



The Path To Follow SHEMINI

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HEVRAT PINTO
Under Aegis of
**RABBI DAVID HANANIA
PINTO CHLITA**
11, rue du plateau
75019 PARIS
Tel: +331 42 08 25 40
Fax +331 42 08 50 85
www.hevratpinto.org
Responsible of publication
Hanania Soussan

PEACE AND HARMONY DRAW THE PRESENCE OF THE SHECHINAH (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

This week's parsha begins with the verse, "It was on the eighth day" (Leviticus 9:1), a reference to the eighth day of the Sanctuary's inauguration. Moses had assembled and disassembled the Sanctuary once each day, doing so for an entire week. Then on the eighth day Moses assembled it and left it standing. On that day he called his brother Aaron and told him to bring inaugural offerings before Hashem. Yet not only were offerings brought on the eighth day, but other things as well, things meant to teach us the path to follow in all the generations and for every moment in our lives.

Moses asked Aaron to bring the offerings, at which point they realized that fire was not descending upon the Altar from Heaven. In his grief, Aaron believed that his sins were the cause. Moses therefore approached him and said that it wasn't so: "Let us go, the two of us, into the Tent of Meeting, and then fire will descend from Heaven." In fact fire did come down and consume the offerings that Aaron had brought upon the Altar.

Furthermore, a terrible event occurred on that day. Aaron's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, thought that because fire had not descended from Heaven, they had to do something to make it descend. What did they do? They knew what the Halachah was: "Even if fire has descended from Heaven, it is a mitzvah to bring ordinary fire." Thus they went to get ordinary fire and brought it to the Altar. What happened in the end? Aaron's two sons died because they brought an alien fire, which they had not been commanded to bring. True, their intentions were pure, but they had not received any order to act.

There is more. At that time Moses also approached the Children of Israel, who were standing before the Sanctuary, and he said to them: "This is the thing that the L-RD has commanded

you to do, then the glory of the L-RD will appear to you" (Leviticus 9:6). This verse, however, in no way describes what Hashem had commanded them to do! Moses and Aaron eventually entered the Tent of Meeting, and when they emerged Aaron blessed all the people with the priestly blessing. Now how does the priestly blessing end? It ends with the words, "May the L-RD...grant you peace." Aaron finished by a blessing for peace, and we are fully aware of just how serious is strife and hatred among Jews. Alternatively, we know just how great is the power of peace and harmony. Strife and hatred destroy all that is good, and when a conflict exists, even the Holy One, blessed be He, cannot dwell among Jews. In that case their sins arise to Heaven to accuse them.

This does not happen when peace and harmony reign among the Jewish people. In that case each person helps the other, each compliments the other, and each thinks both of the pain and the suffering of his fellow Jew. In short, everyone tries as much as possible to connect with others, to encourage and help them with everything they need. During the eight days of the Sanctuary's inauguration, Moses wanted to demonstrate this concept to the Children of Israel. During each of the eight days, he assembled the Sanctuary and then disassembled it. Why did he go to all the trouble of doing this? It is because he wanted

to show the Children of Israel that when harmony ceases among them, then even Hashem's Sanctuary – even the most important house of the Holy One, blessed be He – comes apart. In other words, it is only by the power of harmony that the Sanctuary can be solidly erected; only by the power of unity can we build the Temple for Hashem; and only by the power of unity will the Shechinah rest upon the Sanctuary in order for Hashem to reside among His people. Even a house that a person builds for himself will break apart and disappear.

Let us review what we have seen in this week's parsha, the events that transpired on the eight days of the Sanctuary's inauguration, especially the eighth day. When Aaron saw that fire had not come down from Heaven, he was upset and believed that he was to blame. After all, he had fashioned the golden calf for the Children of Israel, having thrown their earrings and jewelry into a fire from which the calf had emerged. This calf was fashioned in an atmosphere of complete strife and rebellion against Hashem, which is why Aaron was so upset.

