

TOO FAMILIAR

by Shlomo Katz

Parshios Acharei Mos & Kedoshim

Too Familiar

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Today's Learning:
Sukkah 5:2-3
O.C. 548:1-3
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Pesachim 109
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Terumat 1

Much of the first of this week's two parashot is devoted to describing the sacrificial service that the Kohen Gadol was required to perform whenever he entered the Kodesh Ha'kodashim / The Holy of Holies. The Torah says (Vayikra 16:2), "He shall not come at all times into the Sanctuary . . ." Why not?

Rashi explains: "Because My Shechinah is revealed there, Aharon should be careful not to enter regularly." R' Chaim Shmuelevitz z"l (1902-1979; Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva in Shanghai and Yerushalayim) elaborates, saying: "Habit is the greatest enemy of one who wishes to feel holy and uplifted. When one stands opposite that which is sublime and exalted, and in his soul burn sparks of a holy fire, habit sneaks in and douses the embers one by one until the entire fire is extinguished."

R' Shmuelevitz continues: The prophet Yechezkel writes (46:9), "When the populace comes before Hashem on the appointed days, whoever comes in by way of the northern gate [of the Temple] to prostrate himself shall go out by way of the southern gate, and whoever comes in 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." R' Yosef Yaavetz z"l (died 1507) explains that Hashem does not want a person to see one of the gates twice, lest he equate it in his mind with the gate of his own house. Likewise, one should not see the same wall of the Bet Hamikdash twice lest he equate it with the walls of his own house. In fact, writes R' Yaavetz, this is what caused the sin of the Golden Calf, for they took the Ohel Mo'ed / Tent of Meeting for granted and began to despise it. Therefore, after the sin, we read (Shemot 33:7) that Moshe dismantled the Tent and rebuilt it outside of the camp. (Sichot Mussar 5731, No. 16)

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

The Gemara (Shabbat 31a) relates the now well-known incident in which a prospective convert asked Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while the convert stood on one leg. Hillel replied, "That which is hateful to you do not do to your friend. That is the entire Torah, the rest is commentary--go learn it!"

Many commentaries ask: Is this really the entire Torah?

R' Eliyahu Shick z"l (see biography below) explains: This can be understood in light of the following midrash: Rabbi Akiva says, "You shall love your fellow as yourself"--this is a major principle of the Torah. Do not say, "Since I have been debased, let my friend be debased with me. Since I have been ruined, let my friend be ruined with me." Rabbi Tanchuma added to this, [the midrash continues,] "If you do, know whom it is that you are debasing, for man was made in G-d's image."

R' Shick continues: Before Adam's sin, man's body and soul both were pure. As a result of Adam's sin, the body was damaged and it must now die in order to achieve its correction. Also, the Gemara (Shabbat 153b) comments on the verse in Kohelet (12:7), "The soul returns to G-d Who gave it"- "Return it to Him as He gave it to you. Just as He gave it to you in a pure state, so you should return it in a pure state." This implies that man's sins not only do not rectify the damage to his body, they also damage his soul. Indeed, the body and soul are called "friends." If you harm one, you harm the other.

The entire purpose of performing Torah and mitzvot is to correct the damage caused by Adam's sin,

R' Shick writes. This is what Hillel meant: "That which is hateful to you do not do to your friend." That which is hateful to your body, do not do to your soul. That is the essence of the entire Torah.

Why did Hillel phrase his instruction as a negative commandment? Why did he not say, "You shall love your fellow as yourself"? R' Shick suggests an alternative explanation to the Gemara which answers this second question. [Ed. note: Since neither explanation answers both our questions, perhaps R' Shick meant them to be complementary, not alternatives.]

The Talmud Yerushalmi comments that a person who accidentally cut off one of his hands would never cut off his other hand in revenge. This is the attitude that we should adopt towards the harm caused to us by other Jews. Each of us is part of the same body of Klal Yisrael. Just as we would never take revenge on our own bodies, so we should never take revenge on our fellow Jews.

