



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,
שיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Parashat Acharei Mot

Western Culture Versus a Torah Lifestyle

Question:

Maran Harav Shach asked that in this *parashah* the Torah forbids lowly transgressions such as homosexuality and bestiality. These are such degrading acts, that one must wonder why the Torah even has to warn against committing them. Why is there a need to do so? They are similar to a fire from which even a small child knows to flee.

Liberalism Versus Conservatism

It appears that the Torah, our guide through life, wishes to teach us that there are two paths that lie before man: The first is the western culture which is based on the culture practiced by the Egyptians and the gentiles who lived in Canaan. Then, however, is the culture advocated by the Torah, which teaches how to build a well-functioning home and family and how to live in a normal and upstanding society. The Egyptian and Canaanite culture were founded on liberalism and the freedom to indulge in every physical delight without any restrictions whatsoever. There was no need to think about the ramifications of one's actions, just to satisfy his animalistic desires. Therefore it is not surprising that the entire spectrum of relationships was totally distorted and belied any restraint. Relatives, friends, even males and animals were all used to satisfy the urges of the *yetzer hara* that an individual felt at any particular time. It is obvious that living in such a way is totally incongruous with building a well-functioning family and living a normal life. The Torah therefore comes to teach us that this is an abominable and degrading way to live and that it is impossible to live in such a fashion. The *parashah* therefore states [18:4], "You should guard My laws and statutes and **live by them** [ורחי בהם]." Only by living a conservative lifestyle marked by restraint and controlling one's urges, can one build a normal family structure according to the ways of the Torah and permeate them with holiness. He should not rely on the lures of one's intellect and his *yetzer hara* but rather on his Creator, Who fashioned both him and the world, and Who understands what is good for both him and the world. Only by doing so, will he merit building a home and family that is worthy of being associated with Hashem's Chosen Nation.

Liberalism Has No Restrictions

With this we can well understand the need for the Torah to expressly forbid these sins. For even though it is simple that they are incorrect, man must nevertheless recognize his personality and weaknesses. He must realize that if he goes on the path of the Egyptians and the Canaanites, giving free reign to the body's urges, it is possible for him to fall to the lowest level. *Maran* Harav Shach compared man's spiritual needs to his physical ones. An individual's body needs to eat, drink, and sleep, and regain its strength. Shortly thereafter he again weakens and then need to eat, drink, and sleep once again. This is to the extent that if he swears not to sleep for three days then his vow is invalid, because the matter is impossible. So too, writes Harav Shach, man's spirituality requires constant strengthening. Without it, he can fall to the very depths.

Story About Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky zt"l

Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky once took ill and was instructed to go to a health spa, because the matter was life threatening. This took place shortly before the *Yamim Noraim*. Despite the fact that it pained him to be forced to spend the *Yamim Noraim* in a strange place as opposed to with his congregation, since the matter was life-threatening, he had no choice. He therefore went and was wondering why Hashem had brought this about. On *Shabbat Shuva* at *mincha* time, one of the guests approached him and greeted him. R' Chaim Ozer responded in kind with a glowing countenance and asked him where he was from. The guest answered that he was from America, but got stuck here on his way to Petersburg. There he had a brother who passed away and left a widow and many orphans. He therefore decided to go there and marry the widow and raise the orphans, for it was



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better that he raise them than a stranger. R' Chaim Ozer was shocked. "How could you do such a thing?" he asked. "The Torah forbids marrying the wife of one's brother if she already has children!" He even showed him where this was explicitly stated in the Torah. But the man reacted by saying that he would not accept what he had said, for he had already decided that this was the correct thing to do. He said that only if the Rav of Vilna would tell him not to, would he agree to listen. R' Chaim Ozer responded, "I am the Rav of Vilna." Needless to say, the man was stunned, but accepted his words and changed his mind. Only then did R' Chaim Ozer realize that Hashem had sent him there to prevent a Jew from contaminating himself.

Words of Mussar

You see then to what extent man's intellect can deceive him into thinking that the correct path is different from the one commanded by the Torah. But Hashem, Who created man and knows what is the best for him and his ultimate destiny, guides him on the path of truth. All the more so, if he follows in the ways of the liberal Western culture does he run the risk of falling to the very depths. Man's duty is to control his *yetzer hara* and perform the Will of his Creator. All that was stated above was only a small sample of how a person should live appropriately according to the Torah. From these things he should learn to apply this principle in all areas of his life.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka