

The Path to Follow



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MASKIL L'EDAVID

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

Internet – Modern-day Idolatry

“And you shall not bring an abomination into your home and become banned like it; you shall surely loathe it and you shall surely abominate it, for it is banned”
(Devarim 7:26)

Moshe Rabbeinu commands Am Yisrael, before they enter the Land, to completely eradicate all the idols of the nations who resided there. These idols were considered an abomination. But demolishing them was not enough; Am Yisrael were commanded to destroy them and feel utterly repulsed by them. From this mitzvah we see just how disgusting and repulsive avodah zarah is in the eyes of Hashem.

In our day and age, there are not many nations who still serve idols. We do find Eastern religions which worship the constellations. In the past, idolatry was widespread. Nowadays, with the advent of technology, idol worship has decreased, reserved for a few backward, primitive cultures. But let us not fool ourselves into thinking that avodah zarah has really disappeared. Although serving idols is out of style, there is a very real version of idolatry, and much has been sacrificed for it.

This modern-day idolatry is the Internet. In spite of all its efficiency, its curse is greater than its blessing. We cannot deny or ignore its benefits. With the mere click of a key, worlds open up before one's eyes. Instead of running around from place to place, by tapping on the keyboard and moving the mouse, one can bring the entire universe to his screen. Due to its wide usage, the computer has penetrated thousands upon thousands of households and offices, and has become a vessel for disseminating Torah lessons and Jewish thought. In the past, there were those who declined attending Torah lectures with the excuse that they did not have time for it. But with the advent of modern technology and the availability of the media, it has become much simpler to hear words of Torah. During their free time, people can tune in and hear shiurim on any Torah topic, thereby strengthening their yirat Shamayim.

I have not come to downplay the effectiveness of this tool, which has proven so beneficial and valuable. But, by the same token, I cannot ignore its tremendous danger. Because I am involved with the public on a daily basis, I hear all about their problems. I know for a fact that Internet poses a real threat to the harmony in the home and the education of our youth. I have heard many cases

of adults who were caught in the Web. They were enticed by its sweetness, but quickly became stuck in its seductive allure. A large percentage of married couples complain about infidelity. They may think that their age immunizes them from the depravity of the streets, yet they fall captive to the Internet.

The Internet is the idol of the 21st century. A person can be drawn to the most immoral sites, without any form of supervision. Whose heart does not shudder at the thought of the dangers which lurk at the doorstep of our fellow Jews? This abomination has taken permanent residence in their homes. Because of its untold benefits, their eyes are blinded to its innate peril. I remember a case in which a couple came to me, weeping bitterly. They bemoaned the fact that their four children wasted all their time and energy on the Internet, until they had no time left to do their schoolwork. I rebuked the parents, stating that the blame rested with them. They should have foreseen the danger in advance and prevented their children from becoming entangled with this destructive machine before it was too late. Even the gentiles have publicized urgent warnings, appealing to parents to safeguard their children from the Internet, which draws the hearts of the young like a magnet and causes them to spiral downward.

What does the Internet do? It disconnects us from Hashem. As soon as Hashem discerns immodesty among us, He removes His Shechinah from our midst. This is in line with the pasuk (Devarim 23:15), “Your camp shall be holy, so that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you.” In order to draw the Shechinah upon oneself, he must first and foremost withdraw from the Internet.

Just as Hashem commanded Moshe to order Bnei Yisrael to despise and destroy the idols of the nations, we are enjoined to hate and eliminate this modern-day avodah zarah. We are taught (see Shabbat 104a) that one who wishes to purify himself is helped by Hashem. Certainly, when Hashem observes one's real desire to come close to Him by removing this dastardly device from his possession, he will receive Divine blessing. He will become sanctified and be blessed with all things good. He will reap much nachat from his children and have peace and harmony reign in his home.

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Walking in their Ways

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

Protecting One's Properties

On a visit to New York, a relative of mine who lives there came to see me. In the past, this man had been a multimillionaire. When the man was near eighty, his son had him sign all sorts of papers. The father had no idea what he was signing on, trusting his son implicitly. But his son betrayed this trust. The man got into various serious legal difficulties on account of his signatures. Eventually he went through a protracted three year trial, which culminated in a decision that dispossessed him of all his money. He was left with not a penny from all that he had amassed throughout his life-

time. This man, who had been considered one of the wealthiest Jewish tycoons in the state of New York and owned large portions of real estate, was now left with nothing.

When I met him now on my visit, he asked if I had heard about his fall.

"Certainly." Before me, stood a man who had invested his money and his life to amass greater and greater fortunes. At the ripe age of eighty, he lost everything, in one fell swoop. Rebbi Hakadosh said (Avodah Zarah 10b), "There is one who acquires his world in a single instant." We see that there is also one who loses his world in a single instant. One day, a

man is on top of the wheel of fortune; the next day, he is at the bottom.

