

ירידה לצורך עליה

S. Smiles

Living Torah - R. Kaplan

Naso

- 31. Duties of Gershon (4:21)
- 32. Duties of Merari; Tally of Kehoth (4:29)
- 33. Tally of Gershon and Merari (4:38)
- 34. Purifying the Camp (5:1)
- 35. Offerings (5:5)
- 36. The Suspected Adulteress (5:11)
- 37. The Nazirite (6:1)
- 38. 42. The Priestly Blessing (6:22)
- 43. The Leaders' Offering (7:1)
- 44. The Dedication Offerings: Judah (7:12)
- 45. The Second Day: Issachar (7:18)
- 46. The Third Day: Zebulun (7:24)
- 47. The Fourth Day: Reuben (7:30)
- 48. The Fifth Day: Simeon (7:36)
- 49. The Sixth Day: Gad (7:42)

2 תורת אמת - רב איצ'ר [אזכרה, ג, 9, 8]

ובזה ייל טעם על קריאת פרשת נשא אחר שנוטח. שיהא עיקר הכשרת קדושת הכהן. כי כיע מודו ששכנת נישא הכורה. והף אס חל כהן נאלמע בכנוע. עיקר קונו כחוש בלב וקנה גשבת שלחמיו. ולכן קורין נשא אח ראש בני גרשון. וכדליתא כספתיק שגרשון כוא לשון גירוש וריחוק. והיינו שכנשילת ראש כל דייקת לכמרוחק בעיניו מהקדושה. וכודלי אין מדברים ממי שמרחק אח עלמנו ח'ז ופוכה דעתו חיליה. רק מי שדולה בלחמ לעשות ולקיים בכל האפשר. ולהמוע תכסיפוך בכל יכלחו. ועל כל זה רואה בעלמו שליו מקובר בהקדושה. וכוא מרוחק בעיניו. לזה כל כנשילת ראש גם בזמן כזה. כי ראש כוא

3 Insights in Torah - Ed. R. Teuber

The story is told of the mystic who tells the philosopher: "Do you know the difference between you and me? You are constantly thinking about G-d, while I am forever thinking about myself."

The philosopher was very pleased with the compliment. But one day it dawned on him what the old sage had meant. The philosopher is convinced that he, the thinker, exists, and doesn't give it a second thought. So he ponders the existence of G-d: Does G-d exist? What is G-d? How does His existence affect us? To the mystic, however, G-d is the very essence of reality. But where does that leave us? What possible legitimacy can our finite and transitory existence have within the all-transcending, all-pervading reality of G-d? The divine truth a given, the mystic ponders his own subjective reality: Do I exist? What significance, if any, is there to my existence? Why do I exist?

4 שטח חיותה פהלן 37

"הינני ר' אליעזר אומר אין לו לאדם בדיש אלא או אוכל ושותה או יושב ושותה, ר' יהושע אומר חלקו חציו לאכילה ושותה וחציו לבית המדרש. ר' אליעזר סבר או כולו לה או כולו לכס, ר' יהושע סבר חלקו חציו לה וחציו לכס. אר' אליעזר הכל מרש בעצרת רבעינו נמי לכס. מאי טעמא, יום שנתנה בו תורה הוא." ופרשי: "רבעין נמי לכס - שישמח בו במאכל ומשתה להראות שנה ומקובל יום זה לישראל שנתנה תורה בו" (פסחים סח:). והיינו

ש' שור - ר' ח' כ' 5

שבועות הוא אחד מארבעה פרקים שבהם העולם נידון. וכתב בעל תולעת יעקב (הובא בשלי"ה במס' שבועות): "ודע כי כמו בראש השנה רצה הקב"ה להשיגה ולדרוש מעשה בני אדם כי הוא הבריאה הראשונה וחיידוש העולם. כן רצה ביום מתן תורה שהוא מורה על חידוש העולם ולהשיגה ולדרוש על מעשה העולם. והעולם נידון ביום זה על התורה שניתנה בו שבטלו עצמם ממנה." * חרי שבועות הוא יום דין ממש, ולכן עלינו להתעורר בו בתשובה. בחרטה על ביטול תורה וקבלה להבא. ותהיה זאת קבלתנו להבא. למלאות ימינו תורה יום אחד לא ייעדר. לשקוד ולדרוש יום יום. ובוה נחברך יום יום.

