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בית הוראה

Shaarei Ezra

שערי עזרא

Parshat Emor

Zmanim for New York:

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Shabbat ends: 8:43pm

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TORAH IS NOT IN HEAVEN.

RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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One of the big questions on the secrets of the Torah that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai revealed that needs further explanation, is the fact that the Torah isn't given over in any way from heaven or by prophecy. Torah is only given over by learning and toil over the holy text, drawing conclusions from the holy words.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (known in short as Rashbi), was taught all the secrets of the Torah directly from Eliyahu Hanavi himself, as it says in the Zohar: (פרשת כי תבוא דף עג,א):

"רבי שמעון בר יוחאי אזל ליה וערק למדברא דלוד, ואתגניז בחד מערתא, הוא ורבי אלעזר בריה. אתרחיש להו ניסא וכו', הוי אליהו זכור לטוב אתי לון בכל יומא תרי זמני ואלף לון."

Translation: "When Rashbi escaped from the Romans, he hid in a cave with his son Rabbi Elazar. Eliyahu Hanavi appeared to them twice daily and taught them.

The Arizal explained (הקדמה לעץ חיים דף ג' ע"ד) that all the secrets written in the Zohar were from those lessons taught to Rashbi by Eliyahu Hanavi.

Rashbi wasn't the only one to receive his esoteric knowledge from Eliyahu; Eliyahu also appeared to the Arizal and taught him all the secrets that he knows. With that knowledge, the Arizal was able to explain the deep meanings of the Zohar in ways that became somewhat understood to those who learn Kabala, as prior to that, the Zohar was impossible to be understood even by the big Mekubalim. All the Halachot that we follow from the Arizal are really extracted from Eliyahu Hanavi.

This is very perplexing since the Halachot of the Torah may not be given from heaven as the Pasuk teaches:

"אלה המצות אשר צוה ה' את משה אל בני ישראל בהר סיני" (ויקרא כ"ז ל"ד).

וזאת התורה- שאין נביא רשאי לחדש דבר מעתה (שבת קד,א)

The Pasuk says that the Torah we have is a complete Torah and no prophet is allowed to add anything new to it.

After Moshe received the Torah at Har Sinai, we aren't allowed to add any new Torah laws even if received from Heaven. This concept is called לא בשמים היא. This concept teaches that a prophet isn't allowed to teach anything of his own accord. Moreover, even if Hashem says a new Halacha we aren't allowed to listen, unless it's a one-time commandment.

We learn this idea from a Gemara that tells us (בבא בבא) about the argument of Rabbi Eliezer and Chachamim of whether a certain oven is pure or not, Hashem then called out that Halacha is like the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer. One would think that this should resolve the argument, but the Chachamim claimed that once the Torah was sealed, we can't accept laws from heaven, even if Hashem Himself was the one saying it. Rav Nissim Gaon (ברכות יט,ב) wrote that when Hashem said to follow the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, He was really testing the Rabbis to see if they would follow His commandment of לא בשמים היא, or whether they would



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TORAH IS NOT IN HEAVEN.

get confused when they would see that Hashem gets involved in their argument.

After we have learned that the Zohar is all heavenly inspired, given by Eliyahu Hanavi to Rashbi, the question is now asked: how are we allowed to learn things from heaven when the rule is that the Torah may not be learned from heaven, not even from a prophet like Eliyahu Hanavi?

This question may be asked also from many Gemarot that Eliyahu appeared to the Rabbis to teach them Halachot. For example, in the very beginning of Shas (ברכות גא) Eliyahu taught Rabbi Yosi three Halachot. Another example is the bracha of Tfilat Haderech which was instituted by Eliyahu Hanavi (ברכות נטא).

Also we can ask on the known term called 'Teiko' which is abbreviation to תשובה יתרה קושיות ובעיות. Meaning, Eliyahu will resolve all doubts we have in Halacha when he'll appear just prior to the arrival of Mashiach. Now, how will we be able to accept his rulings if they are heavenly? The Chida (ברכי יוסף סי' לב) addresses the above questions and answers that

everything that Rashbi and the Arizal got from Eliyahu were not messages from heaven but something totally different. Eliyahu was teaching Rashbi and the Ari things he withdrew from his own teachings, not things he had received from heaven. Just as regular Torah scholars learn Torah, so did Eliyahu learn Torah. Since Eliyahu was able to draw those teachings on his own, he was able to pass them over to others as well.

Should one ask, how are we able to learn Torah from Eliyahu Hanavi if he was already deceased? The Gmara (מועד קטן כו,א) says that Eliyahu never died, as the Pasuk indicates that he was elevated to heaven alive.

The Chatam Sofer (ח"ו ליקוטים סימן צח) explains further that Eliyahu appears in the world in two forms: one, as an angel and second as a human. When Eliyahu is in a form of an angel he isn't allowed to teach any laws since under that would fall under the restriction of לא בשמים היא, but when he appears in human form, he then learns and teaches as any other individual does and his teachings are thus accepted to all.

THE REJECTED AND DEPRIVED CHILD

Imagine a person who's completely rejected and isolated by the entire society from the day he was born, despite constantly trying to do the right thing. What if he would snap and say something terrible? How would we react? Would we try and understand him and help him recover? Would we feel bad for him?

In the end of our Parasha we come across a story of a young man who has done a grave sin—he uttered the Name of Hashem and cursed. The consequence of his action was severe, he received the death penalty as directed by Hashem Himself.

If we look a bit into this man's upbringing however, we might be puzzled as to why he had received such a harsh punishment.

This man was born to a woman named Shlomit Bat Divri (רש"י ויקרא כד,יא). Shlomit Bat Divri was very immodest to say the least, as she always greeted every man she met. Eventually her actions led to an Egyptian officer waking her husband early in the morning and forcefully sending him away from the house, leading to a terrible thing from which this boy was born (רש"י שמות (ב,יא). As the boy was growing he had a choice to make, would he go with his father or his mother? He decided to stick with his mother. Although the boy could have followed his Egyptian father's origins and live an aristocratic life, being that his father was a highly respected officer, he decided to follow his mother's Jewish origins and be part of the deprived and tortured slave nation (רמב"ן ויקרא כד,י).

As he was growing up in such a home, we can imagine how he was treated by everyone around him and what type of childhood he must have had. For example, we can just imagine that no one would allow his kids to play with this kid who had a mother with such infamous reputation. No kindergarten or yeshiva would accept such a kid whose father was an anti-Semite and murderer.

Still, this kid didn't leave the nation he had willingly chose to follow and continued trying to do the right thing. Going forward many years, the nation had left Egypt and were in the desert, there in the desert he tried to find a place to put up his tent—a place he can call his own. He believed that the tribe of Dan, where his mother is from, would be the correct place to be, but the people of Dan rejected him saying that in order to stay with them he must have a father from that tribe, which he didn't. Having his mother from the tribe of Dan wasn't going to make it. (רש"י כד,י).

He figured that he would go to Moshe's Bet Din and surely Moshe Rabbenu would resolve this in his favor. After all, he needs to dwell somewhere, and the only roots he had were to the tribe of Dan. Much to his surprise and sorrow, Moshe ruled that the people of Dan are correct and he must remove his tent at once.

After all those years of being rejected by everyone, he broke down and sinned, as this was the final straw that broke the camel's back. Immediately he was detained and waited to hear from Moshe of his fate, until the instructions came from Hashem saying that he should be put to death.

