

# The Path To Follow

Shemini

438

A Hevrat Pinto Publication

Under the Direction of Rabbi David H. Pinto Shlita

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Nissan 29<sup>th</sup>, 5772

April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012

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## The Joy of Setting up the Sanctuary and the Descent of the Shechinah

It is written, "It was on the eighth day" (*Vayikra* 9:1). The Sages say in the Midrash that there was as much joy in Heaven as on the day that the world was created (*Torat Kohanim, Shemini* 1:15). The Children of Israel also experienced great joy, as it is written: "A fire went forth from before Hashem and consumed the burnt-offering and the fats upon the altar. The people saw and sang glad song and fell upon their faces" (*Vayikra* 9:24). In other words, the Children of Israel rejoiced with unequaled intensity. It is also said, "A fire went forth from before Hashem" – when they saw a new fire descending from Heaven and consuming the burnt-offering and fats upon the altar, they opened their mouths to sing, at which point it is said: 'Rejoice in Hashem, O you righteous, for praise befits the upright' [*Tehillim* 33:1]" (*Torat Kohanim, Shemini; Mechilta D'Miluim* 20). This joy was not superficial, but was filled with meaning. Before the Sanctuary was set up and sacrifices were offered there when the Children of Israel sinned, the *Shechinah* would depart from them more and more, leaving them entirely during the incident of the golden calf. When the Sanctuary was set up and the *Shechinah* returned among them, the Children of Israel knew that from then on, sacrifices would atone for their sins and the *Shechinah* would no longer leave them.

### Prayers Now Atoned for Us

The Midrash states, "For the most part, the *Shechinah* dwelled with lower beings prior to the sin, but afterwards it left the earth for Heaven. On the day that the Sanctuary was set up, the *Shechinah* returned to this world and the glory of G-d filled the Sanctuary" (*Tanchuma, Pekudei* 6). Furthermore, when the *Shechinah* returned to the Sanctuary, everyone immediately knew that Hashem had forgiven the Children of Israel for the sin of the golden calf. The Midrash states, "Before they made the calf, the Holy One, blessed be He, came and dwelled among them. When He became angry with them, they said that He would never return. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'Let them make a Sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them' [*Shemot* 25:8], and all the inhabitants of the world will know that I have forgiven Israel" (*Tanchuma, Pekudei* 2). The Midrash also states, "It is written: 'These are the accounts of the Sanctuary, the Sanctuary of Testimony' [*Shemot* 38:21] – it is a testimony for everyone on earth that the sin of the golden calf was forgiven" (*Tanchuma, Pekudei* 6). There were therefore two aspects to the great joy experienced on the day that the Sanctuary was set up: The joy of Hashem for never having to remove His *Shechinah* from Israel, and the joy of the Children of Israel because the sin of the golden calf had been forgiven and the *Shechinah* would no longer leave them. Even though the Temple was destroyed on account of our numerous sins, leaving us without sacrifice, *kohen*, altar, or drink offerings, we still have the prayers instituted by the Men of the Great Assembly. These prayers replace the sacrifices that were offered in the Temple, as it is written: "We will offer our lips instead of bulls" (*Hosea* 14:3). Our prayers procure atonement so that our sins do not cause the *Shechinah* to depart, for it remains among Jews even when they sin, as it is written: "Which dwells among them in their impurity" (*Vayikra*

16:16). Furthermore, even when Jews have been exiled, the *Shechinah* was exiled with them. In the Gemara our Sages say, "In every place to which they were exiled, the *Shechinah* went with them" (*Megillah* 29a), something that occurs when they do not fulfill G-d's will. Instead of removing His Presence from the Children of Israel, as He had done before, He punishes sinners.

We also find that when the Temple was destroyed, G-d did not remove His Presence from the Children of Israel, but instead punished sinners. Whatever the case, the *Shechinah* suffers from the pain of Jews, as the Sages have said: "When the destruction of Jerusalem was sealed, the Holy One, blessed be he, decreed that all of Creation should mourn, as it is written: 'Hashem, G-d of hosts declared that day to be for crying and lamenting, for baldness and for the donning of sackcloth' [Isaiah 22:12]. This shows us that as long as the Children of Israel are suffering, the Holy One, blessed be He, is also immersed in suffering with them, as it is written: 'In all their affliction, He was afflicted' [ibid. 63:9]. The ministering angels came to console Him, but He did not wish to accept consolation" (*Eicha Zutah* 1:7).

In addition, the Sages have said that the Holy One, blessed be He, descended from the highest Heavens, the place of His grandeur and glory, from the holiness of His great Name, and personally mourned for them.

### No King Without a People

The rejoicing was so great on the day that the Sanctuary was set up that G-d's joy was similar to His joy on the day that heaven and earth were created. The Sages have compared the establishment of the Sanctuary to the creation of heaven and earth, for the entire goal of Creation was to demonstrate His glory. In fact there cannot be a king without people, and G-d's glory increases when the Children of Israel serve Him, study Torah, and fulfill *mitzvot*. This is explained in the Zohar: "Had the brightness of the glory of the Holy One, blessed be His Name, not been shed over all of His creation, how could He have been perceived even by the wise? He would have remained incomprehensible, and the words 'the whole earth is filled with His glory' [Isaiah 6:3] could never be spoken with truth" (Zohar II:42b).

Let us therefore say that from the day the world was created, the Holy One, blessed be He, has been called King. As the liturgical poem *Adon Olam* states, "Sovereign of the universe, Who reigned before anything was created, at the time when by His will all things were made, then was His Name proclaimed King." In other words, when the world was still desolate, He was not yet king. Although the Holy One, blessed be He, was also King before the creation of the world, He was not yet called king, for "there is no king without a people." When do we begin to call Him king? From the day that heaven and earth were created. Likewise, on the day that the Sanctuary was set up, the Children of Israel proclaimed him King. This is because He was constantly with them from then on, for sacrifices and prayers ensured that He would never leave.

### ***I Never Look for Leniencies***

Abstaining from forbidden food is extremely important, to the point that concerning the verse, "For I am Hashem, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Vayikra 11:45), the Gemara cites a teaching from the school of Rabbi Ishmael: "The Holy One, blessed be He, declared, 'Had I brought up Israel from Egypt for no other purpose but this, that they should not defile themselves with reptiles, it would be sufficient for Me'" (Bava Metzia 61b).

Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Herman Zatzal was one of the pioneers of Torah in the United States. Although he was not very wealthy, he was especially known for his extraordinary hospitality, which was deeply rooted in his entire being. It was natural to see him seated at his table for every Shabbat meal with dozens of unknown guests who had found his door open to all, a warm and loving home.

The following story is taken from the book *All for the Boss* by Ruchoma Shain, the daughter of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Herman. She concretized, as many other similar stories have, the special care and extreme precautions taken by those who observe Torah in regards to *treif* food or anything having even a remote connection to any prohibition:

*It was the night of Hashanah Rabba. Papa went to shul, where he remained the entire night, learning. It was almost midnight, and Mama was still busy kashering twenty-four chickens in relays of six.*

*I sat on a high stool watching Mama salt the chickens. It was a work of art. She sprinkled the salt so evenly into every crevice of each chicken that it flowed like silvery raindrops falling from the sky.*

*The warm, quiet kitchen and the constant motion of Mama's hand almost lulled me to sleep. I emitted a deep yawn.*

*"Go to sleep, Ruchoma," Mama told me gently. "You've helped enough today." I was happy to obey Mama, and ran off to bed.*

*In my sleep, I felt a tugging and heard an insistent voice from afar: "Wake up, Ruchoma! Wake up!"*

*I struggled through to consciousness to see Mama bending over me. "What time is it?" I asked drowsily.*

*"It's the middle of the night," Mama answered.*

*I sat up abruptly. "What's the matter, Mama?"*

*"I was just putting away all the pupiklach [gizzards] of the chickens I had finished kashering, and I noticed that on one pupik [gizzard] there seems to be a shaileh [question]." Mama's words ended in a stifled sob. They're all mixed up now, so if this pupik is treif, all the chickens will be considered...." Mama did not finish the sentence, afraid to voice the horrible thought.*

*"Oh, Mama, what are we going to do?" I rushed into the kitchen to look at the pupik. Mama pointed to the soft wet gizzard, which had a very slight swelling and discoloration on one side.*

