



# GROWTH

## At The SHABBAT TABLE

### PARSHAT ACHAREI MOT

#### Irrelevant?

The end of the Parsha discusses the various forms of forbidden relationships (*ervah*), and interestingly interrupts the discussion with the prohibition of *avodah zara* (idol worship): “Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to ‘molech,’ and do not profane the name of your G-d...” (Vayikra 18:21). The obvious question is: why would the Torah juxtapose these two seemingly unrelated and irrelevant topics?

R' Eliyahu Baruch proposes a fascinating answer. To understand, we must remind ourselves of what really happened after G-d took us out of Egypt. Hashem saw through our impurities and “filth,” choosing us to be His chosen nation – His people that would be ambassadors of His infinite light, glory, and awesomeness. As Chazal describe in many places in great length and detail, Hashem “married” Bnei Yisrael at that moment; we were G-d’s “newlywed bride.” As a *chatan* marries his *kallah* through a ring under a *chuppah*, the ultimate event at Har Sinai was the *chuppah* where Hashem married us by giving us His Torah (see Rashi on Shemot 19:17). In fact, the entire *Shir HaShirim*, which is a long and even graphic compilation of romantic love poems, actually signifies the deep and powerful relationship that exists between Boreh Olam and the Jewish People. That is why the sin of worshipping the golden calf – which happened while the Jews were still at Mt. Sinai – was such a severe atrocity, since it is likened to a bride acting unfaithfully with another man while she still stands under the *chuppah*.

With this, it becomes clear why the Torah mentions the prohibition of idolatry right in the middle of discussing assorted types of forbidden relationships. Since the Jewish Nation was chosen as Hashem’s bride, serving the *molech* or any other foreign deity is akin to “cheating” on G-d. Interestingly enough, the term “*z’nut* / זנות” [going astray], which refers to the sin of adultery, is also used in the Torah to prohibit idolatry: “all those who follow in going astray (לזנות) after molech” (Vayikra 20:5); “and they strayed after (וַיִּזְנוּ) the *ba’alim*” (Devarim 8:33).

*Now more than ever, it is crucial to internalize this empowering theme, as we count up to the wedding anniversary on Shavuot and especially as we witness the blatant and wild anti-Semitism let loose, which may be disheartening for the Jewish identity of some. We must never forget who we are or let go of the precious relationship we share with our Creator, and may that give us the strength to persevere through these difficult times and greet Mashiach very soon...*

“Hashem’s tests are not like the ones we take in school; those are for the benefit of the teacher, to discover what level the student is on. Hashem knows everything; His tests are not for His sake, but for ours. They allow us to discover how much is inside ourselves, how far we can go, and how committed we are to *avodat Hashem*.”

(The Ramban)

#### Go Home

This week’s Parsha enumerates the sequence of events that took place on Yom Kippur and all the services performed by the Kohen Gadol on the holy day.

I heard a phenomenal thought from R' YY Jacobson. The Rambam writes (*Hilchot Avodat Yom HaKippurim*) that at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol took off his golden garments. Interestingly, he adds two words: וּיֵצֵא לְבֵיתוֹ – “and he goes home.” The Lubavitcher Rebbe asked a penetrating question: this is a *halachah*? Why did the Rambam have to add this seemingly insignificant detail; *obviously* he went home afterwards! Where else would the Kohen Gadol go on *motzaei Yom Kippur*, to the pizza shop? Furthermore, what if he didn’t want to go home right away; what if he wanted to go to a *shul* or *bet midrash* for a few hours? Is it really a *halachah* that he has to head home?

His answer was profound: not only is it a *halachah*, but perhaps even the most important one. Once the Kohen Gadol was in the *Kodesh Kadashim* (the Holy of Holies) and was the Jewish National public figure who heroically performed the ultimate service and effected Heavenly atonement for the people, it’s very easy not to go home after that.

To illustrate: *I’havdil*, after a celebrity performs in a concert or after an all-star wins the game series, and goes home only to find his wife asking him to take out the garbage, their marriage oftentimes falls apart. The celebrity can’t handle it. “What do I need this for?” he’ll think. “Hundreds of thousands of people think I’m superhuman; I need my wife to tell me to clean up after myself?”

Jewish wisdom teaches us, however, וּיֵצֵא לְבֵיתוֹ, that the Kohen Gadol goes home. “You were just in the *Kodesh Kadashim*?” says the Torah. “Great, now go home!” The message here is powerful: It’s not an interruption of the holy and sublime *avodah*, but rather a continuation of the *Kodesh Kadashim*...

#### Refuah Sheleimah, b’toch she’ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida      Frida Bat Yaffa      Rahamim Ben Shifra  
Chana Bat Malka      Miriam Bat Bakol      Yitzchak Ben Naama  
Heleni Orna Bat Chen Chana      Noah Yisrael Ben Victoria Yaffa

Le’iluy Nishmat:

Shmuel Ben Chana