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Let us suggest a new understanding of the advice Chazal derive from Eliezer, one that carries a lesson for our *avodas Hashem*. “One should disclose his issues of disgrace first” doesn’t mean that one should share them with others, but rather, that one should address them to himself. One should be fully cognizant and aware of his shortcomings. In this way, his way of life will be one of *רוח נמוכה ונפש שפלה* – *a low spirit and a humble soul*.⁵

The Sfas Emes⁶ uses sharp language on this topic: “A person must know that of himself, he is in a position to transgress every sin.” As the Gemara (Chagigah 16a) says, a person was created sharing characteristics with the animal world. This is learned from a pasuk (Iyov 11:12), *וְעִיר פָּרָא, וְאִדָּם יִלְד* – *a person is born a wild donkey*.

This is the lesson Chazal mean to impart: a person must have a deeply ingrained feeling of humility, born of the understanding that, if left to his own devices, he would free-fall into the deepest abyss. It is only with Hashem’s help that he can succeed in overcoming his *yetzer hara*.⁷ When a person faces a *nisayon*, he must let out a cry from the depths of his heart, “*Gevald!* I can’t do this on my own! I can only persevere with help from Above.”

In contrast, picture someone who fancies himself an extraordinary person, capable of withstanding life’s tests. This person is destined to stumble when he faces a *nisayon*. And, when he ultimately comes face-to-face with his shortcomings, he is liable, *chas v’shalom*, to fall prey to despair.

Eliezer had originally hoped Yitzchak would marry his daughter. Avraham told

him, “My son is blessed and you are cursed. An accursed cannot cling to a blessed.”⁸ This choice of expression is difficult. Avraham was explaining why he wouldn’t allow Yitzchak to marry Eliezer’s daughter, so shouldn’t he have phrased it the other way around: “A blessed cannot cling to an accursed”?

The answer is that Avraham was imparting to Eliezer his shortcoming: Eliezer held himself in high esteem, not recognizing that he was, after all, an accursed.

If you view yourself as worthy of doing a shidduch with Avraham, you won't be capable of finding a wife for Yitzchak. Only once you fully and truly remove yourself from the equation and recognize that you are merely a servant to your master, will you gain the distinction of “a king's servant is a king.”

Eliezer’s daughter couldn’t marry Yitzchak because “an accursed cannot cling to a blessed.” It was because of the accursed – Eliezer – that it could not be a match, since he had not yet recognized that he was indeed an accursed.

Eliezer took this lesson to heart. When he met Besuel and Lavan, he immediately exclaimed, *עֶבֶד אֲבְרָהָם אֲנִי* – *I am a servant of Avraham!* It was an internal declaration, aimed at his own consciousness: *I am no more than a servant of my master*. It was at that moment, when he completely negated himself and viewed himself as only Avraham’s servant, that he transitioned from an accursed to a blessed.⁹ As a king’s servant, he became a king.

(בנאות דשא – חיי שרה תשפ"ג)

To Rabbeinu Shlita,

My group of friends recently discussed the topic of “Torah *lishmah*,” seeking to determine whether it is applicable in today’s day, and in particular, for a *yeshivah bachur*. We did not arrive at a definitive conclusion, and would benefit from clarity on the matter.

Rabbeinu Shlita responded:

As a rule, it is not age-appropriate for you to try and learn specifically *lishmah*. If, by happenstance (and not by intent), you learn Torah in such a setting that nobody is aware of it, it is considered a level of *lishmah*.

There are many degrees between the two extremes – learning for a haughty feeling of superiority, and learning purely for Hashem *Yisbarach*. The main thing is to accustom oneself to learn with diligence, not to waste time, and to maintain *yiras Shamayim* together with one’s learning – to remain aware of Him Who teaches us the Torah.

5 Avos 5:19

6 Va'eira 5631

7 Sukkah 52b

8 Rashi 24:39

9 Bereishis Rabbah 60:7

The High Road

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וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם מְהֵלְכִים בֵּין הָעַמֻּדִים (Zecharyah 3:7), הָאֵלָה – *I will grant you walkers between these who stand here*. Those in the next world are “standers,” since they can do nothing to advance their *madreigah*, while the living are “walkers,” since they can always move forward and grow in *ruchniyus*. When a person visits from the next world, he stands with his feet above, to show that he is not a “walker”; he can no longer make strides and earn *Olam Haba*. Only those still alive have this capacity.

