Points to Ponder

Achrei Mos 5782

**אַֽחֲרֵ֣י מ֔וֹת שְׁנֵ֖י בְּנֵ֣י אַֽהֲרֹ֑ן  After the death of Aharon’s 2 sons (16:1)** - The Midrash notes many reasons why the sons of Aharon died. Among the reasons was that they did not take advice from one another. Now while it makes sense for their punishment for not seeking advice from their elders, but why punish them for not seeking advice from one another? Doesn’t the fact that they both participated imply that they agreed with the path they selected? **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik ztl**. highlights the importance of seeking advice when choosing a plan. When people talk before they act, they often allow more cool heads to prevail and listen to their own words.

**הַשֹּׁכֵ֣ן אִתָּ֔ם בְּת֖וֹךְ טֻמְאֹתָֽם I live with them even in their Tumah state (16:16) - Rav Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztl.** used this possuk as an inspiration to those who often feel that they are too far gone to do Teshuva. This Possuk reminds us that no one is ever too far away to be rejected by Hashem. He is truly everywhere so we ought make the most of our relationship with Him.

**וְנָשָׂ֨א הַשָּׂעִ֥יר עָלָ֛יו אֶת־כָּל־עֲו‍ֹנֹתָ֖ם אֶל־אֶ֣רֶץ גְּזֵרָ֑ה And the Se’ir shall carry all their transgressions to a wasteland (16:22)** - Why is it that the Se’Ir LaAzazel atones for so much more and yet plays such a small role in the details of the Avoda of Yom Kippur? **Rav Yisrael Belsky ztl.** explained that before there can be atonement for sin, there needs to be a place for inspiration and recognition that one can recharge the spiritual batteries and come to recognize the value of doing Teshuva in order to be close to Hashem. Hence, the areas that close one off from the complete Teshuva play a larger role in the atonement process for their repair sets up the opportunity not only for filling in the void created by sin, it sets the stage for improvement in the relationship with Hashem.

**וְעִנִּיתֶ֖ם אֶת־נַפְשֹֽׁתֵיכֶ֑ם חֻקַּ֖ת עוֹלָֽם:  It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall afflict yourselves; an eternal decree (16:31)** - How are we to understand the concept of Inui Nefesh – of affliction as part of the Teshuva process? **Rav Mayer Twersky Shlita** quoted **Abarbanel** who explained that *Inui nefesh*, affliction, refers to fasting.  Abarbanel explains that *Yom Hakipurim* is a day devoted to *teshuva*. *Cheit* represents betrayal, failure, hypocrisy, hubris, foolishness and rebelliousness. *Cheit* signifies the opportunities of life squandered. *Teshuva* involves recognition of *cheit* and its magnitude. And thus the self-awareness induced by *teshuva* is excruciating. Ultimately, *teshuva* culminates in the joy and elation of *kapara* and rapprochement with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. But the path is paved with anguish. When the Torah commands *inui nefesh* on *Yom Hakipurim* it speaks of this penitential, existential anguish as well. Rav Twersky added that *teshuva* provides us with a means to monitor our *teshuva* efforts. If we are coasting along, singing *ashamnu* and "*klapping*" *al cheit* but not feeling anguish, we have yet to hit the mark. "*Aval hacharata u'sheviras ha'lev v'ha'bechi zeh nachutz me'od v'ha'marbeh b'bechi b'mistarim meshubach* - but [feeling] remorse, [having] a broken heart and crying are necessary. And one whom in private, cries effusively is praiseworthy"

**וּבְחֻקֹּֽתֵיהֶ֖ם לֹ֥א תֵלֵֽכוּ And in their laws you shall not follow (18:3) - Rashi** notes that this shows us that Mitzrayim and Canaan were more corrupt than all other practices and in the places where the Jews were, was more corrupt than other places. Why? Why was it worse than the other places? **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that this was the protective Hashgacha of Hashem because historically when the people around the were most corrupt and their values most alien to the Jews, the Jews stood their ground and stayed closest to their values. The closer the alignment, the tougher it is to withstand outside influence.

**וָחַ֣י בָּהֶ֑ם And he will live by them (18:5)** - **The Netziv** notes that the words “V’Chai” refers to the ability to introduce Chiddushei Torah. How did he come to that conclusion? **Rav Noson Tzvi Finkel ztl**. explained that the concept of “Chiddush” is the ability to know and discern the will and intent of Hashem (especially in the Torah). This mission is the ultimate mission in life.

**וּמִזַּרְעֲךָ֥ לֹֽא־תִתֵּ֖ן לְהַֽעֲבִ֣יר לַמֹּ֑לֶךְ  And from your children you shall not give to Molech (18:21)** - Why are the laws of forbidden relationships juxtaposed with the laws of human sacrifice? **Rav Schachter Shlita** mentioned in the name of Rav Soloveitchik ztl. that if one violates the rules of sexual morality, s/he will also come to violate violation of obvious Mishpatim as well. (When people give their children to Molech they do so in order not to give up material niceties. This desire begins when people do not care about rules of morality begun in their own sexual desires).

**וְלֹֽא־תָקִ֤יא הָאָ֨רֶץ֙ אֶתְכֶ֔ם And the land should not spit you out (18:28)** - What a graphic image! Why was it necessary? And to think that it is repeated again in Parshas Kedoshim. Why is that the image that Hashem wants us to have? **Rav Eliyahu Schlessinger Shlita** explained that like a body that vomits out that which is not good for her, Eretz Yisrael is granted the same ability – to quickly expel that which harms her. It is critical that we recall that quick expulsion lest we miss the fact that Hashem can decide to end his Chessed grace and remove the irritant to the Kedusha of the land – the Toavot that are performed therein.

**Haftara**

**מָחָ֣ר חֹ֑דֶשׁ Machar Chodesh (Shmuel Alef 20:18)** - Why do we read this Haftara when the next day is Rosh Chodesh? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** suggests that Rosh Chodesh has the potential to bring Moshiach (Hence the comment that we will build a new Mizbeiach in Zion <Musaf Rosh Chodesh>). When the Haftara mentions that Dovid was not in his place, it reminds us that we lack Moshiach especially because of the sin of Sinas Chinam (as was Shaul’s problem too). When we fix it, we can merit Moshiach.