שובה ישראל עד ה' יהיה

2 3 אלהיך כי קשלת בעונך

2 Return, O Israel, to God your Lord; for you have stumbled because of your sins.

גם חז"ל דייקו מפסוק זה "עד ה' אלהיך" שהתביעה מעם ישראל להגיע לדרגה הגבוהה ביותר, וכך דרשו: "גדולה תשובה שמגיע עד כסא הכבוד" (יומא פז:), מהות כסא הכבוד יוכן ע"פ דברי הוהר (ויקרא כט:): "בגשמת הן גזרות מתחת כסא הכבוד" - נשמות ישראל הם הבונים והיוצרים את כסא כבוד שמים. ע"י תפקידו וחלקו המיוחד של כל אחד מישראל בעבודת ה' שלו נבנה כסא הכבוד, זהו "גדולה תשובה שמגיע עד כסא הכבוד" שיש בכוחה של תשובה להשיב את הנשמה אל מקור שורשה הרוחני בבנין כסא הכבוד. להגיע אל שיא שלימותה במילוי תפקידה הרוחני בבנין כסא כבוד שמים.

9 - נשא את ראש בני גרשון גם הם, ידוע מספתיק. * שני גרשון רמוז על המרוחקים. מלשון כי גרשוני. וכן משמע שמדעת שמה שנאמר גם הם כוא מפני שמקודם נאמר נשא אח ראש בני קהת. שהיו מוטעני בארון ויש להם חשיבות להיות ראשון. וע"ז נאמר אח"כ בבני גרשון גם הם. שגם הם יש להם חשיבות ונביאת ראש. מפני שהם בכורים. וכה עכ"פ יש להם חליטה דעת וריחוק מאדם מזה גופא שלא זכו בבני קהת שטוענים בארון וכס ראשונים להם:

והנה כאשר עבר הכהן הקדוש כזה. רבים מפרטי נפשות ישראל נותנים על לבם. אך שעבר עליהם גם כהן הקדוש בשעת הדומה. כי אינו מרגיש בכבודו שום דבר התקרבות הקדושה. אחר כל היעודים שנאמרו בתמן חורה. ואשא אהכס וגו'. ואניא אהכס אליא וכאלחמ מרגיש בעלמו שעודנו רחוק מאוד מאלו הקדושה. ע"ז קורין חיקף נשא אח ראש בני גרשון גם הם. שיעבאו גם נפשות האלו שחושבים עצמם למרוחקים וערשים. רלשון כי גרשוני היום וגו'. וכו' כלשון גם הם. שמשחוקקים נפשים שנס עליהם וישיעו אורו ויחברך. וכאלחמ כוא שזה גופא כוא מכה שנאלחמ נשפע עליהם נעומק אור הכורה.

9A - יש ליתן טעם על קריאת פרשת נשא ברובה דרובה בשנת שמיטה שנוטח. כי ידוע שטיק ברחה העולם כיה מלך אהצרותה דלטיילא. שעלם ברלוטו הפשוט מלך כי חפץ חסד כוא. וכמו כן ענין נתינת החורה לישראל כיה ג"כ מלך החשודרות חסד עליון. וכך כוא נורא בחסדו ויחברך לרורי דרובה. בהשפעת קדושת חרותה הקדושה לנפשות ישראל. כמו שמבדיין כל יום נוחו כחורה כלשון כוח בחמדיות. וכפי קל גדול ולא יסף. ומהנהנימן ולא פסק. שיהיה שפע הכורה אינו פוסק לעולם. ומכ גם כיוון זה הכבוטות זמן מתן תורהו. כודלי כפפ קד כה הכורה לכל נפשות ישראל. מלך חסדי ורחמי הכ"י.

