

In this week's *Parashah*, we read the section beginning "Ve'hayah eem shamo'a" (11:13-21), the second paragraph of our twice daily *Kri'at Shema*. (The first paragraph, "Shema Yisrael," was in last week's *Parashah--Devarim* 6:4-9.) The *Mishnah* (*Berachot* 2:2) asks: Why do we recite *Shema* before *Ve'hayah*? The *Mishnah* answers, referring to the content of each of the two paragraphs: First one accepts upon himself the yoke of Heaven, and then he accepts upon himself the yoke of *Mitzvot*.

R' Mordechai Sternberg z"l (1948-2022; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Har Ha'mor in Yerushalayim) writes: The *Mishnah* is teaching us to perform *Mitzvot* with *Emunah* / faith and *Yir'at Shamayim* / Reverence for *Hashem*, not merely out of habit. It is not enough to accept the yoke of *Mitzvot*; that acceptance must be preceded by accepting the yoke of Heaven. One who accepts only the yoke of *Mitzvot*, but not the yoke of Heaven, may observe the laws perfectly, but it is a stressful observance. Such a person has many "masters," because each *Mitzvah* stands alone. And, those "masters" may sometimes come into conflict with each other as *Mitzvot* make competing demands [for example: learning Torah versus performing acts of *Chessed*, and both of those versus *Davening* with a *Minyan*]. In contrast, one who first accepts the yoke of Heaven has only one Master--*Hashem*. He will still have to resolve conflicts between *Mitzvot* that make competing demands, but it will not be a stressful experience, because it will all be in the service of the one Master. (*Bayit Ne'eman B'Yisrael* p.24)

Shabbat

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 118b) teaches: If only the Jewish People would observe two *Shabbatot* in accordance with law, they would be redeemed immediately. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Yitzchak Hutner z"l (1906-1980; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, N.Y.) writes: The *Gemara* states that the Redemption will occur "immediately" if we observe two *Shabbatot*. This indicates that the Redemption is not a reward for *Shabbat* observance, since *Hashem* is described (*Shmot* 34:6) as "Patient," meaning that He never rewards or punishes immediately. Rather, it must be a cause and effect.

R' Hutner elaborates: *Shabbat* is referred to by our Sages as a "little bit of *Olam Ha'ba*," while *Olam Ha'ba* is referred to as "A day that is wholly *Shabbat*." This indicates that *Shabbat* is an illustration ("Tziyur") of the World-to-Come, which is the thing being illustrated ("Metzuyar"). R' Hutner says in Yiddish: "*Ha'tziyur shlept sich mit es ha'metzuyar*" / "The illustration pulls along with it the thing it is illustrating." How so?

R' Hutner explains: Generally, we view the first three days of the week as being associated with the *Shabbat* that has passed and the next three days as being associated with the coming *Shabbat*. [Thus, for example, some say that a person can still recite *Havdalah* through the third day of the week. See *Mishnah Berurah* 299:16.] It follows that we must observe two *Shabbatot* in order to imbue an entire week with the holiness of *Shabbat*--one *Shabbat* to sanctify the first half of the week, and the other to sanctify the second half. When the entire week is sanctified with the sanctity of *Shabbat*, this immediately brings about the "The day that is wholly *Shabbat*," the era when all of time is sanctified--*i.e.*, the World-to-Come that follows the Redemption.

(*Pachad Yitzchak: Shabbat-Sukkot* p.104)

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(*Yisroel Moshe ben Yosef a"h*)

“You will say in your heart, ‘My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!’ You shall remember *Hashem*, your *Elokim*--that it is He Who gives you strength to make wealth.” (8:17-18)

Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuven Gerondi z”l (Spain; 1320-1376) writes: The Torah warns us not to attribute our success to our own powers. It definitely is true, R’ Nissim writes, that different people are endowed with different talents and abilities. For example, one person’s nature leads him to seek wisdom, another’s nature leads him to amass wealth, and so on. Thus, a wealthy person could, in some sense, rightly say, “My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!” Even so, remember the source of your strength and might--it is “He (*Hashem*) Who gives you strength to make wealth.”

