



From the desk of
MORDECHAI MALKA
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel
Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions
Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

TORAT

Parashat Behar

HAMELECH

Speak Nicely

In this week's *parashah*, we have the mitzvot of *ona'at mamon* and *ona'at devarim*. We mustn't cheat people nor may we afflict them verbally. It is important to think about these mitzvot, because they come our way more often than we notice, and if we do not prepare ourselves properly, we will fail in our mission.

In this issue, we will focus upon *ona'at devarim*.

Gemara Bava Metzia 58b gives a few examples:

- a) Do not tell a Baal Teshuva, "Remember what you used to do."
- b) Do not tell a descendant of converts, "Remember what your parents did before they converted."
- c) Do not tell a convert, "You know, you once filled your mouth with *treif* food, and now you want to use it to learn Torah!"
- d) If someone asks you where he can buy a certain item, do not send him to a store which you know does not have it.
- e) If you have absolutely no intention of purchasing a certain item, do not ask the seller how much it costs, for that raises his expectations.

In a way, afflicting verbally is worse than cheating monetarily, for one can rectify money matters more easily, by simply compensating for the loss.

Daily Rav Rachumis

The Gemara continues and says that a person must exercise extreme caution not to verbally distress his wife. A woman is generally more sensitive and Heaven speedily responds to tears of the afflicted.

Rav Rachumi used to return home only on Erev Yom Kippur. One year, he was so engrossed in his learning that he forgot to go home. His wife eagerly anticipated his arrival. When the hour got late and he still did not show up, a lone tear strolled down her cheek. Rav Rachumi paid for that dearly. The floor under him caved in and that was the end of him! (Ketuvot 62b).

A *mashgiach* of today would admonish newly married Kollel fellows, "Hurry home straight away after *seder*! Your wife is waiting for you! Today, we are all daily Rav Rachumis! Care for your family and live long!"

Sixty in, Sixty out

As we approach Shavuot, we think of Boaz and Rut. What some of us may not be aware of is that Rut was his second wife. Boaz had married previously and had 30 sons and 30 daughters. He married off all of them, but did not invite Manoach to any of the festivities. Why not? Maharsha explains: Manoach had no children.



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The custom those days was to bring an expensive wedding gift. Boaz thought to himself, "If I invite him, he will spend so much money on me, and I will never get a chance to return the favor."

Although he had this consideration in mind, nonetheless, Manoach felt slighted and Boaz paid dearly for not accurately assessing the situation. All sixty children perished in Boaz's lifetime. (Bava Batra 91a)

Hannah's Seven

Elkanah had two wives, Peninah and Chanah. Peninah had ten children while Chanah had none. Peninah would taunt Chanah, hoping that Chanah would pray and be blessed with children. Eventually, Chanah gave birth to Shmuel and several more. With each successive birth, two of Peninah's children perished. Peninah made the obvious connection. Apparently, all of her good intentions did not help, since at the end of the day, Chanah was pained by her words.

As Chanah was once again expecting and Peninah had only two children left, Peninah begged her to pray that her last two children remain alive. Chanah did so. Thus, while Chanah only gave birth to five children, the verse says that she had seven, because Peninah's remaining two are considered hers as well, since they only stayed alive due to her prayers.

Help Out at Home

Two people enter a *shul* to *daven* and one of them finishes first. If he leaves his friend alone, Hashem tears apart his prayers (Berachot 5a), as if saying to him, "You had no compassion for your comrade, so I have no compassion for you."

Based on this, Rav Moshe Feinstein would tell fathers to give precedence to helping out in the home in the busy morning hours. Certainly it is best to try to arrange one's schedule such that his prayers do not conflict with his household duties. But when his wife is having a rough time getting the kids out to their places of learning in a reasonable fashion, sometimes that takes precedence. Help out first, then go *daven*. This is like giving *tzedakah* before you pray. In this merit, your prayers will be accepted.

One Little Note

Also, whenever leaving home, you ought to tell your spouse where you are heading and when she can expect you home. If you see that something came up and you will return home later than planned, pick up a phone and inform her of the change in schedule. She wants to know.

Also, upon returning home, share your day. Speak of interesting encounters.

There was once a man, we'll call him Gershon. This Gershon came home very late one night, after everyone had gone to sleep.



