



# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה ז"ל  
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM  
FROM THE PARSHAH

## Recipe for Good Health

פִּינָחַס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הִכְהֵן הַשֵּׁיב אֶת חַמְתִּי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת קִנְאַתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא כָלִיתִי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאַתִּי. לָכֵן אָמַר הַנְּנִי נִתֵּן לוֹ אֶת בְּרִיתִי שְׁלָם: (במדבר כב, יא-יב)

**Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon Hakohen removed My wrath from Yisrael by acting out My vengeance in their midst, so I did not destroy Yisrael in My vengeance. Therefore say, "I am hereby giving him My covenant of peace." (Bemidbar 22:11-12)**

We know that *pritzus* is hateful to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. When the Jewish people acted improperly with the Moabite women, this brought a lot of Divine anger on them. *Hashem* was very upset with them and a rift developed between *Hashem* and His beloved people.

The tribe of Shimon was particularly guilty of this sin, and if the tribe of Shimon would have perished in this moment of Heaven's anger, an entire tribe would be missing, and the entire Jewish people would be irreparably maimed forever, because the Jewish people must comprise no less than twelve tribes.

This shows how great the *zechus* of Pinchas is. By striking down Zimri and Kozbi bas Tzur, and thus acting out *Hashem's* vengeance, he made

peace between *Hashem* and the Jewish people, and restored their close relationship of love to how it was before. *Midah k'neged midah*, he received the blessing of *shalom*. Thus he merited eternal *kebunah*, which entails offering *korbanos* that are pleasing to *Hashem*, by which *Hashem* is pleased with His people Yisrael and bestows on them blessing and peace.

He also received the gift of peace for himself personally, as he attained unlimited longevity. Pinchas lives forever. *Chazal* say that Pinchas is Eliyahu,<sup>1</sup> who never died.

How is this connected to the gift of peace?

The Seforno explains that all physical sickness

<sup>1</sup> *Yalkut Shimoni* 771.

and damage is a result of imbalance. The body is composed of various contrasting forces. If one of these forces is not in proper balance, when one of them is too strong or too weak, and they don't balance each other out like they are supposed to, the body falls ill and stops functioning properly or altogether.

Pinchas, who was blessed with peace, thus enjoyed a perfect balance of all the forces within his body, so he lives forever.

This teaches us the great reward of pursuing peace and detesting controversy. Peace is a great *segulah* for physical health. And controversy brings sickness and troubles.

This is especially true in our age, in which cancer

is a major health issue. Cancer is when certain cells in the body grow and multiply in a disorderly and imbalanced manner and invade areas that don't belong to them. This is quite similar to controversy between people.

When the scourge of *machlokes* breaks out in the home, the neighborhood, the city and the country, even *tzaddikim* who live their whole lives in peace can suffer harm, like in the time of Pinchas, when not just the sinners were in danger, but the whole people.

But if a person keeps his mouth closed when there is friction between people, and avoids getting into a fight, and surely if he restores the peace between those around him, he is bringing life and physical and emotional health to everyone, and will merit the blessing of *shalom* forever. ●

## Drawing Lots

על פי הגורל תחלק נחלתו. (במדבר כו, נו)

**Its landed estate will be distributed to it according to what the lot says. (*Bemidbar* 22:11-12)**

**“According to what the lot says” – The lot would speak, as I explained. This teaches that *Eretz Yisrael* was divided up according to *Ruach Hakodesh*. (*Rashi*)**

Drawing lots as a way of deciding how to divvy something up would seem to be a natural, mundane process. There are X number of eligible recipients, and there are the same number of paper slips in a box, and each person blindly selects whatever slip comes up in his hand. The results would seem to be by chance.

But we see here that *Eretz Yisrael* was distributed among the tribes according to the lot, the *goral*, and

this shows that a decision made by *goral* is actually something that *Hashem* Himself does.

Why lots? Because each tribe will naturally want to receive the choicest areas. Everyone will want the seashore, and no one will want the desert, for instance. So there is a necessity for a decision made by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself. And how does *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* render a decision of this type?

### לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורגר ז"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס ז"ל

נדבת נכדיהם ~ עטרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנים אבותם

By lots. As *Chazal* say, the lots were an expression of *Ruach Hakodesh*.

We see the same thing regarding the two goats of Yom Kippur. One goes as a *korban* to *Hashem*, and the other goes to *Azazel*, which means that it goes to Eisav, to the side of evil. Now, there is no *kohen* who can take a goat and send it to Eisav. Only *Hashem* can do that, which is why the *mitzvah* is to choose the goat by means of *goral*.

The *goral* shows up also in *Sefer Yehoshua*. In chapter seven of that *Sefer*, we have the story of the conquest of the city Ai, during the course of which many Jews were killed, in the first disastrous battle. This initial defeat was because someone had previously taken booty for himself from forbidden goods, but it wasn't known who did it.

