

A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

G-d called Moshe and spoke to him from the Appointed Tent, saying, *"Tell the Children of Israel that when any of them offer an animal to G-d, it should be ei-ther from cattle, sheep, or goats."* (Vayikra 1:1-2)

Having completed Sefer Shemos, we now begin Sefer Vayikra, otherwise known as Toras Kohanim, since it deals with the priestly service inside the Mishkan. The question is, why must the rest of us be privy to this information as well? We're not kohanim, and so much of the service that is recorded there will never be relevant to us, and the parts that are relevant will be taught to us by the kohanim when the situation demands it.

The answer was recorded in a previous parshah:

" 'You will be a kingdom of priests to Me, a holy nation.' These are the words to tell Israel." (Shemos 19:6)

Thus, as it turns out, although the vast majority of Klal Yisroel are not the officiating type of priests, we are, nevertheless, priests of G-d, even as Levi'im and Yisroelim. Therefore, even though we may never be able to actually carry out the service described therein, we have what to learn from all of it, at least on a conceptual level.

Just to show how true this is, the Arizal taught:

A person must fulfill all 613 mitzvos. Any lacking is reflected in his Nefesh according to the amount of mitzvos yet to be fulfilled. With respect to the 248 Positive Mitzvos, there are five categories. The Category One consists of those mitzvos which a person is prevented from performing because they depend upon the existence of the Temple, such as sacrifices and other similar mitzvos. There is no point in reincarnating to perform such mitzvos as long as the Temple doesn't exist. Once the Temple is re-built then he will fulfill them. The Category Two consists of those mitzvos that a person can perform such as Tzitzis and Tefillin, etc. If the person has yet to fulfill such mitzvos, he must return in a gilgul even if it takes many times until he completes them all. However, if a person has already fulfilled some mitzvos then it is enough that he reincarnates to fulfill only those mitzvos which he lacks and never fulfilled. When this is the case, it is also possible that he will sin and come to commit many transgressions. The Category Three consists of those mitzvos which a person is not obligated to perform unless the situation arises to do so, such as taking tithes, or sending away the mother bird. In general, there is no obligation to pursue such mitzvos, and nevertheless, a person will have

to reincarnate to fulfill them. However, since he is reincarnating for the sake of such mitzvos, he will not come to sin as in the case of Category Two. Category Four consists of a group of mitzvos that cannot be performed unless G-d creates the necessary circumstance, such as redeeming a first born son, or performing Yibum or Chalitzah, or divorce. For, a man has no obligation to divorce his wife unless she fails to find favor in his eyes (as it says in the Talmud): Difficult is divorce . . . even the altar weeps (Gittin 90a). If such mitzvos do not present themselves then he will not have to reincarnate to perform them, but rather he will return b'sod ibur at the appropriate time to fulfill them, after which he will leave the world immediately. However, if he had the chance to perform such a mitzvah and didn't, then he will have to reincarnate, though I did not learn from my teacher if he will be prone to sin in such a gilgul . . . Category Five consists of mitzvos that a person must try to perform, such as having children. This is the severest category of all the types of mitzvos; it will not be enough for someone who died without having children to simply reincarnate . . . Category Six is the group of mitzvos such as learning Torah which is equal to all of the mitzvos as it says, "the learning of Torah is equal to all of them" (Pe'ah 1:1). There are four levels and the mnemonic is "PaRDeS": Pshat (simple understanding), Remez (hint), Drush (exegetical), and Sod (Secret). A person needs to toil in all of them to the extent that he can seek out a teacher to educate him. If a person lacks one of these four levels relative to what he could have achieved, then he will have to reincarnate. A person must also fulfill all 613 mitzvos in action and in speech, as Chazal say that one who is involved with the section dealing with the Burnt-Offering is considered to be one who has not only offered it, but toiled in it in thought as well. One who has not performed a mitzvah on these three levels must reincarnate until all three levels have been achieved. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 11)

So, even though physically-speaking you can't be a kohen unless your father was one, you can and will have been one through reincarnation. You may be a Levi or a Yisroel in this life, having been born to one, but your soul, at some point in time, will have been born to a kohen, and you will have done the avodah. Or, perhaps you already have done the avodah in some previous incarnation.

"But," but you say, "Must I learn the laws of the priestly service in this gilgul for another gilgul?"

Not necessarily. Although learning Torah in this world affects your soul in eternal ways, and could prepare it for another station in life in another gilgul, more than likely the intended effect is for THIS gilgul. Therefore, it must be that even though we cannot function as real kohanim in terms of the Temple service, we must be able to do so on some kind of conceptual level. The question is now, what does it mean to be a kohen?

SHABBOS DAY:

Death will be absorbed forever. (Yeshayahu 25:8)

One of the main aspects of being a kohen is taharah (ritual purity). As a result, the kohen is limited in what he can do and where he can go in order to maintain a level of spiritual purity, so that he can enter the Temple grounds and participate in the service whenever necessary.

This is obvious, but what is less so obvious is what remaining tahor really means. To answer this question, we have to first appreciate where and when spiritual impurity entered the picture, and that was after the eating from the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Rah (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil). Since death came into the world as a result of eating from the tree, tuma (ritual impurity), came into the world as well, since there is no greater source of tuma than death itself.

What is unique about death that it should be such a source of ritual impurity? The essence of death is the removal of the soul from the body, which is completely pure, which results in tuma. However, is this a new state, or an existing one that the pure soul was able to overcome while attached to the body? In other words, does the removal of the soul simply allow the body to return back to its former state of impurity, or does the body achieve this state for the first time because the soul was once there, but left it? And if the latter, what changed?

It is the latter, and what changed has to do with the Chitzonim, literally "externalities," the technical Kabbalistic term for that which exists in Creation to act as the source of spiritual impurity. More precisely, their job is to block the light of G-d from man, or at least give the impression that this is being done, so that man can choose to deny the reality of G-d. And, wherever there is an absence of belief in G- d, there is tuma (spiritual impurity).

However, like all evil in Creation, the Chitzonim have no independent existence of their own, but rather they feed off Kedushah, for there is no real "source" of evil, as the Arizal explains:

We have already mentioned that as a result of the sin of Kayin and Hevel, the Neshamos became mixed together in the K'lipos (another name for the Chitzonim) and this is called, "the mixture of good and evil." From that time onward, the souls have been undergoing a process of "separation" (birur) from within the K'lipos, just as silver is smelted from waste. This process will continue until all the souls that fell into the 248 Limbs of Adam HaBli'al (the name of the entire complement of sefiros on the side of impurity, and another name for the K'lipos), are separated out from the full length of its being, which is until the bottom of Adam d'Kedushah which overlaps with the legs of Adam d'K'lipah. This is hinted to in the Zohar (Pekudei): Until the legs reach the legs, as it is written, "His feet will stand On that day" (Zechariah 14:4). Once the separation of all the souls has been completed, Adam d'K'lipah, the spiritual "refuse" which is only removed through deeds, will collapse on its own and be absorbed to the point of "bal yira'eh" and "bal yimatze" (these terms refer to the law of Pesach to rid oneself completely of all Chometz, which symbolizes the K'lipos, to the point it will "not be seen" and "not be found"). For, holiness is the life that results from separating from spiritual impurity called "death." Therefore, they will no longer have any life and will disappear like smoke, as it says, "Death will be absorbed forever" (Yeshayahu 25:8), but not until all of the souls are separated out. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 20)

Thus, we see that the Chitzonim "feed off" of Kedushah. And, there is nothing more kadosh in this world than a soul, to such an extent that even after the soul has left a person, a residual kedushah

remains behind in the dead body, drawing the Chitzonim to it like bees to honey (Ohr HaChaim). This is the source of tuma, and this can happen through death, or even partial death, which is why there are varying degrees of tuma, even for living people.

For, even if the soul only partially leaves a body, perhaps only temporarily as it does as a result of a sin, this is an aspect of death and a cause of tuma. For, life is about keeping the body and soul tightly united, so that the soul can elevate the body and bring to it eternal life, symbolized by the idea of Kesones Ohr, "Clothing of Light." Illness and death, on the other hand, are the result of the soul moving away from the body, allowing it to become so physical it can actually decay.

Thus, if a person sins, and causes his soul to detach even a little from his body, the Chitzonim will zoom in on that void to become nourished from the residual kedushah that was once there. And, after this happens, the impact on the person is profound, and teshuvah becomes essential, although not easy. Thus, the entire Torah and its mitzvos are the instructions and the means to keep the soul and body together as long as possible to ward off partial death, and worst, tuma as a result of it.

SEUDOS SHLISHIS:

They will go out and see the corpses of the men who rebelled against Me. (Yeshayahu 66:24)

This is what it means to be a Mamleches Kohanim (Kingdom of Priests). It means to be committed to a lifestyle that maintains the connection between body and soul to the best of one's ability. This is what the Torah is affording to the Jew, between what we are commanded to eat or not to eat, to what we are commanded to do, or not do.

This is the basis of a sin, that which loosens the connection between the soul and its vessel, resulting in a void that leaves residual kedushah for the K'lipos that feed off it and become stronger, and then turn against those who would seek to destroy it. The holier the soul, the more spiritually powerful the soul, the greater the impact of the sin is on the K'lipos and the world.

It's like a relationship between two people. There are many things that people can do to one another, but there are only certain things that draw people closer to them. People with chayn are like magnets for other people; self-centered and selfish people repel others. And, some things attract some people but repel others, and vice-versa. Likewise is this so between body and soul.

And, once the soul feels repulsed by the body, it moves "away," and its spiritual impact can no longer be felt. As a result, spiritual sensitivity is lessened, and the person becomes less repulsed by actions not sanctioned by Torah. If they keep going in that direction, eventually they will become disgusted by that which the Torah does command.

No longer inhibited, they think they have simply "woken up" to a more modern way of life, when in fact what they have done is fallen into a sleep regarding the holier way of life. Sinning pains their soul, but not their body, for their pain numbs the soul and distances the body from the soul. They have become a spiritual feeding ground for the Chitzonim, the K'lipos.

Observing Pesach once a year is supposed to safeguard the Jewish people against such damaging situations. It is supposed to remind us that we are meant to be a Kingdom of Priests, which means doing that which maintains and strengthens the bond between body and soul. Matzah may look quite plain according to the standards of this world, but it is extremely holy by the standards of the World-to-Come.

MELAVE MALKAH:

They got up early the next day and brought burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. The people sat down to eat and to drink, and were licentious. (Shemos 32:6)

That is why it is no coincidence that these parshios occur at this time of year, just as we ready ourselves for the liberating impact of Pesach. Freedom is a popular word throughout history, and many have died to attain or preserve it, but few have ever really understood it. For the Jew, it lies in understanding and attaining the status of Mamleches Kohanim.

What we fail to understand is that if the body wins, the soul never acquiesces; it just drowns in its sorrow. However, if the soul wins, then the body becomes elevated above the mundane physical world, and becomes more like a soul. Eventually, the body will look more like a soul than like a body, and it will be able to live like one, even defying gravity as in the period of Techiyas HaMeisim (Resurrection of the Dead). This was the level of Adam HaRishon before the sin, the level of Kesones Ohr, spelled Aleph-Vav-Raish.

The removal of all "extraneous" ingredients from the matzah symbolizes, according to the Maharal, the simplicity of Olam HaBah (the World-to-Come). And although poverty is generally considered inhibiting and negative, in this case, explains the Maharal, it represents freedom from the trappings of this world. A poor person has little to tie him down in one place or another, little to worry about from day-to-day, except for his own survival.

Pharaoh's name represented the essence of an Egyptian lifestyle from which we were meant to break away. It means "licentiousness," as in the kind that was celebrated by the Erev Rav after the golden calf emerged from the furnace amidst the rebellion against G-d. It is a life designed to push the soul away from the body as much as possible without actually killing it.

Indeed, that is the religion of the Erev Rav - licentiousness. They may disguise their intention in fancy terms that make it seem as if they are doing their business for the sake of Heaven, but the bottom line is that their "new world order" is meant to eradicate devotion to G-d, a theme that has echoed throughout the millennia, going back all the way to Midgal Bavel (the Tower of Bavel).

The Erev Rav is not only about "chometz," they ARE "chometz." It is their goal to draw Jewish "stragglers" away from the idea of Mamleches Kohanim. Sefer Vayikra is not only unimportant to them, it is sacrilege to their philosophical approach to life. If anything is the anti-thesis of their philosophy of life, it is holiness, the pursuit of which, they will argue, has led to more wars in the

course of human history than anything else.

Only the wise man knows that the concept of holiness has become so convoluted, that so much has been perpetrated in the Name of G-d! More chometz! You can just hear the Chitzonim laughing to themselves. You can just hear them feasting on the sins of mankind, growing stronger until truth disappears from the world, and falsehood and immorality rules.

Had we been the Kingdom of Priests we were freed from Egypt to become, this would never have happened. Should we work on becoming a Kingdom of Priests, the "chometz" of our time will become lessened and weakened. We were destined to become one, and eventually the only question remains: Will we coronate ourselves, or will G-d have to do it His way?

Have a great and holy Shabbos,
PW

Text

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