

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



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FOCUSING ON TORAH'S ESSENCE

In last week's parsha, the Torah relates that the *nesi'im* donated six wagons and twelve oxen to help transport the Mishkan. Moshe was instructed to give them to the families of Gershon and Merari. The family of Kehos, however, did not receive any wagons: since they were entrusted with the sacred items of the Mishkan (the Aron, menorah, and so on), they were to carry them on their shoulders. This directive—to carry the Aron on the shoulders—is one of the 613 *mitzvos*.

Later in history, Dovid Hamelech once forgot this *halachah* and transported the Aron on a wagon, causing the death of Uza. Why did this happen? The Gemara explains that Dovid referred to the Torah as *zemiros* (a song), as it says in Tehillim, "Your statutes were like *zemiros* to me in the house of my sojourns (*beveis megurai*)." As punishment, he was made to forget a *halachah* that even young children know, that the Aron must be transported on the shoulders.

Why was Dovid punished by being made to forget this *halachah* in particular, and not some other law? And what does it mean that he referred to the Torah as *zemiros*?

THE SONG OF TORAH

Let us first better understand this *possuk* in Tehillim, where Dovid calls the Torah *zemiros*.

The commentators translate the last word of the *possuk*, *megurai*, in two ways: *sojourn* and *fear*. Dovid is thus stating that when he was traveling from place to place without respite, and furthermore—when he was full of fear of his enemies, he would delve into the study of Torah. The words of Torah were as sweet to him as a melodious song, giving him great joy and causing him to forget his troubles.

If *zemiros* would only mean *song*, why did Dovid compare the

Torah specifically to a pleasing melody, and not to another enjoyable entity? The answer is that *zemiros* has two additional translations: the Targum translates it as *praise*, and it can also be interpreted as *cutting* (as in *lo sizmor*—"do not prune").

What does this mean?

PRAISING AND PRUNING

The Alter Rebbe explains this verse to mean that Dovid praised the greatness of Torah, how the energy of all the worlds depends on a small detail of the Torah. For example, if a *korban* is brought following all the specifications detailed in the Torah, all the worlds—both our world and the supernal worlds—receive Divine energy. By contrast, if the *korban* was brought incorrectly, the worlds do not receive this energy.

This is how Dovid was able to be joyous despite the hardships he was facing. In addition to the simple meaning

(that he enjoyed Torah like a sweet song), he reflected on the Torah's greatness, how everything in the world depends on a single detail of the Torah and has no value compared to the Torah. That being the case, what significance was there to all of his suffering, when he was able to sit and study Torah, which is so incomparably greater even than the supernal worlds?!

What's more, as a result of Dovid's praise of the greatness of Torah, Dovid "cut off" his enemies who opposed the Torah. The truth is that everything in this world was created from Torah and receives its vitality from it. The reason there can be something that is against the Torah is only because this truth is not felt. But as soon as Dovid reflected on how everything receives its energy from the Torah, this truth was brought to the fore, and anything opposed to Torah automatically ceased to exist.

WHAT TORAH IS ALL ABOUT

According to this explanation, why was Dovid punished? He recognized the Torah's greatness, how nothing has any value compared to it, causing him to disregard his suffering and experience joy. Moreover, his perspective influenced the world itself, removing anything that was against the Torah. What was wrong with that?

The Alter Rebbe explains that the Torah is comprised of two dimensions, an external one and an inner one. This idea—that everything in the world depends on a small detail of the Torah—is only the external aspect of Torah. The Torah itself is much deeper; it is united with Hashem Himself.

This is similar to the way it is with regard to Hashem. Hashem creates the world and directs it, but it would not be correct to say that this is what Hashem is all about. Hashem Himself is much greater and higher than simply being the Creator and Master of the world.

The same is true with Torah. Of course, the entire world depends on the Torah, but this is merely the Torah's external dimension. The Torah's true and inner essence is that it is one with Hashem.

In this light, Dovid's mistake was that he praised the Torah by describing its external aspects, without focusing on its inner dimension, that it is one with Hashem.

INWARD FOCUS

This is why Dovid was punished specifically by forgetting the law that the Aron must be carried on the shoulders.

When the Kohanim would carry the Aron, their faces would be directed toward the Aron while their backs would face outwards. A person's back is external, while his face represents his inner self. Carrying the Aron in this way—with one's face directed toward it—demonstrated that a person must focus on the inner aspect of the Torah.

The Yerushalmi states that the *luchos* did not have a front and a back. Unlike a regular book, which consists of both a front and a back, both sides of the *luchos* were the front. The Torah is entirely about its inner dimension, and should be approached in that way.

Since Dovid highlighted the external aspect of Torah and not its inner dimension, he forgot specifically this *halachah*, which emphasizes that one must focus on the Torah's true essence.

It may happen that a person is beset by troubles, and the way he forgets about his problems is through studying Torah. Such a person must

realize that Torah is more than just a medium through which he can forget his situation. The Torah's true essence is that it is one with Hashem, and studying Torah raises a person to Hashem Himself.

For further study, see *Tanya, Kuntres Acharon d'h Dovid zemiros karis lehu*.

The only reason there can be something that is against the Torah is because the truth is not felt.



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