



THE PATH TO FOLLOW Vayechi • No 370 A Hevrat Pinto Publication

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 Teveth 11th, 5771 • December 18th 2010

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THE HERITAGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS JOSEPH (by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita)

It is written, “Joseph said to his brothers: ‘I am about to die, but G-d will surely visit you and bring you out of this land to the land that He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob’ ” (*Bereshith* 50:24). In the Midrash the Sages say, “As Joseph was about to leave this world, he summoned his sons and said to them: ‘I am leaving this world, and I want to share my entire fortune with you.’ At that point he took out seven *selayim* [coins] from his bosom.”

This is absolutely amazing, for the Gemara states: “Joseph hid three treasures in Egypt: One was revealed to Korach, one to Antoninus the son of Severus, and the third is stored up for the *tzaddikim* in the future” (*Pesachim* 119a). Therefore what reason did Joseph have to bequeath but seven *selayim* to his sons?

Hashem Grants Success to Those Who Fear Him

The Sages have taught, “At the time of a man’s passing from this world, neither silver, gold, precious stones, nor pearls accompany him, but only Torah [learning] and good deeds, as it is stated: ‘It will guide you when you walk, it will watch over you when you lie down, and it shall speak to you when you awake’ [*Mishlei* 6:22]. ‘It will guide you when you walk’ – in this world; ‘it will watch over you when you lie down’ – in the grave; ‘and it shall speak to you when you awake’ – in the World to Come” (*Pirkei Avoth* 6:9).

On the verse, “Joseph gathered up all the money” (*Bereshith* 47:14), our teacher the Ramban explains: “Scripture relates this and goes on to complete the subject in this entire section in order to demonstrate Joseph’s greatness in wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.... [It shows] that he was a faithful man because he brought all the money into Pharaoh’s house and did

not accumulate for himself treasures of money and secret hiding places for wealth in the land of Egypt, nor did he send it to Canaan. Instead, he gave all the money to the king who trusted him, and he purchased land for him and even the bodies of the Egyptians. In doing so, he found favor among the people, for it is G-d Who causes those who fear Him to prosper.”

Consequently, why did Joseph not take anything from among all this wealth for himself or his children? It is because he knew that a person does not come into this world for money, but rather to study Torah and fulfill *mitzvot*. When he leaves this world, he takes none of the wealth that he accumulated in life. On the verse, “Neither has he power over the day of death” (*Kohelet* 8:8), the Sages teach: “A man cannot say to the Angel of Death, ‘Wait for me until I settle my accounts, and then I will come’ ” (*Kohelet Rabba* 8:11). This is why Joseph did not hide any of this money, but transferred it to Pharaoh and his kingdom. Joseph did all this because he wanted to teach his children the tremendous importance of not working to earn money, but rather to acquire *mitzvot* and good deeds, which we will bring with us in the World to Come.

We can now understand why Joseph bequeathed such a small amount as seven *selayim* to his sons: Seven corresponds to the seventy years of man’s life, and the *selayim* are a reminder not to forget that the fate of all men is to be buried under a *sela* (stone), taking nothing with them but *mitzvot* and good deeds. Before these, the *sela* cannot resist, as it is written: “Like a hammer that breaks the rock (*sela*) in pieces” (*Jeremiah* 23:29). Even if a man were to possess all the silver and gold in the world, they would be unable to resist the stone or death, and once a person dies, his wealth will go to others.

He Did Not Grow Proud

Furthermore, Joseph did not grow proud despite being one of the ten men who ruled from one end of the world to the other. As the Sages say, “The third king was Joseph, who ruled from one end of the world to the other, as it is said: ‘All the earth came to Egypt to Joseph’ [*Bereshith* 41:57]. It is not written ‘came from Egypt’ but ‘came to Egypt,’ for they brought their tribute and their gifts to Joseph in order to purchase [grain]. For 40 years he was second to the king, and for 40 years he was king alone, as it is said: ‘A new king arose over Egypt’ [*Shemot* 1:8]” (*Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer* 10). The Sages have also taught, “Joseph reigned from one end of the earth to the other, as it is written: ‘Joseph was the governor over the land; he was the one selling to all the peoples of the earth’ [*Bereshith* 42:6]” (*Midrash Asseret Melachim*).

