



DO NOT FOLLOW THEIR WAYS BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA

The Path To Follow **SHEMOT**

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HEVRAT PINTO
Under Aegis of
RABBI DAVID HANANIA
PINTO CHLITA
11, rue du plateau
75019 PARIS
Tel: +331 42 08 25 40
Fax +331 42 08 50 85
www.hevratpinto.org
Responsible of publication
Hanania Soussan

Guard Your Tongue!

Showing Disrespect for a Torah Lecture

Many people erroneously believe that it is not forbidden to show disrespect for a Torah class or a lecture that they heard. To our great regret, this is a widespread occurrence in our times, one that has done much to harm people and cause them shame and suffering. This is completely unjustified and is considered Lashon Harah.

Even when a class is weak in terms of content, meaning that it lacks depth, or if it was not given in a clear and organized way, it is forbidden to show disrespect to the person who gave it.

This is especially true when a listener has evaluated the class by himself, solely according to his own personal tastes. Some people want to hear novel Torah explanations, others simple parables, while still others prefer deeply intellectual talks. A person must always keep this in mind, for even if he did not appreciate what he heard in a class, he has to realize that others probably did, meaning that they appreciated the class. Whatever the case, it is forbidden to show disrespect for a Torah lecture or to humiliate the person who gave it.

It is written, "A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). Concerning this subject, the Sages have said that Rav and Samuel differed in their interpretation: "One said that he was really new, while the other said that only his decrees were new. 'Who did not know Joseph' – he seemed like one who did not know Joseph at all" (Sotah 11a; see also Shemot Rabba 1:8).

We need to explain how it was possible for this king (even according to the opinion that he was actually new) to not have known Joseph, since Joseph was a part of Egyptian history. After all, everyone was talking about him because he had saved the entire country. How much more is an explanation needed if he simply pretended not to know Joseph! Now even if the king himself really did not know Joseph, surely his ministers and wise men would have told him about Joseph, showing him all his brothers (the members of his own family) to whom he should be grateful. We also need to explain why the king wanted to reduce the Children of Israel to slavery, since they were great sages and tremendous merchants, meaning that the kingdom would not be able to take advantage of them if they were enslaved. Why then, instead of taking advantage of their skills, did Pharaoh transform them into slaves? What motivated him to do this?

In my humble opinion, I believe that the entire reason behind the extremely harsh Egyptian treatment of the Children of Israel can be found in the verse, "The Children of Israel were fruitful, teemed, increased and became strong...and the land became filled with them" (Exodus 1:7). This means that as long as the Children

of Israel followed the path of the Patriarchs, they blossomed in the Torah, which is a type of fruitfulness. At that time the Egyptians did them no harm, and the merit of Jacob and Joseph protected them. However once they began to enjoy themselves, to frequent Egyptian theaters (Yalkut Shimoni, Shemot 162), and to follow Egyptian lifestyles and culture, then it was as if they had "swarmed," which evokes the concept of impure insects. Only then did their slavery begin, for everything depends on the actions of the Jewish people. When they do not follow the right path, then even a ruler who loves them will begin to despise them. However when they act properly, then even a ruler who despises them will respect and treat them well. All this stems from Hashem.

We see something like this in our time as well. Rulers and great leaders demonstrate their admiration for the Jewish people and try to help them by their influence and money, but all this on condition that they make peace with their wicked neighbors among the

nations. In reality, however, the hatred of the nations of the world toward the Jewish people is very intense, for everything they do is uniquely for their own good, as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said concerning the Romans: "All that they made, they made for themselves" (Shabbat 33b), not for the Jewish people. There are two kinds of hatred among the nations of the world for the Jewish people. The first kind is when they show that they really hate us, such as during the Second World War. This is an open kind hatred, and those who see it realize that the nations hate Israel. On the other hand, there is another kind of hatred that is hidden. This is when the nations pretend to show love for Israel, yet hide a tremendous hatred that seeks to exterminate and destroy us, we the Jewish people.

