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Paris • Orh 'Haïm Ve Moché

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

Jérusalem • Pninei David

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

Ashdod • Orh 'Haïm Ve Moshe

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

Ra'anana • Kol 'Haïm

Rehov Ha'ahouza 98 • Ra'anana • Israël
Tel: +972 98 828 078 • +972 58 792 9003
kolhaim@hpinto.org.il



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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

Torah and Yirat Shamayim Achieved Through Contemplation

"Now, O Israel, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d"

(Devarim 10:12)

Moshe Rabbeinu tells the people that Hashem is not asking of them something considerable, rather an easy task, Yirat Shamayim. It appears from Moshe's words that Yirat Shamayim is something easy to attain. But this is surprising, for we well know how hard it is to achieve the virtue of Yirat Shamayim.

I would like to explain the idea in the following way. Yirat Shamayim is indeed not hard to acquire, it is only the hindrances that disturb our Avodat Hashem that make it difficult for us to acquire this trait. The greatest hindrance is when a person is unable to differentiate between good and bad, between straight and crooked, therefore he cannot achieve Yirat Shamayim. For when one does not cleave to Torah alone, but also enjoys and is enthusiastic about the futilities of this world, then the power of Torah does not have an influence on this person and does not afford the feelings of Yirat Shamayim that one requires for the war against the Evil Inclination.

My illustrious ancestor, Rabbi Yeshayahu Pinto zya"l, based the name of all his sefarim on the word 'kesef' (silver/money), for example 'Kesef Nivchar', 'Kesef Mezuak'. When he was asked why he chose these names, he answered that he wished to impart an important principle for success in Torah. Every person has a leaning towards and a love for silver and gold. Even if one possesses much wealth, he is still not satisfied and continually seeks strategies and suggestions to increase his assets. However, to be successful in Torah a person is obligated from the start to know and understand the precious value of the Torah, and then take all the leanings and love that he has for this world, including all the effort that he would put forth to acquire more wealth, and turn all his heart's desires towards Torah alone, until he can apply to himself the verse, "My soul yearns, indeed it pines, for the courtyards of Hashem" (Tehillim 84:30). The word 'בנספה', yearns, is derived from the term 'כסף', money, implying that a person must direct all the leaning he has towards money, to Hashem and His Torah. Only when a person understands the precious value of the Torah, can he then be successful in Torah. Only when he understands deep in his heart that he must give up

all the pleasures and futilities of life so as to acquire Torah, will he then merit Torah, as Chazal explain (see Berachot 63b), "Torah is only sustained in one who kills himself over it".

I once had reason to visit one of the higher floors of a multi-storied building, and on contemplation, I realized that the higher I climbed, the cleaner the building was. The ground floor was very dirty, the first floor less so, and so forth. The reason is that all occupants of the building pass through the ground floor, even those who occupy the second and third floor, while only those who occupy the upper floors are the ones to use those floors. That is why the higher stories are cleaner.

This taught me a great lesson. The more a person is connected to materialism and physical matters, the more sullied he is, while the more a person elevates himself and detaches himself from the futilities and pleasures of this world, the cleaner he is. It is most important for man to realize that there is no value to the impermanence of the world, and anything that this world offers, including all its pleasures, were only given to serve the one who is a servant of Hashem Yitbarach. They have no intrinsic value of their own. Only through contemplating this idea can one acquire Torah and Yirat Shamayim.

David Hamelech tells us (Tehillim 8:4), "When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars that You have set in place". This implies that man must contemplate and consider every matter, even the smallest and simplest, and derive a lesson from it, for personal growth and elevation is achieved mainly through the power of contemplation. When a person does not contemplate his ways, he spiritual growth is stunted, as it says (ibid 82:5), "They do not know nor do they understand, they walk in darkness". In the absence of contemplation, a person can G-d forbid fall from the level that he has achieved in one small moment. In addition, if one does not abhor the futilities of this world, one cannot grow and elevate oneself, and one can never achieve the true purpose, Yirat Shamayim, which is a result of Torah study and constant contemplation of Hashem's deeds.

This is the reward that man receives when he lives a life of contemplation and does not live like an animal. Rather, if he abhors worldly pleasures then he merits cleaving to Torah and acquiring Yirat Shamayim.



Walking in their Ways

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

Faith Pays Off

I was once asked to help a particular Rabbi raise funds for his institutions. I arranged an appeal and Hashem shined His favor on me. Within one day, I managed to amass a respectable amount of money. All that was left for me to do was wait for this Rabbi to come and collect the money.

A short time before the Rabbi was supposed to arrive, I received a phone call from a wealthy man. He asked that I bless him with deliverance from the troubles that he was experiencing. In order to have a basis for my blessing, I asked that he make a donation to the tzedakah organization of the aforementioned Rabbi. The man was only too pleased to agree and said that he would bring over the money the following Tuesday. He would give it to me after participating in the weekly shiur that I deliver in the Beit Haknesset.

That Tuesday, another Rabbi appeared in the synagogue. He was a humble tzaddik who had also come to raise money. When he succeeded in raising the sum of three hundred euro, his joy knew no bounds. The wealthy man with whom I had spoken the week before, assumed that this Rabbi was the one I had referred to in our phone conversation, therefore he hurried over to him and handed him the generous sum of one thousand euro.

"Honored Rav," he then told me, "I transferred the money directly to the Rabbi, exactly as you advised me."

I was most surprised since the Rabbi I had mentioned was nowhere in sight. "Where did you see him?" I asked.

"Right here, in the Beit Haknesset," he answered.

I then understood his mistake. "You gave your donation to a different Rabbi, not the one that I had in mind," I explained, "but this is obviously from Hashem."

I thought to myself that the Rabbi who received the wealthy man's donation had imagined he would raise only several hundred euro, but in the end he merited leaving with the considerable sum of one thousand three hundred euro! It must certainly have been his faith in Hashem that caused him to be so successful, way beyond his expectations.

The Haftarah

"Zion said" (Yeshayahu 49)

The connection to Shabbat: This Haftarah is the second of the seven special 'Haftarot of Comfort' that are read starting with the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av. They are chapters of comfort for the Bnei Yisrael, aside from sections of faith in Hashem and His Torah.

Guard Your Tongue

Even Though He Did Not Sin

The Sefer Chassidim writes (siman 22): "If one finds oneself with a group of men, one of whom commits something inappropriate but the identity of the perpetrator is unknown, one must say, 'I was the one who did this', even though he did not sin. This shows the responsibility of one Jew to another.



In Our Father's Path

The Preacher from Prague

A central theme that repeats itself many times in the Torah, is the power of hearing and listening, meaning inclining one's ear to hear words of rebuke and mussar. This Parsha too begins with the words "This shall be the reward when you hearken". This implies that everything is dependent on the power of hearing and internalizing what we are told.

Regarding the giving over of rebuke and mussar to others, Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim of Bavel zya"a (the Ben Ish Chai) relates the following story: An Ashkenazi, European Rav once came to Bagdad. The people asked him, 'Whom do we have the honor of meeting?' to which he replied, 'I am the preacher from Prague'. Since the townspeople had never met the preacher, they believed him, accorded him great honor and asked him to enlighten the townspeople with his words.

Several merchants who had come to this town were also present at his address. One of them, who was familiar with the preacher from Prague, immediately realized that he was not the person he was pretending to be. He turned to him and asked, "Why do you call yourself 'the preacher from Prague'?"

The speaker answered: "The word 'מוכיח', preacher, is not only derived from the term 'תוכחה', rebuke, but also from the term 'הוכחה', proof. I have evidence of the correct way to conduct oneself in this world. I used to be a wealthy man and travelled around the entire world. I even travelled to far-off America, which involves a long and dangerous journey lasting three months on the open sea, exposed to pirates and terrifying storms. I observed all the pleasures that the entire world has to offer and all the different wealthy people from one end of the world to the other. I personally met people who were happy and contented, yet they suddenly fell terribly ill. What kind of lives do they have? Neither home nor family could help them in this situation.

And I myself used to own fifteen vineyards that brought in a yearly profit of millions. I had twenty fields of crops that provided me with such and such, thirty thousand sheep and a hundred cows with whose milk I could support a dozen large families. I possessed a hundred stores and twenty ships, hard cash in the bank and ready money in my pocket, besides several stock bonds in the government.

