

# פ' קדושים תשפ"ד

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## MORAL FREEDOM

*You shall be holy . . . You shall fear your mother and father (19:2–3)*

The commandment to fear our parents is written immediately following the commandment to be holy, because in order to attain holiness, a person must rein in his desires. If a parent wants to give his child the gift of the ability to acquire holiness in his adulthood, he must train him from infancy to practice self-control, and not to give in to his urges. Furthermore, if a parent accustoms his child to subject his own will to that of his parents, the child will be trained to subject his will and desires to the Will of Hashem, thereby gaining moral freedom.

## PARENTS AND CHILDREN

*Every man shall fear his mother and his father, and you shall observe My Shabosos (19:3)*

Irreligious forces argue that the younger generation is wiser than its parents. Such propaganda can have terrible effects. About 70 years ago Rav Sternbuch was in *Eretz Yisroel*, accompanied by his late mother, when a child came up to them and exclaimed “*aba sheli chamor*” (“my father is a donkey”). Needless to say, they were deeply shocked. The Zionists attempted to sever the link between the generations so that it would be easier for them to indoctrinate youngsters with their theories. Unfortunately, they were sometimes successful.

The Torah is warning us that it is not enough to honor our parents, but we have to fear them, always remembering that the Torah compared the honor we must accord to our parents to that which we accord to Hashem.

Parents who feel uncomfortable about their children getting up for them when they enter the room, as used to be the standard practice amongst *erliche yidden* in previous generations, are doing themselves and their children a disservice. Obviously, parents do not require such displays of honor to satisfy their vanity, but only in order to instill that element of respect, which is conducive to an appropriate domestic atmosphere, and which results in a lifetime of *kedusha*.

The Brisker Rov would make a point of his sons serving him so that they would have the benefit of performing *mitzvas kibbud av*. Similarly, Rav Sternbuch’s father would ask his daughters to help him rather than the domestic helper, because he wanted to give them the great merit of *mitzvas kibbud av*.

Another vital principle in childrens’ education is to create a close relationship with the child, because in the absence of such a relationship, the child will be exposed to the danger of departing completely from his parents’ path, *rachmono litzlon*.

Just like one must fear Hashem and His judgment (“You shall fear Hashem your God”) so too must a person always fear that he is not performing this fundamental *mitzvah* adequately. The *Ksav Sofer* says that a “man” (i.e. adult), who has left his parents’ house might imagine that he must now dedicate himself totally to his own family. The Torah therefore warns him that his obligations to his parents remain unchanged.

## CONCEALED IDOLS

*Do not turn to the idols, nor make for yourselves molten gods (literally: “gods with masks”)* (19:4)

Even if someone does not actually serve an idol, but only begins to turn towards one, he violates a negative prohibition, and the *gemoro* in *Shabbos* (149a) derives from this *possuk* that

even looking at idols is forbidden *mide'oraiso*. Reading heretical books on topics such as philosophy and physics is even worse than looking at idols, and anyone doing so surely transgresses this prohibition, and damages the sanctity of his mind and thoughts.

Even books or newspapers, which at first sight appear not to clash with a Torah outlook must be shunned, since more often than not they will turn out to be “gods with masks”, i.e. seemingly harmless material concealing heretical views.

## **BUSINESS**

*You shall not steal, nor shall you deal falsely, or lie to each other (19:11)*

The Torah expects us to be especially careful in monetary matters, where there are many potential pitfalls. Failing to disclose any deficiency in a sold object, even to a non-Jew, constitutes *geneivas da'as*, not to mention overstating the supposed market value of the object. The *halochos* of *gezel*, *ono'oh* and *ribbis* are manifold and complex, and *rabbonim* must ensure that their congregants are well versed in them.

A *rov* once told Rav Yisroel Salanter that he wanted to abandon the rabbinate due to the great responsibilities weighing on his shoulders, and he had chosen to become a businessman instead. Rav Yisroel responded that the responsibilities of a businessman were even greater, since he was likely to *chas vesholom* transgress many prohibitions. Moreover, achieving atonement for interpersonal sins is more difficult than for sins *bein odom lamokom*.

