



Parshat Beshalach: Glorifying the Glorified

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

We say in the song of Az Yashir, “Zeh keli v’anvehu.” (This is Hashem and I will glorify Him.) Rashi notes that the root word of v’anvehu is *naveh*, a home. In effect we are saying, “I will make for Hashem a sanctuary where He can rest.” Another meaning of v’anvehu is to beautify. This is the source for *hiddur mitzvah*, beautifying a mitzvah. A third meaning is the compound word *vani v’hu*, I and Him. This refers to the mitzvah of “V’halachta b’drachav,” to follow in Hashem’s ways.

The Sifsei Chaim asks, when the Jewish people said Zeh Keli, they reached unimaginable lofty heights. Why did they need the extra level of v’anveihu? We learn a fundamental lesson. Inspiration must immediately be concretized. One must ask oneself, “How can I implement this into my life?” Likewise the Ramban writes in his letter to his son, “When you finish learning search what you can put into action.” So too Rav Nachman said, “Turn your Torah into *tefilah*.” Pray that your learning should become a part of your life. It’s wonderful to be inspired with Zeh keli, but we need the practical aspect of v’anveihu as well.

Rashi explains V’anveihu, Ani v’Hu. When we follow in Hashem’s ways and emulate His attributes, we can reach a level of *u’bo sidbak*. (And you shall cleave to Him.) This is

the deeper meaning of V’ahavta l’reicha *komocho*. When I am kind to others, not only am I emulating Hashem but on a deeper level, I’m attaching myself to the divine part of the other person and thereby achieving *deveikut b’Hashem*. The Alter of Kelm taught that someone with bad midot cannot acquire Torah and cannot come closer to Hashem. If you’re trying to elevate your relationship with Hashem but your *middot* are lacking, there will be nowhere to put Torah and *avodah*.

V’anvehu also means to glorify Hashem through beautifying the mitzvot. The Ohr Daniel says, if we take care to look our best for people, how much more so when we stand before Hashem. He notes, if you want to know where a person stands in *avodat Hashem*, see how beloved the mitzvot are to him. See how much time, effort, and money he will invest in it. Rav Wolbe points out that *hiddur mitzvah* is also between man and man. For example, if you are writing a note show respect to the recipient by using a clean sheet of paper or spell checking your email. Anything you do for Hashem should be the best. If you build a shul, let it be nicer than your home. Give a poor person the finest food you’ve got. Rav Dessler writes that we must be wary with *hiddur mitzvah*. We must not let ourselves get lost in the external trappings of the mitzvah and forget its core essence. Rav Wolbe explains that Zeh Keli is reaching an awareness that there’s nothing else in this world but Hashem.

And in that moment of intimacy it becomes clear, “Ani v’hu,” let me be like Him. When we’re so filled with *deveikut*, every mitzvah becomes filled with passion and beauty. Our challenge is to feel that closeness of Zeh Keli. Then we can fulfill v’anveihu.

Naveh, a resting place, is the same letters as hon (treasure). The Gemara says, “Kabed et Hashem m’honcha.” We must honor Hashem with our special gifts. Rav Tzadok Hakohen notes that everyone has an area in which they are in the category of melech. This area is made up of our talents, coupled with our unique life situations and experiences. David hamelech said, “Shiru l’Hashem shir chadash.” Every person’s song is unique. When you can tap into your inner song there’s no room for despair because you realize you have something to offer no one else has. When we take what is special about ourselves and uplift it for Hashem, we create a dwelling place for Him. Life will send us many challenging moments. But within the pain we have to find our melody, that which make us unique, and create a special song for Hashem. *Shabbos Shira* reminds us that Hashem is waiting for this personal song. Experiences are like wings. They may be heavy and weigh us down, but ultimately they’re meant to teach us to fly, to make us soar to lofty heights we would never have reached without them.

