1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

PARSHAS ACHREI MOS / KEDOSHIM – WHO ARE YOU
From the archives of Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Torah commands us, "You shall be holy for I, Hashem your G-d, am holy" (Vayikra 19:2). The Ramban understands this Mitzvah as an exhortation against self-indulgence. While human beings need to engage in many pleasurable functions in order to maintain good physical and mental health, the Torah cautions us not to indulge merely for the sake of self-gratification. This is, indeed, a very tall order. Rav Shimon Shkop offers an approach which may provide us with a gradual step by step process that can enable us to rise toward this lofty goal.

When a person designates an **object** to be holy he sets it aside for a higher, more exalted use such as a *korban* in the Bais Hamikdash. Similarly, when Hashem commands us to make **ourselves** holy, it means that our physical functions should be set aside for a more exalted use, i.e. in the service of others. (This idea is in consonance with the famous quote of Rav Chaim Volozhin: "A person was not created for himself, rather to benefit others in any possible way that he can.") A person who conducts himself in this manner partakes of this world's physical functions, as a means to making himself healthy physically and emotionally, in order to be able to better contribute to others.

Every person is inclined to love himself and this is indeed how it should be. The question, asserts Rav Shimon, is how one defines himself. For some their self involves only their own physical needs. (We might call this egoism.) Rav Shimon continues by enumerating a progression of perceptions of self. Second is one who also includes his spiritual dimension in his identity. Next is one who includes his family and relatives. After that is one who views all Klal Yisrael within his self-definition – he himself being one small part of this broader identity. The ultimate *madreiga* is one who sees the entire creation as blended into his self.

Thus, Rav Shimon concludes, there need not be any contradiction between loving one's self and being holy, as long as your own identity includes others. Then whatever you do for yourself will take into account the welfare of those "others". Put tersely – our goal is to transform "me" into "we". (Rav Yaakov Weinberg, ZT'L, used to say, "Marriage is the transition from me to we.")

Rav Shimon says that this is what Hillel meant when he said, "If I am not for myself who will be for me, but if I am (only) for myself, what am I?" (Avos 1:15). I might add that this idea is also what Hillel meant when he responded to the gentile who wanted to convert if Hillel could teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel told him, "Do not do to others what is objectionable to you yourself. This is the entire Torah. The rest is merely commentary. Go and learn it" (Shabbos 32a). Judaism is all about reaching beyond your own self and thinking about others – and this also includes Hashem. Your psychological perception of who you are and who you are concerned about must extend way beyond yourself.

And, of course, we can certainly assume that this is what Rebbi Akiva meant when he declared, "You shall love your fellow as yourself – this is a great principle of the Torah." The more we think about others' needs – and this includes Hashem's "needs" – and the less we think about our own, the holier we are.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR
Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: In a previous halacha it said that one is allowed to inflate a blowup mattress if it was previously blown up and one is not inflating it for the first time. What about inflating a basketball or a wheel of a baby carriage that was previously inflated and now lost air?

ANSWER: Rabbi Falk explains very nicely the difference between the different inflatable objects. Something that is used by inflating it when in use and deflating when not in use, is allowed to be inflated on שבת as long as it is not the first time. However, anything that is meant to be inflated and to stay that way without being deflated, may not be filled with air at all on שבת. Since these items are filled to capacity meant to be permanent, it is considered an act of בונה. Inflatable beachballs, mattresses, pillows and the like which are deflated after use are okay to inflate even on שבת and is not considered an act of בונה since it is somewhat temporary. A wheel of a baby carriage, a basketball, soccer ball or football are all items that one fills up in a permanent way and is not allowed on שבת. Even if the ball or wheel did not fully deflate, it is still אסור to add even a little air since it is a permanent situation, it is like בונה.

ע' פיה פתחה בחכמה פרק י"א סעי' א'-ג' והערה ג'-ה'

In this week's parsha we are told " בְּזֹאת יָבֹא אַהֲרֹן, אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ" "With this shall Ahron come into the sanctuary."

Thoughts on the parsha from *Emailim Batorah* continued on back page.

HALL BLOCKER

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Last week, we learned a question about taking down a sign. Here is another question that involves a sign.

Dovid's daughter got married, and he was planning a Shabbos Sheva Brachos celebration. He had paid for the event to be held in a hall in Eretz Yisrael and was expecting 100 guests to attend.

On Friday night, Dovid and all the guests davened at the shul near the wedding hall. After davening, Dovid, his family, and all the guests proceeded to the wedding hall for the celebration. However, when they arrived, they encountered an unexpected problem. Someone had placed a sign on the wedding hall doors. Normally, signs were permitted in designated areas on the doors. However, this particular person had carelessly placed their sign right between the double doors, making it impossible to open them without tearing the sign on Shabbos. As a result, the doors could not be opened.

