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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

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MASKIL LEDAVID

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



Man's Rectification in This World

"The children agitated within her, and she said, 'If so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of Hashem'" (Bereishit 25:22).

On this verse Rashi explains that when Rivka passed the Torah academy of Shem and Ever, Ya'akov "ran" and struggled to come out; and when she passed a temple of idol worship, Esav "ran" and struggled to come out. The Maharal of Prague (Gur Aryeh, ibid.) asks, since the yetzer hara is not present before birth, what made Esav struggle to come forth for evil intents even before he was born? He answers that Esav's behavior was not influenced by his personal yetzer hara, but due to his inherent wicked nature. Meaning, every person, even without his yetzer hara, has certain ingrained attributes. Some are born with good and upright middot, while others are born with bad middot. Esav, even without his personal yetzer hara, would on his own accord strive towards evil, that is why even before he his birth he was drawn to places of idol worship.

Every person who comes to This World has a special rectification that he must accomplish during his lifetime. If a person feels he has negative middot ingrained in his very essence, he should know that the purpose of his descent to This World is to work on these middot and rectify them. Concerning one who by nature possesses good middot, his purpose in This World is to improve and refine these attributes even further. Similarly, if a person is drawn to observe a certain mitzvah in a special way, he should know that Hashem's kindness has allowed him to be attracted to this mitzvah since he came to This World to rectify himself with this mitzvah, in which he was possibly deficient in a previous incarnation. This is why we see that a given individual loves a certain mitzvah and is meticulous about it more than any other mitzvah, because his purpose in This World is to rectify that mitzvah. The love and pull to observe particularly this mitzvah is a form of Heavenly assistance to enable him to successfully carry out his role and rectification in This World.

After 120 years, if Hashem accuses someone of acting wickedly during his lifetime, he will not be able to claim, "I did not know that I came to This World to amend a certain matter." If he attempts to use this defense Hashem will counter, "You felt a particular love and inclination to fulfil a certain

mitzvah, or transgress a certain sin, so you should have understood that this is where you have to invest more than in any other area." And since one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah (see Avot 4:2), through fulfilling and rectifying the mitzvah a person is drawn towards, he will be led to observe additional mitzvot on account of the original mitzvah. In this way he will merit accomplishing his rectification in the most exceptional way. This is the meaning of Chazal's words (Avot ibid.), "The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah." What reward does man receive in This World for observing mitzvot? Hashem will send him the opportunity of fulfilling additional mitzvot and this will increase his reward many times over.

Another explanation of "The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah" could be that the reward for fulfilling the mitzvot is the attraction to fulfil a certain mitzvah in a special way. Hashem will help him to be drawn after the mitzvah that is the root and basis for his rectification, which is a Heavenly sign regarding his purpose in This World. In this way he will merit accomplishing his role. Just as Hashem arouses a person's desire to observe a certain mitzvah because it is his rectification, so too if a person sees that he has a particular temptation to transgress a certain sin, he must know that this prohibition is his main challenge in This World and he must be extremely vigilant in this regard. If he merits avoiding this prohibition, he will merit his true rectification.

The Chida, in his sefer Midbar Kedemot (essay 80:2), writes that Moshe Rabbeinu was the gilgul (reincarnation) of Hevel and that is why Korach had to negate himself and submit himself to Moshe Rabbeinu's authority. In this way he would rectify Cayin's sin of killing his brother Hevel. But Korach was not wise enough to understand this and instead of attaining his rectification through Moshe (who personified Hevel) in a positive way, he rose up against him and once again wished to "kill" him. That is why measure for measure Korach was swallowed up by the ground, just as when Cayin killed his brother Hevel in his first gilgul the ground swallowed his blood, as it says (Bereishit 4:10), "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground... which opened its mouth to take your brother's blood!"

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Hilula

2 - Rabbi Aharon Kotler, Rosh Yeshiva Lakewood

3 - Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Brevin, author of She'arim Hametzuyanin B'halacha

4 - Rabbi Ya'akov David Kalish of Amshinov

5 - Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer HaLevi Eidells, the Maharsha

6 - Rabbi Shmuel Pinto, son of Rabbi Daniel Pinto

7 - Rabbi Ya'akov Moshe Charlap, author of Beit Ze'ev

8 - Rabbi Aharon Twerski, Admor of Chernobyl



Walking in their Ways

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

Torah Is His Profession

I became acquainted with a boy from Mexico who was far removed from a Torah way of life. With Hashem's help I was able to persuade him to try learning in a yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. He travelled to Eretz Yisrael and spent two weeks in a yeshiva in Bnei Brak, where he tasted the sweetness of Torah.

A year later I met this bachur once again. He told me he has a strong desire to study in a yeshiva but his parents are totally opposed to the idea. They demand that he study a respectable profession in university.

I tried to speak to his parents and persuade them to allow their son to study in the place his heart desires. After much persuasion, the parents agreed on condition that he would study in yeshiva for a limited time, after which he would go to university.

The bachur accepted the condition and travelled to study in a yeshiva. During the allotted time he immersed himself in Torah study and at the end of this period he approached me and told me that his singular desire is to continue studying in yeshiva.

I knew the bachur well and was aware of his many talents and astuteness that would enable him to go far in Torah study. Knowing he had the potential to become a genius in Torah, on my way back from Argentina I went to the trouble of visiting Mexico, where I once again spoke to his parents and tried to convince them to allow their son to continue his yeshiva studies.

Hashem granted me success and with His kindness I was able to offer them words of encouragement until eventually they agreed to completely forgo their university requirement.

That bachur made great strides in his studies and in four years managed to grasp what other bachurim learn in fifteen years. Some time later he merited establishing a true Jewish home.

His wedding, held in Mexico, was attended by Gedolei Hador from Eretz Yisrael and other countries. At this momentous occasion I thanked Hashem for giving me the merit of being a facilitator of his great spiritual elevation. This bachur merited leaving behind all the vanities of This World, and with an iron will and exceptional siyata d'Shmaya, attained the lofty level where Torah became his profession. Indeed he is a true ben Torah.

The Haftarah

The prophecy of the word of Hashem" (Malachi 1-2)

The connection to the Parshah: The Haftarah speaks about Ya'akov and Esav, as it says: "Was not Esav the brother of Ya'akov," while the Parshah tells of the birth of the twins, Ya'akov Avinu and Esav the rasha, and their offspring.

The Path of the Upright

Transformed from Enemy to Friend

It is imperative to harbor constant hatred to those who incite others with heretical ideas, even if they are considered 'tinokot shenishbu', children who were taken captive (i.e. Jews who were raised in a non-Jewish environment and know nothing about Torah, who are not culpable for their sins). David Hamelech said about them (the heretics), "With the utmost hatred I hate them."

But if the sinner repents and changes his ways, we are then forbidden to hate him. Even just a sincere commitment to repent is enough for him to regain his status of an upright Jew.



In Our Father's Path

The Lesson Gleaned from the Swedish Embassy

The clear distinction between Ya'akov and Esav finds expression in the following words: "The voice is Ya'akov's voice." This conveys everything. 'The voice' expresses the essence and character of Ya'akov, whose image is engraved in the holy Throne of Glory.

And we, as descendants of Ya'akov Avinu a"h, are obligated to cleave to the same highly regarded and superior identification card. We must vigilantly preserve the legacy and uphold the values bequeathed to us by the father of our nation who spent his days in the study halls of Shem and Ever.

The following enlightening description is taken from the sefer Simcha Babayit. This amazing story was related by a talmid Chacham from the Ponevezh yeshiva concerning his visit to the Swedish embassy in Israel, situated on Rechov Hayarkon in Tel Aviv.

