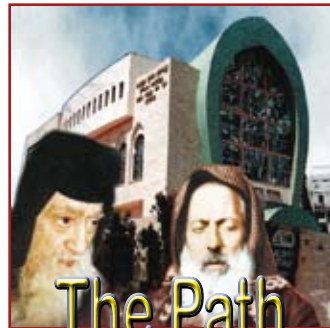


THE PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM – A BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ON EVERY GENERATION (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Canceling the Creator's Joy

"In the beginning G-d created" – these words begin the holy Torah, and our Sages have explained: "Bereshith [In the beginning] G-d created the heavens and the earth" – for the Torah, which is called reshith, and for Israel, which is called reshith. From here we conclude that the Jewish people hold great importance to Hashem, and He derives great joy and satisfaction from every Jew, as the Sages have said: "Your cheeks are like a slice of pomegranate" [Song of Songs 6:7], as if to say: The emptiest among you is packed with mitzvot as a pomegranate is with seeds" (Shir Hashirim Rabba 4:4).

When someone speaks Lashon Harah about a Jew, his words bring about a cancellation, as it were, of the Creator's joy and satisfaction. Not only that, but his words grieve, so to speak, the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written: "It grieved Him at His heart" (Genesis 6:6). Does this not demonstrate incredible ingratitude on the part of one who speaks Lashon Harah?

– Meor Einayim, p.134

It is written, "Three times a year shall all your males appear before the L-RD your G-d in the place that He will choose: On the festival of Matzot, the festival of Shavuot, and the festival of Sukkot" (Deuteronomy 16:16). We have received the commandment to make a pilgrimage to the Temple on each of the three festivals. However we need to understand the reason for the mitzvah to appear at the Temple three times a year, namely on Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot.

Throughout the year, a person must fight his evil inclination as it tries to make him forsake his service of Hashem, and especially to shun his faith. It tries to seduce him by saying, "Why shut yourself in the Beit Midrash and cut yourself off from all the pleasures of the world? Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you will die." It says to him, "Who says that there's a World to Come, so that it separates you from the pleasures of the world? Has anyone ever returned from the World to Come to tell you that it exists, a world other than the one you can see with your own eyes?"

Thus the evil inclination instills all kinds of doubts in us and tries to shake our faith in Hashem and His Torah, as well as in the concept of reward and punishment. Furthermore, it comes forward each day with new arguments, especially against faith, which is the basis for all the mitzvot, as the Sages have said: "It is Habakkuk who came and based them all on one [principle], as it is said: 'But the tzaddik shall live by his faith' [Habakkuk 2:4]" (Makkot 24a).

This is the way that the evil inclination makes people stumble in regards to faith. Now without faith in Hashem, or with a faith that is imperfect, how can a person observe mitzvot? Even if he does observe them, they will not be considered as mitzvot because he does not believe in the One Who gave them. Although it is difficult for a person to overcome the evil inclination during the entire year, he must still wage a firm battle against it. Hence Hashem in His wisdom commanded that we present ourselves during the three festivals, that Jews ascend to Jerusalem and the Temple three times a year, in order for their hearts to be stirred upon seeing the priests, the servants of Hashem, as they serve Him. They will also see the Levites singing, which will further motivate them.

Similarly, when the pilgrims arrived at the Temple, they were shown the showbread, still hot after eight days, as the Gemara says: "This teaches, therefore, that they used to lift up the showbread and show it to the festival pilgrims, saying to them: 'See how much love the Omnipresent has for you? It is taken away as it is set down' " (Chagigah 26b). This also alludes to the sustenance of the Children of Israel, for just as the Holy One, blessed be He, ensured that the showbread remained hot, did not dry up, and did not become moldy, He also ensures that everyone has enough food and that their needs are taken care of. According to one's faith in this area, he receives his sustenance in abundance.

Furthermore, as we well know, when the Children of Israel returned from Jerusalem following their pilgrimage, they saw that all their possessions were intact, for no thieves had touched them, as the Sages stated (Yerushalmi, Peah 3:7). Even the milk that remained in the udders of their cows did not turn bad during all the time that they were in Jerusalem, even though nobody was left behind to take care of their things. Certainly the

thought of how the milk could have stayed fresh, even though the cows had not been milked for several weeks, led to a powerful strengthening of their faith in the Creator of the world, Who cared for them during all the time they were gone.

In reflecting upon this, we see that it is precisely during these three festivals (Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot) that people can best strengthen their faith in Hashem. On Passover our faith is strengthened because today, many generations after the miracles of the Exodus, we still believe in Hashem simply because of what the Torah states and what has been passed on to us by tradition, generation after generation, from the time of Moses, namely an account of all the miracles and wonders that Hashem did for our forefathers in Egypt. It is not only our forefathers that Hashem saved, but us as well, for all our souls were there.

