



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

A Small Apartment and Pure Speech

When the gaon and kabbalist Rabbi Shalom Hadaya Zatzal moved from Aleppo to Jerusalem, he was offered a beautiful and spacious apartment in the Bucharim district. However the Rav decided to live in the Ohel Moshe district (close to the Batei Breuda), even though the apartment there was small. He explained his apparently strange decision as follows: Since people spoke Arabic in the Bucharim district, a language that he knew and which was spoken in his home, he was afraid that it might lead to speaking Lashon Harah. That would not be the case in the Ohel Moshe district, where people spoke Ladino, a language that he wasn't familiar with. There he could live in peace, hopeful that he would not fall into the sin of either hearing or speaking Lashon Harah.

– HaBayit HaYehudi

HOW CAN WE SURVIVE IN THIS BITTER EXILE?

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

On the verse, "Send for yourself men and let them spy out the land of Canaan" (Numbers 13:2), Rashi cites the Sages in stating: "Send for yourself. According to your own understanding. I am not commanding you, but if you wish, you may send" (Tanhuma, Shelach 5). In other words, Hashem did not want to send spies to explore the land, and it was only because the Children of Israel requested spies that He permitted Moses to send them. That being the case, it is certain that Moses did not want to send them either, since it was not Hashem's will. Moses sent them only because the Children of Israel wanted it. As a result, how can we interpret the expression, "Send for yourself" according to the view of the Midrash, which states that the decision to send the spies came from Moses? Furthermore, "Send for yourself" means "for your own benefit, for your own good," yet Moses wanted none of this. Even if we say that Moses somehow benefited from it, should the Children of Israel have been punished because Hashem wanted to reward Moses (since doing so gave them an opportunity to err)?

This in itself is very difficult to understand. How could Moses receive any benefit whatsoever, if it was at the expense of the Children of Israel, who as a result would suffer for 40 years in the desert and be condemned to a day of weeping for the generations to come (Taanith 29a)? How can this be termed beneficial or good? Moses was a faithful shepherd who only wanted to help the Children of Israel, not harm them. Therefore how could he benefit at their expense?

Let us try and explain. We know that the Jewish people survive in exile only by the merit of Torah (Torat Kohanim, Vayikra 26:3), meaning by investing their efforts into its study and analysis. Now all the Torah that Jews have ever studied has been due to the Torah that Moses learned from Hashem, as it is written: "Remember the Torah of My servant Moses" (Malachi 3:22). In fact Moses ascended upon Mount Sinai and studied Torah for 40 days and 40 nights (Shemot Rabba 47:5), neither eating nor drinking (Exodus 34:28). He remained there and learned everything from the mouth of Hashem, "Even what a faithful disciple would say in the future" (Vayikra Rabba 22:1).

When the Children of Israel raised the issue of the spies, Hashem said to Moses: "What will happen is revealed to Me. The Children of Israel want to send spies to explore the land of Israel, and as a result they will be condemned to dwelling in the desert for 40 years, as well as going into exile and weeping for the generations to come." Why all this? It is because, as the Sages have said, punishment comes through a person of guilt (Shabbat 32a). Hence the Children of Israel were condemned to be exiled because of the spies, who were guilty. They were the leaders and great figures among the Children of Israel, men who should have guided the people.

Since that was the case, Hashem gave Moses the remedy for the exile before it happened by teaching him the entire Torah. As such the Children of Israel could survive in exile by laboring in the study of Torah, as well as by all the explanations that had been given to Moses on Sinai. Due to Moses' strength, they would be saved from all their enemies.

We can now understand why Hashem told Moses, "Send for yourself." In other words: This is for your own benefit and your own good, since it is already too late to prevent the Children of Israel from sending out spies. Since they no longer have faith in Me, they would revolt against Me and you, and thus their punishment would be very severe. I will therefore give them an opportunity to err, for on account of the wickedness of the spies, they will become guilty. Therefore send for yourself, "for your own benefit," for you will benefit greatly from this. What benefit will you derive? When they are exiled, they will study the Torah that you heard from My mouth, and they will put an effort into learning it and providing explanations that you have already given, and thus your lips will move in the grave (Yebamot 97a). In this way your merit will protect them, giving them the strength to survive in exile and be saved from all who would harm them.

