



The Path To Follow

TAZRIA METZORA

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Even if Three People Hear

It seems to me that when we recount a story to three people, and these are G-d fearing men who are careful in regards to the prohibition against Lashon Hara, it is unlikely that news of this will spread, and therefore it is forbidden by the Torah to recount what they heard to others. Even if only one of the three is a G-d-fearing man who is careful in regards to the prohibition against Lashon Hara, even in that case it is the din, for there are no longer three people who are likely to spread the information. It is possible that this is also the case if one of the three is a relative or friend of the person who is being spoken of. The same reason applies, namely that he will certainly not go and spread the evil that he heard about his relative or friend.

- Chafetz Chaim

THE AIM OF SUFFERING IS TO BRING MAN CLOSER TO G-D

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

In Parshiot Tazria and Metzora, we read about the leper (metzora). The Sages have said that the term metzora is formed by the same letters as motzira, meaning that it is a punishment for the sin of Lashon Hara, for having spoken ill of others. However this contains another allusion, for leprosy represents suffering. In fact the Gemara states that if a person has any of the four symptoms of leprosy, it constitutes “an altar of atonement” (Berachot 5b), and suffering removes evil from man, for a person is purified and cleansed of all his sins through suffering. This is why the Torah juxtaposes the verse, “On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised” (Vayikra 12:3) with the passage concerning lepers, in order to teach us that just as a man brings his son into the covenant of Avraham through circumcision, likewise the pain and suffering that a person endures through leprosy removes evil from him and connects him to Hashem. In fact these are for a person’s good, and he should not regret it when they come upon him.

As the Mashgiach of Ponevezh said, leprosy comes a little at a time. At first it attacks a person’s home, which is somewhat distant from man, but which he needs for protection against cold and heat. If he does not feel that he has sinned, leprosy attacks his garments, which are closer to him. If he still does not repent, it attacks his body, which is closest to him. This teaches a person not to get too comfortable with his body, but to be sensitive to what Hashem wants to tell him.

We may say that this alludes to the way that we must repent: We must learn from the lesson of the plagues on houses and the plagues on the body, purifying ourselves in order to come ever closer to Hashem.

Who Testifies About Him?

The Gemara discusses the holy Tanna Rabbi Akiva: When Rabbi Akiva was being led to his execution, it was the time for reciting Shema. Thus as his flesh was being torn apart with iron combs, he took upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. His disciples said to him, “Our teacher, even to this point?” He replied, “All my days I have been troubled by this passage, ‘with all your soul,’ [which I interpret as] ‘even if He takes your soul.’ I said: ‘When shall I have the opportunity of fulfilling it?’ Now that I have the opportunity, shall I not fulfill it?” The Gemara adds: “He prolonged the word echad until he expired while saying it. A voice from Heaven went forth and proclaimed: ‘Happy are you, Akiva, that your soul has departed with the word echad’” (Berachot 61b). What is the meaning of, “All my days I have been troubled by this passage.... When shall I have the opportunity of fulfilling it?” It means that every day, when Rabbi Akiva recited Shema by saying, “You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul,” he had the intention of giving his life for the sanctification of Hashem’s Name. He nevertheless thought to himself, “Maybe what I’m saying is nothing but words, and what I’m thinking is nothing but theory. Who can testify that I am truly ready to give my life for the sanctification of Hashem’s Name?”

It was for this reason that he was troubled throughout his days, until the time came for his execution and his flesh was torn apart with iron combs, truly unbearable suffering. He died a cruel and horrendous death, and at that very moment he took the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven upon himself with joy.

