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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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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, zt"l



Maskil LéDavid

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

Protection from Assimilation – A Nation that Dwells Apart

And he commanded them, saying: So shall you say to my lord Esav: So says your servant Yaakov, as a stranger I have stayed with Lavan and have been kept back until now. (B'reshit 32:5)

Our Sages taught that Yaakov sent Esav an account of his life and told him that he lived with Lavan and kept the 613 mitzvos. Yaakov added that "I have an ox and a donkey", to hint to Esav that he has Yosef, the personification of righteousness, and Yissachar, the personification of Torah.

This is rather puzzling since Esav was wicked and denied the existence of everything spiritual, as it says (B'reshit 25:34) "Esav degraded the birthright". Why would Esav care about Yaakov's spiritual difficulties and his success in overcoming them? What purpose did Yaakov see in recounting them? In fact, it seems that it would have been better if Yaakov had desisted from approaching Esav altogether as Esav's immediate response to Yaakov's overtures was to declare war because he understood Yaakov's gesture as a provocation in the form of drawing a comparison between the sinful brother Esav and the righteous brother Yaakov. Also, when Esav heard that Yaakov was wealthy, he desired to take possession of his wealth. Therefore, it appears as if Yaakov Avinu provoked this whole kettle of fish.

In order to explain the depth of Yaakov Avinu's approach, we need to understand that Yaakov wanted to send a message not only to Esav, but to the entire gentile world, represented by Lavan and Esav. The substance of the message is that the gentiles should become aware that the Jewish People will always guard themselves against assimilation even though they will live amongst the gentiles during their long exile. They are compelled to fulfill their mission, "It is a people that shall dwell apart and not reckon itself among the nations" (Bamidbar 23:9). Am Yisrael draws forth this great power through studying the Holy Torah and fulfilling its precepts. They never will want to exchange it for anything else, even if they are a minority among the world's population.

This is why Yaakov Avinu detailed how he lived so intimately with Lavan and nevertheless remained pure in his outlook and his essence. Yaakov related "I have an ox and a donkey" to convey the idea that he did not just remain separate from Lavan, but he also excelled spiritually there; he was able to train his descendants to be wise and great in Torah, like Yosef and Yissachar.

At the same time, this was also guidance for K'lal Yisrael. When we might go into exile, we will never taste comfort or peace. More than that, when the gentiles see that we live in accordance with the Holy Torah, they will fight against us, similar to what the wicked Esav immediately did when he heard that Yaakov still kept all the mitzvos; Esav came to battle him with four hundred men. Esav was jealous and hated the righteous who refuse to assimilate with gentiles. This is the attitude of the nations of the world. The Torah is not within their reach and they cannot bear the thought that it would obligate them to live in an elevated manner that is on a higher plane of existence than beasts.

Until this day, the gentiles try to persuade and provoke us with vain materialism and various pleasures, so that we will blend in with them. But our mission is inviolate. We will guard our sublime virtue of being HaShem's special nation and we will not change ever, regardless if they approach us with trickery like Lavan or attack us wickedly like Esav. This was Yaakov Avinu's intention in provoking Esav. He wanted to warn the gentiles specifically and teach us generally. This warning is the same; whether they do battle with us with weapons or with strategies of seductive Western or Greek culture, Am Yisrael will remain strong, stalwart, and steadfast against their evil, with the merit of the Torah that they possess.

We need to learn from Yosef HaTzaddik how to protect ourselves against the gentile influence. When the forces of Esav drew close to Yaakov's camp, the Torah tells us (B'reshit 33:7), "and after, Yosef approached and Rachel and they bowed down." Our Sages say That Yosef stood in front of Rachel to hide her from the eyes of that rogue. We learn two lessons from this behaviour.

