



Parashat Vayikra 5772 - #227

Ask Rav Aviner: mororly@bezeqint.net

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com

Ha-Admor of Viznitz: Ha-Admor of All of Us

[Talk in Yeshiva during lunch]

A great Rabbi of the Nation of Israel has been taken from us: Ha-Admor of Viznitz, Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Moshe Yehoshua Hagar. He is not just the Chasidic Rebbe of Viznitz, he is the Admor of all of us. Why? Because 99% of what he displayed self-sacrifice for during his lifetime is not particular to Viznitz, or even to Chasidut, but is Klal Yisraeli. There is no difference today between a Viznitz Chasid and another G-d-fearing Jew.

It is true that his Seudat Sheshilit was an experience full of passion, but passion is not something created by the Baal Shem Tov. Passion needs to be the possession of the entire Nation of Israel. Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Levi already wrote in the Kuzari (2:50) that one should not think that his joy and dancing and singing on Shabbat and Yom Tov is less important than fasting. And the Rambam, at the end of Hilchot Sukkah Ve-Lulav (8:15) says that joy in the service of Hashem is in and of itself service of Hashem. The Baal Shem Tov did not invent something new – rather, he reminded us of something that was forgotten. How much passion one should display has been disputed, but the passion of Ha-Admor of Viznitz was certainly proper for the entire Nation of Israel.

Besides being full of passion, Ha-Admor of Viznitz was also great in Torah learning. A great scholar, a great Matmid (one who learns Torah consistently and constantly). He was particularly expert in the book Ketzot Ha-Choshen. Though not everyone has the ability to learn that sefer, everyone must learn Torah. Ha-Admor's example is for all of us.

Ha-Admor also established many educational institutions: institutions for children and adolescents, Yeshivot, women's seminaries, and Kollels. Everyone must learn, teach and spread Torah. This too applies to all of us.

Ha-Admor of Viznitz was also very careful in "Shemirat Einayim" (Guarding himself from looking at forbidden images). He established the Mehadrin buses (in which men and women sit separately). One should pay attention, by the way, to the word "Mehadrin": we are not obligated to observe such a stricture, but it is praiseworthy to do so. When a bus is relatively empty, there is no problem, but when it is packed with people, there is no place to look without seeing improper things. "Shemirat Einayim" is not a stricture, but a basic law. According to the Rambam, it is a Rabbinic obligation, and according to Rabbenu Yonah, it is a Torah obligation (see Beit Shmuel on Even Ha-Ezer, chapter 21). But according to all opinions, one must guard his eyes. And all of this has nothing to do with the Chasidut of Viznitz - it is Klal Yisraeli. Ha-Admor was personally very strict in this matter, and he is a worthy model for all of us.

Ha-Admor of Viznitz is also connected to all streams of Chasidic Jews. In addition to his son, Ha-Rav Yisrael Hagar, who is his successor as Chasidic Rebbe, and another son who is the

Rosh Yeshiva in the Viznitz Yeshiva, he has one daughter who is the Rebbetzin of the Belzer Rebbe, a second daughter who is the Rebbetzin of the Skverer Rebbe and a third daughter who is the Rebbetzin of the Satmar Rebbe.

It is true that the custom in Viznitz is to wear white socks on Shabbat and to have the buttonhole on the right side of the hat. But one must not think that Viznitz Chasidut is a Chasidut of white socks and right-side buttonholes. This would be ridiculous. Chasidut Viznitz is about increasing passion, increasing Torah learning, increasing education and increasing modesty. And all of these things are Klal Yisraeli.

Ha-Admor of Viznitz is therefore the Admor of All of Us, and we must learn from his example.

May the soul of Ha-Admor ztz"l continue to be bound up in the bonds of the living with all of the righteous.

Rav Aviner on... The Importance of Taking Stock of Ourselves

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Vayakel-Pekudei 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

When G-d wished to create man, He asked the angels their opinion. The angel "Kindness" responded, "Create man, for he performs kind deeds." "Truth" agreed that man should be created... "Charity" likewise said, "Create him, for he performs charitable deeds." Yet "Peace" said not to create man for man sows strife.

G-d responded, "While you were arguing, I created man" (Bereshit Rabbah). But G-d did not pass judgement on the angels' words. Man therefore spends his entire life hanging in the balance: should he have been created or not? And it is he himself who determines, every moment, whether or not he is worthy of his existence.

Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai argued over this very question: was it better for man to have been created or not? And their conclusion was, "Now that he has been created, let him scrutinize his deeds, or as some say, let him scrutinize his good deeds for negative components" (Mesilat Yesharim, Chapter 3).

A person must therefore take stock of himself on a daily basis. "Therefore, those in control say, 'Let us enter into an accounting'" (Bemidbar 21:27). Those saintly people who have control of their evil impulses provide us with advice grounded in experience: 'Let us take an accounting' – Take stock of yourself daily. You should have a set time each day to be alone for this purpose (Mesilat Yesharim, Chapter 3).

Magen Avraham writes that the best time for this is bedtime. A person should scrutinize his deeds well, and resolve not to repeat any sins that he discovers in his behavior that day, especially common sins like flattery, falsehood, irreverence and evil gossip (Orach Chaim 139, Magen Avraham #7).

Rabbi Eliyahu Di Vidas (Reshit Chochma, Sha'ar Ha-Kedushah, Chapter 7) likewise writes that before bedtime one should record the day's deeds so as not to forget that he has sins to be rectified, as it says, "I am ever conscious of my sin" (Tehilim 51:5).

Rabbi Ya'akov Emden similarly writes that if someone committed a sin during the day he should record it at night in his ledger when he has free time, as did Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha (Shabbat 12b), thereby fulfilling the verse quoted from Tehilim. Moreover, he should remember to make amends (Siddur Bet Ya'akov, Bet Ha-Laila, Cheshbon Berachot, par. 5).

And in the sefer "Seder Olam" we find: "It is a Mitzvah to undertake the yoke of Heaven before going to sleep. The reason is that sleep constitutes one sixtieth of death, and before one departs from the world it is best for one to undertake the yoke of Heaven, and to proclaim one's love and reverence for G-d. For the same reason some have the practice of reciting the 'Vidui' confessional... for no one knows when his time is up. We've seen many people go to sleep and not wake up. It is thus appropriate to recite a general confession, and also to specify one's personal sins from that day. Moreover, he should ask forgiveness of everyone to whom he caused pain or about whom he spoke poorly. And if others were guilty of doing the same

to him, he should forgive them with all his heart and soul" (Seder Keriat Shema Al Ha-Mitah).

The Zohar teaches, "Every night, before one goes to sleep, he should make a calculation regarding the deeds he did all that day, and he should repent from his sins and ask G-d's mercy." (Zohar Korach, 178:1)

Rav Kook wrote: "Wickedness in the world finds its base in man, and it increasingly takes up residence in him. Daily it is emboldened, weakening man's ability to exalt himself and to ascend to goodness. Man's evil impulse overcomes him every day. Man cannot manage without regular prayer, one component of which should be confession. A person has got to confess his sins, those committed openly, those committed furtively, and those kept a total secret. He must confess his proclivity for evil, which engulfs him constantly. When the purity of prayer and confession is present every single day, when man's personal calculation is not something he forgets, then he will gradually be able to shake off his evil, before it has a chance to deceive him so badly that he can no longer raise his head. People who make such calculations daily rid themselves of their daily wickedness. Before their normal bedtime, they confess on behalf of themselves and the whole world. They at least register a protest over their own and their people's wickedness wherever it turns up. By such means they keep themselves in sync with goodness and holiness, and elevate themselves to lives of holiness, drawing sustenance from the wellspring of goodness. 'Into Your hand I entrust my spirit'" (Tehilim 31:6. Orot Ha-Kodesh 3:302).

A story is told about a holy individual who would record on paper every deed that he committed during the day that was against G-d's will. He would not go to sleep until he had wept so much that his tears blotted out all that he had written (Likutei Maharich, Seder Kriat Shema She-Al Ha-Mitah).

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Soft Matzah for Ashkenazim

Q: Is it permissible for Ashkenazim to eat soft Matzah, like the Sefardim?

A: There are those who forbid it. While they agree that in the past Ashkenazim did eat it, they ceased doing so (Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Halichot Shlomo chap. 9 note #80) and there is no tradition (Masoret) to permit it. But there is also no tradition to forbid it, and the Rama (Orach Chaim 460:4) mentions that the Matzot were thick (and must therefore have been soft). And the Sha'arei Teshuvah writes there that they would prepare them with a type of grater, which is also a sign that they were soft. Ha-Rav Asher Weiss writes that the basic Halachah is that they are permissible, but he is concerned that we are not experts in making them soft and there is therefore a concern about Chametz (at the end of his Haggadah, siman #15). But Sefardim are experts. And Ha-Rav Herschel Schachter also permits them. In sum: It is permissible.

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet