

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

*Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

פרשת אחרי מות - קדושים

Volume 8 Issue # 22

לעילוי נשמה

לעילוי נשמת מורנו
הרב משה אליעזר בן הרב ישראל זצ"ל
לכבוד היארצייט ד' אייר

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצוק"ל

פרשת אחרי מות

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כָּל נַפֶּשׁ מִכֶּם לֹא תֹאכַל דָּם (ויקרא י"ז י"ב)

Any person among you may not eat blood.

רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל

The Mishnah at the end of Makkos brings the famous statement of Rabbi Chananya Ben Akashya: מצינו שהם תורה ומצוות לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות. *Hashem* רבי חנניא בן עקשיא אומר רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל *wished to bestow Klal Yisroel with many merits, and He therefore provided them with much Torah and mitzvos.* Rashi explains that this is referring to the many prohibitions that the Torah placed on the eating of *neveilos* and *shekatzim*, foods which a person is naturally repulsed from even without the prohibition. This applies to the *issur* of eating blood as well, about which the Mishnah specifically mentions earlier that a person is repulsed from it. R' Chananya is teaching us that Hashem specifically gave numerous *issurim* upon these substances even though a person would anyways avoid them, because Hashem wants to give abundant reward. As these *mitzvos* are very easy to fulfill, a *yid* is *zoche* through them to *schar* for each and every type of prohibited food that he refrains from eating.

How is There Schar if there is no Effort?

R' Chaim Shmulevitz would ask on this *Ma'amar Chazal*: The system of *schar v'onesh* that Hashem created is a deep, complex, and exact system. There is nothing for free; every iota of *schar* is precisely measured and based upon the exact amount of effort that the person expended in fulfilling a *mitzvah* or refraining from an *aveirah*, (along with the *cheshbonos* of the severity or importance of the *mitzvah* or *aveirah* etc.). Accordingly, if these *issurim* indeed require little or no effort in keeping them because a person would avoid these foods anyways, what can be the great reward extended to those who do not transgress them?

Avoiding Rusty Water Vs Avoiding Poisonous Water

R' Chaim answered this with a *maschal*:

A person naturally avoids drinking unclean water: When one goes to his summer home for the first time in the season, the first flow of water emerging from the tap is usually full of rust. It is discolored, it doesn't taste good, and it is unhealthy. A normal person finds that water unappealing and would not drink it.

A person also avoids drinking poisonous water: If a person would have water in front of him which he knows was drunk from by a poisonous snake, he would not drink it.

In both cases, then, the individual avoids the water. Is there any difference between the rusty water and the poisonous water, insofar as to how a person avoids them?

The answer is, yes, there is a big difference: A person is repulsed by the rusty water, and he indeed won't drink it. But if his friend were to place \$20,000 on the table and say, "If you drink the water, the money is yours," many a person would squelch his feeling of aversion and drink the water. The cash reward is worth more to him. Similarly, if the person would be terribly thirsty, and no other water is available, he may also decide to drink it.

In the case of poisonous water, however, a person wouldn't drink it for all the money in the world, and, no matter how thirsty he may be.

We find a parallel difference in the way a person would behave upon discovering that he already drank the water.

If someone were to accidentally drink from rusty water, he would not be too perturbed. But if it would be poisonous water that he drank, he would be frantic. He would immediately call Poison Control and rush himself to the hospital as fast as he can.

A Yid Treats an Issur Like Poison

This, explains R' Chaim, is the reason why we are rewarded for refraining from drinking blood. True, even without the *issur* placed upon it we would avoid it. But a yid treats an *issur* like poison. It is not simply something unappealing and offensive, but rather something

that must be avoided at all costs, and even in dire situations. Likewise, if he realizes that he mistakenly consumed a drop of blood, he feels terrible. He cries and does *teshuvah*, and he resolves to be extra careful from then on.¹

It is for this difference in attitude towards the issur that a Yid earns his reward. When we treat an issur of the Torah like it is absolutely poisonous and off limits, we are refraining not because of our own aversion but because of the *issur*. If so, there is effort expended in our avoiding it, and it is deserving of reward. Hashem specifically gave us many *mitzvos* of this sort, in order to increase our *schar*.

