

Lessons from the Chassidische Parsha

The teachings of the Alter Rebbe in Torah Ohr and Likkutei Torah

Two types of donations to Hashem

ד"ה קחו מאתכם

פרשת ויקהל

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Before we can receive the Torah on Shavuot, we need to go through the Avodah of Sefiras Haomer. But before Sefiras Haomer we have the Mitzvah of eating Matzah. These two Mitzvos represent two different modes in the service of Hashem.

The Avodah of Sefiras Haomer is the transformation of the negative emotional drives of the animalistic soul. Each of these seven drives is comprised of more nuanced emotions, made up of the elements of each of the seven emotions. This gives rise to a total of 49 Middos that make up our animalistic self.

On each day of Sefiras Haomer, we transform one facet of our animalistic side so that instead of expressing our selfish desires, they become elevated and directed towards Hashem. For example, instead of desiring material pleasures, our love is focused on Hashem.

This Avodah is referred to as *Is'hapcha* and it represents an emotionally-engaged service of Hashem.

We cannot experience transformation and engage in the Avodah of *Is'hapcha*, without first implementing the Avodah of *Iskafia*. *Iskafia* is Bittul, surrendering ourselves to Hashem with Kabbolas Ol. We do this by pushing our personal desires aside to do His will, even when we lack feeling and emotion in serving Him.

The need for *Iskafia* is illustrated by analogy to a seed that must first decay and breakdown - i.e. lose its *Metzius* - before it can transform into a new entity of a flourishing plant.

This Bittul is and Kabbolas Ol is represented by the Matzah that precedes Sefiras Haomer. Matzah is flat and lacks taste, representing the humility of Bittul. Taste represents emotional experience and pleasure. Someone who serves Hashem with Bittul is not seeking 'taste' in their service of Hashem. After this we can strive for the emotional service of *Is'hapcha*.

This idea is echoed in our davening when we say ונפשי כעפר ונפתי בתורתך. לכול תהי פתח לבי בתורתך. Only after having the Bittul of "let my soul be like dust before all" can we have the emotional service of "open my heart with Your Torah".

Similarly, it is only after the surrender and Bittul of Shema where we sacrifice ourselves to Hashem, that we can experience the emotional service of ואהבת "and you shall love Hashem".

The Alter Rebbe teaches that far from being just a preface to the Avodah of *Is'hapcha*, the Avodah of *Iskafia* is in fact the greater of the two.

Iskafia which applies when our animalistic self is still in full strength, requires us to go against our nature. It is a complete act of surrender of one's being. In contrast, *Is'hapcha*, where the emotions of the animalistic soul have already been transformed, no true Bittul of self is required.

Iskafia has an additional quality. Service of Hashem that is driven by feeling (*Is'hapcha*) will be subject to changes. During Davening a person will feel more inspired and emotionally connected. However, after Davening, when we go out into the world and the rest of our day, these feelings will dissipate.

In contrast, Bittul is the same and unchanging, irrespective of the circumstances. Even after we finish Davening, the resolve of Kabbolas Ol will continue throughout the day.

Hashem responds to our Avodah in a reciprocal manner. The Zohar teaches that through the Avodah of *Iskafia*, we cause a revelation of the light of Hashem in all of the worlds. When we put ourselves aside completely (*Iskafia*), Hashem puts Himself aside to lower His essential light that is beyond the worlds.

Parshas Vayakhel begins with Moshe's directive קחו מאתכם תרומה לה' כל נדיב לבו יביאה את תרומת ה' "Take from yourselves Terumah (an offering) to Hashem, every generous-hearted person shall bring it, the Terumah of Hashem".

The 2 references of Terumah in this verse represent the two different types of Avodah of *Iskafia* and *Is'hapcha*.

Terumah has two meanings. It comes from the terminology of *Haramah*, meaning to lift up. It also means a separation which is to draw down i.e. an apportionment. Each of the two types of Avodah effect a different type of revelation.

The first Terumah is the lifting up from below. This is the initial Avodah of *Iskafia* - Kabbolas Ol and Bittul, which rises all the way up to the Infinite light beyond that is beyond the worlds. This is תרומה לה' an offering going up "to Hashem" (with the extra ל). This is the Avodah of the simple Matzah.

The second Terumah is mentioned in connection to one who is נדיב לבו, whose generous of heart. This is the Avodah of emotions (*Is'hapcha*). This Terumah is referred to as תרומת ה'. The name י-ו-ה-ו-ה represents the drawing down of the light into the worlds.

Once we have reached the transcendent light through *Iskafia*, it can then be drawn down to permeate the worlds through *Is'hapcha*, the service of 'taste' and emotional enjoyment in the keeping of Torah and Mitzvos.