## **PUBLIC FUNDS**

“You shall not steal” [*lo signovu*] is in the plural to teach us that activists in charge of public funds are capable of stealing from thousands of people instantaneously through one act of misappropriation, and they must therefore be especially careful about the way they treat the money with which they have been entrusted.

## **WORKER'S WAGE**

*The hired worker's wage shall not remain with you overnight until morning (19:13)*

The Zohar says that someone who infringes this commandment will have his days curtailed.

If the worker tells the person who hired him that he is not particular about being paid on time, and the hirer does in fact not pay on time, he does not infringe the negative prohibition of the worker's wage not remaining with him overnight, although he misses out on performing the positive *mitzvah* of paying on the day the work is completed. However, this is only the case if the laborer genuinely agrees to forego his rights by being paid late, and not merely because he has no choice, or because he does not dare to claim payment on the same day. In such circumstances, the hirer would be breaching the above negative prohibition.

The best option is for the hirer to tell the worker, “You’re entitled to be paid today, and I’d be willing to do so, but if you are willing to forego this right I’d be grateful”. If the worker then willingly agrees to be paid late, the hirer does not infringe the negative prohibition.

The late Belzer Rebbe, Rav Aharon Rokeach, was also particular about paying non-Jewish laborers on time, and he cited sources for this opinion. (On this whole topic, see also *Teshuvos Vehanhogos* 3:470).

## **RAV CHAIM BRISKER'S YIRAS SHOMAYIM**

*And you shall fear your G-d. I am Hashem. (19:14)*

Rav Zvi Hirsh Farber told Rav Sternbuch that he was once travelling on a train together with Rav Chaim Brisker (who would travel in a regular compartment like everyone else), when one elderly man joined them. Rav Chaim asked him where he had come from, and he replied that he had been at Kotzk to see the Rebbe (presumably a grandson of the first Rebbe). Rav Chaim asked him to repeat a *dvar Torah*, which he had heard from him.

The man replied that the Rebbe had talked about the *possuk* (in *Devorim* 6:13), “You shall fear Hashem your God” – which Chazal expound “to include *talmidei chachomim*”. The plain meaning is that this is an injunction to fear *talmidei chachomim*, but the Rebbe added that *talmidei chachomim* also have to fear Hashem. There are some *talmidei chachomim* who imagine that they do not have to be careful about this area, but the truth is that they too must be careful to fill their hearts with fear of Hashem.

Rav Chaim was very pleased with this *vort*, and did not stop praising it. He said: “You hear what the Kotzker said, *talmidei chachomim* also need *yiras shomayim*! Oy, how right he is, *talmidei chachomim* also need to work very hard to attain fear of heaven”. Rav Farber added that he was very moved to witness the extent to which Rav Chaim was concerned about his own level of *yiras shomayim* and fear of sin.

## **HILCHOS LOSHON HORO**

*You shall not go around as a gossipmonger among your people; you shall not stand by your fellow's blood; I am Hashem. (19:16)*

Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained the connection between these two commandments as follows: Even though we are forbidden to act as gossipmongers, when *halocho* requires negative information to be conveyed, for example, when we are asked about a certain *shidduch* proposal and we know about defects of the person concerned that are considered significant in the eyes of *halocho*, if we refrain from passing on what we know to the questioner and remain silent, this is the equivalent of standing by his blood, because we could be saving him from damage.

Of course, information should only be disclosed in accordance with the rules set down in *Sefer Chofetz Chaim*. Sometimes information must be divulged, sometimes it must be withheld, and sometimes one should avoid saying anything. These rules are rather detailed, and someone not familiar with them must consult with a *rov*. Rav Moshe Schneider felt that candidates for *rabbonus* should be tested not only on *Orach Chaim* and *Yoreh Deioh*, but also on *hilchos loshon horo*. Since these *halochos* deal with one of the severest prohibitions and are very prevalent, every *rov* must be conversant in them. Rav Sternbuch notes with satisfaction that nowadays there are *talmidei chachomim* conversant in these *halochos* who are available to answer questions.

