



Untouchable Essence

Rabbi Yosef Dovid Rothbart, Rabbinic Administrator

There once was a maid who went down to draw water from a spring together with her friend. The maid told her friend, "Tomorrow, my master is going to divorce his wife and will marry me in her stead."

"Why is that?" asked her friend incredulously.

"Because he noticed that her hands were dirty."

Her friend started to laugh. "Foolish woman. If you would only hear what you are saying. If your master is going to divorce his wife whom he loves so much just because her hands were dirty, then certainly he will divorce you—whose entire body was dirty since the day you were born."

With this *meshal*, Rav Yitzchak explains how the other nations pointed to the Jewish people in exile and announced that we have forfeited our glory. The Jewish nation responds, "We may have been forsaken temporarily, but you have been abandoned permanently." (*Shir Hashirim Rabba* 1, 39)

The Alshich on *Shir Hashirim* explains the claims of the other nations. "If Hashem has not abandoned you, why throughout history have you been devastated and consigned to a lowly existence, where even slaves rule over you?"

The answer: "You may have power over our physical bodies, but not our *neshamos*." This answer does not satisfy the other nations for they question our faithfulness, "Have our influences not reached your souls? Are your souls not blackened with sin and iniquity?"

And we respond that the blackness arising from sin is not our natural colour. The Alshich on Hosea explains that the *neshama* of a

Jewish person is an integral part of Hashem. A sin committed by a Jew can never penetrate his essence. The sins are merely an external blemish on the surrounding "shell" of the *neshama*. Our souls remain untainted, pure and eager to perform the will of Hashem.

Parshas Shemos begins with a review of those who went down to *Mitzrayim*. Rashi explains that this was to demonstrate that Hashem "loves the Jewish nation who is compared to stars". Why does the Torah choose the beginning of Shemos to demonstrate Hashem's love for us?

Perhaps it is because *galus Mitzrayim* is the prototype for all future exiles. A Jew in *galus* may have a desire to allow his *neshama* to express itself positively but the climate of exile is not conducive for this. Rav Aleksandri would add a *Tefila* after he finished *Shemona Esrei* as follows; "Master of the world, it is revealed to You that our desire is to fulfill Your will. What is preventing us? It is the *Yetzer Hara* and being subjugated by the nations." (*Brachos* 17a)

As we spend more time in the long *galus*, there is a possibility that we may begin to believe the claims of the other nations. We may tell ourselves that the nations do indeed have influence over our spirituality.

Therefore, Hashem tells us that we are like stars. The Biala Rebbe explains that a star always shines. Sometimes the glow does not reach Earth because there are clouds which block its light. But behind the clouds there is always light. The *neshama* of a Jewish person is always radiant. Sometimes, though, sin on the outer "shell" of the *neshama* does not allow the light to emanate. But a Jew in his essence, even in *galus*, is untouchable.



TIDBITS...

In this week's Parsha the Jewish people are enslaved by Paraoth. Here are some interesting facts about Pharaohs.

- Most Egyptian men were clean shaven. Pharaohs, even females, wore fake beards. These fake beards were hooked behind the ears and worn for state ceremonies.
- The Pharaoh's meal would usually consist of honey, bread, beer and wine. Examined mummies indicate that many Egyptian rulers were overweight and unhealthy, and may have even suffered from diabetes.
- One Pharaoh devised a plan to live forever. He figured that if night never came, the new day couldn't start, and time would basically stop. So every night he lit as many lamps as possible and pretended it was still daylight, and for the rest of his life he did not sleep. Instead, he stayed up all night drinking and celebrating until his death inevitably came.

RIDDLE



When is a person required to wash his hands before drinking?

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THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO SENT IN AN ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE: Although I am not a Levi, I still wash the hands of the *kohanim* before they *duchen*. Who am I?

ANSWER: If there is no Levi in *shul*, a *bechor* would wash the hands of the *kohanim*. (*Mishna Berura siman 128, 22*)

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Questions from the H.I.T. HOTLINE

Is there a problem to wear a tie containing *shatnez*?

The *issur* of *shatnez* applies to clothing that is meant to give pleasure to the person who wears them. The *poskim* explain that this would include clothing that helps a person stay warm such as a coat, or clothing that protect the body (or clothing according to some *poskim*) such as a sun hat. What about clothing meant for decorative purposes only such as a tie or a brooch?

The consensus of the *poskim* is that such clothing would be included in the *issur* of *shatnez*. The *poskim* do disagree however, whether this would be an *issur M'Deoraisa* or an *issur D'Rabbanan*. The *Ritva* in *Shabbos* (29b) writes that clothing which are meant solely for decorative purposes would be subject to the *issur* of *shatnez M'Deoraisa*. The *Beis Halevi* in *chelek aleph siman 3* brings a proof for this position from a *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (77b). The *Gemara* writes that the word לבישה is an acronym for ללא בושה. This indicates that not only is something worn for pleasure or protection considered to be clothing, but also something worn for decorative purposes as well.

