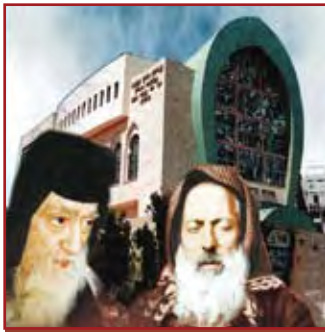


THE EVIL INCLINATION'S VICTORY BETWEEN ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)



The Path To Follow

HAAZINU

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

All I Did Was Speak!

One of the factors that lead a person into "allowing" himself to speak Lashon Harah is the fact that he does not fully appreciate the power of words. He tells himself, "I spoke about so and so, but I didn't do anything to him. I didn't actually do something to wrong him."

This is a mistake! If a person were to simply think about the power of speech, he would realize that each word exerts a tremendous influence, and that a harmful word about his fellowman awakens an accusation in Heaven against both him and the one against whom he spoke. If we were simply to think about this whenever we were about to open our mouths to speak about others, we would be careful not to say forbidden things!

Concerning the verse, "When you go out to war against your enemy and you see horse and chariot, a people more numerous than you, do not fear them" (Deuteronomy 20:1), the Midrash states: "Do not fear the sins that you committed" (Yalkut Shimoni, Devarim 923). This is difficult to understand, for before going out to war the Kohen would say to the soldiers: "Who is the man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house" (Deuteronomy 20:8). Rashi cites the Sages in saying that this refers to "one who is afraid of his sins" (Mishnah in Sotah 44a). That is, his sins may bother him, which is why he must leave the army and return home. Yet the aforementioned Midrash interprets the verse in the opposite way, meaning that Hashem even strengthens a person who committed sins, such that he has no reason to fear having sinned, and on the contrary he should go out to war with an assurance of victory.

We can explain this in the following way: The verse is alluding to the war that we fight on Rosh Hashanah against our accusers, which were created as a result of our sins. On this holy day, it is very likely that we will lose hope of being able to prepare ourselves for the judgment, since we know that we have no way of silencing our accusers and defeating them. After all, their accusations are completely justified and they are a thousand times stronger than us. This is particularly true when they have strong arguments that highlight our deliberate transgression of many Torah mitzvot and our tremendous neglect of Torah study, in which case we are seized with the fear of being unable to confront them. It is precisely for this reason that we must rejoice on this day, for doing so will confuse our accusers. In fact they will not understand what is occurring, for instead of crying and worrying over our terrible spiritual state (since we have no one to defend us, and even the Patriarchs are somewhat disappointed in our conduct during the year), our joy will shock all the angels of destruction and everything created by our sins.

Thus it is written: "When you go out to war" – to defend yourself on the day of judgment, which is Rosh Hashanah: "and you see horse and chariot...you shall not fear them" – you shall not fear accusers on that day, even though their very presence actually means that you have sinned. Instead, you must continue to confuse them by your joy, for the more you continue to serve Hashem with joy, the more confused they will become. They will no longer know where to turn, and in the meantime the Holy One, blessed be He, will have forgiven you.

This is what the Holy One, blessed be He, says to the Jewish people: Have no fear of this army, for all your sins are found in their hands." By the power of repentance, sins are transformed into merits, and accusers become defenders. Now since all our sins are in the hands of the Satan, he is obligated to transform them into merits and to defend the Jewish people, for they have completely repented. In fact this way of experiencing Rosh Hashanah confuses the Satan and his army, preventing them from accusing us. Thus we fulfill the verse, "Let us fall into the hands of the L-RD, for His mercies are abundant" (II Samuel 24:14), and we will not fall into the hands of the Satan.

A well-known question arises at this point: How can man, who is physical, defeat the evil inclination? How can he come into Hashem's presence after 120 years on earth and say before the celestial court, "I raise my hands to the Most High G-d"? After all, Hashem is completely spiritual, not material! Such a thing is too difficult to endure! This is why we must thank Hashem for having given us these days,

days of mercy and kindness, a time for soul-searching, when we can repent and better ourselves. We can remove from our hearts every doubt that we had during the year. We can strengthen ourselves from now on and connect to the Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds. We can therefore return to our Father in Heaven, believe in Him, and ask Him to forgive us with love.

In fact during these days, which are days of spiritual awakening, Heaven is knocking at the door of every Jew's heart – "the sound of my beloved knocking" (Song of Songs 5:2) – and a celestial voice says to him, "Let me in, My sister, My love" (ibid.). With regards to these days, the prophets have said that Hashem is very close to those who call upon Him (Rosh Hashanah 18a). Hashem is ready to accept their repentance, for He is standing behind the wall, watching and knocking at the door of every Jew's heart and saying to him: "My son, repent! Do complete teshuvah. Strengthen yourself in Torah and mitzvot, for then it will be good for you in this world and in the World to Come."

