



## A WARNING AGAINST PRIDE

*Rabbi David Pinto Chlita*

It is written, "Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aaron's two sons, when they approached before Hashem and they died" (Vayikra 16:1). Our Sages have given us a parable to explain this: It is like a sick man who is visited by a doctor. The doctor says to him, "Do not eat cold foods or lie down in a cold, damp place." Another doctor then visits him, and he advises: "Do not eat cold foods or lie down in a cold, damp place, so that you will not die like so-and-so died." The latter warned the sick man better than the former (Torat Kohanim, Acharei Mot 1). Hence after the death of Aaron's two sons, we read: "Hashem said to Moshe: Speak to Aaron your brother – he shall not come at all times into the Sanctuary...so that he should not die" (Vayikra 16:2).

This Midrash is difficult to understand. Did Aaron need a special warning, such that Moshe had to threaten him by saying: "Be careful not to enter the Sanctuary in a prohibited way, so as not to die as your sons died"? Was it not possible to warn him in a general way, such as by telling him not to enter the Sanctuary at all times, nothing more? Prior to this, when G-d warned him about drunkenness (just after the deaths of Nadav and Avihu), He did not warn him in the same way, for it is written: "Do not drink intoxicating wine, you and your sons with you, when you come to the Tent of Meeting, so that you do not die – this is an eternal decree for your generations" (Vayikra 10:9). He did not say, "So that you do not die as your sons died." Consequently, why was a more stern warning required here?

### *My Holiness Dwells Here*

It seems that the Holy One, blessed be He, did not want Aaron to enter the Holy of Holies often, lest he become used to seeing the Shechinah at all times, for then he would grow proud. In that case, he would be unable to pray for Israel and unworthy of speaking with the Shechinah, for it is written: "One with haughty eyes and a proud heart, him I cannot bear" (Tehillim 101:5).

Although in regards to Moshe we read, "Hashem would speak to Moshe face to face, as a man would speak with his fellow" (Shemot 33:11), as well as, "Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moshe, whom Hashem had known face to face" (Devarim 34:10), there was still no trace of pride in him. How is this possible? It is because Moshe possessed tremendous humility. When had he succeeded in removing pride from his heart? It was when G-d revealed Himself to him in the burning bush and said, "Remove your shoes from your feet" (Shemot 3:5). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Since Moshe is constantly being called upon to speak with Me, he may grow accustomed to My glory and eventually demonstrate a lack of respect for Me." This is because one who speaks with his teacher once or twice cannot be compared to one who speaks with him nine or ten times, since the latter grows accustomed to him. Hence He warned Moshe: "Remove your shoes from your feet" – be careful not to conduct yourself with Me like someone who grows accustomed to

speaking with his teacher. Rather, each time that you speak with Me, it should be like the first time that I am speaking to you. Why? "For the place upon which you are standing is holy ground" – for My holiness dwells here. What did He tell him? "Remove your shoes from your feet" – these were not shoes (ne'aleicha), but something tightly sealed (neila), like a treasure that is hidden from everyone. This is how My word should be to you: Just as no one enters the royal treasury or see what it contains, likewise you must be like someone who looks at a sealed treasure from the outside, not knowing what it contains, and yearning to enter inside. Once a person has entered and seen what it contains, he no longer wishes to leave. This is how My word should be to you, as if it were sealed from the outside. Each time that I come to speak with you, it should seem as if you had never heard My voice before.

When G-d spoke to him in this way, Moshe immediately yielded and conducted himself with humility. Moshe said, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Shemot 3:11). At the same time, pride left his heart, for G-d told him: "Remove your shoes from your feet" – and the foot represents pride, as it is written: "Let not the foot of pride come to me" (Tehillim 36:12). Pride left Moshe, never to return again, and he merited to speak with the Shechinah face to face.

However Aaron and Miriam were not aware of Moshe's level, nor did they realize that pride had left his heart, which is why they disparaged him for having separated from his wife. Aaron was surprised by this and said, "My brother Moshe constantly speaks with the Shechinah. It is therefore impossible for him not to grow proud, since man is forbidden to become accustomed to the Shechinah lest he grow proud." This is why G-d told Aaron, "It is not as you think, that your brother Moshe has grown proud. Moshe has never grown proud, and I speak only with him because he is the humblest of all men upon the earth."

