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Path

BERESHIT To Follow
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HUMILITY IS AN ABSOLUTE PREREQUISITE FOR OBSERVING TORAH

When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to create man, He said to the ministering angels: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, over the animals, over the whole earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Bereshith 1:26). There is good reason to examine the order of this verse, which begins with fish that swim in the sea, which we do not see, and proceeds to the birds of the heavens, which hover over man's head, and which he only sees when he raises his eyes. The verse then speaks of land animals and reptiles, which everyone can see. It seems that the verse should have used the reverse order, starting with animals that man sees, and then proceeding with birds, which man cannot see without raising his eyes. Only then should it have mentioned fish, which we find in the waters, covered and hidden from the eyes.

The Heart Yields When We Look to the Heavens

We may explain this according to the teaching of the Sages, who said that the ministering angels did not agree with man's creation, as the Gemara states: The angels said before Him, "Just how wicked will man's deeds be!" The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "Although he will ruin My work in the future, I will create him and give him the virtue of humility. Because he will be humble, he will yield before Me and obey My orders" (see Sanhedrin 38b).

In other words, the Holy One, blessed be He, told the ministering angels: "I created man and gave him the virtue of humility, which resembles water." Just as water flows from higher to lower, man will yield, and the Torah will endure in him when he resembles water (Taanith 7a). There is an added advantage to this, namely that when he raises his eyes to the heavens, the fear of G-d will enter his heart, as it is written: "A man should not pray other than in a room that has windows" (Berachot 34b). Rashi explains that windows encourage a man to focus in prayer, for he sees the heavens and his heart yields. Hence from here we learn that the heavens have the ability

to imbue the heart with the fear of G-d, as it is written: "Raise your eyes on high and see Who created these things" (Isaiah 40:26).

Next, He told the angels that man would rule over the animals and everything that creeps upon the earth. In fact the Sages have said, "Adam was created on the eve of Sabbath. Why? ... So that, if a man grows proud, he may be reminded that gnats preceded him in the order of Creation" (Sanhedrin 38a). This teaches us that when a person grows proud, he will immediately become humble upon seeing the animals that were created before him. This is why the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke to the angels in the following order: Fish (which symbolize water), birds (which symbolize the fear of Heaven), and creatures of the earth (which symbolize humility), for these answered the objections of the angels.

We find the same thing in the following verse: "G-d said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, the bird of the heavens, and every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Bereshith 1:28). Here too, fish and birds come before creatures of the earth, teaching us that it was for this reason that man was created, in order to act with humility, to obey G-d's decrees, and to learn humility from water and the fear of sin from the heavens. Furthermore, a man should look upon the creatures of the earth and learn how to behave from them, as the Sages have said: "If the Torah had not been given, we would have learned modesty from the cat, honesty from the ant, chastity from the dove..." (Eruvin 100b).

A Trace of Pride Entered Him

We see how grave pride is from what the Gemara states: "The wine of Perogaisa and the waters of Diomisis were the ruin of the Ten Tribes. When Rabbi Elazar ben Arach went there, he was attracted to these pleasures and his learning vanished. When he returned, he arose to read in the [Torah] scroll. He wished to read, Hachodesh hazeh lachem ['This month shall be for you' - Shemot 12:2], but he read: Haheresh hayah libam ['Their hearts were silent']. However the Sages prayed for him, and his learning returned" (Shabbat 147b).

This is quite surprising, for how could Rabbi Elazar ben Arach have allowed himself to be attracted by physical pleasures and stopped learning? After all, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said of him: "If all the Sages of Israel, including even Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, were on one side of the scale and Elazar ben Arach were on the other, he would outweigh them all" (Pirkei Avoth 2:9).

From here we learn just how grave pride is. In fact Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, the greatest of the Sages, was only attracted to these pleasures because a trace of pride had entered him. Could anyone possibly imagine that he did not think, before entering that city, that he would be drawn to these pleasures? However a trace of pride had entered him, and he relied upon his wisdom in order not to forget what he had learned, which is precisely what led him to forget his learning. Because he relied upon his own wisdom, the Holy One, blessed be He, took it away.

It is a great principle that we must not rely upon our own wisdom. Whoever fails to fulfill the words of the Psalmist: "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Hashem" (Tehillim 111:10) - who relies upon his own wisdom and does not precede it with the fear of Heaven - such a person will not see his wisdom endure. Not only that, but his wisdom will leave him, as it is written: "He removes the utterances of the trustworthy and takes reason away from the elders" (Job 12:20). It is also said, "Who makes wise men retreat and makes their knowledge foolish" (Isaiah 44:25).

