

# Chukat

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908



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## Hilula

9 – Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam,  
the Admor of Sanz

10 – Rabbi David Chassin

11 – Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Ziditchov,  
author of 'Ateret Tzvi'

12 – Rabbeinu Ya'akov, the 'Ba'al  
HaTurim'

13 – Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman  
hy"d, author of 'Kovetz Se'orim'

14 – Rabbi Ya'akov Melul, Av Beit Din  
of Vezean

15 – Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar zya"z, the  
holy Or HaChaim

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"z



**MASKIL LEDAVID**

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

## Observing the Chukim Leads to Absolute Faith in Hashem

We sometimes find that a person on a mitzvah mission passes away. For example, he may be killed in a road accident. This occurs despite our being told by the Gemara (Pesachim 8b), "Mitzvah messengers are not harmed." There are also people who demonstrate self-sacrifice in honoring their parents, yet they die at a young age despite the Torah promising (Shemot 20:12), "Honor your father and your mother, so that your days will be lengthened."

Many years ago, the holy Rabbi Rafael Pinto zt"l was murdered in Morocco by Arab rioters. His tragic death left everyone in shock since he was famous for his exceptional righteousness and profundity in Torah, remaining secluded in his home without leaving for any reason. In addition, Rabbi Rafael was known as someone who had connections amongst the Arabs and often treated them charitably, supporting them when necessary.

Similarly, the entire history of the Jewish people is replete with difficult circumstances where great, lofty tzadikim suffered through terrible hardships. During the empire of the wicked Greeks, Chana's seven sons, from oldest to youngest, were killed in front of her eyes, following which she threw herself from the roof. The Gemara also tells us that all Rabbi Yochanan's sons died during his lifetime (Berachot 5b, Rashi). Over the course of time, during the terrible Holocaust, European communities suffered indescribable atrocities. The wife and children of the Admor of Satmar were killed, among millions of others.

This harsh reality can undermine our faith and, G-d forbid, even lead to denying Hashem's existence. In order for Am Yisrael to remain faithful to Hashem despite all the challenges and troubles the human mind cannot grasp, Hashem commanded man to observe chukim – decrees – which we have no permission to ponder. By accustoming ourselves to fulfilling also the mitzvot which are beyond our comprehension, one attains absolute faith in Hashem, despite the many questions that may crop up from time to time as a result of various difficult events.

This week's Parshah cites the verse (Bamidbar 19:14), "... a man who would die in a tent." What is the connection between the opening verse of the Parshah, "This is the decree of the Torah" to the later verse, "... a man who would die in a tent"? Man must know that he receives the strength to cope with all the hardships that befall his 'tent' – his home – even in the most difficult of circumstances, when death and bereavement enter his personal

abode, by observing the chukim. When a person educates himself not to ask questions and fulfils chukim that he does not comprehend, only because it is Hashem's will, from this he draws the strength to cope with his troubles without casting doubt on the justice of Hashem's providence.

Parshat Beha'alotcha tells us (10:35), "When the Ark would journey, Moshe said, 'Arise, Hashem, and let Your foes be scattered, let those who hate You flee from before You.'" Rashi explains, "Since the Ark would travel ahead a distance of three days' journey, Moshe would say, 'Stand in place and wait for us and do not go further.'" The Ark went ahead of them to show Bnei Yisrael the way. Let us try to picture this awesome sight! Bnei Yisrael walked in the Wilderness with the pillar of cloud going ahead to straighten the path, while at night the pillar of fire went ahead of them to light up the darkness. Furthermore, Am Yisrael were nourished by the manna and quenched their thirst from Miriam's well which accompanied them on their journey in the Wilderness.

The Ark went before Am Yisrael and in this manner showed them the way, but Moshe Rabbeinu called to it, "Arise, Hashem, and let Your foes be scattered..." Moshe was asking the Ark to wait for Am Yisrael and not advance more than a distance of three days' travel so that Bnei Yisrael would feel safe and protected by the Ark's presence. Were it to go any further ahead, Bnei Yisrael would no longer feel its presence and may feel vulnerable.