### *Transmitted by an Intermediary*

After all that we have said, we can fully understand why this passage was not transmitted directly to Aaron, as was the passage concerning drunkenness. Here G-d commanded Aaron and his sons to enter the Holy of Holies only once a year, whereas Moshe was near the Shechinah at every possible time. Here Aaron was told that he was not at the level of his brother Moshe, which is why this passage was transmitted to him by an intermediary. This was meant to teach Aaron that he could not speak to the Shechinah at any time, and that only Moshe was worthy of this, for he had not grown proud.

If the passage on drunkenness had been transmitted to Aaron directly, he would not have perceived any difference between himself and Moshe. Since G-d had spoken with Aaron, then ceased to speak with him, it was because he was not worthy of hearing the words of G-d at any given time, as was his brother Moshe because of his tremendous humility.

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### *It is written, "He shall don a sacred linen tunic, linen breeches shall be upon his flesh" (Vayikra 16:4).*

Rashi states, "This teaches that [the Kohen Gadol] does not perform the service inside [the Holy of Holies] wearing the eight garments with which he performs the service outside, for these contain gold, and a prosecutor cannot become a defender. Instead, [he wears] four garments, like an ordinary kohen, all of which are of linen."

In his book *Oznaim LaTorah*, the gaon Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin Zatzal laments that in recent times there have been more and more people claiming to be great friends of the Jewish people. They oppose anyone who reprimands the permissiveness of the generation, and they say that it is forbidden to criticize the Jewish people, who are holy. They base themselves on a powerful support, the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev Zatzal. As most people know, he always defended the merits of the Jewish people, and therefore anyone who defends his merits is invariably correct.

The situation reached such a point that the mitzvah of reprimanding others was annulled. One such "defender" protested against the rav of his city because he had reprimanded someone for eating treif meat in the kitchen of scoundrels. He therefore raised a complaint about this rav, saying that it was forbidden to accuse a Jew.

Yet in reality, said Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, there is no doubt that if we see a man or woman breaking the law of Moshe and Israel, we must reprimand them as much as possible. Every rav in Israel must reprimand people for their sins, in order for them to return to Hashem and repent. Such an "accusation" constitutes a merit for Israel, for in this way their hearts are drawn closer to their Father in Heaven.

What does this mean? When a person reprimands an individual or a group of people, he has the duty to make them aware of their sins. On the other hand, when a rav or the person making a reprimand prays to the Holy One, blessed be He, he must defend Israel and find pretexts for their sins and transgressions, even in a dubious or complicated way if necessary. One must always look for the merit of Jews and seek their good before the Holy One, blessed be He.

This has nothing to do with the mitzvah of reprimanding, which is valid at all times. Otherwise, the Torah would disappear from Israel. In fact without reprimanding, every person would do whatever he wants.

#### Finding All Sorts of Pretexts

We see this simple difference in the garments of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur. How so? When the Kohen Gadol is officiating on the greatest day of the year with the complete help of the kohanim and Israelites, who have come to see the service in the House of G-d on this holy day, the Kohen Gadol wears garments of gold. It doesn't even matter if wearing these garments evokes the golden calf. On the contrary, people will see and remember Hashem's anger on Mount Horev, and they will be ashamed and return to Hashem, Who forgives.

Yet when the Kohen Gadol enters the Holy of Holies, it is forbidden for anyone to find himself anywhere within the Sanctuary, as the verse states: "No man shall be in the Tent of Meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the holy place until he comes out" (Vayikra 16:17). The Kohen Gadol alone prays to Hashem for the Jewish people, and no

one else hears him. At that point there is obviously no need to criticize the people, and he must find all kinds of excuses and pretexts to cover their sins and highlight their merits before Hashem. How much more is the Kohen Gadol to distance everything that can recall the sins of the Jewish people! He therefore removes his garments of gold – gold from which the calf was made – and dons garments of white linen, a symbol of the forgiveness of sin, as the prophet Isaiah states: "If your sins are like scarlet, they will become white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

In fact the best way to favorably judge others is to put an effort into finding the goodness that exists within each Jew, as it is written: "With righteousness shall you judge your fellow" (Vayikra 19:15). Even if someone has the feeling that his fellow has wronged him and tried to hurt him, if he still puts an effort into looking for the good in him, he will judge him favorably. As Rabbi David of Lelov Zatzal said, "There is not a wicked Jew in the entire world!" If we see something bad in a Jew, we have actually discovered the non-Jewish part within him, the goy within the Jew.

