



# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM  
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

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

## PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

## Get in the Habit of Truth

כָּל הַיֵּצֵא מִפִּי יֵעָשֶׂה. (במדבר ל, ג)

**He shall do just as it came out of his mouth. (*Bemidbar* 30:3)**

Simply speaking, this verse is talking about oaths and vows. When a person swears, or takes a vow, he must fulfill his words and not act differently than he said. However, *Chazal* and *Baalei Hamussar* spoke at length in many places about how great it is to guard one's mouth from speaking falsely even when no oath or vow is involved. A person should train himself to speak only the truth, and whatever he says, he should make sure to do it.

Habituating oneself to always speak the truth is one of the greatest and loftiest virtues a person can acquire. It is a level of personal perfection that is actually very hard to attain. This is because people naturally deviate quite a bit from the truth.

*Chazal* say that when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* wished to create man, the trait of truth argued that man should not be created, because he speaks falsely so much. People naturally tell lies. Both big lies and little insignificant lies. And even when they are not telling an outright lie, they often speak

inaccurately. People say lies that are damaging to others, and they tell tall tales that are harmless. It is hard to recount even a short, simple story without exaggerating something or adding something.

This is all for a simple reason. We know that when we are in a tough spot, we can very often get out of it by saying a false word, thus saving ourselves a lot of loss and a lot of unpleasantness. And we have been in tough spots like this over and over again during the course of our lives, so we have grown accustomed to this kind of maneuvering.

The habit begins with small matters. Children naturally behave rambunctiously and rollick around. They often do things they should not. With a little lie, a child can save himself from punishment. And since he is a small, weak child, falsehood is the only means of defense he has. This habit of speaking falsely thus becomes second nature. A person knows as long as he lives that he can maneuver a lot of problems in life by telling a

little lie, and this is why so many people don't stick to the truth.

However, speaking non-truths is one of the main causes of spiritual decline. It distances a person from *Hashem*, and from the Torah, which are the very source of truth.

We might think that words are just a matter of pushing a little air out of our mouth; it's no big deal. But we are seriously deluding ourselves if we think this way. A word is a tremendously important and significant matter. It is not by chance that speech has the ability to build worlds and destroy worlds, to break hearts and to re-empower the

downtrodden. We know this is true.

We need to realize that even if we don't immediately see it, our words exert a great influence. Speaking falsely even about paltry things that don't seem to matter to anyone is a harmful and destructive act. It disconnects us from *Hashem*, Whose Name is *Emes*.

Fortunate is the person who accustoms himself to speaking only the truth, because he is thereby attached to the Source of truth. As *Chazal* say, "The seal of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is truth."<sup>1</sup> ●

1 *Shabbos* 55a.

## Be a Talmid

וַיַּעַל אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אֶל הַר הָהָר עַל פִּי ה' וַיָּמָת שָׁם בְּשָׁנַת הָאַרְבָּעִים לְצֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַחֲמִישִׁי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ. (במדבר לג, לח)

***Aharon Hakohen* ascended Mount Hor, as commanded by *Hashem*, and died there in the fortieth year after the Jewish people left the land of Egypt. It was in the fifth month, on the first day of the month. (*Bemidbar* 33:38)**

It says in the *parshah* that *Aharon Hakohen* passed away on *Rosh Chodesh Av*, which falls this coming week.

This might sound like a relatively minor detail, but actually it is quite a remarkable statement. Nowhere else in the Torah are we told the specific date on which a *tzaddik* died. Only *Aharon Hakohen's yahrzeit* is stated in the Torah. In fact,

it says in the *Tur*<sup>1</sup> that it is permitted to fast on this *yahrzeit*, even though it is *Rosh Chodesh*, and it is even praiseworthy to do so, as it is a *ta'anis tzaddikim*.

Why is Aharon's death mentioned in such a special way? Perhaps because he was the great *Rav* of *ahavas shalom* and of *redifas shalom*, of loving

1 *Orach Chayim* 580.

### לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורגר זצ"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

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peace and pursuing peace, so the day of his passing is a time of crying and sorrow for all generations. There is no sorrow like the death of someone who brings peace to the world.

*Chazal* taught us emphatically:

Be a disciple of Aharon, loving peace and pursuing peace.<sup>2</sup>

The first and foremost thing we need is a *Rav* who teaches us to love *shalom*. This is because too many people have a predilection for conflicts and fights. When there is peace, everything is so quiet and boring. But when a good, juicy controversy arises, it brings interesting experiences, and life is more varied.

Not only that, but at times of peace, many people just blend into the background and don't stand out. You don't see them or hear them. But when there is a controversy, they become conspicuous and have an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Let's admit it: too many people enjoy a good *machlokes*. This is why we need a great *Rav* like Aharon to teach us to love *shalom*, and only then

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2 *Avos* 1:12.

will we take practical steps to pursue *shalom*.

This may be compared to a child who came upon a big fire threatening to engulf an entire apartment building. He watches the intense efforts of the fire fighters climbing up and down high ladders, saving people, spraying water. He stands there mesmerized by the sight. It is even more exciting if he himself helps in the rescue efforts, and people see what he is doing and applaud him.

After such an experience, he can't wait for another giant fire like this to take place. He might even be tempted to set a house on fire, in order to go through another great experience like this, even if it might cause a tragedy, *chas v'shalom*. He is thus in desperate need of someone to teach him not to love fires and not to be a pyromaniac.

This is what Aharon would teach people. He taught them to love "boring" peace and hate "exciting" *machlokes*.

The day Aharon passed away is thus a time of sorrow and weeping for all generations. We need to remember what Aharon taught, and know that even if fights look fun and exciting, they are nothing but a curse and a disaster. And peace brings everything good. ●

## PARSHA TOPIC

### Three Events that are One

Early Torah sources speak of three earth-shaking events that took place in the course of history, each of which changed the world fundamentally. And all three convey the same idea.

The first was the sin of *Adam HaRishon*. Before he sinned, he was as tall as the sky, and he saw from one end of the world to the other. After he sinned, *Hashem* placed His hand on him and diminished

## Kedushah is the Root

his stature to a mere 150 feet.<sup>1</sup>

The second event was *Cheit Ha'eigel*, which was a replay of the sin of *Adam HaRishon*. When the Jewish people stood at *Har Sinai*, impurity ceased from them,<sup>2</sup> and they returned to the level of Adam before he sinned. But when they committed the sin of the Golden Calf, they fell once again to their

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1 *Chagigah* 12a; *Bereishis Rabbah* 12:6.

2 *Shabbos* 154a.

previous level.

The third event was the destruction of *Beis HaMikdash*. (This refers primarily to the first *Beis HaMikdash*, for then it was at the height of its glory.)

The fact that these three cataclysmic events are essentially the same event replaying itself is a very deep matter. Nevertheless, we will try to explain, in simple terms, the nature of *Churban Beis HaMikdash*. We will take a look at the “before and after.”

## The World is for Me?

To get an idea how lofty this matter is, and how it belongs to the Torah’s deepest teachings, here is a little introduction.

It says in the writings of the Arizal that before *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed (and also before Adam sinned, and also before *Cheit Ha’eigel*), The Kingdom of Heaven had ten *sefiros*. And the *klipah*, the forces of evil, had only one point. After the *Churban*, the Kingdom of Heaven diminished to one point, and the forces of evil grew to ten *sefiros*.

However, the ten *sefiros* of the Side of Evil are not exactly like the ten *sefiros* that the Kingdom of Heaven once had. The ten *sefiros* of *Malchus Shamayim* were with *da’as*, whereas those of the Side of Evil, although they too are ten *sefiros*, are without *da’as*.

