



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה AND ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה. MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Giving Without Limits

וַיָּבֹאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים עַל הַנָּשִׁים כָּל נְדִיב לֵב הֵבִיאוּ חָח וְנֶזֶם וְטַבַּעַת וְכוּמָז כָּל כְּלֵי זָהָב. (שמות לה, כב)

The men came with the women. All people of generous heart brought bracelets, nose-rings, rings, private ornaments; all kinds of golden ornaments. (Shemos 35:22)

It is so wonderful what the Torah tells us about the generosity of the Jewish people for the *Mishkan*.

When the campaign was announced for raising *Mishkan* materials, everyone responded right away and brought the most precious things they had. They donated gold, silver and copper, as well as jewels and precious stones of various types. The women even took off their jewelry and brought it in for the

Mishkan.

The response was so immense that those in charge of receiving the materials came and told Moshe, "The people are bringing too much!" Not only did they already bring more than enough, but they kept on donating more and more, without stop, until Moshe needed to make an announcement that people should please stop donating.

This week's parsha publication is dedicated as ilui neshama to

האשה החשובה מרת רחל מרים בת לאה שינדל ע"ה
for the day of her yahrzeit which falls this week.

It was like the best possible dream for anyone who ever tried to raise funds for a *shul* or *yeshivah*. Imagine you are trying to get donations for a *mitzvah* cause, and you have to make a public announcement to please stop donating because there is already too much money!

And don't think our forefathers disregarded money. In the beginning of *Parshas Tzav*, *Rashi* explains that the word צו, with which the *parshah* begins, urges people to do as commanded even when it costs them money. People were always attached to their possessions and always felt it hard to part with them. When *Moshe Rabbeinu* looked for judges to appoint over the people, he didn't have trouble finding candidates who were wealthy (and thus had no need to flatter and favor rich and important litigants) but he did have a hard time finding ones who were dispassionate toward their possessions.¹

Nevertheless, when it came to building the *Mishkan*, the people showed such generosity that after a single announcement, an unending flood of money started pouring in. Also the women, who were quite unwilling to part with their jewelry to make the *Eigel Hazahav*, when it came to building a *Mishkan* for *Hashem* they willingly took off their ornaments and brought them in. The participation was complete and wondrous, the likes of which we don't find elsewhere in the Torah, and we surely don't see it happening around us.

Maybe it was because building the *Mishkan* was not a *mitzvah* like other *mitzvos*. It says:

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם – They shall make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell within **them**.²

1 *Rashi, Shemos* 18:21

2 *Shemos* 25:8.

The *Mishkan* caused *Hashem* to dwell within the people themselves. The *Shechinah* came to rest not just in the *Mishkan* but within the Jewish people. This entails love and closeness to *Hashem*. The light of the *Shechinah's* presence is the true and lasting life. Its great illumination contains everything good and pleasant. So when the people heard that they have the opportunity to build a House in which they will be unified with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, they simply poured out their gold and silver to attain this purpose, to the point that they needed to be stopped.

Also today we have ways in which the *Shechinah* comes to rest among us. *Chazal* say:

Husband and wife, if they behave meritoriously, the *Shechinah* is between them.³

We can see that most of the quarrels in the home are usually about financial matters. The husband thinks the wife is spending too much, or the wife wants something that the husband doesn't agree to buy. Also with two friends, if they had a joint financial venture that did not turn out satisfactorily, are likely to quarrel. This, too, causes the *Shechinah* to depart.

Let us remember our forefathers. Also they felt an attachment to money and possessions. And despite this, they poured out money like it was water, in order for the *Shechinah* to dwell within them. They didn't think twice. They just gave and gave and gave.

It is worth it for us, too, to give up on a little money, and not quarrel about it, so there will be peace in our home and our surroundings. Then *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will bring His *Shechinah* to rest among us and will hurry the *Geulah Sheleimah*. ●

3 *Sotah* 17a.



The Whole Torah is Connected

ווי העמודים. (שמות לח, י)

The *vavim* of the columns. (*Shemos* 38:8)

This *pasuk* speaks of the ווי העמודים, the pegs that were on top of the columns in the *Mishkan*. In Hebrew, a peg of this type is called a *vav* because its shape is similar to that of the letter *vav*. Early Torah sources thus say that the whole Torah is like the ווי העמודים. This is because in the *Sefer Torah*, almost all of the columns begin with the letter *vav*. The most common letter in the Torah is *vav*.

