

Fascinating INSIGHTS

ה' סיון תש"פ
May 28, 2020

פרשת נשא
7th year, edition 337

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COMING SOON Bez"H

Fascinating Insights—The Sefer (in English)

[A Lively Death or a Lively Life?](#)

The Gemara¹ reports that there wasn't one זונה R' Elazar Ben Durdia wasn't together with. Once, he heard of a זונה that was overseas who took a purse of coins for her fee. He took a purse of coins and crossed seven rivers to be with her. This זונה told him that his Teshuva wouldn't be received. In the end, he sat between two ranges of mountains and foothills, placed his head between his knees and burst forth in crying until his soul departed. A heavenly voice (בת קול) proclaimed R' Elazar Ben Durdia is מזומן לחיי העולם הבא, readied for the life of the World to Come. Rabbi cried and said there is one who acquires עולם הבא through many years and there is another who acquires it in a single moment (like R' Elazar Ben Durdia)—יש קונה עולמו בשעה אחת. Many are bothered why Rabbi cried?

We have heard stories of people that sacrificed their life for Hashem although they didn't live as a religious Jew.² Although this is great, it is even greater to

¹ Avoda Zara 17a.

² In a letter to R' Yitzchak Zilberstein, R' Menashe Klein (Mishna Halachos 16:121) writes regarding a מומר, apostate that was killed because he was a Jew if that is included in Kiddush Hashem. He brings the Chassam Sofer who writes that it is permitted to be Mechalel Shabbos for one who is a משומר (a Jew who converted to another religion) to save him since even such a person, when he is in a time of trouble, has thoughts of Teshuva (מהרהר בתשובה). He also brings the words of the Iggeres Harebam that says that one who merits to be killed על קידוש ה', even if he has sins like Yeravam Ben Nevat and his colleagues, he has Olam Haba. R' Menashe Klein writes concerning the Scud missiles that were fired in order to kill Jews in Eretz Yisrael because they were Jewish (To those who fired the missiles, there was no difference to them if it fell on someone who was Torah observant or not.) that even if they don't flee although they are able to, and are killed, this is included in being killed על קידוש ה'—even if the one killed was someone like Yeravam Ben Nevat. He goes to Olam Haba. During the Holocaust, more than six million Kedoshim were killed. Even though not all of them went to give themselves over (as many were far from religious), but this is included in being killed על קידוש ה' since they were killed because they were Jewish. For this reason, they are called Kedoshim. Those who die through the wicked and the like are all Kedoshim.

live on a daily basis with Hashem. The Sefas Emes³ comments that being Moser Nefesh in one moment is great. However, that is through חפזון ומהירות, haste. On the other hand, one who lives like that throughout his life is even greater. It is greater to be Moser Nefesh every day of your life by living with Hashem than to be Moser Nefesh just at the end of your life. In other words, it is greater to live על קידוש ה' than to die על קידוש ה'. So, of the two ways to acquire עולם הבא—in many years or in one moment—many years is better. This is why Rabbi cried, because Hashem prefers those who acquire the next world בכמה שנים, through many years.

Avraham and Yitzchak each played a distinct role in the Akeida. Yitzchak was ready to die על קידוש ה' but Avraham taught that it's possible to live על קידוש ה'. If Avraham would have slaughtered Yitzchak, Avraham would remain alive and all his life he would need to live with the idea that he gave up his son. How would the world view such a person?

One can die על קידוש ה' only once but one who lives על קידוש ה' can do it many more times. Although one can psyche himself up so that he would be able to do something extraordinary, it is still greater to live on a steady basis that wouldn't be as great. To maintain and have a continuous life of קידוש ה' is where greatness lies. It is a higher level to live with Hashem daily.

