

2 - The Source Of Life

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In order to grasp the full significance of the laws surrounding Shmirat HaBrit, it is necessary to understand the tragedy of spilling semen in vain, both for an unmarried person, and for a husband and wife.

We have seen how sexual wrongdoing damages the flow of Divine blessing in the world, and how it causes the estrangement of the individual, and the Jewish People, from G-d. In addition, it is important to realize that semen contains the Divine spark of life that sustains the whole world.

The Zohar explains that the ladder that Yaacov saw in his dream represents the Yesod, the spiritual channel that connects man with heaven. (Zohar, Bereshit 149) According to its inner meaning, Yaacov was not only speaking about the place of the Temple Mount, but also about the place of the Brit on the body:

“And he was afraid, and he said, How awesome is this place; this is none other than the House of G-d, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Bereshit, 28:17)

Regarding the verse, “And he lied down (v’yishkav) in that place,” (Bereshit, 28:11) Rabbi Eliahu Leon Levi, shlita, teaches that v’yishkav can be read, v’ yeish kaf bet (and there are 22 letters of the Torah) in that place – the place of the Brit.

The Midrash teaches that with these 22 letters of the Torah, the world was created. These Hebrew letters are the building blocks of Creation. Thus, every drop of semen contains not only the genetic blueprint of the father, but also the spiritual blueprint of life. This is the reason that Avraham commanded his servant, Eliezer, to swear an oath by placing his hand under the place of the Brit – because of its exalted holiness. (Bereshit, 24:9) In this sense, blemishing the sanctity of the Brit through sexual wrongdoing, is like desecrated a scroll of holy scripture, may G-d have mercy.

The Hebrew word for semen is zera, which means seed. This seed contains not only the physical and spiritual blueprints of life, but also the life force itself. Each discharge of semen contains hundreds of thousands of souls. Each microscopic drop is more than a potential life. It is already a living soul. For this reason, the sin of spilling semen in vain is considered like the spilling of blood – like taking the life of a person. Not just the life of any person, but the life of the child of the man who commits the sin. (Niddah 13A; Even HaEzer, 23:2)

Kabbalistic sources explain that that wasting of semen gives strength to the forces of impurity and evil in the world. This mystical concept is explained in depth in the book, "Secret of the Brit." Here, we will only mention that the impurity that a person adds to the world through sexual transgression, not only causes many forms of personal suffering, but also

creates a barrier between the man and G-d, dulling his spiritual sensitivities, and turning his prayer and Torah learning into heavy, half-hearted endeavors which bring no satisfaction nor joy.