



DIVREI TORAH ON THE PARSHA • BY RABBI DOV KEILSON

זכרון אבינעם

ZICHRON AVINOAM

977/תש"ז IN MEMORY OF AVINOAM GROSSMAN • ל"ע"נ הבחור החשוב אבינעם ע"ה בן שמזאל אהרן נ"י

כ"ה אב תשפ"ז

CONNECTING

Chasdei Hashem, I have the great merit to be the mashgiach of Camp Romimu this summer, a camp that is under the leadership of Rav Shlomo Pfeiffer. It is truly a remarkable place, filled with uplifting ruach and Torah spirit. Every Friday night, we have a question-and-answer session with the older division, from 11:30 p.m. until 1:30 a.m.; it is truly a sight to behold, as the boys continue to ask and discuss until the very late hours.

This past Shabbos, a young man asked, "What should I do if I do not feel a connection to Hashem?" The esteemed panel members, each in his own fashion, responded as follows: A relationship takes time to develop, especially one with the Creator of the world — and without expectations, and with dedication and patience, over time it will come, that is guaranteed; but most important of all is the fact that he is yearning for it and is making the steps towards it... for that yearning itself towards the ultimate and eternal bond is the greatest fuel for him to enable him to truly reach his intended goal....

In this week's *parashah*, the Torah tells us these words: אַחֲרֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם תֵּלְכוּ – "After Hashem, your G-d, you shall go..." (Devarim 13:5). My rav, Rav Binyomin Forst *shlita* shared that at the Knessiah Gedolah in 1923, the Chofetz Chaim asked: The word אַחֲרֵי and אַחֵר both mean *after* — yet, the word *acharei* means that one is still far from the intended goal he is trying to reach; while *achar* means that one is immediately behind it, not far off at all. If so, asked the Chofetz Chaim, why does the Torah here use the language of אַחֲרֵי in speaking of one following "after" Hashem?

The Chofetz Chaim explained: In this *pasuk* is found great levels of *avodas Hashem Yisbarach*; perhaps one might feel that he is just so far from those levels that he will never reach them! Comes the Torah to say that he should not fear if he is still far from it, for *avodas Hashem* and coming close to Hashem take time... and the Torah is encouraging each individual by telling him that if he keeps at it, he will eventually reach it, one thousand percent.

The Imrei Emes at that same Knessiah answered differently: If a person feels that he still far from Hashem, then he should know and be aware that he is very close. So long as a person feels that he has already reached it, that person is still far from the goal.

This week, on the yahrzeit of my beloved Rebbi, Rav Aaron Brafman zt"l, I mentioned the following point that hit me in particular this year: While so many myriad ma'alos made my Rebbi exceptional, one thing that stood out was his unbelievable humility, no matter what stage and age he had reached. He always and forever remained a person who expressed how much he still had to grow. He never, ever felt that he had made it and was done; rather, he yearned to always remain young. At every siyum that every talmid made, he said that hadran along with him, and also vividly shared his inspiration to be mesayem more often himself. If he ever heard an idea of aliyah in ruchniyus, he would comment aloud, "Wow, I should really do that too, that is such a good idea...."

Never did we feel that he looked upon us as if he were "greater than thou;" quite the contrary, in his inimitable fashion he would lower himself to make us almost feel that he was one of us, growing and shleiging in every way he could in the yeshiva. Adding sedorim, adding kaballos... wow, his humility was simply overwhelmingly great.... Yehi zichro boruch l'olam....

B'Siyata DiShmaya.