

“Grab onto My Kisei HaKavod and respond to them”

By Serving Hashem Yisrael Influence the Dinor River which Is Filled by the Sweat of the Holy Chayos Carrying the Kisei HaKavod

In honor of Shavuos, which approaches auspiciously, let us examine a subject pertaining to “zman matan toraseinu” — the events surrounding the giving of the Torah. Our blessed sages teach us that when Moshe Rabeinu ascended to the heavens to receive the Torah on behalf of Yisrael, a vehement argument ensued with the ministering angels. The malachim argued: **מה — לילוד אשה בינינו** — what is a mere mortal doing up here amongst us? It is more appropriate to give us the Torah rather than to a lowly creature of flesh and blood.

In the midst of this heated confrontation, HKB”H instructed Moshe to respond to the malachim; however, Moshe feared that they would incinerate him with the vapors emitted from their mouths. Finally, HKB”H promised to protect him by saying: **אחוזי — בכסא כבודי וחזור להן תשובה** — **grab hold of My Kisei HaKavod and supply them with an answer.** Here is the dialogue that ensued between Moshe Rabeinu and the “malachei hashareis” as depicted by the Gemara (Shabbas 88b):

“בשעה שעלה משה למרום, אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקב”ה, רבונו של עולם מה לילוד אשה בינינו, אמר להן לקבל תורה בא. אמרו לפניו חמודה גנוזה שגנוזה לך תשע מאות ושבעים וארבעה דורות קודם שנברא העולם אתה מבקש ליתנה לבשר ודם, מה אנוש כי תזכרנו וכן אדם כי תפקדנו, ה’ אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ, אשר תנה הודך על השמים. אמר לו הקב”ה למשה החזיר להן תשובה, אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם מתיירא אני שמה ישרפוני בהבל שבפיהם, אמר לו אחוזי בכסא כבודי וחזור להן תשובה...”

אמר לפניו, רבונו של עולם תורה שאתה נותן לי מה כתיב בה, אנכי ה’ אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, אמר להן למצרים ירדתם, לפרעה השתעבדתם, תורה למה תהא לכם... שוב מה כתיב בה, לא תרצח, לא תנאף, לא תגנוב, קנאה יש ביניכם, יצר הרע יש ביניכם. מיד הודו לו להקב”ה, שנאמר ה’ אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ, ואילו תנה הודך על השמים לא כתיב.”

When Moshe ascended to the heights, the ministering angels said to HKB”H, “Master of the Universe! What is someone born of a woman doing amongst us?” He replied, “He has come to receive the Torah.” They said to Him, “The coveted treasure that was stored by You for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created! You intend to give it to flesh and blood?! (Tehillim 8, 5) What is a mortal that You should remember him or the son of man that You should recall him? (ibid. 2) Hashem, our Lord, how grand is Your name in all the earth that You bestow Your glory upon the heavens.” HKB”H said to Moshe, “Give them an answer.” Moshe said before Him, “Master of the Universe, I fear lest they burn me with the breath in their mouths.” HKB”H said to him, “Take hold of My Kisei HaKavod and respond to them” . . .

Moshe said to Him, “Master of the Universe, what is written in the Torah that You are giving me? (Shemos 20, 2) “I am Hashem, your G-d, who took you out of Eretz Mitzrayim.” Addressing the malachim, he said, “Did you descend to Mitzrayim? Were you enslaved by Pharaoh? Why should you have the Torah?” . . . “What else is written in it?” (Shemos 20, 13) “You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal.” Addressing the malachim, he said, “Is there envy among you? Is there a yetzer hara among you?” Immediately, they conceded to HKB”H, as it is said (Tehillim 8, 10): “Hashem, our Master, how grand is Your name throughout the land! Now, it is not written: “Bestow Your glory upon the heavens.”

