

# The Path To Follow

Terumah

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Rabbi David Pinto Shlita

## A Unique Creature

It is written, "This is the offering that you shall take from them: Gold, silver, and copper, and turquoise, purple and scarlet wool; linen and goat hair; red-dyed ram skins, *tachash* skins and *shittim* wood" (*Shemot* 25:3-5). Rabbi Meir said, "The *tachash* of Moshe's day was a unique creature, for the Sages could not decide whether it belonged to a type of wild animal or to a type of domestic animal. It had one horn on its forehead, and it presented itself to Moshe for the occasion, and he made of it a [cover for the] Sanctuary, and it was then hidden" (*Shabbat* 28b). The Jerusalem Talmud explains that the Holy One, blessed be He, created a type of pure wild animal for Moshe in the desert, and once it was used for constructing the Sanctuary, it disappeared (*Shabbat* 2:4).

I have heard the *Mashgiach* of Yeshiva Ateret Israel, Rav Chaim Walkin *Shlita*, asking why the Holy One, blessed be He, decided that it was good to create a unique creature solely for the needs of the Sanctuary. Were animal skins missing in the world, such that G-d had to create this creature? The Sages have also said, "The world did not actually deserve the benefit of gold, but it was created for the sake of the Sanctuary and the Temple.... The cedars, too, should have disappeared, but did not, for Rabbi Chanina said: 'The world did not deserve to avail itself of cedar trees, but they were created solely for the sake of the Sanctuary and the Temple' " (*Shemot Rabba* 35:1). Here too we may ask what the difference is between the *tachash*, which was created solely for temporary use and ended up disappearing, and gold & cedar, which were also created for the Sanctuary but did not disappear.

### Daily Renewal

We may explain this according to what we have already said, namely that the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Moshe to make the Sanctuary so the Children of Israel could learn how to serve G-d. They entered it constantly, for the Torah only endures with one who studies at the Beit HaMidrash, as it is said: "It is a covenant that was concluded" (*Yerushalmi, Berachot* 5:1). One who puts an effort into studying Torah in synagogue will not quickly forget his learning. The Sages have also taught, "A man's prayer is heard only in synagogue, for it is said: 'To hear the cry and the prayer' [I Kings 8:28]. Prayer is to be recited where there is song" (*Berachot* 6a). Rashi explains this to mean: "Where there is song, in synagogue, where the community recites songs of praise with a beautiful voice." This is why the Holy One, blessed be He, did not create new creatures anywhere else, but only for the construction of the Sanctuary. He wanted to show the Children of Israel that just as He created a new creature for the Sanctuary, they were also to renew themselves each day, and their service of today must not be like their service of yesterday, since they must renew themselves each day.

### Hashem Requires the Heart

In the same spirit, the Arizal explains (*Sha'ar HaKavanot*) that what we say each day in prayer – "in His goodness He renews each day, continuously, the work of Creation" – means that the Holy One, blessed be He, renews the strength of man every morning, as the verse states: "They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (*Eicha* 3:23). Just as Hashem renews Creation each day for man, everyone must renew his strength to serve Hashem in order for his service of today not to resemble his service of yesterday.

The Sages have said, "The Holy One, blessed be He, requires the heart" (*Sanhedrin* 106b). This means that a person will sometimes fulfill a *mitzvah*, but only out of habit. Hashem looks as how he fulfills the *mitzvah* – "He sees innermost thoughts and feelings" (Jeremiah 20:12) – examining the heart of man when he fulfills a *mitzvah* to determine if it is done out of habit or not. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, created a new creature for the construction of the Sanctuary: The entire goal of the Sanctuary was for the Children of Israel to learn how to serve Hashem, and for them to renew their deeds at every moment.

### Doing Good for Others

Furthermore, G-d wanted to teach the Children of Israel to acquire good *middot*. In fact we can help others with gold and cedar, and gold also enables us to give money to the poor. This is why, although the world did not deserve the benefits of gold and cedars, the Holy One, blessed be He, did good to man by leaving him these things, so he can benefit from them and show kindness to others.

Concerning *tzedakah* we have learned: *Naton titen* – "You shall surely give" (*Devarim* 15:10) – even 100 times (*Sifrei*). In other words, a person should not fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* out of habit. Rather, every time that he gives, it should be as if he received the order today. On the other hand, in regards to the *tachash*, since people do not derive any special benefit from it, Hashem hid that creature. Are animal skins missing in the world? He did not create it for the needs of the Sanctuary, but so the Children of Israel could learn to renew their service every day.

