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Maskil LéDavid

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

## The War Against Midian - Fighting Impure Speech

**"Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel, saying: This is the thing the L-rd has commanded... he shall not violate his word; according to whatever came out of his mouth, he shall do"** (Bamidbar 30:2-3)

This commandment was different from most others. Usually, Hashem told Moshe what to speak to the people. Here, however, Moshe spoke of his own accord. It is precisely in matters regarding the power of the tongue that Moshe felt compelled to speak on his own, as it were. He was well-aware of the tremendous potency lying in the mouth, for better or for worse. With his great wisdom, he saw the need to warn Bnei Yisrael against the damage of, "He shall not violate his word." Whatever comes out of his mouth, he shall keep." Moshe urged them to maintain their purity of speech and never sully their mouths with forbidden words of lashon hara, rechilus, and frivolity.

Previously, Hashem had instructed Moshe, "Distress the Midianim and you shall smite them" (Bamidbar 25:17). Suddenly, the Torah turns to a completely different topic and warns us to keep our word. Then the Torah returns to the Midianim and relates the war in great detail. Moshe is informed that it is his job to avenge Bnei Yisrael's blood from the Midianim. After he is done, he will pass on. What is the reason for the Torah digressing into the subject of vows and proper speech?

The Sifri explains this in a most wonderful way: Although Moshe was well-aware that this war with Midian was his last fight, he did it anyway, with alacrity and joy, the way he had always done mitzvot throughout his life.

Certainly, there was a huge element of self-sacrifice on Moshe's part to take action when he knew this would mark his demise. Tzaddikim are focused on the potential of every moment of life and therefore cherish life immensely. They desire to accomplish more and more with every breath, glorifying Hashem's Name with their deeds. This is why, when Hashem notified Moshe that he would die as soon as he finished doing battle with Midian, Moshe began pleading for more years of life. But Hashem refused him. "Do I deserve to die after reaching such high spiritual levels? It is preferable that I remain alive and teach the world of Your greatness. 'I shall not die, but I shall live

and tell the deeds of Hashem'" (Yalkut Shimoni, Matot 785).

Moshe could have delayed doing battle with Midian for a good few years. He would have gained more life, in which he certainly would have promulgated the Heavenly Name throughout the world. He had never been told when to go to war with the Midianim. He could have bided his time and earned more years. But this was not the way of Moshe. Ever the loyal servant of Hashem, he took up his spear with alacrity, inviting the nation to join him in this mitzvah.

Since Moshe Rabbeinu taught the nation about the power of the tongue, which can make various things forbidden through vows and promises, he added one point, "He shall not violate his word." The word **יחל** (violate) is related to the word **יחול** (mundane). One should take care not to damage his tongue by making it mundane. Moshe thought to himself that if he deemed it appropriate to warn Bnei Yisrael about the evils of improper speech, the war with Midian was meant to destroy their power of speech. Therefore, it was a sacred responsibility to be one of the first to do battle with Midian. He felt he could not wait even a moment longer than necessary. The very air they were breathing was infused with Midian's impure speech, wreaking havoc and destruction.

Moshe moved swiftly from thought to action. He began pumping up the people for war. By inserting the matter of vows into the story of Midian, the Torah impressed upon Moshe the urgency for waging this war immediately, eradicating their name and all they stood for.

I would like to interpret the words, "He shall not violate his word; according to whatever came out of his mouth, he shall do" in a novel way: One who is careful to guard his tongue and not make light of his power of speech will be blessed with, "according to whatever came out of his mouth, He shall do." Hashem will heed his words and bring them to realization. His blessings will bear fruit. This is in line with Iyov's words (28:22), "You will make a decision and it will be accomplished for you." A tzaddik decrees and Hashem fulfills.

This was the way of my forefathers, may their merit bring us blessing. Their berachot were accepted on High. Hashem fulfilled their requests, which came through pure mouths.

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### Hillulah of Tzaddikim

- |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| 2 - Rabbi Aharon Teumim               |
| 3 - Rabbi Shimshon MiOstropoli        |
| 4 - Rabbi Shimon Biderman             |
| 5 - Rabbi Yitzchak Luria<br>Ashkenazi |
| 6 - Rabbi Moshe Ezra Mizrachi         |
| 7 - Rabbi Shalom Noach MiSlonim       |
| 8 - Rabbi Shimon Agasi                |



## Walking in their Ways

*Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon  
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita*



## Words of our Sages

### Struck with Fear

From when I was a young child, Father's method of education was by slapping me when I deserved it. He did this until I was thirty! To this day, I admire my Father, who is no longer with us, may his memory protect us.

I often ask myself why I still feel a certain fear of my father. Father passed on to the World of Truth. And I take comfort in the answer:

Father always trained me to fear Hashem, Who sees everything I do, at any given moment. He trained me, as well, to fear the tzaddikim of the past, including my holy ancestors, who gaze at me from their places on High. For this reason, I am afraid of doing the wrong thing. I don't want to cause them shame.

Although child education today is vastly different from how it was when we were growing up, I raise my children just as I was raised. I teach them constantly to "know what is above you: a Seeing Eye, a Hearing Ear, and all your deeds are recorded in a Book" (Avot 2:1).

