

הַיְהָיָה THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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LIVING WITH CONSTANT JOY

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

Our Parsha begins with the verse that states, "Vehaya [And it will be] when you enter the land" (Deuteronomy 26:1), and concerning this our Sages have said, "The word vehaya always expresses joy" (Vayikra Rabba 11:4). One must therefore understand what type of joy is meant here, since the parents of all those who entered into Eretz Israel had died in the desert. They were the ones who had left Egypt, but now there was not one of them left because they did not have the merit to enter into Eretz Israel. In light of this, what could this type of joy consist of? If we say that it was the joy of bringing the first fruits, why does the Torah not immediately state, "Vehaya [And it will be] when you enter the land ... you shall bring the first fruits of all the produce of the earth"? It is the entry into the land that the Torah cites as the primary reason for the joy in question.

We will attempt to explain this point. The Torah teaches us two principles here, ones from which a man should learn to diligently work on himself, and ones that explain why joy must be felt when entering into Eretz Israel. Thus everything will become perfectly clear.

These principles are as follows:

1. Man should accept everything that happens to him with joy, in the spirit of the Sages' teaching: "One must bless G-d for evil in the same way that one blesses Him for good" (Berachot 54a) in regards to everything that concerns the observance of mitzvot. It must be understood that everything comes from G-d, Who is a righteous Judge, and that there is no reason to protest His decisions or His commandments. In fact, if He sends troubles to someone, that person must

examine himself and reflect upon the reason for this decree, for "Nothing bad comes from the mouth of the Most High" (Lamentations 3:38). Consequently, everything is for a person's good, as it is written, "Everything that the Merciful One does is for the good" (Berachot 60b), and troubles come to a man but through his own sins, for "the L-RD admonishes the one He loves" (Proverbs 3:12). Thus everything that comes to a man from G-d is for the good.

This is what we note at the moment when the Children of Israel entered into their land. True, they were in pain because of the death of their fathers, who were not even allowed to be buried in Eretz Israel, but they had to keep in mind that it was their fathers who had brought this upon themselves by speaking ill of the Holy Land. This is why their children had to enter in joy and bring the first fruits to the Sanctuary with joy, for it is only through joy that one may acquire the land and that one may serve G-d. And at that very moment, the Holy One, blessed be He, gives to the Children of Israel both material and spiritual abundance, while if they act without joy He comes and reprimands them, as it is written, "Because you did not serve the L-RD your G-d with joy" (Deuteronomy 28:47).

Consequently, at the time when the children had to enter into Eretz Israel, even if they dreaded the wars that awaited them, this should not have prevented them from acting out of joy, for the Eternal fought for them. This is the connection with the previous Parsha, Ki Teitzei ("when you go out to war"). It was forbidden for them to sadden themselves over the fact that their fathers were not to be buried in the Holy Land, for this

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would have undermined their joy and therefore they would have had nothing in abundance. In such a case, they would not have had any first fruits to bring.

This is why they had to repair the sin of their fathers, men who had slandered the land (Numbers 13:32), so much in fact that it had not yielded its fruit to them. It was necessary for the children to enter into the land with joy, the joy of having merited such entry, and that joy would have enabled them to accomplish with fervor the mitzvot that depend on the land. This in turn would have allowed them to have agricultural products and first fruits to bring to the Sanctuary.

2. We may also add to this and say that “Vehaya ki tavo” teaches us that one must enter into the Holy Land with joy. We must enter in joy even if there are no first fruits to bring, or even if we must suffer shame and bring them in twig baskets while the rich bring them in golden baskets (Bikurim Ch. 3, Mishnah 8). In any case, one must always rejoice and guard oneself against rebelling against G-d’s word, for “the hidden things are for the L-RD our G-d” (Deuteronomy 29:28), and only He can know the cause of our pains.

Moreover, let us imagine a person who in the past was rich and brought his first fruits in golden baskets, but now has become impoverished. He worries over what people will say about him and how the priests’ attitude toward him will be, for in his mind they will certainly not honor him as before. He risks becoming saddened and depressed in his service of G-d, and yet the Torah tells us vehaya, an expression signifying joy. This is because, regardless of the circumstance, one must bring the first fruits to the Sanctuary with joy. And in any case, one must always rejoice over having the merit to live in the Holy Land, the most important land in the eyes of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the place where the Shechinah resides for all generations.

As it is written, “the eyes of the L-RD your G-d are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year’s end” (Deuteronomy 11:12), so much so that there is no greater joy than living in the land, for the Shechinah and holiness of the land allow a man to increase in greatness, and his heart elevates itself in the ways of G-d (II Chronicles 17:6) and in His mitzvot.

One may also explain this Parsha according to the following words of the Sages: “Whoever brings a gift to a Talmid Chacham, it is as if he had offered first fruits [in the Sanctuary]” (Ketubot

105b). In fact, the generation of the desert had slandered the land, which represents the righteous, for as we know Eretz Israel is the holiest of all lands (Kelim 1:4) and instead of bringing it a gift (meaning, to attach oneself to it and to perform the mitzvot that depend on it, just as one attaches oneself to a Tzaddik), they spoke badly of it and didn’t want to bring it a gift.

This is why the Eternal punished them with death in the desert without letting them enter, and by way of compensation their sons received the command to attach themselves to Eretz Israel with joy, for it represents the Tzaddik. They were commanded to enter therein and to affront all the trials awaiting them there, for better or for worse, and thus it would be as if they had brought the first fruits. For in arriving in the land, they would elevate themselves, become influenced by the purity of the Sanctuary, and would attach themselves to the path of justice and goodness.

This teaches us a great principle: One may devote oneself to study Torah without participating in the work of the land, however in that case, one would not have first fruits to bring, for one would not have any fruits at all. Thus the Torah commanded us that regardless of the circumstance, one must put an effort to work the land and to bring the first fruits to the Sanctuary.

Even if someone is rich and has workers to do his work for him, he should do as much as possible to bring the fruits himself in order to show his love for the land and the mitzvot. In the same way, in our time a great person who devotes himself to Torah should not neglect to go to the Tzaddikim of his generation, without worrying about the effort and weariness that this will entail. This is because there will always be something to be learned from them, and one must do so with joy, as was the case with the Sanctuary.

This is what the expression vehaya alludes to, a word that denotes joy, for in all circumstances a man should enter the Holy Land in joy, and not in hopelessness or despair, for no harm comes from the Eternal. Thus such a man will rejoice to bring his gift, will attach himself to the land, and will be able to triumph over all obstacles and all his suffering because of joy.

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

RABBI CHAIM PINTO

The Hilloula of our saintly and venerated revered teacher, Rabbi Haim Pinto the Great (may his memory be blessed), occurs this year on Sunday, September 12 and corresponds to Elul 26, 5758.

He was born in Agadir, Morocco on Tammuz 15, 5509 (July 1, 1749), on the Hilloula of Rabbi Haim Ben Attar.

He was the son of the saintly and venerated Rabbi Shlomo Pinto Zatzal, the descendant of Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto, known by the name of the Rif of Ein Yaakov.

Rabbi Shlomo Pinto Zatzal instructed Torah to his son, Rabbi Haim Pinto, when he was very young. Unfortunately, Rabbi Shlomo Pinto passed away in 1761, leaving behind him an orphan barely 12 years old. That same year, an earthquake completely destroyed Agadir, and numerous Jews fled and settled in Mogador (Essaouira). Rabbi Haim Pinto was to be found among the refugees.

Rabbi Haim Pinto studied Torah along with Rabbi David Ben Hazan at the yeshiva of Rabbi Yaakov Bibas, the Dayan of the city. Rabbi Haim Pinto's reputation was so great that all Morocco resonated with accounts of his miracles and wonders, and this from his most early years.

His teacher, Rabbi Yaakov Bibas, died in 1769, and the community of the city turned to Rabbi Haim Pinto to accept the heavy responsibility of Dayan. Being but 20 years old, he finally accepted this responsibility in association with his friend, Rabbi David Ben Hazan. Rabbi Haim Pinto carried out his mandate as Head of the Rabbinic Court in an extremely firm manner, and when necessary he knew how to be very strict. Never did he allow someone to act incorrectly, exercising this function for more than 70 years. The greatest Chachamim of the generation esteemed him with fear and respect, and Jews and Muslims alike venerated him. His fame spread throughout Morocco, across the Middle East, and reached all the way to Europe. Eliyahu Hanavi revealed himself regularly to Rabbi Haim Pinto and studied with him, which explains why Rabbi Haim Pinto participated in all the Brit Milahs that took place in Mogador.

Among the many stories about Rabbi Haim Pinto z"l, the following account has been gathered from the book on him entitled *The Light of the Righteous*.

Rabbi Haim Pinto awoke every night to recite prayers and to make "requests of G-d". Afterwards, he would study Torah until dawn. One day his daughter Mazal entered into his room in the middle of the night and saw him studying with a man. In the morning, he scolded her and said, "Why did you come into my room without knocking?" She was not in a position to see Eliyahu Hanavi. "Now you deserve a punishment, meaning that on the day of your marriage you will become blind." His daughter, who was a great saint, accepted the decree.

