

הַיָּם דַּרְךְ THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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STRENGTHENING THE WORLD BY THE STUDY OF THE TORAH *(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)*

Our Sages speculate as to the reason why the Torah seems to repeat itself in the following passage: “*Emor* [say] to the priests, the sons of Aaron, *ve’amarta* [and tell them] ...” (Leviticus 21:1). Our Sages have already explained at length that when the Holy One, blessed be He, addresses the angels, He never has to repeat Himself. In fact, since the angels lack a *Yetzer Hara* (evil inclination), they know only how to serve Hashem. On the contrary, when G-d addresses men, He is often obliged to insist in order to tear away the veil that the *Yetzer Hara* has put up in front of them.

The other explanation that our Sages give for this repetition is that in this way, Hashem wanted to be insistent with the elders in order that they watch over the young.

In this we see expressed one of the essential goals of existence, namely to continue inculcating faith in G-d in the coming generations, and to do so in order that the Torah should never be forgotten.

In bringing the young closer, our own faith is strengthened because we learn the quality of innocence from them, an utterly simple faith and love of the wondrous.

In addition, in teaching the very young, one finds the opportunity to repeat what one has learned. By this, one accomplishes (*vis-à-vis* one’s self) the mitzvah of “*Emor ... ve’amarta*”. By doing this, one becomes accustomed to seeing oneself as “small” in one’s own eyes, which leaves no room for pride. The person who considers himself as knowledgeable enough not to need to review the Torah will be considered by G-d as arrogant, and all his understand won’t hesitate to leave him.

We notice, moreover, that the numerical value of the first letters of “*Emor ... ve’amarta*” (*aleph* and *vav*) add up to seven. This seems like an invitation

for us to consider Shabbat (which is the seventh day) as the day that is particularly well-suited for the study of Torah. It is a day when we can spiritually elevate ourselves ever higher in purity and holiness, and where we find, concentrated, the light of the seven days of the week.

It is written, “...all His work which G-d created to make” (Genesis 2:3). This was in order that, as our Sages say, “man could continue to create the world.” As for G-d, He truly had finished the work, to which He had nothing more to add. However it is Shabbat that the time begins in which man can realize why he was created, namely to strengthen creation by the study of Torah.

In addition, on Shabbat we should not be satisfied with studying alone, but rather we should take advantage of the holiness of this day to inculcate the fear of G-d into our sons and the entire family.

Our Sages tell us that at the time of the giving of the Torah, G-d did not accept anything for a guarantee other than the little children. This is why the Torah particularly invites us to watch over our children, the guarantors of Klal Israel, in order that they not go astray or cling to impure values that risk (G-d forbid) to distance them from their Creator.

Our Sages say: *Ben mezakei abba* (“the son gives merit to the father”). Even if the father is a Tzaddik, the son continues despite everything to spiritually elevate himself from one level to another. Knowing that our sons are our ultimate guarantee, we will have it at heart to properly educate them in the path of Torah and mitzvot. Thus the Torah will continue to exist, for finally that is the goal of this reciprocal guarantee. In this way we learn that thanks to the *ahdut* (unifying) Torah – the Torah that unites the fathers and the sons one another and together joins them to their Father in Heaven – peace will soon come to the world and the Geula will arrive shortly, for unity is the key to deliverance.

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

HILLEL THE ELDER

We all know that the patience, gentleness, and humility of Hillel the Elder has become proverbial. It was only on one occasion that he was seen getting angry, and it was precisely his humility – the feeling that he had of his own lowliness – that had ignited his anger in front of the idleness of so many competent men. In brief, the story goes that Hillel had been questioned on a law, yet had to admit that he once knew it, but had since forgotten. This had happened to him under the influence of anger. Later, he remembered what he had forgotten (see Pesachim 66a for details). Yet anger should be censured.

The Sages bring remarkable examples of the unfailing patience and gentleness of Hillel the Elder.

One day, someone wagered that he could make him get angry. The bet was 400 pieces of gold. It was just before Shabbat and Hillel the Elder was preparing for its arrival. The man therefore rushed to Hillel's home and cried, "Hillel the Elder! Where's Hillel the Elder?" At the time, Hillel was washing himself, and so he interrupted his preparations, wrapped himself in his clothes, and went to the one who was calling him. "What do you want, my son?" he asked.

"I have a question to ask you."

"Ask me then."

"Why are the heads of Babylonians so round?"

And Hillel the Elder, himself Babylonian, answered him with a smile. "You have asked a profound question, my son, and I will answer you. It is because they have bad midwives that don't know how, when a baby is born, to give the head a good shape."

The man didn't reply. Later, he again asked Hillel a question: "Why are the people of Tadmor weak-eyed?"

"Because they live in a sandy country," Hillel the Elder replied.

After a certain time, the man came back and asked, "Why do Africans have such wide feet?"

With inexhaustible patience, Hillel the Elder answered: "Because they live in a marshy land."

"I still have many questions to ask you," said the man, "but I am afraid of making you angry."

"Ask on, my son," said Hillel the Elder, "ask me everything you want to know."

Although Shabbat was arriving, Hillel the Elder sat down in order to be more attentive to the

anthropological and ethnographic questions that this stranger, a man that he had never before seen, wanted to ask.

"Are you really Hillel," said the man, "whom they call a prince in Israel?"

"Yes, that is correct my son," he replied.

"Well, I hope that here are not many more in Israel like you!"

"And why not, my son?" asked Hillel.

"Because of you," said the man, "I have lost 400 pieces of gold, for I wagered that I could make you angry."

"Be warned for the future," said Hillel the Elder. "Better that you should lose 400 pieces of gold, and 400 more after that, than it should be said of Hillel that he lost his temper!"

In that time of trouble and distress, it was Israel's great fortune to have a man as kind and gentle as Hillel the Elder as a prince. He could thus guide the young through all of life's pitfalls by means of Divine teachings and preserve the Torah for generations to come. Herod, the descendant of Idomean slaves, had been raised to royalty with the support of the Romans and had assassinated the remaining offshoots of the Hasmonean dynasty. As for the members of the Sanhedrin, he had them executed, as Shemiah had foretold them. All Israel was filled with hatred for the abhorred tyrant, yet the rage of Herod was broken by the gentleness of Hillel.

EISHET CHAYIL

THE STUDY OF THE TORAH

1. Women are obligated to study the laws that concern them, such as the laws of Shabbat, family purity, etc.
2. Women have the right to study the written Torah. Nevertheless, our Sages have commanded that one is not to teach the Oral Torah to women because the majority of them are not inclined to this type of study.
3. Women should recite the blessings for the Torah every day.
4. Women who teach Torah to their children, and who help and encourage their husbands to devote themselves to Torah study, acquire great merit and benefit in part from the reward reserved for the aforementioned in the world to come.

PERKEI AVOTH THE JEWISH HOME

by Rav M. Lehmann ז"ל

He used to say: At five years of age, the study of Scripture [should be commenced]; at ten – the study of Mishnah; at thirteen – [the obligation to observe] the mitzvot; at fifteen – the study of Gemara; at eighteen, marriage” (Perkei Avoth 5:22).

At first sight, is it not surprising that our Mishnah recommends that this essential step in the life of a man (“at eighteen, marriage”) should be undertaken at an age at which he is not yet fully developed intellectually?

However, after careful consideration, one must recognize that this view resonates with the ideal that the Torah has in mind, namely the one expressed by the Psalmist with the following words: “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of youth” (Psalms 127:4). As so often happens in our days, a man will get married only after having reached at least half the age allotted to him (which is 70, according to Psalms 90:10). In such a case, when he has children and they grow up in a household of much older people, the large age gap between the generations constitutes by itself a serious danger. Hence children’s education, instead of being done by the parents themselves, is entrusted to very competent people perhaps, yet strangers nonetheless. And when it becomes the turn for these children to become adults and they arrive at a crossroad in life, they will not be, as the verse above states, “arrows in the hand of a warrior.” They will most often escape the guidance of those who should be their natural mentors.

Without doubt, the society that we live in and the conditions of modern life make the establishment of a home more difficult than in previous times. And little by little, even in the environment of those who live in conformity with Jewish tradition, the ideal proposed by the Sages (“at eighteen, marriage”) has been abandoned. Does the abandonment of this ideal – the path that we have followed for numerous generations – truly constitute progress?

Our ancestors, who trusted G-d, complied in every matter with the principles taught by our Sages. Step by step, they followed the educational guidelines specified in our Mishnah. We can only express, as does Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the hope that “the time will arrive when we will realize that we should follow the instructions of the ‘fathers’ to guide our youth on the path of duty” (Rabbi Hirsch’s Commentary on Perkei Avoth).

Unfortunately, for the time being the spirit in which we are now raising our children is diametrically opposed to the one that our Sages have suggested. Our instructions, above all, pragmatic in nature, and we are more concerned with that than with character development, intellectual growth, or reasoning abilities. Indeed, we are more concerned with teaching our children what will be necessary to earn a living. And when we complain that our children are being overworked at school, it is in order to suppress spiritual instruction and demand more practical training.

AN APPEAL BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA

Beginning from Lag BaOmer, Bar Mitzvah and wedding ceremonies resume to the great joy of the entire community. Also with summer coming, everyone begins to think about their vacation.

It seems to me that the moment is right to recall the necessity of *Kedusha* and *Tzniut* (holiness and modesty) that is characteristic of a Jew.

Concerning ceremonies and various festivities that are planned, I would like to make a point of saying just how saddened I am to know that many of our brothers ruin the Kedusha of their celebration by mixed dancing and all sorts of practices that are contrary to our customs and sacred duties.

It is obvious that I will not support, by my presence, such ceremonies. Moreover, these same requirements of Kedusha and Tzniut also apply to us when we are on vacation.

It is written, “If you *walk* in My ways,” and our Sages have explained this as follows: Why does the Torah employ the verb “walk”? It is to signify that the Holy One, blessed be He, demands that we also remain true to ourselves when we leave our homes.

The weariness of travel and being distant from our homes can never justify a violation of the laws of Kashrut or the requirements of Kedusha and Tzniut, which are the pride and privilege of the Jewish people.

I hope that everyone will have it at heart to attach themselves to these mitzvot.

By the merit of Rabbi Haim Pinto z”l, I direct all my blessings to you. May we soon celebrate the arrival of Mashiach our Righteous One. Amen.