



SHABBAT HAGADOL: LEAVING THE CURRENT EXILE

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Even in Cases of Tremendous Loss

Even if accustoming ourselves to not speaking ill of a Jew will lead to a tremendous financial loss – for example, if we find ourselves under the authority of completely impious people who, when they see someone whose mouth is not as open as their own, consider him a fool and may even fire him, with the result being that he will have nothing with which to feed his family – even then it is forbidden. As with all other prohibitions, we are obligated to surrender all our money in order not to transgress it.

– Chafetz Chaim

The Tur (Orach Chaim 430) states that the Shabbat preceding Passover is called Shabbat HaGadol (“Great Sabbath”) because it was on this day that a great miracle was performed for us in Egypt. This was the day on which we had to take a lamb, tie it up, etc. Nissan 10 was a Shabbat, and the Children of Israel took a lamb for the Passover offering and attached it to their bedpost. The Egyptians asked why, and we told them that it was for making the Passover offering, as Hashem commanded us. They grinded their teeth on the thought that we were going to slaughter their gods, and that they could not do a thing about it. It is on account of this miracle that the day is known as Shabbat HaGadol.

The Beit Yosef states, “It would seem, by this reasoning, there should have been four ‘great’ days in recollection of this miracle, since they attached a lamb to their bedpost for four days.” He replies by saying that the main part of the miracle occurred at the beginning, during the first day, for that was when the anger of the Egyptians was at its height. Once the first day had passed, once they had endured that, it was done.

We need to ask why the Children of Israel received this order precisely for Nissan 10, which was a Shabbat. Furthermore, why did they need to attach a lamb to their bedpost for exactly four days? Would a single day not have sufficed?

In response, we may say that the main reason for attaching the lamb was to remove the Children of Israel from idolatry, into which they had sunk, in order to attach them to the Ten Commandments. Hence they were commanded to attach a lamb to their bedpost on Nissan 10, which was a Shabbat, telling them by allusion: Since on Shabbat you are called partners of the Holy One, blessed be He, if you observe Shabbat I will give you the Ten Commandments, in which Shabbat is mentioned. Furthermore, if you leave the lamb attached to the bedpost for four days, without fearing the Egyptians, you will also merit for Moshe to be the fourth leg of the Divine Chariot, in addition to the Patriarchs – Avraham being the first, Isaac the second, and Jacob the third – all on condition that you observe Shabbat.

Like Bringing All the Offerings in the World

The book Zecher LeDavid cites the Mikdash Melech in asking why we say “Shabbat HaGadol” rather than “Shabbat Gadol.” He answers by noting that the initials of “Shabbat HaGadol” form the word seh (“lamb”), while its last letters form the word tal (“dew”). Now the numerical value of tal is 430, alluding to the fact that this Shabbat ended the 430 years of the Children of Israel’s servitude. Thus Hashem commanded that the lamb be attached precisely on that Shabbat, thereby demonstrating that the people were emerging from idolatry in order to serve Hashem.

If so, asks the Zecher LeDavid, then why today, when we are in exile, do we not observe another Shabbat HaGadol to recall the miracle that the Egyptians did not kill us for having attached lambs to our bedposts, and that we became partners of the Holy One, blessed be He? All we do on this Shabbat is teach Torah!

In my humble opinion, we may say that the lamb which was attached to their bedpost was later brought as the Passover offering. Therefore, given that today we are in exile, all we have left to connect us to the Holy One, blessed be He, is the study of Torah. Since we do not bring the Passover offering today, we

publicly study the laws of Passover at that time. By engaging in this study, we are considered to have brought the Passover offering, as it is written: “Whoever puts an effort into learning Torah, it is as if he has brought all the offerings in the world before Hashem” (Zohar III:159a).

Remembering the Exodus From Egypt Every Day

All this explains why we received the order to remember the exodus from Egypt every day. Nevertheless, why is there a special mitzvah to speak about the exodus from Egypt on Passover as much as possible during the entire night, since we have already received the commandment to mention it every day? What do we need to add on the night of Passover?

A man must constantly remember the exodus from Egypt every day in order to annul the idolatry that is within him, as well as to become a vessel that is prepared to receive the Torah. Since a person has so many daily occupations and struggles that can make him forget Hashem, by the very fact of remembering the exodus from Egypt each day, he will remember that the goal of the Exodus was to receive the Torah, and he will therefore strengthen himself in the study of Torah.

