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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Vaeira ✍️ Rabbi Akiva Niehaus

Royal Behavior

“Vayidaber Hashem el Moshe v’el Ahron vayitzaveim el Bnei Yisrael- Hashem spoke to Moshe and Ahron and commanded them regarding the Bnei Yisrael.” (Shemos 6:13) This cryptic passuk leaves one wondering what the command to Moshe and Ahron was.

The Ohr HaChayim explains that this passuk is a response to Moshe’s complaint that the Bnei Yisroel refuse to listen to him and accept his directives. Hashem’s solution was to appoint Moshe and Ahron as kings over the Bnei Yisrael. When Bnei Yisrael would realize that Moshe was their king, they would certainly accept his orders.

Rav Nisson Alpert zt”l questions this solution. Why would Bnei Yisrael listen to Moshe based on his claim that he was appointed as their king? This is reminiscent of the chassid who came to his Rebbi and claimed that he had had a dream that he was a Rebbi. The Rebbi responded that such a dream is worthless; had some **disciples** dreamed that you were their new Rebbi, that would be worth a lot more! Here too, what was Moshe’s appointment as king worth? Was he suddenly given supernatural powers to force the nation into submission?

Rav Alpert answers with a powerful insight into human nature. If one wants others to listen to him, he must act as if he is deserving of respect. Bnei Yisrael did not accept Moshe’s authority because Moshe did not act like a leader. Hashem instructed him to act like a king, for if one acts like a king, he will be accepted as a king.

We can apply this concept to our daily lives. Occasionally, we are faced with challenges that seem too difficult to overcome. We may feel that we lack the strength that only great leaders possess. The solution to this problem is to view ourselves as sons of kings (as we see in Shabbos daf 111a). If one imagines himself as a distinguished and powerful prince, he will surely be able to muster the strength needed to overcome any

obstacle in his way.

We would be wise to engender this idea in our children. As our children grow older, they constantly find themselves facing new challenges. We should continuously give them encouragement by reminding them of their special G-d given strengths. We can cite them examples of their extraordinary behavior in the past, using their past performance as an indicator for the future.

This idea is brought to life by a story that happened with Louis. Louis was a young boy who had trouble with his learning skills, and after many difficult years in a regular school was finally enrolled in a “special” school. Mr. Avi Gross, a dedicated teacher in the school, did his best to encourage the young boy. One day Avi was adding up point sheets for his students and asked Louis to memorize the number 92. Every two to three minutes he would ask Louis for the number and Louis, though challenged in the field of recollection and recall, did his best to commit the number 92 to memory. After the scores were computed Avi thanked Louis and asked him how he was able to recall that number. Louis responded that he knew he had had to, and Avi had given him his vote of confidence by entrusting him with that information. They decided that “92” would be their code word to remember in times of distress. Whenever Avi would pass Louis in the hall he would remind him, “92!”, and from that point on Louis improved dramatically. They realized they had come a long way when one day Louis took a Gemara test- his weakest subject- and received the score of “92!” (Read in *Touched by a Story 2* page 33.)

Let us daven to Hashem that He give us the strength to live up to our royal title and be able to pass on to our children the ability to overcome any obstacles they encounter on their journey through life.

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HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Mel aveh Mal kah

Rabbi Hensch Plotnik

“And I established my treaty with **them** to give them the Land of Canaan” (Shmos 6:4). The Gemara in Sanhedrin (90b) teaches us that Rav Simai understood this passuk to be an allusion to techiyas hameisim (resurrection of the dead). The correct wording seemingly would have been, “I will give Eretz Canaan to **you**”. Because it says the word, “lohem” to **them**, we learn that the Avos themselves, who are the subjects of this passuk, will dwell in Eretz Yisroel at the advent of t’chiyas hameisim.

The Medrash in Parshas Metzora teaches that the “luz” bone under a person’s neck never disintegrates and will survive until t’chiyas hameisim. This is because it does not derive benefit from regular food and drink, except that of Melaveh Malkah on Motzei Shabbos. Since that bone received no sustenance through the Eitz Hoda’as, it was not included in the decree of demise of the human body (see Bais Yosef O.C. #300). It is this bone that will begin the process of our resurrection. It would therefore behoove every Jew to partake of a seudas melaveh malkah every Motzei Shabbos.