This is truly the great benefit derived by Moses, the faithful shepherd. The Children of Israel would endure in all their exiles by his merit and by the merit of his Torah, which would not have been the case if he did not send the spies. Would this have been possible if they did not deserve to be exiled? What would have happened to the entire Torah that Moses learned from Hashem and all the explanations he gave? This is what constitutes shelach ("send"), which is formed from the letters of the word chalash ("weak"): If you do not send the spies, you will be weak. Yet if you send them, you will be strong, for they will survive in exile by your merit and by the merit of your Torah. This is why Moses agreed to send them. Furthermore, during the entire 40 years that the Children of Israel were in the desert, they certainly reviewed all the Torah that Moses learned with Hashem. Thus the merit of Moses' Torah protected Israel in all the generations, as well as in the exiles they endured and the destruction that was brought upon them. This is precisely what was beneficial and good for Moses, namely that the Torah would never be forgotten in exile, and that in every generation people would give new explanations and laws that deal with their particular era. All this was possible only by the merit of Moses' Torah.

The Holy One, blessed be He, demonstrated great benevolence and kindness to us by having taught Moses the entire Torah, as well as all the teachings that would ever be derived by the tzaddikim and all who devote themselves to study. If Hashem had taught Moses only the Torah that concerned his own generation, where would we have received the strength to study the holy Torah and derive new teachings from it? Where would we have found the strength to survive in our long exile and be saved from our enemies, if not for Moses' influence on all the generations, an influence that is awakened by the diligent study of Torah? Yet if the Children of Israel had been unwavering in their faith that the land was good, they would not have sinned by speaking Lashon Harah. Hence they would not have incurred death, the destruction of the Temple, or even exile. In that case the Torah would have renewed itself for them, and even Moses would have entered the land. From here we learn that we must pay great attention to the sin of Lashon Harah, for our words must only contain good.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Hidden Reasons for Inquiring About the Land

It is written, "What is the land like: Is it fat or lean?" (Numbers 13:20).

Rabbi Yosef Leib Nandik Zatzal (among the great disciples of Kelm, who died in the Holocaust in 5703) asks: "What did the people in the generation of the desert think in asking for spies to verify the nature of the land? To what can this be compared? It is like someone who is about to be set free from a Siberian labor camp and transferred to another country. He begins to inquire as to whether the conditions of that particular country are good enough for him. Would such a person not be considered mad, given that he doesn't jump with joy upon hearing that he will be set free? When the Children of Israel were about to leave the vast and terrible desert and come into an inhabited land, what difference did it make if this land was sufficiently comfortable, such that they asked, 'Is it fat or lean?' An inhabited land is obviously preferable to the desert!"

Rabbi Yosef Leib replies, "Yes, it is true that if they had felt the least bit of danger or the difficulty of life in the desert, they would have been overjoyed to leave it, and they would have had no reason to verify the nature of the land they set out for. Yet those great people – who were brought out of Egypt and into the desert, and who were led by Divine providence through miracles and supernatural wonders – did not perceive the desert as a barren wasteland. Instead, they felt that they were living in a royal city under the watchful eye of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. They understood just how great their merit was, and what lofty heights they had attained by being surrounded with the clouds of glory, by eating the bread of the mighty from Heaven, and by drinking the water from the well that followed them in the desert. On the other hand, they were afraid that all this would be gone once they arrived in the promised land. Hence they felt the need to verify whether they would be called upon to descend from their lofty spiritual level. This is how we can understand what Moses told them in the plains of Moab: 'All of you approached me and said, "Let us send men before us..."' The idea was good in my eyes' (Deuteronomy 1:22-23). Why did this idea seem good to him? It was because their intentions were good, and the root and basis of their request was holy."

If their request was truly good, then why was it considered a sin? Rabbi Yosef Leib Nandik explains that they erred in believing that their goal in life was to remain under the wings of the Shechinah, surrounded by a life of miracles and living on a higher plane. Such is not the case, for man's great role in this world is precisely to reveal Hashem's presence in the material realm, and from there to arrive at great levels. Doing that – not perceiving Hashem through miracles and wonders – is the most difficult task of all.

– MiShulchan Gavoha

A Pearl From the Rav

In the passage regarding the tzitzit, it is stated that seeing them will lead a person to fulfilling the mitzvot. In his book *Pahad David*, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks: "How can a person observe all the mitzvot? There are many mitzvot that not everyone can observe! We must say that the Holy One, blessed be He, links good intentions to action. Therefore when a person truly desires to perform the mitzvot, although he has not yet done so, Scripture considers that he has performed them. Not only that, but Heaven helps him to perform as many mitzvot as possible, for one mitzvah leads to another. This is what happens with Shabbat, for the Sages have said that whoever observes Shabbat, it is as if he observed the entire Torah. How can this be, given that there are some mitzvot that cannot be performed on Shabbat? If a person desires to perform

mitzvot and pays great attention to those that he can do on Shabbat, he thereby demonstrates his desire to fulfill them all, although the Torah prohibited him from doing so. He is thereby considered to have fulfilled the entire Torah."

A New Task

It is written, "Send for yourself men and let them spy out the land" (Numbers 13:2).

When the Yid HaKodesh (Holy Jew) of Peshischa was near his teacher the Chozeh of Lublin, he became seriously ill. The Yid HaKodesh's son therefore went to the Chozeh and asked him to pray for his father's health. The Chozeh said to him, "It is written in the Torah, 'Send for yourself men and let them spy out the land.' When Hashem sees that a Jew has finished his task in this world and has nothing more to do because he has rectified all he was meant to rectify, He will sometimes send him men to gather in his shadow. They will approach him in order to spy out the path that they should take and the deeds they should perform. This man will therefore have a new task to fulfill, namely to make a tikkun for Jews and to show them the straight and proper path to follow. As such he can continue living in this world."

This is precisely what happened with the Yid HaKodesh, for he was immediately healed and numerous Jews came to him for guidance. Thus he became a great teacher in Israel.

– Torat HaParasha

The Son Who Didn't Trust His Father

It is written, "The entire congregation raised their voice and cried out, and the people wept that night" (Numbers 14:1).

We need to understand how the generation of the desert, which was the generation of knowledge (having witnessed so many miracles), could have doubted the words of Moses when he told them that Eretz Israel was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Instead the people came and asked, "How is the land? Is it fertile?" and they raised their voice in tears! The explanation is that they thought that Moses, according to his greatness and lofty spiritual level, meant that milk and honey flowed in the spiritual realm, that he was not speaking of the material realm. This is why they complained, for they wanted the land to be good from the material point of view as well. What can this be compared to? It is like a pious man whose son was at an age to get married. The man traveled to a certain town to find a young woman for his son, and upon his return he told his son how virtuous and beautiful she was. His son stood there, however, looking somber and upset. His mother asked him why he seemed so down, since his father had just extolled the qualities of the young woman. He said to his mother, "Father is so righteous that when he praises a young woman, it means that she has spiritual virtues, that she fears Heaven. It has nothing to do with her physical beauty. But I want her to be physically beautiful as well!" The same thing happened with the generation of the desert, who believed that Moses, by saying "which flows with milk and honey," was speaking of the spiritual aspect of the land, whereas they wanted this to describe the material aspect of the land as well. That is why they complained.

– Ohel Yaakov

From Sun to Shade, and From Shade to Sun

It is written, "The men who spread the evil report about the land died" (Numbers 14:37).

The Gemara states, "Rabbi Ammi and Rabbi Assi used to move from the sun to the shade, and from the shade to the sun" (Ketubot 112ab). Rashi explains that when the sun reached the place where they were sitting and it beat on them, they arose and sat in the shade. During the winter, however, they avoided the shade and sat in the sun in order to prevent any faultfinding with the weather of Eretz Israel. This teaches

us just how careful we must be not to speak ill of Eretz Israel, even if what we are saying is true and everyone is aware of it. In fact the heat of summer and cold of winter are truly difficult to endure. Nevertheless, since all suffering is liable to lead to complaints about the land, which is forbidden, these Amoraim were careful not to reach that point. Hence they changed seats according to the position of the sun and the shade.

– MiShulchan Gavoha, Citing the Alter of Slabodka

Going Up Carefully

It is written, “Do not go up, for the L-RD is not among you, and do not fall before your enemies” (Numbers 14:42).

We may say by allusion that a person is sometimes overtaken by emotion and immediately starts serving Hashem in a way that is beyond his abilities, which as we know will end in failure. Thus our verse tells us: “Do not go up” – by degrees that do not correspond to your level; “for the L-RD is not among you” – you are not at that level of holiness; “and do not fall before your enemies” – for in so doing you may completely fall before the evil inclination.

– Gevurat Yaakov

The Heart is Moved By Deeds

It is written, “They found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day” (Numbers 15:32).

Tanna D’vei Eliyahu recounts that after the sin of the man who gathered wood in the desert, Hashem asked Moses: “Why did he desecrate Shabbat?” Moses replied, “I do not know!” Hashem said, “I will tell you why. During the six weekdays, the Children of Israel have their tefillin on their head and arm, and they see them and repent of their deeds. Yet now, on Shabbat, they have no tefillin, which is why he desecrated it.” At that point the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: “Go and explain to them a mitzvah that they will perform on Shabbat and the festivals, the mitzvah of tzitzit.” The Rebbe of Ger, Rabbi Aryeh Leib, objects to this, for the mitzvah of Shabbat is itself a “sign” between Hashem and Israel, exactly as the tefillin are. That being the case, why did the man sin? He answers by saying that a mitzvah which depends on a material deed will awaken a person to an even greater extent, whereas the holiness of Shabbat comes from itself.

– Ma’ayanot HaNetzach

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Shelach continues with the account of the people’s journey as they prepare to enter the land. This began in Parsha Beha’alotcha at the mountain of G-d, and after making stops in Kivrot HaTa’ava and Chazereth the people arrive in the desert of Paran. In view of this journey, they go to explore the land of Israel, and they return to the desert without any faith in Hashem. Following this incident, the people are told that they have to remain in the desert for 40 more years, during which time the adult generation would die. The people then try to stop this disaster by rebelling against Hashem and venturing into the land of Israel, but without success. After being estranged from Hashem, and after the decree of a lengthy desert sojourn, the people receive other mitzvot. Added to their burnt-offerings and feast-offerings are meal-offerings and libations, so that offerings of animal and vegetable origin, as well as wine, must be brought. The people are to remove challah from their dough, in addition to tithing the harvest. A special offering is also ordered for anyone who inadvertently transgressed a mitzvah. The punishment for willfully transgressing Shabbat, namely stoning, is given to the man who gathered wood on that day, and the mitzvah of tzitzit is added so people can recall all the mitzvot and conquer their desires through strength of will.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

Turning the Dish Upside Down

It is written, “You should not fear the people of the land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them” (Numbers 14:9).

Rashi explains: “Their protection has departed from them. Their shield and strength, their virtuous ones have died, [including] Job, who protected them.”

From here we learn that Job was a righteous man. On the other hand, we find another account that seems to contradict this. The Talmud states, “Rabbi Eliezer said: Job sought to turn the dish upside down [i.e., to declare that all of G-d’s works are worthless]” (Bava Batra 16a). According to this, Job was far from being righteous! The Vilna Gaon (whose words are cited in Kol Eliyahu) states that the expression “to turn the dish upside down” has its origins in a well-known story (see the book Ben Hamelech Vehanazir, ch. 24): There was once a hot-tempered and spiteful king who never forgave or showed compassion to anyone. If someone committed the slightest offence against him, he was likely to be executed. One day a servant of the king wasn’t paying enough attention as he was serving him, and a few drops of soup spilled onto the table from the dish he was holding. The king turned red with anger, and the servant realized that he was in great danger, liable even to death. He then turned the dish completely upside down, and all the soup inundated the royal table. Naturally, the king ordered the servant put to death. However before the execution, he asked him why he spilled the soup. The servant replied, “Your Majesty, at that point I knew that I was already as good as dead. However I wanted to at least avoid an offence to the king’s honor, for people would have said that you chopped off the head of a faithful servant for a minor offense. I therefore deliberately spilled the dish onto the table, so that everyone would realize that I deserved my punishment.” The king was pleased with the servant’s explanation, and he immediately pardoned and released him. The expression, “Job sought to turn the dish upside down” was drawn from this story, and in using it Rabbi Eliezer meant that even Job, who was known as a great tzaddik, feared that the masses would disparage Hashem when they saw the terrible suffering that he endured at the hand of Heaven. Since the masses didn’t understand Hashem’s ways, Job began to protest Hashem’s treatment of him, for in doing so people would perceive him as a sinner. Everyone would therefore realize that Hashem was fair and that His verdict was just.

– Torat HaParasha

ESHET HAYIL

Respecting Their Husbands

It is said that the tzaddik Rabbi Yeshaya Mushkat of Prague was not pleased with his wife. From morning till night, she would go about with a siddur in hand and a prayer on her lips. When Rabbi Yeshaya would return from Shacharit and wanted to eat, she signaled to him that she was in the middle of a prayer. When the time came for breakfast, she claimed that she had to finish a chapter of Psalms, and during the evenings she would recite ma’amadot. Even when Rabbi Yeshaya wanted a cup of tea, she claimed that she didn’t have time to deal with mundane tasks. Rabbi Yeshaya would control himself, but when he told her that the Sages said, “Who is the righteous woman? She who does her husband’s will,” her opinion didn’t change. Instead she said that whoever is occupied with performing one mitzvah is exempt from performing another. Rabbi Yeshaya calmly explained that the righteous women played a role in the service of the Sanctuary, as it is written: “All the women [kol hanashim] whose hearts inspired them with wisdom” (Exodus 35:26). He also said that in the Masorah we find a verse that corresponds to this: “All the women [kol hanashim] will respect their husbands” (Esther 1:20), which teaches us that even righteous women who concern themselves with mitzvot are not exempt from respecting their husbands and doing their will. – Tiferet Nashim

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

Where Has the Orphans' Money Gone?

The father of Shemuel [Abba ben Abba] had some money belonging to orphans that was left in his care. Shemuel was not with him when he died, and therefore he was called: "The son who consumes the money of orphans." He went to the cemetery to seek his father, and he said to [the dead]: "I am looking for Abba." They said to him, "There are many Abbas here." He said, "I want Abba ben Abba." They replied, "There are also several Abba ben Abbases here." He then said to them, "I want Abba ben Abba, the father of Shemuel. Where is he?" They replied, "He has gone up to the celestial academy." ... Meanwhile his father came, and Shemuel observed that he was both weeping and laughing. He said to him, "Why are you weeping?" He replied, "Because you are coming here soon." "And why are you laughing?" "Because you are highly esteemed in this world." ... He then said to him, "Where is the money of the orphans?" He replied, "Go and you will find it in the case of the millstones. The money at the top and the bottom is mine, but [the money] in the middle belongs to the orphans." He said to him, "Why did you arrange it that way?" He replied, "So that if thieves came, they would take mine, and if the earth destroyed any, it would destroy mine."

