

Chukat

July 13th 2019
10th of Tamuz 5779

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

Published by Mosdot "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" in Israel

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

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



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

A Lesson for All Generations

"Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore you will not bring this congregation to the Land that I have given them" (Bamidbar 20:12)

The main purpose of man in this world is to increase Hashem's glory and to sanctify His name in public. In this parsha we find that Moshe and Ahron a"h unintentionally reduced Hashem's honor through smiting the rock: "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel". As a result, they were punished severely and the merit of bringing the people into the Holy Land was taken from them.

This claim against Moshe and Ahron was actually a very subtle one, due to the fact that Hashem is particular with His righteous ones to the extent of a hairsbreadth. However, it is quite clear that Moshe Rabbeinu a"h concerned himself his entire life with being zealous for Hashem's Name. He displayed great self-sacrifice for the sake of increasing and glorifying Hashem's honor in the world.

We find an example of this in this parsha. The Bnei Yisrael sinned and spoke against Hashem and Moshe. The result was that Hashem sent them the fiery serpents who bit the people, causing many of them to die. When Moshe cried out to Hashem that He should end the plague, Hashem said to him (Bamidbar 21:8): "Make yourself a fiery [serpent] and place it on a pole". However, instead of a fiery serpent Moshe made a copper serpent, as it says (ibid 21:9): "Moshe made a serpent of copper and placed it on the pole".

What was the reason for Moshe deviating from Hashem's command?

The commentaries explain that the 'nachashim' (serpents) were sent as a punishment for speaking lashon hara about Hashem, which was the same sin with which the very first snake sinned, whereas the 'seraphim' (fiery serpents) were sent as a punishment for speaking lashon hara about Moshe, who is called a 'malach' as it says (ibid 20:16): "He sent a 'malach' (emissary) and took us out of Egypt". The emissary is called 'saraf', as it says "Seraphim were standing above, at His service" (Yeshaya 6:2), and therefore one who offends the honor of talmidei chachamim, is punished by being bitten by a 'saraf', as the Tana says (Avot 2:10) "All their words are like fiery coals".

When Moshe Rabbeinu a"h cried out to Hashem, Hashem said to him, "Make yourself a fiery [serpent]" – meaning Hashem was distressed because of the slight to Moshe's honor, and He was concerned about this more than for His own honor. Therefore, He com-

manded Moshe to make a 'saraf', which hints to the slight in Moshe's honor. On the other hand, Moshe Rabbeinu a"h, in his great modesty, was concerned for Hashem's honor more than for his own personal honor, and therefore he made a 'nachash' which hints to the slight to Hashem's honor. The implication was that he overlooked his own honor and was only concerned for Hashem.

This shows us the extent to which Moshe Rabbeinu was careful with Hashem's honor. His sole desire was seeking ways in which to increase Hashem's honor and intensify Hashem's sovereignty in man's eyes, but in this particular episode Moshe made a mistake and hit the rock. Since, as we mentioned, this was considered a very slight sin of diminishing Hashem's honor in relation to Moshe Rabbeinu's level, he was punished.

In addition, Chazal tell us (Rashi, Bamidbar 20:11) that at first Moshe did indeed speak to the rock as Hashem commanded him, but since it only gave out a few drops of water which was not enough for all the people, Moshe decided to hit the rock. But Hashem thought otherwise; His intention was that Moshe should talk to the rock again and not give up – he should continue speaking to it until it gave forth enough water.

Hashem intended that the idea of Moshe talking to the rock should serve as a practical lesson for us throughout our lives. If a person begs Hashem for a certain request, or prays to be redeemed from his challenges, yet his supplication has seemingly not yet been answered, he should G-d forbid never give up and should certainly not hit and kick at the rock of faith which is deep inside him. A person is forbidden to despair from mercy, instead he is obligated to continue talking to Hashem and should speak to Him continually until Hashem chooses to fulfil his wish. This is the powerful message that the Bnei Yisrael could have learnt, had Moshe Rabbeinu continued speaking to the rock and not given up. But when Moshe saw that after speaking to the rock only a few drops of water came out and it did not seem to be helping, he immediately picked up his stick and hit the rock. With this act the lesson that could have been gleaned was suppressed and concealed. This is why Hashem was angry, for besides diminishing Hashem's honor, the Bnei Yisrael also lost an important message which could have served as a lesson for all future generations.

