

Ki Tavo

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Hilula

20 - Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian

21 - Rabbi Aharon Abuchatzera

22 - Rabbi Yehuda ben Simchon

23 - Rabbi Yehuda Meir Gatz

24 - Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen, the
'Chafetz Chaim'

25 - Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlatshov

26 - The esteemed Rabbi
Chaim Pinto HaGadol zy" a

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

Approach Hashem When the King is in the Field

"You shall come to whomever will be the Kohen in those days, and you shall say to him, 'I declare today to Hashem, your G-d, that I have come to the Land that Hashem swore to our forefathers to give to us'" (Devarim 26:3)

The Parshah of Bikkurim (first fruits) is one of the wonderful sections in the Torah. It teaches us the extent to which a person must show gratitude to Hashem for giving him the Land and for blessing him with livelihood through which he can support himself. Therefore, once the fruits of his field have ripened, he must take a basket full of his first fruits to the Beit Hamikdash. He gives them to the Kohen who places them near the mizbe'ach. The owner then expresses his thanks to Hashem for all His kindness and goodness. Rashi quotes Chazal, "...and you shall say to Him: you are not ungrateful. Rather, you show gratitude to Hashem." Following the recital, the owner leaves the Beit Hamikdash with a feeling of great happiness for all the good Hashem bestowed upon him.

This Parshah is read every year during the month of Elul; some years it is read on the Shabbat preceding Rosh Hashanah. What significance does this have?

The Parshah speaks about a person's livelihood, which we know is determined on Rosh Hashanah. Chazal say (Beitza 16a) that a person's entire sustenance is fixed from one Rosh Hashanah to the next. This is the same sustenance which is mentioned in this week's Parshah, from which a person brings Bikkurim.

The Parshah also mentions the abundance and good life granted to man if he follows the correct path. This merits him with the means and ability to bring Bikkurim from the first of his crop each year anew, thanking Hashem for all the good He bestowed upon him, spiritually and materially. Chazal say (Tanchuma, Ki Tavo 2) that one who brings Bikkurim and performs the entire ritual in accordance with Hashem's will is blessed by a Heavenly Voice: "You brought Bikkurim today, may you merit doing so next year as well." This clarifies the connection between the Parshah of Bikkurim, the measure of man's livelihood if he follows the correct path, and Rosh Hashanah.

There is an additional connection between Parshat Ki Tavo and Rosh Hashanah. Towards the end of the Parshah we read about the admonition and harsh curses r"l that will befall those who do not hearken to the voice of Hashem. Among the curses mentioned are a lengthy exile, severe poverty, various difficult

and unbearable sicknesses, and enemies waging war against Am Yisrael and taking them captive.

This Parshah is read during Elul, in advance of Rosh Hashanah when we stand in judgement before Hashem, because the Torah wishes to warn us to repent for all the sins we committed. We must draw closer to Hashem, achieving a state of "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" (Shir Hashirim 6:3), the initials of which spell Elul. Each of the four words (אני לדודי ודודי לי) ends with the letter yud – 10, corresponding to the forty days from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur.

The Torah is advising us to utilize these days of mercy and forgiveness properly. It is a time for repentance, praying with concentration, increasing one's Torah study and taking care to observe the mitzvot as best as we can. This will merit us a good life, filled with sustenance and abundance, which will enable us to bring Bikkurim from the fruits of our harvest. But if G-d forbid we do not try to improve our ways, our fate will be determined on Rosh Hashanah accordingly, may Hashem protect us.

We must appreciate the lofty status of the month of Elul. It is a time in which we can elevate ourselves and draw closer to Hashem so as to be inscribed and sealed for a good and blessed year. How important it is to utilize these days from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur! The Holy Ba'al Hatanya zy" a describes these holy days as a time when Hashem is considered as a 'King in the field'. Hashem descends from His Heavenly Palace to This World, so that we can feel His closeness. This leads us to repentance and the opportunity to ask Him for whatever our hearts desire.

Although we no longer have a Beit Hamikdash and cannot bring Bikkurim, we can still take advantage of the lesson inherent in this mitzvah. When we read this section during Elul, it reminds us that since in our times we cannot fulfil this mitzvah, we must rectify our ways and bring from the Bikkurim of our personal selves, meaning we must offer Hashem our Torah and mitzvot. We must thank Him and also confess our sins which are a result of the Aramean, the Yetzer Hara who wishes to destroy us. By admitting our sins and repenting, we will merit being inscribed and sealed for a good and blessed year, with continued abundance so we can continue thanking Hashem for the abundant good He bestows upon us. When Hashem sees that we appreciate the bounty and are not ungrateful, He will grant us more abundance and we will thereby merit blessing and success in all our endeavors.



