

Anomalies – Pinchas

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לָכֵן אָמַר הַנָּבִי נִתֵּן לוֹ אֶת בְּרִיתֵי שְׁלוֹם. (במדבר כה, יב)

After Pinchas zealously executed Zimri and Kozbi, the plague that was wiping out Am Yisrael ceased. Despite this, Chazal (מדרש תנחומא ; ספרי קלא ; מדרש תנחומא) tell us that the tribes were attacking and mocking Pinchas "How could he, בֶּן פּוּטֵי זֶה (the grandson of Yitro who served idols) dare kill a Nasi of one of the tribes (Shimon)?"

Therefore HKB"H Himself comes to defend Pinchas and (re)awards him the covenant of כְּהֵנָּה, although Pinchas was not "legally" entitled to be a Kohen.

Although Pinchas was the son of Elazar, son of Aharon, the בְּרִית כְּהֵנָּה only applied to Aharon and his sons and their descendants born *after* HKB"H gave the כְּהֵנָּה to Aharon. Since Pinchas was born *before* this covenant was given, he was technically not part of it (זבחים, קא, עייב).

Other Mefarshim (Chizkuni, Abravanel, etc.) say that Pinchas was a Kohen before this episode, but by killing someone, that revoked his right to the כְּהֵנָּה. Here HKB"H *re-awarded* him the right of כְּהֵנָּה.

The word שְׁלוֹם in the passuk above contains what the Rambam (הלי') calls one of the אֲוֵתוֹת הַמְשׁוּנוֹת, the "strange" letters. The letter "Vav" in the word שְׁלוֹם is "broken" in the middle of the letter. This type of "broken" vav is called by Chazal a קְטִיעָה. **שְׁלוֹם**

The reason it is an anomaly is because normally if a letter in the Torah is broken, it is posel the sefer Torah. Here it is the opposite.

There is an enormous halachic discussion regarding this "anomalous" letter "vav", how it is written exactly, if it is in fact "broken" or simply written smaller (like a letter yud), and if it is broken - where exactly the break in the letter is, whether a sefer Torah is kosher if it is not broken, etc.. This is beyond the scope of this shiur as it mainly affects sofrim. If anyone is interested in reading more about this, you may check out this [link](#).

In this shiur, I would like instead to explore the *symbolic* aspect of the יו קְטִיעָה.

The Gemara in Kiddushin says –

בַּעַל מוּם דְּעִבּוּדָתוֹ פְּסוּלָה מִנְּלֵן אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׂמוּאֵל דְּאָמַר קָרָא לְכֹן אָמַר
הֲנִי נִתְּן לּוֹ אֶת בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹם כְּשֶׁהוּא שָׁלֵם וְלֹא כְּשֶׁהוּא חָסֵר וְהָא שְׁלוֹם כְּתִיב אָמַר רַב
נַחֲמָן וְיוֹ דְּשְׁלוֹם קְטִיעָה הִיא (קִידוּשִׁין סו, ע"ב)

The Gemara learns a halacha from this passuk, that the avodah of a Kohen who is a בַּעַל מוּם is pasul, because it requires that the Kohen be שָׁלֵם and not handicapped. The Gemara retorts "But the passuk doesn't say שָׁלֵם, it says שְׁלוֹם?" Rav Nachman answers "Yes, but the letter vav in the word שְׁלוֹם is broken".

On the surface it appears that the Torah's attitude to a בַּעַל מוּם is that of an "incomplete" person. The Pesikta (פסיקתא דרב כהנא פיסקא יב, ג) tells us that before HKB"H gave the Torah to Am Yisrael, He first wanted to cure us of all our מוּמִים that we had incurred while slaves in Egypt. HKB"H therefore gave us the Mann and water from the Well of Miriam which reconstituted us and restored us to full health and completeness. The Midrash (ויקרא רבה יח ד) quotes in the name of R' Shimon bar Yochai that at Har Sinai, when Am Yisrael received the Torah, there were none who were mute, deaf, blind or mentally retarded in any way, as it says כִּלְדָּן יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי וּמוּם אֵין בָּךְ (שיר השירים ד, ז). However, after Am Yisrael sinned with the egel, the concept of a מוּם was reintroduced to reality.

How then does the Torah relate to someone who is a בַּעַל מוּם, someone with some form of handicap?

We see from the Gemara in Kiddushin above, that only Kohanim who are not בַּעַל מוּם may perform avodah in the Beit HaMikdash. The Rambam (ה'י) (ביאת מקדש פרק ו-ח) lists no less than 90 מוּמִים that are posel a Kohen from doing avodah. In fact, the only place that a בַּעַל מוּם is fundamentally forbidden from performing certain mitzvot is in the Mikdash.

Today when there is no Beit HaMikdash there are numerous "derivative" halachot regarding the limitations of handicapped people from performing certain mitzvot, for example (שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן קכח, ס"ק ל-לב) a Kohen who has certain handicaps that are visible is not allowed to duchen. This only applies when the Kohen does not cover their face and hands with a tallit. If the Kohen covers his hands and face with the tallit while duchening, it does not matter if he has a visible blemish – which is why it has become the accepted custom in most communities for the Kohen to cover with a tallit. Most poskim say that you may not call a blind man up for an aliyah to the Torah (שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן ג) (קלט, ס"ק ג) although some poskim (סימן יא) say that it is allowed. In these "derivative" instances it is not because of a fundamental isur, like in the Beit HaMikdash, but rather for practical considerations that preclude

the person from performing the specific mitzva and for reasons of not causing that person embarrassment in public.

Following the sin with the egel and the reintroduction of מומים in Am Yisrael, a major section of sefer Vayikra deals with how to deal with the reality of a מום, on the skin, on the clothes, on the walls of a house, etc. HKB"H gives us the remedy for certain מומים, how to do tikkun for them.

What about other *physical* types of מומים, like those in the list of the Rambam above? Someone who is blind, deaf etc. The Torah does not give any remedy for them, they are nifsal to work as Kohanim in the Mikdash and there is no remedy for that.

That is on the one hand. On the other hand, the Gemara (מנחות צט, ע"א) tells us that HKB"H commanded Moshe to place both the second set of complete luchot *together* with the broken first set of luchot in the Aron. If HKB"H will only accept absolute perfection in the Mikdash, then how is it possible to place the "blemished" set of luchot in the same Aron as the intact set?

Which brings us to the larger question "How does HKB"H view people who are מומים?" There seems to be a glaring paradox. On the one hand HKB"H will not tolerate a Kohen who is a בַּעַל מוּם doing avodah in the Mikdash, but in the *holiest* place in the Mikdash, inside the Aron HaBrit itself, we have a mixture of perfection and imperfection.

I believe the answer to this question lies in the difference between the words שְׁלֵם and שְׁלֹם.

The Torah says וַיָּבֵא יַעֲקֹב שְׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם וְכוּי (בראשית לג, יח), on which Rashi says שְׁלֵם בְּגוּפוֹ שְׁנִתְרַפָּא מְצַלְעָתוֹ, שְׁלֵם בְּמָמוֹנוֹ שְׁלֵם חָסֵר כְּלוּם מְכַל אוֹתוֹ דְּזוּרוֹן. That Yaakov arrived in Shchem in a state of perfection, physical perfection – HKB"H cured his limp incurred from the battle with the angel, and financial perfection – despite giving a large portion (or all) of his wealth as appeasement gifts to Eisav, Yaakov's wealth was not diminished in any way. The word שְׁלֵם means *perfection*.

Although very similar syntactically, the word שְׁלֹם has a different meaning to שְׁלֵם. What distinguishes one from the other is the addition of a letter vav. The letter vav is characteristically a unifying letter, וי החבור.

The letter vav has the power to take two disparate entities and bring them together, יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֶשֶׁךְ עֲשֵׂה שְׁלֹם וּבוֹרֵא אֶת הַכֹּל. Taking two seemingly opposing poles that theoretically cannot coexist with each other and enable them to coexist - like light and dark.

Here is an *amazing* gematria that illustrates this. If we say that the vav in שְׁלוֹם is a הַחֲבוּר, וי, that means that the vav in שְׁלוֹם connects between שָׁל and ם, i.e. שָׁל-וּ-ם. The gematria of שָׁל (330) is the same gematria as שְׁלוֹם. The gematria of ם is 600 (the sofit letters have different gematriot to the regular letters, 500=ך, 600=ם, 700=ן, etc.), the same gematria as אֹר הַבְּקָר. That gematria made me dance with joy, I hope it made you do too.

An example from the real world is oil and water. Try as you might, it does not matter how long you stir a cup half filled with water and the other half with oil. The two will never mix and unite as one, they will always diverge to their opposite poles (water down below, oil on top). What would happen, however, if you have some compound that could bond water to oil so that they wouldn't run from each other and separate? There is such a compound, it is called an emulsifier. Adding an emulsifier (like lecithin, for example) to such a glass of oil and water, will allow the oil molecules to bond with the water molecules and form a homogenous mixture. The word שְׁלוֹם is a "spiritual emulsifier".

Another way to explain the difference between the two words is that שָׁל is the "result" while שְׁלוֹם is the "process". To achieve perfection (result) requires (the process of) bringing together opposing entities.

HKB"H, with His infinite power, has no problem making שְׁלוֹם between opposites. Case in point, the plague of hail in Egypt – fire within ice. We, on the other hand have a much more difficult time bonding and making שְׁלוֹם, with HKB"H and with one another.

In the Beit HaMikdash there are two distinct "realms" (for want of a better word). The realm of "covenant" (Aron HaBrit) and the realm of "avodah" (Kohanim/Levi'im/Korbanot).

HKB"H's covenant with us is that of a husband to a wife, כִּלְךָ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי, וּמוֹם אֵין בְּךָ. How do you form a union between the perfection that is HKB"H and the imperfection that is Am Yisrael? For HKB"H that is easy, HKB"H can make שְׁלוֹם between fire and ice, חֶשֶׁד and אֹר. For HKB"H to bring people who are at the 49th level of טְמֵאָה to a state of perfection וּמוֹם אֵין בְּךָ at Har Sinai is not difficult, He just performs miracles – Mann from Heaven, water from the Well of Miriam. The "wedding" at Har Sinai was between perfection and perfection.

How did that work out? The honeymoon lasted 40 days and then the whole thing fell apart. The reason it fell apart is because the "bride" was not required to make any effort, just to show up and be willing. The consequence of that were the לוֹחֹת שִׁבְרֵי לִוְחֹת. When a marriage is one sided, it won't last long. Only when the effort is mutual will it endure. In the first iteration, HKB"H gave Moshe the לוֹחֹת ready made and they ended up being shattered. In the second iteration, HKB"H told Moshe (שְׁמוֹת לֹד, א), *you make the*

effort this time, you carve the second set of לוחות. Instead of 40 days, the second לוחות have lasted 3338 years (and counting)!

If you closely examine the Torah, you will see that the Torah is not perfection. If the Torah was perfection, then the angels would have been justified in their claim against HKB"H "Why give the Torah to man, leave it up here in Heaven with the angels!" (תהילים ח, ב). In truth, the Torah is a *mixture* of perfection and imperfection. One the one hand the Torah sets the standard for perfection, what we need to strive to. On the other hand, the Torah is all about *fallibility*. Anyone who has studied halacha will know that halacha is the "art of fallibility". Yes, we have the "gold" standard that we should strive for, but what do we do if we "mess up"? 90% or more of halacha deals with what to do when we mess up. The Aron HaBrit contains both the לוחות and the שְׁבָרֵי לוחות, perfection and imperfection.

Unless HKB"H performs miracles, we humans are *incapable* of achieving perfection on our own. Even the most elevated individual in Am Yisrael, the *Kohen Gadol* is fallible and imperfect. One of the 10 miracles listed that occurred during the period of the Beit HaMikdash (אבות ה, ה) was וְלֹא אָרַע קָרִי לְכַהֵן גְּדוֹל בְּיָוִם הַכִּפּוּרִים. The only reason that Yom Kippur happened each year is because HKB"H made a *miracle*. If it was solely up to us, we could never achieve perfection, we are all fallible and imperfect, from the greatest among us to the lowest.

HKB"H never demands perfection from us. He only demands *maximum effort*.

Kayin had the original idea to bring the first korban, it was his brainchild. Kayin was a farmer, he could have offered his best produce – Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, Jaffa oranges ... instead he brought an offering from the stuff that he was never going to use – flax. What do you do with flax? You make clothes out of it (linen). Clothes were not Kayin's domain, they were מְטֵלְטֵלִין, which was *Hevel's* domain. Kayin's korban didn't "hurt", it was effortless, it was not something that he valued for himself, it was something that he was going to get rid of anyway. Instead of offering something that was *precious and valuable* to him and difficult to part with, like Jaffa oranges, which he was going to eat, he made no real effort. HKB"H said to him "You get an A+ for initiative, but an F- for effort!" That is not what avodah is about, it is not about bright ideas - it is about slog.