Moses then consoled Aaron and told him to come into the Tent of Meeting with him. At that point fire descended upon the offerings on the Altar. What did Aaron do? He blessed the Children of Israel. What blessing did he give them? "May the L-RD...grant you peace." Thus we see that peace is the essential thing. Unity is essential, and it is crucial that we live in peace with our family members and with others. It was not without reason that Aaron uttered this blessing, for he was known as a man who loved peace and pursued peace, one who loved others and brought them closer to the Torah.

Yet his two sons, Nadav and Avihu, acted in a different way. They distanced themselves from the community and decided to follow a more elevated path, one with greater devotion. Hence they brought an alien fire. Perhaps they wanted to separate themselves from the community, and therein lay their sin. We must live in harmony with others and not be involved in controversies. We must not behave differently, even when it comes to showing greater devotion or purity of heart. When Aaron's sons acted in this way, a fire came and devoured them, teaching us the great power of peace and harmony among Jews. In fact Moses approached the Children of Israel and explicitly told them: "This is the thing that the L-RD has commanded you to do" – now go and do it! What were they commanded to do? The Torat Kohanim replies, "The evil inclination – chase him from your heart and unify yourselves before G-d!" The Chiddushei HaRim of Ger said, "This is the well-known evil inclination that causes strife." It destroys all that is good among the Jewish people, and it is the reason why the Shechinah does not dwell among Israel. In other words, Moses told the people that if they chased the evil inclination away, they would see the glory of Hashem.

This is why we must live in peace and harmony with others. This is especially true concerning the first Shabbat following Passover, for at that point chametz (i.e., the evil inclination and sin) has been removed from our hearts. Strife is an extremely grave sin, and if we are truly united and live in peace with others, we will merit a blessing in all things and the Shechinah will dwell among us. Amen, may it be so!

GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Prevention is the Best Remedy!

In many cases it is almost impossible to repent for a sin that has resulted from what a person has said. Someone who is used to speaking Lashon Harah is simply not capable of remembering all the people that he has spoken against. Therefore how can he ask them for forgiveness, and how can he compensate for all the wrong that he has done to them? Even if he remembers all he has done, the detrimental effects of his words will usually extend to the family members of those he has spoken against, something that can go on for several generations. In that case it will be impossible for him to repair the wrong he has done. This is why we cannot count on the power of the tongue to right wrongs, as we do in financial matters. For example, a person who saves his own life with someone else's money may rely on the fact that he can eventually pay him back. This is why there are no sure remedies for damages committed with the tongue, other than to prevent ourselves from committing them in the first place.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Holiness of Shabbat Extends to the Other Days of the Week

It is written, “In order to distinguish between the sacred and hachol [the profane]” (Leviticus 10:10).

The Baal HaTurim established a parallel between this verse and a statement in the book of Proverbs: “A stone has weight and hachol [the sand] has mass” (Proverbs 27:3). Given that there is a distinction between the sacred and profane, at the end of Shabbat there is the heaviness of stone and the weight of sand, for a person feels heavy and sluggish. We must make a distinction between the heaviness of stone and the weight of sand. Stone is difficult to transport because it is heavy and concentrated, whereas sand is difficult to transport because it is dispersed and takes up more space. The weight of stone comes from the fact that it is a compact, single mass. As for sand, its mass is dispersed into numerous grains and its weight comes from their great number. That being the case, it is easier to carry a smaller number of them.

