

THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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ONE CAN MERIT THE WORLD TO COME IN AN INSTANT

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

Commenting on the verse that states, "the Children of Israel walked on the dry land amid the sea" (Ex 15:19), the author of *Noam Elimelech* writes, "Just as the Children of Israel did at the Red Sea, the great Tzaddikim managed to perceive the unlimited greatness of the Eternal, even as if they found themselves on dry land in the middle of the Red Sea."

One may ask a few questions on this passage:

1. How can one imagine that, on one the hand, the Children of Israel had reached such a spiritual level that they saw the Divine Presence, could even point out G-d, and had Divine inspiration enough to sing the *Shirah* with Moses, yet on the other hand were forced to purify themselves of the forty-nine levels of impurity once they left the sea (Zohar, Yitro 39a)?

2. Why did they have the merit to see the Celestial Chariot when they passed through the Red Sea, while at the same time they were still stuck in their impurity and continued to worship idols? The Children of Israel should have normally purified and sanctified themselves first, having the privilege to see the Shechinah only after receiving the Torah.

It is because our Sages teach that one can merit the world to come in an instant (Avodah Zarah 10b, 17a). Incidentally, one can also lose it in an instant. They could therefore not linger for a second longer, and well before reaching the threshold of the fiftieth gate of impurity, they reached elevated spiritual levels. "For they were driven from Egypt for they could not delay, וגם [and also] provisions they could not make for themselves" (Ex 12:39). The word וגם has the same numerical value (49) as מט (forty-nine levels of impurity). Yet in their impurity, they nevertheless did offer the Passover sacrifice, and did circumcise themselves, mixing in this way (as we have seen) the blood of the *Brit* with that of the Passover sacrifice.

Even though they knew that they were not meritorious, they believed in G-d Who promised to strike all the firstborn of Egypt in the middle of the night (Ex 12:29). If they sprinkled blood on the lintel of their doors, He would pass above them and spare them (v.13).

The behavior of the Children of Israel is thus unique in the annals of history. What other people managed to believe in G-d and offer Him sacrifices while wandering in the desert, in an uncultivated land, far from G-d and devoid of the Torah to guide them?

It was the survivors of the plague of darkness that repented and merited the world to come in a few moments. When the Eternal saw that they devoted themselves completely to Him, even though they were still impure, He blessed them with *shefa* (abundance), with light and holiness, and enabled them to reach great spiritual heights in allowing them to witness the miracle at the Red Sea. It was because He looked into their hearts and knew that they aimed only to obey Him.

The Children of Israel nevertheless had to rectify all their sins in the desert. Imbued with holiness when then passed through the Red Sea, they knew exactly how to get rid of their impurity, and how to get closer to the Holy One, blessed be He.

But those who didn't improve their behavior showed that, in fact, they refused to get closer to G-d and to leave Egypt. Therefore they died in the plague of darkness because they wanted to "help" the forces of evil that function in the night (Zohar II:164b). It was thus the darkness that punished them (cf. Shabbat 105b). The Eternal also revealed Himself as much to those that didn't believe in Him, as to those that recognized Him without even having received the Torah or witnessed the miracle at the Red Sea. They could therefore rectify all their bad traits and merit the world to come in an instant.

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

RABBI RAPHAEL PINTO

Imbued with great piety, Rabbi Raphael Pinto was a man fervently and unequivocally connected to the service of G-d and the performance of mitzvot. Many were those who had the immense merit to know and draw close to him. He was the son of Rabbi Haim Pinto of Casablanca (who himself was the grandson of Rabbi Haim Pinto of Mogador).

As much Jews as Arabs, all came to him for much-needed comforting and blessing. It would never take long for these to go into effect, and the people who came there to pray or light candles – those who had fallen prey to great difficulties – felt themselves comforted by Rabbi Raphael, who would normally give them a glass of *Mahia*. He took advantage of this respite to recount stories of the Tzaddikim and the miracles they performed.

Rabbi Raphael would tell the pilgrims that it was forbidden to display one's sadness in the home of Rabbi Haim Pinto because, he made it clear, faith is increased through joy. And in this way the pilgrims left his home, profoundly convinced that their troubles had disappeared. These same people, who were not at all ungracious, came back to offer a *Seuda* as a way of saying thank you.

As noted above, Arabs came to ask for blessings as well, and these were always granted to them. Rav Eliyahu Dahan heard with his own ears the story of an Arab who had a serious problem with a member of his family. They had entered into the cattle business together, and they trusted each other so much that no contract had been made between them, right up until the day that one of them tried to cut the other out of the business. Given the fact that there were never any documents that had been drawn up and signed, our man's feeling of being in the right didn't necessarily make him so.

Now the person that Rav Eliyahu Dahan had been listening to (our man in question) had a Jewish neighbor. She advised the man to visit Rabbi Raphael Pinto. It must be said that the man didn't have much faith, but in desperation went to his home. Rabbi Raphael Pinto warmly welcomed him, and the man lit a candle and began with the following innocent and sincere words: "Rabbi Pinto, I don't know you, but I want to believe in you. I want neither cattle nor money, but if I'm to lose everything, may my business partner, the person who so dishonestly tricked me, not profit either."

Rabbi Raphael Pinto consoled him as best as possible and promised that the miracle of the Tzaddik wouldn't delay in happening. At the end of the same week, the mother of our man, having come from the

village, announced that all the cattle were dying. The stable they were in had caught on fire and they had been seriously injured by the intoxicating smoke that was created by the blaze.

It was from the time of that story that our man regularly visited with the Tzaddik to thank, in his manner of prayer, both Rabbi Raphael and Rabbi Meir Pinto.

