

---

## פרשת קרח

---

### פרק יז פסוק ג

אֵת מַחֲתוֹת הַחֹטָאִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּנִפְשָׁתָם וַעֲשׂוּ אֹתָם רִקְעֵי פָחִים צְפוּי לַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
כִּי־הִקְרִיבֶם לַפָּנִי־ה' וַיִּקְדָּשׁוּ וַיְהִי לְאוֹת לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

### חז"ל

שמעלין בקודש ולא מורידין... בתחילה תשמישי מזבח ועכשיו גופו של מזבח.  
(מנחות צט.)

### מושג

מעלין בקודש ולא מורידין.

### Translation:

One must seek to increase holiness and not to decrease holiness.

### Explanation:

Our Musag focuses on the words in the Pasuk, ויקדשו, כי הקריבם לפני ה'. The Pasuk seems to be explaining why the pans could not simply be discarded, being that they were used as a challenge to Moshe and Aharon. The Torah answers that since the pans had attained *some* level of holiness, the only option was to upgrade this Kedusha by making them part of the altar itself. Using this episode to teach this lesson, stresses the importance of being sensitive to upgrading the Kedusha of every object we own. On a personal level, this instructs us to never be satisfied with the levels of Kedusha we have achieved and to constantly strive to be better Jews.

### Looking in the Pasuk:

Our Musag focuses on the words in the Pasuk, ויקדשו, כי הקריבם לפני ה'. The Pasuk seems to be explaining why the pans could not simply be discarded, being that they were used as a challenge to Moshe and Aharon. The Torah answers that since the pans had attained *some* level of holiness, the only option was to upgrade this Kedusha by making them part of the altar itself. Using this episode to teach this lesson, stresses the importance of being sensitive to upgrading the Kedusha of every object we own. On a personal level, this instructs us to never be satisfied with the levels of Kedusha we have achieved and to constantly strive to be better Jews.

### Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: Kedusha may only be upgraded and never downgraded.

Understand: One who truly loves Hashem will always look for opportunities to display that love by improving their service of Hashem and upgrading the Kedusha of every aspect of their lives.

Think: Looking at the context in which an idea is presented provides depth of understanding.

---

## NOTES

---

1. The concept taught in our Musag is used in many different situations, all with the same general sentiment. The most common example, found four times in the Talmud<sup>1</sup>, refers to a situation in which the Kohen Gadol has become impure and a temporary replacement is installed. When the original Kohen Gadol returns, the status of the temporary Kohen Gadol is discussed. The Gemoroh concludes that he may not remain a Kohen Gadol as that would lead to unpleasant competition, and he may not return to being a regular Kohen, כהן הדיוט, because מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין. A second example is found in (כו:), מסכת שבת where the Gemoroh explains the reasoning behind בית הלל saying that the Chanukah candles are to be lit in an ascending order<sup>2</sup>. One of the possible reasons provided for this practice was our Musag which taught the importance of increasing holiness.

Interestingly, the Gemoroh in both of the above cases does not provide a source for this concept. In the first case, regarding the substitute גדול, כהן גדול, Rashi also does not refer us to any source. However, in the second case, גרות הנוכה, Rashi informs us that a source is recorded in a third case, one found in (צט.), מסכת מנחות where the Gemoroh learns our Musag from מהתות קרה.

The third case refers to the tables of gold and silver which were placed at the entrance of the היכל, which were used to hold the לחם הפנים as they were brought to, and taken off, the שלחן. The Gemoroh tells us that they were first put on a silver table, then put on the שלחן and finally taken off the שלחן and placed on a gold table. To explain why the second table could not also be made of silver, the Gemoroh replied with our Musag, מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין. The Gemoroh then asks for the source of אין מורידין and answers that this is learned from the fact that Moshe himself had to set up the Mishkan<sup>3</sup>. The Gemoroh concludes by asking for a source for מעלין בקדש, and answers that this is learned from the fact that the מהתות of קרה were used on the מזבה itself. This increase in holiness, from something used near the מזבה to something put directly on the מזבה, demonstrates the requirement to upgrade holiness.

This Gemoroh seems rather puzzling for the following reasons:

Why did the Talmud wait until this case to ask for the source of מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין? The Musag had been mentioned at least five times in previous sections; why first ask for a source now?

Why did the Gemoroh ask for a source for אין מורידין and afterwards for מעלין, shouldn't they have asked in the order it was taught?

Why would putting the לחם הפנים on a silver table, after removing them from the שלחן, be considered a drop in holiness? Does putting them on a silver table cause the לחם הפנים to become less holy? And, if it somehow does lower the holiness, wouldn't any table, even of gold, cause the same drop in holiness when compared to the שלחן itself?

In addition, we might ask why Rashi only referred us to this Gemoroh in the case of גרות הנוכה and not in the more frequently mentioned case of the replacement Kohen Gadol<sup>4</sup>.

