

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 Cow Paradox

זאת חקת התורה. (במדבר יט, ב)

This is the statute of the Torah. (*Bemidbar 19:2*)

Shlomo said: I grasped the meaning of all these, but when it came to the passage of *Parah Adumah*, I analyzed and inquired and examined it, and אמרתי אֲחַכְמָה וְהִיא רְחוּקָה מִמֶּנִּי – “I thought I would gain wisdom, but it is far from me.”¹ (*Bemidbar Rabbah 19:3*)

¹ *Koheles 7:23.*

Chazal say² that the big paradox with *Parah Adumah* is it purifies those who are impure, but imparts impurity to those who are pure. It thus expresses contradictory characteristics.

Let us try to understand why this is so fundamentally puzzling.

Evil and impurity is a very deep subject. Its meaning and significance is by no means readily apparent. Many have erred seriously when contemplating the meaning of evil. In ancient times, it was commonly believed that there are two divine forces, one good, and one evil. Why did the ancients

² *Yalkut Shimoni, Chukas 759.*

come to such a belief? Because it did not make sense to them that from the Source of Good will come the opposite of good, i.e., evil. They therefore concluded that evil must emanate from a different source.

However, it is written:

יוצר אור ובורא חשך עשה שלום ובורא רע – “Forming light and creating darkness, making peace and creating evil – I, *Hashem*, do all these.”³

One of *Hashem's* astounding capabilities is creating what seems to be the very opposite of His nature.

How does evil come into existence? How does

³ *Yeshayahu 45:7.*

this work? The Ramchal explains as follows in *Sefer Daas Tevunos*.

The above-quoted *pasuk* does not say that *Hashem* “does evil,” because *Hashem* doesn’t do anything bad; He does only good. The *pasuk* rather says that *Hashem* “creates evil.” This means that *Hashem* creates the possibility and the place for evil to exist in the world, although He does not create evil itself. How does He enable evil to exist? Simply by withholding the full force of His good. Evil is nothing other than the lack of good. If *Hashem* doesn’t fully bestow His goodness, evil will come into existence. But *Hashem* never creates evil directly.

This may be compared to a person who made a certain object but left out one of its parts. The object he made is malformed and malfunctioning although he didn’t actually damage it in any way. The damage resulted from what he didn’t do, from the absence of a necessary part.

This is how evil and impurity comes into existence. It’s not what *Hashem* did, but what He refrained from doing. So explains the Ramchal.

Now let’s get back to *Parah Adumah*. We now understand that all evil and impurity in the world comes from a lack of good and purity. As an example, the פרים הנשרפים, which are a certain type of *korban*, were burnt outside *Beis Hamikdash*, and this is why their flesh imparted impurity. They lacked the full *kedushah* of *Beis Hamikdash*. This makes sense.

But with *Parah Adumah*, the sprinkling performed with it was a sprinkling of *taharah* and *kodesh*. It was not lacking in purity at all; on the contrary, it increased purity. So where does the *tum’ah* come from? All *tum’ah* results from a withholding of *taharah*, but here there was an increase of *taharah* and *kedushah*, so there should have been no room for *tum’ah* at all.

Thankfully, *Chazal* revealed the secret. It is because *Parah Adumah* comes to atone for *Cheit Ha’egel*. And why did they worship an image of a calf in the first place? Because the heavens opened up before their eyes at Sinai, and they saw that the *Merkavah Ha’elyonah*, the Divine Chariot, rests on four creatures, one of which is a bull. That’s why they made the image of a little bull, which is a calf. Their error, their sin, resulted from drawing close to *kedushah*. So their atonement was in a similar way. That which purifies, imparts impurity. *Parah Adumah*.

A matter of *taharah*, that is, the holy vision of the *Merkavah Ha’elyonah* they had at Sinai, caused impurity to appear. Before they involved themselves with *taharah*, the *tum’ah* was in its place and was not recognizable on its own. Due to the *kedushah* and *taharah* they experienced, the *tum’ah* emerged from its place and gained influence in the world.

This may be compared to raw gold that still has some fine impurities mixed into it. The dross is not recognizable at all because the percentage of gold is so much greater. But when the gold is refined repeatedly, and the dross is ejected, the impurities now stand on their own and have all of their natural properties in full force.

Similarly, evil and impurity can gain power in two ways. Either by a lack of good and purity, or by purity growing stronger and more refined and ejecting its “dross.”

Parah Adumah entails the strengthening of *taharah*. It purifies even impure people and objects that no other means of purification is effective for, even immersing in a *mikveh* is not enough to purify them. It causes *tum’ah* to be ejected. Thus it imparts impurity to pure people who carry its ashes for purposes other than sprinkling it. ●



Cleaning Up

וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדָמָה. (במדבר יט, ב)

They shall take for you a red cow. (*Bemidbar* 19:2)

This may be compared to the son of a maidservant who soiled the palace of the king. They said, “Let his mother come and wipe up the filth.” Similarly, let the cow come and atone for the making of the calf. (*Rashi*)

This allegory about *Cheit Ha'eigel* teaches us an important principle about *teshuvah* for any sins one might do.

