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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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

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MASKIL LEDAVID

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

Is the Counting of Bnei Israel Necessary?

"This they shall give – everyone who passes through the census – a half shekel of the sacred shekel" (Shemot 30:13)

To explain the essence of the counting of Bnei Yisrael which was done through giving charity, Rashi brings the analogy of one who asks his shepherd to please count his sheep, whereby he shows that they are beloved to him. The obvious question is: Why indeed was this counting necessary? We certainly know that Hashem loves and cherishes us so why is it important that He spell this out to us? In addition, we can ask another question. The verse says (Shemot 30:15) "The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half a shekel". Why should everyone not give as much as his heart desires?

I would like to offer the following explanation: It is obvious that Hashem knows the exact number of His people. Nevertheless, He counts us time and again to let us know our importance to Him and to tell us – you are dear in My eyes and I value and appreciate you. The issue that we have to face is: Is this the way that we behave towards our friends? Do we also count them? How much do we respect and appreciate them? Hashem counts us to let us know His love so that we should learn a practical lesson from His approach and behave in the same way towards our friends; to hold them in regard, love them and assist them.

However, to simply express that one loves ones friend is not enough. When a friend finds himself in a challenging situation, it is not enough to show concern and share his distress, but one must also take action. If he needs financial help one must not look away, for the mitzva of tzedakah is extremely great.

We must open our hearts and pockets and assist him financially and support him as much as possible in every way so that he can get back on his feet. This is called true brotherly love. This is why, immediately following the command of "When you take a census" where Hashem counts us to show us His love, the following verse says, "This they shall give...half a shekel", to teach us that this is the way to show our love for our friends - through acting generously and giving him as much as he needs. Words alone are not sufficient.

Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Rabbi Chaim Pinto HaKatan zya"ta, was a sterling example of this behavior. Every Friday he would go from door to door collecting for the poor. He didn't suffice with this, but he would belittle himself and go around from house to house with two wagons to collect ready-made food. With ruach hakodesh he would tell the woman of the house exactly how many challot she had baked and how many meatballs she had placed in the pot. They were astonished and willingly gave the Rav whatever he asked for. This is the ideal form of ahavat Yisrael - to assist every needy person with one's money or assets.

Why were the Bnei Yisrael commanded to take half a shekel? To hint to us that even though whatever we have is given to us from Hashem for He rules over everything, and even the tzedakah that we give – is not from our own possessions but from Hashem, as the Tana says (Avot 3:8): For everything is from You, and from Your Own we have given You", nevertheless Hashem in His kindness established a kind of partnership with us, saying take half of your possessions for your own needs and for the needs of your household, but the second half you must leave for Me. That sum is deposited in your hands in order to fulfill My mitzvot and My Torah with it, for giving charity and to enable you to perform good deeds.

The abbreviation of "מחצית השקל" is מ"ה, which has the same numerical value as "אדם" (man). This is also the numerical value of יהוה-ואו-יהוה, which is the letters of the name of Hashem spelled out in full. This alludes to the fact that when a person gives tzedakah to his friend, through this act he connects the names of Hashem to each other and he also merits achieving self-perfection. This is why Hashem commanded to give only half a shekel, for when I give half and my friend gives the other half, both of us together complete the shekel, and this is what brings man to completion.

May it be His will that we merit learning from the great deeds of Rabbeinu zya"ta, to follow in his ways especially in this mitzvah of tzedakah which was always a priority for him and for which he truly sacrificed himself. May this raise the splendor of Israel and may we merit the final redemption speedily Amen.

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Hilula

18 - Rabbi Yehoshua Rafael Pinchas DeSigura

19 - Rabbi Yitzchak Chadad, the Av Beit Din of Jabra

20 - Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rosh Yeshiva of 'Kol Torah'

21 - Rabbi Avraham Ibn Moussa

22 - Rabbi Shlomo Zafrani, Rosh Yeshiva of 'Keter Torah'

23 - Rabbi Yashayahu Pinto zya"ta

24 - Rabbi Elyahu HaKohen, author of 'Shevet Mussar'



Walking in their Ways

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

The Three Best Years

When I was visiting New York, a woman approached me with a request for a blessing in the merit of my fathers. She was fighting a dangerous illness and wished to be cured.

This woman was not Torah-observant at the time. I instructed her to repent from her former way of life. There was no doubt that this illness which plagued her was a sign from Heaven that she must do teshuvah.

I noticed that she was wearing an especially large, eye-catching ring. I told her to remove it and never wear it again, due to reasons of modesty. She accepted my words and did complete teshuvah.

This woman suffered tremendously from her difficult illness. Whenever I traveled to New York, she would come to ask me for a berachah. Then, on one visit to New York, I saw that her husband seemed withdrawn, and had stopped shaving, as is the custom of mourners. I asked him about his wife.

At the mention of his wife, the man burst into sobs. For some moments, he could not speak clearly. Finally, he sadly related that his wife had succumbed to her illness. But before she closed her eyes forever, she had asked him to recite Kriyat Shema with her. Then she said the viduy prayer. Then, she told her husband, "After I pass on, tell Rav Pinto that since my first visit to him three years ago, I have developed a relationship with Hashem. In the Rav's merit, I maintained my faith, believing I would continue to live. There is no doubt in my mind that it is due to my emunah that I was granted an additional three years, the best ones of my life. These years were lived on a spiritual level. Please give him my humble thanks."

Let us take the message of this story to heart. One should constantly seek areas of improvement, obviating a wake-up call from Heaven. Since one never knows when his final day will be, he should always be in a state of teshuvah.

The Haftarah

"Achav sent" (Melachim I, 18:20)

The connection to the Parsha: the Haftarah talks about Eliyahu HaNavi who rebuked the people for serving avodah zara and 'dancing between two opinions'. In the parsha Moshe Rabbeinu rebukes the people for making the Golden Calf.

Ashkenazim read from "It happened [after] many days" (ibid 18:1)



Guard Your Tongue

Ba'alei Lashon Hara

One who constantly speaks lashon hara, like those who are accustomed to sitting around and discussing other people in a negative way, (so-and-so did such and such, his parents did such and such, I heard...about him), these people are termed by Chazal as "Ba'alei lashon hara" and their punishment is much greater, for with their cruelty they transgress Hashem's Torah and disregard it. Concerning these people, it says (Tehillim 12:4) "May Hashem excise all lips of smooth talk, the tongue which speaks boastfully".



Words of our Sages

Want to open a Gemach? Smile!

"When the children of Israel saw Moshe's face, that Moshe's face had become radiant" (Shemot 34:35)

A person who radiates joy and has a shining countenance, creates a pleasant atmosphere around him which gives other people a good feeling. This person merits receiving the same treatment from Above; Hashem shines His face on him too.

What is the greatest blessing that one can give a Jewish person?

We beseech every day in the Amidah prayer, "Bless us, Our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance, blessing, compassion, life and peace." This is a concentrated blessing which includes all the good that one can wish for. (The Maharal of Prague says that the value of money fluctuates constantly, but a shining countenance is forever valuable.)

In contrast, the greatest curse imaginable is the exact opposite of he'arat panim, which is defined by Hashem concealing Himself from us. The Gemarah (Chagigah) tells about one of the holy Amoraim who was reading the section of rebuke in the parsha of Ki Tavo, and when he came to the verse "But I will surely have concealed My face on that day" (Devarim 31:18), he burst into tears.

Hastarat panim (Hashem concealing Himself from us) is a terrible thing. A mother may sometimes smack her child, but how does this young child react? He cries and buries his head in his mother's dress. Right there, close to her, he feels protected. Wrapped in her embrace he feels loved. But if a mother would say to her child "I don't want to have anything to do with you", even though perhaps he won't come to any harm, the very fact that he feels uncared for and cut off from the source of his security, is an extremely harsh reality to accept.

We ask Hashem that He should shine His countenance on us. We wish to be desired by Him. If we take a look at the word 'שגר' (emotion), we will notice that changing the letters around gives us the word 'רשג' (bridge). Warm feelings are the bridge between a father and his child, between a mother and her daughter, between any two people.

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander zt"l, was very ill towards the end of his life and it was hard for him to greet people cheerfully. Nevertheless, he exerted himself to do this at all times, even when talking to someone on the phone. He considered it an obligation much like lulav and shofar. He claimed that it is an actual mitzvah, for even on the phone one can feel if the person on the other end is smiling or not. Therefore, even when talking on the phone it is important to smile.

R' Chaim Friedlander's Rebbe, Harav Dessler, points out in Michtav M'Eliyahu, that the mishna "Receive everyone with a cheerful face" (Avot 1:15), was written by Shamai. This teaches us that it is a definite obligation and it is not simply an exemplary form of behaviour. In addition, the sefer 'Yereim' expresses this in very strong terms: One who doesn't greet others pleasantly transgresses the Torah commandment of "Each of you shall not aggrieve his fellow" (Vayikra 25:17)!

This refers both to those people who are most close to us, and in equal measure to strangers. But it is especially important concerning family members- one's wife and children. The true test of a person's middot is how he behaves inside his home, as Rav Wolbe guides us in his sefer 'Kuntrus Hadracha L'Chatanim', according to Rabbi Chaim Vital zya"a, who writes that a person must act pleasantly, first and foremost, inside his own home.



Pearls of the Parshah

Complementary Luchot

“He threw down the tablets from his hands” (Shemot 32:19)

The word ‘מידו’ is written in the Torah in the singular, but one reads it “from his hands” in the plural. What is the implication of this?

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zt”l explains it in the following way:

Originally, Moshe Rabbeinu intended to throw only one of the luchot, for when the Bnei Yisrael transgressed with the sin of the Golden Calf, they violated a commandment between man and G-d, which is written on the first section of the luchot. This sin had no connection to the obligations between man and his fellow which are written on the second half.

However, Moshe changed his mind for one cannot achieve perfection between man and his friend if perfection between man and Hashem does not exist. Therefore although at first Moshe intended to use only one hand to throw one section, he then changed his mind and used both hands to throw both sections of the luchot, for the two parts are intrinsically connected.

More than a Prayer

“Hashem passed before him and proclaimed” (Shemot 34:6)

Hashem promised the Bnei Yisrael a lofty assurance: “Any time that they perform before Me this order of the thirteen middot, I will forgive them”. We will try to clarify why the Bnei Yisrael deserve forgiveness for saying these middot.

The ‘Reishit Chochma’ adds another question. In his ‘Sha’ar Anava’, he quotes the Gaonim who pose the following difficulty: We have seen it happen that we proclaim this order of the thirteen traits and our prayers are not answered? If so, what is the advantage of saying them?

The ‘Reishit Chochma’ explains that the idea isn’t to simply say them; it requires action. In our own interactions we must follow in the ways of Hashem and cleave to these thirteen traits, as we are told: “Just as He is merciful and gracious, so too should you be merciful and gracious.” Working on our middot and perfecting our interpersonal interactions is what will provide us with the merit of forgiveness for our sins.

The Benefit of Shabbat Kodesh

“However, you must observe My Shabbatot” (Shemot 31:13)

The mitzva of Shabbat is a commandment that lasts for twenty-four hours every week, yet there is another notable difference to any other mitzva, as the holy ‘Ohr Hachaim’ zya”a explains:

A person who doesn’t steal, only fulfils “You shall not steal” when he faces a situation where he wishes to steal yet overcomes the desire. It is only then that he is considered as fulfilling this mitzvah, but not at any other time.

On the other hand, with Shabbat kodesh, because there is the possibility of profaning it every second, therefore one who observes Shabbat, earns a mitzva for every second that he doesn’t profane it.

The Connection between Money and Fire

Concerning the command to give half a shekel it says (Shemot 30:13): “This shall they give – everyone who passes through the census”. Rashi writes that Hashem showed Moshe a coin of fire that weighed half a shekel and told him, “Like this they should give”.

Hashem was hinting to Moshe Rabbeinu a”h, an important foundation. A coin can be compared to fire. One who knows how to use fire in the appropriate way can derive much benefit from it. For example, one can use it to cook, to give light, and to warm oneself. But if chalila, a person is irresponsible and uses fire in an uncontrolled way, it has the power to burn and destroy and wipe out all that comes in its path.

It is the same with the coin, which symbolizes money. If one uses it correctly, for an appropriate purpose, for example for giving charity, acts of kindness or investing in a mitzvah, it brings great benefit to man. But if a person uses his money in a negligent and unethical manner by using it for forbidden or improper things chalilah, then he can cause great damage to himself which can lead him down to the grave.

I would like to suggest a hint for this idea:

The letters of the word ‘מטבע’ (coin) can be rearranged to spell טבע ‘מ’. Meaning, a person should take this part of nature (טבע) that Hashem created and use it (the money) for the sake of our Holy Torah which was given to Moshe Rabbeinu in forty days (מ’).

This is the correct path for a person to take. All material things, which seem to us to be an extension of the yetzer hara, should be taken and used for fulfilling Torah and mitzvot.

For example, Chazal tell us (Avot 4:28): “Jealousy, lust and glory remove a man from the world”. This seems to imply that these traits are intrinsically negative and they stem from the yetzer hara. But if a person uses his intellect and insight in the correct way, he can learn how to use these very traits in a positive way and to consecrate these traits for the sake of Hashem and His Torah. We can take, for example, the trait of jealousy. How can this be used in a positive way? One’s heart should be jealous of those who follow the Torah way and one should desire to be like them.

We can do the same with the trait of lust. If a person takes his desire for food and uses it for a holy purpose, for example by investing in a Shabbat or Yom tov seudah, or a Brit Milah celebration, this is lust used in an appropriate way.

Concerning this very idea, we are told, (Devarim 6:5): “You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart”. Chazal say (Berachot 54:1), “With all your heart – with both your inclinations”; with both the good inclination and the bad inclination. This implication of this is that a person should take his yetzer hara and use it in a positive way and then it will aid the yetzer hatov.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



“This they shall give - everyone who passes through the census - a half shekel of the sacred shekel” (Shemot 30:13)

Rashi: He showed him a coin of fire and said to him, “Like this they shall give”.

Why did Hashem specifically show him a coin of fire?

The “Pnei Meir’ answers: Hashem wished to hint to Bnei Yisrael- just as when one uses a lit candle in order to kindle another light, the original light is not diminished in any way, so too, when a person gives to Me –this does not subtract from his possessions in any way. From giving charity one doesn’t lose, nothing is taken away from him...

The ‘Ba’al Haturim’ writes on the verse, “Every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul when counting them”, that the word ‘ונתנו’ (they shall give) can be read from right to left or from left to right. Whatever the direction, one is left with the word ‘ונתנו’. This teaches us that at the end of the day, whatever a person gives to charity comes back to him and one doesn’t lose anything from observing the mitzva of tzedaka!

Men of Faith

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

The Tzaddik Did the Surgery

An amazing incident occurred to R’ David Loyb. He merited long life, reaching the ripe old age of ninety, in the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto.

While still young, R’ Loyb lived in Mogador in the proximity of Rabbi Chaim Hakatan, who lived in the house that had belonged to his grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol. He merited praying in the Beit Hakeneset with the tzaddik, basking in his greatness and occasionally serving him.

He relates with emotion, “Too bad that I don’t know anyone who could record for posterity all the many wondrous miracles that I experienced in the merit of the tzaddik. I would love to transmit them while I am still alive. It would be a pity if Am Yisrael would lose these stories. Through them, people are able to realize the great powers that a tzaddik possesses, even after he dies. Furthermore, Chazal say that whoever discusses stories of tzaddikim is considered as if he delved in the lofty Ma’aseh Merkavah.”

Moreinu v’Rabbeinu enjoyed hearing the following story first hand from R’ David:

Approximately thirty years ago, R’ David Loyb began to experience terrible pain, which later proved to be symptoms of cancer. His condition steadily worsened, until he had to leave Mogador and travel to Casablanca, where a French specialist, Professor Buton, treated him.

When he arrived in Casablanca, he went through a series of tests and was informed that unfortunately he had a

malignant growth. Furthermore, he was told that the operation necessary to remove the growth was very complicated and dangerous.

R’ Loyb began to tremble in fear. Worry filled his heart. “What will be? Will I recover from this illness?”

The doctor sensed R’ Loyb’s anxiety and told him, “We will not be able to operate on you like this. You must be more relaxed during surgery.”

However, this remark did not help calm him at all.

That day, R’ Loyb was hospitalized in Professor Buton’s ward, in order to prepare him for the operation, which would take place the following day. At night, the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan appeared to him in a dream. R’ Loyb saw the shining countenance of the tzaddik facing him, his head wrapped in a white tallit.

Rabbi Chaim took his tallit and placed it around R’ Loyb, and then smiled to him and said, “My son, I am Rabbi Chaim Pinto. Do not fear. Tomorrow I will stand alongside the doctor when he operates. The surgery will take an hour and a quarter, and it will be a success. You will be well and live long.”

R’ Loyb woke up and realized that it was a dream. A pleasant feeling spread over him as he recalled the encouraging words of the tzaddik. He calmed down, and slowly his fears evaporated entirely.

In the morning, Professor Buton entered his room in order to check the results of the most current tests, and to see if he was less anxious. To his surprise, he saw that R’ Loyb was entirely relaxed, as if the

operation had already been performed with success.

“Mr. Loyb,” Professor Buton said to him, “what happened that you are so relaxed and calm?”

R’ Loyb explained to him, “I am from Mogador. In that city, some years ago, there was a tzaddik, who abided by Hashem’s will. He was like an angel from Heaven, a wise, virtuous, and honorable Rabbi, called Rabbi Chaim Pinto. He was a wondrous miracle worker. This tzaddik appeared to me last night in a dream and told me to calm down, since the operation will be successful and will not last longer than an hour and a quarter.”

The professor frowned and said, “Mr. Loyb, what are you talking about? This is a very complicated operation, which takes a minimum of three hours. It is not a simple procedure at all.”

The professor’s argument did not shake R’ Loyb’s confidence, and he remained calm and relaxed. In this way, he was able to undergo surgery.

The surgery went well, in the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto. When R’ Loyb recovered, he opened his eyes and saw Professor Buton standing beside him. His face was wreathed in smiles. R’ Loyb waited to hear the doctor’s report. It did not take long in coming:

“Mr. Loyb, the operation succeeded beyond our expectations. However, I do not think that I am the one who performed it. The operation did take only an hour and a quarter, something which is impossible to imagine. I think that your tzaddik is the one who helped me, and he is the one who operated on you...”