

Parshas Kedoshim

The Fifth Year

Parshas Kedoshim discusses the laws of Orlah and the fruits of the fourth and fifth years. The Torah indicates that there is an advantage to the fruit of the fifth year over those of the previous years. This Sicha discusses the significance of the fruits of the fifth year and their implication to the greater purpose of creation.

This week’s Torah portion discusses the laws of *Orlah*, the prohibition of consuming the fruits of a tree in its first three years, and the commandment to bring the fruits of the fourth year to Jerusalem.

Text 1

When you come to the Land and you plant any food tree, you shall surely block its fruit [from use]; it shall be blocked from you [from use] for three years, not to be eaten. And in the fourth year, all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the Lord.

Vayikra 19: 23-24

After the Torah discusses the above commandments it relates as follows:

Text 2

And in the fifth year, you may eat its fruit; [do this, in order] to increase its produce for you. I am the Lord, your G-d.

Vayikra 19:25

The Torah informs us that the reward for keeping these *mitzvos* (G-dly commandments) of the

third and fourth year is an increase in the produce our trees will yield in the fifth year. As Rashi states¹, “This commandment which you will observe, will be ‘[in order] to increase its produce for you,’ because as its reward, I will bless for you the fruits of [your] plantings.”

From a simple understanding of the Torah, the reason that there will be additional produce in the fifth year is because as Rashi states² “The Torah stated this to counter man’s evil inclination: so that a person should not say, ‘For four years I suffer with this tree for nothing!’” From a deeper perspective of the Torah, however, it is understood that when G-d states that in the fifth year there is an increase in the produce, this indicates not only a physical increase in the fruit but a *spiritual* increase as well.

On a more esoteric level of understanding the Torah, there is an advantage to the fruits of the fifth year, which surpasses those of the years previous.

This is expressed in the following statement of the first Chabad Rebbe, R’ Shnuer Zalman of Liadi:

¹ *Vayikra 19:25.*

² Rashi, *ibid.*

Text 3

The first three years correlate to (the spiritual worlds of) *Briya*, *Yetzira*, and *Assiya*...and the fourth year correlates to (the spiritual world of) *Atzilus*...and the fifth (regarding which it states), “to increase its produce for you,” is the additional light that is drawn from the top of the (letter) *Yud* of the name (of G-d) “*Havaya*,” and is the level of *Kesser*.

Likutei Torah 30d

While the fruit of the first four years correlate to the four worlds of *Atzilus*, *Briya*, *Yetzira* and *Asiya*, the fruit of the fifth year are representative of the level of *Kesser* which surpasses a worldly revelation of G-dliness.

Yet, this statement that the fruits of the fifth year have a greater spiritual source than those of the fourth, must be understood. For, although the Torah explicitly states that the fruit of the fourth year are holy, no such statement is made concerning the fruits of the fifth year.

Concerning the fruits of the fourth year the Torah states,

Text 4

And in the fourth year, all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the Lord.

Vayikra 19:24

The fruits of this period are holy and they may only be eaten in a state of purity in Jerusalem. How then, can the fruits of the *fifth* year, which are *not* holy and can be eaten all over, even in a

state of impurity, be *greater* than the fruits of the preceding years?

A reclusive sage

This phenomenon, and the concept of how something that is not intrinsically holy can be greater than that which is holy, will be understood from first prefacing with a story that occurred with the *Baal Shem Tov*³.

Before the holy Baal Shem Tov revealed himself to the world, he would travel incognito from city to city and from village to village. His holy practice was that of being attentive to every Jew, men and women, old or young.

He would take interest into their wellbeing in all matters, including their health, livelihood, etc. The Baal Shem Tov was extremely satisfied when those Jews—the men, women and children—would respond with various versions of praise for the Creator, such as, “Thank G-d,” “Praised is G-d,” or other such expressions.

It once happened that the Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov arrived at a certain settlement. He conducted himself as he was want to do, striving to bring merit to the Jewish residents there by giving them the opportunity to praise the holy Name of the Almighty.

In this village there was a certain Jew who was extremely old. He was known to be a great Torah scholar and an ascetic from physical pursuits. For more than 50 years, he sat and learned Torah in seclusion and holiness.

All those years, he would learn while fasting and enveloped in his talis (prayer shawl) and tefillin (phylacteries). This would continue until the late evening and only after the nightly prayers, would he partake of a piece of bread and a drink of water.

³ The following is a free translation from Sefer Mamorim Yiddish pg. 138.

When the Baal Shem Tov entered the study of this sage, which was located in an antechamber of the synagogue, the Baal Shem Tov inquired as to his wellbeing. He asked the elderly man if he had all that he needed materially. The sage, however, paid no attention to the Baal Shem Tov, who was dressed as a simple villager.

The Baal Shem Tov attempted the question numerous times until the sage became vexed and motioned towards the door to signify that he should leave.

At that point, the Baal Shem Tov turned to the elderly scholar and asked, "Why do you withhold the livelihood of the Holy one Blessed be He?" When the sage heard these words, he became flustered. How could this villager speak in such a manner regarding the Almighty, suggesting the idea that He requires a livelihood?!

The Baal Shem Tov, sensing the thoughts of the sage, responded: "The Jewish people 'sit,' relying on the livelihood that G-d provides for them, but the Holy One blessed be He, on what does he sit? This is the meaning of what King Dovid tells us⁴, 'But You are holy.' For which livelihood do you sit and await? 'You sit (and await) the praises of Israel,' that they praise You for their health and livelihood. In the merit of this praise that the Jewish people give the Almighty, G-d gives children, life and sustenance in abundance."

