

Ki Tavo

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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 'Haim 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



The Way to Merit Hashem's Blessing

"And these shall stand for the curse on Mount Eval: Reuven, Gad, Asher, Zevulun, Dan, and Naftali"

(Devarim 27:13)

The Holy Ohr HaChaim zya"l writes that when Bnei Yisrael heard the ninety-eight curses that were said on Mount Eval, they were filled with great fright over their future. They approached Moshe and asked him what would be with them. Moshe replied, "The fact that you continue living and existing despite time after time rebelling against Hashem's word, clearly shows that you will never be lost from the world, since 'the Eternal One of Israel does not lie' (Shmuel I, 15:29)". The difficulty is, what motivated Bnei Yisrael to ask this question at the moment of being told about the outcome of the blessings and curses which this week's Parsha enumerates? Seemingly, this question should have bothered them previously after hearing the curses that were stated in Parshat Bechukotai.

The Holy Ohr HaChaim answers that there is a great difference between one who is given a personal curse and one who is cursed as part of a congregation. When an individual is cursed, he feels that the curse is powerfully effective and significant, whereas if it is a public curse, each person feels that the curse does not apply to him personally, rather it is a collective trouble. In Parshat Ki Tavo when Moshe relayed the blessings and curses, he spoke of curses that may befall each and every individual, and that is why they felt great fear. However, since the curses said in Parshat Bechukotai were general curses, Bnei Yisrael did not then feel this great fear.

There is a further difficulty. Why did Moshe calm Bnei Yisrael and remove their fear of the curses that may befall the individual? It would seem more in place for Moshe to encourage Bnei Yisrael's fear and show them that indeed they must be fearful of following the path of evil which results in a great curse. Since we indeed find that the curses came to fruition one by one, Bnei Yisrael's fear was justified. So why did Moshe see fit to diminish their fear?

It is possible to explain that Moshe Rabbeinu was not trying to remove Bnei Yisrael's fear, he only wished to comfort them by telling them that it is possible to repent and achieve atonement. When a person repents for his bad deeds, Hashem who is Merciful accepts his repentance and removes His anger. The curses number ninety-eight which is the numerical value of the word 'גן', arrow. This implies that if Bnei Yisrael repent, Hashem takes the curses and shoots them as arrows onto the nations. Similarly, ninety-eight is also the numerical value of the word 'נלול', forgive, meaning that since Hashem is the One Who Forgives and Pardons, He annuls the curses from having an effect

on Bnei Yisrael through the power of His forgiveness. But it is clear that in order for Hashem to forgive Bnei Yisrael and bear their sin, they must repent sincerely. It is only through their repentance that they can annul the curses from affecting them and even transform them into something positive.

The great tzaddik Rabbi Betzalel Rakow zt"l, Rav of Gateshead, England, asks the following question in his sefer 'Mishkan Betzalel'. In Parshat Ki Tavo Bnei Yisrael were told that when they arrive at Mount Eval, they should build a Mizbeach for Hashem and bring upon on it offerings to Hashem, amid great joy, as it says, "It shall be that when you cross the Jordan, you shall erect these stones, of which I command you today, on Mount Eval...There you shall build an altar for Hashem... You shall slaughter peace-offerings and eat there, and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 27:47). Seemingly, how was it possible for them to offer sacrifices of joy on Mount Eval, the mountain on which the curses were said? It would seem more appropriate to bring their offerings on Mount Gerizim, the mountain on which the blessings were given?

One can answer that Bnei Yisrael brought offerings of joy on Mount Eval because they knew that the curses are dependent on a condition. If they repent, Hashem will atone for their bad deeds and avert the curses from them. They brought offerings of joy on Mount Eval for the very knowledge that the power of their repentance can prevent the curses!

According to this, one can say the goal of the curses was to quieten the Attribute of Justice that demands that Bnei Yisrael be punished since each Jewish person is deemed responsible for the other (see Shavuot 39a). Ninety-eight curses were written in the Torah to show the Attribute of Justice that if Bnei Yisrael do bad in Hashem's eyes, there is a Judge and Justice and they are liable to be punished for their sins. But vis-à-vis ourselves this is not a curse, for if we repent appropriately for our sins, the curse that we deserve is transformed into a blessing.

