



RABBI JUDAH

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*Teshuva (Mosaica 2021)*

## A New Heart

Rav Avraham Simcha Kaplan was the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Tzfas from the time of the founding of the State of Israel for nearly half a century. Before the war, while Rav Avraham Simcha was a student at the Mir Yeshiva in Belarus, he stayed with an older couple who had a single child.

One Erev Shabbos, as he headed out to yeshiva, Avraham Simcha saw the man of the house preparing to leave to the marketplace for some errands. As he departed, his wife said, “It’s Erev Shabbos; come back quickly.” The husband smiled knowingly, and went on his way. Later in the day, when he returned from yeshivah, Avraham Simcha noticed the woman of the house appeared anxious and unsettled, continuously went to the window, looking out for her husband, softly saying, “Shabbos is coming... Soon it will be Shabbos!”

A thoughtful young man, Avraham Simcha attempted to allay her worries. “Shabbos is still a couple of hours away, I’m sure he’ll return in plenty of time...” Without looking away from the window, the older woman replied with a sigh, “Perhaps if you knew our story, you would understand...”

“After many years of yearning and hoping, my husband and I were blessed with a son,” she explained. “From birth, it was clear he was not healthy and we were referred to a

specialist who informed us in no uncertain terms that our child had an untreatable heart condition and would not survive infancy. We were crushed by the prognosis and felt helpless... after so many years, we were finally blessed with a child, and now...

“On our way back home to Mir, we made a detour to Radin to seek a *bracha* from the Chafetz Chaim, sharing our agony. “The Chafetz Chaim furrowed his brow, closed his eyes and after a few moments, said, ‘I request of you to welcome Shabbos earlier than usual. Add to the honor of Shabbos Kodesh by preparing the table, setting up the *neiros*, and being ready by *chatzos* (mid-day). And may you and your child be blessed!’

“From the moment I made this *kabbalah*, our child’s condition improved. The doctors were baffled and tried to understand the sudden turnaround in our son’s health. Years later, the specialist who had examined him asked if we had received care at the cardiology clinic in Vienna. We explained that we had not. “Then where did you go?” asked the specialist with surprise. “To the great sage and rabbi, the Chafetz Chaim in Radin. He blessed us and gave us advice to follow.”

The famed surgeon smiled. “We doctors can only do our best to heal a heart that is unhealthy. The righteous sage you visited must have been able to create a completely new heart for him! There is no other medical or scientific explanation for his recovery.”

Turning her attention back to Avraham Simcha, the hostess said, “Since then we are

always careful to finish all of our Erev Shabbos preparations early in the day... Perhaps now you can understand why I anxiously await my husband's return; it is almost Shabbos, and we must be ready."

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This Shabbos, in preparation for offering the Korban Pesach in a state of purity, we read the *maftir* of Parshas Parah, which centers around the ritual purification of the Red Heifer. In our *haftarah*, Yechezkel haNavi expansively addresses the state of *tumah* and the defilement of Klal Yisrael in disrespecting Hashem's name. For the sake of *k'vod Shamayim* we will be restored in *teshuvah* to our homeland and purified with cleansing waters to faithfully observe *Yiddishkeit*.

וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב חָדָשׁ וְרוּחַ חַדְשָׁה אֶתֶּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם  
וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת-לֵב הָאֲבֹן מִבְּשָׂרְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם  
לֵב בָּשָׂר

And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will place within you,

And I will remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh.

(Yechezkel, 36:25-26)

The result of *teshuvah* is obtaining a new heart, a pure heart, a heart that opens to Hashem in prayer.

Once a Jew complained to Reb Simcha

Bunim of Peshischa that he was suffering from a headache and was unable to pray. Wishing him good health, the Rebbe asked, "But what does the head have to do with prayer? לְאַהֲבָה אֶת-ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם וּלְעֵבְדוֹ בְּכָל-לְבָבְכֶם וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁכֶם וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְכֶם," "To love Hashem your God and serve Him with all your *heart*." What is the service of the heart? It's tefillah."

The electromagnetic field generated by the human heart is exponentially more powerful than the one generated by the brain. As important as it is to live 'mindfully', *Rachmana liba ba'ei*, "The Compassionate One desires our heart." Parshas Parah invites us to renew our efforts to cultivate 'heartfulness' and awaken our natural, simple expression of tefillah.

As we stand by the window in these last moments before the arrival of the Great Shabbos, let us receive a new heart and fill it with love and prayer for our people, our land and our Creator. And thus may we soon merit to engage in the highest *avodah she-ba-lev*, a service with all our heart, in the pure heart of the world, the newly rebuilt *Beis haMikdash*. ■

**GET FIT WHILE YOU SIT:**  
**Exercise for ladies**  
 Sundays 12:30-1:15pm  
 at the OU Israel Center  
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