

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



עילוי נשמת

ALDI DESHE

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

Ehrliche Yiddische Kinder

Parshiyos Nitzavim and Vayelech share a common thread: the need to raise our children as *ehrlische Yidden*.

Parshas Nitzavim opens with (Devarim 29:9-10): אַתֶּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כְּלִכֶּם וְגו' טַפְכֶּם – *You are standing today, all of you... (and) your small children.* Later in the *parshah*, discussing *teshuvah*, the pasuk says (30:6), וְיָמַל ה' אֶלְקֵיךָ אֶת לִבְךָ וְאֶת לִבְבֵי זַרְעֶךָ – *Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring.* And at the end of the *parshah* we read (30:19), וְנִבְחַרְתָּ בְחַיִּים, לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה אִתָּהּ וְזַרְעֶךָ – *you shall choose life, so that you will live – you and your offspring.* Parshas Vayelech contains the mitzvah

*Kadmonim*¹ offer a mnemonic for when Nitzavim and Vayelech are read together and when they are read separately. Sefer Daniel (*perek* 1) relates that when a young Daniel and his colleagues were in Nevuchadnetzar's palace, they subsisted on a diet of beans, as they would not eat the non-Kosher palace food (פַּת בֵּג הַמֶּלֶךְ). On Rosh Hashanah we proclaim Hashem's Kingship with "הַמֶּלֶךְ." When it falls out on "בִּג" – Monday or Tuesday – then Nitzavim and Vayelech are "פַּת," separated (as in Vayikra 2:6, פָּתוּת אִתָּהּ פְּתִים). This story of perseverance in the king's palace is the story of *Yiddische kinder* withstanding their *nisyonos* with heroic self-sacrifice. And this, as well, is the message of these *parshiyos*: raising our children to stand strong in their *avodas Hashem* even in the face of adversity.

The *chinuch* of one's children stands him in good stead on the *Yom HaDin*. Somebody once asked R. Aharon of Belz to daven for an ill person who had unfortunately left the *derech haTorah* after the Holocaust. The Rebbe questioned his petitioner about the sick person's observance: Did he keep Shabbos? The answer was no. Did he wear *tefillin*? No. The petitioner could think of nothing to say in defense of the person in need. Then he remembered that he sent his children to a religious school. When

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of *hakhel*, where the *mesorah* is passed on to the next generation, as the pasuk says (31:12), לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ וְלִמְעַן יִלְמְדוּ – *so that they will hear and so that they will learn.*

A Fool's Hope

How does a person do *teshuvah*? How does a person change? Shlomo Hamelech says (Mishlei 27:22), אִם תִּכְתוּשׁ אֶת הָאֵוִיל בַּמְּכַתֵּשׁ בְּתוֹךְ הָרִיפּוֹת – *If you will grind the fool in a grinder with softened grain and pound him with a pounder, you will not remove his foolishness from him.* The *Zohar hakadosh* states similarly:³ "A piece of wood which does not hold fire – if it is pounded it will light; but a body which does not hold the light of the *neshamah* – if it is pounded, the light of the *neshamah* will go on high" – and the person will remain with his foolishness.

Who is Shlomo Hamelech addressing with these words of wisdom? The Meiri offers two approaches. First, Shlomo Hamelech is advising a fool's teacher: do not put too much effort into educating the foolish student; no matter how hard you try, this student will not rise above his foolishness. In the second approach, the advice is to every person: do not become entrenched in overindulgence, because one who does so will be unable to extract himself no matter how hard he tries. Even for a person who was born

1 See *Baal Haturim* beginning of Vayelech; *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 428:4 with *Magen Avraham* 5.

3 Vayikra 168a

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he told that to the Rebbe, the Rebbe's face lit up, and he gave a heartfelt *berachah* for a *refuah sheleimah*. Clearly, one who provides his children with proper *chinuch* will have a great advantage in his Heavenly judgment.

The Gemara at the end of Sukkah (56b) relates the story of Miriam bas Bilgah, a *bas kohen* who left Judaism and married a Greek soldier. When the Greeks entered the Beis Hamikdash at the time of Chanukah, she too entered, and began kicking the *mizbe'ach* with her sandal, shouting, "Wolf! Wolf! Until when will you eat up the Jews' money and not protect them in their time of hardship?"

