

Inspired Torah
perspectives
for our wondrous
generation

Eilecha

weekly



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וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְהֵייתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים כִּי־לִי כָל־הָאָרֶץ:

MEKOR

SHEMOS 19:5

And now, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My most treasured possession among all the peoples, for the earth is Mine.

MEANING

MIZRACHI, RABBEINU BACHYA SEFORNO

If Am Yisrael will accept the Torah - despite its initial difficulty - they will be Hashem's people; not dependent on any ministering angel like the other nations are, but rather upon Hashem alone. Even though Hashem cares about the entire world and all human beings are precious to Hashem (and this is certainly true of the *Chasidei Umos Ha'Olam*), Hashem has a special connection to am Yisrael.

MESSAGE

BASED ON A TEACHING FROM RAV MOSHE OF KOBRIN ZY" A

וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוּעַ: If each Jew shall take the time to be present (וְעַתָּה) and focus, in the process of individualistic spiritual striving (שָׁמוּעַ), to the inner dimension of the Torah - **תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי** - finding a spirit of yearning, passion, connection, and feeling within the halachic framework of our communal (תִּשְׁמָעוּ) and behavioral engagement with Yiddishkeit, **אֶת־בְּרִיתִי**, **וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי**, we will then manifest our unique message to the nations of the world: a message of *integration*, the ability to capture the greatest spiritual ecstasy in the vessels of day-to-day living. **כִּי־לִי כָל־הָאָרֶץ**, we will then develop a perspective that will enable us to recognize and demonstrate the way in which the mundanity of earthliness is saturated with the Presence of Hashem, and that everything we encounter contains a flame of spiritual essence that flickers within.

THE SOURCE OF JOY

One of the revolutionary truths revealed by the Chassidic masters was the notion that with the proper intention, all facets of the human experience can be elevated to the spiritual realm and consecrated as holy service. In his foundational code of Chassidic thought, sefer *HaTanya*, the first Rebbe of Chabad teaches that at a time when something is troubling us and we are overcome with sadness, it is good to channel this energy into broken-heartedness over our distance from Hashem. In his brilliant masterpiece, *Likutei Moharan*, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov makes a similar point regarding moments of great joy.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that there are varying levels of joy operating at a given celebration. Take a wedding, for example: While the guests are enjoying the wedding ambiance, partaking in the food and appreciating the music, the joy experienced by the parents of the bride and groom greatly transcends these minor delights. They are in a position to take joy in *the wedding itself*; a joy that reaches far beyond the tasty food and pleasant music that enhances the celebration. Usually, those experiencing a broader level of joy do not focus at all on the smaller details. The *baalei simcha* are typically far too preoccupied with the wedding itself to stand in line for sesame chicken at the *shmorg*. Still, the tzaddik teaches that there is an even greater level of joy. When one is able to connect to the Source of all joy, the place where the joy of the entire world merges as one, a person is able to rejoice in **all** levels of the celebration at the same time. Using the joy he feels as a ladder to a realm beyond, the Jew can rise above the lower levels of joy (food and drink at a wedding, etc.), pass even the higher

levels of rejoicing (parents' joy over the marriage of their children), and reach the very essence of joy, the Master of the world from Whom all joy derives. When this is accomplished, even joy over mundanities becomes a spiritual experience; our emotions become a medium for an encounter with our Father in heaven, the Source of all emotion. Aware of the great "all" of the joy that surrounds him, the Jew is able to perceive how this mighty "all" of ultimate ecstasy is reflected in even the most minute details of the celebration. Every enjoyment, both great and small, points him toward the transcendent Source of all joy, the Master of the world.

Rebbe Nachman sees this idea hinted to in a verse from this week's parsha: וַיִּחַד יִתְרוֹ עַל כָּל־הַטּוֹבָה – "And Yisro rejoiced over all of the good". The tzaddik teaches that the word "וַיִּחַד", which means "to rejoice", also connotes "אחדות", unity. The *pasuk* can be read in the following way: "וַיִּחַד יִתְרוֹ": Yisro connected to the **Source** of joy, Hashem's Presence, the place where all joys are bound as one. "עַל כָּל־הַטּוֹבָה": And in so doing, he was able to experience **all** of the goodness at the very same time. Using his joy as a portal to the Source of all joy, Yisro was able to find that Source reflected on all levels of his celebration.

**BINDING EACH JOY TO ITS SOURCE IN THE GREAT
"ALL" OF REJOICING - THE MASTER OF THE WORLD -
A JEW IS ABLE TO RELISH EVERY FACET OF THE
CELEBRATION AS ONE.**

- Rebbe Nachman of Breslov zy" a

אמר רבי אלעזר: בשעה שהקדימו ישראל ל'נעשה' ל'נשמע' יצתה בת קול ואמרה להן: מי גלה לבני רז זה שמלאכי השרת משתמשין בו?
 The Gemara in Shabbos 88a says: When Bnei Yisrael (in *Parshas Mishpatim*) first said נעשה before they said נשמע, a heavenly voice emerged and said to them: 'Who revealed to my children this secret that **the ministering angels use?**'

Many are familiar with the praise Bnei Yisrael deserved for their reflex-like allegiance to Hashem, by first exclaiming that they would perform all that was written in the Torah, and then saying they would listen to the mandates contained in the Torah.

The *Me'or Einayim zy"א* teaches a deep lesson about Bnei Yisrael's choice of words, as he distinguishes נעשה from נשמע:

 נעשה STEP 1 Hard work in order to increase understanding/appreciation	STEP 2 נשמע Enjoyment that results from gaining understanding/appreciation
<p style="text-align: center;">עולם הבא</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"מתחלה צריך להטריח עצמו בעבודה שהיא התעוררות ותשוקה ש'לו וזה נקרא עולם הבא רצה לומר כי הוא בא תמיד בשעת עבודה"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">עולם הבינה / עולם התענוג</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"וכשמדבר הדבורים בחדוה ובהתלהבות באהבה ויראה בא לו התענוג אחר כך"</p>
<p>'<i>Olam Haba</i>' referred to here is not the familiar reference to the 'World to Come / Days of Mashiach'. Here, the <i>Me'or Einayim</i> is describing a world that a person creates and which always comes into existence through exerting one's self engaging in <i>avodah</i>.</p> <p>This requires meaningful investment, even when the <i>avodah</i> doesn't result in palpable enjoyment for long periods of time.</p> <p>The fact that enjoyment doesn't occur immediately differentiates this quest from other pleasure-seeking pursuits and elevates it to the lofty status of '<i>avodah</i>'.</p>	<p>שמיעה / real listening only occurs when we have understanding and enthusiasm for what we're hearing.</p> <p>True enjoyment of serving Hashem can only be experienced after investing time, effort, emotion, etc.</p> <p>The way to appreciate the infinite gifts of a G-dly neshama, Torah, mitzvos, Shabbos, etc. is to delve deeply into their respective inner meanings, how they provide commentary for who we are, their hidden powers, and their intended uses.</p> <p>Having 'studied the manuals', we can then effectively delight in the brilliant functionality of the 'appliances'.</p>

The significance of Bnei Yisrael first opting to say נעשה now becomes clear:

They demonstrated their **willingness to initially dedicate the exertion needed** to fully appreciate Hashem's Torah and a life of mitzvos, and be **patient** for the pleasures that would follow only *after* gaining a meaningful understanding of the Torah.

The Gemara, therefore, labels Bnei Yisrael's word choice and election as the language of the "מלאכי השרת" / ministering angels". This high praise indicates they **achieved a massive feat** and an **extraordinary understanding** of Hashem's expectations.

Repetitive actions/utterances can be regarded one of two ways - it can cause a person to:

A) Feel bored or stagnated, leading to rote performance or expression... [note: continuing to practice, even without feeling, is a *mailah*]

OR

B) Realize the repetitive acts/words have importance, which sparks investigation and appreciation for the significance.

- Generally, newness/*chiddush* is a catalyst for religious stimulation and enjoyment.
- However, we also believe that **repetition can deepen and intensify sweetness**; we insist that there is always more to learn and that there's great value in further ingraining foundational concepts of *Yiddishkeit* into our hearts and minds.
- Like fruit that sweetens because it emerges from a stable tree, we strive to appreciate steady, perpetual *avodas Hashem*.