



The Path To Follow

NITZAVIM

255

Sept. 27th 08

27 Elul 5768

Publication

HEVRAT PINTO

Under Aegis of

RABBI DAVID HANANIA

PINTO CHLITA

11, rue du plateau

75019 PARIS

Tel: +331 42 08 25 40

Fax +331 42 08 50 85

www.hevratpinto.org

Responsible of publication
Hanania Soussan

GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

The Gossiper

Some remarks are forbidden because of gossip, even if they contain nothing derogatory. For example, if a person knows that a certain individual holds a grudge against someone else for something that he did to him, even if it was nothing intrinsically bad, it is forbidden to mention it to that individual. This prohibition also applies when the person responsible for the act recognizes what he did, yet believes that it was not bad. Even then it is forbidden to mention, for it may arouse resentment in the individual who hears it. Apart from this, even if the speaker has no intention of arousing hostility, his words are forbidden if it is clear that they will provoke dissension among people. Such words are then considered to be gossip, even if there was no bad intention behind them.

– Netzor LeShoncha

THE ATTRIBUTE OF TRUTH (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, “You are standing today, all of you, before the L-RD your G-d: The heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers – all the men of Israel; your small children, your women, and your proselyte who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water” (Deuteronomy 29:9-10).

King David wrote, “Who shall ascend the mountain of the L-RD, and who may stand in His holy place? One with clean hands and pure heart; who has not sworn in vain by My soul and has not sworn deceitfully” (Psalms 24:3-4). He also wrote, “Who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy mountain? He who walks uprightly and does what is right, and who speaks the truth from his heart. He who does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his fellow, nor casts disgrace upon his close one” (ibid. 15:1-3). From here we learn that a person cannot stand before Hashem and reside in His holy place unless he possesses the attribute of truth and distances himself from lies and falsehood. Our Sages have said, “The seal of the Holy One, blessed be He, is truth” (Shabbat 55a). It is also written, “One who practices deceit shall not dwell in My house. One who tells lies shall not stand before My eyes” (Psalms 101:7). This teaches us that we can only stand before Hashem if we hold truth in hand. It is also written, “The L-RD hates these six, and the seventh is the abomination of His soul: Haughty eyes, a false tongue...” (Proverbs 6:16-17).

Hence Moses told the Children of Israel, “You are standing today” – the word *atem* (“you”) being formed by the same letters as the word *emet* (“truth”), for here Moses was giving them the Torah for the third time. As the Midrash tells us, the Torah was given in three places (on Mount Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, and in the plains of Moab), and in each case we find the term *yetzivah* (to stand firm): On Mount Sinai, as it is written: “Vay-ityatzvu [And they stood] at the base of the mountain” (Exodus 19:17); in the Tent of Meeting, as it is written: “Venitzvu [And they would stand] each by the door of his tent” (Exodus 33:8); and in the plains of Moab, as it is written: “You nitzavim [are standing] today, all of you, before the L-RD.”

Since they had accepted the yoke of the Torah, they took upon themselves the attribute of truth, for the Torah is called “truth,” as it is written: “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23), which the Sages say refers to the Torah. Moses told the Children of Israel, “Since you have taken upon yourselves the Torah and the truth, you can stand before Hashem.” The Sages have said, “Truth can stand, falsehood cannot stand” (Shabbat 104a), and it is written: “True speech is established forever” (Proverbs 12:19). We find in the Aggadah that when the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to create the world, all the letters immediately descended and stood before Him. One letter said, “Create the world beginning with me,” while another said, “Create it beginning with me!” The *tav* was the first letter to present itself before Hashem, followed by the *shin*, which said to Him: “Master of the universe, may it please You to create the world with me, for Your Name begins with me, as it is written: ‘This is Shemi [My Name] forever’ [Exodus 3:15], and I am also the first letter in the Name *Sh-ddai*.” When Hashem said no, the *shin* asked why, to which Hashem replied: “Because both *shav* [lie] and *sheker* [falsehood] begin with you, and *sheker* has no legs, nor do you. How can I create the world by a letter without legs?” Dejected, the *shin* immediately departed.

