

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

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MASKIL LEDAVID

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

An Opportunity for Renewal

"And so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt and My signs that I placed among them – that you may know that I am Hashem" (Shemot 10:2)

This verse contains a command to impart to one's children the praises of Hashem and His mighty deeds, in order to implant emunah in their hearts that Hashem is the Only Power and He is the One who orchestrates all events. This was the main goal of the ten plagues with which the Egyptians were smitten. They did not serve simply as a punishment for Pharaoh and his people for refusing to send out the Jewish people, but were a way of preparing Am Yisrael to receive the Torah and accept the yoke of Heaven; to prepare their hearts so that they would be fitting to become the Chosen Nation.

The more wonders and miracles that the Bnei Yisrael witness, the more Hashem's Name will become exalted in their eyes. This will bring them to fear Him and a burning love for Hashem will be ignited in them and they will willingly agree to accept the Torah and always fulfil His commandments.

The first mitzvah that was given to the Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim - the command to sanctify the New Moon - was also given in order to prepare their hearts to love Hashem Yitbarach and fulfil His commandments. The Torah tells us (Shemot 12:2) "This month shall be for you the beginning of the months" and Chazal say (Menachot 29a): A breita in the name of Rabbi Yishmael: The renewing of the moon was hard (to comprehend) for Moshe, until Hashem showed him with His finger as it says, "This month shall be for you".

This is extremely puzzling. Why did Moshe Rabbeinu find these laws of the New Moon so difficult? This was not a new commandment that had never yet been kept; even before Moshe Rabbeinu was told about it, the Avot fulfilled this mitzvah, for they kept the entire Torah. Hashem testified about Avraham Avinu (Bereishit 26:5): "Because Avraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards; My commandments; My decrees, and My Torahs", and Rava says (Yoma 28a): Avraham Avinu even kept the commandment of 'eiruv tavshilin', as it says, "My Torahs" - one Written Law and one Oral Law. There is no doubt that he also kept the mitzvah of the New Moon. So why did Moshe not know the laws and intricacies of this mitzvah?

Bs"d, I would like to suggest that of course Moshe Rabbeinu was familiar with the laws of the New Moon. But what he didn't understand was its es-

sence and depth. Moshe realised that sanctifying the New Moon is indeed an important mitzvah because all the festivals are fixed according to when the New Moon is sighted. However, he understood that it was only a preparation for a mitzvah, because through this the Bnei Yisrael will be able to calculate the exact times. But he thought that on its own it does not have an inherent purpose. So how come sighting the New Moon became a mitzvah over which we make a blessing, and secondly, what is its great importance that it was chosen to be the first mitzvah that the Bnei Yisrael received? This was Moshe Rabbeinu's difficulty.

So Hashem answered him, "This month shall be for you the beginning of the months". The meaning of the words 'Rosh Chodesh' (ראש חודש) come from the term 'a renewed head' (ראש מחודש), a head that is clear of any sin or spiritual disorder. Just as the moon renews itself every month, so too must every person renew his thoughts and cleanse them from any impurities that have attached themselves. Every person must examine his deeds and assess his ways once a month, and if he finds any flaws he should immediately eliminate the blemishes and through that he will merit a 'new head', unsoiled for the service of Hashem.

On contemplating the shape of the moon, one notices that at the beginning of the month it is hidden from the human eye and its form cannot be seen. The next day a tiny crack peeks out, and once again the following day slightly more becomes noticeable. Each day we can make out more of its form until its shape is complete and it can be clearly seen on high, in its full glory. Hashem commanded us to sanctify the New Moon so that a person can learn from it how to approach his avodat Hashem. He must start by serving Hashem in a small way, and the next day he must add to his spiritual growth, with every day building on the previous one. He should go from strength to strength in holiness and purity until he attains his true potential.

This is the essence of this mitzvah. Hashem requests that at least once a month one should pick up one's eyes heavenward, take a look at the moon and contemplate its renewal. From this he will derive an important lesson - that just as the moon grows each day until it reaches its full form, so too a person must strive to grow in Torah and increase his yirat shamayim until his soul reaches perfection. Whoever takes this path and contemplates the significance of sanctifying the New Moon, is promised a fresh start and his mind will become cleansed of any sin or spiritual ailment.

