

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
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life

LESSONS


A MANNER OF SPEAKING

The *bachurim* of Yeshivas Toras Chaim of Denver were frightened. For weeks, a local gang had been harassing them and had graffitied the yeshiva building many times. The *hanhalah* decided it was time to call the police.

An officer arrived, and asked to hear the *bachurim's* experiences. "Depending on what the gang has been saying, it might be a hate crime," he explained. "That is much more severe than a simple conflict between teenagers."

But when questioned, one *bachur* after another could not bring himself to repeat the profanities that the gang had hurled at them. They simply replaced every expletive with a "beep."

The policeman threw up his hands. "How am I supposed to write a police report like this?" he exclaimed. "I can't report to the judge that those boys called you 'beep, beep, beep Jews!'" Then his tone softened. "But the truth is, that that's why we like you boys so much. Because of your refined speech, you seem much more human than other teenagers on the street."

The Chovos Halevavos states that the mouth is the "quill" of the heart; it gives expression to the thoughts and feelings buried within. Through our speech, we reveal the *tzelem Elokim*, the Divine spark hidden inside each of us. When a religious Jew speaks with refinement, with respect for others, or in a way that demonstrates his elevated moral standards, he reveals the workings of his heart. 

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OF THE WEEK

MASTER OF THE BODY

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Let us consider the laws of *parah adumah* and *tumas meis*, and the ideas they express. The Torah classifies the mitzvah of *parah adumah* as a *chatas*. It is a *chok*, and a fundamental institution of *tumah* and *tumas meis*. Since the Torah refers to *parah adumah* as *chatas*, it is clearly directing us to the sphere of morality, and that is where we should seek the meaning of the laws of *tumah* and *taharah* in general, and of *parah adumah* in particular.


The Torah has already established ideas regarding the laws of *tumah* and *taharah*. Moral freedom—so we assert—is the first condition for the sanctification of life which the Torah obligates us to strive for. This truth is threatened by the sight of the human corpse, for in it the superficial observer perceives nature's ultimate power. If man succumbs to death; if the corpse lying before us, overwhelmed by the forces of nature, represents all that man is, then man is no different from any other living thing.

If all this were so, then physical "must's" leave no room for moral "thou shalt." Moral freedom is an illusion, G-d's law is inconceivable, and any

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER 

VEAHAVTA:
PATHWAYS TO LOVE

This is one of the 613 mitzvos—to love Hashem. The Rambam tells us that there are two ways to come to love Hashem. One is by looking at nature and seeing the awesome wisdom of Hashem, which has no limit. The other is through learning Torah, which is the infinite wisdom of Hashem. Perhaps for this reason we say two *brachos*, Yotzer Ohr and Ahava Rabba, before Shema. One gives praise and thanks for the wonders of the natural world, and the other is a plea to Hashem to help us learn Torah. After thinking about these two things, we can accept upon ourselves the mitzvah to love Hashem. 

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom

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HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

With gratitude to Hashem, I am happy to announce the publication of my new book, *Separated to be Mine*. This book's central message is one that explores our history and where we have gone wrong.

The Torah warns us in no uncertain terms that we must be separated from the nations of the world. The more we mingle in their society, the more corruption we absorb. Historically, on almost every occasion that *am Yisrael* slid down the slope of defection from Torah, it was due to the imitation of our gentile neighbors.

In more recent times, too, there was a rejection of Torah among the Jewish masses, but one which exceeded all those that preceded it. Around 250 years ago, it would have been difficult to find a Jewish person willing to be *mechallel Shabbos* even in private—certainly never in public. Today, 80% of the Jewish population has intermarried, or at least assimilated to the degree that they have no connection whatsoever to their heritage. Most of them couldn't care less about Shabbos, if they even know what it is.

How did this happen? Most *frum* people, when asked, have no more than a vague, general idea of how this decline played out. Many still picture the great *yeshivos* and *gedolim* that were found in Europe, the faithful and observant *shtetl* of so many stories. That perception was once accurate, but over a century before the Holocaust, things began to change.

The Torah commands us, "Remember the days of old, understand the years of each generation." If we do not know about our past, similar events could easily happen to us, *chas v'shalom*. So I set out to write a book that help us understand what happened, and how world Jewry came to find itself in the state it is today.

This book has not yet been released to bookstores, but is available on Amazon. Feedback has been outstanding; I hope that readers of this newsletter will seize the opportunity to learn a valuable lesson from our nation's past. 🕯

demand to dedicate one's existence to purity rests on baseless suppositions.

But the laws of *taharah* negate this. These laws confront the illusion of physical servitude with a guarantee of moral freedom. Throughout our lives, whenever we are threatened with reminders of bondage to physical forces, the Law reminds us of *taharah* and its freedom.

Here, *tumah* and *taharah* laws proclaim the truth before the eyes of *klal Yisrael*: man can clear himself of sin, and can remain free of it. Such is the meaning of this *chatas*, this symbolic clearing of sin performed outside the Sanctuary. The sin offerings brought inside symbolize a vow to remain faithful from now on. This *chatas*, on the other hand, publicly proclaims that it is possible to be free of sin, that man is capable of controlling himself in the face of temptation, that man has willpower.

In proclaiming man's freedom, *parah adumah* recognizes that he is subject to physical force. It does not teach man to close his eyes and ignore nature's reality. Rather, it shows man as a contrasting whole. He is mortal, yet eternal; he is fettered, yet free; he is endowed with physical power along with moral power. By placing him, with his dual nature, before G-d, this *chatas* elevates transient man to the eternal sphere of G-d.

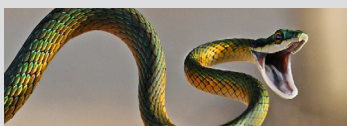
The *parah adumah* tells us: Do not be misled by the sight of corpses and death. Become free. Become immortal, not despite but along with all those aspects of your existence that are physically limited. Be the master of your moral body. In the midst of *tumah*, preserve your *taharah*. 🕯

Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



wonder WORLD

SICKNESS AND CURE



How does antivenom work?

In Parshas Chukas, when Bnei Yisrael look at the copper snake, they are healed. Snake venom is made up of poisons that damage the body. Each snake has a different "recipe," but all venoms spread through the body to hurt cells. Today, when someone is bitten by a poisonous snake, doctors use antivenom, which is made by giving tiny amounts of venom to an animal. The animal's immune system makes antibodies to fight the venom, which doctors collect and purify. When a person is bitten, these antibodies are injected into their blood, where they find the venom and block it from causing harm. Just as the snake reminded Bnei Yisrael to look to Hashem for healing, antivenom reminds us of how Hashem can turn dangerous venom into a way to heal. 🕯

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