



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

אמך WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshat Kedoshim-The Purpose of Israel

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Herschel Reichman

In Parshat Kedoshim we read, "When you will come to the land, you will plant trees that will give food..." The Midrash explains this verse on a symbolic level. The ultimate life sustaining tree is the Torah. "*Etz chaim hi l'machzikim bah...*"-"The Torah is a tree of life for those who support her". The Shem Mishmuel asks, "Why is the message of sustaining Torah linked with coming in to the land of Israel?"

He answers with an intriguing Ibn Ezra in Vayishlach. The Torah records that Yaakov purchased a field near Shechem, in order to teach us that if a Jew purchases four cubits of land in Israel he earns a portion in the World to Come. The Shem Mishmuel explains that *olam habah* cannot be purchased. It is earned through studying Torah and fulfilling mitzvot. The physical act of buying land in Israel is the first step. Then we must turn it into a spiritual acquisition by learning and supporting Torah. By nature a Jew is a ben *olam habah*. We have the potential to acquire our portion in the World to Come by our own sweat and toil. Our challenge on this world is to take the physical and elevate it to spirituality. We must convert *olam hazeh* to *olam habah* by revealing the *ruchniyut* contained in the *gashmiut*. This is how we discover Hashem and it is this

struggle that makes our souls greater. In fact the level that a tzaddik can ultimately attain is more elevated than angels who do not have an evil inclination.

Eretz Yisrael is the ladder that takes us to heaven. It is the *olam habah* that we create in this world through our Torah and mitzvot. Why does the land of Israel play such a special role? To answer this, the Shem Mishmuel raises several questions. In Bereishit, Rashi points out that Hashem began the Torah with creation rather than with the first mitzvah in order to teach us that Hashem controls the world and has given Eretz Yisrael to the Jews. Although this is a fundamental principle, why is this the most important reason? In Parshat V'etchanan, Moshe begged Hashem to let him enter the land. Moshe had already reached unimaginable spiritual heights. Why did he so desire to enter Israel? The Rambam notes that although a Jew is obligated to perform mitzvot wherever he may be, a mitzvah performed in Eretz Yisrael takes on greater levels. In addition he notes that if a Jew resides in Eretz Yisrael, his sins are forgiven. Conversely if a Jew leaves the land of Israel it is as if he is an idol worshipper. In Parshat Lech Lecha, Rashi says that Hashem promised Avraham blessings contingent on his entering Eretz Yisrael. Avraham was a spiritual giant in his

own right. Why did he need to go to the land of Israel to receive the *brachot*? What are the special powers inherent in this land?

Our Sages tell us that although Hashem is concerned with the entire world, His gaze is constantly focused on the land of Israel. Although the Divine Presence is everywhere, it is mainly concentrated in Eretz Yisrael. In fact the *Shechina* never left Eretz Yisrael even when the Jews were driven to exile. Our purpose on this world is to discover Hashem and to cling to Him. There is a special sanctity in the land of Israel and a greater revelation of the *Shechina*. Consequently Hashem is more readily found there. Moshe begged Hashem to enter the land because although he achieved forty nine levels of *kedusha*, he was missing the fiftieth level which he could only attain in Eretz Yisrael. Doing mitzvot in the land of Israel takes on a greater level because we are so much closer to Hashem. That is why the Rambam calls a Jew who leaves the land an idol worshipper. Bereishit begins with creation so that the Jews would have a claim on Eretz Yisrael. Living in the land unites us with Hashem. It is *olam habah* in this world, it is a closeness, a connection, and an eternal spiritual light.

Achieving Balance Class #13

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

Question:

I feel as if I have declined spiritually over the last few years. I try to listen to shiurim, but I find that although I am inspired to grow in the short term, after a while I end up letting my observance slack again. What can I do to get back on track?

Answer:

The Navi tells us that there are times of *ratzo*-going forth and times of *shov*-withdrawing. Everyone has periods when they feel low and periods when they ascend. It is a part of the

rhythm of life. The function of *katnut d'mochin*-small mindedness, is to help us solidify our spiritual levels through *me-sirut nefesh*. Buy a small notebook and write down two things you can do daily to bring yourself back to your previous level. Think of acts that will inspire you. Force yourself to check off both deeds every night. If you can get a friend to do this with you, that would be wonderful. Put money away for every check mark and buy yourself a treat at the end of the week. This may sound very juvenile but you need to fight the evil inclination with his own weapons. He is dragging you down to physicality and to living a life devoid of spiritual light. Beat him by bribing yourself with something

material and commit yourself to not purchasing it until all the check marks are filled in. I guarantee that you will soon find yourself doing the right thing not for the wrong reasons, but because it will make you feel good about yourself. Keep going for another month. At the beginning of the third month, remove what you have already integrated and add two new practices to the list. Follow the same procedure. Keep removing and adding new things. Slowly you will see yourself moving forward and regaining the spiritual levels you once attained.

