



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Arousing Greater Hatred

If Reuven has disparaged Shimon in front of two people, and one of them transgresses the prohibition against gossiping by repeating his words to Shimon, the second person who heard it still cannot tell Shimon about it, especially if he elaborates upon what Reuven said. Doing so is forbidden, and it is termed gossiping. The situation does not change if the second person, in speaking to Shimon, realizes that Shimon is still in doubt as to whether Reuven really disparaged him (such as if Shimon were to ask the second person if Reuven really disparaged him in front of him and someone else). It is certainly forbidden, in such a case, to reveal this information to Shimon. Even barring such a case, it is simply forbidden for the second person to mention it to Shimon, for if two people were to inform him of Reuven's words, he would hate Reuven even more than if only one person had informed him. This may lead to further conflicts, which will arouse even more gossip.

- Chafetz Chaim

MAN WAS BORN TO TOIL (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "Jacob dwelled in the land of his father's sojournings" (Genesis 37:1). Our Sages have said, "When the tzaddikim wish to live in peace in this world, the Satan comes and accuses them: 'They are not content with what is in store for them in the hereafter, but they wish to live in peace even in this world!' The proof lies in the fact that the Patriarch Jacob wished to live at ease in this world, whereupon he was attacked by Joseph's Satan" (Bereshith Rabba 84:3).

This truly requires an explanation. From here it seems that the Holy One, blessed be He, allows the Satan to bring hardships upon the tzaddikim, as he did with Jacob. Now our Sages have said, "Three things deprive a man of his senses and of a knowledge of his Creator" (Eruvin 41b), and one of them is hardship. We also find that when some early Sages experienced hardships and were asked if they welcomed them, they replied: "Neither they nor their reward!" (Berachot 5b). Therefore why did the Holy One, blessed be He, allow the Satan to bring hardships upon Jacob? They were liable to prevent him from wholeheartedly serving Hashem, and we also find (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 37) that the Shechinah did not rest upon Jacob during the 22 years that Joseph was not with him.

We can explain this by first citing a saying of our Sages: "Words of Torah are firmly held by one who kills himself for them" (Berachot 63b). A person will only merit an understanding of Torah when he puts a great effort into it, as we read in Parsha Bechukotai: "If you walk in My statutes" (Leviticus 26:3). Here the Midrash explains that Hashem yearns for the Children of Israel to study Torah (Torat Kohanim, Bechukotai 1). If they fail to study it, the 98 curses written in the book of Leviticus will come upon them.

When Jacob wanted to settle down in peace and tranquility, he also wanted to relax a little from all the effort that he normally invested in studying Torah. When the Holy One, blessed be He, saw this, He said: "As long as this tzaddik studied Torah, I did not bring hardships upon him. Yet now that he wants to relax from the study of Torah, I will send him hardships, and because of them he will exert himself."

This is the result of an ancient decree, namely: "Man is born for toil" (Job 5:7). If he focuses all his efforts into learning Torah, Hashem will not send him hardships. Not only that, but hardships will flee from him. However hardships will come upon him if he distances himself from Torah, and he will focus his efforts on these hardships instead of putting them into Torah study (see Berachot 5a).

Because He Studies Torah

As long as Jacob did not think of resting from his Torah study, the Holy One, blessed be He, protected him from hardships, as the Sages have stated in the

Midrash. According to one view, Jacob did not lie down to sleep during the entire 14 years that he spent with Shem and Eber, while according to another view he did not lie down to sleep during the entire 20 years that he spent with Laban (see Bereshith Rabba 68:11). Hence the wicked Esau did not try to meet him during all the years that he was with Laban, although he knew that Jacob was there, for he told himself that Jacob was studying Torah. As Jacob said, "I sojourned [garti] with Laban" (Genesis 32:5), which our Sages have interpreted to mean: "I have observed the 613 [taryag] mitzvot" (Midrash Aggadah ad loc.).

The underlying principle is that Torah only endures with a person who puts an effort into it. When he fails to put an effort into learning Torah, hardships immediately come upon him, just as they did to our forefathers in Rephidim, as it is written: "They encamped in Rephidim" (Exodus 17:1). Here the Sages have explained that they slackened in Torah (Sanhedrin 106a). They did not say that they neglected Torah, but that they simply slackened in it, meaning that they did not study it with sufficient effort. Once that happened, the Holy One, blessed be He, immediately sent them a hardship, for Amalek came and attacked them, as we read: "Amalek came" (Exodus 17:8). Our Sages added that because they distanced themselves from Torah, their enemy came upon them.

