



Parashat Shemot 5771 - #168

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On the Parashah... Calling a Jew: "Wicked"

[Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah – Shemot pp. 45-46]

The Gemara in Kiddushin (28a) gives clear halachic guidelines for one who calls another Jew by a disparaging name: "Someone who calls his fellow "wicked" will have his livelihood negatively affected (Rashi, Tosafot and Ri Ha-Zaken ibid.). Our Sages state it clearly: It is absolutely forbidden to call a fellow Jew "wicked." Referring to another Jew as evil is a type of forgery and falsification of reality, a shocking falsification. Rabbi David Tabil of Minsk, one of the great and first students of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin and author of "Nachalat David" on the Gemara, wrote a great philosophical book called "Beit David," in which he explained at length that the discord and fragmentation found in the Nation of Israel is also a denial of the unity of Hashem. A division within the Divine Presence is a division within "And I dwell within the Children of Israel" (Shemot 26:45 and Melachim 1 6:13). Our connection to the oneness of Hashem obligates the holy Nation of Israel to be united together in love, brotherhood, and friendship, tied tightly together like one person without any separation or division. In effect, the unity of the holy Nation of Israel testifies to the oneness of Hashem. In turn, the sin of dispute is truly like idol worship, since dispute is the opposite of unity, and it is as if the disputant testifies about himself that he does not have a part in the G-d of Israel (Beit David, darash 6 quoted in Olat Re'eiyah vol. 2, p. 468).

It is thereof not possible to have a reality in which one Jew calls another "wicked"! The Gemara in Sanhedrin (58b) does state, however, that "One who raises his hand against his fellow, even though he does not strike him, is called wicked," and it brings a proof from the verse (Shemot 2:13): "He [Moshe] said to the wicked one: Why would you strike your fellow?" If so, it appears that a reality does exist in which one Jew called another "wicked"?! But one must pay close attention to the words of the Gemara. It is true that he is called "wicked," but this does not mean that it is permissible for one Jew to call his fellow Jew "wicked". Therefore, in the incident with Moshe Rabbenu, we learn that when one Jew was striking another and causing a division among Israel, he is referred to as "wicked" by the Torah, i.e. Hashem. We, however, are not to do the same. A similar example is found in the Gemara in Kiddushin (59a) which speaks of a person abandoning a cake in the public domain. A poor person notices it and wants to take it; but before he grabs it, another person jumps in front of him and snatches it. It is difficult to call him a thief, but he is referred to as "wicked." This does not mean that it is permissible for one Jew to call another Jew "wicked", but only that his level is designated as wicked by Hashem.

Rav Aviner on...
Visiting Jonathan Pollard in an American Prison:
An Interview with Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

[Parashah Sheet "Olam Katan" – Vayigash 5771]

How does one arrange a meeting like this?

"I do not know the process, since they arranged it for me, but I do know that it takes many months to receive permission such as this. The one who arranged all of this is Rabbi Pesach Lerner, Vice President of 'Young Israel'. He displays self-sacrifice to visit Jonathan at every opportunity, and he also accompanied me on this visit."

Can Ha-Rav describe the entrance and checking process before one reaches Jonathan?

"There is a serious checking process there, and it is forbidden to enter with anything. Not a pencil, not a camera, not even a handkerchief or a piece of paper. Nothing. You enter and a metal door is closed. You then enter a hallway, and a metal door is open and then another door and another door, and the place is filled with cameras. They also stamp your hand with an invisible stamp, and when you leave, they check, with the help of ultraviolet, that it is you, in order that you do not switch with the prisoner. It seems that there are people with self-sacrifice who are willing to switch with the prisoner... In brief, it is impossible to escape from there, it thus appears"... Ha-Rav clarifies for anyone planning.

We'll arrange another flight for Pollard

Besides Rabbi Pesach Lerner, a Rabbi/teacher from Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim accompanied Ha-Rav Aviner, and a representative of the American Government was also present during the entire conversation. Ha-Rav Aviner mentioned that the businessman, Shlomo Zakheim, offered his private plane to transport Ha-Rav for the visit. "He is a wealthy man who each day performs kindnesses in many places with much money and time."

