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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"ta**

MASKIL LÉDAVID

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

Personal Bias Leads to Destruction

“Korach son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi took, with Datan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and On ben Pelet, the offspring of Reuven.” (Bamidbar 16:1)

We find in parashat Korach that Korach gathered the people and roused a dispute by casting aspersions on the leadership of Moshe and Aharon. He claimed Why should Moshe and Aharon be distinguished from among everyone else, and why was Aharon more worthy of priesthood when the nation was full of righteous men, worthy of that position? Everyone together stood at the foot of Har Sinai, so why were Moshe and Aharon selected to lead the nation?

But Korach did not stop there. He continued his diatribe by mocking the mitzvah of tzitzit. He claimed that it is illogical that one thread of techelet can exempt an entire cloak, whereas a cloak made completely of techelet is not exempt of this single thread. Korach spoke so convincingly that he succeeded in inducing two hundred and fifty Nesi'im, men of distinction, to defend his cause. He even persuaded Nachshon ben Aminadav, who sacrificed his life to be the first to “test the waters” at Yam Suf, by jumping in before the rest of the nation.

How did Korach have the audacity to ridicule the mitzvah of tzitzit? Hashem has commanded us to wear tzitzit, for they remind a person of the mitzvot and encourage him to perform them enthusiastically, as it says, (Bamidbar 15:39) “You may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem.” Seeing the tzitzit brings one to remember Hashem and His mitzvot, which in turn brings one to actually do the mitzvot.

Chazal illustrate this point by the following story. A man wished to do an act of immorality. He suddenly caught sight of his tzitzit and was immediately reminded of the above pasuk, which commands us to wear tzitzit in order to “not explore after your heart.” He fled from the scene before the pull of sin would overwhelm him. Tzitzit provide a partition, shielding one from sin.

Observing one's tzitzit draws a person to observe the mitzvot.

Originally, Korach's intentions were altruistic. He truly wished to understand how tzitzit, an easy and effortless mitzvah, could provide its wearer with tremendous reward. Mitzvot demand exertion. He therefore had suspicions regarding Moshe's assertion that merely seeing the tzitzit

reminds a person of his obligation to perform mitzvot. In this manner, each additional moment of wearing tzitzit accrues untold reward for the wearer.

Korach approached Moshe with the pure desire to clarify the halachah. Proof that he began his dispute l'shem Shamayim is that he managed to draw the most prominent men of the nation after him. Had he initially intended to degrade Moshe, these men would certainly never have had any part of it. Korach clothed his motives in a halachic query, thereby qualifying his contentions.

Although Korach began his disputation with an innocent question regarding tzitzit, his question was loaded with ulterior motives. It was full of personal interest, desire for honor, and arrogance. His difficulty swelled to mammoth proportions, pushing him into the pit. He was consumed by the thought that he should have been chosen to lead the people, in spite of the fact that he was one of the Ark-bearers. This thought gnawed at him, making him envious of Moshe Rabbeinu. Korach actually harbored jealousy in his heart all along, but it was kept on a low flame. As soon as he began his dispute, this unseemly trait burst forth into fiery fury. As long as a person has a vested interest, his questions are not as innocent as they seem. And they are likely to push him over the brink, to a place where he will be lost forever.

Chazal teach, “Jealousy, lust, and glory remove a man from the world.” These detrimental character traits burn within a person. And even though he has no intention of utilizing them, he can never know when they will rear their ugly heads, ensnaring him in their trap.

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 • Prine'i 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 'Ha'im

Rehov Ha'ahouza 98 • Ra'anana • Israel
Tel: +972 98 828 078 • +972 58 792 9003
kolhaim@hpinto.org.il



Hillulah of Tzaddikim

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Beit Din Eisenstadt



Walking in their Ways

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

Whenever I visited a certain Chassidic Jew in Mexico, my senses would be assailed by the distinct smell of swine. I could never understand how I could connect this G-d-fearing Jew with this repulsive food and decided to ask his forgiveness for doing so. But I did not know how to go about this, so I kept my peace.

