

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



על דש

AL EI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Counteracting Evil

לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ה' וגו' על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים, ואשר שָׁכַר עֲלֵיךָ אֶת בְּלָעַם בֶּן בְּעוֹר וגו' ולא אָבָה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְשַׁמֵּעַ אֶל בְּלָעַם, וַיִּהְיֶה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְךָ אֶת הַקְּלָלָה לְבָרְכָהּ, כִּי אָהַבְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ

An Amoni or Moavi shall not enter the congregation of Hashem... because they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt, and because he hired against you Bilaam son of Beor... But Hashem, your G-d, refused to listen to Bilaam, and Hashem, your G-d, reversed the curse to a blessing for you, because Hashem, your G-d, loved you. (Devarim 23:4-6)

The Torah speaks at length of the reasons why members of Amon and Moav may not join the Jewish nation. Why is this necessary? After

“Yisrael” – the Jewish nation? Why the reference to Yerushalayim? The answer is that these nations are the root of all evil and are thus the bad neighbors of the essence of “Yerushalayim,” reflected in the acronym of its name: *yarei v'shalem*, completeness and *yiras Shamayim*. Amon and Moav are the ultimate enemy of the purity and holiness of Yerushalayim.

The evil nature of Amon and Moav is displayed in the following anecdote of the Gemara (Yevamos 16b). As the nations ransacked the Beis Hamikdash before it was destroyed, each nation entered and searched for gold and silver to loot; but when Amon and Moav entered, they searched for a Sefer Torah, declaring, “This book that says, ‘An Amoni or Moavi shall not enter the congregation of Hashem’ shall be burned.”

This action of Amon and Moav is very strange. An Amoni or Moavi gentile is no different than any other gentile, about whom the Torah says (Devarim 7:3), וְלֹא תִתְחַתֵּן בָּם – *You shall not intermarry with them*. Our parshah's admonition is only relevant to an Amoni or Moavi who becomes a *ger tzedek*. But these people were clearly not planning on converting; if they were, they wouldn't burn a Sefer Torah. So what was so disturbing to them about our pasuk? Clearly, the very truth of the words of the Torah deeply upset Amon and Moav, being the embodiment of evil itself.

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Badge of Servitude

גְּדִלִים תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ עַל אַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת כְּסוּתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּכְסֶה בָּהּ

You shall make for yourselves twisted threads on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself. (Devarim 22:12)

Let us explore the essence of the mitzvah of *tzitzis* and uncover a depth of the *avodah* that is required of us – particularly during this time, as we approach Rosh Hashanah.

The Mordechai¹ points out that instead of prohibiting wearing a four-cornered garment without *tzitzis*, the pasuk commands that *tzitzis* be placed upon a four-cornered garment that one wears. The Mordechai derives from this that indeed, the Torah's intention is not to prohibit wearing a four-cornered garment without *tzitzis*; the mitzvah is that one must place *tzitzis* on such a garment that he is wearing. The mitzvah obligation only arises once the garment is worn. *Avnei Nezer*² considers whether this concept might be applicable to other mitzvos as well. Apparently, though, it pertains only to *tzitzis*. Why?

*Tosafos*³ writes that *tzitzis* serves as insignia of our status as servants of Hashem, like a tag worn by a slave that identifies him

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There is never a time when a Yid cannot create a beis knesses and beis midrash within himself

all, it is all already said in Parshas Balak.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 96b) refers to Amon and Moav as “bad neighbors of Yerushalayim.” Why aren't they referred to as bad neighbors of

1 Geographically, their territories are not closer to Yerushalayim than to other parts of Eretz Yisrael.

11 *Halachos Ketanos* 944; cited by *Beis Yosef, O.C.* end of 13
12 *Y.D.* 381
13 *Menachos* 43b s.v. *Chosem*

Counteracting Evil

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The Maharal² states that all other nations are *chomer* that conflict with *tzurah*, whereas Amon and Moav's *tzurah* is itself fallacious and perverted. In other words, the other nations' wrongful actions and modes of life are inconsistent with their true, positive essence. But Amon and Moav's very essence is corrupt. The Maharal explains that this is why they were always the foremost enemies of Bnei Yisrael, and why they may never marry Jews. Their evil essence is eternally at conflict with the true and virtuous essence of the Jewish nation.