This is why the Sanctuary was disassembled and reassembled, in order for the Children of Israel to know that they must serve their Creator each day in a renewed way. Even if they study Torah and fulfill *mitzvot* on a given day just as on the day before, they must still study Torah and fulfill *mitzvot* on the following day as well. Furthermore, they must study Torah and fulfill *mitzvot* with all their limbs, as it is written: "All my bones will say" (*Tehillim* 35:10). The Sages have taught: "Beruriah [the wife of Rabbi Meir] once found a student who was learning in an undertone. Rebuking him, she exclaimed: 'Is it not written: 'Established for all time and secure' [II Samuel 23:5]? If it is "established" in your 248 limbs, it will be "secure." Otherwise it will not' " (*Eruvin* 53b-54a).

**It is written, “Let them take for Me an offering” (Shemot 25:2).**

When word spread that Reb Akiva had decided to move to Eretz Israel, everyone in town was shaken. Reb Akiva was a generous man, a merchant who earned an honest living, beloved by G-d and man. At the time, it was a daring move for someone to leave his home and circle of friends for a long and dangerous journey into the unknown.

Reb Akiva had lost his wife a few years earlier, and he remained alone. His wife's death had completely broken him. He thought long and hard about leaving his home and circle of friends behind for Eretz Israel. Now, he had decided to take action.

On the day of his departure, all the inhabitants of the small town went out to accompany him. His friends said farewell with high hopes. Many asked that he pray for them when he reached the sacred places of Eretz Israel, and Reb Akiva promised to fulfill their requests.

Weeks passed, then months, and finally years, yet life in the small town went on as normal. In fact Reb Akiva was almost completely forgotten.

Then one day, without any warning, Reb Akiva appeared in town. The news of his sudden return spread like wildfire, and everyone immediately dropped what they were doing and went to welcome the traveler back.

“Tell us how you made this long journey and what you saw in the Holy Land,” the townspeople said to him. Reb Akiva did not need to be persuaded, as he went on to describe the holy places that he had visited, including the Western Wall, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, Rachel's tomb, and the graves of the Tannaim and Kabbalists in Galilee. “It's impossible to describe in words the sanctity that reigns in those places. You have to be there to understand,” said Reb Akiva, his eyes shining bright.

During all this time, everyone was wondering why he had returned from the Holy Land, whose marvels he described so well. “What caused you to leave that atmosphere of holiness and return here?” they asked.

Reb Akiva lowered his gaze and pursed his lips. The residents of the small town then realized that he did want to talk about it, and they left him alone. “We have time,” he said mysteriously.

Reb Akiva's health declined in the years that followed, until one day he summoned the members of the *Chevra Kadisha*. He said to them, “I have called you to reveal my secret before I die.” Everyone's ears opened wide to hear this great secret. A few minutes later, however, he changed his mind. “Leave now. It will be for another time,” he said to them.

On the following day, Reb Akiva again summoned the *Chevra Kadisha* to his home. Its members hoped that he was now going to reveal his secret to them. Yet this time as well, he was content on excusing himself with an ambiguous remark: “Please forgive me. I do not have the right to speak. Perhaps next time.”

On the third day, when the *Chevra Kadisha* was alerted for a third time to go to Reb Akiva's bedside, they clearly saw that these were his final moments. In fact this time the dying man opened his heart to them.

In a faint voice, he said to them: “When I was younger, I would go to the great fair at Berditchev every year. Whenever I would go, I prayed in the Beit HaMidrash of the *tzaddik* Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. One morning, I found the Beit HaMidrash in an uproar: A local innkeeper had come running to see the *tzaddik* and cried out, ‘Somebody stole

my money! Somebody stole my money!’ He was referring to a large sum that he had hidden in a secret place in his inn, but which had recently disappeared.

“‘Do you suspect anyone?’ the *tzaddik* asked him. ‘Yes, the maid who works in my home,’ he replied. On the *tzaddik*'s orders, the maid was quickly summoned, and she arrived in tears. ‘Never in my life have I touched a cent that wasn't mine,’ she wailed.

“The innkeeper asked her a few questions, and then Rabbi Levi Yitzchak said: ‘I have no doubts that your money was stolen, and I feel bad about it. However I am also completely convinced of the maid's sincerity.’ The *tzaddik* then raised his voice and announced, ‘The person who takes, from out of his own pocket, the amount that was stolen and gives it as a gift to the innkeeper, will merit Gan Eden.’

