



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 Yisro 5762

In our parsha, the Torah describes a unique declaration, "ויענו כל העם" (All of the nation answered together and said, all that Hashem says, we will do). In Parshas Mishpatim, we find, "ויאמרו כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה ונשמע" (All that Hashem says we will do and we will hear).

Many people read these pesukim and wonder how each individual could speak for all the other Jews by expressing themselves in the plural נעשה ונשמע!

The ש"ח שרפי קודש presents an explanation that he heard in the name of the first Gerrer Rebbe, the חידושי הרי"ם זיע"א. He explained that while each individual was only able to speak for himself, "אעשה ואשמע" (I will hear, and I will do), each Jew made his commitment as a member of Klal Yisroel.

In order to understand this peirush, we must realize that, at the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim, the Jewish people had descended to their lowest conceivable level, the 49<sup>th</sup> gate of טומאה. In the Medrash ויקרא רבה, R. Eliezer applies the image from Shir Ha'shirim, כשושנה בין החוחים, a rose among the thorns, to Yetzias Mitzrayim. "Just as it is difficult for a farmer to pick a rose when it is surrounded by thorns, so too it was difficult for Hakadosh Boruch Hu to redeem Am Yisroel. The pasuk in Devarim describes Hashem taking גוי מקרב גוי, one nation from within another. These and those were both uncircumcised, these and those had idolatrous haircuts..., from the perspective of Midas Hadin, the Jews should never have been worthy of redemption".



[1]

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A Jew who experienced the miracles in Mitzrayim and Yam Suf, approached Matan Torah aflame with the desire to call out **אעשה ואשמע**. However, his awareness that he had just been in the 49<sup>th</sup> gate of **טומאה**, caused him to doubt his ability to leap to the level of **אעשה ואשמע**. Each Jew reached the conclusion that instead of basing the commitment on his own dubious merit, he would base his declaration on the communal power of Am Yisroel. Each person transformed their initial **אעשה ואשמע** into **נעשה ונשמע**.

וידגדג משה את דברי העם אל ה' (and Moshe told Hashem the words of the nation). The **חידושי הרי"ם** explains that prior to the giving of the Torah, Hashem told Moshe **"הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן וגם בך יאמינו לעולם"** (I will appear to you in the thickness of the cloud and they will also believe in you forever). Moshe Rabeinu, in his humility, didn't want to be singled out. He brought the statement **נעשה ונשמע** before Hashem and declared that just as each Jew wanted to accept the Torah, not as an individual, but as part of the whole, he also wanted no individual promotion. He wanted to approach Hashem, and Matan Torah, just as his fellow Jews did, as part of Am Yisroel.

Unfortunately, in our lowly generation, we often reverse this beautiful process. When we decide to identify the wrongdoings of the generation, we each blame someone else. We have no difficulty finding culprits. In times of difficulty, when each of us should introspect and do teshuva, we quickly identify the "sinners" who must be responsible for our suffering. We don't understand that the responsibility lies with us!

Conversely, when good things happen, each of us feels confident that our righteousness has brought benefit to Am Yisroel, and that we deserve special rewards for our greatness.

The true approach leads us in the opposite direction. My response to a צרה of Am Yisroel should be increased focus on what I need to fix and



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improve. That introspection should be fueled by the understanding that I bear personal responsibility for what happens to Am Yisroel.

The Pnei Menachem zy”a often told me that when he was a child, his father, the Imrei Emes of Gur zy”a, instructed him to adopt a set schedule of learning Sifrei Musar. He said that, just as in the “Nigleh” portions of Torah, one should begin with the Rishonim and then learn the Acharonim, when learning Musar, one should start with sforim written by the Rishonim and then continue with the Acharonim.

The Imrei Emes also taught his son an important lesson about how one should learn Mussar. Many of the lessons in Sifrei Mussar denigrate negative midos such as anger or arrogance. While learning one of those chapters, you may find yourself picturing one acquaintance or another, as someone who personifies that negative attribute. Those thoughts clearly indicate that you have not even begun to step over the threshold of the house of Mussar. Only when you yourself are the example that comes to mind, as you learn about each negative trait, have you begun to approach the way of life based on Mussar.

We find similar distortion in our generation’s sense of entitlement to reward. Countless people spend vast sums of money on lottery cards. They are confident that they will win, even though the odds of success are miniscule. This behavior stems from each person’s sense that he, among all the ticket holders, truly deserves to win the jackpot! How unlike the approach of good Jews throughout the ages! They attributed their own good midos and actions to זכות אחרים, the merit of others.

We find that דוד המלך ע”ה, the Baal Haseuda of Melave Malka, ascended the throne and said, "מי אנכי ה' ומי ביתי כי הבאתני עד היום?" (Who am I Hashem, and who is my family that you have brought me to this?). He couldn’t understand how he deserved to be the king. This was the way of my grandfather zy”a and the Pnei Menachem zy”a who considered themselves less, and lower than any other Jew.



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This approach is one of the foundations of Chasidus as established by my ancestor the Baal Shem Tov zy”a. He taught that when a person sees another transgressing the Torah, or hears about a Jew who sinned, he must understand that his exposure to these events was engineered from above. Why? because he also embodies aspects of those negative behaviors, and Hashem is guiding him to improve his ways. The zy”a and other talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov elaborated on this principle in their teachings and writings.

If we can internalize this approach, we will merit with Hashem’s help, to return and draw close to him. We too will say נעשה ונשמע, and serve Hashem Yisborach בלב ונפש חפצה כל הימים אכי”ר



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