

Vayelech

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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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 Gift of Repentance

"Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Israel!" (Devarim 31:1)

Parshat Vayelech is read on Shabbat Teshuva, since on this Shabbat a person must rouse himself to the reality of Hashem his G-d and repent wholeheartedly for all his sins. Among the different sins can be included- going to forbidden places, or committing deeds that are forbidden by the holy Torah. Also on Shabbat Teshuva, a person must remember that he should not come with complaints against Hashem why this or that happened to him during the previous year, but instead he should immediately understand that if he was stricken with suffering or misfortune, it must be that he deserved it. This is indeed true repentance; we should embrace the conduct of our forefathers who never questioned the Creator, even though they had reason to challenge and query Hashem's ways. Instead, they accepted whatever came their way with complete love and recognized that "This emanated from Hashem", and if they found themselves in a certain difficult situation, they understood that it was for their good, even if they could not comprehend the good because of their limited faculties. Even though in many circumstances our forefathers could have queried the deeds of Hashem Yitbarach, they piously elevated themselves by accepting their predicament with love and without asking questions.

The name 'Shabbat Teshuva' is taken from the Haftarah which is read on this Shabbat where it says (Hoshea 14:2), "Return, Israel, unto Hashem your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity". The choice of wording 'ad- unto (Hashem your G-d)', suggests that a person must repent completely and not just partially -until he reaches a level of "know Hashem your G-d". If one changes around the letters of the word 'ad' (unto), it can be read as 'da' (know). This implies that the teshuva of a person is considered complete when he achieves the clarity that the ways of Hashem are always and only beneficial for us.

On the first Shabbos of creation, there existed a 'light of seven days'. This first Shabbat was the day following Rosh Hashana. On Shabbat Teshuva, the Shabbat following Rosh Hashana, this special light is also present. Hashem created Adam Harishon on the sixth day of Creation (Friday), which was Rosh Hashana (Yalkut Shimoni Bamidbar 782). On that very day Hashem put him into Gan Eden and warned him not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam Harishon listened to the persuasion of his wife to eat from the tree of Knowledge and therefore Hashem banished him from Gan Eden. On the first Shabbat of creation Adam Harishon admitted his sin and repented, as it says "A psalm, a song for the Shabbat day. It is good to thank Hashem". ('Le'hodot - to thank, can also mean 'to admit'). When Hashem

saw that Adam regretted his sin and recognized the greatness of Shabbat which is a taste of the Next World - He immediately forgave him.

Adam Harishon merited Hashem's forgiveness even though he sinned since he regretted his deed and completely repented before Hashem. Adam Harishon was the one who taught us the concept of teshuva - if we wish to merit Hashem's forgiveness we must acknowledge our sins and regret our bad deeds. This is how a person returns the peace between him and Hashem and comes closer to Him and in this merit all his sins are forgiven. It is also important to note that in order to merit Hashem's constant guidance and protection against evil spirits, one must be in harmony with Hashem on Shabbat Teshuva and then this peace will have an effect on him throughout the year. This Shabbat is elevated and has a special power since the purpose and essence of Shabbat is 'shalom', referred to in the popular greeting 'Shabbat Shalom'. In addition, this Shabbat is also Shabbat Teshuva when a person returns to his Creator and through this strengthens peace and harmony in the world.

If a person goes against the Torah and transgresses its mitzvot, he causes the foundations of the world to tremble, and because the world without Torah cannot exist, Hashem gave a person a way to amend, by creating teshuva. The first Shabbat after the sin of Adam was Shabbat Teshuva, named for the teshuva that Adam did for eating from the Tree of Knowledge, the same teshuva which sent a message to all future generations that it is never too late to repent for one's sins. Had Adam Harishon not been created on Friday, it could be that he would have already sinned at the beginning of the week, and if he would have waited to repent until Shabbat (which hints to teshuva), who knows if Hashem would have contained His anger and continued to sustain the world. Since Adam was created on Friday which is the day closest to Shabbat, he could immediately correct his deed, and through repentance bring correction to the world so that it could continue existing.

