



## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

### מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

#### פרשת מטות - מסעי

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל רֹאשֵׁי הַמִּטּוֹת וכו'. אִישׁ כִּי יִדְרֹךְ לֵה', אוֹ הִשָּׁבַע שְׁבַעָה לְאַסֹּר אֶסֶר עַל נַפְשׁוֹ, לֹא יַחַל דְּבָרוֹ כְּכֹל הַיֵּצֵא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה. (במדבר ל, ב-ג)

*Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes ... If a man takes a vow to Hashem or swears an oath to establish a prohibition upon himself, he shall not desecrate his word; according to whatever comes from his mouth shall he do. (Bamidbar 30:2-3)*

In this week's *Sidrah*, the Torah introduces the concept of vows and oaths, which grant a person the right to create a new halachic status. By pronouncing the type of vows or oaths outlined in the *parshah*, an individual has the authority to impose a status, similar to that of the Torah, upon themselves, others, or an object of their choice.

The Midrash Rabbah discusses the qualifications necessary for taking an oath, referencing the *possuk* (Yirmiyah 4:2): *וְנִשְׁבַּעְתָּ חַי ה'* *You shall swear, "As Hashem lives!" in truth, in justice, and in righteousness.* The Midrash conveys a warning from Hashem to Klal Yisroel: Do not assume that it is always permitted to swear truthfully by My Name. Even if your oath is truthful, you are not allowed to swear by My Name unless you possess certain qualities.

The Midrash further cites the *possuk* (Devarim 10:20) that outlines the necessary qualities: *אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא, אֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹד, וְבוֹ תִדְבֹק, וּבְשֵׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע*, *You shall fear Hashem, your G-d; Him shall you serve; to Him shall you cleave; and in His Name shall you swear.* The phrase *אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא* teaches that you must emulate those who fear Hashem, such as Avrohom, Iyov, and Yosef. The expression *אֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹד* emphasises the need to free yourself from mundane concerns in order to study Torah and engage in *mitzvos*, dedicating yourself entirely to these pursuits. The phrase *וְבוֹ תִדְבֹק* instructs you to connect with Hashem by associating with a Torah scholar, whether through giving your daughter in marriage to him, engaging in business with him or benefiting him in other ways. Only after a person possesses these qualities is he permitted to swear in Hashem's name as the *possuk* concludes *וּבְשֵׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע*. The Midrash further records an incident involving the two thousand cities of King Yannai that were destroyed due to *the truthful* oaths he made, as he lacked the qualities mentioned above.

The Meforshim question why all these qualities are necessary for making an oath. It is understandable that without fear of Hashem, one should not swear, as this fear helps ensure that a person fulfils their word. However, why are the other traits also required?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains this concept by analysing a Gemara that discusses the topic. The Gemara (*Nedarim* 8b) states: *מאי דכתיב "וְזָרְתָּ לָּךְ יִרְאֵי שְׁמִי שֶׁמֶשׁ צִדְקָה" (מלאכי ג, כ), אֵלּוּ בְנֵי אָדָם*, *What is the meaning of the possuk (Malachi 3:20), "And it shall shine for you - those who fear My Name - a sun of righteousness"? (Whom does this possuk refer to?) It speaks of those people who are afraid to express the Name of Heaven in vain.* At first glance, this Chazal seems difficult to understand, as vainly invoking Hashem's Name in an oath or promise is a

Torah prohibition. Therefore, what is so commendable about a person who simply refrains from committing this transgression? Moreover, the implication is that merely adhering to this single *mitzvah* is admirable; does this hold true even if the person transgresses other *aveiros*?

The Sefer Iyei Hayam explains that when the Gemara extols those who are cautious not to be מוֹצִיא לְבַטְלָה שְׁמִים לְבַטְלָה, it does not mean לְבַטְלָה, *in vain*, in a literal sense. Instead, it refers to individuals who are careful not to invoke Hashem's Name for matters of *olam hazeh* that are trivial and futile. A person should only use Hashem's Name in an oath or promise that is beneficial for *ruchniyus* growth. This does not imply that promises are only allowed when directly related to performing Torah and *mitzvos*; rather, any promise that contributes to spiritual well-being is considered worthwhile and permitted. If one views his physical needs as a means to facilitate his spiritual agenda, the mundane becomes sanctified. Thus, even in business or physical matters, one may swear in Hashem's Name when it serves the elevated purpose of assisting someone in serving Hashem.

However, how can one determine if their motives are for Hashem or, *chas veshalom*, לְבַטְלָה – in vain? How does one know if they are pursuing materialism or they need the physical and mundane to enhance their service to Hashem? The answer to this question is found in the qualities described in the aforementioned Midrash. A person who fears Hashem, dedicates their life and passion to Torah and *mitzvos*, and cleaves to Hashem through their involvement with a Talmid Chochom (by assisting him or giving him their daughter in marriage) can be assured that their intentions are correct. Someone who lives according to these ideals is content with his lot and does not seek out luxuries. Therefore, for such a person, it is permissible to swear even for financial and mundane matters, as these are being used as tools for serving Hashem.

This understanding resolves the earlier difficulties. The Gemara teaches that expressing Hashem's Name should not be done in vain, meaning it should not pertain to matters that do not involve spiritual significance, either directly or indirectly. To determine whether one has the proper intentions, one can refer to the traits listed in the Midrash. Therefore, indeed, one who embodies these qualities and thus swears by Hashem's Name for a worthy spiritual purpose is deserving of praise.

We learn from here that when a person lives within their means and does not chase financial success solely to support a lavish lifestyle, their business endeavours are viewed more positively. Such a person's promises are not seen as pointless and in vain; instead, they serve as a foundation for nurturing and advancing their spiritual pursuits, which is worthy of admiration.