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maskil Le'David

Seeing the Voice

"The entire people saw the thunder and the flames, the sound of the shofar and the smoking mountain; the people saw and trembled and stood from afar" (*Shemot* 20:15).

"The entire people saw the thunder." Why does the Torah use an expression of sight when referring to the sense of sound? One can explain that the verse can also be read, **"וייראו מן הקולות"** – **they were afraid** of the thunder." The extra *yud* changes the meaning of the word from "they saw" to "they were afraid." This implies that they were frightened of the sound of the shofar which continued growing louder, since shofar blowing signifies either war or the Day of Judgement. This is a possible explanation, but it is still important to understand the simple meaning of the verse.

One can explain this verse in a way that contains a lesson for us: The word רואים – saw, can be explained based on the Gemara (*Tamid* 32a), **"איזהו חכם הרואה את הנוול"** – Who is wise? One who considers the outcome of a deed." The meaning of this saying is that wisdom is dependent on being able to foresee the consequences of one's mitzvot. Was the mitzvah performed with perfection, for the sake of Heaven, or *chalila*, was there a slight combination of defect or impure motives? Bnei Yisrael are considered wise people who foresee the consequences of their actions.

The more thought a person invests in preparation for a mitzvah, the better the outcome will be. If a person fulfills a mitzvah out of a true desire to fulfill Hashem's will and glorify Heaven's Name in this world, then he merits special Divine assistance to be saved from being the cause of any mishap.

Chazal explain that the verse (*Mishlei* 10:8), "The wise of heart will seize good deeds," refers to Moshe Rabbeinu. While Am Yisrael were

occupied with collecting possessions from the Egyptians, Moshe Rabbeinu went to dig up Yosef's bones. One can ask why this verse was said particularly about Moshe Rabbeinu, since when Am Yisrael went to take the Egyptians' possessions, they too were occupied with fulfilling a Heavenly command, since Avraham Avinu was told (*Bereishit* 15:14), "And afterward they will leave with great wealth." It was a mitzvah for Am Yisrael to take the Egyptians' possessions, so Hashem's promise to Avraham would be fulfilled in its entirety. Had Am Yisrael not taken these possessions, it would have been considered disregard of a Heavenly command.

The answer could be that while Bnei Yisrael were busy gathering possessions, they were not thinking about fulfilling G-d's command, rather they were driven by a lust for money and possessions. Since it was considered a mitzvah devoid of any real intention to fulfill the Heavenly command, the verse, "The wise of heart will seize good deeds" does not apply to them. But Moshe Rabbeinu possessed the aspect of "Who is wise? One who considers the outcome of a deed," for with his greatness and strength of spirit he was able to reckon the far-reaching results of any action. Therefore, he preferred to busy himself with collecting Yosef's bones, which would exempt him from joining Bnei Yisrael as he was occupied with a different mitzvah. (It would seem that Moshe Rabbeinu did take a small amount from the Egyptians, to nonetheless fulfill Hashem's command.)

Since Am Yisrael did not try to picture the outcome of their hurried taking of the Egyptians' possessions, the foreign consideration of lust for money was intertwined in their deed. That is why later on these possessions caused them to sin – it was from these possessions that they brought gold to Ahron to create the Golden Calf.

Hashem blesses a person with wealth to give him the opportunity to give charity and support the oppressed, and a person is not meant to squander his money on vanities. But sometimes a person tampers with reality and considers his money as a goal in itself, and not as a means to achieve a goal.

cont. p.4.>>>

17 Shevat 5785 1099
 15 February 2025
 Yitro



Hilula

17 Shevat
 Rabbi Chaim Falag'i

18 Shevat
 Rabbi Binyomin Beinush
 Finkel, the Mirror
 Rosh Yeshiva

19 Shevat
 Rabbi Yitzchak Baruch Sofer

20 Shevat
 Rabbi Ovadiah Hadayah,
 author of *Yaskil Avdi*

21 Shevat
 Rabbi Yehuda Zev Segal,
 Rosh Yeshiva of the
 Manchester Yeshiva

22 Shevat
 Rabbi Menachem Mendel,
 The Seraph of Kotzk

23 Shevat
 Rabbi Yaakov Chaim
 Yisrael Alfiyah





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Taking is the Sacrifice

“Yitro, the father-in-law of Moshe, took a burnt-offering and feast offerings for Hashem” (Shemot 18:12).

