



# The Path To Follow

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## THE WISE MUST BE CAREFUL WITH THEIR WORDS

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "Say to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and you shall say to them: Each of you shall not contaminate himself for the dead among his people" (Leviticus 21:1). Rashi states that the term "say" is repeated in order to warn the adults about the children. The Ramban writes, "The meaning of this warning is to state that we are not to assist with our hands in the defilement of children. There are many warnings in the Torah of this nature...such as the prohibition against eating blood and swarming things...and from them we learn that...we must not assist children to ever transgress the law."

We need to understand this. If throughout the Torah the rule is that adults cannot push children to commit a sin, then why does the Torah only reveal this to us concerning the impurity of the dead? We may explain this from a moral perspective, by citing a passage from the Mishnah: "Ben Zoma said, 'Who is wise? He who learns from every person, as it is written: "From all my teachers I grew wise" [Psalms 119:99]. ... Who is strong? He who subdues his inclination, as it is said: "He who is slow to anger is better than a strong man, and he who masters his passions is better than a conqueror of a city" [Proverbs 16:32]. Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot, as it is said: "When you eat of the labor of your hands, happy are you and it shall be well with you" [Psalms 128:2]. "Happy are you" - in this world; "and it shall be well with you" - in the World to Come. Who is honored? He who honors others, as it is stated: "I honor those who honor Me, and those who scorn Me will be accursed" [1 Samuel 2:30]' " (Pirkei Avot 4:1).

We also find the following remark in the Midrash: "Even so, 'In Gibeon the L-RD appeared to Solomon in a dream of the night, and G-d said: "Request what I should give to you" ' [1 Kings 3:5]. Solomon thought: If I ask for silver and gold and precious stones and pearls, He will give them to me. But what I will do is to ask for wisdom, and that will include everything" " (Shir HaShirim Rabba 1:9).

As a result, a person with wisdom possesses everything. The Gemara states, "He who has [wisdom] has everything. He who lacks this, what does he have?" (Nedarim 41a). Now wisdom is nothing other than the fear of G-d, as it is written: "The fear of the L-RD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 1:7) and "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the L-RD" (Psalms 111:10). It follows that not only does a wise person possess wisdom, but that all other virtues are found in him. Wisdom contains power, wealth, and the fear of Heaven, for a wise person is happy with his lot, subdues his inclination, learns from all men, never grows proud, and does not say, "What do I have to learn from this student? I've studied much more than him!" Instead he controls himself and learns from him. Yet he rejoices in his lot only with things that belong to him personally. In terms of spiritual matters, he is never satisfied with his lot, and during his entire life he tries to study and learn from every person.

Similar to this idea, the Mishnah recounts that Rabbi Yehoshua had calculated that Yom Kippur would take place on a certain day, but Rabban Gamliel pushed it to the following day. Rabban Gamliel sent him a message in which he said, "I order you to appear before me with your staff and money on the day that, according to your calculations, should be Yom Kippur" (Rosh Hashanah 25a). Rabbi Yehoshua therefore took his staff and his money and went to see Rabban Gamliel in Yavneh on the day that he calculated to be Yom Kippur. When Rabban Gamliel saw him, he arose from his chair, kissed him on the head, and said: "Come in peace, my teacher and my disciple. My teacher in wisdom and my disciple because you have accepted my decision." The Gemara adds, "Happy is the generation in which the greater defer to the lesser, and all the more so the lesser to the greater" (Rosh Hashanah 25b).

Hence in the passage concerning the impurity of the dead, we read: "Say...and say" - warn the adults regarding the children. In fact one who exhibits pride resembles the dead, those who have left this world, since it is said: "Every man in whom pride dwells, the Holy One, blessed be He, declares: I and he cannot both dwell in the world" (Sotah 5a). Since there is no place for him in this world, it is fitting for him to leave the world and die. However the Holy One, blessed be He, is patient with him and gives him time to repent.

The Torah clearly teaches us that the young learn just how vile pride is from the High Priest. The High Priest alludes to the great figures of the generation, and the Torah warns them against pride. It prohibits them from rendering themselves impure through the dead, meaning that they do not have the right to grow proud. When the young see that the adults are careful regarding pride, they will conclude: If the adults, who have something to be proud of, are prohibited by the Torah from exhibiting pride, then how much more are we prohibited from exhibiting pride, since we have nothing to be proud of!