This also strengthens our faith in all the mitzvot. Similarly, today there is faith in the coming deliverance, as it written: "As in the days when you left the land of Egypt, I will show him wonders" (Micah 7:15). We still hope and pray to merit being in Jerusalem, fully rebuilt, in the following year.

The same applies to the festival of Shavuot, the holiday of the giving of our holy Torah, when our faith is awakened as it was when Hashem's glory was revealed on Mount Sinai, when people heard His holy words amid flames. Celestial and terrestrial beings remained motionless as the people perceived the unity of Hashem, as it is written: "You have been shown in order to know that the L-RD, He is G-d. There is none beside Him" (Deuteronomy 4:35). Seeing the glory of Hashem face to face, they acknowledged the statement: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds from the mouth of the L-RD does man live" (ibid. 8:3). By making the pilgrimage during the festival of Shavuot, they rejoiced in the brilliance of the Shechinah and perceived that the only life is one of Torah and mitzvot, as it is written: "Which a man shall do and by which he shall live" (Leviticus 18:5). Furthermore, it is precisely during the festival of Shavuot that our faith is especially strengthened. In fact it is very close to the festival of Passover, and barely a few weeks earlier the people were celebrating Passover in Jerusalem. Therefore why did they have to exhaust themselves again by making another pilgrimage on the 6th of Sivan?

Finally, our faith is certainly strengthened on the festival of Sukkot, which is called "the shadow of faith" (Zohar III:73a). This is precisely when the evil inclination entices people by telling them that their fields are filled with wheat and their vineyards are flush with grapes, that the storehouses are filled with produce because it is the harvest, and that now is the time to take advantage of the fruit of their work. The evil inclination whispers to people that the prayers they recited and the tears they shed during selichot were all a waste of time. It tries to make them waver in order for them to remain with their transgressions and prevent them from being atoned. Yet today, on account of our many sins and to our bitter regret – now when we have no Temple, and when we see neither priest nor Levite performing their service – we can still go to Jerusalem, to the Western Wall, and spill out our hearts in prayer to Hashem. We can still ask Him to quickly save us and to establish the Temple, so that in us will be fulfilled the prayer, "May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy." Amen, may it be so.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

A Pearl From the Rav

It is written, “You shall surely tithe the entire crop of your planting... and you shall eat before the L-RD your G-d...so that you learn to fear the L-RD your G-d always” (Deuteronomy 14:22-23).

This passage deals with ma’aser sheni (the second tithe), which was to be eaten in Jerusalem. It consisted of a tenth of the entire crop that remained after the terumah gedolah and ma’aser rishon (the first tithe) were removed. In his book Pahad David, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks how a person can achieve the fear of Heaven while enjoying abundance, while eating and drinking? The answer is that the Holy One, blessed be He, wants us to learn the fear of Heaven in joy and abundance, not in pain or sorrow, as it is written: “Because you did not serve the L-RD your G-d amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant” (Deuteronomy 28:47). This means that we must serve Hashem in joy, and the same applies to learning Torah, which must be studied with joy, not sadness. Hence when a person went to the Temple in order to eat, drink, and profit from his lavish bounty, he had to do so with joy. That was how he was to achieve the fear of Heaven, for the Sages have said: “Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven” (Berachot 33b). A person has to work at it, since the fear of Heaven does not come on its own.

Censorship

It is written, “If there should stand up in your midst a prophet or a dreamer of dreams...” (Deuteronomy 13:2).

The Ba’al HaTurim wrote, “The term bekirbecha [‘in your midst’] has the same numerical value as zu ha-isha [‘it is the woman’], namely 324.” Many people have questioned the meaning of this. In fact the gaon Rabbi Akiva Eiger is cited as stating that in the Ba’al HaTurim’s era, there were many instigators who pushed people to accept Christianity. These individuals sought allusions to their ideas in the Torah, claiming that their messiah was to be miraculously born from a Jewish woman. The Ba’al HaTurim wanted to respond in a similar way, and he found an allusion in the Torah that contradicted them. The above verse deals with a false prophet and dreamer who says, “Let us follow other gods,” and the expression bekirbecha navi (“in your midst a prophet”) has the same numerical value as zu ha-isha u’vna (“it is the woman and her son”), namely 387. However censors removed the term u’vna, throwing the Ba’al HaTurim’s statement out of context.

– MiShulchan Gavoha

The Power of the Community

It is written, “You shall follow the L-RD your G-d” (Deuteronomy 13:5).

