

Parshas Vayikra – The Mind Controlling the Heart – Malcolm Toperoff

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The following is mainly based on a shiur I heard last Friday from Rabbi Menachem Mendel Blachman, shlita, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh.

Rabbi Blachman quoted a very interesting Gemorro in Yoma 53b which asks what happened to the Aron after the Beis Hamikdosh was destroyed.

The answer, according to one opinion, was that it was exiled to Bovel. According to the other opinion it was hidden in Har Hamoriah. Interestingly, the Rambam brings that it was hidden in subterranean tunnels in a special place originally set aside to house the Aron, the container of Mon and the stick of Aharon.

The Baal Hatanya says that Man has a dual nature. On the one hand he has the Nefesh Elokim – the G-dly soul, and on the other hand he has a Nefesh Beheimo – experiential soul. It is only through the mind that he can think and live.

Rabbi Blachman recalled that when he was a child there was a school trip from his home in Chicago to New York. They visited the United Nations building. Rabbi Blachman discovered a small amphitheatre in the building. In this amphitheatre was a ray of light focused on a black pillar. Rabbi Blachman said that this was his first experience of focused thought – a meditative experience. He asked the attendant what the purpose of this amphitheatre was. The attendant answered that it is the place where the delegates can meditate in silence before voting at the UN!

Similarly, we should strive to think about Hashem before we daven – that we should make a Mishkan in our hearts.

Rabbi Icky Sufrin, shlita, pointed out that the Alter Rebbe had an amazing ability to have his mind control his heart.

During the Napoleonic Wars, the Alter Rebbe was suspected by the Russians of supporting Napoleon. An officer asked the Alter Rebbe whether he spoke French. The officer then put his hand over the Alter Rebbe's heart to see if he would lie. The mind of the Alter Rebbe had such control over his heart that his heartbeat remained calm – his heartbeat didn't change.

After the shiur, Rabbi Blachman told me that even today there are such people! When he was a young man living in Yerushalayim there was a snowstorm. His friends were throwing snowballs when a snowball was aimed at Rabbi Blachman. He ducked and the snowball hit Rabbi Simcha Zissel Broide, z'tl the Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron who didn't react at all. Many years later when Rabbi Blachman was learning as a chavrusa with Rabbi Broide he asked him how it was possible that he didn't react when hit by the snowball. Rabbi Broide answered 'what would be achieved by reacting to the incident!'

This Dvar Torah is dedicated for a Refuah Sheleimah for both Chaye Yiscah Bas Batya and Esther Chana Bas Dina