



Uplifting Our Jewish Heads

Parshas Emor

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

During the days of Operation Cast Lead, the Rosh Yehudi organization held a seminar on Judaism in Tel Aviv, I spent an expiring Shabbos with many special Jews. It was an unforgettable event as Jews from across the city gathered to learn about their heritage.

As the Shabbos entered and we began to pray two men entered the Schul, looking very different than the rest of the people; they did not cover their heads. Some people called at them, pointing out that their heads were bare, but I silenced them. I came to them and offered them head coverings. They refused to take them, saying they had come by mistake. They began to leave, but I asked them to stay, saying that if they had already come then it was not a mistake.

They told me that they had come to hear the renowned author David Grossman, who has the same name as I do. I told them I was an author as well, in the midst of writing a new book. Which one? They inquired. "Each Jew is writing his own personal book at every moment," I told them.

They agreed to stay and we continued with the evening prayers. They joined in the dancing, and listened intently to the speeches. After the prayers I asked them to join us for a meal at the beach, where the Shabbos table was set. A large group had already assembled, and the two took their seats, looking somewhat nervous.

After Kiddush I said a few words, repeating an idea I had learned from my father as a child: nothing is lost in this world; no soul is lost in the world. Each Jew is G-d's son, and he is dearly loved by Him.

I followed my two guests throughout the evening; people who came to meet an author and found themselves at a Chassidic Tisch on Tel Aviv's beach.

Our weekly parsha commences with the verse: "And the Lord said to Moshe: **Speak to** the kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and **say to** them: Let none [of you] defile himself for a dead person among his people."¹ Rashi learns from the repeated verb that they come to "admonish the adult for the minors" who are entrusted with their education.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe would teach that this concept of admonishing the adults for the minors comes in only three instances in the Torah: in the prohibition to eat vermin, in the prohibition to drink blood and in our parsha which commands on Koahnic purity. Why these three cases?

The Rebbe explains that these three cases represent three categories, and those who are involved in education may

encounter three cases of weakness: the first is when one becomes depraved morally, and becomes involved in things that he would usually be repulsed by. The second is when one gets used to sinning and eventually does not even feel he is sinning. And the third; when one is commanded to fulfill a commandment that he does not understand.

We are warned by our Sages about these three issues: one usually refrains from eating vermin; the Jewish nation used to sin regularly and drink animal blood; the issue of Kohanic purity is not a commandment one comprehends.

From here we learn three concepts in education. One must remember that even when one encounters low and immoral behavior, it can still be rectified and the person is not lost.

Likewise, when one encounters someone who regularly sins, he must remember that that person is redeemable.

If one thinks that one can educate exclusively concepts that are understandable, the Torah teaches us about Kohanic purity.

One must never give up with education. "There is no such thing as a lost soul," I repeated. "We follow G-d - if He is benevolent towards each individual so are we commanded to love each Jew like he was our son, bringing him close to G-d."

Long past midnight, I was sitting with another person when we were approached by my "two guests."

"Rabbi, how are you so confident that someone who has been immersed in sin for so many years can find his way back?"

I asked them if they believed in the Moshiach. "Of course," they both answered. They answered the same way when I asked them if they believed in the Exodus from Egypt.

"Do you know the Israelites were deeply immersed in impurity when they were redeemed from Egypt? They were like this for many years, and even so G-d came and redeemed them and gave them the Torah. So do you not believe that G-d can come and redeem just one soul and set it on the proper path?"

During these days of Sefiras Ha'Omer, in which we count toward the receiving of the Torah on Shavuot, we return to what occurred as we exited from Egypt. We left the source of our sin because this is the essence of repentance. The moment we did so, we became proper vessels that can receive the Torah, which shines light in our lives until this very day.

"Come dear Jews, write another chapter in David Grossman's book," I told them.

¹ Vayikra 21:1.