

עזרי דשע

**Alei Deshe - Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on
the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur**

Living the Life

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת חֻקֵי וְאֶת מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאֱדוֹם וְחַי בָּהֶם

You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live – I am Hashem. (Vayikra 18:5)

Rashi cites Toras Kohanim: “וְחַי בָּהֶם, He shall live by them – in the World to Come. If you suggest it means in this world – of course man is destined to die. So what does וְחַי בָּהֶם mean? In *Olam Haba*.”

The Gemara (Yoma 85b), however, interprets וְחַי בָּהֶם differently: “וְחַי בָּהֶם - ולא שימות בהם - *One must live by the mitzvos, not die by them*; one should set aside the mitzvos when there is danger of death.” This seems puzzling. Does וְחַי בָּהֶם teach the primacy of *Olam Haze* or that of *Olam Haba*?

Toras Kohanim’s proof, as well, seems difficult. There are multiple places in the Torah where חַי, *life*, refers to the temporal life of this world. עֲשֵׂה לָךְ שֵׁרֶפֶךָ וְנִשִּׂים אֹתוֹ עַל נֶס וְהָיָה כָּל הַנִּשּׁוּף וְנִרְאָה אֹתוֹ וְחַי בָּהֶם - *Make for yourself a serpent and place it on a pole, and anyone who was bitten will look at it and live... so it was that if the serpent bit a man, he would stare at the copper serpent and live* (Bamidbar 21:8-9). Yet that generation of Bnei Yisrael died in the *midbar*; they did not live forever. Regarding a murderer, too, the Torah states (Devarim 19:4-5), וְהָ דָבָר הַרְצִיחַ אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס שָׁמָּה וְחַי וְגוֹי הוּא יָנוּס אֶל אַחַת הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, וְחַי - *This is the matter of the killer who shall flee there and live... he shall flee to one of these cities and live*. Certainly, he will not live forever either. The Torah refers to eternal life only when it specifies לְעוֹלָם, *forever* – as in (Bereishis 3:22) וְאָכַל וְחַי לְעוֹלָם - *and he will eat*

and live forever. So how does Toras Kohanim infer from וְחַי בָּהֶם that it refers to life in *Olam Haba*?

גַּר אֲנֹכִי בָאָרֶץ, גַּר אֲנִי בְּאֶרֶץ - *I am a sojourner in the world, do not hide Your commandments from me*. R. Chaim Vital explains¹ that a Yid’s *neshamah* is carved out of the *Kisei HaKavod*, and when it descends to this world it is called a גַּר, a sojourner. David asked Hashem that he not be looked at as a mere creature of the earth, unworthy of deep Torah wisdom, but instead his heavenly *neshamah* should be seen as his essence. Just as a citizen of a country retains that citizenship even while traveling abroad, so does one’s *neshamah* remain a heavenly being even while in this world.

Our physical life may seem to us to be of primary importance, but that is because of the obscured vision we have in this world. In fact, however, we are only travelers passing through *Olam Haze*; our primary life is that of *Olam Haba* – a life of Torah, mitzvos and *kedushah*. David Hamelech requested that the hiddenness of this world not obscure for him the real life of his *neshamah* – the light of Torah and closeness to Hashem.

This, then, is the meaning of וְחַי בָּהֶם: life with the Torah and mitzvos, life that shuns evil for the purpose of obtaining *deveikus* to Hashem. As the *Zohar* teaches, the word מצוה is rooted in צוותא, companionship. When one learns Torah, he clings to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Who stands and learns opposite him; when he davens, he stands before the King. A life of *deveikus* with Hashem is an eternal life; thus,

1 Eitz Hadaas Tov

“
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לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמַת
מֵרַח
עֵקָא עֵדְנָה
צְפוּרָה ע"ה
בֵּית מִשְׁה מִנְחֵם הַלּוֹי ז"ל

Toras Kohanim maintains that **חַי בְּהַחַי** cannot refer to life in this world. The temporal physical life of this world is false. Only one who dedicates his life to fulfilling the will of Hashem can be considered alive; a life of pursuing the pleasures of this world is not a true life.