All of a sudden, my wealth took a downward turn and eventually disappeared. I have nothing, I am a destitute man who goes around begging for donations. I don't even have enough for one meal; I am as naked as the day I was born.

Look at me, I am a walking lesson that wealth cannot be relied upon! Our riches are compared to a fine strand of hair and the entire universe on which we tread is likened to a broken shard and fleeting dream! The wheel goes round and in just one moment Hashem "humbles the haughty and lifts the lowly"!

These are not mere empty words; I can show you 'receipts' for all that I am telling you. This being the case, am I not fitting to hold the title 'the preacher of Prague?!' I hail from the town of Prague and my townspeople were all shocked at what happened to me and took this lesson to heart. This is why I call myself 'the preacher from Prague'!"...

The Ben Ish Chai appreciated his sincere and correct assertions and even recorded them in his sefer 'Od Yosef Chai'. For one who rebukes others, must first tell himself those very things!



Pearls of the Parsha

One Must Study Torah in Order to Live

"You shall teach them to your children to discuss them" (Devarim 11:19)

A father, whose son studied in the Chafetz Chaim's Yeshiva in Radin, came to the Chafetz Chaim and told him that in his opinion, his son has spent enough time studying Torah and he wishes to ask for permission, and a blessing, for his son to begin assisting him in his business.

"Why should he stop his Torah studies?" asked the Chafetz Chaim.

"What should I tell you, Rebbi," the father replied, "as far as I see it, he will never be the second Rabbi Akiva Eiger. So at least he should assist me with my livelihood."

"What is your profession?" asked the Chafetz Chaim.

"I am a greengrocer in the local market and it is hard work."

"I am surprised at you," the Chafetz Chaim responded. "Why do you work so hard? After all, you'll never be the second Rothschild. So why bother!"

"What do you mean?!" the father objected. "One must work in order to live!"

"Indeed you are right, and one must also study Torah in order to live!" was the tzaddik vehement reply.

Blessings from the Master of Blessings

"You will be blessed above all other peoples" (Devarim 7:14)

Rabbi Maimon Abu of Mostaganem poses the following question in his sefer 'Bnei Reuven'. Since Hashem Himself blesses Yisrael, as it says (ibid 13) "He will love you, bless you and multiply you", what is the meaning of the blessing in the following verse, "You will be blessed above all other peoples", literally meaning 'You will be blessed by all the peoples'.

He answers by quoting the Midrash on the verse "They blessed Rivka and said to her, 'Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads'" (Bereishit 24:60). "Rabbi Berachye and Rabbi Levi in the name of Rav Chama bar Chanina said, why was Rivka not remembered until Yitzchak prayed for her? So that the idol-worshippers should not say, 'our blessing bore fruit'. Only once "Yitzchak entreated opposite his wife, because she was barren" then "Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him, and his wife Rivka conceived" (Bereishit 25:21-22).

This answers the above question. Here too, so that the nations should not

say 'our prayers bore fruit', it will be necessary for Hashem to make sure their blessings are not fulfilled, as with Rivka. Yet since Hashem wants us to be blessed, He therefore preceded their blessing with His own blessing, as the verse says "He will... bless you". Since this is the case, even if the Jewish people are blessed by the nations, as it says "You will be blessed by all the peoples", they do not have to be concerned since they have already been blessed by Hashem. The nations too will not be able to say 'our prayers bore fruit' since their blessing was preceded by Hashem's blessing to His people.

Eretz Yisrael's Presence Throughout the World

"In order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the Land that Hashem has sworn to your forefathers to give them" (Devarim 11:21)

Rabbi Yochanan was told that there were extremely old people living in Bavel. Rabbi Yochanan was surprised, since was the promise of long life not said only concerning Eretz Yisrael, as it says, "In order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the Land that Hashem has sworn to your forefathers"? But when he heard that they attend the Batei Knessiot and Batei Midrashot morning and evening, he was placated (Berachot 8a).

