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Hilula

11 - Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer of St. Petersburg

12 - Rabbi Yosef Lavton

13 - Rabbi Zevulun Graz

14 - Rabbi Yosef Naftali Stern, Rosh Yeshiva of Pressburg

15 - Rabbi Avraham Ben Chassin, of the Meknes Sages

16 - Rabbi Yehuda Pinto, Son of Rabbi Chaim Pinto

17 - Rabbi Avraham Pinto, of the Saloniki and Tzefat Sages



The Advantage of Repentance and Hashem's love of His People

"When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you, at the end of days, you will return unto Hashem, your G-d, and hearken to His voice"

(Devarim 4:30)

Hashem seeks to love His people, the Chosen Nation, and since He knows that in the natural way, the conduct of strict judgement will prevent peace and love from residing between Him and His people, He is therefore Slow to Anger and covers our offenses. We know that a person is judged for every single moment in his life and when he arrives in the Heavenly Court, he will be shown everything that he did during his time in This World. This will not be a concise review of days and weeks, but a thorough and meticulous report of every single second in a person's life. Anyone who sins relying on the fact that Hashem readily makes concessions, is relinquishing his life since Hashem pays back those who transgress His word. But since Hashem desires a relationship of love and closeness with His people, He therefore does not punish His sons immediately after they sin, but He subdues His wrath and is Slow to Anger for perhaps the person will rectify his ways and repent for his sin.

If a person has a bleeding wound on his finger, simply binding the wound with a bandage is not enough to heal it. It only serves to conceal the wound, as in the concept of 'covering offenses'. Only if one applies different creams or healing remedies to the wound, will it truly heal and the skin will regain its original smoothness. So too, Hashem covers up His people's sins and disregards them temporarily, in the hope that they will repent their bad ways. In this situation where Hashem 'covers His eyes' from seeing Yisrael's sins, love can continue to reside between Hashem and Am Yisrael.

Anyone who wishes to repent can achieve this easily since the ways of repentance are well known and clear to all. Since this is the case, all that is required is a person's desire, and this will lead him to Hashem his G-d. My master and teacher, Hagaon Rabbi Shammai Zahn zt"l, once posed the following difficulty: We find that the Torah goes to great length concerning the command to designate cities of refuge, detailing their location and the need to repair, from time to time, the roads that lead to these towns. One must also ensure that appropriate signposts are showing the way to these cities of refuge, so that the murderer should not be held up on the way and place himself in danger from the avenger of his blood. On the other hand, we do not find that the Torah clarifies the location of and guides a person to the city of Yerushalayim, even though we are commanded to appear before Hashem in Yerushalayim three times a year. But even without this, Yerushalayim is the umbilicus of the world, the dwelling place of the

Beit Hamikdash, the place where Hashem's presence is most profound and the main source of purity. If so, why are we not commanded to affix signposts directing us to this Holy City, while we are warned repeatedly about the importance of signposts that lead to the cities of refuge? Can one say that the cities of refuge were of greater benefit than the Holy City of Yerushalayim? The Torah only hints to Yerushalayim's location, as it says, "Rather, only at the place that Hashem, our G-d, will choose from among all your tribes to place His Name there shall you seek out His Presence and come there".

The explanation could be that the Torah intentionally does not describe the location of Yerushalayim in order to teach all those who wish to draw closer and cleave to holiness, that they do not require exact instruction on how to achieve this since inside every Jew beats a wise heart that is capable of leading him to the holy and correct place. He cannot evade his obligation with the pretext that he is not aware of the location since as mentioned, Yerushalayim's holiness is felt all over and it draws with a strong pull all those who desire to come close to it. On the other hand, the Torah details the cities of refuge and warns Am Yisrael to ensure that the roads leading to these cities are always accessible, so as to prevent a further situation of murder.

Hashem tells His children that He desires their love and therefore He is Slow to Anger when they sin and does not rush to punish them. But if one sins repeatedly and does not repent, relying on the fact that Hashem readily makes concessions, or with the excuse that the way to repent is unclear, this intensifies Hashem's anger and He does not accept this excuse since the key to repentance is given over to man and he has the ability to return to Hashem his G-d whenever he wishes.

