

מי יאמר להקב"ה כיצד ינהיג את עולמו

הגאון רבי יצחק פערסקי שליט"א

Who Tells Hashem How to Run His World?

Rav Yitzchok Persky shlita,

THE GEMARA in **ברכות ז ע"א** brings a famous account. Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha related: "I once entered **לפני ולפנים** to offer the *ketores*," which can only mean Yom Kippur, "and I saw **אכתריאל קה ה' צבקות** seated upon a high and exalted throne. He said to me, **ישמעאל בני ברכני**, Yishmael, My son, bless Me." Rabbi Yishmael responded, "May it be Your will that Your mercy conquer Your anger, that Your mercy prevail over Your other *middos*, and that You deal with Your children with the *middah* of *rachamim* and go **לפנים משורת הדין** for them." The Gemara concludes: **ונענע לי בראשו**, He nodded His head in assent, and this teaches us that the *berachah* of a *hedyot* should never be light in your eyes.

The Ramchal (**אוצרות רמח"ל עמ' שכ"א-שכ"ב**) raises two difficulties. First, the Gemara derives its lesson from the nod at the end. But the *chiddush* should already be apparent from the opening. The very request of **ברכני** shows that a *hedyot's berachah* is wanted. What was added by the nod?

Second, where is there a *hedyot* here at all? A Yid is obligated in a hundred *berachos* every day (**מנחות מ"ג ע"ב**). Shemoneh Esrei is one *berachah* after another. Nowhere does the Gemara suggest that a Yid who makes a *berachah* is a *hedyot* whose words we might have dismissed. Why here?

When a Yid Is Not a Hedyot

The Ramchal's answer, presented here in simple terms, begins with the meaning of a *berachah*. As the Nefesh HaChaim explains (**שער ב'**), **ברוך אתה ה'** is a *tefillah* that Hashem be the source of increase, that His *ratzon* be aroused to bestow

shefa on Klal Yisrael. That is what a *berachah* accomplishes.

A person was created for this. **עבודה שבלב זו** (תענית ב ע"א). When a Yid approaches Hashem and asks, he is fulfilling the purpose for which he was made, and one who is doing exactly what he was created to do is no *hedyot*. On the contrary: **שבת ס"ז ע"א** **כל ישראל בני מלכים הם**.

Had Rabbi Yishmael answered **ברכני** with **רופא חולי עמו ישראל**, or with a *tefillah* for *shidduchim*, *parnassah* and understanding in Torah for all of Klal Yisrael, there would have been no *hedyot* in the story. Our *avodah* is to ask Hashem for what touches our lives, and to arouse His *ratzon* to grant it. We ask for the results of His *hanhagah*.

Rabbi Yishmael did something else entirely. His *berachah* addressed the *hanhagah* itself: let Your *rachamim* conquer Your anger, conduct Your world this way and not that way. It is not our place to mix into how Hashem runs His world. A person who stands before the Ribbono Shel Olam and advises Him on His *middos*: **אין לך הדיוט גדול מזה**. There is no greater *hedyot*.

Both questions are now answered. The word **ברכני** alone taught nothing about a *hedyot*, because an ordinary *berachah* is not the *berachah* of a *hedyot*. Only once Rabbi Yishmael spoke about the *hanhagah*, in a realm where any human being is a *hedyot*, and Hashem nonetheless nodded, do we learn that a *hedyot's berachah* is not to be taken lightly.

Yishmael B'ni

But the question remains. From where did Rabbi Yishmael take the license? The Ramchal notes in

passing that it was Yom Kippur, a day when one is stripped of *gashmiyus*, and that the vision was of the *Keser*. The matter deserves to be spelled out.

The Ramak opens Tomer Devorah (פרק א') with the foundation of the entire sefer: והלכת בדרכיו does not mean only copying Hashem's deeds. It means becoming like Him. The Thirteen Middos of Michah, he writes, are the *middos* of the **כתר עליון**, and we are obligated to resemble them. The *Keser*, then, is the way Hashem conducts His creations with *rachamim*.

Rabbi Yishmael saw **אכתריאל**, a vision of the *Keser*. Standing that close, with that measure of likeness to it, he was no longer yearning for his own needs. His longing was for the *hanhagah* itself: that we should perceive Hashem as an **אב הרחמן**, as One Who conquers His anger. That is the perception we are meant to strive toward and the *middah* we are meant to resemble.

This also explains the title he was given. Why **ישמעאל עבדי**? On Rosh Hashanah we say **אם כבנים אם כעבדים**, and we call out **אבינו מלכנו**. What decides whether one is a *ben* or an *eved*?

Rav Chaim Vital, in his *hakdamah* to Shaar HaHakdamos, says something awe-inspiring. On the way to the Akeidah, Avraham Avinu asked those with him what they saw. Yitzchak saw the Shechinah on the mountain; Yishmael and Eliezer saw nothing (**בראשית רבה נ"ו, ב**). Avraham told them, "שבנו לכם פה עם החמור," which Chazal read as **(יבמות ס"ב ע"א)** עם הדומה לחמור. Now, Eliezer was **(יומא כ"ח ע"ב)** דולה ומשקה מתורת רבו. Avraham, who kept the entire Torah before it was given, had transmitted all of it to him. He was an accomplished *talmid chacham*. Yet with all that Torah, one who looks and does not see the Shechinah, who has no inner sight, remains on the outside, like a *chamor* bearing a load. An *eved* stays outside and enters only on occasion. A *ben* is one who comes **לפנים** and sees the hidden treasures of the King.

Rabbi Yishmael stood **לפני ולפנים** and saw. At that moment he was a *ben*, and the yearning of a *ben* is **(משלי י"ז, ו)** תפארת בנים אבותם: the glory of his Father.

This is the depth of **דרשו ה' בהמצאו** (**ישעיה נ"ה, ד**), which Chazal apply to these days (**ראש השנה**), which Chazal apply to these days (**י"ח ע"א**). Beyond our *tefillos* for our own needs, it is a time of closeness in which we can be *mispalles* for *kavod Shamayim* itself, for how the King is perceived in His world.

Perhaps this also sheds light on a known Meshech Chochmah (**וילך**, on the haftarah of **שובה ישראל**). A *chillul Hashem* wounds the honor of the King Himself, and no one can be *mochel* the King's honor but the King. Throughout the days of judgment the Melech sits with the entire heavenly host standing before Him, and such a court can weigh *zechuyos* against *aveiros*, but a *chillul Hashem* is beyond its reach; of that Chazal said, **(יומא פ"ו ע"א)** אם יכופר העון הזה לכם עד תמותו. Only at Neilah, the hour of the *chasimah*, when Hashem seals the judgment alone (**ירושלמי**), can He forgive it out of His own great goodness, for who will question the King for pardoning the slight to His own honor? This is **שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך**: a teshuvah that must rise all the way to Him, because no one else can grant it. And this, writes the Meshech Chochmah, is why the pesukim of Neilah, **ולמה תמותו בית השיבו וחיו ישראל**, all turn on this *avon*.

If so, the deeper *avodah* of the day comes into view. One who arrives at that hour merely to have his *chillul Hashem* erased has no standing; the matter reaches too high. But **דרשו ה' בהמצאו** calls for the very reverse. A *ben* who has come **לפנים** is not pleading his own case at all. He is taken up with his Father's *tiferes*, with how the King is perceived in His world, and in that he draws close enough to resemble Him. That closeness itself is the *kapparah*, for there is no greater *kavod Shamayim*.

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