Miriam bas Bilgah's attitude was the archetype of an un-Jewish attitude. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 4a with Rashi) states that if a Jew gives *tzedakah* as a source of merit that his son should live or that he should merit *Olam Haba*, it is a perfect act of *tzedakah*. A Yid gives *tzedakah* purely for the mitzvah. He knows that Hashem doesn't owe him anything; he merely requests that the mitzvah be meritorious for him. Even if his *tefillah* is not answered, he has no complaints; he blames it on his own shortcomings. But a non-Jew who gives *tzedakah* in this manner is not commended, because he does it only so that Hashem will give him what he desires. If his desires are not fulfilled, he complains against Hashem. This was Miriam bas Bilgah's attitude: the Jews poured their money into the *korbanos* for the *mizbe'ach*, and the *mizbe'ach* did not stand up for them when they needed it most. And this was the scandal of her behavior: not only did she fall prey to her *yetzer hara* and marry a non-Jew, but she so rapidly exchanged her *Yiddishe*

hashkafos for the non-Jewish outlook on life, leading her to hurl grievances against the *mizbe'ach*.

The Gemara relates that when the *Chachamim* heard about this episode, they punished her *mishmeres*, her familial group of *kohanim*, by disabling the ring they used to hold down animals for *shechitah* (they would now need to borrow a ring from a different *mishmeres*), and by sealing the window they used to store their knives. The Gemara questions this: Why was her father punished for the actions of his daughter? The Gemara answers that it was indeed her father's fault: "As people say, 'The outdoor talk of a child is either his father's or his mother's speech.'" In other words, her deeds and mindsets reflected those of her parents. The Gemara then asks, why was Miriam bas Bilgah's entire *mishmeres* punished for the shortcomings of her parents? The Gemara answers, "אוי לרשע אוי לשכינו, טוב לצדיק טוב לשכינו – Woe to an evil person, woe to his neighbors; fortunate is a righteous person, fortunate are his neighbors."

The *mefarshim* explain the *Chachamim*'s intention by disabling the ring and sealing the window of Miriam bas Bilgah's *mishmeres*: they meant to hint that their *avodah* was not wanted. It was as if they were nudging them to leave the Beis Hamikdash.

Let us suggest another approach. Chazal (Sotah 36b) relate that when Yosef faced his great *nisayon*, the image of his father appeared to him 'in the window.' What is the deeper meaning in this reference to 'the window'? The Gemara (Bava Kama 60b) tells of Rava's practice when a plague would spread: he would seal his windows, in keeping with the pasuk

(Yirmiyahu 9:20), כִּי עָלָה מָוֶת בְּחַלּוֹנֵינוּ – *For death has ascended through our windows*. The *mefarshim*² explain the concept of death "ascending through a window" as when it occurs in an unnatural way, like a plague.

When a person faces a *nisayon*, too, it is outside the norm of day-to-day life. One's daily activities and routine do not say much about his essence, since much of what a person does each day is only because he did it the day before. People feel comfortable going with the flow. But a *nisayon* comes 'through a window'; it is a step out of the normal ebb and flow of life. This is why when faced with his *nisayon*, Yosef saw his father's visage in the window.

This, too, is why the window of Miriam bas Bilgah's *mishmeres* was sealed shut. Perhaps she could have carried on as an observant Jew had she never faced a *nisayon*. But when the 'window' of *nisayon* presented itself, she failed it miserably; not only did she marry an idolater, but she traded in her *Yiddishe hashkafah* for the non-Jewish one. The most essential greatness of a Yid is his ability to overcome *nisayonos*. Thus, her window was closed.

And the *shechitah* ring of her *mishmeres* was disabled, because what business did they have tying down animals for slaughter when they could not dominate their own *nefesh habehamis*, their own animal nature?

The most crucial time that a person must exercise control over his lower self is at a time of *nisayon*. That is his moment to prove that he does not live in this world like an animal but like a Yid.

(נצבים תשכ"א, ס"ג מאמר א)

2 See Radak

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intelligent, by his actions and habits he can become increasingly coarsened, to the point where he is an incurable fool and even being crushed in a grinder will not help him.

In youth, a person imagines that in old age, as his energy and passions lessen, he will do *teshuvah* and better his ways. But this is a mistake. A person's *yetzer hara* sticks with him and remains fully alive until his dying day; the only difference is that the body lacks the energy to carry out

ways and methods, still his foolishness will not leave him.

