

# The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn

Prepared by  
Rabbi Yehudah Leib Altein



To view the video with subtitles, visit:  
[MerkazAnash.com/teruma5776](http://MerkazAnash.com/teruma5776)



To listen on the phone, call:  
CONNECTION 347-498-0008, option 7

## MAKING SENSE OF SHTUS

The *kerashim* of the Mishkan were made of *atzei shittim*. The word *shittim* is related both to *shtus*, folly, and to *hatayah*, a turn off the path. Both explanations are interrelated: when one veers from the path of intellect, one is acting foolishly. This can occur in either direction, in a way that is either beneath intellect or above intellect.

In addition to the physical Mishkan, every person must build a personal Mikdash within himself (as Chazal infer from the plural of "*Veshachanti besocham*—and I will dwell among *them*"). Included in this Mishkan is the idea of *atzei shittim*.

One might interpret the *atzei shittim* of one's personal Mikdash as what was *formerly* shtus. In other words, one must discard his foolish conduct of the *past*—"One does not sin unless he is overcome with a spirit of folly"—and adopt the proper, logical path. However, in the famous maamar of Basi Legani 5710, the Frierdiker Rebbe takes this a step further: the Mikdash must retain shtus now as well, in the form of folly of kedushah that is *higher* than intellect.

### THE FOLLY OF R. SHMUEL

As an example of shtus that is higher than intellect, the Frierdiker Rebbe cites a story from Gemara (Kesubos 17a):

R. Shmuel bar R. Yitzchak would dance before the chosson and kallah while juggling three *hadass* branches. Said R. Zeira, "The elder is embarrassing us [because he is acting in a childish way, unbecoming for a talmid chacham]!" When R. Shmuel passed away, a pillar of fire separated between him and everyone else. [This was a great privilege, for] we have a tradition that a pillar of fire only separates one or two *tzaddikim* per generation.

Seeing this, R. Zeira said, "The elder's branch [שוטית] helped him achieve this." According to another version, R. Zeira said, "The elder's folly [שטות] helped him." According to yet another version, R. Zeira said, "The elder's outlook [שיטת] helped him."

From this episode we see that the idea of shtus, a conduct that defies

intellect, exists in kedushah as well. R. Shmuel's behavior was so radical that even the great Amora R. Zeira criticized him. However, he himself ultimately realized that it was thanks to this conduct that he merited to the pillar of fire.

### BALANCING OUT

Why indeed is it important to act with shtus in kedushah? Why can't one just act in a logical, proper manner?

If one were to always act in a logical manner, he might be able to suffice with such an attitude in matters of kedushah as well. However, we all know that not every action we do is determined with the yardstick of logic. Since we possess illogical behavior in *kelipah*, to contrast this we must act with shtus in kedushah as well.

We see this idea from the Rambam. Although one must generally

follow the middle path of each attribute, if a person has gone to one extreme, merely deciding to follow the middle path will be insufficient to balance out his behavior. He must follow the opposite extreme, until his tendency to follow the first extreme is eliminated.

### THE LATE-NIGHT DILEMMA

As an example let's take the concept of setting aside times for Torah study. Shulchan Aruch rules that one must set aside two daily sessions of study: once by day and once at night. But let's say you come home late, after a tiring day at work. You open a sefer and try to study, but it just doesn't work; your eyes keep closing on their own.

In such a case, you might calculate as follows: Instead of forcing myself to study now, I'll go to sleep and get a good night's rest, and tomorrow I'll make up the time by studying double. This way I won't lose any time of learning, and my learning will be much more productive!

But then there is another attitude: Come what may, I will not let one day pass without studying my set shiurim. What will I gain, you'll

ask? The gain is this itself that no day will pass without Torah study! Such an attitude may attract criticism from a logical viewpoint, but it's a conduct of *shtus dekedushah*, a folly that defies reasoning.

Just as this applies to Torah, it can apply to avodah (tefillah) and gemilus chassadim as well. We all know that when it comes to other matters, such as ensuring that our physical needs or desires are fulfilled, we don't make such calculations. Since we are not acting logically in any case, we must act with shtus in kedushah as well.

## CONNECTING TO THE INFINITE

But then there is a deeper explanation why it is necessary to have shtus in kedushah: to connect to Hashem as He is beyond limitations.

The possuk ascribes the description of *adam*—man—to Hashem:

"Upon the throne, I saw the form of a Man from above." On the other hand, the possuk states, "He is not a man to reconsider." There is a level of Elokus that is higher than limitations ("He is not a man"), and there is a level of Elokus that has descended to take on a limited expression ("I saw the form of a Man").

When one serves Hashem in an orderly, "manly" fashion, he connects with a limited expression of Elokus, as it has gone through *tzimtzumim*. In order to connect to Hashem as he is beyond any limitation, we must similarly break free from our limitations and serve Him in an unrestrained manner.

## THE FIERY PILLAR

This, then, is the deeper meaning of the above-mentioned story.

R. Shmuel had merited to a pillar of fire that separated between him and *kuli alma*, which can be literally translated as "every worldly [aspect]." In other words, R. Zeira witnessed that R. Shmuel had reached a level that transcended any and every worldly limitation.

One cannot attain new heights after one's passing; that is the time when one's previous accomplishments are revealed. When R. Zeira reflected on this phenomenon, he realized that R. Shmuel must have exemplified an other-worldly conduct during his lifetime. He

concluded that the pillar was the result of his superrational behavior in matters of kedushah, which connects a person to a level that is beyond limitations.

## NORMAL SHTUS

In light of the above, we can understand the three versions of R. Zeira's response.

R. Zeira attributed the pillar of fire to R. Shmuel's act of juggling *branches* (שוטיות), and he explained that the greatness of this act was the fact that it displayed folly (שטות) in kedushah.

Within such a behavior itself there can be two methods.

One can attain a level where he rises above all restrictions—the avodah of *bechol me'odecha* and mesiras nefesh—but this takes place merely from time to time.

(On a lighter note, the Rebbe once related that during one of the Rebbe Rashab's trips to Germany, he once spoke with a certain Jew about the avodah of *bechol me'odecha*. To demonstrate his current "level" in avodas Hashem, the Jew told the Rebbe Rashab that when he says Shema, he

---

"R. Shmuel's shtus in kedushah wasn't merely an occasional avodah; it was his outlook with which he lived on a constant basis."

---

contemplates on the first possuk for an entire minute!

One can have mesiras nefesh and simultaneously look at his watch and take note that he has experienced mesiras nefesh for an entire minute!)

When R. Zeira saw the pillar of fire, he realized that this was R. Shmuel's *permanent* level. He concluded that his shtus in kedushah wasn't merely an occasional avodah; it was his outlook (שיטת) with which he lived on a constant basis. For R. Shmuel, the superrational was natural.

For further study, Bassi Legani 5715 and 5735

Sponsored by  
Rabbi and Mrs. Yitzchok Wolf

Help make The Chassidus Perspective available on a weekly basis.

Sponsor a week or join our monthly support team.



merkazanash.com  
info@merkazanash.com  
347.471.1770