Why did Moses tell the Children of Israel, “The heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers – all the men of Israel; your small children, your women, and your proselyte who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water”? It was because they believed that they did not have to learn Torah with those who were inferior to them in wisdom. Moses explicitly mentioned “your small children, your women, and your proselyte,” meaning that everyone has the duty to learn Torah with those of lesser stature, for the Torah was not only given to the wise, but also to commoners and the feeble-minded. The duty of the wise is to study with those lacking wisdom, so that the Torah may be familiar to everyone. We learn this from Hashem’s attributes, for His seal is truth, and one of His attributes is to do good to the wicked and the good. Furthermore, each day He feeds the entire world, from the horns of the reimmim to the eggs of lice.

Just as Hashem does good to both small and great, whoever possesses the attribute of truth must do good to all kinds of people. The Sages have said in the Aggadah: “The heads of your tribes” – although I counted your leaders, your elders, and your officials, you are all equal before Me, as it is written – “all the men of Israel.” Hence we learn that all Jews are equal before G-d.

Of Rabbi Chiya the Sages have said, “How great are the deeds of Chiya!” In fact Rabbi Chiya said of himself: “I ensure that the Torah will never be forgotten in Israel. For I take flax seed, plant it, and weave nets. [With these] I hunt deer, with whose flesh I feed orphans and from whose skins I prepare scrolls. I then proceed to a town where there are no teachers of young children, and I write out the five books of the Chumash for five children, and I teach another six children the six orders of the Mishnah” (Ketubot 103b). This exemplifies the principle, “Whoever possesses the attribute of truth, it is a sign that he possesses the attribute of humility,” for he is not afraid to teach the truth and recognize sin. When a person is infused with humility, he learns with everyone and does not say, “How can I study with so-and-so? He hasn’t learned Chumash or Mishnah, and he never frequents Torah scholars!” Actually, the Torah is only acquired through humility. Why are the words of Torah compared to water, as it is written: “Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water” (Isaiah 55:1)? It is in order to tell us that just as water travels from higher to lower ground, words of Torah only endure with someone who is humble. Hence King David said, “Who shall ascend the mountain of the L-RD, and who may stand in His holy place? One with clean hands and pure heart; who has not sworn in vain by My soul and has not sworn deceitfully.” He also stated, “Who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy mountain? He who walks uprightly and does what is right, and who speaks the truth from his heart. He who does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his fellow, nor casts disgrace upon his close one.” Hashem placed the attribute of truth next to the attribute of humility, thereby teaching us that it is impossible to find one without the other. In other words, a person who possesses one also possesses the other, and likewise a person who lacks one will necessarily lack the other, meaning that he will be unable to stand before Hashem.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Jews are Responsible for One Another

We know that when the Children of Israel received the Torah from Hashem, it was not just for themselves that they agreed to fulfill it. Rather, each Jew committed himself to strengthening, as much as possible, the performance of Torah among other Jews, and we all became responsible for one another. Thus it is written: “The hidden things are for the L-RD our G-d, and the revealed things are for us and for our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah” (Deuteronomy 29:28). As Rashi explains, this means that they became responsible for one another, and it is the source of the Din stating that every Jew can discharge another from performing a mitzvah, even if he has already discharged himself from it. This applies, for example, to reciting Kiddush or sounding the Shofar (as the Rosh states on Berachot 20), for if one’s fellow is lacking a certain mitzvah, it is as if the person himself is lacking it. It is also our duty to prevent others from transgressing a prohibition, for if we fail to prevent them when we can, we will be punished for it. In the blessing Emet VeYatziv, we explicitly state that our acceptance of the mitzvot regards ourselves, our children, and the entire Jewish community. We say, “His words are living and eternal...for our fathers, for us, for our children and our descendants, and for all the generations of the progeny of Israel Your servants.... [A] law that will never be abrogated.”