His disciples said to him, “Our teacher, even to this point?” – even to this point must one rejoice in the service of G-d? He replied, “Absolutely! Now is especially the time for me to rejoice, since I have found the strength to give my life for the sanctification of Hashem’s Name.” He prolonged the word echad until finally his soul left him as he was still saying it. In other words, during all the time that he was being tortured, he cleaved to the Holy One, blessed be He, with profound joy for having the opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah. We have no idea just how great Rabbi Akiva was. He possessed the soul of Moshe, and the Sages recount that when Moshe ascended to Heaven, the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him Rabbi Akiva teaching various halachot based upon the crowns of the letters. Moshe said, “Sovereign of the universe, You have such a man, and yet You give the Torah through me?” In other words, Moshe believed that Rabbi Akiva was more deserving than himself to give the Torah to the Jewish people. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: “Be silent, for such is My decree” (Menachot 29b).

A Good Investment

The Sages say that Rabbi Akiva came to see Rabbi Tarfon (who was extremely rich) in order to make him an offer. He said to him, “I have a good investment to offer you. I will go and purchase one or two cities for you.” Rabbi Tarfon agreed and gave Rabbi Akiva 4,000 gold dinarim. Once Rabbi Akiva received the money, he distributed it to tzeddakah. One-third went to the poor, and two-thirds went to those who studied Mishnah, Torah, and the words of the Sages. Some time later, Rabbi Tarfon still had not received anything from this “good investment.” More time passed, and he asked Rabbi Akiva what was happening. He replied that the investment was an excellent one, better than all others. Rabbi Tarfon began to grow very suspicious, and wanted to see where all his money had gone. Rabbi Akiva brought him to the Beit HaMidrash, opened the book of Tehillim, and to Rabbi Tarfon’s great astonishment he read the verse: “He distributed widely to the destitute, his righteousness endures forever” (Tehillim 112:9). Rabbi Akiva then said to him, “Here is the city that I bought for you.” When Rabbi Tarfon understood what was happening, he kissed Rabbi Akiva and said to him: “You are my master and my guide: My master in wisdom and my guide in good conduct.” Rabbi Tarfon then gave Rabbi Akiva even more money to distribute to tzeddakah.

We have a great deal to learn from Rabbi Akiva, who despite his greatness did not trust in himself, but troubled himself throughout his life for the fear of Heaven! How much more should we occupy ourselves with our fear of Heaven!

A TRUE STORY

NO SUCH THING AS COINCIDENCE

It is written, “On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised” (Vayikra 12:3).

Not long ago, an amazing incident took place by the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto.

On Av 19, 5764, a grandson was born to our teacher, Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita, the son of his son Rabbi Raphael Meir Amram. The boy was named Haim Gavriel Yona, and the circumcision took place in New York on Friday, Av 26 during the week of Parsha Re’eh. The mohel performing this important circumcision was the gaon Rabbi David Raphael Banon Shlita (the Rosh Av Beit Din of Montreal and former Chief Rabbi of Casa-blanca), known in Montreal for his numerous activities on behalf of the Jewish community. He is the one who recounted this story.

After the circumcision in New York, Rav Banon returned to Montreal on the same Friday, for he also had to perform a circumcision in Montreal on the next day, Shabbat afternoon. As a rule, whenever Rav Banon has a circumcision to perform on Shabbat, he personally takes his instruments to synagogue on Friday so he knows exactly where to find them on the following day. Yet on that Friday he gave his instruments to somebody else, one of Rabbi Haim Pinto’s descendants, for him to bring to synagogue.

When Rav Banon returned home, his wife asked him: “Did you bring your instruments to synagogue for tomorrow’s circumcision?” He told her that he had sent somebody else to bring them. When his wife heard this, she was astonished: “But you always bring the instruments yourself! You never send anyone else with them, so you can know exactly where they are! Why did you entrust them to somebody else today?” On the next day, Shabbat, Rav Banon arrived at the synagogue at 2:45 pm, 15 minutes before the circumcision was to begin. Although everyone was prepared for the ceremony, Rav Banon could not find his instruments! He asked everyone if the person he had entrusted them with had brought them to synagogue on Friday, but he was told that he had not. Everyone looked for Rav Banon’s instruments throughout the synagogue, but could not find them.

It was already 2:55 pm, and Rav Banon’s instruments were still missing. At one point he thought of returning home to get another set of instruments, but immediately rejected the idea because he lived almost 3 hours away by foot. Even if he had the instruments brought by a non-Jew in a car, it would take an hour and a half. What was he going to do?

In his bewilderment, Rav Banon began to pray from the bottom of his heart, asking Hashem by the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto to help him find the instruments with which he had circumcised the grandson of the tzaddik. He prayed to Hashem with fervor, for he yearned with all his heart for a miracle to take place by the merit of the tzaddik so he could perform the circumcision on time.

Suddenly, at 2:58 pm, one of Rav Banon’s students entered the synagogue. This student was from Cleveland, and had arrived in Montreal after a six-hour flight in order to rest for a few days. He too was a mohel, and Rav Banon was the one who had taught him the halachot and craft of circumcision. Rav Banon greeted him and asked, “What are you doing here? Why did you suddenly just get here?” His student replied, “I heard that you were going to perform a circumcision today, so I came to see you. Although I’m a mohel, it’s always good to observe and learn more.”

Rav Banon described to his student the difficulty that he was now facing, having no instruments with which to perform a circumcision that was supposed to begin right away.

Without losing any time, the student interrupted Rav Banon and saved him from this dilemma:

“Rabbi, blessed be the Name of Hashem forever! I had no reason to come here, for I know very well how to perform a circumcision. So why did I come to see another circumcision? It’s a sign from Heaven that your prayer has been answered. I live right nearby. I’ll immediately go home and have a non-Jew bring my instruments here.”

His instruments made it to synagogue very quickly, having been brought from a nearby house, and the circumcision began at 3:05 pm. By the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto, the prayers of Rav Banon were heard in Heaven, and the circumcision took place on time.

When Rav Banon recounted this story, he added: “Some people may see chance or coincidence playing a role in this story – the fact that my student arrived in synagogue on that very same day. But no, if a person considers this to be a simple coincidence, it means that he does not want to believe and acknowledge Hashem, for with Him there is no such thing as coincidence.”

CONCERNING THE PARSHA

CONSIDERATION FOR THE MONEY OF ISRAEL

When the Torah in this week's parsha gives the laws dealing with the plagues afflicting a house, it says: "The kohen shall command, and they shall clear the house before the kohen comes to look at the affliction, so that everything in the house should not become contaminated. Afterwards the kohen shall come to look at the house" (Vayikra 14:36).

Rashi cites a statement given in the Torat Kohanim, namely that here we find the source for everything pertaining to the concept: "The Torah has consideration for the money of Israel." What does the Torah have consideration for? If it is vessels, they are immersed and purified; if it is food or drink, they can be eaten when a person is impure. Therefore what does the Torah have consideration for, if not the earthenware vessels that a mikveh cannot purify?

The Torat Kohanim cites Rabbi Meir in saying, "What could become impure? If these are vessels of wood or metal, or if these are garments, they are immersed in a mikveh and purified. Therefore what does the Torah have consideration for? Earthenware vessels. What becomes impure by plagues, the wicked or the righteous? It is the wicked. Therefore if the Torah has consideration for things of small monetary value, how much more does it have consideration for things of great monetary value! And if such is the case with regards to one's money, how much more for the life of one's children! And if such is the case for the wicked, how much more for the righteous!"

They Must Not Waste Their Time

Some have learned the principle that the Torah has consideration for the money of Israel from other places. Rabbeinu Gershom learned it from the commandment given by the Holy One, blessed be He, to Moshe: "Make for yourself two silver trumpets" (Bamidbar 10:2). These trumpets were made of silver, not gold, because the Torah has consideration for the money of Israel. It is said in Moadot, "For Passover and Sukkot, which do not occur when heavy work is being done in the fields, the Torah states, 'Spend seven days for one and eight days for the other.' Yet Shavuot, which is the time of the harvest, is but a single day. This teaches us that Scripture protects the money of Israel by not taking them away from their work."

In many places within the Temple, we find the principle that the Torah has consideration for the money of Israel. The Gemara recounts that it is precisely for this reason that pure, pressed olive oil is not required for the meal-offerings (Menachot 86b). In fact there are many offerings that require a great deal of oil, and if pure, pressed olive oil would have been required for each of them – as it was for the Menorah – it would have been very costly.

The Gemara also recounts how the two goats were chosen by lot on Yom Kippur (Yoma 39a). Two lots were placed in a box made of wood, not silver or gold, because the Torah has consideration for the money of Israel. The Gemara also states, "Israel should have been engaged in offering their sacrifices at every time and every moment, but Scripture spared them" (Zevachim 6b). Rashi explains that they could have sinned at any time, but Hashem spared them from having to meticulously examine their sins, for He protects their money.

Sefer Chasidim (985) asks why the Torah did not give the Ten Commandments along with all of its details. It replies by stating that had the Torah given all the details pertaining to each commandment, it would have required much more parchment. Now since "the poor shall never cease out of the land" (Devarim 15:11), and not everyone can afford to purchase parchment, the Torah had consideration for the money of Israel by limiting the amount of parchment required.

In regards to rabbinic prohibitions, the Sages have been lenient in cases that involve financial loss, sometimes when it consists of a large loss, and sometimes even for a small loss, since the Torah has consideration for the money of Israel. Thus in the regulations that concern what is permitted and forbidden, when there is a doubt in regards to a law and there exists no explicit decision to forbid, some reply upon an isolated decision even when it runs counter to the majority, if going according to the majority will result in a large financial loss. Thus in cases where stringencies are not related to the din per se, the same approach is taken for the poor in regards to something important, such as for the honor of Shabbat or for guests.

THE WORDS OF THE SAGES

THE KOHEN SHALL SEE THE PLAGUE

Rabbi Mordechai of Pinshov, a disciple of the Chozeh of Lublin, was extremely poor. Each time that he traveled to Lublin, his wife begged him not to forget to tell the Chozeh about their terrible situation, and to ask him for his help and his blessing.

Yet each time that Rabbi Mordechai went to Lublin, he would forget about his wife's request. When meeting the Chozeh, he would completely immerse himself in a world of Torah and serving G-d, and he would forget about his financial troubles.

One day his wife decided that she would travel to Lublin with her husband. He no longer had any choice at that point, and when he met the Chozeh, he sat before him and told him about the financial difficulty that he and his family were in.

"Why," asked the Chozeh, "have you never told me about this before?"

"I thought," he replied, "that you knew everything through your holy spirit."

The Chozeh answered him, "The Torah tells us in the laws on plagues: 'When the plague of leprosy is on a man, he shall be brought to the kohen, and the kohen shall see' [Vayikra 13:9-10]. Here there is no need to say anything to the kohen; a person simply goes to him, and he will see the plague for himself.

"Yet in regards to plagues that afflict houses, it is written: 'He who owns the house shall come and say to the kohen: Something like a plague has appeared to me in the house' [Vayikra 14:35]. Here, in regards to what occurs within the home, one is not exempt by simply going to see the kohen. Instead he must 'say to the kohen' – he must describe the situation to him."

AT THE SOURCE

After 30 Days

It is written, “When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male.... If she gives birth to a female...” (Vayikra 12:2-5).

This is surprising. At first Scripture uses the terms “male” and “female,” but afterwards it states: “Upon the completion of the days of her purity for a son or for a daughter” (v.6). What is the meaning behind this change in terminology?

In his book *Meshech Chochma*, Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen Zatzal of Dvinsk notes in regards to Shabbat 135b that as long as 30 days have not yet passed, a baby has the status of a fetus. Therefore when the Torah speaks of a birth, the baby still has the status of a fetus and cannot be called a “son” or “daughter,” but simply “male” or “female.” After the days of purification are over, however, this status no longer applies and the term “son” or “daughter” may be used.

