

חובות הלבבות • שער הפרישות • פרק שלישי

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

ON THIS PAGE

In this third Perek of Shaar HaPerishus, Rabbeinu Bachya delves into the different categories of people who practice *perishus*, abstinence. We'll explore the three types of *prushim* who are motivated by *yiras Shamayim*, and then contrast them with three types of individuals whose abstinence is driven by worldly concerns.

This chapter helps us understand the nuances of *perishus*, showing us that not all forms of abstinence are equal. Rabbeinu Bachya guides us to appreciate the true, Torah-aligned path of *perishus* and to recognize those approaches that, while appearing abstinent, are actually rooted in other motivations.

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

אבל לכמה פתות נחלקים הפרושים בפרישות, אומר בתשובת השאלה הזאת, כי הפרישות מן העולם תהיה לאחת משתי עלות כמו שהקדמנו, והם התורה והעולם.

Regarding how many categories the *perushim* (abstainers) are divided into concerning *perishus* (abstinence), I will answer this question by explaining that *perishus* from the world stems from one of two reasons, as we introduced earlier: either for the sake of Torah or for worldly gain.

והפרושים מחמת מסרת התורה, שהם אנשי הפרישות האמתית, הם שלש פתות.

Those who abstain due to the tradition of the Torah, who are the true people of *perishus*, fall into three categories.

אחת מהם: אנשים שהלכו בגדר הפרישות העליון להדמות כאישים הרוחניים, ויעזבו כל מה שטרידם מן האלהים, וברחו מן הישוב אל המדבריות והשימוז וההרים הגבוהים, מקום שאין צוות ולא חברה.

One of them are people who pursued the highest level of *perishus*, to emulate spiritual beings; they abandoned everything that would distract them from Hashem, and fled from civilization to the deserts, wastelands, and high mountains, places where there is no companionship or society.

אוכלים מה שהם מוצאים מעשב הארץ ועלי האילנים, ולובשים הבגדים והצמר, ויחסו בסלעים.

They eat whatever they find from the vegetation of the earth and the leaves of trees, wear worn-out garments and wool, and take shelter in the rocks.

טרדם מורא הבורא ממורא הברואים.

Their awe of the Creator drives away any fear of created beings.

ושעשעה אותם אהבת הבורא מחשב באהבת בני אדם, והספיק להם מה שיש להם אצל האלהים, ולא שייחלו על מה שיש בידי אדם.

The love of the Creator so delights them that it distracts them from thinking about the love of human beings; what they have from Hashem is sufficient for them, and they do not hope for anything that is in the hands of man.

והכת הזאת רחוקה מכל הכתות בדרך הדרך השנה התורה, מפני שהם עוזבים ענין עולמם לגמרי, ואין בדין התורה לעזוב ישוב העולם לגמרי, כמו שהקדמנו במה שאמר הכתוב (ישעיה מה): "לא תהו בראה, לשבת יצרה".

This category is the furthest of all categories from the balanced, Torah-prescribed path, because they completely abandon their worldly affairs, and it is not the Torah's way to completely forsake the settlement of the world, as we previously established from the verse (Yeshayahu 45:18): "He did not create it for desolation; He formed it to be inhabited."

והכת השניה: אנשים שהלכו בדרך הגדר השפרישות, ומאסו מותר העולם לגמרי, וסבלו לחסם תאותם מהם.

The second category consists of people who followed the middle path of *perishus*; they completely rejected the superfluous things of this world and undertook to curb their desires for them.

והמותרים על שני פנים.

These superfluous things are of two types.

אחד מהם: מותרים שהם חוץ לאדם ונפרדים ממנו, כקנינים הגופיים והמאכל והמשתה והמלבוש והמשכן.

One type is superfluous things that are external to a person and separate from him, such as physical possessions, food, drink, clothing, and dwelling.

והשני: מותרים דבקים לאדם, אין נפרדות ממנו סבותם, כדבור והשחוק והמרגוע והמנוחה והבט אל המותרים והאזן אליהם והעבר על הרעיונים מה שאין צריך.

The second type is superfluous things that cling to a person, whose causes are not external to him, such as excessive speech, laughter, relaxation, leisure, looking at or listening to useless things, and dwelling on unnecessary thoughts.

ופסקה הכת הזאת ממנה כל קרואי המותרים, ולא ראו לצאת מהישוב להספיק לגופם מזונותם כמו שהם חכים בו, והמירו המדבריות וההרים בבדידות בבתיהם והיחידות במשכניהם, והשיגו שני הענינים והגיעו אל שני החלקים, והם יותר קרובים אל הדרך השנה והתורה ממי שהקדמנו זכרו.

This category cut themselves off from all things called superfluous, but they did not see fit to leave civilization to provide their bodies with their necessary sustenance, as they are obligated to do; instead, they exchanged deserts and mountains for solitude in their homes and seclusion in their dwellings. They achieved both aspects and attained both portions, and they are closer to the balanced and Torah-true path than the one we mentioned previously.

והכת השלישית: אנשים שהלכו בדרך הגדר השפל שבפרישות, והוא שפרשו מן העולם בלבבותם ובמצפונם, והשתתפו עם אנשי העולם בנראה מגופיהם בישוב העולם כחרישה וזריעה, והתעסקו בגופיהם בעבודת הבורא ית'.

The third category consists of people who followed the lowest level of *perishus*; they separated themselves from the world in their hearts and consciences, but outwardly, with their bodies, they participated with the people of the world in settling it, such as plowing and sowing, and they engaged their bodies in the service of the Creator, may He be blessed.

עמדו על צורת נסיון האדם בעולם הזה ומאסרו בו וגירותו והגירתו מעולם הרוחניות אליו.

They understood the nature of man's test in this world, his imprisonment within it, his exile, and his being cut off from the spiritual world to come here.

ונפשותם מואסות בעולם ובהונו, ונכספות לעולם הבא.

Their souls despise this world and its wealth, and they yearn for the World to Come.

מצפים אל המות, והם נזהרים ממנו.

They anticipate death, yet they are careful to guard themselves from it.

הכינו צדתם לעת נסיעתם, וחשבו במה שמגיעם אל בית מרגועם קדם העתקתם, ולא לקחו מהעולם אלא פחות ממזונותם, ולא הניחו ממנו מה שהוא טוב להם באחריתם כפי יכולתם, אלא לקחו ממנו צדה ונשארו.

They prepared their provisions for the time of their journey, and they considered what would bring them to their resting place before their departure; they took from this world only less than their basic sustenance, and they did not neglect to take from it what would be good for their ultimate end, according to their ability, but rather they took provisions from it and carried them.

והכת הזאת קרובה אל הדרך השנה הישרה התורה יותר ממה שזכרנו קדם.

This category is closer to the balanced, upright, and Torah-true path than what we mentioned previously.

אך הפורשים למשך תועלת העולם, ופרישותם באברים ולא במצפונים ובלבבות, והם שלש כתות.

However, those who abstain in order to gain worldly benefit, whose *perishus* is only in their limbs and not in their consciences and hearts, are also three categories.

אחת מהם: אנשים חסמו תאוות נפשותם מהשיג קצת התענוגים כדי שייצא להם שם בפרישות וישבחו אותם באמונה ובחסד להיות זה סבה חזקה להגיע אל תכלית תאוותם.

One of them are people who restrained their souls' desires from attaining some pleasures so that they would gain a reputation for *perishus* and be praised for their faith and kindness, making this a strong means to achieve the ultimate fulfillment of their desires.

והם מחניפים באמונה ובפרישות בעבור שביטחו בני אדם בהם ויפקידו אצלם ממוןם ויגלו להם סודותם ויוכלו להזיקם, והם הכת הרעה שבכל כתות בני אדם, ויותר רחוקה מן האמת ומגנה מכלם, ובכמותם אמר הכתוב (ירמיה ט): "חץ שחוט לשונם" וגו'.

They are hypocritical in faith and in *perishus* so that people will trust them, deposit their money with them, reveal their secrets to them, and then they will be able to harm them; they are the worst category of all human beings, furthest from the truth and more disgraceful than all others, and concerning such people, the verse says (Yirmiyahu 9:7): "Their tongue is a deadly arrow," and so on.

והכת השנית: אנשים שמצאה ידם מעט מהון העולם, וכאשר ראו מהירות אבדת הממונות והתהפכות הענינים עם מעוט בטחונם באלהים, הצרו על נפשותם במזונותיהם וחסמו תאוותם, וטענו כי הפרישות נשאתם על זה.

The second category consists of people who acquired a small amount of worldly wealth, and when they saw the swift loss of money and the changing of circumstances, combined with their weak trust in Hashem, they restricted themselves in their food and curbed their desires, claiming that *perishus* led them to this.

ועם העיון האמתי לא נשאם על זה אלא רב אהבתם בעולם וחריצותם להרבות מהונו ואכלם על ריש נפשותם ומעוט הסתפקותם במה שהגיע אליהם ממנו, ובכמותם אמר החכם (קהלה ו): "איש אשר יתן לו האלהים עשר ונכסים וכבוד וגו'.

