

TWO DIMENSIONS IN THE MEASURE OF MAN

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Parshas Emor

Two Dimensions In The Measure of Man

The following idea comes from the Sefer Tiferes Torah by Rav Shimshon Pinkus, ob"m.

The Torah teaches us that the Kohen Gadol, unlike a regular Kohen, does not leave the Bais HaMikdash [Temple] when he has suffered the loss of an immediate family member. He continues doing the Avodah [Temple Service] even while having the halachic status of an onen.

The Rambam writes [Hilchos Klei HaMikdash 5:7] "In the Beis HaMikdash they constructed a special room / office for the Kohen Gadol. It was part of his honor and glory to spend the entire day in the Bais HaMikdash, leaving only to go home at night." In other words, even if the Kohen Gadol was not engaged in performing the Service of the Bais HaMikdash, he was not supposed to leave the premises the entire day. Inasmuch as sitting in the Bais HaMikdash Courtyard is prohibited and we would not expect the Kohen Gadol to remain on his feet 12-16 hours a day, he would typically retire to his office on the premises where he could be seated.

The Rambam further writes that the Kohen Gadol's home should be in Yerushalayim [Jerusalem] and he should not move from there. Thus, not only was the Kohen Gadol confined to his office the entire day, he was confined to Yerushalayim for the rest of his life. When one takes the job of Kohen Gadol, he might as well cancel his frequent flier accounts!

There is something called prison and there is something else called house- arrest. In effect, this halacha tells us is that the Kohen Gadol - of all people - is under house arrest. He must stay in the Bais HaMikdash most of the day except to go to sleep at night and he is not allowed to leave Yerushalayim! This is not an easy requirement.

When Dovid HaMelech [King David] was on his death bed, he instructed Shlomo [Solomon] regarding Shimei ben Geirah, who had cursed the king bitterly when Dovid HaMelech fled for his life from his son Avshalom. Dovid had promised Shimei that he would not personally harm him, but on his death bed he advised Shlomo to "take care of him" such that he not die a regular death. However, out of respect of the promise he made Shimei, Dovid advised Shlomo to use his own wisdom and

not just go out and execute him.

Shlomo sent for Shimei and ordered him not to leave Yerushalayim. He warned Shimei that if he should cross the Valley of Kidron, he was sentencing himself to death. Shimei gratefully accepted this deal. But three years later, a couple of Shimei's slaves ran away. Shimei left Yerushalayim to chase after the slaves. Shlomo caught him leaving and had him executed.

In discussing this incident, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz asks how Shlomo knew that Shimei was going to leave Yerushalayim. His father ordered him not to let Shimei die a natural death. In the end he fulfilled his father's command. But why was he so confident that his trap would work?

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz answers that Shlomo knew human nature. When someone is told "This is where you have to stay and you can not leave for the rest of your life!" just as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow, that fellow is going to leave.

Now if this is the case, how is it that the Kohen Gadol does not go out of his mind as a result of the restrictions placed upon him? How is he able to accept the restrictions placed on his movements - which were even more restrictive than the arrangement Shlomo made with Shimei ben Geirah?

The Tiferes Torah addresses this question by giving a brilliant insight into a Gemara in Tractate Chagiga (12a). Human nature is such that people like to travel and see new places. I myself am like that. Baltimore Maryland is a very nice place but after awhile, 365 days a year, it can get to you. People want to see other places - perhaps Delaware! People after all have a natural desire to travel.

Where does this yearning come from? The Gemara in Chagiga states that Adam's height reached "from one end of the world to the other end of the world". This needs to be understood allegorically, but at least in some sense the first man encompassed the entire world. This means that somehow Adam initially grasped the entire world, however when he sinned G-d compressed him. The Tiferes Torah interprets this Agaddah to mean that each individual innately has a relationship with the entire world - the Atlantic and the Pacific and the Mediterranean, the mountains and the valleys, the whole world! Therefore, each person has within him the drive and the curiosity to re-experience and revisit the entire world from one end to the other.

Another opinion in that same Gemara states that Adam's height was from the ground to the heavens. Not only did he encompass the entire world but he went from the earth until the heaven. The Talmud concludes that both opinions refer to the same measure (idi v'idi chad shiura hu).

The Tiferes Torah interprets the Gemara's conclusion to mean that both measurements cannot coexist in the same human being. Either it is from one end of the earth to the other or it is from earth to heaven, but not both! The Tiferes Torah interprets the measure "from earth to heaven" as meaning that just as Adam related to the entire geography of the world, he related to all of its spirituality. Every single iota of ruchniyus [spirituality] that exists from this earth, all the way to the heavens, man also possesses. However, these two dimensions of man cannot flourish simultaneously. It is an

"either / or" situation. The more one satisfies one dimension, the more he loses the other dimension.

This means that a person who can get his satisfaction from that dimension of Adam, which reaches from earth to heaven, will fulfill his natural inquisitiveness and curiosity with that dimension of his personality alone. But if that dimension does not satisfy him, then the other part of his curiosity takes over - the urge to travel from one end of the earth to the other.

When Shimi ben Geira was confined to sit in Yerushalayim for the rest of his life, he was destined to go out of his mind. He was not exclusively involved in spiritual matters, so it went against his natural inclination to see more of the world. But a completely spiritual person, whose curiosity works in the vertical dimension (from earth to heaven), can satisfy his wanderlust in spirituality, rather than in travel.

That is why for the Kohen Gadol, it was no challenge to sit in the Beis Hamikdash and in Yerushalayim his whole life. Spirituality was such an important facet in the life of the Kohen Gadol that he was able to satisfy his innate curiosity with spiritual search rather than with geographical travel.

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