

The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn



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Prepared by
Rabbi Yehudah Leib Altein

The Gemara tells us, "Whoever did not see the rejoicing of the *beis hasho'eivah* never saw joy in his life."

The simple meaning of this statement is that compared to the *simchas beis hasho'eivah*, every other type of joy is insignificant. How can this be? There are many other types of joy sanctioned by the Torah, including the joy displayed when pouring the wine, which was done alongside the pouring of the water on Sukkos. In fact, the Gemara says that praise can only be sung on wine, learning this from the *possuk*, "[wine] brings joy to Hashem and to people." How can all this joy be viewed as meaningless?!

Furthermore, why didn't the Gemara say simply, "The joy of the *beis hasho'eivah* was tremendously great"? Why the protracted terminology?

The Gemara's wording implies that if one did not experience the *simchas beis hasho'eivah*, he has indeed never seen true joy; however, once he does experience it, he can feel joy in other areas as well.

What does this mean?

BETWEEN WATER AND WINE

To understand this, let's first examine the difference between wine and water.

Wine is tasty, and moreover, it initiates joy. By contrast, not only does water not have a special taste but it has no taste at all. Therefore, no *berachah* is made on water if one is not thirsty. *Birchos hanehenin* are made when *enjoying* food or drink. Since water is tasteless, one does not derive pleasure when drinking it (unless one is thirsty). Wine and water are thus two opposite extremes.

Water and wine reflect two types of *avodah*. Wine represents understanding and enjoyment, where one appreciates the value of what he is doing. Water signifies *kabolas ol*, where one does not understand the greatness of Torah and *mitzvos*. Rather, he knows that since the Shulchan Aruch says he must act in this way, he must do so.

Seemingly, the *avodah* of wine has the potential for much greater joy. You can't compare someone who understands what he's

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doing to one who does not! If one doesn't understand the reason for the specific *mitzvah* he is doing, he can at least consider that since Hashem commanded this, there must be great depth to it. Alternatively, he can think in general terms, reflecting on Hashem's greatness and the tremendous value in serving Him. With water, however, there is no appreciation at all; all he has is dry *kabolas ol*.

Yet, the joy of water surpasses all others. How can this be?

JOYOUSLY FREE

A person can only experience joy when he is in a state of freedom. As long as he is in captivity, he cannot be happy.

When the *neshamah* descends to the world, it is restrained by the body and *nefesh habahamis*. Since a Jew's true existence is his *neshamah*, he cannot be happy unless the *neshamah* is able to leave the confines in which it is bound.

Bnei Yisroel are called Hashem's servants and Hashem's children. Both of these descriptions entail serving Hashem beyond reasoning. A servant doesn't follow his master's instructions because he appreciates his master's greatness, but because he knows that he is a servant and must obey. This *kabolas ol* is the foundation of *avodas Hashem*, as the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya. Similarly, while a son feels great satisfaction in serving his father, he is not doing so because it makes sense to him but rather due to his inner connection with his father.

As long as a person serves Hashem based on intellectual stimulation, the *neshamah* is not truly free, as neither the element of *eved* nor the element of *ben* is expressed. True freedom, and consequently true joy, can only come from serving Hashem with unrestrained *kabolas ol*.

LEG LIBATION

Based on the above, we can understand why the *Tzedukim* opposed the *nisuch hamayim*, although they agreed to the *nisuch hayayin*. They had no problem with intellect-based *avodah*; what they took issue with was the concept of water, to serve Hashem with *kabolas ol*.

The Gemara relates that the task of pouring the water on the

mizbei'ach was once given to a Kohen who was a *Tzeduki*. Since he didn't believe in the *nisuch hamayim*, he poured the water onto his feet, hoping no one would realize that he was avoiding this *avodah*.

Every detail in Torah is precise. Why does the Gemara find it necessary to mention that he poured the water onto his feet? The Gemara could have just related that the Kohen tried to fool the onlookers, without saying exactly how!

This teaches us that even the *Tzedukim* agreed to the concept of pouring water, but where—on the legs.

Some people are “head” people; they possess high intellectual and emotional capacities. Others, by contrast, are “feet” people. Their ability to understand is limited, and their *middos* are deficient as well.

The *Tzedukim* agreed that “water”—*kabolas ol*—could be poured on the “feet.” Someone who is on a low level must submit to a higher authority; otherwise, with no one to keep him in check, he is prone to unwanted behavior. Moreover, even a refined person may sometimes need water. There are times when his intellect is active, while at other times his passions may overtake him, causing him to temporarily be on the level of feet. In such a situation, he, too, must revert to *kabolas ol*. However, when he is on the level of head, the *Tzedukim* believed that there is no need for water.

Moreover: The *Tzedukim* knew that certain ideas are beyond comprehension and can only be accepted with *emunah*. What they opposed was the fact that a Jew accepts *everything* with faith, even those things that *can* be understood. In fact, the Midrash quotes the *possuk*, “A fool believes everything,” and explains that it refers to Moshe Rabbeinu! This is the foundation of a Jew's connection to Hashem. *Nisuch hamayim* is necessary not only for the feet, but for the head as well.

WATER-BASED MOTIVATION

One may ask: If *kabolas ol* is so important and is the foundation

of *avodas Hashem*, why attempt to understand at all? Let's stick to *nisuch hamayim* and omit *nisuch hayayin* altogether!

Yet, wine was poured as well, not only during the rest of the year but even on Sukkos.

This teaches us that it *is* important to learn and understand. However, why do we do so? Not because we want to become great intellectuals, but because this is what Hashem commanded.

In *Kisvei HaArizal* it is mentioned that when a person recites Shema, he should have in mind to accept the *mitzvos* of reciting Shema and loving Hashem. Now, we can understand that when a person puts on *tefillin*, he is doing so to fulfill Hashem's command. But

the word *shema* means to understand, and *ve'ahavta* means to love Hashem. Where does *kabolas ol* fit here?

We see from this that even reflecting on the good of *Elokus* and developing an emotional feeling for Hashem are also things we do only because we were instructed.

This is why *nisuch hayayin* was done—not because intellect is valuable in its

own right, but because this is what Hashem commanded. If a person adopts the approach of the *Tzedukim*, limiting his *emunah* to certain areas and leaving others to the realm of intellect, this will ultimately result in complete *kefirah*, *lo aleinu*. A Jew's approach must be that *everything* is based on *emunah*, including his understanding and feelings.

Without the approach of *kabolas ol*, the *neshamah* remains confined in the body and cannot feel true joy, even when understanding (“wine”). However, once a person experiences the *simchas beis hasho'eivah*, infusing each aspect of his *avodah* with *kabolas ol* (“water”), he will be able to have true *simchah* even with wine, and not only on Sukkos but throughout the year.

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 2, pp. 420ff. Ibid., pp. 425ff.

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merkazanash.com
info@merkazanash.com
347.471.1770

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