



KINDER TORAH.™

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PARASHAS MATTOS

KASHER YOUR NESHAMA

“Oy vey! A glass of milk fell into the boiling pot of chicken.”

“Maybe we can save it, dear. Is the volume of food in the pot sixty times the amount of milk that fell?”

“No.”

“Can the milk be removed, or has it spread all over the pot?”

“It mixed into everything.”

“Then we have a problem. Both the mixture of meat and milk and the pot have both become *ossur* (forbidden). We will have to throw away the food, and *kasher* the pot.”

“Oh well. My dear husband, what can we do? It should be a *kapora* (atonement). How do we *kasher* the pot?”

“That is a timely question, dear. We learn the laws of *kashering kelim* (vessels) from the war with Midian in this week’s parasha. Elazar HaKohen spoke to the soldiers who had just returned from the war with *kelim*, captured from the non-Jews. He instructed them how to *kasher* those *kelim*. ‘Everything that came through fire, pass it through the fire, and purify it’ (Bamidbar 31:23).”

“How do we translate that into practical halacha?”

“First we must clean the *keli* thoroughly. In our case, we must wash and scrape off all remnants of the non-kosher food that was stuck to the pot, both inside and out. We must also remove any rust that has accumulated on the *keli*. The metal must be perfectly clean. Secondly, we must heat the *keli* in the same way that it was used to cook. Our chicken pot was used for cooking with water. The pot was heated until the water and food inside reached boiling temperature. Therefore, the pot must be placed into boiling water to remove all traces of the taste of the *ossur* food that had been absorbed into the metal.”

“As I said, my dear husband, it should be a *kapora*.”

“My dear wife, you are thinking along the same lines as the Chofetz Chaim.”

“Thank you for the compliment. What does Rav Yisrael Meir have to say about *kashering kelim*?”

“He compares the purification of the *keli* to the purification of our *neshamos* when we do *teshuva*. The first step is to remove

the dirt and rust of the *aveyros* from our *neshamos*. We accomplish this by regretting our past mistakes and firmly resolving to never repeat them in the future. Secondly, we must be on our guard. We have to form a strategy to beat the yetzer hora, in the same way that he beat us. Hashem will put us into the same situation that led to our sin in the past, and the yetzer hora will do his utmost to convince us to commit the same sin. If he caused us to sin with the fire of *hislahavus* (getting overly excited and worked up), then we must beat him with *hislahavus* for the mitzvah of doing *teshuva*. Just as the *keli* that became treif through boiling must be *kashered* through boiling, so too the *aveyra* that came about from a boiling incitement, must be ‘burned out’ with a boiling fervor for *teshuva*.”

“That is fascinating, dear. I am sure that the holy Chofetz Chaim spoke about the *aveyra* of Loshon Hora.”

“Yes he did. That is a sin committed with improper speech. The *teshuva* is to speak properly. The main action required is toiling in Torah.

Those holy words crossing his lips will atone for the impure ones that he had spoken. Rav Yisrael Meir goes a step farther and says that the main ‘*kashering*’ of a person’s soul is with Torah. Its holy purity renders a person’s soul clean and free of *aveyros*.”

“May we all reach his *madrayga* (spiritual level).”



Kinderlach . . .

The principle of kashering kelim is called “kaboloh kach polto” – the issur was absorbed into the keli in a specific way, and must be removed in the same way. So too with our neshamos. The yetzer hora contaminates our souls with different strategies. We have to use his own strategy against him to purify ourselves from the tumah that he has wrought upon us. That way we will do teshuva, and become clean and pure to serve Hashem.

WINNING THE BATTLE

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Calculate the total of the captured spoils...You shall take it from their (the soldier’s) half and give it to Elazar the Kohen...And from

the spoils of the Bnei Yisrael...you shall give to the Leviim” (Bamidbar 31:25-30). The soldiers had just returned from the war against Midian. The spoils of war must now be divided up. Before anyone takes anything for himself, he must first give to the Kohanim and Leviim. Why?

The Malbim explains that soldiers who go to war are prone to make a fundamental mistake. They may think that their might and their swords win the battle against the enemy. Therefore, they must first give spoils to Elazar the Kohen Godol. In his *zechus* (merit) and the *zechus* of his son Pinchas who carried the holy vessels in his hand, they merited to conquer and inherit Eretz Yisrael. The Ha’amek Davar elaborates that one who goes to fight a battle asks the spiritual leader of the nation to pray for his safety and success. The Kohen Gadol is that leader who atones for Bnei Yisrael and leads the *Avodah* (Divine Service). Therefore, he deserves a bigger portion of the spoils. The Ha’amek Davar adds that the Leviim toiled in Torah. Their Torah learning guarded Klal Yisrael and protected them from all evil. Therefore, those who do not go to war, rather sit safely in their homes, must first give a portion of their spoils to the Leviim. In the *zechus* of the Torah learning of Shevet Levi the rest of the nation is protected.

Kinderlach . . .

During these Three Weeks, we mourn the losses of many battles and wars, resulting in death and destruction to many Jewish communities. The Tanach and our sages point out that each churban (destruction) was preceded by a weakening in some aspect of Avodas Hashem (Service to Hashem). Who fights our wars? “Hashem is Master of war” (Shemos 15:3). We are still in golus (exile). We are surrounded by many enemies. What will protect us from them? Torah Learning and Divine Service, just as the Torah learned by the Leviim protected the nation back in the days of the conquest of Eretz Yisrael. Nowadays, Divine service consists of prayers. Kinderlach, learn Torah, pray to Hashem, protect our nation, and with His Help bring an end to this golus.

Parasha Questions:

- When would Moshe die? (31:2 and Rashi)
- What percentage of the spoils did the soldiers have to give to Hashem? (31:28)
- What percentage of the spoils did the Bnei Yisrael have to give to the Leviim? (31:30)

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