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maskil Le'David

The Heads of the Tribes Are Responsible for Educating the Public

"Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel, saying" (Bamidbar 30:2).

This section was first told to the heads of the tribes and only afterwards to the rest of the Bnei Yisrael. This is because Hashem initially requests that the heads of the tribes should act with caution with regard to every elementary concept and principle in Judaism, and this will result in the rest of the nation learning from their conduct. The heads of the tribes are the leaders. They are the ones who guide us on the correct path and serve as an example for the public. Since the Torah is speaking here about an important and lofty matter — the severity of profaning one's speech, as the verse states, "...he shall not desecrate his word; according to whatever comes from his mouth shall he do" — the Torah initially gave over this command to the heads of the tribes.

Hashem blessed mankind with a wonderful gift. *Onkelos* defines "a living being" as "a speaking spirit," and it is this that distinguishes man from animals. A person is obligated to guard his tongue and take great caution with what comes out of his mouth. He should not profane this gift through any kind of forbidden speech, as the Torah commands, "...he shall not desecrate his word." A person should sanctify the power of speech with which Hashem blessed him by using it only for words of Torah and holiness. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 99b) defines the purpose of speech: "Rabbi Elazar said, every person was created to toil, as it says, 'For man is born to toil' (*Iyov* 5:7). It is not clear if the toil that is demanded of a person refers to speech or to manual labor. There is another verse that says, '...when its mouth humbles itself to it' (*Mishlei* 16:26), from which we understand that man was created to toil in speech, yet it is still not clear if this refers to toiling particularly in words of Torah or toiling in regular speech. However, the verse, 'This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth' proves that man was created to toil in Torah."

Since holiness and purity of speech is a most significant and exalted concern and every person is obligated to

use this gift only for words of Torah, the Torah first cautions the heads of the tribes about the matter so that they will serve as an example for the correct usage of speech, and others will then learn from them.

Every person who considers Torah as his main occupation and is fortunate to be counted among those who sit and occupy themselves with Torah, is considered one of the "heads of the tribes." Chazal tell us (*Gittin* 62b): "Who are the princes? The Sages." Our Sages are referred to as princes since people look up to them, follow in their ways and learn from their deeds. The deeds of those who devote themselves to Torah learning are constantly examined by others with a magnifying glass and therefore a heavy responsibility rests on their shoulders. They must take care to purify their speech and ensure that their sole occupation is the Holy Torah. Any slight deviation from the path of Torah, or a slackening in Torah learning, is already considered for them as deserting the way of Torah.

Every person must therefore be aware of his strengths and utilize them to the utmost for the sake of Hashem, and if he does not do so he is included among those who are "forsaking My Torah" (*Yirmiyah* 9:12), despite the fact that he attempts to make Torah his occupation. Since he does not utilize all of the strengths that he was blessed with for the Torah's sake, it is an accusation against him.

Now we can understand why the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed. The Mikdash and its vessels were supposed to be conduits to teach us *mussar* and a way of life. For example, the fire on the Mizbeach which burnt constantly, and the lights of the Menorah which were continually alight, teach us that a person should constantly light up his *neshamah* with the Holy Torah. But once the Bnei Yisrael deserted the Torah and failed to learn from the vessels of the Mikdash how to conduct themselves, there was no longer a reason for the Mikdash to exist; as if it became unnecessary, *challah*. This is why Hashem destroyed it.

Concerning this matter too, our precious Bnei Torah, the *avreichim* who are the "heads of the tribes," must behave with extra caution. They must be diligent in studying the Holy Torah and toil in it without abating, using all their strength. If not, G-d forbid, they will be included among those who are "forsaking My Torah." Since they are the teachers of the Jewish people who guide others on the correct path, their behavior serves as an example to the rest of the people. As a consequence, they shoulder an enormous responsibility in the way they conduct themselves.

28 Tammuz 5784

3 August 2024

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Mattot-Masei

Shabbat Mevarchin



Hilula

28 Tammuz
Rabbi Yosef Shalom
Elyashiv

29 Tammuz
Rabbeinu Shlomo Yitzchaki

1 Av
Aharon Hakohen

2 Av
Rabbi Aharon Te'umim

3 Av
Rabbi Shimshon
of Ostropol

4 Av
Rabbi Shimon Biderman

5 Av
Rabbi Yitzchak Luria
Ashkenazi





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Annuling an Oath for the Sake of Marital Harmony

“But if she vowed in her husband's home, or she established a prohibition upon herself through an oath” (Bamidbar 30:11).

The *Meshech Chochmah* poses the following question: Why, concerning all the women mentioned in this section of vows, does the Torah write, “...her prohibition that she established upon herself,” and only in reference to the married woman does it add “through an oath”?

He answers that the law is that one may never revoke an oath, for an oath is taken using Hashem's Name. However, there is one situation when one is permitted to revoke an oath, namely an oath that was made concerning marital harmony. Just as the Torah permits erasing Hashem's Name in water (a procedure performed for a woman suspected of being unfaithful to her husband) for the sake of marital harmony, it also permits annulling an oath that was made using Hashem's Name.

Therefore, concerning a widow, divorcee, engaged girl and young girl still living in her father's home, the Torah does not mention the expression of oath, for the leniency of marital harmony is not relevant to these categories of women. Marital harmony is only relevant to a married woman. Therefore, when talking about a married woman the Torah writes “through an oath,” to teach us that one is permitted to annul the oath for the sake of marital harmony.

Anger and Wisdom Cannot Co-exist

“Moshe was angry with the commanders of the army” (Bamidbar 31:14).

Chazal tell us (*Pesachim* 66b): “Anyone who becomes angry, if he is wise his wisdom leaves him.” We learn this from Moshe Rabbeinu about whom it says, “Moshe was angry with the commanders of the army,” and this is followed by, **“Elazar the Kohen** said to the men of the legion who came to the battle, “This is the decree of the Torah **which Hashem commanded Moshe.**” This implies that Moshe forgot these laws.

Seemingly, Moshe's anger was justified — they had kept alive the women who had sinned. If so, why did he forget these laws of *kashering* utensils that once belonged to a non-Jew?

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz zt”l derives a fundamental lesson from this. He explains that irrespective of whether the anger is justified or not, anger always brings mistakes in its wake. Anger and wisdom stand in opposition to each other. Since this is a fact of reality and not a “punishment,” therefore, “...if he is wise his wisdom leaves him.”

Be Wary of Bad Company

“The children of Reuven and the children of Gad had abundant livestock” (Bamidbar 32:1).

Why indeed did the tribes of Gad and Reuven not wish to enter the good and expansive Land, the Land flowing with milk and honey, together with the rest of the Jewish people?

The *Sifsei Kohen* on the parsha writes that the tribes of Gad and Reuven camped under the banner of the tribe of Shimon (Bnei Yisrael were organized into four groups of three tribes in each group; each group had a banner and was led by a designated tribe), and Zimri son of Salu who sinned was the head of the tribe of Shimon. They were afraid that in Eretz Yisrael too, they would live in the same portion as the family of Shimon and therefore preferred to stay outside Eretz Yisrael in the company of good associates, rather than to live in Eretz Yisrael with bad company.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust
penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David
Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Conditioned to Love Hashem

A woman from France had an only child, whom she raised with great love. But she did not merit having more children, as she had wanted. In her sorrow, she turned to me for a blessing, which I offered wholeheartedly.

Some time passed with no signs of another child. She came to me once again. And again. And again. Each time, she begged me to pray that she have another child.

After praying for many years without seeing her prayers answered, this woman decided to move to Eretz Yisrael. She hoped that this move would arouse Heavenly mercy, and she would finally merit to have another child.

But also there her prayers went unanswered. She remained in the Holy Land, but she remained without another child.

With the change of the seasons, there was also a change in her thoughts. Despair crept into her heart where hope had once reigned. With a sense of defeat, she decided to return to France.

“Why does Hashem do this to me?” she asked. “Doesn't He see my great efforts to have another child?”

“By speaking like that,” I replied, “you are demonstrating that your love of Hashem is conditional. You love Him only if He will grant you another child. A Jew must love Hashem under all circumstances, no strings attached.

“A Jew may never approach Hashem and, *chas v'shalom*, say: ‘I will do Your will only if You do what I ask.’ Hashem is sustaining us every moment of our lives. We are not even aware of the tremendous kindnesses He does with us every second. If not for His concern, we would not survive for an instant. Therefore, we must love Him unconditionally, in all situations, and despite all hardships.

“After you feel love toward Hashem in spite of your suffering, you will reach the next rung in the ladder of ahavat Hashem. That is when the suffering increases one's love of Hashem. Tremendous reward awaits you on High for all the challenges you face in this world. Withstanding your tests will be the advocate which will stand by you in the World to Come.”

WORDS OF THE SAGES



Why Did the Chafetz Chaim Relinquish His Position of the Rabbinate?

When Rabbi Aharon Hakohen, zt”l, the son-in-law of the Chafetz Chaim, zt”l, was still an *avreich* being supported by his father-in-law, he once experienced disappointment after failing to receive the position of Rav in a certain town. Rabbi Aharon was duly upset and poured out his heart to his father-in-law.

The Chafetz Chaim tried to console him and pointed out the great responsibility that lies in accepting the Rabbinate, telling him that it is not worth being upset about not obtaining this position. However, his words did not ease Rabbi Aharon's distress.

The Chafetz Chaim then proceeded to tell his son-in-law about an incident that occurred to him during the short time that he served as Rav in his hometown of Radin, and which was in fact, the catalyst for the Chafetz Chaim to leave the position.

“At that time, one of the butchers was caught selling non-Kosher meat and I immediately removed him from his position as the town's butcher. He came to see me and expressed regret for his actions. He promised never to commit such a foolish deed again. Since his remorse seemed sincere and he was suffering from the loss of his livelihood, I allowed him to return to his business. However, I told him that he must donate forty litra of candles to the *beit midrash*, as a fine for his offence. Shortly after this incident, the butcher passed away.

“One day, I was learning as usual in the woman's section of the *beit haknesset*, when I fell asleep and dreamt that three distinguished men appeared in front of me. The most respectable one turned to me with a question: 'R' Yisrael Meir, certainly you remember the incident with the butcher, when you fined him with forty litra of candles. Tell the guilty party what the purpose of the fine was — to deter him from repeating his sin and also to deter others from sinning, or to serve as an atonement for his sin?’

“I was most alarmed,” the Chafetz Chaim continued, “but the leader reassured me and said that they would wait until I regained my composure. I tried to recall that incident and I replied that as far as I could remember, I gave him the fine as a punishment and not as an atonement.

“When I awoke, my head felt heavy. I returned to my learning but once again fell asleep. This time the butcher appeared before me, totally dejected, and in a tearful voice complained: 'Oy, Rebbe, see what you caused with your answer to the Heavenly Court! When I stood in judgment and the prosecutor wished to sentence me to Gehinom for causing others to eat non-Kosher meat, I claimed this sin had already been atoned for with the penalty of the candles you imposed on me.

“However, the prosecutor claimed that the fine was not given as an atonement but only as a punishment. They decided to ask you to reveal your true intention. And since you answered that you did not intend it to be an atonement, I will now have to suffer through the terrible afflictions of Gehinom in order to atone for that sin...”

“After this incident,” concluded the Chafetz Chaim, “I decided to give up the Rabbinate...”



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

The Head of the Family Is Considered Like the “Head of the Tribes”

Pinchas son of Elazar was one of the heads of the Jewish people and he was zealous in his *avodat Hashem*. When he witnessed the act committed by Zimri and Cozbi, his heart was stirred and he fearlessly killed them in front of everyone.

It is interesting to contemplate how Pinchas had the strength to endanger himself and kill them. From where did he draw the inner strength? We also need to understand if he was indeed allowed to put his life in danger? Since he did not know that a miracle would be performed for him, is this not considered committing suicide, G-d forbid?

The answer is that when Pinchas saw this despicable act, he did not stop to think whether he was endangering his life or not. When he saw this terrible desecration of Hashem's Name, he did not weigh up his decision nor think at all. He was prepared to give up his life, for Hashem's sake, with love. He witnessed this act and the only thing he remembered was the halachah that “One who has relations with a non-Jewess, the zealot takes the law into his hands” (*Sanhedrin* 81a). Although this is the halacha, one does not go to the Beit Din to ask how to proceed. One is supposed to act according to one's own understanding at the time of the incident.