How did they find out?

Yehoshua held a drawing of lots, and the lot fell on Achan. He was the one who appropriated the

forbidden booty.

Achan argued that since everyone's name was placed in the *goral*, it was inevitable that someone's name would come out, and that doesn't prove he is the one who actually did it.

So Yehoshua told him:

בְּנֵי שִׁים נָא כְבוֹד לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – “My son, please give honor to *Hashem* the G-d of Yisrael.”<sup>1</sup>

Yehoshua asked him to admit the truth, that he actually did it, and not besmirch the *goral*. Because the *goral* is the word of *Hashem*.<sup>2</sup>

All this shows that the most pointed expression of a direct action of *Hashem* is when it takes place through “natural” means, such as by drawing lots. ●

1 Yehoshua 7:19.

2 See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 23:6.

## PARSHA TOPIC

# Make Yourself an Olah

וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ וּגּוֹי וְעַשִׂיתֶם עֲלָה לְרִיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה. (במדבר כט, א-ב)

**In the seventh month, on the first of the month... you shall make yourselves a burnt offering for a pleasant fragrance to *Hashem*. (*Bemidbar* 29:1-2)**

### You are the Korban

This *pasuk* about the *korbanos* of Rosh Hashanah is different from all the other ones dealing with this type of *korban*. The other ones say, “You shall offer,” but this one says, “You shall make.” It is saying that you shall make your own selves into the *korban*.

So explains the *Mishnah Berurah*.<sup>1</sup> He writes that one of the reasons *Ashkenazim* start saying *Selichos* four days before Rosh Hashanah is because a *korban* needs to be checked for defects four days before it is offered. And regarding the burnt offering of Rosh Hashanah, it

says, “You shall make yourselves a burnt offering.” This teaches that on Rosh Hashanah, a person should make himself as if he is offering his own self. Consequently, he needs to check himself four days earlier for any defects due to sins, and to do *teshuvah* for them.

So we see that Rosh Hashanah is a time of *mesirus nefesh*. Every Jew needs to offer himself as a *korban olah*, in other words, he needs to dedicate and give over his very soul for the sake of *Hashem*. This is not a type of *korban* that you partake of its meat. It is a burnt offering. It ascends in smoke to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This signifies that we need to lovingly give over everything for the sake of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

*Mesirus nefesh*.

1 581:6, citing *Eliyahu Rabbah*.

The problem is that *mesirus nefesh* has become a very common term in our circles. Every little thing we do is described as “*mesirus nefesh*.”

Let’s talk about what *mesirus nefesh* is, and how it applies to our daily lives.

## Change your Life

We all try to keep *mitzvos*. But the way we keep them and how we relate to them is usually determined by our atmosphere and surroundings.

Not so long ago, there were *tzaddikim* and *talmidei chachamim* who had no concept of “going to sleep.” They would learn and learn until they dropped. Nowadays, a *masmid* in *yeshivah* is someone who stays on after 11:00 PM to learn an extra hour. Whereas they say about R. Yisrael Salanter that for him there was no such thing as going to sleep. He would just keep learning until he dropped.

If we would ask today’s “*masmid*” why he doesn’t learn like R. Yisrael Salanter did, he would not understand what we want from him. “Because I’m not R. Yisrael Salanter! For me, 12:00 midnight is an hour after the night *seider* ends, and that’s enough. I don’t live my life like R. Yisrael.”

And if we would ask a *frum* working man who comes home at 9:00 PM after his *daf hayomi shiur*, “Why don’t you learn another hour?” he will answer, “because I am not a *kollel yungerman* in night *seider*.”

Everyone has his own idea about what *hasmadah* means for him. Along the same lines, every Jew has his own idea what *lashon hara* is, and what breaking one’s *taavos* entails, and how a Jew should spend his *Shabbos*. Everyone decides these things according to his own lifestyle.

To illustrate the point, I will tell you a story. Once, a certain American Jew was a guest in the home of R. Yehoshua Dov Soloveitchik, *Rosh Yeshivas Brisk*, and he remarked, while talking about his family, “No luxuries by us. We only have the bare necessities in our home.”

R. Yehoshua Dov replied: Back in Europe, in the small *shtetlach* of Russia, there was no *cheder* for the children, and the wealthy would hire a private tutor, a

*melamed*, for their children. One day, a wealthy family like this held a party in their home, with a lavish menu.

For the first course, a very special fruit compote was served. It looked delicious. The *melamed* went over to the child he taught, and said to him, “Do you remember what we learned about breaking one’s *taivos*? Now is the time to do it!”

The child replied, “Yes, I agree to the idea, but not right now. This course is a basic necessity. Next course, I will break my *taivos*...”