At the beginning of the second Knessia Gedola of Agudath Israel in Vienna in 5689, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai (the Gerer Rebbe) stated: “In Parsha Eikev the Torah says ‘You shall fear the L-RD you G-d and you shall serve Him’ – in the singular. Yet here, in the passage regarding the false prophet and the one who incites people to commit idolatry, it is written: ‘You shall follow the L-RD your G-d’ – in the plural. Why the difference? It is because we must fight such instigators through the power of the community. It is not enough for G-d-fearing individuals to fight them, especially not today, when all kinds of false prophets and instigators are emerging from every side. This is the secret of Agudath Israel, the power of the masses.”

– Ma’ayanot HaNetzach

The Power of Mercy Renewed

It is written, “He will give you mercy and be merciful to you” (Deuteronomy 13:18).

Rabbi Haim ben Attar explained that since Hashem ordered the inhabitants of the banned city to be killed by the sword, and since carrying out this order leads to a cruel heart, it is likely that those bringing justice upon the city would become murderers. Hence Hashem, Who is the source of mercy, promised to renew the power of mercy in their hearts, thereby annulling the power of cruelty.

Juxtaposed Prohibitions

It is written, “You shall not eat any carcass...you shall not cook a kid in its mother’s milk” (Deuteronomy 14:21).

Rabbi Moshe Yechiel of Ozhrov said that in the prohibition against mixing meat and milk, we see that the laws of the Torah do not follow the same logic as that of the human mind. In fact human logic would prohibit the use of an animal carcass, rather than the mixture of meat and milk, since in the latter case both substances are permitted separately. Yet the Torah’s decision is the reverse, and Scripture underlines the difference by juxtaposing the two prohibitions: “You shall not eat any carcass” – I have forbidden you only from eating it, and you may use it for benefit – and “to the stranger who is in your cities shall you give it.” This is contrary to a mixture of meat and milk, which not only is prohibited from being eaten, but is also prohibited from being used for your benefit. Thus the Sages have said that the remainder of the verse (“you shall not cook a kid in its mother’s milk”) also prohibits a person from benefiting from it.

– Ma’ayanot HaNetzach

A Source for Money

It is written, “You shall surely tithe” (Deuteronomy 14:22).

The Sages have said, “Asser [tithe] titasher [that you may become rich]” (Taanith 9a).

The Maggid of Paltzek said that the proof is that when a poor person is given money, he causes the giver to become enriched. In fact we see that the letters of the word kesef (kaf, samech, peh [“money”]) stem from the word ani (ayin, nun, yud [“poor”]), for alphabetically the letter kaf comes after yud, samech comes after nun, and peh comes after ayin. Hence we read, “There is a source for money” (Job 28:1), for the letters of kesef stem from the letters of ani. This means that one who gives tzeddakah has not lost anything. On the contrary, he has gained, for giving to the poor is the reason why he will be enriched.

Faithful Treasurers

Concerning why tzeddakah is a segula for enriching the giver, the gaon Rabbi Shimon Shkop said the following:

All abundance, material or spiritual, which descends upon the world is actually given to the Jewish people as a whole, whereas the individual recipient is but a treasurer who is responsible for using his part for the needs of the community. Government treasurers are generally given very important tasks, such as the oversight of a large treasury, but only once they have faithfully fulfilled their duties in less important roles, even if they have no other skills. The opposite is also true, for if some prove to be dishonest, all their other skills will be meaningless, and they will lose their position. Thus when a person is entrusted with the treasures of Heaven, if he

faithfully fulfills his role as a treasurer and tithes his money as he should, he will be given a promotion in the form of greater wealth. He will also be made responsible for an even greater treasure so he can continue to do the Creator's will and be a benefactor for the community.

– MiShulchan Gavoha

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Re'eh begins a new section in the book of Deuteronomy. Whereas the preceding parshiot reviewed the people's experiences in the desert, and the lessons to be drawn from them, Parsha Re'eh deals with Israel's tasks in a general way when it enters its land.

It especially focuses on the subject of idolatry, which was in direct contrast to Hashem's Sanctuary in its designated place. The parsha begins with the blessing and curse that are to be pronounced over the observance of mitzvot when the people arrive in the plains of Moreh. Next, the people receive the order to serve Hashem in the area chosen as the central place of worship, once all the idols in the land have been destroyed. They are not to follow various instigators who would make Israel sin by turning them from Hashem to idolatry.