In general, a person's wisdom will only endure when it is accompanied by a fear of Heaven and humility. The Sages have said, "Anyone whose wisdom exceeds his [good] deeds, to what can he be compared? To a tree whose branches are numerous but whose roots are few. The wind comes and uproots it, and turns it upside down.... But anyone whose [good] deeds exceed his wisdom, to what can he be compared? To a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are numerous. Even if all the winds in the world were to come and blow against it, they could not move it from its place" (Pirkei Avoth 3:17).

CONCERNING THE PARSHA

Melave Malka: The Fourth Meal of Shabbat

It is written, “The heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And G-d finished on the seventh day His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. And G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it He rested from all His work which G-d created to make” (Bereshith 2:1-3).

How did G-d bless the seventh day? The Midrash tells us that this blessing was given “on account of people with delicate digestions. He blessed it with tasty dishes” (Bereshith Rabba 11:3-4). The book *Matnot Kehuna* explains that this refers to spoiled people who desire good things; He blessed it with good things. The Maharzu writes: “This refers to people who can only eat very little, and who are also spoiled and cannot eat the same meal as on the previous day, for they are repulsed by it. He blessed Shabbat so they can eat three meals, and they can even eat the same meal as on the previous day without being repulsed by it.”

Rashi discusses the meaning of the “additional soul” of Beitzah 16a: “An additional soul – a broadness of heart for the purposes of relaxation and joy, wide open to eat and drink without being repulsed by it.” In fact some people are repulsed by even a little food, as it is said concerning Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi: He had delicate digestion, and when he ate a little in the morning, he could not eat afterwards. Therefore how could he fulfill the mitzvah of eating three meals on Shabbat?

In addition to the fact that there are three meals on Shabbat, the Gemara cites Rabbi Chanina as saying: “One should always set his table at the conclusion of Shabbat, even if he merely requires as much as an olive” (Shabbat 119b).

Success in All Our Endeavors

To honor Shabbat, the Sages ruled that we must respectfully accompany it upon its conclusion, like someone who accompanies the king to the city gates upon his departure. We do this with the Melave Malka meal. The Shulchan Aruch establishes the Halachah as follows: “We must always set the table at the conclusion of Shabbat to accompany Shabbat, even if we can only eat the volume of an olive” (Orach Chaim 200). The Beit Yosef cites Shiblei HaLeket: “It is like accompanying a king upon his departure, just as we welcome him upon his arrival.” We normally recite piyutim and songs to accompany Shabbat, as we do when accompanying a king upon his arrival and departure. The piyutim at the conclusion of Shabbat, states the book *Chemdat HaYamim*, are a segula for success in all our weekly endeavors. As the author of *Minhag Tov* states, “We must ask Hashem for what we need to be with Him when we leave and when we return, and He will give us a heart that will enable us to fulfill mitzvot.”

The Beit Yosef cites the siddurim in giving another reason for the Melave Malka meal: There is a tiny part within man that is called *naskoy*, which benefits only from what we eat at the conclusion of Shabbat. We know that this bone is called *luz*; it is the essence – the essence and root of man – and from it, man is formed. When he dies, this bone does not disappear or become damaged. If it is cast into fire, it does not burn, and if placed in a millstone it does not get crushed, and if struck with a hammer, it does not shatter. It is a bone that exists forever, and from it man will arise in the resurrection of the dead. It is what receives pain or pleasure after the death of man. The root and the essence of this bone is the very essence of the Heavens. It only benefits from what we eat at the conclusion of Shabbat, and therefore it did not derive any benefit from the Tree of Knowledge (for Adam ate from it on the eve of Shabbat), which is why it is indestructible (Kaf HaChaim 301:1).

The holy Zohar speaks with enthusiasm about the greatness of fulfilling

the mitzvah of the fourth meal, to the point that one who fails to do so is considered to have not eaten the third meal of Shabbat!

Tosafot Ma’assei Rav recounts that the wife of the Vilna Gaon once took it upon herself to fast from one Shabbat to the next. She therefore stopped eating after the third meal of Shabbat. After having heard Havdalah at the conclusion of Shabbat, she immediately went to bed. When the Vilna Gaon learned of this, he sent word to his wife that all her fasting could not make up for the absence of even a single “fourth meal.” At that point she immediately got up and ate the fourth meal.

The Best Meals

If a person can, he should ensure that the Melave Malka meal is served hot and includes bread. He should also set a beautiful table to accompany Shabbat. A person who cannot eat bread should at least eat some cake, or some fruit (Minchat Shabbat 96:13). The Aruch HaShulchan states that if a person can, he should eat meat. Otherwise he should eat fish, since it is also dignified food, or the best fruit that he has. All this should be accompanied by bread. One who cannot eat bread should eat cake or fruit. In the book *Shnei Luchot HaBrit*, it is stated that a person must try to eat food that he specifically enjoys, even if it is expensive.

The Minchat Shabbat cites the Ya’avetz in stating that, if necessary, one also fulfills his obligation by drinking a glass of hot tea or something similar (Minchat Shabbat 96:31).

The poskim discuss the issue of whether the Melave Malka meal is similar to the other meals of Shabbat. In the Shulchan Aruch of Rabbeinu Zalman, he states that we do not need to eat the third meal earlier than usual in order to properly eat the fourth meal. He reasons that this is because the fourth meal is not an obligation, but is simply an embellishment of a mitzvah. Along the same lines, the Chafetz Chaim states that the Melave Malka meal is not obligatory, like the three meals of Shabbat, but is simply a good thing to do (Mishnah Berurah 300:2).

On the other hand, the Chida writes that the fourth meal is a great mitzvah and an obligation, and the Chayei Adam (5:36) states that it is an absolute obligation. We know that the Vilna Gaon once fell ill at the conclusion of Shabbat and vomited, which prevented him from eating the fourth meal. After having slept and recovered somewhat, he asked his family if the sun had yet risen. He then asked them for the volume of an olive of bread, which he tried to eat with a spoon in order to fulfill the mitzvah of the fourth meal.

The commentary *Sha’arei Teshuvah* on *Moreh B’Etzba* (5:164) states the Chida’s comments are what prompted the Beit Yosef to write a special section (300) on the Melave Malka meal, as well as a special section (419) on the Rosh Chodesh meal, text that consisted of but a single paragraph. Now he could have joined these remarks to the preceding paragraphs, but deliberately separated them in order to hint that they are very important, despite the fact that most people neglect them.

For an Easy Delivery

The duty of women to partake of this meal is also mentioned in the writings of the poskim. The author of *Kaf HaChaim* cites the *Divrei Yitzchak* (who heard it from Rav Elimelech Zatzal) in stating that eating something at the conclusion of every Shabbat as a Melave Malka meal is a segula for women to have an easy delivery.

The other laws regarding the conclusion of Shabbat and the fourth meal are thoroughly explained in a fine article by the gaon Rabbi Eliyahu Cohen Shlita in his book *Zichron Chaim*.

AT THE SOURCE

The Coming of Mashiach

It is written, "On the day that Gog comes" (Ezekiel 38:18).

The Tur writes (Orach Chaim 56) that the phrase yitgadal veyitkadash, found in the Kaddish, is based upon the expression vehitgadalti vehitkadashti ("I will be exalted and I will be sanctified" – Ezekiel 38:23), written in regards to the war of Gog and Magog. Hashem's Name will be exalted at that point, as it is written: "On that day Hashem will be one and His Name one" (Zechariah 14:9). Some say that the Kaddish is written in Aramaic in order to prevent the angels from becoming jealous of us, since we are uttering such beautiful praises, and also in order for the Holy One, blessed be He, to recall the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel. As the Gemara states, when Jews respond Amen, yehei shemei rabba, the Holy One, blessed be He, shakes His head and says: "Woe to the father who had to banish his children, and woe to the children who had to be banished from the table of their father" (Berachot 3a). Hashem, so to speak, worries over them, and the angels would raise accusations against us if they were to understand this. Hence we recite Kaddish in a language that they do not understand, namely Aramaic.

The Rambam writes, "From the sayings of our prophets, it would appear that the war of Gog and Magog will herald the era of Mashiach. Before that war begins, however, a prophet will arise to prepare Israel and correct their ways, as it is said: 'Behold, I am sending you the prophet Eliyahu...' [Malachi 3:23]. He will not come to pronounce the unclean clean, or the pure impure, nor to invalidate those who were considered valid, nor to validate those considered invalid. He will come only to bring peace to the world, as it says: 'He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children' [Malachi 3:24]. Some Sages believe that the prophet Eliyahu will arrive prior to the era of Mashiach. These things will not be understood until they actually take place, for the prophets did not receive an explicit prophesy about them. Neither have our Sages received a tradition in these matters; they can only expound the verses in Scripture to the best of their ability. This explains the disagreements on several issues related to Mashiach. Whatever the case, the sequence of future events is not a matter that should concern us, and we should not spend time or energy pursuing it. One should not delve too deeply into the midrashim which speak of these matters, for they lead neither to the fear nor the love of G-d. One must not attempt to calculate when the [final] redemption is expected. The Sages say, 'Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end' [Sanhedrin 97b]. One is expected only to wait and believe that Mashiach will come" (Hilchot Melachim 12:2).

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

We Must Not Believe Him

When the Beit Din imposes an obligation upon a person in matters between man and G-d, or between man and fellowman, and yet he absolutely refuses to obey without explaining why, it is permitted to speak about his refusal and even to record it for all the generations. If he gives pretexts for his refusal, saying that he has hidden reasons for it, and if we believe that he is not being truthful, but only trying to rid himself of us, we must not believe him, and it is permitted to speak about him. However if there exists a doubt, it is forbidden to speak ill of him.

– Chafetz Chaim

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA

Forbidden to Listen to the Evil Inclination

It is written, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying: 'You shall not eat of it'..." (Bereshith 3:17).

This is surprising, for did Adam's sin come down to the fact that he listened to his wife's voice? He sinned by eating from the tree that G-d had forbidden him to eat from! Therefore why add the phrase, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife"?

Rabbeinu Yonah wrote:

"Listen well, surrender yourself, and return in teshuvah when you are admonished by Torah scholars and those who criticize you. Take each word of criticism to heart without exception. By doing so, you will go from darkness to great light in an instant. In fact when you listen and internalize, understand in your heart and do teshuvah, and when take the words of those who admonish you to heart as soon as you hear them, taking it upon yourself from that day on to fulfill all that you are taught... your teshuvah will take effect and you will become an entirely different person. In fact from the moment you accept these words in this way within your mind and you take them to heart, you will earn the merit and reward of all the mitzvot and admonishments. How fortunate you will be, for you will have exonerated yourself in a brief instant! Our Sages have said, 'The Children of Israel went and did' (Shemot 12:28). Did they do it right away? They did it on the fourteenth of the month! However since they committed themselves to doing it, the text credits them with having done it right away' (Mechilta, Bo 12:28). It is also said, 'Only the wisdom of one who has more deeds than wisdom is sustained, as it is written: "We will do and we will hear" (Shemot 24:7)' (Avot D'Rabbi Nathan ch. 22). What this means is that as soon as you wholeheartedly take it upon yourself to observe and conform to the instructions and decisions given to you by those who are qualified to judge, you are credited from that day on with the merit of all the mitzvot – for the words of Torah that you have already heard.... Therefore search hard for those who would offer you criticism from that day on, and learn from whoever would teach you. You will then become one 'who has more deeds than wisdom' by earning merit for doing something before even knowing about it. Such was the case with the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai, when they said: 'We will do and we will hear,' and who committed themselves to doing even before hearing about it. Otherwise it is impossible for one to do more than he is aware of" (Sha'arei Teshuvah 2:10).

Thus a person only merits life when he listens to those who admonish him, and when he puts deed before study. We can also deduce the reverse, namely that a person must not listen to the voice of the evil inclination, which pushes him to sin. Instead, he must first carry out a mitzvah, and only then listen. Once a person has carried out a mitzvah, there will no longer be an evil inclination to say anything to him, since he has already taken action.

Adam sinned only because he did not place deed before study, but instead he listened to the voice of the evil inclination and was immediately enticed and sinned. If he had not listened to this voice, he would not have sinned at all. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife," for that was his sin – to have listened before acting. The Holy One, blessed be He, was telling him: If you had listened to My words, I would have credited you with having carried them out, and once you had taken action, the evil inclination would have been powerless against you. However since you first listened to the evil inclination, it was this listening that led you into transgressing My words.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

THE LAST OF THE MEN OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY

This week marks the anniversary of the death of the Tanna Shimon HaTzaddik, who was among the last of the Men of the Great Assembly. He is buried in a cave to the north of Jerusalem, a place where many come to pray and beseech Hashem, as well as to fulfill the mitzvah of chalakeh (a boy's first haircut).

According to a tradition cited in the Gemara, the Tanna Shimon HaTzaddik died on Tishri 29, seven days after the festival of Sukkot.

The Gemara recounts that Shimon HaTzaddik told the Sages of his generation that he would die in that year, for he had seen something upon entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur (Shimon HaTzaddik served as Kohen Gadol).

The Gemara explains: "In the year in which Shimon HaTzaddik died, he told them that he would die. They said, 'How do you know this?' He replied, 'On every Yom Kippur, an old man dressed in white and wrapped in white joins me, entering [the Holy of Holies] and leaving [it] with me. Yet today I was joined by an old man dressed in black and wrapped in black, who entered but did not leave with me'" (Yoma 39b).

The story ends as the tzaddik had foreseen: "After the festival, he was sick for seven days and died" (ibid.).

