



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

The Conversations of the Righteous

Scoffers begin by engaging in idle talk, and from there they speak ill of the righteous. This leads them to speak against the prophets and their message, as it written: "They mocked the messengers of G-d and scorned His words and scoffed at His prophets" [2 Chronicles 36:16]. From there they come to speak against G-d and deny His existence, as it is written: "The Children of Israel used words that were not right against the L-RD their G-d" [2 Kings 17:9] and, "They set their mouth against Heaven and their tongue struts on earth" [Psalms 73:9]. Why are their mouths in Heaven while their tongues first strode upon on earth? This is the conversion of the wicked, which involves idleness and tries to frequent the synagogues of the ignorant and the taverns of the drunkards. As for the conversations of the righteous men of Israel, it is comprised solely of Torah words and wisdom.

– Rambam, Hilchot Tumat, Tzara'at Ch. 7

THE DISCUSSION WITH JOSEPH'S BROTHERS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE EVIL INCLINATION (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "The day dawned and the men were sent off, they and their donkeys. They had left the city, but had not gone far when Joseph said to the overseer of his house: 'Get up. Pursue the men, and when you overtake them, say to them: 'Why do you repay evil for good...'' ... [They replied,] 'Whichever of your servants with whom it is found will die, and we will become slaves to my lord.' He replied, '...the one with whom it is found will be my slave, and you will be innocent'" (Genesis 44:3-4, 9-10).

From this story we can all learn how to fight against the evil inclination. In fact when a person sins and wants to repent, when he is looking for a light in his life – meaning the Torah, as it is written, "The Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23), and as the Sages have said, "Light means Torah" (Megillah 16b) – this same evil inclination will attack him. It will try to make him sin even more and prevent him from getting away. We find this concept alluded to in the verse, "The day dawned and the men were sent off." That is, when sinners want to escape the prison of the evil inclination and step out into a great light, the light of Torah, when "they had left the city, but had not gone far," the evil inclination will pursue them by fulfilling the order, "Get up. Pursue the men." A discussion will then ensue between the evil inclination and the one who wants to repent, just as in the discussion between Joseph's brothers and his servant. The evil inclination will say, "The ways of the wicked work! As long as you were under my control, you succeeded. Instead of being punished for all the sins that you committed, you experienced nothing but success. It was because of me that you became rich, so why leave me now and repay evil for good?" At that point, however, the ba'al teshuvah is obligated to say: "Before I completely repented, I was like a small boy who didn't know that he was doing wrong or what the consequences of his actions were. Yet now I realize that I need to repent, not because I want to repay evil for good, but because I've taken it upon myself to overcome every hardship, difficult though it may be. It doesn't matter to me if the evil inclination takes back all the good that it did for me. Not only that, but now I realize that all its benefits were really misfortunes, for pain and anguish are my lot because of all the good that I received while doing wrong. From now on, I prefer to die rather than to follow the evil inclination by going after sin. I want to remain a slave to Hashem alone, now that I've recognized His continual kindnesses to me." We find this idea alluded to in the verse, "Whichever of your servants with whom it is found will die, and we will become slaves to my lord." That is, it is better to die in order to be slaves of "my lord," meaning Hashem.

Nevertheless, the evil inclination will not let go of a person. It tells all ba'alei teshuvah that great difficulties and suffering await them, and that eventually they will become its servants again, just as before. This concept is alluded to in the verse, "The one with whom it is found will be my slave" (v.10). It's in this way that the war between the evil inclination and a ba'al teshuvah unfolds. Each tries to

bring down the other, as in the expression: "Each one lowered his sack to the ground" (v.11).

However a person must strengthen himself and realize that this lowering is the source of a tremendous spiritual elevation. He must realize that hope is not lost, and that through effort and prayer he will, G-d willing, get back on his feet. The evil inclination asks a person how it's possible that now, just as he is studying Torah, his future looks bleak. By doing so, it is attempting to convince a person to heed its advice and ensure a more successful future. To this a person must reply, "G-d has found the iniquity of your servants" (v.16). In other words: I reached a lowly state because of the sins I committed, but I will still continue to serve Hashem, even if I'm in a worse state.

Still, the evil inclination never gives up or lets go, as the Sages have said: "The evil inclination grows with a person from childhood until old age, and each day it tries to make him fall" (Tanhuma, Beshalach 3). The Sages have also said, "The evil inclination of a man grows in strength from day to day and seeks to kill him" (Sukkah 52b; cf. Kiddushin 30b). It never stops trying, and it uses all sorts of tricks in order to distance a person from Hashem and bring him back to it like at first. However the war against the evil inclination must be waged even if a person has to risk his own life in the process, just as Judah risked his life by standing before Joseph in order to appease or fight him. This action threatened his very life, for Joseph was the viceroy of Egypt, and every Egyptian would certainly have supported and fought for him. Judah was nevertheless adamant. Why? Because "your servant took responsibility for the youth from my father, saying: 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I will have sinned to my father for all time'" (Genesis 44:32). The same applies to every ba'al teshuvah: He must be ready to give his life in the war against his evil inclination, for he is responsible for the youth – meaning the days of his youth – when he didn't know what he was doing. His deliberate sins will then be transformed into inadvertent ones, and he will be forgiven for all he did. Therefore now, "How can I go up to my father if the youth is not with me" (v.44), for now the ba'al teshuvah understands the gravity of sin and the punishment it entails. If he falls back into transgression, he will then be judged for the deliberate sins of his youth, which will once again be viewed as deliberate!

Hence a person must go out to war against the evil inclination, which is the Satan, the Angel of Death (Bava Batra 16a). Even though a person knows that he is but flesh and blood, while the Satan is a fiery angel (Zohar I:80a) and much stronger than him, he must still go out to war against it. He must do this because he has been promised, "When you go out to war against your enemies... the L-RD your G-d will deliver him into your hand, and you shall take captives" (Deuteronomy 21:10).

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Who is Wise?

When Joseph proposed a plan to prepare Egypt for the coming years of famine, Pharaoh and his servants viewed it as being uncommonly wise. Hence Pharaoh said, "There is none so intelligent and wise as you" (Genesis 41:39). The Novardok Beit Midrash raised a question on this issue. That is, how could it be that Joseph's plan was viewed as being so wise? What exactly occurred in this case? There was a clear and established forecast stating that, despite the extreme abundance that would exist for seven years, seven years of famine would follow. Anyone who failed to prepare during those years of abundance would have nothing to eat during the famine. All that was needed was to initiate a "savings plan" that was well-structured and organized. That being said, why could only a wise and prudent man such as Joseph undertake this plan and put it into practice?

Today every bank offers plans in order to help a person save for a wedding, finance their education, purchase a car, travel overseas, and so on. Everyone clearly understands the concept behind such plans, which is that people have to prepare for the future, even if it means reducing their present expenses. Therefore what great wisdom did Joseph demonstrate in proposing his plan?

Instead of giving an answer to this question, however, in Novardok another question was raised: Is it possible that this case was really so straightforward? Did everyone really understand that savings had to be made during the years of abundance so that nobody died during the famine? What are we to make of the verse, "The days of our years are 70" (Psalms 90:10)? Does everyone really understand the need to amass good deeds for the time that will follow? Nobody really thinks that life continues without end, for no one lives forever. And yet suddenly, we are not all so wise and prudent. Here, for some reason, it is not clear enough that it would be better to start saving. For some reason or another, a blind faith reigns among people that all will go well. We feel no pressure, for the years of abundance are not seven, but rather seventy. We therefore reject the voice that hides deep within our hearts, the voice that is trying to remind us that wealth does not last forever.

The reason that not everyone thinks about this is simple: We usually start a savings plan only when we feel compelled to! Only when we begin to think about the day that our life on earth will end (a difficult thought to bear in mind) will we feel compelled not to sin. It is difficult to feel the burden of something that we still cannot see on the horizon, for a person devoid of wisdom cannot "see" the future. At best he can reflect upon the future, but such reflection cannot really stop him from enjoying the pleasures of this world. Because the future is hidden from him, he simply cannot sense any future threat.

Hence to impose a law on an entire population that obligates them to save for seven years without compromise – a plan imposed on the entire population, not one that it freely chooses, but one that forces it to abstain from all excess during times of abundance and to tolerate difficulties for a certain future – to impose such a law requires a man who is "intelligent and wise," for the wise can "see" the future (see Perkei Avoth). Such a person is the only one with the strength to maintain his position and not be enticed by present conditions, for he can envision the future in the same way that he sees the present.