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Hilula

6 - Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman, author of 'Oneg Yom Tov'

7 - Rabbi David of Lelov

8 - Rabbi Yosef Gian, Av Beit Din of Bengazi

9 - Rabbi Ya'akov Katina, author of 'Rachmei Ha'Av'

10 - Rabbi Shalom Mizrahi, the Rashash Hakadosh

11 - Rabbi Chaim Toledano

12 - Rabbi Rafael Pinto zya"l



Walking in their Ways

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

Under Hashem's Watch

It was the evening of the hilula in Morocco. My watch was broken, so I turned to my companion, R' Mordechai Knafo and asked if he happened to have a spare one that I could borrow. He replied in the negative, but suggested that I pray for Hashem to send me a watch.

I replied that I didn't feel it was right to bother Hashem, so to speak, with such an insignificant request as a watch. But R' Mordechai insisted that nothing is too small for Hashem. Upon his insistence, I lit a candle in memory of the tzaddikim and started praying for a watch.

Immediately afterward, R' Mordechai Knafo's father asked me to help him fill out a lottery ticket. I suggested which two numbers he should choose, stipulating that if either of them was the winning number, we would split the winnings. I pledged to contribute my share toward covering the expenses of the hilula.

With great kindness, Hashem arranged that one of the numbers won. Each of us received twenty-two thousand francs (approximately six thousand dollars).

When R' Mordechai heard about our winnings, he said, "Don't you see, Rabbi David? We are in need of Heavenly mercy in every single aspect of our lives, including lottery tickets. Nothing is too small or simple for Hashem. We must turn to Him in prayer for every little detail of our lives."

R' Knafo's father later came back to me, this time bringing a watch. He told me that as he was resting on the beachfront, Rabbi Chaim Pinto had appeared to him in a dream and told him, "You have two watches. Give the one you just received to my grandson, Rabbi David, who needs one desperately right now."

I was dumbstruck at the turn of events. After I had won such a substantial sum, people advised me to buy myself a new watch. But I replied, "Heaven forbid that I should touch a franc of the money I won. This money was consecrated for the hilula expenses. When I saw how a watch was arranged for me on High, I realized that the merit of the tzaddik had a hand in this."



Words of our Sages

A Daf of Gemara or a Piece of Challah?

"And you shall redeem every human firstborn among your sons" (Shemot 13:12)

It is an age-old tradition among the Anshei Yerushalayim, that one who partakes in the se'uda of a pidyon haben is considered as if he has fasted eighty-four fasts.

This is the origin of the custom that in some communities the guests grab a k'zayit of challah from the big challah that the Kohen cuts at the pidyon haben. This custom has become so well-established, that people actually shove each other in their zest to obtain a few crumbs of the challah.

The 'Sdei Chemed' (klall 54), brings the following story: "In 5659 I was invited to a pidyon haben in the holy city of Yerushalayim but did not attend. I was told that it is written in the sefarim that eating from the se'uda of a pidyon haben is considered as if one has fasted eighty-four fasts, but I was not familiar with this idea." He finished off: "It seems to me that there is no source for this, it is only a nice idea that people say."

Time passed and the work 'Sdei Chemed' was published. The Anshei Yerushalayim were surprised to see that the 'Sdei Chemed, who was an expert in all the Rishonim and Acharonim and knew every secret of the Torah, had written in his book that 'there is no source for the above custom'. They were astonished: How is it possible to say this about a minhag that is so well-known in Yerushalayim and has been passed on through so many generations? How can one say that it has no source and it is only a nice idea that people say?

At about the same time, one of the talmidei chachamim of Yerushalayim made a pidyon haben and the Rav of Yerushalayim, the Gaon Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l attended. The words of the 'Sdei Chemed' stirred up quite a commotion between the guests.

Eventually one of the guests stood up and announced: "Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld is here with us. He is well known for his exceptional mastery of the entire Torah, including all the Rishonim and Acharonim. Let us ask him what he says about this."

Rabbi Chaim smiled at his audience and said: "There is indeed no source for this idea. But, the Torah does hint to it..."

"Where is this?" They asked in surprise.

"In the very verse that talks about redeeming the firstborn. **"וּכְל בְּכוֹר אָדָם בְּנִין תַּפְדֶּה"** – "You shall redeem every human firstborn". These three words stand for,

"אם דבר מה בפדיון הנהית – יחשב כאילו תענית פד התענית".

"If you enjoy something from a pidyon haben, it is considered as if you have fasted eighty-four fasts.