A wealthy person who owns many profitable businesses around the world, once came to see me. He wished to ask my advice regarding where to invest his money since he had several investment options and was not sure where to begin. I answered him that coming to ask my advice was simply a pretense since only someone familiar with the intricacies of commerce and investments can decide what is the most preferable and safest way of investing. I added that even if I would tell him to invest his money in a certain area, I am certain that in the end, he will do as he deems appropriate, relying on his own knowledge and talents to make the right decision.

Nobody knows better than himself as the sincerest way to return to Hashem. Chazal have told us (Makot 10b), "A person is led on the path that he wishes to take". Therefore, if a person is honest with Hashem and reveals his desire to draw closer to Him, then this desire will lead him closer to G-d.



Walking in their Ways

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

Joining Benefactor with Recipient

Once when I was in Paris, a woman approached me with her daughter's wedding invitation and bewailed her difficult financial situation. She did not have a cent for the wedding expenses and could not even afford to provide her daughter with the basic necessities with which to begin married life.

That day, I was scheduled to deliver a shiur to thousands of participants. I promised the woman that after the shiur, I would ask the crowd to each donate generously towards the mitzvah of helping a poor bride. However, when the shiur ended, it was G-d's will that I completely forget about my promise, and only after everyone had already left the hall did I remember, leaving me with a sense of anguish.

The woman, needless to say, was greatly disappointed and on the verge of despair. At that moment, I made up my mind to help her in any way possible. Resolutely, I turned to her and said, "Madame, have no fear. Hashem's salvation is in the blink of an eye. You will yet be rescued from your plight."

I had just finished talking, when who should pass by but an old student of mine. As is my practice, I asked how he was doing and he replied that everything was Baruch Hashem fine with him. Then he turned on his way. But something in his demeanor struck me. I called him back and asked if it was true that everything was fine. He was taken aback at my repeated queries. "Everything is one hundred per cent okay," he affirmed. But after taking a few steps, he returned to me. "Just now I received a call from home and they told me that a problem came up. The Rav's repeated questions have made me concerned and I don't know what to think." I told him he had nothing to fear and he can go home with peace of mind.

But he was not appeased and insisted that he perform a mitzvah immediately to bring merit to him and his household. When I heard this, I told him that he had the chance to perform a very important mitzvah, that of helping to marry off a poor bride. I warned him against letting this precious opportunity slip away.

From thought to deed. We immediately asked the woman how much she required to marry off her daughter and she specified the amount. The very next day, my student transferred his donation to the mother and I added my own donation to complete the sum. Baruch Hashem, the wedding took place on time, to the delight of all those involved.

The Haftarah

"Comfort, comfort My people" (Yeshaya 40)

The connection to Shabbat: This Haftarah is the first of the seven special 'Haftarot of Consolation' that are read beginning with the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av. They are taken from the Sefer Yeshaya and are called the 'Shiva Denechemta' (The Seven of Consolation).

Guard Your Tongue

I Did Not Do It

If something inappropriate was done and Reuven asks Shimon, "Who did this?", then even if Shimon feels that Reuven suspects him of being the guilty party, he is forbidden to reveal the true perpetrator, even if he witnessed him carrying out the act. Rather, he should only reply, "I did not do this".



In Our Father's Path

Who Determined the 'Pythagoras' Theorem'

"For it is your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of the peoples" (Devarim 4:6)

The extent of the Torah's wisdom is endless and comprises all of the wisdoms in the world. "Its measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea" (Iyov 11:9). The entire Torah is made up of Hashem's Names and is the source of the entire wisdom of the creation and nature. It includes everything and is the source of everything!

The Ramban, in his introduction to his commentary on the Torah, explains at length how the wisdom of the Torah is all-encompassing. All the powers of the creation were said and written in the Torah and are contained within its letters (otiyot), vowels (nekudot), hints (remezim), and crowns (tagim). It contains the knowledge of medicine, the astrological Zodiac signs, botany and everything within the natural world.

