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maskil Le'David

To Warn Adults About the Children

"Hashem said to Moshe: Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Ahron, and tell them: One shall not contaminate himself to a [dead] person among his people" (Vayikra 21:1).

Rashi explains: "Say...and tell — to warn adults about the children."

Rashi is troubled: Why is there a double expression of "say...and tell"; surely the words "and tell them" are superfluous? Rashi answers that in addition to instructing the sons of Aharon that they should not contaminate themselves to a corpse, the Torah alludes to a further "telling": The adult Kohanim — above the age of thirteen — must tell the younger Kohanim that they must not contaminate themselves to a corpse.

These words of Rashi teach us an important lesson. When we try to educate the "young ones" — those uneducated in Torah and mitzvot — to come closer to Hashem, we should teach them to be enthusiastic in their *avodat Hashem*. When we are guiding the youth to lead the correct path in life, we must educate them with a clear and consistent message and not behave in a way that contradicts the ideas we wish to teach them.

We find an example of this in Parshat Shemot. Hashem commanded Moshe to return to Mitzrayim and tell Pharaoh to free Bnei Yisrael. The verse states: "So Moshe took his wife and sons, mounted them on the donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt...It was on the way, in the lodging, that Hashem encountered him and sought to kill him. So Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and touched it to his feet; and she said, 'You caused my bridegroom's bloodshed!'" (*Shemot* 4:20–25).

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 31b) records the following dispute: "Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha says: Circumcision is so great, for all the merits Moshe Rabbeinu possessed did not help him when he was negligent with milah." Rabbi disagrees: "Far be it to say that Moshe was negligent with

milah, rather he said: 'Should I circumcise my son and then go — surely the infant is in danger for the first three days after circumcision? Should I circumcise and wait three days — surely Hashem commanded me, "Go, return to Egypt.'" So why was he punished? Because he occupied himself first with his lodgings."

This Gemara is difficult to understand: If Moshe Rabbeinu was unsure whether to circumcise his son or not, why did he not ask Hashem whether he should circumcise his child first and remain in Midian, or leave right away? After all, Moshe Rabbeinu was "the faithful shepherd," the master of all prophets.

The answer is that Moshe Rabbeinu came to the conclusion that he must go immediately to Mitzrayim. He had pleaded with Hashem for seven days about his reluctance to go and redeem Bnei Yisrael, but ultimately Hashem commanded him — "Go, return to Mitzrayim." Moshe understood this to mean that he must leave immediately; in which case, he should postpone his son's circumcision.

The objection against him was why he began making arrangements for his lodgings. He should have immediately fulfilled Hashem's command and gone to Pharaoh without delay. This is why the angel came and wanted to swallow him like a snake. As long as Moshe was travelling, there was no accusation against him why he had not yet circumcised his son. But as soon as he arrived at an inn and began occupying himself with other things, this, as if, contradicted his justification to leave Midian without circumcising his son.

When Eliezer would grow up and Moshe would explain to him why he did not circumcise him at the appropriate time, it would be a lesson for his son that one must obediently fulfil Hashem's instructions. But after Moshe Rabbeinu delayed and concerned himself with arranging his lodgings without going straight to Pharaoh, he would now appear to be contradicting that message. For on that occasion he did not seem to prioritize the fulfillment of Hashem's instructions.

There is a further point. We do not see anywhere that Hashem commanded Moshe to take his wife and children with him.

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18 May 2024

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Emor



Hilula

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PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Speech that Awakens Longing and Mercy

"Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron" (Vayikra 21:1).

The Ohr Hachaim HaKadosh, zy"a asks a powerful question that is actually relevant to the entire Torah: wherever the verse says "Speak to Bnei Yisrael," it would seem sufficient to say "speak to them." It is obvious that the intention is to speak to "Bnei Yisrael," for they were the ones to whom the mitzvot were given.

The Ohr HaChaim answers, that although it seems redundant, Hashem repeats their name time after time.

This can be compared to a father who has a beloved son. He is always talking about him, and when he tells him to eat or drink, he uses a loving expression, "Eat, my child," "Drink, my child." Similarly, this is how Hashem behaves with Am Yisrael — His children — and constantly repeats their name out of His love for them.

