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Hilula

- 1 – Rabbi Masod Hakohen, author of 'Pirchei Kehuna'
- 2 – Rabbi Shmuel of Nikolsburg
- 3 – Rabbi Aryeh Leib Tzintz, author of 'Meloh Ha'omer'
- 4 – Rabbi Yosef Te'umim, author of 'Pri Megadim'
- 5 – Rabbi Ephraim Navon
- 6 – Rabbi Chaim Sathon, author of 'Eretz Chaim'
- 7 – Rabbi Shlomo Luntschitz, the 'Kli Yakar'



A Proven Recipe for Marital Harmony

"If a tzara'at affliction will be in a person, he shall be brought to the Kohen" (Vayikra 13:9)

The power of habit is an important quality that man should adopt as a true acquisition. A person must be able to cope with difficult situations and become accustomed to them. He should also habituate himself to become a regular occupant of Hashem's house and accustom his body and spirit to lofty spiritual matters. This is what David Hamelech said (Tehillim 119:59), "I considered my ways and returned my feet to Your testimonies", meaning I thought to go here and there but in the end I went to the Beit Midrash. Why? Because this is what I had accustomed myself to do.

Although this mitzvah is in essence something positive and essential for a person, it can at times stand to his detriment, for when a person becomes accustomed to a certain thing it can then become like a habit and he will no longer marvel at and be inspired by anything holy. His life will proceed in customary routine, lacking spiritual vitality G-d forbid. Therefore, it is incumbent upon man not to allow himself to grow accustomed to these matters, rather he should enhance and marvel each day anew, as in "each day they should be considered in your eyes like new". This is what David Hamelech prayed, "One thing I asked of Hashem, that shall I seek: Would that I dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life, to behold the sweetness of Hashem and to contemplate in His Sanctuary" (Tehillim 27:4), meaning, even though he was accustomed to being in the Beit Midrash all his life, nevertheless he wished to feel 'לבקר ביהכלו', literally meaning to visit His Sanctuary, as if he was visiting for the first time and is excited and awed as if it was his first impression.

This matter is hinted to in the Haftarah of Parshat HaChodesh, "But when the populace comes before Hashem on the appointed days, whoever comes in by way of the northern gate to prostrate himself shall go out by way of the southern gate and whoever enters by way of the southern gate shall go out by way of the northern gate, he shall not return by way of the gate through which he came in; rather he shall go out opposite it." (Yechezkel 46:9). The reason is, writes the Chassid Yavetz in his commentary on Avot (1:4): "Hashem was particular that he shouldn't see the gate twice in case he will come to consider it like the gate of his house and the walls of the House to his walls...This was in fact the sin of the Golden Calf. Because the Ohel was in their midst, they came to detest it and said, 'make for us gods'. Moshe Rabbeinu a"h felt this and therefore pitched the Ohel outside the camp, far away from the camp."

This should be every person's life aspiration and it is something that is binding in all areas, whether in Torah, mitzvah performance or in the home. The implication of 'in the home' means that if the husband allows himself to become accustomed to his married life, he will then start to take his wife's qualities for granted. The same is true if the wife becomes used to her husband's qualities. If their spouse's admirable middot no longer impress them, their defects will automatically become more pronounced, because due to the power of habit the good becomes taken for granted. This is

a proven recipe for violating marital harmony and quickly leads to disagreements and arguments and sometimes even to expressing inappropriate comments that can offend the spouse. And when the voice is no longer the voice of Ya'akov, G-d forbid the hands of Esav rule and these words will suffice for the wise.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon each spouse to notice and internalize their spouse's merits, focus on them and also thank Hashem for this. In this way, they will come to appreciate each other and not be quick to argue. One should also keep in mind the words of Harav Hatzaddik Rabbi Chaim Vital zy"a, who writes that a person who disrupts marital harmony causes the Shechina to depart and the Name of Hashem to separate, may Hashem spare us, for when a husband and wife merit, the Shechina rests among them whereas if they argue and quarrel the Shechina departs. He also writes that the husband should know that a person is judged in the Next World according to how he behaved with his family and not according to how he behaved with others. Sometimes a person can be very devoted to others, but when it comes to his own family he is ill-tempered. If this is the case, he will be judged solely according to how he behaved in his own home.

Before falling into the trap of anger one should remind oneself of these words and know that one is about to drive away the Shechina from one's home, G-d forbid. Is this matter something worth getting angry over?

The Rambam (end Hilchot Tumat Tzara'at) points out: "The afflictions were a sign and wonder among Bnei Yisrael to caution them about lashon hara, for one who speaks lashon hara, the walls of his house change (tzara'at appears on some of the stones). If he repents, his house becomes pure but if he continues with his wicked ways until some of the stones must be removed, then the leather seats that he sits on and lies on in his home, will change. And if he repents... and if not his skin changes and he becomes a leper and he must be separated and remain on his own, until he no longer takes part in the conversations of the wicked, which are mockery and lashon hara."

We see that tzara'at does not appear on a person's body immediately, but it comes in stages. It seems surprising how a person who comes to the point where his home must be destroyed in front of his eyes, will not leave his crooked ways and stop speaking lashon hara. What is more, the tzara'at then appears on his clothing yet even this does not deter him, until it appears on his body and he is forced to remain in isolation outside the camp. How do we understand this surprising phenomenon? According to what we explained above, we now understand that habit can sometimes work against a person, in the case where he becomes accustomed to a certain manner and is therefore no longer impressed or inspired. Obviously, at first, this person is alarmed by the afflictions that appear on his house, but by the time he goes to ask the advice of a Kohen to rule for him if it is an impure affliction and the Kohen will then reprove him for his ways and guide him to repent, his initial agitation and inspiration will have cooled off and faded away.



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Influencing Others to Do Hashem's Bidding

I wished to impart a most crucial message to the public. As it was imperative that as many people as possible hear it, it was decided that a raffle draw would be held among the participants of the shiur. This would draw people to come and hear the word of Hashem. As we know, through acting with ulterior motives, one eventually acts l'shem Shamayim.

As we had hoped, the hall was packed. Baruch Hashem, I succeeded in conveying my message and it seemed that the audience accepted it. At the end of the evening, the lottery was drawn. But for some reason, the winners refused to accept their prizes. We conducted another round of draws, but this time, too, the winners declined to come forward.

During this time, I was made aware of a fellow Jew who was envious of our tremendous success in bringing merit to the public. He spread the rumor that Rabbi David Pinto buys people with prizes. I was terribly aggrieved at hearing this. These were words of emptiness, said to sow the seeds of discord and discontent. In response, I remained silent, following Chazal, "sit still and do nothing" and did not react.

Sometime later, I bumped into an old student who had not attended this shiur. I asked why he had refrained from participating. He repeated the words of that jealous Jew. Since he believed that I bought people for money, he wished to have no part in it. After a short time, I was told that this student had removed his kippah and with it, the yoke of Heavenly service.

I then decided that things had come to a head. I turned to the man who had originally publicized the scandal against me and told him sternly, "See how far your deeds have reached. On account of jealousy and evil slander, you caused a fellow Jew to cast off all Torah and mitzvah observance. You steered him off the correct path. What answer will you have for the Creator of the World when you will be taken to account for this deed?!"

I was terribly saddened that my disciple left the path of Torah. But I learned a tremendous lesson regarding the great responsibility of one who brings merit to the public. Just as it is in the power of a Jew to bring merit to the public, to nurture them and bring them closer to their Heavenly Father, to the same extent he can cause others to stumble, rachmana litzlan. The evil inclination takes advantage of his status and authority to influence the public and bring them to sin.

The Haftarah

"Thus said Hashem: The Heaven is My throne" (Yeshaya 66)

The connection to the Parsha: Rosh Chodesh Iyar falls on this Shabbat. This is the connection to the verse that is mentioned in the Haftarah: "It shall be that at every New Moon and on every Shabbat all mankind will come to prostrate themselves before Me". This is a timely reference to this Shabbat which is also Rosh Chodesh.

Guard Your Tongue

There is Almost No Difference

The Torah warns us not to accept lashon hara, which means not believing in one's heart that the matter is true. There is no need to go into detail about the essence of the one who accepts lashon hara and the one who is spoken about, for there is almost no difference between them. To summarize, the rule is that every Jewish person must follow the commandment not to accept lashon hara about any other Jew, besides Apikorsim, informers and other similar categories who are no longer considered as 'רְתִימֵנוּ', your fellow Jew.



Words of our Sages

The Coughing Attack Stopped in Merit of the Neighbor's Porch

"This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification" (Vayikra 14:2)

The fact that we live in such a competitive world can cause our outlook to become competitive and begrudging. And then, when faced with someone else's success or advancement, whether it is the fact that he is living it up, is able to extend his home, landed a well-paying job, has a beautiful family and a tranquil life, this triggers the disease of competition and resentment, with thoughts along the lines of: So and so is extending? So and so is renovating? So and so is earning well? Why does he deserve it? Why he is the recipient of all this pleasure? We are so close, why was he the one who merited an easy livelihood, an extra porch, a beautiful family, pure nachat?

These thoughts, may we be preserved from them, all fall into the category of envy, which is one of the reasons for the appearance of tzara'at, discussed in this Parsha. The feelings of envy and resentment are a natural and normal phenomenon in our competitive world, but this fact does not justify it. On the contrary, it is much more reasonable to understand that every person receives that which he is supposed to receive and one person's gain does not harm his friend in any way, so why not feel happy for him?

Your neighbor is building? Wonderful! How happy am I that Hashem is giving him extra space! Your brother has delightful children? Wonderful! I am happy that he enjoys this nachat! Your friend landed a respectable job with a great salary? Thank You Hashem for all Your kindness, it makes me want to dance and sing! I remember to pray for my friend that his good should never cease and that all his days be full of nachat and fulfillment. It is not on my account! He hasn't taken anything away from me! Why not welcome his blessings?! Why not be happy for him?! Why not rejoice with him?!

This is the formula for true happiness! If I believe and understand that no one can take anything away from me, then inevitably I have no reason to complain or not to be happy for someone else's success, for someone else's income, for someone's tranquil and blessed life. I am

delighted because he is delighted, I am happy because he is happy, I rejoice in his happiness with my entire heart!

The Gaon Rabbi Avraham Noach Palai zt"l, the Mashgiach of Chevron Yeshiva, suffered from asthma for many years. It happened more than once that he was overcome with a coughing attack in the middle of learning and then he had to rush outside for fresh air until his breathing steadied. Sometimes he was even forced to leave his talmidim in the middle of giving over a shiur and go and take a rest.

One day, Rav Palai was in the middle of giving over one of his wonderful shiurim when suddenly his face turned red and his breathing became wheezy and labored. He immediately ran outside for fresh air. "This is another bad attack," his talmidim said to each other, "what a shame that once again the shiur will be interrupted for about twenty minutes." But to their surprise, only a minute and a half passed and the Rav was already back in the room, smiling and breathing easily and evenly. He continued the shiur from where he left off, as if he hadn't been in the middle of an attack two minutes ago. The talmidim looked at their Rav in amazement, they themselves witnessed the attack, how did he recover so quickly?

At the end of the shiur, his talmidim turned to him and asked: "Could the Rav explain, this attack seemed particularly severe, more than previous ones that required the Rav to rest for a short time. We are delighted that the Rav returned so quickly but wish to understand how this happened?"

Rav Palai smiled and explained: "I have a neighbor who for a long time already wished to extend his cramped apartment. He has a large family and lives in a tiny apartment, but the bureaucratic issues were complicated and the matter kept getting pushed off. But today, when I went out to the street to breathe in some fresh air and recover from the attack, do you know what I saw?" His talmidim looked at him in suspense. His eyes lit up, his smile widened: "Tractors arrived! My neighbor started building! Baruch Hashem! At that moment my breathing returned to normal, my heart expanded when I saw that my neighbor was finally able to go ahead with the extension! It caused me such joy that the attack passed instantly!"

Harav Palai finished his explanation. The smile remained on his face, just remembering the incident made him happy all over again (Umatok Ha'or).



Pearls of the Parsha

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



The Chacham Decides

"The Kohen shall look at the affliction on the skin of his flesh: If hair in the affliction has changed to white and the affliction's appearance is deeper than the skin of the flesh – it is a tzara'at affliction; the Kohen shall look at it and declare him contaminated" (Vayikra 13:3)

Rabbi Ya'akov Amado of Izmir zt"l, in his sefer 'Imrei Emet', asks why the verse repeats the words "the Kohen shall look at it"? Has it not said already at the beginning of the verse "The Kohen shall look"?

The Imrei Emet answers this question by quoting the words of the Rambam in Hilchot Tumat Tzara'at: "Even though all are qualified to rule concerning afflictions, contamination and purity are dependent on the Kohen. How can this be? A Kohen who is not familiar with the laws shows it to a Talmid Chacham who tells him to declare, "contaminated" and the Kohen pronounces "contaminated". If the Chacham tells him to declare it pure, the Kohen pronounces "pure". If the Chacham says it must be quarantined, the Kohen quarantines it, as it says "and according to their word shall be every grievance and every plague" (Devarim 21:5).

Rashi writes (Erchin 3a) that even if the Kohen is not an expert (in these laws), nevertheless he must look at the affliction together with the Chacham and then he declares "pure" or "contaminated", according to what the Chacham tells him to say.

