

# PACHAD DAVID

Bechukotai



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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"ta

**"If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them" (Vayikra 26:3).**

Rashi quotes the Midrash: "If you will follow My decrees – this refers to engaging in intensive Torah study." We can ask: Why does Hashem demand of us to toil in Torah? Is Torah study without toil not enough? It would still seem to be considered Torah study.

Why should someone who schedules set times for Torah study, but does not toil and labor in Torah, not receive all the benefits Hashem promises one who engages in Torah study?

We will explain by quoting the holy Zohar: "Come and see: Balak was wiser and greater in sorcery than Bilam. And so we learned, whenever a person wishes to engage in avodat Hashem in This World, through the act of the mitzvah he does down here, he awakens the root of the mitzvah above. Since this is the case, the act must be carried out in purity, as has been explained by the sages. But if the mitzvah does not include an act, for example the mitzvah is carried out through speech, in this case speech has the power to arouse its root above.

"Therefore," the holy Zohar continues, "just as we must arouse lofty holiness through act or speech, similarly those acting from the side of impurity, also arouse their side through an act or speech. Even though Bilam was a great sorcerer, greater than all the sorcerers in the world, Balak son of Beor was an even greater sorcerer than him. That is, Balak was greater in sorcery than all sorcerers, while Bilam was greater in divination, because sorcery and divination are two different levels. Sorcery depends on deed, whereas divination does not depend on the deed at all but only on gazing with one's eyes or speech. This arouses the spirit of impurity to settle on them, and then he (the sorcerer) can do what he does to harm mankind.

## maskil Le'David Toiling in Torah Study Awakens the Root of the Mitzvah



But the holy Jewish people are not like that. All are holy and all their deeds arouse in them the spirit of holiness. Concerning this it says (*Bamidbar* 23:23), 'For there is no divination in Yaakov and no sorcery in Yisrael.' Meaning, among Bnei Yisrael there is neither divination nor sorcery because they grasp the aspect of lofty holiness. Since all their deeds are done in holiness, this arouses a holy spirit to rest on them."

Accordingly, this reconciles the question we asked on the verse, "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them." Meaning, it is not enough that you engage in Torah or set times for Torah study, for this is not the mitzvah in its entirety below, here on earth. Only through toiling in Torah is the root of the mitzvah awakened above.

This is particularly true if the act of toiling in Torah down below is done in holiness. This power brings down a corresponding influence from above and becomes a type of garment for man, as Chazal tell us that Torah becomes the clothing (*levush*) of one who toils in Torah.

In addition, the power of toiling in Torah study awakens the root of every mitzvah we do in This World and connects us with a higher power of Torah from above. Chazal tell us that Torah was brought down to earth and did not remain in the heavens. Nevertheless, since the time of the Giving of the Torah, its impression remains in heaven and this is what is aroused to descend.

Since we now understand that Torah studied with toil down below awakens the root of this mitzvah above, it is correct to study Torah specifically in this fashion, to bring down positive influences which become a kind of clothing – a Rabbi's cloak – for the person who toils in Torah.

20 Iyar 5782  
21 May 2022

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## Hilula

- 20 Iyar – Rabbi Yosef Velatoch
- 20 Iyar – Rabbi Meir Brandsdorfer, author of *Kneh B'shem*
- 21 Iyar – Rabbi Moshe Dayan, author of *Likutei Chemed*
- 21 Iyar – Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik, author of *Raza M'heimana*
- 22 Iyar – Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri, the Saba Kadisha
- 22 Iyar – Rabbi Shlomo Zalman, author of *Magen Avot*
- 23 Iyar – Rabbi Yehoshua of Dinov
- 23 Iyar – Rabbi Yosef Babliki, Av Beit Din Yerushalayim
- 24 Iyar – Rabbi Chizkiya Panikarli, a Rav from Italy
- 24 Iyar – Rabbi Eliezer Tzvi Sufrin, Admor of Kamran
- 25 Iyar – Rabbi Yissachar Dov Lifshitz, Admor of Stropkov
- 25 Iyar – Rabbi Shlomo Amsalem, Av Beit Din of Midlet
- 26 Iyar – Rabbi Saadia Gaon
- 26 Iyar – Rabbeinu Moshe Chaim Luzatto, the Ramchal





## WORDS OF THE SAGES

### The Practical Message of Covid

In a message of encouragement delivered by Rabbi Shimon Galai shlit"א, he quoted the commentaries who say that Hashem smote the Egyptians to awaken them. Similarly, when He sends blows to Am Yisrael the purpose is to wake us up. Hashem sent us a painful blow, and just as when a father hits his son, if he is awake – the purpose is to cause him pain, and if he is sleeping the purpose is to wake him up! Since it is written, "I am with him in distress," certainly Hashem does not wish to hurt us, rather He wishes to send us a wake-up message!

Although we do not understand the ways of Heaven, it must be made clear that Hashem sent this blow to arouse us, just as Hashem said that if we do not listen to the prophets, He Himself will have to smite us. Hashem behaves with us measure for measure.

Rabbi Galai suggested concentrating on and improving our interpersonal conduct, and in particular being careful about speaking negatively (*lashon hara*) about one's friend.

During this period of Covid we have heard the voice of Hashem! He has been calling out to us and we need to wake up! So many sick people! How many of us were familiar with respirators, with ECMO machines? Who even knew what it was? This phone that is lying here on the table rang non-stop. People begged me, in tears: "Rabbi, pray for us, we can't breathe!" Until now we thought breathing was a trivial matter, and suddenly we understand, as Rabbi Abramsky quoted: "As for me, through Your abundant kindness: 'What a kindness it is that we can breathe. We suddenly realize that breath is from Hashem!'"

"There was once someone," relates Rabbi Shimon Galai, "who prayed with us in our *beit kneset*, and one day I noticed that he had a hospital bracelet in his tallit and tefillin bag. I asked him about it and this is what he told me: "I was hospitalized and baruch Hashem released several days later. I was thinking of a way to constantly remember to thank Hashem for this kindness. So I placed the bracelet in my tallit and tefillin bag, and now I have a daily reminder of Hashem's kindness that I recovered!"

What practical lesson can we derive from this?

We must realize what a great gift it is to be able to go and pray in the *beit kneset*! It is important to remember that a *beit kneset* is a place of prayer only! Particularly during prayers. For several long months we were unable to pray inside a *beit kneset*, and this made us appreciate what a special gift it is, to merit praying in the *beit kneset*. We should also try to internalize the great kindness of being able to breathe on our own. This was one of Hashem's purposes in sending the virus, to arouse us to see that things that seem so simple are actually very far from simple. This awakens us to how much goodness and kindness Hashem showers upon us constantly!

It is therefore very important to strengthen our feelings of gratitude to the Creator of the World for the salvation He sends us. And to thereby come to a deeper realization, that everything that until pre-Covid seemed a simple thing, is really not so simple. Covid must leave us with some practical change. Every morning when a Jew gets up and says: "I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King, for You have returned my soul within me," he must say this statement with more feeling than before. After learning how complicated breathing can become, how difficult it was for some of us to breathe, the "I gratefully thank You" must take on a different meaning! We cannot remain as we were before. Thank You, Creator of the World, for giving us breath and for the ability to breathe!

Harav Galai concludes: "We must thank for the past and beg for the future!" This seemingly contradicts politeness; Hashem has given you and you are already asking for more?! The answer is that this is part of the thanks! To ask that Hashem should continue showering us with His kindness is the greatest form of appreciation! Hagaon Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner zt"l tells us that the word תודה, thanks, is derived both from תודה, thank you, and from מודה במקצת, partial admission. We thank Hashem for all the good He has done for us, and pray for the future because we know only Hashem can give us, and only He showers us with all the good. We therefore ask Him to continue sending His blessings.

## WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

### He Preceded the Blow with Recovery

My dear disciple, Mr. Gabi Elbaz, was once approached by someone from Marseille who asked if he learns in Rav Pinto's yeshiva. When my disciple replied in the affirmative, the man asked if he could share a story with him. This is what he related:

"A number of years ago, I learned that Rav Pinto was in Marseille, receiving people. As is traditional Jewish custom, I went to receive a blessing from him.

"I waited in line for my turn and when I finally entered his room, the Rav lifted his hands and blessed me with good health and Heavenly protection.

"At the time, I was taken aback at his blessing. Health? Protection? I was a strapping young man, the picture of health, and living quite securely, thank you. But that very evening everything became clear. As I was eating supper, I suddenly suffered a heart attack!

"In those moments, the Rav's blessing suddenly came back to me with crystal clarity. I reassured myself that with Hashem's help I would recover, in the merit of the blessing I had received just that morning from the Rav."

This man's faith in the blessings of tzaddikim, even when they are obscure, was what protected him from the effects of his heart attack.



## FROM THE TREASURY

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

### Hashem Gives Man Materialism to Fulfil Mitzvot

**“If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them” (Vayikra 26:3).**

Chazal say in praise of talmidei chachamim (*Berachot* 64a), “Talmidei chachamim have no rest, neither in this World nor in the Next World.” Rashi explains, “They go from yeshiva to yeshiva and from [*beit*] *midrash* to [*beit*] *midrash*.” This is the meaning of “If you will follow My decrees.” Fulfilling “If you will follow My decrees,” leads to “observing My commandments” and “performing [all of] them.” Accustoming oneself to study Torah leads to observing the mitzvot. However, if one is constantly involved in transient matters, this habit prevents him from observing the mitzvot which merit us with eternal life. This is the meaning of the Chazal, “The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah.” When a person fulfills the mitzvah of toiling in Torah, Hashem gives him the opportunity to fulfill all the other mitzvot, thereby increasing his reward in the World to Come.

How can man fulfil all the commandments? Through laboring in Torah with the intention to safeguard and perform. As Rashi writes, Hashem also gives man a temporary life in This World so he will be able to observe all the mitzvot, both “minor” and “major”. This is because many mitzvot depend on material entities, such as the mitzvot of *leket*, *shikcha*, and *pe'ah* (setting aside part of the crop for the poor), *ma'aserot* (tithing produce), and *bikkurim* (first fruits). Hashem gave these mitzvot to a person who toils in Torah so he can fulfill what he learns. Without assets it would be impossible to fulfil these mitzvot.

This is the meaning of, “I will provide your rains in their time.” “גשמיכם, Your rains” can also refer to גשמייות, materialism, meaning that Hashem gives man all the materialism necessary to observe the mitzvot. And when Hashem opens His treasure house, He showers us with abundance, as the Navi says, “I will pour out upon you blessing without end.” That is, Hashem will give us even more than what we need to keep the mitzvot. Hashem gives repeatedly, He pours out, and without end, as much as man is worthy.

But he who does not engage in Torah with toil, does not deserve to receive material possessions for he cannot fulfill that which he does not learn. Only one who toils in Torah is given the opportunity to fulfill all the mitzvot. At the end of his life when a person ascends to the Heavenly Court, if he claims, “I was poor and did not have the means to keep the mitzvot,” the Heavenly Court will reply, “You did not have sufficient livelihood because you did not toil in Torah. Had you invested in Torah study, Hashem would have provided for you so you could observe the mitzvot. Hashem only gives materialism to enable a person to observe the mitzvot.”

If someone claims that we find many rich people who do not toil in Torah, we can reply: “The Ba'alei Tosafot have taught us: Hashem created three gifts in His world: wisdom, strength, and wealth. If one merits one of them, he merits all of them. When is this? When these gifts come from the power of Torah and yirat Shamayim.

But otherwise strength and wealth are of no benefit to him, as the Navi said, ‘Let not the wise man glorify himself with his wisdom, and let not the strong man glorify himself with his strength, let not the rich man glorify himself with his wealth. For only with this may one glorify himself - contemplating and knowing Me...’”

## THE SABBATICAL YEAR



1. *Peirot shevi'it* may be eaten as long as that fruit is still found in the fields. But when this is no longer the case, all fruit of that variety that one has in the house must go through a process of *bi'ur* (renouncing of ownership). We learn this from the verse, “And for your animal and for the beast that is in your land, all its crop shall be to eat.” Chazal explain, as long as some of that species is still available in the field for a wild animal to forage, you may retain this species in your possession for eating or storage. However, once a species of produce has disappeared from the field, it must undergo the *bi'ur* process. This is done by declaring the produce ownerless.

2. The obligation of *bi'ur* applies only to fruits and vegetables that have *kedushat shevi'it*. Even though the Shemittah year is calculated from the first of Tishrei until the 29<sup>th</sup> of Elul, nevertheless *kedushat shevi'it* is established according to the time of growth. This means that fruit, grain and legumes that reach the stage of *chanatah* (from this point there is an obligation to tithe i.e. it becomes edible, or reaches a third of expected growth) before Rosh Hashanah of the Shemittah year, do not have *kedushat shevi'it* even if they were picked during Shemittah. But if they reached this stage sometime after Rosh Hashanah of the Shemittah year, they do have *kedushat shevi'it*, even if their full growth was reached after the Shemittah year. The prohibition of *sefichin* also applies to these grains and legumes.

3. If fruits reached the stage of *chanatah* during Shemittah but were only picked after Shemittah, it is still a mitzvah (and obligation) to declare them ownerless, even in the eighth year.

4. Citrus fruits that reached the stage of *chanatah* in the sixth year but were harvested in the seventh, do not have *kedushat shevi'it*, and are therefore subject to *terumot* and *ma'aserot*. But if they reached *chanatah* during Shemittah but were picked in the eighth year, they have *kedushat shevi'it* and are exempt from *terumot* and *ma'aserot*, as is all Shemittah produce, since it has been declared ownerless.

5. Declaring the crop ownerless applies only to fruits and vegetables, and does not apply to the twigs, branches and trees.

6. If *bi'ur* is not carried out at the set date, the produce becomes prohibited and may not be consumed. However, if delayed due to reasons beyond control (*onnes*), when the cause of delay has passed the *bi'ur* may be made, after which the produce may be re-possessed and consumed.

7. *Bi'ur* must be carried out in front of three people. Some say the produce must be taken outside one's personal domain. One declares: "My friends of the Jewish nation, whosoever has a need for that which I placed down here, may take it." He may then bring the produce back into his house and eat it. Some say *bi'ur* may be performed even inside the house, as long as it is done in front of a group of three people. This is the ruling we follow. Even after carrying out the *bi'ur* process, the produce still has *kedushat shevi'it* and must be treated accordingly.

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



## The Saba Kadisha Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri zt"l

Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri zt"l was an impressive holy tzaddik. He was revered by the gedolim of both the East and the West; great Sephardic sages, Ashkenazic Admorim, and gaonim of Lithuania would all seek his guidance. In his youth he corresponded with the Torah giants Hagaon Rabbi Akiva Eiger and his son-in-law the Chatam Sofer. He served as Chief Rabbi of Damascus and Tzefat, and towards the end of his life moved to Yerushalayim where he continued to radiate from the glory of his Torah and holiness to those around him. He was 115 years old when his pure soul ascended to heaven.

Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer was born in 5575 in Istanbul, Turkey, to his father, Rabbi Yaakov Alfandri. The Alfandri family was of distinguished lineage, and according to the Chida they were descendants of Beztalel son of Uri son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehuda.

As a young boy Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer was orphaned of his father. On the other hand,

his mother, who was intelligent and learned and taught her son Torah in his youth, was granted longevity and died at the age of eighty.

The leaders of the Jewish community in Damascus become acquainted with Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer who visited their city several times, and recognized his greatness in Torah. A few years later, he was offered the position of Chief Rabbi, but he did not want to serve in the rabbinate and rejected their offer.

Along with his immense greatness in Torah, the Rav was extremely humble. He stayed away from positions of honor. His clothes too were simple. He did not wear a *mitznefet* or *tarbush*, the customary headdress of the local sages, nor did he wear the rabbinical cloak. Rather, he was always careful that his clothes should be clean and simple, like the clothes of the common people.

Hagaon Rabbi Shlomo Alfandari was revered by all – Jews and Gentiles alike. One matter where he intervened decisively, even though he did not officially serve in the rabbinate, was the matter of conscripting Turkish Jews into the army. Most members of the Spiritual Council informed the local Jews that they must enlist in the Turkish army. However, Rabbi Shlomo and two other rabbis did not sign this statement. Rabbi Shlomo informed the Jews that the Turkish government had made an agreement with the Jews of the country, who settled there at the time of the expulsion from Spain, that they would not impose on the Jews any matter that might harm their religion. Since enlistment in the army could cause many problems of Shabbat desecration, eating forbidden foods, and more, this was included in the agreement.

Rabbi Shlomo heard that one of community

heads, who was close to the king, was involved in the initiative to enlist the Jews in the army. He went to his house and tried to convince him to cease this activity which was contrary to Torah law. Rabbi Shlomo did not make do with an affable conversation; he declared that if this Jew did not listen to him, he would be severely punished. However the Jew showed clear disrespect to the rabbi and was not prepared to change his position.

Shortly afterwards, when this Jew went to the king's palace to further the matter of conscription, he suddenly fainted and died on the spot. Rabbi Shlomo announced that no sage should eulogize him at his funeral. Even though his sons and the authorities tried to intercede, they were sent away empty-handed. Rabbi Shlomo explained briefly, "I am the King's servant, a servant of the King of the World, and it is His honor alone that I demand."

The Turkish king was very angry at Rabbi Alfandri's intervention in the matter of conscription, and summoned him to his palace. However, when he saw the face of the rabbi, who appeared like a holy angel, he did him no harm.

Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer was known as the Saba Kadisha. It is said that when shaven yeshiva students would come to discuss Torah with him, the Saba would refuse to talk to them, and would say: "First 'Show Me your countenance,' (meaning with a beard), and only then, 'let Me hear your voice.'"

At his funeral, which was held on Tuesday, 22 Iyar 5690, the sages of Yerushalayim decreed that everyone should abstain from work and the shops should be closed. He was buried on Har Hazeitim in "Chelkat Hatzaddikim."

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