

חובות הלבבות • שער הפרישות • פרק שביעי

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

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This seventh chapter of Shaar HaPerishus delves into the profound differences in avodas Hashem, specifically regarding *perishus* (separation from worldly matters), between the early generations and our own. The Chovos HaLevavos explains how the spiritual needs and challenges of each era dictated the appropriate level of *perishus* required for true *avodas Hashem*.

The chapter traces this evolution from the pure intellects of the Avos, through the period of Mitzrayim and the settlement of Eretz Yisrael, up to our later generations. It highlights how the strengthening of the *yetzer hara* and worldly desires necessitated a greater degree of separation, culminating in a powerful parable from one of the pious, serving as a poignant testament to the path of *perishus*.

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

אבל ההפרש שבין קדמונינו ובינינו בפרישות הוא שחננה ונח ואברהם ויצחק ויעקב ואיוב ורעיו היה שכלם זה ויצרם חלש, ונפשותם היו נמשכות אחר שכלם, והמעט מן המצות היה מספיק להם בהשגת עבודת האלהים עם אמונת לבם לאלהים, כמ"ש באברהם (נחמיה ט) "ומצאת את לבבו נאמן לפניך", ולא היו צריכים אל הפרישות היוצאת מהדרך השונה התורה.

However, the difference between our predecessors and us regarding *perishus* (separation) is that for Chanoch, Noach, Avraham, Yitzhak, Yaakov, Iyov, and their contemporaries, their intellect was pure and their *yetzer hara* was weak; their souls were drawn after their intellect, and the few *mitzvos* they had were sufficient for them to complete their *avodas Hashem* together with their heartfelt faith in Hashem, as it says regarding Avraham (Nechemiah 9:8), "You found his heart faithful before You"; they did not need the kind of *perishus* that goes beyond the balanced, Torah-prescribed path.

NOTE The Chovos HaLevavos is explaining that the early *tzaddikim* had such pure intellect and weak *yetzer hara* that they didn't need extreme forms of *perishus* (abstinence/separation from worldly pleasures) to serve Hashem. Their natural inclination was already towards good.

וכאשר ירדו בניהם אל מצרים וגרו בה בימי יוסף כשבעים שנה בשלום (ס"א בשלום), וחזקה תאותם וגדלה תשוקתם וגבר יצרם על שכלם, נצטרכו מן הפרישות אל מה שיהיה הפך תאותם ויעמד כנגד יצרם.

But when their descendants went down to Mitzrayim and dwelled there during Yosef's lifetime for about seventy years in peace (or tranquility), their lusts became strong, their desires grew, and their *yetzer hara* overpowered their intellect; they then needed a form of *perishus* that would be contrary to their lusts and would stand against their *yetzer hara*.

וְהוֹסִיף לָהֶם הַבּוֹרָא מִן הַמִּצְוֹת הַשְּׁמַעִיּוֹת מָה שֶׁעָמַד לָהֶם בַּמָּקוֹם הַפְּרִישׁוֹת הָרְאוּיָה לָהֶם כְּפִי תַכְלִית
יְכַלְתֶּם וּפְחוֹת מִמֶּנָּה.

And the Creator added for them from the *mitzvos shinyios* (commandments that are not rationally understood) that which served them in place of the *perishus* that was appropriate for them, according to their utmost ability, and even less than that.

NOTE The *mitzvos shinyios* are *chukim*, mitzvos whose reasons are beyond human comprehension. The Chovos HaLevavos is saying that these mitzvos, which require submission to Hashem's will even without understanding, served as a form of *perishus* for Bnei Yisrael, helping them to curb their desires and strengthen their spiritual resolve.

וְכַאֲשֶׁר כָּבְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַנִּכְנָסוּ בָּהּ וְהִתְנַעְמּוּ בְּטוֹבָהּ, בִּקְשׁוּ הַמְּזוֹן וְהַסְמוּךְ לוֹ מִמּוֹתְרֵי מֵאֲכָל וּמִשְׁתֵּה
וְהַמִּשְׁגָּל וְהַבְּנִין.

