

וַיַּאכְהֶל
וַיִּקְדְּשֵׁי
THE PATH
TO FOLLOW

No 125
VAYAKHEL
PEKUDEI

25 ADAR 5766
MARCH.25.2006

HEVRAT PINTO

Under Aegis of

Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shelita

11, rue du plateau - 75019 PARIS

Tel: (331) 48 03 53 89 • Fax (331) 42 08 50 85

8 Morris Road - Spring Valley NY 10977

Tel: 1-845 426 1276 • Fax: 1-845 426 1149

www.hevratpinto.org

Responsible of publication Hanania Soussan

SHABBAT: FORETASTE OF THE WORLD TO COME

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita)

The Talmud teaches, “The one who offers a gift to his friend should make him aware of it” (Shabbat 10b). This is what the Holy One, blessed be He, did when He said to Moses, “I have a good gift in My treasury ... Personally transmit this mitzvah to the Children of Israel. Do not follow the normal custom of first informing your brother Aaron, then his children, then the elders. Do not even employ a meturgeman [translator or spokesman]” (see Eruvin 54b). This is why the verse stipulates, “Moses assembled the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them...” (Exodus 35:1).

With regards to this, we may ask the following question: Is the mitzvah of Shabbat so important that Moses had to transmit it to them directly, without any intermediary?

We may respond by saying that Moses took on the aspect of the Sanctuary, where the Shechinah (Divine Presence) constantly resided (Shemot Rabba 47:6), as it is written: “Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles” (Numbers 12:8). Only a man of Moses’ caliber, who literally lived the holiness of Shabbat, could transmit it to the Children of Israel. And since Shabbat is equal to all the mitzvot (Shabbat Rabba 25:16), when he taught them the mitzvah of Shabbat, he also taught them all of G-d’s precepts and the entire Torah. As we read in the Amidah of Shabbat morning: “Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion ... and he brought down two Tablets of stone in his hand, on which was inscribed the observance of Shabbat”. Only a faithful servant

of this caliber, the most faithful in G-d’s entire house (Numbers 12:7), could be charged with such a holy and important mission.

Nevertheless, to instill in oneself the holiness of Shabbat and the delight of the World to Come – the Shechinah – a man must take on the aspect of the Sanctuary. To sense the holiness of Shabbat, he must make extensive preparations throughout the week, at which point he will feel the joy that Moses felt on Sinai when he received the Torah.

The observance of Shabbat procures power and strength for a man, which in turn allows him to serve G-d during the entire week that follows. This is because, as we have seen (Zohar, Yitro 88a), it is from Shabbat that the six following days of the week obtain their blessing. The new energy that a man acquires will sanctify the next Shabbat and give him a foretaste of the World to Come. In this way he will advance “from strength to strength” (Psalms 84:8) until the end of his days.

Consequently, it is incumbent on a man to diligently engage in the study of Torah so as to sense the holiness of Shabbat. With the goal of giving him “a beautiful crown for his head” (that of Shabbat, see Amidah), he should overcome all obstacles that stand in his way. If he demonstrates endurance and does not fall into despair, he can reach the level of being G-d’s faithful servant. In our days, where the economic outlook has appreciably improved (which aids Shabbat), let us not act like those who believe

Continuation page 2

that the main thing is the performance of all mitzvot except those concerning Shabbat, where one must relax and rest (even to work, if the need arises – G-d forbid). Only the strict observance of Shabbat sanctifies the days of the week and is closely connected to all other mitzvot.

The construction of the Sanctuary therefore did not push aside Shabbat, for as our Sages teach, Shabbat itself constitutes this building process (Yebamot 6a). It is Shabbat that contributes to spiritually elevating a man, who himself is a miniature Sanctuary, as we have seen.

“Contemplate and see that the L-RD is good. Happy is the man yecheseh bo [who takes refuge in Him]” (Psalms 34:9), exclaims King David, the sweet singer of Israel. The one who savors the taste of Shabbat will manage to accomplish all the mitzvot and diligently engage in the study of Torah, which is called Tov (Berachot 5a). The light of Torah and its divine precepts lead to complete faith in G-d (see Psalm 34:9, above). As a result, it was Moses who personally transmitted the mitzvah of Shabbat to the Children of Israel, since it constitutes the very foundation of faith in G-d as well as the foundation of the Torah and mitzvot.