At the same time, R’ Nissim adds, the Torah does not dismiss man’s efforts. It does not say, “He Who gives you wealth.” Rather, it says “He Who gives you strength to make wealth.” Your talents made the wealth, but remember the One Who gave you your talents. (Derashot Ha’Ran 10)

R’ Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z”l (1865-1935; first *Ashkenazic* Chief Rabbi of *Eretz Yisrael*) elaborates: Human perfection is attaining *Bitachon* / trust in *Hashem*. One type of *Bitachon* involves expecting a miracle when necessary, but everyday *Bitachon* is trusting that *Hashem* will help one’s own *Hishtadlut* / efforts succeed.

We find a seeming contradiction, R’ Kook continues. Sometimes, *Hishtadlut* is praiseworthy and obligatory---as in Yehoshua’s war against the city of Ai (see *Yehoshua* 8:1)--and other times it is undesirable--as in Gidon’s war against Midian (see *Shoftim* 7:2). R’ Kook explains: When a person is on a higher religious level, then he will recognize *Hashem* even if it seems to be his efforts that are bringing about his success. In such a case, *Hashem* has no need to intervene with an open miracle. On the other hand, if a person is on a lower religious level, then the success of his own efforts will obscure *Hashem*’s role. For such a person, *Hashem* must perform an open miracle.

R’ Kook adds: We read (*Hoshea* 11:1), “When *Yisrael* was a lad, I loved him, and since Egypt I have been calling out to My son.” The way a parent relates to an older child is different from the way the parent relates to a younger child. Indeed, Yaakov Avinu went so far as to call his mature sons his “brothers” (see *Bereishit* 31:46 and *Rashi* z”l there). Says the prophet Hoshea: When the Jewish Nation was young, immediately after the Exodus, it required open miracles to teach it to know *Hashem*. But, as the Nation grew and reached higher levels, it was ready--indeed, it was expected--to live a natural life in *Eretz Yisrael*, all the while recognizing *Hashem* Who gave the people the strength to succeed. (*Ain Ayah: Berachot* I 143)

“*Hashem*, your *Elokim*, will drive these nations away from before you little by little; you will not be able to eliminate them quickly, lest the beasts of the field increase against you.” (7:22)

We read similarly (*Shmot* 23:29), “I shall not drive them away from you in a single year, lest the Land become desolate and the wildlife of the field multiply against you.” R’ Avraham Shimon Halevi Ish Horowitz z”l Hy”d (1876-1943; *Mashgiach* in Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin in Poland) wonders: Considering the Ten Plagues, the Splitting of the Sea, and the miracles of the Pillar of Fire, the *Mahn* and the well that traveled with *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert, would it be challenging for *Hashem* to keep animals out of *Eretz Yisrael* while it lies desolate?!

R’ Horowitz explains: Our perspective is backwards. Being here on earth, we are amazed by extraordinary events like the Ten Plagues or the Splitting of the Sea. *Hashem*’s perspective is different, however. *Hashem* created a world that would operate according to laws of nature (which are, of course, part of *Hashem*’s Creation). *Hashem* “doesn’t mind,” so-to-speak, changing nature briefly, as He did in Egypt and at the Sea. But, changing the behavior of entire species of animals for an extended period of time so that they would not colonize the desolate Land is something *Hashem* does not want to do. (*Naharei Aish: Likuttei Dibburim* 110)

“Behold! I have engraved you on [My] palms; your [ruined] walls are before Me continuously.” (Yeshayah 49:16--in this week’s Haftarah)

The *Gemara* (*Ta’anit* 4a) states: The Jewish People requested inappropriately, but *Hashem* responded appropriately. The Jewish People requested (*Shir Ha’shirim* 8:6), “Place me like a seal on Your heart”--a place which is sometimes visible and sometimes not visible. *Hashem* responded (in our verse), “I have engraved you on [My] palms”--a place that is always visible. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ David Cohen *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) explains in the name of R’ Moshe Shapiro z”l (1935-2017; *Rosh Yeshiva* in several Israeli *yeshivot*; best known for his lectures on Jewish Thought): That which is “sometimes visible and sometimes not visible” refers to *Hashem*’s miracles. The Jewish People requested that *Hashem* relate to them with open miracles, which was an inappropriate request. That which is “always visible” refers to the natural order that *Hashem* created, hence the reference to “palms,” *i.e.*, hands, which are the most basic tool for acting within nature. *Hashem* promises: Even when I am most hidden, when there are no open miracles to be seen, I will keep the Jewish Nation alive through the world’s natural order.

(*Yemei Ha’Purim* p.8-9)