This is why we received the commandment to attach the lamb on Shabbat itself. In fact the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to bring man back, while he was still in Egypt, to the same level of perfection that he had upon his creation on the eve of Shabbat. This was in order for him to sense the great responsibility he has to the world through his observance of Shabbat, and to publicly announce that whoever takes pleasure in Shabbat merits tremendous good in this world.

Hence this Shabbat is called “Shabbat HaGadol,” in order to teach us that it is very important, even more important than the first Shabbat that Adam observed. In fact Adam was created on a Friday, and he sinned on the same day (Sanhedrin 38a). He therefore entered Shabbat having committed a sin. Such was not the case with the Children of Israel, for by the merit of their faith in the Creator of the world while they were in Egypt, He protected them from the Egyptians, who did not harm them.

Today, when there are numerous evils in the world, many people ask me why Hashem allows such hardship to exist. I answer this by saying that the Holy One, blessed be He, created a very beautiful world. It is men, however, who have brought great hardship upon the world. Instead of being content with little and spending most of their time studying Torah and thereby meriting a good and happy life, a person will spend his time and energy trying to earn more and more money, without ever asking himself what his responsibility is in this world, nor will he pay attention to his family. He is therefore responsible for the fact that his life is no longer a life. Come the night of Passover, when there is a commandment to slaughter a lamb and place its blood on the doorposts and the lintel, the Holy One, blessed be He, wants to tell us by allusion: Until today you have worshiped the lamb, which is the idol of the Egyptians, and today you have annulled idolatry and used the lamb to bring the Passover offering. Likewise until today you have used money for the needs of idolatry, and starting today you will use money to purchase a mezuzah, tefillin, and perform mitzvot.

AT THE SOURCE

Most Holy?

It is written, "This is the law of the guilt-offering; it is most holy" (Vayikra 7:1).

If someone thinks that he is flawless and free of all sin, it means that he has not taken upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In his book *Nezer Yosef*, Rabbi Yosef Lalzer Shlita states that this is alluded to in the verse: "This is the law of the guilt-offering." What causes a man to sin and become guilty (ashem)? It is the thought that he is "most holy" – the notion that he is completely righteous – which leads him to sin.

Singular and Plural

It is written, "This is the law of the burnt-offering, the meal-offering, the sin-offering, the guilt-offering, the inauguration-offerings, and the peace-offerings" (Vayikra 7:37).

This verse is surprising, for it begins with the singular ("the burnt-offering, the meal-offering, the sin-offering, the guilt-offering"), but ends with the plural ("the inauguration-offerings, and the peace-offerings").

All this, writes Rabbi Yosef Karo Zatzal in his book *Ohr Tzaddik*, is because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not want His people Israel to sin. He therefore mentions the expiatory offerings (the burnt-, meal-, sin-, and guilt-offerings) in the singular, desiring that a person not sin and thus have no reason to bring an offering.

Yet in regards to the inauguration and peace-offerings, it would be wonderful for them to be constantly brought, thereby bringing Hashem satisfaction: "A pleasing odor to Hashem." These offerings are mentioned in the plural, with the hope that they will be brought in abundance in order to fulfill Hashem's will.

One Sash Fits All

It is written, "He girded them with a sash and wrapped turbans upon them" (Vayikra 8:13).

This is surprising: Why is the sash mentioned in the singular, while the turban is mentioned in the plural? In his book *Meshech Chochma*, Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen Zatzal of Dvinsk says that this is because, as the Rambam explains (*Hilchot Klei HaMikdash* 8:9), the sash was 32 cubits long and 23 inches wide. Therefore all the sashes had the same dimensions. Such was not the case for the turbans and other priestly garments, which were made to measure for each individual priest.

This is why the verse mentions the sash in the singular, for there was only one size of sash, and it was used for all the priests. Yet in regards to the turbans, they were made in various sizes according to the requirements of each individual priest.

By Allusion

Clay and Copper

It is written, "A clay vessel in which it was cooked yishaver [shall be broken]" (Vayikra 6:21).

For a person who prays with a broken and contrite heart, this contains an allusion that his prayer will be heard. The term *yishaver* ("shall be broken") is formed by the initials of the expression *Raoui SheHashem Yasse Bakashato* (he merits Hashem answering his prayer). The verse continues by stating, "And if in a copper vessel" – if a person prays with an arrogant heart, just as copper is resistant – then "it should be purged and rinsed in water." That is, he must pray with an overflowing heart, just as water flows from higher to lower.