Whatever the case, Joseph’s heart did not grow proud, nor did he feel superior to his brothers because he was a ruler. He knew that the Holy One, blessed be He, had sent him into this world in order to save Israel, as he himself said: “For G-d sent me ahead of you to be a provider” (*Bereshith* 45:5). He also said, “It was not you who sent me here, but G-d. He has made me father to Pharaoh, master of his entire household, and ruler throughout the entire land of Egypt. Hurry, go up to my father and say to him: ‘So says your son Joseph: G-d has made me master of all Egypt’ ” (vv. 8-9). He was careful to say, “G-d has made me” in order to tell his brothers that it was for this reason that his soul descended into this world. He wanted them to know that he had not grown proud as a result of becoming a ruler, thereby fulfilling the words: “So that his heart does not feel superior to his brothers” (*Devarim* 17:20). After the

death of their father Jacob, Joseph also told them: "Although you intended me harm, G-d intended it for good, in order to do as this day, to keep a numerous people alive" (*Bereshith* 50:20). Targum Yonatan translates this to mean that as long as Jacob was alive, his sons ate with him and sat before him according to age. Joseph sat at the head of them all, for that is what Jacob wanted. Now that their father was dead, and despite the fact that the brothers asked Joseph to sit at the head of the table, he did not accept. Instead, he did not eat with his brothers out of respect for them. They, however, believed that it was because he detested them. Joseph therefore told them, "Not so. I cannot take a seat at the head of the table, and I have no desire to show that I am greater than you. I was only made a ruler over you to keep a numerous people alive."

Since royalty did not go to his head, he wanted to teach this to his sons. Furthermore, he kept none of the money that he had collected for Pharaoh. Instead he brought it all to Pharaoh in order to teach us that gold, silver, and precious stones do not accompany man when he leaves this world, but only Torah study and good deeds.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA FROM THE TEACHINGS OF TZADDIK RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA

Deliverance Depends on the Unity of Israel

It is written, "Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying: 'G-d will surely visit you, and you shall bring up my bones from here'" (*Bereshith* 50:25).

Why did Joseph make his brothers swear to bring up his bones, rather than making his own sons swear to it? Furthermore, why did he believe that he should tell them that the Holy One, blessed be He, would certainly visit them and return them to Eretz Israel? They knew perfectly well that G-d would deliver them, just as He told Abraham: "Afterwards they will leave with great wealth" (*Bereshith* 15:14).

According to the plain meaning of the text, Joseph was afraid that his brothers still secretly hated him and would not take his bones back with them to Eretz Israel. He also feared that they would prevent his sons from doing so. Hence Joseph reminded them of their coming deliverance from Egypt. We have already explained on several occasions that Israel is delivered when they are united. Joseph therefore suggested that they should be united with him and take his bones with them.

According to this, we may also understand that Joseph made his brothers swear to bring up his bones because he feared that otherwise they would not. As for his sons, Joseph had no need to make them swear to it, for they would obviously take his bones with them to Eretz Israel.

As such we may explain why Joseph used the redundant expression *pakod yifkod* ("will surely visit you"). Just as he had told Pharaoh, "As for the repetition of the dream to Pharaoh, two times, it is because the matter stands ready before G-d, and G-d is hastening to accomplish it" (*Bereshith* 41:32), likewise he was now telling his brothers that if they were united, G-d would hasten their deliverance.

TRUE STORY THE COMPLAINTS OF THE SHECHINA

It is written, "He said, 'Swear to me,' and he swore to him. Israel bowed towards the head of the bed" (*Bereshith* 47:31).

Rashi states, "He turned around to the side of the *Shechinah*. From here [the Sages] deduced that the *Shechinah* is at the head of a sick person."

The Maggid of Kelm *Zatzal* would travel to Jewish towns and village in order to encourage Torah observance. He once came to a certain town, and there the leaders of the community told him that the town's Jewish hospital was about to close, for the wealthy members of the community no longer wanted to donate money to maintain it.