Chazal say⁵ regarding the above pasuk: "One who strikes a fool – as he raises his club to deliver another blow, the fool forgets the earlier blows." This can't mean that the fool does not feel the first strike once he is hit again. The Gemara (Makkos 22a) states that before *beis din* gives *malkos*, they assess how many lashes the sinner can withstand, because each successive lash adds pain to the previous lashes. So in what way does a fool forget his previous blows? A fool is so entrenched in his materialistic lifestyle that even if he has a thought of *teshuvah* when he is first stricken, it evaporates before the next blow.⁶

It is not only harsh treatment that will not effect change in a fool; dealing with him gently won't help either. As the pasuk states elsewhere in Mishlei (29:9), אִישׁ חָכָם, נִשְׁפָּט אֶת אִישׁ אֵוִיל וְרָגַז וְשָׁחַק וְאֵין נִחַת – *When a wise man contends with a foolish man, [the wise man] may rage or laugh, but will have no satisfaction.* Whether he handles him with sternness or smiles, he will have no success.⁷

Even *mofsim* won't awaken a fool's heart to true and lasting inspiration. R. Bunim of Peshischa once said that if he wanted, he could make the rafts on the Veisel River float upstream, but he didn't because it wouldn't make any difference. The Jews of Berlin would read about it in the newspaper while enjoying their repast, marvel about the Wunder-rabbiner, and then they'd finish their breakfast and life would move on. The *mofes* wouldn't inspire anybody to *teshuvah*.

So what hope does a foolish sinner have? How can he do *teshuvah*? Surely, Shlomo Hamelech doesn't mean to discourage anyone who truly wants to mend his ways.

The Gemara (Shabbos 31a) cites the pasuk (Yeshayah 33:6), וְהָיָה אֶמּוּנַת עֲתִידָהּ חֶסֶן יְשׁוּעָה, וְהָיָה אֶמּוּנַת עֲתִידָהּ חֶסֶן יְשׁוּעָה וְדָעַת יְרָאתָהּ ה' הִיא אוֹצָרוֹ, and explains the six words עֲתִידָהּ חֶסֶן יְשׁוּעָה וְדָעַת יְרָאתָהּ as referring to the six *Sidrei Mishnah*. The Gemara continues that even if a person masters all six orders of the Mishnah, it is worthless unless ה' הִיא אוֹצָרוֹ – *fear of Hashem is his treasure*. It is compared to one who instructs his servant to bring his wheat up to the attic. Having fulfilled the task, the servant returns. The master questions him: "Did you add preservatives to the wheat?" The servant replies that he did not. The master responds, "In that case, it would have been better had you not brought it up." *Yiras Shamayim* is the preservative necessary to maintain one's Torah learning.

This, then, is how one can do *teshuvah*. The pasuk mentions that together with the fool in the grinder is softened grain. Let's understand this in an additional way. Shlomo Hamelech is hinting that the one way a fool can pick himself up and improve his ways is by storing his grain – learning Torah – and adding to it the preservative of *yiras Shamayim*. If a person does this, his 'grain' will last and he will benefit from it in the end. More effective than a hundred lashes or a hundred *mofsim* is when a person works to strengthen *yiras Shamayim* within himself and allows his *hisorerus* to touch a deep place in his heart, shaking him up and leading him to lasting *teshuvah*.

(נצבים וילך - סליחות תש"פ, ס"ג מאמר ב)

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his directives. Thus, Shlomo Hamelech warns: take great care not to sink into *Olam Hazeih*, because the more you do, the more foolish you will become, and you will not be able to extract yourself even with a grinder.

Why does Shlomo Hamelech mention that the fool is in the grinder "בְּתוֹךְ הַרְיִפוֹת" – with softened grain"? Obviously, grain is ground in a grinder, but what does its presence add to a fool's attempted education?

The Gemara⁴ describes different manners of splitting a kernel of wheat; depending on how many parts it is splintered into, it can be made into various dishes. This may be Shlomo Hamelech's intention: even if one crushes a fool as a piece of wheat is crushed, in many different

4 See Moed Kattan 13b and Berachos 37a

5 Tanchuma, Noach 18; Bereishis Rabbah 38:2

6 See Bereishis Rabbah ibid with *Yefeh To'ar* and *Nezer Hakodesh*

7 See Tanchuma, Ki Sisa 6

Death Over Envy

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה הֲבֵן קִרְבּוֹ יִמְיָהּ לְמוֹת קָרָא אֶת
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְגו'

Hashem spoke to Moshe, "Behold, your days are drawing near to die; summon Yehoshua..."
(Devarim 31:14)

The Midrash teaches us:⁸ "At that time, Moshe cried out and said, 'A hundred deaths rather than one envy!'" The Imrei Emes wonders about this. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 105b) states that a person can be jealous of anyone except his child and his student. Yehoshua was Moshe's student, so why was Moshe envious of him? The Imrei Emes explains that a teacher does not envy his student for what he gains from another party; but when something is taken from the teacher and given to the student, the teacher will feel jealous.

