

THE TORAH BELONGS EXCLUSIVELY TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO)

The Path To Follow BESHALACH

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Guard Your Tongue!

Lashon Harah about Relatives

It is forbidden to speak Lashon Harah about one's relatives, meaning parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Even if a person is not upset when one of his relatives speaks ill of him, and even if the speaker of Lashon Harah believes that what he is saying is for the good of his relative – not to hurt him – this still does not give him permission to speak Lashon Harah. We find examples of this in the Torah itself, for Joseph gave his father an evil report concerning his brothers, and he was punished for it. Furthermore, Miriam complained to Aaron concerning Moses' actions, and she too was punished for it. In each case the same element appears, namely that the speaker did not intend on doing harm by his or her words. On the contrary, the intention in both cases was to do good. Nevertheless both Joseph and Miriam were punished, for they erroneously interpreted the actions of their brothers as being wrong.

Regarding the Children of Israel's passage through the Sea of Reeds, it is written: "The sea saw and fled" (Psalms 114:3). The Sages ask what the sea saw, to which they answer: "It saw the casket of Joseph" (Midrash Tehillim 114:9). Now this presents us with a difficulty. The Sages have said, "The Holy One, blessed be He, made a stipulation with the sea that it should split before Israel. Thus it is written, 'And the sea returned to its strength [le-eitano]' [Exodus 14:27], i.e., in accordance with its agreement [le-tenao]" (Bereshith Rabba 5:5). As a result, the sea should have split for the Children of Israel even without seeing Joseph's casket, since this condition was imposed on it at Creation.

There is another difficulty here. It is stated that the sea split for the Children of Israel because it saw that they were obeying the mitzvah of circumcision (Shemot Rabba 23:12). Netivot Olam objects that the sea should have split even without having seen this, since at the world's creation Hashem obligated the sea to split for the Children of Israel upon their departure from Egypt.

We know that Abraham observed the entire Torah even before it was given (Yoma 28b). He also performed mitzvot of his own free will, though he was not yet ordered to, as it is written: "Because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My statutes, and My commandments" (Genesis 26:5). It seems difficult to understand what is so novel about the fact that Abraham obeyed Hashem and observed His commandments. Can we possibly think that he transgressed Hashem's mitzvot because he had not yet received the order to observe them?

It seems that we may say that Abraham could not have observed the mitzvot because he was not yet circumcised. In fact it is only a circumcised man who enters into Hashem's covenant and has the power to study Torah and observe mitzvot. Only one who is circumcised can experience them and be saved from all spiritual harm, for circumcision is the sign of a holy covenant. To illustrate the point, we shall cite two interpretations given by the Gemara on the verse, "If not for My covenant, I would not have appointed days and nights, the decrees of heaven and earth" (Jeremiah 33:25): (1) It relates to the covenant of the Torah, for without Torah there would be no world; or (2) It relates to the covenant of circumcision, for without circumcision there would be no world (Nedarim 32a). It is therefore conceivable that circumcision and Torah are connected, for a person who is circumcised has the power to observe mitzvot and study Hashem's Torah.

However Abraham, though he was not yet circumcised, meticulously observed mitzvot and studied Torah. He did so courageously, without any thought of reward, and he always yielded to Hashem's will. Furthermore, he gathered the whole world to the Creator and converted his fellowmen to Him. He made believers of them and overcame all kinds of trials, even though it seemed that no covenant existed between himself and Hashem. Abraham's actions were so great that Hashem selected him as the one from whom the chosen people would emerge.

Since we have reached this point, we can fully understand the condition that the Holy One, blessed be He, imposed on the sea, namely that it should split for the Children of Israel. This condition regarded circumcised Jews, those who carried the Name of Hashem,

since the sea was not to split for the uncircumcised. However it seems that even this requires an explanation, for how could the sea know that these Jews were circumcised and that it therefore had to split for them?

This seems to be the message behind the verse, "The sea saw and fled" (Psalms 114:3), meaning that it saw Joseph's casket. That is, since the sea saw that Joseph's casket was with the Children of Israel, this indicated that they all observed the holy covenant and were thus all circumcised. This is because Joseph guarded the sanctity of circumcision in Egypt, having "hedged himself about against unchastity" (Vayikra Rabba 32:5). Furthermore, Hashem wanted the Children of Israel to be circumcised before the exodus from Egypt in order for the sea to split when they came to it. In fact if they had arrived at the sea without being circumcised – indicating an unwillingness to devote themselves to Hashem – how could the sea have split for them? The sea also had to be devoted in order to split! Even though a prerequisite existed here, it only concerned Jews who observed the Torah and mitzvot with all their heart. Thus Hashem wanted the Children of Israel to be circumcised, for in this way the sea would perceive their devotion to Torah and mitzvot, and it would split for them.

