

# Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah insights translated and revised by Duvid Pinchas Rose, based on the Yiddish יהודה פרדס by Yehuda Zvulun Klitnick

פרשת יתרו  
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## Klal Yisroel: purified to receive the Torah

וְהָרַחֵם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשְׁמַח בְּיָמֵינוּ כְּשֶׁנִּשְׁמַח בְּיָמֵינוּ (הַפְּסֵקָה: יֵשׁ יְיָ)

The entire Mount Sinai smoked because the Lord had descended upon it in fire, and its smoke ascended like the smoke of the kiln (19:18)

Why does the Torah employ the metaphor of a smoking kiln to make the events at Sinai easier to understand? The Gemara (Pesachim 30b) teaches: והתורה העידה על כלי חרס שאינו יוצא מידי דופיו לעולם

"An earthenware vessel which has absorbed [chametz] in its walls: ... the absorbed matter cannot be expelled by boiling water or fire, but the vessel must be broken in pieces. If the pieces are reassembled, a new kosher vessel has been formed." Tosfos raise another possibility: to place the affected vessel into a pottery kiln. Will the absorbed chametz remain to any degree at all? No, because the extreme heat of the kiln will transform and remake the pot just as if it had been shattered and re-assembled; it is not the same vessel as it was before, plain and simple. Considering how he was formed during Creation, does a human not have much in common with an earthenware vessel? He was, after all, formed from the earth itself וְהָאָדָם אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָאָדָמָה The Yid in Mitzrayim veritably absorbed in himself the spiritual filth and degradation of that depraved environment and before he could become a fitting vessel to receive the Holy Torah, a thoroughgoing purification was imperative. Only a fiery pottery kiln had the power to make a Yid into a new person, a new receptacle, by ridding him of the absorbed impurity. Matan Torah -- through the fiery Revelation -- accomplished this. The Torah's language is no mere metaphor describing the event, but an actual enabling of the Yidden to receive the Torah by having the requisite purity.

(צמח דוד - דינוב)

## What is the true reason for the obligation of honouring parents?

כִּבְדוֹת אֲבוֹתָיִךְ וְאִמֹתָיִךְ לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּ יָמֶיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה: (כ יב) The Alshich HaKodosh wonders why the Torah commanded one to honour one's parents. Might I have thought that I should NOT honour them, or that it is perhaps an optional virtue? One might erroneously think that while the parents brought a new soul into this lowly world, down from the Upper Realms where it enjoyed closeness to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, by so doing they caused anguish to the new being. Cholila! Just the opposite! The payback for Kibud Av veAim is clearly spelled out in the Aseres HaDibros themselves:

This refers to Olam HaBa, the Next World, which one cannot attain other than by sojourning in This World, Olam HaZeh. In this light, one's parents, by giving the gift of life, provide the greatest favour for a person, for which they surely deserve extreme honour. But a stunning question on this insight arises from the Mishna (Bava Metzia, perek 2, mishna 11). We see there that if one is faced with a choice of returning two lost objects, one his Rebbe's and one his father's, attending to the Rebbe's takes precedence. The reason given is that while one's father actively bring him into This World/ olam hazeh, his rebbe, by teaching him the wisdom of the Torah enables him to enter the Next World/olam haba. But how are to reconcile this

point with the Alshich's teaching that the parent also plays a crucial role in a child's eventual entry into Olam HaBa? Why should the rebbe's lost article take precedence? The key lies in the different degrees of certainty inherent in the father's versus the rebbe's contributions. There is absolute certainty that the father brings one into the world, and that is sufficient merit to trigger kibud av veAim. The father's action is a "necessary but not sufficient condition" for Olam HaBa. Its outcome is doubtful. It is by no means certain that this child will subsequently enter Olam HaBa. Ensuring that entrance is the job of the rebbe, and we assume that the Torah learned at his knee will certainly provide the entry pass. So now the general rule from Pesachim 9a applies: אין ספק מוציא מידי וודאי, a doubt cannot supersede a certainty. The certainty of the rebbe's component entitles to him to precedence in having his lost article returned and the Mishna from Bava Metzia is explained.

(אברהם אנכי -ר' אברהם פאלאוי')

## What was gained by seeing the Voice of Hashem's Commandments?

וְכִלְיָהוּם רְאִים אֶת-הַקּוֹלֹת: (כ טו) Other than in an acoustics laboratory, audible words have no physical counterpart. But our posuk clearly states that Hashem's words were visible as well as audible. This is remarkable; why was this phenomenon of "visible speech" necessary? All of the neshamos of Klal Yisroel were present at the revelation of the Aseres Hadibros, which contain either explicitly or by extension all of the foundations of Judaism. Every Yid had to understand every word. And yet there was an ambiguity which could have led to a grievous misunderstanding. The posuk לא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם (ולא תִעֲבֹדֵם) (שם טו) is the source of the prohibition of avodah zarah/idolatry. The word תִּעֲבֹדֵם (You may not SERVE them) is written with an ayin. But there is another very similar word containing an aleph תִּבְדֹּם (You shall not DESTROY them) which implies just the opposite, but which is pronounced identically: "you may not destroy the avodah zara, but you may worship it" Chas vesholom. To forestall such a grievous error, the words had to be physically SEEN, so as not to confuse the kosher ayin-word תִּעֲבֹדֵם with the heretical aleph-word תִּבְדֹּם.