– Avnei HaShoham

Truth and Honesty

It is written, "For seven days yemalei et yedchem [he shall fill your hands]" (Vayikra 8:33).

The last letters of the expression *yemalei et yedchem* form the word *emet*.

This tells us by allusion that by conducting our financial transactions with truth and honesty, our hands will be filled. As the Gemara states: *Aleph – emet* ("truth"), *beit – beracha* ("blessing"), and so on (see *Shabbat* 104a). In other words, by conducting ourselves according to truth and honesty, we will merit blessings.

– Yoshia Tzion

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA A TEACHING OF THE GAON AND TZADDIK RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA

The Joy of a Jew

One of my sons mentioned two reasons for why Hashem commanded the bringing of offerings.

The first is in order to nourish the priests, who ate the meat of the offerings. The second comes from the fact that because a person must bring offerings for his sins – and animal are very costly – he will not be so quick to sin because doing so will entail a financial loss. Before sinning, he will think about the fact that sinning will obligate him to bring an offering that will be expensive, and this will distance him from sin.

I replied that these two reasons contradict one another, for if a person is careful to distance himself from sin, he will not bring any offerings, and the priests will not have anything to eat! If one says that the priests would eat from the voluntary offerings and thank-offerings, does a person bring a thank-offering every day? He only brings one when he has been saved from a misfortune.

That said, when a person distances himself from sin, his heart will open and overflow with joy because he is living a life of holiness, a life separated from sin. He will then thank Hashem every day, and out of this joy he will bring many thank-offerings and sacrifices to Hashem, Who enables him to depart from sin. It is from these offerings that the priests will nourish themselves.

Thus King David said, "A psalms of thanksgiving. Hariou [Call out] to Hashem, all the earth. Serve Hashem in joy; come before Him with joyous song. ... Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise" (*Tehillim* 100:1-4). What connection is there between serving Hashem in joy and the thank-offerings? From the fact that a man is separated from sin, the term *hariou* can be understood as being from the root of *ra* ("evil"). That is, from the fact that materiality is evil in the eyes of man and he distances himself from it, he will instantly attain joy. Now once joy has entered him, he will immediately go to the Temple in order to bring a thank-offering to Hashem for having enabled him to depart from sin and to serve Him in joy.

CONCERNING THE PARSHA

SHABBAT HAGADOL

Torah literature mentions several reasons for why this Shabbat is called “Shabbat HaGadol.” Here are just a few:

Some write that since there is no special Torah reading on this Shabbat, only a special haftarah (contrary to what we read for the Four Parshiot), and that the verse which ends this haftarah is the penultimate verse in Malachi, the last book in the section of the Prophets: “Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of hagadol [the great] and awesome day of Hashem” (Malachi 3: 23), the Shabbat in which we read this verse, which contains the term hagadol, is therefore called Shabbat HaGadol.

Some explain that this Shabbat is called Shabbat HaGadol because the greatest (gadol) member of the community, meaning the Rav, gives a lengthy course dealing with the issues and laws of Passover. In general, this lasts a very long time, until the middle of the day, which is why this Shabbat seems great and long.

The book of the Maharil (Minhagim) recounts that the Mahari Segal spoke of Shabbat HaGadol in 5187, the year in which he was summoned to the Heavenly yeshiva during the month of Elul, may his merit protect us all. In his words we find a reason for why this Shabbat is called Shabbat HaGadol, namely for the same reason that Yom Kippur is called tzoma rabba (“the great fast”), for on Yom Kippur we prolong our prayers and supplications. Likewise we give lengthy discourses on Shabbat HaGadol, for the laws of Passover are numerous and important.

In Memory of the Miracle of the Lambs

Rashi connects the expression “Shabbat HaGadol” to the Shabbat preceding the exodus from Egypt. The Children of Israel received the order to take a lamb without blemish on the 10th of Nissan. They were to keep it until the 14th of the month and bring it as a Passover offering. Now the 10th of Nissan on that year was a Shabbat, and the Egyptians tried to harm them, but could not. In memory of this great miracle, that Shabbat was called “HaGadol.”

This is what Sefer HaPardes states, attributed to Rashi:

We usually call the Shabbat preceding Passover “Shabbat HaGadol,” not because we know how it is greater than every other Shabbat of the year, but because they left Egypt on a Thursday (as it is written in Seder Olam) during the month of Nissan, and they took the Passover offering on the 10th of the month, which was Shabbat. The Children of Israel thought, “Will we slaughter their idol before their eyes, and they will not stone us?”

