

WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE?

When is passionate zealotry a positive trait, and when is kindness and compassion the better approach?

The Gemara in Zevachim tells a story of Rav Huna Bar Nosson who came before a king of Persia named Izgadar.

King Izgadar took Rav Huna's belt, which was encircling his body near his armpits, and repositioned it at his elbows. As he lowered the belt he said, "About you it is written, 'A kingdom of priests and a holy nation,' you must dress like the Kohanim in a beautiful manner. They don't gird themselves where they sweat; as stated, 'Do not gird yourselves in a place that sweats.'"

Rav Huna Bar Nosson later recounted his experience to two different people, Rav Ashi and Ameimar.

Rav Ashi repeated this story on occasion, but did not contribute any reflective significance.

Ameimar, on the other hand, saw biblical prophetic intensity in the story. "You are the fulfillment of [the Messianic prophecy], 'והיו מלכים אומנים' 'Kings will be your nursing fathers,' he told Rav Huna."

In his notes on Zohar, the Rebbe's father, Harav Levi Yitzchok, spends

close to four pages elucidating this story. He shows how each character had a distinct role, because of a unique mindset, indicated Kabbalistically in their name.

However he doesn't conclude with a take-away message, a lesson that could be applied to a person's life.

The Rebbe explained that his father had limited supplies of ink and paper. He hoped the reader would infer on his own a relevant application from the explanation he provided.

He starts with clarifying the principles that separated Rav Ashi and Ameimar, and how that evolved into opposing perceptions and responses.

PASSIONATE FEELINGS

The name Ashi comes from the word "aish." Fire, holy passion, strict and unbending. This impedes the opportunity for elevation and transformation. Rav Ashi reflected the divine *midah* of **Gevurah**.

Ameimar by contrast, contains the letters that spell "mayim," Water. Ameimar also means "amirah," To speak.

Amirah and *dibbur* both mean to speak, but *amirah* is soft and gentle speech as opposed to *dibbur* which is harsh speech. Water by nature always descends, like the characteristic of kindness which is to give to those that are lower and lacking. Ameimar reflected the divine *midah* of **Chesed**.

When Rav Ashi heard the story of Rav Huna Bar Nosson approaching a non-Jewish king, and the non-Jewish king lowering his belt and telling him how to behave, this made him uncomfortable. Better the king be consumed by the fire of *kedusha* than to involve himself in the affairs of someone of the caliber of Rav Huna Bar Nosson.

Ameimar, by contrast, discerned a submission of sorts in King Izgadar. The king sought to beautify Rav Huna Bar Nosson; that he should dress like the Kohanim, *lekavod u'letiferes*.

A LOOK OF BENEVOLENCE

The Rebbe derives a powerful lesson from his father's discussion:

There are two approaches one can have to himself, others, and the world at large.

One is the approach of embracing kindness, trying to see in oneself and others a connection with *kedusha*. The other approach is one of exclusiveness; to be passionate, but alone and secluded.



A LOOK AT THE TORAH OF
HARAV LEVI YITZCHOK
THROUGH THE REBBE'S SICHOS

Additionally, being kind, compassionate and generous, means that one is not particular to perform only according to the harsh letter of the law, but is instead willing to extend himself and to harness more of his own life into the service of Hashem. Conversely, the *gevurah* approach is to do Torah and mitzvos only at the level of absolute necessity.

Additionally, someone who lives with *gevurah* may indeed be very passionate about Torah and mitzvos, but that passion can cause him to be harsh on others. He can look at something that appears to be contradictory to Torah and mitzvos and that may result in him sweating from rage.

Someone who lives with *chesed* is always ready to see a depth of character that can be harnessed into a submission to *kedusha*.

Ameimar, embodying the attribute of kindness, saw in the depths of the three impure *klipos*, אַ הַמַּיִנַּאי, a word which in Aramaic means “belt,” but in Hebrew it means *emunah*.

To Ameimar, Izgadar moving the belt away from the place of physical heat and sweat was the very principle that he represented. The Persian king moved the “yardstick of faith” away from the fiery passion of *gevurah*. When this happens, there can be room for healing and

transformation, instead of banishment and destruction.

To Ameimar, Izgadar’s belt placement and comment was the symbolic act of *klipta* kneeling before *kedusha*, an act of service and submission embodying a micro-*Geulah* moment, that only a lens of kindness can appreciate. Rav Ashi, on the other hand, could not appreciate and discern *klipta’s* transformation, and so he said nothing.

UPPER AND LOWER BODY

The belt also has another function, that it is girded prior to prayer, because it severs the bond between the upper and lower body. The upper body is the location of the respiratory system, the heart, and the head. The lower body is the location of the digestive system.

Arabs, who wear a turban on their head, make no distinction between the higher and lower parts of their body. To them it is all the same. That is why they were not able to accept the Torah, which demands a person live with ‘mind over matter.’

[In *kedusha* there is also such a concept of a wrap around the head. The Kohen Gadol wore the *mitznefes*, which encircled his head. However the Kohen Gadol also had an *avnet*, which divided the upper and lower body. In fact, the way the Arabs do it today is

a result of the concept as it exists in *kedusha*.]

Unlike Arabs, a Jew divides his upper and lower body with a *gartel*. However, the purpose of the divide is not to banish the lower, but rather to refine it, to make sure it’s submissive to the higher.

This benevolent divide only functions this way when properly placed. If it is placed beneath the armpits it then turns into a firewall, which blocks out and wants nothing to do with the lower body.

There is a story of the Mittler Rebbe that illustrates all of the above:

He once heard someone other than his own father read the curses of the *tochacha*, and it caused him to become physically ill. When asked, “Don’t you hear this *parsha* every year?” He explained, “When father reads it is an entirely different thing.”

The same curses can come through like a zero tolerance policy, an uncompromising firewall, or they can come through as a dividing line between what is already good and what still needs to be elevated—like a “father” who sees the inherent good in everything and seeks only to demonstrate the division between what is clear goodness, and what still needs to be elevated and transformed. **T**

(Adapted from *Sichas Motzoei Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5739*)

מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר
בקשר עם יום הבהיר י"א ניסן

נדפס ע"י

הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק
וזוגתו מרת ח' שצערא
ומשפחתם שיחי
שפאלטר