And when they conquered Eretz Kenaan and entered it and enjoyed its goodness, they sought food and what is close to it, from the superfluities of eating and drinking, and relations, and building.

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר נֹסְפָה הָאֶרֶץ יָשׁוּב, נֹסֵף הַשֶּׁכֶּל חֲרָבָן, כַּמִּשָּׁׁ״ (דברים ח) "פֶּן תֹּאכַל וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵתִים טוֹבִים
תִּבְנֶה וְיִשְׁכַּתָּ וְגוֹ' וּבִקְרָה וְצִאָנָה יִרְבִּין וְגוֹ' וְרָם לִבְבֶּךָ וְגוֹ'".

And the more the land became settled, the more the intellect suffered ruin, as it is written (Devarim 8:12), "Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelled therein... and your cattle and sheep multiply... and your heart be lifted up..."

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר נֹסְפוּ הַתַּאֲוֹת וְנִתְחַזְּקוּ, נַחֲלַשׁ הַשֶּׁכֶּל וְהִתְאַחַר מִהַשִּׁיג הָעֲצָה הַנְּכוֹנָה.

And the more the lusts increased and strengthened, the more the intellect weakened and was delayed from grasping the correct counsel.

וְהִצְטַרְכוּ אֶל פְּרִישׁוֹת חֻזְקָה יַעֲמְדוּ בָּהּ כְּנֶגֶד חוּשֵׁיהֶם, כְּדֶרֶךְ הַנָּזִיר וּמִנְהַג בְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים אֲשֶׁר זָכְרָנוּ בָּמָה
שֶׁעָבַר לָנוּ בִּסְפָר הַזֶּה.

Therefore, they needed a strong *perishus* through which they could stand against their senses, like the way of the Nazir and the custom of the disciples of the prophets, which we mentioned previously in this book.

וְכֵן בְּשָׁׁר הַדּוֹרוֹת הַשֶּׁכֶּל בָּחֻלָּה וְהִתְאַוָּה בְּגִבּוּרָה.

And similarly, in later generations, the intellect is in weakness and desire is in strength.

וּבְכָל עֵת שִׁמְתַּעֲסָקִים בְּעִנְיָן מַעֲנִינֵי הָעוֹלָם, הַטְרִידִם מַעֲנִינֵי הָעוֹלָם, עַל כֵּן הִצְרָכָנוּ [לְפְרִישׁוֹת מִן
הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה] לְהַפְנוֹת מִמֶּנּוּ בְּעֵת שְׁעוֹשִׁים מְאוּמָה מִמַּעֲשֵׂי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

And whenever people are occupied with matters of this world, it distracts them from matters of the World to Come; therefore, they needed *perishus* from this world, to free themselves from it, whenever they are doing anything of the World to Come.

וְהָיוּ הַקְדָּמוֹנִים בְּחֻזֶּק שִׁכְלָם וְזֶה נִפְשָׁם עוֹשִׂים לְעוֹלָמָם וּלְאַחֲרֵיתָם, וְלֹא הָיָה הָאֶחָד מִפְּסִיד עַל חֲבֵרוֹ, כְּמוֹ
שֶׁכְּתוּב (ירמיהו כ"ב:ט"ו) "אָבִיךָ הֵלֵא אָכַל וְשָׂתָה וְגוֹ' אָז טוֹב לוֹ וְגוֹ'", וְאָמַר (קהלת ז':י"ח) "טוֹב אֲשֶׁר
תֹּאחֲזֶה בָּזָה וְגַם מִזֶּה אַל תִּנָּח אֶת יָדְךָ".

