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Hilula

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14 - Rabbi Avraham Elimelech hy"d,
Admor of Karlin-Stolin

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Hakatan zya"a

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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"a



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

A Spiritual Building Must Rest on Firm Foundations

"And he trusted in Hashem, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Bereishit 15:6)

Avraham Avinu's a"n entire way of life serves as a living mussar sefer for us. Just as faith in Hashem was implanted in his heart already from his early years, and from when he was a young child he loved Hashem Yitbarach and served Him with self-sacrifice, so too every person must learn from his ways and follow in his footsteps. If he does so, he too will merit the blessing that was given to Avraham, as the Midrash says (Tanchuma Lech Lecha 11) on the words "Fear not, Avram, I am a shield for you": "Not on you alone but also for your children, if they engage in My Torah just as you engaged in it, I will be for them as a shield as it says (Shmuel II, 22:31), 'The promise of Hashem is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him'".

We will now study Avraham Avinu's a"n holy ways in some small measure. We can see the degree of love that Avraham had for his Creator by the Chazal that tells us (Tanchuma 4), "Rabbi Chanina said, he was three years old when he recognized his Creator as it says (Bereishit 26:5), 'Because (בְּקָטָה) Avraham obeyed My voice'. The word 'בְּקָטָה', 'because', has a numerical value of one hundred and seventy-two. Since Avraham Avinu lived for one hundred and seventy-five years, we conclude from this that he was three years old when he recognized his Creator."

As we know, during those three years Avraham Avinu engaged in investigating and examining his understanding of who created and directs the world. At first, he supposed that the sun was the master of the world, but once the sun set he understood that it could not be the master. After that, he innocently thought that the moon must be the director, but when dawn broke, the moon disappeared and the sun took its place, shining brightly in the sky. Then Avraham understood that the moon too could not be the director of the world. And so it went on, Avraham observed and examined until at three years old he came to the conclusion that there is a Master of the World and it is impossible for the sun, the moon, or the stars to fill this role. At that point, the Master of the World appeared to him and announced, "I am the Master of the World."

I was wondering if Avraham Avinu received reward from Hashem for those three years in which he investigated and searched to discover the Master of the World. For during that time, he did not actually serve the Creator but only searched for Him, therefore it is questionable whether he was deserving of reward for this. According to the Midrash that we quoted above, Avraham Avinu a"n served Hashem for only one hundred and seventy-two (בְּקָטָה) years, so in what way did Hashem consider those three years in which he searched for Him?

With siyata dishmaya, I would like to suggest the following answer. To illustrate, when a person stands facing a massively tall building which rises skyward, does he see its foundations?! Of course not. But without a doubt, this enormous building stands on strong, firm foundations which are concealed deep in the ground, and it is these very foundations which allow the building to remain in position.

So it was with Avraham Avinu a"n. Those three years in which he inquired, investigated and searched for the Creator of the World, constituted the basis and foundation for the rest of the one hundred and seventy-two years of his life, in which he served Hashem with self-sacrifice and sublime strength. During those three years, Avraham Avinu a"n implanted firm foundations deep in his soul to know and recognize the truth, and when he found that Truth, he immediately made a firm decision and was determined that this is the correct path and there is no other way. These strong foundations are what implanted in him an immense power to remain strong and not lose heart when facing all the wicked people of his generation, such as Nimrod and his cronies.

In contrast, if we consider the life of Lot, Avraham's nephew, it seems on the surface that he followed Avraham's path and learnt from him to observe Torah and mitzvot. As an example, Lot's hospitality was exemplary, to the extent of self-sacrifice. He risked his life to host the angels who came to his home in Sodom, and also was particular to eat matzot and not chametz on Pesach. However, all his deeds were insincere and hypocritical, lacking foundations and roots.

Lot did not see Avraham Avinu's way as a definite path that has no other alternative. Rather, with his distorted intellect, he came to the erroneous conclusion that there could be another way, the way of lawlessness, abandonment and corruption through the temptations of This World. This is why his faith in Hashem and his mitzvah observance were no more than an unsteady building established on unstable foundations. When this is the case, in a moment of challenge the entire building obviously falls to the ground. That is why Lot stumbled and fell spiritually until he befriended the people of Sodom and Amorah and learnt from their ways. To what is Lot compared? To a tree that does not have many roots, when the wind comes it uproots it. That is why Lot degenerated and became sinful, and Hashem despised him to the extent that He did not wish to speak to Avraham as long as Lot was in the vicinity. This, in fact, is the abysmal difference between Avraham Avinu a"n and Lot, considered by some as a rasha.

Avraham Avinu followed the path of life, walking in the way of Torah and mitzvot and cleaving to faith in Hashem. With his utmost strength, he strove to sanctify Hashem's Name in the world, among the rest of mankind.



Walking in their Ways

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

Lucrative Investments

I know of a wealthy man who owns tremendous amounts of property. He has bank accounts in Switzerland and other countries. I do not know if he himself is aware of how wealthy he is. However, he behaves like a pauper in every respect. He dresses in regular clothes, lives in an apartment building like ordinary people, and eats simple foods.

One day, my curiosity got the better of me. I asked him, "Why do you live like a poor man? You are already seventy. You never married and do not have children who will continue your name. You know that the banks will take all your money after you pass away. Why do you live so eccentrically? Don't you at least want to enjoy your hard-earned money, before the government seizes it for themselves?"

The man was quiet, so I went on. I suggested that at least he should fund the writing of a Sefer Torah, which would stand in his merit.

"How much does a Sefer Torah cost?" he inquired.

"Two hundred thousand francs," I replied.

"Two hundred thousand francs? That's an astronomical sum!" He had no intention of parting with such a considerable amount of money. I personally did not think it would make a dent in his bank account.

"Isn't it a shame that the banks will have a field day with your millions after you die? Don't you see that although you are loaded, you are really very poor, because you are not concerned with funding yourself for your future!"

"What a shame, my dear brother! None of your wealth will accompany you when you come to the World Above. It will all remain in This World. To your dismay, you will then realize how many merits you could have acquired with your vast assets, and arrived in the Next World rich in merits and mitzvot."

And with that, I left my penetrating words to seep into his Jewish heart.

The Haftarah

"Why do you say, O Ya'akov" (Yeshaya 40:41)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about Avraham's battle with the four kings, as it says "Who inspired [the one] from the east, at whose [every] footstep righteousness attended? [Who] delivered nations to him, and subdued kings [before him]?" This battle is described in the Parsha.

Guard Your Tongue

Laxity in Mitzvah Observance

It is forbidden to relate that someone is lax in observing certain mitzvot. Therefore, it is forbidden to say that someone dedicates only a small amount of time to Torah study or that he does not try to do good to others.

This applies even if both the one relating and the one listening do not spend much time studying Torah themselves or are not known for their generosity to others, and they admit this without any embarrassment. Since the Holy Torah considers Torah study and acts of kindness as foremost priorities, it is forbidden to say that someone else is lax in these areas.



In Our Father's Path

Why Should You Kiss My Hand?!

"I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse" (Bereishit 12:3)

Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar zya"a, in his sefer 'Ohr Hachaim', asks the following remarkable question:

Why does the verse change its terminology and in reference to those who bless it says, "I will bless those who bless you", implying that Hashem's blessing to them precedes their blessing to Avraham, while in reference to cursing, the person's curse precedes Hashem's curse, as it says, "the one who curses you I will curse"? This implies that Hashem will curse them only after they curse Avraham. Should it not say 'I will curse him who curses you', the term used for those who bless?

But, explains the Holy Ohr Hachaim, the reason for the change is that Hashem intentionally wished to precede His blessing to those who bless Avraham, so as to give validity to their blessing and allow it to have an effect. This is why it says, "I will bless those who bless you". Before others bless Avraham, Hashem blesses the words of their mouths so that they should have an effect and be fulfilled.

The Gaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of 'Ohr Hachaim', relates the following personal story:

More than forty years ago I used to give a lecture in a neighborhood in Yerushalayim. I was then a young man and could easily have been a grandson of the elderly participants...

On one occasion when we completed a masechta, I invited the Yerushalmi darshan, the Gaon Rabbi Shalom Schwadron zt"l, with whom I had a close relationship, to share words of Torah and inspiration. The Beit Haknesset was crowded and the Rav was extremely happy that so many people had come to participate in the siyum of the masechet. He addressed the participants and after the shiur some of the participants came over to me, wishing to kiss my hand. I immediately pulled my hand away and said to them, why do I deserve this?!

Rabbi Shalom Schwadron zt"l noticed and did not hide his displeasure.

"What are you doing?" he asked me. "Does it not say, 'Do not withhold good from its rightful recipients' (Mishlei 3:27). Why if so, are you preventing yourself from being blessed? Are you not aware of what the Holy Ohr Hachaim writes in Parshat Lech Lecha on the words "I will bless those who bless you"? When a person is asked to give a blessing, Hashem first blesses him so that his blessing should have an effect. And concerning pride? What is there to feel proud about? Your brethren wish to receive a blessing, do not withhold it from them!"



Pearls of the Parsha

Personal Lesson in Torah and Acts of Kindness

"But Malchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was a priest of G-d, the Most High" (Bereishit 14:18)

The Sefer 'Marganita d'Rabbi Meir' offers a wonderful explanation of this verse, according to the account of Rabbeinu Meir of Parmishlan zt"l who once met up with the tzaddik Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l. Rabbi Meir zt"l told him that the intention of this verse is to teach us that when two tzaddikim meet, each one must learn from his fellow what he himself lacks.

This is how the tzaddik explained the verse: "But Malchizedek", this refers to Shem who was the Minister of Torah, "brought out" (learnt) from Avraham the attribute of "bread and wine", referring to Avraham's attribute of hospitality.

And "he", referring to Avraham Avinu a"h, absorbed from Shem the attribute of "priest of G-d", of studying Torah day and night, for this was Shem's quality.

Why Did Pharaoh Wish to Take Sarah?