The runnings of Olam Hazeah are needless and devoid of purpose. On Shabbos, in particular, a Yid can gain this understanding.

We must ensure that our “walking” is done in the proper manner. The Gemara (Shabbos 113a) teaches that לא יהא הילוכך של חול – *One’s walking of Shabbos should not be like his walking of the weekdays*. The Gemara’s terminology is unusual. What does הילוכך של שבת, *walking of Shabbos* mean? Shouldn’t it say הילוכך בשבת – *walking on Shabbos*?

This contains a lesson. There are, indeed, two manners of walking. There is *walking of the weekdays* – when one’s feet firmly tread the ground, and he is deeply engaged in the *gashmiyus* of this world; and there is *walking of Shabbos* – and elevated walk, when one engages in

ruchniyus and longs to grow close to the Ribbono Shel Olam.

וַיֵּרָץ לָבוֹן אֶל הָאִישׁ הַחוּצָה אֶל הָעֵיִן – *Lavan ran to the man (Eliezer), outside to the spring (24:29)*. Rashi asks, למה רץ ועל מה רץ – *Why did he run, and for what did he run?* Rashi answers that seeing Rivkah adorned with jewelry, Lavan reasoned that Eliezer must be wealthy. He ran to greet Eliezer, hoping to gain some of his riches.

The way Rashi words his question seems redundant. Why does he augment “why did he run” with “for what did he run”?¹³

R. Tzadok HaKohen writes¹⁴ that the root and essence of a concept can be discovered by observing the first place it is mentioned in the Torah. The first place ריצה, running, is mentioned in the Torah is regarding Avraham Avinu, וַיֵּרָא אֵת לְקַרְאֵתָם – *He saw, and he ran toward them (18:2)*. The next place is with regard to Lavan, וַיֵּרָץ לָבוֹן. These two “runnings” exemplify the two ways a person can travel through this world: הילוך של שבת and הילוך של חול. Or, as we say when we make a *siyum*, אנו רצים והם רצים – *We run and they run*. The difference is where we’re running to.

Why did he run, and for what did he run? We know *why* Lavan ran: to get rich. But *for what* did he run? What, ultimately, did his run gain him? Some food, that’s all.

That’s the lesson here: people spend all their days running. They must pause and think, למה רץ ועל מה רץ? We know why they’re running – it’s a הילוך של חול, an attempt to gain their fortune and experience all the glitz the world has to offer. But what is it they are running for?

Even if they do strike it rich, it’s not real; it’s all just a passing mirage. Contrast that to Avraham’s run, which was a הילוך של שבת, a run to fulfill a mitzvah. Such a run gains a person eternal benefit. For all generations, Jews would gain from Avraham’s encounter with the *malachim*.¹⁵

Let us take another approach to Rashi’s choice of expression. The Gemara (Shabbos 150a) learns from מְמַצּוֹא הִקְפָּךְ – *from seeking your own needs or discussing the forbidden* (Yeshayah 58:13), that tending to one’s own needs is forbidden on Shabbos, but tending to the needs of *Shamayim* is permitted. As well, the Gemara says it is permissible to calculate חשבונות של מה לך. Rashi explains that this means calculations which serve no purpose.

The question על מה רץ, *for what did he run?* is a reminder that the runnings of *Olam Hazeah* are pursuits of מה לך, needless and devoid of purpose. On Shabbos, in particular, a Yid can gain this understanding, and begin to run for the right reasons: in the pursuit of *kedushah*.

There is another version to the Gemara’s text: חשבונות של מלך – *calculations of a king*. The *Aruch*¹⁶ explains this means it is permissible to compute the needs of a king and his military, since the person who is doing it has no need for these figures.

We may suggest a different approach. It is permissible to calculate on Shabbos *cheshbonos* of the King of kings, assessing one’s pursuits and directing them toward *kedushah*. There is no better time for this than Shabbos.

(חיי שרה תשפ”ג – ליל ש”ג, מאמר ב)

13 See *Gur Aryeh, Maskil L’David, Bartenura*

14 *Yisrael Kedoshim*, 7

15 See *Bava Metzia* 86b

16 ערך חשבב

Understanding Value

נתתני כסף השדה קח ממני

I give the money for the field; accept it from me. (Bereishis 23:13)

The Gemara (Kiddushin 2a) derives from this pasuk that *kiddushin* can be performed with money. The *Rishonim* wonder: since the transaction in our pasuk took place with actual money, why is *shaveh kesef* (objects worth money) acceptable for *kiddushin*? *Tosafos* answers that this is learned from the *halachos* of damages and *avadim* (servants), where the acceptability of *shaveh kesef* is derived from a pasuk.

