

The Path To Follow

Vayeira

416

A Hevrat Pinto
Publication

Heshvan 15th, 5772
November 12th, 2011

Under the Direction of Rabbi David H. Pinto Shlita
www.hevratpinto.org / hevratpinto@aol.com
Editor-in-Chief: Hanania Soussan
32 rue du Plateau 75019 Paris, France • Tel: +331 48 03 53 89 • Fax: +331 42 06 00 33

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita



When Does The Satan Come To Hinder A Person?

It is written, "Abraham raised his eyes and saw, and behold, a ram behind, caught in the thickets by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and he offered it up as a sacrifice instead of his son" (*Bereshith* 22:13).

The Sages have greatly admired the vision of the *tzaddikim*. Thus they say in the Midrash, "The vision of the *tzaddikim* gives them enlightenment, for it raises them to the loftiest heights, as it is written: 'He lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, three men were standing over him' [*Bereshith* 18:2]; '[He] saw, and behold, a ram' [*ibid.* 22:13]; 'He [Jacob] saw, and behold, a well in the field' [*ibid.* 29:2]; 'He [Moshe] saw, and behold, the bush...' [*Shemot* 3:2]; 'When Pinchas saw...' [*Bamidbar* 25:7]. Therefore they rejoice in the sight of their eyes, as it says, 'The upright see and are glad' [*Tehillim* 107:42]" (*Esther Rabba* 7:9).

This raises a number of questions: First of all, what does raising the eyes mean here? Next, how did Abraham know that he was going to find a ram that was ownerless, and why was he not afraid that it belonged to someone who had left it there, or that someone had lost this ram, whose horns were now entangled in a thicket on the mountain? Perhaps its owners were looking for it, in which case he did not have the right to offer it as a sacrifice before Hashem! We also need to understand why it is said, "and behold, a ram behind." Why behind? It should have said, "and behold, a ram caught in the thickets by its horns"!

The Satan Returned with Obstacles

We can begin to understand this by citing the words of our Sages in the Midrash Aggadah. They say that when Abraham and Isaac started their journey, the Satan preceded them in an attempt to place obstacles before them (*Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeira* 22). At first the Satan tried to prevent them from leaving, but it was successful. It then spread itself out and appeared as a great river. Nevertheless, Abraham and Isaac descended into the water up to their necks, until Hashem reprimanded the Satan, which left them alone.

When they climbed the mountain and G-d said to him, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad" (*Bereshith* 22:12), Abraham saw the ram and wanted to sacrifice it in place of his son Isaac. He wanted to slaughter it in place of his son, sprinkle its blood in place of his son's blood, and burn its innards in place of his son's innards. The Satan immediately tried to prevent this, entangling the horns of the ram so it could not move and do Hashem's will.

When Abraham saw that the ram's horns were caught in the thicket, he immediately realized that it was there for him to slaughter in place of his son Isaac, and that the odor of the ram would ascend before G-d as the odor of his son. The proof was that its horns had become entangled in the thicket and that the Satan was again trying to prevent him from doing G-d's will.

A Person Must be Stronger

It is a basic principle that whenever a person wants to do something

good or perform a *mitzvah*, the Satan comes and tries to hinder him. One must be stronger than the Satan, taking action with boldness and courage.

As Abraham knew, the ram had clearly been sent to him and the Satan was trying to place obstacles in his way. This is why the text says that it was *achar* (behind). Now the term *achar* alludes to the power of impurity represented by the hind quarters. Throughout his life, our father Abraham worked to remove this power, known as *achar*, from both his heart and his home.

When the three angels came to Abraham, he thought that they were idolatrous Arabs (*Bava Metzia* 86b). He said to them, "Let some water be brought to wash your feet, and recline beneath the tree. I will fetch a morsel of bread so that you may sustain yourselves, *achar* [afterwards] go on" (*Bereshith* 18:4-5). By saying this, Abraham in his wisdom wanted to annul the power of impurity – the power of *achar* – through the power of the holy Torah. We know that "words of Torah are likened to water" (*Taanith* 7a), and the Sages have also said: "Bread refers to Torah, as it says, 'Come, eat of my bread' [*Mishlei* 9:5]" (*Bereshith Rabba* 70:5).