One, Yosef did not consider whether he would succeed in his undertaking. Esav could have moved around to look at Rachel from different angles. Also, it is certainly possible that Yosef, all of six years old at the time, was shorter than his mother. How could he obscure her? However, Yosef knew that the main thing is to want to do HaShem's will and to do everything in his power to work towards that end. It is not our job to make our decision to act depend on calculations on whether we will sufficiently succeed and how others will judge our actions. In fact, his effort that seemed to be useless was successful and was granted Heavenly assistance. Maybe Yosef's intention to guard his mother was that which actually protected her from the effect of the impure gaze of Esav.

Therefore, we should not be tempted to consider what benefit serving HaShem might have in the immoral atmosphere of Paris or the like. That is certainly bad advice. We need to do our best. If we learn in the Bet HaMidrash, our Torah will protect us from the impure effect of the street. Like Yaakov who told Esav that he lived with Lavan and kept all the mitzvos until now, meaning that he stayed with the scoundrel Lavan and remained righteous until now.

The second lesson to learn from Yosef HaTzaddik is that he prepared and planned for the future in considering what was likely to become an obstacle in serving HaShem. He undertook to stand guard over his mother even before Esav arrived and did not wait until the moment of danger.

This is a lesson that Yosef bequeathed to future generations of K'lal Yisrael when he stood strong and stalwart against Esav the villain in guarding his soul that was distinctly connected with his mother Rachel. K'lal Yisrael should make plans to protect their souls from every spiritual danger that is likely to occur during their long exile and to remain strong and steadfast against the gentile nations and their culture. Only in this way will they survive the exile and remain righteous.

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Hillulah of Tzaddikim

16 – Rabbi Shaul Yedidyah Elazar Taub, Modzitzer Rebbe

17 – Rabbi Yosef Yozel Horowitz, Alter of Novardok

18 – Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuzh

19 – Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch

20 – Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank

21 – Rabbi Refael Berdugo

22 – Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi, author of Maase HaShem



Walking in their Ways

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

Handed a Second Chance

R' Rachamim Elbaz is a prominent member of our community who supports the yeshiva in Lyon at all times. One Pesach, I was visiting his home. R' Elbaz treated me like a king and told me his story:

"My brother, Gavriel, merited a relationship with the Rav two years before I did. From the time he got to know you, he always asked me to come and get to know you, as well. Seeing my reluctance, he kept entreating me to approach you and receive a blessing in the merit of your holy ancestors.

"To tell you the truth, I was afraid of making your acquaintance. I felt you would influence me to do teshuvah and demand that I observe mitzvot. I was able to protect myself from your impact by simply refusing to associate with you.

"One year, as the hilula in Morocco for the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, was approaching, I found myself serving as the Chief of Security for the occasion. When my brother, Gavriel, heard that I was on the premises, he pressured me to visit you and receive your blessing. At first, I was inclined to decline, on the premise that nothing was missing from my life. I had no need for rabbanim and their berachot, I asserted. But, on second thought, I decided to listen to him, and I came to see you.

"You were distributing shot glasses of liquor for l'chaim, in a large auditorium. I approached you and shook your hand. But, for some reason, you held my hand tightly and did not leave go for some moments. My fingers turned red, and I was left with a very noticeable mark on my hand. Forgive me, Rav, but when I returned home, I did not stop ranting to my wife against the rabbi and his strange behavior. Instead of shaking hands cordially, he held my hand tightly and squeezed it hard. I was left with a mark for some time afterward.

"The next day, I made my usual way to the washroom in order to shave. I didn't realize that my hands were wet. As I held the shaver, I suddenly felt an electrical current course through my hand. The shaver exploded and blew a fuse. But for some inexplicable reason, and much to my surprise, the electric shock that went through my body stopped at the spot where the Rav's imprint was still on my hand, preventing it from going further. In this manner, I was saved from electrocution.

"I made the Birkat Hagomel blessing in front of the entire congregation. I realized that this was not mere coincidence, but a message from Heaven that I must change my ways. The Rav's handshake saved my life. From then on, I became extremely close with the Rav and merited accepting the yoke of Torah and mitzvot upon myself."