During the six days of the week, which are workdays, there are some people whose every thought revolves around their everyday activities, even though such activities don’t take up all their time. There are other people who always seem to be working, though they don’t focus all their thoughts on their work. The first type of people, whose every thought – if not all their time – is devoted to everyday activities, are like a stone that is heavy and concentrated, though it occupies less volume than sand. As for the second type of people, whose every moment (though not every thought) is devoted to their activities, they resemble sand that is dispersed over a greater volume than stone. Some people allow both their thoughts and their time to be controlled by their everyday activities. This is why the Baal HaTurim’s statement is particularly appropriate, for once we have established a distinction between the sacred and profane after Shabbat, that distinction will become real by people returning to the situation described by the verse, “A stone has weight and hachol [the sand] has mass.” There is a way of lessening this separation from the sanctity of Shabbat, and to extend its holiness to the other days of the week (thus preventing the weekdays from being marked by the heaviness of stone and the weight of sand). In order to do this, we must always invest our first thoughts and moments of each day into studying Torah, and only then to attend to earning a living. In this way we will realize that such activities are not essential. Our thoughts, like our bodies, will then be drawn to the Beit Midrash, where it is like Shabbat, without the heaviness of stone or the weight of sand. Rabbi Dessler Zatzal noted that the difference between a ben Torah and a ba’al habayit is not (as many people think) that the former is seated in the Beit Midrash while the latter is occupied with earning a living. The distinction, said Rabbi Dessler, lies in where a person’s thoughts reside. One whose thoughts are on the Torah – regardless of where he happens to be – is a ben Torah, whereas one whose mind is mired in the vanities of this world is a ba’al habayit, regardless of where he is. A person can be seated in the Beit Midrash while his main thoughts are focused on ways of earning money or achieving political gain. Conversely, a person can be occupied with earning a living while his thoughts are chiefly devoted to increasing the glory of Hashem and His Torah, or while reflecting upon its words.

“The Eighth” – Holiness Spreads Without Limit

It is written, “The Eighth day” (Leviticus 9:1).

In his book *Pahad David* (Parsha Beshalach), Rabbi David Pinto Shlita wrote that the eighth, above the seventh, points to holiness without limit, as it is written in the Midrash: “Distribute portions to seven or even to eight” (Kohelet Rabba 11:2). After seven inaugural days, on the eighth day (when the service of the Sanctuary began) the holiness prepared

during the seven days will spread without limit. So too with the mitzvah of circumcision on the eighth day. When we think about it, we realize that the same applies to the counting of the Omer, which comes after the seven days of Passover. The faith that was infused in us during the seven days of Passover, a faith produced the miracles of the exodus from Egypt, must prolong itself after the holiday. It must extend into all the days of the Omer, days that also produce faith, and which are considered “the eighth day.”

Blessing for the Bad Before Seeing the Good

It is written, “Aaron was silent” (Leviticus 10:3).

The Mishnah states, “It is incumbent on a man to bless [G-d] for the bad in the same way as for the good” (Berachot 54a). In his commentary on the Mishnah, the Rambam wrote: “When it says, ‘In the same way as for the good,’ this means that we must accept it with joy, willingly, and we must control our anger. By saying the blessing, ‘Blessed be the true Judge,’ we must feel in our souls the same thing as when we say, ‘Who is good and does good,’ since as the Sages often said: ‘Everything that comes from Heaven is for the good.’” When we take the Rambam’s words in the most straightforward way possible, we understand that a person is capable of joyfully accepting a bad thing just like a good thing, but that this requires a great deal of effort. This is why we first say the blessing, “Blessed be the true Judge,” not “Who is good and does good.” However this is difficult to understand, for it would seem that a hidden good (that is, a good that a person does not actually see, but which he believes exists) does not have the same effect as a good that he can actually see. As the Sages have said, “Hearing is not the same as seeing.” Thus we read in the Mishnah that Moses broke the Tablets of the Law only when he actually saw the sin of the golden calf, not when Hashem told him about it. The Torah also underlines the difference between directly seeing something and indirectly knowing of it: “For it is not your children...it is your own eyes that see” (Deuteronomy 11:2-7). However after reading what the Rambam said, we understand that a person is in fact not required to have equal reactions to good and bad, but rather to believe that everything which the Merciful One does is for the good. A person must not confine himself to the limited view of a bad event, meaning he must realize that there is a “bigger picture” which testifies to the fact that “The Rock – perfect is His work” (ibid. 32:4). In this way he can wholeheartedly bless Hashem, even when the good is still impossible to see. The Rambam underlines that this is something obvious: “It is something understandable for intelligent people, even if Scripture did not give us a commandment concerning it, for there are things that appear good at first, but whose aftermath is bad. As a result, it is not fitting for an intelligent person to be surprised when something very bad happens to him, for he never knows what its end will be.”

Tranquility Even In Bad Times

It is written, “Aaron was silent” (Leviticus 10:3).