We must realize, however, that the mitzvah of circumcision alone is not enough. That is, when a person is circumcised but does not study Torah, he can easily grow distant from Hashem; it becomes a separation that is not difficult. Yet when a person accomplishes the mitzvah of circumcision and also studies Torah, then for Hashem this separation becomes difficult. Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, give the Children of Israel a few mitzvot as soon as they left Egypt, as it is written: "There He established for [the nation] a decree and an ordinance, and there He tested it" (Exodus 15:25)? Citing the Sages on this verse, Rashi said: "In Marah He gave them some sections of the Torah so that they would busy themselves with them, namely the Sabbath, the red heifer, and the laws of jurisprudence" (see Sanhedrin 56b).

The Sages have also said, "The Torah was given for study only to the eaters of manna" (Mechilta, Beshalach 17). What is the link between the Torah and manna? The very fact that they ate manna, food from Heaven, means that they were clean of all sin, as the Sages have said: " 'Man ate the bread of the mighty' [Psalms 78:25], i.e., bread that ministering angels eat" (Yoma 75b). We know that it is impossible to be cleansed of sin without the Torah, for only the Torah can purify the body. From everything that has been said, we see that it is precisely after the Children of Israel were circumcised that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave them a few mitzvot to study and perform. He did this in order for them to merit eating the manna, for without the Torah they would not have had the right to eat manna, since they were not yet cleansed. It is only through Torah study that they could eat it.

Such is the message behind the verse, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, the L-RD your G-d" (Leviticus 19:2). In what must we be holy? The Sages have said, "Separate yourselves from sexual immorality and from sin" (Vayikra Rabba 24:6 and Rashi), meaning that it is not enough to study Torah and light oil lamps. A person must perform the mitzvah of circumcision and study Torah, for only in this way will he merit to achieve perfection. All this is because the mitzvah of circumcision, along with Torah study, represents the reason for the world's existence, these being the two covenants between Hashem and us for all time.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Holiday of the Glasses

It is written, "They believed in the L-RD and in Moses His servant" (14:31).

The Torah calls the Passover holiday the "festival of unleavened bread." The fact that it does this surprised the Maharal of Prague, who noted that the name of a holiday in the Torah generally expresses its essence. Thus the holiday of Sukkot, "That your generations may know that I made the people of Israel to dwell in booths [sukkot]" (Leviticus 23:43), and the festival of Shavuot, "You shall count for yourselves...seven weeks" (shavuot) (v.15). That being the case, why did the Torah immortalize the holiday of Passover by recalling the time when our ancestors were prevented from letting their bread rise, thereby calling it the "festival of unleavened bread"? To clarify the Maharal's question, we shall cite an account given by a survivor of the hostage taking at Entebbe. On the night in which they were eventually rescued, all the hostages were kept in the passenger terminal of the Entebbe airport, and they were given mats to sleep on. Before going to sleep, the hostage in question took off his glasses and placed them by his mat. The room in which they slept was kept completely dark in order to make all attempts at rescuing them extremely difficult. However at around midnight, Israeli commandos made their way into the room and shouted to the hostages, telling them to head for one of the waiting helicopters. Our friend, who had placed his glasses by his mat, immediately began to look for them in all the commotion. Yet what was he to do when he couldn't find them? The man quickly understood that he if continued to look for his glasses, both he and his glasses would remain in Entebbe! He therefore gave up his search and headed for the rescue helicopters, and thus he emerged from captivity and was liberated.

We can picture our friend hosting a meal every year to give thanks for his rescue. Yet would he ever think of calling his celebration "the festival of glasses"? During the meal, would he ever think of telling his guests about his precious glasses, on account of which he was saved when he gave up looking for them? Instead, would he not obviously choose to thank Hashem for being miraculously rescued? Here the Maharal of Prague replies that all the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed for us in Egypt contained nothing for which Israel could be praised, since all the events that transpired occurred solely through Hashem's goodness. However during those last few moments, when everyone was preparing to leave Egypt and were thus organizing rations for the journey, it was then that the greatness of the Children of Israel became clear. When Moses ordered them, on Hashem's behalf, to leave immediately, there wasn't a single person among the entire people who protested or said, "We've been here for 210 years! Surely we can wait a few more minutes for our bread to rise. After all, we're heading for the desert, where there's neither bread nor water!" No one objected to Moses' words, and concerning this Hashem said: "I recall for you the devotion of your youth, the love of your nuptials, your following Me into the desert, into an unsown land" (Jeremiah 2:2). This is why the Torah chose to describe the holiday precisely by a name ("the festival of unleavened bread") that depicted those last few moments, thereby recalling the great faith of the Children of Israel. Thus they did indeed believe in Hashem and in Moses His servant!

Distance Yourself From Temptation

It is written, "It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people that G-d did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, because it was near, for G-d said, 'Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see war, and they will return to Egypt'" (Exodus 13:17).

Hashem did not lead Israel by the main road, but by a back road, lest the people become regretful upon seeing war and then return to Egypt.

This teaches us that a person must flee from temptation, just as we say in our daily prayers: "Do not bring us...into temptation or scorn." The Divrei Chaim of Sanz was looking through the window when he saw a chassid. He called to him and said, "Come in for a moment." When the chassid entered, the Rebbe asked him: "If you found a wallet in the street and it was full money, what would you do?"

The chassid replied, "What's the problem? I would immediately place an announcement in various places, as well as in the newspaper, declaring that I've found a wallet that I want to return."

The Rebbe said to him, "Don't be foolish!"

He called the chassid back and asked him the question once more. This time he replied, "Rebbe, why should I tell you stories. I need to marry off my children, and if I found a wallet full of money, that would be my last hope. I would definitely take it."

The Rebbe said to him, "Don't be wicked!" He then called to him a third time.

This time the chassid answered, "When I'm here in the Beit Midrash and I see the saintly countenance of the Rebbe before me, I'm positive that I would immediately return any wallet I find. However were I to really find a wallet in the middle of the street, then the evil inclination would try to convince me to take it for myself. In that case, I really don't know what would happen."

The Rebbe said to him, "Now you're speaking wisely!"

When we encounter a tempting situation, we need a great deal of Heavenly assistance to overcome it, even though we all know what we should do.

Thus the Torah teaches us that we must flee from temptation. Da'at Zekenim MiBa'alei HaTosefot states: " 'Because it was near' [Exodus 13:17]. What was near? The Jewish people are close to Hashem, hence He takes care of them and does not want to put them to the test!"

They're Drowning, Yet You're Singing?

It is written, "The Children of Israel sang this song to the L-RD" (Exodus 15:1).

A well-known Midrash states that the ministering angels wanted to sing as the Egyptians were drowning in the sea, but Hashem said to them, "The works of My hands are drowning in the sea, yet you wish to sing before Me?" That being said, why did the Children of Israel sing in the above verse?

First explanation: One day the governor of a certain city died. He was a wicked man who had persecuted the residents in town, and upon his death they gathered together and celebrated with a drink. A resident of another city happened to come by, and he sat down with them for a drink. When people asked him why he was drinking, he replied: "You people are having a drink, so I'm having a drink!" He was told, "Why would you do that? A Jew has died, so it's better if you attend his funeral. As for us, we suffered at his hand, so we have the right to celebrate with a drink. You, however, should go to the funeral." The same thing happened with the ministering angels, for Hashem told them, "The works of My hands are drowning in the sea, yet you wish to sing before Me? The Children of Israel, they have the right to sing, for they suffered. You, however, did not!"

Second Explanation: The ministering angels wanted to sing at night, but Hashem told them that one does not sing in the middle of the watch. The Children of Israel sang in the morning, once everything was done, for that is the time to sing. In fact the Mechilta states that the angels also sang in the morning, not just the Children of Israel.

The Authority of Those Who Study Torah

It is written, "The L-RD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand...and the water will go back upon Egypt, upon its chariots and upon its horsemen.' Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and toward morning the water returned to its strength as the Egyptians were fleeing toward it. Hashem churned Egypt in the midst of the sea" (Exodus 14:26-27).

