



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of
maamarim
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Melave Malka Parshas Noach 5776

In tonight's portion of *Tana D'vei Eliyahu*, Eliyahu Hanavi explains a *pasuk* in Yeshayahu (כ"ו:י"ט).

יְחִיו מִתֵּיךְ נִבְלָתִי יִקְוִמוּן הַקִּיצוֹ וְרִנְנוֹ שְׁכֵנֵי עֵפֶר כִּי טַל אֹרֶת טֶלֶךְ וְאֶרֶץ רַפָּאִים תִּפְּלִי

"May your dead live. The bodies of tzadikim who were killed for your name will arise, awaken and sing, dwellers of the dust, for the dew of lights is your dew, and the land will expel those who are buried in it."

From here they said, whoever becomes a neighbor to the dust during his lifetime, his dust will awaken for *techiyas hameisim*. Whoever doesn't become a neighbor to the dust in his lifetime, his dust won't awake for *techiyas hameisim*. This is why the *pasuk* says הַקִּיצוֹ וְרִנְנוֹ שְׁכֵנֵי עֵפֶר. It doesn't say שְׁכֵנֵי עֵפֶר those who are buried in the dust, but rather שְׁכֵנֵי עֵפֶר. These are people who lower themselves to the dust in order to learn Torah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings upon them the dew of the lights of Torah, seats them between his knees, hugs them and kisses them and brings them to *Chayei Olam Haba*. (תנא דבי אליהו פ"ה אות ה.)

In *Maseches Sota* (ה.) we find a similar *drasha*.

"R. Elazar said, the dust of anyone who is arrogant won't be awakened, as the *pasuk* says שְׁכֵנֵי עֵפֶר. It doesn't say שְׁכֵנֵי עֵפֶר, those who lie in the dust, but rather שְׁכֵנֵי עֵפֶר - those who become "neighbors" to the dust."



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Rashi explains שכן לעפר - a neighbor to the dust, means someone who lowers himself to the dust.

It is our practice to find the relevance of the *Tana D'vei Eliyahu* that we learn at *melave malka* to the *parsha* that we read on *Shabbos*. In this week's *parsha* we learn about Avraham Avinu's humility and *anava*.

וְכָל אַנְשֵׁי בֵּיתוֹ יָלִיד בֵּית וּמִקְנֵת כֶּסֶף מֵאֶת בֶּן נָכָר נִמְלּוּ אִתּוֹ. - And all members of his household, whether born in his home or purchased from a foreigner were circumcised with him. (בראשית י"ז:כ"ז).

The Rambam writes (משנה תורה הלכות ע"ז פרק א' הלכה ג') that the members of Avraham's household numbered in the tens of thousands.

“Avraham began to stand and call out in a loud voice to the entire world, and to inform them that there is one G-d of the entire world and that it is fitting to serve Him. He went and called out and gathered the people from city to city and from kingdom to kingdom, until he reached the land of *Canaan*. And when the people would gather to him and ask him about his words, he would inform each of them according to his understanding, until he brought them back to the path of truth. Until thousands and tens of thousands gathered to him, and they are אנשי בית אברהם - the members of Avraham's house.”

This means that at age ninety-nine Avraham Avinu himself performed *bris milah* on thousands of people, and then on himself. The *bris milah* of Avraham Avinu, who entered the *bris* with *mesirus nefesh* at age ninety-nine after decades of Torah, mitzvos, and good deeds, was on the highest spiritual level possible.

Chazal already said in the *Mechilta D'Rabi Yishmael* (ח"נ) (משפטים נדיקין י"ח)

“*Geirim* are precious. Avraham Avinu was *nimol* at age ninety-nine. If his *bris* had taken place when he was twenty or thirty years old, no one older than thirty would have been capable of converting. Therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu guided Avraham's life until he entered the *bris* at



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age ninety-nine, in order not to “lock the door” in the face of future *Geirim*.”

This teaches us that Avraham Avinu selflessly waited until he was ninety-nine years old for his *bris milah*, so that his *zechus* would benefit the future generations. For if a person desires to convert at an advanced age, but fears the *bris milah*, they will tell him that Avraham Avinu already preceded you, for his *bris milah* took place when he was ninety-nine years old with great *mesirus nefesh*. In his merit all the future generations will fulfill the *mitzva* of *bris milah*.

We now must ask a question about the phraseology of the *pasuk*. It seems to equate the *bris milah* of every male in his household with that of Avraham Avinu by saying *נימולו אתו* - they were circumcised together with him. How can the *pasuk* combine the sublime *bris milah* of Avraham Avinu, that benefits every Jew to this very day, with the *bris milah* of those anonymous members of his household?

The explanation lies in Avraham's description of himself in *Parshas Vayeira*, *וְאֶנֶכִי עָפָר וָאֵפֶר* - And I am dust and ashes. (בראשית י"ח:כ"ז). Avraham Avinu truly felt that among all the *geirim* and lonely wanderers who joined him, he was an equal among equals. He saw no qualitative difference between his *bris milah* and that of his followers. He viewed their combined *bris milah* as one joint action, for in front of the King, great and small are all equal.

