



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

Kiddush Hashem

בְּקִרְבֵי אֶקְדֹּשׁ וְעַל פְּנֵי כָּל הָעָם אֶכְבֵּד. (ויקרא י, ג)

I will be sanctified through My holy ones, and I will be honored before all the people.
(*Vayikra* 10:3)

“I will be honored before all the people” – When *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* executes judgment upon the *tzaddikim*, He is feared, elevated and praised. (*Rashi*)

The death of Aharon’s two sons brought about a *kiddush Hashem* in two ways. The first is that it demonstrated *Hashem’s* Oneness, and the second is that it demonstrated His *kedushah*. We will now explain.

The revelation of *Hashem’s* Oneness is the goal of all Creation. The whole world was created to reveal *Hashem’s* Oneness, as the Ramchal explains in many places.

Why does *Hashem’s* Oneness need to be “revealed”? What is so hidden about it?

It is hard for non-Jews to understand and accept that two diametric opposites – good and evil – actually come from the same source. Here is a statement that illustrates the point:

A Zoroastrian priest said to Ameimar, “Your upper half belongs to Hormiz [the god of good] and your lower half to Ahormiz [the god of evil].”¹

This person thought that half comes from the source of all good, and half from the source of all evil.

But we know that it is not so. *Hashem* is the source of everything, as it says:

יוֹצֵר אֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֲשָׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא רַע
אֱנִי ה' עֹשֶׂה כָּל אֱלֹהִים – The Creator of light and the Creator of darkness... I *Hashem*

¹ *Sanhedrin* 39a.

make all of these.”²

Everything comes from one source. *Hashem* is One. This is the principle of *Hashem's* Oneness. Both good and evil have a single source, which is *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

So what does this have to do with the death of Nadav and Avihu?

After the *korbanos* were offered on the eighth day, the *Shechinah* came to rest in the *Mishkan*, about which it says:

– וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
Fire came out from before *Hashem* and consumed on the Altar.³

This represented the greatest success, the *chesed* and *rachamim* that the Jewish people so longed for, to know that their *avodah* was accepted by *Hashem*, and the sin of the *Eigel* was atoned. Right after this, the death of Nadav and Avihu is described in exactly the same language:

– וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם
Fire came out from before *Hashem* and consumed them.⁴

This was a severe judgment, the likes of which will never reoccur, executed upon great *tzaddikim* who were comparable to Moshe and Aharon themselves. And both of these incidents are described by the Torah with the same wording: 'וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל – “Fire came out from before *Hashem* and consumed.” Both acts came from the same Source.

This demonstrated *Hashem's* Oneness in a most

2 *Yeshayahu* 45:7.

3 *Vayikra* 9:24.

4 *Ibid* 10:2.

wondrous way. The greatest *chesed* and the greatest *din* emanate from the same place. Thus it says בְּקִרְבֵי אֶקְדָּשׁ – “I will be sanctified through My holy ones.” They brought about a great *kiddush Hashem* and revelation of *Hashem's* Oneness. This is the first way in which a *kiddush Hashem* took place.

The second way was as follows. First we need to know what the word *kadosh* means. *Kadosh*, “holy,” signifies that which is separated and removed. Properly understood, *kiddush Hashem* means to know that that *Hashem* is supremely high and lofty and far above us.

כִּי גָבְהוּ שָׁמַיִם מֵאָרֶץ כֵּן גָּבְהוּ דְרָכַי מִדְרָכֵיכֶם
וּמַחְשַׁבְתֵּי מִמַּחְשַׁבְתֵּיכֶם – As the heavens are far above the earth, so are My ways far above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts.⁵

Heavenly judgment is very, very profound. It is far above our understanding.

There is a special blessing about this in the *Amidah*. After the blessing of *Gevuros*, in which we praise *Hashem* for His mighty acts, saying מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים וְגו' סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים וְגו' מַחִיָּה הַמַּתִּים – “You are holy.” *Hashem* is separated and removed; He is high above our understanding. Although we have just spoken out His mighty acts, we must not mistakenly think that we have any understanding of them. It is not so, because He is *kadosh*. He is so high and lofty that He is removed from our understanding. He is above all praise.

This was actually the mistake of Nadav and Avihu. It says about them:

5 *Yeshayahu* 55:9.

לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמָה

מוֹהַ"ד מֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְבוֹדָהר זצ"ל

וּמוֹהַ"ד בְּרוּךְ זַאב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְרָאוּס זצ"ל

נִדְבַת נְכִידָהּ ~ עֲטַדַת זְקִנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפְאֵרַת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם

וַיִּחְזוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ – They gazed upon G-d and they ate and drank.⁶

This means that they felt too comfortable with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. They were so close to Him and were on such a high level of *ahavas Hashem* that they lacked sufficient *yirah*.

This was also why they offered to *Hashem* an incense burning that they were not commanded to do. It was because they felt too at home in the *Mishkan*. We are not *Hashem's* “friends.”⁷ About *Moshe Rabbeinu* it says ויקרא אל משה – “*Hashem* called to Moshe.”⁸ Even after all the awesome

6 *Shemos* 24:11.