It is our duty to transform the evil inclination into something that is "very good." We must transform materiality into spirituality. We must study Torah, for it is the antidote to the evil inclination, which exists to make us fall. It tries to make us sin in either impure or holy places, and we must overcome it and completely cleanse our hearts of all doubts. Improving ourselves is something that is entirely in our hands: We must do complete teshuvah, especially during these days, days of mercy and kindness – the Ten Days of Teshuvah – when Hashem is close to us and knocking at the door of our heart. We must improve our deeds, and the covenant will not be broken.

This is why we must awaken ourselves even more during the entire year, and especially during these days – "Arise from your sleep, you who sleep. Awaken from your slumber" – for these days are suitable for repentance. If we let them pass without doing anything, a heavy accusation will be raised against us, and we will be unable to answer the celestial court. If we do awaken ourselves, however, Hashem will certainly hear our prayers and supplications. He will enable us to completely return to Him, for we are His children, the pinnacle of Creation. After a long life on earth, we will be able to present ourselves in the World of Truth as vessels that are filled with blessing, completely overflowing with Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds.

May our prayers be accepted with favor before the Master of the universe, and may we merit a good year, a sweet year that is filled with blessings for the best of everything in the material and spiritual realms. May we be able to transform the material into the spiritual, and may we be inscribed in the book of the wholly righteous. Amen, may it be so.

*The Pinto Associations
around the world, along with Rabbi David
Hanania Pinto Shlita, send you their
best wishes for an exceptional new year 5770.*

*Shana Tova!
May we all be
inscribed in the Book
of Life. Amen.*



MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Ways of Hashem are Just

It is written, “The Rock, perfect is His work” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Here the Torah is telling us that the way Hashem directs the world is completely just, beyond any suspicion of injustice. If we have questions to ask, it is because we lack the knowledge and understanding of Heaven’s ways.

Two ba’alei batim once came to see Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev to complain about their situation. The tzaddik asked them, “How would you direct the world if you were its leaders?” One of them said, “I would arrange things in such a way that there would be no rich or poor people in the world; everyone would be equal.” The other said, “I would eliminate all wars and make peace reign between all countries.” Rabbi Levi Yitzchak said to them, “I would make things exactly as they are today, when the Holy One, blessed be He, is directing the world. This is because there is no doubt that all the deeds of Hashem are for the best, perfect and true. It is just that we lack the knowledge and understanding of Heaven’s ways.” In the story of the ten martyrs of the Roman era, the ministering angels ask: “This is the Torah and this is its reward?” A celestial voice answered them from Heaven: “If I hear another sound, I will transform the world into water; I will reduce you to chaos.” This means that if they had not kept quiet, Hashem would have turned the world back to its initial state of chaos and annulled all of Creation. This seems difficult to understand, for what kind of answer is this? It seems more like a threat: If you do not keep silent, I will destroy the world! Why did Heaven not give them an answer? Furthermore, why would the world have to be destroyed as a result?

The gaon Rabbi Shlomo Kluger Zatzal explained this with a parable: A king chose a tailor to make him an outfit, and he provided the tailor with a great quantity of gold and silver thread in order to make it. Other tailors became jealous, and so they accused the tailor of being a thief. They claimed that he took some of the thread for himself.

When the king summoned the tailor in question, he denied everything. When the king asked him how he could prove that the allegation was a lie, the tailor said that there was no other way than to take the entire garment apart, to undo it thread by thread in order to show how each thread was where it should be, without a single one missing.

This is the idea behind the answer of the Holy One, blessed be He. Hashem is telling us that we can never understand why He acts in a certain way, unless He were to completely “undo” all of Creator. In other words, He would have to undo everything in Creation from beginning to end, explaining each action in terms of the circumstances that led to it and the reasons behind it. Only then would it be possible to understand why the ten martyrs had to endure their fate.

– Chedvat HaChaim

A Pearl From the Rav

The Sages have said that Yom Kippur does not procure atonement for sins between a person and his fellowman until his fellowman forgives him (Yoma 85b).

In his book Pahad David, Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita explains that the term iratzeh (forgiven) contains a mitzvah for every Jew to give his fellowman the opportunity to perform mitzvot. In this way he will become ratzui (accepted) and merutzeh (pleasing) to the Holy One, blessed be He. This is what constitutes iratzeh (making him ratzui and merutzeh), meaning that his fellowman forgives him.