Let us think about this for a moment: If Reuven becomes a guarantor for Shimon to the tune of several hundreds of dollars – and even more so if he guarantees thousands of dollars – and he sees that Shimon wants to launch a new business that he knows will lose money, he will try by every means to prevent him from launching it. This is because he knows that if Shimon does so, Reuven will have to pay for every cent of it. The same applies here as well, for a person must realize that if, by issuing a reprimand, he can prevent another person or the people of his community from committing a sin, yet he fails to do so, he will be considered to be responsible for that sin. As the Sages have said, “Whoever can forbid his household [from committing a sin] but does not, is seized for his household. [If he can forbid] his fellow citizens, he is seized for his fellow citizens; if the whole world, he is seized for the whole world” (Shabbat 54b).

– Chomat HaDat

A Pearl From the Rav:

The Essentials of Teshuvah

It is written, “The hidden things are for the L-RD our G-d, and the revealed things are for us and for our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah” (Deuteronomy 29:28).

The commentators have said that the words Elokeinu vehaniglot lanu u’levaneinu (“our G-d and the revealed things are for us and for our children”) are an acronym for Elul. This means that teshuvah deals essentially with sins that are committed in secret, for a person will repent of sins committed in public because he knows that people are aware of them. As for sins committed in secret, he feels that he does not need to repent of them. The Torah therefore warns us by saying, “The hidden things are for the L-RD our G-d, and the revealed things are for us and for our children forever.” That is, just as every person repents of sins committed before other people and before his children, he should also wholeheartedly repent of sins that he committed against himself. Hence at the outset of the parsha we read, “You are

standing today,” for which the Sages have said: “Today means Rosh Hashanah.” Furthermore: “The heads of your tribes” – although I appointed your leaders, elders, and officials, you are all equal before Me, as it is written – “all the men of Israel.” This tells us that when the Children of Israel repent, they are all equal before Hashem, and the hewer of wood has the same status as the head of the tribes. Everyone is then free of sin, which is why the verse states: “You are standing today” – when do you stand before Hashem without shame? On Rosh Hashanah, when everyone does teshuvah.

G-d Sides With the Pursued

It is written, “In order to establish you this day as His people” (Deuteronomy 29:12).

Here Rashi states, “Curses and sufferings preserve you and enable you to stand before Him.” When accusations arise against the Children of Israel due to their sins, or when calls for their destruction come before Hashem to such a degree that He can no longer, as it were, silence such accusations, what does He do to counter such calls? He stands against Israel’s pursuers, who mistreat and persecute them. This is because it is one of Hashem’s attributes to side with the pursued, even if the righteous are pursuing the wicked. Since the Children of Israel are being pursued, they are saved from their accusers, and thus Israel’s pursuers strengthen and preserve them before Hashem.

– Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman

All United As One

It is written, “You are standing today, all of you, before the L-RD your G-d” (Deuteronomy 29:9).

Concerning the Halachot of Rosh Hashanah, the Tur writes that when a person is charged with a crime, he normally wears black garments, attires himself in black, lets his beard grow, and does not cut his nails. This is because he does not know what his verdict will be. The Children of Israel, however, do not act in this way, for they wear white garments and attire themselves in white. They trim their hair and they eat and drink on Rosh Hashanah, for they know that the Holy One, blessed be He, will perform a miracle for them. The Alter of Kelm explains that each individual must fear the day of judgment and not rely on miracles. However the Jewish community as a whole can be certain that a miracle will be performed for it. Hence every individual should make sure that he is connected to the community and serves it in such a way that it needs him, for a miracle will be performed on its behalf. This is what Moses told the Children of Israel: “You are standing today, all of you” – for you are all united as one, which is why the Holy One, blessed be He, will perform a miracle of you. Even if you have greatly upset G-d, He will not destroy you, and you will continue to live before Him.

– Darchei Mussar

Worse Than the Ungodly

It is written, “I shall have peace, though I walk as my heart sees fit, to add drunkenness to thirst” (Deuteronomy 29:18).