7 *Berachos* 34a.

8 *Vayikra* 1:1.

madreigos that Moshe attained, he did not enter the *Mishkan* until he was called.⁹

The death of Nadav and Avihu thus sanctified the *Mishkan*. It emphasized the *kedushah of Hashem*. At the very place and time of the greatest *chesed* and closeness of *Hashem*, a very awesome and scary judgment was executed, totally beyond our understanding. The greatest *tzaddikim*, those closest to *Hashem*, were struck down by *midas hadin*.

From this we learn that the ways of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* are lofty and holy and beyond our understanding. This is *kedushah*; this is *kiddush Hashem*. ●

9 *Rashi ibid*.

Irreplaceable

וְאֶחֱיֵיכֶם כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְכוּ אֶת הַשְּׂרִפָּה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף ה'. (ויקרא י, ו)

And your brethren, the whole House of Yisrael, shall cry over the burning that *Hashem* burned. (*Vayikra* 10:6)

The *pasuk* says that *kol beis Yisrael*, “the whole House of Yisrael,” shall cry over the death of Nadav and Avihu. This implies that every Jew in every generation should cry over it. Thus it says in the *Machzor* of Yom Kippur, at the beginning of *Kri'as Hatorah*, that it is a lofty matter and a great *segulah* to cry over their death (which is mentioned in the reading).

But why cry? It is not proper to mourn excessively over someone's death.

אַל תִּבְכוּ לְמַת וְאַל תִּגְדּוּ לוֹ – Do not cry over the deceased and do not shake over him.¹

1 *Yirmeyahu* 22:10.

Chazal explain this *pasuk* as follows:

“Do not cry over the deceased” too much, “And do not shake over him” excessively. Rather, three days for crying, and seven for eulogy, and thirty for refraining from ironing clothing and taking a haircut. From then on, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* says, “You do not have more mercy for him than I do.”²

Accordingly, it is hard to understand why we cry unendingly for the death of Nadav and Avihu.

2 *Moed Katan* 27b.

An answer emerges from the Jewish *minhag* that mourners are served eggs and lentils to eat, which are round like a wheel, in order to console them. This alludes to the fact that mourning is a wheel that rotates in the world. In other words, the nature of the world is that the sun sets, and the sun rises. A new generation comes to take the place of the generation that passed, so we should not grieve excessively over the loss of the previous generation.

However, this only applies when people pass away in the normal and natural manner. When death suddenly and irreplaceably uproots something, it is to be cried over forever. This may be compared to someone who lost an arm. You can't place a time limit on the grieving over this loss because another arm is not going to grow in its place. He will be missing an important limb for the rest of his life.

This is how it is with Nadav and Avihu. If they would have died a natural death, when their time came, then others like them would have eventually arisen to take their place, each generation according to its respective level. But since they died before their time, unnaturally, these two *Gedolei Olam* will always be missing. There will never be anyone like Nadav and Avihu, even according to the relative level of coming generations, and this is why we cry over them in every generation.

This explains other events that we cry about in every generation, such as the slaughter of multitudes of Jews at the time of *Churban Beis Hamikdash*. We are crying over something that was irreplaceably uprooted, so we continue to cry over it.

If they would have died naturally, in their proper

time, another generation like them would have arisen to take their place, in which case there would be a great multitude of Jews today, as there were then. The slaughter of all those Jews at the time of the *Churban* did irreparable damage to the state of *Klal Yisrael*. The quantity of the Jewish people was permanently impaired. Until this day, the number of Jews in the world is few, due to that slaughter, which is why we continue to cry over it.

It is the same with the burning of the Torah by the wicked Apostomus, which is one of the five tragic events over which we mourn on the 17th of Tammuz. He burned just one Torah scroll, and ostensibly, this did not affect the Torah as a whole. Furthermore, burning Torah scrolls and manuscripts is an unfortunate event that has taken place in many subsequent generations.

Since Apostomus didn't seem to do any permanent damage, why do we cry over it?

Because in truth he did. *Chazal* say that the non-Jews show respect to the Torah.³ Despite the widespread hatred for Jews, and all the terrible things they did to us, they didn't burn Torah scrolls. They understood that you don't go and burn the word of G-d. And so it was, until Apostomus came along and actually burned a Torah scroll. This act diminished respect for Torah in the world at large. It lowered the status of the Torah in the eyes of the world for all generations to come. So it is because of him that the Torah was burned in subsequent generations.

This is why we mourn his burning of the Torah. It resulted in all the burnings of the Torah that took place until this day. ●

³ *Chulin* 92b.

Admit It

וַיְדַבֵּר אַהֲרֹן אֶל מֹשֶׁה הֲנֵן הַיּוֹם הִקְרִיבוּ אֶת חַטָּאתָם וְאֶת עֹלֹתָם לִפְנֵי ה' וַתִּקְרָאנָה אֹתִי
כְּאֵלֶּה וְאֶכְלֹתִי חַטָּאת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּטֵּב בְּעֵינָי ה': וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיִּטֵּב בְּעֵינָיו: (ויקרא י, יט-כ)

Aharon spoke to Moshe, “Behold, today they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before *Hashem*, and such things happened to me; if I would eat from the sin offering today, would it be good in the eyes of *Hashem*?” Moshe listened, and it was good in his eyes. (*Vayikra* 10:19-20)

He admitted it and did not say, out of embarrassment, “I did not hear such a thing.” He rather said, “I heard it, but I forgot.” (*Rashi*)

Here the Torah teaches us the trait of admitting the truth, through the account of the argument between *Moshe Rabbeinu* and *Aharon Hakohen*. We will not get into the details of the *dinim* that Moshe and Aharon were hashing out, but suffice it to say that Aharon was right and Moshe was wrong.

