

פ' אחרי מות תשפ"ד

Based on droshos by Maran HaGaon Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlita, Gaavad of Yerushalayim. To receive these weekly divrei Torah email ravsternbuchtorah@gmail.com

Leiluy nishmas Feige bas R. Avrohom z"l

SPEECH ON CHOL HAMOED

After the public sang "I believe with complete faith that there is no nature or coincidence in the world at all", Rav Sternbuch said that people should introspect to see whether they really believe completely that there is no difference between nature and miracles, Everything stems from Hashem: "No one lifts his finger below without a declaration from above". Pesach is the Yom Tov of faith and direct Divine providence, when we recollect how Hashem distinguished between Egyptian and Jew, for example during the plague of blood.

We have to invest a lot of efforts into bolstering our *emuna* in order to counteract the *Soton* who endeavors to convince us to place our faith in the might of our own hands. Only through *emuna* can we merit witnessing the revelation of Hashem's glory.

Only good stems from Hashem, but sometimes it takes a while for a person to discern this. Hashem wants only the best for everyone, and the purpose of all trials is only to add merits for those Jews who overcome them.

Every moment creation is being renewed. Hashem created time for our benefit. When a person comes to Heaven he will realize what a fool he has been to have frittered away his time on vanities in this world instead of accumulating *mitzvos* and good deeds by grabbing more *gemoro* and more *tehilim* and helping a fellow Jew. This feeling of regret about how he behaved like an animal in this world is the biggest possible punishment a person can experience.

Unfortunately, we are becoming contaminated with the *tumah* of the happenstance philosophy espoused by our erring brethren. Although we must find ways to draw them closer to our Father in Heaven, we must distance ourselves from them psychologically and physically, since even looking at them has a harmful effect on the soul.

Moshiach is standing and waiting for Hashem's order to redeem His holy nation. May we witness his coming speedily.

SHIRAS HAYAM

After midnight on *leil shvi'i shel Pesach* Rav Sternbuch recited the *shiras hayam* in the *Gro Shul* to a packed audience. Afterwards he exhorted his audience to do their *hishtadlus* by helping others find a *shidduch*. Rav Sternbuch also stressed that one should not have exaggerated demands and expectations from a marriage partner, and not be too choosy.

In addition, Rav Sternbuch spoke about how we need to strengthen our *emuna* during this Festival of Faith to counteract the heresy espoused by our erring brethren who believe in the power of their own hands, and the Prime Minister who believes he is G-d. The prosecuting angels seek to accuse us by mentioning our spiritual deficiencies, but Rav Sternbuch that he did not want to cite what they are saying lest they will say, 'See, even down below they are talking about these sins'. Following his speech, for about forty minutes many boys came to receive a personal *brocho* for a *zivug* from Rav Sternbuch.

LIVING FOR OTHERS

"After the death of two sons of Aharon, who brought an offering before Hashem and they died" (16:1).

Here the *possuk* makes it clear that Nodov and Avihu were punished for having entered the *kodesh hakodoshim*, but in *parashas eikev* it says "And at Aharon Hashem grew very angry to destroy him; I prayed for Aharon, too, at that time". Chazal explain that *possuk* as follows: at the time of the *chet ho'eigel* it was decreed that Aharon would be punished for his involvement in the *chet* through the death

of all of his four sons, but Moshe *Rabbeinu* managed to mitigate the decree by means of his prayer, so that only two of his sons would die. The question though remains, did Nodov and Avihu die because of their own sin (whatever it was, depending on the different views in *Chazal*) or because of their father's sin?

Sometimes a person may deserve to die, but his wife, children, students, or others who benefit from his activities, would suffer from his death. In a human court of law, if someone deserves to be handed down the death punishment, a judge does not have discretion to consider the ramifications of the death penalty on the killed person's family or friends. By contrast, it says "The commandments of Hashem are true, they are righteous altogether" (*Tehilim*, 19:10). In the case of Divine judgement, if those who are dependent on a person do not deserve to die, he remains alive for their sake.

Similarly, the Brisker Rov asked what it means that Hashem is "full of lovingkindness and truth" (in the Thirteen Divine Attributes). What sort of praise is it to state that Hashem does not lie? He answered that it means that His truth is just and fair towards all parties involved, something which a mortal system of justice is incapable of achieving.

If Aharon would not have had a sin of his own to be held out against him, his sons would not have died despite their own sin, because their father would not have deserved to endure the anguish of losing his sons.

On a related note, Rav Eliyohu Lopian told Rav Sternbuch several times that a person should engage in as many activities as possible that benefit the public, such as teaching or being *osek bezorchei tzibbur*, so that even if he deserves to be punished, that punishment might be deferred because those who benefit from his activities do not deserve to be punished.

PARABLES

"After the death of two sons of Aharon" (*ibid*). Rashi: What does this teach us? Rabi Elozor ben Azariah illustrated this with a parable of a patient, whom a physician came to visit. The physician said to him, "Do not eat cold foods, and do not lie down in a cold, damp place." Then, another physician visited him, and advised him, "Do not eat cold foods or lie down in a cold, damp place, so that you will not die the way so-and-so died." This one warned that patient more effectively than the former".

This parable cited by Rashi illustrates the power of real-life precedents even on Aharon *Hakohen*. Sometimes hearing stories about great Torah personalities has a greater effect on a person than merely being told about a prohibition or *halocho*. Rav Schneider too would bring incidents from *gedolim* to bring alive certain points to do with *yiras shomayim* etc.

FIGHTING ROUTINE

Speak to your brother Aharon that he not come at all times into the Holy . . . so that he not die, for in a cloud I shall appear on the Ark-cover (16:2)

*Because the revelation of My Shechinah is there, he should be careful not to accustom himself to enter (Rashi, *ibid*.)*

The force of habit and routine weakens our ability to maintain a sense of excitement and awe, so that even Aharon was forbidden to enter the *Kodesh HaKodoshim* at any time lest he become too accustomed to the intense holiness that pervaded it. Before entering, he had to make sure that he felt an appropriate awareness of Hashem's Presence there.

Similarly, before praying, we should endeavor to internalize the fact that we are about to pray before the King. "Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, to those who call upon Him in truth" (*Tehillim* 145:18). Rav Elyah Lopian would note that since Hashem can read our thoughts, they are equivalent to speech as far as Hashem is concerned, so if when we pray we are thinking of matters not connected to our prayer, it is as if we are communicating in a garbled language with the Almighty. Hashem is close to those who call upon Him *in truth* - who seek closeness to Him and exclude extraneous thoughts as much as possible when they pray, thereby "speaking" in a language that He "understands."

In general, our only hope of avoiding the tendency to perform *mitzvos* in a perfunctory manner is to treat each day as if we were born anew on that day and approach our *avodas Hashem* as if for the first time.

KOSEL

If we have to be in an appropriate state of mind before entering a holy location such as a *shul*, this applies with even greater force to the holiest place which we still have, the *Kosel Hama'arovi*, through which every Jew's prayer passes. Unfortunately, the sanctity of the *Kosel* becomes desecrated when people behave there with levity, or dance. It is meant to be a place set aside for tearful prayer concerning the destruction of Hashem's Palace.

In recent times the *Kosel* Plaza has become expanded and renovated. People imagine that it is a great mitzvah to beautify this area, but the *halocho* states that a *shul* which has become destroyed and its location is full of weeds, those weeds should not be uprooted, in order to make people dejected by this desolate state, thereby motivating them to reconstruct the *shul*. Clearly then, the location of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdosh* should not be beautified because that diminishes the *churbon* (destruction) that one should be feeling. [Although the *Kosel* Plaza is strictly speaking not situated in a location where the *Beis Hamikdosh* used to stand, and is therefore not a place of "destruction", it is considered subsidiary to the *Kosel* itself, and serves as a place of prayer in a place of *churbon*].

TORAH NEEDS NO COVER

"In front of the כַּפֹּרֶת that is upon the ark" (ibid).

It says in *Toras Kohanim* that the purpose of the *kapores* was not to act as a cover for the *oron*.

Some *bnai Torah*, or their wives, are embarrassed that after twenty years of marriage the head of the family is "only" an *avreich* with no profession or even a Torah position to show for it, and they feel that they have to cover up for this "deficiency". The *oron* symbolizes Torah and Chazal are telling us that the Torah does not need to be "covered up", and *bnai Torah* and their families should instead be proud and realize that it is in the merit of people like them that Hashem has guarded us throughout history.

Our erring brethren cannot understand why someone in his thirties or forties should remain an eternal "student", who is merely an unproductive burden on the state. On the other hand, they argue that our right to repossess this country is based, to a great extent, on our almost continuous presence here over the past 2000 years. What they ignore is the fact that until recent generations the only people living here were "idle" people who did nothing other than learn Torah and lived off charity from overseas. In reality, those who dedicate their lives to Torah learning make up the Army of Hashem and are closest to Him.

