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January 8th 2022
6th of Shvat 5782

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

Published by Mosdot "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" in Israel

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



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MASKIL LEDAVID

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

Blood Alludes to Our Approach in Avodat Hashem

"Hashem will pass through to smite Egypt, and He will see the blood that is on the lintel and the two doorposts; and Hashem will pass over the entrance and He will not permit the destroyer to enter your homes to smite" (Shemot 12:23).

The Creator of the world Who fashions everything, Who knows man's thoughts and the motives behind man's deeds, Who probes all inner-most chambers and tests thoughts and emotions... requires signs of blood on the doorpost to recognize the Jewish houses and not kill their firstborns?!

Chazal tell us that when the Egyptians saw Bnei Yisrael taking the Egyptian god (the sheep) and tying it to their bedposts, they ground their teeth because they could not protest. Why did Hashem command Bnei Yisrael to tie the sheep specifically to their bedposts? If Hashem wanted the Egyptians to be troubled by this bold act, would it not have been preferable to tie the sheep to the front door in full view of the Egyptians?

We can answer these questions by explaining that there are several approaches when it comes to fulfilling mitzvot. One attitude is thinking "I will not behave with extra piety and observe too many stringencies because I fear others will mock me. It is enough for me that I believe in Hashem in my heart." On the other hand, we have the person who fulfills all the mitzvot but with a lack of feeling; he acts out of habit.

Corresponding to the first group who are afraid of others, Rabbeinu Yaakov the Baal Haturim writes in his introduction to the Tur: "Yehuda ben Tema said: Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the Will of your Father in Heaven." He detailed four aspects of avodat Hashem, beginning with bold as a leopard because it is an important lesson in avodat Hashem. Sometimes a person wishes to do a mitzvah but refrains from doing so because he is afraid of being ridiculed. So the Tanna warns us to be bold in front of those who mock, and not allow their derision to prevent us from doing the mitzvah.

Corresponding to the second group who perform the mitzvot but do not put thought into what they are doing, Chazal say (Sanhedrin 106b), "Hashem seeks the heart, as it says, 'Man sees what his eyes behold, but Hashem sees into the heart.'" There are those who fulfil the mitzvot but don't feel anything in their heart, just like a monkey who is taught to jump but doesn't understand what he is doing.

One who is afraid of being scorned will eventually come to sin since his fear of people is stronger than his fear of the King of kings. As an example, Chazal tell us that in Egypt the Jewish people neglected the mitzvah of brit milah to find favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. So Hashem turned their hearts to hate His nation.

When the Egyptians looked inside the Jewish houses and saw their god tied to the beds, they asked Bnei Yisrael what they plan to do with the sheep. They replied, "We have been commanded by our G-d to sacrifice this sheep for His honor."

On the same night that Hashem smote the Egyptian firstborns, Bnei Yisrael slaughtered and ate their Pesach-offering. The Egyptians saw their firstborns dying and their god being slaughtered, but were powerless to do anything. Through their act of rebellion against the Egyptian god, Bnei Yisrael were immediately filled with strong faith in Hashem, and the desire for idol worship was uprooted from their hearts. The idea of taking the sheep was to detach Bnei Yisrael from avodah zarah and get them used to observing mitzvot, as Chazal say on the verse, "Draw [your hands] and take"; withdraw your hands from avodah zarah and cleave to mitzvot."

Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael to put blood on the lintel and doorposts because blood represents our innermost self, "for the blood, it is the life." Hashem wanted to hint to Bnei Yisrael that avodat Hashem must stem from the soul, from the heart, while avodat Hashem that is just lip service is not most desirable. One who studies Torah and fulfills the mitzvot while investing thought in his deeds, demonstrates that he loves Hashem with all his heart and soul.

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Hilula

6 Shevat - Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Teitelbaum,
author of Atzei Chaim

7 Shevat - Rabbi Mordechai David
Levin, author of Darkei David

8 Shevat - Rabbi Makhluif Abuchatzera

9 Shevat - Rabbi Yehosef Schwartz,
author of Tevu'at Shemesh

10 Shevat - Rabbi Rachamim Chai
Chavita HaKohen

11 Shevat - Rabbi Chaim Toledano

12 Shevat - Rabbi Chaim Kafusi



A Seeing Eye and a Hearing Ear

When I was a young boy, I once came home from a friend's house and my father asked me, "David, where were you these past few hours?"

"I went to visit so-and-so," I replied.

"And what did you do there?" Abba continued to ask.

"We reviewed the Torah lesson we learned this morning."

The truth was, I hadn't been with my friend at all. I had been visiting my sister, where I spent the time playing checkers with her husband.

I have grown up since then, and today my single hobby is studying the holy Torah. But when I was young, checkers was my favorite hobby.

My father knew this, so he pressed further. He asked what we had studied, where we had studied, and similar questions. At some point, I realized he was aware of the truth. My stories were getting me more and more tangled up, until I could no longer restrain myself.

"Father," I cried in desperation. "You know exactly where I was these past few hours. Why, then, are you interrogating me like this?"

With his great wisdom, my dear father replied, "I want to teach you not to be a wise guy with Hashem. If you sat and learned, you may say so. But if you were busy with other things, do not speak falsehood. 'Know what is above you: A seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all of your deeds are recorded in a book.'"

The Haftarah

"The word that Hashem spoke"

(Yirmiyahu 46)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about Pharaoh's punishment and the destruction of Egypt. The Parsha too speaks about the last three plagues and the destruction of Egypt.

Minor Conciliation for Years of Suffering and Bondage

"The Children of Israel carried out the word of Moshe; they requested from the Egyptians silver vessels, gold vessels, and garments" (Shemot 12:35).

It seems surprising that Hashem instruct Bnei Yisrael to 'borrow' the Egyptians' possessions. Why did He not tell them to take them as an acquisition; didn't they deserve it after their years of slavery in Egypt?

The Gaon Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bavel zy"a, the Ben Ish Chai, answers this question in his sefer Ben Ish Chayil (IV, 122), using a parable:

It can be compared to a wealthy man who was walking in the streets accompanied by his son. Suddenly a drunkard appeared and grabbed hold of the man's coat, shouting loudly in front of all: "This is my coat. You stole it from me! Return it immediately!"

The wealthy man turned to him and answered calmly and quietly:

"It is true, this coat is yours! But I didn't steal it from you, G-d forbid that I should do such a thing. So what happened? I asked your wife if she could give it to me for one day, and I received her full permission. Do not worry, tomorrow I will return it ..."

The drunkard was appeased and left him alone.

When the drunkard was far enough away, the son turned to his father and asked:

"Tell me father, why did you tell him the coat is his, and you borrowed it from him with his wife's permission? It is your coat; it belongs to you?!"

The father replied:

"What do you think? I should argue with a drunkard in the middle of the street? I pushed him off until tomorrow; meanwhile he will grow sober and forget his shouts and claims of yesterday. And if he does remember, he will be embarrassed and never speak to me like that again..."

The Ben Ish Chai zy"a explains that this is what happened in Egypt: The Egyptians were about to meet their end. Not much later, they rushed Bnei Yisrael out of their land and later drowned in the Yam Suf, following which Bnei Yisrael inherited all their spoil at the sea shore. But before all this happened, even before the Plague of the Firstborns, we asked them for great wealth on loan, as we were instructed. At that point they were still in their drunkard state and thought they would manage to keep Bnei Yisrael in their land and maintain the bondage.

But once they awoke from their drunkard state, they no longer demanded that Bnei Yisrael return their possessions, because they already understood that this is only a small reimbursement for all the years of suffering and slavery which they brought upon Bnei Yisrael.



The Sabbatical Year

1. Dmei shevi'it (money received in exchange for peirot shevi'it) cannot be used to repay a debt. It should also not be distributed as charity to the poor in the beit kneset, but can be used for acts of kindness.

One must inform the recipient that it is dmei shevi'it, so they should treat it accordingly.

2. One should not fulfil the mitzvah of mishloach manot with peirot shevi'it. But if he already fulfilled the mitzvah and wants to send additional portions to friends to increase friendship and love, he may send peirot shevi'it, since it is no longer considered a 'debt'. But he must inform the recipient so he will be aware and treat them with the appropriate holiness.

3. If one receives mishloach manot from one's friend, the mishloach manot one sends in return may not contain peirot shevi'it or dmei shevi'it, since it is the acceptable practice to reciprocate and peirot shevi'it may not be used to pay a debt.

4. Similarly, one may not use dmei shevi'it to buy a wedding gift for a chatan or kallah if he received a wedding gift from them, since it is the acceptable practice to return a gift and therefore comparable to paying a debt with dmei shevi'it.

5. Peirot shevi'it may not be given to one's workers instead of their salary. But one may give them peirot shevi'it as a gift, even if he knows that as a result of this gift the workers will not demand their wages.

However, this is not something one should make a practice of, since it resembles trickery.

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



Promise for Abundant Blessing in This World

"Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request of his fellow and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels" (Shemot 11:2).

Chazal say (Berachot 9a-b), Na, please, is an expression of requesting. Hashem said to Moshe: "Please go and tell Yisrael, 'Please ask the Egyptians for their silver and gold vessels, so the tzaddik (Avraham Avinu) should not say "And they [Bnei Yisrael] will serve them [Egyptians], and they [Egyptians] will oppress them [Bnei Yisrael]" He fulfilled, but He did not fulfil 'and afterwards they will leave with great wealth.'"

The question is: Why did Hashem promise Avraham Avinu at the Brit Ben Habetarim, "and afterwards they will leave with great wealth"? Does one captured by bandits request great wealth? All he wants is to be released! As Chazal say (Berachot 9b), "It can be compared to someone who is imprisoned and he is told, 'Tomorrow you will be released and given a large sum of money.' He replies, 'Please, I beg of you, take me out today and I do not ask for anything.'"

At the Brit Ben Habetarim Avraham was informed that his children would not assimilate among the nations. Hashem told him, "Know with certainty that your offspring shall be aliens in a land not their own." This was when Hashem revealed to Avraham that his descendants would be exiled to Egypt. But Hashem said, even though they will dwell among the Egyptians for four hundred years, nevertheless I will protect them and ensure they do not assimilate. I will take them out from there before they fall to the fiftieth gate of impurity. Furthermore, I will give them several mitzvot which they will observe and thereby become deserving to leave with those merits.

Hashem also promised Avraham Avinu that in the future Bnei Yisrael will merit great reward in This World as a result of their good deeds, for Hashem promised that He will shower Bnei Yisrael with much blessing in This World if they perform His will. As it says (Vayikra 26:3-5), "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments, and perform them, then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit. Your threshing will last until the vintage, and the vintage will last until the sowing; you will eat your bread to satiety and you will dwell securely in your land."

So Hashem promising Avraham that his descendants will leave with great wealth was a sign for Avraham that he can be confident they will perform Hashem's will.



Rabbi Chaim Kafusi zt"l

The description 'Baal Haness' became a permanent accompaniment to Rabbi Chaim's name, as a result of the following story: A Customs officer took out loans for his master, the tax collector. Since the Jewish officer was not used to swearing, he promised he would not eat meat or drink wine if he does not repay the debt.

Several years passed but the officer was unable to repay the loan. His creditors wanted to force him to fulfil his vow, but Rabbi Chaim ruled that the officer was not bound by his vow, explaining that the vow only applied in the case wherein he wouldn't repay the debt on his own will, but not on the grounds that poverty will prevent him from doing so.

The ruling in favor of the officer led to much defamation of Rabbi Chaim Kafusi's name, and a big controversy ensued.

One of the sages who belittled Rabbi Chaim, went as far as alluding to his blindness by applying to him the verse, "Though he may have walked in darkness."

Rabbi Chaim supplied a detailed

answer, refuting all claims against his ruling, and also referred to the hint to his blindness by saying, "And concerning 'Though he may have walked in darkness,' I ask that he continue reading the end of the verse: 'Let him trust in the name of Hashem.' My heart trusts in Him, 'Though I walk in the valley overshadowed by death, I will fear no evil'; 'Though I sit in darkness, Hashem is a light unto me!'"

As is the way of controversy, the fire spread also among the sages of the generation. The peak of this painful chapter was a public announcement that Rabbi Chaim became blind as a result of accepting bribery, even citing a proof from the verse, "For the bribe will blind the eyes of the wise."

When Rabbi Chaim became aware of this serious accusation, he asked the entire community to gather in the beit haknesset on Shabbat. After beginning his speech with words of Torah on a timely topic, he addressed the issue at hand: "I know there are those who are saying that I accepted bribery. Hashem is my witness that I am free of this sin! And now, if there is anyone among you from whom I took anything, or perverted his judgement, he should get up and answer me in front of Hashem and in front of this entire holy assembly."

Here Rabbi Chaim raised his voice and continued: "So that it should serve me as a testimony, I beseech Hashem, the G-d of judgement, that if it is true I sinned, my bones should crumble and I will not be able to descend the bimah. But if I am innocent,

may it be His will that my eyes open and He return my sight. Then all those assembled will know there is a G-d Who is a Righteous and True Judge."

On hearing these words, the participants shivered with trepidation. Indeed, to their great astonishment, his prayer was accepted. His eyes immediately opened and he was able to see! He looked all around him and called each person by name. He descended the bimah and greeted everyone he met by his name. From then on, he would sign his name, "Hashem Nasi Chaim Kafusi."

After this great miracle occurred, he dedicated the majority of his time to writing his sefer on the Torah, Be'or HaChaim, with its name hinting to his restored vision.

The following is a testimony concerning the period of his blindness: "I personally saw the way he signed his name when he was blind; the letters were hardly legible, clearly written by one who could not see. I saw his signature again after his sight was restored: Hashem Nissi (Hashem has wrought a miracle for me) Chaim Kafusi, in clear handwriting. Until today, anyone who swears falsely by his name is punished. May his memory protect us."

After his passing, Rabbi Chaim's gravesite became a sacred place for the Jews of Egypt. Anyone who required salvation would pray intensely at his gravesite, and many merited seeing miracles and wonders.