



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Forbidden Even When False

Know that the prohibition against gossiping applies even to an ignoramus, for he too is included in "your people." Even if we see that this ignoramus has freely insulted a person behind his back, and that justice belongs to that person, we still know that gossip is forbidden even when it is true. How much more is it forbidden when we gossip about a talmid chacham, for in that case our sin is much worse for several reasons.

One of these reasons lies in the very act of gossiping, for it is obvious that if some falsehood has become mixed into the gossip that we have spoken, our punishment is considerably more severe than if we had only spoken the truth. More specifically, such gossip will generally be false, for in principle a talmid chacham does not insult or harm anyone without just cause. We must assume that he has acted correctly, which is why a person who says something negative about him will be spreading false gossip.

- Chafetz Chaim

THE GRAVITY OF BASELESS HATRED (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "Joseph could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out: 'Remove everyone from before me!' No one remained with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers" (Genesis 45:1). The Aggadah states, "When they recognized him, they wanted to kill him. An angel came and dispersed them to the four corners of the house. Judah then screamed with a powerful voice, and all the walls of Egypt fell, all the animals lost the young they were carrying, Joseph fell from his throne, Pharaoh fell from his throne, both of them fell, and the faces of all the brave warriors standing around Joseph turned backwards, remaining that way until the day of their death" (Tanhuma, Vayigash 5).

I find this surprising! When Joseph saw that his brothers were going from street to street, he asked them: "Why are you going about the land like this?" They replied, "We have a brother that we sold as a slave. Since the time that we sold him, our father has been mourning for him. We have come with money, and wherever we find him, we will buy him back."

Joseph replied, "Can someone who sells something change his mind?" They told him, "That is why we have come with twice as much money to buy him back."

Joseph asked them, "And if his owner does not want to sell him back to you?"

They said, "Even if we have to burn for his sake, we will not leave before having bought him back."

From here it seems that they uprooted the resentment that they felt for him in their hearts, to the point of being willing to burn for his sake. Therefore how can we say that they wanted to kill him when they recognized him, and that they would have done so if an angel had not intervened? Can we say that their hatred returned at that point? This is quite surprising!

When the Condition Ceases, Hatred Ceases

The Sages have said: "Any love that is dependent upon a specific consideration, when that consideration ceases, the love ceases. Yet if it is not dependent upon a specific consideration, it will never cease" (Pirkei Avoth 5:16). Likewise all hatred that depends upon a condition will cease when that condition ceases. We see examples of this every day: A person may despise someone and constantly wish him harm. Yet if he were to be told, "So and so is dead," his hatred would immediately cease and he would mourn his passing. If he were to be told, "Actually, that person is still alive," his hatred for him would immediately return, just as at first. Why? Given that we only hate someone when he is alive, and given that hatred is dependent upon life, as soon as that person dies, our hatred for him will also die.

Likewise Joseph's brothers despised him when they sold him into slavery, and afterwards they thought that he was dead, as it is written: "His brother is dead" (Genesis 44:20). The Sages have said (Hadar Zekenim, Genesis 44:20) that Joseph asked, "You saw that he was dead?" They said yes. Joseph asked further: "You stood by his grave?" They again said yes. Since they thought that he was dead, their hatred for him ceased. However when they recognized him and saw that he was actually alive, their hatred for him returned.

Joseph's brothers did not go to Egypt in order to find him, but because their father Jacob had told them: "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down and purchase for us from there" (Genesis 42:2). The Sages have explained, "Since the day that Joseph was stolen, the Holy Spirit departed from him [Jacob], so that he saw but did not see, heard but did not hear. Why does it not say, 'Jacob heard that there was bar' or 'There was okel,' but rather: 'There was shever [grain]'? Do not read shever [grain] but sever [hope]: He saw in a vision that his hope was in Egypt, namely Joseph" (Bereshith Rabba 91:6). Although the brothers did not know that Joseph was still alive, it was revealed to Jacob.

The Ten Martyrs of the Roman Government

I say that hatred which has returned is more powerful than hatred when it first appears. The Holy One, blessed be He, accepted it the first time, as the Sages have said: "Let us bind ourselves with a malediction to never tell our father Jacob! Judah said to them, 'Reuven is not here, and the malediction is only valid with ten.' What did they do? They joined the Holy One, blessed be He, to themselves in this malediction, so that He would say nothing to their father. Although it is written, 'He tells His word to Jacob' [Psalms 147:19], this He did not tell him, due to the malediction" (Tanhuma, Vayeishev 2).

On the other hand, the hatred that returned to the brothers was baseless hatred, for even if Joseph's brothers believed that he was liable to death because he had spoken Lashon Harah about them, and as a result they said, "Let us kill him by inciting the dogs against him" (Bereshith Rabba 84:14) – since one who speaks Lashon Harah deserves to be thrown to the dogs (Pesachim 118a) – in any case Joseph had been exiled for 22 years, and exile is considered to be like death (Midrash Tehillim 71). Therefore even if Joseph's brothers believed at the time of his sale that he was liable to death, his exile atoned for his sin, and they no longer had any right to hate him. It was this hatred, which returned to them, that led to the death of the ten martyrs by the Romans, as our Sages have said (Midrash Mishlei 1:13).

When Joseph told them, "I am Joseph your brother," their faces changed and they could no longer look at him. At that point we read, "His brothers were not able to answer him, for they were terrified at his presence" (Genesis 45:3). In the Aggadah our Sages have explained: "Woe to us on the day of judgment. Woe to us on the day of rebuke! ... Joseph was the youngest of the tribal ancestors, and yet his brothers could not withstand his rebuke.... Thus how much more when the Holy One, blessed be He, comes and rebukes each man according to his deeds" (Bereshith Rabba 93:10).

The Sages also taught that Judah said to Joseph, "You are judging us dishonestly!" Joseph replied, "There is no judgment more dishonest than to sell a brother" (Tanhuma, Vayigash 5). At that point they realized that their judgment had not been a judgment for truth, for if Joseph had been an evildoer, he would not have remained upright during all these years. When he showed them his circumcision and said, "I have maintained the same sanctity as on the day that you sold me," they were afraid of him and recanted. This sin, however, was not forgiven until the ten martyrs were killed by the Romans on their account.

AT THE SOURCE

Your Servant

It is written, “May your servant speak a word in my lord’s ears” (Genesis 44:18).

In addition to the plain meaning of this verse, in which the expression “your servant” refers to Judah, Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi Zatzal explains that it also refers to the Egyptian servant who pursued the brothers and accused them of having stolen Joseph’s cup, which was found in Benjamin’s sack. Thus Judah’s words can be understood to mean:

“May your servant speak a word in my lord’s ear” – may the servant whom you sent to pursue us come and reveal a secret to you, namely what he did with the cup. He deliberately hid it among our sacks, wanting to hatch a plot against us without reason.

The Lad Cannot Leave His Father

It is written, “We said to my lord, ‘The lad cannot leave his father, for should he leave his father, he will die’ ” (Genesis 44:22).

From the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Amsallem Zatzal, this verse can easily be understood as an allusion. As he explains in his book *Bnei Shlomo*, our Sages have said that the wicked are called dead even while alive, and the Children of Israel are called na’ar (“lad”), as it is written: “When Israel was a lad, I loved him” (Hosea 11:1).

Hence Judah’s statement can be understood in the following way: “We said to my lord” – to the Holy One, blessed be He, the Master of the universe; “the lad” – the Jewish people; “cannot leave his father” – their Father in Heaven; “for should he leave his father” – should the Children of Israel leave their Father in Heaven by abandoning His ways; “he will die” – they will die a spiritual death, for the wicked are called dead even while alive.

Not Enough to Forgive

It is written, “And now, it was not you who sent me here” (Genesis 45:8).

Regarding Joseph’s words of consolation to his brothers, the book *Ta’am VaDa’at* states: “From here we learn a great principle regarding proper conduct: It is not enough to forgive a person who has wronged us, for we must leave him with a good impression, as if he has never done the slightest thing to harm us. Likewise Joseph explained to his brothers that G-d had sent him, and therefore they had nothing to be sad about or to feel ashamed over.”

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz Zatzal taught that if a person has wronged us and wants to apologize, if we tell him that he does not need to, we are depriving him of the contentment that comes from seeking forgiveness. We are therefore obligated to listen to him in order to make him feel better.

Pleasing to Pharaoh and His Servants

It is written, “It was good in Pharaoh’s eyes and in the eyes of his servants” (Genesis 45:16).

Why were Pharaoh and his servants so pleased when Joseph brought his entire family to Egypt, to the point that Scripture actually tells us that it pleased them?

Rabbi Ovadia Sforno Zatzal answers this by stating that Pharaoh believed that from then on, from the day that Joseph’s family settled in Egypt, Joseph would not watch over the interests of Egypt like a stranger who governs a foreign land, but rather as a citizen who has the intention of living there, him and all his descendants. Hence Joseph would watch over the interests of Egypt and its inhabitants with all his heart and soul. This is why Pharaoh was pleased, both him and his servants.

BY ALLUSION

Upon Them

It is written, “He kissed all his brothers and wept upon them” (Genesis 45:15).

Joseph wept for the ten martyrs of the Romans, whom his brothers were reincarnated as because they had sold him.

The term *alei hem* (“upon them”) is formed by the letters of *al yehem*, initials for the expression *yud harugei malchut* (“ten martyrs of the [Roman] government”).

– Bnei Shlomo

You Open Your Hand

It is written, “To his father he sent like this” (Genesis 45:23).

Rashi states, “According to this amount.”

I have heard that the words of Rashi allude to what is mentioned among the Kabbalists, namely that during years of famine, even if a person eats more than he usually does, he will not be completely satisfied. A *segula* against this is to invoke the name of abundance, *chatach*, which is formed by the last letters in the expression *Poteach et yadecha* (“You open Your hand” – Psalms 145:16). By concentrating on this name, a person can eat to satisfaction.

It is possible that Joseph conveyed this marvelous secret to his father, for the term *kezot* (“like this”) has the same numerical value – “according to this amount” – as *chatach*, namely 428.

– Irin Kadishin

Whatever He Tells You

It is written, “Joseph made it a law to this day over...” (Genesis 47:26).

The last letters of these words form the expression *Ma pakad? Mahel* (“Who ordered you? Circumcise yourself”).

This tells us by allusion that Joseph imposed circumcision as a law in Egypt, as the Midrash says concerning the verse: “Go to Joseph. Whatever he tells you, you should do” (Genesis 41:55).

– Maskil el Dal

CONCERNING THE PARSHA

BRING US IN PEACE

Concerning the verse in this week's parsha, "If disaster were to befall him on the journey which you shall take" (Genesis 42:38), the Yerushalmi asks the following question: "Misfortune may befall him 'on the journey,' but not at home? From here we learn that the Satan only accuses in a time of danger."

In principle, all roads are dangerous. In fact Rav Yehudah was warned by Eliyahu, "When you go out on a journey, seek counsel of your Maker" (Berachot 29b). This refers to Tifillat HaDerech, the prayer for traveling, as the Gemara states: "Whoever sets forth on a journey should say the prayer for traveling" (ibid.). As for the words of this prayer, several versions have been written that have been accepted throughout the Diaspora, and each person should follow his own custom. Besides this prayer, people usually add a few verses for protection. The book Ma'avar Yabok indicates how the text of such a prayer should be arranged, with the first letter of each verse forming the term *leviya* ("accompaniment"). There are several ways to arrange the same verses.

The custom of the Maharam of Rothenburg was to recite the prayer for traveling immediately after another blessing, for in this way it would be considered as a prayer that begins with "Baruch." Actually, we know that when one prayer is immediately recited after another, it does not begin with the words "Hashem Elokeinu melech haolam" (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 110:6). The Shulchan Aruch points to the Maharam of Rothenburg's custom of saying the prayer for traveling immediately after the blessing "Hagomel chasadim tovim leamo Israel" in the morning blessings, for this blessing comprises all the kindnesses of Hashem and all the protection needed for traveling.

The Chatam Sofer (HaGaot Chatam Sofer) testifies that his teacher would usually precede the prayer for traveling with the blessing over fragrant herbs. However he noted the fact that smelling these herbs constitutes an interruption between the blessing over the herbs and the prayer for traveling. Be that as it may, the book *Yalkut Yosef* (3:219) notes that this custom is not strictly considered Halachah, but is simply an added measure.

The distance that requires a blessing with "Elokeinu melech haolam" is one *parsa* (about 4 kilometers, or 2½ miles). This is the distance that one can walk in 72 minutes. For a shorter distance, we do not recite these words.

Traveling on Shabbat or on a Festival

If someone sets out on a journey during Shabbat or on a festival in order to save a life, or for another permitted reason, should he recite the prayer for traveling? Given that it is forbidden to request something on Shabbat, is the prayer for traveling part of this prohibition? When this question was addressed to the gaon Rabbi Betzalel Stern Zatzal, he said that making a request on Shabbat or a festival is not forbidden if it is impossible to make such a request after Shabbat or the festival. When it is impossible to make such a request on the next day, it is permissible to pray for it even on Shabbat (Betzal HaChochma 5:41). Hence a person who sets out on a journey during Shabbat in order to save a life must recite the prayer for traveling, just as he would on a regular day.

We must also recite this prayer on Tisha B'Av, but without the verses that are usually added to it, for it is forbidden to study Torah on Tisha B'Av.

With regards to an *onen* (a person in mourning, before the burial of the deceased), the Acharonim differ on this issue. They question whether he is exempt from reciting it – just as he is exempt from reciting all other blessings (Lev Yehudah, Hashmatot 3) – or whether he should recite the prayer because it is meant to protect him from danger. In the latter case, it applies to him just as it applies to others.

Since the Sages have said that someone who is sent on a journey to perform a mitzvah will not be harmed, neither in leaving nor in returning (Pesachim 8b), we must reflect upon the question of whether a person who is sent to perform a mitzvah is obligated to say the prayer for traveling. The book *Ma'asseh Betzalel on the Recanti* (35) notes that even those who are sent on a journey to perform a mitzvah should say the prayer for traveling when they take to the road.

THE WORDS OF THE SAGES

Is a Talmid Chacham Obligated to Pay Taxes?

It is written, "Only the land of the priests he did not buy, since the priests had a stipend from Pharaoh, and they lived off their stipend that Pharaoh had given them. Therefore they did not sell their land" (Genesis 47:22).

The gaon Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Margalioth Zatzal was a very wealthy man with immense possessions. However he refused to pay the taxes that the community levied on him, taxes that they levied on everyone else in town without exception.

Each time that the community sent him envoys with debt notices for the taxes that he owed, he sent them away empty-handed. He based himself on the words of the *din* which states that *talmidei chachamim* are "exempt from paying all kinds of taxes, be they taxes that apply to all the residents of a town, or taxes levied on each individual, whether ordinary or exceptional, which the residents must pay in their place" (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 243:2).

The leaders of the community, who did not accept his position, did not leave things at that. They also responded in kind, basing themselves upon what the Shulchan Aruch states further on in chapter 3: "However if he works a little or engages in some commerce in order to earn a living, but not to become wealthy, and he returns to Torah study and constantly learns whenever his work gives him free time, then Torah can be called his main occupation, but he must still pay taxes."

Each side sent letters and messages to the Poskim and great Torah figures of the generation in order to get an answer to this question, and to know who was in the right.

Among the reasons used by Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Magalioth was a verse found in this week's parsha: "Only the land of the priests he did not buy, since the priests had a stipend from Pharaoh, and they lived off their stipend that Pharaoh had given them. Therefore they did not sell their land." Hence Rabbi Ephraim believed that with regards to his situation, there was no reason to burden the priests of Israel, those who devote themselves entirely to Torah, as was the case with the priests of Egypt, whose personal possessions and money were not touched.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

RABBI HIZKIYAH HACOHN RABIN

According to tradition, the flourishing Jewish community of Bukhara has its beginnings in the remnants of the Ten Tribes, which were exiled prior to the destruction of the First Temple, and who found a home in the vast regions of Central Asia. Some have found support for this idea in the words of Scripture, which states: “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and exiled Israel to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Habor, by the Gozan River, and in the cities of Media” (II Kings 17:6). Some have a tradition that this is speaking of Bukhara.

The Rabin family was among the glory of Bukharian Jewry. Its noble lineage goes back to a holy shoot, one generation after another, until Ezra HaSofer. A special family tree, found in the Russian National Museum in St. Petersburg, testifies to this prestigious lineage.

The gaon Rabbi Hizkiyah HaCohen Rabin Zatzal, who for years served as the Chief Rabbi of the Bukharian community, and who made many disciples, was born in sanctity on Shevat 1, 5632. His father was the gaon Rabbi Yitzhak Haim Rabin Zatzal, who also served as the Rosh Av Beit Din and Chief Rabbi of Bukhara. His mother was Yocheved Banu, the granddaughter of the gaon Rabbi Yosef Maman Ma’aravi Zatzal.

Youthful Expectations Kept

As early as his youth, Rabbi Hizkiyah was known for his exceptional wisdom and intelligence. While immersing himself in diligent Torah study, he demonstrated a pure fear of Heaven that revealed itself in all his deeds and fine character traits.

With the death of his father Rabbi Yitzhak Haim HaCohen Rabin Zatzal, who as we said was the Rosh Av Beit Din and Chief Rabbi of the Bukharian community, Rabbi Hizkiyah HaCohen inherited his father’s position in accordance with his will. Still young, about 24 years old, Rabbi Hizkiyah carried the lofty status of a gaon on his shoulders as he led the community. He taught Torah to all segments of the community, while educating and showing them the path to follow and what needed to be done. He made peace among people and between husband and wife, rendering judgments of truth and peace. His rabbinic tasks sometimes put his life in danger, as when the communists believed that he was inciting people against their ideology. More than once was he led into an interrogation room, where terrifying treats were made against his life if he didn’t promise to stop his spiritual activities. However he never backed down, and he firmly held onto his position until disaster eventually caught up with him and he was sentenced to death. At that point he quickly fled to the Holy Land. It is interesting to note that Rabbi Hizkiyah never immediately wrote a get for someone who came before the Beit Din. It is said that he could foretell events through Ruach HaKodesh, and would declare before the Beit Din, “A get must be given to so-and-so, but so-and-so must reconcile with his wife and live with her in peace.”

This is precisely what would happen. For those whom he proclaimed did not need a get, they would return home and live in peace, without ever thinking of returning to the Beit Din for the same reason. When a boy would be born to them, they would ask Rabbi Hizkiyah to be the Sandak and perform the circumcision. They would even go so far as to name the child after him, being grateful and recognizing that he brought light and joy, peace and tranquility into their home, not to mention the fact that by his merit they received the blessing of Hashem, Who gave them a son to serve Him.

An interesting story is told about this subject. One Shabbat, a butcher in town went to the Rav’s home greatly upset, carrying a pot full of chamin [stew]. Pointing to the pot, he said to the Rav: “May the Rav judge between me and my wife! She burned my food, which is why I want a divorce!”

As fate would have it, on that very same Shabbat, Rabbi Hizkiyah’s food also turned out badly, for it had been spoiled while simmering. The Rav immediately said to his wife, “Bring me the pot of chamin, so the butcher can see it and settle down.”

Rabbi Hizkiyah turned towards the butcher and said, “So, should I divorce my wife as well? You have come to see me in order to complain about your wife. And I, to whom will I go to complain about my wife?” He continued to console the butcher, all while educating him. The butcher eventually calmed down and forgot about his complaint. In fact he regretted his bad intentions and returned home in peace.

Near the end of his life, the Soviet authorities began to hatch pots against Rabbi Hizkiyah with the intention of killing him. It was then that he fled from the Soviet Union, undertaking a long and tortuous journey to reach, after great effort, the gates of Jerusalem in Nissan 5695.

He quickly began to mingle among the Torah greats of Jerusalem, be it with Rav “HaSadeh” at the Rehovot HaNahar yeshiva of the kabbalists, where he learned a great deal of Kabbalah with his friend Rabbi Yaakov Monsa Zatzal, or on the Beit Din of the Bukharian community, where he sat with his friends Rabbi Yaakov Ades, Rabbi Hizkiyah Shabtai, and others.

Thirty days before his passing, Rabbi Hizkiyah felt his end drawing near, and he knew that he would have to render his soul to the Creator. Thus he began to prepare himself with love and fear, until on Tevet 9, 5705, the yahrtzeit of Ezra HaSofer (Rabbi Hizkiyah’s ancestor), he rendered his soul to his Creator in holiness and purity at the age of 74. He was laid to rest in the section of the Kohanim on the Mount of Olives, close to where the Temple stood.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA

Complete Forgiveness Only Through Verbal Confession

Our Sages cite Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levy as saying, “The fate of the ten martyrs who were killed by the Romans was sealed by the sin of Joseph’s sale” (Midrash Mishlei 1:13). Let’s think about this for a moment: Since Joseph forgave his brothers for having sold him, why were they punished? It would seem that although Joseph forgave them in his heart, he did not actually say: “I have forgiven you.” Since these words did not emerge from his mouth, they were punished. Hence when Moses asked G-d to forgive the Children of Israel, he did not move before G-d told him: “I have forgiven according to your word” (Numbers 14:20).

Nevertheless, the Children of Israel were not forgiven for the sin of the golden calf, since G-d did not verbally express His forgiveness. Instead, He simply told Moses: “Go, lead the people to where I have told you” (Exodus 32:34). What did G-d then say? “My angel shall go before you, and on the day that I make My accounting, I shall bring their sin to account against them” (v.35). Not only were they not forgiven for this sin, it has remained for all the generations!

Our Sages have said, “No retribution whatsoever comes upon the world that does not contain a slight fraction of the first calf” (Sanhedrin 102a). On the verse, “On the day that I make My accounting, I shall bring their sin to account against them,” the Sages also said: “That day is still pending” (Sifrei Zutah 11:11).