

# Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

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שבת פליחות פרקי אבות ג

פרשת כי תבא תשע"ח

## Do a Mitzvah with enthusiasm

ולא תסור מקל-הדברים אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום ימין ושמאל ללכת אחרי אלהים אחרים לעבדם: (כח יד)

"And you do not turn away from any of the words... right or left, to follow gods of others to worship them." (28:14) The Torah is relating a powerful message: If one turns aside even slightly from the words of Hashem, this is considered actual idol worship. But ask how can this be? The Seforno on the Chumash interprets this "to follow other gods" as being a reference to one who performs mitzvos by rote, out of habit, or in response to peer pressure אנשים מלומדה. Seforno explains that complacency in mitzvah observance is tantamount to rebellion against Hashem. One must serve Hashem with conviction and full commitment at all times, not only when it is convenient to do so. Worship of Hashem should be carried out with enthusiasm and devotion.

There is a famous vort from Hagaon Rav David Povarsky z"l of Ponivizh on this subject. In Parshas Toldos we see that Yitzchak and Rivkah both stood in supplication to Hashem, beseeching Him to grant them a child. Hashem listened to Yitzchak's prayer because there is no comparison between the prayer rendered by a *tzaddik ben tzaddik*, the righteous child of a righteous person, and that of a *tzaddik ben rasha*, righteous child of a wicked person. Why? One would think that Rivka, as the righteous child of a wicked parent, *Besuel*, had attained a greater achievement than Yitzchak, whose roots were meritorious. Rav Povarsky, cites a pasuk in Yeshayah 29:13 as basis for his explanation. The Navi says, ויאמר ה' יען כי נגש העם ויאמרו רדני וילבו רתק ממני ותהי יראתם אתי מצות אנשים מלמדה: "And the Lord said: "Because this people has come near; with their mouth and with their lips they honor Me, but their heart they draw far away from Me, and their fear of Me has become a command of people, which has been taught." This gives the impression that the critique of the people was their complacency in serving Hashem. In other words, they put on Tefillin and observed Shabbos and all of the other mitzvos. The problem was that they did not display any enthusiasm. They acted by rote; the manner that they put on Tefillin yesterday was the same way in which they put it on today - without excitement or fervor. While this may be reason to critique them, why does the Navi say that their fear of Hashem was deficient? Does a lack of excitement connote a lack of fear? Furthermore, is it possible that a generation of righteous, observant Jews was guilty of complacency in mitzvah performance? Rav Povarsky explains that when one emulates the observance of his predecessor or parent, without adding any creativity of his own,

he is guilty of complacency. A Jew must grow spiritually. To do this, he cannot retain the status quo of observance. The people basically continued observing as they and their predecessors had in the past. They remained carbon copies of those before them without initiating anything of their own. In this weeks parsha we see ה' אלקיך מצוה לעשות את-החקים האלה ואת-המשפטים ושמרת ועשית אותם בכל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך: (דברים 26: 16) *This day, the Lord, your God, is commanding you to fulfill these statutes and ordinances, and you will observe and fulfill them with all your heart and with all your soul.* (26: 16) Rashi explains: Every day, you shall regard the commandments as if they are brand new, as though you are just today being commanded regarding them!- [Tanchuma 1] When Mitzvos are done *with all your heart and with all your soul*, in these Mitzvos will elevate the person to higher levels in spirituality.

## The spelling of "our voice" has a lot to teach

ונצעק אל ה' אלקי אבותינו וישמע ה' את-קולנו וירא את-ענינו: (כו ז)  
So we cried out to Hashem, G-d of our fathers, and Hashem heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.(26:7) It is interesting to note that from the word "voice" which is missing a "vav" we can learn something heart rending as to how the Yidden used to call out to Hashem in the midst of their agony. Rav Meir Premishlaner explains it through an insight on an earlier posuk in Shemos (2:23): וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבדה ויצעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלקים מן היום: "the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed from the labor, and they cried out, and their cry ascended to God from the labor.(Shemos 2:23) What did the king's death have to do with the Yiddens' sighing? Would one not have thought that the moaning of the Yidden was a common component throughout a life of bitter servitude and brutal slavery? But the Egyptians were so brutally cruel that they forced the Yidden to suppress any full-throated groans, whose voicing could have eased their pain ever so slightly. Any agonizing crying was *forbidden and punishable*! But the picture changed rather suddenly when the king died. This provided an opening for the Yidden to give vent to their cries, which were drowned out by the Egyptians' lamenting their sovereign's death. The posuk from Shemos indicates this: *the children of Israel sighed from the labour* -- and NOT because of the king's death. Any earlier "*krechtz*" had to be internal, and without voicing. So our "voice" was only audible to Hashem. Since the voice was held inside, the word for it in the posuk is spelled lacking a letter "vav". (תפוחי חיים - פאנעט קארלסבורג)

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As we stand before Rosh Hashana and Hashem will decree a judgment for all creatures, it is self understood that the more merits one has, the chances for reaping a good Year are better. By casting merits constantly, they will turn up in the dire time of need. Shlome Hamelech says in Koheles 11:1 **שְׁלַח לַחֲמֹךְ עַל כָּרֶב הַיָּמִים תִּמְצָאֶנּוּ** Which means: Always be ready to do a good turn even if you don't expect a reward for it. For, some day, you will surely find your reward waiting for you.

