

Parshas Ki Savo

This week's Parsha continues with Moshe's words to the Jews upon their arrival in Israel, with the latter half focusing on the afflictions that would result from straying from Hashem. The Alter Rebbe, in a Mamer on this week's Parsha, addresses the Posuk 29:1-3, which seems to contradict itself, where, on one hand, Hashem says, "You have seen...", but on the other, "Hashem didn't give you a heart to understand, and eyes to see." The Alter Rebbe answers by turning to Bereishis, specifically Avraham's call to Hashem, "Lord of the World." Avraham didn't say "the world," indicating a disconnect between Hashem and the world as two separate entities. Rather, they are one and the same. That is, as it is written in Zechariah 14:9, that on that day Hashem will be one and his name will be one (talking about Mashiach); that, in the time of revelation, the world will see Hashem as the master of the universe and reveal Him as the force behind everything and as everything. During our time on this world, the Alter Rebbe says that if a person preoccupies himself with his personal desires, he will separate himself from his Master (i.e. Hashem). This is the basis of how the Alter Rebbe approaches the work and journey of a Yid, throughout Tanya: that there is a constant ebb and flow, and vacillation, between connection and, heaven forbid, disconnection that arises

as a result of being human, specifically from the animal soul.

Our goal, as humans, specifically as Jews, is to aspire to a greater existence than mere animal life; rather, to have Godliness and holiness prevail through the holy soul embedded in each of us, whose lifeforce is derived from resisting the bad (sur meyra). When one connects with a friend, they greet them with a smile and a countenance; the same is reflected back. Similarly, when we serve Hashem and care about Hashem, the same is reflected back to us, especially when we act with happiness, specifically serving Hashem with happiness (again an important and recurring theme of Tanya, and a point in this Mamer). When a person serves Hashem with happiness and therefore reflects happiness back, they forget what is bogging them down in this physical domain. Thematically, this is something we should consider in Elul as we approach the new year: renewing our vows and our strength to serve Hashem, and fully immersing ourselves in Torah and Mitzvos with happiness. There is a deeper desire in Hashem to forgive us and to give us all the blessings in this time and existence, since the upper world reflects the lower world. I heard similarly that in a partnership, if one partner is negative, it will seem that every opportunity is negative and the entire relationship is negative; but when you are positive and working together, the sky's the limit for growth. Similarly, when we

are positive and take Hashem as our partner, Hashem will be positive in return and reflect that back on us. To answer the original quandary of the Alter Rebbe, we can also find clarity in Rashi on the Posuk. That is to recognize the kindness of Hashem and to cleave to him; that is, it is a learned experience that we must work on to receive the ultimate reflection of positivity and blessing. Similarly, Rashi further explains that the Jews complained that they weren't given a Torah like Levi was; this made Moshe happy, and he subsequently wrote each tribe their own Torah.

This love for the Torah made Moshe happy, and it is the ultimate purpose. As Rashi concludes, "today (because of the request for the Torah), I understood that you are cleaving to and desiring Hashem..." Therefore, although the Posuk seems to contradict, it really means that Hashem cannot make us lovers of Him; we must work at it, and this is our purpose. This broad love, which is about recognizing Hashem as the master of the universe, is critical to our service, and through this we will be blessed with Hashem echad Ushemo Echad, that Hashem will be the recognized ruler of the world by all.

Good Shabbos