

# The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn



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## REVEALING OUR INNER LIGHT

Parshas Emor begins with the *possuk*, "...speak to the Kohanim the sons of Aharon, and tell them..." Why does the *possuk* repeat itself, stating two expressions of speech ("speak...and tell them")? The Gemara in Yevamos explains that this teaches us that adults (*gedolim*) are responsible for the children (*ketanim*), ensuring that they, too, do not defile themselves by coming in contact with a dead person.

This idea (that adults are responsible to ensure that children do not sin) is stated in two other places as well: with regard to eating *shekatzim* (crawling animals) and drinking blood. The Gemara proceeds to explain why this directive needs to be repeated three times: there is a certain stringency in each of these three areas, and therefore each one could not have been derived from the others. Once this concept is written in all three places, it is applied to every other area in Torah as well.

### GEDOLIM AND KETANIM

The fact that this idea applies to every area in Torah indicates that it teaches us a basic concept.

What is this basic concept?

Although the Gemara is referring to *gedolim* and *ketanim* in age, it can also be understood as hinting to *gedolim* and *ketanim* in stature: someone who is great in Torah wisdom, *mitzvah* observance, and *yiras Shomayim*, and someone who is deficient in these areas. The message, then, is that a "*gado*" should think about those who are still "*ketanim*."

One may think: "I am advanced in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*. [Indeed, it may be that he is not fooling himself and is truly so.] Why should I 'descend' and interact with someone who is lagging far behind?"

There are actually two questions a person can ask. One is, "I would be better off using my time to study Torah, to learn a page of Gemara or a *maamar Chassidus*. Why should I interrupt my lofty pursuits to think about such a lowly person?!"

The second possible question is, "Even if I were to break away from my studies, who is to say I will be successful in influencing someone

who is on such a low level?!"

In fact, there are three possible factors that can motivate this second question, hinted to by the three topics of blood, *shekatzim*, and impurity.

### INFLUENCING THE OBSESSED AND UNREFINED

**Blood.** The Sifri explains that the reason there are so many prohibitions against consuming blood is because in those days, people were obsessed with it.

A person may say: "It's one thing if we are dealing with a person who is indeed a *katan*, but has merely sinned intermittently. I can understand how it is possible to influence such a person to rectify his ways. But we are dealing with a person who is obsessed with worldly pleasures, and has been living this type of lifestyle for years now. Can *such* a person be influenced as well?!"

The Torah teaches us that yes, a *gado* must even interact with a *katan* who is obsessed with something forbidden.

**Shekatzim.** The Gemara says that a person detests *shekatzim*. If someone *does* consume such creatures despite their repulsive nature, it demonstrates that he is lowly indeed, and can barely be classified as a human.

A person may say: "If someone is deficient in Torah and *mitzvos*, I understand that I must go and speak to him. But here is someone who isn't just lacking in Torah and *mitzvos*; he is lacking in the basics of humanity, doing

things no regular person would ever do. Am I supposed to interact with *such* a person, too?!"

The Torah therefore provides us with a separate teaching that even with regard to *shekatzim*, a *gado* must think about a *katan*.

(This alone, however, would not be sufficient. Even if someone eats *shekatzim*, it may be that he only eats them from time to time, unlike the obsession of blood. A separate *possuk* must therefore teach us that this concept applies to blood as well.)

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## “BUT I DON’T BELIEVE!”

**Impurity.** The Rambam writes that the concept of purity and impurity belongs to the category of *chukim*. Impurity is not something you can touch or sense and cannot be explained with logic. It is among those things that require *emunah*.

A person may say: “It’s one thing to explain to another why he should not consume blood or *shekatzim*. These are things that can be explained logically. But how can I talk about concepts that require belief? I myself don’t understand them; I simply believe that they are true. But he says he doesn’t believe, and that as long as I don’t give him a rational explanation, he won’t accept it. How can I bring up *such* concepts?”

It is therefore necessary to teach us yet a third time—in Parshas Emor—that a *gadol* must teach a *katan*.

How indeed is this possible?

The Rambam writes that deep down, every Jew wants to fulfill Hashem’s Will. Jews are called “believers, sons of believers,” as in truth every Jew *does* believe; it’s just that this belief may be concealed. Although he may say he doesn’t believe, that’s only what *he* thinks; in truth, however, *he does* believe.

All that is necessary is to speak “words that come from the heart,” and he will surely be affected. Torah tells us—and thereby empowers us—that a *gadol* must deal with a *katan*, and he will surely succeed.

## REMOVING THE DIVISIONS

All this answers the second question a person may ask (“Who is to say I will be successful in influencing a *katan*?”). Then there is the first question—“Why should I, a *gadol*, interrupt my lofty pursuits and think about a *katan*?”

The answer to this question is alluded to in the wording used by Chazal to teach us that a *gadol* must take responsibility for a *katan*—“*Lehazhir gedolim al ha’ketanim*.” *Lehazhir* comes from the word *zohar*, which can also mean “light.” (This is one of the reasons the *Zohar* is

called with this name, because it means “light.”)

Chazal say, “Be careful—*zahir*—with a minor *mitzvah* as you are with a major one.” The Baal Shem Tov explains that *zahir* can also be interpreted as “light.” When the light of the *mitzvah* is not shining, one may give more importance to one *mitzvah* than to another. But when the *mitzvah* is shining, he treats them all the same.

The same is true with *Bnei Yisroel*. The *Zohar* states that Torah, Yisroel, and Hashem each possess two facets, one revealed and one hidden. The revealed facet of a Jew consists of those parts of him which can be measured: how much he fears Hashem, how much he studies, and so on. The concealed facet is his *neshamah* and his connection to Hashem. This is an element that cannot be measured; it is the “light” within him that has no limits.

(To use kabbalistic terminology, this is the difference between *keilim* and *ohr*, vessels and light. *Keilim* refers to how the *ohr* adopts a limited, defined form. The *ohr* itself, however, has no limits.)

However, this “light” of a Jew may not always shine. To enable our inner light to come to the fore, Chazal tell us, the *gadol* must deal

with the *katan*. As long as he views himself as being greater than the other, even if that is the truth, it shows he is limited to his exterior facet, where such factors make a difference. If he wants to reveal his inner facet, he must break his ego and reach out to the *katan*. Doing so displays the inner dimension where all Jews are equal, allowing it to shine.


This is what Chazal hint to us with the word “*lehazhir*.” Reaching out to a *katan* is not a descent; it is an ascent, allowing us to go beyond our limited, outer form and reach our deeper, unlimited self.

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 2, pp. 680–681. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 151–152.

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