



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה. MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Surprise Find

וַיֵּצֵא לָבָם וַיִּחְרְדוּ. (בראשית מב, כח)

Their hearts sank, and they trembled. (*Bereishis* 42:28)

Said R. Levi: The Tribes came upon a surprise find, as it is written, “Their hearts sank, and they trembled.” Surely it should be so with us, as we have lost R. Simon bar Zavdi. (*Yalkut Shimoni, Miketz* 148)

Yosef’s brothers found something that ostensibly should have made them happy. They found money in the mouths of their sacks. Yet, “Their hearts sank, and they trembled.” Therefore, the loss of a great Sage such as R. Simon bar Zavdi surely should bring people to fear. This is what the *Midrash* is saying.

However, it is very hard to grasp the point of this *Midrash*, because the surprise find of Yosef’s brothers was not a very happy event at all. On the contrary, when they found bags of money at the top of their grain sacks, they were naturally afraid for their lives, as the Egyptians would assumedly accuse them of stealing money. So why does the *Midrash* construe this find as a happy event?

When *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* brings a decree upon

a person, He sends him warning signals. When a person performs an act, and then something happens to him, this is a sign of what will happen in the end.

Yosef’s brothers found money in their sacks. But Yosef could just as well have hidden the body of an Egyptian child in their sacks, and then they would have been in much worse shape. Whereas when a person finds a sum of money, he is naturally happy, it gives him a good feeling, even if he knows that it could potentially lead to trouble.

Yosef’s brothers learned a wonderful lesson from the fact that money, and not something else, was placed in their sacks. It spelled trouble, but the trouble was arising from a “happy” find, and this indicated that it was a completely different kind of

trouble. It showed the nature of the trouble that was brewing up.

This explains the *Midrash*. If a find like this, which contains a joyful element, brought Yosef's brothers to tremble, then the loss of a great man such as R. Simon bar Zavdi should surely make us fear.

Throughout the *parshah* we see an interesting thing: Yosef treated his brothers very carefully from beginning to end. He could have done a lot of really unpleasant things to them. He could have beaten them, harassed them in various ways, etc. Yet, all he did was put money in their sacks, which caused

them no damage at all. Not only that, but when they wanted to return the money, he refused, saying it was theirs.

Also before, when he asked them to bring Binyamin down to him, what "terrible" things did he do to them? He held Shimon in prison for a few minutes, until they left. What happened to Shimon after that? Nothing bad. Yosef gave him five-star treatment until his brothers came back.

This was a sign of Yosef's true intentions toward his brothers. ●

SPECIAL TOPIC

Light Up the Darkness

The Light of a Holiday

The original light, with which *Hashem* created the world, enabled *Adam Harishon* to see from one end of the world to the other. However, *Hashem* knew that unworthy generations would later come along, so He hid this light away, to prevent *resha'im* from using it. He hid it away for the *tzaddikim* of future generations.¹

So say *Chazal*. Where did *Hashem* hide this light? It says in *Seforim Hakedoshim* that *Hashem* hid this light in the Jewish holidays of the year. When a *chag* comes, the light bursts forth and illuminates

a person's soul. This is why the holidays are called *Yamim Tovim*. It is because this hidden light is called *tov*, "good," as it says:

וירא אלקים את האור כי טוב – G-d saw the light that it is good.²

During the ordinary days of the year, this light is hidden in the Torah, as the *Midrash* says in the beginning of *Bereishis Rabbah*.

There are a lot of stories about *Gedolei Yisrael* who, thanks to their Torah erudition, had eyes that saw from one end of the world to the other. This is

1 *Bereishis Rabbah* 12:6.

2 *Bereishis* 1:4.

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

גדבת נכדיהם ~ עטרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בני אבותם

because someone who delves deeply into the *Torah Hakedoshah* finds in it the same hidden light by which *Adam Harishon* saw around the world.

Now, most Jewish holidays have a *masechta* devoted to it and its *halachos*. *Chazal* say:

Moshe enacted for the Jewish people that they should ask and expound in matters pertaining to the day: The laws of Pesach on Pesach, the laws of Shavu'os on Shavu'os and the laws of Sukkos on Sukkos.³

This is because the “lifeblood,” the essence, of the holiday is hidden in the *maseches* that speaks about it. The main light of the holiday is in its Torah teachings.

Since the *avodah* and the wondrous spiritual influences of each holiday are to be found in the *masechta* pertinent to it, almost every holiday has its own *maseches*. Pesach has *Pesachim*, Sukkos has *Sukkah*, Rosh Hashanah has *Rosh Hashanah*, Yom Kippur has *Yoma*, Purim has *Megilah*. And Shavu'os is connected in some ways to *Maseches Shavu'os*. I don't know the exact source for this last one, but it is a fact that *Maseches Shavu'os* is printed in the *machzorim* for the holiday of Shavu'os. Apparently, the reason is that the foundation of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai is the oath, the *shevuah*, that the Jewish people took there to keep the Torah.⁴

Chazal composed a *masechta* for all these holidays. For all of them, but not for Chanukah! We do find a section about kindling the Chanukah lights in chapter *Bameh Madlikin*, which is the second chapter of *Maseches Shabbos*, and speaks about Shabbos candles. This implies that the Torah teachings pertinent to Chanukah are part of the Torah teachings of Shabbos. Chanukah is incorporated into Shabbos.

This shows the deep connection between Shabbos candles and Chanukah candles. If we grasp the deeper meaning of Shabbos candles, we can thereby

understand what Chanukah is all about. And we can also appreciate the difference between them.

Shabbos Illuminates

So let's discuss Shabbos candles.

The peak of light and *kedushah* on Shabbos is the *Minchah* prayer. This is the time described in Torah sources as *Raava d'raavin*, it is when *Hashem's* innermost Will expresses itself. But we don't start there. The entry gate to the holiness of Shabbos is kindling the Shabbos candles.

Shabbos candles are indeed an exceptionally great and precious *mitzvah*. *Chazal* say that if a person has limited means, and he is forced to choose between Shabbos candles and Chanukah candles, Shabbos candles come first. They are top priority. This is because Shabbos candles enhance *shalom bayis* by illuminating the home. And *Chazal* saw this as even more important than kindling Chanukah candles, which publicize miracles, for which reason they come before *Kiddush* over wine, despite the fact that *Kiddush* is essentially a Biblical *mitzvah*.

Why do Chanukah candles come before *Kiddush* in importance and priority? Because publicizing the Chanukah miracle is a demonstration of our faith in *Hashem*, in His *Hashgachah* and His closeness to us. This is basic to the Jewish belief. It is so important that, ostensibly, it should be the greatest thing of all. After all, the Ramban said:

The purpose of all the *mitzvos* is that we should believe in our G-d... and this is the purpose of all Creation.⁵

Yet, Shabbos candles take precedence over Chanukah candles. Let's understand why.

Shabbos, which in Hebrew is שבת, comes from the verb שביתה, meaning “cessation.” When Shabbos comes, everything ceases, everything fades away. During the six days of the workweek, there is the regular world, and it follows the natural order of

³ *Megilah* 4a.

⁴ See *Taamei Minhagim* p. 272.

⁵ *Ramban* commentary on the Torah, end of *Parshas Bo*.

things. (As the Chazon Ish explains, “That which we call ‘natural’ is the more constant Will of He Who brings everything into existence.”⁶)

But when Shabbos commences, there is a change in the way the world runs. Everything ceases, and the only thing left in the world is the honor and glory of *Hashem*. The true nature of Shabbos is *Hashem’s* Oneness.

This is why specifically *melachah* is forbidden on Shabbos. There is no prohibition on working hard. It is likely that one may carry heavy tables from one place to another on Shabbos. (Only according to the Ramban would this be forbidden.) The thing we may not do on Shabbos is *melachah*, which means the 39 types of creative work that were performed in the *Mishkan*. They entail creating things.

What’s wrong with creating things?

Any act, any *melachah*, by which the world is built up, is forbidden on Shabbos. Because Shabbos is a time when everything ceases to exist, so to speak, and there is nothing in the world but *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

Now let’s understand what makes everything cease to exist.

The truth is that this is not a question at all, because that’s how *Hashem* created things to be: ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת – “Six days you shall work and do all your labor, and the seventh day is Shabbos for *Hashem* your G-d.”⁷ But practically speaking, we see that Shabbos commences by means of lighting Shabbos candles.

What does this signify?

When Shabbos leaves, we recite *Havdalah*, in which we say קודש לחול בין – “He differentiates between holy and mundane.” Shabbos is the holy, and the weekdays are the mundane. Shabbos is the opposite of the weekdays. Shabbos is light, and the weekdays are darkness, as we go on to say

in *Havdalah*. And this is actually the difference between this world and the World to Come.

