

Acharei Mot Kedoshim

May 2nd 2020
8th of Iyar 5780

850



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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

Published by Mosdot "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" in Israel

Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"a



MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Sanctify Yourself with the Permissible

"You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d" (Vayikra 19:2)

The Midrash says: We are told in Parshat Vayikra, "You shall be holy", which means 'be separated'. In Parshat Shemini it says (Vayikra 11:44) "you are to sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy". It says in Parshat Vayikra "for I am holy" – just as I am Holy so you shall be holy, just as I am separated so you shall be separated."

This Midrash requires clarification. For how can a mere mortal being, flesh and blood, pretend to achieve this supreme holiness exclusive to the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed Be He, who is surrounded by Angels and Tarshishim who tremble and fear in His presence? After all, the Yetzer Hara is embedded in man's heart and is out to make him stumble at every step of the way, trying with all his might to incite him to follow the path of evil. Is it truly possible that despite all the challenges and difficulties that man faces, he will succeed in attaining such a lofty and elevated level of holiness? How can we make this comparison between the holiness of man and the Creator of the World?

Furthermore, Chazal say (Niddah 30b): "'And every tongue swear' this refers to the day of birth when man is made to swear, 'Be righteous and do not be wicked'. And even if the entire world tells you that you are a tzaddik, consider yourself as a rasha and know that Hashem is pure and His servants are pure and the soul that He placed within you is pure. If you safeguard it in purity all is well, if not I will take it from you." Seemingly, this oath is founded on error, for does a person know what awaits him on his arrival to this world? Does he know of the difficult challenges that the Yetzer Hara will place in his path? He is now still in the Upper Worlds which are free of any trace of evil and where the Yetzer Hara has no power. He no doubt thinks that to be a tzaddik and not a rasha is a simple feat and he is even prepared to swear on it. But once he comes down to this world and encounters difficult trials, it would seem that he immediately withdraws his declaration and regrets his oath, for he did not know in advance that he would have to battle the Yetzer Hara.

With siyata dishmaya, I would like to suggest the following thought. While man is still in the Heavens and before he swears, he is shown all the ills of this world and all its challenges and he is taught that a difficult battle awaits him on his arrival to this world. Only after this revelation is he made to swear. So in fact, he clearly knows what his oath involves and what awaits him, thereby it is not a promise based on a false premise. This could be the meaning of the following Gemarah (Nidah 30b): "A candle burns above a baby's head when it is in its mothers' womb, and he foresees and gazes from one end of the world to the other." He is shown the world, with all its inherent difficulties and challenges, so that he should know what awaits him, and he is told: If you wish to be successful in this battle, you must ensure that a lit candle should burn

above your head, meaning the light of Torah should always burn and shine on you. If this is the case, he is promised that he will be successful in his campaign against the Yetzer Hara. This shows us that even before taking his oath, he is aware of what the future holds for him, therefore his oath is a genuine one.

He is specifically made to swear while he is still in the Upper Worlds, a place that is shrouded in holiness and purity, free of any trace of impurity, so that at the time of his oath he will absorb the holiness which is present and then by inhaling immense powers of holiness from the Upper Worlds, he will have the strength to live his life with holiness and contend with the challenges that life will send his way. We see that while he is still in the Upper Worlds, before coming down to this world, Hashem endows him with the necessary strength to cope with the Yetzer Hara and charges his batteries with enough resources of holiness and purity. So when a person arrives in this world he is well-equipped with spiritual and holy nutrition, which are the weapons against the Yetzer Hara, and he possesses the strength to heed his oath, for a person is not given trials that he does not have the strength to overcome.

This is why the Torah commands a person, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d" (Vayikra 19:2). In truth, the intention is not that a person should be as holy as Hashem, for this is an impossible feat. Rather it means that he should be as holy as he was before coming down to this world when he stood before the Holy Throne and absorbed holiness and purity. If he draws on this holiness, then Hashem will add to it from His holiness.

