

Parshat Beshalach: Glorifying the Glorified

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

We say in the song of Az Yashir, “*Zeh keli v'anvehu*.” (This is Hashem and I will glorify Him.) Rashi notes that the root word of *v'anvehu* is *naveh*, a home. In effect we are saying, “I will make for Hashem a sanctuary where He can rest.” Another meaning of *v'anvehu* is to beautify. This is the source for *hiddur mitzvah*, beautifying a *mitzvah*. A third meaning is the compound word *vani v'hu*, I and Him. This refers to the *mitzvah* of “*V'halachta b'drachav*,” to follow in Hashem's ways.

The Sifsei Chaim asks, when the Jewish people said Zeh Keli, they reached unimaginable lofty heights. Why did they need the extra level of *v'anveihu*? We learn a fundamental lesson. Inspiration must immediately be concretized. One must ask oneself, “How can I implement this into my life?” Likewise the Ramban writes in his letter to his son, “When you finish learning search what you can put into action.” So too Rav Nachman said, “Turn your Torah into *tefilah*.” Pray that your learning should become a part of your life. It's wonderful to be inspired with *Zeh keli*, but we need the practical aspect of *v'anveihu* as well.

Rashi explains *V'anveihu, Ani v'Hu*. When we follow in Hashem's ways and emulate His attributes, we can reach a level of *u'bo sidbak*. (And you shall cleave to Him.) This is

the deeper meaning of *V'ahavta l'reicha komocha*. When I am kind to others, not only am I emulating Hashem but on a deeper level, I'm attaching myself to the divine part of the other person and thereby achieving *deveikut b'Hashem*. The Alter of Kelm taught that someone with bad *midot* cannot acquire Torah and cannot come closer to Hashem. If you're trying to elevate your relationship with Hashem but your *middot* are lacking, there will be nowhere to put Torah and *avodah*.

V'anvehu also means to glorify Hashem through beautifying the *mitzvot*. The Ohr Daniel says, if we take care to look our best for people, how much more so when we stand before Hashem. He notes, if you want to know where a person stands in *avodat Hashem*, see how beloved the *mitzvot* are to him. See how much time, effort, and money he will invest in it. Rav Wolbe points out that *hiddur mitzvah* is also between man and man. For example, if you are writing a note show respect to the recipient by using a clean sheet of paper or spell checking your email. Anything you do for Hashem should be the best. If you build a shul, let it be nicer than your home. Give a poor person the finest food you've got. Rav Dessler writes that we must be wary with *hiddur mitzvah*. We must not let ourselves get lost in the external trappings of the *mitzvah* and forget its core essence. Rav Wolbe explains that Zeh Keli is reaching an awareness that there's nothing else in this world but Hashem.

And in that moment of intimacy it becomes clear, “*Ani v'hu*,” let me be like Him. When we're so filled with *deveikut*, every *mitzvah* becomes filled with passion and beauty. Our challenge is to feel that closeness of *Zeh Keli*. Then we can fulfill *v'anveihu*.

Naveh, a resting place, is the same letters as *hon* (treasure). The Gemara says, “*Kabed et Hashem m'honcha*.” We must honor Hashem with our special gifts. Rav Tzadok Hakohen notes that everyone has an area in which they are in the category of *melech*. This area is made up of our talents, coupled with our unique life situations and experiences. David *hamelech* said, “*Shiru l'Hashem shir chadash*.” Every person's song is unique. When you can tap into your inner song there's no room for despair because you realize you have something to offer no one else has. When we take what is special about ourselves and uplift it for Hashem, we create a dwelling place for Him. Life will send us many challenging moments. But within the pain we have to find our melody, that which make us unique, and create a special song for Hashem. *Shabbos Shira* reminds us that Hashem is waiting for this personal song. Experiences are like wings. They may be heavy and weigh us down, but ultimately they're meant to teach us to fly, to make us soar to lofty heights we would never have reached without them.

Connecting to the Inner Spark #2- Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Eliezer Miller

The Torah tells us that man's chief purpose in this world is to come closer to Hashem. The Sefer Chareidim considers *dveikut b'Hashem* as a positive *mitzvah*. Similarly, the Sharei Teshuva counts forgetting Hashem as a negative commandment. *Dveikut b'Hashem* is connecting to the divine spark inside oneself, the main place where the Divine Presence rests. It says in Yeshaya, “His glory fills the earth.” This refers to the light of Hashem that shines down on this world. Chazal call it the *Shechina*. The roots of the word are, “*Shochen Hashem*.” Hashem dwells below among Klal Yisrael as it says, “I am Hashem who dwells among them.” In Parshat Terumah Hashem commanded the Jewish people, “*Vasu li mishkan v'shachanti b'sochom*”

(Make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them). *B'sochom* is written in plural form to teach us that Hashem dwells within each of us. But just as the clouds separate between the sun and the earth, our sins separate us from the *Shechina*. *Mitzvot* are meant to connect us to Hashem's light. Before doing a *mitzvah* we say, “*L'shem yechud brich hu u'shchintei*.” We pray that we may merit to unite the light of Hashem within us with the source of His light above.

