



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Even if Completely True

It is forbidden to speak ill of others, even if what we say is completely true. This is always termed Lashon Harah by the Sages. (Incidentally, if what we say contains a mixture of lies, to the point that the person being spoken of is wronged even more, this is called Motzei Shem Ra, which is an even graver sin.)

One who spreads stories transgresses a negative mitzvah, as it is written: "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people" (Leviticus 19:16), and this is also considered slander.

– Chafetz Chaim

HOW FAR SHOULD CHESD EXTEND?

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "And you, command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to light the lamp continually" (Exodus 27:20). Why is there a change in the text here, since earlier it is written: "Let them take an offering for Me" (Exodus 25:2)? Were they perhaps taking oil for Moses? They were taking it for Hashem, and they were lighting the Menorah with it!

With regards to man, we see that the Creator focused on his creation for an entire day, giving him a soul that is a Divine spark, as it is written: "The L-RD G-d formed man from the dust of the earth, and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). The early commentators (see Ramban ad loc.) said that one who breathes into the nostrils of another gives him something from within himself. Our Sages have also said, "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, He brought three creatures into existence each day, but on the day before Shabbat He spent the entire day on man. At the first hour He had the concept of man, at the second hour He consulted the ministering angels, at the third hour He gathered the dust, at the fourth hour He began to knead it, at the fifth hour He shaped it, at the sixth hour He placed man on his feet, and at the seventh hour He breathed a soul into him" (Pesikta Rabbati 46).

Mutual Respect

Why does man differ so greatly from all the other creatures, which came into existence with a single word from Hashem, whereas man was fashioned by His own hands, and his creation took an entire day? Furthermore, Hashem breathed a soul into man, which is a Divine spark, whereas the souls of all the other creatures lack a Divine spark. The answer is that G-d wanted to teach the inhabitants of the world the verse, "I will see G-d from my flesh" (Job 19:26). All people need to reflect upon the fact that Hashem focused on man's creation for an entire day – whereas all the other creatures appeared by a single word in a brief instant – and can therefore learn to respect one another. Every person should be careful to yield before the honor of others, for everyone in the world was created by the hands of the Holy One, blessed be He, so to speak.

In fact just as the Holy One, blessed be He, disregarded His own honor by personally dealing with the creation of man, giving him 248 limbs and 365 sinews, how much more should each person disregard his own honor for the sake of others!

The Torah warns, "You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). It does not simply say, "You shall love your fellow," but rather: "You shall love your fellow as yourself." In other words, just as a person loves himself and does not trust others to do everything, so too must he not trust them to help his fellow, but must do so himself.

In His Essence, Man is a Torah

Rabbi Akiva explains, " 'You shall love your fellow as yourself' [Leviticus 19:18] is a great principle of the Torah" (Torat Kohanim, Kedoshim 4:12). He also told his disciples concerning his wife, "My [learning] and

yours are hers" (Nedarim 50a), for the Torah only endures through unity. In fact the Torah was only given when all the Children of Israel were united, as it is written: "Israel encamped there before the mountain" (Exodus 19:2). Here the Sages have explained that they encamped "like a single man with a single heart." Since they were all compared to a single man, they were good to one another, just as a man is good to himself and is never jealous of himself.

This is why G-d did not create man by a word from His mouth, but through the work of His hands, as it were. He only did this for the honor of the holy Torah, which was worthy that Hashem should personally deal with it. In fact man by his very nature is a "Torah." The Creator engraved in his 248 limbs and 365 sinews all the mitzvot of the Torah, for He knew that man would fall into sin. Hence a mitzvah was created to correspond to each limb and each sinew, in order for man to repent when he so desires.

Thus each person must help the other when he is in need. A person must not say, "I won't tire myself for so-and-so, for I remember how much trouble he gave me. Why should I help him?" The Sages have told us that man should cleave to the attributes of the Creator, saying: "Just as He is gracious and compassionate, so should you be gracious and compassionate" (Shabbat 133b).

This is why our parsha says "that they shall take for you," whereas earlier we read: "Let them take an offering for Me." When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel, the ministering angels said: "That secret treasure – hidden by You for 974 generations before the world was created – You wish to give to flesh and blood?!" (Shabbat 88b). Elsewhere we read, "Nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the creation of the world, the Torah was written and placed in the bosom of Hashem, and it sang His praises with the ministering angels" (Avot D'Rabbi Nathan, ch. 31).

You Shall Give From What is Mine

The Holy One, blessed be He, gave His delight, the holy Torah, as a gift to Israel. In the verse, "Let them take an offering for Me," the term terumah ("offering") has the numerical value of the word Torah and the letter mem (numerical value 40). This is a reference to the Torah, which was given after 40 days.

