



THANK YOU HASHEM

For Shabbos Kodesh!

Parshas Shemini

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HaMeor Shebah

A Short Burst of Relevance

אש זרה אשר לא צוה אתם ...

"A strange fire that He did not command them..."

THE EPISODE OF Nadav and Avihu's death on the day of the Mishkan's inauguration is one of the most mysterious in the entire Torah. While there are hundreds of approaches in the works of the *meforshim* which attempt to explain what it was that caused this tragedy, the Chassidic masters are generally in concurrence regarding the spiritual nature of their deaths. The tzaddikim (see, for example, the Lubavitcher Rebbe's approach in *Likutei Sichos*) interpret the various reasons stated in chazal for this event as intimating the great holiness of these tzaddikim and the manner in which they nullified themselves to an extremely potent level of Hashem's annihilating presence to the point that they simply ceased to exist as independent beings. Among the explanations in this camp is the approach of the Chiddushei HaRim. The tzaddik focuses on this that with all of their lofty intentions and desire to serve Hashem on the highest levels, the Torah faults Nadav and Avihu with "bringing a strange fire that Hashem had not commanded." Says the Chiddushei HaRim, this tells us that the primary essence of a mitzvah and the main intention one should have in mind is that Hashem commanded us to perform this action. Devoid of Hashem's commandment - the expression of His presence in the mitzvos - even the deepest Kabbalistic



calculations and intentions are unable to bring a Jew to the ultimate level of avodas Hashem. Nadav and Avihu desired to serve Hashem based on the most glorious spiritual concepts and ideals. However, lacking the essential aspect of Hashem's desire for a relationship expressed in His commandments, this service ended in tragedy. 👑

Parsha Roundup

A 60-second Review

- 👑 On the eighth day following the inauguration, Ahron and his sons begin the service as kohanim. A fire descends to consume the *korban*, and the *Shechinah* dwells in the *Mishkan*.
- 👑 Nadav and Avihu offer a "strange fire" and die before G-d, to which Ahron responds with silence. Moshe and Ahron disagree about a halacha, but Moshe soon concedes to Ahron.
- 👑 Hashem delivers the *halachos* of *kashrus*, identifying the animal species both permissible and forbidden for consumption. A list of non-kosher birds is given, as well as a list of kosher insects.
- 👑 Parshas Shemini also includes are some of the laws of ritual purity, including the power of the *mikvah* and the wellspring.

P'nimiyus haParsha

An Encounter with the Soul of the Torah

זאת החיה אשר תאכלו מכל-הבהמה אשר על-הארץ ...

“These are the creatures you may eat from among all the animals upon the earth...”

IN THIS WEEK’S parsha, Hashem tells Moshe “Speak to the B’nei Yisrael and tell them “These are the creatures that you may eat”. Following this pasuk are the dietary laws of Kosher, detailing which animals may be eaten by a Jewish person.

Rav Moshe Tzvi of Savran quotes a teaching from Chazal which states that Hashem took each animal by the tail in order to demonstrate which animals the Jewish nation may eat.

What is the significance of Hashem’s taking each animal by the tail? Why was it important for our sages to mention this detail?

The tzaddik answers with a beautiful idea.

In the incredibly fundamental first chapter of sefer *Mesillas Yesharim*, the Ramchal explains that this world and everything in it is here for the sake of a Jew’s avodas Hashem. Whereas the forbidden elements of our physical realm are intended to provide a counterbalance so that free choice is preserved, the permissible elements are intended to aid the Jewish person in his or her relationship with Hashem. For example, the Ramchal teaches that when one eats a delicious meal with the intention of gaining strength to continue living a life of Torah and avodas Hashem, all elements of the food he is eating become part and parcel of his being and are elevated in his holy thoughts, words, and actions.

In truth, however, this process reaches beyond the particular food he has consumed, elevating other levels of the physical realm as well.

It is known that our physical world is made up of four levels; Inanimate, Plantlife, Animals, and Humans. Plants are sustained by the earth, animals are sustained by eating plants, and humans are sustained by a variation of those categories. Therefore, when a Jew consumes meat, instead of merely elevating that isolated element, he is in fact elevating the animal from which this meat derived, the plants with which the animal was sustained, and the earth which sustained the plants, in turn. In so doing, all levels of the physical world are included in his avodas Hashem. It emerges that, in a certain way, eating - when engaged with consciously, and with the proper intention - is one of the loftiest aspects of avodas Hashem!

The Savraner Rebbe explains that this is the lesson Hashem sought to impart. By grasping each kosher animal by the tail, which represents the lowliest levels of physicality, and showing them to Moshe, Hashem was teaching him that by utilizing these animals for the purpose of better serving Him, we are able to elevate even the “tail”, the lowliest levels of our physical reality.

