



The Medrash relates a conversation that transpired between the Malachim and Hakadosh Boruch Hu at the moment that Moshe Rabbeinu arrived Upstairs to receive the Torah.

באותה שעה בקשו מלאכי השרת לפגע במשה, עשה בו הקדוש ברוך הוא קלסטירין של פניו של משה דומה לאברהם, אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא אי אתם מתבישין הימנו לא זהו שירדתם אצלו ואכלתם בתוך ביתו, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה לא נתנה לך – At that moment, the Malachei Hashares sought to harm Moshe. Hakadosh Boruch Hu made the image of Moshe's face similar to Avraham. Hakadosh Boruch Hu said to them: "Are you not ashamed before him? Is he not that one to whom you descended and ate in his house?" Hakadosh Boruch Hu said to Moshe: "The Torah was given to you only in the merit of Avraham."

There are many explanations given for this Medrash. Simply understood, Hakadosh Boruch Hu was telling the Malachim that Avraham Avinu had hosted them, and therefore they owed him a debt of gratitude. Putting this into perspective for a moment, it emerges that the Malachim were expected to relinquish the Torah due to hakaras hatov. What an incredible insight into the extent of one's obligation in matters of gratitude.

Another well-known explanation is that Avraham served them meat and milk together. Since Basar B'chalav is forbidden, Hakadosh Boruch Hu showed them the face of Avraham as if to remind them of that meal, thereby disqualifying them from holding onto the Torah. The B'er Hataiv (end of O.C. 494) writes:

ושמעתי שאוכלים חלב ואח"כ בשר דלא כמו שעשו המלאכים אצל אברהם שאכלו בשר בחלב שבעבור זה נתנה התורה לישראל ודו"ק

The minhag on Shavuos is to eat dairy and afterward meat, unlike the Malachim who consumed them together. It was for this reason that the Torah was given to Klal Yisroel and not to the Malachim.

The Beis HaLevi takes this even further. Every Yom Tov carries an obligation of simcha, אין שמחה, אלא בבשר ויין, true simcha requires meat and wine. One may have thought that on Shavuos, after "flying high" through kabbolas haTorah, perhaps one should distance himself from physical pleasures altogether. Yet the gemara tells us that specifically regarding Shavuos, everyone agrees: בעינין נמי לכם, there must also be a physical component.

The Beis HaLevi explains that it was specifically through food that Klal Yisroel "won" the argument for the Torah. More specifically, through meat and milk together. Therefore, on Shavuos we eat dairy followed by meat to demonstrate that we are indeed the worthy recipients of the Torah, unlike the Malachim.

However, perhaps there is an even deeper understanding of the exchange between the Malachim and Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

The gemara in Bava Metzia (86b) states:

לעולם אל ישנה אדם מן המנהג שהרי משה עלה למרום ולא אכל לחם מלאכי השרת ירדו למטה ואכלו לחם, ואכלו סלקא דעתך אלא אימא נראה כמי שאכלו ושחו

A person should never deviate from the local custom. Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to Shomayim and did not eat, while the Malachim descended below and "ate." But did they actually eat? Rather, they merely appeared as though they ate and drank so as not to deviate from the local custom.

But if the Malachim never actually ate anything, then what hakaras hatov did they owe Avraham at all?

The Emek Yehoshua brilliantly explains this through a gemara in Pesachim. Rabba bar bar

Chana traveled from Eretz Yisroel to Bavel and ate from a part of the animal that was permissible in Eretz Yisroel but avoided in Bavel due to concerns of cheilev. The gemara asks: how could he do so? Do we not learn that one traveling from one place to another must observe the chumros of both places?

Abaye answers that this rule applies when traveling between places of equal standing, or from Bavel to Eretz Yisroel. But one who travels from Eretz Yisroel to Bavel is not bound by the chumros of Bavel, since Bavel is secondary to Eretz Yisroel.

The Emek Yehoshua explains with a simple mashal: when a person from a large city visits a village, he need not suddenly dress like a villager. But when the villager visits the large city, he must dress the part.

With this yesod, the conversation between the Malachim and Hakadosh Boruch Hu takes on an entirely different dimension.

The Malachim argued: why should the Torah be given to human beings down below? We are perfect spiritual beings who can preserve the Torah flawlessly. The Torah belongs in the Heavens.

To this, Hakadosh Boruch Hu responded from their own behavior. Why, when descending to Avraham's home, did they adopt the local custom and appear to eat? According to Abaye, such conduct is unnecessary when traveling from a higher place to a lower one. If so, why did the Malachim feel compelled to follow the minhag hamakom?

It must be that when they entered the home of Avraham Avinu and witnessed the greatness that Man can achieve in this world, they recognized that this world is not merely a lower realm. They saw that the potential of $\square\aleph$ down below can reach even higher than the world above. And therefore, they accepted upon themselves the minhag hamakom.

Furthermore, everything that transpires in the upper worlds is generated from below. Torah learned and mitzvos performed by Man create immeasurable hashpa'os throughout all the olamos. And chas v'shalom, the opposite is true as well.

Therefore, Hakadosh Boruch Hu made Moshe resemble Avraham Avinu. The face of Avraham was itself the answer to the Malachim's claim.

The seforim explain that the argument between Moshe and the Malachim centered around one question: where can the greatest kavod Shomayim emerge from?