The Mishnah at the beginning of Masechet Yoma states that since the *kohen gadol* must be *tahor* on Yom Kippur, we designate a כהן אחר, a different *kohen*, to replace him if he becomes *tamei*. *Sifsei Tzaddik*⁹ notes that the wording seems unusual; why doesn't the Mishnah simply say that we designate a *kohen* as a replacement? Why does the Mishnah add the word אחר, *different*?

The Gemara (Yoma 13a) states that the real reason a replacement is designated for the *kohen gadol* is to serve as a motivation for him to take care to remain *tahor*. The thought of being replaced by another induces a feeling of jealousy which would cause him to be cautious not to become *tamei*. Based on this, *Sifsei Tzaddik* explains the Mishnah's wording. Who could this replacement be? It couldn't be the *kohen gadol*'s son, since one is not jealous of his son, so the *kohen gadol*

wouldn't be sufficiently motivated to caution. It would have to be "כהן אחר," a different *kohen*, not his son.¹⁰

This seems to be at odds with the above statement of the Imrei Emes, that a teacher becomes envious of his student when the student is given what had belonged to the teacher. After all, although the *kohen gadol*'s own position would be at risk of being given to his son, *Sifsei Kohen* maintains that the *kohen gadol* would not feel jealous of him.¹¹

We may take several approaches to reconcile these ideas. First, there is a difference between losing one's position temporarily and losing it permanently. Granted, the *kohen gadol* would not be envious of his son replacing him, since that would only be a temporary replacement until he could become *tahor*. But Moshe was envious of Yehoshua since Yehoshua would replace him permanently.

Second, if the *kohen gadol* would be replaced by his son, his own *kehunah gedolah* would be carried on through his son. After all, that is why a son typically has precedence as a replacement. Thus, the *kohen gadol* wouldn't feel envious toward him. But as the Midrash¹² relates, when Moshe had requested to be succeeded by his sons, he was answered that Yehoshua was more fit for the position. Since Moshe's leadership would not even be carried on through his children, but instead he would be replaced by Yehoshua, a feeling of jealousy was appropriate.

One might suggest that there is a distinction between jealousy toward a son and toward a student. Although the above Gemara states that one is not jealous of either

of them, there might be a difference between them where one's own effects are given away to them. Perhaps in this case, one would not be jealous of his son, but would be of his student.¹³ This would resolve our difficulty: Moshe was jealous of Yehoshua since his position was being given to him, his student; but a *kohen gadol* would not be envious if his position were given to his son. However, this distinction does not seem correct; it seems that one's capacity for jealousy would be the same for his son and his student.

Searching through *sefarim*, I found that *Aruch Hashulchan Ha'asid*¹⁴ considers whether a *kohen gadol* who became *tamei* may be replaced by his son; perhaps this would be considered improper.

In truth, we find a similar precedent. Rashi¹⁵ tells the story of the outstanding *kibbud av* of Yosam, son of King Uziyahu: Yosam's father, King Uziyahu, became a *metzora* and could not actively lead the nation. Yosam therefore took the reigns of leadership and judged the nation. Nonetheless, he did not wear the royal crown, and whenever he would adjudicate a case, he would cite his father's rulings.

When Uziyahu became unable to rule during his son's lifetime, his son replaced him, taking his position for all practical purposes. This would seem to indicate that it would not be inappropriate for a *kohen gadol* who became *tamei* to be replaced by his son.

(בנאות דשא – נצבים וילך - סליחות, גליון י"ט)

8 Devarim Rabbah 9:9

9 Cited in *She'elos U'Teshuvos Chedvas Yaakov, mahadura tinyana* 69:2; see there for a discussion on the topic. This is cited in *ש"ש* and *Likutei Yehudah* to Yom Kippur.

10 This answer is given as well by R. Meir Arik in *She'elos U'Teshuvos Imrei Yosher*, vol. 1, 84 s.v. *u'besevara*.

11 As above, the Gemara equates a son and a student in regard to the father's or teacher's jealousy.

12 Bamidbar Rabbah

13 One might argue that Chazal say תלמידו כבנו, one's student is like his son, so it would seem that one could not differentiate between them. However, *sefarim* write that a comparison made with a *kof* (כבנו) is not absolute; it only means to compare the subjects to a certain degree. Thus, one could make the above distinction.

14 *Hilchos Avodas Yom Hakippurim - Kodashim* 158:12

15 *Sukkah* 45b s.v. Yosam