This is among the esoteric teachings of the Torah. We cannot even touch upon its meaning in proper depth. However, hearing such words gives us the proper outlook on this lofty subject, even if we approach it with allegories that elucidate its meaning on a very simple level:

A person by nature sees himself as the center of the world. The sun shines on *him*. It’s cloudy today for *him*. The whole world is there for him.

A simple illustration: someone is rushing to an important appointment and he gets stuck in a traffic jam. At that moment his feelings are likely to be: why are all these cars in my way? Why did they all go this route today, when I am in a hurry,

to make me late? He doesn’t realize that the driver behind him is saying to himself: Why did this car in front of me make me miss the green light, just when I am in such a rush to get to an appointment!

That’s the way it is with everything. A person tends to see the world from his own perspective. For instance, when it comes to current issues, a person often says to himself: I am open to hearing the other side, I respect other people’s opinions, but it just so happens that the facts prove me right...

A person sees himself in the center of the world. His reality is essentially himself. The whole world revolves around him, and it is important insofar as it relates to him.

## The Chasan and the Waiter

But does it have to be this way? Is this the proper perspective on things?

Let’s say a forty-five-year-old *kollel* man has been learning for many years, and has already finished *Shas* twice, and now he decides the time has come to work a little, to make a living. For lack of other alternatives, he takes a job as a waiter at a wedding hall. After all, *Chazal* say a humble occupation is better than none: “Flay carcasses in the marketplace, rather than rely on people to support you.”<sup>3</sup>

At work he feels very strange. Here he is, a respectable man of forty-five, who already finished *Shas* twice, and he is waiting on the bridegroom who is a youngster, barely twenty-one.

But on second thought, he recognizes that in truth, there is nothing demeaning about this situation. The *chasan* is rightfully at the center of it all. The whole celebration, with all the distinguished guests who are attending, revolves around the *chasan*, and that includes the waiter, too. It’s his job to be there for the *chasan*.

So let’s ask: who is the “*chasan*” here in the world? Who does it all revolve around?

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3 *Bava Basra* 110a.

Before Adam came to the world, early on the sixth day of Creation, there were already heavens and earth, sun and moon, stars and constellations, fruit trees, animals and birds. Who was the “*chasan*” before human beings were created? Who did everything serve? *HaKadosh Baruch Hu!*

הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסְאִי וְהָאָרֶץ רַגְלִי – The heavens are My throne and the earth is My footstool.<sup>4</sup>

The entire universe was meant to serve the “*Chasan*,” Who was *Hashem*.

And then, a little later on the sixth day, *Adam HaRishon* arrives. If we would ask him, “Who are you,” he would say, “I’m just the waiter here. *Hashem* is the ‘*Chasan*’ in the world, and I am the headwaiter, the created being closest to Him. I am meant to serve Him in the best way possible.”

That’s how it was in the world, for the course of a few hours. The heavens were His throne, the earth was His footstool, the birds sang in honor of the “*Chasan*,” and *Adam HaRishon* was his “headwaiter.”

Then the *Nachash* came along and said, “So, G-d is the “*Chasan*,” is He? Just eat from the *Eitz HaDa’as*, and then *you* will be like G-d. Then *You* will be the “*chasan*”!

This was the sin of *Adam HaRishon*. So to speak, he said to *Hashem*, “Move over, please. You’re not the *Chasan* anymore. From now on, It’s me. The whole world revolves around *me*, and is meant to serve *me*. And *You*, *Hashem*, are the Headwaiter. You – the G-d in Heaven – will serve me. You will give me life, health, *parnassah* and everything else I need. The roles are switched now.”

Before Adam sinned, the Kingdom of Heaven had ten *sefiros*. Everything was *Hashem’s*: *chesed*, *gevurah*, *tiferes* and all the rest. Evil was only one point. But after the sin, the Kingdom of Heaven switched places with the kingdom of the *klipah*.

