

PARSHAS EMOR

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

'Rabbi Berachia said in the name of Rabbi Levi, here we read 2 sayings, 'Speak to the priests, the sons of Aharon, and say unto them' (Vayikrah 21:1). However, with regard to the celestial beings, who do not have a yetzer harah we read, (Daniel 4: 14) 'This matter is by decree of the angels and this demand by the saying of the holy ones'; that is only one saying' (Vayikrah Rabbah, 26:5).

The Avnei Nezer, the father of the Shem Mi Shmuel and the first Admor of Sochochow, explained that one saying is to announce the will of G-d while the second saying is to ensure that that will is enshrined in their hearts so that they will obey His will. For the angels it is sufficient only to know His will as they do not have free will but that knowledge is not sufficient for humans who need to be told a second time in order that they can translate His will into their actions.

Menachem Mendel of Kotsk said that the body should be so purified and refined by G-d's words till they have no desire even for the evil that is the soul of the evil ones. Reb Feivle of Granzia tells of how he once spoke to the Kotsker about money. The Rebbe answered him with disgust saying, 'For that I have a great hatred'. These words had such an effect on the chassid that some months later when he received some money he could not even bear to look at it.

Now we know that the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, devoted his whole mind to writing books to implanting ethics and the pursuit of goodness in the minds of people so that they should not pursue materialism and greed. However, he himself died because of his desires and lusts. This occurs because the mind and the body are 2 separate entities and while the mind and the intellect understand and recognize the necessity of ethics and philosophies of moral living to refine our natural desires and lusts, the body does not. It is only through Torah study and observing Hashem's Mitzvot that the body can separate itself from its nature and obtain a purified and refined nature. Although it is obvious to us that the righteous ones do actually acquire this new nature that leads them not to desire the material, we could know this by our minds and logic.

'And the Lord created Man upright' (Kohelet, 7:29), and the Ramban explains that a person should not desire unseemly things; rather one should be as the sun and moon that do not change their tasks, so we should remain as we were created. It is only through the sin of Adam that evil became mixed into his nature and they stirred his materialism to bring him to do evil and undesirable acts. Now everything that the Torah commanded us should restore our natures to what they were, except that the evil forces introduced by the sin of Adam Harishon prevents that. Torah study and mitzvot weaken these forces until the nature of Hashem's creation of Man is reestablished. This is something

that Aristotle could not achieve with his mere human wisdom and cleverness. Only Israel, who busy themselves with Torah and mitzvot can bring the body also to be holy and so to change its nature.

Now we can understand the teaching of the Midrash that human beings need two sayings, one to teach their minds what G-d's will is and the other in order that that will should become engraved on their hearts and thereby change the nature of their bodies.

However, it still remains unclear why these 2 sayings concern 'tumat met' that no man desires and applies only to Cohanim; rather they should relate to things desired equally and constantly by all men.

In view of what the Ramban said above, we can understand that prior to the sin of Adam Harishon, the body was subject to his mind and intelligence, so that they were a unity. Then the body was unable to desire those things and actions that the mind knew were undesirable and wrong. The sin however, attracted evil that led the body and its matter to separate themselves from the mind. This change in Man that made it possible for him to desire unworthy things, also made death, that is a separation between body and nefesh, possible, both of them contrary to his original created state. Now the impurity caused by 'tumat met', induces in a person through contact, desires and thoughts alien to the dictates of the mind, since the body is no longer subservient to the mind.

The reason that Cohanim were commanded not to defile themselves with contact with the dead lies in Aharon's attribute. He loved peace and pursued it, reconciling a person with their fellow and a husband with his wife. Husband and wife are akin to form and matter while the Zohar calls body and nefesh husband and wife. Just as his merit was to bring peace between a person and his neighbor so he brought peace between the 2 parts of Man, mind and body. His speech and his words drew Israel close to their Father in Heaven until the material body followed the mind, and body and nefesh were united, so they were able to change their nature to goodness and desirable deeds. Perhaps more importantly, the speech of Aharon made such a deep impression of the hearts of his listeners that they were moved to change their material natures to the pursuit of good. This unity within people is the opposite of the effect of 'tumat met', so the Cohanim were forbidden to so defile themselves.

That is why the 2 sayings were written only in connection with 'tumat met', even though the unity of hearing G-d's will and it being an integral part of us, actually apply to all the mitzvot. The 2 sayings and the specific merit of Aharon have the same purpose. That is to root in our hearts a drive to change our natures to goodness, the opposite of 'tumat met' that separates. So it will be in the End of Days when the spirit of tumah will disappear from the earth as well as death. Then the world will revert to what it was before the sin of Adam Harishon and the natures of all Israel, in unison, will turn only to good.

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