



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

Reminder

A reminder for next week, Erev Tisha B'Av.

Before Shabbos next week, bring to Shul:

1. Low chair/cushion
2. Non-leather footwear
3. Kinos

In Our Hands

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

If a man takes a vow to HASHEM or swears an oath to establish a prohibition upon him-self, he should not desecrate his word; according to whatever comes out of his mouth should he do! (Bamidbar 30:3)

Why are we told to "do"? Isn't sufficient the warning about not desecrating a word? How does one desecrate a word anyway? Isn't a word- just a word? How does it become profane for one and holy for another?

Question! Is possible for a person to do two Mitzvos at the same time? Sure! Many Mitzvos may have overlapping domains. Here we have at least two grand Mitzvah opportunities. One is commanded to not cheapen his words by failing to fulfill an oath or a vow. Simultaneously there is potentially another ubiquitous Mitzvah in the mix to have in mind.

The verse sates, "HASHEM will establish you for Him-self as a Holy People, as He swore to you- if you observe the commandments of HASHEM your G-d, and you go in His ways." (Devarim 28:9) Here the Mitzvah is called "going in His ways". Our sages define as follows, "Just as The Holy One blessed is He is called "merciful" so you too should be merciful. Just as The Holy One blessed is He is called "gracious" so you too should be gracious. Just as The Holy One blessed is He is called "righteous" so you so should be righteous. Just as The Holy One blessed is He is called "holy" so you too should be holy." Whatever we can know about the traits of the Almighty through deed or description is another way to emulate. In the liturgy of morning prayers we recite daily "Boruch She'amar", "Blessed is He Who spoke and the world came to be. Blessed is He. Blessed is He Who makes the creation. Blessed is He Who says and does. Blessed is He Who decrees and fulfills..." We can therefore say that just as HASHEM fulfills His word so should we.

A woman was out clothes shopping with her children before a holiday when she took notice of an orphaned child looking longingly into the store window. Moved by the sight of the child's plight she moved into action. She told her children to stand aside for a short while and declared what she what she was about to do. She approached the poor child and asked him what he would like to buy. He looked at her with amazement and disbelief. Then the kind woman proceeded to lead the child through the department store picking out and matching him with a handsome wardrobe for Yom Tov. The little child who had become used to disappointment in life was astonished that his dreams were being fulfilled before his eyes. He asked the woman, "Are you G-d?" The woman chuckled at his sweet naiveté and quipped, "No, I'm one of His children!" To which the boy responded, "Oh, I thought you must be related!"

Deeds are like money in the bank, while words are like checks. When the currency has backing, when the words we utter have deeds to back

לעלוי נשמת דוב יצחק ב"ר אפרים אלחנן ז"ל

Laundry During The Nine Days

The Ashkenazi Minhag is not to launder or iron from Rosh Chodesh, even for clothing that will not be worn until after Tishah B'Av.

However, one may spot clean a stain, since this does not cause a person to lose focus on Aveilus.

Children's clothing (up to the age of six or seven) which are required may be washed.

them, then those words can have supreme value. However, when even profound words are bounced about like bad checks then they can become hollow and cheap. A word's real true is in our hands.

What's In Charge?

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

Your servants have taken a count of the soldiers in our charge. Not one of them is missing.

Meshech Chochmah: The gemara takes nifkad/missing, lacking in a spiritual sense. Not a single soldier was lost in the battle with his yetzer hora. In the trying conditions of the front lines, the excited passions of warfare, and the emotional release in surviving, soldiers sometimes fall prey to their desires and to opportunities to exercise power. The officers reported that their soldiers had, without exception, conducted themselves in an exemplary manner.

They emphasized that these soldiers were be-yadeinu/ "in our charge," meaning that they were all accounted for physically as well. None went AWOL. The officers knew where each of their men were at all times. None had been missing, then, in a physical sense as well. By keeping tight control of their men, they kept them away from morally challenging situations.

