



Adapted from the sefer **חמין במוצאי שבת** and **חדוותא דזעיר אנפין** collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Seuda Shlishis Nitzavim

(חדוותא דזעיר אנפין עמ' ע"ר)

Our *Parsha* begins (דברים כ"ט ט"ז - י"ח):

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל איש ישראל. טפכם נשיכם וגרך אשר בקרב מחניך מחטב עציק עד שאב מימיק.

You are all standing today before Hashem your G-d, the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, every man in Yisrael. Your young children, your wives, and your stranger who is within your camp, from your woodcutters to your water drawer.

Rashi explains **החשוב חשוב קדם** - that these categories are listed in order of descending importance.

We should try to understand why woodcutters are listed before water drawers. What extra *chashivus* can we identify in the trade of woodcutting as opposed to that of drawing water?

I had the *zchus* to hear a very precious *maamar* about this from my father-in-law, Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Weissblum *zt"l*. It is a story that he heard about the Rebbe of Sanz, the *Divrei Chayim zy"a*.

In the last years of his life, the *Divrei Chayim* once visited Cracow before *Rosh Hashana*. At that time, the Rav of Cracow was Rav Shimon Sofer *zt"l*, the son of the *Chasam Sofer zt"l*.



[1]

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Rav Shimon was renowned for both his *geonus* and his great *tzidkus*. On the day of the *Divreu Chaim's* visit, Rav Shimon came to deliver his daily *shiur* between *mincha* and *maariv*. He was surprised to find that many of the usual participants were missing. He was told that since Rav Chaim of Sanz was visiting Cracow, many people went to receive a *bracha* from him before *Rosh Hashana*.

Word of this discussion reached the *Divrei Chaim*, who deeply respected the *Chasam Sofer* and his children. He went to visit Rav Shimon hoping to appease him. As they sat together, the *Divrei Chaim* addressed the question of why the *Torah* would consider woodcutters to be more significant than water drawers. The *Divrei Chaim* explained that the word חֹטֵב - a cutter, is related to the word חֻטִּיבָה meaning a unified entity. Therefore, the term חֹטֵב עֵצִיךְ, refers not only to the literal woodcutter, but also to someone who unifies עם ישראל with his עֲצוֹת - advice, whether in *ruchniyus* or *gashmiyus*.

The *Divrei Chaim* went on to explain that this is the task of a *Rebbe*. *Yidden* come to him for advice and he endeavors to advise them to the best of his ability.

The שׁוֹאֵב מַיִם, who draws water, represents the *Rosh Yeshiva*. *Chazal* (ב"ק י"ז.) say, אֵין מַיִם אֶלָּא תּוֹרָה, - water refers only to Torah. Moshe Rabeinu listed the woodcutter before the water-drawer, even though one who teaches Torah is truly much more *chashuv* than one who simply gives advice, because *Parshas Nitzavim* is always read before *Rosh Hashana*. At that point in time, all *Bnei Yisrael* come to the חֹטֵב עֵצִים in order to seek his advice as to how they can merit a good judgement for the upcoming year.

The *Divrei Chaim* chose to present this *Dvar Torah* in order to appease Rav Shimon Sofer.

We find a similar lesson in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (הוריות ג:ה):

.... אַתֶּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כְּלֶכֶם ... רִאשִׁיכֶם שְׁבִטִיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם



However, in *Sefer Yehoshua* (כ"ד:א) it is written:

וַיֹּסֶף יְהוֹשֻעַ אֶת כָּל שְׂבִטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׂכְמָה וַיִּקְרָא לְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּלְרָאשֵׁי

Moshe put the ראשים before the זקנים. Yehoshua placed the זקנים before the ראשים. R. Yehoshua of Sichnin said in the name of R. Levi 'With his *ruach hakodesh*, he saw that in the future Yisrael would be given over to the kingdoms, and that their ראשים will stand over them. Therefore, he placed the ראשים before the זקנים."

In other words, since Moshe Rabeinu foresaw with *ruach hakodesh*, that *Am Yisrael* are destined to be given over to the rule of kings, it will be the ראשים - leaders who will intercede on their behalf with the kings.

Therefore, he placed them first, for if there are no leaders who can intercede and negotiate with the kings, the *Chachmei Hatorah* won't be able to learn and teach Torah to *Am Yisrael*.

I recall that the *Beis Yisrael zy"z* once told me a wonderful *Dvar Torah* from his precious treasury. His words were as joyous as when given from *Sinai* and beautifully illustrates this idea.

In *Parshas Shmos* (ה:א) the Torah describes Moshe and Aharon going to Pharaoh on behalf of *Am Yisrael*.

וַאֲחֵר בָּאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל פַּרְעֹה כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלַח אֶת עַמִּי וַיְחַגּוּ לִי
בַּמִּדְבָּר.

And afterwards Moshe and Aharon came and they said to Pharaoh, so says Hashem the G-d of *Yisrael* 'Send out my nation and they will celebrate before me in the desert.

Rashi, based on *Chazal*, comments:

But the elders slipped away one by one from behind Moses and Aaron, until they had all slipped away before they reached the palace, because they



[3]

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were afraid to go to Pharaoh. At *Har Sinai*, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* exacted punishment from them [for this], as it is said: "And to the elders he said, 'Wait for us here'" (שמות כ"ד:). He had them turn back.