It is important to point out that the father of a household is considered the “head of the tribe,” since the responsibility for his sons' and daughters' education rests on his shoulders. He serves as an example to them and they learn from his ways. We are told (*Bamidbar* 8:2): “...toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps.” This verse can be explained, according to *drush*, as hinting to the idea that the father is compared to the Menorah while the children are compared to the lamps. The father stands opposite the lights — his children, and it is his obligation to light up the way for them and guide them in the way of Torah, mitzvot and fear of G-d. His *avodat Hashem* and meticulousness in the performance of mitzvot must serve as an example for them — just as the heads of the tribes were responsible for guiding their congregation on the correct path, so too the father is responsible for directing his household in the way of Torah, mitzvot and good deeds.

"LET HER BE PRAISED"

Portrayal of the True Eshet Chayil
In memory of Rabbanit **Mazal Medlin Pinto**, a"h



"She made for herself luxurious bedspreads; linen and purple wool are her clothing."

The following question was posed to Harav Mordechai Neugershel, shlita, (*Lehitaden B'Ahavatecha*): Why, in comparison to men, are so few women mentioned throughout Tanach, and even less in the Mishna and the Talmud? This is a question that comes up every day, in one form or another...

He replied that in the desert Am Yisrael were given three gifts: The Well, the Manna and the Clouds of Glory. The Well was given to them in the merit of Miriam the prophetess, the Manna fell in the merit of Moshe Rabbeinu, and they received the Clouds of Glory in the merit of Aharon Hakohen.

The festival of Sukkot is celebrated as a remembrance of the Clouds of Glory. We remember the Manna by making a blessing over two loaves of bread every Shabbat. In contrast, we do not have any commemoration of the Well, and this is despite the fact that of all these three gifts, the most vital was undoubtedly that which was given in Miriam's merit. The Jewish people could have survived without Clouds of Glory; the proof is that people have been living in the desert for thousands of years, despite the difficult conditions. Without Manna it would also have been possible to survive — they were given *slav* (quail) and they possessed many animals. On the other hand, there is no way to survive, not even for a few days, without water. So why is there no commemoration of the Well?

He quoted the Gaon Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, zt"l, who says that water can be compared to a woman. Although not usually noticeable, water is found in almost everything: Building materials contain water, electricity is created by currents of water, fruits and vegetables are full of water. But, as we said, it is not noticeable to the eye.

So too the Jewish woman's touch is felt in

everything, but since she proceeds with great modesty, her accomplishments are carried out behind the scenes.

Harav Eliyahu, zt"l, applies the same concept to Torah study. The element of water is present in every aspect of creation even though it is often undetected. So too, Torah, which is compared to water, is the life force of the entire world. Those with a superficial outlook do not realize that our entire existence is only due to the Torah.

The same idea can be said in praise of the late Rabbanit, Mrs. Mazal Madeleine Pinto, a"h, whose righteous accomplishments covered many capacities. All her deeds were carried out with a special finesse and with great modesty and humility. The feelings of those on the receiving end of her good deeds were of utmost importance to her and she acted with discretion so as not to cause embarrassment to the needy. All those who felt her touch were left with a good feeling.

Her grandson, Harav Hagaon Rabbi Yoel Pinto, shlita, told over:

"My Savta, a"h, was not present at *Kriyat Yam Suf*, nor by the Giving of the Torah. Her soul was there, but she herself was not. However, she possessed such great faith that everything that happens is from Hashem. During the *shiva*, we heard many stories about her immense charitable acts, the many mitzvot she performed and how active she was in *hachnassat kallah*. What propelled her generosity? She understood that all the money that found its way to her hands came from Hashem, so when a mitzvah opportunity arose, for example a woman came to ask for charity, she realized that Hashem is the One who sent this woman her way and this is the reason why He gave her the money. If Hashem decided that a tearful young lady should knock on her door, she readily gave away whatever she had. Without witnessing *Kriyat Yam Suf*, the path she chose was to give someone a reason to smile and leave all those who came into contact with her with a special feeling."



GUARD YOUR TONGUE

The Obligation to Reprimand

One who inadvertently finds himself among a group of *ba'alei lashon hara*, (habitual speakers of *lashon hara*) and realizes that they are speaking *lashon hara*, if he thinks that his rebuke will stop them, he has a Torah obligation to reprimand them. Even if he thinks that his reproof will not help, he is not permitted to remain silent for this might cause them to assume that he is in agreement with their words.



"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"

Exciting update: With *siyata diShmaya*, the *shiurim* of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the Admor Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlit"a, are now available in Hebrew, English, French and Spanish

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