The Haftarah

"The vision of Ovadyah" (Ovadyah 1). Some congregations read: "For my people are only bent on backsliding from me" (Hoshe'ah 11).

The connection to the Parashah: The Haftarah describes Esav's constant hatred for Esav, as is described in our Parashah at length when Esav travelled towards Yaakov to act nefariously with his brother.



Guard Your Tongue

Provoking Quarrels

We need to be aware that rechilut is even if it is not told to the one who is involved. For example, if Yehudah tells Levi that he heard Reuven say such-and-such about Shimon. This is forbidden because it is eminently possible that it will cause a quarrel between Reuven and Shimon.



Words of our Sages

To Be Satisfied with Little

"for HaShem had graciously granted it to me and then: I have everything" (B'reshit 33:11)

Our Sages speak at length about the weakness in pursuing a life of material largesse, the source of which is rooted in the sensual inclination, and about the lack of being satisfied with less. The aim is certainly to be content with just the bare necessities, "bread to eat and garments to wear", at its most basic meaning. This philosophy begins with "you shall eat bread with salt", continues with "One who has bread in his basket and wonders what he will eat tomorrow, is from those with little faith", and ends with "the Torah was given to those who ate Manna." The Talmud is full of sagacious statements that speak about being satisfied with little.

In his prayer, Yaakov Avinu details the purpose of the bread and the garments. He emphasizes that he wants bread "to eat" and garments "to wear" even though this purpose sounds obvious and redundant. Why do we want bread, if not to eat? What do we do with clothing, if not to wear?

It is logical to assume that some need clothing for more than simply to be dressed and covered. They require various finery, in diverse colours and assorted patterns. They are unsatisfied with what they already have and desire everything on which they lay their eyes. That is not consonance with Yaakov's character. He merely requests the simplest food in order to be content and clothing in order to be dressed. That is enough for Yaakov.

Bread with Salt, Water Measured

In the biography of the Tzaddik, Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto zy"a, father of Morenu V'Rabbenu HaGaon HaTzaddik Rabbi David Chananyah Pinto sh'lita, it is related that after Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto's marriage, poverty prevailed in his home. He was not as yet renowned. He was not given money and could barely survive.

Personally, Rabbi Moshe Aharon was satisfied with the scantiest existence. Poverty and want were his daily fare, as Rabbanit Pinto recounted. [She had been raised in a wealthy environment and was used to comfort.] During their first year of marriage they lived in abject poverty and barely had food to eat or clothes to wear. Only after great effort did the Rabbanit manage to obtain food to quell their hunger.

However, a life of poverty and penury did not distract him from his holy work. Rabbi Moshe Aharon continued to study Torah assiduously day after day, as our Sages say: "So is the way of learning Torah – You shall eat bread with salt and drink measured water." He was content with the promise of our Sages, "You will be fortunate in this world and experience bliss in the World to Come!"



Pearls of the Parshah

Why Did They Need to Be Actual Angels

"Yaakov sent messengers before him, to Esav his brother, to the land of Se'ir, the field of Edom." (B'reshit 32:4)

Who were the messengers that Yaakov sent to Esav? Rashi HaKadosh explains that they were really angels. Why did Yaakov have to send angels and not people?

It is explained in the Sefer Chomat Esh, using a Mishnah in Pirke Avos (1:7), "Keep away from an evil neighbour and do not associate with a lawless man." The distance, of which our Sages teach, is important for everyone. Even an impeccable and accomplished person, if he spends time with a wicked person, will eventually learn from his evil ways. Therefore, Yaakov was worried about sending people to Esav, lest they become influenced negatively, and sent angels instead. This is why the verse says, "Yaakov sent messengers [angels]" – not people, because he was sending them "to Esav his brother", who was wicked, and "to the land of Se'ir, the field of Edom", which was a depraved place. For this mission he could only rely on angels.