Until He Develops a Taste for It

Along the same lines, the Sages have taught: "If a man sees that hardships come upon him, let him examine his conduct. ... If he examines and finds nothing, let him attribute it to neglect in the study of Torah" (Berachot 5a). This is surprising! If a person examines his conduct and finds nothing, and then he examines it once more and discovers some neglect in learning Torah, it means that his first examination left something to be desired. What difference is there between the second examination and the first, during which time he found nothing?

The explanation is that when he first examined his conduct, he did not find the sin of Torah neglect because he had never in his life neglected study. Yet now that he continued to experience hardships, he examined himself again and realized that he had not put enough effort into learning Torah. He did not discover it the first time because he did not consider it to be a sin, and he did not perform a sufficiently thorough examination because he did not usually study Torah with total effort.

When he examined himself once again, he realized that since he did not initially find the sin of negligence in the study of Torah, the persistence of unexplained hardships nevertheless proved that it was there. It is impossible to study just once. A person has to put a great deal of effort into learning Torah, and he must review what he has learned until he develops a taste for it. That is why he failed to discover this sin the first time.

AT THE SOURCE

A Halachic Dispute

It is written, "They hated him and could not speak peaceably to him" (Genesis 37:4).

In the book *Peninei Rabbeinu HaKehillot Yaakov*, we find that someone asked Rabbi Yaakov Kanievsky Zatzal about a good way to teach students about the passage on Joseph and his brothers, as well as on similar topics.

The Rav replied that we must teach and infuse students with the concept that they were having a dispute regarding Halachah. That is, Joseph thought that the din was one way, while his brothers thought that the din was another way.

Hatred

It is written, "They hated him still more for his dreams and for his words" (Genesis 37:8).

"A love for Israel," said the Rav of Jerusalem, the gaon Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank Zatzal, "can be learned from the very conduct of the tribal fathers, of whom it is said: 'They hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.' At first they hated him, which is followed by: 'They hated him still more' – their hatred increased when strict justice allowed it to. At the time of their dispute, however, they did not exceed permitted bounds, nor did they exaggerate in their hatred.

"A person must break the evil inclination, which pushes him towards hatred. Besides his duty to act correctly, a person must uproot and chase away all feelings of vengeance and resentment from his heart, feelings that stem from hatred.

"Furthermore," said Rabbi Tzvi Pesach, "all resentment, all strife, and all hatred without exception lead to negligence in Torah study, negligence in prayer, and Lashon Harah. It is a sacred duty to distance ourselves from them."

Virtues Clearly, Faults by Allusion

It is written, "The pit was empty; no water was in it" (Genesis 37:24).

Rashi said, "There was no water in it, but there were snakes and scorpions in it."

The Rav of Lutzk, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, said: "This phrase seems to be teaching us that the pit in which Joseph was thrown possessed a virtue and a fault: The virtue was that it contained no water; the fault was that it contained serpents and scorpions. The virtue is explicitly stated: 'No water was in it.' This constitutes the second subtraction in the phrase, and one subtraction after another is equivalent to an addition. This teaches us that there were serpents and scorpions inside. If this seems obvious in the case of a pit, how much more does it apply to a human being! We must praise virtues clearly, and if we must sometimes point out faults, we must do so by allusion."

Three Reasons

It is written, "Judah said to his brothers, 'What gain is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?'" (Genesis 37:26).

A person will kill another for three reasons: The first, to steal his money; the second, to take vengeance on him for some reason; and the third, for the sake of glory, to show everyone that he has performed some brave act by killing him.

Rabbi Yitzchak Abrabanel thus explained why Judah told his brothers: "What gain is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?" Regarding the first reason, to steal a person's money, Judah asked what "gain" – what money – it would bring them. Regarding the second reason, to take vengeance, Judah said "our brother" – it was not right for them to kill their own brother. Regarding the third reason, for the sake of glory, Judah said "conceal his blood" – this matter would have to remain hidden, and they could never

reveal it in public, despite their desire to. For all these reasons, Judah said: "What gain is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?"

By Allusion

Allusions to Chanukah – According to Rabbi Avraham Harari Rafoul

- People normally give tzeddakah to the poor during Chanukah. This is alluded to in the expression *ness Chanukah* ("the miracle of Chanukah"), which has the same numerical value as the term *tzeddakah*.

- Including the *shamash*, there are 44 Chanukah lights in all, 44 being the numerical value of the term *leDavid* in the expression *mizmor shir chanukat habayit leDavid*.

- For Shabbat of Chanukah, we first light candles for Chanukah, and then candles for Shabbat. In the expression *ki nacheish yenacheish* ("that would surely divine" – Genesis 44:15), which we normally read during Chanukah, the term *nacheish* is formed by the initials of *Ner Chanukah Shabbat*.

- We pray *Mincha* and then we first light candles for Chanukah. The term *mincha* is formed by the initials of *Mincha, Ner Chanukah, Hadlakah*.

- In the phrase *az yimalei s'chok pinu u'leshoneinu rina* ("then our mouth will be filled with laughter, and our tongues with songs of joy"), the words *az yimalei* have the same numerical value as Chanukah. In fact on Chanukah we must thank and praise Hashem for the miracles and wonders that He has done for us. In this way, we will merit them forever.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA

Resisting the Evil Inclination with the Tunic of the Sages

It is written, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, since he was a child of his old age, and he made him a fine woolen tunic. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him" (Genesis 37:3-4).

The Gemara states, "A man should never single out one son among his other sons, for on account of two *selas* of silk that Jacob gave Joseph in excess of his other sons, his brothers became jealous of him and the matter resulted in our forefathers' descent into Egypt" (Shabbat 10b). In reality, we need to understand why Jacob differentiated between Joseph and the rest of his brothers.

As we know, Jacob knew that Joseph would eventually descend into Egypt and safeguard his integrity for many years, which is why he prepared him by giving him the ability to resist the impurity of Egypt and the debauchery of the land. How did Jacob prepare him? It was through the study of Torah, as our Sages have said: "All the laws that Shem and Eber handed down to Jacob, he transmitted to him [Joseph]" (Bereshith Rabba 84:8). By studying with him, Jacob clothed him with a garment of Torah, a "tunic of the Sages" that enabled him to maintain his integrity in Egypt. Hence Jacob transmitted to him everything that he himself had received from Shem and Eber. He also clothed Joseph with a woolen tunic, alluding to the fact that in the future he would have to descend into Egypt and battle its impurity.

Along the same lines we read: "The L-RD G-d made coats of skin [ohr: *ayin-vav-resh*] for Adam and his wife" (Genesis 3:21). The Midrash states that in Rabbi Meir's Torah it is written, "coats of light [ohr: *aleph-vav-resh*]," a reference to Adam's garments (Bereshith Rabba 20:12). Astonishing! It would seem that the evil inclination did not attempt to make him stumble before the sin, for only afterwards did it begin to entice him. Adam had difficulty in seeing how he could protect himself from it, at which point the Holy One, blessed be He, clothed him in a garment of light, as it is written: "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread" (Genesis 3:19), for bread always designates Torah. By studying Torah, a person can merit a tunic of the Sages and resist the evil inclination.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

RABBI EZRA HAMAWI

This week sees the yahrtzeit of the great gaon Rabbi Ezra Hamawi Zatzal, one of the greatest Torah scholars of Syria. A man of great stature, Rabbi Ezra illuminated the Jewish firmament of Aleppo through his Torah and wisdom, his understanding and his intelligence.

The Yismach Ezra Torah center has recently published a book about him entitled *Ish Haya BaAretz*. It was written by Rabbi Asher Ezra Hamawi Shlita, the great grandson of the Rav. Rabbi Asher Ezra used his considerable talents to compile and write a biography of his great grandfather, one that includes a description of his habits and lifestyle over the course of his life, from his birth in Aleppo to his final hours on earth in the Mekor Baruch district of Jerusalem.

In this remarkable book, which befits the honor of a tzaddik, we find numerous stories about Rabbi Ezra Hamawi and his customs. We have chosen a few of them, like drops among the vast waters of the ocean, to recount here.

