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MASKIL LÉDAVID

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

The Severity of Slanderous Speech

“But Hashem became angry with me because of you, and He did not listen to me: Hashem said to me: It is too much for you! Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter” (Devarim 3:26)

Parashat Va'etchanan begins with Moshe's request to enter Eretz Yisrael and Hashem's refusal. Moshe does not merely state that Hashem refused his request, but he spoke to Bnei Yisrael harshly, saying, “Hashem became angry with me because of you.” We know that Moshe was denied the privilege to enter the Holy Land because he struck the rock to obtain water from it instead of speaking to it, thereby disobeying Hashem's command. Moshe was punished by being denied entry into Eretz Yisrael. In spite of Moshe's entreaties to set foot in the Land, Hashem refused, even adding, “It is too much for you! Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter.”

Some questions press for our attention. Why did Moshe say, “Hashem became angry with me because of you”? Was he casting blame for his own fault upon Bnei Yisrael?

Moshe was worthy of entering Eretz Yisrael. But Hashem, in His infinite kindness, denied him this pleasure. Whatever Moshe crafted endured forever. Had he been allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael, he would certainly have built the Beit Hamikdash. In his merit, it would never have fallen. What would happen when Bnei Yisrael would sin? Hashem would, so to speak, be forced to strike at them, for the Beit Hamikdash would be indestructible.

But Hashem has mercy on His children and does not want to harm them. He therefore preferred to cast His wrath on the sticks and stones that were the Mik-

dash and preserve His people. Hashem purposely arranged for Moshe to sin at Mei Merivah. This would prevent him from entering Eretz Yisrael. Bnei Yisrael would pay the price of sin by having their Temple destroyed, but they themselves would remain intact.

In effect, Moshe was punished at Mei Merivah on their account. Because Bnei Yisrael would sin in the future, Moshe could not enter the Land and build the Beit Hamikdash.

The day the spies returned from scouting the Land was Tishah b'Av. Hashem told the nation, “You cried a cry for nothing. This day will be designated as a day of weeping for generations”. The two Batei Mikdash were destroyed on Tishah b'Av. Therefore, it is a day of mourning and grief.

The lashon hara of the spies caused the nation to weep for nothing, which eventually resulted in the future weeping over the churban Beit Hamikdash on Tishah b'Av. Moreover, Bnei Yisrael's acceptance of the spies' slanderous report necessitated Moshe's sin at Mei Merivah. This was in order that he would be forbidden from entering the Holy Land and building a Beit Hamikdash that would stand eternally. Had that been the case, when Bnei Yisrael would sin in the future, Hashem would have “been forced” to annihilate them.

A person can learn Torah with excitement and enthusiasm, but if he speaks lashon hara, his Torah is worthless in Hashem's eyes. Hashem foregoes His own honor, but will not forego the honor of His children. Yom Kippur atones for sins between man and Hashem, but not for sins between man and his fellow man. This teaches us just how precious the honor of Yisrael is in Hashem's eyes.

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Hillulah of Tzaddikim

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the Mai'am Loez

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Author of Mordechai



Walking in their Ways

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

Kindness Reflected in Cure

The following letter reached our office in France:

The first time I encountered Rabbi David Pinto was when I went to ask him for a berachah. I had undergone a turbulent year, and was suffering from numerous medical issues. I told the Rav about my situation. He stopped me in the middle, asking various questions. Afterward, he promised me a marked improvement in my livelihood as well as in my marital harmony.

I was pleased to receive berachot in this area, but the reason for my visit remained undressed. I told him about the catheterization I had recently undergone, and the resulting complications. But the Rav once again interrupted me, asking about my feet.

I was in utter shock. One of the illnesses I was suffering from was a problem of the nervous system, which caused me untold neurological issues, especially in the bottom of my feet. How did the Rav know about this?

I began telling the Rav the story of my feet, when he suddenly stopped me and asked, "Who is Yaakov?"

I replied that I had no idea who he was talking about.

We continued talking about my various health issues. The Rav instructed me to reduce my sugar intake and be careful about my cholesterol. The Rav's words were an exact quote of the doctor's orders.