May it be Hashem's will that we merit sanctifying and intensifying Hashem's name through our deeds, and His Honorable Name should rise high and be lauded among all people, Amen V'Amen.



Walking in their Ways

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



Words of our Sages

A Jewish Burial

Mr. Dayan a"h was a well-known personality in France, and when he passed away it was clear that thousands of people would participate in his levaya and accompany him to the burial site. My dear talmid, Rabbi Gavriel Elbaz a"h, who heard about his passing, also wished to accompany him to his final resting place, and together with several of his students, made the effort to go to the cemetery where he was supposed to be buried.

To their great surprise, Rabbi Gavriel and his talmidim saw that the cemetery was deserted. They noticed a small group of people who had come to pay their last respects to a family member, so they approached them and asked if the levaya of Mr. Dayan had already taken place. The group replied that as far as they know his levaya is supposed to take place in about an hour.

When Rabbi Gavriel heard this, he thought to himself that if Hashem brought him to the cemetery a full hour before the levaya, exactly when a different woman's levaya was taking place – it must be a sign that Hashem wished for him to take part in the levaya of this woman, who was being brought to rest from a deserted town in France.

And so Rabbi Gavriel joined the levaya, together with his talmidim.

In France, there is unfortunately a law that lowering the body into the grave must be performed by non-Jewish gravediggers. This law is against the laws of Jewish burial, and in order to circumvent it one must put up a strong fight and be prepared to stand up for Jewish burial rights which are abused by this order.

As they approached the grave, Rabbi Gavriel noticed that the gravediggers had not yet arrived, and therefore he called over his talmidim and together they seized the opportunity to personally lower the woman's body into the grave.

Just as they finished performing this act in accordance with the Jewish law, the non-Jewish gravediggers arrived, but the woman had already merited a full Jewish burial.

An hour later, the levaya of Mr. Dayan a"h indeed arrived at the cemetery, but despite the thousands of people who came to pay their respects – his body was lowered into the grave by the non-Jewish gravediggers, and he did not merit what this simple woman merited- to be buried by Jews.

Upon reflection, Rabbi Gavriel arrived at the conclusion that the woman who was buried just an hour before, obviously had a great merit from some mitzvah that she performed, which prevailed for her to be buried in this miraculous way- a complete Jewish burial, attended to by Jewish people only.

Reflections on Account Of Cutting An Onion

"This is the decree of the Torah" (Bamidbar 19:2)

Rashi clarifies the above words: "It is a decree of Mine, it is not for anyone to question it"

Rabbi Chaim of Sanz zya"a, the author of 'Divrei Chaim', had a holy custom. Every Shabbat, he himself would chop up the egg and onion which he had a custom to eat at the morning se'uda.

This reason for this custom was not clear to his chassidim. Why did the Rebbe have to cut the egg and onion and why was this act performed at the table? It remained a mystery.

A simple villager was once a guest at his table, and when he saw the Rebbe cutting the onion, he could not contain his curiosity and immediately voiced his inquisitiveness: "Rebbe, why are you doing this? Can the onion not be cut before being brought to the table?"

The Rebbe smiled and answered the villager: "The essence of an onion is its sharpness. If it is cut before being brought to the table, even the best cooks will not be able to replace its flavor"...

The villager was appeased but the chassidim, who were on a loftier level, understood that a deeper message lay behind their Rebbe's custom...

A short time later, the Rebbe had another visitor at his table. This time it was a Rav and Dayan, an expert in halacha, who came to partake of the Rebbe's se'uda and bask in his glory, even though he wasn't one of his chassidim. Like the previous visitor, he could not contain himself and gently voiced his surprise: "Why does the Rebbe cut the onion at the table?"

The Rebbe smiled and answered: "You are familiar with halacha; I'm sure you are aware of how many prohibitions can be involved when cutting an onion on Shabbat. In order not cause the Rabbanit to G-d forbid stumble, I am particular to cut the onion myself, to prevent a righteous woman from being the cause of an oversight"...