Furthermore, since Bnei Yisrael are responsible for each other, there can be a reality where a person is smitten on behalf of his friend. Hashem in His great mercy portions out the knocks into small measures so that in this way the one struck is spared the full force of the punishment. Instead of one person being punished with one difficult and painful punishment, all Am Yisrael are punished for him, but the punishment is hardly felt since it is divided up among all of them.

We must take this lesson to heart so that we merit standing before Hashem in judgement worthy and meritorious, and then only goodness, blessings and kindness will pursue us all the days of our lives, Amen.



Walking in their Ways

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

The Required Caution when Relating Information

I was once involved in an incident that taught me a great lesson.

I heard about a certain man who desecrated the Shabbat in public. When the man's family approached me, I expressed my displeasure that this relative desecrated the Shabbat. A nephew, seeing how much this matter disturbed me, decided to take matters into his own hands. He went to the Shabbat offender and told him that I was angry with him.

The Shabbat desecrator then called me and said, "If the Rabbi is so angry with me, I am not interested in the Rabbi anymore." He threw off his kippah and totally abandoned every last vestige of Judaism. I tried to calm him down and told him that I am not angry with him, it just pains me greatly that he is not particular about Shabbat observance.

Some time passed and I happened to speak to this nephew who had told his relative that I was angry with him. I asked him why he decided to say things to his uncle in my name. He answered that he had good intentions and thought it would be an effective way of getting him to repent.

However, he was most distraught that his words had been of no benefit, and had even caused damage to his uncle who had decided to throw off his kippah. I told him "The Torah forbids us to recount things said by someone else, even if these words are true, besides words of Torah when it is a mitzvah to say over the source. Now we have both clearly seen how much damage this kind of speech can cause."

This story taught me a great lesson about the extent to which one must be careful concerning every word that we utter. For even though the nephew had good intentions, it could be that he added some of his own words to my words, or maybe told them over in a bit of a forceful and insulting way, therefore it would have been preferable had he kept quiet.

The Torah warns us (Vayikra 19:17), "You shall reprove your fellow and do not bear a sin because of him". This means that a person must rebuke his friend personally and not behind his back. For if he rebukes him behind his back, he may stumble with the prohibition of ineffective rebuke. This teaches us the value and importance of man's speech and the extent to which man must guard his words and take care not to transgress any forms of forbidden speech.

The Haftarah

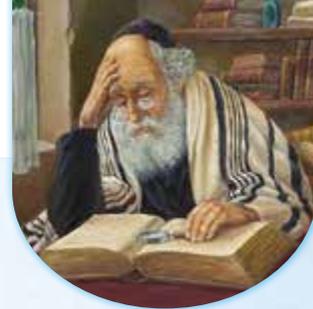
"Arise! Shine!" (Yeshaya 60)

The connection to Shabbat: This Haftarah is the sixth of the seven special 'Haftarot of Consolation' that are read starting with the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av. They are chapters of consolation for the Jewish people.

Guard Your Tongue

If Levi told Reuven something negative about Shimon, and Reuven goes and relates this to Shimon (Reuven thereby transgresses the prohibition of rechi-lut), Shimon is forbidden to confront Levi saying, "Why did you speak about me?" for Shimon is thereby slandering Reuven.

Even if Shimon does not mention that it was Reuven who divulged this information to him, if Levi will understand this by himself, Shimon is forbidden to mention the matter to Levi.



In Our Father's Path

Would We Ask the Household Help to Take a Break?

In the height of the days of Elul, when we are all occupied with repentance and preparing ourselves for the Day of Judgement, the day on which when we will be written and inscribed for a life of goodness and peace, it is worthwhile for us to keep in mind the penetrating words of the Vilna Gaon, brought in the introduction to his sefer 'Even Shlomo': All Avodat Hashem is dependent on perfecting one's middot, which are like the clothing for the mitzvot and principles of the Torah, and all sins are rooted in bad middot. The main reason for a person's existence is so that he should continually strengthen himself in breaking and molding his middot, and if he does not do so, why does he deserve to live?!"

