



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.
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

The Reward for Mesirus Nefesh

וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. (ויקרא כב, לב)

I will be sanctified in the midst of the Jewish people. (*Vayikra* 22:32)

Give up your life and sanctify My Name. (*Rashi*)

The *Gemara* tells of certain Jews who gave their lives for the sake of *Hashem's* Name. They are the *Harugei Lod*, the slain from the city of Lod. The *Gemara* says as follows about them:

Those who were slain by the royal authorities, no one can stand in their partitioned area [in Heaven].¹

These people who died *al kiddush Hashem* have such a great reward in Heaven that no one else can even cross the partition that demarks their exalted area.

What are *Chazal* saying?

When a person gives to another, the amount given depends on the ability of the donor to give and the ability of the recipient to receive. But when it comes

to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, there is no limitation on what He is able to give. The only limitation is on the side of the recipient. There is only so much that the one on the receiving end is able to hold on to.

What happens if a person gives his very life for *kiddush Hashem*? He thereby makes himself into nothing regarding *Hashem*. He ceases to exist; there is only *Hashem*. So his ability to receive is now measured by *Hashem's* standards, because he no longer exists as an independent entity and there is only *Hashem*.

This grants him an infinite, unlimited ability to receive, above and beyond what any other creature of *Hashem* is capable of receiving. No other can stand in his exalted area in Heaven, because he is in a totally different kind of area. He is in a place of completely unlimited reward. ●

¹ *Pesachim* 50a.

Publicize Him

וְכִי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח תּוֹדָה לַה' לְרִצְנֹכֶם תִּזְבְּחוּ: (ויקרא כב, כט)

When you bring a thanksgiving offering to Hashem, bring it willingly. (Vayikra 22:29)

There are experiences for which we need to offer special thanks to Hashem. When *Beis Hamikdash* was still standing, people would bring a *korban todah*, a thanksgiving offering, over these experiences.

Four kinds of people need to give thanks: Those who traveled by sea, those who crossed the desert, someone who was healed from sickness and someone who was released from prison.¹

Now, *korbanos* fall into four basic categories: *olah* (burnt offering), *chata* (sin offering), *asham* (guilt offering) and *shelamim* (peace offering). The last type, *shelamim*, is not to atone for sin. It is rather an offering by which a person shares his *simchah* with Hashem, so to speak. The bringer of the *korban* gets most of the meat, the *kohen* receives certain cuts that go to him as ordained by the Torah, and other parts are burned on the *Mizbeach*. Everyone has a share in the *korban* and partakes of it.

What about a *korban todah*? It is basically a *korban shelamim*, but with a couple special rules. A regular *korban shelamim* may be eaten on the day it is brought, and that night, and also the following day, until sundown. But the *korban todah* must be finished by the end of that night. It may not be eaten on the following day.

Another special rule of the *korban todah* is that loaves of bread are brought along with it. Some are eaten by the *kohanim*, and some by the bringer of the *korban*.

When a person offered a regular *korban shelamim*, he would get a lot of meat to eat, and since it was too much for him to finish on his own by the end of the next day, he would invite friends and relatives to partake of it along with him.

But when a person brought a *korban todah*, he had to finish it that night, and not only that, there were also forty loaves of bread to be eaten within the same time slot. So he needed to invite a lot more people. This caused the miracles and kindnesses of Hashem to be widely publicized, as many people would be invited to the banquet honoring the special event that he experienced.

From this we learn that when Hashem does *chesed* to a person, he should publicize it. This is a very important thing. It is written in connection to this:

– ויספרו מעשיו ברנה וגוי וירוממוהו בקהל עם

They recounted His deed joyously... and they exalted Him in the congregation of the people.²

And this is why it says in *Mizmor l'Todah*:

Shout joyously to Hashem, all the earth!³

We thank Hashem in a loud voice and make His Name known throughout the earth. And it says:

– לך אזבח זבח תודה ובשם ה' אקרא
You, I will bring a thanksgiving offering, and

1 Berachos 54b.

2 Tehillim 107:22,32.

3 Ibid 100:1.

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

נדבת נכדיהם ~ עשרת דקנים בני נשים והפארת בני אבותם

I will call out in the Name of *Hashem*.⁴

When we speak about *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and publicize His acts of kindness, we thereby bring joy,

⁴ *Ibid* 116:17.

health and everything good to the people around us. Because recounting *Hashem's* kind deeds brings others to recognize and acknowledge *Hashem*, and to love Him and attach to Him. And this is the source of everything good in the world. ●

SPECIAL TOPIC

Pesach Sheni

Pesach Sheni, which falls this week, is amazing. It has no parallel in the Torah. The general rule is you can't bring yesterday's *korban* today. "When the time has passed, so has its *korban*." Then came along some Jews who couldn't bring their *Korban Pesach*, and said, "Why should we miss out?!" They were allowed to bring it a month after its time.

It is common for people to miss an essential life-opportunity, such as learning Torah in their youth. Perhaps one didn't grow up in an observant home. A person could say, "What can I do?" and leave it at that. Or he could say, "Why should I miss out?!" – in which case he may bring his "*Pesach Sheni*." He is late, but the Torah teaches that he, too, can get there.

This is in fact the story of R. Akiva. He was totally ignorant of Torah learning, had a wife and children, and was already forty years old. When he realized where he was, he said, "Why should I miss out?!" He went on to become the extraordinary Torah sage whose tremendous influence is felt until this day.

When a person feels, "If only I could start my life over again and do it right!" he indeed can, in spiritual matters. He can throw himself into Torah study, he can learn to *daven* with *kavanah*, and the same with *berachos*. He can guard his mouth from *lashon hara*, and train himself to every other good thing.

We learn from *Pesach Sheni* that we can still do it, and succeed at it! ●

PARSHA TOPIC

A Time to Clarify

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת וְגו' שִׁבְעַ שַׁבָּתוֹת. (ויקרא כג, טו)

You shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath... seven weeks. (*Vayikra* 23:15)

Sefiras Ha'Omer is a time of preparation and purification for *Matan Torah*. It is a time of clarification for every Jew: is he fitting to receive the Torah? Thus the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva

died at this time, since they did not treat each other with sufficient respect.

Rabbi Akiva had twelve thousand pairs of *talmidim*, from Geves to Antifras, and they all died in one period because they did not treat each other respectfully.¹

This imperfection in the area of *bein adam l'chaveiro*, in the way they conducted their interpersonal relationships, impinged on their very right to live. דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה – “Proper behavior precedes Torah,” so someone who is lacking in proper behavior toward his fellow Jews is not fitting to come to the time of *Matan Torah*.

It is likely that at other times of year, too, Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim* did not show sufficient respect to one another, and were held responsible for it, but it did not cause their death. In *Sefiras Ha'Omer*, which is a time of preparation, a time of increasingly intense clarification, their lacking in this area stood out more, and had a greater effect, so much so that they were punished with death.

The more that a certain time of year is suited to high levels of spirituality, the greater is the responsibility for one's failures and lackings during that time. When we are preparing to receive the Torah, every person is examined extra carefully if he is fitting for the Torah. This is why the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva died at this time.

Torah Atones

R. Chaim of Volozhin explains² that Torah learning has the power to atone for all sins. One who occupies himself with Torah study does not need the *korbanos* to atone for him because the power of Torah will atone for him and bring forgiveness for all his transgressions.

Occupying oneself with Torah study atones for all the transgressions of the sinning soul...

1 *Yevamos* 62b.

2 *Nefesh Hachayim* 4:31.

We can see how great the power of Torah study is from the fact that it purifies the transgressors of the Jewish people when they do *teshuvah*, even if they were guilty of idolatry... If a person occupies himself with Torah study for its own sake – even if he previously sullied himself with tremendous sins and transgressions and sunk deep in the mud and filth of the depths of evil, *chas v'shalom* – by means of Torah learning he can still count on the light of Torah to bring him back to the good.³

We find the same idea expressed by *Rabbeinu Yonah*, who detailed the various categories of atonement for the various types of sins.⁴ He explains that some sins are atoned by means of lashing, some by the death penalty, and some through *kares*, dying before one's time. The severity of the sin determines its form of atonement.

