

Purity - On The Outside & Inside

Tum'ah (Spiritual Defilement) - When The Holiness Becomes Hidden

Parashas Chukas begins with the laws of parah adamah (*the red heifer*), which is part of the ritual purification process to those who become contaminated from a corpse (*tumas meis*).

Ritual defilement, tum'ah, is from the word “tamun”, “hidden”, because it hides and conceals the true holiness in something. When a person becomes tamei (*defiled*), his inner holiness goes into “hiding”, and he is in an impure state, until he purifies himself, depending on what the purification process (*taharah*) entailed.

Tum'ah (*ritual impurity*) is also from the word “timum”, “blockage”, because it blocks, conceals, and covers over the holiness, placing it into a state of concealment (*he'elam*).

External Defilement

There are many levels to tum'ah.

Tum'ah descends upon the physical body, and the Rambam says that the concept of immersing in a mikveh (*ritual bath*) after becoming tamei is “to immerse in the waters of daas (*understanding*)”.

The source of tum'ah originates from the Eitz HaDaas Tov V'Ra (*the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*), from the evil aspect that was contained in the Eitz HaDaas, whereas taharah (*ritual purity*) comes from the “good” aspect in the Eitz HaDaas. Thus, returning to taharah after becoming tamei is a return to the “good”, rectified aspect that was contained in the Eitz HaDaas.

External and Internal Impurity

There is external impurity, and in turn, there is external purity that can remove it. External impurity comes upon the physical body, and the physical action which removes this impurity is to immerse in the mikveh.

But there is also impurity that descends upon the soul. An example of this is “blockage of the heart” (*timum halev*), which comes mainly through consuming forbidden foods. Such impurity affects the person on the inside, causing his inside to become impure.

Chazal state that the evil inclination is called by seven names, and one of its names is “tamei” (*“impure”*). This refers to an impurity that affects a person on the inside. The evil inclination resides in man, in the “left chamber of the heart”, and this is not an external state of impurity on the outside of the person, but an impurity that resides within and which affects him on the inside.

Inner impurity affects a person not only in the physical sense (*for which he must immerse in a mikveh, in order to remove*), but also in his heart and mind. When impurity contaminates the heart, it is called timum halev (*blockage of the heart*), which we mentioned earlier; and when impurity affects the mind, it manifests as thoughts that are closed, blocked, and unclear (*“stumin v'chatumin” – “closed and sealed”*), and the person can't think correctly.

Thus, inner impurity affects both the mind and the heart.

Impurity In The Heart - An Indifference To The Spiritual

When the heart has become impure - for example, if a person ate non-kosher food, which causes “blockage of the heart” - the heart’s feelings will become blocked, and he will become insensitive to the spiritual. His feelings will become “hidden” deep in him, and he will lack emotion or have indifference towards that which he should feel emotion towards.

“A dead person cannot feel” – the impurity of a corpse can be in the heart as well, which causes the heart not to feel holiness. “The wicked in their lifetime are called dead” – a person can be dead even while alive: when his heart has become blocked from feeling holiness, and he is insensitive to the spiritual. In order to undo the blockage of the heart, a person will need to purify the heart.

Purifying The Heart: Through Prayer, and Through Finding Your Holiness

Generally speaking, in order to purify the heart, there is a prayer: **וטרה לבנו לעבדך באמת**, “And purify our hearts to serve You in truth”.

This is a prayer, and in general, “prayer accomplishes half the task.” What is the other half we will need to do, in our personal avodah, in order to merit purity of heart? The avodah is as follows.

Whenever any person sins, even he has committed all of the worst sins in the world, like Rabbi Eliezer ben Dordaya did – he will feel like he is indifferent to holiness, as a result of sinning. Still, he will not become completely indifferent. The impurity can’t ruin the heart totally. His feelings will be blocked, but he will still be able to feel some small crack in his feelings, which can be open to the spiritual. That little crack is always there, and one can always feel it, no matter how blocked his feelings have become from sin.

“A Jew, even when he sins, is still a Jew.” Even the worst sinners in the Jewish people, when faced with the test of giving up their lives for Hashem, were willing to sacrifice their lives for Him. So there is never such a thing as total *timtum halev*, even when the *timtum halev* is very dominant. There is always a small crack of holiness that can shine through. This is true even if he committed every sin in the world!

Thus, by way of avodah, every person has times where his feelings towards holiness are closed, and times where his feelings towards holiness are opened. This is not felt in the same amount by each person, as it is a matter that depends on the particular level of each person. But in any case, the avodah of a person is to feel some small feeling of holiness that he does have.