The Holy One, blessed be He, answered them: “Now you will see the miracle that I will do for you.” They each took their offering and kept it until the 14th. When the Egyptians saw this, they wanted to rise up and take vengeance on them. However their innards were like fire, and they were overcome by pain and grave diseases that prevented them from harming the Children of Israel. Hence the Shabbat preceding Passover is called Shabbat HaGadol on account of the miracles that were performed for Israel, according to Rabbi Avraham Zatzal.

On tractate Shabbat 87b (the passage which begins with “that day was a Thursday”), Tosaphot calculate that they slaughtered the Passover offering on a Wednesday. Hence they took it on the preceding Shabbat, which was the 10th of the month. It is therefore called Shabbat HaGadol, for on that day a great miracle was performed for them. As the Midrash states, when they went to take their offering, on that very same Shabbat the firstborn of Egypt gathered against the Children of Israel and asked them what they were doing. They replied, “This is a Passover offering for Hashem, for Him to kill the firstborn of Egypt.” The firstborn of Egypt then asked their fathers and Pharaoh to release the Children of Israel, but they refused. Thus the firstborn declared war against them, and many were killed. This is the meaning of the verse, “Who struck Egypt through its firstborn” (Tehillim 136:10).

Some say that it is called Shabbat HaGadol on account of the Ashkenazi custom to prepare for the Haggadah by reading a section from it (from avadim until lechapher al kol avonoteinu) on Shabbat. It was therefore called Shabbat Haggadah, an expression used for generations to designate Shabbat HaGadol. The Rabia (Pesachim 425) mentions another custom: “Children usually read the Haggadah in advance on Shabbat HaGadol. This is also mentioned in the Seder of Rav Amram. They seem to do this in order to familiarize themselves with the text, making it easier for them to understand things on Passover and to ask questions.”

Like a Child Who Has Grown

When a child comes under the yoke of the mitzvot, he is deemed an adult. The first mitzvah that the Children of Israel received was, “On the tenth day of this month they shall take every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house” (Shemot 12:3). The Jewish people became “an adult who performs mitzvot because he is commanded to.” This is what Rabbi David ben Yosef Abudaram stated in his book *The Meaning of the Blessings and Prayers*: It is called Shabbat HaGadol because it was the first Shabbat that the Children of Israel came under the yoke of the mitzvot.

The Great on Account of the Small

Some explain that it is called Shabbat HaGadol because it is followed by Passover, which itself is called, according to the tradition of the Sages, “Shabbat.” Thus we read, “You shall count from the next day after the Shabbat” (Vayikra 23:15). In response to the Sadducees – who denied the tradition of the Sages and decided that “the next day after the Shabbat” referred to a literal Shabbat – we call the Shabbat that precedes Passover “Shabbat HaGadol.” This is done in order to point out that an extra Shabbat comes afterwards, namely “Shabbat HaKatan.”

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

RABBI CHALOM MESSAS

Radiating like a brilliant stone set among jewels, which illuminates its surroundings with a beautiful light, was the magnificent and illustrious Rav of Jerusalem, the gaon Rabbi Chalom Messas Zatzal. Besides his extraordinary gifts in Torah and teaching, he was known for his immense intelligence and his great clarity and purity of mind. Yet the greatest of his lofty traits was his humility. From his home and office, there emerged a light that illuminated the holy city like a blazing torch for a quarter of a century.

For 25 years, Rabbi Chalom Messas reigned over Jerusalem and carried the responsibility of the holy city upon his shoulders. During the entire time that he served as the Rav of Jerusalem, his home was a beacon for the inhabitants of Zion. He rendered halachic decisions on numerous issues, and his name was known by all. His fine character traits and great deeds for both the community and individuals attracted, as if by magic, the love of all the residents of the country for him.

During the years that he served as Rav, Rabbi Shalom imprinted the seal of his enthusiastic personality upon the holy city by means of his humility, modesty, and remarkably simple and principled way of life. Rabbi Shalom was a symbol and an example for his flock, and although he lived in Jerusalem, his reputation preceded him throughout the Diaspora.

