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By the Hakham
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5779 פרשת עֶקֶב

Being Pedantic in Our Dealings with Others

Haqpadah (being overly strict) is a by-product of haughtiness. Left unchecked, it can consume one's life and its own by-products are hatred, competition, controversy, Lashon Hara' (lit. evil tongue) and more. Whoever is overly strict with others must know that Heaven will treat him the same way.

This character trait is part of a person's nature that he is born with. If one is fortunate not to be a Qappedan (one who is overly strict or exacting) by nature, he must know that it is a gift from G-d. However, one who does have the trait of Haqpadah, must understand that by working on oneself on a daily basis and studying the works of Mussar (lessons in character improvement), a person does have the strength and ability to change his Middoth (character).

This applies to dealings with all people, because even if the person has more honor and wealth than his neighbor, he should realize that in Heaven the opposite might be true. What is most important, however, is that a person must be careful not to be overly strict with his wife, children and those who work in his home. The evil inclination tempts a person to get angry and be severe with his household, when they behave contrary to his will and he should be constantly on the guard against this.

(See Pele Yo'esh, Haqpadah)



מדרש בן איש חי
Midrash BEN ISH HAI

'Equeb: Why Babies are First Taught Their Parents' Names

וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הֵנִיחַ לְךָ בָּח לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל

"You shall remember the L-rd your G-d, for He is the one who gives you strength". (Debarim 8:18).

The Ben Ish Hai, 'a"h, says that he delved into the matter of why it is that mothers, when they teach their children to speak, first teach them to say the words 'Abba' and 'Imma' (Mommy and Daddy), in whichever language they prefer. The mother repeats these words over and over, until the child learns how to say them. He states that the reason appears to be based on what the Qadmonim (the early Rabbis) wrote.

When a person mentions a friend's name, it creates love and closeness between them, because a person's name is the essence of who he or she is. The pronouncing of the name creates a connection and bond with each other. Enemies shy away from using the other person's name, as we see with King Shaul (Saul), 'a"h, who referred to King David, 'a"h, as 'Ben Ishai' (the son of Ishai).

When the child repeats the words 'Abba, Imma', it causes him to feel closeness and attachment to the parents which, in turn, causes him to love them and listen to them even more. From this we see the kindness that G-d has done with us by allowing us to say His Name (in the permissible forms), which brings us closer to him. This, in turn, gives us the strength to do keep His Torah and commandments and do good deeds.

(See 'Od Yosef Hai, Derashoth)

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Understanding the Significance of the 248 Words

As we mentioned previously, we are very particular that the Shema' must contain 248 (רמ"ח - Ramah) words when we read it. They represent the 248 positive commandments (Mishvot 'Aseh) that we are all obligated to do.

It is not possible, however, for every individual to perform each and every one of the 248 positive commandments, since they do not all apply to everybody. Some are specifically for Kohanim, others are for those whose first born is a male, and so on. Through the love that exists among the Jewish people, however, everyone can complete the 248 (רמ"ח), by combining his actions with those of his fellow Jew.

If we take the Hebrew letters of רמ"ח (Ramah) and change the order, they read רחם (Raḥem) which is an expression of love. From this we can understand that the Ramah (248) commandments can be completed by Raḥem (loving one another).

When we have perfected this Middah (trait) of love for one another, the final Geullah (redemption) will take place. May it come speedily in our days, Amen.

(See Ben Ish Hai, 1st year, Parashath Wa-era, introduction)


Protecting Ourselves from Our Words

One should not open one's mouth to the Satan. This means that one should not say something bad lest it happens. A person should not curse himself, as it says, *lips are subject to a covenant*, meaning that what one says may, in fact, foretell what will take place.


A person should be very concerned about this because, as we have seen, when Moshe Rabbenu, 'a"h, said, *Meḥeni Na Miṣifrekha* (erase me from Your book), his name was not mentioned in the previous Parasha. If such a thing happened to Moshe Rabbenu, 'a"h, who gave himself to save the Children of Israel, how much more so should an ordinary person be concerned.

It says in the holy Zohar, that even if one is a lay person, one's words bear fruit. One should be aware that there are Malakhei Ḥabbalah (angels of destruction), who answer *Amen* when a person curses himself, the Zohar states that they take the curse up to the Serpent above.


(See Zibḥei Ṣedeq vol 2, 115, Oth 70. Šipporen Shamir 11, Oth 191)



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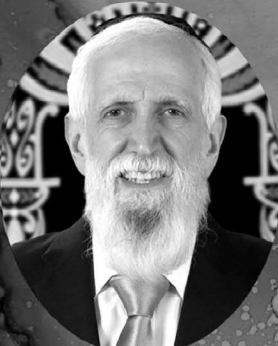
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