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maskil Le'David

Can a Mere Human Being Attain Holiness?

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

In Torat Kohanim, Chazal explain the words "you shall be holy" as meaning: "you shall abstain."

In Parashat Shemini, (Vayikra 11:44), we are instructed: "You are to sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy." Once again, Torat Kohanim clarifies that "for I am holy" means "Just as I am holy, so you shall be holy; just as I abstain, so you shall abstain."

This interpretation raises questions. How can humans, mere mortals, strive for the supreme holiness attributed to the King of Kings, surrounded by angels and *tarshishim*? Doesn't the evil inclination reside within the human heart, tempting us at every turn? Despite the daunting challenges, is it plausible for individuals to achieve such lofty levels of holiness? How can we compare ourselves to the Creator?

Chazal elaborate on the verse, "... shall every tongue swear" (Niddah 30b): "This refers to the day of birth when a person is made to swear: Be righteous and don't be wicked. And even if the entire world tells you that you are righteous, consider yourself as wicked, and know that Hashem is pure and His servants are pure and the soul that He placed within you is pure. If you safeguard its purity, all is good, and if not, I will take it from you."

Isn't there a basic loophole in this oath? After all, can a person foresee the challenges awaiting him when he enters this world and has to confront the yetzer hara? In the celestial realms, where evil has no dominion, pledging to remain righteousness might seem a light matter. Later, on arriving in this world where he is confronted with arduous trials, wouldn't one retract his oath? Would he not claim that he was not aware of the impending battle against the yetzer hara?

However, we are told that before taking the oath, individuals are shown the tribulations and trials of this world. They grasp the forthcoming

challenges; when they swear to this oath, they are fully aware of what awaits them.

He is required to promise specifically when he is still in the upper worlds, a place enveloped in holiness and purity, so that at the time of his oath he is soaking up the holiness which is present. This will enable him to live his life with holiness and handle life's challenges. He charges his batteries with reserves of holiness and purity, and Hashem endows him with all the necessary strength to be able to challenge the yetzer hara.

Therefore, when a person arrives in this world, he is already equipped with all the spiritual and holy sustenance he requires, and this is the weapon he will employ against the yetzer hara. With this treasure house he has the power to be true to his oath, for a person is not challenged with difficulties he does not have the power to withstand.

This is what Chazal (*Baba Metzia* 107a) were referring to when they expounded on the verse, "Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out." Just as your entering this world is without sin so your leaving this world is without sin." A person arrives in this world steeped in upper-world holiness and imbedded with supernatural strength, and he must take care not to lose these powers.

Hashem commands individuals to "be holy, for I am holy" (Vayikra 19:1). This does not imply attaining the same degree of sanctity as Hashem — a feat clearly beyond a human being. Rather, it implies that we must maintain the celestial purity bestowed before birth. If we succeed in preserving this holiness, Hashem will add to our sanctity from His own and thus grant eternal life.

The Zohar asserts that mitzvot are the conduits to holiness. Thus, by fulfilling Hashem's commandments, we become empowered to safeguard this sanctity.

Following this command of holiness, we are enjoined, "Every man: Your mother and father shall you revere" (Vayikra 19:3). Apparently, there is a connection between reverence for one's parents and holiness. How so? Children emulate their parents' behavior, inheriting their sanctity. Hence, the command "You shall be holy" assures that this holiness will extend to future generations.

3 Iyar 5784
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1060

Kedoshim



Hilula

3 Iyar

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Tzintz,
author of *Meloh Ha'omer*

4 Iyar

Rabbi Yakov Shashforts,
author of *Titzit Novel Tzvi*

5 Iyar

Rabbi Meir Auerbach

6 Iyar

Rabbi Levi Bar R' Gershom,
the *Ralbag*

7 Iyar

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim,
author of *Kli Yakar*

8 Iyar

Rabbi Yerachmiel, HaYehudi
HaKadosh of Peshischa

9 Iyar

Rabbi Avigdor Kara,
Av Beit Din of Prague





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

For Whom Do the Angels Wait?

