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By the Hakham

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Not Understanding the Qiddush

If someone hears the Qiddush in Hebrew and doesn't understand the words, there is a difference of opinion as to whether or not he fulfills his obligation of Qiddush. While there is an opinion that he does, there is also an opinion that hearing Qiddush without understanding has no value, and he does not fulfill his obligation. To fulfill one's obligation according to all opinions, one should do the following:

It says in Derekh HaTorah that the one who recites the Qiddush should explain before starting, the meaning of the words, that they are praise of G-d Who gave us the seventh day, separated us from the other nations and we are remembering the Sabbath day. He should then make the Qiddush.

We see from this the importance for every person to go over the Qiddush and ensure that he/she understands it. Teachers and Rabbis of those who are not familiar with the Holy Tongue should also make a point of teaching it.

(See Derekh HaTorah, Shabbath, 6:13)

Niṣabim/Wayelekh: Refining Our Character to Keep the Torah

בִּי־קְרוֹב אֵלַי הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ

"Because this matter is very (Me-od) close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it" (Debarim, 30:14). Rabbenu the Hida, 'a"h, says that refining our character is the ultimate purpose of the Torah. If, Heaven forbid, a person doesn't toil to improve his character, he will fall into the trap of the Siṭra Aḥara (the impure side).

If a person deviates from the right way (which for all character traits is the middle path, except for arrogance), the Yeṣer Hara' (evil inclination) immediately finds a dwelling place in the person, to push him further into the wrong direction.

The reason why the word Me-od (מְאֹד - very) is used, can be explained from the use of the word Me-odekha (מְאֹדָךְ) in the Shema'. One explanation there is that the word means Middah which is the same word as character trait (Berakhoth 54a). That is why it says that the matter is "very" (מְאֹד) close to us, because the word Me-od hints to a person's character traits. So the verse can be understood to mean that once a person works on refining his character, he will find that it automatically becomes easier to keep the Torah and the Miṣwoth.

(See Ahabath Dawid, Derush 4)



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Not Splitting the Sheba' Berakhoth (Blessings) at a Wedding

At the wedding of one of his sons, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, 'a"h, honored Rabbi Mashash, 'a"h, to be the Meqaddesh (Mesadder Qiddushin) and perform the wedding, and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, 'a"h, to read all the Sheba' Berakhoth (seven blessings) under the Huppah. Rabbi Auerbach said to Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, "How will you be able to let me read them all? You'll suddenly see this Rabbi and that Rabbi walk in the hall, and you will want to honor each of them with one of the blessings".

In the end, however, it took place the way Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, 'a"h, said and Rabbi Auerbach, 'a"h, read all the seven blessings. Rabbi Auerbach was ecstatic and said to Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, "I am eighty years old, and this is the first time that I said all seven blessings at one time.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, 'a"h, said to Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, 'a"h, that according to Halakha, the correct way, a priori, is for only one person to recite all seven blessings of the Sheba' Berakhoth.

(See Be-or Panekha, HaRab Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Sheba' Berakhoth)

Why Strive for a Higher Level of Repentance?

In preparing ourselves for the Yamim Noraim (Days of Awe), one should work on achieving a high level of repentance and not simply try to "get by" with the minimum. The lower level of repentance is when it is made out of fear (Teshubah MeYir-ah). This is the type of repentance made by Cain. As a result, the repentance that he made was considered as only half.

The highest level is repentance made out of love (Teshubah MeAhabah). This type of repentance is far superior to one made out of fear. As a result, the benefits are also much greater. One who repents out of love for the Creator, has his repentance accepted in full.

This is also the explanation of the two apparently contradictory statements by Resh Laqish (Yoma 86b). One says that repentance turns willful transgressions (Zedonoth) into unintentional ones, and another says that it turns them into merits (Zekhuyoth). The first one refers to repentance made out of fear, and the second to repentance made out of love.

(See Ben Ish Hayil, 4 [Teshubah], 4)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"h

The Significance of the Simanim (Part 1)

The Ramban says that a decision made in Heaven, may not necessarily be carried out and can, in fact, be changed. If we make an action here on earth which resembles that decree, it will facilitate the fulfilling of that decision.

Hakham Yosef Hayyim, 'a"h, writes that the custom of opening one's hands when reciting the verse "Potheyah Eth Yadekha" (open your hands), which is connected with one's Parnassah (livelihood), is a good practice, because it symbolizes the opening of one's hands to receive something. This, in turn, helps facilitate the receiving of the blessings from above. This is one of many examples which illustrates the Ramban's statement.

This is the reason for the Simanim which we eat on Rosh Hashanah and Yehi Raṣon that we read before eating them.

(to be continued)