

LA VOIE À SUIVRE

No 144
VAETCHANAN
11 AV 5766
AUGUST 5 2006

בס"ד
Publication
HEVRAT PINTO
Sous l'égide de
Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א
11, rue du plateau - 75019 PARIS
Tel: 01 42 08 25 40 • Fax 01 42 08 50 85
www.hevratpinto.org
Responsable de publication Hanania Soussan

THE POWER OF PRAYER AT ANY TIME

The holy Tanna Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" (Perkei Avoth 1:14). What does the last statement mean? What exactly is the issue with regards to doing something now? In the second chapter in Perkei Avoth, Hillel also stated: "Do not say, 'I will study when I have free time,' for perhaps you will never have free time" (ibid. 2:4).

The explanation is the following: It is obvious that the words of Hillel in the second chapter of Perkei Avoth ("Do not say, 'I will study when I have free time'") refer to Torah study. This means that a person has no right to say, "When I have the time, then I'll study Torah," for in that case he might not be able free himself to study when the time comes. We must therefore use every spare moment to study Torah, lest when the time comes and we want to study, various interruptions will prevent us from doing so.

The gaon Rabbi Israel Salanter Zatzal, the great master of Mussar, said that the words of Hillel in the first chapter of Perkei Avoth ("And if not now, when?") as well as those in the second chapter ("Do not say, 'I will study when I have free time'") both refer to prayer. The book *Al HaTorah* cites Rabbi Salanter as saying: "A man must not say, 'This time is perfectly suited for study and prayer, but that time is not. I can therefore take it easy now, for I have no energy or ability to focus, and I have no time to study. However when I do have the time, then I'll study.'" Not at all! All times are suitable for Torah study and prayer. Every moment is convenient, and if not now, when? We must not neglect Torah study or prayer at any time.

Concerning which verse did Rabbi Salanter make such comments? He wrote them with regards to the first verse in our parsha: "I implored the L-RD at the time" (Deuteronomy 3:23). Moses prayed to the Holy One, blessed be He, at that time because he wanted to enter Eretz Israel. What time was that? Rabbi Salanter answers this question by saying, "It was not an exact and definite point in time, for all times are suitable for

prayer, and we can arouse Hashem's mercy at each instant."

What does this pertain to? There are some among us who, when we ask them to pray for something (be it for sustenance, help in various predicaments, or for a health-related matter) they answer, "Not now. It's not a good time to pray. We have to organize a special 'prayer day' and invite all the great men of the generation, for then the entire house of Israel will recite supplications before our heavenly Father and the gates of Heaven will certainly open and deliverance will surely come." People who say such things simply do not understand anything about the power of prayer. They know absolutely nothing of its potency. They fail to realize that the gates of prayer are not tightly sealed. This means that the gates of prayer are open before the Holy One, blessed be He, at all times and at every instant – each day, 365 days a year – and it is possible at any time to implore Hashem, to ask and beseech Him for help. If the people described above feel that all these times are not suitable for prayer, it is because they believe that we cannot always ask G-d for help. Yet Moses himself did not wait for a special time to beseech G-d, for he began to pray as soon as he learned that he was not to enter Eretz Israel. We must therefore make such people understand that all times are good for prayer.

Concerning one of the tzaddikim of the previous generation, it is said that he would normally light the Chanukah candles in the presence of his servants and family members (not with his chassidim). One day one of his chassidim, who had been childless after seven years of marriage, came to see him before he lit the candles. He wanted to witness the Rebbe lighting the Chanukah candles in the hope that, just maybe, he would have a son by the power of these sanctified lights. His Rebbe, however, told him: "With the Holy One, blessed be He, every moment and all times are the same. There is neither Chanukah nor the month of Tammuz, for just as we can beseech Hashem before the Chanukah candles, so too can we beseech Him