Let's think how we would treat such a scenario today. When a person commits a terrible crime, we would first see if it is a crime that hurts others, such as a murder or a robbery. Then we would evaluate to see if the criminal is stable or 'emotionally disturbed' before punishing him for his crimes. If his actions were not harmful to others, such as merely talking or cursing, we would probably recommend some therapy, give him much love and support, and help him cope with his childhood emotional trauma. We would try to give him social support in order to build his stability. Why then, in our story with this young man, did Hashem decide that this young man is guilty and



THE REJECTED AND DEPRIVED CHILD

deserves the worse punishment, although his sin did not hurt anyone and most likely he acted out of emotional illness?

Perhaps this was part of the reason Moshe Rabenu had detained him. Moshe didn't know if this person acted well aware of his actions or mindlessly, and therefore he turned to Hashem to inform of what to do with him. Only Hashem knows what the real motivation of a person is. Hashem, Who knows the person's history and why he behaved the way he did, could have found him guilty. It seems that this person allowed himself to act the way he did, simply because he felt that after he sacrificed so much he deserves a different treatment. When things

didn't turn out as planned, he allowed himself to express his frustration in the most horrific way. There is no excuse to behave in such a way simply because one feels bad for himself.

We also should acknowledge that we have a real misunderstanding of what a sin really does. We think that a sin only hurts the person sinning but no one else, therefore it's hard for us to understand why this man, who only spoke seemingly harmless words, should be punished so severely. But the reality is that a sin affects the entire world, causing much harm and destruction. Especially a sin of the great magnitude that this man was guilty of.

PSHAT OR KABBALAH?

The day of Lag B'omer is the day that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai revealed to the world the deepest secrets of the Torah, known as the Kabbalah, written in the Sefer HaZohar. Though it was not only these secrets that were revealed in the Zohar; Mekubalim drew from the wellsprings of the Zohar many Halachot as well. However, many times the Halachot either written in or derived from the Zohar are contrary to those that are in the Shulchan Aruch, and the Poskim therefore discuss what to do in such an event.

Do all agree?

This discussion seems to be a difference of opinions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The Bet Yosef (who wrote the Shulchan Aruch), whom the Sephardim generally follow, wrote (סימן קמא) that the Zohar overrides the ruling of the Poskim: "הזוהר מפני דברי לא שבקינן דברי" "הפוסקים". In contrast, the Rema, who is the Posek of the Ashkenazim, argued that we follow the poskim over the Zohar: "אין לזוז מדברי הפוסקים אף אם היו דברי הזוהר חולקים עליהם. כן נראה לי דלא בבית יוסף"



The Bet Yosef explained (או"ח סי' כה) that in reality any Posek who ruled contrary to the Zohar did so only because he hadn't seen the Zohar's opinion; had the Posek seen the words of the Zohar, surely he would change his mind and rule in accordance with the Zohar. The reason the Poskim didn't see what the Zohar says is because the Zohar was hidden for about 1500 years after Rabbi Abba wrote all those wonderful secrets that were given to him by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

Let's give just one of the many examples of this concept. In the halachot of משנה לחם Lechem Mishne on Shabbat (the two loaves of bread required on Shabbat meals), we learn that on Friday night we should cut the bottom loaf. The Bet Yosef says that according to the Pshat one should really cut the top bread; nevertheless, we don't do that, rather we cut the bottom loaf since that is the opinion of the holy Zohar. The Bach argued on the Bet Yosef strongly asking how it's possible that he ignores the Gemara's ruling that one may not skip over a Mitzvah (אין מעבירין על המצוות) that's in front of him and go to the Mitzvah under it because of the Zohar?!?!

Later of poskim opinionn

Later poskim followed this principle as well. The Mishna Berura (סימן כח, ס"ק מב) who was the leading authority for the Ashkenazim, wrote to follow the Gemara and the Poskim over the Zohar and Kabbalah; with an exception—whenever the Poskim didn't state their opinion or whenever the Poskim argue over a certain law, then the Zohar would will determine. Another exception is if the Kabbalah is more stringent than the Pshat, then we should follow the Kabbalah. Contrary to that, the Kaf Hachai, (סימן כה, ס"ק עה) who was the late Sefaradi Posek, wrote that the Sefaradi approach is the way Maran the Bet Yosef wrote (see above), that L'Halacha we go with the Zohar ruling.

He brings the words of the Rav Mas'at Binyamin (משאת בנימין) that even if all the poskim in the world would say differently from the Zohar, we still follow the Zohar over everybody.

Sefer Petach Hadvir (ח"ב עמוד ח') writes that Maran the Shulchan Aruch always brings the Zohar to Halacha in his Sefer.

Minhagim

Moreover, this applies not only to Halachic matters but also to Minhagim—customs as well. Although the Shulchan Aruch wrote that one may not change any Minhag (custom) in any way, and proceeded to give a disclaimer in his introduction to his great essay, the Bet Yosef on the Tur, that if he might say something that is not with accordance with one's Minhag, one should ignore his Psak and follow the Minhag, but when it came to the Zohar, he seemed to follow the Zohar over the Minhag. For example, he brings (או"ח סי' נט) the Minhag mentioned by the Rosh and Rabenu Yona that one may say "Kedusha" of "Yotser" and "U'va Letsion Goel" without a minyan (quorum of ten men), but since the Zohar holds otherwise we don't follow the Minhag. Here as well the Rema (in Darkei Moshe ג' ס"ק) argued and said that the Minhag must be kept even against the Zohar's opinion.

Since the Sephardim always follow the Shulchan Aruch, in this very case it isn't any different, and one must follow his Psak that Kabbala overrides the Pshat and all other Poskim. Moreover, even if the Bet Yosef himself says differently than the Kabbalah, Sephardim must follow the Kabbalah (ב"ק החיים שם). This also applies to the laws of Berachot, as whenever we

PSHAT OR KABBALAH?

have a doubt whether a Beracha should be said or not, the rule of thumb is that we usually don't say the Beracha (ספק ברכות). Surprisingly, when the Ari (the Ari was the main master of Kabbalah) says that a Beracha should be said we must say it even if the Poskim argue and even if the Shulchan Aruch holds it shouldn't be said. (חיד"א בברכי יוסף סי' מו אות יא) it's worthwhile to note that Chacham Ovadia argues on this ruling of the Chida.

It's interesting to note that Chacham Ovadia was also very opposed to this entire approach that Kabbala overrides Pshat, as he wrote many times that L'Halacha we only go according to Pshat. Concerning that which we brought above, Chacham Ovadia argued that it's a misunderstanding of the concept, as the Halacha follows Kabbala only when it's the Zohar itself against the Poskim, since the Zohar is an ancient Sefer written many years prior to the Poskim; but when the Gemara argues with the Zohar, or the Poskim argue with the Mekubalim, we always follow the Gemara and Poskim. (ראה באריכות בעין יצחק ח"ג עמוד רסד).

Final words

The above is a rundown of the opinions on the matter of Kabbalah vs Pshat, but it's important to note that in reality the Kabbalah and Pshat do not argue at all, but rather deal with two separate levels of the Torah which complement and complete each other. The Vilna Gaon explained that anyone who thinks they argue is mistaken. Therefore, all that the Poskim wrote was only in relation to how to direct us in the Halacha, since to us it looks like it's contradictory and we have to act in one way or the other.

The way the Mekubalim explain this (חסד לאברהם בהקדמה לאור החמה) is that the Torah has (so to speak) soul, body and clothing. The simple understanding of the Torah (Pshat) is the clothing part, while the laws and Mitzvot of the Torah is the body, and the Kabbalah is the soul.

ברוך חכם הרזים.

