



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת חיים

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת תרומה תש"ע

BUILDERS AND DESTROYERS

The venerated Divrei Chaim of Tzanz, surrounded by a group of loyal adherents, sat immersed in thought. Finally, he revealed what was on his mind.

“*Rabosai*, I’d like to relate to you a vision. I perceived the Beis Hamikdash in its station in *Shamayim* (Heaven), fully furnished and completed, waiting and ready to descend. The single object that was missing was the *Paroches* (curtain of partition in front of the Holy of Holies).”

His followers knew to what he was referring. In keeping with our *mesorah* (hallowed tradition), Jews the world over anxiously await the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, when the third Beis Hamikdash, formed of fire, will descend from Above. Although fashioned in the Heavenly Abode, our actions down below directly affect the reconstruction. Mitzvah observance and Torah study can ultimately bring the Beis Hamikdash to completion, at which point it will return to its rightful place in Yerushalayim.

The audience of the Divrei Chaim was hearing – so it seemed – that the completion of the Beis Hamikdash was imminent. All that still needed to be fashioned was a single partition.

One of those present could no longer contain himself. “Surely the Rebbe can supply the *Paroches* through his deeds alone!” he exhorted.

“Yes,” replied the Divrei Chaim. “In fact, I did effect the completion of the *Paroches*.” At this point, however, his face flashed fire. “Alas, what can we do? Someone else has come along and committed a grave sin. Through

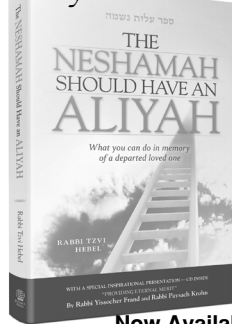
his actions, he has taken the *Paroches* and torn it to pieces!” (*Minchas Asher*, vol. 2, p. 534).

THE POWER OF OUR WORDS AND DEEDS

Those who are somewhat familiar with the classic works of R’ Chaim Volozhiner (foremost disciple of the Vilna Gaon) are well aware that a recurring theme of his focuses on the far-reaching impact of the actions of an individual. The performance of a deed – good or bad – has repercussions that far transcend one’s personal store of reward or punishment. Although our physical eyes cannot glimpse the spiritual emanations that result from our acts, the effects in fact reach through countless universes and spheres. The fourth section of *Nefesh Hachaim* is replete with statements of Chazal revealing the extent to which a Jew who occupies himself with Torah study brings blessing, happiness, strength, and continued sustenance to the entire world and both physical and spiritual abodes.

In his pre-Selichos lecture (*D’rashes Maharach*), R’ Chaim cites the Gemara in Chagigah (5b), which mentions that a person will be reminded on his day of judgment of all of the improper conversations he held, no matter how trivial they may have seemed. The Gemara derives this idea from the verse in Navi (*Amos 4:13*), which states: מַגִּיד לְאָדָם מַה שָׁחוּ (“He relates to a man his conversation”). R’ Chaim points out that the word מה (literally: “what”) in this verse appears to be extra. Translated word for word, the verse as it stands means literally: “He relates to a man *what* his conversation is.” Why didn’t the Navi simply say, מַגִּיד לְאָדָם שָׁחוּ (“He relates to a man his conversation”)?

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responsibility to heart can be gleaned from the words of the Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4*). He instructs an individual how to shape his self-perception and how this assessment should affect his decision-making process:

“A person needs to view himself... as if he is 50% meritorious and 50% sinful. Similarly, he should view the world’s population as being 50% meritorious and 50% sinful. (He should then recognize the result:) If this individual will now commit a transgression, his personal store of sins – as well as that of the entire world – will now be in the majority, and he will have brought the world to the brink of destruction. If, however, he will perform a good deed, he will have brought himself – and the rest of the world – to the side of merit, thus effecting a great salvation for himself and the entire world.”

It is quite appropriate to bear this lesson in mind as we read the *parshiyos* of the Sanctuary. We are reminded to apply ourselves, as the Divrei Chaim had done, toward the very real task of rebuilding the Beis Hamikdash, with all of its furnishings.

The manifestation in the Beis Hamikdash of these personal “contributions” is a truly remarkable feature. Many *shuls*, *yeshivos*, and other institutions recognize the contributions of their benefactors; elegant plaques and inscriptions upon their walls proclaim who facilitated the construction of the *aron* (ark), a classroom, etc. According to the Chofetz Chaim, this system serves as a precursor for the construction of the third Beis Hamikdash.

The Navi proclaims: וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם בְּיַמֵּי וְבַחֲוֹמֹתַי יָד וְשֵׁם
“And I shall grant them a holding and a name in My House and Walls” (*Yeshayah 56:5*). As stated, the “currency” with which we “donate” to the rebuilding of the Temple is deeds: Torah study and *mitzvos*. And this reality will be forever reflected and recognized. On one part of the Temple’s wall, an eternal inscription will state: “This section was dedicated through the Torah study of Reuvein,” while another plaque will declare: “This *Paroches* was facilitated through Shimon’s acts of kindness...”

The answer, explains R’ Chaim, is that a lot more is revealed to an individual on that day beyond the mere content of his conversation. Additionally, he is shown מה שחוו – *what* his improper conversation “accomplished.” In other words, he is shown the damage his words inflicted on the upper realms and the immense devastation that reverberated throughout the universe on account of his poor choice of words.

The upshot of this arrangement is that it is critical for an individual to be aware of the magnitude of his potential to affect (literally) the entire world and to appreciate the awesome responsibility this entails. Perhaps this is the intent of Chazal, as they sized up the situation of the individual in the Mishnah in Sanhedrin (4:5):

לְפִיכֶן כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד חָיָב לוֹמַר, בְּשִׁבְלֵי נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם.

“Therefore, it is incumbent on every person to say (of himself): ‘The world was created on my account.’”

TIPPING THE SCALES

Just how much a person is expected to take this

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