Abraham himself fulfilled the verse, "From all my teachers I grew wise," for the Midrash states that the Holy One, blessed be He, made his two kidneys his two teachers, instructing him Torah and wisdom (Bereshith Rabba 61:1). Furthermore, he went to study Torah with Shem the son of Noah (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 7). Now this is difficult to understand, for if the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Abraham two kidneys from which to learn Torah, why did he have to go and learn with Shem? The answer is that Abraham was afraid of growing proud. He was afraid of thinking, "All that I have learned, I did not learn from a teacher or from my father, but from myself!" He went to study with a teacher so he would have no reason to grow proud. After all, can a student stand before his teacher and say, "All that I learned, I learned by myself, not from you"? Therefore Abraham thought: "Up to now, everything I learned, I could say that I learned it from myself. From now on, since I will be studying Torah from a teacher, I will understand nothing on my own, and everything that I learn, I will only learn from my teacher."

Likewise King David said, "From all my teachers I grew wise," and our Sages state that in everything King David did, he consulted his teacher Mephiboshet by asking: "My teacher Mephiboshet, is my decision right? Did I correctly convict, correctly acquit, correctly declare clean, correctly declare unclean," and Mephiboshet humiliated David in the Halachah (Berachot 4a). It is also said that David went from group to group in order to fulfill the verse, "From all my teachers I grew wise" (Midrash Tehillim 1). On the other hand, we also learn the opposite from the priest. What does this mean? It means that a priest is forbidden to render himself impure for the dead and exhibit pride with regards to his own possessions. However in regards to spirituality, he is permitted to render himself impure, and in fact he is obligated to render himself impure and exhibit pride, as it is written: "His heart was lifted up in the ways of the L-RD" (II Chronicles 17:6). Before dying, Rabbeinu HaKadosh said to his son Rabban Gamliel, "Conduct your rule with men of high standing, and cast bile among the students" (Ketubot 103b). Likewise, the Torah has permitted the High Priest to render himself impure for a dead body that nobody has buried, meaning for a mitzvah. He is also permitted to render himself impure for his wife, as it is written: "Except for the relative who is closest to him" - and a wife designates the Torah (Midrash Mishlei 31:10). This teaches us that it is a duty for the great figures of the generation to exhibit pride and demand that people honor the Torah in them, an honor that they cannot forego, as the Gemara states (Kiddushin 32a).

### GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

#### The Danger of Strife

We must flee from strife. Besides the gravity of the sin itself, it encourages numerous other grave sins, sins such as baseless hatred, Lashon Harah, slander, anger, scorn, words that harm the honor of others, vengeance, hatred, curses, and the desecration of Hashem's Name. If someone finds himself embroiled in a dispute, he should immediately drop it. Although some people are ashamed of leaving in the midst of a dispute, they should remember the words of the Sages: It is better to be considered a fool for your entire life by man, than to be considered wicked for even a single instant by G-d (Eduyot 5:6). It is a great mitzvah to settle a dispute and reconcile opponents. Even if a person has often struggled to make peace without success, he should not give up. There is always hope that the next time he will succeed in making peace among opponents.

- Beyad HaLashon

# MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

## *The Honor of Man*

***It is written, “To the Children of Israel you shall speak, saying: Whoever curses his G-d shall bear his sin.... He who kills any man shall surely be put to death. He who kills an animal shall make restitution, a life for a life. If a man inflicts a wound in his fellow, as he did, so shall it be done to him” (Leviticus 24:15-19).***