פרשת קדושים

וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ (ויקרא י"ט י"ז)

Love your fellow man like yourself

Description of the Mitzvah

This parshah contains the all-encompassing *mitzvah* of וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ / *Love your fellow man like yourself*. As Rebbi Akiva teaches us, this *mitzvah* is a חֲלוּט בְּתוֹרָה / *a fundamental principle in the Torah*. In its simple reading, the *passuk* tells us that a Jew must love every other Jew in the same way that he loves himself. However, the *Meforshim* explain that this does not refer to the actual emotion of love a person has for his own self, because it is impossible for a person to replicate that love to another person, and the Torah would not demand of us something which is beyond our capabilities. Rather, this is referring to the love a person has for himself on a practical level, in regard to how he behaves toward himself as a result of his self-love.

¹ Similarly, if there is a doubt as to whether blood was mixed into another food, he will avoid that food as required by *halacha*, unless there is enough of the other food to nullify the blood.

This is what he must replicate toward others; by behaving toward them in the identical fashion².

Mitzvah of Nekama – One Does Not ‘Punish’ Himself

Let us try with Hashem's help to describe what may be a practical illustration of this idea:

A person is among a group of people involved in a discussion. Towards the middle of the conversation, this individual loses his focus for a few moments. He then interjects a question or statement into the conversation, which has absolutely no relevance. He makes himself sound completely foolish.

Or, in another example:

A man is advised by an expert that a certain company's stock prices are going to skyrocket in the near-future, and it would be extremely wise to purchase shares at that point. This person is somewhat lazy, or perhaps he forgets about it, or is too busy. By the time he finally gets to fulfilling the task, the prices have already risen one-hundred-fold and are no longer rising. He lost for himself the opportunity of a lifetime, due to his own laziness or forgetfulness.

In each of these instances, the person is upset with himself – disappointed. ‘How could I have sounded so foolish?’ ‘How could I have been so foolish?’ And yet, immediately after these incidents take place, he will still not go outside on a freezing day without proper protection. Why doesn't he say to himself, ‘No! Go outside without a coat, you deserve it! You must be punished for your foolishness!’ He doesn't act that way because he loves himself, and regardless of how upset with himself he may be, he still will not harm himself.

In the very same way that a person will not ‘punish’ himself, he should act toward others. When a person feels that he has been wronged by someone else, as upset or hurt as he may feel, he should

² עי' רמב"ם הלכות אבל (פרק יד הלכה א) וז"ל שכל מצות אלו מדבריהם הרי הן בכלל ואהבת לרעך כמוך, כל הדברים שאתה רוצה שיעשו אותם לך אחרים, עשה אתה אותן לאחרך, עכ"ל.

not harm the other person. This is the aveirah of נקמה/*revenge* which is written in conjunction with this *mitzvah* of *Ahavas Yisrael*. Through the *mitzvah* of *ahavah*, a person can restrain himself and refrain from taking revenge. He must have a love for the person who harmed him which far outweighs the grievance he feels against him, just as his love for his own self outweighs his own self-disappointment.

Mitzvah of Tochacha – Confronting the Individual Who Wronged Him

Certainly, he should approach the individual who wronged him and confront him. He should say to him, "Look at what you've done to me. See the damage that was caused, and how I was embarrassed!" The other person will try to correct the wrong. Maybe he will apologize and ask for forgiveness.

An example of this chain of events occurring is described in the Torah in Parshas Vayeira, where Avraham Avinu reproves Avimelech for his servants stealing Avraham's wells. Avimelech defended himself, arguing that he didn't know about the matter and was never informed about it previously by Avraham. Avimelech then rectified the wrong, and their friendly relationship continued, even to intensify, as they forged a treaty between themselves.

The Medrash in that *parshah*, in fact, draws this lesson from Avraham Avinu: Reproving one's friend for his wrongdoing **leads to peace**. This is the next *mitzvah* commanded in the Torah after the prohibitions of נקמה/*revenge* and נטירה/*bearing a grudge*: הוכה תוכיח (רמב"ן שם, רמב"ם הל' דעות ו,ו), (פסוק י"ז). As the *Rishonim* clearly explain, this does not only mean to give *mussar* to one is doing *aveiros*, but also to 'argue' and discuss with another who has wronged him.

