



### The best path

**"And the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying"** (Vayikra 25:1)

Rashi explains: What [special relevance] does the subject of Shemittah [the "release" of fields in the seventh year] have with Mount Sinai? Were then all the commandments not stated from Sinai? However, [this teaches us that] just as with Shemittah, its general principles and its finer details were all stated from Sinai, likewise, all of them were stated-their general principles [together with] their finer details-from Sinai.

Truly, what is the Torah coming to teach us with this? Would it occur to us to say that the commandment of Hashem was not transmitted at Mount Sinai? We also need to clarify, why specifically was the mitzvah of Shemittah used to prove this rule, rather than a different commandment, to become an example for the rest of the commandments of the Torah.

This can be explained in the following way: During the days of Sefirat HaOmer we draw closer, with siyatta D'Shemaya, to the great day of the Giving of the Torah. Of course, it is incumbent upon us to prepare ourselves in a spiritual sense by shining and cleansing our souls and examining our deeds and purifying our thoughts in order to merit receiving the Torah. Just like a chattan and kallah before their chuppah have to prepare themselves for the grand event, so too Knesset Yisrael, who are entering their chuppah with the Shechinah on the day of the Giving of the Torah, are obligated to prepare themselves properly and thoroughly for the exalted event.

The Mishnah (Avot 2:10) states: Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had five [primary] disciples. They were: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania, Rabbi Yose the Kohen, Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach. Further on it states: He used to enumerate their praises, etc. In addition, it is stated (Mishnah 13): Go out and discern which is the proper way to which a man should cling, etc.

This requires clarification. Why is it necessary to write a special Mishnah only in order to indicate the names of the Tana'im? We may also wonder – Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai said to them, "Go out and discern which is the proper way to which a man should cling." Is there only one proper way? Aren't there many ways in which one can serve Hashem? Moreover: if in the Mishnah before Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai praised each disciple for their outstanding quality, then obviously the path for each one of those Tana'im was paved before him, and this was the proper path that each one chose to cling to all his life. Then why does Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai ask of them to go out and discern which is the proper way?

I would like to suggest, with siyatta d'Shemaya, an explanation based on the words of Chazal (Chagiga 17a), "If you take hold of much, you do not hold it." This implies that there are limits for everything. One cannot grab

hold of all the worlds at once, just like one who ascends a ladder cannot reach the top in one leap, but only step by step. So too it is regarding the service of Hashem. One who tries to achieve everything at once will soon lose it all. This is how it was when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt and had to disengage themselves from the defilement of Egypt, which they were enveloped in. Hashem did not command them to purify themselves and change their clothes immediately, but gave them forty-nine days in order to progress step by step and so advance a little each day until they reached perfection on the day of the Giving of the Torah.

This is what Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai taught his disciples when he told them, "Go out and discern which is the proper way." He indicated that although they possessed special lofty qualities, they were required to advance beyond these virtues and examine their deeds carefully to see which path leads to all the paths. Because if they would attempt to take many paths to the Torah, in the end they would achieve nothing. It is therefore necessary to choose a primary path which would lead to all the paths of acquiring perfect character traits. For this reason, a special Mishnah was included in order to list all the names of the holy Tana'im, because they contemplated and examined the path which they had already chosen to see if this was the path that would perfect them in their entire service of Hashem, or whether they should replace it with another. Since their Rabbi requested this clarification, the Tana'im immediately fulfilled his wishes and went out to check and see if there was a better path than the path that they had chosen originally.

Based on this, we can understand why the mitzvah of Shemittah was chosen as a symbol and example for the other mitzvot of Hashem. This is because it is a most difficult mitzvah to fulfill and requires enormous devotion. And if a person succeeds in fulfilling this mitzvah, then he found the path which paves the way to all the other mitzvot of Hashem, since the mitzvah of Shemittah is so awesome that through it one can reach perfection in all other mitzvot. This is because through this mitzvah one subjugates himself entirely to Hashem's will and he allows all people to enter his fields and help themselves to his crops. Until then, this man relied on the crops to provide him with a living and feed his family, but on Shemittah he abandons his ownership entirely. Through this mitzvah he also merits benefitting others and gives of his possessions to anyone who wants it, and consequently merits fulfilling the mitzvah of "Love your fellow as yourself," which is a fundamental principle of the Torah. Therefore, this mitzvah is the foundation and path to all the mitzvot, and if a person performs the mitzvah of Shemittah and fulfills it properly, he thereby fulfills the directives of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, who said, "Go out and discern which is the proper way to which a man should cling," through which a person will ascend to lofty heights and thereby pave for himself a path to all other mitzvot of Hashem.

