

Man's Confrontation with the Evil Inclination

And it will be, when you come into the Land ... you shall take from the first of all the fruit of the soil (Devarim 26:1-2)

This week's Parshah elaborates on the mitzvah of Bikkurim. To understand the mitzvah better, it is important to review Hashem's instructions of five weeks ago in Parashat Va'et[an]an. Hashem commands us, "You shall love Hashem your G-d, with the whole of your heart, with the whole of your soul, and with the whole of your fortune." This means that Hashem commands man to constantly remember that he is totally dependent on his Creator and to serve Him by putting the three components of man's existence: his will, his life, and his possessions, completely at Hashem's disposal.

The component of "man's possessions" mentioned above is clarified through the mitzvah of Bikkurim to also denote serving Hashem with those possessions that he acquires via the earth for he is commanded to give from the first of all the fruit of the soil. Similarly, man is commanded to separate tithes from the fruit of his field before consuming them. The purpose of the mitzvah is to make it absolutely clear to man that even what may appear to him to be the result of his toil and his acquiring power, is subject to the will of Hashem, the Creator of everything, and it is incumbent upon him to bring some of it to the Bet HaMikdash. This teaches us that the true will of Hashem is that man grow spiritually and attach himself at all times, in every era, in every moment of his life in thought, word and deed, when he works for his livelihood, in his travels, when he lays down to sleep and when he arises.

This idea we can glean from the beginning of last week's Parshah (Devarim 21:10-11), as it says: "When you go out to war against your enemies ... and you see amongst those in captivity a woman of beauty."

There are two types of enemies. One kind of enemy is someone with whom we can work out our differences and come to a measure of peace. For example, sometimes a husband and wife come to hate each other (may Hashem save us from such tragedy) and through sufficient effort they can return their marriage to one of peace as it was at its outset. The other kind is an eternal enemy with whom it is impossible ever to make peace with, and this is the Yetzer Hara, the Evil Inclination.

This verse, "When you go out to war against your enemies" refers to our permanent enemy, the Evil Inclination (see Zohar [adash Parashat Ki Tetze 58b). The war against Satan is until his ultimate destruction, as is evident in Parashat Ki Tetze, and that is an absolute prerequisite for the fulfillment of the mitzvot in Parashat Ki Tavo, where man is irrevocably bound to Hashem, as with Bikkurim.

Sometimes we think that once we have been victorious in our battle with the Yetzer Hara a number of times, we have gained the upper hand and will no longer need to fight any more. However, the matter is not that simple because the Yetzer Hara is like a viper, the nature of which is that it is not dead until its head is totally pulverised. Likewise, if we do not succeed in uprooting the Yetzer Hara from our hearts completely and even

the slightest bit of evil remains, the Yezer HaRa can regenerate its original strength, G-d forbid. Therefore, the struggle with the Yetzer Hara is protracted and exhausting and in order to be victorious against it we must obliterate it completely like the wiping out of Amalek.

A Jew is not attached to his wealth. We learn this from David HaMelech. His head bore a crown of gold and diamonds that was part of spoils taken in war and it was very heavy. The Gemara (Avoda Zara 44a) explains that his head was able to handle the weight of the crown with the use of a magnet that was strategically placed above the crown. The purpose of this arrangement was to show the nation that he was not shackled to his wealth. Rather, his wealth was merely a tool that he used for Avodat Hashem. For that reason, David HaMelech was accustomed not to count or calculate his wealth, wasting time in its investment, in order to leave his time free to absorb Torah knowledge, as it says (Tehilim 40:9), "Your Torah is within my innards," as his body and mind was deeply immersed in the Torah, unlike his honour, the royal crown and his wealth. These were for all intents and purposes merely hanging in the air and had no connection to him whatsoever. This is the way that David HaMelech fought with the Evil Inclination all his days.