As a result, the explanation is not that the king did not really know Joseph, for he knew him perfectly well! However he did not remember him because the Children of Israel had begun to enjoy themselves and behave improperly. Hence the king and the entire generation of Egyptians forgot everything about Joseph. This stemmed from Hashem, and it was meant to encourage the Children of Israel to repent and begin uncovering the sparks of holiness and removing them from Egypt. When the Jewish people follow Hashem's path, then the nations of the world do not hate them and have no power over them. Why does this occur? It is because the inner part of a Jew is always good, and it is only superficially that the forces of impurity do damage, as our Sages have said: "Our will is to perform Your will, and what prevents us? The yeast in the dough" (Berachot 17a). When the Jewish people follow the right path, the forces of impurity cannot harm them.

Sometimes the damage is completely external, though we can lose hope when we find ourselves inundated with misfortunes despite serving Hashem. Above all, we must look on the inside to see if we are serving Hashem in truth. When that is the case, the teaching of the Sages will be fulfilled: "When the voice of Jacob rings out in the synagogues, Esau has no hands" (Bereshith Rabba 65: 20). That is, Esau will be rendered powerless. It is solely the heart that makes a person good or bad, attached to Hashem or not.

It sometimes happens that people serve G-d only because others are observing them. Such pride turns them into "swarming insects," for all their deeds are only self-serving, meant to render themselves important in the eyes of others. Furthermore, if we act so as to please non-Jews, this is an even greater hindrance. However if this is a way of "growing" in the Torah, then it is beneficial. If a person is not stable in the Torah, he will end up mixing among non-Jews, as evidenced by the expression: "The land became filled with them" (Exodus 1:7).

Everyone can therefore choose a lifestyle and mode of conduct to follow in this world. We must strive for our inner selves to be completely good, and we must not mix among the peoples of the world. We must not imitate them nor adopt their culture, for this destroys both body and soul. It is only when we are separated from the nations that Hashem is close to us and grants us all things, both in the spiritual and material realms. Amen, may it be so!

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Deliverer's National Identity

Rashi states, "On the day Moses was born, [Pharaoh's] astrologers told him, 'Today the one who will save them has been born, but we do not know whether he is from the Egyptians or from the Israelites. However we see that he will ultimately be smitten through water.' Therefore on that day he issued a decree also upon the Egyptians, as it is said: 'Every son who is born' – it does not say, 'who is born to the Hebrews.' They did not know, however, that [Moses] would ultimately suffer because of the water of Merivah."

If the astrologers had already seen that the deliverer was born on that day, the Maharal of Prague asks, then how could they not have known if he was Egyptian or Hebrew? He replies by saying that they saw that on that day a savior was born, namely Moses. When Moses grew up with Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, the statement of the Sages was fulfilled in her: "Whoever brings up an orphan in his home, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had begotten him" (Sanhedrin 19b). According to this view, Bithiah merited for Moses to be considered as her own son, as it is written: "These are the sons of Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh" (I Chronicles 4:18). On this verse, the Sages have explained the names of her offspring as a reference to Moses (Megillah 13a). Hence the Egyptian astrologers could not determine the national identity of the deliverer, whether he was Egyptian or Hebrew.

The Steipler Gaon, Rabbi Yaakov Kanievsky Zatzal, wrote in Birkat Peretz that here we see the marvels of Hashem's providence. The decree of that day, wherein Pharaoh demonstrated his cruelty even towards his own people, was based entirely on the great fear that Israel's deliverer had been born into the world. What happened in the end? It was Pharaoh himself who raised this deliverer in his own home and with his own hands!

