

PARSHA
KI TAVO

SEPTEMBER 13TH 2014
ELUL 18TH 5774

561

The Path to Follow

ת"סג

THE BASKET OF FIRST FRUITS REMINDS US OF HASHEM'S GOODNESS

Rabbi David Pinto Chlita

It is written, "And it will be, when you enter the land that Hashem your G-d gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your land that Hashem your G-d gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that Hashem your G-d will choose to make His Name rest there" (Devarim 26:1-2).

We are fully aware of just how powerful the evil inclination is, to the point that it tries to infuse pride in the heart of man in order to drive him from this world. In fact the Sages have taught that jealousy, desire, and the pursuit of honors drive a man from this world (Pirkei Avot 4:21). As such, not only will he be driven from this world, he will also lose his place in the World to Come, for the Holy One, blessed be He, despises all the proud of heart, as it is written: "Every haughty heart is the abomination of Hashem" (Mishlei 16:5).

When the Children of Israel were about to enter Eretz Israel, the land of milk and honey, it is written: "You will eat bread without poverty – you will lack nothing there" (Devarim 8:9). The Holy One, blessed be He, was concerned that wealth would result in pride, and that the people would forget their Creator, as it is written: "Yeshurun became fat and kicked. You became fat, you became thick, you became corpulent – and he deserted G-d his Maker" (Devarim 32:15).

Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, reminded them that they had been enslaved and exiled for 400 years, as well as the fact that the land of Israel was given to them not by their own merit, but by the merit of the holy Patriarchs – Abraham Isaac, and Jacob – men who faithfully served Hashem with devotion by annulling themselves. Consequently, the Children of Israel had no reason to be proud, especially since the land was given to them as a gift on condition that they study Torah and observe mitzvot. Otherwise, the Holy One, blessed be He, would take it back and exile them from their land.

He Remembers the Patriarchs

This is alluded to in the verse, "And it will be, when you enter the land..." (Devarim 26:1). The words ki tavo ("when you enter") have a numerical value of 403. The number 400 represents years of slavery and exile, as it is written: "Know with certainty that your offspring shall be aliens in a land not their own – and they will serve them, and they will oppress them – 400 years" (Bereshith 15:13), and the number three represents the Patriarchs, to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, promised the land after the exile in Egypt.

That is why Hashem ordered them to bring bikurim (first fruits) to the Temple and to recite the

passage: "An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather. He descended to Egypt.... The Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us, and placed hard work upon us" (Devarim 26:5-6). In this way, they would never forget their past, when they were enslaved in Egypt, nor would they forget that they inherited the land not only by the merit of the holy Patriarchs, but also on condition that they study Torah and observe mitzvot. That being the case, everything they possessed up to that point was entirely a gift.

This is why they came to the Temple with a basket in hand, to thank Hashem for all the good that He had done for them. He had let them enter the land of their forefathers, as it is written: "Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand.... He brought us to this place and He gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now, behold – I have brought the first fruits of the ground that You have given me, O Hashem!" (Devarim 26:8-10). As a result of thanking G-d for all the good that He had done for them, they never had prideful thoughts, nor did they fool themselves into thinking that their success was their own doing.

This is one of the ways in which the Torah protects a person from being infused with pride, which causes him to lose his place in this world. In general, when a person because wealthy and his mind is preoccupied with business, he begins to study Torah less and less. The wealthier he becomes, the less he studies. When he distances himself from words of Torah, pride will certainly fill the void created by his diminished Torah study. He is therefore liable of having wicked thoughts.

Because of our many sins, today we no longer have the Temple. However the abode of the tzaddik serves as a substitute to a small degree. The tzaddik is like the Kohen Gadol, who used to officiate in the Temple. When a person learns the path to follow in serving Hashem from the tzaddik, it is as if he has brought an offering to the Temple.

Furthermore, when a person brings a gift to the tzaddik and sees his conduct – which is completely devoid of self-interest – he will feel his heart melt and become another person as he completely repents. It is therefore as if he has brought first fruits to the Temple, as our Sages say: "One who brings a gift to a Torah scholar, it is as if he had offered first fruits" (Ketubot 105b).

Cleaving to the Tzaddik

The verse states, "And it will be, when you enter the land that Hashem your G-d gives you" (Devarim 26:1), meaning you will remember that the land is yours only on condition that you follow the ways of the Patriarchs and do not forget that you were in exile for 400 years. In fact the land is not yours, for the entire earth is Mine. I gave it to your forefathers



Publication of
HEVRAT PINTO

Under the Direction of
Rabbi David Hanania
Pinto Shlita

CHEVRAT PINTO

207 West 78th Street
New York - NY 10024

Tel: 1 212 721 0230

www.hevratpinto.org
hevratpinto@aol.com

Editor-in-Chief:
Hanania Soussan

and their descendants on condition that you do not succumb to pride on account of the wealth that the land brings you, nor feel that you are the masters of your own success.

Above all, we learn from this passage that if a poor person has become wealthy, he must remember that such a gift is only due to G-d's compassion and the merit of the Patriarchs. Hence we have no reason to become filled with pride and vanity. In fact just as Hashem can bring wealth, He

can also take it away when a person does not act correctly. Due to the abundance that G-d gives to man, the evil inclination tries to delude his heart into thinking that his wealth is on account of his own intelligence, or that his current state is due to the fact that he has "succeeded." Yet when a person is constantly going to see the tzaddik in order to be guided along the right path, he will avoid becoming filled with pride, and will always remain humble before Hashem.

Real Life Stories

It is written, "Hashem shall open for you His storehouse of goodness" (Devarim 28:12).

The Rambam writes: "A person will never become impoverished by giving charity. No harm or damage will ever be caused because of charity, as it states: 'The product of charity shall be peace' [Isaiah 32:17]. Everyone who is merciful evokes mercy from others" (Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 10:2). What follows is a fine story that clearly illustrates how Hashem rewards those who fear Him. It was told by the maggid Rabbi Shlomo Lewinstein Shlita in the name of Rabbi Israel Zuckerman.

An honorable man was experiencing difficult times with his business. In the midst of his adversity, he asked a friend for a substantial loan. His friend, who had a great deal of money as well as a generous heart, agreed to lend him the money. Nevertheless, he was worried that his friend would be unable to repay it. He therefore agreed to the loan on condition that two people sign as guarantors, as is customary. The borrower objected that he could not find any guarantors due to the fact that in this particular case, in order to extract himself from his crisis, everything had to remain secret. If he went around seeking guarantors, it would soon become known that he was in trouble, and everyone would stop doing business with him. After all, who wants to do business with someone who is deeply in debt and on the verge of bankruptcy?

His reasoning seemed logical, but the friend still found it difficult to loan such a large amount of money without any guarantors.

Finally, the man said to his friend: "Look, I can't get you any human guarantors. But I do have an excellent guarantor Who is absolutely solid. The Holy One, blessed be He, will guarantee this loan! What do you think?"

The lender was surprised by this novel idea. He thought about it for a moment, and then said: "Agreed, I accept your proposal!" On the spot, he loaned him the requested amount, for which he received an IOU that bore a single signature, that of the borrower. Now the borrower had no idea how he was ever going to repay the vast amount. The lender put the IOU in his pocket, hoping that it held some kind of value.

When the loan was due, the lender waited in vain for a call from the borrower. A day passed, then two, and then a week, and then another week, but he saw nothing on the horizon. Having no choice, he telephoned the borrower to politely ask him what was happening with the loan. The borrower, obviously troubled, began to stammer: "I am so sorry, but I have nothing to reimburse you with." Secretly in his heart, the lender always had this fear, which is why he wasn't particularly surprised by the answer he received. Nevertheless, the direct and brazen response of the lender that was being thrown in his face was devastating, and he had no idea what to do. After having calmed down, he started thinking about what he could do to recoup his money. All of a sudden, he had a brilliant idea: "Why should I even worry? I have the best and most reliable Guarantor possible!"

He raised his eyes to Heaven and spoke to the Creator of the universe, like a son would speak to his father: "Sovereign of the universe, when I agreed to lend this money, it was because I had confidence in You. I am speaking with You today to request and plead with You; I know that You are all-powerful and that You are very generous. That is why I am asking, in return for this loan, that You find a husband for my daughter."

The lender had a daughter who for a long time had wanted to get married, yet remained unwed. The situation was creating a depressing environment in the home that weighed heavily upon the entire family. Hence it was not surprising that in requesting Hashem to "reimburse" his loan, he renounced the money itself, as significant as it was, in exchange for a husband for his daughter, who was at the age of marriage. Fifteen days later, his daughter's engagement was being celebrated!

Several months passed, until one fine day the telephone rang. The borrower was on the line. The lender was taken completely by surprise. He had not been expecting the call. In fact he had completely forgotten about the loan. As far as he was concerned, his "Guarantor" had reimbursed him – not with cash, but with something that meant everything to him. From the start of the conversation, the borrower showered him with apologies, and then he exclaimed with great emotion: "Know that you saved me! Thank G-d, your loan saved me from imminent bankruptcy. Not only is my business back in order, allowing me to get on my feet again, but I've made some excellent profits. I want to come to your house and repay the money that I owe you."

The lender replied: "I'm sorry, but I can't be repaid twice."

The borrower was shocked: "What do you mean, 'twice'? I haven't repaid you anything yet, not even once!"

"No, you didn't repay me, but your Guarantor took care of it, and you should see how!"

"What guarantor are you talking about? You agreed to lend me the money without any guarantors!"

"You don't remember having suggested Hashem as your guarantor?"

He then told him the whole story: "Thank G-d, the Holy One, blessed be He, was incredibly kind to me. My daughter is now engaged, and the wedding will soon take place. You have no idea how much our lives have changed. We sing for joy all day long. That's how I received my due. You no longer owe me anything!"

The two men went before the Beit Din, with one saying: "I haven't repaid my loan," and the other saying: "The Guarantor has more than repaid me." The Rav listened to both of their testimonies, weighed them, and finally rendered his decision: The borrower is to give the amount of the loan to tzedakah. Since that year was a Shmita year, it was decided that the money would be given to a charity that helped farmers who observed the Shmita.

At the Source

He is Considered a Kohen

It is written, “You shall come to whoever will be the kohen in those days” (Devarim 26:3).

Rabbi Yossi the Galilean said: Would it occur to you to come to the kohen who is not in your days? Instead [I must say that the verse requires one to come to] the kohen who is considered by you to be established and fit in those days. Kinsmen who have ceased to be kinsmen are qualified. Thus it is said, “Do not say, ‘How was it that former times were better than these?’” [Kohelet 7:10]. – Sifrei, Ki Tavo

A Foretaste of the World to Come

It is written, “A land flowing with milk and honey” (Devarim 26:9).

One day Rabbi Yonatan ben Elazar was sitting beneath a fig tree, and the tree was full of beautiful figs. When the dew fell, the figs filled with honey, which dripped to the ground. The wind mixed it with earth, a goat came by and dropped milk into the honey, and the milk and honey were mixed together. He summoned his students and exclaimed, “Come and witness a sample of the World to Come!” Because of the wine libations [offerings], the vineyard was blessed.

A certain scribe went to Jerusalem every year. He was known to the residents of Jerusalem as a great Torah scholar. They said to him, “We will give you 50 gold pieces to live among us.” He replied, “I have a vineyard that I cherish more than anything you could give me. It bears fruit for me three times a year, and it produces 600 barrels of wine each year: The first crop yields 300, the second 200, and the third 100, which I sell at a very high price.” He then left them and returned home.

– Midrash HaGadol

He Opens and He Closes

It is written, “Gaze down from Your holy abode, from the heavens” (Devarim 26:15).

Rabbi Ishmael asks: “Do we not know that His holy abode is the heavens? Why mention this?”

The answer is that when the Children of Israel fail to do G-d’s will, He closes His treasure trove and they die of hunger, as it is said: “Then the wrath of Hashem will blaze against you; He will close the heavens” (Devarim 11:17). However when they do G-d’s will, He opens His treasure trove, as it is said: “Gaze down from Your holy abode, from the heavens.”

– Midrash Tannaim

Because of their Faith

It is written, “For praise, for renown, and for splendor” (Devarim 26:19).

May the nations of the world glorify you and aspire to serve you, as it is said: “Kings will be your nurturers and their princesses your wet nurses” (Isaiah 49:23).

When the Roman Emperor Hadrian went to Hamat Gerar, he found a little Jewish girl at the summit. He asked her: “Who are you?” She replied: “I am a daughter of Israel!”

Immediately, Hadrian descended from his carriage and bowed before her.

All the prominent officials of his realm were angry with him. They asked, “Why did you bow before this dirty, disheveled girl?”

“Fools,” he answered. “All the nations are called to bow before them, as it is written: ‘Thus said Hashem, the Redeemer of Israel and their Holy One, to the despised soul, to the one loathed by nations, to the servant of rulers: Kings will see and arise’ [Isaiah 49:7]. What allowed them to achieve all this? It was the faith they had in G-d, as it is said: ‘Because of Hashem, Who is faithful’ [ibid.]” – Midrash HaGadol

Establishing Peace

It is written, “Of whole stones shall you build the altar” (Devarim 27:6).

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said, “It is written, ‘Of whole stones shall you build the altar.’ What does ‘whole’ [shleimot] mean?”

These are stones that establish peace (shalom) between Israel and the Creator.

Is it not a matter of logical reasoning? If with stones – which neither see, nor hear, nor speak – because they establish peace between Israel and their Heavenly Father, the Holy One, blessed be He, says: “You shall not raise iron upon them” (Devarim 27:5), how much more will a person who establishes peace between man and fellowman, between man and wife, between city and city, between country and country, and between family and family, not experience any calamity!

– Mechilta D’Rabbi Yishmael

In the Light of the Parsha

Which Road to Jerusalem?

It is written, “You shall separate three cities for yourselves in the midst of your land that Hashem your G-d gives you to possess” (Devarim 19:2).

I heard the following question in the name of my teacher Rabbi Sham-mai Zahn Zatzal, the Rosh Yeshiva of Sunderland:

In the law dealing with manslaughter, why does the Torah command us to indicate the path to the cities of refuge, as it is written: “Prepare the way for yourself” (Devarim 19:3)? [Rashi explains this to mean that directions to the cities of refuge were inscribed on signs located at crossroads.] However when it comes to the mitzvah of bringing first fruits to Jerusalem and the Temple, nowhere does the Torah command us to indicate the path for pilgrims to follow on their way to Jerusalem. Why not? What could be the reason for this omission? It is very strange indeed.

We may explain this omission in light of what our Sages say in the Gemara: “What is our warrant for doing things in remembrance of the Temple? It is because Scripture says, ‘For I will make a cure for you, and I will heal you from your wounds – the word of Hashem – for they called you “discarded,” [saying:] “She is Zion. No one cares for her!”’ [Jeremiah 30:17]. From this we gather that she should be inquired after” (Rosh Hashanah 30a).

From here we may explain that the Torah did not want us to indicate the way to Jerusalem because, even in the days of the Temple, the Torah wanted us to inquire after Zion. Because the pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem were forced to ask people, “Which road to Jerusalem?” this was a way of inquiring after Zion, an honorable and pleasant way of doing so.

We may also explain the following verse along the same lines: “Let us search and examine our ways and return to Hashem” (Eicha 3:40). This verse evokes the journey to Jerusalem, for special importance is placed on a person who seeks out and looks for the road to Jerusalem, in order that he may return to Hashem and seek His presence.

Guard Your Tongue

Speaking Rechilut

If Levi tells Reuven something negative about Shimon, and Reuven then goes and tells it to Shimon (thus breaking the prohibition against Rechilut [talebearing]), Shimon is forbidden to ask Levi: “Why did you say that about me?” In doing so, Shimon would be speaking Rechilut about Reuven. Even if he does not say that he heard it from Reuven, if it is easy to deduce that fact, then it is forbidden. – Chafetz Chaim

Prayer

The Chafetz Chaim used to say that when we are standing in prayer before Hashem, we must address Him as we would address our mother, knowing that she only wants what is good for us. In fact she always knows what's in our best interest, as the verse says: "I stilled and silenced my soul, like a suckling child at his mother's side" (Tehillim 131:2), meaning like a baby that depends entirely on its mother. The baby knows that its mother will never get angry with it, even when constantly asking its mother for more. In general, when a person begs and pleads too much, people get angry and grow resentful with him. Not so the Creator; indeed, the more you pray to Him, the more He responds to your requests.

Hashem carefully listens to the prayer of every Jew. True, "The Holy One, blessed be He, longs to hear the prayer of the righteous" (Yebamot 64a), and He opens the door to those who knock in sincere repentance. However He always prefers the prayers of the poor man who unburdens himself before Him, as the verse says: "G-d heard the cry of the lad" (Bereshith 21:17). Here Rashi cites the Midrash in explaining, "From here [we learn] that a sick person's prayer is more effective than the prayer of others on his behalf, and it is the first to be accepted."

From his youth, the Chafetz Chaim would usually pour out his soul before the Holy One, blessed be He, preferring not to depend on others. As he himself revealed, "When I was a child, I was orphaned and poor. I grew up and Hashem helped me. Whenever I lacked something, I took the book of Tehillim, found myself a corner, and the Master of the universe heard my prayer."

He also counseled those who came from every corner of the world to ask that he pray for them: "What can I, a simple Jew, do to save you? Only Hashem in His infinite kindness can save you, and it is only to Him that you should address your requests!" On this subject, we may also recall that during the month of Elul in the year 5684, the Chafetz Chaim was travelling through the city of Grodno. Naturally, during his travels many people gathered from near and far to experience his holiness and be included in his prayers. Yet he remained indifferent to the enthusiasm of the huge crowd.

He addressed them and said, "My dear brothers! It seems as if you need me to present your requests to our Father in Heaven! Don't you know that a father is not satisfied when one of his children asks him for favors on behalf of another? He wants each and every one of his children to personally come to him with his requests.

"The same applies to the children of your Heavenly Father. The Sovereign of the universe wants every one of His children to personally address themselves to Him for their requests and supplications. Nevertheless, some of you feel that perhaps your Father is a little angry with you. I can therefore promise you that Hashem wants to be at peace with you much more than you want to be with Him. He is waiting for you to come to Him alone.

"My dear brothers, first you must open the door yourselves, as the Sages have said: 'Present to Me an opening of repentance no

bigger than the eye of a needle, and I will widen it into openings through which wagons and carriages can pass.'"

We Forget to Pray for Them

The great gaon Rabbi Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz Zatzal merited teaching Torah to generations of students over the course of more than 60 years. Thousands of students were educated by him, and sometimes even three generations studied under him.

He once said, "I have often seen students who, in the beginning, were not considered particularly gifted, and yet in the end they succeeded magnificently.

"It was precisely these students – the ones who did not succeed at first – whose parents prayed for them, beseeching Hashem with tears, reciting tehillim, and giving to tzeddakah for them, all of which resulted in raising them from the lowest levels to becoming great in Torah. On the other hand, we sometimes 'forget' to pray for gifted children, which is why their success does not always last."

The Faithful Ones - Accounts from the Tzaddikim of the Pinto Family

He was Promised the World to Come

During the time of the great war between Spain and Morocco, Rabbi Haim Pinto, may his merit protect us, was 78 years old. One day the tzaddik stood before the door that led to the Jewish district in Mogador, and he said: "The one who saves me by leading me out of the city to escape the war, I promise him the World to Come."

Next to the Rav was a Jew named Uzi Aukha. He heard these words and immediately told Rabbi Haim, "What the Rav wishes, I will do right away."

This Jew then took the Rav with him and led him outside the city to a safe location. Thus the Rav was saved, whereas there were many casualties in the immediate surroundings.

After leading the Rav to safety, Uzi Aukha set out for a well to get some water. When he got down to the well, he found a treasure trove of silver, gold, and precious stones. It was something that wealthy individuals had thrown into the well for safekeeping until after the war, so they could continue making a living when the time was right.

Uzi Aukha greatly rejoiced at finding such an impressive treasure. He then brought it to Rabbi Haim and told him about it. Upon his arrival, the tzaddik said to him:

"This is your reward in this world, but it doesn't stop there. Since you saved me, the principle is waiting for you in the World to Come, as I promised."

Indeed, Uzi Aukha's descendants tell us that he became very wealthy at that point and fulfilled the verse: "He raises the needy from the dirt" (I Samuel 2:8), as well as: "The principle remains in the World to Come" (Devarim Rabba 1:15). Uzi Akuna also lived to be quite old, all by the merit of the mitzvah that he performed in saving Rabbi Haim Pinto from the dangers of war.