We continued our discussion, but the Rav seemed distracted. He often repeated that I had experienced a great miracle. Only a few months earlier, on Shabbat, a decree of death had been hovering over my head. I merited emerging unscathed in the merit of a certain mitzvah which I had done. I asked the Rav which mitzvah he was referring to. He said he did not know, but he was certain, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that I had done a certain mitzvah that had saved my life.

I was also surprised that the Rav knew that my illness had begun on the afternoon of a Shabbat.

The Rav directed me to continue my observance of mitzvot and to increase Torah study, and he blessed me with a complete recovery.

I returned home in an elevated mood. I told my wife all about the meeting and the Rav's instructions. But one point gave me no rest. For the life of me, I couldn't figure out who was the Yaakov that the Rav had referred to. My mind was on this all day long. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, I shot up in bed, as

realization struck. I finally remembered who Yaakov was.

The first Shabbat that I had become ill, my wife and I were participating at a weekend seminar, which was held from Wednesday through Sunday. On Thursday, I made the acquaintance of a fellow participant, a nice-looking religious Jew. I introduced myself and asked what his plans were for the Shabbat meals.

The man, who introduced himself as Yaakov, said he intended to buy some kosher food for the Shabbat meals. I immediately told him there was no need, as we had plenty of food and would be honored to have him as our guest. He accepted our invitation. We experienced a most wonderful Shabbat. Since then, our relationship has blossomed.

I returned to Rav Pinto and relayed the details of my friendship with Yaakov. The Rav's face lit up. He asserted that it was the mitzvah of hachnasat orchim with Yaakov which had saved me from certain death that Shabbat. He spoke about the significance of this mitzvah and mentioned that people are unaware of the tremendous power of kind deeds.

The Rav asked that I publicize this message, with words of blessing for a complete recovery and all things good.

The Haftarah



The haftarah of the week: "**Comfort, comfort My people**" (Yeshayahu 40).

The connection to this Shabbat: This haftarah is one in the series of seven haftarot of comfort read during the seven Shabbatot following Tisha B'Av. It is one of the seven haftarot from Yeshayahu called "shivah d'nehemta" (seven of comfort).



Guard Your Tongue

The Power of Speech

A Short Adjustment

It has been proven through experience that guarding one's tongue and ears from slander is not burdensome for very long, because eventually people realize that this man refuses to participate in speaking or hearing lashon hara and scoffing. Consequently, they stop relating gossip to him and go sell their stories of lashon hara and gossip to those who are interested in buying them. Ultimately they realize that they have nothing to gain by gossiping to him.

Reasons for Jewish Customs



After blessing the new moon, it is customary to declare, "David king of Israel is alive and vigorous."

There are a few reasons for this custom: One is because the kingdom of David is compared to the moon, and it is destined to renew itself like the moon.

Another reason is that just like the moon keeps diminishing itself after the fifteenth day of the month, so too, the kingdom of David diminished after the fifteenth king reigned.

By way of remez: The words "דוד מלך ישראל חי וקיים" – David king of Israel is alive and vigorous," has the same gematria (numerical value) as "ראש חודש" – Rosh Chodesh."



Words of Wisdom

Midrashim of Chazal on Parshat Hashavua

Free Gifts

“Va’etchanan el Hashem – I implored Hashem” (Devarim 3:23)

This is as the pasuk states, “And may You hear the supplication of Your servant” (Melachim I 8:30).

There are many different words for prayer: tefillah, tehina, tza’aka, za’aka, sha’ava, rannana, pegiah, na’akah, keriah, atirah, amidah, hillu.

Why did Moshe specifically choose the word “tachnunim,” as it says, “Va’etchanan el Hashem – I implored Hashem.”

Because when Moshe stood before Hashem and said, “Show me your glory,” he requested of Hashem: Ribbono Shel Olam, show me by which trait you run the world. Hashem said to him: I will show you, “I will let all My goodness pass before you.” Hashem said: I do not owe the Creation anything, but I give them everything “hinam” – for free, as it says, “I will favor when I wish to favor.”

Moshe said to Him: If so, do with me a mitzvah and grant me for free. Therefore, he said Va’etchanan. (Midrash Tanchuma)

For The First Time

“Lest you raise your eyes to the heaven and you see the sun” (Devarim 4:19)

Since they had never yet seen the sun or the moon because the Clouds of Glory enveloped them.

Moshe said to them: Eventually you will behold the sun and the moon. Do not think that they are gods, since Hakadosh Baruch Hu created them to bring light to the world. This is as the pasuk states, “which the Lord your God assigned to all peoples” who worship them.

Even though you do not see Hashem arraigning the idol worshippers and contradicting their validity, it is only in order to mislead them so that they should believe that they have the power to save themselves, and thus they will not stop serving them, which ultimately is to exploit their sin and despise them. (Midrash Aggadah)

An Individual Message

“I am Hashem, your G-d”(Devarim 5:6)

Why were the Ten Commandments issued in the singular form? So that each and every person should say: I was commanded. The Torah was given to me so that I should observe it. He should not say that it is enough if the whole world keeps it besides for me.

Another reason: Since individuals transgressed the Ten Commandments.

Michah transgressed “I am Hashem” with the idol that he fashioned.

Yiravam transgressed “You shall not recognize the gods of others” by the two golden calves.

The son of the Israelite woman transgressed “You shall not take the Name of Hashem.”

The wood gatherer transgressed “Safeguard the Shabbat.”

Avshalom transgressed “Honor your father and your mother.”

Yoav transgressed “You shall not kill.”

Amnon transgressed “You shall not commit adultery.”

Achan transgressed “You shall not steal.”

Tzivah transgressed “You shall not bear vain witness,” as it says, “And he slandered your servant.”

Achav transgressed “You shall not covet” with the vineyard of Navot. Therefore, they were issued in the singular form. (Pesikta Zutrata)

Treasures

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



Miracles Past and Present

“I implored Hashem at that time, saying: My Lord, Hashem/Elokim, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand, for what power is there in the heaven or on the earth that can perform according to Your deeds and according to Your mighty acts?” (Devarim 3:23-24)

After Bnei Yisrael’s victories over Sichon and Og, Moshe offers this prayer to Hashem. He opens with the words, “You have begun to show... Your greatness...” Did Moshe perceive Hashem’s great miracles only during the war with Sichon and Og? Throughout the miracles of Egypt and the Wilderness, Hashem constantly demonstrated His powers. Why did Moshe say, “You have begun...” only now?

People find a certain connection to relics of the past. Old-fashioned items evoke feelings of nostalgia. The older an antique, the greater is its monetary value. For instance, an earthenware vessel crafted centuries ago is worth much more than one made nowadays. But when it comes to traditions, people tend to write them off as ancient and outmoded. They prefer to relate to modern attitudes, fresh and futuristic. This was why the founders of Zionism stated arrogantly that they would demolish the old world down to its foundations. As they raised a new generation, devoid of Torah, they attempted to raze any vestige of the “Galut Jew.”

If one desires to connect to the rich past of our people and to the spiritual substance which is the foundation of our nation, to the miracles of Yetziat Mitzrayim and the Wilderness, he must first discover the wonder in his everyday life. Hashem sustains his body and neshamah with kindness and compassion. We have become accustomed to view our survival as part of the laws of nature. But if we contemplate our beings, we will realize that we live above nature. There is a supernatural Being Who conducts nature and supervises every aspect of nature. He manages our bodies so that they can function optimally.

Reflecting upon the seemingly small miracles, as well as the great, which occur to us daily, will allow us to appreciate the greatness of the miracles of Yetziat Mitzrayim and the Wilderness. But if a person remains indifferent to the myriad miracles that he experiences every day, he is lacking the tools with which to recognize the tremendous national miracles of our past.

With the words “You have begun,” Moshe was saying that the miracles with Sichon and Og awakened within him an appreciation for the previous miracles, and now he grasped their significance all the more.

As we accustom ourselves to regard with awe the miracles which occur to us every day, we will come to appreciate and thank Hashem for the mighty miracles He has wrought with our forefathers. Memories of these miracles bind us to our splendid dynasty.

Wellsprings

Chapters in Child-Raising



Shabbat Nachamu represents, in our times of exile and concealment, the heralding and commencement of “bein hazmanim,” which are days designed to refresh and renew energy for the opening of the new school year in all the Torah learning centers, Talmudei Torah, yeshivot, and kollel for avreichim.

As parents, we should know that although these days are perceived as days of vacation and rest, but in fact the opposite is true. The days of bein hazmanim are the most packed days, full of pressure, not only in a technical aspect, or the financial aspect, but mostly from the educational challenge that appears at our entrance:

Bein hazmanim is the true test for parents. In the period of the three weeks in which they host their teenage sons, returning from the Beit Hamidrash, there may arise educational challenges that can endanger the youth’s future spiritual level. Whoever does not know how to prepare adequately for these days, it is worthwhile for them to turn to rabbanim who can guide him briefly on the way to educate his children in these days.

Besides the educational responsibility for what is happening in the house, we will turn to look specifically at what is happening outside the house, when one leaves the confines of his home, from a sheltered and protected haven to the streets outside. This is true especially when going out for entertainment and recreation. Then the danger is compounded greatly. Therefore, one must prepare in advance to be able to decide whether the entertainment and resort is really worth the spiritual damages disastrous for the future of our education.

Guarding one’s eyes is the main pillar,

which ultimately determines the spiritual status of each person. Everything stems from it. Our Rabbis state, and write, and teach, that one’s entire character is determined through guarding one’s eyes and guarding one’s tongue. We know that the Shelah Hakadosh promised his students that if they would just guard their eyes and tongues, they would merit achieving lofty levels of kedushah and prominence, since the purity and holiness of a person is dependent upon how he guards these organs.

There was a well-known tzaddik who lived in Yerushalayim, the gaon Rabbi Ze’ev Tzatzik, zt”l, who was called Rav Velvel by the people. He was very close to the gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Ze’ev of Brisk, zt”l, and he was known for his outstanding fear of Heaven. On one occasion, Rabbi Velvel told his family what he had heard from an older man who had been privileged to meet one of the students of the great luminary, the Ketzot Hachoshen, zt”l. He recounted the following:

I learned for a period of time by Mori v’Rebi Hakadosh, the Ketzot Hachoshen. At the end of the term, when I prepared to go home, I went to the Rabbi to bid him farewell. I entered into the inner sanctuary of his study and I told the Rabbi that I came to say goodbye before returning home.

The Rabbi looked at me and did not say a word. Suddenly, he grabbed my hand, gripped it tightly in his hand, and began to repeat in a pleasant voice the words of the wisest of all men: “Rejoice, O youth, in your childhood, and let your heart bring you cheer in the days of your youth, and go in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes”

Here the Rabbi paused a bit, his face turned crimson, and a cry issued from his mouth. While shaking my hand firmly, my hand in his grip, he continued and enunciated clearly the continuation of the pasuk: “but know,” and he again shouted fervently with fire in his eyes: “that... for... all... these... God... will... bring... you... to judgment!”

This was the farewell of the Ketzot Hachoshen to his student. No lecture in mussar, and no sharp wit. He did not reveal his greatness in Choshen Mishpat, nor in Torah, yirah, or mussar. Only with one pasuk. A “simple” pasuk from Kohelet. Without Rashi and Midrash...

Years have passed since that day, the student related, and my heart still resonates with the fear and tremendous dread in transgressing even a slight prohibition, G-d forbid. My ears still echo with the voice of my Rebbi. This is what everyone must have in mind when he goes out in the street. He must remember that each transgression has a price to pay.

One must aspire for high levels.

The gaon in mussar, Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, zt”l declared that teenagers can reach in a very short time, if they would only wish, very lofty levels. They must accustom themselves, he said, to guard themselves in three ways: guard their eyes, guard their tongue, and guard their thoughts.

“Indeed,” he added, “All beginnings are difficult, but they must know that accustoming themselves to good habits is empowering.”