The Malachim insisted that true perfection exists only in a world free of failure and temptation. But Moshe Rabbeinu argued that when a human being is surrounded by opportunities to sin, yet chooses the path of Torah, he elevates himself beyond the level of a Malach.

Just how high can a human being rise?

The gemara records that Moshe feared being consumed by the fiery breath of the Malachim. Hakadosh Boruch Hu therefore instructed him to grasp the kisei hakavod.

The seforim explain that Hakadosh Boruch Hu was showing Moshe that Man possesses the ability to reach all the way to the highest levels, even to the kisei hakavod itself.

And perhaps now we can understand an additional depth. The gemara tells us that teshuvah is so great that it reaches until the kisei hakavod.

The Malachim came with the claim that Man will fail, stumble, and destroy. To this came the response: it is true that Man can fall. But Man also possesses the ability to rise again. Not merely to recover, but to ascend all the way to the kisei hakavod itself.

That is the greatness of Mattan Torah. The Torah was not given to Malachim who cannot fall. It was given to Man, who falls, rises, struggles, chooses,

and through that very struggle can reach the *kisei hakavod* itself.

תנא משמיה דרבי מאיר: מפני מה נתנה תורה לישראל? מפני שהן עזין.

The Gemara (Maseches Beitzah 25b) considers different aspects of the character of Klal Yisroel. It brings the following *baraisa*: *It is taught in the name of Rabbi Meir: For what reason was the Torah given to Klal Yisroel? Because they are brazen.*

The *meforshim* all wonder why it is that because we have *עזות*/brazenness – a *middah* which is not typically regarded positively – did we merit receiving the Torah? Let us mention a few of the answers that are brought.

1) Rashi notes that Torah study weakens and humbles people, so they needed to start out with a tougher stance.

2) The Ben Yehoyada offers a couple of answers. He explains that the Gemara was actually asking: why did Hashem give the Torah directly to Klal Yisroel? After all, Moshe Rabbeinu had just spent forty days in Shomayim and was surely capable of giving over the *Aseres Hadibros* as well. However, due to the brazenness of Klal Yisroel, even after seeing all of the wonders and miracles, their *emunah* would not have been strong enough. It was only after hearing *אלקיך* directly from Hashem that they would be willing to believe and accept whatever Moshe would teach them.

This answer is fascinating because as a result of not accepting everything at face value, and literally questioning things, did they merit a direct revelation from Hashem. The truth is that when one genuinely pushes to understand Toras Hashem and does not just give in and accept things flatly, Hashem rewards the person and gives them a level

of understanding that would not have otherwise been available.

The Torah tells us that we need to toil in Torah. It is not enough to learn Torah passively. Torah learning requires *עמלות* – actual hard work. Reb Leibel Berenbaum (son of Rav Shmuel *zt"l*) once asked: if we put in hard work and then understand the Torah, why is it called a *chok*? Doesn't hard work beget good and clear results? Why should they still be considered vague and difficult to understand, as the word *chok* implies? Reb Leibel explained that the truth is that the *Malachim* were right in their claim of *מה לילוד אשה בינינו* – *what is a human being doing here in the upper realms?* Does a human being, born from physical parents, actually think that they can have a real connection with the Torah which comes from Above? And the answer is that Hashem made it as a *chok*! We don't really have the ability to connect to the Torah – but Hashem promised that if we toil in it, He will open the doors and allow us to connect to its deeper implications and meanings! That is the incredible *chok* of the Torah!

3) The Ben Yehoyada offers another answer (shown to me by R' D. Indich). The Gemara was indirectly addressing the following question: Why is it that the Torah was given to Klal Yisroel and not the *Avos*?

The Ben Yehoyada explains his answer with the following *mashal*: There was a city that was being threatened by a major mob, and it seemed that the only way to avoid the imminent danger was through heavy bribery. An emergency committee was formed, and the first stop that they made was at the home of the town's wealthy miser. He agreed that the situation was serious, and he gave a huge donation. But then he asked them the obvious question: if in the past he always turned

people away emptyhanded, then why would this newfound committee come to him first? They explained that if he would say yes to them, then there would no longer be any excuses for anyone else.

Similarly, if the *Avos* would have been offered the Torah, their acceptance would not have demonstrated anything out of the ordinary or inspiring; of course the holy *Avos* would accept a blueprint of getting even closer to Hashem! However, when the “brazen” Klal Yisroel accepted the Torah lock, stock and barrel – כגגית (excuse the pun), this proved that the Torah is essential and one cannot live without it, and that Klal Yisroel recognized that integral truth – unlike the rest of the nations of the world.

4) The Pnei Yehoshua approaches this question from a different angle. יהודא בן תימא אומר הוי עד – כנמר לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים – The Mishna in *Avos* teaches us that עזות can be a very good and necessary *midah*. It can be translated as “brazen” – or perhaps more accurately in our case, “bold.” When it comes to carrying out Hashem’s *ratzon*, one must be bold. The Pnei Yehoshua adds, “ומכ”ש” – “בליומוד התורה שלא הביישן למד – *Certainly, when it comes to learning the Torah, if one is bashful, he will never learn.* It is specifically the *middah* of עזות that makes them the perfect recipients of the Torah.