Chazal are explicit about the greatness of those who repent by telling us, "In a place where ba'alei teshuva stand complete tzaddikim cannot stand". Those who are chozer b'teshuva merit attaining this special level since they discard their pride by admitting their sins. In addition, they try hard to repent and atone for their transgressions. When we insult our friend or take something that is not ours, it is difficult to approach that friend and tell him how we acted; sometimes it entails embarrassment and shame that we fell to such a low level. But the fact that a person overcomes his embarrassment and confesses his sins, brings him to an elevated and selected place so lofty that even great tzaddikim cannot be found there.

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Hillulah of Tzaddikim

6 - Rabbi Yakov Yosef HaRofeh

7 - Rabbi Yakov Entebi

8 - Rabbi Avner Yisrael HaTzarfati,
Rabbi of Fez

9 - Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik

10 - Rabbi David Knafot, Rabbi of
Mogador

11 - Rabbi Shlomo Bachbot

12 - Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zhvill



Walking in their Ways

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

'One who desires to refine himself merits Heavenly assistance'

I was once hospitalized and was severely limited in my movements. I needed physical help to perform various activities. At all times, I had someone at my side: a family member, a disciple, or my devoted secretary. But one time, just when my secretary was in the next room engrossed in prayer, the nurses walked in and wanted to treat me.

Of course, I refused to allow them to touch me. In spite of my protests that my secretary would be with me in just a few moments, the nurses insisted that I be tended to immediately. I therefore asked one of them to call up my wife and ask her to send over a yeshiva student to help me. But they refused me this favor. So I asked that at least a male nurse tend to me. But they refused this request, as well. It was a Sunday, when the hospital is understaffed.

My shouts did not do the job, so I politely called over one of the nurses and asked to speak to her. I have no idea what went through this nurse's mind in those moments. All I thought about was Miriam Haneviah, sister of Moshe and Aharon, whom we read about in the previous week's parashah of Beha'alotcha. I thought that if I shared stories of the Torah with them just then, they would take me for a lunatic and leave me alone.

I told this nurse that Miriam said only a small thing against her brother Moshe, yet was struck with tzara'at. Who knows what her punishment would have been had she spoken outright lashon hara.

"How do you know that my Jewish name is Miriam?" she asked, shaken and pale.

The truth is that I did not know this beforehand. But I understood that she thought the story was a portent of what she could expect to happen to her.

I strongly felt Hashem's hand directing me specifically to this nurse and telling her specifically this story. Taking full advantage of the moment, I warned her, "Do not touch me, lest what happened to Miriam happen to you!"

The woman was visibly alarmed. She quickly called all of the other nurses to leave my room and called in a male nurse, who tended to me appropriately. From that day on, my word was law among all the hospital staff.

The Haftarah

"Return, Israel" (Hoshe'a 14, Micha 7)

The connection to this Shabbat: This haftarah is read on the Shabbat between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, since it talks about the concept of teshuva. These days are called the Ten Days of Repentance, they are days of compassion which are conducive for repentance.



Guard Your Tongue

Speech that Causes Death

One who talks about his friend transgresses the negative commandment of "Do not go tale-bearing among your people" (Vayikra 19:16). It is a great sin which brings people to kill. Therefore, the passuk continues, "Do not stand by the blood of your friend" which is spelling out the consequence of transgressing this sin. Take note what happened as a result of the tale-bearing of Do'eg Ho'Adomi; the entire town of Nov, the city of Kohanim, was killed.



Words of our Sages

Praying by the cave of Avshalom

The following story was heard from Rabbi Nissim Yagen zt"l: I was told that Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz used to pray at 'me'arat Avshalom'. This seemed very strange to me – we pray at the graveside of tzaddikim so that their merit should protect us; what purpose could be achieved by davening at the grave of a wicked person?

Avshalom was a wicked person; he was the son of David Hamelech and rebelled against his father's kingdom. He tried to win the people over to his side by getting them to come and be judged by him and not by David Hamelech, which he hoped would lead to crowning him as king in place of David Hamelech. Avshalom pursued his father David Hamelech, with the intention of killing him!

Since I merited attending to Rabbi Chaim for many years, Harav Yagen continued to tell over, I once plucked up the courage and asked him: "People say that the Rav goes to daven at 'me'arat Avshalom'. I would like to understand this since Avshalom was a great rasha?!"

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz answered: "I go to pray at the kotel and at Kever Rachel and also at 'me'arat Avshalom'. At 'me'arat Avshalom' I do not speak to Avshalom, I speak to Hashem and plead with Him".

