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By the Hakham

Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe, 'a"h

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Behuqqothai: Why Care What the Other Does?

"וְכָשְׁלוּ אִישׁ-בְּאָחִיו" "They will stumble over each other" (Wayyiqra 26:37). The simple meaning of this phrase which is part of the Tokhahoth (admonitions), according to Rashi, is that when the Jewish people try to run out of fear, even though no one is chasing after them, in their haste they will stumble upon each other.

Razal learn this phrase in a non literal sense, explaining that because of each other's sins they will all be affected because all Jews are responsible for the actions of each other.

An example of this is the case of 'Akhan who was an individual who sinned, yet all of Israel were trapped in his transgression, as it says, "Israel sinned..." Even though one individual sinned, the entire Jewish people were blamed. That is why we are likened to walnuts. Just like when there is a heap of nuts, if you remove one of them the others all tumble, so too if one of Israel is punished, everybody feels it. We should use this as motivation to always care about those we come into contact with and help them to be better people and to increase our good deeds to help tip the balance in favor of all the Jewish people.

(See Rashi Behuqqothai 26:37,
Rabbenu Behayye ibid)



מדרש בן איש חי
Midrash BEN ISH HAI

Our Weapons of War

There is a parable of a king who had many servants. Among them was a group who were strong and courageous and would make powerful warriors. The others were much weaker and would not be fit for such an undertaking. The king separated these two groups and gave the powerful ones bows and arrows and other weapons of war and taught them the skills of how to succeed in battle.

What did these servants do? They took their weapons and roamed the city streets and markets, marauding, injuring and killing innocent people who had the misfortune of being at the receiving end of their weapons. When the king heard of this he brought them all to judgment. He said to them, "Before I separated you from the others, you were equal in all respects. The only advantage that you had was that I gave you weapons and taught you the art of war. By doing this damage you have made yourselves inferior to the others."

We should learn from this that G-d separated man from the animals. He gave us a tongue that can shoot arrows, which are the study of the Torah and our prayers which serve as weapons against our enemies. If, however, a person uses his G-d given gift, which is his tongue, for inappropriate speech, such as Lashon Hara' (gossip), he is effectively shooting arrows in the King's city, against those whom He loves and against all that is holy.

G-d's purpose in separating us from the animals was so that we would raise ourselves to a much higher level, but not to become inferior to them. It behooves us to remember this at all times, and use our speech for holy and appropriate purposes

(See Qol Sasson, Lashon Hara')

For the 'Ilui Neshamah of
Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe, 'a"h.

יעקב אליהו עבדאללה פרג' חיים בן רחל, ע"ה

Carrying a Tallith Gadol Where There Is No 'Erub

I have periodically seen people carrying their Şişşith bag with their Tallith Gadol, while walking to Synagogue on Shabbath, in an area where there is no 'Erub. This is obviously forbidden and it makes no difference that they need it for prayers when they arrive at the Synagogue.

One is, likewise, forbidden to place it folded on one's shoulders under one's coat, when walking in a place with no 'Erub. This means that after placing it over one's head, one may not then lift the bottom ends and place them over one's shoulders, because this is not the way it is ordinarily worn and is considered carrying.

If one wraps oneself in it, however, it may be worn even if there is no 'Erub, since this is considered to be wearing it. If one lifts the bottom portion slightly because one is wearing it in an area where he does not want it to be seen under his coat, there is no problem with that.

(See Shulḥan 'Arukh, 301:29)

Paying Extra for Paying Late

Let us look at a case of a Jewish individual who sells an item to another Jew but does not require immediate payment and gives the buyer credit for a specific amount of time. If the time passes and the buyer does not pay as agreed within the allotted time, but some time later comes with the money and, in fact, gives the seller additional money because of the delay in paying, is this permitted or is it forbidden because of Ribbith (interest/usury)?

The answer is that it is forbidden, even if the additional money was given without specifying that it was given on account of the delay in paying, even though this money is for merchandise. And since credit was extended for a period of time this is considered as being a loan.

(See Ben Ish Ḥai, 2nd year, Parashath Wa-eth-ḥannan, Oth 11)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"ḥ

Asking G-d the Right Questions

A dear friend of mine recently told me that she had fallen at home and got injured. She told me she started thinking and asking herself the following: "What message is G-d trying to send me? What lesson is there for me?"

I was extremely surprised to hear her reaction to the circumstances. "After all," I thought to myself, "she didn't grow up in a religious home, so why would she come up with such 'religious' observations?"

Most people, in such a situation, would probably complain or feel pity for themselves. Nevertheless, we should use our countless life experiences to fortify our connection with the Holy One blessed be He and draw ourselves closer to Him.

When we ask "why", we fail to comprehend that our understanding is limited and we are incapable of appreciating His infinite wisdom. If we ask "why", we may unnecessarily tire ourselves spiritually and might distance ourselves from our Creator.

You will be amazed how asking ourselves the right questions may change ourselves and our whole outlook on life. Questions such as: "What does G-d want from me? What message hidden in this is designed especially for me?", will strengthen our faith, instill in us peace and tranquility, and turn us into stronger and better people.