

# Va'eira

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## 936

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

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### MASKIL LEDAVID

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



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### Hilula

28 Tevet – Rabbi Refael Shmuel Birnbaum, Rosh Yeshiva of Mir

29 Tevet – Rabbi Eliyahu Moshe Yisrael Panizel

1 Shevat – The Maharam Shick

2 Shevat – Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Anapole

3 Shevat – Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik

4 Shevat – Rabbi Yisrael Abuchatzera, the Baba Sali zy"l

5 Shevat – Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib of Gur, author of Sefat Emet

## Pride Hinders Repentance

The Ramban quotes the Midrash [Shemot Raba 13:3] on the verse "Because I have made his heart stubborn" [Shemot 10:1]: "Rabbi Yochanan said, this is an opportunity for heretics to say, but he was prevented from repenting! Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, the heretics should close their mouths, but 'If [one is drawn] to the scoffers, he will scoff' [Mishlei 3:34]. Hashem warns a person once, a second time, and a third time, but he still does not repent? So He locks the door to his repentance as a punishment for his sin. And so it was with the wicked Pharaoh. Since Hashem sent [Moshe Rabbeinu] to him five times and he did not pay attention to [Moshe Rabbeinu's] words, Hashem said, 'You stubbornly hardened your heart; I will add impurity to your impurity.'"

The Ramban explains the Midrash:

"[The first] half of the plagues were unleashed because of his wickedness, for with these plagues it says, 'Pharaoh's heart was strong', 'Pharaoh made his heart stubborn.' He did not want to send them out for Hashem's honor. But when the plagues intensified and he tired of enduring them, his heart softened and he contemplated sending them out, but it was due to the weight of the plagues, not for the sake of doing His Creator's will. And therefore Hashem hardened his spirit and toughened his heart, for the sake of publicizing His Name."

The Ramban is saying that Pharaoh should have let Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt with the goal of wanting to honor Hashem and do His will. Pharaoh should have learnt a lesson from the plagues, and realized Hashem's greatness and might, causing him to repent and desire to obey His word.

One of the reasons why Hashem brought the plague of darkness at the end of all the plagues – the last plague before the plague of the Firstborns – is as Rashi writes, because there were wicked people among Bnei Yisrael who did not want to leave Egypt. All these wicked ones died during the three days of total darkness.

Hashem postponed killing these wicked ones, for perhaps when they see "the great Hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt," through all the great plagues they experienced until now, they

will recognize Hashem's greatness. They will realize how much good Hashem bestowed on the Jewish people, and not await any favors from the Egyptians, who are beaten and humiliated. They will then wish to repent and want to leave Egypt like the rest of Bnei Yisrael who feared Hashem. But once Hashem already smote the Egyptians with eight plagues and even so they did not repent from their bad ways, and still rebelliously did not want to leave Egypt, there was no more opportunity for them; Hashem brought the plague of darkness in which they all died.

Similarly, Pharaoh too should have been impressed with the miracles and wonders and this should have brought him to repent. But since he did not do so, Hashem hardened his heart, to prevent him escaping the retribution he had richly earned.

This teaches us that Hashem did not prevent Pharaoh from repenting, He only hardened his heart so he should not repent because of the severity of the plagues. Truthfully, it is extremely surprising that the wicked Pharaoh did not repent, for the Egyptians already recognized the truth of Hashem's existence, and that all emanates from Him, the Omnipotent.

Other Midrashim point out that Moshe Rabbeinu warned Pharaoh for twenty-four days prior to each plague, as the Midrash says [Shemot Rabba 9:12], "Hashem gave him time between each plague to contemplate the truth and repent." It is therefore a great wonder that he did not repent.

The reason could be because Pharaoh considered himself a god. We see this also with some people today. Although they believe in Hashem and realize they are not behaving appropriately, and in truth wish to repent, they do not do so. Perhaps they think they somehow know better than Hashem Himself!? However, it is correct for each individual to contemplate the truth: Hashem is the One Who created all the worlds, and it is in His Hands alone to do as He wishes with the Upper and lower worlds. We must therefore obey His word and do His wish, and thereby we will merit repenting and returning to Hashem as it says, [Yeshaya 6:10], "His heart will understand, so that it will repent and be healed."



## From suffering to liberation

On one of my visits to my fellow Jews in the Diaspora, a wheel-chair bound woman came to me and sobbed bitterly, "Rabbi David, bless me that I regain my health. My husband left me due to my handicap. He ridicules me and even took another wife in my place. Only on rare occasions does he come to visit. When I once told him that I don't need these visits, he countered, "But you are paralyzed, and I have pity on you."

"I don't need his pity. All I want is that he divorce me according to Jewish law. I'll manage fine without his gestures of piety. What I do seek, though, is Hashem's compassion. I pray to Him that He heal me and allow me to live a normal life."

At hearing these heartfelt words, I encouraged the woman telling her, "Continue to pray. With Hashem's help, you will merit salvation, in the merit of your faith."

Sometime later, I once again found myself in that locale. A woman approached me and asked if I recognized her. Since I could not recall her identity, I asked who she was. She reminded me that she was the handicapped woman who was bitter over her husband's infidelity. But now, with Heavenly kindness, she is completely healed and walks on her own two feet, like a regular person.

I was happy to observe Hashem's salvation which this woman merited and I thought to myself that here is a powerful lesson of the extent to which we must believe in Hashem. He has all the tools necessary to deliver those who firmly believe in Him, no matter the hardship.

I then turned to the woman and told her, "See just how far your faith has reached. Look how effective your prayers were in Heaven. They took you from shame to glory, from narrow straits to wide expanses."

## *The Haftarah*

**"Thus said the Lord Hashem/Elokim"** (Yechezkel 28)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about the prophecies of the expulsion of the Egyptians and desolation of the land, and in the Parsha we read about the punishments that the Egyptians received from Hashem, in the form of the Ten Plagues.

## Solving the Problems that Arise

**"I shall take you to Me for a people"** [Shemot 6:7]

We see a yearning for repentance in today's generation. As a result, those involved in kiruv are often faced with halachic questions that crop up, as the following story illustrates:

A Lev L'Achim activist from Haifa, an avreich and talmid chacham, began teaching Torah to a certain family. Their neighbor was entranced by the sound of Torah emanating from that house, so he contacted this avreich and asked if he would be prepared to learn with him too.

Of course, he agreed. The man then related that he owns a very busy restaurant and does not want to be absent for even a short time, so he asked if they could learn in the restaurant. "We will find a quiet spot and study together," he suggested.

The avreich happily agreed but as soon as he arrived at the place, he 'smelt' something not quite right. Indeed, several moments later, he realized this restaurant served non-kosher meat!

He was absolutely shocked. He could not decide if he should continue their sessions, or maybe it is considered a desecration of Hashem's Name for someone like him to be seen in a place like this.

The next day at his Kollel in Haifa, he began discussing the matter with the other avreichim. Their opinion was that surely a short time after studying together, the restaurant owner will most likely discontinue offering forbidden meat. And until they think of a solution, the problem will already resolve itself..

The avreich continued their study sessions in the treif restaurant. Several days later he noticed something alarming. While studying with the owner, he saw someone wearing a kippa enter the restaurant and sit down to enjoy the treif meat he was served.

The activist could no longer sit there in silence. He approached the religious Jew and asked him how he dares dine in such a place.

The customer looked at him in astonishment, as if not understanding the question. "I have known this place for many years, and am aware that it was selling treif meat. But when I passed by and saw you – a clearly religious Jew – sitting here, I was 100% sure that the place must have become completely kosher!"

Now he was faced with an even more serious problem. It turned out that it was not just a question of desecrating Hashem's Name, but of causing other Jews to stumble. Even if as a result of the learning, the owner will decide to make the restaurant kosher, until that happens many people will stumble when they see the avreich in the restaurant...

This story has a happy ending: when the question was brought to the attention of the gedolei hador at a Lev L'Achim convention, a note was sent to the CEO of the organization, Harav Sorotzkin, from the Lev L'Achim coordinator in Haifa, Harav Menachem Kaplan, informing them that the question was no longer relevant since the restaurant had indeed become completely kosher...



## The Sabbatical Year

1. The Torah writes, "The Shabbat produce of the Land shall be yours to eat, for you." Chazal expound, "For you – for all your needs; but only for food and not for trade, and not for waste. This is the source of the prohibition to not do business with peirot shevi'it (produce of the Shemittah year), or cause them to spoil or go to waste. Some say it is a mitzvah to eat peirot shevi'it.

2. In stores that observe Shemittah, one can find fruits and vegetables that are free of any transgression, meaning they were not sown in the seventh year etc. One can also find vegetables that are not sefichin. The owners purchase the vegetables from a non-Jew who sowed his field in a way that sefichin is not transgressed. Or they import from places outside the borders of Israel, for example settlements in southern Arava (Eilat). Or they import produce from abroad, such as onions from Holland.

3. Fruit purchased from non-Jews has no kedushat shevi'it. Therefore stores who sell this produce have no problem with trade, kedushat shevi'it, and dmei shevi'it (money used to purchase Shemittah produce becomes holy). Rather the suppliers and store owners trade, purchase and sell as usual.

4. Women are also prohibited from engaging in trade with peirot shevi'it, a mitzvah not included in the time-bound mitzvot from which women are exempt.

5. Money used to purchase peirot shevi'it acquires kedushat shevi'it and has the same law as peirot shevi'it.

6. A person is allowed to hire himself as a laborer to work with peirot shevi'it and may be paid demai tircha – a wage for his efforts (and not for the produce). One may give a poor person charity from peirot shevi'it. But if one promised to give charity, one may not redeem one's debt with peirot shevi'it.

7. If one wishes to sell a small amount of peirot shevi'it (the amount of food for three meals) one may do so. Peirot shevi'it may not be weighed on scales, or measured according to volume or number, the cost must be determined only by a rough estimation.

8. If most of the fruit belongs to non-Jews, or most of the Jewish-owned fields were sold to non-Jews, the prohibition of selling these fruits by exact measure or weight does not apply.

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



### Heartfelt Repentance

"Among the servants of Pharaoh whoever feared the word of Hashem chased his servants and his livestock to the houses. And whoever did not take the word of G-d to heart – he left his servants and livestock in the field" [Shemot 9:20-21].

This was said concerning the plague of hail. Moshe warned Pharaoh and his servants that whoever wishes to save himself and his possessions should bring everything inside. Whoever believed in Hashem, brought his possessions inside and was not harmed, while those who did not believe, did not and suffered many losses. It is hard to understand how there were those who did not believe in Hashem; as we know, the sorcerers had already said to Pharaoh in the plague of lice, "It is a finger of G-d!"

My ancestor the gaon Rabbi Yeshayahu Pinto zy"a, in his sefer Kesef Mezugak, explains that indeed during the first plagues, Pharaoh and his servants were aroused to repent, but their repentance was only lip service. It was not accompanied by any inner feelings. That is why they did not bring their animals into their homes despite Moshe's warning. This means that when repentance is only an external expression, the person retains his wickedness; he only imagines that he has repented and so in truth, his repentance is not acceptable.

This is how the Rif zy"a explains the verse, "Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst" [Shemot 10:1]. Since Hashem saw that Pharaoh's repentance was only an external expression and did not come from his heart, Hashem hardened his heart so he would receive the rest of the plagues – locusts, darkness and the Plague of the Firstborn, which would cause him to be aroused to repent inwardly too.

However, once again Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart, so even after the Plague of the Firstborn he would still chase after Bnei Yisrael to the Yam Suf. The reason for this was because Pharaoh repented during the Plague of the Firstborn only out of fear of punishment and not because he chose to submit himself to Hashem. This teaches us the extent to which a person is indicted for his deeds.

The lesson we can derive from the above is that it is not enough to repent superficially. Repentance must be felt deep in one's heart. To truly determine whether one's repentance is heartfelt or not requires a penetrating search of the soul. If a person's repentance does not stem from a broken heart, his bad ways remain an integral part of him. Since his repentance is not considered true repentance, he will never show true fear of G-d.



### Hagaon Rabbi Yehuda Ben Moyal zt"l

The Gaon Rabbi Yehuda Ben Moyal zt"l, one of the great sages of Mogador, was born in 5588, in Taroudant, Morocco, to his pious father Rabbi Makhluф zt"l. In the chronicles we find: "Moreinu Rabbi Makhluф Moyal zt"l, a sage of Mogador, is the father of Moreinu Rabbi Yehuda Moyal. He performed many acts of chessed and good deeds."

Already in his youth, Rabbi Yehuda undertook the yoke of Torah with tremendous diligence. He studied in the yeshiva of his uncle, the gaon Rabbi Yaakov Ben Shabbat zt"l, talmid of the esteemed gaon Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol zy"a, Rav of Mogador. He devoted himself to Torah with tremendous self-sacrifice, discarding all futilities of This World. Those who recorded his history testify: "While still a young boy he completed all of Shas. He was tested by the Gedolei Hador who found him to be extremely well-versed – a new jug full of ageless [wisdom]."

It was of no wonder then that already in his youth – mature in wisdom but young in years – he was adorned with the cloak of

dayanut, in the beit din of the Jewish community in Safi. Following this he was asked to fill the honorable position of Rabbi Avraham ben Attar zt"l, Av Beit Din of Mogador, who passed away in 5639.

Rabbi Yehuda was the natural continuation to the family dynasty of dayanut. According to tradition, until the generation of Rabbi Yehuda more than twenty of the Ben Moyal family had been appointed as dayanim.

Like a compassionate father, Rabbi Yehuda led his family and community, showing concern for all their needs, both material and spiritual, together with his characteristic modesty and self-effacement, as the following incident demonstrates:

When the Rav wished to move to Eretz Yisrael, his family began preparing for the trip and hired a worker to assist with packing their belongings, including the Rav's holy articles. The unscrupulous worker coveted the Rav's possessions – sefarim and silver items, and so stealthily hid several of them in the folds of his garment.

Later on, to his bad luck, his deed was discovered. Several sefarim containing Rabbi Yehuda's signature were noticed at an auction. Those who purchased the sefarim recognized their value, and assumed that Rabbi Yehuda had been forced to sell his sefarim due to financial difficulties. They immediately arranged an appeal for the benefit of their revered Rav, and on the same day were able to present Rabbi Yehuda with a significant sum.

The Rav was greatly surprised when the messengers told him how they had arranged an appeal due to their suspicion of his financial state. But Rabbi Yehuda had no desire to accept the gift and declared that far be it from him to benefit from the public's money. He said he held no grudge against that worker and forgives him wholeheartedly. He was not placated until he was able to extract an explicit promise from them that they would not harm the worker, or his livelihood, in any way.

Community members would often turn to him begging him to pray to the Creator on their behalf for salvation, for his prayers were heeded. Through the power of his prayers that Hashem held dear, many merited salvation, and often in a miraculous fashion, as we are told, "A tzaddik decrees and Hashem fulfills."

The residents of the Jewish quarter (Mellah) in Mogador once came and poured out their pain – every year during the period of high tide, the waters rise and flood a number of houses in the quarter. As a result, several poor families are left without a roof over their heads.

Rabbi Yehuda immediately got up from his chair, took his stick in his hand, and went to the sea front. He drew a line in the sand and softly ordered the waters: "You may pass up until this point." Indeed the waters obeyed his command, and from then on there were no more flooding issues for the Jews of the Mellah!