### The Haftarah

Haftarah of the week

**"Listen to the word of Hashem"**

(Yirmeyahu 2)

The connection to the parashah: This is the second of the three haftarot that Chazal instituted be read during the three Shabbatot preceding Tisha B'Av. The theme of these haftaroth is the destruction predicted by Yirmeyahu Hanavi regarding the churban of Yerushalayim.



### Guard Your Tongue

It is forbidden to live among gossipers, and all the more so to sit among those who speak lashon hara. Even if one does not intend to believe what he hears, merely sitting in such a setting has an adverse effect on him and will cause him to listen to what is being said.

**"A thousand for each tribe, a thousand for each tribe, from all the tribes of Yisrael you shall send into the army"**

(Bamidbar 31:4)

Chazal explain: "One thousand refers to one thousand for prayer, three thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand for war and twelve thousand for prayer."

Why did they need so many people to pray for them?

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l (Mimizrach Shemesh) says that Klal Yisrael understood the urgency of prayer, and not just general prayer, but an individual prayer offered for each and every man who went out to war.

When every one of those praying knows that he is praying especially for one soldier, he sees the soldier in front of his eyes; knowing that the soldier's success depends on him. When a person is living the situation then the prayer offered is totally different, the prayer is unique. The one offering the prayer realizes that he is responsible for "his" soldier's success.

We witnessed this phenomenon approximately one decade ago, during Operation Protective Edge, where the war in Gaza was fought in a most supernatural way. The strongest army in the world would have emerged from such a war with hundreds, if not thousands, dead. How did we emerge victorious?

Rabbanit Grossman, may she live long, initiated a program called "A thousand for each tribe" (as well as "Project Guardian"). The station made direct contact with the soldiers at the front and offered their names to whoever wished to pray for their welfare. In the campaign Cast Lead, approximately 100,000 members participated. Rabbi Kook and the Admor of Boston, shlit"a, encouraged participation in these projects. They wrote, "We broached this idea to R' Chaim Kanievsky, shlita, and he was happy

to hear about it. He said this was how David Hamelech acted. He, too, prepared one Jew for each soldier sent out to battle, whose job it was to pray on behalf of that soldier. This project has David Hamelech's backing."

Aside from this support, it is known that in Torah institutions throughout the world, Torah scholars reinforced their Torah learning. They dedicated the zechut of their Torah study to the safety and success of the Jewish soldiers.

Roshei Yeshivot already instructed their disciples, at the beginning of this campaign, to undertake a ta'anit dibbur. Torah sages asked that the outstanding Torah students forego their usual midday rest and continue their Torah studies uninterrupted. There is no doubt that the combination of prayer and enhanced Torah study are what brought about Israel's victory.



## Chazak U'Baruch

Many of the Chafetz Chaim's acquaintances bear witness to the following unusual habit he had. At midnight, when the entire family slept and the city was covered in a blanket of stillness, he would enter his room and lock the door. Sometimes, those bold of heart would stand outside his door and listen to him pour out his heart before his Creator. His words were clear and sharp. First, he would give thanks to Hashem for all that He had done for him. He would delineate each aspect of his life and thank Hashem for everything that happened to him, for all the privileges He had bestowed upon him.

After thanking Hashem for his individual kindnesses, he would speak about the general privileges of Klal Yisrael. However, at this point, he changed his tone of voice. Instead of being the grateful son, he suddenly turned into the accuser. "What have You given us? You gave us an eternal Torah. It was closed and hidden. What did we do for You? We gave You prophets, Talmudic sages, Ge'onim. We delved into the intricacies of the Oral Torah. And what did we get in return? Suffering, pogroms, killings. Wherever we found ourselves, we took the Torah with us. We saved it from the hands of our enemies, and to this day, it is with us. We uphold it devotedly."

He continued, "How much longer must we wait? We're already worn out, broken like smashed vessels. Look and see if You can find a Jew with a whole heart." Suddenly, he called upon the righteous ones of previous generations who had already passed on from this world. "Where are you?!" he demanded. "Why are you silent? You should be our advocates! Have you forgotten us?"

He would go through this ritual night after night. When the sun made its first appearance on the horizon, the Chafetz Chaim would return to his studies, eagerly awaiting the coming of Mashiach, fully trusting that the debt would be paid.

In 5690, the year before Shemittah, the community of Karlin-Pinsk chose Rabbi Meir Karelitz to fill the seat of the Torah sage of the generation, Rabbi David Friedman. They sent him a letter of Rabbanut, signed by hundreds of the city's Jews, headed by Rabbi Avraham Elimelech Perlow, the Admor of Stolin-Karlin.

Rabbi Meir arrived at Radin, in order to ask the advice of the Chafetz Chaim, whether or not to accept this position. At first, the Chafetz Chaim opposed such a plan, since Karlin and Vilna are far away from each other and a person such as Rabbi Meir was forbidden from living at such a distance from the Jewish community. Distancing himself from the great Rabbi Chaim Ozer would be akin to moving away from Klal Yisrael.