A famous rich man passed away and his children inherited from him significant wealth. The deceased left two wills. One of them they were to read immediately upon his passing and the other, at the conclusion of the seven days of mourning. The first will contained the following unusual request, that he should be buried wearing his socks that he wore on Yom Kippur. The Chevrah Kadisha refused to honor the request as it is forbidden to bury a dead person in any clothes other than the prescribed burial shrouds. The only private specialized clothing that a person wears upon his crossing over to the next world are his good deeds. [The Gaon of Vilna explains that the real pain of Gehinnom is the intense shame that engulfs the sinner when he realizes how scantily clad he is with Torah and good deeds and he has no ability to escape and hide.] After consultation with the Torah authorities, it was decided to bury him in the normal burial shrouds, without his private requested socks.

When the second will was opened and read, they saw that their father wrote the following:

"My dear children, I want to ask your forgiveness for causing you pain in regard to my socks. I know that it is forbidden to bury a dead person with his own private clothing. I wanted, through this idea, to make it crystal clear to you that a person cannot arrive in the next world even with his own private earthly socks, for he may not take any earthly possessions with him. Likewise, when your time comes, you will be unable to take with you even a needle from the worldly commodities with which I have bequeathed to you. Therefore, please do not pursue earthly affluence, for it has no real value."

The battle with the Evil Inclination can only be won by subjugating all that we possess to the will of Hashem. Only then can the Yetzer Hara be taken into captivity.

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Hillulah of Tzaddikim

- 21 - Rabbi Y'honatan Eibeschutz
- 22 - Rabbi Yehudah ben Sim[on]
- 23 - Rabbi Uri Klughaupt, the Saraf of Strelisk
- 24 - Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen, the Chafetz Chaim
- 25 - Rabbi Binyomin Yehoshua Zilber
- 26 - the saintly Maran Rabbi Chaim Pinto HaGadol, may his merit shield us
- 27 - Rabbi Yehudah Z'ev Liebowitz



Walking in their Ways

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

Revved into Vitality

R' Daniel Afriat's family was ending their family vacation in North Morocco. They got into their car and headed home.

As they were driving, they realized that something was very wrong with their car. Strange sounds emitted from the motor, indicating that it had overheated. As they were weighing their options, the motor stopped completely, leaving them stranded on the road.

The family found themselves in the middle of a busy highway, unable to continue on their way. The hours passed as they remained there, frightened and helpless. Suddenly Mr. Afriat shook himself of his despair, and cried out:

"Ribbono shel Olam! This is the car that brings Rabbi David Pinto, shlita, every year, from Casablanca to Mogador, as he makes his way to the hilula of his holy grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a. How can You let us down in our hour of need? Please, Hashem, in the merit of the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, allow us to arrive home. After that, do as You see fit with the car."

Mr. Afriat entered his car once more, this time armed with a strong feeling of faith in Hashem and His tzaddikim, those who do His will. With a sense of hope, he gunned the engine.

The miracle was not long in coming. The engine roared to life immediately, and the car swallowed the miles without incident. When the family at last arrived home, safe and sound, they offered a prayer of thanks to Hashem for His kindnesses with them.

Just moments after they entered their house, they heard a loud explosion. The car blew up into flames, and was burnt to a cinder.

They had witnessed an open miracle. Their prayers were answered completely, in the merit of their staunch faith in Hashem and His tzaddikim, who are capable of changing the laws of nature by the power of their merits, even after death.

The Haftarah

The haftarah of the week:

"Rise and shine"

(Yeshayahu 60:1-22)

The connection to the parashah: This Shabbat is the 6th of the seven Shabbatot of consolation that begin with the Shabbat immediately following Tisha B'Av.



Guard Your Tongue

Say "It is I who sinned"

It is written in Sefer Chasidim (section 22):

If one finds himself in the company of others and an improper deed occurs and it is not clear who committed it, it is important to declare, "It was I," even if it was not.



Words of our Sages

Are you waiting for Shabbat to end?

"Since you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and gladness of heart" (Devarim 28:47)

Rabbi Yitzchak Silberstein shlita" a recounts (Aleinu L'shabei'ah):

I once knocked on someone's door. When he opened the door, I saw that he was not wearing Tzitzit. He thought that the visitor was someone else and when he saw me standing in the doorway, he was very embarrassed.

When I asked him why he was not wearing Tzitzit, he said, "Because it is very hot," and proceeded to explain to me how difficult it was for him to wear Tzitzit in his heat.