אם רחץ ה' את צאת בנות ציון – If *Hashem* washes away the filth of the daughters of Tzion.¹

When *Hashem* atones for us, this entails great compassion. It is like a mother cleaning up her toddler.

If a toddler just got his clothing dusty, it is quite possible that a good friend of the mother will brush the child off. But if he made in his pants and got himself all filthy, it's different. That's not for others to handle. The best they can do is send the child to his mother. Only the mother, who loves the child dearly, will wash him off and change his clothes. Because she loves him so much, she can tolerate the filth and mess.

So it is with the Jewish people's sins. There are many of them. There is a lot of filth. No one other than *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is able and willing to wash away the filth of all the *aveiros*. He loves us like a mother loves her little child, and He cleans us up.

This is why the *pesukim* speaking of *teshuvah* emphasize returning to *Hashem*. It is obvious that our return needs to be to *Hashem*; He is the One we distanced ourselves from. So why do the *pesukim* emphasize this point? Because He alone is able and willing to cleanse us of our filth.

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך – Return, Yisrael, all the way to *Hashem* your G-d.²

אם תשוב ישראל נאם ה' אלי תשוב – So said *Hashem*: Yisrael, if you return, then return to Me.³

It is like someone saying, “Sweet child, go to Mommy.” Similarly, we are told to go back to *Hashem*, because no one can clean up the filth of the *aveiros* other than Him.

However, there is a general Torah rule that *Hashem* treats us *midah k'neged midah*. As we treat others, so *Hashem* treats us.

Let's say we see what someone did, and we say, “No way I am going to rectify matters for his *aveiros* and mess-ups!” And if someone mistreated us, for instance by insulting us or saying bad things about us, we are even more likely to lose all respect for him and distance ourselves from him. But if we behave this way, *Hashem* might say, “Why should I put up with the filth and mess of his *aveiros* against Me?” Such behavior on our part could cause *Hashem* to distance Himself from us, *chas v'shalom*.

If we are patient and forgiving with others and show brotherly love to all Jews, and surely if we show compassion for our friends and their family members like a mother is compassionate to her own child, then *Hashem* won't pay attention to the filth of the misdeeds we might have done.

¹ Yeshayahu 4:4.

² Hoshea 14:2.

³ Yirmeyahu 4:1.

Whoever forgoes his personal sensitivities, Heaven forgoes all his sins.⁴

We can thus understand why *Aharon Hakohen*, although he enabled *Cheit Ha'eigel* to take place, had the merit to make the *Parah Adumah* that wipes away the filth of this sin. Aharon loved peace and

pursued peace and loved people and drew them close to Torah. He put up with the filth of everyone's fights and quarrels. So *Hashem* too, *midah k'neged midah*, forgave him, and gave him the *mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah*.

This teaches us that if someone loves all Jews, and puts up with them, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, too, will love him and forgive him for all his sins. ●

⁴ *Rosh Hashanah* 17a.



I Told You So

לְקַבֵּל אֵיבֵי לְקַחְתִּיךָ וְהִנֵּה בִּרְכַתְּ בְּרַךְ. (במדבר כג, יא)

I took you to curse my enemies, and now you blessed them. (*Bemidbar* 23:11)

Here we find Balak lodging a complaint that Bilaam didn't say what he was supposed to. Balak wanted Bilaam to curse the Jewish people, and he blessed them instead.

But what kind of a complaint is this? Bilaam told him so from the start. Bilaam stipulated before he came to Balak that he doesn't say what he wishes; he says what *Hashem* puts in his mouth. So what was Balak complaining about?

Sefer Imrei Chein explains it beautifully. He cites Maharil Diskin, who says that the reason Bilaam was granted a level of prophecy like that of *Moshe Rabbeinu* was so the words he spoke would not filter through his own personality. If Bilaam would have been granted ordinary prophecy, his *nevu'ah* would have been affected by who he was, and picked up an influence detrimental to the Jewish people, who were the subject of his prophecy. But since his *nevu'ah* was on the level of *Moshe Rabbeinu's*, what *Hashem* spoke is exactly what came out of Bilaam's mouth, with no extraneous hue or alteration at all.

Balak didn't know this. He thought Bilaam was a regular prophet. Although Bilaam told him that he is in *Hashem's* hands, Balak understood this to mean that Bilaam can't speak and do anything he wants, but he can still imbue *Hashem's* words with a personal touch and thereby change them enough to make a difference. Balak found out only in the end that Bilaam can't do that. Thus his complaint.