Indeed, Amon and Moav did not wage a war of arms with Bnei Yisrael as other nations did, instead battling them with the power of speech. Their curses were an expression of their spiritual selves – their very essence of evil. In fact, the Midrash³ says that just as Hashem swore to eliminate Amalek from the world, He swore as well that He will destroy Amon and Moav. Since they are the root of evil, they cannot have a continued existence.

How deep does the evil of Amon and Moav run? What is the extent of their perversion?

Mefarshim point out that the word דָּבַר על דָּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קִדְמוּ אֹתְכֶם בְּלֶחֶם וּבְמִיּוֹם seems extraneous; the pasuk could have simply said על דָּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קִדְמוּ אֹתְכֶם. The *mefarshim* explain that this is why Rashi comments on the words על דָּבַר: "For their advice that you be brought to sin." Rashi sees an allusion in the word דָּבַר to the sin of adultery, since the Gemara⁴ uses a *gezeirah shaveh* with the word דָּבַר in reference to *gilui arayos*.

But if we follow Rashi, the continuation of the pasuk, על דָּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קִדְמוּ אֹתְכֶם, בְּלֶחֶם וּבְמִיּוֹם, is difficult to understand. What connection is there between Bilaam's advice of

bringing Bnei Yisrael to sin, alluded to with על דָּבַר, and the fact that Amon and Moav did not greet Bnei Yisrael with bread and water?⁵

Sefarim explain as follows. Chazal say⁶ that Amon and Moav lured Bnei Yisrael into sin by setting up shops and marketplaces and offering Bnei Yisrael a tempting array of food, eventually leading them to sin with their daughters. But why were Bnei Yisrael so easily enticed to enjoy their food? It was because in preparation for this display of delicacies, Amon and Moav had deprived Bnei Yisrael of basic sustenance: bread and water. Thus, famished and parched, Bnei Yisrael were easy victims for their scheme.⁷ This is why Rashi connects these two nefarious actions of Amon and Moav, by reading Bilaam's plot into the words על דָּבַר.

Rashi's phrasing deserves study, as always. על העצה שיעצו אתכם להחטיאכם – For the advice that they *advised you* to bring you to sin." Shouldn't the word עליכם be used instead of אתכם? Then, Rashi would read: "For the advice that they advised *about* you to bring you to sin."⁸ Perhaps Rashi means that Bilaam's advice was not a one-time idea; with his evil machinations he implanted in Bnei Yisrael the enduring idea by which they themselves would continually seek sin – *they advised you to bring you to sin*.

Just as Amon and Moav seduced Bnei Yisrael at that time by first bringing them to hunger and thirst, temptation would always return in this manner. The *yetzer hara* continues to lure us to sin by first bringing us to hunger for *gashmiyus*. This feeling of hunger is actually a Yid's

yearning for closeness to Hashem,⁹ but the *yetzer hara* corrupts it and leads us to believe we crave enjoyment of *Olam Hazeih*.

How can we counteract this power of the *yetzer hara*?

וַיִּהְיֶה ה' אֱלֹקֵיךָ לְךָ אֵת הַקְּלָלָה לְבָרְכָהּ – *and Hashem, your G-d, reversed the curse to a blessing for you*. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 105b) says that the singular "הַקְּלָלָה" refers to Bilaam's pronouncement that addressed the *batei knessios* and *batei midrashos*. Whereas all the other blessings of Bilaam reverted to curses, this one remains a blessing forever, since Bnei Yisrael are never without *batei knessios* and *batei midrashos*. But do the facts reflect this? There have been periods of persecution when Yidden were forced to survive without shuls.

The answer lies in the pasuk's statement that Hashem *reversed the curse to a blessing for you*. There is never a time when a Yid cannot create a *beis knesses* and *beis midrash* within himself, in the depths of his consciousness.

This brings us to Chazal's advice¹⁰ that one who encounters the *yetzer hara* should drag him into the *beis midrash*. They mean that the *yetzer hara* should be brought into one's internal *beis midrash*. One can satisfy the thirst that the *yetzer hara* imposes on him with the spiritual pursuits of the *beis midrash*, since in reality, it is his own pining for *ruchniyus* that is at the root of this thirst.

This is the blessing that remains a blessing forever.

(כי תצא תשכ"ב – ס"ג מאמר ב)

2 *Netzach Yisrael* 32

3 *Eichah Rabbah, Pesichta* 9

4 See *Kiddushin* 65b

5 See *Divrei David* of the Taz

6 See *Bamidbar Rabbah* 20:23; *Sanhedrin* 106a

7 דברת שלמה

8 Some versions of Rashi do read this way, but our editions read "אתכם." As we know, every word of Rashi contains holy secrets.