The Pnei Yehoshua then continues: מפני כך כפה – עליהם הקב"ה הר כגיגית – Why did Hashem need to force the Yidden by “holding the mountain over their heads like a barrel?” לפי שצפה הקב"ה שאף שתחילת קבלתה יהא באונס אעפ"כ יהא סופה ברצון כשיעמדו על עומק התורה והמצות וכל זה מפני שהן עזין – Hashem knew that even if at the onset, the acceptance was by force, due to the boldness and brazenness that Klal Yisroel applies while learning the Torah, they would reach its greatest depths.

This, in turn, would lead them to accept the Torah willfully. משא"כ באומות שאינן עזין לעמוד על אמיתות התורה והמצות אלא מקלי הדעת שאין מכירין ברצון ומש"ה לא כפה עליהם הר כגיגית דמה יועיל ומה יוסיף כיון שהכל – However, for the *goyim*, there would be an unwillingness to push hard. They would never plumb the depths of the Torah. So, what would be the point in forcing them to accept it if it will never be willfully accepted?

5) Perhaps we can add one more detail. The *velt* says as a joke: The days leading up to Pesach, we refrain from eating Matzah so that we shall be able to eat it on Pesach night with a great appetite; so too, some seem to adopt this practice leading up to Shavuos (maybe even קודם החג ל" יום – not to learn Torah so that we can accept the Torah with a great excitement and yearning for its study. Well, all jokes aside – what is in fact the difference? With food, there is a limit how much one can eat, and the moment one overeats, the food becomes repulsive to him. But with the Torah, the more one learns – the more *geshmak* it becomes, causing the appetite to increase.

