



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

Melave Malka Parshas Va'eschanan 5759

In this week's Parsha, Moshe Rabeinu reminds Am Yisrael of what they experienced at Matan Torah.

פָּנִים בְּפָנִים דִּבֶּר ה' עִמָּכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ (Hashem spoke with you face to face on the mountain from within the fire). In *Maseches Sofrim* (ט"ז:ג') Rav Chanina bar Papa explains that the words פָּנִים בְּפָנִים teach us a lesson about the transmission of Torah.

פָּנִים שׁוֹחֲקוֹת לַתְּלִמּוּד. (A laughing (happy) face is necessary for Talmud)... Rav Nechemia says in the name of Rav Yaakov bar Yanai, כְּמִים הַפָּנִים (משלי י"ז: י"ט) (as the reflection of a face in the water) usually, there is a Rav who wants to teach and a talmid who doesn't want to learn, or a talmid who wants to learn and a Rav who doesn't want to teach. However, here the Rav wants to teach, and the talmid wants to learn *Mikra, Mishnah, Talmud, and Aggadah.*"

We should notice that Rav Chanina bar Papa utilized the plural, פָּנִים שׁוֹחֲקוֹת. That choice of wording implies that not only should the Rav teach with a face that expresses joy, but that the Rav also has to do everything in his power to ensure that his *talmidim's* faces reflect their happiness. The transmission of Torah to the future generations must replicate the original transmission where Hakadosh Baruch Hu (the Rav) and Bnei Yisrael (the *talmid*), reflected each other's joy, פָּנִים בְּפָנִים.

In the thirteen *ikarim* of the Rambam we find, זאת התורה לא תהא מוחלפת. This Torah will never be exchanged. This principle applies not only to the



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content but also to the learning and teaching of Torah. The Torah was given with פנים שוחקות, and to this day, that is the only way to learn Torah, teach Torah, and fulfill our desire לשמור ולעשות ולקיים, to implement the Torah in every aspect of our lives.

Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. Torah which is not taught and learned with a joyous face, but with sadness, is not the Torah that was given at Sinai. Not only is it lacking the sweetness of Torah, and *ahavas Torah*, but it lacks one of the prerequisites necessary for authentic transmission of Torah. Since we did not receive the Torah from Hakadosh Baruch Hu in sadness, that lack of joy prevents *divrei Torah* from being engraved in the hearts of the *talmidim*. Those who learn in sadness also won't benefit from the Torah's ability to protect *lomdei Torah* from *yissurim*.

Chazal also taught us that Torah is the תבלין, the antidote that enables us to overcome the *yetzer hara*. Each of us knows how many difficult challenges we face every day. If we take that battle seriously, we have to take some time to think about how we learn. If we aren't learning with פנים שוחקות we can't benefit from the Torah's inherent ability to counteract the influence of the *yetzer hara*.

In *Maseches Horayos* (י"ב.), Rav Mesharshiya tells his sons that when they sit before their Rav, they should look at the Rav's mouth, as the *pasuk* says, וְהָיוּ עֵינֶיךָ רְאוּת אֶת מוֹרֶיךָ, (ישעיהו ל:כ), (Your eyes should see your teacher).

Why did he tell his sons to look at his Rav's mouth? The *pasuk* didn't mention the mouth. The *navi* Yeshayahu simply instructs us to see our teacher.

Perhaps we can explain his emphasis on the mouth of the Rav in light of the Gemara's description, (מועד קטן כ"ה), "When Rav Mesharshiya passed away, the date palms produced thorns." The *Chidushei Ha'Ran* explains that this phenomenon was a sign that in the merit of Rav Mesharshiya,



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the date palms had been blessed. The Ran quotes an *Aggadah* “Why were Yisrael exiled to Bavel? Because there was an abundance of date palms in Bavel, for sweetness accustoms the tongue to Torah.”

The Ran’s explanation reveals to us that in the merit of Rav Mesharshiya, the date palms were blessed, and their sweetness enabled those who learned Torah to experience the sweetness of Torah. It goes without saying that someone can only experience the sweetness of Torah if both the teacher, and the *talmid*, express their happiness with פנים שוחקות.

We can now understand why Rav Mesharshiya instructed his sons to look specifically at the mouth of their Rav. He wanted them to pay attention to the sweetness and joy with which their Rav teaches Torah. פנים שוחקות which is expressed primarily by the smile and laughter of the mouth.

When Rav Mesharshiya was *niftar*, no one was left to safeguard the transmission of Torah in its authentic form, with sweetness and joy. Therefore, the date palms, produced less sweet fruit, and more thorns.

Obviously, when Chazal spoke about פנים שוחקות they weren’t referring to someone whose smile is only superficial. If the heart is sad, the mouth’s smile is worthless. How then are we supposed to develop the internal *simchah* that manifests itself in authentic פנים שוחקות? The only way to truly feel that type of *simchah* is by *bitul ha’yesh*, avoiding self-centeredness, and achieving true *anavah* (humility).

An arrogant, self-centered person is always sad, bitter, and angry. Only someone who is truly, נעפר לכל (like dust to others) and eliminates his own sense of *yesh* to the extent that he doesn’t feel entitled to anything, can be constantly happy. He views everything he has, and especially life itself, as a gift that he receives because of Hashem’s *chesed*, and has no sense of entitlement.

I saw in the writings of Chabad *chasidim* a lesson that the *Rashab zy”a* brought down in the name of the *Baal Hatanya zy”a*.



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“When Hashem created the *malach ha’mavess* and sent him into the world to entice Bnei Yisrael to sin, he returned to Hashem and reported that he had failed. He attributed his failure to the name מלאך המוות which scares people away. Hashem told him that from now on, he will be called *Satan*. Once again, he failed and blamed his lack of success on people’s unwillingness to have anything to do with a being called *Satan*.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him that from now on he would be called *yetzer hara*. When that didn’t help, Hashem gave him the name *Nefesh Ha’bahamis* (the animal soul). However, in the time of the Baal Shem Tov, the *nefesh ha’bahamis* complained to Hashem that people once again knew his true identity and this prevented his success.

Finally, Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him that from now on his name would be *Yesh*, (independent existence). The *Baal Hatanya* said that we have to know and to teach others that *Yesh*, *Nefesh Ha’bahamis*, *Yetzer Ha’ra*, *Satan*, and the *Malach Ha’mavess* are all the same entity!”

My grandfather zy”a exemplified the *middah* of *bitul ha’yesh*. He truly believed that he couldn’t attribute anything he had to his own ability or actions. That’s why he constantly exuded true *simchah* that was sensed by anyone who simply saw his face. This *Beis Medrash* that he founded is therefore imbued with the power of helping people attain *bitul ha’yesh*. We can follow his path by developing אמונה חושית, real, tangible *emunah* that we have no power to do anything unless it is Hashem’s will.

If we strengthen our *emunah* in that way, we will overcome our arrogance and self-centeredness. Then, we will be able to learn Torah with *simchah* and פנים שוחקות, absorbing what we learn to the extent that it becomes part of us. Our desire to learn even more Torah will be ignited, driving us to learn Torah even during *bein hazmanim*, and protecting us from the challenges prevalent in those weeks. We will elevate and transpose the letters יש into שי, (a gift) the gift of serving Hashem בשמחה ובטוב לבב אכי”ר



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