The *Beis Yisrael* said that we know that all of Hashem's *midos* are מידה כנגד מידה - measure for measure. We have to understand the reciprocity of preventing them from going up to *Har Sinai*, as a punishment for slipping away rather than accompanying Moshe and Aharon when they went to speak with the evil *rasha* Pharaoh.

He explained that the *Zekeinim* are the *Chachamim* and *Roshei Yeshivah*. *Chazal* taught us (זקן – זֶה שֶׁקָּנָה חִכְמָה (קידושין ל"ב:)) that the word *zakein* is an acronym for *zeh she'kana Chochma* - This is one who has acquired wisdom.

As the *Zekeinim* accompanied Moshe Rabeinu, they heard that the purpose of the journey was to go to Pharaoh and speak on behalf of *Bnei Yisrael*. They then said to themselves, 'Saving *Am Yisrael* is certainly an important matter, but it isn't the domain of *Roshei Yeshivos*. It is for *askanim* - activists who work on behalf of the *tzibur*. If we continue, it will cause us to be *mevatel Torah*.' Therefore, they slipped away.

This is why they were punished measure for measure specifically at *Matan Torah*. They were prevented from ascending *Har Sinai*, in order to teach them the error of their reasoning. They were taught that in order to have the *zechus* to ascend *Har Sinai*, they must care about the comfort of *Am Yisrael*, and do all that they can to lighten the burden of their suffering and ease the difficulty of their *galus*.

Someone who doesn't care about the comfort of *Am Yisrael* isn't truly connected to the *Torah Ha'kedosha*, in whose name he refrains from helping *Am Yisrael* in their time of need and suffering. It was specifically Moshe Rabeinu, who took upon himself the *askanus* of saving *Am Yisrael* from their oppressors, who could ascend to the heights of *Har Sinai*.



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I heard a similar thing from Harav Shlomo Kalish zt”l, a distinguished Sochatchover *chasid*, who was also the son-in-law of the *gaon*, the *Chelkas Yoav zt”l*.

There were times when *gedolei hador* in Poland gathered and discussed matters of great importance. At one such gathering, one of the *Rabbanim* in attendance was Rav Mendel of Vorka zy”a. He said that they must discuss the terrible decree which authorized the Czar’s army to forcibly take young Jewish boys from their homes. He emphasized that it was imperative that everyone support and protect these boys in any way possible.

One of the well-know *Rabbanim* responded, “While this is an extremely important issue, it isn’t really a matter for this gathering of *gedolei ahdor*. This is something that *askanim* are meant to deal with.”

Rav Mendel refused to accept this view and responded:

“In *Maseches Makos* (כ”ב:) Rava says, ‘How foolish are those people who stand up before a *Sefer Torah* but don’t stand up for a *gavra rabba* (*talmid chacham*). For in the *Sefer Torah* it is written that the punishment of *malkos* consists of forty lashes, and the *Rabbanan* came and lessened the total by one. (Hence, no more than 39 lashes).”

Isn’t it surprising that from all of the hundreds of thousands of statements and *halachos* in *Shas*, this was the only *halacha* that Rava chose to demonstrate the great power of the *chachamim*? Don’t we see the same power expressed in the *halachos* of *Sefiras Ha’omer* where the Torah says, תספרו חמישים יום - count fifty days, but the *rabbanan* reduced it by one, so we count only forty-nine days. (עיין ראש פסחים פ”ו סימן מ”)

It is clear therefore, that the power of the *rabbanan* is measured by only one criterion, their ability to bring respite to *Am Yisrael* by saving them from lashes and suffering.



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This is the clear outlook of *Chazal*, who understood that the primary reason that the *rabbanan* are imbued with such great power, is to lessen the pain of a Jew. This applies even to a Jew who was found guilty of sin by *beis din*, and now, according to the *din*, must undergo the punishment of *malkos*. Even in his case, the *rabbanan* utilized their power to reduce his sentence by one lash. A *talmid chacham* who utilizes his power to reduce the suffering of a Jew, is one whom *Chazal* crowned with the title *gavra rabba* - a great man.

It is well known that throughout the generations *tzadikim* took suffering upon themselves so that *Bnei Yisrael* wouldn't be harmed. In the *Midrash*, (דברים רבה ז:י) we learn that Moshe Rabeinu said, "*Ribono Shel Olam* let Moshe and a hundred like him die, but let not the fingernail of any Jew be harmed."

The *yom tov* of *Rosh Hashana* corresponds to the *mida* of *ayin tova*. As the *Sfas Emes zy"l* writes in the name of his grandfather the *Chidushei Ha'Rim*. (ר"ה תרנ"ד)

"My grandfather and teacher the *Chidushei Ha'Rim* said that on *Rosh Hashana*, we must have *ayin tova* even to the nations. He brought a hint to this from the *Gemara* (ר"ה כ"ה.) where *Chazal* say, "Go to one with *ayin tova* to be *mekadesh* the month." For *Kidush Hachodesh* and *Kidush Hashana* depend on the *mida* of *ayin tova*.

The more we increase our *ayin tova*, and try to benefit, assist, and help others, uniting them into one entity, and providing them with good *aitza*, we will likewise be measured *mida k'neged mida* with *ayin tova*.

וְנִזְכֶּה לְסִיעָתָא דְשָׁמַיָא בְּכָל עֲנִיְיֵינוּ בְּגִשְׁמִיּוֹת וְרוּחָנִיּוֹת, וְלִשְׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמִתּוֹקָה בְּכָל פְּרָטִיָּה
וּדְקָדוּקָיָה אַכִּי"ר



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