



FINDING HOLINESS TODAY

KILAYIM – FORBIDDEN MIXTURES

Parshas Kedoshim discusses the laws of “*kilayim*”, forbidden mixtures. The Torah discusses the details of these laws regarding certain kinds of plants, clothing, and animals which may not be mixed together. The underlying theme of *kilayim* is that there are certain things which are meant to remain apart from each other, which the Torah doesn’t want together.

Certainly, there is also a higher point than this, where everything in Creation is integrated, and there is even a hint to this from the word “*kilayim*”, which contains the word “*kalul*”, “integrated”. But in the current world, we are in an *alma d’piruda*, a “world of separation”, where certain things must remain separate from each other and not be joined together.

THE ROOT OF KILAYIM – THE EITZ HADAAS

The concept of *Kilayim* also has deeper roots.

The entire Creation is a mixture of good and evil, ever since Adam from the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra*, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. When Hashem placed Adam in *Gan Eden*, He showed him all the trees of *Gan Eden* and said to him, “Look at all of this beautiful handiwork I have made. Give thought to this, and don’t ruin My world.” When Adam sinned by eating from the forbidden tree, not only did he sin and become removed from *Gan Eden*, but the state of the world was ruined also.

What was wrong with the *Eitz HaDaas*? It was a form of *kilayim*, a forbidden mixture, because it contained a mixture of good and evil – two forces which are not meant to be together. *Kilayim* is therefore rooted in the evil mixture that was in the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra*, which contained the two ultimate forces that cannot be together – the forces of good and evil. Just as *kilayim* is forbidden, so was the *Eitz HaDaas* forbidden, for the same root reason – they were both forbidden mixtures, which cannot be together.

THIS WORLD – A MIXTURE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Adam ruined the world when he ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, by making the world into a place where good and evil were mixed with each other. This mixture spread to the rest of the world, and now the entire Creation became one giant form of “*kilayim*”, a mixture of forces which is not the ideal state of Creation. This is the current world we are found in – the “world of action” where good and evil are mixed with each other all the time.

For this reason, we are always amidst a “sifting process” in this world. We need to always clarify the good and bad parts of this world in anything we encounter. But, before we try to sift out the good from the bad, we need to first understand that there is a mixture of good and evil in everything.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner (*in the sefer Nefesh HaChaim*) explained that before the sin, the evil inclination was an external force. The Serpent was outside of Adam and Chavah and didn’t yet enter into them. After the sin, the evil inclination, or the Serpent, entered into man. The evil inclination resides in the heart, and is enmeshed with our soul, as the *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* describes.

Thus, we first need to be clear that each thing in Creation has become mixed with evil, ever since the sin. That is the reality today, and it is the result of the sin, not the ideal state of Creation as things were meant to be.

CONNECTING TO THE EITZ HACHAIM –
THROUGH TORAH AND HASHEM

But when one merits a connection to the Torah, which is called the “*Eitz HaChaim*” (*Tree of Life*) – for the Torah is *chayei olam*, “eternal life” – he partakes of the *Eitz HaChaim*, and he is thereby connected with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. He is not simply partaking of a life that is externally good, in the same sense as partaking of the fruit of the *Eitz HaDaas*. Rather, he connects himself to the holy Torah, which

is “*A tree of life it is, to those who are steadfast in it*”. The Torah is the revelation of the *Eitz HaChaim* that was in *Gan Eden*.

Through connecting to the Torah, one becomes connected with Hashem, where no evil can damage, for it is written “*In His place, evil shall not visit you*.” Evil cannot affect the place where one stands with Hashem. The more that a person connects with the reality of Torah and with the reality of Hashem, with true, inner *d’veykus*, the more he enters into the innermost chambers with Hashem, where there is no mixture of good and evil. This is the state of the pure soul which Hashem created man with.

As long as a person hasn’t yet connected himself to the depths of Torah with *d’veykus* in Hashem, the life he lives is a mixture of good and evil, a life of “*kilayim*”. Within this mixture, one still has the *avodah* to sift out the good and evil. Even if he does sift out the good from the evil, he will always be found within a world that is a mix of good and evil, until *Moshiach* comes, may he come speedily in our days.

When one accesses the inner world, by connecting himself to the world of Torah which is Hashem’s world, there is no mixture of good and evil. There is only good there, for Torah is called “good”. It is a reality that is entirely good.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE “EREV RAV” ON THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Therefore, when a person lives in the external world, he lives in a world of *kilayim*, of mixtures. This was always true ever since the sin of Adam. Ever since the Jewish people left Egypt, there was a group of people called the “*Erev Rav*” (*Mixed Multitude*), who followed them out of Egypt. The word “*Erev Rav*” is from the word “*taaruvos*”, mixture. Simply speaking, they were a mixture of different nations. No slave ever left Egypt until the exodus, and therefore there was already a mixture of many nations in Egypt. That is why they are called the *Erev Rav*, because they were a *taaruvos*/mixture of many nations together.

But the deeper understanding, as explained by the *Gra*¹, and later elaborated upon by Reb Elchonon Wasserman², is that the *Erev Rav*

are souls who contain an inherent mixture of good and evil.