To answer, we begin by noting that not all applications of the rule of מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין are similar. For example, if one were to ask would it be permissible to use the parchment from a Sefer Torah to make a drum, we would most certainly answer in the negative, as this would be a gross violation of the קדושת ספר תורה. I would argue that the same would hold true even if one wanted to

---

1 (מגילה ט. יומא יב: עג. הוריות יב:).

2 were of the opinion that they should be lit in a descending order.

3 Rashi struggles to explain how this fact teaches that one may not decrease holiness. Rashi provides three possible explanations, of which I will share the first two. (The fact that Rashi needed three explanations tells us that he was not particularly convinced by any of them.) The first is that the Pasuk only uses the words ויקם and never mentions that Moshe took down the the Mishkan, implying that ויורד is to be avoided. Rashi's second explanation is that we learn this from the fact that only Moshe set up the Mishkan. After Moshe began the process, anyone helping him would cause a drop in the level of holiness. The fact that neither of the above explanations seems convincing enough to warrant the prohibition to decrease holiness in objects, will be discussed later.

4 This question may be answered by claiming that the Gemoroh in מסכת שבת is the first time the Musag is mentioned, and therefore Rashi provided the source for the Musag in the first instance it is mentioned and saw no need to repeat it in subsequent cases. There is however an additional case in מסכת ברכות (see Questions for further thought) which also mentions our Musag, and therefore the case in מסכת שבת would not be the first time the concept is mentioned. It is possible to deflect this point, but this goes beyond the scope of these notes.

use the parchment to write a section of Novi, the clear decrease in the קדושת ספר תורה would forbid such action. Now, if one would ask, "Do I need a source in the Torah to prove this prohibition?", I would answer that none is needed, for the violation of the Sefer Torah's holiness, or any such degradation of any holy object, is obviously prohibited as it constitutes a ביזוי מצוה<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, I would argue, that the case of the replacement Kohen Gadol is similar<sup>6</sup>. For it is obvious that after having served with the eight garments he cannot be expected to serve with only four, as this is a clear violation of his higher sanctity. Therefore, no mention is made in this case of any source for the application of the rule of אין מורידין, as none is needed.

However, in the case of the לחם הפנים and the silver & gold tables the application of the rule is not obvious at all! Placing the לחם הפנים on a gold or silver table does not enhance nor detract from its holiness in any way. The לחם retains the exact same level of holiness no matter what surface it is placed upon. One could, therefore, claim that the rule of אין מורידין does not apply here<sup>7</sup>. The Gemoroh teaches us that even though the holiness of the לחם הפנים would not be effected, the rule still applies. The reason for this is that the rule means something different here than it did in the case of the Kohen Gadol. Here it is coming to teach that one must be sensitive to how they relate to קדושה. One must seek to increase the value they place on things holy, to show their love and appreciation for קדושה, even when the essential holiness will not be affected. Therefore, they should look to upgrade the value of the table the לחם הפנים are placed upon irregardless of the effect this has on the לחם, but rather because of the effect this has on the person himself. This new application of our Musag is not obvious, and needs a source. Therefore, only in this instance does the Gemoroh ask מנלן דאין מורידין וכי.

The Gemoroh must now find a source for both parts of our Musag: מעלין ואין מורידין. We must prove, in order of difficulty, that first of all one should be sensitive not to do anything that might look like they hold the Mitzvah in contempt, such as downgrading from an expensive table to a cheaper one. And not only that, but even that one should try to show that they love the Mitzvah. Therefore the Gemoroh first proves אין מורידין and only afterwards proves מעלין.

The Gemoroh proves the sensitivity demanded of אין מורידין from the fact that the Torah did want to use the word הוריד by the Mishkan, or by the fact that Moshe saw fit to erect the Mishkan by himself and not let anyone assist him, lest that be seen as considering the task in which he was engaged as being burdensome<sup>8</sup>. The rule of מעלין is proved from the מהתות קרה. Here too, the מהתות were not really holy at all as the רמב"ן points out, since they were brought by זרים outside the

---

5 An example is found in the very same Gemoroh in (כב.) מסכת שבת concerning the opinion which forbids lighting one Chanukah candle from another. The Gemoroh entertains the possibility that this might be forbidden only if one were to transfer the flame through a stick, and the reason for the prohibition would be using a Chanukah candle to light a stick, which would constitute a ביזוי מצוה.

One could argue with my contention that lowering the Kedusha from Sefer Torah to Novi is also considered a ביזוי מצוה and could claim that a ביזוי מצוה only takes place when the Kedusha is lowered from something קדוש to something with no קדושה whatsoever. I, however, believe that it would simply be an issue of degree, and should not change the basic prohibition.

