

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



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פרשת כי תבא תשע"ה

Heartfelt Pleading (I)

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

Simple Tehillim

One Shabbos, several unlearned farmers and merchants joined the *seuda* of the **Baal Shem Tov**, who showered them with much attention. The *tzaddik* gave the wine remaining in his *becher* to one, another was given slices of *challa*, and some had the *zechus* of receiving fish and meat from his plate. Watching the Baal Shem Tov's conduct and seeing the attention he was giving to these simple folk, perplexed his *talmidim*.

Shabbos day, the Baal Shem Tov as usual, had the *seuda* alone with his *talmidim*. The unlettered guests had their own hurried *seuda* and then returned to *shul* to read *Tehillim*. At the *seuda* of the Baal Shem Tov by contrast, he delivered a profound *maamar* steeped in his unique blend of erudition and mysticism. Inspired by the profound teachings of their *Rebbe*, the *talmidim* began singing a deep contemplative *niggun*. During this profound time of *deveikus*, while feeling so greatly uplifted, some of them were also struck with thoughts of relief that this time they did not have to share their *seuda* with the previous nights ignorant guests, still in wonderment as to the affection shown to them by the Baal Shem Tov.

Hardly had the thought crossed their minds when the *tzaddik* became deeply serious, and began to describe the uniqueness of the *avoda* of a simple, sincere *Yid*. The *talmidim* resumed the *niggun* while the Baal Shem Tov sat deep in thought. Suddenly he opened his eyes, and told his *talmidim* that each of them should place his right hand on his neighbor's shoulder. He then told them to close their eyes, and he closed the circle by placing his holy hands on the shoulders of those near him. The *talmidim* suddenly felt themselves transported to the highest worlds by sweet music. This was the music of familiar *pesukim* of *Tehillim*, interspersed with requests in informal *Yiddish* that sprang spontaneously from warm and humble hearts. The *talmidim*, overcome by the devout sincerity of these *tefilos*, sat entranced and trembling, their eyes closed, tears coursing down their faces. They wished that they too could attain such heights.

When the Baal Shem Tov removed his hands, breaking the circle, the music was no longer to be heard. The *talmidim* were instructed to open their eyes and continue singing. Soon after, the *tzaddik* explained that the spiritual bliss that they had experienced had been aroused by the *Tehillim* being recited in the next room by the simple *Yidden*. Their

words, springing from the deep faith that is their very essence, were bringing *HaShem* indescribable pleasure.

(קובץ מכתבים אודות אמירת תהלים ע' 194)

The **Rayatz of Lubavitch** related: Reb Ber, the father of Reb Mendel the *gabbai*, was a simple *Yid* who constantly recited *Tehillim* while delivering milk. At his *bar-mitzva* he had been by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, who instructed him to say the entire *Tehillim* daily, as well as while he traveled. Years later, before his *chassuna*, the *Rebbe* reminded him, "Remember to say *Tehillim* at all times."

He once told the **Tzemach Tzedek**: "I wake up every day at a quarter to 12 a.m. and read *Tikkun Chatzos*, *Tehillim* and *Zohar*. I don't understand what I'm reading, but saying it all gives me such pleasure! I'm a wagon-driver, so I know that a man can travel only when the horses are harnessed..."

When I related the above to my father, the *Rashab*, he remarked: "The world stands on the *Tehillim* of these simple *Yidden*. The pleasure it brings *HaShem* is beyond description."

(ס"ה ש"ת ת"ז ע' 142, ס"ה ש"ת ת"א ע' 86)

Reading with Emotion

The reading of *Tehillim* has tremendous power, repelling evil decrees from a person, his family and even his entire generation, and generously drawing down *beracha* and *hatzlacha*. There is a tradition that a person in need of a *yeshua* should recite the entire *Tehillim* every day, humbly and without interruption, and he will be saved. Also, nothing protects a person from evil more than the *Kaddish* recited after the *tzibbur* says *Tehillim*.

However, these qualities apply to those who read *Tehillim* as it ought to be read, word by word, with a *niggun* of gratitude and of request to *HaShem*. We should put our heart into understanding those *tefilos*, even though we are unable to perceive their true depth, for they were revealed to *Dovid HaMelech* by *Ruach HaKodesh* to ward off trouble. Nevertheless, a person who does not understand them can also merit their positive effect, provided that they are recited slowly and carefully.

