



Bet Horaah

בית הוראה

Shaarei Ezra

שערי עזרא

Parshat Yitro
Zmanim for New York:
Candle Lighting: 5:12pm
Shabbat ends: 6:13pm
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DOES HASHEM NEED US? A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING
 WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**
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Lately, a major controversy erupted when a highly renowned and influential rabbi stated that G-d needs us. He explained that the very fact that Hashem created us proves that He desires something from us—namely, our relationship with Him and our love. Needless to say, such statements, which he repeatedly emphasized in many different classes, sparked a huge outcry. On the surface, this claim appears at best problematic and, at worst, outright heretical. Since G-d is not human and does not possess human traits, the concept of having a need—a fundamentally human characteristic—cannot apply to Him. Suggesting that we can provide something that G-d lacks diminishes His transcendence and implies a degree of human-like limitation. We firmly believe and know that Hashem has no limitations and can do anything He wills; thus, He has no need for us in any way. We also cannot benefit Him in any way, and, obviously, there is nothing we can do that He cannot. Therefore, the above statements seem to be entirely incorrect. However, studying the words of our sages and rabbis can provide a surprisingly deeper perspective on this concept. The Zohar (3, 7;2) states, "ישראל מפרנסים"—Israel sustains and provides for their Father in Heaven. These words are profound and require further explanation. Let's begin with this week's parasha (Beshalach). The Ohr HaChaim explains that when Moshe stood before Hashem and prayed for the sea to split, Hashem responded that while He desired to help, He was unable to do so. This was because He created the world with two opposing forces—Midat HaDin and Midat HaRachamim—which are in constant struggle. Midat HaDin opposed saving the Jewish people, while Midat HaRachamim sought to intervene. As a result, Hashem declared that He would not act directly; rather, the Jew-

**HASHEM
NEEDS
YOU**

ish people themselves needed to tip the balance by strengthening their emunah and jumping into the sea, thereby empowering Midat HaRachamim to override Midat HaDin. This insight from the Ohr HaChaim is fascinating. Consider this: Hashem, who created the world and us, chose to limit Himself in a way that makes His help dependent on our actions, even in moments of desperate need. The Ohr HaChaim connects this idea to another pasuk in parashat Haazinu: "You weakened the Rock that bore you", which Rashi explains to mean that when we sin, we weaken Hashem, so to speak. This concept is even more striking—it suggests not only that Hashem sometimes cannot help us without our support, but that our sins actually diminish His presence in the world. On the contrary, when we act correctly by learning Torah and performing mitzvot, we actually strengthen Hashem, as the pasuk states: "Give strength to God" (Tehillim 68:35). Chazal explain this in Shemot Rabbah (Eicha 1; 33): "When Yisrael fulfills the will of Hashem, they add strength to the might of the One above, as it says (Tehillim 60:14): "באלקים חיל נגשה חיל"—'With G-d, we will achieve valor.' However, when Yisrael does not fulfill His will, it is as if, so to speak, they weaken the great power above, as it is written (Devarim 32:18): 'You weakened the Rock that bore you.'" Similarly it is stated: "When Yisrael fulfills the will of the Hashem they increase strength in the might of the One above, as it says (Bamidbar 14:17): 'And now, let the strength of Hashem be magnified.' However, when they do not fulfill His will, it is as if, so to speak, they weaken the great power above, and they, too, go forth without strength before their pursuers." This concept is repeated in Chazal in various versions. For example, the Gemara (Megilah 11a) states:

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"בעצלותם ימך המקרה ובשפלות ידים ילדוף הבית" *Through laziness, the roof sags, and through idle hands, the house leaks*" (Kohelet 10:18).

The Gemara explains that the pasuk's reference is to a more profound idea:

"Because Yisrael were lazy and did not engage in Torah study, the 'enemy' of Hashem became poor." (The term "enemy" is a euphemism for Hashem, used out of reverence.)

This passage teaches that when we are lax in Torah learning, it is as if Hashem Himself, so to speak, becomes "impoverished."

Rav Chaim Volozhin, in his sefer *Nefesh HaChaim* (1; 9), presents this same concept and adds an allegory based on the pasuk: "I have compared you to the horses of Pharaoh's chariots" (Shir HaShirim 1:9)- meaning Israel are compared in this pasuk to those horses. He explains its meaning as follows: Normally, a rider directs the horse, and the horse follows wherever the rider leads. However, during *Kriat Yam Suf*, the horses did not obey their riders; instead, they led them into the sea against their will. Similarly, Hashem declares that *Am Yisrael* always leads Him, so to speak, through their actions—determining positive or negative outcomes—even against His will.