The Mishnah (Avos 4:22) teaches: “Do not allow your *yetzer hara* to assure you that the abyss (of death) is a place of refuge; for unwillingly you are created, unwillingly you are born, unwillingly you live, unwillingly you die, and unwillingly you will give a reckoning before the King of Kings, Hakadosh Baruch Hu.”

We can understand that the *neshamah* does not want to descend into this world, nor does anybody want to die or undergo judgment. But what is meant by “unwillingly you live”? A person would give up everything for more life. R. Ovadyah of Bartenura explains that one enduring severe suffering may wish for his life to end, but unwillingly continues living. Yet this is somewhat difficult; some people do, *rachmana litzlan*, end their lives, so can life truly be considered against one’s will?

Mahara² explains the Mishnah this way: One might think that since he can end his life, he is in control of his life. This is not the case; rather, “unwillingly you live,” i.e., your life is fully controlled by Hashem; each breath you take is by His will. Every detail of a person’s existence, formation, birth, and everything that occurs afterwards, is only by Hashem’s master plan.

It is of a life of eternal connection with Hashem that the Torah states **חַי בְּהַחַי**. Although a mitzvah may occasionally be overridden in order to preserve life of this world, one must remember that ultimately, the life of this world was created for the sake of **חַי בְּהַחַי** - a life of Torah and mitzvos.

² *Derech Chaim*, ad loc.

³ See at length *Beis Yaakov* (Alexander), end of Nitzavim

After all, we are alive only because Hashem supports us, breathing life into us at every moment.

The *mashgiach* Rav Gad'l Eisner would relate a tale of a *shadchan* who received resistance to a *shidduch*, since the boy’s grandfather was a boorish, ignorant man. The *shadchan* explained that there was no problem, as the grandfather was no longer alive. The *shidduch* was completed, and soon enough the families were seated at the wedding. Seeing a coarse villager sitting next to the *chassan* and handing out *l’chaim*, the *mechutan* inquired who he was. When he heard that this was the *chassan*’s grandfather, he rushed over to the *shadchan*, livid. “So the grandfather is alive. Why did you deceive me like that?!” The *shadchan* rejoined, “Can that be considered alive?”³

The question is what we consider life; there is life, and there is life. My father related that on his first visit to the United States, he asked a *chassid* about the state of his *parnassah*. “I am making a living,” the man replied with a sigh. In Eretz Yisrael, to make a living means to achieve a good, enjoyable life, so my father wondered why the *chassid* sighed as he said this. People explained to him that in America, “making a living” means eking out a livelihood, just getting by. There is life, and there is life.

Although it may appear as if one who attains wealth and pleasure is truly alive, it is not so; just as a lizard’s tail continues to wiggle after it is severed and lifeless, one who lives for physicality is not alive. Life is only life when it is uplifted above this world, a life of **חַי בְּהַחַי**, of deep connection to Torah and mitzvos.

(אחרי קדושים תש"פ – מאמר א)

Full Commitment

מִפְנֵי שִׁבְהָ תִקּוּם וְהַדְרַתָּ כְּפִי זָקֵן וְיִרְאַתָּ מֵאֱלֹקֵי אֲבִי ה'
In the presence of an old person you shall rise, and you shall honor the presence of a sage, and you shall revere your G-d – I am Hashem (Vayikra 19:32)

The Gemara (Yoma 53a) relates that when Rava would take leave of his *rebbe*, R. Yosef, he would walk out backwards, which would cause his legs to become injured. This continued to happen until R. Yosef’s lintel became stained with blood.

⁴ See *Birkei Yosef*, Y.D. 241 and others

⁵ Y.D. 241:1

The extent of Rava’s honor for him was related to R. Yosef (who didn’t observe this since he was blind), and he blessed Rava that his head would be lifted above the city (i.e., he would become its *rosh yeshivah*).

Some *Acharonim*⁴ prove from this Gemara that the obligation of honoring *talmidei chachamim* applies even if they are blind and cannot see the honor. The Sfas Emes,⁵ however, proves the contrary from this same Gemara: if R. Yosef was

moved to bless Rava for his acts of honor, surely they were not obligatory. Clearly, then, Rava was exempt from honoring R. Yosef since he was blind.

