

Shoftim

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762

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita
Son of the tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a



Maskil LéDavid

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

The Cure for Pride

"If a matter of judgment is hidden from you, between blood and blood, between verdict and verdict, between plague and plague, matters of dispute in your cities – you shall rise up and ascend to the place that Hashem, your G-d shall choose. You shall come to the Kohanim, the Levites, and to the judge who will be in those days; you shall inquire and they will tell you the word of judgment." (Devarim 17:8-9)

Parshat Shoftim has a direct connection to the previous parsha, Parshat Re'eh where it says (ibid 16:16), "Three times a year all your males should appear before Hashem, your G-d, in the place that He will choose: on the Festival of Matzot, the Festival of Shavuot, and the Festival of Succot". The Torah commands every male Jew to go up to Jerusalem three times a year, since aliyah l'regel holds the power to inspire a person and lead him to faith in Hashem Yitbarach. When he sees the masses of Jewish people going up to Jerusalem with a feeling of joy and closeness to Hashem Yitbarach, his faith in Hashem immediately becomes stronger. The ones travelling to Jerusalem also observed close up, the ten miracles that constantly took place in the Temple, and from contemplating these miracles their faith intensified and they accepted the yoke of heaven upon themselves.

In this parsha too, Parshat Shoftim, the Torah commands a person who seeks an answer to a halachic query, to go to Jerusalem and stand before the Kohen and Levite, or the judge, in order that they should resolve his doubt. If a person does not know whether a particular kind of blood is impure or pure, if a certain situation is forbidden or permitted, and also if the plague is impure or pure, he must go to the local judge so that he can decide for him, but if the local judge in his town does not know the answer or has a doubt, he must go to Jerusalem in order to ask Da'at Torah from the Kohen or the judge in Jerusalem, in order that he should determine the matter.

The Torah continues and says that the decision of the Kohen or judge of Jerusalem is final and one cannot question or doubt it, therefore a person who is not willing to accept the decision of the Kohen or judge of Jerusalem, must be killed, as it says (Devarim 17:12) "And the man that will act with willfulness, not listening to the Kohen... or to the judge, that man shall die, and you shall destroy the evil from among Israel".

The sefer 'Ma'or V'Shemesh' asks (Shoftim d"h ki yipaleh): Why is the one who has a query commanded to go first to the Kohanim and Levites, when their role is to perform work in the Temple and not to decide halachic queries, (besides the area of afflictions of the skin where the Kohen is the one who decides if it is pure or impure)? It seems more fitting that he

should go straight to the judge; why are the Kohanim listed first in the verse?

The 'Ma'or V'Shemesh answers that all the doubts and questions that exist in the world, have their root in the first sin committed by Adam HaRishon, who was the first one to doubt the word of Hashem. Hashem put Adam HaRishon in Gan Eden and allowed him to eat from all the trees besides the Tree of Knowledge, from which it was forbidden for man to eat. But Adam HaRishon, instead of listening to G-d's word, chose to listen to the words of his wife who persuaded him to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. This happened to him because he doubted the word of Hashem, for had he not had doubts in Hashem's word, he would not have dismissed His word even after hearing the words of his wife.

This makes it clear that all the doubts and questions which exist in this world, are an outcome of the first doubt that Adam HaRishon implanted in the world. Those doubts that came down to the world also gave birth to questions in halacha, until there became a need to inquire as to the correct halacha in order to understand the true intention of Hashem.

When a person disagrees with the opinion of his Rebbe and prefers to listen to the words of his student, his behavior shows that he has a lack of respect for his Rav's words. If he would respect his Rav wholeheartedly, he would accept his words without any hesitation at all. One can add that doubt is an outcome of pride, because when a person feels 'Only I and none but me!' (Yeshaya 47:8), as a result of this he is inclined to doubt the words of those greater than him because of the inflated sense of self-importance that he feels.

The Torah commands an arrogant person to go up to Jerusalem in order to clarify the correct halacha, therefore it is not enough for a person to go to a judge, but first he must go to the Bet Hamikdash and see the Kohanim and Levi'im at their work, since the service of the Kohanim who are occupied with the blood of sacrifices has the power to shake up the heart of a person and get rid of his pride, since he looks and sees what should really be happening to a person because of his sins. Similarly, when a person observes the Levi'im in their service, his love for Hashem and faith in Him will intensify, and this power will cause the trait of pride to be annulled.

This is the reason that the Torah commanded a person to first go to see the Kohanim at their service and the Levi'im at their singing, since when he sees the devotion of the Kohanim and Levi'im for the sake of sanctifying G-d's Name and fulfilling His will, and also sees the spilt blood of the sacrifices, his arrogance will leave him, and instead he will be filled with deference and submission which will cause him to accept the words of the judge in Jerusalem, without any wavering at all.

