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## maskil Le'David

### Understanding the Name of the Parsha

**“Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon’s two sons, when they approached before Hashem and they died” (Vayikra 16:1).**

This *parsha* is called “Acharei Mot” – “after the death” (of Aharon’s two sons). Why is this so if their death is only mentioned in the first verse of the *parsha*, while the rest of the *parsha* speaks about matters pertaining to the Mikdash? It would seem more appropriate to call this *parsha* “Mishkan” or some such; why does the name refer to a subject described in greater detail in Parshat Shemini? Let us try to explain this difficulty.

*Chazal* offer different opinions as to why the sons of Aharon were punished. One opinion is for serving in the Mikdash, although they were not married. Another opinion is that they entered the Mikdash intoxicated, while others say it was because they offered an alien fire. Some Sages maintain they were punished for offering a halachic ruling in their teacher’s presence (Moshe Rabbeinu). There is even an opinion saying they were punished for their insolence, declaring about Moshe and Aharon, “When will these two old people die so that we can lead the people instead.”

One can explain that each of the above acts on its own was not enough of a reason to punish Aharon’s sons with death. But they went too far, and Hashem held them accountable. Aharon’s sons offered incense before Hashem even though they were not asked to do so. They did this because they were afraid Bnei Yisrael would grow accustomed to Hashem’s presence resting among them and in the Mikdash. This would lead to a lack of respect for the Mishkan and the Shechina, for which they would be punished. Just as Bnei Yisrael grew accustomed to Moshe and Aharon’s presence, to the extent that they were not afraid of being insolent and coming to them with complaints and requests, Aharon’s sons were afraid the same would happen with the Mishkan: Bnei Yisrael may grow accustomed to Hashem’s Presence and G-d forbid treat it lightly. Therefore the sons of Aharon, with enormous self-sacrifice, did something which they knew would cost them their lives. They wished to publicly demonstrate the extent to which one must be

vigilant with the honor of the Mishkan and the Shechina, in strict accordance with the law.

The sons of Aharon entered the Mikdash and offered an alien fire, and they were consumed. As soon as Bnei Yisrael became aware of what happened, they were filled with fear and awe and accordingly, became more meticulous with the honor of the Mishkan.

Because the sons of Aharon performed this act with enormous self-sacrifice and concern for Am Yisrael, the verse tells us (*Vayikra* 10:6), “The entire House of Israel shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem ignited.” Similarly, Hashem instructed that the name of the *parsha* which speaks about the Mikdash should recall their deaths. This would put them on a pedestal and stress that all the honor which Bnei Yisrael display for the Mishkan and later for the Mikdash, is credited to Aharon’s sons who aroused sensitivity for this matter.

I saw that *Chazal* say, “The passing of *tzaddikim* is as difficult as the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash,” and also that, “The death of *tzaddikim* atones.” Perhaps because Nadav and Avihu gave their lives for the honor of the Mishkan, one can therefore say they were considered to be equal to the Mishkan. For just as the Mishkan atones, so too did the death of Nadav and Avihu atone. This is why we read the *parsha* of Acharei Mot on Yom Kippur: just as the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash served as an atonement for Am Yisrael, so too the death of Aharon’s sons was an atonement for Am Yisrael.

Going back to the idea mentioned previously, that Nadav and Avihu died because they went too far, one can say that Hashem never takes a person’s soul immediately, but only if he goes too far and sins increasingly before Hashem. There is no way we can understand what it means that Aharon’s sons sinned, especially since the verse says about them (*Vayikra* 10:3), “I will be sanctified through those who are nearest to Me,” which shows how righteous and close to Hashem they were. But nevertheless, this idea arouses us to contemplate how a Jew must repent for any small transgression so that G-d forbid his sins should not be joined together, resulting in Hashem having to punish him in a severe way.

Hashem never punishes a person immediately, but first sends him signs signaling him to repent. At first his suit may tear, after that the motor of his car may die in the middle of a journey, and following that he may become sick with some slight disorder. If all this is not effective, Hashem must then strike him with a difficult and painful tragedy, with the hope that maybe this time he will awaken from his slumber and return to Hashem (see *Kiddushin* 20a).