10 21 God spoke to Moses, saying:

22 Also take a census of Gershon's descendants by families, following the paternal line. 23 Take a tally of those from 30 to 50 years old, all who are fit for duty in the Communion Tent's service.

24 The Gershonite family shall serve by maintaining and carrying as follows:

מכתב נאמרו - רב רס"ו

11 איתא בילקוט שמעוני פ' בשלח -

"הנני עומד למנוח שם על הצור בחורב... אמר ליה הקב"ה למשה כל מקום שאתה מוצא רושם רגלי אדם שם אני למנוחי. בחינת 'רגלי אדם' פירושה הדרגה התחתונה שבמהותו הרוחנית. על הנחש הראשון כתוב 'זאתה תשופנו עקב'. פירוש, שתחוש מתקוה את האדם בנקודת התורפה שלו - בצננות שהאדם דש בעקביו. העבירות שהאדם חושב לקטנות ושאינו מרגיש בהן חטא; מהות הן את הדרגה התחתונה שלו. אכן שם הנה הקב"ה למנוי. שם מקום השכינה; 'כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש תוא'. כל מקום שהאדם עומד עליו הוא בית המקדש שלו - מקום התחלת עלייתו. ממקומו - מנקודת הבחירה שלו - אי אדם היא נמוכה מאד, דוקא משם יוכל לעלות. אם רק יגלה האדם לעצמו את פחיתותו באמת, ישאב מזה את התעוררות הגדולה ביותר לעלייה. ישל נעליך מעל רגליך" - הסר המכסה מפחיתותך, או 'המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא'; פחיתותו נעשית נקודת מוצא לעלייתו.

10 נשא את־ראש בני גרשון

23 נסיהם לבית אבתם למישפחתם: מכן שלשים שנה ומעלה עד בדהמשים שנה תפקד אותם כל־הבא לצבא צבא לעבד עבדה באהל מועד: זאת עבדת משפחת הגרשון לעבד ולמשא:

12

לְרִיבָה שֶׁעַל רִמּוֹ זֶה סוֹכֵךְ כּוֹלֵךְ כֹּל הַסֵּדֶר הַגָּאֹמֵר כִּפְרִיּוֹת שֶׁאֵינֶיךָ כִּינּוּ בִלְעֵזְבֵי הַמַּקְרִיבוֹת * הַבְּלִיטִים מִסַּכַּח כְּרִימּוֹק. וְכֹאֵל מִכֵּן שֶׁגָּאֹמֵר אֲחִיכִי וְיִשְׁלַח מִן הַמַּחֲסֵה כֹּל לְרִיעַ וְכֹל זֶה וְכֹל טַמֵּא לְנֶפֶשׁ. יָדוּעַ שֶׁנִּי עֲנִיבֵה אֵלַי בְּלִיטֵי לְהַאֲדִים חִיו בְּלֹא מַדְעָחוּ. [* כִּי גַם טַמֵּא לְנֶפֶשׁ יָדוּעַ שְׂרוּמוֹ עַל הַקְּלִקֵּל הַיָּדוּעַ כַּעֲסֵק קְדוּשָׁה לְרִיבָה יָכוֹד עוֹלִים טְהוֹרֵי נִפְשֵׁי]. וְכֹאֵשֶׁר יִרְעֵה בְּלֹא לְהַאֲדִים הוּא מַחֲמַרְמֵר מֵאִדּוּ כִּנְפֵיו לְמַה אֲכִיכֵי כִּי לִידוֹ רִימּוֹק גְּדוֹל כּוֹס. וְעִיּוֹ הוּא מְלָדִיק עַלִּיו אֵלֶּה כִּדּוּן שִׂיזוּעַ שֶׁמִּשְׁפָּטֵי כִי אֲמַח. וְכֹדוּלֵו הוּא רְחוּק בְּמַעֲשָׂיו מִהַקְּדוּשָׁה. זֶה גּוֹפֵא * כִּיֵּאֵר סַכַּח טְהוֹרֵו. שִׁטְהֵר מִזֶּה וְיִתְקַרֵב לְהַקְּדוּשָׁה בְּלִמְחָה.

