



Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFKA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

In memory of R' Shmuel Shmelka ben HaRav Moshe Kizelnik z"l

תשפ"ה

שמיני

פרשת

A REAL LIFE INSURANCE POLICY

After the sudden death of Nadav and Avihu, the posuk tells us that Moshe addressed Aharon and his remaining sons, Elazar and Isamar. The words 'his remaining sons' seem to be unnecessary, but Chazal tell us that really death was decreed on all of Aharon's children but the merit of Moshe's tefilah helped save Elazar and Isamar.

Yet Chazal tell us why Nadav and Avihu were punished and, presumably, this means that Elazar and Isamar were not guilty of the same violations. One the reasons given is because Nadav and Avihu didn't get married and have children. While it seems that they were in fact faulted for this and they were punished because of it, HaRav Shimon Schwab zt"l posits that perhaps they didn't get married out of a tremendous desire to study Torah, like Ben Azai who never got married. There was no sin on their part and they were not faulted for their decision, and were only punished because it was decreed that Aharon's son should die. Really, the same was decreed on Elazar and Isamar as well, except that they were married with children who were not really included in the decree. Although they too would have lost their lives as part of the decree on Aharon, Moshe's tefilah helped accomplish that the decree should be half abolished, and so it was decided in shomayim, to spare the lives of Aharon's sons who whose families would be more impacted. In short, it wasn't the fact that Nadav and Avihu didn't get married that they were killed, but rather the lives of their brothers were spared because they were married.

It is difficult to know what our individual mission is in life, but we often have clues and can guess. What we can't know, is what our merits in life are, and it is very possible and likely that way we impact others is the reason why were brought down to the world and is the merit for our continued sustenance and blessings. We often like to try to make things easier for ourselves and opt out of difficult situations and relationships but it might very well be that the challenges we have in impacting others is our greatest merit, as the seforim ha'kedoshim tell us that there is no greater merit than doing chesed for others and zikui ha'rabim. If we extend ourselves more for others, we will bring merit and beracha to ourselves.

תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: עבירה מטמטמת לבו של אדם, שנאמר: "ולא תטמאו בהם ונטמאתם בהם", אל תקרי 'ונטמאתם', אלא: "ונטמטם". תנו רבנן: "(אל) תטמאו בהם ונטמאתם בהם", אדם מטמא עצמו מעט — מטמאין אותו הרבה. מלמטה — מטמאין אותו מלמעלה. בעולם הזה — מטמאין אותו לעולם הבא. (יומא לט.)

When a person eats forbidden foods, not only does it make him tamei, but since the letter alef is absent from 'v'nitneisam' we are to understand that it also stops up a person's heart and he has difficulty understanding Torah and connecting to spiritual matters. There is also a shadow effect; when a person sins by exposing himself to tumah, shomayim responds by allowing more tumah to come his way. Of course, midah tova merubah, and one who seeks out kedusha will receive a positive response from shomayim by being able to easily attain greater levels of kedusha and tahara.

TORAH TEMIMAH



From the desk of
the Rosh Kollel...

Welcome to all our new subscribers!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Pesach campaign! Your help enabled so many to enjoy their Pesach seder and the entire yom tov!

Exciting things are happening in the kollel! - Now well into our 16th year since the kollel was first established, the kollel and its beis medrash continue to be a real asset to the community on so many levels. We have reached the final stages of organizing and cataloging our vast otzar ha'seforim (around 3,000 volumes). This new system will not only improve learning in the kollel, but with benefit the broader community as well.

THE SEFER IS OUT! - In honor of reaching our 16th year, I have published the Shabbos derashos on the haftarah and parsha which were said within the walls of our beis medrash. This is a second volume to the edition published upon our 10th anniversary five years ago. To find out how to get your own copy, email me at: rabbi@torahkollel.com

The current situation worldwide is still frightening. Please increase your commitment to Torah study, tzedaka and chesed, and of course daven for all the captives, soldiers and the general situation.

From the early hours of the morning, until late at night, the beis medrash is and active asset to the community at large. Mosdos Avahas Yehonoson - "Torah Kollel" continues to impact on the community at large in many ways and exists thanks to the benevolence and generosity of its supporters around the world. Consider having a part of this tremendous zechus by sponsoring a sefer, a day, week or month of the Torah Kollel. Contact us at info@torahkollel.com for further information.

- Rabbi David Lewin

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Sugyas ha' Sedra

TURKEYS, BISON AND ZEBU

Although the Torah gives very clear identifying features ('simanim') as to what constitutes a kosher animal, when it comes to birds, the Torah merely lists 24 prohibited species. All other birds are kosher. It should be noted however, that each of these 24 species has hundreds of subspecies which are also prohibited by the Torah and one cannot just assume that an unknown bird is from the permitted species. Moreover, since the identity of many of these twenty-four birds are unknown to us, we only permit consumption of birds about which we have a clear tradition that they are permitted.