Parshat Beshalach: Emancipation of the Mind and Heart

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The Midrash writes, Hashem tells Israel, “Remember the day of Shabbat as you should remember the Exodus of Egypt.” Just as the seven days of creation culminate with Shabbat, so too the first and last of the seven days of Pesach are compared to Shabbat. How do we understand this? Additionally, we see that the redemption was accomplished by both Moshe and Aharon. However, once the Jews left Egypt, only Moshe remained as the sole leader. What happened to Aharon? Thirdly, why is Moshe praised as a “*chacham lev*,” for performing the mitzvah of taking Yosef’s bones out of Egypt, while the Jews who were also involved with the mitzvah of taking gold and silver from their Egyptian neighbors, are not

called so.

To answer this, the Avnei Nezer notes that when the Jews took the gold and silver, they received a certain level of holiness for performing the deed. In contrast, Moshe’s mitzvah did not generate any additional *kedusha* and therefore it was considered a greater act of divine service. This teaches us that doing a simple mitzvah with alacrity and enthusiasm is more beloved to Hashem than a mitzvah that comes with an automatic spiritual high.

The Shem Mishmuel explains that the souls of the Jews in Egypt were a reincarnation of the

souls of the *dor hamabul* (generation of the Flood) and the *dor haflaga* (tower of Bavel.) *Dor hamabul* faltered with sins of the heart—immorality and theft. *Dor haflaga* sinned with the mind—they rebelled against Hashem. In Egypt, the Jews rectified the sins of the heart. They exemplified themselves in areas of morality. Moshe represented the power of the mind while Aharon symbolized the heart. The Exodus was in a sense taking the Egyptian mentality out of the Jews. For that, both Moshe and Aharon were needed to liberate both the corruption of *lev* and *moach*. However, the redemption came too early. The Jews had not managed to rectify their idolatrous mindset. Once they were already freed, Aharon’s role in the Egyptian

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exile was completed as the hearts of the Jews were already pure. At the splitting of the sea, when the Jews saw the downfall of Pharaoh and his henchmen, their idolatrous mentality collapsed. "And they believed in Hashem and in Moshe his servant." In a sense, Moshe engineered this and the Jewish people only participated in Moshe's mindset and knowledge of Hashem. The Shem MiShmuel explains that sometimes a person needs the elevated connection of a *tzaddik* to inspire him to greater heights. However in order for the

tzaddik's inspiration to have lasting power, the person himself must toil and sweat to acquire these levels. And indeed we see that although the Jewish people reached enormous heights at the Yam Suf, it was not a *tikkun gamor* (a complete fixing) and they sinned with the Golden Calf shortly after.

What is the double Shabbat referred to on Pesach? The first day is a celebration of the heart which was rectified in Egypt. The second Shabbat signifies the mind of Moshe, absolute

belief in Hashem, which was temporarily achieved at the Yam Suf. The third Shabbat will be when Mashiach will come and we will celebrate the final rectification. Jewish faith and belief in Hashem will then be rooted deeply in the heart of every Jew, acquired through thousands of years of their own toil, effort, and suffering. It is then that the Jewish nation will reach the level of *chaya* and *yechida*-the ultimate point where both mind and heart, now completely rectified, will merge in an overwhelming symphony and ode to Hashem.

Tu B'shevat: Focus on Eretz Yisrael

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Mishna tells us that there are four periods in the year that are called Rosh Hashana. Tu b'shevat is the New Year for the trees. What is the meaning of this quasi-holiday? When the Temple stood the Jews needed a time to count the life of a tree in order to determine *Shemita* and *Neta Ravai*, and Tu B'shevat is the day chosen. However, clearly there is more to this unique day.