13 Shabbat Shurim - R. Miller [13, 16, 43]

On this, we can ask the obvious but puzzling question: how could this defilement happen in the first place, if, as we have just seen, the Nazirite is assured of God's aid in his quest for purity? Why should God have interrupted this sincere quest, by such an apparently fortuitous incident?

Ibn Ezra⁸ provides an answer that enlarges our whole understanding of the Nazirite vow. He traces the incident back to the general principle of שכר עברה עברה - 'the retribution for a sin is another sin.' According to the logic of this, the apparently 'accidental' sin of defilement, that interrupts the Neziruth, is no accident at all: it is a result of an already existing defect; a physical symptom, as it were, of an inner, and possibly unknown ailment.

14 R. Zadok HaCohen¹⁰ elaborates on this and says that the term 'Zaddik', 'righteous,' is used to describe one who is completely clear of any impurity of thought or desire in a particular sphere. If his spirit is really pellucidly clear, in this sphere, then he will be protected even from an accident of sin: but, on the other hand, if such an accident does happen, even though he is considered a שׂוֹגֵג as not having intended the sin, yet he is termed a חַטָּא and has to atone for his sin. This is because even an accidental, unwitting error, for which man seems to bear no responsibility, is a symptom of a deeper deficiency within him: it is a kind of warning of the real flaws in his devotion. A well-known example of this principle is the fact that in the trial of the Sotah, the woman suspected of adultery, the bitter waters will have no effect if the husband's morals are not quite immaculate—the supernatural verification is not granted to someone who is not himself whole in his devotion to God. This is how the Sages explain the words: כִּי כִשְׁלָה בְעוֹנֶךָ — 'for you have stumbled in your sin':¹¹ it is because of the sin hidden in the heart of man, that external stumbling-blocks obstruct his way: they are symptoms of an inner disease, and, in the long run, a merciful warning, rousing man to examine himself, and root out the evil.

15

In this way, even the impediment that apparently frustrates his desire for holiness is, in effect, a contrivance of God to help man perfect himself, to re-inforce the chinks in his armour. הוא ליסור מסייעין אותו — if man's desire is truly for purity, then even if his practical determination is weak, God helps him to achieve his deepest longings.

The frustration of attempts at holiness, then, should not be taken as a conclusive token that God regards the attempt with disfavour. It can, on the contrary, be an implicit blessing, an indication to man to probe himself, his own motives, and make himself perfect before God. This is how 'Sefath Emeth' explains the prayer 'קח אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבר וקח אל ה' — 'Hope unto God; be strong and let your heart take courage; and hope unto God.' From this, the Sages teach that if one prays, and one's prayer is not answered,—then one should pray again with greater devotion. On the surface, it would seem pointless to persist in prayer, if it is clear that God is not responding; but the point is that the original silence of G-d was in order to rouse man to a greater awareness; to stimulate him to a new prayer, a finer and more intense supplication.¹²

16

If impediments occur, then, in the fulfilment of a Mitzvah, if man finds himself thwarted in his desire to come closer to God, then he should take this as a sign of an inner defect in himself, and concentrate all his energies on cleansing himself of any duplicity of intention. In this light, the impediment that at first sight may seem a sign of God's disfavour, is ultimately a divine aid to man, in his quest for holiness.

