

The Importance of Shame in Rabbinic Tradition

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1. Genesis 2:25 - 3:1-7

- ²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.
- **3** Now the serpent was more crafty [= more "naked"] than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
- ² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"
- ⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
- ⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

כֹת וַיִּהְיוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עֲרוּמִים, הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ; וְלֹא, יִתְבּשָׁשׁוּ

א וְהַנָּחָשׁ, הָיָה עָרוּם, מִכּּל חַיַּת הַשְּׂדֶּה, אֲשֶׁר עָשֶׂה יְהנָה אֱלֹהִים ; וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה, אַף כִּי-אָמַר אֱלֹהִים, לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכּּל עֵץ הַנָּן

בַּ וַתּאמֶר הָאשָׁה, אֶל-הַנָּחָשׁ: מִפְּרִי עֵץ-הַנְּן, ג וּמִפְּרִי הָעֵץ, אֲשֵׁר בְּתוֹךְ-הַנְּן--אָמֵר .נאכֵל אֱלֹהִים לא תאכְלוּ מִמֶנוּ, וְלֹא תִנְעוּ בּוֹ: פֶּן-תְּמֵתוּן

דַ וַיּאמֶר הַנָּחָשׁ, אֶל-הָאשָׁה: לא-מוֹת, הַ כִּי, יֹדֵעַ אֱלֹהִים, כִּי בְּיוֹם אֲכַלְכֶם .תְּמֵתוּן מִמֶּנוּוּ, וְנִפְקְחוּ עֵינֵיכֶם; וִהְיִיתֶם, כֵּאלֹהִים, יֹדְעֵי, טוֹב וָרָע

וּ וַתֵּרֶא הָאשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמַאֲכָל וְכִי תַאֲוָה-הוּא לְעִינִים, וְנֶחְמָד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׁכִּיל, וַתִּקַּח מִפְּרְיוֹ, וַתּאכַל; וַתִּתֵּן גַּם-לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּהּ, זּ וַתִּפָּקַחְנָה, עִינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם, וַיֵּדְעוּ, כִּי וַיִּאכַל עֵירָמִם הֵם; וַיִּתְפְּרוּ עֲלֵה תְאֵנָה, וַיַּעֲשׁוּ לְהֶם תַגֹרת

2. Mishnah Baba Qamma Ch. 8

One who injures another is liable to pay compensation for that injury due to five types of indemnity: He must pay for damage, for pain, for medical costs, for loss of livelihood, and for humiliation... How is payment for humiliation assessed? It all depends on the one who humiliates and the one who is humiliated. One who humiliates a naked person, or one who humiliates a blind person, or one who humiliates a sleeping person is liable, but a sleeping person who humiliates another is exempt. If one **fell from the roof** onto another person, **and** thereby caused him damage and humiliated him, then the one who fell is liable for the damage and exempt from the humiliation, as it is stated: "and putting out her hand, she takes hold of his private parts" (Deuteronomy 25:11); a person is not liable for humiliation unless he intends to humiliate the other person.

One who strikes another must give him a sela. Rabbi Yehuda says in the name of Rabbi Yosei HaGelili that he must give him one hundred dinars. If he slapped another on the cheek, he must give him two hundred dinars. If he slapped him on the cheek with the back of his hand, he must give him four hundred dinars. If he pulled his ear, or pulled out his hair, or spat at him and his spittle reached him, or if he removed the other's cloak from him, or if he uncovered the head of a woman in the marketplace, he must give the injured party four hundred dinars. This is the principle: It is all evaluated in accordance with the honor of the one who was humiliated. Rabbi Akiva said: Even with regard to the poor among the Jewish people, they are viewed as though they were