Let’s understand what this Side of Evil is: it is

*avodah zarah*. About *avodah zarah*, Chazal say:

What is the “strange god” that is inside man’s body? It is the *yetzer hara*.<sup>5</sup>

And what is the *yetzer hara*? Pharaoh (who embodied the *yetzer hara*) said about himself:

לִי יֵאֲרִי וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִנִּי – The Nile is Mine, and I made Myself.<sup>6</sup>

The *yetzer hara* says: I am G-d. I am the center of the universe. Evil took ten *sefiros*, meaning, “The world is mine,” and *Malchus Shamayim* was transformed into one point.

However, we need to understand that a man possessed by such a *yetzer hara* does not ignore G-d’s existence. On the contrary, G-d “serves” him. G-d gives him life and *parnassah* and everything else he needs.

Indeed, G-d serves him, but not for “free.” Every morning, this man needs to *daven shacharis*, and throughout the rest of the day he continues to “pay” G-d for each food and each pleasure that G-d gives him. He must recite 100 *berachos* every day. This man feels that he is the “*chasan*,” and G-d is, so to speak, the “Waiter” serving him.

This great switch took place due to Adam’s sin (and also due to *Cheit Ha’eigel*, which resembled Adam’s sin, as we mentioned above).

## The Great Switch

When *Beis HaMikdash* stood, a Jew who entered its gates felt clearly that the whole reality of the entire world is meant only to glorify *Hashem*. “The heavens are My throne and the earth is My footstool.”

Now let’s consider what happened after the *Churban*.

According to the metaphor above, in which the *chasan* is the center of everything, it comes out as follows. What food is served at a wedding?

5 Shabbos 105b.

6 Yechezkel 29:3.

4 Yeshayahu 66:1.

Obviously, it depends a lot on the *chasan*. If the *chasan* comes from a well-to-do family, the tables will be laden with the finest delicacies, and there will be plenty of everything. Whereas if the *chasan* is poor and barely survives from day to day, the wedding cuisine is going to be simple, and limited in quantity.

When *Hashem* is the “*Chasan*,” when He takes the center, everything is provided in an abundance we can’t even imagine. It fits *Hashem*’s standards, which are infinitely great.

Here’s a little example, to give us some idea of the abundance that was in the time of *Beis HaMikdash*. The example is getting *nachas* from one’s children. When *Beis HaMikdash* stood, all the children were on the level of *Tannaim*! If someone had five children, he had five *Tannaim* at home. One like R. Akiva, one like Hillel, one like R. Yochanan ben Zakkai... Can we imagine what kind of *nachas* this was?

In the days when first *Beis HaMikdash* was at the height of its glory, there was no scarcity of *parnassah*, there were no childless women, and there weren’t other kinds of suffering either. The closeness to *Hashem* was so great that it brought an indescribable abundance of blessing. Just as you can’t explain to a blind person what colors are, and what beautiful landscapes are, so it was with *Hashem*’s world.

But when the Jewish people sinned and *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, man no longer saw *Hashem* as the center of the world, but rather saw himself at the center. And when man is the “*chasan*,” then the “refreshments” to be served will go accordingly – sicknesses, calamities and destructions.

## The Point of Evil

When the world was in its glory and *Malchus Shamayim* had ten *sefiros* – that is, when it took up everything – evil had only one point. There was a single point, called “*nekudas hakesef*.” This means a point that was so deep, it had the power to captivate a person’s heart. A person had

such desire (*kisufim*) for it that all the goodness showered on him by *Hashem* seemed as nothing to him.

This point of evil, although it was just one point, was capable of causing the *Churban*. We will explain this through three examples.

One example is from *Dor HaMidbar*. The Jewish people ate manna, bread from heaven that tasted like whatever they wished. However, there were a few flavors it was missing, among them garlic and onion, since those foods are bad for pregnant and nursing women.<sup>7</sup> Now, the Jewish people had everything in the *Midbar*. They lacked nothing. They could taste all flavors in the manna. But it was not enough for them. They wanted garlic and onion, too!