It is written, "Let them take an offering for Me." Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, created man and breathed into him a soul that is a Divine spark – as if to say: "What is Mine is yours" – He also gave him, so to speak, His own essence. In other words: You too must accomplish, "Let them take an offering for Me," for everything that you give to the Sanctuary, you are giving from what is Mine, since I gave you a part of Myself. Thus it is written, "Mine is the silver and Mine is the gold" (Haggai 2:8).

A person should not tell himself: "Why should I give my money to tzedakah and support Torah institutions, kollelim, and the like, since it's my money!" The Holy One, blessed be He, also gave from Himself to man when He created him. Hashem did not say, "I am giving him nothing," but instead He breathed into him a soul that is a Divine spark, and He placed him upon his feet.

AT THE SOURCE

Individually Pressed

It is written, "They shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil" (Exodus 27:20).

This is surprising, for whenever the Torah simply says "oil," it is referring to olive oil ("he shall pour oil upon his head," "oil for the lights," "he shall pour oil upon it," etc.). That being said, why does the Torah need to specify that the oil which the Children of Israel were to take for lighting the Menorah must be "olive oil"?

We must also ask why the Torah speaks in the singular when it deals with olive oil, whereas it speaks in the plural when referring to all other liquids derived from fruit. This includes date honey, wine from grapes, and so on.

In his book *Panim Yafot*, Rabbi Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz, the author of *Sefer HaFla'ah*, explains as follows: "How could the Children of Israel find olive oil in the desert, since there were no olive trees there? If we say that they purchased olives from non-Jews, then these olives were impure and could not be used to kindle the lights in the Sanctuary!"

The Gemara states, "If a man who is unclean through [contact with] a corpse squeezes out olives or grapes exactly as much as an egg in quantity, they are clean" (Pesachim 33b). This means that at the moment the liquid leaves the fruit, what remains from the olive is less than the volume of an egg, which is not impure. It is only when we press several olives together that the oil which comes out becomes impure. This is why the Torah states, "olive oil," thereby teaching us that every olive was individually pressed in order to prepare the oil for kindling the lamps.

For the Light

It is written, "Pressed olive oil for illumination, to light the lamp continually" (Exodus 27:20).

In his book *Harei Bashamayim*, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Guinez Zatzal explains by way of allusion that the Sages have stated: "If [someone] says, 'I have labored and found,' you may believe him" (Megillah 6b). With regards to the Torah, if a person really puts an effort into studying it with great diligence and willingness, it is promised that he will find the light of the holy Torah in relationship to his effort. This is not the case with regards to earning a living, for it may happen that a person will make all the efforts in the world, traveling to every market in order to sell his wares, and yet in the end he may not only not make money, he may even lose it!

The word *katit* ("pressed") alludes to a person putting a great deal of effort into learning Torah and exhausting his body through rigorous, disciplined measures.

However this is only if it is done *la'maor* ("for illumination"), which will serve a useful purpose, meaning that we will merit the great light of the Torah. If we "press" ourselves for something else, for example to earn a living, it will be useless. Nothing is worth exhausting ourselves for that reason, since our livelihood depends solely on Hashem.

The Man Behind the Garments

It is written, "You shall make garments of sanctity for Aaron your brother, for glory and splendor" (Exodus 28:2).

It is only for someone who is like your brother Aaron that these garments will be for glory and splendor. They are not just for anyone, nor are they glorious for just about anybody.

Some people may wear sacred garments and put an effort into ensuring that they are made of beautiful fabric, are well-tailored, and are as stitched as best possible, for they have nothing else to glory in. We find this idea expressed in the Gemara: "Why are the scholars in Babylonia distinguished? Because they are not *bnei Torah*" (Shabbat 145b). Rashi explains that because they are not *bnei Torah*, they are not respected for their Torah. Beautiful garments are therefore made for them, so they will be respected for these garments."

The Zohar also states, "The garments worn by a man are the most visible part of him, and fools looking at the man do not see more in him than the garments" (Zohar III:152a).

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA A TEACHING OF THE GAON AND TZADDIK RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA

From the Strong Came Forth Sweetness

In the Zohar we read, "Who do we have who is greater than Moses, who said: 'But if not, erase me please from Your book that You have written' [Exodus 32:32]? This he said for the sake of Israel, and although the Holy One, blessed be He, did his wish and forgave Israel, nevertheless he was not spared punishment, for it has already been noted that his name is not mentioned in Parsha Tetzaveh" (Zohar III:246a).