The Torah tells us, "*Ki ha'adam eitz hasadeh*"-Man is compared to a tree which consists of roots, a trunk, branches, and fruit. The Ramchal writes that the early generations before Avraham were involved in defining reality. It was the era of roots. Avraham gave us the trunk-the visible side of spiritual projection. Unlike spiritual thinkers of his time, he saw that this world could be uplifted. Not everyone followed his path and from Avraham's tree sprouted branches and sub-branches which still remained part of one reality. In essence, we are all one people and we draw our spiritual energy from one source. If we look at it from this perspective, Tu B'shevat is in many ways the Rosh Hashana of our identity. A person's roots are his past, yet some of these roots are meant to be our inherent *emunah* which the Baal Hatanya says is the ultimate definition of every Jew. There is something within us that desires connection and *tikkun* and that part of us cannot be denied. We must become more aware of this point of *emunah* inside of us. If we make it real, it will show itself in our thought pattern and actions. This is the trunk because if one looks at a tree that is all one can see -the trunk and branches, not the roots. Fruit doesn't benefit the tree, it benefits others. Yet every part of the tree works in consonance to produce fruit. Similarly, ones good deeds are ones fruit. They are what affect others. Additionally, a person's speech is his fruit. In Hebrew, "*Niv*" can mean either

expression or bud. To a large extent a person is what he says.

On Tu B'shevat we pray for a beautiful etrog. Why are we thinking about Sukkot now? The four species taken on Sukkot reflect four different parts of the body. The lulav is the spine, the hadassim are the eyes, the aravot are the lips, and the etrog is the heart. The heart bridges the mind to the body. It is the most central part of a person. It is easy to believe intellectually, but true *emunah* is found in the heart. So when one prays for an esrog, one is really praying for a straight heart, for passion and for a profound connection with our Father in heaven.

Tu B'shevat is the yom tov of Eretz Yisrael which is the etrog, the heart of the world. There is no place in the universe where the spiritual flow from above is as visible or accessible. Therefore there is a custom to partake of the *Shivat Haminim*, the seven species, of Eretz Yisrael, on this day. Wheat - Wheat relates to the mind which is an integral aspect of our connection to Hashem. It takes human intellect to produce flour. Indeed we find in Gemara that a child begins the process of becoming a thinker in the human sense, when he can eat wheat. Barley-In early times, barley, was used as animal fodder. It is a tragic mistake to dismiss the animal self. What we are meant to do is uplift physicality by letting our souls tell our bodies who and what to be.

Figs-The Gemara tells us that the *eitz hadaat* was a fig tree. Figs are usually eaten for pleasure. The pleasure of creativity is almost equaled by the pleasure of destruction. Our challenge is to bring both pleasures into the process of growth.

Pomegranate-All Jews are potentially as full of

mitzvoth as a pomegranate. Every Jewish soul is constructed in a way that the mitzvoth will resonate within, if reached and addressed in the right way. It is impossible for one Jew to keep all the mitzvoth since some mitzvoth are only applicable to Jews in specific circumstances. The idea is that we are one entity and that the collective of Klal Yisrael can fulfill all the mitzvoth.

Grapes-For a vineyard to flourish, it needs the right soil, climate, and rain. The soil is Eretz Yisrael, the vines are the Jewish body that contains a spark of the merit of our forefathers, the rain is Torah which runs from a high place downward and gives us life, and the sun is the light that shines through the mitzvoth.

Dates-A *tzaddik* is compared to a date tree. It grows straight and sprouts leaves on top. What defines a *tzaddik* more than anything else is his straightness. We all have different inclinations. Some are inclined to be givers, which can lead to manipulation and crossing lines. Some believe in justice and punishment which can lead to corruption and cruelty. Being a *tzaddik* means maintaining a balance. This can only come from working on ones middot. Life is about reaching that perfect equilibrium.

Olives-Olives must be pressed to extract their oil. Until one applies pressure, olives have little value. So too, who we are in essence, comes forth not in times of ease, but in times of challenge.

Tu Beshavat is a holiday of joy, a time to contemplate who we truly are. May we merit to see the fruits of our labor- our children, our words, and our deeds, reflected in the *emunah* implanted within us.

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