

## **They Say, and We Say: Managing Conflicting Messages About Our Values**

*Mrs Emma Katz- Director of NII- Mid-Winter Yarchei Kallah 5783*

### **דברים ל"ג:א-ב'**

וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַךְ מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מִסִּינַי בָּא וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לְמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ מִהַר פָּאָרָן וְאַתָּה מִרְבֶּבֶת קְדֹשׁ מִיַּמִּינָו (אשדת) [אש דָּת] לְמוֹ:

This is the blessing with which Moses, God's agent, bade the Israelites farewell before he died. He said: Hashem came from Sinai, And shone upon them from Seir; [God] appeared from Mount Paran, And approached from Ribebboth-kodesh, Lightning flashing at them from [God's] right.

### **רש"י שם**

**וזרח משעיר למו. שפֶּתַח לְבָנֵי עֵשָׂו שֶׁיִּקְבְּלוּ אֶת הַתּוֹרָה וְלֹא רָצוּ:**

because He first addressed Himself to the sons of Esau (the inhabitants of Seir) that they should accept the Law, but they refused,

**הופיע מהר פארן. שֶׁהֵלַךְ שָׁם וּפְתַח לְבָנֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל שֶׁיִּקְבְּלוּהָ וְלֹא רָצוּ (ספרי):**

because He went there and addressed Himself to the sons of Ishmael (who dwelt in Paran, see Genesis 21:21) that they should accept it and they also refused (Sifrei Devarim 343:6; Avodah Zarah 2b),

**ואתה. לִישְׂרָאֵל:**

therefore to Israel,

### **עין יעקב, תענית ג'**

לוי גזר תעניתא בעי רחמי ולא אתא מטרא. אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם עלית וישבת במרום ואין אתה מרחם על בניך אתא מטרא ואטלע. אמר רבי אלעזר לעולם אל יטיח אדם דברים כלפי מעלה שהרי אדם גדול הטיח דברים קמיה דרבי ואיטלע. הא והא גרמא ליה. רבי חייא בר לוליאני אמר אנא שמעינהו להנך ענני דקא אמרן ניזיל ונשדי מיטרא בעמון ומואב א"ל כשהחזיר הקדוש ברוך הוא את התורה על כל אומה ולשון ולא קבלוה עד שבאו ישראל וקבלוה ואתון שבקיתו ישראל ותשדו מיטרא בעמון ומואב שדו אדוכתייהו שדיין אדוכתייהו:

Levi ordered a fast-day, but no rain descended. Said he: "Sovereign of the Universe! Thou didst ascend to the heavens, and didst sit down, but hast no compassion upon thy children." Whereupon rain descended, but Levi fell and became lame. R. Elazar said: Never shall a man use [in his prayer] reproaching words against Heaven, for a great man used [in his prayer] reproaching words against Heaven and became lame as a punishment, and this refers to Levi. Was it this that caused Levi to become lame? Behold, it was the cause of a Kidda which he showed before Rabbi that made him lame? Both things were the cause of it. R. Chiya b. Lolaini said: "I heard one cloud saying to the other: 'Come, let us go and pour out our waters on the lands of Ammon and Moab.' And I said: 'Sovereign of the Universe! When Thou hadst crone to other nations, offering Thy Torah to them, they did not accept it. Thou hast then offered Thy Torah to Israel, who did accept it, and now Thou wouldst allow the clouds to pour forth their waters on the land of Ammon and Moab. [Turning to the cloud, I exclaimed]: 'Pour forth your waters on this spot,' and they did pour their waters on that spot."

### **פסיקתא רבתי כ"א**

כך עלה על דעתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא בתחילה הלך לו אצל בני עשו אמר להם מקבלים אתם את התורה אמרו לפניו רבונו של עולם מה כתיב בה אמר [להם] לא תרצח אמרו לו וכל עצמם של אותם האנשים לא הבטיחם אביהם אלא על החרב שנאמר על חרבך תחיה (בראשית כ"ז מ') אין אנו יכולים לקבל את התורה.

