



THE LONG SHORT WAY

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PARSHAS VAYEIRA
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How far does human effort reach? Is it even possible for a person to communicate with the infinite G-d? The ultimate self-made man is limited by his efforts to succeed—then what is effort for?

ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

(ד) וְהָיָה מִצַּד הַהֶתְלַבְּשׁוֹת דְּתוֹרָה וּמִצּוֹת בְּעֵינֵי עוֹלָם הָזֶה הַגִּשְׁמִי שֶׁהוּא רֹבֵץ כְּכוֹלֵד כֵּעַ, צָרִיד לְנִקּוּת מִכָּל פְּסוּלַת הַנוֹפֵל בָּהֶן,

Physical reality is made up of both good and evil: everything can be used for either one. When we use physicality for holy purposes, the potential good is actualized. Since Torah and mitzvos become a part of physical reality, they're affected by the evil that exists within the mundane.

וּכְמוֹ בְּלִימוד התורה, שֶׁמִּצַּד זֶה שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה נִתְלַבֶּשֶׁת בְּשִׁכָּל אֲנוּשֵׁי וּבְעֵינֵינֵם גִּשְׁמִיִּים הֲרִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁהַלִּימוד שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה שְׁלֵא לְשִׁמָּה וְעַד לְדִרְגָּא הַכִּי תַּחְתּוֹנָה בְּשִׁלָּא לְשִׁמָּה, וְעַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה בְּמִצּוֹת.

Learning Torah is so great that at times learning is a higher priority than mitzvos. The way Torah exists down here however—where it can be understood by the human mind, and relates to physical occurrences—can be learned for ulterior motives.

It's entirely possible for Torah to be learned for pleasure and even self-aggrandizement.

וְזֶהוּ מֵה שֶׁהִלְבּוֹשִׁים דְּתוֹרָה וּמִצּוֹת צָרִיכִים לְרַחֲיָצָה וּכְיָבוּס, שִׁיְהִיָּה לְבוּשִׁים נְקִיִּים וְכוּלְהוּ (וְאִפְּלוּ לֹא יִהְיוּ בְּאוֹפֵן ד'מִלְבוּשֵׁי אֲגָאֲלִית'), בְּדוֹגְמַת לְבוּשׁ הַגִּשְׁמִי שֶׁבְּכִדִּי שִׁיְהִיָּה זֶה וְנִקִּי צָרִיד לְרַחוּץ וּלְכַבֵּס אוֹתוֹ.

Like physical clothing, the protective garments of Torah and mitzvos need cleaning. Even if our garments aren't "blood-stained"—our ulterior motives aren't so bad—they need to be cleaned and rid of filth that may have stuck. Although learning Torah for the

sake of pleasure may even be a good thing, it's still an ulterior motive.

Previously we explained that doing mitzvos and learning Torah creates a protective layer for the soul. The soul is finite and needs these protective garments to be able to handle G-d's infinite light. The cleaner and more refined the garment, the better suited we are to experience the infinite.

[וְגַם לְאַחֲרֵי שֶׁהָאֲדָם מְכַבֵּס אֶת הַלְבוּשִׁים דְּתוֹרָה וּמִצּוֹת שִׁיְהִיו נְקִיִּים מִכָּל פְּסוּלַת כּוֹלְהוּ, בְּכִדִּי שִׁיְעָלוּ לְמַעְלָה, צָרִיכִים הֵם לְהִזְדַּבֵּד עַל יְדֵי הַמְּלָאכִים, דְּגַפְרִי לְהוֹן וְנִשְׁיָק לְהוֹן.]

Even after the protective garments of Torah and mitzvos have been cleaned, it's not enough for them to ascend on high. The garments of Torah and mitzvos first need to be caressed, kissed by angels. Only then can they ascend on high.

What does "ascend on high" mean? The Arizal taught that everything that exists has a soul—even leaves and stones have a spark of G-dliness that "existifies" it. That spark is its soul. Kabbalah explains that physical reality is made up of both good and evil—the potential for both. The good within the mundane is that spark of G-dliness, its soul. The soul and G-dliness in general is likened to fire—just as fire ascends, constantly pulling away at its wick, G-dliness too wants to reattach itself to G-d. This is its nature. When we "elevate" an object and make it holy, we are exposing the object's holy potential. When we turn paper, for example, into something holy—we reveal that its soul is from a higher place. This happens with every mitzvah and the Torah we learn. And this is why proper intent is so crucial—if the purpose of learning Torah is to expose its G-dly identity, then we need to clean our garments—let go of ulterior motives. If our intent is what helps

expose the G-dliness of the mitzvah and the learning, then our intent needs to be "clean."

וְהָעֵינָן הוּא דְּהִנֵּה כְּתִיב, "אִין צָדִיק בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא," שֶׁמִּפְּנֵי שֶׁהָאֲדָם נִמְצָא בְּאֶרֶץ בְּעוֹלָם הָזֶה הַגִּשְׁמִי לְכֹן יֵשׁ בּוֹ חַטָּא, חַטָּא מִלְשׁוֹן חֶסְרוֹן (עַל כָּל פְּנִים).

