

CHILDREN OF THE KING

by Shlomo Katz

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Today's Learning:

Eduyot 4:8-9

Orach Chaim 629:15-17

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 31

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Ma'aser Sheni 1

We read in this week's parashah (19:28), "You may not cut your flesh for the dead . . . I am Hashem." Rashi writes earlier in the parashah (19:17) that the expression "I am Hashem" usually means "I can be trusted to pay the reward for your good deeds."

Look in what context Hashem promises to reward us! says R' Isaac Sher z"l (Rosh Yeshiva in Slobodka and of the transplanted Slobodka Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; died 1952). "Don't injure yourselves, and I will reward you."

This is just one reminder of Hashem's immense love for us, notes R' Sher. Another is the verse in Shir Hashirim (6:3), "I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me." Hashem actually allows us to call Him, who is so exalted, our "Beloved." Not only that, but that verse concludes, "Who shepherds us amongst roses." What does this mean? That Hashem desires to make our lives as pleasant and "sweet-smelling" as possible.

The above mitzvah (regarding injuring oneself) is taught again in Devarim (14:1): "You are Hashem's children; do not cut yourselves . . ." Again, we see that Hashem rewards us as His children even for doing what is obviously good for us. However, we also see what is expected of us. Chazal say that the term "children" also means "students," particularly, students of Torah. We must therefore act like Hashem's children, firstly, by learning Torah, and also by carrying ourselves with the regal bearing and pride in our Torah that befits children of the King of Kings. (Leket Sichot Mussar II p.7)

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: 'I am Hashem, your Elokim'." (18:2) R' David Zvi Hoffman z"l (1844-1926; rosh yeshiva at Berlin's Hidesheimer Seminary) writes: G-d introduces the laws of incest and other forbidden relationships, and stresses their importance, by reintroducing himself, so-to-speak. "I am Hashem" - your merciful Father. "I am Elokim" - the Creator of the laws of nature. "I am your Elokim" - I have chosen you to be a holy nation living a holy life.

"I am Hashem." Hashem, which signifies the Attribute of Loving- kindness, is one of the Names He used when He gave Adam a wife (see Bereishit 2:18). In His love for man, G-d gave him a wife to be his aizer / helper. Therefore, man has no need for forbidden relationships.

"I am Elokim." This Name signifies G-d as the Creator. G-d has established what is a natural relationship and what is unnatural.

"I am your Elokim." Many of the forbidden relationships are prohibited to all of the descendants of Noach, but Hashem has placed additional restrictions and laws upon Bnei Yisrael as a means to achieve kedushah / holiness. (Sefer Vayikra Meforash B'yda' R' D.Z. Hoffman)

"You shall love your fellow as yourself -- I am Hashem." (19:18)

The Gemara (Shabbat 31a) relates the story of a would-be convert who approached the sage Hillel and said, "Teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot."

Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to others. This is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Go learn it."

How does this statement encapsulate the entire Torah? R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935) explains: It is impossible to love another as you love yourself unless you see the two of you as organs of the same body. This, in turn, can only come about if you see all of the Jewish people as working together to accomplish the Divine plan - the unification of all of creation under G-d's banner.

This Divine purpose is alluded to by the concluding teaching of the Mishnah (Uktzin 3:12), "G-d did not find any vessel that could hold a blessing for Yisrael except for shalom / peace or harmony." The ultimate goal of all our service is for Klal Yisrael, and then the world, to unite in the recognition of G-

d. But until this is achieved, G-d cannot shower His full blessing on us, for the vessel - peace and harmony - is yet incomplete.

(Midbar Shur: Hadrush Harishon)

"Any man from Bnei Yisrael and from the proselyte who lives with Yisrael, who shall offer of his descendants to Molech, shall be put to death; the am ha'aretz / people of the land shall pelt him with stones." (20:2)

This verse refers to a certain idolatrous practice that involved passing one's child through a fire. Why, asks R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (1835-1922), does the Torah specify that the "people of the land," the common folk, shall pelt him with stones? He explains:

There are two kinds of people who sin. One sins to satisfy his own desires (for example, because he loves the taste of this or that non-kosher food), while the other sins to spite G-d, so-to- speak. The one who sins to obtain pleasure is not likely to try to entice others to sin. To the contrary, he knows deep down that he should control his desires, and he hopes that his son will grow up to be better than he is. On the other hand, the one who sins to anger G-d is likely to recruit others to his cause.