ואמונתך בלילות – “And Your faith in nights.” This refers to this world, which is compared to the night, as it says, תִּשָּׂא חֹשֶׁךְ וַיְהִי לַיְלָה בּוֹ תִרְמַשׁ כָּל חַיֵּיתוֹ יָעַר – “You place darkness, and it becomes night, in which all the animals of the forest creep around.” Now, is it true that all the animals of the forest creep around only at night, and at day, they do not creep around at all? Rather, this verse comes to teach us that this world is compared to night.⁸

Weekdays in this world are days of darkness. *Shabbos Kodesh* is like *Olam Haba*. It is a day of light. This is why we kindle lights when Shabbos comes in.

What’s the difference between light and dark? It’s not that in the light, things exist, and in the dark, they don’t. Even in the dark, everything is still there, you just don’t seem them because the darkness hides them. It causes a lacking in the person’s faculty of sight, not a lacking in the object itself.

Let’s say a person goes into the *beis midrash* on a dark night. There is not even moonlight. And the electricity is out. He gropes around by feeling the walls, and he can’t find the books he came in to look for. It’s not because the books flew out the window and are gone. The books are right there in front of his eyes, just like in the middle of the day. But he can’t see them. The problem is with him, not with the books.

The truth that will be revealed in *Olam Haba* is right here in this world, in front of our eyes. קדוש קדוש קדוש ה’ צבאות מלוא כל הארץ כבודו – “*Hashem* of H-sts is holy, holy, holy. The whole world is full of His glory.” That’s right. The whole world is full of *Hashem’s* glory, it’s right in front of our eyes, but we have difficulty seeing it, because of the great darkness of this world. But in *Olam Haba*, the truth reveals itself to our eyes, because it is a world of light, and we

6 *Igros Chazon Ish* letter 35.

7 *Shemos* 20:9.

8 *Otzar Hamidrashim* p. 407, see also *Bava Metzia* 83b.

will see the Oneness of *Hashem*.

The whole nature of this world is to cover over the truth that is actually right here in front of us the whole time.

Shabbos commences with kindling lights. When the candles are lit, everything is suddenly illuminated, and we can perceive the true reality that is in front of our eyes. This changes the whole way we view ourselves and the world around us.

Let's say a Jewish farmer is sitting on his front lawn on Shabbos afternoon, perusing a *sefer*. Along comes a non-Jew, and, upon noticing the Jew sitting there in total tranquility, shouts out in an alarmed voice, "Hey there, your whole tomato field is drying up because of the heat! Go turn on the irrigation quick, or the whole crop is toast!!"

What does the Jew reply? Well, he could say, "I am willing to lose everything I have in order not to desecrate the Sabbath day." This would be an appropriate response for someone who doesn't really have a proper feeling for what Shabbos is all about.

A better response would be, "Why should I trouble myself to go out to the field and turn on the irrigation, in order to rescue my whole livelihood, when *Hashem* can send me my *parnassah* straight to my home without any effort on my part? I don't need to sweat and labor in the field in order to make a living."

But wait, after Shabbos is over, something changes. The farmer Jew rushes out to his field early Sunday morning, despite his advanced age, and toils and sweats out there to take care of his tomato plantation. Why? Because Shabbos is a time of light. On Shabbos, the reality of the world is different, and the way we look at this reality is different. On Shabbos, it's crazy to go to work. In fact, it's forbidden! There is nothing but *Hakadosh Baruch*

Hu, and He takes care of everything for us. But the reality of the weekdays is different. Work isn't crazy, and in fact, it is permitted. We live in the natural world.

Chanukah's Special Light

As we said, a Jew is gripped by a lofty feeling and outlook on Shabbos. But as soon as he recites *Havdalah* on *Motzaei Shabbos*, it's over. He is back down in the natural world.

Kindling the Chanukah candles brings the light and *kedushah* of Shabbos into the mundane workdays.

How so?

The *Gemara* states that the *Shechinah* never descended lower than ten *tefachim* from the ground.⁹ This is because ten *tefachim* defines an independent domain, as we see in *Hilchos Shabbos*. A height of ten *tefachim* thus constitutes a division, a separation. Therefore, the *Shechinah* never descended all the way into this world. There was always a *mechitzah* of ten *tefachim*.

But the Chanukah *Menorah* is to be placed next to the entrance to the public domain, lower than ten *tefachim*, as stated in *Halachah*. This position shows the special purpose of the light of Chanukah. It illuminates this world. It brings the reality and the outlook of Shabbos into the mundanity of the workweek.

Chanukah is not a special, uplifted domain unto itself. Thus it does not have its own dedicated *masechta*. It brings the reality of *Hashem's* absolute Oneness down to the ground, into the public domain, into the workweek, into this mundane world. ●

⁹ *Sukkah* 5a.