אח"כ הלך אצל בני עמון [ומואב] אמר להם מקבלים אתם את התורה אמרו לפניו רבונו של עולם מה כתב בה אמר להם לא תנאף אמרו לו וכל עצמם של אותם האנשים אינם באים אלא מניאוף הדא [היא] דכתיב ותהרין שתי בנות לוט מאביהן (שם י"ט ל"ו) אין אנו יכולים לקבל את התורה.

אחר כך הלך לו אצל בני ישמעאל אמר להם מקבלים אתם את התורה אמרו לפניו רבונו של עולם מה כתיב בה אמר להם לא תגנוב אמרו לו כל עצמם של אותם האנשים אינם חיים אלא מן הגניבה ומן הגזל הדא היא דכתב יהיה פרא אדם וידו בכל יד כל בו (שם ט"ז י"ב) אין אנו יכולים לקבל את התורה.

ואח"כ בא לו אצל ישראל אמרו לו נעשה ונשמע.

When God was ready to give the Torah to the Children of Israel, God offered the Torah to all the other nations as well.

First God went to the Children of Eisav and asked them "Will you accept the Torah?" They replied, "Master of the universe, what is written in it?" God said: "You shall not murder" They replied, "Killing has always been part of our way of life. We cannot accept the Torah!"

Then God went to the Children of Ammon and Moab, and asked them if they would accept the Torah? They asked, "Master of the universe, what is written in it?" God told them "You shall not commit adultery." They replied, "Adultery has always been part of our way of life. We cannot accept the Torah!"

Then God went to the Children of Yishmael, and asked them if they would accept the Torah. They asked, "Master of the universe, what is written in it?" God told them "Do not steal." They replied, "Theft has always been part of our way of life. We cannot accept the Torah!"

Finally God came to Israel. They simply said, “We will do and we will listen” (na’aseh ve-nishma) (Shemot 24:7).

### שמות כ"ד:ז'

(ז) ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא באזני העם ויאמרו כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה ונשמע:

(7) And he [Moses] took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people; and they said: 'All that the Eternal has spoken will we do, and obey.'

### רשב"ם על שמות כ"ד:ז'ב'

נעשה ונשמע - נעשה מה שדיבר וגם נשמע מה שיצונו עוד מכאן ולהבא ונקיים.

נעשה ונשמע, “we will carry out what God has said already, and we are also prepared to listen (obey) to what God will command from here on in.

### “Live and Let Live”: So Easy to Say, So Hard to Do by Leon F. Seltzer PhD

Archaeologists, anthropologists, evolutionary psychologists, and historians have repeatedly found evidence that our abiding by the fundamentally cooperative edict of “live and let live” has challenged us since the advent of our species. Presumably, competing with others must somehow be in our bones—or genes. After all, it’s only natural that our most primitive ancestors would have been predisposed to confront one another in situations where natural resources vital to survival were in short supply. Whenever their lives felt threatened, their most primal instincts would have driven them toward combat with whatever animals, or humans from another tribe, were perceived as endangering it.

In such instances, cooperation would have been experienced as an exorbitant luxury. For putting others’ needs on a par with their own could be fatal—it could lead to death by starvation, over-exposure to the elements, or abject surrender to those more belligerent than themselves. And, with animals, it could frankly determine who had whom for dinner.

True, our highly developed brains made us more adaptable and better fit for survival than our sub-human relatives. But being nonetheless part of the animal kingdom, we’d have been all-too-susceptible to acting in “pre-ethical” ways which, while understandable, aren’t particularly admirable. Innate survival mechanisms, whether or not they’re exaggerated, certainly don’t reflect our capacity for generosity, empathy, compassion, or altruism. When someone possesses that which we require—or desire—we may from deep within feel compelled to “hunt” them down and take it away from them. For then we can enjoy the heady “spoils of victory.” (And might this possibly be something akin to the dubiously ethical expression: “All’s fair in love and war”?)

