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Hilula

26 - Rabbi Avraham Ben David, the Ra'avad

27 - Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kahen, the Admor of Toldot Ahron

28 - Rabbi Ezra Chamou

29 - Rabbi Yisrael Friedman

1 - Rabbi Yair Chaim Bachrach, author of 'Chavat Yair' Responsa

2 - Rabbi Yitzchak son of Rabbi Yehudah Abarbanel

3 - Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, Rosh Yeshiva of Mir

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"á



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

The Tactic of the Greeks

Contemplating the period when the Greeks reigned leads us to a surprising difficulty. It is well-known that the majority of Am Yisrael ended up following the ways of the Greeks who almost succeeded in their perverted plot "to make them forget Your Torah", G-d forbid. Only a handful of Jewish people remained faithful to Hashem Yitbarach and His Torah.

This fact is most puzzling. For how it can be that right inside Yerushalayim, while the Beit Hamikdash still stood and Am Yisrael merited seeing the Kohanim and the Leviim in their service, as well as witnessing the ten miracles that were present in the Beit Hamikdash (c.f. Avot 5:7), so many Jews became Hellenists and were swayed by the counsel of these wicked people?

The answer lies in understanding the tactic that lay behind the method of the Greeks. They did not approach Am Yisrael and demand that they immediately cease observing Shabbat or any of the other central mitzvot and foundations of authentic Judaism, rather they approached them with small, seemingly innocent, suggestions that concerned minor matters, about which the simple Jew says to himself, what is so bad about this? They are simply offering various gymnasiums and sports games that do not involve any immodesty or debauchery.

Those parents who lacked the wisdom to understand the extent of this stumbling block, sat back in serenity and sent their children to participate in all these activities, for on the face of it they did not seem to be of harmful influence. But they should have realized that although the actual sport involved no prohibitions, it is

necessary to inquire about the instructor and find out who is this educator under whose guidance they are playing, and just as important, with which kind of company are they mixing. Do they have a pure Torah outlook and follow the spirit of tradition, or G-d forbid, the opposite? And when faced with a teacher or instructor who is a wicked Greek and possesses indecent middot and a decadent outlook, he will certainly instill his false and misleading opinions in the children, infusing the impressionable children with a negative influence which endangers their entire spirituality, to the extent of uprooting all Torah values and commandments with which they were educated.

In my opinion, this is the essence of the game, Chanukah dreidel (sevivon, spinning top) that is customary to play on Chanukah. It serves as a reminder for us that the Greeks 'revolved' the outlook of the Jews and diverted them from the straight path, similar to the spinning top which begins its rotation at a certain point and finishes in a different spot.

At first the Greeks approached the Jews with insignificant, petty matters which on the face of it seemed meaningless. They suggested taking their children to various, apparently harmless, activities and in this way, they instilled their inappropriate views in their hearts. In their innocence, the simple Jews did not comprehend the hidden trap and serenely justified themselves, "What of it, our children are young"... The tragic end was parents who sacrificed their lives to sanctify Hashem's Name, while their children were the ones from whom the Greeks succeeded in uprooting any spark of Judaism and attachment to Torah and mitzvot.



Walking in their Ways

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

The Power of Holiness

I once participated in a function on behalf of a Torah institution in France. The mayor of the city, an atheistic gentile, was also in attendance.

Throughout the evening, many people approached me to receive my blessings for success and *siyata dishmaya*, in the merit of my esteemed ancestors. I was surprised to find this atheist also waiting to receive my blessing. This was quite surprising. I knew this man to be an out-and-out Communist and a categorical condemner of anything hinting to religion. What was he doing asking for a blessing from a Rabbi, cut from a vastly different cloth than himself?

Unable to contain my curiosity, I asked, "Tell me, please, what makes you ask for the blessing of an Orthodox Rabbi when you clearly denounce the existence of G-d?"

He enthusiastically replied, "I have been standing at the side, watching you dispense blessings to anyone and everyone who comes to request. I finally realized that so many people cannot be asking for empty blessings. There must, therefore, be validity to your blessings."

As I contemplated the words that this non-Jew had uttered, I strongly felt the power of an event that had taken place for the honor of Torah. It had the ability to breathe sanctity even into non-Jews.

I also realized that this power of holiness is capable of changing even an atheistic outlook of someone who is severed from Hashem, such as this Gentile. Certainly, then, it has the ability to bring back the soul of a Jew, which was hewn from the Heavenly Throne itself.

The Haftarah

"Sing and be glad" (Zechariah 2-4)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah mentions the lights and the Menorah that the navi Zecharya saw in a prophecy, a topic that corresponds to this time of the year when we kindle the Chanukah lights.

Guard Your Tongue

Lashon Hara Without Hatred

Even if the one speaking lashon hara includes himself in his negative narrative and says that he too possesses this negative trait or performed this act, it is still considered as lashon hara.

This ruling is derived from the words of the prophet Yeshaya, "For I am a man of impure lips and I dwell among a people with impure lips" (Yeshaya 6:5). Hashem held these words against him, even though he included himself.

Moreover, it is forbidden to speak lashon hara even if it is clear that the speaker does not have bad intentions and has no intention of causing damage. This is why it is forbidden to speak negatively even about one's close family members.



In Our Father's Path

When a Secular Jew lights Chanukah Lights

"How can I briefly prove to a secular Jew the existence of a Creator and the truth of the Torah?"

No simple dilemma. The one who brought this question to the Gaon Rabbi Chaim Greineman zt"l for the advice of da'at Torah, was the Gaon and tzadik, Rabbi Aryeh Schechter zt"l. On one occasion he related: "I used to lecture at many seminars about human relationships and marital harmony, as you might know. I look like someone from bygone days, from the Middle Ages, with a big beard and peyot. When I would begin my lecture on these topics to this audience of secular Jews, they regarded me in wonder. "We are apparently at the wrong address," they thought to themselves. "This type of character will lecture to us about communication and interpersonal relationships?! Nu, indeed!"

And what happened in the end?

"Not more than five minutes passed and all the partitions would fall down. They were drawn to the content, their previous opinions and stigmas disappeared. One of the reasons that caused these secular Jews to open themselves up to change and eventually return to the correct path, was the understanding that they were living a mistake. They had no real idea of what Judaism and observant Jews were all about."

Harav Chaim Greineman zt"l answered Harav Schechter's query by saying, "Tell the secular Jew that we constitute a negligible percentage of humanity, yet nevertheless all of mankind is occupied with us day and night."

"And I add," Harav Schechter says (see sefer 'Aryeh Sho'eg'), "that would there be a small, marginal group who would do all kinds of strange things, even nonsense and real futilities, would someone pay attention to them?! At most people would chuckle derisively for a moment and then turn back to their own occupations, forgetting all about this strange phenomenon. If so, why do the Gentiles care that we – a tiny group - observe customs different to them? Why do they persecute us and go to such lengths to annihilate us physically and spiritually?"

The answer is that our very existence is proof that their way is incorrect, and it is this proof that they wish to erase. They cannot bear the living and constant proof that the way of the Torah is the correct path.

Secular Jews joyously celebrate the days of Chanukah just as we do. It could be that in some way these days are more fateful for them than for us, since if not for the Chanukah lights they would fall to the depths.

During the time of the Chozeh of Lublin, there was an informer in the village who caused the Jews much trouble by informing on them to the authorities. One day during Chanukah the talmidim brought their Rebbe a kvitel (note) on which they had penned their moving request: The Rebbe should use his powers to seriously punish the informer so that he will no longer cause evil to any of the Jews.

The Rebbe turned to them, "Do you not know what this informer is doing now? He is shaking worlds"...

The talmidim approached the informer and asked him what he was doing when the Rebbe uttered those words. The informer looked at them in surprise and said, "What do you mean? I was kindling the Chanukah lights; it was time to light!"

This shows us that even the kindling of Chanukah lights of someone as low as that informer, has a great effect in all the worlds.



Pearls of the Parsha

The Trouble is that We Don't Converse!

"So, they hated him, and they could not speak to him peaceably" (Bereishit 37:4)

Rabbi Yehonatan Eibeshitz zya"א points out that the main problem was that they could not talk to each other, for had they discussed the matter, it is quite possible that they would have found a way to alleviate the hatred that characterized the relationship between Yosef and his brothers.

He added: This idea is the pitfall of all disagreements, the fact that no one wishes to speak to his fellow and each side is not prepared to hear and understand the other side. If the picture was different, it would be possible to peaceably resolve many arguments which stem from jealousy and hatred.

Ya'akov Believed that He Would Witness the Resurrection of the Dead

"But his father kept the matter in mind" (Bereishit 37:11)

The sefer 'Divrei Shaul' quotes in the name of Rabbi David Asher Zelig Ehrlich zt"l, that the word 'א', the, comes to include something. Ya'akov Avinu said, "Are we to come, I and your mother", yet surely Yosef's mother had already passed away? Nevertheless, Ya'akov waited with anticipation for the dream to be fulfilled in its entirety, meaning that Rachel too will come to bow down to Yosef.

Why was this?

The Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 84:10) tells us that Ya'akov Avinu a"ח thought that the resurrection of the dead would occur in his lifetime. If so, Rachel would also come and bow down to Yosef.

Crisis Gives Birth to Opportunity for Growth

"But he left his garment in her hand, and he fled, and went outside" (Bereshit 39:12)

Adding another implication to the simple meaning of the verse, the Admor of Spinka shlita, in the name of Rabbi Hershele Lisker zt"l, explains that the word 'בגדו', his garment, comes from the word 'בגדו', betrayer.

The Yetzer Hara came to Yosef Hatzadik and whispered in his ear: "Why are you running away? Since when are you such a tzadik? I know exactly who you are deep inside, how much betrayal you have within you! What came over you just now to act like a tzadik?"

But Yosef Hatzadik left his garment with her. He answered the Yetzer Hara: Despite all this betrayal I have in me, despite all the downfalls, despite all the times I was not successful... still the image of the face of my Father in Heaven stands in front of me. I can still take this opportunity...

"He left his garment", implies take my betrayal, my downfalls, for they do not disturb me. I can grow together with them, particularly because of them. They will be my impetus for growth, not a pit to make me stumble and despair...

Only with Hashem's Help

"The prison warden did not scrutinize anything that was in his charge inasmuch as Hashem was with him" (Bereishit 39:23)

Rabbi Rafael Halevi zt"l, the son of the Brisker Rav, told over that when they fled to Vilna in 5700, his father questioned the above verse:

The verse stresses that the prison warden did not find anything for which to accuse Yosef, for Hashem was with him. In essence, Yosef's prison sentence was due to a false charge; he was entirely innocent. Therefore, the question is why he required special Heavenly Assistance so as not to be found guilty?

But, the Brisker Rav pointed out, we see from this that without the special siyata dishmaya of Hashem being with him that he merited, the prison warden would have found new injustices with which to charge Yosef at every step.

It was only due to "inasmuch as Hashem was with him", that the warden did not invent any false charges which could have stood to his detriment.

Treasures

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



Whoever Stumbles Can Start a New Page!

I saw a question asked by Harav Hagoon Rabbi Ben Zion Abba Shaul zt"l. As we know, the Greeks decreed three harsh rulings on Am Yisrael, forbidding them to observe Shabbat, the sanctification of the new month, and Brit Milah. However, the reason why they wished to obliterate the sanctification of the new month is unclear. It is easy to understand why they chose Shabbat, for it is the source of blessing and faith in Hashem. For six days a person toils and earns money, and despite his ability to work and earn also on the Shabbat day, he nevertheless closes his business and rests. This serves to implant great faith in Hashem, that his livelihood and life is from Him alone.

This reminds me of an acquaintance who travelled to Miami to collect funds for a certain Yeshiva. I gave him the phone number of a certain philanthropist who supports our holy institutions. When he approached him this wealthy man said, "Since Rabbi David shlita sent you, I am prepared to give you the amount that I had designated for his institutions, with his permission, of course". Indeed, I received a call from him, asking for my consent.

At that moment I thought to myself, why does it have to be the entire amount? Maybe half is good enough? And anyway, what kind of sum is he talking about, maybe it is a huge amount of money?! But I immediately strengthened my faith in Hashem, saying that everything is from Him Yitbarach and whatever has been ascribed for me in Heaven will come to me anyway. Hashem has many ways and many messengers. I expressed my consent that the philanthropist should give that person the entire amount. Indeed, "But as for one who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him" (Tehillim 32:10). Not half an hour passed and I received another phone call from the philanthropist. He explained that with G-d's help he had just now closed on a most lucrative deal and he wishes to donate to our holy institutions from the profits. This donation was so considerable that it valued twenty times more than that which he had given my acquaintance. This is a clear lesson in the extent that faith and trust in Hashem Yitbarach brings blessing and abundance to a person.

All this, the power of faith in Hashem Yitbarach, is what the precious Shabbat implants in us. Therefore, we can understand why the Greeks wished to abolish it and considered it a thorn in their flesh. We can also understand why they forbade us to observe brit milah because it is the holy sign, the connection and signature in our very flesh that we are Hashem's servants. This is why the Greeks wished to do away with it. However, why did they care if we sanctify the New Month and recite a blessing over the New Moon? How did this mitzvah disturb them more than any of the other mitzvot that they did not abolish?

With siyata dishmaya I would like to suggest that the essence of Rosh Chodesh is something deep and lofty. The words Rosh Chodesh, 'ראש חודש', come from the term 'ראש חדש', a new head. Meaning that a person can begin a new page for himself and a new chapter in his life. Even though he fell and stumbled, nevertheless he has the power to forget the past, repent for his transgressions and begin again new. This being the case, Rosh Chodesh manifests the theme of renewal which is an important foundation in Avodat Hashem. To begin again each day anew, not continuing with yesterday's ways. This is the idea behind the renewal of the moon, which slowly becomes smaller and disappears, yet once again appears and shines strongly.

The essence of Rosh Chodesh teaches us very significant matters, both the idea of constant renewal in our Avodat Hashem and also repentance from our past ways and the opportunity to begin a new page. The Greeks knew and understood this, and that is why they put a special stress on abolishing the sanctification of the New Moon more than any other mitzvot.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



The Chamberlain of the Cupbearers and the Chamberlain of the Bakers who were imprisoned together with Yosef the tzadik, both dreamt a dream but could not understand its interpretation. That morning Yosef noticed that they were not looking their usual selves and asked them why they appear downcast.

Hagaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz shlita ('Mishkani Acharecha') points out an interesting concept. Why did Yosef care that these people were not in a good mood that day? What was his concern if they were aggrieved? It is reasonable to assume that Yosef was not bored while in prison; he certainly reviewed all the Torah that he studied with his father. The verse says that Ya'akov Avinu loved Yosef "since he was a child of his old age". Chazal tell us that Ya'akov taught Yosef all the Torah that he studied during the fourteen years he spent in the Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever. If so, throughout the time that Yosef was in prison he reviewed all that he had learnt with his father, so why did he care if these two gentiles were upset and aggrieved? And besides, how did he even notice this?

Contemplating the matter will enable us to understand how Yosef achieved the eminent role of becoming ruler over the entire land of Egypt.

During his imprisonment, Yosef treated all the inmates with pleasantness and amiability. No doubt every morning when he would meet the

Chamberlain of Cupbearers and the Chamberlain of the Bakers, he would smile at them and inquire after their welfare.

So, on that morning when Yosef met them and asked how they are feeling, they did not reply with their customary answer. Their faces were downcast, and since they felt that he was truly interested in their welfare, they opened their hearts to him and told him about the strange dream that each of them dreamt.

It follows that Yosef's entire salvation and elevation to greatness, which eventually came about through the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers, was founded on his conduct of greeting each person with a smile and pleasant countenance. Yosef the tzadik was not capable of ignoring someone who looked sad. This is the sign of a true leader. One who wishes to benefit every single person, Jew and non-Jew alike.

Assisting a Non-Jewish child and the Results

Several years ago, on Chanukah, there was a gathering in Moscow in which the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, participated. The Chief Rabbi of Russia, Harav Berel Lazar shlita was also present.

During the course of the event, the President stood up and began delivering a moving speech. These were his words:

"Listen well, Jews, to a story that took place here in Russia. In a certain neighborhood lived a poor family who had a young child. This child was unfortunate because his parents worked hard for their living, from morning till night, and they would leave him alone at home, sometimes even without any food.

There was a Jewish family who lived in this same neighborhood,

and when they noticed the young child alone at home, they asked him if he had what to eat. When he replied in the negative, they made sure that he had food to eat each day, and on Shabbatot and Chagim even invited him to eat together with them at their table. And so over a long period of time, they 'adopted' this non-Jewish child and provided for all his needs."

When Putin finished his moving story he added:

"I am this child that I just told you about! I cannot forget how this Jewish family showed concern for me. Until today I still remember their rituals of washing hands before the meal, the recital of 'hamotzi' before eating bread and the blessing of 'birkat hamazon' on completion of the meal."

Today this poor child is the President of this large country and his attitude towards the Russian Jews is sympathetic, something almost unprecedented in all European countries. All in the merit of that family who showed concern for the needs of an unfortunate, non-Jewish child.

Who is like Your people Israel.

Bnei Yisrael are benevolent even with non-Jews. Doing good with each and every person is something that we learn from Yosef Hatzadik, for he inquired about the welfare of those non-Jews who were spending time with him in prison.

That is why the Egyptian king found him suitable to act as ruler of his country and to be "the provider to all the people of the land". For only one who constantly seeks ways to do good to others, is fitting for leadership.