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Hillulah of Tzaddikim

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|---|
| 7 - Rabbi Heshel of Vilna |
| 8 - Rabbi Yechiya Amar |
| 9 - Rabbi Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin |
| 10 - Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller |
| 11 - Rabbi Shalom Yosef of Ruzhin |
| 12 - Rabbi Ahron Alkasalsi zya" a |
| 13 - Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim of Bavel zya" a |



There is No Chance Occurrence

The name of Amalek hints at its essence and its claim that everything that happens in the world is purely coincidental. The name 'Amalek' has the same numerical value-240- as the word 'safek' – doubt.

If we think about it, we will see that the word 'mikreh' (chance encounter), is a combination of the words rak me'Hashem (only from G-d). This means that even when things seem to us as happenstance, this is not so, in reality everything comes solely from Hashem Yitbarach. When a person trains himself that everything that happens to him is by chance, doubt and confusion very quickly become attached to him and he is compared to the Amalekim who lived with the belief that everything is purely 'chance', and they closed their eyes to seeing the Hand of G-d.

Many years ago when I was in Morocco, I had to travel to the airport, but I made a mistake on the way. Usually I am particular to be in the airport three hours before the flight, but this time because of the error, time was passing and I was still considerably far from the airport one hour before the plane was due to take off. In my distress I mentioned the names of the tzaddikim and prayed that their merit should protect me and I will manage to get to the airport quickly. Suddenly a taxi drew up next to me, and its driver agreed to take me to my destination. When I asked the driver if he usually passes the place where I was waiting, he replied that normally he doesn't take this route, but this time he made a mistake on the way and therefore entered this area.

I thought to myself that Heaven alone caused the driver to make a mistake in order that he should pass by this place and help me arrive at the airport as quickly as possible. It is well known that taxis are never seen here and therefore a great miracle was performed for me; this taxi was sent to me by Heaven so that I shouldn't miss my flight. And while we have accustomed ourselves to seeing G-d's Hand in every occurrence and as a result of this we strengthen our faith in Hashem, there are people who have become accustomed to writing everything up as coincidence, and even in this incident they would say that by chance the driver made a mistake and therefore came my way.

All those people who believe in chance encounters should know that they are strengthening and increasing the power of Amalek in this world; the power of Amalek who wished to implant doubt and cool off our faith in Hashem and in His messengers.

The Haftarah

"I, only I, am He who comforts you" (Yeshaya 51:12)



The connection to this Shabbat: This Shabbat is one of the seven Shabbatot of consolation, starting from the Shabbat after Tisha B'Av, when one reads one of the seven Haftarot of consolation.

Guard Your Tongue

With Righteousness shall you Judge your Fellow (Vayikra 19:15)

Even if the act seems to lean towards a negative interpretation, it is proper to leave the matter undecided in one's mind, and one shouldn't conclude that it is something bad.

When the act seems more probable to be positive, which means that it is definitely forbidden by law to judge him negatively, if he does judge him negatively, and because of this goes and denounces him, besides that he has not fulfilled "judge your friend favorably", he has also transgressed the law of speaking lashon hara.

Words of our Sages

The Lesson of the Ant

"Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities – which Hashem, your G-d gives you – for your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment" (Devarim 17:18)

In contrast to man, whom the Torah commands to appoint judges and officers for himself in all his cities, so that they will stand guard and concern themselves in case he will deviate from the correct path, there stands the ant, this tiny insect about whom Shlomo Hamelech tells us in his wisdom: "... though there is neither officer nor guard nor ruler over her..." (Mishlei 6:7)

The Midrash in 'Yalkut Shimoni' (Mishlei 6 remez 938) explains the allegory of the ant, which is a symbol for a person. "Go to the ant, lazy one; see its ways and grow wise". The idea behind the expression is that a person should observe how extremely careful the ant is, not to steal or touch what her friend prepared for herself, even though she doesn't have neither an officer nor judge, as it says, "...though there is neither officer nor guard nor ruler over her". So you, man, who have appointed judges and officers for yourselves, all the more so, go and learn from the ant, how can it be that you won't be careful and guard yourself?!...

Chazal tell us (Eiruvin 100:) "Had the Torah not been given we would have learnt theft [is forbidden] from the ant". The Sefer 'Umatok Ha'or' quotes R' Shmuel HaLevi Vosner zt"l on this idea. "The main area of decline over the generations is that people are not scrupulous with robbery, theft and pilfering money in different ways. This is the main accusation, just as it says concerning the sin of the Generation of the Flood (Bereishit 6:11): "And the earth had become filled with robbery." Chazal say about this (Vayikra Rabba 33:3) "A se'ah (measurement) full of sins, which one heads the accusation? Robbery".

