

הַיְיָ הַדָּרַךְ THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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TORAH AND THE FEAR OF HEAVEN LEAD TO THE REWARD OF THE WORLD TO COME (by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

Resh Lakish reflected upon the verse that states, "If the snake bites because it was not charmed, then there is no advantage to the charmer's art" (Ecclesiastes 10:11). "In the future," he said, "all the animals will assemble themselves and go to the serpent and say, 'The lion rips apart its prey to eat it, the wolf rips apart its prey to eat it, but you – what benefit do you derive from your prey?' The serpent will reply, 'What benefit does someone have who speaks evil?' " (Erchin 15b). The connection between the serpent and one who speaks ill of others must therefore be understood.

We can understand the relationship between the two in the following way. The serpent is used to biting the heel, as it is written, "[It] bites a horse's heels so its rider falls backward" (Genesis 49:17). Rashi explains that the serpent makes a tiny bite on the foot without its victim feeling a thing, and then all of a sudden this wound begins to swell up tremendously (Rashi on Exodus 22:24). It happens in exactly the same way regarding slander. At the beginning it is nothing at all (like a person's heel, which he neither sees nor notices), but in the end it swells up until the entire body suffers. And if the serpent bites precisely on the heel, it is measure for measure (Shabbat 105b), for the mouth that should have studied Torah spoke ill of others instead. The punishment is therefore a bite on the heel (עקב) because effort wasn't put into fixing (קבע) times for Torah study.

It must be understood that gossiping is a very grave sin. Rabbi Ishmael teaches that whoever speaks ill of others commits a sin as great as idolatry, adultery, and murder (Erchin 15b). The passage, "You shall not be a gossipmonger among your people" (Leviticus 19:16) means that if someone speaks ill of others, he should realize that it's as if he is also speaking ill of himself, since he is included in the term "your people." In doing so, he harms the unity of the Jewish people because of the power of gossip's venom. We find this idea alluded to in the very same verse ("You shall not be a gossipmonger [*rachil*] among your people"), for the word *rachil* has the same numerical

value as the letter *yud* and the word *ner* ("lamp"), the letter *yud* being at the beginning of the word *yadlik* ("he will light"). This means that he lights a lamp by making slanderous remarks, and this light then penetrates to all holes and crevices, damaging every area it penetrates.

We should be very careful before opening our mouths, because a tiny word barely more important than a person's heel can bring about devastating results, as it is written, "Evil speech kills three people: The speaker, the subject, and the listener" (Devarim Rabba 5:10). It acts in exactly the same way as the serpent bite that, starting from the heel, puts the entire body at risk.

All this is alluded to in the verse that states, "And it shall come to pass [*vehaya*], because [*eikev*] you will hearken" (Deuteronomy 7:12). As the Sages have said, the word *vehaya* always denotes a joyous event (Bereshith Rabba 42:4). This means that we must live in joy and love our neighbor by being on our heels (*eikev*) in order to provide him with what he lacks, even the most insignificant thing, and to listen to him as he speaks of his worries and troubles. When we act in this way and refrain from speaking ill of others, and when we remain immersed in joy, we bring about an awakening on earth that is reciprocated in Heaven.

Another important lesson is also taught to us in this parsha. It begins with the words *vehaya eikev*, which denote joy, and in the remainder of the parsha the Children of Israel are reminded of the sin of the golden calf and all they did to irritate the Holy One, blessed be He. This is in order to teach us that Torah study alone (that is, without the fear of Heaven) is not enough, for "Not by bread alone does man live" – bread referring to Torah (Yalkut Shimoni Mishlei 9) – "rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live" (Deuteronomy 8:3), which refers to faith in G-d. We may also explain it to mean the opposite, that faith alone is not enough without Torah study, since

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faith alone cannot be maintained. Both things together are needed: Torah study and faith. We should also stress that it is not only while studying that one should think of G-d, but always, even when on vacation and while resting. We can do this by searching our hearts, for it is written: “by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d,” which is to say that we must always remember Him.

