

# GROWTH

At The

# SHABBAT TABLE

8<sup>th</sup> Edition  
By Misha'el Sionov  
BS"D

## PARSHAT VA'ERA

## Why?

R' Label Lam shared an interesting idea. The *Malbim*, in his 2-volume work "HaKarmel," advanced the premise that there are no synonyms in Lashon HaKodesh. One example he brings to prove his point is a contrast between the words "*Lama* / למה" and "*Madua* / מדוע," which, while both translated as "why," differ at the core. "*Madua*" is asking what comprises the root cause and reason for something, whereas "*lama*" is a query of what the ultimate purpose and future goal is. Yosef asked his inmates *מדוע* – פניכם רעים היום – 'what is causing your anxiety today?' On the flipside, Hashem asked Kayin: *למה* – חרה לך – 'what is the goal of being angry and depressed?' That's a totally different question...  
  
*We can't even scratch the surface of understanding the immense wisdom and depths behind our rich heritage...*

## The Life-Saving Covenant

R' Leeor Dahan related a remarkable insight. At the start of this week's Parshah, G-d tells Moshe (Shemot 6:4-5): "I also established My covenant with them [the patriarchs], to give them the land of Canaan... I have now heard the moaning of Bnei Yisrael because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant." These *pesukim* seem redundant; why is Hashem repeating mention of His covenant, and do we not know that the Egyptians were oppressing Bnei Yisrael?

The Sefer "Kosi Revaya" brings down a fascinating twist on a Gemara in Berachot (5a), which discusses *yissurin* (suffering). The Gemara states that people who experience *yissurin* (hardships) are especially beloved by Hashem, and are attributed many merits, among them having one's sins forgiven and erased. The debate ensues as to where this concept is derived from. R' Yochanan understands that this is learnt from a *kal vachomer* (logical argument) within a *halacha* in the Torah: If one owns a Canaanite slave and knocks out his eye or tooth, the slave is automatically freed. R' Yochanan expounds that if the loss of a single limb can free someone, then certainly when an individual experiences pain in several areas or in the entire body, it frees the person from his sins and cleanses his slate. However, Reish Lakish argues, maintaining that this idea is sourced in a *gezeira shava* from "*b'rit melach* / ברית מלח" [a *gezeira shava* is a link between two identical words in different contexts, used to connect an idea from one verse to the other, as follows]. In one *pasuk* discussing the requirement for all *korban*-offerings to be brought with salt, it mentions the word "*b'rit*" (covenant) [ברית, ולא תשבית מלח בריית, see Vayikra 2:13], because a covenant connotes an enduring permanence, and salt both lasts permanently and sustains other entities for long periods of time. Elsewhere, where the Torah talks about *yissurin*, it also mentions the word "*b'rit*" [ברית, אלה דברי הברית, see Devarim 28:69]. Using a *gezeira shava* to bridge the two, Reish Lakish expounds: Just as the "*b'rit*" of salt purifies the meat (by removing the blood and making it edible), so does the "*b'rit*" of hardships purify a person by alleviating and reducing his sins.

What is the need for these two alternate sources? They both lead to the same place at the end!

There is actually a subtle but major difference between these two derivations. According to R' Yochanan, the source is the eye/tooth of the Canaanite slave. Now, the slave is only freed if his eye/tooth was severed directly by his master; if it was through other means or even via the master's messenger, the slave is not granted freedom. Thus, it would follow that for *yissurin* to cleanse and forgive a person of his iniquities, the person would have to attribute his troubles as coming from the source – Hashem – and not the messenger or anything else. However, Reish Lakish, who sourced the idea from 'the covenant of salt,' doesn't subscribe to this caveat; just as salt *by nature* preserves and purifies the meat, regardless of *who* does it, so does *yissurin* atone for an individual regardless of where he perceives it to be coming from.

With this in mind, we can explain our *pesukim* beautifully. Read homiletically, G-d was telling Moshe: *And now I've heard Bnei Yisrael's cry... but they perceive the Egyptians as being the source of their pain! They aren't looking at the depth behind the matter to see that it's all Me, to come closer to Me. So, according to R' Yochanan, their yissurin aren't accomplishing anything for them. Nevertheless, says Hashem, I will remember My "covenant" – i.e., the opinion of Reish Lakish, who holds that suffering serves as a merit and atonement despite misplaced attributions! In the merit of the "covenant of salt," I will redeem Bnei Yisrael.*

We often perceive events in life through our limited, 3-dimensional view. When we are faced with pain or hardships, we look to blame what we think is the cause of our suffering. Let us work on viewing things through the spiritual, 4<sup>th</sup> dimension of the story - the real root of *why* things happen. Nothing happens without the green light of Boreh Olam, and while we can never fully understand His ways, let us utilize our life experiences to improve ourselves and grow closer to Him.

**"Being challenged in life is inevitable; being defeated is optional."**

**Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:**

Ariel Ben Frida

Frida Bat Yaffa

Miriam Bat Bakol

Shira Chaya Bat Rachel

Esther Bat Frida

Rahamim Ben Shifra

Yitzchak Ben Naama

Chaim Avraham Ben Shifra Zisel

Idan Ben Tova