Another reason why Moses personally transmitted the mitzvah of Shabbat is because, as we have seen, the Torah itself testifies to Moses’ humility, as it is written: “Now the man Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). It was he who performed wonders before the eyes of all Israel (Deuteronomy 34:12), meaning with the utmost humility, with completely unselfish motives. It is in this way that we should act as we prepare for Shabbat. We should ready ourselves for that holy day with the utmost modesty, not to show our neighbors and guests how much material wealth (beautiful clothes, sumptuous meals, etc.) or spiritual wealth we possess. Let us honor Shabbat with modesty and constantly submit ourselves to G-d.

If Shabbat – like the entire Torah, for that matter – was given to us as a precious gift by the Holy One, blessed be He (Shemot Rabba 28:1), Who shows us the love He has for us, we are beholden to truly honor Him and proudly wear this priceless gem

(i.e., observe Shabbat) before everyone’s eyes. It is in this way that we will find favor in the eyes of our Creator.

If our Sages have recommended that we should permeate all of Shabbat with Torah (Tanna D’vei Eliyahu Rabba 1), it is because both Torah and Shabbat are precious gifts that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to us. In fact, if we were to observe but one Shabbat, no nation would be able to harm us, and if we observed two Shabbats, we would be immediately redeemed. If the Temple was destroyed, it was because the Children of Israel abandoned G-d’s Torah. Therefore to correct that state of affairs – to put an end to our prolonged exile – we must display these two gems before the eyes of all the nations. It is then that we will be liberated.

As we have seen, if Moses personally transmitted the mitzvah of Shabbat to the Children of Israel, it was because he was the only man on earth to have understood its true meaning. Moses “remained on the mountain for forty days and forty nights; bread [he] did not eat, and water [he] did not drink” (Deuteronomy 9:9). He drew all his strength from G-d (see Shemot Rabba 47:5, 7) and could savor the taste of Gan Eden. The Talmud teaches that we learn of the 39 forms of forbidden work on Shabbat by the word eileh (“these [are]”), which is found in the verse, “Eileh [These are] the things...” (Exodus 35:1), and whose Gematria is exactly 39 [the numerical value of each letter (1+30+5=36) plus the number of its letters (3) equals 39]. These were the number of divine precepts relating to Shabbat that Moses instructed the Children of Israel. Consequently, the one who observes Shabbat will enjoy the tal (39), the enlivening dew (Isaiah 26:19) that will resurrect the dead at the end of days (Shabbat 88b). He will be able to reach the level of Moses, whom even the Angel of Death could not conquer. In fact, the Angel of Death revealed to Moses the secret of the incense (ibid. 89a), which resurrects the dead. Furthermore Moses did not die a normal death, but was kissed by the Holy One, blessed be He (Devarim Rabba 11:9). This is what happens to every Tzaddik, to all men of Israel whose very essence is holy and who are constantly imbued with the Shechinah, observe Shabbat, and rejoice in its holiness.

IN MEMORY OF THE TSADIKIM

RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL OF LUBAVITCH, THE AUTHOR OF TZEMACH

His father was a Tzaddik, his mother the daughter of a Tzaddik, and he was a Gaon and Tzaddik in his own right – a pillar of the Chabad line of Rebbes – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn. He was the grandson of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi and the son-in-law of the “Mitteler” Rebbe, Rabbi Dov Ber.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel was born to Rabbi Shalom Shachna on Elul 29, 5549 (1789). At a very young age he began to study with his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Rebbe of Chabad Chassidim. Once he realized that his grandson was destined for greatness, Rabbi Shneur Zalman devoted himself to watching over him like the apple of his eye. He was pleased with his grandson’s progress, and he taught him the best of his Torah.

Up to the age of Bar Mitzvah he studied only the revealed aspects of Torah, and on the advice of his grandfather he then began studying the hidden Torah as well.

At the age of 15 his illustrious grandfather made him responsible for various tasks for the good of the community. He taught him to be organized in his work, telling him: “Mendel, one must work more at being organized than at being learned, for order is one of the fundamental principles of everything that concerns knowledge and integrity.”

Menachem Mendel did not disappoint his grandfather. At a young age he began to write commentaries that his grandfather greatly complemented him on, and on his advice he married the daughter of Rabbi Dov Ber. After his wedding, he lived with his father-in-law and studied Torah and Chassidus in holiness and purity. “It was during that time,” Rabbi Menachem Mendel would say, “that I learned from my grandfather to place all my confidence in the Tzaddikim.”