A hallmark of the *chutzpah* of עזות is not knowing when to stop. Hashem chose us for His Torah because of our עזות. Knowing that we would keep on learning more and more was an additional reason for Hashem to give it to us. Torah is the gift that keeps on giving, and who better to give it to than to those that are willing to keep on pursuing its study – at any hour, calendar date, or point in life!

~~~~~

**רבי משרשיא בשם רבי אידי. בכל-הקרבנות כתוב חטא ובעצרת אין כתוב חטא. אמר להן הקדוש ברוך הוא. מכיון שקיבלתם עליכם עול תורה מעלה אני עליכם כאילו לא חטאתם מימיכם**

Rabi Mesharshia said in the name of Rabi Idi: For all sacrifices (of each Yom Tov) it is written חטח "sin," but on Shavuos it is not written חטח "sin." Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to them, since you accepted the yoke of the Torah on you – I consider it as if you never sinned. (Yerushalmi Rosh Hashana 4:8)

Many have asked the obvious question here: Is it so simple to achieve forgiveness of our *aveiros* just by showing up to shul when the *Aseres Hadibros* are being read? Even if you make it conditional upon actually being awake while the *baal korei* reads the words, it still seems far too simple.

Rav Mordche Druk *zt"l* related the following conversation that occurred at a *bris*. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* and Rav Chatzkel Levenstein *zt"l* were discussing with each other the idea which is found in the *seforim* that one who attends a *bris* receives forgiveness for all of his *aveiros*. The same question was brought up: the reward of something as easy as attending a *bris* is so big that all of the person's sins simply evaporate into thin air? Rav Shlomo Zalman answered that it cannot be taken literally. He suggested that because *aveiros* carry a terrible stench, Eliyahu Malach Habris would not be able to handle such a foul odor – so the *aveiros* are removed temporarily, but they come right back afterwards. Rav Chatzkel, however, disagreed. If it says that the *aveiros* disappear, then that is precisely what happens.

Rav Druk later asked Rav Shlomo Zalman about this, to which he replied that even by Yom Kippur, unless one performs *teshuvah*, no *aveiros* are waived. As with Yom Kippur, a *bris* comes with conditions. If one attends a *bris* because he knows he will get some good bagels and lox, he hasn't really attended a *bris*. You know where he is at that moment? " הוא לא נמצא " – He is not at the *bris*, he

is in the plate of food," Rav Shlomo Zalman quipped. But if he stops and thinks about the *bris* that we have between us and Hakadosh Baruch Hu and what it obligates us regarding our relationship with Him – if he thinks about the *mesiras nefesh* of the parents, how they are willing to give their newborn baby as a *korban* to Hashem – then, at that moment, he is definitely at the *bris*.

Rav Druk explained that the exact same thing can be said about Shavuos. If during the Yom Tov, in our minds we are busy with Kabbalas Hatorah, accepting it and making it a true priority in our lives, then we can indeed receive the high level of forgiveness that the Yerushalmi mentions. But if the entire Yom Tov is all about the cheesecake and standing rib roast (because after all, we must achieve the *לכם*), can it really be said about us that we attended Kabbalas Hatorah? הוא לא נמצא בקבלת התורה, – This person is not at Kabbalas Hatorah, but rather he is a foodie that is attending Kosherfest!

The rule is that a person's thoughts determine where he truly is. Throughout Yom Kippur, just like a *Malach*, we recite the words *ברוך שם כבוד* out loud. However, on Motzaei Yom Kippur, after acting like an angel and fasting for 25 hours, suddenly the words are once again recited quietly. The reason is that while it is true that we are acting like an angel at that moment – as soon as the chazzan says *borchu*, our thoughts are already on what we are breaking the fast on. At that moment, the lofty state ceases to exist.

Let us take these special days of Yom Tov and make the most of them by truly contemplating what is spiritually taking place, thereby elevating ourselves with something that will last a lot longer than the calories.

\*\*\*\*\*

**The Mishna in Avos** (6:4) teaches us, כָּהֵיא הִיא דְרָכָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה, פֶּת בְּמִלַּח תֹּאכֵל וּיְמִים בְּמִשׁוֹרָה תִּשְׁתֶּה וְעַל הָאָרֶץ תִּישָׁן וְחַיִּי צַעַר תַּחֲיֶה וּבִתּוֹרָה אֲתָה עֹמֵל, אִם אֲתָה עֹשֶׂה כֵן, (תְּהִלִּים קַכח) אֲשֶׁרִיךְ וְטוֹב לָךְ. אֲשֶׁרִיךְ – *This is the way of the Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, live a life of deprivation – but toil in Torah! If you do this, ‘You are praiseworthy, and all is well with you.’ ‘You are praiseworthy’ – in this world; ‘and all is well with you’ – in the World to Come.*

The Maharal explains that this Mishna is a guide for every person whilst experiencing difficult times. Many people tend to throw in the towel and just give up. The way to succeed in Torah is by persevering and pushing forward even during the hard times. When one does so, not only will he make it past that particular period, but even more than that – this will be a key to great future success. אִם אֲתָה עֹשֶׂה כֵן – if you will push yourself, even if all you have is bread and salt with minimal water, אֲשֶׁרִיךְ וְטוֹב לָךְ – you are praiseworthy, and it will be good for you.

The Gemara in Maseches Nedarim tells the story of Eliyahu Hanavi’s visit to Rabi Akiva and Rochel in their hut when they had absolutely nothing to live on. Eliyahu, dressed as a poor person, was requesting straw for his wife that had just given birth. After this encounter, Rabi Akiva went on to learn Torah for the next 24 years. The Ran explains that Eliyahu visited them to give them *chizuk* and console them in their situation. The obvious question is that if he wanted to help them out, he should have dropped off a few dollars and taken care of their basic necessities. *Chizuk* is nice, but does it pay the bills?

Another question is that in response to this visit, Rabi Akiva went on to learn Torah. What

connection did this visit have to learning Torah? The answer, of course, is as we have been saying. If Eliyahu would have given them money, they would have been in better shape; they would now have heat, food and their other basic necessities. However, he would have never become the great Rabi Akiva. Instead, he would have remained Akiva the shepherd – a fine Jew that would not even make it to the footnotes of the history books. The *chizuk* that Rabi Akiva and Rochel received from Eliyahu’s visit was that pain and suffering is not something that we request – but when it is present, we accept it fully. By doing so, we don’t just survive. No! It is much more than that; we actually thrive. Now that they fully accepted their situation, Rabi Akiva was able to apply himself in ways that were not options to him prior to that moment. It was then and there that he decided upon a life of Torah, and as they say, “the rest is history.”

On Shavuos we read the well-known story of Rus. The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Rus, 596) asks וּמָה עֵינֵי רוּת אֲצֵל עֲצַרְתְּ שֶׁנִּקְרְאָת בְּעֲצַרְתְּ בְּזִמְנָא מִתַּן תּוֹרָה, לְלַמְדָּךְ שֶׁלֹּא נִתְּנָה תּוֹרָה אֲלֵא עַל יְדֵי יִסּוּרֵינִי וְעוֹנֵי – *What connection does Rus have to Shavuos that we read her story on the day of Matan Torah? It comes to teach us that Torah can only be acquired through hard work and poverty.* The story of Megillas Rus begins with one of the wealthiest families in Klal Yisroel, and their subsequent nosedive-turn in which things spiraled completely out of their control. Rus herself went from a family of royalty to becoming completely destitute. But Rus never gave up, pushing further and digging deeper. From this story of perseverance in the face of total destruction came about Rus – the mother of royalty, the grandmother of Dovid HaMelech.

Rus teaches us to view difficult times as a ticket to success. If we persevere, אֲשֶׁרִיךְ וְטוֹב לָךְ – the payoff will be immeasurable. In this manner, we

can begin to look at things around us as they are unfolding with a completely different approach. Our attitudes will change for the better. We will now fully accept everything as a real *chesed* from above. The greatest *chesed* one can do for another person is to offer them an opportunity. We must realize that Hashem is offering us opportunities left and right. והבוטח בה' חסד יסובבנו – If we trust in Hashem, we begin to look at everything surrounding us as a *chesed*. The only question is: will we survive or will we thrive?

.....

**בחדש השלישי לצאת בני ישראל מארץ מצרים ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני (פרשת יתרו- יט:א)**

*"In the third month from leaving Mitzrayim, on this day, they arrived at Midbar Sinai."*

Back in Mitzrayim, Moshe Rabbeinu was already told that in order for the Bnei Yisroel to be redeemed, there was a condition that had to be met. Hashem told Moshe (Shemos 3:12) that the purpose of leaving was to be able to arrive at Har Sinai and serve Hashem there (with the acceptance of the Torah).

Finally, in the third month, was the moment that everyone was waiting for. There was literally a great *chasunah* taking place; Hashem would now take us as His *kallah*. The Baal Haturim points out that this could only take place in the third month, and not prior to that, because our status in Mitzrayim was like that of a captive, and the *halachah* states that before marrying a captive one must wait three months. There is also a comment from Rashi (19:17) that we must mention here: Hashem's method of greeting His people was different than a monarch that only comes after the people have arrived; Hashem arrived at Sinai before we did. Hashem "went

out" to greet Klal Yisroel like a *chosson* that goes out to greet his *kallah*.

The Gemara in Maseches Yevamos (63a) gives some advice for *shidduchim*. At times, a person may feel that perhaps the *shidduch* that is being entertained is beneath him. The Gemara suggests נחות דרגא ונסיב איתתא – sometimes a person must step down from the higher step to get married. The *remez* for this, says the Taamei HaMinhagim, can be found in the *trop* on the words וירד ה'. Hashem "came down" to take Klal Yisroel as His *kallah*. The *trop* on these two words is *darga* and *sevir*, which literally translates as "break the step." Obviously, there is no one out there that could ever match up to be a *kallah* for Hashem, and yet Hashem "lowered" Himself to take Klal Yisroel.

As we can imagine, when a *shidduch* does not seem to be first rate according to one of the sides, they may drag their feet to an extent, and perhaps proceed with a lack of excitement. However, let us take a look at how the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh assesses Hashem's excitement level. (It should be pointed out that were it not for the Ohr Hachaim writing this, we would not have a right to say it.)

The *pasuk* tells us בחדש השלישי לצאת בני ישראל מארץ מצרים ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני – *In the third month from leaving Mitzrayim, on this day, they arrived at Midbar Sinai*. The next *pasuk* says: ויסעו מרפידים ויבאו מדבר סיני – *They journeyed from Refidim and arrived at Midbar Sinai*. The Ohr Hachaim asks: why does the *pasuk* repeat this information? If anything, the second *pasuk* should have come before the first one?

Before we bring the Ohr Hachaim's comments, let's begin with a *mashal*: A family is in the airport, waiting for the arrival of their father and husband, who has been away for an extended period. As the door at Arrivals keeps on opening, they are all craning their necks, hoping that the

next person will be him. "Is he here yet?" "Look ahead over there, maybe you see him," and so on. Finally, from the distance, he is spotted. Now the yelling begins. "He's here, he's here, Tatty is here!" A few moments later, when he is actually with them, the family is finally reunited.

The Ohr Hachaim explains that אהבה מקלקלת את השורה – *Love causes the line to be spoiled*. True, the order in the *pesukim* was off, but out of Hashem's great love for Klal Yisroel the rules were broken. It was as if, *k'viyachol*, Hashem was proclaiming with emotion that we had arrived even before we actually got there. Only in the next *pasuk* does the Torah say that we still had to travel from Refidim until we arrived.

Why was this day so anticipated by Hashem? The world had been held in abeyance for 26 generations since Creation – plus an additional 974 generations before the world was created – for a total of 1000 generations awaiting the great moment of Matan Torah. "Here it is – the moment the world has been waiting for has finally arrived." To further quote the stunning words of the Ohr Hachaim: הגיע חשוק ונחשק לחושק וחשק ושמחו שמים וארץ כי זה הוא תכלית הבריאה ותקותה – *The desired one arrived for the One who is waiting and desires its arrival, and the heaven and earth rejoice, for this is the very purpose of creation*.

The Torah displays tremendous emotion and excitement upon taking us as its recipient; shouldn't we reciprocate and show our great love in return? אהבה מקלקלת את השורה – when there is true love, there are no boundaries and no rules! Let us rejoice in receiving the Torah and always mirror Hashem's love.