May we merit to approach all of life with this awareness, powered by the belief that every “tail” by which we are surrounded can be utilized to fulfill the ultimate purpose of creation, to re-create the world around us as a dwelling place for the *Shechinah*. 🤴



The permissible elements of our physical reality are intended to aid us in avodas Hashem. When a person eats kosher food, all elements of his meal become included in his commitment to a life of Torah and avodah and are elevated to the loftiest level.

Tohameha

Tasting the Depth of Shabbos Kodesh

WE ARE ALL familiar with the concept of the *neshama yeseirah* with which we are invested on Shabbos Kodesh. But what is the nature of this “extra soul”? What is it about Shabbos that enables us to feel more connected than during the week? The Chernovitzer explains that all of the mitzvos are likened to the flame of a candle, which provides a relatively small amount of illumination. When the light of the mitzvos encounters the thick layers of filth, error, confusion, and ego that so often encompass the Jewish heart, their light is unable to enter into the inner recesses of one’s heart and soul. Therefore, it is difficult for the mitzvos to truly impact a person who is far removed from matters of spirituality and inner work. However, because Shabbos is equal to all other mitzvos, its illumination is tremendous - likened, as we have discussed in the past, to the light of day which causes even the fiercest of night creatures to scurry back to their burrows. Because of the awesome spiritual energy of Shabbos Kodesh, even one who is not ordinarily moved by the other mitzvos will be able to be inspired and lit up with the sweetness of avodas Hashem - providing he invests even the most minimal level of preparation and expectation of awakening. This, teaches the tzaddik, is what we refer to by the “*neshama yeseirah*” that is gifted to us on Shabbos - the additional illumination of this holy day that can brighten even the darkest spiritual landscape, igniting a flame of warmth and clarity in the lowliest pockets of the human experience. 🤴

This section is adapted from the sefer “Sidduro Shel Shabbos” by R’ Chaim of Chernowitz zy”a (1760-1816)



Profiles of Tzaddikim

Biographical sketches of the Chassidic Masters

Reb Naftali Tzvi Horowitz of Ropshitz zy"א

Reb Naftali Tzvi Horowitz was born in Linsk, Galicia in 1760 (5520). He was raised in a family that was strongly opposed to the movement of Chassidus. His father was the renowned Talmud scholar, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Linsk. His mother Baylah, known for her brilliant mind, was the daughter of the *gaon* Rabbi Yitzchak Horowitz of Hamburg.

When Reb Naftali Tzvi developed an interest in Chassidus, he chose the Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk as his mentor. He subsequently became a dedicated chassid of the Chozeh of Lublin, the Maggid of Kozhnitz, and Reb Menachem Mendel of Rimanov. After the passing of the latter three tzaddikim, Reb Naftali Tzvi settled in Ropshitz, which soon became the focal point for thousands of chassidim in the region. Ropshitz Chassidus distinguished itself for its exquisitely beautiful niggunim.

The Ropshitzer tzaddik was known for his incredibly lofty wisdom, humor, and sharp wit. He was a master of the Kabbalah and would often weave its lofty concepts into beautiful teachings on the *parshios* which are reflected in his writings. His *shiurim* were said to have only been truly grasped by his closest disciples, foremost among whom was Reb Chaim of Sanz, the famed *Divrei Chaim*.

The Ropshitzer left this world in 1827 (5587) in the city of Lanzut. He authored *Zera Kodesh*, comprised of his teachings on the weekly Torah portions, which are based heavily on Kabbalah. One line etched on the tzaddik's tombstone reads, "The Greatest Kabbalist of His Generation." Unfortunately, many of his descendants were murdered in the Holocaust, *Hashem yinkom damam*. Those who survived traveled to the United States where they established thriving Chassidic communities, led by the Rebbes of Dolin, Tcheshinov, Sasregen, Dombrova, Strizov, Melitz, Dzhikov, Shotz, Stutchin, Baitch and others, all located in Brooklyn and New York City. 🕎

Zechuso yagein aleinu! This section is written by R' Akiva Bruck, author of "From Behind the Curtain" (Mosaica Press)

A first edition print of sefer Zera Kodesh



Chassidus 101

Exploring the Foundations of Chassidus

IT IS WELL known that the Arizal writes about *tzimtzum*, a process of constriction through which the creation of the world took place. In order for the Master of the world to create a universe that wouldn't be consumed by His infinite light, He first created a *challal hapanui*, a "vacant space," within which the process of creation began. The tzaddikim explain that while these concepts and their ideas are beyond our finite comprehension, it is nevertheless vital for us to develop even a simple understanding in order to better comprehend how Hashem interacts with us and the world as a whole. Without understanding the nature of Hashem's presence within the world around us, it is difficult for one to develop a truly meaningful relationship with Him.