The tzaddik then added his own personal touch:

"There is another deed which is considered as if a person has fasted 84 fasts, and that is - **דף גמרא**! One who learns a page of gemarah is considered as if he fasted eighty-four fasts, for daf has the numerical value of eighty-four! But for this we don't find so many customers....

The Haftarah



"The word that Hashem spoke" (Yirmiyahu 46)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah tells about the punishment of Pharaoh and the destruction of Egypt. The parsha too talks about the last three plagues with which the Egyptians were smitten.



Guard Your Tongue

Praising Someone In Front of his Friend

One who praises someone in front of his friend, in a way that could stir up resentment in his friend's heart, is considered as if he has spoken avak lashon hara. Praise can sometimes be a catalyst for hurting the other person.



Pearls of the Parshah

Who Can Reckon His Praises

“So that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I made a mockery of Egypt” (Shemot 10:2)

The sefer ‘Zichron Saloniki’ brings a story about someone from the town of Salonika, who was reading the haggadah on the Seder Night. When he came to the passage of “Therefore we are obligated to thank, to laud, to praise...”, he intentionally missed out one of the expressions of praise, for he decided that it was unnecessary and served no purpose other than drawing out the prayer...

That night, the Chacham Rabbi Shabtai Gavriel Yehoshua zt”l, one of the respectable members of the community, had a dream.

“So-and-so committed a certain act and as a result will become sick with a throat ailment for six months.”

The next morning the Chacham met this person and indeed the man, who was breathing heavily, wished him “Chag Sameach” in a hoarse voice. Rabbi Shabtai replied, “This happened to you because yesterday you omitted one of Hashem’s praises and there is a complaint against you. You are being taken to account because of it and you will suffer for six months.”

Correct Conduct Even in the Dark

“There was a thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt for a three-day period” (Shemot 10:22)

Rashi explains: “Yisrael searched through their belongings and saw their vessels, and when they left (Egypt) they asked for them, and they said we don’t possess anything, he said to him, I saw it in your house and it is in this place”. The ‘Peninei Da’at’ ponders this behaviour, questioning the appropriateness of searching someone else’s possessions when they are unable to prevent him?

One can add to this question: Were they not embarrassed to tell the Egyptians that they had searched through their houses? This is not exactly the kind of behaviour that is expected of the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov?

The answer to both these questions is that since the Egyptians couldn’t stand and walk for three days during the plague of thick darkness, they were in need of the Bnei Yisrael to come into their houses to assist them with eating and drinking, which necessitated the Bnei Yisrael going through their possessions. This is how they could later tell them that they saw a certain object in their house and in which exact place, as Rashi tells us.

Pharoh’s Loss

“That He remove from me only this death” (Shemot 10:17)

Unlike with the other plagues, Pharoh described this plague of locusts as “death”. What is the reason for this?

The commentaries offer a number of explanations for this; either that some people died during this plague, or because after this plague and the previous one of hail there was no food left in the land, or as the Ba’al HaTurim explains that snakes came together with the locust and killed the people.

Rabbi Natan Einfeld offers another explanation:

When the swarms of locusts arrived, the Egyptians rejoiced and said, “After all the damage that we have been through from the plagues, now we will finally have an abundance of tasty food.”

Why the stress on abundance? There was a law in Egypt that they had to separate a fifth from every crop and give it to Pharoh. With the arrival of the locusts they rejoiced for they would be able to keep everything for themselves.

Therefore Pharoh said about this plague, “Remove from me only this death” because from this plague he lost out...

Treasures

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



What Remained from the Inspiration?

“Pharoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder ceased, and he continued to sin; and he made his heart stubborn, he and his servants.” (Shemot 9:34)

To our great distress there are people today who follow in Pharoh’s footsteps and they are obligated to mend their ways immediately.

Often when a person is hit by a tragedy and he is desperate for Hashem’s salvation, he is drawn closer to Hashem and promises to repent. But the minute Hashem has mercy on him and the suffering lets up, he quickly reverts to his previous ways and forgets about the path of Torah and mitzvot. Is this not similar to Pharoh behaviour? Is he not walking on the same crooked path where at first Pharoh shouted “Hashem is the Righteous One” and as soon as the suffering disappeared he once again hardened his heart?!