The officers could certainly take pride in the record of those under their command. But it led to a Eureka moment. They realized that they, the officers, had successfully countered the more primitive drives of a large number of people. Immediately, they connected the dots to another episode – and were overcome with guilt. "If we were able to prevent the many from sinning by exercising deliberate and focused control, why hadn't we done more at the time of the incident with Pe'or and its

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת מטות מסעי

Mincha	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.49pm - 7.55pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.06am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	9.38pm
Shiur	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	10.43pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.30pm

worship? Why had we not stood up to the sinners, as we were able to do with our soldiers!"

We can therefore see what the officers later say in a new light. "We have brought Hashem's offering: each person who found gold vessels, chains, bracelets... to atone for our souls before Hashem." They sought atonement for their silence in the Ba'al Pe'or episode, in which they now realized they were complicit through inaction.

The military campaign against Midian turned out to be a win-win action. Both Hashem and the Bnei Yisroel were honored by the outcome. The latter in not losing a single soldier to moral turpitude; the former because His providence ensured that the Jewish army did not suffer a single fatality on the military field of battle. This accounts for the seemingly long-winded description of the donation of the offering of the army officers: "They brought it to the Ohel Moed as a remembrance for the Bnei Yisroel before Hashem." The victory over Midian created a remembrance for the Bnei Yisroel of the greatness of Hashem, while also taking a place before Hashem, i.e. testifying before Him of the greatness of the Jewish army, whose soldiers – without exception – gave opportunistic aveiros the cold-shoulder.

We could suggest an entirely different approach to the "in our charge" phrase. Chazal emphasize that several of Man's senses are not amenable to his complete control. Walking through the street, a person has no consistent way to evade the next scene that may enter his visual field. He may find himself looking at something that he really does not want to see. He may hear words in which he has no business hearing, and might detect the aroma of succulent meat offered to some pagan deity on an idolatrous altar. Try as he may to shield himself from undesired sensory intrusion, he cannot fully succeed.

The officers alluded to this. Their men, they announced, had resolutely held themselves apart from aveirah. They exercised control over their actions. They put limits on where their legs would carry them, their hands would touch, and their mouths would speak. These were all part of what is in "our charge." They could not control, however, everything that flowed into their internal lives from the outside. They did find vicarious pleasure in what they saw, which wasn't always so holy. As the gemara says, the soldiers "sated their eyes with aveirah." Despite having a perfect record in regard to what they could control, they came up short on what they couldn't. For this they needed atonement, and responded with their offering of part of the booty.

They called it "Hashem's korban," rather than "a korban for Hashem." Those who went out to battle returned not only gratified at the outcome, but stunned by the conduct of the war. They had not lost a single soldier! They saw in this an enormous contribution of Divine hashgachah. Any offering to Hashem is ordinarily accompanied by a feeling of giving something to Him that belongs to us. The offering after the battle with Midian was so lopsided, that the participants could not develop a sense of possession and ownership towards the spoils of war. Everything they took had been handed to them by HKBH. When they took their offering to the Ohel Moed, they saw themselves bringing not a korban for Hashem, but Hashem's korban. The korban belonged to Him before it was ever designated as holy!

Dovid expressed this elegantly: "From Your hand we have given You."

Oaths & Vows

Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari (Torah.org)

At the very opening of this parshah all the laws of oaths and vows are presented. Such oaths sanctify objects, possessions and acts. It is difficult to understand how a human being has the ability through speech to make something holy and thereby change its character and its nature. This would seem to be something that only HaShem can do. Rabbi Jonah teaches that one who guards their tongue transforms it into a vessel like those used in the Temple service. Therefore, in the same way that these vessels sanctified the offering put into them, so too the words that come out of our mouths are holy and can sanctify an article or an object. The ability given to the Jews to sanctify the months and thereby determine the exact dates of the Holy Days was deduced similarly in the midrash from the Temple vessels. Just as the vessel becomes holy because the priest received into it a holy object, so too Israel who are holy, are able to sanctify the months of the year.