The early ones, with their strong intellect and pure souls, were able to work for both this world and their ultimate destiny, and one did not detract from the other, as it is written (Yirmiyahu 22:15), "Did not your father eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness, and then it was well with him?" and it says (Koheles 7:18), "It is good that you should take hold of this, and also from this you shall not withdraw your hand."

וְרֵאִיתִי אֲחִי מְלִיצָה נִמְרָצֶת בְּעֵינֵי הַפְּרִישׁוֹת לְאַחַד מִן הַחֲסִידִים מְצֹוֶה בָּהּ בְּנוֹ, וְיִשְׁרָה בְּעֵינֵי וְשִׁמְתִּיהָ
חֲתִימָה לְשַׁעַר הַזֶּה כְּמוֹ שֶׁמְצֹאֶתֶיהָ, תַּחַת תּוֹכַחְתִּי לָהּ וְהוֹרֹתִי אוֹתָהּ.

My brother, I saw a powerful parable concerning *perishus* from one of the *chasidim*, who commanded his son with it as his last testament; it pleased my eye, and I placed it as the conclusion for this gate, just as I found it, instead of ending with my own rebuke and instruction to you.

הֵבֵן אוֹתָהּ וְהִסְתַּכַּל בָּהּ, תִּגְיַע אֶל הַטּוֹב וְהַיָּשָׁר בְּעֶזְרַת הָאֵל.

Understand it and examine it, and you will reach what is good and upright with Hashem's help.

וְזֹאת הִיא.

And this is it:

וְאַתָּה בְּנִי, יִשְׁמְךָ הָאֱלֹהִים מֵאַשֶׁר יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיִאֲזִינוּ, וְיִחַשְׁבוּ וְיִחַשְׁבוּ, וְיִדְעוּ וְיִדְעוּ וְיַעֲשׂוּ; וְאֵל יִשְׁמְךָ
מִן הָאֲנָשִׁים הַטּוֹבֵעִים בְּתַעֲוֹת הַשְּׂדוּדִים (ס"א הַשְּׂכּוּרִים) בְּיֵין הַסִּכְלוֹת, אֲשֶׁר הָעֶבְיָדִים הַיֵּצֵר וּמְשַׁל בָּם
הָעוֹלָם וְגִבְרוּ עֲלֵיהֶם הַתַּאֲוֹת וְנָטוּ בָּהֶם אֶל הַתַּעֲנוּגִים וְהַסִּיתוּם הַמְּאֻיִּים וְהַשִּׂיאָתָם הַחֲמָדָה.

And you, my son, may Hashem place you among those who hear and listen, who listen and think, who think and know, and who know and act; and may He not place you among the people who are drowning in error, who are intoxicated with the wine of foolishness, whom the *yetzer hara* has enslaved, over whom this world has ruled, whom lusts have overpowered, swaying them towards pleasures, enticing them with desires, and drawing them to coveting.

וְהֵם בְּאִפְלָתָם נֶחֱבָטִים וּבְמְרוּצַת טְעוּתָם שָׁבִים, יִשְׁמְעוּ וְלֹא יִאֲזִינוּ וְיֹאמְרוּ וְלֹא יַעֲשׂוּ.

And they, in their darkness, are smitten, and swiftly move dazzled in their error; they hear but do not lend ear, they say but do not do.

בְּקִשׁוֹ הַמְּנוּחֹת וְנָפְלוּ בְּאֲנָחוֹת, הִשְׁתַּדְּלוּ לְהַשִּׁיג הַנְּעִימּוֹת וְהַשִּׁיגוּ הַיִּסּוּרִים הַקָּשִׁים, וְנִפְשׁוֹתָם עֲצִיפוֹת
וְגוֹפוֹתָם יִגְעוֹת.

They sought tranquility but fell into frustrations; they endeavored to reach pleasantness but reached instead harsh suffering; their souls are tired, and their bodies are weary.

דַּעוּתָם שְׁלולֹת וּבִינּוֹתָם מְנַפְצוֹת.