We also find this idea expressed by the words of Yirmiyahu HaNavi, "Is Ephraim My favorite son or a delightful child, that whenever I speak of him I remember him more and more? Therefore, My inner self yearns for him; I will surely take pity on him — the word of Hashem." This shows us that the actual mentioning of Yisrael's name awakens Hashem's mercy, which then awakens an even stronger love for us.

Anger Drives Away Wisdom

"They shall not make a bald spot on their heads, and they shall not shave an edge of their beard; and in their flesh they shall not cut a gash" (Vayikra 21:5).

The Ben Ish Chai, zy"a, tells us that since Kohanim are quick to become angry, the Torah brings this verse to warn them particularly about the trait of anger.

Chazal say (*Pesachim* 66b): Any person who becomes angry, if he is clever, his wisdom withdraws from him." Where is wisdom found? In a person's head. Therefore the Kohanim were warned, "They shall not make a bald spot on their heads" — don't get angry so wisdom should not withdraw from your heads.

On a fast day, even people who are generally calm can become more irritable, and therefore on these days there is a particular need to warn people not to become angry.

The above verse hints to this idea. If you take the word **לְרִיחַ** (beard), the letter preceding *zayin* is *vav*; the letter preceding *kuf* is *tzadik* and the letter preceding *nun* is *mem*. These three letters spell **נצו** (fast). The Torah says, "They shall not make a bald spot" — the Kohanim must not get angry, so they shouldn't lose their wisdom as a result of their anger. "...an edge of their beard" — the side of the beard, the letters preceding the letters of **לְרִיחַ**, which spell the word **נצו** — "they shall not shave."

And above all this "in their flesh they shall not cut a gash" — they must take care of their health and not become angry.

Lineage Demands Caution

"You shall not desecrate My Holy Name" (Vayikra 22:32).

When someone would approach Rabbi Hillel Zaks, zt"l, and ask him to bless them since he was a grandson the Chafetz Chaim, this is how he would reply: "My being the grandson of the Chafetz Chaim is of no value — but for this: Since people look at it as an advantage, this behooves me to be more cautious than others with chilul Hashem. Since more is expected of me, I can be punished more than others."

This is the message Rabbi Hillel passed on to his children. He would tell them that it is not worth talking about their *yichus* (lineage), since if their friends are familiar with the fact that they are descendants of the Chafetz Chaim, and they stumble G-d forbid with lashon hara or different sins, their sin is much greater for there is more
|chilul Hashem involved.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

Love for a Child; Love for Hashem

When I was once receiving the public in New York, a woman came to me together with all her children. She was the mother of a large family, and about twelve years ago, when she was already older, Hashem blessed her with another son. She was delighted with this son of her old age. Now when she came to me, I noticed that this youngest child was not present, so I asked her about him.

She immediately burst out crying and told me that this precious child, the apple of her eye, had passed away one day in his sleep.

I remembered that once she had asked me to bless this child but to my distress I didn't have the chance to do so. The mother pulled herself together and said that she understands his death is an atonement and she believes that "Hashem gave and Hashem took"; she is certainly not questioning Hashem's ways. On the contrary, she asked me what she could do for Hashem's honor, something that could be a merit for her son.

I told her that since this son did not merit laying tefillin, maybe she can make this a merit for him. I suggested that she buy a pair of tefillin for a Bar Mitzva boy who cannot afford the expense. Right then and there she opened her purse and presented me with two thousand dollars for buying the tefillin.

I was so impressed with this woman. She was a poor woman with no means, and it could well be that the amount she donated was the sum of all her savings. In addition, even though Hashem had taken her beautiful child, she had no complaints and accepted the decree with love. She even wished to honor Hashem and buy an expensive pair of tefillin, in order to give someone the merit of this mitzva.

How can a person attain this level?

Only if during one's entire life, one serves Hashem with tremendous willingness and inner passion; if one does not perform the mitzvot out of habit, instead one serves the Creator with alacrity and rejoices in His mitzvot and desires to perform them. This kind of person, even when he comes across challenging times, *chalilah*, will accept it with love and thank Hashem in all circumstances, with the clear knowledge that this is the will of Hashem.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Where is Gehinom?

"The seventh day is a day of complete rest" (*Vayikra* 23:3).