I asked him, "If you would know that for every minute of wearing Tzitzit, they would pay you \$100, would you not wear them even in this heat, even in extreme hot and dry weather? And if you would know that if it is difficult to wear Tzitzit and you wear them anyway, that you would receive not \$100 per minute, but rather \$1000, would you not wear them?"

The Mishnah (Kidushin 1:10) teaches us, "He who performs one precept is well rewarded and his days are prolonged." However, we fulfill many mitzvot and yet we fail to see this promise materialize.

This enigma is addressed by none other than Rabbi Chaim Vital, the prime disciple of the Arizal, in the introduction to his Gate of Mitzvot.

The barometer by which our fulfillment of the mitzvot is measured is the extent of our joy while performing the commandment, as is evident in our verse above.

However, if the mitzvah is performed without sufficient joy, this shows that the mitzvah is a burden to him. For such service, can we expect to be well-rewarded and enjoy lengthening of our days?

One who abstains from wearing Tzitzit due to severe heat, demonstrates a lack of belief in heavenly reward for the mitzvah, and the grievous result may even be that he or his children could forsake the path of Torah and mitzvot entirely, may Hashem have mercy.

Similarly, if someone yearns for the Tefilah to conclude so that he may remove his Tefilin and go to work, or if somebody is aching for the Shabbat to end so that he may light up a cigarette (itself no small sin) already, why should he presume to receive such immense reward?



Chazak U'Baruch

When we contemplate our surroundings, we do not sense the atmosphere described in the holy books regarding the preparatory dread that prevailed in former good days as the Y'mei HaDin drew closer. Why is that?

Maran Rosh Yeshiva HaGaon Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman zt"l summarized this in one sentence: The fuss over the material things of this world prevent us from experiencing the dread of the coming judgement.

The reason we are so cold, that we do not sense the days of judgement with trepidation, is because we are so over-confident in ourselves and our situation. In the olden days, when the world was not so luxurious and full of leisure, people were not so connected to electronic devices and they could feel dependent on the mercies of HaShem. At that time, Elul was Elul and Rosh HaShanah was Rosh HaShanah. As luxury increases and we continue to think how permanent our situation is, we fail to realize how dependent we are on the kindness of HaShem.

We witness so many tragedies, how people fall like flies, how one moment they are full of life and the next instant they are lifeless. Others are racked with dreadful, frightening and excruciating diseases. And yet, we are complacent, for the leisure of this world fools us completely to think that we are installed here permanently.

How can we possibly succeed in becoming sensitized to the atmosphere of fear and dread of the days of judgement?

HaGaon Rabbi Dov Yaffe zt"l, the Mashgiach of Yeshivat K'far Chasidim, brought this home to our hearts and minds by asking us to reflect upon the emotional equilibrium of a patient facing a dangerous operation who is unaware of the risks involved in his surgery. When he sees however, that the doctors and medical experts involved in his case are themselves worried about his condition, the extent of the danger confronting him becomes abundantly clear.

We need to remember that the fear and worry about our future is itself a source of merit for us, as HaGaon HaTzaddik Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian zt"l illustrated. When he was in Russia, two fellows were accused of the identical offense and put on trial. One fellow sat trembling during the entire court proceedings. He was eventually found not-guilty. His friend sat in court the whole time combing his hair and fixing his tie and other clothing, totally calm and at peace. The verdict handed down to the second fellow was immediate execution. Hence, Reb Elya reminded us that we need to tremble in fear for our future, and this itself will be a source of merit for us.

Treasures

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



How to merit Hashem's blessing

"These shall stand for the sake of the curse upon Mt. Eval: Reuven, Gad, Asher, Zevulun, Dan, and Naftali." (Devarim 27:13)

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, may his merit protect us, writes that when Bnei Yisrael heard the 98 curses that were pronounced in this week's parashah, they became overwhelmed with dreadful fear about their situation and ran to Moshe Rabbeinu that he might reveal to them their future.

The question is, why were Bnei Yisrael so overcome with terror after hearing the curses of this week's Parashah, and not after hearing those recorded in Parashat Bechukotai?

