



Overcoming Challenges in the Merit of Faith

"Hashem appeared to Avram and said to him, 'I am Kel Shakkai; walk before Me and be perfect' (Bereishit 17:1)

The Midrash tells us (Bereishit Rabba 38:13) that when Avraham smashed all the idols in his father's house, he was brought to Nimrod. Nimrod asked him, "Are you Avraham, the son of Terach?" He answered, "yes." Nimrod said, "do you not know that I am the master over all the creations? The sun, moon, stars, zodiac signs and man, are all under my rule so why did you destroy my idols?!"

At that moment Hashem blessed Avraham with wisdom and he replied: "My master, the king! If it be your will, I will tell you one thing for your greatness." He said, "speak." Avraham said, "this is the way of the world. From the day the world was created until now, the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. If it be your will, tomorrow command the sun that it will rise in the west and set in the east and with this, I will attest that you are indeed the master of all creations!"

Avraham continued arguing with Nimrod and emerging victorious until in the end they tied and bound up Avraham and took him out to throw him into the furnace. They placed him on a stone and surrounded him with wood from all four directions, five amot deep on each side and five amot high and they lit them. At that moment, Gavriel came before Hashem and said, "Master of the world, I will go down and cool the fire and save the tzaddik from the raging furnace." Hashem said to him, "I am One and Only in My world and he is one and only in his world, so it is fitting for the One and Only to save the one and only. You will have the merit of saving three of his descendants, Chananya, Misha'el and Azarya."

The Midrash continues: Haran, the brother of Avraham, was there and his heart was undecided. He said, "either way I will be okay. If Avraham emerges victorious, I will agree with Avraham, and if Nimrod is victorious, I will agree with Nimrod." Since Avraham was saved, they asked whose side he was on. He answered, "I agree with Avraham Avinu!" They took him and threw him into the furnace. Before he even managed to land, he convulsed from the flames, his insides were burnt and he died. Nimrod took him and threw him before his father, as it says (Bereishit 11:28) "Haran died in the lifetime of (lit. in front of) Terach his father".

It is difficult to understand why Nimrod threw Haran into the furnace. A great and wondrous miracle had just been performed in front of his eyes and Avraham was saved from the raging fire. With this Nimrod clearly saw that "Hashem is the only G-d – in heaven above and on earth below – there is none other," and that Avraham's way is the correct way.

The answer seems to be that precisely because Nimrod clearly saw the truth, he threw Haran into the

furnace. Nimrod came to him with a claim and said, you are Avraham's brother and grew up with him. From a young age, you saw and recognized the correct path that Avraham your brother was following. If so, why are you still debating whether this is the correct way?

It can be compared to a man who is told the winning lottery numbers and all that is left for him to do is to fill in and send the form. But with great foolishness, he does not rush to proceed and thereby loses all that he could have gained.

This is what Nimrod was implying to Haran: He could clearly see how Avraham his brother was uplifting himself, fighting a battle against his father for Heavens' sake with Hashem's Name perpetually on his lips. Since words of truth can be recognized and without a doubt this was the correct path, then Avraham had already paved the way for him and all that was left for him to do was to walk on the same path. Yet he still doubts the matter and delays whilst searching for more proofs... This is why Nimrod threw him into the furnace.

At that moment Nimrod repented from his evil ways and clung to the G-d of Avraham since he was extremely inspired by the powerful faith that Avraham demonstrated against all the other inhabitants of the world. He saw how Hashem repaid Avraham's love manifold and saved him from the furnace. All this caused Nimrod to be impressed by the magnificent sight, causing him to repent and desert the alien gods that he possessed. Since the truth was so clear to him he became angry with Haran and came to him with a claim that how come he, who grew up in Avraham's proximity, did not bother to learn from his ways and still entertained doubts.

However, later on, Nimrod returned to his evil ways. As long as Avraham was close by and his tremendous influence had an effect on everyone, he was also influenced for the good and believed in Hashem. But when Hashem presented Avraham with a trial by commanding him "Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house" and Avraham left the town, Nimrod returned to his evil ways, for when he was faced with a challenge there was no longer from whom to learn and he did not know how to overcome his evil inclination.

Now we can understand why Hashem did not perform a miracle for Haran and save him from the furnace just like he saved Avraham. For indeed Nimrod had a compelling claim against Haran. How could he still entertain doubts in his heart while witnessing his brother fighting a battle for the sake of pure faith? Words of truth can be recognized; it was clear that this was the correct path. So why was his faith dependent on whether or not a miracle would occur to Avraham? Since his inner faith in Hashem was wavering and he did not possess steadfast faith, he did not merit a miracle being performed for him.

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Hilula

- 11 - Rachel Imenu a'h
- 12 - Rabbi Yehuda Tzedaka, Rosh Yeshiva 'Porat Yosef'
- 13 - Rabbi Chaim Yakov Vaknin
- 14 - Rabbi Avraham Elimelech hy"d, Admor of Karlin-Stolin
- 15 - Rabbi Leib Ba'al Yissurim
- 16 - Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach
- 16 - The Esteemed Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan zya"a
- 17 - Rabbi Binyamin Zev Cheshin



Walking in their Ways

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

The Honor of Talmidei Chachamim

In the year 2008, the home of my holy grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a, in Morocco, underwent renovations. R' Avraham Knafo, shlita, was responsible for the job and executed it in the best way possible. He told me afterward, that one day, while the work was in progress, he discovered that a considerable amount of materials brought to the building site had simply disappeared.

He immediately turned to the gentile contractor and asked for an explanation. But the man claimed he did not know a thing. He was so adamant in his denial that he swore that if he was, indeed, the one who stole the materials, he should be punished for this.

To the shock of everyone, they found out the next day that this contractor had been killed during the night in a brawl. He had proven to one and all that he was the true thief. He had received his punishment, exactly as he had predicted.

The workers, who knew about his treachery, were very worried about their own future. They began to ask forgiveness from the tzaddik, so that his wrath should not strike them, as well. But one of the workers made a mockery of the whole thing. He scoffed at his frightened comrades, telling them they were making a fuss over nothing. He had not even finished speaking when his mouth became distorted in a most ugly way. It remained that way until he came to the tzaddik's home and personally begged forgiveness.

How severe it is to demonstrate disrespect toward a talmid chacham! One who mocks the honor of the holy tzaddikim will pay the price, which will be hefty, indeed.

The Haftarah

"Why do you say, O Ya'akov" (Yeshaya 40:41)

The connection to the parsha: The haftarah speaks about Avraham's battle with the four kings, as it says "Who inspired [the one] from the east, at whose [every] footstep righteousness attended? [Who] delivered nations to him, and subdued kings [before him]?" This battle is described in the parsha.



Guard Your Tongue

Considered Righteous

If a person hears that someone spoke about him, or harmed him or wishes to harm him, he must be careful not to believe this information, he is only permitted to be cautious. This means that he may take measures to protect himself since unless proven otherwise we adopt the view that a person is righteous, we must assume that he probably did not cause him any harm or disparage him.

It is therefore forbidden to take any measure against him or cause him damage or embarrassment, neither in a small or big way. It is even a Torah prohibition to hate this person in one's heart.



Words of our Sages

I promise that you will never have children!

"Nonetheless, your wife Sarah will bear you a son" (Bereishit 17:19)

The esteemed Admor of "Mevakshei Emuna" shlita does not cease thanking the Creator for all His many kindnesses, for after thirty-two years of marriage he was finally blessed with offspring! He tells over again and again about the feeling of despair that was never far off and about the many prayers that brought them salvation. The following is an excerpt from an interview with the 'Hamevaser' magazine (Yom Kippur edition, 5778):

"Thirty-two years elapsed from my wedding day, 10 Shevat 5739, until the day that I merited embracing my own offspring, twin girls, on 12 Adar II, 5771. The years that we went through were full of long, suspenseful waiting and hoping, constant prayers and beseeching Hashem. Thirty-two years and two months in which we did not give up hope. We prayed and waited and hoped.

It is impossible to describe the heart-break and deep pain that consumed us, we went through an ocean of suffering, with the greatest danger hovering over us being 'despair'. There was no lack of people to discourage us, from doctors to mekubalim who can perceive the hidden. But throughout the years we continued praying and hoping, asking tzaddikim for blessings and trying many segulot. I remember one great mekubal whom I begged for a blessing and promise, but his words only caused me despair. He told me that he doesn't see any chance for me to have children, even adding: "I promise you that you will never have children!" Another famous person said to me

sadly, "I do not see you having children, but by establishing upright talmidim who seek Hashem, you will thereby leave a legacy forever!"

These gloomy words that were said to me after al-

most three decades of negligible chances, threatened to crush my spirit. There is something in these kind of words that are said after so many years without seeing any light, that is enough to break any person's heart. But to me it was clear that I will not allow any person or power in the world to bring me to despair.

I used all my strength to encourage myself to continue placing my faith in Hashem, and hung onto my guiding principle, the words of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav zy" a who stated: "There is no such thing as despair!" I decided to accept upon myself additional prayers: to pray every day at the kever of Rachel Immeinu, who was also childless for many years until she gave birth to Yosef and Binyomin, and to recite there the entire book of Tehillim."

For an entire year, I went every morning to the holy gravesite of 'Mamme Rachel' and in a tearful voice, I completed the sefer Tehillim. I prayed and begged my Father in heaven that I should merit children.

At the end of the second year, on 12 Adar II, 5771, we experienced the miraculous salvation! Hashem blessed us with twin girls!"

These words served as a great lesson for me, which I would like to present to all those who are in need of salvation:

First of all – do not despair! No matter what a person goes through, he should never give up. He should strengthen his pure faith in the One who said and the world came into being. Hashem is all-powerful and with His great power, He changes the natural order of the creation.

Secondly, one must learn about the power of prayer. To pray and pray and pray yet again, without prayer a person is not given anything! And with the power of a person's prayers, he can bring about genuine miracles and wonders. The problem is that people underestimate the value of prayer. Prayer is one of the loftiest things in the world yet people disregard it. If a person would only understand the power and prominence of prayer, he could merit bringing about great salvations and the most unexpected results.



Pearls of the Parsha

Lot's Far-fetched Reasoning

"And there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Avram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock" (Bereishit 13:7)

Avraham Avinu, famous for bringing people closer to the Shechina, advises Lot to separate from him. Why did he not try to influence him to repent for his sin of allowing his flock to graze in fields belonging to other people?

Rabbi Reuven Karlinstein zt"l, in his sefer 'Yechi Reuven', explains that when Avraham heard that Lot was stealing, he wished to understand his motive.

Had Lot answered him that he lacked provisions, Avraham would have sufficed with a lecture and allowed him to remain. But Lot's reply involved a philosophical response; he claimed that since Hashem had promised to give Avraham the entire Land yet he has no offspring, this makes Lot the only inheritor, therefore on account of this future inheritance he is permitted to partake of whatever he wishes.

When Avraham Avinu heard this 'halachic' reasoning, he immediately said, "Please separate from me", I do not deal with 'tzaddikim', only with non-Jews who sincerely wish to accept the word of Hashem and convert.

The Promise is Part of the Trial

"So Avram went as Hashem had spoken to him" (Bereishit 12:4)

"Go for yourself from your land", on this first trial that Avram was given by Hashem, we are struck by an interesting question. What was the great challenge involved in moving to a different land, if he was promised so many benefits: "And I will make you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great..."?

Furthermore, why, when Hashem spoke to Avram, does the verse use the expression of 'amirah' "Hashem said (וַיֹּאמֶר ה') to Avram", while when Avram fulfills this command, the verse uses an expression of 'dibur', "So Avram went as Hashem had spoken (בְּאִשֶּׁר דָּבַר) to Him"?

The holy Ohr Hachaim zya"l explains that Hashem promised Avraham Avinu all these benefits in order to put his motive to the test. This means that the promises themselves were part of the challenge. Will he go because of the promises, or will he go only for the sake of fulfilling Hashem's command?

This adds an additional dimension to the challenge. To get up and go without thinking about the promises, only for the sake of fulfilling the will of Hashem.

Now we can understand the use of the different expressions. 'Amira' is an expression of being soft-spoken, while 'dibur' is a harsher form of speech. The Torah is teaching us that Hashem gave over the command with the addition of 'amirah', of a softening of the challenge. If he goes, he was told, he will merit all these blessings. But Avraham Avinu related to the command as if it was 'dibur', a harsh directive, without any promise of reward and performed it only to fulfill his Creator's command.

Thought, Speech and Deed

"You shall keep My covenant – you and your offspring after you" (Bereishit 17:9)

Rabbi Shalom of Belz zt"l asks why the word 'you' is repeated?

He answers that in order for a mitzvah to be performed in its entirety, it must include thought, speech and deed.

Concerning the mitzva of brit milah this is impossible because the 'deed' of the mitzvah is performed on the body of the child, whereas the 'thought' is carried out by the father. Only once the child grows up and merits performing brit milah on his own offspring, will he fulfill this missing element of 'thought'. Once again the baby who is being circumcised will wait for the completion of his 'deed', which will come about through his own children and so on and so forth...

This is what the verse is hinting at: "You and your offspring after you" – only once your children will be circumcised, will you have fulfilled the commandment in its entirety.

Treasures

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



The Deeds of Avraham Avinu were Calculated with Da'at Torah

Hashem told Avraham, "Go for yourself from your land" to an unknown place. Avraham and his wife took all their possessions and set off for Eretz Yisrael. On their arrival, they were greeted with a heavy famine. Avraham, the personification of kindness, distributed all his possessions to others so that they would have a means of assuaging their hunger and he tried to help them in whatever way he could, even taking loans on their behalf.

He then went down to Mitzrayim where Pharaoh and his officers stole his wife, yet Avraham Avinu accepts everything with love and doesn't complain to Hashem, why did you do this to me? Instead, he believes with complete faith that everything will turn out for the best, and this is what indeed happened. Avraham and his wife left Pharaoh's palace with great honor and enormous wealth, as it says (Bereishit 13:2) "Now Avram was very laden with livestock, silver, and gold".

In all his dealings, Avraham always walked with Hashem with virtuousness and kept His commandments, being scrupulous in performing 'minor' mitzvot as in 'major' ones, and distanced himself from the slightest chance of transgression. This is the reason why he agreed to take from Pharaoh's silver and gold although he would not take from the possessions of the King of Sodom. He said to them, "If so much as a thread to a shoe strap; or if I shall take from anything of yours!" Since we are told about the men of Sodom, "Now the people of Sodom were wicked and sinful towards Hashem, exceedingly" and the Gemara explains (Sanhedrin 109a) that this means, "wicked with their bodies and sinful with their money", all their possessions were defiled by the prohibition of theft and were tainted with robbery. Avraham was apprehensive about this prohibition therefore, he did not wish to take from their possessions. On the other hand, the possessions of Pharaoh were free of theft, therefore, he agreed to take from them. From this, we see that all of Avraham's deeds were calculated according to the way of the Torah and mitzvot. He merited achieving this level because he clearly recognized Hashem; he had perfect faith in the Creator of the world. He never questioned Hashem's ways or wondered why Hashem did a certain thing to him since he knew that "whatever the Merciful One does is for the best".

ZECHER TZADDIK LIVRACHA

RABBI CHAIM PINTO "HAKATAN"



This week (15th of Heshvan - Nov. 13th 2019) we mark the hilula of one of the great Torah giants, a descendant of the distinguished Pinto family of Morocco, the tzaddik and miracle-worker, Rabbi Chaim Pinto HaKatan zya"a. The tzaddik Rabbi Chaim zya"a brought merit to the public, both spiritually and materially, not only while he was alive but also after he passed away, by returning the hearts of his people to their Father in heaven. Our Sages tell us that tzaddikim are greater in their deaths than in their lifetime and we often hear from Moreinu v'Rabbeinu shlita about wonders and miracles that happen throughout the world, to Jews who pray for Hashem's salvation in the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto zya"a.

Rabbi Chaim zya"a would instill faith and hope, crucial for every Jew, in every person no matter his origin; Jews and non-Jews alike. The sefer 'Anshei Emuna' (Ch. 19) brings the following story:

Rabbi Chaim once came down with a severe case of typhus and was at the brink of death. The members of the Chevrah Kadisha assembled around his bed, and when they saw him taking his last breath, they began to recite Tehillim.

Suddenly, Rabbi Chaim opened his eyes and raised himself slightly. He told the members of the Chevrah Kadisha, "You can leave now. I am fine. I was granted by Heaven another twenty-six years of life."

After everyone recovered from their shock, the tzaddik explained to them that just as he was about to die, his grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol, suddenly came from Gan Eden to stand before the Heavenly Court. He tearfully pleaded, "You must add more years to Rabbi Chaim's life, since he

has not yet accomplished all that he has to. He must live longer in order to increase people's faith in Hashem."

Rabbi Chaim Hagadol continued pleading his grandson's case and advocating for him. In the end, the Heavenly Court accepted his appeal and added another twenty-six years to Rabbi Chaim Hakatan's life. During these years, he dedicated himself to strengthening his brethren with faith in the Master of the World.

Rabbi Chaim Hakatan's zya"a door was open to every single person without exception. At all hours of day and night, people would come to seek his blessings for salvation and mercy, or to ask for his advice.

Countless people would visit Rabbi Chaim's zya"a home asking the tzaddik to pray for them and bless them. Those who later merited salvation on account of this blessing would return to his house to express their gratitude. But Rabbi Chaim zya"a immediately put the matter in perspective and told them simply:

"Thank only the Creator of the world."

R' Itzchak Abisoror relates that Rabbi Chaim Hakatan called him several times to accompany him on his rounds of collecting money from the people of the city and distributing the charity among the poor. Not everyone merited accompanying Rabbi Chaim when he collected money since it was a special privilege. However, R' Itzchak was chosen for the mission.

Every Friday, Rabbi Chaim would go and gather food from people so that he could distribute it among the poor in honor of Shabbat Kodesh. He would not collect money on Fridays since he knew that time was limited, and the poor would not have sufficient time to buy provisions for Shabbat. Conversely, on other days, he would collect money and distribute it to the poor.

When Rabbi Chaim would visit the houses of the people to ask them to contribute some of their food, he would reveal to them in a supernatural manner how much food they had cooked that day and how much they would need to eat that week. Consequently, he would inform them how much they could spare for tzedakah.

R' Itzchak Abisoror expressed his amazement at the conduct of Rabbi Chaim: "It is amazing that a Jewish leader, who was immersed in Torah and mitzvot in utmost

holiness, interrupted his studies in order to care for the needs of his fellow Jews. Rabbi Chaim would humbly go from house to house in order to gather food to provide for the poor people of the city."

An interesting testimony was given by R' Ishua, the attendant of Rabbi Chaim Hakatan, about the daily schedule of the tzaddik. This is what he said:

I would go to his house early in the morning and already find him praying in the Beit Hakeneset, on the top floor. After praying, Rabbi Chaim went downstairs to his wife and asked her what she planned to cook that day. He would give her a sum of money to purchase the necessary provisions and then immediately went on his way, going from house to house to collect money to distribute to the poor people of the city.

His feet literally led him to the houses of the sick, poor, and needy. He himself would go to the stores to shop for them and then brought them the provisions. In every home that he visited, he would be offered some food, and he would make sure to always taste a bit. He told me to eat in every place.

I asked him, "Harav, how much can I eat?" He answered, "You are still young; you can eat. If they offer you food, you may not humiliate them by refusing to eat in their home."

In this manner, the tzaddik would walk for hours, going from one end of the city to the other, in order to practice kindness and charity. This was his custom in his younger years, and he continued doing so until old age.

At night, the tzaddik would engage in tikkunim and in the study of the holy Torah. "Who may ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who may stand in the place of His sanctity? One with clean hands and a pure heart."

Rabbi Chaim's extraordinary efforts to assist the poor and needy made him popular among the people. They sensed that all his actions were entirely for the sake of Heaven. Whoever searched for the tzaddik knew that he would be found among the poor and wretched people. He would spend time talking to them, offering words of encouragement so that they would not become depressed, but continue serving Hashem joyously.