The story of how that happened goes as follows:

One day the elderly Rav, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, asked him a question: “Mendel, how much is your dowry?”

“Two thousand rubbles,” replied Rabbi Menachem Mendel.

“And what do you plan on doing with this money?” asked the aged Rav once again.

“I will give it to a trustworthy wealthy man and earn a little off of it,” replied the grandson.

His grandfather responded: “What does it matter if he is now rich? It could happen that after a while he will become poor. I advise you to put your money in this box, a Tzedakah box. The capital and profit will be completely secure.”

Rabbi Menachem Mendel slipped out of his grandfather’s room and gave the money to a man who was very rich and highly trustworthy. However after a few months, the rich man lost his money and became destitute.

As time went on, his grandfather eventually asked him: “Tell me Mendel, how much did you make with your money?”

The grandson told him the truth about what happened, so his grandfather said to him, “Why did you not listen to me when I advised you to give your money to Tzedakah? Why did you not have more confidence in the words of your Rav than in those of an ordinary Jew?”

After the death of his uncle and father-in-law, the Mitteler Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel refused to take over the leadership of the Chabad Chassidim. This was because it was a heavy responsibility, and he wanted to be a simple Chassid like the others. His son Rabbi Shemuel recounted the following story about him:

“One day, I went to see my father the Tzemach Tzedek. I found him walking about in his room with a look of profound sorrow etched on his face. Naturally this frightened me, for I felt that some tragedy was about to occur. In response to my question about this, my father said: ‘Today marks 50 years since my first meeting with the Chassidim. I was then 20 years old, and the next day my grandfather called me. He spoke to me about the verse that states, “At the age of 20,” and he gave me his blessing that I should be successful in writing commentaries on the Torah, both revealed and hidden. Since that time, at every reunion I was present at, I was honored first as the grandson of the Rebbe, and then as the son-in-law of the Mitteler Rebbe. And since I took upon myself the yoke of leading the Chassidim some 30 years ago, I have not had the taste for a gathering of the Chassidim, for this gives great discomfort.’ As he said this, tears poured down his cheeks.”

However under the influence of those close to him, Rabbi Menachem Mendel assumed the leadership of the Chassidim after the death of his father-in-law. From near and far, people came to him to eagerly drink in his words. Rabbi Menachem Mendel worried greatly about his Chassidim. He purchased a parcel of land, founded the village of Shchedrin, and settled many Jews there. His renown spread around the globe, and people from every corner of the Diaspora addressed him with questions. Even though he was overloaded with work, he never stopped answering these questions. He assembled all his Halachic explanations in his book of responsum entitled Tzemach Tzedek, a four-part work.

In 5608 (1848), he was invited to a meeting in St. Petersburg that was organized by Prince Obrov, the Russian minister of education. The prince wanted to have the rabbanim accept that Jews learn Russian and secular studies, but Rabbi Menachem Mendel was determined in his opposition to this. Fearing that this view would cost him his life, he brought a burial shroud with him to St. Petersburg. Rabbi Menachem Mendel’s merit protected him, however, and he arrived there in peace and departed in peace.

In 5615 (1855), opponents began to denounce him, and his house was placed under government surveillance. He then personally went to see the governor of the region, who promised that he would pay no attention to what informers were saying about him.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel fell ill in 5620 (1860) and did not recuperate, dying on Nissan 13, 5626 (1866). He was 77 years old when his soul departed from the city of Lubavitch. He had left instructions that his gravestone should have no glorious titles on it, but only the mention that he contributed to the Teshuvah of many. His son Rabbi Shemuel, the Rebbe Maharash, succeeded him as leader of the Chassidim.

THE STORY OF THE WEEK

THE MAIN THING IS “WHAT IS SPOKEN OF US IN HEAVEN”

Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, the Brisker Rav, was constantly motivated by a tangible faith, which held that nothing could prevent G-d from saving, regardless of the circumstances. This is why, even in the most difficult situations, he stressed that it was not the situation itself that mattered, but solely “what is spoken of us in Heaven.” What follows is a story that is told concerning him in the collection entitled Shaarei Torah:

When our teacher was in Vilna in 5700 (1940), the Russians began to appropriate apartments for its army officers. This is how they proceeded: They first issued an edict laying claim to certain apartments, then they sent interested officers to choose one that they liked among those claimed. If a particular apartment pleased an officer, it was confiscated and the tenant had to vacate the premises within 24 hours. As for a substitute, the tenant received an apartment that was far from town.