Perhaps, though, R. Yosef’s blessing was not for the fact that Rava honored him, but for the way he honored him. The Gemara (Chullin 7b) states that when an open wound becomes re-injured, it causes very great pain. Although Rava injured his legs once by leaving R. Yosef backwards, he

continued to do so day after day. Why? Rava had given over his very essence, his soul and all his senses, for the Torah, so he was completely attached to R. Yosef, his *rebbe*. He therefore honored R. Yosef to the utmost, paying no heed to his injuries.

For this reason, R. Yosef blessed Rava that his head would be lifted above the city. The “city” is a reference a place of *gashmiyus*, of *nisyonos* and sin.⁶ Since Rava had been *moser nefesh* for Torah and mitzvos, he deserved a *berachah* that his head, too, would be elevated above the mundanity of this world.

From whom did Rava learn this conduct of such unconditional compliance with the Torah’s expectations?

The Gemara in various places mentions that both R. Yosef and R. Sheshes were blind. *Teshuvos HaGeonim*⁷ explains how this came to be. Rav possessed ten unique facets of piety; one of them was that he would not look beyond his immediate four *amos*. Following his *petirah*, his *talmidim* each undertook one of his *middos* so that the *middos* would not go lost. R. Yosef and R. Sheshes both committed not to look outside their four *amos*. When they realized that they could not uphold their commitments, they blinded themselves.⁸

It would seem that they blinded themselves as an act of self-punishment. They could not sufficiently control their eyes, so they blinded them. But this is difficult. If they realized that the resolution was beyond their ability, they should have been *matir neder*, perhaps given *tzedakah* as penance, and moved on. Why punish themselves so harshly?

Rather, they blinded themselves as a way of upholding their commitment. When they accepted upon themselves not to look outside their four *amos*, there was no uncertainty about it. A commitment is a commitment. The only

question was whether it would be upheld with intact eyesight or without.

Parshas Kedoshim begins with (19:2) קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ – you shall be holy and ends with (20:27) דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם – their blood is upon themselves. The Kotzker Rebbe taught, “בלוט זאל זעך גיסען, הייליג זאלט” – Though blood may gush, you must be holy.” Why, then, isn’t דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם written first?

is written (Mishlei 11:3), תִּמְתַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּנְחָם – *The innocence of the just will guide them*; but about those who go with deviousness, it is written (ibid), וְסָלַף בּוֹגְדִים יִשְׂדָּם – *but the corruption of the faithless will rob them*.” The Maharsha explains that תִּמְתַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל is a reference to absolute adherence to the Torah even when it is difficult. This strict adherence תִּנְחָם, will lead them. As the Gemara (Makkos 10b) states, a person is led on

In order to achieve sheleimus, we must make an absolute commitment of na’aseh, which will enable us to fulfill our resolution of nishma

Because one will only triumph a difficult test of *kedushah* if he has previously undertaken an ironclad commitment of *kedushah*. If the initial commitment was feeble, it will not withstand confrontation with reality.

It was R. Yosef’s approach of unyielding adherence to the Torah’s principles that taught his *talmid*, Rava, to act in this manner, to the extent of injuring himself through honoring his *rebbe*.

This is not the only example of this conduct of Rava. The Gemara (Shabbos 88a) relates that a *Tzeduki* once observed Rava deeply absorbed in his learning, to the point where blood spurted from his fingers because of their cramped position. He attacked Rava, “You are a rash people; you precede your mouths to your ears. You still act in this rash manner. You should have first heard [what the Torah demands, to know] whether you could observe it.” Rava replied, “About us, who go with *shleimus* (wholeness), it

the path he chooses.⁹ Conversely, וְסָלַף בּוֹגְדִים יִשְׂדָּם, those who choose to lead a crooked life will be led on that path.

The *Tzeduki* criticized Klal Yisrael’s manner of accepting the Torah, the way they said *na’aseh* before *nishma*. In truth, however, this is the order that’s called for when undertaking to fulfill the Torah. In order to achieve *sheleimus*, we must make an absolute commitment of *na’aseh*, which will enable us to fulfill our resolution of *nishma*. Rava learned from R. Yosef that *kabbalas haTorah* must be ironclad; to achieve *deveikus* to Torah with all of one’s senses, one cannot make *cheshbonos* of avoiding injury. It must be a complete and whole commitment.

May Hashem help us merit a true preparation for *kabbalas haTorah*.

