

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES RABBI CHONA MUSER



In the parsha of the tochacha the pasuk says (21:26), “Im tailchu Imi keru” (“If you behave casually with Me.”) Rashi comments, “Menachem explains an expression of holding back. This meaning is close to Onkelos’ translation, ‘hardness’, for they harden their hearts to hold themselves back from bringing themselves close to Me”.

Rashi is telling us a remarkable insight. Naturally, every Jew wants to become close to Hashem. The Rambam in Hilchos Gerushin (2: 20) says, “ Someone who is halachically obligated to divorce his wife and he refuses, he is lashed until he says that he wants to divorce her. Why don’t we say that such a get is invalid because it was forced? One whose evil inclination is preventing him from doing a mitzva or making him do an aveira and is lashed, he is not being forced but rather he is forcing himself through his evil thoughts. Therefore, this person who does not want to divorce, since he wants to be a Yisroel and he wants to do mitzvos and to stay away from aveiros, but his inclination is pressing him, once he is lashed and his evil inclination subsides and he says he wants to divorce, he is doing it with his will.”

The nature of a Yisroel is to do Hashem’s will. His heart wants to do the right thing but his yetzer hara is forcing his heart not to do the ratzon Hashem. That is against his nature - “hardening his heart to hold back” so as not to want to be close to Hashem.

We see nowadays that when non-religious Jews are approached and asked if they want to learn more about Judaism, it’s amazing how many will respond in the affirmative. The kiruv organization Lev L’achim went around distributing questionnaires to many homes. 20,000 people responded that they were looking for something. Some wanted tefillin, some wanted instruction on how to keep Shabbos, some wanted someone to teach Torah to their children, and some asked for instructions for their wives to learn about taharas hamishpacha.

The medrash in Rus says (7: 8), “My son, there is nothing closer to Hashem than a person’s heart.” Naturally, the heart is the place closest to Hashem and therefore the heart has a natural desire to become close to Hashem. In order to prevent this closeness, it’s necessary to block this feeling with force; to force oneself not to become close to Hashem, not to allow oneself to fulfill his natural desire to be close to Hashem.

The reason Rashi gives this explanation here is because the consequence in the next verse is that naturally tame animals will be destructive agents against their nature, measure for measure, for the sin of going against one’s own nature.

Just realizing that we have this natural desire to be close with Hashem could help us overcome our negative thoughts to the contrary.



**DEDICATED AS ZCHUS FOR SPEEDY RECOVERY
FOR ALL AFFLICTED WITH COVID19**



TOIL IN TORAH. RABBI YAAKOV BERKOWITZ

Im bechukosai teileichu v'es mitzvosai tishmoru v'asisem osam

Hashem tells us in the beginning of Parshas Bechukosai that if “we follow in My ways and fulfill My mitzvos we will be *bentched*, blessed, and get all the goodness”. Rashi explains the meaning of *bechukosai teileichu*, walking in the path of Hashem as “*Shetihiyu ameilim b'Torah*” - we should toil in Torah. Not only to learn Torah; to toil in it. If we fulfill that, the Torah continues, we will get the blessings. If, however, one does

not fulfill “*im bechukosai teileichu*”, the alternative - with no middle ground - is “*bechukosai tim'asu*”, you will be disgusted by my Torah and are not *amal* (toiling in) b'Torah.

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the great Rav of Yerushalaim asks: The majority of Klal Yisroel are working men who are NOT sitting in Kollel and yeshiva all day. Is it possible to say that most of the Jewish people are not fulfilling “*im bechukosai teileichu*” and are part of the alternative, “*im bechukosai tim'asu?!*”

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld says a phenomenal answer to give perspective for this Rashi. In fact, we're reading Rashi wrong. Rashi is not saying *she'tihiyu amaeim baTorah* - that we should toil in Torah. Rashi is saying “*shetihiu ameilim. BaTorah.*” We should toil - as a lawyer, as a doctor, as a bus driver or as a plumber, B'Torah. With a Torah mindset, following the laws and the spirit of the Torah, and that, which is applicable to every single Jew, will bring us to merit all of the brachos.

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE MRS. GABRIELLE SOLOMON, DIRECTOR - EISHES CHAYIL DIVISION

We just celebrated Lag BaOmer, and the count towards Shavuos continues! For those of us who lifted the restrictions of the mourning period on Tuesday, we can now enjoy music again. What is Lag BaOmer doing during the period of the Omer? Is there a connection between the two days, or is it a coincidence that they are close in proximity? And what does music have to do with the aforementioned days?

