



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Bshalach 5764

In our Parsha, we read about the splitting of the sea that was brought about by Moshe Rabeinu. In Maseches Chulin (7a), we find another story of a *Tzadik* who split a body of water.

“R. Pinchas ben Yair was travelling to perform the mitzvah of *pidyon shvuyim* (redeeming captives). He reached the *Ginai* river and had no way to cross. He said, ‘*Ginai*, split your waters so that I may cross to the other side’. The river *Ginai* responded, ‘You are going to perform the will of your Creator, and I flow to perform the will of my creator. The success of your endeavor is a *safek* (questionable), whereas I certainly succeed in fulfilling Hashem’s will.’ R. Pinchas ben Yair responded, ‘If you don’t split, I will decree that water will never again flow through you.’ The river then split.

There is a special story that clarifies the narrative in the Gemara. My ancestor, Rav Tzvi Hersh of Ziditshov zy”a, who was often referred to as “*Sar Beis Hazohar*”, because of his vast knowledge of *Toras Hakabalah*, was a talmid of the *Chozeh* of Lublin zy”a. Once, the *Chozeh* asked Rav Tzvi Hersh to write out his entire daily schedule, and to bring it to him for review and approval.

We can imagine what his holy schedule looked like. How many hours for learning *Torah Hanigleh*, how many for learning *Toras Hanistar*, how many for the *avodah* of *tefillah* and how many for preparation before performing a *mitzvah*, (See his *sefer Sur Me’ra*, which includes descriptions of his *avodah*).



[1]

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When he placed the schedule before the *Chozeh*, the *Chozeh* picked up his pen. Next to every line that Rav Tvi Hersh wrote, the *Chozeh* added, “*Lav Davka*” (Not exactly, or not necessarily). For example, if he wrote that from nine to ten he learns the writings of the Ari z”l, the *Chozeh* added, “*Lav Davka*”.

The *Chozeh* then explained his intention to R. Tzvi Hersh. “If I approve this schedule, and a Jew who needs your help comes to you, you will look at your schedule and say, “I’m now fulfilling Hashem’s will based on a schedule that was approved by my Rebbe. I’m learning or *davening*.” The result will be that you won’t help that Jew who needs you. That’s why I added, “*Lav Davka*”, to teach you that sometimes it’s more important to Hashem that you help someone else, even if it means that you won’t learn or daven according to your schedule.

The *Chozeh* went on to explain that this was the mistake of the River *Ginai*. When R. Pinchas ben Yair stood on the riverbank in the midst of his journey to redeem a Jew from captivity, it refused to split. The “schedule” of the river stated that by Hashem’s decree, all rivers must continually flow to the sea. That is why it refused R. Pinchas ben Yair’s request.

Rav Pinchas ben Yair corrected the river. “You were created exclusively for the purpose of serving your Creator. Therefore, when a Jew is suffering in captivity, the Creator certainly wants you to split. If you don’t, your refusal reveals that you didn’t flow every day in order to serve your Creator. Therefore, you forfeit the right to have water flow through you at all.”

The *sefer Noam Megadim* brings a similar statement of the *Chozeh*. In *Parshas Devarim* the Torah commands *Bnei Yisrael* to destroy idolatry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*. The Torah goes on to say, לא תַעֲשׂוּן כֵּן לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. (Don’t do so to Hashem your G-d - commanding us not to damage



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anything dedicated to *avodas Hashem*.) The *Chozeh* explained the words as “Don’t say *ken* to Hashem Elokecha”. This means that if a person has undertaken a commitment to perform a certain aspect of *avodah* consistently, (e.g. fasting for a certain amount of hours each day, or *tevila* in the *Mikvah* every day), but one day is unable to fulfill his commitment, he may get depressed. He had ingrained in himself the belief that this act provides him with *yirah* and *kedushah*.

However, this is not the true path of *avodas Hashem*. It’s as if this person worships his scheduled activity! While it’s true that Chazal said that a person who fasts is called a “*kadosh*”, and that *tevilah* in the *Mikvah* can enlighten a person, those results come only from Hashem. Sometimes Hashem enables us to achieve *kedusha* by fasting, and sometimes by eating and drinking (such as on *Erev Yom Kipur*). The *pasuk* is telling us that we shouldn’t declare to Hashem that our *avodah* is going to be *ken*, only like this. This lesson is a fundamental principle of *Avodas Hashem*.

We should understand that if the lofty *avodah* of the “*Sar Beis Hazohar*” could be set aside in order to help a Jew in need, we certainly need to value our fellow Jew and help them in any way we can, even during times that we have scheduled for learning or *davening*.



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