ַהַחוֹבֵל בַּחֲבֶרוֹ חַיַּב עַלַיו מִשׁוּם ָחֲמִשַּׁה דָבַרִים, בָּנֵזֶק, בָּצַעַר, בִּרְפּוּי, ַבָּשֶׁבֶת, <mark>וּבִבשֶׁת</mark>. בָּנֵזֶק כֵּיצַד. סְמַא את עינו, קטע את ידו, שבר את רַגְלוֹ, רוֹאָין אוֹתוֹ כָּאָלוּ הוּא עֶבֶד נִמְכַּר בַּשׁוּק וְשַׁמִין כַּמַּה הַיַּה יַבֶּה וָכַמַּה הוּא יַפֵּה. צַעַר, כָּוַאוֹ בִשְׁפּוּד אוֹ בִמַסְמֵר, וַאֲפָלוּ עַל צְפַּרְנוֹ, מִקוֹם שַׁאַינוֹ עוֹשָה חַבּוּרַה, אוֹמְדִין כַּמַּה אַדַם כַּיוֹצֵא בַזֶה רוֹצֵה לְטֹל לְהִיוֹת מִצְטַעֵר כַּדְ. רְפּוּי, הְכָּהוּ חַיָּב לְרַפָּאתוֹ. עַלוּ בוֹ צְמַחִים, אָם מֶחֲמַת ָהַמַּכַּה, חַיַּב. שַׁלֹּא מֶחֲמַת הַמַּכַּה, פַטוּר. חַיָּתַה וְנָסְתְּרָה, חַיָּתַה וְנָסְתָּרָה, חַיַּב לְרַפָּאֹתוֹ. חַיִּתַה כַּל ,צַרְכַּהּ, אֵינוֹ חַיַּב לְרַפָּאֹתוֹ. שֶׁבֶת רוֹאִין אוֹתוֹ כָּאָלוּ הוּא שׁוֹמֵר קשוּאִין, שַכָּבַר נַתַן לוֹ דָמֵי יַדוֹ וּדָמֵי רַגַלוֹ. בּשָׁת, הַכּל לְפֵי הַמְבַיֵּשׁ וָהַמִּתִבּיֵשׁ. הַמִבַיֵּשׁ אֵת הֶעַרֹם, הַמְבַיֵּשׁ אֶת הַסּוּמַא, וְהַמְבַיֵּשׁ אֶת הַיַּשָׁן, חַיַּב. וַיַשַׁן שַבַּיָּשׁ, פַּטוּר. נַפַּל מו הַנָּג, וִהְזִּיק וּבְיֵשׁ, חַיָּב עַל הַנֵּזֵק וּפַטוּר עַל הַבּשָׁת, שֵׁנָאֱמֵר (דברים ושַׁלְחַה יַדַהּ וְהֶחֱזִיקַה בִּמְבַשַּׁיוּ, כַּהַ) וְשַׁלְחַה יַדַהּ וְהֶחֱזִיקַה בִּמְבַשַּׁיוּ אֵינוֹ חַיַּב עַל הַבּּשָׁת עַד שִׁיהָא מִתְכַּוּון

ַהַּתּוֹקֵעַ לַחֲבֶרוֹ ,נוֹתֵן לוֹ סֵלַע רַבְּי יהודה אומר משום רבי יוסי <u>הגלילי</u>, מַנָה .סְטֵרוֹ ,נוֹתֵן לוֹ מַאתַיִם זוּז לַאֲחַר יַדוֹ ,נוֹתָן לוֹ אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת זוּז .צָרַם בִּאָזִנוֹ ,תָּלַשׁ בָּשָׁעַרוֹ ,רַקַק וָהָגִּיעַ בּוֹ רָקּוֹ ,הַעֵבָיר ָטַלִּיתוֹ מִמֶנוּ ,פַּרַע ראשׁ הַאִשָּׁה בשוק, נותן אַרבַע מאות זוז, זָה בַּשׁוּק, נותן הַכָּלֵל הַכֹּל לְפִי כִבוֹדוֹ .אֲמֵר רַבִּי עקיבא, אַפִּילוּ עַניִים שַׁבִּישַׂרָאֵל, רוֹאָין אוֹתַם כָּאָלוּ הֶם בְּנֵי חוֹרִין שַּיַרדוּ מַנָּכְסֵיהַם, שָׁהֵם בָּנֵי אַבְרַהָם, יִצְחַק ווִעָקב. וּמַעֲשֵׁה בָּאֵחָד שֵׁפָּרַע ראש הַאִשַּׁה בַּשׁוּק ,בַּאת לְפָנֵי רַבִּי עקיבא וָחִיָּבוֹ לְתֵּן לַהּ אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת, עקיבא זוּז .אַמַר לוֹ רַבִּי ,תֵּן לִי זְמַן .וְנַתַּן לוֹ freemen who lost their property and were impoverished. And their humiliation is calculated according to this status, as they are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And an incident occurred involving one who uncovered the head of a woman in the marketplace, and the woman came before Rabbi Akiva to request that he render the assailant liable to pay for the humiliation that she suffered, and Rabbi Akiva rendered the assailant liable to give her four hundred dinars. The man said to Rabbi Akiva: My teacher, give me time to pay the penalty, and Rabbi Akiva gave him time. The man then waited for her until she was standing by the opening of her courtyard, and he broke a jug in front of her, and there was the value of about an issar of oil inside the jug. The woman then **exposed her** own **head and she** was wetting [metapaḥat] her hand in the oil, and placing her hand on her head to make use of the oil. The man set up witnesses to observe her actions, and he came before Rabbi Akiva, and he said to him: Will I give four hundred dinars to this woman? Rabbi Akiva said to him: You did not say anything, i.e., this claim will not exempt you. One who injures himself, although it is not permitted for him to do so, is nevertheless exempt, but others who injured him are liable to pay him.