What did the Maggid do? Between *Mincha* and *Ma'ariv*, when all the residents of the community were in synagogue to listen to the sermon of the famous Maggid, he ascended the podium, turned to the public, and said: "My friends, I would like to tell you about something that once happened. As you know, my dear Jews, the holy *Shechinah* is found at the head of a sick person's bed. As the Sages tell us in regards to the verse on Jacob, 'He said, "Swear to me," and he swore to him. Israel bowed towards the head of the bed' – he turned towards the *Shechinah*, from which they concluded that the *Shechinah* is found at the head of the sick person's bed. One day, the *Shechinah* came before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said: 'Sovereign of the universe, Master of all created beings, You always send me to poor Jews. When I come before the sick, I see that he is resting in a very small room, in a wobbly bed, and without a pillow. The poor children of this sick person are standing at the door; their feet are bare and they lack sufficient clothing. Nobody is there to care for them, and they are hungry. As for the sick person himself, he suffers bitterly in bed. He loses consciousness and becomes emaciated, and he has nothing to revive him. He does not even have a cent in his pocket to summon a doctor! He cannot even afford medicine! I no longer have the strength to bear this, to see such suffering,' says the *Shechinah*. 'I ask You, Sovereign of the universe, why do You not send me to the homes of wealthy Jews, to those who live in large and beautiful rooms, who sleep in beds with abundant pillows and covers, and who live in abundance along with their families?'

"The Sovereign of the universe answered the *Shechinah*, 'You are correct, my daughter. I am prepared to grant your request.'

"That being the case, wealthy Jews began to get sick. In fact there was not a single wealthy home without someone sick in it, and the *Shechinah* had no further reason to complain. From then on, it rested in large and luxurious rooms, as befits the holy *Shechinah*. It dwelled at the head of soft and comfortable beds, and it no longer saw the misery of the poor. When wealthy Jews realized their bitter fate, they reflected and built a special hospital for the poor. Thus if a poor person were to fall ill, he would have a special place to lay his head. He would sleep in his own clean and ventilated room, and on a soft and tidy bed. He would have a doctor nearby to heal him, he would receive the necessary medicine from a nurse, and food would be regularly given to him. All in order for the holy *Shechinah* to rest upon him."

The Maggid of Kelm continued: "Yet now, my friends, since you, the wealthy members of the community, no longer wish to donate money to the hospital, it is likely to close. The *Shechinah* will once again feel obligated to come to you, to your prosperous homes. I have the impression that this is obviously something that none of you want!"

Soon afterwards, the wealthy members of the community abundantly filled the charity box for the hospital. From then on, they remembered the "complaints" of the holy *Shechinah*, and the poor in town received dedicated medical care thanks to their generosity.

AT THE SOURCE

The Wisdom of Jacob

It is written, "He took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with him" (*Bereshith* 48:1).

Why did Joseph bring his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to visit his father Jacob only when he was told that his father was ill? Why did he not bring them to Jacob beforehand, in order for him to bless them?

The *gaon* Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer *Zatzal* answers this according to a teaching of the Sages: "As for scholars, the older they become, the more wisdom they acquire, for it is said: 'In the aged is wisdom, and in length of days understanding' [Job 12:12]. Yet for the ignorant, they become more foolish as they grow older, for it is said: 'He removes the speech of the trustworthy and takes reason away from the elders' [v.20]" (*Shabbat* 152a).

For this reason, Joseph delayed in bringing his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to his father Jacob for a blessing. He waited until his final days, until Jacob had reached the height of his wisdom, so he could give them a great blessing that befitted them. This is precisely what Jacob did in his wisdom. He crossed his arms and placed Ephraim before Manasseh, for Ephraim's descendant would be Joshua bin Nun, and he would conquer the land of Canaan and bring the Children of Israel there to inherit it, becoming famous throughout the world.

Heavy Eyes

It is written, "Israel's eyes were heavy with age" (*Bereshith* 48:10).

Is the fact that Jacob's eyes became heavy, and that he could no longer see in his old age, mentioned as a positive or negative thing?

In commenting on *Yoma* 28a, the *Ritba* explains: "It was certainly not because of Jacob's age that his eyes became heavy and he could no longer see, for it is written: 'Those who place their hope in Hashem will renew their strength' [Isaiah 40:31]. On the contrary, it was because of his incessant and habitual Torah study, which drains a person of strength, that his eyes became heavy and he could no longer see. The verse says this in order to honor Jacob, not to point out a shortcoming."

Two Brothers

It is written, "May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh" (*Bereshith* 48:20).

We find something special in the relationship between Manasseh and Ephraim. From the time of creation, there have always been disputes between two brothers, as was the case with Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau. Thus two brothers represent a symbol of jealousy and competitiveness.

Such was not the case with Manasseh and Ephraim, even though Jacob put Ephraim the younger brother first. Although Manasseh could have easily become jealous, he did not feel that jealousy and hatred of Ephraim was necessary, and the two brothers lived in complete harmony.