"Honored Rav, why was I destined to lose everything at the age of eighty? I invested my entire life in my wealth. I built synagogues and schools and scores of other public institutions. I willingly gave of mine to others. Now I depend on others for my daily sustenance. An entire lifetime was lost because of an act of foolishness."

I had no idea what to answer this broken man. But I took a lesson from his experience. He lost his entire enterprise due to a careless act. Let us not lose our life enterprise of spiritual assets in the same way.

The Haftarah



The haftarah of the week: **"Zion said"** (Yeshayahu 49)

The connection to Shabbat: This haftarah is one of the seven haftarot read during the seven Shabbatot following Tisha B'Av, transmitting messages of comfort alongside chapters of faith in Hashem and His Torah.



Guard Your Tongue

The Power of Speech

One should to be very careful not to condemn the Jewish people, because it is a very severe sin. For example, as it says in Pesachim (87b): What is meant by the verse (Mishlei 30:10), "Slander not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty?" And it is written (ibid. 11), "A generation that curse their father, and do not bless their mother."

This implies that even generations in which fathers are cursed and mothers are not blessed, do not slander them to their Master – who is Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Reasons for Jewish Customs



One who sends his fellow a letter in the month of Elul should include blessings to be inscribed for a good New Year.

This is learned through a remez (code – lit. hint) as it says (Shemot 18:7)

"וישאלו איש לרעהו לשלום"

And each inquired about the other's well-being," and the first letters of each word spells Elul. The word וישאלו (lit. inquired) implies to wish one well, as it says

"אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש"

One thing I ask of Hashem, that shall I seek" (Tehillim 27:4).



Words of Wisdom

Midrashim of Chazal on Parshat Hashavua

Investing for the Future

“Hashem, your G-d, will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers” (Devarim 7:12)

Everything that Bnei Yisrael enjoy in this world stems from the blessings of Bilaam. However, that which our fathers and prophets blessed us with – is reserved for the Future.

What can this be compared to?

To an orphan who grew up in his guardian’s house and ate and drank his food. He taught him a craft, and the orphan said: All that I eat and drink and my shelter is from my salary.

The guardian told him: I promise, all that you eat and drink and your shelter is in the merit of the water barrels that you fill for me and in the merit the wood that you chop for me. But you will get a double reward, which is stored and reserved for you.

Everything that Bnei Yisrael enjoy in this world is in the merit of the suffering that strikes them. But their reward is double and it is stored and reserved for the future. (Yalkut Shimoni)

The Prognosis is Up to Us

“The eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year’s end” (Devarim 11:12)

Sometimes for the better sometimes for the worse.

For the better – how? If Yisrael are wicked on Rosh Hashanah and it is decreed upon them to have little rainfall, but thereafter they do teshuvah, to add rainfall is impossible because the judgment has already been decreed. But, since “the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it,” Hashem brings the rain in the most favorable time to bring blessing upon them.

For the worse – how? If Yisrael are righteous on Rosh Hashanah and it is decreed upon them to have an abundance of rainfall, but thereafter they sin, to withhold the rain is impossible because it was already decreed upon them. Consequently, Hashem brings the rain in the most unfavorable times, when it is not productive, as it says “the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it from the beginning of the year to year’s end,” despite the fact that it had been already decreed on Rosh Hashanah how much wind, how many clouds, how much rainfall, and how much dew there will be. (Pesikta Zutrata)

All the Miracles with Water

“Hear, O Israel, today you cross the Jordan” (Devarim 9:1)

It is a halachah. A Jew who drinks water to quench his thirst, says: Blessed... through Whose word everything came to be.” Rabbi Tarfon said: Who creates numerous living things with their deficiencies.” Rabbanan said: Take note that all the miracles that Hashem did for Yisrael, He did with water. How? While they were in Egypt He performed miracles with the Nile. Rabbi Yitzchak said: The Egyptians and the Jews would go to drink water from the Nile. The Egyptian would drink blood while the Jew would drink water. When the Jews left Egypt, Hashem performed miracles only by the waters.

They arrived at Marah when they exited the sea and the waters were bitter, He performed miracles for them there.

By the Rock, He performed miracles with water. At the Well, He performed miracles and they sang shirah.

Moshe said to them: You should know that all the miracles that Hashem performed for you He did only by water, and likewise, when you will cross the Jordan to inherit the Land, He is destined to perform miracles for you by the waters of Jordan. (Midrash Rabbah)

Treasures

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



The Benefit of Contemplation

“Now, O Israel, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem” (Devarim 10:12)

Moshe implies, in these words, that he is asking only a small thing from us. He is only demanding yirat Shamayim. This is quite astounding. We know that fear of Heaven is one of the most difficult traits to acquire.

The truth is that yirat Shamayim is not all that hard to attain. But we have so many obstacles obstructing the path to Avodat Hashem, preventing us from obtaining this priceless possession. The greatest deterrent to yirat Shamayim is the fact that people live a mixed-up existence. They have their priorities so skewed that they cannot differentiate between good and evil, between straight and slanted. When a person is not sold completely to Torah, but has holdings in fleeting pleasures, the power of the Torah eludes him. He will suffer setbacks in yirat Shamayim, the trait so necessary in the battle against the Yetzer Hara.

