

# Bechukotai

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## 802



Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

# Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon 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"l



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

### «Let us make Man' – was said concerning Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai»

**"If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them"** (Vayikra 26:3)

Every Friday night, we have the custom to sing the song "Bar Yochai". One of its stanzas is "Let us make Man' – was said concerning Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai". Chazal tell us (Sanhedrin 38b) that when Hashem wished to create man, He took counsel with the ministering angels, whether it is worth creating them or not. The commentaries explain that when Hashem looked at the future generations and saw Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, He immediately said "Let us make man", for it was worth creating all of mankind, even though they were unworthy – as long as the neshama of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai zy"l would arrive.

We will now attempt to understand how Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai achieved such a lofty and exalted level. The key is through the power of his toiling in Torah. Not for nothing does the day of his hilula fall during the parsha of Behukotai, where it is written "If you will follow My decrees". Rashi expounds on these words – "that you should toil in Torah". Torah is chiefly acquired through toil and exertion, as the Tanna says (Avot 6:4): "This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, live a life of deprivation – but toil in Torah!" This is the only way to acquire Torah. Who is a better example of this than Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai who lived a life of deprivation and suffering, in a cave, for thirteen years? He inserted his body up until his neck into the earth, until his entire body became full of fissures, and in this state he toiled in the holy Torah without abate and with great exertion. What was his sustenance during these years? The fruit of a carob tree and water from a spring. This was the life of deprivation that he lived and this is why he merited achieving such lofty levels in the holy Torah.

The gemarah tells us (Shabbat 33b) that when Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai came out of the cave, Rabbi Pinchas Ben Yair took him to the bathhouse and when he noticed that his back was full of fissures he started to cry. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai asked him, why are you crying? He answered: "Woe to me that I saw you in this state." Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai responded: "Fortunate are you that you saw me in this state, for had you not seen me like this, you would not have found me at this level."

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was implying - this is the way to achieve greatness in Torah; only Torah that is learnt with toil and exertion and pain, is absorbed in the person and has the power to change his essence and elevate him. However, if a person seeks life's

pleasures and wishes to follow the impulsiveness of his heart, he will not merit Torah.

The Torah writes "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them; then I will provide your rains in their right time" (Vayikra 26:3-4), and later we are also promised: "I will provide peace in the land" (ibid. 6). We can see from the above verses that there is a promise waiting for those who toil in Torah – Hashem's promise will be fulfilled - he will be given his material needs through the angels, according to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's interpretation of the words "I will provide your rains in their right time". Rain [מים] is a reference to material needs [תוימשג]. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai also promised that with his power of Torah he can protect the entire world and pardon us from exact judgment; this is a concept of "I will provide peace in the land" - the world will achieve perfection through the merit of toiling in Torah.

Now we can understand the great joy and happiness that is inherent in the hilula of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. The entire world rejoices, and all of mankind; right from Adam Harishon and until this very day is joyful, for not only can Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai annul harsh decrees in the merit of the concealed Torah that was revealed by him, but in addition, through the power of toiling in Torah we can achieve the innermost essence of the Torah – we bring the redemption closer and we are able to redeem the essence of hod from the klipah. We have much to rejoice about and through this happiness the klipah of sadness and sighing will be annulled. Due to this it is a great mitzva to rejoice on the hilulah. The holy Arizal tells us that sadness and sighing are the symbols of klipah, so if, G-d forbid, one is sad on this day – this lends power to the klipah.

Once on the hilula of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, the holy Arizal was in Meron and out of great fervor he started to dance. A tall man, whose face shone with glory, came towards him and danced with him. As they were dancing, the sun joined them and danced with them too. All those present were amazed at this sight. First of all, they wished to know, who is this tall man? And secondly, what is the sun doing with them? Later on the holy Ari explained that the man who came to dance with him was Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai himself, and the sun was Rabbi Elazar Azkari, a lofty tzaddik, who until now had remained concealed.

The situation of today's generation is most inferior. Due to our many sins we are lacking faith, a result of the ever increasing lures of this world, for example the computer, cellphone and other similar devices. We must therefore work to strengthen our faith in the power of tzaddikim.