9 See *Sfas Emes*, *Terumah* 5662

10 *Sukkah* 52b and *Kiddushin* 30b

Badge of Servitude

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as his master's slave. The *Chinuch* explains:¹⁴ "There is no better reminder in the world than to fix one's master's seal on the garment he always wears; in this way, his eyes and heart are with his master throughout the day." *Tzitzis* is a badge of identity, reminding us that we are servants of Hashem and must keep all His mitzvos.

The Gemara (Shabbos 57b) states that a slave may not wear his identifying tag outside on Shabbos. We are concerned that it may fall off, and, fearful of his master, the slave might carry it home. Slaveowners were very

Our dress must reflect how we feel deep down at all times of day and night: אָנָא עֲבָדָא דְקוּדְשָׁא בְרִיךְ הוּא, I am Hashem's loyal servant

strict about their slaves wearing their identity tags at all times, so that they would remain constantly aware of their status as slaves.

There is a great lesson in this. If human slaves must always bear their insignia, certainly we, servants of Hashem, must wear our identifying tags – our *tzitzis* – at all times. We must be always cognizant of our status as servants of Hashem. A servant's status is not only active when he serves his master; while he eats and sleeps, too, he remains in his master's dominion. Our dress must reflect how we feel deep down at all times of day and night: אָנָא עֲבָדָא דְקוּדְשָׁא בְרִיךְ הוּא, I am Hashem's loyal servant.

This is why the mitzvah of *tzitzis* is incumbent only after one dons his garment. If the mitzvah would be to add the *tzitzis* before putting it on, we would look at *tzitzis* as a mitzvah-uniform, a consecrated vestment. The lesson would then be that when engaged in active *avodah*, we must keep in mind our status as servants of Hashem. It brings to mind (though we avoid drawing such parallels) the way the nations of the world think of religious observance — carrying out their rituals at designated times and places, while living the rest of their lives however they wish.

Tzitzis are to be placed on a Jew's garment *after* he is wearing it, to demonstrate that it is only an ordinary garment – which shows that even when we are engaged in the mundanity of life, we are servants of Hashem.

Chazal teach:¹⁵ "What is unique about the color of *techeiles*? *Techeiles* is similar to the sea; the sea is similar to grass; grass is similar to the sky; the sky is similar to the *kisei hakavod*." Why not simply say that *techeiles* is similar to the sky which is similar to the *kisei hakavod*? Why the lengthy chain of comparisons? Rashi answers that *techeiles* is not exactly the shade of the sky; it is close to the shade of the sea, which is close to that of grass, which in turn is like the sky.

Based on the above, we may suggest that Chazal meant to allude that our servitude to Hashem – as signified by *tzitzis* and *techeiles* – is not only about matters of the 'sky' – heavenly matters, such as when we are occupied with mitzvos. It is about the sea and grass, too – about our earthly, everyday living.

In all contexts, even the most mundane, we are subservient to Hashem.

This concept relates especially to this time of year, as Rosh Hashanah approaches, when we coronate Hashem as our King.¹⁶ Declaring Hashem our King is not a once-a-year affair. On Rosh Hashanah we accept His Kingship for every day and every night of the year, for every location and every situation in which we will find ourselves; both for when we are engaged in Torah and mitzvos, and for when we are occupied with our daily lives. Without this intention, it would not be a true acceptance of His Kingship. A Yid's very essence and conduct must reflect this, proclaiming, "As long as I'm alive, Ribbono Shel Olam, I am Your slave!"

We must know that nowadays, when there are so few true servants of Hashem, He awaits our *avodah* most eagerly. When Hashem looks down from *Shamayim*, He sees so much evil, so much coldness toward *kedushah* – and He has *nachas* from us, His soldiers who fear His word and keep His mitzvos. But this is not just a privilege; it is also a responsibility. We must fulfill Hashem's expectations of us and act as true, wholehearted servants of the King, striving to bring Him ever greater *nachas*.