Following the Torah's Guidance in Fulfilling the Mitzvah

Beside for the Torah giving us the *mitzvah* and ideal of *Ahavas Yisrael*, it also imparted to us guidelines and dictates on how to achieve and maintain the state of *ahavah*. By striving to abide by the guidelines of the Torah and Chazal, we are assured that we will indeed live on an elevated level, where there will be found true love between fellow Jews. It is a beautiful existence in its own right, and through this *Ahavas Yisrael*, we can further reach the levels of unity through which

K'lal Yisrael was found worthy of receiving the Torah. Iy"Y through such unity, we should merit through to be found worthy of the Final Redemption, *bimheirah b'yomeinu*.

All of the above levels are attainable when they are sought after using the Torah's and Chazal's direction and guidance. However, if one seeks to reach these levels using his own wisdom and judgement, he is doomed for failure. Hashem is the One Who created the world, and only Hashem's guidance is what will give clear direction, even regarding relationships between people themselves.

The Ger Who Wanted to Learn the Entire Torah While Standing on One Foot

Let us examine a story in the Gemara (שבט ל"א.), which bs"Y illustrates this point.

A Goy approached Shammai and requested, "Make me into a Ger, on the condition that you will teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot." Shammai showed no patience for this impudent request. "What are you wasting my time for? You have nothing better to do than to bother me with this preposterous request; mocking the Torah and its greatness?!" Shammai summarily expelled him from his home with the stick in his hand.

This Goy then approached Hillel with the same insane request. "Make me a Ger on the condition that you will teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot!" But Hillel did not react impatiently. He said to the Goy, "Sure, I'll be happy to accommodate you! [Here goes:] 'What is hateful to you, don't do to others.' That is the entire Torah, the rest is explanation. Go learn it!" The Goy was satisfied by Hillel's presentation and became a Ger.

On the surface, this story is difficult to understand:

1) What message was this Goy trying to convey by demanding to be taught the Torah while standing on one foot? Apparently, he wished to make a mockery of the Torah, but what specific message was he implying by his outlandish request? Why couldn't he stand on both feet, or sit down?

2) Hillel responded with the dictum of not doing to others what a person would not wish done to himself. This is an offshoot of the mitzvah of *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*, and Hillel chose this mitzvah as an encapsulation of the concept behind all the mitzvos of the Torah. Indeed, Rabbi Akiva said about this mitzvah: "זה כלל גדול בתורה", this is a fundamental principle of the Torah. But Hillel changed the concept from a positive one to a negative one. The passuk says we should love our neighbor, which as we learned from the Rambam, means to do to others what one would want done to himself, whereas Hillel switched the context to a negative one; not to do what one doesn't want done to himself. What was his intention with this change?

3) This Goy was obviously coming to mock and poke fun at Yiddishkeit and the Torah, and yet after Hillel spoke to him, he became a full-fledged, sincere Ger. What message did he learn from Hillel's words that inspired such a major change of heart within himself?

The Underlying Intents in the Exchanges between the Goy and Shammai and Hillel

Bs"ד, we understand this story as follows: When a person claims that he can learn an entire subject or body of material while standing on one foot, he is implying that there is very little for him to learn. He can cover the whole subject in the short time that he is able to stand on one foot, before he is compelled to put down his other foot and catch his balance.

The Goy Wished to Discover that 'One Little Additional Point' of Wisdom which Could Be Found in the Torah

This Goy had studied human nature, as well as all the wisdom available in the world about human interactions. He absorbed the attributes of kindness and benevolence, and he felt that he understood the proper and just way of treating and dealing with people. He believed that he had reached near-perfection on these subjects. However, he knew that the Torah had much to say and teach in these matters, and he realized that there may be some points of wisdom contained therein, which he had not yet acquired. Nonetheless, he still felt that he was just about there. He conceded that there may be a few points he [had] missed, but no more than that.

With this attitude, the Goy appeared before Shammai, demanding that he teach whatever he did not yet know – but while he was standing on one foot. He would complete the missing information in that brief amount of time. Shammai certainly welcomed him into his presence when he originally presented himself; that was the *middah* Shammai used to teach: *הוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות* – *Greet each man with a pleasant countenance*. But after hearing this man's spurious claim, he dismissed him with anger. Certainly, it is mocking the Torah, to claim that the wealth of Torah contains only a few more nuggets of information than one can discover in worldly wisdom.

