

B'SIYATTA D'SHEMIYAH

# ZERA SHIMSHON

Fascinating excerpts and intriguing discourses from the works of the great Gaon and kabbalist Morainu HaRav **Shimshon Chaim ben Reb Nachman Michael Nachmani** Author of **Zera Shimshon** and **Toldos Shimshon** who lived almost 300 years ago.

**HE PROMISED THAT WHOEVER LEARNS HIS WORKS WILL SEE HELP WITH CHILDREN, LONG LIFE, AND PARNASSAH. MANY PEOPLE CAN ATTEST TO THEIR PERSONAL SALVATIONS!**



THE LEARNING IS  
FOR A MERIT FOR  
THE HOLY AUTHOR  
OUR TEACHER  
**HARAV SHIMSHON  
CHAIM BEN REB  
NACHMAN MICHAEL  
NACHMANI.**  
PASSED AWAY 6  
ELUL 5539 (1779)

## Parshas Reah

עֲשֵׂר תַעֲשֶׂר אֶת כָּל תְּבוּאֹת יִרְעֶךָ הַיֵּצֵא הַשְּׂדֶה שְׁנָה שְׁנָה: (דברים יד/כב)

The *Gemorra* in *Taanis* (9a) tells the following story. *Rebbi Yochanan* met a young son of *Raish Lakish* and said to him: Tell me the *possukim* that you learnt today in *cheider*. The boy said to him "*Asir ta'asir* all the crops of your field (that your field produces every year)" (the verb in this *possuk*, *Asir taaisir* is a compound verb made up of two verb forms of "to tithe" which is usually translated "you should be careful to tithe"). The boy then asked *Rebbi Yochanan* what does this *possuk* mean? *Rebbi Yochanan* answered that if one gives a tithe of his produce he will become rich (the letters *ayin shin raish* is the root of the verb "to tithe" and also "to become wealthy"). The boy asked how does he know that this is true? *Rebbi Yochanan* answered back, "Go try!" The boy retorted, "Is it really permitted to test *Hashem*? Isn't it written (*Devarim* 6/16) You shall not test *Hashem*."? *Rebbi Yochanan* answered back that *Rebbi Hoshiya* said that although generally speaking one shouldn't test *Hashem* concerning the *mitzvah* of *maasir* it is different as it is written (*Malachi* 3/10), "Bring all of your *maaser* into the storeroom of the *Bais Hamikdash* that there will be food

in My house and test Me now by this, said *Hashem Tzevokos*, I will surely open the floodgates of the sky for you and pour down blessings on you". The boy answered back: if I had learned this *possuk*, then I would not need you or *Hoshiya* your teacher!

*Zera Shimshon* asks, firstly, why did *Rebbi Yochanan* first tell the young boy to test *Hashem* and to "see for himself" that *Hashem* will make him wealthy and after that he quoted him the *possuk*, "Bring all of your tithes..." only as a proof that with regards to giving a tithe one can test *Hashem*. In this *possuk* it also says that one who gives *maaser* becomes wealthy! So why didn't he quote this *possuk* right away? Secondly, seemingly the young boy spoke "*chutzpadik*" and disrespectfully to *Rebbi Yochanan* so why did the *Gemorra* mention it? What does the fact that he said, "if I had learned this *possuk*, I would not have needed you or *Hoshiya* your teacher" teach us that the *Gemorra* felt it was important to tell us?

*Zera Shimshon* begins his answer by first explaining why did the young boy ask *Rebbi Yochanan* to explain the *possuk* to him. What didn't he understand? Simply we

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would say that he was only bothered by the usage of the double verb "asir ta'asir" instead of just "ta'asir". This, however, *Zera Shimshon* rejects because if this is the only thing that bothered him there is simple explanation.

For instance, the *Torah* also uses a double verb, "ha'anaik ta'anik" when the *Torah* speaks of the obligation for a master of a Jewish slave to give a gift, severance pay, when his slave leaves him. *Chazal* explain the reason for this extra word is to teach us that even if the slave did not make his master more prosperous when he worked for him, the master still has to give him this gift. Therefore, if the only thing that bothered him was the double verb he could explain it in the same way; a person has to give a tithe of his produce even if he had a very weak harvest.

Rather *Raish Lakish's* son was bothered by how does the extra verb fit in with the end of the *possuk* "that your land produces every year"? Obviously if one is obliged to give a tithe from a weak harvest one year he is also obliged to do the same every year!

*Rebbi Yochanan* explained to him that the extra word is not teaching us that one has to give a tithe even if there was a weak harvest but *asir ta'asir* means, "give a tithe and you will become wealthy IMMEDIATELY." The *beracha* will take effect right away in this year's crop. In other words, the *beracha* will be seen right away, even this year and you won't have to wait a few years for the *beracha*.

