

PACHAD DAVID

Ki Tisa



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Under the auspices of Moreinu v' Rabbeinu, the Admor 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

“This they shall give, everyone who passes through the census, a half shekel of the sacred shekel; the shekel is twenty geras, half a shekel as a portion to Hashem” (Shemot 30:13).

The purpose of these shekalim was to atone for Am Yisrael, including the sin of the Golden Calf, as it says, “The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half a shekel, to give the portion of Hashem, to atone for your souls.” We are told that these shekalim were used for the construction and upkeep of the Mishkan, as the next verse says, “You shall take the silver of the atonements from the Children of Israel and give it for the work of the Tent of Meeting and it shall be a remembrance before Hashem for the Children of Israel, to atone for your souls.” Rashi explains that this contribution was also used to cover the cost of all communal offerings, and through the offerings they were granted atonement.

Why were both the wealthy and destitute commanded to give the same amount? Hashem did not want their donations to cause jealousy and competition, which would result if the wealthy come with their generous donations while the poor cannot give more than a small gift. Instead of the contribution bringing atonement, it would lead to envy and resentment!

This is why both the rich and poor were commanded to give a half shekel only. It also teaches us that each person's donation is only half, and the shekel is not complete until the rich gives his half and the poor his half. Each donation completes the other person's donation.

Yom Kippur does not atone unless we are united, as it says (Yoma 85b), “Yom Kippur atones for sins between man and Hashem, but can only atone for sins between man and his friend if he first he appeases his friend.” In the same way, these shekalim only atone if the entire nation is united. As soon as people reconcile with each other, unity is a natural outcome and then Hashem too is appeased and forgives all their sins. The Mishkan and the offerings can only endure and atone if they are based on donations brought with unity.

maskil Le'David The Half Shekel Teaches Unity



Since unity is a prerequisite for Hashem resting His presence among us, this half shekel donation enabled the Shechina to rest in the Mishkan and the offerings to be brought, which give rise to a pleasant smell before Hashem. The Torah then considers Bnei Yisrael as becoming partners in the Oneness of Hashem.

This could be the reason why the Torah writes “...a half shekel of the sacred shekel.” ב-שקל, of the shekel, signifies the ‘two’ (numerical value of the letter beit) who make up the complete shekel. The sanctity of the shekel is created by both the rich and the poor giving a half shekel.

This sanctity has two facets. The first one is the unification of Am Yisrael, the holy nation, and the second is that Hashem will rest His holy Presence in the Mishkan, established through the donations of Am Yisrael.

Coin of Fire

Hashem did not find a more suitable means than money to impart the importance of unity and love, because kesef, money, comes from the term kisufin, yearning, as we find (Tehillim 84:3), “My souls yearns (נכספה), indeed it pines, for the courtyards of Hashem.” Shekel can also mean shakul, equal, which implies that the rich and poor giving equally will cause love to reign between them, leading to love of Hashem. Then Bnei Yisrael will attain the level of kesef, longing for the glory of the Shechina. And this combination of love for their fellow Jew together with love for Hashem, makes them worthy of atonement.

Hashem showed Moshe Rabbeinu a coin of fire to teach him that charity must resemble fire. When Yisrael give charity to the Mishkan and there is no jealousy, the love between them resembles a huge flame of fire. Fire is used to symbolize love, as it says about our love for Hashem (Shir Hashirim 8:6), “That love is as strong as death... its flashes are flashes of fire.” Hashem was implying to Moshe, these shekalim will only atone if there is fierce love between them.

18 Adar 1 5782
19 February 2022

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Hilula

18 Adar 1 – Rabbi Alexander Ziskind, author of *Yesod V'shoresh Ha'avodah*

18 Adar 1 – Rabbi Rafael Chadad, author of *Petter Rechem*

19 Adar 1 – Rabbi Avraham Chalavah, author of *Minchat Avraham*

19 Adar 1 – Rabbi David of Dinov, author of *Tzemach Tzedek*

20 Adar 1 – Rabbi Yosef HaKohen Kojhinoff, a great sage from Bukhara

20 Adar 1 – Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rosh Yeshiva of Kol Torah

21 Adar 1 – Rabbi Rafael David Bardugo, Av Beit Din Meknes

21 Adar 1 – Rabbi Elimelech of Lizansk, author of *Noam Elimelech*

22 Adar 1 – Rabbi Chaim Alchadif, author of *To'ameha Chaim*

22 Adar 1 – Rabbi Yecheil Michel Epstein, author of *Aruch Hashulchan*

23 Adar 1 – The esteemed Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto zy" a

23 Adar 1 – Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, author of *Chidushei Harim*

24 Adar 1 – Rabbi Chaim Algazi of Constantinople, author of *Netivot Hamishpat*

24 Adar 1 – Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen, author of *Shevet Mussar*





WORDS OF THE SAGES

Looking Deeper Than the Surface

Hashem blessed Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehuda, with a wonderful gift by filling him "... with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft." Insight is the derivation of new ideas and deductions from one's wisdom; to understand the depth and root of any issue that arises.

This is what we beseech in the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer, "Endow us graciously from Yourself with wisdom, insight and knowledge." In addition to the asset of wisdom and acquiring knowledge, we also long to merit deriving deeper insight from apparent facts. This applies both to matters between man and Hashem, and all the more so to matters between man and his fellow.

Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul ז"ל, an outstandingly generous sage, was an example of someone who used insight to evaluate circumstances. One of his students walked from the other end of town to visit his Rav on a *chag* and arrived several moments before sunset. Rabbeinu rejoiced upon seeing him and said, "You fulfilled the mitzvah of visiting one's Rav on the *chag* (ברגל), in the most literal way. Firstly, you walked a long distance by foot (ברגל). Secondly, ברגל means 'on one leg,' implying a short, to-the-point, visit (since he had come right before the end of the *chag*)."

After praying Arvit, Rabbeinu gave the talmid money to pay for a taxi back to his house. The taxi fare was much greater than the amount it would cost to travel by bus and the talmid was uncomfortable. "Baruch Hashem I do not require charity," he claimed, but Rabbeinu was adamant: "You are taking a taxi home!"

When Rabbeinu wished to participate in a wedding of an acquaintance, he did not suffice with his presence at the *simcha*, but customarily gave a generous gift. He was once invited to a wedding hosted by one of his associates in Tel Aviv. The wedding took place on a Thursday, and the parents begged Rabbeinu and his wife to stay for the Shabbat Chatan. They agreed. On Motza'ei Shabbat he asked his Rabbanit, "Did you find out what the couple is missing?" And she joyfully replied, "An iron!"

On Sunday Rabbeinu went to an expensive store and asked for a quality iron. One of the employees suggested a sale product: an iron for only fifty *shekels*! Rabbeinu refused and explained, "It is usually the mediocre items which go on sale! I would like a sophisticated iron; it is for a bride and groom!" The employee then offered him a luxury steam iron. Rabbeinu paid the high price and the Rabbanit went to deliver the gift to the bride. An hour later, Rabbeinu called the groom and inquired, "Nu, is your bride happy?"

He once met an acquaintance who looked troubled. He asked what he was concerned about but the man evaded answering. Rabbeinu understood that a difficult Rambam or puzzling *sugya* was not what was bothering him, and an hour later handed him a bulging envelope. The man opened it and found a sum large enough to get him out of his financial crisis!

"How did the Rav know?" he asked in amazement.

"I asked why you were distressed and you didn't answer. I was left to guess and found the reason in a clear *Yerushalmi* in *masechet Terumot*. Raish Lakish met Rabbi Yochanan who looked troubled. Raish Lakish asked him to explain and he answered, 'All organs are dependent on the heart, and the heart depends on the pocket...' I understood from this Gemara that money was the remedy!"

The man began crying and Rabbeinu comforted him, "The season of tears has passed. From now on it is time to laugh!"



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

Mitzvah Observance – The Cure-all

Hashem, in His great wisdom, commanded us to keep the laws of family purity in order to maintain our Jewish homes. From time immemorial, Jewish women have merited upholding this precious mitzvah and it has often brought them great salvation.

I knew couples in Mexico who did not merit having children or were stricken with strange illnesses. When the women undertook to observe the laws of *taharat hamishpachah*, they were delivered from their suffering.

A woman suffered from a tumor in her head. The growth was in a sensitive spot, affected her sight and became life-threatening. But when she accepted upon herself the mitzvah of *taharat hamishpachah*, the tumor simply disappeared.

A similar incident happened to a woman who lives in Paris. She, too, suffered from a cancerous growth. When she asked for my blessing, I instructed her to observe *taharat hamishpachah*. In this merit, I told her, she would recover.

"What is the connection between my illness and family purity?" she demanded.

"If the doctor recommended antibiotics, would you agree to take them?"

"Certainly!" she replied, without hesitation.

"So this is the antibiotics I am offering you!"

The woman did as I instructed, and her cancer became a thing of the past.

She came to inform me of her miraculous deliverance. Gratified to hear the good news, I told her, "Your miraculous recovery proves that Hashem's cures are much more effective than those of any doctor. Hashem's cures are the mitzvot, as it says, "You shall observe My decrees and My laws... by which he shall live."

Hashem often brings an illness upon a person which doctors cannot cure. The person then turns to a tzaddik to ask what to rectify. The tzaddik, who is Hashem's messenger, guides him along the road to life and goodness. The measures he instructs him to take in mitzvah observance are Hashem's tried and true prescriptions for remedy.



FROM THE TREASURY

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

Pride Led to the Sin of the Golden Calf

“The people saw that Moshe had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people gathered around Aharon and said to him, ‘Rise up, make for us gods that will go before us” (Shemot 32:1).

Chazal say (*Tanchuma, Ki Tisa* 19), “When the sixth hour of the day had passed, 40,000 (of the Mixed Multitude) who left Egypt with Am Yisrael assembled together with two Egyptians sorcerers, Yonus and Yombrus, who had performed witchcraft for Pharaoh. They all gathered around Aharon and said, “Rise up, make for us gods...” Rashi also mentions several times that it was the Mixed Multitude who gathered against Aharon, and they were the ones who made the Golden Calf, drawing Am Yisrael after them.

The Gemara says (*Berachot* 32a), “What is the meaning of *Dizahav* (the name of a place; lit. meaning ‘enough gold’)? They said in the yeshiva of Rabbi Yanai, this is what Moshe said to Hashem: Master of the World, it was the abundance of silver and gold with which You showered Am Yisrael, until they said ‘Enough!’ which caused them to make the Golden Calf. They said in the yeshiva of Rabbi Yanai, a lion does not roar (with delight) when given a box of straw, but when given meat. Rabbi Oshaya says, it can be compared to someone who has a thin, bony cow. He fed it grain and it kicked him. He said to it, what caused you to kick me? The grain I fed you.”

The abundance of silver and gold with which Am Yisrael were blessed led to pride. Due to this they were punished by the Egyptian sorcerers performing witchcraft and making them sin with creating the Golden Calf. Chazal tell us that the punishment for the sin of pride is witchcraft.

According to the reasoning that they sinned because of pride, one can say this is why the sin of the Golden Calf is mentioned in Parshat *Ki Tisa*. The holy sefarim write that the mitzvah of giving a half *shekel* teaches us humility, for half implies that on his own each person is only a half entity. Had Bnei Yisrael possessed the attribute of humility, they would not have sinned with the Golden Calf. The fact that the incident of the Golden Calf is written in the same Parshah as the half *shekel* teaches us the importance of humility, for in its absence one can commit the severest of sins.

In this vein we can explain the verse, “And now, desist from Me. Let My anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them; and I shall make you a great nation.” Since the root of their sin was pride, Hashem said that a new Am Yisrael will emerge from Moshe Rabbeinu, the humblest of all men, so they will never again come to sin due to pride.

THE SABBATICAL YEAR



1. Our sages forbade taking *peirot shevi'it* out of Eretz Yisrael, as is explained in *masechet Shevi'it* (6:5).

2. There are several reasons for this directive:

Some say this is due to the fact that the mitzvah of *bi'ur* must be carried out in Eretz Yisrael. Just as *peirot shevi'it* become ownerless and any resident can come and pick the fruit, so too, the mitzvah of *bi'ur*, established to make the fruit available to all, must be done in Eretz Yisrael.

A different reason is because of the concern that taking them to Chutz L'aretz increases the chance of forgetting they are *peirot shevi'it*, which will result in their holiness not being appropriately safeguarded.

Some say they may not be taken out of Eretz Yisrael because of their extreme holiness.

Yet another reason is it could result in a lack of fruit for local residents.

3. If one transgressed and took the fruit to Chutz L'aretz, one does not have to return them, but should eat them as soon as possible. If the time of *bi'ur* arrives, he does not need to bring them back to do *bi'ur*, but should perform the procedure wherever he is.

4. In recent times there has been great pressure to export fruit to Chutz L'aretz even during Shemittah because of those in the industry who rely on export. If they suddenly stop exporting, there is great concern that competitors will take their place and this will cause them great financial loss.

Since it is a question of extenuating circumstances and great loss, some rule that one may rely on the opinion of those who hold that one may be lenient and export *peirot shevi'it* under *otzar beit din*.

For any questions in practical application of these halachot, please consult a rabbinical authority.



The Ordained Rabbi, Harav Yoshiyahu Pinto zy"o

Among the numerous people who left Spain during the expulsion, and merited leaving Portugal spiritually unscathed, despite being tortured and impoverished because they refused to convert and denounce their faith in Hashem, was the family of Rabbi Yosef Pinto zt"l. They settled in Damascus, Syria, where they established a thriving Jewish community, including prosperous businesses. Rabbi Yosef became one of the wealthiest people in Damascus and his charitable deeds increased in proportion to his wealth. He supported the poor and was known as one of the greatest supporters of Torah in his generation.

Rabbi Yosef Pinto also merited vast spiritual wealth, since in his old age, in 5325, his son Yoshiyahu was born to him. Rabbi Yoshiyahu illuminated the world with his Torah and sanctity, publishing many important sefarim from which countless Jews still draw wisdom. The young Yoshiyahu became famous as one who would eventually illuminate the world with his Torah, holiness, and devotion in the

service of Hashem. Recognizing his unusual qualities and exalted conduct, Rabbi Yosef imparted his Torah and wisdom to his son. He regularly sent him to the wise scholars in Damascus, and to the tzaddikim and holy people of his generation. They infused him with their Torah and wisdom, and he was nurtured by them in his growing years.

Rabbi Yoshiyahu learned from the *gaon* and tzaddik, Rabbi Yaakov Abulafia zt"l, in Damascus. These were the most important years of his education. He followed in Rabbi Yaakov's footsteps and submitted himself to his guidance, achieving great heights in Torah and holiness.

In 5377, Rabbi Yoshiyahu went to Eretz Yisrael, choosing to learn in the holy city of Tzefat. There he acquired *semichah* from his main teacher, Rabbi Yaakov Abulafia, who had been ordained by the students of Rabbi Yaakov Bi Rav, who renewed the tradition of Rabbinical Ordination in Eretz Yisrael. From then on, Rabbi Yoshiyahu was referred to by the great Torah scholars as "The Ordained Rabbi." (Rabbi Yaakov ordained only two students in his lifetime: his son and Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto.)

Rabbi Yoshiyahu returned to Damascus adorned with the crown of *semichah*, which served as a magnificent embellishment to his virtuous character, molded by the Torah. His brilliance in *halachah*, *mussar*, *drush*, and Holy Scriptures was outstanding, and many Jews from Damascus flocked to him and drew from his vast Torah knowledge and holiness.

Rabbi Yoshiyahu became known throughout the Torah world as the *Rif*, the acronym of his name - Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto. This was a result of the sefer *Meor Einayim*, which he composed as a commentary on the *Ein Yaakov*, written following the death of his son Rabbi Yosef zt"l, in 5386.

Maran HaChida, Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai zy"o, expressed his regard for the sefer *Meor Einayim*: "In all of the land, praises are heaped upon him." In fact, this commentary has become an inseparable part of the sefer *Ein Yaakov*. It is a detailed and clear commentary, exact and extensive. It is a true masterpiece on the *aggadot* of the *Shas*.

In 5380 when Rabbi Chaim Vital passed away, the *Rif* was appointed to serve as Rav of Damascus in his stead. However, in 5385 the *Rif* left Damascus to settle in Eretz Yisrael, making Tzefat his permanent residence. A year later, upon the death of his son Rabbi Yosef who was only twenty-four years old, the *Rif* returned to Damascus where he served as the Chief Rabbi until his passing on the 23rd of Adar 5408; he was eighty-three years old.

The entire Jewish community joined in his funeral procession, according him his final honor. He was buried in Damascus. His esteemed son-in-law, Rabbi Shmuel Vital eulogized him, crying bitterly for the great loss of all Am Yisrael, and particularly for the Jews of Damascus.

In a letter sent by Rabbi Yaakov Antebi a"h to Sir Moses Montefiore about the difficulties experienced by the Jews of Damascus as a result of the infamous blood libel (in the year 5600), it is mentioned that when they heard about the decree, all the Jews gathered in the Alpernage *beit kneset*. Chacham Yaakov Antebi inspired the congregation to repent so they should merit Hashem's mercy, and following this they blew the *Rif's* shofar, while shedding heartbreaking tears. This was apparently the shofar that belonged to Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto zy"o, which remained concealed in this *beit kneset*. They would blow it in times of trouble, to awaken his merit for their protection.

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