

Devarim

July 21st 2018
9th of Av 5778

758

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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

Guarding one's speech

"These are the words which Moshe spoke to all Israel on that side of the Jordan in the desert, in the plain opposite the Red Sea, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan and Hazeroth and Di Zahav" (Devarim 1:1)

Chumash Bamidbar ends with the parshiyot of Matot and Masei. Parashat Matot opens with the words (Bamidbar 30:2-3), "Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel, saying: 'This is the matter that Hashem has commanded: If a man takes a vow to Hashem or swears an oath to prohibit a prohibition upon himself, he shall not profane his word; according to whatever comes forth from his mouth shall he do.'"

Moshe taught Bnei Yisrael how careful one must be with what he says. He should never, chalilah, speak falsehood, derogatory words, or swear falsely. Man is created in the image of Hashem. Hashem breathed into him

a neshamah from on High. This is demonstrated in his power of speech (see Onkelos, Bereishit 2:7). Since man is superior to the beast by virtue of his power of speech, invested in him from Above, he must be careful in the matter of "these are the words" which come from his mouth. They must be words of truth, pure and effective. One should not squander his speech in frivolity and falsehood, thereby forfeiting the Heavenly spirit granted to him.

Since this teaching is so significant, Moshe first delivered it to the heads of the tribes. Only afterward, did he deem it fitting to share it with the rest of the nation. When Bnei Yisrael would see how much effort Moshe Rabbeinu expended in this matter, they would be aware of how careful they should be regarding speech, and would not profane their words.

Parashat Devarim is read close to Tishah b'Av, the day of the churban. Since, in those days, Bnei Yisrael failed to study Torah sufficiently, they sinned in lashon hara and baseless hatred. They banished the Shechinah from their midst and were therefore exiled from their land (see Yoma 9b). This should teach us a powerful lesson. Torah has the power to protect a person from sin and help him maintain the purity of his mouth. But when a person is negligent in Torah study, he utters words of inanity. He quickly spirals downward, sinning in all types of derogatory speech.

When Hashem offered the Torah to Bnei Yisrael, they cried out, as one (Shemot 24:7), "We will do and we will hear." They accepted the Torah upon themselves wholeheartedly, undertaking to learn

and uphold all of its words, even before knowing what was actually written in it. This statement was considered an oath. Therefore, it is our sacred obligation to uphold this oath, and not profane it, as we are warned (Bamidbar 30:3), "He shall not profane his word."

The Gemara (Eiruvim 54b) describes a case of self-sacrifice for the sake of the Torah. Rabbi Preida had a pupil for whom he needed to repeat the lesson four hundred times. Once, as Rabbi Preida and his disciple were in the middle of their study session, Rabbi Preida was called away to do a mitzvah, and their learning was interrupted. When he returned, his pupil asked that they review from the beginning, for he had forgotten everything. Rabbi Preida, with utmost devotion, repeated the Torah lesson as though they had just begun its study. A Heavenly Voice called out that Rabbi Preida was guaranteed a portion in the World to Come. Rabbi Preida's dedication to his disciple stemmed from his love for Torah and his respect for "These words." Since the words of Torah were so precious to him, he made every effort to transmit them to his disciple, in spite of the difficulty involved.

The Torah uses the term "Eile hadevarim" (These are the words). The word "dibbur" (speech) refers to words of harshness (Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishit 149). The road to Torah is paved with difficulty, to the point of self-sacrifice. Torah does not come easily. One must toil and sweat in order to earn it (see Tanchuma 58:3).

One merits siyata di'Shemaya by keeping his mouth pure of forbidden speech. Words of Torah cannot co-exist with words of vanity and nonsense (see Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:21; see Rabbeinu Yonah on Mishlei 6:24). When the Torah realizes that a person is involved in falsehood and lashon hara, it departs, leaving the person with a dirty and defiled tongue. Our Sages (Zohar II, 263b; see Chafetz Chaim, Introduction) go so far as to say that lashon hara acts as a screen between us and Hashem, preventing our tefillot from rising to Him. If a person sees that his prayers are unanswered, he should investigate his speech. It goes without saying that only a clean mouth can speak to Hashem.

The proven method of success and blessing in Torah study is by means of maintaining purity of speech. When Hashem sees that a person truly wishes to purify himself, He comes to his assistance (Shabbat 104a).

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Hillulah of Tzaddikim

9 - Rabbi Refael Aharon Monsenego Av
Beit Din Fez

10 - Rabbi Massoud Chai Rokeach
of Tripoli

11 - Rabbi Yitzchak Blaser of Petersburg

12 - Rabbi Yosef Luvton

13 - Rabbi Natan Nota Shapira of
Krakow The author of "Megaleh
Amukot"

14 - Rabbi Mordechai Bardugo

15 - Rabbi Shimon ben Lavi Author of
the piyut "Bar Yochai"



Walking in their Ways

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

I Smell a Rat

During the time of tefillah one day, I could not evoke any enthusiasm in my prayer. Try as I might, I could not manage to direct my thoughts to my Heavenly Father and feel as though I was standing before the Mighty King Who can grant me all of my heart's desires. I was filled with a deep sense of anguish.

After prayers ended, I decided to do some serious introspection. Why could I not muster the appropriate feelings of elevation as I had so terribly wished? Maybe I had not laid my tefillin properly, or maybe I had not prayed Shemoneh Esrei as I should have. But I found no solution to my quandary. I remained depressed and disappointed.

The following week, I sat in the same spot in the Beit Hakeneset, when someone nearby suddenly called my attention to a bad smell. I looked around to find its source. We even moved some furniture. To our utter shock, we discovered a dead mouse.

Now I clearly understood what had prevented my prayers from reaching heavenward. Everyone knows the halachah which was in effect in the times of the Beit Hamikdash: One who had touched an impure creature was forbidden from entering the holy Sanctuary until he immersed in a mikveh.

This dead rodent blocked the way for sanctity to descend upon the worshippers. Therefore, in spite of all my efforts, I felt a lack of enthusiasm and elevation in my prayers.

Upon reflection, I realized that I alone am responsible for my spiritual level. I certainly was to blame for not focusing sufficiently on my prayer. Maybe the dead mouse was the source of the impurity, but I was required to overcome this problem and resolutely concentrate on my prayers.

The Haftarah

The haftarah of the week:

"The prophecy of Yeshayahu"

(Yeshayahu 1:1)

The connection to this Shabbat: The haftarah relates the punishment Bnei Yisrael will suffer during the time of the churban, due to their sins. This is the third haftarah that we read during the three weeks preceding Tisha B'Av.



Guard Your Tongue

Moral Obligation

If someone finds himself unwittingly among a group of gossipers and he is capable of rebuking them and preventing them from continuing to slander others, he is obligated by the Torah to do so.



Words of our Sages

Foxes in Rabbinic Garb

As is well-known, both the first and the second Batei Mikdash were destroyed on account of baseless hatred.

At the end of Masechet Makkot, the Gemara recounts a gripping tale:

Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva had occasion to walk through Yerushalayim once after the churban of the Bayit Sheini. As they reached the Har HaBayit, they noticed a fox emerging from what had once been the Kodesh HaKodashim. All the sages began weeping as Rabbi Akiva laughed. The author of the Aruch L'ner asks why it was specifically a fox that emerged. The Gemara explains why Rabbi Akiva saw fit to laugh.

During the era of the First Beit Hamikdash, the Sages prayed for the yetzer hara toward idolatry to be nullified (Yoma 89b). This was what they said, "This inclination for idol-worship is what destroyed the first Beit Hamikdash, caused the deaths of so many righteous people, and sent us into exile. And it's still dancing in our midst, provoking us to sin. You only gave us this yetzer hara in order to reward us for overcoming it. We're not interested in it or in the reward we get for overcoming it!" The image of a lion cub of fire emerged from the Kodesh HaKodashim. Zechariah HaNavi explained to the nation, "This is the yetzer hara for idolatry."

What was the essential difference between the two Temples, that the destruction of the first warranted a lion cub, while the second warranted a fox? The Aruch L'ner enlightens us: The first Beit Hamikdash was destroyed on account of transgressing the three cardinal sins: idolatry, bloodshed, and immorality. These most severe of sins are compared to a lion, depicting the strength of the yetzer hara in inciting the nation to sin. This is why a lion cub emerged from the place of the Kodesh HaKodashim after the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash. However, the second Beit Hamikdash was destroyed on account of hatred, a clever, deceitful sin, as cunning as the sly fox.

Therefore, it was fitting for a fox to emerge after the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash.

The cunning yetzer hara of controversy, gossip, and friction is depicted by the fox, often wearing the cloak of sagacity. "It's a mitzvah to tell the world what so-and-so did," is a line often used by those who follow in this fellow's footsteps.



Chazak U'Baruch

Rivers of tears have accompanied us since the days of the churban until today. They began in the Babylonian waters, where we wept copiously, and continue through every station in this long and bitter exile.

When Eisav realized that Yaakov had received the blessings instead of him, he shouted a long and bitter cry. Two and a half tears fell from his eyes. For these few tears, all of the suffering in galut has befallen us. Every ounce of pain from the time of the churban until today is on account of those two and a half tears that Eisav wept at that time.

Rebbi Shmelka MiNikolsburg asks, «How many tears have we shed throughout the galut of the first Beit Hamikdash and the second? How many rivers have been shed during the days of the Inquisition, the Crusades, and the Holocaust? Haven't we shed enough to pay for the two and a half tears of Eisav?! Wasn't enough blood shed fighting the wars of our country?

Rav Pincus, zt"l, tells a story of the Rebbe of Radoshitz. In his youth, he would exile himself to faraway places. One late night found him in a desolate city. To his surprise, he found a house with a mezuzah on the doorpost. He knocked on the door and asked to spend the night there. The homeowner allowed him to enter. This man was a simple wagon-driver, but he accorded his guest with every honor, taking care of all his needs. When the Rebbe awoke at midnight to say the usual tikkun chatzot, he heard the homeowner's voice. He thought to himself, «What a wonderful nation! This simple wagon-driver awakens each night to pray the tikkun chatzot. What a nation of tzaddikim!»

While the Rebbe was engrossed in his prayer, he suddenly heard the homeowner emit a powerful sigh. The Rebbe thought, «Certainly this man is one of the 36 hidden tzaddikim.» A few moments later, another sigh came from his mouth. The Rebbe thought that this sigh would erase any negative things that were slated to happen to this man for the rest of his life. After yet a third sigh, the Rebbe believed this man was the greatest among all the 36 hidden tzaddikim of the generation.

This went on for a number of nights, until, the last night of the Rebbe's stay, when he finally heard words accompanying the moans as the man called out to his wife, «How many times must I tell you not to give me fried eggs before bedtime? I have such heartburn...»

The Rebbe of Radoshitz offers a message: Of course, we all yearn for Mashiach. But when do we remember him? When we have heartburn. When things are difficult, we pray for the Salvation. But do we concern ourselves with kavod Shamayim? Tikkun chatzot is done because the Shechinah is in exile and suffers. Chillul Hashem reaches the very Heavens. So many precious Jews have no idea what it means to be the son of the King.

The question is, what is it that we shed tears over? Are our tears of the churban like Eisav's? Do we cry over the important things or the inconsequential ones? Eisav also cried. He, like we, thought these are the type of tears that will add to our bank account.

Treasures

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



The Revision of Torah Reachings

«How can I bear your trouble, your burden, and your strife all by myself?»
(Devarim 1:12)

Before Bnei Yisrael entered into the Promised Land, Moshe spoke to them at length. The word «How» used in the above pasuk hints to the very same word offered by Yirmeyahu as he lamented the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, «How did she sit alone?» (Eichah 1:1).

