

Ha'azinu

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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"ta



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

Faith is Man's Greatest Gift

"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth" (Devarim 32:1)

Before Moshe Rabbeinu passed away, he gathered the people and appointed heaven and earth to serve as eternal witnesses, that if Bnei Yisrael follow Hashem's path they will be blessed and not lack anything, but if they choose to turn their backs on Hashem and His Torah, they will suffer difficult, harsh decrees and their end will be bitter.

When one writes a deed, there must be witnesses who attest to its authenticity, for it is they who authorize the deed and give it validity. Moshe Rabbeinu too appointed two witnesses for his will. Why did he not choose the heavenly angels? Because not everyone merits seeing angels and if they cannot be seen, how can they be brought when necessary if someone objects to the deed?

If this is the case, we can ask why Moshe did not choose Yehoshua bin Nun, Elazar HaKohen or the elders? Even though human beings eventually die, their signatures can be held and one can testify before Beit Din that these are their signatures, just as we do with any deed signed by mortals.

Rashi addresses this question: "Why did he appoint heaven and earth to testify? Moshe said, 'I am a human being and will not live forever. If Yisrael deny they accepted the covenant, who will reproach them?' Therefore, he appointed heaven and earth as witnesses, for they are eternal witnesses."

However, heaven and earth are only appropriate witnesses for those who believe in Hashem. When a believing Jew is faced with hardships, he immediately remembers that heaven and earth testified that those who follow the correct path will merit Hashem's blessing, while those who take the path of evil will eventually be tried. But for he who does not believe in Hashem, of what benefit are heaven and earth? He does not acknowledge the Creator who created heaven and earth and established their order for eternity. He will claim that although heaven and earth can be seen, they have no mouth to attest to Hashem's existence. So how do we refute this claim?

"The heavens declare the glory of G-d, and the firmament tells of His handiwork" (Tehillim 19:2). If one wishes to believe in the Creator, it is enough to look at the heavens which declare Hashem's glory and contemplate the firmament which tells of His handiwork. Even though they cannot talk, just contemplating the heavens discloses the work of creation and strengthen one's faith in the Creator Who fashioned them during the six days of creation. Their very existence validates and verifies the Creator.

A heretic who refuses to acknowledge Hashem's existence and detaches himself from the light of Torah, will remain blind even if we bring him all the proofs in the world and the most cutting evidence for Hashem's existence. Until he agrees to open his eyes, no form of reasoning will be of benefit. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu said to Bnei Yisrael "I appoint them to bear witness בכם - against you"; it is dependent בכם - on you and your will.

Every object and creature will eventually deteriorate and perish. A person buys a suit and wears it for a year, two years, even ten years, but even after the longest time, the suit will eventually wear out and no longer be fitting for use. A tree may be sturdy and have strong roots, but the day will come when its roots will rot and the tree will decay. Sand too flies around in the wind and does not remain firmly in place. Even man, the crown of creation, is given a limited number of time in this world and after a hundred and twenty years will die. Only the heaven and earth stand set for eternity, and that is why Moshe chose them to bear witness to his warning.

I have come across many people who nod their heads in agreement when I speak to them about Judaism and mitzvah observance, but the truth is their hearts are somewhere else. Only when I begin speaking about their business concerns do their heads begin to work and their brains go into high gear. These people are blind and do not consider what awaits them after their death. When the day comes for them to leave This World, how sorry they will be. They will be ashamed of their foolishness but it will already be too late.

When the king parades in the streets, the entire population goes out to greet him. If someone decides it does not interest him and locks himself in his house instead of savoring the sight of the king, later when he hears the king distributed generous gifts to all those who welcomed him he will be very sorry he remained secluded at home. To one he gave a house, another received a vineyard, and someone else precious stones and pearls. But the one who remained at home did not get anything because he did not give himself the chance. Now, when he decides to go out and greet the king so he too may receive a gift, he finds the king has already returned to his palace. He missed the opportunity.

So too, when man locks himself up and does not want to believe in Hashem, he is the one who loses out enormously because faith is one of the greatest gifts, and with it a person can merit wondrous achievements.



Walking in their Ways

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

Free Favors

A man once besmirched my name in public, in a most offensive way. The day came when he met with misfortune. His business collapsed and whatever he tried his hand at turned sour. He needed my assistance to pull himself out of the depths of indigence; for various reasons I was the only one who was able to help him. Indeed, I helped him tremendously until he was able to stand on his own two feet once again. I even came to his new home and affixed the mezuzah to his doorpost, blessing him with all things good. I also presented his family with a respectable gift in honor of their new home – a picture of my grandfather the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a.

The man and his wife were awestruck by my unconditional generosity. They did not know how they could ever thank me enough, especially after the way I had been treated. However, I harbored no resentment whatsoever in my heart.

They thanked me over and over again. Tears formed in their eyes. They pulled out wads of money from their pockets in recompense for all my help. But I politely declined their offer. I did not want to receive monetary payment for my gestures.

Once again they were overcome with emotion. But these were tears of repentance. Today, they are completely Torah-observant and keep all the mitzvot like any other Jew.

When I was asked why I had refused the offer of money from this couple, I replied that had I taken the money, they would have considered it atonement for the lashon hara spoken about me and they would never have repented. But when I refused their offer, he understood he had to do specific teshuva for that sin regardless of the favors I had done for them. In this way, they merited doing complete teshuva.

The Haftarah

"David spoke" (Shmuel II, 22)

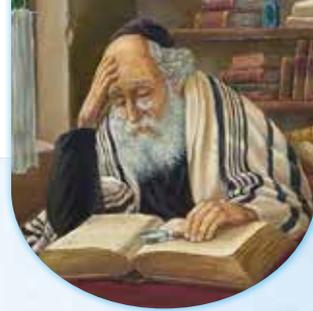
The connection to the Parshah: In the Haftarah we read about David's Song of Gratitude, while the Parshah relates Moshe's song.

Guard Your Tongue

Being Precise When Relating Negative Information

The fact that derogatory information is being related for a beneficial purpose does not permit the listener to accept it as fact. When necessary, one is permitted to listen to this information but one is forbidden to believe it. One may act on account of this information, taking into consideration that it might contain some truth.

Due to this, the first condition for relating beneficial derogatory speech is that the information being shared was heard first-hand. Since this information may not be accepted as fact, one may not present it as fact. In situations where it is permissible to relate information heard indirectly, this must be pointed out and the speaker must say he is not certain about the accuracy of the information.



In Our Father's Path

How Does One Preserve the Atmosphere of the High Holy Days?

We are still enveloped by the pure fragrance of the holy Yom Kippur day. Being compared to heavenly angels is still a fresh memory. The question is, how, if at all, can one preserve that atmosphere, eternalizing those lofty moments and holding on to them throughout the coming year?

Most likely, during those holy moments, we each accepted upon ourselves some positive commitment as a merit to emerge worthy from the Heavenly trial. Again the question arises, what can we do so the untainted scent of that undertaking should not fade away? How can we maintain this sincerity during the course of the year?

The solution is to fix a special time for the daily study of mussar. Studying mussar can be compared to utilizing a mirror, such that can be found in every home, in almost every room. We stand in front of it with great concentration and only once the mirror approves, are we prepared to leave the house.

This is how we should view the study of mussar. It reveals to us all negative traits, all the tactics of the Yetzer Hara, and teaches us how the power of imagination can lead us astray. Studying mussar enables us to rectify our middot and improve our ways, and only then are we ready to appear in public and mix with others in a way that will testify that we are faithful Jews.

The Chafetz Chaim zt"l writes about the importance of a daily mussar session:

"The Holy sefarim, for example the Arizal and the Vilna Gaon's zt"l commentary on Mishlei, strongly emphasized the obligation of studying mussar daily. Particularly in our times, due to our many sins, when we see a great increase in violators of religion and disseminators of erroneous beliefs, it is extremely important to reinforce the study of mussar, for this is the only way we can prevail and not be overcome.

"To what can this be compared? To someone walking on his way who is suddenly faced with a strong wind. If he does not hold on tightly to his clothes, the storm can strip him of his clothing leaving him unprotected from the elements. So too concerning this matter: Now, when a stormy wind of heresy and apostasy is raging in the world, if a person does not strengthen his mussar study – the garment that protects his Torah – he will be blown away by the wind."



Pearls of the Parsha

Prayer that Pierces the Heavens

"See, now, that I, I am He and no god is with Me" (Devarim 32:39)

The Megaleh Amukot explains that there are nine hundred and fifty-five heavens. Nine hundred of the heavens are where the lofty angels can be found, but the highest fifty-five are Hashem's dominion alone and no angel may step into this territory. The words of the verse "Behold! To Hashem, your G-d, are the heaven and the highest heaven" (Devarim 10:14) hint to this idea. The numerical value of "hen – behold" is fifty-five; these heavens are for Hashem alone.

Moshe Rabbeinu a"h, through his prayers, pierced all the heavens. With what did he pierce them? With the nine hundred verses of sefer Devarim. And from the verse "See, now" until the end of the Torah, there are fifty-five verses.

Therefore, when Moshe pierced the nine hundred heavens with the nine hundred verses of sefer Devarim, he saw the Melachim (angels), Seraphim and Ofanim in these heavens. But when he recited this verse and pierced the first of the remaining fifty-five heavens where no Melachim reside, then Moshe said, "[Hashem said] See, now, that I, I am He and no god is with Me."

The Final Redemption Will Bring Complete Recovery

"I struck down and I will heal" (Devarim 32:39)

The Holy Zohar quotes Rabbi Yosi: In the future Hashem will perfect and heal Yisrael so they will be entirely perfect and have no defects among them, because they are the rectification of the world, comparable to man's clothing which is the rectification for his body. This is the meaning of the verse, "as [people] come into being like [the earth's] garment."

Come and see; at the resurrection of the dead, they will arise just as they entered [the grave]. If they entered lame or blind, lame and blind they will arise, in the same form, so people should not say – this resurrected person is someone else.

Only after that will Hashem heal them and they will stand perfect before Him, and then the whole world will reach perfection as it says "On that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One."

The Gravesite of Moshe Rabbeinu

"From a distance shall you see the Land" (Devarim 32:52)

We know that Moshe Rabbeinu was buried in the portion of Gad, as it says in Gad's blessing "for that is where the lawgiver's plot is hidden." (Devarim 33:21)

In his commentary Od Yosef Chai, Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim zy" a brings a wonderful hint for this: If you split the word "mineged – from a distance" into two, it can be read "min gad – from Gad." So the verse can be translated, "From Gad shall you see the Land", from your burial place in the portion of Gad, you will be able to see Eretz Yisrael.

... The Sabbatical Year ...

1. The prohibition of sefichin does not apply to fruit, since it cannot be that the tree was planted this year. It also does not apply to plants which most people do not sow, or field and garden crops which grew in places not intended for sowing, since people do not normally plant in these places for specific reasons.

2. Sefichin does not apply to bananas, even though they are considered produce of the ground, since even if the tree was planted at the beginning of the Shemittah year, it will not produce fruit until the next year. Also due to the fact that it is a perennial plant. However, all laws pertaining to fruit apply to bananas too.

3. Sefichin does not apply to the second year of yield from perennial shrubs, and most marketed produce is from this yield. For example, sefichin does not apply to mint, papaya etc.

4. Others hold that sefichin does apply to mint since today it is sown specially. However, we follow the lenient ruling since mint is a perennial shrub. Even those who are stringent only forbid eating it but one may benefit from it in other ways since one may benefit from sefichin. Therefore, one may smell mint that grew in the Shemittah year. Even if it was planted specifically for its smell, sefichin does not apply.

Treasures

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



Hashem Rejoices with His lot

"For Hashem's portion is His people; Ya'akov is the measure of His inheritance" (Devarim 32:9)

Tana d'bei Eliyahu tells us that one of Hashem's attributes is "happy with His lot." The Gaon Rabbi Chaim Volozhin zt"l (Nefesh Hachaim) asks: Does not the entire world belong to Hashem? He is One Who rules over everything and there is no area His presence does not fill. So how is it possible to say that Hashem is "happy with His lot"?

The Vilna Gaon answers that "His lot" refers to Am Yisrael, as it says, "For Hashem's portion is His people; Ya'akov is the measure of His inheritance." Hashem is happy with His portion, happy with Am Yisrael whatever their situation, even with generations who have fallen from their spiritual greatness.

With siyata d'Shmaya I would like to add that the main joy and pleasure Hashem has from His people is when they repent and return to Him. When Am Yisrael turn their backs on Hashem r"l, distancing themselves from His Torah and mitzvot, there is no doubt this causes the Holy Shechina terrible pain. This can be compared to a prince who alienated himself from his father and left his palace. So Hashem laments, "Woe to Me that My children have exiled themselves from My table and left Me."

As soon as Am Yisrael arouse themselves to return to their Father in Heaven and re-connect to His Torah and mitzvot, there is no limit to the joy and pleasure this brings to Hashem. His lost children, the delight of His soul, are returning to Him and wish to bask in His presence and live together with Him. When Hashem sees His children returning to Him, He grants them a precious gift to express His love for them. Hashem restores the purity of their souls which they lost when they distanced themselves from Him. Now Hashem willingly returns the jewel that was taken from them.

If a human king wishes to present his servant with an expensive gift but for some reason the servant refuses to accept it, the king will clearly be very angry at this act of scorn and he will make the disrespectful servant pay for it dearly. So it is with the King of kings. The Yetzer Hara incites man to sin, causing him to blemish his ways, turn his back on the Creator and distance himself from Him. But with His abundant mercy, not only is Hashem patient and does not punish him straight away, He even calls him to repent and once again cleave to Hashem and His Torah.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



How Does One fulfil the Mitzvah of Rejoicing on the Chag?

The mitzvah incumbent upon us during the approaching Chag is "You shall rejoice on your festival... and you will be completely joyous." We know Hashem does not obligate a person with something he is incapable of carrying out, so how can Hashem command us to feel tremendous, unlimited joy, without any sorrow and sighing, distress and concerns? Surely our Father who sees into our hearts knows this is extremely hard for us.

HaGaon Rabbi Chaim HaKohen zt"l, the Chalban, answers this question by asking another question: On Succot, in the blessing recited after eating mezonot foods we say, "And gladden us Hashem, our G-d, on this day of the Festival of Succot." However, if Hashem commands us to rejoice and it seems to be a mitzvah we must carry out, why do we ask Hashem to make us happy? Hashem said "You shall rejoice on your festival" and we say to Him "And gladden us Hashem, our G-d"?

This, in fact, is the profundity of feeling joyful. It is not a mitzvah a person can fulfil by himself for it is very hard. In contrast to lulav and succah, where man himself can go and buy the necessary articles, when faced with this command to be completely happy on the festivals, he sees he is unable to do this. His many concerns and limitations make it very challenging for him. So he picks up his eyes to heaven and begs Hashem, "Master of the World, I truly want to fulfil Your command with all my heart and feel unlimited joy, but it is an extremely hard directive. Although I am happy, You want me to be boundlessly joyful, without feeling any sorrow or restrictions at all!"

And then we get a glimpse of the answer; a powerful profundity that is the basis of this mitzvah: We are truly not capable of fulfilling this mitzvah on our own! So we turn to Hashem and ask Him to make us happy: "And gladden us Hashem,

our G-d, on this day of the Festival of Succot." Meaning, we understand very well that we do not possess the power to do anything, at all; everything is from Him.

When a person comprehends that it is Hashem Who does everything, his heart is filled with great joy. For the essence of joy stems from closeness to Hashem, realizing that Hashem is very close to us and there is no limit to Hashem's love for us and no end to His assistance. There is no limit to the joy of one who attains this perception of G-dliness and understands the depth of Hashem's closeness to His people. It fills us with confidence and courage and this entire materialistic world is considered as nil in contrast to man's intense adherence to Hashem.

This teaches us that it is our attachment to Hashem that lies behind the joy we must feel on the Chag. This comes specifically from understanding that we ourselves do nothing. When we wish to fulfil the mitzvah of rejoicing on the Chag and feel it is too hard for us, we turn to Hashem and ask for His help, with the realization that He is the Only One who does everything and there is none other than Him. We then recognize the depth of Hashem's closeness to us which fills us with tremendous joy. Because it is Hashem who gladdens us and we rejoice in His closeness.

You Give Color to Life!

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that our demanding lifestyles are replete with challenges, disappointments, and various failures. Yet despite all this we are commanded to forget about everything and be happy. How do we do this?

HaRav Aharon Margalit shlit"l stresses: Man does not choose his life's sketch. What he does choose is how to color it. He can choose whether to laugh or cry, complain or rejoice. Everything depends on his choice. We must remember: our life's picture is sketched by Hashem and is not in our control, but we can choose the colors.

What is our life's sketch? The challenges presented to us by Hashem. He did not ask us if we want this father or that mother, which blood type we would like, who our brothers and sisters will be. He determined our reality and we are the ones who need to decide how to work with it.

As long as a person has not come to terms with his reality, he does not possess the humility and submission necessary to understand it is all Hashem's doing. He is the One who put me here and these are the challenges Hashem, in His glory, decided to set in my path. Lacking this perception make it very hard to cope with one's circumstances.

"Hashem gave and gives each person the exact strengths he needs to face his personal challenges and complete his mission in This World" continues HaRav Margalit. "As David Hamelech said, 'He Who gives snow like fleece, He scatters frost like ashes.' Before descending to this lowly world, each person receives from Hashem all the strength required of him in his lifetime to cope with the challenges he will face. And then, in the moment of truth, when he is faced with a challenge, if he has the sense, he makes use of those strengths.

"And if Hashem specifically chose us and specifically gave us a difficult challenge, it is a sign that we are capable of handling it. Not everyone is capable, but we are capable. How can we know this? From the fact that Hashem is trying precisely us! He does not try someone who truly is not capable!

"When a person comes to terms with his reality and understands that everything depends on his attitude and perspective, his life changes drastically in an instant. Up until now he tried to fight reality but was unsuccessful. It turned him into an angry, hurt and bitter person, who judged everything negatively. This kind of person lacks hope, he is a hopeless pessimist who spreads poison in his surroundings and is unpleasant to be around.

"But when he comes to term with reality and understands Who is behind it, his life changes drastically. He begins to handle his challenges in a healthy way, with faith in the Creator and recognition of the strengths given to him to overcome the difficulty and succeed in meeting the challenge."