



HASHEM GRANTS WEALTH TO THOSE WHO MERIT IT

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

The Path To Follow

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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

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

The "Dust" of Lashon Harah

A person who tells his friend how someone asked about him, and that he replied, "Don't ask me such things. I don't want to talk about it" – or a similar response, said in such a way that the listener can deduce something negative about the person in question – all this constitutes the "dust" of Lashon Harah.

Likewise when we praise the merits of a person in front of his friend, it may lead to that person's friend becoming resentful of him. If this resentment causes him problems, our praise constitutes the "dust" of Lashon Harah.

– Chafetz Chaim

It is written, "Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man borrow from his fellow, and each woman from her fellow, silver vessels and gold vessels" (Exodus 11:2). The Gemara states, "The word na means 'please.' The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Please, go and tell Israel, 'Please borrow from the Egyptians vessels of silver and vessels of gold,' so that this tzaddik [Abraham] may not say, 'And they shall serve them, and they shall afflict them'" [Genesis 15:14] He did fulfill for them, but "and afterwards they will leave with great wealth" [ibid.] He did not fulfill for them" (Berachot 9ab).

This is extremely surprising. Could anyone possibly think that Abraham, in the World to Come, would torment himself, worry, and complain about the silver and gold that his descendants would fail to receive? If they had not received food or clothing, that we could understand. However once they left Egypt, the clouds of glory provided them with everything they needed. In fact they had absolutely nothing to do, for the manna descended for them and in it they could savor all the tastes in the world. Would Abraham therefore worry about the silver and gold that his descendants would have failed to receive?

Rather, this is what Hashem told Moses: "This tzaddik said to Me, 'How will I know that I will inherit it?' [Genesis 15:8]. Do you think that he did trust Me that his descendants would inherit the land? Certainly not! What he feared, however, is that his descendants would not serve Hashem, that they would assimilate among the nations and no longer observe Torah. I said to him, 'Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own, and they will serve them and they will oppress them 400 years. But also the nation that they will serve, I shall judge, and afterwards they will leave with great wealth' [Genesis 15:13-14]."

Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, tell him "and afterwards they will leave with great wealth"? Does a person who is held hostage by bandits ask for great wealth in return? He only asks to be released! Thus the Gemara states, "[It is] like a man who was kept in prison and people told him: 'Tomorrow they will release you from prison and give you plenty of money.' He replies, 'Please, let me go free today and I shall ask for nothing more!'" (Berachot 9b).

Yet here, Abraham was told that his descendants would not assimilate among the nations of the world. G-d told him, "Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens." He revealed to Abraham that there was a decree that the Children of Israel would be exiled in Egypt, telling him: "Although they are destined to live among the Egyptians for 400 years, I will protect them so they will not be assimilated. I will take them out before they reach the 50th gate of impurity. Furthermore, I will give them a few mitzvot, and by observing them they will merit to emerge from there." He also promised that the Children of Israel would be worthy of receiving a great reward in this world by their good deeds, just as long as they do His will: "If you follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them, then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit. Your threshing will last until the vintage, and the vintage will last

until the sowing. You will eat your bread to satiety and you will dwell securely in your land" (Leviticus 26:3-5). G-d also told Abraham: From the fact that they will leave with great wealth, they will know that they have done My will, for otherwise – if they had not been meritorious – I would not have given them great wealth.

He Should Not Have to Suffer

Furthermore, when the Children of Israel do G-d's will, the Holy One, blessed be He, gives them a reward in this world, namely the ability to study Torah and fulfill mitzvot. This is because, as the Sages have said: "Three things deprive a man of his senses and a knowledge of his Creator" (Eruvin 41b), and one of them is poverty. When the Children of Israel fail to perform G-d's will, He does not give them money, since in any case they are not doing His will and have no need for peace of mind. Yet when the Children of Israel do His will, G-d yearns for them to fulfill all the mitzvot, some of which cannot be done without money. Although the clouds of glory provided them with all they needed, a wealthy man who fulfills a mitzvah cannot be compared to a poor man who does the same. In fact a wealthy man embellishes the mitzvot that he performs, whereas a poor man – who depends on others – spends the least amount possible to perform them.

This is why Hashem told Moses: "Please, go and tell Israel, 'Please borrow from the Egyptians vessels of silver and vessels of gold,' so that this tzaddik may not say, 'And they shall serve them, and they shall afflict them'" He did fulfill for them, but "and afterwards they will leave with great wealth" He did not fulfill for them." In that case, Abraham would have suffered upon seeing them leave Egypt without great wealth. Since this tzaddik elevated himself to a lofty level, it was not fitting for him to suffer by thinking that the Children of Israel did not perform Hashem's will. Thus Moses had to tell them to borrow silver and gold vessels from the Egyptians.