They tried looking for a non-Jew to remove the sign, but were unsuccessful. With no other option, everyone went to a neighbor's or friend's house, where they served matzah and tuna fish. Despite the setback, they had a joyous and meaningful Sheva Brachos. However, all the food that had been prepared in the hall went unused and ultimately spoiled.

After Shabbos, the caterer sent Dovid a bill for $2,000 for the costs of the food, the hall, and the waiters. They claimed that even though the food was not eaten, all of it had been cooked, the hall had been reserved, and the waiters were ready to work.

However, Dovid felt he shouldn't have to pay, since the food, hall, and waiters were never used. He argued that the person responsible for posting the sign was at fault.

The flyer poster felt bad about what had happened, but he believed that he shouldn't be responsible for covering the entire cost. After all, the damage seemed very indirect.

They agreed to bring the question to a rav: Who is responsible for paying the caterer? Should the catering company absorb the loss? Is Dovid, the ba'al simcha, obligated to pay, even though the food wasn't used? Or is the person who blocked the door with the flyer liable for the damages? What do you think? See Shabbos Besimcha Page 165

Regarding last week's question about the man who wanted to take down the signs on Shabbos, Rav Zilberstein wrote that, ideally, a non-Jew should be asked to remove them. If that is not possible, then, since removing the signs is only rabbinically prohibited due to it being mekalkel, when combined with the kavod habriyos (human dignity) of the person being slandered, along with the opportunity to prevent further lashon hara (harmful speech), it may be permissible to take the signs down.

EMUNAH, BITACHON, AND SIMCHA ARE ABLE TO CHANGE REALITY

Rabbi Zevy Golumbek shared the following beautiful story:

Reb Avraham was very close to the Telshe Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Chaim Stein. One time, his grandfather went to the doctor because he wasn't feeling well. The doctors diagnosed him with cancer in the pancreas and told him, "There's nothing we can do for you. Your days are numbered."

Reb Avraham, heartbroken by what he heard, went to the Rosh Yeshiva and said, "Rav Chaim, the doctor just said that they found yenneh machlah (cancer) in my father's pancreas, and there's nothing they can do."

Rav Chaim replied, "These doctors don't know what they're talking about. Don't be nispoel. It's lo hayah v'lo nivra, it never happened." Shortly afterward, they discovered that indeed the doctors had made a mistake—he did not have yenneh machlah in the pancreas—and he was zocheh to a refuah sheleimah.

A short while later, the Landau family from Cleveland shared the following remarkable story they experienced with Rav Chaim Stein. The Landaus' daughter was expecting a baby. The doctor performed a sonogram and saw that the baby was not going to be healthy. The baby was diagnosed with Down syndrome among several other medical conditions.

The parents, heartbroken by the news, went to Rav Chaim Stein and reported to him the doctor's diagnosis. Upon hearing the situation, Rav Chaim Stein told the parents, "Accept upon yourselves the following two things, and you will see a miraculous deliverance. Accept upon yourselves to strengthen your emunah and bitachon (trust and reliance upon HaShem), and also accept upon yourselves to always be b'simcha, to be happy no matter what comes your way. If you accept these two things, you will see tremendous yeshuos."

That's exactly what the parents did throughout the duration of the pregnancy. They strengthened their bitachon, their emunah, and their simcha. Sure enough, after nine months, the baby was born 100% healthy—without a trace of any medical condition.

After their child was born, they went back to Rav Chaim Stein and asked, "Is it possible that maybe the doctors made a mistake?"

The Rosh Yeshiva replied, "No, no, no. The doctors knew exactly what they were talking about. There was no mistake. Your koach of emunah and bitachon changed the status of the baby. Bitachon made it so that the baby became 100% healthy. Never, ever underestimate the power of what emunah and bitachon can accomplish."

In contrast to the first story, these doctors made no mistake. But emunah and bitachon were able to change reality. Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.

Thoughts on the parsha (continued):

The Torah is more precious than even a Kohen Gadol who enters the innermost chamber in the Temple, the Kodesh Kadashim (הוריות י"ג ע"א)

R. Yisroel Salanter Zt"l said, "The holiest person in כלל ישראל is the כהן גדול. The holiest day of the year is יום כיפור. The holiest place on the planet is the קדש קדשים.

Yet, even when all three are combined, the גמרא says מפנינים יקרה היא learning Torah is more precious and takes precedence.

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