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## maskil Le'David Monotony in Avodat Hashem is Detrimental

**"Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the End of Days"** (*Bereishit* 49:1).

The *gemara* (*Pesachim* 56a) tells us: "Yaakov wished to reveal the end of days to his children, but the Shechina left him. He said: 'Perhaps, G-d forbid, there is some blemish among my children.' His children recited, 'Hear O Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem, the One and Only. Just as in your heart there is only One, so too in our hearts there is only One.' At that moment Yaakov Avinu called out, 'Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity.'"

This *gemara* is most puzzling. How is it possible that Yaakov Avinu suspected there might be some blemish among his holy sons? Did they not have the Name of G-d engraved on them, as it says (*Tehillim* 122:4), "The tribes of G-d, a testimony for Israel"? Certainly, Yaakov knew his children and was aware of their greatness and prominence. So why did they need to prove their allegiance by reciting the Shema, a declaration of acceptance of the yoke of Heaven?

Chazal also tell us that when Yaakov met up with Yosef, he did not fall on his neck and did not kiss him. The reason for this was because at that moment Yaakov recited the Shema. We need to understand why Yaakov chose to recite the Shema just at that moment. Was it because this moment happened to be the exact time when the Shema must be recited?

In order to answer these questions, we must understand what kind of blemish Yaakov suspected might be present, *chalila*, in his children. The Mishna (*Succah* 29b) tells us: "A dry lulav is unfit." The Torah commands us to take a green, fresh lulav. Once the lulav dries up, it is no longer called a lulav, but a piece of wood. Within this commandment lies an important allusion to the way in which we must serve Hashem. A person must not fulfil the mitzvot blandly, without vitality and enthusiasm, for this disqualifies his *avodat* Hashem. A person might pray three times a day and even study Torah, but if he is doing it out of habit, without zest and fervor, he is missing the essential component of *avodat* Hashem. His lips utter words of prayer and Torah, but they are not an expression of his heart.

It is possible this was Yaakov's concern. Of course he knew clearly that all of his children were faithful and pure, but he thought that if the Shechina suddenly departed from him, maybe it was due to a lack of "freshness" in their mitzvah performance. Maybe one of his sons was fulfilling the mitzvot without feeling inspired and motivated, which would disqualify their *avodat* Hashem. This is why the Shevatim immediately recited the Shema. They wished to prove their allegiance, so they told Yaakov that he should know that just like in his heart there is only One G-d, and he accepts the yoke of Heaven with enthusiasm and a holy awe, so too, in their hearts there is also only One and they too perform their *avodat* Hashem with a fiery holiness. When Yaakov heard this, he rejoiced greatly and thanked Hashem by saying, "Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity."

This can be compared to a tall, sturdy tree that has started to wilt inside. Although externally it still looks beautiful, it does not stand a chance. It certainly doesn't possess the strength to stand firm against the slightest wind. Yaakov Avinu was concerned that since his children were now living in Egypt, if they were fulfilling Hashem's will without vitality, the impure winds blowing in Egypt will have the power to uproot the Shevatim completely from their pure roots.

Now we can understand the reason Yaakov recited Shema when he met his son Yosef. Yaakov was also concerned about his own *avodat* Hashem. He was apprehensive that even though he was a holy and spiritual person who had been living in the Holy Land, now that he was going to Egypt, the power of this impure place could weaken his *avodat* Hashem and have a negative influence on him, *chalila*. He was worried he may lose his enthusiasm. Therefore, he immediately accepted the yoke of Heaven upon himself, and with this act he inspired his soul and strengthened his heart. Specifically now, when going to live among the nations of the world, he required additional protection and spiritual reinforcement.

How can we keep our enthusiasm alive? The answer is: Only through consistent Torah study. One who merits studying Torah every day, besides the enormous reward for studying Torah, also acquires the merit of being able to arouse his soul to fulfil Hashem's commandments with enthusiasm, passion, and alacrity.

May Hashem give us the merit of removing all impurities from our hearts, specifically, the impurity of blandness in our *avodat* Hashem. May we fulfil Hashem's will with a fiery enthusiasm and with the freshness of the life-giving dew, the holy Torah, Amen v'Amen.

11 Tivet 5785  
 11 January 2025

1094

Yayechi



## Hilula

11 Tivet  
 Rabbi Yehoshua Sharbani

12 Tivet  
 Rabbi Avraham Goldman,  
 Admor of Zevil

13 Tivet  
 Rabbi Moshe of Lelov

14 Tivet  
 Rabbi Rafael Meir Panizhel,  
 author of Lev Marpeh

15 Tivet  
 Rabbi Chaim Mordechai  
 Rosenbaum, Admor  
 of Nadvorna

16 Tivet  
 Rabbi Chaim Kreiswirth

17 Tivet  
 Rabbi Salman Mutzafi







## PARSHAH PEARLS

### Inspiring Reflections

#### Indictment of Yisrael is Not Desirable

“Yaakov lived” (*Bereishit* 47:28).