Vav is not just the name of a particular letter. It also means “and.” So the Torah is full of “ands.” What does this signify?

It is actually a profound point. Unlike other languages, in which it is not usually correct to begin a sentence with “and,” the majority of the Torah’s verses actually begin with the letter *vav*. It says, ויסע, ויבוא, ויאמר and so forth.

This is because the whole Torah is one long continuous sequence. It begins with *Bereishis*, and goes on in a chain that connects one *pasuk* to the next, places brick upon brick, building forward unbrokenly. The first verse creates the second, the second creates the third, the third the fourth, from the very beginning through to the last *pasuk* of the Torah. This is why the Torah writes, “And Avraham,” “And Yitzchak,” “And Yaakov.”

From Avraham came Yitzchak, and from Yitzchak came Yaakov, all the way down to the Giving of the Torah and entering *Eretz Yisrael*. The entire Torah is built this way.

This stems from the idea that a thing’s end is tied to its beginning, נעוץ סופו בתחילתו. In every progressive sequence of connected steps, the end is tied up with the beginning. It is like a chain in which each part is interlinked, so the last part in the chain is linked up with the very first part. This basic principle enables us to understand many phenomena.

For instance, a child’s development. Sometimes we see an eight-year-old child who on the one hand already understands *Gemara*, but on the other hand he plays like a young child. This is because he takes on

each stage of his development a little early. He takes on the coming stage of growth when the previous stage is still in him, and it doesn’t leave him until a little later. There is a point in the middle where the two stages interlink.

Another example is the fact that the *kedushah* of *Shabbos* spreads out into *Erev Shabbos* and into *Motzaei Shabbos*, thus going beyond its bounds while still retaining its identity. This is because it is a chain. It is all one unit. We can see that it is all part of the same main thing. Otherwise, the stages would be disconnected from one another and each stage would be something on its own. It would not be *kedushas Shabbos*.

It is so also with the chain of time reaching into *Yemos Hamashiach*. The light of the days of *Mashiach* permeates backwards into the end of the period of *Galus*. Some claim that this is why we see the phenomenon of *baalei teshuvah* in our times. Someone who thinks about this phenomenon will realize that it is something that never happened before. It is so fitting to *Yemos Hamashiach*! People who were deep down in the forty-nine gates of *tum’ah* suddenly turn into impressive *talmidei chachamim*.

On the other hand, also the period of *Galus* permeates into *Yemos Hamashiach*. In other words, even after *Melech Hamashiach* will appear and take control of the world, there will still be terrible troubles called *Milchemes Gog uMagog*. Many nations and leaders will arise together to battle against *Hashem* and His *Mashiach*, as it says in *Tehillim* 2:1-2: למה רגשו גוים ולאמים יהגו ריק. יתיצבו מלכי ארץ ורוזנים נוסדו יחד על ה' ועל משיחו:

This passage in *Tehillim* teaches us that we should not make the mistake of thinking that the moment *Mashiach* comes, everyone will understand that he is *Mashiach* and will recognize his rulership and accept *Malchus Shamayim*, and all the troubles of *Galus* will immediately come to an end. It doesn’t work that way. The wars will go on until the *Ge’ulah Sheleimah* comes. ●



The Kohanim's Concern

בְּמִרְאֵת הַצְּבָאֹת. (שמות לח, ח)

With the mirrors of the hosts. (*Shemos* 38:8)

Sometimes a *kohen* would need to look at a woman's face, due to something connected to *avodah*. The *kohen* was concerned that this might be an impropriety, so he would look at her reflection on the *Kior*, the big brass basin of *Beis Hamikdash* from which the *kohanim* would draw water to sanctify their hands and feet.

This practice raises an obvious question. The whole problem with a man looking at a woman is that it might bring him to have improper thoughts, and the same will happen if he sees her reflection.

We find in the *Gemara* apparently contradictory stories about whether the *Yetzer Hara* of this type had influence on our great Torah sages. From some stories, it seems that they had completely conquered the *Yetzer Hara*:

The disciples said to R. Yochanan, [who would sit at the gate of the mikveh when the women would come out after immersing themselves,] "Is the *Rav* not concerned about the *Yetzer Hara*?"

