

The Path to Follow



Published by **Mosdot Orot Chaim U'Moshe** in Israel

Under the auspices of **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita**
Son of the tzaddik and miracle-worker **Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l**, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker **Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"l**

MASKIL LÉDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita**

Encamping According to the Flags

“The Children of Israel shall encamp each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers’ household at a distance surrounding the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp” (Bamidbar 2:2)

Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded the tribes to encamp around the Mishkan, according to their flags (Tanchuma, Bamidbar 12). Moshe Rabbeinu told Hashem that if each shevet would have a separate flag indicating their designated places around the Mishkan, some closer and others further, it would likely be a cause of dissention. Hashem responded that the tribes would encamp around the Mishkan in the same formation that Yaakov Avinu specified for them to stand when bearing his bier.

Why did Hashem want each shevet to have its own flag? The Arizal (Pri Eitz Chaim, Tefillah, Introduction) states that there are twelve gates in Heaven, corresponding to the Twelve Tribes. Each tribe has its own path to perfection. This is the reason why it is commendable that one should maintain his version of tefillah. It is understandable that each tribe needs its own space, just like they each have their separate gates in Heaven. But why was it necessary for each tribe to have its own flag?

Hashem desires that Bnei Yisrael should be close to the Shechinah. He wants, also, that there should be peace among His nation. The avodah of each tribe was to feel that even though there were those who encamped closer to the Mishkan, this was not an indication that they were better than the others. They were positioned according to Hashem’s command. One should always recognize the virtues of his friend, and consider him greater than himself. The word דגל (flag) is contained in the word גדלות (greatness). Constantly considering one’s fellow man on a higher level than oneself is a praiseworthy attribute, which ultimately unites the nation.

In the Wilderness, Hashem trained the nation to consider others greater than themselves. Moshe Rabbeinu feared that if the people would encamp according to an order, some tribes closer to the Mishkan and others, further away, this would arouse jealousy. Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him not to fear. On the contrary, the arrangement according to flags would teach the people to respect one another, each aspiring to come closer to the Shechinah.

One who does not sense greatness in his fellow man, due to his own arrogance, does not have the tools to feel the greatness of Hashem (see Devarim 8:14; see Sotah 4b). Those tribes who rested closer to the Mishkan and the Shechinah had to work on appreciating the value of their comrades, who rested behind them. This was what allowed them to come close to the Shechinah.

I was once walking with a well-to-do man. We saw a small coin on the ground, and the man bent down to pick it up. I asked him why he needed it; he was so wealthy. He answered that in his youth, he needed every penny he could get. That was why he did not make light of even the smallest coin. Our Sages (Sanhedrin 8a) tell us, “The value of one penny is equal to the value of one hundred.” A small coin can yield a large dividend, therefore, every coin is important. Similarly, we should appreciate the great value of each and every Jewish person. The virtue of Bnei Yisrael in the Wilderness was that each one contemplated his friend’s virtues.

Those who rested near the Mishkan felt that those further away were greater than they, and they themselves merited closeness only due to Hashem’s order, not because of their significance. And those who rested afar respected their peers who merited residing nearer to the Shechinah, constantly striving to come closer to Hashem.



Chevrat Pinto NYC

207 West 78th Street • New York NY 10024 • U.S.A
Tel: +1 212 721 0230 • Fax: +1 212 721 0195
hevratpinto@aol.com

Jerusalem • Prinei David

Rehov Bayit Va Gan 8 • Jérusalem • Israel
Tel: +972 2643 3605 • Fax: +972 2643 3570
p@hpinto.org.il

Ashdod • Orh 'Haim Ve Moshe

Rehov Ha-Admour Mi-Belz 43 • Ashod • Israel
Tel: +972 88 566 233 • Fax: +972 88 521 527
orothaim@gmail.com

Ra'anana • Kol 'Haïm

Rehov Ha'ahouza 98 • Ra'anana • Israel
Tel: +972 98 828 078 • +972 98 792 9003
kolhaim@hpinto.org.il



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Ra'avad of Yerushalayim



Walking in their Ways

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

The Protective Shield of Tefillin

My personal doctor, Dr. Eliyahu Bismuth, told me that he once met a fellow physician who confided in him that he had been diagnosed with an unusual and serious case of cancer. Dr. Bismuth realized that nothing short of prayer would bring this man salvation. He therefore asked him, "Do you wear tefillin each morning?"

"No."

Dr. Bismuth told him that if he would resolve to begin now, he promised to pray for his complete recovery. The merit of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a, would stand in his defense for emerging healthy from his terrible illness. His friend accepted

his advice and began laying tefillin every day.

That night, Dr. Bismuth had a dream in which Rabbi Chaim Pinto appeared and promised him that his friend would have a complete recovery. Already now, his friend was beginning to feel better, in the merit of the mitzvah of tefillin. He was instructed to approach his friend and inform him of the good news.

Dr. Bismuth woke up and hurried to do as he was bidden. After hearing the good tidings, his friend said, "Until now, I never believed in G-d or His Torah. I was light-years away from mitzvah observance. But now I feel tremendous improvement in

my condition, and I understand it is in the merit of doing teshuvah. I can wholeheartedly say that I believe completely in the existence of a Creator and the power of the tzaddikim."

The next time this man was examined by one of the top professors in the field, the results of the tests came back completely clear. His illness had gone as quickly as it had come. The professor, who did not believe there was a cure for the illness, was stunned at the miracle he witnessed. The incident was the cause of a great kiddush Hashem.

The Haftarah



The haftarah of the week: **"The number of the Children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea..."** (Hoshea 2:1-22).

The connection to the parashah: Hoshea prophesies that the Children of Israel will increase to be as numerous as the sand on the seashore, which cannot be counted. This correlates to the "book of countings" (Bamidbar) that mentions the number and countings of Bnei Yisrael.

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Guard Your Tongue

The Power of Speech

More Important than Honoring One's Parents

If the instigator of an argument is one's relative, or even one's own father, he should not honor him by joining his side.

Even if his father commands him to do so, just as the halachah states that if his father tells him to transgress a mitzvah d'Rabbanan he should not listen to him, since both the son and the father are obligated to keep mitzvot, he should certainly not listen to his father when it concerns the stringent transgression of being involved in a dispute.

Reasons for Jewish Customs



The festival of Shavuot has six names. One of them is the well-known name of "חג השבועות – the festival of Shavuot."

This is because Hakadosh Baruch Hu has sworn never to forsake us, and we have sworn never to forsake Him. The word שבועות can be translated as "oaths" as well as "weeks."

If we read it as "weeks," it can hint that in order to receive the Torah we must count seven weeks, just as seven days are counted to ensure the purity of the Jewish family. Similarly, we must purify ourselves in order to receive the Torah.



Words of Wisdom

Midrashim of Chazal on Parshat Hashavua

Completely Equal

“These are the names of the men who will stand with you” (Bamidbar 1:5)

For Reuven, Elizur son of Shedeur... for Naphtali Achira son of Einan.

We do not find that the tribes are listed in the same order each time they are mentioned. This teaches that they are all equal in the eyes of Hakadosh Baruch Hu (Lekach Tov).

To Increase Reward

“From the age of one month and up shall you count them” (Bamidbar 3:15).

Why from this age? Could a one-month-old baby guard the Ohel Moed? He himself needs to be protected.

Rav Huna the Kohen said in the name of Rav Shmuel the son of Zeira: “This was in order to give them reward. How so? Because you find that they did not come to serve in the Mishkan until they were thirty years old. So why were they counted from the age of one month? This was so they should receive reward by being brought from the age of one month (Bamidbar Rabbah).

Good Neighbors

“Those who encamped before the Ohel Moed to the front, before the Tent of Meeting to the east” (Bamidbar 3:38).

How did they encamp?

The Levi'im encamped around the Mishkan, with Moshe and Aharon in the east, as it says, “Those who encamped before the Ohel Moed to the front, before the Tent of Meeting to the east.”

Moshe and Aharon and their sons were close to them, and Yehudah, Yissachar, and Zevulun were with them.

This is the origin of the saying, “Fortunate is the righteous man, and fortunate is his neighbor.” The three tribes who encamped in the proximity of Moshe and Aharon became great in Torah, as it says, “The staff and law-giver shall not depart from Yehudah,” and “Yehudah is my law-giver, and from the children of Yissachar, men who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred.” This refers to the two hundred members of the Sanhedrin who came from Yissachar; and from Zevulun they became scribes. Because they were neighbors of those who were great in Torah, they all became wise people.

The sons of Kehat were in the south, with Reuven, Shimon, and Gad close to them. This is the origin of the saying, “Woe to the wicked, and woe to his neighbor.” These tribes situated in the south, next to Korach and his assembly, were destroyed in their dispute, as it says, “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their houses, and all the people who were with Korach” (Yalkut Shimoni).