in the month of Tammuz." As it turned out, a year and a half later – during the month of Tammuz no less – the wife of this chassid had a baby boy! This story clearly proves that we can indeed successfully implore Hashem at all times. We find an allusion to this idea in the verse, "For I have given you a tov [good] teaching, do not forsake My Torah" (Proverbs 4:2). The word tov has the same numerical value as the word hahu, which appears in the verse, "I implored the L-RD hahu [at that] time" (Deuteronomy 3:23). This means that Hashem sends tov (good) our way, and that all times and every moment is good for Torah study and prayer. It is forbidden for a man to delay his Torah study for another time or to say that he will pray later on. We must not give up. We must not neglect the time we have before us. We must pray and study now, as soon as the time presents itself. Rabbi Yochanan said with regards to this, "If only a man could go on praying the whole day!" (Berachot 21a). This is because the entire day is suitable in Hashem's eyes for Torah study, and even more so for prayer. One day the disciples of Rabbi Chaim of Sanz asked him, "What does our teacher do before prayer?" He replied, "Before prayer, I ask Hashem for the ability to 'pray at the time of prayer,' for all hours are suitable for prayer. I therefore ask to be able to pray and take advantage of this good time for prayer."

This applies to every generation. Furthermore, it applies not only to men, but to women as well. As we know, women are exempt from the duty to pray, yet many women still do so. No woman should think that she needs to pray at the same three times that men do, for all times are good for prayer. With regards to righteous women, it is said that when they prepared breakfast for their husbands, they said a special prayer from the depths of their heart. Is that not a prayer? Is such a prayer not accepted by G-d? It is as we have said: The power of prayer exists at any time. Therefore let's take advantage of the moment!

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Comfort, Comfort My People

This Shabbat is universally known as Shabbat Nachamu, for the days preceding it were ones of weeping, lamentation, and anguish. Because of our grief over the destruction of the Temple, an event that has left us in bitter exile today, we need to be uplifted by words of consolation, words whose role is to inundate us with light and hope for the coming deliverance. A person who is keenly observant will be amazed upon closely examining the reason for the exile and the deliverance. On the surface, the exile appears to be something evil and bitter, a period that has inundated us with disaster, persecution, and misfortune for thousands of years. Yet all this is from a superficial point of view. If we were to raise the dark cover of the exile, we would discover that something extremely sublime is concealed within. It is precisely at the heart of this exile that our complete deliverance is hidden, a deliverance that will herald the end of our exile. Yet to achieve this deliverance, we must proceed by means of exile, whose goal is to rectify all that is not right in us and eliminate everything that separates us from our Father in Heaven. A planted seed must first rot in the ground before new life can sprout and grow from it, and the same applies to the Jewish people in exile. It is precisely through suffering and despair that new life develops and blossoms. Without such terribly difficult times, a process of renewal and true deliverance would not be able to occur. This is why the Sages have said that Tisha B'Av is the day that Mashiach was born. This should surprise us, for why did the Holy One, blessed be He, arrange for Mashiach to be born precisely on Tisha B'Av, when our terrible exile began? It is to teach us that at the deepest level, the exile conceals restoration and rejuvenation. Hence it is precisely at the time of destruction – on the most difficult day of the year – that the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring about the birth of Mashiach. This is why Tisha B'Av is called a “festival,” a day that symbolizes the exile on one hand and deliverance on the other. It is also why fast days will, in the future, be transformed into days of feasting and joy. These are the days that will open a new path to the future. We find a marvelous allusion to this in the words *geula* (“deliverance”) and *galut* (“exile”), which are written in very similar ways. This is to teach us that we can only attain *geula* by first going through *galut*, for it is precisely in the midst of darkness that light will appear.