But after the community leaders themselves traveled to Radin to supplicate the Chafetz Chaim to agree to this plan, The Chafetz Chaim replied, "I cannot make such a fateful decision on my own. Greater men than myself must preside over such a ruling. Since it's nearly the Shemittah year and Mashiach is at our doorstep, as Chazal say, "At the end of Shevi'it (the Shemittah year), the son of David will come," heralded by Eliyahu Hanavi, let's wait for him to decide!"

One of those present allowed himself a small smile at this statement. The Chafetz Chaim grabbed him by his sleeve and reprimanded him, "Are you in doubt? To me, it's as clear as day!"

## Treasures

Based on the teachings of  
Moreinu v' Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik  
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita



"Moshe became angry with the officers of the army"

(Bamidbar 31:14)

Rashi elucidates: Due to his anger, Moshe erred. He forgot the halachah regarding vessels of the gentiles. Similarly, when Moshe became angry at Elazar and Itamar (Vayikra 10:16), he forgot the halachah.

If Moshe forgot the halachot of the gentile vessels, why didn't he forget the halachot of war? Immediately after becoming angry, Moshe began instructing the nation to kill the children and the women they had taken into captivity. He even warned those who had become defiled due to war to purify themselves on the third and seventh days. How did these halachot remain with him while the others were forgotten?

Since Moshe sacrificed his very life for this war against Midian, realizing that with its conclusion, he would die, Hashem saw fit to allow him to remember all the halachot pertaining to this war. Moshe was adamant about eradicating any vestige of Midian that related to their impurity of speech, similar to the power of defilement emanating from the mouth of Bilaam. However, since Moshe became angered by the nation, Hashem caused him to forget the halachot concerning the vessels used for war.

How severe is the sin of anger! Chazal (Nedarim 22a) have taught, "Whoever is angry is controlled by all types of negative forces." Certainly, Moshe, the greatest of all prophets, did not become angry like some ordinary person who loses his temper. People who become annoyed over any small perceived offense seethe with wrath and lose control. Moshe's anger, in contrast, was for the sake of Heaven. He was truly and solely motivated by Hashem's honor that was trampled. Nevertheless, Hashem saw fit to punish him, as He is extremely scrupulous with the tzaddikim. Moshe, the humblest of all men, was scrutinized to a hairsbreadth, and therefore was forbidden to hold even a smidgen of anger. Anger stems from arrogance, in direct contrast to Moshe's hallmark trait of humbleness.



### Men of Faith

Excerpts from the book *Men of Faith on the lives and deeds of the House of Pinto*



Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zy" a, was a role model of a saintly and holy Jew, who served Hashem with absolute devotion. The description **אהוב למעלה ונחמד למטה** - beloved Above and admired below" personified him, and the first letters of this description spells Elul, the month in which he passed away.

Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zy" a, was well-known for his wholesome service of Hashem. He undertook to remain in his room for a full forty years, upon the instruction of his father, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a. For four decades, he studied Torah without stop, something we cannot fathom. From the four corners of his room, he transcended this world, purifying himself beyond the confines of the body. His entire being was devoted to coming closer to Hashem.

Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zy" a,

was a great man of faith. "Cast your burden upon Hashem" was his life's calling. He was so engrossed in his service of Hashem that he was completely disconnected from this-worldly matters. He would light numerous candles in memory of his hold ancestors and learn Torah and do mitzvot.

He would accept all petitioners, never turning down man or woman who came to his door. He never lifted his eyes to study his visitor. However, he knew exactly who came, why they came, whether it was for a berachah, advice, a blessing for a recovery.. Sometimes, his wife or daughters walked in and only after asking their name for prayer, did he realize it was his own family member standing before him.

I would like to mention something wonderful here. It has been mentioned before, but it's so special that it bears repetition. One of my father's great attributes was how he guarded his eyes. The sefarim hakedoshim state that the main source of one's sanctity is through his eyes. One who protects his eyes from forbidden sights merits true yirat Shamayim. My father was extremely careful in this area. Thousands frequented his home, yet he made sure never to look at women. Even when Rabbanit Mazal, may she live long, came in, he did not recognize her!

Rabbi Moshe Aharon's reverence for the Torah sages was expressed during the hillula of the great Tana'aim, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Meir Ba'al Haness, zy" a, as well as the days of celebrating the hillula of his holy ancestors, Rabbi Chaim Pinto HaGadol and Rabbi Chaim Pinto HaKatan, zy" a. He would prepare large banquets and inspire the guests to strive for greatness in faith and yirat Shamayim. He told stories of the wonders of tzaddikim past, imbuing the people with yearnings to grow ever higher.

The merits of his ancestors was what gave his blessings potency, he felt. Whoever merited visiting him would receive a berachah in merit of his fathers.

In this spirit, he wrote a unique formula for success:

Whoever keeps the sefer "Shenot Chaim" (which tells about his forefathers' great deeds), will be guarded and succeed in his endeavors, in line with the words, "The tzaddik will live by his faith."

This sefer, Shenot Chaim, tells much about the power of the tzaddikim, both in their lifetimes and after death, as Chazal have said, "The righteous are greater in death than in life."