This is what Hashem requests of man with the command "You shall be holy". This is also what the holy Zohar tells us: All the mitzvot that Hashem gave us are counsel and tools that enable us to achieve the virtue of holiness. If so, a person has the power to safeguard this special holiness and it is up to him to do so for he was given all the necessary tools.

In the next verse we are told (Vayikra 19:3), "Every man: Your mother and father shall you revere". Why does the command of fearing one's parents follow the command of "You shall be holy"? I would like to suggest the following answer: Chazal tell us, 'The deeds of the parents are an indication for the children'. A person's offspring follow in the way that the parent behaves and learn from his deeds, for it is the way of a child to copy his father's ways and conduct. Therefore, the Torah commands us 'You shall be holy', implying that man should know that if he behaves with purity and holiness, this holiness will perforce pass on to his offspring, for children's chief education comes through observing their parents conduct. Since children will behave in the same way that their parents behave, the Torah commands "You shall be holy" which is immediately followed by the command "Every man: Your mother and father shall you revere" to hint to the parents that if they behave with holiness, their offspring too will merit this holiness.



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

A Father's Blessing

A woman once came to me, bitterly bemoaning her lot. She asked, "Why do my friends, my neighbors, my cousins, and my sisters all have children, and only I am singled out to be childless?" I felt for her in her pain, but I couldn't help her much. Hashem alone holds the key to children.

Throughout her visit, each time I tried encouraging her, I felt that she was accusing me for her condition. She seemed to imply that it was my fault that she hadn't been blessed with offspring. I tried explaining to her that we cannot fathom Hashem's calculations. But she banged on the table in stubbornness and would not accept my words.

Finally, I decided to change tactics. In a sharp change of tone, I said, "Madame, I admire you."

She fell silent, not expecting such a reaction. I continued. "With your attitude, you are acting exactly as a daughter who is obstinately demanding help from her father, not yielding until he agrees to her request. You are proving yourself a true daughter to our Heavenly Father. Take your grievances directly to Hashem, tell them to Him, and with His help, you will yet have a child."

Every Jew who finds himself in a difficult position should turn to Hashem with tenacity, staunchly clinging to his desire. When Hashem observes his closeness and pure faith in Him, He will certainly act according to the man's wishes.

The Haftarah

"The word of Hashem came to me, saying, 'Now you, 'Son of Man'' (Yechezkel 22)

The connection to the Parsha: In the Haftarah, the Navi Yechezkel decries the sins of Am Yisrael at that time. In the Parsha, Am Yisrael are warned not to behave like the abominations of the nations.

Ashkenazim read "Behold, you are like the children of the Cushites" (Amos 9) where it tells of the Kingdom of Yisrael who were exiled because of the sins of the generation, as the Parsha says, "Let not the land disgorge you for having contaminated it".

Guard Your Tongue

His Father and Mother Too

There is no distinction in the prohibition of accepting lashon hara, if one hears it from others or if one hears it from his one of his parents or other family members. Furthermore, we find in Tana D'bei Eliyahu, that if a person hears his father or mother talking in an incorrect manner, for example speaking lashon hara, besides being warned not to accept their words, he must also stop them (he should take care to do so in a respectable manner). If he remains quiet, he, as well as they, are punished greatly.



Words of our Sages

The Hidden Secret of the Wealthy

The story is told about two friends, one wise and the other foolish. They learned together as children and as they grew older they went their separate ways. The wise one went out to the wide world and made great strides in business, while the fool made no attempts to progress and remained as he was. One day the two friends met up and the fool asked his wise childhood friend, "Please tell me your secret, how did you become so wealthy?"

The wise one answered: "From time to time I travel to faraway places where I purchase merchandise and I then return home and sell the goods. The money that I earn in exchange for the merchandise is how I make a good living." The fool was skeptical and voiced his opinion: "You are considered a wise person, yet I don't see what you gain by travelling far away and buying merchandise in exchange for good cash, which you then bring back here and sell. You end up with exactly what you had originally – money and no merchandise." His wise friend explained: I buy a large stock at a discounted price and then sell it for a higher amount. So I am left with more money than I started out with."