Nevertheless, Chazal tell us that there are four signs by which one can identify whether a bird is permitted or not. A species that is tahor (permitted) has: (a) an extra finger (which is either larger or positioned above the others - this is a dispute among the rishonim); (b) it has a crop; (c) its gizzard can be peeled; and (d) it doesn't attack its prey (the definition of which is also disputed by the rishonim). Theoretically, if a bird has all four simanim, it would be permitted, however since the definition of these signs is somewhat unclear, we only rely on identifying a species as permitted if we have a tradition that it is. Prohibited species usually also have some of these four simanim and permitted species don't necessarily have all four of them either.

In earlier generations, the poskim have addressed the kosher status of turkey. While it appears to be like a chicken, it seems clear that it is not a large variety of chicken, and since it is relatively a new food to the Jewish world - since there was no preexisting mesorah to eat it on American shores (where it originated from), it should be prohibited. Yet, for generations, Jews have enjoyed turkey, save for a few families who were adamant not to eat it. On what basis, do they do so?

Some sources indicate that Jews in India ate turkey and we can continue to do so based on their tradition, although it is questionable if they were referring to the turkey. Additionally,

according to the Rema, we do not automatically accept the mesorah of one community as a basis to eat that meat in a community that doesn't have such a mesorah. The Netziv however understands that although this is true and we would have never permitted the turkey in the first place, we don't invoke the stringency of the Rema and forbid meat of a bird which has already been assumed and established as kosher unless we have reason to believe otherwise (such as having confirmed signs of tumah). It is on this basis that most Ashkenazi Jews enjoy turkey today.

When it comes to animals however, the Torah is very clear: If an animal has split hooves and chews its cud, it is kosher. Many animals do neither and only four have one of these signs and are forbidden. So it would seem. However, the Shach (Y.D. 61) makes a comment that has created doubt about this as well. Animals are divided into two kinds: "beheimos" (domesticated) and "chayos" (wild animals). One of the major differences between the two is that the cheilev (certain fats) of a beheima are prohibited and that of a chaya may be eaten without concern. There is much discussion in the rishonim and Beis Yosef as to how to identify an animal as a chaya or beheima and the Shach comments that we can only rely upon and eat those animals about which we have a definite tradition.

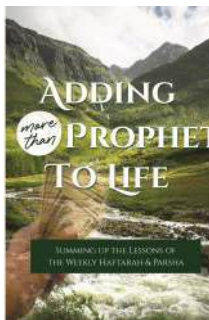
On the surface, it would seem that the Shach merely means that unless we have a tradition, one may not assume an animal is wild and thereby permit its cheilev, simply by relying on simanim alone. Indeed, this is the Pri Megadim's understanding of his words because after all, an animal that has split hooves and chews its cud is kosher without doubt. The Chochmas Adam however, understands that the Shach means to forbid eating any animal about which we don't have a mesorah as being kosher. This would include bison and the zebu, a cow with humps which is the source of much of the meat slaughtered in South America. The Aruch Hashulchan and the Chazon Ish also concur with this understanding of the Shach and accordingly, the custom of mehadrin hechsherim in Eretz Yisroel is to avoid such species. Many fine hechsherim around the world do however certify these as kosher since the Pri Megadim's understanding of the Shach seems simple and many communities in Europe accepted the Pri Megadim's words as authoritative in all areas of halacha. Furthermore, there were several established communities in South America that did have a mesora permitting the zebu.

SPARKS OF SHABBOS

A person is comprised of a physical being and a spiritual soul and throughout the week he is pulled by his physical needs and desires, and to a certain degree, a need for spiritual accomplishment as well. On Shabbos however, he is pulled by a more intense desire to get closer to Hashem. This drive and thirst for spiritual matters is driven by his neshama yeseira, the extra neshama we receive every Shabbos. Our desires for physicality are numbed. Our job, explains the Nesivos Sholom, is to try to retain our Shabbos desires of closeness to Hashem into the rest of the week, as alluded to by the words "V'shamru Bnei Yisroel es ha'Shabbos".

L'maaseh...

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l once noticed a twelve year old boy rebuking a bochur who was several years older than him. Although the boy's message was true it was certainly out of place and therefore wrong for him to give musar to an older yeshiva bochur. R' Moshe realized that there would be no point in correcting the boy's behavior because clearly, he was too young and immature to grasp the error of his ways. Fifteen years later, Rav Moshe found himself alone together with this boy and recounted the incident, drawing his attention to the inappropriateness of his actions. The now twenty-seven year old not only realized the error of his ways, but saw how R' Moshe not only didn't forget anything, but waited until the right moment to bring up the topic so that he could seek the forgiveness of bochur who was so many years his senior.