The Gemara recounts the story of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair as he was on his way to redeem captives. Arriving at the River Ginnai, he said: "O Ginnai, divide your waters for me." The river replied, "You are about to fulfill your Maker's will, and I am also doing my Maker's will. While you may or may not fulfill your goal, I am sure of fulfilling mine." Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair said, "If you do not divide, I will decree that no waters should ever pass through you." The river immediately divided, and the Gemara describes this feat as being even greater than the splitting of the Sea of Reeds (Chullin 7a). The Ohr HaChaim objects: "Was Rabbi

Pinchas greater than Moses? When the Sea of Reeds did not want to divide, Moses needed Hashem's help. Why did he not threaten to dry up the sea if it refused, like Rabbi Pinchas?" The Ohr HaChaim answers, "What is the meaning that the sea 'returned to its strength' [Exodus 14:27]? Hashem had imposed on all of nature the condition that it must yield before the Torah and those who engage in its study, that their power over it should be equal to the Creator's. Hence when a tzaddik, who studies Torah, tells something in nature to obey his word, yet it does not, it must disappear from the world. Yet what happened with Moses?" The Ohr HaChaim goes on to say, "Moses lived before the giving of the Torah. When he came to split the sea, it replied: 'You have come without Torah, while I was created before you.' What did Hashem do? He placed His right on the right of Moses, as it is written: 'From His right went a fiery law' [Deuteronomy 33:2]. The Torah was given by the right of Hashem, and by this He hinted to the sea that Moses was a ben Torah even before the Torah was given, which is why it had to divide before him!" We learn a great principle here, which is that the first prerequisite for performing miracles is the study of Torah. This is due to the fact that Hashem imposed on nature the condition that it must yield to the Torah and those who engage in its study.

Praise Him with Timbrels

It is written, "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took her timbrel in her hand and all the women went forth after her with timbrels and dances" (Exodus 15:20).

"Why did Miriam choose a timbrel?" asks the Yalkut HaGershoni. Had Moses not sung even without a timbrel? However it is a Halachah that "the voice of a woman is immodest" (Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 21:1). Miriam therefore took a timbrel in her hand so that the voices of the women as they sang would not be heard.

– Aish Dat

Weakened

It is written, "Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim" (Exodus 17:8).

The Sages explain that "in Rephidim" alludes to the fact that the Children of Israel weakened themselves [raphu yedechem] in Torah, which is why Amalek appeared. In his book Pahad David, our teacher Rabbi David Pinto Shlita explains that the root of Torah is humility. One who studies Torah for the sake of Heaven is fulfilling Hashem's desire, meaning humility. The root of Amalek, however, is pride, which consists of revolting against Hashem's will. We now understand that because the Children of Israel had weakened themselves in Torah, they were punished measure for measure by Amalek's appearance.

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Beshalach continues to describe the process that would turn the Children of Israel into G-d's people. The Children of Israel left Egypt in the previous parsha, and they would receive the Torah "on this mountain" in the next parsha. Moses had been told of this in Parsha Shemot, when he was appointed as Hashem emissary and charged with bringing His children out of Egypt. At the beginning of Parsha Beshalach the people marched from Egypt to the sea, and there they complained when Pharaoh and his army caught up with them. They were told, "Hashem will fight for you," and were in fact saved when the sea split before them. The people sang the Shirat HaYam (Song of the Sea) concerning these miracles, after which Moses led them to the desert of Sin by way of Marah (whose bitter waters were sweetened for them) and Elim (which had an abundance of water and palm trees). When they arrived at the desert of Sin, they began to complain about a lack of bread and meat, at which point Hashem announced that it would rain bread and quail for them. Hashem gave them the mitzvot concerning the manna and Shabbat, and they journeyed through the desert of Sin and encamped in Rephidim. There the people began complaining about a lack of water, at which point they were forced to fight Amalek.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

Tu B'Shevat

The fifteenth day of Shevat marks the new year for trees. Up to that day we consider the fruits that have matured on a tree as belonging to the previous year, whereas from that day on we consider them as belonging to the coming year. Tu B'Shevat always occurs around the time of Parsha Beshalach.

The Shelah states that each holiday is connected in some way to the parsha in which it occurs, and the book Ziv HaMinhagim (Part II) describes the connection between Tu B'Shevat and Parsha Beshalach. It teaches us that regardless of the situation that we find ourselves in, we must not get discouraged. Instead we must strengthen our faith in Hashem, realizing that the hardship we are experiencing will pass and that we will merit a good and happy life. Now a tree in winter loses its leaves and vitality, yet on Tu B'Shevat the maturation of good, ripe fruit begins anew and from it new life emerges. So too with Parsha Beshalach, for "they came to Marah but could not drink the waters...because they were bitter" (Exodus 15:23). However Hashem showed Moses a tree, and "he threw it into the water and the water became sweet" (v.25).