I knew someone who was involved in a serious car accident. All his limbs were crushed and his life was in immediate danger. But, with Hashem’s kindness, his life was miraculously saved. When I went to visit him in the hospital he was full of emotion and told me, “I will never forget this miracle that Hashem performed for me. Now I know that there is a Creator.” I answered him, “We will meet again next week...”

He didn’t understand my intention but indeed two weeks later I met him again. I asked him – “Do you still know that there is a Creator? Did you take any steps in spiritual growth as a way of thanking Him for the miracle? Do you feel any closer to Hashem?”

He lowered his eyes and remained silent. He didn’t have an answer for me.

I said to him, “If you sincerely desire to recognize the Creator and draw closer to Him, you wouldn’t hesitate. It was wrong for you to say, ‘tomorrow I will repent and change my ways’. As soon as you experienced Hashem’s kindness and this great miracle that He performed for you, you should have taken this inspiration and used it immediately to come closer to Him and His Torah. But you didn’t rush. You took your time to mend your ways so the inspiration which gripped you slowly weakened its hold and you lost everything.”

This is the kind of behaviour that we observe in Pharoh. As soon as he experienced the miracle he cried out superficially, “Hashem is the Righteous One”. However, deep in his heart nothing changed. He did not take any steps to amend his ways. Therefore after a short time he reverted to his old behaviour and said, “Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice”. When the Bnei Yisrael saw Pharoh’s crooked ways even after he had experienced all the ten plagues, they understood how warped this approach is and how important it is to draw near to Hashem sincerely.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Chinuch is Absorbed through Play

On the verse “And so that you may relate in the ears of your son” (Shemot 10:2) – the Midrash tells us that this refers to the plague of locusts, as it says in the Navi concerning this plague “Tell your children about it” (Yoel 1:3). The verse continues: “and your children to their children, and their children to another generation:”

What is so unique about this plague that we are told to tell our children about it?

Furthermore, why especially concerning locusts does the Navi instruct us “your children to their children, and their children to another generation”?

Rabbi David Luria offers a possible explanation: It is the way of small children to play with locusts and grasshoppers. The Gemara speaks about one who finds locusts, puts them aside for small children to play with. Therefore it is natural for children to talk about the plague of locust more than they discuss the other plagues.

Children used to play with locusts, not with playmobil or lego. When they are playing with locusts – grasshoppers, it is a wonderful opportunity to instruct them about the plague of locust that occurred in Egypt.

Men of Faith

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

Saved in the Merit of the Tzaddik

R' Shmuel Marciano once traveled to the tzaddikim Rabbi Meir Pinto and Rabbi Refael Pinto in Casablanca in order to receive their blessings. There was a woman in the house, who had also come to receive the blessings of the two righteous brothers.

Suddenly, the woman turned to Rabbi Shmuel Marciano and declared, “May it be Hashem’s will that just as the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto wrought a tremendous miracle for me, so, too, Hashem should perform miracles for you.”

When R' Shmuel asked her to tell him about the miracle which she had experienced, she told the following story:

For a living, I engage in the production of alcoholic beverages, such as wine and arrack, and sell them to the Jews, despite the fact that the sale of alcoholic beverages is against the law. The law forbids Jews to produce alcoholic beverages without a license. (Note that this business was a source of income for hundreds of Jews several decades ago in Morocco, and the government would deliberately close their eyes to those engaging in such business, knowing full well that this was their livelihood.)

One day, someone who was jealous of my thriving business informed on me to the

authorities. All of a sudden, without any prior warning, the police raided my home and began to search the house. Of course, I was very frightened and did not have where to escape, since the whole house was surrounded by policemen.

Immediately, I cried out in prayer for the merit of Rabbi Chaim Pinto to protect me, and I begged Hashem to come to the aid of a poor widow, whose only source of income was the sale of alcoholic beverages and arrack.

Immediately afterward, I felt instant relief. With incomprehensible joy, I began to “help” the police search my house for the liquor and alcohol. The police were very surprised that I was helping them unlock doors and open the barrels full of wine and arrack. I myself was surprised that I was helping the police search the house. But this is the way it was.

The police searched every room in the house, opening barrel after barrel, but did not notice anything amiss. When they finished going through the house, having searched in every corner, they told me that someone had tipped them off that I was selling alcoholic beverages without a license. They even apologized to me about the trouble and mess that they had caused during the search. They left the house empty-handed.

And this is how I was saved from slander in the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Hakatan.