Why was Moses punished for having said, "Erase me please from Your book that You have written"? He said this only because of his devotion to Israel, and the Holy One, blessed be He, should have rewarded, not punished him for it!

The answer is that although Moses was punished, the verse: "From the strong came forth sweetness" (Judges 14:14) was fulfilled here. We find a similar situation with regards to the prophet Eliyahu, who had sworn that no rain would fall until the Children of Israel would circumcise their sons. Jezebel wanted to kill him, and so he fled to Mount Horev. There the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Why are you here, Eliyahu?" He replied, "I have acted with great zeal" (I Kings 19:9-10). Hashem said to him, "You have always acted with zeal! You acted with zeal at Shittim because of immorality, and now you have acted with zeal. By your life, no circumcision will take place without you seeing it with your own eyes" (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 28).

This is why the Sages instituted the tradition of placing a chair of honor for the angel of circumcision, who is called Eliyahu. To Moses, G-d said: "And you, command..." (Exodus 27:20). In other words: In the past the word was addressed to you, but now it is you who shall command, it is you who shall speak, and it is you who shall take because you devoted yourself to them. All the people are united, and all are equal before Me.

The word *tetzaveh* ("command") comes from the same root as *tzavta* ("together"). Here the Children of Israel were united with Moses, and henceforth their souls would be linked to his. From him they also learned to be humble, which is why it is said: "They shall take for you" – from you they shall learn to be "pressed" by humility.

CONCERNING THE PARSHA THE JUDGMENT OF THE URIM AND TUMIM

It is written, “Into the Breastplate of Judgment shall you place the Urim and the Tumim, and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart when he comes before the L-RD. Aaron shall bear the judgment of the Children of Israel on his heart constantly before the L-RD” (Exodus 28:30).

The way in which the Children of Israel examined the Urim and Tumim is explained in tractate Yoma, as well as by the Rambam:

“How would they consult the Breastplate? The priest would stand facing the Ark, with the inquirer behind him facing the priest’s back. The inquirer would say, ‘Should I go to war or not?’ He asks neither loudly nor silently, but rather in a low voice like one praying, between him and himself. Ruach HaKodesh would immediately overcome the priest and he would understand the Breastplate, seeing in it a form of prophetic vision ‘Go’ or ‘Don’t go’ in the letters that protrude from the Breastplate before him. The priest would then respond to him, ‘Go’ or ‘Don’t go’ ” (Rambam, Hilchot Kelei Hamikdash 10:11).

Another Halachah is given in the Gemara: “One should not pose two questions at the same time. If one has done so, only one [question] is answered, and only the first is answered” (Yoma 73b). An ordinary man was not allowed to inquire of the Urim and Tumim; only the King, the Sanhedrin, or someone important to the community could do so.

Interpreting the Letters

Our Sages have different views on how the priest interpreted answers from the Breastplate. Rabbi Yochanan believed that its letters stood forth, meaning that certain letters of the Breastplate (which carried the names of the Patriarchs and the tribes of Israel) would stand in relief to others. The High Priest would interpret such letters in connection to the question being asked.

Resh Lakish believed that the letters themselves joined one another, enabling the priest to answer the question being asked (“Go” or “Don’t go”). In the Yerushalmi, there is another discussion on whether the letters on the stones would stand in relief to others, or if the priest heard a prophetic voice telling him how to answer the question at hand.

Regarding Shabbat

The Poskim deal with the question of whether one could inquire of the Urim and Tumim on Shabbat. Actually, the fact that the letters of the Breastplate would stand in relief was considered to be like writing, which is forbidden on Shabbat.

Others have tried to prove that this is not considered writing, meaning that one could inquire of the Urim and Tumim on Shabbat, based on the fact that King David arrived in the city of Nov (a priestly city) on Shabbat (Menachot 95b). This prompted Achimelech to inquire of the Urim and Tumim on that very same day, proving that it is permitted.

Tosaphot (Gittin 68a) teach that one does not inquire of the Urim and Tumim when an answer can be reached by other means. It is only when there is no other way of determining Hashem’s will that we inquire of the Urim and Tumim. Likewise, questions put to the Urim and Tumim were simple ones pertaining to the community, not ones regarding a doubt in Halachah or financial transactions (Rashi, Eruvin 4a).

THE WORDS OF THE SAGES THE NAME OF MOSES

It is written, “Command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually” (Exodus 27:20).

We know the famous question raised by the commentators: Why is Moses’ name not mentioned anywhere in Parsha Tetzaveh?

