

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter IV: Vaveira (Gen. 18:1–22:24)

Essay 25. Greeting a teacher on a Festival

ראש השנה פָּרַק קמ"א, אָמַר ר' יִצְחָק סְיִיב אָדָם לְהַקְבִּיל פְּנֵי רַבּוֹ בְּרֵגֶל שְׁנָאָמַר "מִדּוּעַ אַתָּה הַלַּכְתָּ אֵלָיו הַיּוֹם לֹא-חֻדַּשׁ וְלֹא שַׁבָּת", מִפְּלֵל דְּבַחֲדָשׁ וְשַׁבָּת אֵיבְעֵי לִיהּ לְמִיזֵל ע"כ. לֵשׁ לְדַקְדָּק דְּפִתְחָא "בְּרֵגֶל" וְסִינִים בְּ"חֻדַּשׁ וְשַׁבָּת", וְאִיךָ זְלִיף מִקְרָא דְסְיִיב לְהַקְבִּיל בְּרֵגֶל וְהֵלֵא לֹא פְתִיב אֱלָא חֻדַּשׁ וְשַׁבָּת. וְאִם תֵּאמַר דְּבִכְלָל חֻדַּשׁ וְשַׁבָּת אֵיפָא נְמִי רֵגֶל, הֵיכָּה לֹא לֹמַר דְּבַחֲדָשׁ וְשַׁבָּת וְרֵגֶל אֵיבְעֵי לְמִיזֵל.

We see in the Gemara of tractate **Rosh Hashana, the first chapter** (page 16b): **“Rabbi Yitzchak said: A person is obligated to [go out and] greet his teacher on a Festival, as it is stated [that the husband of the Shunamite woman asked, when she was readying herself to go to the prophet Elisha]: ‘Why will you go to him today; it is neither the New Moon nor Shabbat’ (II Kings 4:23). By inference, we learn that on the New Moon and on Sabbath, he is required to go.**

We need to investigate this, for it opens with discussing a “Festival,” and concludes with “New Moon and Sabbath.” How does Scripture teach that one is obligated to greet his teacher on a Festival, while the only thing written in II Kings 4:23 is a “New Moon and Sabbath”? If you’ll say that included in “New Moon and Sabbath” is also a “Festival,” then [Rabbi Yitzchak] should have said that “on the New Moon and on Sabbath and on Festival it’s required to go.”

וְיֵשׁ לֹמַר דְּהוּאִיל שְׁהַנְּשִׂים מְשֻׁמְרוֹת רֹאשׁ חֻדַּשׁ כְּמוֹ יוֹם טוֹב כְּדֵאִתָּא בְּטוֹר הַלְכוֹת רֹאשׁ חֻדַּשׁ, אִם כֵּן יוֹם טוֹב הֵי בְּכָלֵל חֻדַּשׁ. וְהֵינּוּ חֻדַּשׁ וְהֵינּוּ יוֹם טוֹב, וּמִשּׁוֹם הֵכִי לֹא אֵיבְעִי קְרָא לְפָרוּשֵׁי יוֹם טוֹב, מִשּׁוֹם דְּהִכָּא בְּאִשָּׁה עֶסְקִינָּה וְרֹאשׁ חֻדַּשׁ הוּא לָהּ כְּמוֹ יוֹם טוֹב. וְר' יִצְחָק אֵתָּא לְפָרוּשֵׁי לָן מַה שְּׁלֵא גַתְפְּרֵשׁ בְּפִתּוּב.

It can be said that since women observe a New Moon as though it is a Festival, as is found in the Tur,¹ Orach Chaim, Laws of the New Moon (siman 417), if so, then a Festival is included in the term “New Moon.” There is a New Moon and there is a Festival, and because of this, it wasn’t necessary for Scripture to explain the meaning of the term “Festival,” because it was dealing with a woman, the Shunamite, and we know from the Tur that a New Moon for her is like a Festival. Rabbi Yitzchak came to interpret for us what is not explained in the Scripture.

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¹ The Tur, i.e., the Arba’ah Turim, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher’s compilation of halacha.

והטור ברקת כתב שיש רמז בקרא אף בחיוב הרגל, מדכתיב "מדוע את הלכת" ולא כתב "למה את הלכת", שאותיות מדו"ע הם אותיות מוע"ד.

The Tur Bareket² wrote that there is a hint in Scripture even regarding the obligation to greet one's teacher on the Festival, from the fact that it's written, "Why [מדוע] [madua] are you going" and not "Why [למה] [lama] are you going," for the letters of the word מדוע [madua] ["why"] are the same letters of the word מוע"ד [moed] ["Festival"].

ועוד יש לתת טעם לשיבחה בתירוץ קושטא הנזכר לעיל במה שכתב הרב מנחם עזריה בתשובותיו (סימן ו') שהטעם שחייב אדם להקביל פני הסקמים בחדש נרגל, היינו מטעם שאנו מברכים "מקדש ישראל וראשי חודשים", "מקדש ישראל והזמנים", ולא הני חותם בשמים כדאמרין בברכות דמשמע הכי ישראל מקדשי לראשי חודשים ישראל מקדשי לזמנים. ובשפת יש טעם אחר כפי ללמוד מהם תורה אם הם בעיר ועיי"ש.

Moreover, a point of praise should be given to the solution of the question mentioned above by what Rabbi Menachem Azaria of Fano³ wrote in his responsa (siman 6). He wrote that the reason that a person must greet the sages on the New Moon and Festival, is because we say a blessing for the New Moon in the Shemoneh Esreh of Musaf, "Blessed are You, L-rd, Who sanctifies Israel and the New Moons," and we say a blessing for the Festivals in the Shemoneh Esreh of Musaf, "Blessed are You, L-rd, Who sanctifies Israel and the Festivals." We do not conclude a blessing with two themes, as it says in tractate Berachot (49a), so that [these blessings] mean "[Who sanctifies] Israel, who sanctify the New Moons," and also "[Who sanctify] Israel, who sanctify the Festivals." The New Moons, and by extension, the Festivals, were determined by the Sanhedrin based on witness testimony. As the identification of the sanctity of these days was thus placed in the hands of the Sanhedrin, we are obligated to greet them on the New Moon, i.e., to learn from them when the New Moon occurs. Rabbi Menachem Azaria of Fano adds: **On the Sabbath, there is another reason to greet the sages: in order to learn Torah from them, if they are in the city.**

והשתא אתי שפיר דקרא קא משמע לן חידושא דבשפת בעי למיזל ללמוד תורה ממנו, ובחדש נמי לפי שהם מקדשים החדש, וממילא נשמע החיוב אף ברגל לפי שהם מקדשים הזמנים, ולא איצטריך קרא למימריה.

Now all is well, that Scripture is coming to teach us a novelty, that on the Sabbath one is required to go to learn Torah from [one's teacher], and also by itself is heard the obligation of the Festival, because [the sages] sanctify the Festivals, and it is not necessary for Scripture to explicitly say [that one should greet his teacher on a Festival].

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² Rabbi Chaim ben Avraham haCohen, of Aleppo ("Aram Zobah"). His sefer, Tor Bareket (Amsterdam 1654), is a commentary on the Orach Chaim section of the Shulchan Aruch.

³ Rabbi Menachem Azaria da Fano ("Rema M'Pano") (1548–1620), Italian Kabbalist and commentator on the Talmud. His responsa were published as Sefer Tshuvot (Venice, 1600).