The Rav was satisfied with this answer but once again the astute Chassidim realized that some deeper issue lay behind the act. Surely the Rabbanit was well-versed in all the laws of preparing food on Shabbat? They also could not reconcile the Rebbe concerning himself with a mundane onion at his holy table...

The years passed, and one day an elderly Chassid came to see the Rebbe. He turned to the Rebbe and asked him: "Gracious Rebbe, for many years I have been a Chassid of the Rebbe and most of the Torah that I merited learning is from the Rebbe, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, the Revealed Torah and the Hidden Torah. Yet there is one thing that I don't understand:

Why does the Rebbe have this custom of cutting the onion at the holy Shabbat table?

The Rebbe explained: "There is a well-known explanation that many of the customs of Shabbat kodesh, the seventh day, are connected to the number seven. 'נר' (light) has the numerical value of seven (using gematria katan – any number over nine loses its zero). Similarly, each of the words 'יין' (wine), 'דג' (fish), 'מרק' (soup), and 'בשר' (meat), also have a numerical value of seven. Everything is connected to seven, until we come to the morning se'uda when the onion is served. 'בצל' (onion), using gematria katan, adds up to fourteen, and in order to rectify this, I am particular to cut the onion into seven parts."

The Maggidim say that each of the three answers that the Rebbe gave were referring to different approaches:

With his answer to the villager, the Rebbe was hinting at the idea of sharpness and devotion to Hashem, whereas his answer to the Rav was pointing out the importance of being familiar with all the laws of Shabbat, to know and master all the relevant laws so as not to transgress any prohibitions. His answer to the elderly Chassid was implying not to be "likened to silenced animals"...contemplate and know your Creator and your role in His world.

The Haftarah

"Yiftach the Giladi" (Shoftim 11)

The connection to the parsha: The haftarah talks about the war that the Children of Ammon fought against Yisrael, and about the land that Yisrael took possession of from Sichon, which he had captured from Ammon. The parsha too mentions the Children of Ammon. The Bnei Yisrael did not fight with them; they smote Sichon and through that took possession of the land that Sichon had captured from Ammon.



Guard Your Tongue

Praise Which Causes Harm

When praising someone one must take care that the praise should not lead to loss for the person being spoken about. An example of this could be a guest who publicizes his host's kindness and the great trouble that he went to in taking care of him. This could result in non-scrupulous people taking advantage of this kindness, which will be to the detriment of the host.

We can apply the following verse to this idea: "If one blesses his friend loudly from early in the morning, it will be considered a curse to him." (Mishlei 27:14)



Pearls of the Parshah

Miriam's Merit Had Its Roots in Moshe

"There was no water for the assembly, and they gathered against Moshe and Ahron" (Bamidbar 20:2)

It is surprising that after the people gathered against Moshe and Ahron and complained about the lack of water, they then started arguing with Moshe alone, without including Ahron, as the next verse continues: "The people quarreled with Moshe". What was the reason for this?

The Gaon Rabbi Eliyahu Chai Demari zt"l, in his sefer 'Petach Ha'smadar' brings the following answer:

Rashi writes that the Well, which was the source of water for the Bnei Yisrael during their forty years in the desert, was given to them in the merit of Miriam, as a reward for Miriam waiting by the water to see what would happen to Moshe Rabbeinu when he was put into the river as a baby.

This being the case, Miriam's merit had its source in Moshe Rabbeinu's merit and honor. When Miriam passed away and the well disappeared, Moshe Rabbeinu, who was the main reason behind the Well, was still with them and there was no reason why they should not have water and the Well be returned in his merit.

This was the people's complaint and why they directed it specifically towards Moshe and not Ahron. According to their calculation, Moshe, with his merit, had the power to return the Well to them, so that it could continue being a source of water for them.

Water from A Rock

"Then Moshe raised his arms and struck the rock with his staff twice" (Bamidbar 20:11)

Rabbi Chaim of Tshernovitz zt"l, the author of 'Be'er Mayim Chaim' brings the following wonderful intimation, taken from the word 'סלע' (rock):

If we spell out the names of the letters that make up the word 'סלע', we have three words: 'עין', 'למד', 'סמך'.

If we remove the first and last letters from each of these words, we are left with the letters מ-מ-י, which can be rearranged to spell 'מים' (water).

This is why Moshe hit the rock twice- he hit at the first and last letters, and then automatically he was left with the middle letters – 'mayim', and water started flowing. As the verse says: "and struck the rock with his staff twice; abundant water came forth"!

Height Is Meaningless

"Hashem said to Moshe, "Do not fear him, for into your hand have I given him, his entire people" (Bamidbar 21:34)

Originally Moshe was scared to fight with Og, King of Bashan. However, this was not a fear of Og being a giant, rather he was afraid that maybe the merit of Avraham Avinu will serve as a protection for Og. The 'Rabbeinu Bachaya' writes:

Hashem rewarded Og for the steps that he took when he went to tell Avraham that Lot his nephew had been captured. And when Moshe came to wage war with Og, Moshe was afraid of him. He said: I am a hundred and twenty years old and this one is more than five hundred years old; were he not in possession of some merit, he would not have remained alive all these years...

Hashem reassured Moshe: "Do not fear him, for into your hand have I given him" – kill him with your hands and do to him just as you did to Sichon. The Gemara tells us that Moshe Rabbeinu hit Og at his ankles and killed him – this is hinting to the fact that Moshe annulled Og's merit, which was a reward for the steps he took.

Treasures

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



The Morning Is an Indicator

"This is the decree of the Torah...a man who would die in a tent" (Bamidbar 19:2-14)

We must constantly remind ourselves of the holy words of Maran HaTzaddik, the Ba'al Shem Tov zya"a, who explained why unfortunately we sometimes see a great lack of yirat shamayim, even among people who sit and study Torah and we wonder- how can this be?

He clarified this phenomenon by stating that everything is dependent on the beginning of the day. Upon awakening in the morning, a person should immediately start his day with something spiritual. He should get up with alacrity to serve his Creator and say Modeh ani with great thought, thanking Hashem from the bottom of his heart for His amazing world and then run to the Beit Haknesset for the morning prayer. If he starts his day with mitzvot and good deeds, performed for Hashem's sake, the beginning of the day will set the tone for the entire day, and in this way fear of G-d will become ingrained in him. On the other hand, if a person takes his time getting up and all his thoughts are tied up with the fleeting pleasures of this world, and from his bed he stumbles straight into eating, drinking and other mundane matters, and only after all this does he remember about Hashem and think about going to pray, we will not see fear of G-d from someone like this. Since he started his day with his personal needs and material matters, the shechina will not rest within him.

This is how we can explain, "This is the decree of the Torah...a man who would die in a tent". A person's Torah is dependent on the beginning of the day, when he is asleep on his bed like a dead body in a tent. Once he awakens from that death, (מיתה) – death, can be interchanged with the word מיטה – bed), if he arises with vigor and alacrity to serve Hashem and looks at this way of life as the decree of the Torah which cannot be transgressed, he asks no questions and does not come up with any excuses, for example, "I'm so tired... I'm too weak...", but instead he always gets up with enthusiasm and joy to serve Hashem, this is the entire Torah, for the entire day is dependent on its beginning. There is no doubt that this kind of person will place Torah at the forefront of his interests during the rest of the day, with fear of G-d an integral part of him.

However, if he does not consider this way of life as inviolable, but rather his morning is a slow attempt at waking up and meeting his personal needs, the yetzer hara will create new excuses for him every day and this laziness will be to his disadvantage throughout the day, causing him to lose out spiritually; this is the root of his lack of yirat shamayim.



"LET HER BE PRAISED"

Portrayal of the True 'Eshet Chayil'

In memory of Rabbanit Mazal Madeleine Pinto

"Her hands she stretches out to the distaff, and her palms support the spindle"

Shifra and Pu'ah, the Women of Valor who played a major role in the formation of Am Yisrael during the melting pot of Egypt, were given these names as a reference to their roles. Rashi explains that Shifra was in fact Yocheved, and she was called Shifra because she would beautify the baby after it's birth ("משפּרת את"ן הולד"). Pu'ah was Miriam, and she was given this name because she would whisper and make cooing noises to the babies, ("פועה לילד" ו"מדברת והוגה לילד") just as a woman calms a crying baby.

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt"l points out that the midwives' main accomplishment was the fact that they saved the babies from death. However, despite this, they were named for seemingly insignificant things – beautifying the baby, cooing and calming it. It would seem more in place to give them names which are a reference to the heroic act of saving the babies lives, for which they risked their own lives and which demonstrates their yirat shamayim more than anything else. Why, if so, were they named for these secondary acts?

The following story will serve as an answer to this question:

The wife of the Gaon Rabbi Shlomo Heiman zt"l, was famous for the charitable deeds that she performed with the needy and disadvantaged. Marrying off orphans and providing for all their wedding needs, was where she outshone herself.

Rabbi Shlomo and his wife were once about to leave for a wedding of one of these orphans. Of course, the Rabbanit was the one who had lovingly taken charge of all the wedding preparations and provided for all her needs. While they were still at the doorway, Rabbi Shlomo turned to his wife and asked her, "Did you buy flowers for the kallah?" "No," answered the Rabbanit, "I considered this an 'extra' that I wasn't obliged to attend to. I took responsibility for every single thing that she needed, from furniture to clothes, including every detail of her trousseau and whatever she needed to set up her home", the Rabbanit explained, "why are the flowers so important?"

Rabbi Shlomo explained: "If her mother would still be alive and she would be the one marrying off her daughter, she certainly would have also bought her flowers. If so, even though you devotedly took care of all her needs, but G-d forbid that an orphan should feel that she is losing out on her wedding day because she doesn't have a mother. She needs to feel like all her friends – let's go and buy her flowers so that she should get married with a good feeling and feel equal to everyone else."

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus brings a mashal of a small baby, lying in a hospital bed. The tumult of doctors and nurses standing around and attending to the baby, are a clear demonstration of his precarious state of health. Suddenly, in the middle of the treatment, we observe one of the women stroking the

baby, smiling to him and trying calm him down. Without a doubt this woman is the mother of the baby, for despite the numerous staff doing all that they can to help the baby, the mother will always do that bit more. She will always reflect on what else she can do for the baby so that he will feel that bit better; she will think about all the little things, which may seem small and insignificant when faced with life and death, but this is the essence of a mother...

The Torah wishes to stress that the midwives' kindness was perfect. They did not just concern themselves with the babies lives, but they wanted them to have everything that the mother would be giving them, had it been she who was keeping them alive. Therefore, the Torah gives them names which are an expression of these deeds, which demonstrate the ultimate in kindness.

This, then, is the praise of the woman of valor, whose "hands she stretches out to the distaff". With the characteristic capacity of a compassionate mother, she raises and supports these Jewish children, the future generation, and with her own hands shapes and leaves an indelible imprint on these broken souls, whose childhood has been marked with the challenge of losing a parent and the subsequent instability and lack of a warm and supportive environment.

Why Did the Orphan Burst Out Crying?

Rabbi Yitzchak Yerucham Diskin zt"l, son of the Maharil zya"a, was famous as one of the Gaonim of Yerushalayim in the old yishuv. His name is also synonymous with his renowned institution 'Beit Hayetomim', (named after him), where he personally raised of hundreds of orphans who were left alone in the world.

A number of orphaned girls for whom he had not yet found suitable arrangements, stayed in his own home, where Rabbi Diskin's wife took care of all their needs with the utmost devotion.

Over some time, Rabbi Yitzchak Yerucham noticed that every time after the Rabbanit would bathe the girls, one of them would cry bitterly and they were unable to calm her. Rabbi Yitzchak Yerucham was concerned and asked his Rabbanit if it could be that perhaps a bit of soap entered her eyes and this was causing her to cry? She replied that she tries very hard to prevent this from happening.

Rabbi Yitzchak Yerucham approached the child and gently asked her, why are you crying?

At first she didn't cooperate but when the Rav did not give up, she felt uncomfortable maintaining her silence. Unable to control herself, she burst into tears and explained:

My mother a"h, unlike the Rabbanit, was not so protective of me when I bathed. But there is one thing that I miss terribly – when I was ready my mother a"h would kiss me on my head. It is this kiss that I long for, and this is why I am overcome every time I bathe...

"This episode," Rabbi Yitzchak Yerucham told over, "taught us the value of every small act that we perform for these precious orphaned children, and my wife who is totally dedicated to the children, performs her mission l'shem shamayim, in a way that leaves me inspired.