



Parashot Achrei Mot-Kdoshim You Shall Live by Them Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

ויקרא פרק יח פסוק ה

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקְתִּי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטִי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וְחַי בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה:

יומא פרק ה ע"ב

וחי בהם ולא שימות בהם.

ילקוט שמעוני תורה פרשת אחרי מות רמז תקפז

וחי בהם לעולם, אם תאמר בעוה"ז הרי זה סופו מת הוא הא מה אני מקיים וחי בהם לעה"ב.

רשב"ם פרק יח פסוק ה

וחי בהם - אבל אם לא יעשה - ונכרתו הנפשות העושות מקרב עמם.

בכור שור פרק יח פסוק ה

שלא יהו שניו מתקצרות שאינו מת אלא מיתת עצמו, אבל חוקות הגוים, שגוזלים וחומסים וגונבים ורוצחים ובאים על נשי חבריהם, מקצרות ימיהם, שבאים בעלי הממון והורגים אותם, וכן בעל האשה לא יחמול ביום נקם, ואף הקרובים הורגים את הרוצח, וכתוב: ושנות רשעים תקצרנה.

רבנו בחיי פרק יח פסוק ה

אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם. יחזור למשפטים שהם חיי האדם ביישובי הארצות והם קיום העולם ועמידתו, הוא שכתוב: (משלי כט, ד) "מלך במשפט יעמיד ארץ".

הנצי"ב בהעמק דבר פרק יח פסוק ה

וחי בהם. כבר נתבאר בס' בראשית ב' ז' ובכ"מ דחי פעם פירושו חי ולא מת, ופעם פירושו חי בשלמות ולא בשפלות הדעת, ומובן לפי הענין, והכא לפי' הב' דקאי על מעשה המצות, הפשט ולא שימות בהם, ולפי' הא' פירושו שיהיה נפשו מתענג בהרגש רוחני בהם.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik

There were two mesorot that Moses transferred to Joshua. One is the tradition of Torah learning, of lomdus. The second mesorah, the hod, was experiential. One can know the entire Maseches Shabbos and yet still not know what Shabbos is. To truly know what Shabbos is, one has to spend time in a Yiddishe home. Even in those neighborhoods made up predominantly of religious Jews, today one can no longer talk of the sanctity of Shabbos. True, there are Jews in America who observe Shabbos; but there are no "Erev Shabbos Jews," who go out to greet Shabbos with beating hearts and pulsating souls. There are many who observe the precepts with their hands, with their feet, and with their mouths—but there are few indeed who truly know the meaning of the "service of the heart."

I was raised in a Chabad town. The population of that town consisted almost exclusively of poor people: workers, tradesmen, particularly peddlers, who used to travel to visit the villages within a fifteen-mile radius of the town.

You cannot imagine the primitive conditions in which the Russian peasants lived. The people used to come home every Friday afternoon after spending the week in those primitive villages. I watched them coming into the shul one by one, water glistening from their payos and beards because they had immersed in the mikveh. I still remember the tune with which they started to recite, immediately upon entering the shul, the 107th psalm: Give thanks to the Lord because He is good...Those redeemed by the Lord shall say it... They sang a hymn of gratitude to God. For what? For delivery from captivity, for freeing them from a prison; they would cling to God, coming home for Shabbos though they knew very well that the next day, after nightfall, they would return to the primitive villages surrounding the town.

To truly understand what Shabbos is, it is insufficient to merely know the halachos of Shabbos. One should experience a chasidishe shtiebel for Shalosh Seudos. Not far from where our family lived in Warsaw there was a Modzitzer shtiebel where I would occasionally go for Shalosh Seudos. The chasidim would be singing Bnei heichala, Hashem ro'i lo echsar, then again Bnei heichala, again Hashem ro'i. It occurred to me that they weren't singing because they wanted to sing; they were singing because they did not want to allow Shabbos to leave. I remember an encounter in this shtiebel as a small child. One of the men who had been singing most enthusiastically, wearing a kapota consisting of more holes than material, approached me and asked if I recognized him. I told him that I did not, and he introduced himself as Yankel the Porter. Now, during the week, I knew Yankel the Porter as someone very ordinary, wearing shabby clothing, walking around with a rope. I could not imagine that an individual of such regal bearing could be the same person. Yet on Shabbos, he wore a kapota and shtreimel. That is because his soul wasn't Yankel the Porter, but Yankel the Prince. Well after nightfall, I naively asked him, "When do we daven Ma'ariv?" He replied: "Do you miss the weekdays so much [that you cannot wait to daven Ma'ariv]?"

This is an educational-philosophical problem that has weighed heavily upon

me. To contemporary Orthodox Jews the Torah is revealed in intellectual categories, in cold thought and logic. However, it has not merited being revealed in a living “sensory” mode, which causes both trembling and gladdening of the heart. They recognize the Torah as an idea, but they do not encounter it as an unmediated reality that one can taste, see, and feel.

I can explain Yom Kippur to my students. From an intellectual standpoint there is much I can transmit. What I cannot pass on are the experiences that I myself underwent on those days. The American Jew has no awareness of the sublime experience of the sanctity of Yom Kippur.

I want to describe to them the ta’am of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that once existed in Europe, and I can’t! I would have to bring them to the house where I was raised and show them how Reb Chaim said vidui on Yom Kippur: V’atah tzaddik, gasping for breath, v’anachnu hirshanu, gasping for breath. In the synagogue, the echo of the Amen that followed the Shehecheyanu blessing after Kol Nidrei...I cannot impart this—it has to be lived.

Joshua not only received the Torah from Moses, but also how to live Yiddishkeit. His attendant, Joshua, the son of Nun, a lad, would not depart from the tent (Ex. 33:11). Joshua never left Moses’ side: he saw how Moses davened Minchah, how he ate, how he bentched, how he accepted Shabbos, how he said vidui on Erev Yom Kippur. He therefore merited both mesoros: the mesorah of the mind and the mesorah of the heart. And although Eleazar was a greater lamdan, only Joshua could transmit Torah to the next generation.