It turns out that the statement, "That which is hateful to you do not do to your friend" alludes to two different commandments. One of them is, in fact, the mitzvah of "You shall love your fellow as yourself." However, Hillel's statement also reminds us of another prohibition found in this week's parashah, i.e., the prohibition on taking revenge.

(Ein Eliyahu)

"Yesod Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah"

("The Foundation and Root of Divine Service")

This year, we are presenting excerpts from the work Yesod Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah by R' Alexander Ziskind z"l (died 1794). The primary theme of this work is improving one's concentration in prayer. In the introduction to his work, the author comments on a verse in this week's parashah (19:32):

"You shall honor pnei zakein / the 'pnim' of a sage." What does this mean? Why didn't the verse say simply, "You shall honor a sage"?

A scholar whom people regularly honor runs the risk of becoming haughty. What should he do? This verse tells us. The word "pnim" means "insides." When a sage is honored by others, he should tell himself that it is not his person that is being honored. Rather, the Divinely-given intellect within him is being honored. If the sage remembers this, he will have no reason to be haughty, since he did nothing to cause this intellect to be placed within him.

To the contrary, a person who has been blessed with intellect must constantly remind himself of G-d's greatness and kindness. Especially at the moment when others are honoring him, the scholar should reflect on the majesty and glory of Hashem. In this way, he will bring pleasure ("nachas") to G-d.

Pirkei Avot

"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 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 may 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 / scorners to his side. Thus, if a person is not studying Torah, his intellect is like a tzaddik sitting among two scorners. "Praiseworthy is the man who did not sit in a session of scorners." Says our Mishnah: If two people are sitting and no words of Torah are passing between them, each of them is sitting in a session of scorners.

(Masechet Avot Im Peirush Ha'Chatam Sofer)

R' Eliyahu Shick z"l

R' Elinke Lieder, as our subject was commonly known (after the town of Lida where he served as rabbi for 20 years), was born near Vilna in 1809. Young Elinke's father died when the boy was 12 weeks old and, in his writings, R' Elinke expresses his gratitude to his uncle, R' Pinchas, and his stepfather, R' David, who raised him. Nothing is known about R' Elinke's early education, but after his marriage he became a student of R' Binyamin Diskin, father of R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin.

R' Elinke held a number of rabbinic positions in his career before being appointed to the prestigious rabbinate of Lida. In one of his early positions, he was the mentor of R' Chaim Leib Tiktinski, who later went on to head the Mir Yeshiva. (R' Chaim Leib was then a young orphan and R' Elinke took the boy under his wing. Recognizing the lad's talents, R' Elinke used to appoint him to teach the rabbi's classes to the townsfolk if R' Elinke was unavailable.)

One of the most significant problems facing Russian Jews in the mid-1800s was the issue of the "Cantonists," i.e., Jewish boys who were torn away from their homes and drafted into the Russian army at a tender age. It was very common that communities would meet their quota of conscripts by kidnapping the children of the poorest families, while the town's leaders and wealthy families turned

a blind eye. R' Elinke cried out against this injustice, applying to these people the verse (Yishayah 42:24), "Who delivered Yaakov to plunder and made Yisrael looters." He observed that "Yaakov" usually refers to the lower classes of the nation while "Yisrael" refers to the dignitaries. However, R' Elinke did not just lecture about the problem. On at least one occasion, he physically led a mob that attacked a prison and freed a large group of young boys.

R' Elinke left several written works, of which the best known is Ein Eliyahu, a commentary on the aggadic portions of the Talmud. An excerpt appears in this issue. He also authored a commentary on Pirkei Avot entitled Derech Avot.

In his old age, R' Elinke served as Rabbi of Kobrin. He died in 1874. (Source: Rabboteinu She'ba'golah)

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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 [Torah.org](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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