The book *Mikdash Mordechai* states that it is because of this characteristic that Jacob blessed them, saying that it was through them that men would bless their children with the words: "May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh." They perfected the attribute of brotherly love, becoming a symbol for everyone who desires to bless their children with a sense of fraternity and love.

Long Strides

It is written, "Naphtali is a hind let loose; he delivers beautiful words" (*Bereshith* 49:21).

How can it be said that when he runs, Naphtali is like a hind set loose? After all, the Sages have taught us that long strides diminish a man's eyesight by one part in five hundred (*Shabbat* 113b).

In his book *Tzitzim U'Ferachim*, Rabbeinu Yaakov Chaim *Zatzal* responds to this by stating that since Naphtali "delivers beautiful sayings," he would run for a *mitzvah*, such as to go pray in synagogue or to listen to words of Torah. Now for the sake a *mitzvah*, the Sages have allowed us to take long strides.

His Words

It is written, "Naphtali is a hind let loose; he delivers beautiful words" (*Bereshith* 49:21).

Rabbi Shmuel Shammai *Shlita* explains this verse allegorically:

The name "Naphtali" is formed by the same letters as *tefillin*, and the term *ayala* ("hind") is formed by the same letters as the name "Eliya." This teaches us that whoever observes the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* in accordance with the Halachah will merit seeing the face of Eliyahu HaNavi. Not only that, but he also merits what is stated at the end of the verse: "He delivers beautiful words." Everyone will take pleasure in listening to his words, and they will be accepted. Thus it is said, "The *tzaddik* decrees and the Holy One, blessed be He, executes."

The Name of Mashiach

It is written, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes" (*Bereshith* 49:10).

We find the following statement in the Gemara: "What is his [*Mashiach's*] name? The school of Rabbi Shila said, 'His name is Shiloh,' for it is written: 'Until Shiloh comes.' The school of Rabbi Yanai said, 'His name is Yinon,' for it is written: 'May his name endure forever. Before the sun, his name is *yinon*' [*Tehillim* 72:17]. The school of Rabbi Chanina maintained, 'His name is Chanina,' for it is written: 'Where I will not give you *chanina*' [Jeremiah 16:13]" (*Sanhedrin* 98b).

It is interesting to note how each school attempted to demonstrate that *Mashiach's* name was that of its Rav, or to indicate the relationship between their Rav and *Mashiach* by referring to a verse. Thus the students of Rabbi Shila said that his name was Shiloh, the students of Rabbi Yanai said that his name was Yinon, and so forth.

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Permitted in Principle

The Torah also prohibits listening to *Lashon Harah*, even if the listener has no intention of believing what he hears. However there are several differences between merely listening and believing: It is prohibited to merely listen to *Lashon Harah* only if the information has no future relevance to the listener. However if the information, given that it is true, does have some future relevance to the listener (e.g. if the listener realizes from the outset that the speaker wants to explain why so-and-so is not a trustworthy person, and the listener had been planning on entering into a business relationship or concluding a *shidduch* with him), he may in principle listen to the speaker in order to protect himself.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

THE MAGGID OF DUBNO

The *gaon* Rabbi Yaakov Krantz *Zatzal*, who became famous as the “Maggid of Dubno,” was born in the small Lithuanian town of Zhetel, near Vilna. It was there that he discovered his special abilities to influence people in an amazing and significant way by means of parables. For each issue that he was questioned about, he would reply with a parable and its lesson, giving examples by combining his parables with the *midrashim* of the Sages.

Although Rabbi Yaakov traveled through several villages and small towns in Lithuania and Poland, he remained in Dubno for a very long time, 18 years in fact. He lived during the time of the Vilna Gaon, who showed him great affection despite the fact that the Maggid never joined him in the fight against Chassidut. It is said that the Vilna Gaon asked the Maggid to preach Mussar to him as well.

Although there were many *maggidim* [preachers] at the time, the Maggid of Dubno was the greatest among them. One explanation for his success is that he never liked to give descriptions of Gehinnom, as did the other *maggidim*. He did not like to reason in excess, nor did he drag on with a subject, but instead spoke simply and was straightforward to the very end. His wisdom became an integral part of his sermons, and as such he was able to delve into the complexities of Jewish hearts, and to elevate them through Torah and *mitzvot*. Thus for example, when asked why a wealthy man donates money to people who are blind or crippled, but not to Torah scholars, he replied: “Because a wealthy man is afraid that he himself may become blind or crippled. To become a Torah scholar, however, that he is not afraid of!”