R' Yosef Karo (1488-1575) asked the Maggid⁴ he would learn with for the merit to die על קידוש ה'. Although the Maggid promised him such a death, it was never fulfilled. R' Sternbuch⁵ explains the reason why he didn't die על קידוש ה' is because it is greater to live על קידוש ה' than to die על קידוש ה'. R' Yosef Karo lived על קידוש ה' as he authored the Shulchan Aruch, the code of Jewish law which we live by today. This is in addition to other great works including the Kesef Mishna and the Beis Yosef.

An assimilated Jew once came to R' Yehoshua of Belz and asked for a Bracha to die as a Jew. The Rebbe said even non-Jews desire that as we see with Bilaam—...תמת נפשי מות ישרים.⁶ The purpose is to live as a Jew.

When the Gemara says יש קונה עולמו בשעה אחת, it says מזומן לחיי העולם הבא. Elsewhere, we find the term בן כל השונה הלכות...בן עולם הבא as whoever learns

³ Emor, במצות ונקדשתי, s.v. תרמ"ג.

⁴ This was the Maggid (Malach) of the Sefer Maggid Masharim. Maggid Masharim is a mystical diary in which R' Yosef Karo during a period of fifty years recorded the nocturnal visits of an angelic being.

⁵ Sefer Taam V'Daas.

⁶ Bamidbar 23:10. The Chofetz Chaim (על התורה, Balak 23:10) commented that Bilaam didn't want to live like a Jew rather die like one because a genuine Jewish life is not one that is a path full of roses as it also has thorns and the like. There is that which is permitted to a Jew and that which is forbidden such as certain foods among other things. However, regarding death, a Jew knows it is just a temporary existence to an eternal one. He believes that the soul remains and there is reward and punishment. So, death doesn't bring with it such fear.

Halachos is assured that he is destined for the World to Come.⁷ The one who acquires it in a single moment is not a בן עולם הבא, rather he is a מזומן לחיי העולם הבא, meaning it is like one who is invited⁸ to come in but he is a stranger, on the outside. On the other hand, a בן עולם הבא is like a child in a house who is not an outsider but on the inside.

Learning from the Mistakes of Others

While many may learn from personal experiences, one can also learn from the experience of others.⁹ This is why the section of Sota and Nazir are placed next to each other since one who sees a Sota in her disgrace should abstain from wine by becoming a Nazir as wine can lead to adultery.¹⁰ In this way we can grasp איזהו חכם הלומד מכל אדם, who is wise, one who learns from everyone.¹¹ This includes even learning from the mistakes of others. An example of this would be wealthy people. Many of them have achieved their wealth by learning from the mistakes of others such as where they failed in businesses. This message is taught to us in Parshas Shlach as the section of the spies is put next to the section about Miriam's criticism of Moshe since she was stricken because of her speech, yet the spies didn't learn from this and spoke negatively about Eretz Yisrael.¹² Why make your own mistakes if you can simply learn from the mistakes of others!¹³

Lingering Light

Each Yom Tov comes with its light. For example, when Pesach comes each of us has the ability to leave our own Mitzrayim, our constraints. When Shavuos comes we each receive the Torah anew. Following Yom Tov we have אסרו חג. The Kedushas Levi tells us that this is a day to tie up the spiritual lights of the Yom Tov and as it says אסרו חג...בבעותים.¹⁴ In this way we can grasp what we say in the Shemoneh Esrei of Yom Tov והשאנו as ברכת מועדיך. The Shemoneh Esrei is related to משא וטעינה, carry and load, since we want to take the light with us, the ברכת מועדיך.

In light of this we can comprehend that which it states by Matan Torah וקדשתם היום ומחר, as מחר can also refer to the future, as in כי ישאלך בנך מחר, since we want to take this light with us for the remainder of the year.¹⁶

Helping the Highway Helpless

⁷ Megila 28b.

⁸ This is what מזומן means, as in יזמון, invitation.

⁹ This would include taking a lesson from an earthquake in a foreign country to do Teshuva.

¹⁰ Bamidbar 6:2, Rashi.

¹¹ Avos 4:1.