Unfortunately, this mitzvah of Seudas melaveh malkah has fallen into neglect by too many of us. This may be due to the difficulty it entails when Shabbos ends late, or because we are ignorant of its importance. The Sefer Yalkut Hagershuni (quoted in Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchoso) suggests that it was precisely because of people’s disregard for this mitzvah that the Shulchan Aruch devoted a special siman to its laws and customs. Aside from the above mentioned reason, for this mitzvah, melaveh malkah is a way of showing honor for the Shabbos Queen as she departs, just as we have a mitzvah to honor her upon her arrival. Preferably one should not even change into weekday clothing until eating Melaveh Malkah (see Kof Hachaim 282:28), and one should not remove the Shabbos tablecloth either, until he finishes the seuda. It is said in the name of Talmidei Arizal that any engaging undertaking should also be avoided before eating melave malka, as the “neshomo yesayro” does not depart until after the seuda is completed (see Mishna Brura). Women should also be meticulous in this mitzvah as they have the added segula that Melaveh Malka protects them from a difficult labor. The Sefer Minchas Shabbos adds that they should specifically verbalize that they are eating for the sake of melave malka. (This is also said in the name of Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk.) Poskim mention that preferably the seuda should be eaten immediately after havdala. If not, then definitely before four “hours” into the night and certainly before chatzos.

One should eat bread and preferably something hot as well as part of the seuda. The Gra would eat warm bread specifically. If one cannot bring himself to eat bread, he should at least eat a mezonos

food or some other cooked item, and at the bare minimum, a hot drink. According to the Kaf Hachaim, one should also try to have a food that was designated for the melava malka, as opposed to leftovers from Shabbos.

It is well documented how particular the Vilna Gaon was in this mitzvah. When the Gaon was quite ill and was practically incapable of holding down food, he requested to be fed bread for melava malkah as long as it was still before alos hashachar (dawn). When his disciple Rav Chaim Volozhiner reminded him of his failing health and that he already fulfilled his mitzvah with a piece of cake the Gaon still demanded bread to fulfill the mitzvah properly (Sefer Tosfos Ma’aseh Rav). **The Chazon Ish has been quoted that whoever doesn’t eat bread on Motzei Shabbos will regret it in the olam ha’emes.**

There is discussion among the poskim as to whether one is able to eat meat for melave malkah during the nine days (when meat is generally forbidden) between Rosh Chodesh Av and Tisha B’av. (See She’arim Mitzuyanim Bahalacha who discusses eating fleishig leftovers on Shabbos Chazon for Melave malkah.) R’ Moshe Shternbuch (Teshuvos V’hanhagos vol. 2 #166) mentions a psak from Rav Chaim Volozhiner that indeed permits doing so because melave malkah is no less a seudas mitzvah than a seudas bris. Rav Shternbuch finds this difficult to understand because a seudas bris needs to contain an element of simcha which can only be fulfilled with meat, whereas melava malkah has no such component. On the other hand, the Rambam compares melave malka to the first seuda of Shabbos, which of course should be celebrated in a grand fashion, meat included. The minhag ha’olam certainly seems to adopt a strict stand in this matter and does not eat meat, but from the fact that it is even debatable, shows us the high regard this mitzvah is held in.

The author of Sefer Hapardes writes that the seudas melave malkah extends the “light of the Shabbos meals into all our following weekday meals”. Coupled with all the brochos and segulos that accompany this precious mitzvah, one can be easily encouraged to fulfill seudas melave malkah properly and enlighten his entire week with kedushas Shabbos.

There is a “vort” that R’ Yaakov Kamenetzky Zt”l would quote in relation to our indifference towards this mitzvah. The passuk in Melochim says “ad mosai atem poschim al shtei has’ifim?” which literally means, “How long will you dance between two opinions?” B’derech drush, this passuk is alluding to our indifference towards two mitzvos that occupy but one s’if (sentence) in Shulchan Aruch respectively- seudas Rosh Chodesh and seudas melava malkah- until when will we keep “jumping” over these two “sentences”? Hopefully, no longer.

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