The boy then asked him how does he know that the *beracha* is immediate? Since this was the question that *Rebbi Yochanan* was answering he couldn't bring a proof from the *possuk*, "Bring all of your *maaser* into the storeroom in the *Bais Hamikdash*... test Me... I will ...

pour down blessings on you." because from this *possuk* we only see that it is permitted to test *Hashem* and that *Hashem* will bless this person but we don't see that the *beracha* is immediate. Therefore *R' Yochanan* told him to try it and he will see for himself that it is true, that the *beracha* is immediate.

The boy then asked that he can't do that because it is prohibited to test *Hashem*. *R' Yochanan* then brought a prove that concerning the reward for tithing one's crop it is permitted to test *Hashem* from the way his *rebbe*, *R' Hoshiya* explained the *possuk*, "Bring all of your *maaser* into the storeroom in the *Bais Hamikdash*... test Me... I will surely open the floodgates of the sky for you and pour down blessings on you."

When *Raish Lakish's* son heard this *possuk* he said, "if I had learned this *possuk*, I would not have needed you or *Hoshiya* your teacher". He didn't mean to be "*chutzpadik*" or disrespectful but he meant to say that from this *possuk* we also see that the *beracha* is immediate!

How is this?

If the *beracha* would only come in a few years then *Hashem* would not have "passed the test" that He gives *beracha* for this *mitzvah*. A person could argue that just like the year after the tithe was given "by chance" there was no reward or *beracha* so to when the *beracha* comes a few years later it was also only be chance. Therefore in order for the blessing of the crops to be a proof that *Hashem* gives reward for this *mitzvah* it has to be immediate and ""if I had learned this *possuk*, I would not have needed you or *Hoshiya* your teacher" because this idea is already stated in the *possuk*!

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<b>The learning of Zera Shimshon should be L'iy Lui Nishmas R' Aharon Ber ben Chaim Eliyahu (Lipson)</b>	<b>In the merit of learning the Torah of Zera Shimshon Esther Yenta Bas Chana Chassia and Nechama bas Menucha Shaina should find a zivvug hogun speedily.</b>	<b>The learning of Zera Shimshon should be L'iy Lui Nishmas Feigga bas Shlomo (Sadler)</b>
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On the opening *possuk* in our *parsha*, "Look, I (*Hashem*) gave before you blessing and affliction." the *Medrash* comments, 'This *possuk* can be understood in light of a different *possuk*, 'Listen, internalize, and don't be haughty (*al tagbihu*- literally, don't rise high), because *Hashem* has spoken.' (This *possuk* means) Listen to the *Torah*, internalize it and don't push away (*tagbihu* can also mean to make something else fly away) *Hashem's* goodness from this world because *Hashem* spoke.'

(The *Medrash* continues and asks) And where did H. speak? (As it is written in *Yishayahu*) 'If you humble yourself and listen to H.m then the good of the land you will eat but if you refuse to listen to H.m and rebel the sword will...'

(The *Medrash* continues to ask) What does it mean, 'If you humble yourself and listen to H.m then the good of land you will eat ...' *R. Elezer* explained, 'The *Torah* and the sword came from Heaven wrapped together. *Hashem* said to them, 'If you keep what it says in the *Torah* you will be saved from the sword. If not...!... This is what *Hashem* said to *Clal Yisroel* if you do My will you will receive goodness and blessing and if not you will be afflicted.'"

*Zera Shimshon* asks after the *Medrash* quotes the *possuk*, "If you humble yourself and listen to H.m then the good of the land you will eat..." why does the *Medrash* ask what does it mean? Isn't it self explanatory- if we listen to *Hashem* and do what H. tells us to do then we merit reward!

Secondly, what does *R. Elezar* mean that the *Torah* and the sword are wrapped together?

Thirdly, what is the meaning of the double language, "you will receive goodness and blessing"? Seemingly, goodness is blessing and blessing is goodness!

He answers in light of another *Medrash* that says that

*Hashem* asked *Clal Yisroel*, "Did anyone every do a *mitzvah* before I was good to him? Did anyone ever perform the *mitzvah* to build a fence on his roof before I gave him a house? Did anyone ever perform the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* before I gave him a garment? Did anyone ever perform the *mitzvah* of *milah* before I gave him a baby boy?"

We learn from this *Medrash* that *Hashem* doesn't wait for us to do *mitzvos* in order to bestow on us H.s goodness. H. first gives gives us a gift. When we use these gifts to do the *mitzvos* then *Hashem* allows us to keep those gifts and H. gives us even more. However if we don't do the *mitzvos* connected with them, *chas v'shalom*, then not only does H. not give us more but H. takes from us what H. already gave.

According to this concept, explains *Zera Shimshon*, we can now understand the flow of the *Medrash* and what it found difficult in the *possuk*, "If you humble yourself and listen to H.m then the good of the land you will eat...".