The people receive the order to sanctify themselves by not cutting or making bald spots on their bodies, as well as by eating certain foods, the underlining idea being that "you are a holy people." They are to observe the laws regarding the ma'aser and shmita year for their harvests, as well as the shmita of money and demonstrating generosity to the poor. They must either free the slave by providing him with what he needs to live on, or keep him and pierce his ear. At the end of the parsha, the people receive the order to sanctify the firstborn of a clean, unblemished animal and to sacrifice it. They are also to celebrate the festivals in the place chosen by Hashem.

ESHET HAYIL

Her Husband is Known at the Gates

Our Sages have said that Eliyahu Hanavi described the virtues of women to Rabbi Yossi (Yebamot 63a). Included in his description was the fact that a woman enlightens the eyes of her husband and enables him to stand on his feet. In a home with a good wife, a man has the ability to flourish and demonstrate his hidden strength in all its splendor. As people say, "Behind every great man is a great woman."

We can prove this by what King Solomon wrote in his song about the eishet chayil ("woman of valor"), a song dedicated entirely to extolling a virtuous woman. Among its praises we find the verse, "Her husband is known at the gates, as he sits with the elders of the land" (Proverbs 31:23). Why is her husband being praised here, since the entire song is dedicated to her?

The answer is that this compliment is not directed at her husband. Instead, it is an additional example of her praise, for her husband is important and well-respected. This crown of glory belongs to the woman herself, for behind every great man is a great woman.

– Shiurim BeAggadot Chazal

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

Summoning Their Friends

It is written, "You shall not eat any abomination. These are the animals that you may eat..." (Deuteronomy 14:3-4).

The gaon Rabbi Ilouan Avidni Zatzal of Kurdistan recounted an incident that he was involved in. A butcher became ill and was about to die. He called for the Rav and confessed to him that he sold unkosher meat to Jews throughout his life, G-d help us. He continued his confession up until his final hour, when he died. A grave was dug for him and his body was about to be lowered into it, when the grave suddenly filled with mice that were scurrying about. Another grave was therefore dug, but when his body was about to be lowered into it, mice began to fill it as well. Rabbi Ilouan Avidni, the Rav in this story, ordered that a third grave be dug. Once again the body was about to be lowered into it, when dozens of mice began to scurry inside. Branches were lit on fire and placed in the grave, but the mice didn't move. The Rav said, "Three times is a chazakah. We have no other choice: Lower his body into the grave!" When they came to set his tombstone in place, they saw that the mice had gnawed away at his body, right to the bone.

Why such a punishment? The answer is that Hashem always deals with a person measure for measure.

The Jerusalem Talmud states that mice are wicked (see Tosaphot on Bava Metziah 40a). Why so? It is because when they see a large amount of grain, not only do they steal it to satisfy their appetite, they also summon their friends to come and eat with them. Hence they sin and makes others sin. A person who wants to grow fat by eating bugs, seafood, or unkosher meat such as pork will have to give an accounting for his behavior. Yet why make other people sin? Such a person acts like mice, and they are both the same.

Conversely, the book Kol Yehuda (Parsha Mishpatim) recounts a story that took place in a tiny Polish town where the government ordered a cemetery to be relocated in order to make way for a new road, meaning that the remains of the dead were to be removed. Most of the graves contained only bones, but two graves contained intact corpses. One of them was the body of the town's Rav, a righteous and holy man, while the other was that of a Jewish soldier who had served in the Polish army, but had never eaten anything unkosher. When the soldier's commanding officer discovered that he refused to eat pork, he became furious and ordered him to eat it. The soldier refused, so pork was forced down his throat, and he suffocated to death as a result. Thus when his grave was opened more than a hundred years later, his body was discovered to be intact. Of course our main reward and punishment takes place in the World to Come, and incidents of this kind happen only so as to make us realize that there is a Judge and a judgment, and so we may learn from it.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Binyamin Broida – The Rav and Av Beit Din of Horodna

The gaon Rabbi Binyamin Boida Zatzal was the son of the gaon Rabbi Aharon Broida (among the rabbis of Frankfurt) and the grandson of the gaon Rabbi Avraham Boida (the Av Beit Din and Rav of Frankfurt, and the author of Eishel Avraham). From his youth, Rabbi Binyamin was known as a genius, a diligent young man who spent both his days and nights studying Torah and Halachah. He would remain studying a book for hours without paying attention to anything around him. Even when people came to see him, he was capable of being so immersed in his studies that he left them waiting for hours. He didn't see them on account of his incredible devotion to learning.

Rabbi Binyamin Boida combined Torah and splendor. In his advanced years, he became the Av Beit Din of Horodna, where he corresponded with great Torah scholars who sent him their questions regarding every field of Torah and Shulchan Aruch.