Raise the Honor of Your People Israel

According to what we have said, we may understand the following statement of the Sages: "Moshe addressed himself to the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: 'Sovereign of the universe, how shall the honor [*keren*, which also means horn] of Israel be exalted?' He replied, 'Through *ki tisa* [when you raise up]' " (*Bava Batra* 10b).

This requires an explanation.

We can understand this by applying the words of the Rambam: "What is the way to achieve a love and fear of G-d? When one contemplates His actions and His wondrous and great creations, and sees in them His wisdom, that it has no limit and no end, immediately he will love and praise Him, and greatly desire to know His great Name" (*Yesodei HaTorah* 2:2).

Our father Abraham acted in this way, for he was able to recognize his Creator by observing the hosts of Heaven (*Midrash Ma'aseh Avraham*). He did this throughout his life, raising his eyes to heaven in order to recall the One Who created the world by His word. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moshe Rabbeinu that the "horn" (*i.e.*, the honor) of Israel would be elevated through *ki tisa* ("when you raise"). In other words, it would be by constantly raising one's eyes to heaven and seeing the works of Hashem.

This is why the verse states, "Abraham raised his eyes and saw." In his heart, he felt that he must perform G-d's will, which is why the Satan came and placed all kinds of obstacles before him, trying to ensnare him with "horns" so the honor of Israel would not be raised. At that point, Abraham immediately saw "a ram behind" – the power of impurity known as *achar* – and he conquered it. He placed the ram upon the altar and offered it before Hashem, Who constantly recalls the merit of Isaac's ram for the sake of his descendants.

Concerning the Parsha

The Angel's Return

It is written, "He said, 'I will certainly return to you at this same time'" (*Bereshith* 18:10).

Where do we find that the angel returned?

We must say that he kept his word at Mount Moriah, when it is said: "An angel of Hashem called to him from heaven and said... 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad'" (*Bereshith* 22:11-12). This teaches us that the lad needed strength.

– *Nimukei D'vei Yeshaya*

Measure for Measure

It is written, "I am but dust and ashes" (*Bereshith* 18:27).

Rabbi Meir Yechiel Halevi of Ostrova understands this verse as follows:

By having said, "I am but dust and ashes," Abraham merited that in his war against the four kings, each speck of dust that he threw at them was transformed into a sword, and each blade of straw turned into a deadly arrow, as the Midrash states (*Bereshith Rabba* 43:3).

Thus measure for measure, just as Abraham considered his own body as dust, Hashem also considered dust as his body. Now just as the body is infused with great power to bravely fight for life, so too was the dust. In regards to Abraham, the dust and his body were one and the same, for in the way that a man measures, things are measured for him.

Sarah Will Nurse Children

It is written, "Who would have said to Abraham, 'Sarah will nurse children?'" (*Bereshith* 21:7).

Here the Midrash states that on the day of the festive meal, the princes brought their sons with them and Sarah nursed them. This is because people were saying, "It was not Sarah who gave birth to Isaac. He was a lost boy whom they found." Hence it is said, "Sarah will nurse children."

This is surprising, for a Halachah in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yore Deah* 154:2) states that a Jewish woman must not nurse a non-Jewish child, even if compensated. Therefore how could Sarah have nursed these non-Jewish children?

The book *Pardes Yosef* explains by citing the Rema's opinion that if a Jewish woman has a great deal of milk, and suffers as a result, she may nurse a non-Jewish child. Now the Midrash states that Sarah's breasts opened like two fountains.

The Rav also says in the name of his son that the only reason a Jewish woman is forbidden to nurse a non-Jewish child is because she is thereby helping a child grow up for idolatry. Yet in regards to Sarah, it is said that the children she nursed converted. In that case, in which nursing non-Jewish children would cause them to grow up and serve Hashem, there was no prohibition against it.

Why Two?

It is written, "The two made a covenant" (*Bereshith* 21:27).