The *Medrash* begins by quoting the *possuk*, 'Listen, internalize, and *al tagbihu* because *Hashem* has spoken.' and explains that it means to listen and internalize the words of the *Torah* and don't push away *Hashem's* goodness from this world because *Hashem* spoke.' We can infer from this *possuk* that the good is already here even before "we listen and internalize..." and if we don't do the *mitzvos* then we will push that goodness away (like we learned from the other *Medrash*, "Did anyone ever do a *mitzvah*....").

The *Medrash* was bothered with this explanation because the *possuk* 'If you humble yourself and listen to H.m then the good of the land you will eat but if you refuse to listen to H.m and rebel the sword will..." seems to contradict this idea; from this *possuk* it seems that only AFTER we listen to *Hashem* do we get to eat from the good of the land. The *Medrash* therefore asks what is meaning of this

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*possuk?*

R. Elezar agrees with the premise that Hashem bestows on us goodness even before we deserve it and gives a *marshal* that the Torah, and all its good, descended from Heaven together even before we do anything.

Therefore the meaning of the promise "the good of the land you will eat" means that after we use the initial "gift"

properly then Hashem will give us more reward and "the good of the land you will eat".

This is also the meaning of R. Elezar's seemingly double language "goodness and blessing"; goodness is the initial "gift" independent of our actions and blessing is the reward we receive when we conduct ourselves properly after we receive the initial "gift"!

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כִּי יִכְרִית יְדֹוֹד אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶת הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בָּא שְׂמָה לְרַשֵּׁת אוֹתָם מִפְּנֵיךָ וַיִּרְשֶׁת אֹתָם וַיִּשְׁבֶּת בְּאַרְצָם: הַשְּׁמֵר לְךָ פֶּן תִּנְקַשׁ אֱלֹהֵיהֶם אֲחֵרֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם מִפְּנֵיךָ וּפֶן תִּדְרֹשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר אֵיכָּה יַעֲבֹדוּ הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֶת אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה כֵן גַּם אֲנִי: (דברים יב/כט-ל)

When Hashem, your G-d, will defeat the nations to which you come to take possession from them ... Be careful, not to be confused by them after they have been destroyed before you, and (be careful) not to seek out their gods, saying, "How will these nations worship their gods and I will do the same". (*Devarim* 12/29-30)

Zera Shimshon asks two questions.

Firstly why does the *Torah* write, "How WILL these nations worship their gods..." in the future tense? This *possuk* is speaking about the time after *Bnei Yisroel* defeated the inhabitants of *Eretz Yisroel*. Therefore it is more appropriate for the *Torah* to write, "How DID these nations worship their gods..."- past tense- and not "How WILL these nations..."- future tense!

Secondly, the main point in this *possuk* is that we should be careful not to worship *Avodah Zarah*. In the Ten Commandments we already learned the prohibition to worship *Avodah Zoro*, so what is this *possuk* adding that we don't already know?

Zera Shimshon answers both questions in light of *Rabeinu Yerucham* who mentioned (and strongly objected) to a custom that was prevalent in his time. The night before a *bris*, people set a table with food, not to eat, but in order to strengthen the *mazal* to bestow goodness on the new born. *Raeinu Yerucham*

strongly objected to this custom citing *Yeshiya HaNavi* who rebuked *Clal Yisroel* (*Yeshiya* 65/11), "the ones who set up tables (of food) for Gad (the name of a specific *mazal*)"!

From the *Zohar* it seems that this is not technically *Avodah Zorah* but is prohibited because it is a type of black magic used by sorcerers (like *Billum*) to strengthen the influence of the *mazal*.

Certainly, continues *Zera Shimshon*, *Bnei Yisroel* didn't kill all of the inhabitants who lived in *Eretz Yisoel*. Some people ran away and hid to save themselves. These remaining people, after seeing their whole nation destroyed, tried to strengthen their *mazal* and "set up tables...".

In light of this, *Zera Shimshon* concludes, that the *Torah* was afraid that *Bnei Yisroel* would see these few remaining *Canaanim* "setting up tables" to strengthen their *mazal*. Since it is not technically *Avodah Zoro* there is a strong chance that *Bnei Yisroel* will copy them and do the same.

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In this *possuk*, The *Torah* therefore prohibits us even from this practice.

*HaRav Shimshon Nachmani, author of Zera Shimshon lived in Italy about 300 years ago in the time of the Or HaChaim HaKodesh.*

*The Chida writes that he was a great Mekubal and wrote many sefarim including sefarim about "practical kabbolo" and asked that all of his sefarim be buried after he passes away except for Zera Shimshon and Niflaos Shimshon on Avos.*

*HaRav Shimshon Nachmani had one child who died in his lifetime (hence the name "Zera Shimshon") and in the preface he promises for people who learn his sefarim after he dies "... And your eyes will see children and grandchildren like the offshoots of an olive tree around your tables, wise and understanding with houses filled with all manner of good things... and wealth and honor..."*

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