How is this done? When we help another person to perform a mitzvah, we lighten the evil inclination’s burden on him. If we help him to benefit from increasingly more mitzvot (since one mitzvah leads to another), then the evil inclination will leave him completely. Thus we can explain the verse, “You shall help with him [azov ta’azov imo]” (Exodus 23:5): If you help your fellowman to perform more mitzvot and to rid himself of the yoke of the evil inclination, as well as to merit other mitzvot, you will also perform mitzvot with him (imo) and rid yourself of the yoke of the evil inclination. This explains the redundant expression azov ta’azov imo.

How to Merit a Long Life

It is written, “The Rock, perfect is His work” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Rabbi Shimon of Yaroslav lived a very long time. When his disciples asked him what he attributed his longevity to, he said: “I never contested the deeds of the Holy One, blessed be He, for I always accepted them with love. In fact it is clear that all the deeds of Hashem are fair and good. When a person raises questions and starts complaining about them, he is summoned to Heaven and told, ‘Look, everything is good. Everything is fair.’ Since I never complained, I was never summoned to Heaven to be shown the justice of Hashem’s ways.”

A Tailor’s Work

Someone came to see the Chazon Ish and asked him some “questions” about Divine providence, given that the Holocaust had decimated the Jews of Europe. The Chazon Ish noted, “When a person does not know how a tailor works, and he sees him cutting fabric into pieces, he will think that he is destroying a garment. Yet in reality, the tailor is simply creating a new one.”

– Ma’ayanot HaNetzach

Showing Gratitude to Hashem

It is written, “Is this how you repay the L-RD, foolish and unwise people?” (Deuteronomy 32:6).

The book Chovot HaLevavot states, “If a person’s mother were to throw him into the street as a child, and a passerby would see him and show him compassion by rescuing and raising him until he became an adult, how quickly would he run to fulfill the will of his benefactor, and how greatly would he feel obligated to him! Therefore how much more should we seek to serve Hashem and take it upon ourselves to fulfill mitzvot! In fact the Holy One, blessed be He, not only protects and supplies us with what we need, He also created and placed us on a higher level than animals and vegetation. Moses reprimanded the Children of Israel in regards to this by saying, ‘Is this how you repay the L-RD, foolish and unwise people?’”

Wholehearted Praise and Thanks

Rabbi Alexander Ziskind, the author of Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah, wrote in his will:

For all the benefits that I received, large or small, I praised and thanked Hashem with immense joy. I will cite only a few examples here, for they are too numerous to all be mentioned. I had a toothache almost every day, and sometimes the pain was excruciating. When the pain diminished somewhat, I praised and thanked G-d with immense joy by saying, “I thank You, my Creator. Blessed be Your Name before all the living for having sent healing to my tremendous pain.” I expressed my gratitude in this way even in the midst of prayer, in the thoughts of my heart. When I had to journey to a certain place and had forgotten something, obligating me to return and get it, if I remembered it quickly enough that I wasn’t too tired to retrieve it, I wholeheartedly praised and thanked Hashem with tremendous joy...

by saying, “My Creator, blessed be Your Name. I praise and thank You for having allowed me to remember this immediately, so that I didn’t become too tired to retrieve it, as I would have been if I had remembered in the middle or at the end of my journey.”

Losing Hope in a Natural Deliverance

It is written, “Their power is gone, and none is supported or helped” (Deuteronomy 32:36).

From here the Sages learn that the son of David will only come when the Children of Israel lose hope of ever being delivered, saying that the power of the Jewish people will be gone, without any supporter or helper (Sanhedrin 97a). This is quite surprising, for will deliverance only come about when the essential aspect of the 13 principles of faith – to believe in deliverance and to wait for it – is forgotten by all Israel? Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky said, “This means ‘until the Jewish people will have lost hope in a natural deliverance.’ As long as they look for help among the nations in order to build a homeland, deliverance will certainly not come. It is only when they completely lose hope in all these illusions, and they completely understand that we can only rely on our Father in Heaven, that the son of David will come and bring us true deliverance.”

– MiShulchan Gavoha

The Suit is Too Big

It is written, “For it is not an empty thing for you” (Deuteronomy 32:47).

