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IN MEMORY OF THE GAON RABBI YEHUDA YOSSEF BEN RABBI AVRAHAM YITCHOK WENGROWER ZATSAL

"When i saw this picture above, my Emouna on Hashem and his Tzadikim grow stronger" (Rabbi David Pinto)

אברכי כולל "אורות חיים ומשה" אשדוד התעוררות והתחזקות בקברות הצדיקים



למעלה מ-250 אברכים ובעלי בתים, בעלי תשובה ומתחזקים, הלומדים בכולל "אורות חיים ומשה" ומישיבת "זוהר תורה" באשדוד, נטלו חלק ביום התחזקות של תורה ותפילות בקברות הצדיקים בצפון הארץ.

היום המיוחד התקיים מספר ימים לפני חג מתן תורה ביוזמת נשיא מוסדות פינטו בארץ ובעולם בנן של קדושים הרה"צ רבי דוד חנניה פינטו שליט"א. היוזמה הברוכה עמדה בסימן הכנה לקבלת התורה ולביטול הגזרות הקשות מעל עם ישראל.

בשעת הצהריים המוקדמות יצאו בזה אחר זה 5 אוטובוסים כשפני השיירה מועדות צפונה לקברי התנאים. במהלך הנסיעה נהנו המשתתפים מדברי תורה מפי רבני הכולל ומפי תלמידי חכמים חשובים. בין השאר ביקרו המשתתפים בקברו של רבי יהודה בר אלעאי, רבי יונתן בן עוזיאל ובציון הקדוש של רשב"י במירון. בקברות הצדיקים נערכה תפילה מיוחדת לשלום עם ישראל וביטול הגזרות הקשות.

ואכן במהלך הנסיעה חשו המשתתפים היטב את האווירה הרוחנית והרושם הכביר שהותיר היום המיוחד על כל אחד ואחד. במהלך היום זכה הציבור לשמוע דברי תורה נלהבים מפי קדשו הרה"צ רבי דוד חנניה פינטו שליט"א. הרב עורר את לב הציבור לחובה המוטלת על כל אחד ואחד לעמלה של תורה ולערבות ההדדית המחייבת כל אדם מעם ישראל כלפי חברו.

הדברים הותירו רושם רב על הנוכחים כפי שניכר בתפילה הנרגשת בקברי הצדיקים. נוכחותו של הרב שליט"א עוררה התרגשות רבה בקרב בציבור הגדול ממקומות שונים בארץ, שהגיע ממקומות שונים בארץ והופתע לראות את הרב שליט"א שהעיתר מברכותיו על הציבור הגדול שהודה לו בחמימות רבה.

לאחר תפילת ערבית פצחו הציבור בשירה אדירה לכבוד רשב"י ולאחר מכן נערכה סעודת מצוה ברוב פאר והדר בהשתתפות הרב שליט"א.

אווירת הקדושה המשיכה גם בדרך חזרה, כאשר הנסיעה הארוכה נוצלה לדברי תורה ולדברי התחזקות ע"י האברכים. בשעות הלילה המאוחרות הגיעה שיירת האוטובוסים לאשדוד בתחושת סיפוק והתעלות רוחנית.

הצלחת היום הובילה לפניות רבות לרב שליט"א ליוזם מעת לעת ימי התחזקות נוספים לאור תחושת ההתעלות שנכרה היטב על פני המשתתפים.

למחרת בבוקר שבו הכוללים במוסדות "אורות חיים ומשה" לפעול במתכונתם הרגילה, אך תחושת ההתעלות הרוחנית נכרה היטב בסדרי הלימוד בכולל.

יהי רצון שיתקבלו התפילות ברחמים וברצון מן השמים.



HOW HEVRAT PINTO SPREADS TORAH AND TZEDDAKA AROUND THE WORLD

It is said that Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal was responsible for helping the poor in the community. Each day, he hastened to distribute to the needy all the donations that he had received from people who came to ask him for a blessing.

The main goal of Hevrat Pinto consists of creating and maintaining, as best possible, those institutions aimed at teaching Torah.

Up to our day, not a single yeshiva or Torah institution in the Holy Land experiencing financial difficulty has ever been refused the least request for grants from Hevrat Pinto. As everyone knows, Hevrat Pinto runs its own institutions, along with all the considerable expenses that their operation entails.

Like all other institutions, Hevrat Pinto has also experienced periods of financial difficulty. However these periods are much more severe because Hevrat Pinto has committed itself to aiding other organizations that do not operate under its auspices.

Such is the legacy that Rabbi David Pinto Shlita has inherited from his holy ancestors. Simply put, it is to not refuse

granting financial assistance to anyone, especially those who study Torah, for it is upon them that the world rests. In fact, everyone should realize that coming to the aid of those who study Torah is the key to the very survival of the Jewish people.

In France as well, many Torah institutions and charity organizations benefit every year from the support of Hevrat Pinto. In addition, during the last years Hevrat Pinto has greatly contributed to helping women with regards to Hachnassat Kallah. On this point we may say that Hevrat Pinto, with G-d's help, has assisted in building many Jewish homes. In addition, the organization has built numerous mikvaot, namely three in France, one in Russia, and another in Sefat, Israel. In parallel to this, Hevrat Pinto has contributed financially to the construction of several Torah centers around the world.

Since the first year of its establishment until today, Hevrat Pinto has opened the doors to Torah study (which people have expressed increasing interest in) and has promoted an awakening in Jewish con-

sciousness, as well as the desire for constant self-improvement. Around the world, Hevrat Pinto thoroughly carries out important work among those who study holy texts. The sheer number of those who frequent its institutions gives honor to all men who love Torah.

For several years now, Rabbi David has traveled around the world to spread Torah. With uncommon eloquence, he encourages those who are far from Judaism to come closer, and in this way he has brought thousands of Jews to do Teshuvah. What's more is that he has brought thousands of families spiritual and financial assistance, enabling people to continue studying Torah and performing mitzvot.

Just like his holy ancestors, it is with great tzinah (discretion) that he practices Tzeddakah on a massive scale. The mitzvot that are performed do not require publicity. For example, his father Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto Zatzal did not head any yeshiva or other institution. Nevertheless, he received hundreds of millions of Francs in donations. When he passed



The Hevrat Pinto (Paris FRANCE)



Yeshiva Pinto (Lyon FRANCE)



is with him in everything he does.

Let us begin with the yeshiva and kollel. These are among the most magnificent in all of Europe, shining with their brilliance in Lyon-Villeurbanne, where both day and night classes are given by the rabbis Shlita of the town. The building in which the mikvaot for men and women is housed is the most beautiful in Europe.

Let us continue with the building that we purchased not so long ago. It houses a synagogue, a reception hall for the com-

mation instituted by our great teacher, the Tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita. This was accomplished by the construction of a synagogue, a mikveh for men, a study hall for women, and a Beit Midrash for Ba'alei Batim. Naturally, all this helps the members of the community to come closer to their Father in Heaven and strengthens them in Judaism, be it by putting on Tefillin or by observing the laws of family purity. Concerning this latter topic alone, thousands of pamphlets have been distributed. Most important of all are the Torah classes for youngsters each night, as well as two weekly classes for women.

This revolution has not forgotten Bussières, where a kollel and yeshiva (bearing the name of the Tzaddik Rabbeinu Gershon Liebman Zatzal) have been opened. They receive considerable financial support each month from Hevrat Pinto.

Yad Mordkhai school in Paris received tens of thousands of Euros in financial assistance, and the school of

away, although people firmly believed that he had left a fortune in his bank account, the truth came to light: From around the world, evidence began pouring in from institutions that rendered homage to the Tzaddik for the considerable financial aid that he had provided them with. Furthermore, hundreds of households in which the father was studying Torah fulltime also benefited from his support. Hence it was only then that the mystery was cleared up concerning the enormous donations received by Rabbi Moshe Aaron, may his merit protect us.

For the first time, we shall slightly lift the veil concerning what is done with your money and donations to Torah institutions and charity organizations in France in general, and to the Oroth Haim VeMoshe institutions in particular. All this and more is accomplished by the merit of the Pinto family's holy Tzaddikim, as well as by the considerable efforts of their grandson, the Tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita.

The spiritual desert into which the Tzaddik David Hanania Pinto Shlita infused life was only accomplished through the merit of his holy ancestors and by the help of Heaven, which



MIKVA FOR WOMEN IN LYON - FRANCE

munity, and a study hall for women, who come there in search of piety and to increase their understanding in Torah through courses given by Torah greats.

There is a Beit Midrash for men who are not fluent in Hebrew, which is used two or three times a week, and there is also Hessed Haim, a charity organization that distributes food to the needy.

Today, Lyon has become a miniature Jerusalem from which Torah and mitzvot spring forth.

The Jewish community in Paris has also experienced a profound transfor-

Rav Rottenberg Shlita also received a similar amount of aid. In fact there are many institutions (numbering in the hundreds and whose names we shall not list) that receive financial support



MIKVA FOR MEN IN LYON - FRANCE

from Hevrat Pinto. In addition, the door is never closed to those asking for help, and everything is done with discretion, with no fanfare, and without anything in return. It is all done solely to serve Hashem.

All this and more rests on the shoulders of our teacher, who draws holiness and purity from his saintly ancestors, may their merit protect us, Amen. Without this material and spiritual assistance, we would not be here today.

As you are no doubt aware, we cannot send contributions from France to Israel, which is why all contributions arriving in France are distributed only to institutions in France. However thanks to the generous support of our American friends, we can also help Torah and charity institutions in the land of our forefathers.

As everyone knows, the situation in Eretz Israel is very difficult. There are people who literally do not have enough to eat there. You also know that each year, on the eve of Passover and the holidays in the month of Tishri, the Oroth Haim VeMoshe institutions distribute essential food for the holidays, which comes to more than 200,000 Euros per year.



The new Torah Center "Oroth Haim Ou Moche" at Ashdod (Israël)

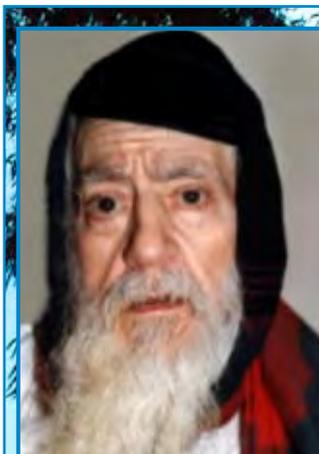
This goes to helping the needy carry out the mitzvot of the holidays and to bringing a little light and happiness to their homes.

The prophet said, "If not for My covenant [the Torah], I would not have appointed days and nights, the decrees of heaven and earth" (Jeremiah 33:25). The Torah is an elixir of life, and the world cannot survive if we fail to study it.

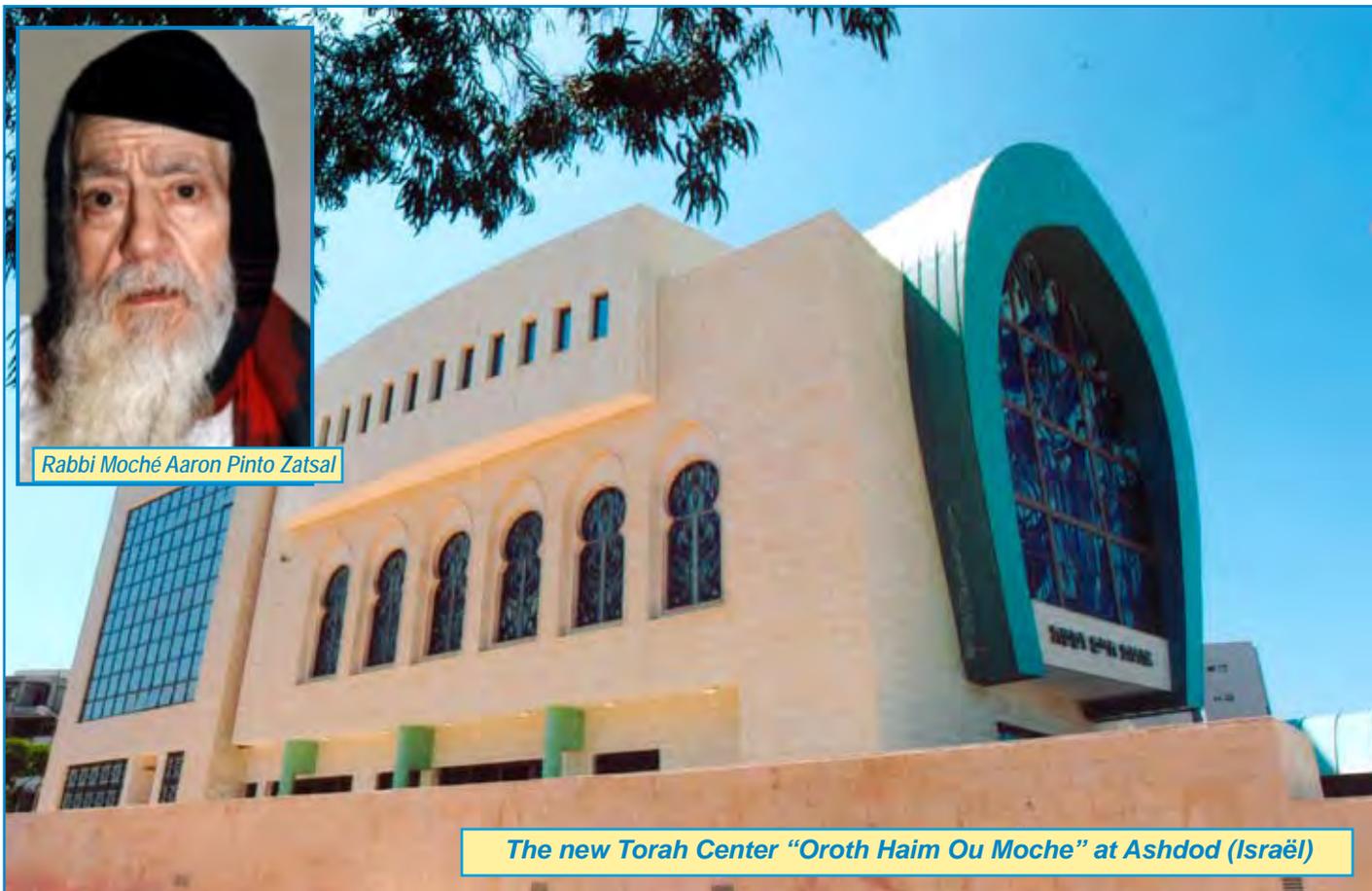
Thank G-d, there are hundreds

of yeshivot and charity institutions that we help each month with sizable financial assistance, the details of which we shall list only partly.

We help support the yeshivot of Mir, Dushinsky, Kol Torah, and Ateret Jerusalem, as well as the schools that carry the name of Rav Shapira and Ahiezer. We also assist the Zohar HaTorah yeshiva, which brings our young brothers closer to their Father in Heaven, and where we see great



Rabbi Moché Aaron Pinto Zatsal



The new Torah Center "Oroth Haim Ou Moche" at Ashdod (Israël)



The Synagogue in the new Torah Center (Ashdod)

work being done thanks to the devotion of local rabbis.

Filled with wonder, our teacher and Rav, the Tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita simply cannot resist. He sends them no less than 5,000 Euros each month, not including a large donation that was given for purchasing a building.

In Jerusalem we have opened a yeshiva for youngsters (including about 50 talented students who are given complete material support) in a building that we are currently renovating. We are expanding the premises so that students can be more comfortable, and soon a kollel for about 100 Avrechim will open in the same place.

Naturally, many institutions ask us for help and receive generous

amounts of it. However as we said at the outset, we will only slightly lift the veil concerning our activities, leaving most hidden. As it is written, "The hidden [things] are for the L-RD our G-d, but the revealed are for us and our children" (Deuteronomy 29:28).

Let us not forget the pearl of Ashdod, the community of Beer Moshe, which carries the name of the Tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto Zatzal, may his merit protect us. This holy community brings together G-d-fearing Jews, a portion of whom work to earn a living during the day and study Torah during the night, while the other portion consists of Avrechim who are immersed in Torah study both day and night.

The Beit Midrash started out in a prefabricated building, but soon the place became too cramped to contain those who studied there. It was therefore expanded, yet even then it was too small to shelter everyone who came to pray and the Avrechim who studied Torah there each day.

At present, it is the largest kollel in the Ashdod region, consisting of 120 Avrechim who study along with members of the community.



The new Yeshiva at Bayit Vagan - Jérusalem



Here too our teacher, with the help of our generous American friends, took an enormous burden upon himself, namely the construction of an edifice that will be among the largest and most imposing in all Israel. It was built on a lot of 6,700 square meters and is under the supervision of Mr. Yehuda Zahavi, one of Israel's best architects. It will easily contain all those who wish to study and pray there.

Near the gravesite of the Tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto Zatzal is where the prefabricated building,



Lecture given by Rabbi David Pinto Shlita in the Buffault Synagogue in Paris

which served as the first Beit Midrash, once stood. It has been temporarily moved to a nearby lot until our edifice will be completed in all its beauty near Shavuot of this year.

In this luxurious edifice (which will shelter more than 600 Avrechim and students) we see daily progress in the construction of the following:

- A 500-seat synagogue.
- A completely subsidized reception hall available for all who need it.
- A very lavish mikveh.
- A yeshiva for the young.
- A kollel for some 200 Avrechim.
- Three different Beit Midrashim.

• Everything necessary for those who need it, particularly for members of the community.

That's not all. Nearby on the lot, additional housing units will soon be built to answer the needs of those who are looking for an apartment at a good price and with reasonable conditions. All profits that may arise from these apartments will be devoted to Torah institutions.

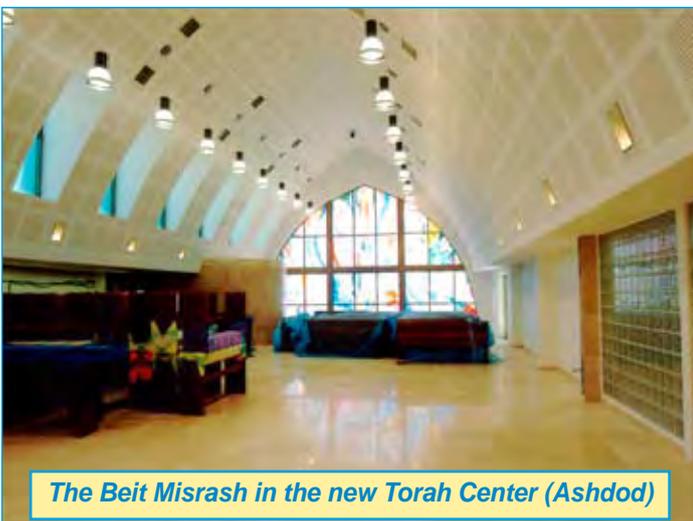
And the hand remains outstretched to increase and adorn the Torah!

On this occasion, we would like to thank all our institutions in France, the United States, Israel, Mexico, Canada, and Argentina for all their

help and support, as well as for the confidence that they have placed in us.

We thank the president of our associations in the United States, the president of our associations in France, the president of our association in Mexican, the president of our association in Canada, the president of our association in Argentina, and the president of our worldwide Hevrat Pinto and Oroth Haim VeMoshe associations.

We would also like to thank all of you for your generosity, which has allowed us to spread Torah and make it shine around the world. May the merit of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal protect you. Amen.



The Beit Misrash in the new Torah Center (Ashdod)



The Mikva for men in the new Torah Center (Ashdod)

MAN'S DUTY IN THIS WORLD: THE TORAH AND MITZVOT

From Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita

Blessed and praised be the Creator for the goodness that He shows us every day and at each instant. If today we want to describe the kindnesses of Hashem, which constantly accompany us (especially this year), time itself would come to an end without such a description being complete. Neither would all the sheets of paper in the world be sufficient to describe, be it even a small portion, Hashem's kindnesses to us day after day.

We say this very thing in our prayers: "To Him Who alone performs great wonders, for His kindness endures forever" (Psalms 136:4). Hashem performs wonders for us at each instant, for His kindness is eternal – it exists for all time, without interruption. We also recite in the Shabbat prayer Nishmat Kol Chai: "Even if our mouth were filled with song as the sea...we would still be unable to thank You...for even one of the innumerable myriads of favors, miracles and wonders that You have performed for us and for our fathers before us."

At the same time, however, we remain fully unaware of the miracles that Hashem performs for us at each instant. For example, when someone is sleeping soundly, the Creator does not ignore him, but rather protects him at all times. When has such a thing ever happened: A king who remains awake during the entire night to guard his servants while they sleep, acting like a servant to them! Yet Hashem acts in this way, for He protects His servants, the work of His hands, from all harm.

In addition, when a person is sleeping the Creator, blessed be He, protects his entire body so that his heart continues to beat, his blood pressure remains steady, his blood continues to circulate, his brain continues to function, and his breathing does not stop, be it even for a single instant. All this is part of the marvels that the

Creator demonstrates for us. Are people aware of this extraordinary wonder, that someone is watching over and protecting them at each instant as they sleep?

To top it off, when a person wakes up, he opens his eyes, gets dressed, moves his hands and feet, and attends to his affairs like everyone else. All this seems natural enough. However such is not the case! In this situation as well, there is someone protecting and helping him at each second in order to ensure that everything functions properly. It is not in vain that the Sages said concerning the verse, "Let all souls praise [neshama] G-d" (Psalms 150:6) that with each breath (neshima) we must praise Hashem (Bereshith Rabba 19:4), for in reality the Creator's kindnesses surround us at every step and at each instant.

Yet because of our many sins, we are oblivious to all this. We have become so accustomed to the everyday conditions of our existence that we have come to see them as being normal, natural, and permanent. And if regrettably something does not work properly, we become filled with discontent like a pomegranate is filled with seeds, to the point that we in no way feel that Divine Providence is protecting each of us individually. People ask themselves why such things happen. The answer is that, in order for a person to strengthen himself and immediately engage in soul-searching before the awe-inspiring days of Tishri, he must think a little.

2. The Torah and Spirituality: The Primary Aspect of Creation and the Existence of the World

Hashem is One and His Name is One, and nothing exists other than Him. He was, He is, and He will be, and there is no god but Him. He is the first and He is the last, and besides Him there is no god. The Holy One, blessed be He, is the aleph, mean-

ing the One. He is called the Master of the world (Alufo shel olam – Zohar III:16b). He is represented by the aleph, the first of the 22 letters. Now as we know, the word aleph is formed by the same letters as the world peleh (wonder), which means that all of Hashem's actions for us are a wonder of wonders. As it is written: "He Who alone performs great wonders," wonders each second.

We need to reflect upon this. No one can understand Hashem's entire Creation, with exception to certain special beings who know the Creator and realize that He brought about Creation so that it would have overseers who would shower it with everything it lacks. The question then arises: What is lacking in all of Creation?

The answer is extremely simple. Everyone should know that Hashem in fact prepared a material world for man to live in, but only on condition that he takes care of the spiritual aspect contained in the material world, for that is the main thing. That is what a person will possess after his death. While he is alive, it is forbidden for him to get excited only about the material aspect of Creation – which is superficial, the exterior envelope – while neglecting its main contents, meaning the Torah. The Torah is found within Creation, which continues to exist primarily because of it. Without the holy Torah, from which Creation began, the material world would not exist.

Actually, we have already said that Hashem, Who is the Master of the world (Alufo shel olam), looked into the Torah to create the world. This means that from Divine spirituality, which is contemplating the Torah, Creation was brought into existence with its material aspect. The essential part of man's work consists of changing the aspect of the material, i.e., to change materiality into spirituality. However man can only accomplish this if he has the will to do so.

Consequently, man's duty is to exist

primarily from the spiritual. This is what is to nourish the material, not the reverse. A person must not look solely to materiality; he must not take into account only what his eyes see externally, while neglecting the main thing, the Torah, which maintains Creation's very existence.

A person must also realize that when he leaves this world after 120 years, neither honors nor wealth, nor anything that his eyes have seen of the material world will accompany him (Perkei Avoth 6:9). Even his body will remain in this world, rotting away in the grave. Consequently, what will he take with him in Gan Eden, if not the spiritual wealth that Hashem placed within Creation, the Torah and mitzvot? These are found inside Creation.

3. Feeding the Soul and Man's Goal in Life

A person should briefly reflect upon what will happen to his soul. At the time it leaves the body, the latter will remain on earth while the soul will hover over it, without permission to reenter it and bring it back to life. The soul will then have no connection to the body (which is completely material), for it is called a spark of Divinity, breathed into the body by Hashem when a person comes into this world.

What then is the goal of the soul? It comes into this world to look for spiritual nourishment, as it was used to having in the supernal world. It is helped in this quest by the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvot, but in this world it is struck by materiality. What must it do in such circumstances?

The soul must be helped by the body in which it finds itself in order to transform the material into spiritual by the performance of Hashem's mitzvot. Otherwise, what was a person created for? Did Hashem work to create him solely to drink, sleep, and profit from all the vanities of this world, to anger Him and then to get punished? Is that the goal? We must open our eyes and see that we have not come into this world for that. It was not to rejoice in the material and anger our Creator by not nourishing ourselves from the spirituality that He embedded within Creation for us to find.

The Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah and mitzvot to man so that he could observe them, so that the soul would only be nourished by spirituality. In this

way it would transform the material body into an instrument of holiness, until it becomes holy in and of itself, and hence not destroyed in the grave after a long life. In the same way that the body is transformed into a spiritual instrument, so too do all its members.

To what can this be compared? It is like a moving car. The car's goal is to help a person get to his destination faster than he would on foot. An airplane has the goal of helping him get there even faster. Nobody, however, asks himself why a car or airplane was invented (or anything else meant to help people in this way), because it is clearly understood that such things are designed to bring people to their destinations more quickly.

The same applies to man. Hashem created him, yet in order that he quickly discovers his goal in this world – that he does not tire too quickly in finding it, for he may be destroyed if he went too slowly on his own – the Holy One, blessed be He, gave him the Torah. It helps us to discover the secrets of Creation and uncover true knowledge so that we would know with certainty what our true goal in this world is. The more a person puts an effort into studying Torah, the more quickly he will understand what Hashem wants of him and what his duties are.

However in the same way that a car may break down and must be repaired in order to regain its usefulness, so too does a person risk faltering in understanding the Torah. He may end up modifying the mitzvot according to his whims and desires, and if he becomes unstable in observing them, he may do something in one way now and in another way later. What will happen in that case? There is the danger of a tremendous spiritual collapse, for his deeds may deteriorate and he will stop serving G-d. That person will then veer off in all directions, perhaps even becoming profoundly depressed and having doubts about his faith. At that point, what is the solution?

The solution, the true remedy, is to completely return to Hashem. When a person completely repents of his sins and wants to improve himself, Hashem will accept his Teshuvah. Rapidly and easily, he will once again become G-d's servant, and in accordance with Hashem's will he will arrive at his true destination, which is spirituality.

4. I Created the Evil Inclination, and I Created the Torah as its Antidote

A person may ask himself the following: If Hashem wants me to serve Him with all my heart, why does the evil inclination prevent me from doing so?

The answer is that we must realize that Hashem created a good entity called the evil inclination, for the Sages have said that it is "very good" (Bereshith Rabba 9:7). This means that the inclination that seems evil to man (since it seeks to deviate him from the right path) in fact brings him closer to Hashem. The evil inclination turns a man into a Tzaddik, as the Sages have said: "There where Ba'alei Teshuvah stand, the greatest Tzaddikim cannot stand" (Berachot 34b, Sanhedrin 99a).

Actually, the question is a complicated one. Instead of saying that the evil inclination is very evil, it is even called "very good," for the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that it is very good. What good did Hashem see in it?

It is precisely because of this situation – one in which the evil inclination confronts a person and drives him to do evil, yet he nevertheless wisely reflects upon it and seeks the truth – that he will find the right path, as it is written: "If he says, 'I have labored and found,' you may believe him" (Megillah 6b). He will then begin to study Torah once again and discover the light, for it was only covered by an external husk of materiality. Therefore this inclination is very good, for it leads a person to come closer to Hashem and to become very good.

As I am writing all this, I am in an airplane traveling from Paris to Montreal. I have a tuna fish sandwich with me, whereas everyone else here in Business Class has an abundance of fresh food and unlimited drinks.

The flight attendants pass nearby and out of politeness they ask me if I want to eat. They are no doubt surprised when I refuse. Why would I forgo a delicious meal, with all sorts of salads, meat, fruits and vegetables, drinks, ice cream, and so on, to eat something that looks like poor man's food?

A special, powerful force exists when we see people around us enjoying various

kinds of sumptuous meals, whereas we have to content ourselves with a tuna fish sandwich. This is especially true when we know that these foods are forbidden. Furthermore, the pleasing aroma of these foods makes its way to us, and we must put an effort into not noticing them; we must also not dwell on the fact that all these foods are forbidden. In doing so, we certainly carry out some words of Torah and sanctify ourselves even more.

It is just as we have said. In things that are forbidden (and even for mitzvot), the evil inclination tries to entice us, to make us stumble. However if you demonstrate that you are stronger than it, this earns the evil inclination merit! It tried to entice you, but you emerged victorious, thus demonstrating that you cherished the mitzvah. Otherwise, all the mitzvot could be performed without any special effort, and they would therefore have no importance or value. It is therefore the evil inclination that brought you closer to Hashem.

The Holy One, blessed be He, knows fully well that the evil inclination is very powerful and that alone a person cannot resist it. This is why He provided us with the Torah as its antidote (Kiddushin 30b). It has a pleasing fragrance, to the extent that under the influence of this fragrance, a person can conquer the evil inclination. Even more will a person study Torah and carry out the mitzvot, for at that point the evil inclination can no longer approach him because of his great holiness, purity, and spirituality.

5. The Evil Inclination is Hidden in Man's Heart

Since we have reached this point, I thought that I would provide an example of what we are discussing. Our teacher Moses, the father of the prophets (Vayikra Rabba 1:15), warned us that the evil inclination is not always found in the most impure places, but also in the purest places of all. Even in places that people consider to be holy, the evil inclination waits for a man in order to make him fall into its trap.

Thus a warning was given to the High Priest concerning improper thoughts that he risked having while he was in the Holy of Holies during Yom Kippur, lest he die in

that case. This is why he entered the Holy of Holies with immense fear. How is it possible that the High Priest could have had improper thoughts on Yom Kippur, and not only that, but in the Holy of Holies? How could that be, since he knew that he would die if he had such thoughts?

In this we see that it was precisely in the Holy of Holies, in the most sanctified of places, that the evil inclination awaited the High Priest in order to arouse wicked thoughts in him. In such a case he would die, and the forgiveness that Hashem wanted to give to the Children of Israel on Yom Kippur would not come through him.

There is another astounding example that we find with Moses. In Parsha Pekudei, it is stated that Moses alone erected the Sanctuary, brought in all its vessels, placed the curtains all around, and anointed Aaron and his sons (Exodus chapters 39 and 40). It is then written: "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the L-RD filled the Sanctuary" (Exodus 40:34). This means that the Shechinah immediately rested upon the Tent of Meeting.

However right afterwards it is stated, "Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it" (v.35). This means that he could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the Shechinah was there, which is why he remained outside where the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke to him.

This is difficult to understand. Moses remained in Heaven for 40 days and 40 nights, neither eating bread nor drinking water (Exodus 34:28). There he saw all the celestial beings, fearing neither the angels nor the seraphim. He spoke with the Holy One, blessed be He, throughout the whole time, and he ventured into the fire and clouds without fear. If such were the case, it means that Moses had no fear of being in the supernal worlds that are boundless and infinite, whereas in the small Tent of Meeting he was so greatly afraid that he didn't enter it simply because it was filled with Hashem's cloud of glory. Why was Moses not afraid in Heaven, whereas here below he was afraid?

We learn a very important principle that Moses comes to teach us here. In

Heaven he felt comfortable, without any fear of the angels or the seraphim, nor of the fire or clouds, because his body was completely pure. There he spent all his time neither eating nor drinking. This is all due to the fact that in Heaven the evil inclination does not exist, and without the evil inclination, there is no reason to fear it.

This is why Moses feared nothing in Heaven. There, the evil inclination does not exist. Furthermore, the Shechinah resides there. However in this world, the place where the evil inclination resides, Moses was afraid of even being in the Tent of Meeting (a sacred place), and he immediately left it. Thus he taught the Children of Israel a lesson on how to conduct oneself in a sacred place. In addition, great care must be taken in a sacred place, for it is precisely inside the Sanctuary that the evil inclination is liable to make a person transgress.

There are therefore great demands made of us in this world. We live in a world entirely filled with falsehood and vanity, so we must pay very special attention to not fall into the power of the evil inclination. If Moses could not remain in the most sacred of places because he feared that he might come to having a slightly misplaced thought (even if the Holy One, blessed be He, protected him from all harm), how much more should we be particularly attentive in an impure place! It is truly frightening when we think of it.

Due to our many sins, the generation in which we live is filled with all sorts of abominations, sins, and erroneous conceptions. As a result, we must be especially vigilant and aware of the following thing: A Jew is born pure and he must also die pure, for after 120 years, how can he present himself before the King of kings, in the abode of His glory, in a state of uncleanness?

