

The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn



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The *haftorah* of Parshas Behaaloscha is the *haftorah* of *Rani vesimchi bas tziyon*.

Why was this reading selected as the *haftorah* of Parshas Behaaloscha? The obvious explanation is because it features Zechariah's vision of a golden menorah, and is thus connected with this *parshah*, which begins with "*Behaaloscha es haneiros*—When you will kindle the flames [of the menorah]." Similarly, this very *haftorah* is also recited on Shabbos Chanukah, the holiday that commemorates the miracle that occurred with the menorah.

However, if this is the only connection, the *haftorah* should begin a few verses later, when the menorah is first mentioned. Why does it begin with "*Rani vesimchi bas tziyon*—Rejoice and be glad daughter of *tziyon*"?

STARTING POINT

The Alter Rebbe asks this question in a Chanukah *maamar* in Torah Ohr. He answers that the term "*bas tziyon*" represents the state of the Jewish nation during *galus*. This fits neatly with the Chanukah story, when the Jews suffered oppression at the hands of the Greeks.

However, that only explains why the *haftorah* begins with these words on Shabbos Chanukah. Why do we start at this point on Shabbos Parshas Behaaloscha, where there is no apparent *galus* connection?

In fact, the opposite would seem to be true. Parshas Behaaloscha is read after Shavuot (either on the Shabbos directly following it, or on the next Shabbos), the day we celebrate the giving of the Torah. Regarding *Matan Torah*, Chazal state that were it not for our subsequent failings, the *luchos* would never have been broken, and no nation would ever have been able to oppress us—in other words, the concept of *galus* would not have existed! Furthermore, even now that we are in *galus*, the Torah symbolizes freedom—"One can only truly be free through studying Torah." Behaaloscha is clearly associated with freedom, not *galus*!

DAUGHTER, SISTER, MOTHER

The question is even greater:

The Midrash gives three names with which Hashem expresses His affection for the Jewish people: "First He called them 'My daughter'.... He continued to display even greater affection, until He called them 'My sister'....He continued to display even greater affection, until He

called them 'My mother.'"

The Alter Rebbe explains the spiritual significance of each of these three appellations. "My daughter" represents a state of doing *mitzvos*. Just as a child is on the receiving end, when we do *mitzvos* we are simply following Hashem's command. "My sister" refers to the study of Torah, when we unite with Hashem's wisdom until it is as if we are His "sibling." Finally, "My mother" indicates our ability to actually bestow upon Hashem (as it were), a level accomplished through *mesiras nefesh*.

When your submission to Hashem is the result of your personal choice, even if you surrender completely, a feeling of self still remains.

This last level is specifically relevant to Shavuot. Regarding *Matan Torah* the verse says, "Go out, daughters of *tziyon*, and look at King Shlomo [referring to Hashem], at the crown with which His mother adorned Him, on the day of His wedding." The "wedding" is a reference to *Matan Torah*, at which time the Jews are said to have bestowed Hashem with a crown, and are referred to as "His mother."

This serves to strengthen our question: Since *Matan Torah* is associated with the level of "mother," why does the *haftorah* of Shabbos Parshas Behaaloscha, which follows Shavuot, begin with "*bas—the daughter of—tziyon*"?!

We must say that there is a unique advantage in the level of "daughter," unparalleled by the level of "sister," and even by the level of "mother."

THE ULTIMATE SUBMISSION

The Gemara relates that before Hashem gave us the Torah, He held *Har Sinai* over our heads like a barrel and forced us to accept it, saying: "If you will accept the Torah, good. If not, your burial spot will be right here!"

The commentators question the need for this coerced acceptance of the Torah. After all, the Jewish nation had already accepted the Torah of their own free will, declaring, "*naaseh venishma*—We will do and [only then] will we understand." In fact, it was this *bittul* that allowed us to bestow upon Hashem and to be called His "mother." Why was it necessary to be forced?

The Rebbe explains that when your submission to Hashem and *kabalas ol* is the result of your personal choice, even if you surrender completely, a feeling of self still remains. Since *you* are the one who

made the decision to submit yourself, you are not completely *batel*. Absolute subservience and *bittul* can only occur when there is no choice at all, because you were *forced* to accept His authority.

We see this concept in a *halachah* involving slaves. There are two types of Jewish slaves: one who sells himself out of financial distress, and one who is sold by *Beis Din* because he is unable to repay a theft. From among these two categories, it is only the person sold by *Beis Din* who may be given a Canaanite maidservant. Why?

The *heter* to live with a Canaanite maidservant stems from the servitude of the slave to his master. As an absolute slave, he must serve his master both by day and at night: by day through actual work, and at night by producing offspring who will eventually serve the master as well.

However, this is only the case if the person is entirely subjugated to his master. In a case where he sold himself, he cannot be said to have no self-identity whatsoever, since his subjugation was self-imposed. It is only when he was sold through *Beis Din* that he is indeed a slave through and through.

BEYOND NAASEH VENISHMA

This is why Hashem forced us to receive the Torah. He wanted our subjugation to Him to be complete, and that could only be accomplished when it originated (not from our voluntary acceptance of *naaseh venishma*, but) from a yoke we were forced to accept, whether we wanted to or not.

This can help us understand a *pasuk* in Parshas Behar: “For *Bnei Yisroel* are slaves to Me; they are My slaves.” The wording here seems to be repetitive. After stating “For *Bnei Yisroel* are slaves to Me,” what is added by the words “they are My slaves”?

This can be understood based on the above. If the *pasuk* were to have only stated “For *Bnei Yisroel* are slaves to Me,” it might have been understood to mean that *we* resolved to become Hashem’s slaves. The *pasuk* therefore continues “they are *My* slaves”: the reason we are slaves is because *Hashem* subjugated us, without giving us a choice in the matter.

This is what “*bas tziyon*” in our *haftorah* represents. As stated above, “daughter” represents a recipient. To be an ultimate recipient, not

only are you *batel*, but even the *kabalas ol* itself is “received”: it is not something you chose to do, but was forced upon you from Above. This is the pinnacle of *Matan Torah*, which lies beyond even *naaseh venishma*.

HAPPY TO BE FORCED

How does this play itself out in actuality?

For the most part, a Jew has a *geshmak* in being an *ehrlische Yid*. Although it involves hard work, being an *eved* of Hashem is something he accepts voluntarily. However, ultimately *he* is the one who chose this lifestyle.


But then there is the Jew who doesn’t feel this way. If it were up to him, it could even be that he would choose to leave the fold, *chas veshalom*. Yet, there is something that just does not let him leave. He feels a force pushing him to stay. This is *Har Sinai* being held over him; it is Hashem forcing him to stay connected.

Now, “*Rani vesimchi bas tziyon*” means that “*bas tziyon*” rejoices. But how is this possible? It is understandable how a person who enjoys performing *mitzvos* can be joyful. Even someone who does not actually enjoy them but at least wants to be Hashem’s *eved* can also be *besimchah*. But how can someone be happy if he is forced to be a Jew?!

The Rebbe explains that such an individual can also attain joy, and this is achieved through being connected to *tzadikim*. *Tzadikim* grant the ability to find joy in the very fact that no choice is provided!

The fact that we are being forced to serve Hashem is not a *nebach*. To the contrary, *Atah vechartanu mikol ho’amim*—Hashem chose us and wants us to be connected to Him in the strongest manner possible, and He therefore does not give us the option of choosing otherwise. Reflecting on this and realizing that this deep connection is the greatest privilege will enable us to gladly accept the yoke we have no choice but to accept.

For further study see 23, 82, 72 ובהערות (סיון) ובהערות 23, 82, 72 (ס"מ מלוקט אדר-סיון) ובהערות 23, 82, 72



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