



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

At Least a Sigh

A businessman from Warsaw once handed the Chafetz Chaim a list of his seforim that he wished to buy. After taking a quick glance at the list, the Chafetz Chaim asked him, "I notice that you ordered every one of my seforim except the Chafetz Chaim – the laws of Lashon Harah. Why did you leave out such an important work?"

"I really would like to buy that sefer also," was the reply. "But I'm afraid to. You see, I come in contact with many people every day, and in my position it's impossible for me not to speak and hear Lashon Harah."

"I'm fully aware of that problem," said the Chafetz Chaim. "I have even spoken to Reb Israel Salanter about it. He told me, 'It is worthwhile for someone to read your sefer on Lashon Harah even if the only result will be a sigh when he completes it.'"

– Guard Your Tongue, p.5

SERVING HASHEM SOLELY IN JOY!

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "And it will be [vehaya], because you will hearken to these ordinances...the L-RD your G-d will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:12). We know what the Sages have taught, namely that the term veyehi denotes trouble, whereas vehaya denotes joy (see Bereshith Rabba 42:3). In the Shema it is written: "And it will be [vehaya], if you will diligently obey My commandments...I will give rain for your land in its proper time" (Deuteronomy 11:13-14). Here too we have a term that denotes joy. This means that there is joy in serving G-d, and that the Torah and its mitzvot are performed in the joy of being able to serve such a great King. This attitude brings us an abundance of good from the Creator. In this week's parsha as well, if the Children of Israel observe all the mitzvot of Hashem in joy, He will protect them from all illnesses and they will succeed in everything they do.

On the other hand, we need to realize that the opposite may also happen. That is, evil decrees come upon the world when joy is lacking in the service of Hashem, as it is written: "Because you did not serve the L-RD your G-d amid gladness and goodness of heart" (Deuteronomy 28:47). To what can this be compared? It is like the useless pursuits of this world, for when someone wins the lottery, he becomes ecstatic even before receiving or seeing his money. In fact he already begins to plan what he is going to do with so much money. Similarly, and to an even greater extent, a person should constantly rejoice at being able to perform numerous mitzvot and merit eternal good in the World to Come. There are also many mitzvot whose rewards are given in this world, as the Sages have mentioned (Peah 1:1).

Examining the opening verse in this week's parsha, we see that the Torah indicates that the joy which must accompany a mitzvah need not apply just for great or exceptional mitzvot, ones that rarely present themselves to us. Instead, the parsha is speaking about all mitzvot, including those described as eikev ("heel"), meaning the ones a person tends to trample on, as Rashi explains in citing the Sages (Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim 758). These too must be carried out in joy, as the Mishnah states: "Be as careful of a minor mitzvah as of a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" (Perkei Avoth 2:1). Therefore even a mitzvah that seems unimportant to a person, one that he may trample on, is very important in the eyes of Hashem. The proof is that the Torah does not allude to the reward of performing mitzvot.

If a person were to ask: What is the best way to perform a mitzvah in joy if it is one that people tend to do out of habit? The answer is to think about how the material world operates, and then to draw a lesson from it that we can apply to performing such mitzvot. For example, although people earn money each day, does anyone ever say that they don't enjoy their money because they earn it on a daily basis? Obviously not! As the Sages have said on the verse, "It is a sorry task that G-d has given to the sons of man with which to be concerned" (Ecclesiastes 1:13): "This is the nature of wealth. ... If one has a hundred he wants to turn them into two hundred" (Kohelet Rabba 1:32). The more a person's wealth increases, the happier he becomes, even if he becomes wealthier each and every day.

If such is the case for frivolous pursuits, of which a person brings nothing with him in the World to Come, how much more does it apply for mitzvot that he brings with him in the World to Come – mitzvot that are eternal, and whose reward cannot possibly be given in this world alone? He should obviously rejoice to no end in performing them, even though he is constantly doing so out of habit. In fact mitzvot protect a person in this world and in the World to Come after his death. When one reflects on this fact, his heart will be filled with infinite joy, and he will run to perform all the easy mitzvot with joy and enthusiasm.