Once – Twice

"Yaakov said: If Esav comes to the one camp and smite it" (B'reshit 32:9)

Take a look at the word in the Torah "והכה", used for "and smite it". Whether we read it forwards or backwards, it is the same word. There is a great message here, as is found in the Sefer Da'at Chachamim. Every blow, every wound that the gentiles inflict on Am Yisroel, will eventually rebound and hit them back in the face.

Fantasy World

"Put a space betwixt drove and drove." (B'reshit 32:17)

The main purpose of the space that Yaakov insisted upon, explains Rashi, was in order to satisfy the eye of the wicked Esav and fill his desire with the great amount of gifts.

Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l teaches us that a great fundamental principle in serving HaShem is here imbedded. What really satisfied the eye of the wicked Esav? Nothing! Air! Space! This is exactly what the desires of this world are. They are all fantasies, as if they have substance, as if they represent reality, when actually there is nothing there.

Perhaps this is why we close and cover our eyes when we say Kri'at Sh'ma. We thus bring home the message to ourselves that the only reality is belief in HaShem. Everything that we view with our eyes is merely temporary and illusory, something full of hot air.

Behind the Kings' Names

"And these are the Kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any King over the children of Yisrael." (B'reshit 36:31)

Why does the Torah bother to tell us the names of the Edomite Kings? Of what concern are they to us?

Actually, writes Rabbi Yaakov Kuli zt"l in Sefer Me'am Lo'ez: "This section is enveloped with Torah secrets. The entire Idra Rabba of the Zohar HaKadosh that we read on the night of Shavu'ot is based on the verses in this section. Therefore, even though, due to our many sins, we do not comprehend anything, we still need to read it, for thereby our soul, which understands everything, receives spiritual pleasure. Do not imagine that this list of names of Edomite kings are just of historical significance, G-d forbid. There is no difference in importance and sanctity between this section and the Aseret HaDibrot. It is all one."

In another segment he writes: "Know that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said that there are three hundred secrets imbedded in this section and he did not reveal them to a soul other than his son Rabbi El'azar. We see from this how every word of the Torah is full of secrets and deep wisdom that our intellect cannot fathom."

Treasures

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



Who can Merit Torah together with Wealth?

"Yaakov journeyed to Sukkot and built a home for himself; and made huts for his property, therefore he called the name of the place Sukkot." (B'reshit 33:17)

My grandfather, the Tzaddik Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto zy"l explained this verse at length in his Sefer "Kesef M'zukah". Yaakov was the choicest of the Patriarchs. His form was engraved under the Heavenly Throne (B'reshit Rabbah 78:3). Yaakov Avinu did not pass away like the rest of humanity, for we do not find an expression of death in the verses dealing with the passing of Yaakov Avinu, simply "he was gathered unto his people" (Taanit 5b). Therefore, Yaakov Avinu remains alive at some level to give life for all later generations. Yaakov wanted to teach his children that this world is merely a connection corridor to the World to Come.

One builds himself a hut as a temporary dwelling for a brief period until he reaches a more permanent place, and there he builds his home. Yaakov Avinu wanted to imbue his children with the message that this world is temporary and transient, and is only a means towards arriving at the permanent world, the World to Come. [So concludes the holy words of my grandfather.]

I thought to add the idea of the Chafetz Chayim, that we are tourists in this world. We pack a few of our possessions into a small suitcase and skip from place to place. Obviously, a tourist does not fill up his travelling bag with all his assets and drag them around to his every destination. He only spends a few days in each place and then decamps and departs to a new place. We are only here temporarily on our way to the coming world.

Why is this message so important?

When Yaakov told Esav that he is blessed with both spiritual and material wealth, his children might mistakenly think that Torah and wealth can coexist under the same roof. In truth, only if we give the Torah dominance and our wealth a subordinate role, can the Torah endure. Even when Yaakov mentioned "I have an ox and a donkey", he meant Yosef and Yissachar.