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### Hillulah of Tzaddikim

22 - Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer  
Elfandri

24 - Rabbi Yakov of Lissa

25 - Rabbi Chaim Churi

26 - Rabbi Shlomo of  
Zhevil

26 - Rabbi Moshe Chaim  
Luzatto

27 - Rabbi Avraham Shmuel  
Bachrach Author of "Shu"t  
Chut Hashani"



## Walking in their Ways

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



## Words of our Sages

### The Long Arm of Faith

When I was on a visit to Montreal, a man came to see me with his arm in a cast. He related that he had experienced a serious accident and his arm had been irreversibly injured. The doctors informed him that he had to have it amputated.

“Rebbi,” he cried to me, “how will I be able to live with only one arm?” I was deeply pained by his plight and asked how I could help.

“Honored Rav,” he replied, determinedly, “bless me that I merit complete healing. You are the grandson of the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy”a, about whom tremendous things are said. I have full faith that Hashem can do anything. In the merit of your blessing, as well as the merit of your forefathers, I will, B’ezrat Hashem, experience the miracle of my arm being saved.”

Upon hearing the man’s words of firm faith, I blessed him from the depths of my heart. I told him he should see Hashem’s salvation in the rescue of his arm. I added that I hoped to see him on my next visit with two healthy arms.

The next year found me in Montreal once again. I needed a pen and asked those near me if anyone had one. A man whipped a pen out of his pocket and offered it to me. When I stuck out my hand to take it, I noticed a big scar covering his hand. I asked the man what it was from. He told me that he was the one who had asked me to bless him that his arm return to normal.

He related that in a most miraculous manner, his arm had healed. There was no need for an amputation. He now offered me his pen as a memento of this wonderful miracle.

### Is Hashem in your plans?

The Torah promises in our parashah that those who toil in it will be rewarded, as it is stated, “V’natati gishmeichem b’itam – I will give your rains in their time.”

The word “B’itam – in their time” alludes to “itim l’Torah – setting fixed times for the study of Torah.” It is the duty of every Jew, with no exception, to designate fixed times to study Torah every day, so that not a single day will pass without the study of Torah.

The treatment of measure for measure never ceased, and therefore, if one sets “itim – fixed times” for Torah, Hashem will reward him likewise with “V’natati gishmeichem b’itam – I will give your rains in their time.”

The parashah ends with the pasuk (Vayikra 27:34) “Aileh hamitzvot asher tziva Hashem – These are the commandments that the Lord commanded.” The last letters of these words have the numerical value of “taryag – 613” plus two, signifying the 613 commandments written in the two Torahs; the written Torah and the oral Torah.

In other words, it is the obligation of every Jew to fulfill all the words of the Torah and toil in it, and the more a person makes an effort to study the Torah, so too Hashem will bless him and grant him success in all his endeavors.

When I was in Miami, I met a well-to-do man holding a heavy planner in his hand. I asked about the nature of the plans filling his planner, and he told me that it was filled with all sorts of issues he had to take care of, including even the smallest details.

“Did you allocate any time in your planner for Hashem and the Torah?” I asked.

“Unfortunately, I do not have time for that,” he replied casually.

This is a strong accusation against people, because especially if his business is flourishing and, thank G-d, he sees success in his endeavors, why shouldn’t he dedicate some of his time also for spiritual pursuits, and why shouldn’t he set fixed times for the study of Torah? Why when it comes to Torah he has no time, but for all the affairs of this world he finds time?

This is an accusation that is unforgivable; what will he answer on the Day of Judgment? Thus, while one is alive, he must make sure to devote part of his day to the study of Torah and engage in it. Then he is assured that the blessings of the Torah will come upon him, and the blessings of Hashem will accompany him in every matter.

