



# שמע קולנו

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## KIRUV RECHOKIM

*Rabbi Michael Taubes*

We find in this Parsha a Posuk which forbids one to hate a fellow Jew and then commands one to rebuke a fellow Jew who commits a transgression (VaYikra 19:17). The Ramban, in his commentary on the Torah (ibid.), explains the connection between these two parts of the Posuk by saying that one should not hate someone who commits a sin, but one should rather reproach that person and show him the correct way to behave. This is the Mitzvah of Hocheiach Tochiach, as discussed in the Gemara in Erchin (16b). The Ramban (ibid.) adds that the conclusion of the Posuk (ibid.) implies that one who fails to observe this Mitzvah will himself be blamed for the other person's transgressions, as suggested in the Targum Onkelos there (ibid.). This idea is supported by the Mishnah and Gemara in Shabbos (54b) which blames one of the Tannaim himself for a sin committed by his neighbor because he didn't reproach that neighbor. The Rambam (Hilchos De'os - Perek 6: Halachos 6-7) consequently rules that one should keep quiet when seeing another person sin, but should speak to the person nicely and object to the sin which has been committed, rather than bear a grudge against him.

The next Posuk in this Parsha (19:18) contains the famous dictum "Ve'Ahavta L'Re'Acha Kamocha" "Love your neighbor as yourself," which, as the Yerushalmi in Nedarim (Perek 9 – Halacha 4: 30b) states, Rabbi Akiva held to be the key principle of the entire Torah. The Rashbam, in commenting on that Posuk (ibid.-Ve'Ahavta), writes that this requirement to love one's neighbor applies only if that neighbor is a good person. At first glance, this would seem to indicate that if one has a wicked neighbor, he may hate him, which would contradict the opening phrase of the previous Posuk (19:17), as discussed above. The Rambam (ibid. Halacha 3) rules that one is required to love every Jew as he loves himself. The Hagahos Maimoniyos (ibid. - Os 1) qualifies this, however, by limiting this requirement and stating that one must love only a fellow Jew who observes the Torah and its Mitzvos, as

opposed to a wicked person whom one can hate; this too seems to contradict the prohibition to hate cited above. He resolves the problem by defining as a wicked person only one who refuses to accept the Tochachah, the rebuking, of another, implying clearly that one must first attempt to reproach the other person and warn him as to the correct path. Until one has done this, he must indeed love this fellow Jew, like all others; only after this fellow Jew has refused to accept this Tochachah may he be disliked. This idea appears to be corroborated by the Shulcahn Aruch (Choshen Mishpat – Siman 272: Se'if 11).

Interestingly, the Rambam (Hilchos Mamerim – Perek 3: Halacha 3) writes that certain people are in an entirely different category because they were never educated in the proper way to begin with. They are like children who were kidnapped and raised among non-Jews and therefore, through no fault of their own, they are unfamiliar with Torah and Mitzvos. Such people, says the Rambam (ibid.), must be encouraged to repent by attracting them to return to the Torah. We thus see that the effort must be made to engage in Kiruv Rechokim, to bring back those who are far off the path of Torah. In his Sefer HaMitzvos, the Rambam (Mitzvas Aseh 3) includes this idea as a part of the Mitzvah of loving Hashem; the Minchas Chinuch (Mitzvah 239: Os 4) equates this to saving a person's life and returning to a person his lost property. In more modern times, the Chofetz Chaim, in an essay called Chizuk HaDas, among other places, writes of the tremendous importance of Kiruv Rechokim. The Chazon Ish (Chelek Yoreh Deah – Hilchos Shechitah – Siman 2: Se'if Katan 16) also stresses that we must all each out with words of love and try our utmost to bring people back to the light of Torah.

It is worth noting that this appears that the obligation of Kiruv Rechokim applies not only to the individual, but to the community as well. The Gemara in Shevuos (39a) learns from a Posuk elsewhere in the Torah (ibid. 19: 26, 37) that there is a principle called Areivus, which means that every Jew is

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responsible, like a guarantor, for every other Jew. This principle takes Kiruv Rechokim beyond the realm of the Mitzvah of Hocheiach Tochiach, because the Mitzvah implies only that one must help a fellow Jew take care of his spiritual needs. Areivus, however, implies that one must treat a fellow Jew's spiritual needs as if they were in fact his own needs. This explains why, as mentioned above, one can be blamed for a sin committed by another person, just as a guarantor on a loan can be forced to pay the money if the borrower defaults. The Gemara in Sotah (37b) implies that this principle of Areivus went into effect only once the Jews entered Eretz Yisrael, specifically, when the new Bris was established at Har Gerizim and Har Eival (Yehoshua Perek 8). This Bris, as the Torah implies (Devarim 29: 13-19), was established not with individuals but with the collective Jewish community, and it would thus seem that the obligation of Areivus is likewise a communal obligation. Indeed, Rav Yerucham Perlow, in his commentary to the Sefer HaMitzvos of Rabbeinu Saadyah Gaon (Parsha 57), points out that the Geonim enumerate the law of Areivus as a Mitzvah upon the Tzibbur. Apparently, there is also this communal obligation of Kiruv Rechokim which goes beyond the individual obligation of Hocheiach Tochiach.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (Perek 5: Mishna 22) states that one who brings merit to the community will be saved from sinning himself; the Meiri there (ibid. – Beis HaBechirah) comments that this is the most righteous thing one can do. Likewise, the Gemara in Tamid (28a) indicates that one who reproaches another properly earns a place with Hashem.

#### **Editor's Note - mistake in last week's issue**

In last week's issue of Shema Koleinu (Yom Ha'atzmaut edition), the article titled "Eilu v'eilu - Medinat Yisrael B'halacha" mistakenly quoted the Tzitz Eliezer as stating that majority of rabbanim accepted the position of the Megillat Esther regarding the issue of establishing a Jewish government in Eretz Yisrael. This is incorrect as it actually is the **Minchas Elazar** who wrote this.

## THE SEVERITY OF LASHON HARA

*Yehuda Tager*

*Vayidaber Hashem el Moshe acharei mos shnei b'nei Aharon.*

What do the deaths of Nadav and Avihu have to do with the *Avoda* of Yom Kippur? To answer this question, we must analyze why they died in the first place. Ramban notes, that Nadav and Avihu died serving Hashem. R' Bachya elaborates saying that they died for two reasons, because they came too close to Har Sinai at *Matan Torah*, and because they brought fire without *Ketores*. Rashi says that Aharon was reminded of his children's deaths like a doctor who tells his patient to follow instructions in order to avoid ending up like another person who died. Rabainu Bachya continues, saying that Aharon was told to come with the *Ketores* specifically with the pretext of the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, because they came missing the spices. We see that the *Ketores* is a very important aspect of the *Avoda*. Why is the *Ketores* so important?

The Gemara (Yoma 60) says that the *Ketores* atones for *lashon hara*. Chazal tell us that there is a parallel *Bais Hamikdash* in *Shamayim*, and that every *mitzva* and *avaira* also has a match in *Shamayim*. The Chafetz Chaim notes that *lashon hara* pollutes the *Kodesh Hakodashim* itself, thereby obstructing *kapparah* through the *korbanos* offered in the *Kodesh* on Yom Kippur (sprinkling blood on *paroches*). Therefore, the *Ketores* must be brought before Aharon is able to enter the *Kodesh* and bring *Kapparah*. This leaves us with an important question. What is the connection between *Ketores* and *Lashon Hara*?

The *Chelbona*, one of the spices of the *Ketores*, was foul smelling. Rashi explains that this was to show us that we must not disregard or degrade the sinners of B'nei Yisroel. We see that the *Ketores* represents the collaboration of all Jews for the purpose of serving Hashem. When people serve Hashem together they are able to create a *Raiach Nichoach*. *Lashon hara* drives people away from each other, and we atone for it with the *Ketores* which represents unity.

We can still wonder why *lashon hara* is so severe. Chazal tell us that there are three terrible sins: idol worship, bloodshed, and immorality, but *lashon hara* is worse than all of them. Why is this so? Only *lashon hara* attacks the essence of the victim. When one kills another or is immoral, there are often exterior considerations, and idol worship is also not necessarily out of spite. However, *lashon hara* is the act of demeaning the person himself, not just getting rid of an obstacle or failing to see the truth of Hashem. To fix this *aveira*, one must accept the

other person as he is. Just as the attack was not merely superficial or based on some secondary consideration, so too one who wants to fix this *aveira* must love the person himself and accept him.

Thus, when atoning for *lashon hara* with the *Ketores*, we must engulf the Kodesh with the smoke of unity and acceptance. Nadav and Avihu did not bring that with them, rather they brought fire. Fire is both a blessing and a curse, as it is both constructive and destructive. Nadav and Avihu came closer and closer to Hashem, seeing only the beauty of doing this. They also only saw the beauty of fire, and, therefore, offered it. This *middah* of seeing the good in things is a wonderful *middah*, but it needs to be moderated. The idea of overcoming *lashon hara* and creating unity is seeing the flaws and accepting them, not necessarily ignoring them. That is why Aharon brings this mixture of sweet and foul spices, to create this acceptance on Yom Kippur.

Rav Moshe notes that the first *pasuk* in this week's *parshah* seems to introduce a conversation separate from that of the *avoda* of Yom Kippur. The only information we have about this conversation is that it refers to the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. He suggests that this is because the death themselves are a *kiddush* Hashem and needed to be addressed. Rav Zilberstien asks how this could be, because one may not say *lashon hara* about the dead. He answers that one may slander the dead for constructive purposes. This is the theme of the *Ketores*, that we do not hide their flaws, rather we build off them and create a *Raich Nichoach* with both our merits and also with our flaws. We should all be *zoche* to grow and use our flaws to become better people and better *ovdai* Hashem.

## MOSHE, MALACHIM, MILAH, AND SELF IMPROVEMENT

*Asher Finkelstein*

Parshas Achrei-Mos discusses the *Avodah* in the Beis Hamikdash on Yom Kippur. The Torah describes how the Kohen Gadol should enter the Kodesh Hakadashim, the Holy of Holies. At the time the Kohen Gadol is performing the *Avodah* in the Kodesh Hakadashim, the *pasuk* says that, "Any person shall not be" in the Mishkan/Beis Hamikdash. Interestingly enough, the Talmud Yerushalmi (Yoma 5:1) interprets this *pasuk* to say that even angels should not be there at that time. But how can there be a command in the Torah directed towards angels? Don't we say that the Torah was not given to the angels (Berachos 25b)? Rav Moshe Soloveitchik explains that this *pasuk* is not a prohibition against entering the Beis Hamikdash during the Kohen Gadol's *Avodah*. Rather, the *pasuk* is stating a requirement in the Kohen's *Avodah*, that in order for it to be *כִּשְׁרָה* no one else (angels included) can be in the Beis Hamikdash. Therefore, this is not a Mitzvah being directed towards the angels, but simply a requirement for the Kohen Gadol's *Avodah*.

However, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik's father, Rav Chaim Brisker, suggested that perhaps on such a holy day as Yom Kippur, there can be prohibitions even on angels. At first glance, this

explanation seems quite baffling. After all, what about Yom Kippur serves to change the fact that the Torah was not given to the angels? To understand this, we need to examine a passage in the Gemara Shabbos (88b) which describes Moshe's argument with the angels over who should receive the *Torah*. The angels wanted to keep the *Torah* for themselves, and pleaded with G-d not to give it to the Jews, as flesh and blood were certainly not worthy of receiving the great and holy *Torah*. When Hashem told Moshe to respond to the angels, Moshe said he was afraid they would burn him up with the steam in their mouths. G-d told Moshe to grab onto His Throne of Honor for protection. After doing that, Moshe told the angels that it was human beings, not they, that truly needed the *Torah*. After all, he said, do angels have an evil inclination or jealousy that they need the command, "Thou shall not murder"? He proceeded to give other examples, and the angels acquiesced, and each one, "became to him a lover, and gave him something".

The Angel of Death even taught him a life-saving trick. This is the simple explanation of the story, but if we turn to a story in Nedarim (32a), we will see that there was a much more intense drama occurring in the heavens at that time than one may see at first. The Gemara in Nedarim says that when Moshe delayed the *Bris Millah* of his son, two angels were sent to kill him. They began to swallow him up, but once Tziporah circumcised the boy, they let Moshe go. Moshe then killed one of the angels. The Maharsha explains that these angels were connected with the *Yetzer Hara*, who is also called an *arel*, or an uncircumcised one. Moshe's killing of one of the angels represented his partial victory over the forces of the *Yetzer Hara* at that time. Now we can have a deeper understanding of what was going on in the heavens in the story in the Gemara *Shabbos*. Not only were Moshe and the angels arguing about who should get the *Torah*, but perhaps the angels also had a score to settle with Moshe Rabbeinu. Although his action of killing the angel may have been justified, in the angelic realm, Moshe was considered a murderer for having killed one of their fellow angels. That is why Moshe said to Hashem, "I fear they (the angels) will burn me up with the steam in their mouths." He feared retribution from the angels. Because of this, Hashem told Moshe, "Grab onto my Throne of Honor".