Treasures

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



Torah Is Found in the Heart of Every Jew

“Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names, every male according to their head count” (Bamidbar 1:2)

We find that Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded that the nation be counted. This is very surprising; surely Hashem knows how many people they numbered. The counting demonstrates that each and every Jew is important and distinguished, due to the fact that he received the Torah. The counting proclaims to each person that he is a part of the nation of Israel, which is singular among all the nations because of their receiving the Torah. Even if a Jew is distanced from Torah, he is still a Jew. Were a Jew to be baptized a thousand times, rachmana litzlan, and be taught their religion day and night, nevertheless Jewish blood always flows through his veins, and he is always a part of the nation that Hakadosh Baruch Hu constantly counts, because of His love for them.

What distinguishes the Jew from all other nations? The holy Torah, which is found in each and every Jew. This is true concerning every Jew, even though it might not be apparent. With the help of Hashem, the day will yet come that the Torah nestled in his heart will burst forth and enlighten him, declaring his connection to the Chosen People.

The Gemara relates a story of two disciples of Rebbi who were mute. Despite their handicap, they came to the beit midrash daily to listen to his shiur. When Rebbi noticed that they persistently came to the beit midrash for this purpose and would not miss even one day, he prayed to Hashem to heal them so that they would be able to speak. Hakadosh Baruch Hu answered his prayers, and they were able to speak. From that day, everyone saw how great in Torah these disciples were, and that despite their difficulties, they had thirstily drunk the words of their teacher without missing a thing. They were both truly like a well-plastered pit that does not leak a drop of water.

This was surely a wondrous miracle. It is also a tremendous lesson for us how these disciples so greatly desired to learn the holy Torah, and thus overcame their physical disabilities in order to do so and against all odds were able to understand and assimilate the Torah of their teacher. But we can ask the following two questions: Since these students had such a great desire to learn Torah, why did Hakadosh Baruch Hu create them mute, and why did he ultimately heal them?

The pasuk in Tehillim (147:19) will enlighten us: “He relates His word to Yaakov, His statutes and ordinances to Yisrael.” Bnei Yisrael are descended from Yaakov Avinu. The Torah that the Avot learned was later given to the entire nation at the foot of Har Sinai, and was passed on throughout the generations. Accordingly, we can say that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the two students mute in order to demonstrate that the Torah is found in each member of Klal Yisrael. The students' natural abilities left them unable to review and express the Torah of their teacher, nevertheless, their greatness in Torah was finally revealed, since the Torah existed deep within them.

Since the Torah is found in the root of the neshamah of a Jew, no physical limitation can prevent him from learning the Torah and understanding its depths. Therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu healed these disciples in order to demonstrate to one and all that the Torah is the root of every member of Am Yisrael. It is found in the heart of every Jew, although it may sometimes be hidden and sometimes revealed. Thus, although it appeared that the disciples did not understand what they were learning, this was not the case, as became abundantly apparent when their greatness in Torah was finally revealed.



Millions of people all over the world are eager to receive “only” one blessing from the Creator of the world. They are willing to work hard with all their heart and soul in order to merit being included in the category of fortunate people, who are listed in the *sefer zichronot* of Hashem. Of course, to merit receiving The ultimate blessing, with a capital “T”, is not simple. However, once a year a unique opportunity presents itself to receive not only one blessing from Hashem, but to receive a package full of blessings, with seventy blessings all together.

This unique opportunity will commence on Motzei Shabbat, on the eve of Shavuot, since on this night it is the common practice throughout the Diaspora to remain awake all night to study Torah until dawn.

What is the reward for those who learn Torah all night on the eve of Shavuot?

This is what the holy Zohar reveals [Introduction to the Zohar chelek I, p. 8]:

All those who complete the tikkun on this night and do so joyously, will be registered and recorded in the *sefer zichronot*, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu blesses them with seventy blessings and with crowns from the Upper world. Regarding them it says, “Then those who fear Hashem spoke to one another and Hashem listened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear Hashem and those who give thought to His Name.”

Regarding the *segulah* of learning Torah throughout the eve of Shavuot, the *sefer* on the customs of the Arizal, called *Pitora d’Abba*, states: All those who did not sleep in this night at all, not even for one moment, and was involved in the study of Torah the entire night, is promised that he will live out the year and no harm will befall him in that year. As Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai writes in his introduction to Bereishit, “He will live through the year in peace.” Moreover, a person’s life is determined according to this matter, because if he will not sleep at all on the eve of Shavuot, then he will surely not die that year. This is why it became a custom for Am Yisrael to delve in Torah the entire night of Shavuot.