As mentioned above, my grandfather, Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto, zy”a, called all of his sefarim by a variation of the word כסף (silver or money). Two examples are: כסף נבחר (Chosen Silver) and מזוקק כסף (Refined Silver). When asked about this, he said that he wished to teach a basic principle for success in Torah. People are naturally drawn after gold and silver. Even after amassing fortunes, they do not sit still, always seeking ways to increase their assets.

In order to succeed in Torah, one must first and foremost appreciate its value. Then he must take all his love for this world, all his investments in materialism, and all his desires, and transfer them to Hashem and His Torah. He should be able to sincerely proclaim, “My soul yearns, indeed, it pines for the courtyards of Hashem.” The word נכספה (yearns) has the same root as כסף (silver or money). Once one understands the value of Torah, is he capable of successfully studying it. Only after he genuinely feels that he is prepared to forego all earthly pleasures for the sake of Torah, can he merit acquiring it, as Chazal have said, “Torah endures only in one who sacrifices himself for it.”



Bein hazmanim is the true test for parents. In the period of the three weeks in which they host their teenage sons, returning from the Beit Hamidrash, there may arise educational challenges that can endanger the youth's future spiritual level.

In the previous issue the column was reserved for the important subject of the sanctity of thought and sight. Also this week we will deal with this issue, and we will be inspired by the words of Chazal and by their lofty example.

The sefer Yeshuot Malko explains the words of the pasuk in Bereishit "איה הקדשה הוא בעינים" – Where is the prostitute (lit. holy one), the one at the crossroads by the road (lit. eye)" "Where is the holy" implies that the way to draw the spirit of holiness upon oneself or chas v'chalila conversely to draw the spirit of impurity upon oneself is through his eyes. When one looks for truth, love and humility, he draws upon himself a spirit of holiness and purity. But if chas v'chalila he uses his eyes to view improper scenes, then he draws upon himself a spirit of impurity.

"Why does the eye possess such power? This is because the soul fills the entire body, and it surveys the world through the eyes. This is why the eyes have this power to draw negative forces or positive ones."

The gaon Rabbi Yehudah Adas, shlita, Rosh Yeshivat Kol Yaakov, once went to see the holy gaon Rabbi Meir Abuchatzera, zy" a, before the beginning of the new term in yeshiva, and he asked him: "What should I tell the youth to do in order to succeed in their studies?" Rabbi Meir answered: "That they should guard their eyes and mouth, that's the secret to success."

The streets in our times hold tremendous spiritual dangers. Any exposure outside of our four walls involves so many varied spiritual challenges and dangers. They appear in all different strange shapes and forms, and it is our sacred duty to be vigilant and sometimes even sacrifice on the altar of the sanctity of our homes and for the pure education of our children – things which we desire and worldly pleasures. This is while emphasizing that we are doing so in order to maintain the sanctity and purity within the walls of our home, and outside of it as well.

To illustrate the far-reaching influence of one inappropriate sight, we will relate the following story that happened with the Maran Hagoan Rabbi Shmuel Wosner, zt"l (from the sefer Aleinu Leshabayach).

A prominent Jew in America, whose son reached the age of bar mitzvah, wanted to give his son a special gift in honor of his bar mitzvah. He informed him that in honor of his bar mitzvah they will travel to Israel to the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Wosner, zt"l, and there the tzaddik will lay his tefillin for him for the first time in his life.

The boy was very excited about the meaningful gift in store for him, and prepared himself well for the upcoming flight to Israel. The father explained to his child that Rabbi Wosner told him that several days before departing from America they should call again to verify that all was well, so that they should not come in vain.

The father had already bought the tickets, which cost him about two thousand dollars. About a week before the flight in question, the father called Rabbi Wosner, and to his surprise, he hears the Rabbi, author of Shevet Levi, tell him: I decided that it is not a good idea for you to come to me to Bnei Brak!

"What happened suddenly?" The father asked in shock. "My child is preparing for this trip excitedly already for a long time."

The Maran Rabbi Wosner explained his decision: True, there is an advantage that the first time a child lays tefillin he should do so with a Rabbi. But did you consider, dear father, how many inappropriate things your child may see on his long journey from America to Israel? Does the damage justify the gains?

The stunned father tried to explain that the child may be badly disappointed, but of course, all the arguments did not help at all. "Nothing in the world is worth the damage that may result to the child from seeing forbidden things," the Maran, zt"l, ruled.

The father went on to ask: "What do I do about the two tickets that I already bought for the price of \$2,000.00!?"

"Go and buy a large, impressive frame," said Maran, zt"l, "and frame the two tickets. On top of the frame engrave in huge letters, 'We sacrificed these two tickets that cost \$2,000.00 in order that our dear son should not see anything that is forbidden!'"