That is the meaning of the pasuk (Devarim 33; 26): "רוכב שמים בעוזרך"—Hashem guides the world with the help of *Am Yisrael*.

All the above clearly illustrate that Hashem, after creation, chose to limit Himself to act in this world only according to the actions of *Klal Yisrael*.

Another idea presented by that well-known rabbi is that Hashem "needs" us in the way that a father needs his children. When a person needs his children, it does not diminish him in any way. On the contrary, someone who is devoid of feelings, uninterested in companionship or family to love and care for, is lacking something fundamental.

Those who oppose this idea cite the pasuk: "אם תצדק מה תתן לו"—"If you are righteous, what do you give Him?" (Iyov 35:7), implying that we cannot help or provide Hashem in any way. However, the response to this is that performing mitzvot does not "help" Hashem Himself, as He does not need our mitzvot for Himself, but rather, it enables Him to bestow goodness upon us.

An analogy for this is a father who owns a successful business and wishes to bring his children into it. However, he requires them to first learn the trade in order to join. Even though he desires to bring them in, if they are unprepared, they cannot take part. Clearly, the father does not *need* their help, but he wants them to be involved for their own benefit, so they too can succeed.

Summary: There are two key points in this discussion that require clarification. The first is whether Hashem limited His abilities concerning our world, and the second is whether Hashem needed to create us in order to have entities to love and interact with. Obviously, this topic is not as simple as it initially seems and is more kabbalistic in nature. Anyone who wishes to study and gain an understanding of it must seek proper guidance from a true *talmid chacham*.

HOSTAGE FOOTAGE ON SHABBAT: A HALACHIC PERSPECTIVE

The release of hostages in recent instances has often taken place on Shabbat. Footage of these events is being viewed worldwide, and as a Shabbat-observant nation, we would watch it only after Shabbat. However, the question arises: Can one view footage that was recorded on Shabbat?

This question is divided into two parts:

1. Videos recorded by the terrorists before releasing the hostages – Since non-Jews are not commanded to keep Shabbat, footage they record does not fall under the prohibition of benefiting from Shabbat labor—unless it was created exclusively for Jews. Since these recordings were made for their own public relations and glorification, they may be viewed after Shabbat, despite having been recorded on Shabbat.

2. Videos taken in Israel by Jewish individuals – This raises a separate halachic concern that requires further analysis.

The Status of Shabbat Violations

When a Jew violates Shabbat, the results of his actions are generally prohibited, but different scenarios must be considered:

•If he violated Shabbat unknowingly (*shogeg*)—meaning he either did not realize it was Shabbat or was unaware that his actions constituted a violation—then the results are prohibited for him and others on Shabbat. However, they may benefit from them immediately after Shabbat.



•If he violated Shabbat knowingly (*mezid*)—meaning he was fully aware that it was Shabbat and that his actions were prohibited—then the results are prohibited for him forever. Others, however, may benefit from them only after Shabbat.

Accordingly, one might assume that recordings made by those who violated Shabbat could still be watched after Shabbat. However, upon further examination of the poskim, some explain that if the recordings were made specifically for others to watch, it is comparable to someone performing a *melacha* for himself, rendering it prohibited. Therefore, Jewish reporters filming on Shabbat to broadcast the freeing of the hostages are violating Shabbat for others to see, and such footage should be avoided.

A Classic Dispute in Halacha

One might argue that our case is somewhat different, as the person benefiting from the outcome of the Shabbat violation would have preferred that Shabbat be observed rather than violated, and thus, he is not pleased with the transgression. This question was debated by two great halachic authorities over 500 years ago. The Rivash ruled that even if a Jew did not want *melacha* to be performed for him on Shabbat, he is still prohibited from benefiting from it. The Maharshal, however, permitted it. Nevertheless,

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the Ktav Sofer explained that in a case like ours—where the act was done for public viewing—everyone would agree that it is forbidden.

This principle is derived from a question posed to the Ktav Sofer regarding whether one may eat food cooked on Shabbat in a Jewish-owned restaurant after Shabbat. Based on previous halachic rulings, one might assume that it should be permitted. However, the Ktav Sofer explained that the usual allowance is based on the assumption that the Jew will not violate Shabbat again. In this case, where the Jew is not Shabbat observant and operates his business on Shabbat regularly, it is certain that he will continue violating Shabbat. Therefore, one is not permitted to eat the food he cooked on Shabbat, even after Shabbat.

