



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 רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Getting Too Attached

אָדָם כִּי יִהְיֶה בְּעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אוֹ סַפְחַת אוֹ בְּהָרַת וְהָיָה בְּעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֹגַע צָרְעַת וְהוּבֵא אֶל אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל אֶחָד מִבְּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים: (ויקרא יג, ב)

When a man will have in the skin of his flesh a swelling, a patch or a bright spot, and it will become, in the skin of his flesh, a plague of *tzara'as*, he shall be brought to *Aharon Hakohen*, or to one of his sons the *kohanim*. (*Vayikra* 13:2)

The main subject of this *parshah*, the laws of *tzara'as*, used to be in practice back when the Jewish people were at their peak and dwelled in *Eretz Yisrael*. The fact that *tzara'as* would afflict them, and the way it was treated, showed *Hashem's* great love for them.

If someone would speak *lashon hara*, he would contract the serious disease of *tzara'as*, and would be declared impure. He would then have to dwell outside the city. But first he would need to go to a *kohen*, who usually was a *talmid chacham* and

a *tzaddik*. If the *kohen*, after examining him, saw that he indeed has *tzara'as*, he would reprove him for his sin, causing the person to do *teshuvah* and consequently be healed.

This was a very fortunate and desirable state of affairs for the Jewish people. *Hashem* was close to His people and would reprove them for every sin and lead them on the right path.

Nowadays we are shrouded in darkness. We speak as we please and no one stops us. Although we don't

This week's digital publication is dedicated in honor of the marriage of our dear friend
Moishe Kazlow to Raizy Avitan.

May their zivug work out beautifully and may they be zocheh to build a bayis neeman b'Yisrael and raise wonderful children and have only simcha in their home at all times

have the awesome reminder of *tzara'as* anymore, we still have its *parshah* in the Torah, and we can study it, and learn from it how to stay away from *lashon hara* and *machlokes*.

Three kinds of *tzara'as* are stated in the Torah. There is *שאת ובהרת* – a swelling, a patch and a bright spot. *Chazal* explain that these three are really two main kinds: *שאת ובהרת* – a swelling and a bright spot. The “bright spot” is white as snow, and the “swelling” is as white as the lime that was used to paint the *Heichal*. So what is *ספחת*, the “patch”? It teaches us that there is a secondary color of *tzara'as* that is “attached” – *נספח* – to the two primary ones. The “swelling” has a secondary color, and the “bright spot” also has a secondary color. Both the primary and the secondary colors are considered full-fledged *tzara'as*.

Sefer Taam v'Daas says that the two primary colors allude to *lashon hara* and *machlokes* having two main causes. There is “swelling,” which indicates that a person swells up and inflates his own worth by speaking *lashon hara* about his neighbor. And there is “bright spot,” which indicates that everything is bright and clear to the speaker of *lashon hara*; he knows exactly what is going on with his neighbor, he knows what his neighbor did, and what he should have done but didn't.

Then there is the “patch,” the *ספחת*, who is “attached” to either of the two types of *lashon hara* speakers. He patches himself onto them. This person does not actually speak *lashon hara* himself, at least at first. He just attaches himself to an individual or a group who are speaking *lashon hara*. He sits there together with the *lashon hara* speakers, and he doesn't have the inner strength to go against the “swelling,” the *lashon hara* speaker who is swelled up and self-important. Neither does he have the fortitude to go against the “bright spot,” the clever *lashon hara* speaker to whom everything is so bright

and clear, who knows it all. So the person who just sitting there will get pulled in, too, and will speak *lashon hara* along with them.

The Torah says that they are all impure. They are all *tzara'as*.

So what should he do? “He shall be brought to *Aharon Hakohen*, or to one of his sons the *kohanim*.” Instead of sitting and shooting off his mouth with them, a person should join with learners of Torah, which people of *yiras Shamayim*, who bring purity to the world.

So it says in *Sefer Taam v'Daas*.

We could add to this explanation that the verse alludes also to “the *kohen* who will be in those days,” to the great *kohen* of our times, the Chofetz Chaim. A person shall be brought to the wonderful *sefarim* that he composed on the subject of *lashon hara*. Someone who comes to his books and learns them will surely attain purity.

Tzara'as is usually white. And the whiter it is, the more serious a type of *tzara'as* it is. This can be taken as an allusion to the fact that *lashon hara* speakers usually claim that they mean well by what they say. They defend what they are doing with statements such as, “It isn't *lashon hara*; I'm saying it for a good purpose. It's a *mitzvah*.”