This week’s parsha contains the horrifying passage concerning the person who blasphemes Hashem, the one whose case is presented to Hashem in order to determine what must be done with him. Hashem replies by giving the laws concerning one who curses his G-d, and in the same breath He adds the law concerning a person who strikes a human being. And not only one who kills, but also one who wounds, and even one who damages the possessions of others. These sins are apparently minor in comparison to the sin of cursing Hashem, so how could all of them be put together? Rabbeinu Bechaye wrote: “He who blasphemes the Name of the L-RD shall surely be put to death,” and right afterwards, “He who kills any man shall surely be put to death.” From here our Sages deduced that whoever slaps his fellow, it is as if he had slapped the Shechinah. In his commentary Bechor Shor, Rabbeinu Yosef explains that here the Torah is teaching us just how precious the honor of a Jew is in the eyes of G-d, since He makes the same demands concerning the honor of a Jew as He does of His own honor. Concerning the verse, “the twins of a gazelle” (Song of Songs 4:5), Rashi states that these symbolize the Tablets of the law: “The five commandments on this [side], the five commandments on the other, each commandment corresponding to a commandment. ‘I [am the L-RD your G-d]’ corresponds to ‘You shall not murder,’ for the murderer diminishes the image of the Holy One, blessed be He.” Here too, this consists of either murder or an attack on the possessions of others, as mentioned in Sefer HaAkeida (Shemot, Sha’ar 45): “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of G-d He made man” (Genesis 9:6) – and included in the concept of murder is tormenting others, competing with them, preventing them from earning a living, and damaging their bodies or possessions. All this teaches us the importance of man, created in G-d’s image, who is so important that for Hashem, his honor is as important as the honor of Heaven.

## *A Pearl From the Rav:*

### **Separated from Impurity**

It is written, “Say to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and you shall say to them: Each of you shall not contaminate himself for the dead among his people” (Leviticus 21:1). The term emor (“say”) is formed from the same letters as the word roma (“Rome”), because evil Rome was summoned to spread over the entire world and persecute Israel. Now Rome is Edom, as the Midrash states: “ ‘Rejoice and exult, O daughter of Edom’ [Lamentations 4:21] – Caesarea; ‘who dwells in the land of Uz’ – [Rome]” (Eicha Rabba 4:24). This week’s parsha deals with a separation from impurity, an allusion to the fact that the Children of Israel will not emerge from this exile – the exile of Edom – before having separated themselves from impurity. The Sages have said, “In the future, all the princes of the nations will come and accuse Israel before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying to Him: ‘Master of the universe, how are the Children of Israel different from the other nations? These are idolaters and these are idolaters; these spill blood and these spill blood; these are immoral and these are immoral. Will these descend to Gehinnom while these do not?’ The Holy One, blessed be He, will say: ‘In that case, let each nation descend to Gehinnom with its gods and examine themselves, and the Children of Israel will also go and examine themselves.’ The Children of Israel will say to the Holy One, blessed be He, ‘You are our hope of escaping, and You are our excuse.

We only trust in You. Go before us!’ The Holy One, blessed be He, will respond: ‘Do not fear, you are all clothed with the scarlet of circumcision, as it is written: “She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet” [Proverbs 31:21]’ ” (Midrash Tehillim 1:20). We therefore conclude that the Jewish people will only be saved from the present exile by the merit of having separated themselves from impurity and cleaving to holiness.

## *The Influence of Adults on Children*

***It is written, “Say...and you shall say” (Leviticus 21:1).***

Rashi cites the Sages in explaining this to mean: “Warn the adults regarding the children.”

This means that the verse is giving one warning after another, thereby teaching us to infuse the fear of G-d into the hearts of adults to such an extent that it will have an influence on the children.

– Rabbi Reuven Grozovsky

## *Guard and Do*

***It is written, “You shall guard My commandments and do them” (Leviticus 22:31).***

This consists of two things: The first, to perform things individually, that you yourselves do the mitzvot. The second, that you watch over others, so that they also do them. In fact the word “guard” relates to watching over something, not to do it yourself. Like “guarding a warehouse,” we must guard something so that it is not stolen or lost. Thus it is stated, “You shall guard” – you must watch over others. This is also the direct meaning of the verse, “The Children of Israel shall guard Shabbat” (Exodus 31:16), a reference to watching something, namely that the sanctity of Shabbat is observed by others as well. It is our duty to encourage others to do so, and to teach them as well.

– Rav Shach, Bezot Ani Bote’ach

## *Shabbat is a Time for Reflection*

***It is written, “The seventh day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation; you shall not do any work” (Leviticus 23:3).***

The Sages say, “Adam met [Cain] and asked him, ‘How did your case go?’ He replied, ‘I repented and I am reconciled.’ At that point Adam began beating his face, crying: ‘So great is the power of repentance, and I did not know!’ He then arose and exclaimed, ‘A psalm, a song for the Sabbath day. It is good to thank the L-RD’ [Psalms 92:1-3]” (Bereshith Rabba 22:13). This can be compared to a large company where a day off is established so an account can be made of losses and gains. However if the company is in bankruptcy because of its debts and losses, there will not be any day off established to calculate its financial state, for doing so will no longer change things. At first Adam believed that one who sinned had no way to redeem himself, and that he was in spiritual default. Therefore why would he need to set aside a day to observe and calculate his debts, since there is no way of paying them off? However when he heard about the power of repentance, that there was still a way to repay his debts and continue with things, he began to sing: “A psalm, a song for the Sabbath day.” Henceforth, Shabbat became an excellent time to reflect upon life and repay one’s debts from the six day of Creation by studying Torah.

– Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Rabinowitz

## *An Advantage Above the Sun*

***It is written, “When you enter the land that I give you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring an omer from the first of your harvest to the priest” (Leviticus 23:10).***

The verse begins by stating “its harvest,” without further specification, but ends by stating “from the first of your harvest,” meaning that the har-

vest is yours. The explanation is that a person does not really own what he harvests and brings home, other than what he removes and gives to Hashem through tithes and offerings. Likewise by the fact that he offers the omer, the harvest becomes “your harvest,” as the Gemara explains: “Scripture says ‘your harvest’ – it shall be yours” (Pesachim 23a). It is thus “the first of your harvest,” for it has now become yours.

Jacob said, “All that You give me, I will surely give a tenth to You” (Genesis 28:22). This signifies that only the tenth that I give is what You have given to me. This is because all that a person possesses does not belong to him, other than what he gives and puts aside for tzeddakah. This will remain his for all time. When King Monobaz’s said to him, “Your father saved money and added to the treasures of his fathers, and you are squandering them,” he replied: “My fathers stored below and I am storing above...in a place that cannot be tampered with...as it is written: ‘It shall be tzeddakah for you’ [Deuteronomy 24:13]” (Bava Batra 11a).

According to this, we can understand why the Sages (Vayikra Rabba 28:1) link our verse to the text: “What profit does a man have from all his labor that he toils beneath the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3). In fact everything that a person does under the sun is useless, and the fruits of his work do not belong to him, except for what he stores above the sun, as King Monobaz did.

– Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank, Shevivei Ohr

### ***The Greatness of Tzeddakah***

***It is written, “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not completely remove the corners of your field as you reap, and you shall not gather the gleanings of your harvest. For the poor and the stranger shall you leave them; I am the L-RD” (Leviticus 23:22).***

Why are the gifts left for the poor mentioned precisely in the middle of a passage regarding the festivals? Rashi cites the Sages in saying, “Whoever gives leket, shikcha, and pe’ah to the poor in the appropriate manner is considered to have built the Holy Temple and offered his sacrifices within it.” This requires an explanation. Why is such a person regarded to have built the Temple? It is because, as the prophet states, “Those who return to her [will be redeemed] by tzeddakah” (Isaiah 1:27). Therefore when a person gives tzeddakah as he should – although everyone else in his generation may delay the Final Redemption – for the sake of that particular person Hashem should rebuild the Temple, and he should offer his sacrifices there. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, rewards him as if he had actually built the Temple and offered sacrifices there.

– Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Darash Moshe

### ***Overview of the Parsha***

From the sanctification of the people in Parsha Kedoshim, Scripture continues in Parsha Emor with the sanctity of the Sanctuary, its servants and the sacrifices, the sacred festivals, and the honor of Hashem. The parsha begins by separating the priests from impurity, excluding the infirm from serving in the Sanctuary, preventing the impure and non-priests from performing a sacrifice, and establishing the times for which sacrifices remain valid. The festivals are listed, being sanctified by a holy assembly and the appropriate sacrifices. The importance of Hashem’s Name is stressed in the passage describing the one who blasphemes His Name, and laws are given concerning one who physically harms another person.

