

Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter XXVII: Tazria (Lev. 12:1–13:59)

Essay 10. A Torah scholar must fear G-d

יומא פֿרק ז' אָמַר רַבָּא כָּל תַּלְמִיד חֲכָם שֶׁאֵין תּוֹכוֹ כְּבָרוֹ אֵינוֹ תַלְמִיד חֲכָם. אֲבֵינֵי נְאִיתִימָא רַבָּה בַּר עֻלָּא: אָמַר אִף נִקְרָא תוֹעֵבָה שְׁנֵאמַר בְּאִיּוֹב "אִף כִּי־תִעָב וְנִאָּלַח" וְכו'. יֵשׁ לְהִבִּין הַטַּעַם שֶׁאֵינוֹ תַלְמִיד חֲכָם, וְנֵאמָר הִמְתִּין רַבָּה בַּר עֻלָּא לֵאמֹר שְׁנִקְרָא תוֹעֵבָה אַחֵר דְּבָרֵי רַבָּא וְלֹא אֲמָרָם בְּפָנֵי עַצְמָם שֶׁאֵין תּוֹכוֹ כְּבָרוֹ נִקְרָא תוֹעֵבָה, כַּנֶּרְאָה שְׂבָא לְהוֹסִיף עַל דְּבָרֵי רַבָּא. אֲלֵא נִדְאִי צָרִיד לֵאמֹר דָּאם לֹא הִיא אֲמָרָה רַבָּא שֶׁאֵינוֹ תַלְמִיד חֲכָם לֹא הִיא יָכוֹל לֵאמֹר שְׁנִקְרָא תוֹעֵבָה, אֲמָנָם לְאַחֵר שֶׁשָּׁמַע שֶׁאֵינוֹ תַלְמִיד חֲכָם אָמַר עַל כִּרְחֻק לֵאמֹר שְׁנִקְרָא תוֹעֵבָה.

Tractate Yoma, chapter 7:

Rava said: Any Torah scholar whose inside is not like his outside is not a Torah scholar. Abaye, and some say it was Rabbah bar Ulla, said: He is also called an abomination, as it is said in Job, "What then of one loathsome and foul, man, who drinks wrongdoing like water!"¹

- Yoma 72b

One must understand the reason he is not considered a Torah scholar.

Also, why did Rabbah bar Ulla wait only after Rava's statement to say that such a person is called an abomination? Why did he not say independently that one whose inside is not like his outside is called an abomination? That is, by saying, "He is also called an abomination," it appears that he came to add to Rava's words.

Rather, it must be said that had Rava not said that he is not a Torah scholar, Rabbah bar Ulla would not have been able to say that he is called an abomination. However, once he heard that he is not a Torah scholar, he necessarily said that he is an abomination.

דְּאֲמַרְיָנוּ בְּפֶרֶק ח' דְּשִׁבְתָּ סוּדְרָא "סוּד ה' לִירְאָיו", וּפִירִשׁ מִהַרְשֵׁ"א בְּגִדֵי אָדָם מְרֻמָּזִים עַל מִידוּתָיו שֶׁל אָדָם כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב "בְּכָל־עֵת יִהְיֶה בְּגָדֶיךָ לְבָנִים" וּבְמַעֲלֹת הַמַּדּוּת הֵיא הִירְאָה, וְעַל כֵּן שֵׁם הַסּוּדָר הַמְּוֹרָה עַל זֶה הוּא מְיוּחָד לִירְאָה ה'. וּבְפֶרֶק אֵלּוּ קוֹשְׁרִים אֲמַרְיָנוּ אָמַר ר' חִזְיָא בַּר אֲבָא אָמַר ר' יוֹחָנָן כָּל תַּלְמִיד חֲכָם שֶׁנִּמְצָא רַבָּב עַל בְּגָדָיו חֲטִיב מִיתָה, שְׁנֵאמַר "כָּל־מִשְׁנֵאי אֲהָבוּ מָוֶת" אֵל תִּיקָרִי "מִשְׁנֵאי" אֲלֵא "מִשְׁנֵאי".

As it is said in chapter 8 of tractate *Shabbat* (77b), "[The name for the head covering of Torah scholars, the] *sudara* [can be understood as an acronym for *sod yareh*] which is a reference to the verse]: 'The counsel of the L-rd is with them who fear Him [*sod Hashem lire'av*].'²

* English translation: Copyright © 2025 by Charles S. Stein. Additional essays are at <https://www.zstorah.com>

¹ Job 15:16.

² Ps. 25:14.

The Maharsha explained: “A person’s garments hint at the man’s character traits, as it is written, ‘Let your garments always be white.’³ Among the character traits is fear [of Heaven], and therefore, the head-covering, which symbolizes this, is unique to those who fear G-d.”⁴

In the 15th chapter of tractate Shabbat (114a), entitled, “And these are knots,” it is said: “Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Any Torah scholar who is found with a stain on his garment is liable to death, as it is said: ‘All who hate me love death.’⁵ Don’t read “all who hate me” [משנאי] [*mesan'ai*], but “those who cause others to hate Me” [משנאי] [*masni'ai*].