This is what the “white” color of *tzara'as* alludes to. If you see someone flaunting himself as being “white” and having only the purest of intentions, who claims that he just wants to improve the whole world, don't “attach” yourself to him. Instead, you should practice, “He shall be brought to the *kohen*.” You should go and learn the books of the Chofetz Chaim, and study what may be said and what may not, until you are thoroughly familiar with the *halachos*. This will bring purity and redemption to the Jewish people. ●

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורגר זצ"ל
ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

נדבת נכדיהם ~ עטרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנינים אבותם

וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יְמוּל בְּשַׁר עֶרְלָתוֹ. (ויקרא יב, ג)

And on the eighth day, he shall circumcise the flesh of his foreskin. (*Vayikra* 12:3)

Five Times Techiyas Hameisim

Bris Milah sets the foundation for all of life.

How so?

Atah Gibor, the second blessing of the *Amidah*, mentions *Techiyas Hameisim* no less than five times. It says: מחיה מתים וגו' מחיה מתים ברחמים רבים וגו' מחיה מתים וגו' מלך ממית ומחיה וגו' ונאמן אתה להחיות מתים, ברוך אתה ה' מחיה המתים.

What is this all about? Five times in one *berachah*?

It says in the *Seforim Hakedoshim* that there are five parts to a person's soul. They are *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *chayah* and *yechidah*.

There are *pesukim* that serve as a source for all these names of the soul. But they are not just five names for the same thing. They represent the five different levels of the soul.

Accordingly, we could say that the five times that *Techiyas Hameisim* is mentioned correspond to the five levels of the soul. We will explain.

Five Stages in Life

A person's life divides into five periods.

From the moment of birth until about the age of three, a person is completely exempt from fulfilling the Torah. He has no connection to doing *mitzvos*. At this stage in life, he doesn't understand what is going on. He doesn't know what he is doing.

He doesn't have to keep *Shabbos*, he doesn't need to recite the *pasuk* of משה לנו משה, which is the first little bit of Torah that a child is taught. He doesn't need to do anything *Torahdik*. Similarly, nothing he does is considered an *aveirah*. This is the first period in a person's life.

The second period begins when the child reaches the age of *chinuch*, the age at which he can be educated. This is approximately the age of three, and it continues until the age of thirteen (for boys). *Chazal* describe a child at this stage by saying הבל שאין בו חטא – “The breath coming out of his mouth is untainted by sin.”¹ Any deeds he does cannot be considered sinful, but on the other hand, due to the *mitzvah* of *chinuch*, he is required to perform certain *mitzvos*, and his father teaches him Torah.

The third period is from the thirteen to twenty. At this stage, a person has an obligation to fulfill the *mitzvos* of the Torah, but he is not subject to full punishment at the hands of Heaven for failure to do so. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will not apply the term *rasha* to him. As far as the *Sanhedrin* is concerned, if he would desecrate *Shabbos* deliberately, in front of witnesses, he would be liable for the death penalty, because he is fully obligated to keep *mitzvos*. But Heaven will not decree death upon him at this stage in life.

After the age of twenty, a person stands firmly on his own two feet. If he does *aveiros*, he is fully culpable, and could be subject to the Heavenly punishment of *kareis*. And if he does *mitzvos*, he will be blessed with longevity. This is the fourth period in life.

The fifth period, which not everyone merits coming to, is as follows. He fully rectifies his soul and transforms himself into a *tzaddik*, into a holy and pure person with great Torah knowledge and understanding.

These are the five stages in life in brief. Now we will go a little more into depth.

¹ *Shabbos* 119b.

Milah is Constant Connection to Hashem

Let's talk about those first three years of a person's life.

The *Chasid Yaabetz* writes that when a person is born, since he is a Jew and *Hashem* places in him a pure *neshamah*, he is automatically bonded to *kedushah* and has a portion in *Olam Haba*. If he would die as a baby, *chas v'shalom*, he would go straight to *Olam Haba*, since *Olam Haba* is the place of connection to *Hashem*, and he is fundamentally attached to *Hashem*.

Hashem breathed into him a pure *neshamah*, and *Chazal* say that "When one breathes out, he is breathing out something from his very self." The source of this child's life force is in the inner realms of *kedushah*, so he is intrinsically connected to *Hashem* and automatically has a portion in *Olam Haba*.

