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Parashat Vayigash - #310

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## שו"ת חורף – Winter Questions

### Guarding Against Spreading Sickness

#### A Sick Person Going to Shul

Question: If someone is sick, coughing, sneezing and is spreading germs in shul, doesn't he have an obligation to stay home?

Answer: One who infects another person with this type of illness is exempt from any fine, since this is "Gerama" – an indirect cause. The germs do not directly penetrate a person's body, but are spread throughout the room, and afterwards are breathed in by others. This is not a certain injury since it is not certain that the other person will become sick. Perhaps he will be affected or perhaps he is immune. One who infects another person in this manner is therefore exempt from paying a fine. Nevertheless, it is forbidden for a person to injure another, even indirectly, even with germs, which are like arrows. In the book "Kehillot Yaacov," the Steipler Gaon discusses similar cases, such as one who damages through witchcraft (Kehillot Yaacov, Baba Kamma #39, #44 in the new edition at the end of the chapter). Therefore, someone who is coughing and sneezing should not go to shul, but should daven on his own. For the same reason, one should not send children with infectious sicknesses to nursery school or school, unless a doctor decides that it is better for children to be infected with this illness when they are young.

#### Asking Someone to Remove a Used Tissue from the Table

Question: If a person wipes his nose and places the used tissue on a table on which food is going to be served, is it permissible to tell him or should one refrain so as not to embarrass him?

Answer: It is certainly forbidden to put a used tissue on the table since it disgusts another person, as it is written: "For every deed, G-d will judge, on everything which is hidden" (Kohelet 12:13). The Talmud in Chagigah (5a) says, "This is one who kills a louse in front of another person and he is disgusted by it...This is one who spits in front of another person and he is disgusted by it." "On everything" means even on a small thing. "Which is hidden" means even if the person who is disgusted does not inform the other person what he caused, since in his eyes there was no problem in doing such a thing. Therefore, one must certainly tell him, but it must be with gentleness and wisdom, as with every instance of giving rebuke. If, however, despite this he is still hurt or insulted, this is not our responsibility, since we acted according to the law, and he placed himself in this position.

#### Pointing Out to Someone to Clean their Nose

Question: Is it appropriate to tell someone that his nose is not clean or is there a concern for embarrassment?

Answer: This is similar to the previous question. Again, one should act with wisdom.

#### Kissing the Torah by Hand

Question: Isn't it preferable to kiss the Torah with your hand, and not your mouth, during the winter since it is unclear whether the others kissing it are sick?

Answer: It appears that this is a remote concern. We therefore leave this to the discretion of each person.

#### Windows Open or Shut in Shul

Question: According to doctors, it is important to have windows open in order to ventilate rooms and halls. If one of the people davening says that he is cold, does he take precedence over the many when there is a danger of becoming sick because of lack of ventilation?

Answer: We follow the accepted practice of people in all of these matters, and it is forbidden to act in a way which injures another person and is difficult for him to endure (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 155:39 in the Rama). It therefore seems that the general rule is: In the summer, if someone wants to open the window, it is opened, even if the majority wanted it closed. In the winter, if someone wants to close the window, it is closed, even if the majority wanted it opens. However, since doctors have established that there is a need for ventilation and that cold weather does not cause the common cold, but germs do, there is a

need for ventilation in every place. This rule also applies in catering halls, yeshivot, school classrooms, buses and similar places.

## Rav Aviner on... The Humble Rabbi

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Miketz 5774 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Every person is obligated to be humble (Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 1-2. Mesillat Yesharim 11). All the more so a Rabbi must be humble. He must be humble vis-à-vis the Rabbis of previous generations, and humble vis-à-vis the Rabbis of his own generation.

First, he must be humble vis-à-vis the Torah giants of previous generations. He must realize that compared to them, he is nothing. As Maharal said in the introduction to his work, "Be'er Ha-Golah": "A man's perfection...consists of appraising oneself properly and not foolishly... The fool compares himself to those of previous generations and says, 'I, too, have a brain. Those days of old were not as good as our own.' The Sages of the Talmud were humble, and they said: 'Our predecessors' intelligence was as expansive as the entranceway to the Temple Hall [Ulam] and that of the more recent Sages was as small as the entranceway to the Temple palace [Heichal]. As for myself, I am like a minuscule needle hole' (Eiruvin 53a). The earlier sages were total intelligence...whoever likens himself to the earlier sages is doubly a fool. He does not recognize the worth of those sages and he does not know his own worth" (Introduction to Be'er Ha- Golah, pp. 9-10).

Humility vis-à-vis the Rabbis of his own generation: He must realize that he does not possess all the truth, justice, integrity, Torah or wisdom. He must not seize honor at his fellow's expense, saying, "I am the real Jewish People, whereas those others are extremists."

Certainly not! The Jewish People means the entire Jewish People.

The humble Rabbi shoulders the yoke with his fellow Rabbis (from the forty-eight means by which the Torah is acquired – Avot 6). He does not agree with his colleague on every point, but he cooperates with him. He does not say, "It's me or nothing." He does not suffer over the fact that he has no monopoly on a connection to the Jewish People, and no monopoly on popularity.

How humble were Beit Hillel, who would not only quote the opinions of the competing Beit Shammai, but would quote them before their own opinions.

The humble Rabbi knows that he cannot, alone, solve all the problems of the Jewish People. Rather, he must devotedly engage in his own G-d-given share in the Torah. He certainly must not discount any Rabbi who is unlike himself.

The Maggid from Moznitz expounded regarding the verse, "This is the Torah of the Guilt Offering – it is holy of holies" (Vayikra 7:1): What makes a person cast blame on his fellow man? The thought that he, himself, is holy of holies, a total saint.

Our watchword must be to "dwell within our people" (Melachim 2 4:13). The Zohar explains several times that one who goes it alone places himself in danger. By contrast, one who goes along together with the entire nation is protected by the divine light that rests over us all.

## Truth or Superstition?

### Segulah Wine

Q: What is "Segulah Wine" for a livelihood, finding a mate and health?

A: This has no source. Obviously, if the money for the wine goes to Tzedakah, it is good (see Ner Ba-Ishon Laila p. 159).

### Pets and Finding a Mate

Q: Is it true that having a pet impedes finding a mate?

A: Not true.

### Kissing a Child

Q: I heard that it is forbidden to kiss a baby on the heal. Is it true? What is the source? What is the reason?

A: Nonsense.

### Segulah for Education

Q: Is there a Segulah to have righteous children?

A: A good education (And so too in Shut Doresh Tzion of Ha-Rav Ben Tzion Mutzafi: There are no Segulot and no ruses. For education, one has to work and invest. And Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski related that someone once came to Ha-Griz Soloveitchik – the Brisker Rav – and asked for a blessing that his son should be a Torah scholar and G-d-fearing. The Rav said that he will be a Torah scholar based on how much you learn with him, and he will be G-d-fearing based on how many tears his mother sheds during Davening for him. Minchat Todah p. 89).

### Wife's Faithfulness

Q: After marital tensions, I went to someone and he claimed that he received a message from heaven that my wife cheated on me. What should I do?

A: Immediately break any connection with that person, go with your wife to a marriage counselor.

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