We may wonder why of all the parts of the body, only the mouth has this ability of sanctification. We read in Isaiah (43: 21), 'This people I have created for Myself; they will recite My praises'. This is the whole

purpose of the creation of Mankind, but especially of Israel, His People. In fulfillment of this purpose, the mouth becomes the means of kedusha. If this is indeed the whole purpose of Mankind and especially of Israel, then it is difficult to understand the statement by Rabbi Jonah, that it is necessary to guard the tongue in order to be able to achieve it. The teaching of Shimon Bar Yochai in the Yerushalmi, however, makes this very clear. 'If I would have been present at the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai I would have told G-d that Man should be created with two mouths; One mouth for teaching Torah, prayer and wise speech, and another mouth for slander, gossip and evil speech. However, I realize the Divine Wisdom inherent in the Creation, since human beings would have spoken evil speech and slander with both mouths.' (Talmud, Berachot, Chapter 1, halakha 2). This should be seen in connection with the words of Rashi explaining that a Temple vessel that had become impure, needs ritual immersion and anointment with oil, since they had lost their purity (Avodah Zara 52b). So too, creation of two mouths would have caused the loss of purity of both of them. That is why Rabbi Jonah taught that it is only by guarding the mouth and the speech that it is possible to make them a holy vessel. Without this, the mouth would become like a holy vessel that had lost its sanctity and become impure.

The sages explained the verse in Tehillim (55:21), 'and he stretched out his hand against those who were at peace with him, he desecrated his covenant,' to refer to one who is guilty of sexual immorality, thereby desecrating His Covenant. Joseph, who was able to preserve and maintain this Covenant by his moral behavior, bequeathed this ability to the whole House of Israel, so that they too are able to keep the covenant of sexual morality. This is the answer to the Sadducee who asked Rabbi Kahane, (Sanhedrin 37 a), 'Is it possible that there is a flame within flax and nothing is burnt?' [Is it possible that given human sexuality, people are able to refrain from sinning with regard to Niddah?]. When Pinchas at Shittim, being zealous for the covenant of sexual morality, reinstated this moral ability inherent in Israel, they rejected immorality completely. The people rejected idolatry as well as sexual immorality and therefore they were able to restore also the purity of their mouths and thereby their speech; this enables them to make vows that confer holiness. This is in keeping with the teaching of Rabbi Jonah that such purity can only be achieved when the mouth is guarded.

Therefore, the laws of vows and oaths are brought after the story of Pinchas.

There are, however, two types of vows, one that consecrates something to Heaven, thereby changing its status universally and another that makes the object or action holy or obligatory only on the person making the vow. The first type of the oath or vow is like actually giving something to the Temple, thereby making it holy. Here, that holiness does not flow from the speech of the individual but rather from the sanctity of the Temple receiving the article or the object. However, in the case of the vow that changes the status of the action or the article, only in respect to the person making the oath or the vow, the sanctity that applies is a consequence only of the speech of that person. It seems difficult to understand how the second type of oath can exist. After all, something is either sacred, in which case it applies to everybody or it is not sacred for anybody. We can only understand how this is possible, if we realize that in this respect there is a difference between Israel and the Nations of the World. While both of them have the ability to take an oath creating sanctity that will apply to everybody, only a Jew has the ability to make something that is permitted to everybody else, but forbidden to that individual. This flows from the difference in their sanctity. All Mankind has a sanctity that flows from being part of the humanity created by God, while in Israel, each individual has an additional and special relationship; a relationship that flows from the Covenant between God and Israel. By this relationship, each Jewish individual becomes a world or an entity on their own, even as our sages in the Talmud taught, 'One who saves a single soul [life] in Israel, that is as though they saved a whole world' (Sanhedrin, 37a). [There is an alternative version (Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin, Chapter 4, Mishnah 9) without reference to Israel, making it more universal. This is an expression of an ancient discussion as to the universalism or particularism of Judaism]. It is this characteristic of being a world in itself that gives every Jew the ability to create a holiness that would apply only to that individual, as distinct from everybody else.