Visiting the Swedish embassy is not a regular occurrence for any of us, and was certainly a rare and unusual occasion for that talmid Chacham. Since one of the duties incumbent upon every ben Torah is to derive a lesson from everything Hashem brings into his life, this talmid chacham actively considered the lesson he could draw from the visit. And indeed the incident left him inspired with a moral lesson.

"From the moment I entered the embassy building, which encompasses several floors," the talmid Chacham told his talmidim, "I noticed that every corner of the building reflects and symbolizes the motherland, Sweden. The walls were adorned with paintings of Swedish scenic settings, the furniture was designed in Swedish style, and there were other typical features appreciated by Swedish citizens. This was all despite the fact that those who staffed the embassy's departments and offices were not, for the most part, Swedes.

"The language spoken throughout the embassy was Swedish, and the employees were particular to speak this language alone. The conduct and manners were derived from this country's culture; the diplomats travelled to work in Swedish cars, and there were also many other characteristic symbols and indications which individually and together were reminders of Sweden.

"The feeling was that the embassy's administrators had a particular interest in instilling the Swedish lifestyle and experience into the building. As if they were saying: 'Here we behave as in Sweden, and in Sweden there are, as is well known, unique practices and customs. Whoever deviates from these ways has no place with us.'

"On leaving the embassy building," the talmid chacham continued, "I thought to myself that I am about to go to the Beit Midrash, and there too, I havdil, there are special customs and behaviors which characterize the 'miniature Beit Mikdash'. So how great, then, is our obligation to guard with supreme devotion every single nuance of these rules of conduct, no less than the extent to which the staff of the Swedish embassy on Rechov Hayarkon are particular to uphold their country's customs.

"After spending time in the Beit Midrash I go home, and there too, in every Jewish home, there are countless practices that must characterize the family. It is incumbent on myself and my household to eagerly adopt these customs and not deviate from them in any way."

We must remember that we live in a Jewish home, with its own "the voice is Ya'akov's voice", with its own characteristics. All this must find expression in our conduct and entire lifestyle, so that any observer will declare, "This person belongs to a Jewish home!"



The Sabbatical Year

1. It says in the Torah, "your vineyard you shall not prune." Therefore, anyone who cuts a branch or cuts away part of the tree in a way that benefits the tree, causing it to grow better or thicker, has transgressed a Torah prohibition. This is true whether it is a vine or any other type of tree. Some are of the opinion that concerning other trees (not grapevines) it is a rabbinic prohibition.

2. The definition of pruning is to cut off large branches or cut their tops so they will grow better. If one picks off dry leaves or blossoms from a tree it is considered as pruning d'rabbanan. Any kind of pruning which is done to enhance growth is considered as pruning and is forbidden.

3. The act of pruning necessitates great precision and knowledge, since otherwise it can cause damage to the fruit. If one is doing it for the use of the branches, it is permitted, but if one intends to prune it is forbidden.

4. If it is necessary to prune or pull off leaves etc. on trees other than a grapevine in order to sustain the tree, it would be permitted in a case of great loss where pruning before the start of the Shemittah year would not suffice. It is preferable to carry out these acts in a different way to the norm (shinui). Some permit these acts also with a grapevine, if they are necessary to keep the tree alive.

5. Some say there is no Torah prohibition of pruning when removing a live branch, but not all agree with this opinion.

6. The Torah prohibits pruning if one's intention is to enhance growth, but if this is not the case there is no Torah prohibition. Some say these acts are still forbidden mid'rabbanan; for example, if one cuts branches so they should not weigh the tree down, or cuts a branch that is too close to another branch, or cuts a decayed or dry branch, as long as his intention is not to increase growth.

7. It is permissible to cut off a branch that is infested if there is concern that the insects will harm the rest of the tree. This kind of damage that permits one to carry out a certain act, is permitted even if it will cause further growth. But one should only prune the necessary area and not use the opportunity to cut other parts of the tree for the sake of enhancing its growth.