HKB”H Was Advising Moshe to Reveal the Amazing Power of Teshuvah

To avoid being incinerated by the vapors coming from the mouths of the malachim, HKB”H advises Moshe: **”אחוז בכסא כבודי—וחזור להן תשובה—grab onto My Kisei HaKavod and provide them with a “teshuvah.”** At first glance, this entire scenario is surprisingly surreal. Clearly, HKB”H did not want the malachei hashareis to harm Moshe, His loyal servant. So, why was it necessary for Moshe to grab hold of the Throne of Glory? There is no way that the malachim would have dared harm him!

We find a wonderful explanation in the writings of the Shela hakadosh (Maseches Shevuos). He explains that the malachim’s argument: **”What is a mortal that You should remember him?”** insinuates that human beings do not deserve the Torah, because they are influenced by the yetzer hara and are liable to sin.

To which HKB”H instructs Moshe to explain to the malachim that a tikun exists for the sinner; he need merely perform teshuvah, which reaches all the way up to the Kisei HaKavod. This fact is expressed unequivocally in the Gemara (Yoma 86a): **”גדולה תשובה שמגיעת עד כסא הכבוד—the power of teshuvah is so great that it reaches up to the Kisei HaKavod.** This then is the implication of HKB”H’s advice to Moshe: **”Grab onto My Kisei HaKavod and provide them with a “teshuvah.”** Here, the word **”teshuvah”** does not merely mean provide them with an answer; it implies that Moshe should reveal to the malachim the amazing power of teshuvah. When Yisrael perform teshuvah, they can rectify all wrongdoing; for, as we learn from the Gemara, teshuvah ascends to the Kisei HaKavod.

The Secret of the River Dinor that Falls upon the Heads of the Reshaim in Gehinom

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to elaborate further on this explanation regarding the profound intent of HKB”H’s remark to Moshe Rabeinu: **”Grab onto My Kisei HaKavod and provide them with a “teshuvah.”** We will refer to what we have learned in the Gemara (Chagigah 13b). The Gemara expounds on the passuk (Daniel 7, 10): **”נהר דינור: נהר דינור—גדולת תשובה שמגיעת עד כסא הכבוד—a river of fire was flowing forth before Him,** i.e. from before the Kisei HaKavod. This prompts the Gemara to ask: **”מהיכן נפיק”—where does it originate from?—** i.e. what is the source of this river of fire?

The Gemara answers: **”מזיעתן של חיות”—from the sweat of the “Chayos.”** There is a prestigious group of heavenly angels known as **”Chayos hakodesh”** — which literally means **”beasts of the holy realm.”** This name reflects the fact that they were created in the images of beasts — a lion, an ox, an eagle and a cherub; they were assigned the prestigious task of carrying the Kisei HaKavod upon which HKB”H sits, so to speak. Due to their immense fear of HKB”H, they would perspire; their perspiration formed the river of fire—**”nahar dinor.”**

Next, the Gemara inquires: **”ולהיכן שפיק”** — where does the stream of fire empty? **אמר רב זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב, על ראש רשעים בגיהנם — Rav Zutra the son of Tuvia said in the name of Rav: Upon the heads of the wicked in Gehinnom.** We learn from this Gemara that the fire of Gehinnom emanates from the sweat of the **”Chayos hakodesh”** who bear the Throne of Glory.

The divine kabbalist, the Rama of Pano, in his work Asarah Maamarot, reveals to us the connection between the fire of Gehinnom and the sweat of the **”Chayos hakodesh.”** Although it may appear as if the **”Chayos hakodesh”** are transporting the Kisei HaKavod; in truth, that is not the case. The Kisei HaKavod is, in fact, carrying them. This phenomenon is actually described in the piyut for the Mussaf service on Rosh HaShanah, in the kedushah of Keter: **”נראות נושאות והם נושאות עם כסא”** — **they appear to be carrying, but they are being carried along with the Throne.**