This seems surprising. Since Rabbi Yochanan thought that it was only possible to merit long life in Eretz Yisrael, why was he appeased when he heard that they pray morning and evening in the Batei Knessiot? Does the verse not say explicitly that life is only prolonged in the Land?

Rabbi Yosef Adas zt"l explains that the 'Shevet Mussar' tells us that when the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, Hashem dispersed its stones throughout the world, and wherever one of these stones fell, a Beit Knesset was built on that spot. That is why our Batei Knessiot are called a "Mikdash Me'at", a small Beit Hamikdash.

So since the Babylonians prayed morning and evening in their Batei Knessiot, the place where Hashem dispersed the stones of the Beit Hamikdash, these places were considered like Eretz Yisrael itself.

Also, since the Gemara tells us that in the future the Batei Knessiot and Batei Midrashot of Bavel will be re-established in Eretz Yisrael, they are therefore considered like Eretz Yisrael, and this is why Rabbi Yochanan was appeased when hearing these words.

Treasures

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



Man is the Ruler of his Thoughts

"Now, O Israel, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d"

(Devarim 10:12)

On the words "only to fear", Rashi expounds, "Our Sages learnt from here that everything is in the hands of Heaven besides Yirat Shamayim."

Moshe told Bnei Yisrael that everything Hashem asks of them is dependent on Yirat Shamayim, and by having Yirat Shamayim they will be able to achieve all other attributes. The Gemara asks on this (Berachot 33b), "Is Yirat Shamayim something small and easy to achieve?" From the way Moshe addresses the people, it seems that Yirat Shamayim is something simple that is easy to acquire. How can this be said about Yirat Shamayim when Chazal have already told us 'all is in the hands of Heaven besides Yirat Shamayim'?

The Gemara answers that for Moshe Rabbeinu, Yirat Shamayim was indeed a small and easy matter, therefore he used this expression when talking to Bnei Yisrael.

The Holy Ba'al Shem Tov said that there are many people whose outside appearance confirms that they observe the Torah and mitzvot, but if we look a little bit deeper into their actions we will see that they are lacking Yirat Shamayim and everything they do is simply a matter of habit devoid of Yirat Shamayim. The Ba'al Shem Tov adds that this reality is a result of those people not giving preference to Hashem Yitbarach, therefore their faith is lacking and this causes a lack in their Yirat Shamayim.

When a person gets up in the morning and his head is occupied with his personal, materialistic affairs, these thoughts accompany him throughout the day and therefore he is too troubled to concern himself with Hashem's will. On the other hand, when a person awakens in the morning and announces loudly, "I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King", his first thoughts that were given over completely to Hashem, continue accompanying him throughout the day. It therefore follows that all his deeds will be carried out with Yirat Shamayim and with the desire to achieve a higher wisdom.

Everything is dependent on the matter to which we give precedence, to that with which we start our day. Each person must ask himself if his day begins with his personal desires and other materialistic matters, or by mentioning Hashem's Name in gratitude, for returning his soul with great mercy. This is why Chazal said (Berachot 33b), 'Everything is in the hands of Heaven besides Yirat Shamayim'. This is true because it is the person alone who decides where to focus his thoughts on awakening since it is he alone who has control over his thoughts.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

There is a story told about a straightforward Jewish simpleton who posed the following question to his Rav:

"Rabbi, I have a passionate yearning to become a 'ben Olam Haba', to merit Eternal life, but I am an Am Ha'aretz (unlearned) and I do not know how to go about achieving this. I am unable to set aside fixed times for Torah study. Show me the Torah way of life in short!"

"Listen to me well and engrave this in your memory," the Rav replied. "Imagine to yourself that there is only one mitzvah to accomplish, that you are the only Jew in the world, and you are required to fulfill mitzvot today only!"

On hearing these words, the simpleton was very happy. If this is the case, it is simple indeed! He quickly left the Rav's home but the Rav called after him:

"Wait, don't rush away. I wish to explain my words!"

But the simpleton kept on walking quickly and called over his shoulder: "There is nothing to explain, Rabbi! I am not stupid in the least. I understood your words well!"

The man hurried to his store where he sold remnants of material. An elderly Jew entered, chose a piece of material and paid.