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Sefirat Haomer-The Inner Count

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

Usefartem lachem mi'macharat hashabbat miyom heviachem et omer hatnufa sheva shabbatot temimot tehiyena, ad mimcharat h'shabbat hash'viit... "And you shall count from the day after Shabbat from the day of the waving of the Omer sacrifice, seven full weeks it shall be until the day after the seventh week..." Why is the phrase "*Mi'macharat haShabbat*" repeated? Why do we first bring an offering of barley and then of wheat? Why do we count towards Shavuot instead of counting down?

In Shir Hashirim it is written, "*Mashchaini acharecha narutza he'viani hamelech chadarav...*" - "Draw me towards you and I will run. The King has brought me into his chamber." *Mashchaini* refers to Pesach, *narutza* is *Sefirah*, and *he'viani* is Shavuot. On Pesach, Hashem took the initiative and drew us towards Him. He revealed Himself to us and redeemed us. This is why Pesach is

called Shabbat. It is an eternal gift from Hashem independent of human intervention. On Pesach, the Jews reached lofty spiritual levels which they could have never attained on their own. After this great illumination, they were given the challenge to regain it again. They were commanded "*narutza*"-to count 49 day. They were to elevate themselves by degrees, until they could once again reach the level they had attained at Yetziat Mitzrayim. We count towards Shavuot and not down. We must not look at the ultimate goal which we cannot yet appreciate. We must gain strength from what we have already accomplished instead of feeling overwhelmed about what is left to do. If we look at the omer, the first simple offering, our hearts will be uplifted to ascend higher and higher until we can bring the more elaborate wheat offering on the holy Yom Tov of Shavuot.

Rav Tatz notes that counting the omer is not just a sentimental marking but a build up

towards a goal. It is developing each component of a process. We received that burst of inspiration on Pesach. Our challenge during Sefirat haomer is to return to that level again through our own toil and effort.

The Ishbitzer Rebbe explains that there is a custom to eat eggs at the Seder night. This is symbolic of a spiritual transformation. On the outside of an egg one cannot tell if a chick will eventually emerge. We need to wait and see what will happen. That's us on the Seder night. We've been touched even though we may not sense anything initially. *Sefirat haomer* is our incubation period. It is during these weeks that we develop ourselves so that we can eventually emerge as deeper human beings on Shavuot.

Next week, we will discuss the ways in which we can embark on a path of growth during *Sefirat Haomer*.

Shabbat Scenarios: The Prohibition of Tying Knots #1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The *melacha of koshair* (tying knots) is derived from the times of the Mishkan when the Jews would tie down their tents to pegs stuck in the ground. This was meant to be a permanent type of knot, as the Jews in the desert did not know when they would travel again.

The *melacha of koshair* corresponds to the *melacha of mattir* (untying). Any knot that may not be tied on Shabbat, may not be untied on Shabbat.

The Mishna in Mesechta Shabbat discusses various types of Biblically prohibited knots. A classic example is the *keshet hagemalim* (the knot of the camel drivers). The camel driver would make a permanent knot on a rope attached to the camel's nose ring. The other

end of the rope would be tied to a pole. Another example given is the sailor's knot. The sailor would tie a permanent knot on a rope attached to his boat. The other end would be tied to the pier. In both examples, the first knots which are meant to last permanently, are Biblically prohibited forms of *koshair*.

According to Rashi:

A permanent knot such as a shoemaker's knot which attaches the straps of a sandal to the sole, is *ossur m'dorayta* (Biblically prohibited).

A quasi-permanent knot such as the loose knot the Rabbanim would make on the straps of their shoes so they could be slipped on and off without untying, is *ossur m'drabanan* (Rabbinically prohibited).

A temporary knot on a shoe which is meant to be untied later in the day is permitted.

According to the Rambam and the Rif:

There are two criteria for a knot to be *ossur m'dorayta*:

- It must be permanent
- It must be a knot that requires expertise such as a craftsman's knot.

A knot that only has one of the above criteria, for example a temporary craftsman's knot or an ordinary permanent knot is *ossur m'drabanun*.

A knot that has neither of the two criteria is permissible.