Actually, the Throne only carries its carriers whilst Yisrael are properly serving Hashem and pleasing Him. When, however, they are not serving Hashem properly, chas v’shalom, and there are many wicked people among them, they cause significant distress and turmoil above. This latter scenario is depicted by the passuk (Devarim 32, 18): **”צור ילדך תשי ותשכח א”ל מחוללך:—you ignored the Rock Who gave birth to you, and forgot G-d Who brought you forth.** Rashi comments: **When He comes to do good to you, you anger Him and weaken His resolve to do good on your behalf.**

Due to HKB”H’s distress whilst sitting atop the Kisei HaKavod, the Throne no longer carries its carriers. In fact, just the opposite is true; it becomes a heavier burden for the **”Chayos hakodesh.”** The increased burden causes them to toil and expend more effort, causing them to perspire. As we have learned, their perspiration forms the **”nahar dinor,”** the river of

fire. Seeing as this perspiration is a result of the wicked people's actions below--transgressions which increase the burden of the Throne upon its heavenly bearers—it is only fitting, measure for measure, that this sweat is emptied out on the heads of the wicked in Gehinnom. This is the gist of the Rama of Pano's revealing insight.

The Neshamos of Yisrael Are Carved Out from beneath the Kisei HaKavod

Let us add a tantalizing thought to achieve a better understanding of the insight from the Rama of Pano. We explained last week, in the essay for parshas Bamidbar, the significance of HKB”H sitting on His Kisei HaKavod. It is written (Yeshayah 6, 1): "ואראה את ה' יושב על כסא רם ונשא"—**I saw Hashem sitting upon a high and lofty throne.** The concept of sitting upon the Kisei HaKavod represents a king sitting upon his royal throne. This is evident from the passuk (Esther 1, 2): "בימים" **ההם כשבת המלך אחשורוש על כסא מלכותו אשר בשושן הבירה—in those days, when Achashveirosh sat on his royal throne, which was in the capital city of Shushan.** Rashi comments: **When the kingship became his.**

Now, our sacred sources teach us that the purpose of creation was for HKB”H to be called King. The source for this notion is found in the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer (3). Seeing as there cannot be a king without a people, HKB”H only became King, for all practical purposes, when Yisrael accepted the Torah and its Mitzvos at Har Sinai. We express this fact in tefilas Arvis as follows: "ומלכותו ברצון קיבלו עליהם"—**they accepted His Sovereignty over them willingly.** Thus, HKB”H sitting upon His Kisei HaKavod indicates that He is our King sitting upon His royal throne, as it is written (ibid. 29, 10): "וישב ה' מלך לעולם"—**Hashem sits enthroned as King forever.** Similarly, we recite in the tefilah Nishmat: "המלך היושב על כסא רם ונשא"—**the King, Who sits on a high and lofty throne.**

Based on this idea, we explained why the neshamos of Yisrael are hewn from beneath the Kisei HaKavod, as it states in the Zohar hakadosh (Tzav 29b): "כל הנשמות גזורות מתחת כסא הכבוד". By accepting the Torah and fulfilling Hashem's mitzvos, as loyal subjects honoring their master's will, they establish HKB”H as King of the World. Thus, it turns out that the Kisei HaKavod is supported by the neshamos of Yisrael, who choose

HKB”H as their King. This empowers HKB”H, so to speak, to sit atop His Kisei HaKavod and rule over the entire world.

This clarifies very nicely the insight of the Rama of Pano. The shortcomings of the reshaim—who rebel against HKB”H's sovereignty by committing countless sins and iniquities—reach the Kisei HaKavod. For, their negative behavior and actions cause HKB”H, so to speak, to vacate the Kisei HaKavod and abandon His position as King of the World. This makes the Kisei HaKavod heavier to bear, causing the "Chayos hakodesh" to exert more effort and sweat even more. Their sweat generates the river of fire known as Nahar Dinor; it spills its contents on the heads of the reshaim in Gehinnom as their punishment for sinning and causing this sequence of events.

