



The Path To Follow BESHALACH

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Why Only Now?

If your friend has deceived or embarrassed you, or if he has caused you to incur some loss, it is forbidden to relate this information to others. This is true even if you claim that you don't hold a grudge against him, and that your goal in relating this information is strictly practical.

Yaakov began to tell Nachum bad things about Moshe. When Nachum said that he didn't want to hear Lashon Harah, Yaakov replied, "Don't misunderstand me. I hold no grudge against Moshe. It's just that he always manages to hurt his friends and upset them in public. Can you believe that only a week ago, he embarrassed me around everyone? I think he should be taught a lesson." Nachum immediately replied, "If you really hold no grudge against him, it's strange that you didn't think it was necessary to speak against him before he upset you, and that you're only mentioning it now!"

THE TORAH IS NOTHING WITHOUT HOLINESS

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "The sea saw and fled" (Psalms 114:3), concerning which the Sages have said: "What did the sea perceive? It saw the casket of Joseph" (Midrash Tehillim 114:9). We need to understand what the Sages meant by this. Rabbi Yochanan said, "The Holy One, blessed be He, made a stipulation with the sea that it should split before Israel. Thus it is written, 'The sea returned le-etano [to its strength]' [Exodus 14:27], i.e., in accordance with its agreement [li-tenao]" (Bereshith Rabba 5:5). Therefore even without seeing Joseph's casket, the sea should have split before the Children of Israel because that was the agreement made at the time of Creation.

There is something else we need to understand. It is said that the sea split before the Children of Israel because it saw that they respected the mitzvah of circumcision (see Shemot Rabba 23:12). The book Netivot Shalom asks, "The sea should have split even without seeing this, for when the world was created, Hashem obligated it to split for the Children of Israel upon leaving Egypt. Why did it suddenly split only when it saw that they observed the mitzvah of circumcision?"

Let us try to explain this as best we can. We know that Abraham performed all the mitzvot of the Torah even before they were given (Yoma 28b). He performed them of his own free will, without even being commanded, as it is written: "Because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My statutes, and My commandments" (Genesis 26:5). How can we possibly think that he transgressed a mitzvah of Hashem because he had not yet received it?

We might think that Abraham did not observe the mitzvot because he was not yet circumcised, for only a circumcised man can enter Hashem's covenant and is strong enough to shoulder the burden of Torah study and mitzvot performance. Only such a man can truly feel them and be protected from all spiritual harm, for circumcision is the sign of the covenant and a symbol of Judaism. Yet Abraham, although he was not yet circumcised, devoted himself to Torah study and meticulous mitzvot performance, all without the thought of reward. He overcame every obstacle and constantly yielded to Hashem's will. This enables us to understand why the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded the Children of Israel to circumcise themselves before leaving Egypt. Since they were already occupied with the mitzvah of the Passover offering, why did they need an extra mitzvah? Furthermore, if they needed an extra mitzvah, why was it precisely circumcision that they were given? Hashem could have given them another mitzvah. Why did He specify the mitzvah of circumcision, such that the blood of circumcision mingled with the blood of the offerings?

It seems that in order for a person to truly sense the Passover offering, meaning to offer himself in the service of Hashem and change for the better, he needs the

mitzvah of circumcision. In fact a man cannot be a Jew and serve Hashem with devotion unless he is circumcised. This is why a person who tries to purify himself and serve Hashem in holiness must remove the kelipah [the outer shell or covering, in this case the foreskin], the symbol of evil.

This explains why the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted the Children of Israel to be circumcised before leaving Egypt. When they arrived at the sea, it was to split before them. However if they arrived without being circumcised and ready to wholeheartedly serve Hashem, how could the sea split for them? It also had to demonstrate devotion in order to split! Although this is an absolute prerequisite, it deals with Jews who wholeheartedly learn Torah and perform mitzvot. Hence Hashem wanted the Children of Israel to be circumcised, for then the sea would perceive their devotion to Torah and its mitzvot, and it would split for them.

However in the opposite case, when a Jew does not respect the holy covenant, what good will circumcision do? He lacks devotion in serving Hashem, and when that is missing he will never be able to transform evil into good. Similarly, what good will circumcision do if he does not study Torah and perform mitzvot? The same question also applies to one who studies Torah and performs mitzvot, yet is not circumcised. A person must have it all together: The mitzvah of circumcision, the study of Torah, the performance of mitzvot, and loyalty to the covenant of circumcision. The Sages have said, "The Torah was given for study only to the eaters of manna" (Mechilta, Beshalach 17). What is the connection between the Torah and manna? The manna was food from Heaven, as the Sages have said: "Man ate the bread of the mighty" [Psalms 78:25], i.e., bread that ministering angels eat" (Yoma 75b). This means that they were purified of all evil, and we know that we cannot be purified without the Torah, for only it can purify the body of man.