On a basic level, the similarity between Shavuos and Lag BaOmer is that they are both days of receiving Torah, but there is a different theme I would like to highlight. On the first ever Shavuos at Har Sinai, we received much more than a document. When we received the Torah, Hashem revealed Himself to all of Klal Yisrael, and we each experienced a personal revelation! We were on such a high level, our neshamos could sense the Divine plan intrinsically connected to the Torah. We came

closer to Hashem's perspective of the world. It was an awesome experience of transcendence and seeing the big picture.

Today, it can be challenging to hold onto the big picture. Rav Dessler gives a beautiful analogy that life is like a map that is mostly covered up. We only see tiny parts of the picture at a time. Hashem, of course, sees the full picture, but we will get to that later. Because our vision of life is limited by time and scope, we can find ourselves feeling frustrated and even depressed by moments that seem terrible from our perspective. There are pieces of this picture that seem quite dark.

Lag BaOmer marks the day we received the Zohar from Rav Shimon Bar Yochai. The Zohar teaches us to access the transcendent in our world – to see Hashem in everything – to recognize the infinite in the finite. The Kabbalah that entered the world on Lag BaOmer helped us to regain some of the big

(continued on next page)

THANK YOU TO
OUR CORPORATE SPONSOR



FRANKEL, RUBIN, KLEIN,
SIEGEL, PAYNE & PUDLOWSKI, P.C.
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS AT LAW

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

CONTINUED

picture view we had at Matan Torah.

Each of the seven weeks of the Omer has a midda – divine attribute – for us to focus on, and each day has one too! Lag BaOmer's midda is Hod sheb'Hod. Hod means humility, and humility is the key to connecting to the big picture! Humility allows us to escape ourselves and understand the world from another's perspective. The ultimate humility would enable someone to see the world through Hashem's Eyes, so to speak. Obviously, this is an incredibly high level of Hod. To put it simply, when we get *outside* of ourselves, we can see *beyond* ourselves. It is no coincidence that Lag BaOmer – the day we received the Zohar, is Hod Sheb'Hod. It is Hod that allows us to internalize the teachings of Rav Shimon Bar Yochai – to see Hashem in the material world and gain a glimpse of His divine perspective.

So far, we have explained how both Shavuot and Lag BaOmer help us transcend our limited view to connect to the big picture, but how does music fit into all of this?

Let's return to that mashal of life as a map. While we only see a sliver at a time, Hashem sees the full picture. This is because He is *beyond* time. Music is one of the most powerful vehicles we have for transcendence into the BIG picture! The following explanations are based on a shiur by Rabbi Jonathon Taub, a rebbi at Machon Yaakov in Yerushalaim: There are three songs in the Torah - the word "Az" is in all three. "Az" means then, but interestingly it can be used to describe past or present. "I will go to the grocery store, and *then* I will cook dinner" describes the future. "Back *then*, I used to exercise" describes the past. The word Az is above time! Az is spelled aleph and zayin-

זא. The numerical value of zayin is 7, which is the number for completion of the physical world. Eight is the number in Judaism that signifies going *beyond* the physical world. This is the gematria of Az! We see this same theme in the scale itself. The notes are *doh re mi fa so la ti* ... but the scale is not complete until you complete the octave, until you add another *doh*. The scale is made up of 7 + 1! It is made up of Az!

The word for song in Hebrew – "shir" (שיר) – has the same shoresh, or root, as the Hebrew word "sharsheret" (שרשרת) meaning "chain". This is because music is created when notes are strung together to create the whole! Music pulls us out of our narrow, piece by piece view and gives us a broader perspective. And that's why, as Rabbi Taub explains, Miriam was the one to lead the women in song and dance after Kriyas Yam Suf. Having prophesized that Moshe would be the redeemer of Israel, imagine the pain Miriam felt while she stood hopelessly watching as Moshe drifted down the Nile. Since she was there from that darkest moment, she was the one who could most appreciate how all the events led to the redemption at the splitting of the sea! In that powerful moment, she recognized with an awesome recognition that all the "bad" she witnessed was really part of Hashem's plan, and this inspired shira! Why shira over any other expression of joy? Because powerful songs turn heartbreak into rejoicing.

These ideas can serve us well as we navigate this challenging time. We have the opportunity to remember that all challenges pave the way to the ultimate redemption. And to remember that, is to see the big picture!..