(אחרי קדושים תש”פ – מאמר ב)

6 See Pesachim 113a and Eiruvin 21b

7 Cited be *Pesach Einayim*, Menachos 110a

8 See Ramban, Kiddushin 31a and Ritva, Megillah 24a. See also *Ibra D’dasha* (vol. 2 p. 141, in footnote), whether they blinded themselves by physical action or through *tefillah*.

9 See also Yoma 38ab; *Likutei HaRim, Likutim*, p. 167 ד”ה והבטע”ש

Waiting for Nightfall

In *Seder Parshiyos*¹⁰ of the Aderes (R. Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Temimim), he wonders about *he'erev shemesh*, the need to wait until nightfall after *tevilah* to complete one's *taharah*: must one immerse in the *mikvah* before nightfall for *he'erev shemesh* to be effective, or can one *tovel* after nightfall and have the beginning of that night count for *he'erev shemesh*? The Aderes writes that proof has been brought that *tevilah* after nightfall is effective. On Yom Kippur, the one who burns the bull-offering of Yom Kippur and the one who brings the goat for *Azazel* to the *midbar* must immerse themselves and their clothes.¹¹ However, regarding these *tevilos*, the pasuk does not say that they must wait until nightfall to become *tahor*. Seemingly, since one may neither bathe nor wash clothes on Yom Kippur, these *tevilos* took place at night, following Yom Kippur. Since *he'erev shemesh* preceded these *tevilos*, they became *tahor* immediately upon immersing.

This seems very problematic. The Gemara states in many places that *tevilah* may only take place during daytime: Berachos 2b, "The Kohanim immerse while still day"; Shabbos 35a, "Kohanim may immerse during what R. Yehudah considers *bein hashemashos* (since it is actually still daytime)"; Yoma 19a, "As evening approached... [the Kohen Gadol] would return to his chamber and immerse"; Beitzah 19a, "Evening on weekdays, one cannot immerse during *bein hashemashos*"; as well as Nazir 44b and other places.

Additionally, the Aderes writes that immersing one's body is forbidden on Yom Kippur since it is like bathing, and immersing one's clothes is forbidden since it is like laundering clothes. However, this is not so. Even if we grant that bathing is forbidden on Yom Kippur *min haTorah* (which is subject to debate), early authorities write that *tevilah* is permitted *mid'Oraisa*.¹² Immersing garments for *taharah*, similarly, is not considered a *melachah*

of laundering. The *Kadmonim* make this point on the Gemara's statement (Yoma 77b) that one traveling to greet his *rebbe* on Yom Tov may walk through water even up to his neck.

So why does the pasuk not mention *he'erev shemesh* regarding those who burn the bull and bring the goat for *Azazel*? Regarding these people, the pasuk says that after they immerse, *וְאַחֲרַי כִּן יָבוֹא אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה* - *thereafter he may enter the camp*. Of course, every time one becomes *tahor* he may re-enter the *machaneh*. Why must the pasuk say this? The Malbim explains: this teaches that these people's requirement of *tevilah* is not solely a 'law of the King,' but is because they are *tamei*. We may now understand that since the Torah specifically stresses the fact that they are *tamei*, it does not need to mention the various laws of *tumah*, such as the need to wait for *he'erev shemesh*.

In addition, the law of *he'erev shemesh* is only partially relevant on Yom Kippur, since in any case one may not eat, including the foods which require *taharah*; one must only take care not to touch them while *tamei*. Furthermore, since this *parshah* is dedicated to the laws of Yom Kippur, it mentions only the halachos relevant to Yom Kippur itself — and not those that belong to the night after Yom Kippur, such as *he'erev shemesh*.

The publisher of the Aderes's *sefer* mentions that the Avnei Nezer¹³ writes that it is strange to say that *he'erev shemesh* is effective before *tevilah*. In fact, however, the Avnei Nezer never even considers this idea. He makes his statement only regarding one who immersed while it was still day but did not complete his *taharah* by emerging from the water before nightfall.

(בגאות דשא – אחרי קדושים תשכ"א)

10 Newly printed edition to Sefer Vayikra, Acharei Mos p. 155

11 Vayikra 16:26-28

12 See *Sfas Emes*, Yoma 73b

13 *She'elos U'Teshuvos*, C.M. end of 72

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