Each person must carry out what our Sages have said: "That your exit from the world should be as your entry therein" (Bava Metzia 107a). In this way – by being clean of all sin and filled solely with Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds – we will be able to see the face of Hashem and rejoice in all the good that is reserved for the Tzaddikim.

6. Before Whom You Must Give an Accounting

Some people ask me, "Prove to me that there's a judgment after death, that there's reward and punishment after 120 years. Maybe in reality there's nothing after death, in which case I will have worked in vain to study the Torah and practice the mitzvot all my life!"

What is the answer to this question? I tell such people, "If you have a doubt concerning the judgment that occurs after death, it is precisely this which obligates you to remove doubt from yourself and believe even more in Hashem, to repent and strengthen yourself in Torah and mitzvot, until your doubt is replaced by certainty and you know that there is a Creator and a judgment after 120 years."

I also add, "I promise you that if you were to only try, you would see that you are wrong, and you will come and thank me for having helped you realize that there is a judgment after death." I also say, "If you want to rid yourself of the yoke of the Torah and mitzvot, given that you have a doubt, I have a question to ask you: When a doctor tells you that there is a slight chance that you may have a serious disease, and he gives you some medication just to be on the safe side, would you begin to argue with him as to whether it will cure you or not? If the medicine can do you no harm and can only make you stronger, would you refuse to take it simply because you doubt the doctor?" In reply to my question, people tell me, "Naturally! When it comes to saving my life, the doubt becomes secondary and I'll take the medicine."

I then continue: "Consequently, what would you say about the doubts you are having about a judgment after 120 years? You will obviously improve your conduct here in this world, given the possibility that you can be judged after 120 years. In addition, what would you say if you arrive in the world above and then realize that there is a Creator, that there is reward and punishment, and that there is a judgment and a Judge? At that point, you will no longer be able to improve your conduct!"

"Therefore your small doubts are completely irrelevant. It is impossible to say that all of Creation is answerable to itself

and that there is no Judge or judgment. How can you accept running the terrible risk of realizing after 120 years that because of a doubt that crossed your mind, you remained devoid of all mitzvot? What will you be able to do in the world above? This is also a question of life and death for you."

If a person wants to say that there is no reward or punishment after 120 years, and that there is nothing to see in Heaven after death, the fact that he has a doubt concerning this subject is a sign that the evil inclination is trying to distance him from the truth, all while a person's soul screams out to him to not listen. This is because doubts arise in the heart only when one is not protected from the evil inclination. However if a person is well protected by the holy Torah, it is then obvious that his doubts will completely disappear.

To illustrate this idea, we may cite the words of the Sages concerning Rephidim: As soon as Israel slackened (raphu) in their Torah study and mitzvot, Amalek attacked them and cooled their hearts (Sanhedrin 106a). Now we know that the word Amalek has the same numerical value as safek (doubt), as well as the numerical value of "dollar".

This means that the power of Amalek grows stronger when a person only tires to accumulate silver and gold. Thus he neglects Torah study and the performance of mitzvot because he values money over them, even though they protect him from the evil inclination, which Amalek evokes. This is why it is precisely at that time that Amalek comes to him and instills a doubt in his heart by saying, "Listen, it was only because of your intelligence and luck that you earned all this money, not because of your prayers to Hashem!"

Thus Amalek leads people from one doubt to another, failure by failure, until they fall completely into the abyss. Consequently, everyone needs a great deal of help from Heaven, and to work on themselves as well, in order to escape from the grasp of the evil inclination and to find refuge in the shadow of the good inclination.

7. Elul: "I am my Beloved, and my Beloved is mine"

Here the famous question is asked: How can a man, made of flesh and blood,

conquer the evil inclination? How can he see the face of Hashem after 120 years and say before the Celestial Court, "I have lifted up my hand to the L-RD, the Most High G-d [Genesis 14:22], I who am nourished solely from spirituality and not from vile materiality"? Is such a thing possible?

This is why we must thank Hashem for having given us days of mercy and favor, days of soul-searching in which we can repent and improve ourselves. We can then remove from our hearts all the doubts that we had throughout the year and strengthen ourselves from that point on, clinging solely to the Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds. In this way we will return to our Heavenly Father, we will believe in Him, and we can ask Him for forgiveness, as in the verse: "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine" (Song of Songs 6: 3).

However everyone must take the first step of "I am my Beloved's," and then the Holy One, blessed be He, will come closer to him, connect to him, and thus "my Beloved is mine." As the Sages have said, "Make for Me an opening as narrow as the eye of a needle, and I will open it as wide as a hall" (Shir Hashirim Rabba 5:2). A person must begin, and then the Holy One, blessed be He, will come to his aid, for "one who desires to purify himself is given help" (Yoma 38b).

It is during these days of spiritual awakening that Heaven definitely knocks at the door of every Jew's heart: "The sound of my Beloved knocking" (Song of Songs 5:2) and a voice replies, "Open to Me, My sister, My love" (ibid.). The Sages have said that the Holy One, blessed be He, is extremely close to all who call upon Him in truth during those days (Rosh Hashanah 18a), and He is ready to accept their repentance. He stands behind the wall, watches, knocks at the door of each Jew and says, "My son, repent. Do Teshuvah wholeheartedly. Strengthen yourself in the Torah and mitzvot, and then you will experience good in this world and in the World to Come."

8. Divine Providence on the Individual Level

This not only applies during the days of Elul and Tishri. Sometimes the Holy One, blessed be He, awakens a person from his

spiritual slumber during the middle of the year, to the point that His specific providence can clearly be seen at each step. Consequently, what more is needed? Do people need clearer signs than that?

To prove this, I will recount three wonderful stories that clearly show the workings of Divine providence at each instant, stories from which people can learn how much we must believe in Hashem. It also teaches us how we must return to Him completely in order to be declared innocent in the judgment, and thus to arrive in the supernal world after 120 years in a state of purity and cleanliness, filled with spirituality.

Story I: The Lizard and Complete Teshuvah

During the week of Parsha Ki Tisa 5760, an orthodox man (one of the greatest benefactors of my yeshiva in France) came with his son to see me. His son had veered from the path, to the point that he was seeing a non-Jewish girl. The son had studied, like everybody else, in a yeshiva at first, but there he had been badly influenced by various lowly people, to the extent that he arrived at the edge of the abyss. At first his father asked that he accompany him to see me, but he categorically refused. In the end, however, he finally agreed to meet with me.

Since I had already heard the boy's whole story, I set out to convince him. Yet everything that I said fell on deaf ears. The boy listened to nothing I said, and he even began to laugh and make fun of the things he was hearing.

"Do you know that the world has a Creator?" I suddenly asked him. The boy replied, "Prove to me that a Creator exists!" At that moment I looked at the father of this boy, who beforehand was a believer, yet now had completely lost his faith in Hashem, and I didn't know how I could help him. The father had never asked me for anything before, and here he was before me with an enormous problem!

All of a sudden I asked the boy, "What do you fear in life? What are you afraid of?" He answered, "I'm afraid of lizards." I then said to him, "The lizard has a Creator. It doesn't come along just like that to terror-

ize you. If it comes your way, it is a sign that you have sinned, for a person who hasn't committed a sin is afraid of nothing. The Holy One, blessed be He, placed man above domestic and wild animals, and if he is afraid of them, it is because he has sinned."

The boy then said to me, "Prove it!" In fact after a few seconds, the proof arrived, for at that very moment a lizard entered the room! I have no idea from where it came, or how it got into the room, but it got up onto the table, stood on its legs, and looked at the boy. At that point he was in a complete state of shock, gripped by an unbearable fear. I too was afraid, since I didn't know from where it had come, and on top of everything it was wintertime! Normally lizards are found in the summer, yet this one had suddenly appeared in the room, and at exactly the right time – precisely when the boy had said that he was afraid of them!

The more the boy moved back, the more the lizard approached him. I then said to him, "You see! I didn't know that you were afraid of lizards," to which the boy replied, "It's true. Nobody knows." I went on: "The lizard isn't looking at me. It's only looking at you!"

The boy understood the obvious implications: From Heaven he was being called to repent. He completely returned to Hashem, immersed himself in a mikveh, left his non-Jewish girlfriend, and became a G-d-fearing Jew. Here we see that Hashem put in my mouth what he had to be told, for I certainly had not prayed for a lizard to show up!

We learn a tremendous principle from this, namely that Hashem created everything in the world with a definite purpose. It's possible that He created that lizard solely so that the boy could do Teshuvah, for it's difficult to believe that there are lizards running about in a yeshiva, and that one of them could arrive in the exact room that we were in to scare the boy. It was apparently created for that very purpose.

When I told this story to the Rosh Kollel, who knows the boy's father very well, he told me that a similar event happened in Bnei Brak to the Gaon Rabbi Haim Kaniewsky Shlita. He was once studying with his study partner on the subject of

grasshoppers (concerning which are permitted to eat and which are forbidden). All of a sudden the Rav said, "It's too bad that we don't have a grasshopper here to look at and examine!"

He had barely finished speaking when a grasshopper from outside arrived straight onto the Rav's Gemara. He and his study partner understood that this was from Heaven, and they looked at it from all sides to learn all the details of the laws concerning it. They eventually let it go out by the window, but afterwards his study partner said to the Rav, "It's too bad we let it go. I still have a question about it." The Gaon replied, "It's a pity that you didn't say this before. By observing the grasshopper, I could have answered your question." Once again, the grasshopper returned to the room until it came upon the Gemara, and at that point they truly understood that this was from Heaven. Some time later, the Gaon Shlita confirmed this story to several people who asked him about it.

We learn a great principle from this: Hashem created everything in nature solely for Torah study and to teach the Jewish people, as in the case of the lizard, which had been created to bring a boy back to the faith.

Story II: Those Who Perform a Mitzvah Suffer No Harm

My secretary and I were to travel to the United States at the end of Shabbat. A few days earlier, my secretary's wife had come to ask me for a blessing, for she was complaining about a feeling of exhaustion that had been bothering her for the past few days. In addition, she also told me that there had been some tension in the home, and since they were about to be moving soon, she was feeling a great amount of stress. What was she to do?

At first I felt a little uneasy with regards to this woman, for she is an excellent wife, letting her husband travel with me everywhere I need to go. Thus there was ample reason to give her a blessing. At that point the Holy One, blessed be He, put an answer in my mouth, and I said: "Your problems aren't so bad. There are more serious problems out there. There are people who are sick, who have very serious problems,

such as neck tumors. Before you, I saw a woman with a tumor in her neck, so your problems aren't so bad."

I continued to speak to her in this vein, continually mentioning (without realizing it) the story about the woman's neck tumor. My secretary's wife listened to me and then went home.

At the end of Shabbat, before getting into the airplane, I saw that my secretary's expression had changed. His face was emotionless and something was tormenting him. I asked, "Why so somber today?" He replied, "Two days ago, my wife began to feel something like a small growth in her neck. This frightened her, and she immediately went to the doctor. What the doctor said was also very alarming, and he told her that some tests had to be carried out right away."

I immediately told my secretary, "Your wife has absolutely nothing to worry about." I went to the United States with him, during which time his wife underwent her tests. The doctors did a biopsy of a portion of her neck, and the results turned out to be excellent. She had no tumor; everything had disappeared. She then called her husband to tell him the good news, after which I said to him: "This is due to the merit of those who support the Torah. When someone supports the Tree of Life, he lives, for it is said: 'he shall live by them' [Leviticus 18:5], not die because of them. Actually, those who perform a mitzvah suffer no harm."

Story III: Complete Teshuvah before Dying

Once while I was in the United States, an elderly Jew by the name of Mr. Azoulay came to see me. He had married late in life and still had no children. He asked me for a blessing to have children, and I asked him to do several things. He did them, and he then had three girls (triplets). When I returned to the United States the following year, Mr. Azoulay came to see me with his three girls, and he gave a large donation for our institutions.

In 5760, while I was once again in the United States, I was very surprised to notice that Mr. Azoulay did not come and see me during my stay. However he eventually met me a few minutes before my

departure, but without a donation. I then thought to myself, "It is written, 'Tzedakah protects from death,' " but I didn't know if I should ask him for a donation or not. I gave him a blessing, all while judging him favorably and telling myself that he might send me a donation later on.

During the week of Parsha Shelach 5760, I received a telephone call from the United States. I was told that Mr. Azoulay had had a stroke and was dead at the age of 52. I was completely taken aback at this news. The person with whom I stayed while in the United States, and who told me this story over the telephone, was also thunderstruck and overcome with fear. When I asked him what he was afraid of, he said: "On the day before Mr. Azoulay died, he said to me, 'Who knows what may happen to me? Maybe tomorrow I will die. Who will say Kaddish for me?' He even asked me to say Kaddish for him after his death. When I asked him why he was speaking like this – why he was thinking about dying even though he was still young – he replied, 'I just have a feeling.' In fact on the following day, this feeling of his turned out to be accurate, which is why I'm so shocked."

I said to him, "This is just as the Sages have said: Forty days before person's death, he is told that he will die. The proof lies in the fact that he had this feeling. Some people die without sensing it at all, and so they leave this world without having repented. However that man had a intuition, which means that he had merit because Heaven announced it to him."

It is written, "Repent one day before your death" (Perkei Avoth 2:10). If that man was thinking about the day of his death (since he had said that he would have no one to recite Kaddish for him), then he certainly wanted to repent and therefore died in Teshuvah. Thus he is invited for life in the World to Come.

We clearly see from all this that Hashem's individual providence accompanies us at each moment, day by day, throughout the year. If such is the case in this world, how much more is this true in the World to Come! The Holy One, blessed be He, will call us to judgment concerning everything that we have done in this world, especially concerning everything that we have not done, meaning the Torah that we have not

studied and the mitzvot that we have not performed, for there is a Judge and there is a judgment.

That being the case, what will we say on the day of judgment, and what will we answer on the day of reproof? We should feel ashamed for each instant in this world that we do not study and are not performing mitzvot. In addition, we should thank Hashem for His miracles and wonders that accompany us each day, for we are the essential part and the pinnacle of Creation. Hashem created us in order that we accomplish the goal of Creation – the holy Torah. If we refrain from doing so, how will we be able to stand before Him, stained on that great and terrible day of judgment?

It is our duty to transform the evil inclination into something that is very good. We must transform the material into the spiritual. We must study Torah, for it is the antidote to the evil inclination, which tries to make us transgress both in pure and impure places. We must conquer it and completely eliminate all doubts from our hearts. We have the ability to completely change ourselves for the better. We can accomplish this by a complete Teshuvah, especially during these days, days of mercy and kindness, when Hashem is near and knocks at the door of our hearts. Let us improve our deeds, and may the covenant not be dissolved.

For this to occur, we must firmly awaken ourselves throughout the year, particularly during these present days, of which it is said: "Rouse yourselves from your slumber, you who sleep. Awaken yourselves, you who have fallen asleep." These are days that are particularly suited for repentance. If they pass without anything having happened, the reproof levied against us will be even greater, and we will have no answer to give before the Celestial Court.

If we conduct ourselves in this way, Hashem will certainly listen to our prayers and supplications, and He will bring us back to Him completely, for we are His children, the pinnacle of Creation. We have the ability, after a long life on earth, to present ourselves in the World of Truth filled with blessings, Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds.

MAN'S GOAL IN THIS WORLD IS TO PREPARE HIMSELF FOR THE WORLD TO COME

From Rabbi David H. Pinto Shlita

It is written, "They shall take for Me an offering; of every man whose heart makes him willing, you shall take My offering" (Exodus 25:2). Rashi explains, " 'You shall take for Me' means 'for My Name.' " Commenting on these verses, Midrash Peliah states: "It is written, 'Hear O Israel, the L-RD is our G-d, the L-RD is One.' "

During Seuda Shelishit in our Beit Midrash, one of the rabbis asked me two difficult questions. The first: Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, say that it is precisely this mitzvah that should be done "for My Name"? Are the other mitzvot not to be done for His Name? Why it is precisely here that this is stressed? The second question: What is the meaning of Midrash Peliah (mentioned above)? What connection is there between the Shema and the mitzvah of Terumah (an offering)?

Many holy books have already asked the first question. However I thought that I would base my reply, with G-d's help, on what I had said during a lecture to the community.

First of all, let us see what the Torah says in this parsha. The Holy One, blessed be He, commands us to make a Terumah, meaning that everyone must offer according to his heart for the construction of the Sanctuary. A person would in this way fulfill the mitzvah of Tzedakah, and with the silver collected from the offerings the Sanctuary and its instruments would be built. This would be a place for the Shechinah to reside among the Children of Israel.