## **HIGHLIGHTS FROM RAV STERNBUCH'S STATEMENTS ON PESACH IN PREVIOUS YEARS AND THIS YEAR**

Idol worship does not only consist of bowing down to an idol, but whenever we imagine that our success depends on our handiwork and our human efforts, we are transforming our handiwork into gods, into “idols of nature”. Our job is to uproot these notions with great self-dedication, so that we will “no longer call the work of our hands our gods” (Hoshea 14:4).

The Ramban writes that the main purpose of relating the story of the Exodus is to demonstrate that there is no such thing as nature, only revealed and concealed miracles, both in the public and

private sphere, and believing and internalizing this is an integral part of the faith of anyone who wants to have a portion in the Torah of *Moshe Rabbenu*.

At the *seder* table this year Rav Sternbuch told his family that in our times too we have been privileged to witness open miracles when two weeks before Pesach Iran sent around 170 drones and more than 150 missiles towards Eretz Yisroel, miraculously resulting in no serious injuries. Rav Sternbuch had noted in the week following those events that he could not understand how people could get on with their lives, and not change for the better, as if nothing had happened.

The Yaavetz says that there is no greater proof of divine providence than the very survival of the Jewish nation throughout the ages. This applies especially to us in *Eretz Yisroel*, surrounded as we are by seventy wolves, wealthy Arab nations who seek our destruction. Our survival cannot be explained through natural causes, but only through Hashem's great mercy and kindness.

The Zohar says that not only on Seder night, but throughout the year, whenever we relate Hashem's miracles and kindnesses, He gathers the celestial retinue to show them how the Jewish nation rejoices in Him, thereby causing a great sanctification of the Divine Name above and below.

Religious Jews' outlooks are corrupted by their exposure to the media, which attribute events to natural causes. For example, wars are analyzed on the basis of cause and effect, by comparing the strength of two armies, their military capabilities and so on, whereas we know that in reality Hashem is in charge of making wars (see *Avoda Zoro 2b*). We have no way of knowing what will be, and only Hashem controls events. Instead of focusing on what Hashem wants from us during a period of war, the media, by mentioning exclusively "natural" causes, confuses people and makes them forget the real causes of war.

The Brisker Rov said that for every war in this world, there is a corresponding conflict between the heavenly ministers of the combatant nations, and the heavenly battle can only be won through reciting *Tehilim*. Every prayer with concentration releases "arrows" aimed at the heavenly enemies. This means that wars are settled through our actions here in this world. For that reason, our real protection from the enemies surrounding us is the Torah that we learn, and we will never abandon this Army of Hashem.

Working people who utilize all their free time for Torah learning receive a reward not only for the time that they learn, but also for the time that they work, since by dedicating every free moment to learning they are proving that they yearn to learn the rest of the day too, and are only prevented from doing so by the force of necessity. Hashem considers their good intentions and desires to be the equivalent of an action, as Chazal say, "Someone who intends to do a mitzvah but does not do so, due to constraint, is considered by the *possuk* as if he has performed it" (*Brochos 6a*). A working person should set aside a fixed regular time for learning, and not give up that time for any reason whatsoever, not even for making a huge profit, thereby proving his subjugation to the Torah.

People who go up to *Har Habayis*, in addition to their own personal sin punishable by *kores*, are also guilty of endangering the entire Jewish population through their inflammatory behavior. Chazal are very particular about *eivo* (refraining from antagonizing non-Jews), and permitted Rabbinic and even Scriptural prohibitions in order to prevent *eivo*, and save lives. These people, by contrast, arouse *eivo*, claiming that they are performing a mitzvah and wearing chareidi attire. We are obligated to protest their actions and publicize the fact that they are acting contrary to our holy Torah, so that the nations of the world will realize that this group is acting on its own, and have no connection with the Jewish religion.

Those who live in *Eretz Yisroel* with the awareness of the great sanctity of the Palace of the King, being especially careful to avoid sinning in this holy location, will enjoy the merit and protection of *Eretz Yisroel* during these difficult times.

The main thing is to realize that if we place our reliance on any force other than Hashem, we will not be redeemed. The more we place our complete reliance on Hashem, the more rapidly will we merit complete redemption without suffering.