Rabbi Nachum Ziv, the son of the Alter of Kelm and the father-in-law of Rabbi Dessler, died on a Friday. Before passing away, he summoned his wife and children and told them that he was leaving this world on that very day. That being the case, he told them, they would be in emotional distress and were liable to remove bones from their fish in a forbidden way on that Shabbat. They were also liable to swallow a fish bone, which could be dangerous. He therefore cautioned them concerning how they should eat on that night.

A Bird Seeing a Carcass in Eretz Israel Must Be Impure

It is written, “These shall you abominate among the fowl...the vulture” (Leviticus 11:13-14).

It is stated in Parsha Re’eh, “The glede, and the vulture, and the kite” (Deuteronomy 14:13). In this verse the word *et* does not occur with regard to the kite, and here the subject is only the vulture, for Rashi states:

“The ra’ah, ayah, and dayah are one and the same.” He adds, “Why is it called ra’ah? Because it sees (roeh) very well” (Rashi on Deuteronomy 14:13). The Gemara states that an ayah in Babylon could see a carcass in the land of Israel (Chullin 63b), for it possesses extraordinary vision to help it capture food. The gaon Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin asks, “If it has such great vision, why is it impure?” The answer is that it only sees carcasses, and furthermore it sees them in the land of Israel! Being outside the land and seeing only carcasses there – seeing only the bad – is enough to make it impure.

– Aish Dat

Overview of the Parsha

The first part of Parsha Shemini ends with the sanctification of the Sanctuary by the offerings made on its inaugural day. The second part of the parsha deals with the sanctity of man and his cleanliness in terms of obtaining food from animals. The beginning of the parsha describes the offerings made on the eighth day, up until the time that fire came and consumed them on the Altar. This represented the relationship between Hashem and His people Israel, a relationship to which the latter aspired. Immediately afterwards, a fire came and devoured Nadav and Avihu, who had brought an alien fire. Following this incident, their father received the order not to enter the Sanctuary if he had consumed wine. Later on, Moses asked the grieving priests why they had not eaten the offerings of the eighth day. The remainder of the parsha deals with the sanctity of man, who must purify himself with regards to food obtained from animals, even if they are not offered on the Altar. It also teaches us what we are forbidden to eat and touch.

IN LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

For the Sake of the Ark, For the Sake of the Torah

Parallel to the account of the Sanctuary’s inauguration on the eighth day, which we read in this week’s parsha, we have the Haftorah’s account of King David’s transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. This was to be the final journey of the Sanctuary, for afterwards King David’s son Solomon would build the Temple. Before David brought up the holy Ark, however, the text states that Abinadab’s sons tried to transport it. In that attempt, Hashem struck Uzzah when he tried to support the Ark after the oxen transporting it had stumbled. This also corresponds to our parsha’s statement, “I will be sanctified through those near to Me” (Leviticus 10:3), when Nadav and Avihu died by approaching the Ark. David, who was the king of Israel, learned to conduct himself with the Ark as a servant of the Torah, albeit as the first servant and the one responsible for applying the Torah, as the Torah commands the king in Parsha Shoftim. Just as the death of Aaron’s sons (which occurred on the first day of the Altar’s inauguration in our parsha) warned us to be absolutely obedient before the Torah – teaching that there is no place for wavering on the part of those who carry the crown of priesthood – so too did King David learn a lesson from the death of Uzzah. That is, he learned that there is no place for wavering on the part of those who carry the crown of royalty before the Torah. Until David realized that Hashem had blessed the home of Obed-edom because the Ark had stayed with him for three months, he was still hesitant to move it. When the time came to actually transport the Ark, King David scarified his own honor for its sake. It is precisely this fact that aroused the displeasure of Michal, the daughter of King Saul, and which stamped David as a faithful king to the dictates of the Torah. It made him worthy of reigning over Israel, contrary to Michal’s father Saul.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

The Sanctification of Man and His Connection to the Animals

It is written, “These are the creatures that you may eat” (Leviticus 11:2).

