

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



עניני ארץ

ALIEI DESHE

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

Yearning for Learning

In the lead up to *Kabbalas HaTorah* Hashem instructed Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael about the greatness of the Torah they were about to receive, and the exceptional standards it would require. Bnei Yisrael accepted the deal, and Moshe reported this back to Hashem. Did Moshe Rabbeinu need to tell Hashem, Who knows everything, what Bnei Yisrael had said? Rashi quotes the

deeper, kabbalistic meaning. The Sfas Emes gives some context:

Chazal¹ note that the Torah was not given immediately upon the creation of the world, but only after 26 generations has passed.² The reason given by Chazal for this is to teach us that *derech ertz kadmah laTorah*. Here, again, we cannot understand this at face value; we don't need 26 generations to learn social etiquette.

The Sfas Emes explains that '*derech ertz*,' literally 'the way of the land,' refers to inspiration born of our – human – initiative: איתערותא דלתתא. This reference is drawn from the words of Chazal, who open our eyes to the spiritual aspect of ארץ. We generally associate ארץ with the lower, baser elements, the most physical part of creation, but Chazal³ teach us that even earth has a hidden spirituality. "למה נקרא שמה ארץ – שרצתה לעשות רצון קונה *Why is it called ארץ? For it ran/desired to do the will of its Creator.*"

Even the lowest elements of creation strive to fulfill the will of their Creator. The very name ארץ defines that this

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Last But Not Least

There was a *ger tzedek* who was troubled by the *pasuk* we read in this week's *parshah*, concerning keeping Shabbos. The *pasuk* reads: לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה "כָּל מְלָאכָה אֹתָהּ וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ עַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ וְאִשְׁרְךָ בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְעַמְּךָ הַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ" *do not perform any melachah (of the 39 prohibited labors); you, and your son, and your daughter, your slave, and your maidservant, and your domesticated animals, and your foreigner (ger) who is in your gates.*" This *ger* was understandably perturbed that the *ger* is mentioned after the animals, as if they were on a lower stratum than the animals of a Jew. Many people attempted to explain the *pasuk* to him in a different light, but he could not accept their explanations.

The Shinever Rebbe explained¹⁴ that the *ger* is not relegated to last due to his standing, *chas veshalom*. The *pasuk* really should have read, לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל מְלָאכָה אֹתָהּ וּגְרָךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ, with *ger* following immediately after every *Yid*. However, the *pasuk* inserts those who fall within the purview of 'אתה' because each individual is responsible for them, and must make sure that they do no *melachah* for him: one's minor children,

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14 *Divrei Yechezkel*, Yisro.

Hashem plants every inspiration within us, and we only have to fan that inspiration into action.

Mechilta, saying that the Torah wants us to learn *derech ertz* from Moshe, who did not say "Since the One Who sent me knows, I don't need to report back."

The Sfas Emes explains that when the Chazal speak of *derech ertz* it doesn't mean simply good manners or courtesy. The term '*derech ertz*' has a

1 Tanna D'bei Eliyahu 1, and Vayikra Rabbah 9:3.

2 Ten generations from Adam to Noach, another ten from Noach to Avraham, and then Yitzchak, Yaakov, Levi, Kehas, Amram, and Moshe.

3 Bereishis Rabbah 5:8.

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is earth's more salient desire. '*Derech erez kodmah laTorah*' means that it is impossible to receive the Torah without proper desire and yearning for the Torah. Twenty-six generations⁴ were needed to build up the requisite yearning and hunger for Torah in order to allow the Torah a foothold in this lowly world.

The Sfas Emes returns to the Mechilta. The Mechilta refers also to this dynamic of *derech erez* meaning the inspiration that comes from down here, איתערוּתא דלתתא. We need to realize that any *his'orerus* that we may generate was also ignited by Hashem. It was not truly created by our own good intentions. Hashem plants every inspiration within us, and we only have to fan that inspiration into action. So, what was the purpose of Moshe reporting Klal Yisrael's *his'orerus* back to Hashem? He was the One who instilled the *his'orerus* in them in the first place!

The Torah wished to teach us '*derech erez*,' that we need to bring whatever *his'orerus* we have, as an איתערוּתא דלתתא, because that is the only way we can receive the Torah. As the Sfas Emes explains elsewhere,⁵ any Divine outpouring could not be absorbed in this world if there is no receptacle prepared. The receptacle is created through the desire and thirst of man for that Heavenly *hashpa'ah*. The *hashpa'ah* is simply not compatible with this world, and could not lodge here with any permanence, if not for the איתערוּתא דלתתא.

These words of the Sfas Emes give us the perspective to understand yet another teaching of Chazal. The Gemara⁶ speaks of the aforementioned negotiation between Hashem and Klal Yisrael, facilitated by Moshe, in the lead up to *Kabbalas HaTorah*. The Gemara says that Moshe could have brought the matter before Bnei Yisrael a day earlier, but he didn't because of *chulsha d'orcha*. Usually this is understood as road fatigue. But Bnei Yisrael, as we know, were transported as if on eagle's wings.⁷ Their feet were not worn down, and even their clothes remained fresh.⁸ What weariness did they experience from this first-class travel?

Having learned the words of the Sfas Emes, we can suggest that this weakness was of '*orcha*' which is Aramaic for *erez*. They were weak in that they did not yet have the requisite '*derech erez*' – the desire and yearning which were necessary for even this stage of *kabbalas haTorah*. They weren't yet enthusiastic enough to be ready, even to be just spoken to about *kabbalas haTorah*.

This thought can shed light on a puzzling *pasuk* in Parshas Shemos. When Hashem first sends Moshe Rabbeinu on his mission to bring the Yidden out of Mitzrayim, Hashem gives Moshe a sign: "וְזָה לְךָ הָאוֹת כִּי אֶנְכִּי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ בְּהוֹצִיאֲךָ אֶת הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה. *This is a sign for you that I have sent you: when you take the nation out of Mitzrayim you will serve Hashem on this mountain.*"⁹

One of the ways to read this *pasuk* is that Hashem gave Moshe a sign with which he will know that Klal Yisrael will eventually receive the Torah on Har Sinai. But what is the sign, and how does it indicate that there will be a *kabbalas haTorah*?

I believe that the 'sign' here refers to the tradition they had that the redeemer would reveal himself with the words פִּקֹּד פִּקְדוֹתָי.¹⁰ If this was the tradition, couldn't any false messiah come along and pronounce those simple words?¹¹ The answer is that those words were far from simple. They were not merely words; they were words that had an actionable test. The word פִּקֹּד can mean a lacuna, a vacuum; something is missing.¹² When Moshe Rabbeinu pronounced those momentous words, there was an immediate sense of lacking, of yearning for what they were missing in the depths of *galus*. It began to pain them; not their physical affliction, but their spiritual servitude.¹³

It was that yearning, that desire, that would guarantee that they would be able to receive the Torah on Har Sinai. It was this איתערוּתא דלתתא that made it possible.

May Hashem ignite within us as well, the spark of true desire, the inspiration of yearning, to want to draw as much as we can from this time of *kabbalas haTorah*. May the Torah find a foothold within us, a place of איתערוּתא דלתתא, where we have prepared within ourselves a receptacle for it to take hold and remain forever.

(יתרו תשפ"ג ס"ג מאמר א)

4 הוי"ה)) the gematria of Hashem's Ineffable Name (הוי"ה).

5 ברש"י. Noach 5637 s.v.

6 Shabbos 86b-87a.

7 Shemos 19:4.

8 Devarim 8:4.

9 Shemos 3:12.

10 See Rashi to Shemos 3:18.

11 See Ramban ad loc.

12 See, for example, Bamidbar 31:49, וְלֹא נִפְקַד מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ, or I Shmuel 20:25, וַיִּפְקֹד מִקּוֹם דָּוִד.

13 See *Zera Kodesh* Parshas Va'eira s.v. וידבר משה כל הן בני".

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his slaves, and his animals. Then the Torah returns to those who are responsible for themselves, and mentions, following 'אתה, גרך אשר' בשעריך.¹⁵

Perhaps we can suggest another explanation, that the Torah wishes to allude to a fascinating phenomenon. There is a famous story related in the Midrash¹⁶ which bears repetition here.

Perhaps, then, the Torah wishes to allude to the fact that one's inspiration to transform himself completely can even come through an animal

A certain Jew had an ox for plowing, and he came upon hard times, so he sold the ox to a non-Jew. The buyer used his new animal for plowing throughout the week, but when he took it out to plow on Shabbos, the ox crouched under the yoke and refused to move. The buyer started to hit the ox, but it wouldn't budge. At his wits' end, the buyer went back to the Jew who had

sold him the ox. He said, "Take back your ox! I whipped and whipped it, and it refuses to budge! Did you sell me an ox with some kind of defect?" The Jew understood that the issue was that it was Shabbos, and the animal was accustomed to resting on Shabbos. He told the buyer, "Come with me. I'll get it to stand up." When they approached the animal, it was still in its crouched position. The Jew went over and whispered into its ear: "Ox! Ox! You know that when you belonged to me you would work for six days and rest on Shabbos, since I was commanded to rest my animals. Now that my sins have caused me to need to sell you, and you belong to a non-Jew, who is not obligated to make sure you rest, please stand up and plow." The ox stood up immediately and began to plow.

The non-Jew was very intrigued, and was desperate to know what the Jew had just done. He said, "Take back your ox! Do you think I'm going to keep it and come chasing after you every time it does this? I will not let you go until you tell me the secret. What did you do there in her ear? Here I worked up a sweat, and hit her, and she wouldn't stand up, and you just did something in her ear and she stood up!"

The Yid reassured the buyer that there was no sorcery involved,

and explained what he had told the ox.

The non-Jew was frightened. He said to himself, "If an ox, who cannot communicate, and has no independent thought, recognized its Creator; I, when my Creator has formed me in His Image, and has imbued me with independent thought, can I refuse to recognize my Creator?" He promptly became a ger tzedek and began to learn Torah. He was so successful in his learning that the Chachamim repeated his teachings in his name. He was called Rabbi Yochanan ben Torta (the son of the cow), because he 'saw the light' through the ox.

Perhaps, then, the Torah wishes to allude to the fact that one's inspiration to transform himself completely can even come through an animal. There are lessons to be learned even from animal, and if one can take them to heart, he can merit to become a ger, sheltering under the wings of the Shechinah. He can even merit to become a permanent part of the Torah tradition, as did Rabbi Yochanan ben Torta. If the Chachamim wished to convey this message by alluding to this truth in his name, we can certainly suggest that the Torah alludes to this as well.

קידושא רבא – להולדת הנכדה

שתח"י – יתרו תשכ"ג

¹⁵ See also, "The Ger Who is in Your Gates" in this gilyon.

¹⁶ *Pesikta Rabbasi* 14, cited by the *Rishonim* to Yoma 9a.

The Ger Who is in Your Gates

In the fourth *dibrah*, the Torah commands us: "שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעֵשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלַאכְתְּךָ, וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל מְלַאכְהָ אֹתָהּ וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ עֲבָדְךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וּבְהֵמָתְךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ – Six days you shall work, and perform all of your labors, and the seventh day is Shabbos for Hashem, your God; do not perform any *melachah* (of the 39 prohibited labors); you, and your son, and your daughter, your slave, and your maidservant, and your domesticated animals, and your foreigner (*ger*) who is in your gates."

Why does the Torah need to mention *ger*? We know that a *ger* is a bona fide Yid; why is he not included in 'אתה'? The Ramban is troubled by this question, and at first he suggests that the *pasuk* actually refers not to a *ger tzedek*, who is included in 'אתה' along with every Jew, but rather to a *ger toshav* who keeps his status of a non-Jew. The Torah is warning us not to let a *ger toshav* perform *melachah* for us. But, the Ramban subsequently cites Chazal¹⁷ who clearly understood that the *pasuk* refers to a *ger tzedek*. We return, then, to our original question.

The Maharil Diskin¹⁸ notes that in the second set of *Aseres Hadibros*, in Parshas Va'eschanan, the Torah makes mention of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*: וַיִּזְכְּרֶנּוּ כִּי עֲבָד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְגו' עַל כֵּן צִוְּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת – And you shall remember that you were slaves in the land of Mitzrayim... therefore Hashem your God has commanded you to observe the day of Shabbos, but here in Parshas Yisro the Torah omits it entirely. Instead, the Torah tells us a different reason to keep Shabbos: כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ וְגו' וַיִּנַּח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי – For in six days Hashem made the heavens and earth...

and He rested on the seventh day; therefore He blessed the day of Shabbos and he sanctified it.

The Maharil Diskin suggests that if the reason for Shabbos was only in remembrance of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* then a *ger*, who was never enslaved in Mitzrayim, would have no reason to keep Shabbos. Therefore, the Torah first gives the reason of Hashem's resting on the seventh day of Creation, which is relevant to every Jew.

The Maharil Diskin's approach is problematic, because there are numerous *mitzvos* which were given to commemorate *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, and *geirim* are included in all of them. In fact, the Ramban¹⁹ teaches that the Torah mentions *ger* with regards to *geirim* are included even when the mitzvah commemorates *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. So, why does the Maharil Diskin understand that if the only reason for Shabbos was *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, *geirim* might have been excluded from the mitzvah of keeping Shabbos?

The Gemara²⁰ states that there are three requirements for *geirus*: *Milah*, *tevillah* in a *mikveh*, and a *korban*. Today, since we cannot bring a *korban*, that requirement is deferred until the *Beis Hamikdash* is built (may it be soon). The Gemara elsewhere²¹ states that one who is in the process of becoming a *ger* and has undergone *milah* but has not yet immersed in a *mikveh* is not a Jew yet.

There is a well-known question discussed by the Acharonim whether a person in this middle stage should keep Shabbos. On one hand, he has already undergone *milah*. On the other hand, if he is a non-Jew he is not allowed to keep Shabbos.²² Some Acharonim maintain that he must not be allowed to keep

Shabbos, while the majority hold that he must keep Shabbos, with the reason being that while he is not yet a bona fide Yid until after he goes to the *mikveh*, he is no longer a certified non-Jew, and he may – and he must – keep Shabbos.²³

The Avnei Nezer²⁴ poses another question. In the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, when a *ger* had all three requirements, what is the status of one who undergoes *milah* and *tevillah*, but has not yet offered his *korban*? Is he still not a bona fide Jew? The Avnei Nezer is of the opinion that his *geirus* is valid. Like others who are required to offer *korbanos* who have the status of *mechusarei kapparah* (lacking atonement), who cannot enter the *Beis Hamikdash* or partake in *korbanos* — this *ger* is simply required to offer his *korban*, and he is a *mechusar kapparah*. His *geirus* is valid.

It is possible that even according to those who hold that nowadays one who has undergone *milah* but not yet immersed in a *mikveh* must not keep Shabbos, in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash* one who underwent both and has not yet offered his *korban* is obligated in all of the *mitzvos* like any Jew.

Perhaps, then, the *pasuk* comes to teach us this *halachah*. The *pasuk* includes in the mitzvah of keeping Shabbos even a *ger* who has not yet brought his *korban*. If we are correct in this suggestion, we have a very beautiful understanding of the words 'וגרך' – *the foreigner who is in your gates*. Since the *ger* we are speaking of is a *mechusar kapparah*, he is not yet allowed into the *Beis Hamikdash* – he is found 'in your gates,' but is not yet allowed into the *Bais Hamikdash*.²⁵

(קידושא רבא – להולדת הנכדה שתחי' – יתרו תשפ"ג)

17 Mechilta, 7 בחודש 7.

18 S.v. זכור.

19 Behaalos'cha.

20 Kerisos 9a.

21 Yevamos 46a.

22 Sanhedrin 58b.

23 See, for example, Avnei Nezer, Yoreh De'ah 351.

24 Yoreh De'ah 347.

25 Translator's note: The word שערך refers to outside the *Beis Hamikdash* in many instances. For example: Devarim 16:5: לא תוכל לזבח את הפסח באחד שעריך.