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### Hilula

27 of Iyar, Rabbi Itzchak ben Rabbi Isakhar Aboulafia

28 of Iyar, Shmouel Hanavi

29 of Iyar, Rabbi Meir of Premischlan

First of Sivan, Rabbi Meir Halevi Horowitz

2 of Sivan, Rabbi Israel of Viznitz

3 of Sivan, Rabeinou Ovdia of Bartenura

4 of Sivan, Rabbi Mantzour Marzouk



## Walking in their Ways

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

### True, Lasting Love

A woman once came to see me with tears pouring down her face, greatly distressed about her many troubles. Her marital harmony was most unstable, she had no nachat from her children, she was in a bad state financially and her health was failing too.

Her pain touched my heart and I asked her what kind of blessing she wished for. She answered that she was not seeking anything for herself; she had come on behalf of her neighbor who was lying on her deathbed, her days numbered owing to her acute illness... Her only desire was that I bless her friend.

"As for myself," the woman said, "Despite all my troubles, I am still alive. My neighbor, however, is in a far worse situation – for her I wish to ask for a blessing from the honorable Rav shlita."

I learnt a great lesson from this extraordinary woman. Her entire thoughts were with her friend's pain and she was not focused on her own troubles. She reached a level where her friends' distress made her forget her own sorrows and she learned to be happy with what she had and see the good instead of paying attention to what she was lacking. We can learn from this astounding woman to what extent a person must try and be happy with his lot and accustom himself to say about everything – "This too is for the good", and as the Tanna teaches us - "According to the effort is the reward".

I am also familiar with the experiences of an acquaintance who is a patron of our institutions and helps support Torah. Several years ago the wheels

of fortune turned and he became very hard pressed. His marital harmony was also affected to the degree that he almost divorced, but I constantly encouraged him and told him not to give up and to continue serving Hashem wholeheartedly as he always had, and that he should not give up his regular Torah classes. Indeed after a time his mazal changed and things started improving for him.

Our sages have taught us (Avot 5:17): "Any love that depends on a specific cause, when the cause is gone, the love is gone."

If a person thanks Hashem and serves Him and observes His mitzvot when everything goes well, but when troubles accost him then he distances himself from avodat Hashem – it shows that his observance was dependent on something, and if this is the case, this is not love.

However, if his love is not dependent on something material and is not in exchange for worldly goods, instead it stems from his innermost being and his observance remains holy avodah even when he is troubled and his lot is bitter, this is the most choice and longed-for service of Hashem. This shows that even when he is experiencing tranquility and all his needs are fulfilled, he is not enjoying this world for his own pleasure, but whatever he has only assists him in his avodat Hashem. And therefore even if he suddenly falls on challenging times and he is left lacking something worldly, despite this he does not become disheartened for he will continue to enjoy his true delight which is the holy Torah and mitzvot.

## The Haftarah

"Hashem, my Strength, my Stronghold" (Yirmiyahu 16)

The connection to the parsha: The haftarah talks about the punishments that Hashem will bring on the Jewish people if they do not follow His decrees and do not observe His mitzvot. This is the message of the rebuke which is mentioned in the parsha – it is a prophesy of the evil that will befall the Bnei Yisrael if, G-d forbid, they do not observe the laws of the Torah and its commandments.

## Guard Your Tongue

### A Wise Undertaking

At the time of reciting the shema, as one recites the verse "Place these words of Mine upon your heart", which is in effect the accepting of the yoke of Torah and mitzvot, a person should undertake not to transgress the positive and negative commandments associated with the laws of speech.



## Words of our Sages

### On The Contrary - I Will Offer My Assistance

"If you will follow My decrees" (Vayikra 26:3)

Rabbeinu Ya'akov, the 'Ba'al Haturim', reveals a wonderful fundement which is hinted at in the above verse. "אם בחקתי תלכו" - the first letter of each word spells אבות (fathers) – which hints to the message "שתלכו בדרכי אבות", you should follow in the ways of the fathers.

When the Alter of Slabodka, Rabbi Natan Tzvi Finkel zt"l, was asked how he encapsulates his main occupation in life, he replied with a profound sentence: "I tried to give over to my students the obligation to be wise and good-hearted."