On one visit, this man asked me to affix a mezuzah to the entrance of his store. He felt that this would draw Heavenly blessing upon his endeavors. After that was taken care of, he offered me a tour of his factory. As we passed each room, the man explained what was done there and who was employed there. But he skipped one room. I immediately asked about it, but he replied, "It is not fitting for the Rav to enter

that room. Come, let us continue on our way."

His answer only further aroused my curiosity. What was this man hiding there? I insisted on visiting specifically that room and seeing what took place there. He finally agreed to my request. He opened the door to reveal a tremendous freezer, full of swine heads!

I was shaken at this sight. "What is this?" I roared. "Remove it right now!"

"But honored Rav," he stammered, "here is where I get the most revenue."

The dam had burst. "You should know," I began, trying mightily to steady my voice, "I have always wanted to ask forgiveness for associating you with pigs. But now I see that I was justified. You deal

with this defiled creature and make a profit from it. As a result, all of your property smells like swine, and your face conjures up images of this impure beast."

One who is involved in defilement will possess the look and smell of that item. Although this man tried to be a righteous, G-d-fearing person, he acquired the qualities of the impurity with which he dealt. One who fails to correct his inappropriate character traits is nothing more than a two-legged animal. A person takes the form of the physical matter with which he deals.

Conversely, one who sanctifies himself through Torah study and mitzvah observance transforms everything that enters his body into a holy object, an extension of his good deeds.

The Haftarah



The haftarah of the week: **"And Shmuel said"** (Shmuel I, 11:12)

The connection to the parashah: The haftarah discusses how the nation demanded of Shmuel that he should appoint a king over them, and in the parashah we read how Korach rebelled against Moshe and sought leadership. Likewise, the haftarah states that Shmuel said:

"Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken?"

This is similar to the parashah, where Moshe says: "I have not taken even a single donkey of theirs".



Guard Your Tongue

The Power of Speech

The Best Teshuvah

The Gra wrote in his holy work Alim L'Trufa the following: Until his last day, a person should afflict himself, but not through fasting and pain, but by harnessing his mouth and desires. This is considered teshuvah, and it is more effective than all the fasting and afflictions in the world.

Likewise, it is written in the sefer Rosh Hagivah that when a person wishes to fast, it is preferable that he should rather accept upon himself to abstain from speaking than to abstain from eating, because in this way he will not cause any harm to his body or his soul, and he will not become weakened by the fast.

Reasons for Jewish Customs



During the tefillah of the Amidah on Shabbat Kodesh, we make only seven blessings.

The reason for this is because on Shabbat it is forbidden to make personal request, and in the tefillah of the Amidah during the week there are eighteen blessings in which a person can place his requests if he needs something. Thus, by remembering his needs, he remembers his lack thereof, and consequently it decreases his enjoyment of Shabbat.



Words of Wisdom

Midrashim of Chazal on Parshat Hashavua

Providing Clues

“With two hundred and fifty men from the Children of Israel” (Bamidbar 16:2)

Who were they? Elitzur ben Shdeor and his friends, the people who “had been designated by [their] names”. Although the Torah did not specify their names, they were hinted to. Thus, by reading what is stated, one can infer who they were.

What can we compare this to?

To a son of honorable people who was found stealing belongings from the public baths, and the owner did not want to publicize his name. Therefore, he hinted to who the culprit was. He was asked: Who stole your belongings? He answered: That son of the honorable family who is tall and has nice teeth and black hair and a straight nose.

By his description – it was clear who the culprit was.

So, too, in our case. Even though the Torah hid their identity, it provided a description, and that is how we know who they are.

It is written further on (Bamidbar 1), “These were the ones summoned by the assembly, the leaders of their fathers’ tribes, they are the heads of Israel’s thousands. Moshe and Aharon took these men who had been designated by [their] names.” And here it says “leaders of the assembly, those summoned for meeting, men of renown.” (Bamidbar Rabbah)

Four Types of Wicked People

Our Rabbis taught that four types of people are considered wicked: One who raises his hand over his fellow to hit him. Even though he did not strike him, he is considered wicked, as it says “He said to the wicked one, ‘Why would you strike your fellow?’” It does not state, “why did you strike,” only “Why would you strike.”