YESHIVA WITHOUT SEDORIM

With this shall Aharon enter the Holy (16:3)

The *Medrash (Vayikro Rabba 21:6)* says that "with this" refers to the merit of the Torah. This shows that the merit of the *kehuna*, of Yom Kippur and of the *Kodesh HaKodashim* was not enough. Without the power and merit of Torah the *Kohen Godol* could not achieve atonement for the nation.

Torah is supreme, and that is why a *mamzer* who is a *talmid chochom* takes precedence over a *Kohen Godol* who is an *am ho'oretz* (ignorant) (*Horayos 13a*).

Rav Yisroel Salanter noted that this occasion presented a confluence between the holiest person, the *Kohen Godol*, the holiest time, Yom Kippur, and the holiest place, the *Kodesh HaKodashim*. The sanctity of this unique combination of factors is difficult to fathom, and yet the Torah of *talmidei chachomim* studied with sanctity is dearer in Hashem's eyes even than the *avoda* of the *Kohen Godol* on Yom Kippur in the *Kodesh HaKodashim*.

When the Netziv was asked about the learning schedule of Volozhin Yeshiva, he replied that "Torah has no schedules, the only scheduled times in the Yeshiva are for eating and resting". In other words,

Torah is not limited to time, one must learn as much as one can at any time, and only eating and resting should be limited to specific allotted times.

SECLUSION

“No man shall be present in the Tent of Meeting when he comes in to atone” (16:17).

The *kohen Godol* in the *kodesh hakodoshim* on Yom Kippur had to keep his mind exclusively focused on his *avoda* and on Hashem, and the presence of any other person would have been likely to disturb his concentration.

Sometimes great people feel the need to emulate such a situation for a limited period. Rav Kalmanovich, the Rakover *rov* told Rav Sternbuch that he once went to see Rav Chaim Brisker with an urgent question. He knocked on the door, but there was no answer. Only when he shouted that he had come to ask about a matter involving *pikuach nefesh* did Rav Chaim come to open the door. When Rav Kalmanovich asked him why did not open earlier, Rav Chaim replied that sometimes he closes himself up in his room and learns undisturbed as if there is no one else except for him and Hashem, but when he heard that the Rakover *rov* had a question on a matter of *pikuach nefesh*, he felt that he had no choice but to come and open the door.

IDLE BOCHURIM

And Aharon shall enter the Ohel Moed (16:23). Rashi: to take out the spoon and the pan, with which he had caused the ketores to go up in smoke in the inner kodesh

The *kohen godol* has to change clothes, *toivel*, and wash his hand and feet before and after this *avoda* of removing the vessels. Why is such a fuss made about this seemingly insignificant act? Why does the Torah not simply require the *kohen godol* to remove these *keilim* the next time he enters the *kodesh hakodoshim* on the following Yom Kippur?

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky answers that there can be no such reality as an object remaining in the *Kodesh HaKodashim* without a purpose, because that would be a disgrace for Hashem's Abode.

The Yeshivos too, added Rav Abramsky, are *Kodesh HaKodashim* and therefore cannot house anyone who wastes his time. Even if this person does not harm others, it is a disgrace for the holy Yeshiva to house someone who sits around idly without engaging in Torah. Such a *bochur* must understand on his own that he should not be in a holy place without a purpose.

On the other hand, the Yeshiva management has no right to throw him to the street and abandon him simply because he is not learning. Rav Schneider used to say that as soon as a boy enters the Yeshiva he becomes like a son and has to be treated accordingly. Just like one would not throw one's own son to the street and abandon him, but would rather find him an alternative Yeshiva appropriate for him, so too must any *bochur* receive the same treatment. As long as no alternative exists, the boy may not be thrown out, although the other *bochurim* must be warned not to learn from his ways or associate with him.

Of course, each case has to be assessed based on its specific circumstances.

SINNING IN ERETZ YISROEL

And the land became defiled, and I visited its sin upon it, and the land vomited out its inhabitants (18:25)

The Ramban talks at length about how *Eretz Yisroel* is Hashem's heritage, which is subject to His direct providence, and has not been delivered to *mazolos* or angels. That is why this country spews out those who defile it with sins. He adds that even before *matan Torah* the forefathers kept *mitzos* only in *Eretz Yisroel*, the Palace of the King, in which His Will has to be fulfilled completely.

The *Sefer Chareidim* (Ch. 59) decries those who come to live in the Palace of the King only to feast and drink, and commit sins therein (see also *Shlo*, end of *P. Bechukosai*).

The residents of *Eretz Yisroel* are not only obligated to be especially careful to refrain from sinning themselves, but are also duty-bound to act as “guardians” to make sure that others do not defile the Holy Land, and warn them about the great blemish caused by sins in *Eretz Yisroel*.