זְמַן שְּׁמָרָהּ עוֹמֶדֶת עַל פֶּתַח חֲצֵרָהּ וְשָׁבַר אֶת הַכֵּד בְּפָנֶיהָ ,וּבוֹ כְּאִפָּר שְׁמֶן .גִּלְּתָה אֶת ראשָׁהּ ,וְהָיְתָה הְעֲמִיד עָלֶיהָ עִדִים ,וּבָא לִפְנֵי רַבִּי עָקִיבָּא .אָמַר לוֹ ,רבִּי ,לָזוֹ אֲנִי נוֹתֵן אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת זוּז .אָמַר לוֹ ,לֹא אָמַרְתָּ שְׁרְבַּע מֵאוֹת זוּז .אָמַר לוֹ ,לֹא אָמַרְתָּ שְׁאֵינוֹ רַשַּׁאי ,פָּטוּר .אֲחֵרִים שֶׁחָבְלוּ פִּי שְׁאֵינוֹ רַשַּׁאי ,פָּטוּר .אֲחֵרִים פִּי שְׁאֵינוֹ רַשַּׁאי ,פָּטוּר .אֲחֵרִים פִּי שְׁאֵינוֹ רַשַּׁאי ,פָּטוּר .אֲחֵרִים

3. Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 20a

It is taught: "That His fear may be upon your faces" (Exodus 20:17); this is referring to shame. "That you not sin" (Exodus 20:17) teaches that shame leads to fear of sin. From here the Sages said: It is a good sign in a person that he is one who experiences shame. Others say: Any person who experiences shame will not quickly sin, and one who does not have the capacity to be shamefaced, it is known that his forefathers did not stand at Mount Sinai.

תַּנְיָא בַּעֲבוּר תִּהְיֶה יִרְאָתוֹ עַל פְּנֵיכֶם זוֹ בּוּשָׁה לְבִלְתִּי תֶּחֱטָאוּ מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהַבּוּשָׁה מְבִיאָה לִידֵי יִרְאַת חֵטְא מִיכָּן אָמְרוּ סִימָן יָפֶּה בְּאָדָם שֶׁהוּא בַּיְישָׁן אֲחֵרִים אומְרִים כָּל אָדָם חַמִּתְבַּיֵישׁ לֹא בִּמְתַּרָה הוּא חוֹטֵא וּמִי שֶׁאֵין לוֹ בּוֹשֶׁת פָּנִים בְּיָדוּעַ שֶׁלֹּא עָמְדוּ אֲבוֹתָיו עַל חַר סִינֵי

4. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah Deot 5:5

He who follows such conduct will not only sanctify his soul, and live in a state of purity, and improve his ideas, but if he will father children they will be refined and modest, prepared for wisdom and piety; but he who follows the conduct of the rest of the people who walk in darkness will father children in their likeness.