17
 והחודק . וכוא שרש המלוא עשה של השוכה . כידוע
 מוסיק . ועיקר ענין השוכה הוא התקרבות מנה'
 כרימוק כידוע

19

Rev Hirsch

עין מקדש (Ex. XXVIII.38). עין הקדשים מכל חטאת האדם (Numb. XVIII.1) designates a sin against holy things and against the Sanctuary, so here too חטאת האדם could mean sin against other human beings; but more probably it is the ordinary genitive, "sins of men" and is referring to the quite similar case introduced in detail in Leviticus. From what follows it is evident, clearly enough, that here too it is dealing with the denial of an unpaid debt, accordingly with a sin against the right of possession of one's fellow-man: למען מעל בה every such sin against one's fellow-man is immediately an act of treachery towards God, Who is the guarantor and pledge in transactions between man and man. But this is raised to a higher degree when he has taken an oath, calling on God to witness the truth of his statement. If then he has misused this call to support an untrue dishonest statement, the oath makes the debt he owes to his fellow-man to something he owes to God, it raises it to a holy

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7. Then they shall confess their sin which they have committed and then give back that wherein he is guilty in its capital value and add to it a fifth, and give it to him to whom he had been guilty.

7. והתודו את חטאתם אשר עשו והשיב את אשר בר'אשו וחקישו יסף עליו ונתן לאשר אשם לו:

20

On Repentance - Ex. 7. Peli [20-25, 36]

All this concerns the liability incurred by the sinner. The moment acquittal is granted and punishment wiped from the books, man's liability is terminated.

However, sin also has a polluting quality. The Jewish view recognizes a state of "impurity of sin" (*tum'at ha-het*). The entire Bible abounds in references to this idea of self-pollution, contamination, rolling about in the mire of sin. This impurity makes its mark on the sinner's personality. Sin, as it were, removes the divine halo from man's head, impairing his spiritual integrity. In addition to the frequent appearance of this idea in Scripture and in the homiletical teachings of the Aggadah, we also find many concrete references to the "impurity of sin" in the Halakha (Jewish Law).

23

The intensity of sin and the sense of guilt and shame that overwhelms man in its wake are such strong drives that they impel the penitent upward and outward in the direction of the Creator of the universe. The years of sin are transformed into powerful impulsive forces which propel the sinner toward God.

Sin is not to be forgotten, blotted out or cast into the depths of the sea. On the contrary, sin has to be remembered. It is the memory of sin that releases the power within the inner

depths of the soul of the penitent to do greater things than ever before. The energy of sin can be used to bring one to new heights.

21

Sin deprives man of his natural privileges and unique human attributes. He is subjected to a complete transformation as his original personality departs, and another one replaces it. This is not a form of punishment, or a fine, and is not imposed in a spirit of anger, wrath or vindictiveness. It is a "metaphysical" corruption of the human personality, of the divine image of man.

22

Indeed true *teshuvah* (repentance) not only achieves *kapparah* (acquittal and erasure of penalty), it should also bring about *taharah* (purification) from *tum'ah* (spiritual pollution), liberating man from his hard-hearted ignorance and insensitivity. Such *teshuvah* restores man's spiritual viability and rehabilitates him to his original state.

And sometimes it makes man rise to heights he never dreamed he could reach.

24

The Talmudic sage, Resh Lakish, was renowned as a man who sinned grievously and repented. According to Rabbenu Tam (Tosafot, Baba Metzia 84a), Resh Lakish was an accomplished scholar before he became a thief. After he fell to thievery, Rabbi Johanan succeeded in convincing him to repent of his ways, and thereafter Resh Lakish became "even greater" than he had been before. How did this happen? Certainly, while he was out thieving and robbing, he wasn't engaged in the study of Torah! What, then, made him greater after he sinned than he had been before? Sin itself!

The penitent who does not wipe out the past nor tear the pages of sin from his memory, but rather makes a point to use the memory of his sins to enhance his longings for holiness that are bursting forth from inside of him—such a person achieves the quality of repentance which elevates evil to a state of goodness. With regard to such a penitent, the Holy One, blessed be He, does not "overlook transgression" but "bears sin and transgression." It is as if He lifts up and elevates sin and transgression to unimaginable heights.

