

Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חזון (ברכות לב:) - שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו (רש"י)

A *Sichah* from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein shlita, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez - Vayeira 5776 #180

For Your Pleasure and Good

Last week's Parshah started with Hashem commanding Avraham, "Lech Lecha Mei'Artzecha Umi'Moladetecha Umi'Beis Avicha El Ha'Aretz Asher Areka" – "Go for you from your land, and from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." Rashi explains, "Lech Lecha – for your pleasure and your good."

"Pleasure" and "good" are two separate things that can be mutually exclusive. For example, sometimes a person may have pleasure when he eats certain sugary foods, but they are not good for him, as they are unhealthy. Even too much honey is not good, as the Passuk in Mishlei (25:27) explicitly states, "Eating a lot of honey is not good."

In contrast, a person may sometimes have to take certain medicines that are bitter tasting. These medicines are good for a person, but are unpleasant to consume. Therefore, Hashem told Avraham that he should know that following Hashem will be both pleasurable and good.

The Passuk continues that Hashem told Avraham to leave three things. "Your land" refers to his country. "Your birthplace" refers to the city of his birth. "Your father's house" refers to his family. The commentaries ask that it would seem the order should be reversed. First a person must take leave of his family. He then leaves his city, and only lastly leaves his country. Why, then, does the Passuk state the reverse order?

The answer is that this was not a command to merely physically leave certain places. It was a command to go away from being influenced by these places.

The influence of a bad person has an impact on even the most righteous person. This is evident from the Passuk (13:14) that states, "And Hashem said to Avraham after Lot left him." Rashi there comments that Hashem only spoke to Avraham after Lot left him. Avraham was blocked from receiving prophecy, despite his tremendous righteousness, when he was in the company of Lot.

We similarly find that Moshe Rabeinu was unable to receive prophecy in the city of Egypt. This is evident from the Passuk in Shemos (9:29), "And Moshe said to him, when I leave the city I will raise my palms (i.e. hands) to Hashem." Rashi there explains that Moshe could not pray in the city where the palace was located in Egypt, as the city was full of idols. Rashi later in Shemos (12:1) notes that when the Passuk says Hashem did speak to Moshe and Aharon, it must be that they left the city in order for Hashem to speak to them.

Therefore, Hashem commanded Avraham to leave these bad influences, in order of how strong of an influence they had on him. A person's country can have a bad influence on him, but it is his general surroundings. A person's city, his more specific surroundings, has a greater influence on him. It takes more effort to leave this behind. The hardest of these three is to leave a negative family influence.

For Your Good

While we previously explained that pleasure and good can be mutually exclusive, there is still a question regarding why Hashem had to tell Avraham that he is being commanded to do so "for your good." Isn't it a rule, as stated in the Gemara in Berachos (60b), that everything Hashem does, He does for our good? Accordingly, it is obvious Avraham was being told to do this for his good! Why did Hashem tell him this?

The answer is that this statement was just an introduction to what the "good" was going to be. The Passuk continues, "And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will raise your name." These three things were three different good blessings that Hashem was telling Avraham he would have if he fulfilled this command. Rashi explains that "A great nation" was the promise that he would have children, "bless you" was a promise that he would become wealthy, and "raise your name" was that he would become famous. It is possible to explain that the first two things were

really for his pleasure (i.e. benefit). However, the last blessing, that he would become famous, was for his good. In other words, Avraham had no personal desire to become famous. However, it would be beneficial for him to become famous in order to have more ability to publicize Emunah in Hashem. This is what is meant by, “And for your good,” that he will become famous in order to give him the tremendous merits that will come from his spreading the word of Hashem.

Vayikra B'Shem Hashem

We find that Avraham Avinu indeed spread the idea of Emunah in Hashem throughout the world. This is as the Passuk (12:8) states, “And he built there an altar for Hashem, and he called out in the name of Hashem.” Unkelos explains, “And he prayed in the name of Hashem.” The Ramban there explains, “Avraham called out in a loud voice the name of Hashem, telling and informing people about how Hashem is G-d.” Later, the Passuk (21:33) states, “And he planted a tree in Be’ar Sheva, and he called out in the name of Hashem, G-d of the universe.” Rashi there explains that the name of Hashem was constantly called out by many people next to this tree. This is because people would come to receive a meal from Avraham Avinu. After they ate and drank, he would tell them to bless Hashem, as it was His food that they had enjoyed, not the food of Avraham.

This is why Hashem blessed him, “And I will raise up your name.” It was beneficial for him to become famous in order to have more ability to publicize Emunah in Hashem. It is true that he even publicized Hashem’s name before he became famous, as is apparent from the Passuk (12:5) stating that he traveled with “the souls they made in Charan.” Rashi there explains that he brought them under the “wings” of the Shechinah, as Avraham would do outreach with the men, and Sarah would do outreach with the women. The Passuk considers it as if they “made” these people. While it is true that Avraham and Sarah were involved in outreach before they became famous, they were able to be more influential when they became famous.

Since they were the ones who influenced others to serve Hashem, all of the good deeds done by the people who started serving Hashem because of them are attributed to them as well. Even after a person dies he can continue to receive merits if people are doing Mitzvos because of him. It is possible that a person can receive such merits for many hundreds of years after he dies because of his continuing influence.

The Mishnah in Avos (5:18) says, “Moshe merited, and he caused others to merit. Therefore, the merit of the public is his, as the Passuk says, “Tzidkas Hashem Asah, u’Mishpatav Im Yisrael.” Since Moshe received Torah from Har Sinai, and then brought it and taught it to Bnei Yisrael, anyone who performs a Mitzvah does so in part due to Moshe Rabeinu. He therefore receives reward for all of the Mitzvos done by all of Bnei Yisrael since Matan Torah. He continues to receive this reward today.

Even though the Gemara in Shabbos (30a) states that when a person dies he can no longer do Mitzvos, this only means that he can no longer perform Mitzvos. However, he can still receive ongoing reward for all of the Mitzvos performed because of his positive influence. He keeps ascending in Gan Eden whenever more Mitzvos are done because of him. There is an infinite amount of reward that Hashem can give a person. The Gemara in Berachos (34b) says that even the prophets could not see and understand the great spiritual reward of Olam Haba. Accordingly, Moshe Rabeinu keeps ascending every day in Gan Eden anew, as Bnei Yisrael keep performing Mitzvos. The same applies to others who have passed away, and who influenced people during their lifetime to perform Mitzvos.

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.1) says, “A person was created to enjoy Hashem, and to have pleasure from the radiance of the Shechinah. This is the truest and greatest pleasure that is possible, and the true place for this is in Olam Haba.”

A person can have a semblance of this pleasure in this world. This is as the Mishnah in Avos (6:4) states, “And if you do so, you will be happy in this world, and it will be good for you in the next world.” If someone learns Torah, he merits having the greatest pleasure in this world, which is a semblance of Olam Haba. However, the highest level of this type of pleasure, which is the greatest pleasure possible, is in Olam Haba.

The Sefarim write that there are always new pleasures every instant in Olam Haba. The Sefer Avnei Eliyahu, which is a commentary on the Siddur of the Gra, says as much in his comments on the Passuk in Hallel, “Zeh Ha’Yom Asah Hashem Nagilah v’Nismachah Vo” – “This is the day that Hashem has made, let us rejoice and be happy in it.” He writes, “The matter of pleasure in Olam Haba is constantly having new understandings in Hashem and the depth of his Torah. Every instant a person will know Hashem better, and his soul will want to come ever closer to Hashem. This will keep increasing every moment.” (See his comments there at length.)

Yisbi'u v'Yisangu Mi'Tuvecha

The Gemara in Berachos (57b) states that Shabbos is akin to Olam Haba. In our Shemonah Esreh on Shabbos we say, “Am Mikadshei Shevi'i, Kulam Yisbi'u v'Yisangu Mi'Tuvecha” – “The nation that sanctifies the seventh (day), they will all be satiated and have pleasure from Your goodness.” Satiation is mentioned first, and pleasure is mentioned second. One would think that first a person receives pleasure, and only then is he satiated.

The Hafla'ah, in his introduction to his commentary on Meseches Kesuvos, explains that there is a reason why this is mentioned seemingly out of order. While this is true regarding physical things such as food, it is not true regarding spiritual things like learning Torah. In this prayer, the satiation and pleasure is from “Your good,” which refers to Torah. This is as the Mishnah in Avos (6:13) states, “There is no good besides (i.e. good only refers to) Torah.” We know that Shabbos is a time when the general public must increase their Torah learning, as stated in Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 290) that people who do not learn much Torah during the week should make sure to increase their Torah learning on Shabbos. Accordingly, when we say, “they will all be satiated and have pleasure from Your goodness,” this refers to satiation and pleasure from Torah learning.