**As a psychologist, I’m tempted to blame almost all of this on human ego. And what that’s about is needing to see ourselves as separate from, and *better* than, others—and so allow us to feel entitled to fulfill our desires independent and (at least relatively) neglectful of another’s wants**

**and needs.** This self-interested trait seems to be one that, time and again, has compromised our ability to carry out our lives on the basis of ideals which, consciously, we universally applaud.

But the stratagems of ego go far beyond that. If virtually all of us need something outside ourselves to make us feel better from within, what needs to be understood is that we continue to be burdened by feelings of insecurity originating when we were children, that significant emotional residue yet remains from our ancient self-doubts. Never fully able to convince ourselves back then that we were totally okay, when we're older we still experience an internal pull to prove ourselves, to compare ourselves favorably to others—especially when who they are is different from how we need to see ourselves. In such instances, we unconsciously feel obliged to put them down, to perceive their difference as somehow making them *less than* us.

Similarly, we can feel threatened in circumstances where those from the outside world seem to be giving us the message that it's *we* who aren't making the grade (implicitly, that *they're* the better ones). The reason that we can be made so uncomfortable by criticism is that, at a level we may only be dimly aware of, such an "attack" feels destabilizing—not to say, degrading.

To put it a bit differently, being criticized feels as though our ego is under siege, triggering the urge to fight back, go into defensive mode, or exit the scene entirely. And these tendencies all too frequently overrule our (also built-in) instincts to comply and cooperate. In many instances, cooperating just seems less self-protective than competing or assessing negatively all that undermines our sense of being good enough.

### אסתר ג':ח

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ יִשְׁנֶנּוּ עִם־אֶחָד מִפָּזָר וּמִפָּרֶדֶד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלְכוּתְךָ וְדַתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עַם וְאֶת־דַּתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים וְלִמְלַךְ אֵין־שׁוּהָ לְהַנִּיחָם:

Haman then said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws; and it is not in Your Majesty's interest to tolerate them.

### אבן עזרא מהדורא תניינא על אסתר ג':ח:ב'

עם אחד. מתבודד ואין מתערב עם אחרים:

### יוסף אבן יחיא שם

ויאמר המן למלך אחשוורוש וגומר ישנו עם אחד ר"ל עם מיוחד בדיעותיו ומעשיו מכל הזולת. ואינם אוכלים ושותים ומתחתנים עם זולתם. והם מודרי הנאה מהכל.

### דברים כג:טו

כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מֵתְהַלֵּךְ בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶיךָ לְהַצִּילְךָ וְלִתֵּת אִיבֶיךָ לְפָנֶיךָ וְהָיָה מַחֲנֶיךָ קָדוֹשׁ וְלֹא-יֵרָאֶה בְּךָ עֲרוֹת דָּבָר, וְשָׁב מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ.

For the Lord your G-d walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, so your camp shall be holy, that He not see in you any matter of nakedness, and turn away from you.

### מיכה ו:ח

הֲגִיד לְךָ אָדָם מֵה טוֹב וּמֵה ה' דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ כִּי אִם עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְהִצַּנֵּעַ לְכַת עִם אֱלֹקֶיךָ

He has told you, human, what is good and what G-d seeks of you: only doing justice, and love of kindness, and walking modestly with your G-d.

### בראשית ג':כ"א

(כא) וַיַּעַשׂ ה' אֱלֹקִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כְּתָנוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם: (פ)

(21) And the LORD God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

### שמות כ"ח:מ"ב

(מ) וְלִבְנֵי אַהֲרֹן תַּעֲשֶׂה כְּתָנֹת וְעֲשִׂיתָ לָהֶם אַבְנֵיטִים וּמִגְבְּעוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם לְכָבוֹד וְלִתְפָאֶרֶת: ... (מב) וְעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם מְכַסְי־כֶּד לְכִסּוֹת בֶּשֶׂר עַרְוֹה מִמִּתְנַיִם וְעַד-יָרְכָיִם יְהִיוּ:

(40) And for Aaron's sons also you shall make tunics, and make sashes for them, and make turbans for them, for dignity and adornment... (42) You shall also make for them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; they shall extend from the hips to the thighs.

