

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת בא

החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה
“This month shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year” (12:2)

Every month, on the week before Rosh Chodesh, we recite the Mevarchim Hachodesh prayer. In the middle of this prayer of requests for the upcoming month, we insert a paragraph (Mi She'asa Nisim) where we ask Hashem to redeem us from exile. Why is this request inserted at that point of the davening? The sefer entitled Tosfos Beracha says that the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh, sanctifying each month at the new moon, was the first mitzvah that was given to the Jewish nation. Since the backdrop to the original mitzvah was the redemption of Egypt, each time we declare a new month, we pray we should be able to fulfill this mitzvah in the same type of atmosphere in which it was originally given.

והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים
“And you shall tell your son on that day, saying: It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt” (13:8)

The Meshech Chochma tells a story in connection with this posuk. There was once a man who married off his daughter and provided for all her needs. His wife, the girl's mother, was very happy that her daughter had found a husband and was living comfortably. The father said that while everything was indeed fine for the moment and everyone was happy, there is no guarantee that the new husband would still be so good to their daughter when he had to provide for her on his own. If he is still good to her then and takes care of her as he does now, then all the investment in their new home will be worth it.

This is the idea behind the statement that the father tells his son in the posuk. Because of this, that day in the future when the Jews live securely in Eretz Yisrael following the Torah of Hashem, did Hashem perform miracles in Mitzrayim. Hashem preformed many miracles to take the Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim and to provide for them in the wilderness. Only when they enter Eretz Yisrael and observe the Torah will Hashem's investment in his nation be validated.

Often Hashem presents us with a situation in life where the future is the ultimate goal. Only later on will it will be seen if we were successful. When we are faced with difficulties in life, it may be difficult, but we have to step up to the plate and recognize that Hashem is taking care of us. We should feel confident that what we go through will ultimately prove beneficial in the future if we can make it through. We should remain committed to fulfill the mitzvos in all circumstances, both good and bad, whether it is easy or challenging.

והיה לך לאות על ידך ולזכרון בין עיניך למען תהיה תורת ה' בפיך כי ביד חזקה הוצאך ה' ממצרים

“And it shall be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes - so that Hashem’s Torah may be in your mouth - for with a strong hand Hashem removed you from Egypt” (13:9)

The Chofetz Chaim writes that one of the main purposes of tefillin is for the Torah of Hashem to be in our mouths. The mitzvah of tefillin prepares us for learning Torah. The midrash in Eliyahu Zuta says that the ultimate redemption will come through the study of Torah in a group setting. The tefillin should remind us to increase our study of Torah so that we can bring these words of the midrash to fruition. One way to act on this idea is to keep one's tefillin on after davening and learn for a few minutes. The Mishna Berura (37:7) says that "men of good deeds have the custom to learn Torah after davening while wearing tefillin." In this way, one can translate the message of the tefillin into practice.

והיה לאות על ידכה ולטוטפת בין עיניך כי בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים
“And it shall be a sign upon your arm, and an ornament between your eyes, for with a strong hand Hashem removed us from Egypt” (13:16)

Aruch Hashulchan (27:15) points out that there are the two types of tefillin have two different ideas behind their placement. The tefillin shel rosh is meant to be in an open place as a sign for all to see. The tefillin shel yad is meant to be in a covered place as a sign for the individual who is wearing it but not for others. R' Moshe Feinstein asks: Why is there is a difference between the two? Rashi, citing Menachem, explains that the word "totafos" comes from a root meaning "to speak." The tefillin shel rosh are named thusly "because one who sees them tied between the eyes will remember the miracle [of Yetzias Mitzrayim] and speak about it." R' Moshe Feinstein explains that reminding others about the miracles in Egypt is the ultimate goal of wearing tefillin. However, in order for a person to be an effective influence on others to remind them of Hashem's greatness, he needs a sign for himself that instructs him to focus on this idea. Once he internalizes this message through his tefillin shel yad, his own personal reminder, he can lead by example when he wears the tefillin shel rosh. For this sign to be effective, he needs to have a sign for himself.

R' Feinstein elaborates with a posuk from Malachi (2:6) which describes Aharon in the following way: "The teaching of truth was in his mouth and injustice was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and with fairness and turned many away from iniquity." What does it mean that "injustice was not found on his lips?" Even when Aharon rebuked people for their wrongdoing, he never needed to do so outright. He never had to even speak of their injustice because when people saw him and how he acted, it was a sufficient rebuke in its own right. Aharon led more by example than with his words. When we work on ourselves, then people will be inspired by our actions and our way of life. That is the most effective tool to encourage people to do the right thing. This is what we should think about when wearing tefillin. We should be working on ourselves in order to become a positive influence on others.

Why is the word "yadcha" spelled with an extra letter "hey"? Rabbeinu Bachya writes that the extra "hey" is a source for the halacha that there must be five compartments in the tefillin, one in the shel yad and four in the shel rosh. Chazal say that this spelling is similar to the word "keiha," "weak." This is the source for the halacha that tefillin is worn

on the weak hand. Why is this the halacha? Rabbi Friedman suggests that when we wear to the tefillin on our weaker hand, it reminds us of our shortcomings and that we need to improve ourselves. By wearing tefillin in a place where we are weaker, we symbolize that we must be cognizant of our weaknesses and focus on them and work on correcting them.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur
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