

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Lessons From Davening



Growing up in midwestern America means everyone is SUPER nice. Even when they're not. It's just how people are here. They are really polite, but what does *please* mean? The word never made any sense to me, other than it's just what you say when you want something. I'm not sure the source, but I once heard an interesting concept in Aish HaTorah about the word *please*; it means, "I acknowledge that you have the choice to say no." It's humbling. I would never say please to an animal or a computer. Only a person with free will. Perhaps this is part of *derech erez*.

Rabbi Nachman Seltzer writes:

Moshe *Rabbeinu's* sister Miriam has just been stricken with *tzaraas* for speaking *lashon hara* about her brother Moshe, and now Moshe *Rabbeinu* is *davening* to Hashem to heal her. The *pasuk* describes him as screaming to Hashem.

Rashi (Sifri 105) asks why the *pasuk* didn't just write, "Moshe screamed out to Hashem, 'Heal her!'" Why add the words "Please, G-d"? He explains that the Torah is using the words "Please, G-d" to teach us that when asking for a favor one should use a few pleasant words of entreaty before making the actual request.

This is an important concept; every conversation needs to be conducted with *derech erez*. If you need something from someone else, you should begin by speaking pleasantly.

This is what Moshe *Rabbeinu* did when standing before Hashem and begging for his sister to be healed. Instead of starting with a request, immediately pleading, "heal her," he began the conversation with the seemingly unneces-

sary words, "Please, G-d" to teach us how to communicate with our fellow man and even with Hashem.

Why did Moshe *Rabbeinu* scream? The Gemara (*Berachos* 24b) explicitly states that anyone who raises his voice during prayer is following in the path of the false prophets! We infer from this Gemara that *davening* to Hashem should be done quietly and not with a raised voice.

The *Rema* (OC 101:2) says that even though a person is supposed to *daven* quietly, it is permissible to raise your voice in order to teach your children how to *daven*.

The *Ohr HaChaim* points out that the word *leimor*, "saying," is used to mean "instructing others." If Moshe is talking to Hashem, why does the *pasuk* use the word *leimor*? Because Moshe *Rabbeinu* was teaching *Klal Yisrael* an important lesson. He was teaching his people how to behave when engaged in one of the most all-encompassing aspects of our lives, prayer.

It was alright for Moshe *Rabbeinu* to scream to Hashem, "Please, G-d, heal her." Moshe *Rabbeinu* was allowed to scream when he *davened* because *leimor*; he was teaching the Yidden that just as you begin with a few nice words when you ask someone for a favor, you should begin with a few extra words prior to the actual prayer when *davening* to Hashem, too. That's why Moshe used the seemingly unnecessary words "Please, G-d" before his prayer of "heal her," and why he did it in a loud voice; he was teaching *Bnei Yisrael* how to *daven* by demonstrating the need to display *derech erez* before making a request. 🕊

THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Yitzchak was once walking down the street late one Shabbos afternoon and out of the corner of his eye he noticed a \$100 bill on the side of the sidewalk. Since it was uncommon to find a \$100 bill lying around, and it was nearing the end of Shabbos, he decided to leave his foot on it and stay there until Shabbos would be over and then take it for himself.

Suddenly, a poor man walked over to him and said, "I know you are standing on a \$100 bill. I saw it already this morning, and I planned on taking it for myself after Shabbos." Yitzchak responded, "I believe you, but it's not *halachically* yours because looking at something doesn't help you acquire it (see *Bava Metzia* 2a). However, I don't want to deprive you, so I will give you 100 *shekalim* for charity!"

When Shabbos concluded, Yitzchak picked up the bill, and was surprised to see that, although on one side it looked real, the other side showed it was just an advertisement. It was not real money. The poor man came over to Yitzchak for the 100 *shekalim* he promised, and Yitzchak told him he can even have the bill! Yitzchak said, "It wasn't real money and the only reason I would have to give the 100 *shekalim* is because I thought the bill was real. Now that we see it's not real money, I am absolved from my promise."

The poor man countered, "You promised to give me the money without any

➡ CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ➡

Sponsorship & feedback:
parasha@cincynollel.org

Sponsored by
Pinchus and Aliza Zell
 in honor of the Kollel and all of the wonderful things
 they do for the community.

Cincinnati Torah
 is distributed weekly
 to local shuls
 and the community
 e-mail list.

THE RABBI WAS ASKED

CONTINUED

condition, so it's considered a vow to *tzedaka* which you must fulfill!"

Q Is Yitzchak obligated to give the poor man 100 *shekalim*?

A Yitzchak is not obligated to give the poor man money, because his promise to give *tzedaka* was mistaken; he was only prepared to give that sum of money had he gotten the \$100. He promised the charity because he thought he found money, and he agreed to give away a portion of it. Therefore, when it became clear that no real money was found, we deem his pledge as mistaken, and he is exempt from giving it to the poor man.

Rema rules as well that a mistaken promise to *tzedaka* is not binding (Y.D. 258:2; 232:6). Similarly, *Shach* (ibid, 251:9) quotes *Re'aim* (*Teshuvos*, 53) that in all matter of vows and consecrations we rely on circumstantial assessments. Here too, we can rely on our assessment and exempt Yitzchak from giving the money that he would not have otherwise offered. 🕒

A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

How many different people did Hashem speak to in this week's parasha?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕒

A LESSON LEARNED

One year as Yom Kippur ended, the head of the Nitra yeshiva, Rabbi Yonah Forst, noticed that one of the young men looked troubled. Asking the boy what was on his mind, he responded, "Yom Kippur is now over, how do we know we accomplished anything?" "When I was a young man on the cattle cars to Treblinka," said Rabbi Forst, "there was a man who looked like the stereotypical Aryan man standing near me. Blue eyes, light blond hair, strong build. I could not contain my curiosity and to my questioning the man indeed replied that he was German and he had converted to Judaism! I asked the man what in the world would cause to him to convert in any of the recent years when in Germany the Nazi propaganda had totally dehumanized the Jewish people? The man answered that he had seen Jews performing the mitzvah of *Kiddush Levanah* (sanctifying the new moon) at the end of Yom Kippur, while they were all still clothed in their *kittels* and *taleisim*. He had been so taken by the sight and sounds and the glow of these Jews' faces that

Mazal Tov to

all Daf Hashovua participants on their upcoming Siyum on *Maseches Chagiga*. Now is a great time to join! Contact Rabbi Heinemann for further details. 🕒

he had a sudden urge to find out what Judaism was all about and to join these people in how they lived their lives. The man finished by saying that even though he knows that he could get out of this trip to the death camps by blending back in to German society, he would rather die together with his new Jewish brothers and sisters." With this, Rabbi Forst, with tears glistening in his eyes, looked at the yeshiva student and said, "If you had any idea of the glow of a Jew on the night after Yom Kippur!" 🕒



BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Another Jew with connections to President Lincoln also had a Cincinnati connection. Joseph Jonas is considered the first permanent Jewish resident of Cincinnati. The second was his brother Abraham. Abraham would end up leaving Cincinnati to live in Kentucky for a time, before settling in Quincy, Illinois. In Quincy he ran a store, studied and began practicing law, and became very active in politics. It is not clear where and when Abraham Jonas met and befriended Lincoln, but in 1860 Lincoln wrote to Jonas, "you are one of my most valued friends." Jonas was also instrumental in helping Lincoln reach the presidency. A prominent Illinois member of the newly formed Republican party, Jonas was among those who convinced Lincoln to run against and debate the well-known Illinois senator, Stephen A. Douglas, on the topic of extending slavery into new states. Lincoln, although well-known in Illinois, was not on the national radar until this series of debates in 1858. Then, at the Republican convention in 1860, Jonas and friends helped engineer the nomination of Lincoln in the upcoming presidential election over the favorite William H. Seward. The final show of friendship between the two would be during the Civil War. Jonas fell deathly ill. One of Jonas' sons who had fought for the Confederacy was being held prisoner, and his sister wrote to President Lincoln to request that he receive leave from prison to visit his dying father. Lincoln would grant an executive order allowing him leave. 🕒

SOURCES: Segal, Charles M. "Abraham Jonas' Role in Lincoln's First Presidential Nomination." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1954, pp. 98-105.
Miller, Dr. Yvette Alt. "Abraham Lincoln and the Jews." Aish.com.
"Brother Against Brother: Abraham Jonas's Sons." Shapell.org.

Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • kollel@shul.net • cincykollel.org

Please remember the Kollel with a gift in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.