cont. p. 2.>>>

8 Iyar 5786  
25 April 2026

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**Acharei Kedoshim**



## Hilula

**8 Iyar**  
Rabbi Elazar Mor Yosef,  
Rosh Yeshiva of Neve  
Shalom, Casablanca

**9 Iyar**  
Rabbi Shalom Mashash,  
author of *Divrei Shalom*

**10 Iyar**  
Rabbi Yaakov Toledano,  
Av Beit Din of Kinas

**11 Iyar**  
Rabbi Avraham Sharbani,  
Rav of Rechovot

**12 Iyar**  
Rabbi Yosef Soso  
Hakohen, Rav of Gabes,  
Tunisia

**13 Iyar**  
Rabbi Yaakov Abulafia,  
Av Beit Din of Teveria

**14 Iyar**  
Rabbi Tzadka Harari  
Hakohen





## WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

### A Mussar Lesson

A yeshiva *bachur* once turned to me in consternation. “Rabbi David,” he began, “for some reason I feel something is missing in my faith in Hashem, despite the fact that I spend my entire day studying Torah. I cannot learn with peace of mind when my mind is constantly occupied with this thought.”

I turned the tables, asking him what *he* felt was the reason for this strange phenomenon. He thought for a few moments and then replied with the following: He thought his lack of *emunah* stemmed from the fact that the Rabbanim of the Yeshiva do not give their students enough *mussar*.

His sincere words struck home. I now understood the words of our Sages in a new light. The Mishnah (*Avot* 3:17) states, “If there is no worldly occupation, there is no Torah.” The term “worldly occupation,” or *derech erez*, refers to the study of *mussar*, whereas “Torah” refers to faith and mitzvah observance.

Through *mussar* which precedes faith and mitzvah observance, one learns how to approach mitzvot with the proper attitude, with fear and love of Hashem. One day, a fine, orthodox Jew approached me and with a smile and a handshake, asked if I recognized him. I apologized that I did not and added that he was not the only one whose face I forgot, as I meet so many people throughout the day and cannot possibly remember everyone.

He completely understood and accepted my apology and then went on to introduce himself with the following tale. Twelve years earlier, when he had been light-years away from a Torah lifestyle, he heard a *mussar* lecture which I delivered; it had no effect on him. Time passed and then one day he remembered my words and this time they penetrated his heart. He decided to make a turnabout in his life, until he eventually returned completely to his Maker.

His story gave me great *chizuk*. The impact of one *mussar* lecture can never be underestimated! And even if the impression is not immediate, many years later it can still have an effect and cause people to return to their Creator.

*cont. from p. 1 >>>*

In a similar way, we find that one who speaks *lashon hara* is not punished straight away with *tzara'at* on his body. First the walls of his home and his possessions are covered with *tzara'at* afflictions, only after that are his clothes affected, and if he still does not repent for his derogatory speech, Hashem sends afflictions on his flesh (*Rambam, Tumat tzara'at* 16:10).

As we mentioned, the main deterrent in *avodat Hashem* is habit and lack of appreciation. Many times we become blind to all the good that surrounds us; we grow accustomed to it all to the extent that we take for granted that they are part of our lives. When we see someone walking with crutches or with a blind man's stick, suddenly we thank Hashem for our health; that we can walk and see.

Hashem approved of the way Aharon's sons acted; therefore He dedicated a *parsha* to their name. It is the very *parsha* which deals with matters of holiness of the Mikdash which they honored and elevated. Through them the honor of Hashem was sanctified, as it says, “I will be sanctified through those who are nearest to Me.”



## PARSHA PEARLS

### Inspiring Reflections

### Never Despair, No Matter the Situation

**“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not complete the corner of your field to reap”** (*Vayikra* 19:9).

The Or Hachaim Hakadosh explains the juxtaposition of the previous verse which ends “and that soul will be cut off from its people” to the mitzvah of *pe'ah*, leaving a corner of the field unharvested, and *leket*, gleanings that must be left for the poor. The Torah is alluding to the punishment of a willful sinner with the death penalty; he should not throw his hands up and say it makes no difference if he sins as he has already been sentenced to death.

Therefore, the Torah continues and says, “When you reap the harvest of your land,” referring to someone punished with *karet*. Nevertheless, “You shall not complete the corner of your field to reap” with additional bad deeds. The punishment of *karet* does not affect the entire soul; there are still other branches that remain connected to their source. Every Jewish soul has roots Above, corresponding to all the mitzvot of the Torah. Therefore even if one branch is cut off, he must still protect the other branches of his soul and take care that they should not be cut off.

The Torah therefore commands, “The gleanings of your harvest you shall not take,” with abundant sins, for Hashem desires that through these remaining gleanings, the person will be aroused to repent, and when he does Hashem will have mercy on him. As *Chazal* say (*Yoma* 86a), even if a person transgresses sins that are deserving of *kritot* and death by Beit Din, he can still atone for them, and “Great is repentance for it reaches straight to the Throne of Glory.”

