

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



על דשא

AL EI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

In the Blood

דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם
קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם.

Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them, You shall be holy. Because I, Hashem your G-d, am holy (19:2).

We want to be
קדשים. The ability
is ingrained in us;
it is in our blood.
We have the ability
to stand strong
against the
yetzer hara.

Parshas Kedoshim begins with a mandate that we must be holy, and ends (20:27) with the words דמיהם בם - *their blood is upon them*. There is a well-known saying of the Kotzker explaining this: "Blood may spill, and blood it will cost, but we must remain holy." If this is the lesson of this *parshah*, shouldn't the *pesukim* be in the reverse order? First,

the pasuk should tell of the blood, and afterwards, קדשים תהיו.

Sefer Vayikra which discusses *avodah*, both during the times of the Beis Hamikdash, and in our times, begins with the pasuk לה' קרבן - *A man who will bring, from you, a korban to Hashem (1:2)*. The Maggid of Mezritch explains אדם:—when is a person called אדם?—when he brings of himself. דם (blood) represents the animal aspect of every human; it is the driving force behind all that man and beast have in common. How does man distinguish himself over beast; how does he become אדם? By uniting with א, the אלוף של עולם - the Prince of the World, i.e. Hashem. The method for this is יקריב מכם. When a person gives up from his earthly pleasures, thinks about the *Ribono Shel Olam*, and connects with Him—he gains the distinction of אדם.

לא תאכלו על הדם - *Do not eat over the blood (19:26)*. The Gemara (Brachos 10b) explains that this prohibits eating before davening. We mustn't eat before we daven for our blood. The Maggid explains that we must not eat when we are still דם. Before we connect our

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ושפך את דמו וכסהו בעפר.

He shall spill its blood and cover it with dirt (17:13).

We are commanded to cover the blood of wild animals and birds after shechting them. The *Shulchan Aruch*⁴ dictates the *brachah* we are to make before covering the blood: אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על כיסוי - *He sanctified us with His mitzvos, and commanded us to cover blood with dirt*. Generally, the *brachos* made over *mitzvos* do not go into such specific detail. Why does this *brachah* specify the material used for covering the blood?⁵

The *Sfas Emes* explains⁶ that we are thanking Hashem for giving us *mitzvos* which relate even to the dirt. The Midrash tells us, חביבין ישראל - Klal Yisrael is treasured: Hashem gave us *mitzvos* that relate to every facet of the creation, even the dirt which we trample underfoot. Our purpose as Yidden is to reveal the *kedushah* that is hidden in every aspect of the world. We thank and praise Hashem for this opportunity.

The *Sfas Emes* opened the door for us to explain the *nusach* of the *brachah* in this fashion, and we will add some further explanations.

⁴ Yoreh De'ah 28:2.

⁵ Taz.

⁶ Yoreh De'ah.

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physical existence to Hashem, we must not eat. Once we connect with Hashem and we become אֶדָם, we are then permitted to eat.

The *parshah* places קדושים תהיו before דְּמִיָּהֶם בָּם to teach us how to fulfill the mandate of תהיו קדושים. If we first discuss our physical life when there is yet no mention of Hashem, it is impossible to become קדושים. We must give precedence to our connection with Hashem—קדושים תהיו. Once we connect with Hashem we can speak about our blood—דְּמִיָּהֶם בָּם.

כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יֹשְׁבֵיהֶם בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ
– *Do not perform the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled* (18:3). The Makova Rav explains,² when Klal Yisrael accepted the Torah, they were concerned. In Mitzrayim they had withstood many *nisyonos*; maybe they were only able to do so because they did not have the Torah? The Gemara (Sukkah 52a) tells us that the greater a person is, the greater his *yetzer hara* becomes. Maybe now that they were accepting the Torah, they would no longer be able to stand up to the *yetzer hara*? Hashem comforted them, “You dwelled in Mitzrayim.” You lived in Mitzrayim and overcame *nisyonos*. You have it in your blood. Klal Yisrael was vaccinated against the *yetzer hara*—their blood was immune.

² Ateres Moshe.

³ Shem Olam in conclusion.

The Chofetz Chaim writes³ that Hashem brought about modern technological advances to help us recognize deeper truths. The Mishnah (Avos 2:1) teaches that there is an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all our deeds are written in a book. Once technology made it possible to see, hear, and record for future reference everything that happens all over the world, that made it easy to comprehend this truth. If such a thing is possible in the physical world, it must be possible in the spiritual realm as well.

A more recent invention is the mRNA vaccine, which fights illness, not by merely introducing outside material into the body: the mRNA vaccine enables our own cells to create proteins, ultimately stimulating an immune response.

All that happens in the physical world is an allegory for the spiritual realm. Yes, the blood is physical, and powers all our animal drives. Yet also contained in our blood is the fighting power ingrained in us from our parents. This strength will hold us in good stead against the powerful *yetzer hara*.