One can try this with a particular aspect of holiness that he strongly identifies with the most, and concentrate his thoughts on that area. From reflecting deeply into it, along with prayer to Hashem to be guided to the truth, a person can succeed in feeling the small opening to holiness that is always with him.

When a person becomes aware of the strongest feeling for holiness he identifies with, which is already opened to him and which is always with him, he has the key towards feelings for holiness.

It is written, “Open for Me an opening, the size of a needle, and I will open for you an opening the size of an entranceway.” The simple understanding of this concept is that there is previously no opening at all, and a person has to make the opening, and then Hashem comes and assists the person. But the deeper, truer understanding of this is that there is already a small opening that is there, and a person’s avodah is to just to

open it a little bit more – “the size of a needle”, just as a needle makes a rip in a cloth. After there is that small opening, a person through it can work harder on himself and further connect himself to the opening towards holiness. Every Jew already has this small opening – not only the opening the size of a needle, but an opening that comes before that, a tiny, hidden opening that can be subtly felt. It is always some small feeling towards something that is holy, and through it, a person can further connect to the holiness and make the opening bigger. Every neshamah that is a member of Yisrael has one point – at least one point – that contains a small opening towards holiness.

If a person is trying to work on himself and to improve, with the attitude that he doesn't have this small opening, and that he needs to create this space in himself, then his avodah will be most difficult. It is very hard to improve when you can't sense any sensitivity to holiness already present in yourself. You need that small opening in yourself in order to work on yourself, so you must discover in yourself.

The Proper Attitude Towards Self-Improvement and Spiritual Growth

So far, we have described one side of the coin [*finding the small opening in yourself*]. Now we will discuss the other side of the coin [*how to improve*].

Whenever a person learns the words of Chazal which describe the qualities of good character or higher spiritual levels, usually, a person views these matters as outside of himself, and not as something that is already present in him. He views self-improvement and acquiring higher levels as matters that are outside of him and which need to be drawn onto himself so that they can become a part of him.

However, this is an unsuccessful approach. With such a perspective, a person usually will not acquire the matters he is learning about. He doesn't consider these levels as part of him, but something ‘outside’ of him which he needs to draw into his inside.

There is another attitude entirely to have, when learning the words of Chazal about any of the qualities and levels we want to acquire. A person can focus on finding how the quality in question already exists in him, on some level. When you focus on whatever level you already do have – even if it is only small some percentage of what it should be – you are then focused on whatever personal portion you have already acquired in your ruchniyus (*spirituality*), and from there onward, you can succeed further.

For example, when a person begins to learn Mesillas Yesharim, he sees that the first level is zehirus (*watchfulness*). He might become discouraged, thinking that he can't even acquire this first, basic level of self-improvement, and if he tries to work very hard on himself at acquiring this level, it will be too difficult for him. Instead, he needs to see how he already has some level of zehirus, and to discover the areas in his life where his zehirus is more revealed. He needs to find the small “opening” that is already there, and then expand upon the opening.

Removing Blockage of The Mind (When Learning Gemara)

So far, we have explained how to attain purification of the heart, after it has become defiled. But we mentioned earlier that there is also defilement that can come to the mind, so let us explain how the mind can be purified.

The Rambam says that immersing in a mikveh is called immersing in the “waters of daas” (*understanding*). A person's daas may be pure, or it may be defiled. When a person's daas is defiled, a person's thinking abilities become closed up and blocked, or he won't be able to think correctly. In turn, purifying the daas is when there

is seichel hayashar (*straight intellect*) and a person can think clearly, purely, and logically. The way to purify the da'as is as follows (*understandably, there are many different approaches to Torah learning, and not every way is the same. But as a general course of action, this is the approach to take*).

You can have a person who learns Torah, who enjoys looking for good questions; and then he searches for answers to his questions. Understandably, this shows that he has an interest in learning Torah and a desire to know, and it sharpens his mind. However, this alone does not build a person's Torah learning. In order for a person to build his Torah learning, he needs to find the "small opening" already existent in him, just as in the case of acquiring higher spiritual levels and feelings.

When a person has a difficulty when learning the Gemara, he shouldn't just think about the question. He should go back and review each step of the Gemara until now, and come to a point where he knows what he understands, and he knows what he doesn't understand. He must know: "What did I understand so far, until now? And what do I still not understand, at this point?"

Then, after doing so, he should connect himself to the points of understanding in the Gemara that is already clear to him. He must find the "opening" – a point in which he does understand a certain part of the sugya. Then he can go from there, further developing his understanding.