~~~~~

One of the customs of the Yom Tov of Shavuot is to read Megillas Rus. In the second *perek*, we read that out of great deference to her mother-in-law, Rus chose to pick up the left behind gleanings from the field. Rus was unknown, and therefore would not suffer the same embarrassment as the well-known Naomi.

Throughout the Megillah, we learn about many different aspects of *Siyata Dishmaya* that came into play. We note that the very first field that Rus entered was actually the property of a relative. Furthermore, against normal practice, Boaz, the owner of the field, decided to pay a visit. This of course sets up the famous meeting between Rus and Boaz, which would ultimately set the course of history. As we learn in the conclusion of the Megillah, from this union would come Dovid HaMelech, and ultimately Moshiach.

There is a beautiful *limud* that is pointed out by the Malbim in these *pesukim* of the second *perek* which I feel can really add a lot to our daily lives. The *pasuk* says "והנה – *and behold*." The Malbim comments that throughout the Torah, this word is used only when a novelty is occurring. Of course, in our case, it was the visit of Boaz to the field at that moment. But why, asks the Malbim, did Boaz choose to visit at that moment?

The Gemara in Maseches Brachos (63) tells us that on that very day, Boaz and his Beis Din enacted that when greeting a fellow Jew, one should use the name of Hashem. Their reasoning was because in those days, the society was completely corrupt. Sure, the people *davened* three times a day, and they most probably even went to the *mikvah* beforehand as well. However, it seemed that there was no smooth transition from the *Beis Haknesses* to the workplace. Daily life was devoid of the Ribono shel Olam. The Sanhedrin concluded that if they could somehow bring Hashem into the

workplace as well, the people's conduct would surely change for the better. The saying of "*business is business and Moses is Moses*" would no longer find any meaning.

At that moment, upon greeting the harvesters, Boaz called out "*Hashem imachem*," to which they replied, "*Yivarechecha Hashem*." This was indeed a novelty because until this point, it was considered to be uttering Hashem's name in vain. But now this would change. Today as well, we have the custom of greeting others with the words "Shalom Aleichem." It is well known that one of the names of Hashem is Shalom. This is in keeping with the custom of greeting with Hashem's name on our lips, to bring Hashem into our daily lives. By greeting them in this manner in a workplace setting, Boaz was reminding them that Hashem is there as well. (*Hashem imachem* literally means that Hashem should be with you, i.e. even here in workplace.)

A few *pesukim* later, we find that it was the time to eat. Boaz joined everyone for the meal. The Malbim wonders if it was the norm for a CEO to eat in the cafeteria of the low-level workers. Surely, Boaz could have eaten in privacy, or at home, yet he seemed to specifically want to eat with them at that time. What prompted him to do this?

The Gemara teaches us (ibid. 16) the *halachah* that a worker is exempt from reciting the entire Birchas Hamazon; he is only required to say two brachos. The reason for this is because the 'time' does not belong to the employee. However, the exception to this rule is if the employer dines with the employee. By joining him, it is as if he is giving express consent for the employee to say the entire *bentching*.

The Malbim suggests that the reason Boaz ate with the workers was specifically so that they would be obligated to recite the entire *bentching*. It seems that the Malbim is basing this on his

previous comments. Since Boaz had just introduced the concept of bringing Hashem into the workplace, he now wanted to follow through and have them make *brachos*, thereby creating a constant awareness of Hashem.

Based on our discussion, I believe we can apply this to the famous words of Rav Yosef in מסכת פסחים (סח,ב) "רב יוסף, ביומא דעצרתא, אמר, 'עבדי לי עגלא תלתא'; אמר, 'אי לא האי יומא דקא גרים, כמה יוסף איכא בשוקא!'" - Rav Yosef commented that "if not for *that day (shavuos)*, many Yosefs would be wandering the streets!" Rav Yosef is attributing his success in life to the Yom Tov of Shavuos. He isn't merely "some guy named Joe," but the great Rav Yosef. How did he elevate himself to this exalted level? The Yom Tov of Shavuos taught him to live every moment with the Eibishter.

The difference between Am Yisrael and the rest of the world is that we have the Torah. We are the *Am Hanivchar*. But what good is a Torah that remains in the Beis Medrash? The purpose of the Torah is to perfect us, to mold us into different people set aside from all the other nations. We are meant to be distinctly unique compared to the others that roam the streets. But what sets us apart? The answer is what the Beis Din of Boaz enacted on that day. They taught us that Hashem needs to be constantly on our lips – a part of our daily lives.

We read Megillas Rus on the same day that we receive the Torah to remind us to bring the Torah and its life lessons to the streets. If not for that day, we would be no different than the rest of the inhabitants of this world. This Yom Tov, let us be *zoche* to accept the Torah into our lives and our routines. After all, this is what makes us different!

We previously mentioned the Gemara about Rav Yosef on Shavuos. I would like to share a few more interpretations on this passage:

I heard from Rav Rephoel Shmuelevitz (Toronto) in the name of Rav Ruderman *zt"l* a similar idea which fits in beautifully with the words of the Gemara. **אי לאו האי יומא דקא גרים**, **כמה יוסף איכא בשוקא** – If not for the day that the Torah was given, there would be many Yosefs in the street – meaning that *“I myself would be a fragmented person.”* In business I might act one way, and at shul another. At home I behave one way, perhaps with all the *chumros* – but on vacation, the *yiras shomayim* suddenly checks out as well. Rav Yosef looked at the Torah and saw in it direction for every-day life in every individual circumstance. If I am on vacation, I will act consistent with what the Torah deems appropriate for vacation. For business, there is a whole volume in Shulchan Aruch that guides me as well. As the Brisker Rav would say, *“Today I did a tremendous mitzvah: I first put on my right shoe and then my left. Following that, I tied my left and then my right.”* This is living a daily life according to the Torah, and this is what separates those that keep the Torah from those that do not.

Rav Yosef Elefant *shlit"a* shared an additional translation. Upon being challenged by the angels that a human being should not be capable of accepting the Torah which comes from on-high (מה לילוד אשה בינינו), Moshe Rabbeinu was told **אחוז בכסאי** – *“Grab onto My Kisei Hakavod.”* But how does this help Moshe respond to the challenge? Rav Elefant explained that one who keeps the Torah and uses it as his guide to life is automatically elevated because it teaches the person to strive for greatness in every scenario. If I help another person, it is not just me helping them because it's a good thing to do. There is a *mitzvah* attached to my actions, so I will perform

it now on a more elevated level. The Torah is about living a life of higher purpose. When I live my life in this manner, I become so elevated that I am now reaching all the way up to the *Kisei Hakavod*. Accordingly, Rav Yosef was saying that the Torah elevated him, so he was no longer the average person on the street.