This is similar to the idea of one who incurs the death penalty running to seek asylum on the *karnos hamizbeach*, the horns of the altar. This strategy was employed by Adoniah (Melachim Alef 1:50) and then Yoav (Melachim Alef 2:28) when each feared death at the hands of Shlomo. Although this strategy didn't work out too well for Yoav (he was killed regardless), perhaps this was why Hashem told Moshe to grab hold of the Throne of Hashem at that point. Then, Moshe went on to explain to the angels that their opposition to the Jews receiving the *Torah* and their antipathy towards him, were both a result of a lack of understanding of human nature and the nature of the *Torah*. The angels thought the *Torah* was meant for perfection. Moshe reminded them about the commands against murder, adultery, and kidnapping, clearly demonstrating that the *Torah* was not meant for those who were perfect. He explained to them that perfection is not part of the human experience. Rather, the central idea of the human spiritual experience, and, therefore, the *Torah*, is growth. This, Moshe explained to the angels, was why he killed the angel after the *Bris* incident. The angel represented the *Yetzer Hara*. Moshe was growing spiritually, and that was why he was able, and *had* to kill that angel. He was doing *Teshuva*, repentance, and he was ready to grow. That, said Moshe, is why the Jews must receive the *Torah*, and not the

Moshe, and, therefore, says the Gemara, they “each became to him (Moshe) like a lover.” They were no longer angry with Moshe.

Now we can understand Rav Chaim Brisker’s idea that on the day of Yom Kippur, with so much sanctity, even angels can have a commandment. The day of Yom Kippur seems to be about perfection. In fact, many of our customs on Yom Kippur reflect our almost angelic nature on that day. We are wiped clean of sin, and can now attain perfection. With this in mind, the angels desire to enter the Kodesh Hakdashim with the Kohen Gadol. On the day of perfection, surely the angels can join in the holiest *Avodah* of the day. For this reason, the pasuk we quoted earlier tells us that this understanding of Yom Kippur is totally incorrect. This day is not about perfection; it is about spiritual growth. We do *Teshuva*, and we can reach greater heights than we were ever able to before. This is the essence of Yom Kippur. Therefore, the angels have no place in the Kodesh Hakdashim on Yom Kippur with the Kohen Gadol. The angels’ spiritual status is static. Only the human being, who has potential for growth, can enter the Holy of Holies on this day of growth. Therefore, the angels are commanded not to enter at that time.

## THE MEANING OF KEDUSHA

*Avi Sebbag*

The Parsha of Kedoshim opens when G-d tells Moshe, “Speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, 'Be holy,' because I, the L-rd your G-d, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). This command to 'be holy' is the opening of the Parsha because it includes all the other commandments in the Parsha which follow it. This mitzvah commands us that when we do G-d’s mitzvot they should not be treated as a burden or yoke upon us. In other words, we should not do the mitzvot with the desire to be finished with them as soon as possible, like a child who runs away from a school where he has been forcefully compelled to study; rather, a person’s desire to do the mitzvot should emanate from the depths of his heart.

It is even possible that a person could be very scrupulous and work very hard to do the mitzvot, yet he is actually far away from them. Despite his strenuous efforts, it might be that the mitzvot are really a heavy burden upon him, and his heart is really bound to material things and the affairs of this world. Therefore, the Torah commands us with this inclusive mitzvah to 'be holy'. The Hebrew word for 'holy' is “kadosh,” and it is well-known that the main implication of the word kadosh is “separate”. This is true in both its positive and negative connotations. For example, a concubine is a “kedaishah” because she is separated and set aside for sin. In its positive connotation, the word kadosh (holy) implies separation and withdrawal from the material into the spiritual.

Although all of the mitzvot raise and separate a person from the material, this function also depends somewhat upon the mentality of the person who is doing them. Therefore, we are commanded not to do the mitzvot because of compulsion or as a merely external act; rather, we should do them as acts deriving from our inner being, and

we should completely identify with them. One of the mitzvot commanded in the Parsha is the prohibition to eat fruit from a tree for the first three years that it bears fruit. For the first three years, the fruit of a tree is called “*orla*,” the same word used for that part of the skin which is removed by circumcision. The verse (Leviticus 19:23) which prohibits eating fruit which is *orla* uses a difficult arrangement of words: “*ve'oraltem orlato*”. The Ibn Ezra explains these difficult words by stating that firstly, that they do not constitute the actual prohibition since the verse concludes by stating explicitly, “...You shall not eat them”. Then he writes, “It shall be considered in your eyes as an uncircumcised thing.”

According to what has been written here, we can attempt to explain what the Ibn Ezra intended. When a person throws away the fruit of the first three years for which he laboured, then he should think that it is as if this fruit is unhealthy or spoiled and he also does not want to eat it. In other words, he should identify with the mitzvah and want to do it as if it were his own desire. That is how it should appear in his own eyes.

In the same way, a person who wants to advance in his service of G-d must strive to make his desires and emotions consistent with the Will of G-d, as our sages have taught, “Make your will His Will...” The will of a person should become completely identified with G-d’s Will. In this way he will become close to G-d and will become more like Him.

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