– From Chayei HaMussar of Novardok

A Pearl From the Rav:

The Proper Perspective

When Jacob's sons met Joseph, he claimed that they were spies. He then had Shimon taken away before their very eyes and put into prison, and he accused Benjamin of having stolen his cup. It seems that the brothers should have instead revolted, for they knew the truth: All the allegations against them were false. That being the case, why do we read that the brothers accepted each of Joseph's accusations, ones that he concocted against them? Why didn't they cry foul, since it was nothing but a plot that contained not a shred of truth?

From here we see the tremendous faith possessed by the fathers of the tribes. The Sages teach, "If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct" (Berachot 5a). In fact Hashem does not inflict painful judgments upon a person without reason, and He is very exacting with the tzaddikim. Therefore when the fathers of the tribes saw that they were being assailed by misfortune, they focused their thoughts on just one thing: What is this teaching us, and how can we improve our ways? Instead of trying to get even with Joseph or to protest against his schemes, they simply accepted everything with love. They understood this to be a sign from Heaven that the sin for having sold Joseph had to be rectified. Therefore they focused solely on that thought.

Standing Before the King

It is written, "Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they rushed him from the dungeon. He shaved and changed his clothes, and he came before Pharaoh" (Genesis 41:14).

From here the book Orchot Tzaddikim learns just how much we must ensure that our thoughts are good and acceptable to G-d. This is because every person is actually standing before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, at all times. It states that a person must remember that the Holy One, blessed be He, perceives the thoughts of his heart. Now an individual can only appear before the king in a certain way, as it is written: "It was forbidden to enter the king's gate in a garment of sackcloth" (Esther 4:2). This was also the case for the righteous Joseph: "Pharaoh sent and called Joseph.... He shaved and changed his clothes, and he came before Pharaoh" (Genesis 41:14). A person who constantly stands before the king does not present himself in the same way as one who stands before the king only once. Hence with regard to ourselves – we who are constantly standing before the King of kings, Who perceives the thoughts of the heart, concealed as well as revealed, and to Whom nothing is hidden, for He is everywhere – how much more should we constantly reflect upon His grandeur? How much more should we commit ourselves to performing His will and to properly presenting ourselves in thought before Him?

Why Did Joseph Not Contact His Father?

It is written, "Joseph recalled the dreams that he dreamed about them" (Genesis 42:9).

The Ramban states, "One should wonder: After Joseph stayed in Egypt for many years and became chief and overseer in the house of a great lord in Egypt, how was it possible that he did not send a single letter to his father to inform him of his whereabouts and comfort him, as Egypt is only about a six-day journey from Hebron? Even if it were a year's journey, out of respect for his father he should have notified him, in which case even if the ransom of his person would be ever so costly, he would have redeemed him."

The Ramban explains that Joseph knew that his dreams were a prophecy which had to be fulfilled. As he states, "Jacob saw that the bowing down of his brothers, as well as his father and all his family, could not possibly be accomplished in their homeland, and he was hoping that it would occur in Egypt, when he saw his great success there. This was all the more so after he heard Pharaoh's dream, from which it became clear to him that all of them were destined to come there, and all his dreams would be fulfilled."

The Ramban also states, "When Joseph saw that his brothers were bowing to him, he remembered all the dreams that he had dreamed concerning them, and he knew that in this instance not one of the dreams had been fulfilled. He knew that it was inherent in their interpretation that according to the first dream, initially all his brothers would bow down to him, as it says: 'And behold, we were binding sheaves' [Genesis 37:7], for 'we' refers to all eleven of his brothers. The second time, in accordance with the second dream, 'the sun, the moon, and eleven stars' [v.9] would bow down to him. Now since he did not see Benjamin with them, he conceived of the strategy of devising a charge against them so that they would also bring his brother Benjamin to him, in order to first fulfill the first dream. It is for this reason that he did not wish to tell them at this time, 'I am Joseph your brother' [Genesis 45:4] and to say,

'Hurry and go up to my father' [ibid. 45:9]...as he did to them the second time, for his father would undoubtedly have come at once."

It would seem that all the brothers, including Benjamin, first had to bow down, and only then was Jacob to come and bow down. Hence when the first dream had been fulfilled and everyone, including Benjamin, had arrived, only then did Joseph attempt to fulfill the second dream.

Professional Spies

It is written, "You are spies. You have come to see the nakedness of the land.... The land's nakedness have you come to see.... It is as I have said: You are spies!" (Genesis 42:9-14).

In reading this passage, we notice that Joseph first accuses his brothers of being spies and coming to see the nakedness of the land (v.9), then he repeats the accusation of coming to see the nakedness of the land but omits the spy charge (v.12), and finally he repeats the accusation of being spies but omits the charge of coming to see the nakedness of the land (v.14)! We need to understand the significance of these changes. The answer lies in the fact that not everyone is cut out to be a spy, for spying requires special individuals who have studied and practiced this craft. These are people who, if necessary, are prepared to go and spy on a country with which war is envisioned. Yet even a person whose occupation is spying does not spy all the time, for sometimes he travels for business or some other reason. Hence Joseph said to his brothers: "You are spies" – this, before all else, is your normal occupation, being spies. He then said, "You have come to see the nakedness of the land" – you are now acting as spies, which is why you have come to Egypt; you have not come here for business. They replied, "Not so, my lord, for your servants have come to buy food" (Genesis 42:10), meaning that they responded to the second accusation, the crux of the issue, which is that they had come only to buy food. They immediately added: "We are honest men. Your servants have never been spies" (v.11) – we have never learned this craft, nor have we ever practiced it. Joseph rebuffed their arguments by saying, "No! But the land's nakedness have you come to see" (v.12). In other words: "I won't lower myself by discussing whether or not you are professional spies, for that wouldn't change a thing. The issue here is that you have actually come to see the nakedness of the land." Hence Joseph did not, at that point, repeat the accusation that they were spies.

– Abarbanel and Beit Halevi

Overview of the Parsha

In this week's parsha, Joseph is taken from prison to become the viceroy of Egypt and distribute food to other countries. He also weaves a web of intrigue around his brothers, who had arrived in Egypt in search of food.

Because Joseph interpreted dreams in prison, he was called upon to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, after which he was appointed as viceroy. Years of abundance eventually ended and a famine began, prompting Joseph's brothers to come to Egypt for food. Recalling his dreams, Joseph hides his identity from his brothers, accuses them of being spies, and imprisons Shimon. When their food begins to run out once more, Joseph's brothers return to Egypt with Benjamin, their youngest brother, who is now Judah's responsibility. Benjamin receives more than his brothers as they dine in the home of Joseph, who once again accuses them of conspiring against him, this time to steal his cup.

Are Dreams Meaningless?

Many of our sages, upon whom the Torah and Halachah rest, have given their consent to Halachic rulings based on the contents of dreams. Rabbi Eliezer ben Nathan (the Raavan) said, "In the year 4912, my son-in-law poured the contents of a wine barrel into a small vessel, one from which a non-Jew had consumed wine, and I ruled that the wine was permissible to drink. This occurred on Shabbat. After eating I went to sleep, and my teacher came to me in a dream. He spoke harshly of those who had poured the wine. When I awoke, I realized that my teacher had declared the wine forbidden to drink. I then knew that I had erred in my ruling, and I fasted for two days." (See Even HaEzer 26 of the Raavan; Hagahot Mordechai, Avodah Zarah 5:658.)

Rabbi Ephraim of Regensburg once ruled that a fish known as burbita was kosher. That same night, he had a dream in which he was served a plate full of insects. He became angry with the one who served it to him, but he replied: "Why are you getting angry? You're the one who permitted them!" At that point he became so angry that he woke up from his dream. Rabbi Ephraim then recalled that on the day before he had ruled that burbita was kosher. He immediately got up and broke all the dishes from which people had eaten. (See Hagahot Ashrei 77:41; Ohr Zarua ibid., 200a.)

The Tashbetz wrote, "I discovered that our teacher Baruch once said that Rabbeinu Ephraim had eaten a fish called barbuta. During the night, a dignified looking elderly man with a long white beard appeared to him with a plate full of insects and said, 'Get up and eat!' He refused and said, 'But these are insects!' The man replied, 'What you permitted and ate today are also insects.' When he awoke, he realized that the prophet Eliyahu had appeared to him in a dream, and from that day on he never ate that kind of fish again" (Tashbetz Katan 352).