Rabbi Eliezer Turk shlita, describes Rabbi Aryeh Finkel's zt"l, integrity of middot. He was the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, Brachfeld and his personality was a live, tangible example of purity and refinement of middot. He was a symbol of perfection in Torah, in his behaviour, in his fear of Hashem and in his middot – everything that Hashem wishes a Jew to demonstrate.

During the time that the Finkel family lived on Rechov Malachi in Yerushalayim, one day as Rabbi Aryeh sat at the dining room table immersed in his gemarah, with his customary diligence, suddenly deafening sounds of drilling and banging could be heard coming from the floor above them. At first Rabbi Aryeh deliberated as to the reason for the noise, but a few minutes later, the peeling paint and bits of plaster that started falling from the ceiling, were a clear sign of what was going on just above his head.

"What is going on?" Rabbi Aryeh asked his wife, "What is this banging that we can hear from upstairs? Is everything okay?"

"All is well, the neighbours on top of us are expanding and renovating their apartment."

A smile lit up Rabbi Aryeh's kind face. He closed his gemarah, got up from his place, put on his hat and jacket and went upstairs. His knocking on the door could barely be made out due to the deafening noise of the building work. Only after a few long minutes one of the children realised and went to open the door.

"Is your father home?" Rabbi Aryeh asked.

"Father, Father!" the child called out, "the neighbor Finkel is at the door!"

The father's face coloured with embarrassment. "Harav Finkel?! Oh no! I didn't tell him about our plans to renovate. Who knows how he is going to react?" he thought to himself.

But as he approached the door, he was in for a surprise- he was met with a completely different picture:

"Shalom Aleichem", Rabbi Aryeh received him with a smile and shook his hand warmly. "I would appreciate if I could come inside and discuss something with you. I was so happy to hear that you started building! For a long time already I was wondering to myself how you manage with such a small apartment!"

"Listen", Rabbi Aryeh continued, "I imagine that the expense involved is enormous, but I cannot help you with money since I myself do not have. But if you need me to sign as a guarantor for a loan, I will be most happy to do so."

Another good word, another shake of his hand, and Rabbi Aryeh went back downstairs to continue his learning.

And the neighbor? He was left standing by the doorway, watching in astonishment as Rabbi Aryeh made his way down the stairs. He was deep in thought. What about Rabbi Aryeh and his own family? How do they manage in their small, crowded apartment? And the bigger question - how does one acquire such an ayin tovah (a good eye – an attitude of benevolence)? To see only the good in others??

When one of his family members expressed a bit of resentment about the renovations, Rabbi Aryeh responded in astonishment: "If the neighbour who was building was our son, would we also be opposed?"



## Pearls of the Parshah

### Bound with Tefillin Throughout the Day

*"If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them" (Vayikra 26:3)*

The Torah tells us that the mitzva of tefillin is considered to be a chok, as it says, "You shall observe this decree (חוקה) at its designated time from year to year" (Shemot 13:10), referring to the commandment of tefillin.

If so, the holy 'Or Hachaim' zya" explains, this is the explanation of "If you will follow My decrees", meaning that there is a mitzva to wear tefillin, called 'chukah' the entire day. But this is only on the condition that he is careful to observe the particular mitzvot that are applicable when wearing tefillin, and he must take care to constantly keep them at the forefront of his mind.

This is the implication of the continuation of the verse "and observe My commandments", meaning he should observe those mitzvot that apply when laying tefillin.

The holy Rabbeinu 'Ohr Hachaim' and his students were indeed accustomed to do so; they wore their tefillin the entire day. Rabbeinu HaKadosh, in his letter about the manner of learning in his holy yeshiva in Yerushalayim, testifies to this: "And the way of learning is with tallit and tefillin the entire day, with holiness, yirat shamayim and humility and every pious act."

### Born For the Sake of Toiling In Torah

*"If you will follow My decrees" (Vayikra 26:3)*

Rashi's explanation on the above words is famous: "That you should toil in Torah".

Rabbi Chaim Brisker quotes the Chazal "Man is born to toil – to toil in Torah (Sanhedrin 92b), and explains that while the fetus is still in its mother's womb, it learns the entire Torah with a malach. It lacks for nothing but the experience of exerting himself in Torah study.

Rabbi Chaim says that in these words "Man is born to toil", lies a hint to the reason why man sees the light of the world- so that he should also have the toil.