Rabbeinu Yonah states there in article 16 that if a person is guilty of desecrating *Hashem's* Name, undergoing suffering is not sufficient to atone for his sin. However, he writes:

He can attain atonement by means of constant Torah study and toiling in Torah, as *Chazal* say,⁵ “אם תתכפר עון בית עלי בזבח” – ‘The House of Eli shall not be atoned for by animal offerings and grain offerings.’⁶ By animal offerings and grain offerings they cannot attain atonement, but they may attain atonement by words of Torah.” ...Thus we see that Torah study heals even the most grievous of wounds. Therefore it says, “The healing of the tongue is the Tree of Life.”^{7,8}

Torah learning transcends the whole system. It is above and beyond the regular spiritual rules. It

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Shaarei Teshuvah* 4.

5 *Rosh Hashanah* 18a.

6 I *Shmuel* 3:14.

7 *Mishlei* 15:4.

8 *Shaarei Teshuvah* 4:16.

is the underlying reality of life and of the world, so Torah has the power to atone for all of a person's sins, even those that *korbanos* cannot atone.

This is why R. Chaim of Volozhin wrote that a person can, by occupying himself with Torah study, purify his soul from even the deepest and filthiest evil. As *Rabbeinu Yonah* said, "Torah study heals even the most grievous of wounds." It even atones for *chilul Hashem*.

The Superhuman Ben Torah

Hashem's world is composed of mineral, vegetable, animal and human. To truly reach the level of "human" it is not enough to just walk on two legs. A truly "human" being is a Jew who properly learns Torah and carefully keeps *mitzvos* and perfects his character traits. The whole purpose of man's creation was for him to perfect his character traits according to Torah and *mitzvos*, to live his life according to the Torah's ways. His deeds of *chesed* and proper performance of *mitzvos* are the glorious expression of his humanity.

But there is a level even higher than that of "human." There is the level of the *ben Torah*. A *ben Torah's* learning of Torah is different and loftier than that of an ordinary person. His character traits and performance of *mitzvos* are different. They are not a matter of shape and order; rather, his entire being is attached to *Hashem* and Torah.

Someone who sacrifices sleep for another examination of the *sugya* under study is a *ben Torah*. Only someone whose constancy in Torah learning is not limited to the regular, scheduled study sessions is living in a place above the physical world.

A lot more is expected of a *ben Torah* when it comes to his behavior toward other people. A *ben Torah* needs to display kindness and compassion at all times and in every situation. There is no such thing as a person or a type of behavior that he can't stand. So during the period of preparing and clarifying before *Matan Torah* he needs to conduct his interpersonal relations in a loftier way. His *bein adam l'chaveiro* needs to be on a higher level.

This was the time of year when Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim* were held to account for not treating each other with sufficient respect. In order for the world to continue to exist properly, the place of Torah needs to be as it should. Lack of respect for others damages one's own right to exist. And when they died, "the world was desolate," as *Chazal* say. This indicates that the world cannot exist, there is no life, without *bnei Torah*.

It is hard to maintain this high level of connection to Torah, *mitzvos* and *midos tovos*, but it is important for us to know the truth. The way to reach the level of *ben Torah* is in stages. *Deveikus* to Torah study or proper devotion to *Tefilah*, working on one's *midos* or on enhancing one's *mitzvah* performance. Each person according to what is most relevant to him can connect to the level of being a *ben Torah*. This is a level that lifts a person above the world, a level that not dependent of one's scheduled learning periods and is not limited to the days and times of year when *yeshivah* is in session.

Just as the Torah enables the world to exist, so the *ben Torah* bears on his shoulders the world's existence. He is the perfected human being whose deeds keep the world going. This is an unlimited, unending *chesed* that encompasses the entire world. ●