It is human nature not to be satisfied with what we have, but to always feel like paupers compared to our material goals. If we have \$100, we want \$200 (see Kohelet Rabbah 1:13). If we do not give the Torah and its mitzvos prime importance, we will find ourselves constantly pursuing materialism, because the attainment of material possessions is never bundled with satisfaction. Yaakov Avinu told his children that only if they view this world like a hut, a temporary dwelling, will the Torah and their wealth be able to coexist.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Snow White Bridegroom

A bridegroom merits forgiveness for his sins on the day of his wedding. The source of this is learned from this weekly Parashah, where Esav's wives are listed, one being Yishma'el's daughter. The Torah tells us that her name was Basmat. Was her name not Machalat (see end of Parashat Toldot)? This teaches us that Esav obtained forgiveness [Mechilah] for his sins.

Rashi, quoting Agadat Midrash Sefer Sh'muel, explains that three people obtain forgiveness for their sins: A new convert, one who attains a high position, and one who gets married. The Midrash derives its reason from here, that she was called Machalat because Esav's sins were pardoned.

What about the bride? Does she not have her sins pardoned like her new husband?

It is clear in the Sefer K'dushat Levi that a bride too merits the pardoning of her sins, for if the bridegroom merits forgiveness, surely the bride does as well, for there is no difference between them. After all, they are marrying each other!

Men of Faith

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

Even without His Glasses

A man came to pray at the grave of Rabbi Chaim HaKatan. He wanted to begin reciting Tehillim, but could not find his reading glasses in his pocket.

This caused him great anguish, since he could not read without his glasses. How then would he be able to recite the psalms at the holy site?

The closer he drew to the grave, the more his anguish grew. However, when he reached the grave, he suddenly heard the psalms being read aloud, and in this way, he was able to recite them by heart.

Regaining Vision

There is another story told about a man who became blind in both eyes, rachmana litzlan, and could neither learn nor pray properly. He asked his family members to lead him to Rabbi Chaim's grave to beseech Hashem that in the tzaddik's merit, he should regain his vision.

He shed many tears and, to his great delight, his prayers bore fruit. When he arose the next morning, he was able to see normally with both eyes.

A Spark of Achiya Hashiloni

That night, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol was unable to rise to recite the tikkun chatzot in the Beit Hakeneset, as he usually did.

When the shamash, who regularly joined the Rav in the tikkun, showed up, he was surprised to find himself alone in the Beit Hakeneset. He was even more astonished when he suddenly heard a voice emanating from the Aron Hakodesh, "Where is Rabbi Chaim Pinto? Why did he not come as usual to say the tikkun chatzot prayer? Why is he not singing the praises of his Creator?"

All the Celestial Hosts are waiting to hear his song and prayers." The attendant became extremely frightened. He gathered his courage and quivered, "Who is talking?"

"It is I," answered the voice, "Rabbi Yisrael Najara. Go quickly to Rabbi Chaim and tell him that he possesses a spark of the neshamah of the prophet, Achiya Hashiloni. He should cease torturing himself, because his sin has already been forgiven."

The voice continued, "I used to give my Creator pleasure with the songs that I composed, but since the day that I departed from the world only Rabbi Chaim Pinto masters the depth of song."

The attendant trembled from the sound of the voice. He quickly went to Rabbi Chaim's house, in order to repeat to him all that he had heard. However, before he could open his mouth, Rabbi Chaim said, "You heard the voice of Rabbi Yisrael Najara in the Beit Hakeneset. Blessed are you and blessed is your portion!"

The following night, the Rif appeared in a dream to Rabbi David Chazan and told him, "Tell Rabbi Chaim that he should not worry about what he did unintentionally. Order him to rise from his bed. His swollen leg is already healed."

At the same time, the Rif appeared to Rabbi Chaim in a dream and told him the following, "You have received full pardon in all the spheres. Tomorrow, with Hashem's help, you will arise from your sleep and be healed."

The next morning, when Rabbi David Chazan came to Rabbi Chaim to tell him about his dream, Rabbi Chaim preceded him, saying, "The one who came to you in a dream came to me as well." Just as he had been promised, he rose from his bed and stood on his two feet, completely cured (Shenot Chaim)