Walking in their Ways

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

Investing one's Time in Torah Study and Kindness

Nowadays people are addicted to various impure devices, to the extent that they no longer speak to their spouses because they are constantly chained to the screen. At a shiur I gave, I noticed that one of the participants was constantly looking down at his legs. I understood that it was not his legs that interested him, but the impure device he held there, r"l.

One of my talmidim from Montreal told me that after hearing me deliver a lecture one Tish B'Av night about the great tragedy inherent in the various iPhones, he returned home and told his wife he is planning to smash the expensive phone he bought not long ago. He explained to his surprised wife that because of this device he no longer goes to study Torah, does not go to the Beit Knesset for prayers and who knows what else will happen to him if he does not smash this device immediately. With his wife's agreement he went ahead and from that point on their marital harmony began thriving, Baruch Hashem.

Someone approached me and told me he is building a huge mall in America. He asked for a blessing that it should be successful. When I asked him if it would house abominable places, he stuttered and did not give a clear reply. I told him if this is the case he must be careful his children do not get involved with bad culture. He laughed and replied that his children are already grown and he has nothing to worry about. I told him there is no guardian against immorality and even at age eighty the Yetzer Hara does not leave man alone.

Much later he returned to me, clearly distressed. "What a shame I did not listen to you!" he said. "The mall only caused me great losses, material but mainly spiritual. I myself almost stumbled with serious prohibitions!"

A person thinks that if he invests his time in Torah study, fulfilling mitzvot and acts of kindness, he will lose out. But this is not the case, as the following story demonstrates:

I once planned to travel from Geneva to New York, from New York to Chicago and then back to Geneva. The outward journey was planned for Monday and the return journey for Wednesday. However, a short time before the flight, Rabbi Nissim Revivo zya"a, Av Beit Din of Paris, called me and asked me to participate in a dinner he was organizing for his institutions in Paris, on Monday evening. I told him I would have loved to participate, but it will not work out since I am due to fly to New York on Monday.

Rabbi Nissim Revivo did not concede so quickly. He explained that those who participate in the dinner every year are anticipating my presence and my blessings in the merit of my holy ancestors. Although I had scheduled a flight for Monday, I could postpone it to Tuesday and also postpone my return flight somewhat.

I seriously debated the matter. In the end, I agreed to his request, for the honor of Torah and its scholars, despite the difficulty in postponing all the planned appointments, and the financial loss from cancelling the flight and purchasing new tickets. I postponed my outward flight for Tuesday and the return flight for Thursday.

While in Chicago on Thursday morning, I was in the middle of receiving people when suddenly my attendant entered looking shaken. He told me in alarm that last night's Swissair flight from New York to Geneva, the flight we were supposed to take according to our original plans, had crashed into the Atlantic Ocean shortly after take-off and there were no survivors!

I thanked Hashem for His enormous kindness in saving me, in the merit of the Torah for which sake I had postponed my flight.

The Haftarah

"Arise! Shine!" (Yeshaya 60)

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

Guard Your Tongue

Warning Against Intended Harm

The mitzvah "You shall not stand aside while your fellow's blood is shed" (Vayikra 19:16) teaches us that we must invest the utmost effort in preventing a fellow Jew from experiencing any form of mental, emotional, physical or monetary harm.

Therefore, if a person hears that someone intends to harm a fellow Jew, he is obligated to warn him. In this case, since the information is not based on first-hand knowledge, one may not give over the information as fact. Rather, one should explain in a clear fashion that the information stems from secondhand knowledge that has not been confirmed: "I heard such and such. It is possible that it is true so you would be wise to take precautions."



In Our Father's Path

We Merit the Million-Dollar Lottery Daily

A significant part of the month of mercy and forgiveness is already behind us. We are at the height of the days during which we anoint Hashem as King over us, in approach of Rosh Hashanah when we observe the obligation of the day, 'Anoint Me as King over you.' However, it must be stressed that this duty must be carried out with joy.