He answered them, "The women are like white ducks to me."¹

Similarly, the *Gemara* recounts that when R. Acha would come to a wedding, he would put the bride on his shoulders and dance. He explained that she is like "a beam of wood" to him.²

From these stories it seems that *Chazal* were not

concerned that the *Yetzer Hara* would influence them. They considered themselves detached from it.

On the other hand, we see from other stories in the *Gemara* that even the greatest of sages faced tough struggles against the *Yetzer Hara*. There is the case of Rav Amram Chasida, who found himself about to commit an *aveirah*. In order to save himself at the last minute, he yelled out:

There is a fire at the home of Amram!

The disciples came, [and found no fire, but instead found their rabbi halfway up a ladder, on his way to the attic where women were sleeping.] They said to him, "You have embarrassed us."

He replied, "Better you should be embarrassed in Amram's house in this world, and not be embarrassed of me in the World to Come."³

There are stories also about the saintly R. Meir and R. Akiva, in which they found themselves on their way to do an *aveirah* but were saved from it.⁴

These latter stories seem to contradict the former ones. Were *Chazal*, our Sages of blessed memory, immune to the lures of the *Yetzer Hara* or not?

The answer seems to be that the *Yetzer Hara* has two different manifestations. So writes R. Yisrael Salanter in his famous *Iggeres Hamusar*. The first manifestation is the attraction to sin due to the

1 *Berachos* 20a.

2 *Kesubos* 17a.

3 *Kidushin* 81a.

4 *Ibid.*

nature of the physical body. The human body was created out of dust (material substance) and thus naturally gravitates toward “dust,” i.e., materiality.

The second manifestation of the *Yetzer Hara* is an angel sent from Heaven to test a person’s righteousness. This spiritual force, which is a spirit of impurity, pulls him toward *aveiros*.

Regarding the body’s natural attraction to physical lusts, *Chazal* were above this. They were eminently holy and the *Yetzer Hara* held no lure for them. They found feminine beauty no more alluring than a wooden beam.

But faced by an angel of fire, as Rav Amram was, even *Chazal* were susceptible. They needed a lot of *siyata d’Shamaya* to overcome that.

The story about Rav Amram continues as follows:

Rav Amram adjured the *Yetzer Hara* to go out of him. It went out of him as a pillar of fire. Rav Amram said to him, “See that you are fire, and I am flesh, yet I am more powerful than you.”⁵

The *Yetzer Hara* that Rav Amram and other saintly sages faced was actually a “pillar of fire,” a compelling spiritual force.

Let’s say someone of today’s generation would put an oath on the *Yetzer Hara* to get out of him, as Rav Amram did to his *Yetzer Hara*. The angel called *Yetzer Hara* would say back to him: Who do you think you are talking to? Who do you think you are placing under oath? Indeed, *Chazal* said that the *Yetzer Hara* incites great Torah scholars, but what does that have to do with you? The angelic *Yetzer Hara* doesn’t pay any attention to people like you. The force that is tempting you is not an angel of fire, but rather you yourself. You should place an oath on

⁵ *Ibid.*

yourself!

It is recounted that a man came to a certain *Tzaddik* and complained that he suffers from *machshavos zaros*, “foreign thoughts.” The *Tzaddik* said to him, “Those thoughts are not ‘foreign’ to you. They belong to you yourself.”

Unlike us, Rav Amram Chasida had already refined and purified his body all the way. He lusted only for matters of *kedushah* and *taharah*. Nevertheless, when a pillar of fire entered him, he needed to work very hard to get it out. This explains all the stories about the great sages who sinned or almost sinned.

The way of the angelic *Yetzer Hara* is to be in the vicinity of a woman, because that is the prime place to cause a man to sin, and it waits there to attack someone who meets up with the woman even just by sight. But the natural *Yetzer Hara* of the physical body is not necessarily connected to a woman. It is an integral part of a person.

The difference comes out when a man sees a woman through a mirror or in a picture. As far as the natural *Yetzer Hara* is concerned, his lust could be aroused, and he might have improper thoughts, even if he just sees her reflection in a mirror. But if his body is sanctified and refined, then just seeing something that reminds him of sin will not make any impression on him at all. Only when he meets the angel of fire is he at risk. However, this angel is only in the place of the sin itself. It doesn’t get to him through mirrors and pictures.

This is why the holy and pure *kohanim* in *Beis Hamikdash* would employ a mirror when they were concerned about sights that might induce improper thoughts. This way they had nothing to worry about, because the angelic *Yetzer Hara* can’t get to them that way.

This explains it all. ●

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