No matter what, no one is perfect, as the verse states, "...There is no righteous man on earth who does good and doesn't sin." Being in this physical world is enough for there to be sin (*cheit*, in Hebrew), means lack or imperfection.

וְהָגַם שֶׁחַטָּא (הַחֶסְרוֹן) הוּא לֹא בְּאִשְׁמִתּוֹ חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם, שֶׁהֲרִי, "וְעַמָּד בְּלִם צְדִיקִים," כִּי אִם בְּמָה שֶׁבְּתוֹב, "וְנֹרָא עֲלִילָה עַל בְּנֵי אָדָם" שֶׁרָצוֹן הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא הוּא שֶׁבְּנֵי אָדָם נִמְצָא בְּעוֹלָם כְּזֶה [וּבְדוֹגְמַת מֶלֶךְ שֶׁשָּׁלַח אֶת בְּנוֹ לְמַדְיָנָה רְחוֹקָה בְּכִדִּי לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת חֻכְמַת בְּנוֹ שֶׁגַם בְּמַדְיָנָה הַרְחוֹקָה יִכִּיר אֶת הָאֻמָּת, בְּחִינַת "וְאֻמָּת הַנּוֹיָה לְעוֹלָם"],

The fact that no one is free from imperfection is not our fault. As the verse says, "And your people, all of them [are] righteous," nevertheless, "...Awesome in His deeds toward mankind." It's G-d's will for mankind to be in this physical and imperfect world. There's an analogy of a king who sends his son, heir to the throne, to a faraway land to test his moral compass. He wants to see if his son will be able to recognize truth and virtue even outside of his environment.

אִף עַל פִּי כּוֹן, מִכֵּיִן שֶׁבְּפִעֵל יֵשׁ בּוֹ (חַטָּא מִלְשׁוֹן) חֶסְרוֹן, וְגַם הַתּוֹרָה וּמִצּוֹת שֶׁלֹּא אֵינִם בְּשִׁלְמוֹת, וּבְמָה שֶׁבְּתוֹב, "אִין צָדִיק בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא," שֶׁחֶסְרוֹן ("יִחַטָּא") הוּא גַם בְּהַתּוֹרָה וּמִצּוֹת ("בְּיַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב") (שֶׁלֹּא, לְכֹן בְּכִדִּי שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה וּמִצּוֹת שֶׁלֹּא יַעֲלוּ לְמַעְלָה, צָרִיד הוּא לְסִיוַע הַמְּלָאכִים).

Nevertheless, since this world is not perfect, neither are the Torah we learn

and the mitzvos we do. Since our effort alone isn't enough, our Torah and mitzvos need the caressing and kissing from angels.

PARADIGM SHIFT

(ה) וְהָיָה זֶה מֵה שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת שֶׁבְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הַגִּשְׁמִי צָרִיכִים וְזִקְקִים לְסִיוֵעַ הַמַּלְאָכִים הוּא לֹא רַק מִפְּנֵי שֶׁעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הַגִּשְׁמִי הוּא רֹבֵץ בְּכוֹלּוֹ רַע, אֲלָא (גם) מִצֵּד הַגִּשְׁמִיּוּת דְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה. שֶׁלְהִיטוֹת גִּשְׁמִי הוּא בָּאִין עֲרוּךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹת הָעֲלִיּוֹנִים (הַרוּחָנִיִּים).

Another reason why our Torah and mitzvos need angels' help, is because they're physical. Physicality is completely not relative to spirituality—the two are infinitely beyond compare.

The words of Torah and prayer we say are physical and are elevated by our intent and sincerity. Although words of Torah and prayer are G-dliness exposed, since they're physical, they need help to jump the gap between the material and the physical. Physicality is inferior to spirituality in the following two ways:

- The G-dly light that causes existence is dimmed until it becomes physicality.*
- This dimmed version of G-dliness is masked and concealed. Whenever a gap is jumped—from physicality to spirituality or from one stage in Gan Eden to the next—the previous stage needs to be abandoned. Our Torah and mitzvos are further elevated by the kissing of angels. Similarly a soul's ascent in Gan Eden needs help to go from stage to stage.*

וְעַל דֶּרֶךְ הַיְדוּשׁ בְּנוֹנֵעַ לְגִשְׁמַת הָאָדָם, שֶׁאֵפִילוֹ צָדִיק גָּמוּר בִּשְׁעוֹלָה לֹגֵן עֵדוֹ צָרִיד טְבִילָה בְּנֶהֱרַ דִּינוֹר בְּכָדִי לְשִׁכּוֹחַ עַל חִיּוֹ דְּהָיָה עֲלֵמָא, כִּי מִצֵּד הָאִין עֲרוּךְ דְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הַגִּשְׁמִי לֹגֵן עֵדוֹ הָרִי אֵפִילוֹ מִקְצַת מַעֲנִינֵי עוֹלָם הַזֶּה מוֹנֵעַ מַלְעוֹלוֹת לֹגֵן עֵדוֹ [וּבְדוּגָמַת הָעֲלִיּוֹת שֶׁבְּדִרְגוֹת דָּגוֹן עֵדוֹ שְׁמַנּוֹ עֵדוֹ