From all that we have said, we see that it is precisely after the Children of Israel were circumcised that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave them a few mitzvot to study and perform in order to eat the manna. Without Torah, they would not have had the merit or the right to eat it, since they were not yet purified. Only by the power of Torah study could they merit to eat it.

Such is the message of the verse, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, the L-RD your G-d" (Leviticus 19:2). In what ways must we be holy? The Sages have said, "Separate yourselves from sexual immorality and from sin" (Vayikra Rabba 24:6 and Rashi), meaning that it is not enough to study Torah and light the menorah. A man must perform the mitzvah of circumcision all while studying Torah, for only by properly guarding his holiness will he come to study Torah, and through it to merit perfection.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Why Twelve Paths?

The Sages teach that when the sea opened to let the Children of Israel across, it split into twelve paths, each corresponding to one of the twelve tribes. Within each path was a tribe, and between each of them was a wall of water. Yet in order for the tribes to see one another, these walls were as transparent as glass and contained openings like windows.

This seems surprising, for why were all these miracles needed? Would it not have been enough for a single path to have been created within the sea for all the Children of Israel? After all, everyone's goal was to cross the sea! Furthermore, why were the walls of water as transparent as glass, and why did they contain openings in them? The answer is that when we left Egypt, Hashem wanted to teach us the path to follow and the things to do in life. Each tribe had its own customs and habits that differed from those of other tribes. Therefore Hashem prepared a separate path for each of them within the sea. Yet even while traveling within a given path, one was not to forget the other or ignore him. Therefore a miracle was needed to make the walls of water in the sea as transparent as glass. However that was still not enough, for simply seeing the other without trying to help him in his struggles or to rejoice in his happiness is not what Hashem wants. He therefore placed openings like windows within these walls, openings through which they could speak to one another. This represents Hashem's path, one that we are to follow in every generation, like a single person with a single heart.

The Chafetz Chaim was once asked, "Why are the Jewish people divided into all kinds of communities: Sephardim, Ashkenazim, Chassidim, Mitnagdim? Why don't we have a single path with which to serve Hashem?" The Chafetz Chaim used an example to explain the concept: "Every army in the world, although its goal is to defeat its enemies, is composed of various armed services (army, navy, air force, etc.), each with its own role to play and separate task that differs from the other services. However the common denominator is that they all fight the same enemy and they all have the same goal. In the same way, the goal of the Jewish people is to fight the evil inclination, their greatest enemy. That is the common denominator among us all, in addition to the fact that we all seek to serve Hashem. Although each of us belongs to a different service, none of us is better than the other. We are all like a single person with a single heart."

A Pearl From the Rav

In his book *Pahad David*, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks why we must remember the deliverance from Egypt. After all, the Holy One, blessed be He, promised Abraham that He would deliver them! It seems that at the time of the exodus from Egypt, the Children of Israel were not worthy of being delivered, for they had descended into the 49 gates of impurity, and the promise to Abraham was not valid in such a case. Still, Hashem in His great mercy delivered them.

As a result, the exodus from Egypt was a great miracle that occurred when they emerged from their impurity, for they saw Hashem's guiding hand as they each performed mitzvot. In fact this is what brought about the other miracles, which is why we must remember it.

Regretting the Sale

It is written, "Vayehi [And it came to pass], when Pharaoh sent out the people" (Exodus 13:17).

According to the Sages, the term *vayehi* always denotes trouble. Rabbi Yochanan said, "They were like a man who had a field the size of a *beth kor*, but went and sold it for little. The purchaser went and dug wells in it and planted gardens and orchards. When the seller saw it, he was deeply mortified and exclaimed, 'Alas, what have I thrown away?' So when the Israelites were in Egypt they were set to work at bricks and mortar, and they were despised in the eyes of the Egyptians. But when they saw them encamped under their standards by the sea in military array, they were deeply mortified and exclaimed, 'Alas, why have we let them go from our land!'" (*Shir Hashirim Rabba* 4:25).

The Four Groups Encamped by the Sea

It is written, "Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of the L-RD, which He will perform for you today. As for the Egyptians

whom you have seen today, you will never see them again. The L-RD will fight for you, and you shall remain silent'" (*Exodus 14:13-14*).

The Children of Israel were divided into four groups: Some said, "Let us descend into the sea." Others said, "Let us return to Egypt." Still others said, "Let us fight them." Finally others said, "Let us sow confusion among them."

