



Parsha Encounters

22 Elul 5766/Sep. 15, 2006

Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech – Rabbi Moshe M. Willner

Don't Be Like Yankel !

There is a mashal related by the Chofetz Chaim that can direct us during these days of slichos recitation.

Yankel was a young fellow without a job. Luckily he had a wealthy uncle who ran a large factory where Yankel hoped he would be able to secure a position. The uncle who was a kind hearted man hired Yankel immediately although he lacked experience. The job entailed overseeing the many different departments in the factory. Yankel diligently copied down a list of all the places that needed to be inspected throughout the week. However, instead of going around and visiting those departments, he just went to his office and read over the list until he had it committed to memory. At the week's end his uncle called him in to his office to pay him and to see how the job was going. Yankel proudly recited all the different departments in the factory. Truly impressed with Yankel's knowledge of all that had to be observed, his uncle continued to inquire about the production of these departments. To this, however, Yankel had nothing to reply. In his foolishness, he hadn't even once gone to visit any of these places. The uncle, disappointed, exclaimed, "Dear Yankel, you weren't just supposed to review what had to be done, - you had to take action!"

With this we can understand the following Gemara, concerning the thirteen middos of Rachamim (thirteen attributes of Hashem). Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu that any time Klal Yisrael will sin, performing before Him the following ceremony (13 middos) will grant them forgiveness. The Gemara continues, that R' Yehuda said that one who recites the 13 middos, will never be turned away unanswered.

We can ask two questions on this Gemara.

1. Why does the Gemara say, "perform before me the 13 middos", and not "pray" before me?
2. If the 13 middos are always answered, why does it

seem that despite our reciting of them, we are not always answered?

The answer was illustrated before in our mashal. Hashem's intention in our reciting of the 13 middos was not to just say the 13 middos, but to live by them! Just as Hashem is compassionate, so must we relate to our fellow Jew. This is why we don't always find the recital of the 13 middos bearing fruit. Alas, we may be lacking in emulating the ways of Hashem.

By studying the thirteen middos in a way that we can apply them, we can help to rectify this problem. There is a number of benefits we can reap from delving into the thirteen middos. Firstly, we can come to recognize Hashem's great love and kindness towards His creations. Another benefit from this study is that it provides us with direction on how to relate to one another. Thirdly, by realizing that with our kindness we are emulating our Creator, we infuse our day with a heightened awareness of Hashem.

An example of the above can be seen with the first midah of "Hashem". The meforshim explain that the first midah refers to Hashem's kindness prior to sins. One may ask, what mercy is needed before one sins? The answer is, even though Hashem know's one is about to sin, Hashem still showers kindness upon him! Hashem ignores the fact that His kindness will be used against Him. Perhaps we can emulate this midah in a very common occurrence. Many times when driving, we are faced with people who may want to cut in front of us. It's possible, that by allowing someone to cut in front of us, we will have to miss a light or be stuck by a train crossing. This may cause us to feel anxious and resentful. However, in truth, by giving others the right of way despite the delay it may cause us, we are in fact emulating Hashem's ways.

May we all merit to elevate our conduct in these days of mercy. Let's not be like Yankel. Let's take action!

Rabbi Willner learns full time at the kollel.

Halacha Encounters

Rosh Hashanah *Simanim*

Rabbi Avi Weinrib

Rosh Hashanah is a unique day in the Jewish calendar. Its *tefillos*, *halachos* and *minhagim* certainly set it apart from all other days in the year. One of the highlights of the evening Rosh Hashana meals is the various *simanim* that are eaten. In this week's Halacha Encounters we will discuss some of the halachos which apply to this most special *minhag*.

Brocha

In general, when one makes the *brocha* of *Hamotzi* the *brocha* covers most foods eaten subsequently. However, there are many exceptions to this rule. The *Shulchan Aruch* [187.1] writes that any food eaten to accompany the bread or for satiation purposes are covered by the bracha of *Hamotzi*. This includes the main dish, side dishes, salads etc. In general, fruits eaten at the beginning or end of the meal do require their own *brocha* [see M.B. 177-45 see also 177-29 for an exception to this rule]. Certainly the fruits eaten for the *simanim* are not part of the meal and require their own *Borei Pri Haetz*. R' Shlomo Zalman [*Halichos Shlomo* 1-18] ruled similarly regarding the vegetables. He writes that one should recite a *Borei Pri Haodoma* on the gourd and have in mind to cover the leek, beets etc. The only time one would not recite these blessings is if one would make a salad or dish from the *simanim* which is then eaten for satiation purposes.

Order

When eating a number of fruits together, various factors determine which fruit the *brocha* should be recited upon in order to exempt the others from requiring a *brocha*. The *Shulchan Aruch* [211-1] rules that when eating various fruits with the same *brocha* if one of the fruits is of the 7 species [olives, dates, grapes, figs, and pomegranate] the bracha should be recited on it, thereby covering all other fruits. Additionally, [211-2] the *Shulchan Aruch* quotes the *Rambam* who rules that the fruit one has the greatest preference for, "*choviv*", takes precedence even over a fruit from the seven species. However, the *Mishna Berura* [211-13] writes that most authorities do not follow the *Rambam* and a fruit of the seven species would always come first. On Rosh Hashana, most have the custom to partake of a date and a pomegranate both which are from the 7 species. Among the seven species there is a hierarchy regarding which one the *brocha* is recited upon first. The order is olive, date, grape, figs and then pomegranate. Based on this, R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach rules that one should recite the *Haetz* on the date and exempt all the other fruits eaten afterwards. [*Halichos Shlomo* 1-17] This is also brought from R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld Zt"l. See *Shu"t Rivivos Ephraim* [8-558] who also rules this way. He further questions if one should have the pomegranate second as it is also one of the seven spe-

cies or is the preference only when reciting the *brocha*.] However, some have the custom of reciting the *brocha* of *Haetz* on the apple. This is based on various Kabbalistic ideas found connecting the apple to Rosh Hashana. [*Siddur Ari, Kaf Hachayim* 583-13.] Being that the apple has special significance on Rosh Hashana, it can then be considered "*choviv*" over the other fruits eaten that night. This ruling further relies upon the opinion of the *Rambam* that "*choviv*" takes precedence over even the seven species. R' Shlomo Zalman writes that one who does follow this custom should leave the fruits of the seven species in the kitchen while reciting the *Haetz* on the apple. They should have in mind that the *Haetz* should cover the apple and any other fruits eaten subsequently.

Yehi Ratzon Without Eating

The *Shulchan Aruch* [583-1] writes that one should eat from the *simanim* and recite the appropriate *Yehi Ratzon* on each one. The *Kaf Hachaim* [583-6] comments that the source for having to actually eat from the foods is unclear. The Gemara [*Horiyos* 12a] says that they would look at the *siman* and recite the *Yehi Ratzon* [there is a question of the *girsas* in the *gemara* -see *Beis Yosef* 583-1]. He writes that if one is unable to eat any of the *simanim*, they could nonetheless place the food in front of them and recite the *Yehi Ratzon*. He concludes that if one was lacking one of the foods they could still recite the *Yehi Ratzon* as it is a *tefillah* not a *brocha* on the fruit.

Rabbi Weinrib, manhig ruchni of Agudas Yisroel of West Rogers park, is the community maggid shiur at the kollel.

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