25

Resh Lakish said: Great is repentance, for because of it, premeditated sins are accounted as errors, as it is said: "Return, O Israel, unto the Lord, thy God, for thou hast stumbled in thy iniquity" (Hosea 14:2). "Iniquity" is premeditated, and yet he calls it "stumbling!"—But is that really so? For has Resh Lakish not said that repentance is so great that premeditated sins are accounted as though they were merits, as it is said: "And when the wicked turneth from his wickedness and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby" (Ezekiel 33:19)? That is no contradiction. One refers to a case [of repentance] motivated by love, the other [to repentance] which comes from fear.

26 ואחיו נאמר פי סוטה . וכנה כל עין סוטה נא מנד ריחוק שמעלמה . שעברה ונחמרה . ועיו נחמרה מבעלה שנאברה עליו כל זמן שלא שחכה . ואחר כל זה אם מנררה טמאה שלא נטמאה . נא מזה נופא בהקדמות יותר ונקחה ומרעה דע . וכידוע מאמר חז"ל ע"ז .

27 Sicker Messer - R. Shmelwitz

אל השמחי איבתי לי . כי נפלתי קמחי . כי אשב בחשך ה' אור לי (מיכה ז:ח).

Rejoice not over me, my enemy, for though I have fallen, I have [also] arisen, though I sit in darkness, Hashem is a light for me (Michah 7:8).

אלולי שנפלתי לא קמחי . ואלולי שישבתי בחשך . לא היה ה' אור לי (מדרש שוחר טוב, תהלים).

Had I not fallen, I would not have arisen, had I not sat in darkness, Hashem would not have been a light for me (Midrash Shocheh Tov, Tehillim 5).

28

Paradoxical as it may seem, Israel's lapses and dark nights serve as both preparation to and prerequisite of its ascension to greatness. This is true not only of Israel as a nation, but also each individual in his own battle with his *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) experiences periods of darkness. And it is these periods of darkness which enable one to clearly perceive the truth, discerning the light by its contrast to the darkness.

31 Jewish Meditation - R. Kaplan

In earlier chapters, I discussed how the last two letters of the Tetragrammaton, *vav* (ו) and *heh* (ה), represent the male and female forces of providence. The male force is that which acts upon the world, while the female force is that which allows the world to be receptive to God's power.

This is one reason that we refer to God in the male gender when we pray. Of course, although we usually refer to God as a male, in His true essence He is without gender. We refer to Him as a male, however, because we want Him to act upon the world through the male force of providence. We then leave ourselves open to God's providence, as a female is open to her mate.

The expression "the Holy One, blessed be He" is in the male gender and is therefore seen as denoting the male force of providence. It also relates to the *vav* of the Tetragrammaton.

The Hebrew word for "Divine Presence," on the other hand, is *Shekhinah*, which is a feminine noun. The *Shekhinah* denotes the final *heh* in the divine name as well as the female power of providence.

35

2. Speak to the Children of Israel. What is the connection between this chapter dealing with the *nazir* [someone who has taken a nazirite vow of abstinence] and the previous chapter dealing with the *sotah* [a wife suspected of being unfaithful]? The association between them is not readily apparent. *Rashi* cites the Talmudic explanation that the passages are joined to teach that anyone who sees an unfaithful wife in her degradation should abstain from wine, which brings one to adultery (*Bamidbar Rabbah* and *Sotah* 2). That

29

Having seen how it is sometimes sin itself that paradoxically serves as a springboard to achievement we can understand the uniqueness of the *teshuvah*, the penitent.

Chazal tell us, *במקום שקצלי השוכה עומרין צדיקים גמורים אינם עומרין*, In the place that penitents stand, even the completely righteous cannot stand (*Berachos* 34b). In a similar vein the verse heralding the call to *teshuvah*, repentance — *שובה וישראל ער ה' אלוקיך*, Return, Israel, unto Hashem your God — describes *teshuvah* as reaching to the throne of the Almighty (see *Yoma* 86a). The reason being *כי קשלתו* for you have stumbled by your sins (*Hoshea* 14:2). It is the stumbling itself on the obstacles of sin that carries within it the potential to elevate a person to the very throne of the Almighty.