In that way, they are very different from the nation of Yisrael. The nation of *Yisrael* stood at *Har Sinai* to receive the Torah. This wasn’t just an event, but a revelation of the *Eitz HaChaim* to them, where they received a world which is free from the mixture of good and evil. But the *Erev Rav* didn’t join in this experience. The Ramban says that the *Erev Rav* stood apart from the people when the Torah was being received at Har Sinai. Although they had the status of Jews, they didn’t actually stand together with the people at the foot of the mountain, choosing instead to stand apart from them.

After the exodus, the *Erev Rav* became mixed with the Jewish people, up until the point where the Torah was received. At the very apex of the giving of the Torah, Hashem’s Presence was revealed – it was a sublime experience. It was the revelation of the Torah that is entirely life, with no mixture of good and evil. The spirit of impurity of the Serpent was removed from them.

But the *Erev Rav* didn’t partake of this experience, because they were an inherent mixture of good and evil. When the rest of the Jewish people remained together with the *Erev Rav* afterwards, the mixture of good and evil affected them, and continues to affect us until today, obscuring the light of the Torah from completely elevating the Jewish people.

Therefore, it is clear, says the Ramban³ that the *Erev Rav* stand on their own as a separate nation. Otherwise, their mixture with the Jewish people wouldn’t have allowed the spirit of impurity to leave the Jewish people at Har Sinai. Since the spirit of impurity was indeed removed from the Jewish people at Har Sinai, it must be that the *Erev Rav* stood apart from the people then, as their own independent reality.

This perspective offers us greater insight into these days before preparing to receive the Torah on Shavuot. When we received the Torah at Har Sinai, we separated from the external world around us, which is entirely a mixture, and we entered into an internal life, which is entirely life. But it is only accessed by one who is attached, in the depths of his soul, to the holy Torah and to Hashem.

When the people sinned with the golden calf, due to the influence

of the Messiah.

³ The Rav explained: although the Ramban doesn’t prove to his words, it is his own straightforward logic, and therefore we should honor it as the logic of the Rishonim, which is self-explanatory

¹ *sefer Even Shelaimah 11:1, and Perush HaGra Tikkunei HaZohar 41a*

² Reb Elchonon Wasserman (student of the Chofetz Chaim and the foremost *Gadol* in Europe, Rosh Yeshiva of Baranovitch, and author of *Kovetz Maamarim*, *Kovetz He’aros*, and *Kovetz Shiurim* and *Epoch*

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of the *Erev Rav* (the other “nation” who influenced them to sin), the mixture of the *Erev Rav* re-entered the Jewish people. The very fact that the people became mixed with that external world, where there is good and evil mixed together, was a terrible decline in their entire spiritual level, for they left their internal world where all is pure and good, and were now connected to a world where everything is mixed up.

“EXILE OF THE EREV RAV”

The *Gra* wrote - and Rav Elchonon Wasserman explained his words further⁴ - that in the final generation, the influence of the *Erev Rav* upon the Jewish people will once again re-assert itself.

In the previous generations, we went through the exiles in Egypt, Babylonia, Media-Persia, Greece, and later the exile of Edom (*Rome*). Currently, we are in the *galus Yishmael* (suffering from the Arabic nations) – and within this exile, we also face the “exile of the *Erev Rav*”. The exile of the *Erev Rav* is the final exile, where we are being tested with all kinds of forbidden mixtures.

At the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people were separated from the *Erev Rav*, and even Bilaam understood that there was a separation, saying “*They are a nation that dwells alone, and with the nations they do not think.*” The Jewish people were understandably separated from the rest of the nations when they were in the desert, but even more so, they were separate from the *Erev Rav*. This separation between the Jewish people and the *Erev Rav* was evident when the people stood at Har Sinai.

After the sin with the golden calf, though, the Jewish people fell from this sublime spiritual level into the influences of the *Erev Rav*. Hashem is of course with us and can be revealed even now amidst the mixture with the *Erev Rav*. We are in a generation that is entirely *kilayim*, the total opposite of standing at Har Sinai.

In this final generation we are within the exiles of *Edom*, *Yishmael* and *Erev Rav*, all together. It is not merely a kind of *kilayim* that the Torah describes, such as *kilayim* of plants, clothing and animals. Those are outer kinds of mixtures. It is rather an inner level of *kilayim*, where the mixture takes place on the inside.

There will always be a pure place in our souls which remains unaffected by this mixture, but to the extent that we are influenced by the mixture of the *Erev Rav*, that is how much we will spiritually

suffer from the “exile of the *Erev Rav*”, which is like the forbidden mixture of *kilayim*.

DESIRE AN INTERNAL KIND OF LIFE

What then? In order for a person to live in a true world, he needs to penetrate to the depths of the Torah and to the depths of their own relationship with Hashem.