### One can Judge even a Thief Favorably

**“With righteousness shall you judge your fellow”** (*Vayikra* 19:15).

It is related about Rabbi Zelmele of Volozhin that he once went to immerse in the mikveh and upon exiting, noticed his shirt had disappeared. What did he do? He put on his jacket without his shirt and returned home.

As soon as he entered his home his wife noticed the missing shirt and asked, “Zalman, where is your shirt?”

He replied, “Some pauper in the mikveh evidently exchanged it with his shirt by mistake.” “So why did you not take his shirt?” “Because he forgot to leave it behind...”



## WORDS OF THE SAGES

### Whose Wafers are These?

The Torah opens a window for us into an original and unique way of thinking with the commandment, “With righteousness shall you judge your fellow.” *Chazal* explain that we regularly come face to face with the practical application of this mitzvah; we see someone behaving inappropriately and his conduct seems problematic in our eyes. We must search for a way to defend him in our minds, to set the wheels of our brain into motion to retain a positive impression of someone despite his behavior.

This noble attribute has unique characteristics. First of all, unlike what we may think, it is not merely considered a good *middah* or even a commendable quality. Rather it is one of the positive Torah commandments! It is a mitzvah, just as it is a mitzvah to recite Shema every morning. Moreover, if we previously viewed someone in an unfavorable light, we are commanded to change our opinion immediately, to modify our view of him. We can do so by searching for points of merit, and thinking about him as a good person.

The following incident took place in a busy waiting area. A Jewish person entered, found a seat and placed at his side a bag containing several documents, plus a package of wafers that he had taken with him for a snack.

He left the room for a moment, leaving the bag behind, and returned to find the person sitting next to his place holding the package of wafers in his hand, eating from it with obvious pleasure. He couldn't believe his eyes! He became filled with anger — this was nothing less than daylight robbery! This was *his* package of wafers that he had left in his bag for a short time and this person couldn't overcome his temptation and was polishing it off?!

He quickly sat down beside the neighboring patient and also stuck his hand into the package of wafers. His neighbor showed no sign of surprise and calmly continued eating. The sight was both strange and comical at the same time: two strangers sharing package of wafers, with interesting expressions on their faces.

When it came to the last wafer in the package, the owner was certain that the stranger would finally show some restraint and allow him to eat the last one. But no — what nerve! His neighbor stuck his hand deep into the package and took out the last wafer. All that was left for our unfortunate friend to do was to throw the empty package into the garbage...

The behavior of this ill-mannered stranger made his anger rise. The situation was saved when just at that moment he heard his name; it was his turn to be helped.

As he opened his bag to put in the new paperwork he received — he was stuck with horror! He began to tremble and turned extremely pale. There, lying at the bottom of his bag, was his package of wafers. No one had touched them without permission. It turned out *he* was the one who had taken wafer after wafer from his neighbor's package, with a blatant lack of manners. And he had even considered him a thief...

This story, brought in the *kuntras Vavei Ha'amudim*, exclaims loud and clear: We can never know what drove someone to behave in a certain way. We can never be certain where justice lies. What we *can* do is adhere to “with righteousness shall you judge your fellow” — judge him favorably and consider his deeds to be carried out with righteousness and integrity. This is our obligation!



## FROM THE TREASURY

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

### The Power of Influence

**“Do not perform the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled; and do not perform the practice of the land of Canaan to which I bring you, and do not follow their traditions” (Vayikra 18:3).**

Would it occur to anyone that Am Yisrael, the Chosen Nation who had already received the Torah, would want to follow the practices of the nations? Furthermore, the Torah mentions following the practices of Egypt and Canaan, harsh and abominable nations. As we know, Am Yisrael only merited being redeemed from Egypt because they did not change their names, dress, and language and did not intermingle with the Egyptians. If so, why did Hashem command the Jewish people not to follow the traditions of the nations, when they themselves had already proved their great caution in guarding their Jewish identity?

This command seems comparable to commanding a wealthy person not to behave like a pauper; it is totally unnecessary. So why did the Torah find it necessary to command the Chosen Nation not to behave like the most immodest and abominable nations of the world?

*Chazal* explain (see *Rashi, Bamidbar 15:39*): “The eye sees and the heart desires.” The way of the world is that the eye is drawn after materialistic temptations. Although a person does not wish to misbehave, it can happen that suddenly, against his will, he sees some temptation and his heart is quickly drawn after his eyes. He finds himself transgressing the most severe sins! This being the case, it is clear that Bnei Yisrael themselves do not wish to follow the practices of the nations, but Hashem can read thoughts and emotions and is aware of human nature, and therefore found it necessary to command Am Yisrael about this matter. Bnei Yisrael themselves do not wish to resemble the nations but are exposed to their deeds and practices. They can slowly be drawn after them and actually commit these acts themselves.

When Bnei Yisrael were in Egypt, Hashem awarded them with special protection so that they should not assimilate with the Egyptians. Hashem knew that if Bnei Yisrael will take just one more small step and enter the fiftieth gate of impurity, their fall will be irreversible and they will no longer merit being redeemed from Egypt.

# a NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



## Hashem is Part of every True Friendship

There is a close connection between this week's *parsha* and the holy days of this period, the days of Sefirat Ha'Omer, during which we are required to rectify our *middot* – specifically the way we relate to our fellow man.

The attribute of love and brotherhood between man and his fellow is extremely important. The Admor of Rozhin expounds beautifully on the verse in this week's *parsha*, "You shall love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem" (*Vayikra* 19:18). When two Jews love each other with all their heart and are prepared to do anything for each other, in line with the concept of "you shall love your fellow as yourself," Hashem says to them, "I am Hashem" – **I am interested in dwelling among you and being a part of your relationship.**

The *gaon* and *tzaddik* Rabbi Aryeh Shechter *zt"l* relates a story (*Aryeh Sha'ag*) about two friends who were extremely devoted and faithful to one another, bound with heart and soul. It happened that some unscrupulous people falsely accused one of them, and as a result he was brought to court and sentenced to death.

His faithful friend spared no effort, toil, and bother, doing all he could to save his friend. But to his great sorrow, all his efforts were to no avail.

When the appointed hour arrived and the condemned was about to be taken to the gallows, they turned to him as was the custom, allowing him to state his final request before being executed.

The man asked to be allowed to return home to his family, to his wife and children who were in a different country, so that he could take leave of them before his death. Of course his request was rejected out of fear that he

would exploit the opportunity to escape and disappear.

This is when his good friend intervened and declared, "I am prepared to sit in prison as a hostage until my friend returns from his hometown. And if he doesn't return, I am prepared to be executed instead of him!"

Many tried to prevent this faithful friend from carrying out this dangerous step, but out of his great love for his friend he refused to listen to them. He was happy to sit in jail, if it meant that his good friend could take one last look at his dear and beloved family and part from them before his death.

The final day arrived; the condemned was supposed to return to the gallows but there was no sign of him! All the various advisors and sages mocked the friend who was still in jail, "We told you so! We warned you!" But the faithful friend claimed passionately, "It seems my friend was held back from returning, for if not he certainly would have come back on time! And even if he does not manage to return, I am prepared to die instead of him."

When the appointed hour arrived and the condemned had not yet returned to serve his sentence, they took his friend to the gallows and prepared to execute him.

At the last second, with the noose already tied around his neck, a horse came galloping up. It fell to the ground, thick lather frothing from its mouth, and the condemned jumped off it crying out in alarm, "Did I manage to get here on time, or G-d forbid have I come too late? Is my good friend still alive?! I was delayed on the way through no fault of my own. I did all I could to get here on time so that my good friend should not die instead of me, G-d forbid!"

The two friends fell on each other's necks in tears, but a stormy argument quickly

broke out between them. This is what the friend who was already prepared for the gallows claimed: "They were about to execute me. I already made peace with the fact that I am about to depart from this world, therefore I am the one who should be killed, while you should return home in peace to your dear wife and children."

But the one condemned to death claimed to the contrary: "I was the one sentenced to death, there's no way that you are going to die in my place!" He begged the executioners, "Please, release my friend and let him live the remainder of his life in peace, and hang me as I was sentenced in the court case!"

A great tumult broke out at the site and rather than carrying out the sentence, it was pushed off for further clarification. The matter quickly came to the attention of the king who ordered the two friends to appear before him. They were brought to his palace and the king asked them to relate in detail what had occurred between them.

The friends told the king the entire truth. "We are friends who are bound to each other with heart and soul. Each one of us prefers to give up his life to save his friend's life, even though in truth both of us are innocent."

The king was deeply touched by these words and enthusiastically declared, "I am prepared to have compassion on both your lives on one condition: Allow me join your friendship; I strongly desire to be a third partner in this beautiful relationship!"

This is the meaning of the verse, "You shall love your fellow as yourself." If you love your friend just as you love yourself, then "I am Hashem." Hashem, so to speak, joins the relationship as a Holy partner.

This is true Ahavat Yisrael!



**"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"**

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