30 Call of Torah - R. Munk [35, 38]

And erase it into the bitter water. The Midrash observes that to bring peace between husband and wife one is permitted to blot out in water the holy Name of Hashem

32

It is significant that the Torah presents man and woman together as comprising the image of the Divine. The Torah thus says, "God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them" (*Gen.* 1:27). This clearly implies that male and female together form the "image of God."

The reason for this is obvious. A male and female have the power to do the most Godlike thing possible, namely, to create life. The power to conceive a child is so Godlike that the Talmud states that when man and woman create a child, God Himself is their third partner.

33

Therefore, a husband and wife should see each other as being a reflection of the Divine. When a woman looks at her husband, she should see him as a reflection of "the Holy One, blessed be He," the male aspect of the Divine. Similarly, when a husband looks at his wife, he should see her as the Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*), the feminine aspect of the Divine.

When a person attains this goal, he will fully appreciate his wife's beauty and see it as a reflection of the Divine. He will then also be aware of her inner beauty, which is a reflection of the beauty of the *Shekhinah*. When one can contemplate this, one is filled with a love toward one's spouse that parallels the supernal love between the masculine and feminine forces of the Divine.

34

ואחיו נאמר פי מיר ככל עניונו ניב מנד ריחוק . כחמרה זיל מיר חוטא כוא שלער עלמו מן כיון . כי כחלום עבה ה' האדם ישר . שיבה מחנה כעולם בדרך ישר . אם ירגיש שנאך לאכילה ושחיה . יהל וישחה . ובאם לאו לא ישחה . וכוא כעוב בזה כמה מאמר על עלמו בנדר . וגם עיקר הכנה שגדר בניזר כוא מנד שמרגיש ריחוק כנפשו כחוא מומד ח"ו לדיע . כחמרה זיל כחאכ סוטה בקלוקל . יזר עלמו מן כיון . ומזה עלמו בא בהקדמות שלו . כמ"ס ח"ס כי יפליא וגוי קדוש כוא לבי וגוי . ואחר כל אלה יח

"Return, Israel, to the Lord, your God, for you have stumbled in your sins" (Hosea 14:2). The prophet's admonition concerns the causal nexus of sin. "It is not your sins, Israel, which led to your fall. Rather, the sins in which you were caught up became your stumbling block, they threw you off your course. And when you examine yourself you see where you have failed, that you have achieved nothing, or, perhaps, that you have even regressed."

קרשים חקוי — Be holy. Rashi defines holiness as the duty of keeping away from illicit sexual relationships and other sins, חקויים חקוי.

This interpretation is opposed by Ramban and by Rabbeinu Bachya (in Kad HaKemach). In their view, holiness refers to self-restraint in the vast range of acts which are not forbidden. This is in accordance with the Talmudic principle: קרש עצוקו במוחר לק, sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you (Yevasos 20a). Thus, although the law prohibits sexual union with a close relative and the eating of certain foods, it does permit intimate relations with a non-relative, eating meat, and drinking wine. A person could fall into sensuality and voluptuousness, while remaining fully within his legal right; he could become one of the drinkers of wine and boisterous eaters of meat (Proverbs 23:20). He could resort to obscenities and rude language without trespassing the technicalities of the law. He would thus become a despicable person, all the while remaining within the legality of the Torah.

That is why, after listing the formally forbidden actions in the previous chapters, the Torah here proclaims the general principle of reserve which must be maintained even while performing permissible acts. Holiness implies temperance, that is, moderation of one's desires and passions. It includes sobriety in the satisfaction of appetites, avoidance of spiritual contamination, and moderation in language. (See Succah 28a and Akeidas Yitzchak 67.)