הַתַּחֲתוֹן לֹגֵן עֵדוֹ הָעֲלִיּוֹן וְכוּלָּהוּ, שְׁמַכִּין שֶׁהָעֲלִיּוֹת הֵם בָּאִין עֲרוּךְ, צָרִיד לְהִיטוֹל תַּחֲלִילָה בִּיטוֹל הַהֲשָׁגָה דָּגוֹן עֵדוֹ הַתַּחֲתוֹן. וְכִדּוּשׁ הַמֶּשֶׁל מַעֲנִין הַשָּׂגַת הַשִּׁכּוֹל, שֶׁבְּכָדִי לְבֹא לְהֲשִׁיגָה עֲלִיּוֹנָה שֶׁבָּאִין עֲרוּךְ לְהֲשִׁיגָה הַקּוֹדֶמֶת (אף עַל פִּי שֶׁגַם הַשָּׂגָה הָעֲלִיּוֹנָה הִיא בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הַגִּשְׁמִי) צָרִיד לְהִיטוֹל תַּחֲלִילָה בִּיטוֹל הַשָּׂגָה הַקּוֹדֶמֶת.

Take the soul for example: When the soul of even a complete tzaddik ascends to Gan Eden, it needs to be immersed in the Dinor River to forget having seen this world. Since this world is completely incomparable to spirituality, even the smallest remnant of earthiness prevents the soul from entering Gan Eden. Even within Gan Eden, there are countless levels and dimensions in ascending quality—and each one is unparalleled to the next. To understand the souls ascent, let's take learning new ideas for example: When we try to understand an entirely new idea, one we've never heard of—even if this idea exists in physical reality—we need to drop any preconceived notions.

We learn new ideas by comparing them to what we already know. However, when we try to understand something that is truly new to us, that's incomparable to anything we've learned before, our efforts to try fitting this new idea into our old frame of reference prove worthless. In such a case, we're simply recycling our old ideas instead of trying to understand. To understand a new idea, we need the humility, simplicity and open-mindedness to let go of what we imagine this new idea might be and try to get it for what it is.

וּכְמוֹ רַבִּי זִירָא כִּי סָלִיק לְאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל יְתִיב מֵאָה תַעֲנִיתָא (אוּ מ' תַעֲנִיּוֹת) לְשִׁכּוֹחַ תְּלִמּוּד בְּבָלִי בְּכָדִי שִׁיבָל לְלִמּוּד תְּלִמּוּד יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, עַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה הוּא גַם בְּנוֹנֵעַ לְהַתּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת שֶׁל הָאָדָם, שֶׁמִּצֵּד חִיּוֹתוֹ מְלֻבְּשׁוֹת בְּעֵנִינִים גִּשְׁמִיִּים, צָרִיד לְהִיטוֹל תַּחֲלִילָה

שֶׁיִּזְדַּכְכוּ וְיִתְפַּשְׁטוּ מִגִּשְׁמִיּוֹתָן עַל יְדֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים.

Rabbi Zeyra, for example, fasted one hundred fasts (forty, according to the Maharshal) when he moved from Bavel to the Holy Land. The fasts were to forget Babylonian Talmud in order to learn the Jerusalem Talmud. So too our Torah and mitzvos—in order for them to reach their fullest potential, we need the help of angels to refine them and un-physicalize them.

R' Zeyra was an amora, who lived in Eretz Yisroel. He was born in Bavel, and was a student R' Chisda, R' Huna and R' Yehuda bar Yechezkel at the yeshiva in Pumbedisa. R' Zeyra loved and wanted very much to go to Eretz Yisroel. Before leaving, he fasted one hundred days in order to forget the learning style of the yeshivos in Bavel. He did this so that the dialectic style of learning of Bavel wouldn't impede his openness to the learning style in the Holy Land (Bava Metzia, 85a). He was so excited to arrive in Eretz Yisroel that he crossed the Jordan River fully clothed. An onlooking non-believer made fun of him, to which he answered, "Why shouldn't I be excited when I seek a blessing that was denied to Moshe and Aharon?" (Yerushalmi, Shevuos, 35c).

SUMMARY

This installment explained why the motivation behind our Torah learning and mitzvah doing needs to be adjusted. In the first part, the Rebbe explained that physicality—which is what we use to do Torah and mitzvos—needs to be rid of its evil potential in order to elevate it. In the second part, he explained that to elevate our Torah and mitzvos—they need to lose their physical limitations. In both instances, it's our intent that needs purifying.

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