The Torah gives us two distinctive signs by which we can determine if an animal may be eaten: It must chew the cud and have a split hoof. For an edible fish, the Torah gives us two signs: It must have scales and fins. The Torah gives no distinctive signs for an edible bird, however, but rather a list of those we may not eat. Insofar as winged insects (grasshoppers) are concerned, it is stated that those having only four legs are an abomination that we are forbidden to eat. However we may eat those with extra legs, which they use to leap off the ground. The Gemara (beginning from Chullin 59a) gives us even more signs. It states that pure animals have no upper incisors. In terms of birds, it gives four signs that indicate their impurity: They have no extra toe, no crop, the gizzard is not easily peeled, and it seizes its prey. One Sage said that every bird that catches food thrown to it in the air is impure. Even people who believe that the Torah generally wanted to limit the Children of Israel’s consumption of meat – by prohibiting impure animals and placing strict restrictions on pure ones (i.e., ritually slaughtered only) – must still recognize that pure animals are not as bad as impure ones. This is why they are called impure, and it is precisely why the Torah forbids them.

We need to understand the shortcomings of impure animals vis-à-vis pure ones according to the Ramban, who said that impure animals have negative characteristics. If we look at what all permitted animals have in common, we will notice that they are more physiologically complex than impure animals. They are also more refined than impure animals when it comes to eating their food. For example, the act of ruminating is a complex way of digesting food, and having a split hoof permits an animal to climb rocky terrain. Scales and fins are complex instruments that lack offensive capabilities to protect a fish. The same applies to the legs of a grasshopper, which enables it to leap off the ground. By stressing the absence of upper incisors among pure animals, the Gemara also teaches that in order for us to eat an animal, it is not enough for it to be complex. It must also be refined, for an animal with no upper incisors cannot tear prey. So too with regards to the signs that the Gemara gives for unclean birds, signs that demonstrate an absence of refinement. Thus an absence of complexity and refinement prevents an animal from being fit for man’s consumption, since consuming an animal draws a person closer to its characteristics. It is therefore fitting for man to distance himself from what is crude, as the Ramban states. Insofar as the eight types of impure crawling creatures are concerned, which the Torah lists in the remainder of the Parsha, the Gemara says that the more their skin differs from their flesh, the more reason we have to say that they are impure (see Shabbat 107a). Here too we must say that to be deemed impure, they need to have some value or importance, as we see in the case of instruments made of metal or clay. Hence when their skin is like their flesh, they are simpler and more unlike man. Therefore they have less value or importance, and hence less to render them impure.

A TRUE STORY

Strictness & Sensitivity

Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin Zatzal, the Rav of Brisk and Jerusalem, was astonished by the fact that his father, Rabbi Binyamin, would not eat certain things that he allowed his family members to eat. Rabbi Yehoshua Leib asked his father, “What is the difference between you and me? Why are certain things forbidden to you but permitted to me?” He didn’t understand until a fire broke out in a synagogue and burned its Torah scrolls. When Rabbi Binyamin learned of it, he immediately fainted. Afterwards Rabbi Yehoshua Leib said, “Now I realize that there’s a tremendous difference between my father and myself. Therefore what is forbidden to him is permitted to me.” What enables us to assess the greatness of a person is the extent to which his beliefs have penetrated his body, meaning to what point his beliefs influence not only his conduct, but also the natural reactions of his body. Tremendous sensitivity to the truth is attained by working in the service of Hashem. That is the goal! Since Rabbi Binyamin was at such a lofty level that he actually fainted upon hearing that a Torah scroll had burned, it was fitting that he should also be very strict with himself in terms of personal conduct. It is also said that when Rabbi Yehoshua Leib moved, he accompanied the movers who were transporting the containers in which his father’s manuscripts were placed. He did this in order to protect his father’s Torah commentaries, ensuring that they were always placed over boxes that contained his own.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel – The Rebbe of Slonim

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel was born in 5658 to Rabbi Issachar Leib Zatzal (the Rebbe of Slonim and the grandson of the first Rebbe of Slonim, Rabbi Avraham Zatzal, the author of *Yesod HaAvodah*). Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua descended from a prestigious family, being the great-grandson and grandson of the Rebbes of Kwinidow, Leikhowitz, Stolin-Karling, Waltzing, Zlotchow, and Barheir. He studied Torah with his father, but after his death the chassidim wanted to appoint him as their Rebbe. At that point he left and attempted to go into business. However even when engaged in commerce, he continued to study Torah and the pure teachings of Chassidut for many hours each day. Out of his great love for Eretz Israel, he settled in Tel Aviv in 5695. There he allowed himself to be convinced by his father’s chassidim, and thus he accepted to lead the community as the new Rebbe of Slonim. He was famous for the kindness that he demonstrated to every person, wanting to see only the good and happiness of others.