This story portrays the "gain" the Almighty receives, so to speak, from the praises expressed by the Jewish people when they are blessed with their material needs.

Singing His praises

The above narrative though, is not fully comprehensible. The story insinuates that unless the Almighty is praised for the physical nourishment which He provides, he remains removed and exalted from this world and only

through praising Him for physical sustenance, do we provide the Almighty with "livelihood."

This idea that in order for G-d to "sit," we must praise Him, is expressed in the teachings of Chassidus in the following manner:

Text 5

This is the meaning of the verse, "But You are holy; You sit for the praises of Israel." Meaning to say, that He blessed be He is inherently holy and removed (from the world), and for him to "sit" and be drawn down, which is referred to as sitting, like a "sitter" that lowers his body, is through the praise of Israel, that through their praise they bring about that G-d should be revealed.

Likutei Torah 29c

It is because the "sitting" of G-d is (so to speak) dependent on the praise of Israel, that the Baal Shem Tov desired that this sage praise the Almighty. What remains to be understood though, is the following:

Although the Almighty is indeed holy, exalted and removed from the world, and for him to "sit," i.e. to lower Himself in order to be involved with this world, there must be some act performed in this lower realm by the Jewish people to draw down His revealed presence, why can this not be accomplished by Torah study alone?

Why is the study of Torah not a great enough act that in and of itself it can draw down a revelation of G-dliness into this world?

Furthermore, if Torah can indeed fulfill this motion, why did the Baal Shem Tov find it

⁴ Tehillim 22:4.

necessary to tell the sage, who was in the midst of Torah study, “Why do you withhold the livelihood of the Holy one Blessed be He?”

It can be suggested that in order to draw down spiritual sustenance from an exalted level of the Almighty, it must come specifically through praising G-d, and not merely through fulfilling *mitzvos* and that this is why the Baal Shem Tov desired that the sage praise G-d. Still, the Baal Shem Tov could have inspired the sage to praise G-d for the Torah learning that he was studying.

The idea is further explained in the continuation of the above elucidation.

Text 6

In order to reveal G-d’s attributes—who is in and of Himself completely removed from being classified by them—is through praising Him regarding these attributes...By way of an allegory: when an individual requires kindness from his friend, and at that moment his friend is in great fury and anger and distant from kindness, nevertheless, when his friend calls out to him and praises him concerning his great kindness, this itself awakens within him (his friend) that his attribute of kindness becomes revealed and that he fulfill his request.

Likutei Torah, ibid

While the necessity of praising the Almighty is understood, what remains unclear is the reason to praise Him specifically regarding the physical.

Why did the Baal Shem Tov specifically desire that he praise G-d for physical things, wouldn’t praising G-d for his Torah learning have sufficed to draw down a G-dly revelation?

The purpose of creation

The explanation of this story hinges on an appreciation for the purpose of creation. The intention of the creation of the world was not for the spiritual but the physical.

Text 7

R. Shmuel bar Nachman said, “At the time when the Holy One, Blessed be He created the world, He desired that there should be an abode for Him in the lower worlds just as there is in the higher worlds...”

Medrash Tanchuma, Naso 16

It is specifically from the *physical* that we can make a dwelling place for G-d and not through the spiritual. This dwelling place is created primarily from the material, and not so much through Torah, or even by *praising* G-d for the study of Torah.

The reason being, that the study of Torah mainly involves the higher element of the Jew, his G-dly soul, and not the lower parts, his physical body.

Rather, through praising G-d for the fact that He provides *physical* sustenance, things which the *body* derives benefit from, it is at this time that we are able to create a dwelling place for Him.

When the Jewish people recognize and feel that their physical needs come from G-d and they praise Him for them, it is then that they create a dwelling place for G-d in this world.

Therefore, when the Baal Shem Tov observed that this sage was an ascetic, secluded from all physical things, and did not at all involve himself from worldly matters—to the point that even his eating was just for basic sustenance and not to refine the physical—he then reprimanded him,

questioning, “Why do you withhold the livelihood of the Holy one Blessed be He?”

Meaning to say, that being that G-d desires a dwelling place in *this* world, why do you withhold it from him? Only when the sage praised G-d in the realm of the physical, could he begin to make a dwelling place for G-d in *this* world.

The fifth year

According to the above, the advantage of the fruits of the fifth year over the fruits of the fourth year can be appreciated, despite the fact that the fourth year’s yield are holy and must be consumed in a state of purity in Jerusalem.

For, it is specifically when a Jew realizes that even his fruit which are *not* holy are also dependent on G-d’s blessing, and he praises G-d

for what He has given him, does it cause that G-d Himself should dwell in this physical abode.

So, although the fruits of the fourth year are indeed holy, they are not expressive of G-d’s ultimate intent in creating the world. G-d’s objective in creating the universe was not for holiness per se, but to reveal G-dliness in the mundane.

It is therefore *specifically* the fruit of the fifth year that have a true increase in G-dliness, as it within *them* that G-d’s purpose in creating the world is most felt.

(Based on Likutei Sichos 7, Kedoshim 1, reworked by Rabbi Dovid Markel. To see other projects and to partner in our work, see: www.Neirot.com.)