



דרכים בפרשה

עקב



ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלוקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלוקיך ללכת בכל דרכיו לאהבה אותו ולעבוד את ה' אלוקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך

And now, Yisrael, what does HaShem, your God, demand of you? Only to fear HaShem, your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to worship HaShem, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul (10:12)

The Tur (O”C 46:3) and Midrash relate a story that occurred during the times of Dovid Hamelech. Each day, without any reason, one hundred people would die. Through *ruach hakodesh*, Dovid understood that the way to combat these deaths was to institute a new obligation of reciting one hundred brachos daily.

The gemara in Maseches Menachos (43b) explains that he saw a hint to it in our possuk. מה-ה' אלוקיך שואל מעמך אל תקרי מה אלא מאה - instead of reading the word “ma”, insert a letter alef and read it as “Me’ah” (the gematria 100). (Tosfos further points out that the possuk has 99 letters, so instead of reading it “מה”, add an alef to make מאה and you now have 100 letters.)

There is a famous quote that is attributed to Chazal (the earliest that I was able to trace it back to was the Rabbeinu Bachya in Cheshbon hanefesh) "תפילה בלא כוונה כגוף בלא נשמה" - A *tefillah* that is recited without *kavana*/ intent, is like a body without a *neshama*/soul. The words of a *tefillah* are the body, and the *kavana* that one infuses is the life.

We can suggest that in the times of Dovid Hamelech, everyone was making brachos.

Perhaps, they were even making one hundred brachos daily. The problem was that they were making the brachos out of rote; the life of the bracha was now missing. Dovid looked at this and said that if we are taking the life out of the brachos, it makes sense that lives of Klal Yisroel are being taken as well. So the antidote would be to infuse life back into the brachos.

Upon looking at the word מה, we note that it is a word that minimizes. Moshe Rabbeinu said- ואנחנו מה minimizing himself as if to say, “what are we”? In the English language as well, there is an expression “MEH”, which means expressing a lack of interest or enthusiasm. Dovid looked at the possuk and determined that HaShem was asking of us to rectify the item that we look at as “MEH”. Instead of reading it as מה, it would now be מאה.

It is well known *al pi kabbalah* that although the letter alef is numerically only one, it also holds a hidden numerical value of 26 which is the same as the name of HaShem (the alef is comprised of a vov and two yuds). By adding in an alef, Dovid is hinting to the idea of adding HaShem into our brachos.

The purpose of infusing HaShem into our brachos is so that we can live lives that HaShem is a part of. If we stop and think about HaShem when making a bracha, our lives would be different. How long does this take? All it takes is a mere seven or eight seconds on a bracha instead of two seconds.

There is a well know “shvigger joke” that comes to mind: There is an unexpected knock at the door. The shvigger has come to visit. Caught off guard, the daughter in law says, “Oh it is so nice of you to visit! How long will you be staying for? The mother in law replies, “”for as long as I am invited”! To which the daughter in law says, “Wait, aren’t you going to at least stay for a cup of coffee”?

The Sefer Aish Kodesh writes that when we say the word *atah* in a bracha, it is as if we are inviting HaShem to “stand” directly in front of us (*lashon nochach*). HaShem listens to our invitation and does indeed stand in front of us so that we won’t be making a *bracha levatala* (blessing in vain). So the question is, how long will He remain with us for? The answer of course depends on how long He feels invited for. If our bracha is of the two second variety, then the invitation is not that nice after all.

The gemara in Mesechta Chagiga teaches us that the difference between an *Oved Elokim* (one that truly serves HaShem) and a non-*Oved Elokim*, is the difference between one that reviews his learning “me’ah vs me’ah v’alef”- a hundred times vs. a hundred and

one. The Baal Shem Tov homiletically explained that perhaps both were actually reviewing one hundred times. The difference is that one was adding the “alef”- he was infusing HaShem into whatever he was doing. By including HaShem in our lives, we become *Ovdei Elokim*. It is not necessarily *what* we do, but rather, *how* we do it. (The Besh”t also makes note of the usage of the number one hundred here as a possible reference to making one hundred brachos with kavana vs. without.

Dovid realized that the power that a bracha wields when made properly is far greater than anti-biotics and has nothing to do with infections or bacteria. If people host a “brachos party” in New York City, the merit of that get-together can heal a sick person 5,700 miles away in Yerushalyim.

We all must ask ourselves if the brachos that we are making are just perfunctory, or are they full of life. Are we taking the easy-to-find opportunities to connect with HaShem or are we squandering them?

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפל



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