

Pardes Yehuda

← Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick →

Parshas Reah

[year 5] #186

שבת מברכין

פרשת ראה תשע"ד

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה: (י"א כ"ו)

Behold that I am presenting a blessing before you today.

[Last week's gilyon introduced the topic of reward for mitzvah performance in this lower world. We described two aspects: 1) that merciful concern for one's fellow Jew while doing an interpersonal mitzvah does incur reward; and 2) Hashem grants us enabling resources to afford to do Mitzvos quite apart from their concrete reward, which is postponed for one's Gan Eden. This week, we extend the discussion. (DPR)]

Our question from last week remains current: we know that all rewards for Mitzvos are given in one's personal Gan Eden, yet our posuk again seems to be promising a reward in this physical world for Mitzvah performance. The question is, what is the phrase "before you" teaching us?

The Yismach Moshe says that granted, reward for the actual Mitzvah is bestowed solely in the World to Come. But for the preparations הכנה, one invests in advance of a Mitzvah, there is indeed a reward conferred in this physical world. He derives this from an episode in the life of Yaakov Avinu, when he dispatched angels to Esav. "וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו." What is the meaning of "לפניו" "before him" here? Seemingly, the posuk could have simply stated "Yaakov sent angels/messengers." The question arises in trying to understand how Yaakov was able to utilize his defending angels, which were created directly through his mitzvos, to protect him from his marauding brother when there is supposedly no reward for those mitzvos in this world?

The answer is that it was actually Yaakov's hachono/preparation in advance of the mitzvos which spawned his angels and which subsequently triggered a reward for him in this world (protection from Esav's impending attack). Hence, the word "לפניו" is well understood, in that "**Before** him" alludes to Yaakov's preparation. Yaakov's angel-creating reward came to good use in protecting him from Esav. The Torah teaches us that preparation is part of the mitzvah process and for this, one is rewarded in this world. Now looking back at our parashah, "ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה", *before you*, likewise alludes to preparation done in advance of a mitzvah. For this, it is no mistake to speak of a reward in this world. (תורת יפה בעסערמין.)

And yet another dimension:

נתון תתן לו ולא יגרע לך בך בתתה לו כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכה ה' אלקיך בלפניכם: (י"א כ"ו) "You shall surely give him, and

your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him; for because of this thing the Lord, your God, will bless you in all your work and in all your endeavors." As we saw in last week in Parshas Eikev, in a well-known dictum, the gemara (Kiddushin 39b) states clearly that Hashem does not bestow rewards in this world for mitzvos performed in this world; those rewards are reserved for the Next World in a person's Gan Eden. *The reward for fulfilling a mitzvah is not given in this world.* And yet our posuk seems to indicate otherwise – *for because of this thing* – [referring to giving tzedaka] – *the Lord, your G-d, will bless you in all your work and in all your endeavors.* Here, a reward is explicitly linked to a mitzvah performance. The Ksav Sofer shines light on this with an innovative chiddush – identifying **SIMCHA** as an element in the mitzvah/temporal reward equation: doing a Mitzvah with simcha brings reward in this world. Therefore if when giving tzedaka, you do so not with a begrudging heart, but rather with simcha, because of this: *Hashem will grant you blessing and a reward.* (כתב סופר.)

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה: (י"א כ"ו)

The Sforno teaches, based on our posuk: The Torah admits no middle ground – everything is couched as either a blessing or a curse. Either one climbs upwards spiritually, or he slides downwards. [This should not be misconstrued as ruling out a "derech haEmtzo'i" in actual practice of minhagim or other conduct guidelines. There are times when the Middle Way is appropriate in life, and for this one needs guidance from a Morech derech. (DPR).]

One cannot remain static. The Chovas Halevavos extends this to say that the concept of "Reshus"/voluntary, optional action is alien to us: I may do something, but then again I might not. Everything one does is classed as either a Mitzvah or an Aveira. Therefore, according to this view, if one's act cannot be classified as a Mitzvah, then it is perform an Aveira. This can be the lesson in our posuk: *Behold that I am presenting both a blessing and a curse before you today.* And the pasuk continues directly "*The blessing, that you will heed the commandments of the Lord your G-d, which I command you today; and the curse, if you will not heed the commandments of the Lord your G-d,*" The blessing lies in heeding the Mitzvos and the curse in not heeding the Mitzvas. This is the only conceptual model for serving Hashem. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick according to the Chovas halevavos and the Yesod veshoresh HoAvodah)

Story of the Week

**** *The Prosecutor switches sides and saves the defendant* **** (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

Zelig lived in a small village and earned his livelihood from his successful tavern. The Mayor of the village cast a jealous eye on Zelig and, scheming to snatch the tavern away from Zelig,

concocted a nefarious plot. He befriended Zelig and gained his trust until Zelig let the Mayor start serving the customers. (The part-time position of "Mayor" in those days was not highly

remunerative.) One day Zelig had to go away for a short business trip and the Mayor offered to stay and tend to the customers. Zelig was content with this arrangement.

While alone, the Mayor poured deadly poison into the whiskey barrels. When Zelig came back, he naively thanked the Mayor for helping him out. The Mayor waited around to see the fruits of his evil plan. Zelig's first customer, who quaffed a glass of whiskey, keeled over and died on the spot. The wicked Mayor accused Zelig of poisoning the barrels and lost no time in calling the Police. In a flash, Zelig understood that the Mayor was trying to frame him, but he knew if he stayed around he was destined for jail and possibly death. Zelig, slipped out a back door and fled from the *bilbul* like greased lightning. The police came and Zelig was officially accused of placing poison in the barrels. His lease on the tavern was forfeited and the tavern passed into the hands of the Mayor. Zelig, now a fugitive, decided to seek counsel from the heilige Shiniva Rav, Harav Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam, son of the Sanzer Rav the Divrei Chaim.