The great Sages of Am Yisrael throughout the generations had a profound knowledge of nature without ever studying any book written by the world's experts and intellectuals. From where did they glean this extensive knowledge of all the wisdoms, an expertise which amazed the learned non-Jewish professors? Only from studying the Torah, as the Giver of the Torah testified, "For it is your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of the peoples, who shall hear all these decrees and who shall say, 'Surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation!'"

In light of these principles, the Chazon Ish explains that the abundant wisdom with which Torah Sages are enlightened, stems from a pure source - studying the Holy Torah.

His own prominent and impressive medical and scientific knowledge was evident throughout all sections of the Shulchan Aruch. On the Mishna, "One who plants a vegetable in a vineyard" (Kelaim 5), he introduced his explanation by saying, "Those who have mathematical wisdom write...", and he went on to explain the well-known geometric proof named the 'Pythagoras' Theorem', without mentioning its name. He then points out and stresses that Chazal were familiar with all these ideas through Divine Inspiration.

The famous story related below reveals the scope of the Chazon Ish's knowledge of the anatomy of the human body and animals. Rabbi Dr. Moshe Rothschild zt"l, was the guardian of a famous piece of paper on which the Chazon Ish had sketched in his own hand an accurate diagram of the brain, showing the best way to operate on it. The story took place when a dangerously ill patient who suffered from a brain complication came to see Professor Ashkenazi, one of the most skilled neuro-surgeons in Eretz Yisrael. It was clear that he required brain surgery, but after examining the patient the professor declared determinedly, "I am not prepared to perform this operation. An operation in his condition means certain death!"

Not knowing how to proceed, the family went to ask advice from Maran the Chazon Ish. After hearing all the details of the illness and the doctor's opinion, the Chazon Ish took a piece of paper and sketched a picture of the brain and of the ideal way to operate, including the side of entry and exact spot. He asked that they present it to the doctor and tell him that if he operates according to these instructions, with G-d's help the operation will be successful.

Professor Ashkenazi looked at the picture and was amazed! How can it be that a Jew who had never studied medicine had succeeded in a situation where the most professional doctors had given up? He performed the operation exactly as the Chazon Ish instructed and with Hashem's help, it was successful.



Pearls of the Parsha

The Past and Future Meet in an Inn

"For a killer to flee there, who will have killed his fellow without knowledge" (Devarim 4:42)

Rabbi Shlomo Algazi zt"l points out that one should take note of the double expression in the verse: "a killer...who will have killed". Furthermore, why does the verse call him a 'murderer' before he has actually murdered, since the verse uses the term "who will have killed" in the future tense, implying that he has not yet murdered?

In his sefer 'Shema Shlomo', Rabbi Shlomo answers these difficulties by quoting the Gemarah (Makot 10b) on the verse, "But for one who had not lain in ambush and G-d had caused it to come to his hand" (Shemot 21:13). What is this verse referring to? It refers to two people who both killed another person. One of them killed unintentionally, while the other one killed purposely, and in both situations there were no witnesses. What does Hashem do (so that each should meet their fitting punishment even though there were no witnesses)? He causes them to meet up at the same inn. The intentional murderer is sitting under a ladder, while the one who killed unintentionally climbs down the ladder, falls on him and kills him.

The result is that the one who previously killed purposely now met his punishment and was killed, while the one who previously killed unintentionally now has to run to a city of refuge, for this time there were witnesses.

In light of this, we now understand the double expression "for a killer to flee there, who will have killed". The verse is referring to someone who already killed previously unintentionally, but no one witnessed the act. What is his rectification? Hashem will make him come to a certain inn in the future so that he should unintentionally kill someone who previously killed another human being intentionally. This is why the words "who will have killed" are written in the future tense, for it is only in the future (after his second unintentional killing which was witnessed) that he will be liable to exile, and in this way, his sin will be atoned for.

Who Can Assure

"Who can assure that this heart should remain theirs, to fear Me and observe all My commandments all the days" (Devarim 5:26)

The wording of the above verse is mystifying:

How is it possible for Hashem, the Omnipotent, to say "who can assure"? Is it feasible that Hashem is entreating, 'if only it would be so'? After all, strength and power are in His hands, 'and He alone made, makes, and will make everything'.

