

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



עַלֵּי דֵשֶׁה

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur

Empowered

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית חֳדָשִׁים

This month shall be for you the beginning of the months. (Shemos 12:2)

Rashi begins, at the beginning of Bereishis: "R. Yitzchak said, "The Torah should have begun with לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם, which is the first mitzvah the Jewish nation was commanded." Simply, this means that since the Torah is primarily meant to teach us how to live, it should

demonstrates that the Torah and its *chachamim* can influence nature. (This power is how the *chachamim* can effect positive change in the nature of Klal Yisrael.)

The beginning of the Torah contains multiple references to the power of the *yetzer hara*. First, Hashem's statement to Kayin: וְאִם לֹא תִיטִיב שְׂאֵת, וְאִם לֹא תִיטִיב – לִפְתּוֹחַ חַטָּאת רִבְּךָ – *If you improve yourself, you will be forgiven; but if you do not improve yourself, sin crouches at the door* (Bereishis 4:7). Then, the Torah tells the stories of the *dor hamabul* and the *dor haflagah*. The Torah details, too, other *nisyonos* and hardships, culminating with *galus Mitzrayim*.

This is what R. Yitzchak meant: Before detailing the influence of the *yetzer hara*, the Torah should have taught הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם – which teaches every Yid that in any situation, he has the ability to overcome nature and triumph over the *yetzer hara*. This is the power of the Torah – and the Torah belongs to every Jew.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כִּן דִּבַּרְתָּ. לֹא אֶסְף עוֹד רְאוֹת פְּנֵיךָ – *Moshe said, "You have spoken correctly. I shall never see your face again."* (Shemos 10:29) *Ba'al HaTurim* notes that the phrase לֹא אֶסְף עוֹד appears elsewhere in the Torah (Bereishis 8:21), וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל לְבֹ, לֹא אֶסְף לְקַלֵּל, וְעוֹד אֶת הָאָדָמָה וְגו' וְלֹא אֶסְף עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת כָּל חַי כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי – *Hashem said in His heart: "I will not continue to curse again the*

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A New Face

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ פָּרְעֹה לֹךְ מֵעַלֵּי הַשְּׂמֶרֶךְ לֵךְ אֶל תִּסְף רְאוֹת פְּנֵי כִּי בַיּוֹם רְאוֹתָהּ כִּי תִּמּוֹת. וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כִּן דִּבַּרְתָּ לֹא אֶסְף עוֹד רְאוֹת פְּנֵיךָ.

Pharaoh said to him, "Go from me! Beware – do not see my face anymore, for on the day you see my face you shall die!" Moshe said, "You have spoken correctly. I shall never see your face again." (Shemos 10:28-29)

The *mefarshim* point out that Moshe did, in fact, see Pharaoh's face again, when Pharaoh came to see Moshe during *Makkas Bechoros*. The Ramban explains that Moshe meant he wouldn't see Pharaoh again in his house – instead, Pharaoh would come to Moshe's house. The Ramban cites a Midrash⁷ that interprets the pasuk this way: "I (Moshe) will not go to you (Pharaoh); you will come to me."

Other commentators take another approach. Whenever Moshe saw Pharaoh before *Makkas Bechoros*, Pharaoh was sitting comfortably in his palace, fully at peace. When they met during *Makkas Bechoros*, Pharaoh was in a very different state: frightened and begging for his life. What kind of 'face' did he have then? This

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7 Shemos Rabbah 18:1

With our redemption from Mitzrayim, the koach hatumah inside of us was shattered. Of the *yetzer hara*, too, Klal Yisrael could say לֹא אֶסְף עוֹד רְאוֹת פְּנֵיךָ

have begun with the first mitzvah. Let us delve into this on a deeper level.

The Yerushalmi¹ states that there is a special quality to *kiddush hachodesh* (the mitzvah of לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם), in that when *beis din* decides to declare a leap year, *Shamayim* agrees – to the extent that nature is altered accordingly. *Kiddush hachodesh*

1 Kesubos 1:2

Empowered

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ground... nor will I again continue to smite every living being, as I have done." Ba'al HaTurim takes one approach in explaining the connection between these *pesukim*, and the Sfas Emes² takes another. Let us explore an approach of our own.

In the first occurrence of *לֹא אֶסֶף עוֹד*, Hashem states that He will not bring another *mabul*. Rashi cites Chazal³ saying that Hashem repeated this phrase twice in this *pasuk*, in order to effectuate a *shevuah*. But how could Hashem swear not to destroy the world again? What if mankind's iniquity would once again make them worthy of destruction?