Perhaps we can now begin to understand the severity of sins of speech in Torah. Speech is the basic tool of Creation and revelation, as we have noted, and the ability to speak is the hallmark of the human. Misuse of this central gift is particularly devastating - the first sin ever committed was brought about by improper speech: the serpent's devious words to the unsuspecting Chava (Eve). In that immoral and treacherous temptation lay all the danger that misused speech can hold.

Such a life consists of talking constantly but not saying anything; the version of such a life which is reflected in the next world, the world of reality, is the experience of moving but not arriving. To speak and create is to live in the Divine image; to speak without creating is to negate that image.

So we see in the spiritual history of Israel a process parallel to that we have pointed out in the life of the individual—a process beginning with a gift of God: continuing with the effort of man on his own behalf to achieve a spiritual aim, to bring into consciousness the latent purity and holiness that has been planted in him; and ending with God's renewed intervention, guiding him to levels of attainment not accessible to human nature, of its own strength. Man's effort, then, in any task that seems difficult at the outset, almost beyond his energies, must be seen, not from the human view alone, as a solitary, futile resistance against the forces of evil, but in true perspective, as a movement towards God, buttressed on both sides by the aid and love of God Himself. Here there is no room for despair: such endeavours should call forth in him, rather, a joyful confidence and gratitude for the strength that has been, and shall be given, to achieve his aim.

In this context the Torah states, "and after [this process] the nazir can drink wine" (Bamidbar 6:20). This verse is problematic, since after the process is finished he is no longer a nazir. The Torah is telling us that the purpose of his nezirus was not abstinence for its own sake, but rather as a lesson in how to properly drink wine after the period is over. Hence the goal of his nezirus is to drink wine as a nazir, as one sanctified and uplifted.

There is an aspect of the misuse of speech which needs special study: wasting words. There is a particular problem in wasting words, even when the words spoken are not false or intrinsically sinful. In general, this is part of the problem of wasting any human resource: any time or effort wasted in a human life is wastage of that life itself and therefore a very serious matter. But wasted words, d'varim b'telim, are particularly problematic.

A lie presents a false picture of that which is hidden within, it betrays the inner dimension. D'varim b'telim, wasted and meaningless words, present a picture of that which has no inner dimension, and this is no less a betrayal. Words are given in order to reveal meaning, to clothe a deeper reality; empty nonsense betrays the very fact that there is a depth at all.

The Vilna Gaon states that the consequence of wasted words is a particular suffering in the next world: kaf ha'kala, the "cup of the slingshot"; a neshama which must endure that particular suffering as a result of wasting words experiences the sensation of being flung from one place to another, but before arriving at the destination is flung yet again in another direction, and so on. The Gaon says that for every empty statement a person must be flung from one end of the world to the other. There is an experience of constant travelling towards a goal, but never arriving - this is the reality generated by a life which used the tools of human growth for nothing other than their own sake, a life which moved through the world but wasted its creative energies.

נשיאת ראש לני שמתרחק. והוא גיב ישא כי פניו אליו. גם אם אירע לפעמים איזה קלקול והתרחקות חיו. יביה נחקק עיי שיתנשא במהרה לשרשו. והוא דווקא לישראל שבכשרם הם מקושרים בכקדושה. וגם אם יאירע לפעמים איזה ריחוק ויכל לחזור לשרשו בכקדושה. ועיי ישא כי פניו אליו להחזיר לשרשו. וישם לך שלום ואיתא במדרש זה שלום מלכות בית דוד. והוא גיב לרמו דבריו הריל. טוב עיקר בחיי דוד. שעליו נחמר נשא את ראש בני גרשון. שהוא הראש של בחיי בני גרשון. וכאשר יביה נשיאת ראש לבחיי ו. כמאמר ישא כי פניו אליו. או יביה גיב וישם לך שלום. שביה נשלים עייב בשלימות מלכות בית דוד. אכירר כיב: