

MAN IS LIKE AN EARTHENWARE VESSEL

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape #18, Rending Garments on Seeing Yerushalayim. Good Shabbos!

Kotzker Rebbe: Man Is Like An Earthenware Vessel -- His Value Is Not Based On Externals

At the time of the Temple, there was a way of purifying oneself from Tumas Meis, through the Parah Adumah. Today, unfortunately, we don't have the Parah Adumah and we are all Tomayei Meisim. In the course of the discussion of Tumas Meis, the Torah alludes to other discussions of Tumah v'Tahara. One type of Tumah is that of Keylim - vessels.

There are two types of vessels that have two different sets of Tumah laws: There are metal utensils (kli matches) which become Tameh from outside contact with sources of Tumah. There are also earthenware vessels (kli cheres), which only become Tameh from the inside.

In the case of the earthenware vessels (kli cheres), actual contact between the vessel and the Tumah is not needed. Even if a sheretz is suspended inside the kli cheres, the utensil becomes tameh.

The Kotzker Rebbe, zt"l, explains the difference: Metal itself is a precious commodity. Therefore as soon as contact is made -- even on the outside -- it becomes tameh.

An earthenware, kli cheres, however, is made from material that is almost valueless. The whole value and importance of the vessel is determined by its functionality -- what it can contain. Therefore the vessel can only be made impure by **attacking** its functionality -- from within the walls of the vessel.

The Kotzker declares that people can also be compared to earthenware vessels. Man's value is not based on his component elements and minerals. The value of these elements is negligible. The value of a human being is based on what is inside.

Sometimes we make the mistake of getting so caught up in the **chitzonius** of human beings -- how they dress or what kind of car they drive -- that we forget this lesson. The value of a human being is

like that of a kli cheres -- it is based on the internals. Just as that which is put inside the earthenware vessel can be metameh it, so too, the thoughts and desires that are put into a human being can sometimes be metameh the person.

The value of a person is not based on what's **bachutz** but on what's **bifnim**. We must be very thoughtful and careful about what we put into both our **kalim** and our children's **kalim**.

Departure of Israel's Peace-maker Triggers Cannanite Attack

In this week's parsha the Torah relates the death of Aharon haKohen. The verse states that the Cannanite King had been afraid to start up with Israel until this point. But now he heard something (Vayishma haCannani...) that caused him to wage war with Israel.

The Talmud in tractate Rosh Hashannah explains that what he heard was that Aharon haKohen had died. Aharon's death caused the Clouds of Glory to depart. The Cannanite King took this as a signal that permission was given to wage war against Israel. What was it about the loss of Aharon that now made the Jewish people vulnerable to attack from their enemies?

The Ateres Mordechai quotes the teaching of the Sages: Aharon haKohen was a Rodef Shalom, who preserved peace in Klal Yisroel. Once Aharon was gone, machlokes began, people fought among themselves, and Bnai Yisroel became vulnerable to attack from outside.

The Ateres Mordechai further connects this idea with the verse in parshas Lech-Lecha: "There was a quarrel between the shepherds of Avram and the shepherds of Lot. And the Cannani was then in the land."

What is the significance of the "Cannani was then in the land?" This, notes the Ateres Mordechai, is the same idea that we find here in our parsha: As long as there was peace between the shepherds of Avram and Lot, their unity was a guarantee of protection from external enemies; but as soon as quarrels broke out, then there was a cause for worry about the Cannani being in the land.

When there are quarrels among the Jewish people, they become vulnerable to attack from external enemies.

Aharon's Death Triggers Even Greater Emotions Than Moshe's Death

Aharon loved and pursued peace. Chazal consider this a very important concept. The Yalkut Shimoni says that when it came time for Aharon to die, G-d, kaviyachol, did **not have it within Him** to go to Aharon and tell him directly that his time was up. G-d had to ask Moshe Rabbeynu a **favor** to tell Aharon to go up to his place of death.

Rav Bergman, in his sefer, Shaare Orah, points out that there is no such teaching when it was time for Moshe Rabbeynu to die. Nowhere do we find that G-d was **embarrassed** to tell Moshe Rabbeynu that the time had come for him to leave this world. In what way was Aharon superior?

Rav Bergman suggests it was Aharon's attribute of being the pursuer of peace among the Jewish nation that gave him this special status.

Aharon's Method of Making Ba'lei Teshuva: Smiles not Stones

The Avos D'Rav Nasson echoes this same theme. When Aharon dies, the pasuk tells us that the entire *House* of Israel (implying men and women) mourned. But when Moshe dies, the verse states that the *Children* of Israel (implying the men only) mourned.

The relationship between Klal Yisroel and Moshe Rabbenu was not the same as that between Aharon and Klal Yisroel. Moshe had to give mussar, had to *set the people straight*, had to issue uncompromising judgments.

Aharon, however, never criticized. He was a peacemaker who was beloved by everyone. Aharon would greet wicked people with a smile. He did not spit or throw stones. He said "Good Morning." The response of the wicked, often was, "How can I continue to sin, it will distress Aharon?" The Medrash declares that in this way "he caused many people to repent from doing evil." He caused them to repent, not through anger or disgust, but with Shalom. That is how he was so successful.

Mr. Harry Wolpert, a long time supporter of Torah causes in Baltimore, had been a student of Rabbi Baruch Ber Lebovitz, the Kaminetzer Rosh Yeshiva. When Mr. Wolpert came to Baltimore in the early 1900s he was faced time and time again with the nisayon of Chillul Shabbos. Today, we don't have to face the common practice of those years -- "If you don't come in on Saturday, don't bother coming Monday."

Mr. Wolpert related that he was faced with this temptation many times when he needed to support his wife and children. What stopped him was the image of his Rebbe, Reb Baruch Ber. Reb Baruch Ber was known as a Rebbe who loved his students. Each student was cherished by him. This love shown to a student was what stopped Mr. Wolpert from becoming a Mechalel Shabbos.

Glossary

Tumah; Tumas Mes -- Halachic impurity; Impurity from contact with dead body

Tahara -- Halachic purity

Parah Adumah -- red heifer used in Tumah-purification ritual for Tumas Meis

Chitzonius -- externals

bachutz -- on the outside

bifnim -- on the inside

Rodef Shalom -- pursuer of peace

Machlokes -- arguments

Chillul Shabbos -- Shabbos Desecration

Mechallel Shabbos -- violator of the Shabbos

Kaviyachol -- so to speak

Nisayon -- test; challenge

Personalities & Sources:

Kotzker Rebbe -- R. Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787-1859), one of leading Chassidic Rebbes of the mid-nineteenth century; Poland.

Rav Meyer Bergman -- contemporary Rosh Yeshiva, Bnai Brak, Israel

Yalkut Shimoni -- Anthology of Midrashim

Avos D'Rav Nassan -- One of the 14 "minor tractates"; collection of Braisos forming a commentary to tractate Avos

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#) Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#)

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#18). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: # 18 is: Rending Garments on Seeing Yerushalayim. The other halachic portions for Parshas Chukas from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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