



# 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

## Modest Protection

ולא יראה בך ערות דבר ושב מאחריך. (דברים כג, טו)

**Lest He see something immodest in you, and turn away from you. (*Devarim* 23:15)**

The Chofetz Chayim pointed out that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* dwells among the Jewish people even if they are full of sins, because it says:

“He Who dwells with them in the midst of their impurity.”<sup>1</sup>

His *Shechinah* is always with them. However, the Chofetz Chayim goes on to say, there is one factor that causes *Hashem* to remove His *Shechinah* from us, and it is stated in our *pasuk*. ולא יראה בך ערות – “Lest He see something immodest in you, and turn away from you.” Immodesty causes the *Shechinah* to depart. And when *Hashem's* Presence is gone, we also lose protection from dangers. It is as if *Hashem* says to us: you will have to manage on your own.

Yet, we need to know and remember that there is

a basic rule in *Yiddishkeit* that states that *Hashem's* trait of goodness is much greater than His trait of punishment. It is 500 times greater!

So far, we have only learned regarding the trait of Divine punishment that *Hashem* repays a person in kind (*midah k'neged midah*). How do we know this is true also of the trait of Divine goodness? We may derive it based on the principle that the trait of Divine goodness is 500 times greater than the Divine trait of punishment.

About the trait of punishment, it is written פֶּקֶד עוֹן אָבוֹת עַל בָּנִים וְעַל בָּנֵי בָנִים – “He visits the sin of the parents on the children until the third and fourth generation.”<sup>2</sup> And about the trait of goodness, it is written וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלָפִים

<sup>1</sup> *Vayikra* 16:16.

<sup>2</sup> *Shemos* 20:5.

– “He does kindness for two thousand [generations].”<sup>3</sup> From this we learn that the trait of goodness is 500 times greater than the trait of punishment.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* v. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Tosefta, Sotah* 4.

A *mitzvah* has a very great influence. It influences 500 times more than an *aveirah* does. So if a woman goes around dressed modestly, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* protects and guards her 500 times more than the damage that could be caused by a lack of modesty. *Tzni'us*, the closeness to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* it engenders, brings great protection. ●

## Two Ways to Remember

זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָךְ עַמְלֶק בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם: (דברים כה, יז)

**Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you left Egypt. (*Devarim* 25:17)**

There are two different words in Hebrew for remembering: *זכירה* and *פקידה*. The Ramchal writes that *Yetzi'as Mitzrayim* had two stages. First was *פקידה* and then came *זכירה*. We will call these two concepts “recalling” and “remembering,” respectively.

After the first phase, in which *Hashem* “recalled” the Jewish people’s suffering in *Mitzrayim*, their harsh *galus* still continued. This was because “recalling” is not the same as “remembering.” “Recalling,” *פקידה*, means that *Hashem* takes note of the situation and plans what to do, but He does not act differently due to “recalling” alone. This is why the harsh exile in Egypt continued, despite *Hashem* “recalling” their suffering.

“Remembering,” *זכירה*, means that *Hashem* doesn’t just take note of the situation and make appropriate plans. *Hashem*’s “remembering” means that the past is just as alive and real to Him as is the present, and He now acts according to His remembrance.

For instance, on Rosh Hashanah, our “remembrance” comes before *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and He acts in accordance with it. He allots life. He sits and writes down everything that will happen during the course of the year.

Now let’s talk about “remembering” Amalek. The Rambam writes as follows about this *mitzvah*:

To remember what Amalek did to us, and to hate him at all times.... And to encourage the people to hate him to the point that we do not forget our hatred of him.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the *mitzvah* is not just to recall what happened, what Amalek did, but to live according to it, to act according to this remembrance. To feel how much we hate Amalek and how important it is to wipe him out.

Now, Amalek was not just a person who went

<sup>1</sup> Rambam, *Sefer Hamitzvos*, Positive *Mitzvah* 189.

### לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

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by that name. He is the very essence of evil and the source of wickedness and impurity. When the Egyptians were drowning in *Yam Suf*, the angels in heaven did not sing their songs of joyous praise to *Hashem*. It was not a happy moment to *Hashem* when the Egyptians were perishing because the Egyptians were merely people who were evil. But Amalek is much more than that. He is the very essence of evil. The Masters of *Avodah* say that from this *mitzvah* we learn to hate all the sources of evil and impurity, as they are the “Amalek” of our times.

