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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" a

MASKIL LEDAVID

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



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Hilula

20 Shevat - Rabbi Ovadiah Hadayah,
author of Yaskil Avdi

21 Shevat - Rabbi Moshe Galante, First
Rishon Le'tzion

22 Shevat - Rabbi Menachem Mendel,
the Saraf of Kotzk

23 Shevat - Rabbi Yehoshua
Rokeach, Admor of Belz

24 Shevat - Rabbi Mimon Ohayon, Av
Beit Din Revat and Marrakesh

25 Shevat - Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of
Salant, founder of the Mussar Movement

26 Shevat - Rabbi David Segal
HaLevi, author of Turei Zahav

Introduction to Matan Torah

"Yitro, the minister of Midian, the father-in-law of Moshe, heard everything that Hashem did to Moshe and to Israel, His people, that Hashem had taken Israel out of Egypt" (Shemot 18:1).

Rashi asks, "What did Yitro hear that made him come? He heard about the Splitting of the Sea and the war against Amalek."

Yitro's decision can be viewed as an introduction to Matan Torah (the Giving of the Torah). The section that speaks about Yitro joining the Jewish people in the Wilderness is followed by the section of Matan Torah. The adjacency teaches us that if Yitro, a gentile, heard about these miracles and as a result came to the conclusion that it was correct to accept the Torah, how much more so must we Bnei Yisrael contemplate the miracles Hashem performed for us and willingly accept the Torah.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zy" a says that from when they left Egypt for the next fifty days, Bnei Yisrael rectified one level after the next, until they ascended to the fiftieth level of purity and became worthy of receiving the Torah. However, if as the Torah tells us, they were lax in Torah for a short time, there must have been several days which were not dedicated to rectification. So how were they able to receive the Torah?

The answer seems to be that Bnei Yisrael did not neglect the Torah completely; rather they studied with a feeling of satiety and not of great thirst. On their level this was considered laxity, since they were supposed to toil in Torah with all their strength. So they did in fact correct each day's rectification, but were just lacking the aspect of toil. This can be compared to a king inviting someone to his treasury and telling him to take as much as he can. He will certainly not work listlessly, but will toil and gather as much as he can. In the same way, Bnei Yisrael were supposed to toil in Torah, but since they did not do so, the war of Amalek came upon them. Evidently, after the war of Amalek they once again toiled in Torah and rectification of their middot, to complete what they had missed out on during the days they were lax and hadn't taken full advantage of their opportunity.

In Tevet 5765, a terrible catastrophe occurred in Asia and over three hundred thousand people were killed. How did this happen? Tremendously powerful waves emerged from under the sea and destroyed entire cities. I heard that in Sri Lanka over a hundred elephants escaped a few minutes before the disaster, while humans had no hint whatsoever, that such a terrible tragedy was about to happen! How do we answer this conundrum? Animals seem to be advantageous to man, in that they have a sense of warning of impending natural disasters, while humans lack any insight?

I would like to suggest an answer based on the following Chazal: If a person follows the Torah path, we tell him the entire world was created for him. But if he does not follow in Hashem's ways, we tell him the mosquito preceded you (it was created before man and therefore seemingly more significant). Since animals were not given the Torah and therefore have nothing to protect them, they were given natural senses to enable them to escape the ravages of nature. But man possesses the Torah and therefore does not need this sense to be saved from natural tragedies, since the Torah protects and saves him. When difficult decrees come to the world, it is because there is some negligence of Torah. But since animals do not deserve to be punished as a result, they have a special sense to feel when danger is imminent and thereby save themselves.

Now we can understand Yitro's virtue. The entire world heard about these miracles but only Yitro came. He was originally the priest of Midian and served every avodah zarah in the world, so what made him come? As soon as Yitro heard he immediately went to join Am Yisrael and study the Torah, since he realized that if he does not study Torah immediately, his newly acquired faith will wane and he will lose the inspiration he acquired from all he saw and heard. Moreover, Yitro took careful note of the fact that as soon as Am Yisrael were lax in Torah, they were immediately faced with the war of Amalek. This strengthened his resolve to join Am Yisrael and study Torah, so his convictions and faith should not weaken.



The Humility of a Torah Sage

I had the singular merit of visiting the home of Maran Harav Ovadiah Yosef, zt"l. Unfortunately, at that time he had something wrong with his hand which prevented him from writing. One could detect the suffering on his face at being deprived of committing his Torah thoughts to paper.

Torah is the essence of the lives of our Torah Sages. Their sole desire is to cleave to Hashem and immerse themselves in the sea of Torah day and night. When they are prevented from doing this, they are filled with sorrow.

With his great modesty, Rav Ovadiah asked that I bless him with a speedy recovery, that his hand would soon heal and he would be able to continue writing his Torah novellae. I felt very uncomfortable with this request. Who am I to bless this holy man, who studies Torah day and night, brings merit to the public, and leads his flock so faithfully?

I have no doubt that his entreaty came from a place of humility and self-negation. He certainly wanted to teach us that every Jew who wishes to grow in Torah must subjugate himself to a Higher calling. This is alluded to in the verse (Vayikra 7:37), "This is the law of the burnt-offering, the meal-offering... and the feast peace-offering." Chazal expound on this that a Jew who makes himself into a meal-offering (מנחה, which also means a gift), and like a feast peace-offering, will merit becoming an olah – a burnt offering, completely consumed for the sake of Heaven, ascending ever higher in spiritual levels.

The Haftarah

"In the year of King Uzziah's death" (Yeshaya 6)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah describes the revelation of the Holy Shechina in the Chosen House in Yerushalayim, while the Parsha describes the revelation of the Shechina to all of Israel which took place at Har Sinai, with the Giving of the Torah.

In Our Father's Path

Caution with Monetary Matters

When Yitro advised Moshe Rabbeinu to appoint officers under him who would share the burden of leading the people, he also knew to detail the requisite qualities of a public leader: "...men of accomplishment, G-d fearing people, men of truth, people who despise money." These are basic criteria for anyone who deals with the public.

Such was the holy conduct of our great sages throughout the generation. They studied Torah with diligence and were meticulous that G-d forbid they should not be found guilty of any trace of financial benefit from money that does not belong to them, thereby preventing defamation and false rumors.

The way the late Rabbi Yehuda Tzedaka, Rosh Yeshiva of Porat Yosef, was cautious with monetary matters is an ethical lesson for us. Huge sums of money passed through his hands, donations and dedications that were destined for charity purposes, but he was extremely careful not to derive any personal benefit from them. He always carried a notebook in his pocket which contained two columns: "Income" and "Expenditure." He would record every sum he received from others, so he would use it beneficially and correctly as he saw fit. He also recorded every sum he spent and distributed to the needy.

For many years there was a "monthly subscription" in the Satmar mikvah near his house. Contrary to the normal custom of paying the subscription fee at the end of the month, Rabbi Yehuda made sure to pay in advance, at the beginning of the month. He explained: "Who knows what the future holds, may Hashem protect us; if I do not pay my debts in advance, who will pay for me later?"

Once after attending a funerals, he entered a nearby beit kneset to wash his hands in the courtyard. Due to his great caution with money belonging to hekdesch, he took out several coins from his pocket and deposited them in the coffer of the beit kneset, as payment for the water. He explained that had he not done so, it would be a question of theft.

He used to say: "When someone has a doubt concerning monetary matters, G-d forbid he should not judge for himself, because he is biased. Rather he should appoint a Rav for himself, and then he will no longer have to contend with doubt!"

Rabbi Eliyahu Dushnitzer zt"l, mashgiach at the Lomza Yeshiva, was also extremely careful with monetary matters, and took care not to stumble with even the smallest amount. The yeshiva provided him with electricity for his home (just a shabby hut, with a floor of sand and empty of furniture). Rabbi Eliyahu skimped on using the electricity to the extreme. When he sat down to eat in the evening, he used to light an oil lantern and turn off the electricity, saying: "For eating it is good enough." In his later years he did this also when

pouring over his holy sefarim at night, saying, "In old age one must take into account that he might perhaps fall asleep while studying, and the electricity will burn unnecessarily at the yeshiva's expense!"

He once asked a certain tailor to repair his Shabbat coat. On Friday he went to fetch the coat and paid the tailor his fee. When he came home, he noticed the tailor had sewn an additional button on his coat which they had not spoken about. Because he had not yet paid for this extra button, he was afraid it was considered theft and so did not wear the coat that Shabbat!



The Sabbatical Year

1. The prohibition of doing business with peirot shevi'it refers to normal trade of landowners and merchants who are out to make a profit. However, one may sell a small amount of produce cheaply, where payment is mainly for the service of making the produce available.

2. The prohibition of trading involves three categories:

a. Trading large amounts for profit is a Torah prohibition.

b. Selling a small amount to one's friend in the way of regular trade is a rabbinical prohibition.

c. One may sell a small amount at a reduced price, which is not the normal way of trading. One should make clear it is Shemittah produce and the payment received must be reserved for purchasing food.

3. This is the permitted way of selling: he should take care not to pick more than the quantity usually brought home as food supplies for a few days. Some say only a quantity enough for three meals may be picked and sold.

4. He should not sell this quantity himself, but give it to his son or friend who must sell it in a provisional way (e.g. from a house, courtyard, or side street) and not in a permanent stall in the market.

5. If someone picks fruit for his family's needs and is left with a surplus he does not intend to eat, he may sell this surplus in a temporary fashion.

6. Peirot shevi'it must not be sold by weight, measure, or number as is the usual manner, but by rough estimation.

7. Why did the sages not forbid a small sale, fearing that it might lead to trade forbidden according to the Torah? The answer is because this kind of small sale can be beneficial for the consumption of peirot shevi'it. If someone picks ten kilos of apples for his household, he may prefer to sell some of them and use the money to buy other food, instead of constantly eating apples. This benefits other people who due to other concerns or lack of strength cannot go to fields and pick their own fruit. In this way peirot shevi'it are made available to them at a cheap price. Most probably it is something the poor would choose to engage in since it is not worthwhile for the wealthy to pick a small amount and receive a meager sum in exchange. But this can be a blessing for the poor. So as not to stumble with prohibited trade, the sages established the above conditions.

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 News that Yitro Heard

Parshat Yitro begins with the words "Yitro heard". Rashi explains: "What did he hear that made him come? He heard about the Splitting of the Sea and the war against Amalek." This is not straight forward. We can understand that Yitro was moved and awed by the miracles experienced at the Splitting of the Sea, but what aroused him to attach himself to the Jewish people after hearing about the war of Amalek? This was a difficult battle for Am Yisrael; it cooled off and weakened the nations' faith in Hashem, and diminished the prestige accorded the Jewish people. Therefore, how do we explain that the war of Amalek was a catalyst for Yitro joining the Jewish people?

The answer is that Yitro, former priest of Midian, made the following wise calculation: When Am Yisrael followed Hashem, they merited Hashem's miraculous protection. The manifestation of G-dliness was so clear at the Splitting of the Sea, they could literally point with their finger and say, "This is my G-d and I will glorify Him!" But Yitro understood that specifically at a time of holiness and purity, the Yetzer Hara tries very hard to pull Am Yisrael down from their lofty level. There is a constant battle between the powers of holiness and the powers of impurity. The Yetzer Hara does not want a person to strengthen and sanctify himself for Hashem's sake, so precisely when the Yetzer Hara sees a person drawing closer to Hashem, at that moment he tries to make him stumble. And while it is natural for man to grow weary, the Yetzer Hara never tires and constantly seeks new tactics to trip us up. The only way man can overcome the Yetzer Hara is through the holy Torah.

This, then, is what Yitro heard. He realized it is possible to fight against negative influences and powers of impurity only through the holy Torah. As soon as Bnei Yisrael showed somewhat of a laxity in Torah, Amalek immediately rose up against them, as it says (Shemot 17:1), "They encamped in Rephidim (רפידים)," and Chazal explain, they loosened (רפו) their grip on the Torah. Yitro understood this important message – it is the Torah alone that protects and saves us from the Yetzer hara and powers of impurity. He not only understood, but got up and acted on his convictions.

It follows that Yitro was not impressed by the war against Amalek, a bitter battle for Am Yisrael. Rather he was impressed by the difficulty of the constant battle between the powers of good and evil! And because this battle is so hard and never-ending, the only thing that can save Am Yisrael from the impurity of the Yetzer Hara is cleaving to Torah.



Rabbi David HaLevi Segal zt"l

Rabbi David HaLevi Segal was known as the Taz, from the initials of his sefer Turei Zahav on the Shulchan Aruch. He was born in Ludmir to his father Rabbi Shmuel, a great Torah scholar and philanthropist. Already in his youth the Taz was famous for his exceptional acuity and diligence in Torah. When he was only twelve years old, he travelled to Brisk, Lithuania, to join the yeshiva of Rabbi Yoel Sirkish, the Bach (initials of his sefer Beit Chadash), who was very impressed with him and even took him as a son-in-law.

The Bach promised to support his son-in-law and provide him daily with meat. One day he gave the Taz organ meat instead of regular meat. Rabbi David ate his portion, but later took his father-in-law to a din Torah, on the grounds that organ meat is not considered meat. The beit

din ruled in favor of the Bach however and declared that organ meat is indeed considered meat.

The Chazon Ish clarified this incident. G-d forbid one should not think the Taz coveted meat. Rather, he used to study with intense diligence until the last drop of his strength. That day when he ate the organ meat instead of the usual meat, he studied several minutes less than usual. Since the Taz was afraid his father-in-law would be held guilty for causing bitul Torah, he brought him to a din Torah. It was obvious to him that the beit din would rule in favor of the Bach, and the Heavenly court always rules in accordance with the way they rule down below. He thereby saved his father-in-law from any kind of Heavenly retribution.

You Are Respected in Heaven

The sefer Avnei Shoham quotes a record from the notebook of the Lvov community: an evil spirit once entered the daughter of a wealthy man. Her father asked the Taz to visit her and pray for her recovery.

After much persuasion he agreed to go. When the Taz walked in she said, "Welcome," and then turned away.

Rabbeinu asked her, "Why are you looking away?" She replied: "The wicked cannot gaze at the face of a tzaddik." She also added that in heaven he is known as "Rabbeinu Hagaon, the Turei Zahav".

Rabbeinu replied: "If it is true that I am considered worthy in heaven, I decree that you be healed in the merit of my finding an answer for the wonderful words of Rabbeinu the Tur, and I was able to arrive at the truth." Indeed, to her great joy, she recovered. In appreciation, her father bought a beautiful tallit for the Taz but he would not accept the gift. He explained, "I am already old. When I soon go the way of all humans, my old tallit will testify that I never entertained foreign thoughts while praying. I therefore do not wish to exchange it for a new one!"

Rabbi Yosef Shaul Natanson, Rav of Lamburg and author of Sho'el Umeishiv, related that about two hundred years after the passing of the Taz, the government ordered to evacuate the Jewish cemetery. When they opened the grave of the Taz, they found his body whole and beautiful, untouched by a single worm or maggot.