

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

ח' אלול תש"פ

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## Full Conviction

In the Mitzva of Hashavas Avaida, returning a lost object, it says *לא תוכל להתעלם*,<sup>1</sup> you shouldn't be capable of ignoring it. This is the person we need to make ourselves into. One needs to be sensitive. He must recognize that someone lost an object and is likely anxious to recover it. Our conviction should be so strong that we wouldn't walk past it.<sup>2</sup>

We must make ourselves incapable of violating whatever it says in the Torah. One's conviction must be so strong that it wouldn't enter his mind, as it would violate his very being. The analogy is given of an allergy where one's conviction is so strong to protect his health and not to violate the boundary of that allergy. In a spiritual sense, we must have a conviction that sins are dangerous. We should reach the level that we have such a strong conviction that we live a life where everyone knows about that allergy and has to accommodate us because of that allergy, and that they can testify about our convictions. It has been said, the purpose of Bechira, free choice, is to reach the level where you have no Bechira to do anything wrong.

We have that which observe where we are like this. For example, a religious Jew wouldn't entertain the possibility of turning a light on Shabbos or eating non-kosher or eating Chametz on Pesach. The following story is told of the Kotzker Rebbe. Since he had an open house, someone once came and stole candlesticks. When his wife told the Rebbe that someone stole the candlesticks, the Rebbe responded, "How can someone steal the candlesticks if the Torah says not to steal?"

<sup>1</sup> Devarim 22:3. Literally this means, "You shouldn't hide yourself."

<sup>2</sup> This is in contrast to just performing the action of returning the object. Rather we must transform our personality.

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## Shoeless

It is said that a shoe is to the body what the body is to the soul. Just as the shoe is what connects the person to the physical ground, so too the body connects the soul to this world.

Removing shoes represent a purely soul, spiritual level.<sup>3</sup> We see this in many places.

1) Moshe was told to remove his shoes, when he prophesized. Likewise, Yehoshua was told the same.<sup>4</sup>

2) The Kohanim did the Avoda in the Beis Hamikdash without shoes.<sup>5</sup>

3) On Yom Kippur, we don't wear leather shoes.<sup>6</sup>

In Parshas Ki Seitzei, we have Chalitza.<sup>7</sup> In this process, the man's shoe is removed.<sup>8</sup> This symbolizes that he wasn't willing to give of himself to his brother's soul. As a result, he is declared undeserving of his own body, undeserving of his own shoe.

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## 960 Hours

In these days we have the power to purify ourselves. The 40 days from the beginning of Elul until Yom Kippur<sup>9</sup> are like a Mikva. In each day there are 24 hours. Multiplying 40 (days) by 24 (hours), we arrive at a total of 960. This is the amount of water in Lugin (measurement) that a Mikva contains (40 סאה is 960 Lugin). In this way we can grasp *מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף* *מה מקוה מטהר את ישראל*,<sup>10</sup> just as a Mikva purifies the impure in the 960 Lugin of the Mikva, Hashem purifies us in these 960 hours.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Shemos Rabba 2:6. This is because the shoe connects us to the ground. By taking off our shoes, it signifies the removal of the physicality.

<sup>4</sup> Shemos 3:5. See Ramban there. Yehoshua 5:15.

<sup>5</sup> Zevachim 24a.

<sup>6</sup> Orach Chaim 614:2. It is specifically leather that is a problem since it was once part of a physical body—animal (see also Mishna Brura 5).

<sup>7</sup> If a husband dies childless, his widow and brother should marry. If the brother doesn't want to go through with the marriage, Chalitza is performed, where it severs the bond between them.

<sup>8</sup> Devarim 25:9.

<sup>9</sup> These are 40 days of Teshuva since Moshe ascended to heaven for the second Luchos during this period (Pirkei Drebi Eliezer 46. See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:2, Mishna Brura, Hilchos Rosh Hashana 581). The Chassam Sofer teaches that during these days we should pour out our *שיח* (speech) to Hashem as it says *והפני ה' ייפך שיחך*, pour forth supplications before Hashem (with Vidui and the like)—Tehillim 102:1. 40 (days) is the numerical value of מ. Adding a מ to the word *שיח* we get *משיח*. This brings Mashiach closer. Moreover, *משיח* shares the same sum as *נחש* (358) since there is a Nachash in Kedusha—Yishai, the father of Mashiach, as this is what he is referred to—*אביגל בת נחש* (Shmuel 2, 17:25).

<sup>10</sup> Yoma 85b.

<sup>11</sup> Bnei Yisschar, Elul 1:15.

## Build Fences

We are instructed to have protective fences—cautionary rules—for the Torah—סיג לתורה.<sup>12</sup> This is so that we don't come to transgress and as the Mishna says כדי להרחיק אדם מן העבירה, to distance oneself from sin.<sup>13</sup> A hint to this is found in והגבלת את העם סביב,<sup>14</sup> you shall set boundaries for the people, which is written in the context of Matan Torah.<sup>15</sup>

A wealthy man named R' Issurel had a big store with all types of silk which he would close on Erev Shabbos at Chatzos. The Yetzer Hara once came to test him in this area in which he appeared in the guise of a big officer. Appearing as such, he entered the store and took lots of the expensive merchandise and measured it. Chatzos arrived while he was in the middle of his shopping. However, this didn't deter the wealthy store owner as he began to close up like he always did. This officer pleaded with him to give him the merchandise but R' Issurel objected thereby losing an abundance of money. Due to this, he was honored with such a holy son—the Rema<sup>16</sup> (1530-1572).<sup>17</sup>

It is written והגבל את ההר וקדשתו, make a boundary around the mountain, and sanctify it—since Hashem didn't want the nation ascending Har Sinai at Matan Torah.<sup>18</sup> This also teaches us about setting limitations to avoid sin, as this is one of the preparations for receiving Torah. והגבל את ההר can also be translated to take the

letters that are on the boundaries of ה. That is to say, the letters prior and that come after ה (ד, ו) and ר (ק, ש). These four letters spell קדוש because when one sets protective fences for Torah, he makes himself holy as the Pasuk continues וקדשתו.