I heard from Rav Chaim Mendel Brodsky *shlit"a* and from Rav Nissan Kaplan *shlit"a* the same idea: The Gemara tells us about this same Rav Yosef that he eventually developed a condition that caused him to forget a great deal of his Torah. One may ask that if Torah was the only thing that separated him from the rest of the world, then at that point, he was almost like another fellow in the street. However, we find that when the second set of *luchos* were given, the broken set was taken and placed inside the *aron* – **שברי לחות מונחים בארון** – This teaches us that a *Talmid Chacham* that is unwell and can no longer recall his Torah learning is still accorded the same respect. So now Rav Yosef was still able to hold his head up high.

ישלם ה' פעלך ותהי משכרתך שלמה מעם ה' אלקי ישראל אשר באת לחסות תחת כנפיו (ב:יב)

“May Hashem repay you for what you have done, and may your payment be complete from Hashem, under whose wings you have come to take shelter” (2:12)

In Megillas Rus, we read about Rus' encounter with Boaz. Boaz relates that he heard about her great deeds – how she treated her mother-in-law after the death of her husband, and came to an unknown land to join the Jewish People. Boaz proclaimed, *“May Hashem repay you for what you have done, and may your payment be complete*

from Hashem, under whose wings you have come to take shelter.”

The Malbim wonders about the double language of our *pasuk*. Surely, it refers to two actions: the kindness Rus showed to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and the fact that she joined Am Yisroel. But the language of the *pasuk* seems to tell us even more.

The *pasuk* uses two different words to describe Rus' work: *משכרתך* and *פעלך*. The Malbim explains that there is a difference between someone that works as a *po'el* and one who works as a *s'chir*. A *po'el* gets a job, for instance, to sew a garment. Upon successful completion of his task, he is paid. If he accidentally sews the wrong measurements, there is no pay day; his pay is totally based on his work. On the other hand, a *s'chir* will get paid as a hired hand; if his contract is for three years, whether he sews the correct measurements or not, he will still get paid.

Boaz tells Rus: you've come to join Klal Yisroel. Aside for all the benefits of being one of Hashem's children, there is an additional, rather significant benefit: the way a Yid gets paid. Of course, there is *s'char* for the good deeds of a *goy* as well; however, that is only on the level of a *po'el*. Upon successful completion, Hashem gives them their reward. If they fail to complete what they were attempting to accomplish, then they walk out with nothing. A Yid, on the other hand, gets paid as a *s'chir*. Even if we don't end up completing the job, Hashem still pays. *אנו עמלים והם עמלים* – *We toil and they toil*, *אנו עמלים ושכר ומקבלים שכר והם עמלים ואינם מקבלים שכר* – *we toil and receive our payment, but they toil and do not receive their payment*. A Yid gets paid for effort alone, even without getting the job done – unlike the *goy* who receives his reward based on the results. Now we understand what Boaz was saying: *ה' פעלך* – whatever you have

successfully completed whilst still a *goy*, i.e. your kindness to your mother-in-law, you shall get paid for. But from here on, *ותיה משכרתך שלמה* – you shall receive full payment even if you haven't completed the job, because *אשר באת* – you have joined the Jewish people, so now you are a different type of worker.

Regarding the *pasuk* in Parshas Yayakhel that states *ויביאו את המשכן* – that they brought the *Mishkan* to Moshe, the Midrash relates the following story: *When Rav Avahu died, he asked to be shown his portion in the World to Come. Upon seeing it, he exclaimed: "All this for Avahu? I thought that I was toiling in vain, and now I see that I have a great portion in the World to Come."*

What connection does this story have to the *Mishkan* and why was Rav Avahu surprised? Surely, after spending his days and nights learning Torah and serving Hashem throughout his entire lifetime, he would expect a decent portion; yet, here he seems astonished!

The answer is the idea we just quoted from the Malbim. Rav Avahu knew that he had a great portion reserved for him, but when he looked at it, he felt it was really much greater than what he had earned. He noticed that he was being credited as well for all those times that he tried to learn yet remained unsuccessful in coming to an understanding of what the Torah was telling him. Until now, he had assumed that all that toil was for naught. But now on his final day, he rejoiced, because he saw that he was being rewarded for all the efforts that he put in.

When Klal Yisroel tried building the *Mishkan*, the walls kept toppling. Finally, they decided to bring the walls to Moshe. Yet, the *pasuk* writes that they brought the *Mishkan* – teaching us that they received the credit as if they had actually built it.

The job of a Yid is “*tzu tohn, nisht tzu oif tohn*” (*to do, but not necessarily to accomplish*). It’s nice to have a sense of accomplishment, but that is not our job. We aren’t judged based on that. Hashem looks at our *ameilus*/toil and efforts. This was the great gain that Boaz was implying to Rus.

Megillas Rus was written by Shmuel HaNavi. The Midrash questions what the purpose of this Megillah is, as it has no halachic ramifications. Another question that we should explore is why this story is read specifically on Shavuos.

(The following explanation is based on the Brisker Rav)

The Gemara in Yevamos (76b-77a) relates that Dovid volunteered to kill Golias. Shaul HaMelech saw how the armor that was given to Dovid for this occasion fit him perfectly, despite Dovid standing much shorter than Shaul. He became very nervous, thinking that perhaps this is sign that in the future Dovid will take the throne. So he asked his trusted general Avner ben Ner, “Who is this lad?” Avner responded that he did not know. The Gemara asks that it was well known who Dovid was; after all, he was Shaul’s arms bearer. It was also well known that he was the son of Yishai, who was an illustrious individual. Rather, Shaul was asking if Dovid’s lineage (of *shevet* Yehuda) stemmed from Peretz or from Zerach. If he was indeed from Peretz, than he was fit to be a future king.

