



The Path To Follow

RE'EH

197

August 11th 07

27 AV 5767

Publication

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

GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Financial Loss

There is no justification or permission granted for speaking Lashon Harah, even when not speaking Lashon Harah might result in great financial loss. We must be ready to forego all our money rather than to transgress even a single Torah prohibition.

An owner asked his employees to make derogatory remarks about the competition in front of their buyers. The more virulent and caustic the remark, the more important the employee became to the owner. One employee, who refused to speak Lashon Harah about the competition, was fired. The loss of his income caused him and his family a great deal of suffering. However given the circumstances, it was forbidden for him to have acted differently.

THE PILGRIMAGE FESTIVALS IN TEMPLE TIMES AND TODAY

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the L-RD your G-d in the place that He will choose: On the festival of Matzot, the festival of Shavuot, and the festival of Sukkot" (Deuteronomy 16:16). We have received the commandment to ascend to the Temple during the three pilgrimage festivals. Although we no longer have a Temple today, since we have not yet been delivered from exile, we still need to understand the reason for the mitzvah to travel to Jerusalem and the Temple three times a year on Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot.

During the entire year a person must fight against the evil inclination as it tries to make him forsake his service of Hashem, and especially to shun his faith. It says to a person, "Why go to the Beit Midrash and deprive yourself of all the pleasures of this world?" A person can be tricked by the argument, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you will die. Is there really a World to Come that compels you to give up the pleasures of this world? Has anyone ever returned from the World to Come and claimed that it exists, a world other than the one you see with your own eyes?" Thus the evil inclination implants doubts in people and tries to shake their faith in Hashem and His Torah, as well as in the concept of reward and punishment.

Furthermore, each day the evil inclination presents people with new ideas that target their faith, the basis for all the mitzvot, as the Sages state: "It is Habakkuk who came and based them all on one [principle], as it is said: 'But the tzaddik shall live by his faith' [Habakkuk 2:4]" (Makkot 24a). In fact if a person lacks faith in Hashem, or if his faith is incomplete, then how can he observe the mitzvot? Even if he observes them, they will not be considered as mitzvot because he does not believe in the One Who gave them. Although it is difficult for a person to overcome the evil inclination during the entire year, he must still wage a firm battle against it.

This is why Hashem in His wisdom commanded us to be seen during the three festivals. Jews must ascend to Jerusalem and the Temple three times a year in order to strengthen their faith in the Creator. By doing so, they will be moved in seeing the Levites singing and the priests serving Hashem. They will then be spiritually awakened.

When they arrived at the Temple, the Children of Israel were shown the showbread, which was still hot even after eight days, as mentioned in the Gemara (Chagigah 26b). When they were shown this bread, the pilgrims were told: "See how cherished you are to Hashem! This bread was removed in the same state in which it was placed – hot!" This alludes to man's sustenance, for just as the Holy One, blessed be He, ensured that the bread remained hot and did not dry up, so too does He ensure that everyone has enough food and their needs are taken care of. According to a person's faith in this area, he will receive a greater or lesser degree of abundance.

The pilgrims were also shown the container that held the manna, which was perfectly preserved, an eternal reminder of the fact that the Holy One, blessed be He, fed the Children of Israel in the desert for 40 years. All these things infused faith into the hearts of the Children of Israel when they came to the Temple for the pilgrimage festivals.

In reflecting upon this, we see that it is precisely during these

three festivals (Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot) that people are especially able to strengthen their faith in Hashem. On Passover our faith is strengthened because today (many generations after people last witnessed the miracles of the Exodus) we still believe in Hashem simply because of what is written in the Torah and what has been passed on to us by tradition, generation after generation, from the time of Moses.

So too is our faith strengthened on the festival of Shavuot, the holiday of the giving of the holy Torah, for at that time the glory of Hashem was revealed on Mount Sinai. There people heard His holy words amid the flames, and everyone perceived the unity of Hashem, as it is written: "You have been shown in order to know that the L-RD, He is G-d; there is none beside Him" (Deuteronomy 4:35).

Above all, our faith is definitely strengthened on the festival of Sukkot (called "the shadow of faith" [Zohar III:73a]), when the evil inclination entices people by telling them that the fields are lush with wheat and grapes, that the storehouses are filled with produce because it is the time of the harvest, and that now is the time to take advantage of the fruit of their work. This is why the Torah instructs us to go to the Temple at this time, so as to merit a holiday spent in joy and to absorb a spirit of holiness, as the Sages have said (Yerushalmi, Sukkah 5:1). There is also the fact that a person leaves his home in order to live in a temporary dwelling, for this strengthens his faith in Hashem, Who protects man from harm and provides him with food as well as everything else he needs, not only in his home. A person will then recognize the magnitude of Hashem's kindness, for He has given him a home in which to live. When he goes out to live elsewhere, in a temporary dwelling, this makes him realize that some people actually live in such places, meaning that they have no house because of Hashem's decree. Hence we must thank Hashem, Who in His goodness has provided us with a house during the entire year.

It is true that today we do not have a Temple, nor priests who serve there. However we can go to the tzaddikim and present them with a gift, for this is comparable to making a pilgrimage to the Temple, as it is written: "One who brings a gift to a talmid chacham is as if he had offered first-fruits" (Ketubot 105b).

Furthermore, when we see how the tzaddikim conduct themselves with regards to the activities of this world, activities such as eating and drinking, it is like seeing the Altar, as the saintly Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto and others have said: "The food that such a person [a tzaddik] would eat is like a burnt-offering brought upon the fires of the Altar... the food and drink of the holy man is elevated and considered as if it had actually been sacrificed upon the Altar" (Messilat Yesharim, ch. 26). This is why we must all cleave to the tzaddikim, who today are the closest thing we have to the Temple. In this way we will merit blessings and good things from Hashem, for we will be fulfilling the mitzvah of cleaving to the Sages and their disciples

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

How to Live in Joy

It is written, “For the L-RD your G-d will bless you in all your crop and in all your handiwork, and you will be completely joyous” (Deuteronomy 16:15).

Here the Torah promises, “You will be completely joyous,” meaning that we will be immersed in total joy. Yet how can we reach such a state?

Let us examine what people would go through in order to arrive at a festival in Jerusalem. First of all, the journey could take anywhere from days to weeks. There was also difficult terrain to cover, and entire families would have to sleep on the way, for all the Jewish people would be going to Jerusalem, and every other place in Israel would empty out. Although people in Jerusalem would definitely be squeezed for room, the Mishnah tells us that nobody ever said, “The place is too crowded” (Perkei Avoth 5:5). That is, not only did people not complain about traveling to Jerusalem and the crowds they encountered there, the Torah also tells us: “You will be completely joyous.” How is this possible?

Let us begin by citing our Sages in the Gemara, who said that when the Children of Israel performed the will of Hashem, the Cherubim miraculously turned to face one another. However when the Children of Israel did not perform His will, they miraculously turned toward the Temple wall (see Bava Batra 99a). Why not the opposite arrangement? That is, when the Torah was being observed, why did the Cherubim not look at the Temple in all its splendor, and in the opposite case why did they not turn away?

From here we learn that the greatest indication that Hashem’s will is being fulfilled is when an individual looks to the other, meaning that people look to see what others need and how they can help. It is solely through unity that we can perform G-d’s will, and when all Jews are united like a single person with a single heart to serve our Father in Heaven, the Shechinah resides in them and crowds or packed roads upset no one. In that case there is neither jealousy nor competition, and everyone is inclined to sacrifice himself for the other, so much so that a lack of room does not create division.