The Sages say, “And if it is empty, it is because of you.” How so? “Because you put no effort into it” (Yerushalmi, Shabbat 1:4). We can get a better sense of the Yerushalmi’s statement with a parable: A tailor made a new suit for someone. One day the owner of the suit came running to the tailor and vehemently complained, “The suit doesn’t fit me. It’s too big. It looks like I’m swimming in it.” The tailor checked the suit, smiled and said, “The fault lies neither with me nor the suit. Rather, it lies with you. When I made you this suit, it fit you perfectly. However you’ve lost weight since then, and the suit stayed the same size.” Because of our numerous sins, today we see many people who have strayed from the Torah, from tefillin and tzitzit. We can make the mistake of thinking that they have acquired so much wisdom that Torah and tefillin no longer fit them. The truth, however, is the opposite, for the minds of these people have diminished. They have become so small that tefillin no longer fit their heads, and the Torah no longer fits inside such puny minds. Therefore tefillin fall from their heads, and the Torah distances itself from them. Hence the above passage from the Yerushalmi says, “For it is not an empty thing for you – and if it is empty, it is because of you.”

– Mishlei HaChafetz Chaim

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Haazinu continues the account given in Parsha Re’eh concerning the song and eternal Torah, the testimony of Moses to the Children of Israel, which was to assure them that they would continue to be the chosen people. There are six parts to it: (1) Introduction (vv.1-3); (2) Hashem’s ways (vv.4-14); (3) The sin of His people (vv.15-18); (4) The hiding of His face (vv.19-35); (5) Reconciliation (vv.36-43); and (6) The attribution of the song to Moses and Joshua (vv.44-47). At the end of the parsha, we find a statement similar to the one given in Parsha Pinchas, when Moses is commanded to ascend Mount Nebo so he could see Eretz Israel before dying.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

Rebuffed by his Rebbe

A certain Modzitz chassid went to see his Rebbe in order to ask him for advice on improving his livelihood. The Rebbe rebuffed him, saying: “I don’t deal with the vanities of this world.” After the chassid left, he saw another chassid go in and speak with the Rebbe about matters of a livelihood for almost two hours. The first chassid returned to the Rebbe and asked him why he didn’t want to speak to him about the things of this world, although he spoke to his friend at great length about it! The Rebbe replied, “I will give you an analogy. A wagon driver came into a large store that sold expensive merchandise, and he asked for a little oil to grease the wheels of his wagon. The storeowner sent him away, saying: ‘I don’t sell oil for wagon wheels. I sell things of value.’ The driver then said, ‘But you sold this kind of oil to the client who came before me!’ The owner replied, ‘The client who came before you purchased many costly items, which earned me a nice profit. I therefore gave him some oil that he needed for his wheels. You, however, only want a little oil for your wagon, and I don’t sell that.’ ” This is what the Rebbe of Modzitz said to the chassid, “So and so always comes to me for advice on the education of his children, on fixing times for Torah study, and on other things that pertain to the service of Hashem. When he comes to me for advice on his livelihood, I also give it to him, for without a livelihood he wouldn’t be able to educate his children or serve Hashem. Such is not the case with you. You only come to me for questions dealing with your livelihood, pertaining to oil for your wheels, and I don’t sell oil.”

Rabbi Moshe Rosenstein Zatzal said, “When a person fixes times for studying Torah and fulfilling mitzvot throughout the year, then he presents himself before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and asks for his livelihood, Hashem gives it to him so he can fulfill mitzvot. As for a person who only asks for his sustenance, the Holy One, does not deal in that.”

In this way we can explain the verse: “If you follow My decrees...I will give your rains in their time” (Leviticus 26:3-4). Since the commentators note that a reward for a mitzvah is not given in this world, why does the Holy One, blessed be He, reward those who follow His decrees? It is because when a person wants to walk in His ways, study Torah, and fulfill mitzvot, he also needs to earn a living. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, promises him: “I will give your rains in their time.” Without oil for his wheels, he cannot ride. This is not a reward for a mitzvah, but oil to help him study Torah and perform mitzvot.

– Rabbi Yaakov Neiman, Darchei Mussar

EISHET CHAYIL

Inhabitants of the World

It is written, “Hear this, all you peoples. Give ear, all you inhabitants of the world [yoshvei chaled]” (Psalms 49:2). Why are all the inhabitants of the world compared to a rat (chulda)? It is because just as a rat drags things and deposits them without knowing who will use them, likewise the inhabitants of the world drag and heap up things without knowing who will use them. As King David said, “He amasses, but he knows not who will gather them” (Psalms 39:7). A powerful instinct exists to amass material things, to drag and heap up without knowing why or for whom. These consist of incessant purchases, numerous savings, great possessions. Yet for whom, and for what reason? Nobody knows. Why do we do this? We just do; that is all. It is because a person has the impression that his goal is to heap up and amass things.

Desires drive a person out of this world, for someone who desires finds no rest. He is always unhappy, in a state of want, and throughout life he is constantly running after one thing or another. As for the tzaddik, who is content with little, he is happy.

– Shalom VeReut