



Behaaloscha – Standing Together

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

The Torah recounts an interesting event. As Moshe reviews the laws of Pesach and the details of the Paschal lamb offering, a group approaches worried they will miss out on this beautiful opportunity because of their impure state. *"We are ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person; [but] why should we be excluded so as not to bring the offering of the Lord in its appointed time, with all the children of Israel? (Bamidbar 9:6-7).* Moshe doesn't immediately know the answer to this dilemma and instructs the people to wait until he obtains an answer from God. *"Moses said to them, stand here (imdu), and I will hear what the Lord instructs concerning you (Bamidbar 9:8)."* Immediately, God instructs Moshe regarding the laws of *Pesach Sheyni* (the second Passover), a special make-up date for those who were either too far from Jerusalem or were ritually impure and therefore unable to offer the *Korban Pesach* on Pesach itself.

Why the need for the word, "Imdu, stand here?" Why not tell the people "*chaku, wait*", or just simply tell the people, you will get back to them as soon as God gives you proper instructions?

The Baal Shem Tov (Rav Yisroel Baal Shem Tov 1700-1760) was known to have prayed an exceptionally long *Shmona Esrei* (Amida prayer). For many it was difficult to wait for the Baal Shem Tov to finish, and so, they would leave the Beis Midrash to make Kiddush (on Shabbos and Yom Tov), eat something, and would then return to the Beis Midrash for the Chazzan's repetition. However, the Baal Shem Tov's closest disciples would always remain with their beloved Rebbe. It once happened that the students felt faint and decided they would leave the Beis Midrash for just a few minutes, eat and drink a bit, and then return for the conclusion of davening (thinking they had much time until the Baal Shem Tov finished). Much to their surprise, when they returned, they found the Baal Shem Tov sitting and waiting as he had already finished davening. The students were baffled, *"Rebbe, every day your Shmona Esrei is long and intense, and today it was much shorter. Is everything alright? Did something occur?"* The Baal Shem Tov said, *allow me to explain with a mashal (parable).* There was a man who saw a beautiful bird perched atop a tall tree. The man wanted more than anything to see the bird up close and see its unique features and characteristics. However, he was short, and the tree was tall. So, he gathered a group of his closest friends, and each man stood on the shoulders of the other until the first man was hoisted to the top of the tree and able to look upon this beautiful and unique creature. The Baal Shem Tov paused, *Imagine, if the man on the bottom of this human chain decided he was hungry and went home to eat something. The entire group would come tumbling down to the ground.* The Baal Shem Tov continued, *when I daven, I am able to reach the highest levels of the celestial sphere because I am surrounded by all of you – I stand on your shoulders. Your presence supports and hoists me up to places I could not reach on my own. My merits only take me so far, but together we are able to stand before God, Himself. And so this morning, when all of you left the Beis Midrash, I lost my footing and tumbled downward.*

The Baal Shem Tov continued, *"This is the meaning of the verse of this week's Parsha, Imdu V'Eshmiah Mah Yitzaveh Hashem Lachem, **Stand here**, and I will hear what God commands you."* Moshe was telling the people, *if you stand by me, then I will be able to hear God's voice. If I can stand on your shoulders, then I will be able to reach great heights – but if you leave, if I am alone, I don't know if God will converse with me.*

We must recognize that we can only be truly great in the company of others. We need each other to actualize as individuals and as a nation. We must build bonds of friendship and unity with one another because this is the key to our personal success. There are things we can achieve alone, but there is so much more we can do together. Alone we can accomplish good things; together, we can soar to the greatest heights.

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