If so, why did *Chazal* say that a child has a portion in *Olam Haba* only from the time that he starts to answer *amein*?²

Because that is talking about a higher level of *Olam Haba*, which the child attains due to his deeds. But even without any good deeds at all, he is fundamentally bonded to *kedushah*. And not because he is incapable of sinning, due to his lack of mental capacity. The reason he is free of sin is because of the great *kedushah* within him, he has a Jewish *neshamah*. He is totally perfected. He is a *tzaddik gamur*.

Even if his parents are *resha'im gemurim*, right now he is a *tzaddik gamur* and we must desecrate *Shabbos* for him if he is endangered. Since he is in a state of perfection, he has no need for Torah and *mitzvos*. This is why he has no connection Torah and *mitzvos* until he grows older.

Despite all this, there is one *mitzvah* that he does have a connection to, and that is *bris milah*. So let's talk about this very unique *mitzvah* of *bris milah*.

David said הַלְלִיתִיךָ בַּיּוֹם הַלְלִיתִיךָ שֶׁבַע בַּיּוֹם – "I praised You seven times a day."³ But when he entered the

bathroom and found himself unclothed, he said, "Woe to me, for I am 'unclothed' of *mitzvos* [at this time, since I cannot engage in Torah study]." Then he noticed that he has a *bris milah*, and he began composing a praise to *Hashem* over it, as it says לְמַנְצֵחַ עַל הַשְּׂמִינִית – "To the musician, regarding the [*mitzvah* performed on the day of the] eighth⁴."⁵

When a baby is born, he is bonded to *kedushah* due to the very fact that he is a Jew. This is why *milah* is the only *mitzvah* fitting to this age. It ties the person so strongly to *kedushah* that wherever he is and whatever the situation, even if he is in the bathroom, even if he is eating or sleeping, he always bears the seal of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* on himself.

Hashem has many ways to bestow *chesed* on people. There is the *chesed* of great wealth, which not very many people attain. And there is the *chesed* of *parnassah*, of having enough to subsist. Most people have this. Yet, there are poor people who don't have the bare minimum, and there are those who even die of starvation.

Another *chesed* of *Hashem* is air. This is something everyone gets to benefit from, *tzaddikim* and *resha'im* alike. *Hashem's chesed* is so great that there is almost no way for a person not to have air to breathe. Nevertheless, it is still possible for a person to die due to lack of air.

The greatest *chesed* of all is that called *makom*, "place." Everyone has place, has room. There is no one at all who doesn't have place. Even *resha'im* in *Gehinom* have a place to be. This is the peak of *chesed* that we can conceive of, and it is granted to all beings, without exception. There is no one without a place in which he exists.

There are also *mitzvos* like this. There are *mitzvos* that are so wonderful that they are part of a person's very life and are inseparable from him, and one of them is the *mitzvah* of *milah*. A Jew who was fortunate enough that they once did with him the *mitzvah* of *bris milah* will be connected to *Hashem* forever. It doesn't matter what he does or doesn't do.

2 *Sanhedrin* 110b.

3 *Tehillim* 119:164.

4 *Ibid* 12:1.

5 *Yalkut Shimoni, Va'es'chanan* 844.

Even if he *chas v'shalom* desecrates *Shabbos*, even if he eats on Yom Kippur, the Name of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is still on him. It is like the *chesed* of place. It is something you have by virtue of the fact that you exist.

There is another *mitzvah* that resembles *bris milah*, and that is the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*. On *Shabbos kodesh*, a Jew doesn't need to do anything. Nothing needs to come from him. The seventh day of the week has been designated as *Shabbos* from the time of the Six Days of Creation, and a person observes it without having to go and do anything at all. And when he keeps *Shabbos*, *Shabbos* sanctifies his very being, just like it sanctifies all other creatures. (Even *Gebinom* observes *Shabbos*.)

Yom Tov is not like this. Its *kedushah* depends on us. The Jewish people renders *Yom Tov* holy. [In former times, the *Sanhedrin* would determine the date of the *Yamim Tovim* based on the sighting of the new moon, and they set the calendar that we follow to this day.] If the Jewish people would not sanctify *Yom Tov*, it would not be *Yom Tov*.

There are no other *mitzvos* like this. Only *Shabbos* and *bris milah*.

This is the first stage in a person's life. In this stage, his very soul is attached to *kedushah*.

Coming of Age

The second stage in a person's life is when he reaches the age of *chinuch*, of education. At this age, he enters the lowliness of this world to some extent, and begins to have some relationship to negativity and impurity. He still has no connection to *aveiros*. "The breath coming out of his mouth is untainted by sin." But he can bring a lot of harmful influences into himself. He can get in the habit of desecrating *Shabbos*, he can develop the trait of anger, he can even learn to kill, *chas v'shalom*.

So at this stage he needs Torah and *mitzvos*, and "His father teaches him Torah." But since he is unable to commit a sin, he also has no obligation to fulfill *mitzvos*. He only does them for the sake of *chinuch*, education.

When a person reaches the age of thirteen (for a boy), now he is living in this world, and in order to protect him, he needs the *Torah Hakadoshah* to clean him up and refine him, to urge him to serve *Hashem*. He needs to work hard, day and night, in order to remove from himself all the *tumah* and bring *kedushah* into himself.

At this age, *mitzvah* observance is incumbent on him. He does *mitzvos* as an obligation. But still, due to the bond to *kedushah* that he has from the day of his birth, he is exempt from *kareis*. Heaven will not take away his life and his soul will not be cut off, because he still has a strong tie to *kedushah*.

That was the third stage. The fourth stage begins when he reaches the age of twenty. Now he is deep into the life of this world, and he needs to stand on his own two feet. Therefore, he is now liable for death at the hands of Heaven.

The fifth stage, for those who merit it, is essentially a return to the first state. It entails total attachment to *kedushah*. This fits with the general rule that "the end is contained within the beginning."

A person's goal in life is to return to his beginning point, to the *kedushah* that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* granted him in the very beginning, when He breathed his *neshamah* into him. The Rambam expressed this idea when he wrote as follows about a person who dedicates himself to Torah learning:

And not just the tribe of Levi, but every single individual in the world whose spirit moved him... and he conducts himself with straightness, as G-d made him... he acquires supreme sanctity."⁶

In other words, such a person returns to the "straightness" that was his in the first years of life, and then "he acquires supreme sanctity."

This is a person's life goal. This is what he aspires to his whole life: to get back to where he started. It is our desire to leave the world in the state we were in when we came here. However, there is one difference. At the end of a person's life, when he goes back to that total attachment to *kedushah*, it is

⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, end of *Hilchos Shemitah v'Yovel*.

coming from his own *avodah*, his own work.

Even at this stage, there is such a thing as losing one's life, there is such a thing as death. And it is the harshest death of all. It is the worst of all fates. As it says in *Sefer Mesilas Yesharim*, "There is no evil greater than that of a lack in perfection and of being far from *Hashem*."⁷ This is the worst death of all.

Levels of Soul

These five stages of life correspond to the five levels of soul we mentioned before: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *chayah* and *yechidah*.

In the first stage of life, a person is totally bound to *kedushah* and is inseparable from it. This is the level of *yechidah*, in which a person is totally connected to *Hashem* and there is nothing else at all. *Hashem* is *yachid* for him.

אתה אחד ושםך אחד – "You are One and Your Name is One." The truth of this is self-evident, but here is the amazing thing: ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד – בארץ – "And who is like Your people Yisrael, one nation in the world." The Jewish nation, too, has this type of *kedushah*. They are one, they are only *tzaddikim*, there is nothing else. There is no other side to the coin. As it says, ועמך כולם צדיקים לעולם, ירשו ארץ – "Your people are all *tzaddikim*; they will inherit the earth forever."⁸

It is inherent to a person's soul that he is attached to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and this is felt mainly at the time he is born. He is holy; he is pure. A baby is a *tzaddik*. Besides the fact that he doesn't speak *lashon hara*, because he doesn't know how to speak, he is fundamentally alienated from speaking *lashon hara* because of the great *kedushah* inside him.

The second stage of life, from the age of three to thirteen, corresponds to the level of soul called *chayah*. At this age, a person could do a lot of *aveiros*, but he still is not culpable. *Beis din* will not put him to death. So this has the aspect of *chayah*, because he is alive, he is *chai*, and not dead. He is perforce alive.

The third stage of life, from thirteen to twenty, corresponds to the level of soul called *neshamah*. Because at this age, a person is still attached to *kedushah*. He might commit sins, and if he does, he is culpable for them. But Heaven will not put him to death. His soul will not be cut off because he is still attached to *kedushah*. His *neshamah* is his.

The fourth stage in life, from the age of twenty on, corresponds to the level of soul known as *ruach*, "spirit." There is a spirit of purity and there is a spirit of impurity, and it is up to a person to choose which kind of *ruach* he will have. He is no longer inseparably and inherently bound to *kedushah*, to the Source of life, like he was in earlier stages. Thus he is now liable for death at the hands of Heaven.

The fifth stage of life, in which a person goes back to being a *tzaddik*, to being holy and pious and pure, corresponds to the level of soul called *nefesh*. The *nefesh* is the lowly part of a person. It is physically oriented and is responsible for eating, drinking and other physical functions.

An animal, too, has a *nefesh*, as it says: ומכה נפש – ביהמה ישלמנה – "He who strikes the soul of an animal shall pay for it."⁹ However, the *nefesh* of a person comes from Heaven, from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, while the *nefesh* of an animal comes from the earth. But in the end, a *nefesh* is a *nefesh*.

It is possible for the lowly part of a person to never become bound up with *kedushah*. It might never see the light. There are a lot of people who lived out their whole lives, and the *nefesh*, the lowly part of them that eats and drinks, never became attached to *kedushah*.

A person's goal is to connect his *nefesh* with the other parts of his soul, so that also the *nefesh* will be completely holy. And someone who does this has rectified himself completely. He has attained total *sheleimus*. As it says in *Sefer Mesilas Yesharim*:

Torah scholars who are holy in their ways and in all their deeds are truly like the *Mikdash* and like the *Mizbeach*, because

⁷ *Mesilas Yesharim* ch. 4.

⁸ *Yeshayahu* 60:21.

⁹ *Vayikra* 24:18.

the *Shechinah* rests upon them like it rested upon the *Mikdash* itself. Someone who draws close to them is like being brought on the *Mizbeach*, and filling their throats [with drink] is like filling the cups that were on the *Mizbeach*, in which wine libations were poured.¹⁰

This is the goal: to connect the end of life with its beginning, to connect the lowliest part with the most sacred part.

Back to Bris

When a baby has a *bris milah*, we bless him as follows: כשם שנכנס לברית כן יכנס לתורה ולחופה טובים ולמעשים טובים – “Just as he has entered the covenant, so shall he come to Torah, marriage and good deeds.”

A Jew's aspiration is to be inherently connected to *kedushah* at every stage in life, until the final stage, called *nefesh*, just as he was originally attached to *kedushah* in a total way. The goal is that even his eating and other bodily activities should continually be bound up with *kedushah*. Not that sometimes he gets up in the morning for *davening* and sometimes he doesn't, that sometimes he learns and sometimes he doesn't, that sometimes he goes up and sometimes down, but that “his end is contained within his beginning.” That every stage should be a continuation of the beginning.

He began life by entering into a covenant with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This rendered him fundamentally and inseparably connected to Him. Even if *chas v'shalom* he eats pork on Yom Kippur, he remains a circumcised Jew and nothing in the world can separate him from *kedushah*. So it should be also in the second stage, and the third, fourth and fifth. He should always be inherently tied to *kedushah*.

¹⁰ *Mesilas Yesharim* ch. 26.

This is actually the aspect of *ruach*, which is connected to Torah. To fundamentally be a *ben Torah*. Not that he happens to learn sometimes, but that his essential being is that of a *ben Torah*. And if he merits attaining even the level of *nefesh*, he will be so bound to *kedushah* that even his eating and sleeping will be part of *kedushah*. Every movement he makes is all part of one great *kedushah*. This is the spiritual peak that a person is capable of reaching.

The truth is that all these qualities exist within a person throughout his life. They are not just stages that come one after another, but are always present in him. There is a point inside a person where he is connected to *kedushah* due to the very fact that he is a Jew. A person can commit every *aveirah* in the Torah and he will still be a Jew. There is a point within him to which he is always connected, at which is always alive.

Now we can understand why *Techiyas Hameisim* is mentioned five times in the blessing of *Atah Gibor*, as we mentioned at the beginning of this piece. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* grants life to a person in five stages.

In the first stage, it was possible for a person not to have been born at all, and even after he was born, the *kedushah* of *yechidah* comes by means of *milah*, through which *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* grants him life and connects him to *kedushah*, to true life.

Afterwards, in the second stage, when a person is capable of bringing impurity into himself, *Hashem* continues to grant him life. And so it is in all the subsequent stages.

This is why we bless the baby at the time of his *milah* by saying לברית שנכנס. It expresses that he is inherently connected to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. And we continue the blessing by saying כן ייכנס לתורה לחופה ולמעשים טובים, meaning that at every stage in life, he should be fundamentally tied to *Hashem*, just as he was connected to *Hashem* at the beginning of his life through *bris milah*. ●