The book Pituchei Chotam, from the holy kabbalist Rabbi Yaakov Abutzteira, offers an explanation for why Parsha Eikev is juxtaposed to Parsha Re'eh. He states that when a person reflects on his end (for eikev denotes the end) and sees (roeh) the day of death, he will put an effort into observing mitzvot and the blessing, as the Sages have said: "Repent one day before your death" (Perkei Avoth 2:10). Thus: Look at the end (re'eh eikev) of your life and see what will happen to you.

This requires an explanation, for a person is liable to become depressed when thinking about the day of death. Therefore how can he fulfill vehaya, which denotes joy, and perform mitzvot in joy, as we explained earlier?

Yet it is precisely when we realize that all the possessions of this world are but vanities – that only Torah and mitzvot are precious and eternal, and that this world is but a corridor before the palace of the World to Come (Perkei Avoth 4:16) – that we will have no reason for sadness when reflecting upon our end. Man must die in the corridor in order to enter eternal life in the palace, where the soul can shine only through Torah and mitzvot.

In fact the reverse is true: Thinking about death will lead a person to unlimited joy, as it is written: "Your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the L-RD will gather you in" (Isaiah 58:8) and, "How great is Your goodness that You have stored away for those who fear You" (Psalms 31:20).

I have had the opportunity to explain just how terrifying it is for a person to picture himself standing, after his death, before the Celestial Court. The books will be opened, and he will be told that he never prayed, fulfilled the mitzvah of tefillin, the mitzvah of Shabbat, and so on. Hearing this, he will protest and cry out that he observed every Shabbat, put on tefillin, and prayed with the community. He will then be told, "It is true that you did all these things. However you did not perform them with joy. On the contrary, you performed them in sadness and without concentration."

This is what the verse is saying: When we perform a mitzvah with joy (vehaya), this will bring about good things. In the same way that a person desires food and drink, how much more should he desire Torah and mitzvot, which are eternal possessions. He should certainly desire them and fulfill them in joy!

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Imaginations of the Heart

It is written, "Take heed for yourselves, lest your heart be lured away" (Deuteronomy 11:16).

"The power of the evil inclination," said the Alter of Novardok in the introduction to his book *Madregas HaAdam*, "lies solely in barren promises and useless fantasies. Yet when we realize this, it is already too late." He gives us the following parable: A scoffer enticed a fool by telling him that if he closed his eyes very tightly, people would think that he was blind, and therefore they would give him food and drink for free. He told the fool that he would be provided with clothes and be able to enter the public baths without paying. The fool agreed and shut his eyes tightly, and the scoffer brought him to a restaurant and signaled to the owner to bring him something to eat. The fool ate a tremendous amount of food, which the scoffer paid for. After leaving the restaurant, the scoffer pretended to bring the fool into a clothing store. He said in a loud voice that he wanted to purchase some magnificent clothes, and he told the fool (whose eyes were still closed): "They're now bringing you some gorgeous clothing! Let's go by the river, where you can take off your old clothes and clean them, and then you can try on these new clothes!" Yet instead of leading him to the river, he took him to the marketplace in the heart of the city, where the fool took off his clothes. The scoffer then picked them up and fled! Imagine how the fool felt when he finally opened his eyes! The moral of the story is that a person allows his evil inclination to lead and seduce him with useless fantasies. At the end of his life he will open his eyes and discover that his days were spent chasing useless pursuits. He will then realize that he is completely naked, both spiritually and materially, having taken nothing with him to his final destination.