In this week's Parshah the Torah writes (Devarim 28:47): "Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant." Rashi explains, "when everything was abundant: even though you had everything good." The Holy Arizal offers a different explanation.

He explains that the words "when everything was abundant" define the joy we must feel when fulfilling a mitzvah. It must be the same joy we felt "when everything was abundant"! If a person would possess all the good in the world, there would be no limit to his joy. This is how we should feel when performing a mitzvah!

In one of his lectures, the tzadik HaGaon Rabbi Reuven Karlenstein zt"l addressed the crowd: "Do you remember the lottery advert that adorned the buses and billboards – 'The Fifty-Million Lottery'? People went hysterical. Can words describe the joy of the lucky winner who won this fantastic prize?"

"I remember," related Rabbi Karlenstein, "once travelling by taxi in Bnei Brak. I noticed the driver looked particularly happy and excited. One could see it was some special occasion for him. Before I managed to ask, he began to share his story: 'Yesterday I gave a ride to the lottery winner! He asked me to drive him to the lottery building in Tel Aviv. At first I did not believe him but slowly it began to sink in that he was telling the truth. Honorable Rav! What should I say!' he told me excitedly. 'He got out of the taxi by the lottery office and told me to wait for him. Several moments later he returned and showed me a check of 14 million, bearing the lottery stamp!'"

"The driver spoke with such excitement; one could hear the beating of his heart. And why? Because yesterday he drove the winner! If so, how much happier is the one who actually won all those millions!"

This, says the Holy Arizal, is the joy we should feel when performing a mitzvah! We are obligated to feel as if we won the highest lottery sum, as if we possess all the good in the world! We laid tefillin today? We earned millions! We recited the blessing after eating bread? We earned millions! We learnt Torah? We earned millions!

Every prayer, every blessing, must be accompanied by the feeling that we are talking to the King. In this way we will utter every word slowly and with joy! We must feel we are doing every mitzvah for the honor of Hashem Yitbarach! This leads to enthusiasm, excitement and joy and is a wonderful way of preparing ourselves for the Day of Judgement.



Pearls of the Parsha

Rejoice with All the Good You Have

"You shall rejoice with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you and your household" (Devarim 26:11)

In this section of Bikkurim the Torah instructs us: "You shall rejoice with all the goodness." This seems to be a superfluous command. Generally, if a person is blessed with much good, it is unnecessary to tell him to be happy; it is an automatic reaction.

Rabbi Rachamim David Koskas shlit"א, in his sefer Maskil el Dal, answers that sometimes a person has an abundance of good, he truly lacks nothing, but he is still not happy with his lot. Either due to Chazal's proclamation: "One who possesses one hundred desires two hundred", or due to the presence of other factors that cause him to be unhappy, in which case all his wealth and goodness does not bring him joy.

This is why the Torah sees fit to warn us, "You shall rejoice with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you and your household." Rejoice with the good you possess, "be completely joyous" and use it for the service of Hashem.

The Blessing of Expansion of the Mind

"Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out" (Devarim 28:6)

Chazal say that three things expand a person's mind: a beautiful house, a beautiful wife and beautiful utensils.

The sefer Avnei Shoham brings a nice hint for this idea: The word (רַאבַב), (when) you come in, is an acronym for תיב – house, השא – wife, and סילכ – utensils.

Receiving a Portion in the Merit of Unity

"To the Reuvenite, the Gadite, and to half the tribe of the Manassite" (Devarim 29:7)

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu add the letter yud to the names of the tribes – רַאוּבֵנִי, גַּדִּי, and מְנַשֵּׁי and not simply say 'to Reuven, Gad and half the tribe of Menashe'?

The esteemed Gaon and tzadik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlit"א explains this with a beautiful idea. When the children of Gad and Reuven came to ask Moshe Rabbeinu for the land of Sichon and Og, at first he did not want to agree because he was afraid they wished to separate themselves from the rest of the people and not take part in conquering the Land. Only once they promised to go with Am Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael and help conquer the Land, did he accede to their request. It follows then that receiving the land of Sichon and Og was due to uniting themselves with Am Yisrael.

We know that Hashem only rests His presence among Am Yisrael if they are in complete unity and there is no dissidence among them. Chazal say (Tanchuma Nitzavim 1), "The Shechina only rests its Presence and transcends when Yisrael are unified as one group."

Therefore, when mentioning giving the land of Sichon and Og to Reuven, Gad and half the tribe of Menashe, Moshe Rabbeinu added the letter yud to the end of each of their names, to signify that Hashem was with them as a result of their remaining united with the rest of Am Yisrael.

... The Sabbatical Year ...

1. A tree that does not give fruit, and similarly ornamental or spice shrubs etc. may be planted after the sixteenth of Av. Some say one should not plant these barren trees from two weeks before Rosh Hashanah, so their absorption into the ground should not take place in the seventh year. Others have a more lenient opinion and permit planting them till just before Rosh Hashanah and in fact we follow this ruling. Nevertheless, to perform the mitzvah the best possible way (l'chatchila), one should complete the planting by the fifteenth of Elul before sunset, for the above reason.

2. This same rule applies to flowers and roses which are planted for smell alone and do not have taste.

3. Similarly, acts permitted during Shemittah to prevent loss should preferably be done before the Shemittah year begins so they should not have to be done during Shemittah.

For any questions in practical application of these halachot, please consult a rabbinical authority.

Treasures

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



The Soul and Fruit; the Ground and Mitzvot

"You shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your Land" (Devarim 26:2)

The Midrash tells us (Bereishit Rabba 1:1) that 'first' always refers to Torah. This teaches us that man must observe the Torah and mitzvot so Hashem should give him reward in the Next World. Fruits refers to reward as it says, (Pe'ah 1a), "These are the precepts whose fruits a person enjoys in This World but whose principal remains intact for him in the World to Come." Through observing the Torah, he merits reward.

The verse says "you shall take", from the term 'taking as a wife' as it says (Devarim 24:1), "If a man marries (חָקַי) a wife." This implies that when man devotes himself to Torah which is called a wife, he thereby merits fruit – reward.

It is impossible for the soul to fulfil Torah and mitzvot without a physical body, and mitzvot can be fulfilled in This World only, not in the World to Come. In addition, most of the mitzvot concern material concepts, for example Shemittah, Yovel, bearing children and performing brit milah. Very few of the mitzvot, for example prayer, are of a spiritual nature alone. This being the case, Hashem rewards the soul for the mitzvot observed in This World by the body. Therefore, the Torah says, "you shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your Land", for this Torah and its fruit is derived from the ground, from this material world. When a person dies he takes nothing with him, neither silver nor gold, only the Torah and mitzvot he performed in This World.

The soul is a deposit given over to man and we must guard it from the Yetzer Hara, not allowing him to make it filthy with sins. As the verse continues, "that Hashem, your G-d, gives you." Just as Eretz Yisrael is given to Am Yisrael conditionally, as Chazal say (Sifri Devarim 38): "If you perform Hashem's will, the land of Canaan is yours. If not, you will be exiled from it", so too, the soul is given to us as a deposit. We must take good care of it so it should not be taken from us.

How can man guard this deposit from the damages of the Yetzer Hara? Through greater Torah study. As the Gemara says (Yoma 28b): From the time of our Forefathers, they always had study houses. While they were in Egypt, they had a study house. While they were in the Wilderness, they had a study house. Avraham Avinu was a scholar and sat and studied Torah. Yitzchak Avinu was a scholar and sat and studied Torah. Ya'akov Avinu was a scholar and sat and studied Torah.



The Esteemed Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol zy" a, In Honor of his Hilula, 26 Elul

"Know, my beloved students! I will continue to stand before the Holy One Blessed Be He in prayer after my death, just as I did during my lifetime. I will not forsake you in my death, just as I did not forsake you during my lifetime."

These were the last words of the esteemed Maran, the tzadik and miracle worker, Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol zy" a. He promised explicitly to pray on behalf of the sheep of his pasture and affect salvation when they mention his name.

In this column we present several anecdotes demonstrating miraculous deliverances on account of the esteemed Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto Hagadol zy" a. Conveying the praise of tzadikim reinforces our faith in the purity of their prayers and the tremendous power accorded to their supplications before the One who sits on the Throne of Mercy.

Sent by Heaven

On Sunday the tenth of Adar 5755, Moreinu v'Rabbeinu shlit" a, descendant of the illustrious Pinto dynasty, served as sandak at a brit milah in Paris. He had been invited by Mr. David Cohen, a prominent member of the community. In middle of the seudah, one of the participants, Mr. Ben-Shushan, stood up and related the following inspirational story:

On the previous hilula of Rabbi Chaim Pinto (5754), he travelled to Mogador to participate in the hilula of the tzadik. He suffered from severe pain in his legs, with multiple complications, to the extent that he could no longer walk unaided and required two people to support him.

When he arrived at the cemetery, he decided he would sleep by the grave of Rabbi Chaim Hagadol and perhaps Hashem would grant him a complete recovery in the merit of the holy tzadik. Thus, he remained by the grave throughout the night.

That night he dreamed that Rabbi Chaim himself began to operate on his foot. After he concluded the surgery, the tzadik told him, "In the merit of your faith in Hashem

and in tzadikim, I was sent from Heaven specially to heal you. Now you may rise because you are cured. You may return to France without anyone's help! Awaken from your slumber!"

Mr. Ben-Shushan immediately woke up and began deliberating whether the dream was mere fantasy or reality. After all, he had slept the entire night by the grave, hoping for salvation in the merit of the tzadik. Perhaps the dream had just been wishful thinking.

But suddenly he felt his legs move. He tried to stand up unaided, and to his absolute amazement, he succeeded in getting up and walking around on his own!

His friends were amazed and asked him, "What happened to you? Were you putting on a show until now that you could not walk by yourself, making as if you were handicapped?"

Mr. Ben-Shushan dismissed their accusations and told them of his awesome dream. Everyone present celebrated joyously and a great kiddush Hashem was created by the gravesite of Rabbi Chaim Pinto on his hilula.

May his merit protect us.

Named After the Tzadik

Moreinu v'Rabbeinu shlit" a related another miraculous story:

"My disciple, Rav Shimon Elzas, had been married for a number of years, but did not merit having children. Every year, he would religiously visit the grave of my holy grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a. There he would shed copious tears, begging Hashem for children in the merit of the tzadik. I was always moved by his pain.

"During the hilula ceremony in 5763, all the participants joined in his anguish and rent the heavens in supplication for this couple. They blessed him, 'May it be His will that next year you will return here with your wife and a baby boy whom you will name Chaim, after the tzadik zy" a.'

"Heavenly mercy was aroused in the merit of the tzadik and nine months later his wife gave birth to a baby boy! The brit milah took place on Sunday of Parshat Balak 5764, and I was invited to be the sandak. However, since at the time I was in chutz l'aretz, I gave over the merit to R' Shimon's brother. This is a most miraculous story!"

A Tumult in the City

We wish to conclude this section with an excerpt from a lecture delivered by Moreinu shlit" a on Motzei Shabbat Parshat Chukat (5766). Talking about preparing ourselves in approach of the future redemption, may

it arrive speedily in our days, he mentioned a miraculous story that had taken place not long before.

"I wish to relate a wonderful story that took place just six months ago. The home of my holy grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy" a, which was almost two hundred and twenty years old, required renovations. Many of the homes in the area had collapsed and it was dangerous to approach his house. We set about raising funds and then signed a contract with an Arab contractor. To save on expenses, we supplied the materials. R' Avraham Knafo shlit" a, was responsible for the project and oversaw it in the best way possible. He told me afterward, that one day while the work was in progress, he discovered that a considerable amount of materials brought to the building site had simply disappeared.

"He immediately turned to the contractor and asked for an explanation but the contractor claimed he did not know a thing. He was so adamant in his denial that he swore if he was, indeed, the one who stole the materials, he should be punished with an unusual death which he spelled out to R' Knafo.

The very next day, they were shocked to discover that this contractor had been killed during the night in a brawl. He had proven to one and all that he was the true thief. He received his punishment, exactly as he had predicted.

The workers, who knew about his treachery, were very worried about their own fate. They too had taken part in the theft, but claimed the contractor had instructed them to do so. They asked forgiveness from the tzadik so his wrath should not strike them too. However, one of the workers made a mockery of the whole thing. He scoffed at his frightened comrades, telling them they were making a fuss over nothing. He had not even finished speaking, when his mouth became distorted in a most ugly way. It remained that way until he personally begged forgiveness from the tzadik!

This is the meaning of the Chazal, "Tzadikim are greater after their deaths than in their lifetime." The tzadikim receive their power from the holy Torah and their influence effects even inanimate objects in their surroundings. The inanimate house of the tzadik Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy" a, became sanctified, similar to the frying pans of the Mishkan which were sanctified through being used for a mitzvah.