However, upon true examination, what truly led them to this was nothing other than their great love for the world, their eagerness to increase its wealth, their sorrow over their souls' poverty, and their lack of contentment with what they had attained from it; and concerning such people, the wise man said (Koheles 6:2): "A man to whom Hashem gives wealth, possessions, and honor," and so on.

והכת השלישית: אנשים קצרה ידם מקנות ממון, ולא הגיעו מהון העולם אל מה שיונים אלא על הצר שבעיניהם, וראו שיתכבדו ויסתפקו במה שנודמן להם מן המזון ולא יעמדו מעמד השאלה וזלות הבקשה מבני אדם, וחסמו תאותם בהתמדת הרעב והסתתר במעט מלבוש להשמר מפניהם ושלל יתבזו בשאלם מוזלתם ויהיו לחרפה בעולם, ותלו כל זה בפרישות מן העולם.

The third category consists of people whose hands were too short to acquire wealth, and they did not attain enough worldly possessions to sustain them except in the most meager circumstances; they decided that they would maintain their dignity and be content with whatever food came their way, rather than standing in the position of asking and the disgrace of begging from other people. They curbed their desires by enduring constant hunger and by covering themselves with minimal clothing, to protect themselves from others and to avoid being shamed by asking from them and becoming a disgrace in the world, and they attributed all of this to *perishus* from the world.

וכאשר תרצה לעמד על אמתת מי שיטען מן הפרישות, אם הוא לתקנת תורתם או לתקנת עולמם, בחנם בתנאים אשר בהם תשלם הפרישות אשר אני עתיד לזכרם, ותעמד על ברור מצפונם מפניהם מפרישות בעזרת השם יתברך.

And when you wish to ascertain the truth of one who claims *perishus*, whether it is for the improvement of their Torah or for the improvement of their worldly affairs, test them with the conditions for perfect *perishus* that I am about to mention, and you will, with Hashem's help, discern the clarity of their conscience from their false claim of *perishus*.

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that there are two main reasons for *perishus*: for the sake of Hashem, or for worldly gain. He first details three classes of *prushim* who abstain for Hashem's sake: the first are those who go to the extreme, completely withdrawing from society to live like angels; the second are those who renounce all superfluous worldly matters but remain within society, confining themselves to their homes; and the third are those who separate themselves in heart and mind, but outwardly engage in the world for its rectification and for *avodas Hashem*, taking only their minimum needs. Rabbeinu Bachya then describes three classes of those who abstain for worldly benefits: the first are hypocrites who feign *perishus* for reputation and to exploit others; the second are those who limit their desires out of love for money and fear of poverty, claiming it is *perishus*; and the third are those who live meagerly to maintain self-respect and avoid begging, while claiming it is *perishus*.

The Chovos HaLevavos is teaching us a profound chiddush here, that true *perishus* isn't about running away from the world physically. Lichoira, we might think the greatest *perushim* are those who go to the desert, eat leaves, and wear rags. But the Chovos HaLevavos tells us that the highest level, the one closest to the Torah's derech hayashar, is actually the third type of *perush* for the sake of Heaven: the one who is involved in the world, plowing and sowing, but whose heart and mind are completely separated from it. He uses the world for Hashem's service, but his inner being longs only for Olam Haba.

This is a powerful lesson for us. We live in a world that constantly pulls at us, demanding our attention, our desires, our focus. It's easy to get caught up in the pursuit of *gashmiyus*, even when we think we're doing it for a good reason. The Chovos HaLevavos is telling us that our avodah isn't necessarily to abandon our jobs, our families, our communities, or even the comforts of life. Rather, it's to cultivate an inner *perishus* – a detachment of the heart. To be in the world, but not *of* the world.

It means that while our hands might be busy with worldly tasks, our minds and hearts are focused on Hashem, on our purpose, on Olam Haba. We use the world as a tool, a means to an end, to serve our Creator and prepare for our true home. We don't let its fleeting pleasures or worries consume us. This is the real challenge, and the real greatness: to live a full life in this world, fulfilling our responsibilities, but with an inner core that remains pure and dedicated to Hashem alone.

So, for today, let's try to practice this inner *perishus*. Whatever task you are doing, whether it's work, errands, or even enjoying a meal, take a moment to remind yourself: my heart is not here. My true desire is for Hashem. Use the physical act as a means to connect to Him, rather than letting it pull you away.