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The next morning, he woke up early and went to daven at the sunrise *minyán* at the Western Wall. How righteous! But he forgot to leave his wife a note! His wife woke up and did not find him at home. All frantic, she called her parents, who then called their other two sons-in-law to set out on a search where he was last seen. She also called her in-laws, for perhaps Gershon went to visit them. The agitated parents travelled by taxi from Bnei Brak to Yerushalayim. By the time Gershon returned from *Shacharit*, he found a whole party of concerned family members assembled in his dining room.

He could have saved so many people from two long hours of worry and concern with one little thoughtful note.

Rabbi Meir's Observation

We should realize that causing pain to others also causes pain to the Shechinah HaKedoshah! Rabbi Meir teaches that when a Jew is in pain, the Shechinah exclaims, "Oy! My Head Aches! Oy! My Arm Aches!"

This is true even if the afflicted is a sinner. All the much more so if he is meticulous in mitzvah observance. (Sanhedrin 46a)

Rav Yitzchak Erlich thus explains the well-known *segulah* of praying in the merit of Rabbi Meir, saying, "Elaka de Meir, Aneini!"

This could be a reference to Rabbi Meir's aforementioned descriptions of the pain of the Shechinah! If you pray to be free of pain so that the Shechinah need not suffer, such a prayer deserves a positive response!

Hashem's Prayer

Even HaKadosh Baruch Hu prays! What does He say? "May it be My Will that My Compassion suppresses My anger, and My Compassion be dominant over all My other Attributes, and that I conduct Myself towards My children with Compassion and I deal with them in the most benevolent way." (Berachot 7a)

Give and Live

Rabbeinu Yonah writes (Shaarei Teshuva 3:36) that the Torah prohibition of "Lo ti'amez et levavecha" instructs us to uproot all cruelty from ourselves and to establish the pleasant ways of compassion and kindness into our hearts.

Zohar HaKadosh (Parashat Mishpatim) explains that when we keep Shemittah properly, ensuring that produce is available for all, that arouses Hashem's Compassion and Benevolence upon His People.

This brings us to the story of Binyamin Hatsaddik. This righteous man was the *tzedakah* collector of the town. One time, a woman came and begged for alms. Reb Binyamin swore to her that his



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tzedakah funds were totally depleted. She replied, "Rabbi! If you do not support me, then I and my seven children will die of hunger."

Reb Binyamin supported her from his own resources.

Sometime later, Reb Binyamin fell ill, very ill. *Malachei HaSharet* pleaded on his behalf. "Master of the Universe," they began, "You said that anyone who saves one life, it is as if he has saved an entire world. Binyamin Hatzaddik sustained a woman and her seven children. Will he now die?"

At that, the verdict was torn apart and he was granted an additional 22 years.

The Blind Man's Bed

Zohar HaKadosh (Bereishit p. 23) says that when a person deserves harsh punishment due to his sins, sometimes Hashem sends a poor man to knock at his door to give him a chance to earn compassion. Be compassionate to the poor and Heaven will deal compassionately towards you. Remember this the next time someone asks you for help. He may really be offering you salvation!

We need not limit this to financial assistance. If you are sitting in a Beit Medrash and someone comes to ask you a question in learning, if you are able to help him, do so. Don't just send him away.

When R' Chaim Kreiswirth learned in Yeshiva, there was a blind *bachur* who needed a bed. Reb Chaim let him use his bed and Reb Chaim slept on the floor.

When the Nazis invaded they led the *bachurim* to their death, one by one. Reb Chaim's turn was next. He uttered a silent prayer. He said to Hashem, "Please remember how I gave my bed to the blind boy!"

For some unknown reason, the S.S. officer took Reb Chaim outside and told him, "I am going to shoot and miss. You run for your life."

Reb Chaim survived and became one of the greatest Geonim and Roshei Yeshiva of the generation.

Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh (Devarim 13:18) reveals to us what a ruthless Arab murderer once told him. The murderer said, "When we go on a killing mission, we get filled with a passion for blood spilling. Not a trace of compassion is left in our system."

Unfortunately, we have experienced this Arab tendency recently. May we all be aroused to deal compassionately towards our brethren, earning us Heavenly compassion.

**Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka**