

# The Path To Follow

Eikev

454

A Hevrat Pinto Publication

Under the Direction of Rabbi David H. Pinto Shlita

[www.hevratpinto.org](http://www.hevratpinto.org) | [hevratpinto@aol.com](mailto:hevratpinto@aol.com)

Editor-in-Chief: Hanania Soussan

32 rue du Plateau 75019 Paris, France • Tel: +331 48 03 53 89 • Fax: +331 42 06 00 33

Av 23<sup>rd</sup>, 5772

August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita

## To Observe Torah, You Must be Humble When Admonished

It is written, "And it will be, when [eikev] you listen to these ordinances and you observe and perform them, Hashem your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your fathers" (Devarim 7:12).

I would like to explain why the verse uses the term eikev by referring to what the wisest of men said: "Stern discipline awaits one who forsakes the path. He who hates admonishment will die" (Mishlei 15:10). Rabbeinu Yona explains: "Your sin becomes compounded if you are not moved by what those who admonish you say, for they would have warned you, but you hardened your heart and did not take heed. As it is said, 'Admonishment enters more deeply into one who understands than a hundred blows into a fool. A wrongdoer wants only to rebel, so a cruel angel will be sent against him' [Mishlei 17:10-11]" (Sha'arei Teshuvah 2:11). This means that a wicked man does not humble himself before those who admonish him, but on the contrary rebels. Since he did not yield before the words of those who admonished him, a cruel angel will be sent against him. This punishment is measure for measure, for those who issue admonishments are called angels, as it is written: "They insulted the messengers [lit. 'angels'] of G-d and scorned His words and taunted His prophets" (II Chronicles 36:16). As King Solomon said, "Stern discipline awaits one who forsakes the path. He who hates admonishment will die" (Mishlei 15:10). It is true that one who leaves the right path and transgresses the Torah deserves to be sternly disciplined. However there is still hope that he will eventually listen and turn from his evil ways. Still worse is one who despises admonishment, in which case there is no chance that stern discipline will return him to the right path, meaning that he will inevitably head towards death. When someone commits a sin, desire overtakes him and he may regret not having had the strength to resist his desires. He may then yearn for admonishment and hope for it. However a person who hates admonishment is already in a hopeless state, and such hatred testifies that he detests the words of Hashem!

We therefore learn that a person is forbidden from hating admonishment, for the Torah is only acquired through a love of admonishment (Pirkei Avoth 6:6). As our Sages have said, "When you have friends, some of whom admonish you while others compliment you, love those who admonish you and hate those who compliment you. In fact those who admonish you lead you to life in the World to Come, while those who compliment you lead you out of this world" (Avoth D'Rabbi Nathan 29). The Sages count a hatred for admonishment among those things which impede teshuvah (Derech Eretz 2).

This is why the Torah states, "And it will be [vehaya], when [eikev] you listen," and we know that the term vehaya always denotes joy (Bereshith Rabba 42:3). Furthermore, the term eikev evokes the heel, alluding to the fact that a person must yield before those who admonish him and listen to what they have to say. He must be like the heel, which is lowest part of the body, and rejoice in complying with their words.

### My Heart Did Not Grow Proud

When a person rejoices in hearing admonishment, and he listens to those who give them – as it is written: "And it will be, when you listen to these ordinances" (Devarim 7:12) – G-d says: "For them I will fulfill the oath that I made to their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who conducted themselves with humility." Regarding Abraham it is said, "I am but dust and ashes" (Bereshith 18:27). Regarding Isaac it is said that great is humility, which constituted the glory of our father Isaac. In fact Avimelech chased him from his kingdom, and when he returned to find him, Isaac's heart did not grow proud, nor did he repay Avimelech according to his deeds. Rather,

in Isaac's great humility he welcomed Avimelech with love and provided him with food and drink, both him and his men. The same occurred with Jacob, as we read: "I am too small for all the kindnesses [that I have received]" (Bereshith 32:11).

The Holy One, blessed be He, promised our fathers abundant descendants by the merit of eikev, as it is written: "I will surely bless you and greatly increase your descendants like the stars of the heavens and like the sand on the seashore, and all your offspring shall inherit the gate of its enemy. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, for you have listened to My voice" (Bereshith 22:17-18). We also read, "Eikev [Because] Abraham listened to My voice" (ibid. 26:5).

We should be surprised by this and ask the following question: If Abraham's offspring will be like the stars of the heavens, then why is the sand on the seashore mentioned, and vice versa? The answer is that G-d promised Abraham that by the study of Torah, his offspring would shine like the stars. Since Abraham was afraid that this would lead them to pride, G-d said to him: Because you lowered yourself before Me like a heel, conducting yourself with humility, I will surely infuse them with humility and a love for admonishment, and they will be like the sand, which is trodden upon by everyone and which feels nothing.

Generally speaking, the Torah can only be acquired and endured with someone who loves to hear admonishment. In fact he can only take action by listening to admonishment, which is why the verse says: "When you listen to these ordinances and you observe and perform them" (Devarim 7:12). When a person listens to admonishment, he will take action, as Rabbeinu Yona writes: "Listen well, surrender yourself, and return in teshuvah when admonished by sages and those who admonish you. Take each word of admonishment to heart without exception. By doing so, you will go from darkness to great light in an instant. For if you listen and internalize, and you understand in your heart and do teshuvah – taking the words of those who admonish you to heart as soon as you hear them, taking it upon yourself from that day on to fulfill all you are taught by those who grasp Torah, and being cautious about the things which those who know alert you about from then on – then your teshuvah will take effect and you will become an entirely different person. In fact from the instant you accept these words in your mind and take them to heart, you will earn the merit and reward for all the mitzvot and admonishments. How happy you will be, for you will have exonerated yourselves in a brief instant" (Sha'arei Teshuvah 2:10).

On the verse, "The Children of Israel went and did" (Shemot 12:28), our Sages say: "Did they already do? Was this not said to them on Rosh Chodesh? However since they accepted this upon themselves, Scripture credits them for it as if they had already done so" (Mechilta, Bo). It is said, "One whose deeds are greater than his wisdom, his wisdom will endure, as it is said: 'We shall do and we shall hear' [Shemot 24:7]" (Avoth D'Rabbi Nathan 22). A person who wholeheartedly commits himself to observing and doing, according to what he has been taught and according to the laws given to him, from that day on he has a reward for all the mitzvot because he carefully listened to words of Torah, arraying himself with justice and acquiring the merit of what was revealed to him and what was hidden from him. He will then constantly knock at the door of those who admonish him, thereby learning from everything he is told. His deeds will be more numerous than his wisdom, for there are certain things which he does not understand, and he will be rewarded for them.

As the Children of Israel said at Sinai, "We will do and we will hear" – they decided to do before having heard. Otherwise, it is impossible for a person's deeds to be greater than his wisdom.

### Bread Alone

It is written, “A land where you will eat bread without poverty” (Devarim 8:9).

The Alsheich explains the blessing of the land in the following way:

Once the Creator mentioned the abundant blessing in the seven types of fruit associated with Eretz Israel, He now mentions another kind of blessing.

Throughout the world, nobody eats bread by itself. If they do, it is due to poverty or a lack of other food to accompany it. Hence the verse mentions the blessing of the land, for the bread of Eretz Israel will be so rich that it will not be on account of poverty that people eat just bread, nor because of lack that people add nothing to it, for nothing will be lacking. Indeed, bread will be made from such rich wheat that it will be enough to satisfy the one who eats it, as if it were a dessert.

### Why the Difference?

It is written, “You will eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 8:10).

The Sefat Emet, Rabbi Yehudah Leib of Ger Zatzal, is astonished by this verse.

Why did the Sages not institute the blessing, “Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to say Birkat Hamazon,” as they did for other Torah mitzvot? We find such blessings for rabbinical injunctions, such as for Hallel and the like.

The Sefat Emet replies by noting that Birkat Hamazon is different from the other blessings that we recite when performing mitzvot. In this case, the blessing was not instituted due to the sanctity that Hashem gave us through His mitzvot, but simply because “you will eat and be satisfied.” It is because we must thank the One Who gave us food and enabled us to be satisfied.

### With Concentration

It is written, “You will eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 8:10).

The author of Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah wrote to his sons in order for them to listen and learn:

“After eating alone in my tiny sheltered home, as you know, before reciting Birkat Hamazon I fear that someone will come knocking at the door in the middle of the Birkat, and I will lose my concentration by welcoming him in. ... Before I start reciting Birkat Hamazon, I pray to Hashem and say: ‘Protect me, my Creator, so that no one comes knocking during Birkat Hamazon and I lose my concentration.’”

“After Birkat Hamazon, if no one has interrupted me, I thank Hashem with great joy: ‘I thank you, my Creator, for having protected me from losing my concentration during Birkat Hamazon.’”

### By the Merit of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs

It is written, “A land whose stones are iron” (Devarim 8:9).

We can rearrange the letters of the term *avaneyha* (“stones”) to form *baneyah* (“sons” or “builders”). Furthermore, the initials of the phrase *avaneyha varzel u'meharareyha tachzov* form the word *avot* (“patriarchs”), and the term *varzel* (“iron”) is formed by the initials of Bilhah Rachel Zilpah Leah.

All this comes to tell us about the greatness and praise of the land, whose sons are its builders. They carry out this building by the merit of the Patriarchs Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (as well as by the merit of the Matriarchs

Bilhah, Zilpah, Rachel, and Leah), all of whom are buried in the cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan.

– Etz HaDa’at Tov

### Rosh Hashanah

It is written, “From the beginning of the year to year’s end” (Devarim 11:12).

The term *mereshith* (“from the beginning”) is written without the letter *aleph*. This alludes to the month of Tishri (a word formed by the same letters), which is the new year for the creation of the world. The Sages explain that on Rosh Hashanah, the world is judged to determine its fate.

– Rabbeinu Bechaye

## In the Light of the Parsha

### Hashem Rewards the Jewish People Only When they do His Will in Joy

The Sages have said that everywhere we find the term *vehaya* in Scripture, it denotes joy (Bereshith Rabba 42:3). In this week’s parsha we read, “And it will be [*vehaya*], when you listen” (Devarim 7:12), which teaches us that a person must fulfill all the mitzvot with joy, as it is written: “Serve Hashem with joy. Come before Him with glad song” (Tehillim 100:2) and “All these curses will come upon you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed...because you did not serve Hashem your G-d amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant” (Devarim 28:45-47).

If a person does not fulfill mitzvot in joy, he will eventually get used to them, and when he gets used to performing mitzvot and tramples on them, he will experience numerous troubles. This will happen for two reasons: First, because he did not serve Hashem in joy, in which case the curses of Sefer Devarim will apply to him. Second, because he performed mitzvot out of habit, without paying attention to them.

The prophet Isaiah says, “Insofar as this people has drawn close, with its mouth and with its lips it has honored Me, yet it has distanced its heart from Me. Their fear of Me is like rote learning of human commands. Thus behold, I will continue to perform more wonders against this people, wonder upon wonders. The wisdom of its wise men will be lost, and the understanding of its sages will be concealed” (Isaiah 29:13-14).

The Holy One, blessed be He, only rewards the Jewish people when they carry out His will in joy, not when they treat mitzvot as something old and used. In that case, they will bring disaster upon themselves, as it is written: “I will continue to perform more wonders against this people, wonder upon wonders.” This can be perfectly understood, despite the fact that it is written: “There is no reward for mitzvot in this world.” That is, for the joy of mitzvot, there is a great reward, as we read in Sefer Charedim:

“The fourth prerequisite is great joy for a mitzvah. Every mitzvah that we have an opportunity to perform, we should view it an opportunity sent by the Holy One, blessed be He, and the reward will be in function to our joy. The kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Ashkenazi Zatzal revealed to a close friend that everything he had achieved in opening the gates of wisdom and Ruach HaKodesh was a reward for having fulfilled each mitzvah with great joy.”

Along the same lines, it is written in Noam Elimelech: “There is no reward for a mitzvah in this world. There are only the fruits of a mitzvah, which man enjoys in this world [Peah 1:1] when he fulfills it in joy.”

### ***By the Merit of His Tefillin***

Over the course of the years, there have been numerous miracles and wonders involving Jews who have seen Hashem's salvation with their own eyes through the mitzvah of tefillin. This mitzvah is so holy that it has protected people on many occasions. One such miracle occurred almost a decade ago, during the earth-shaking events that took place on September 11, 2001. What follows is an account found in the book *Ateret Tiferet Israel*:

David Miller is a young Orthodox Jewish businessman who from time to time travels across the United States by plane for business. Besides his suitcases, he keeps a case containing his tefillin close at hand. His tefillin case has a blue cover with golden initials D.M. [David Miller] embroidered on it.

David is very careful never to miss praying with a minyan, not to mention his devotion to reciting Shema at the proper time.

On that particular day, David was scheduled to board United Airlines flight 175 for a business meeting that could earn him a nice profit. He would have to travel six hours by plane in order to reach his destination, and he was now waiting to board his flight.

The signal to board arrived, and armed with his suitcase full of documents in his left hand, and his tefillin case in his right, he quickly made his way towards the passenger walkway that led to the airplane. Suddenly, his cell phone rang. The call display indicated that it was his wife.

"Yes, Rivka" he answered as he put his tefillin case on a wooden chair that was nearby. He fixed his cell phone to his ear and began walking towards the plane as he spoke to his wife. When the conversation ended, David boarded the plane and took his seat on the right side of the cabin. He looked at his watch and then saw the airplane door closing after the last passenger entered.

"Please fasten your seatbelts," announced the stewardess. At that point, David realized that his tefillin case was missing, since it wasn't on his lap where he normally put it. "Where did I forget it?" he wondered. He then remembered that he had left it on a chair not far from there. By then, however, the flight was about to get underway.

David was anxious and asked the stewardess if the pilot could wait for him one minute. "I forgot my tefillin at the entrance of the passenger walkway; it's only 100 feet away!" he said. The stewardess replied, "Sorry sir, but we're on a tight schedule, and the door is already closed."

David didn't give up, and his voice got louder: "Please, let me speak to the pilot. This isn't right – a Jew can't stay without his tefillin."

The other passengers in the plane joined the chorus and said: "Let him go. It's no big deal! He'll be back in a minute and a half." The stewardess was adamant: "Sorry sir, but you're not in charge of the flight schedule. And with all due respect to your tefillin, we have laws and regulations. We're also dependent on flight schedules from around the world." The young Mr. Miller didn't give up, however,

and the argument increased in intensity, although there was still respect between him and the flight crew.

The entire episode lasted a few, albeit long minutes.

Pleading with them, he said: "I could have left and returned a few times by now!"

The pilot eventually gave in to the problematic passenger by telling him: "My friend, I'm going to open the door for you. You can leave, but you can't come back. Now go. Goodbye!"

David tried to convince the pilot that he would return right away. He then got out of the plane and made his way through the passenger walkway, and at the other end he saw his tefillin case sitting on a chair. He quickly took it and ran back through the walkway towards the plane, but it was too late. He could see exhaust emerging from the engines, for the plane had left without him.

David was very disappointed, and his business deal was in jeopardy.

Flight 175 never reached its destination. Al-Qa'ida terrorists took control of the plane halfway through the flight and redirected it towards the Twin Towers in New York City. It was September 11, 2001.

According to Bin Laden's plan, two airplanes were to fly into each tower simultaneously. His plan was for both planes to hit the immense buildings at the same time, with the shock of a dual impact resulting in a much deadlier attack. Experts say that in such a case, the chance for survivors would have been near zero.

The argument between David Miller and the stubborn flight crew lasted exactly 18 minutes, 18 being the numerical value of the term *chai* ("life"). During the interval that followed the attack on the first tower, some 10,000 people were able to escape from the second tower. [Translator's note: Although there were actually 16 minutes between the first plane hitting the first tower (8:46 am) and the second plane hitting the second tower (9:02 am), there are many plausible explanations for this two minute gap.] Those minutes lasted an eternity, nobody thinking that a second plane (Flight 175) was about to hit the second tower. Panic played a role in all this, enabling 10,000 people to escape a horrific fate.

Here we have an incredible story about Divine providence, a story of how a young Jew was ready to do everything for the mitzvah of tefillin, even if it entailed losing a great deal of money. All that mattered was doing Hashem's will before his own. Thousands of people, Jews included, were saved by the merit of David Miller's tefillin.

## ***Guard Your Tongue!***

### ***A Mitzvah to Reprimand Them***

Know that even if a person hears his young son or daughter speaking *Lashon Harah*, it is a mitzvah to reprimand them and to distance them from such behavior. Thus it is written, "Train the youth according to his way" (Mishlei 22:6), as the *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 243:1) explains in regards to all Torah prohibitions.

– Chafetz Chaim

Why are Jacob's children compared to fish, as Jacob blessed them: "Let them increase like fish in the midst of the earth" (Bereshith 48:16)? The Midrash explains: "Just as fish live in water, yet when a drop falls from above they catch it thirstily, as though they had never tasted water in their lives, likewise Israel is brought up in the waters of Torah, yet when they hear a new Torah exposition, they receive it as thirstily as if they had never heard a Torah teaching in their lives" (Bereshith Rabba 97:3).