6 They are similar but not identical, for the parchment has the inherent Kedusha of a Sefer Torah, while the replacement Kohen Gadol does not possess such inherent Kedusha, as he is not wearing the 8 vestments at the moment and he is only the replacement. (It would be interesting to ponder the status of the original Kohen Gadol. Would lowering him be considered identical to the Torah parchment or not?). The Kedusha of the replacement is more secondary in nature, in that he *once wore* the בגדים. Therefore, using parchment for a lesser purpose, I would argue, does not even come under the heading of אין מורידין for lowering primary Kedusha is a more fundamental prohibition. However, lowering the secondary Kedusha of a replacement Kohen Gadol, does come under the rule of אין מורידין, albeit so obvious a violation as not to require a Biblical source.

The above contention - that where primary Kedusha exists a prohibition exists without a need to call upon the rule of אין מורידין - would help us explain the Gemoroh in (כו.) מסכת מגילה which teaches that if one were to sell a ספר תורה they may only purchase another ספר תורה with the money, but not something of lower קדושה. The Gemoroh does not give a reason why. Rashi explains that this is because מעלין בקודש ואין מורידין. One must wonder why the Gemoroh itself never explained this, as it does in all the other cases. We may now answer because the primary Kedusha of the Sefer Torah has been transferred to the money and therefore there is no need to explain the prohibition.

7 If we were to discuss putting a non-Kodesh object on the silver or gold tables after the לחם הפנים had been placed upon them, perhaps there we could relate to מעלין בקודש ואין מורידין. But regarding the לחם הפנים themselves, whose Kedusha is impervious to which table they are placed upon, no increase or decrease of Kedusha seems to take place.

8 For, in this case as well, having someone help Moshe set up the Mishkan would not detract from the Kedusha at all!

Mishkan. Theoretically, they could have been thrown out. But, even so, Hashem ordered that they be used to cover the מזבחה, to teach the sensitivity one must have to things that even have an appearance of holiness. Even these must be treated with respect and elevated to higher levels of holiness.

One could argue that the case of חנוכה according to בית הלל is similar to the case of the לחם הפנים. For here too the holiness of the holiday or the Menorah is not effected by the number of candles lit. One cannot claim that if I lit 5 candles one night and 4 the next night, then I have violated the holiness of the holiday. Rather, בית הלל's opinion is based on this new idea, taught to us in מנחות regarding the לחם הפנים. The same lesson applies: one must be sensitive to show their love and appreciation for מצות even when they are not necessarily violating the קדושה of an object. Therefore, בית הלל opines, they should show this love by adding a candle every day. Rashi, thus points us to the Gemoroh in מנחות to find a source for this novel idea.

To sum up, we have differentiated between three different situations as regards our Musag.

Where there is primary Kedusha in the object, such as using the parchment from a Sefer Torah for any purpose other than for a Sefer Torah (or the money used to buy a Sefer Torah).

Where there is secondary Kedusha, such as the replacement Kohen Gadol after the original Kohen Gadol returns.

Where the Kedusha of the object will not be affected in any way, such as the tables on which the לחם הפנים were put before and after being placed on the שלחן, or the number of candles lit on the חנוכה of מנורה.

In the first group our Musag need not be mentioned as the prohibition is obvious. In the second group the Musag is mentioned but does not require a Biblical source. And in the third group a Biblical source to the law of מועלין בקודש ואין מורידין is needed.

An important lesson can be learned from this new dimension of our Musag. Frequently, fear of transgressing a prohibition, יראת העונש, is the only parameter we use to guide our actions. The Musag of מועלין בקודש teaches us that one should always look for ways to show their love for Torah and Mitzvos, אהבת ה', even if a prohibition is not involved. Constantly seeking to only upgrade our level of service to Hashem is the message our Musag provides.

The fact that the Torah chose to teach us this lesson through the מחתות of קרה conveys an even deeper lesson. It teaches us that everything can be used to serve Hashem. The need to upgrade Kedusha applies even to objects with little or no Kedusha, and even to objects that may have been used in opposition to the will of G-d. Even the מחתות of Korach, which represent an open rebellion against the כהונה, can attain the highest status of holiness, ציפוי למזבחה, if dedicated correctly and appropriately.

## 2. Questions for further thought:

- a. Another case mentioned in the Talmud (ברכות כה.) that uses our Musag refers to when ר' רב גמליאל replaced אלעזר בן עזריה as נשיא for a short while. When רב גמליאל returned it was decided that ר"א ב"ע should not return to his previous lower status<sup>9</sup>. To which of the above cases does this compare? (Hint: It's not as simple as it seems)
- b. Think of ways in which your service of Hashem, even while following the guidelines of Halacha, might be upgraded.

---

<sup>9</sup> Rather רב גמליאל was given the position for 3 weeks of every month and ר"א ב"ע was given it for the fourth week. Interestingly, when applying the law of מועלין בקודש ואין מורידין in this story, the Gemoroh adds the words גמרינן