ובפרק חלק אמר רב משנאי דאג נאחיתופל לא הו סברי שמעתתא. מתקיף לה מר זוטרא: מאן דכתיב בהו "איה ספר איה שקל" וכו' ואת אמרת לא הו סברי שמעתתא. אלא דלא סלקת להו שמעתתא אליבא דהלכתא, דכתיב: "סוד ה' ליראיו", ופרש רש"י לא הו סברי שמעתתא לא הו יודעין הלכה לפרשה פתיקונה בטעמא. ודאג נאחיתופל טיבא היתה בלבם ולא היתה תורתם אלא מן השפה ולחוץ כי לא היה תוכם פבד, ואף על פי שהיו כל כך חכמים הואיל שלא היו מכוננים ההלכה מקרו דלא סברי שמעתתא, והטעם הוא כי "סוד ה' ליראיו" דהיינו הנראה שלא היה להם.

In the 11th chapter of tractate Sanhedrin, entitled, “All Jews have a portion in the World-to-Come,” we read:

Rav Mesharshiya says: Doeg and Ahithophel did not comprehend halachic discussions. Mar Zutra objects to this [statement: These are people] **with regard to whom it is written: “Where is he that counts; where is he that weighs; where is he that counts the towers,”⁶ and you say that they did not comprehend halachic discussions? Rather, they would not conclude halachic discussions in accordance with the halacha, as it is written: “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him.”** [I.e., despite their great wisdom, they failed to arrive at the proper halachic decisions, because they did not fear G-d.]

- Sanhedrin 106b

Rashi explained: “They did not understand the halachic discussion” as meaning they did not know how to properly explain the halacha with its rationale. Doeg and Ahitophel had impurity in their hearts, and their Torah was only on the surface, for their inside was not like their outside. Even though they were very wise, since they did not align with halacha, they are called “those who did not comprehend halachic discussions.” The reason is: “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, that is, namely, they lacked fear of G-d.

³ Eccl. 9:8.

⁴ Rabbi Shmuel Eidels (1555–1631) (“Maharsha”), *Chidushei Agadot* on Shabbat 77b.

⁵ Prov. 8:36.

⁶ Prov. 8:36.

ולכן אמר רבא כל תלמיד חכם שאין תוכו כבדו שאין לו היראה אינו תלמיד חכם שלא יגלו לו מן השמים סוד ההלכה, וכינון ששמע אבני שמי שאין תוכו כבדו אינו בכלל "סוד ה' ליראיו", אם כן נקרא תועבה, משום דתלמיד חכם צריך שיהיה לו מלבוש נקי מבחוץ כמו שיש לו יראה בפנים כמו שאמרו סודרא "סוד ה' ליראיו". ומי שיש לו רבב נקרא משניאי, והכי נמי מי שיש לו רבב בפנים שאין לו יראה הני בכלל משניאי, והיינו תועבה שהוא נתעב מכל אדם.

Therefore, Rava said: Any Torah scholar whose inside is not like his outside, who does not have fear of Heaven, is not a Torah scholar, because the secret of the halacha will not be revealed to him from Heaven. Once Abaye heard that one whose inside is not like his outside is not included in the category of “the secret of the L-rd is with those who fear Him,” then he said: such a person is called an abomination. That is because a Torah scholar must have clean garments externally, just as he has fear internally, as they said: “[The name for the head covering of Torah scholars, the] *sudara* [can be understood as an acronym for *sod yareh*] which is a reference to the verse]: ‘The counsel of the L-rd is with them who fear Him.’”

One who has a stain on his garments is called “one who causes others to hate Me.” So too, one who has an internal stain, meaning a lack of fear of G-d, is included among “those who cause others to hate Me,” and this is the abomination, that he loathsome among all people.

ובדרבנן זה אמרו ז"ל "וידעיים לשבטיכם" שהם ידועים לכם שאם בא לפני מעוטף בטליתו איני יודע מי הוא ומאיזה שבט הוא וכו'. וקשה מה רצה לומר מעוטף בטליתו וכי תיסק אדעתין שכל מי שהוא מעוטף בטליתו יהיה אדם גדול. ולפי דברינו אתי שפיר, דסודרא אינו אלא לתלמידי חכמים לזכר שיש להם יראת ה', ואמר משה אם אני רואה אנשים כאלו איני יכול להבחין, ואף יתרו אמר "איעצה ויהי אלהים עמך", כלומר איעצה שאתה תתחזה אמןם צריך להיות אלהים עמך בעצה, "כי האדם יראה לעינים וה' יראה ללבב".

In this way, [the rabbis] of blessed memory said: “ ‘And known to your tribes,’⁷ that they are known to you, so that if one comes before Me wrapped in his tallit, I do not know who he is or from which tribe he comes.”⁸

It is difficult to understand: What does it mean by “wrapped in his tallit”? Could it be thought that everyone wrapped in a tallit is a great person?

But according to our explanation, it is fine: the *sudara* is only for Torah scholars as a reminder that they have fear of G-d. Moses said: If I see such people who according to wearing a *sudara* are Torah scholars, nevertheless I cannot discern if they are truly worthy. Even Jethro said, “I will advise you, and may G-d be with you,”⁹ as if to say, “I will advise you that you will surely see your need for G-d to be with you in counsel, because ‘Man sees with the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart.’”¹⁰

* * *

⁷ Deut. 1:13.

⁸ Rashi on Deut. 1:13, based on Sifrei Devarim 13:4.

⁹ Ex. 18:19.

¹⁰ 1 Sam. 16:7.