Avshalom was a great rasha and caused David Hamelech tremendous suffering, including great humiliation. David Hamelech could have easily killed Avshalom, but he did not wish to kill his son, even though this son caused the people to rebel against him and even though he chased after him in the hope of killing him and also took his concubines. David Hamelech did not want to kill him at any cost because a father has mercy on his son.

In the middle of the harsh and bloody war between the warriors of Avshalom and the faithful men of David HaMelech, the men of David HaMelech found Avshalom with his head entangled in a large elm tree and he was suspended between the heavens and the earth. Even though David Hamelech had commanded his men not to hurt Avshalom, Yo'av thrust three staves into Avshalom's heart and then Yoav's armor-bearers killed Avshalom.

The rebellious son who took his fathers' concubines, chased after his father and wanted to kill him – is now dead! The war has ended. No longer will David Hamelech have to run for his life. When they came to tell him this good news, "The king trembled. He ascended to the upper chamber of the gateway and wept; and thus he said as he went: "My son, Avshalom! My son, my son, Avshalom! If only I could have died in your place! Avshalom, my son, my son!"...The salvation of that day was transformed to mourning for all the people, for the people heard it said on that day, "The king is saddened over his son."...The king wrapped his face, and the king cried out in a loud voice, "My son, Avshalom! Avshalom, my son, my son!" (Shmuel II, 19:1-5)

The Gemarah describes how when Avshalom died he was placed in the seventh and lowest place in gehinom. The Ramban in 'Sha'ar Hagmul' writes that if a person could choose between one hour in gehinom or seventy years of lyov's suffering, he would prefer seventy years of lyov's suffering rather than one hour of gehinom!

Eight times David Hamelech cried out, "my son"; each time brought Avshalom up one level, until he was taken out of all seven levels of gehinom and brought to Gan Eden.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz davened to Hashem by the grave of Avshalom: "Master of the World, look to what degree Avshalom sinned against his father and how much he persecuted him. And what did David Hamelech do? He mourned for him, davened for him and cried out: "my son Avshalom, my son..." in order to raise him out of the seven levels of unbearable gehinom and enable him to be brought to Gan Eden.

Are we worse than Avshalom?! We are your beloved children, even if we have sinned – save us, father...the day of judgment is approaching, we are in great danger, please, save us, our father our king..."

The prayers of Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, finished Harav Yagen with strong emotion, changed my entire approach to my prayers for the Yom Hadin.



Chazak U'Baruch

The Gemarah (Rosh Hashana 16a) tells us "The world is judged on four occasions. On Pesach for produce, on Azeret (Shavu'ot) for fruit, on the Chag (Succot) for water, and on Rosh Hashana all mankind pass before Him like members of the flock, as it says, He fashions their hearts all together, He comprehends all their deeds".

The Gemarah asks, what does 'like members of the flock' mean? The Gemarah offers three responses:

The first explanation: "Like the warriors of Bet David" – the soldiers of David Hamelech used to go out to war, each one a skilled expert – so too on Rosh Hashana we pass before Hashem one by one, like those great and important ones.

The second explanation: "Like the ascent of Bet Choron" – this refers to a high mountain which has a narrow path at its highest point, where two people cannot pass at the same time. So too on Rosh Hashana we pass before Hashem one by one.

The third explanation: "like sheep that are counted for tithing" – like sheep that are let past one by one when reckoning the tithes of the flock. When one tithes the sheep, they pass through a narrow door where only one can go through at a time. They count nine sheep and then the tenth one is marked with a red line as a sign that he was chosen for ma'aser.

Rabbi Shabtai Yudelevitz zt"l questions why, in order to clarify that each one passes single file, we need three allegories- like "soldiers", like "a steep hill", like "counting sheep for ma'aser" ?

Rabbi Shabtai clarifies this in his usual style, with a story about a successful merchant who travelled to 'market day' where he invested all his money, including money that he had borrowed from friends, in purchasing expensive merchandise. He decided to take the risk of illegally crossing the border in order to be saved from paying tax on the merchandise, which would considerably increase his wealth.

He did not rest until he found a wagon driver who was willing to take him across the border. He arranged every detail of the escape – the travelling would be done at night when there was no light from the moon, and on nights when there were not many soldiers by the border. The appointed night arrived and the merchant loaded the wagon with all his expensive merchandise. Then both of them, the merchant and the wagon driver, climbed up on the wagon.