### Ya'akov Took a Security from Eliyahu Hanavi

*"I will remember My covenant with Ya'akov" (Vayikra 26:42)*

The word 'עקוב' is written here with the addition of the letter 'vav'. Rashi explains that in five instances Ya'akov took a letter from the name of Eliyahu HaNavi, as a guarantee that he would come and announce the redemption of his children.

The sefer 'Avnei Shoham' brings a hint for this: The word עקוב stands for "ומאליהו קבל יעקב ערבון בחמשה". (From Eliyahu, Ya'akov received a pledge five times.)

The five instances in which he took a pledge is a reference to the Five Books of the Torah, for through learning and observing the Torah, one hastens the arrival of Eliyahu HaNavi.

Why was specifically the letter 'vav' chosen to be added to his name?

The letter 'vav', when written out in full, has the numerical value of thirteen. This hints to the idea that we must cleave to the thirteen attributes of Hashem – "Just as He is Compassionate and Gracious, so must you be compassionate and gracious."

### In Our Fathers Footsteps

*Nuggets of guidance culled from the teachings of Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlit'a, on masechet Avot*



### "Do not make the Torah a crown for self-glorification, nor a spade with which to dig"

A great foundation in Torah study is that if a person studies Torah with arrogance, his Torah will not remain with him, rather when one studies Torah one must behave with extreme humility. Through repenting before starting to learn, his learning will bring him to humility. I saw this idea in a small notation from Harav HaKadosh, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk zt"l who wrote (section 10) that every person must repent completely before starting to learn Torah. And if a person does not examine his deeds before learning, his Torah will not stay with him.

Once when I went to see my esteemed Rebbe, the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Shmuel Lopian zt"l, he told me that he was in the middle of writing a commentary on the sefer 'Shev Shma'atah', written by the 'Ktzot HaChoshen' zt"l. He added, "You should know that this holy Rav, each time before he sat down to learn, he would seclude himself with his Creator and conduct a personal reckoning of his deeds. He would say the verse (Tehillim 50:7), "But to the wicked, G-d said, "To what purpose do you recount My decrees?" He felt that according to his level he was not fitting to study the holy Torah. Therefore, whenever he would sit down to learn, he would first rebuke himself and make a reckoning of his deeds and repent, in order to inculcate himself with the trait of humility. This is how this holy tzaddik merited becoming so great and to write precious sefarim like the 'Ktzot Hachoshen' and 'Shev Shma'atah' – only because he learnt Torah with abundant humility and self-effacement.

My esteemed father zt"l, commented that if the author of the 'Ktzotz Hachoshen' behaved in this fashion, how much more so must we rebuke ourselves before starting to learn in order that our Torah should remain with us. Due to our great sins, things have turned upside down and we see people coming to the Beit Midrash to learn, and before entering the study hall, what do they do? They make a few phone calls, smoke a cigarette or two, and afterwards enter the Beit Midrash and discuss the latest news with their chavruta, what's doing in business and at home and eventually they open their gemara and begin learning. Only half the allotted time for learning is left- maybe even less. This is their preparation for learning! In place of preparing themselves with sincerity and fear of G-d, they squander their days with nonsense and do not take this to heart.

Would these people consider the idea of censuring themselves before starting to study, and would they surrender themselves before Hashem as the 'Ktzotz Hachoshen' zt"l did, they would not end up wasting precious learning time and their learning would not bring them to pride, for only one who does not totally submit his entire being can turn his heart to other things besides Torah. The fact that these people can sit and talk about mundane affairs is because they did not subdue their hearts in preparation for Torah study, and their Torah will cause them to stumble.

This is the rule: A person cannot achieve humility through Torah if his Torah is not combined with rebuke and mussar.



# "LET HER BE PRAISED"

## Portrayal of the True 'Eshet Chayil'

### In memory of Rabbanit Mazal Madeleine Pinto

*"She seeks out wool and linen, and her hands work willingly"*

The 'Minchat Elazar' of Munkatch, in his sefer 'Divrei Torah', brings the following amazing story:

The government decided to build a new track for the local train in Hokliyua, which necessitated evacuating and relocating several graves from the local Jewish cemetery.

The Dayanim of the Beit Din, notable Rabbanim, and a large segment of the Jewish community, all travelled to the sight, in order to supervise the removal of the graves.

Among the tombstones that were marked for digging up were several very old ones, dated hundreds of years old. Suddenly the Gaon of Munkatch heard a commotion going on around a certain grave. He was then still a young lad, just thirteen years old. His curiosity was aroused and he ran over to find out what the great excitement was.

As he approached his hairs bristled. Lying in the hundred-year-old grave, was the niftar – intact and clean as if it had just now been lain to rest.

He stood rooted to the spot, astounded, and thought to himself: With what merit did this person lying here achieve this lofty level that few in every generation merit? His body is intact even after hundreds of years of lying in the grave. It must be that he is one of the thirty six hidden tzaddikim who cleaved to Hashem throughout his life...

He was even more astonished as he started to read what was inscribed on the matzeivah- that here lay a righteous woman, crowned with outstanding praises, largely concerning her great modesty. Despite her profession as a seamstress, "she seeks out wool and linen", she remained modest and pious her entire life, also in her dealings with the many customers who flocked to her, to buy her modest designs...

With great honour they removed the nifteret, wrapped her in new white tachrichim, and placed her in the aron in order to bury her anew with the respect that she deserved.

The holy Gaon of Munkatch concludes: It is impossible to describe the great kiddush Hashem that this sight caused, both for the Jews and for the non-Jews who were present, as they merited to see the enormous value attributed to the trait of modesty of a righteous Jewish woman.

#### *What Is The 'Kaf Hachaim' Doing In The Marketplace?*

If we start painting a picture of Rabbanit Pinto, if we start by praising her modesty in just a small way, we will attain a comprehensive view of an eishet chayil, who with wisdom and insight

managed her home with true modesty and Jewish grace, despite shouldering the entire responsibility of maintaining the home. We have already mentioned that her righteous husband, the esteemed Maran Rabbeinu Moshe Ahron Pinto zya"n, ensconced himself in his home for forty years, immersing himself in Torah and chassidut. The righteous Rabbanit was the one who took care of everything in the best possible way.

Rabbi Ya'akov Hillel shlita, Rosh yeshiva of 'Ahavat Shalom' attests that it used to be accepted practice that the husband, the head of the household, was the one who would bring the parnassah to the home, while the wife used to be a personification of the verse "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the inner chambers of your home". She was like Sarah Imeinu who remained in the tent, not moving from it, and there she was occupied with the daily demands of the home.

Even the idea of frequenting the marketplace used to be foreign to the woman. One of the famous Chachamim of Hungary, who was familiar with the supreme value of the sefer 'Kaf Hachaim', describes the following scene:

He was once in the marketplace where he met a Sefardi Chacham who was buying vegetables for Shabbat. After speaking to him for a few moments he was astounded to realize that it was Rabbi Ya'akov Sofer zt"l, the very author of the 'Kaf Hachaim', He had come to shop for Shabbat in the local market! He could not believe his eyes; he had always imagined that the 'Kaf Hachaim' never left his learning for anything- what was he doing shopping in the market?

In a similar vein, the elders of Yerushalayim told over that once when the son of the 'Divrei Chaim' of Sanz visited Yerushalayim, he went to visit the famous mekubal, the author of 'Shemen Sasson', head of the Yeshiva of Kabbalah 'Beit E-I', after having heard about his great piety and holiness. Since he didn't find him at home, he waited for him by the entrance and was astonished to see him coming home alone from the marketplace, carrying two baskets full of fruits and vegetables in honor of Shabbat!

In previous generations there were severe guidelines concerning the concept of modesty for women, especially among the Sefardic communities. For example, in 5514, the Gedolei Yerushalayim wrote up several regulations which were printed in the Book of Takanot and Haskamot, signed by twelve Gedolim from all over the world. All the regulations concerned the modesty of Jewish daughters: "No bat Yisrael, even the older ones, should go to the market without wearing an additional garment on top of her clothes (called 'lizar'), and she should not even go from one courtyard to the next without this garment. Similarly, she should not sit at the entrance to the courtyard in order to speak to friends, and even from one window to the next if there is a public area in between. In addition, a woman who is under the age of fifty, does not have permission to go to the public oven to take and fetch the bread and other things."