



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
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Parashat Emor

The Influence that Man's Deeds Have on His Life

Our *parasha* states (21:21), "Any man from the descendants of Aharon, who has a blemish, should not approach to offer the sacrificial offerings of Hashem; he has a blemish; the bread of G-d he should not approach to offer."

Questions:

- 1- We know that Hashem loves the down-trodden and broken-hearted. If so, why did He forbid the blemished *kohanim* from offering sacrifices? 2 – Furthermore, the *Torat Kohanim* teaches us that not only is a *kohein* who develops a blemish unfit to serve, but it is also forbidden for an individual **born** with a blemish to serve. This must be understood, for why is he at fault if he was born with a blemish? What did he do wrong that he should be disqualified from the service?

Hidden from Man's Eyes

Even though man realizes that there are 613 mitzvot, consisting of 365 negative commandments and 248 positive commandments, he does not realize that there are consequences to his actions. This is because the punishment for transgressing the Torah is spiritual and will be received in the World to Come; this requires faith on man's part. Therefore, it is difficult for man to internalize the severity and consequences of his actions. As a result, the *yetzer hara* convinces him that he need not be concerned and that he could continue to pursue that which his eyes covet and heart desires. However, the Torah teaches us that whatever situation man finds himself in presently, is due to the deeds that he performed in his previous transmigration. Therefore, he should act wisely and try to rectify whatever he can in this lifetime, as we will soon explain.

Explanation of the Zohar

The *Zohar* asks how it is possible that the Torah excludes blemished *kohanim* from performing the *avodah*. For on the contrary, it is Hashem's way to rest His *Shechinah* on the broken-hearted. The *Zohar* answers that when an individual has a blemish on his body, it is a sign that his soul is blemished as well, a result of his sins in his previous transmigration. Therefore, he is not worthy of performing the sanctified service of the *kohanim*. However if he does not have a blemish, and simply humbles himself, then the *Shechinah* does dwell upon him, for he has perfected himself by doing so. Therefore the *pasuk* states (*Yeshaya* 57:15), "But I am with the despondent and lowly of spirit," but it does not say that Hashem is with the blind or lame. **We can learn from the Zohar how man's external blemish hints to an inner blemish.**

The *Kli Yakar* writes similarly. He points out that in one *pasuk* the Torah (*Vayikra* 21:17) states, "A man from your descendants who will have a blemish," in the future tense. But in this week's *parashah*, the *pasuk* states, "who **has** a blemish." He states that in the earlier generations, they were able to know that that man would develop a blemish due to a particular sin that they presently saw in him. For example, if they knew that he received bribes, they knew that he would eventually go blind; if they



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saw that he was arrogant and walked with a haughty gait, they knew that he would eventually break his leg. They had the wisdom to discern from his face, which bad trait he possessed inside of him and which limb it corresponded to; they knew that he would eventually develop an outward, physical blemish corresponding to his inner blemish. They therefore discerned this from his face when he was born and disallowed him to serve, because they knew that a physical blemish would ultimately result. He explains that this is the intention of the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 21:17), "Any man from your descendants who **will** have a blemish," in other words, they detected that he would ultimately develop a blemish in the future. The *pasuk* which states, "who **has** a blemish," is providing a reason for the ruling of the previous *pasuk*. Certainly, no one disagrees that if he presently has a blemish he is unworthy of serving, for it would not be disrespectful to Hashem. Therefore, someone who will eventually develop a blemish should also be excluded from the *kehunah*. Therefore, the future tense is not used in the second *pasuk*, for the *pasuk* is providing a reason why a *kohein* who is suspected of developing a blemish will not be allowed to serve. The Kli Yakar continues to write that all this is said regarding someone who was not born with a blemish, but rather, his deeds caused him to gain a blemish, as they affected one of his limbs. However, one might suggest that specifically a sinner will be excluded if he has a blemish, since both his soul and body are tainted. But someone born with a blemish, whose soul is not tainted by sin, perhaps he should be allowed to serve. Therefore the *pasuk* states, "the bread of G-d, he should not approach to offer," referring to one born with a blemish; he is also unfit to serve.