Zelig poured out his heart to the Rebbe and begged for salvation. The Rebbe listened intently but didn't respond. Zelig left the Rebbe's chamber dejectedly and met an elderly chosid in the waiting room, told him his story and asked for his interpretation of the episode. The chosid said, "Do not worry, my brother. The Rebbe will surely give you an answer at the right moment, but understandably, it can take some time. In the meantime come with me to Bais Midrash and I'll show you how to daven with more Kavanah and we'll learn Torah together." From a sense of sheer exasperation, Zelig immersed himself in learning and his davening became much more intense. After six weeks, a summons from the Rebbe arrived. With bated breath, almost as if he were hearing the bloodhounds on his trail, Zelig reported to the Rebbe's kvittl-shteeb. The Rebbe told him, "Run straight away to the train station and catch the next train to Pshevorsk." Zelig was taken aback, but the Gabbai told Zelig, "Don't waste a minute! Do as the Rebbe told you!" Zelig did so and by the skin of his teeth, caught the Pshevorsk train.

Zelig was emotionally distraught. He headed to the mostly empty first car, collapsed on the floor and began crying hysterically. A prominent, well-dressed man was in the same car and kindly walked over to Zelig and asked why he was crying. Zelig poured out his whole story. The man asked Zelig why he happened to be on that train. Although he knew it would sound strange, Zelig answered that his "Rabbiner" urged him to catch this train going to Pshevorsk, but he did not understand any reason for doing so. The gentleman told Zelig, "I see that your Rabbiner is a holy man. I happen to be the state's prosecutor working on your case. Your Rebbe saw with his holy eyes that I would be on this train, and that meeting me might help you in some way." Zelig reviewed the recent events again, now in more detail, and the prosecutor took extensive legal notes in his book. The man said, "I believe you are innocent; I advise you to return home and turn yourself in to the police and I will meet you in court." Zelig was now full of

Emunah and Bitachon and understood why the Rebbe urged him to catch this train! The Rebbe saw that not only would Zelig meet the prosecutor, but that he would also be well-disposed to him. Zelig returned to his village and a court date was set.

The prosecutor sprang into action. He visited Zelig's tavern in disguise introduced himself to the Mayor/tavernkeeper of the village, and ordered a drink. After a few drinks the prosecutor confided in his new friend. "I have a dilemma. Like you, I am the mayor of a village in the next province. Where I come from, the wealthy tavernkeeper is a despicable Jew. I want to get rid of him! Do you have any ideas for me?" The wicked scoundrel answered, "I can help you! I recently had the same problem. Just do as I did. I poisoned the whiskey barrels and a customer died. If you do this, the police will arrest the Jew and you will take over the tavern lease for yourself." The prosecutor thanked him for his advice and left, now confident that Zelig was as innocent as a new-born babe.

But now he had to prove Zelig's innocence in court. The day of judgement arrived and the usual court proceedings got under way until the Mayor of the village testified how he saw Zelig proffer a cup of whiskey to a customer who collapsed and perished on the spot. He said the police had tested the whiskey and found that it was poisonous. The defense then presented the best argument they could that Zelig had been framed and was 100% innocent. Still, things did not look sunny for poor Zelig. When it was time for the judge to deliberate on his judgment, the erstwhile prosecutor asked the judge if he could meet him in his chambers. The judge agreed. The prosecutor told the judge about his clandestine meeting with the mayor and how he concluded that it was the mayor who had perpetrated the evil deed. The prosecutor asked permission to repeat the masquerade, promising that the truth would soon be revealed. Although this was a highly irregular procedure, the judge consented. The prosecutor changed into his disguise, and no one recognized him. He had left his deputy in place in the courtroom during the impromptu recess. The judge returned to the court and waited for the prosecutor to enter the courtroom. The judge asked the Mayor of Zelig's village, "Do you recognize this man?" He answered, "Yes, he was in my tavern just a few days ago." The judge now ordered the prosecutor to tell the court the conversation that took place in the bar. The prosecutor related, "This man, the mayor of the village confided in me that he put poison in the barrel of whiskey in order to have done with Zelig". The judge asked the mayor, "What do you have to say?" Totally abashed, he contritely lowered his head and blurted out his confession. Zelig's plight changed from night to day as the judge acquitted him and ordered that the tavern be returned to him. The Prosecutor, now sans disguise, told in open court how the famous Rabbiner sent Zelig onto his train, and how the story unfolded after that. The bystanders were astonished that the Shinava Rov knew the prosecutor to be a man of integrity and that Zelig could cross paths with him on that precise train. A first-class Kiddush Hashem was palpable to all.

*edited and revised by my chaver and partner in Pardes Yehuda, R' Duvid Pinchas Rose תשואת חן חן לו נ"י [reachable at davidrose10@gmail.com] Only with the chesed of Hashem, we are now entering our 5th year תשע"ד - תשע"ה 185 gilyonos to date and growing. I thank our loyal readers for their positive feedback. A publication of **Seforim World** 1000's of seforim: new, old 4403 16 Ave. Brooklyn N.Y. 11204 U.S.A. 718 438 8414 718 633 5500 www.seforimworld.com or seforim@gmail.com [summer hours 11-7]*