A Glorious Lineage

The great gaon Rabbi Ezra Hamawi Zatzal descended from a noble and holy shoot that went all the way back to King David. One of the greatest rabbis of Eretz Israel in the previous generation, the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Avraham Harari-Rafal Zatzal, finds an allusion to this in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “A staff will emerge from the stump of Jesse, and a shoot will sprout from his roots” (Isaiah 11:1). The initials of the words in this verse form the name Hamawi.

Rabbi Ezra Hamawi grew up and was educated in Aleppo, a city of Torah sages and scholars. He received his main Torah education from the gaon Rabbi Avraham Haim Ades Zatzal, the “Ba’al Ruach HaKodesh.” He wielded great influence and was involved in everything that occurred in Jewish communities around the world, trying to strengthen and establish the observance of the 613 mitzvot in all places.

Possessing a rare degree of intelligence and immense enthusiasm, which he combined with tremendous devotion, Rabbi Ezra Hamawi fought with integrity for everything that was sacred to Israel. He feared no difficulty or obstacle placed in his path.

His name was connected to numerous events, and his signature was proudly displayed on every announcement and letter, encompassing the sacred mission of performing the will of his Father in Heaven. He always acted in this way, be it in his youth as a member of the Beit Din, in or his later years when he was the head of the Beit Din of Syria. He strived to imbue the tasks that he undertook with real substance, pouring his life and love into the sacred task that the sages of his generation entrusted him with.

A Partner of the Holy One, Blessed be He

Rabbi Ezra Hamawi was very involved in the life of the Jewish community, be it through his position as the Rosh Av Beit Din, or because of the Beit Midrash for exceptional avrechim that he established in his town. These included Rabbi Raphael Shlomo Laniado Zatzal and the gaon Rabbi Yehuda Attiya (Asslan) Zatzal, the first Rosh Yeshiva of Porat Yosef.

For 45 years, Rabbi Ezra Hamawi merited to render judgments of truth. During those years, he was actually a partner of the Holy One,

blessed be He, in the Creation of the world, as our Sages have said: “Every judge who judges with complete fairness...[it is] as though he became a partner of the Holy One, blessed be He, in Creation” (Shabbat 10a). Great Torah figures testified to the full extent of his greatness and skill, be it in analyzing the arguments of litigants one by one, or by giving incredibly lucid explanations for his decisions. By dint of his intelligence and tremendous refinement, which expressed itself in sessions of the Beit Din, he eventually merited – after examining thousands of cases, seeking compromises from litigants, and taking decisions in complete harmony with other members of the Beit Din – for the great figures of the generation to take note of him and appoint him as the Rosh Av Beit Din of the Syrian community, a task that he assumed until he left for the Holy Land in 5695.

On the Beit Din where Rabbi Ezra Hamawi sat, there were Torah giants by his side, other members of the Beit Din. These included Rabbi Yom Tom Yadid HaLevi, Rabbi Moshe Mizrachi, and Rabbi Ezra Abadi Shav, may the memory of the righteous be blessed.

You are the Treasurer

During one year in which it was unusually dry, Rabbi Ezra Hamawi ordered the entire community to gather in synagogue to recite psalms. Among those in attendance, Rabbi Ezra noticed a wealthy merchant from Aleppo.

“Your place isn’t here,” Rabbi Ezra said to him. “You have to continue working in order to earn money to feed the poor of the community.”

Rabbi Ezra proved his point with a parable: “A king fell ill, and physicians ordered beautiful music to be played for him. Now could anyone think that the king would choose the royal treasurer for this task, even if he played music well? It is clear that a skillful musician would be found, thereby enabling the treasurer to continue dealing with his tasks.

“The same applies to you, for you serve as the treasurer for the poor. Your task is to find sources of money, whereas they, the poor – those who are seated here – their merit lies in weeping, imploring, and reciting psalms before the Creator, Who will answer their cries.”

In Jerusalem

In the year 5695, Rabbi Ezra Hamawi’s yearnings for Zion reached their peak, and although his eyesight had greatly diminished by that time, he went to live in Jerusalem. It was there that he became known by the Torah scholars of the holy city and its rabbis, who gathered around Rabbi Ezra to exchange words of Torah with him.