It is widely known that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev constantly defended the Jewish people. He said that everyone must always defend Jews and see only the good in them. Obviously, anyone who develops this attitude will merit Hashem's help in not seeing any evil among Israel, and he will always be able to defend Jews and confer merit upon them.

#### *I Know!*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak loved every Jew and had compassion on whoever was called a Jew. For him, every Jew was righteous by default, which is why he would defend him.

It is said that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak once went into the city on Tisha B'Av, and there he saw a Jew sitting on the porch of his home eating in full view of the public. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak said to him, "My son, you have certainly forgotten that today is Tisha B'Av."

"No, Rabbi" he replied, "I know that today is Tisha B'Av."

"Then perhaps you don't realize," retorted Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, "that today is a fast day, and that it's forbidden to eat and drink today."

"I know that Tisha B'Av is a public fast day," brazenly replied the man.

"In that case, you must be frail and your doctors have ordered you not to fast," countered Rabbi Levi Yitzchak.

"Certainly not," the man responded. "I'm in very good health!"

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak then raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed, "Sovereign of the universe! Look at how great the love for truth is in Jews! This Jew prefers to incriminate himself rather than to utter a lie!"

## Guard Your Tongue

### *For a Constructive Purpose*

Know that there is no distinction between speaking Lashon Hara to others, be they relatives or not, or to one's wife, unless he must tell her something that serves a constructive purpose for the future. For example, if one's wife is about to sell items on credit to untrustworthy individuals, meaning that it will be difficult for her to be paid afterwards, he should warn her not to sell things on credit to such bad people.

### The More We Speak of it...

We know by tradition that everyone who joyously recounts the story of the exodus from Egypt is assured of rejoicing in the World to Come and delighting in the radiance of the Shechinah. This is the greatest kind of bliss possible. G-d experiences great satisfaction when Israel recounts at length the exodus from Egypt. He summons His celestial hosts and says to them, "Come and listen to the account of the exodus from Egypt as told by My children." He rejoices with them, and all the angels gather to hear the Haggadah from the mouths of the Jewish people, who praise the Creator for the numerous miracles performed in their favor. – Me'am Loez

### Worthy of Praise

Maggid: The gaon Rabbi Moshe Sofer prolonged the Seder in the presence of his young children. He translated each word of the Haggadah for them and explained its meaning, though without providing them with the interpretation. – Minhagei HaChatam Sofer

### The Fourth Question

Why did the compiler of the Haggadah add the fourth question ("Why is it that on all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we eat reclining?"), since it does not appear in tractate Pesachim?

The gaon Rabbi Shaul of Amsterdam responds as follows: The Mishnah opts in favor of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria's view, which is that we can only eat matza until chatzot ("midnight"). According to this view, the question does not arise. In fact we must hurry to finish eating the matza before chatzot, and whoever hurries will eat reclining, as it is written: "If one enters a house stricken with leprosy...he stays in the house long enough to eat...reclining" (Berachot 41a).

Here Rashi explains, "When we eat in a reclining position, we hurry because we are not distracted." Nevertheless, the compiler of the Haggadah follows the opinion of the Sages, who believe that we can eat matza throughout the night. In that case, an important question arises: Why on this night do we eat in a reclining position? – Divrei Shaul

## The Faithful Ones - Accounts from the Tzaddikim of the Pinto Family

### Rabbi Hadan Pinto and his Father

It was a year of drought, and Rabbi Hadan, who would normally buy new clothes for the poor of the city during the holidays, didn't have enough money to buy any clothes. Rabbi Hadan went to bed very worried. That night his father, Rabbi Haim Pinto, appeared to him in a dream and said: "My son, don't worry. Tomorrow you'll have the money to buy clothes like never before." Very early the next morning, before he could leave for synagogue, the servant of the wealthy Moshe Aflalo came to his home, informing Rabbi Hadan that his master urgently wished to see him. Moshe Aflalo welcomed Rabbi Hadan with great honor, telling him that his father Rabbi Haim Pinto had come to him in a dream and said: "How can you wear new clothes for the holidays, and yet my son Rabbi Hadan not only doesn't have any new clothes, he won't even be able to buy new ones for the poor?" Moshe Aflalo then explained that Rabbi Haim had obligated him to give Rabbi Hadan everything he needed, as well as money for the poor. Rabbi Hadan returned home happy.

Another time, there was a great merchant named Massane Bohbot who would journey to Taroudant before the holiday of Sukkot and purchase

### The Exile of Egypt in Our Generation

The Gemara states that after the coming of Mashiach, the exodus from Egypt will retain its place in the history of the Jewish people, but the Final Redemption will take precedence (Berachot 12b). Thus the prophet Isaiah declares, "Remember not the first events, and do not meditate over early ones" (Isaiah 43:18). Remember not the first events – this is a warning to foreign kingdoms; do not meditate – this is the exodus from Egypt. Our present exile has the same characteristic as the exile in Egypt, and Hashem will deliver us from it. Yet what exactly is this characteristic?

The Egyptians subjugated the Children of Israel, as it is written: "They embittered their lives with hard work, with mortar and with bricks, and with every labor of the field; all their labors that they performed with them were with crushing harshness" (Shemot 1:14). Likewise we read, "During those many days, it happened that the king of Egypt died, and the Children of Israel groaned because of the work, and they cried out" (ibid. 2:23).

This teaches us that in the midst of their backbreaking work, the Children of Israel groaned and cried out to G-d. They did not change their names or their language, nor did they become guilty because of slander or immoral behavior (Shir HaShirim Rabba 4:25). Although immersed to the 49th degree of impurity, they did not stop believing in G-d, as it is written: "And the people believed" (Shemot 4:31). It was for this reason that they were delivered.

Yet in our days, during this final exile, the situation is reversed. While we rejoice in comfort and tranquility, we all stumble and fall into the sin of slander and forbidden relations. Is there a single person in this generation who hasn't changed his name or his language? Moreover, even when we go to houses of study and synagogues to pray, we talk about futile things or think about profane subjects. Is this the cry that our forefathers made to Hashem in Egypt?

Furthermore, we have all allowed ourselves to be enticed, be it ever so little, by the dust of heresy. Is there anyone among us who possesses perfect faith in G-d, someone who places all his confidence in Him, as our ancestors did in Egypt?

This being the case, we need a deliverer who will free us from this bitter exile, which is even more difficult than the first. As the prophet Micah announced, "As in the days of your exodus from the land of Egypt, I will show him wonders" (Micah 7:15).

etrogim to sell in Mogador. Upon returning to Mogador, he was about to be attacked by bandits. Carrying a large sum of money with him, he then made a vow that if he were to escape, he would give all this money to Rabbi Hadan, the son of Rabbi Haim Pinto. At that point the bandits heard the sound of horses and fled. Thanks to this miracle, he escaped and reached Mogador in safety. However he regretted the vow he had made, and wanted to give Rabbi Hadan only a tiny donation. As soon as he went to see him, Rabbi Hadan said: "I won't accept anything less than the total amount that you wanted to give me as an offering." Rabbi Hadan then recounted everything that had happened to Massane Bohbot from beginning to end. Stunned and fearful, he took out the entire contents of his sack and gave everything to Rabbi Hadan. "How did you know what happened to me?" he asked. Rabbi Hadan replied, "My father Rabbi Haim Pinto appeared to me in a dream and recounted the whole story. I'm now going to return the money to you, but know that when you vow to give something in a time of trouble, you should only promise what you can fulfill."

– Shenot Haim

### The Revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi

Many of the great men of Israel have merited the revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi. Included among these was Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol, who would regularly see and even study with him. Although these stories are numerous and well-known, we shall mention two short accounts from among those which have been written on this subject.

The first story took place around midnight, a time when Rabbi Haim Pinto was as strong as a lion in beginning his daily regimen of serving G-d. His assistant, Rabbi Aharon, was there to serve and prepare a hot drink for him. One night, his assistant heard two voices coming from Rabbi Haim's room. He thought, "If the Rav is studying with a friend tonight, better to prepare a drink for his guest as well."

No sooner said than done: He prepared and brought two glasses to the Rav's room.

In the morning, after Shacharit, Rabbi Haim asked him: "Please explain why you brought me two glasses last night, since you normally bring me only one!"

"I heard you speaking with someone," he replied. "I therefore wanted to also honor your guest by bringing him a hot drink."

The tzaddik Rabbi Haim nodded silently in approval, and then looked at Rabbi Aharon and said to him: "Happy are you, my son, for having merited to hear the voice of Eliyahu HaNavi. His was the second voice that you heard last night. However I order you not to reveal this to anyone."

Rabbi Aharon obeyed the Rav's order for several years, not telling anyone what he had heard on that night. Yet when Rabbi Haim left this world, Rabbi Aharon felt that it was time to reveal this incredible secret to the Rav's family: The revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi, the good messenger, who had come to study Torah with Rabbi Haim Pinto.

The second story took place in the home of Rabbi Haim Pinto. Rabbi Makhlof Lov, known as Rav Lissa, had come to ask for the Rav's help in an important and urgent matter, one which could not allow for any delay. It was late at night, but Rabbi Makhlof was able to locate the residence of Rav Haim thanks to the light which illuminated it. As he entered, he found two people before him:

The first was Rabbi Haim Pinto, whose face radiated a special kind of light, but Rabbi Makhlof couldn't identify the second, who seemed like an angel of G-d.

Rabbi Makhlof, who planned on approaching both men in order to speak with Rabbi Haim and ask him for advice, suddenly felt his knees giving way and was filled with tremendous fear.

He then turned around and left!

On the following day, when they met, Rabbi Haim said to him: "Happy are you, Rabbi Makhlof, for having merited to see Eliyahu HaNavi of blessed memory."

Rabbi Makhlof recorded this story in his prayer book. His children and grandchildren, who worked for the members of the holy Pinto family, then transmitted it to succeeding generations.

Our goal here is not to repeat things which are well-known, such as the fact that the great men of Israel in every generation encounter Eliyahu HaNavi and merit to speak with him. Nevertheless, there

are two cases when every individual has the merit of being in the presence of Eliyahu HaNavi: During a circumcision (when a special chair is prepared for him, the "Chair of Eliyahu"), and on the night of Pesach, just prior to the reading of the passage Shefoch Hamatecha in the Haggadah. We then have the custom (as taught by our Sages) to open the door and welcome Eliyahu HaNavi to our home. We even fill a glass of wine for him, "the glass of Eliyahu." Why is it precisely during these two circumstances that Eliyahu HaNavi appears to each Jew, without distinction, even to the most simple among us?

In looking at this more closely, we see that every Jew is at a particularly high level during these two occasions. In fact during a circumcision, the newborn enters a covenant with Hashem and becomes part of the golden lineage of the Jewish people, which has existed from the time of his holy forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moreover, the reading of the Haggadah evokes the time when the Jewish people left Egypt and freed themselves, in a single step, from the 49 degrees of impurity into which they had fallen. This teaches us that regardless of our present circumstances, there always exists the possibility to lift ourselves up to a higher level and improve. Furthermore, as our holy books stress, this period recurs each year. Everyone among us, regardless of where he is, should take advantage of this favorable time to disconnect himself from impurity, from the futile pursuits of this world into which he is immersed, and to elevate himself. This is why Eliyahu HaNavi, of blessed memory, appears precisely on these occasions. It is in order to show us that, just like all the great men of Israel throughout the generations, we also merit to perceive the revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi.

The following statement is found in Tanna D'vei Eliyahu (ch. 25): "Each Jew has the obligation to say, 'When will my deeds reach the level of the deeds of my forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?'" In fact every person can, and even should, reach the level that will render him worthy of the revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi of blessed memory.

Still on this subject, we may add that the revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi symbolizes the connection between Israel and its Creator, as well as the difference between Israel and the nations of the world. That is why the Final Redemption, which will only take place for Israel, will be accomplished through him.

This is the reason why Eliyahu HaNavi only reveals himself on these two occasions: During a circumcision (when Israel seals an eternal covenant with its Father in Heaven) and during the festival of Pesach (a festival that symbolizes deliverance, a festival of faith, a festival when G-d's light spreads out upon the entire people, and a symbol of the distinction between Israel and Egypt, the difference between Israel and the nations of the world). Furthermore, Eliyahu HaNavi appears only when we separate ourselves from the nations of the world and proclaim: "Pour out Your anger upon the nations that do not know You" (Shefoch Hamatecha). Hence this is where the rift between Israel and the peoples takes place: In the Brit Milah and in faith. This may also be why we pour a glass of blessing for Eliyahu, for the distinction between Israel and the nations can be found in wine, since wine touched by idolaters becomes forbidden to Jews due to the problem of "consecrated wine" (to idols).