We may also explain that the verse alludes to the fact that if a Tzaddik is sick and cannot give an answer to his students, they should attach themselves to his books. It is only in that way that a person will receive the answers he needs, and that is what constitutes “because you will hearken” (עקב תשמעו) – whose initials form the word עת (“time”) – meaning that a man should set times for the joyful study of Torah.

With regards to this, in the Torah we find the phrase: “Because you will hearken to My laws [*mishpatim*]” (Deuteronomy 7:12). Why is the reference here not to decrees (*chukim*) or commandments (*mitzvot*), rather than exclusively to laws (*mishpatim*)? These types of ordinances are relatively simple and understood by each and everyone. Even non-Jews have these types of ordinances, which is why the Torah comes to teach us that a Jew must perform them with immense joy on the inside – to the depths of his being – rather than being satisfied with a superficial approach. For example, when the Torah writes, “You shall not murder,” it includes the command not to shame another Jew. Similarly, “You shall not steal” refers to stealing a person’s opinion (i.e., making a person believe something which isn’t true).

The verse also alludes to the fact that the reward for performing mitzvot is given in the future, at the time that precedes the coming of Mashiach (*Ikveta d’Mashiach*, literally “the heal of Mashiach”). As it is written, “In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will give to each righteous individual 300 worlds” (Sanhedrin 100a). The main part of this reward deals with the mitzvot that man has a tendency to trample underfoot (literally, “with his heels”), as Rashi writes: “If you observe the easy mitzvot that a man tramples on with his heels, G-d will keep His promise to you” (Rashi on Deuteronomy 7:12).

I have found the following parable in *Likutei Torah* of the *Baal HaTanya*: It is like a king whose servant wanted to please him. After having thought about it a great deal, he decided to bring him a talking ape, a rare thing indeed, which he would no doubt greatly enjoy. Similarly, when we want to bring joy to the King of kings, it is not enough to be satisfied with simple things. A person’s entire heart must be focused onto accomplishing His will. That is what will bring joy to the King.

In my humble opinion, the fact that the passage contains the word *vehaya*, which denotes joy, shows that the King has joy “because [עקב] you will hearken,”

solely when a man performs the important mitzvot by considering himself like a עקב, a heel (i.e., humble), by abasing himself completely. This is what brings joy to the Creator. In addition, the expression יהיה עקב has the same numerical value as יעקב and the name רבו, which alludes to the atonement for harming the covenant of circumcision. This means that Yaakov, who continuously took hold of the idea of the heel, never arrives at committing this sin because he remembers that he is but dust.

The expression *vehaya eikev* also has the same numerical value as twice the Name *Elokim*, alluding to the fact that Yaakov fought twice against the manifestation of strict justice (once against Esau and once against his ministering angel). He defeated them twice and transformed them into mercy. This is the reason why he said, “I am too small for all the mercies” (Genesis 32:11), which means: “I am too small because I am only a heel. In examining myself, I said, ‘What am I that the Holy One, blessed be He, shows me His goodness?’ “ By the merit of this humility, which corresponds to the covenant of circumcision, he is protected and saved from strict justice.

In reality, to succeed in Torah a man should reduce himself to nothing before every Jew, as it is written, “Who is wise? He who learns from every person” (Perkei Avot 4:1), and further, “From all my teachers I grew wise” (Psalms 119:99). There is an allusion to this idea in the verse that states, “From where [*mei’ayin*] will my help come?” (ibid. 121:1), for *mei’ayin* can also be read “as nothing,” meaning that the man who considers himself “as nothing” will be helped because of it.

THE PATH OF THE JUST

LOVE PART IV

The man who acts with kindness towards everyone will know great success. In this world, one advantage that he will have is that everyone will help him. If he falls, many will come to his aid. If someone rises up against him, he will have many people ready to silence and shame the one who slanders him. If he is in trouble, everyone will be distressed and try to help him. If he has financial difficulties, many will come to his aid.

Given that he is loved by everyone, his words will be heeded and can encourage people to improve themselves. This will earn him a reward in the World to Come. Thanks to this love, he will maintain harmonious relationships with everyone and live in peace, and he will also be free to study and perform good deeds. People will help him, do his work for him, and protect him, which will allow him to serve his Creator with tranquility and in the best possible way. This love will allow him to find favor in the eyes of all. His good deeds will be appreciated, and as a result, people will want to emulate them.