*Avnei Nezer*¹⁷ and *Divrei Yechezkel*¹⁸ deliberate a *chakirah*: following *Tosafos*'s approach, is the allowance of *shaveh kesef* because 'money' is defined as something containing value, so *shaveh kesef* is no worse than actual money; or perhaps 'money' is defined as actual currency, but since *shaveh kesef* can be sold and exchanged for money, it is given the status of money.

The second option seems difficult to understand. If the Torah defines 'money' as coinage, then clearly, it has some quality that 'objects worth money' don't share. If so, what difference does it make that these objects can be sold for money? That doesn't turn them into money, just as an orange that can be bartered for an apple isn't an apple.

Avnei Nezer, however, seeks to prove this approach – that *shaveh kesef* is acceptable only because it can be sold for money – from a ruling of the Rambam. The Rambam writes¹⁹ that if a person is *mekadesh* a woman with a date in a place where it is not worth a *perutah*, she is considered married out of doubt – since perhaps in a different locale, this date is worth a *perutah*. The Rambam clarifies that this applies only where the

woman is able to get to the other location, and the date wouldn't spoil before it got there. Clearly, concludes *Avnei Nezer*, the acceptability of a date for *kiddushin* is only because of the possibility of selling it for a *perutah* in the other location. This seems to be the understanding of *Ohr Same'ach*,²⁰ as well.

It would seem, however, that we may refute this proof. Granted, a date must be able to be exchanged for a *perutah* to be valid for *kiddushin*. But that isn't because it isn't considered money of its own accord. In fact, it is considered money on its own – but only because it contains value. And if it couldn't be exchanged for money, it wouldn't have any value. In other words, its ability to be sold doesn't allow it work *like* money, but rather makes it considered *actual* money.

Divrei Yechezkel brings a different proof that *shaveh kesef* works only because it can be sold for money. The Rosh²¹ writes that although generally, objects worth money are acceptable as money, when one steals an object, he must replace it with a similar object, and not with something else worth that value. The Rosh adds that nonetheless, the thief may pay actual money instead of replacing the object, because, "מה לי הן מה" – what difference is there between it or its [value in] money?" The Rosh explains that this is so since the person can easily buy a replacement object with the money. But a different article, which would take effort to sell and then buy a replacement object, cannot be used by the thief as compensation.

The Rosh is clear that the concept of *מה לי הן מה* is applicable because the money can buy a replacement object. Elsewhere,²² the Rosh implies that this concept holds true because of the principle that *shaveh kesef*

is like money. If so – combining these two statements of the Rosh – it is clear that the reason *shaveh kesef* is like money is because it can be replaced with money.²³

We may counter, however, that when the Rosh invokes *מה לי הן מה לי דמיהן* in connection with returning a theft, he does not mean that the money is considered as the object's replacement, but rather that it is an acceptable *substitute*. A thief can pay back money since it will be easy enough for the person to buy the true replacement. If so, this statement of the Rosh has no bearing on the discussion of *shaveh kesef*.

We may offer proof of our own to the contrary – that *shaveh kesef* is considered actual money. The Gemara (Kiddushin 63a) says that a man can perform *kiddushin* with a service – advocating for the woman before the government, dancing before her, etc. Obviously, the woman cannot take these services and barter them for money. Clearly then, it is the *shaveh kesef* of the *hana'ah* (benefit) itself, valued at a *perutah*, that effectuates the *kiddushin*.

One might respond that perhaps the *kiddushin* is not performed with the value of the service, but rather with the money the woman saved by not having to pay for it – and indeed, *shaveh kesef* is only effective because it can be traded for money. But consider where a man performs a service for a penniless woman as *kiddushin*. He didn't save her any money, since in any case, she had no money to pay for the service. Nonetheless, the *kiddushin* is valid. It is clear, then, that the *kiddushin* is performed with the *shaveh kesef* of the *hana'ah* itself – and that *shaveh kesef* is indeed considered money all its own.

(בנאות דשא – חיי שרה תשפ"ג)

17 E.H. 386

18 38

19 *Hilchos Ishus* 4:19

20 *Hilchos Ishus* 5:24

21 Bava Kama 1:11

22 *She'elos u'Teshuvos HaRosh*, 6:19

23 See *Avnei Miluim*, 27:4