The gaon Rabbi Shneur Kotler Zatzal, the Lakewood Rosh Yeshiva, once told his students the following story:

Rabbi Israel Salanter Zatzal had a student to whom Hashem had given great abilities: He studied Torah with tremendous diligence and discovered novel teachings that were profound and just. After staying close to his teacher for a long time, he unfortunately left the ways of Torah and descended to a very low point, being on the verge of becoming an unbeliever.

This totally confounded the other students. How was such a thing possible? How could a person study a great deal of Torah with tremendous diligence, and yet completely abandon it until he reached the abyss? When Rabbi Israel heard this, people could see that he was not surprised. He explained his reaction as follows:

"During all the years that this student learned Torah, although he was immersed in learning without stop, one could not perceive any joy on his face as he studied. Furthermore, when his work bore fruit and he found a novel explanation for a problem, it did not impress him. It was simply because the Torah was beyond him, never having been an integral part of his being. The path to sin lay open before him, and it was easy for him to go down such a path, for he was never connected to the holy Torah."

### He Studied with Great Yearning

It is said that the holy Gemara never left the hands of Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Zatzal. Anyone who was ever around him quickly realized that in everything that touched upon the study of Torah, day and night were mixed for him. He studied with a great sense of yearning, just as a person who is dying of hunger and thirst goes wild at the sight of bread and water. The more he studied, the more his spiritual hunger and thirst for Torah grew, as if he never had the opportunity to study before in his life.

### We Skip Nothing

At Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim in Manhattan, where the gaon Rabbi Moshe Feinstein Zatzal served as Rosh Yeshiva, students learned Yoreh Deah with a study partner. Reb Moshe made sure to walk along each row in the Beit HaMidrash to supervise the learning taking place. He answered questions that were brought to him, and also spoke with the students to help them delve deeper into their studies.

One day Rabbi Moshe approached one such group, which was composed of a young Israeli and a young American, and realized that they were progressing much more quickly than the other students. He addressed them with a smile and said, "I see that you're learning quickly."

The young men understood the gentle hint which the words of their Rav contained, meaning that they were learning in a superficial way, not properly or deeply enough. One of them responded, "We skipped paragraph 242, along with the long commentaries of the Shach and the Taz." His friend added, as if to explain himself: "It's just that paragraph 242 doesn't have many practical implications."

Rabbi Moshe shook his head in disagreement and said, "Such a view is fundamentally flawed. When learning Torah, we do not skip any passage. If you are learning Yoreh Deah, you must study everything from beginning to end."

At the end of the zeman [semester], and upon obtaining smicha, the Israeli student said goodbye to his friend and returned to Eretz Israel, even though his entire family had moved to the United States in the meantime. Some time later, the young man became engaged with a young woman from a good family. He stayed in constant telephone contact with his parents in the United States, and when a wedding date was set, he realized that financial difficulties would prevent his parents from traveling to Eretz Israel for the wedding.

The wedding was set for a Tuesday in a hall located in Bnei Brak. However on the previous Friday, while preparations were in full swing, the young man's father was involved in a terrible car accident in Manhattan. He was rushed to the hospital in grave condition, being between life and death. Doctors held out little hope, but the family in New York decided not to tell the groom about the accident so as not to ruin his joy. Unfortunately, on Tuesday the groom's father passed away at the exact moment that he was getting married in Bnei Brak. The groom knew nothing of what was happening. After the wedding, a telephone call was made to the groom to inform him of the sad news, and on the following day he arrived in shock to the Lod airport to see his father's coffin and accompany him to his final resting place. He then began to sit shiva for seven days.

Two years after this tragedy struck the young Israeli, his American friend got engaged with a girl from a prominent family in New York, and their wedding was set for a Sunday night. The groom's father was a man with health problems, but his life was not in danger. A week before the wedding, however, his health began to deteriorate, and eventually he was hospitalized. His condition then became critical, and his family began to pray fervently and weep bitter tears for his healing.

On Shabbat morning, a few minutes after the groom was called to the Torah (the Aufruf), his father passed away. His burial took place on Sunday morning, and according to directives from the rabbis, the young man's wedding was scheduled for that very same night.

In an extraordinary way, the two young men experienced terrible tragedies under similar circumstances, and precisely on their wedding day. It is difficult for us to understand the ways of Heaven, or why this happened to them, for G-d's ways are hidden from us. However we must point out a small detail that will make hair stand on end.

The passage in the Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, which the two youngsters had decided to skip during their learning, was paragraph 242. It is entitled, "One who prepares everything needed for the chuppah, and one of his relatives, for whom he must mourn, dies...."