But it is difficult to understand, Harav Vosner continues. Why does Shlomo Hamelech command the lazy one to go and learn from the ant to be careful with theft? It seems that it would be more suitable to have written: Go to the ant, thief?

But, the Rav explains in a wonderful way, in our generation we see a strange phenomenon; many people are not ambitious. They don't want to work and they are also not motivated to learn. The reality of (Tehilim 128:2) "When you eat the labor of your hands, you are praiseworthy and it is well with you", as David HaMelech tells us, does not attract them, but instead, they wish to become rich overnight.

These lazy people try their hands at all different dealings, which often involve a hint of theft, stealing and bankruptcy, and with their bad deeds they bring suffering upon themselves and on those around them, and also profane G-d's Name in the world.

Therefore, Shlomo Hamelech says: "Go to the ant, you lazy one", this failing with money is caused by your laziness! Therefore, you need to go and learn from the ant, see to what extent she is careful with money that is not hers, even without an officer or ruler, and without a legal system and law-enforcement.



Chazak U'Baruch

The main spiritual work during the month of Elul, involves examining and searching deeply into our everyday actions of the past year, noting if we acted appropriately or not, what we need to improve in our deeds and behavior between man and man and between man and G-d, and of course to express regret for our crooked ways and preparing ourselves for the Day of Judgment.

The Dubno Maggid describes the importance of regret with a wonderful parable:

A shepherd was watching over his sheep on a hill of pasture, when he suddenly felt tired, laid his head on a bed of grass and fell asleep. The sheep made the most of this time, meandered here and there until they found a hole in the fence and promptly went into the adjacent field where there was superior quality grass and ate to satisfaction. But those fields belonged to the general of the town, and when his servants saw alien sheep grazing in his fields, they took possession of them and placed them together with the flocks belonging to the general.

When the shepherd awoke he was astonished to see that his sheep had disappeared...

He investigated the situation and then sat and thought what he could do in order to appease the general. The shepherd heard that a similar incident had happened earlier and the owner of the sheep presented the general with a sack of sugar and with this he was appeased. The shepherd was pleased and hurried to bring the general a sack of sugar. When he came to the general's house, they told him that the general was away and would return only the next day. With no choice, he left the sack of sugar in the general's room on his table, took his sheep and left.

When the general returned and heard what had happened, he was enraged and requested that the shepherd be brought before him. The shepherd arrived, trembling. The general immediately asked: "How did you dare enter my house and take the sheep?"

"I did as the previous shepherd did!" answered the shepherd. "You fool," shouted the general, "Do you really think I need a sack of sugar?! The main thing was the pleading and begging of that shepherd; when I heard his pleas and saw how he sincerely regrets his actions, then I forgave him."

The moral is clear: We too, when we repent and beat our hearts as our fathers did, this is not the correct way. We must beg and plead for our lives with a broken heart, because only then will Hashem forgive us for our sins and accept our supplications.

Treasures

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



Avodat HaMiddot - A Constant Work-in-Progress

"When you observe this entire commandment to perform it – which I command you today...then you shall add three more cities to these three." (Devarim 19:9)

Rashi explains "And you shall add three more – this totals nine; three in Ever Hayarden (Transjordan) and three in the Land of Cana'an and three in the future." Besides the six cities of refuge which exist in the Land of Cana'an and Ever L'yarden, Bnei Yisrael will be asked to add another three cities of refuge when Moshiach comes.

This is hard to understand because Chazal tell us (Succah 52:1) that when Moshiach comes Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination and there will no longer be temptation to transgress the word of Hashem. Since this will be the case, people definitely won't kill by mistake because this sin comes as a result of other sins that they have committed. So why did Hashem command the people to add three cities of refuge for those who kill unintentionally? In the future there won't be an evil inclination and there won't be sinners, so what reason is there to add cities of refuge for unintentional sinners?

We can explain this according to the Chazal (Avot 2:4) "Don't trust in yourself until the day of your death". The Bnei Yisrael did indeed inherit the Land from all the nations who were dwelling in it, and thereby removed their bad influence from having an impact on them. But nevertheless, the yetzer hara continued to exist inside them and therefore their work hadn't finished yet. Therefore, they had to 'precede healing to the disease' and designate cities of refuge for unintentional sinners.