8. If branches are disturbing power lines, and there is concern that this will cause the lines to become disconnected in the winter, if it is clear that the branches are causing a problem one may cut them off during Shemittah.

For any questions in practical application of these halachot, please consult a rabbinical authority.

Treasures

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



A Blessing that is Considered a Curse

The Torah states (Bereishit 27:33), "Then Yitzchak trembled in very great perplexity and said, 'Who – where – is the one who hunted game, brought it to me, and I partook of all when you had not yet come, and I blessed him? Indeed, he shall remain blessed!'"

When Yitzchak realized he had blessed Ya'akov and not Esav, he was in fact pleased about it and no longer wished to bless Esav, despite the fact that he had no shortage of blessings to give (the proof being that in the end he did bless him). We will try to understand why in fact Ya'akov did not want to bless Esav despite his pleas, and why in the end he did agree to bless him.

I would like to suggest the following explanation. Yitzchak knew that Esav was wicked, did not intend to repent, and treated his brother Ya'akov with cruelty. Consequently he did not want to bless him. But when Esav cried it appeared to him a sign of repentance and that is why he then agreed to bless him.

But even then, when he blessed him, he gave him a blessing that was really like a curse, by saying "ועל חרבך תחיה", by your sword you shall live." The first letter of each of these words (vav, chet, taf) have the same numerical value as יתד, a spade, which hints to the sword and spade of war (see Devarim 23:14). And the last letter of each of these words spells כלה, destruction. This alludes to the wicked Esav, since eventually the sword will be directed at him and he will be annihilated from the world. As indeed the Torah writes (Ovadia 1:21), "The saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge Esav's mountain, and the sovereignty will be Hashem's." Meaning, in the end when Mashiach comes to redeem us, Hashem's kingdom will be for Bnei Yisrael, descendants of Ya'akov Avinu, alone, while Esav and all his descendants will be finished off and disappear from the world.

Contemplating the incident of the blessings shows us the extent of Esav's wickedness. Although Yitzchak gave him a blessing that was like a curse, as we explained, Esav himself could have used the blessing of "by your sword you shall live" in a positive way. In other words, Esav had the option to use his sword to fight against or scare the enemies of Bnei Yisrael and those who wished to harm them. Or he could have used his sword to protect his brother Ya'akov. But in his great wickedness, Esav brandished his sword specifically against Bnei Yisrael, to fight against them, and that is why throughout the generations the nations descended from Esav have fought against Bnei Yisrael.

So in fact this blessing he received from his father was really a curse, since Yitzchak knew he would fight against Bnei Yisrael. Therefore, Yitzchak did not initially want to bless him at all and only after Esav begged repeatedly did he bless him. But since he used the blessing in the wrong way, in the future Esav and all his descendants will be wiped out, and only Ya'akov and his descendants will remain for eternity.



Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidells zt"l, the Maharsha

The chiddushei Torah of the Maharsha, Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidells zt"l, are included in all editions of the Gemara printed after his passing. They are cherished by all those who study Gemara, both the great scholars and the laymen, and are considered the basis for understanding the words of the Gemara, Rashi and Tosafot. One of the eminent rabbis of his generation wrote about him, "All his words are based upon pillars of wisdom and strong foundations, and all the winds in the world cannot sway him or move him from his position (i.e. his opinions are almost inarguable). Anyone who argues with him is like someone arguing with the Shechina."

Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Halevi was born in Cracow, Poland, in 5325, to a family of distinguished rabbanim. He changed his family name to Eidells as a sign of appreciation for his mother-in-law, the Rabbanit Eidell Lifshitz, who supported him and the many students who flocked to study in his yeshiva.

The Maharsha's fame spread far and wide and he was recognized as a gaon and gadol hador (leader of the generation). All the great rabbis corresponded with him to deliberate on matters of halacha and aggada. He was appointed as head of "Va'ad Arba Aratzot", the organization that represented and led Polish Jewry in those days. In this capacity he established many regulations.