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

This verse is elucidated by Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzera, zy"a, in his sefer *Petuchei Chotem*. He alludes to the angels' practice of not reciting Kedushah in the heavens until Yisrael recites Kedushah here on earth. If Am Yisrael lack sanctity and purity, it becomes mere mockery for them to utter Kedushah with their mouths.

The angels, awaiting Kedushah from Yisrael, might *chalilah* ask: "Master of the World, are we to wait for these people to recite Kedushah?"

Thus, Am Yisrael must strive for holiness when reciting Kedushah so they enable the angels to follow suit. The verse emphasizes sanctification with holiness and purity. We learn from here that both the upper and lower realms sanctify Hashem. The term אלקים (your G-d) at the end of the verse cryptically hints at the concept of sanctification, suggesting that the angels are waiting for Yisrael to sanctify themselves, אך יתקדשו כי המלאכים ממתינים להם.

The Wealthy Are a Pipeline for the Righteous

"You shall not cheat your fellow and you shall not rob" (Vayikra 19:13).

Just who is considered our "fellow" and why is this warning particularly directed at this group?

Rabbeinu Chaim Ben Atar, zy"a, the Ohr Hachaim, cites a teaching of Chazal: those who study Torah do not have parnassah in this world, as we learn from Yalkut Mishlei (siman 934):

The Torah asks why are there poor people? And the reason is, I heard in the name of the Arizal, that the world cannot bear the immense good which was intended for the righteous, so Hashem bestows wealth only on the mediocre ones. Through them, those who study Torah will receive their sustenance.

Thus, we learn that the prohibition against cheating one's fellow refers specifically to the righteous individual. As stated in Tehillim (122:8), failure to provide for the righteous amounts to open deception. The wealthy are entrusted with the task of ensuring that the righteous receive their rightful sustenance. In this manner, they fulfill their mission as conduits of divine providence.

The Secondary Rule and the Fundamental Rule

"You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18).

The *Yesod Tzaddik* tells over that once Rabbi Shlomko of Zvhill turned to his shamash Rabbi Elya Ratta, and asked him to explain the famous words of Rabbi Akiva, "You shall love your fellow as yourself is a fundamental rule in the Torah."

If Rabbi Akiva called it a "fundamental rule," this is a sign that there is also a "secondary rule." What is this other imperative?

Rabi Elya was quiet and waited for his Rebbe to explain. This is what he said:

If, for example, you hear that a famous etrog merchant earned a huge profit through selling etrogim, the secondary rule would be that you should not be jealous of his success, for "What is hateful to you, do not do to others" (*Shabbat* 31a), whereas the fundamental rule would be that not only should you not feel bad about his profit, you should even rejoice as if you yourself had earned this money. This is the fundamental rule of love your friend as yourself!



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

Salvation in the Merit of Faith

During a visit to Miami, I received an alarming phone call. The distressed caller was a relative of Rav Menachem, n"y, a dear and close friend. He informed me that Rabbi Menachem was seriously ill and had been flown to New York for emergency medical treatment. Unaware of the severity, I reassured the caller, "Don't worry, with Hashem's help, everything will be okay."

A few days later, another urgent call came from Rav Menachem's daughter. With a heavy heart, she shared with me the latest test results: a cancerous tumor in his brain, a dire situation. In her anguish, she questioned my earlier assurance that all would be well. Apparently, she told me, I had not realized how ill her father was now.

Placing my trust in Hashem Yitbarach and the merit of my holy ancestors, I responded, "Do not worry! He will regain his strength, and his situation is not so grave as the doctors reported." Inwardly, I relied on Hashem, the Ultimate Healer.

The family phoned to let me know that Rav Menachem was scheduled for an eighteen-hour surgery. I flew to New York to support him and the family. At the hospital, his specialist was surprised at my optimism, given the gravity of the situation. Despite his doubts, I prayed silently for Hashem's intervention.

Encouraged by faith, I assured the doctor, "With G-d's help, he will survive and lead a good life." Every word was uttered sincerely.

Eight tense hours passed outside the operating theater, filled with prayers and trust in Hashem's salvation. When the doors finally opened, the doctors joyously announced the successful operation. With siyata diShmaya, Rabbi Menachem's life was spared.

As David Hamelech wrote (*Tehillim* 32:10), "But as for one who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him." Complete faith in Hashem ensures His benevolence and guarantees that no prayer goes unanswered.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Directing the Clouds

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

What does it mean to be holy?

The Malbim provides a profound definition:

"Holiness is abstention and elevation above all materialistic and natural ways... and the holiness attributed to Hashem entails acting towards mankind in miraculous and wondrous ways, transcending the laws of nature."

How can we attain this level of transcending natural powers? The Sages reveal a remarkable key: *mesirut nefesh*.

The Gemara (*Berachot* 20a) recounts Rav Papa's inquiry to Abaya: "What distinguishes those who witnessed miracles from us who do not?" The response emphasizes the importance of *mesirut nefesh* in fulfilling Hashem's will.

A well-known tale of the holy Baba Sali, zt"l, illustrates this concept: One *motzei* Shabbat, as the congregation gathered to sanctify the new moon, they found the sky veiled in clouds, obscuring the moon. All eyes turned to the tzaddik for guidance.

At the wave of his cane, the clouds parted, revealing the moon so they might fulfill the mitzvah. Astonished, they asked if the Rav had power over the moon. The Baba Sali explained that the root of this act lay not in Netivot but in far-off Leon, France. And this is the story he told:

"Once when I was in Leon, it was time to bless the new moon, but it was impossible due to the thick clouds. The situation repeated itself for several nights until the last opportunity for sanctifying the moon arrived, and still the sky was overcast.

"The townspeople told me that if I wish to sanctify the moon, my only option would be to travel 380 kilometers to the town of Marseille, and there I will be able to perform the mitzva. Without further ado, I packed my bags and travelled to Marseille."

The distance from Leon to Marseille is akin to that from Bnei Brak to Eilat! The Baba Sali's sacrifice bestowed upon him the power to part the clouds and sanctify the moon in Netivot when needed.

One who sacrifices for a mitzvah acquires power over it. Thus, the Baba Sali's *mesirut nefesh* many years previously empowered him to disperse the clouds and recite Kiddush Levanah many years later.

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Two Sins; One Conversation



Both the speaker of lashon hara and one who listens to it transgress the commandment, "Hashem, your G-d, you shall fear" (*Devarim* 6:13). They both violate the duty to fear Hashem and avoid transgressing His will by committing *aveirot*. Additionally, gossiping instead of using the time for Torah study compounds this transgression.



IN OUR FATHERS' FOOTSTEPS

Nuggets of guidance based on
Masechet Avot, culled from
the teachings of Hagaon Hatzaddik
Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto**, shlita.

Chapter Two

"Torah study is good together with an occupation, for the exertion of them both makes sin forgotten. All Torah study that is not joined with work will cease in the end, and leads to sin" (*Avot* 2:2).

Rabbeinu Ovadiah M'Bartenurah offers the following interpretation of this mishna: A person could question that since one's toil should always be in Torah and exerting oneself in this makes sin forgotten, why is an occupation necessary? Therefore, the mishna had to say that any Torah study that doesn't come together with an occupation will in the end cease, for a person cannot manage without sustenance. Lack of livelihood will cause him to steal from others and forget his learning.

One can add to this that the intention of the Tana was that a person should not say, I will separate my years – part for Hashem and part for work, and I will start by being involved with *parnassa*.

Once I amass a large amount of money, I will leave my business and go and sit and learn in the Beit Midrash. To counter this idea, Hillel says (*ibid.* 4), "Do not say, 'When I am free, I will study,' for perhaps you will not become free." A person is required to fix set times for study and set times for working every day, and shouldn't separate them from each other, for if he does not do so, neither one will last."

A person must always be careful not to mix up the times. He must take care not to occupy himself with business during the time he has set aside for Torah study, for the Tana did not say that Torah study is good *and* an occupation is good, but it says that Torah study is good *together* with an occupation, implying that each one assists the other – not that one disturbs the other.

"LET HER BE PRAISED"

Portrayal of the True Eshet Chayil
In memory of Rabbanit **Mazal Medlin Pinto**, a"h



To What Are Tzaddikim Compared?

