



IYAR: TRANSFORMATION IN LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Of all the months in the year, Iyar is the only one that every single day has a time-relevant mitzvah. During Nissan, we count the *omer* for half the month; in Sivan—just a week. But in Iyar, the mitzvah of *sefiras ha'omer* applies daily for the entire month.

This repetition affects the mitzvah itself by affording it a gravitas and permanence. The days themselves are also changed by their association with a mitzvah. Of all mitzvos that we have, the *sefira* has special significance, as it prepares us for *matan Torah*. On that day, not only were we given the *Aseres Hadibros*, but everything in the Torah until today—*Torah Shebiksav*, *Torah Sheb'al Peh*, *chiddushim* written throughout the generations, and even the new revelations in the

Torah that will be given to us by Moshiach—were all given at Har Sinai.

The *avoda* of Nissan, as it is characterized by Pesach, is *iskafya*—running away from any potential negatives. In the state the Yidden were then found, trying to fight against evil would have been too difficult; the first step was for them to run away. As time passed and Iyar came along, the Yidden were stronger and they began a new *avoda*—*is'hapcha*. At that point, they had to start dealing with the world and transforming it.

Curiously though, the *bracha* and power for Iyar and its *avoda* comes from Shabbos Mevorchim Iyar, which is still in the month of Nissan. If Iyar is so much higher and more advanced than Nissan, how

can its energy come from Nissan?

Although Nissan (*iskafya*) is a more basic level, and only the first step, it does have a unique advantage over Iyar (*is'hapcha*). Transforming the world is slow and methodical work; leaving Mitzrayim, however, was a massive and sudden leap forward. To achieve this, Hashem revealed Himself to the Yidden. His “breaking the rules” enabled Yidden to “break their rules” and escape the clutches of Mitzrayim. This is what Nissan can contribute to Iyar—infusing it with the power to do its job of transforming the world by leaps and bounds instead of the usual slow steps. With that mindset, Iyar—and the daily *sefiras ha'omer*—can be a fitting preparation for *matan Torah*, which broke the



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 104489

לזכות
 החייל בצבאות ה'
 אהרון ברוך שיחי'
 לרגל יום הולדתו כ"ז ניסן
 שיגדל להיות חי"ל ולגרום נח"ר
 לכ"ק אדמו"ר ולנח"ר הוריו הי"ו
 מתוך בריאות נכונה בגו"ר

rules by canceling the decree of division between Heaven and Earth.

Some may mistakenly assume that as Nissan comes to a close, it is time to stop taking leaps and instead return to a regular, methodical pace. Shabbos Mevorchim Iyar bridges the two months, and reminds us that this pace must continue. Similarly, our custom is not to announce “חסל פסח סידור פסח—the order of Pesach is over.” The work of *mitvza Pesach*—dealing with Yidden still in their own “Mitzrayim” and helping them leave it—is not over; it must continue.

Some question the value—and possibility—of affecting simple Yidden, especially as it may come at a price for their own personal progress. Looking back at the Pesach story, certainly they were in a worse situation. The oppression, assimilation, and hopelessness were harder then. Furthermore, before *matan Torah* there was no open channel between Heaven and Earth. They also didn’t have (nearly as much) *zechus avos* to rely on. Despite all that, the Yidden left Mitzrayim, which means that there is certainly hope for us now.

As to the complaint of the personal “cost,” the opposite is actually true. By helping others and inspiring them to take a leap, Hashem will cause one’s personal *avoda* to grow by leaps and bounds. On a practical note: if you want to sleep peacefully and have sweet dreams—that’s your choice. Great and swift growth is not available to everyone. For that you need to leave your own comfort zone and go out to inspire others. That’s how you can merit this ability.

This also explains the stories of the Baal Shem Tov’s seemingly strange custom. On many occasions, he would initiate conversations with the simple Yidden, asking them about their welfare. Each time, he would lead them to say “ברוך השם” or in Yiddish “געלויבט דער אויבערשטער” and the like.

When eating and drinking, there is a mitzvah to thank Hashem for the food. There’s no mitzvah to start conversations just in order to say *baruch Hashem*. And yet, the Baal Shem Tov did this. Not just once—it was a regular occurrence. With his special *neshama* of *yechida*, the essence of the *neshamos* of all Yidden, it seems

odd that the Baal Shem Tov devoted so much time to this practice.

The simple Yid epitomizes the idea of exponential effect. When a *mekubal* says a *bracha*, he has many special *kavanos*. In each word, he ponders different levels. When a simple Yid says a *bracha*, he has one simple thought: “Thank You, Hashem.” Instead of focusing on particular levels, he devotes his thanks to Hashem Himself—His essence. When celebrating Hashem’s kindness too, the simple Yid thanks Hashem Himself—*Atzmus*. This is what attracted the Baal Shem Tov to the simple Yidden. It’s also why he didn’t consider it a waste of his time and taking away from his own *avodah*. By inspiring them, he was able to achieve so much more himself.

As he famously said, everything we see and hear must teach us a lesson. This story was made public for a reason—it teaches us to follow in his way and inspire others, inspiring ourselves in the process. **T**

(Adapted from *sichas Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5745*)