When HKB"H sees us making the maximum effort, He is מְשַׁלֵּם with a miracle and then, and *only* then can we achieve perfection.

HKB"H asks only this of us – to try our hardest to achieve perfection. To be the "process", to try to make שְׁלוֹם between the imperfection that we are and

the perfection that we can be, with HKB"H's help. Using the Torah as the model and the mechanism.

There is not a single one of us who does not have a מום of some kind, we are all blemished. We all have our unique challenge to raise ourselves up beyond our blemishes and starting stats and strive for perfection with all of our might, in the realization that we can never achieve it without HKB"H's help. To make שלום on an individual level between our inherent imperfections and our aspirations.

This is as relevant on a national level as well as on an individual level. As a nation we have to make the best "national effort" to take the "choicest of our produce" as an offering to HKB"H, to choose the *"least blemished"* of us to stand at the forefront between us and HKB"H in the Beit HaMikdash. None of us is totally perfect, but by fronting someone with a "known blemish" is indicative of lack of effort. It is like Kayin and the flax instead of the Jaffa oranges. This is why HKB"H is intolerant of Kohanim that have one of the 90 מומים fronting for Am Yisrael in the Mikdash, because it is indicative of F- for effort. This is why we cannot offer a korban that has a מום, for the same reason.

The only representatives of Am Yisrael at the forefront between us and HKB"H are the Kohanim, who are אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, they are the pinnacle of the "process" and are the national "emulsifier" that bridges the gap between the imperfection that is Am Yisrael and the perfection that is HKB"H.

Where does that leave people with "handicaps", people who are blind, deaf, autistic, etc.? Does the fact that they are not fit for avodah in the Beit HaMikdash mean they are lesser individuals?

On the contrary. HKB"H gives the greatest challenges only to the neshamot He knows are capable of handling them. Without generalizing (there are exceptions on both sides), from personal experience individuals we regard as "handicapped" are usually much more elevated spiritually than those we regard as normal, even gifted. In fact, more often than not it is the "gifted" people, for whom everything comes easily, that are the more pompous and conceited.

Well known are the stories told of HaRav Eliezer Shach zt"l one of the Gedolei HaDor of our generation, who used to stand up when a special needs person (autistic, Downs syndrome etc.) would enter the Beit Knesset. When asked why he did so, he replied that they have extremely elevated neshamot.

HKB"H wants the least blemished of us to front for Am Yisrael in the Beit HaMikdash, but the real tough jobs of tikkun, He gives to the "handicapped" amongst us. It is they, the tzaddikim nistarim, who are achieving the greatest tikkun for Am Yisrael. I don't think it is a coincidence that in recent generations the number of autistic children is rising drastically, because as we approach the Geulah, it will be they who achieve the final tikkun for the rest of Am Yisrael.

It is all about our avodah, our effort, the "process", making שלום between our imperfections and the perfection that we strive to achieve. It is a very powerful thing but it is also a very *fragile* thing. It is typified by a וי קטיעה, an imperfect letter vav in the word שלום and it is the gift davka given to Pinchas.

The reason is because Chazal tell us that Pinchas is Eliyahu HaNavi. Eliyahu is not the Mashiach. What is Eliyahu HaNavi's role? We read it each time we recite Birkat HaMazon הרחמן הוא ישלח לנו את אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב, ויבשר לנו בשורות טובות ישועות ונחמות. Eliyahu's role is to precede the Mashiach, to announce his impending arrival. As we read in sefer Malachi הנה אנכי שלח לכם את אליה הנביא לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא. והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם פן אבוא והכיתי את הארץ חרם (מלאכי ג, כג-כד).

It will be Pinchas/Eliyahu HaNavi's role to make שלום in Am Yisrael and cause us to do teshuva, so the maximum number of us will merit surviving into the era of Mashiach.

HKB"H is done doing miracles for nothing, like He did the first time at Matan Torah. He has changed His modus operandi of doing miracles only to complement our maximum effort. The miracle of sending Eliyahu HaNavi will only happen after we, Am Yisrael make our maximum effort to achieve שלום. Then HKB"H will be משלים and send the Mashiach.

We all know what a fragile thing שלום is and how easily it can slip through our fingers if we don't do our maximum hishtadlut, each in our own מצויאית, each with our own מומים and limitations. None of us alone can make שלום in Am Yisrael, it can only be done all together.

Shabbat Shalom

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