The Torah warns, “Perhaps there is a man among you...a root flourishing with gall and wormwood. It will be that when he hears the words of this curse, he will bless himself in his heart, saying: ‘I shall have peace, though I walk as my heart sees fit, to add drunkenness to thirst.’ The L-RD will not be willing to forgive him” (vv.17-19). Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman wrote that in earlier generations, sinners felt some degree of shame and had to act in secret and find pretexts for their actions. Yet now, sinners are not content with feeling no

shame whatsoever. On the contrary, they boast and are proud of going against the Torah, even when it serves them no supposed purpose. Indeed, these sinners have even formed groups to destroy the Torah. The saintly author of the Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan Zatzal, said that Scripture alludes to this in Parsha Nitzavim by stating: “Though I walk as my heart sees fit,” in accordance with what my heart desires, according to my way of doing things. Here Scripture states that if he makes a habit out of transgressing the words of the Torah, Hashem will not be willing to forgive him. This is worse than all the deeds of the ungodly.

We Are Guilty

It is written, “The hidden things are for the L-RD our G-d, but the revealed things are for us and for our children forever” (Deuteronomy 29:28).

Rashi states, “Now you might object: ‘But what can we do? You punish the whole community because of the sinful thoughts of one person....’ [G-d replies] ‘I will not punish you for the hidden things!’ ... Yet if we do not execute judgment upon these [open sins], then the whole community will be punished.” Rashi goes on to say that G-d did not punish the whole community until Israel crossed the Jordan, for it was then that they accepted responsibility for one another.

At that point a new page opened in the life of the people. When they accepted the oath on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the Children of Israel became responsible for one another, and from then on there was no longer “me” and “you” – there was “us,” like a single person. Everyone became responsible for everything done by others, a mutual responsibility that has direct Halachic consequences. With regards to non-obligatory blessings over food, a person who has already recited a blessing or who has not eaten cannot discharge someone else of his duty because he himself is not obligated to say this blessing. Therefore he is not responsible for what others say in this case. Let him not eat and not say the blessing. However for blessings that are mitzvot, even a person who has already performed the mitzvah can recite the blessing once again for someone who needs to recite it. Why? The Arizal is cited as stating that as long as someone else still has a mitzvah to perform, then I myself am responsible for that mitzvah. That is, my duty is to ensure that he fulfills his duty. On Yom Kippur, when a Jew bows before G-d, he confesses his sins in the plural, not the singular. He does not say, “I am guilty,” but rather, “We are guilty.” All Israel forms but a single entity, which is why an individual confesses a particular sin even if he himself has not committed it. If someone else has committed it, it is regarded as if he committed it as well, which is why the text is written in the plural.

– U’Bah HaLevi

Overview of the Parsha

Following the introduction to the covenant in Parsha Ki Tavo, the covenant itself and the people it pertains to are addressed in Parsha Nitzavim. The Children of Israel are promised that even if they violate the covenant, they will eventually repent. At the end of the parsha, we find words that encourage the Children of Israel to observe the Torah and its mitzvot.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

The Fear of Heaven Depends on You Alone

It is written, “The matter is very near to you, in your mouth and your heart to perform it” (Deuteronomy 30:14).

The Sages have said that everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven. The deeper significance of this teaching is that from the time a person is born, he cannot do anything on his own. He must be fed, washed, cleaned, etc. Yet when he grows up and wants to enjoy things in life, what actually depends on him alone? Suppose he wants to eat bread. Does that depend on him alone? Hundreds of people are needed in order to plant seeds, harvest wheat, and make bread, all of which requires machines which countless others have built. Similarly, when a person wants to wear some article of clothing, does this depend on him alone? Flax has to be spun and woven, and then fabric has to be cut and sewn, which itself requires all kinds of machines and numerous workers to make each component. In the final analysis, thousands of people are needed before a person can fulfill his desire to wear a single piece of clothing. Hence he depends on an unlimited number of factors with regards to everything he desires or needs. None of it depends on him alone, and he is surrounded by hundreds and thousands of people on whom everything he needs depends. That being the case, can we say that he owns the world? Indeed, is he the master of anything in the world?