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

RABBI MOSHE AARON PINTO

It is written, “And the man Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3).

On Wednesday Elul 5, 5746, after a long and painful illness that lasted three years, the Tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto, the “Light and Pillar of the World,” passed away in Ashdod at the age of 73. Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto was the son of the saintly and venerated Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan, and the descendant of the great Tzaddik Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto, author of the book *The Rif on Ein Yaakov*, and of Rabbi Yaakov Pinto, author of the book on the Zohar entitled *Mikdash Melech*.

In all times and in every generation, the Jewish people have seen renowned men appear, men who were spiritual giants and who profoundly marked their era. These men had set as their sole goal their complete attachment to the Creator of the universe and the glorification of His Holy Torah. Each of them chose his own path in attaining this goal.

I have been asked by many people (foremost among them being Tzaddikim) to write about our Holy Teacher, Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto Zatzal, concerning his exceptional character and great deeds. Also, to write about him in order to perpetuate his memory among the generations to come, that we ourselves should be able to draw lessons from his conduct, notably his humility. His humility, in fact, was particularly revealing, as well as his desire – inspired by the example of Aaron HaKohen – to promote love between G-d’s creations in general, and between a man and his wife in particular. It is not by chance, therefore, that his father Zatzal named him Moshe Aaron.

It is thus that the Tzaddik, Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto Zatzal, literally gave meaning to his first names by adopting the virtues of our teacher Moses and Aaron the High Priest. There exists, furthermore, an interesting parallel between our teacher Moses and Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto. Moses wandered in the desert for 40 years, during which time, as head of the Jewish people, he endured their complaints, helped them to leave the worlds of Tuma (impurity), and was continuously their defender and spokesman before G-d. Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto, obeying his father’s directive, shut himself in his home for 40 years – as long as the Children of Israel stayed in the desert – and he too did it to defend the Jewish people. It was with his 248 members that our teacher was attached to his Creator.

In the eyes of our teacher Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto Zatzal, the important thing was not to be surrounded by students entirely dedicated to his service and glory, but rather to be attached to Hashem by carrying out the commandments: “Walk humbly with the L-RD your G-d” (Micah 6:8) and “You shall be holy” (Leviticus 11:45). This is why he fled from honors and high positions.

One of the most extraordinary things that are mentioned concerning great Tzaddikim is the radiance of their faces.

It is said that a light comparable to that of the heavens emanated from them. When they were alone, it was this Divine light that illuminated their rooms. Most people did not have the privilege to see them studying, for this could be very dangerous. During a trip to Los Angeles, my father of blessed memory was staying with Mr. David Azoulay and his family. They had seen to it that all their cutlery and cookware had undergone Tevila (ritual immersion), and they prepared a special meal for their illustrious guest. One day, the lady of the house sent her son into the room reserved for my father in order to invite him to the table. But in opening the door, the young boy let out a frightful cry that made the entire household shake. To everyone who asked the boy what he had seen, he replied as follows: “Rabbi Moshe’s room was filled with light. His face was also illuminated and radiant!”

A second account comes to us from Mr. Makhlof Bitton, of Moshav Luzite in Israel, who also had the privilege of hosting the Tzaddik. It was a gloomy day in the middle of winter, with the cold being particularly harsh. At one point during the day, Mr. Bitton came into the room of Rabbi Moshe to ask him if he needed anything. In opening the door, Mr. Bitton saw that the face of the Tzaddik was luminous like a star in the sky. It was like a torch from which flashes of light arose. Fearing that he would lose his mind if he remained there watching, the master of the house hurried to leave. Yet afterwards, during the nights that followed, all of Mr. Bitton’s family could see, from a distance, that Rabbi Moshe’s room was illuminated, while his face was brilliant like a celestial light. More than once, the members of Mr. Bitton’s family were amazed to the point of dread by this extraordinary sight.