By the Sweat of Your Brow Shall You Eat Bread

This sacred idea of the Rama of Pano's provides us with a better understanding of HKB”H's decree after Adam HaRishon sinned by partaking of the Eitz HaDa'as (Bereishis 3, 19): "בזיעת" **אפיך תאכל לחם עד שובך אל האדמה—by the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread until you return to the earth.** Let us refer to the Midrash (B.R. 19, 7) related to the passuk (ibid. 8): **"They heard the sound of Hashem Elokim walking in the garden toward the direction of the sun." Going is not written here but rather walking** (hence, it is referring to Hashem and not to the sound). **This indicates that He jumped up and ascended. Previously, the Shechinah dwelled primarily with the inhabitants below; after Adam HaRishon sinned, the Shechinah went to the first level of heaven.**

As a consequence of the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as," Adam HaRishon and all of the neshamos contained within him caused HKB”H tremendous anguish; hence, His Shechinah left the earth. His anguish made the Kisei HaKavod a heavier burden for the Chayos to bear. As a result of their increased labor, they sweated profusely, and the river of fire was generated to punish the reshaim. To make amends for his sinful act, Adam HaRishon was punished "midah k'neged midah"—measure for measure: "בזיעת אפיך תאכל לחם"—he would sweat in order to feed himself and his family.

It is with great pleasure and delight that we will now introduce a fascinating idea presented by Rabbi Chaim Vital, ztz”l, in Sha'ar HaMitzvos (Vaeschanan) in the name of his teacher, the Arizal:

I witnessed my mentor exerting tremendous energy while engaged in halachah to the point that he was sweating profusely. I asked him why it was necessary to work so hard. He replied that one must learn in depth to shatter the klipos. They appear in the form of difficult questions that prevent a person from understanding the halachah.

Therefore, it is imperative to go to great lengths and to exert one's energy while studying halachah. For this reason, the Torah is referred to as "toshiyah," because it usurps a person's strength, weakening the person who engages in its study. [Translator's note: the name "toshiyah" derives from the Hebrew root meaning to weaken.] My teacher would also say the same with regards to pilpul and delving into the halachah. For, the purpose of the investigation is to shatter the klipos that appear as difficult questions. For, they are the cause of those difficult halachic questions, making their answers comprehensible only with difficulty and tremendous effort.

In keeping with our current discussion, we can propose an explanation for the need to labor in the study of Torah to the point of sweating. The difficult halachic questions were generated by the klipos, who were generated by the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as"; they prevent a person from achieving a good understanding of the Torah and its principles. Furthermore, due to that monumental sin, Adam HaRishon caused the Kisei HaKavod to be a heavier burden for its bearers, causing them to sweat profusely. Therefore, to rectify this situation and our part in the sin, we must labor in the study of Torah, studying it in depth to the degree that we sweat. Thus, we will shatter the klipos.

At this point, it delights me to introduce an insight from the Yismach Moshe (Beshalach). He writes that there are two ways to fulfill the divine decree of: **"By the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread."** Firstly, there is the simple, straightforward way; one must toil and sweat to earn a living and feed oneself. Secondly, one must toil and sweat to achieve a better understanding of the Torah, which is called "bread," as we find in the passuk (Mishlei 9, 5): **"לכו לחמו בלחמי"—come and partake of My bread.**

Therefore, if a person fulfills the decree of **"בזיעת אפיק תאכל לחם"** by sweating to attain the bread of Torah, the burden of his livelihood is removed from him; he will no longer be required to sweat to earn his bread. This phenomenon is expressed by the Mishnah (Avos 3, 5): **"כל המקבל עליו עול תורה מעבירין ממנו עול"** **"all who accept upon themselves the yoke of Torah, the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly affairs are removed from him.** As explained, this is man's tikun for Adam HaRishon causing the "Chayos hakodesh" to sweat by eating from the Eitz HaDa'as.

