

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בשבת



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
MATOS-MASEI

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TO BE A SERVANT

At the end of *Parshas Balak*, we find Midyan luring the *Bnei Yisrael* to sin. This caused a terrible plague, wiping out twenty-four thousand members of *Klal Yisrael*. In *Parshas Matos*, Hashem told Moshe to avenge those who had died, and wage war against Midyan. Moshe did so, dispatching twelve thousand soldiers, who successfully defeated the Midyanim, and also slew Bilaam, the instigator of the crime.

When they returned from the battlefield, Moshe saw they had not sufficiently carried out Hashem's word, by allowing some of the instigators to live. He became upset, chastising them for not properly finishing the job.¹

After this episode, the next laws in the Torah are taught by *Elazar HaKohen*. The Gemara² explains that Moshe's anger caused him to forget some of his learning, and therefore Elazar had to take over and teach these laws to *Klal Yisrael*.

While much can be learned about the impact of anger, The Alter of Novordhak³ (R' Yosef Yozel Horowitz, 1847-1919) asks an illuminating question. Why was Moshe upset at all? He should have rejoiced! If we look back in the *parshah*, Hashem told Moshe that Moshe had one final task before his death, and that was to avenge those who had died. When Moshe saw that the war was not yet over, his reaction should have been elation — he gets to live another day! Yet, he reacted in the exact opposite manner. Why is that?

It is clear, as Rashi⁴ says, that *Moshe Rabbeinu's* focus was *avodas Hashem*, at all costs, including his own life. Thus, after being told his mission, he immediately rallied the troops and sent them to Midyan. And when he found out they had not properly completed the job, he was upset. How could *Klal Yisrael* fail in its mission of *avodas Hashem*!?

Serving Hashem is our entire purpose for existence. Without it, there is no reason to live. With that perspective, we can understand Moshe's reaction. Though Moshe could certainly have done more *mitzvos* with another day of life, it was not what Hashem wanted. Isn't that reason enough to get upset?

1 *Bamidbar* 31:1-20

2 *Pesachim* 66b

3 *Chayei HaMussar*, Vol. I, pg. 174

4 *Bamidbar* 31:3, s.v. וידבר משה

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

In a good relationship, one party does for the other simply because of their desire to do good and make them happy.¹

Similarly, one of the greatest ways we can inspire our own *avodas Hashem* is to work on our relationship with Hashem. The more we understand and feel Hashem's presence in our lives, the more we will want to do whatever we can to make Him happy.

But how does one work on that relationship? A great way, which is already built into our day, is to take our time and understand what we are saying when we *daven*.

Davening is filled with praise of Hashem, and recognition of the good that He does for us.

When we focus on the descriptions of Hashem's greatness, His fine-tuned control of the entire world, and the amazing creations He created, and it is all for us, it is bound to inspire love of Hashem in our hearts.²

1 *Mesillas Yescharim*, Chap. 18

2 *Rambam Hilchos Yisodei Torah* 2:2



Don't think that when one is young they can rely on age to fix their middos. Only the years grow old, but not the person. - *The Piaseczna Rebbe, R' Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, zt"l, Chovos HaTalmidim, Chap. 7*

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WISDOM AND EXPERIENCE

Naomi* met her grandfather outside after *davening*, like she always did. Though her family *davened* at the large *shul* down the block, her grandfather liked to *daven* in the *shteeble* that was no larger than a small house. It was mostly elderly men, but they met every morning, evening and night, like clockwork.

At the age of seven, Naomi decided she wanted to greet her grandfather after *davening* on Shabbos, and now, one year later, she had not missed a single week. "Good Shabbos, *sheifelah*," her grandfather said. Naomi loved when her grandfather called her that. The way he said it, it felt like the entire *Klal Yisrael* was smiling at her.

"Hi Saba! Should we take the long way home?"

"Of course, I wouldn't have it any other way!"

Mr. Yumi Zuckerbrodt and his granddaughter headed to her house, making sure to take the long way home. Unconsciously, Naomi reached up to hold her Saba's worn hand. As if on cue, Mr. Zuckerbrodt started to tell her what the *rav* spoke about, as he always did. "In *Ashrei*, there is a *pasuk*, '*Poseach es yodecha*,'" he started. "I know that one!" interrupted Naomi. "My *morah* says that we should concentrate extra hard when we say that."

"That's right, *sheifelah*. And that's what Rabbi Katz spoke about as well!"

"Do you know what I do? I close my eyes tight when I say it. It helps me. Do you do that, Saba?"

To Naomi's surprise, her grandfather suddenly stopped walking, and stared into the distance, as if he were seeing something a thousand miles away. "I don't close my eyes, no. But I do concentrate. But I'll tell you something... *Klal Yisrael* concentrates during that *pasuk*. Given my experiences, I find I put my energy into the next *pasuk*."

"Why? What's the next *pasuk*?"

"*Tzadik Hashem b'chol derachav, v'chasisid b'chol ma'asov*. Hashem is righteous in all His ways, and generous in all His deeds." As if he remembered where he was, Mr. Zuckerbrodt blinked a few times, and looked down at the shining face of his granddaughter. "When you're older, you'll understand. But remember this — no matter the difficulty one has gone through, the troubles, the challenges, and the pitfalls, Hashem is there guiding us. Hashem is righteous in all of His ways, not just the one's that we like."

Naomi nodded, and although she knew she didn't really understand what was just said, she knew it was important.

Mr. Zuckerbrodt has since passed, and Naomi now has a family of her own. But that short interaction left an enduring impression, and the lesson remains.

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Hashem will stall a decree for the sake of one who treats Hashem's will as his own.¹
- An *eved Hashem* is greater than a prophet.²
- How does one receive the appellation of '*eved Hashem*'? One way is by doing *teshuva*.³

1 *Rashash* on *Avos* 2:4, s.v. בהר"ב ד"ה כדי

2 R' S. R. Hirsch on *Bamidbar* 12:7, s.v. לא כן

3 *Medrash Shocher Tov*, 18:2

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