In Parshat Korach it says, “And Korach took,” and Rashi clarifies that it means Korach took himself. If so, the Shevet Mussar, *zt”l*, says, here too we can explain “And Yitro took,” by saying that he took himself, meaning he took himself on a new path. He left behind an important, honorable position in Midian and went after Moshe to the barren desert.

Yitro’s “taking” is something very precious. This taking of himself and setting out on a new path, was “a burnt-offering and feast-offerings for Hashem.” This is the biggest offering one can offer Hashem.

The Segula of the Segol

“You shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples” (Shemot 19:5).

The word “*segula*,” translated as “the most beloved treasure,” comes from the term *segol*, a Hebrew vowel made up of three dots. Even if one turns the *segol* around, it still remains a *segol*.

The tzaddik Rabbi David of Lelov, *zt”l*, explains that this is the essence of Bnei Yisrael. No matter where we live and no matter what we experience as a nation, we remain eternal. This is echoed in the verse, “The Eternal One of Israel does not lie.”

In Peace, In the World That is Only Good

“And this entire people, as well, shall arrive at its destination in peace” (Shemot 18:23).

The Gemara (*Berachot* 64a) brings in the name of Rabbi Avin Halevi: “One who takes leave of his friend should not say to him, ‘Go in peace,’ rather ‘Go to peace.’ When Yitro said to Moshe, ‘Go to peace,’ Moshe went and rose up. When David told Avshalom ‘Go in peace,’ Avshalom went and was hung.”

Based on this Gemara, we need to understand why Yitro said, “And this entire people, as well, shall arrive at its destination **in peace.**” Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, *zy”a*, in his sefer *Chefetz Hashem*, explains that when saying this, Yitro was referring to the period of time when the entire generation will have already passed away. He said to Moshe that if he establishes suitable judges, who will be “... men of accomplishment, G-d fearing people, men of truth who despise money” — if these will be the kind of people who will judge the people with integrity — this will save Am Yisrael from the sin of theft and then automatically, “this entire people,” after leaving the world, “will arrive at its destination in peace,” meaning they will not have to return to this world as transmigrated souls.



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu v’Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto, shlita**

The Special Power of Hearing

The first verse in Parshat Yitro is an introduction to the entire *parsha* which talks about the Giving of the Torah. Just as every book contains an introduction which describes the book’s content, so too, the fact that Yitro heard and came is an introduction to the Giving of the Torah. This incident proves to Bnei Yisrael the great power of Torah and endears it to them. Even Yitro, who was the minister of Midian and from a material standpoint did not lack anything, left behind his honor and authority and came to take shelter under the wings of the Shechina, after hearing about the deeds of Hashem.

Yitro did not witness all the miracles Hashem performed for Bnei Yisrael. What gave him the ability to repent just from hearing about the miracles? There were many people throughout the world who heard about Hashem’s wonders and might, and despite this did not seek to attach themselves to Hashem. What quality did Yitro possess that others did not have?

One can answer that **Yitro used his power of imagination and pictured the miracles of the Exodus, to the extent that he felt as if he himself had participated in those miracles.** Therefore, even though he only heard about them, he felt the same degree of elation as those who actually witnessed the miracles.

When Yitro accepted the yoke of Heaven, the Torah broadened his heart and filled his entire being, to the extent that he no longer felt a need for money and possessions, of which — being a Midianite minister — he had vast amounts. Yitro was steeped in love for Hashem and followed Him to the desert, an unsown land, placing his trust in Hashem that He will show him the way and grant him understanding on this new path. The Torah stresses Yitro’s words, “Yitro said, ‘Blessed is Hashem,’” which means Yitro was the first one who blessed Hashem’s Name, and he was the one who instilled this blessing in all future generations.

From Yitro’s behavior, which is brought as an introduction to receiving the Torah, we learn of the great power inherent in hearing about an event. If we pay attention to the message, it is capable of changing worlds and redeeming a person from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom.



GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Zealous for the Truth

When speaking negatively about a relative, even though one’s intention may simply be **zealousness for the truth**, for in his opinion the relative did not act correctly, it is nonetheless considered *lashon hara*.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Instilling Jewish Tradition
from a Tender Age

In a speech given by Maran Rabbi Gershon Eidelstein, *zt"l*, he pointed out that every person blessed with a family is continuously occupied with mitzvot. He performs the mitzvah of *chessed* alongside the mitzvah of loving others, for he is taking care of his family and exerting himself to support them and satisfy all their needs. All these *chessed* opportunities afford him many merits. In addition, every person in his own home amasses spiritual merits, both merits he himself earns and merits he causes others to earn. The father and mother educate their children, and this provides the children with spiritual merits which are attributed to the parents.

For example, as soon as a child starts to speak, the parents immediately teach him to say, “*Torah tzivah lanu Moshe*,” the first verse of Shema, “*Modeh ani*,” and other holy verses. Even though he is still a young child who has just begun to speak and certainly does not understand what he is saying, they already teach him these holy words, so that in the morning he wakes up with “*Modeh ani*” on his lips, and at night he falls sleep with the words “Shema Yisrael” ringing in his ears. In this way, when he grows up he will possess *emunah* that was instilled in him from his youth. This *emunah* can be impressed upon a child from a very young age, when he is not yet capable of understanding, yet the parents already gain and give merits!

As the child grows older, he picks up the way his family speaks. He hears how they always say, “Im yirtzeh Hashem” (G-d willing), and “Be’ezrat Hashem” (with Hashem’s help). This is the way they talk and this is the way it should be. Instead of saying, “I will do” and “I will go,” everything is only “if Hashem wishes” and “with Hashem’s help.” With this, the parents influence the child from a tender age and instill in him the *emunah* that everything that happens is directed by Hashem and in accordance with His will.

I still remember from my childhood how my mother, *a”h*, would talk to us about *Akeidat Yitzchak*. There was a song describing the *akeidah* and the *mesirut nefesh* involved, and she would sing us these words with a special tune. She also sang about Avraham Avinu being saved from the burning furnace and about the other trials he endured. It was the facet of *emunah* that shone strongly throughout.

We also used to hear about *gehinom* – reward and punishment; in those days they spoke about this even to young children. As soon as a child was able to understand in some way, he was taught there is Gan Eden and Gehinom. He knew there are mitzvot and *aveirot*, and for mitzvot one receives Gan Eden and for *aveirot* one goes to Gehinom. This knowledge of retribution only served to increase our *yirat Shamayim* and did not cause us to become depressed.

It is evident that each person, right in his own home, is occupied with *zikuy harabim* – bringing merit to the public, through the education he instills in his children.

Similarly, a kindergarten teacher, besides the *chessed* she performs by taking care of the children (a kindness for the parents and the children), also recites *Modeh ani* with the children, verses of Shema Yisrael, the blessings recited after eating bread, and speaks to them about concepts of *emunah*. Through all this she brings merit to the public by instilling the children with *emunah*.

In truth, it is important to speak to kindergarten children about *emunah* and the creation of the world – to explain that there is a Creator and that the world was created in six days. She should tell them about the Receiving of the Torah and about what occurred at Har Sinai. Even young children should hear and know this. At home too, one should speak about Har Sinai where we received the Ten Commandments from the Almighty Himself!

On Shabbat too, one should speak to children about the sanctity and greatness of Shabbat. They should feel that Shabbat is a day of happiness! One makes Kiddush, sings *zemirot*, eats a Shabbat *se’uda* and enjoys special Shabbat delights. They should not, *chalila*, think it is a day when we suffer because so many things are forbidden. On the contrary, there are special Shabbat prayers, and the extra joy in studying Torah on Shabbat! We delight in Shabbat to the extent that a person’s face changes on Shabbat, as Tosfot (*Ketubot 7b*) writes in the name of the Midrash: “On Shabbat, a new face arrives.”



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and
trust penned by
Moreinu v Rabbeinu
Hagaon Rabbi David
Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Sage Advice

A good friend of mine once found himself enmeshed in a complicated judicial case. He hired the best lawyers to extricate him from his troubles, but they could not figure how to help him out. Therefore, he turned to me for advice. I thought about his situation long and hard. Afterward, I offered him effective, sound advice.

My friend relayed my advice to his lawyers, asking for their professional opinion. The lawyers were dumbstruck by its clarity and were surprised they had not come up with such a brilliant solution, despite their being smart and sharp lawyers. They asked my friend to find out where I had studied, as they assumed that university had given me the tools and ability to come up with this brilliant idea.

