

# Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy" a, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



## אמרות שמשון

### Israel Must Sanctify the Nefesh and Ruach to Properly Unite with the Neshamah

“Speak to all the congregation of the Children of Israel and say to them: ‘Holy shall you be, for I, Hashem your G-d, am Holy.’” (Vayikra 19:2)

The Midrash ponders the phrase “Holy shall you be, for I am Holy”: Does this mean, “If you sanctify yourselves, I consider it as if you sanctified Me”? Or does it mean, “If you sanctify Me, I am Holy, and if not, I am not Holy”? Therefore, the verse concludes “...for I am Holy,” implying: “I remain in My holiness, whether you sanctify Me or not.”

These words of the Midrash require explanation. It can be understood according to the Zohar HaKadosh (vol. II, 182a): when Hashem created man, He did so in a supernal image and breathed into him a holy spirit composed of three parts: Nefesh (vital soul), Ruach (spirit, which is higher than the Nefesh), and Neshamah (higher soul). The highest level is the Neshamah.

The Ramaz explains a difficulty: how can impurity have dominion over the Neshamah, which is so spiritual and elevated? The Zohar clarifies that the Neshamah is bound to the Nefesh and Ruach. If the Nefesh—which belongs to the “World of Action” where evil can predominate—becomes corrupted, that imperfection reaches the Ruach and ultimately affects the Neshamah.

This is similar to the proverb: “He who walks with the wise becomes wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm” (Mishlei 13:20). Since the Neshamah is perfect, it can influence the Ruach and Nefesh with light; conversely, if the lower levels are corrupted, they affect the Neshamah.

Thus, the Midrash is actually referring to the Neshamah, which is a “part” of G-dliness:

Hashem says: “If you sanctify yourselves”—meaning, if you sanctify your Nefesh and Ruach (the parts most linked to your physical selves)—you unite them correctly with the Neshamah. “I consider it as if you sanctified Me”—meaning, as if you sanctified the Neshamah, which is a part of Me.

The Midrash continues: “Or perhaps only if you sanctify the Neshamah is it holy?” One might argue that once the Neshamah

enters a physical body, it loses its intrinsic holiness and the person shouldn't be as liable for punishment. To this, the verse concludes: “for I am Holy.” Just as My holiness is intrinsic and remains regardless of your actions, so too the Neshamah—being a part of Me—is intrinsically holy. Therefore, you must be extremely careful not to damage or contaminate it with evil deeds.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Kedoshim, Art. 1)

### One Who is Humble Does Not Stumble and Merits the Resurrection of the Dead

“And you shall keep My statutes and My laws, which man (adam) shall fulfill and live by them; I am Hashem.” (Vayikra 18:5)

This verse appears after all the commandments related to the prohibitions of illicit relations.

It can be explained that in this verse there is an allusion to what our Sages said in the Gemara (Sotah 4b): “Anyone who possesses arrogance is considered as if he had committed all the forbidden relations; and Rabbi Yochanan said that it is as if he denied the fundamental principle [that Hashem exists and leads the entire universe according to His will], and that his dust will not be shaken in the Resurrection of the Dead.”

The name “adam” (אדם—‘man’) also alludes to humility and lowliness, for it stems from “adamah” (אדמה—‘earth’), from which he was created, and he is like the earth that everyone treads upon. Thus, the verse comes to teach us that one who is humble will not fall into forbidden relations, will live in the Resurrection of the Dead, and will not deny the fundamental principle—a denial that leads to apostasy, Hashem yerachem.

For this reason, after the section on the prohibitions of relations, the verse says: “And you shall keep My statutes [...] which the adam shall fulfill,” meaning it refers to one who is called “adam” because he was taken from the earth—that is, by being humble—and it does not refer to one who is called “adam” for his strength like the earth.

And therefore, “he shall live by them,” meaning his dust will be awakened and he will live in the future, in the Resurrection of the Dead, recognizing then that “I am Hashem.” Now, from this, the opposite is also understood: if he possesses arrogance, he will fall into forbidden relations, his dust will not be awakened, and, Hashem yerachem, he will deny the fundamental principle.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Behaalotecha, Art. 6)

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## Chapter 3 Mishna 4

**“Three who ate at one table and spoke words of Torah over it - it is as if they had eaten from the table of the Omnipresent, as it says (Yechezkel 41:22): ‘And He said to me, «This is the table that is before Hashem».”**

### An “Infinite” Table

We must understand why it says “from the table of the Omnipresent” (*shulchano shel Makom*) and not “from the table of Hashem” (*shulchano shel Hashem*). (Hashem is called *Makom* — the Omnipresent — because He is the “Place” of the universe, and there is no place where He is not present.)

This can be clarified based on what the Shach wrote on the Torah (*Parshat Terumah*, under “*U’bZohar kohanei*”) — that the *Lechem Hapanim* (Showbread) on the Table at the *Beit HaMikdash* was sacred, and the *kohanim* (priests) would eat it in order to weaken the force of the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination), which is called *hatzfuni* (הצפוני: “the northern one”), and therefore the Table was positioned on the north side. Just as the priests weakened the *Yetzer Hara* through the Showbread, so too, every person can weaken the *Yetzer Hara*, which lies *tzafun* (צפון: hidden) in his heart, by speaking words of Torah at his table.

Therefore, the Tanna precisely said “as if they had eaten from

the table of the Omnipresent” (*Makom* — lit. “Place”), alluding to the specific place where the Table stood — in the Sanctuary, on the northern side — which had the power to subdue the *Yetzer Hara*. This teaches us that we too, through physical eating, can sanctify ourselves and subdue the hidden *Yetzer Hara* within us, if we speak words of Torah at our table, just like the priests who ate physical bread and were sanctified through it.

Additionally, the reason it is called “the table of the Omnipresent” (*shulchano shel Makom*) can be explained according to the Maharsha (*Berachot* 40b): “A place that holds physical things has limits and cannot hold more than its capacity. But a place that contains spiritual matters has no limit and can hold more and more spiritual content”. The Tanna wished to allude that at the table of the Omnipresent there is always space to add more spirituality and holiness. Thus, when a person speaks words of Torah at his table and draws spirituality and holiness upon it, his table becomes “the table of the Omnipresent” — a place with capacity to receive ever more holiness.

## Chapter 3 Mishna 5

**“One who walks alone on the road and turns his heart toward idleness is liable for his soul.”**

### Eliminating the Danger of the Road

This can be interpreted to mean that these two elements are interconnected. We must ask: why didn’t the Sages forbid traveling altogether, just as they forbade other activities because of danger? After all, all roads are presumed dangerous (*Yerushalmi, Berachot*, chapter 4, *halachah* 4).

We must say that since it is impossible to forbid something so necessary, the Sages enacted that a person should not travel alone but rather go with at least one other person. And if he must go alone, he should occupy himself with Torah study, which will protect him from danger, as the *Gemara* says (*Eruvin* 54a): “One who walks on the road and has no companion — let him engage in Torah study.”

But what about someone who cannot study and is forced to travel alone for business — what should he do to protect himself? It can be said that this is why the Tanna precisely said: “One who walks alone on the road and turns his heart toward idleness is liable for his soul” — meaning, even if he is not a Torah scholar and cannot learn, nonetheless, if he does *not* turn his heart to idleness but instead directs his thoughts toward *mitzvah* matters — such as deciding to set regular times for Torah study, planning to visit the study hall of a Torah scholar to learn from him, or supporting Torah scholars with his assets — these thoughts can help protect him. Only if he turns his heart toward idleness and does not think about matters of *mitzvah* is he then “liable for his soul,” since in such a case, every road is presumed dangerous.

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