The Nefesh Hachaim explains the verse in Tehilim, “Give strength to Hashem.” When a Jew fulfills Torah and *mitzvot* he raises the level of Divine Presence in this world. Rav Alkabetz writes that the stronger Hashem's

connection to this world is, the more spiritual and material blessing can come down. When a person feels lack, it is because the *Shechina* is concealed in his life. The main concept of *kodesh* and *mikdash* is in the heart of a person. The *ohr panav*, the light of the face of Hashem, dwells among the Jewish people in the divine spark within every Jew. But when he sins, a partition forms around the spark blocking the light of Hashem and causing him to feel distant from the Creator. Why does Hashem cause this blockage to form? The spark is so powerful that Hashem covers it so that it will not damage the sinner. This gives the person a chance to return. Rav Dessler compares it to a peel that guards the fruit. The barrier which forms around the spark protects

Continued on Page 2



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Continued from Page 1

it so that it isn't forced to leave the person. When a Jew works to come closer to Hashem he works to break through and reveal his inner spark, to sense the light of Hashem inside him and connect it to its higher source.

The Orach L'ner compares the *Shechina* to the sun. If a person opens a window or door,

the house becomes brighter. So too, the fewer blockages there are, the more a person will sense the *Shechina*. At noon, one can feel the full strength of the sun. Earlier and later in the day, the sun shines at an angle and one feels it less. So too someone who lives with the reality of "*Shivisi Hashem*," he puts Hashem in front of him always, will feel more of the light of

the *Shechina* as opposed to someone who frequently forgets His presence. When the sun shines brightly there's no shade. Someone who puts Hashem before him will see Hashem clearly. In contrast, someone standing to the side, who puts Hashem in the shadows, will feel darkness.

Rebbetzin's Perspective IV #1

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Q&A series on Naaleh.com

Question:

My daughter passed away this year at the young age of 33. She suffered a long time with her illness. I am having difficulties making sense of the idea of a loving, compassionate, Creator. In addition, my husband is having trouble going to shul. How do I encourage myself and my husband not to pull away from Hashem?

Answer:

You are really asking three questions: How can you find Hashem's compassion within suffering? How can you interpret your daughter's life? How can you help your husband?

To answer the first question, we must understand that Hashem's compassion is all encompassing. You didn't create yourself. Neither did you create any of the things that make life sweet and delightful. The problem is that the more Hashem gives us, the more we expect, and the more everything we have becomes boring and taken for granted. On the other hand, the more something isn't what we want, the more it becomes the definitive of life. We keep raising the bar. So it's common for people to think, "Yes, you've given me life, a family, and children, but so what. Everyone has it. You haven't given me what I want." It doesn't matter what you want. At that point the thing you want takes over. So the first thing to recognize is that behind it all is Hashem's profound compassion. Hashem doesn't need suffering, illness, or pain. If he's giving it to you, there's a reason. There were periods in history when the gentiles tried to force us to convert to their religion. In those times, a Jew may not bend and transgress even the smallest custom. You can't even

change the color of your shoelaces. So if the non-Jews habitually wear brown shoelaces and the Jews wear green shoelaces, you cannot change from green to brown. And if it means giving up your life for it, you must do it. This raises many questions. Who cares what color your shoelaces are?

Every so often in life, especially if you're worn down spiritually or if materialism is crushing you, Hashem will put you in a situation where you have to make a choice, where you'll say, "I believe in spite of..." It will be hugely challenging for someone who doesn't have a strong foundation of *emunah*. I was reading a magazine article about Yosef Mendelevich, a Russian refusenik. The article described how he fashioned a *kippah* in jail using threads from his prison uniform. He could've easily taken another route. He could've said, "I tried to do what's right and now look at my life." As far as he knew he would never see the outside of the jail again. But he decided to use this opportunity to say, "I believe, even in this prison cell." And that transformed and redefined him. None of us want these painful situations. But when they do come, the backdrop of seeing Hashem's all-encompassing compassion should give you the strength to say, "I'll choose to believe anyway." In order for this to work you have to believe in yourself too, not only in Hashem. You have to believe you can face the situation and grow. In our own times, Racheli Frankel is an example. Her *emunah* stayed firm all through the tragic saga of her son. This is where suffering is meant to take us.

Nobody knows how long anyone is meant to live. Every moment is a gift from Hashem. Nobody promised anybody 85 or 70 or even 35 years. Your daughter was meant to live not a day more than her life span, just as you and I

will not live a day more than we're meant to. After the terrorist attack in Har Nof, one of the children of the men who were killed was experiencing enormous anxiety problems. He was afraid to leave the house. He kept asking, "How do I know there won't be bad Arabs outside?" Someone advised his mother, "Make him realize no Arab will cause him to die. He may be the direct cause, the one who triggers your death, but ten year old children can also die of illness and accidents. If you're only meant to live ten years, nothing will give you eleven years. And if you're meant to live 85 years, nobody can change that." Your daughter had a divine mission that required 33 years and no more. Part of her mission included being tested by suffering. And it was a test for those around her too.

It's very important to encourage your husband by showing him how much you respect him for whatever he does. Tell him you understand how hard it must be for him to leave his emotions behind to do what is right. Tell him this is what makes you love and respect him more. Make him see slowly that his emotions are stemming from grief. Anger and grief are not the same thing. Grief is legitimate. It means he misses your daughter. It's something you and he will always share. But tell him it's meant to be manifested through growing and drawing closer to Hashem who created both him and your daughter and gave her 33 years. He should be putting his energies into good deeds. It may help to think of a project, even something small, that you can both do that would keep your daughter's memory alive and bring merit to her soul.