Immediately at the start of the journey, the wagon driver noticed that the merchant's hands and legs were shaking... The wagon driver mockingly asked him: "Why are you trembling, we have another five hours until we get to our destination, what are you afraid of now when we are still near home"?

The merchant answered him, "Why should I not be afraid? I am making a simple calculation- if I will succeed I will gain tremendous wealth. My profits will amount to more than ten times the amount that I invested, and from then on I will enjoy the life of a rich and admired person; how wonderful! But if, G-d forbid, towards daylight we will meet a soldier at the border who will command "Halt! Raise your hands!" then the merchandise will be banned, I will not see a penny from it, and I will find myself in prison, with my creditors hounding

my family. Since this is the case, how can I not tremble, in another five hours I am either at the doorstep of riches or deep down in the depths?"...

Meanwhile, they continued on their way. Midnight arrived; they entered the forest and approached the border. It was then that the merchant noticed that the wagon driver was trembling like a leaf. The merchant asked him:

"Dear wagon driver, why are you so afraid?" The wagon driver answered, "Listen, at the end of the day I am also human; we are getting closer to the riskiest stretch. It is true that I do not own any of this merchandise, but the thought of sitting in prison for a month is not a pleasant one; the wagon and horses that will be taken from me I did not get free of charge"...

With wildly beating hearts they carried on travelling deeper into the thick forest following the paths that they had prepared in advanced; both are trembling... one kilometer, another kilometer, in fear and doubt of their future. But one thing is clear to them: the 'horses' are not trembling, they don't understand anything, the fear that is in the air does not mean anything to them, the 'horse' stays an animal before the border, at the border and after the border, he stays just as he was...

Ay! Continued the Maggid Rabbi Shabtai in his famous tune: This is what the Gemarah is hinting at with the three examples: the first one refers to the Jew who at the beginning of Elul begins to tremble, already on Shabbat mevorchin when 'Rosh Chodesh Elul' is announced he already starts trembling "like the soldiers of Bet David", who do not join the battalion without practicing first. They invest much energy and extended effort long before the crucial operation.

And then there is a second type of person whose yirat shamayim stays weak until Rosh Hashana, but once Rosh Hashana arrives he begins to tremble "like the ascent of Bet Choron", because when one walks on a dangerous path with a huge drop on both sides, one walks in single file, in fear. So too, on the Day of Judgment he is consumed with fear. But there is a third kind, Jewish people who are compared to 'quiet sheep joyfully skipping around who enter the gate and are counted one at a time and do not understand anything, oy, the tenth sheep does not know that the owner marked him with a red line on his back, he will soon be taken to be slaughtered...

"On Rosh Hashana will be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will be sealed how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created; who will live and who will die;" – a mark of life on the back or G-d forbid a red line – "and who will die". Where is your sense? Hashem sits on the throne of judgment on Rosh Hashana.

But the court case did not arrive suddenly, without notice. "Like an eagle awakens his nest, over his young he hovers" – the eagle has mercy on his children and doesn't enter the nest unexpectedly, but flies from tree to tree and chirps to his fellow bird in order to arouse his children so that they will be prepared to receive his weight. So too, throughout Elul Hashem knocks with the shofar, "Wake up sleeping ones from your sleep and those who sleep deeply awaken from your slumber". Hashem wishes to rouse us in preparation for Rosh Hashana, when the books of life and death are opened.

Treasures

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



Our task - to prepare a defense

The Haftarah of Shabbat Teshuva starts with the passuk (Hoshe'a 14:2) "Return, Israel, unto Hashem your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity." There is another verse also on the topic of teshuva (Tehillim 90:13) where it says, "Return, Hashem, until when? Relent concerning Your servants". One who contemplates these verses will notice that the expression 'shuva – return' is said concerning Am Yisrael and also concerning Hashem. How is it possible to use this term in reference to Hashem? All His deeds are just and righteous. What then, is the meaning of 'shuva Hashem'?

We can explain it in this way: Even when the Jewish people sin time after time, Hashem does not hurry to punish them but holds off his anger with the hope that His children will wake up from their slumber and repent for their bad deeds. This is the meaning of "Relent concerning Your servants". Hashem does not hurry to punish His children, since He takes comfort in the fact that the day will come when His children will repent before Him. But when the attribute of justice prevails and demands that Hashem punish His children; since the scales for a long time already have been tipped against them, Hashem, as if, has 'nothing to answer' the attribute of justice so He hastens to punish His children.