The Gemara (Bava Basra 11a) tells a story about King Munbaz. There was a famine during his times, and Munbaz generously opened his ancestral treasure houses

to save the people from starvation. His brothers and extended family protested: “Your fathers accumulated much treasure, on top of their fathers’ treasure, and you simply squander it?”

These were royal storehouses, filled with rare treasures his ancestors had collected over many generations. Many items were priceless and utterly irreplaceable. How could he open the doors and throw it all away? Munbaz replied: “My ancestors accumulated treasure in this world, while I accumulate it for the next. My ancestors collected items that do not bear fruit, while I collected treasures that are fruit-bearing.”

Our fathers accumulated immeasurable spiritual treasure, and bequeathed it to us. We will be asked: “Your fathers stored away treasure; why did you squander it?” For a moment of meaningless pleasure? Is that why you destroyed the king’s treasures? What will we answer?

We must always keep in mind קדושים תהיו. We want to be קדושים. The ability is ingrained in us; it is in our blood. We have the ability to stand strong against the *yetzer hara*.

(סעודה שלישית פרשת אחרי קדושים תשכ”ג מאמר ב)

Exalted Earth

1. In Kotzk they found it ironic that people cry over the words in *Unesaneh Tokef*, אָדָם יִסּוּדוֹ מֵעַפֵּר וְסוּפּוֹ לְעַפֵּר – *Man, his foundation is from dirt, and his end is to the*

dirt. Is this cause for crying? If man were made of gold and then turned into mud at the end, that would be a loss. But if man is dirt, what is so sad about his returning to

dirt? In the meantime, he can do countless *mitzvos* and serve Hashem with *chiyus*!

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⁷ The Kotzker *chassid* who repeated this *vort* said, “in the meantime, man can drink a *glezel bronfin*.” Yet this was not the true intention. He was alluding to serving Hashem with *chiyus* and *simchah*.

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Chazal tell us⁸ why birds merit having their blood covered. When Kayin killed Hevel, he was not sure what to do with the body. Hashem sent two birds. One bird killed the other and buried it. Seeing this, Kayin realized that he should do the same with Hevel's body. We mention dirt in the *brachah* of *kisui hadam*, because covering the blood with dirt reminds us of this story.

2. The Gemara (Chullin 83b) states that we must place dirt under the blood, as well as covering the blood with dirt after it is spilled. Rashi writes that the soil under the blood must be loose, because otherwise, the requirement of having dirt under the blood is not fulfilled. The *Smag*⁹ explains the reasoning behind this requirement: The dirt used for *kisui hadam* reminds us of Hashem's promise to Avraham Avinu that his children will be likened to the soil, becoming so many that it would be impossible to count them. This explains the requirement to use loose dirt which can be broken down and counted. We mention dirt in the *brachah* to allude to this blessing of Klal Yisrael.

3. The Gemara (Bava Basra 7b) compares the *maasim tovim* of *tzaddikim* to sand. If sand, which is not as numerous, protects the land from the sea, the actions of *tzaddikim*, which are more numerous, certainly protect them.

In what way are *maasim tovim* similar to sand? Sand is made up of small particles. Each particle by itself may seem insignificant, but when they all come together, they protect against the mighty waves of the ocean. Similarly for *maasim tovim*, if we consider each good deed in isolation. Answering *amein*, smiling at a

friend, overcoming a *nisayon*—we cannot fathom how they could be so great. Yet, the myriad actions of *tzaddikim* combine together and protect them. We make a *brachah* and mention dirt, to emphasize this point.

The Gemara (Shabbos 22a) states that it is forbidden to count money in front of *Chanukah licht*, or to use Sukkah decorations for our personal use. This is derived from a *halachah* regarding the mitzvah of *kisui hadam*. *Kisui hadam* must be done by hand; we cannot do it with our feet because it would lead us to treat the mitzvah disgracefully. Similarly, using *ner Chanukah* and Sukkah decorations for our personal use would make us lose respect for *mitzvos*. Here again, we find that *kisui hadam*, which is done with dirt, is the source for protecting the honor of all *mitzvos*.

We find this in another instance as well. The Gemara (Chullin 87a) relates a story where one person slaughtered an animal and another jumped in and covered the blood. Rabban Gamliel obligated the one who covered the blood to compensate the *shochet* ten gold coins for the theft of his mitzvah. This is puzzling, as he didn't steal anything physical that has monetary value! The Rishonim write that this was a *takanah* of Chazal. We must pay for a mitzvah to demonstrate its importance. This obligation applies to all *mitzvos*. *Kisui hadam*, done with dirt, once again demonstrates the value of *mitzvos*.



Chazal tell us (Brachos 6b, Kiddushin 40a) that one who tried to do a mitzvah,

but was unable, receives reward as if he actually accomplished his goal. If so, asks the *Chasam Sofer*,¹⁰ if someone steals a mitzvah why must he compensate the other party? The person whose mitzvah was stolen doesn't lose out in the slightest! The *Chasam Sofer* answers that although in *shamayim* he will receive his just reward, he still loses the joy of the mitzvah in this world! For this, Rabban Gamliel obligated the thief to pay ten gold coins.