Additional Reasons to Forbid

Another reason to forbid benefiting from Shabbat violations comes from a ruling of Chazal. They decreed that one may not benefit from melacha performed by a non-Jew on Shabbat until enough time has passed after Shabbat for the act to have been done then. This prevents even indirect benefit from the time saved. For example, if a non-Jew cooked an egg on Shabbat and it takes five minutes to cook, one must wait five minutes after Shabbat before eating it. This restriction ensures that people do not come to ask a non-Jew to perform melacha for them on Shabbat in the future, since there would be no perceived gain.

On the other hand, if a Jew violated Shabbat, one may benefit from the outcome immediately after Shabbat, as the assumption is that we will not ask him to do so again, since he would not violate Shabbat for us.

Now, since a non-observant Jew willingly violates Shabbat, and wouldn't might doing such a violation for us next Shabbat as well, in the same way a non-Jew might, we apply the same principle that we must wait after Shabbat the time that it takes to perform the melacha. Hence, we should wait the amount of time it takes to film the event and upload it to the news site. However, there is a complication: this event, which took place on Shabbat, cannot be recreated after Shabbat. Since it was a one-time occurrence on Shabbat and cannot be duplicated, one may argue that it remains forbidden forever.

Accordingly, Rav Elyashiv (Orchot Shabbat 25; 66) ruled that recordings taken on Shabbat by non-observant Jews may not be watched after Shabbat for the above two reasons:

1. The person who violated Shabbat will continue doing so in the future to benefit others with his work, thus chazal restriction would apply to him as well.
2. Since we are directly benefiting from the time spent violating Shabbat—where the photos and videos could only be taken on Shabbat—they become permanently forbidden.

Still, there are some poskim (Rav Chaim Kanyevsky, Maor Hashabat 1; page 432) who are lenient regarding viewing such pictures and videos, arguing that they are not tangible items from which one derives direct benefit—unlike food cooked on Shabbat, which is a physical object. This idea is based on the principle stated by Chazal that there is no me'ilah (misuse of sacred property) in merely looking at kodashim (consecrated items).

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE: BUT WHY US?

As part of the Jewish nation, we take pride in many things, including our intelligence, kindness, righteousness, and holiness. It seems to us that Hashem made a good choice in selecting us from among all the nations.

However, none of these traits alone can fully explain why Hashem chose us. If it were about wisdom, one might argue that He could have chosen the Chinese people, who are also renowned for their intelligence. If it were about wealth, we know that Hashem does not value material riches. The same applies to military strength—there are nations with more powerful armies, yet Hashem does not consider that a determining factor.

This leaves us with the assumption that Hashem chose us for our righteousness. Yet the **pasuk** in **Parashat Ekev** explicitly states that Hashem is not impressed by our righteousness. Instead, He describes us as a **"stiff-necked people"**—stubborn and resistant.

Why, then, did Hashem choose us from among all the nations? Before we examine the answer the **Torah** provides, let us first explore the message from our **parasha**.

When **Yitro** arrives to see **Am Yisrael**, he presents highly intelligent suggestions to improve the nation's functioning. He

offers **Moshe Rabbeinu** detailed advice, which **Moshe** accepts and implements.

The **Ohr HaChaim** explains that the **Torah** includes this story about **Yitro** to teach us an important lesson: that gentiles, like **Yitro**, can be wise, intelligent, and possess other admirable qualities. Yet, despite these virtues, they were not chosen as **Hashem's** nation. This teaches us that **Hashem** is not impressed by intelligence or other such attributes when selecting His people.

The **Ohr HaChaim** explains that **Hashem** chose us purely out of His immense love for us, a love that began with our forefathers—Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov—whom He cherished. That's it. This idea is explicitly repeated in various places throughout the **Torah**. For example:

This idea is also found in the commentary of the **Kli Yakar** on **Devarim 7:7** (Parashat Va'etchanan) regarding the verse: **"Not because you are more numerous than all the nations did Hashem desire you and choose you...rather, because Hashem loves you"**The **Kli Yakar** is puzzled by the question-and-answer structure of the **pasuk**. It begins by searching for a reason why **Hashem** loves us, yet ultimately answers: **"Because Hashem**



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loves you." This, in itself, is profoundly powerful. Consider an analogy: Imagine parents being asked why they love their child. He misbehaves, keeps them up at night, causes trouble at school, and rarely helps around the house. And yet, their answer is simple—there is no specific reason. **They love him, just because.** Hashem loves us because we are His children. He chose us because of our **patriarchs and matriarchs**, and since then, His love

for us remains unshaken—whether we misbehave and anger Him or we act righteously and make Him proud. It is irrelevant; His love is not conditional on anything. **Chazal** refer to this as a **love that is not dependent on anything.** Unlike love that is based on a specific reason—where, once that reason is no longer relevant, the love fades—this love is **boundless and eternal.**