The Sfas Emes explains⁴ that when Hashem made His *bris* and *shevuah* following the *mabul*, Hashem weakened the *yetzer hara*, so that it could never overcome humanity again to the extent that they would be fit for annihilation. We, too, have *nisyonos*, but they cannot lead to the world's destruction.

Just as *לֹא אֶסֶף עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת כָּל חַי* alludes to the diminished power of the *yetzer hara*, so does *לֹא אֶסֶף עוֹד רְאוּת פְּנֵיךְ* that Moshe said to Pharaoh.

How could Moshe say he would never see Pharaoh's face again, if during *Makkas Bechoros* Pharaoh came to speak to Moshe? The answer is that what Moshe said he would never see again was Pharaoh's face of wickedness. By the time Pharaoh came to see Moshe and beg for his life, that was gone. Pharaoh was humbled.

*Sefarim*⁵ teach that Pharaoh is representative of the *yetzer hara* itself. Just as Pharaoh's face of unadulterated evil became unrecognizable, so did that of the *yetzer hara*. With our redemption from *Mitzrayim*, the *koach hatumah* inside of us was shattered. Of the *yetzer hara*, too, Klal Yisrael could say *לֹא אֶסֶף עוֹד רְאוּת פְּנֵיךְ*.

Today, no Yid can say he cannot overcome the *yetzer hara*. At *yetzias Mitzrayim*, we gained the ability to overpower the *yetzer hara* and quash our hearts' stubbornness. But that is not all. With the *mitzvah* of *כָּפַר הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה*, we became empowered over nature. We could now overcome whatever *nisyonos* we would face.

This is especially pertinent to a person who has sinned and feels he is incapable of righting himself; he feels that his nature pulls him to sin, since he has transgressed repeatedly. Such a person must know what Rabbeinu Yonah writes:⁶ "Hashem helps those who do *teshuvah*, when of their own accord they are incapable." Even if they are firmly in the grip of the *yetzer hara*, having sinned again and again, Hashem will help them overcome and rise out of the muck they find themselves in.

The *navi* says, *שׁוּבוּ בְּנִים שׁוֹבְרִים* – *Return, wayward sons* (*Yirmiyahu* 3:14). *שׁוֹבְרִים* can mean *those who return again and again*. Even one who has repeatedly attempted *teshuvah*, only to fail time and again, can still do *teshuvah* and succeed. There is still hope.

Targum renders the *pasuk* *שׁוּבוּ בְּנִים* – *תּוֹבוּ בְּנֵי דַמְתַּחֲסִינִין לְמִיתָב* – *Return, sons who strengthen themselves to do teshuvah*. Sometimes a person wants to return to Hashem, but he fears his *teshuvah* will not be accepted. Perhaps he has tried correcting himself in the past, only to stumble once again. Or perhaps he read in a *sefer* that on sins such as his there can be no *teshuvah*. Such a person begins to despair of *teshuvah*. Hashem says to him: *There is no sin beyond the reach of teshuvah! There is nothing that cannot be repaired!* At any time, we able – and obligated – to overcome our nature and better ourselves.

(בא תשפ"ג – ס"ג מאמר ב)

Nature Changer

וְכִי יִגֹּר אֶתְּךָ גֵר וְעָשָׂה כְּסֹחַ לֵה', הַמּוֹל לֹא כָל זָכָר וְאִזּוֹ יִקְרַב לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ וְהָיָה כְּאֶזְרַח הָאָרֶץ, וְכָל עֶרְל לֹא יֹאכֵל בּוֹ

When a convert sojourns among you he shall make the Korban Pesach for Hashem, each of his males shall be circumcised, and then he may draw near to perform it and he shall be like the native of the land; no uncircumcised male may eat of it. (Shemos 12:48)

The words *וְכִי יִגֹּר לֹא כָל זָכָר וְאִזּוֹ יִקְרַב* teach that if one has sons who were not given a *bris*, he may not eat of the *Korban Pesach*. The Chasam Sofer asks:¹⁸ These words are written in our *pasuk* which discusses the obligations of a *ger*, but this does not seem applicable to a *ger*: if it refers to sons born after his conversion, he is not a *ger* with regard to them; he and they are regular Jews. And if it means sons born while he was still a non-Jew, their state of *arlus* does not, in fact, prevent him from eating a *Korban Pesach*.

