

Parshas Acharei Mos – Payback Time – Dr J H Freilich

כ"ט ניסן תשע"ו – 7th May 2016 – שבת פי אחרי מות

Just before shishi, we find in our sedra (18 v.5): "You shall keep my statutes and my judgements which man shall do and live by them; I am the Lord". This posuk is the source for an amazing concept that one is instructed to set aside virtually any commandment where one's life is at risk. This was learned (Yoma 85b) by Rav Yehudah in the name of Shmuel from our posuk : one should live by them (the commandment) and not die on account of them. This dictum applies even where there is only a sofek, a doubt that one's life is at risk. However, it does not apply to the 3 cardinal sins viz idolatory, incestuous relationships (aroyas) and murder. In those cases, one is expected to forfeit one's life rather than commit an aveira. How did Chazal know this? The Ohr Hachaim notes the following. Apart from the extra phrase 'Live by them', verse 5 repeats the theme of verse 4, namely to observe Hashem's judgements and statutes unconditionally. Now verse 4 is in juxtaposition to the subject of aroyas, indicating that the sanctity of life does not override cardinal sins.

However, the medrash, brought in Rashi, gives an entirely different nuance to these words. 'Live by them' must be referring to Olam Haboh, for in this world, one is surely destined to die. 'I am the Lord', - - - faithful to pay a reward. The Ksav Sofer elucidates. One can't interpret the posuk to mean that a person will receive his reward in this world, as his life is finite, whereas we know the reward for a mitzva is infinite. Hence it will be realised in Olam Haboh. The Chofetz Chaim on the Torah raises the following paradox. The Gemara in Kiddushin 39b states that there is no reward for a mitzva in this world. Yet, based on the posuk in Voeschanan 7, v.10, the Gemara in Eruvin 22a states that the wicked will be paid their reward in their lifetime in order that they perish in Olam Haboh. So it appears possible for there to be a reward for mitzvos and good deeds in this world, after all. The Chofetz Chaim resolves the issue with the following parable. When a person performs a mitzva, he receives a promissory note for a reward from the King. If the mitzva is performed by a tzaddik, he receives a major promissory note, of very considerable value, which can therefore only be redeemed in the King's capital where the treasury is located, analogous to Olam Haboh. On the other hand, if the mitzva is performed by a rasha, he receives only a minor promissory note, of no great value, which can be redeemed in any local town, analogous to Olam Hazeh.

The Ramban, on our posuk, enumerates the following categories of mitzva observers.

- 1) Those who perform mitzvos not lishmo, in order to be rewarded, will have an extended life in Olem Hazeh with wealth and kovod. As it says, 'To its left (ie to those who turn left) is wealth and kovod'.
- 2) Those who occupy themselves with mitzvos in order to merit Olam Haboh, ie they serve Hashem through fear, will merit to be saved from the judgement of the reshaim - their souls will dwell in goodness.
- 3) Those who occupy themselves with mitzvos through love of Hashem combined with a worldly life, as described in Leviticus 26 v.5 " If you walk in my statutes, the threshing will overtake the harvesting...." they will merit a good life in Olam Hazeh and complete merit in Olam Haboh
- 4) Those who forsake all matters of this world and pay no attention to it, their whole focus being on their Creator, and their souls cleaving to Him, as was with Elijah, then they will merit to live eternally just like Elijah and will be resurrected at תחיית המתים .

Thus the Ramban can say that when the Torah mentions any reward of longevity, with regards to keeping a mitzva, it is in the context of one of the above categories that the individual person belongs to.

The Ksav Sofer uses these ideas to explain an enigmatic medrash on the following verses in Tehillim which we recite Shabbos morning. Psalm 33 says הנה עין ה' אל יראיו למיחלים לחסדו. להציל ממות נפשם. ולחיותם ברעב. 'Behold, the eye of Hashem is on those who fear Him, upon those who await His kindness. To rescue their soul from death, and to sustain them in famine.' In Psalm 34, however, it says...הנה עיני ה' אל צדיקים. The eyes (plural) of Hashem are towards the righteous... The medrash comments that when Yisroel performs the will of Hashem it is הנה עיני ה' but when they don't, הנה עין ה' אל יראיו. But if they don't, how can the medrash refer to them as יראיו? The Ksav Sofer explains that Hashem has only one eye on those that keep mitzvos for the reward either in this world or the next. In particular, for those who seek reward in Olam Haboh, He will barely sustain them in Olam Hazeh in order to save their souls from eternal death. On the other hand, for those tzaddikim that seek no reward, Hashem watches over them with both eyes to ensure their well-being in both worlds.

*Dedicated to the memory of two family matriarchs - **Maras Chaska Bas R' Chaim Baruch** (27th Nisan)
and **Maras Rivka Bina bas R' Avraham** (3rd Iyar)*

Parshas Acharei Mos – Meir Cooper

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The Parsha begins with the warning by the *הקב"ה* forbidding the *כהנים* to enter the excessively holy areas of the *משכן* and this *אחריו* בני *אהרן*. Rashi explains with a parable made by *רבי אלעזר בן עזריה* regarding two patients with identical medical problems who go to their Doctor. The Doctor warns the first patient not to eat horseradish and not to sleep on moss. When addressing the second patient the Doctor repeats his warning not to eat horseradish and not to sleep on moss with the addendum "so that you should not die from the same causes which brought about the death of such and such a patient". The second patient comes out of the surgery duly sobered in comparison to the first patient. Therefore the *הקב"ה* in warning the *כהנים* to be careful reminds them of the death of the two sons of *אהרן* who drew themselves too close to the *הקב"ה* as is written *כי לא יראני* [שמות לג-כ] *האדם וחי*.

A person can only reach perfection if he remains totally aware of his limitations and builds fences and safeguards to prevent himself slipping away from the goals he has set for himself as is written further on in the Parsha *ושמרתם את משמרתיו* [ויקרא יח-ל] create barriers.

In the *Sefer Chofetz Chaim* the *Chofetz Chaim's* son recounts how as a child he saw his illustrious Father entertaining a guest over Succot. His Father would talk in learning with the guest who on one day would only nod his head and yet on the next day would be an active participant in the conversation. The son, who was only a child at the time, started to deride the guest in front of his father.

The *חפץ חיים* responded with a story. There was a vegetable grower who noticed an agile goat jumping over his fence and eating the produce of the field. Accordingly he raised the height of the fence. This only helped to some extent because the family of the vegetable grower would sometimes leave the gate open and thus the goats could still enter. Worse still, if a pig entered it would also destroy the field by uprooting the vegetables with their snouts. This led to endless friction in the household until the grower decided he had no choice but to close up the entrance and climb over the fence in order to reach his field. A very inconvenient scenario but this was the only way he could protect his field.

So, said the *חפץ חיים* to his son, when a person tries in every direction to prevent himself from speaking *לשון הרע* without total success, there is one method that has time and time proved itself to be safe proof and that is not to speak at all, *תענית דיבור*.

On *ז"ל* later this coming week will be the *yahrzeit* of my beloved Father *ג' אייר*. He never spoke *לשון הרע*. How did he do it? I think the answer may be that whenever he was not involved in communal duties his *Gemara* was open. When he retired at the age of sixty he commenced the *דף היומי* shiur which he gave for over sixteen years till illness prevented him continuing thereafter. He would spend six hours every day preparing the shiur and a further hour going over the *daf* before the shiur, which commenced at 6:00 am. In other words he woke up at 4:30 am every morning even in the depth of the cold and frosty mornings of winter.

It is therefore no wonder as recounted by two *תלמידים* at the shiur that on one winter morning there was a power cut for twenty minutes. The shiur continued *Gemara* and Rashi as though my Father *ז"ל* was reading it out of his *Gemara*!

יהא זכרו ברוך