Maran Hagaon Rabbi Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz zt"l, in his sefer 'Imrei Da'at', imparts a lesson culled from his years of experience in the area of chinuch:

"I am telling you, from established evidence and tens of years of experience, that the true foundation of a person, how he determines his future and sets himself up for life, is not ascertained by his talents or other things, rather it is only his middot that determine how he will live his life! If a person has good middot, then he has a promising future. And if, G-d forbid, his middot are not up to par, then he is far from achieving anything. He might give a different impression, but in reality, he is very far from any true qualities."

Rabbi Michel concludes with an amazing statement: "This is what we heard about and saw in all the Gedolim of our time, and in all the famous leaders of the previous generation too. Their core foundation was good middot!"

Hagaon Rabbi Michal Zilber shlita, testifies about the conduct of his master, Maran Hagaon Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky zt"l. He witnessed the special treatment which Harav Abramsky accorded his household help.

Every so often he would call her over in the middle of her work and tell her to rest for a bit. He also told her that in general, it would make him happy if she would work slowly and with ease, rather than exhausting herself by working quickly. This was his wish, even though working slowly meant that he had to pay her extra since she was paid by the hour.

This considerate conduct with which Harav Abramsky treated his domestic help, certainly enhanced her view of a Torah way of life, as she witnessed its pleasant ways. This approach of treating each person with equal honor, no matter their status, is what brings peace and harmony to the world.

When the Alter of Slabodka, Maran Hagaon Rabbi Natan Tzvi Finkel zt"l, was once asked how he would define his main occupation in life, he replied with a deep and concise sentence: "I tried to educate my talmidim that they must be 'klug un gut', (wise and good)!"

The Alter of Slabodka based the main educational message that he instilled in his talmidim, on the need to acquire wisdom and good-heartedness. The combination of these two qualities enables one to do good to others!



Pearls of the Parsha

If the Poor Benefits, the Intention is of No Difference

"Gaze down from Your holy abode, from the heavens" (Devarim 26:15)

Chazal tell us, "Every time the Torah uses the expression 'gaze down', it has a negative connotation, apart from 'Gaze down from Your holy abode', since the great power of giving gifts to the poor transforms the Attribute of Anger to Mercy."

The holy Rabbi Yisrael of Czortkow zya"א interprets the Chazal in the following homiletic way:

"Every... 'gaze down'", means if Heaven gazes down and examine the worthiness of our deeds, "it has a negative connotation", our deeds will always be found lacking and faulty, "besides giving gifts to the poor", for in this case even if our intentions are not proper, it is still beneficial, for the poor is being supported by him...

The Holy Ba'al Shem Tov zya"א also writes that even though Torah study and Avodat Hashem must be done for Heaven's sake and with the desired intent, nevertheless one can be less strict with acts of kindness, for at the end of the day the other person benefits from these acts of kindness, and it does not make a difference to him if his benefactor intended for the sake of heaven or not.

The Nations will be Afraid to Purchase Yisrael as Slaves

"And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as slaves and maidservants, but there will be no buyer" (Devarim 28:68)

This verse seems surprising. How can it be that there will be no buyers?

The explanation lies in a different difficulty, brought by Rabbi Rachamim Churi of Djerba in his sefer 'Kiryat Arba', on the verse "Thereupon, King Achashverosh exclaimed and said to Queen Esther, 'Who is this? Where is the one who dared to do so?'" (Esther 7:5). How can it be that Achashverosh forgot that he had told Haman, "The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with as you see fit" (ibid 3:12)?

One can reconcile this according to an explanation from the Chida, who writes in his sefer 'Devarim Achadim' (112:2), that if one sells Yisrael for the sake of killing them, the one who sells is liable to death by Heaven, but if one sells Yisrael as servants and maidservants, then it is the buyer who is liable to death by Heaven. Therefore, when Achashverosh now heard that Haman had bought the Jewish people from him in order

to kill them, this implies that Haman's desire was that the seller (Achashverosh) should die, and then Haman will take his place as king. This is what Esther was telling the king, "For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain and to be exterminated. Had we been sold as slaves and maidservants, I would have kept quiet" (ibid 7:4). Had Haman bought the Jewish people only as slaves and maidservants, I would have kept quiet since the law is that the buyer (Haman) will die, but since his intention was to buy the Jewish people and kill them, this means that the seller will die.