*"Run quickly to Papa in Tiferes Yerushalayim and tell him to go right now to Rabbi Skinder to ask a shaileh. Don't forget to tell Papa that I have no idea from which of the twenty-four chickens this pupik comes," Mama cautioned.*

*I dressed hurriedly. Holding the pupik in a soggy little bag, I sped through the dark, gloomy streets, my footsteps echoing my inner anxiety. (In 1930 [5690], Mama had no qualms about sending me, a young teenager, out all alone in the middle of the night. Our East Side streets were completely safe.)*

*As I neared the brightly illuminated shul, I heard many voices raised in Torah study. I rushed into the corridor and poked my head through the swinging door. Papa was sitting up front with an open sefer*

*before him.*

*One of the men recognized me and hurried over. "What is it, Ruchoma?" he queried anxiously.*

*"I have to tell my father something," I answered quickly. He went over, tapped Papa gently on the shoulder, and whispered something to him.*

*Papa ran over to me with a questioning glance. "Oh, Papa, Mama just finished kashering all the twenty-four chickens, and she mixed up all the pupiklach, and she found a shaileh on one of them, and she doesn't know which chicken it's from, and she says you should go right away to Rabbi Skinder to ask a shaileh." It came out all in one breath.*

*Papa grabbed his hat, and we both flew through the sleepy, silent streets. We reached Henry Street in a few minutes. Papa looked up to the first floor where Rabbi Skinder lived. There was a light shining from his dining-room window.*

*We tiptoed up the stairs, and Papa knocked gently on the door. Rabbi Skinder opened the door himself. "Shalom Aleichem, Reb Yaakov Yosef." He clasped Papa's hand warmly.*

*"My wife was kashering a chicken and found a shaileh on this pupik," Papa said matter-of-factly. I gazed at Papa in amazement and opened my mouth to speak. Papa's warning look choked back the words into my throat.*

*And so, while Rabbi Skinder poked and probed the defenseless pupik under the light of his lamp, the fate of twenty-four chickens hung in the balance.*

*I trembled as I stood there. What if it were treif? All Mama's hard work would have been in vain. What would all of our orchim [guests] eat on Yom Tov? It cost so much money. Mama's tired, wan face swam before my eyes and clouded my vision.*

*Then I glanced at Papa. He stood straight and tall, like a soldier awaiting the verdict of his general. After what seemed an eternity, Rabbi Skinder looked up and announced, "Kosher, kosher." The words of reprieve rang in my ears.*

*Papa then said, "Rebbe, if you had pronounced the pupik 'treif,' I would have thrown out twenty-four chickens. My wife does not know from which of the chickens this pupik comes."*

*Rabbi Skinder looked at Papa reprovingly, "Ach, ach, Reb Yaakov Yosef, why didn't you tell me? When there is a great loss involved, I examine the shaileh differently."*

*"I never look for heterim [leniencies]," Papa answered with his oft-repeated and oft-practiced maxim.*

*With the kosher pupik wrapped up again in its wet brown bag, Papa and I rushed down the stairs. "Run home quickly, Ruchoma, and tell Mama that the pupik is one-hundred percent kosher. See that she gets to bed. I'm going back to shul."*

*Like a bird in flight, I flew through the tranquil streets, my footsteps in tune with the rhythm of kosher, kosher, kosher.*

*When I burst into the front hall of our apartment building, I could not control myself and called out loudly, "Mama! Mama! The pupik is kosher! It's kosher!"*

*Mrs. Friedman, our first floor neighbor, came running out of her apartment. "Ruchoma, what's the matter with you? Why are you making such an unearthly racket at this time of night, waking everybody?" she asked peevishly.*

*"The pupik is kosher," I babbled.*

*Mama heard me and rushed out of our apartment to greet me. I threw myself into her arms and almost threw her off balance. "It's all right, Mama – it's one hundred percent kosher!"*

*Mama burst out crying.*

## Concerning the Parsha

### A Different Status

It is written, “Do not leave your heads unshorn and do not tear your garments, so that you not die and He be angry with the entire assembly” (*Vayikra* 10:6).

This is surprising. Here the subject is the *kohanim*, the sons of Aaron. Therefore how has the community sinned if the *kohanim* tear their clothes or uncover their heads? Why must the entire community fear that Hashem would become angry with everyone, as the Torah warns?

The book *Shema Shlomo* explains that the Gemara states, “A mourner who did not let his hair grow long and did not rend his clothes is guilty of a mortal offence” (*Moed Katan* 24a). This is the meaning of the verse, “Do not leave your heads unshorn and do not tear your garments, so that you not die” – you, the sons of Aaron, will not be liable to death if you do not let your hair grow in mourning. Nevertheless, “and He be angry with the entire assembly” – a Jew has a different status than a *kohen*. If a Jew wants to act like a *kohen* by cutting his hair in mourning, this will put his life in danger.

### Not For External Reasons

It is written, “Do not drink wine or strong drink” (*Vayikra* 10:9).

We must ask why the Torah completely forbids the consumption of wine, which rejoices G-d and man, and which plays the role of a *mitzvah* when we recite Kiddush on Shabbat and the holidays. It would be fitting to forbid drunkenness, not the consumption of wine! In his book *Shulchan Shlomo*, Rabbi Shlomo Tzadok *Shlita* gives a wonderful explanation for this. He states that since the tendency to become drunk is never far away, other than to establish fences, the Torah does not want joy in the Temple to stem from an external factor, such as the consumption of wine. Instead, it should come from something that awakens a joy in the *mitzvah* and in sanctity, like the peace-offerings that encourage people to grow spiritually, following an act of submission to G-d through an offering. Wine therefore has no place in the Temple, but must be poured out uniquely as a drink offering upon the altar.

### These are the Creatures

It is written, “These are the creatures that you may eat” (*Vayikra* 11:2).

Since the purity of food and its kosherness are among the most serious subjects, one who transgresses them is harming himself – his body and soul at the same time. One who protects himself from this sanctifies his soul and purifies his bodily members.

This is why, observes Rabbi Moshe Malka *Shlita* in his book *Netifei HaMayim*, when Moshe came to give the Children of Israel the *mitzvot* dealing with this subject, he was not content on just giving them verbal instructions. He gave them the names of impure and pure creatures, just as with all the other warnings. However he went to the trouble of showing them each domestic and wild animal, as well as each bird, which they could and could not eat, so they would definitely not make a mistake.

Furthermore, on this verse the Sifra states: “This teaches us that Moshe held the animal, showed it to the Children of Israel, and said to them: ‘This is what you may eat, and this is what you may not eat,’ ‘this is what you must abhor, and this is what you must not abhor,’ ‘this is impure for you, and this is not impure for you.’”

### Not Impure Upon Death

It is written, “The hedgehog, the crocodile, the lizard, the snail, and the chameleon” (*Vayikra* 11:30).

Some have asked why the serpent, which is the source of impurity, is not among the eight reptiles whose carcasses transmit impurity

through contact. In the Gemara the Sages say, “ ‘Goes upon the belly’ [*Vayikra* 11:42] means the serpent.... ‘Upon all fours’ [ibid.] means the scorpion” (*Chullin* 67b). The Torah only prohibits the eating of them – as it is written, “You shall not eat them” (*Vayikra* 11:42) – but does impurity not apply to them?

Rabbeinu Bechaye answers this question by stating that since serpents and scorpions are harmful to people, the Torah rendered them pure upon death, so that people would not hesitate to kill them out of fear of becoming impure. Such is not the case for the other reptiles that possess no venom whatsoever. The Torah did not need to rid them of their impurity upon death.

## In the Light of the Parsha

### Silence that Constitutes Consent

It is written, “Moshe said to Aaron, ‘Of this did Hashem speak, saying: I will be sanctified by those who are near to Me.’ And Aaron was silent” (*Vayikra* 10:3).

The Sages have said, “Moshe said to Aaron: ‘My brother, at Sinai I was told that I would sanctify this House, and through a great man would I sanctify it. I believed that this House would be sanctified either through me or through you, but now [I see that] your two sons are greater than you or I.’ When Aaron heard that his sons were G-d-fearing, he remained silent and was rewarded for his silence. How [do we know] that he kept silent? Because it is said, ‘And Aaron was silent.’ How [do we know] that he received a reward for his silence? From the fact that he was privileged to have the Divine word addressed to him alone, as it is said: ‘And Hashem spoke to Aaron’ [*Vayikra* 10:8]” (*Vayikra Rabba* 12:2).

There are times when a person receives a reward for his silence, as the Gemara says regarding the verse, “A time to be silent, and a time to speak” (*Kohelet* 3:7): “Sometimes a man is silent and is rewarded for his silence. At others, a man speaks and is rewarded for his speaking” (*Zevachim* 115b).

Why did Aaron remain silent? It was because what Moshe said was more pleasing than what he himself was saying. He kept silent to signal his consent, so that the Children of Israel would see and learn from him.

Moshe also did the same thing when he became angry with Aaron’s sons, as it is said: “He was angry with Eleazar and with Itamar, Aaron’s remaining sons” (*Vayikra* 10:16). However Moshe accepted the explanation of his brother Aaron, as we read in this regard: “Aaron spoke to Moshe: ‘Behold, today they offered their sin-offering...’” (v.19). What does the very next verse say? “Moshe heard, and it was pleasing in his eyes.” He heard and kept silent, accepting what Aaron was saying because his brother’s words seemed preferable to his own.

## Guard Your Tongue!

### Forbidden to Rely on Hearsay

We call someone an *apikorus* (whom it is a *mitzvah* to despise and denigrate) only if we have personally heard him speak profane words. However if we only know this through hearsay, it is forbidden to rely on it and to speak ill of him, be it in his presence or not. We should also not be certain about it ourselves, for it is forbidden to believe *Lashon Harah*. From then on, we must only be cautious and discreetly warn others not to have a connection with him until things become clear.

As we know, our teacher the Beit Yosef, Rabbi Yosef Karo, merited a *maggid*, an emissary from Heaven who taught him Torah secrets and revealed to him things by which he purified himself and received sublime revelations.

Thus, he was told in one of the revelations of the *maggid*: "These sufferings which have come upon you, if you have endured them without diverting your thoughts from the Torah for a single instant, you would have elevated yourself to levels so high that you have been unable to imagine them" (*Maggid Mesharim, Parsha Emor*).

The great men of Israel have always strived to cleave to Torah study even in times of hardship and severe illness. Their mouths are constantly occupied with learning Torah at each instant, and their train of thought is never derailed, not even when they find themselves in the valley of the shadow of death.

At the funeral of the *gaon* Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum *Zatzal* (the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir in the United States), the *gaon* Rabbi Yitzchak Sheiner *Shlita* (the Rosh Yeshiva of Kamenitz) said the following:

"For 60 years he was frail, and it was a miracle that he lived. Nevertheless, he studied like one of the greatest Torah giants, like in his youth, during his years of learning at the Shanghai yeshiva, when a real threat of death from war and the events of the time reigned over the yeshiva. Nevertheless, Rabbi Shmuel *Zatzal* invested all his energy into learning Torah. Thus he elevated himself from the time of his youth, and he was among the most advanced group in the yeshiva. "Whenever I paid him a visit, his '*Shalom Aleichem*' and 'how are you' were always questions concerning the passage that he was learning at the time. They were his 'how are you' from the passage in which he was completely immersed."

### Burning with Fever

In 5733, Rabbi Meir Chadash *Zatzal* was hospitalized in intensive care, his condition so grave that doctors feared for his life. His relatives, who surrounded his bed, realized that even as he was burning with fever, his lips were murmuring something. One of his relatives lowered his head towards him and could hear him reciting *mishnayot* of *Negaim* from order *Taharot*, which he knew by heart.

His relative was stunned to hear Rabbi Meir Chadash murmuring the words, "And here, on the side, you will see the objections of Rabbi Akiva Eiger...."

### How Can One Reach Such a Level?

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander *Zatzal*, the *meshgiach* of the Ponevezh yeshiva, served Hashem with such great intensity that it aroused astonishment. During ordinary times, as well as during the most difficult periods, he did not make the smallest concession in his service of Hashem. He overcame every difficulty and obstacle in his way, things that threatened to divert him from learning. As long as he had the breath of life still in him, he learned Torah, taught Torah, and proved to everyone that nothing can resist a person's own will. He proved that if a person truly desires to learn Torah, the very fact that he has such a desire is a definite *segula* to conquer all adversities in life.

In 5708, in the middle of the War of Independence in Eretz Israel, Rabbi Chaim was in Jerusalem. The city was surrounded, and it was impossible to leave by the same way that he arrived. However a man such as himself was not going to stay there doing nothing as he waited for an opportunity to leave the city. He realized that his teacher, the *gaon* Rabbi Shmuel Rosovski *Zatzal*, was also in Jerusalem, and so he immediately began to learn with him. This learning extended to all hours of the day. Even when bombs were wreaking havoc in the streets of Jerusalem, their incredibly diligent learning was not interrupted. They would simply change the location of where they

learned, and instead of going to the Beit HaMidrash, they descended into the shelter of the Hebron yeshiva, where they continued to learn Torah. During his last years, when he was afflicted by illness and fell prey to tremendous suffering, Rabbi Chaim did not change his daily schedule. He would go to the yeshiva for prayers and *sedarim*, as during regular days, all while undergoing painful and exhausting treatments at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. He had chosen to undergo these treatments on Wednesdays, for in any case he had to leave Bnei Brak every Wednesday to give a class at the HaNegev yeshiva in the south of the country, and on the way he traveled to Jerusalem for his treatments.

Rabbi Chaim was also obligated to get treated abroad. His family impatiently awaited his return, and on the given day they went to the Lod Airport to meet him. When they saw the first people coming off the plane, they approached them and asked: "Did the Rav travel with you?" The answer was, "Are you talking about the Rav who was writing during the entire flight?" Just an hour after the plane landed, Rabbi Chaim was sitting as usual in the study hall of the Ponevezh yeshiva.

One of his students, stunned by his conduct during such a time of suffering, worked up the courage to ask him: "Excuse me, but how are you able to work, engage in conversations, and function so efficiently with such pain?"

Rabbi Chaim calmly replied, "When a person knows what his primary goal in life is, he is capable of everything." The student again asked, "Nevertheless, how can a person attain such a level of self-effacement?"

Rabbi Chaim's reply: "It's when you really want to, and you cleave to Hashem!"

### Not Only Chocolate

It was in Rabbi Chaim Friedlander's nature not to allow himself to get caught up in the whirlwind of life, nor to let suffering dictate the rhythm of things in his service of G-d. He demanded the maximum possible of himself, and he succeeded in giving it.

Rabbi Chaim was once visited by a young rosh yeshiva who wanted to lift his spirits in the midst of his illness. At that point in time, it was difficult for Rabbi Chaim to even speak, and so he wrote the following on a piece of paper for his guest:

"Thank you very much for paying me a visit, but I'm not in need of encouragement. Please, since I don't have much time left in this world, and I have much to do, I ask that you allow me to get on and not disturb me."

Rabbi Chaim was once learning with his son when he was assailed by pain. However he continued learning, twisting with pain. When his son suggested that they stop, Rabbi Chaim replied: "We don't stop learning when it's difficult. We stop when it's impossible."

When he traveled abroad for the second time, and he was told that he had just a few weeks left to live, some people came to see him and tried to encourage him. Rabbi Chaim said to them, "Believe me, the closeness that I now feel to G-d, I've never before felt in my life! On the verse, 'I dwell on a high and holy place, but also with one who is of a contrite and humble spirit' [Isaiah 57:15], the Sages [*Sotah* 5a] say that G-d is with the contrite ['I spread My *Shechinah* on one who is humble' – Rashi]. With such closeness to G-d, I don't need encouragement. We must just pray to Hashem for the future." During that time, he said to the Rebbetzin: "The Creator's will is that man should not only eat chocolate, but also bitter and painful things. That is Hashem's will!"

One Friday, as his condition grew appreciably worse, it became necessary to bring him to the hospital. An ambulance was called, but it was delayed. As was his custom, Rabbi Chaim took advantage of this delay. He put on his Shabbat clothes and began to go through the *parsha*, reading it once in Hebrew and twice in Aramaic.