We find numerous answers to this question in the books of our masters in all levels of Torah. Here are just a few:

Rabbeinu Yaakov Ba’al HaTurim explains that this is because Moses told Hashem, “But if not, erase me please from Your book that You have written” (Exodus 32:32). The curse of a Sage, even if conditional, is always fulfilled, which is why Moses’ name does not appear in Parsha Tetzaveh.

We should note that Moses’ supplication, when he asked the Holy One, blessed be He, to “erase me please from Your book that You have written,” was only said after the sin of the golden calf. Yet since that occurred in Parsha Ki Tisa, why is Moses’ name missing from Parsha Tetzaveh, which precedes it?

Rabbi Shaoul Zatzal of Vilna explains this according to the simple meaning of the text, which is that Parsha Tetzaveh occurred after the sin of the golden calf. In looking at this more closely, we may say that Moses asked in the past tense: “Erase me please from Your book that You have written.” This is why his name is not mentioned in Parsha Tetzaveh, which precedes Parsha Ki Tisa. By way of allusion, we may say that Moses asked, “Erase me please from Your book asher [that] You have written,” with the term asher having the same numerical value (501) as the word tetzavah.

According to Kabbalah, the Vilna Gaon explains that in almost every year Adar 7 occurs during the week in which Parsha Tetzaveh is read. He Who sees to the end of all the generations knew in advance that Moses would pass away on Adar 7, which is why his name is not mentioned anywhere in that parsha.

Another reason is given in the book Pa’aneach Razah, which states that Moses was worthy of becoming the High Priest. However he was punished for having said, “Send through whomever You will send” (Exodus 4:13), and the priesthood was given to Aaron: “When he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart” (v.14). From here we learn that Aaron merited the Breastplate, which was placed upon his heart (Rashi). Hence Moses’ name is not mentioned in Parsha Tetzaveh, which deals primarily with the garments of the priests.

The book Chanukat HaTorah explains that after the sin of the golden calf, the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to remove His Presence from Israel and provide them with an angel (Michael) who would go before them. Yet by asking: “If Your Presence does not go along, do not bring us forward from here” (Exodus 33:15), Moses was able to postpone the coming of the angel until the time of Joshua bin Nun, to whom the angel said: “I have now come” (Joshua 5:14).

As a result, there was no place for Michael in Moses’ presence. Hence Parsha Tetzaveh, in which Moses’ name does not occur, contains 101 verses, the numerical value of the name “Michael.”

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER - RABBI MEIR PINTO

The yahrtzeit of the tzaddik Rabbi Meir Pinto Zatzal, the son of Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan, takes place this week. We shall cite some of his customs as described to us by our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita, who merited to serve the tzaadik Rabbi Meir and learn from him near the end of his life.

Rabbi Meir Pinto was known as one of the great talmidei chachamim of Morocco. His holiness and purity were legendary, and his prayers pierced the heavens. In praying he was like a servant who beseeched his master, and all the great rabbis of Morocco obeyed him and respected his words and decrees.

Rabbi Meir suffered from agonizing and constant pain throughout his life, part of his service of Hashem in holiness and purity.

His many pains did not prevent him from serving Hashem or studying the holy Torah, to which he completely devoted himself.

His blessings were fulfilled, as our Sages have said concerning the words of the righteous: "The tzaddik decrees and the Holy One, blessed be He, executes." Many of his contemporaries waited at his door for a blessing regarding personal or communal matters. He descended from the noble Pinto family, known for its sanctity and righteousness, and whose members were miracle workers, as the verse states: "Utter a decree, and it will be done" (Job 22:28). This occurred with them every day.

Our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita told us with great amazement that Rabbi Meir refused to receive medical help that could have eased his great pain. Since these medical treatments required, according to the sanctified concepts of Rabbi Meir, a certain slackening of the religious standards that he practiced, he refused to take them. Instead Rabbi Meir preferred to suffer until his dying day, all in order not to abandon his sanctified ways.

Such was our Teacher

Rabbi Meir lived in the same apartment as his brother, Rabbi Raphael Pinto Zatzal, into whose home assassins made their way on 12 Shevat, 5740 to murder him in his own bed (may Hashem avenge his blood). Through Ruach HaKodesh, Rabbi Meir knew the identity of his attacker, who lived near them, but was afraid to reveal it in public. Our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita asked him to tell his brother Rabbi Raphael, but Rabbi Meir said that he did not want to do so. It was only when the time came to recite Shema by his bed, as he was about to pass away, that he revealed it. Our teacher Shlita goes on:

"I merited to serve my uncle Rabbi Meir Pinto during his final month, until he departed for the heavenly yeshiva, and I merited to close his eyes. The last night before his passing, he called me to ask: 'Do you see what I see?' I said that I didn't, and he was surprised.