Not only that, but the measures that Pharaoh took to remove Israel's deliverer from the world were precisely what brought Moses to greatness in Pharaoh's house. It was solely because of Pharaoh's decree that Jochebed placed Moses' cradle upon the river, where Pharaoh's daughter Bithiah just happened to be. She in turn brought him into the royal palace. This teaches us that all of man's deeds and scheming cannot change in the slightest way what has been decreed in Heaven. Furthermore, and quite to the contrary, it is these actions themselves that bring about the Divine goal and lead to the actualization of Heaven's decrees. The paths of providence are truly amazing!

Is Rebuilt Equivalent to New?

It is written, "A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8).

On the subject of this "new king," Rashi cites the controversy between Rav and Samuel: "One said that he was really new, while the other said that only his decrees were new" (Sotah 11a).

What did they disagree on, and what does this change on a practical level? Torat Chaim states that there is a definite difference between someone who sells a rebuilt house as if it were new, and one who actually sells a new house. If a buyer were to tell the former, "This house isn't new, it's been rebuilt," the seller could answer by quoting the description of the king of Egypt: "A new king arose," for this did not really mean that he was new, but that his decrees were new. Hence the seller could say that the house is also new. The Ben Yehoyada says that the priest exempts a person from going off to war if he has built a new house but has not inaugurated it. What about a person who has

rebuilt his home? There is a discussion on this subject between Rabbi Yehudah and the Sages in the Talmud (Sotah 43a). The Ben Yehoyada says that the issue depends on what is before us in the verse, meaning whether it is truly a new king or one whose laws were new. If a new king is meant, then a person who has simply rebuilt his home must also go out to war. Otherwise he does not.

Moses' Greatness

It is written, "It happened in those days that Moses grew up and went out to his brothers and observed their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, of his brothers" (Exodus 2:11).

"Moses grew up" – Where did Moses' greatness lay? It was in the fact that he went out toward his brothers to carry the yoke with them. One of the qualities by which Torah is acquired is to share in the burdens of one's brothers.

When Things Work Out

It is written, "Do not come closer to here. Remove your shoes from your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

The Chafetz Chaim said that when we ask someone why he does not come to study, he may say, "I can't study now because I'm in a very difficult situation! When things work out, I'll come right away."

The Chafetz Chaim rebuffs such an excuse by saying: There where you stand, that is holy ground! Hashem knows what situation you find yourself in, and He is certainly not asking you to do the same thing as when you are at ease. However at the very least, there is a requirement in the here and now to serve Hashem in function to your abilities. In fact we must serve Hashem even under difficult circumstances, demonstrating that we are attached to Him and ready to put an effort into serving Him. It is with regards to this that the verse states, "The place upon which you stand [now] is holy ground."

Why Refuse a Mission?

It is written, "Moses said to the L-RD, 'Please, my L-rd, I am not a man of words, not since yesterday, nor since the day before yesterday, nor since You first spoke to Your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of speech.' Then the L-RD said to him, 'Who makes a mouth for man, or who makes one dumb or deaf, or sighted or blind? Is it not I, the L-RD? So now go! I shall be with your mouth and teach you what you should say.' He replied, 'Please, my L-rd, send through whomever You will send'" (Exodus 4:10-13).

Moses was standing before the burning bush as Hashem told him to deliver the Jewish people, who were experiencing constant suffering. Every day their babies were being killed and their children used as bricks. Yet Moses refused because he did not want to hurt Aaron's feelings? "Send Aaron," was his reply.

There were millions of Jews being enslaved, yet Moses refused? This is the question asked by Rav Shach Zatzal, a question from which he derived a great principle.

Moses knew that it was not possible for a good thing, such as the deliverance of the Jewish people, to result from a person being hurt if he did not deserve to be. Hashem did not contradict Moses, but instead He told him: "You do not appreciate Aaron's rightful value, and I tell you that he will not be upset. On the contrary, he will be happy to see you going!"

Some yeshiva students once suggested to Rabbi Shalom Schwadron Zatzal that he give them a Mussar course in his home. Thinking about their proposal, he realized that if these students were asking only him to give a lecture, their regular teacher might be upset. Rabbi Shalom

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

When Does Scripture Proclaim a Miracle?