The Talmud states, "Rabbi Meir had 300 parables of foxes, but we have only three left" (Sanhedrin 38b). One of them is the following: A fox once craftily induced a wolf to go and join the Jews in their Shabbat preparations and share in their festivities. On his appearing in their midst, the Jews fell upon him with sticks and beat him. He therefore came back determined to kill the fox. However the fox said to the wolf, "Come with me and I will supply you with abundant food." The two of them went to a deep well, which the fox claimed was a food warehouse. The fox entered the upper bucket and descended into the well, while the lower bucket was drawn up. "Where are you going?" asked the wolf. The fox, pointing to the cheese-like reflection of the moon on the water at the bottom of the well, replied: "There's plenty of cheese down here. Climb into the other bucket and get down at once." The wolf did so, and the fox was drawn up as the wolf descended. Thus the wolf was caught at the bottom of the well, while the fox was drawn to the top of it, where he emerged from the bucket and gained his freedom. It was then that the wolf realized that what he thought was cheese at the bottom of the well was just the reflection of the moon on the water. Although he called out for help, nobody heard his cries. Rabbi Meir used this parable to illustrate how the evil inclination uses our own imagination to deceive us.

A Pearl From the Rav

It is written, "And it will be [vehaya], because [eikev] you will hearken" (Deuteronomy 7:12).

In his book *Pahad David*, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita notes that *eikev* is formed by the same letters as *kevah* ("to fix"). This teaches us that when a person fixes himself a time for studying Torah, its words will enter his ears and he will do everything that Hashem commands him. He will thereby achieve joy, as the Sages have said: "Vehaya denotes joy" (Bereshith Rabba 42:3). We merit these things by fixing times for Torah study, times that we never break. Doing this is so important that it can remove the yoke of material concerns from us, for we will no longer view money as being important, nor will we be jealous of our friends or neighbors. Hence the Sages have said that the son of David will not come until the last penny has gone from the purse (Sanhedrin 97a), for people will no longer think of materiality in that generation. In fact Mashiach will come in a generation that is entirely worthy. May Hashem grant us the merit to see him soon.

A Thanksgiving Meal

A Rebbe once invited a great number of his friends to a thanksgiving meal. "What miracle happened to our teacher?" the chassidim asked. The Rebbe explained to them that someone had greatly offended and humiliated him in public on that day. His guests were surprised: "And so?" The Rebbe, overcome with emotion, exclaimed: "Is this a small thing in your eyes? Even a man who has recovered from an illness doesn't prepare a thanksgiving meal because he has been healed, but because his sins have been erased by his suffering. In fact since my suffering has ended, it means that the purification process is finished. Since the Sages said that a man who was humiliated has therefore been cleansed of his sins, it means that Heaven had pity on him and decreed that his sins would be erased in an easy way. That being the case, should I not prepare a thanksgiving meal?"

For Your Eventual Happiness

It is written, "In order to afflict you and in order to test you, to do good for you in the end" (Deuteronomy 8:16).

We know that some individuals have a difficult time earning a living, and they have to exert tremendous efforts for it. On the other hand, there are many transgressors who live in ease and comfort during their entire lives. Why? The author of *Chovot HaLevavot* states (Sha'ar HaBitachon ch. 3) that there are many reasons for this. One of them is that the Holy One, blessed be He, is testing the righteous in this world in order to increase their reward in the World to Come, as it is written: "In order to afflict you and in order to test you, to do good for you in the end."

It is written in *Sefer Charedim* (chs. 66, 163, 164) that the poor are regarded as dead. Therefore the poor must rejoice in their condition, for death atones for all sins. Similarly, a person who has been publicly humiliated to the point of turning white – yet remains silent – should rejoice and thank Hashem because he is regarded as having been killed, meaning that all his sins are forgiven. He should even recite *Vidui*, for it is said by those who are put to death.

The Observance of Shabbat Remained Intact

It is written, "I grasped the two tablets and threw them from my two hands, and I broke them before your eyes" (Deuteronomy 9:17).

The Midrash states that although the letters on the tablets flew away, leaving only the fragments of the tablets themselves, the commandment "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it" remained intact. Hence we recite during the *Shacharit* prayer of Shabbat, "He brought down two tablets of stone in his hand, on which was inscribed the observance of Shabbat." In other words, the commandment to observe Shabbat was still written on the tablets that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, even after they were broken.

– The Kedushat Aharon of Sadigora

A Special Treasure

It is written, "Now, O Israel, what does the L-RD your G-d ask of you? Only to fear the L-RD your G-d" (Deuteronomy 10:12).