Their minds are empty, and their understanding is shattered.

יִקְבְּצוּ הַזָּהָב הָאוֹבֵד וְהַכֶּסֶף הַחוֹלֵף וְיִוְרִישׁוּהוּ הָאוֹיְבִים וְהַחוֹדְרוֹת (וְהַבּוֹגְדוֹת) מִן הַנָּשִׁים, וּמִחֲזִיקִים
הָאֲרָמוֹנוֹת וְשׁוֹכְנֵיהֶם בְּקִבְרוֹת.

They hoard gold that will be lost and fleeting silver, which becomes an inheritance to their enemies or to their treacherous wives; they erect mansions and lie down in graves.

וּבּוֹנִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יוֹשִׁיבוּ וְיִקְבְּצוּ מָה שֶׁלֹּא יוֹצִיא, קוֹבֵר כָּל אִישׁ מֵהֶם אָבִיו וּבְנוֹ וְאִינוּ עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה הַקָּדִים
לְנֶצַח, שׁוֹכֵחַ קִצּוֹ וְזוֹכֵר מֵאֻיּוֹ.

They build what they will not inhabit, and they amass what they will not spend; each man among them buries his father and his son, yet still does not do religious deeds that endure forever; he forgets his end but remembers his desires.

ומה תאמר בתוך שאבדו שתי קצותיו ויחיד שעזבוהו אבותיו?

And what will you say of a middle piece whose two ends are lost, and of an only child whose parents abandoned him?

NOTE This is a rhetorical question, a powerful metaphor. The 'middle piece' refers to a person's life in this world, which is meaningless if they lose sight of both their beginning (their purpose from Hashem) and their end (the World to Come). The 'child whose parents abandoned him' refers to a person who has lost their spiritual guidance and connection to their Creator.

והסתכל בני במי שהרחיב הבורא את לבו והמשילו במחשבתו ופקח עיניו בטוב לו והראהו הדרך הישרה וקרב אליה [ונוכח בה].

Look, my son, at him whose heart the Creator has broadened, whom He has helped to rule over his thoughts, whose eyes He has opened to what is good for him, whom He has shown the straight path and drawn close to it, and who has become established in it.

בטוחים ממנו בני אדם והוא בטוח בהם והשלים עמם ונצל מהם.

People are secure from him, and he is secure in them; he is at peace with them and saved from them.

עבדו בני אדם יצרם ועבד הוא אלהי השמים והארץ המחיה הממית הבורא החונן אשר אין אלוה מב לעדיו.

Other people serve their *yetzer hara*, but he serves the Hashem of heaven and earth, Who grants life, Who brings death, the Creator, Who is gracious, and there is no god besides Him.

כמה בינם ובין אנשים ברו מצפוניהם וזכו חביהם ועיניהם נחות ולבותם בטוחות והם בזכר האלהים משתעשעים בבדידות ומודים על טובתו בכל ענין.

How great is the difference between them and those people whose inner thoughts are pure and whose affections are clear, whose eyes are at rest and whose hearts are secure, and who delight in remembering Hashem in solitude and thank Him for His goodness in every situation!

קרבו אל העיון המחשבי והמניני והמועצי, קרעו מסך הראות בדרכי המצפונים והגיעו אל מרגוע האמת ביגיעה ויצאו ממנוחה אל שעשועים.

They drew close to contemplative, numerical, and advisory study; they tore away the veil from their sight regarding the hidden paths, and they reached true tranquility through their toil, and from that tranquility they emerged into delights.

לא טרדם מאוים ולא אחרם ארה קצם והם ליום המות נחפזים ומאחריתו נשמרים, קרואי אלהים ומשחריו ומיחליו ועובדיו, דוברי אמת ולוהגי צדק, מבלי מורא שלטון ולא ממשלת שטן.