The Meiri writes (beg. of *Pesachim*) that tzaddikim are compared to stars, as it says (*Daniel* 12:3), "Those who teach righteousness to the multitudes [will shine] like the stars, forever and ever." This means that just as the brightness of stars cannot be discerned during the daytime, so too the full brightness and glory of tzaddikim is only recognized once they leave this world. When a tzaddik passes away the sun is extinguished at noon and the world grows dark. Then his true status emerges and he becomes famous. His honor grows in the eyes of the people and his brilliance glows like stars that shine in the darkness.

This is how we can define the esteemed Rabbanit, mother of royalty and righteous wife of the honorable Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zy"a. She was taken from us after a long life in which she was blessed with many generations of upright children who support the three pillars on which the world stands — Torah, prayer and acts of kindness.

Due to her exceptional modesty, during her lifetime not many merited glimpsing her outstanding personality and middot. She performed numerous good deeds purely for the sake of increasing the honour of Hashem in this world.

Her son, yblch"t, our esteemed master Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita, said in a hesped: "Ima, the tzaddek, prepared herself throughout her life for her passing to the World of Truth. Ima, a"h, understood that only one who prepares on Erev Shabbat will have what to eat on Shabbat, therefore she performed many righteous deeds and constantly grew in holiness and purity, in her tzniut, middot tovot, chessed and loving others. The strength of her emunah and bitachon in Hashem was exceptional and her

meticulousness in performing mitzvot was impressive.

"...and now that you have gone to your final resting place, suddenly your light shines like a star and everyone is praising and commending your qualities and good deeds."

In this column, a tribute to the esteemed Rabbanit, a"h, we will attempt to sketch an outline of the true *eshet chayil*. We will shed light on the distinguished role of the Jewish woman, the mainstay of the home and the joyful mother of children. It is she who merits the admirable description expressed by David Hamelech, "and let her be praised in the gates by her very own deeds."

**"An accomplished woman who
can find? Far beyond pearls
is her value."**

In this mizmor, Shlomo Hamelech portrays the Jewish woman who merits the description of *eshet chayil* (accomplished woman). The backbone of a woman is her accomplishments; the intense zeal and all-encompassing efforts she invests in raising her children, and her devotion to fulfilling both their physical and emotional requirements.

Eshet chayil is synonymous with alacrity. The attainments that describe the *eshet chayil* all relate to the toil and effort she invests in her home. "She stretches out her hand to the distaff, and her palms support the spindle... She made for herself luxurious bedspreads... She makes a cloak and sells it... Strength and majesty are her raiment."

The ideal woman does not know of fatigue — neither by day nor by night; this is the splendor of the authentic Jewish woman. She is the one who packs up nourishing food for her children, sweetening their departure as

they leave to their places of Torah study. She is the one who repairs her children's clothing late at night, so that when they awaken from their slumber they will have all they need. She is the one who accompanies them with her prayers, her supplications and her tears. She is the one who receives them joyfully on their return, and she is always ready with a listening ear to hear their tales and chatter. Toward evening as tiredness overcomes her, she nevertheless sits by their side, inspiring her children with stories of tzaddikim. She reads the *kriyat shema* with them and rocks their cradle to the tune of songs of Torah, until they fall into a peaceful sleep. And in the stillness of the night, she awakens to prepare provisions for the new day.

Six days of creation, six days of hard work and then rest descends. The Jewish home is bedecked in festivity; the flickering Shabbat candles sway in the sacred atmosphere. The children are dressed in their Shabbat finery and the smell of the delicious Shabbat foods warms the heart. A pristine white tablecloth covers the table which is adorned with elegant dishes, all contributing to a special peace of mind.

The father returns from the *beit hakeset* accompanied by angels. This is the moment that the deeds come forward to praise the one who performed them. Now, in this weekly supplication, the head of the house sings a *mizmor* to the mainstay of the home — the heart and soul of all this passion. To the one who with her special intuition added yet another layer in building this monumental enterprise — the home. To the mother who with the utmost devotion, invests all her inner strength to bestow this precious moment on her family, elevating them to this banquet hall of Shabbat. For all of this — "Her children arise and praise her, her husband, and he lauds her."

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