He Elevated Himself to a Lofty Level

Why did G-d not say, "So that Abraham may not say," rather than: "So that this tzaddik may not say"? Tosaphot (Eduyot 3:4) teach, "One who has disciples, he is called 'Rabbi.' When his disciples are forgotten, he is called 'Rabban.' When everyone is forgotten, he is called by his name." In the introduction to his commentary on the Mishnah, the Rambam explains this statement by saying: "This divides the people who are mentioned in the Mishnah, numbering 128, into three groups. Whoever is at the highest level is called by his own name, such as Hillel, Shammai, Shemaya, and Avtalyon. This testifies to the greatness and honor of their level, for it is impossible to find a title that befits their name, just as the prophets did not carry titles. However the Sages who, in His eyes, are lower than this level are called 'Rabban,' such as Rabban Gamliel and Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai. Those who are lower than this level are called 'Rabbi,' such as Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehudah."

As a result, the greater the man, the fewer titles he is given. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, called Abraham "this tzaddik" because he elevated himself to a tremendous level in the World above, where he could not even be called by his own name

AT THE SOURCE

Leave!

It is written, "Then all these servants of yours will come down to me and bow to me and say, 'Leave, you and the entire people who follow you.' After that, I will leave" (Exodus 11:8).

The book Olamot Shecharvu states that Rabbi Pinchas Eliezer Paksher was greatly distressed when he went to see the gaon Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum. He was upset because a relative of his was having difficulty in childbirth, and the doctors feared for her life.

At that point, the Rav was studying the weekly parsha (Parsha Bo), twice in Hebrew and once in the Targum. Rabbi Pinchas explained his problem to the Rav, but the Rav did not stop reading. In fact he continued to read as Rabbi Pinchas impatiently waited for him to finish.

When the Rav came to the verse, "Leave, you and the entire people who follow you [literally: that are in your legs]," he raised his voice, set his eyes upon Rabbi Pinchas, and repeated in a particularly insistent tone: "Leave, you and the entire people who follow you." Rabbi Pinchas thought that the Rav was ordering him to leave, and therefore he got up and left. It was exactly at that point that his relative gave birth, and both mother and child were in perfect health.

The origin of this segula – to say "leave, you and the entire people who follow you" when a woman is having difficulty giving birth – is based on the explanation of Rabbeinu Bechaye. He says the following:

"Leave, you and the entire people who follow you" – neither myself nor the Children of Israel will leave your domain before you yourself send us out; "after that, I will leave."

Here the Children of Israel were sent away and a higher power led them from their prison. Hence it follows that from this verse, by using a certain Name of G-d, a woman having difficulty giving birth can receive help. A powerful force can open the way for the baby enclosed in her womb, helping it to emerge into the world and merit the Torah, for man was born only to toil in Torah. Likewise the Children of Israel left their prison in order to receive the Torah on the third month. This Name is known by those who know G-d's Names, and its punctuation is well-known.

The Weak Hand

It is written, "It shall be a sign upon your hand" (Exodus 13:16).

Our Sages have explained, "Yadecha [‘your hand’] – yad keha [literally, ‘the weak hand’], which is the left hand."

The saintly Rabbi Chaim ben Attar Zatzal states that we need to understand why Hashem did not select the right hand for this mitzvah, since preference is given to the right hand. Elsewhere, the Sages state that the area on which to place the tefillin is on the left, so as to face the heart.

"It seems to me," wrote Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, "that the verse itself gives us the reason by stating: 'for with a strong hand the L-RD brought us out of Egypt.' There are two aspects to the middot of the Holy One, blessed be He: The first is an outstretched hand, which is the side of goodness and kindness. The other is a strong hand, a reference to the justice that is meted out to the wicked."

In order to bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt, Hashem extended His strong hand and struck His enemies with ten plagues. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, decided that the tefillin should be placed on the "weak" hand.

By Allusion

A Lack of Fish

It is written, "And they emptied Egypt" (Exodus 12:36).

The Sages have explained, "They made it like a pond without fish" (Be-rachot 9b).

We find an allusion to this statement in the words vayenatzlu et Mitzrayim ("and they emptied Egypt"), the last letters of which form the word mavet ("dead"). This tells us that they turned Egypt into an empty boat, into a boat without fish, whose owners will be poor. Now the poor are considered to be dead, and so this punishment is measure for measure, since the Egyptians had persecuted the Children of Israel and killed them.

