



Parshas Dvarim

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

The envelope that arrived at the house of my revered teacher Rabbi Aryeh Levin surprised everyone. It was a letter from the Jerusalem's Magistrate Court. What did they want with the rabbi? Maybe it was a mistake.

The letter ordered Rabbi Levin to appear in court to face claims made by a person who said the rabbi owed him a large sum of money.

Rabbi Levin tried to recall what the story was about but could not. He never met the person and had no financial transactions with him.

A thorough investigation revealed that Rabbi Levin had signed a third-party guaranty for someone, and the plaintiff now demanded that Rabbi Levin meet his obligation.

Rabbi Levin said he had never signed such a commitment.

"A guarantor should know that he has from where to pay," he would teach us, "otherwise he is a thief."

Rabbi Aryeh was adamant: I never signed a guarantee for this person, and my name was inserted into the affair without my knowledge. But the plaintiff stood his ground and demanded that they meet in court, where everyone would put forth their claims.

Rabbi Aryeh continued with his holy work and taught at the Etz Hachaim yeshiva while visiting the sick and the incarcerated and encouraging them.

His heart did not foretell evil. He will come to court and easily contradict the words of the plaintiff. What evidence does the plaintiff have? This never happened?!

Our weekly parasha begin with a list of hints about Israel's sins "in the desert, in the plain opposite the Red Sea, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan and Hazeroth and Di Zahav."¹

"In the desert: Moshe rebuked them for their having angered G-d in the desert by saying, "If only we had died." In the plain:" where they sinned with idolatry. "Opposite the Red Sea:" regarding their rebellion at the Red Sea when they said, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt. "Between Paran and Tofel and Lavan:" Moshe rebuked them because of the foolish things they had said about the Manna. "Hazeroth:" regarding the insurrection of Korach. "Di-Zahav:" He rebuked them for the golden calf.

Why did Moshe make sure to open his words with only intimations? The goal is for the students to understand the words of their rabbi, and when Moshe comes to teach morality to Israel, why not point out the failures explicitly?

Rashi explains that "since these are words of rebuke and Moshe numbers here all the places where they angered G-d, therefore he makes no explicit mention of the incidents in which they transgressed, but rather merely alludes to them, by mentioning the names of the places out of respect for Israel."

One must maintain the respect of a transgressor, even when rebuking him.



Here you learn a great lesson: a person can be a sinner who angers his Creator time and time again, does not walk the straight path, angers, sins, transgresses and disputes - and yet "the honor of Israel" stands before us. He is a Jew and must not be harmed, teased and insulted. Even when it comes to rebuking him, it must be done justly and without blaming and insulting.

Here are the words of Rabbi Elazar:² "Come and see how great the power of shame is, for G-d helped Bar Kamtsa and destroyed His house and burned His temple." Look at what God did because they violated the dignity of a Jew: He agreed to destroy His house and burn down His temple. You can see from this how far things can go.

The court room was full. On one bench sat the plaintiff, and on the other side sat Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the Tzaddik who did not sin and never did injustice to anyone. The judges reviewed the documents and discussed the situation. Rabbi Aryeh's signature was on the document.

Rabbi Aryeh was tense. He did not dream that a Jew would lie to the court in this way, falsify his signature and bring to a wrong judgment.

He understood that the condition of the plaintiff was not simple at all, and especially understood that the person could be ashamed if it was revealed that he had knowingly forged his signature.

Rabbi Aryeh looked at the man standing in front of him, who was looking down, and decided not to harm his honor.

"Yes, indeed it is my signature," Rabbi Aryeh "recalled" and confirmed his "signature" on the guarantee document.

Rabbi Aryeh requested from the court that since it was a very high amount to pay, that the court spread out the debt in many payments.

Indeed, for many years to come, Rabbi Aryeh paid a huge sum every month, lest he embarrass a person from Israel, even though he had sinned, lied and deceived.

It was convenient for the Jerusalem Tzaddik to cast himself into the fiery furnace as long as he did not shame a person.

¹ Dvarim 1:1.

² Talmud Bavli tractate Gittin 57a.