## **REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT**

### **The Mitzvah of Counting the Omer**

***It is written, “You shall count for yourselves, from the day after Shabbat, from the day when you bring the omer of the waving, seven weeks. They shall be complete” (Leviticus 23:15).***

We can understand the reason for the mitzvah of counting the omer according to a statement in the Mishnah: “Do not say, ‘I will study when I have free time,’ for perhaps you will never have free time” (Pirkei Avot 2:4). On the Torah’s statement, “You will gather in your grain” (Deuteronomy 11:14), Rabbi Ishmael explained: “Combine the study of [Torah] with a worldly occupation” (Berachot 35b). In other words, we must do everything necessary to earn a living. Thus Rabba taught his students not to come to the yeshiva to study during Nissan and Tishri, lest they have a difficult time earning a living during the rest of the year. This explains the passage on the omer, which begins with the statement: “When you enter the land...and you reap its harvest” (Leviticus 23:10). Is it possible for a person to work in his field throughout the year? When will he study Torah? Hence the Torah placed a limit of seven weeks on a person’s work, until the end of the wheat and barley harvest. It commands us to count seven weeks starting from the beginning of the harvest, so that there is no slackening in the study of Torah any longer than this. These weeks therefore constitute a preparation for the Torah, since they eliminate a person’s worries over his livelihood for the rest of the year.

From here we learn that it is better for the entire day to be devoted to the study of Torah. We should fix specific times for doing other things, such as earning a living, rather than letting the time that we spend on earning a living be ill-defined and unlimited. As we have explained, this is the basis of the mitzvah of counting the omer: Reducing the time that we spend on earning a living to a specific and limited period, and devoting all the time that remains to the study of Torah.

– Imrei Yaakov

## **ESHET HAYIL**

### **The House of Jacob**

The Torah exempts women from the performance of positive, time-based mitzvot, and the Sages did not impose these mitzvot on them either. We must realize that this exemption was not granted because women are spiritually inferior to men. In fact with regards to holiness, women are equal to men, and all the passages that constitute a condition for receiving the Torah are stated with regards to women as well: “You shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6). It is also written, “So shall you say to the House of Jacob and tell the Children of Israel” (v.3) – “the House of Jacob” are the women, “the Children of Israel” are the men. Many women were prophetesses, and they had the same laws of prophecy as the men. In many areas, women are praised by Scripture and the words of the Sages even more than men, and their honor is never ridiculed because they are exempt (for reasons known only by Hashem) from the study of Torah and positive, time-based mitzvot.

– Responsa Iggerot Moshe

## YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

### Rabbi David Rappaport – The Author of Mikdash David

The holy gaon Rabbi David Rappaport Zatzal already stood out in his youth for his tremendous intelligence and exceptional gifts. Day and night, he never stopped studying Torah. His parents eventually realized that while he was pretending to sleep, he would actually be waiting for everyone in the house to go to bed so he could secretly head out to the nearby Beit Midrash, where he diligently studied until dawn. He then returned home for a short sleep and would wake up at the same time as everyone else. In describing his book Mikdash David on Zeraim and Kodashim, Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz said: "It is impossible to write such a book without Ruach HaKodesh." Concerning his book Tzemach David, which answers problems raised by his grandfather Rabbi Akiva Eiger, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman said: "Rabbi David knows how to study a page of Gemara as clearly as his grandfather Rabbi Akiva Eiger did in his generation." In 5601, he was sent into forced labor in a distant concentration camp. He refused to eat unkosher food, and instead ate only bread and water, which resulted in him falling gravely ill. On Rosh Hashanah 5602, he expressed his desire to hear the Shofar. On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, after the sounding of the Shofar, his final hour approached. During his last moments, he called two Jews who were by his bedside and said to them, "Stay here so you can witness my death, lest my wife become an agunah.... This is what the Halachah requires." The next day, during the fast of Gedalia 5602, Rabbi David Rappaport passed away. Jews dug a grave for him in a neighboring field and laid his body to rest.