The Chasam Sofer answers based on Rashi's explanation of *וְכִי יִגֹּר לֹא יֹאכֵל בּוֹ*. Rashi states that one who legitimately did not receive a *milah*, because his brothers died due to their *milah*, nonetheless may not eat of the *Korban Pesach*. Says the Chasam Sofer: Just as these last words of the *pasuk* refer to a scenario of *מתו אחיו מחמת מילה*, so do the earlier words, *הַמּוֹל לֹא כָל זָכָר*. But how can this be? In what scenario might one be obligated to receive a *milah* if his brothers died because of theirs? In a case of a *ger* whose first two sons were circumcised, as non-Jews, and died as a result. He then converted and had another son. It is of this son that the *pasuk* speaks. This child must be given a *bris* before his

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2 Likutim

3 Shevuos 36a

4 Likutim, Noach s.v. Bris

5 See Noam Elimelech, beginning of Beshalach

6 Sha'arei Teshuvah 1:1

A New Face

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was not the face Moshe said he wouldn't see again.⁸

Let us suggest yet another approach. The Yerushalmi⁹ states that should there exist a creature with the body of an animal but the face of a person, it would be considered a person. Even if it were out pulling a plow, we could instruct it to perform *chalitzah* or *yibbum*. The converse is true for a creature whose body is human but whose face is that of an animal: even if it were reading from a *Sefer Torah*, we would consider it an animal and slaughter it.

are pure and directed heavenward – is a person. He can do act constructive acts, such as *yibbum*; even if all is not perfect with him, he can improve. But if he has the face of an animal – if his head is immersed in lowly cravings – then he is an animal, even if with his body he learns Torah.¹²

When Yaakov met Eisav on his way from Lavan's house, Yaakov told Eisav, *וַיֵּרְאֵהוּ עֵשָׂו וַיִּשָּׂקְצוּהוּ וַיִּנָּשֶׂק עַל צַוְעָתוֹ וַיִּשָּׂק עָלָיו* – *I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of a divine being* (Bereishis 33:10). This is difficult to understand; how could Yaakov see the wicked Esav as a *malach*?

The answer is that Esav's *tikkun* is when he humbles himself before Yaakov.¹³ At this moment, when Esav's mercy had become aroused for Yaakov – *וַיִּחַבְּקֵהוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל צַוְעָתוֹ וַיִּשָּׂק עָלָיו*, *he embraced him, fell upon his neck, and kissed him* (33:4) – Esav was in his proper form.

Yaakov meant, *In general, your face is that of an animal. But right now, it is that of a true person, a divine being.*¹⁴

True *tzaddikim* could tell a person's standing by seeing his face. The Baal Shem Tov, it is said, once remarked that he saw oxen wearing *shtreimlach*, sitting and eating.¹⁵ Similarly, it is told about certain *tzaddik* that a man once walked into his house outside of *kabbalas kahal*. The *tzaddik* beheld him in fright: here was

an animal dressed as a man! The *tzaddik* had not prepared, had not lowered himself to a level where he could tolerate the sight of a simple, *gashmiyus'dige* person.

When Moshe Rabbeinu beheld Pharaoh, he saw Pharaoh's evil character and obstinate heart displayed on his face. He saw the face of an animal. It was about this face that Moshe said, *I shall never see your face again*. At the time of *Makkas Bechoros*, all the world's *avodah zarah* became nullified, as the truth of Hashem became plain to see. All wickedness and stubbornness of heart evaporated. On that night, Pharaoh had a very different face. This was a face that Moshe could see.

Here is another lesson to be learned about faces. The Midrash¹⁶ states, "The light of a person's face on Shabbos is incomparable to that of the weekdays." The Imrei Emes and others explained that this is why on Shabbos, *sheva berachos* may be recited even without *panim chadashos* (a new "face," i.e., person);¹⁷ every person is a *panim chadashos* on Shabbos. A Yid's face on Shabbos reflects the pinnacle of humanity.

And another: Just as a person can "turn his back" to the past – he can move on and pay it no heed – so too, a person can "face" the future – he can do *teshuvah* for his mistakes and merit a new face going forward – the face of a true person.

(בא תשפ"ג – שבע ברכות, מאמר ב)

A Yid's face on Shabbos reflects the pinnacle of humanity

My father explained this¹⁰ based on a saying of the Baal Shem Tov: "Wherever a person's thoughts are – that is where his essence is." This essence is reflected on a person's face.¹¹

This, then, is what the Yerushalmi means: A person whose 'body' is like an animal's – who is engaged in earthly pursuits – but nevertheless, his 'face' is human – his thoughts and desires

8 See *Beis Yaakov* - Alexander; *Zichron Shmuel* - Heine

9 Niddah 3:2

10 *Pnei Menachem, Bahab*, p. 172-173; see also *Otzar Derashos*, vol. 4 p. 112

11 See *Pnei Menachem*, Tetzaveh p. 165

12 See *Maseches Kallah, perakim* 1 and 2

13 See *Sfas Emes*, end of Toldos 5636

14 After all, the Gemara (Kiddushin 18a) states Esav was considered a *Yisrael mumar*.

15 See also *Otzar Derashos*, vol. 4 p. 190 about the Yid Hakadosh.

16 Bereishis Rabbah 11:2

17 See *E.H.* 62:8

Nature Changer

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father can eat of the *Korban Pesach*. But why should this child be given a *bris*, if his brothers died due to their circumcision? The answer is that non-Jewish “relatives” of a Jew have no bearing at all upon him.¹⁹

The Chasam Sofer does not explain why one’s non-Jewish siblings cannot serve as an indication of his nature.

The Chasam Sofer elsewhere²⁰ considers that perhaps a Jew could not be lenient toward *issurim*²¹ based on medical research from non-Jewish experimentation, since the Gemara²² says that the bodies of Jews differ from those of non-Jews. This, then, may be the reason the Chasam Sofer says this child should be given a *bris*: as a Jew, he has a different nature than his non-Jewish brothers.

But this is not so simple. The Gemara states that the reason non-Jewish bodies are different that Jewish ones is because they eat *shekatzim u’reimasim*, insects. This would not seem to apply to our case, since the non-Jewish brothers, as well, were circumcised at eight days, and they surely hadn’t eaten any *shekatzim u’reimasim* yet. Perhaps, however, their bodies received a non-Jewish nature because their parents ate *shekatzim u’reimasim*.

Let us consider another scenario in light of this understanding. A *Yisrael mumar* (non Torah-observant Jew), who for years ate *shekatzim u’reimasim*, circumcised two sons, and they died as a result. He then did *teshuvah*, and had another son. Should

he give this child a *bris*? According to the above reasoning, perhaps he should. After all, his earlier sons had a not-Jewish nature due to his eating insects. But this son was born after he did *teshuvah*, reversing the negative impact of his *aveiros*. His body is thus different than his brothers’.

The Chazon Ish spoke of a different, but similar, scenario: a non-Jew, who lost two brothers to circumcision, wishes to become a *ger*. Should he undergo *milah*? Presently, he is still a non-Jew, and may thus have the same nature as his brothers. But perhaps, since through his *bris* he will become a Jew, the change in nature that he will experience as a Jew will prevent this *milah* from adversely affecting him.²³

We may also explain the Chasam Sofer’s position –that a *ger* who lost two non-Jewish sons to circumcision should give his newborn, Jewish son a *bris*– in another manner.

The Gemara (Gittin 57b) interprets the pasuk (Tehillim 44:23), כִּי עָלֶיךָ הִרְגָנוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם – *Because for Your sake we are killed throughout the day*, as referring to our observing the mitzvah of *milah*. Rashi explains that at times, a child may die because of circumcision. So why, in fact, do we disregard this danger and perform a *bris*? The Chasam Sofer explains²⁴ that the merit of the mitzvah protects us from potential harm.

This may be the Chasam Sofer’s own reasoning in regard to circumcising

the child of the *ger*: although the child’s brothers died because of circumcision, they did not have the protection of a mitzvah. Their death therefore has no bearing on this Jewish brother, who will be protected from harm through fulfilling the mitzvah of *milah*.

There is a practical implication in these two understandings of the Chasam Sofer’s statement. Consider a scenario of three Jewish brothers, two of whom died because of *milah*. However, their *milah* was performed within their first week of life, before its proper time. Should the third brother be given a *bris* (at eight days)?

Following some authorities, a *milah* before its proper time is entirely invalid, and is thus not in fulfillment of the mitzvah. According to our second understanding, it is the merit of the mitzvah which makes the difference between a Jewish child and his non-Jewish brothers. Accordingly, in this case, too, the third brother should be given a *bris*, since he – unlike his brothers – will be protected by the mitzvah. However, according to our first understanding –d that the difference hinges on the consumption of *shekatzim u’reimasim* of non-Jews – the Chasam Sofer’s statement has no relevance in this case of all Jewish children. Accordingly, the third brother should not be given a *bris*.

(בנאות דשא – בא תשס"א)

19 The Chasam Sofer concludes: כנלע"ד, וצ"ע לדינא.

20 Shabbos 86b; Avodah Zarah 31b

21 Unless in a life-threatening scenario.

22 Shabbos 86b; Avodah Zarah 31b

23 See *Divrei Yaakov* (Adess), Mikvaos vol. 1, *Pesichah*, no. 5

24 *She'elos U'Teshuvos*, Y.D. 245