The Gemara states, "The Holy One, blessed be He, has in His treasury nothing but a supply of the fear of Heaven" (Berachot 33b).

The question arises: Why was the fear of Heaven chosen above all else to be set aside in Hashem's treasury? The Vilna Gaon replies: In tractate *Berachot*, it is written that everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven. It therefore follows that nothing in the world is very important to the Creator, since "everything is in the hands of Heaven." Yet the fear of Heaven, because it is not given by Heaven, is extremely important in the eyes of Hashem. Hence the Creator made a special treasury for it, a place where precious and very important things are kept.

– Parperaot LaTorah

What Does Hashem Ask...of You?

In the same spirit as the preceding explanation, the commentators explain why the verse states, "What does the L-RD your G-d ask of you?" The inclusion of the

expression “of you” indicates that a person must learn all the middot of the Torah from the Holy One, blessed be He, as it written: “You shall walk after the L-RD your G-d” (Deuteronomy 13:5). Here the Talmud states: “[This means] to walk after the middot of the Holy One, blessed be He. As He clothes the naked...so should you clothe the naked” (Sotah 14a). However there is one thing that we cannot learn from Hashem – the fear of Heaven. This is because Hashem cannot, as it were, fear someone. Hence the verse includes the expression “of you,” meaning that you must use your own strength to attain the fear of Heaven.

– Torat HaParasha

Four Conditions

It is written, “To serve Him with all your heart” (Deuteronomy 11:13).

Rabbi Haim Ben Attar wrote that there are four conditions needed for a prayer to be granted. The first: We must pray like a poor person who is knocking at the door, as it is written: “The poor utters supplications” (Proverbs 18:23). The second: We must ask Hashem to have mercy on us. The third: We must pray at the right time, as it is written: “As for me, may my prayer to You, O L-RD, be at an acceptable time” (Psalms 69:14). The fourth: We must pray clearly and in detail, ensuring that our prayer is not construed in a negative way, as the Midrash recounts: “A man was walking along a road and his legs began to give way from the hard going. ‘I wish I had a donkey,’ he exclaimed. Soon afterwards, a Roman whose donkey had just given birth to a foal passed him by and said: ‘Take this foal....’ He said: ‘My prayer seems to have been heard, but I did not speak properly. [I did not explain] whether I wanted to ride or carry it’ ” (Esther Rabba 7:19).

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Eikev completes Moses’ review of past events and his words of Mussar to the Children of Israel. It continues with the necessary condition for the people to inherit the land, which is to wipe out the nations living there by observing mitzvot. The miracles that occurred during the Children of Israel’s journeys are recalled, as well as their revolt in the desert and the golden calf that they made. At the end of the parsha, after past events have been recalled, Moses ends his admonition by teaching them to love and cleave to Hashem.

EISHET CHAYIL

Logic Outweighs Superficial Desire

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra wrote, “Why are you concerned with money, O man, yet do not worry about days...for money can do nothing, while days never return.”

This means that a person focuses his attention on things in a distorted way. For example, when someone has a chance to purchase a piece of land, his worries give him so many reasons for pause that he is robbed of his peace of mind. Perhaps he can obtain a better bargain somewhere else? Perhaps the owner is difficult to get along with? Perhaps the land will be flooded by rain, or the government will confiscate it, and so on. The same applies for everything that is acquired through money. All kinds of remote or far-fetched scenarios come into play when people calculate the pros and cons of a purchase, lest they make an impulsive decision such as spending a few of their pennies! Yet it is surprising to see people who are so cautious with their money demonstrating haste when they are at crossroads in life, situations upon which their lives, as well as the lives of their descendants, depend for all eternity. For example, take the case of choosing a spouse, a choice that is usually influenced by superficial desires, not a consideration of moral values or the logical weighing of pros and cons. Such a distorted way of evaluating things is brought to light in the words of Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, meaning that money is more important to man than his own life. Hence the wise reflect upon things in order to determine what is truly important.

– Shiurim BeAggadot Chazal

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

The Fear of Heaven, Even in a Dream

It is written, “The L-RD your G-d shall you fear. Him shall you serve, to Him shall you cleave, and in His Name shall you swear” (Deuteronomy 10:20).

Regarding this verse, Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 432) states that Hashem commanded us to constantly place the fear of Heaven before our eyes in order not to sin. In other words, we are to fear punishment, a sentiment that we must always have at heart. The reason for this is obvious for everyone to see, for such fear can offer a person great protection. It is one of the mitzvot that a person must constantly be engaged in, one whose obligations never leave him, not even for a second. A person who has a chance to sin should pay great attention to the fact that Hashem observes all the deeds of man, who will be repaid for each of them. One who fails to take heed in such a case neglects a positive mitzvah. A person’s entire life – each and every instant – is subject to the mitzvah of remaining vigilant, a mitzvah that he will be rewarded for observing.

The Gemara cites Rabbi Chanina as saying, “Everything is in the hand of Heaven except the fear of Heaven, as it says: ‘Now, O Israel, what does the L-RD your G-d ask of you? Only to fear the L-RD your G-d’ [Deuteronomy 10:12]” (Berachot 33b). The Gemara asks, “Is the fear of Heaven such a small matter,” to which the Sages reply: “Yes – for Moses it was a small matter.” What can this be compared to? The Gemara offers us a parable: “If a man is asked for a big article and he has it, it seems like a small article to him. If he is asked for a small article and he does not have it, it seems like a big article to him.”

We need to understand this concept, for just because the fear of Heaven was a small matter to Moses, does it mean that it is a small matter for all Jews? Some explain that since Moses’ intention was to motivate the Children of Israel to fear G-d in order to be the recipients of good in this world and the World to Come, it was a small matter for them. This is because whenever one sees the possibility of bringing good upon himself, it is easy for him to do. The situation is comparable to a person who does not eat or sleep enough because he is too busy earning a living. The money he earns makes this easy for him to do.

Scripture describes how the Holy One, blessed be He, asked King Solomon to choose either wisdom or wealth. When Solomon chose wisdom, Hashem also promised him wealth (I Kings 3:5-13). In his book Tuvcha Yabiu, the Imrei Emet writes: “The discussion between King Solomon and the Holy One, blessed be He, took place in a dream. Now if Solomon had chosen wealth, he would have lost wisdom. This is surprising, for everything that we do in a dream is meaningless, having no basis in reality! From here we see that with regards to the fear of Heaven, a person should be on the alert even in a dream. In fact he should be so vigilant that if he is asked a question in a dream that relates to the fear of Heaven, he should know what to say.”

A TRUE STORIE PAYING AHEAD OF TIME

Nobody Removes Boots Better than Me!

It is written, “Lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle...and your heart will become haughty” (Deuteronomy 8:12-14).

After the gaon Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin established his great yeshiva, he procured splendid and spacious rooms for its students. Some people pointed out to him that this was liable to fill them with a sense of pride. Rabbi Chaim replied, “I will tell you something that once happened to me. I was in a small town and went to the public baths one Friday. When I tried to remove my boots, the custodian of the facility came to help me and thereby earn some money. As he pulled on my boots with all his might, I calmly told him that in Volozhin we remove boots slowly. Upon hearing this, he stood up and raised his hand as if to strike me: ‘How dare you give me lessons!’ he said. ‘Nobody knows how to take off boots better than me!’”

Rabbi Chaim explained: “You see, my friends, even this man – whose job was to remove people’s boots, and who spent his time in the public baths to take care of them – grew haughty. It is not necessary to live in a spacious room in order to succumb to pride. Anyone is liable to fall prey to it, and the only way to avoid it is to work on one’s middot.”

– Torat HaParasha

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

The Tzaddik and Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Pinto

Among the rabbis in the Pinto dynasty, we all know of the holy tzaddik and kabbalist Rabbi Yehudah Pinto, may his merit protect us all. He was better known as Rabbi Hadane, and everyone called him “Gur Aryé Yehuda.” He was the son of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Gadol, whom everyone called “Saba DeMishpatim.”

Like his father, Rabbi Yehudah was known throughout the country as a holy and pure man, a miracle worker. Above all, he was known for his deeds of tzeddakah, which he performed with all his might. Not only that, but he used his own money to purchase clothes, utensils, talitot, and tefillin that he distributed to those who could not afford them. Rabbi Hadane was great in Torah and in the wisdom of the Kabbalah. He gave advice to both the masses and the great men who came to see him for help in every field. Notable figures from all around the country, including government representatives and state leaders, were in contact with him, especially through the numerous consulates located in Mogador. With his tremendous knowledge, Rabbi Hadane would help everyone, be it in the material or spiritual realm, by praying for all who suffered or needed help.

Rabbi Hadane is buried in the Mogador cemetery, next to the grave of his father. Engraved on his tombstone are the words: “Here lies the perfect and accomplished sage, helper of the masses, zealous in mitzvot, of holy extraction, our teacher Rabbi Yehudah Pinto, may his merit protect us all.” His soul entered its resting place on Av 16, 5641. May his merit protect us, as well as all Israel. Amen.

A fuller account of Rabbi Yehuda Pinto’s life will appear in the soon to be published VeNifleotav Livnei Adam, a book written by his great-grandson Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Not Now, But Afterwards

It is written, “Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you, for he was only one when I called him. I blessed him and increased him, for the L-RD shall comfort Zion” (Isaiah 51:2-3).

The Midrash (Bereshith Rabba 38:14) states that every occurrence of the expression “she has no” means that now she lacks, but in the future she will not lack (Bereshith Rabba 38:14). For example, the Torah states, “Sarah was barren; she had no child” (Genesis 11:30), but later we read: “The L-RD visited Sarah” (ibid. 21:1). We also have, “She is Zion; no one cares for her” (Jeremiah 30:17), yet later it is written: “A redeemer shall come to Zion” (Isaiah 59:20). Likewise it is stated, “She has no comforter” (Lamentations 1:2), yet afterwards: “I am He Who comforts you” (Isaiah 51:12).

Thus the verse, “Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you” means that when we lose hope because we have not been comforted in the darkness of our exile, and when we start to believe that “she has no comforter” and that “no one cares for her” means forever, then we must look to our father Abraham and to our mother Sarah. Although Abraham “was only one when I called him” – although Hashem called him in this world and announced that he should be childless – nevertheless, “I blessed him and increased him.” The meaning of “she had no child” is thus clear: Now she has no child, but in the future she will have one. From here we learn that “the L-RD shall comfort Zion,” for although now “She has no comforter,” afterwards she will have one!

– The Chida, Tzavarei Shalal

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

Three Who Got the Better of Him

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania remarked: No one has ever gotten the better of me except a woman, a little boy, and a little girl.

What was the incident with the woman? I was once staying at an inn where the hostess served me beans. On the first day I ate all of them, leaving nothing. On the second day I also left nothing. On the third day she over-seasoned them with salt, and I stopped eating as soon as I tasted them. “My master,” she said to me, “why are you not eating?” I replied, “I have already eaten earlier in the day.” She said to him, “You should then have stopped eating bread.” She continued: “My master, is it possible that you left [the dish today] as compensation for the former meals, for have the Sages not said: ‘Nothing is to be left in the pot, but something must be left in the plate?’”

What was the incident with the little girl? I was once on a journey when I saw a path across a field. I made my way through it when a little girl called out to me, “Master! Isn’t that part of the field?” I replied, “No, this is a trodden path.” She retorted, “[That’s because] robbers like yourself have trodden it down.”

What was the incident with the little boy? I was once on a journey when I noticed a little boy sitting at a crossroads. I asked him, “By which road do we go to town?” He replied, “This one is short and long, while that one is long and short.” I proceeded along the “short and long” road. When I approached the town, I discovered that it was hedged in by gardens and orchards. Turning back to him, I said: “My son, did you not tell me that this road was short?” He replied, “And did I not also tell you: ‘and long?’” I kissed him on his head and said to him, “Happy are you, O Israel. All of you are wise, both young and old.”

– Erubin 53b