¹² 13:2, Rashi.

¹³ When one learns from the mistakes of others, he can excel more than he would have since he doesn't need those setbacks in his personal life to learn that lesson. Even if one still needs this setback in his life to learn this lesson, it can still be ingrained in him more if he also takes the lessons from the mistakes of others.

¹⁴ See Yerushalmi Avoda Zara 1:1. The Rema writes (Orach Chaim 429:2) that we are accustomed to have a little increase in eating and drinking on Isru Chag.

¹⁵ מה שמקשין. s.v. דרוש לפסח. Tehillim 118:27. See Kisvei Arizal, Shaar Hakavanos, Inyan Isru Chag. This is how R' Ahron Karliner (Beis Ahron, Isru Chag, s.v. אמר) would interpret והשאנו, to take the Yom Tov with us as שירים, leftovers, remainder.

¹⁶ Shemos 19:10. 13:14.

R' Ovadia Yosef¹⁷ was asked if one sees a car that broke down on the highway and the driver of the car is standing on the shoulder of the road helplessly if there an obligation for other experienced drivers on the road to pull over and to assist the stranded driver in any way possible by repairing the car or offering him helpful advice?

The Rambam¹⁸ writes that if one encounters his fellow on the road and sees his fellow's animal collapsing under the weight of what it is carrying, it is a positive Torah commandment for one to unload the packages from upon it. One shouldn't, however, merely unload the animal's burden and leave its owner distraught (since the owner will only be able to reload the packages on the animal alone by exerting tremendous effort), but rather one should help the owner to reload the packages onto the animal. This is indeed a separate Mitzva. The reason for the Mitzvos of unloading and reloading is to help out another Jew in his time of distress as opposed to seeing him distraught and merely walking away. There is no difference between an animal belonging to a Jew or a Jew's car that breaks down in the middle of the road—especially since sometimes, such situations can even lead to danger. It is therefore a Mitzva and obligation for any experienced driver or mechanic who sees a Jew stranded on the shoulder of the road with his broken-down car to pull over and help him by repairing the car or in any other way. The Aruch Hashulchan¹⁹ rules likewise with regards to a horse and buggy that if one of the wheels break, anyone who sees the wagon driver in this situation must help him in any way possible until he is up and running again. Therefore, concerning our question, if one sees a broken-down car on the side of the road, it is a Mitzva and obligation to come to the aid of the driver and passengers of the vehicle as much as possible. This certainly constitutes the Mitzva of performing Chesed.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Ztz"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹⁷ Yechaveh Daas 5:6.

¹⁸ Hilchos Rotzeach U'Shmiras Hanefesh, 13:1. We know of the Shabsai Frankel editions of the Rambam which has helped tremendously with the learning of the Rambam. R' Shabsai Frankel (1909-2000) was a successful philanthropist and publisher of Torah books. His father, R' Yosef Frankel, was a prominent Gerrer Chassid in Poland whose son Alexander married a granddaughter of the Gerrer Rebbe, the Imrei Emes. R' Shabsai married the daughter of R' Yosef Nechemya Kornitzer, a great-grandson of the Chassam Sofer and the Chief Rabbinical Justice in Krakow. During World War 2, R' Shabsai fled Poland for Vilna and then he eventually immigrated to The United States. In America, R' Shabsai joined with the likes of R' Reuven Grozovsky in helping save European Jews from the Holocaust. In 1970, after succeeding in business, R' Shabsai moved to Eretz Yisrael to fulfill his lifelong dream: He wished to publish a new, corrected edition of the Rambam's Mishna Torah. R' Shabsai established a Kollel—which he funded from his own money—of select Talmudic scholars who would actually put together the new print of the Rambams' works as well as a comprehensive index of various other rabbinical commentaries and citations who dealt with Rambam's rulings. The first volume was printed in 1973 and the last was finished in 2007.

¹⁹ Choshen Mishpat 272:8.