The Maggid of Dubno published no books during his lifetime, but simply had notes to remind himself of what he wanted to say. His sons would later publish these notes, which spread far and wide due to the beneficial influence of the Mussar movement, which occurred in the era following his death.

In response to a question directed at him by one of the great Torah figures of his generation, namely why he did not deliver his sermons in an ordered way – on the Torah, the Prophets, and the Midrashim – he wisely replied: “This can be compared to the difference between a wealthy man who has been invited to a lavish banquet, and a poor man who is also there. The wealthy man is among the official guests, and when he arrives the attendant loudly proclaims: ‘Welcome Reb [So-and-so].’ He is given a seat at the table and presented with dishes in the correct order: First fish, then meat, and so on.

“Such is not the case for the poor man. When he comes to the banquet, he is not among the official guests, and nobody welcomes him or asks him to take a seat at the table. He therefore remains standing and looks from a distance, hoping for people to hand him some food. One person gives him some meat, which he quickly eats, another gives him salted fish, and still another gives him cooked fish. He takes everything that people give him and eats it right away. Therefore how can he eat in the right order?”

The Maggid gently added, “The same applies to me. When a *gaon* of Israel has been invited, so to speak, to the pure table that is before Hashem, he is presented with meals in the correct order: First the written Torah – the Torah of Moshe and the prophets – and then the oral Torah, everything in its proper order. As for myself, I am poor and needy, and I hope to generously receive a few good things. Therefore when I am given an explanation on the words of Habakkuk,

I accept it with great love. When I am given an explanation of Isaiah, and then an explanation on *Parsha* Balak and then on *Parsha* Noah, I accept them all.”

Rest Assured

During his time, city merchants demonstrated a spiritual shortcoming by lending money with interest. At the first opportunity that presented itself to the Maggid, he let people know just how grave this was. One morning he entered a synagogue before *Shacharit*, and there he saw one of the wealthy members of the community fervently praying, “My G-d, the soul that You have given within me is pure.” When he came to the words, “You will restore it within me in time to come,” he began weeping bitterly. The Maggid approached him and asked, “Why are you crying over the resurrection of the dead? You should cry beforehand, regarding the words: ‘You will eventually take it from me.’” He replied, “You don’t understand my problem: I am very wealthy, I lend money with interest, and my business is thriving. The problem is that I have depraved sons, children who have gone off the *derech*. I’m afraid that after my death, they will squander my money on frivolous pursuits. I’ll have nothing left at the resurrection, and I’ll be forced to beg!”

The Maggid said to him, “Rest assured, with sons like these, and with the ‘merit’ you’ve earned by lending money with interest, you have no chance of ever being resurrected, because the sin of one who lends with interest is a sin that lingers for all time. In fact income from money loaned with interest increases with each minute of the day, even on Shabbat and festivals, and even on Yom Kippur!”

Preparing for the Wedding

The Final Redemption was a central theme of many of the Maggid’s sermons. Waiting for it filled his entire being, and he managed to inculcate a spirit of faith and anticipation for the Final Redemption in all segments of the population. He never lost focus of it even for a day, as others would.

Regarding this subject, the Maggid gave the parable of a man who traveled with his son to a wedding in a distant town. Shortly after leaving, the man’s son asked him: “Father, when will we arrive?” The man replied, “My son, you know that the town we are going to is very far away, and we have just left home. Why do you want to know when we will arrive?” When they were finally close to their destination, the father asked the carriage driver: “How much longer before we reach town?” He asked because he wanted to be dressed in his wedding garments upon their arrival. When his son heard this question, he immediately said: “But father, you told me not to ask such a question! You told me to think of something else so the journey won’t seem so long!” The man replied, “My son, we were still very far away when you asked this question, and it made no sense to think of it then. Yet now that we are close, we must know exactly when we will arrive so we can prepare ourselves and put on our splendid wedding garments.”

The lesson here is that although the Sages said we should think of other things besides the Final Redemption, they were only speaking to their generation, which was still far from it. They knew by *Ruach HaKodesh* that it was still a long time off from their generation, which is why they said that it was better to think of other things, because the wait would be too difficult. Yet for us – we who are living in the time heralding the arrival of *Mashiach* – we must prepare ourselves in order to be worthy of his coming.