Perhaps we can suggest an alternative answer. One only receives reward for intending to do a mitzvah if no one else did the mitzvah. Once a different person executes the mitzvah, and receives the reward, there is no additional reward remaining. Two rewards are not accorded for the same mitzvah.

Yet there are many well-known stories of *tzaddikim* who, after preparing for *sandeka'us*, were not honored with it, and it was given to someone else. These *tzaddikim* considered this advantageous. One who actually performs a mitzvah is judged on their performance. Who can be sure he would actually perform the mitzvah to its fullest? Yet, one who only planned to do the mitzvah is rewarded as if he fulfilled it completely; there is no performance to judge.

If these *tzaddikim* considered it advantageous to have the mitzvah performed by another person, it cannot be that they did not receive reward. We see that two rewards are in fact bestowed for the same mitzvah—both the one who did the mitzvah, and the one who tried, are rewarded.

(קידושא רבא פירשתי אחרי תשכ"ד)

8 *Tanchuma* Bereishis 10.

9 See *Shach*, Y.D. 28:37.

10 *Chullin*.

Building Bridges

לא תקום ולא תטר אֶת בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ.

You shall not take revenge, and you shall not bear a grudge against the children of your people (Vayikra 19:18).

Why does the pasuk refer to fellow Jews as בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ —*the children of your people*, and not simply עַמֶּךָ —*your people*?

The Gemara (Yoma 23a) illustrates the cases of revenge (*nekamah*) and bearing a grudge (*netirah*): *Nekamah* is where Reuven asks to borrow Shimon's sickle, and Shimon refuses him. The next day, Shimon needs a hatchet and he makes an appeal to Reuven. Reuven retorts: "Just as you did not lend me the sickle, so too, I will not lend you the hatchet." Reuven has taken revenge on Shimon. *Netirah* is where Reuven says, "Sure, take the [shirt]. I am not like you who refuses to lend." Reuven is bearing a grudge against Shimon.

In these examples, it would seem that Reuven has a legitimate complaint against Shimon. First Shimon turned him down, and now he has the chutzpah to ask the same favor! At times, 'Reuven' may have been harmed physically or emotionally, and he cannot bring himself to forgive. He may not take revenge, but he cannot help bearing a grudge. 'Reuven' may convince himself that 'Shimon' is not behaving properly;

he is not included in עַמֶּךָ, and it is permissible to bear a grudge.

The Torah tells Reuven how to view Shimon. Shimon himself may not be acting appropriately, but he is certainly בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ —his fathers certainly acted properly.¹¹ Every Yid has ancestors from earlier generations who were *yerei'im u'shleimim*, and every Yid is a descendant of the *Avos hakedoshim*. When we daven to Hashem, we don't come with our own merits; we come before Him invoking the merit of the *Avos*. Who are we to bear a grudge against another Yid?

With the words אֶת בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ, the Torah adds another angle on how to view Shimon. The word אֶת connotes togetherness. Reuven must realize that he shares a connection to Shimon; they are both sons of the same nation. He must realize that the connection is much greater than the petty misdeed that drove them apart.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 7a) gives analogies to explain the consequences of *machlokes*. Rav Huna compares a *machlokes* to streams formed as the result of an overflowing river. If one immediately seals them, he will be successful, but if he leaves them too long, it will be too late. So too, a *machlokes* must be stopped immediately, before it is too late. Abaye Keshisha compares a

machlokes to a bridge made of slats. At first the slats are not firmly secured, and are a bit shaky. Yet, after many people walk on the bridge, the slats settle in and become sturdy. So too, at the onset of a *machlokes*, it can be shaken easily, but once it has a chance to settle in, it won't budge.

What was Abaye Keshisha adding with his parable? How many examples do we need? Yet we can suggest that Abaye Keshisha was adding something he had learned from life experience.¹² Rav Huna was right; an old *machlokes*, like an established stream, is difficult to stop. But even a mighty river can have a bridge passing over it. Even when there is an old *machlokes*, there is always a way to build a bridge, and make *shalom*.

This is especially pertinent during Sefiras HaOmer. At this time, as we prepare for *Kabbalas HaTorah*, we aim to work on our *middos* and our connection with others. We must put in effort to let go of ill feelings toward our friends. We shouldn't consider this effort futile thinking that there is no way we can conquer this *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* is like a fingernail; if you ignore it, it keeps growing. It is our job to learn to trim it. We must always strive to live peacefully together.

(סעודה שלישית כרשת אחר-קדושים תשפ"ג מאמר ג)

¹¹ *Panim Yafos*.

¹² Perhaps for this reason he was referred to as Abaye Keshisha, Abaye the Elder. It is specifically because he was an elder that he understood this additional point.