It is said that Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa once told his servants to rent a carriage to take him to Warsaw. There, he stood at the entrance of a liquor outlet and saw two porters drinking a *l'chaim*.

One porter asked other, "Did you study Chumash today?"

"Yes," he replied. "But I didn't understand the verse, 'The two made a covenant.' How could Abraham have made a covenant with Avimelech, who was an idolater?"

The other replied, "I myself couldn't understand the verse, for it would have been enough to say, 'They made a covenant.' The words 'The two' are unnecessary!"

"That can be explained by your question," the other replied. "Although Abraham made a covenant with Avimelech the idolater, they were actually 'two' separate parties – there was no unity between them."

When Rabbi Bunim heard this, he immediately returned home and said that he had traveled just to hear this.

The Way of Women

It is written, "Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah" (*Bereshith* 18:11).

The Arizal writes that Heaven allots each person a fixed number of words to last throughout his life. When a person reaches this number, he leaves the world. Our Sages have said that of the ten measures of speech that descended into this world, nine of them were taken by women and one by men.

Since Sarah was able to attain a very great age, it follows that she did not speak as much as other women. In fact she spoke very little, which is why she merited for her days to be lengthened.

The verse is therefore saying, "Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years" – they had the merit of reaching old age, and if it is surprising that Sarah merited this, since nine measures of speech were taken by women, the verse replies by saying: "The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah." This means that she did not speak as much as other women, which is why she merited such a long life.

Important Once Again

It is written, "Stay here with the donkey" (*Bereshith* 22:5).

Concerning the explanation of the Sages on this passage ("people who are like the donkey" [*Yebamot* 62a]), the author of *Tiferet Shlomo* asks: "Why did Abraham choose this very moment to humiliate those who accompanied him, especially his servant Eliezer?"

He replies by stating that Abraham wanted to proclaim and make his great love for his son Isaac known, a love so great that his son Ishmael and disciple Eliezer were like a donkey by comparison in his eyes. Nevertheless, Abraham was ready to sacrifice him before Hashem.

This is why, after the passage on the *Akeidah*, the text states: "Abraham returned to his lads, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba" (*Bereshith* 22:19). This teaches us that they were once again important in his eyes, and that he walked with them.

Continuation Page 3

The Ways of Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan

It is written, "I will fetch a morsel of bread so that you may sustain yourselves" (*Bereshith* 18:5).

Without a doubt, the *tzaddik* Rabbi Haim Pinto *Hakatan*, may his merit protect us, practiced tremendous *chesed* towards the Jewish people. When he put all his energy into it, he did a great deal to aid the poor and needy of his city. He used his time in the same way each day: After *Shacharit*, he went to the old cemetery and visited the grave of his grandfather, the *tzaddik* and kabbalist Rabbi Haim Pinto *Hagadol*, may his merit protect us. He always mentioned his great name whenever he blessed people.

To those who asked him for a blessing, he would say, "May the merit of my grandfather protect you." Next, he would go to the new cemetery, where he would pray by the grave of his father, the holy *tzaddik* Rabbi Yehudah (Hadan), may his merit protect us, and from there he would return to town and head towards the shops, where he purchased food for the poor. The *tzaddik* would then ask his servant to visit a certain widow, or a particular family, who were among the poor of the city. To some he sent meat and bread, while to others he sent fruits and vegetables. His servant thus distributed all this food to the needy according to the orders of the *tzaddik*, thereby preventing the city's poor from experiencing the shame of hunger.

Rabbi Nissim Avitzror recounted that Rabbi Haim asked that he accompany him as he went to collect money among the city's residents and distributed it as *tzeddakah*. It was a great honor to accompany Rabbi Haim as he went to collect money, an honor that Rabbi Nissim enjoyed several times.

Every Friday, Rabbi Haim would go out to collect food, for on that day he did not collect money. The reason was that the *tzaddik* knew that the day was short, meaning that the poor would not have enough time to purchase things for Shabbat if they had been given money. Hence he collected only food on Fridays, so he could give it to the poor for Shabbat. When Rabbi Haim came to people's homes collecting food, he spoke to them prophetically, knowing the quantity of food that a woman had cooked on that day, and how much of it would be eaten during the week. As a result, she could give what was to remain as *tzeddakah*.

Rabbi Nissim Avitzror was surprised by this. How could it be that some Jews – those whose every thought focused on Torah and *mitzvot*, holiness and purity – could abandon everything to devote themselves to the poor? Rather than learning Torah, Rabbi Haim would lower himself, so to speak, and go from house to house collecting food for the poor of the city.

When Rabbi Nissim recounted these things to our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto *Shlita*, Rabbi David asked him: "Did you personally accompany Rabbi Haim?" "Yes!" replied Rabbi Nissim. "I personally accompanied him from house to house, and he would fill entire carts with food."

Our teacher then thought, "David, you still haven't reached the ankle of your grandfather! When have you done anything like this in your life? When have you given a piece of bread to a poor person? You've always discharged your obligation by giving money. Throughout his life, your grandfather went out to the people, which is why he merited prophesy and *Ruach Hakodesh*. For a person who goes out to his people and helps them, Hashem opens every gate and path so he can reach Him. Hashem loves those who help their brothers, and He fills them with a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of holiness and purity so they can continue in this holy endeavor to help those in need."

Today, because of our many sins, there are rabbis who are only concerned with their own honor. They have no desire to dirty their hands with meat or bread, which should be collected for the poor and *bnei Torah* who don't have enough to eat or feed their families with. Such rabbis sit in their offices and wait for others to do their work. Yet rabbis of previous generations did not see any harm in doing everything themselves for the poor and needy. Happy are those and happy is their lot! We find something similar among the *tzaddikim*, men such as the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov, and Rabbi Yitzchak of Berditchev. Many *tzaddikim* of the Maghreb personally went out in public collecting items for the poor, giving to the poor and needy what they needed in abundance and with honor.

From One End of the City to the Other

An interesting account has come to us from Rabbi Yehoshua, the servant of Rabbi Haim Pinto, concerning the progression of the *tzaddik's* day:

"I went to see him early in the morning, at which time he was already praying in the synagogue above his house. After praying, Rabbi Haim descended and asked his wife what she planned on cooking that day. When she responded, he gave her some money for her purchases, at which point he immediately left and went from house to house collecting money for the poor of the city.

"His legs took him directly to the sick, the poor, and the needy. He alone did everything for the poor, including shopping for them, and he was able to provide them with everything they needed. Everywhere he went, he was offered food to eat, but he ate very little. He would say to me, 'Everywhere we go, you have to eat something.' I asked him, 'Rabbi, how much can I eat?' He replied, 'You're still young. You can eat. If they give you something, it is forbidden to belittle them. You have to eat everywhere we go.'"

Thus the *tzaddik* would walk for many hours, from one end of the city to the other, performing deeds of *chesed* with his body and his money. He had done this in his youth, and he continued to do so in his old age. At night, Rabbi Yehoshua recounted, the *tzaddik* would recite *tikkunim* and study the holy Torah. "Who may ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart" (*Tehillim* 24:3-4).

The great deeds of Rabbi Haim on behalf of the poor and needy made him widely accepted among all his Jewish brothers, who knew that everything he did was for the sake of Heaven. Anyone looking for the *tzaddik* knew that he was among the poor, for he would usually sit down to talk with them, consoling and encouraging them so they would not fall into despair. In this way, they could serve their Creator with joy.

In the Light of the Parsha

Measure for Measure

It is written, "Let some water be brought" (*Bereshith* 18:4). Here Rashi explains, "Through a messenger, and the Holy One, blessed be He, rewarded [Abraham's] children through a messenger." The Gemara states, "Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina and the school of Ishmael taught likewise: As a reward for three things, they obtained three things. Thus as a reward for 'butter and milk,' they received the manna. As a reward for 'he stood by them,' they received the pillar of cloud. As a reward for 'let some water be brought,' they were granted Miriam's well" (*Bava Metzia* 86b). The Maharsha objects to this, noting that the Sages have said: "The well by the merit of Miriam, the pillar of cloud by the merit of Aaron; the manna by the merit of Moshe" (*Taanith* 9a). (We can see the Maharsha's response there.)

Let us first ask why Abraham's deeds of kindness on that particular day resulted in the Children of Israel meriting all these things. After all, Abraham demonstrated tremendous kindness throughout his life. We also need to understand why his descendants merited the manna on account of the butter and milk, since Abraham also provided his guests with bread and meat.

Both explanations are correct: The Children of Israel merited the manna, the well, and the pillar of cloud by the merit of Abraham, as well as by the merit of Moshe, Aaron, and Miriam. Had it only been for the merit of Moshe, Aaron, and Miriam, the Children of Israel would have received bread and water in a more natural way, ordinary bread that came from the earth. However bread that came from heaven, a miraculous well, and the pillar of cloud resulted from Abraham's merit.

According to this explanation, we can fully understand why these things were granted to them precisely on account of the hospitality that Abraham demonstrated on that day, deeds of kindness that pertained to small things. Thanks to Abraham's hospitality, they merited these things in a supernatural way. In fact Abraham was 99 years old on that day, the third day following his circumcision, and he practiced hospitality in the full heat of the day.

The Children of Israel merited all this precisely on account of the small things that make devotion even greater. In fact the essence of hospitality lies in providing guests with food and drink. Abraham did not need to show such devotion by giving them small things as well, even providing them himself, things such as butter and milk. Since he served his guests and gave them water to wash their feet, Hashem provided his descendants with bread and water to protect them in a supernatural way, measure for measure, in the desert.

The Memory of the Tzaddik is a Blessing

Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan

This Thursday of *Parsha Vayeira* will see the Hilloula of Rabbi Haim Pinto *Hakatan*, may his merit protect us, a spiritual giant and descendant of the magnificent Pinto dynasty who lived in Morocco. A *tzaddik* accustomed to working miracles, Rabbi Haim Pinto was able to confer merit upon the community, both spiritual and material, by bringing Jewish hearts closer to their Father in Heaven. He did this both in life and after his passing, according to the teaching of our Sages that the *tzaddikim* are greater in death than in life.

We have collected some amazing accounts in honor of the *tzaddik*, accounts that we heard directly from our teacher, the *gaon* and *tzaddik* Rabbi David Hanania Pinto *Shlita*.

During the week of *Parsha Vayeira* in 5760, while our teacher was in France, a woman who looked very depressed came to see him. She explained that she had a very aggressive form of cancer, and with a voice filled with tears, she mourned the fact that she had not yet married off her children, and yet now her life was in grave danger.

The woman's condition deeply affected our teacher, for it was now Cheshvan 15, precisely the start of the evening of his grandfather's Hilloula, the *tzaddik* Rabbi Haim Pinto *Hakatan*. He said to her, "Return home now, and the merit of the *tzaddik* will protect you. Tomorrow, on the day of the Hilloula, you will return and give us some good news."

This woman immediately returned home, and on the following day, after *Arvit*, there was a Hilloula ceremony in honor of the *gaon* Rabbi Eliezer Menachem Man Shach, may his merit protect us, who passed away on Cheshvan 16. This woman arrived in synagogue, and before thousands of people and in the presence of Rabbi Issachar Berman *Shlita* (the nephew of Rav Shach *Zatza*), she announced that her doctors could not understand what had happened to her.

On that very same day, she had gone to the hospital for an ultrasound and blood tests to evaluate the state of her illness, when suddenly her doctors discovered that her illness had completely disappeared. There was no trace of it in her body, meaning that she was in perfect health and her life was no longer in danger.

Four Thousand Dollars

Rabbi Raphael Amar, a student of our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto *Shlita*, recounted that he once traveled to Morocco with an associate, a pilot in the Israeli military who had started to come closer to Judaism. The two of them traveled to Morocco in order to pray by the grave of the *tzaddik* Rabbi Haim Pinto. When they arrived at the cemetery, the custodian (who was not Jewish) brought them to his grave and gave them books of *Tehillim*.

As this was happening, the pilot saw a piece of paper in the custodian's hand, and he asked him what it was. The Arab replied, "I'm holding a picture of the *tzaddik* Rabbi Haim Pinto, which I received from his grandson the *tzaddik*."

The pilot, who was not accustomed to seeing such things, began speaking in Hebrew with Rabbi Raphael Amar so the custodian would not understand him. He said, "Let's try to buy the picture from him. Let's offer him some money, and maybe he'll sell it to us." When the pilot offered the custodian some money for the picture, he adamantly refused. The pilot raised his offer until it reached one thousand dollars, but still the custodian refused. The pilot then raised it even more, until his offer reached four thousand dollars (an amount for which a house can be purchased in Morocco). Nevertheless, the custodian did not want to hear of it.

Very moved by this, the pilot said to Rabbi Raphael: "Look at how much faith this man has in the *tzaddik*! His faith is rooted in his entire body, in his 248 limbs and 365 sinews. Although the picture is old and torn, he absolutely doesn't want to part from it because he's seen miracles and wonders happen here by the merit of the *tzaddik*. For him, that picture is his entire life. If someone who isn't Jewish has such strong faith in the *tzaddik*, how much more should we!"

When our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto *Shlita* heard this account, he said: "Know that faith without Torah is nothing, for the two of them go together. Concerning this, King Solomon prayed: When a non-Jew prays to You, immediately answer his prayer; but when a Jew prays to You, do not immediately answer his prayer [see I Kings 8:41]. Why? It is because a Jew is not content with simply uttering a prayer. For it to be immediately answered and a miracle to occur, faith is not enough. A Jew must also be a *ben Torah*, fulfilling all the words of his Torah study with love. Such is not the case for a non-Jew, for whom Torah study is not incumbent. If he has faith, Hashem is content on answering his prayer. As we have said, a Jew must enlighten himself through the study of Torah, the fulfillment of *mitzvot*, and good deeds. Hashem will then perform miracles for him."

Father, Why Are you Crying?

We must realize the importance of stories concerning the *tzaddikim* from the following incident:

A powerful earthquake struck Agadir, Morocco in the year 5720. Entire buildings collapsed, burying thousands of people inside. Those who managed to crawl out of the rubble were electrocuted by live wires that were left dangling on the city streets. The Jewish community lost entire families, and all the yeshiva students who were studying in the city, along with all the rabbanim, were buried alive in the rubble of the yeshiva.

It was a tragic time for Jews. But why?

During that time, the *tzaddik* Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, may his merit protect us, published his book *Shenot Haim* about his father the *tzaddik* Rabbi Haim Pinto *Hakatan*. He sent this book around the world so that people could purchase it and their faith in the *tzaddikim* would be strengthened. He also sent this book to Agadir, so that Jews would buy it and learn about faith in the *tzaddikim*.

However Rabbi Moshe Aharon was about to be greatly disappointed.

After a certain time, all the books that he had sent there were returned to him. The message coming from Agadir was that no Jew was interested in purchasing his books, for "they've already heard stories about the *tzaddik*."

That being the case, Rabbi Moshe Aharon sent the books back to Agadir and said that they were free of charge. However this too was useless, for the books returned to him once again. As it turned out, the residents of the city were not interested in reading or studying about the life and miracles of the *tzaddik* Rabbi Haim Pinto.

On that night, Rabbi Moshe Aharon saw his father Rabbi Haim in a dream. He was sitting on the ground and crying.

Rabbi Moshe Aharon said to him, "Father, why are you crying?"

"You will hear and you will understand," was his response.

When he awoke, Rabbi Moshe Aharon felt a strong earthquake. A few days later, people learned that the city of Agadir had been destroyed and that numerous Jews and yeshiva students had perished. This was apparently why Rabbi Moshe Aharon had sent his books to Agadir the second time for free, so that the decree against the city would be annulled. However the Satan had succeeded, for nobody had wanted those important books.