

The Path to Follow



Published by **Mosdot Orot Chaim U'Moshe** in Israel

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MASKIL LÉDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita**

Naturally Drawn to the Path of Torah

"If you will go in My statutes and observe My commandments, and perform them" (Vayikra 26:3).

Why does the Torah write "If you will go in My statutes"? It would seem more appropriate to write, "If you will hearken to My statutes." Since the Torah specifically chose this working, there must be a lesson to be learned.

This can be elucidated by examining the words of David Hamelech (Tehillim 119:59), "I considered my ways and returned my feet to Your testimonies." He expressed that despite deciding in his mind to visit a certain place, in the end, his feet took control and led him automatically to the Beit Hamidrash. This statement requires clarification.

We know that the brain is located in one's head, and it is the source of intelligence. One's body follows the rational conclusions decided by the brain. Therefore, when the brain instructs the feet to go to a certain destination, the feet obey the command. One's limbs do not act independently of his brain.

According to this, how is it possible to understand the words of David Hamelech? He indicated that despite deciding in his head to go to a certain place, his feet contradicted his thoughts, and consequently he ended up going to the Beit Hamidrash. It seems that this is contrary to one's natural behavior.

Although the body receives messages from the brain, it is not necessarily considered entirely separate from it.

Even though feet generally receive instructions from the brain and act accordingly, one can sanctify himself to the extent that his legs also become elevated. Since they are directly connected to the head, which is the source of all intelligence, they acquire independent thought, which at times contradicts the mind. Occasionally, people relate that their feet were rooted to the ground, despite their brain ordering them to continue going. Similarly, there are times when one's heart persuades him to go to a forbidden location, but his feet do not allow him to go there.

Although it may seem to us that it is our brain alone that instructs man where to go and how to behave, it is not so. The feet also have a certain "mind of their own." The more a person elevates himself and becomes sanctified through Torah and yirat Shamayim, the more his feet rise in rank and acquire the ability to decide their actions on their own, independently of the mind. This is to the benefit of man. While his thoughts may lean toward committing a crime, his feet can draw him to the proper path and thereby save him from sin.

This is the meaning of David Hamelech's statement (Tehillim 119:59), "I considered my ways and returned my feet to Your testimonies." David Hamelech sanctified himself and became elevated, to the extent that his feet acquired a mind of their own, aiding him in his Avodat Hashem. They led him to the Beit Hamidrash to learn Torah rather than turning toward passing material pursuits.

Perhaps this is the reason that the Torah specifically uses the phrase to "go in My statutes." It implies that one should become sanctified in Avodat Hashem to the extent that his feet also become sanctified and lead him in the path of the Torah. It is an encouraging thought that not only one's head and mind instruct him to learn Torah, but even his legs lead him directly to the Beit Hamidrash, so that he should not waste his time in forbidden places instead of learning Torah.

When one accustoms his body to keeping mitzvot, his hands, feet, and mouth become used to doing them, to the point that they even seek to do them. This is the reason why David Hamelech's feet drew him to the Beit Hamidrash. They were so used to going there to do mitzvot that his feet naturally took him to the Beit Hamidrash so that they could enjoy the spiritual treasures it contains.

Thus, our pasuk says, "If you will go in My ways," to indicate that if we accustom ourselves to using the various parts of our bodies for doing mitzvot, our feet will carry us of their own accord to fulfill more and more mitzvot, since this is what they are used to.

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Hillulah of Tzaddikim

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1 - Rabbi Meir Halevi Horovitz

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3 - Rabbeinu Ovadia Mi-Bartenura

4 - Rabbi Mansour Marzuk



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Bad That Is Really Good

At the end of one year, a man turned to me bitterly, crying, "Honored Rav, why was this past year so bad for me? I observed Torah and mitzvot and withstood difficult tests admirably. Why, then, did my livelihood suffer, and why were my possessions confiscated?"

"Why do you assert that it was a bad year?" I asked, uncomprehending. "You stand before me, whole and healthy. Is that not proof of a good year? Many young people passed away this year, yet you and your family are alive! Is goodness measured only by financial success?!"

The man remained silent, so I continued. "Did you forget all the times that Hashem saved you and your family's lives? Maybe monetary achievement would have aroused the Hand of Jus-

tice, due to some iniquity on your part. Then you might have suffered illness, or, G-d forbid, death!

"Open your eyes to the tremendous kindness which Hashem has granted you. He has switched loss of life with loss of finances. Is this what you call a bad year? Your statement is nothing but an indication of ingratitude toward Hashem!"

Baruch Hashem, my words made their mark. The man learned to recognize Hashem's tremendous goodness toward him. He values the fact that Hashem cast His anger upon inanimate objects and keeps his family alive and healthy.

Another man told me he had the custom of praying only once a week. I was taken aback by this assertion.

"Are you a Jew only once a week?"

I asked. "Does Hashem do kindness with you only once a week?"

He heard my words and allowed them to penetrate. Then he said, in true remorse, "Honored Rav, you are correct. I never thought of it that way. I am a proud Jew during the entire week. And Hashem takes care of my needs 24/7. I am certainly obligated to pray to Him each and every day."

People often fail to analyze the great goodness which Hashem does for them, each and every moment of their lives. They therefore do not feel sufficient gratitude toward Him for all He does. A little thought will make them aware of the tremendous amount of good Hashem has granted them, and then they will feel immense gratitude toward Him.

The Haftarah



The haftarah of the week: **Hashem, my Strength and my Stronghold...** (Yirmeyahu 17)

The connection to the parashah: The haftarah refers to the calamities that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will bring upon Israel if they do not uphold the Torah. This is similar to the rebuke mentioned in the parashah, which relates the prophecy of the terrible things that will happen to the nation if, chaililah, the people do not keep the laws of the Torah.



Guard Your Tongue

The Power of Speech

A wise person will always take to heart what Chazal have to say on the pasuk "G-d will seek out the one who is pursued." R' Yehudah said in the name of R' Yosi ben Nehorai, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu always exacts vengeance on those who are pursued from those who pursue them." This should give a person pause for thought as to how important it is to distance himself from becoming involved in an argument by supporting one of the sides. Eventually, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will demand justice for this. As much as he hoped to gain honor by being a member of the side that is victorious, he will instead find himself inflicted with tzara'at or poverty as punishment. On the other hand, one who guards himself from being involved in such disputes will ultimately be honored by others.

Reasons for Jewish Customs



On Shabbat Kodesh, we do not put on tefillin.

The reason for this is that there are three things which are called "a sign – **אֵימָת**" between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Israel: Brit milah, Shabbat, and tefillin. These three mitzvot bear witness that Israel are the servants of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

On a regular day, a person has two witnesses to his serving Hashem: brit milah, engraved on his body, and the tefillin that he wears on his arm and head. On Shabbat, he has the two witnesses of Shabbat and brit milah, and thus does not need another witness (tefillin). This is why one does not wear tefillin on Shabbat.



Words of Wisdom

Midrashim of Chazal on Parshat Hashavua

The Sign of Favor

“And I will provide your rains in their times” (Vayikra 26:3)

In the era of King Herod, the rains would fall at night. When morning came, the winds would scatter the clouds, the sun would shine brightly, and the earth would dry out. People would go out to work knowing that their Father in Heaven was pleased with their deeds.

Another explanation for “in their times” is during the night on Shabbat.

The following story took place during the times of Shimon ben Shetach and Shlomtzion Hamalka. During those times, the rains would fall on Shabbat during the night, and the wheat grains grew as big as kidneys, the barley grains as big as olive pits, and lentils as big as gold dinarim. The Chachamim gathered some of them to warn and show future generations the effects of sin, as Yirmeyahu (5) said, “Your sins have overturned these, and your transgressions have kept goodness away from you.” (Vayikra Rabbah)

Keep in Mind

“I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember, and I will remember the Land” (Vayikra 26:42)

Concerning Yitzchak, the word “remember” is not used, since the ashes of Yitzchak are constantly remembered by Hakadosh Baruch Hu. It is thus not necessary for him to be “remembered.”

Concerning Yaakov, the word “also – וְגַם” is not mentioned, since all his progeny were righteous.

Why does this pasuk start with Yaakov? First, because he endured the troubles and anguish of raising children, and second, because Israel are called by his name (Yisrael).

[The Zohar Hakadosh (III, 30) relates the explanation of Rabbi Chiya on the pasuk “An eternal fire you shall light on the altar, you shall not extinguish it” – that this refers to the fire of Yitzchak, an eternal fire that constantly endures.] (Midrash Aggadah)

Asking After the Land

“I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember, and I will remember the Land” (Vayikra 26:42)

Why does the pasuk mention the Land when mentioning the merits of the forefathers?

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: This can be compared to a king who had three sons and a maid who raised them. Since the king asked after the welfare of his sons, he says, “Ask after the welfare of the maid who raises them.”

Similarly, Hakadosh Baruch Hu mentions the merit of the Land when mentioning the merits of the forefathers: “I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember, and I will remember the Land” (Yalkut Shimoni).

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita



Setting Aside a Fixed Time for Learning Torah

“If you will go in My statutes and observe My commandments, and perform them” (Vayikra 26:3).

The Rema (Yoreh De'ah 246:26) writes, “When one completes a masechta, it is a mitzvah to make a festive meal.” The Shach writes in the name of the Maharshal that others, even if they did not complete the masechta, should also join the siyum. This is because by joining the siyum, it is considered to be as significant as if they did complete it.

First let us examine why one should make a festive meal on completing a masechta or on completing Shas.

It seems we can say that when one joins the siyum of his friend, he sees in front of himself a person who consistently set aside the time to learn one daf after another, and consequently completed the masechta. He cannot fail to be impressed by this. This is especially the case when he joins the siyum his friend makes on the entire Shas, when he considers the tremendous commitment his friend made to stick to a timetable of learning one daf a day for seven and a half years, and was able to complete it with Hashem's help. He himself might very well be beset with pangs of jealousy, the healthy jealousy of colleagues in learning (kinas sofrim), and might also feel a tinge of regret. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu sees his true desire to be counted among those who are now completing Shas, He will shorten his path, and will consider him as if he also completed it.

But this applies only the first time that he feels this inspiration and lack. If he continues to be negligent and does not keep to a regimen of learning one daf a day in order to finish Shas, then the next time a siyum is made, either on one masechta or on the entire Shas, if he attends with a heavy heart, regretting not having completed it himself, he will not be considered to have done so, since he had the opportunity and forfeited it. If, however, he was unable to complete Shas due to unforeseen circumstances, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Who knows the thoughts and intentions of every person, and understands what held him back, will free him from the accusation of bitul Torah and will again consider it as if he also completed Shas.

It is well-known that the second question a person will be asked in the Next World is: Did you set aside fixed times for learning Torah?” (Shabbat 31a). How fortunate is the person who can answer in the positive, and how ashamed will be one who cannot. Most of those who completed Shas in the seven years certainly set aside a fixed time to learn the day's daf. Each one either rose early to learn, or fixed a time in the evening to learn the daf after a hard day's work. Each one demonstrated self-sacrifice in order to go to the Beit Midrash to complete the day's learning. Fortunate are they, and fortunate is their lot! By their actions they surely fulfill the commandment “If you will go in My statutes and observe My commandments, and perform them.”

Wellsprings

Chapters in Child-Raising



Until now, we have spent considerable time clarifying the foundation of our way of educating our children and the importance of the love and warmth that we, as parents, impart to our children throughout their lives, from childhood to adulthood, for many years. This week, we will look back thousands of years to the times of Shlomo Hamelech to see how the wisest of all men describes the way he was educated by his parents.

He describes his education in the following words: “For I was a son to my father, a tender and only son before my mother. He taught me and said to me, ‘Let my words sustain your heart; observe my commandments and live’ (Mishlei 4:3).

Shlomo Hamelech tells us that as a young child, he was surrounded by the love of devoted parents, who concerned themselves over his development and toward fulfilling all his needs as a “tender and only son.” It was the feeling generated by this, of being treated as “tender and only,” that enabled him to accept the words of his father, who adjured him out of concern for his spiritual development to “observe my commandments and live.”

When we examine the book of Mishlei, we see that this message is repeated time and again, in different ways. The common denominator of these references is that the command to guard one’s spiritual life stems from the one who concerns himself over and ensures his physical existence.

This is the tremendous and singular merit of parents, which has no substitute.



Men of Faith

Excerpts from the book *Men of Faith on the lives and deeds of the House of Pinto*

Still Living

Approximately twenty years ago, a man joined in the hilula of Rabbi Chaim Hagadol in Morocco, and tearfully told the assembled people his heartbreaking story:

Following medical tests, his doctor discovered that he was suffering from an advanced stage of cancer, rachmana litzlan. The doctors did not give him more than six months to live. They informed him, “There is nothing left to do, since there is no cure for your illness. Go enjoy yourself for the remaining six months of your life.”

The participants of the hilula told him encouragingly, “Here lies the great doctor, Rabbi Chaim Pinto. Pray to Hashem that in the merit of the tzaddik you should have a complete recovery.”

Bitterly, the sick man countered, “None of the best doctors could assist me; how, then, will being at this grave help me?”

“In that case, why did you come here?”

Parents give their children life and raise them both physically and spiritually. They are the ones who shower them with unending warmth and love, and the child instinctively understands that his life stems from the input of his parents.

Giving is the most influential factor in educating our children. The child is in the process of formation and growth. Through his physical and mental powers, and the experiences he has, he constantly adds to and reinforces his emotions and opinions. Whoever is involved in the growth process of the child is able to direct him to the same extent that an educator is able to direct him spiritually, and has tremendous influence in molding his character.

The Vilna Gaon, zy”a, in his letter, asked his wife, concerning the education of their children, “Always concern yourself over their health and ensure that they should not lack food.” It seems that when instructing his wife about their children’s education, he mentioned the physical aspect of their care since this is what opens the gate to influencing children spiritually.

Concerning this point, it seems appropriate to digress from the main point we are speaking about: the power of giving and nurturing, and mention a point that the Steipler Gaon, zt”l, author of the *Kehillas Yaakov*, would frequently say: “In former times, in the small villages of Europe, people grew up in great poverty. Because of this, they got used to not always getting what they wanted. Often, when a boy came home from cheder, there was nothing in the house for him to eat, and he got used to being hungry. When there was food, it was simple. A fruit was a delicacy. New clothes were rarely bought. Poverty and affliction educated children for the good. When they would grow up, if they lacked something they

wanted, they were used to putting up with it, and it didn’t upset them.

“But today, a child is used to getting whatever he wants; his parents will provide. Food is plentiful. There is no such thing as not having any food at home, including fruits and sweets. Children are dressed as princes and princesses. They often get new clothes.

Sometimes, a child is showered with material abundance, but his education is neglected. The father goes out to work and has no time to invest in his children. When he comes home, he is tired and disagreeable. He does not have the energy to educate his children and influence them positively. So children grow up without education.

“After they have become used to all this in their childhood, when something doesn’t go their way when they are older, they immediately become upset and get depressed.

“This is because the parents are able to give them plentiful food and abundant clothing, but they are not able to give him respect. And when a child does not feel respected in his learning, when other children are better in learning than he is, and he feels eaten up by jealousy, because he is used to getting whatever he wants and now his parents cannot give him this most desired thing, he becomes broken and depressed.

“But if a child is immunized from his childhood by being used to not getting everything he wants, he won’t be disheartened and upset by the problems that he faces in life. Even more than this, when one has grown up in poverty and difficult circumstances, if he receives something more than he is used to, he will appreciate it. Thus, he will always be happy, because he will rejoice in and enjoy every good thing that he receives above the norm.”

The man answered simply, “I heard that people were celebrating a hilula with a lavish feast. That is why I came.”

The assembled people insisted, “If you came to this holy place, it is a sign from Heaven that you were granted a chance to be cured.” A few people proceeded to lay the sick man on the grave of the tzaddik, and they blessed him, saying, “We shall meet next year, with the help of G-d, and find you alive and well.”

Six months passed, and the man visited his doctor to monitor his condition. The doctor asked him in surprise, “How are you still alive and functioning? We must examine you.” He had extensive tests done, and found no trace of the disease.

This story was told directly by the man himself at the hilula of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, on the fifth of Elul, 2004 (5764). Many cried tears of joy for the miracle that was performed for him.