Descend Towards the People

We shall cite an incident that will enable us to clearly see his great stature, an incident that Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita described during the eulogy that he gave at his funeral:

“A few years ago, I was in Morocco with my entire family for Passover, and we were staying at the home of Rabbi Yehoshua Dahan. One day during Chol HaMoed, I received a telephone call from France. It was from the great Rav, the tzaddik and friend of the Pinto family, the gaon Rabbi Chalom Messas, the Rosh Av Beit Din of Jerusalem. He wanted to speak with me urgently.

“I took the telephone and began by greeting Rabbi Chalom Messas. The Rav told me that he wanted a blessing for his wife, who was ill and scheduled to undergo an operation on the following day. I immediately expressed my great surprise to the Rav, for I was a small man, whereas he was a great Rav! Who was I to give him a blessing?

“However Rav Messas said to me, ‘I am who I am, but you have the great merit of your ancestors. We all know who Rabbi Haim Pinto was. That’s why I want you to awaken Heaven’s compassion for my wife. We believe in the merit of Rabbi Haim Pinto, in the merit of your holy ancestors, which is why I’m asking you to awaken the merit of your ancestors and to pray for the complete healing of my wife.’

“I replied, ‘Since the Rav is greater and older than me, and he has nevertheless negated himself before me, it means that he is much greater than me. Therefore, because the Rav is addressing someone who is small, Hashem will provide his wife with an immediate healing.’

“I said something else to the Rav: ‘I remember what Hashem told Moshe: “Descend towards the people” – a descent required for an ascent. Likewise the Rav is descending from his greatness and asking for things from people who are smaller than him. By this merit, Hashem will help you.’

“Afterwards, Rabbi Yehoshua told me that he knew that Rav Messas’ wife was ill. However a great miracle had occurred. She underwent the operation on the following day, but to their great surprise the doctors

found nothing wrong with her, even though all prior tests had clearly shown that she was gravely ill. At that point everyone realized that her healing had occurred by the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto.”

His Life

Rabbi Chalom Messas was born in Meknes, Morocco on Shevat 22, 5668 to the gaon Rabbi Maimon Zatzal, the author of *Otzrot Shamayim*.

In his youth, Rabbi Shalom studied Torah and served the Torah scholars of Israel in that generation. While still young, he was known as being extremely well-versed in the Talmud and Halachah, and in short time he was considered a great posek. His main teacher in Talmud and the poskim was the great gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Assabag Zatzal, whom the Rav would frequently mention with love and reverence.

In Morocco, Rabbi Shalom established the Dovev Siftei Yeshenim company, whose aim was the publication of manuscripts from great Moroccan Jewish figures. He did this because of the tremendous pain he experienced in seeing the manuscripts of great rabbis being abandoned, with no one doing anything about them. In 5704, after having overcome typhus, Rabbi Shalom took it upon himself – just as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had done upon emerging from a cave – to undertake important measures for the good of the community. He therefore established, along with his teachers and friends, and through great personal effort, the Keter Torah yeshiva in Meknes. Both materially and spiritually, he was the living embodiment of the yeshiva, which trained rabbis and talmidei chachamim.

It was in Meknes that he also directed the Talmud Torah, a school that enrolled more than 2,000 students. The Rav, who was known for his gentle manners, was loved and respected by his students and the leaders of the community.

In 5707, he was examined according to the laws of the Moroccan state by Rabbi Shaoul ibn Danan (the Chief Rabbi of Morocco and the Av Beit Din of the appeals court, as well as the author of *Hagam Shaoul*) to become the dayan of Casablanca. In 5720, at the age of 52, Rabbi Chalom Messas became the Chief Rabbi and Rosh Av Beit Din of Casablanca, and later of all Morocco.

In 5734, his cousin the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Yosef Messas Zatzal, the Chief Rabbi of Haifa, passed away and Rabbi Shalom was later offered the position. Due to pressure from individuals such as the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson Zatzal), he declined the offer. Afterwards, however, discussions began on bringing him to Eretz Israel.

In 5738, Rabbi Chalom Messas arrived in Jerusalem to become its Chief Rabbi. The gaon Rabbi Ovadia Yosef Shlita played an active role in bringing him from Morocco to Jerusalem, deeply aware of his greatness and ability to unite such diverse communities as those of Jerusalem. The main condition that Rabbi Chalom Messas had for accepting the position was that his appointment should not arouse any strife.

In Nissan of the year 5763, on Shabbat HaGadol, Rabbi Chalom Messas passed away at his home. Although he had reached a very advanced age, being 95 years old, he still retained complete clarity of mind. May his memory be a blessing.