

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"ta



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

Constantly on Guard

"Ya'akov settled in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan"

(Bereishit 37:1)

Rashi (Bereishit 37:2) quotes the Chazal that Ya'akov requested to live in tranquility but then the anguish of Yosef's kidnapping pounced upon him. We need to clarify this idea. Until now, Ya'akov had not yet actually lived in tranquility. It was a mere thought that passed through his mind. 'In the land of his father's sojournings' means that he lived in the land but had not yet achieved tranquility. Furthermore, it is well known (Kedushin 40a) that Hashem does not reckon a bad thought as if it were an accomplished act, for there is always the chance that the person will regret the idea before carrying it out. If so, in this case where Ya'akov just wished to live in tranquility and had not actually experienced it, why did he deserve to have the anguish of Yosef's kidnapping spring upon him?

We will try to clarify the essence of the tranquility that Ya'akov sought, for it was certainly not something superficial. Esav dwelt in Sa'ir and engaged in the fleeting pleasures of this world while Ya'akov kept his distance from him. My grandfather Rabbi Yashayahu Pinto zt"l, in his sefer 'Kesef M'zukah', writes that Esav decided to settle in Sa'ir since he considered himself a permanent fixture in this world, while Ya'akov Avinu who understood that this world is only temporary, built a succah, a temporary dwelling, for himself as a reminder that he is only here temporarily.

The Ramban (Bereishit 37:17) brings an opinion that the succah that Ya'akov built was actually a tower that enabled him to observe Esav from afar. It seems that he built this tower in order to teach and warn his children that they should constantly be on the lookout and be wary of embracing the ways of Esav, who considered this world as the main place in which to invest. Ya'akov observed Esav dwelling in far-away Sa'ir and occupying himself with transient pleasures and this distance presented him with a sense of tranquility. He assumed that it was no longer necessary to exert himself and go up to the lookout to scrutinize the ways of Esav because he felt that the danger had already passed for his family; his children were all devoted to Torah. So Hashem brought this anguish upon him to teach him that in this world a person is in constant existential danger. He must constantly put forth effort and be on the lookout in order to check that there is no spiritual danger lurking on the horizon for Am Yisrael. Tranquility is dangerous for Am Yisrael as long as Esav exists and has a hold on this world. This was the claim on Ya'akov; for thinking that he no longer needs to be wary of Esav's influence.

During the period of the Chashmona'im, Chazal tell us that almost all of Am Yisrael became Hellenists. This Chazal begs for clarification. The Jewish people at that time merited living with the Beit Hamikdash. They had Kohanim Gedolim – Yochanan and Matityahu. How was it possible that in a time of such spiritual heights they abandoned Judaism in favor of the Greek culture?

I have seen written about Rabbi Ahron Kotler zt"l and other tzaddikim who were accustomed to going to vacation resorts for a short time during the winter, that specifically during those days they learnt and achieved more than at any other time. Maran Harav Shach zt"l writes that during bein hazmanim when most people are relaxing, whoever learns Torah will merit a higher than usual spiritual attainment.

There is a difference of opinion in the Gemara (Shabbat 21b) with regard to lighting the menorah. Beit Shammai holds that on the first day one lights eight lights and on each subsequent day one decreases in number. According to Beit Hillel, on the first day one lights only one light, while adding an additional light on each day thereafter, for one ascends holiness and doesn't descend. We also need to understand why we do not light all the lights every day as was the custom in the Beit Hamikdash.

This difference of opinion can be understood in light of what we explained above. Ya'akov wished to dwell in tranquility, so the anguish of Yosef pounced on him. We explained that the Torah wishes to teach us that tranquility is dangerous for our spirituality. Chazal explain that the yetzer harah doesn't attempt to seduce a person by telling him to serve avodah zarah, for he knows that there is no chance that the person will agree. Instead he comes and tells him to slack off a bit, and the next day he once again approaches him and says, "Look, yesterday you took things easy, today just a little more." This is how he speaks to him each day and gets him to do a little more until eventually he brings him to the point where he is ready to serve avodah zarah. So it was in the days of the Yevanim who introduced sophistication and culture. How did they possibly manage to introduce these foreign ideas to Am Yisrael who were on such a high spiritual level? It must be that they used the approach of the evil inclination: Take a little break from your learning... until eventually almost all of Am Yisrael were ensnared. It was the slight amount of 'ease' that brought them to slide so low.