Besides being an exceptional genius, he was also famous for his righteousness, purity of heart and assistance to others. It is told that throughout the years he served as Rav in Ostraha, not one person went hungry. Engraved on his door were the words "No sojourner ever slept outside; I open my door to any guest."

May the Memory of a Tzaddik be for a Blessing

In the Beit Din shel Mata

One morning just after dawn, urgent knocking was suddenly heard on the Rav's door.

"You may enter," called out the Rav and in came one of the local residents, panting and trembling.

"Sit down, my son, sit and calm down. How can I help you?" offered the Rav.

"It all began several years ago," the Jew began to pour out his heart, "when I and my childhood friend gained a fortune on a certain business deal. To my chagrin, I stumbled with serious sins: I drank non-Jews' wine and ate forbidden foods. I transgressed while in a daze, intoxicated. But when I became sober, I was extremely upset and depressed and found no rest for my soul.

"My friend could not bear my distress and approached me with a proposal: 'I see,' he said, 'that you are suffering greatly. So I am prepared to purchase these sins from you, in exchange for which you will give me your share of the profit from this deal.'

"I expressed my agreement without hesitation. And so I transferred all my money to his hands, and with a firm handshake he accepted upon himself all the serious sins I had committed.

"A short time ago my friend passed away. And now, these last few nights he has been bothering me in a dream and demanding that I come with him to a din Torah (rabbinical hearing) in the Heavenly Court, since he is being accused of sins he never transgressed. He claims that he only purchased them from me to calm me down...

"Last night," he concluded, "my friend forcefully threatened me until I began shaking all over. What should I do?" he begged the Rav.

The Rav thought about it seriously and replied: "The next time he comes to you, tell him you are prepared to go to court with him, but only in the Beit Din shel matah (earthly rabbinical court)."

Indeed, that night, when he once again appeared to him in a dream, the friend agreed, after repeated begging and pleading, to appear in the Maharsha's Beit Din.

The appointed day arrived. All the local Jews, and even some from further out, streamed to the Grand Beit Knesset where the din Torah was due to take place. The place was filled to capacity and many had to listen from outside. In the corner of the

Beit Knesset hung a partition, behind which was portioned off a place for the deceased. Everyone present trembled in awe of what was about to take place.

The Rav arrived, turned to his attendant and said, "Please take my stick, go to the cemetery, and knock on the grave of the deceased three times. Tell him that the Maharsha is summoning him to a din Torah."

The attendant left and a deathly silence filled the Beit Knesset. On the front bench sat the Beit Din members, headed by the Rav who was dressed in white clothing – a paradigm of holiness.

Time passed. The attendant returned and then knocked on the bimah as instructed by the Rav and declared, "The din Torah is about to begin!"

"First the plaintiff will speak" the Maharsha stood up and announced.

The Jew stood up, shaking all over, and told his story.

It was now time to hear the defendant. The Rav rose a second time and again his words echoed throughout the room: "The defendant should express his claims."

Another moment and an unclear voice could be heard from behind the partition.

The hearts of the attendees beat wildly and they grew deathly pale.

The deceased concluded his words and the voice was silent. When the Rav saw that the deceased's words had not been understood, he repeated them: "The deceased claims that he purchased the sins only to calm his friend and never intended to take responsibility for them. He added, 'My friend is still alive and can repent for his sins, but I, I cannot do so.'"

The members of the beit din convened to discuss the ruling. Then the Maharsha stood up and said, "The beit din exonerates the Jew who is among us, since the defendant purchased these sins in full awareness. But, since a positive thought was attached to the act for he wanted to calm his friend, I promise to pray for the rectification of his soul."

The din Torah ended and from then on the deceased no longer bothered his friend.

On the fifth of Kislev 5392, the Maharsha ascended to the World of Truth. His teachings continue to be studied at every moment in the Batei Midrashot and Torah institutions throughout the world. May his merit protect us.