The Rebbe of Slonim realized that to really understand Tanach, he had to compile all the relevant commentaries of the Sages. Thus he began to compose his great work, entitled *Beohelie Issachar*, which deals with all of Torah and Tanach in alphabetical order. Some volumes have already been published, though many others remain unpublished. In his books we can see the immense power of his intellect. On Nissan 24, 5738, while in his 80th year, Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel left this world for the celestial academy. He is buried in the Zichron Meir cemetery in Bnei Brak. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed for life in the World to Come.

A MATTER OF EDUCATION

Obeying Hashem, Not Selfish Desires

It is written, “When Moses heard that, he was content” (Leviticus 10:20). Rashi explains this verse by citing the Sages: “He admitted [that Aaron was correct] and he was not ashamed to say, ‘I had not heard.’” Moses’ greatness, which is the subject of this verse, was not just the result of being a man of truth who admitted that others were right despite the shame that this could bring him. More than this, Moses “admitted and was not ashamed,” meaning that did not feel the least bit of shame. Furthermore, “He was content” – it was good for our teacher Moses to hear something that he did not know. He did not fight for his status, and his honor was not diminished in any way by the fact that he admitted that there were things he was unaware of. This was the same Moses who in Parsha Beha’alotcha said, “Would that all the L-RD’s people were prophets” (Numbers 11:29). At the end of that parsha, the Torah says of him: “Now the man Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth” (ibid. 12:3). At the level of our teacher Moses, there was no such thing as personal status. Instead, he annulled his entire being in an effort to get closer to Hashem.

At the beginning of Moses’ life, as well as during his selection at the burning bush in Parsha Shemot, the Torah stresses this characteristic of Moses. Three times did he instantly go and help others: Striking the Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, rebuking the Hebrew who struck his fellow, and saving the daughters of the priest of Midian. However when Hashem Himself wanted to send Moses to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt, he refused four times. Moses was ready to help when Hashem showed him that a Hebrew was being hit or the daughters of the priest of Midian needed help. However when it came to taking action for something that wasn’t specific – but rather a nomination to the role of leader – this was something completely alien to him. In educating children, we often instill them with the desire to, as it were, become great. Yet because children usually understand this to mean attaining a “great” status, we must explain to them that being great really means something else. It means knowing Hashem and wholeheartedly doing His will with what He has given us. This does not depend on other people being aware of it. Having desires is generally seen as selfish climbing on some social ladder, not as being completely obedient to Hashem. A person should therefore ask himself, “Would I really want to be great if nobody else would know?” Sincerely answering this question will shed light on the whole issue.

EISHET CHAYIL

His House, His Wife

The tzaddik of Jerusalem, Rabbi Aryeh Levine Zatzal, and another person were being driven home by a man who asked the Rav where his house was. The Rav, however, did not reply. It was only when the driver asked him again, phrasing the question differently (“where do you want me to let you off?”) that the Rav gave him a street address. When Rabbi Aryeh and his companion got off, the Rav said to him, “You were no doubt surprised that I didn’t answer the driver when he asked me where my house was. You should realize that since the passing of my wife the tzaddeket, I no longer have a house, for the Sages have said: ‘His house’ – that means his wife.’ This is why I was silent. However when he asked me where I wanted to be let off, I gave him a street address.” A house is what provides life with stability. A house, in every sense of the word, is not only a place where the body can dwell, but also a place where the soul can find rest. It is fitting for the relationship between husband and wife to be a perfect expression of this. When there exists an atmosphere in the house that expresses the sentiment, “‘His house’ – that means his wife” (Yoma 2a), then the harmony of the couple will not be disrupted. To create such an atmosphere, the couple must pay careful attention, and be absolutely committed to completing one another. In this way peace and harmony, in both senses, will rest upon their house.