A person whose life is threatened by a dangerous animal may kill that animal, even on Shabbat. Similarly, one who would offer his own son as a sacrifice is a (spiritual) danger to others, for he obviously is sinning only out of spite and is likely to try to recruit others to his ways. Thus, says the verse: The people of the land, the common folk, shall pelt him with stones.

(Torat Yechiel)

"If two people are sitting and there are no words of Torah passing between them, this is called a session of scorners, as it is written (Tehilim 1:1-2), '[Praiseworthy is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked . . .] and did not sit in a session of scorners. [Rather, his only desire is in the Torah of Hashem.]'" (Avot, Ch. 3)

R' Moshe Sofer z"l (1763-1839; the "Chatam Sofer"; foremost rabbi and rosh yeshiva in 19th century Hungary) asks: The verse that praises the tzaddik for not sitting "in a session of scorners" implies that a tzaddik would sit with one scorners. Can this be?

He answers that the verse must be understood as follows: Man is a combination of two competing parts - the intellect and the body. The body is naturally drawn toward joining forces with the yetzer hara, while the intellect remains aloof. The intellect is the tzaddik, and the yetzer hara and the body are the two scorners.

Only through Torah study can the intellect/tzaddik attract the body/scorner to his side. Thus, if a person is not studying Torah, his intellect is like tzaddik sitting among two scorners. "Praiseworthy is

the man who did not sit in a session of scorers." Says our Mishnah: If two people are sitting and no words are passing between them, each of them is sitting in a session of scorers.
(Masechet Avot Im Peirush Ha'Chatam Sofer)

R' Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l

Part III

In December 1940, upon the passing of Yeshiva College / Yeshiva Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan (RIETS) president, Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel, R' Soloveitchik was proposed as a candidate for that position. However, Dr. Revel's death was followed within two months by the passing of the institution's rosh yeshiva, R' Moshe Soloveitchik, and many felt that R' Soloveitchik was the logical candidate to inherit his father's position instead of the presidency. In light of the adoration that generations of students would later have for R' Soloveitchik, it is interesting to note that there was substantial student opposition to his appointment. The reason was that R' Soloveitchik was an active member of the Agudas Harabbonim / Union of Orthodox Rabbis (not to be confused with the O-U), an association of European-trained, Yiddish-speaking pulpit rabbis that was often at odds with the younger, American-trained and often-American-born, secularly- educated, RIETS graduates. As a compromise, the yeshiva's board resolved to offer R' Soloveitchik a one-year contract, "during which time he was to prove his usefulness."

Needless to say, R' Soloveitchik apparently satisfied the board, as he went on to teach at the yeshiva for 44 years, until ill health forced his retirement in 1985. Throughout his career at RIETS, he continued to live in Boston and to take an active interest in Jewish education in that city. Among his other activities, he was honorary president of the Zionist Mizrahi organization. (In 1959, R' Soloveitchik was proposed as a candidate for Israel's Chief Rabbinate, but he declined to be considered, explaining that he did not want a position where his rulings might be debated in the Cabinet.)

It has been claimed that R' Soloveitchik was the teacher of the majority of American-trained Orthodox pulpit rabbis in the second half of the 20th century. In part, his popularity derived from his ability to relate to the changing nature of American youth over his long career. Another factor was his ability to lecture equally comfortably on complex Talmudic subjects and profound philosophical issues, whether in Yiddish, English or Hebrew. (In the yeshiva, he officially switched from lecturing in Yiddish to English in 1960.)

For many years, R' Soloveitchik delivered an annual yahrzeit- shiur in memory of his father. These lectures were attended by thousands of listeners, including many from outside the Yeshiva University community, and sometimes lasted four or five hours. He also delivered regular public lectures in other forums.

In the tradition of his ancestors, R' Soloveitchik published relatively little until the last decade of his life. Nevertheless, there are today dozens of books containing his halachic and aggadic talks, some published from students' notes and others from cassette tapes of R' Soloveitchik himself. (Some of these tapes are themselves widely available.) R' Soloveitchik passed away during Chol Ha'moed Pesach, 18 Nissan 5753/ April 8, 1993. He had three children, Dr. Atarah Twersky, Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein and Rabbi Dr. Haym Soloveitchik.

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.
