

Kinder Torah

Parashas Behar/Bechukosai

Whom Are You Serving?

"I (Hashem), too, will behave toward them indifferently and I will bring them into the land of their enemies - perhaps then their unfeeling heart will be humbled and they will gain conciliation for their sin' (Vayikra 26:41). This verse appears at the end of the *tochacha* - a list of punishments, frustrations, and curses that will result from our *aveyros*. Why must we go through such suffering? Because we have a '*lev aral*' - an unfeeling heart. This places a barrier between us and our Father in Heaven. We can violate His Will without feeling badly about it. Deep down we want to get close to Him, but the *orla* (barrier) stands between us. Hashem wants to arouse us to do *teshuvah*, and break the barrier. Perhaps, just perhaps our unfeeling heart will be humbled.

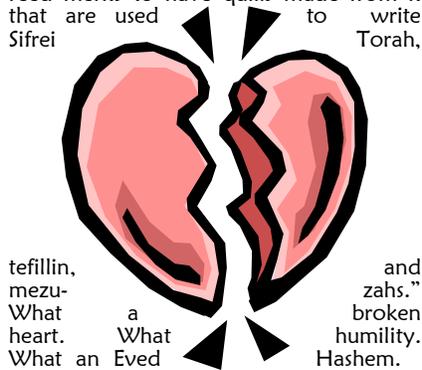
"Hashem is close to the broken-hearted" (Tehillim 34:19). The Kotzker Rebbe used to say, "There is nothing more whole than a broken heart" (Lekach Tov). This process of breaking the *orla* and humbling the heart is called "*hachnah*." This process is so important that the Chovos Halevavos dedicates an entire section of his sefer to *hachnah*. One of the things that brings a person to *hachnah* is suffering. It makes a person realize how truly helpless he is. His fate is in Hashem's hands; therefore, he humbles himself before his Master. This is the basic foundation of Avodas Hashem: to realize that He is the Master. We are His *avadim* (servants). This is not shameful. Quite the opposite! It is the greatest privilege in the world to serve the Almighty, Creator of the Universe! Our whole reason for existence is to serve Him. This must be our motivation. If we do not humble ourselves and realize this, then we are ultimately serving ourselves and our interests, and not the Will of Hashem.

What are the characteristics of a humble person? He is satisfied with his material possessions. He is happy with the kindness that Hashem has bestowed upon him. When it comes to his Avodas Hashem, however, he is never satisfied. He has great ambitions. He is always striving to get closer and closer to The Almighty; to learn better, pray better, to increase his love for his fellow Jews, and kindness towards them.

The Chovos Halevavos brings a poignant example to illustrate how a humble person conducts himself. How shall you answer someone who points out a fault of yours? Many people would try to justify their behavior. A humble person is different. He says, "You are correct - I made a mistake. However, my brother, the fault that you have brought to my attention is so insignificant compared to my other faults. You do not know about them be-

cause Hashem has hidden them from the eyes of man. If people knew about them, they would run away from me for fear of being punished along with me." Can you imagine receiving such a response? We see from this that a humble person is completely different from the rest of humanity.

The Gemora (Taanis 20a&b) relates a story about Rebbe Elazar. He was traveling from the house of his Rebbe, feeling very proud of himself because he had learned a lot of Torah. On the way, he saw a person who was very ugly. Rebbe Elazar insulted him. The ugly man replied, "Go and tell the Craftsman Who made me, "How ugly is that vessel that You made." Rebbe Elazar realized that he had sinned, and he humbled himself, lying down before the man begging for forgiveness. The man eventually forgave him. Rebbe Elazar immediately entered the Beis HaMedrash and darshened, "A person should always be soft like a reed (flexible in matters between people) and not hard like a cedar. For this reason, the reed merits to have quills made from it that are used to write Sifrei Torah,



*Kinderlach . . .
The goal of our life is to serve Hashem. The key is humility. If we do not humble ourselves, we are not serving Him; rather we are serving our own desires. The key to humility is a broken heart. Realize that our fate is in His Hands. His Will must be carried out. Our only choice is whether to serve Him or not. If we humbly choose the right way, we receive great blessings and rewards. If not, He must humble us - oy va voy. Take the short, straight way, kinderlach. Humble yourselves. Serve Hashem.*

The Long Journey

"I'm tired. This trip is very wearing."
"Me too. How far do we have to go?"
"Some distance. We're not there yet, but b'ezras Hashem we will be arriving soon."
"Good. This journey has been so long that I have lost track of time. I had no idea that the trip would take so long."
"Actually, it all depends on how fast you travel. Some people are able to make the trip relatively quickly. For others, it takes

more time.
"How long have we been traveling?"
"Several years now."
"Amazing. I hope we arrive soon."

"And you shall know this day and take it into your heart" (from the Aleinu prayer). This passage presents a question. If you know something, then it is already in your memory. We often say, "I know it by heart." Why does the prayer separate the two - "And you shall know this day AND take it into your heart?" What do you add by taking it into your heart?

The answer is that there is a big difference between knowing something and taking it to heart. Knowing refers to intellectual knowledge - acquiring information, understanding it, and remembering it. That is important, because without the facts, a person will not know what to do. However, that is only the beginning of the story. One must take the knowledge to heart. He must do what he knows is right. He must think the right thoughts, and feel the proper emotions. This is much more challenging than just acquiring the knowledge. For example, one may know that it is proper to take time when saying berachos of praise and gratitude to Hashem. However, he has a bad habit of saying berachos as quickly as possible. It may take him a while to internalize his knowledge, take it to heart, and change his ways. This is the journey - from the head to the heart. It can be a quick excursion, or a long journey, depending upon many factors. The main thing is - keep traveling! Never lose sight of the destination. Keep asking The Almighty for *Siyata Di'Shmaya* (Heavenly Assistance). B'ezras Hashem you will get there.

*Kinderlach . . .
We learned about the middah of a humble heart. The knowledge is in our minds. The next step is to begin the journey from the mind to the heart. It is only a few centimeters in distance. However, traveling those few centimeters can take years. Kinderlach, begin the journey and keep going. Do not get discouraged. It may take time. Some parts of the trip may be rougher than others. Do not give up in the middle! With Hashem's help, you will get there. You will know the Torah, take it to heart, and live by it. May we all reach the destination.*

Parasha Questions:

- How many *aveyros* are numbered in 26:15? Why are they listed in this order?
- What is the sequence of events that will happen to one who does not observe Shmitta? (Rashi 26:1)
- If one sells his *sadeh achuza* 20 years before *yovel*, and redeems it ten years later, does he pay the same price that he received for it? (Rashi 25:27)

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