To those who said, "Let us descend into the sea," Moses replied: "Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of the L-RD, which He will perform for you today." To those who said, "Let us return to Egypt," Moses replied: "Do not return, 'For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again.'" To those who said, "Let us fight them," Moses replied: "Do not fight, for 'the L-RD will fight for you.'" And to those who said, "Let us sow confusion among them," Moses replied: "You shall remain silent" and render glory to your G-d.

– Targum Yonatan

The Rich Man's Mansion

It is written, "Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of the L-RD, which He will perform for you today" (Exodus 14:13).

The Maggid of Dubno explains this verse with a parable: An extremely rich man lived in a distant land across the sea. His daughter was perfect in every way, and he sought a husband for her. One day he met an intelligent and successful young man from a poor family. The rich man decided to offer his daughter's hand in marriage to him, and he agreed.

As the wedding day approached, the rich man ordered his mansion to be filled with flowers and fine furniture, and for lavishly set tables to be prepared for the reception. On the wedding day the rich man and the members of his family wore magnificent clothes, garments embroidered with gold and silver, for he wanted to demonstrate his wealth and majesty to his new son-in-law. Upon entering the mansion, however, the young man's hunger made him dizzy, for he was always famished on account of his meager diet. As the delicious reception meal was set out, the young man paid no attention to his majestic surroundings, for he was focused on his plate and nothing else. When his hunger began to subside a few days later, he started to explore his father-in-law's mansion and to learn how things were done there.

His father-in-law, however, was upset with him. "Why didn't you pay attention to the marvelous things you saw? What about the sumptuous clothes and hidden marvels that I showed you on your wedding day, things that neither you nor your father could imagine!"

Moses told the Children of Israel by the sea: "Do not fear, for when a person is afraid he can no longer control his senses and he lacks the ability to reflect. 'As for the Egyptians whom you have seen today' – the miracles and marvels that I showed you today – 'you will never see them again' – you will never see such miracles and marvels again."

This is why Moses said, "Do not fear!" Instead they were to "Stand fast" – with strength and confidence in their heart – "and see the salvation of the L-RD."

When May We Sing?

It is written, "One did not draw near the other during the entire night" (Exodus 14:20).

The Sages have said, "The ministering angels wanted to sing their hymns, but the Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'The work of My hands is being drowned in the sea, and you would sing hymns?'" (*Megillah* 10b).

When doctors perform an operation on a seriously ill patient, this is no place for song, since it is a painful procedure. Only once the operation has successfully ended is there reason to rejoice and sing.

This is what the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Now that "the work of My hands is being drowned in the sea" – now that a serious operation is taking place, when people are drowning in the sea, then even if it absolutely necessary to punish wrongdoing, it is still a grave and painful operation, and therefore not the time to sing. On the other hand, after the operation "there is glad song when the wicked perish" (*Proverbs* 11:10), and it is then that we may sing.

– Ma'ayana Shel Torah

Medicinal Herbs

It is written, "There He gave him a statute and an ordinance, and there he tested him. He said, 'If you hearken to the voice of the L-RD your G-d...for I am the L-RD Who heals you'" (Exodus 15:25-26).

Hashem gave Moses insight into the healing powers of herbs, powers that are hidden within them all. "There He gave him a statute" – Hashem showed Moses the herbs that are like a segula – "and an ordinance" – the herbs whose effects are as sure as laws, understood by all. "And there he tested him" – Moses immediately tried every herb.

Thus Hashem said that when you use these remedies, you must not forget that they will only help "if you hearken to the voice of the L-RD your G-d." That is, healing will only come if you also pray to Hashem at the same time, "for I am the L-RD Who heals you."

– Sifte Cohen

Stay Put!

It is written, "Let every man remain in his place; let no man leave his place" (Exodus 16:29).

Every Jew should occupy a lower position than befits his status – "let every man remain in his place" – and never should he try to occupy a higher position – "let no man leave his place."

– The Mahari of Rozhin

Overview of the Parsha

Beshalach is an intermediate parsha in the ongoing description of the formation of G-d's people. In the preceding section (Parsha Bo) the Children of Israel leave Egypt, and in the proceeding section (Parsha Yitro) they receive the Torah "on this mountain." Moses had been told of this in Parsha Shemot, when he was appointed as Hashem's envoy to deliver His children from Egypt. At the beginning of Parsha Beshalach the people march from Egypt to the sea, where they complain when Pharaoh and his army catch up to them. They are then promised that Hashem "will fight for you," at which point the sea splits for them. The people sing the Shirat Hayam (Song of the Sea) concerning these miracles, after which Moses leads them to the desert of Sin by way of Marah (whose bitter waters are sweetened for them) and Elim (which has an abundance of water and palm trees). Arriving in the desert of Sin, the people begin to complain about a lack of bread and meat. Hashem announces that bread and quail will rain down for them, and He gives them mitzvot concerning the manna and Shabbat. Infighting begins after the people cross the desert of Sin. They grumble over a lack of water, at which point they are attacked by Amalek.