R. Yehoshua Dov remarked: “Everyone agrees that the first course is a basic necessity, and the next course is extras. The whole disagreement is when the first course finishes and the next one begins.”

If we ask a Jew why he doesn’t live on the same *madreigah* as R. Akiva Eiger or the Chasam Sofer, he will answer: I can’t do that. Those things you want me to give up are all part of the “first course,” as far as I am concerned. This is how I live my life.

The whole question is where to draw the line between the “first course” and the “second course.” Moving that line is real *mesirus nefesh*.

## Examples of Real Mesirus Nefesh

Let’s see how this plays out in real life. Take *lashon hara*, for example. This is one of our biggest problems. *Lashon hara* is just too prevalent, and so are words spoken in anger and out of annoyance.

We have a fierce inner urge to speak *lashon hara*. Where does it come from?

The world that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created is composed of four basic elements: mineral, vegetable, animal and human. The “human” element is characterized by the power of speech, which is a uniquely human trait that sets humans apart from animals. Speech expresses the faculty of intelligence.

People feel that if they can’t speak enough, if they can’t outwardly express their criticism of their friends and neighbors, they are being deprived of the power of speech, and thereby dehumanized. They feel the same way if someone insults them and they don’t answer back. It is as if they were a dumb animal who doesn’t have a mouth. If they can’t say what they think, they

feel their innate intelligence is being denied them.

This is why people feel an emotional need to speak *lashon hara*.

So when a person is asked not to speak *lashon hara*, he feels like he being asked to die. He feels he is showing everyone that he lacks the faculty of intelligence.

I am not talking about just holding your tongue for a few minutes and then letting it all out half an hour later. Even that is hard work, but it's not *mesirus nefesh*.

*Mesirus nefesh* is when there is a certain point, even a small point, where a person makes a fundamental change in how he lives his life. With *lashon hara*, it means becoming "less intelligent," "less smart," in people's eyes. Making such a change is like undergoing death.

This is *mesirus nefesh*. This is being a *korban olah*. A person who does this may not have repented all his sins, but he did sacrifice a piece of his very life, and this is considered a *teshuvah* that ascends all the way up to the Heavenly *Kisei Hakavod*.

Here's another example. There are people that if they go for two hours without hearing the news, it's tantamount to *mesirus nefesh*. They feel compelled to know what is happening in the world. Not everyone understands this, but someone for who has such a *yetzer hara*, refraining from the news is like *pikuach nefesh* for him. If he doesn't know what is going on in the world, he feels like he is locked up in a chicken coop – and such a state is against human nature.

Also in previous generations, Jews constantly sucked in what is happening in the world, but they lived in a different world, the world of Torah. One day they spoke with Abaye and Rava, the next day with R. Akiva Eiger, and so on. They lived their lives with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This is not a matter of one *mitzvah* more or one *mitzvah* less; it is a matter of a whole different life.

In order for a Jew of our generation to reach such a *madreigah*, he needs to make a fundamental

change in how he lives his life. He needs to give up his preoccupation with what is happening in the news. To walk past the mailbox and not read the newspaper sticking out of it. Not even to take a quick look at the headlines. To come to the *beis midrash* like a total idiot who doesn't know what's happening in the world, and there to meet only *Hashem Yisborach*.

It's true that when a person rectifies one shortcoming, that doesn't mean he did *teshuvah* for all his sins, and it doesn't yet make him into a *tzaddik gamur*. But if he takes one point, even a little one, and makes a real change in his life, one that gives him a pang in the heart, this is true *teshuvah*.

Here's another example, a very common one. *Shabbos kodesh*. It says in the *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>2</sup> that your speech on *Shabbos* should be different from your speech on weekdays. So on *Shabbos* you should not say that tomorrow, you are going to do such-and-such a job, or to buy such-and-such a thing. It is even forbidden to talk a lot of *devarim beteilim*, idle talk.

That's what it says in the *Shulchan Aruch*. Even if you are not talking about business or *melachah*, and you are just sitting and chatting about this and that, it is forbidden.

So what's left? What can you spend *Shabbos* doing?

*Shabbos* is so named because it is a time of *shevisah*, of "cessation" from worldly matters. Just live for twenty-four hours with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

For a non-observant person to keep *Shabbos*, it is *mesirus nefesh*. It is very hard for him to give up the phone, the radio, the car, for twenty-four hours straight. He feels like he is handcuffed.

We might have a similar feeling if we give up mundane talk on *Shabbos*.

Making such a change is *mesirus nefesh*. This is our *avodah* not just on Rosh Hashanah but the rest of the year as well. ועשיתם עולה – "You shall make yourselves into a burnt offering." Have *mesirus nefesh* for *Hashem*. ●

<sup>2</sup> *Orach Chayim* 307:1.