Furthermore, the Ark was the symbol of Torah since it contained the Luchot. Similarly, every Jewish person possesses a spark from Moshe Rabbeinu's soul, therefore he calls out to Hashem saying, "Do not distance Yourself from me too much. I need to feel Your closeness." Hashem, on His part, turns to man and says, "I remain in My place. If you feel lost and distant, it means you are the one who has distanced himself."

How can man feel constant closeness to Hashem? Through cleaving to the Torah and mitzvot, even in matters that are considered a chok, incomprehensible to our human minds. When a person fulfills all the mitzvot without leaving anything out, he merits feeling constant closeness to Hashem even if, G-d forbid, death visits his home. If man accustoms himself to fulfil Hashem's word indisputably, sudden, unexplainable death will not make him lose his composure since he feels Hashem's love and closeness.



## Walking in their Ways

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

### Guided Imagery Brings Benefit and Blessing to Man

With regards to Pesach we are told (Pesachim 116b), "One is obligated to regard himself as though he himself had actually left Egypt." Despite this not being the reality, its purpose is to awaken the power of man's positive imagination, leading to absolute faith in the Creator. The more a person delves into the story of the Exodus and imagines as if he and his family endured the enslavement and then merited being redeemed with wondrous miracles, the more he intensifies his faith and connection with Hashem.

This is a blessed form of imagination that brings benefit and blessing to man. I read that even the Chafetz Chaim would use this technique; he used his imagination to visualize the Ten Plagues Hashem brought on the Egyptians, so as to strengthen his faith in Hashem.

In this vein one can add that the Ashkenazim suffered the atrocities of the Holocaust while the Sephardic Jews were mostly not under the threat of the Nazi authorities. Reading and hearing stories about the Holocaust increases my desire to feel the terrible pain the European Jews endured, and partake in their suffering.

Since I and all my family are of Sephardic descent and we were far from the atrocities of the German oppressors, I always found this desire hard to achieve.

One day I found a solution in the form of an album of Holocaust pictures I came across. It depicts over one hundred horrific photographs from that accursed period in our history. One picture shows a Jewish mother holding her young baby in her arms; behind her stands a brutal Nazi pointing a gun to her head. The next picture shows the mother lying lifeless with the wicked soldier standing beside her, murdering the baby.

From the day I saw those pictures, I began to feel in a much more intense way the tremendous pain that was the lot of the European Jews at that time. The horrific pictures caused me to feel the horrendous pain throughout my 248 limbs and 365 sinews. And so, every time I wish to feel the pain of those who lost their lives in the Holocaust, I look at these difficult scenes which awaken my imagination and lend me the ability to once again feel that dark and terrible period.

## The Haftarah

**"Yiftach the Giladi"** (Shoftim 11)

The connection to the Parshah: The Haftarah talks about the war the Children of Ammon fought against Yisrael, and about the land Yisrael took possession of from Sichon, which he had captured from Ammon. The Parshah too mentions the Children of Ammon. The Bnei Yisrael did not fight them; they smote Sichon and through that, took possession of the land Sichon had captured from Ammon.

## Guard Your Tongue

Before arriving at the conclusion that it is necessary to rebuke someone for his ways, one must make certain he indeed transgressed.

From the command "with righteousness shall you judge your fellow" (Vayikra 19:15), we learn that if a person transgresses a sin not characteristic of his ways, we must try and judge him favorably. If there is some way to justify his deed, we are obligated to adopt this line of thinking.

If it becomes indisputably clear that he indeed sinned, if this person is normally careful in this matter, we must assume he certainly regrets his ways and has already repented. It is forbidden to relate this information to others and speaking about it is considered lashon hara.



## In Our Father's Path

### Why Did Rabbi Chaim Give the Taxi Driver an Additional Shekel?

Kind words and good middot have enormous, inherent power to create a Kiddush Hashem, as this week's Parshah mentions, "to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel" (Bamidbar 20:12). HaGaon Rabbi Aharon Toisig shlit" a tells about the exemplary conduct and exceptional middot of Rabbi Chaim Brim zt"l. He was someone who completely felt for a fellow Jew, actually living his pain, subsequently understanding the ideal way to address him and elevate his spirit.

When travelling by taxi, he customarily gave the driver an additional shekel or two more than the amount displayed on the meter.

He explained: "Taxi drivers suffer from a negative, public image. Even if here and there some behave in a way that justifies this image, the generalization makes life hard for many of them. But let us think for a moment: What creates this negative image? The answer is: The fact that we are inclined to entertain negative feelings about them creates this low self-image, and their behavior is just a result and expression of our attitude. The taxi driver thinks to himself: 'If this is what they think of me, I will behave accordingly.' Instead of seeing his positive aspects and trying to change any undesirable characteristics, he establishes his image in line with widespread public opinion. Frustrated by his projected image, he sees fit to prove to the public they are right."

There is a simple solution for this: Raise their esteem. How does one do this? First of all, treating them with respect will diminish their feelings of inferiority. If it comes from a true place, it will permeate and have an effect. A symbolic way is by giving them another shekel or two above the asked-for price, as a gesture and expression of appreciation.

The daughter of Rabbi Chaim related: "We once travelled together by taxi and on arrival at our destination the meter showed thirty shekels. Rabbi Chaim gave the driver thirty-one shekels. The driver said: 'Excuse me, the Rav gave me an extra shekel'..."

"Rabbi Chaim replied: 'It is not extra! Thirty shekels are for the journey and the extra shekel is for you, as a sign of appreciation!'"

"The driver was impressed at the Rav's small gesture and they parted on good terms.

"Several weeks later," the daughter continued, "I was trying to stop a taxi for a long time, but to no avail. Suddenly a taxi drew up next to me, the driver turned to me and said, 'You should know, the truth is I am not available right now, but I remember you from the journey with your father. Do you remember he gave me an extra shekel? What a tzadik! Get into the taxi, I will take you, even though I don't really have time now.'"

"On the way the driver said: 'You should know, for me that single shekel was worth a million times more than the thirty shekels, because through that your father demonstrated he understands a taxi driver is also a human being.'"

Let us take a lesson from this episode. One can acquire one's world with one shekel! Without too much effort, with an investment of just one shekel, one word, or one smile, one can affect a radical change in another person's esteem.



## Pearls of the Parsha

## Treasures

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



### Judges Even After Death

*"This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent" (Bamidbar 19:14)*

Chazal tell us (Baba Metzia 84b) that after Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, passed away, they placed him on a rooftop for more than eighteen years and his body stayed complete, just as when he was alive. Furthermore, they would come to him to be judged and he would judge them. The prosecutor and defendant would stand outside the door and each one would assert his claim. Then a voice would be heard from the rooftop declaring: "So and so is liable and so and so is exempt."

This occurrence, says Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen Traub zt"l, is hinted to in the above verse. Through engaging in "This is the teaching", even "a man who would die" will merit, despite his death, to continue sitting "in the tent", as happened with Rabbi Eliezer, and thereby be able to continue judging Am Yisrael.

### Afraid to Allow Them Entry

*"Edom said to him, 'You shall not pass through me – lest I come against you with the sword!'" (Bamidbar 20:18)*

Why does the verse use the expression "lest" and not "because [I will come against you]", expressing certainty?

The Sfat Emet writes: Edom did not wish to do battle with Am Yisrael at that time; they were simply afraid if Am Yisrael would pass through their land, they would perceive the country's practices and secrets, and if there will be a future war between them, Am Yisrael would succeed in defeating them because they had discerned their secrets.

This is the explanation of "lest I come against you with the sword." Maybe in the future we will come to fight against you and you will know how to attack us.

### Who Rejoices with a Snake Bite?

*"And it will be, anyone who was bitten will look at it and live" (Bamidbar 21:8)*

The expression "And it will be" is always an expression of joy. If so, what place is there for joy if a person has been bitten by a snake?

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk, the Meshech Chochma, explains the choice of the terminology "anyone who was bitten." Even if someone was sick with any other natural illness and close to death, if a snake bit him and he looked to the copper snake, he would be healed and regain his health. It follows that this person will rejoice if a snake bites him.

This is why it says "Vehaya – And it will be, anyone who was bitten", using an expression of joy, and not "Vayehi – and it will be", an expression of sorrow.

### Positive Act; Negative Intention

*"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Do not fear him, for into your hand have I given him'" (Bamidbar 21:34)*

Rashi explains: Moshe was afraid that perhaps the merit of warning Avraham when Lot had been captured would stand for Og. This seems surprising because on the verse "Then there came the fugitive and told Abram" (Bereishit 14:13), Rashi writes "the fugitive" refers to Og, a survivor of the generation of the Flood. He intended to incite Avraham to go to war to rescue Lot, confident Avraham would be killed in the battle and then Og would take Sarah as his wife. So on the contrary, not only does he not possess a merit, this act was actually a sin. So why was Moshe afraid?

This question is asked by the Kli Yakar.

He answers that Moshe did not know about Og's intention. He was afraid it was a positive act that earned him a merit. But Hashem said "Do not fear him"; he has no merit because he had negative intentions. So it follows, "for into your hand I have given him."

### Torah Study Requires Submission and Capitulation

*"This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent" (Bamidbar 19:14)*

"A man who would die in a tent" – Chazal expound on these words (Berachot 63b): "The Torah only endures in one who kills himself over it." The explanation seems to be that it refers to someone who is willing to defer to someone else, listen to him and accept his opinion. It is not referring to one who studies Torah on his own, but one who studies with a chavruta. This type of study affords the opportunity to show submission to one's friend, and Torah studied with a chavruta cannot be compared to independent learning.

Chazal say, in the future Hashem will teach us Torah from His mouth and then lashon hara will be completely eradicated from the world. What is the connection between Torah studied directly with Hashem and the disappearance of lashon hara?

One can say that studying Torah straight from Hashem without an intermediary is comparable to fine flour, free of any external influence such as honor or power. Rather, it is Torah studied for its own sake, considered as "a man who would die in a tent." When a person toils in Torah with a chavruta, with self-sacrifice, it affords him the power of being saved from the sin of lashon hara. That merit of his pure Torah learning creates a protective shield, it empowers him to resist the temptation of speaking ill of others.

It is interesting to contemplate why, during the era of David Hamelech, when Torah study was prevalent, people nevertheless sinned. I would like to suggest that they had a blemish in their personal avodah and as a result did not attain the height of spirituality achieved during the reign of Shlomo Hamelech. What was the flaw? They spoke lashon hara, thinking it was for a beneficial purpose. But had they worked on themselves and shown submission to their friends, they would not have felt the need to speak lashon hara, even though they had beneficial intentions.

Beware! The situation today makes it much more challenging to refrain from lashon hara than previous generations. With the advancement of technology, man has easy access to diverse opportunities through which he can easily sin. If in the past, to stumble with lashon hara one had to speak face to face to another person, today with just the press of a button on a phone, computer, or fax, the derogatory words are disseminated throughout the world in just a few seconds.



# A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



## Is this a Candy or a Flick?

Sometimes a Jew finds himself facing a situation in which he feels strict judgement enveloping him and it seems that Hashem is hiding His face from him. He may be suffering some kind of hardship, sickness, pain, financial difficulties or other painful events. This is what took place in this week's Parshah, where we read how "G-d sent the fiery serpents against the people and they bit the people."

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt"l would encourage people to adopt the correct view when faced with 'makot':

We are all familiar with elderly people who come to the Beit Knesset on Friday night with candies in their pockets, distributing them to the children who come to pray. One rarely finds someone approaching the 'candy man' and asking him, "Tell me, do you have permission to distribute candy to the children? Did you ask the child's father if it is okay?" What happens is that each person says thank you and offers a nice smile.

On the other hand, if this elderly person sees a child being wild in the Beit Knesset and gives him a slap, he will immediately be pounced upon, "What, are you his father?!"

In other words, not everyone has permission to hit someone else. Only a father can give a slap...

The obligation to educate our children permits the father to behave in this way. A father on the one hand is full of compassion for his child, but from the same place of concern he will also hit his child when necessary. This is also an act of kindness and mercy. A person can view his hardships as 'makot', or he can see them as candies...

In the sefer Doresh Tov, Rabbi Yechiel Meir Tzucker shlit"l relates a story he heard from Rabbi Chizkiyahu Mishkovzki shlit"l:

There was a certain ba'alat teshuva who was orphaned of her father. Since her mother was an elderly woman taking her first steps in Judaism, the daughter would consult with a prominent Dayan in Bnei Brak when necessary.

When she came of age, a shidduch was suggested with a boy who was also a ba'al teshuva. After several meetings, she was

left confused. On the one hand, she liked him greatly and admired his many qualities, but there were certain points that disturbed her. She agonized and debated and eventually decided to ask the advice of the Dayan. He listened to the points that disturbed her and thought she should not go ahead with this match.

However, he was afraid to take responsibility for the decision. The Dayan went to HaRav Shach and asked his advice.

HaRav Shach told him: "Under no circumstances should you be the one to make this decision, not 'yes' and not 'no'."

The Dayan wondered why; HaRav Shach explained: "This girl does not have a father and even her mother is not able to help her. She is relying on you. At the moment, she has some feelings towards the boy and wants to get engaged to him. If you tell her no, she will listen to you and one day will get engaged to someone else. And then, every time some small or big problem crops up in their home, she will say, 'Ah, it is because I did not marry that boy!' and she will blame you.

"On the other hand, if you tell her yes, every time there is a problem between them, she will say, 'I told the Dayan all the problematic issues I saw even before we got engaged, but he told me to go ahead. It is all because he did not take me seriously...' If you make the decision, you will be blamed until one hundred and twenty, therefore you can't decide."

"So what should I tell her?" asked the Dayan.

HaRav Shach replied, "Send her to me."

The Dayan told the girl HaRav Shach wants to see her and she happily went.

HaRav Shach turned to her and said pleasantly, "I heard you lost your father. I have already married off all my children long ago; are you prepared to be my daughter?"

Would anyone refuse? She nodded her head shyly.

"You should never be embarrassed," smiled HaRav Shach. "A daughter comes to her father every time she needs help or advice, right? Not only when she has an important, crucial question. A daughter is a daughter. If you are about to take a test and you feel stressed, come and tell me! If you just took a test and are disappointed with the results, or maybe happy and pleased, share it with me! Anything that is important to you is important to me. Tell me how things are in your dormitory, what you are learning, what bothers you, what makes you happy..."

The girl sat with Rav Shach for twenty minutes, happy for the opportunity to share her experiences with someone who was really listening, someone who cared. She felt quite uncomfortable but Rav Shach encouraged her pleasantly: "I am happy you shared this with me, it is important to me."

When she began internalizing that she is really welcome and not a bother, Rav Shach said: "I understand you are debating about a certain shidduch. What are your concerns?"

She explained her deliberations for and against, analyzing the situation and describing how she felt about it. After listening with great attention, Rav Shach said, "You can conclude the shidduch, it should be besh'a' tova! And please, come to tell me so I can rejoice together with you!"

The girl left Rav Shach's home, went back to the dormitory and called the Dayan, telling him Rav Shach decided she should get engaged to this boy.

The Dayan hurried over to Rav Shach's home. He had to understand what made Rav Shach suddenly say this!

"HaRav, I want to understand. Did I not explain the sides correctly to the Rosh Yeshiva?"

"You explained very clearly."

"So why did the Rosh Yeshiva tell me not to decide, while the Rosh Yeshiva did make to a decision? And I have another question: If the Rosh Yeshiva trusts that I gave over a correct picture of the situation and he came to a decision, why was it necessary to call the girl? Why could I have not been told what to tell her?"

Rav Shach replied: "Do you not understand why? I told you if any problem arises, you will be the guilty party!"

"And Rav Shach won't be held guilty for any problems? What's the difference?"

"I will tell you what the difference is: I first of all made her into my daughter. And a father is permitted to say 'no' to a son or daughter. Once I made it clear to her that I am like her father and she can come to me at any time to share any joy or pain, ask for any necessary help, and all that happens to her is important to me and I care, only then could I also tell her things that might not be acceptable to her." Only within such a relationship can one successfully guide, and therefore take the responsibility.