This, then, is the meaning of the verse: Even if the Kohen is not an expert in afflictions and they will need to show it to a Chacham who is well versed in these laws, the Chacham still does not have the authority to declare him contaminated, nor may the Kohen pronounce him contaminated until he himself actually looks at the affliction. This is why the verse repeats the words "the Kohen shall look", for even in the case where a Chacham must look at the affliction, the Kohen too must look at it as it says, "the Kohen shall look at it and declare him contaminated".

The Gates of Prayer are Closed for a Metzora

"His garments shall be rent, the hair of his head shall be unshorn, and he shall cloak himself up to his lips; he is to call out: "Contaminated, contaminated!" (Vayikra 13:45)

Chazal expound (Shabbat 68a) on the words, "he is to call out: "Contaminated, contaminated": He must announce his sorrow to the public, on which Rashi writes, "he himself".

It is puzzling why particularly the metzora needs to publicly announce his affliction, which is not the case with other sicknesses. The sefer 'Midrash Yonatan' answers this question, according to the basis that Rashi brings on the verse referring to Yishma'el, "G-d heard the cry of the youth". Rashi explains on this verse: "From here we learn that the prayer of a sick person is better than the prayers of others who pray for him."

The holy Zohar asks, why is the metzora called 'מוסגר', extradited? Because his prayers are banished in heaven. If so, he must announce his suffering in public so that others should plead for mercy on his behalf. With other sicknesses, it is better that the sick person prays for himself, but a metzora must ask others to pray for him since his own prayers are banished.

How Can a Chatan be a Metzora?

"On the day healthy flesh appears on it, it shall be contaminated" (Vayikra 13:14)

Chazal expound on the words "On the day": "There are some days when the Kohen can rule and some days when he may not." From this they taught: If a chatan has tzara'at, one does not rule until after the seven days of feasting (Rashi).

This is hard to understand because we know that the tzara'at affliction comes as a result of sin, but isn't a chatan forgiven for all his sins? So how can it be that he is punished with an affliction?

The Rav of Kaziglov zt"l explains this in a beautiful way:

When a chatan is forgiven for his sins, he then achieves the status of a tzaddik. And as Chazal tell us, Hashem is particular with tzaddikim like a hairsbreadth, so now various sins are awakened that are only considered as sins for the truly righteous, and it is for these kinds of sins that the afflictions come. In light of this, the Torah says that one doesn't look at the afflictions of a chatan during the days of feasting.

What Can We Learn from the Blood of the Slaughtered Bird?

When talking about the purification process of the metzora it says (Vayikra 14:4-5), "The Kohen shall command; and for the person being purified there shall be taken two live, clean birds...and the one bird shall be slaughtered into an earthenware vessel". Rashi writes, "Since his affliction came in punishment for the chatter of gossip and slander, his purification is effected by means of chirping, twittering birds."

This requires clarification. If the birds allude to his empty chattering, why is he commanded to bring them once he is already pure from his tzara'at and has repented from his sin? Should he not have brought them right at the start when he became impure with tzara'at, and then this will serve to remind him that he did not behave appropriately, just like the chirping bird? What is the point of reminding him of his sin once he has already purified himself from his sin? "Recall not against us the sins of the ancient."

When a person is sick he is given two types of medication. The goal of the first medicine is to heal him from his illness, while he is given the second medicine once he has already recovered, as a preventative measure so that he should not be re-infected with this illness. So too with the sickness of tzara'at. He must first be healed from the impurity of his tzara'at, as the verse says "his garments shall be rent, the hair of his head shall be unshorn, and he shall cloak himself up to his lips...his dwelling shall be outside the camp." Rashi writes: "Why is a metzora singled out to live in isolation? Because his affliction is a punishment for slander, which causes husbands to be separated from their wives and friends from one another. Therefore, it is fitting that he be punished through isolation from society." When he sits alone he will certainly search his ways to consider why this happened to him and then he will repent and be purified from his sin. But after becoming pure, he requires a preventative medicine so as not to return to his sin, and this is why the Torah commands him to bring two birds which will remind him of his sin, that he too chattered like a bird and in this way he will fulfill that which David Hamelech said (Tehillim 51:5), "and my sin is before me always." Through this he will always remember the terrible sin that he transgressed and he will understand why he was afflicted with tzara'at. This will serve to protect his soul from his original sin of speaking negatively about others.

Talking negatively about someone causes that person embarrassment and it is as if he has killed him with his tongue that is as sharp as a sword. This is why he brings two birds. One is slaughtered and the other one remains alive. The slaughtered bird corresponds to his friend against whom he spoke and as if was slaughtered by him, while the bird which remains alive represents the sinner. He dips the live bird into the blood of the slaughtered bird to imprint upon himself the severity of his sin and to place his 'slaughtered' friend's blood in front of his eyes, for it is as if he killed him with his words. This is also why his body is sprinkled with the blood of the slaughtered bird, so that his wicked deed of speaking negatively about others should constantly remain in front of his eyes and he will no longer return to his bad ways.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

In this period, from Pesach till Shavuot, twenty-four thousand talmidim of Rabbi Akiva passed away.

Our Sages point out that in several places Chazal stress that "Rabbi Akiva had twelve thousand pairs of talmidim". What lies behind this expression of "twelve thousand pairs"? Why do Chazal not use the simpler wording of "twenty-four thousand talmidim"? If, for example, one wishes to speak about the number of students in the Mir Yeshiva, one would say that there are six thousand bachurim and avreichim who study there. We would not say that there are three thousand chavrutot in the yeshiva?

Chazal stress that in Rabbi Akiva's yeshiva they excelled in the attribute of "closeness with colleagues". Rabbi Akiva was the one who instigated "Love your fellow as yourself is a great rule in the Torah". In his Yeshiva, there were not twenty-four thousand students, but twelve thousand chavrutot who studied together, in pairs! They were not single students, but 'chavrutot' in their essence. Due to this, especially from these talmidim there was a stronger claim when it came to behavior 'between man and his friend'!

Rabbi Shmuel Baruch Ganot shlita quotes in the name of tzaddikim, that Torah tradition was passed on to future generations through the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Akiva. They were not merely 'Torah learners', but 'transmitters of the Torah'. It was this fact that obligated those who studied in this Beit Midrash, where the foundation of the Oral Law was created and established and transmit-

ted to future generations, to be on the highest level, as is fitting for those who transmit the Torah and bequeath it to others. We are not speaking about 'private' people, but about an institution of Torah that was chosen to transmit the Torah from Moshe to Rabbi Akiva and from Rabbi Akiva to his talmidim and onwards. This is why they were punished so severely, for it is impossible to give over the chain of Torah if one falls short in good middot between man and his friend.

A Favor for your Friend, Not a Favor for Yourself

A darshan once came to the private Beit Midrash of the wealthy Rabbi Tzvi Navinski zt"l, and those present asked him to address the congregants. Rabbi Tzvi did not want him to speak, maintaining that he himself learns in the Beit Midrash and the drasha will disturb his learning. The darshan, on the other hand, claimed that the money he receives for his lectures is his way of supporting his family. While the two were discussing the matter between them, Maran Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zt"l, founder of the Mussar movement, entered the Beit Midrash. He asked the rich person an interesting question: "Why did Hillel form his statement in the negative and say that what is hated by you, do not do to your friend? Why did he not say, what is good for you, do to your friend?"

Rabbi Yisrael answered his own question: "The answer is that it is not in place to say that what is good for you do to your friend because not everything that is good for you, is also good for your friend." And here Rabbi Yisrael turned to the wealthy person: "For you, of course it is better to sit and learn Torah in peace and quiet tranquility. But for the darshan it would not be good to sit here and learn right now, rather he prefers to address the congregants, as a way of supporting his family. Now you must

take into account: Would you be happy if a certain action, which is actually something positive, would result in harm for yourself? This was Hillel's intention in saying "what is hated by you do not do to your friend". He was implying, do not do bad to your friend, even though for you yourself, this act may be something good. In light of this, please allow the darshan to give his address"...

Harav Ganot adds to this idea: "On Chol Hamoed Pesach a few years ago, I merited visiting my master and teacher, Rabbeinu Hagaon Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita. I asked him a number of questions on matters concerning Pesach, and I merited this holy tzaddik's blessings. Seeing the joy of the Chag that was etched on Rabbeinu's shlita face, and his state of great delight as was always his way during the festivals, I plucked up the courage to tell him about the arguments and dissension which plagues sectors of religious Jewry. I told him about the humiliation of talmidei chachamim, of the violation to their honor, and how it is impossible to fight and argue all the time, especially since all this degradation is being carried out by the religious, and all the aggressors are those who generally fulfill the Torah with love and awe. I asked Maran Hagaon Rabbi Chaim for advice that would enable us to eradicate this lack of respect and appreciation that exists between the different sectors."

Maran shlita answered with simple and easy advice: To invest ourselves entirely in Torah study and not to concern ourselves with any topics that are not connected to learning. "After all, Torah study is equal to all of the other mitzvot and Torah is the remedy for everything", Maran shlita stressed.