### מדרש לקח טוב, דברים כ"ו:ה'

וְהָיָה שָׁם לְגוֹי. מִלְמַד שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְצִינִים שָׁם. שֶׁהָיָה מְלִבוּשָׁם וּמְאָכְלָם וּלְשׁוֹנָם מְשָׁנִים מִן הַמִּצְרַיִם. מִסְמָנִין הָיוּ וְדוֹעִין שֶׁהֵם גּוֹי לְבָדָם חֲלוּק מִן הַמִּצְרַיִם:

“And they became there a nation”: This teaches that Israel stood out there. For their clothing and their food and their language were different from the Egyptians'. They were singled out and it was known that they are a nation unto themselves apart from the Egyptians.

### תהילים מ"ה:י"ד

כָּל-כְּבוֹדָה בֵּת-מֶלֶךְ פְּגִימָה מִמִּשְׁבָּצוֹת זָהָב לְבוּשָׁה:

All glorious is the king's daughter within the palace; her dress embroidered with gold.

### סוכה מ"ט ב:ח'

דא"ר [=דאָמער רבי] אַלעזר מאי דְּכְתִיב (מיכה ו, ח) הַגִּיד לְךָ אָדָם מַה טוֹב וּמַה ה' דוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ כִּי אִם עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְהִצְנֵעַ לְכַתּוּב עִם אֱלֹקֶיךָ עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט זֶה הַדִּין וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד זֶה גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים וְהִצְנֵעַ לְכַתּוּב עִם אֱלֹקֶיךָ זֶה הוֹצֵאת הַמֵּת וְהַכְּנסַת כָּלָה לְחַפָּה

For Rabbi Elazar said: What is it that is written, “He has told you, man, what is good and what God seeks of you: only doing justice, and love of kindness, and walking modestly with your God”? “Doing justice” refers to law. “Love of kindness” refers to acts of lovingkindness. “And walking modestly with your God” refers to bringing out the dead and bringing in the bride to the *chuppa*.

### **דרשות ר"י אבן שועיב פרשת ויקרא**

כִּי מֵלֵת וְהִצְנֵעַ חִזְרָה עַל חֶסֶד וּמִשְׁפָּט וְאִינָה מִצְוָה בְּפָנֶי עֲצָמָה אֶלָּא פְּרוּשׁ, כְּלוּמַר, שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם הַחֶסֶד וְהַמִּצְוֹת בְּצִנְעָה לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם, לֹא לְהַתְגַּדֵּל, כִּי אִפְלוּ הַמִּצְוֹת שְׂאִין אָדָם יְכוּל לַעֲשׂוֹתָן בְּצִנְעָה כְּקַבּוּרַת מֵת וְהַכְּנסַת כָּלָה כְּתִיב בְּיָהּ וְהִצְנֵעַ, כָּל שֶׁכֵּן הָאַחֲרוֹת...

For the word “modestly” refers back to loving kindness and justice and is not an independent mitzvah but an explanation. Meaning, a person should do lovingkindness and *mitzvot* modestly, for the sake of Heaven – not to make himself great. For “*hatzne'a*” is written regarding even *mitzvot* that a person cannot do in [total] privacy, like burying the dead and escorting the bride. How much more so other [*mitzvot*]...

### **נתיבות עולם, נתיב הצניעות א'ג'**

... כִּי הַצְּנִיעוּת הוּא הַכְּבוֹד בְּעֵצְמוֹ

...For modesty is honor itself.

### **Rav Norman Lamm, 'Tzeniut: A Universal Concept,' Seventy Faces, 193-5**

One who possesses *kavod*, a sense of dignity, will deal with it in a manner compatible with *tzeniut*. Modesty will characterize his conduct and personality as a reflection of that inner sense of worth....A person who has self-respect has no need to wear his virtues like a badge and show them off to the world....*Tzeniut* implies *kavod* both with regard to oneself and to others...*Tzeniut* means respect for the inviolability of the personal privacy of the individual, whether oneself or another, which is another way of saying that *tzeniut* is a respect for the integrity of one's ego, of one's essential self.