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Hilula

10 - Rabbi Refael Aharon ben Shimon,
Av Beit Din Egypt

11 - Rachel Imeinu a"h

12 - Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka, Rosh Yeshiva
'Parat Yosef'

13 - Rabbi Rachamim Barda, Av Beit
Din Tripoli

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

15 - Maran Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan
zya"á

16 - Maran Rabbi Elazar Menachem
Man Shach, Rosh Yeshiva of Ponivezh



Faith in Hashem – an Obligation

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

The verse mentions Avraham Avinu's perfect, heartfelt faith which Hashem considered as something outstanding. The question is, why is it regarded as something special? Surely Avraham Avinu would not believe in any other being! How does this show his greatness?

The answer is that there are two kinds of faith. There is someone who believes only in Hashem and has complete faith that He alone made, makes and will make everything; he understands there is none other than Him and everything emanates from Him. On the other hand, there is the person who is very active in different pursuits and so naturally also gives credit to his own power and capabilities. He does not ascribe results to Hashem alone.

This is what the verse wishes to stress when saying that Avraham believed in Hashem. It means to say that he believed in Hashem alone and not in anything else. He did not attribute success to his own powers or capabilities, even though he caused people to repent, and converted many of his townsmen (Bamidbar Rabba 14:11). This was Avraham Avinu's exceptional greatness and the reason why Hashem reckoned his faith as an act of righteousness.

Although we cannot remotely compare anyone to Avraham, let's consider the great scientist Albert Einstein who made many contributions to the world with his famous scientific discoveries. He is best remembered for facilitating the development of nuclear weapons and the atom bomb, and indeed, he accorded full credit to his great scientific powers and impressive talents. Similarly, the famous English scientist, Isaac Newton, contributed to the world with his breakthroughs in mathematics and optics by inventing the first telescope, and above all by discovering the law of gravity. There were others too who believed first and foremost in their own capabilities and powers; this is where their faith lay. Only towards the end of their lives did they come to the realization that all their scientific knowledge was nothing compared to Hashem Almighty, and admitted there is none other than Him.

Although there are a thousand distinctions, we must consider that already as a young child Avraham Avinu recognized there is none other than Him and the entire world is sustained by Hashem's word. After realizing clearly that Hashem is the only G-d, he achieved a level of faith way above anyone else.

The difference between Avraham Avinu and the other scientists we mentioned is that their main goal was how to further glorify their own name and raise their status in the eyes of the world, whereas Avraham Avinu had a different agenda. His constant wish was to elevate the great Name of Hashem in the world. Accordingly, he guided the people to convert and brought them closer to the Shechina.

Avraham Avinu's conduct imparts a lesson for life. Every single person can acquire belief and complete faith in Hashem; it all depends on a person's will and the effort he is willing to put forth. If a person has true faith and sincerely wishes to elevate Hashem's Name in the world, he will then succeed in instilling faith in Hashem in the hearts of others too and bring wayward people closer to the path of faith and Judaism.

Both the person who gives credit to his own capabilities and the one who does not know how to manage his life, should eradicate all foreign thoughts from his mind and believe in Hashem alone. This will grant him a good life in This World and the Next.

Above all, even someone who comes from a very ordinary and even disreputable family can strengthen his belief in Hashem and come closer to Him. No person should say, "My father/grandfather were corrupt, my family is corrupt, so I too am not worth anything and have no chance to change. I will forever remain wicked." This is simply untrue. Avraham Avinu himself was born to his father Terach who worshipped idols and did not educate his son to believe in Hashem. Despite this, on his own initiative Avraham Avinu toiled to acknowledge the Creator and serve Him, as it says (Yeshaya 40:26), "Raise your eyes on high and see Who created these [things]!" He even guided others to follow his path, bringing them closer to Hashem.

This teaches us that complete faith in Hashem is not 'hereditary'. It is the very personal mission of each individual to believe in Hashem and serve Him. There are those, like Avraham Avinu, who recognize Hashem already at a young age, while there are those who only merit to acknowledge the Creator at a later stage in life. There is also the one who does not fit into any of these categories and never attains belief in Hashem. This is the most unfortunate kind. Man must strive to serve Hashem without taking his circumstances, family, or other factors into account. The main thing is never to despair from repenting and drawing closer to Hashem. When he strengthens himself and truly wishes to believe in Hashem, Hashem will assist him in attaining his quest.



Walking in their Ways

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

Walk Humbly with Your G-d

My esteemed father, Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto zy"a, conducted himself exactly as he taught others to lead their lives. He never asked anyone to take upon themselves any aspect of mitzvah observance which he himself did not excel in, including the matter of guarding his eyes.

Abba zy"a is famous for not leaving his home for forty years, at the command of his father. Even when eventually he did leave his home, he always kept his eyes glued to the ground.

About five years before his passing, we travelled together to Morocco and stopped over in Marseille where we spent Shabbat. Walking to the nearest Beit Knesset would take an hour and a half. At that time Abba suffered from a fracture in his leg and it was very hard for him to walk; despite this, he paid no attention to our request that he remain at home. He explained that since he had already told the community leaders he would visit them, it was considered like an oath and he must keep his word despite the challenge.

Throughout the one and a half hour walk, Abba kept his eyes focused on the ground and did not look up even once. When someone asked him, "How do you manage not to pick up your eyes at all?" He answered modestly, "Now during the summer the streets may be fouled by dog's mess, therefore I keep looking down so as not to filthy my legs. I wish to arrive in a clean state to the Beit Haknesset."

In truth, with this answer Abba was evading the real issue – the extent to which he guarded his eyes when passing through streets full of immodesty. Yet due to his humility, Abba wished to hide his good deeds from others, thereby fulfilling the command "Walk humbly with your G-d."

The Haftarah

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

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

The Path of the Upright

We have a constant obligation to help others to the best of our ability. If one notices a friend upset or angry, one should try hard to make him happy, calm him down and reassure him.

This requirement includes extending oneself to help others. Rabbeinu Yonah (Sha'arei Teshuva) writes that this attribute is "one of the most serious and primary principles demanded of man, whether he is poor or rich." For the sake of peace and harmony one should learn to compromise in all matters and go beyond the strict letter of the law. Yerushalayim was only destroyed because they acted strictly according to the law and did not extend themselves more than the law required.



In Our Father's Path

Seasonings of Wisdom

A special branch of Torah wisdom and its secrets is found in contemplating word/letter comparisons which reveal new insights and concepts. The Mishna tells us (Avot 3:18), "Rabbi Eliezer ben Chisma said: The laws of bird-offerings, and the laws regarding the beginning of the menstrual periods – these are essential laws; astronomy and mathematics (gematria – numerology) are like the seasonings of wisdom." The essential laws are the actual wisdom of the Torah, while engaging in astronomy and gematriot can be compared to an outer garment for that wisdom.

The Gemara (Shabbat 105a) refers to this category of Torah, the source for which is found in this week's Parshah:

"How do we know that abbreviations are from the Torah? As it says, 'כי אב המון' – For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations' (Bereishit 17:5). אב – I have made you a father of the nations; בחר – you are the chosen one of the nations; המון חביב – you are My beloved among the nations; מלך – you are a king over the nations; ותיק – among the nations you are the one who is modest and loves mitzvot; נאמן – you are faithful among the nations."

According to Rabbi Eliezer son of R' Yosi Hagelili, abbreviations are one of the thirty-two ways in which Torah can be expounded. Indeed, the Gemara rules a significant number of laws using abbreviations.

As an example, the Ba'alei Hatsofot (Berachot 51b) bring a proof that one must sit – and not stand – while reciting Birkat Hamazon (Grace after meals) from the words, "ואכלת ושבעת וברכת" – And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied and you shall bless Hashem, your G-d." The word ושבעת (you shall be satisfied) can be split up into ושב – and sit, וברכת (עת) – while you bless. This alludes to the fact that one must sit during Birkat Hamazon.

Chazal also accord much weight to gematria and make use of this wisdom, often using it to find a connection between the Written and Oral Law. For example, the tradition passed down from the time of Moshe Rabbeinu that the period of abstention for the Nazirite is thirty days, is expounded from the words קדוש יהיה – holy shall he be, since the numerical value of יהיה is thirty.

Gematria is usually an arithmetic calculation of existing data, comparing two things with the same numerical value that are logical and true, even excluding their identical gematria. The wisdom of gematria is referred to as parpara'ot – seasonings of the Torah, for they draw the heart to the wisdom concealed in the Torah which hides behind an identical number value, even though the gematria itself is only numerical and not spoken language.

In his introduction to Sefer Bereishit, the Ramban refers to the wisdom and value of gematria:

"We have a valid tradition that the entire Torah is made up of the names of Hashem, since the words can be split up into words of a different meaning. For example, the verse בראשית ברא אלקים – In the beginning of G-d's creating, can be divided up into different words, for example בראש יתברא אלקים. The entire Torah is like this, in addition to the combinations and numerical value of the words."

Throughout the generations, our Sages engaged in this wisdom to a significant extent and used it to reveal hidden Torah concepts, for their times and for future generations, which shed new light on both halachic and moral details.

The significant technological advances witnessed by our generation have led to the development of computer programs through which one can easily access the numerical value of a certain idea, and find matches identical in content to a specific Torah concept. It reveals complex calculations and unlimited mathematical codes.



The Sabbatical Year

1. During Shemittah one may not clear a field, neither of big or small stones, whether in one's own field or that of a friend, since this is considered to be preparing the land for sowing and planting.

2. If, for example, one requires the stones for construction and one's intention is not for agricultural purposes, one should remove only the top layer of stones, leaving in the earth those stones that are attached to the ground. In this way it will be clear that one's intention is not for agricultural purposes.

3. However, a contractor who erects buildings may take all the stones and does not need to leave the bottom layer, since his profession is proof of the fact that his goal is to use the stones. Even today when it is no longer routine to take stones from a field for building purposes, rather one uses stones hewn from a mountain quarry, he may still remove stones from a field.

4. One may remove stones from a parking lot, playground, path or similar expanse. Similarly, it is customary to weed wild grass that grows in gardens and empty lots so it should not serve as a hideout for snakes, or in order to prevent fires. This may be done during Shemittah but one should not uproot them with their roots. Rather one should only cut off what lies above the ground. If for some reason one does have to remove the roots, one should do so by hand and not with a hoe.

5. Taking stones from a fence that is higher than ten tefachim: If the fence is made up of more than ten stones, each weighing the equivalent of two human beings, one may remove them. If the fence is lower than ten tefachim, contains less than ten stones, or is made up of small stones that weigh less than two people, one may take them all besides the lowest tefach.

When taking stones for building purposes, it must be clear that one's intention is not to benefit the land, for example he can be seen taking the stones to a nearby building site. In absence of this condition it would be prohibited on account of mar'at ayin.

6. It is common practice to gather small twigs and straw for barbecuing in a garden or forest. This is permissible during Shemittah. There is no need to fear that one will be suspected of gathering the twigs for the sake of improving the land, since the barbecue is proof that one's intention is to light a fire.

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



Hashem's Promise will be fulfilled in its entirety

"Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Bereishit 12:1)

Rashi writes on the words "go for yourself": For your own benefit and for your own good. What is this benefit? "And I will make of you a great nation"; here you will not merit the privilege of having children and there you will, and there you will also become famous.

The commentators write that the words לך לך, go for yourself, have a numerical value of one hundred. When Hashem promised Avraham that he would have children, he was seventy-five years old. Yet this promise was fulfilled only when he reached the age of one hundred, twenty-five years after the promise! This was a not simple test; Avraham and Sara were old and longed for a child and finally they are told they would merit a son. But one year passes, and another year, and they are still waiting. Nevertheless, Avraham does not entertain thoughts about Hashem's ways and does not ask questions about the promise. Only twenty-five years later do they merit salvation when their son Yitzchak is born.

This serves as a lesson for those who come to ask for a blessing for salvation, whether for children or livelihood or any other matter. Often people want to see the fulfillment of the verse "before they call I will answer!" They are not capable of waiting and wish an immediate answer to their prayers. Of course this is not the correct attitude. We see how Avraham waited for twenty-five years, displaying great patience until he merited a child. He had no doubt that Hashem's promise would be fulfilled in its entirety – if not now then sometime in the future, for Hashem knows the most auspicious time to fulfil a petitioner's request.

This is why we conclude the first blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei prayer with the words "Shield of Avraham." Avraham was the example of complete faith in the Creator and cleaved to Him with all his heart because he believed He would watch over him and protect him from any mishap. We mention this in the prayer so we should remember Avraham and learn from his deeds. May it be His will that we indeed merit following in his footsteps.

May the Memory of a Tzaddik be for a Blessing



The Esteemed Maran Rabbi Chaim Pinto HaKatan zy"a

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

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

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

His daily schedule began after the Shacharit prayers, when he would visit the grave of his grandfather the tzad-

dik and mekubal Rabbi Chaim Hagadol, in the old cemetery. He would always mention his name while blessing people, saying, "The merit of my honorable, holy grandfather, should protect you."

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

He would instruct his attendant to go to the house of a needy widow or underprivileged family and deliver the food. To some he would send meat and pastries and to others, fruits and vegetables. The attendant distributed the food among the needy, preventing the poor people of the city from starving.

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

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

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

There were those who actively searched for Rabbi Chaim, passing in front of him intentionally in order that he request of them to donate a specific sum of money for tzedakah. They believed that if they would fulfill the request of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, they would meet

with success and thereafter experience good fortune in all their endeavors.

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

Complete Joy

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

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

Washing off Impurity

Rabbi Chaim Hakatan used to bundle the money he collected for charitable purposes in a handkerchief that was specifically designated for this mitzvah. After the stars came out, even before Rabbi Chaim began to learn Torah, he would ritually wash the kerchief that held the money.

When questioned about this custom, the tzaddik explained, "I wash the kerchief from the klippot and contamination of this world. The greatest filth in this world is money. Therefore, after distributing the funds for tzedakah, I wash the kerchief."

Great is the power of tzaddikim for their good deeds and acts make an impression even after their passing. There is a well-known Chazal that states that relating and delving into stories of tzaddikim is considered as if engaging in the mystical Ma'aseh Merkavah.