



The Path To Follow

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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

A Great Deal of Harm

We know that a person does not worry so much about an ignoramus who speaks ill of him or does something to wrong him. However if that person were to be told that a talmid chacham has spoken ill of him, he would certainly hate him to a greater degree, a situation that is much more likely to awaken justice.

This is especially true when someone speaks ill of the Rav of the city, in which case a great deal of harm will certainly result, often leading to a heated conflict.

– Chafetz Chaim

HOW TO HASTEN THE FINAL REDEMPTION

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, “Jacob called for his sons and said: ‘Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the end of days. Gather yourselves and listen, O sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father’” (Genesis 49:1-2). We need to ask why Jacob summoned his sons twice by saying “assemble yourselves” and “gather yourselves.” From the fact that they assembled themselves, they had obviously gathered themselves!

Our Sages say that Jacob wanted to reveal the end times to them, but the Shechinah left him (Pesachim 56a). Why did Jacob want to reveal it to them before leaving this world? Not only that, but if he had actually revealed the end times to them, they would have become discouraged on account of the long exile that awaited them. They would not have made an effort to repent and regret their deeds, since they would have known when the exile ends!

It seems that when the Sages said that Jacob wanted to reveal the end to them, they did not mean that he wanted to tell them when Mashiach would arrive. This is because no one can know the time of the Final Redemption, and he certainly cannot reveal it to others, as the Sages have said: “Three come unawares: Mashiach, an object that is found, and a scorpion” (Sanhedrin 97a).

What Jacob wanted to reveal to his sons, however, was how to hasten the Final Redemption, for the Holy One, blessed be He, has promised that the redeemer will come quickly if Israel is worthy of it. Jacob wanted to reveal to his sons how they could hasten the arrival of the redeemer, and how they could lighten the yoke of slavery.

He began by saying, “Assemble yourselves” – meaning “unify yourselves,” as the Aggadah states: “This teaches that they were scattered, and he [Jacob] assembled them by means of Ruach HaKodesh” (Bereshith Rabba 98:3). Jacob taught his sons that the entire existence of the Jewish people in exile among the nations depends on unity, which is why he said “assemble yourselves” and “gather yourselves.” In other words, he summoned them for that very reason. He therefore gathered them together through Ruach HaKodesh in order to teach them that unity is the main thing, and that without unity we have nothing.

There is But One in Our Heart

When the Jewish people are united, no nation in the world can harm them, and the Final Redemption can then take place. This is why Jacob assembled his sons before leaving this world, lest they quarrel with one another after his death and never escape slavery.

It is why he assembled and taught them about loving one’s brother. He united them with the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is the One and only G-d. Together they replied, “Just as there is but One in your heart, there is but One in our heart.”

The Children of Israel were reduced to slavery in Egypt only after their unity was disrupted. When Moses saw the Children of Israel fighting among themselves, he said: “Surely the thing is known” (Exodus 2:14). Here the Midrash cites Rabbi Alexandri as saying: “Moses was thinking in his heart, ‘How has Israel sinned, such that they are more

enslaved than all the nations?’ When he heard these words, he said: ‘Lashon Harah is rife among them, so how can they be ready for deliverance?’ Hence, ‘Surely the thing is known’ – now I know the cause of their enslavement” (Shemot Rabba 1:30). Thus the Children of Israel were only delivered from Egypt when they were united.

What did Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, do to the Children of Israel? He appointed taskmasters to oppress them. I say that something is concealed in these words, for instead of placing Egyptian taskmasters over the Children of Israel, Pharaoh placed their own foremen over them. This requires an explanation.

Pharaoh, the great enemy of the Jewish people, was the one who made them breach the 49 gates of impurity. He knew that as long as the Children of Israel were united, he could not enslave them, in which case it would not be long before they left Egypt. Hence Pharaoh resorted to trickery by appointing foremen from among their own people to supervise their work, which would result in disputes and infighting, and a lack of unity among them.

However these Jewish foremen understood what Pharaoh wanted to do, and they did not disrupt the unity that existed among them. Scripture tells us, “The foremen of the Children of Israel...were beaten.” That is, the Egyptian taskmasters struck the Jewish foremen because the Children of Israel had not completed their work, but the Jewish foremen did not strike their own brothers in return so they could quickly finish their work. Thus by the merit of having safeguarded their unity, the Children of Israel were delivered from Egypt.

Although they did not possess Torah and mitzvot, the Children of Israel were able to leave Egypt on account of their unity. The Sages have said, “The generation of Ahab all worshipped idols. Yet owing to the fact that there were no informers among them, they would go out to war and emerge victorious” (Vayikra Rabba 26:2). Concerning the generation that left Egypt, the Sages say that they were delivered because there were no informers among them.

What Did He Hear?

Jethro as well, when he wanted to leave Midian and venture into the desert to receive the Torah of Moses, heard that the Children of Israel were united. The verse states, “Jethro, the priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moses, heard everything that G-d did to Moses and to Israel His people” (Exodus 18:1). Here our Sages say, “What news did he hear that he came and became a convert? Rabbi Yehoshua said, ‘He heard of the battle with Amalek’” (Zevachim 116a).

We may explain this according to what the Sages have said, namely that when the Children of Israel were by the sea, it immediately split when Nachshon the son of Aminadav jumped into it (Sotah 37a). That is, Nachshon sacrificed himself for the community, and the sea split by the merit of his love for Israel. Hence it only split before the Children of Israel when they were united. This is what Jethro had heard. When Jews demonstrate love for one another, then the Holy One, blessed be He, performs miracles for them, which is why the sea split before them.

AT THE SOURCE

Kindness and Truth

It is written, “Deal with me in kindness and truth” (Genesis 47:29).

What is the significance of “kindness and truth,” since they are generally opposites by nature? “Kindness” points to something that is more generous than required by strict justice, whereas “truth” points to something that adheres strictly to justice.

In his book *Apirion*, Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried Zatzal explains that initially, Jacob wanted Joseph to swear an oath that he would not bury him in Egypt. He therefore asked him to swear an oath out of “kindness.” Then, once Joseph had sworn this oath, he would be obligated to fulfill it out of “truth.” Hence “kindness and truth” were acting in sync to achieve the same goal.

All the Patriarchs are Included

It is written, “Let my name be called on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac” (Genesis 48:16).

The book *Be'er Moshe* expresses surprise here, asking: “Why did Jacob mention his name before that of his fathers Abraham and Isaac?”

According to the writings of the Arizal, the name Israel is composed of the initials of the Patriarchs: Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Abraham, Leah. In fact Israel represents them all, as the Zohar states: “Jacob comprises the Patriarchs.”

This is why Jacob mentioned his name first, for it includes the names of all the Patriarchs. It is what constitutes “my name...and the name of my fathers.” Hence the Children of Israel are also known as “the House of Israel,” not “the House of Abraham” or “the House of Isaac,” for all the Patriarchs are included in the name Israel.

Large Steps

It is written, “Naphtali is a hind let loose; he brings beautiful sayings” (Genesis 49:21).

How can Naphtali be compared to a deer that is let loose, since our Sages have taught (Shabbat 113b) that taking large steps diminishes a person’s eyesight by five one-hundreds?

In his book *Tzitzim U’Perachim*, Rabbeinu Yaakov Chaim Zatzal replies to this by saying: “Since Naphtali ‘brings beautiful sayings,’ meaning that he uses his speed to perform mitzvot (such as praying in synagogue or listening to Torah lectures, or for the requirements of a mitzvah), the Sages allowed him to take large steps.”

By allusion

It is written, “These are my sons, whom G-d has given me bazeh [here]” (Genesis 48:9).

The letters of bazeh are the same as those of zahav (“gold”), telling us by allusion what the author of *Leket Shmuel* said, namely that Jacob had written upon a golden tablet for Asenat the daughter of Dinah: “Whoever cleaves to you cleaves to the progeny of Jacob.”

– Ma’aseh Choshev

Repenting

It is written, “A gur aryeh [lion cub] is Judah” (Genesis 49:9).

We must interpret the word aryeh (“lion”) as an allusion, being formed from the initials of Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippurim, Hoshanah Rabba. The offspring of Judah, who are Israel, must pay particular attention (yaguru) to repenting during those days.

– Zerach David

Your Hand

It is written, “Yadecha [Your hand] will be on the neck of your enemies” (Genesis 49:8).

The word yad (“hand”) has the same numerical value as the name David.

Thus it is written: “Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies” – your hand is David, from whom enemies turned and fled. As King David said, “You have also given me the necks of my enemies” (Psalms 18:41).

– Nahar Shalom

THE PARABLE AND ITS MEANING

A “Wrong” that Helps Others

It is written, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not fear, for am I in G-d’s place?’” (Genesis 50:19).

The tzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Lasle Zatzal explains this verse by means of a parable:

A king besieged a city for a long time, but he could not conquer it. The king and one of his ministers decided to disguise themselves as commoners and slip into the besieged city to assess the conditions inside. If they saw that it still contained enough food for a long time, it would not bode well for the king. However if little food remained, he could simply wait for famine to take hold, in which case the city would fall without any difficulty.

The king and his minister slipped into the city, entered an inn, and sat down for a drink in order to hear what was going on around them. As we know, a public meeting place like an inn is where people discuss events and exchange news.

As they were sitting down and drinking, they heard one resident telling his friend, “I have the feeling that the king who’s besieging the city is sitting over there. I’ve known him for a long time.”

His friend replied, “You’re talking foolishness! How could anyone think that the king himself would risk his life in order to enter a city that he’s besieging?” When the king heard these words, he began to worry.

Seeing that their lives were in danger, the minister pretended that he was a nobleman and that the king was his servant. He therefore ordered the king to fetch him something to drink. The king quickly understood the minister’s intentions, and therefore he went to bring him a drink. As the minister reached out to take the drink, he struck the king’s hand on purpose and the mug that he was holding fell to the floor and broke. The minister arose from his chair in anger and slapped the king, all while insulting him. In fact he didn’t calm down until he threw the king outside!

The man said to his friend, “You see how foolish your words were! Have you ever seen a servant striking his king? He’s obviously not the king!”

When the king and his minister left the city, the minister threw himself at the king’s feet and pleaded for mercy, since he had struck and humiliated him. The king replied, “Why are you asking me for forgiveness? If I really wanted to pay you back for what you did to me, I would first need to look for an incident in which I saved your life, since you saved mine. All the treasures in the world are not enough to pay you back for the ‘wrong’ that you did to me, which is why I cannot do anything to harm you.”

This is also what Joseph said to his brothers: “Do not fear, for am I in G-d’s place” – true, you sold me, but tremendous good resulted from this wrong, since I have attained royalty. If I wanted to pay you back for what you did to me, you would merit a reward that is so great, you would attain royalty and be kings. I have no way of “wronging” you like this, for only G-d can do so

CONCERNING THE PARSHA

THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISSACHAR AND ZEBULON

It is written, “Zebulon shall dwell at the haven of the sea” (Genesis 49:13). Although Issachar was older than Zebulon, our Sages explain that Zebulon was blessed first because he “engaged in commerce while Issachar studied the Torah, and Zebulon came and provided him with sustenance. He is therefore given precedence. Of him [Scripture says], ‘It is a Tree of Life to those who grasp it’ [Proverbs 3:18]” (Bereshith Rabba 99:9). Hence Jacob blessed Zebulon before Issachar. Moses also said, “Rejoice, O Zebulon, in your going out” (Deuteronomy 33:18). Why? Because “Issachar [is] in your tents” (ibid.). They are yours, since you help them remain there, and “Happy are those who support it” (Proverbs 3:18).

In the same spirit, the Sages have said: “Zebulon and Issachar were partners. Issachar studied Torah and Zebulon engaged in trade, working hard and providing Issachar with food. In allusion to this, his offering included a silver dish, symbolizing the sea” (Bamidbar Rabba 13:17).

Regarding the laws found in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 246) on Torah study, after detailing the responsibility of every man in Israel to fix himself times for the study of Torah both day and night, be he rich or poor, in good health or ill, old or young, even a poor man who must extend his hand – as it is written: “You shall meditate on it day and night” (Joshua 1:8) – the Mehaber (Rabbi Yosef Karo) ends by affirming that one who cannot study because he does not know how, or because of his many occupations, can help others to do so. The Rema adds, “It will be considered as if he himself had studied. A man can enter into an agreement with another so that he studies Torah while the other ensures his sustenance, and the reward will be shared between them [in the World to Come].”

The Aruch HaShulchan makes an important point here: A person should not say that he does not need to support others if he himself studies. This is not true, for on the contrary, since he knows the power of Torah, he has an even greater responsibility to support its study by giving money to yeshivot and places where people study Torah.

Acting Generously

The gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss Zatzal, the Rosh Av Beit Din of Jerusalem, was once asked if a person who supports a yeshiva should sign an “Issachar and Zebulon” agreement with the yeshiva’s administration. In his response (Minchat Yitzchak 8:81), Rabbi Weiss said that the yeshiva’s administration requires the agreement of the students, who must accept a partner that will share in the reward of their Torah studies. Without this consent, the administration is not allowed to enter into an agreement with the donor stipulating that he will share in the reward of the yeshiva’s students.

Some have written (see Keter Rosh 64 and others) that it is fitting for a talmid chacham to act generously by sharing the

reward of his Torah study with his financial supporter. In this way they will both merit something: The talmid chacham will be able to study even more, and the donor will receive the reward of Torah study.

In his book *Midbar Kedmot* (40:36), the Chida is surprised by what the Sages have said on this subject, namely that a talmid chacham shares the reward of his Torah study with his wife. In that case, what reward will a talmid chacham receive, since half of it will go to his wife, while the other half will go to the person who supports him! What will he be left with?

In the editor’s introduction to the book *Drashot LeRasham*, the Rav writes that he heard from the Magen that this issue bothered him. He added, however, that he saw among the commentators that the Holy One, blessed be He, gives a gift to the wife of a talmid chacham, one equal to the reward of half his study, while he himself loses nothing. We can therefore rejoice in the idea of contributing to the honor of Torah.

How Much to Give?

The author of *Pri HaAdama* examines the amount covered in the “Issachar and Zebulon” agreement, which is equal to half the earnings of Zebulon. This means that a talmid chacham must also give half of his reward. Nevertheless, if Zebulon provides a talmid chacham with enough financial support for a decent living, but not half of his earnings, he will be rewarded for that act of tzedakah alone. He will not be given half the reward of the talmid chacham’s Torah study.

Conversely, the Chafetz Chaim believes that even one who gives a talmid chacham enough money for a decent living, enough to free his mind of worries so he can study Torah in peace, becomes his partner and acquires a part of his reward (*Shem Olam*, Sha’ar HaHitchazkut 2). Elsewhere, he notes in passing that it is fitting for the donor to greet the talmid chacham with great honor, just as he would greet a business partner who brought him immense profits. As such, he will happily receive the reward for his part in learning Torah, for man is given in function to what he himself gives.

In his book *Esh Dat* (Parsha Vayeilech), Rabbi Alfandri Zatzal states that there are two kinds of “Issachar and Zebulon” agreements, the greater of which is when the donor and the one who studies split the “benefits” in two. The lesser kind is when the donor gives the one who studies only enough to live on so he can devote himself to learning Torah.

We find another opinion in *Chaim Sheal* (2:38), namely that the two parties can stipulate the amount of financial support to be given on one hand (taken from the donor’s possessions), and the size of the reward for Torah study to be given on the other (taken from the reward of one who studies).

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

RABBI YAAKOV ABUHATZERA

Taking place this week is the Hilloula of our teacher Rabbi Yaakov Abuhatzera Zatzal, some of whose wonders and sanctity we shall attempt to describe.

Rabbi Yaakov, a descendant of the famous Abuhatzera family, was a man of G-d, a holy and awe-inspiring individual. He was both a miracle worker and a prodigious talmid chacham whose genius and holiness infused numerous works of Kabbalah that he penned. (It is said that he asked his son not to publish his works before his death, in order for him to verify that they were pleasing to Hashem. Indeed, after dying he appeared to his son Rabbi Aharon in a dream and told him that he could publish them. This meant that they were pleasing to Hashem.)

From his youth, Rabbi Yaakov was very diligent, amazing everyone by his wisdom and intelligence. He enclosed himself in his home from Shabbat to Shabbat in order to study Torah, and he multiplied his prayers and lived an austere way of life in order to reach the heights of holiness and purity. One of the things that Rabbi Yaakov loved to do was to help talmidei chachamim, orphans, and widows. In fact he would go from town to town and from village to village in order to collect money for those in need. He would also show tremendous hospitality to people, and even today the Abuhatzera family is famous for its hospitality.

Armed Robbers

It is said that as Rabbi Yaakov was once returning from collecting money for talmidei chachamim, orphans, and widows, he took a non-Jew to accompany him back home and assist him there. At one point there were two paths before them, and the Rav told the non-Jew: "We'll take this path." The non-Jew said, "But there are armed robbers on this path, and nobody ever takes it!" Rabbi Yaakov replied, "Don't be afraid. I'm responsible for you, for you are with me." As it turned out, they took that path and eventually saw a group of armed robbers before them. The non-Jew began to tremble, but Rabbi Yaakov continued along as if nothing had happened. The robbers approached them and told Rabbi Yaakov, "Give us your money!" He handed over the bag he had in his hand, but they again said to him, "To take your money, we'll first have to kill you." Rabbi Yaakov said to them, "Go ahead, kill me." The robbers were still arguing over their weapons before trying to kill Rabbi Yaakov, when suddenly they froze in place, unable to move a muscle. Not only that, but their lower bodies sunk into the earth. When the non-Jew accompanying Rabbi Yaakov saw this, he was stunned. In fact he could not believe his eyes, for he had never seen the wonders of the holy and pure tzaddikim.

At that point Rabbi Yaakov said to him, "Leave them like this. Let them stay here, so that other robbers will see them and fear." Hence they left them like this and continued on their way. Now the relatives of these robbers knew that they had intended to assault Rabbi Yaakov. When they saw Rabbi Yaakov returning from his journey, but not their relatives, they decided to wait another day. Yet when they failed to return on the following day, they went to find Rabbi Abuhatzera to "innocently" ask him if he had seen their relatives on the road. Rabbi Yaakov did not respond. He turned to the non-Jew who had accompanied him, and he told them everything that had

happened. In the end, he gave them some good advice: Ask the Rav for forgiveness.

Deciding to follow this advice, they approached Rabbi Yaakov with abundant tears in their eyes and asked him for forgiveness. Rabbi Yaakov replied, "So that Jews are not troubled, I will forgive them. Go find them and tell them to promise, starting from today, to change their behavior. If not, woe to them." These people went to find their relatives and said to them, "Are you going to stop robbing and persecuting people?" They replied, "We'll stop." At that point they immediately got up and left the spot they had been in, returning unharmed.

Great Lights

It is also said that Rabbi Yaakov Abuhatzera had a neighbor who saw great lights in the home of the Rav every night, lights and silhouettes of people who resembled angels. When Rabbi Yaakov became aware of this, he warned him not to look at what was happening in his home.

The neighbor kept his promise. One night, however, he heard a tremendous noise coming from Rabbi Yaakov's home. Although he was aware of his promise, he could not contain his curiosity. He therefore looked out towards the tzaddik's home...and immediately lost his sight! At sunrise, the man's family went to see Rabbi Yaakov to ask that he pray for him. He replied, "I warned him not to look!" When they continued to seek his forgiveness, Rabbi Yaakov told them to summon him. As the neighbor stood before Rabbi Yaakov, he passed his hand over his face and he regained his sight, just like before!

Rabbi Yaakov Abuhatzera left his town of Tafilalet in Morocco for Eretz Israel, passing through Algeria and Egypt. While he was in Damanhour, near Alexandria, he fell ill and died on Tevet 20, 5640. He was 72 years old when he rendered his soul to G-d.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA

It is written, "He fell upon the neck of his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck" (Genesis 45:14).

The Sages have explained that Joseph wept on account of the two Temples that would be built on Benjamin's territory and destroyed (Megillah 16b). We need to understand what this means. Why did only Joseph cry? Why did his brothers not cry for the two Temples that would be destroyed? Can we say that his brothers did not regret their destruction?

The other brothers certainly knew that the Temples would be destroyed. Yet because they had sold Joseph on account of their baseless hatred for him, Joseph wanted to tell them by allusion: "You sold me to the Egyptians on account of baseless hatred; therefore know that both Temples will be destroyed on account of baseless hatred!"

Their hatred led to hatred in all the generations, a sin that resulted in the destruction of both Temples on the territory of Benjamin, which is why Joseph wept upon his neck.