But, the Ramban explains, since Chazal have told us, 'all is in the hands of Heaven besides yirat shamayim' (Berachot 33b), it follows that this matter, as if, is not in Hashem's hands, rather it is given over to man. Therefore, Hashem, as if, begs us, Yisrael His dear nation, to fill our hearts with fear of Him.

The Ten Commandments Were Given Over in an Individual Manner

"I am Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 5:6)

The Ten Commandments, in their entirety, were given over in the singular form.

A most significant foundation lies in this observation. Every single Jew must tell himself that the Ten Commandments were given to him personally and he is obligated to fulfill them.

The Chozeh of Lublin adds that the singular expression used in the Ten Commandments is a message for each Jew: Even if the entire world turns away, G-d forbid, from the Torah path, you should remember that the Torah was given to you personally, and you may not follow them.

The Harmful Spirits Flee

"And write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates" (Devarim 6:9)

The mitzvah of mezuzah is well-known segulah for protecting the home from evil mishaps, destructive spiritual impediments, and harmful spirits.

The sefarim write that the word 'מזוזת', mezuzot, can be re-arranged to form two words, 'זז-מות'. Chazal say (Shabbat 32a) that for the sin of not placing a mezuzah on one's doorpost, one's children may die r"l, but one who is careful with mezuzah, 'זז מות', 'death moves away' from his home.

This is the reason, writes the 'Sha'ar Bat Rabim', for writing the Name 'ש-ד-י' on the outside of the mezuzah. 'ש-ד-י' is an acronym for 'שומר דלתות ישראל', 'He guards the doors of Yisrael'. When they see Hashem's Holy Name written on the outside of the mezuzah, all harmful spirits and impediments are subdued and flee from this doorway.

Treasures

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



Achieving Perfection in Avodat Hashem

"But Hashem became angry with me because of you, and He did not listen to me; Hashem said to me, "It is too much for you! Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter" (Devarim 3:26)

The Gemara (Sotah 14a) tells us that the only reason why Moshe Rabbeinu wished to enter Eretz Yisrael was so that he could fulfill the mitzvot dependent on the Land (certain mitzvot that can only be performed in Eretz Yisrael). The difficulty is, if Moshe so desperately wanted to enter the Holy Land for this reason, why did Hashem prevent him from doing so? Not only this, but Hashem also told him, "It is too much for you! Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter".

The Holy Zohar explains that Hashem told Moshe that he had already achieved perfection in fulfilling the Torah and mitzvot, therefore his entry to the Holy Land may blemish the perfection that he had merited, as in the concept of 'anyone who adds, subtracts'. Hashem who is aware of our thoughts and feelings, knew well that Moshe had already completed his work in This World and merited achieving perfection. Therefore, Hashem prevented him from entering the Land and even requested that he not continue praying about this matter, so as not to blemish in any way the perfection that he had already achieved.

We have no understanding and perception at all of why entering the Holy Land and fulfilling its particular mitzvot would blemish Moshe Rabbeinu's perfection, nevertheless we see to what extent Hashem desired Moshe's benefit. By anticipating what could happen to him, He prevented him from the start from entering the Land, and instead took him to the World that is entirely good.

Hashem, who is Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger and Abundant in Kindness, had only Moshe's benefit in mind, and since this was the case, He prevented him from entering the Land so as not to blemish his perfected state of Avodat Hashem. Whereas Moshe Rabbeinu, even though he had already achieved perfection, felt that he still had much work to accomplish in This World, therefore his soul longed to enter the Holy Land so as to fulfill the mitzvot that are dependent on it. This now clarifies the matter.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

The core of the first of the Ten Commandments is the mitzvah of belief in the Creator Yitbarach, and recognition of the fact that He is the One who took us out of Egypt, the house of bondage. Seemingly, it would be fitting to commence with the basic foundation with which Sefer Bereishit begins, namely that Hashem is the One who created the world and all that is in it. Since this is the basis of our faith in Hashem, why does the Torah only mention that Hashem took us out of Egypt? This is apparently only a one-off incident and not as fundamental as the creation of the world?

Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, in his sefer 'The Kuzari', explains that although it is correct that faith in the creation of the world is more basic and fundamental, recognition of the redemption from Egypt will instigate a greater strengthening of faith and affixing of it in man's heart, since the generation of the Wilderness actually experienced the redemption from Egypt and personally witnessed all its miracles.

In a different light, Rabbi Eliyahu Baruch Finkel zt"l, offers an alternative insight, based on a mashal from the Mechilta in Parshat Yitro, explaining why the Torah does not begin with the Ten Commandments:

"A man arrived in a country and asked its inhabitants, 'Shall I be your king?' They answered him, 'Did you bring us any benefit that you should rule over us?!' What did he do? He built a wall for them, provided them with water, and fought their wars. Again he asked them, 'Shall I be your king?' They answered, 'Yes, indeed'."

"So too," the Midrash concludes the mashal, "Hashem took Yisrael out of Egypt, split the sea for them, brought

them down the manna, provided them with the Well, blew them quail from the sea, and fought their battle with Amalek. Again he asked them, 'Shall I be your King?' They answered 'Yes, indeed!'"

This Midrash teaches us that the foundation for all mitzvot is the feeling of appreciation that we have towards Hashem for performing miracles on our behalf. This is also clear from the way the Torah answers the question of the wise son (Devarim 6:20), "What are the testimonies and the decrees and the ordinances that Hashem, our G-d, commanded you?" And we answer him, "You shall say to your child, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand... Hashem commanded us to perform all these decrees, to fear Hashem, our G-d'" (ibid 21-24).

So it follows that the first Commandment, besides the inherent command to believe in Hashem Yitbarach, is also the foundation for all the Torah commandments. This is the reason why the Torah mentions the redemption from Egypt, since as we explained it is the foundation and reason for fulfilling all the mitzvot.

The attribute of showing appreciation is one of the greatest qualities required of man. This insight is well-reflected in the Ten Plagues with which the Egyptians were smitten, when the first three plagues were carried out by Aharon the Kohen and not by Moshe Rabbeinu.

The Midrash asks, "Why was the River and dust of the land hit by Aharon? Rabbi Tanchum says, Hashem said to Moshe, the waters that protected you when you were placed in the River and the dust of the land that protected you from discovery when you killed the Egyptian, should not be smitten by you, therefore they were smitten by Aharon".

Rabbi Meir Rubman zt"l writes in his sefer 'Zichron Meir' that this teaches us a novel concept in showing appreciation. The common understanding is that expressing appreciation is a form of remuneration to the one who did you a favor. However, water and dust are inanimate objects who did not intend to bring

benefit to Moshe Rabbeinu, and they similarly could also not object to Moshe Rabbeinu's actions. Besides, since they have no feelings, they would not feel humiliated and insulted if Moshe Rabbeinu were to smite them. All this demonstrates that the matter of showing appreciation is beneficial for our soul, it is necessary for our own self-perfection and is not only something that the one who assists deserves. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to show appreciation to the element of assistance, no matter whether it is an animal, a form of growth or plant, or even an inanimate object. And even though it cannot differentiate between good and bad and did not intend to provide one with any benefit, the very fact that one benefitted from a particular cause is enough of an obligation to feel appreciation towards the source of that benefit.

Do Not Open a Gemach!

How are we supposed to relate to the important insight of living with a constant feeling of appreciation towards our Creator? The following story will enlighten us. The 'Netivot Shalom' of Slonim zt"l, had a disciple who was delivered from a great misfortune that he experienced. With tremendous feelings of hakarat hatov to the Creator of the World, he contemplated opening a 'gemach' (free-loan service) for the public, thinking that benefitting others will be his way of 'repaying' Hashem's kindness to him.

The disciple went to the 'Netivot Shalom', wishing to ask his advice on how to go about establishing the Gemach. To his great surprise, the Admor told him: "If you want to take my advice, do not establish a gemach and do not do anything else either!" The disciple was most surprised, but the Admor explained his reaction: "It is better for you to retain the feeling for the rest of your days, that you are indebted to the Master of the World. Establishing a gemach will 'exempt you' and you will cease feeling appreciation to Hashem for the great kindness that He performed for you."