

The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn

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Parshas Tazria is sometimes read on the Shabbos of Parshas Hachodesh, which is associated with the month of Nissan. However, Parshas Tazria and Nissan seem to have no relation, and what's more, they appear to express contradictory themes!

LASTING INSPIRATION

Parshas Tazria begins with the *possuk*, "When a woman will produce seed and give birth to a male." The Gemara derives from this that "when a woman produces seed first, a male is born, while when a man produces seed first, a female is born."

As is the case with every phenomenon, the reason this is so in the physical realm is because it has a counterpart on a spiritual plane.

The Alter Rebbe explains that "man" represents Hashem, while "woman" represents Bnei Yisroel. The difference between who produces seed first corresponds to two possible ways a Jew can become aroused.

One possibility is that Hashem arouses a Jew from Above, without any effort on the Jew's part. An example for this is the various heavenly voices that call out each day. What is the purpose of these voices if we cannot hear them? The Baal Shem Tov explains that we *do* hear them. There are times when a Jew feels a sudden urge to repent, as if from nowhere. This is because his *neshamah* hears these heavenly voices which inspire him from Above. This is the meaning of the "man" producing seed first.

In such a case, "a female is born." The Gemara states that *nashim daatan kalos*, which means that one's thought process today might not remain tomorrow. In other words, although presently he is greatly inspired, the inspiration does not have a lasting effect, for two reasons: first of all, he has not worked on himself to absorb and retain it, and more importantly, the inspiration comes from a lower level of *Elokus*.

Alternatively, the "woman" produces seed first. This means that the Jew arouses himself using his own efforts. To use the above example of repentance, a person studies texts that discuss the negative effects of sin, until he is inspired to mend his ways. In such a case, "a male is born," meaning that the inspiration is long-lasting. Here as well there are two reasons for this: first of all, he has worked on himself and can therefore retain the inspiration, and furthermore, the level of *Elokus*

When a Jew arouses himself using his own efforts, the inspiration is long-lasting.

he has initiated is deeper and more powerful.

It follows that Parshas Tazria highlights the advantage of a person's *avodah*.

RAIN AND DEW

Now let's analyze the theme of the month of Nissan.

One of the differences between Tishrei and Nissan is that in Tishrei we ask for rain, while in Nissan we ask for dew.

Rain comes from clouds, which are formed from water that rises from the earth (as the *possuk* states, "Mist ascended from the earth, [forming clouds that] watered the face of the land"). This represents a level of *Elokus* that is initiated through the efforts of those found down here in this world.

Dew, on the other hand, comes from the sky and returns there as well. This represents a level of *Elokus* that is revealed (not through our efforts, but rather) as a higher initiative.

This is why rain depends on our *avodah*, as we say in Shema, "If you will listen to my *mitzvos*...I will give the rain of your land in its proper time." Dew, by contrast, descends on a regular basis, irrelevant of whether we are deserving or not.

In a similar vein, Tishrei follows Elul, regarding which the *possuk* states, "I am to my Beloved [Hashem], and [only then] my Beloved is to me." In Elul and Tishrei, we begin with our *avodah*, and this leads to a revelation from Above. Regarding Nissan, the *possuk* switches the order: "My Beloved is to me, and [then] I am to Him." During this month, "Hashem, the King of kings, revealed Himself and redeemed" the Jews from Mitzrayim, although they were bereft of *mitzvos*. In Nissan, the emphasis is on the revelation from Above, and it is the Divine revelation that arouses us below.

It follows that while Tazria emphasizes the advantage of our *avodah*, Nissan stresses the greatness of what descends from Above without our input. How is it that these two opposite themes coincide on one Shabbos?!

HEAD FOR MIRACLES

Tishrei and Nissan are both referred to as "head": The first day of Tishrei is Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year, and the *possuk* calls



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Nissan “the head of the months.”

The head is the source of life for the entire body, giving each limb and organ the ability to function. Similarly, these two months provide life for the entire year, in two distinct areas.

There are two systems with which Hashem runs the world: in a natural manner, and in a supernatural manner. Tishrei is the “head” for the natural conduct throughout the year, while Nissan is the “head” for the miraculous conduct.

In Elul and Tishrei the emphasis is on our *avodah* as it is connected to our *metzius*. The focus is on serving Hashem “with all *your* heart and with all *your* soul”—to connect our *metzius* to Hashem. Since the revelation from Above is correlated to our efforts, this *avodah* initiates a lower level of *Elokus*, one that is related to the natural course of conduct.

During Nissan, however, the emphasis is on the revelation from Above. Ultimately everything depends on our *avodah*, but here the *avodah* is of a different category entirely—“with all your might,” to surpass the boundaries of our *metzius* and serve Hashem with self-sacrifice and *kabolas ol*. The revelation from Above is therefore also one that is beyond the limits of nature.

This further strengthens the question: How does the limitless theme of Nissan fit in with Tazria, where the focus is on a person’s limited *avodah*?

FUSING GEVUL WITH BLI GEVUL

There are two ways these two themes can be approached: from the perspective of *giluyim*, Hashem’s revelations, and from the perspective of *atzmus*, Hashem’s essence.

In the world of *giluyim*, Hashem reveals Himself in two distinct ways: either in a limited fashion, running the world according to the rules of nature, or in an unlimited and miraculous manner. Each of the two has an advantage: When a miracle takes place, we behold a higher level of *Elokus* that is unrestrained by the confines of nature. On the other hand, with nature we see the quality of consistency,

expressing how Hashem does not change. On this plane, the two themes are opposites.

The same is true with a person’s *avodah*. From the vantage point of the *giluyim* of the *neshamah*, there are two ways in which one can serve Hashem: through connecting his *metzius* to Hashem by developing an intellectual and emotional appreciation of Him (Tishrei), or through *kabolas ol* and *mesiras nefesh* (Nissan). The latter method is advantageous in that one breaks through his personal confines, while the former has the advantage in that his actual *metzius* is connected to Hashem. Here as well, the two methods are not only different but are opposites.

From the view of *atzmus*, where Hashem is *kol yachol*, limited and unlimited conduct are one and the same.

However, as far as *atzmus* is concerned, both courses of conduct are one. Hashem is beyond any definition and description, and is higher than both limited conduct and unlimited conduct; both themes are one and the same.

(The Rebbe once explained the *piyut* we say on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: “Everyone believes...He is *kol yachol* [capable of everything], and includes them all together.” When actually manifesting themselves, limited

conduct and unlimited conduct are two distinct expressions of Hashem. However, from the view of *atzmus*, where Hashem is *kol yachol*, both abilities are one and the same.)

The same is true with us. As far as our essence is concerned, both methods of *avodah* are one. What’s more, we have the ability to infuse our *giluyim* with the perspective of *atzmus*. It is not enough to go past our limitations and display *mesiras nefesh* and *kabolas ol*; we must also reflect on Hashem’s greatness and thereby effect a change in our emotions. In a year when Parshas Tazria coincides with Nissan, we have the special power to fuse these two methods of *avodah* together, by recognizing that our *metzius* as well comes from *Elokus*, and that our limited faculties are themselves unlimited.

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, pp. 148ff.



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