Hillel Demonstrated to the Goy his Own Glaring Hypocrisy

Hillel, however, had a way of driving the point, even to this arrogant Goy. He told him the most simple and basic rule of human relationships: Treat others the way one himself would want to be treated. He did not even say it in the positive obligatory form, but in the lower, negative one. At the very least, one should not do to others what he does not want done to himself.

Suddenly, the Goy was struck by his complete hypocrisy: He claimed to be such an expert on human interaction and kindness, and here he was violating the most basic rule of decency! What was he doing to Shammai and Hillel? Challenging their beliefs and attempting to make a mockery of them! Is that what he would want done to himself?!

At that point, he realized that without the direction and guidance of the Torah and Chazal, he had not achieved even the most simple, initial steps in his perfection. He perceived that the truth lay in the Torah and he became a sincere Ger.

From this illustration we can clearly perceive how we must follow all the wisdom of Chazal about *bein adam l'chaveiro*. Through that, we can merit bs"ד to achieve success in this area.

Acting in the Way One Would Want to be Treated – Practical Applications

Now, let us focus on the actual words of Hillel and the words of the Rambam: "**Do not do** to others what you would not wish done to yourself." "**Do** for others, and treat them and speak about them, in the fashion you would wish to be treated and spoken about."

If you are trying to write on a paper, you do not appreciate it when there is someone who is shaking the table. So, don't shake the table when someone else is trying to write on it!

When entering someone's house, you can either walk on the path, or step through their flowers. If you had planted flowers in your own yard – investing many hours of toiling, pruning, weeding, watering, etc., would you want someone to come and spoil your hard work? Definitely not! Therefore, do not do so to others.

Loshon Hara Stems from Not Applying this Concept

In truth, much of the *aveirah* of *loshon hora* is due to the lack of applying this concept. As the Chofetz Chaim points out to us about human nature – when someone makes a mistake, he wishes with all his heart that no one should notice. If someone notices, he desperately hopes that he will not publicize it and cause him shame. If he is being spoken of disparagingly, he hopes that someone will come to his defense. Everyone feels this way about himself, and that is how he should treat others.

There was a bachur in a yeshiva who lay down to sleep during his afternoon break. When he awoke, he was completely disoriented. As he made his way to the bais medrash for Mincha, he thought that it was time for Shacharis. He put on his tefillin and entered the bais medrash wearing them. The Rosh Yeshiva saw this and immediately sized up the situation. He instructed another bochur, "Quickly go tell this bochur to remove his tefillin before everyone comes in and sees!"

This other bochur, however, took his time, enjoying the joke and the spectacle of the bochur making such a silly mistake in public. The Rosh Yeshiva called this bochur and berated him harshly, "When you make a mistake, you don't want anyone to know. And if people do know, you hope they forget it - instantly! How then can you cause someone else's mistake to become more and more public, causing him that much more embarrassment?"

Two individuals once approached me with a dispute. One was a contractor, who had been asked by a homeowner to cover a certain project in his home. The homeowner had subsequently wanted to use a different contract for a certain reason. The first contractor, however, felt that it was not correct for the homeowner to back out at that point. After having heard both sides, I was speaking to the contractor privately, and he asked me, "What is the proper path for me to follow? Should I allow him to withdraw from his original request, or should I hold him to it?"

I told the contractor as follows: "The case is a complicated one, and I cannot decide the halachah. You will need to go to a Bais Din. But I can tell you what I think is the right thing for you to do, even before you ask your sheilah: Flip the case in your mind; imagine you were the homeowner, and he was the contractor. In this exact situation, would you feel that you, as the homeowner were correct, or would you still say that the contractor is the correct party? If you know that were the situation flipped, you would want to be excused by the contractor, do to him now what you would want done to yourself!"

What great levels we can acquire from the Torah's *mitzvos* – and how beautiful K'lal Yisrael appears as a whole, and each person appears individually, when following them. Iy"H, we should grow in these *madreigos*, and through this we should be *zoche* to the *geulah shleimah*.

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לכבוד היארצייט של
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יתקיים בעזה"י סיום הש"ס שנלמד לעילוי נשמתו

בבית מדרשו תפארת שמעון

299 MONMOUTH AVE.

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אחר תפילת מוסף

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ר"י ישיבת שערי אורה

וביום ראשון לפרשת אמור

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בשעה 9:50 בבוקר

בהשתתפות מרן רה"י ר' ירוחם אלשין שליט"א

ובנו הרב יחיאל שליט"א