Their desires do not distract them, nor does the length of their lives cause them to procrastinate; they are zealous for the day of death and are guarded from what comes after it; they are called by Hashem, seekers of Him, hopeful in Him, and His servants; they speak truth and converse righteousness, without fear of any ruler and without the dominion of the *Satan*.

יקרים יותר מכל אדם ושמורים יותר מכל עם ותפארתם ומעלתם גדולה מכלם.

They are more precious than any person and more guarded than any nation; their splendor and greatness are greater than all of them.

מְכַבְּדִים בְּבֵתִי (ס"א בדרכי) הָאֱלֹהִים וְגִדּוּלִים בְּעֵינֵי הַבְּרֹאִים, אֵין טוֹרַד אוֹתָם מִזְכֹּר הָאֱלֹהִים טוֹרַד,
וְלֹא מַעֲכָבְם מִהוֹדוֹתוֹ מַעֲכָב.

They are honored in the houses (or ways) of Hashem and great in the eyes of creatures; nothing distracts them from remembering Hashem, and nothing prevents them from thanking Him.

לְשׁוֹנוֹתָם רְגִילוֹת בְּהִלּוֹת וְהוֹדוֹת וְלִבּוֹתָם שְׂמֵחוֹת בְּכָר וּבְיָחִיד.

Their tongues are accustomed to praise and thanksgiving, and their hearts are full of purity and unity.

הַתִּנְכֹּר לָהֶם הָעוֹלָם וְהַפִּירוּהוּ וְדָרְכוּ בּוֹ וְסִפְרוּהוּ, לֹא נֶעְלַם מֵעֵינֵיהֶם בְּגִדּוֹ וְלֹא נִסְתָּרָה מֵהֶם תְּרִמִּיתוֹ.

This world disguised itself to them, but they recognized it, and they trod upon it and spoke of it; its treachery was not hidden from their eyes, nor was its deceit concealed from them.

לִכְשׁ לָהֶם בְּגִדֵי חֲמוּדוֹתָיו וַיִּחְשְׁבוּהוּ שׁוֹלָל וְהִתְרַפָּה לָהֶם וַיִּמְצְאוּהוּ מְכָרָח, שָׁחַק אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּגְעְרוּ בּוֹ וְרָצָה לְהַטּוֹתָם וְנָטוּ מַעֲלָיו.

It adorned itself for them with its desirable garments, but they considered it naked and empty; it tried to weaken them, but they found it compelled; it tried to befriend them, but they rebuked it; it wanted to sway them, but they turned away from it.

הַשְׁקִיפוּ עַל רֵעַ מַעֲלָלָיו וְהִתְבָּאֵר לָהֶם גְּנוֹת מַעֲשָׂיו וְאֵין לוֹ שְׁלֹטוֹן עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא בָמָּה יִתְקַרֵּב אֲלֵיהֶם.

They gazed upon its evil deeds, and the disgrace of its actions became clear to them, and it has no dominion over them, nor anything with which to approach them.

הֵם בְּחִירֵי הָאֱלֹהִים הַבָּרִים וְסִגְלַת הַחֲסִידִים בְּעֵלֵי הָרוֹאוֹת הַפְּקוּחוֹת וְהַמְשָׁאֵלוֹת הַיְקָרוֹת וְהַיְגִיעוֹת הָרָצוּיוֹת, אֲשֶׁרוֹ אֵל הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֲשֶׁרוֹ וְסִחְרוֹ עִמּוֹ וְהָרוּיָחוֹ, בָּרְרוּ מִצְּפוֹנָם וְנִבְּרָרוּ וְזָכוּ לְבוֹתָם וְנִבְּחָרוּ, הִצְטִידוּ הַיְרָאָה בַּדֶּרֶךְ הָרָעָה, וְנִצְּלוּ וְרָכְבוּ מִרְכָּבוֹת הַמַּעֲשִׂים וְהַגִּיעוּ, פָּגְעוּ בְּשִׁמְחָה מִתְמַדָּת וְשָׁשׂוֹן לֹא יִשְׁתַּנָּה, נִמְלְטוּ מִמַּעַמַּד הַחֲשָׁבוֹן וּבָטְחוּ מִחִסּוּרִים.