ט"ו בשבט

הימים שלפי הקבלה יש נוהגים לעשות סדר של אכילת שלוש מיני פירות. ויש להקפיד על סדר קדימת הברכות, והם נרמזים בראשי תיבות: מגע אש, דהיינו מזונת, גפן, עץ, אדמה, שהכל. וכשאוכל פירות, יקדים לברך על פי סדר הקודם בפסוק (דברים ח, ח): "ארץ חיטה ושעורה, גפן תאנה ורימון, ארץ זית שמן ודבש (תמרים). וכיון שראשון בפסוק היא החיטה לכן אם אוכל דבר שברכתו מזונת יברך עליו תחילה, ואחר כך יברך על שעורה, זיתים, תמרים (שהוא הדבש הנזכר בפסוק), גפן, תאנה ורימון. ולהבין את הסדר הנ"ל נעתיק את מתיקת את מתיקות לשונו של ה"בן איש חי" (פרשת מטות): אם היו לפניו מיני פירות, ויש בהם פירות משבעת המינים שנשתבחה בהם ארץ ישראל, יש דין קדימה לפירות שנשתבחה בהם ארץ ישראל על שאר פירות האילן, ולא עוד אלא גם בפירות שנשתבחה בהם ארץ ישראל עצמן יש קדימה זה על זה כפי הסדר שסידרם הכתוב בפסוק (דברים ח, ח): "ארץ חטה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורימון ארץ זית שמן ודבש", הרי זכר כאן חמישה מיני פירות, כי דבש הכתוב כאן הוא תמרים. וזה סדר קדימתן זה אחר זה: הענבים בין לחים בין יבשים קודמים לתאנים וכל שכן לרמונים, וכן תאנים קודמין לרמונים, אבל התמרים קודמין לענבים, מפני שהתמרים נזכרו שניים ל"ארץ" בתרא, וענבים שלישים ל"ארץ" קמא, והזית קודם לתמרים, וגם קודם לענבים מפני שהזית ראשון ל"ארץ" בתרא, אבל אינו קודם ליין אף על גב שהוא ראשון ל"ארץ" בתרא מפני כי חשיבות היין גדולה מאד, וגם ברכתו מבוררת יותר דאין מברכין "בורא פרי הגפן" אלא על היין, וכל ברכה הקבועה על מין פרטי יש בה שבח להקב"ה יותר שנראה בזה השגחתו יתברך בפרטות."

שלום לרב. **מה הכוונה ש"ט"ו בשבט הוא ראש השנה לאילנות, ומדוע אנחנו שמחים ביום זה?**

שלום וברכה. שאלה מעניינת, ובאמת אנחנו נוהגים לחגוג את יום זה ללא הבנה בסיסית במשמעותה. המשנה בתחילת מסכת ראש השנה מביאה את דעת בית הלל שחמשה עשר בשבט הוא ראש השנה לאילנות, והגמרא הסבירה שהכוונה שזמן זה הוא הגבול בין השנה הקודמת לשנה הזו בנוגע לתרומות ומעשרות, דהיינו שלא תרמים ומעשרים ממה שנחנט לפני זמן זה על מה שנחנט אחרי כן. וחניטה הוא שלב התהוות הפרי. ולכאורה לשמחה מה זה עושה, ומדוע זה סיבה למסיבה? אכן השמחה אינה כמו שמחה של חג ששם יש את מצות 'ושמחת בחגך', וגם לא כמו שמחה של פורים שנצטוונו בה בשמחה יתירה, אלא שנוהגים בה קצת שמחה ולא אומרים תחנון ונפילת אפים (שו"ע סימן קלא ס"ו), וכמו שכתב הטעם בזה הלבוש (סימן תרפה) שהוא כמו התחלת מצוה, וז"ל: "שבאילן הולכין בתרומותיו אחר התנטה, וכיון שזה הוא התחלה לדבר של מצוה, עשאוהו יום טוב". ומהעולה למדנו ששמחת ט"ו בשבט היא בעבור שבזמן זה היו מתחילים מחזור חדש של תרומות ומעשרות, וכשמתחילים מצוה חדשה יש לעשות שמחה, ולכן נהגו לעטר השולחן בפירות שבעת המינים, ויש מביאים עוד מיני פירות, עד שכתב בספר חמדת

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