(פלא יועץ ערך תהלים)

The **Rayatz of Lubavitch** writes: Whoever says *Tehillim* every day, pleasantly and deliberately, brings protection and salvation to his door. His words are precious in the eyes of *HaShem*. The *malochim* embrace and kiss the letters of his words

and carry them before His throne with joy and awe, where they intercede on his behalf, on behalf of his family, and on behalf of his entire community.

(אגרות קודש מוהרי"צ ח"ה ע' רמב)

In the days of czarist Russia, *Yiddische* children were often snatched and taken off to be trained in the militia. Many such six- and seven-year-olds from various cities were once conscripted as a group, and their parents, wailing fathers and mothers, followed them until the officers drove them away.

At some point during their lengthy trek, the children were temporarily confined in a fortified house. They began to talk about their unfortunate circumstances, how they were being forcibly taken with the intention of eventual conversion, with no opportunity for escape. They knew that if they were to fake illness, they would be abandoned or poisoned. The tearful parting of their parents pained them as well. Then they reminded each other: "At home, whenever there was a *tzara*, people always said *Tehillim*. There's no greater calamity than what is happening to us, so let us *daven*."

However, they had no *seforim* and didn't know any *kapitlach* of *Tehillim* by heart – but from their days in *cheder* they remembered the tune to which they used to sing their way through the *pesukim* of *Tehillim*. Their cries pierced the heavens, and through a quick turn of salvation, they were all returned to their homes.

(שער יששכר תקע בשופר אות טו)

In the past, even ordinary *chassidim* had a *primiyus* to them. Even those who did not understand the meaning of the words said *Tehillim* with an inner sincerity that was superior even to the *Tehillim* with tears that is said today.

(ס"ה ש"ק קין ת"ש ע' 101)

Consider This

What new understanding did the *talmidim* of the Baal Shem Tov learn about the simple *Yidden*? Had they never before heard them recite *Tehillim*?

Sparks of Greatness

Reb Nosson Adler - כ"ז אלול

Reb Nosson Adler was born on the 10th of Teves, תקי"ב (1752). He was an outstanding *gaon* with a phenomenal memory, who taught and spread Torah throughout his entire life. He was also a great *tzaddik*, known for his righteousness and piety. He learned from the *Pnei Yehoshua* and Reb Avraham Abush of Frankfurt, and was the primary teacher of the *Chasam Sofer*, who bore witness that the "paths of heaven" were more clear to his teacher than to the *malachim*. He passed away on the 27th of *Elul* תקס" (1800).

When Reb Nosson was on his way to Boskovitz, where he would be taking the position as *Rov*, the wagon in which he was traveling got stuck in the snow and mud. The *goyishe* wagon-driver went to get reinforcement from the next village, to help

pull the wagon out, and he returned with a pair of sturdy oxen. When Reb Nosson saw that he was going to harness the oxen together with the horses, he jumped out of the wagon so as not to transgress the prohibition of *kilei beheima* (using a combination of animals). Reb Nosson was so excited that he started dancing in the snow, full of joy that he merited fulfilling such a rare *mitzvah*.

The hospitality and generosity of Reb Nosson knew no bounds, to the extent that he wrote on his house that everything is ownerless, ensuring that no one would ever transgress the *aveira* of theft because of him. All week long, his house was always bustling with people coming to learn and take advice from him.

Library Sparks

This week's Torah portion, *Ki Savo*, opens with the *mitzva* of *bikurim* -- first fruits. "You shall put it in a basket...and the priest will take the basket out of your hand."

Closer study of the Torah's laws of *bikurim* reveals that the presentation of the basket (usually made out of wicker) to the *kohen* was an integral part of the *mitzva* itself.

Interestingly, while the fruits that were brought were only the choicest (and only selected from the seven varieties with which the land of Israel is praised), the basket that was used for them was made of a common material.

This seeming contradiction in the *mitzva* of *bikurim* contains an allusion to the descent of the soul from the higher spheres and its incarnation in a physical body down below.

The fruits of the *bikurim* are symbolic of the soul; the basket is the corporeal body. Handing the basket to the priest represents the purpose for which the soul made this drastic descent.

In general, the first fruits are symbolic of the Jewish people; more specifically, of the G-dly soul as it exists Above, completely transcendent of the physical world.

G-d's plan, however, is for this rarefied soul to become en clothed in a body, a coarse and lowly "vessel" which contains it, as it were.

This vessel makes it difficult for the soul

to express its connection with G-d, even to the point of obscuring its true mission in the world. Again, just as in the *mitzva* of *bikurim*, the holy and superior "fruit" is contained and even constrained within the confines of a simple and unpretentious "basket."

Chasidus provides the reason for this, explaining that the descent of the soul into a physical body is a "descent for the purpose of ascent": It is precisely through its sojourn on the physical plane, having to confront the difficulties of this world and overcome them, that the essence of the soul is revealed and a higher level of spirituality attained -- much higher than could ever be reached without experiencing this descent in the first place.

In principle, "fruits" alone are not enough; the objective of the soul's descent is "fruits within a basket."

The soul's ascent is accomplished through the performance of practical *mitzvos*, which can only be done with the help of the "vessel" -- the physical body. For in truth, the soul was already filled with love and awe of G-d before it came down into the material world; the only change it experiences upon finding itself in a body is that it can now do physical *mitzvot*, something that was previously impossible. Thus the soul is rendered capable of elevating the physical world and turning it into holiness -- the very intent of all of creation.

Halacha Sparks

Kavana for Shema

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

What intention is one supposed to have while reciting Shema?

Before one recites *Shema* one should have the intention that he is about to fulfill the *mitzvas asei* of *Krias Shema*¹.

One should ideally concentrate while reciting all three passages of *Krias Shema*. However, the minimum requirement is to concentrate during the recital of the first *posuk* of *Shema* and *Boruch Shem*, because they express one's acceptance of *Hashem's* Kingship. If a person recited *Shema* and did not concentrate for the first *posuk* or *Boruch Shem*, he must go back and recite them again².

The minimum intention required in order to fulfill the obligation is to understand the meaning of what he is saying, i.e. for *Shema* that he accepts that *Hashem* is our G-d and is One without any 'partners', and for *Boruch Shem* that His Sovereignty is forever³.

As with the rest of *davening*, one should⁴ have in mind the specific *kavanas* for *Hashem's* names: For *Adnai* that He is master of the world that was, is and will be, and for *Elokeinu* that He is strong and mighty and that He is omnipotent in both the Heavenly and the terrestrial realms⁵.

Chazal say⁶: Whoever prolongs his enunciation of the *Daled* in the word *echod* will have his days and years prolonged. The *Ches* should also be prolonged somewhat, so that one can mentally affirm the sovereignty of *Hashem* over the heaven and earth (the *gematria* of *Ches* alludes to the seven heavens and the earth). The *Daled* should be prolonged more, so that one can contemplate on how *Hashem* is alone in *His* world and rules over all four directions of the world.

It should be noted that the actual enunciation of the *Daled* should not be drawn out, for whenever the final letter of a word is not vocalized by a vowel mark below it, its enunciation should be cut short. Rather, one should think at length about affirming *Hashem's* sovereignty in the four directions while enunciating the *Daled* and afterwards, before proceeding with *Boruch Shem*.⁷

Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk writes⁸ that one should think of how he is prepared to sacrifice his life for *Hashem's* unity and he should imagine in his mind a scenario of a *goy* actually torturing him for his refusal to deny *Hashem's* unity.

1. שו"ע הרב סי' ס"ה.

2. שו"ע הרב סי' ס"ה.

3. שם. וראה אג"מ בה"ע הבא.

4. לכא' כוונות אלו אינם לעיכובא אפי' בפסוק ראשון דק"ש, וכ"פ ובאג"מ או"ח ח"ה סי' ה. אבל בעל הא"א מבטשאטש בסיפור תפילה לדוד ניסח תנאי שיאמר לפני התפילה שכל פעם שמזכיר השמות כוונתו לפי הכוונות, וכותב שתנאי זה אינו מועיל לפסוק ראשון דק"ש.

5. שו"ע הרב סי' ה"ס וג'.

6. ברכות י"ע ב.

7. שו"ע הרב סי' ס"ה וז'.

8. צעטל קטן אות ב.

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