They are Hashem's chosen pure ones and the treasured elite of the *chasidim*, possessing discerning eyes, noble desires, and favored efforts; they sought Hashem and were made rich, they did business with Him and profited, they purified their inner selves and became pure, they cleansed their hearts and were chosen; they equipped themselves with *yiras Shamayim* on the evil path and were saved; they rode the chariots of good deeds and arrived; they encountered continuous joy and unchangeable gladness; they escaped the reckoning and were secure from suffering.

וְאַתָּה בְּנִי, בַּחֵר הַטּוֹב לְנַפְשְׁךָ טָרָם הַחֲרָטָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תוֹעִיל וְהַדָּאָגָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִכְלָה.

And you, my son, choose what is good for your soul before the regret that will not help and the worry that will not end.

הָאֱלֹהִים יוֹרְנוּ וְאוֹתָהּ הַדֶּרֶךְ הַיְשָׁרָה וַיִּטָּה אוֹתָנוּ אֵל גְּתִיב הַהֲצִלָּה בְּרַחֲמָיו וְרֹב חֲסָדָיו, אָמֵן: נִשְׁלַם שַׁעַר הַתְּשִׁיעִי. תְּהִלָּה לְאֵל יִתְבָּרַךְ:

May Hashem guide us and you on the straight path, and may He incline us towards the path of success through His mercies and abundant kindnesses, Amen. The Ninth Gate is completed. Praise to Hashem, blessed be He.

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

The chapter begins by contrasting the early generations, whose pure intellects and weak *yetzer hara* allowed them to serve Hashem with minimal *perishus*, with later generations. It explains that after Mitzrayim, as lusts grew, Hashem added

mitzvos to counteract these desires. Upon settling Eretz Yisrael, increased indulgence led to further intellectual deterioration, necessitating more severe *perishus*, like that of the *Nazir*. The Chovos HaLevavos then describes how in even later generations, weakened intellects and stronger lusts demand even greater separation from worldly matters. The chapter concludes with a moving parable from a pious individual, emphasizing the stark contrast between those enslaved by worldly desires and those who, with Hashem's help, achieve true tranquility and devotion through *perishus*.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The Chovos HaLevavos here gives us a powerful, almost frightening, historical perspective on *perishus*, on separating from worldly desires. He tells us that in earlier generations, the Avos and their children, their intellect was so pure and their yetzer hara so weak, that they didn't need much *perishus* at all. A few mitzvos and pure *emunah* were enough. But as the generations went on, especially after Mitzrayim and settling Eretz Yisrael, the *yetzer hara* grew stronger, and the intellect weaker. Mitzvos were added, and the need for *perishus* became greater and greater, to the point of the Nazir and Bnei Nevi'im.

What does this mean for *us*? We are in the very last generations, when the *yetzer hara* is at its strongest, and our intellect is, lichaira, at its weakest. The world is full of *taavos* and distractions. The Chovos HaLevavos is telling us that we need *perishus* more than ever before. Not necessarily to become a Nazir, but to recognize that the world is constantly pulling us away from Hashem. We need to actively, consciously, create space for Hashem in our lives, to separate ourselves from the noise and the desires, even for a few moments.

This isn't about being a *tzaddik* of previous generations. It's about being real with ourselves. If we don't actively push back against the *taavos* of the world, they will simply overpower us. The Chovos HaLevavos is giving us a wake-up call: the default setting of our generation is *not* conducive to *avodas Hashem*. We need to fight for it, to carve out our *perishus*.

So, for today, let's pick one small area where we can practice a little *perishus*. Maybe it's turning off the phone for a set time, or consciously limiting a certain pleasure, to create a moment of clarity and connection to Hashem.