Once, during the anniversary of Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto’s death, hundreds of people came to pray by his grave in the cemetery of Ashdod. In accordance with family tradition, the faithful encircled his grave seven times, holding in their hands the book devoted to the Tzaddik entitled “And the Man Moshe.” (Let us point out that this tradition is supported by special Halachic consent). When the participants completed their encirclement of the grave, the President of the David Hamelech Association, Rabbi Meir Amar, stirred up everyone’s amazement by remarking that a flow of water dripping from the Tzaddik’s headstone. Everyone asked how such a thing could have happened. Yet overcoming this first shock, everybody there gathered around this flow of water that was truly miraculous. It was a source of living water that made Rabbi Moshe’s grave into a Mizbe’ach Tahor (a pure altar). Another point of astonishment: Barely had the procession around the grave been completed, that the water stopped dripping and the gravesite took on its usual appearance. To this very day, witnesses to that extraordinary event retain the profound impression of this deep-rooted memory, namely the miraculous source of water that their eyes had seen and their hands had touched.

May his merit protect us. Amen.

THE STORY OF THE WEEK WHO ARE YOU ?

A quite shallow man, the descendant of a family of Tzaddikim and Torah greats, one day found himself at Rabbi Meir's in the city of Premishlan. Even though he was "vinegar the son of wine" (someone of little importance who stems from a good family), he boasted of his ancestry by listing all his great ancestors over the course of the generations. Rabbi Meir heard his boasting and told him, "I am going to tell you a nice little story."

Rabbi Meir began: "In the yard of a non-Jewish landowner, there was a horse that served its owner and his family for many years with faithfulness and devotion. However, since it had become old and weak, it was useless now, to the point that the owner decided to get rid of it by sending it off into the forest. Nevertheless, aware that the horse had served him well, he had pity on it and was afraid that wild animals would rip apart this old, defenseless animal. He therefore enwrapped the horse with the skins of a lion, a bear, and a wolf, so that the wild animals would flee from it. That having been done, he sent the horse into the forest.

"There, rumors spread among the animals almost as swiftly as they do among men, and their king, meaning the lion, quickly learned that there was a strange creature that was roaming about in his kingdom, a creature that was perhaps a lion, perhaps a bear, or perhaps a wolf. He had this mysterious animal summoned, and when it arrived, the completely shocked lion asked, 'Who are you?' The strange animal replied with pride, 'I grew up in the house of a landowner.' The lion responded, 'I asked you who you are.' The animal answered, 'I served him faithfully.' The lion replied, 'All that is fine and good, but who are you?' The response was, 'I visited royal palaces.' The lion insisted: 'Yes, but aside from that, who are you?' The strange animal lowered its head, ashamed with embarrassment: 'Me? I'm only a horse.'

Those who wish to understand Rabbi Meir's story may do so.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY FROM THE MAGGID OF DUBNO

It is written, "This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances, and you shall observe and perform them. The L-RD your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers" (Deuteronomy 7:12).

An elderly man had a very young son for whom he was keeping 1,000 pieces of gold. When he felt his end approaching, the man called one of his friends and asked him to be his son's guardian, to raise him and to take care of his inheritance. When the child grew up, this guardian employed him as a bookkeeper in his shop and gave him a fixed annual salary. Several years passed, until one day the boy heard that he had an inheritance from his father of 1,000 gold coins, an inheritance that was being kept by his employer. He thought, "Why should I tire myself out for nothing in order to work for others?" and then went to his employer and said, "Give me my money so that I can live trouble-free with what's rightfully mine!" He replied, "If that's what you want, take it – I'll give it to you. But if you want some good advice, put it aside in safekeeping and don't touch any of it for the moment, otherwise you'll spend it all without realizing that you'll be left with nothing. It's better for you to have a job that allows you to earn a living. Your money can stay with me, as it has up to now, and you'll be very happy to have it one day!"

Our fathers put their merit in trust with Hashem so that He could keep it for their descendants. If He gives our inheritance to us right away, we will devour it little by little until the merit of our fathers will have been completely used up. This is why He said, "This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances" – if you earn your living yourselves, the benefit will be yours – "The L-RD your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers." In the Midrash on this parsha, our Sages have similarly explained the meaning of the expression, "will safeguard for you": Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman said, "Everything that the Children of Israel eat in this word is through the power of the blessings that the wicked Balaam give them, but the blessings that the Patriarchs gave them is kept for later."