He accidentally paid three diners instead of two.

The seller noticed but let the buyer leave without saying anything.

Afternoon approached. The man locked his store and went home to eat.

"You can wash your hands," his wife said. "I am ready to serve the food."

"You can bring the food right away," her husband replied. "We no longer need to wash our hands before partaking of bread!"

The woman was astounded and looked at him questioningly.

"This morning I went to see the Rav, and he ruled that I am only obligated to fulfill one mitzvah. Since I already put on Tefillin today and I also prayed, this is more than enough for today. And tomorrow I will even

be exempt from this. The Rav said that I only need to fulfill mitzvot today!"

His wife's mouth hung open in astonishment. She had not yet collected herself when someone knocked on the door.

An elderly man entered. "I bought a piece of material in your store," he said, "and I just realized that I paid three diners instead of two."

"You are right," answered the store owner calmly, "but what of it? Today I spoke to the Rav and he instructed me to imagine that I am the only Jew in the world. If so, I consider you as a non-Jew and one is not obligated to correct a non-Jew's mistake"...

Now it was the elderly man's turn to stare at him in shock, while the wife began screaming.

"Help! My husband has lost his mind!" The elderly man too began to scream and the husband fled from his home.

He stood in the street and said to himself, "One minute, they are actually right. Who would not be stupefied on hearing these words? One Jew, one mitzvah, one day?! All that happened to me is the Rav's fault. He was the one who instructed me to behave in this strange manner! And with determined steps he turned to the Rav's home to demand an explanation.

The Rav took one look at his face and nodded, "You returned, after all," he said, "I did ask you to come back and allow me to explain my intentions."

Before he had a chance to reply, the man's wife burst into the Rav's home: "Help us, Rabbi, my husband has gone crazy!"

The Rav calmed her down and then the elderly Jew appeared, breathing hard. He had come to ask the Rav to bring the store owner to a din Torah...

The Rav addressed them all. "Listen carefully. It is true that I told him these three instructions, but now let me explain.

The first thing I said was that you should imagine that there is only one mitzvah to fulfill. This was my intention: We have been commanded with six hundred and thirteen mitzvot so the lazy person tells himself, this mitzvah that came my way, I can let it pass. If I do not fulfill this particular mitzvah, I will fulfill a different mitzvah in its place. And even if he decides to fulfill that mitzvah, he says to himself, what's the rush, it won't run away.

He is sitting with a sefer and permits himself to dream. It is true that there is

a mitzvah of Torah study, but it won't run away. I can learn a bit later instead.

A poor man comes and asks for a donation but the wealthy man shrugs his shoulders. He has plenty of money, but maybe he will donate to the next poor person who comes knocking on his door...

This is why I told you not to start making calculations when it comes to mitzvot. You should imagine that there is only this mitzvah in front of you, and nothing else. Only this Torah study, only this prayer, only this mitzvah that came your way.

I also told you to imagine that you are the only Jew in the world. Why?

Because when one is asked to donate for a certain cause, each person excuses himself by saying, why was I approached? There are other people besides me. And so the poor man is pushed away from one to another and remains destitute.

When it is time to attend one's Torah shiur, each person says to himself, 'why should I leave my house tonight when it is pouring with rain? There will still be many participants even if I don't attend'. In the meantime, the shiur is scarcely attended.

The same idea lies behind thinking that one has today only to fulfill the mitzvot. In this way, you will not push off the mitzvot for a different day, which will cause you to push them off completely."

This delightful mashal, says the Maggid Rabbi Ya'akov Galinsky zt"l, is a demonstration of the verse in this week's Parsha, "The entire commandment that I command you today you shall observe to perform" (Devarim 8:1). This verse requires clarification. Since all Bnei Yisrael were being warned about all the Torah commandments, why is it written in the singular ("the entire commandment") and why is it addressed to the individual ("that I command you"), yet ends in the plural ("you shall observe")?

The wording of the verse is a message for each one of us. We should consider each mitzvah as if it is the only one, "the entire commandment"! Similarly, a person should imagine that he is the only one in the world, "that I command you", and he should focus on today alone, "today". This attitude will endow one with the ability to fulfill all the mitzvot!