EISHET CHAYIL

A Happy Mother of Children

Rebbetzin Rachel Toledano not only concerned herself with the Torah of her husband Rabbi Baruch Toledano Zatzal and her children, she also educated students from abroad in her home, many of whom stayed there for years and benefited from her maternal affection to study in peace. She would often make herself available to these students, even during strenuous times, such as before candle lighting, or when a boy once asked her to mend his socks. She remained seated and fixed them, given that he would be satisfied and continue learning Torah.

Upon her passing one student said, "I obtained my entire Jewish education, all my Torah learning and mitzvot, from Emma Rachel. Her great dedication supported me during hard times, and without her I don't know where I would be today."

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

As for Me, I Trust in Your Kindness

It is written, "Then Moses and the Children of Israel will sing this song" (Exodus 15:1).

Why is this written in the future tense?

Let us first cite a verse from the Psalms: "And as for me, I trust in Your kindness; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation" (Psalms 13:6). We, the Children of Israel, have received two orders: 1) To trust in Hashem; and 2) To rejoice when His salvation comes.

Why are we required and compelled to rejoice? Because Hashem has the power to save us. We rejoice because we trust in Him, much in the same way that the son of a wealthy man is happy because he knows that his father's wealth will come to him. Even if he is not yet wealthy, he rejoices because he trusts his father. We too have the duty to thank Hashem every day for the abundant generosity He demonstrates to us. It would seem, however, that this contradicts the confidence we must have, for if we trust in Hashem, believe in His salvation, and rejoice over the good that we have not yet received, then why should we rejoice when we do receive it? We were already expecting it, so what was the great surprise? Nevertheless King David said, "And as for me, I trust in Your kindness; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation." In other words: In spite of everything, when salvation comes "my heart will rejoice" – I will be as happy as if it were a great surprise, a true deliverance from Heaven! The question again arises: Why this joy? Let us explain this by means of a parable: A Jew came across someone in synagogue who didn't know anyone in town. He felt compassion for this fellow and invited him to his home. After eating, he invited his guest to return the next day. His guest accepted his kind invitation, thanked him, and departed.

The next day, after they finished eating, the guest arose and emotionally thanked his host for his kindness and generosity.

Surprised by this, the man asked: "Yesterday I invited you, and you already thanked me. So why are you giving me another blessing today?" The guest replied, "My dear friend, yesterday I wasn't very hungry when you invited me over, for I had already eaten a good meal. This was not the case today. Before today's meal I was very hungry and thirsty, and I was satiated by your kindness. I felt so good and I was so pleased that I wanted to thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

A person who trusts in Hashem knows that He will not deprive him of anything good. He also knows that Hashem will save him if any harm comes his way. Therefore his days are spent in joy, though he experiences neither pain nor salvation.

Yet when hardship strikes, he experiences a great feeling of joy that prompts him to thank Hashem. He will feel this way although he was sure, even beforehand, that Hashem would save him. Therefore he is happy to thank his Creator once again.

This is why the Children of Israel rejoiced and thanked Hashem for their deliverance. Yet because they trusted in Hashem, they also wanted to thank and praise Him for miracles that were still to come.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yechezkel Taub – The Rebbe of Kuzmir

The gaon Rabbi Yechezkel Taub Zatzal, the first Rebbe of Kuzmir, was the closest disciple of the Chozev of Lublin. He was also closely connected to Rabbi Shemuel of Karov and Rabbi Yitzchak of Weingrov. It was from them that he learned Torah and Chassidut, elevating himself to a great degree in both the revealed and concealed Torah. In fact he became so holy and pure that he completely distanced himself from all the pleasures of this world.

When Rabbi Yechezkel became the Rebbe of Kuzmir, thousands of chassidim gathered around him. Among them were his disciples, men who later became leaders in Israel and great Torah figures around the world. Whenever he organized a tisch, he uttered words of Torah that penetrated to the depths of the soul. It was from these words, these Torah insights, that his son-in-law Rabbi Moshe David of Klushin published the book *Nechmad MiZahav*.