"Why did you not tell me that she is your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?" (Bereishit 12:18-19)

To be precise, Pharaoh's main claim against Avraham was "Why did you not tell me that she is your wife?" So why did he continue to assert, "Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?" a statement that seemingly does not add or detract to the claim.

Rabbi Avraham Brudo zt"l of Istanbul, in the sefer 'Birkat Avraham', reconciles this difficulty in light of the Gemarah (Baba Batra 110a) that says: "Rava said, one who weds a woman should examine her brothers, as it says, "Aharon took Elisheva daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon, as a wife" (Shemot 6:23). What do we understand from the words 'daughter of Aminadav', do I not know that she was the sister of Nachshon? What is the verse coming to teach us by saying, 'sister of Nachshon'? From here we learn that one who marries a woman must check her brothers. We learnt in the Mishna, most children are similar to the mother's brothers."

In light of the above, it could be that Pharaoh had two claims:

Firstly, "Why did you not tell me that she is your wife?" because due to this I almost transgressed the prohibition of taking a married woman. Furthermore, since you said, "She is my sister", this was another reason that tempted me to take her for a wife so that the children born to me will be similar to you!

Magen David or Magen Avraham?

"Fear not, Avram, I am a shield for you" (Bereishit 15:1)

We are all familiar with the famous symbol of 'Magen David', a symbol with six points. The question is, why is it called 'Magen David' and not 'Magen Avraham'? Was it not Avraham to whom Hashem said, "I am a shield (magen) for you"?

The 'Kovetz Hama'asef' offers a wonderful explanation:

The Gemarah (Sanhedrin 95a) tells us that Yishvi brother of Goliath wished to kill David in revenge for killing his brother. The Satan brought it about that David arrived in the land of the Philistines and when Yishvi saw him, he bound him and placed him under the beams of the winepress. But when he pressed down the heavy beams, a miracle occurred for David and the ground under him became soft and so he sunk into it.

Later on, it says that Yishvi threw David to heaven and inserted his spear in the ground so that David would fall down onto it. At that moment Avishai son of Tzeruyah came, pronounced the Holy Name, and suspended David between heaven and earth. In this way, he saved him from Yishvi.

Concerning Avraham Avinu, we find that Hashem protected him in the way that a king protects his warriors, from the four directions that surround them, north, south, east and west.

However, Hashem protected David Hamelech Hashem from six directions. From the four directions as in all battles, and additionally from above and below. From above, when the heavy beams of the winepress almost crushed him, and from below, when he almost fell down and would have been pierced by Yishvi's spear.

The symbol is called 'Magen David' since David was protected from six directions, as depicted in the symbol!

Treasures

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



Raise Your Eyes on High and See Who Created These [Things]!

"And said to him, 'I am E'I Sha"ddai; walk before Me and be perfect" (Bereishit 17:1)

The Gemarah tells us (Makot 24a), "Chabakuk came and established Am Yisrael on one foundation: 'But the righteous person shall live through his faith'". This is the entire foundation of man, perfect faith, without reservations, in the Creator of the World.

In truth, belief in Hashem, the G-d of Israel, does not require considerable depth and understanding. It is sufficient to merely see and contemplate the wonderful creation that Hashem formed and irresistibly the exclamation, "How great are Your works, Hashem, You make them all with wisdom" erupts from our mouths. If a person contemplates his amazing bodily systems and the manner in which all his limbs and sinews function, he will certainly be utterly overwhelmed and understand that there is a Master Creator. This contemplation will bring him to an immediate belief in Hashem, with his entire heart, and it will strengthen his faith.

When I merited visiting Maran Harav Shacha zt"l, the Rav told me, "If a person would only reflect on his body when he awakens in the morning, how he is able to open his eyes, move his hands and legs, communicate using the power of speech with which he was endowed, faith in Hashem will immediately fill his heart"...

This is what Hashem commanded Avraham Avinu a"h (Bereishit 17:1), "walk before Me and be perfect". Perfect faith without investigations and inquiries. For one who tries to achieve faith in Hashem through investigating, questioning and querying, can lose everything. This is because the Satan never rests and will never cease trying to make man stumble, so even when all his questions have been settled, the Yetzer will uncover new questions and claims. Until eventually he will abandon Torah and mitzvot with the claim that he was not able to resolve all his difficult questions, and so he may even die in that state of his wickedness.

To what can this be compared? To a gravely ill person whose doctor prescribes medications to heal his illness. But in his foolishness he says, "As long as I do not understand how the medications work I cannot agree to take them"... Sooner or later he will obviously die from his illness. On the other hand, a wise person trusts his doctor and believes him that these are the most suitable medications for him, and does not try to research what they are and how they function.

This is exactly the manner of one who possesses perfect faith. If a person tries to investigate and declares that as long as Hashem's existence is not perfectly clear to him, he is not interested in observing the mitzvot, he will die in that state of wickedness and cut himself off from the land of the living. On the other hand, one who believes with complete, simple faith in the Eternal G-d and has a clear recognition that the Creator of the World is the One who directs every step of his way in life and is the One who assists him, he merits peace of mind in This World and tranquility in the World to Come. This is the reward of one who merits cleaving to faith in Hashem.