We are told ורעשית מעקה לגגך ולא תשים דמים בביתך כי... if you build a new house, you shall make a fence for your roof so that you will not place blood in your house if a fallen one falls from it.<sup>19</sup> The word גגך has a Gematria of 26, the same sum as י-ה-ו-ה. Consequently, it refers to actual Torah laws. On this we should make fences—מעקה. Then, even if we fall (יפל הנפל), it will only be from the fence (ממנו) and not the actual Torah law.<sup>20</sup>

For going beyond the call of duty (having protective fences), one receives reward here, as this is above what is required.<sup>21</sup> This is how we can explain what it says when Bilaam<sup>22</sup> was traveling to curse us—במשעל גדר מזה וגדר מזה הכרמים, stood in the path of the vineyards, a fence on this side and a fence on that side.<sup>23</sup> במשעל is an acronym for מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא,<sup>24</sup> the reward for fulfilling a Mitzva is not given in this world, as Bilaam thought he could curse us and our Mitzvos wouldn't protect since there is no reward for it in this world. This was a mistake, as the Pasuk continues, because גדר מזה וגדר מזה—because we made fences to avoid sin thereby going beyond the call of duty, we are rewarded in this world as well.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Tzt"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 and is the author of the Sefer, *Fascinating Insights: Torah Perspectives on Unique Topics*. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. 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.

<sup>12</sup> Avos 1:1. See Bamidbar 22:5, Rashi, s.v. ארץ. An example of this is that the Rabbanan forbade the handling of certain utensils on Shabbos—known as Muktzá—since maybe one will use them to perform work forbidden by the Torah. Another instance is a Nazir where the Gemara states (Shabbos 13a) לך לך אמרי נזירא, go away, go away, we say to the Nazir. Go around, go around, do not approach the vineyard. Although there is no prohibition for a Nazir to enter a vineyard, as he is prohibited from eating grapes, he should refrain from doing so in order that he not succumb to temptation.

<sup>13</sup> Brachos 2a. See Ohr Hachaim, Devarim, 11:22. For this reason, regarding Shema in the evening, one has until midnight to recite it, although biblically one has until dawn.

<sup>14</sup> Shemos 19:12. On a deeper level, the phrase ופרצו חומות מגדלי, which we say on Chanuka, means they breached the spiritual fences.

<sup>15</sup> אמר אויב ארדף אשיג אהלק שלל, we say או ישרו, the enemy declared I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide plunder (Shemos 15:9). The מרה"י of Belz is bothered how Paroh was so sure that he would be victorious and get the spoils? The Jewish people were firm in their Kedusha in Mitzrayim, as they didn't change their name, clothing or language. This is also why they were redeemed. Paroh thought to seduce the Jewish people and remove them from this. In this way, he felt he would get them to stumble. This is how we can understand the above Pasuk: אמר אויב ארדף אשיג—he declared he will overtake the Jewish people. How? Through אהלק שלל, making us fall in the areas of לשון, לבוש, שם, שלל—name, language, and clothing.

<sup>16</sup> Some of the Rema's students were the Levush, the Sma, the Bach, and the Masas Binyamin—the father of the Shela.

<sup>17</sup> Taamai HaMinhagim, p. 128, s.v. וצריך. In 1551-2 the mother of the Rema as well as his 20-year-old wife and maternal grandmother died. To perpetuate their memory, the Rema's father built a shul in Krakow, Poland, which came to be known as the Rema's shul.

<sup>18</sup> Shemos 19:23. See Panim Yafos, Yisro, s.v. ומה.

<sup>19</sup> Devarim 22:8.

<sup>20</sup> תורת מוהרי"ן, Ki Seitzei. The Gemara says one doesn't commit a transgression unless רוח שטות, spirit of foolishness enters him (Sota 3a). If this is the case, asks R' Chaim Shmuelevitz, why is one held accountable for his sins? This can be compared to one standing near a pit when a strong wind—רוח—pushes him into the pit, as in such a case it clearly isn't his fault? R' Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that the one who fell into the pit was negligent because he shouldn't have stood near the pit when he knows a strong wind could push him in. Similarly, one is held responsible for being so close to sin that a רוח שטות can cause him to fall into sin.

<sup>21</sup> See Maharsha, Sota 14a, s.v. וא"ל. See Brachos 20b.

<sup>22</sup> Tangentially, the Gemara (Sota 11a) tells us that three people were involved in offering counsel to Paroh. One of them was בלעם. Based on this, the Pe'er Aharon points out that the initials of מסיים למען ענתו בסבלתם, they would appoint tax collectors over it in order to afflict it with their burdens (Shemos 1:11), are בלעם.

<sup>23</sup> Bamidbar 22:24. Bilaam said הנה העם היצא ממצרים, the people coming out of Egypt... (Bamidbar 22:11). The Imrei Chaim explains he was saying it is difficult to destroy such a nation that left the רע, evil of Mitzrayim. This is alluded to in היצא ממצרים, as if we take (היצא) the Gematria of עמ—110—from מצרים (ממצרים), which has a sum of 380, we get רע (270).

<sup>24</sup> Kiddushin 39b. Arugas Habosem, Balak, s.v. ויעמד.