The Sages tell us that a series of miracles that occurred in the Temple during Shimon HaTzaddik's lifetime ceased upon his passing. The Gemara states, "Throughout the 40 years that Shimon HaTzaddik ministered, the lot [for Hashem on Yom Kippur] would always come up in the right hand. Afterwards, it would sometimes come up in the right hand and sometimes in the left. The crimson-colored thread became white [indicating that Hashem had forgiven the sins of Israel – Rashi], but afterwards it sometimes became white and sometimes not. Furthermore, the western-most light shined [indicating that the Shechinah rested upon Israel – Rashi] throughout those 40 years, but afterwards it would sometimes shine and sometimes fail. Also, the fire of the pile of wood [for the Altar] kept burning strong, such that the kohanim did not have to put more wood on the pile, aside from the two logs, to fulfill the commandment of constantly providing wood. Afterwards, it would sometimes burn strongly, and sometimes not, such that the kohanim always had to bring wood for the pile throughout the day. A blessing was bestowed upon the Omer, the two loaves, and the bread of the presence, so that every kohen who obtained a piece as large as an olive would eat it and be satisfied, with some eating from it and even leaving something over. From then on, a curse was sent upon the Omer, the two loaves, and the bread of the presence..." (Yoma 39a).

He Bowed Before Him

The Gemara recounts how, 40 years after the Second Temple was built, the Samaritans tried to persuade Alexander the Great to destroy it. He agreed with their request and gave them permission to do so. When Shimon HaTzaddik learned of this, what did he do? "He put on his priestly garments and robed himself in priestly garments, and some of the nobles of Israel went with him, carrying flaming torches in their hands. ... When [Alexander] saw Shimon HaTzaddik, he descended from his chariot and bowed before him. They said to him, 'A great king like yourself is bowing before this Jew?' He replied, 'His image is what wins my battles for me.' He said to them, 'Why have you come?' They said, 'Is it possible that star-worshippers should

mislead you into destroying the Temple in which prayers are said for you and your kingdom, that it should never be destroyed?' He said to them, 'Which people?' They said to him, 'The Samaritans who are standing before you.' He said, 'They are in your hands.' They immediately punctured their heels, tied them to the tails of their horses, and dragged them over thorns and thistles until they came to Mount Gerizim, which they ploughed and planted with weeds, even as they had planned to do with the House of G-d, and they made that day [Tevet 25] into a festive day" (Yoma 69a).

By Order of the Representatives

By tradition we know where Shimon HaTzaddik, among the last of the Men of the Great Assembly, is buried. The location is northeast of Jerusalem, along the road that goes up from Jerusalem between the city walls towards Mount Scopus, in the small valley where the Kidron River originates. There is a fence at the entrance of the cave located there, and inscribed on that fence are the words: "Repairs to this fence were made by order of the representatives of Eretz Israel, 1918." A metal grill and some steps lead down from the cave's entrance. On the right, there is a channel that was carved into the wall, bringing rainwater from outside to a small well that was made in one of the cave's rooms. We can see signs of graves within recesses that were cut into the walls of the cave. According to tradition, these recesses contain the remains of Shimon HaTzaddik's disciples. Another room within the cave contains a tombstone in one corner, where according to tradition the remains of Shimon HaTzaddik are located.

Extraordinary Joy

The grave of Shimon HaTzaddik is known as a sanctified place where great miracles can occur. Even until today, the residents of Jerusalem commonly go there for the chalakeh of their young boys. The book Chibat Yerushalayim, which speaks of this ancient custom, describes the extraordinary joy that exists by the grave of Rabbi Shimon HaTzaddik on Lag BaOmer. Why such rejoicing on this day? It is because the residents of Jerusalem were jealous of the inhabitants of Meron and Sefat, who rejoiced by the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

The Miracle of the Oil

In Sha'arei Yerushalayim, Rabbi Moshe Reisher recounts a miracle that occurred by the grave of Rabbi Shimon HaTzaddik:

Located within the cave, there was an oil lamp that burned constantly, a lamp that burned without ever going out. One day, two people came on the eve of Shabbat to fulfill the mitzvah of keeping this lamp constantly lit, but they could not find enough oil to last throughout Shabbat.

Since they had no other choice in this urgent case, they fed the lamp (which could hold seven ounces of oil) with all the oil they had, only two ounces. A great miracle occurred on that very same Shabbat, for the tiny quantity of oil lasted the entire day, enabling the lamp to burn throughout Shabbat!

Rabbi Moshe Reisher ends his description of this miracle by stating that the people involved testified before the Beit Din of Jerusalem. They swore by the Torah that they had added nothing to the account, that they had not exaggerated in any way, and that it was the complete truth!