– Berachot 18b

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Why the Difference?

It is written, "We heard and our hearts melted – no spirit remained in any man because of you – for the L-RD your G-d, He is G-d in the heavens above and on the earth below" (Joshua 2:11).

Here we see Rahab's great astonishment, which did not leave her or diminish. It is what enabled her to cleave to the Jewish people so greatly that she merited becoming the wife of Joshua and giving rise to prophets. Scripture describes how the Queen of Sheba came to witness the wisdom of King Solomon for herself, wisdom that was divine. Once she verified the truth of the report that had reached her, she said: "True was the word that I had heard in my country about your words and your wisdom. ... Behold, even the half of it was not told to me. You have surpassed in wisdom and goodness the report that I heard" (I Kings 10:6-7). Not content on simply voicing her surprise, the Queen of Sheba also brought gifts: "She gave the king 120 talents of gold, very many spices and precious stones. There has never again come such a large quantity of spice as that which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon" (v.10). In the end, however, she did not convert to Judaism, as we read: "She turned around and went to her land, she and her servants" (II Chronicles 9:12). How was it possible that after all this enthusiasm, she turned her back on everything that moved her, as it is written: "She turned around"? What difference existed between her and Rahab? The answer is that the honor accorded to royalty, which was at her disposition, was enough to dampen all the enthusiasm she had over Solomon's wisdom, for honor and pleasure obscure the heart and diminish a person's desire to change for the better.

– Kol Tzofayich, Part III

A TRUE STORY

The Day Will Come

It is written, "Speak to the Children of Israel and tell them to make for themselves tzitzit" (Numbers 15:38).

The Maggid of Kelm was once in the resort town of Dobeles, near Riga. From all across Russia, and especially from the neighboring city of Riga, thousands of people had gathered there to bathe in its waters. When the Maggid went to synagogue on Shabbat, he saw that several residents from Riga were not wearing a tallit, for they had forgotten to bring it with them on their trip. The Maggid went up to the podium and said, "Gentlemen, I'm going to tell you a true story. I was once in Riga during the summer, and I decided to pay someone a visit. When I arrived, I was informed that nobody was home. When I asked where the man of the house was, I was told that he went to relax in Dobeles. At that point I heard a bitter cry coming from one of the rooms. I went to look, but the room was empty. There was only a tallit bag there, yet it was the tallit that was crying! I asked it, 'Tallit, tallit, why are you crying?' It replied, 'How can I not cry? The man of the house left with all his gold and silver, everything that he holds dear, but left me here all alone!' I tried to console it: 'Don't cry tallit! The day will come when the man of the house will leave on an even longer journey, but he will leave behind all his gold and silver, everything that he holds dear, and bring only you.'"

– Torat HaParasha

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak – The Rebbe of Blendov

The gaon Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak was the son of the holy Rabbi Chaim Meir Yechiel Zatzal, whom everyone called "the Seraph of Mogielnica." He was raised by his father, the son-in-law of Rabbi Elazar, the son of the holy Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk. People could sense a mixture of Kozhnitz and Lizensk in Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak's Torah, a mixture that enabled him to become a great figure, a tzaddik in all his ways and a pious man in all his deeds.

Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak was one of the most famous rebbes of his generation, a holy and righteous man, and a miracle worker under whose shadow multitudes sought shelter. He spread Chassidut to thousands of people, and from them he demanded that they serve Hashem with devotion. This was the central message of his life, and he spoke of it at great length in the words of Torah that he uttered at his holy table.

Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak later moved to Blendov, the town by which he became known for the rest of his life ("the Rebbe of Blendov"). His home was open to everyone, and there were never specific times for receiving people because his door was open 24 hours a day. Because it wasn't easy to find fish for Shabbat in the tiny town of Blendov, he was simply overjoyed whenever he had some. His life came to an end on Sivan 24, 5642, as his soul departed for the celestial academy. His passing was mourned by thousands of Jews. May his merit protect us all.