



The Path To Follow

SHEMINI

335

April 10th 2010
Nisan 26th 5770

Publication

HEVRAT PINTO

Under Aegis of

RABBI DAVID HANANIA
PINTO CHLITA

11, rue du plateau
75019 PARIS

Tel: +331 42 08 25 40

Fax +331 42 08 50 85

www.hevratpinto.org

Responsible of publication
Hanania Soussan

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

In the Presence of Three People

Some opinions hold that if a person speaks ill of another in the presence of three people, then apart from the fact that he has certainly transgressed the prohibition against speaking Lashon Harah, if one of the three goes out and spreads what he heard to others, he has not transgressed the prohibition against Lashon Harah. In fact since three people are aware of what the original person said, it is considered common knowledge, the spreading of which the Torah does not consider to be Lashon Harah. However this only applies when someone spreads these words incidentally, not purposely. One who intentionally goes about spreading these words – even if he does not mention the name of the person who told him it, but simply recounts what he heard about a given person – is guilty of having spoken Lashon Harah.

THE HEART OF THOSE WHO SEEK HASHEM WILL REJOICE

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "It was on the eighth day, Moshe called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel" (Vayikra 9:1). Rashi states that "throughout all seven days of the inauguration, when Moshe erected the Sanctuary...and dismantled it daily, the Shechinah did not rest upon it. The Israelites were humiliated and said to Moshe, 'Moshe our teacher, all the efforts we have made were in order for the Shechinah to dwell among us, in order to know that we have been forgiven for the sin of the calf.' Moshe therefore answered them: 'This is the thing Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you [Vayikra 9:6]. My brother Aaron is more worthy and important than I, and by his offerings and service the Shechinah will dwell among you, and you will know that G-d has chosen him' " (Rashi on Vayikra 9:23).

This is difficult to understand. Why did Moshe wait until the eighth day of the inauguration in order for Aaron to replace him? That is, why did he make the Children of Israel wait for eight days? The Sages have said, "Wherever in Scripture we find the term vayehi, it indicates sorrow" (Megillah 10b). Here it is written, "Vayehi [It was] on the eighth day" (Vayikra 9:1), and yet we know that on that day there was as much joy before the Holy One, blessed be He, as there was on the day when He created the heavens and the earth! Therefore why does the verse use the term vayehi? Was it because Nadav and Avihu died on that day? They did not die until the end of the day, when the Sanctuary was already standing, not when it was still being erected!

It is also said, "During all seven days of the inauguration, Moshe used to erect the Sanctuary and take it apart twice each day" (Bamidbar Rabba 12:9). He did this through miracles, as the Midrash states: "When the work on the Sanctuary was completed, the Children of Israel awaited the coming of the Shechinah to dwell upon it. They went to the wise of heart and said to them, 'Erect the Sanctuary yourselves, and the Shechinah will dwell among us!' They wanted to erect it, but could not. They went to Betzalel and Oholiab and said to them, 'Erect the Sanctuary that you yourselves built!' They began to erect it, but they could not. All the Children of Israel went to find Moshe and said to him: 'Moshe our teacher, we have done all that you have told us. Why does it not stand?' " (Tanchuma, Pekudei II).

Moshe was tormented by this, so much so that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Because you suffered for not having labored or played any role in the work of the Sanctuary, all these wise men have been unable to erect it in your place, so that all Israel may know that it can only stand because of you; otherwise it will never stand. I will only allow it to stand because of you." Moshe replied, "Sovereign of the universe, I do not know how to erect it!" He said to him, "Do what you must. It will appear that you are erecting it, but it will stand on its own, and I will write that you erected it."

How amazing is this statement by the Midrash! If the Holy One, blessed be He, helped Moshe to erect the Sanctuary on each of the seven days of its inauguration, then why did Moshe doubt during all this time that the Shechinah would descend upon the Sanctuary on that day? After all, the fact that the Holy One, blessed be He, helped him was proof that He would make His Shechinah rest upon it! G-d also said, "I will dwell among them" (Shemot 25:8), meaning that He would help him to erect it. Would G-d not keep His word?

Don't Lose Hope

I thought that I would explain this through the teachings of Musar, by citing the explanation of the holy Jew of Peshischa Zatzal on

the verse: "Glory in His holy Name, may the heart of those who seek Hashem be glad" (Tehillim 105:3). He states that although a person may not yet have reached lofty levels in the service of Hashem, and although he may still be searching for Him and having doubts, then if it is G-d's will, the very fact that he is seeking Hashem shall give him joy. Hence we read, "May the heart of those who seek Hashem be glad." It is not "who have found Hashem," but rather, "who seek Hashem." This goes without saying that G-d has great joy when a Jew seeks Him out.

Moshe also acted in this way, although he had doubts as to whether the Shechinah would descend upon the Sanctuary, for he did not know with certainty if the sin of the golden calf had been forgiven. He nevertheless did not lose hope, and for seven days he tried to erect the Sanctuary in case the Shechinah would descend upon it. Since G-d had told him to make the Sanctuary for His sake, and that the Shechinah would help him to erect it, Moshe knew what he had to do and that it was G-d's will. However he did not know with certainty if G-d would make His Shechinah dwell upon it just because He helped him to erect it, since He helps those who seek Him, even if they do not find Him. Moshe was not afraid of wearying the Children of Israel in case the Shechinah would not descend upon the Sanctuary, since he knew that he was doing G-d's will. He was erecting the Sanctuary despite his doubts, because when a Jew does G-d's will – even if he has doubts about His will – Hashem still has great joy and helps him. When G-d saw that Moshe and the Children of Israel were busy erecting the Sanctuary despite their doubts, He rejoiced and helped them. Come the eighth day, Moshe saw that there was great joy before Hashem and he immediately sensed that the Shechinah would descend upon the Sanctuary on that day. He therefore told the Children of Israel, "Today Hashem will appear to you" (Vayikra 9:4).

Be that as it may, although there was great joy before G-d, there was also sorrow because the Children of Israel had sinned with the golden calf, and they had to be told to build a Sanctuary in order to atone for that sin. True, G-d had forgiven them, but their sin was not completely erased; there was still a trace of it, as it is written: "On the day that I make My account, I will bring their sin to account against them" (Shemot 32:34).

Although the Sanctuary had been erected and there was joy for Hashem, there was still sorrow because Hashem had to forgive their sin by means of the Sanctuary. Rashi mentions this by speaking about all the efforts made by the Children of Israel in order for the Shechinah to dwell among them, efforts made in order for them to know that they had been forgiven for the sin of the golden calf.

This is why the passage uses the term vayehi ("and it was"). In the final analysis, G-d was saddened by the fact that the Sanctuary had only been erected in order to atone for the sin of the golden calf. If the Children of Israel had been worthy, the Shechinah would have rested upon each of them, as the Gemara states: "At first, before Israel sinned, the Shechinah dwelled with each individual; as it is said: 'For Hashem your G-d walks in the midst of your camp' [Devarim 23:15]. When they sinned, the Shechinah departed from them" (Sotah 3b). It is also said, "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, He wanted to live among lower beings as among higher beings. When they sinned with the golden calf, He gave them the Sanctuary in order to redeem them" (Tanchuma, Nasso 16).

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

RABBI TZVI ASHKENAZI – THE CHACHAM TZVI

The gaon Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi Zatzal, better known as the “Chacham Tzvi,” was born into a prestigious family in the year 5420. He was the son of the gaon Rabbi Yaakov, a great talmid chacham who initially lived in Vilna, a city of Torah sages and scholars. Vilna earned a reputation among its inhabitants as the “Jerusalem of Lithuania,” a status which it retained until 5415, when Cossacks invaded the city and decimated the Jewish community. At that point Rabbi Yaakov fled, his disappearance being so abrupt that people thought he had died and that his wife should be allowed to remarry.

When the rabbis of the city learned that Rabbi Yaakov was still alive, they immediately sent him to his wife (who, incidentally, was the daughter of the gaon Rabbi Ephraim HaCohen Zatzal, the author of Sha’ar Ephraim). Their firstborn son Tzvi was born in holiness and purity, and from his earliest years his parents consecrated him to the study of Torah with skilled and G-d-fearing teachers. The young Tzvi also studied Torah with his grandfather, the Sha’ar Ephraim.

When he neared the age of Bar Mitzvah, the young Tzvi was known as a skilled talmid chacham, possessing extraordinary intelligence and being well-versed in the Talmud and poskim. He amazed his teachers by the breadth of his thought and the depth of his understanding. In fact he was so impressive that his parents decided to send him to study in a place of Torah, as the Sages have said: “Exile yourself to a place of Torah” (Pirkei Avot 4:14). He was therefore sent to the Balkans in order to study with Sephardic rabbis and learn their ways.

Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi found himself in Salonica, and his legs took him directly to the gaon Rabbi Elihu Cobo Zatzal, who had a large yeshiva where he taught. It was there that Rabbi Tzvi mixed among other talmid chachamim and great Torah figures, absorbing a great deal of Torah and the fear of Heaven, to the point of becoming one of the most prestigious members of the Salonica Beit HaMidrash.

For two full years, Rabbi Tzvi remained among the Sephardim and learned their way of life. He became an expert in their customs and languages, which is how he earned the name of “Chacham Tzvi,” a name that was upon the lips of Sephardic rabbis wherever he went.

After remaining with the Sephardim long enough to study the Gemara and poskim, he again journeyed out, this time for the small city of Alt-Ofen. It was there that his parents lived, as well as his grandfather Rabbi Ephraim HaCohen, who in the meantime had been appointed as its Rav.

After receiving an emotional welcome at the gates of the city, many of its prominent figures offered him their daughter in marriage, in order to have this extraordinary talmid chacham as their son-in-law. Thus, after a few days, the Chacham Tzvi married the daughter of one of the prominent figures in the city, who promised to see to all his financial needs so he could continue studying Torah, as he yearned to do.

Such pleasant days, however, were not to last. In 5446, a few years after his wedding, soldiers of the German emperor invaded the city, and cannon fire struck his home, instantly killing his young wife and small daughter. The Chacham Tzvi endured many hardships in life, for as the Sages have said in regards to the tzaddikim: “They are not

content with what is in store for them in the World to Come, they even want to live at ease in this world?” (Bereshith Rabba 84:3).

Leaving an Important Position

After the death of his father-in-law in 5466, the Chacham Tzvi was named as the Rav of the community in his place. However disappointment awaited him. Some ba’alei batim opposed his nomination as Rav, preferring Rabbi Moshe of Rothenburg instead, who was one of the talmidei chachamim of Altona. As for the Chacham Tzvi, when he learned that his nomination was causing dissension, he renounced this lofty position in order to return to the Beit HaMidrash and devote himself to teaching.

At that point, a rabbinical position opened up in the Ashkenazi community of Amsterdam. In fact its leaders heard a great deal of the Chacham Tzvi’s greatness in Torah and his halachic decisions, which had been accepted throughout the Torah world without debate, and therefore they invited him to become their Rav. They agreed to assure him of a comfortable living and to give him whatever he needed so he could spread Torah. The Chacham Tzvi was greatly honored in Amsterdam, and he was also admired by the Sephardic community of the city, which was led by the gaon Rabbi Moshe Hagiz Zatzal. At the same time, he published a volume of his writings and responsa, entitled She’elot U’Teshuvot Ve’Chidsushim U’Biurim. In the end, the book was named after its author: She’elot U’Teshuvot Chacham Tzvi.

His greatest accomplishment as the Rav of Amsterdam was to be named as the leader in the fight against Nehemiah Chayun, a follower of Shabtai Tzvi. Nehemiah Chayun had traveled to Amsterdam in order to spread his books and writings, which were filled with spiritual poison and impiety. The Chacham Tzvi went to fight him with pure zeal, to the point of being willing to give up his life, without any consideration for his own status or honor. Along with Rabbi Moshe Hagiz, he excommunicated Nehemiah Chayun, which caused some rich Sephardim in the city to rebel, for they had been his followers. When they saw the position held by the Chacham Tzvi, who was the Rav of the Ashkenazim, they believed that he was grossly interfering in the affairs of the Sephardic community. Hence they vehemently attacked him, including denouncing him before the authorities and summoning him to court. At that point the Chacham Tzvi decided to leave his position in Amsterdam, and so he departed from the city and headed towards an unknown future.

After sojourning in England, Germany, and Poland for a long time, he finally settled in Lvov, where he was appointed as the Rav of the community and the region. However he did not remain in this position long, for he died at the age of 58 on Rosh Chodesh Iyar in the year 5478. He left behind a blessing to the world in the form of his son, Rabbi Yaakov Emden. Like his father, Rabbi Yaakov Emden would go on to enrich the world through his Torah, responsa, and halachic decisions.

A TRUE STORY

HELPING A PERSON TO SANCTIFY HIMSELF

It is written, “I am Hashem Who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your G-d. You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Vayikra 11:45).

The Gemara cites a teaching from the school of Rabbi Ishmael: “The Holy One, blessed be He, declared, ‘Had I brought up Israel from Egypt for no other purpose but this, that they should not defile themselves with reptiles, it would be sufficient for Me’ ” (Bava Metzia 61b).

The following story allows us understand just how much Heaven helps a person to sanctify himself and maintain the sanctity of his soul and mind. It happened more than ten years ago.

A young avrech from Jerusalem fell ill and had to undergo a complex brain operation in a medical center located in former Yugoslavia. In order to translate from English what the medical team was saying, the father of the avrech asked his friend Rav Yossef Rafoul Shlita to accompany them on their journey. After having received the blessings of rabbis and great Torah figures, the three of them – the avrech, his father, and Rav Rafoul – left on their journey.

Through Hashem’s goodness, they all arrived in Yugoslavia and immediately made an appointment to see the surgeon, who was very specialized in brain operations of the type required by the avrech. After exhaustive tests, the surgeon fixed a date for the operation.

When the surgeon completed the operation and emerged from the operating room, he addressed Rav Rafoul and asked him to immediately purchase a large quantity of milk for the avrech’s recovery, for he would need to drink a great deal of it.

Rav Rafoul left the hospital and began looking for milk, but could only find a few liters of non-Jewish milk. With obvious joy, he addressed the avrech, who had already awoken from the anesthesia, and told him that with Hashem’s help he had obtained some milk, which would help him to recover.

The avrech asked whether the milk was Jewish or not, for he would not drink it if it was not Jewish. He was strict in regards to himself, and non-Jewish milk had never touched his lips, a custom that he had no intention of changing, even under such difficult circumstances.

In order to convince the avrech to change his mind and drink the milk, Rav Rafoul summoned all the teachings of the Sages with regards to the measures that one must take in order to preserve life. In fact it was the surgeon himself who was ordering him to drink this milk, which was essential for his recovery. However the avrech was adamant, for he had never even tasted non-Jewish milk, and even now he did not want to drink any. He told the Rav that if drinking such milk was so important for him, then the Holy One, blessed be He, Who heals all flesh, knew about it and would certainly find him some Jewish milk.

Needless to say, it was almost impossible to find Jewish milk in Yugoslavia at that time, and therefore looking for it would be an

impossible task. Racking his brain in order to determine how he was going to find some Jewish milk for the avrech, Rav Rafoul began to pace up and down the hospital corridor. Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a woman walking with a young man who was carrying a loaded suitcase. When they noticed a Jew walking towards them like a light emerging from the darkness, they asked him in Hebrew: “Excuse me, do you speak English?”

“Yes,” replied Rav Rafoul, “what can I do for you?”

The woman said that she had arrived from Israel for a major brain operation, and now she had to meet the surgeon. However since she did not speak any English, she did not know how she was going to communicate with him.

Rav Rafoul accompanied the woman and spoke with the surgeon, who looked at her medical records and x-rays. He then told her that he could perform the operation, but not in Yugoslavia. It had to be done in Israel, for the local medical staff was not skilled enough for such an operation. It required a medical team from Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

When Rav Rafoul translated the surgeon’s remarks to the woman, she was beside herself with anger: “That can’t be!” she exclaimed. “I traveled here from Jerusalem after a long journey. I had to endure airplane strikes on the way, wandering from country to country before arriving here. And now you want me to return to Israel?!”

The woman’s supplications were translated to the doctor, who repeated his position: “The local medical team isn’t capable of performing such a complicated operation. It’s only at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem that such an operation can be attempted. Therefore let’s schedule an operation at Hadassah.”

Not long after they left the surgeon’s office, the young Jewish man who was accompanying the woman approached Rav Rafoul and asked him to take the suitcase that he was carrying, since it was now useless to them.

“What’s in it?” asked Rav Rafoul.

The young man explained that before their trip, the woman made sure to pack everything she would require, both for her personal and medical needs. Among other things, she packed a large quantity of milk, which she would have to drink after the operation. She had therefore purchased a great amount of Jewish milk, which obviously she would not need now.

With visible joy, Rav Rafoul took the suitcase from the hand of the young Israeli and ran to the room of the avrech, who was stunned to see its contents: An enormous pile of milk cartons, Jewish milk, before his very eyes. With praises and thanks to Hashem, he took the glass of milk that had been poured for him and said with great concentration: Shehakol nehiye bidevaro (“By Whose word all things came to be”).

Note: I would like to thank my friend Rav Yehudah Rafoul Shlita for recounting this amazing story, as told to him by his father, so it can benefit the community.

AT THE SOURCE

In the Same Way

It is written, “Aaron was silent” (Vayikra 10:3).

The book Shai LaTorah cites an account given by the gaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Zatzal regarding the gaon Rabbi Eliyahu David Teomim Zatzal (known as the Aderet).

The Aderet was very careful never to weary the public, so as not to discourage them. On the day that his son died, the Aderet’s heart was broken.

When a large crowd gathered for the funeral, everyone began waiting for the Aderet to leave his room, where he had enclosed himself. After two full hours, he emerged from his room and said the blessing of Dayan HaEmet, at which point the funeral procession began.

A little later, the Aderet’s disciples said to him: “Teach us why you remained in your room for so long, since it wearied the public.”

The Aderet replied, “The Gemara in Berachot states, and it is the Halachah, that a man must say a blessing for evil things in the same way as he says it for good things. That being the case, I remembered the immense joy that I had when I said Shecheyanu upon bringing my son into the covenant of our father Avraham. I therefore had to ready my broken heart, lifting myself to the same level of joy that I had experienced then, in order to say the blessing of Dayan HaEmet.”

Only When Young

It is written, “And the ostrich” (Vayikra 11:16).

It would seem that this verse prohibits the eating of the bat haya’ana (ostrich). Does this mean, however, that the “mother” of this “daughter” (bat) is permitted?

The book Sha’ar Bat Rabim answers this by basing itself on Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra’s remarks on Parsha Mishpatim concerning the verse, “You shall not cook a kid in its mother’s milk” (Shemot 23:19). He states that in Africa and India, where the ostrich lives, it grows to such a size that it becomes impossible to eat, for its meat is as dry as wood and as hard as iron. It cannot be softened even with cooking, and only the meat of a young female chick that is just a few days old is tender enough to eat.

This is why the Torah does not need to prohibit us from eating an adult ostrich, for eating it is impossible. Only an ostrich that has just been born from its mother is edible, and only for a short time. Hence it is called bat haya’ana, since its meat is tender only when it is young (bat).

Kosher Locusts

It is written, “You may eat these from among them: The arbeh according to its kind; the salam according to its kind; the chargol according to its kind; and the chagav according to its kind” (Vayikra 11:22).

The Rambam lists eight kinds of locusts in the Mishneh Torah (Laws of Forbidden Foods 1:21) which the Torah has allowed us to eat: 1) the chagav; 2) a type of chagav called chazbanit; 3) the chargol; 4) a type of chargol called artzovia; 5) the arbeh; 6) a type of arbeh called tziporat keramim; 7) the salam; and 8) a type of salam called yochana yerushalmit. The Gemara also tells us that there are 800 kinds of locusts (Chullin 63b)!

The Rambam states that an expert who knows their identities may eat them. What about someone who is not an expert? He must verify the signs of a clean locust, of which there are three. Those with four feet and four wings, which cover the greatest part of its body in length and in width, and have two thighs or knees to leap with, are pure. Although its head is long and it has a tail, if its name is chagav, it is clean.

Past, Present, and Future

It is written, “The camel, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split” (Vayikra 11:4).

The expression “its hoof is not split” is stated in the present tense. In the next verse we read, “The hyrax, for it brings up the cud, but its hoof lo yafris [will not be split]” (v.5), using the future tense. In the verse after that we read, “The hare, for it brings up its cut, but its hoof lo hifrisah [was not split]” (v.6), using the past tense. Rabbi Israel Salanter Zatzal states that the Torah is telling us by allusion that before one declares a person to be impure, one must first think deeply and take into consideration not only the present, but also the person’s past and future. One must not rush into judgment and declare him impure, even if his past and present are not what we would like, for perhaps in the future he will show signs of purity. It is only if one has made certain that he sees signs of impurity in the future, the present, and the past that he must declare, “He is impure.”

THE WAYS OF THE FATHERS INSIGHTS ON PIRKEI AVOTH BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA

The Art of Speaking and Remaining Silent

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said, “I have found nothing better for the body than silence” (Pirkei Avoth 1:17).

This is surprising, for is this some wise advice that he learned from the Sages? Even fools know that when they remain quiet, people do not perceive their foolishness, as it is written: “Even a fool will be considered wise if he is silent” (Mishlei 17:28). What special wisdom does one need for this?

Looking at this more closely, we see that the Tanna carefully selected his words by stating: “I have found nothing better for the body than silence.” For the soul, however, silence is not appropriate, as the Gemara states: “What should a man’s art be in this world? He should be silent. Perhaps he should be so with regards to words of Torah? It says therefore, ‘Speak righteousness’ [Tehillim 58:2]” (Chullin 89a). It is difficult to understand how silence can be called an art; how is it so? It would seem that the silence of a fool who seeks to hide his foolishness is not an art, nor does it require any wisdom. However this is not the kind of silence that Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel is speaking of. Instead, it consists of the great wisdom needed to distinguish between situations in which one should remain silent and situations in which one should speak. In fact no wisdom is required to speak all the time, nor to remain silent all the time. Distinguishing words of Torah from mundane words, however, requires tremendous wisdom. In fact King Solomon, the wisest of all men, said that there is “a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Kohelet 3:7). Oftentimes, there are things that seem to constitute a negligence of Torah, but in reality are part of the foundations of Torah, as it is written: “There are times when the negligence of Torah may be the foundation of Torah” (Menachot 99ab). Even when we speak, we must weigh our words, thinking about what to say and what not to say.

As a result, silence is good for the body but not for the soul, for the soul is nourished by abundant words of Torah and prayer. The body becomes honorable when silent, but the soul desires an abundance of Torah, prayer, and the service of G-d. Furthermore, the body derives no benefit from an abundance of words, but from an abundance of deeds, for the body’s role is to take action. It is as we have said: For the body, it is not Torah teachings that are the main thing, but deeds; and for the soul, it is obvious that the more a person speaks words of Torah and prayer, the more he receives a reward in the Word to Come.

– From Kerem David on Pirkei Avoth