A Blemish Arouses Prosecution

I saw that R' Shteinman *zt"l* in his *sefer Ayelet HaShachar al HaTorah*, writes an amazing reason to explain why *kohanim* with blemishes are disqualified from serving. He writes that blemishes are a result of sin, and *kohanim* cannot have their sins on display. This is also the reason why a *metzora* and *zav* are not allowed to serve; for if they would serve, it would awaken a Heavenly prosecution. They were therefore unfit to serve as *kohanim*.

The Story About the Baal Shem Tov's Student

There was an individual who suffered from dire poverty his entire life. His wife asked him again and again to speak to his Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov, about his situation. However, when he was in the presence of his Rebbe, they were involved in lofty, holy matters, and it would have been shameful for him to mention a mundane, worldly matter at that time. However, his wife, when she could no longer take it anymore, warned him that if he would not ask the Baal Shem Tov to perform a wonder for them, she would banish him from the house. This is exactly what happened. Upon returning home from the Baal Shem Tov, he greeted his wife and admitted that he just could not ask his Rebbe to help them, so she made him leave. At that point, he was forced to return to the Baal Shem Tov. When the Baal Shem Tov asked him what happened, he related the entire story to him. Upon hearing about his student's predicament, the Baal Shem Tov let out a sigh and said, "What can I do? The only way that your soul will be rectified is through enduring such extreme poverty." When the man heard this, he grew very frightened and fainted. For he had seen each and every day how the Baal Shem Tov had



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easily rectified scores of broken and banished souls by utilizing various holy methods. Yet his soul – despite being a lofty one indeed, as he was a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov – could not be rectified any other way than by suffering such poverty? The Baal Shem Tov therefore told him, “You should know that even though you are my student and believe what I say, but if I would tell you all the wicked deeds that you did in your previous life, you would not believe me. Therefore, go to this particular city and inquire about a certain individual who used to live there. Ask about what types of deeds he did. You should know that the man that they tell you about is who you were in your previous transmigration. This is why your soul must be rectified through dire poverty.” So the man went to the city, and upon inquiring of the aforementioned individual, he discovered that no one knew who he was. However, they advised him to speak to the head of the *chevra Kadisha*; he was very old and maybe he knew the person. But when he asked the elderly man, he too, responded that he knew very little. But he said that the man’s son in law, who was now extremely elderly – around 120 year old – certainly knows everything about him. However, he can barely see, hear, and speak, and no one is allowed to approach him. But when they heard that he was sent by the Baal Shem Tov, they obviously allowed him to enter immediately. When he asked about the person in mention, the elderly man answered that he does not wish to speak about him at all, nor even mention the name of such an impure person, adding, “*yimach she’o ve’zichro.*” But when he told the elderly man that the Baal Shem Tov had specifically sent him to inquire about the man’s deeds, he told him the following: besides for violating the entire Torah, *rachmana litzlan*, the man was also an informer, he informed on Jews to the gentile government, and several Jews were killed because of him. There was literally no end to his wicked deeds. Only then did the man understand why he had been sentenced to live a life of poverty, because in his previous life he had caused many others to become poor and suffer through his informing.

Words of Mussar

We have learned just how much man’s *yetzer hara* fools him and lures him into his clutches. He does so by deceiving man into thinking that his actions are inconsequential. But the wise man will realize that every aspect of his present life situation – both his physical state, as well as his financial state – have been decreed due to his present actions or on account of the actions performed during his previous transmigration. All of his surroundings are intended to be utilized by him to rectify and perfect himself in the world. For there is not a single word or thought which does not have an effect on him and his soul’s present or future. Therefore the weak one should gird his strength and overcome his *yetzer hara* to perform the Will of Hashem. He should not fall into the trap of the *yetzer hara* to pursue his heart’s desires. Rather, he should be strong and fulfill the Will of Hashem by following the Torah and mitzvot, and it will be good for him both in this world and the next, *amen ve’amen.*

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka



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