But a question still remains. Balak saw, the first time Bilaam prophesized, that he wants only to bless the Jews. So why did Balak try again and again, futilely, to get Bilaam to do the exact opposite and curse them instead?

The answer is that Bilaam in fact said something different every time. He did not give a clear message. When he originally came, he said:

– הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר יִשִּׁים אֱלֹקִים בְּפִי אֲתוּ אֲדַבֵּר –

The word that G-d places in my mouth is what I will speak.

After he first blessed them, he said:

הלא את אשר ישים ה' בפני אתו אֲשֶׁמֶר
לְדַבֵּר – That which *Hashem* places in my
mouth, I will **be careful** to speak.

After the second time he said:

הלא דַּבַּרְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר
ה' אֵתוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה – I already told you that
everything *Hashem* speaks, I will **do**.

Bilaam kept changing his story because he did not want to reveal to Balak that he in fact has no power of his own, that his *nevu'ah* is like that of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, without any personal element. So he started out by saying, “The word that G-d places in my mouth is what I will speak.” In other words, I can’t lie in G-d’s Name, I am going to say what *Hashem* said. This left Balak thinking that Bilaam will basically say what *Hashem* said, but will add a word, or leave out a couple words, in order to change it to the desired meaning.

Then Bilaam told him, “That which *Hashem* places in my mouth, I will **be careful** to speak.” He can’t change the text. This left Balak hoping that Bilaam will still be able to put in a comma or an emphasis or some other subtle alteration that will leave the original words intact but change the meaning of the message to a curse.

At that point, Bilaam said, “Everything *Hashem* speaks, I will **do**.” He can’t do anything to alter the message.

Then Balak took him to another lookout point from which to view the Jewish people encamped below. At that point, Balak already gave up on the idea that Bilaam is going to alter *Hashem’s* words. But he still hoped he could somehow get *Hashem* Himself to change His mind.

וַיֹּאמֶר בָּלַק אֶל בִּלְעָם לְכֵה נָא אֶקְחֶךָ אֶל
מְקוֹם אַחֵר אוֹלֵי יִישׂרָאֵל בְּעֵינַי הָאֵלֶקִים וְקַבְּבוּ
לִי מִשָּׁם – Balak said to Bilaam, “Let’s go,
I will take you to a different place. Maybe

G-d will find it proper for you to curse them for me from there.”

That failed, too. In the end, Bilaam had to admit the truth that he has no power at all regarding *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. He has nothing to say about the matter; it is totally in *Hashem’s* hands. His *nevu'ah* is like that of Moshe. He just reflects *Hashem’s* Will and Word as it is, without any personal influence on it.

Bilaam actually revealed this point when he said that he is נִפֹּל וְגִלּוּי עֵינָיִם – “Falling with eyes open.”

Balak saw that Bilaam falls down on the ground when he prophesizes. This is one of the differences between the *nevu'ah* of Moshe and that of other prophets. The Rambam states as follows:

When all other prophets prophesize, their limbs shake and their bodily strength fails them.... All other prophets are afraid and shaken up and fall apart. But *Moshe Rabbeinu* is not like that, as it says about him, כַּאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ, – [Hashem] speaks to him like a person speaks to his friend^{1,2}

When Balak saw Bilaam fall down, he thought it was because Bilaam was seized by the terror of prophecy, like other prophets are, in which case Bilaam’s personality should color and alter the prophetic message he receives.

But Bilaam already revealed that it is not so. He is “falling with eyes open.” He doesn’t fall down because he is terrified or because he is going into a slumber. Rather, it is because he has the disgrace of being uncircumcised. And he keeps his eyes open. He sees his *nevu'ah* with absolute clarity, like *Moshe Rabbeinu* does, and he communicates it exactly like it is. ●

1 Shemos 33:11.

2 Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah ch. 7.



(We are presenting this piece again due to its importance)

Krias Shema Al Hamitah

לא ישָׁכַב עַד יֹאכַל טֶרֶף וְדָם חָלָלִים יִשְׁתָּהּ. (במדבר כג, כד)

He does not lie down until he devours prey and drinks the blood of the slain.

(*Bemidbar* 23:24)

“He does not lie down” at night on his bed, until he devours and destroys any malicious force that comes to prey upon him. How? He recites the *Shema* upon his bed and deposits his spirit in the hands of *Hashem*. If a camp and a division come to harm them, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* protects them and fights their war and throws down the slain corpses of their enemies. (*Rashi*)

The Way You Sleep is the Way You Wake

The *Shulchan Aruch* begins with the laws pertaining to getting up in the morning.