This is truly the deep meaning of the *parsha's* title *Lech Lecha*. The *tzadikim* of previous generations explained this to mean, *לך לך מעצמך* - leave the prison of being self-centered. One who is constantly focused on himself, his honor, and his standing (as they say in Yiddish *איך מיט זיך מיט מיך* - me, myself and I), is truly a prisoner.

This is why Eliyahu Hanavi and *Chazal* teach us that the dust of an arrogant person won't be awakened. Only if someone has been a



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“neighbor of the dust” throughout his life, will his dust awaken at the time of *techiyas ha’méisim*.

This isn’t easy. A person has to work very hard throughout his life to avoid *gaava* and to cultivate *anava*. He must lower himself to the dust, and internalize the understanding that he has nothing that comes “from himself.” He must feel that he is truly עפר ואפר - ashes and dust. Every day, at the end of the *Amida* we ask ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה - Let my soul be as dust to all. A person must constantly evaluate his progress (or lack of such) in this vital *avoda*.

People often tell the story of a man who, at the end of the *Amida*, cries out ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה - begging Hashem to help him attain that goal. A moment later someone walks by and accidentally pushes him. The man quickly finishes his *tefilla* and begins to very loudly curse the man who pushed him. The bystanders ask him, “Didn’t you just now cry out to Hashem ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה? If you are simply a clump of dust, why are so enraged that a person didn’t treat you with honor?” He responds, “I was only speaking about being dust in relation to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, not to a common simpleton like him!”

We need constant *chizuk* and reminders to work on this *mida*. If we are honest with ourselves, it should be embarrassing to even speak about the need to humble ourselves. In our impoverished, lowly generation, what do we have to be arrogant about? How much Torah and *maasim tovim* do we have? We are empty vessels who are full of wrongdoing. How embarrassing it is that despite that reality, we have such a tendency to be arrogant, that we must speak against it repeatedly.

In our generation it would be appropriate for the *parsha* to be titled בא לך - it’s coming to you, you deserve it, rather than לך לך, for everyone is concerned about their own *kavod*. They never fulfill the command לך לך - distancing themselves from their ego and their desires. Instead, they remain in the prison of their physicality and concern for “me, myself, and I”.



[4]

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We can learn much from the life of my grandfather zy”a who founded this *beis medrash*. He was truly unique in the way that he would take extreme measures to escape from any hint of *kavod*. His *anava* and sense of *shiflus* - lowliness, were so sincere that he truly loved *bizyonos* (being scorned or ridiculed by others).

I remember that one year, my grandfather held the *tish* for the tenth of *Iyar*, (The *yohrzheit* of Rav Dovid of Tolna, zy”a the first *Tolner Rebbe*) in a very nice hall in Yerushalayim. His close friend and relative, Rav Yisrael Mordechai of Rachmestrivka zy”a, Rav Yehoshua Heschel Brim *zt”l* (Rosh Yeshiva of Boyan) attended, and I believe the the Boyaner Rebbe *shlita* was also there. *Chasidim* and *Anshei Maaseh* of Yerushalayim sat around the table.

Suddenly, a strange man dressed in rags wandered in from the street, and stood to one side, looking at the table. As soon as my grandfather noticed him, he called the man over and asked if he had washed *netilas yadayim* for the *seuda*. The man responded, “How can I wash *netilas yadayim* if I have no place to sit?”

My grandfather, who had been sitting at the head of the table, immediately stood up and said, “you can sit here”. He then urged the stranger to wash his hands and sit at the head of the table. All the guests were shocked, and Rachmistrivka Rebbe told my grandfather that it wasn’t befitting for him to give up his place at the head of the *tish*. Rav Yehoshua Heschel Brim asked my grandfather, “And where will you sit?”

My grandfather simply answered that Rashi (בראשית כ”ד:ל) teaches us that when the Torah tells us in *Parshas Vayeira* that at the *seuda* that Avraham Avinu provided for the *malachim*, והוא עומד עליהם - And he stood over them, it means לשמשם - to serve them. In other words, it seemed totally natural to my grandfather that the stranger would sit in his place at the head of the table, and he would stand and serve the guests. If



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some of the other guests had not stood up and guided the man to another seat, this is exactly what would have happened.

Each of us must realize how far we are from the wonderful, blessed, *midos* of *anava* and *shiflus*, and how much we must strengthen our *avoda* to progress in those *midos*.

The *yohrzheit* of my grandfather *zy"ra* on the first night of *Chanuka* is approaching. We, the *chabura* who try to follow in his ways, must develop *anava* and *shiflus*, understanding that we truly are empty vessels, without Torah and *maasim tovim*. This will enable us to follow his holy ways.

וימליץ טוב בעדנו אכי"ר



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