It is written, “Charm is deceitful and beauty is naught, but a woman who fears the L-RD will be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). The Sages have explained, “A woman who fears the L-RD will be praised refers to the generation of Rabbi Judah the son of Rabbi Ilai, in whose time it was said that [due to great poverty] six of his disciples had to cover themselves with one garment” (Sanhedrin 20a). That being the case, how did people manage to cover themselves? If six individuals tried to control the same cover, it is clear that none of them would, in fact, be covered. Yet each of them gave up his part for the other, and in this way they all managed to be covered. We lose nothing in foregoing things for others in unity, and in fact we can only gain, even if it appears otherwise. However this is only on condition that our concern for the other is real, not superficial. This is the fear of G-d that is worthy of praise; it is why “a woman who fears the L-RD will be praised.” When unity reigns among us – when we are all like a single person with a single heart – then the Shechinah will reside among us, and there can only be blessing and joy where the Shechinah resides. Hence we should not be surprised by the fact that “you will be completely joyous.”

A Pearl From the Rav

It is written, “The blessing, that you hearken” (Deuteronomy 11:27).

In his book *Pahad David*, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks why the Torah uses the term “that” instead of “if,” as it does in the preceding verse: “If you do not hearken” (v.28). The answer is that by Moses telling the Children of Israel “that you hearken,” it meant that they were obligated to do so. Such an obligation is not conveyed by using the term “if.” How can we arrive at this level? It is by clearly perceiving the blessing that we will receive when we hearken, as well as the curse if we do not hearken. Moses made both the blessing and the curse crystal clear to the Children of Israel, for it is only

in this way that we can achieve a fear of G-d and overcome evil. How can we sense blessings today? It is by going to the yeshiva, to a place of Torah, where people learn how to fulfill mitzvot in joy. In this way we will sense blessings and achieve a true fear of G-d.

For a Single Soul

It is written, “See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse” (Deuteronomy 11:26).

This verse begins with the singular “see” but continues with the plural “before you.” Rabbi Chaim of Worms (the brother of the Maharal of Prague) saw this as proof that even when a person reprimands others, yet knows that only a single person will listen to him, the speaker must still address them. In fact Moses, who spoke before the entire Jewish people, used the plural “before you” even though his words were addressed to a single person – to whom he said “see” – so as to save a single Jewish soul.

Blessing in Abundance

It is written, “Et haberacha [The blessing], that you hearken” (Deuteronomy 11:27).

When the Holy One, blessed be He, sends a blessing, He sends it in abundance, for it contains several blessings. However when He sends a catastrophe, He sends it in a limited fashion because He is compassionate. This is why the term *et* is used with regard to the blessing, for it always includes something else. Hence it does not appear with regard to the curse.

– Me’am Loez

Chesed, But Only With What is Ours!

It is written, “The chasida [stork] and the heron after its kind” (Deuteronomy 14:18).

Rashi states, “Chasida. And why is it called chasida? Because it does chesed for its fellow birds with its food” (Rashi on Leviticus 11:19).

Our Sages have said that mice are wicked creatures, for after eating they call other mice to eat as well. Yet how is it that when the stork gives its fellow birds to eat, it is considered an act of chesed, but when mice do the same they are called wicked?

The answer is that mice eat food that is not theirs, and moreover they call other mice to eat this food, something that is truly wicked. As for the stork, it gives other birds food from its own portion, food meant for its own consumption. Now that’s chesed!

This means that we must help people with what is ours, not with what belongs to others.

– Ma’ayana Shel Torah

Even One Hundred Times

It is written, “Asser te’asser [You shall surely tithe] the entire crop of your planting” (Deuteronomy 14:22).

The Sages have said, “Asser titasher [Tithe that you may become rich]” (Ta’anith 9a). In other words, if you tithe your money you will become rich. Generally speaking, when a command is repeated (as in *asser te’asser*), it teaches us that we must carry it out even one hundred times. For example, on the expression *shale’ach teshalach* (“you will surely send away” [Deuteronomy 22:7]), our Sages have said: “Even one hundred times” (Bava Metzia 31a). It would seem, however, that this cannot apply to *asser te’asser*, for it has been taught that we cannot spend more than a fifth of our money on *tzedakah*.

However since the Torah promises, “Tithe that you may become rich,” when a person gives a tenth of his money, he will become rich once again, and when he gives a tenth of that money, the cycle will repeat itself. In this way he can fulfill *asser te’asser* even a hundred times without ever spending more than a fifth of his money.

– Pirchei Aharon

With Kindness

It is written, “For phatoach tiptach [you will certainly open] your hand” (Deuteronomy 15:8).

The book Nachalat David states that the reason why this verse uses a double expression (phatoach tiptach) is because the poor feel ashamed when they receive tzeddakah. Therefore if the poor are given tzeddakah with a stern look, they will not return. Hence the Torah uses a double expression, meaning that we must first open our hand in such a way that the poor will return so we can open our hand to them a second time. That is, we must give tzeddakah with kindness or in secret so that the poor will not be ashamed to receive it. In this way they will not avoid asking a second time.

– MiShulchan Gavoah

What is Generosity?

It is written, “You shall lend him his requirement, whatever is lacking to him” (Deuteronomy 15:8).

Rashi explains: “Whatever is lacking to him. Even a horse to ride on and a servant to run before him.”

One day a self-important man came to see the Rebbe of Kotzk. When the Rebbe ordered his disciples to show him a tremendous degree of honor, they were curious. The Rebbe said to them, “We have learned that we must accord great honor to a poor person from a good family, providing him with a horse to ride on and a servant to run before him. Now a horse to ride on seems reasonable, for he may be weak. Yet a servant to run before him? Isn't that foolish? From here we learn that giving fools the foolish things they want is part of being generous. As for the person who came to see me, he wanted to be honored.”

Giving With Kindness

It is written, “When the L-RD your G-d brings you to the land to which you go to possess, then you shall lay the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal” (Deuteronomy 11:29).

Why does the word venatata (“then you shall lay”) end with the letter hei? It is because a person who offers a gift to his friend should always do so with kindness. The addition of the letter hei indicates a kind and abundant blessing. The Rebbe of Ger, the author of Imrei Emet, said that other than on two occasions, nobody ever had the last word with him. What happened on these occasions? The Rebbe was an extremely punctual man, scheduling all his activities to the minute. Because he allotted himself a certain time for eating, if his meal wasn't ready on time he would go without eating, for he had no time to spare. Thus he scheduled every minute of his time. One day as he was going home to eat, he met a chassid who began speaking with him. When the Rebbe told him that he really didn't have time to talk, the chassid said: “For twenty years I've been taking care of my sick daughter, and the Rebbe can't devote a single minute to talk about this?” That was the first time anyone ever had the last word with him. The second time occurred in the city of Ger, where there lived a Jewish man who was over 90 years old. He suffered from blindness, and from time to time he would sigh over the bitterness of his fate. One day the Rebbe said to him, “Why are you sighing? It is written, ‘The days of our years are 70 years, and if with might, 80 years’ [Psalms 90:10]. Each day is a gift for you, so why are you complaining?” The Jew replied, “Rebbe, is it not written that one who gives a gift to his friend must do so with kindness?”

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

So They May Learn

It is written, “You shall tithe the entire crop of your planting, the produce of your field” (Deuteronomy 14:22).

We have received the commandment to take the ma'aser of our harvest and bring it with us to be eaten in Jerusalem four times during the seven-year agricultural cycle. This is known as ma'aser sheni, as it is written: “You shall tithe the entire crop of your planting, the produce of your field.”

Hashem chose us and wants all of us to study Torah and know His Name. However most people allow themselves to be drawn to material pursuits and are not interested in continuous Torah study. Therefore Hashem in His wisdom provided us with a place where everyone knew Torah, for people normally live close to their workplace [i.e., those who owned fields lived outside of Jerusalem]. Hence when someone was about to bring his ma'aser to Jerusalem, where Torah scholars were found, he would either go himself or send his son to study Torah there, nourishing himself with the fruits in question. Thus within every home of Israel, there would be someone who was wise and knew Torah, someone to spread his knowledge among his father's house. In this way the land would be filled with the knowledge of Hashem. In fact with just one Torah scholar in a city (or even ten scholars there), many of its residents will not go to see him even once, and even if they often hear him speak, they will forget everything as soon as they return home. However if each home has someone to guide them, one who lives there and can caution them, then there will be no sins among them. Thus they will merit what is written, namely: “I will set My Sanctuary among you... and I will be your G-d and you will be My people” (Leviticus 26:11-12). In our era, when because of our sins we can no longer bring our ma'aser to the Temple, we can fulfill this mitzvah by going to places of holiness, to the synagogue and Beit Midrash. From the Torah scholars who are there, we can learn how to live and what we should do, and we will also send our children to study Torah and fulfill it. In this way we will at least fulfill the goal of this mitzvah, and in each home we will merit educating children who will be the glory of the Jewish people, “Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (Isaiah 49:3). When Hashem sees our efforts in fulfilling His Torah, He will return the Temple and we will be completely delivered. May this happen speedily and in our days, Amen.

EISHET CHAYIL

With Her Own Hands

There is love for Torah, and there is devotion for Torah. The expression, “And you surpass them all” (Proverbs 31:29) denotes the quality of looking for every opportunity to help those who study Torah. Rebbetzin Elyashiv was cast from just such a mold, for she epitomized that very trait.

Each night when the Rav would get up to study, the Rebbetzin would also get up to make him some hot coffee. This was not an easy thing to do, for in earlier times water had to be heated over a gas stove, which took a long time and was difficult to do. Yet how could it be compared to the immense merit of the Rebbetzin helping a talmid chacham? She arose every night with a joyous heart because she was happy to prepare him a hot drink.

In her advanced years, one of the Rebbetzin's daughters brought her an electric kettle. It could make hot water at the press of a button, in which case the Rav could prepare hot drinks for himself. The Rebbetzin, however, vigorously refused to accept this gift, for she said: “Am I going to be deprived of even this mitzvah?”

A TRUE STORY

When Hashem Shall Expand My Territory

It is written, "When the L-RD your G-d shall expand your territory as He spoke to you, and you shall say, 'I will eat meat' " (Deuteronomy 12:20).

As a boy, Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Zatzal studied Torah with his father, the tzaddik Rabbi Israel Isser Zatzal. One time two people came before Rabbi Israel to be judged in court. The plaintiff claimed that he loaned his friend (the defendant) a certain amount of money. When the time came to be repaid, his friend returned only half the amount. For the other half, he wrote an IOU which stated: "When Hashem shall expand my territory, I will repay the remainder of my debt."

However three years had already passed, and as far as the plaintiff knew, Hashem had expanded the defendant's territory. Thus the plaintiff was asking for his money back. The defendant admitted that the facts, as presented by the plaintiff, were correct. However he asserted that he still could not repay his debt.

After listening to both sides, the Rav turned to his son and said: "My son, you have heard what the litigants have said. However because it is impossible to precisely determine if Hashem 'expanded the territory' of the plaintiff, how would you rule in such a case?"

The young Yitzchak Elchanan jumped up and said, "Father, there is an explicate Gemara on the verse: 'When the L-RD your G-d shall expand your territory as He spoke to you, and you shall say, "I will eat meat." ' Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaryah said: 'A man who has...fifty maneh, he may buy for his stew a litra of meat' [Chullin 84a]. This means that fifty maneh is considered as proof of an expanded territory. The defendant must therefore take an oath that he does not have the equivalent of fifty maneh, and the plaintiff must wait until he does."

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin – The Netziv of Volozhin

The gaon Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Yehuda was born in 5577 to Rabbi Yaakov in the small town of Mir. At the age of 14 he married the daughter of Volozhin's Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yitzchak Zatzal, the son of the gaon Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin.

After the death of his father-in-law, Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi's older brother-in-law (Rabbi Eliezer Yitzchak Fried) was named as the Rosh Yeshiva of Volozhin. However Rabbi Eliezer Yitzchak died five years later, and Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi was named as the Rosh Yeshiva, a position that he held for the rest of his life. Though known as a very profound Torah scholar, he was also a compassionate father to each of his students. In fact he said that each of the four hundred students in the yeshiva was like his only child. When the father of one student asked him to take care of the boy because he was an only child, he replied: "What else can I do? Each of my 400 students is like my only child!"

In 5652 the government decreed that the yeshiva must teach its students the official language of the state, which Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi refused to do. The result was that the yeshiva completely closed down. The Rosh Yeshiva and his students packed their things and went into exile. The Netziv went to Vilna and then to Brisk, and from there he planned to go to Eretz Israel. However the closure of the yeshiva had disheartened him to such an extent that he fell ill and never recovered. The best doctors advised him to go see his colleagues in Warsaw, but this proved futile, for it was in Warsaw that he passed away on Av 28, 5653. An elaborate funeral was held for him, with eulogies that lasted several hours. Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Yehuda is buried beneath a special mausoleum in the Warsaw cemetery.

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

An Affront to His Honor or an Act of Kindness?

It once happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Joshua, and Rabbi Tzadok were reclining at a banquet of Rabban Gamliel's son, while Rabban Gamliel was standing over them and serving drinks. When he offered a cup to Rabbi Eliezer, he did not accept it. However when he offered it to Rabbi Joshua, he did. Rabbi Eliezer said to him, "What is this, Joshua? We are sitting, while Rabban Gamliel is standing over us and serving drinks!" "We find that even one greater than he acted as a servant," he replied. "Abraham was the greatest man of his age, yet it is written of him, 'And he stood over them.' And should you say that they appeared to him as ministering angels – they appeared to him only as Arabs! Shall Rabban Gamliel the Eminent not stand over us and offer drinks?" Rabbi Tzadok said to them, "How long will you disregard the honor of the Omnipresent and occupy yourselves with the honor of men! The Holy One, blessed be He, causes the winds to blow, the vapors to ascend, the rain to fall, the earth to yield, and He sets a table before everyone. As for us, shall Rabban Gamliel the Eminent not stand over us and serve drinks?"

– Kiddushin 32b

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Go to the Water

It is written, "Whoever is thirsty, go to the water" (Isaiah 55:1).

The Holy One, blessed be He, consoled the Children of Israel by saying: My dear children, the day will come when I will deliver you, and all your troubles will be over. "I will set down gems as your stones and lay your foundation with sapphires" (ibid. 54:11). However to merit this, a condition must first be met: "Whoever is thirsty, go to the water." Now water always represents the Torah, and just as the body cannot survive without water, so too can the soul not survive without the Torah. Only the merit of the Torah enables us to be saved.

We must cleave to the Torah in every possible way, each according to his abilities. Just as a thirsty person wandering in the desert would give anything for some water, since his life depends on it, so too must we seek out Torah. "Whoever is thirsty, go to the water" – one who is thirsty, whose soul hangs in the balance in the material desert of this world – must go to the water. He must go to the Torah, which is compared to water. Concerning our era, the prophet Amos said: "Not a hunger for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the L-RD" (Amos 8:11). Nothing is lacking in our material world – "not a hunger for bread, nor a thirst for water" – since our material lives are greater than those of our ancestors. What we lack is "hearing the words of the L-RD," for there is a thirst for Torah in our time. Therefore, "Whoever is thirsty, go to the water," let us seek out places of Torah. The holy Torah, described as a tree of life, is a tree of life for everyone who supports it. Therefore let us support it without letting go, for it is a life saver. It will prevent us from dying in the desert of this exile, for it alone can return us to safety, towards complete deliverance. This is what Hashem says through the prophet Isaiah: My children, everyone who is thirsty, go to the water, and by its merit I will save you.