



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת היום

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

A project of CHEVRAH LOMDEI MISHNAH • Parshas Terumah 5768

In this week's *parshah*, Hashem commands the *B'nai Yisrael* to build the *mishkan*, to serve as a resting place for His *Shechinah*. While discussing this incident, the Chofetz Chaim (*Shem Olam, Shaar Hischazkus, ch. 5*) shares some remarkable revelations about the inner workings of every Jew, and of *Klal Yisrael* as a whole.

The *possuk* states (*Shemos 25:8*): “And they shall make a sanctuary for Me, and I shall dwell amongst them.” The simple meaning of the verse is that by occupying the *mishkan* within the Jews' encampment, the *Shechinah* will be dwelling in their vicinity.

The Chofetz Chaim quotes an explanation of Chazal which casts this *possuk* in a totally new light. To the final phrase, “I shall dwell amongst them”, Chazal add one word of interpretation: “Amongst them *mamash* (literally).” According to Chazal, the ‘dwelling place’ referred to here is not the *mishkan*. Rather, the Torah is telling us that Hashem's dwelling place will be amongst the Jews *themselves*. In all generations, Hashem shall literally rest His *Shechinah* on the *nefesh* of each and every *Yid*—“Amongst **them mamash.**”

The Chofetz Chaim wonders how such a situation is possible. Nothing possesses more *kedushah* than the *Shechinah*; even the most lofty and pristine soul is a materialistic entity by comparison. How, then, is it possible for the *nefesh* of a Jew to house the *Shechinah* within it?

After delineating his question, the Chofetz Chaim digresses to explain a similar phenomenon: the incongruous relationship of body and soul. We often take for granted the fact that our bodies carry our souls around inside of them. Yet, how can this everyday occurrence be possible? The body is a physical entity, while the soul is spiritual. How can they coexist within a single entity?

In truth, the two *cannot* coexist independently. Quoting the *Bris Avrohom*, the *Chofetz Chaim* explains that in order to facilitate this paradoxical bond, Hashem created an ‘interlocutor’ known as the *guf*. Although *guf* usually refers to the physical body, in this context the term *guf* refers to the body's faculty of sensation. This interlocutor, the *guf*, is the faculty which enables a person to experience the agony of a pulled muscle or the pleasure of a tasty delicacy.

(Parenthetically, the awareness of the *guf*'s existence can enable us to gain a new appreciation—or constructive fear—of the afflictions of *Gehinom*. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin 91b*) states that when a *rasha* dies and his soul is sent to the netherworld to receive its just desserts, the *guf* is sent there as well to share in the experience.

This Gemara is difficult to understand, considering the fact that when a coffin is opened for whatever reason, it usually still contains the remains of the body, even if the departed was a *rasha*. How can the body still be there if the *guf* was sent to *Gehinom*? Here, too,

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חיים בן רפאל ע"ה

a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his Neshamah.



MISHNAS
CHAYIM

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the *Bris Avrohom* explains that Chazal are not referring to the physical body; rather, they are referring to the faculty of sensation known as the *guf*. The knowledge that one's *sense of touch* is subjected to the purgatorial fires of *Gehinom* should help to dissuade us from emulating the ways of *reshaim*.)

The nature of this *guf* lies somewhere between the physical and the spiritual. On the one hand, the *guf*—the faculty of sensation—is not a tangible, physical entity. On the other hand, it does not possess the elements of *kedushah* which are trademarks of the soul. Consequently, it is the perfect candidate to serve as a facilitator between the physical body and the spiritual *nefesh*.

The *Bris Avrohom* depicts the mechanics: The *guf* makes its home in the physical body, resting upon the vapor which emanates from the bloodstream. The *nefesh*—which is too holy to attach itself directly to the physical body—inhabits this quasi-spiritual *guf*. In this fashion, the soul resides harmoniously within the body.

Upon concluding his discussion of the body-soul relationship, the Chofetz Chaim explains that the *Shechinah* can be housed by the souls of the Jewish people, through the offices of the Torah, the 'interlocutor' which facilitates the connection. When a Jew immerses himself in Torah study, the Torah reciprocally attaches itself to his soul, becoming a part of him. Since Hashem has concentrated His *Shechinah* within the Torah, when a Jew infuses himself with Torah, his soul automatically becomes a dwelling place for the *Shechinah*— "Amongst them *mamash*".

This lofty idea is reflected in the Mishnah (*Avos* 3:3,7). The Mishnah states:

שְׁנַיִם שְׂיוֹשְׁבֵינֵי וַיֵּשׁ בֵּינֵיהֶם דְּבַרֵי תוֹרָה שְׂכִינָה שְׂרוּיָה בֵּינֵיהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (מלאכי ג) אִזּוּ נִדְּבְרוּ יִרְאִי ה' אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ, וַיִּקְשֹׁב ה' וַיִּשְׁמַע, וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זְכָרוֹן לְפָנָיו... וּמִנֵּן אֶפְלוּ אֶחָד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שמות כ) בְּכֹל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּר אֶת שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלַיךְ וּבְרַכְתִּיךְ.

“When two people sit together and learn Torah, the *Shechinah* rests among them, as it says (*Malachi 3:16*), ‘Then two G-d fearing people spoke to each other (words of Torah), and Hashem hearkened, and they were inscribed in a Book of Remembrance before Him’..... How do we know that this concept is true even for an individual (who engages in Torah study)? For it says (*Shemos 20:21*), ‘Any place where My name is mentioned (i.e. someone engages in a sanctified activity such as learning Torah), I will rest My Presence there and bring you blessing.’”

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