

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

*Shmuessen from
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פרשת כי תשא

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ברוך מאיר לייב בן
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ואשתו אסתר בת פנחס יוסף מילר ע"ה
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אברהם שמחה והינדי אורליך

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצוק"ל

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וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן מָה עָשָׂה לְךָ הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי הִבֵּאתָ עָלָיו
חַטָּאת גְּדוֹלָה: (שמות ל"ב כ"א)

And Moshe said to Aharon, "What has this nation done to you, that you have brought upon it a great sin?"

When Moshe Saw the Eigel He Immediately Turned to Aharon

Moshe Rabeinu came down from Har Sinai and he witnessed the *Cheit Ha'Eigel* in action. The first person he turned to was Aharon, and he asked him how he could have done such a thing. How did this nation bring upon him such a great sin? It seems puzzling that the first person Moshe should turn to is none other than the great Aharon Hakohen.

A locker in the Yeshiva was broken, and it was clearly the handiwork of one of the bochurim. The menahel immediately identified the boy who was responsible for the damage. He singled out a specific bochur, called him into his office, and said: "Noach, was it you who was fooling around with the lockers?" Indeed, Noach confessed that he was the responsible party.

A menahel must know his bochurim. When someone has stepped out of line he needs to know where to turn, and which boys are more likely to have been involved. He should know who the 'troublemakers' are and who they aren't.

If he is a good menahel, he will be able to immediately intuit which bochur was associated with the damage, and usually the first person who he calls into his office will indeed be the culprit. If he is not as good he will get it on his second or third try. He certainly would not make the mistake of thinking that the damage was caused by the yeshiva's biggest masmid!

Why did Moshe immediately assume that it was Aharon who was responsible for the *Cheit Ha'egel*? Aharon was the most outstanding member of Klal Yisrael. He was the least likely person among the entire nation who would have done such a great sin! If

Moshe was looking for the 'troublemakers', he should have first gone to Dasan and Aviram! They were probably the ones who had instigated this terrible atrocity!

What is even more intriguing is that Moshe was right! He correctly identified Aharon as the responsible party. How did Moshe know that it was indeed Aharon who was behind this great sin?

Aharon was the Nation's Leader During Moshe's Absence

The answer is that before Moshe had left Klal Yisrael to go up to Har Sinai, he put them in the hands of Aharon. ואל הזקנים אמר שבו לנו בזה עד אשר נשוב אליכם והנה אהרן וחור עמכם מי בעל דברים יגש אליהם, "And to the Zekeinim he said, "Wait for us here until we return to you, and behold Aharon and Chur are with you; whoever has a grievance should approach them."

Moshe had instructed Klal Yisrael that while he would be absent they should seek the guidance of Aharon and Chur. They would be the leaders and all issues should be brought to them. Thus, Moshe knew that Klal Yisrael had not done this terrible sin without first consulting Aharon and Chur. Chur was not around, for he had been killed. Therefore, Moshe immediately turned to Aharon and demanded an explanation. He was the leader, and he was therefore held responsible for this offense.

This leads us to another question. If Aharon was indeed responsible for the nation, then why did he allow them to fall into this terrible transgression? This that Moshe immediately identified Aharon as the responsible party demonstrates that Klal Yisrael would not have committed this sin without Aharon's consent. He was their leader, and he was responsible for resolving all their issues. If so, why did Aharon allow this?

עם קשה עורף

The answer to this question reveals a great weakness about us. It is the essence of why we are called an עם קשה עורף, *a stiff-necked people*.

When Klal Yisrael approached Aharon, they did not ask if they should make an *Eigel*, they demanded it. The *posuk* says: "ויקהל העם על אהרן ויאמרו אליו קום עשה לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו כי זה משה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים לא ידענו מה היה לו, *And the nation gathered around Aharon and they said, "Rise up, make for us gods that will go before us,*

for this man Moshe who brought us up from the land of Mitzrayim – we do not know what became of him.”

Klal Yisrael did not know what happened to Moshe, and they panicked. They ran to Aharon and they said: “We don’t know where Moshe is! Get up and make for us an *Eigel!*” They told Aharon what to do. This is not the way to address a leader. They should not have told him what to do, rather they should have asked him what to do.

