

"Do not come any closer to this spot; take your shoes off of your feet"

In the Service of Hashem It Is Vital that "עשה טוב" Precede "סור מרע"

In this week's parsha, parshas Shemos, we read about the amazing first time that HKB"H reveals Himself to Moshe Rabeinu (Shemos 3, 1):

"ומשה היה רועה את צאן יתרו חתנו כהן מדין, וינהג את הצאן אחר המדבר ויבוא אל הר האלקים חורבה. וירא מלאך ה' אליו בלבת אש מתוך הסנה, וירא והנה הסנה בוער באש והסנה איננו אוכל. ויאמר משה אסורה נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה מדוע לא יבער הסנה. וירא ה' כי סר לראות, ויקרא אליו אלקים מתוך הסנה ויאמר משה ויאמר הנני, ויאמר אל תקרב הלום של נעליך מעל רגליך, כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא. ויאמר אנכי אלקי אביך אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב, ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט אל האלקים."

"Moshe was grazing the sheep of Yitro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midyan; he guided the sheep far into the wilderness and he arrived at the Mountain of G-d, near Chorev. An angel of Hashem appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn-bush. He saw and behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed. Moshe thought, 'Let me turn aside now and behold this great sight—why will the bush not be burned?' Hashem saw that he turned aside to see; and G-d called out to him from amid the bush and said, 'Moshe, Moshe,' and he replied, 'Here I am!' He said, 'Do not come any closer to this spot; take your shoes off of your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.' And He said, 'I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov.' Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to look at G-d."

The Ramban explains why HKB"H warned Moshe not to approach the spot of the burning bush: **"לא הגיע עדיין למעלתו"** הגדולה בנבואה, כי בהר סיני (שם כ-כא) ניגש אל הערפל אשר שם האלקים, וכן ענין הסתרת פנים, שעדיין לא עלה למה שנאמר בו (במדבר יב-ח) ותמונת ה' יביט". According to the Ramban, Moshe Rabeinu had not

yet achieved the spiritual level congruent with this level of prophecy. In fact, the Ramban proves his point from a passuk that later describes the levels to which Moshe soared at the revelation on Har Sinai. According to the text, there Moshe achieved the level of (Bamidbar 12, 8): **"ותמונת ה' יביט"—at the image of Hashem does he gaze.** In contrast, at the time of the revelation of the burning bush, it states: **"ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט אל האלקים"—Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to gaze toward G-d.** Obviously, the reason he hid his face was as a reaction to HKB"H's warning: **"אל תקרב הלום"**—not to come any closer to that sacred spot. From this warning, he understood that he was not yet worthy to gaze at G-d.

We can add a little spice to this sacred idea based on a revelation from Chazal in the Midrash (S.R. 2, 4): **"ויבוא אל הר האלקים חורבה. ה' שמונת ים לו, הר אלקים, הר בשן, הר גבנונים, הר חורב, הר סיני - הר האלקים, ששם קבלו ישראל אלהותו של הקב"ה... הר סיני, שממנו ירדה."** According to the Midrash, the revelation of the burning bush took place on Har Sinai. Furthermore, it teaches us that this mountain had five distinct names—among them the Mountain of G-d, Mount Chorev and Har Sinai. It was known as the Mountain of G-d, because it is where Yisrael accepted HKB"H as their G-d. It was called Har Sinai, because it elicited the hatred ("sin'ah") of the idol-worshippers of the world. [Note that the names Mountain of G-d and Chorev appear in the pesukim introducing the revelation of the burning bush.]

This explains the comment of the Ramban very nicely. He drew a comparison between the historic revelation at Har Sinai and the revelation at the burning bush. To receive the Torah Moshe Rabeinu was permitted to ascend to the top of the mountain and draw closer to HKB"H. Here, on the other hand, HKB"H admonishes Moshe: **"Do not come**

any closer—for he was not yet worthy. Additionally, there Moshe did not cover his face; whereas here he had to cover his face. We can suggest that these two facts are interrelated. After HKB”H commanded Moshe not to come any closer--אל--“**אל--because he was not yet worthy; Moshe deduced that he was also not worthy to gaze upon HKB”H, so he hid his face--“ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט אל האלקים”**.

“It is holy ground”: The Commentaries of the Ramban and the Targum Yonasan

Based on the premise that the revelation of the burning bush occurred on Har Sinai, the Ramban proceeds to explain the rationale given for HKB”H’s command that Moshe remove his shoes: **“For the place upon which you stand is holy ground”**—the entire mountain was sanctified due to the descent of the Shechinah upon it from the burning bush on top of the mountain. Here are his fascinating words:

“כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא. אף על פי שהיה רחוק מן הסנה הזהירו בזה, כי נתקדש כל ההר ברדת השכינה אל ראש ההר כאשר בשעת מתן תורה, ומשה בהר היה כי שם עלה, שנאמר ויבוא אל הר האלקים חורבה, והסנה היה בראש ההר, והנה כולו קדוש ואסור בנעילת הסנדל, וכך אמרו (שמו”ר ב-יג) בכל מקום שהשכינה נגלית אסור בנעילת הסנדל, וכן ביהושע (יהושע ה-טו), וכן הכהנים לא שמשו במקדש אלא יחפים”.

Even though he was far away from the bush, He warned him to stay away; because the entire mountain became “kadosh” when the Shechinah descended upon the top of the mountain—just like what happened at Matan Torah. Moshe was on the mountain, because he had climbed up there, as it states: “And he arrived at the Mountain of G-d, near Chorev.” The bush was at the top of the mountain. Now, the entire mountain was “kadosh” and wearing footwear on it was prohibited. Thus they said (S.R. 2, 13): “Wherever the Shechinah is revealed, it is prohibited to wear shoes. This was the case with Yehoshua (Yehoshua 5, 15); similarly, the kohanim only performed their duties in the Mikdash barefoot.”

We find a different explanation in the Targum Yonasan: **כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא - ארום אתרא דאנת קאים עלוי - אתר קדיש הוא, ועלוי אנת עתיד לקבלא אורייתא למלפא יתה לבני ישראל--because the place upon which you stand is a holy place; and on it you are destined to receive the Torah and teach it to Bnei Yisrael.**

Rabeinu Bachayei provides a similar explanation: **“ועוד ירמוז לו, כי במקום הזה תינתן התורה כתובה אש שחורה על גבי לבנה, ומטעם furthermore, זה הזכיר הקב”ה למשה לשון ‘של’ יותר משאר לשונות”** **He alluded to him that in this place, the Torah would be given—black fire upon white. For this reason, HKB”H in speaking to Moshe employed the term “של” rather than some other term.** Let us explain. HKB”H instructs Moshe to remove his shoes with the words: **“של נעליך מעל רגליך”**. Now, the Talmud Yerushalmi teaches us (Shekalim 25b): **“התורה שנתן לו: “של”--the Torah that HKB”H gave Moshe, was given to him as white fire etched with black fire. HKB”H alludes to this fact with the words: “של”--black and white—black and white—alluding to the fact that Yisrael were destined to receive the Torah, which was given as black fire etched upon white fire, in this very place.**

Why Was the Ramban Reluctant to Use the Explanation of the Targum Yonasan

According to the Targum Yonasan and Rabeinu Bachayei, the reason HKB”H told Moshe that he was standing on holy ground was because this was the location where Yisrael were destined to receive the Torah. Apparently, the Ramban was not satisfied with this explanation, seeing as Yisrael had not yet received the Torah. So, how was the mountain sanctified by an event that had not yet taken place?!

Proof of this fact can be found in the following Gemara (Ta’anis 21b): **“תניא רבי יוסי אומר, לא מקומו של אדם מכבדו, אלא אדם מכבד את מקומו, שכן מצינו בהר סיני, שכל זמן שהשכינה שרויה עליו אמרה תורה (שמות לד-ג), גם הצאן והבקר אל ירעו אל מול ההר ההוא, נסתלקה שכינה ממנו I have learned in a Baraisa: Rabbi Yossi says: It is not a person’s place that accords him honor, but rather the person who accords honor to his place. For so we find with regards to Har Sinai. As long as the Shechinah rested upon it, the Torah commanded, “Even the sheep and the cattle shall not graze next to that mountain.” Once the Shechinah departed from it, the Torah said, “When the blast of the shofar extends, they may go up on the mountain.”**

Thus, we have explicit proof that the mountain possessed no inherent sanctity of its own. As soon as the Shechinah vacated the mountain, the kedushah also vacated the mountain. That

being the case, it is impossible to claim that the mountain became “kadosh” well before HKB”H gave us the Torah in that location in the merit of future events. Therefore, the Ramban preferred to explain that the mountain became “kadosh,” because the Shechinah descended upon it at that moment.

Now, however, we must reconcile why the Targum Yonasan and Rabeinu Bachayei chose to explain: **“Because the place upon which you stand is a holy place”**—because Yisrael were destined to receive the Torah at that very same location. That implies that the mountain became “kadosh” due to future events; as explained, that is an untenable explanation.