Sometimes, when a person tries to build upon what he already understands, his mind becomes blocked and he loses whatever he understood until now. But if you connected yourself to the point that you did understand, it opens the way for further understanding.

The parts that are beyond me, which I don't yet understand, are called the timtum (*blockage*) in the daas, of the mind. In the case of difficulties while learning the sugya of the Gemara, the parts of the sugya which I don't understand are the areas where the da'as is "defiled" and hence the thinking will be clouded when it comes to those points. *[It was mentioned before that a person must become aware of what he understands and what he doesn't understand]*. But many times, when you focus on the points of the sugya that you do understand, this "opening" leads you to further your understanding of the sugya, and then even the difficult points become understandable to you.

This is a great, deep attitude towards all of life. In whatever matter a person is trying to acquire, a person needs to find how there is some small level of it already existent in him. If a person wants to improve in his ruchniyus (*spiritual level*), Torah learning, davening, chessed, he needs to first see how there is already a point of chessed existent within him, rather than viewing these things as matters are that are completely "outside" of him. This is the meaning of "Torah scholars are called builders."

These things are not merely "maalos" (*qualities*) to learn about, or "very big, important matters", or levels that bring you to reward in the World To Come. All of that is true, but that should not be the focus. The focus should be that all of these things are already existent in you to some level. That is true not only in regards to developing feelings for holiness, but it is also true with regards to learning Torah, where we must also begin with a small, simple opening and then build upon it, step-by-step. You will still need to exert yourself in your learning, of course, but the gain will be that it will be built upon what is already existent in you.

So, in summary, the rule is that in whatever quality\level\matter\point you are trying to acquire, you first need to see how it's already existent in you to some level – you need to find the small "opening".

External Purity (Mikveh) - A Means To Awaken The Inner Purity of The Neshamah

Living in this way enables one to leave tum'ah (*defilement*) and enter into taharah (*purity*), where one's avodah will be from within himself, and it will be well-developed and structured.

This way of serving Hashem, the "inner light", is the meaning of "My G-d, the soul You gave me is pure", which can penetrate past all the defilement that comes from the outside. We can receive external purification from immersing in the mikveh as well, but that is a light that comes from the outside, which we should then use to awaken the inner purity, of "My G-d, the soul You gave to me is pure." How exactly do we awaken the inner purity? We elaborated upon it here at length.

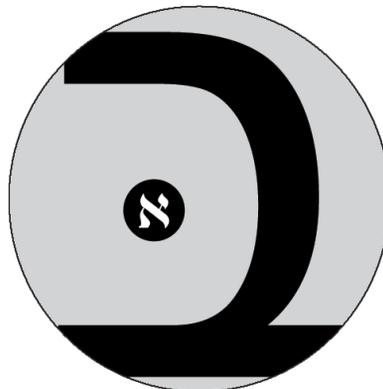
Understandably, if a person has become defiled, he needs to immerse in the mikveh, but he should not remain with this external level of purity. Rather, one needs to awaken the inner purity of the neshamah. This purity exists in every Jew, and all a person needs to do is to open it further, and then, slowly but surely, it will become revealed. On a more specific level, it has been explained here that each person can feel some small feeling for holiness in at least one area in his life, as well as some point of understanding in his Torah learning. The depth of it is to awaken the pure neshamah, and then the inner purity will slowly extend to his outside as well.

When we combine together the purity we can attain from the external [*immersing in the mikveh*], along with the depth of the purity which stems from the inside and which penetrates into the outside, this is like the holy Aron which was pure both on the outside and inside. Such a soul will cling to purity, both in the external sense and in the inner sense.

In Conclusion

This is the meaning of "Torah scholars are called builders." The Torah scholars build the world, and the perfection of man, step after step, activating the potential of the soul, from within. Through this, a person merits "A pure heart G-d created me with."

[שיחת השבוע 032 חוקת]



Q&A

QUESTION: What are the current stages of The 50th Gate of Impurity?

ANSWER: The main thrust of the “50th Gate of Impurity” revealed in the Final Days is the power of being the “head”¹ as in the sense of Amalek being “head” of the nations.

The head is comprised of the skull and the brain within it, which contains the mental faculties of Chochmah, Binah, and Daas.² Therefore, the power of evil is divided into these three parts. We shall explain each of them.

Evil Chochmah today is the power of media-technology use which contains an incredible amount of information about everything in mankind. This is especially the case ever since the Web, which connects the whole world together within it.