Instead of saying “Get up and make for us an *Eigel!*” they should have approached Aharon and said: “What should we do? We don’t know where Moshe is!” Had they said this, Aharon would have responded: “Let us think about it and we will come up with an *aitzah*. Don’t worry, I am in charge, and I will not let you go! I will take care of you!”

Unfortunately, however, they did not ask Aharon what to do. They assumed that their solution to make an *eigel* was clearly the answer to their problems, and they demanded of Aharon that he make for them an *eigel*. Under these circumstances Aharon was left with no choice but to go along with their demands.¹

This is not the way to approach a leader. When approaching our leaders we must understand that they are the ones with clear vision, and that we need them to guide us. We must fully surrender ourselves to them, and give them full control to resolve our issues.

This that *Klal Yisrael* came to Aharon with a finished product, and they dictated to him what should be done demonstrated that in fact they were not at all interested in Aharon’s opinion. They were sure that with their wisdom alone they could resolve their problems,

¹ One could ask that still, Aharon should have refused. He should have held strong against their demands, and as their leader he should have prevented them from committing this terrible *aveirah*.

The answer to this is that Aharon saw that Chur had been killed because he refused to allow the *yidden* to make an *eigel*. Aharon felt that if he would further antagonize them, he too would be killed. If this would happen, their sin would have been too great to bear, and *Klal Yisrael* would be lost forever. Aharon therefore felt that for *Klal Yisrael*’s own benefit it would be better to go along with them. He would have to deal with the repercussions, but it would ultimately save *Klal Yisrael* from total destruction.

and they would not be budged. It was this stubbornness which earned them the title of an עורף קשה, *a stiff-necked people*.

Our Gedolim are The Experts

We learn a very important lesson from this. It is of utmost importance that when seeking the guidance of *gedolim*, we leave the decision in their hands. We must feed them all the pertinent information with one hundred percent accuracy, and let them decide what should be done.

Reuven was feeling sick for a prolonged period of time, and he went to his doctor to receive a diagnosis. He wanted to be sure that the doctor would understand how he was feeling and that he would correctly determine the cause of his sickness. He therefore made sure to write down all of his symptoms on a piece of paper before his appointment, just to be sure that he didn't leave anything out.

When we go to the doctor we understand that they are the experts and they should be the ones to make the diagnosis. To be sure that they give an accurate diagnosis, we are careful to tell them everything, and we certainly would not intentionally distort any facts! If this is our attitude with regard to our physical health, how much more so should we feel this way when it comes to our *ruchniyus*! The *gedolim* are our doctors of *ruchniyus*. When seeking the advice of a *gadol* we must understand that we need *them* to answer our questions. We can only be sure that their advice reflects the will of Hashem if we have fed them all the information correctly.

This is relevant both on a personal level and on a communal level.

Objectiveness is Key When Seeking the Guidance of Gedolim

On a personal level, if one wants to truly follow the guidance of *Daas Torah* he must be very careful to formulate his question objectively. We have an unfortunate tendency to ask questions in a biased way. Based on our agenda, we decide exactly how to present the question, and we tailor it so that we should get the results which we want.

Sruly very much wants to go to Las Vegas for a vacation. He knows however, that it is a place filled with peritzus and

tumah, and going there will be very harmful to his kedushah. He therefore seeks the guidance of his Rav.

He says: "Rebbi, is it okay for me to daven in Beis Torah U'Tefillah, a certain shul in the city?" The Rav doesn't know of any reason why this particular shul should be unfit for davening, and he therefore responds affirmatively.

Sruly takes this to mean that the Rav has allowed him to make the trip to Las Vegas.

This is obviously a ridiculous conclusion. Sruly didn't ask if he could go to Las Vegas for a vacation, he asked about davening in a particular *shul* which happened to be in Las Vegas. His Rav's response that it would be okay to daven in that *shul* was not meant as an approval for a vacation in that city.

Had Sruly said, "*Is it okay to take a vacation in a place filled with peritzus and shmutz?*" his Rav would have responded with a resounding "NO!" However, Sruly really wanted to go on this vacation and he therefore tailored the question in a way which brought him the desired response.

When seeking the guidance of a *Gadol* it is imperative to ask questions objectively, and without personal agendas. Otherwise, we cannot necessarily assume that the *Gadol's* response is reflective of *Daas Torah*. It may actually just be reflective of our desires.

Misplaced Zealousness

This is also relevant on a communal level. Oftentimes people perceive a communal problem, and they act zealously to rectify it. In order to ensure that their agenda will be followed they seek the approbation of *gedolim*. When doing so they must take extreme care not to distort any facts. They must present the entire case without leaving anything out and allow the *gadol* to decide if their agenda has merit. If they deviate from the truth and embellish their story in order to ensure that the *gadol* gives the sought-after response, they have committed a grievous sin.

Even if their intent is for *kavod Shamayim*, this does not justify their actions. Stretching the truth in order to advance their agenda is manipulating *Gedolim* and betraying their trust. It is essentially telling them what the answers should be.

This is what *Klal Yisrael* did to Aharon Hakohen, and it proved to be disastrous. They were not at all interested in Aharon's opinion as they were sure that they knew just what should be done to solve their problem. It was this stubbornness which earned them the title of 'עם קשה עורף'.

The Way of the Torah is *Emes*.

The way of the Torah is *emes*, and the only path to properly living a Torah-life is by following the dictates of *emes*. Just because we assume that our agendas will uphold Torah values, this does not justify deviating from the truth. Zealousness has no place in Torah if its goals are achieved through crookedness.

There is a fascinating Ohr Hachaim in *Parshas Mishpatim* which drives home this point with stunning clarity.

The *possuk* says לא תהיה אחרי רבים לרעות ולא תענה על רב לנטות (שמות כג: ב) "Do not be a follower of the majority for evil, and do not respond to a grievance by yielding to the majority to pervert the law."

The Ohr Hachaim explains as follows:

The *Gemara* in *דף יז* discusses the *halachos* of a *Beis Din* when ruling on a case of capital punishment. It says: סנהדרין שראו כולם לחובה פוטרין אותו. This means that they can only kill the accused person if there was a dissenting view among the judges. However, if all twenty three judges unanimously agreed that the defendant was in fact guilty then he would not be killed.

The Torah is referring to a judge who is sitting with a *Beis Din* and they are about to give their ruling on whether or not a particular person deserves the death penalty. All twenty two other judges found him guilty, whereas the last judge to cast his vote feels that he was innocent. If this last judge would in fact vote according to his view then the defendant would be killed. His vote of acquittal would be outnumbered twenty two to one. However, if he votes guilty, contrary to his actual belief, then the accused party would actually be acquitted. Thus, if this last judge truly wants to save the defendant from the death penalty, he should in fact vote guilty!

The Ohr Hachaim writes that above *possuk* teaches that even so, this judge may not cast a vote which is contrary to his belief. לא תהיה אחרי רבים לרעות, *Do not follow the majority for evil*. In other words,

if you feel that the majority vote is evil, and that they have wrongly concluded that the defendant is guilty, you must not follow them. Even if by following them you will in fact be undermining their agenda, because now the defendant will actually be acquitted, it is still considered following the majority for evil and it may not be done.

The Ohr Hachaim continues and says: Do not be worried that in your view the verdict will be unjust, and that ultimately an innocent person will be killed. Justice belongs to Hashem alone, and He commanded you to honestly state your view. If according to the Torah this will ultimately bring death upon this defendant, than this must be what Hashem has decided is just. One may not attempt to 'outsmart' the system to ensure that his view of justice is upheld.

We see from here the level of importance which the Torah attaches to *emes*. A judge may not say something which in his view is *sheker* even at the expense of someone's life. If this is so in matters of life and death, how much more so is it true in all other areas!

When seeking the advice of Gedolim we must recognize that their views reflect the will of Hashem, and in no way may we attempt to sway their opinions by distorting the truth. Attempting to manipulate a Gadol, and to promote an agenda by deviating from the truth is 'outsmarting' the system and it is the mark of a קשה עורף. It doesn't matter that in this person's view this agenda is the will of Hashem. The very act of using *sheker* to achieve ones goals is what demonstrates that his views are in fact *not* in line with the Torah!

This is the lesson of the *Cheit Ha'eigel*. When *klal Yisrael* approached Aharon Hakohen they manipulated him into doing their will. They assumed that their tactic was the correct one, and they refused to hear of anything else. They 'forced' their leader to promote their agenda, and this proved to be a grave mistake.

Let us learn from this *Parsha* to properly submit ourselves to our Gedolim, and to objectively seek the true *Daas Torah* in every area of our lives.

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