The home of Rabbi Raphael was insignificant in appearances but incredibly grand by virtue of the teachings that came out of it. In walking inside, independent of the joy and faith that filled the home, one could discern one great feature at the Tzaddik's, a feature that was probably the most important of all: Modesty.

It is said that a few days before his passing, Rabbi Haim Pinto of Casablanca gathered his sons together in order to bless them. When it came the turn of Rabbi Raphael, Rabbi Haim Pinto began to cry. When he was asked the reason for the tears rolling down his face, he declared that his son would die a horrible death.

And unfortunately, we know that his prophecy came true one day in 1980, 43 years after his death. In fact, an Arab in the neighborhood and two other individuals broke into Rabbi Raphael's home in the middle of the night and savagely beat him with an iron bar, then stole everything he had.

After a week of unbearable suffering, Rabbi Raphael rendered his soul to G-d. The Tzaddik's maid remembers that a few days before his passing, he said, "On the day that I die, a great darkness will ensue."

And so it was that on the night following his death, Casablanca found itself completely in the dark, an electrical failure having plunged the inhabitants of the city into a total blackout.

Finally, not long after the death of the Tzaddik, an Arab neighbor entered his home and, finding Rabbi David *Shlita* there, said, "May the Tzaddik himself disclose the identity of his murderer." That same night, around midnight, the police arrested the murderer in question. One can say that the Arab's request had been granted because the murderer quickly admitted to his horrendous crime.

The day of the burial, the entire city of Casablanca was in mourning. One month later another tragedy struck, and this time Rabbi Meir also left this world. On that day, the Chevra Kadisha came to pray and was forced to wait close to five hours as the Tzaddik agonizingly passed away, yet with a smile on his lips.

The Hilloula of Rabbi Raphael is Shevat 12.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

FEAR HASHEM

A teaching from the Maguid of Dubno

Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose men for us and go do battle with Amalek’ (Ex 17:8). Commenting on this verse, the Midrash says, “Why Joshua? Because Moses told him as follows: Your ancestor [Joseph] said, ‘I fear G-d’ [Gen 42:18], and with regards to him [Amalek] it is written, ‘he did not fear G-d’ [Deut 25:18]. That the descendant of Joseph, who said, ‘I fear G-d’, come and fight against him of whom it is said, ‘he did not fear G-d.’”

This is amazing. Just because Joseph said, “I fear G-d”, does this mean that the one who doesn’t fear G-d should fall into the hands of Joseph’s descendants? For that matter, even if concerning Joseph’s descendants it is not specifically written that they “fear G-d”, don’t we know with complete certainty that such is the case with all the tribes of Israel? Therefore it was because of contextual reasons that Scripture felt the need to specify this for Joseph. From where does the idea come from, therefore, which states that Amalek can only be defeated by Joseph?

It seems that this idea comes from the Sages, an idea that answers yet another question that comes to the fore: Why does Scripture accuse Amalek of not fearing G-d? Since when does a foreign nation have the obligation of fearing Him, so that the lack thereof is considered as a great sin?

The answer to this last question is already stated: “That the descendant of Joseph, who said, ‘I fear G-d’, come and fight against him of whom it is said, ‘he did not fear G-d.’”

The Maggid explains this with a parable.

Two brothers, one rich and the other poor, lived in the same town. The rich one helped his brother out by providing him with basic food supplies, however he gave him clothes that were already worn out. The poor brother would wear them for a few days, and at the end of this time they would have huge holes in them and be held together only by a thread. The rich brother asked how he always managed to wear such rags, to which the poor brother excused himself by saying, “what else can I wear, my brother, if you gave me such clothes that were already in such a worn-down state? I don’t have anything with which to sew them up!”

The rich brother decided to put him to the test. He brought him to a clothing store and purchased enough material to make two suits, one for himself and the other for his brother. At the end of a few days, he met him in the street and found him dressed in the same way as usual. Seeing this he criticized him and said,

“You can clearly see that our two outfits were made at the same time, yet mine is practically new!” The poor brother began to laugh and said, “Can you change the nature of things? It is such that with poor people, their clothes are always torn up and not properly sewn.” The rich brother was forced to accept this explanation.

One day they found themselves together at a wedding, and the entertainer (a classic figure at Jewish weddings) was dressed up as a vagabond, with the clothes and mannerisms to boot. The audience was thoroughly amused, and the rich brother carefully watched him perform. He noticed that his clothes were held together and properly sewn. He then said to his brother, “Do have an answer for this? This entertainer is dressed up exactly like a vagabond and yet his clothes are in one piece. You can clearly see that poor people dress the same way, for a performer as talented as this goes to great lengths to mimic every detail of a poor person’s life, and yet he doesn’t dress as you do.”

Scripture accused Amalek of not fearing G-d, and in response Amalek answered that non-Jews are not obligated to fear Him and hence not at all punishable for not doing so. Yet the example of Joseph proves that the contrary is true, for in Egypt he acted as a performer in front of his brothers insofar as he appeared to be a non-Jew. He went so far as to speak to his brothers only through the intermediary of an interpreter, and yet he couldn’t hold himself back from saying, “I fear G-d.” If non-Jews normally didn’t fear G-d, would Joseph have uttered these words? In that case, would these words have not given him away as a Jew?

EISHET CHAYIL

SHABBAT CANDLES – PART VII

What Should be Used to Light?

25. It is preferable to light the Shabbat lights with olive oil. If one doesn’t have olive oil, one uses other types of oil or wax candles.

26. When one lights the Shabbat lights with olive or other types of oil, it is permitted to put water in the glass used for lighting.