Jochebed, the mother of Moses, was born within the gates of the border city as the Children of Israel descended into Egypt. There they were enslaved for 210 years (the numerical value of the word redu [descend]), and afterwards they were delivered. Since Moses was 80 years old when they left Egypt (Exodus 7:7), Jochebed gave birth to him at the age of 130.

In his commentary on the Torah, the Ramban expresses surprise at the fact that Scripture does not mention the miracle that occurred when Jochebed gave birth to Moses at the age of 130, since it does mention the miracle that occurred to Sarah when she gave birth at the age of 90.

The Ramban says: "I will tell you a true principle, clearly indicated in the Torah. Scripture mentions miracles performed through a prophet and which he previously prophesied, or performed by an angel who is revealed in the course of a Divine mission. However those effected naturally in order to help the righteous or destroy the wicked are not mentioned in the Torah or in the books of the prophets" (Ramban on Genesis 46:15). Since the miracle performed for Jochebed had not been previously announced by a prophet or a messenger of Hashem, Scripture did not mention it.

Another answer is given in the book Apirion by Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried Zatzal. In it he states that since a similar miracle had already been announced with regards to Sarah, it was not mentioned again because it was not such a novelty.

The Maggid of Dubno gives us another explanation by means of a parable: Two beggars met each other on the road and began chatting. The first said that he was returning from a certain town, the kindness of whose inhabitants he began to extol for their generosity to the poor. In fact they had given him, on average, one ruble each.

The second beggar replied, "When I was in that town, I received an average of ten rubles from each person, so why are you praising them so much for having given you but a fraction of that?" The first beggar asked, "When were you there?" He replied, "On Purim."

The first beggar said, "It's not surprising that they gave you so much money on Purim, and you can't use it to prove your point. Jews are normally generous to the poor on Purim. However I went to that town on an ordinary day, and everyone gave me an average of one ruble each, which does prove their generosity."

The miracle that occurred to Jochebed took place in Egypt when the Children of Israel were multiplying in a miraculous way (six births per pregnancy). Therefore a single miracle was not so special. However during the time of Sarah, when the laws of nature regulated the world, Isaac was born when Sarah and Abraham were extremely old, which was indeed a great miracle.

EISHET CHAYIL

Tzipporah

After Moses fled from Egypt because he was afraid of Pharaoh, he arrived in Midian. There he saved the daughters of Jethro from marauding shepherds, and Jethro welcomed him into his home. Later on he gave Moses his daughter Tzipporah as a wife.

Tzipporah was so named because she ran after Moses like a bird (tzippor) and brought him home. She was also generous like all the Matriarchs. Another reason for her name was that she was a tzaddeket, and just like a bird that a leper brings to be cleansed of his impurity, Tzipporah cleansed her father's house of the idolatry it contained. Furthermore, it was by her merit that her sisters also became Jewish.

When Moses returned to Egypt upon being sent there by Hashem, he took Tzipporah and his two sons with him. At a lodging place along the way, Hashem wanted to kill him because he had delayed in circumcising his son Eliezer. At that point Tzipporah quickly circumcised her son, thereby saving Moses' life.

therefore went to see the Mashgiach, Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein Zatzal, and put the question to him. He replied, "I have learned from my holy teachers the tradition that if someone runs to build the Temple, and by his running he hurts someone else, it would have been better for him to have remained at home and not build the Temple!" In other words, we are not responsible for bringing deliverance if it is connected to a bad deed.

Doubting Hashem

It is written, "Moses returned to the L-RD and said, 'My L-rd, why have You done evil to this people, why have You sent me? From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he did evil to this people, but You did not rescue Your people.' The L-RD said to Moses, 'Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh'" (Exodus 5:22-6:1).