– Etz HaChaim

Thirty Days

It is written, "You shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice'" (Exodus 12:27).

The Sages say, "From here we learn that we must study the laws of Passover 30 days before the festival."

The book Lechem Oni explains this as follows: Half the numerical value of the letter peh (80) is equal to the numerical value of the letter mem (40). Likewise half the numerical value of the letter samech (60) is equal to the numerical value of the letter lamed (30). Finally half the numerical value of the letter chet (8) is equal to the numerical value of the letter dalet (4).

In other words: When you "sacrifice" the word Pesach (peh-samech-chet) by cutting it in two, you end up with lamed-mem-dalet, which spells lamed. Thus: "You shall say" the laws of Passover 30 (lamed) days before the festival.

– Yalkut HaUrim

TRUE STORY

Rabbi Haim Pinto's Prayer

It is written, "The L-RD turned back a very powerful west wind, and it carried the locust-swarm and hurled it towards the Sea of Reeds. Not a single locust remained within the entire border of Egypt" (Exodus 10:19).

The Moroccan town of Mogador experienced years of famine and suffering, during which time many of its inhabitants experienced hunger, thirst, and want. Every few years, an immense swarm of locusts descended upon the town, as millions of them spread out upon the fields and orchards. When they felt like leaving, they left behind fields and orchards that were stripped of all their fruit. This deficiency led to an increase in the price of food, resulting in tremendous poverty among the people.

One year a huge locust swarm was seen heading for Mogador. Its inhabitants began to tremble, and their fear was increasing with each passing day.

At such a difficult time, there was no other option left for the Jews of Mogador than to rely upon the ways of their fathers. A day of fasting and prayer was therefore proclaimed throughout Morocco. Yet to their great disappointment, their prayers were not answered. The swarm of locusts did not veer off, and the anxiety of the Jews of Mogador continued to increase. Deliverance finally came a few days later, as the saintly Rabbi Haim Pinto was immersed in studying Torah with his students. A great darkness fell upon the house as a "cloud" of millions of locusts arrived above them and blocked the entire sky. A few locusts fell into the books of the students, which forced them to interrupt their learning.

Rabbi Haim Pinto immediately interrupted his learning, took a shofar, and began to blow it in order to annul the evil decree. He then began to pray and recite the 13 attributes of mercy, thereby turning that day into a miniature Yom Kippur. Rabbi Haim stood like this in prayer without interruption before his Creator, until a wind came and drove the locusts towards the sea.

CONCERNING THE PARSHA

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

It is written, “You shall not break a bone in it” (Exodus 12:46).

Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 16) states that the essence of this mitzvah is to recall the miracles of Egypt, as we have written concerning other mitzvot. This also follows from the principle that we have previously mentioned, according to which there is no honor for princes and great figures in dragging and breaking bones like a dog. This is only done by the poor, who are hungry. Hence when we start to become the chosen people among all nations, “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” each year at the same time it is fitting to perform deeds that demonstrate the lofty level that we have reached at that point. Through our deeds and the power of our imagination, we establish it in our souls for all time.

My son, do not think that you can say: “Why has Hashem ordered us to do all this in memory of this miracle? To ensure that it’s never forgotten by our descendants, we just have to remember it once.”

Know that this is not a wise question, nor is it serious.

And now, my son, if you wish to listen wisely, I will teach you something practical in the observance of Torah and mitzvot. Know that man is silent in regards to his own deeds. His heart and all his thoughts are always in line with the deeds that he performs, for better or for worse. Even one whose heart is completely wicked, someone whose thoughts are always evil, if his spirit pushes him to put an effort into studying Torah and performing mitzvot, even for selfish reasons, he will immediately incline towards the good. By doing good for selfish reasons, one will eventually do good for unselfish reasons. The power of good deeds will kill the evil inclination, for hearts are led by deeds.

This is why you must carefully observe everything you do, for your deeds are what lead you. Now that you know this, it is not difficult to pay great attention to the mitzvah in order to recall the miracles of Egypt, which are a great part of our Torah. If we constantly occupy ourselves with this, it will make a good impression on us, just as we have said.

The Foundations of Wisdom

On this basis, Rabbi Shemuel Rozovsky Zatzal, the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevezh, dealt with a practical subject:

“Sometimes a ben Torah studies Torah with great diligence for an entire study session, and then goes to the cafeteria to eat. During that time, all the accomplishments that he made while studying may be swallowed by an abyss if he does not act properly, for there is a specific way to act when eating. Among the laws concerning proper behavior, there are several Halachot that we have to pay attention to, for otherwise everything may be lost.”

According to the words of Sefer HaChinuch, which were cited above regarding the mitzvah, “You shall not break a bone in it,” one of the reasons for this mitzvah is that Jews are the sons of king and nobles, and it is not fitting for them to break bones like dogs.

According to this reasoning, even if the body of the prohibition was only observed during the time of the Temple with regards to the Passover offering, its message remains viable for all time. This is because every Jew is responsible for conducting himself with a high degree of dignity, as befits the son of the king. This is a duty that pertains

to all aspects of life, to sleeping and awaking, to keeping quiet and to speaking, to sitting and to walking. Each thing has a proper time and place, and each action has significance. If we act incorrectly, this comes back to the definition given in Sefer HaChinuch: “Dragging bones like a dog.” Such behavior represents the abyss into which all spirituality is engulfed.

– Zichron Shemuel

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA

Nothing to Fear

It is written, “The L-RD said to Moses, ‘Come to Pharaoh’ ” (Exodus 10:1).

The Zohar states, “Why is it written here: ‘Bo [come] to Pharaoh’? Should it not have said, ‘Lech [go]’? It is to indicate that the Holy One, blessed be He, guided Moses” (Zohar II:34a).

We need to understand something: If Moses was afraid of Pharaoh, why did Hashem not accompany him as he went to see Pharaoh to announce each plague, rather than just for the plague of locusts?

Our Sages have said, “But if you do not listen to Me [Leviticus 26:14]. What do these words mean? This is speaking only about someone who knows his Master, and yet willfully rebels against Him. Thus it is written, ‘Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter before the L-RD’ [Genesis 10:9], the expression ‘before the L-RD’ only being used for someone who recognizes G-d but intentionally rebels against Him” (Torat Kohanim, Bechukotai 2:2).

Pharaoh was among this kind, knowing his Creator and yet deliberately rebelling against Him. In fact with regards to the plague of hail, Pharaoh himself said: “The L-RD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked” (Exodus 9:27). Nevertheless, he hardened his heart and did not allow the Children of Israel to leave his country.

Our Sages have said, “Greater is the hatred with which the ignoramus hates the scholar than the hatred with which the heathens hate Israel, and their wives [hate even] more than they do. It was taught: ‘He who studied and stopped [hates the scholar] more than them all’ ” (Pesachim 49b). Pharaoh was among those who studied and stopped, for he knew that Hashem was righteous, and yet he persisted in his wicked attitude.

Exactly when did Pharaoh say, “The L-RD is righteous”? During the plague of hail. Therefore after the plague, when G-d told Moses, “Come to Pharaoh,” Moses was afraid and began to worry because Pharaoh, more than anyone else, belonged to the category of those who studied and stopped. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moses to “come to Pharaoh,” i.e., you and I shall go and see him together, and you will have nothing to fear.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

RABBI RAPHAEL PINTO

The tzaddik Rabbi Raphael Pinto Zatzal, the young son of the saintly Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan, was among the great Torah scholars who lived in Morocco. He conducted himself with humility throughout his life, dressing like an ordinary individual. His prayers pierced the heavens, and in his prayers he resembled a servant who was beseeching his master. All the great rabbis of Morocco recognized his authority and respected his words and decrees.

Rabbi Raphael was known to be a very generous man. He acted in life as in his prayers, by assisting those in need of help. Hence he was respected and accepted by all Jews, as well as by Moroccan Arabs who frequented his home to receive charity.

It is said that Rabbi Raphael once entered the shop of a Jewish fabric merchant and told him and his friend, who was with him: "Listen carefully. You have to give a certain amount of tzeddakah so that Hashem will annul all kinds of severe decrees enacted against you, misfortunes that are to come your way, and enact favorable decrees for you."

Upon hearing this, the merchant flew into a rage. He turned towards Rabbi Raphael and said, "We've already heard about your stories of money and decrees. I don't have any money to give you." Rabbi Raphael looked at him and said, "It's a pity. I wanted to help you, but you rejected my help. You are going to come and look for me."

At that point a group of Arabs entered the shop to purchase some fabric, but eventually left without buying anything. When they had gone, the merchant discovered that his briefcase, which contained 2,000 francs, was missing. He assumed that this last group had stolen it. Although he did not know what to do, the merchant immediately realized that this had happened because of what Rabbi Raphael Pinto had said.

