, this matter depends on one condition, which is: "And also our livestock shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind" (10:26).

That is, we must not leave even the slightest aspect of personal enjoyment in our hearts regarding our *livestock*—meaning, our material possessions and pleasures. Rather, our entire intention in the act of eating must be solely for the sake of Heaven. Not even a single *hoof* of personal pleasure should remain when we approach the service of Hashem through eating. Instead, our eating must be performed with complete and pure intent for Heaven, like a burnt offering that is entirely consumed upon the *Mizbeach*.

And *Moshe*, the *chacham*, explains his reasoning for rejecting the compromise proposed by the *yetzer*, saying: "And we shall not know with what we are to serve Hashem until we arrive there" (10:26). That is to say, as long as we remain accustomed to material pleasures, we have not yet merited removing the barriers that separate us from our Creator. Due to the absence of divine light, we are unable to truly comprehend how to serve Him in an inner and authentic manner. For as long as a person maintains an attachment to materialism, his soul is entangled in impurity, and he does not attain clarity of mind. Consequently, there is a flaw in his Torah study and prayer, as they are influenced by ulterior motives and personal interests. Only "when he arrives there"—after he fulfills his obligation and accustoms himself to minimizing indulgence—will he merit the lights of holiness. Then, his understanding will be enhanced, enabling him to refine his path in serving his Creator.

And let us say Amein ונאמר אמן

I read the story previously published in this section about a man who forgot to recite the *Birchot HaShachar* (morning blessings). At the end of the Tefillah, he heard another man reciting the berachos with great intent, which reminded him that he himself had forgotten to say them, and thus he merited to recite the *Birchot HaShachar*.

This reminded me of a similar incident that happened to me when I was in Meron on a Shabbos morning. After finishing my Tefillah, I left the cave at 11:30 AM, heading towards the apartment I had rented. In the middle of the road, a man on his way to the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai stopped me and asked, "Would you mind answering Amen to my *Birchot HaShachar*?" At that moment, I didn't quite understand—why would someone on their way to *daven* in the cave stop a man on the street when he could certainly find plenty of people inside the cave who would gladly respond *Amein* to his berachos?

Nonetheless, I seized the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah and responded *Amein* to his berachos. Afterward, he thanked me for the special patience I had shown him. And then, in that very moment, I suddenly remembered that I had not yet recited *Birchot HaShachar* myself!

Since I wanted people to answer *Amein* to my berachos, I had waited until I reached the cave—but once there, I completely forgot about it! And so, HaKadosh Baruch Hu reminded me in this way!

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‘ואתה נתן להם את אכלם בעתו’

You give them their food in its proper time

The overdraft in my bank account was suffocating me. I was extremely worried that my checks would bounce, and I knew that my credit card payment was also due soon. I desperately needed a sum of money to cover all these expenses.

What can a Jew do in such a situation if not turn to our Father in Heaven with all his heart and plead for His salvation, which only He, Yisbarach, knows how to orchestrate?! And so, I did just that—I prayed with all my heart.

As I was still praying, my phone rang. On the other end was a close friend asking me for a favor: "Would it be possible for me to transfer a sum of money to your bank account, and you, in turn, will transfer it to a certain person?" I happily agreed to do this act of kindness—after all, as long as my bank account wasn't collapsing, I was glad to help. And so, I followed through with the request.

He transferred the money to me, and I then forwarded the sum to the second individual as I had been asked. Suddenly, I remembered that the person to whom I had transferred the money manages a large *gemach* (a free-loan fund). It dawned on me that he could easily lend me the amount I desperately needed—if only Hashem willed it! Perhaps this entire sequence of events was orchestrated just to help me?!

I approached the man with the envelope I had just given him on behalf of my friend and asked if there was any chance I could receive a loan. Without hesitation, he agreed and ensured that I received the full amount I needed under very favorable terms—saving me from a terrible financial crisis!

I should note that normally, in order to qualify for a loan from his *gemach*, one must wait in line and go through various delays. But now, since *hashgacha* had sent me to deliver a significant sum from my friend to him, it ended up benefiting me as well! .טז

The Holy Rebbe from the Mishkenos Haro'im neighborhood, Rav Binyamin Rabinovitch, zt"l, Dayan of the Eida HaChareidis in Yerushalayim

Rosh Chodesh Shevat is the *yahrzeit* of the holy Rebbe from Mishkenos Haro'im, Rav Binyamin Rabinovitch, zt"l, a *dayan* and *posek* of the Holy City of Yerushalayim who greatly influenced me. He passed away about twenty years ago. Here is a small collection of stories about him drawn from the treasure troves of his *sefarim* and *shmuessen*.