In light of this, we may explain the words of the Gemara in tractate Makot. There the Gemara states that Rabbi Akiva was walking with some of the Sages when they arrived at the Temple mount. Amid the ruins of the Temple, they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies, at which point the Sages began to cry. As for Rabbi Akiva, however, he seemed happy. When Rabbi Akiva asked them why they were weeping, the Sages said: “A place of which it was once said, ‘The stranger who approaches shall die’ [Numbers 1:51] has now become the haunt of foxes, and should we not weep?” Rabbi Akiva replied that he was happy because just as Scripture was fulfilled in stating, “Zion will be plowed over like a field” (Micah 3:12), so too would it be fulfilled in stating, “Old men and old women will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem” (Zechariah 8:4). Upon hearing these words, the Sages said to him: “Akiva, you have comforted us! Akiva, you have comforted us!” (Makot 24b). We need to understand why at first the Sages wept, yet were consoled upon hearing Rabbi Akiva’s words. The reason is that at first they thought that it was impossible not to cry upon seeking a fox scurrying out of the Holy of Holies, for this symbolized the complete and utter destruction of the Temple. Rabbi Akiva told them that they did indeed have a reason to weep over its destruction. However it was precisely such destruction that marked the beginning of a new era of deliverance, one that will come speedily and in our days. Amen.

When Did Moses Begin to Pray?

“I implored the L-RD at the time” (Deuteronomy 3:23).

When did Moses begin to pray?

Rashi commented: “‘At the time’ – After I had captured the land of Sihon and Og, I imagined that the vow had been cancelled.” Now the war against

Sihon and Og occurred on the day when the people stopped dying in the desert, meaning on Av 15. Therefore on that day, after the conquest of the lands of Sihon and Og, Moses realized that it had been decreed that he would not enter the Holy Land, and at that point he began to pray. From this we can easily calculate the number of his prayers, which took place from Av 15 until Adar 7, when he died (excluding Shabbat and festivals, when it is forbidden to implore Hashem for personal requests). This comes to exactly 515 prayers, which is the numerical value of *va’etchanan* (“and I implored”).

Explicitly Stating Your Requests in Prayer

“I implored thL-RD at the time, saying...” (Deuteronomy 3:23).

What is the meaning of Moses’ extra word *laymor* (“saying”)? It teaches us that one prerequisite for having a prayer accepted is that it must be said explicitly, in such a way that it cannot be wrongfully interpreted. Concerning this subject, the Midrash recounts the story of a man who injured his leg. He then prayed, “If only I had a beast of burden!” At that point, who should pass by but a man whose donkey had just given birth to a mule in the middle of the road! He immediately approached the injured man and asked him to take the newborn mule into his arms. At that point the injured man said, “My prayer’s been answered, for here’s the animal I asked for. Yet I didn’t ask as I should have. I didn’t correctly explain that I needed an animal to ride on, not to hold in my arms!”

Why Did Hashem Prohibit Moses From Praying?

“Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter” (Deuteronomy 3:26).

Why is the significance of Hashem’s command that Moses stop praying, even going to the point of explicitly prohibiting him from prayer?

The Midrash states that in his prayer, Moses told Hashem that he had the same status as a servant, as it is written: “My servant Moses” (Numbers 12:7). Now the Torah states that a servant who says, “I love my master... I will not go out free” (Exodus 21:5), such a servant “shall serve him [the master] forever” (v.6). This is precisely what Moses told Hashem, namely that he did not want to go free, preferring instead to “serve Him [Hashem] forever.” If Moses had said this to Hashem in prayer, his argument would have been justified and Hashem would have had to let him enter Eretz Israel. Hashem therefore commanded Moses to no longer speak of this matter. Hence Moses was prevented from assuming the status of one who gives up his freedom to serve his master, for otherwise that would have enabled him to enter Eretz Israel.

– Maharil Diskin

Moses Also Implicated Himself

“So we remained in the valley, opposite Beth-Peor” (Deuteronomy 3:29).

According to Rashi’s explanation of this verse, Moses reprimanded the Children of Israel for the sin of Baal Peor, where they succumbed to idolatry. However we must ask ourselves why Moses used the expression, “So we remained” (using the plural form), since Moses himself did not participate in this sin. He should have instead said, “So you remained,” without including himself. The answer is that this is what *tzaddikim* do when reprimanding the Jewish people: They include themselves among the people and find themselves guilty of the people’s sin!