(בְּנֹאוֹת דָּשָׁא – כִּי תִצָּא תִשָּׁ"פ)

14 386

15 Yerushalmi cited by *Tosafos*, Sotah 17a

16 Rosh Hashanah 34b

Guilty as Charged

Our parshah contains the halachah of *na'arah hame'orasah*:¹⁷ if a man sins with a girl who is married with *eirusin*, he is given the death penalty; and if the girl could have prevented it, she is killed as well.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 10a) states that if witnesses testify about an occurrence of *na'arah hame'orasah* and then become *eidim zomemin* (who incur the punishment they tried to inflict), they are killed and must also pay money. Rashi explains¹⁸ that they are killed for having attempted to cause the death penalty and must pay the value of the girl's right to collect her *kesubah*, since she would have lost this right per their testimony.

It was asked:¹⁹ Since the girl would have been killed shortly due to the witnesses' testimony, her right to collect her *kesubah* was essentially worthless at that time; after all, there was no chance she would ever see the money. So why must the *eidim zomemin* pay? They would certainly not need to pay for the indirect effect of their testimony – that her right to collect her *kesubah* would devalue because she would be killed.

We might suggest two answers to this question, although neither answer is compelling. First, perhaps the Gemara is discussing a case where the girl's husband is deathly ill and may die at any moment; thus, she might have collected her *kesubah* before being brought to her death, so there was value in her right to her *kesubah*. Second, the case may be where her *kesubah* was for a very large sum,²⁰ so that even the minuscule chance that her husband would die before she did, and she would collect her *kesubah*, carried value.

In truth, however, I don't believe the issue is problematic to start with. Granted, the witnesses only indirectly degraded the value of her right to collect her *kesubah* by inflicting on her the death penalty – but by testifying that she was *mezaneh*, they also directly made her ineligible to collect her *kesubah*. For this alone they would need to pay her the value of her right to collect it.²¹

One might counter, however, that it is true that the witnesses made her ineligible to collect her *kesubah* with their testimony, but ultimately, she would never have collected it anyway, since her death was imminent. So, although they must indeed pay her the value of the right she had to collect it, that value is nil, since she would not have had the opportunity to collect it.

But I believe this argument is faulty. Although with their testimony, the witnesses led us to *believe* that she could never collect her *kesubah*, so her right to its collection was valueless; this was only a result of their false narrative. In truth, she was never *mezaneh*, was not deserving of the death penalty, and had every right to collect her *kesubah* should her husband ever die or divorce her. The loss that the witnesses attempted to cause her, by claiming she was *mezaneh* and was ineligible to collect her *kesubah*, must be judged through the lens of the truth – that she was not deserving of death and was fit to eventually collect her *kesubah*. Accordingly, her right to collect it had full value, and it is this that the *eidim zomemin* must pay her.

I believe we can extend this line of reasoning further.

Suppose one pair of witnesses, whom we'll call pair A, testifies that a *na'arah*

me'orasah was not a *besulah* before her marriage and is thus only worthy of a half-value *kesubah*. Another pair of witnesses, pair B, then testifies that she was *mezaneh* after her marriage and is thus ineligible to collect any *kesubah*. Pair B subsequently becomes *eidim zomemin*, while pair A's testimony is overturned (without them becoming *eidim zomemin*). Now we know that before her marriage she was a *besulah* and was worthy of a full-value *kesubah* when she got married. But as far as pair B knew when they testified, she was only worthy of a half-value *kesubah*. So must they, as *eidim zomemin*, pay the value of her right to a full-value *kesubah*, or a half-value?

The answer is clear: they must pay the value of her right to collect a full-value *kesubah*. They attempted to cause her the loss of her right to collect the *kesubah* she is entitled to, and it is immaterial what they thought at the time it was worth. Since in truth she was entitled to a full-value *kesubah*, that is what they must pay for.

If this is true where the *eidim zomemin* – pair B – actually believed that she was entitled to less, how much more so in our discussion where the witnesses who attempted to make her ineligible to collect her *kesubah* were fully aware that she was, in fact, worthy of eventually collecting it (since it was they who brought her the death penalty by their false testimony). Even to the witnesses' own minds, her right to collect her *kesubah* had its full value – and thus, they must certainly pay her for it.

(בנאות דשא – כי תצא תשפ"ב)

17 Devarim 22:23-24

18 S.v. *U'meshalmin mamon*

19 By Rav Shimon Moshe Diskin, *Moriah*, Year 20 no. 8-9, p. 115

20 See *Kesubos* 47a

21 Although one who causes an indirect damage cannot be made to pay for it, he is not absolved of other, direct damages that he causes.