Rashi states, "You have questioned My ways, unlike Abraham, to whom I said: 'For in Isaac will your seed be called' [Genesis 21:12]. Afterwards I said to him, 'Bring him up there for a burnt offering' [ibid. 22:2], yet he did not question Me. 'Now you will see.' You will see what is done to Pharaoh, but not what is done to the kings of the seven nations when I bring them into the land" (see Sanhedrin 111a).

Rashi gives the example of Abraham, who as opposed to Moses did not doubt Hashem.

However is it really true that Abraham did not doubt Him? Did Abraham not say, "Shall the judge of all the earth not do justice" (Genesis 18:25)? Furthermore, Moses returned to the word "why" in Parsha Ki Tisa by saying: "Why, O L-RD, should Your anger flare up against Your people, whom You have taken out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:11). What did Hashem say to him? "I have forgiven according to your word"!

Rav Lieberman states that there is a difference between speaking before an event by telling Hashem, "Don't do this," and after an event by telling Hashem, "Why have You done this?" We also find this distinction in Rashi's words, for he states that Abraham did not doubt Hashem. One is permitted to pray and ask before the fact, but after the fact it is forbidden to doubt, for G-d is faithful and just.

– Aish Dat

Overview of the Parsha

The book of Exodus deals with the formation of the Jewish people, G-d's chosen ones, which carries in it the Temple of G-d. It recounts the story of its birth in the crucible of Egypt until its maturity as a people who received the Torah and housed the Sanctuary. The Tablets of the Law resided in the Sanctuary, which was destined for the offering of scarifies that brought Hashem closer to His people.

From Jacob's children, who descended into a strange land, a people were formed in Egypt that would be persecuted by Pharaoh and his people. Moses was born into the house of Levi, which was destined for greatness among the tribes of Israel. Already in his early years, Moses went to the rescue of his brothers, as well as to the daughters of Jethro. Remembering His covenant, Hashem revealed Himself to Moses in a bush that burned yet was not consumed, and there He gave His mission to Moses. After much discussion, Moses agreed to go and tell Pharaoh to release Hashem's children. Instead, Pharaoh increased the workload of the Children of Israel, which prompted Moses to ask G-d, "Why have You done evil to this people?" G-d replied, "Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh."

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi
The Author of the Tanya

Forty-seven years after the birth of that great light, our teacher the holy Baal Shem Tov on Elul 18, 5458, Rabbi Shneur Zalman Schneerson Zatzal was born in 5505. The author of the Tanya and the founder of Chabad Chassidut, Rabbi Shneur Zalman was born in the small town of Liozna, in the province of Mohilov.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman learned most of his Torah with Rabbi Issachar Ber in Lubavitch, and as early as the age of 11 his teacher discovered extraordinary talents in him. He therefore exiled himself to a place of Torah, and at the age of 18 he was fully versed in every Torah subject. Indeed, everyone who met him was amazed.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman settled in Vitebsk after his marriage, and from there he went to study Chassidut with Rabbi Dov Ber, the great Maggid of Mezritch. The Maggid predicted that he would lead a community of myriads. Rabbi Shneur Zalman began to direct the community after the passing of his teacher, and thousands of Jews gathered around him in the small town of Liadi, which became a shining beacon of Torah. It was from there that Torah and Chassidut went out to the entire Diaspora.

The Baal HaTanya (as Rabbi Shneur Zalman became known) was arrested several times due to false allegations. When he emerged from prison a second time, on Kislev 19, everyone realized that he was a holy man. From then on, Kislev 19 became known as the "Rosh Hashanah" of Chassidut, the day that the Rebbe was freed.

During the Napoleonic wars, Rabbi Shneur Zalman fled into the heart of Russia due to his opposition to Napoleon. However due to his many travels, he fell ill and ascended to the celestial academy on Tevet 24, 5573. He is famous for having written the Tanya, as well as for his own Shulchan Aruch, known as Shulchan Aruch HaRav. Rabbi Shneur Zalman is buried in the town of Hadiacz. May his merit protect us all.

A TRUE STORY

A Time to Evade Responsibility and a Time to Assume It

One of the greatest disciples of the Chafetz Chaim was asked to become the Rav of one of the communities in Lithuania. This man possessed an incredible fear of Heaven, and therefore he hesitated to accept the position for fear that he would make mistakes in ruling upon Torah matters. When he went to ask his teacher the Chafetz Chaim for advice, he said to him: "In Parsha Shemot the Torah tells us that although Pharaoh asked the Hebrew midwives to kill all the boys that were born to this people, they did not follow the Egyptian king's order. This is surprising, for they could have just abandoned their jobs following Pharaoh's cruel decree, and in that case they would not have been guilty towards Heaven. However the Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah, were afraid that other midwives would replace them and that they would obey Pharaoh's decree to kill all the Hebrew boys who saw the light of day. This is why they did not abandon their difficult duties during that time, and it is why they risked their lives for the Jewish people. This attitude of the midwives should guide us in performing the tasks that are imposed on us."

A MATTER OF EDUCATION

Life and Death Depend on the Realities of the Tongue

It is written, "Moses feared, and he said, 'Surely the thing is known.' Pharaoh heard this and sought to kill Moses" (Exodus 2:14-15). Every act that we concentrate on as such, without its proper context, becomes some definite thing (whether justified or not). This is what is done by speech (dibur, same letters as davar [thing]), which evaluates (lehadrin) a point in its context and thus transforms it into an independent thing (davar). When the point in question becomes a thing, it is given even more importance. When word spread that Moses had killed an Egyptian, it became an actual thing that occurred in Egypt and threatened Moses' life. Similarly we find, "By the mouth of two witnesses...shall the thing be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15). Testimony becomes actuality, and by way of speech it is extended and becomes a thing. This is the simple meaning of the statement, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). From this we see the violence and destruction that can result from speech, as well as the peace and harmony that can be derived from it.

In this we have a fundamental principle that we can base our education on. Each word that comes from the wellsprings of thought eventually reflects a real distinction. Speech has no meaning outside the living description it provides. Even an abstract word such as justice represents a certain kind of relationship among the realities of existence. Even when we speak of the Holy One, blessed be He, there is a connection to the world and everything it contains.

The greatest irritant in man's mind, in addition to his other sins, is his inaccurate use of language. When a person speaks about anything in life, he must focus his attention on understanding the exact meaning of what he is saying. This is why we must engage in a tireless effort to understand the meaning of each word we utter. By means of precise words and what they actually represent, a person can build his vision of the world to the point of achieving a quality of life at the level of the World to Come, wherein "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the L-RD" (Isaiah 11:9).

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

The Fault of the Nations

It is written, "Thus said the L-RD: I remember you, the devotion of your youth, your love like a bride, when you went after Me in the desert, into a land that was not sown" (Jeremiah 2:2).

Through the prophet Jeremiah, Hashem told the Children of Israel to remember the distant past, when they exhibited unlimited devotion and great faith in Him. They followed Hashem with their wives and children into an unsown land, where they would have died of hunger if Hashem had not rescued them. In the next verse it is written, "All who devour him [Israel] shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them" (v.3). What the prophet means by this is that in the future, Hashem will punish the nations because of the sins committed by the Children of Israel.

To what can this be compared? It is like a man whose son possessed many virtues and talents, and for whatever reason the father was forced to place the boy with a peasant, who raised him. The boy learned many bad habits in his new surroundings, and he became so insolent and hardheaded that the peasant lost his patience and beat him. When the man learned of this, he became enraged with the peasant, who asked the man why he was so angry with him, since it was his son who was doing wrong! The man replied, "My son possessed excellent character traits, but he learned many bad habits from his new surroundings when he began living with you. That is why I'm angry with you." Thus the prophet said, "All who devour him [Israel] shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them," for it was from the nations that Israel learned to do wicked things, so why should they also be struck by them? This is why "evil shall come upon them."