This is the 'teshuva' that is said concerning Hashem. He knows that He should have punished His children immediately after their sin without waiting for their repentance since it gets pushed off. But since Hashem agrees with the complaint of the attribute of justice, He goes back on His original decision not to punish, and seeks a way to 'punish' His children in order to indicate that they have pushed too far and must repent.

Unfortunately, it happens that people who were strong and healthy, with no specific health problems, suddenly one bright day leave the world. And just as a person likes to prepare himself before an important event in order to arrive organized and equipped, for example to be dressed appropriately and know the correct things that are meant to be said in this situation, so too when he stands before the Heavenly Court he will want to be prepared and ready for his case. How great will be the embarrassment of a person who did not prepare himself in time but comes to the World of Truth with his hands full of sins. It can be compared to one who stands before a group of judges who are about to charge him guilty, but he didn't prepare means of vindication which would have the power to save him from the decree.

We are required to make the most of this special Shabbat, Shabbat Teshuva, which is blessed with the light of the seven days of creation, in order to return to Hashem Yitbarach and His Torah.



When the Creator Hides His Face

“But I will surely have concealed My face on that day” (Devarim 31:18)

‘Hastir astir’ (I will surely have concealed). Why is there a double expression of concealment in the Hebrew text?

It is brought in the name of the holy Ba'al Shem Tov, that sometimes a person feels distant from Hashem and he therefore makes an effort to come closer.

But a greater concern than this, is when Hashem hides the feeling that He is distant and then the person is certain that he is close, even though he is really very far away...

This is the meaning of the double expression – Hashem will also hide from Am Yisrael His ‘hiding’, and they will have no idea that they are so very far away.

This kind of punishment is much worse. There is no way to deal with it since the person does not invest effort to come closer to his Creator.



Men of Faith

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

Holy Fervor

Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan had the custom of arranging a melaveh malkah feast in his house every Motza'ei Shabbat. The people of his community would gather in his house to pray Ma'ariv at the conclusion of Shabbat and afterward participate in the feast referred to as “melaveh malkah d'David Mashicha” with great celebration, singing and praising Hashem.

Rabbi Chaim would play enjoyable and moving music on his fiddle, which added a special touch when he sang the piyutim that his holy grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol, had composed. For many hours, Rabbi Chaim would sing and play the fiddle with holy fervor, enabling the crowd to experience the spiritual ecstasy of the departing Shabbat, which they escorted happily with music and piyutim.

It is told that during one melaveh malkah feast, the tzaddik felt an especially lofty spiritual sensation. He continued playing the same tune over and over again, until he was exhausted. Then, he turned to the crowd and told them, “I am too tired to continue playing music. It's a good idea to get some rest and gather strength for the coming six days of work.”

Since it was already early morning, the participants of the melaveh malkah realized that it was time to recite the Kriyat Shema of Shacharit.

After praying with the congregation, they asked Rabbi Chaim why he had repeated the same tune the whole night. Rabbi Chaim did not respond.

After the people entreated him over and over again to reveal the reason for his behavior, he told them, “If you will ask me once more, I will not allow you to congregate in my house on Motza'ei Shabbat again.”

The people begged the Rav's forgiveness and did not persist in their inquiries. They realized that the Rav could not divulge his reasons because he conducted himself in a lofty manner that was way beyond their comprehension.

The Healing Music

One Motza'ei Shabbat, Rabbi Chaim Hakatan left his house with his attendant. On his way he met Mr. Karutshy, and Rabbi Chaim requested that he join them.

The three entered the house of a certain Jew. There, they found all the relatives standing around his bed, tearfully reciting Tehillim, as the man was in the throes of death. When Rabbi Chaim asked what was happening, the family members explained that the man had swallowed a bone, and it had become lodged in his throat, causing him to choke to death.

Mr. Karutshy's son told Moreinu v'Rabbeinu that Rabbi Chaim did not get alarmed by the traumatic situation. He informed the family decisively, “The man's final hour has not yet arrived. He is not destined to die now.”

Rabbi Chaim requested that Mr. Karutshy sit by his side and accompany him in singing the holy piyutim. As soon as they began to sing together, the sick man began to vomit. He vomited considerably until the bone came out of his throat.