DIVREI HA'NAVI - ADDING PROPHET TO LIFE

From a cursory reading of the pesukim it seems that Nadav and Avihu were punished for bringing an eish zarah - a foreign fire - on the mizbayach. Yet, Chazal offer several other infractions for which they were held accountable. Either they ruled in halachic matters in the presence of Moshe Rabeinu, or they failed to get married and start a family. One medrash even describes how they walked behind their father and uncle, Aharon and Moshe, wondering when these two old men would die so that they could take over their leadership roles, and the meforshim struggle to reconcile the different opinions with each other and in light of the words of the posuk.

We might ask then, what is wrong with the simple understanding of the posuk; that they brought a foreign fire on the mizbayach when they weren't commanded to do so? Although he doesn't address this directly, Rabeinu Tam argues that the posuk cannot be taken literally since Chazal in fact tell us that even though the fire on the mizbayach descends from heaven, it is a mitzva to light an "ordinary" fire there as well. Yet the posuk seems to hold them accountable for doing so. Because of this, Rabeinu Tam posits that the Nadav and Avihu were in fact faulted for offering a foreign fire, because it wasn't time yet. This was in the midst of the inauguration of the mishkan and the entire avodah fell on Aharon's shoulders, which meant that they weren't supposed to be involved, yet.

Often we make assumptions or reach conclusions in avodas Hashem and we have proof that we are in fact right, but we need to assess if the timing is right or perhaps our actions are out of context. This seems to be a recurring theme throughout our haftarah:

The medrash tells us that there are two things which appear to be dangerous and so Hakadosh Boruch Hu had to demonstrate that they are not inherently dangerous, just potentially so under varying circumstances. The first of these two is the ketores. It seemed to prove fatal for Nadav and Avihu and later to Korach and his associates. In order to dispel this fallacy Hashem utilized the ketores as the segula of choice to end the mageifa in the times of Pinchas. The other misunderstood potency is that of the aron. The Plishtim suffered when they had it, as did the people of Beit Shemesh. In our haftarah, Uza reaches out to secure it and dies on the spot. In order to show that it wasn't the aron per se which had lethal powers, Oved Edom and his family had tremendous beracha when they hosted the aron, because it is all a matter of context.

When the aron is returned to the Jewish people, Dovid HaMelech went out to the street and danced uncontrollably. His wife Michal, didn't look upon his behavior favorably and openly criticized him for it. This might have been out of line, but Dovid's response seems more out of place if you think about it; he not only defends himself by arguing that it is in the honor of Hashem, but tells her that "Hashem chose me to lead the Jewish people over your father, Shaul". His point was valid, but it seems like a rather childish response.

The Musar HaNeviim cites the Kochav Mi'Yaakov who explains that Dovid had a very clear message to deliver: The reason why Shaul was stripped of his malchus was because he failed to kill out Amaleik. In his defense, Shaul explained that the people wanted to preserve the animals in order to offer them as korbanos. At the root of this however, was that Shaul had misplaced humility. Chazal tell us that a talmid chacham has to have an eighth of an eighth of gaavah, and there is a place for arrogance. Yet, when he pursued Dovid and sought to kill him, Shaul exhibited the ability to stand up for his own honor, but that wasn't the time to do so. In short, Shaul didn't know when to stand up for his own honor and when to desist. Dovid, on the other hand, was cognizant that he danced before Hashem, and this was therefore not a time to worry about his own kavod.

Towards the end of the haftarah Dovid decides that it isn't right for Hashem to "dwell in a tent" while he lives in a permanent edifice. Set on building a permanent home for the Shechina, he consults with Nossan HaNavi who concurs that it is a good idea, but that night, Hakadosh Boruch Hu comes to Nossan and tells him that Dovid can't be the one to do so, but his son Shlomo, will in fact build the Beis HaMikdash. The Ramad Vali explains that the reason why Dovid couldn't build the Beis HaMikdash was because he always acted with tremendous zerizus, and a Beis HaMikdash has to be more settled. Shlomo, whose name is "sholom lo" - peace for him - was more suited for the job. Clearly, the message was that Dovid wasn't at fault, just the timing and context wasn't right.

There is a right time and place for everything. Every midah in the Torah has its place. Even gaavah and anger have limited space in avodas Hashem. It is said in the name of the Brisker Rav that 'kefira' is also a midah and its place is when it comes to helping someone in need that one shouldn't dismiss his responsibility arguing that Hashem will take care of the poor man's parnasa etc. May we be zocheh to understand when, where, and how to apply every midah, in the correct context and measure!



Every Jew goes through trials and challenges throughout his lifetime, and while we cannot know Hashem's full reasoning for anything, one definite aspect of any difficulty is that it propels us into tefilah. While it true that one can daven and thank Hashem for the good he or she receives, few and far between are those who are propelled into the highest levels of tefilah because of the good in their lives. Even the avos and imahos were barren and Chazal reveal to us that Hashem made them so in order to inspire them to daven. Certainly then, we can use any challenge as an impetus for prayer and understand that this may be the main reason for it (Adapted from Sha'arim ba'Tefilah, Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus zt"l)