## The Haftarah

The haftarah of the week:

**“O L-rd, Who are my power and my strength”**

(Yirmeyahu 16:19)

The connection to the parashah: The haftarah mentions the calamity that Hashem will bring upon Bnei Yisrael if they do not observe His commandments, which is similar to the rebuke mentioned in the parashah, foretelling the troubles that would come upon Bnei Yisrael if they would not observe the laws of the Torah.



## Guard Your Tongue

*The Power of Speech*

### In summary

The issue of accepting lashon hara, is what the Torah warned us about, that we should not believe it to be true. There is no need to elaborate upon the character of the recipient, because it hardly makes a difference. But the rule is that every Jewish person is commanded not to accept lashon hara about any other Jew, except for an apikores or an informer, or the likes of those who are not considered fellow Jews.



## Chazak U'Baruch

### Guarding our eyes

A person's eyes are considered "agents for sin," and by looking at immorality, one also flaws his "ote Brit kodesh." Even a person who invests all his life into perfecting his spirituality; he studies Torah and gathers mitzvot, he is worthy of great reward in Gan Eden, but if he doesn't guard his eyes and his Brit, the Heavenly Gates are locked before him.

Let us imagine a person who travels on a distant journey, and after a long time he finally reaches his destination. He searches for the exact location, but upon arriving, he cannot open the door. His entire journey, and all the trouble was in vain...

Our entire purpose in coming to this world is to correct our flaws, and if a person does not guard his eyes, what is all the efforts worth for all the spiritual gains he worked to acquire during his lifetime?

If a person walked in the street and accidentally saw a forbidden scene, the main thing is not to dwell upon what he saw. He must avert his gaze, and then remove the impression from his mind and move on to a different matter. He should not focus on what he saw, and also not make an issue about it. If one excessively engages in battle against it, psychologically it gets much harder, because the mind wants to dwell upon it. One must remove the thought from his head and not fight it, and then the battle will get easier.

If we want to guard our children in purity and sanctity, it is not accomplished by just talking. It is mostly by how we generally conduct ourselves. Many times a mother wishes to rest in the afternoon, and the simple and easy solution to keeping the children occupied is to turn on the computer to let them see a so called "kosher" movie. Not a sound will be heard in the house, and she will be able to rest for some time. The temptation is enormous, but it is important to remember that it is preferable for one to suffer now than suffer later.

We need to recall that our children are only deposits placed in our care; we do not own them. Anyone who has a deposit in his house, has to guard it according to the terms he negotiated with the owner, and not the way he chooses, according to his moods.

## Treasures

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



### Feeling Gratitude to Hashem

One of the reasons for the mitzvah of Shemittah is that after six years of working the land a person may think that he earned large profits throughout the years, and he could become even richer working the next year as well. The Creator of the World says: No! He must abstain from working in the fields in the seventh year, and he is not permitted to work even if he will seemingly lose out because of it. As a result of this command, the person halts his rat race after money and takes a year of Sabbatical in order to contemplate his life, and recall who the money and land truly belong to, as it is stated "For Mine is the entire earth" (Shemot 19:5). Consequently, he begins to feel gratitude toward Hashem for everything He has given him.

There is a story about the Chatam Sofer that one of the prominent members of the community came to him and told him that he wanted to leave the city quietly, without anyone knowing, since he lost all his money and was left with nothing, and he was terribly ashamed. Therefore, before it would become known to his creditors, he wanted to escape. The Chatam Sofer asked him why he didn't go to the business fair to try his luck once more. The man answered that he did not even have one cent left in his pocket. The Rabbi asked him how much money he needed in order to get back on his feet in his business. The man named a huge sum...

Without hesitation, the Rabbi stood up from his place and took out the entire amount from his drawer and gave it to him as a loan. He told him, "When Hashem will shine luck upon you again, then return the money to me." The prominent man was overjoyed and thanked the Rabbi. In fact, Hashem blessed the man's business and he succeeded in flourishing again as before. He approached the Rabbi's house in dignity and with joy to return the loan, and included a small box containing a number of precious diamonds as a token of gratitude for his kindness.

The Rabbi opened the box and gazed at the diamonds in awe for a long time, and afterwards he returned it to the man. The man repeatedly urged him to accept the gift, declaring that he was giving it with all his heart. The Chatam Sofer asked, "Do you want to cause me to transgress the prohibition of taking interest, G-d forbid?" The man replied, "Then why did the Rabbi at first gaze for a long time at the diamonds and marvel at their beauty if it was prohibited for you to accept it in any case?" The Rabbi explained that he wanted to magnify and cherish the great mitzvah that was presented to him; namely, the prohibition of taking interest, even if he would suffer a great loss of money because of it.

This is the lofty level of tzaddikim, zya"ra. They do not care about money, but only about the mitzvot that one can perform with them. This is the purpose that Hashem wants – that by sanctifying ourselves through His mitzvot in all material matters and money, we will instill in our hearts simple faith in Hashem that everything is His, and thus we will be able to thank Him and praise Him for all the good that He bestows upon us, and we will not mistakenly assert, "My strength and the might of my hand that has accumulated this wealth for me."

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT



## Assisting graciously

*“V’chi yamuch achicha u’mata yado v’hechzakta bo, etc, et kaspecha lo titen b’neshech – If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him...You shall not give him your money with interest”*  
(Vaykira 25:35-37)

Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin explains: It is not for nothing that the two pesukim were stated consecutively. It teaches us that even when one encounters the circumstances of “if your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him,” make sure to do it properly, as is stated, “You shall not give him your money ‘b’neshech,” which literally means “with a bite.” Do not accompany the charity with biting, chastising words: Why don’t you take a job? Why are you so lazy? etc. But rather one should give his fellow charity in a pleasant manner, as Chazal say: “he who addresses the poor man with words of comfort obtains eleven blessings...”

## Men of Faith

Excerpts from the book *Men of Faith on the lives and deeds of the House of Pinto*

### A Shoe-in

The following story was told by Moreinu v’Rabbeinu:

A person told me this fantastic story that happened to his grandfather, who was a fisherman. Once, he went to the river and did not succeed in catching any fish. Frustrated, he came to Rabbi Chaim Hakatan and worriedly related how he had not succeeded in catching any fish.

The tzaddik sympathetically gazed at him for a moment. Then he removed his shoes and handed them to the fisherman, instructing him, “Take these shoes and place them in the water. In this way, you will succeed in catching many fish.”

The fisherman left with the tzaddik’s shoes in his hands and did as he was told. An amazing thing occurred. After placing the tzaddik’s shoes in the water, the fish swarmed toward them and filled his nets until he could barely lift them up.

Toward evening, the fisherman went to the tzaddik with a basket full of fish as a gift. He recounted in awe the events of the day. The tzaddik refused to accept any gifts. He returned his basket to him and said, “These fish are yours. I do not want to take anything from you.”

There is much to be learned from this incredible story. Rabbi Chaim was like a father to each and every person. The tzaddik took everyone’s problems personally, as if they were his own.

Let us imagine a fisherman experiencing a similar dilemma, who pours out his heart to his neighbor in grief. How would the neighbor react? He might tell him, “What do you expect of me? How can I help you catch fish?”

Rabbi Chaim Hakatan was different. He acted toward each person like a father to his son. Everyone would come and pour their hearts out to him when faced by trouble or difficulty.

If such a story would happen today, perhaps people would wonder, how could the shoes possibly help? Did anyone ever hear of shoes attracting fish?

This teaches us the power of simple faith that people once possessed. The tzaddik took off his shoes and gave them to the fisherman, and the man did not doubt for a moment that this could help him. His faith in tzaddikim was rock-solid. He knew that whatever the tzaddik advised would ultimately bring salvation.

Chazal say (Ta’anit 25a), “Whoever commanded the oil to burn will command the vinegar to burn.” Jews once lived with this simple faith.

Moreinu v’Rabbeinu Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlit”a, declared in wonder: “When I heard this story, it made a strong impression on me and bolstered my faith greatly. I have not have found such fuel for my faith anywhere else.”