Certainly, every person has the *avodah* to separate as much as he can from the superficial world and to enter inward. But even more so, as we have been explaining here with *siyata d’shmaya*, the very definition of our *avodah* today requires one to enter inward. For as long as one does not enter inward enough, he is still connected to the mixture of the world today, and that means he will be found in the depths of the exile. Even if a person is able to draw out the good that is available in the mixture of the world today, he is still living in the mixture, so he will be missing the inner truth and he will be found in the depths of exile. This is the meaning of “*Torah, Torah, don a sackcloth.*”

If we understand these words, it should awaken in us a desire, in the depths of our soul, to seek an inner kind of life, where a person is attached to the holy of Torah, in the depths of his intellect and heart, where there is nothing else in his life other than Torah. Where the Torah fills all of his life and that is where one is connected to, and that is where he lives. This does not require a high spiritual level to be on. Rather, all it requires from us is that we not be so spiritually callous, from the depths of the exile we are in.

When one merits reaching a deep connection to the holy Torah and to Hashem, this is a redemption for the soul. “*My soul is close to her redemption*”. It is a way for one to leave the depths of exile. It is not a total redemption from the exile, but it enables one to at least touch upon a place of redemption. That is where purity and holiness resides. That is where a person can merit to feel the holiness of the Torah, and then he becomes transformed.

Understandably, even when one is mainly living within the mixture of this world, he can still be affected by Torah, because the light of the Torah illuminates every place. However, the holiness of the Torah will be obscured by the mixture one is in, and he won’t be able to feel the holiness that clearly.

But when one merits to penetrate inward, to the place where there are no mixtures, the soul can then feel the truth of the Torah, “Moshe is truth, and his Torah is truth”, and the person will then

⁴ In the epistle Epoch of the Messiah

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feel the truth with clarity, and his soul becomes more and more connected with the truth of Torah. As a result, his soul will naturally recoil from what is found on the outside world today, for the soul will be aware of what the truth is.

TIMES OF SOLITUDE EVERY DAY

It is written, “*Go my nation, come into your rooms, close the doors behind you, wait for the moment until the wrath passes.*” Just as we can close the doors in our physical world, so can we also ‘close the doors’ in our own soul from whatever is taking place in the outside world. We can live only in the inner world, by being connected only with the holy Torah and Hashem. There, a person can discover the *kedushah* (holiness) of the *neshamah* (Divine soul) of a Jew. There, a person can discover that “My G-d, the soul You gave to me is pure.” It is **pure!**

To live with this perspective on a 24/7 basis is, understandably, not possible. **But every person who searches for a life of truth, a life of Torah, needs to have times every day where he disconnects from everything, when he lives only in the inner world.**

PREPARING FOR THE TORAH: DESIRING NOTHING BUT HASHEM'S WORD

This is the very idea of the days we are in now. When the Jewish people left Egypt, they left behind the mixture that was in Egypt, and prepared themselves to receive the Torah. Their entire focus was on listening to Hashem. They didn't want anything else and they had no other goal.

That is what it means to prepare for the Torah – when one prepares his soul to enter into the innermost chambers with Hashem. The more one is connected to the outside world, the more he is found amidst the mixture in this world. The more one lives inwardly, the less he is mixed with the world – until he can reach the ultimate level, where there is no mixture at all. That was the state of receiving the Torah.

Every person needs times every day where he totally disconnects from the world around him – starting with an external disconnect from the world, and continuing with an internal disconnect from the world, by separating your mind (*thoughts*) and heart (*emotions*) as much as you can, from all of the troubles of this world. During this quiet time, one needs to bring his mind's thoughts and

his heart's desires into the depths of the Torah. One should prepare himself, during this time, to enter into the innermost chambers with Hashem.

Of course, a person cannot accomplish this all at once. It is a gradual process, of slowly disconnecting from the rest of the world, whereupon one merits discovering the inner world. At first, when one begins to try this, it will only be a momentary experience. But as one gets used to it, one will find that it settles their soul, and the inner world opens to a life that is entirely pure, free from all unsavory ‘mixtures’ of this world.

DIRECTING OUR LIFE TO HASHEM AND HIS TORAH

The light of the Torah, the light of Hashem which shines within man, is the same light where nothing else exists other than Hashem's Presence, revealed through His wisdom, which is the Torah. That is where all of our life should be directed towards. If one is not trying to reach this point, then he is still eating from the mixture of the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V'Ra* every day, and every hour....

In contrast to this, when one directs his life towards the light of Hashem and His Torah, he leaves behind the life that resembles “*kilayim*” (*forbidden mixtures*). For the “*kilayim*” that we are found in in this world are not our true *ratzon* – it is against our true will. When we awaken our true *ratzon*, our *neshamah* will want a pure place which is free from any mixtures that are unsavory and unwanted.

IN CONCLUSION

When one realizes that he they have been forced into a state of *kilayim* in this world, an unwanted mixture, a desire will be awakened in him, for an inner world that is pure, where there are no mixtures.

When one accesses it, he will then be prepared to give his soul for it, and to disconnect from everything else around him, and to penetrate into an inner place that is inclusive of everything. One's entire being is contained in that inner place, and it includes *Klal Yisrael*, as well as the entire unit of the holy Torah, and, more than anything, the greatest *Klal* of all: Hashem, Whom there is none other besides. On a personal level, this refers to the complete level of revelation of Hashem's Presence in the depths of one's soul.

FROM BILVAVI ON THE PARSHA