"Furthermore, a few hours before his passing he gave me his blessing that I would marry in that same year, and his blessing was fulfilled. He also revealed secrets to me concerning the sanctity of our ancestors.

"I arranged for his burial, acquiring a plot of land in which he would be laid to rest near his brother, the tzaddik Rabbi Raphael, in Casablanca. We mourn those who have passed away, those whom we will never see again."

The tzaddik merited for a yeshiva to be built in his name, which was accomplished by our teacher Shlita in England. Likewise, our teacher wrote Kerem David for the elevation of the souls of these sanctified and pure brothers, Rabbi Raphael and Rabbi Meir, who were separated neither in life nor in death (Kerem: Kevod Raphael Meir).

May their merit protect us and all Israel. Amen.

A FEW DINIM - SHABBAT ZACHOR

This Shabbat is called "Shabbat Zachor" because we read in the Torah "Zachor [Remember] what Amalek did to you" (Deuteronomy 25:17). It is a Torah mitzvah to read this parsha with a minyan from a kosher Sefer Torah. Hence we must use the most kosher Sefer Torah available to us.

Note: The Poskim differ on whether women are obligated to hear Parsha Zachor. In practice, women usually make an effort to hear this parsha being read in synagogue.

The Fast of Esther

This year the fast of Esther falls on a Thursday. During Mincha, we usually give money on this day in memory of the half-shekel that was donated to the Temple during the month of Adar.

According to Sephardic tradition, we give the equivalent of about 10 grams of silver. Ashkenazim usually give three times the value of half the standard currency of the country where they live, in memory of the three offerings mentioned in the passage on the Sanctuary. When giving this money, we must be careful to say: "In memory of the half-shekel."

This money is given to those who study Torah, since the study of Torah replaces the offerings that were made in the Temple. In making this donation, we must not give money that has been set aside for tithes.

The book Kav HaYashar states that whoever needs Hashem's help should read Psalms 22 (Lamenatseach al ayelet hashachar) during the fast of Esther. He must then pour out his heart before Hashem and mention the names of Mordechai and Esther, by whose merit Hashem will favorably answer his prayer and open the gates of mercy for him.

The Reading of the Megillah

Men, women, and children who are old enough for school must listen to the reading of the Megillah. One must rise when the blessings are recited, and then be seated. The Shaliach Tzibur stands out of respect for the community.

We must be careful to hear each word of the Megillah, and if we have failed to hear even a single word, we have not fulfilled our duty. This is why everyone must have the text of the Megillah in hand (even a printed version), not to read it, but to follow with his eyes as he listens to the Shaliach Tzibur.

We must not speak during the reading of the Megillah.

We must bring our young children to synagogue in order to teach them the mitzvah of listening to the Megillah. However if we know that our children will make too much noise when the name of Haman is mentioned, thereby disturbing the people in synagogue and preventing them from hearing the Megillah, it is better not to bring them. Hence there is a Megillah reading for women in many synagogues, in order that they may listen to the Megillah in tranquility while their husbands take care of their children at home.

The Mitzvot of the Day

1. The reading of the Megillah: At night (Saturday night), and again during the day.
2. Gifts for the poor: We are obligated to give gifts to at least two poor individuals. A gift of money should be large enough for the poor to buy bread weighing at least three eggs (about 170 grams, according to the Ben Ish Hai). It is praiseworthy to give as much as possible. We must give two gifts from our own possessions, and the rest can come from money that has been set aside for tithes.
3. Mishloach manot: We must give manot (things to eat) to our friends, the minimum being to send two things to one person. A drink and some food are considered as two manot, as are two kinds of food. We must give food that is ready to eat, and the Mishnah Berurah states that it is better to give more gifts to the poor than to make a larger meal for the holiday or to send more manot than necessary. This is because no mitzvah is more beautiful than rejoicing the heart of the poor.
4. The Purim meal: We must have the Purim meal during the day, not at night, eating it in honor of the day. It is good to eat bread and meat during this meal, and we should drink more wine than usual, to the point that we become drowsy. According to the din, we must have this meal in the morning, although most people usually have it in the afternoon. We must pray Mincha before the meal, lest we become intoxicated and fall asleep.

Women must also fulfill all the mitzvot associated with the day: Listening to the Megillah at night and during the day, giving gifts to the poor, sending manot, and eating the Purim meal.

During our prayers on that day, as well as during Birkat Hamazon, we must recite Al Hanissim. If we have forgotten to do so, we do not start over.