This illustrates the idea that we must not lose hope. We must instead strengthen ourselves, and in this way the water will become sweet. What can we learn from a tree?

1. A tree can only survive when it is connected to its roots. When detached from them, it withers and dies. So too does man – who is compared to a tree – obtain life, one rich in meaning, only when his deeds connect him to his Creator.
2. Without water, a tree withers and cannot survive. This alludes to man, who will wither and die without Torah, which is compared to water.
3. The wind is unable to uproot a tree that has many roots. However wind can uproot a tree with few roots. The same applies to man, for when he is strongly rooted in his faith, nothing can divert him from serving Hashem. However if the roots of his faith are weak, then almost anything can come and disrupt his service of Hashem (Ya'avetz, Perkei Avot 3:7).
4. The skin of a fruit growing on a tree develops prior to the fruit itself. Similarly, the evil inclination settles in man prior to the good inclination. Nevertheless, we must throw away the skin and eat just the fruit.
5. If a pit is scratched, the tree that grows from it will be marred. So too with regards to the education of children, for a small divergence in early childhood can become a tremendous defect in adulthood.
6. A tree does not grow a new trunk every year, for the trunk remains throughout a tree's life. A tree's fruits, however, grow anew each year. This alludes to the holy Torah, which is eternal and exists perpetually, yet we discover new treasures in it each year that are sweet and pleasant.

EISHET CHAYIL

Michal, Daughter of Saul

On the verse, "One who has found a wife has found goodness" (Proverbs 18:22), the Sages have said: "This is Michal, the daughter of Saul, who saved her husband King David from her father." Michal let David out through a window by using a rope she had prepared, and she encouraged him to escape. She then took an idol that resembled a human body, placed it in David's bed, and covered it with blankets. When Saul's guards arrived and asked her where David was, she said that he was sick. Upon hearing this, Saul told his guards: "Bring him up to me in the bed." When Saul realized that Michal had deceived him, he was infuriated with her. He asked her, "Why have you deceived me this way and sent away my enemy?" Michal wisely replied, "You made me marry a warrior, and he said to me: 'Let me go or I will kill you.' I let him go because I was afraid of him!"

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Like the Sun

It is written, “Those who love Him are like the powerfully rising sun” (Judges 5:31).

In the Gemara our Sages explain this verse as referring to those “who suffer insults but do not inflict them, who hear themselves reviled and do not reply, who act from love and rejoice in chastisement” (Gittin 36b). Our Sages compare those who are insulted without replying to the sun that emerges in all its power, for the ability to not return insults is considered a virtue only when it concerns a person himself. Hence the Sages have said, “who hear themselves reviled” – not others – a reference to an affront on their own personal dignity. However if we hear insults directed at another person, such as a talmid chacham, one who is upright and clean of all sin, then we are forbidden to remain silent. On the contrary, it is a tremendous sin to let an insult directed at a talmid chacham pass without protest.

Now the sun did a good thing at the time of Creation, for it was then that the moon wanted Hashem to make the sun smaller, asking in protest: “Is it possible for two kings to wear one crown?” Yet the sun did not reply, and instead it remained silent. However during the rebellion of Korach and his followers against Moses, the sun applied pressure and refused to shine on the world for as long as those who protested against Moses’ leadership had not been punished, as stated in the Gemara (Nedarim 39b). This is why the Sages equate those “who suffer insults but do not inflict them” – who only respond when other, innocent people are insulted – to “the powerfully rising sun,” for they possess some of the power of the sun, which acted in the same way.

A TRUE STORY

Making the Bitter Sweet

It is written, “The L-RD showed him a tree. He threw it into the water and the water became sweet” (Exodus 15:25).

Exactly what tree was Moses shown? Rabbi Eliezer of Modim said: “It was an olive-tree. Yet whatever it was, it was bitter and yet it sweetened the bitter waters” (Shemot Rabba 23:3). The Sages said, “The ways of G-d are unlike those of man. A man inflicts a wound with a knife and heals with a bandage, but G-d heals with the very thing with which He wounds, as it says: ‘When they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah.’ Why? ‘For they were bitter’ ” (Shemot Rabba 50:3). This was done in order for people to understand that a miracle had occurred, that the change from bitter to sweet did not occur naturally.

Similarly, the book of Isaiah states that King Hezekiah prayed to Hashem to heal him from a fatal illness. Hashem answered his prayer and told the prophet Isaiah to announce to Hezekiah that He would add 15 years to his life. Thus Isaiah ordered a cake of dried figs to be smeared on Hezekiah’s boil, and he was healed (Isaiah 38:1-21). Now even healthy skin is instantly damaged when dried figs are applied to it. However Isaiah ordered that a harmful substance be placed on his already damaged skin in order for everyone to realize that a miracle had occurred. Similarly, the book of Kings recounts that when Elisha came to Jericho, the people of the city told him that their water was so contaminated that the place was unhealthy to live in. Thus Elisha went to their source of water and threw salt into it (II Kings 2:19-22). Now even pure water instantly becomes undrinkable when salt is added to it. However Elisha placed a harmful substance into the water so as to prove that a miracle had occurred there (Mechilta).

A MATTER OF EDUCATION

A Person With Faith in G-d Acts Without Worry

In our parsha we find statements such as, “The L-RD shall fight for you and you shall remain silent” (Exodus 14:14) and, “When Moses raised his hands, Israel prevailed” (ibid. 17:11). Many people think that educating a person to have faith in G-d consists of thinking that problems can be solved by miracles and without effort on our part, as occurred in our parsha. However when we reflect upon the hardships that a person goes through in life, we realize that such an attitude leads to more faith from the lips than faith in the heart.

The Chazon Ish wrote (Emunah U’Vitachon, ch. 2) that a classic mistake in the area of faith is to think that everything will obviously work out. Such an assumption is not correct, for as long as the future has not been declared through prophecy (as in our parsha), it is still undecided. Having faith in G-d consists of trusting in Him, even when experiencing hardship, by opening our hearts to the fact that everything comes from Hashem. Mistakes stem from a person’s lethargic refusal to confront the possibility of hardship. This is part of the lethargy of thinking that Hashem’s decree – whether we see it as good or bad – is absolute. However as long as we do not know the future, all outcomes are possible, meaning that it is equally possible for Hashem to proclaim, as it were, that the future should depend on our efforts in prayer and deed. This is similar to the way in which He taught us to believe that it is only by putting food into our mouths that we will eat. Hashem teaches everyone in particular the way in which He guides him. This is Hashem’s promise to everyone, one by which a person senses just how much effort he must exert. One who ignores this is like “a fool [who] becomes enraged and is confident” (Proverbs 14:16). A person must realize that his efforts do not necessarily result in success. Rather, Hashem has simply decreed that a person must make an effort. Hence a person should view his efforts only as a corporal appeal to Hashem’s will, just as prayer is called a verbal appeal to Hashem’s will. It is said that Rabbi Leib Chasid Zatzal of Kelm was once waiting in line to buy a train ticket, though he had no money on him. As it turned out, he met a Jew who wanted to ask him some questions, and in the end the man paid for his ticket. Rabbi Leib Chasid did not perceive his efforts as being what got him a ticket. Rather, he saw waiting in line as the minimum effort that he had to exert, a way of addressing Hashem.

Teaching this distinction leads to having faith in the fact that we do not have to worry about results. We only have to worry about doing what is demanded of us, both in prayer and in deed.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Shalom Mordechai HaKohen Schwadron – The Maharsham

Rabbi Shalom Mordechai HaKohen Schwadron Zatzal, the author of Responsa Maharsham, was one of the greatest gaonim of his time. His numerous Halachic responses are known and recognized throughout the rabbinic world, being almost impossible to contest. Although he served as the Rav of Potok, Yoslovitch, Butchotch, and Brezhan, it was by the name of this last city that he became famous, being known as “the Maharsham of Brezhan.”

Besides the Maharsham’s greatness in Torah, he was also known to be a tzaddik and Kabbalist. He was very close to the Rebbes of his generation, men such as Rabbi Sar Shalom of Belz and Rabbi Avraham of Stretin. The Maharsham was also very close to the Rebbe of Chortkov, Rabbi David Moshe. In Chortkov he met an avrech who later became famous in his own right, namely Rabbi Meir Shapira of Lublin, the founder of the Lublin Yeshiva and Daf Yomi. The Maharsham gave him smicha with the authority to judge and decide in all matters of Halachah. He resembled an angel of G-d, to the point that even non-Jews revered him as a king and came to him for advice and to have him settle their disputes.

In his will, the Maharsham requested that nothing be inscribed on his tomb other than his name and works. His life ended on Shevat 16, 5671, as his soul ascended to the celestial academy to rejoice in the light reserved for the righteous. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.