The term “satiating oneself with Torah” is a term that we indeed find in the Gemara in Berachos (14a). Just as a person who is hungry must eat food in order to satiate himself, so too a person who is spiritually hungry must learn Torah to satiate his soul.

We similarly find in Sefer Amos (8:11), “Behold, days are coming, says the word of Hashem Elokim, and I will make a famine in the land. They will not be famished for bread or thirsty for water, but to listen to the word of Hashem.” In other words, this is a prophecy that the time will come when people are starving and thirsting to hear the word of Hashem. We see nowadays that people have a very strong desire to hear words of Torah. There is a large increase of Balei Teshuvah. More and more irreligious people are interested in hearing lessons on various Torah subjects, and people are indeed teaching classes to these people. I have heard that there are more and more office buildings, where religious and irreligious people work together, that have started to have a daily shiur that is attended by everyone. This indicates how people are thirsting for Torah.

When a person learns Torah, he becomes satiated. However, even after he is satiated, he will continue to receive pleasure from more words of Torah. This is unlike

food. Even if a person eats his favorite food, there is a limit to how much he can eat before it nauseates him if he takes another bite. One constantly enjoys learning Torah, and usually enjoys it even more the more he continues to learn. This is why we regarding Torah, “they will be satiated,” and only then mention, “and have pleasure.” This indicates the unique property of Torah to give pleasure even after satiation.

The words of the Or Ha'Chaim (*Devarim* 26:11) regarding the sweetness of Torah are well known. He comments that if people would taste the sweetness and richness of Torah, they would go crazy over it. I know of a boy in our Yeshivah who was taught how he could learn in a manner that he would very much enjoy. He enjoyed learning in this new method so much, that he simply neglected his sleep, and collapsed. He had to rest for a few weeks to regain his strength. Baruch Hashem, today he is someone who teaches Torah to others.

We find many statements of Chazal regarding Torah scholars who enjoyed learning Torah so much that they did not keep track of things that would normally bother a person. The Gemara in Eruvin (54b) states that Rebbi Elazar ben Pedas would start learning in the upper market in Tzipori and end up leaving his cloak there by mistake, while continuing to learn as he was going to the lower market in Tzipori. He simply enjoyed learning Torah so much that he was unable to keep track of his cloak. This is as the Passuk states, “In her love he will constantly be crazy.” Out of great love for Torah study a person can act in a manner that some would consider crazy, like not keeping track of his cloak. Similarly, the Gemara in Shabbos (88a) states that while Rava was learning Torah he accidentally squashed his thumb, causing it to bleed. He did not even notice that this was happening, as he was so involved in his Torah learning. There are many similar stories in the words of Chazal.

For Our Pleasure and Good

We must realize that just as Hashem commanded Avraham Avinu that he should go for his pleasure and good, as stated in the beginning of this article, the same applies to us. Hashem commanded us to learn Torah, pray, and be involved in charity and acts of kindness for our own good. A person who is truly involved in these things will realize how good their life is, and will merit through these actions to have a great portion in Olam Haba. The way to strengthen ourselves in all of these areas is to constantly learn Mussar.

A person must learn a Mussar Sefer that he is interested in learning, and not learn Mussar because he is

being forced or is forcing himself to learn Mussar. A person from Chutz l'Aretz just told me that when he was in Yeshivah he was obligated to learn Mussar, and he forced himself to do so for hours. He does not think that he gained anything from doing so. This is because he did not want to do what he was doing. Moreover, doing so can even have a negative effect of turning a person against words of Mussar. Accordingly, if a person is going to learn Mussar, he must do so because he is genuinely interested in Mussar, as he understands it will elevate him spiritually. If he learns Mussar with this positive intent, he will certainly gain tremendously from it.

We have already said the following many times, but perhaps there is someone who has not yet heard it. If a person starts to learn Mussar with the proper intent, as explained above, he will have a very happy life. This will also cause his family, and all who come in contact with him, to have a happier life.

May we all merit strengthening ourselves spiritually in every area!



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