I explained that the Torah is the Ivy League College of the world. The ability to solve a legal problem showed the fulfillment of the verse, (*Devarim 4:5*), “See, I have taught you decrees and ordinances.” When a Jew cleaves to Torah, he is granted a special measure of *siyata di’Shemaya* to offer wise counsel.

Torah is the source of all wisdom. Therefore, it confers wisdom upon those who learn it and grants them understanding in all areas of life.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



cont. from p. 1 >>>

Tosefet Shabbat

This week is the Shabbat of the Giving of the Torah, and we elatedly read about the Ten Commandments that were given to us at Har Sinai. The Fifth Commandment – the commandment to observe Shabbat – was presented to us as a gift of love.

There is no Jew, who when reminded about Shabbat in the middle of the week, does not feel a surge of inner joy. It could be a tune from one of the *zemirot* that is playing in the background, a section of the Shabbat prayers that suddenly comes to mind, or a pleasant memory of successfully observing the Shabbat with all its intricate laws. Either way, every Jew, the world-over, grows excited when thinking about Shabbat and aspires to once again taste from its delights and recharge his batteries from its sanctified atmosphere. The heart bursts out in song and rejoicing: “Shabbat Kodesh! Shabbat Kodesh! – my soul pines for your love!”

In addition to this special gift of Shabbat, we received another gift which is called *tosefet* Shabbat, adding on to the obligatory time of observing the Shabbat. It is actually a halacha that one must add from the weekday to the length of the holy Shabbat.

The time one adds is flexible and a person may decide for himself how much to extend Shabbat, meriting another span of time sheltering under the wings of the Shechina. Those who merit welcoming the Shabbat before the required time, tell of a surprising, sublime pleasure they experience during this time. The enchanted atmosphere, the emotional calm and composure, the excitement on welcoming the Shabbat queen, is only a partial list of benefits

that await those who usher in the Shabbat early. But it turns out, that alongside these main benefits, *tosefet* Shabbat also provides us with several other bonuses.

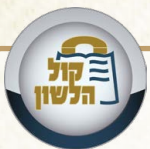
One who welcomes the Shabbat early, merits an exceptional “opening of the gates.” Over the last few years, thousands have joined the revolution of welcoming Shabbat early. They tell of extraordinary miracles and salvations they experienced: Childless couples were blessed, health problems simply disappeared, financial distress was resolved in a miraculous fashion, and older single boys and girls surprisingly found their match.

This is, in fact, what Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim, *zy”a*, the Ben Ish Chai, writes in his sefer *Ben Yehoyada*: He explains the statement of Chazal that anyone who delights in the Shabbat is given a portion without limits. **One who welcomes Shabbat early, opens up the borders of Shabbat – seemingly limited to a day and night – and widens them. The Shabbat then repays him on similar terms, and opens all “limitations” for him, expanding his portion in all areas.**

If so, *tosefet* Shabbat is an exceptional gift we can give ourselves. Whoever has merited tasting from the sweet nectar of welcoming Shabbat early, whoever merited the spiritual uplift and serenity it bestows, can never give up this pleasure, and recommends it warmly. Even if it demands effort, it is definitely worth trying and tasting! “Come my Beloved to greet the bride, the Shabbat presence let us welcome!”

This stems from a blemish in the ability to consider the outcome of a deed.

But once they left Egypt, Am Yisrael purified themselves for fifty days, to the extent that at the time of the Giving of the Torah, they declared, “We will do and we will hear,” accepting to do before they heard what it entailed. The implication of this statement is that they had achieved the level of angels who accept upon themselves to carry out any role they are given by Hashem, even before knowing what it involves. By Am Yisrael preceding “we will do” to “we will hear,” it shows they considered the future, for in their elevated state of angels, they could perceive the future outcome of receiving the Torah. This explains the meaning of the verse, “The entire people **saw** the thunder.” In their lofty state they could perceive the consequences and blessed results of accepting the yoke of Torah and mitzvot, and as mentioned above, “saw” refers to considering the outcome of a deed.



“Contemplate and see that Hashem is good”

Exciting update: With *siyata diShmaya*, the *shiurim* of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the Admor Rabbi David Chananya Pinto *shlit”a*, are now available in Hebrew, English, French and Spanish

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