Moshe's use of the word, «how» served as a warning signal of sorts. The entire reason for the Exodus was in order to receive the Torah and enter Eretz Yisrael. Mitzvah observance was the key to earning the privilege of settling the Land. When the Torah is trampled on, the Land disgorges its occupants. Destruction is not long in coming.

During the days of Yirmeyahu, Am Yisrael were at an all-time low vis-à-vis their spiritual level. The Land could not contain them and evicted them. The Beit Hamikdash served no purpose and was destroyed. Moshe used the word איכה to warn them to be careful.

Sefer Devarim is also called Mishneh Torah. In this sefer, Moshe repeats all of the mitzvot before they enter the Holy Land. Hashem asked Moshe to do this so that if there was anyone who had a question or difficulty regarding any of the mitzvot, he should ask it now, while they were yet in the desert. Once they reached Eretz Yisrael, they were obligated to fulfill all the mitzvot, no questions asked. If they would be remiss, they would be ejected from the Land. Moshe called Heaven and Earth as his witnesses to watch as he repeated all of the Torah's mitzvot before the entire nation.

Sadly, after arriving at the longed-for Land, the Satan found a way to provoke the nation to sin.

This was all hinted at in the word איכה, a word of warning from a loving leader.



Men of Faith

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



“May Your Departure Be to Peace; May Your Coming Be for Peace”

It was in the middle of Shacharit on Shavuot 1981 (5741). According to the prevailing custom, the congregants stood in the Beit Hakeneset of Rabbi Moshe Aharon next to the Aron Hakodesh and read the Ketubah (between Am Yisrael and Hashem).

Suddenly, the sound of Israeli aircraft overhead disrupted the festive atmosphere and the chanting of the congregants. The planes circled over Ashdod and flew southward.

Rabbi Moshe Aharon lifted his hands toward heaven and exclaimed, “May your departure be to peace, and may your coming be for peace. May you not be found at fault by any person, nor by G-d. Although you could have accomplished your operation on a

weekday and not on Shavuot, you are presently fulfilling the mitzvah of ‘Whoever saves the life of one Jew is considered as if he saved the entire world.’ Who knows how many lives you are saving by your maneuver?” This justification was typical of Rabbi Moshe Aharon, because he always advocated for Am Yisrael, as all tzaddikim do.

The congregation was astonished. They did not understand what the Rav was hinting at, and why the planes were thundering overhead. At the conclusion of the festival, everyone found out what had happened. News spread that the Israeli Air Force jets had successfully bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor and returned safely to their bases in a daring and dangerous operation.

Only ten years later, was the full extent of Rabbi Moshe Aharon’s remark fully understood. He said, “Who knows how many lives you are saving by your maneuver?” In the month of Shevat, 1991, when the Gulf war broke out, and the fanatical Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, bombed Israel with Scud missiles, people began to appreciate the previous Israeli initiative to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactors.

Then, everyone realized how necessary this mission had been. Even those who had initially criticized the operation were finally convinced of its importance. If not for the successful bombing of

the nuclear reactors, who knows what the Iraqi dictator would have done to the Jews? Thanks to this daring maneuver, the Israeli Air Force saved many Jewish lives. Certainly, it was in the merit of the holy day, which is the day the Torah was given to the Jewish people, and in the merit of the prayers of all the tzaddikim. (As heard.)

The Outstanding Virtue of Tzedakah

It is well known that tzedakah is an outstanding virtue. Rabbi Moshe Aharon firmly believed in the power of tzedakah, as it says, “Tzedakah saves one from death.” He would implore people to fulfill this mitzvah. He wrote in his sefer that anyone who loses something, or has any requests, should give tzedakah, and he will see wondrous miracles.

He taught that even if something terrible happens to a person, he should not assume that it was meant for his detriment. For example, if a person loses his wallet, it is a sign that he must remedy something. Everything that Hashem brings upon a person is ultimately for his good. Therefore, if something seemingly bad happens to a person, the first thing he should do is make an accounting of his deeds. He should then give tzedakah, in order to cancel the decree. The problem will surely be resolved, and his suffering will cease.