כל הנוהג מנהג זה לא די לו שקדש נפשו וטהר עצמו ותקן דעותיו אלא שאם היו לו בנים יהיו נאים וביישנים ראוין לחכמה ולחסידות וכל הנוהג במנהגות שאר העם ההולכים בחשך יהיו לו בנים כמו אותם העם

5. Maimonides, Eight Chapters, 4

And bashfulness (?) is the mean between impudence and embarrassedness. [The explanation of these latter terms, gleaned from the sayings of our sages (may their memory be blessed!) seems to be this. In their opinion, a man who experiences shame is one who is *very* bashful, and therefore "shamefacedness" is the mean. This we gather from their saying, (<u>Pirkei Avot 2:5</u>) "A shamefaced man cannot learn". They also assert, (<u>Pirkei Avot 5:20</u>) "One who has shame of face is worthy of Paradise", but they do not say this of a shamefaced man. Therefore, I have thus arranged them.]

ובושת פנים ממוצע בין
העזות והביישנות)פי ינראה מדברי רבותי יזייל שביישן אצלם הוא מי שיש לו רוב בושת ,ובוש פנים הוא הממוצע מאמרם לא הביישן למד ,ולא אמרו אין בוש פנים ,ואמרו בוש פנים לגן עדן ,ולא אמרו הביישן לגן (עדן ,ולזה סדרתים כך

6. Rashba on Yevamot 14a

Because the nature of Israel is more pleasant, because they are accustomed to do mitvot and they are naturally merciful and capable of shame, even their milk raises a nature like them, and this is why it says about Moses that he didn't want to suck the milk of a gentile woman, as it says in aggadah.

אבל מפני שטבען של ישראל נח יותר משום דרגילי במצות והם רחמנים **וביישנים** בטבע ,אף חלבן מגדל טבע כיוצא בהן .וז"ש במשה שלא רצה לינק מחלב הנכרית כמו שהוא באגדה

7. Kli Yakar (Poland, 1550-1619) on Exodus 24:23

He placed a cover over his face. Because everyone was looking at him, and Moshe was very humble and capable of shame, and he was embarrassed when people looked at the radiance of his face. For this is the quality of one who shames, and he therefore put a veil on his face to cover the eyes. But whenever he came before God to receive instruction HERE from God he was required to remove the veil of shame from his face, in keeping with the Sages' principle that one who is prone to shame cannot learn (Pirkei Avos 2:5), and therefore it says "when Moses came before God to speak with Him he would remove the veil, until he left."

ויתן על פניו מסוה. לפי שהיו הכל מסתכלין בו ומשה היה עניו גדול וביישן ,והיה מתבייש על שמסתכלין בקירון עור פניו כי כך היא המדה בכל מי שהוא ביישן עייכ נתן על פניו מסוה לכסות עינים אבל בבואו לפני ה יללמוד תורה מפיו אז הוצרך להסיר מסוה הבושה מעל פניו כי לא הביישן למד)אבות בן (לכך הביישן למד)אבות בן (לכך אתו יסיר המסוה עד צאתו

8. Yismach Moshe (Sighet, 1898), Ki Teitzei, 18:8

The intent is to say that there are in this nation those who experience shame, and those with mercy, and those who perform deeds of lovingkindness, and this is because Israel cleaves more closely to God, may He be blessed, than any other creatures, and dwells among them, as it says, "I shall dwell in the midst of the Children of Israel." They therefore have greater influence than other creatures from His qualities, may He be blessed. And to experience shame... this is the root of modesty, since harshness is the opposite of experiencing shame.

רז״ל שיש באומה זו ביישנים רחמנים גומלי חסדים ,הוא משום שיש לישראל דביקות יותר להבורא יתברך מכל הברואים ושוכן ביניהם כאמור ושכנתי בתוך בני ישראל ,על כן יש להם השפעה יותר מכל הברואים ממדותיו יתברך ,**וביישנים**...הוא שורש יתברך ,כי העזות היפך **הביישן** וק״ל