Because of a Father’s Love

It is written, “On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised” (Vayikra 12:3).

Numerous reasons have been given to explain why circumcision must be performed on the eighth day. It is fitting to cite one reason given by the Rambam in his *Guide for the Perplexed*:

“[T]he parents of a child that is just born take lightly matters concerning it, for up to that time the imaginative form that compels the parents to love it is not yet consolidated. ... For the love of the father and of the mother for the child when it has just been born is not like their love for it when it is one year old; and their love for it when it is one year old is not like their love when it is six years old.

“Consequently, if it were left uncircumcised for two or three years, this would necessitate the abandonment of circumcision because of the father’s love and affection for it.”

Whatever a Woman Acquires...

It is written, “If she cannot afford a sheep, then she shall take two turtledoves” (Vayikra 12:8).

The expression, “If she cannot afford” is difficult to explain, for it uses the feminine term. Rabbi Leib Charif Zatzal notes that a woman who has given birth is the one who must bring an offering, although the offering comes from the money of her husband, for “whatever a woman acquires becomes her husband’s” (*Nazir* 24b). It therefore depends only on her husband, on whether he has the means or not. Hence the verse should have used the masculine term, not the feminine.

To the Kohen

It is written, “When the plague of leprosy is on a man, he shall be brought to the kohen” (Vayikra 13:9).

In his book *Tzror HaMor*, Rabbi Avraham Saba Zatzal cites the explanation brought by the Sages (*Yevamot* 61a) that the term *adam* (“man”) excludes non-Jews, who are not called *adam*.

We can actually see this in regards to Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Aram. When he was struck by leprosy, Elisha did not send him to the kohen who officiated at the time, but personally healed him and saved him from his leprosy. This is because “he shall be brought to the kohen” is addressed to Jews who are struck by leprosy, not to non-Jews.

As Stingy As Before

It is written, “If he is poor and his means are not sufficient...” (Vayikra 14:21).

The Gemara states that although there are conflicting views in regards to other offerings – some saying that a wealthy man who brings the offering of a poor man has fulfilled his obligations – everyone recognizes that a wealthy leper who brings the offering of a poor person has not fulfilled his obligations, nor is he cleansed of his leprosy (*Yoma* 41b). Why not?

Rabbi Akiva Landau Zatzal, the son of the Noda B’Yehudah, explains this according to the words of the Sages: Plagues come upon a person because of seven sins, one of which is stinginess. Therefore if the leper is wealthy and brings the offering of a poor person, it shows that he has not yet repented of his sin, meaning that he is as stingy as before. Hence everyone recognizes that he is not cleansed of his leprosy.

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

Controlling the Evil Inclination

Rabban Gamliel said, “Annul your will before His will, so that He may annul the will of others before your will” (Pirkei Avoth 2:4).

When a man serves G-d with devotion and tries to control his evil inclination, the Holy One, blessed be He, will help him by annulling the power of the evil inclination so it no longer controls him. Thus we find that King David killed his own evil inclination (*Yerushalmi, Sotah* 5:5), and the Gemara recounts how several Tannaim controlled theirs. In fact every day Pelimo used to say, “An arrow in Satan’s eyes!” (*Kiddushin* 81a). It put him to the test because it had no influence over him.

It is possible that this is what the Tanna meant by saying “of others.” The evil inclination represents the forces of impurity, and it is called “the other god,” as we find in the Gemara: “Who is the other god that resides in man himself? Say that it is the evil inclination” (*Shabbat* 105b). However a man cannot control the evil inclination all on his own, but only with the help of Hashem, as the Sages have said: “Were not the Holy One, blessed be He, to help [man], he would not be able to prevail against it” (*Kiddushin* 30b). This is because the evil inclination is made of fire, while man is made of matter, of flesh and blood. Yet when a person begins with an awakening below, overcoming his evil inclination and annulling his desires, the Holy One, blessed be He, helps him measure for measure and thus completely annuls his evil inclination.