We know that the Sanctuary alludes to and symbolizes many lofty concepts for the Jewish people. During the construction of the Sanctuary and the fashioning of its instruments, Hashem also alluded to various con-

cepts, the most important of which is what we learn here, namely that a man should build his life in the service of G-d. He must observe how the Sanctuary is built and his actions must be inspired by it.

Consequently, the most important item in the Sanctuary, the one that the Torah first commands be built in our parsha, is the Ark of the Covenant. This is the holy Ark in which the two tablets of the law were placed, the area where the holy Torah is found. In observing how the Ark was built and carried, we may draw some lessons on how to wisely lead our lives.

The Ark is built of wood and covered with pure gold inside and out. On the upper edge, the Creator commanded that a crown be made to adorn it, which itself consists of pure gold, as it is written: "You shall make on it a gold crown all around" (Exodus 25:11). How is the Ark carried? Four rings of gold were placed at its four corners, and two poles of gold-covered shittim (acacia) wood were fitted into the rings, and in this way it was carried.

Concerning the poles, the Holy One, blessed be He, commands, "The poles shall remain in the rings of the Ark; they may not be removed from it" (Exodus 25:15). This means that the poles were to permanently remain in their place, without being removed, to the point that the Sages said that whoever removes the poles transgresses a positive mitzvah and deserves lashes (Yoma 72a).

Now when we first hear this command, we have two reasons to be greatly surprised: First, if Hashem's will is for the poles to permanently remain by the sides of the Ark, why did He not command that they be firmly attached to it, exactly as the

crown and rings had been attached to the Ark? Instead, the rings should not have been made at all, but rather the poles should have been placed under the cover and firmly attached to the body of the Ark so as not to be removed from it! If Hashem commanded that the rings be made, and simply to slide the poles through them (which is something only temporary), what is the meaning of the commandment to not remove them? (Note: The Gemara states, "They were loose, but did not come out [entirely]" [Yoma 72a]).

We can fully understand this in accordance with what we have said, i.e., that the entire construction of the Sanctuary and its instruments allude to the edification of man and his way of life.

Man is charged with working during his entire life in order to resemble a holy ark, a vessel filled with holiness and containing the Torah. Thus when a righteous man leaves this world, we say in his eulogy, "The Ark of G-d has been captured" – "The holy Ark had been captured" (Ketubot 104a).

Man must also adorn himself with fine character traits, inside and out, just like the Ark. When performing mitzvot, he should always pay attention to adding a gold crown to adorn the mitzvah, as it is written: "This is my G-d, and I will adorn Him" (Exodus 15:2). From here the Sages learn, "Add beauty to the mitzvot" (Shabbat 133b, Sukkah 11b).

In addition, how was this holy Ark lifted and carried – how should a person lead himself to ever higher levels of Torah and the fear of G-d? In the same way that the Ark in the Sanctuary was carried with poles, a person should hang onto the poles of the Ark and thus be lifted and car-

ried along. What do the poles represent in the life of a person? The command, “You shall make poles of shittim [acacia] wood” (Exodus 25:13) alludes to the Torah, which is also called a tree of life (Perkei Avoth 6:7, Berachot 32b). This means that by the continual study of Torah, with love and diligence, we will elevate ourselves and ascend higher and higher (according to Psalms 84:8). We must also be careful to carry it, and also to support those who study it by carrying it with the poles, as it is written: “It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and its supporters are happy” (Proverbs 3:18).

The more we put an effort into carrying the poles (by studying Torah), the more we will elevate ourselves and increasingly recognize the full magnitude of its worth and holiness. Thus from level to level, the more we know Torah, the more we will love it, to the point of being faint with love for it. We will try at all costs to observe the mitzvot and to recite the holy letters of Torah. We will also spend a good deal of money for it and the mitzvot, as we are told about the Tannaim, who expended enormous sums to carry out the mitzvot.

True, in seeing someone demonstrate great fervor in serving G-d, some of that person’s friends and associates will be afraid that he is not acting appropriately and rationally. They will feel that he is emulating a shittim (acacia) tree in the sense of shtut (folly, foolishness) by spending a great deal of money on the performance of mitzvot. Without paying any attention to those who are belittling him, he should persistently continue along this path and support the Torah without feeling the least bit of doubt, just as the poles that were forbidden to be removed. Actually, it is Hashem’s will that he continues to study Torah, supports it financially, and observes the mitzvot.

Although Hashem desires perseverance in serving Him, He nevertheless did not want the poles to be rigidly fixed to the Ark in such a way as to be immovable. With regards to the rings, there is a profound lesson to be learned by the one who serves

G-d, namely that he should make a ring around himself, a frame by which to set limits for himself and realize what is forbidden and what is permitted, as in the case of the railing that a person must build on his roof (Deuteronomy 22:8). This is also similar to the injunction to sanctify oneself in permitted things (Ye-bamot 20a). He must not leave this frame, and in this way he will protect and elevate himself on the path that leads to G-d’s house.

What do the rings represent? Hashem knows that a person’s money is his life, and that his existence depends on it. When a person gives to Tzedakah, he gives a part of his heart with it (the word *damim* means both blood and money). This is a very difficult mitzvah to perform, for in reality it embodies a loss for the one who carries it out, and he will worry about getting by.

The Creator wants to help us perform this mitzvah and make this battle easier for us. This is why in His mercy Hashem reminds us of the day of death, the day when neither silver nor gold will accompany a person, but only Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds (Perkei Avoth 6:9). At that point, money will no longer serve any purpose.

Nevertheless, Hashem certainly does not want a Jew to be overtaken with sadness, which is harmful and even destructive. The goal of such a reminder is solely for a person to wake up, to realize that at each moment in this world, he can give a little bit of money and thus acquire a great mitzvah, that of Tzedakah. With a little effort, we can acquire a truly good thing, which will accompany us even then, once everything is over at the end of a long life. Each coin that we give represents an extra mitzvah, and it is solely this money that produces wealth.

This is precisely why the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted the poles (which allude to Torah support) to be inserted into the rings, for the rings are round and recall the day of death and grieving, just as all round things do. For example, we eat lentils at the home of the deceased and

during Tisha B’Av (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 552, Perkei D’Rabbi Eliezer 35), and Jacob prepared lentils to eat after Abraham died (Bava Batra 16b). A person will thereby recall the day of death and be motivated to give to Tzedakah, and so he will emerge victorious in his difficult fight against the evil inclination.

This is what the Holy One, blessed be He, said when He asked for an offering from the Children of Israel: “They shall take for Me an offering” (Exodus 25:2). He lovingly calls to us and says: Please, realize that after 120 years you will only take along a Terumah, a word formed by the same letters as the word Torah and the letter *mem* – the Torah that was given in *mem* (40) days (Menachot 43b). You also take along the mitzvah of Tzedakah, as well as all other Torah mitzvot, for these are the only things that you will take with you. This is why today is the best time to accumulate even more merits through this mitzvah, for it will accompany you for eternity.

Let us now say that we fully understand the aforementioned statement of Midrash Peliah, which cites the verse, “Hear O Israel, the L-RD is our G-d, the L-RD is One.” By attaching the rings to the Ark, the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to remind us of the last Kriat Shema that we will hear on the day of our death. This is to motivate us to take advantage of our time and money here in this world, while we are still alive, in order to accumulate the greatest possible amounts of mitzvot and merits.

There is more. To awaken us as much as possible to the mitzvah of Tzedakah, the Holy One, blessed be He, has taught us the importance of this mitzvah by saying, “They shall take for Me an offering” – for My Name. This means that one who gives Tzedakah and supports the Torah is as if he supported Hashem Himself, as if he were connected to His Name. Actually, “for Me” signifies that giving actually relates to “My Name.” The giver will also remember that by giving, he builds the Sanctuary, the abode of the holy Shechinah, the place of the Creator.

Above all, the giver should remember that the Mishkan (Sanctuary) is formed by the same letters as the word Nimshach (drawn). Hence by the mitzvah of Tzedakah, he also merits to be actually drawn to Hashem, to witness Heavenly assistance, and to see that the Shechinah's abode is drawn inside the work of his hands by all his deeds. This is what Hashem truly wants by teaching us this mitzvah, and consequently it embodies something new with respect to the other mitzvot, for it is written "for Me" (i.e., "for My Name") which is not the case with the other mitzvot.

However there is something else that we still need to understand. The Torah had already given the mitzvah of Tzedakah (Deuteronomy 15:11), so why does Hashem again command "for Me" (i.e., "for My Name")? This becomes clear in light of what we have already explained. Hashem knew that He would find people who would give to Tzedakah because of the Torah's commandment, but not wholeheartedly and with joy, and so they would not be connected with their Creator. They would thus lose the primary thing – being connected to His Name.

Now we know that the goal in life is to try to emulate Hashem, as the Sages have said: "In the same way that He is merciful, so should you be merciful..." (Yalkut Shimoni Beshalach 245). If there is an imperfection in a person's heart, he will not achieve life's primary goal and its reward. This is why Hashem mentioned this mitzvah to us a second time by saying, "for Me" (i.e., "for My Name"): Cling to My mitzvot and carry out the mitzvah as you should, and then you will be actually connected to My Name.

However even when a person performs this mitzvah, it may be that two things are flawed in his donation. True, he gives Tzedakah, but he may be doing so because he is obligated to do it – to take pity on one who is in need. This is why Hashem comes and says, "for Me"

(i.e., "for My Name"). Perform the mitzvah for Hashem's Name, for it is "Me" Who commanded you, not because you understand that it must be done.

There is yet another flaw that a person may have when performing this mitzvah, namely that he does it as a routine thing, not as one of the 248 positive mitzvot. This is why Hashem tells us to not permanently fix the poles in the rings, but only to slide them in and not to take them out. This means that the poles allude to supporting the Torah, and in this area Hashem says to do it in a temporary way, but without removing them. That is, they must be left there at each instant. This demonstrates a renewal at all times, which is the opposite of a mitzvah performed by rote. We must constantly renew ourselves; we must not perform mitzvot by rote.

In finishing, I again reflected upon another aspect of the same subject. I wrote all this during the week of the yahrtzeit of my uncle, the Tzadik Rabbi Meir Pinto, may his merit protect us all, who passed away on Adar 12, 5740. I had the merit of being by his side to help him during the last month of his life, until he passed away. I remember that just before his passing, he was holding in his hand some money, which I tried to remove. He was holding it so tightly, however, that I was not able to do so until his actually passing, for at that point his grip slackened.

Why did such a thing happen? We may understand this according to what we said above, that it is a hint given by the Holy One, blessed be He, to His children. Above all else, money symbolizes life to a person, for it is used to obtain everything he needs to continue living as he desires. It is for this that a man struggles, as his soul is attached to money (which is his life). When his day of death approaches, he struggles to remain alive and clings to his money, meaning his life. Yet when death finally arrives, all his efforts prove useless. He leaves this

world, and money no longer serves him any purpose.

This is what the Holy One, blessed be He, asks us to remember: Now, while you are still alive, use money to obtain a good thing for yourself that you will be able to take with you and will be extremely helpful. What is this good thing? Put tremendous effort into giving to Tzedakah with a good, generous heart, doing so for the Name of Hashem. Create a connection between your soul and the Creator, between you and His Name forever by giving to Tzedakah. You will then merit to leave this world in holiness and purity, in the oneness of Hashem, the oneness that you helped to proclaim.

Let us say that we now fully understand why it is said concerning the Terumah, "for Me" (i.e., "for My Name"). Money can be a source of lack, and money is life (as we have said, the word damim means both money and blood). Man has trouble parting from it, and he does so only if he has tremendous confidence in Hashem. However even someone who has such confidence is liable to give to Tzedakah for personal glory, not for the sake of the mitzvah itself, and so again there will be some defect in the performance of this mitzvah.

Consequently, if a person remembers that after he dies his glory will not accompany him, that silver and gold will not come with him, and that his body will only hear the eternal Shema Israel, then his heart will certainly soften and he will give to Tzedakah "for Me" – for the Name of Hashem – with a generous heart.

To conclude, we may say by allusion that the words li lishmi ("for Me, for My Name") are formed by the initials of the words Lekachtem Yuchal Leolam Shekulo Metukan Yafe ("You may take them forever in the World that is entirely perfect"). In fact, only the Torah and mitzvot accompany man in the World to Come, and it is through them that he can connect to the Creator, blessed be His Name.

THE GREATNESS AND POWER OF PRAYER

The following remarks, my dear brother, which are drawn from the book by Rabbi Yechezkel Lewinstein Zatzukal, will provide those who pray with several pieces of advice to more fully benefit from their prayers. With G-d's help, may our prayers be accepted with favor.

It is written *kerum zulut livnei adam* (Psalms 12:9) which can be translated as, "When a strange thing is exalted among the sons of men." The Gemara states with regards to this: "These are the things of supreme importance, which nevertheless people neglect" (Berachot 6b). Rashi explains, "For example, prayer."

There is a special Segula in prayer. It can certainly save a person from all harm, and although Torah study is equal to all the mitzvot, in terms of being saved from hardships only prayer has this special power.

The object of prayer is to feel like a poor person, devoid of all things, who must ask Hashem for everything. This is because without Hashem's mercy, it may be that a miracle will never occur and He will not demonstrate His patience with us.

We must understand just how precious prayer is. The Gemara asks why the Matriarchs were childless, and it answers: "Because the Holy One, blessed be He, longs to hear the prayer of the righteous" (Yebamot 64a). These words of the Sages are awe-inspiring. It is as if Hashem had desires and wanted our prayers.

When we begin to pray for something, Hashem will no doubt help us, and our prayers will be answered.

We must believe that the Holy One, blessed be He, hears our prayers, that He is filled with mercy, and that He gives us everything we ask for, as it is written: "Cry out [pray], and Hashem listens."

The first thing that we should get used to is recognizing and knowing that we are standing before Hashem. We must feel that we are addressing our requests to Hashem when we pray.

A single prayer said in darkness and obscurity, said with a troubled spirit, which a person through his efforts transforms into light, is more important than 100 prayers that come easily, with the reward being in proportion to the effort made.

Confidence in Hashem is the sole reason and goal of prayer. This consists of believing and recognizing that "Everything comes from Hashem." As a

result, we ask Him to give us what we need. Prayer means that because we present our requests to Hashem, we thus proclaim that we do not have the strength to do anything ourselves, and it is only from Hashem that we receive what we need. Therefore, my dear brother, through this realization and basic affirmation, we will merit that G-d answers our request.

During prayer, we must at least put an effort into understanding what we are saying. Otherwise, our prayer is not truly valid.

Prayer should not be automatic, but rather consists of supplications to G-d, requests that we address to Him.

Prayer consists very simply of speaking with Hashem, which is why we must, when praying, feel as if the Shechinah is before us. We must feel in close proximity to Hashem.

The best way to rekindle one's faith is to pray with vigor, for the essential aspect of prayer is to stand before Hashem and speak to Him. It is to feel that the Shechinah is before us; there is no greater stimulus for great faith. Now as we know, prayer replaces sacrifices, and even when sacrifices were being offered in the Temple, everyone had a clear vision of this. Thus when we pray, we must also clearly feel faith.

The G-d of Abraham comes to the aid of the person who sets aside a place for prayer. This means that we must set aside a place in our hearts where there is nothing other than Hashem's providence. When we believe in Divine providence and know that nothing happens outside Hashem's will, we will merit receiving everything we need from Him through our prayers.

A man must pray three times a day, just as he eats three times a day. Each meal gives him sufficient energy until the next meal, just as each prayer is spiritual nourishment for his soul (Kuzari).

It is obvious that we must understand the meaning of the words that we say while praying, and our ears must also hear what our mouths are saying.

The reason why prayer is so neglected is that we do not realize or understand its nature, its power, or its greatness. All our prayers consist of simple words, which is why we do not accord enough importance to them.

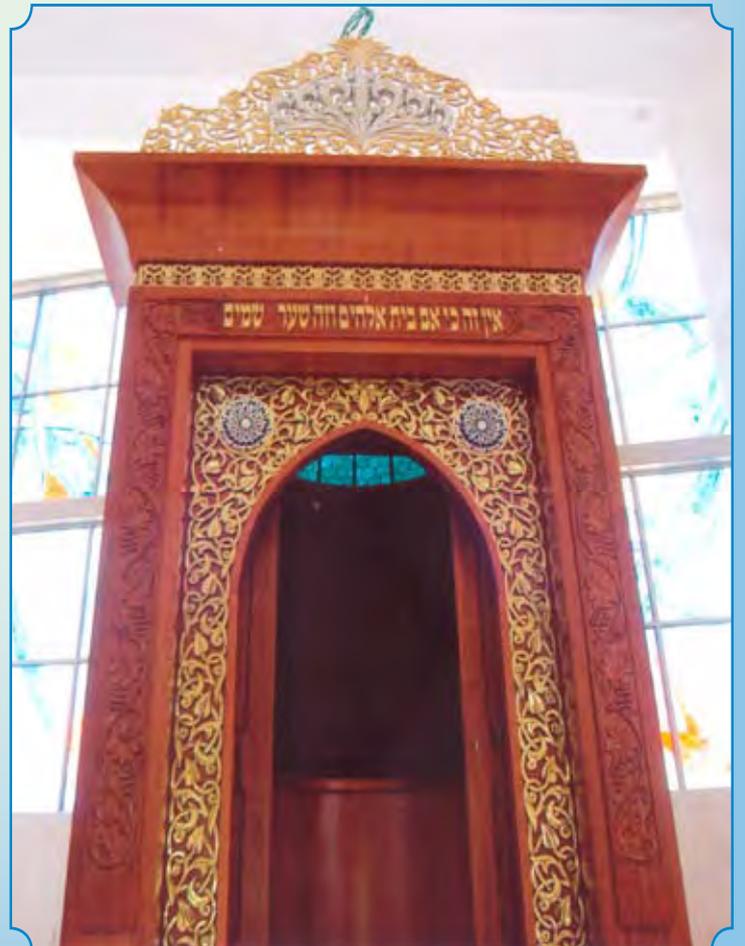
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THE IMPORTANCE OF TZNIUT

By Yaël Hava Abitbol

It is fundamentally important to understand that Tzniut (modesty) is the way of giving a woman the ability to overcome her evil inclination. We know that men not only have the mitzvot to keep, but are also obligated to study Torah, which helps them to grow spiritually.

Our Sages cite the words of Hashem to His beloved people: "I created the evil inclination, and I created the Torah as its antidote." This is not surprising, since Hashem first prepares a remedy before administering a punishment. Thus because of Torah study, men have ways to overcome their evil inclination in all the areas that it attacks. If a man does not study, he will therefore be held responsible for his sins.

We also see that our father Jacob prepared himself for a longtime before arriving at Laban's. In fact he studied continuously for 14 years at the yeshiva of Shem and Ever in order to arm himself with a solid shield and protect himself from the evil inclination, which could await him there.

A woman also has tests to overcome. She can desire to do things that are forbidden in whatever area it may be, but she does not have Torah study to overcome it.

From where will she be able to draw the strength necessary to overcome her natural desires and weaknesses?

The answer is that a woman has her own type of "vaccine," her own "remedy," which is the equivalent of Torah study for men. It is this ability of Tzniut that, when properly guarded, encompasses everything. It empowers a woman and makes her so holy that she is capable of outsmarting her own evil inclination and resisting its relentless pressure.

Today the evil inclination tries by all means possible to fully carry out its task, meaning to distort the demands of Tzniut and Kedushat Israel. From this we see the extreme importance of

Tzniut, for it is the only way for women to combat their evil inclination.

The Chafetz Chaim Zatzal explained that the evil inclination's attacks have become particularly powerful in our times, when the exile is soon coming to an end and the greatly awaited arrival of Mashiach gets closer each day. Just as a fire is aflame until the time it is put out, the Tumah of Arayot (impurity of sexual immorality) is also aflame and shoots upward until the arrival of Mashiach, the era in which it will be wiped off the face of the earth, as it is written: "I will remove...the spirit of impurity from the land" (Zechariah 13:2).

The Vilna Gaon himself said that just as every man who is immersed in Torah is capable of fighting his evil inclination, so too are women who are immersed in Tzniut, for it allows them to be victorious in the same way.

Furthermore, we should realize that the reward is proportional to the effort made. The reward of Tzniut is to have children well-versed in Torah and outstanding in their good deeds, as it is written: "Your children will be like olive shoots" (Psalms 128:3).

Rabbeinu Bechaye wrote, "When a man is righteous and humble, and he has noble character traits, this is a testimony to the decency and good thoughts of his mother. It is because of these merits that she had such a son, for a beautiful tree speaks highly of its roots." In addition, every woman who acts discretely can marry the High Priest and give birth to High Priests, even if she is not a daughter of a Priest, as it is written: "All glorious is the princess within; her clothing is embroidered with gold" (Psalms 45:14), an allusion to the clothes worn by the High Priest.

Can we, as women, tell ourselves, "I would like to be like that Talmid Chacham, or like that Tzaddik, who are so holy! But I don't have the ability to elevate myself like them. They spend their time studying Torah day

and night, for they're men and that's their duty. But that's not the case with me."

It is a fundamental error to think like this!

All women, whoever they may be, have the capacity to be holy and attain the heights of spirituality by perfecting themselves in the laws of Tzniut.

We must realize that every woman has within herself a potential for Tzniut that comes as a heritage from the Matriarchs.

A woman who progresses more slowly in the area of Tzniut should not be judged condescendingly, for "whoever is greater than another, his evil inclination is greater" (Sukkah 52a). In other words, the more difficulty a woman has in progressing in Tzniut, the greater her evil inclination is.

Why is this so? Listen carefully: It is because her potential in the area of Tzniut is that much greater!

Furthermore, as we have said, "The reward is proportional to the effort." In other words, the more a woman puts an effort into perfecting herself in this area – which is not simply a good habit to take up, but also a positive commandment, as it is written: "Your camp shall be holy" (Deuteronomy 23:15) – the greater her reward will be!

We should regard our difficulties in the area of Tzniut not as faults, but rather as challenges!

Today it is not simply one or two women who are confronted with the challenges of Tzniut. Rather, all women encounter certain difficulties in this area. This stems from a certain slackening on our part in Tzniut. The only way that we can climb back up is to strengthen ourselves in the application of the laws of Tzniut. It is up to us women to strengthen ourselves as much as possible in Tzniut in order to draw a shefa (abundance) of blessings and purity upon ourselves and to speed up the arrival of Mashiach Tzidkenu as much as possible.

THE WEDDING OF RAV RAPHAEL MEIR AMRAM - THE FIRSTBORN OF THE TZADDIK RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO CHLITA

All roads lead to the Dan Panorama hotel in Tel Aviv... A huge crowd, including chassidim and dynamic individuals from all classes and every community, begins to flow like a river. All are headed to the same place, with everyone trying to get to the hotel as early as possible. A caravan of taxis can be seen headed towards the place, and why not? A wedding will soon take place at Tel Aviv's Dan Panorama hotel, the wedding of young man who is exemplary in Torah and the fear of Heaven, the firstborn son of the Rav and Tzaddik, the Admor Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita.

Does this seem insignificant to you? Rav David Pinto Shlita is marrying off his firstborn son. Is there a Jewish heart that is not rejoicing? People's eyes strain to see and be seen, to hear and be heard, to participate with body and soul, with all 248 limbs and 365 sinews, in this holy joy that will no doubt bring abundance to all the worlds. It will exert an influence of joy, success, and everything good on the entire Jewish people.

The High Point: The Moving Chuppah Ceremony

The place is abuzz with people. Everyone waits for the crucial moment: The Chuppah ceremony. Rabbi David Shlita arrives, and all eyes try to catch a glimpse of him and participate in the events of the Chuppah. The Rav Shlita, for whom the holiness and purity of the Jewish people are of prime importance, constantly asks for a complete separation between men and women (since our Sages have said that when men and women mingle together during a wedding, it is impossible to recite the

Sheva Berachot, for it is like an instance of indecency). This is in order to conserve holiness in all its purity during the Chuppah ceremony, at that special moment which is soon to take place.

The father of the Chattan, Rabbi David Shlita, walks toward the Chuppah, his face enflamed on one hand and filled with immense joy on the other. The Chuppah ceremony takes place on a raised platform so that everyone can see it well. In his hand, the Rav Shlita holds a cane that belonged to his grandfather, the Tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal (may his merit protect us), who as we know performed many miracles. Whoever holds it in his hand can give blessings by the merit of the Tzaddik with an abundance of success and everything that is good.

The event is very moving, and all eyes are fixed on the Chuppah to see how the ceremony progresses. We then hear a murmur in the crowd – the ceremony has begun! One could truly hear a pin drop. This brings to mind the Ma'amad Har Sinai, when not even a bird chirped or flew, when there was no lowing of cattle, and the entire universe stood

in silence to hear Hashem's voice as He gave the Torah to Israel. This is what the Chuppah ceremony resembles. It is like the giving of the Torah on Sinai, for the goal of marriage is to build a faithful and holy home in Israel on the foundations of Torah and holiness, on the path that leads to the house of G-d, as our holy ancestors desired.

The Chuppah ceremony has begun, and the Rav Shlita, the father of the Chattan, covers himself in his Tallit and begins to initiate the wedding ceremony: "...Who sanctifies His people Israel through Chuppah and Kiddushin." The father of the bride, Rav Shimon Haliwa Shlita, reads the Ketubah, while the other blessings are said by Rav Menachem Tzvi Berlin Shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of Chaim Ozer Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. The last blessing is said by the father of the Chattan, Rav David Hanania Pinto Shlita. The atmosphere is truly electrifying. It is an atmosphere of absolute purity and holiness, and it hovers over the heads of this holy people. From the bottom of their hearts, they bless this young couple that has established a home in Israel and added a stone to the wall of the



The Houppa



Jewish people. The Shechinah hovers over them, just as the Sages have said: "When man and woman merit it, the Shechinah is found between them."

Great Joy in All Corners of the Earth

The Chuppah ceremony has barely finished when joyous celebration breaks out in full force. All the participants form circles and begin dancing wildly in honor of the great joy that has just erupted. Then, from all directions the crowd presses together in order for people to pass before Rabbi David Shlita and congratulate him, and also to receive a blessing from his holy mouth, which as we know accomplishes miracles. This moment is extremely elevated, a time of joy for the Chassidim and Kallah, when the entire community is blessed in a prayer that the home that has just been established be an eternal edifice.

Thousands of people pass before the Rav Shlita to congratulate him and receive his blessing, and the Rav Shlita pleasantly greets each one with great joy. At the same time, he gives each a copy of his book *Pahad David*, which covers various subjects. It has been published just in time for the wedding, and it contains in-depth articles on lofty concepts meant to teach people the path to follow and the proper steps to take in order to elevate oneself in the Torah and fear of G-d.

Thus for a long time the crowd marches past the Rav Shlita, where-

as nearby people begin to sit down for the wedding meal. The assistants of the Rav Shlita spare no effort in receiving each guest and showing them to their table or a comfortable place during the meal.

A casual glance inside the wedding hall shows the boundless esteem that the Rav Shlita enjoys from every Jewish community. From all sides we see Jews from every corner of the earth, from all cities and towns and from every community – Chassidic, Lithuanian, Ashkenaz and Sephardic – everyone seated together to honor the Rav Shlita, who is accepted and respected by everyone without exception, by all the Jewish people regardless of status or community affiliation.

Next to each of the guests, who have arrived from all corners of the earth, we see a great many from France, followers and students of the Rav from there, who have made every effort to travel from France and other European countries to partici-

pate in the wedding of the firstborn son of the Rav Shlita. We meet them at every turn, each speaking their own language. However the hearts of them all burn with the hope of being able to give back to the Rav Shlita a little bit of love and affection, some honor and glory, for what he has done for them over the years.

In addition to this, we see some guests who have happily arrived from all corners of the world. It is not without reason that they took the trouble to travel to Israel, the Holy Land, to attend this wedding. It was to show the Rav Shlita how much they want to emulate him in accordance with the verse, "As water reflects a face back to a face, so one's heart is reflected back to him by another" (Proverbs 27:19). The eyes shine in seeing just what a Jewish celebration is. The eyes glimmer in seeing a Jewish house worthy of the noblest families of Israel.

The Wedding Meal and the Joy of the Talmidei Chachamim

If we are speaking about the nature of the meal, we can describe it by what the Sages have said: "If one partakes of a meal at which a scholar is present, it is as if he feasted on the radiance of the Divine Presence" (Berachot 64a). Everyone clearly sees that the radiance of the Divine Presence hovers over those who are seated. If such is the case at each table, then a glimpse at the head table (where the Rav Shlita is seated next to the father of the bride,





The Gaon Rav Baroukh Ezrahi Shlita givins a Dvor Torah in the Seouda

Rabbi Shimon Haliwa Shlita, along with other Tzaddikim and Gaonim) clearly proves what the Sages have said, namely: “The Tzaddikim sit with their crowns on their heads feasting on the brightness of the Divine Presence” (Berachot 17a).

Everyone is seated, yet in reality almost no one pays attention to the sumptuous meals abundantly placed before each, for all eyes are constantly turned to the table of honor. Arriving there one after the next are Torah greats, Tzaddikim, Gaonim, and also ordinarily individuals who want to congratulate the Rav and receive his blessing. The guests, with a reverential fear, kiss the hand of the Rav Shlita and receive a blessing and some words of Torah from him. This is a spiritually elevated and important time, one that certainly assures blessings and even opens the great bolts to the gates of deliverance and mercy for all. This is why each one strives to be among those who receive a personal blessing, thus obtaining an abundance of blessing and success in this spiritually elevated and holy time.

Words of Torah and Blessing During the Meal

The meal continues for several hours. However since this is a true mitzvah meal, it is appropriate to say words of Torah to the Rav Shlita and to the father of the bride Shlita, and especially to the young couple. Thus one after the next, the great men

of Torah in attendance make their words heard.

With reverential fear, people listen to the enflamed words of the Gaon Rabbi Meir Tzvi Bergman Shlita (the son-in-law of the Gaon Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach Zatzal). They also listen to the words of the Gaon Baruch Mordechai Ezrahi Shlita (the Rosh Yeshiva of Ateret Israel), the Gaon Rabbi Shimon Haliwa Shlita (the father of the bride), and also the Rishon Letzion, the Gaon Rabbi Shlomo Amar Shlita. These men pour out blessings upon the head of the Tzaddik, the Rav Shlita, and tell everyone a little bit about his activities throughout the world. In their speeches, they also describe what the joy of a marriage is, as they bestow blessings upon the young couple.

To top it off, and again with reverential fear and in total silence, people listen to words of blessing and Torah from Rabbi David Pinto Shlita, who speaks in French in order to be understood by those who have come from France. People sense the emotion in each of the Rav’s words, and everyone clearly sees how he opens the gates of Heaven and tries to instill his listeners with an understanding of the nature of this great celebration, the nature of the joy of a marriage. It evokes the statement in the Torah, “They shall make a Sanctuary for Me – so that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8), for when a home is established on the foundations of Torah and sanctity, the Holy One, blessed be He, dwells in the home of the couple.

You Shall Be Joyful: Joy Breaks All Barriers

The meal continues, yet at the same time great joy breaks all barriers. Between servings, the Rav Shlita descends from the platform and heads for the dance floor, like Moses descending from the mount toward the people, and with all his energy he begins to dance, as if uplifting the earth. The joy is overflowing, and everyone is singing and dancing in honor of the newlyweds. However legs do not tire, hearts do not seek rest, bodies do not cease moving, and with intense energy the gathering dances with extraordinary



Chief Rabbi of Israël the Gaon Rav Mordekhai Amar Shlita giving a Dvor Torah in the Seouda



Son-in-law of Rav Chakh Zatsal, the Gaon Rav Tsvi Bergman giving his blessings to Hatan & Kala

enthusiasm, over and over without stop, without respite.

People eventually get back to their seats and continue the meal, but all of a sudden the dancing begins anew with even more people! The groom is then carried on people's shoulders, as everyone dances around in his honor, for a groom is like a king. It seems that we could say, "One who has not seen the joy of this celebration has never witnessed joy in his life." It is a little like the Simcha Beit Hashoeva, in which we draw the holy spirit, since from this joy everyone can draw an abundance of blessings and all that is good in life, for joy ascends to Heaven and opens gates there.

From time to time, the Rav Shlita takes someone by the hand (either one of his students or someone who

is dancing) and dances with him in the middle of a circle, and then we hear shouts of joy that ascend to Heaven. This is not only with those who live in Israel, but also with people who have come from abroad, and even with those who have come closer to Judaism by the merit of the Rav – they too merit being close to him. They also merit a tap on the shoulder or a friendly hug by the Rav, who wants to elevate them above the material world.

While all this is going on, those dancing with the Rav Shlita can testify that it is not everyday that a person has such merit, to dance with the Rav Shlita after he has just married off his firstborn son. The moment is truly special, and it can have a very beneficial effect on people because of its great joy.

With the end of the meal comes the public Birkat Hamazon. This is performed, followed by the recitation

of the Sheva Berachot, as everyone wants to join with those saying the blessings "that rejoice groom with bridegroom," for joy pours out all its benefits on everyone.