Evil Binah is A.I. (Artificial Intelligence), whose development has accelerated extremely fast in recent years. It is entering more and more into all areas of life, such as the medical field, art, music, computers, warfare, etc..

Evil Daas is the new products formed by Artificial Intelligence, in which technology can ‘give birth’ to all kinds of new things with endless possibilities. This is something that is going to change the entire way the world lives.

Evil Keser is the power of fantasy which modern technology allows. *Keser* begins with the Hebrew letter *Kaf*, which means “resembling”. Until recently, it was only the human mind that could fantasize, but now viewing new technologies has stimulated human fantasy further. And recently, an ability has been produced for one to sensually experience what one imagines primarily, through 3D virtual reality glasses that are available worldwide. This is a way to totally experience what one imagines,³ and it is the complete antithesis to the holy *Havayah* (the reality of sensing Hashem’s Presence).

This new technology increases the imaginative faculty, which counters the soul’s inner state of balance leading to spiritual contamination. Imagination not only propels a person to visualize something inappropriate but stimulates the experience just like in a dream where one’s fantasies leads to *keri* (nocturnal emissions). The

1 Translator’s Note: There is always an equal counterbalance between the sides of holiness (good) and impurity (evil), in order to allow for free will. On the side of holiness, the power of the “head” is called *Reisha d’lo isyada*, the unknowable “head”, referring to the highest level of *Keser*, the 50th gate of holiness. This is countered by the evil “head” on the side of impurity: Amalek, which is also called the 50th level of impurity, and the Daas of the *kelipah* (evil knowledge), also called *Keser* of the *kelipah* [or evil consciousness]. There is always a rule of *kelipah kodemes l’pri*, “The shell comes before the fruit”, meaning that the *kelipah* (evil side) of a concept will first be manifest before the holy side of the concept is manifest. Therefore, before the 50th gate of holiness can be revealed in our world –which will be the times of the Messianic area, when G-d consciousness will fill the world – it is first countered by the 50th gate of impurity.

2 Translator’s Note: Daas contains an external and internal layer. Its external layer is called Daas, and its internal layer is called *Keser*.

3 Translator’s Note: In light of this, playing video/computer games with real-life looking graphics, which allow the players to experience the game as if they are actually in it, is creating an “alternate reality” faculty to one’s mind, which upsets the entire balance of the rational intellect and the soul [as explained by the Rav later], which, as the Rav shlit”a has explained here, is nothing less than a force of *tumah* [spiritual contamination] that blocks the person from being receptive to the spiritual (to G-d’s will, self-improvement, *teshuvah*, etc.). While it is true that this technology has functioned in the video game field, it is now being brought to a whole new level through 3D glasses on a worldwide scale, being the ‘new norm’. So, instead of saying “Cool” to all this new technology, we should be repelled by it and see it as an evil mind-altering technology, a terrible *kelipah* to stay away from.

fantasy in the dreams leads one to committing a real act (enough said about this to understand).

Understand this very, very, very well- this power of experiential fantasy is the complete antithesis to *Havayah*. It is the most difficult *kelipah* (evil force) of all, since it obscures *Havayah*, by obscuring both the reality of people as well as obscuring the Root of all Reality: the Infinite, Blessed Is He.⁴

When this power of experiential fantasy completely spreads all over the world (may Hashem save us from it), it absolutely necessitates the end of the period of Galus (Exile).

Understand these words, and then you will be able to understand the full depth of the entire process of the last generation.

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QUESTION: Are We In The Final Sorting Process?