The Incredible Power of Teshuvah

Based on the vital principle we have learned from the Rama of Pano, we can better comprehend Chazal's statement: **גדולה תשובה שמגיעת עד כסא הכבוד, שנאמר שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך.** **the power of teshuvah is so great that it reaches up to the Kisei HaKavod, as it states (Hoshea 14, 2): "Return, O Yisrael, unto Hashem, your G-d."** For, when a person commits a sin, he causes the holy Shechinah anguish, which makes the Kisei HaKavod more difficult for the "Chayos hakodesh" to bear. Conversely, when a person performs teshuvah, he pleases the Shechinah; as a result, the Kisei HaKavod carries its carriers.

This then is the interpretation of the statement: **גדולה תשובה שמגיעת עד כסא הכבוד.** The teshuvah a Jew performs is so powerful that it affects the Kisei HaKavod. To prove this point, the Mishnah cites the passuk: **"Return, O Yisrael, unto Hashem, your G-d."** In other words, a Jew's teshuvah reaches Hashem, his G-d. HKB"H, so to speak, receives additional strength due to a Jew's teshuvah, providing the Throne the power to carry its carriers. This is the tremendous power of teshuvah and its effect on the Kisei HaKavod.

This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the words of the divine poet instituted for the kedushah of Shacharis on Rosh HaShanah: **"ויושר יליצו בעדינו חיות אש"—and the fiery Chayos will advocate on our behalf.** In other words, the fiery "Chayos hakodesh" that carry the Kisei HaKavod will defend us before HKB"H sitting on His Throne of Glory. Seeing as they carry the Kisei HaKavod, they are the beneficiaries of Yisrael's teshuvah. They sense the intensity and sincerity of that teshuvah by the lightening of their sacred load.

We have now achieved a better understanding of the explanation of the Shela hakadosh. Let us review. HKB”H instructed Moshe Rabeinu: **“Grab onto My Kisei HaKavod and respond to them.”** He wanted Moshe to refute the argument of the “malachei hashareis”: **“What is a mortal that You should remember him or the son of man that You should recall him?”** After all, man has a yetzer hara and is likely to sin. With this argument, they intended to prove that they were superior to Yisrael and worthier recipients of the Torah.

To which HKB”H said to Moshe: **“Grab onto My Kisei HaKavod and provide them with a ‘teshuvah.’”** Prove to the malachim that the neshamos of Yisrael are intimately connected to the Kisei HaKavod. For, their mitzvah of teshuvah has a profound effect upon the Kisei HaKavod. If they sin, chas v’shalom, the “Chayos hakodesh” must exert themselves to carry the Kisei, causing them to sweat. If, however, they perform teshuvah, the Chayos are carried by the Kisei. This proves conclusively that the neshamos of Yisrael, that are hewn from beneath the Kisei HaKavod, are superior to the “malachei hashareis.” By electing HKB”H as their King, He sits majestically upon the Kisei HaKavod.

The Reason the Neshamos of Tzaddikim Bathe in the Nahar Dinor

Following this exalted line of reasoning, we will explain in greater depth HKB”H’s directive to Moshe Rabeinu: **“Grab onto My Kisei HaKavod and respond to them.”** We learned from the Rama of Pano that the sweat of the “Chayos hakodesh” spills on the heads of the reshaim in Gehinom, because due to their transgressions, the Chayos are not transported by the Kisei HaKavod. On the contrary, they are forced to exert themselves to carry it, causing them to sweat profusely. With this in mind, we must endeavor to explain a curious statement in the Zohar hakadosh (Vayikra 16b). Just as the reshaim are punished in Gehinom by the waters of the Nahar Dinor; similarly, the neshamos of the tzaddikim bathe in its waters and are purified by them. What connection do the tzaddikim have with the Nahar Dinor—the fiery river generated by the sweat of the Chayos? After all, the tzaddikim make life much easier for the “Chayos hakodesh,” eliminating the need for them to sweat. For, their good deeds are pleasing to HKB”H; and, in their merit, the Kisei HaKavod carries its carriers.

Thankfully, Hashem has opened my eyes and shown me how to reconcile the words of the tzaddik, the Rama of Pano. We will refer to the writings of the Bnei Yissaschar (Nissan 3, 9). He explains that there are two distinct ways to serve the Almighty. Firstly, there is “עבודת משא”; secondly, there is “עבודת מתנה”. The first type of service is mentioned in parshas Nasso in relation to the sons of Kehat, who transported the Aron (Bamidbar 7, 9): “ולבני קהת לא נתן כי עבודת הקודש עליהם בכתיף ישאו”—**and to the sons of Kehat he did not give, because the service of the holy is upon them; they carry on the shoulder.** The second type of service is mentioned in parshas Korach (ibid. 18, 7): עבודת מתנה “אתן—a service that is a gift. The Bnei Yissaschar explains the nature of these two types of service as follows:

“עבודת משא” is service characterized by “yirah.” The person does not enjoy the exertion; he merely carries the burden of the workload out of fear. Whereas “עבודת מתנה” is characterized by “ahavah.” The person enjoys the exertion and the toil of the service. It is truly a gift from the Almighty. As the Gemara depicts it, it is enjoying a taste of Gan Eden while still in Olam HaZeh.

Let us expand on his sacred explanation. The Gemara (Sotah 35a) explains that the Aron containing the two luchos carried its carriers. Accordingly, the sons of Kehat did not have to exert themselves to transport the Aron. On the contrary, the Aron carried them. Yet, due to their fervent desire to serve Hashem, they tried to carry the Aron, even though it was unnecessary to do so. This is the meaning of the passuk: **“Because the service of the holy is upon them; they carry on the shoulder”**—they exerted themselves, attempting to carry the Aron on their shoulders.

We can now suggest, with the utmost reverence and love, that, in truth, because of the tzaddikim—who serve Hashem and act according to His will—the “Chayos hakodesh” do not have to exert themselves to carry the Kisei HaKavod. Hence, they do not sweat, because the Kisei carries its carriers. Yet, when they see the great pleasure the tzaddikim derive from serving Hashem--“עבודת מתנה”—it motivates them to exert themselves and serve Hashem in a similar manner—**“they carry on their shoulder.”** As a result of their efforts to carry the Kisei HaKavod, they sweat profusely.

This explains very nicely the fact that the tzaddikim bathe in the waters of the Nahar Dinor to sanctify themselves, whereas the reshaim are punished by the fiery waters of the Nahar Dinor in Gehinom. For, there is the Nahar Dinor generated by the sweat of the Chayos caused by the sins of the reshaim; it causes the Kisei HaKavod to be a heavier burden upon its bearers. That Nahar Dinor pours its contents on the heads of the reshaim in Gehinom punishing them appropriately. On the other hand, there is the Nahar Dinor that is generated by the exertion of the Chayos, who were inspired by the tzaddikim; they learned how to serve Hashem with awe and devotion. It is in this Nahar Dinor that the neshamos of the tzaddikim immerse themselves to purify themselves. For, their sacred service caused it to exist.

At this point, we can comprehend HKB”H’s directive to Moshe: "אחוז בכסא כבודי וחזור להן תשובה". He was instructing Moshe to prove to the malachim that there are tzaddikim among the people of Yisrael who are greater than the malachim. In the words of the Gemara (Sanhedrin 93a): "גדולים צדיקים יותר ממלאכי השרת"—**tzaddikim are superior to the ministering angels.** This is evident from the fact that they have the power to influence the “Chayos hakodesh” with their sacred avodah. They inspire them to rise to a higher madreigah by exerting themselves to carry the Kisei HaKavod in the sense of "בכתף ישאו"—carrying it on their shoulders even when it is unnecessary. This proves conclusively that tzaddikim are superior to the “malachei hashareis.”

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