The following story from Chazal is a very good illustration of this saying, Bar Kappara, one of the Tanaim who lived at the time of Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi, was once walking along the seashore of Caesaria, when he noticed a shipwreck in the distance. As he stood and looked, he saw a man swimming from the wreck towards the shore. The man seemed to be making good headway and was obviously a good swimmer. But as soon as he reached land, he almost collapsed with weariness. Bar Kappara went forward and gave him a helping hand. The man staggered ashore and begged him to assist him. Bar Kappara took him home, clothed him, fed him and offered him some money so that the man went away refreshed and encouraged.

Some years later, the Jews of Caesaria found themselves in a predicament with the local authorities and decided to send a petition to the Governor. They chose Bar Kappara to go and speak on their behalf.

Bar Kappara prayed to Hashem to guide him aright and help him succeed in his important mission. When Bar Kappara reached the Governor's palace, he asked for permission to see the Governor, having come on a very urgent matter. When his request was granted, he was ushered into the presence of the Governor. To his great astonishment, Bar Kappara recognized him as the same man whom he had once saved and helped on the shores of Caesaria.

"What can I do for you, my friend?" the Governor greeted him warmly, recognizing Bar Kappara as his onetime "friend in need." Bar Kappara earnestly begged the Governor to use his authority in helping the Jews, on whose behalf he had now come to plead.

The Governor listened carefully and patiently to the story Bar Kappara unfolded before him and then said: "I will gladly do this favor for you, my friend, because when I was in such a desperate position you helped me to the maximum of your ability without asking for or expecting any reward. Because of your unselfishness and kindness to me, I shall now help your suffering brethren at your request."

Bar Kappara had brought a large sum of money as a gift to the Governor from his fellow-Jews. The Governor, however, gave the money back to Bar Kappara, saying: "Take this money back as a gift from me now. For although the sum of money you gave me was not as great as this, to me it meant everything at

the time of my need. You may return to your brethren and tell them that I am helping them out of gratitude to you, and take my blessing with you."

Bar Kappara joyfully hurried back with the good news. Great was the rejoicing among them at Bar Kappara's good tidings, and they all acknowledged how true was the saying of Shlome Hamelech: **שְׁלַח לַחֲמֹךְ עַל כָּרֶב הַיָּמִים תִּמְצָאֶנּוּ** "Cast thy bread upon the waters for you shall find it after many days."

***The grandfather's deed reaps a reward for his granchild***

R' Gershon Blau traveled to America in the summer of 1995 to collect funds for several family members who were suffering from severe illnesses. One of the people to whom he was referred was the Konig family, who were staying in a bungalow in the Catskills. The Konigs welcomed him graciously and, after listening to his difficulties, Mr. Konig gave him a check, along with his blessings for a speedy recovery for the entire family. Once outside, R' Gershon peeked at the check. His eyes widened in disbelief. The check was for \$1800! He was impressed and deeply grateful. R' Gershon spent that Shabbos in the Catskills so he could solicit more people. On Shabbos afternoon, R' Gershon met the Konig family as they strolled outside of their bungalow colony. They greeted him warmly, and introduced Mrs. Konig's father, Mr. Schorr, who was spending Shabbos with them. As they walked, R' Gershon was left walking alone with Mr. Schorr. They spoke, and discovered that both of their families originated from Pshevorske in Galicia. When R' Gershon told Mr. Schorr that his name was "Blau," Mr. Schorr said, "Are you related to R' Dovid Blau?" R' Gershon confirmed that indeed R' Dovid was his great grandfather. Mr. Schorr was overcome. "I don't believe it! This is amazing! We are family!" Mr. Schorr called his daughter and son-in-law over and explained to everyone. "R' Gershon is our relative. His great-grandfather was my grandmother's brother. R' Dovid Blau came to America before the war. He prospered and brought over his own family. When he saw the dangers threatening European Jewry, he brought over 17 other families to America, including ours. He found us apartments, provided food and clothing, and set us up in business. We all owe him our lives." Mr. and Mrs. Konig noted that they had somehow sensed they were related and had therefore given him a more generous donation. They asked R' Gershon to return for Havdalah after Maariv. It was then that they gave him another check - for \$10,000. "It's too much," said R' Gershon. "I can't thank you enough!" Mrs. Konig replied, "On the contrary; it is we who must thank you for allowing us, in this small way, to show gratitude to your great-grandfather for saving our family."

(Visions of Greatness, Vol. 2 a C.I.S. Publication)

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