



## Pardes's Parsha Discussion with Rabbi Alex Israel

TORAH TO DISCUSS WITH TEENS AND ADULTS AROUND YOUR SHABBAT TABLE

### Terumah. Hypocrisy and Authenticity

What is hypocrisy? Acting one way on the outside but feeling another way inside?

See this interesting statement about the Ark of the covenant. The Ark was a wood box, which was overlaid with gold on the outside and the inside. The Talmud says (Yoma 72b):

מבית ומחוץ תצפנו (שמות כה, יא) אמר רבא כל תלמיד חכם שאין תוכו כברו אינו תלמיד חכם

The verse states concerning the Ark: "From within and from without you shall cover it" ([Exodus 25:11](#)). Rava said: This alludes to the idea that any Torah scholar whose inside is not like his outside, (i.e., whose outward expression of righteousness is insincere), is not to be considered a Torah scholar.

So, here is the lesson: Outside must reflect inside. Be genuine, honest, have integrity, be authentic! This teaches us not to be a hypocrite, two-faced; not to put on a false impression to others which does not reflect our inner commitment, not to act more virtuous to others than you really are.

- Do you agree with this moral message?
- If you find it powerful, why is it powerful?

But here is a story that you might want to think about.

"I shall tell you of an incident that happened when I was a Rabbi... One Shabbat morning I passed a congregant who was smoking. When he saw me coming, he tried to hide his cigarette behind his back and turned his face away. A few minutes later another congregant saw me. He too was smoking, but he was determined to brazen it out. He made no attempt to hide the fact that he was smoking on Shabbat; on the contrary he passed me, puffing quite openly. He was determined to be "honest"; in all probability he was congratulating himself upon his courage - he was not going to be a hypocrite – no, not he! Well, what do you think?" (Dear David. Rabbi Kopul Rosen. Pg.28)

**Please discuss:**

- Which of the two men acted better?
- Why

We will return to this writer later.

Here is a second text, from the Talmud in Berachot, where having consistency “inside like the outside – תוֹנוֹ כְּבוֹרוֹ” becomes not a virtue, but a problem. It speaks about a moment in which Rabban Gamliel was deposed as leader. He had been the head of the central Yeshiva, and had instituted a very restrictive admissions policy:

On that day the doorkeeper was removed and permission was given to the disciples to enter. For Rabban Gamliel had issued a proclamation: **Any Torah scholar whose inside is not like his outside is not admitted (תוֹנוֹ כְּבוֹרוֹ)** to the Beit ha-Midrash. On that day many benches were added [because new students joined the academy]... some say four hundred ... others say seven hundred. Rabban Gamliel became alarmed and said: Perhaps, God forbid, I withheld Torah from Israel! (Talmud Berachot 28a)

Students might not be fully authentic. Rabban Gamliel wanted perfect students: “Only a Torah scholar whose inside is like his outside may enter the Beth ha-Midrash.” But there were hundreds of students who wanted to study Torah who couldn’t say that their “inside was like there outside”

- Why did Rabban Gamliel reject a person whose “inside was not like his outside”?
- Who might these students be?
- Why did these students want to enter and study?
- Do you find yourself identifying with Rabban Gamliel’s admissions policy or the alternative “open-door” policy? What are the advantages of each position?

Here is a letter from the Rabbi I quoted above. His name was Kopul Rosen. He was a Rabbi, and creative and charismatic head of a Jewish school in the UK. He wrote this letter speaking to a “hypothetical” student, but one might imagine that he had conversations like this with many students:

#### A NOTE ON HYPOCRISY

Dear David,

What do you mean by the term hypocrisy? Few words are more misused.

Every person striving to lead the Godly life will tell you that his behaviour is not yet up to the standard which he regards as the desirable plane. That does not make him a hypocrite. To accept your present level in whatever department of life and not admit the possibility of finer achievement, is a shocking confession of insensitivity. It is the clearest indication of the impending pestilence that breeds in stagnation.

...There is no hypocrisy in being ashamed of our weaknesses and there is nothing dishonest in wishing to hide our faults from public view. Of course, the all-important thing is to strive continually to improve and eliminate our defects, but honesty does not demand of us that until our faults are removed we display them. On the contrary as long as a man tries to conceal his weaknesses it is clear that he is ashamed of them; once he begins to flaunt them he is reconciled to them. Where there is no sense of shame there is no sensitivity, no awareness and little chance of self-improvement.

Furthermore, the person who thinks that honesty compels him to reveal all blemishes and flaws of character will find that the human tendency for self-justification will very soon so influence him that he will begin by justifying himself and then persuading himself that his faults are virtues. This route is followed more frequently than is commonly realised. Many people unwilling or unable to improve themselves and equally unable to conceal their weaknesses, soon imperceptibly and without deliberate dishonesty manoeuvre themselves into the position of arguing that good is bad. Self-justification is an intoxicating and blinding force in our lives.

What, then, you ask is hypocrisy? When a person chooses to lead a life which he knows is wrong and at the same time preaches to others or deliberately poses in a form contrary to the life which he leads, I think he can be called a hypocrite. The hypocrite, in my opinion, has an element of the deliberate deceiver in his mental make-up. Do not use that term when you speak of those who fall short in practice of their aspirations - all of us, to some extent, are in this category.

Shabbat Shalom!