A surprising incident occurred in the time of Rabbi Binyamin Boida, who sat on the same Beit Din as the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Shemuel of Horodna. One day a woman came and entrusted 1,200 rubles to the Beit Din, money that they were to give to her husband when he agreed to grant her a divorce. Rabbi Binyamin put the money aside, but later forgot about it. When the woman returned some time later, the money was nowhere to be found, and Rabbi Binyamin suspected that Rabbi Shemuel had taken it. It was therefore ruled that both men had to take an oath that they had not taken it. Shocked by this decision, Rabbi Shemuel refused by saying: "I have never taken an oath in my life, nor will I take one. However I am prepared to give half of the money." The next day he gave Rabbi Binyamin 600 rubles, and then he decided to add 200 more. When the money was eventually discovered, Rabbi Binyamin was so upset that he ran to Rabbi Shemuel and begged his forgiveness. This incident made tremendous waves in the city.

Rabbi Binyamin left this world on Av 25, 5578 and was buried in Horodna. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.

A TRUE STORY

The Rav's Great Happiness

It is written, "You shall generously open your hand to him" (Deuteronomy 15:8).

The Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum Zatzal, was known as one of the greatest distributors of tzedakah in his time. One day a Jew came to him in tears, saying that he had lost his wife and was now left with several children to care for. As he held out his hand to receive money from the Rebbe, the man also described his other hardships, including the fact that he was lame in one leg. The Rebbe therefore gave him a large donation, as was his custom. After a few minutes, however, the Rebbe's assistant came to see him looking terribly upset. "What happened?" the Rebbe asked. His assistant said, "The fellow who was just here claiming that he was lame in one leg? I just saw him leaving the room walking perfectly on both legs!" The Rebbe had barely heard this when he arose from his seat, equally surprised. His assistant thought that he would tell him to go after the man and demand all the money back. Imagine his surprise, however, when the Rebbe let out a heavy sigh of relief and said: "That's good to hear! You don't know how happy your words have made me! Thank G-d, the man isn't lame!"

Such are the great men of Israel, who desire only good for the children of the Holy One, blessed be He.

– Alenu Leshabeach, Part II, p.450

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

The Gentile Who Betrayed Himself

A certain Gentile used to go to Jerusalem and partake of the Passover offerings. He presented himself to Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra and boasted, "It is written: 'No alien shall eat of it...no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.' Yet I ate the very best of it!"

Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra said to him, "Did they give you the alyah [the fat tail, the best part of the sheep]?"

"No," he replied.

Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra wanted to trick the man, so that the next time he went to Jerusalem and tried to partake of the offerings, he would ask for the alyah. Now every Jew knew that the alyah was forbidden to eat, since it was presented on the altar and burned as an offering entirely dedicated to Hashem. Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra therefore said to the man, "The next time you go, ask them to give you the alyah."

Thus when the man went to Jerusalem, he said: "Give me the alyah of the sheep." They replied, "What are you talking about? Don't you know that the alyah isn't eaten, but is dedicated to Hashem?" Upon hearing this, the man shot back: "Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra told me this, and he knows the Torah inside and out. So I don't believe you!" The officials realized that they had to understand why Rabbi Yehudah had told the man to insist upon this strange request. They finally understood his aim, and upon learning of the man's true identity they had him put to death. They sent a message to Rabbi Yehudah: "Peace unto you, Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra, for you are in Nisibis, but your net is spread out in Jerusalem."

– Adapted from Pesachim 3b

A TRUE STORY

Increasing Peace in the World

It is written, "All your children shall be students of the L-RD, and great will be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).

Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina, "Torah scholars increase peace in the world" (Yebamot 122b). Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky said that this does not mean that Torah scholars go from door to door trying to foster peace between husband and wife or between a person and his fellow. Peace is the opposite of anger and bitterness, which can only thrive in someone who is unsatisfied, someone who is filled with bitterness, hostility, and discontent. He is therefore easily upset over every little thing that bothers him, thereby making everyone around him shudder. A true Torah scholar, on the other hand, is filled with joy and satisfaction over the page of Gemara that is before him, even more than the super-wealthy on account of the billions they have earned. A Torah scholar is therefore not bitter, for he is filled with pleasure and satisfaction over his learning, and all else matters little to him. Thus he increases peace in this world.

The term "increase" is also used because Torah scholars exhibit good middot, and this behavior brings those around them closer to Hashem. Not only do Torah scholars themselves live in peace and harmony with those around them, but they also "increase" them. That is, they also bring peace to the world and live together in peace and harmony. Furthermore, Torah scholars learn the Torah's laws and teach people how to act as they should, be it in financial matters or in the realm of moral conduct. Hence this also increases peace between a person and his fellow.