Rashi tells us: “He wished to reveal the end of days but the Shechina departed from him.” Various explanations have been suggested to clarify the meaning of this Rashi.

Rabbi Bunim of Pashischa, *zt”l*, offers his own unique interpretation: Yaakov wished to reveal how the generation will appear at the time of “the end of days.” He wanted to tell his children about the chutzpah and the ignorance that will prevail, but the Shechina departed from him. Why was he prevented from revealing this information?

Because Heaven did not want him to talk negatively about Am Yisrael.

#### In the Merit of Our Forefathers

“O G-d before Whom my forefathers Avraham and Yitzchak walked” (*Bereishit* 48:15).

The holy Ohr Hachaim stresses that Yaakov Avinu first asks in the merit of his fathers, and only after that in his own merit. From this verse, the Leaders of the Great Assembly derived the correct order of the blessings of the Shemone Esrei prayer: One must first awaken the merit of our forefathers, the holy *avot*, and only after that ask for mercy and compassion.

Yaakov Avinu mentioned his own merit using the phrase “G-d who shepherds me,” saying that in front of Hashem he feels like a sheep being led by its shepherd, prepared to go wherever Hashem will lead him.

#### Yosef Continually Remembers the Day of Death

“Yosef said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die’” (*Bereishit* 50:24).

It seems strange that Yosef phrased his sentence in the present tense, *הנה אנכי מת* — “I am dying,” and did not say “I am going to die,” using the future tense. Rabbi Akiva Eiger answers that Yosef used this expression to let his brothers know he doesn’t hold a grudge against them or feel any jealousy.

Chazal (*Berachot* 5a) advise us how to handle the *yetzer hara* at all stages: “If a person is victorious, all is well and good, but if not, he should study Torah. If (now) he is victorious, all is well and good; if not he should remind himself of the day of death.”

The way to uproot pride from a person’s heart is by remembering the day of death.

This is why Yosef said to his brothers, “I am about to die,” using the present tense. He was implying that he continually remembers the day of death, and this is how he acquired the attribute of submission.

Chazal also say (*Shabbat* 152b), that if a person does not suffer from jealousy, his bones do not rot (after his death). According to this, one can understand the continuation of Yosef’s words:

“Then you must bring my bones up out of here,” indicating that even if you leave Egypt after an extended period of time, you will still be able to take up my bones for they will not rot.



## WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

### The Power of the Tongue

About fifteen years ago, on Erev Shabbat Parshat Vayechi, my mother, *a”h*, baked a special cake for Shabbat, in our honor. After the Friday night meal, this cake was brought to the table.

I was the only one who had already tasted a small amount, when my daughter informed us in alarm that the cake was milky!

I was terribly distressed. It is hard to describe the aggravation I felt at that moment.

Of course, I immediately tried to vomit what I had ingested. I also searched my soul and started considering all my deeds. I wondered why I had come to commit this sin, especially now after spending a week in Eretz Yisrael giving many Torah lectures and devoting myself to public matters. Why had I stumbled with this serious prohibition of eating milk after meat?

Suddenly I remembered that a few days ago, I had unintentionally stumbled with my tongue. While talking to my mother about a certain matter, she felt offended by something I had said, as she did not understand me correctly. Later, she told me that for three days she had been distressed about it and had even shed tears. In truth, I certainly did not intend to hurt her with my words or cause her any suffering, *chalila*. It was simply a case of a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, Hashem was possibly punishing me for the insult she had felt. The same mouth that unintentionally insulted her and offended her honor, also stumbled unintentionally with the sin of forbidden foods.

I know I will never forget that day; it is deeply engraved in my heart. It is certainly not by chance that I transgressed such a serious prohibition, even unintentionally.

## GUARD YOUR TONGUE



### Investigate the Matter

One may not accept *lashon hara* even if it is said in public. One may not take this as proof that the matter is true. However, one who hears the *lashon hara* is allowed to investigate the matter. If it is found to be true, the sinner should be reproved for his misdeed.



## WORDS OF THE SAGES

Did Any Swiss Native Merit the Nobel Prize?

**“He saw tranquility that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant, yet he bent his shoulder to bear and he became an indentured laborer”** (*Bereishit* 49:15).

Switzerland is famous throughout the world for its breathtaking scenery. With its snowy Alps that add to its imposing beauty, we admire Switzerland for the calm and serenity which envelops its residents. It is a country which knows not of poverty, and its residents enjoy a high standard of living. From a financial viewpoint, the country is stable and everything appears promising and impressive.

Poland and Lithuania are two backward countries whose residents live in poverty. The standard of life is low, their scenery is nothing remarkable, and progression and technology were slow to make their impression. Their financial state is considerably lacking, and everything looks depressing and despondent.

Yet the unbelievable is happening before our eyes! Switzerland, with all the peace, wealth and tranquility that its residents enjoy, has not benefitted the world with any impressive achievement. They have neither produced famous scientists nor contributed any scientific or technological advancement for the benefit of the world at large. How has Switzerland profited the world? With its exquisite, scenic pictures which adorn every living room and plush lobby. Nothing more! This is most incredible!

And wonder of wonders! The countries that surround Switzerland — Poland, Lithuania and Hungary — are considered backward countries. While Zurich was already enjoying electric street lights and modern modes of transport, Warsaw, Vilna and Lodz, lacking the infrastructure for electricity, were still enveloped by complete darkness at night. Yet these countries produced the greatest merchants in the world, and *l'havdil*, the greatest Torah scholars. Vilna produced Torah luminaries such as the Vilna Gaon and his student, Rabbi Chaim (of Volozhin), Poland was home to the Rema, the Maharsha and the Maharshal, and the Chatam Sofer and Rabbi Akiva Eiger grew up in Hungary. The list goes on, but what is significant is that they all grew up in countries that lacked basic infrastructure, lived in abject poverty and endured the pressure of day-to-day survival.

How do we understand this phenomenon?

The answer can be found in this week's *parsha*. As part of Yaakov's blessings to his sons, he blesses Yissachar with the words, “He saw tranquility that it was good ... yet he bent his shoulder to bear.” There is a famous question: Don't these words contradict each other? If he saw how good tranquility was, why did he bend his shoulder to bear? One who appreciates the advantage of tranquility, immediately books a weekend in a luxury hotel. Yet concerning Yissachar it says that after seeing the benefit of tranquility, he decided to bend his shoulder to bear?

The Mashgiach of Mir, Rabbi Yerucham, explains a great foundation in life that transforms our entire perception of the much beloved concept — tranquility. For the nations of the world, tranquility is, as we mentioned, synonymous with a dream vacation in a luxury hotel, or a situation where a person is unhindered by any obligations or demands and is free to do as he pleases.

But the Torah outlook on tranquility is completely different. True tranquility is when a person carries a burden: The responsibility of restrictions and obligations with which one is occupied from morning to night. This is when a person's soul feels it is doing what it is supposed to be doing. All these obligations ensure we are filled with vitality and eliminate any feelings of depressing emptiness. This kind of person is relaxed, his soul is at peace, and he personifies tranquility.

True tranquility, the Mashgiach R' Yerucham explains, is accustoming oneself to hard work and carrying responsibility, for this fortifies the body and soul and enables a person to stand strong against the regular winds of change. This is called tranquility! Life is full of surprises and one who feels capable of withstanding any changes in life, feels truly at peace.



## FROM THE TREASURY

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

### What Tzaddikim See with their Pure Eyes

One who studies this Parsha will notice that the word “eyes” is mentioned several times. “Now Yisrael's eyes were heavy with age,” “Red eyed from wine,” and more. Why is this?

Due to Yaakov's old age, he was no longer able to see, but this only refers to human sight. However, he was able to foresee all that would transpire in the future with a spiritual vision, for he had rectified his eyes. Since Yaakov's attribute was truth, as it says (*Micha* 7:20) “Grant truth to Yaakov,” he was therefore unable to hide what his eyes saw with Divine inspiration. He asked “Who are these?” for even though Menashe and Ephraim were considered tzaddikim, he saw that their descendants will serve idolatry.

The holy Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, *zy”a*, became blind in his old age yet he could perceive everything using his supernatural wisdom. Although he could not see, he was able to name every person who entered his home.

I recall an incident that happened many years ago with my esteemed father Rabbeinu Moshe Ahron, *zy”a*. He required a certain medical procedure on his eyes, and we were directed to an expert doctor for eye disease, who lived in Manchester, England. I accompanied my father on this trip, and on arriving in England we took a taxi to the doctor's house. The taxi stopped two streets away from his house since there was no entry for vehicles, and from there we had to make our way by foot.

Wonder of wonders! My father had never been to England and was not familiar with its streets, but when we got out of the taxi he started walking quickly with his face down. He knew exactly where to turn and where to go, and I had to run to keep up with him, all the time wondering how he knew the way.

When we arrived at the doctor's house, Abba stopped and asked me simply, “Is this where the doctor lives?” And indeed it was the right address.

How did Abba merit attaining these holy levels? Because he rectified his eyes and was most particular to guard them from looking at forbidden sights. With this spiritual vision he knew how to get to the doctor's home, without any previous knowledge of the area.

May it be His will that we merit guarding our eyes from looking at improper sights and may we sanctify ourselves with our actions, sight and thoughts, Amen v'Amen.



# A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



## Success in Torah Is Dependent on Toil.

As part of the momentous occasion of Yaakov blessing his children before his death, we read about the unique blessing which Yissachar merited, "He bent his shoulder to bear." What burden did he take upon himself? Rashi answers that it refers to the yoke of Torah.

Rabbi Chizkiyahu Mishkovski, *shlita*, tells over the following story:

There was once a very talented *bachur* who had an excellent memory. He could learn an entire page of *gemara* in five minutes, after which you could test him in detail. Waking up one morning, he was astounded to find out he had suddenly lost this capacity.

He sought out all the Gedolim to ask for their blessings and advice. Each Gadol, according to his personal outlook, suggested a different piece of advice.

But the Steipler's reaction was entirely different. He said to the *bachur*: "You are asking me to curse you and there is no way I will do this. A camera in one's head is not a blessing! A person does not come to this world to photocopy. There are enough cameras in the world. We are here to work, to put in effort!" Even though the *bachur* continued crying and begging, the Steipler remained firm. "Under no circumstances will I bless you to retrieve your previous ability. It is a curse, not a blessing!"

Another *bachur* once came to the Rosh Yeshiva, Harav Shteinman, *zt"l*, and complained that he was encountering difficulties in his present yeshiva and he wished to move to a different yeshiva. The Rosh Yeshiva replied: "You have problems? Difficulties? Know that this is *l'chatchila*, this is how things are meant to be. When things do not go easily, this is how one merits acquiring Torah, for Torah is acquired with toil, with hardship! Only in this way can a person grow in Torah." Rav Shteinman advised the *bachur* to remain where he was.

Our generation, (this is something that

was already said by the Chafetz Chaim!) is a pampered generation. This is why many people do not merit acquiring Torah on a high level. We live in a generation where everything needs to go exactly as we want and every problem, even the smallest, takes us away from our learning. In this manner, it is impossible to grow!

When the Yeshiva Orchot Torah first started out, it was located above a bakery and the smoke and smell made it hard for the *bachurim* to learn. We approached Moreinu, the Rosh Yeshiva, and told him the problem. The Rosh Yeshiva replied forcefully: "Do you think that the creation has changed? From time immortal this has always been the way of Torah: 'Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure...' If all the conditions were optimal, it would be impossible to succeed. In order to be successful, there has to be hardships! Be happy that these are your difficulties. Torah without toil and effort, without investment and sacrifice, does not thrive."

### The Dog is Under Five

Harav Mishkovski illustrates the admirable personality of the distinguished Harav Hirsh Palei:

The outstanding feature of the Slabodka Yeshiva of Chevron, under the leadership of the two Mashgichim, Rabbi Meir Chadash and Rabbi Hirsch Palei, was its emphasis on a shining countenance and good *middot*. With their exceptional devotion on behalf of others, the two Mashgichim served as a living example for their students. The Mashgichim invested tremendous thought in how to make other people happy, how to help and elevate them. They lived only for their students. Rabbi Meir's home was open twenty-four hours, completely at the service of the students. They would come in and make themselves at home, at all hours. He even gave them his house keys.

He did not know the meaning of a private life.

When Rabbi Hirsh passed away, I came to comfort the mourners. While I was there, they read out a letter that someone had faxed. This is what he wrote: "Rabbi Hirsch was greatly praised for the extent to which he would take care of all his acquaintances, and how he devoted himself completely to the yeshiva *bachurim*. But I wish to protest! Did Rabbi Hirsch care only for those who were close to him? Did he give himself up only for the yeshiva *bachurim*? I lay in Hadassah hospital, Rabbi Hirsch did not know who I was, yet when he saw I was suffering, he devoted himself to my care. It is impossible to describe in words how much he sacrificed for me, how much devotion he showed me. I felt he was not living for himself, but for me and others."

The following is a story that circulated in Yeshivat Chevron. It is hard to verify if the story is true or not, but generally the stories they told there had a backing.

Once Rabbi Hirsch was travelling by bus, and he found a seat toward the back of the bus. At one of the stops, an irreligious lady alighted together with a big dog. The driver demanded she pay for the dog too, but the woman refused. An argument broke out, a complete tumult of raised voices and angry words.

The Mashgiach was not embarrassed. He walked from the back of the bus all the way to the driver and said with a smile: "The dog is under five years of age, and the law is that this age group does not need to pay."

At once everybody calmed down. The driver smiled, the woman smiled, the argument ended, and the bus carried on its route.

What would we say? The Rav was embarrassing himself! Is it fitting for the Rav to get involved and try and get a free ride for a dog?! But all of this did not interest Rabbi Hirsch. What was important to him was offering a good word and making peace between people!



**"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"**

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