Another example: Haman, at the height of his career as viceroy of King Achashverosh, was not lacking at all in riches and honor. He wasn’t lacking in family, either. Haman himself tells of “the glory of his riches and his many children and all grandeur that the king bestowed upon him, and how he elevated him above the ministers and the king’s servants.”<sup>8</sup>

However, Haman still grumbles: “And all this is worthless to me every time I see Mordechai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”<sup>9</sup>

The third example is a modern one. A certain doctor remarked that when he was in medical school, he met a sick man for whom cigarettes were absolute poison, but still, this man couldn’t quit smoking.

“The first time I met him,” the doctor recounted, “was when he was wheeled out of the operating room after his leg had been amputated due to cigarette smoking. A year later they amputated his second leg. After another year they amputated an arm. And the whole while, he couldn’t stop smoking, until he died.”

A person has everything. He has all the flavors

7 Yoma 75a, Rashi ad loc.

8 Esther 5:11-13.

9 Ibid.

in the manna, all the honor and riches in the empire, all the chances to live. But there is one single point that he is missing, and that point eats away at him and consumes all the goodness he is blessed with.

This is what led to Adam's sin.

*Adam HaRishon* was reclining in *Gan Eden*. The ministering angels were roasting meat for him, and pouring him wine.<sup>10</sup>

He had all the trees in the world there. But all this did not satisfy him. There was one point – the *Eitz Hada'as* – that he felt he must have. And this point is what caused everything to change so frightfully.

The Jewish people at the time of *Beis HaMikdash* had everything. Yet, all this did not satisfy them. They lacked one point, and this point brought on the most terrible destruction.

What caused this *Churban*? Man became the center of the world. He started to think that the whole world is his. He wakes up in the morning and feels himself before everything else. He feels tired, so he will sleep a little more... there is a *minyan* also at nine... but if he *davens* at nine, he will be late to *kollel*. So what does he do? He gets up for the 8:30 *minyan* and takes some shortcuts in his *tefilah*.

There are other people who wake up in the morning and don't feel themselves. A mother who wakes up to the cry of a two-month-old baby does not feel herself at all. She hurries to get up because there is someone who needs her. She doesn't belong to herself; she belongs to the baby.

This is the idea of *lehisgaber ka'ari*, "to get up in the morning with the strength of a lion," as the *Shulchan Aruch* tells us to do in the first *halachah*. A lion gets up in the morning because

he knows the world doesn't belong to him. He serves *Hashem*.

This is what *Churban HaBayis* caused, as described in our terms: a person gets up in the morning and thinks only about himself. He eats and drinks. He sleeps. He also *davens* and learns, so he will get *Olam Haba*. And *Hashem* is there to serve him and supply him with all his needs.

However, even after we have fallen into this sorry state, even after the *churban*, when evil has taken up everything, the Arizal says that a person can still find the point of *kedushah*. And the point of *kedushah* is *nekudas hakesef*, the "point of longing."

We spoke above about the foolish patient who couldn't give up smoking even though he knew he was literally killing himself. It is because he was riveted on one point. In the same way, a person can desire the point of *kedushah*, despite it all. He can raise himself up above the *klipos* that fill the world. He can desire *Hashem*, Who is the Radiance of the world, Whose palate is sweet, Who is all delight, for He created everything.

And how does a person get to this point of *kedushah*? By means of *da'as*. Evil doesn't have *daas*, but *kedushah* does.

Through *da'as*, through understanding, we bring up the compelling question: What is the world like, now that man has become the "*chasan*"? And what was the world like when Hashem was the "*Chasan*"?

When we see all these things, when we see the shocking difference between a world with *Hashem* at the center and a world with man at the center, there is one thing that is expected of us: to cry. To call out to *Hashem*: "When will You come back to Your world? When will all the problems get solved, when will all the troubles stop?"

Here is the door to our salvation. ●

<sup>10</sup> *Sanhedrin* 59b.