So, let us examine the language of the Targum Yonasan more closely. He doesn’t actually say that the mountain became “kadosh,” because they were destined to receive the Torah there. Rather, initially he merely comments: **“ארום אתרא דאנת קאים—עלוי אתר קדיש הוא”**—the place upon which you stand is “kadosh.” Then he adds: **“ועלוי אנת עתיד לקבלא אורייתא למלפא יתה לבני ישראל”**—on it, you will receive the Torah in the future, in order to teach it to Bnei Yisrael.

So, let us suggest that both the Targum Yonasan and Rabeinu Bachayei understood things just as the Ramban did—that the mountain became “kadosh,” because the Shechinah descended upon it from the burning bush. Yet, they added another vital point of information. The reason HKB”H chose to rest His Shechinah and reveal Himself to Moshe precisely at that location was because Yisrael were destined to receive the Torah there. HKB”H alluded all of this to Moshe with the words: **“כי המקום שאתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא.”**

An Incredible Chiddush from the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh

I would like to explain the comments of the Targum Yonasan and Rabeinu Bachayei further—that HKB”H was alluding to Moshe that he was destined to receive the Torah at that precise location—based on an incredible chiddush from the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. He addresses HKB”H’s directive to Moshe: **“אל תקרב הלום, של נעליך מעל רגליך”**—**do not come any closer to this spot; remove your shoes from your feet.** He points out that HKB”H purposely uttered the prohibition, the mitzvas lo sa’aseh, of: “Do not come closer,” before the positive command, the mitzvas aseh, of: “take off your shoes.” Seemingly, it would have been more appropriate to first instruct him to remove his

shoes immediately, in order to prevent him from violating the prohibition of wearing shoes in a holy place. After doing so, He could have admonished him not to approach further, in order to prevent him from acting inappropriately.

The Ohr HaChaim explains that HKB”H wished to teach us that He is more concerned that we do not transgress a mitzvas lo sa’aseh—which damages our soul—than that we fail to fulfill a mitzvas aseh. While neglecting to perform a mitzvas aseh precludes the soul from benefitting from the kedushah of that particular mitzvah; nevertheless, it does not damage the soul to the degree that a mitzvas lo sa’aseh does. This is substantiated by the fact that the punishment of lashes—“malkos”—is only administered for the transgression of a lo sa’aseh and not for the failure to perform an aseh. Let us enjoy an excerpt from his commentary:

“אל תקרב וגו’ של וגו’, הנה ב’ דברים יצו אותו ה’, אחד שלא יקרב, ואחד שישלוח נעל רגלו, שלא יעמוד בו אפילו במקום שהוא עומד בו, כאומר המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו כבר אדמת קודש הוא, וצריך לדעת למה לא הקדים לומר לו הסרת מכשול שכבר הוא נתון בו, שהוא עומד במגעו על אדמת קודש, ואחר כך יצו עליו לכל יקרב הלום.”

דע כי בכל התורה כולה גילה ה’ דעתו ורצונו, כי עיקר הקפדתו ומוסרו הוא על מצוות לא תעשה כי זה יחבול בנפש... אבל מצוות עשה הם השגת הטוב כשיהיו ובהעדרם אין עונש, זולת על פרטים ידועים כגון פסח ומילה. והנה כאן צוה לו ה’ מצוות לא תעשה ומצוות עשה, לא תעשה היא אל תקרב הלום, ואמרו ז”ל (עירובין צו.) כל מקום שנאמר פן ואל אינו אלא לא תעשה, ומצוות עשה היא של נעלך... ותמיד יקדים ה’ השמירה לעשה, דכתיב (דברים ד-ו) ושמרתם ועשיתם... לזה גם כן הקדים החמור, אל תקרב לא תעשה, ואחר כך עשה של וגו’, שינהוג כבוד במקום המקודש.”

Throughout the entire Torah, Hashem reveals His will that His main emphasis is on mitzvos lo sa’aseh, because they damage the soul . . . Whereas mitzvos aseh achieve benefit when performed; when they are not performed, no punishment is incurred—except for known exceptions such as Pesach and milah. Here Hashem commands Moshe both a mitzvas lo sa’aseh and a mitzvas aseh— **“do not approach”** and **“remove your shoes”** . . . Hashem always places the prevention ahead of the action, as it is written (Devarim 4, 6): **“You shall safeguard and perform them”** . . . For this reason, He also commanded the more severe first— **“do not approach,”** the lo sa’aseh; afterwards, He commanded the aseh of **“remove your shoes,”** so that he would act respectfully in that holy place.

The Name Havaya Indicates that Mitzvos Lo Sa'aseh Take Precedence over Mitzvos Aseh

Based on the explanation of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, we can explain very nicely HKB”H’s statement to Moshe at that momentous revelation at the burning bush (Shemos 3, 15): “ויאמר עוד אלקים אל משה, כה תאמר אל בני ישראל ה' אלקי אבותיכם: זכרי אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב שלחני אליכם, זה שמי לעולם וזה זכרי—G-d said further to Moshe, “So shall you say to Bnei Yisrael, ‘Hashem the G-d of your forefathers, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov has dispatched me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My remembrance from generation to generation.”

In the Tikunei Zohar (Introduction 4b), we find the following elucidation: “זה שמי לעולם, שמי עם י”ה שס”ה, זכרי עם ו”ה רמ”ח.” In other words, the word “שמי” (350) plus the two letters “י”ה (15) equal 365, the number of mitzvos lo sa’aseh. The word “זכרי” (237) plus the two letters “ו”ה (11) equals 248, the number of mitzvos aseh. Thus we see that the 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh are related to the letters “י”ה; whereas the 248 mitzvos aseh are related to the letters “ו”ה.

Thus, we can understand very nicely what the Maor Einayim writes in parshas Bereishit. He points out that the word “עביר” meaning transgression, is associated with the letters “י”ה, and can be broken down to spell “עבר י”ה, implying that one violated the two letters “י”ה. In contrast, the word “מצוה” meaning a good deed or command, is associated with the letters “ו”ה. For, when a person violates, chas v’shalom, one of the mitzvos lo sa’aseh, he is damaging the letters “י”ה, which the 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh are related to. Therefore, the word “עביר” is an anagram for “עבר י”ה. Yet, when a person performs a positive commandment, a mitzvas aseh, he unites the letters “ו”ה, which the 248 mitzvos aseh are related to.

Let us combine this idea with the words of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. We can suggest that HKB”H’s statement to Moshe: “זה” “אל תקרב הלום” ties in beautifully with His admonition to Moshe to comply with the mitzvas lo sa’aseh-- “אל תקרב הלום”-- before the mitzvas aseh-- “של נעליך מעל רגליך”. HKB”H was teaching Moshe that it is more important to Him that a person not transgress a mitzvas lo sa’aseh than that a person should perform a mitzvas aseh. Therefore, HKB”H indicated to him that this matter is alluded to in His holy name. The two letters “י”ה, the source of the 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh, precede the two letters “ו”ה, the source of the 248 mitzvos aseh.

The Revelation of the Burning Bush Was a Preparation for Matan Torah

We can now better understand why the Targum Yonasan chose to explain that HKB”H’s statement: “עליו אדמת קודש היא”—informed Moshe that he was destined to receive the Torah at this location and convey its contents to Bnei Yisrael. This is the reason why HKB”H chose to reveal this vital principle to Moshe specifically at this location—that a lo sa’aseh is more stringent than an aseh. As we have learned this historic revelation took place on Mount Chorev, which is none other than Har Sinai, the site where Yisrael were destined to receive the holy Torah. The purpose of receiving the Torah is that Yisrael observe all of the 248 mitzvos aseh and 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh contained in it.

Therefore, HKB”H chose to reveal to Moshe ahead of time the stringency of mitzvos lo sa’aseh, so that he would emphasize this fact to Yisrael. It is more important to the Almighty that a person avoid transgressing one of the 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh—that harm his being spiritually-- than it is for a person to fulfill one of the 248 mitzvos aseh, which sanctify his being. It goes without saying that the optimal situation is that a person observes both categories of mitzvos. He should take great care not to transgress, chas v’shalom, any of the 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh; he should also strive to perform all of the 248 mitzvos aseh.

With this understanding, let us explain the message conveyed by the following pesukim: “וירא ה' כי סר לראות, ויקרא אליו: ואלקים מתוך הסנה ויאמר משה משה ויאמר הנני, ויאמר אל תקרב הלום של נעליך—Hashem saw that he turned aside to see; and G-d called out to him from amid the bush and said, “Moshe, Moshe,” and he replied, “Here I am!” He said, “Do not come any closer to this spot; take your shoes off of your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.” As the Ohr HaChaim explained, here HKB”H impresses upon Moshe that He is stricter with regards to the observance of a mitzvas lo sa’aseh than with regards to the performance of a mitzvas aseh.