We find a similar instance in Megillas Esther, hinging on the very same lexical roots, but now having different vocalizations. When Haman HaRasha sought to enslave the Jews in return for a huge payment to Achashveirosh's treasury, his plea was טוב יכתב לאֲבָדֵם (ג) If it pleases the king, let it be written to destroy them, His intention was לאֲבָדֵם to destroy the Jews, but he hoodwinked the moronic king that he was only seeking to enslave them לְעַבְדֵם But, as we saw above, the two crucial action verbs are pronounced alike. Haman spoke the words "to enslave them", meaning full well "to destroy them" if only Achashveirosh would acquiesce by signing the proclamation which Haman thrust under his nose. This he willingly did in return for the enormous bribe. But when it came to writing up the royal declaration, Haman's "bait-and-switch" came into play and he duplicitously wrote לְאֲבָדֵם totally distorting the king's actual agreement. Now when Esther plead: כי נמכרו אני ועמי: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to be annihilated. But if we had been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept my silence (Esther 7:4), the ruse was exposed and that is what triggered Achashveirosh's rage -- more from umbrage at Haman's forging a royal document than from any new-found pity on Jewish lives. (תפוחי חיים -הוספות פרדס יהודה)

Rav Menachem Nachum of Stefeneshti (נפטר י"ד) (בכסלו תרכ"ט) was a son of the Heiliger Rizhiner Rebbe Rav Yisroel. He was known for causing amazing *mofsim*/miracles to happen which transcended the ordinary laws of nature. His son, Rav Avrohom Matisyahu, trod the same path and left behind renowned talmidim, including the Skulener and Ribnitzer Rebbes.

A poor villager had not been blessed with offspring after many years of marriage and came to the Stefanisht Rebbe to bemoan his fate and beg for a brocho. As was customary, the Rebbe gazed deeply into the man's kvittl and uttered a brocho for him to become very successful in business. It was only natural for the man to react with great joy at this event, since he had never done well in any kind of trading he had tried. He hurried home to share the good news with his wife. "Our salvation is at hand, dear wife!" he exclaimed. "That's very fine, husband. But tell me exactly what the Rebbe wished for us." "He said that it is meant for us to become very wealthy through our business dealings." Being a pious woman of simple *emunas chachamim*, the good woman sublimated her maternal yearnings and thought to herself that the Holy Rebbe knew what would be best for them in their lives – and that was that.

The couple's financial situation changed overnight. Whatever business deal they tried their hands at blossomed with success and it was only a year so until they became quite prosperous – wealthy, in fact. But even as *nouveau riche*, they still ached from the void of childlessness, so it was back to the Rebbe, this time with a very sizable *pidyon* contribution in hand. The only topic on the table this time was a brocho for a child, and there were more tears than words expended during this yechidus with the Rebbe. The Rebbe peered deeply into their kvittl for an extended time and then entered into an other-worldly state of elevated trance-like consciousness. The couple were terrified to witness the change that seized the Rebbe's face, and were much relieved when his visage returned to normal. "I was able to arrange a decree in shomayim for a first-born son for you. Travel back home *gesunderheit* and get ready for the great day." The couple were overjoyed, and, as the tzaddik had proclaimed, and Hashem had provided, a bris celebration was planned in their town within the following year. Everyone in town attended the lavish event, funded by the new father's wealth. Many simple townspeople were

deeply moved to see the power of the Rebbe's ruach hakodesh and their faith in tzaddikim was very much strengthened. The man knew how important it was to return to the Rebbe to share the details of the happy event. His wife, overwhelmed by joy and gratitude, wanted to go beyond that and actually take the infant to the Rebbe to receive his brocho.

Hard winter, with its snow and frost, had taken hold by then and the man was apprehensive of taking a tender infant on a wagon trip in such conditions. The woman was insistent and bundled up the baby in layers of the warmest garments she had and made sure that their wagon was roadworthy and insulated.

## STORY OF THE WEEK:

Even wild animals defer to the Stefanisher Rebbe

They set out on a twisting forest road and even with the most skilled driver, the wagon lurched from side to side in the deep snow. The woman bent over to check on the baby, and to her horror, screamed "The baby is gone! Ribbono shel olam! Bring my baby back!" The father realized that the precious bundle had been thrown from the wagon and panicked from the realization that no baby could survive for long in a frozen snow bank. He frantically ordered the driver to retrace their trail and the three adults peered in every direction for the lost baby. Suddenly, the father blanched. He spotted the baby's blanket lying in a snowy ditch with two wild wolves standing over him! He assumed the worst, but then it appeared that the animals were protecting the child, not menacing him. Nevertheless, the two men approached the baby armed with heavy rifles. But when they got closer, they were flabbergasted to see something totally outside the bounds of nature: the two wild beasts were bending over the child, gently blowing their warm breath right on him to keep him warm. When the wolves sensed the men's approach, they retreated meekly into the forest and disappeared from view. Both parents cuddled the child amidst a personal version of Hallel in thanks for the miracle the Borei Olam had sent their way. They hastily completed their journey to Stefanisht with no further obstacles and were nervously waiting to relate their entire saga to the Rebbe. But as soon as he opened his door, the words he uttered were: "Nu? What did you think of my two wolves I sent to guard and protect the baby? I promised you that child, so I had to take personal responsibility for his welfare. Take good care of him and have nachas from him always." The Stanfanishte Rebbe's open ruach hakodesh was displayed for many other Yidden throughout his life. ZY<sup>A</sup>

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