May his *zechus*, along with the *zechus* of his Torah and sanctity, which emanated from the heart of Yerushalayim to all of Yisrael, serve to bring us Hashem's salvation and compassion. Amen.

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The Importance of Stories of Tzaddikim

My teacher and master, Rav Binyamin Rabinovitch zt"l, told me that in his youth in the Old City, he made every effort to absorb the wisdom and spirit of the Yerushalayim elders of the previous generation.

He recounted that his regular custom was to *daven Shacharis* in the historic and magnificent *kloiz* of the early Ruzhin-Sadigura chassidim, named the Rav Nissan Beck's Shul after the esteemed philanthropist Rav Nissan Beck, zt"l. Rav Nissan Beck had built this grand *shul* under the directive of his holy Rebbe, the saintly Rav Avraham Yaakov of Sadigura zt"l, son of the holy Rebbe of Ruzhin, zt"l. This *shul* was adorned and beautified with great splendor and elegance.

(Unfortunately, when the Arabs, *yimach shemam*, invaded the Old City in 1948, they destroyed this magnificent *shul* in their rage and hatred, desecrating the glory of Yisrael that had been a thorn in their eyes.)

In the old *kloiz* building, alongside the large main *beis midrash*, additional rooms and small *shatiebelach* served the worshippers. The chassidim would gather after *Shacharis* to drink a *le'chaim* in one room, rejuvenating their spirits with food and drink after hours of toil and exertion in Torah and prayer. This gathering included some of the elder chassidim who had merited to see the holy countenance of the Rebbe of Sadigura, and they would recount sacred stories of the tzaddikim they had the privilege to be close to.

Rav Binyamin zt"l, recounted to me that he witnessed, on several occasions during these gatherings, chassidim holding handkerchiefs to discreetly wipe away tears that streamed from their eyes out of profound emotion and inspiration when hearing these stories of the tzaddikim.

While recounting this memory, Rav Binyamin would be moved to tears, his holy eyes shedding burning tears from the intensity of his emotions. He would recall the fiery sparks when hearts opened to *teshuvah* and good deeds during those exalted chassidic gatherings.

This teaches us a moral lesson: When we hear or read stories of the righteous, we should derive a personal lesson and consider how we can apply it to ourselves, each person according to his soul. As we have discussed

many times, these stories should not be merely pleasant and engaging tales but should leave a positive impression and inspire us to action.

Repeating Old Stories of Tzaddikim

My father, the esteemed Rav Levi Hakohen *zt"l*, author of *Ma'adanei HaShulchan*, once told me that when his father, the *mekubal* Rav Gamliel Hakohen *zt"l*, head of the Kishinev Yeshivah, was about to start his deep *shiurim* in his holy yeshivah, he would always first relate stories of the tzaddikim to open the heart to Torah. As the Gemara states (*Shabbos* 30b): "Rabbah, before he began his *shiur* to the *rabbanim*, would cite something humorous, causing the *rabbanim* to laugh. Then he would sit in trepidation and begin the *shiur*." The commentaries explain that this was done to prepare the heart for Torah study. As Rashi explains: "Before discussing *halachah*, one must begin with something humorous."

Rav Gamliel the tzaddik often repeated the same story multiple times, each time with renewed vigor, discovering new *mussar* lessons from the story. Yet, there were *talmidim*, who, in their limited understanding, would occasionally remark that they had already heard the story and knew it well, asking for a new tale instead—failing to grasp the renewed insights and depth revealed each time he retold it.

But he marveled at their comments, asking: "Would you say the same about studying the Gemara—that we've already learned this and why repeat it? Just as you understand that we must review and study the lesson in the Gemara many times, so too, must we revisit and deeply internalize these stories."

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Protecting the Honor of Torah

A story from my teacher, as related by Rav Binyamin Rabinovitch, *zt"l*:

During World War II, as the accursed Nazis, *yimach shemam*, advanced in their campaigns, nearing the gates of the Holy Land, Field Marshal Rommel, *yimach shemo*, and thousands of his troops reached El Alamein in Egypt. The enemy boasted that once they reached Alexandria, they could

conquer the entire Eretz Yisrael in a single lunch hour and carry out a decree reminiscent of Haman's to destroy, kill, and annihilate the Jewish people, *chas veshalom*.

At this terrifying moment, all the Jews of Yerushalayim gathered in great distress for a monumental day of prayer and repentance in the hall of the Meah Shearim Yeshivah.

At this assembly, the holy Rebbe, the Shomer Emunim *zt"l*, delivered a fiery address to arouse the hearts of Yisrael to repentance below, hoping to awaken Divine mercy above to rescue them from the terrible decree. He stood and spoke for an extended time, as it says of Mordechai Hatzaddik (*Esther* 4:1), **וַיִּזְעַק וַיִּעֲקֶה גְדוּלָה וַיִּמְרָר - He cried out in the city, a loud and bitter cry.**

Rav Binyamin *zt"l*, recounted that he stood among the throng gathered in this sacred assembly. Among them was the elderly and frail Rav Ben Zion, son of the *mekubal* Rav Tzvi Michel Shapira *zt"l* (known as Rav Ben Zion ben Rav Hirsch Michel). Despite his advanced age and weakness, Rav Ben Zion gathered all his strength to attend the prayer assembly. Rav Binyamin, then a young *avreich*, stood beside him to assist and ensure he was not pushed in the immense crowd that packed and overflowed the hall.

Amid the Shomer Emunim's impassioned words of rebuke and inspiration, a disturbed individual began shouting and disrupting the speech. He cried out, "How much longer will you burden the *kehillah*? Finish the speech already!" This caused a minor commotion. It was an apparent effort by the *sitra achra* (the forces of evil) to sow discord and prevent the assembly's prayers from achieving their intended effect during such a dire time.

Rav Binyamin recounted that amidst this disturbance, the elderly Rav Ben Zion rose from his seat, turned toward the crowd, cupped his hands around his mouth, and cried out with all his strength from the depths of his heart: "Oy! Where is the honor of the Torah?!"

However, due to his extreme frailty, his words were barely audible

despite all his efforts. Still, he persisted and did not rest, fulfilling his responsibility to protest for the honor of the holy Torah, which had been disrespected *chas veshalom*.

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The Power of Torah and Holiness

On another occasion, when I spoke with Rav Binyamin about the Holocaust, we discussed how the decree was annulled, *baruch Hashem*, and the black clouds dispersed. The battles came to an abrupt halt close to the borders of the Holy Land, and the hand of Hashem was evident in driving out the fleeing Germans with great miracles. Many spoke of the great wonder that was clear and visible to all, how the land's inhabitants were saved while millions in Europe died on the altar of *kiddush Hashem*.

It is well known from several tzaddikim who spoke of the merit that stood for the inhabitants of the Holy Land—that their numerous prayers and supplications were accepted. Regarding this, Rav Binyamin said to me: "What did you think? That Eretz Yisrael is like any other land? That Yerushalayim, the Holy City, is just another city (*noch a shtetele*) among the cities of the world?"

In those times, before intruders came and defiled it, Yerushalayim was saturated with holiness and purity, filled with *chachamim* and *sofrim* who devoted their lives to Torah and service amidst hardship, casting aside all worldly vanities and living in supreme sanctity.

Did not King Shlomoh *a"h*, the wisest of all men, say (*Kohelles* 2:9), **וַיִּגְדַּלְתִּי וַהֲוֹסַפְתִּי מִכָּל שֶׁהָיָה לִפְנֵי בִירוֹשָׁלַם אֶף הַכְּמֹתַי לִי וַעֲמָדָה לִי - I grew and increased in wisdom more than anyone before me in Yerushalayim, and my wisdom stood by me? And Chazal explained (*Koheles Rabbah* *ibid.*): "Rav Chama bar Papa said, 'All the Torah I learned here, amidst affliction, remained with me.'"**

The abundance of Torah studied amidst hardship and pain by the inhabitants of Yerushalayim was what stood by them, saving them from the wicked Nazi oppressor. Through this *zechus*, they emerged from darkness to light and from subjugation to redemption.