

Channeling Traits

It is known that in Mitzrayim, we were on the 49th level of impurity. Through Sefira, we cleanse ourselves until we reach the 50th day, Shavuos. However, to reach the 49 levels of holiness we first need to remove the 49 levels of impurity. This is likened to a hole that is 49 feet deep as in order to build it 49 feet above ground, first you need to reach ground level. As a result, we should have 98 days of Sefira (49 multiplied by 2)?

The following analogy is given: one standing on an electrical line in New York City can give power to millions of people. However, if he makes a mistake he can be killed in an instant since there is tremendous voltage there. On the other hand, one who fixes an electric outlet has now given power for an electrical appliance to work. Conversely, if he makes a mistake, there may be some sparks and the like but nothing too dangerous happens. So, the amount of power one is dealing with is how much of an effect it can have to empower or destroy (See Tzidkas Hatzadik 248).

Another analogy given to grasp this concept is the following: one who walks down the street and bumps into someone won't cause too much damage. However, if he is riding on a bike and collides with someone, that can cause injury. How about if he is driving a car and crashes? That can kill people. Even worse is one who is flying a plane that crashes as that can kill many more. The reverse is also true as walking can get you to your destination. Riding a bike can get you there even quicker. Driving a car can get you as well as others there in even less time. Of course, a plane is faster than them all by far. Again we see that in proportion to the object, is how constructive or destructive it can be.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim (Emor, s.v. ותדעו) writes that if the wicked and those who wallow in the pleasures of the world whose

hearts are burning with all types of desire and sin with a powerful wanting, wish to enter to holiness, they could enter on the very same level that they could become enflamed with a desire like flames of fire for Ahavas Hashem and His Torah and Mitzvos. This is because for everything there is in Tuma, there is the equal and opposite in Kedusha. One who has such strong power in Tuma from extraordinary desire and powerful wanting so would his power be in Kedusha for Ahavas Hashem. One who doesn't have this power would be unable to do this.

This concept is known as זה לעומת זה as the amount of power there is on one side is the same as on the other (Koheles 7:14. See Chagiga 15a, Tzidkas Hatzadik 150). Each thing was created with an equal and opposite force.

The following are some of the many places we see this idea.

1) A sin in Eretz Yisrael is worse than one in חוץ לארץ, outside the land of Israel, as Eretz Yisrael is holier. The converse is also true, a Mitzva is greater in Eretz Yisrael (See Ramban in Vayikra 18:25 and Breishis 26:5).

2) The Gemara teaches that the remedy for one who speaks Lashon Hara is to be engaged in Torah (Eruchin 15b). Since he used his speech negatively, he should now use it for Torah, for positive (See Tzidkas Hatzadik 234). Tangentially, the Pasuk (Vayikra 5:4) לבטא בשפתים להרע או להיטיב, expressing with his lips to do harm or good, can also be understood that one's speech can be used for good or bad.

3) With this concept, we can grasp why one who does תשובה מאהבה, his willful sins are counted as זכויות ועשו זכויות (Yoma 86b). This idea is in line with הפכת מספדי למחול (Tehillim 30), לי, you have changed my lament into dancing (Tehillim 30).

4) The Gemara (Shabbos 156a, See Peninim Mishulchan Hagra, Shelach 14:18) tells us

that one who is born during the hour of Mars will be a man who spills blood. However, this person can be a killer or one who is a מוהל or

as it can be channeled. In explaining חנך לנער על פי דרכו, train the youth according to his way, the Gra (Mishlei 22:6) comments that one's nature can't be broken rather just channeled (See also 1:7, אבן שלמה).

5) When the Yetzer Hara for immorality was removed, they couldn't find a freshly laid egg. They didn't daven that the Yetzer Hara should only be for his wife but not for another woman because פלגא ברקיעא לא יהבי, heaven doesn't grant half (Yoma 69b). This is in line with our concept. A metaphor to help us grasp this is the following: one who has a problem with his kidney and gets it removed, removes the danger. However, he also doesn't possess the positive functions of the kidney.

In the Tefila after Sefira we say (Nusach Sefard) that Hashem commanded us to count Sefira כדי לטהרו מקלפותיו... ; in order to purify us from the shells of impurity, as we need to channel that impurity for holiness. This is hinted to in (Vayikra 23:15) וספרתם לכם כדי לטהרו, as לכם is an acronym for מקלפותיו.

By removing impurity from within us, we automatically increase our purity. This follows the concept of סורמרע ועשה טוב (Tehillim 34) as when one removes the bad, inevitably he is doing good. This can be compared to a candle as the more waste that is removed from the candle, the better it lights.

For this reason, there are only 49 days of Sefira since with each day we remove a level of impurity thereby channeling it towards holiness. Consequently, when we reach Shavuos we have removed the levels of impurity as well as having attained all the levels of holiness.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

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