For 12 years, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were able to bask in his light, a light that was extinguished on Monday, Kislev 28, 5706, the fourth night of Chanukah. At an advanced age, his soul ascended to Heaven in purity, and his body was laid to rest on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

The Difference Between Melucha and Memshala

It is written, “His brothers said to him, ‘Will you indeed reign [timloch] over us, or will you govern [timshol] us?’” (Genesis 37:8).

This is surprising, for what difference is there between the terms melucha and memshala, which both convey the concept of rulership, such that Joseph’s brothers used both terms? Do they not mean the same thing?

The Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna Zatzal, said that melucha and memshala are different concepts that have nothing to do with one another.

A king (melech) is appointed through the people, as different levels of society consult with one another to decide upon a king for themselves. This means that a king is crowned by those who choose him for that role. A moshel, however, governs people by force, against their will and interests. This also explains the verses we read each day in the morning prayer: “For sovereignty [melucha] is the L-RD’s, and He rules [moshel] over the nations. Deliverers will go up to Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau, and kingship will be the L-RD’s. The L-RD will be king [melech] over the entire earth.”

At first, “Sovereignty is the L-RD’s” – the Children of Israel accept the yoke of sovereignty of the Holy One, blessed be He, wholeheartedly and with love. On the other hand, “He rules over the nations” – the Holy One, blessed be He, will rule the nations of the world by force, even against their will. Yet in the future, at the time of the Final Redemption, the Vilna Gaon explains that upon fulfillment of the verse, “Deliverers will go up to Mount Zion,” the verse, “The L-RD will be king over all the earth” will also be fulfilled. In other words, all the nations will accept the yoke of sovereignty of the Holy One, blessed be He, wholeheartedly and with love.

Therefore, explains the Vilna Gaon, the verse describing the two expressions used by Joseph’s brothers means: “Will you indeed reign over us” – rulership is something that comes from the will and complete agreement of the people over whom a king reigns. That is not the case here, for we are not interested and certainly have no desire for you to “reign over us.” At the most, you may “govern us,” for if you dreamed about governing us, it may happen. But you will never reign over us.

Hence the brothers concluded that just as the dream in which he would reign over them was impossible, likewise the dream in which he would govern them was impossible.

The Eighth Bag

Much has been said and written in response to the famous question raised by the Beit Yosef, namely why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days, since the miracle of the flask of oil lasted only seven days. After all, there was enough oil to last for the first night. The simplest way to answer this is with the explanation offered by the Turei Zahav, namely that the miracle actually occurred on the first night, this being the presence of a flask with enough oil to burn for one night. This oil was not entirely used up on that night, for there remained a little upon which the miracle and the blessing of the next seven days could rest.

In his book Kometz HaMincha, the gaon Rabbi Aryeh Leib Tzontz Zatzal uses a parable to explain this concept:

A wealthy merchant was once traveling to a fair in Leipzig with eight small bags, each of which contained gold. On the way, he was attacked by bandits who tried to steal all his money. Yet by a miracle, they didn’t see one of his small bags, which he was able to keep.

When the merchant arrived at the nearest village, he immediately stopped and hired several peasants to help him chase down the bandits. At that point he swore to himself that if Hashem would help him retrieve his money, he would immediately put aside a tenth of it for tzeddakah. His prayer was granted, and he returned home with joy.

When the directors of a tzeddakah fund came to see him for his donation, a discussion ensued.

The merchant believed that he should give a tenth of the amount contained in the seven small bags that had been stolen from him, not from the eighth bag that the bandits did not touch.

The directors of the tzeddakah fund believed that he was completely mistaken, and that he should give a tenth from the eighth bag as well, for it enabled the miracle to occur in the first place. In other words, if the eighth bag would also have been stolen, he would not have been able to hire men and pursue the bandits, in which case he would have been unable to retrieve the rest of his money.

Hence this is what constituted the miracle of the one flask of oil, explained Rabbi Aryeh Tzontz Zatzal. Without this miracle – namely that the Greeks searched throughout the entire Temple, but failed to find that one flask – there would have been no oil to serve as a foundation for the eight-day miracle of light. In remembrance of this first miracle, which led to those which came after it, we include the first day of Chanukah among the days on which a miracle occurred.