From the recent *derashos* of the Rav about the new period of time which we have now entered, I have made the following summary of the main points which the Rav said recently. (1) In the times we are in, for the last couple of the years and especially now, we are in the midst of the “final sorting process”, where each person is being told, “Whoever is for Hashem, come to me.” Each Jew now has to decide if he will be loyal to Hashem, *Klal Yisrael*, and the Torah, or if he choose the *Sitra Achra* (*the side of evil*) *chas v'shalom*, by falling into the influences of the *goyim*, doing whatever's convenient and comfortable, and running after *taavos* (*desires*) for This World. (2) The Internet is the stronghold of the *tumah* of the *Erev Rav*, and now that there is more usage of the Internet the “*Erev Rav*” has intensified. Now even *Kolel* men, who have never had Internet in their homes before, have had to bring Internet into their homes so that they can have *parnassah*, and this was the success of the *Sitra Achra* which came about through this entire corona pandemic: To draw the *bnei Torah* into the heter to have Internet in their homes. (3) The final sorting process, then, is if a person today will choose the way for a Jew or the way of the *Erev Rav*. Through this final sorting process, it will be discovered who belongs to the Jewish people and who belongs (*or who has fallen*) to the *Erev Rav*. (4) Those who don't withstand the test of the Internet now are those who will fall to the side of the *Erev Rav* (*I understand this to mean that this is not that they are chas v'shalom actually part of the Erev Rav, but that they are falling into the “50th Gate of the Impurity” of the Erev Rav*). (5) Those who don't withstand this final test, if they don't do *teshuvah* (*meaning that they are not willing to be moser nefesh not to have Internet in their homes*), they are in the category of *reshaim* and they will become the “dust under the feet of *tzaddikim*.” And those who are *moser nefesh* not to have Internet in their homes even if this will cause them to lose their *parnassah* are choosing truth and they are the *tzaddikim* of *Klal Yisrael*. (6) Those who fall *Rachmana Litzlan* in this final test, by bringing the Internet into their homes (*especially now, where this final test is being faced by the bnei Torah as well, who are being faced with the nisayon of bringing Internet into the house because their wives need it for work, etc.*), they are becoming connected to the “50th Gate of Impurity” of the *tumah* of the Internet, which is the *tumah* of the *Erev Rav*, which is the ‘point of no return’. Those who fall to the side of the *Erev Rav* (*by falling into the nisayon of the Internet*) will not be *zocheh* to the *Geulah*, *chas v'shalom* and *Rachmana Litzlan*.

1) Is it really true that those who don't withstand the final test and fall to the side of the *Erev Rav chas v'shalom* have no *tikkun*, *chas*

⁴ Translator's Note: On the side of holiness, the holy use of *Keser* (also called the 50th Gate of Holiness) will be fully revealed with the coming of *Mashiach*, in which all of mankind will have the true, holy “virtual reality” – an experiential awareness of Hashem's Presence. Our *avodah* in the final period of the End of Days which we are amidst, in which we are preparing for the times of *Mashiach*, is to attain an experiential awareness of Hashem at our current level, as explained in the “*Bilvavi*” *sefarim* and in many other holy *sefarim* as well. As the Rav shlit" a has explained in many responses on the topic, the Internet – and now A.I. and augmented reality – are all such highly sensual experiences that they are all complete blockages that prevent a person from experiencing Hashem's Presence and hence the greatest impediment to preparing oneself for the times of *Mashiach*. It is not for nothing that the *Gedolim* of our times called Internet as the “final test” for *Klal Yisrael*. To sum up the Rav's view on the matter in one sentence, the way to overcome the test of the Internet is not merely through filters, but by staying as far away from it as possible, since it is the “50th gate of impurity” which we don't want to get near.

v'shalom, and they won't merit the Geulah? Making the question stronger, someone remarked to me, "What's so bad to become the 'dust under the feet of tzaddikim'? In the end of the day it sounds like there is some level of tikkun even for those who become reshaim and aren't moser nefesh..." So it seems that there is some "hope" even for those who don't pass this final test...?

ANSWER 1

Through *mesirus nefesh*, it is possible to exit the "50th Gate of Impurity".

QUESTION 2

Also, we know from Navi that Hashem promised that in the final Redemption he will gather all Jews from every country to merit the *Geulah*, even those who are far from Torah, which includes every single member of *Klal Yisrael*. So even those who fall into the *tumah* of the Internet will still see the Geulah...?

ANSWER 2

A similar argument like this is mentioned in the beginning of *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*, who quotes the argument of those who are feeble-minded, who say that they don't need to acquire spiritual growth or try to fulfill their life's mission, because they are satisfied with any share in the World To Come. Refer to the answer given in *sefer Mesillas Yesharim* to see how this claim is refuted.

QUESTION 3

I also have a deeper question. The Rav explains in a *derasha* (about *teshuvah* on *Yom Kippur*) that even though there is no return for one who falls into the "50th Gate of Impurity", if one accesses the "50th Level of Holiness" he can return even from the "50th Gate of Impurity". So I want to know: What's all the fuss about falling into the "50th Gate of Impurity" if, in the end, there will ultimately be a tikkun for souls of the Jewish people when the "50th Gate of Holiness" becomes revealed upon the world? (*Of course, we need to do what Hashem wants and separate from the tumah of the Internet as much as possible, because it is our obligation and that is our avodah and that is what Hashem wants from us...*)

ANSWER 3

It is possible to separate from it through *mesirus nefesh* and that is their *tikkun*, because the "50th Gate of Holiness" is the spiritual light of *mesirus nefesh*.

[Bilvavi Q&A Archive]

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