ה'רואה לבנה בחידושה מברך', וכתבו הפוסקים שאין צריך ראייה ממש של הלבנה (רעק"א על השו"ע בשם המהריק"ש והר"ש אייגר או"ח סי' יב), ודלא כדעת הפנים מאירות שסבר שהלשון 'רואה' הוא לאו דוקא, וראה בן איש חי (ויקרא שנה ב' אות כד). וכן מצאנו גם בברכת האילות שנאמר בהם: 'היוצא בימי ניסן וראה אילות מברך', ולכן כתבו הפוסקים שסומא לא יברך, ולעומת זאת בברכת המלך מצאנו שסומא מברך אף שאינו רואה את המלך (מג"א סימן רכד ס"ו), ויש להבין מה החילוק בניהם. ונראה לומר כמו שכתבו הפוסקים שיש הבדל בין ברכת המלכים לברכת שאר דברים, שבשאר דברים צריך ראייה ממש כיון שהברכה הינה על התפעלות הנפש מראיית אותם הדברים, אולם הברכה על המלך אינה על הראיה אלא על הידיעה שיש לפניו מלך (כן חילק החיד"א בברכ"י הובא בשערי תשובה סי' רכד ס"ה), ולכן סומא יכול לברך כשיודע שהמלך במקום, וכן גם אדם שיכול לראות את המלך במקום שישנו דבר המכסה את המלך ואין הוא יכול לראותו. ועל פי הניל יש לומר שגם בברכת חכם הרזים שמברך על ששים רבוא ישראל, שהברכה אינה על ההתפעלות שבאה מראיה, אלא על ידיעה שהבורא ברא ריבוי גדול של ידועות, ולכן יכול לברך גם אם אינו רואה את כמות האנשים ורק נמצא שם. ובאמת אפשר לומר דבר נוסף, שיתכן שמספיק לראות חלק מאותה כמות הגדולה של האנשים ולא את כולם, ומוכרח להיות כן שכמעט מן הנמנע במציאות לראות את כל כמות האנשים יחדיו ואם כן איך חז"ל תקנו ברכה שכזו, אלא ודאי שמספיק לראות רק את חלקם.



שלום לכבוד הרב. יש לי שאלה ורציתי לראות אם הרב יוכל לעזור לי בה. אני בדרך כלל לא משתתף בהפגנות, אולם כששמעתי על הפגנת המליון שהתקיימה שבוע שעבר חשבתי לעצמי שעלי לילך לשם על מנת לברך את הברכה שקבעו חז"ל כשרואים כמות גדולה של ישראל. ואמנם מליון אנשים לא היו שם אבל מאוד יתכן שהיו כשש מאות אלף איש. והנה התלבטתי אם רשאי הייתי לברך, שהרי חז"ל אמרו שעל מנת לברך יש לראות ששים ריבוא, והרי כשהייתי שם יכלתי לראות רק את אלו הנמצאים מסביבי ולא את כל הששים ריבוא.

שלום וברכה לשואל היקר. שנינו בגמרא (ברכות נח, א) ונפסק בשולחן ערוך (סימן רכד סעיף ה') שהרואה ששים ריבוא (שהם שש מאות אלף) מישראל ביחד אומר: 'ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם חכם הרזים'. והסבר ברכה זו היא שכיון שאין דעת אנשים דומה זה לזה כשם שאין פרצופיהם דומין זה לזה, ורק השם יתברך יודע מה בלב כל אחד מאוכלסין אלו, לכן מברך את הבורא. וביתר ביאור הסביר המהרש"א שתכלית השינויים בין בני אדם מגיע עד ששים ריבוא ולכן מברך על שרואה מבחר כה גדול של ריבוי דעות ופרצופים משונים שברא הבורא. ובכפ החיים (סימן רכד ס"ק טו) כתב לסייג את הברכה רק לרואה ששים ריבוא בארץ ישראל, ואילו הרואה כמות זו של ישראל בחוץ לארץ יברך בלי שם ומלכות. והנה כמו שכבודו העיר שממשמעות לשונם של חכמינו עולה שיש לראות את הדבר עליו מברכים ודבר זה אכן מבואר בכמה מקומות. לדוגמה בברכת הלבנה אמרו חז"ל:

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