– Gedolei HaDorot

## IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

### The Honor of the King

*It is written, "But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok – who kept the charge of My Sanctuary when the Children of Israel strayed from Me – they shall draw near to Me to serve Me" (Ezekiel 44:15).*

A person who takes it upon himself to elevate the honor of the king when the land is at peace and the king is strong cannot be compared to a person who willingly does the same when the land is at war, the king's servants are weak due to their many tasks, and the king himself is in a very precarious situation. Naturally, the latter will be much more appreciated by the king, who will summon him and ask him to stand before him and be among his friends after he defeats his enemies. This is exactly the situation here, as the verse states: "But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok – who kept the charge of My Sanctuary when the Children of Israel strayed from Me – they shall draw near to Me to serve Me." Something similar is mentioned regarding King David, who before dying commanded Solomon: "Show kindness to the sons of Barzilai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for so they befriended me when I fled from Absalom your brother" (I Kings 2:7). The opposite is also true: In our time, the sin of a person who fails to strengthen the honor of Hashem and His Torah is much greater than before, since he demonstrates just how little the King's honor matters to him in difficult times. The Rosh wrote something along the same lines in his responsa: The sin of a person who slackens in such times is much worse, for he sees the King at a difficult time and yet fails to elevate His honor. It would seem that this is what Moses was alluding to at the end of his discourse to Israel: "Happy are you, O Israel. Who is like you, O people saved by the L-RD" (Deuteronomy 33:29). This is like a general who, upon seeing that the war is getting worse and his soldiers are weakening before the arrows and stones that fall upon them like rain, approaches them as they are resting and encourages them by saying: "See, you are fighting for the crown of the king! When you defeat the enemy and the king is victorious, he will reward each of you with joy and honor, for you have fought for the crown with your lives!"

## A TRUE STORY

### The Detrimental Effects of Bad Company

*It is written, "The son of an Israelite woman went out, and he was the son of an Egyptian man" (Leviticus 24:10).*

Rashi states, "From where did he go out? ... He 'went out' from Moses' court guilty. He had come to pitch his tent among the camp of the tribe of Dan, and they said to him: 'What right do you have to be here?' He said, 'I am among the descendants of Dan.' They said to him, 'Each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers' house.' He entered Moses' court and went out guilty. He then arose and blasphemed." The Alter of Kelm Zatzal asks, "What could have bothered the tribe of Dan, which had more than 60,000 men among them, if this son of an Egyptian pitched his tent among them?" He replies by saying that from here we see that a single unworthy person can have a bad influence on an entire tribe. A talmid chacham recounts, "I once went to see our teacher Rav Shach Zatzal with a young Bar Mitzvah. I said to him, 'We know that the Chazon Ish Zatzal, upon reaching the age of observing mitzvot, took it upon himself to study the Torah solely for the sake of Heaven, and as a result he blossomed. What must a Bar Mitzvah take upon himself to do in our time?'"

The Rav replied, "He must take two things upon himself: The first, not to mingle with bad company; and the second, to not spend his time in the streets, but to go from his house to the Beit Midrash, and from the Beit Midrash to his house. If he does this, and if he eats according to his needs and sleeps according to his needs, he will be assured of becoming great in Torah!"

– Lulei Toratcha

## THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

### The Cow that Observed Shabbat

Our Sages said that there was once a Jew who owned a cow that he used to plow with. He eventually became poor and had to sell his cow to a non-Jew. This non-Jew took his new cow and plowed with it for six days. However when he took it out to plow on Shabbat, it did not move when placed under the yoke. He even struck the animal, but still it failed to move. Upon seeing this, he went to the Jew who had sold him the cow and said, "Take your cow. It must be sick because it won't move no matter how much I beat it." The Jew understood that this was due to Shabbat, since the cow was used to resting on that day. He said to the non-Jew, "Come with me and I'll get the cow to work." When they got there, the Jew went over to the cow and said in its ear, "You know that when I owned you, you plowed during the week and rested on Shabbat. Now because of my many sins, you belong to a non-Jew. Please, I beg you, go and plow!" The cow immediately began walking and started to plow. The non-Jew said to him, "Please take your cow back! I'm not letting you go until you tell me what you said in the cow's ear." The Jew calmed him down and said, "It's not magic that I did. Rather, this is what I said in its ear...and it began to plow." The non-Jew was overcome with fear and said, "If a cow, which cannot speak and has no intelligence, can recognize its Creator, how can I, who has been created in G-d's image and given intelligence by G-d, not acknowledge Him?" He immediately converted, studied Torah, and was called Yochanan ben Torta (literally, "son of the ox"). To this day our rabbis teach laws in his name. If you are astounded at how a cow brought a person under the wings of the Shechinah, think about the fact that all of Israel is purified on account of a cow, as it is written: "This is the decree of the Torah...the red heifer."

– From Pesikta Rabbati 14:2