Rabbi Yechezkel would always judge the Jewish people in a favorable light. In fact he once said that with regards to the mitzvah of returning lost objects, if the finder is old and respected, and it is not fitting for him to return a lost object, then he is allowed to turn away. Nevertheless we ask Hashem to “have pity and not turn away,” meaning to act with us in a more generous way than strict justice requires.

Rabbi Yechezkel was the founder of the Modzitz dynasty (which continues to this day in Israel), without mentioning the sons and sons-in-law that he left for the Jewish people, men who were gaonim and rebbes in their own right. On Shevat 17, 5615, Rabbi Yechezkel’s soul departed for the celestial academy. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Those Who Suffer Insult

It is written, “Those who love Him are like the powerfully rising sun” (Judges 5:31).

“Those who suffer insult but do not inflict them, who hear themselves reviled and do not reply, who act from love and rejoice in chastisement” (Gittin 36b) – it is with regards to such people that Scripture states: “Those who love Him are like the powerfully rising sun.” Our Sages compare those who are insulted without answering back to the sun in all its strength, for in reality the ability to not return an insult is considered a virtue only when it concerns a person himself. Hence the Sages have said, “who hear themselves reviled,” a reference to an affront to their own honor. However if we hear insults directed at another person, such as an innocent talmid chacham, then we are forbidden to remain silent. On the contrary, it is a tremendous sin to let an insult directed at a talmid chacham pass in silence. It was precisely in this way that the sun acted at the time of Creation, for the moon wanted Hashem to make the sun smaller, asking in protest: “Is it possible for two kings to wear one crown?” The sun did not reply, but instead remained silent. However during the rebellion of Korach and his followers against Moses, the sun was jealous for Moses’ honor. In fact it refused to shine upon the world as long as those who had insulted Moses were not punished, as mentioned in the Gemara (Nedarim 39b).

This is why the Sages compare those “who suffer insult but do not inflict them” – who only respond when insults are cast at the innocent – to “the powerfully rising sun,” for they possess some of the power of the sun, which acted in the very same way.

A TRUE STORY

The Dogs That Disappeared

It is written, “They believed in the L-RD and in Moses His servant” (Exodus 14:31).

The path from the yeshiva to the home of Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein Zatzal in Mir was treacherous, for along the way lived many Gentiles and roughnecks who kept ferocious dogs in their yard. Jews were afraid to pass by these homes, for such dogs were able to rip a person apart. Rather than to walk along this path, the youngsters who attended yeshiva preferred to take a much longer route that circumvented the problem.

One day Rabbi Yechezkel gave a course in his home that lasted much longer than usual. He told his students that they shouldn’t take the longer, circuitous path back to the yeshiva this time, since they would be late for the next period. The boys said, “What else can we do? We’re afraid of the dogs!” Rabbi Yechezkel replied, “Don’t be afraid. I’ll stand outside and watch you until you make it past those yards. You have nothing to fear. The main thing is to return to the yeshiva on time!” They listened to these words and put their faith in Hashem and His tzaddikim. Then they walked passed these yards, looking back to see their Rav as he stood by his door and watched them. As it turned out, the dogs they were expecting to see had apparently vanished, and the boys calmly made it back to the yeshiva in time. It was a great wonder!

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

Rabbi Yehoshua and the Imperial Family

The emperor said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania, “I wish to prepare a banquet for your G-d.” He replied: “You cannot succeed.” “Why?” “Because His attendants are too numerous.” “Indeed, I will do it.” “Then go and prepare it on the spacious banks of the Rebitha River.” [The emperor] spent six summer months making preparations, until a tempest arose and swept everything into the sea. He then spent six winter months making preparations, until rains fell and washed everything into the sea. “What is [the meaning of] this?” asked the emperor. “They are but the sweepers and sprinklers that march before Him!” “In that case,” said the emperor, “I cannot succeed.”

The emperor’s daughter once said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania, “Your G-d is a carpenter, for it is written: ‘Who roofs His upper chambers with water’ [Psalms 104:3]. Ask Him to make me a spindle!” He replied: “Very well.” He prayed for her and she was smitten with leprosy. She was then removed to the open square of Rome and given a spindle. (The custom in Rome was that whoever was smitten with leprosy was given a spindle and moved to the open square. [The leper] was also given yarn to wind, so that people would notice and pray for their recovery.) One day as Rabbi Yehoshua was passing by, he saw her sitting in the open square of Rome and winding the yarn on the spindle. He remarked, “My G-d has given you a beautiful spindle!” She said, “I beg you, ask your G-d to take back what He has given me.” He replied, “Our G-d grants a request, but He never takes it back.”