Lineage of the Pinto Family



The ancestry of this illustrious family, which produced generations of great Torah scholars, righteous and devout men, who possessed true awe of Hashem, has its roots in the ancient Jewish kehilla in the city of 'Pinto', in Spain.

According to several versions, the ancestry of the Pinto family can be traced back to Rav Sherira Gaon, who lived in the times of the Geonim and was the Rosh Yeshiva of Pumbedita and the Rosh Hagolah of Ariel. He returned the glory of Torah to its former magnificence, reestablishing its grandeur among Am Yisrael.

In 1492 (5252), the era of Spanish Jewry came to an abrupt end, due to the devastation of the Expulsion. The resulting persecutions and torturous murders were felt by all the Jews in Spain, leaving them with no option but to leave behind their high positions, their professions and all their wealth and emigrate to nearby countries. They emigrated to Morocco, Syria, Portugal, Turkey, Holland, and other European countries. The Pinto family were among those who left Spain.

Originally, the Pinto family name was 'De Pinto', and some of the family members who emigrated to Holland, appear in the records as the De Pinto family. The shortened family name was adopted mainly by those family members who emigrated to Western countries, in order to prevent confrontations and friction with their Gentile neighbors who did not look kindly at the addition of 'De' to those they hated, and so their name remained as their city of origin was called, Pinto.

Many stories have been written about the wondrous tzaddik, the holy mekubal, Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol, zya"á. Some of them appear in the well-known sefer Shevach Chaim, which was written in Arabic by Harav Makhlufl Mazal Tarim, zt"l. It was recently translated to Hebrew by Rabbi David Cohen, shlita, a student of Moreinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlita.

Harav Makhlufl Mazal Tarim quotes the words of the Holy Zohar in the foreword to this sefer:

It is incumbent upon every person to always be conscious that he is in Hashem's Presence and publicize the miracles that Hashem does because such words ascend on High and all the Heavenly Hosts gather and thank Hashem for these wonders. Consequently, the Shechinah of Hashem resides upon them Above and below.

Recalling the Kindnesses of our Patriarchs

In honor of the hilula of the holy tzaddik, Maran Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto zya"á, we offer a selection of the wondrous ways of the tzaddik, miracles which he performed during his lifetime and miracles that we experience still today, in his merit. We enjoy the merit of basking in the radiance of his grandson who continues the illustrious legacy of the Pinto family, Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlita, who arouses the merit of his ancestors to hasten salvation and relief for those who reach the fringes of his holy cloak and wish for deliverance in times of trouble and hardship.

As believing Jews, zechuat avot is a tradition which we grasp strongly, as we beseech in our prayers and mention the merit of our Forefathers before the One who dwells on High, "Who recalls the kindnesses of the Patriarchs and brings a Redeemer to their children's children, for His Name's sake, with love". The following story, related in the sefer Shenot Chaim, illustrates our outlook on zechut avot.

The great tzaddik, Rabbi Yosef Benvenisti, zt"l, from the holy city of Yerushalayim, scion of the gaon who authored the sefer Kneset HaGedolah, traveled to Morocco several times as a messenger of the Kollel HaSefaradim in Yerushalayim, to collect money from the Jews of Morocco.

While in Morocco, he was careful to pray each day at the grave of Rabbi Chaim Hagadol. Moreover, when he returned to Yerushalayim, every month, he would send a letter to his grandson who lived in Morocco with a sum of money, asking him to pray for his welfare at the grave of Rabbi Chaim Pinto. He continued to do so until the end of his life.

Once, several Yerushalmi people asked Rabbi Yosef why he troubled himself so much to honor the memory of Rabbi Chaim Pinto. What was the reason for his behavior?

Rabbi Yosef answered, "One who possesses zechut avot appreciates its enormous value. Since I have zechut avot, I recognize its great worth. This is why I send money as a pidyon so that people should pray for me by the grave of Rabbi Chaim Pinto".

You Are Still Young

The tzaddik and mekubal Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan, son of the well-known tzaddik Rabbi Hadan, was born in 1865 (5625), in the city of Mogador. Already at a young age, he dedicated himself to Torah study and Avodat Hashem, which was his sole aspiration and joy. He became known as an outstanding gaon, well versed in all the Rishonim and Acharonim. He was likened to "a cemented cistern that loses not a drop."

Rabbi Chaim labored diligently to draw from the Torah of the Rishonim and clarify

the Torah of the Acharonim, in order to understand the practical application of the halachah. He rejected all worldly vanities and sat in the halls of Torah. With great effort and diligence, he learned Shas and Poskim and was fluent in all areas of the Torah. In addition, he devoted a substantial amount of time, despite his tight learning schedule, to doing acts of charity and kindness, as will be described below.

An interesting testimony was given by R' Ishua, the attendant of Rabbi Chaim Hakatan, about the daily schedule of the tzaddik. This is what he said:

I would go to his house early in the morning and already find him praying in the Beit Hakeneset, on the top floor. After praying, Rabbi Chaim went downstairs to his wife and asked her what she planned to cook that day. He would give her a sum of money to purchase the necessary provisions and then immediately went on his way, going from house to house to collect money to distribute to the poor people of the city.

His feet literally led him to the houses of the sick, poor, and needy. He shopped for them himself and then brought them whatever they required.

In this manner, the tzaddik would walk for hours, going from one end of the city to the other, to practice kindness and charity. This was his custom in his young years, and he continued doing so until old age.

At night, the tzaddik would engage in tikunim and the study of the holy Torah. "Who may ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who may stand in the place of His sanctity? One with clean hands and a pure heart."

Rabbi Chaim's extraordinary efforts to assist the poor and needy made him popular among the people. They sensed that all his actions were entirely for the sake of Heaven. Whoever searched for the tzaddik knew that he would be found among the poor and wretched people. He would spend time talking to them, offering words of encouragement so that they would not become depressed, but continue serving Hashem joyously.

In Prayer

When describing Rabbi Chaim's zya"á productive life, it is fitting to devote a section to his heartfelt prayers.

Every detail of how he prayed is worthy of a thorough review since all his prayers and blessings were said with intense concentration, as one who counts precious jewels, with pleasure and precision. This exemplified the statement, "All my limbs will say, Hashem, who is like You?"

It was not surprising that Rabbi Chaim merited that his pure prayers penetrated the Heavens and bore fruit, and his blessings came true, one by one. The many stories

of miracles effected by his prayers, recounted by the subjects of the incidents, attest to this.

The words of Chazal were fulfilled through him: "A tzaddik decrees and Hashem fulfills his wish."

Through all his prayers and supplications, for the general public as well as for the individual, he would beg for mercy in the merit of the saintly Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, zy"a.

Rabbi Chaim would often refer to himself as "the lowly servant of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai." He would utter this frequently, and it was often heard by many of his close relatives, whether he was in the middle of learning the secrets of the Zohar Hakadosh or supplicating Hashem.

Customary Fast

Rabbi Chaim Hakatan customarily fasted from Motza'ei Shabbat Kodesh until the following Erev Shabbat. He neither ate bread nor drank water.

Every Erev Shabbat, his wife, the Rabbanit, a"h, would prepare for him some hot soup with meatballs for the Friday night meal, in order to revive his soul and strengthen his weakened body for the service of Hashem.

On this matter, we recall the amazing account of Rabbi Moshe Benisti, principal of a school in Nice, France, which he heard from his mother, Mrs. Chanina, tichyeh, and told over to Moreinu v'Rabbeinu shlita.

Take the Soup Away!

Once, the Rabbanit went to the butcher to buy meat, as usual, for the Friday night meal. That day, the butcher deviated from his regular habit and gave her meat which was kosher but not chalak (glatt), as she generally bought each week.

The Rabbanit, who was not aware of the change, brought the meat home and prepared the soup and meatballs for the Rav as usual in honor of Shabbat, to revive the tzaddik's spirit after fasting the whole week. When the Rabbanit placed the plate of soup on the table, Rabbi Chaim suddenly called to her, "Take the soup away! It is prohibited to eat from it; it contains worms..."

The Rabbanit glanced at the soup and saw that it was clear, with no worms. She innocently assumed that the Rav did not like her soup and just mentioned the worms as a joke. The Rabbanit went to the kitchen and brought her husband the second course, the meatballs.

The Rav again called out to her, declaring that worms were crawling in his plate. "Do you want to feed me food that is prohibited? The Torah states that whoever eats worms transgresses five prohibitions. Why then did you serve me meatballs with live worms crawling in them?"

Rabbi Chaim took the whole pot of soup with the meatballs and threw it in the garbage. Consequently, after a week of fasting, he ate only bread and water for his meal, without tasting the meat at all.

Immediately upon the conclusion of Shabbat, the Rabbanit hurried to the butcher and inquired about the meat that she had bought from him. Where did it come from, and who was the shochet?

The butcher explained that the shochet was a G-d fearing Jew; however, the meat that she had bought that week had not been chalak, as she usually bought. It was considered just kosher since there was a question of sircha (adhesion) concerning the animal's lungs, which rendered it kosher, but not chalak, glatt.

Then the Rabbanit understood that Hashem had prevented her husband from eating meat whose kashrut was questionable. This story illustrates the importance of Sefardim adhering to the ruling of Maran Beit Yosef, zy"a, to only eat chalak meat. Furthermore, we see that when a person guards himself against eating prohibited foods, Hashem protects him from stumbling unintentionally, as it says, "He guards the steps of His devout ones."

Inspiration for Strengthening Our Emunah

As we mentioned at the beginning of the article, in our generation too we hear many miraculous stories which are attributed to the merit of the tzaddik and miracle worker. Many of these stories have been published in the sefer 'Men of Faith' which describes the illustrious dynasty of the Pinto family, and also in the sefer 'Walking in Their Ways', whose pages are interwoven with stories adorned with the utter faith of those who merited salvation, as related to Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlita.

The sefer 'Walking in Their Ways' and the stories that are published in a regular column in the weekly 'Pachad David' magazine, serve as a weekly dose of inspiration and encouragement for thousands of readers who are exposed to a revelation of Hashem's glory through these moving stories that inspire a strengthening of emunah in Hashem Yitbarach and in Moshe His servant, and in our Sages who guide their holy congregations throughout the ages.

The following is but one of the many stories that come to our desk, a deeply moving record that describes the power of salvation as a result of complete faith. Salvation that was an outcome of the mitzvah of belief in the power of tzaddikim and acceptance of the yoke of Heaven.

We bring you the story in the writer's own words:

I Decided to Publicize the Story to Sanctify G-d's Name.

I never recorded the story of this miracle because it is very personal, but after reading the new book 'Walking in Their Ways', I decided to go ahead and in doing so sanctify G-d's Name.

I was born in Agadir, Morocco, to parents who always respected and honored the tzaddikim. We were not religious and received a very minimal Jewish education, but we had complete faith in the tzaddikim and sincere values instilled in us by our parents.

When we were young, the only vacation we took was when we went to Taroudant in Oulad Berhil, to the gravesite of Rabbi David Ben Baruch, since my maternal grandfather, Messaoud Assaraf, was a close friend of Baba Dido, (the two graves are opposite each other in the cemetery in Taroudant). We also went to Essaouira to the gravesite of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, because my father was born in Mogador and is called after Rabbi Chaim HaKatan who was his sandak. Also, we regularly visited the gravesite of Rabbi Khalifa Ben Malka (who married the sister of Rabbi Chaim Pinto), in the cemetery of Agadir.

We were familiar with Rabbi David but from afar. When our daughter Sarah was eight months old, in November 1996, my husband took her to Rabbi David for a blessing.

I Knew That He Was Holding on to the Truth

We observed Shabbat, kashrut and family purity. During the first year of our marriage, my mother-in-law suddenly passed away. This was a catalyst for my husband to embrace a completely religious lifestyle. Knowing that he was doing so as an elevation for the soul of his mother, I did not object. Each time he asked me what I thought about regularly wearing tzitzit or a kippah, I thought that it was only right to encourage him since it would be an elevation for his mother's soul.

However, his progress in Judaism worried me slightly because I felt that it was creating a distance between us. But deep inside I knew that he was holding on to the truth...

We married in 1994 and in 1996 our daughter Sarah was born. In 1998 I gave birth to another daughter, Shirel, and in 2000, our third daughter, Ora, was born.

In June of 2001, I went to my parents in Agadir, without my husband but with my daughters, to recuperate from the birth.

I began dressing more modestly and wore a skirt, but instead of encouraging me, my husband who was more stringent than I, would tell me that it's not enough and each time this caused me to regress.

The day we arrived in Agadir, I took Sara who was then five years old, and Shirel who was three, to the local pool, since the Mayor was my brother's friend gave us permission to use the pool.

We had been in the pool for less than an hour and I was keeping an eye on Shirel who was playing with a little girl. Sara sat by the pool's edge, without armbands, since one of the armbands that I had bought at the hotel's store was faulty.

I wish to point out that I am a responsible mother and far from being reckless. I was waiting for my sister-in-law to come and watch the girls so that I could go and change the armbands.

I was watching Shirel when suddenly a woman got up and jumped into the pool... to pull out my daughter Sarah. She was purple and unconscious. Everything happened so quickly, I didn't understand what was going on. I tried

to wake her and was suddenly pushed to the side.

I shouted and called out to the tzaddikim from the depths of my heart, that their merit should help us. It was a heart-rending sight for all the spectators.

They threw water on me so that I shouldn't faint, while time passed and my daughter still remained unconscious.

The woman who pulled her out of the water was a nurse. A doctor who happened to be there began massaging her heart. (The doctor and nurse who had come here for a vacation were from Portugal, where my father's family, the Ziri family, originated from. They left Portugal for Essaouira in the fifteen hundreds at the time of the Inquisition, seemingly like the Pinto family...).

Her situation remained bleak. Suddenly I began to pray from the depths of my heart. "My G-d, give me back my daughter and I will take upon myself to dress modestly and cover my hair (something I had never thought of doing)."

As soon as I made this silent vow, I felt movement in the air and my daughter began to throw up. The doctor put her over his shoulder and ran with her to the entrance of the hotel where an ambulance was waiting.

Sara's eyes were open but it seemed that she had no idea what was going on or even what I was telling her...

The thought passed through my mind, "My G-d, if my daughter is handicapped, what will be?"

After joining them in the ambulance the doctor reassured me and said that Sara was beginning to react and knew her name.

Everything happened so quickly; ambulance, hospital, examinations.

By a miracle, the water had not entered her lungs. During the night, every time I took my daughter, who was hooked up to an intravenous, to the bathroom, she repeated, "Ima I called you and you didn't hear me!" How could I hear her cries from inside the water?

She explained to me that she had gone down one step and then slipped into the deep water.

I was in shock, but I did not tell anyone about my vow.

I told my mother: "It happened because I walked around there with a bathing suit." But she retorted, "No way, you are a good person, you observe Shabbat, where do you get this idea from?"

I phoned my husband and told him what had happened while minimizing the severity of the situation and not revealing what I had promised.

I would like to point out that I later found out that my husband had taken upon himself to complete the entire sefer Tehillim within a week, from one Shabbat till the next Shabbat. The combination of his mitzvah together with the mitzvah of modesty interceded in heaven in favor of my daughter and our family.

It Is Time to Cover Your Hair

After Sara's miraculous recovery, I went to thank the Portuguese doctor. He told me, "Madam, I was not supposed to be by the pool right then. Every day I go to the beach but today my son insisted that I stay here by the pool..."

A few days after I returned to Paris, my husband went to Rabbi David Pinto to ask for a blessing for myself and for Sara. Rabbi David told him, "Call your wife, I need to speak to her."

I will never forget this meeting. At that time, Rabbi David did not receive people where he receives people today.

Accompanied by my husband, I went to Rabbi David, dressed modestly and complete with a head covering, out of respect for the tzaddik.

We entered the office together and Rabbi David was sitting there. This was the first time I had seen him so close up. Behind him were many Torah volumes. His face was serious and closed.

In a harsh and stern tone, he told me, "It is time to cover your hair!"

My husband was paralyzed with fear. I began crying, remembering the kindness that Hashem did for me and my daughter. Had I been asked to cover my hair with a pot, I would have agreed! Had my daughter not survived, what would my life have been like? Would our marriage have survived?

Rabbi David continued: "Are you not embarrassed to walk around half-naked in the presence of men when your husband is a tzaddik?" I felt that I was being judged. I wanted to recount my qualities in my defense, but I knew that Rabbi David was right. What answer did I have for him??

He handed me a sefer and asked me to open it. I opened it up and right there on the page were the words, 'Hashem saved them from death'.

He then said, "You don't know from where Hashem saved you and your daughter, from where you are coming back..."

But I knew well. I saw with my own eyes how Sarah's life was saved miraculously. I asked Rabbi David two questions: "How should I cover my hair, with a headscarf or a wig?" I was afraid that he would tell me to wear a headscarf, which would make problems for me at work. My second question was, "We still have a television in our bedroom, is this a problem?" (We gave up the TV in the dining room several years ago)

To my first question he answered that I should do as I wished, the main thing is to cover my hair. In answer to the second question, he said that it is not urgent and that in a few years I should give it up, which indeed was a natural consequence.

I continued crying out of a combination of reasons: emotion, gratitude and fear.

When we got up to leave, Rabbi David's face was calmer. In an encouraging tone he said to me with a smile; "It will be okay, it will be okay".

And indeed everything worked out well. After recovering from the shock of the meeting and

its repercussions on our life, I noticed that from the time I began covering my hair, it brought many blessings to our family.

The problem was that I had not been prepared for this change and owned neither a headscarf, hat or wig. I only had a sunhat that did not cover my hair fully so I did not dare to leave the house. Due to the importance of this mitzvah and the salvation that it brought us, I could not take it lightly.

Today, when I think about it, the headscarf has become almost like a fashion accessory, with the variety of beautiful styles that the market offers today!

I Learned to Understand his Words

From that day, we grew closer to the Pinto family. We participate in the hilula of Rabbi Chaim Pinto in Essaouira and when I call on him for help he answers me. We consult with Rabbi David concerning every important decision in our lives. On several occasions, he prevented me from going in the wrong direction. For example, when I wanted to make Aliya, he told me not to do so and he was right, for at that time we were still not ready for it. I learned to understand him and read between the lines when he speaks (he speaks concisely and chooses his words carefully before opening his mouth).

Like a father full of patience for his children, he accompanies us with the goodness of his heart and with patience, (unlike him, I am a big talker...). Every time we come to him, he blesses us, gives us advice, cautions us and offers words of encouragement. He is very humble and one can sometimes forget his true level of a Gaon and spiritual guide because he lowers himself so that each person can understand his guidance.

He sacrifices himself in an exceptional way for the sake of Am Yisrael, by spreading Torah and mitzvah observance throughout the world, hastening the coming of Mashiach and the final redemption, may it be speedily in our days.

May it be Hashem's will that this merit grants him long life and health, and protect him, his wife, his children and grandchildren. Amen.

The year 1844 (5604) was a very difficult one for the Jews of Mogador. Many harsh decrees were levied at the Jews. The French bombed the city from the sea, and many Jews were either slaughtered, died of starvation, or fell captive. It was a period of mourning for the House of Ya'akov.

The esteemed Rabbi Chaim Hagadol fought valiantly to save his brethren who were plundered and looted, and in the merit of his Torah and prayers, he succeeded in preventing the enemies from entering the city.

Moreover, Rabbi Chaim's faithful shamash, Rabbi Uzi Saliman Ben Chaim, zt"l, testifies that from then on the Angel of Death was not permitted to enter Mogador unless Rabbi Chaim Pinto zya" authorized it.

ZECHER TZADDIK LIVRACHA

RABBI CHAIM PINTO "HAKATANE"



This week (Monday 15th of Cheshvan - November 2nd) we mark the hilula of one of the great Torah giants, a descendant of the distinguished Pinto dynasty from Morocco, the tzaddik and miracle-worker, Rabbi Chaim Pinto HaKatan zya"a. The tzaddik Rabbi Chaim zya"a brought merit to the public, both spiritually and materially, not only while he was alive but also after he passed away, by returning the hearts of his people to their Father in heaven.

This very week in which we read in the Torah about the exceptional deeds of Avraham Avinu a"h, the pillar of kindness, we will depict a digest of the distinguished personality of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto zya"a, focusing on his acts of kindness which were only one facet of his exemplary ways and righteousness with which he illuminated the world.

Thousands of people benefitted from the charitable activities of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan. Some were those who donated charity and some were the recipients of his charity. Rabbi Chaim vigorously engaged in gemilut chassadim, one of the pillars that support the world, following in the ways of his Creator, "who bestows beneficent kindnesses upon His people Israel", by dedicating his entire being in support of the destitute and needy of his town.

His daily schedule began after the Shacharit prayers, when he would visit the grave of his grandfather the tzaddik and mekubal Rabbi Chaim Hagadol, in the old cemetery. He would always mention his name while blessing people, saying, "The merit of my honorable, holy grandfather, should protect you."

Afterward, he would go to the new cemetery and prostrate himself over the grave of his father, the holy tzaddik Rabbi Yehuda (Hadan) zya"a. Then he would set out in the direction of the stores, to purchase the necessary provisions for the poor.

He would instruct his attendant to visit a needy widow or underprivileged family, in order to deliver the food. For some, he would instruct his attendant to deliver meat and pastries, and to others, fruits and vegetables. In this way the attendant shared in the mitzvah of distributing food among the needy, preventing the poor people of the city from starving.

R' Itzchak Abisoror relates that Rabbi Chaim Hakatan called him several times to accompany him on his rounds of collecting money from the people of the city and distributing the charity among the poor. Not everyone merited accompanying Rabbi Chaim when he collected money since it was a special privilege. However, R' Itzchak was chosen for the mission.

Every Friday, Rabbi Chaim would go and collect food from people so that he could distribute it among the poor in honor of Shabbat Kodesh. He would not collect money on Fridays since he knew that time was limited, and the poor would not have sufficient time to buy provisions for Shabbat. Conversely, on other days, he would collect money and distribute it to the poor.

The impressive image and shining countenance of the tzaddik made a lasting impression on each and every Jew who visited Mogador. Rabbi Chaim Hakatan would sit at the gates of the city and wait for guests arriving from other cities, in order to grant them the opportunity of sharing in the mitzvah of tzedakah.

There were those who actively searched for Rabbi Chaim, passing in front of him intentionally, so that he should request of them to donate a specific sum of money for tzedakah. They believed that if they would fulfill the request of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, they would meet success and thereafter experience good fortune in all their endeavors.

It was a known fact among the Moroccan Jews that if Rabbi Chaim would bless them for their donation, everything would go well for them that day. Furthermore, they would see wondrous miracles in the coming week.

Complete Joy

During the chagim, and especially before Pesach, when expenses were greater than usual, Rabbi Chaim did not hesitate to burden the wealthy people with supporting the impoverished people. Prior to Pesach, Rabbi Chaim Pinto would go from house to house, asking everyone to open their hearts and pockets to give charity and gladden the hearts of the poor people, widows, and orphans on the upcoming chag. In this way, they could also rejoice during the festival, and the happiness of Am Yisrael would be complete.

Anyone who donated money for charity merited the blessings of the tzaddik, issued from his holy mouth and the depths of his pure heart.

Twenty-six Years

Rabbi Chaim zya"a would instil faith and hope, crucial for every Jew, in every person no matter his origin; Jews and non-Jews alike. The sefer 'Anshei Emuna' (Ch. 19) brings the following story:

Rabbi Chaim once came down with a severe case of typhus and was at the brink of death. The members of the Chevrah Kadisha assembled around his bed, and when they saw him taking his last breaths, they began to recite Tehillim.

Suddenly, Rabbi Chaim opened his eyes and raised himself slightly. He told the members of the Chevrah Kadisha, "You can leave now. I am fine. I was granted by Heaven another twenty-six years of life."

After everyone recovered from their shock, the tzaddik explained to them that just as he was about to die, his grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol, suddenly came from Gan Eden to stand before the Heavenly Court. He tearfully pleaded, "You must add more years to Rabbi Chaim's life since he has not yet accomplished all that he has to do. He must live longer in order to increase people's faith in Hashem."

Rabbi Chaim Hagadol continued pleading his grandson's case and advocating for him. In the end, the Heavenly Court accepted his appeal and added another twenty-six years to Rabbi Chaim Hakatan's life. During these years, he dedicated himself to strengthening his brethren with faith in the Master of the World.