

חובות הלבבות • שער הפרישות • פרק שני

Sentence by Sentence • Punctuated Hebrew with Translation and Notes • Navy & Gold Edition

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In Shaar HaPerishus, Chapter Two, Rabbeinu Bachya delves into the profound concept of 'special abstinence' for Bnei Torah. The chapter begins by exploring various definitions of this unique form of *perishus*, presenting a range of perspectives from the Sages on what it truly entails. We'll see how different Chachamim understood the essence of detaching from worldly distractions and cultivating a deeper connection with Hashem.

Following this exploration of definitions, Rabbeinu Bachya explains the critical need for Bnei Torah to embrace this special abstinence. He illuminates how the yetzer hara subtly draws people away from Torah and avodas Hashem by making worldly pursuits seem appealing, leading to a spiritual decline. The chapter emphasizes that without this special *perishus*, even those dedicated to Torah can become entangled in the illusions of this world, losing their focus on their true purpose.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

אבל מה גדר הפרישות המיוחדת וצורך אנשי התורה אליה נחלקו החכמים בגדרה:

However, regarding the definition of this special *perishus* (abstinence) and the need for *Anshei Torah* (Torah scholars) to practice it, the Sages were divided in their definitions.

מהם מי שאמר: הפרישות עזיבת כל מה שטורד מן האלהים.

Among them, one opinion stated that *perishus* is the abandonment of everything that distracts a person from Hashem.

ואמר אחר: הפרישות מאס בעולם וקצר המאוים.

Another said: *Perishus* is to despise this world and to shorten one's desires.

ואמר אחר: הפרישות מנוחת הנפש וחסימת רעיוניה מכל מה שהיא להם למנוחה.

Another said: *Perishus* is the tranquility of the soul and blocking its thoughts from anything that brings it (the soul) comfort.

ואמר אחר: הפרישות הבטחון באלהים.

Another said: *Perishus* is trust in Hashem.

ואמר אחר: הפרישות כסות בשר הערוה ושבר הרעבון ומאס בזולתם.

Another said: *Perishus* is to cover one's nakedness, to break one's hunger, and to despise anything beyond that.

ואמר אחר: הפרישות עזב אהבת הפרואים ואהב הבדידות.

Another said: *Perishus* is to abandon the love of other creations and to love solitude.

ואמר אחר: הפרישות הודאה על הטובה וסבל הנסיון.

Another said: *Perishus* is gratitude for the good and patiently enduring trials.

ואמר אחר: הפרישות מניעת הנפש מכל מנוחה ותענוג גופני אלא הטבע אשר לא תוכל לעמד בלעדיו ויוציא זולתו מן הנפש.

Another said: *Perishus* is preventing the soul from any physical comfort or pleasure, except for what nature requires and without which one cannot survive, and to remove everything else from the soul.

וזה הגדר יותר ראוי לפרישות הנוהגת בתורתנו משאר הגדרים אשר זכרנו.

And this last definition is more fitting for the *perishus* practiced in our Torah than the other definitions we mentioned.

אך צרה אנשי התורה לנהוג בפרישות הוא: שכונת התורה להמשיל השכל בכל תאוות הנפש ולהגבירו עליהן.

However, the need for *Anshei Torah* to practice *perishus* is this: The Torah's intention is to make the intellect rule over all the soul's desires and to strengthen it over them.

ומן הידוע כי הגברת התאוה על השכל היא ראש כל חטאת וסבת כל גנות.

And it is well-known that the overpowering of desire over the intellect is the root of all sin and the cause of all that is reprehensible.

ולא נטה עם אל העולם עד שנטו מן התורה והשיאם היצר להניח ישוב עולם הצלתם ונטה בהם מדרך אבותיהם אשר היה דרך די הצרה בעולם והספק ממנו ולהסתפק בדבר המספיק לחיות בו.

And a people did not incline towards this world until they had strayed from the Torah, and the *yetzer hara* enticed them to abandon cultivating the world of their salvation and to deviate from the path of their forefathers, whose way was to take only what was necessary from this world, to be content with sufficiency, and to be satisfied with what was enough for their livelihood.

ויפה להם התפארה בו והרבות מהונו וחיבב עליהם להתעדין ולהתנשא בו עד אשר צללו במצלות ימיו.

And the *yetzer hara* made the glory of this world beautiful to them, and accumulating its wealth, and made indulging in its pleasures and boasting about it desirable to them, until they sank into the depths of its seas.

וחיבם היצר לסבל צער גליהם והעולם מושל בהם ואוּטם אַזניהם ומעצים את עיניהם.

And the *yetzer hara* compelled them to suffer the pain of its waves, and the world rules over them, stopping up their ears and shutting their eyes.

ואין מהם אחד אלא מתעסק בתענוגו כשישיגו ויזדמן לו והוא תורתו ודתו עד שטרד אותו מאלהיו כמו שאמר (ירמיהו ב' י"ט): "תִּסְרֹךְ רַעְתָּךְ וּמִשְׁבֹּתֶיךָ תִּזְכָּח וְגו'".

And there is not one of them who does not occupy himself with its pleasures whenever he can attain them and an opportunity presents itself, and this becomes his Torah and his religion, until it drives him away from Hashem, as it says (Yirmiyahu 2:19): "Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you, etc."

ומהם מי שימנע ממנו התענוג ההוא ומחשבתו עליו ונפשו שואפת עליו ותלויה בו ושונה (ושונה) בבקשתו לילה ויומם כמו שאמר (תהלים לו): "אֵון יִחַשֵׁב עַל מִשְׁכָּבוֹ יִתְיַצֵּב עַל דֶּרֶךְ לֹא טוֹב".

And among them is one from whom that pleasure is withheld, yet his thoughts are fixed on it, his soul yearns for it and is dependent on it, and he errs in his pursuit of it day and night, as it says (Tehillim 36:5): "He devises mischief upon his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good."

וּשְׁנֵיהֶם בְּעֵינֵינוּ טוֹבְעִים מִהַשִּׁיג הַטּוֹב בּוֹ נִגְזְרִים וְנִלְאִים מִפְּסִידִים בְּסַחֲוֹרָתָם וְנִפְשָׁם פְּחוּתָה וּבְחִירָתָם רָעָה.

Both of these types are drowning in their pursuits, cut off and weary from ever achieving any good from it; they are losing in their business, their souls are diminished, and their choice is bad.

סְכָלִים בְּעֵרָה הַתְּמוּרָה וְהַמוֹקֵר בָּהּ כְּמוֹ שְׂאֵמֶר (שם קו): "וַיִּמְירוּ אֶת כְּבוֹדָם בְּתַבְנִית שׁוֹר וְגו'".

They are foolish in the value of the exchange and what is exchanged for it, as it says (Tehillim 106:20): "They exchanged their Glory for the likeness of an ox eating grass, etc."

וְאִינָם סָרִים קְרוּאֵי הַהֲרִגָל הַגּוֹבֵר וְרִהְבֵי הַסַּחֲוֹרוֹת הַמִּפְסִידוֹת לְטָרֵד (ס"א לענות) לְבוֹתָם בְּתוֹלְדוֹת רִהְבֵי וּלְיֹשֵׁב בְּלִבָּם גִּלְגּוּלָיו.

And they do not turn away from the powerful call of habit and the pride of their losing businesses, which constantly distract their hearts with its vain outcomes and implant its endless desires in their hearts.

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַרְבוּ רַחֲקוּ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר רַחֲקוּ מֵאוֹר הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר נִפְרַד מֵהֶם בְּחִבְרַת הַיֵּצֵר אֲשֶׁר יָדְעוּ הַתְּאֵכָה הָאִפְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּגְדַּל הָעוֹלָם בְּלִבָּם.

And the more they became entangled, the further they distanced themselves; and the further they distanced themselves from the light of truth, which separated from them due to their association with the *yetzer hara* they knew, the more darkness enveloped them, and the world grew in their hearts.

וַיִּיף חֲזָקוֹ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם, וַיּוֹשִׁיבוּ אוֹתוֹ בְּהַחֲרֵב שְׂכָלָם.

Its strength became beautiful in their eyes, and they established it by destroying their intellect.

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר נֹסֵף הָעוֹלָם יָשׁוּב נֹסֵף שְׂכָלָם חֲרִבָּן עַד אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ דְרָכּוֹ הָרָעָה כִּי הִיא הַטּוֹבָה וְתַעֲוָתוֹ כִּי הִיא הַיִּשְׁרָה וְשִׁמוּהוּ לְחֹק וּלְמוֹסֵר.

And the more the world was settled, the more their intellect was destroyed, until they considered its evil ways to be good and its straying to be righteous, and they made it a statute and a moral outlook.

וַיּוֹרִישׁוּ אוֹתוֹ הָאֲבוֹת אֶת בְּנֵיהֶם וְהַעִיר עָלָיו מִשְׁכָּלָם (וַיִּגְדְּלוּ עָלָיו צִאֲצָאֵיהֶם) וַצּוּ בּוֹ הַמוֹנֵם וְהַתְקַנָּאוּ עָלָיו שְׂרִיהֶם עַד אֲשֶׁר נִתְבַּסַּס הַיֵּצֵר בָּהֶם (ס"א ביניהם) וְנִתְמַלְאֵת הַחֶמֶת.

And fathers bequeathed it to their children, and their teachers aroused them to it, and their masses were commanded to follow it, and their leaders competed over it, until the *yetzer hara* became firmly established among them and their homes were filled with vanity.

וְשָׁב בָּהֶם הַדְּבָר הַנִּכְרִי בְּעוֹלָם נֹדֵעַ וְהַדְּרָה הַנִּכּוֹנָה בּוֹ נִכְרְיָה וְהַמְסַפִּיק מִמוֹתָרָיו הָרַעַב הַכֶּסֶף (קצור כחובותיו).

And what was foreign in the world became known to them, and the correct path became foreign to them, and one who was content with what was sufficient from its superfluities was considered to be neglecting his duties.

וַעֲשֵׂה כָּל אֶחָד מֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה שֶׁעָשָׂה רֵעֵהוּ.

And each one of them did as he saw his fellow do.

וְהָאִחִיז מִמֶּנּוּ דִּי סִפְקוּ נִקְרָא עֲצָל וְהַמְתָּאֲחֵר (ס"א וְהַמְתָּעֲצָל) מִהֶרְבּוֹת בּוּ מְקַצֵּר וְהַמְסַתְפֵּק בְּמִסְפִּיק מִמֶּנּוּ חֵלֶשׁ וְהַעֲוִיבֵר (וְהַעֲוִיבֵר) אוֹתוֹ מִשְׁתַּדֵּל.

And one who took only what was sufficient from it was called lazy, and one who delayed in accumulating more of it was considered a slacker, and one who was content with only what was necessary was considered weak, while he who surpassed this amount was regarded as industrious.

וּמִשְׁתַּבְּחִים בּוּ וּמִתְנַשְּׂאִים וּבִעְבוּרוֹ מִתְחַבְּרִים וְכוּעָסִים וְרוֹצִים.

And they praise themselves and boast about it, and for its sake they befriend, become angry, and desire.

וּבִעְבוּר הַגָּבוֹל בּוּ (ס"א וּבִעְבוּר הַגָּמוּל בּוּ) עוֹשִׂים בְּטִגְיָהֶם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְתוֹרָתָם מִלְּבוּשֵׁיהֶם וּמוֹסָרָם חֲזוֹק מִשְׁכָּנֵיהֶם.

And for the sake of its reward, they make their bellies their god, their clothing their Torah, and the strengthening of their dwellings their ethics.

וְתוֹעִים בְּמִצּוֹלוֹת הַסִּכְלוֹת שָׁבִים בְּמִרוּצוֹת הָעֲצָלָה עֲמוּסִים בְּמַעֲמָסוֹת הַתְּאֻוֹת וּמִבְקָשִׁים גָּמוּל הָעוֹבְדִים בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָעוֹבְרִים וּמִדְּרָגוֹת הַצְּדִיקִים בְּמִנְהֲגֵי הָרָשָׁעִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֵחָז"ל: "עוֹשִׂים מַעֲשֵׂה זִמְרִי וּמִבְקָשִׁים שָׂכָר כְּפִינְחָס".

And they stray in the depths of foolishness, turning in the paths of idleness, laden with the burdens of desires, seeking the reward of the worshippers of Hashem while performing the deeds of transgressors, and the levels of the righteous with the conduct of the wicked, as our Sages, *zichronam livracha*, said: "They commit the acts of Zimri and seek the reward of Pinchas."

וְכַאֲשֶׁר הִגִּיעַ הַיָּצֵר בְּרַב אֲנָשֵׁי הַתּוֹרָה אֶל מָה שֶׁסִּפְרָנוּ נִצְטָרְכָנוּ (הַצְטָרְכוּ) לַעֲמֹד כְּנִגְדּוֹ בְּפִרְיָשׁוֹת הַמִּיחָדָת אֲשֶׁר זָכְרָנוּ גְּדִרְיָה בְּפִתְיַחַת הַשַּׁעַר הַזֶּה וּלְהַתִּיצֵב לִפְנֵינוּ בָּהּ עַד אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁכַּח אֶל גְּדֵר הַנִּכְוָנָה הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר בָּהּ תִּקְנֶת הָאֱמוּנָה וְהָעוֹלָם.

And since the *yetzer hara* has brought most *Anshei Torah* to the state we have described, we need to stand against it with the special *perishus* whose definitions we mentioned at the beginning of this gate, and to confront it with this *perishus* until it returns them to the correct Torah boundary, which is the rectification for both faith and the world.

וְהִיא בִּדְיוֹ בִּעְבוּר זֶה שִׁיחִיו בְּאֲנָשֵׁי הַתּוֹרָה אֲנָשִׁים יְחִידִים נוֹשְׂאִים הַפְּרִיָּשׁוֹת הַמִּיחָדָת וּמִקְבָּלִים תְּנָאִיָּה לְהוֹעִיל בָּהּ אֲנָשֵׁי הַתּוֹרָה עִם פְּנוֹת נִפְשׁוֹתָם וְנִטּוֹת מְדוּתָם אֶל הַתְּאֻוֹת הַבְּהֻמָּיוֹת עִם הַיָּצֵר וְיִהְיוּ רוֹפְאִים לָאֱמוּנָה וְלַנִּפְשׁוֹת יַעֲלוּ אֲרוּכָה לָהֶם בָּעֵת נִטּוֹת מִהֲמָדוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת אֶל הַמְּדוּת שְׁאֲחִירֵתָם מְגָנָה, וּבָעֵת גְּבוּרָה יִצְרִיָּהֶם עַל שִׁכְלָם וְעַת טְרַדְתָּם בְּמוֹתָרֵי עוֹלָמָם מִהֲדַבְּרִים הַצְּרִיכִים מְאֹד לָאֱמוּנָתָם.

And it is therefore proper that there should be among *Anshei Torah* unique individuals who bear this special *perishus* and accept its conditions, to benefit other *Anshei Torah* when their souls turn and their traits incline towards animalistic desires with the *yetzer hara*. And these individuals will be doctors for faith and for souls, bringing healing to them when they stray from good traits towards disgraceful traits, and when their *yetzer hara* overpowers their intellect, and when their preoccupation with the superfluities of their world distracts them from matters most essential to their faith.

כְּאִלוּ כְּוִנָּתָם לְרַפָּא חוּלֵה הָאֱמוּנָה אוֹ דְיוֹה נֶפֶשׁ מִמְּדוּי הַסִּפְקוֹת יִמְהָרוּ לְהַעֲלוֹת לוֹ אֲרוּכָה בְּאֲמַתָּת חֻכְמָתָם.

As if their intention is to heal one sick in faith or one whose soul is afflicted by the maladies of doubts, they will hasten to bring him healing with the truth of their wisdom.

או בורח מעבודת האלהים ישיבוהו אליה ויבטיחוהו.

Or if someone is fleeing from the service of Hashem, they will return him to it and reassure him.

או עמוס בתטאיו יערבו לו מחילת האלהים בשובו מהם.

Or if someone is burdened by his sins, they will guarantee him Hashem's forgiveness upon his repentance from them.

ואם יבא אליהם שוכח אלהים יזכירוהו או צדיק יאשרוהו או אוהב אלהים יאהבוהו או מגדל ליכלת האלהים יגדלוהו.

And if one who forgets Hashem comes to them, they will remind him; or a *tzaddik*, they will affirm him; or one who loves Hashem, they will love him; or one who magnifies Hashem's capability, they will magnify him.

ואם יחטא יזכירוהו מיד לשוב ואם יחלה יבקרוהו.

And if he sins, they will immediately remind him to repent; and if he falls ill, they will visit him.

ואם יהיה להם מותר מן העולם יעניקוהו ממנו ואם יפגעוהו פגע יעזרוהו.

And if they have a surplus from this world, they will bestow it upon him; and if misfortune befalls him, they will help him.