Moreover, it is important to note that there are many communities that are meticulous about not speaking any mundane words the entire night until after the Kedushah beginning with “Keter” (כתר) in the tefillah of Mussaf. This is a special *segulah*, according to the Arizal, to be saved from death defined as “karet” (כרת), since the word “karet” (כרת) contains the same letters as “Keter” (כתר).

Befitting Teshuvah

The reason for learning Torah on the eve of Shavuot is explained in *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer*. At the time of Matan Torah, Bnei Yisrael had slept throughout the night, since sleeping on the Atzeret is pleasant, and the night is short. Hashem had to wake them up from their sleep with thunder and lightning, which occurred prior to receiving the Torah on Har Sinai. In order to make amends, Chazal established, as befitting teshuvah, to be on duty that entire night and study the holy Torah in the way they outlined, until dawn, and hear krias HaTorah and the Ten Commandments as if we had just received them on Har Sinai.

The Voice of the Shechinah

A rare glimpse into the extent of the great tikkun accomplished in the Upper Worlds by the study of Torah on the eve of Shavuot is presented by Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, zy”a, (Author of the piyut “Lecha Dodi” which is said throughout the Diaspora on Friday night). It is a testimony of what he witnessed with his own eyes, not second-hand, when he was with a group of Sages, including the author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, Maran Rabbi Yosef Caro, zy”a, while they were still in *chutz l’Aretz*, and they decided to study together on the eve of Shavuot:

Know that we agreed, the chassid [Rabbi Yosef Caro] and I, his servant [Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz] and the members of the group, to guard ourselves and deny sleep from our eyes, and give glory to Hashem, as you will now hear and thereby become inspired.

This is the order, from parashat Bereishit we read the *pesukim*, etc., and we read it all with awe and dread, with the melody and intonations, in an extraordinary manner. When we began to learn Mishanah, we merited hearing our Creator and heard his Voice speaking through the mouth of the chassid, with a loud and clear voice. And all the neighbors heard the Voice, but did not understand. It was very pleasant, and the voice got ever-stronger, and we fell on our faces and our spirit left us all from the tremendous awe and fear. The Voice began to talk to us and this is what He said:

My friends zealots, the purest of the purest, my beloved friends, peace unto you. Blessed are you and happy are your parents. Blessed are you in this world and happy are you in the World to Come, since you chose to crown Me on this night. It is

already many years that I have been dethroned and there is no one to comfort Me. I am cast on the ground and strewn in the gutter, and now you have returned Me, to my former glory.

Strengthen yourselves, My friends, and brace yourselves, my beloved, delight and rejoice and know that you are from the best. You merited being members in the Hall of the King of the universe. All your Torah and the vapor of your mouths have risen before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and many heavens and many spheres have been penetrated by your words, as they were spoken. The angels were silenced, and the Seraphim stood still, and the Sacred Animals stood at attention, and all the Heavenly Hosts and Hakadosh Baruch Hu listened to your voices.

And if you had been a group of ten, you would have become even more elevated. But, nevertheless, you have risen high. Blessed are you and happy are your parents, my friends, you have elevated yourself and denied sleep from your eyes. Through you, I have become elevated this night and through the members of the group in this great city, city in Israel, since you are not like those that lie on their beds (of ivory), which is like one sixtieth of death, but you cleave to Hashem and He is happy with you.

Therefore, my sons, strengthen yourselves, gather yourselves and rejoice in My love of you, in my Torah and in Awe of Me. Know that if you would feel just one part of thousands of thousands and myriads and myriads of the pain that I am in, no joy would enter your hearts, nor mirth in your mouths, when you recall that because of your sins I am cast on the ground. But be strong and brave and rejoice, my dear sons who are pure, and do not stop your study [of Torah], because the grace of G-d is bestowed upon you, and your Torah is pleasant to Hashem. Stand up and glorify Me and declare in a loud voice, as on Yom Kippur, “Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity.”

The chassid Alkabetz tells more about this lofty matter which they witnessed that night, “And a number of big promises, and we all burst out crying from great joy. Also, when we heard about the pain of the Shechinah due to our sins, and its Voice pleading to us, we strengthened ourselves until dawn, and the study of Torah did not stop flowing from our mouths with elation and awe.”