The merchant quickly left his store and went to look for Rabbi Raphael. When he saw the merchant, Rabbi Raphael said to him: "Your briefcase was stolen because you didn't want to give tzeddakah. If you had given tzeddakah, I would have saved you from this theft." When the merchant asked Rabbi Raphael for forgiveness, he replied: "I forgive you, but because you shamed me, I don't know if my father Rabbi Haim Pinto will forgive you." The merchant again asked for forgiveness, adding: "If you truly forgive me, then your father the saintly Rabbi Haim will also forgive me."

Following his request for forgiveness, Rabbi Raphael told the merchant: "From now on, if a poor person comes to you, give him some tzeddakah. It is impossible to know what may happen, and King Solomon said that tzeddakah saves from death."

The Sanctification of G-d's Name Before Non-Jews

Hania Moyal, the son of Rav Avraham Moyal of France, recounted an amazing story regarding the holiness of Rabbi Raphael Pinto. One day, Rabbi Raphael went to see the head of the Ayit Izmil bus company, who was a non-Jew, and said to him: "Since you are a good friend of Jews and you like them, I am giving you my blessing today: G-d will perform a miracle for you." However the man began to ridicule Rabbi Raphael, even asking him to leave his office.

Rabbi Raphael departed, and this non-Jew took his car and left. All of a sudden, he collided with a large truck, an accident that completely demolished his car. Nevertheless he emerged safe and sound. Remembering the words of the Rav, this non-Jew began to look for him. When he found Rabbi Raphael, he kissed his hand and said: "From now on, come see me every Friday [Rabbi Raphael would distribute tzeddakah to the poor on Friday in honor of Shabbat] and from the company coffers

I will give you a good deal of money for tzeddakah." On that day, the Name of Hashem was sanctified in the world.

For the Sanctification of the Name

Ten years before leaving this world, Rabbi Raphael stopped leaving his home. Many people from around the world came to see him in order to receive a blessing for all kinds of things, since he was famous as a kabbalist who could work miracles. In fact in him the saying was fulfilled, "The tzaddik decrees and the Holy One, blessed be He, executes." His blessings never went unfulfilled.

A man by the name of Mr. Siboni was among Rabbi Raphael's acquaintances. Almost every Saturday night, he would go to Rabbi Raphael's home in order to hear Havdalah.

On the last Saturday night of Rabbi Raphael's life, Mr. Siboni went to the Rav's home as he normally would. Yet when the Rav took the cup for Havdalah, he burst into tears and could not stop crying.

Everyone around the table was surprised by this. What was happening? He answered them, "I am crying because I never had children. It is very painful for me to be unable to die like everyone else. I am consoled by the fact that I will serve as an atonement for the Jewish people."

Everyone present began to console him with sincere, heartfelt words. Rabbi Raphael accepted their consolation, recited Havdalah, and then gave his blessing to the entire holy group that was in his home, one by one.

Rabbi Raphael's prophesy came true that very same week. On Shevat 12, 5740, assassins entered his home and murdered him as he lay in bed. May Hashem avenge his blood.

News of Rabbi Raphael's tragic passing spread around the world. It also reached the ears of his brother, the holy Rabbi Meir Pinto Zatzal. Thousands of people traveled to Casablanca to participate in the funeral of the tzaddik.

Our teacher, Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita, adds: "I had the chance of being with my uncle, the saintly Rabbi Meir Pinto, during the last month of his life, and I merited to close his eyes. The last night before his death, he summoned me and said: 'Do you see what I see?' When I told him that I didn't, he was surprised.

"At that point I asked him to tell me who had murdered his brother Rabbi Raphael. He said that he didn't want to reveal the answer, and that it was only when Shema would be recited by his bedside as he was dying that he would reveal it, which is what happened. Likewise, a few hours before his death, he gave me his blessing that I would get married that year, which is what happened. He also told me great secrets regarding the sanctity of our ancestors.

"I arranged for his burial, acquiring a plot of land in which he would be laid to rest near his brother, the tzaddik Rabbi Raphael, in Casablanca. We mourn those who have passed away, those whom we will never see again."

The tzaddik merited that a yeshiva was established in his honor, a yeshiva that our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto opened in England. Likewise our teacher wrote Kerem David for the elevation of the souls of these sanctified and pure brothers, Rabbi Raphael and Rabbi Meir, who were separated neither in life nor in death (Kerem: Kevod Raphael Meir).

May their merit protect us and all Israel. Amen.