In our generation, if we want to hate the essence of evil, we should hate the improper newspapers and books. We need to hate the radio. They are the tools that served to destroy the Jewish people! R. Chayim of Brisk wrote that a hundred years ago, there was one people that served *Hashem*. There was no secularism. What was the tool that made the *Haskalah*? It was the improper books that spread an evil spirit throughout the Jewish people. Those books full of nonsensical ideas about atheism and rejection of Torah destroyed all the uniqueness of the Jewish people, who are the holy people.

We need to hate all these tools and not look at a newspaper or book that is unkosher. We should not turn on the radio, not even incidentally, because these are the tools that destroyed the Jewish people. This is the way to fulfill “Remember what Amalek did to you” in our generation.

R. Chayim Shmuelevitz recounted that his father would look for these improper books and burn them, and this brought him great joy. When people said to him, “There are thousands more like them,” he would respond, “It’s *kefirah*, it’s *avodah zarah*!” Since he hated these books so much, he relished each time he merited “uprooting” an *avodah zarah*.

A Jew told me that a number of years ago, there was a store in Meah Shearim that sold improper books. The bookseller sat and recited *Tehillim* all day, and while he was doing so, *bachurim* came in and read those books. This Jew told me that you can’t imagine how many *yarmulkes* were taken off in that store, and how many of those *bachurim* went off the Torah way.

This is the *rish’us* of Amalek that we need to hate in our times. ●

## PARSHA TOPIC

## Clean Heart

וְנִשְׁמַרְתָּ מִכָּל דְּבַר רָע. (דברים כג, י)

**You shall guard yourself for all evil. (*Devarim* 23:10)**

**From this R. Pinchas ben Yair derived that a man should not have improper thoughts by day, lest he have an impure emission at night. (*Kesubos* 46a)**

### Your Holy Heart

*Sefer Nefesh Hachayim* writes awesome things about the importance of keeping our thoughts pure and holy. This is what he writes, at first quoting the *Zohar*. [In the following quote, the heart is

considered the place where thoughts take place.]

When *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created man, He designed him in similarity to the Heavenly Glory. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* placed his strength and power in the middle of his body,

where the heart is.

The *Kodesh Kodoshim* in the *Beis Hamikdash* is the heart of the whole world. *Hashem* dwells in the middle of the world, and every being receives its sustenance from it. (Similarly, the heart of man is the center of man, and all his limbs and organs derive their energy from there.)

Since this is so, (that the *Zohar* says that the heart of man is the *Kodesh Kodoshim*,) when a man's thoughts stray to something impure, such as adultery, he is thereby bringing a harlot, a symbol of arousing Divine vengeance, into the heavenly, awesome *Kodesh Kodoshim* in the upper worlds. He thereby strengthens the forces of impurity and the *Sitra Achara* in the upper *Kodesh Kodoshim*.

(The severe result caused by this impure thought) is much greater than that caused by the increase in the power of impurity brought about by Titus, (the Roman emperor who destroyed the Second Temple,) when he had a harlot lie down in the *Kodesh Kodoshim* of the earthly *Beis Hamikdash*. (This is because the evil deeds of Titus took place only in the lower *Beis Hamikdash*, while a man's thoughts have the same effect, but in the upper *Beis Hamikdash*.)

And so it is with any sin that a Jew brings into his heart. It is like bringing in a foreign fire. This applies to sins such as anger or other evil desires. It is truly a case of **בֵּית קִדְשֵׁנוּ** – “The House of holiness and glory... was given to be burnt by fire.”<sup>1</sup> (It literally burns the *Beis Hamikdash*.) May the All-Merciful One save us from this.

This is as *Hashem* said to the prophet Yechezkel: **אֶת מְקוֹם כְּסֵאִי וְגוֹי אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁכֵּן שָׁם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעוֹלָם וְלֹא יִטְמָאוּ עוֹד בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁם קִדְשִׁי וְגוֹי בְּזוּתָם וְגוֹי עֲתִיד יִרְחֶקוּ אֶת זְנוּתָם וְשִׁכְנָתִי לְעוֹלָם בְּתוֹכָם** – “The place of My Throne... on which I will dwell there in the midst of the

Jewish people forever, and the House of Yisrael shall no longer render impurity to My Name... through their harlotry. Now they will distance themselves from their harlotry, and I will dwell in their midst forever.”<sup>2,3</sup>

This is what *Sefer Nefesh Hachayim* says about improper thoughts and the effect they have. Let's focus on a certain point that emerges from this teaching.

## Pure Thoughts Build Beis Hamikdash

It is very important to know that if *Sefer Nefesh Hachayim* says that having improper thoughts is like bringing impurity into *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, then if such thoughts entered a person's mind, and he does things to get them out of his mind, it is like he removed impurity from *Kodesh Hakodoshim* and purified *Beis Hamikdash*. He built *Beis Hamikdash*!

In connection with this, I will quote a Chassidic saying from one of the great *Rebbes*. He said that Chassidim think that the *Rebbes*, who are great *tzaddikim*, don't have improper thoughts. The truth is that they do have improper thoughts, and sometimes even really bad ones. The difference between the *Rebbe* and his Chassidim is that when an improper thought comes into the mind of the *Rebbe*, he banishes it with such a fire that this act refines the whole world and brings *kedushah* and *taharah* to the world.

*Chazal* say<sup>4</sup> that one of the things that a person can't get away from every day is sinful thoughts. It's a fact of life.

We definitely need to try as hard as we can to keep our minds free from improper thoughts. But at the same time, it is a special *avodah* to know how to handle it when such thoughts float in. When a person knows how to handle such a situation, when he gets rid of impure thoughts, he is performing an act of *kedushah* and *taharah*, an act of greatness, that

<sup>1</sup> *Yesheayahu* 64:10.

<sup>2</sup> *Yechezkel* 43:7-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Nefesh Hachayim* 1:4.

<sup>4</sup> *Bava Basra* 164b.

is quite capable of building his whole personality.

We live in a generation that has harder *nisyonos* than anything that ever was before. The thoughts that come into our heads are terrible. But we need to know that if a person manages to get this under control, if he knows how to deal with it, he is a great and holy person. And the main thing is when an unwanted thought comes, don't keep thinking it. Try to get rid of it.

The worst thing with these matters is to get down and despondent. Don't let it get you down. You should always remember this important principle, that just as bad thoughts bring impurity into the *Kodesh Kodoshim*, so when you try to clean up your thoughts and get rid of the bad ones, you are actually purifying the *Kodesh Kodoshim*. You are doing the same thing that the *Chashmonaim* did for *Beis Hamikdash* after they defeated the Greeks. They renovated the *Beis Hamikdash*.

The Masters of *Mussar*, whenever they would come to this subject, would always mention the positive side as well. לעולם מידה טובה מרובה ממידת פורענות – “The trait of Divine goodness is always greater than the trait of Divine punishment.”<sup>5</sup> It is indeed very important for us, when we learn about how serious it is to commit *aveiros* and what great punishments they entail, to keep in mind the rich reward and tremendously good fortune of he who steers clear of these *aveiros*.

## Just Stay Away

The big rule, the first rule, the fundamental rule in handling this whole issue is to look for ways not to get into the situation in the first place.

The biggest *tzaddik* who ever lived in our world was *Yosef Hatzaddik*. He was the *tzaddik yesod olam*. This means that the whole world stood on his merit.

<sup>5</sup> *Sotah* i11a.

He supported the whole world.

There was another *tzaddik* who supported the whole world, and that was Noah. נח איש צדיק – “Noah was a righteous man.”<sup>6</sup> But it was a very small and limited world. At that time, all that remained of the world was *Teivas Noah*.

*Yosef* was the *tzaddik*, the foundation on which the whole world stood. And even so, when *Yosef Hatzaddik* faced a *nisayon*, it says וינס – “He fled.”<sup>7</sup> He simply ran away. Even though he was the greatest *tzaddik* who ever was, he still needed to escape the place of test and trial. And if he hadn't escaped, he could not have withstood the *Yetzer Hara*.

This teaches us that the great principle in keeping up one's *kedushah* is simply not to be where the trouble is.

There is no better barrier to lust than closing one's eyes.<sup>8</sup>

Don't go to all sorts of places, don't go into those little shops that display those magazines. Don't even get close to them.

In general, a person needs to train his eyes not to look everywhere. Let's say you are walking down the street and there are open windows. Don't peek inside as you are walking by. Don't try to see what people are doing inside their homes. If you are walking up the stairwell in an apartment building, and someone's door is open, just look aside. Don't peek into their home. Besides the matter of *tzniyus*, it simply isn't nice. It's not *derech eretz* to peek inside people's homes.

This is the first rule: keep away from where the *nisyonos* are. I am not talking about high *madreigos*. I am talking about very basic things that each one of us can and should do. ●

<sup>6</sup> *Bereishis* 6:9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* 39:12.

<sup>8</sup> *Sefer Chassidim* 9.