When the sons of our teacher arrived home one day, he told them that the Russians had been in their apartment and had laid claim to it. They felt hopeless, for there would be no place to go if their apartment would be confiscated. This was because the one that would be offered to them as a substitute was very far from town and they had no means of transportation, and that was besides the fact that the new place would have no windows. When our teacher saw the sadness of his children, he sighed deeply: “This week we read Parsha Vayishlach, in which we find the verse: ‘He said, “No longer will it be said that your name is Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with the Divine and with man and have overcome.”’ On this Rashi explains: ‘“And with man” – Esau and Laban.’ This requires an explanation. True, Jacob had already defeated Laban, yet he had not even encountered Esau! So how can it be said that he overcame him? The explanation is that the man who wrestled with Jacob was Esau’s ministering angel, and the Sages explain that they wrestled even to the Throne of Glory, meaning that their struggle had a bearing on their status in Heaven. As a result, once Jacob defeated Esau’s ministering angel in Heaven, by that same token he had also defeated Esau here on earth, even though he had not yet met him.”

Our teacher continued to speak to those who lived with him and said, “Similarly, we should first worry about what will be said of us in Heaven. If we are shown kindness there, there is no reason to fear anyone!” And in fact that is what happened. Even though our teacher’s apartment in Vilna was large and beautiful, it did not please any of the Russian officers who visited it, and it was only after our teacher left for Eretz Israel that someone came to see it, liked what he saw, and ordered it confiscated.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

FROM THE MAGGID OF DUBNO

It is written, “Moses assembled the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them, ‘These are the things that the L-RD commanded, to do them: On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for the L-RD’ ” (Exodus 35:1-2).

The Yalkut Shimoni states: “The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: ‘Make large assemblies and explain the Torah to them in public and the laws of Shabbat on Shabbat.’ One concludes from this that Moses instituted the custom of giving lessons at the time of the subject: The Halachot of Passover on Passover, those of Shavuot on Shavuot, etc. On a given holiday, the laws of that same holiday were elucidated.”

Why did the Biblical text put so much emphasis on Shabbat and the holidays? Be it to praise them or to protest that we do not observe them sufficiently, it is a question pertaining to these more than to any other mitzvot. With regards to what else do we speak of remembrance and observance as we do for Shabbat? Not only that, but the desecration of holy days is vehemently condemned, as for example in the following verse: “My soul detests your New Moons and your appointed times; they have become a burden upon Me” (Isaiah 1:14).

A person left his family en route to a distant country. When he finally arrived, he waited impatiently for news concerning his hometown, yet nobody from there ever passed by. One day a beggar showed up and the man immediately recognized him as being from his city. He was overjoyed at his arrival and wanted to hear all the news that he could possibly relay to him. The poor man, however, responded, “Why are you delaying me? I came here for my livelihood, so don’t make me lose any precious time.”

“How much do you think you’ll be able to collect today?” the man asked.

“Two or three gold coins,” replied the beggar.

“Here are three gold coins. Stay here with me!”

He therefore stayed at the man’s home and began to recount everything that had happened to the man’s family. The beggar had hardly begun to speak, however, when drowsiness took a hold of him.

“Since this is a place where I can rest,” the beggar told himself, “I’ll ask the man of the house to give me a bed and let me sleep a little!”

His host, however, became angry: “If I relieved you from all your work today, it was only for me – so that you could tell me how my family was doing! Why, for goodness’ sake, would you want to go to bed now?”

Hashem gave man a privileged soul, one whose origin is from under the Throne of Glory. However in man it finds itself far from its natural environment. Every day of the week, even though the Holy One, blessed be He, yearns to hear good news on its part, a man is occupied with his business. This is why He gave us Shabbat; it is in order that He may rejoice with us. On Friday we receive our sustenance for two days in order that Shabbat finds us free of all our worries and ready to rejoice in G-d’s closeness and love. “For six days you will work”: You may occupy yourself with everything that concerns your body, but the seventh day is a rest in honor of Hashem your G-d. That day should be devoted solely to Hashem, Who granted us this rest in order to rejoice with us, not to see us lounging around in bed or giving ourselves over to other personal activities. This is what constitutes a “day of complete rest for the L-RD.”