An Abundance of Blessing and Success for All the Jewish People

This magnificent wedding celebration finishes very late into the night, and it certainly exerts a beneficial influence in the spiritual and material realms for everyone. It is already been noted that the word beshirah is formed by the initials of the words yushpa shefa rav bekol haolamot ("great abundance spreads to all the worlds"). In reality, through the power of shirah (song) and music, the great joy that ensues then spreads tremendous abundance to all the worlds and on the Jewish people (both collectively and individually), an abundance of bless-



ing and success, children, life, and bountiful sustenance, in order that we may announce good things and be told good things.

May Hashem help us in order that this joy truly exerts an influence over the entire Jewish people, that they may know deliverance and mercy. May we all merit the long-sought goal that "all flesh together will see that the mouth of the L-RD has spoken" (Isaiah 40:5) by the construction of the Temple in all its glory and by the revelation of Mashiach our redeemer, speedily in our days, Amen.

THE EVIL INCLINATION IS CONQUERED BY THE POWER OF PRAYER

Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Chlita

It is written, “Jacob departed from Beer-sheba...and he encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set” (Genesis 28: 10-11). The Sages, cited by Rashi in the commentary on *vayifga* (“and he encountered”), explain that this word designates prayer (Berachot 26b). The verse is therefore telling us that Jacob instituted a prayer. In fact the Gemara teaches that the holy Patriarchs instituted our three prayers: Abraham instituted Shacharit, Isaac instituted Mincha, and Jacob instituted Arvit.

I have a question, however, concerning this: Why did the holy Patriarchs institute these prayers? Is it not enough for us to study Hashem’s Torah and to carry out the 613 mitzvot? Why do we need to pray? Is there anything special about prayer that does not exist in the Torah?

While we are on this subject, I thought of asking another question in a different area, which the answer to the first question will satisfy as well. The Sages say, “If that wretch encounters you, drag him to the House of Study” (Kiddushin 30b), and in this way you will conquer it. Now if this concerns a Jew whose whole time is devoted to Torah study, how could the evil inclination have reached him? Where did it find and ensnare him? However if this concerns a Jew that the evil inclination has already affected and managed to overcome (which seems to follow from the words of the Sages), how will he find the strength to conquer the evil inclination by dragging it to the Beit Midrash? For that matter, what can this Jew (who has al-

ready been defeated) do at the Beit Midrash in order to fight the evil inclination there?

With regards to this, I thought that I would explain a very profound principle in serving the Creator. The Torah, prayer, and the mitzvot are pathways and roads, conduits and guides on how to be drawn to the Creator and take upon ourselves the full yoke of the kingdom of Heaven. It is true that the holy Torah is the foundation that connects us with our Creator. However in their wisdom and saintly spirits, the Patriarchs felt that they had to institute a specific channel for Jews, a channel of exceptional holiness and importance, by which the Children of Israel would come closer to their Creator and connect to Him. That channel is prayer.

I shall explain what this means. When a Jew gets ready to pray, he has an idea of Who he is standing before, Who he is about to pray to, and Who is the One that he is about to present the desires of his heart, asking Him to bestow them for good and for blessing. Thus he readies himself prior to prayer in reverent fear of the King of kings. He opens his mouth and recites words of prayer as if counting silver coins, with calm concentration. This applies whether it be the morning blessings, *Pesukei D’Zimra*, or especially *Kriat Shema*, for when he recites the *Shema* by distinctly pronouncing all its letters, the fire of hell is cooled for him (Berachot 15b). Hence a powerful and indestructible bond is made between himself and his Creator.

In addition, prayer is a crown for the Creator of the world (*Pesikta*

Rabbati 20). Actually, the angels make a crown for Hashem with each word of prayer. They wait until the last Jew completes his prayer, and only then do they say, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” If a Jew does not perform a complete prayer, or does not pray with concentration, something is missing in the crown of the Holy One, blessed be He. However Hashem is kind to the Jewish people, for there are *Tzaddikim* who prolong their prayers and complete the Creator’s crown by making their prayers ascend. Thus every Jew can connect to the *Tzaddikim* and also complete their crown.

Despite a Jew’s emotion during prayer, he sometimes feels an emotional cooling afterwards, a sudden fall. Why does this happen? It is because after prayer, the evil inclination (that wretch) places itself before a man with the intention of beating him down – this occurring precisely after he has finished praying – for it wants to immediately break a Jew’s connection with the Creator. As a result, it is not enough for a man to have aroused his heart during prayer, since right afterwards the evil inclination wants to again attack, conquer, and make him fall into its power.

It is true that we cannot get closer to the Creator and connect ourselves to Him without arousing our hearts in prayer and opening them to a love for Hashem, an ever-radiant love. However it is precisely at this time that the evil inclination wants to trap a man and make him completely lose everything that he has gained. It is in this regard that the Sages have said, “If that wretch encounters you.” If the evil

inclination meets you now, after prayer (for it is constantly lying in wait to trap you), so as to disrupt your service of the Creator, how can you escape? “Drag him to the House of Study.” In other words, control the evil inclination by the power of the Torah.

I shall clarify this point. This subject deals with a respectable man, a Jew who works on himself and arouses his heart for Hashem during prayer. It is with respect to him that the Sages say, “If that wretch meets you,” which means that it will certainly encounter you. Nevertheless you are to raise your guard and drag it immediately to the Beit Midrash. Enter the Beit Midrash and study Torah there with as much vigor as possible. You will in this way be able to prolong your connection with the Creator of all the worlds. This means that prayer arouses the heart and creates a bond between a Jew and his Creator, and this bond is evermore strengthened by the power of the Torah that a Jew then studies in the Beit Midrash. He can thus completely dominate the evil inclination and conquer it.

The power of prayer is truly remarkable. We know that if we want to accomplish the King’s command, we must love Him. The more a person loves the King, the more likely he will be to carry out all His commands. Furthermore because he loves the King, everything that the King loves, a person will also love. Through prayer, a person makes the Holy One, blessed be He, his King, mentioning all the verses that proclaim His kingship in the morning blessings.

For a person to find a reason to be engaged in Torah study and have a desire to perform mitzvot, he must love the King, the Holy One, blessed be He. How can he achieve this love? By praying with great concentration, negating body and soul. Then, automatically, a person loves all beings made in the image of the King.

Such being the case, we see that the essential thing is prayer, for it leads to a love of Hashem and a love of Israel. This is why our holy Patriarchs instituted the three daily prayers, for they lead to a love of G-d and also prepare the way for Torah study. Consequently, it is very difficult for the Satan to see a Jew praying with concentration, for this provides him with a great spiritual elevation. The Satan therefore tries to reach a man as he leaves synagogue, before he studies Torah. It must therefore be conquered immediately, not given a chance to win, by a person strengthening himself right away through Torah study, the reading of Psalms, or the study of Mishnayot. It is in this way that we immediately control the evil domain of the Satan and his entourage. We know what the Sages have said about this: “The world stands on three things: On the Torah, on the service, and on deeds of kindness” (Perkei Avoth 1:2).

The Power of Adam’s Prayer for all the Generations

During the time of the first man, strength was not needed for prayer. This is because Adam was completely pure and holy before his sin. The ministering angels roasted meat for him in Gan Eden (Sanhedrin 59b), and he reached from one end of the world to the other (Hagigah 12a, Sanhedrin 38b). As a result, the Torah shone with a very great light (since nothing in Creation was as yet damaged), to the point that the taste of a tree and that of its fruit were the same (Yalkut Shimoni Bereshith 8) and the entire world yielded to the Creator.

In addition, Adam looked at the world and saw the beauty of all Creation. In his immense fervor for G-d, he knew what names to give all living things. He saw the hidden explanations in the Torah, to the extent that even the angels mistakenly called him G-d (Bereshith Rabba 8: 10). It was only when he ate that

they understood that he was made of flesh and blood. A man such as Adam, who was so greatly connected to his Creator, had no need to arouse his heart through prayer.

However a new era began after the sin. The worlds had been damaged, the pathways for abundance into this world had been blocked, and the letters of the holy Torah no longer shined so greatly. Instead, they had been swallowed inside Creation, where the eye of an ordinary man could not perceive them. The evil inclination then began to gather strength in the world, and it disturbed Adam and Eve by wicked thoughts and deeds. Adam therefore realized that he once again needed a special catalyst that would encourage and help him to connect to the Creator after the sin.

At that point, Adam and Eve understood that they had to develop a way that would allow them to connect to the Creator. They saw that they were naked, naked of mitzvot (Bereshith Rabba 19:6) that connect man to Hashem. This is why they immediately began to sew garments together, making themselves belts. This means that they once again girded themselves with limits and barriers in order to find shelter from all the obstacles in their way. Yet in reality, how did they defend themselves against the evil inclination, which acted within them and wanted to destroy them?

They did so through prayer. They began to call out to Hashem, and by the power of their prayer they succeeded in arousing their hearts. Thus they immediately attached themselves to the Torah with zeal. It was in this way that they protected themselves against the evil inclination and were even able to defeat it. In fact they were so successful that their reward was doubled, since despite the evil inclination’s opposition, they arrived at contemplating godliness. In fact we see that Adam used the power of prayer after his sin, as the Sages have said: “He recited the Psalm ‘Mizmor Shir LeYom

HaShabbat. It is good to thank the L-RD... [Psalms 91:1-2]" (Bereshith Rabba 22:13). This is a special prayer of thanks.

When Adam saw that he had committed a very serious sin, he seized the method of prayer. It was only in this way that he could once again arouse his heart for his Father in Heaven and reconnect himself to the Creator by studying, as we have explained.

In fact when Adam began to pray, he saw that there was a real link between himself and the Creator. Thus by the thanks that he uttered in prayer, he became the first pious man in the world. After him, King David also said in the Psalms, "Guard my soul, for I am devout" (Psalms 86:2). (Note: David's soul was connected to that of Adam, since the 70 years of David's life were the 70 years that had been removed from Adam [Bereshith Rabba 19:8, Zohar 1:55a]). David had become devout through the power of prayer. He also said, "Your statutes were music to me" (Psalms 119:54), for to him the Torah was like psalm and prayer. In fact he achieved his full greatness in Torah through the power of prayer, which enabled him (when combined with subsequent Torah study) to connect to the Creator of the world and arrive at the greatest spiritual heights.

There is more. We see the power of prayer at the time of the giving of the Torah. It is written, "Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain" (Exodus 19:2), and the Sages have explained this to signify "as one person with one heart" (Mechilta ibid.). This means that the Children of Israel achieved the highest level of unity before the giving of the Torah. However we must understand how they achieved such a lofty level, since they did not yet possess the power of the Torah. The answer is that they achieved this through the power of prayer. In fact they possessed the prayers handed down to them by the Patriarchs, who instituted the three daily

prayers (Berachot 26b). It was the power of prayer that purified and led them to such a lofty spiritual level that they sang Shirat HaYam (the Song of the Sea), to the point of being able to say, "This is my G-d, and I will adorn Him" (Exodus 15:2). It was in this way that they were able to receive the Torah.

We find something similar to this with Jacob and Joseph, when they were reunited after 22 years. Joseph fell upon his father's neck and cried, yet Jacob did not reciprocate or kiss him. What did Jacob do instead? The Sages say that he recited the Shema (Midrash Aggadah Genesis 46:29). In other words, Jacob channeled all his love for Joseph into the Shema, into prayer.

We know that in the first verse of the Shema, a person must take upon himself the positive mitzvah of "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This is because it is impossible to say "You shall love the L-RD your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, with and all your might" without loving your neighbor, Hashem's creation.

Hence this was the state of the Children of Israel in the desert, before receiving the Torah. They armed themselves with the power of unity and merited achieving a love for the Creator, since the one who loves the King also loves His only son, whom He loves as His own soul. When the Children of Israel perfected their souls by the love of their neighbor, by the power of unity, and by prayer, they also merited perfection of character and achieved purity at the giving of the Torah. Thus each Jew, if he puts an effort into elevating himself through prayer, will be pure and merit receiving the Torah.

The Importance of Arvit: Shining a Light into the Darkness

Since we have arrived at this point, we shall understand what is written concerning Jacob. When he left his father's home, he went to

study at the Academy of Shem and Ever for 14 years (Megillah 17a). Through this Torah study, he obviously merited to elevate himself and be protected from all forces of impurity. Yet as soon as he followed his father's orders (to travel to Haran to find a wife) and left Beer-sheba, it is immediately written, "and he encountered." This means that he encountered the evil inclination on the way, and it wanted to conquer him and make him transgress.

What did Jacob do? He immediately stood up and prayed Arvit. He initiated the power of this prayer, and thus it was Jacob who "encountered" that wretch, the evil inclination. He gathered all his strength in prayer, thus meriting very lofty revelations. It was to such a point that while he slept, Hashem stood over him and made great promises to him. He certainly saw Mount Moriah in this place, for Mount Moriah had moved there. When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, "This is none other than the abode of G-d, and this is the gate of the heavens!" (Genesis 28:17). Thus he also sanctified this place by the power of his prayer, and he defeated the evil inclination once and for all.

All this is actually alluded to in the word Arvit. In fact the word contains the letters of the words iv'ar ("he aroused"), boer ("this burns"), ra'av ("hunger"), ra ("evil"), and tav. This means that by the power of Arvit, we can arouse our hearts for the Holy One, blessed be He, and it then becomes possible to conquer the burning evil inclination, that old and foolish king, which always hungers after Jewish blood and which is completely evil and always comes with its entourage of tav (400) angels of destruction. Thus the verse states, "To relate Your kindness in the dawn and Your faith in the nights" (Psalms 92:3), meaning that during Arvit, which is "in the nights," we can conquer the evil inclination.

It was not in vain that Jacob instituted Arvit. As we know, the Sages have said that a Talmid Chacham

should not go out alone at night, for it is then that the forces of impurity are most powerful (Berachot 43b). However Jacob, who was alone at night, instituted Arvit precisely so that through the power of prayer everyone could conquer the forces of evil during the night and arrive at the sources of holiness.

Since we are speaking of this, I thought that I would explain another subject. Why did Jacob institute Arvit in particular, and what is the greatness of this nightly prayer as opposed to the prayers instituted by Abraham and Isaac (Shacharit and Mincha)?

As long as Jacob was dwelling in the home of his righteous father and mother, Isaac and Rebecca, he recited the prayers of his fathers Abraham and Isaac. Yet when Jacob was commanded to leave his home and travel to Haran, he thought of Laban the Aramean and realized that these two prayers would be insufficient. He understood that he would have to add another one to them.

This is why Jacob considered returning (according to Chullin 91b), telling himself: The place where my fathers prayed – where my fathers instituted the prayers – do I not need to add the prayer of Arvit in this same place so as to conquer the impure forces of the night? He also added: Certainly here the merit of my fathers protects me against Esau. The merit of the Torah also protects me here, yet in Haran, which is an evil place and without Torah and good deeds, these two prayers will certainly not be enough to save me.

This is why Jacob considered returning in order to institute an additional prayer. At that point the Holy One, blessed be He, brought Mount Moriah to him (Chullin 91b). Jacob prayed there and instituted Arvit for protection, demonstrating his devotion to this nightly prayer that is tremendously powerful, particularly during the long nights

of winter. Arvit has the power to protect a person from the darkness of the night, for in winter the day is short and two prayers are assigned to it (Shacharit and Mincha), whereas Arvit protects a person during the entire length of a drawn-out winter night. All this is due to the devotion of Jacob, who instituted Arvit.

I have reflected upon the greatness of this prayer. Actually, we find almost no Jew who is brought closer to Judaism by being taught the laws of Shabbat, family purity, tithes of fruits and vegetables, and so on. A Jew who is far from Torah and mitzvot will not understand that he can come closer to Hashem in this way. On the contrary, he will mock everything that he hears. How can he be brought closer? By teaching him to pray, to believe in the Creator of the world, and by opening his heart to the love and reverent fear of Hashem. It is only in this way, through the power of prayer and by the help of Heaven, that we can bring Jews closer to their Creator.

Conversely, to our great regret and shame, we find many people who regularly pray three times a day, yet are still uneducated, scoffers who mock everything that is holy, all because “prayer without concentration is a body without a soul.” Without a soul in the body, there can be no life. Thus if a person prays without concentration, his prayer has no life. Praying without concentration has no effect on the one who prays, and it’s a pity that he prays. Such prayer cannot give him the power to arouse his heart, and it certainly does not have the ability to give him the power to progress in Torah.

However there are two categories of the uneducated. There are some who do not pray at all and do not understand the nature of prayer. It is only when their hearts are aroused and we teach them that they begin to pray a little.