The fool was still not convinced and continued to doubt his friend: "Since your 'business' involves travel expenses and you need to sleep in a hotel when you go to the fair, the money that you earn is spent on different overheads, so I am left with the same question. What do you gain at the end of the day by all your travelling around? How did you in fact become wealthy?" With no other option, the wealthy friend took out his notebook where he kept

a detailed inventory of all his expenses and income, and showed his friend: Here is the record of all my expenses, here is the record of all my income and this is the bottom line which shows a certain profit.

The fool now had a new question: If indeed it is true what you are saying and the main thing is what is written on the bottom line, why do you need to travel around, leaving your home far behind? Just take the notebook, write on the bottom line the amount that you wish to 'earn', and everything will be fine!

That this way of thinking is most absurd needs no further clarification. What will he gain by entering a higher profit than what he really earned, for the paper is nothing more than paper? The whole point of his toil is that through his actual expenses and income, he will be left with a true profit.

The Maggid, Rabbi Elimelech Biderman shlita, explains that this is exactly the idea of the Sefira:

Throughout the day we must remember where we are currently holding – these are the days of preparation for receiving the Torah. Each person, according to his level, must engage in Torah study and rectification of his middot, and then each night, he records on the 'bottom line', 'Today is ... of the Omer', I already came that bit closer to Har Sinai. It is not enough to simply count the Omer aloud after the Arvit prayer, with fear and love, while throughout the day one doesn't pay attention to man's task of self-improvement that is an intrinsic part of these days. This kind of behavior is similar to that foolish friend who due to his stupidity mistakenly thinks that he can change the results by changing the numbers on the last line, when he counts at the end of the day "Today is ... of the Omer". Even though G-d forbid, this does not take away from the requirement to perform the mitzvah as we have been commanded, the main purpose is missing.



Pearls of the Parsha

Young That Are Considered as Old

"After the death of Aharon's two sons" (Vayikra 16:1)

The holy Zohar says that since Nadav and Avihu were not yet twenty years old, they were therefore called 'Aharon's sons', meaning children who are still under the jurisdiction of their parents.

If so, the question arises, why were they punished? There is a concept that a person under twenty years of age is not punished by Heaven?

However, the 'Hadrash v'Ha'iyun' explains, from the words of the Talmud (Berachot 31b) it appears that a clever and extremely intelligent youngster is punished even before reaching twenty years of age. This is why Eli HaKohen told Shmuel that he was liable for death, when he was a young child of only two years old, because of his evident great wisdom.

This is what the above verse is implying: "After the death of Aharon's two sons", if you ask how they were punished before the age of twenty, the verse immediately answers this question, "when they approached before Hashem". Since they had reached a very lofty level and possessed great wisdom, to the extent that they became extremely close to Hashem, therefore "and they died", even though others of the same age are not yet eligible for punishment.

Lowliness and Elevation, Vital Traits

"With this shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary" (Vayikra 16:3)

The word 'בזאת', with this, has the same numerical value (410) as 'שפל', lowly, and 'קדוש', holy.

What does this imply? The 'Siach Ya'akov Yosef zt"l, writes that Hashem was hinting to Aharon HaKohen that in order to serve Hashem a person must possess these two perceptions. On the one hand, with matters concerning his own self he must feel lowly, whereas with matters concerning heaven, he must feel elevated when he acts with holiness.

The Shechina is Compared to a Devoted Mother

"That dwells with them amid their contamination" (Vayikra 16:16)

Once several Admorim were sitting together with the Maggid of Trisk, and they asked him why the holy Zohar calls the holy Shechina a mother.

The Maggid replied, "you answer", but they responded, "we want to hear what you have to say".

The Maggid then told them that the way of the world is that when a child is unclean, the father hands the baby over to the mother so that she should wash him and then once he is clean he will hug and kiss him. But a mother is not like this; even when her baby is unclean she hugs and kisses him.

The Shechina too dwells with the people amid their contamination. The Shechina hugs and kisses Knesset Yisrael even while they are still dirty with wrongdoings and sins. This, then, is why the Shechina is compared to a mother.

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaadik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



Sanctify Yourself with the Permissible

"You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d" (Vayikra 19:2)

This Parsha talks about the matter of holiness, referring to it three times. At the beginning of the Parsha, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d", in the middle (ibid 20:7-8) "You shall sanctify yourselves and you will be holy, for I am Hashem, your G-d. You shall observe My decrees and perform them – I am Hashem, Who sanctifies you", and at the end of the Parsha (ibid 20:26) "You shall be holy for Me, for I Hashem am holy".

There are two boundaries of holiness. Holiness can be the virtue of abstinence "Sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you", as the Ramban writes, and there is also holiness that comes from abstaining from Torah prohibitions. This is also called holiness, as Rashi writes (ibid 19:2) "'You shall be holy': Separate yourselves from immorality and from sin, for wherever there is a separation from immorality, there is holiness." (Rashi brings several examples of this). It is this abstention that separates us from the nations of the world, for they indulge in immorality, eating forbidden foods and in all kinds of abominations, whereas we are fenced off from all this, barricaded from sin.

We can explain the words "sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you" to mean that we should sanctify ourselves in that which was permitted before Matan Torah, for at that time we were not yet commanded about immorality, and as we find Ya'akov married two sisters, the Shevatim married their sisters (Bereishit 37:35, Rashi), and Amram married Yocheved, his aunt, for this did not entail any prohibition. Yet now that we received the Torah and the Heavenly decrees, we sanctify ourselves by not approaching immorality, avoiding forbidden foods and all the other Torah prohibitions.

There is an additional level in holiness: Hashem says, if you keep yourselves apart from the nations and their ways, you will be Mine. This is what Rashi points out: "Rabbi Elazar son of Azaria taught, "From where do we learn, do not say, 'I cannot stand pig meat, I do not wish to wear a garment made from mixed fibers', rather you should say, 'I would like to savor these things, but what can I do – G-d forbade it'? The answer is: The verse teaches us, 'and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine', your separation from them should be for My sake and not because you dislike their ways, abstain from sin and accept His sovereignty upon yourself."

This is the most elevated form of holiness. In the same way that we are told, "One mitzvah leads to another", so too holiness leads to holiness. The Torah demands this from a person gradually, the first requirement being (at the beginning of the Parsha) "You shall be holy", which refers to sanctifying yourself in what is permitted to you, general things like minimal talk with a woman, or minimal eating and drinking of wine. Following that, the Torah demands from man virtuousness in avodat Hashem, as it says "You shall observe My decrees" (middle of the Parsha) like the concept of "If you will follow My decrees" (Vayikra 26:3), and they are the laws and decrees which are our guiding light, and this is what brings man closer to Hashem. This is followed by the verse teaching us, "You shall be holy for Me", (end of the Parsha) that you are transformed into part of Hashem's essence, and this is what marks the clear distinction between us and the rest of the nations.

In fact, this is the greatest form of sanctifying Hashem's Name, as we say in the Shabbat prayers, "the sanctifiers of Your Name, rest on it (the Shabbat)". Shabbat is one of the most elevated levels that Am Yisrael possess and with this we sanctify Hashem. On the contrary, the more we separate ourselves from the rest of the nations, the more we merit their esteem. Yet if we try to copy their lifestyle, their hatred for us only grows.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

We are commanded in this Parsha: "with righteousness shall you judge your fellow". Rashi expounds on these words: "As its literal meaning. Another explanation: Judge your friend favorably".

There is a well-known explanation on the Mishna (Avot 1:6) "הוֹדִין אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם", "לכך זכות", "Judge everyone favorably", brought by the Sfat Emet. He explains that before judging a person, you must take "the entire person" (כל האדם) into account. You must contemplate his roots right from his childhood and ponder deeply the crevices of his soul, delving into and repeatedly examining his personal challenges, talents, financial situation and whether life is going smoothly for him. Only after contemplating 'the entire person', do you have the right to decide either way. For what do you know of what he went through today? It is better for you to exercise your brain and become accustomed to giving others the benefit of the doubt, even if this means searching 'under the ground'. Even in matters where it seems totally irrational to justify him, one should twist one's intellect and direct one's thoughts to the most improbable, to the idea that would never cross your mind and tell yourself: Maybe due to such and such, even though it seems most unfounded, he was led to behave in this way...

He is not Neurotic!

The Yalkut 'Lekach Tov' quotes Rabbi Dov Yaffe zt"l who suggests a beautiful idea:

If a person does not give the benefit of the doubt, it is a sign that he does not like his friend. He brings the following example: If someone loses a beloved object, he will first search in all the places where it could possibly be. If he still doesn't find it, he will not give up. He will go and look even in most unlikely

places, for he thinks, maybe nevertheless it will be there. If this proves futile, he will return to the original places where he already searched, for maybe he didn't inspect well enough, maybe he didn't notice it, just maybe he will finally find his precious lost object.

Why indeed does he search so much, even returning to places where he already looked? Is he obsessive? No, the object that he lost is simply very precious to him!

Similarly, if you would really love your friend as much as you love yourself, you would search in all the holes and crevices (in your brain) to find a way to give him the benefit of the doubt, and you would manage to find a way to judge him favorably. Even if, superficially, the act seems to be incorrect, you would search everywhere to find a redeeming factor for him. If you don't search, it is because you don't love him!

Rabbi Reuven Karlenstein's zt"l was a famous Maggid and in one of his lectures he expressed his frustration that there are people who publish sefarim that serve to strengthen yirat shamayim and mitzvah performance, yet why does no one publish sefarim with stories about judging favorably? There are boundless stories about people who merited giving the benefit of the doubt and later found out that this was indeed the truth.

He told over a story that took place a few years ago. In the Lederman Beit Knesset that morning, there were two minyanim for netz, one was held in the main Beit Midrash and the second one in the adjacent room, with a smaller minyan. They finished the quiet Shemone Esrei and wished to begin the Chazan's repetition of the Shemone Esrei, but they were short of one person to complete the minyan since one of the participants had disappeared.

They looked outside and found him in the courtyard of the Beit Knesset. They asked him to come inside to complete the minyan.

"No," he replied.

"Why do you not wish to come back inside?"

"I need air."

"There is a ventilator inside."

"No, no, I need the fresh air from outside."

"Everyone is waiting for you."

"I cannot come inside."

With no alternative, they go and look for someone to take his place.

You must understand, this person looked completely healthy and strong. And suddenly he doesn't have enough air... "I regarded him with surprise," one of the participants said, but what could we do, we had to call someone else to be the tenth person.

When they finished praying this man asked someone to call his wife since he wasn't feeling well. He felt pressure and shortness of breath...

That afternoon he was no longer among the living. He had been taken to the hospital after suffering a massive heart attack.

Who could have imagined? Someone who looks completely healthy says that he doesn't have enough air, and it turns out that he had a heart attack?!

Yes! If he says that he needs air, one is obligated to judge him favorably!

There are tens and hundreds of stories like this.

Someone once came to visit Maran Rabbeinu Ovadiah Yosef zt"l at 7:30 in the morning, and the Rabbanit told the visitor that the Rav was sleeping. The man expressed his surprise: "What, at 7:30 in the morning the Rav is still sleeping?"

The Rav, who overheard the exchange, called the visitor inside and told him: Don't be so quick to judge me in a negative light. Yesterday at twelve o'clock at night, I returned from giving four lectures in four different places. I then received a fax from Argentina concerning an agunah, to which I wrote a lengthy response until five in the morning, permitting her to remarry. I then went to pray netz and returned home to sleep for a short time. This is a proof of how important it is to give every person the benefit of the doubt!