Also, one who borrows, but does not pay back [is considered wicked], as it says, “The wicked one borrows but repays not” (Tehillim 37:21).

In addition, one who is brazen and does not shy from those who are greater than him, as it says “A wicked person shows his audacity on his face” (Mishlei 21:29). Another, is one who instigates dispute, as it says, “Turn away now from near the tents of these wicked men” (Bamidbar 16:26).

Both things are true of Danan, who instigated dispute, as it says “Turn away now from near the tents of these wicked men.” And both of them deserve cherm, fault, curse, and are an abomination. There are those who claim that they [such people] literally bring calamity to the world. (Midrash Tanchuma)

Double Punishment

“All Israel that was around them fled at their sound” (Bamidbar 16:34)

“A flame came forth from Hashem and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense.” If they would have just been burned and not swallowed [by the earth] – the ones swallowed would have complained: Korach, who caused all this calamity, he was saved, while we were swallowed. Had they been swallowed and not burned – the ones burned would have complained: Korach, who brought upon us this calamity, was saved and we are burning.

Therefore, he was sentenced to two types of deaths, and he was ignited first in front of those who were burnt. Why? Since he was holding the fire-pan, as it says, “and you and Ahron, each man with his fire-pan,” and the fire folded him into a ball and he rolled along until he reached the mouth of the earth to all those who were swallowed, as it says “Then the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and Korach.” (Midrash Yelamdeni)

Treasures

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



Riches and Honor

In Pesukei D’Zimrah, we recite, “And David blessed Hashem in the presence of the entire congregation... Yours, Hashem, is the greatness, the strength, the splendor, the triumph, and the glory, even everything in heaven and earth; Yours, Hashem, is the kingdom, and the sovereignty over every leader. Wealth and honor come from You and You rule everything.”

This passage states that wealth and honor belong to Hashem. He controls them, and only He decides who is worthy of receiving them and who will lose them. For this reason, when one sees a Jewish king, he recites the blessing, “Blessed is the One Who apportioned of His honor to those who fear Him.” When one encounters a gentile king, he proclaims, “Blessed is the One Who gave of His honor to flesh and blood”. Riches and prestige are His Alone. We bless Him and thank Him when He has deemed it fitting to share his honor with others, out of His great kindness.

Many have the custom to stand during the recitation of this prayer and give tzedakah while saying it. Why do people give charity specifically then?

By both the rich man and the pauper distributing coins to charity, they are demonstrating that their financial status is temporary. The wheel of fortune is in constant motion. One who is on the bottom today will reach the top another day, while the one at the top will descend. Wealth and honor come only from Hashem, and He Alone decides how to allocate it.

This awareness enables one to feel humble. How can he take pride in his wealth, knowing it is here today and gone tomorrow? We have heard of wealthy magnates whose stocks took a plunge and were left penniless. In contrast, pitiful paupers suddenly inherited tremendous fortunes and went, in an instant, from rags to riches.

Korach reached the nadir of lowliness. In spite of his elevated status, he did not internalize the message that wealth and honor are Hashem’s Alone. Korach was fabulously wealthy, as we are wont to say: “Rich like

Korach”. Nevertheless, he pursued prestige in order to accrue to himself more pride. All his money could not buy him happiness. He was blessed with riches, but he lacked inner joy and satisfaction. This is proof that wealth does not necessarily bring one to feel fortunate and honored. Although Korach was blessed with great wealth, he lacked satisfaction and happiness and sought ways and means of gaining stature at the expense of others.

There are those who purchase prestige. They surround themselves with slaves and servants who are at their beck and call. But this honor is superficial, for outward appearances only. As soon as these people withhold the salaries of their employees, they will abandon them like the

plague. In direct contrast, there were giants in Torah who were desperately poor. Despite their poverty, they merited tremendous respect, for the world acknowledged their righteousness and wisdom. Tzaddikim of old are remembered with reverence, and their names mentioned with honor and awe. Money does not produce honor. Only Torah and good character will help a person acquire a good name.

Wellsprings

Chapters in Child-Raising



Some parents, precisely because they seek the best interest of their children, do not place any boundaries or limits upon them. These, in fact, come into the category of basic necessities in every home: sleep on time, buying and eating lots of sweets, cleaning up toys scattered by the children, and so on. These parents are convinced that a child who is given greater liberties grows up happier.

It is not so! Why? We will use the analogy that is familiar of a very wealthy man, who has no difficulty in purchasing new curtains for the windows of his house. The pleasure he experiences is negligible and does not compare at all to the satisfaction and happiness of a person, who works hard to make a living, and finally saves up enough money to realize his dream: the acquisition of new curtains for the windows of his house.

This is exactly what happens with a child who knows that all his wishes will be granted to him, and every treat, and every toy that he desires he will certainly receive. He suffers doubly. First

of all, he lacks the anticipation and yearning, which actually constitutes a prerequisite for satisfaction and happiness, and perhaps also an integral part of the intensity of the pleasure.

Second, the child is conditioned to believe that this system will continue all his life. But the reality is that when he grows up and will not get everything he wants, he will sink into frustration, bitterness, and anger.

Successful education is carried out through proper guidance and supervision, as necessary in all aspects of life. For example, respect for others, parents, and teachers; overcoming negative emotions and bad character traits such as anger, pride, envy, and hatred, exercising caution with money of other people and not taking or using what is not his, not succumbing to instant gratification and controlling himself not to do what is prohibited, performing mitzvot that are appropriate for his age and any other proper conduct.

On this occasion we should take note of the wonderful educational outcome that results from raising a child as outlined by the Torah. This child gets used to limits and restraints from early childhood in all areas in life.

Occupation: "Six days you shall work, but the seventh day is Shabbat...you shall not do any work"

Eating: "These are the animals that you may eat... But this you shall not eat"

Speech: "You shall not be a gossipmonger among your people..." "You shall not take the Name of Hashem, your G-d, in vain"

Emotions: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart"

If we take a look at the contemporary education, which is largely influenced by the Western culture, a child is trained to take advantage of this world to the fullest extent. There are no limits or restraints. All temptations are readily available for man to pursue.

Rabbi Zamir Cohen reinforces the idea that the outcome of not placing restraints and limits on a child is mental depression and unhappiness, which exists extensively among young people. It also results in the inability to cope with life's difficulties. "One who chooses to make material hedonism his purpose in life, will lose happiness in life when he lacks the fulfillment of his desires."

The Torah education, on the other hand, provides a model for the child of how to live a life of eternal spiritual purpose, which requires placing limits and curbing his passion. For example, he is trained to forgo a tempting ice pop on a hot day because it is not certified kosher. He will be taught to stop speaking in mid-sentence if he suspects that his words constitute slander. And these are but a few examples.

Men of Faith

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

Paying Respect to the Tzaddikim

When I was perhaps twenty-six years old, I visited the grave of my holy grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"va. I noticed that the cemetery was unkempt and therefore hired workers to clean up the place and make it look respectable, as is fitting for the resting place of the holy tzaddik, where many prayers are offered daily. I did not realize that I had given the workers every last cent I had, until I was preparing my return trip to Casablanca. The last bus was due to arrive in one hour. Where would I get the funds to return to my lodgings? As I made my way to the bus depot, I offered a prayer to Hashem, to come to my aid in the merit of my grandfather, as I had laid out all my money to cover the cost of respect for the dead.

I saw the bus in the distance and wondered from where my salvation would come. Suddenly, I heard someone call out, "Here he is!" I turned my head to find, much to my delight, R' David Loyb, z"l, one

of the elderly Jews of Essaouira, who merited long life due to the blessing of my grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Pinto. Rabbi David asked if I had the fare for the way back, to which I answered no. Upon hearing this, Rabbi David became extremely excited. He told me that that Rabbi Chaim Pinto had appeared to him three times in a dream and instructed him to give money to his grandson for the bus ride. When he awakened, he repeated the dream to his wife, who dismissed it as nonsense.

But since it had repeated itself a few times, he felt an inner drive to go to the bus stop and see what would be. Here he found Rabbi Chaim's grandson, waiting for the bus, exactly as the tzaddik had predicted.

Baruch Hashem, I received travel fare in a miraculous manner, enabling me to catch the last bus to my destination.