There are others who giggle when they pray. Their case is much more serious, for they fully understand the meaning of prayer, and they can come closer to the Creator and progress in learning by the power of prayer, yet they refrain from doing so. This is why every Jew must understand the power and greatness of prayer. It is only through concentrated prayer that we can progress in Torah and perfect ourselves in serving Hashem.

Despite all this, we know that most Jews in the world, although they are religiously uneducated and do not study Torah, nevertheless have solid faith in the Creator of the world because of their prayers. They would never renounce the Shabbat prayers, and there are some who would never renounce the three daily prayers. This is because the power of prayer can instill faith in the heart of man.

Yet because of our many sins, they are content to pray without studying Torah. This is why the Tanna said of them: “An ignoramus cannot be pious” (Perkei Avoth 2: 6), for they have no enthusiasm for Hashem’s Torah. It is a pity that they do not overcome the evil inclination and taste the Torah, as it written: “Taste and see that the L-RD is good” (Psalms 34:9). They would then see how good Hashem is.

This is why we must also conquer our material desires. It is precisely in this area that the Satan succeeds in silencing the heart of man by telling him, “You are a Tzaddik and a Gaon who is careful about praying [without Torah].” We must connect ourselves to both Torah study and prayer, for prayer makes serving G-d appealing and sweet, while the Torah helps man to attain his goal in this world. This is why we must also encourage others to both pray and study, for in this way we can overcome the evil inclination and come closer to Hashem.

A NIGHT OF SPIRITUAL ELEVATION, TORAH, AND THE FEAR OF HEAVEN

To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the yeshiva that carries the name of the Tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal in Lyon, the Ohr Haim VeMoshe institutions organized a very impressive gathering aimed at encouraging people and motivating them to study Torah.

Rabbi David Shlita, who came especially from Israel for this event, delivered a moving address to the large

began growing 20 years ago – when I knew you, when you were still young and not yet grown. Now, however, thanks to G-d, you have grown up on the knees of the Torah and the yeshiva!

“When you were young, you were great. Why were you great? Because one who elevates himself in the path of Torah is already called a great man. Happy are you, holy assembly, that the Holy One, blessed be He, has chosen you, and happy are you to have chosen to follow the paths of Hashem!”

It was an inspiring evening that lifted the thousand participants toward one of the most beautiful moments of Torah in the history of the Lyon yeshiva.

In hearing this unexpected appeal, dozens of young people in attendance responded by placing themselves in front of Rabbi David Pinto Shlita, and promising to commit themselves to an extra hour of Torah study each day at the yeshiva. It must be stressed that these people all work, and that they undertook this promise before the entire public gathering that filled the convention hall (the large part of which was com-



crowd that completely filled the great hall, about 1,000 people.

He said, “See just how much you love the Holy One, blessed be He! Before coming here, you knew what He was expecting of you tonight, and what you would be prepared to do for Him tonight – taking upon yourselves a little more of the yoke of the Torah and mitzvot – and still you came. You didn’t come to eat or drink, or simply to have an enjoyable evening, but you came for the honor of the Torah, to make a resolution tonight to strengthen yourselves as much as possible in honor of the Torah. To you I say: See the plants that I





heart of the listener. He added that everyone who faithfully deals with the public, the Holy One, blessed be He, gives them their reward.

The Rosh Kollel, Rav Assaraf Shlita said, "It's a dream come true to see hundreds of people who have come for an event like this, to hear words of Torah and take upon themselves the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who believed that the Torah had almost disappeared from France committed a grave error. Thank G-d, as we see, the Torah and its study are developing, in France and throughout the world, due to the devotion of the great men of our time. We ask Rabbi David Pinto Shlita to not abandon us,

prised of those from the elite of Lyon's Torah-observant community).

Hundreds of Ba'alei Teshuvah, gentle and humble, came to this event solely to identify with the holy Torah and erase even more of what their past had profaned. Now we may call them Bnei Torah and blessed by Hashem, may He protect them all.

The rabbis of the city said the following during that magnificent evening: The one who remembers the city of Lyon some 20 years ago would not have imagined that it would resemble a miniature Jerusalem today. By G-d's favor, the initiative taken by Rabbi David Pinto Shlita to open a kollel in a place that was a spiritual desert – where there was neither Torah nor the fear of Heaven – has succeeded, whereas nobody gave him the slightest chance of success. Today, thank G-d, 20 years later, we can say that by his merit, daring, and courage, as well as the great risks that he took upon himself, there are hundreds, perhaps even thousands of people who have returned to Judaism and at least know the meaning of the honor of Torah. Meanwhile, at the kollel there are about 40 Avrechim Bnei Torah, as well as hundreds of young people who come to study Torah after work. All this is because of Rabbi David Hanania Shlita, a person from a family of Tzaddikim, one of the men who supports all those who yearn for Torah.

The Chief Rabbi of Lyon, Rav Wertenshlag Shlita, welcomed all the participants to that historic evening. He also thanked Rabbi David Pinto Shlita for the responsibility that he took upon himself 20 years earlier, namely to establish Torah institutions not only in Lyon, but throughout the world. He said that the success he experienced in this task came from speaking from the heart, for words that come from the heart enter the

to continue to visit us, and to pray for us."

That night one rabbi said, "This is a gathering of generous people. They have come to thank Rabbi David Pinto Shlita and all who help him for their great generosity in having undertaken, here in our city, a holy task. It is because of their merit that today we see a new generation of young people who will be called upon to spread Judaism. In fact, the entire goal of Rabbi David Pinto Shlita is to reduce disbelief and to increase the love of G-d, which is the reason why he had Heaven's help in the fruit of his work throughout the entire world, especially in the city of Lyon."

Another Rav said, "The yeshiva is a source of faith, and one who wants to study a chapter of faith and trust in Hashem can go to the Pinto yeshiva. I promise him that he will emerge filled with faith and confidence in G-d. If you notice, hundreds of people have enhanced their service of Hashem. They have come closer to Torah solely because they have come closer to Rabbi David Pinto Shlita, and in him they saw a spring bursting with a love for Israel, a man from whom we can learn how to conduct ourselves in serving Hashem."





Inauguration of a new Sefer Torah at Lyon



Inauguration of a new Sefer Torah at Lyon





With the Rishon Letzion Hagaon Rav Ovadia Yossef Shlita



With the Rishon Letzion Rav Bakchi Doron Shlita



With Israel's Chif Rabbi Chlita Rav Meyer Low Shlita



With Rav Reouven Elbaz Shlita



With the Gaon Rav Yehouda Leib Steinman Shlita



With the Rishon Letzion Rav Mordekhai Eliahou Shlita



With Rabbi Haim Shmouel Loupian Zatsal



Rabbi Haim Pinto of Casablanca Zatsal



With the Gaon Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky Shlita



With the Admour of Beltz Shlita



With the Admour de Dushinski Zatsal



Inauguration of a Sefer Torah in Lyon - FRANCE



Torah studies in Lyon - FRANCE



Giving a Lecture in Mexico City



Torah studies (PARIS - FRANCE)

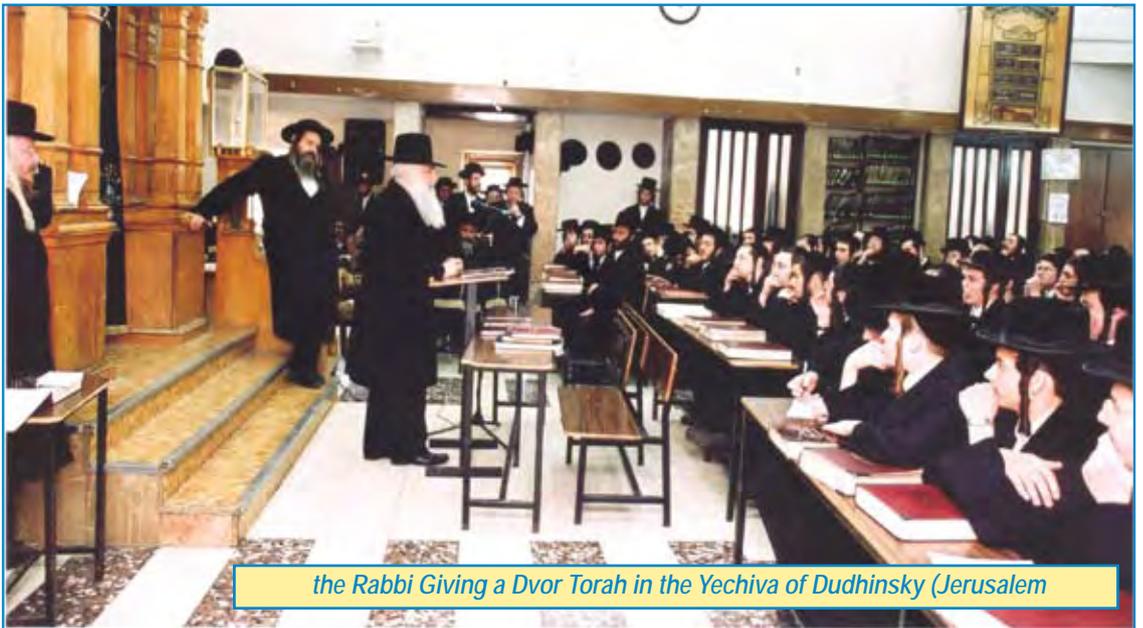


THE MAGNIFICENT RECEPTION IN HONOR OF THE TZADDIK RABBI DAVID PINTO SHLITA at Beit Yossef Tsvi (5 Tevet 5764)

On Tuesday night during the week of Parsha Vayigash (Tevet 5, 5764), a reception took place in a large building belonging to the great institutions of our friend, the Gaon

This great friendship saw the light of day during the lifetime of the Gaon and Admor Y.M. Dushinski Zatzukal, the Av Beit Din of Jerusalem. When these two Torah greats met, the fabric of a wonderful friendship was woven between them.

and Tzaddik, the Admor Rabbi Yossef Tzvi Dushinski Shlita. It was simply magnificent, accompanied with all the honor befitting both the guest of honor and the long standing friendship that bonds the great Tzaddik and Kabbalist Rabbi David Pinto Shlita to the Beit Yossef Tzvi institutions.



the Rabbi Giving a Dvor Torah in the Yechiva of Dudhinsky (Jerusalem)

During the lifetime of the Admor Rabbi Y.M. Dushinski Zatzukal, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita



With the new Admour of Dushinsky Shlita

went to visit him several times, and the Admor even asked for a blessing for himself, his family members, and his students. He also asked him to give a course to hundreds of students in the main hall of his large yeshiva. Once, the Admor Rabbi Y.M. Dushinski even lowered his

head before the Gaon and Kabbalist Rabbi David Pinto Shlita so he could lay his hands on him and bless him for good health and success, adding that he was a channel for bringing an abundance of blessings to the Jewish people. The Gaon Rabbi Y.M. Dushinski even visited him, despite the fact that walking was difficult for him in his final years. In spite of this, on several occasions he endeavored to see him so as to rejoice in his light. When there were family celebrations with the Gaon and Kabbalist, the Admor Y.M. Dushinski twice sent his son to Paris to celebrate with him. This is the history of their friendship, one that

knew no bounds. Thus when the lights went out in Jerusalem when the Admor Rabbi Y.M. Dushinski Zatzukal, the Av Beit Din of Jerusalem, left this world, the Kabbalist Rabbi David felt great darkness arising in the direction of Jerusalem.



With the Admour of Dushinsky Zatsal



Giving a Dvros Torah at "Beith Tzvi" - Jerusalem

It was only afterwards that we learned that, in fact, great darkness had come upon that night. The Gaon Rabbi David Shlita himself organized an evening of eulogies, with thousands of people participating in his city of Lyon as well as in Paris. He wept bitterly over this heavy loss for the Jewish people.

Consequently, it is obvious that this great friendship continues to go on, even now that his firstborn son, the Tzaddik Rabbi Yossef Tzvi Dushinski Shlita, received the crown of leadership for the great Beit Yossef Tzvi institutions. There was therefore an amazing meeting between these two Torah greats.

The Gaon, Tzaddik and Kabbalist Rabbi David Pinto Shlita also had the chance to visit the Beit Yossef Tzvi Torah institutions, out of which thousands of students have emerged and followed their saintly teachers and connected themselves to them.

May Hashem ensure that all the blessings that the great guest gave to our teacher Shlita be fulfilled in us, and may we merit a complete deliverance. Amen.

"THE PARCHMENTS ARE BURNING BUT THE LETTERS ARE SOARING ON HIGH HIS TORAH PROTECT US"

Eulogy delivered by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita for the Tzaddik and Gaon Rabbi Shalom Messas Zatsal, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem

The Letters are Soaring on High: The Torah Remains with Klal Israel. The Sages say that when the Romans returned from the burial of Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma, they found Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion studying Torah and gathering groups in public with a Sefer Torah in his arms. The Romans enwrapped him in the Sefer Torah and placed bundles of branches around him, which they set on fire. They then brought tufts of wool soaked in water and placed them on his heart so that he would die more slowly. His disciples said to him, "Rabbi, what do you see?" He replied, "The parchments are burning but the letters are soaring on high." The Executioner said to him, "Rabbi, if I raise the flame and take away the tufts of wool from your heart, will you bring me to life in the World to Come?" He replied, "Yes." The Executioner added, "Then swear unto me," and Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion swore to him. The Executioner raised the flame and removed the tufts of wool from his heart, and his soul quickly departed. The Executioner then threw himself into the fire, and a Heavenly voice was heard saying, "Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion and the Executioner have been assigned to the World to Come" (Avodah Zarah 18a).

There was great darkness in the world at that time, for the Romans had killed many of the Jewish people, including the Ten Martyrs, the Tannaim. However the words of Rabbi Chanina teach us something amazing. He said, "The letters are soaring on high," yet what does this mean? What does it mean that the letters are soaring upwards precisely when the Sefer Torah is burned?



The Tzaddik, few month before his decease

The accursed Romans wanted the Jewish people to forget the Torah, and they believed that they could achieve this by burning their book of study, the Torah. However they were wrong. I remember once in France having read that, hundreds of years ago, a French king had taken and burned all the Sifre Torah and holy books in France. The same thing happened in Russia, for this is what all our enemies have done to us. They have all wanted to burn the Torah, not to tear it up. This is because when we tear something up, traces of it are left behind. However when we burn something, it disappears completely. The only thing that remains is ash.

Concerning this, Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion teaches us that even when non-Jews burn the Torah, it does not actually burn. Its letters fly up and remain in the air, and the one who merits it can see them, for

the Torah certainly does not disappear. Although people may grieve because the Torah has been burned, nevertheless that Torah is definitely not lost; it remains in the air. The one who grieves over it will merit breathing in its letters, benefiting from the emanations of the Torah of this Tzaddik. Consequently, the Torah is not in Heaven, and the world continues to benefit from it.

In those circumstances, since the Executioner (although a non-Jew and completely ignorant) was grieved over what was being done to Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion, and because he had thoughts of repenting, he threw himself into the fire and instantly merited life in the World to Come. This embodies the concept of the letters soaring on high. When we mourn for a Tzaddik who has died, the Holy One, blessed be He, also pushes us to benefit from his Torah, for the Torah learned by this Tanna or Tzaddik hovers in the air, and people need to be protected by it.

This is what the Sages have said, namely that Moses' influence is felt in every generation in the 600,000 souls of Israel, for the Torah that he taught to the Children of Israel in the desert was transmitted to them, and when



Moses departed for the Celestial Academy, it remained with us (Tikkunei Zohar 69:112a). The more we study Torah, the more Heaven helps us to yearn for the Torah of Moses in our hearts. Moses was comparable to a Sefer Torah, and therefore the Torah continues to hover over us. This is how Moses exerts his influence in every generation.

Such was the great Tzaddik and Gaon Rabbi Shalom Messas Zatzkal. He left this world for another one, yet his Torah remains here, still in the air. The one who mourns his passing certainly benefits from his Torah, profiting from the merit of the Torah that he studied. Because we mourn the passing of the Tzaddik and Gaon Rabbi Shalom Zatzal, we may benefit from his Torah. May the Holy One, blessed be He, open our minds in order that we may better understand the Torah of Rabbi Shalom Zatzal.

About eight years ago, I was with Rabbi Yehoshua Dahan in Casablanca, Morocco for Passover. Rabbi Shalom Messas Zatzal was in Israel at that time, and his wife was having health problems. He called Rabbi Yehoshua in Morocco to wish him a happy holiday, and Rabbi Yehoshua told him that I was staying with him. I saw Rabbi Shalom's extraordinary humility at that point, for when he spoke with me, he asked for a blessing for his wife. I said to him, "Rabbi Shalom, I am not great; I am small, whereas you are the Rosh Av Beit Din. You teach Torah to the community, and you have the merit of your prayers. Why are you asking for a blessing from someone like me?"