A few years later, the grandson of Rabbi Khalifa Malka came from Agadir to Mogador and went directly to Rabbi Haim Pinto's home. When he saw Mazal, she found grace in his eyes, and so he asked Rabbi Haim Pinto to give his daughter to him in marriage, but the Rabbi refused. He insisted, but Rabbi Haim Pinto absolutely refused. The grandson of Rabbi Khalifa Malka returned to Agadir saddened and hurt because the Rabbi had refused to give him his daughter as a wife.

Later, Rabbi Haim Pinto had a dream in which he saw Rabbi Khalifa Malka, who told him, "I sent you my grandson happy, and you sent him back to me sad." Rabbi Haim Pinto responded, "Your honor knows that my daughter Mazal saw Eliyahu Hanavi and a decree has been given: On the day of her marriage, she will become blind. This is why I refused her to your grandson."

Rabbi Khalifa replied that his grandson would accept this decree as is. All of this occurred during the dream.

The next day, Rabbi Haim Pinto sent a special messenger to Agadir to bring the grandson of Rabbi Khalifa Malka to him. When Rabbi Haim Pinto saw him, he explained what would happen to his daughter on the day of her wedding, and he agreed. However, thanks to their merit and uprightness, this cruel decree was annulled and they had children and lived a great many years. They passed away in the same week.

When Rabbi Haim Pinto would arise every night to study Torah, his Shamash (assistant) Rabbi Aaron Ben Haim, would also arise and prepare him a cup of coffee. Once, the Shamash awoke a little late and therefore hurried to prepare a cup of coffee for the Rabbi, when suddenly he heard two voices coming from his room. He then went and prepared an additional cup for the unexpected guest. In the morning, Rabbi Haim Pinto asked his Shamash, "Why did you prepare two cups of coffee during the night?" The Shamash responded, "I heard two voices and I thought to prepare a second cup for the guest." The Rabbi told him, "Happy are you, my son, you who had the merit to hear the voice of Eliyahu Hanavi. However I decree that you repeat this secret to no one." After the death of Rabbi Haim Pinto, the Shamash recounted this incident to the inhabitants of the city.

Rabbi Maklouf Ben Lisha came to the home of Rabbi Haim Pinto concerning matters of importance for the community of Mogador. Because of the fact that this was a serious matter, he went directly to Rabbi Haim Pinto in the middle of the night. He entered into his room and saw the Rabbi, whose face was "illuminated", and someone else who resembled an angel. He wanted to come a little closer, but he was seized with such great fear and fright that he fled to his home. The next day the Rabbi told him, "Very happy are you, my son, who had the merit of seeing the face of Eliyahu Hanavi." Rabbi Maklouf lived a long time, to the age of 110, and he described this incident in his prayer book.

Rabbi Haim Pinto of blessed memory had four sons: Rabbi Yehudah (known as Rabbi Hadane), Rabbi Yossef, Rabbi Yoshiyahu, and Rabbi Yaakov. All were great Tzaddikim, devoted to Torah and to Klal Israel.

Rabbi Haim Pinto of blessed memory left this world on Elul 26, 5605 (September 28, 1845) at the age of 96. On the day of his passing, he promised his disciples that those who would invoke his name on the day of his Hilloula would see their prayers answered. May his merit protect us. Amen.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

A teaching of the Maguid of Dubno

It is written, "The L-RD will scatter you among all the peoples, from the end of the earth to the end of the earth" (Deuteronomy 28:64).

King David exclaims the following: "Until when, O L-RD, will You constantly hide Yourself? ... [Be] mindful of how short is my lifetime" (Psalms 89:47-48).

We can understand the punishments that Hashem sends us by a parable of the Maggid of Dubno.

Let us suppose that a father gives some medication to his son in order to heal him, and at the same time prevents him from eating foods that are too rich (even though they taste good) so that he does not incur harm to himself during his treatment. This is a hardship that is completely different from the punishment that a master, in his rage, inflicts on his servant. This latter suffering is constant, whereas the anger of our Heavenly Father resembles that of a father towards his son, anger which lasts but a moment. Until this child takes his medication, his father appears to be angry with him. However once the medication has had its effect, this so-called anger changes into great mercy, the punishment into an act of kindness, and the bitterness into delicacy. All this, of course, happens only on condition that the child gets better. If he refuses to take his medication, however, and pays no heed to the directives given to him, his father's anger will also become constant, and the punishments will truly become real, given that everything that the father has done for his son's good has been of no use. This is the meaning of, "Until when, O L-RD, will You constantly hide Yourself?" Will Your anger become real and permanent, because – since we have not yet repented of our sins – it has not yet had any affect on us?

This is why King David added, "[Be] mindful of how short is my lifetime."