This explanation helps us understand our original question. "And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as slaves and maidservants" because you were sold for slavery, therefore "there will be no buyer", for in this case the buyer is the one liable and will be punished with death.

Taking Care to Honor One Who Honored You

"You have seen everything that Hashem did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land" (Devarim 29:1)

Moshe Rabbeinu rebuked Am Yisrael for being ungrateful to Hashem, for after witnessing all the miracles and wonders that He performed for them in Mitzrayim and the redemption from the bondage, Am Yisrael later said, "Let us appoint a leader and let us return to Egypt!" (Bamidbar 14:4). In addition, they said, "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge" (ibid 11:5) and other complaints. Chazal tell us (Baba Kama 92b), "Do not throw stones into a well from which you drunk". The Meiri writes that even though it is appropriate not to disgrace anyone in the world, nevertheless it is fitting to be even more careful and not to degrade someone who honored you or did you a favor. Even if one just contemplates degrading him, he is already considered as loathsome. Due to the importance of this matter, we find that the first three plagues in Mitzrayim were carried out specifically by Aharon since Moshe did not want to repay bad even to an inanimate object, namely the Nile and the sand which had protected him earlier. One who is ungrateful to man will eventually come to deny all the good that Hashem does for us.

Rabbi Chaim Palagi zt"ל, in his sefer 'Tochachot Chaim', points out that this should teach us to give praise and thanks to Hashem for all the good that He bestowed on us, and we should not be ungrateful by doubting Hashem's ways.

Treasures

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



The Mitzvah of Bikkurim Teaches us to Remember the Creator's Goodness

I would like to explain the lesson that lies behind the mitzvah of bikkurim (the Jew's gift of his first fruits to the Kohen). As we go about our everyday life, we generally do not stop to contemplate all the great kindnesses that Hashem performs for us throughout the day. Hashem is the Power behind each breath that we take, the constant rhythm of our heartbeat, and our brain functioning. He is the One who gifts us with family, children, food and drink, with great abundance and compassion. Yet we ignore all this goodness and take it for granted, as if we are deserving.

To what can this be compared? To a person who finds himself in the desert, desperately thirsty and longing for a drop of water. If someone appears and offers him a reviving gulp of water, he will be eternally grateful to him. Yet we allow ourselves to forget about the Creator of the World, Who gives us water in abundance, much more than we require, every hour of the day.

This is why we were given the mitzvah of bikkurim. A Jew takes the small fruit with which Hashem Yitbarach blessed him and troubles himself to travel to the far-off Beit Hamikdash in Yerushalayim. Along the way, he contemplates why Hashem made him go to this trouble, and he will then recognize the extent of Hashem's kindness that He bestowed on him by giving him this fruit. This will lead him to remember all the good that Hashem performed for him throughout his life.

It follows that this person eventually arrives at the Beit Hamikdash with his heart filled to the brim with feelings of gratitude to Hashem. He presents the fruit to the Kohen with his entire heart and soul, together with a powerful feeling of gratitude. And when Hashem sees this person's hakarat hatov, He is filled with joy. This is why the verse uses the expression "It will be (when you enter the Land)" since the Hebrew word for "it will be" (וְהָיָה) always denotes joy. Because it is necessary to go through this process of contemplation, a person is required to bring specifically the fruit and not its value in money.

When bringing fruit as bikkurim, the person must pray with self-effacement before the Altar and mention the kindness that Hashem did with our forefathers by saving them from poverty. The prayer includes a particular reference to Ya'akov who was pursued by Lavan who wanted to impoverish him and later annihilate him. The merit of Ya'akov Avinu's prayer to Hashem to save him from the deceitful Lavan, is what stood for him and his descendants. His descendant now comes to publicly thank the Creator of the World for all the goodness that He bestowed on him, and for fulfilling His promise to the Avot to give his children the Holy Land

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



The Torah makes it clear that the ninety-eight curses written in this Parsha will come about, G-d forbid, due to of a lack of joy in Avodat Hashem, as it says, *"Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart"* (Devarim 28:47).

The Sfat Emet explains that the Torah points out the reason for our exile so that we should be aware of it and know what to improve and how to rectify our sins, and then this rectification will be the reason for the redemption. If the reason for our exile was a lack of joy when performing mitzvot, then if the Jewish people prove that they serve Hashem with joy despite the exile and terrible suffering that we experience, and since a positive attribute is always more powerful than the attribute of punishment, this will certainly be the cause of our physical and spiritual redemption. When a Jew, who is the son of the King of Kings, is about to serve his Creator and fulfill His mitzvot, he must feel just like the individual who is prepared to pay a huge sum of money for the merit of a once in a lifetime opportunity of having his picture taken together with the President of America. When this longed-for moment arrives, his joy reaches a climax.

If at that opportunity the President asks him for a favor, he will feel doubly proud. Do you understand the significance of the President turning to me personally?

If so, all the more so when Hashem Yitbarach turns to us and asks us to put on Tefillin, sit in the Succah, observe Shabbat, and keep all the mitzvot, how much joy this should bring us! The heart of each Jew should overflow with happiness when he merits performing a mitzvah and reciting the blessing "Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us..."

The sefer 'Aleinu Leshabe'ach' brings a story that took place many years ago in a new neighborhood that was constructed in Yerushalayim. Although many of the residents had already moved into their new homes, the infrastructure for the local telephone exchange had not yet been laid down, meaning that all the homes in that neighborhood had no means of telecommunication. Only one person who had previously lived in a nearby area and was connected to a different switchboard, had the luxury of having a phone in his home.

Since in those days' cellphones were non-existent, the natural outcome was that many residents knocked on this person's door asking to use his phone. The requests grew from day to day, particularly on Erev Shabbat, and gave him no rest.

The next stage was that the residents' relatives began calling his home, asking him to go and find 'so and so' and tell them that they have a phone call. The situation soon became hard to tolerate.

Any other person would have long ago put a stop to this 'service' for the residents, closed the door and hung up a conspicuous notice, worded to the effect that 'it is no longer possible to make calls from this house'.

But the person we are talking about was a Talmid Chacham and G-d-fearing Jew, and since after all his home was the only one in the entire area that had a working phone, a large share of the phone calls that the residents placed involved serious matters of life and death. The owner therefore felt a great responsibility to the public and did not want to shut his house to the callers.

On the other hand, his trouble and suffering only grew from day to day, for the people who came to use his phone were not always considerate of rest times. They turned up at his door both in the middle of the afternoon and late at night, and regarded the family's private phone as public property...

He decided to approach one of the Gedolim in Yerushalayim and ask him for advice. This was the Gadol's answer:

"If, before every phone call that a

stranger makes from your home, you would receive a phone call from the President of America, which in your language since you are a Talmid Chacham, would be that you receive a phone call from one of the Gedolim asking you to allow this person to use your phone, would you not delight in fulfilling his request?!"

"If so," the Gadol continued, "how much more so must you rejoice in knowing that Hashem, the King of Kings, whose Greatness is incomparably superior to all the American and European Leaders together, is the One asking you to perform this kindness with His children. By permitting them to use your phone you are fulfilling His will. And this is not all," the Gadol added, "for we have not yet taken into account the reward that one receives for each mitzvah.

Think for a moment. If you would be told that for every phone call you will receive one thousand dollars, each knock on the door would cause you to rejoice as if you had just stumbled upon a great treasure. Even more than this, you would sit and wait and hope that more people will turn up. The late hour would be of no concern to you, nor would you be distressed by someone disturbing your afternoon rest, since with every phone call you earn another thousand dollars. Ten notes of one hundred dollars are enough to cancel out any feelings of trouble and hardship that you and your family suffer as a result."

"Am I not correct?" concluded the Gadol. And the man could only nod his head in agreement.

If this is the case, all the more should this be true since we are talking about a mitzvah whose reward is infinite! Especially since it is a mitzvah that is hard for you to fulfil because it involves hardship, how great is the reward that awaits you for each phone call!

And so it is with each mitzvah opportunity that comes our way. Even if it involves a certain amount of hardship and bother, if one stops for a moment and contemplates the reward that awaits him, in one moment the entire matter will be transformed into the simplest of tasks!