

Speak praise and do not slander

TO SEE WITHOUT LOOKING

"You're not guilty!"

A Jewish man in prison asked Rabbi Shalom Ber Lipskar a"h of Bal Harbor, Florida, to help his wife. Behind on three months of rent, the woman had fallen on very hard times. Her kids were reduced to eating scraps from the dumpster behind the pizza store.

"Get me the name of your landlord, we're going to send a check for your" Rabbi Lipskar told her over the phone, "I want him to know that there's somebody out there that's looking out for you.."

The woman had more to say; her distress had peaked as she watched her kids eating scraps of food. Having no income, one night she descended to a level far beneath her dignity. She told Rabbi Lipsker that indeed she earned cash that evening, but she "felt like she was going to die," completely disgusted and would not use the money. She contemplated taking her life but could not leave her children alone.

"I gave her a ruling" Rabbi Lipskar said, "right on the spot. According to law, you're not guilty for what you did. It was you in a state of insanity and people who are insane are not guilty... It doesn't count, you've got a clean slate."

Perhaps Rabbi Lipskar took his cue from the commandment given to Moshe in this week's parsha – a directive so meaningful that it names the the entire portion.



Emor -- "speak" to the priests, G-d says to Moshe. What kind of speech is G-d commanding?

Not only is the scholar warned to stay away from gossip and slander, he is indeed required to speak words of praise. You can't fool the One Above with platitudes and insincerity. Speak of a person's praise – see the goodness in each person. Speak their praise into being – bring out the best.

And if the person has fallen so low – if she sold her dignity for a slice of bread – recognize that the Giver of all Givers only placed her in a situation she had the strength to overcome. When you look at her, see the G-d given strength evidenced by greatness of the fall – don't get stuck on the descent itself.

The good will overpower your perspective and refraining from gossip and slander will come naturally.

Many years later, with a fully established congregation, Rabbi Lipskar concluded a class attended by 200 people. Many came to speak with the Rabbi afterwards. One woman walked over and simply said, "thank you".

It took him a while to place to voice of the woman he had never seen in person. He hadn't needed to look at her face to see the good.

Rabbi Lipskar passed away on Shabbat, 5 Iyar (May 3 2025), at the age of 78. 


Torah Q&A for Your Shabbos Table

Q: Why is the blessing for washing our hands *al netilas yadayim*? *Netilas* means taking. Wouldn't it make more sense to say *al rechitzas yadayim*, which means to wash?

One reason we say *al netilas yadayim* is because the rabbis instituted that we are required to wash our hands using a cup, and the word *natla* means cup, thus indicating that we must use a cup to wash our hands.

שו"ע הרב אור"ח סי' ד, א

Q: Is it true that you shouldn't leave a bottle of wine open?

A: It says in Shulchan Aruch that you should not make Kiddush on "uncovered wine." There is debate about how long wine would have to be uncovered in order for it to be problematic for Kiddush. Ideally, it should not remain uncovered for even a short time. It is said in the name of the Baal Shem Tov that one should be particular that the wine bottle is covered while someone is making Kiddush. That being said, it is permissible to make Kiddush on wine, even if it has been uncovered for a number of hours. 

שבת שלום

A deeper look at Pirkei Avot

The Solitary Journey

by Mishaël Sionov


Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai says: "One who stays awake at night, or walks on the road alone, or clears his heart to idle matters, has forfeited his life" (Pirkei Avot 3:4).

The mishnah is seemingly warning against endangering yourself. Likkutei Moharan uncovers a new dimension, suggesting that the mishnah can actually be understood as encouraging positive activities.

Stay up at night: After dark, when you're not busy with daily tasks, go somewhere alone and talk to Hashem. Make a *cheshbon hanefesh* (a check-in on your spiritual state).

Walk alone: Avoid people who distract you from prayer; travel outside the city to converse with your Creator in tranquility and focus.

Clear your heart: Empty your heart from anxiety and worldly concerns, reaching a sublime state of total suspension of self. Strive for oneness of the body and soul until both are fully aligned with the Creator.

He has forfeited his life: Attach yourself to Hashem with every fiber of your being. 



As everything else in our holy Torah, the Ethics of our Fathers is no exception to the incredible depths that lay behind the sacred words. The significance of true meditation – conversing with and pouring one's heart out to Hashem – and its role in reaching the lofty, humbling, and exhilarating experience of true oneness.


for more from Mishaël Sionov visit www.parshagrowth.com

Chassidic Story Kiddush on Milk?

The man came to the Rav of his town and asked, "is it permissible to use milk (instead of wine) for the 4 cups at the Seder?"

The Rabbi reached into his Tzedaka funds and handed him a large sum for Passover, way beyond the cost of wine.

If he's asking about using milk for the four cups, reasoned the sage, he obviously doesn't have money for meat.

Although the man had severely understated his need, the rabbi was wise enough to answer the person without getting stuck in the details of the question. 

Torah Q&A for Your Shabbos Table

Q: If a woman gets divorced, is she required to change her family name back to her maiden name?

A: A divorced woman is not required to go back to her maiden name. She may keep her married name, or switch back to her maiden name.

Q: Can you give a child a chumash and count him as the 10th man for a minyan if you only have 9 men?

A: While some say that a child of at least 6 can be counted for the 10th "man" of a minyan if he holds a chumash, poskim write that he must hold an actual sefer Torah. Additionally, this leniency can only be relied upon in case of great need. The best thing would be to find a 10th man.

שר"ע אר"ח סי' נה, ד"ו"כ

May one take a Sefer Torah to a location for a one-time minyan?

Although there is no technical prohibition of moving a Sefer Torah, it is preferable to read from it 3 times in that location.

ערוך השלחן אר"ח סי' קלה, לב

גוט שבת

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7:49pm Candle Lighting

7:55pm Mincha

Followed by Kabbalas Shabbos

8:45am Chassidus Shiur

10:00am Davening

6:25 Gemora Shiur (Sotah daf 34)

7:40pm Mincha

8:55pm Maariv / Shabbos Ends