“One of the people approached the *tzaddik*. Then, before the stunned eyes of everyone present, he took from out of his moneybag an amount equal to what had been stolen, and he gave it to the innkeeper. The *tzaddik* was satisfied with this deed, at which point the Jew asked the *tzaddik* for his promise in writing. The *tzaddik* agreed, and wrote down his promise of Gan Eden on a small slip of paper.”

Reb Akiva coughed heavily, then continued: “That Jew – the one who responded to the *tzaddik*'s request for someone to give money from out of his own pocket – was me. Before I left Berditchev, the *tzaddik* instructed me to recount this story to no one until the day I die. ‘Only at that point,’ the *tzaddik* said to me, ‘when you know with certainty that your end has come, can you recount it to the *Chevra Kadisha* and ask them to place this slip of paper in your grave.’

“One day, while I was still in Eretz Israel, I fell ill. I began to look through my things to find the paper upon which the *tzaddik* had written his promise, but I couldn't find it. I racked my brain trying to remember where I had put it, but to no avail. Suddenly, I remembered that I had placed it in a prayer book that I left in this town, in synagogue. I therefore had no choice but to return and find the slip of paper. Now I sense that my time has come, which is why I am telling you these things.” Reb Akiva finished his account, and then lifted his frail hand which held the slip of paper. The members of the *Chevra Kadisha* quickly recited *Vidui* and *Shema* with him, and as soon as they had finished, Reb Akiva's soul left his body and departed for Gan Eden.

## Guarde Your Tongue

### Fighting Hashem's War

If a person finds himself among people who start speaking forbidden words, and he believes that rebuking them will serve absolutely no purpose, then if it is possible for him to leave the group or place his fingers in his ears, it is a great *mitzvah* for him to do so.

If he cannot leave their presence, however, and if he believes that placing his fingers in his ears would be very difficult because they will ridicule him, he should in any case muster all his strength at such an oppressive moment and fight Hashem's war so as not to transgress the Torah prohibition of listening to and accepting *Lashon Hara*.

### Needing the Kohen

It is written, "Let them take for Me an offering" (*Shemot* 25:2).

Rashi's explanation ("for Me" – for My Name) has long been examined by the commentators. The view of one such commentator, the *tzaddik* Rabbi Yosef Ades *Zatzal*, is cited in the book *Bikkurei Reuven*:

On the verse, "A man's holy things shall be his, and what a man gives to the *kohen* shall be his" (*Bamidbar* 5:10), the Gemara (*Berachot* 63a) explains that a man who tries to save money by not giving to the *kohen* what the law states is his rightful share will end up needing the *kohen* because he will grow suspicious of his wife [and will have to go through the process of the *sotah*].

We find this idea alluded to in Rashi's words: "For Me" – for My Name. The holy Torah enjoins all Jews to give his contribution according to the law, not to be stingy. All this is "for My Name" – in order not to erase the Name of Hashem that is written on parchment by placing it into the bitter waters on account of the *sotah*, for that is what will happen when the *kohanim* are robbed of their rightful share.

### The Deception

It is written, "*Tachash* skins and *shittim* wood" (*Shemot* 25:5).

Regarding the explanation of Rabbi Tanchuma (who stated that when Jacob saw through *Ruach HaKodesh* that the Children of Israel would build a Sanctuary in the desert, he brought cedars into Egypt and planted them there, ordering his descendants to take them with them upon leaving Egypt), Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra expresses surprise:

"What answer did they give to those who asked them why they were taking *shittim* wood with them, since they were only going to make offerings for three days?"

Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi *Zatzal* responds to this by saying that on the contrary, this was how the Children of Israel deceived the Egyptians. The Egyptians thought that they were only going into the desert for three days and would need *shittim* wood to build huts. Hence the Egyptians thought: If the Children of Israel really wanted to flee, they would not have taken something so heavy with them!

### Guarantors

It is written, "You shall make a cover of pure gold" (*Shemot* 25:17).

In his book *Tzror HaMor*, Rabbi Avraham Saba *Zatzal* explains that this verse uses the term *kapparat* ("cover") because "it is an expiation (*kaparah*) for all their descendants, as it is written: 'Through kindness and truth will iniquity be forgiven' [*Mishlei* 16:6] and also, 'The iniquity of the house of Eli will never be expiated by sacrifice or meal-offering' [I Samuel 3:14]. Here the Sages have said, 'With sacrifice and meal-offering it cannot be expiated, but it can be expiated with Torah' [*Rosh Hashanah* 18a]."

As we know, the Torah was only created in order to be constantly studied. Not everyone can achieve this, however, except for young children who have the strength, and who were guarantors for their fathers at the giving of the Torah. When Jews do not study, the Holy One, blessed be He, turns to these guarantors, as it is written: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have established strength" (*Tehillim* 8:3), and they annul evil decrees, as it is written: "to silence foe and avenger" (*ibid.*).

The expression *velashon raka tinokot shel beit rabban garam* ("the sweet speech of small children was the cause") has the same initials as *tinokot shel beit rabban gezerot raot m'vatlim* ("small children annul evil decrees").

Hence the verse states, "You shall make two cherubim of gold" (*Shemot* 25:18). This alludes to small children who study Torah, for the term "child" in Aramaic is *ravia* (from the same root as *keruvim*). In this way, they protect the Jewish people.

## In the Light of the Parsha

### Do Not Boast of Giving Tzeddakah

It is written, "Speak to the Children of Israel and let them take for Me an offering. From every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take My offering" (*Shemot* 25:2).

The verse should have said, "Speak to the Children of Israel and let them give Me an offering," for Hashem was commanding the Children of Israel to give an offering for the construction of the Sanctuary. (See Sforno, who seems to speak of this.)

We note that it is written, "Mine is the silver and Mine is the gold" (*Haggai* 2:8) and, "You shall remember Hashem your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to acquire wealth" (*Devarim* 8:18) and also, "For who am I, and what is my people, that we should muster the strength to donate in this manner? For everything is from You, and from Your hand have we given to You" (I Chronicles 29:14). We therefore see that all man's possessions are not his, but Hashem's, and by giving Him something, we are really only returning what is really His. Therefore when we bring an offering to Hashem, it does not mean that we are "giving," since everything belongs to Him and He is only taking back what is His. Hence the verse does not say "let them give," but rather "let them take."

According to what we have said, we may add that this is what Rashi meant by stating: "Let them take for Me an offering," *i.e.*, for Me – for My Name. In fact if a person thinks that his strength and wealth come from himself, then when he gives *tzeddakah*, he will boast of having given from his own possessions. However if he understands that everything comes from Hashem, and that it is He Who gives strength and wealth, he will have no reason to boast. Hence the Torah states, "Let them take," not "Let them give," for we give nothing of ours. The Holy One, blessed be He, is taking what is His, which is why "for Me" means "for My Name," since it is obvious that people gave to the Sanctuary for the sake of Heaven.

## **Rabbi Yosef Chaim David Azoulay – The Chida**

### **When the Ark Departed**

On Shevat 23, 5720, a meeting took place in the Italian city of Livorno. Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim *Zatzal* (the *Rishon LeTzion* at the time) had asked the leaders of the Jewish community of Livorno to hold this meeting, which was to discuss moving the sacred remains of the *gaon* Rabbi Yosef Chaim David Azoulay (the Chida) to Jerusalem for reburial. Attending this meeting were Rabbi Alfredo Toaf, the leader of Livorno's Jewish community, members of the council, and other rabbis.

The council unanimously agreed to move the Chida's remains, decreeing that the unearthing of his coffin and its transfer would proceed according to Jewish tradition.

### **Please Do It Yourself**

About a year ago, there was a historic meeting between the *Rishon LeTzion*, the *gaon* Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu *Shlita*, and one of the Jews from Livorno who was fortunate enough to participate in the transfer of the Chida's remains to Jerusalem. An account of this meeting was given in an Israeli newspaper, from which most of Rabbi Eliyahu's statements have been drawn.

Rabbi Eliyahu said, "Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim, the *Rishon LeTzion*, had asked myself, Rabbi Yosef David Shalush, Baba Haki, Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhatzera, the Rav of Ramleh, and Rabbi David Laniado, who was responsible for burying the dead, to receive the coffin of the Chida that had been sent to Israel, and to give him a burial place. When we reached the airplane, we looked for the coffin that contained the holy and precious remains, but could not find it. The pilot came and asked us, 'What are you looking for?' When we told him, he left and returned several minutes later with a box that was about 20 inches long."

"Can you tell us where the head and feet are?" Rabbi Eliyahu asked the pilot. "I need to know how to place the coffin." The pilot replied, "No, but there is a sign indicating where the coffin is to be opened."

The rabbis stirred around the coffin, their faces tense. Rabbi Eliyahu looked in front of him, moving sand with his foot as the other rabbis followed his movements in silence and with reverential fear. Everything was mixed up, creating an impression that was hard to describe. Before them, in the coffin, were the remains of the saintly Chida, and they were expected to participate in this holy task.

Rabbi Eliyahu continued to piece together the hours in which they were devoted to this sacred and unusual task: "I asked for a screwdriver, and I opened the cover and put my hand inside. Heavens! I was frightened by what I saw! How could it be? How could Yosef *HaTzaddik's* remains be all jumbled together in a box? I looked at the bones, and I knew that I had to properly arrange them within the coffin to give them a burial place. With fear and trembling, I asked for a hammer and a saw. I broke the box in two pieces where I thought that the head and feet of the *tzaddik* were located.

"Trembling and short of breath, I put the cover back. I placed my hand on the coffin and said, 'Rav Chida, Rav Chida, I do not know how to arrange your bones. Please do it yourself.'

"Suddenly, we heard a strange sound that was impossible to describe. We heard another sound in the seconds that followed, and everyone around was paralyzed with fear."

Rabbi Eliyahu, who was occupied with this complicated task during the whole time, was the only one who did not lose his composure.

"I was performing a task, and I did not faint. A deafening silence fell over the place, but the rabbis pulled themselves together. Yet the look

on their faces said everything. They summoned up their courage and approached the coffin. They looked inside. The head, arms, skeleton, feet, and all the bones were completely in place. I closed the coffin and once again said, with the same sense of fear: 'Forgive, forgive, forgive!'"

Announced in Jerusalem on Iyar 20, 5720 was the burial of the Chida, the great *posek* and child of Jerusalem. He had been sent away on his mission to the Diaspora more than 150 years earlier, and now he had returned. A huge crowd participated in the funeral procession, which made its way through the main streets of the city. When it reached Har HaMenuchot, on the outskirts of the city, Rabbi Eliyahu again asked for a screwdriver. "The earth of Eretz Israel must enter the coffin," he said. When one was found, Rabbi Eliyahu made holes all along the coffin so that the earth of Eretz Israel could enter it. The Chida is still there, awaiting the resurrection of all who sleep in the earth, speedily and in our days, Amen.

### **His Life**

Rabbi Yosef Chaim David Azoulay, better known by his acronym as the Chida, was born into a distinguished family in Jerusalem. His father, among the great rabbis of Jerusalem, sat upon Beit Din, while his mother came from a family of Ashkenaz kabbalists who were among Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid's entourage. The Chida's extraordinary abilities manifested themselves while he was still young. He was younger than his classmates, who included such famous Torah giants such as the Maharit Algazi (who became the Rav of Jerusalem). The Chida stood in sharp contrast to them by the abundance of his brilliant and penetrating commentaries, as well as by his prodigious memory. He studied Torah with the great men of Jerusalem, including the *Nechpa BaKessef* (Rabbi Yona Navon) and the *Rishon LeTzion* (Rabbi Eliezer Nachum). In 5503, the Ohr HaChaim decided to settle in Jerusalem, where he remained until his death a year later. Before his death, the Chida learned a great deal from him, often mentioning him in his writings. He also grew in Kabbalah, being close to the kabbalist Rabbi Gedalia Hayun, the founder of the Beit El yeshiva of the kabbalists. He then became a leading figure in the group of the great kabbalist Rabbi Shalom Sharabi (the Rashash). Before he was 30 years old, the leaders of Hebron's Sephardic community asked the Chida to travel to Jewish communities in the Diaspora to collect money for Jews who endured grinding poverty. He journeyed to Italy, Germany, Holland, England, France, Turkey, and Egypt. During his travels, he became friends with the great leaders of the generation, leaving a great impression with the scholars of the communities that he visited and earning the respect of them all. The Chida also studied ancient documents dealing with all areas of Torah. Due to his prodigious memory and great intelligence, he was able to "capture" them with his photographic memory. He would then recopy the Torah commentaries that he found, including them along with his own informative insights. Even during his travels, he wrote books and had them published. Although he spent several years traveling, he wrote almost 160 books – an astounding amount of work that testifies to his genius – dealing with Halachah and Kabbalah, sermons and Mussar, Torah commentaries and prayer. In 5533, the Chida undertook his second journey as the emissary of the communities of Hebron. This time he traveled to Egypt, Tunisia, Italy, France, and Holland. From there he returned to the Italian city of Livorno, where he was asked to stay and lead the yeshiva. The Chida accepted and wrote other books at the same time, until his death in the year 5566.