Sometimes it seems to a person that he is immune to a certain danger because he did all the necessary effort to combat it, but he must know that as long as a person is alive in this world, the evil inclination is alive within him and tries to lure him into committing sins. Therefore, a person must constantly be alert and stand guard not to fall prey to his evil inclination. Even though the Jewish people had removed from themselves the negative influence of the nations who had been dwelling in the Land, with this their work and toil hadn't finished. Who can be sure that on one occasion they won't stumble, and since 'A liability is brought about through one who is liable', Hashem will cause this person to murder unintentionally in order to awaken him to repent for true sins that he has committed.

If Hashem commanded the people to designate cities of refuge when Moshiach comes and there will no longer be a yetzer hara, we must learn from this that all the more so to what extent we are obligated to be on guard whilst we still have the yetzer hara inside us. And it is binding that 'One who tries to become pure, receives Heavenly help'.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Sadness is a Negative and Harmful Trait

Before the Jewish people go out to war, the Kohen stands in front of the people and encourages them not to be afraid for Hashem is with them. He then instructs the people concerning what awaits them, and with his words (repeated to the people by the officers) he permits certain groups of people to leave the battlefield and not participate in the fighting.

The officers then continue and say, "Who is the man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house..." (Devarim 20:8).

Rashi explains the words "the man who is fearful and fainthearted" according to the words of Chazal in Masechet Sotah, and these are Rashi's words: "Rabbi Akiva says: As its simple meaning. He is not able to stand in battle and see a sword drawn. Rabbi Yosi HaGlili says: One who is afraid because of his sins".

On the words of Rabbi Yosi HaGlili, the tzaddik Rabbi Nachman of Breslav would say:

The most harmful thing is "one who is afraid because of his sins" – the feeling of depression and sadness that comes after the sin has been committed. This is very important to know- when the evil inclination persuades a person to sin – more than he intends for the action (the sin) to be carried out – his main intention is to sow sadness and depression inside the sinner after the sin; because these (feelings) are more severe than all the sins in the world...



Men of Faith

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

They Have Eyes, but Cannot See

A few years preceding the Second World War, anti-Semitism began to wreak havoc on the Jews around the world. Governments enacted various laws whose sole purpose was to harm the Jews. For example, whoever was caught with foreign currency in his possession was arrested immediately.

R' Avraham Moyal had on him a large sum of foreign currency at that time. Naturally, he was very afraid. On one of his trips from a distant country back to Morocco, he smuggled sacks full of foreign currency among his luggage. However, the police tracked him down. Trembling, R' Moyal began to pray that in the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Hakatan, who was still alive at the time, he would be saved.

The police began to search R' Moyal's luggage, and they even touched his sacks full of foreign currency, but they did not notice anything at all, as it says, "They have eyes but cannot see."

When he arrived in Mogador, he met Rabbi Chaim Pinto, who told him, "You prayed in the merit of my ancestors, and the tzaddikim saved you from their hands."

This is another story that R' Avraham Moyal told on this matter:

Once, he was traveling by bus, transporting several crates full of foreign currency. Some people who were jealous of him denounced him to the authorities for smuggling foreign currency, saying that he was about to arrive in Mogador with five crates of money.

Somehow, R' Moyal found out that people had informed on him, and in a flash got off the bus and ran for his life, leaving all the money behind. He reached Mogador in a mysterious manner without getting caught.

Meanwhile, the bus reached its final station in Mogador, and R' Moyal decided to try his luck in retrieving the crates of money. He prayed that in the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi

Chaim Pinto he should succeed in finding the crates with all his money, even though chances were that the local Arabs riding on the bus had already helped themselves to his treasures.

Moreover, station-workers would routinely board the buses at the terminal and clean them in preparation for the next trip. R' Moyal was sure that the station-workers had already claimed the crates of money for themselves.

Nevertheless, he tried his luck. He arrived at the terminal and found the station-workers cleaning the bus. He inquired if they had already cleaned inside the bus and was told that they had. R' Moyal did not despair. He turned to one of the workers and asked him, "May I get on the bus for a minute? I left something there."

"What did you leave there?" asked the station-worker. "We already cleaned the bus and there was nothing left inside."

All the same, R' Moyal got on the bus. He was astonished to find the five crates untouched, lying in the exact spot where he had left them. The station-workers had cleaned the bus thoroughly, but had simply not seen the crates full of money.

Once again the words of the pasuk were fulfilled, "They have eyes but cannot see..."

R' Moyal got off the bus and asked the workers to help him carry all the crates to a car waiting nearby. One of them asked in amazement, "How is it possible that we did not see the crates? We cleaned the entire bus thoroughly. How did we miss them?"

R' Moyal replied in a tone of confidence, "Of course you could not see the crates, because I prayed that in the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto no one should touch them, and I should get back all the money. These crates hold my livelihood, and I thank Hashem that my treasures were returned to me intact."