In the middle of this conversation, Doeg Ha’Adomi weighed in and said that before worrying whether or not Dovid was worthy of royalty, they should examine whether he was even worthy of being a part of Klal Yisroel, as he was a grandson of Rus the Moabite, and the descendants of Moav were forbidden from joining the Jewish people. Avner quickly responded that the *halachah* teaches that this law only applies to the men, and not the women.

The arguing went back and forth with various proofs, until Avner was stumped. Shaul told them to take the question to the Beis Medrash. Once again, they asked if the law was applicable to women as well. In the Beis Medrash, they responded that it was only said for the men – so Doeg again brought his various proofs, and no one was able to refute him. With no choice, they were ready to denounce Dovid and his entire lineage. Suddenly, Amasa ben Yeser stood up with his sword and said: “Whoever does not listen to this *halachah* will be pierced with this sword: We have a tradition from Shmuel HaNavi that *Moavi velo Moavis*; the law only applies to men.” Although there were questions, the matter was finally laid to rest.

Let us now turn to the earlier story of Rus. Ploni Almoni was eligible to marry Rus, but he turned her down because he was worried that perhaps there would be negative halachic ramifications on their future children. He was concerned about Doeg’s future claims. Understanding this concern, Boaz gathered a Beis Din of ten scholars and reminded them that the *halachah* allows a Moavis to join Klal Yisroel, and therefore this would be a permissible marriage. Once again, we find the same discussion if the prohibition is applicable to a woman or not.

But why was it that because of a tradition from Shmuel, the case was closed? Weren’t there good questions proving otherwise? The answer is that there are different ways to arrive at conclusions in order to establish *halachah*. Sometimes, there can be a debate that goes back and forth, and the strongest *svara* (logic) will win, until the next even stronger *svara* refutes the previous one. But then there is something that is even more powerful than the strongest *svara*: the *mesorah* (tradition) of Torah She’baal Peh (the Oral Law). This is based on *Halachah leMoshe MiSinai* and it was passed down to us.

When Avner told Doeg that the *halachah* was *Moavi velo Moavis*, Doeg had no problem trying to refute it. This was precisely what Ploni Almoni was concerned would happen. Today it is fine, but tomorrow there may be a new argument. Boaz, on the other hand, was never concerned by this thought process, because he knew that this *halachah* was already determined by the *mesorah*; no logic could possibly refute it.

Now things are starting to add up. Shmuel HaNavi was the one that appointed Dovid as the new king. To avoid any lineage questions, he wrote Megillas Rus, showing that Boaz himself followed this *psak*. How did Shmuel know it was right? He heard it from his Rebbe, who heard it from his – all the way back to Moshe.

Now we can understand why this is read on Shavuos. It is on this day that we received Torah She'bichsav *and* Torah She'baal Peh. Were it not for the latter, we would not know how to fulfill many of the *mitzvos* delineated in the former. The Yom Tov of Shavuos is a celebration of the receiving of both. What better book is there to read to prove the point that we need both, and that we cannot exist without Torah She'baal Peh, than Megillas Rus? Without it, we could question the legitimacy of the greatest king in the history of Klal Yisroel. Without it, Dovid is gone, along with our beloved and cherished Tehillim. But with Torah She'baal Peh, we open the Gemara and we see that *Moavi velo Moavis*, and Dovid's lineage is cleared of all confusion and doubt.

The Vilna Gaon writes on the verse in Tehillim 119: שרים רדפוני חנם ומדברין פחד לבי שש אנכי על- אמרתך כמוצא שלל רב – *sarim* refers to princes, i.e. Shaul and Doeg, who were "chasing after me," *umidvorcha* – and from your words, i.e. Torah She'bichsav, I was scared. But I can rejoice *al imrosecha* – because of Torah She'baal Peh, like one who finds a great treasure. Dovid

Hamelech is attributing his entire right to the throne to Torah She'baal Peh.

It is interesting that the only Yom Tov that the Torah does not say an exact date for is Shavuos. We are told to count forty nine days from "the day after Shabbos," and that day is the Yom Tov. Sunday is the day after Shabbos, so this should technically mean that even if Pesach begins on a Sunday, we would not start counting the forty-nine days for another week. In fact, the Sadducees counted this way. However, as a result of Torah She'baal Peh, we know that Yom Tov can also be referred to as Shabbos. Therefore, we start our count the day after the first day of Pesach. Accordingly, the source of when to actually observe the Yom Tov is only known to us through Torah She'baal Peh.

At this auspicious moment of Kabbalas HaTorah, let us strengthen ourselves to accept more Torah Learning in our daily schedules, especially Torah She'baal Peh. There is no greater *mitzvah* than *Talmud Torah*; each and every word that we learn or hear is another *mitzvah*. I once calculated that a person can say 150 words in a minute, and 9000 words in an hour. This means that one can accrue 9000 *mitzvos* from just one hour of learning Torah. Whereas if a person spends an hour visiting the sick, he walks away with just one *mitzvah*. *V'talmud Torah k'neged kulam!*

Good Yom Tov! מרדכי אפפניל