Then HKB”H proceeds to explain the rationale for revealing this fundamental principle to Moshe: “For the place upon which you stand is holy ground.” In this very same place, you are going to receive the Torah in the future and teach it to Bnei Yisrael. After all, the purpose of receiving the Torah is to fulfill the 248 mitzvos aseh and to safeguard yourselves from the 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh. Therefore, in preparation for receiving the

Torah, I am teaching you an important lesson: I am stricter with regards to the transgression of a mitzvas lo sa'aseh than with regards to the performance of a mitzvas aseh.

The Proper Order to Serve Hashem: "סור מרע ועשה טוב"

I was struck by a wonderful idea as to why HKB"H chose to reveal this vital principle to Moshe at the spectacle of the burning bush. A passuk teaches us explicitly (Tehillim 34, 15): "סור מרע ועשה טוב"-- **"Turn from evil and do good."** First it is essential to avoid wrongdoing; only afterwards is it possible to perform mitzvos and good deeds. As long as a person fails to repent for his transgressions, he falls into the category of (Vayikra 21, 17): "אשר יהיה בו מום לא יקרב להקריב לחם אלקיו"—**in whom there will be a blemish shall not come near to offer the bread of his G-d.**

Let us introduce what is presented in Sidduro shel Shabbas in the name of the marvel of his generation, the great Rabbi Yeshayah of Dinovets, ztz"l. He addresses the statement (Kiddushin 13a): "כל שאינו יודע בטיב גיטין וקידושין לא יהא לו עסק עמהן"—**"anyone not well-versed in matters of gittin and kiddushin, should not involve himself with them."** He explains, allegorically, that "גיטין" alludes to "avoidance of wrongdoing"—driving out evil by divorcing oneself from the yetzer hara; whereas, "קידושין" alludes to "doing good"—sanctifying oneself by the performance of good deeds.

It is essential that the "גיטין"—driving out the evil—come before engaging in matters of "קידושין"—sanctifying oneself with mitzvos and good deeds. However: "כל שאינו יודע בטיב גיטין וקידושין"—**anyone who does not know how to avoid wrongdoing prior to doing good; "לא יהא לו עסק עמהן"—it is preferable that he not engage in Torah-study, as it is written (Tehillim 50, 16): "ולרשע אמר אלקים מה לך לספר חוקי ותשא בריתי עלי פיך"—and to the wicked, G-d said, "What purpose does it serve for you to recount my laws and to bear my covenant on your lips?"**

Regarding this subject, we find that in Zera Kodesh (Ki Seitzei and Ki Savo), the great Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy"a, brings in the name of his father, the great Rabbi Mendel of Linsk, zy"a, an explanation regarding the passuk (Tehillim 127, 2): "שוא לכם משכימי קום מאחרי שבת"—**it is in vain for you who rise early, that you stay up late.** In the jargon of the Gemara, "עשה טוב"—doing good—is referred to as "קום ועשה"—it is an active process. Whereas "סור מרע"

--avoiding wrongdoing-- is referred to as "שב ואל תעשה"—a passive process. This then is the interpretation of the passuk: "שוא לכם משכימי קום"—for you who first perform mitzvos actively, in the sense of "קום ועשה", and as a result "מאחרי שבת"—delay the process of "שב ואל תעשה", your efforts are in vain.

In Mitzrayim HKB"H Gave Precedence to "עשה טוב" over "סור מרע"

In Yitav Panim (Parshas HaChodesh 2), he explains at length that during the exodus from Mitzrayim HKB"H began with the process of "עשה טוב" rather than "סור מרע". First He gave Yisrael the mitzvos of Pesach and milah. Then on the night of Pesach, Yisrael rose to a spiritual pinnacle, meriting the intense reverence associated with the revelation of the Shechinah. Only subsequently, during the forty-nine days of the "sefirah," did they begin to engage in the process of "avoiding wrongdoing"--"סור מרע". During those days, they rid themselves of all spiritual blemishes and taints of sin in preparation for receiving the Torah.

Based on what we have learned, it is crucial to engage first in the process of "סור מרע" and only then to proceed to the phase of "עשה טוב". That being the case, why didn't HKB"H command them to first repent for all of their iniquitous behavior in Mitzrayim before proceeding to give them the mitzvos of Pesach and Milah? The answer of course is well-known. The Torah informs us (Shemos 12, 39): "ולא יכלו להתמהמה"—they couldn't delay the exodus a moment longer. As it is explained in the siddur of the Arizal (Pesach Haggadah), Yisrael sank in Mitzrayim to the forty-ninth level of tumah. Had they delayed any longer, they would have sunk to the nadir of the fiftieth level of tumah, from which they would never have emerged.

