

פ' כי תשא תשפ"ג

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TRANSGRESSORS IN A MINYAN

And galbanum (chelbeno). (30:34)

A spice with an unpleasant odor. . . The Torah counted it among the ingredients of the ketores to teach us that we should not look askance at including Jewish transgressors with us when we assemble for fasting or prayer, that they should be counted with us. (Rashi, ibid)

The wording of this *Chazal* implies that it is not only permitted, but even preferable, to have Jewish sinners present at *tefillos*, because the superior qualities of a *tzaddik* are more discernible when he is counted together with the transgressor. However, the *Baal Haflo'oh*, who was the *Rav* of Frankfurt (and an ancestor of Rav Sternbuch), was particular about choosing only G-d-fearing people for his *minyan*. When he was challenged about this policy in light of the above *Medrash* that encourages us to include sinners in our public prayers, he replied that he had no objection to their joining his prayers, but only once a kosher *minyan* had been formed. Just like the *chelbonah* does not come to complete a quota of ten, but is only an additional eleventh component, so too must we be careful not to be dependent on sinners and count them as part of our community.

Moreover, just like the *chelbonah's* being added to the ingredients of the *ketores* is for its benefit since its unpleasant odor is counteracted by the pleasant smell of the other spices, so too when the wicked join us we have to make sure that this is done in such a manner that they will be influenced by the pleasant fragrance of *Yiddishkeit* rather than our being influenced by them to our detriment.

SEGULA FOR RECOVERY

And the Bnei Yisroel shall observe (veshomru) Shabbos (31:16)

Shemira can also mean to wait or expect (see Rashi on *Bereishis* 37:11), and so this phrase may be interpreted as an instruction to wait for Shabbos in eager anticipation, like Shammai who thought about Shabbos the whole week and set aside choice food he found during the week for Shabbos.

In Rav Yechezkel Abramsky's house, the Shabbos table was covered with a Shabbos tablecloth with wine and *challos* on it and set for Shabbos already in the morning. He said that he had a tradition from his grandfather who had appeared to him in a dream that this was a *segula* for being healed.

TENACITY IN TORAH

He gave Moshe the two tablets of the testimony, stone tablets, written with the finger of G-d (31:18)

The Torah was written specifically on stone tablets to hint to us that just like stone is very hard to break and resistant to heavy blows, so too is the Torah eternal and resistant to all those who seek to destroy it.

Furthermore, if someone wants to acquire Torah he must be firm with himself like stone and refuse to interrupt his studies for any other matter. Only someone who sticks to such a regimen obstinately can merit the Crown of Torah.

USING HACHNOSAS KALLO FUNDS TO SUPPORT A TALMID CHOCHOM

“When He had finished speaking (*kechaloiso*) with him on Har Sinai, He gave Moshe the two *luchos habris*” (31:18)

Rashi says that *kechaloiso* is spelled without a *vov* so that it can be read as *kechaloso* (“like his bride”), because the Torah was delivered to Moshe as a gift, as a *kallo* is given to a *choson*, because otherwise he could not have learnt it all in such a short time.

It is not enough to learn Torah like other forms of wisdom. Torah has to be acquired, just like a *choson* acquires his *kallo*. Just like he cleaves to his wife until they become one indivisible unit, so too should a *chochom* cleave to the Torah and be consumed by it to the point that it dominates all his thoughts.

Alternatively (Rashi adds), just as a bride is adorned with the twenty-four ornaments listed in *Yeshayohu* (3:18-22), so too must a *talmid chochom* be adorned with the twenty-four books of the *Tenach*. The emphasis here is on an adornment. A *talmid chochom* should first master Torah *sheba'al pe*, which is the main body and foundation of the Torah, and only then adorn himself with the entire *Tenach*.

The *sefer Mishnas Sochir* brings a *halachik* ruling based on an actual case in which a *hachnosas kallo* organization wanted to use its funds, which were designated for *kallots*, to support a *talmid chochom*. The Chasam Sofer ruled on the basis of the above Rashi that a *talmid chochom* enjoys a status equivalent to that of a *kallo*, and consequently the organization was entitled to use its funds to support a *talmid chochom*.

This ruling is a very novel one. Rav Sternbuch heard from his grandfather, Rav Shlomo Zalman Pines that their ancestor, the Vilna Gaon did not participate in any charity organization in Vilna. Only when it came to a poor or orphaned bride was he willing to take himself away from his learning and do what he could to assist this cause, going from door to door to collect funds.

LESSONS OF THE CHEIT HO'EIGEL

Now leave Me alone, and My anger will be kindled against them so that I will annihilate them. (32:10)

Only three thousand people, all of them belonging to the *Eirev Rav*, actively participated in the *cheit ho'eigel* (see Rashi on 32:7 in conjunction with 32:28), and yet Hashem wanted to destroy the whole nation on account of them. Why was this?

Even though *Klal Yisroel* had not actually served the *eigel*, and entertained no doubts that it was a hoax, they disowned any responsibility for the actions of the *Eirev Rav*, and expressed complete disinterest in the sins committed by them. It was for this reason that Hashem's anger was kindled and He said “I will annihilate them, and make you into a great nation.”

If a person does not care for a fellow Jew, Hashem acts towards him measure for measure, and *kivyochol* does not care for him, leaving him to his own devices. Moreover, if everyone lives only for himself, then *Klal Yisroel* lacks the power of the *rabbim*. In that situation every person is judged as an individual, and everyone becomes associated with the active sins committed by the transgressors because of his failure to protest them.

During World War II Rav Moshe Schneider said that the *cheit ho'eigel* teaches us that if we remain silent upon witnessing *kefirah* and *avodah zoro*, this has a destructive effect on everybody, and, as *Chazal* say, whenever the nation is punished in each generation some of that punishment is a continuation of the punishment for the *chiet ha'eigel*. In each generation, whenever we do not protest enough against sinners, even if we are not happy with what they are doing, Hashem metes out punishment on the nation as a whole.

He added that he was fearful for the future because we were not sufficiently protesting the transgressions of those who were inciting others to sin, and Hashem was likely to hold the entire public responsible for this, because, as *Chazal* say, when permission is given to the destroying angel, it does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. Rav Schneider concluded that perhaps the destruction of the Torah centers in Europe was occurring because the *yiden* had not sufficiently protested the actions of those who had angered Hashem *kivyochol*.

Similarly, Rav Sternbuch heard from Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler in England during World War II when news started filtering through about the atrocities being committed on the continent against Jews, and people were wondering how Hashem could let such calamities befall so many righteous people, that although there were indeed many *zaddikim* and G-d-fearing people, perhaps they had not taken sufficient action to make sure that others keep the Torah too, with the result that Hashem had become angry and “hidden His countenance” from them. Just like we did not think it necessary to interfere and protest the actions of our wicked coreligionists, so too – measure for measure - did Hashem not “interfere” to save us from our enemies.

The Chofetz Chaim used to say that if we do not fight the wicked, we might come up with the excuse that we are afraid of them, but if we flatter them, then we cannot be judged favorably, and Hashem will surely hold us to account for that.

Rav Schneider would add that even if we do not have the ability to fight the wicked properly, then we should at least feel great sorrow for the desecration of the divine name. When a person loses a lot of money, he is very upset, and if he does not feel at least the same amount of sorrow for Hashem’s honor, what will he be able to say on the Day of Judgement?

WAILING IN JOY

“When Yehoshua heard the voice of the people in their shouting, he said to Moshe: “There is a voice of battle [bere’oh] in the camp!”” (32:17)

The Targum Yonoson renders *bere’oh* as “wailing in joy”. They danced and were outwardly happy, but simultaneously felt internal anguish at having reached this stage, their conscience refusing to let them suppress their intellectual recognition of the enormity of their sin. This is what Targum Yonoson means by “wailing in joy”.

The Alter of Novardok once found himself in the same town as a former student who had become completely irreligious. The Alter spent a full hour trying to convince this wayward student to repent, but to no avail. It is well known that the Alter used every moment to the fullest, and so his students asked him whether he did not regret having wasted an entire hour. He answered that he had no regrets at all, because he had been successful in convincing this wicked person that at least he should not feel pleasure in his sins, and even though he would continue to sin due to his desires, he would no longer sin enthusiastically, but with grief for having become swept away by his desires.

Alternatively, genuine happiness is an internal lasting joy, and that is known as *simcha shel mitzvah*, whereas momentary pleasure devoid of any content (known as *holelus*) is ephemeral. The person may think that he feels happy during the act itself, but immediately afterwards his feelings evaporate and he realizes that this is not *simcha*. According to this, the *Targum Yonoson* means that those who participated in the *chet ho’egel* experienced only *holelus*, and therefore their expressions of joy were intermingled with wailing sounds due to the vacuous and meaningless nature of their experience.

EARNING A LIVING IN OUR TIMES

“And he flung the tablets from his hands” (32:19)

It says in Tana Devei Eliyohu (Zuta Ch. 4) that when Moshe flung the tablets from his hands it was decreed upon the Jews that they would learn Torah with difficulty and great effort, and with little sustenance, and in the reward of the resulting distress Hashem would recompense them in the days of *Moshiach* and in the World to Come.

Lately, the cost of living has gone up and the offers and temptations to join the job market are increasing all the time. Every *ben Torah* has to know that the difficulties he encounters have been decreed since the time that the *luchos* were broken by Moshe *Rabbenu*, and he will be greatly rewarded for his efforts and tenacity, not to mention his wife, who will share his reward for the sacrifices she makes in her dedication to her husband's and sons' Torah.

The more effort that we put into Torah learning, the less effort will we have to make into earning a living. Rav Yechezkel Abramsky said, "On Rosh HaShanoh and Yom Kippur, people cry when saying the words 'a man's foundations are from dust and he ends up in dust' in *U'Nesaneh Tokef*, but I cry mainly when saying the words 'with his soul does he bring bread.' In order to provide sustenance for his family, a person often uses methods that are harmful to his soul, to his spiritual welfare, and that is certainly a matter to cry about." This applies both to working in inappropriate jobs or environments, and investing too much effort into making a living, at the expense of Torah learning.

DAAS TORAH

"And he flung the tablets from his hands" (32:19)

At the end of the Chumash it says, "and all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moshe wrought in the sight of all the Jews", on which the Sifri comments: "that he was courageous and broke the tablets in front of them". It seems amazing that after stating that "there has not arisen a prophet since in Yisroel like Moshe... in all the signs and wonders", the Torah culminates the praises heaped upon Moshe with the praise that he broke the tablets. Why was that the ultimate praise?

By breaking the *luchos*, Moshe was demonstrating that he had not only been privileged to receive the Torah from Hashem, but had merited reaching the stage that his intellect had turned into pure *daas Torah*, which enabled him to overcome the *luchos* and smash them.

Every *godol baTorah* is obligated to turn his intellect into *daas Torah*, and not make do with just knowing what it says in the *Shulchan Oruch*, but rather delving into what is the Will of Hashem. Such *daas Torah* can only be merited through intense toiling in Torah and pure fear of Heaven.

JEWISH LEADERS ALWAYS OPPOSED

"And they gazed after Moshe until he went into the tent" (33:8)

Rashi says that they gazed in admiration saying, "Fortunate is one born of woman who is so assured that the *Shechinah* follows him to the entrance of his tent". However, the Yerushalmi (*Shekolim* 5:2) brings another opinion. According to the contrary view, they gazed at him in a derogatory manner, as if to say that he had taken everything from the Jews. Had he not had complete control over the money for constructing the *Mishkon*? Surely that is how he became rich, they argued.

We see from this that anyone who issues halachik rulings will have enemies who slander him. Even Moshe *Rabbenu* was not spared, and people attempted to portray him as a thief. True Jewish leaders, like Moshe *Rabbenu*, are willing to tolerate such treatment, and serve the nation with great self-sacrifice, in total disregard of those who slander them. As Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzhinsky put it, "a *rov* who does not have people seeking to depose him is not a *rov* at all, and if the *rov* is afraid and resigns he is not a *rov* at all".