A problem was discovered with the plane a short time after take-off. They turned around and the landing was without problems. Zakheim quickly descended the plane and another rented plane was waiting for them. "Just as you buy a pen when your pen does not write, he rented another plane," Ha-Rav said in astonishment. "Regarding these two Jews, Zakheim and Rabbi Lerner, Jonathan said that without them he does not know where he and his wife would be today, since the Government of Israel does not help him and his wife."

People say that Pollard is not so healthy. Did Ha-Rav observe this?

"In general, he is sick and he recently had another complication, but one does not sense this about him. He smiles, speaks in moderation, quietly and with knowledge. He possesses a sharp, analytical mind, creativity, and also a good sense of humor. You do not see any of this about him, and this is great strength, since the following night, he felt really awful. But when one comes to see him, he strengthens himself, and you do not see any of it."

Does he succeed in having any hope?

"He has hope. Firstly, because he is a man of great faith. Additionally, as is known, there was been an awakening both in Israel and outside of Israel. A senior aide to Caspar Weinberger (Secretary of Defense of American during the time of Pollard's arrest), named Korb, was the person who presented the memo, following which Jonathan received a life

sentence with a recommendation not to grant him clemency. This same Korb recently said that this memo was not true, i.e. Jonathan was blamed for things he did not do. There is therefore an awakening in the US and in Israel."

What did you talk about?

"He spoke the whole time and I just listened. At the end of the conversation, he said that he knows me, because every week he reads the Parashah Sheet of Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim. This sheet is distributed on the internet in Hebrew, English, Russian, French, and Spanish. He therefore knows what I think on all subjects (to receive the Parashah Sheet, e-mail: mororly@bezeqint.net). In general, he knows everything that is happening in Israel and America. He said that he is concerned about the Nation of Israel. This man is in love with the Nation of Israel with a great yearning. He said: "I want to get out of here not necessarily for myself but for the Nation of Israel. Since the Nation of Israel needs to withstand future tests, which will not be simple, I want to be together with her." These are not merely words. If another person said such things, people would say to him that his words don't amount to much. But as Jonathan displayed self-sacrifice for the Nation of Israel and endangered himself for the sake of the Nation of Israel, it is therefore possible to believe him.

By the way, he also displays self-sacrifice in the service of Hashem. It is not easy to observe Shabbat in an American prison, but he observes Shabbat, eats Kosher, and also acts modestly with self-sacrifice. There are people, when faced with hardships in life, who begin to raise objections against the Master of the Universe, but he is the exact opposite. When he entered prison, he was not religious, and here – of all places – he became religious. He has to drink large quantities of water on account of a medical problem, and he says: 'This is an opportunity for me to recite a lot of blessings.'

Obviously, it greatly pains him that the Government ignores him and does nothing for him. What bothers him is not only how they relate to him, but that the Government of Israel does not act, as one would expect, in a Jewish and ethical manner in this matter. He says: 'If the Government had said that it could not help, this would be something else.' But the sense they transmit is that they do not want to help. It took approximately ten years until the State of Israel recognized its agent, and this was only following a ruling of the Supreme Court, which he approached and convinced. Only for this reason is there a document today which testifies that he is an official spy of the State of Israel. But this document has not been brought to the U.S. And as long as there is not official statement of responsibility from the State of Israel, in the U.S., he is presumed to be a criminal or traitor, and not as an agent of a friendly country, with which it has a special relationship."

It always seems that there is a detail which we are missing in this story. Why is he estranged by the Government?

"I do not understand political matters such as this. Some claim that if he is released from prison, he will open his mouth and will say many things. Following this, many important people will be blamed for all sorts of things, and there are therefore many important people both in Israel and America who are not interested in his release. But all of these are theories and we do not really know. Regardless, the most surprising thing is why we do not bang on the table and say: Give him to us. Until this day, we have not said to the Americans, even once, that we want him. There was a request, signed by 109 Knesset members, but this request was not passed on to the Americans. The Americans are not able to know this on their own. It is therefore correct that something here is not understandable. It is also not

understandable why the Americans do not want to release him. Nevertheless, none of these theories relieve us of our obligation to what this demand."

