



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Bo

HAMELECH

Be Humble

Moshe comes to Pharaoh with a message from Hashem, "Until when do you refuse to humble yourself before Me?"

It seems that one of the main goals of the *makkot* was to achieve *humility*.

Later on in the *parashah*, we are given the very first mitzvah to *Klal Yisrael* as a unit. This is the mitzvah of *Kiddush HaChodesh* – sanctifying the new month.

We know that the Greeks banned observance of *Shabbat*, *Brit Mila* and *Kiddush HaChodesh*. The first two are quite understandable. They are hallmarks of a Jew. But why *Kiddush HaChodesh* more than other *mitsvot*?

The answer is that *Kiddush HaChodesh* shows the power and control of *Chachmei Yisrael*. The Sages of Israel are endowed with the power to create the Jewish calendar, to infuse certain days with *kedushah*.

They have the final word in declaring *Rosh Chodesh*. As a result, this will directly impact which day is Pesach, Yom Kippur and all other special days. Additionally, deciding when to add a leap year can create real changes in our physical world, as delineated in *Yerushalmi Ketubot*, Chapter One.

Klal Yisrael count by the moon, which represents humility. When the two luminaries were created, originally both were identical in size. Subsequently the moon was diminished. Thus, the moon represents humility. *Klal Yisrael's*

calendar follows the moon, indicating that we, as well, are to strive for humility.

What is *Hachna'ah*?

Anava is humility. *Hachna'ah* is subservience. *Anava* is a character trait, it means that a person feels that no credit is due to him. All he has is a gift from Heaven. *Hachna'ah* is the next step. It is a way of life.

We must display *Hachna'ah* first and foremost to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. This is the foundation of prayer and of all service of Hashem. Hashem took us out of *Mitzrayim* so that we should be His servants (*Vayikra* 25:55).

Sefer Chovot HaLevavot (*Cheshbon Hanefesh* 3) teaches that *tefillah* is to be done with a feeling of subservience to Hashem. We praise and extol Hashem and acknowledge His Sovereignty over us and our dependence upon Him. When we pray, we express our awareness of how much we need Hashem for everything.

Respect the Scholars

We are also able to display subservience to Torah leaders. We are to hold them in high esteem and value their words. We are to view their words as conclusive guidance.

We can tie this in to *Kiddush HaChodesh*. One time, *Rabban Gamliel* and his *Beit Din* decided when *Rosh Chodesh Tishrei* would be. *Rabbi Yehoshua* thought otherwise. It came out that he wanted to observe *Yom Kippur* on a different day. *Rabban Gamliel* would not hear of it. He felt that it would divide the nation into two. So he



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sent a message to Rabbi Yehoshua to appear before him on the day when Rabbi Yehoshua held it was Yom Kippur. He demanded that he bring with him his staff and money belt.

At first, Rabbi Yehoshua was uneasy. How could he desecrate Yom Kippur? But R' Akiva came to console him. He taught him that when it comes to Rosh Chodesh, Hashem endowed Beit Din with the power to establish the Jewish calendar so whatever day Rabban Gamliel said was Yom Kippur is the only Yom Kippur. So R' Yehoshua has nothing to worry about. He is not considered desecrating Yom Kippur because his own Yom Kippur is not really Yom Kippur.

R' Yehoshua accepted and indeed went to visit R' Gamliel on that day. R' Gamliel was visibly moved. He arose and kissed R' Yehoshua on the head. He declared, "Come in peace, my master and my student. My master in wisdom, and my student – for you have fulfilled my word."

Follow the Leader

In that same Gemara (Rosh Hashana 25a-b), we are told that the Torah did not inform us of the identities of the members of Moshe's Sanhedrin. This is so that in every generation we can always say that perhaps our current leaders are of equal caliber to those members of Moshe's Sanhedrin. Consequently, we are to look up to them and accept their rulings.

A *pasuk* is brought to illustrate how all leaders are to be respected and accepted. The *pasuk* equates the three great leaders – Moshe, Aharon and Shmuel – with three leaders of lower stature – Yiftach, Shimshon and Gidon. This is to show that

each generation must respect and follow its leaders.

A pertinent example is our times is to make sure to take vaccines as advised by *Gedolei Yisrael*.

"They Beat Me," He Smiled

In Bava Metzia (59b), a dispute erupted between R' Eliezer and the Sages. Now, this was not uncommon. Ever since the early Tannaim, there have been many a dispute between Sages. But this time was different. The majority ruled against R' Eliezer but R' Eliezer refused to surrender. He called upon various miracles to support his position. For example, he exclaimed, "If I am correct, may the stream flow in the opposite direction," and it did. R' Yehoshua dismissed, "We do not bring proofs from streams."

R' Eliezer said, "If I am correct, may the carob tree move 400 cubits," and it did.

R' Yehoshua was unstartled. "We do not bring proofs from carob trees," he retorted.

"If I am correct," insisted R' Eliezer, "may the walls of the Beit Midrash prove it." The walls began caving in. R' Yehoshua screamed at them and they froze in place.

Finally, R' Eliezer proclaimed, "If I am right, let Heaven endorse." Out came a Heavenly Voice, saying, "What have you with my son, Eliezer? The *halachah* is like him in all circumstances."

R' Yehoshua stood up and voiced, "Torah is not in Heaven. We pay no attention to Heavenly Proclamations!"

This Gemara speaks volumes. Hashem gave the Torah to the scholars of each generation. Eliyahu



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Hanavi revealed that Hashem expressed joy at being outdone by His children. He was happy that R' Yehoshua established and upheld the ruling of the current Beit Din, even against Hashem's own "better judgment", as it were.

Stay Put

There was a man with a certain distinct illness who resided in the city where the Shaagas Aryeh had been Rav in an earlier generation. He considered moving to a different town. R' Yechiel Michel Gordon of Lomza strongly advised against the move. He explained, "Your medical condition is one which is a matter of dispute amongst Poskim if it is called *treifa* had it been in an animal. Now, the Shaagas Aryeh ruled that it is not *treifa*. So as long as you remain in the town of the Shaagas Aryeh, you are considered to be healthy and viable. If is life-threatening for you to move away!"

So is the *koach HaTorah* of the Sages of each generation to establish matters on the physical world, impacting life and death.

Subservience

R' Bechaye in Kad HaKemach (Hachna'ah) teaches that *hachna'ah* is of the fundamentals of leading a Torah life! Our service to Hashem is not at its prime unless we feel totally subservient to Him. Being subservient means that your heart is totally with Him.

Picture a servant who is nervous in the king's presence, always making sure to please the king with his every twitch. Someone who really feels subservient is protected from sin. Even if he would err; he would repent immediately and be

fulfilled with intense remorse, so his sin will be erased on the spot.

Yalkut (to Vayikra 26:41) says that once we humble ourselves before Hashem, Hashem immediately has compassion for us and brings pain and suffering to a halt. Humility and subservience breed atonement.

Achav, king of Israel, sinned terribly. But when Hashem saw how he humbled himself, the punishment was halted. (Melachim I 21:29)

Soft & Hard

This message is reflected in the concluding verses of last week's *parashah*. The plague of Barad destroyed the flax and barley, as they were fully grown and had hardened. The wheat and spelt, on the other hand, were not harmed by the downpour, since they were still soft.

Hashem was trying to give a message to Pharaoh – take your pick. Continue to act stubborn and defiant and you, too, will get beaten and meet your bitter end. But if you take an easygoing approach and soften up, humble yourself before Me and follow My command, you have a chance at survival.

Pharaoh did not get the message. But we should. We have mentioned *hachna'ah* to HaKadosh Baruch Hu and to Torah scholars. Let us not forget to also act humbly to our peers and even to our underlings. Let us control our anger and speak softly to all. Let us see positive qualities in all of our acquaintances and deal with them respectfully and pleasantly.

Have a great Shabbat!

Mordechai Malka