We are taught that the creation of the world took place *ex nihilo*, *yeish m'ayin*, something from nothing, and that its existence is being perpetuated in this way. On a practical level, the Baal Shem Tov and the other tzaddikim explain that reaching the ultimate level of closeness with Hashem requires one to elevate oneself from this world of *yeish*, of substance and materialism, to the world of *ayin*, nothingness. In other words, to completely forego one's own wants and desires to fulfill Hashem's will, negating one's ego any nullify sense of "I" or independence. While such a level is exceedingly lofty, this is nevertheless the goal we are expected to strive for. Indeed, this striving reflects the exact opposite of what Amalek represents as the spiritual energy of Amalek manifests as haughtiness, a sense of independence from Hashem and a reliance on one's own intellect and capabilities.

This section is written by R' Akiva Bruck, author of "From Behind the Curtain" (Mosaica Press)

The Nefesh HaChaim details how the human body is a mirror image of the upper worlds and their inner workings. "*V'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'socham*" – each and every Jewish person is charged with the mission of creating a place for Hashem within. Because the creation of our inner world within which Hashem can dwell must mirror the creation of the physical universe, one must create an inner vacant space, so to speak, within which Hashem can be drawn.

The question is, how does one achieve such a state? The tzaddikim explain that while each of us are imperfect, constantly battling and overcoming our own struggles, it is the imperfections themselves which enable us to build such a place for Hashem within ourselves. This is because the process of *teshuvah*, which necessitates failure and human error, requires one to recognize that ultimately, everything is in Hashem's hands. *Teshuvah* culminates in the awareness that our experiences and encounters are perfectly orchestrated by our Father in heaven, lovingly guiding us closer to Him.

It is this recognition born of one's experiences in *teshuvah* that lays the bricks for the *mikdash* within. Each step we take towards further refining ourselves, in whatever way form this may take, enables us to shed the *yeish* of this world, to ascend beyond the restrictive materialism around us and to experience a relationship which transcends creation. The process of *teshuvah* may begin from a place of difficulty and darkness, but this journey is the ultimate key to experiencing the greatest light. 🕎

A Quick Mayseh

A Story to Warm the Heart

THE HOLY ROPSHITZER was known for his sense of humor and sharp wit. One Friday afternoon, the tzaddik emerged from the mikvah and began cutting his toenails as another means of preparing for Shabbos Kodesh. Seeing the Rebbe doing this, one of the chassidim approached and hesitantly asked whether he could ask a question “I mean no disrespect, *chas v’shalom*, but as the Rebbe knows, it is the universal custom to cut one’s toenails *before* immersing in the mikvah. May I ask the secret reason behind the Rebbe’s cutting them afterward?” Wishing to teach the man a lesson and sensing, at the same time, an opportunity for some good-natured humor, the Ropshitzer assumed a serious expression and whispered: “Behind my action lies a very lofty reason that is given over only to worthy individuals.” When the chassid heard this, he responded: “Rebbe, I must know this great secret. How can I become worthy of earning it?” The tzaddik looked at him gravely and said: “There lies great and laborious work ahead of you if you really desire to be worthy of this great secret. First, you must search your heart and conscience and root out all sins. You must give more tzeddakah, perform more mitzvos, and truly dedicate yourself to the proper life.” True to his word, the man followed to the letter everything that his Rebbe had told him. The change in him was astonishing!

After a few months of intense *avodah*, the chassid came back to the Ropshitzer. “Rebbe,” he said. “I have done all that you said I must. I hope that I am now worthy to learn the great secret. Tell me, please, why do you wait until after you have immersed yourself in the mikvah before cutting your toenails?” Reb Naftali looked at the chassid and said: “It is true, you have indeed become a better person because of your desire to know the secret and lofty reason behind my actions. Bend over and I will whisper it in your ear.”

Eagerly and trembling with anticipation, the man bent over. Dramatically, the tzaddik drew close and whispered: “Know, that this is the nature of toenails. When you immerse them in water first, they get soft, and they are easier to cut.”

There are many messages in this cute, but powerful story. To me, the most impactful of them is the idea that oftentimes, the journey toward a goal emerges as having been a lot more meaningful than achieving the goal itself. 🤴

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IS A WEEKLY PROJECT OF @TYHASHEM**

“Thank You Hashem” is a powerful sound bite. These simple words are a prayer, blessing, appreciation, sanctification, and expression of spiritual intimacy—all in one. Jews from all walks of life utter them in all life circumstances, finding meaning and strength in direct access to Hashem. Our mission is to ignite that passion and pride in every Jew worldwide. To remind us all that Hashem exists in every single aspect of life. That He loves each of us in every situation, environment, and spiritual position. And that by saying His name with gratitude, we return His love every day.

“THANK YOU HASHEM
FOR SHABBOS KODESH! WEEKLY”
IS WRITTEN BY R’ YAAKOV KLEIN,
AUTHOR OF **THE STORY OF OUR LIVES** (FELDHEIM)
AND EDITED BY **ASHIRA HERZFELD**
FOR MORE OF R’ YAAKOV’S WRITINGS, VISIT LPITORAH.ORG.

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