Did Ha-Rav update him about things being done for him in Israel?

"He knows everything better than I do."

What can we do for him, at least on a personal level?

"Firstly, we can send him letters. And in this area, his words have been published in the newspapers, that the letters he receives are oxygen to him. Therefore, please write him. Everyone can write him, but you must write in English, since everything has to pass the censor. But it does not necessarily have to be in clear English. Just the opposite, he said that when he receives a letter in beautiful English, he understands that someone exerted effort to write in an artificial manner, but when it is in English with mistakes and errors, then he knows that this was an initiative that came from the heart. For a long time now, I personally write him a letter each week. I don't know English so well and I am sure that there are mistakes in my English, but after I heard this from him, I was comforted - it is not so bad that I write with errors."

In general, does he feel betrayed?

"He feels betrayed by the Government of Israel but not by the Nation of Israel. He knows that the Nation of Israel loves him and is interested in him. And if we send him letters, he sees that the Nation of Israel remembers him."

And this is despite the fact that only a small percentage of people send him letters and act for his release?

"This is true, but he does not expect to receive letters from everyone. He sees this as a credible representative sample of the Nation of Israel. He knows the direction of the winds among the Nation and if we ask a simple person among the Nation of Israel, he will answer: "Yes, certainly, Pollard is a good person, etc."

Did Jonathan ask Ha-Rav for something in particular?

"Yes. He humbly said: 'I have an extremely big request from you – when you return to Israel can you plant a fruit tree.' I said that I will certainly make sure to plant a fruit tree for you, and I will ask other communities to do so as well. This is therefore an opportunity to publicize that every community should plant a fruit tree. Every city, every Jew, just one tree. It is also worthwhile to inform him through the site www.freepollard.net. And this will make him happy. In any event, I have two other requests: One request - as we said - is to write him letters in English, and a lot of them. And the second request – to make others aware. Since many people do not know about this story, the more we speak about it the more it helps. The fact is that someone spoke about it here and someone else spoke about it there, and a snowball was created and an awakening occurred in the US. It is therefore important to tell friends and relate it at every opportunity."

Does Ha-Rav know how often Pollard receives a visit such as this?

"I have no idea, but I know that the day after our visit, he was going to have a visit from a group of scientists from America, in order to discuss a scientific matter, which he had thought about."

Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #23

[adapted for middle-schoolers by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner's three-volume commentary on the siddur "Tefilat Amecha"]

We have already learned that the Gemara in Berachot promises that "Anyone who says Tehillah Le-David three times a day is promised a place in the World to Come (Ben Olam Ha-Ba)." A "Ben Olam Ha-Ba" means that he is connecting to the World to Come both in the next world and even in this world. Olam Ha-Ba is forever. Someone who is connected to Olam Ha-Ba in this world is connected to the important, eternal things in the world. The first two verses of Ashrei were not written by David. They come before we say Tehillah Le-David, and were added by Geonim. But they tell us how we can connect to Olam Ha-Ba. "Happy are those who dwell in Your House." Of course, Hashem's main house is the Beit Ha-Mikdash. But when we learn, daven, and perform Mitzvot, we can also turn where we are into being a house of Hashem. That doesn't just bring us enjoyment, which can pass. It brings us true happiness, which is eternal, as it is connected to Hashem forever.

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

Educating during Infancy

The age of infancy is not the place for punishments or speeches, which do not help at all. There is no "direct" educating of a child during this period. Direct instruction lacks any meaning. Even the best behavior of an infant does not flow from his understanding to do good, but from imitation.

Education begins at the age of 5-6. A child is not capable of understanding that the Master of the Universe brings forth bread from the earth, and one should therefore bless Him. Nor does he understand the context of the words, but is imitating his parents. This also possess great value in helping him to acquire proper habits, so that when he grows up there will be no need to exert great effort in order to instill good habits. Nonetheless, this is not education. Therefore, do not laugh at him when he imitates his father or mother. In general, one should not laugh at anyone, especially a little child. One must be very particular about another person's honor, besides the fact that the imitation is building another level in the child's development. It is healthy behavior in a pleasant way.

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