Since When Do Inanimate Objects “Give Birth”?

“You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor shall you subtract from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

The reason for the prohibition against subtracting from Hashem’s word is clear. However why does the Torah command us not to add to it?

For that matter, exactly what could be added to it? What can this be compared to? It is like a man who normally borrowed items from his neighbor. Each time that he borrowed an item, he returned it twofold. If he borrowed a spoon or a plate, he would return two spoons for one spoon or two plates for one plate.

His neighbor was surprised at this unusual behavior, and he asked him the reason for it. The man replied, "The plate that you loaned me conceived and gave birth to another plate. It therefore belongs to you, not to me." The neighbor was pleased to hear this explanation, at which point he begged the man to borrow more of his things, knowing that he would receive them back twofold. One day the man asked his neighbor to lend him a large silver candlestick, since he was planning a celebration at his home. The neighbor gladly lent it to him, hoping to receive two candlesticks in return. When the neighbor went to collect his candlestick on the following day, the man had a distraught look on his face. He told his neighbor the bad news: His candlestick had died during childbirth. The neighbor began to yell and scorn the man, "Who said that a candlestick could die?" The man replied, "And who said that a spoon or a plate could give birth? Until today you've agreed with me that a pot can give birth. So you also have to agree that a candlestick can die!"

The same applies to the performance of mitzvot. A person who adds to a Torah mitzvah by claiming that it "conceived and gave birth," such a person is liable to claim that just as it can give birth, so too can it die.

Israel's Great Wisdom

"You shall safeguard and perform them, for it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the peoples" (Deuteronomy 4:6).

The Sages explain, "What wisdom and understanding is in the eyes of the peoples? Say that it is the science of cycles and planets" (Shabbat 75a). The Steipler speaks of this in his book Chayei Olam: "We see that the nations, even though they study astronomy in great detail, have already modified their calendar several times, for over the course of time their calculations have been inaccurate. We, however, have a tradition from the Sages of the Gemara that goes back to Moses on Sinai, and it tells us that the length of a month is 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 chalakim, which is an extremely precise measurement." The book HaBrit states that one reason why the nations of the world recognize that the Torah of Israel is true is that this calculation of 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 chalakim has never been invalidated, not even to the slightest degree. This is a fulfillment of the verse, "It is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the peoples."

EISHET CHAYIL

The Laws of Modesty in the Workplace

Every employer must try to have separate rooms for male and female employees to keep their personal belongings such as coats, purses, and the like.

Attention must be paid to ensuring that male and female employees do not work in close proximity with one another, and that they keep their distance as much as possible. If employees are called to a meeting to discuss work-related matters, men and women should sit separately. Employees should not try to organize celebrations, and a person should not participate if invited to one (unless, of course, it is conducted according to the laws of modesty, namely that men and women are separated). Every employee must be careful not to have co-workers of the opposite sex in their vehicle – not even if they pay – and certainly not for free. Separate cars should be arranged in that case, and if that is not possible, employees should at least make sure not to chat during the ride.

A MATTER OF EDUCATION

"We Will Do and We Will Hear" – Action Leads to Greater Understanding

It is written, "Know today and take it unto your heart" (Deuteronomy 4: 39). "Know today" – this is the wisdom of the intellect; "And take it unto your heart" – this is the wisdom of the heart. Alternatively, "Know today" – this is the gathering of understanding; "And take it unto your heart" – this is the deepening of understanding. Alternatively still, "Know today" – this is knowledge; "And take it unto your heart" – this is yielding to knowledge.

There are four characteristics among men: 1) One who knows and yields, he is a tzaddik; 2) One who does not know and does not yield, he is a rasha; 3) One who does not know yet yields, he is uneducated; and 4) One who does not know and does not yield, he is a boor. The objective of a person or thing is determined according to its characteristics. The objective of a pen is to write, and that is its characteristic. The same applies to man: His objective is to apply G-d's word in thought and deed, which are not two mutually exclusive realms. That is, action is nothing but a degree of thought, and simple thought is but the knowledge of something. Action is the internalization of knowledge. Many people claim that they hold certain beliefs, yet their deeds demonstrate complete opposition to such beliefs. This means that they possess a superficial degree of knowledge, but not a degree that penetrates their hearts and makes them yield to that knowledge. On the opposite end, there are many people who spend their entire lives conducting themselves uprightly, yet they do not delve into the moral concepts or ideas that form the basis of their conduct. They too possess wisdom, yet it is the kind described by the phrase, "The fear of Hashem is wisdom." It is not wisdom of the intellect, but of the heart.

Wisdom of the heart is greater than that of the intellect. The heart has a direct and living sense of things, while the intellect is nothing but an instrument to organize and gather knowledge. Those who are wise of heart are faithful to the truth of their hearts, even if their intellect does not exactly express it. Those who are wise of intellect – who organize their knowledge without being wise of heart, and who do not deepen their understanding – what purpose can their wisdom serve as long as it is not in their hearts? Wisdom of the heart without wisdom of the intellect is like a device without a description, but with a user's manual, meaning a realistic education. On the other hand, wisdom of the intellect without wisdom of the heart is like a description of a machine without the actual machine! A realistic education instills a person with wisdom of the heart. A person's deeds are always the concretization of some idea, which penetrates the heart through action, as in: "We will do and we will hear." However intellectualizing an idea does not guarantee that it will penetrate and dwell in the heart.

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

A Person Should Fear Lest...

The Chafetz Chaim wrote, "One who realizes that he has difficulty keeping his mouth shut and who cannot avoid speaking Lashon Harah, such a person should tremble inside. This is because Heaven may have decreed, as a result of his sin, that he be cut off from his people, since the Sages have said that everywhere that the Torah states arur ('cursed be'), it implies being cut off (Shevuot 36a)."

How many evils are caused by the Lashon Harah that a person speaks on account of his cruelty! Such a person takes no pity on the dignity of others, which leads him to anger, scorn, and other defects that, over time, become habitual. All this teaches us the extent of the damage that can occur as a result of Lashon Harah. The wise foresee and take heed.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

Clinging to the Shechinah

It is written, "You who cling to the L-RD your G-d, you are all alive today" (Deuteronomy 4:4).

From here we learn that every Jew has been given the opportunity to cling to Hashem. This is extremely hard to understand, for man is a material being made from the dust of the earth, while the Holy One, blessed be He, possesses absolute purity and is completely non-material. Therefore how can this verse be fulfilled by our clinging to Hashem?

We find an answer to this question in the Gemara. From the verse, "For Your dew is like the dew of light, and the earth shall bring to life the dead" (Isaiah 26: 19) it deduces that whoever uses the light of the Torah, the light of the Torah will revive him. Conversely, whoever does not use the light of the Torah, the light of the Torah will not revive him. From here the Gemara learns that the uneducated will not be brought back to life at the time of the resurrection of the dead, for they did not study Torah. However the Gemara continues with a proof that the uneducated may, in fact, also be revived during the resurrection, even if they did not study Torah. What must they do in order for that to happen? They must, as the verse states, "Cling to the L-RD your G-d..." for those who did "...are all alive." An objection is then raised in the Gemara, for it seems impossible for a person to cling to the Shechinah, since Hashem is described as "a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24). The answer to this dilemma is then given: "Any man who marries his daughter to a Torah scholar, conducts trade on behalf of Torah scholars, or benefits Torah scholars from his estate is regarded by Scripture as if he had cleaved to the Shechinah" (Ketubot 111b).

From these remarks in the Gemara, we learn a lesson of paramount importance, namely that the uneducated can in fact cling to Hashem. Thus how much more can Torah scholars cling to Him, for the Torah purifies and sanctifies the body of man until it becomes a suitable vessel in which the Shechinah may dwell. There can be no greater clinging to Hashem than that of a person who studies Torah.