With this idea we can understand the argument between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel. Beit Hillel holds that one increases in number each day, just like the Yevanim who slowly introduced their culture until they eventually overpowered them completely and they became true Hellenists. Against this tactic, when lighting the menorah each day we add a light as an everlasting reminder of the tricks of the yetzer hara who wishes to overpower the person slightly more than the previous day. Beit Shammai holds that one decreases in number each day, to remind us that the Yevanim made their heads and hearts impure bit by bit, and slowly defiled their holiness until they achieved their goal.

Chazal fixed the days of Chanuka in order to remind us that it was this dispassion and tranquility that caused them to embrace the Greek culture, until the 25th of Kislev when the Chashmona'im started lighting up the hearts of every Jew with the light of Torah. We therefore increase in holiness to remind us what a lack of passion can cause. Beit Shammai held the opposite- the need to focus on how the neshama was led astray, how every day they slid further down in madreigah, until they reached the level of Hellenists. Both opinions are correct; they are simply different sides of the same idea. Since the halacha follows Beit Hillel and we add another light each day, it is a lesson for us not to look back at yesterday, but rather to pray for today that we should merit to advance and progress and reach higher levels of growth and righteousness.

Paris • Orh 'Haïm Ve Moché

32, rue du Plateau • 75019 Paris • France
Tel: 01 42 08 25 40 • Fax: 01 42 06 00 33
hevratpinto@aol.com

Jérusalem • Pninei David

Rehov Bayit Va Gan 8 • Jérusalem • Israël
Tel: +972 2643 3605 • Fax: +972 2643 3570
p@hpinto.org.il

Ashdod • Orh 'Haïm Ve Moshe

Rehov Ha-Admour Mi-Belz 43 • Ashdod • Israël
Tel: +972 88 566 233 • Fax: +972 88 521 527
orothaim@gmail.com

Ra'anana • Kol 'Haïm

Rehov Ha'ahouza 98 • Ra'anana • Israël
Tel: +972 98 828 078 • Fax: +972 98 792 9003
kolhaim@hpinto.org.il



Hilula

- 23 - Rabbi Ben Zion Alfass, author of 'Ma'aseh Alfass'
- 24 - Rabbi Massad Shitrit, the 'Baba Sidi'
- 25 - Rabbi Avraham Harrari Rafal
- 26 - Rabbi Avraham Ben David, the Ra'avad
- 27 - Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kahan, the Admor of Toldot Ahron
- 28 - Rabbi Ezra Chamou
- 29 - Rabbi Yisrael Friedman



Walking in their Ways

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

A Nation Eternal

One of the most memorable experiences that I experienced in my life was when I had to travel from Leon, France to Israel. Since all the direct flights were full, I had two options: Either to fly via Rome, or via Greece. I was not excited about any of these options since Rome was home to Titus and the Roman Empire who destroyed the Beit Hamikdash, and Athens is a city in Greece which was where Antiochus, who darkened the eyes of the Jewish people, came from. After considering the matter I chose Athens over Rome and chose to focus on the victory of the Chashmonaim over the wicked Greek Empire.

My first flight landed in Athens, where I had several hours to spend until my next flight was due to depart. Suddenly I remembered that I had not yet prayed Minchah. I found a quiet corner in the terminal and prayed there. As I took three steps back to end my Shemone Esrei prayer, I suddenly became aware of a group of Greek gentiles surrounding me. Their party included a number of priests clothed in their traditional dress. With a smile of apology, I explained that I had just wanted to pray, and they should forgive me for any infringement I may have unwittingly committed. But they did not look angry. All they did was nod their heads and say, "Good, good."

Sometime later, we boarded our plane to Israel. As I sat in my seat, I thought about my airport experience and said to myself, "How great are Your works, Hashem." Here I, David Pinto, had arrived in Greece, the kingdom of the wicked Antiochus. He had tried his best to undermine the Torah and had issued harsh decrees toward this end. I stood and openly prayed Minchah there, with no disturbance whatsoever. Had Antiochus still been alive, he certainly would have had me killed on the spot, together with all those who were impressed and said, "Good, good," to my act. But Antiochus is no longer. In his place, stands a lone Jew, sporting a beard and payot, praying in public. This is nothing more than the fruits of the victory of the Chashmonaim.

During the course of the flight, on a Greek plane, a Greek steward informed me that my glatt kosher meal was waiting for me. I couldn't believe it. He brought it to me, sealed with the kashrut symbol on the sticker. But I still expressed disbelief that it was indeed Kosher. The steward did not know what I wanted. When the chief flight attendant came over to me I explained: "Many centuries ago, your ancestors ascended to the Holy Land with the intention of obliterating all Jews who observed Shabbat, kashrut, circumcision, and laws of family purity. But Antiochus' plan failed, and he died an ignoble death.

"Here you stand, descendants of those Greeks who wished to uproot the Torah from Am Yisrael. You yourselves are bringing me kosher food. If Antiochus would see you, he would kill you on the spot. Isn't this something amazing?"

All the flight attendants were shocked and looked at each other in astonishment as if they did not know what I was talking about. But for me it served to strengthen my pride in my Jewishness.

After this episode I realized that this was a testimony to "Am Yisrael lives on forever." This certainly has its roots in the mesirat nefesh of the Chashmonaim and the Chanukah miracle.

A person who, in galut and in front of the other nations, performs mitzvot with pride, can be compared to one who lights a menorah that is never distinguished and miraculously stays alight in front of and despite all our enemies. This is what we refer to when we say "in those days at this time"; lighting the menorah signifies igniting ourselves in service of Hashem every single day. And to the degree that a person makes sacrifices for the sake of observing Torah and mitzvot, so he will merit to stand up against the entire world without them having the power to thwart him, and through him the verse will be fulfilled: "And all the nations of the world will see that the name of Hashem is called upon you and they will be afraid of you." (Devarim 28:10)

The Haftarah

"Thus said Hashem: For three transgressions of Israel [I have looked away], but for four I will not pardon them" (Amos 2:6)



The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah is referring to the selling of Yosef HaTzaddik when Amos the navi said: "For their selling a righteous man for money". The selling of Yosef HaTzaddik is described in detail in this parsha.

Guard Your Tongue

Strangers and Relatives

There is no difference when telling rechilut (gossip), whether the one speaking is a male or female, a relative or a stranger. Even if a person hears a disgraceful report that was said about one of his parents, and out of concern for their honor he reveals this to them, this is also considered rechilut.



Words of our Sages

The Power of Memories

The Gemarah in Sotah says "When Potiphar's wife grabbed hold of Yosef in order to cause him to sin, the image of his father's face appeared to him in the window. Ya'akov said to him: Yosef, in the future the names of your brothers will be written on the stones of the ephod, and your name will be included. Do you wish for your name to be blotted out from among them?"

A child's future is determined in great measure by the image of his parents and their behavior. The more they try to be a personal example, and the more they are particular about every small mitzvah and every minhag, so the young child will grow up internalizing this, and will achieve the level of anoved Hashem.

What a child absorbs in his home and whatever his eyes see, will never be erased. We have a great responsibility to be an example of living a life filled with performing mitzvot with joy, and fulfilling Hashem's will with enthusiasm and delight.

Harav Yosef Avraham Wolf zt"l, the Menahel of a seminary for girls in Bnei Brak, told over a story that took place in the time of the Gaon, the 'Nachal Eshkol'. It is unfortunately nothing new that the missionaries do whatever they can in order to ensnare more and more innocent Jews in their trap and to make them give up their religion and beliefs, r"l. But in the time of the Gaon zt"l, when a young Jewish child was taken captive by the priests, the whole town broke out in an uproar.

The following is a true story that happened in the town where the 'Nachal Eshkol' resided. A child from one of the prominent families was forcefully taken to the monastery and despite the terrible cries of the parents and the protests of the town's Rabbanim and its leaders, the priests would not return the child.

A few years passed and the child became well assimilated in his new place. The clergy pampered him with an easy life and expansively cared for all his needs, so that the desire to return to his parent's home should never enter his mind.

Meanwhile, the parents left no stone unturned and invested unbelievable efforts in order to regain their son. They finally managed to win their way into the heart of a judge who felt for the Jews. He was prepared to take up the case and represent the parents in this painful chapter of their lives.

After hearing the claims of both parties, he turned to the child's parents and said, "I hear your claims, but who can guarantee that you are speaking the truth? I am prepared to offer you an opportunity whereby you will be able to prove that you are right and the child rightfully belongs in your home. This is my offer: I will demand from the church that you be allowed to see the child and stay with him for five minutes, either you or your power of attorney. If you will manage, in this short amount of time, to get the child to willingly leave the church, it will be a clear sign for me that the child is yours. But, if you don't succeed, the child will stay with the church forever."

The parents left the court somewhat encouraged, despite having no idea how they would succeed in this enormously difficult challenge that was presented to them. They had no doubt that during the years that the child had been cared for by the church, they had managed to defile his mind and heart with 'olam hazeh'; if so how will they succeed in convincing him to return to their Jewish community, which will definitely not be able to provide him with the abundance of materialism that he was used to?

The parents knocked on the door of the Gaon, the 'Nachal Eshkol', and begged him for advice. The Gaon reassured the anxious parents, strengthened their faith and trust in Hashem and then surprised them by saying: "I will go with you to the monastery and I will talk with the child. I hope that with Hashem's help I will be successful in convincing him to return to the Jewish people."

True to his promise, the Gaon accompanied them to this fateful meeting, wearing the kittel and white kippa that he customarily wore on Yom Kippur. Their only resource was five minutes with which to persuade their beloved son to return to the Jewish fold. If their mission would fail, he would be doomed to remain a Christian forever.

The father and mother looked at the Rav, waiting to hear the words of inspiration that would come out of his mouth. But the Rav did not utter a word. He just started humming and singing the well-known tune of 'kol nidrei', which is sung in all kehillot on Yom Kippur night. The child sat and listened, spellbound, mesmerized by the emotional niggun; a small salty tear eventually appeared in the corner of his eye.

The parents looked at their watch. There were exactly two minutes left. "Do you wish to come with us and merit olam hazeh and olam haba? Or do you prefer to stay here in the monastery?" asked the Rav.

Suddenly, as if in a dream, the child jumped up from his chair, totally shaken. He fell on his parent's shoulders, and shouted in an other-worldly voice, "Take me out of here. I don't want to stay in this monastery for even one more minute! Take me back to the Beit HaKnesset; that is where I heard this beautiful tune!"



Pearls of the Parshah

Why the Hatred?

“So they hated him” (Bereishit 37:4)

The Torah tells us the reason for this hatred: “His brothers saw that it was he whom their father loved most of all his brothers so they hated him”.

Why is the son guilty if his father loves him more than his brothers? It seems to be a flaw in the father, not in the son!

In addition, the Torah itself informs us that the reason for Ya’akov’s great love for Yosef was because “Since he was a child of his old age”. If so, what place is there for hatred?

The ‘Ben Ish chai’ in his sefer ‘Aderet Eliyahu’ resolves this perplexity. The brothers did not attribute their father’s great love for Yosef to the fact that he was the youngest son, for Ya’akov had an even younger son – Binyomin, and he did not merit this extra love?

“Since he was a child of his old age” was not the reason for their hatred. There was a completely different reason which was that Yosef spoke badly about his brothers to his father. Through this he captured his father’s heart and bought his love, therefore they hated him greatly.

Later on when Yosef told them his dream, “Behold! my sheaf arose and also remained standing; then behold! – your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf”, the brothers felt that he considered them as straw and chaff, this only increased their hatred: “And they hated him even more.”

Appearance can Distort

“They stripped Yosef of his tunic, the fine woolen tunic that was on him” (Bereishit 37:23)

Why did the brothers remove the tunic as soon as he approached them? Did they do it out of hatred?

Rabbi Sholom Schwadron zt”l offers a beautiful explanation. They certainly were not motivated by hatred. The Gemara tells us (Shavuot 31a): From where do we learn that if two people come to be judged and one is wearing rags while the other one is dressed in expensive clothing, one must tell him: Either you dress like the poor man or dress the poor man as you are dressed? From the verse that tells us, “Keep far away from falsehood.”

It is clear from this Gemara that a person’s appearance affects the clarity of one’s judgment. If so, the brothers of Yosef, who were deciding whether or not he deserved to be killed, were hesitant. Maybe the special coat that their father made for Yosef and which was the cause for their hatred, will have an effect on them and will prevent them from reaching an unbiased conclusion? Therefore they removed Yosef’s coat. This teaches us that all their actions were strictly according to the letter of the law.

A Time to Eat

“They sat to eat food” (Bereishit 37:25)

It is surprising that the verse deems it necessary to tell us that they sat down to eat?

The ‘Shulchan Gavo’ah’ brings an answer from the Brisker Rav zt”l. He quotes the Rambam who rules (Hilchot Sanhedrin 13:4), that when a Beit Din decides that a person must be killed, the judges are forbidden to eat that entire day. This law is included in the prohibition of “You shall not eat over the blood”. Here, the brothers decided that Yosef deserved to be killed. If so, according to the law they were forbidden to eat. Only now, according to Re’uven told them: “Shed no blood! Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him”, were they permitted to sit down and eat.

Treasures

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



Torah is Acquired through Humility

“These are the chronicles of Ya’akov: Yosef, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock, but he was a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Yosef would bring evil reports about them to their father.” (Bereishit 37:2)

“These are the generations of Ya’akov: Yosef...” On contemplating the wording, we are puzzled: Didn’t Ya’akov merit many generations; why is only Yosef mentioned? Chazal clarify this by telling us that Ya’akov passed on all the Torah that learnt to his son Yosef. Since Yosef contained all the Torah that Ya’akov possessed, therefore it says, “These are the chronicles of Ya’akov: Yosef”. However, it seems strange that Yosef managed to learn more Torah than his brother Reuven - the oldest of the shevatim and many years older than Yosef? In addition, Chazal call Yosef, Yosef HaTzaddik. We need to understand why Yosef was chosen to bear this description. The other shevatim were also extremely great and certainly not on a lower level than Yosef?

The idea behind the answer to all these questions lies in what the verse tells us about Yosef: “He was a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah”. Yosef HaTzaddik acted like a young lad in front of the children of the maidservants, meaning that he played down his status by treating the children of the maidservants with special respect and by not acting with superiority in their presence. Rashi writes that Yosef used to play with his hair, meaning that he was exceptionally beautiful. This could have brought him to feel superior to the rest of the shevatim. We also find that Ya’akov Avinu awarded preferential treatment to Yosef and sewed him a special tunic. However, despite these facts, Yosef retained his great humility and showed love to the maidservant’s children whereby he attained even greater heights.

When Yosef was taken down to Mitzrayim and then later given power over all the land of Egypt, he could have used the opportunity to overcome Pharaoh and dethrone him, for he knew an additional language that Pharaoh did not understand. But Yosef Hatzaddik felt appreciation to Pharaoh for appointing him as ruler over the entire land, therefore he didn’t rebel against him. It seems then that Yosef was blessed with great humility and he made a habit of playing down his true worth. Even though he was fluent in all the languages and knew how to interpret dreams which stumped all the sorcerers of Mitzraim, he didn’t become proud. On the contrary, he remained greatly humble, and as the verse says, “He was a lad with the sons of Bilhah”, he would shake off (רענתם - from the same root as the word רע, lad) his greatness before the children of the maidservants.

After delving into this episode we can understand why specifically Yosef, out of all the brothers, is described as ‘tzaddik’, and why he was the one who inherited all the Torah from Ya’akov. He was found to be humble and modest in all his dealings, and Torah is acquired through cleaving to one’s friends and behaving with self-effacement, which is the way that Yosef acted towards the children of the maidservants. This is the meaning of the Chazal: “Torah only exist only in one who kills himself over it” (Berachot 63b); meaning, one who approaches Torah learning with humility and subordination. Therefore Yosef merited absorbing from his father Ya’akov all the Torah that he learnt from Shem and Ever, and during a very short time.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Only with Hashem's Help

“The prison warden did not scrutinize anything that was in his charge inasmuch as Hashem was with him” (Bereishit 39:23)

Rabbi Rafael Halevi zt”l, the son of the Rav of Brisk, related that when they fled to Vilna in 5700, his father questioned the above verse:

The verse stresses that the prison warden did not find anything for which to accuse Yosef, for Hashem was with him. In essence, the whole idea of Yosef sitting in prison was because of a false story; Yosef was entirely innocent. Therefore, the question is, why did he need special heavenly assistance so as not to be found guilty?

But, the Rav of Brisk pointed out, we see from this that without the special *siyata dishmaya* that he merited, that Hashem was with him, the prison warden would have found ways to trip him up at every step.

It was only due to “Inasmuch as Hashem was with him”, that the warden did not invent any false reports with which to provoke him.

Men of Faith

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

The Prayers of a Non-Jew Are Answered Immediately

R' Refael Amar, a disciple of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita, relates that once he traveled to Morocco with his business partner. He was a pilot in the Israeli Defense Forces and had begun to take an interest in Judaism. The two went to Morocco to pray at the grave of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Hakatan.

When they arrived at the cemetery, an Arab caretaker showed them to the tzaddik's grave and handed them *sifrei Tehillim*.

The pilot noticed that the caretaker was holding something in his hand, and he asked him what it was. The Arab told him that he had a picture of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto, which he had once received from a tzaddik who was Rabbi Chaim's grandson.

The pilot, who was not accustomed to such reverence, told R' Refael Amar in Hebrew, so that the Arab would not understand him, “Let's buy the picture from the Arab. We will offer him some money, and maybe he will agree to sell it.”

The pilot offered the Arab a sum of money, but the Arab caretaker was not prepared to sell the picture under any circumstances. The pilot raised the price to one thousand dollars, but the Arab still refused. The pilot offered to buy it for a sum of over four thousand dollars, and even for this exorbitant sum (an amount of money with which one could buy a house in Morocco)

the Arab was not prepared to negotiate at all.

The pilot was very moved and told R' Refael Amar, “See how much faith the Arab has in the tzaddik. His faith is deeply engrained in his very being. Although the picture in his hand is already old and torn, he will not part from it for all the money in the world. This is because he witnessed wondrous miracles wrought by the tzaddik. For him, the picture is his whole life. And if a non-Jewish Arab has such faith in the tzaddik, how much more so should we.”

When Moreinu v'Rabbeinu heard this account, he commented, “It is important to note that faith without Torah is not complete, since they are interconnected. For this Shlomo Hamelech prayed to Hashem (Mela-chim I 8:41) that when a non-Jew will pray to Him, He would immediately accept his prayer. However when a Jew prays, He should not accept his prayer immediately. Why?

For a Jew, a single prayer is not sufficient to bring miraculous salvation. Simple faith is not enough, since a Jew is also required to be a bastion of Torah and observe the mitzvot with fervor. This is not so regarding non-Jews, since they have no connection to Torah. Therefore, if a gentile exhibits faith, Hashem suffices with his prayers and answers him immediately.

A Jew must bask in the light of Torah, engaging in mitzvot and good deeds. Only then will Hashem perform miraculous wonders for him.