A person performs mitzvot yet has no conception of what awaits him in the World to Come as a reward for fulfilling Hashem's command. Would we know what we receive for just one mitzva, what a Heavenly light will envelop us because of this deed, we would take great care not to overlook any opportunity.

The Gaon Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, zt"l, writes in his commentary on *Masechet Avot*, that the inspiration a person feels after fulfilling a mitzva, is actually a feeling of closeness to Hashem which he experiences now in this world. This closeness awakens in us the desire to perform more mitzvot, more Torah study, more kindness. All of this is besides the reward he will receive in the World to Come. Here, in this world, he already has Gan Eden. These are the words of the holy Gaon: "The reward for a mitzva is the mitzva itself that is given to him as a reward, and that is the light that surrounds him...and he sits as if he is in Gan Eden, and then it is easier for him to perform additional mitzvot."

"Every Shabbat," the Gaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Hachaim, tells over, "we host secular students. After Shabbat I ask them: 'How did you feel on Shabbat?' And this is their remarkable answer: 'Gan Eden.'"

"I am not sure they know what Gan Eden is, but they are right!"

On Shabbat, we are treated to a taste of the Heavenly Gan Eden. These students spend the entire Shabbat listening to Torah discourses, Midrashim and stories. There is good food and spirited singing. The reward of their mitzva is another mitzva they are able to perform, and these mitzvot give them a sublime pleasure and a feeling of closeness to the Creator.

The opposite is also true — when a person transgresses a commandment, he is surrounded with an impure spirit which causes him to transgress further, as Rabbi Chaim Volozhin continues: "And the opposite, G-d forbid, holds true with a sin; he is holding on to cords of contempt, and one sin leads to another."

This concept shows itself clearly in life:

A person sins in some way, and immediately following this, an argument breaks out in his home. The gehinom he experiences in his home is the outcome of his sin. A person thinks, I sinned, but I am done with it. This is not the case. The gehinom remains with him. He gets no pleasure from what he did, he cannot feel close to Hashem. There is a divide between him and Hashem.

In addition, even when he performs a mitzva, it does not bring him any pleasure. All around him he hears people saying: "I felt great pleasure from my praying." "The learning today was so pleasurable." But he is unfortunate and doesn't understand what they are talking about; he is convinced there is something wrong with him. This is not the case; it is simply the sin that has caused a rift; "The consequence of an aveirah is another aveirah," and he is unable to experience the pleasure of closeness to Hashem.



IN OUR FATHERS' FOOTSTEPS

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

Chapter Three

"Rabbi Chanina, the deputy Kohen Gadol, says: 'Pray for the welfare of the government'" (*Avot* 2:2).

We can explain that Rabbi Chanina wished to say that a person should pray privately for the welfare of the government, without them knowing you are praying for their welfare, and it shouldn't enter a person's head to say, through publicizing my name to the government and telling them I am praying for their welfare, this will benefit the Jewish people, for our Sages have warned us (*Avot* 1:10), "Do not become overly familiar with the government." A person shouldn't think that good will result from performing a service for the government, but instead he should pray to Hashem that He should divert the heart of the government for the good, and He will do what He sees fit.

We find a hint for this idea in the verse, "The heart of a king is in the hand of Hashem" (*Mishlei* 21:1). Our Sages tell us (*Taanit* 2a) that there are three keys in Hashem's possession that were not given over to a messenger. The verse adds that in addition, the heart of a king is also in Hashem's hands. A person does not have the power to do anything but to pray for the king's welfare, and Hashem will do His part. He will divert the heart of the government for the good, just as He does with the three things that were not given over to a messenger.

My esteemed father, zy"a, would always pray for the welfare of the Moroccan monarchy, but this was something between him and His Creator. He never mentioned this to the sovereignties, even though had the king known about this he would have been grateful to him. However, Father did not wish to do so. He personally fulfilled the words of the Sages, "Do not become overly familiar with the government."

"If someone takes upon himself the yoke of Torah — the yoke of the government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities are removed from him" (*Avot* 2:6).

This idea is *middah k'neged middah*. A person was not created to take from what is already prepared, but he must be prepared to toil to merit receiving; through doing he merits taking. This is why this world is called "The world of performing," and not "The world of completion," for the accomplished world is in the Next World, but down here there is work to do.

This is the rule: A person was created to toil. If he merits, his toil is in Torah. If not, his toil will be transferred to worldly responsibilities, as it says (*Iyov* 5:7), "For man is born to weariness." Chazal explain this to mean (*Sanhedrin* 99b) that if he toils in this place, his Torah toils for him in a different place. Rabbi Eliezer said, every person was created to toil, was he created to toil in speech, or was he created to toil in physical work? If he merits, his toil is in Torah, if he doesn't merit — his toil is in worldly responsibilities, meaning he will have to toil for his income.

"LET HER BE PRAISED"

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



"Her husband's heart relies on her and he shall lack no fortune"

A woman's role entails many responsibilities. She is the cook and the one who nurtures, advises, and listens with an open heart; she does the laundry and sometimes also assists with the *parnassah*; she is both an occupational and speech therapist.

But we must remember that the most important part of her role is "Her husband's heart relies on her," with the climax being – "Distinctive in the councils is her husband, when he sits with the elders of the land." If, no matter what she is occupied with, these verses stand in the forefront of her mind, then she is fitting to be praised with the song composed by Shlomo Hamelech, wisest of all men.

Where Is the Store? I Had No Idea...

The Torah knowledge of the wife of Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, zt"l, was exceptional even by the standards of women of previous generations. Hashem blessed her with extraordinary talent, and with her great abilities she towered high above in an unbelievable way.

Every day after many hours of arduous work in the market, Rabbanit Epstein would sit and delve into holy works. Her husband, author of *Aruch HaShulchan*, was the Rav of Novhardok; his face shone with Heavenly wisdom and he had the appearance of a king. His diligence in Torah study was exceptional, to the extent that he refused to accept respectable positions out of fear that this might take him away from his intense Torah study. Rabbi Yechiel Michel attested that his wife was the one who supported and encouraged him to grow in Torah, without letting up.

When the Rabbanit passed away, her husband, in

his emotionally charged state, chose to praise her by saying:

"For thirty years my wife, the Rabbanit, managed a store, and I didn't even know it's location..."

So great was her love for Torah that she never disturbed her husband from learning the Torah that was so beloved to them both.

Rabbi Yechiel Michel added that to this one can apply the verse, "Her husband's heart relies on her and he shall lack no fortune." Implying that because the Rabbanit took responsibility for all the needs of the home from beginning to end, and he was able to devote himself to Torah study without any concerns, he merited "spoil" – for the Torah is called "spoil" as it says, "I rejoice over Your word, like one who finds abundant spoils."

In our generation too, we merited to see a live example of this. Right from the start of their marriage, the Rabbanit Margalit Yosef, righteous wife of the Rishon L'Tzion, Rabbeinu Ovadiah Yosef, zt"l, took upon herself the entire management of the household from a financial and educational perspective, all so her diligent husband shouldn't be distracted from learning Torah. Even when it was necessary to take the children for medical treatment and other similar things, she didn't think twice and did what she knew how to do, for the sake of the holy Torah.

After she passed away, Maran the Rishon L'Tzion cried bitterly and praised her dignified personality and upright middot by telling over the following: "When I would receive my wages as Dayan or Chief Rabbi, I would give her the money and tell her, 'Take what you want, and if there is change give it back to me.' I never once asked her for the change! I knew how righteous and loyal she was."

cont. from p. 1 >>>

Proof to this is that when Aharon met Moshe, he asked him, "Who are these with you?" Moshe answered, "My wife and children."

Aron said to him, "We are distressed about those who are already (enslaved in Egypt), and you are coming to add to them?" Moshe heard this and sent Zipporah and his children back to Midian.

We see from this conversation that Moshe was not explicitly commanded to bring his wife and children to Egypt. Nevertheless, the angel did not come to seize him for not circumcising his son on time, for as long as Moshe Rabbeinu reasoned that he had to hurry to fulfill Hashem's command of "Go, return to Egypt," he was forgiven for delaying the circumcision of his son, for "One who is occupied with one mitzvah is exempt from performing a different mitzvah." But once he contradicted this by occupying himself with his lodgings, "Hashem encountered him and sought to kill him."

This is an extremely powerful lesson for all of us.

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