Everyone makes mistakes. Even *Moshe Rabbeinu*. This is human nature, and no one is exempt from it.

The more distinguished and important a person is, the harder it is for him to admit his mistakes. The true greatness of a person is not his infallibility but his ability to recognize his mistakes and admit to them. It is even harder to do this when one person argues with another, and gets angry with him over the issue, and it becomes public knowledge, and then it turns out that the other was actually right. It is very hard for him to forgo his honor and say, “Okay, my mistake. You were right.”

This may be compared to someone who wants to drive a heavy car with a big engine. The first thing he needs to verify is that the brakes are in good shape, because if you drive a car without brakes, the bigger the car is, the more damage it can do.

It is the same with people. The greater a person is in Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, or the sharper his intellect is, the more damage he will do if he doesn't know how to recognize his mistakes and admit to them. He is able to use his powers and abilities to the betterment of the world only if he can admit the truth even at the expense of his honor.

The ability to admit to the truth is essential not just in matters between a person and others but also between a person and himself. Everyone chooses for himself a certain life path to follow. This applies both to how he runs his life generally and to the details of his daily behavior.

If a person doesn't know how to exercise self-criticism and discover his mistakes, and correct them, he will inevitably go downhill. So it says in *Sefer Mesilas Yescharim*:

A person who goes through life without contemplating whether his way is good or bad is like a blind person walking on the edge of the river. He is surely in great danger and is more likely to come to mishap than to be saved from it.¹

Even if a person already realizes his mistake, and is watching out not to fall into it, it still takes a lot of inner strength to stop and change direction. This is especially true when his honor is involved or when it affects other people.

Thus we should learn from *Moshe Rabbeinu*. He was the greatest of men, and even after he got angry, and made his opinion public, he still admitted and said, “I made a mistake.” This is why he was granted such incredible greatness in the first place. With Moshe, it will never come to wrong. ●

¹ *Mesilas Yescharim* ch. 2.

Hidden Meanings

וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם וְנִטְמַתֶּם בָּם: (ויקרא יא, מג)

Do not defile yourselves with them, lest you become stopped up by them. (Vayikra 11:43)

It was taught in the House of R. Yishmael: A sin stops up the heart of a person, as it says, וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם וְנִטְמַתֶּם בָּם. Do not read it as וְנִטְמַתֶּם but rather as וְנִטְמַתֶּם. (Yoma 39a)

The Torah has two parts: the revealed and the hidden. Although people on our level generally don't delve into the hidden meanings of the Torah, we still need to know that there *is* a hidden aspect to the Torah.

Everything in the world has its hidden aspect and its revealed aspect. No one can say he has nothing at all to do with hidden matters. Most of the thoughts and interests of educated people have to do with hidden matters.

Let's take food for example. We know that certain foods are fattening, or are unhealthy for various reasons, whereas other foods are considered healthy and strengthen the body. Can we see with our eyes some kind of immediate effect from eating these foods? We can't discern anything right away. It only shows itself as time goes on. But there is a "hidden" effect that is immediate.

If a child is born with a heart defect, the doctor starts asking the mother if she took certain medications during pregnancy.

This is something everyone can understand.

Years ago, people who wanted to show how they are intelligent and educated would say, "Seeing is believing." What they don't see with their eyes, they don't believe. But nowadays everyone knows that you don't need to see in order to believe. A person walks down the street with a little black box in his hand, and he says into it, "Hi, how are you?" If we would ask him, "Who are you talking to?" he would

say, "With my brother in Israel."

Is this person sane? He is in Baltimore, and he is talking to his brother in Israel?! But we don't have any problem believing it because we know that there are sound waves and they can be transformed into a signal that may be transmitted over phone lines, and there are cables that go under the Atlantic Ocean and even farther, and therefore you can talk on the phone to someone in Israel without any problem.

But did we ever see sound waves? Did we ever see the trans-Atlantic phone cables? Of course not. You can't even see sound waves at all. But we know that they exist.

We don't usually delve into hidden matters, but we know that there really are hidden aspects to things.

It is the same with the Torah. If the Torah says וְנִטְמַתֶּם בָּם about eating non-kosher foods, thus informing us that it stops up our hearts and minds, it is a reality. It exists. This is the hidden part of the prohibition on eating non-kosher foods.

You might say that we never saw anyone who suffered brain damage or impaired cognitive functioning immediately after eating *treif*. The answer is that we also never saw anyone smoke a cigarette and his lungs stopped working right on the spot. But even if we don't see it, the effect exists.

It is the same in *ruchniyus*. These things exist and they affect. ●