It therefore follows that every Jew has the ability to cling to the Shechinah. If a person is uneducated, let him support a Torah scholar, and if he is a Torah scholar, let him continue to study Torah.

We learn another important lesson here, which is that whoever does not study Torah, or does help a Torah scholar to live, has no chance of being revived during the resurrection of the dead. This is why everyone must strive to cling to the Shechinah by one of the ways mentioned above. In fact we see that Torah study and mitzvot observance can help a person to constantly attach himself to the Shechinah. One of the reasons that we are prevented from clinging to the Shechinah is that we do not always have the opportunity to perform mitzvot or study Torah. Yet even in that case we have a marvelous opportunity to do so, for there are six mitzvot that can easily be performed and are independent of time and place. We can perform them merely with our thoughts, as stated in the introduction to Sefer HaChinuch.

These six mitzvot are the following:

1. To believe in G-d
2. Not to believe in anything but G-d
3. To affirm G-d's unity
4. To love G-d
5. To fear G-d
6. Not to stray after the lusts of the heart or the eyes.

These six mitzvot constitute a constant duty that a person must uphold without any interruption, not even for a single instant in life. If he puts an effort into reflecting upon these six mitzvot whenever he is occupied, it follows that he will be attached to the Holy One, blessed be He, throughout life. Of such a person it is said, "The L-RD's beloved will dwell safely by Him. He hovers over him all day long and dwells between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12)

A TRUE STORY

Blessing Hashem Both for Good and Bad

It is written, "With all your heart and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

It is said that Rabbi Shmelke of Nickelsburg asked his teacher, the Maggid of Mezritch, how a person can fulfill the statement of the Sages: "It is incumbent on a man to bless [G-d] for the evil in the same way as for the good" (Berachot 54a).

The Maggid told him to go to the Beit Midrash, and there he would find his disciple Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli. Because Rabbi Zusha was poor, had been beset by misery throughout life, and lived under extremely precarious circumstances, he would be the person to teach Rabbi Shmelke how to fulfill the words of the Mishnah. Rabbi Shmelke went to Rabbi Zusha and said that the Maggid wanted Rabbi Zusha to explain the Mishnah to him. Upon hearing that, Rabbi Zusha replied: "I'm surprised that our teacher sent you to ask me about this. You should rather ask someone who suffered some misfortune in life. Thank G-d, I have never experienced anything bad in my life, and I have always had what I've needed from the day I was born until today. How can I answer your question?" This response from Rabbi Zusha was enough for Rabbi Shmelke to fully understand the meaning of the Mishnah.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Shlomo Chanoch Rabinowitz – The Rebbe of Radomsk

Rabbi Shlomo Chanoch Hachohen was born to the Rebbe of Radomsk and author of Kneset Yechezkel (the grandson of the author of Tiferet Shlomo) in the year 5642. From the time of his birth, people could see that he was born for greatness. He studied Torah for many long hours, without the least bit of interest in anything around him. When he grew up, he studied with Rabbi Dov Berisch of Amstow Zatzal. After the passing of his father, the Rebbe of Radomsk, on Heshvan 18, 5671, Rabbi Shlomo Chanoch took over as leader of the community. Although he was known to be in very frail health, he spoke words of Torah to his chassidim at every available opportunity. For medical reasons, every Friday night before Kiddush a doctor came to give him an injection of insulin so he could lead the Shabbat meal without incident. Rabbi Shlomo Chanoch established 36 yeshivot throughout Poland under the name of Keter Torah. These were 36 lights in the crown of Torah, lights that illuminated the darkness of the time, the years preceding the Holocaust. During the Holocaust, the Rebbe hid in several places. However on Av 18, 5702, the Shabbat of Parsha Eikev (which Radomsk chassidim call black Shabbat), he was captured in Warsaw and murdered there. Rabbi Shlomo Chanoch is buried in Warsaw, and his gravesite is located next to the square of the tzaddikim. May Hashem avenge his blood, and may his merit protect us all.