והם דומים בעולם לשמש שפושטת אורה בעולם עליונו ותחתונו כי היא מאירה מה שלמעלה ממנה כמו שהיא מאירה מה שלמטה ממנה מן הכוכבים והגרמים.

And they are like the sun in the world, which spreads its light throughout the upper and lower worlds, for it illuminates what is above it just as it illuminates what is below it, among the stars and celestial bodies.

וכן אלה היחידים אשר ספרתי לה בעוה"ז כמ"ש (בראשית י"ח:כ"ו): "ונשאתי לכל המקום בעבורם" ואמר (תהלים קו): "לולי משה בחירי".

And so too are these unique individuals, about whom I have told you, in this world, as it is written (Bereishis 18:26): "And I will forgive the entire place for their sake," and it says (Tehillim 106:23): "Were it not for Moshe, His chosen one."

ובעולם הבא כמו שאמר (משלי יא): "פרי צדיק עץ חיים ועל כן אמרה דבורה (שופטים ה): "ואהביו כציאת השמש בגברתו".

And in the World to Come, as it says (Mishlei 11:30): "The fruit of a *tzaddik* is a tree of life," and therefore Devorah said (Shoftim 5:31): "And those who love Him are like the sun when it goes forth in its might."

ועל המנהג הזה בפרישות תמצא הנביאים עליהם השלום וחסיד קדמונינו בכל דור ודור כאשר הוא מבאר בספריהם, ואני עתיד לבאר מזה מה שיזדמן לי במקומו הראוי בעזרת הצור יתברך:

And regarding this practice of *perishus*, you will find that the Prophets, *alehem hashalom*, and the pious ones of our ancestors in every generation, followed it, as is explained in their books. And I intend to explain from this whatever comes my way in its proper place, with the help of the blessed Rock.

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

This chapter first presents diverse definitions of 'special abstinence' for Bnei Torah, ranging from renouncing distractions and curtailing desires to cultivating tranquility, trust in Hashem, and limiting physical pleasures to only what is essential. Rabbeinu

Bachya concludes that the definition of denying oneself all bodily pleasures beyond what is absolutely necessary for survival is most aligned with the Torah. He then explains the vital need for this abstinence, showing how the yetzer hara entices people, even Bnei Torah, to pursue worldly accumulation and pleasures, thereby distracting them from their spiritual path and leading them astray from Hashem, as the pasuk says, "Your own wickedness shall correct you." This worldly entanglement, whether through active pursuit or longing, results in spiritual loss and a distorted perception of good and evil, passed down through generations, making it imperative to counter the yetzer hara with this special abstinence.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The Chovos HaLevavos here gives us a powerful chiddush about *perishus*, about separating ourselves from the world. We might think it means being a hermit, or denying ourselves everything. But the Baalei Chovos HaLevavos tells us the truest definition for us, Bnei Torah, is to deny ourselves all physical pleasures and comforts *except* for what is absolutely necessary for our basic existence. It's not about suffering, chas v'shalom, but about making sure our physical needs don't become our masters.

Why is this so crucial? Because the Torah's whole purpose is to make our *seichel*, our intellect and neshama, rule over our *taavos*, our physical desires. The yetzer hara's biggest trick is to flip this around, to make us think that accumulating more, indulging more, is the path to happiness. He makes us chase after things that are not just unnecessary, but actively distract us from Hashem. We see people, even Bnei Torah, who get so caught up in the rat race, in making more money, in having nicer things, that it becomes their whole "Torah and avodah." They're constantly thinking about it, even when they don't have it, and it pulls them away from their true purpose.

The Chovos HaLevavos is telling us that this isn't just a problem for "others"; it's a nisayon for *us*, for "most men of Torah." The yetzer hara makes us think that if we don't chase after more, we're "lazy" or "weak." But the truth is the opposite: true strength is to be content with what is sufficient, to let our neshama lead, not our body. This is the path of our Avos, who lived with *dei hatzorech*, with just enough. When we get caught in the world's current, we lose our clarity, our seichel gets "destroyed," and we start to call evil good, and crooked straight.

So, what's the practical takeaway for us today? Let's take a moment to look at one area in our lives where we might be chasing after something beyond *dei hatzorech*, something that's more about comfort or status than true need. And today, let's make a small, conscious decision to pull back from that one thing, even just a little, to let our neshama breathe and our seichel rule.