



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Not Even From His Wife

A person must be very careful not to accept gossip from anyone, not even from his wife. When we think about this, accepting gossip from his wife means that he believes what she has told him, that so-and-so spoke against him. Other than the sin of accepting gossip, a man draws a great deal of misfortune upon himself in this way. In fact when a woman realizes that her husband has accepted her words without protest, she will continue to tell him such things. She will thereby push him to become angry, to get embroiled in disputes, and to become embittered. Hence it is extremely important for a man to reprimand his wife when she says such things.

– Chafetz Chaim

BEING CONTENT WITH LITTLE (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as E-I Sh-ddai, but with My Name the L-RD I did not make Myself known to them” (Exodus 6:3).

We need to understand what the expression “I appeared” is doing here, since G-d is reprimanding Moses for having asked Him: “Why have You done evil to this people?” (Exodus 5:22). We also need to understand something else: Did G-d never reveal Himself to the Patriarchs using the name “the L-RD”? We find that G-d said to Abraham, “I am the L-RD, Who brought you out of Ur-Kasdim” (Genesis 15:7). He also said to Jacob, “I am the L-RD, the G-d of Abraham your father and the G-d of Isaac” (ibid. 28:13).

Our Sages have taught that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Alas for those who are gone and not to be found! For how many times did I reveal Myself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the Name E-I Sh-ddai, and they did not question My character or say to Me, ‘What is Your Name?’ I said to Abraham, ‘Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth, for I will give it to you’ [Genesis 13:17]. Yet when he sought a place to bury Sarah, he did not find one, but had to purchase it for 400 silver shekels. However he still did not question My character. I said to Isaac, ‘Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you’ [ibid. 26:3]. However his servants sought water to drink and did not find it without a dispute, as it is said: ‘The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying: “The water is ours”’ [v.20]. Still he did not question My character. I said to Jacob, ‘The ground upon which you are lying, to you will I give it and to your descendants’ [ibid. 28:13]. However when he sought a place to pitch his tent, he did not find one until he purchased it for 100 pieces of money. Still he did not question My character, nor did he say to Me: ‘What is Your Name?’ Yet now you say to Me, ‘Neither have You delivered Your people at all’ [Exodus 5:23]” (Sanhedrin 111a).

This is difficult to understand. What is the connection between the questions, “What is Your Name” and “Neither have You delivered Your people at all”? Can we possibly think that Hashem would get angry with Moses for having asked, “What is Your Name,” but not angry for, “Neither have You delivered Your people at all”? Therefore what is the phrase, “What is Your Name” doing here?

The Tzaddikim Consider Themselves as Nothing

Consider the verse, “May E-I Sh-ddai grant you mercy” (Genesis 43:14). Here the Aggadah states that Jacob was praying to G-d Alm-ghty and saying: “He Who said to Heaven and earth dai [enough], may He say to my misfortunes dai” (Tanhuma, Mikeitz 10), for when the Holy One, blessed be He, created Heaven and earth, they continued to expand until He said “enough.”

This teaches us that the Name Sh-ddai denotes restriction and scarcity, for it was through this Name that Heaven and earth were stopped from expanding further. Hashem said, “Moses, do you really believe that you spoke with Me because I revealed Myself to you by the Name ‘the L-RD’? Do you really think that you can reprimand Me and ask how I guide the world and act in the way that I do? Consider that the Patriarchs, despite being great tzaddikim who overcame their trials, did not ask Me for anything or try to learn My ways. The fact that you are trying to know My Name indicates that you are not content with little, as they

were, for they did not ask me if My Name was Sh-ddai or the L-RD. Furthermore, your fathers acted like foreigners in this world, for just as foreigners do not ask for anything and are content with little, likewise they did not ask for anything and were content with little.” As the Sages said on the verse, “For we are like sojourners before You, and like temporary residents, as were all our forefathers” (I Chronicles 29:15): “Likewise the tzaddikim are essential to this world, and yet they consider themselves as nothing. Thus we find that although Abraham was essential to the world, he assumed a less important status, as it is written: ‘I am an alien and a resident among you’ [Genesis 23:4], and Jacob said: ‘I sojourned [garti] with Laban’ [like a ger, a foreigner]” (Aggadat Bereshith 58).

The Sages have also said, “Whoever possesses the following three characteristics is among the disciples of our father Abraham, and the three opposite characteristics is among the disciples of the wicked Bilam: The disciples of our father Abraham possess a good eye, a humble spirit, and a meek soul. The disciples of the wicked Bilam possess an evil eye, an arrogant spirit, and a greedy soul” (Pirkei Avoth 5:19).

Therefore what G-d said to Moses (“I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as E-I Sh-ddai, but with My Name the L-RD I did not make Myself known to them”) was a rebuke. In other words: Do not think that you can criticize Me and try to understand My ways! You should instead emulate your fathers, who did not try to understand My ways. They considered and accepted all that I did for them, just as a servant who is told by his master to do something. He does not ask why, but instead goes out and does it as soon as he is told.

That is the meaning of “I appeared.” It is why Hashem said to Moses, “With My Name the L-RD I did not make Myself known to them,” for they did not seek to know it. Instead, they did everything that Hashem told them to do, immediately and without questioning G-d’s ways.

Va’eira and Achar

We may also explain the meaning of the term va’eira (“and I appeared”) by noting that it has the same numerical value as achar (“after”).

In fact the word achar appears in three places that describe the trials endured by the Patriarchs. Concerning Abraham it is written, “It happened achar [after] these things that G-d tested Abraham and said to him, ‘Abraham,’ and he replied, ‘Here I am’” (Genesis 22:1). In the same parsha it is written, “Behold, a ram achar [behind] caught in the thicket by its horns” (ibid. 22:13).

Concerning Isaac it is written, “Sojourn [gur] in this land” (ibid. 26:3). Here the word gur has the same numerical value as achar. Similarly, Jacob said to Esau: “I have sojourned with Laban va’echar [and delayed] until now” (ibid. 32:5). Concerning Joseph it is written, “May E-I Sh-ddai grant you mercy before the man, that he may release your achar [other] brother to you” (ibid. 43:14).

Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Although your forefathers endured trials before Me, they were content with little and accepted My decrees without protesting My actions. You should have adopted the same conduct and not have questioned My ways.

AT THE SOURCE

In Spite of Themselves

It is written, "I will place My hand upon Egypt, and I shall take out My legions" (Exodus 7:4).

In his book Tzror HaMor, Rabbi Abraham Saba Zatzal explains the juxtaposition of these two statements, discussing the connection between the ten plagues and the Exodus from Egypt. He says the following:

"This teaches us that the goal of the plagues was to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt in spite of themselves. Hashem embittered their lives with forced labor so they could no longer take it, so they would cry out for help. Otherwise, on account of the wealth and abundance of Egypt, where they lived as citizens for 210 years, they would not have wanted to leave, as they said later on: 'Let us return to Egypt' [Numbers 14:4]."

Worse than 50 Plagues

It is written, "There was blood throughout the land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:21).

The Midrash states that the Children of Israel grew wealthier on account of the plague of blood.

The book Peninei Kedem explains why it was precisely the plague of blood that made Israel wealthier, not any other plague. Our Sages have said, "Poverty in one's home is worse than 50 plagues" (Bava Batra 116a).

Hence it was absolutely imperative for the Children of Israel to become wealthier before the occurrence of the first plague, the plague of blood. Even if the Egyptians had received 50 plagues and Israel remained poor, they would have been worse off than the Egyptians, for "poverty in one's home is worse than 50 plagues."

The Sin of Lashon Harah

It is written, "The frogs shall leave you and your homes" (Exodus 8:7).

Here Moses' prayer was able to remove the frogs from Pharaoh and his servants. On the other hand, with regards to the serpents that Hashem sent against the Children of Israel, Moses prayed for the people but was unable to remove the serpents. Nevertheless the Holy One, blessed be He, gave him some advice: "Make yourself a fiery [serpent] and place it on a pole, and it will be that anyone who was bitten will look at it and live" (Numbers 21:8).

The Chafetz Chaim writes that this means that everything has a remedy except for the sin of Lashon Harah. It is impossible to remove the accuser created by Lashon Harah, since it follows the principle of measure for measure. That is, just as the sinner did not remain silent, the accuser will not remain silent.

Since the people spoke against Hashem and Moses, they were punished with serpents on account of their Lashon Harah, serpents that Moses' prayer was unable to completely remove. Still, Hashem gave Moses some advice on how to heal those bitten by a serpent, as it is written: "Make yourself a fiery [serpent] and place it on a pole, and it will be that anyone who was bitten will look at it and live."

Fourteen Kinds of Lice

It is written, "It shall become lice throughout the land of Egypt" (Exodus 8:12).

The Holy One, blessed be He, brought 14 kinds of lice upon Egypt, the names of which are given in the book Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu:

(1) Yeruknim, (2) Yarkovot, (3) Kefuin, (4) Kapuchot, (5) Sefifin, (6) Ya'alei Mayim, (7) Nifkadrin, (8) Ya'alei Sadot, (9) Nemala, (10) Avi Etzel, (11) Em Kinim, (12) Achshav, (13) Kivei Dachriri, and (14) Biukei Bili. The smallest of these was the size of a chicken egg, and the largest was the size of a goose egg.

By Allusion

Olive Oil, Wine, and Spices

It is written, "The sons of Yitzhar: Korach and Nepheg and Zichri" (Exodus 6:21).

The Gemara cites Rabbi Yochanan as saying, "As the olive causes one to forget 70 years of study, likewise olive oil restores 70 years of study" (Horayot 13b). Elsewhere we read, "Wine and spices have made me wise" (Sanhedrin 70a).

Thus it is written: "The sons of Yitzhar" – these are people who normally drink yitzhar (oil); "Korach" – formed by the same letters as roke'ach (spices); "Nepheg" – formed by the same letters as gephen (vine), a reference to wine that comes from the vine; all this helps them "Zichri" – to zecher (remember) and be wise.

– Chen Vechavod

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA

We have learned that the Holy One, blessed be He, did not prevent Pharaoh from repenting. He simply strengthened his heart in order for him to endure the burden of the plagues.

In reality, it is extraordinary that Pharaoh did not repent, for the Egyptians already recognized the existence of Hashem and they knew that He could do all that He wanted, as the magicians said to him: "It is the finger of G-d" (Exodus 8:15). With regards to the plague of hail, we read: "Those among Pharaoh's servants who feared the word of the L-RD" (ibid. 9:20), and afterwards Pharaoh said to Moses and Aaron, "This time I have sinned. The L-RD is righteous and I and my people are wicked" (v.27).

Pharaoh was also warned for 24 days prior to each plague, as the Midrash tells us (Shemot Rabba 9:12), so as to give him time to reflect and repent. It is therefore surprising that he failed to do so.

It seems that Pharaoh did not repent because he had made himself into a god, as the Sages say: "Go to Pharaoh in the morning. Behold, he goes out to the water [Exodus 7:15]. Only in the morning did he go out to the water, because this evildoer would boast that he was a god and did not require to ease himself. He would therefore go early in the morning to the water" (Shemot Rabba 9:8). Thus we read, "I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great crocodile that crouches within its rivers, who has said: 'Mine is the river, and I have made it myself!' " (Ezekiel 29:3). Pharaoh failed to repent because of his pride, because he refused to yield before the Holy One, blessed be He.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita

CONCERNING THE PARSHA

THE BLESSING FOR KINGS

On the verse found in this week's parsha, "Go to Pharaoh in the morning. Behold, he goes out to the water, and you shall stand opposite him" (Exodus 7:15), the Gemara cites Resh Lakish in explaining that the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moses: "He is a king, and you must show him reverence" (Zevachim 102a). Likewise the parsha states, "The L-RD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and He commanded them regarding the Children of Israel and regarding Pharaoh, king of Egypt" (Exodus 6:13). Here Rashi cites the Midrash (Shemot Rabba 7:3) as saying that He commanded them with regards to Pharaoh, to address him with respect.

Insofar as the Halachah is concerned, the Chatam Sofer writes that Joseph shaved himself on Rosh Hashanah out of respect for the king, as we read in Parsha Mikeitz: "Pharaoh sent and summoned Joseph, and they rushed him from the dungeon. He shaved and changed his clothes" (Genesis 41:14).

This is surprising! How could Joseph have shaved himself, given that Pharaoh summoned him on Rosh Hashanah? After all, we know that Joseph observed the entire Torah even before it was given. Therefore how could he have shaved himself on Rosh Hashanah?

This is why Rashi explains that he shaved himself out of respect for the throne. He believed that it was permissible to shave before presenting himself to the king, for one can never appear before a king with disheveled hair.

Like the Kingdom on High

The Sages teach: "On seeing kings of Israel, one says: 'Blessed be He Who has imparted of His glory to them that fear Him.' On seeing non-Jewish kings, one says: 'Blessed be He Who has imparted of His glory to His creatures.' Rabbi Yochanan said, 'A man should always exert himself and run to meet an Israelite king. And not only a king of Israel, but also a king of any other nation, so that he will be able to distinguish between the kings of Israel and the kings of other nations if he is deemed worthy'" (Berachot 58a). Rashi: If he is deemed worthy in the World to Come, he will see the glory of King Mashiach. He will see how much greater is the glory of those who do mitzvot than the glory of the nations.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 224:8) mentions both blessings. For a king of Israel: "Blessed be He Who has imparted of His glory to them that fear Him," and for a non-Jewish king: "Blessed be He Who has imparted of His glory to His creatures."

In terms of allusions, the Kaf HaChaim writes that the first letter of each word in the blessing for non-Jewish kings forms the word shalom ("peace"). This is to make us reflect upon the statement of the Sages, who said: "Pray for the peace of the government, for were it not for the fear of it, men would swallow one another alive" (Pirkei Avoth 3:2).

The Mishnah Berurah cites Responsa Radbaz in noting that the "king" in question is not necessarily a king per se: The blessing applies to all forms of power that are exercised without opposition. For a person holding such a position, we recite the blessing with Hashem's Name. (Note: The honor of a position is measured with regards to the degree that lives depend on it, somewhat like the King above, Who controls all lives.) Regarding the dignitaries that a king appoints in

each town, however, it is good to recite the blessing without Hashem's Name. The Radbaz cites Rabbeinu Avraham bar Yitzchak, the author of Sefer HaEshkol, as stating that one must recite the blessing for kings even on the pasha of Egypt, who was appointed by the Turkish king. Be that as it may, since the Turkish king could annul the pasha's decrees, it is not fitting to recite the blessing for kings on him.

Where is the Glory for Which We Honor Him?

Based on this principle, several Acharonim have written that a person who sees a nation's president – one who has the ability to extend his favor or to refuse it (even if his power is limited to a few years) – has the right to recite the blessing for kings on him. In Responsa Nivchar MiKesef, the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto was asked whether someone who sees a king dressed as an ordinary individual should recite the blessing for kings on him. He replied that the blessing for kings should only be said when we see the king in his glory, for the blessing states: "Who has imparted of His glory to His creatures." Therefore if such a king goes about like an ordinary individual, where is the glory for which we honor him? The essence of his glory lies in the garments he wears, his ceremonial garb, which makes his status known to men, just as Rabbi Yochanan called his garments "my glory." It also seems that the king's official vehicle and entourage are also part of his glory, and one is not obligated to recite this blessing without them.

On the other hand, the Chida notes the ruling of the gaon Rabbi Avraham Yitzchaki Zatzal, namely that one who sees a boat in which the king is found, even if he does not see the king at all, but definitely knows that he is aboard, can say the blessing for kings on him. It therefore follows that there is no reason for one to actually see a king in his ceremonial garments before reciting the blessing. Several Acharonim have rejected this opinion, however, believing that if one wants to recite the blessing under such circumstances, it is best to recite it without Hashem's Name.

The Ridbaz is also cited as stating that we must not recite the blessing each time that we see a king or the authorities, but only once every 30 days. All this applies to seeing one particular king. However when several kings or authority figures are seen on a given day, even if they number more than a hundred on that day, the blessing must be said for each of them.

For the sake of bettering the world, the Sages also decreed that we date official documents according to a king's reign, meaning from the time that he ascended to the throne. Thus the Mishnah in Rosh Hashanah states, "There are four new years: On the first of Nissan is the new year for kings." For the sake of bettering the world, they also decreed that a get is to be dated according to the years of the king. "Jews have become accustomed," writes the Rambam (Hilchot Gerushin 1:27), "to dating a get according to the years from Creation, or to date it from the reign of Alexander of Macedonia, which is how documents are dated."

An ancient custom existed whereby Torah scrolls were brought into the city streets in order to welcome a king, a custom mentioned in Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 379). Numerous quills have been broken over the validity of this custom, and the issue remains open.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

RABBI ISRAEL ABUHATZERA – THE “BABA SALE”

This week witnesses the Hilloula of a tzaddik who worked miracles, a man of noble extraction and the light of Israel, our teacher Rabbi Israel Abuhatzera, known as the “Baba Sale.” Rabbi Israel was born on Rosh Hashanah 5650 to the gaon Rabbi Messod Zatzal. From his youth, he was recognized as an extraordinary talmid chacham whose fear of Heaven preceded his wisdom. All the great Torah figures of his generation understood his importance and sanctity. In fact the letters that he received at the age of 24 used extraordinary terms to describe him: “The tzaddik of our generation,” “the perfectly clear speculum,” “the light of purity.”

Many among us merited to see the face of the tzaddik and benefit from his blessings and numerous miracles. His prayers pierced the Heavens and saved many people who were living in hardship. Countless stories of miracles revolve around him, one of which we shall cite. It is a story that made our teacher known in very corner of Morocco as a tzaddik who could save, as one whose prayers were heard in Heaven. This is what happened:

When the “Baba Sale,” as the tzaddik was commonly known, traveled from Erfoud to Boudnib in the Moroccan province of Tafilalet, he first checked to see that it had a mikveh. He was disappointed to learn that a nearby river was being used as a mikveh, for the presence of the French army in the area greatly disturbed him.

Hence the Rav decided to build, in the courtyard of his own home, a mikveh that would be filled with rainwater. He undertook this project much to the chagrin of the other rabbis, for it was the month of Tammuz and not a drop of rain was falling. Still, the masons began the work, digging a channel from the road to the mikveh. At one end of the channel, a small gutter was installed to direct the flow of water into the mikveh. The work was completed in the month of Tammuz, at which time everyone waited for rain. The town of Boudnib, however, was located in a desert region, a place where rain hardly ever fell, not even in winter, and especially not in the scorching days of Tammuz. Nevertheless, our teacher emerged from his room on the edge of his home, infused with tremendous confidence in the goodness of Hashem. He raised his eyes to Heaven and said, “Master of the universe! We have done what is required of us, now act for the holiness and purity of the Jewish people and send a rain of blessing until the mikveh is filled.”

He then returned to his Torah study and sent Rabbi Avraham Amoyal to see if everything was ready. He wanted to make sure that nothing could prevent rainwater from flowing into the mikveh. When the messenger returned and said that everything was in order, our teacher told those around him, “Now, Be’ezrat Hashem, rain will fall.”

They were still speaking when clouds started to cover the sky and abundant rain began to fall. In fact it rained until the mikveh was filled with rainwater, according to the din.

Everyone went outside to watch this spectacular sight. The entire town of Boudnib was celebrating with joy. However a cloud passed over the face of our teacher when he saw the metal gutter through which water from the channel was flowing into the mikveh. “What’s the matter?” those around him asked with trepidation. “The mikveh is invalid according to the opinion of the Beit Yehudah,” our teacher replied. “Why?” The tzaddik calmly replied, “Because of this small

gutter, which is made of metal. I’m afraid that according to the Beit Yehudah’s opinion, the mikveh is not kosher, which is why we have to drain it.”

For a moment, everyone was completely silent. The rabbis who were there proceeded to argue against such a move, stating that when a single opinion differs from several others, the Halachah follows the majority. Since the advice of the Beit Yehudah constituted a single opinion, why should they be strict and declare the mikveh to be invalid, especially since the situation they were in was so pressing? From the very beginning, they had told the Rav that it didn’t even rain in winter. Yet now a miracle had occurred with the downpour, and miracles don’t often happen. Our teacher, however, refused to listen.

When the tzaddik Rabbi Yechiya Adahan Zatzal, the grandson of the Abir Yaakov, saw that our Rav was adamant on draining the mikveh, he arose and said with tremendous emotion: “Our teacher! By me and my life, I accept total responsibility towards Heaven for the kashrut of this mikveh. I beg of you, don’t declare it invalid! Do you think that another miracle will occur, that rain will start falling once again?”

Yet even this emotional appeal from his friend and cousin did not influence our teacher. He therefore ordered the mikveh to be drained and for the metal gutter to be replaced with a wooden one. He did this despite viable arguments to the contrary, and despite the fact that the pious Rabbi Yechiya assumed complete responsibility towards Heaven. No longer having any choice, with a heavy heart Rabbi Yechiya had the mikveh drained of water and the metal gutter changed according to the instructions of our teacher.

After these changes were made, our teacher again went out to the edge of his home and said, “Our teacher the Beit Yehudah, we have followed your instructions. We have declared the mikveh invalid and drained it of water. The responsibility of filling the mikveh with rainwater rests upon you. Pray to the Creator so that a miracle will reoccur and a rain of blessing will fall for the purity of the Jewish people!”

Our teacher had not yet reentered his home when a wind from the north began to blow. Clouds once again covered the skies and an abundant rain began to fall. When the mikveh was full, the rain stopped, just as it had the first time.

The entire group of rabbis, with Rabbi Yechiya Adahan at their head, stood there in amazement as they watched this second miracle, which was even greater than the first. They immediately organized a prayer service to give thanks to the Holy One, blessed be He, for His tremendous kindness. The mikveh was inaugurated with a festive meal, and words of Torah were spoken regarding the great sanctity and purity of the Jewish people.

With tremendous anticipation for the coming of Mashiach and the construction of the Temple, our teacher Rabbi Israel Abuhatzera, the Baba Sale, died on Shevat 4, 5740. He died during the year of mourning over his son, the tzaddik Rabbi Meir, and following a painful illness that he had accepted with love “in order to redeem the Jewish people.” May his merit protect us all.