The *Shita Mekubetzes* in *Beitza* (15a) clearly disagrees. He writes that the clothing of *kohanim*, although they were חסר ולתפארת, are not subject to the *issur* of *shatnez M'Deoraisa* as they are very stiff and were not worn for pleasure. However, he does write that they are

subject to *shatnez D'Rabbanan* because they are decorative. There are many *Rishonim* and *Achronim* that support both positions.

In conclusion: a person may not wear a tie or other clothing worn solely for decorative purposes either due to an *issur M'Deoraisa* or an *issur D'Rabbanan*.

Do water urns require *tevilla*?

If the inside of the urn is either metal or glass, *tevilla* should be done with a *bracha*. (After *tevilla*, the urn should be drained and then left for a day or two to ensure that it dried completely before usage).

If the urn is digital or there is a legitimate concern that water will damage it, מעיקר הדין it would not require *tevilla*. Rav Shlomo Miller maintains that an item whose usage will be nullified by *tevilla*, would not require *tevilla*. Similarly, the *Beis Yosef* in *hilchos tzitzis (siman 10)* writes that a very long garment would not require *tzitzis* strings if the strings will constantly be dragging on the ground and tearing. If such a garment would be obligated in *tzitzis*, the owner would have to be always repairing the strings. The principle of דרכיה דרכי נועם would preclude such a garment from needing *tzitzis*.

That being said, it is recommended that you sell the digital urn or part of it to a non-Jew. As we know from preparing for *Pesach*, a *halachic* sale to a gentile is not a simple matter and guidance from a Rov is highly recommended. At Halacha Institute of Toronto, we can help you sell *kaylim* that cannot be *toyvelled* due to a chance that toyvelling will harm the *kaylim*. Call us for more information.

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The 650 Ruble Kvittel

The story until now: R' Shachna's life took a devastating turn and he soon was left with very little money. He managed to borrow enough to purchase wine at the fair in Hungary. He used all the money for a bracha from the tzadik R' Tzvi Hirsch "meshores", and went to the fair penniless. One day a broker excitedly approached him.

"Shachna, have I got a deal for you!" The broker exclaimed excitedly barely getting the words out due to his lack of breath. "Truly, it is the opportunity of a lifetime – a fantastic arrangement with virtually limitless profit potential!"

The broker pulled up a chair and elaborated. "Not far from here is an enormous vineyard. The field has not been worked for around twenty years – that was when the former owner, a Jew, died, leaving the entire estate to his heirs. However, there is a vast warehouse full of sealed barrels of wine that were never sold. All this time, the division of the property has been the cause of bitter dispute and heartache, but finally, just yesterday in fact, the inheritors came to a peaceful agreement. They are now looking for someone to buy up all of those old barrels of wine in the warehouse. They want to do this as simply and quickly as possible, and with only one merchant. Shachna my friend, today is your lucky day – of course some investment is required, after all, we are talking here about mammoth quantities of old wine – but think of the revenue possibilities!"

R' Shachna wiped the sweat dripping out of his forehead. He didn't know how to react to such a situation. Perhaps this broker wasn't quite aware of his dire financial straits. He groped in his mind for words to explain, with devastating disappointment, how it was simply

impossible for him to undertake such a large venture at this time. As he stuttered his first few words, the broker interrupted. "Listen Shachna, I realize that by now you have most likely used up all of the money you brought for this trip, but at this late stage in the game, I am confident that because of your honorable and honest reputation, the family will be agreeable to selling you the merchandise on credit!"

Before R' Shachna could even react, the broker dashed out of the hotel. Within five minutes, he returned with a huge smile on his face – "They've agreed!"

Everything went smoothly after that and the barrels, a few weeks later, arrived safely in Krakow. It didn't take long before R' Shachna realized how truly phenomenal this deal had been. The wine he soon discovered, had aged during those twenty years, in the most perfect of ways. The wealthiest people from across Europe sought out his product and paid dearly for it. Within a very short time R' Shachna's financial situation improved astronomically. He was able to pay off all of his debts and then open up the great kosher wine manufacturing plant of Krakow.

The "Avnei Nezer" made sure to stress the point that the plant came about as a direct result of R' Shachna's *Emunas Tzadikim*. But whether your *bracha* comes through a holy *tzadik* or as a result of your own davening to Hashem, the message is the same – be patient and don't despair! Hashem is guiding us through our lives in a way that maximizes our possibilities for accomplishment. Learn lessons from the hard times, daven fervently, converse with Hashem, and surely better times will follow! •

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