

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



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פרשת עקב תשע"ה

All for the Good

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Above Our Understanding

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi once fasted for many days and *davened* that he be granted a revelation of **Eliyahu HaNavi**. His request was fulfilled and Eliyahu appeared to him, saying, "Whatever you desire, I will fulfill."

Reb Yehoshua asked to be allowed to join him, to observe what he did and to learn from him.

"But you will not be able to handle the sights that you will encounter," Eliyahu warned him. He also stipulated that Reb Yehoshua not question anything he did, and if he did, he would not be able to continue with him.

Together they headed out, until they reached a tiny, dilapidated cottage. There they were eagerly welcomed by a poor man and his wife, who treated their guests with the best sleeping accommodations and meals that they could manage. In the morning, after the prophet and the sage took their leave, Eliyahu HaNavi stood next to the couple's only cow and *davened* that it should die. Reb Yehoshua gasped. Was this the only reward for the poor couple's graciousness – to kill their only source of livelihood?! However, recalling the condition, and wanting to continue on with Eliyahu HaNavi, Reb Yehoshua was forced to quell his amazement.

After traveling until evening, they finally reached the home of a wealthy man, who neither greeted them nor invited them to share any crumb of his plentiful provisions. The following morning as they were leaving, Eliyahu HaNavi *davened* that the wall of the rich man's home that had collapsed be reconstructed. Once again Reb Yehoshua was astonished, but said nothing. However, after experiencing a number of such episodes, he was no longer able to contain himself and he asked Eliyahu for an explanation.

Eliyahu then revealed to him that it was decreed Above that their gracious hostess was to die that very day, and he had *davened* that their cow be taken instead – a tremendous kindness to the couple. The wall of the greedy man was positioned above a precious treasure, which would now remain hidden from his eyes.

It thus turned out that not everything was as it appeared to be...

(סדר הדורות ערך ר' יהושע בן לוי)

The **Shaloh** teaches that one must take great

care not to say anything that implies a complaint about the acts of *HaShem*, such as, "How did *HaShem* do such a thing?" This is a serious *aveira*, for one must know that all occurrences are justified and righteous.

(של"ה שער האותיות שתיקה)

Confusing Moments

Two *chassidim* were once traveling to the **Baal Shem Tov** when they found themselves slowed down behind the local landowner's wagon that was taking its time rambling down the road. One concerned *chossid* turned to the other, "If we're going to continue along at this pace, it's highly unlikely that we'll reach *Mezhibuzh* before *Shabbos*."

"Don't worry," his friend assured him, "I have no doubt that whatever *HaShem* does is for the good."

As they were still talking, they reached a very narrow passage that was blocked by a broken-down wagon carrying jugs of milk. The landowner jumped down and ordered its driver to move the jugs to another wagon and to move away the wagon that was blocking the road. His orders were followed and the path was cleared. Soon after they continued on their way, the landowner moved his wagon to the side of the road and the wagon carrying the *chassidim* was able to pass by and continue on its way.

"Now I see that you were right," said the *chossid* to his companion. "If the landowner had not been in front of us, we would have had to wait until the milk wagon was fixed. The driver would not have moved the jugs for us as he did for the landowner!"

(אסדר לסעודתא ח"א ע' 157)

Every year, on his way from Petersburg to the annual fair in Nizhni-Novogorod, a certain wealthy *chossid* of the **Tzemach Tzedek** of **Lubavitch** would first stop by his *Rebbe*, and then in *Dobromisl* to visit his childhood *melamed*. He would leave him a sum of money and then continue on his way.

One year the *chossid* was delayed, and he left home only after the fair had already begun. Nevertheless, he stopped in *Lubavitch*, but intended to skip his visit to *Dobromisl*, and asked the *Tzemach Tzedek*'s opinion on this.

"Since this has been your custom for many years," said the *Rebbe*, "it is not advisable to diverge from it."

Heeding this advice, the *chossid* traveled to visit his *melamed*, who greeted him with a warm welcome. Being in a great hurry, however, he planned to leave immediately after *Mincha*, but while he was *davening*, the sky darkened and a fierce storm set in. The *melamed* invited him to remain at his home overnight, but the *chossid* insisted on keeping to his original schedule. However, when he was then beset by a severe headache, he had no choice but to agree.

The following morning, the *chossid* awoke feeling very ill, suffering with high fever. A doctor was summoned from nearby *Orsha*. When he was diagnosed with typhus, a message was immediately sent to his family, and to the *Tzemach Tzedek*, so that he should *daven* on the *chossid*'s behalf.

After eight difficult weeks, he was finally well enough to travel to *Lubavitch*. The fact is, however, that he felt a sense of grievance toward the *Rebbe* who had advised him to visit the *melamed*, for it had been on the way to *Dobromisl* that he had contracted the fever. Indeed, as soon as he entered the *Tzemach Tzedek*'s study, he cried out, "*Rebbe*, why did you send me to *Dobromisl*?"

The *Tzemach Tzedek* replied by quoting the *Gemara*: " 'A man's legs may be depended upon to take him to the place to which he is summoned' – that is, to where *HaShem* has ordained that his life should end. The word for summoned (*demisbo'ei*) can also be understood to mean *daven*. That means that 'A man's legs may be depended upon to take him to the place where there is someone who is able to *daven* for him.' You owe your life to the *tefilos* of your *melamed*!"

(סיפ"ח זוין תורה ע' 71)

Consider This

Is it *wrong* to question *HaShem*'s actions, or is it *foolish*?

Does it always turn out for the good?

Sparks of Greatness

כ"ה מנחם אב - The Yeshuos Yaakov

Reb Yaakov Meshulam Orenshtein was a posek and one of the great *rabbonim* in Galicia. He was born to a family who had held the *rabbonus* of Lvov for 150 years, and eventually he too was appointed as *rov*. He battled fiercely against the *maskilim* and even placed a *cherem* on one particular leading figure. He is known by the name of his *sefer* on *Shulchan Aruch*, the "Yeshuos Yaakov." He passed away on the 25th Av תקצ"ט (1839).

The *Yeshuos Yaakov* once saw a group of people idly chattering on *Shabbos*. The *rov* told them that it is preferable for them to go to sleep, for it says that the *roshei teivos* of *Shabbos* is "Sheina beShabos taanug," taking a rest on *Shabbos* is pleasurable. One fellow from the group answered, "Yes, but *Shabbos* can also stand for 'Sicha beShabbos taanug,' talking on *Shabbos* is pleasurable! "True," the *rov* responded, "however

it can be applied here that which the *possuk* says 'Leiv chacham limino,' the heart of the wise is on his right side, meaning that he puts the dot on the right, making a shin for 'sheina.' While 'Velev kesil lismolo,' the heart of a foolish one is on his left, for he puts the dot on the left, forming a letter sin to read the word *sicha*..."

The *Yeshuos Yaakov* was not a *chossid*. Once, a man who came to his *shul* and davened by the *amud* for a *yahrtzait*, said *kaddish* as is the *nusach sford* and the way of *chassidim*, adding the words 'Veyatzmach purkanei' (that *Moshiach* should come soon). The *gabbaim* of the *shul* made a whole scandal out of it. When the *Yeshuos Yaakov* heard what was going on, he cried out bitterly, "Ribono Shel Olam! It is high time that you send us *Moshiach*, when we will once and for all forget about this 'Veyatzmach purkanei'..."

Library Sparks

In this week's *Torah* portion, *Ekev*, Moshe recounts the story of the Golden Calf and the breaking of the first set of Tablets.

After praying for another 40 days and nights, *Hashem* commands Moshe, "Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first...and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke."

Hashem then commands the Jewish people to build Him a sanctuary, "so the nations will know that the sin of the Calf has been forgiven."

Our Sages teach that one of the factors contributing to the sin of the Golden Calf was the great quantity of gold in the Jews' possession.

Because they were unable to withstand the temptation, one might think that after their sin, *Hashem* would forbid them the use of gold for all time. Yet we find that the exact opposite occurred: the very first material mentioned in the building of the sanctuary -- the purpose of which was to atone for the Golden Calf -- is gold!

"The world was not worthy of the use of gold..." our Sages explain. "It was created solely for the purpose of the sanctuary and the Holy Temple."

After being brought into existence for this reason, permission was then granted for mankind to utilize gold for other purposes as well.

This is but one example of the principle that everything in the world is created to serve a heavenly purpose. "Everything created by *Hashem* in His world is only created for His honor," the Mishna teaches.

Hashem grants man the free will to choose how His creations are to be used -- to fulfill the

purpose for which they were created, or, *Hashem* forbid, to do evil.

Gold, created solely for use in the sanctuary and Temple, was utilized by the Children of Israel for their idol-worship.

The gross misuse of the gold, however, did not alter its original purpose one iota.

Hashem has no desire to destroy His world simply because some people are foolish!

Furthermore, the fact that *Hashem* allows man the capacity to utilize His creations for evil adds to His honor. For human nature is such that when a person is confronted by obstacles, inner strengths that would not otherwise have been revealed are brought to the fore, strengthening his resolve in the service of *Hashem*.

This fundamental principle applies not only to things that were created during the Six Days of Creation, but to modern discoveries and advancements in technology that are constantly being invented.

These too, are part of the Divine plan, and are also "discovered" solely for a Heavenly purpose. The true objective behind all of creation, in reality, is one and the same -- to enhance the service of the Creator of all things.

The fact that some people choose to utilize these means for corrupt purposes does not detract from their original intent. On the contrary, when a Jew utilizes modern technology for the purpose of spreading *Torah* and *mitzvos*, he elevates these tools to their true perfection, for which they were discovered in the first place.

Halacha Sparks

Consenting To Serve As Chazan

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

If one is davening with a minyan where no gabbai is present to send someone to the omud, should he wait until being asked by one of the mispalelim to serve as chazan, or should one approach the omud on his own?

In general the *Torah* urges a person to flee from honor and positions of authority. On the contrary, *Chazal* say: "hedyet kofetz b'rosh" -- a coarse individual jumps to lead.

The practice in times of old, (which is still followed by some communities) was that the congregation would appoint a man of stature as a permanent *chazan* to lead the *davening* year round. *Halacha* states: One who is not a permanently appointed *chazan* should decline somewhat before consenting to serve as *chazan*. He should not, however, refuse extensively. Rather, the first time he is asked he should refuse the honor entirely, as if to say "I am unworthy of this." When he is asked a second time, he should prepare himself as if he desires to rise and accept, and the third time, he should rise and accept.

The reason why one should first refuse is because the *Shulchan Aruch* outlines many credentials required for a *chazan*, and it is arrogant to appear as if he immediately agrees that he possesses those qualities². However, today when we don't have permanent *chazanim* and therefore don't insist that the *chazan* have special credentials (at least during the weekdays) there is no honor in serving as *chazan* and therefore no arrogance in immediately consenting. Hence contemporary *poskim*³ write that there is no reason to first refuse.

When one sees that no one wants to *daven* before the *omud*, he should not refrain. On the contrary, it is a *mitzva* to approach the *omud* even without being asked⁴, as it is a kindness to the congregation and it avoids making them wait (*tircha detzibura*). This is all the more necessary if there is a concern that someone who is in a hurry may go to the *omud* and rush the *davening*⁵.

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