One should gather strength like a lion to get up in the morning to serve one’s Creator.¹

The *Rema* comments on this as follows:

When one lies down on one’s bed, one should be aware before Whom one is lying, and as soon as one wakes from one’s sleep, one should arise with alacrity to serve one’s Creator, may He be blessed.²

The *Shulchan Aruch* talks about waking up in the morning, and *Rema*’s comment talks about going to sleep at night: “When one lies down on one’s bed...” Why was this comment made here, at the beginning of *Orach Chayim*? Shouldn’t it be at the end of *Orach Chayim*, in the *halachos* of going to sleep?

The answer is if you go to sleep like a lion, you can

wake up like a lion. But if you go to sleep like a donkey, you won’t wake up like a lion. The only way to rise in the morning like a lion is to go to sleep like a lion.

The way a Jew gets up in the morning is fundamental. It is a classic example of putting in a little effort and reaping great profits. Some people get up in the morning like this:

הַדֹּלֶת תִּסּוּב עַל צִירָהּ וְעָצַל עַל מִטָּתוֹ – The door turns around on its hinge, and the lazy person on his bed.³

What is this metaphor telling us? We all know that lazy people roll over from side to side in bed, rather than getting up and doing things.

A door turning on its hinge might accumulate miles upon miles of revolutions. Nevertheless, it stays in its place. It doesn’t get anywhere. It makes zero progress because it ends right where it began.

This is what a lazy person is like. He wakes up at 6:30 AM and rolls over on his other side. He wakes up again after a quarter of an hour, and again rolls over and continues sleeping.

1 *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* 1:1.

2 *Rema ad loc.*

3 *Mishlei* 26:14.

If a person gets up in the morning in such a lazy way, his whole day will be out of shape. He gets to *shul* late and dices up the *Tefilah* into little pieces and chooses which ones he will say. *Pitum Haketores* is not necessary. That's for *baalei batim*.... The purpose of *Uva l'Tzion* is to hold up the world, and my personal world is in ruins anyway.... That's the way a lazy person's whole day goes. Consequently, he makes no progress.

If a person goes to sleep in order to get up the next morning with zest and energy, if he goes to sleep with awareness of *Hashem* and His Oneness, with words of Torah, then the way he gets up the next morning will be completely different. And as a result, his afternoon and evening will be different, too. And that night he says *Krias Shema* again, and this puts the whole following day on the right track. In such a way he can become a different person altogether. But when the two points of going to sleep and waking up are weak, the whole day is weak.

It Pays Off

Keeping Torah and *mitzvos* calls for employing proper tactics.

כִּי בַתְּחִבּוּלוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָךְ מִלְחָמָה – You should wage war with tactics.⁴

Sometimes you need to devise a successful plan, as in business.

A successful business deal is one in which the investment is small and the profit is great. The Vilna Gaon is said to have taken hold of his *tzitzis* before he passed away, and remarked, “What a wonderful world is the world that I am about to depart from. In this world, for a few pennies you can buy *tzitzis*, and every moment that one wears *tzitzis*, it is equal to all the *mitzvos* put together.”

This is an example of a good business deal. Such a small investment and such great returns! You just

⁴ *Mishlei* 24:6.

wear *tzitzis* all day and earn many thousands of priceless *mitzvos*.

Up in heaven, *Hashem* has a computer, so to speak, with which He calculates all the *mitzvos* a person does. Every moment a person wears *tzitzis* he is gaining a *mitzvah* equal to all the 613 *mitzvos*. Worlds upon worlds of *mitzvos*. And this brings him blessing, *parnassah* and success.

Here's another example of an easy *mitzvah* to do. Someone lives in an apartment building that doesn't have good lighting in the stairwell. It turns off all the time and people get stuck in in the dark in the middle of climbing up the steps. So this person took a little initiative. He bought a light bulb for a few pennies, connected it to an electric wire, and affixed it to the ceiling of the stairwell. Now there is light all night long. People can access their apartments and go down to the street. Children, elderly people, sick people now have light. He might have even forgotten about the whole thing, but everyone knows that in this stairwell, there is always light.

This is an easy investment. And in the meantime, he is accumulating thousands of *mitzvos*. And *Hashem* records it all. It is recorded that he did a *mitzvah* of saving a life, because an elderly person would have stumbled in the dark, broken a leg, and perhaps even died. Or a little child would have got stuck in the dark in the middle of the stairs and become very frightened. And the *Gemara* says⁵ that a little child's fear can endanger his life. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* writes everything down. Such a little investment, and such great returns.

A person needs to look for *mitzvos* like these. It is like investing money in a savings account with very high interest.

Reciting *Krias Shema she'al hamitah* is undoubtedly such a *mitzvah*. When we go to sleep right, we wake up right, and we thereby gain an entire day of Torah and *avodas Hashem*. ●

⁵ *Yoma* 84b.