



Proof of G-d

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

The Chovot Halevovot in Shaar Habechina, Chapter 5, discusses *hisbonenut*, contemplating and reflecting on the greatness of Hashem and his creation. Man is not only a biological miracle where soul and body can coexist, but he was also given the ability to elevate all the parts of his body for a higher purpose. When Hashem imbued within us a living soul, he gave us the power of ruach mimaala, the ability to speak. The Gemara says the thought of the heart can be recognized in one's actions and in this case one's action could be one's speech. The ability to speak, to be able to relate to one another, and to reveal one's thoughts and feelings, is something unique only to man.

We find several concepts in *halacha* that show the power of speech and what Hashem's intent was in giving it to us. The *halacha* is that one may not speak in the middle of shema. However, if a person greets you, there are times one may return the greeting. The Gemara in Brachot says if you

don't respond to a greeting, you are in a sense a thief for taking away the person's self-respect. According to *halacha* the definition of an enemy is someone that you saw for three days and did not greet. The sages added on many restrictions to enhance the *Shabbat* and to make us aware that the day is different. The Rambam in Hilchot Shabbat tell us, the way you walk on *Shabbat* should not be the same as during the week. So too the way one speaks should be different. On *Shabbat* one should avoid mundane talk, but when it comes to greeting someone there are no limits. Hashem gave us the power of speech to treat other people with respect and to give them encouragement. One does not know how far a good word can go. The power of speech shows us Hashem's greatness, that he not only created man but interests Himself in how he will connect with others and how he will accomplish his mission.

Hashem also gave man the ability to express himself through the power of writing. Writing

links the past, present, and future. There are times one shouldn't speak in person, where sending a card, or putting something in writing can have a better effect. It can also be a priceless way of preserving the past through the writings of our great Torah leaders. Before the *Torah* was given a man divorced his wife by telling her to leave. This shows the power of speech. However, when the *Torah* was given the husband now had to hire an agent to represent him and it had to be put in writing. A get must be written in the proper way with dignity and must be signed and with this the wife has a right to collect her ketubah. A ketubah is a written document that delineates the husband's fundamental obligations to his wife. Hashem put into man the ability to use his fingers in a way that connects husband and wife through the *kesubah* while at the same time giving him the power to dissolve the partnership through a get. This shows the power of the written word.

Ahavat Chessed: Your Best Friend

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Beinish Ginsburg

In *Sefer Ahavat Chessed*, Part 1, chapter 9, the Chofetz Chaim discusses the laws of paying workers on time. There is a mitzvah to pay a worker on the day that he finishes his work. Some opinions hold that you only violate the negative prohibition of "*Lo talin*" at the very end of the night. If you wait till the next day you violate both a positive and a negative prohibition. If you have money, you cannot use it for another investment if that will mean you won't have money left to pay your worker. Even if the worker hasn't yet asked for the money, once he's finished his work, you're obligated to pay him. All the more so, if he asks for the money. In an earlier section, the Chofetz Chaim discusses taking a loan to pay off one's financial obligation. This shows that paying one's workers on time is a serious matter. If you happen to not have the money at the time you don't violate the prohibition but as soon as you get it, you have to pay your worker. If you spend the money needed to pay your worker so that when the end of the night comes there's no money left, you technically wouldn't be in violation of the

negative prohibition, but you would still violate the positive mitzvah of paying on time. You have to pay as soon as you can. The *mitzvah asei* applies immediately when the worker finishes the work as it says "*B'yomo titen secharo.*"

The Chofetz Chaim notes that the *Torah* is one big unit and the rules and regulations that apply to *mitzvot* such as *shofar*, *tzizit*, and *lulav*, also apply to the *mitzvah* of *Lo talin*. One can perform the *mitzvah* of *lulav* all day. However, a person cannot choose in his mind to push off the *mitzvah* until the afternoon if he knows that from that point on he won't have a *lulav*. It's as if he's actively nullifying the *mitzvah*, although technically he hasn't violated until sunset. So too if the worker finishes working and you spend the money so that at the end of the day there's no money left, that too is nullifying the *mitzva*.

Whatever money you have, you're obligated to pay right away. If you owe your worker \$1000 but you only have \$500 dollar at the moment, you must pay that or transgress *Lo talin*. The

Chofetz Chaim suggests an interesting idea. If you pay the \$500 it avoids the negative prohibition and it may be considered a full fulfillment of the positive *mitzvah* as this is all you have at the time. The majority opinion holds that the negative prohibition begins only when the worker asks for payment. If he hasn't asked, it's as if he's ok with being paid later. Some say although you don't violate the negative prohibition one should be careful to pay on time. The Pischei Choshen writes that according to the simple reading of the Gemara, if there's no *mitzvah lo tasei* then the *mitzvah asei* doesn't apply either. However the Zohar seems to indicate that the *asei* always applies even if for a technical reason the *lo tasei* does not, and if a person wants to be careful he should pay his worker on time even if he didn't ask for the money. If the worker asked for money and you couldn't pay, you're exempt until you have the money. Once you do have it, you must send it over right away or ask the worker to come and get it. It's not the workers responsibility to keep asking for his pay.

In The Ways of The Gentiles Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Ari Jacobson

The issue of using non-Jewish names appears to be a violation of "*U'bechukoseim lo teileichu.*" The Midrash teaches that the Jews in Egypt, although they did not receive the Torah yet, maintained their unique names, mode of dress, and language. Based on this, some Chassidic authorities argue that a Jew must continue in this way. Rav Moshe Feinstein, in a responsa, disagrees. Historically we find that many individuals of great stature including some Rishonim went by secular names such as Rabbeinu Vidal, Rabbeinu Peter, and the Amoraim Rav Pupa and Rav Huna. The reasoning may be that in Egypt we didn't have the Torah yet. Once we received it, we had something stronger with which to maintain our identity. Therefore, using a non-Jewish name would not be an issue. Even those who claim that it would be, doing it for a reason, such as for business purposes would not be a violation.

In Hungary, one of the jobs of the Rabbi was to keep a detailed list of all the names of the people in their community. Once the Maharam Shick went to the governor with a list of names and the governor asked, "Every nation has their own names. Why aren't you proud enough to maintain your own names?" The Maharam Shick noted this was more telling than the strongest rebuke he could have received. He held that everyone must use their Jewish names. As noted, many poskim don't follow this opinion if one is using a non-Jewish name for a reason.

The Mishna states that one must be scrupu-

lous with a light mitzvah as with a significant mitzvah. The Rambam explains that an example of a light mitzvah is speaking the Hebrew language. However, if someone is speaking another language for a reason, it would not be a violation.

A question that arose in the early 20th century was, is one allowed to pray in another language other than Hebrew. Some people approached Rabbi Jung z'l about it. His answer was, of course you're allowed to daven in another language but it's a bad policy. If even one's language of prayer becomes the language of the land it's only a short stretch down a slippery slope where our distinctive identity is in danger of disappearing. Likewise, the Chasam Sofer was very emphatic that Orthodox shuls maintain their practice of praying from a Hebrew siddur.

What about clothing? One of the objections Chassidim have to ties is that is a violation of *U'bechukoseihem*. A number of *poskim* maintain that this is not an issue. The original purpose of a tie was utilitarian not superstition. It was meant to be used as a handkerchief. The same holds true for short jackets. The reason why men stopped wearing long coats was to make it easier to get around, not as a fashion statement. Women's fashion would seem to be a clear issue of *U'bechukoseihem* as it isn't based on any explanation or rationale. However, Rav Moshe writes that if Jews and non-Jews adopt the fashion simultaneously it's not an issue.

The Kitzur notes that we do not emulate the ways of the nations, not in dress, hairstyle, or other types of items. There is a specific prohibition against wearing clothing that is worn specifically out of haughtiness. The Gemara in Masechet Sanhedrin states that if there's a specifically gentile mode of tying shoelaces or if they wear red laces and we wear black laces, one would not be allowed to follow their way. We can apply this to other instances in accordance to time and place. Any type of garment fundamentally designed to draw attention and to violate precepts of modesty, whether for men or women, is fundamentally not a Jewish garment. Even if you're doing it for another reason, for example not to lose your job, it's still prohibited. The Gemara tells us that there are three distinct characteristics that typify a Jew, compassion, a sense of shame, and kindness. The Shulchan Aruch writes that if you find a Jew completely devoid of these characteristics, one should question his lineage. A garment that draws attention is fundamentally a violation of our sense of shame, by its nature is a non-Jewish garment, and is prohibited based on *U'bechukoseihem*. One should not wear exceptionally expensive clothing as it arouses arrogance. At the same time, one should not wear tattered garments in order not to create a negative impression. The goal should be decent, clean, clothing. The Mussar books write that a person has a right to spend according to his station. There's room for subjectivity depending on where one lives and one's means. The basic rule is not to veer off to either extreme.