There is only one thing that depends on a person alone: The fear of Heaven! It depends exclusively on himself. When he must fulfill a mitzvah and he needs certain things in order to do so (e.g. an etrog or a lulav), the teaching of the Sages then applies: “If he wants to perform a mitzvah but cannot, Scripture accounts it to him as if he had performed it.” It follows that everything regarding the fear of Heaven depends entirely on the person alone. In this regard he needs nothing and no one. If he possesses the fear of Heaven, then it is his. This is the meaning of the verse, “The matter is very near to you, in your mouth and your heart to perform it.” In other words: There is no problem here, for you can do it. The fear of Heaven is the only thing that is completely in your hands. It is close to you and depends on you alone.

– Rav Shach, Machshevet Mussar

ESHET HAYIL

Crying Out Because of Pain

It is written, “Many evils and distresses will encounter him” (Deuteronomy 31:17).

The Rebbe of Munkacz, Rabbi Chaim Elazar Shapira Zatzal (the author of Responsa Minchat Elazar), was once hospitalized in Vienna. When it came time to pray, he did as he normally would, crying out in prayer as he spilled out his heart with abundant tears. In the next room there was an elderly patient who complained that he couldn’t sleep because of the noise caused by Rabbi Chaim Elazar. The director of the hospital therefore came to see him and asked him not to pray so loudly because it was disturbing the other patients. Rabbi Chaim Elazar replied that there was a patient near his room who cried out and made all kinds of noise throughout the night, depriving him of sleep. The director explained that this patient was making noise because his illness was causing him pain, and therefore nothing could be done for it. Hearing this explanation, Rabbi Chaim Elazar replied: “And when I recite ‘to Jerusalem Your city,’ do I not feel pain?”

– Beit Sanz

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Haim Pinto HaGadol

An emissary from Eretz Israel arrived in Marrakech, Morocco to collect funds. Since he had great difficulty understanding Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra's commentary, he asked the Torah scholars of Marrakech to help him understand it. One day this emissary arrived in Mogador, where he heard of Rabbi Haim Pinto. He therefore decided to go and find the tzaddik in order to ask him about Rabbi ibn Ezra's commentary. Rabbi Haim listened to his questions and explained everything to him in a clear and profound way, much to his great satisfaction. When the emissary returned to Marrakech, he told its Torah scholars what had happened to him, which enabled them to understand the extent of Rabbi Haim Pinto's greatness in Torah. When the emissary returned to Eretz Israel, he also told his friends about the tzaddik of Mogador. From then on, the Torah scholars of Eretz Israel sent Rabbi Haim Pinto questions and problems regarding Torah and Kabbalah, which he would explain with extraordinary clarity. When Rabbi Haim Pinto was very advanced in age, the great Torah figures of Israel wanted to see if he still retained all his strength in Torah. Hence they sent him scholars who discussed all aspects of Torah with him, yet it was Rabbi Haim who was asking the apparently impossible questions, and he was the one who answered them! Thus they testified that in his great age, his mind was just as clear in Torah as in his youth. May his merit protect us all.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Allusions to Tishri

It is written, "I will rejoice intensely with the L-RD. My soul will exult with my G-d, for He has dressed me in the garment of salvation. In a robe of righteousness has He cloaked me, like a bridegroom who exalts with splendor, like a bride who bedecks herself with her jewelry" (Isaiah 61:10).