Answers the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, there exists a difference between one who is personally maledicted and one who is cursed as part of the general public. When one is cursed personally, he senses that the curse has teeth, is significant and has import. However, when one is cursed as part of the general public, each person thinks that the curse will not be carried out upon him personally but rather only spread out over the entire community. In Parashat Bechukotai the curses were stated to the community as a whole and thus, the individual members of the nation did not feel so threatened. However, the curses of Parashat Ki Tavo were directed personally at each and every individual and so the heart of each person was shaken to the core.

It is completely clear that in order that Hashem will forgive Bnei Yisrael and bear their sins, it is incumbent upon them to return to Him with complete Teshuvah. Thereby, the curses will be transformed into unbelievable blessings.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



When kindness pursues you

A fellow once travelled from London to ask the Chafetz Chaim for advice. There was a long line of people waiting to see the Tzaddik and it took two days to obtain an appointment that was set for Shabbat afternoon after Birkat HaMazon of the Third Meal.

When the visitor entered the dining room, the Chafetz Chaim was singing Mizmor L'David. When the Chafetz Chaim arrived at the words, "Only goodness and kindness should pursue me all my life", he turned to his guest and asked him why David HaMelech wanted to be "pursued" by goodness and kindness? Answered the Chafetz Chaim, if it is decreed upon a person that he be pursued in life, let it be that what pursues him is goodness and kindness.

The visitor immediately got up to leave. The members of the family were aghast that he had no intention of remaining for his appointment after Birkat HaMazon. The guest replied that the Chafetz Chaim already solved his dilemma. He was involved in Chessed and Tzedakah projects and his family pursued him constantly to give up his benevolent behaviour and it caused him no end of anguish. He came to seek the Chafetz Chaim's advice and he had already received his answer and the solution to his problems.

Men of Faith

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

The Powers Granted to a Tzaddik on the Day of His Hilula

An Ongoing Battle

Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita, often talks about the extraordinary powers granted to a tzaddik on the day of his hilula. Rabbi Yehuda Leib Raskin, zt"l, who served in Morocco as a shaliach sent by the Rabbi of Lubavitch, zt"l, for forty-five years until his death, would constantly emphasize this point when seeing the tremendous crowd gathered to pray at the grave of the tzaddik on the twenty-sixth of Elul each year.

On the hilula, one perceives the simple faith of all the participants. Educated, rich, and respectable people, whose lives are filled with materialism, attend the hilula. Yet, when they stand at the gravesite, they become entirely spiritual. They are totally humbled when praying by the tomb, and they somehow turn into different people. This proves that they are truly worthy individuals.

When a person stands facing the tomb and sees the grave, he realizes the ultimate destiny of every person. Consequently, he lessens the importance he places on the physical and concentrates on the spiritual. Following the event, when the hilula is over and everyone returns home, he aspires to achieve greater levels in spirituality.

However, the Yetzer Hara quickly begins to attack him, causing him to forget all the spiritual achievements he attained at the hilula. It is his job to defeat the Yetzer Hara, as it says, "When you will go out to

war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-d, will deliver him into your hand, and you will capture its captives." This indicates that one should try to capture the enemy before the enemy captures him. It is possible to defeat the Yetzer Hara only with Torah. The Yetzer Hara knows this and therefore constantly attempts to sway the person.

This is what is hinted in the words "And you will capture its captives." One should continue to battle the Yetzer Hara continuously, not only for a limited time. The Yetzer Hara knows that after a while the inspiration will wear off, and then the spiritual elevation will diminish. Then, at an opportune moment the Yetzer Hara will strike. Therefore, one should always strive to achieve higher levels and reinforce the inspiration that he experienced at the hilula of the tzaddik.

One can maintain this lofty level by learning Torah, keeping mitzvot, and hearing stories about tzaddikim. He should constantly progress, as it says, "A fire, continually, shall remain aflame on the Altar; you shall not extinguish it."

However, this is very difficult. One needs much Divine assistance in order to succeed, since otherwise it is impossible to overcome the Yetzer Hara, which attempts to trap a person in its snare. This is why it says, "And Hashem, your G-d, will deliver him into your hand," since only with Divine assistance can one retain his spiritual attainments and continue advancing spiritually.