In the responsa of the Tashbetz (Vol. 2, No. 159), it is written: "One night in a dream, I found myself eating something impure. I awoke stunned and trembling. Later that day, the person who usually purchased my meat brought me some, and he said to me with a smile: 'This meat was first forbidden and then permitted.' I asked him how, and he replied: 'They found evidence that the animal had been injured.' I then said, 'That's the impurity I saw in my dream!' I ordered him to return it, and since that time I made sure never to eat in such cases."

Rabbeinu Yitzchak of Vienna did not know how to spell the name "Akiva" for a get, either with a hei or an aleph at the end. In a dream he was shown the verse Ohr zarua latzaddik ulishrei lev simcha ("Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright of heart" [Psalms 97:11]). In this expression, the last letter of each word forms the name "Akiva" with a hei. Accordingly, Rabbeinu Yitzchak decided to write the get using a hei, so important was this vision in his eyes. In fact it was so important that he entitled his great book Ohr Zarua.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yichya Alsheich – The Son of Rabbi Nethanel Alsheich

The gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Yichya Alsheich was born on Tammuz 13, 5675 to the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Nethanel Zatzal. Rabbi Yichya was a member of the famous Alsheich family (the original name of which was “Levi”), a very important family in Yemen that produced great rabbis and Torah scholars. Rabbi Yichya lost his father when he was about six years old, and his grandfather and maternal uncles took care of him. From childhood he demonstrated an extraordinary ability for comprehension and a phenomenal memory. In his youth, he studied with the great rabbis of Yemen, who even could tell, even then, that he would become a great light for the Jews of Yemen.

Not only was Rabbi Yichya gifted with a phenomenal memory, he was also very diligent in learning Torah, often studying through the night in the ezrat nashim (woman’s section) of the synagogue. In 5709 he went to settle in the Holy Land, where he devoted himself to the holiness of the camp and the purity of education.

In Eretz Israel, he continued to study Torah with all his strength and all his might. Entirely familiar with all the customs and traditions of Yemen, he also possessed tremendous knowledge in every field of Torah. The great Torah figures of Israel recognized Rabbi Yichya’s brilliance despite his remarkable humility, and they addressed their questions to him concerning the Gemara and the commentators. He amazed everyone with his memory and complete mastery of Torah.

Rabbi Yichya possessed complete self-control, and his modesty and simple way of life were legendary. He humbled himself tremendously, wholeheartedly devoting himself to deeds of chesed for the entire Jewish community through his Torah, advice, and blessings.

Rabbi Yichya lived his entire life in a state of holiness and purity, paying great attention to protecting all his senses. He was grieved at the misfortunes of the Jewish people, and he prayed for them with all his heart. His voice was beautiful to hear, and many gathered around him just to listen to his extraordinary melodies. Heaven answered his prayers, and hundreds, even thousands of people saw deliverance on account of him. On Heshvan 21, 5757, Rabbi Yichya Alsheich rendered his holy and pure soul to his Creator. He was greatly honored at his funeral, as thousands joined the funeral procession on foot from his home all the way to Har HaMenuchot, where he was buried near the Chida. Leading Torah figures from every region delivered eulogies for Rabbi Yichya, who left behind sons and grandsons, great Torah figures who will continue to spread his spiritual heritage.

A TRUE STORY

The Interpreter Was Between Them

One day the rabbis of Russia were invited to a meeting organized by the government, which demanded that they learn the language of the country. Most of those present were not opposed to this demand, for in their view the government’s intention was not to turn them away from their faith, but only to allow rabbis to get by in Russian and enable them, for example, to write letters in that language. Only the gaon Rabbi Chaim Halevi of Brisk Zatzal was firmly against this, saying that the rabbis were forbidden to agree that a rav should be evaluated by anything other than his greatness in Torah and knowledge of Halachah. The majority of the rabbis, however, did not share his view, and they prepared to enact a resolution that supported the government’s demand. Rabbi Chaim then arose and said, “I’m the secretary of this meeting, and I’ll write its resolutions!” Everyone was taken aback by this, and they said to Rabbi Chaim, “But you’re against the resolution!” Rabbi Chaim replied, “What does that matter? The majority has decided, and everyone must go along with it.” People continued to question him: “But you don’t know Russian! How can you write a resolution in a language that you don’t know?”

He replied, “Even if I knew Russian, I would still need a pen. And who would write the resolution, me or the pen? It’s the pen that writes. But since the pen writes only what I want it to, the resolution will carry my name. That being the case, I ask you: Why does a rav need to know Russian? All he needs is a Russian interpreter, who will act as his pen. That’s all. If the government still insists that a rav must know Russian, it’s obviously because it has the intention of weakening the rabbinate. It wants to choose rabbis according to their knowledge of Russian, not their understanding of Torah.”

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

By the Merit of Shabbat

Yosef Mokir Shavi [Joseph who honors Shabbat] had in his neighborhood a certain Gentile who owned a great deal of property. Soothsayers said to him, “Yosef Mokir Shavi will consume all your property.” [Therefore the Gentile] went, sold all his property, and bought a precious stone with the proceeds, which he set in his turban. As he was crossing a bridge, the wind blew it off and cast it into the water. It was swallowed by a fish, which was hauled up and brought [to the market] on the eve of Shabbat toward sunset. “Who will buy now?” they cried. “Go and take it to Yosef Mokir Shavi,” they were told, “as he is accustomed to buy.” So they took it to him. He bought it, opened it, found the jewel within, and sold it for thirteen roomfuls of gold denarii. A certain old man met him [and] said, “He who lends to Shabbat, Shabbat repays him.”

Rabbi asked Rabbi Ishmael the son of Rabbi Yossi, “How do the wealthy in Palestine merit [wealth]?” He replied, “Because they give tithes, as it is written: Asser te’asser – give tithes [asser] so that you may become rich [titasher].” “Those in Babylon, how do they merit it?” He replied, “Because they honor Torah.” “And those in other countries, how do they merit it?” He replied, “Because they honor Shabbat.” [This is demonstrated by the following story:] Rabbi Chiya bar Abba related: “I was once invited to the home of a man in Laodicea. When he arrived, a golden table was brought before him, one that had to be carried by sixteen men. Sixteen silver chains were fixed in it, and plates, goblets, pitchers, and flasks were set upon it. On the table were all kinds of food, dainties, and spices. When they set it down they recited, ‘The earth and its fullness is the L-RD’s’ [Psalms 24:1]. When they removed it they recited, ‘As for the heavens, the heavens are the L-RD’s, but the earth He has given to man’ [ibid. 115:16]. I said to him, ‘My son! How have you merited all this?’ He replied, ‘I was a butcher, and with every fine animal I used to say, “This will be for Shabbat.”’ I said to him, ‘Happy are you that you have merited this, and praised be the Omnipresent, Who has allowed you to enjoy all this.’”

The emperor said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania, “Why does the Sabbath meal smell so good?” He answered, “We have a certain seasoning called Shabbat. We add it to our food to give it a fragrant smell.” The emperor asked, “Give us some of it.” Rabbi Yehoshua replied, “To one who keeps Shabbat, it is effective. But to one who does not keep Shabbat, it is useless.” – Shabbat 119a

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Wisdom Resides Among the Humble

It is written, “And Hiram made” (I Kings 7:40).

This week’s Haftorah describes the work performed by Hiram in building the Temple. In this chapter we are told that Hiram, who oversaw the construction of the Temple, was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali. It is surprising that the Torah felt it necessary to relate this fact, and we should also question how Hiram deserved the merit of building the Temple. The author of Kol Tzofayich states that Scripture mentions that Hiram was the son of a widow in order to hint that it was precisely on this account that he merited to build the Temple. Since he was an orphan and had lived a difficult life, having no father to guide and protect him, he felt defenseless. Precisely because he had to face life on his own, unusual abilities were awakened in him. In fact this motivated him to such a great extent that he elevated himself and surpassed all his friends and peers. This allows us to understand the Sages statement, “Be mindful of the children of the poor, because the Torah proceeds from them” (Nedarim 81a). Actually, the fact that the children of the poor have a humble and sensitive disposition is what motivates them to surpass their friends and attain lofty heights. Hiram merited wisdom in proportion to the suffering and troubles he endured. Because his mother was a widow and his father had been a simple coppersmith, he was provided with help from Heaven. For his part as well, Hiram never demonstrated any laziness, but instead honed his special abilities and developed his full potential, hidden away inside. His lowly standing is precisely what pushed him to muster all the talents given to him by Heaven and surpass all his friends, to the point that he became the craftsman responsible for building the Temple!