It seems that this verse alludes to the holidays that take place in the month of Tishri. Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgment, but the Children of Israel sense that this judgment is solely for their good, that they may attain holiness and blessing. This is alluded to in the words, "I will rejoice intensely with the L-RD," for Hashem's Name designates mercy, and everything is but immense mercy. "My soul will exult with my G-d" – this is the Name that designates justice, for the Children of Israel rejoice in severe decrees, as it is written: "For the enjoyment of the L-RD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). If the Children of Israel know that severe decrees exist solely for the needs of kindness, it is gevurah (strength) that is found in chesed. "For He has dressed me in the garment of salvation" – this alludes to Yom Kippur, as the Midrash states: "The L-RD is my light and my salvation" [Psalms 27:1]. He is 'my light' on Rosh Hashanah and 'my salvation' on Yom Kippur" (Vayikra Rabba 21:4). The Jewish people are saved on Yom Kippur, this being alluded to by the words "the garment of salvation." A garment is something that is tailored to the measurements of the person who wears it. Similarly, the salvation of Israel on Yom Kippur is tailored to their teshuvah: If they merit it, they will be inscribed for life. On Sukkot the Jewish people fulfill the expression, "The king has brought me into his chambers" (Song of Songs 1:1), a reference to the light that surrounds the entirety of man, and even his legs are found in the Sukkah. This is what constitutes, "In a robe of righteousness has He cloaked me" – which is the righteousness that Hashem does for the Jewish people, although they do not deserve it according to the measure of strict justice. It is like a coat that covers the entire body, not like the coat of Yom Kippur, which represents teshuvah. – Shem MiShemuel

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

The Reward of Never Being Jealous of Others

Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak had a mound of earth in his vineyard, and he hired some workers to level it out. They spent the entire day digging, and on the next day, as they continued to dig, a man jumped out from the earth, sat on what remained of the mound, and began to sway back and forth as he shouted, "Has the resurrection of the dead begun? Has the resurrection of the dead begun?" The workers ran and told Rabbi Nachman, who came to the man and said to him, "Who are you?" He replied, "I'm dead. Has the resurrection of the dead begun?" He said, "What are you doing on this mound of earth?" He replied, "I've just told you that I'm dead!" Rabbi Nachman said, "Does a corpse not rot?" He replied, "Have you not studied the book of Proverbs? Did King Solomon not say, 'Jealousy rots the bones'? Never in my life did I insist on things with my friends, nor did I ever speak in the Beit Midrash or in synagogue. My eyes and my heart were always set on the Torah, to fulfill what is written therein: 'He who obeys Me will rest in security.' That's why my body has not rotted." Rabbi Nachman said to him, "I will build a cabin for you." He replied, "Don't do anything for me, and don't move me from here because I was buried with permission. Instead, put the earth that was taken from me back in its place." Rabbi Nachman was afraid and worried throughout the day, for he thought to himself: "Woe to me, for perhaps I disturbed the dead!" He then had a dream in which he was sitting in a sukkah of myrtle. He began to praise the Holy One, blessed be He, and he read the verse, "Happy is the man who listens to Me by knocking at My door every day." Blessed be the Name of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, Who deprives no creature of his reward. Even if one who did not insist on being right receives the reward of remaining silent, how much more will the Holy One, blessed be He, give an infinitely greater reward to one who studies Torah every day, educates his children to study Torah, and walks in the ways of Hashem and with humility!

– Reshith Chochma, Sha'ar HaAnava, Part III

A TRUE STORY

Chesed Protects the Body

To gladden the groom and bride is also an important duty. ... We have learned this from the episode concerning the wicked Jezebel, the wife of Ahab. She was the one who incited him to worship idols and to shed the blood of Naboth of Jezreel. According to Scripture, her punishment was that dogs devoured her flesh. When her remains were collected for burial, only her skull and heels could be found. Chazal have explained that these limbs were left intact because her feet would dance and her head would nod in honor of brides. Hence these were left over by the dogs. These facts demonstrate the greatness of the mitzvah. ... The mitzvah of gladdening groom and bride reaches its highest form when not many guests are present, or when poor couples or the children of parents who have become bereft of their wealth, marry. Few come to give them joy. ... Chazal have said: Whoever gladdens the bridegroom is privileged to acquire Torah, and it is considered as if he had sacrificed a thanksgiving offering in the Temple or as if he had rebuilt one of the ruins of Jerusalem.

– Ahavat Chesed