



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT PEKUDEI

The Prerequisite

Tehillim is more than just poetic praises to G-d or assorted supplications; it contains deep and profound messages upon careful analysis. In the "Mizmor L'toda" (Psalm 100), David HaMelech writes a song of thanks to Hashem, which we recite in *tefillah* every day. In it, he writes the following line: "באו שערינו – Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, into His courtyards with praise [of His mighty acts]; give thanks to Him, bless His Name." For a while, I've wondered about the appearing redundancy of these seemingly synonymous terms throughout the *pasuk*. However, after coming across the eye-opening commentary of R' Samson Raphael Hirsch [1], the verse clearly transcends rhyme and comes to allude to a fundamental principle as it relates to one's relationship with G-d.

R' Hirsch explains that in the aforementioned *pasuk*, King David was highlighting the pivotal importance of appreciating G-d on a personal level before connecting to Him on a general one. First things first, one must "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving." Before even entering the next segment – "the courtyards" – one needs to first get in through the gates which surround it. But what should we come with? David tells us: "with thanksgiving [תודה]." This refers to the recognition of a deep sense of gratitude arising from understanding the significance of Hashem in our lives. Only after passing the gates can one come "into His courtyards with praise [תהלה]," which denotes contemplating the grandeur, genius, and greatness of all of Hashem's works and creations. Thus, expressing *gratitude* means to feel that G-d is my own G-d and that we are deeply connected, while delivering praise views Hashem as The Almighty in a global sense. And just as gates always precede the courtyard within (from the perspective of the one entering), תודה must always be a precursor for תהלה since, as R' Hirsch puts it, "To sing G-d's praises in hymns but to deny Him in our own life and destiny, to cast the universe at G-d's feet but to stand aside ourselves, indifferent with our own tiny personality – that would be more than idle folly; it would be criminal blasphemy."

Perhaps, this could also explain why we refer to Hashem as "אבינו מלכנו – our Father, our King." Before we come to recognize his unbelievable providence in the world as the King, we must appreciate and love Him with a blazing passion because he is, first and foremost, our Father.

[1] "The Hirsch Tehillim" (Extensively Revised Edition), Feldheim Publishers

No Nation like Ours

R' Shlomo Landau shared a heartwarming story.

Recently, a fine man residing in the Holy Land named Tzvika got into a fender bender with a woman while he was driving. They both exited their cars to examine the damage, and Tzvika realized that he was the one at fault. He apologized to the woman and reassured her that he would pay for the damages. They agreed to meet up the following Wednesday at the body shop, where they would assess the damages and Tzvika would pay her.

The following Wednesday, the woman brought her somewhat dented car to the body shop and waited for Tzvika. She waited and waited, but to her utter dismay, Tzvika did not show. She was deeply disappointed; she had assumed Tzvika was an honest man. The next day, she had sent Tzvika a text message: "I'm really disappointed. I thought you were an honest person, but you stood me up." Tzvika responded not too long thereafter, apologizing profusely and explaining that two days prior, on Tuesday, his son Shaul, who was a soldier fighting in Gaza, was killed, and with the hectic schedule of the funeral and shiva, he couldn't get to the body shop. "As soon as the shiva is over, I will pay you," he concluded.

The lady had felt so bad for nearly attacking him in such a difficult situation, and decided to pay a condolence visit to Tzvika and his family. She came to his house and gave her earnest apology for the text that she had sent, pleading with him not to worry about the money. Tzvika insisted that he would pay as soon as the shiva was over, but the woman was adamant that she had thought about it and wouldn't accept the money from him, as he had many other things to worry about already.

After the shiva, Tzvika met up with the woman and pulled out 2,000 shekel. Once again, the woman wouldn't allow him to offer the money, but Tzvika was resolute that he wanted to pay her. When the mechanic had found out that it was the father of a fallen soldier who had been trying to pay for the job, he made sure to fix the car and let them know that it was on the house. Empathetic towards Tzvika's plight, the mechanic assured both parties that they didn't have to pay him anything.

There truly is something extraordinary about the kindness, sensitivity, and compassion of the Jewish people...

"Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever could."