For this reason, HKB"H did not wait for them to complete the process of "סור מרע" first before proceeding to serve Hashem in the manner of "עשה טוב". For, had they waited until they had corrected all of their spiritual defects, they would have become mired in the fiftieth level of tumah, without any hope of salvation. Therefore, HKB"H, in His infinite mercy and kindness, brought them into the realm of kedushah without delay. Immediately, on the night of Pesach, He raised them from the spiritual depths to the spiritual heights, until they experienced the forty-ninth level of kedushah. Only afterwards, during the forty-nine days of the sefirah, did they begin to make amends for their transgressions via the process of "סור מרע".

Based on this notion, the Yitav Panim explains the allusion inherent in the passuk (Shemos 12, 23): “**ופסח ה' על הפתח**”—**and Hashem will skip over the entrance**. The process of “סור מרע” is analogous to a “פתח”. It is the doorway through which a Jew enters the realm of kedushah, so that he can ultimately serve Hashem via the process of “עשה טוב”. During the exodus from Mitzrayim, however, HKB”H skipped over the “פתח” of “סור מרע”. Instead He brought them immediately into the realm of kedushah, so that they would begin serving Hashem in the manner of “עשה טוב”.

In this manner, he goes on to explain the protocol followed on the seder-night, as indicated by the “simanim” we traditionally recite: “קדש ורחץ”. “קדש” implies that a person should sanctify himself by means of mitzvos and good deeds; whereas “ורחץ” implies that a person should cleanse himself of his iniquities. It is seemingly difficult to understand why the author of the Haggadah began with “קדש”, which represents the process of “עשה טוב”, instead of “ורחץ”, which represents the process of “סור מרע”.

Yet, based on what we have discussed, it is not difficult to explain. For, we have learned in the Mishnah (Pesachim 116b): “**בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים**”—**in each and every generation, one is obligated to view himself as though he has departed from Mitzrayim**. So, just as HKB”H placed the “עשה טוב” before the “סור מרע” during the original exodus; in similar fashion, every Jew is able to sanctify himself even before he has cleansed himself of his iniquities annually on the seder-night, as he relives the exodus from Mitzrayim. This is also the meaning of the divine poet’s words recited on parshas HaChodesh: “ראשון הוא לכם לפסוח עליכם להתקדש בתוכם”—HKB”H skips over the “סור מרע” to sanctify Himself in our midst. This concludes his wonderful insight.

We can now understand more fully why, at the spectacle of the burning bush, HKB”H chose to admonish Moshe with regards to the mitzvas lo sa’aseh first: “אל תקרב הלום”—before admonishing him with regards to the mitzvas aseh: “של נעליך מעל רגליך”. As we have learned, in Mitzrayim HKB”H, in His infinite mercy and kindness, skipped over the doorway, enabling Yisrael to serve Him via the process of “עשה טוב” even before they had succeeded in correcting their spiritual deficiencies via the process of “סור מרע”. Therefore, HKB”H wanted him to know that the protocol employed in Mitzrayim during the exodus constituted an exception to the rule. In truth, however, it is important to HKB”H that a person begin by being more stringent with regards to mitzvos lo sa’aseh, which represent the process of “סור מרע”. Only afterwards should he focus on performing mitzvos aseh, which represent the process of “עשה טוב”. As we have learned, this is evident from the name Havaya, in which HKB”H placed the letters “יה”—the source of the mitzvos lo sa’aseh—ahead of the letters “וה”—the source of the mitzvos aseh.

This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the following statement from David HaMelech, Yisrael’s sweet psalmist (Tehillim 25, 11): “**למען שמוך ה' וסלחת לעוני כי רב הוא**”—**for the sake of Your name, Hashem, forgive my sin, though it is great**. David HaMelech himself says: “סור מרע ועשה טוב”—**turn away from evil and do good**. So, here he remains consistent with this dictum. Due to his extreme humility, he considers himself a sinner. As such, he was apprehensive to perform Hashem’s mitzvos before he was forgiven for his sins. Therefore, he beseeches HKB”H: “**For the sake of Your name, Hashem (Havaya)**”—which illustrates that the process of “סור מרע” should precede the process of “עשה טוב”; “**forgive my sin, though it is great**”—because if You don’t forgive me, I will not be able to engage in Torah and mitzvos.



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