I do not wish to repeat his response, but suffice to say that this man has always been a great among giants. He negated himself to request a blessing for his wife, which demonstrates his extraordinary humility. Someone who is prepared to set himself aside in order to receive a blessing is not an ordinary person. I said to him, "Rabbi Shalom, it's only because you're asking me for this blessing, only because of your humility, that the Holy One, blessed be He, will hear the prayer that you address to Him." That was Rabbi Shalom Messas Zatzal.

The Pain of a Tzaddik's Passing

The Sages say, "If one sheds tears for a worthy man, the Holy One, blessed be He, counts them and lays them up in His treasure house" (Shabbat 105b). We know that one who weeps for a Tzaddik, the Holy One, blessed be He, counts his tears and the pain that he feels, and He forgives his sins. Now we see something very surprising concerning Yom Kippur. On that day two goats are taken, one for Hashem and the other for Azazel. The goat for Hashem is slaughtered, atoning for the Jewish people, while the goat for Azazel is brought into the desert and thrown off the top of a mountain, being torn to pieces before even reaching halfway down the slope. It is in this way that Hashem forgives all the sins of the Jewish people.

This is very difficult to understand. We know that the Holy One, blessed be He, is merciful and takes pity on His creatures. This includes both domestic and wild animals, as it is writ-

ten: "His mercies are on all His works" (Psalms 145:9). Yet in such a case, why do we see such cruelty with regards to the goat for Azazel? Why does the Holy One, blessed be He, not tell us to first slaughter this goat and then to throw it off a mountain?

We find allusions to Hashem's mercy in sacred texts. The Sages recount that Rabbeinu Hakadosh experienced tremendous pain for 13 years because he once agreed that a calf should be slaughtered. It was being taken for slaughter when it fled and tried to find refuge under Rabbi's clothing. When Rabbi saw the calf, he took no pity on it and instead said, "Go, for you were created for this." When Heaven saw Rabbi not taking pity on animals, no pity was taken on him either, and thus he experienced extreme pain for 13 years. His pain disappeared when his maidservant was sweeping the house and saw some young weasels lying there. He said to her, "Let them be, for it is written: 'His mercies are on all His works' [Psalms 145:9]." Rabbi's pain then left him because he had pity on these animals (Bava Metzia 85a).

Consequently, why does the Holy One, blessed be He, not take pity on the goat for Azazel? Why do we see such cruelty in this case? As we have said, it would have been better to first slaughter the goat before throwing it down the mountain, thus preventing such an atrocious death.

We are now a few days before the holiday of Shavuot, celebrating the giving of the Torah. However we must prepare ourselves to receive the Torah, and the preparation for this begins as early as Passover. What exactly is the preparation that we undertake at Passover? It is the improvement of our midot. Actually, no one can say that he only has virtues; there are always midot that can be improved. We see that even after the death of Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon, a worm came out of his ear because he had heard Lashon Harah concerning a Talmid Chacham without protesting (Bava Metzia 84b).

We must therefore prepare ourselves by working on our midot, which is the main part of our preparation. The Gaon Rabbi Israel Salanter said



His son, Chif Rabbi of Paris Rabbi David Messas Pronouncing the Hespel



The Tsaddik at the Bar-mitzva of Yoël Pinto

that there are 48 good midot to acquire. Conversely, there are 48 bad midot to perfect or uproot during the days of the Omer until Shavuot, and on the 49th day of the Omer we revisit them all. Only then do we merit obtaining the Torah, as we run towards Hashem to receive it. As for the one who has not prepared himself, what will he receive? There is something to receive only if there has been preparation beforehand. The Mishnah states, “Moses received the Torah from Sinai” (Perkei Avoth 1:1). It does not say, “Hashem gave the Torah to Moses on Sinai,” but rather “Moses received,” which means that Hashem always wants to give, but a person must want to receive.

We must all be people who receive. We should not have to ask people and beg them, “Come and listen to a Torah class.” Instead, everyone should come running to receive, ready to listen, and then the receiver can in turn give and transmit, for even before we offer people the chance to come and study, they should already be prepared to take it upon themselves to do so. Likewise, even before we ask people to help their fellowman, they should already be prepared to do so. To arrive at this level, we must prepare ourselves by working on our midot, for this allows us to receive, both in

things concerning man and his fellowman, as well as concerning man and G-d.

Consequently, the question that we asked can be answered. On Yom Kippur, everyone realizes how cruel it is that a live goat is thrown off the top of a mountain. However the answer to why this is done is found in the question itself. Why do you feel pain and pity for a goat that is thrown off the top of a mountain, yet feel indifferent to the fact that you caused pain to your fellowman during the entire year?

Furthermore, what about all the pain that you caused the Creator of the world during the whole year? What about the pain you caused the Shechinah, for which you did nothing to lift from the earth? You have no regrets about this, or about your negligence in Torah study and the scorn of the Torah that you forsook. You feel no pain for all this, yet you feel pain for an animal thrown off the top of a mountain? Better that you should regret sins between G-d and man, and between man and his fellow!

It may be that this is one of the reasons why the Holy One, blessed be He, desired that it is precisely on Yom Kippur that a goat is unmercifully thrown off the top of a mountain (without being slaughtered first) to experience a cruel death. A person must ask himself why this is so. When he does, he will immediately wake up and say

to himself, “I feel pain over the death of this animal, yet I don’t feel any pain for my wicked deeds, among them being making others forgo Torah study, for people may be punished because of me!”

When we think about things in this way, we will truly regret that our fellowman must die because of the Lashon Harah that we have spoken of him. We will regret the prayers that we did not properly say during the whole year, as well as all the evil deeds that we have committed. We need to ask forgiveness for this. The cause of evil deeds is pride, and the fact that a goat is thrown off the top of a mountain serves to awaken all men to their bad midot, for which many others have been punished. Even children have been punished for the bad midot of others, for children die for fathers, may G-d help us.

The Torah is Acquired by Humility

When we speak of Rabbi Shalom Messas Zatzal, a man who was a great among giants, what immediately comes to mind is his immense humility. I remember that as a 10-year-old boy in Morocco, I saw Rabbi Shalom passing in the street and I ran to kiss his hand. Everything about him testified to his greatness. When the King of Morocco went to see him at his home, Rabbi Shalom did not mention this to the press. When important people were with him, he did speak of it or even mention it. In him we saw the teaching of the Sages being fulfilled: “Words of Torah are firmly held by one who kills himself for it” (Berachot 63b). The Sages also said that the Torah can only be acquired by one who submits himself to it (Taanith 7a). Rabbi Shalom in fact submitted himself to the Torah. The one who knew him had great merit, and the one who did not know him certainly heard great stories about him.

I was with him last year, on the evening before my son’s Bar Mitzvah, and I asked him some questions of Halachah concerning our traditions. What can I say! The Shechinah was resting on his countenance – Torah, extraordinary humility, and greatness in a single person – and with this



In the obsequies of the Tsadik

humility he answered my questions directly. He then called his son Rabbi Daniel and said to him, "Daniel, our origins are from Morocco. I am your father, but sometimes I cannot give you advice. He [referring to me] is your age, and he can advise you." I then answered him, "Rabbi Shalom, you are his father and he loves you. Only you who can give him advice. Can another person tell your son what to do?" Is there greater humility than this? Such was Rabbi Shalom Messas: Simplicity and humility.

Rabbi Shalom Messas Zatzal, who has left for the Celestial Academy, is up there now and looking at us, looking at his children and this entire holy gathering that has gathered in his honor. As a result, it is certain that from Heaven he has dispatched a group of emissaries and angels who say, "Let us go down and see what people are saying about him." What are we saying about him? There are so many things to say that we can no longer say anything, particularly concerning his immense humility. We can only think, "How regrettable it is that those who are irreplaceable have died." What a pity it is that our generation did not merit knowing who Rabbi Shalom Messas really was!

The Meiri (at the beginning of Tractate Pesachim) compares the Tzaddikim to stars. Now stars shine during the day also, for they emit light like the sun. However during the day we do not see their light because the sun's own light hides it. However when the sun disappears from view during the

night, we can clearly see the light of the stars.

It is the same with the Tzaddikim. As long as they are alive, they shine so much that we do not see their light, and it is almost impossible to benefit from the light of their Torah. However after their death (as we have explained above), when the letters fly up into the air, we no longer see them. We then immediately begin to better perceive the light of the Tzaddikim, and we now sense this light that has gone out.

Certainly the angels have won and the holy Ark has been captured (Ketubot 104a). He was taken from us, but his Torah was not taken. The letters fly about in the air, and the one who wants to take them can do so. His Torah protects us, and all the books that he wrote, all the Halachic decisions he took, all the agunot he allowed to remarry, all these have remained for us. In France I was once presented with a case of a woman who had ten children, some of which were suspected of being illegitimate. I therefore put the question to Rabbi Shalom, and he resolved the problem, for he also knew how to solve very difficult questions such as this one.

By his saintly spirit, by the spirit of his Torah, he knew who was a mamzer and who was not, for he given help from Heaven. The Holy One, blessed be He, supported him to such an extent that he once said to me in his saintly manner of speaking, "Rabbi David, I am certain that I am given

help from Heaven." Such was the Divine service and strength of Rabbi Shalom, may his merit protect us. Amen, may it be so, and through his merit may the Holy One, blessed be He, send us Mashiach, speedily and in our days. Amen.

Aaron is Silent: Everything that the Merciful One Does is for the Good

We see in the Torah that after the death of Aaron's two sons, Moses came to console his brother and said to him, "Of this did the L-RD speak, saying, 'I will be sanctified through those who are nearest Me' " (Leviticus 10:3). This means: I knew that Hashem's Name would be sanctified at the inauguration of the Sanctuary, but I did not know through who it would be, you or I. Now that your two sons are dead, I see that they were holier than you or I. It was they who Hashem had in mind by saying, "I will be sanctified through those who are nearest Me." Immediately upon hearing this, "Aaron was silent." He did not say anything in response, but was quiet. He received a reward for this silence, for afterwards the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke to him separately (Vayikra Rabba 12:2).

If the Torah states "Aaron was silent," it is because there is some secret in this, something for us to learn. Actually, it is not easy for a father to hear that his sons are greater than him, more holy than him, and that they have died during his lifetime. The pain of not having benefited from his sons, from the light of their Torah and their holiness, was immense. Consequently, it is certain that all this was extremely painful for Aaron. Yet instead of telling Moses that he was suffering because his children had died, he remained silent.

Now Aaron could have told Moses, "Why did they die precisely on the day of the Sanctuary's inauguration? Why did both of them die rather than one? Why did I not die in their place, since they were not yet even married, and I cannot see 'grandchildren [who are] like children' [Ye-bamot 62b]?" Despite all this, Aaron kept quiet. This silence clearly demonstrates Aaron's greatness, who felt Hashem's presence everywhere



and knew that everything comes from Him. If Hashem did this, it was because it was His will. Therefore who was he, Aaron, to come and contest Hashem's deeds? Who was he to protest? Only a man as great as Aaron, who knew that everything comes from G-d and that everything the Merciful One does is for the good (Berachot 60b), could arrive at such a level without complaining.

It is in man's nature to bemoan himself when in mourning; thus he cries and experiences regrets. However Aaron kept quiet. A love for Hashem burned in him to such an extent that when he heard that this happened for Hashem's honor – that it was in this way that the Holy One, blessed be He, glorified Himself – he immediately accepted it. Only a man who loves G-d can love His glory, and such a man takes no account of himself in this world. Only a man like this can keep quiet and not react.

Aaron was such a man. He kept quiet when he heard that Hashem was glorified by the death of his sons, and silence is acceptance. A love of Hashem and the ability to sense His presence are only expressed during a time of testing. It is

only then that we see if a man truly loves G-d, or if it only appears that way. It is then that we see if he has only a fair-weather love of G-d, complaining as soon as something goes bad and crying about everything he lacks. Such a love of Hashem is far from being perfect.

Rabbi Shalom Messas Zatsal suffered greatly during his life, yet just from the way that he spoke of Hashem, as well as the great love that he had for Him, can we also say of Rabbi Shalom, "Aaron was silent." He accepted everything that came from Hashem with joy. As many people told us, he loved peace and pursued peace, and he had no enemies, either in Jerusalem or Morocco, or anywhere else in the world. He found common ground with everyone, and he knew just what to say and how to act with all people. This is because the Torah is acquired by peace, as it is written: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its pathways are peace" (Proverbs 3:17). This is what the Torah wants, to lead people towards peace. Unfortunately, not every Rav understands that the purpose of the Torah is peace, even though every Rav has the intention

of going towards peace. Thus when disputes arise, the statement "all its pathways are peace" is not fully realized.

Rabbi Shalom was not like this. Even when he was hurt, Shalom was silent, just as "Aaron was silent." It was in this way that Rabbi Shalom acquired everyone's love, and of him we may say that his Torah hovers in the air. The proof is that from all around the world people have gathered for his funeral, and even people who have never of him have come to hear this eulogy. This is a sign that his Torah hovers in the air, and that anyone who wants to take it can do so. His Torah did not ascend to Heaven and was not burned. It remains here, as it is written: "It is not in Heaven.... Rather, the matter is very close to you" (Deuteronomy 30:12,14).

The Torah is Not in Heaven, but Close for You to Accomplish

The verse states, "He distributed widely to the destitute, his righteousness endures forever" (Psalms 112:9). Someone who teaches Torah to

the children of the poor who do not have Torah, or to the uneducated, his righteousness will endure forever. This is because teaching Torah is called giving Tzedakah, for the Torah is called Tzedakah (Yalkut Shimon Vayera 2).

Such was Rabbi Shalom. He was famous among the poor, the needy, and the uneducated, and it was precisely with them that he elevated himself, teaching them the ways of peace. One who teaches Torah to someone who already knows Torah has great merit. However one who teaches it to someone who knows nothing of Torah has tremendously greater merit. We see this with Moses, who taught Torah to the Jewish people, as it is written: "The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4). It is also written, "Remember the Torah of Moses My servant" (Malachi 3:22). Now it is said of him, "his righteousness endures forever" (Psalms 112:9), for he gave great Tzedakah to the Jewish people. This is what Rabbi Shalom Messas did as well.

The Sages have taught, "Pay heed to the children of the poor, for the Torah goes forth from them" (Nedarim 81a). The Torah brings great happiness, and whoever teaches it to the children of the poor brings them life, since afterwards they become Bnei Torah, and there is none wealthier than one who possesses Torah. A man who is rich in money believes that this money belongs to

him. Nevertheless, he may end up losing it. However a Talmid Chacham will never lose his wealth (the Torah), and he will be honored and esteemed everywhere he goes, for the Torah elevates him. It is concerning this that we weep. Nevertheless, Rabbi Shalom's Torah hovers in the air, and whoever wants to take it can do so.

In addition, the Torah can even exert an influence on a non-Jew, as in the story of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion (Avodah Zarah 18a). When the Executioner heard that Rabbi Chanina's Torah was soaring upwards, he repented and threw himself into the fire, thereby meriting life in the World to Come. What was it that made him repent? It was the letters that soared upwards, and as a result he earned the World to Come at the same time as Rabbi Chanina.

The Gemara recounts the famous story of the oven of Aknai that Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus believed to be pure, whereas the other Sages believed it to be impure (Bava Metzia 59). Rabbi Eliezer did many things to justify his opinion, to the point of stating that he would be proved right by a carob tree, a stream of water, the walls of the Beit Midrash, and Heaven itself. However the Sages would have none of it, and each time they rejected his proofs by saying that Halachic matters are not decided by any of these things.

This is very difficult to understand. If the Sages constantly rejected each

of Rabbi Eliezer's words and proofs, why did they let him bring them in the first place? This is especially so at the end, when Rabbi Eliezer said that Heaven would justify him, and indeed a Heavenly voice announced that the Halachah was in accordance with his opinion. At that point Rabbi Yehoshua arose and said, "It is not in Heaven" (Deuteronomy 30:12). The Torah is here on earth, and we pay no attention to a Heavenly voice. This is astonishing! If Rabbi Yehoshua also rejected a Heavenly voice, then why did he allow Rabbi Eliezer to say what he did? Why did a Heavenly voice need to speak, if it was only going to be silenced? Why did Rabbi Yehoshua do this?

We know that "The Holy One, blessed be He, looked into the Torah and created the world" (Zohar II:161b). This means that the Torah is found in all of Creation, for all of Creation knows that there is a Torah, and it is fixed into each thing. However in all of Creation, only man can speak, which is not the case with all the rest. Furthermore, the Torah was only given to the Jewish people, which is why Rabbi Eliezer Hagadol believed that although all of Creation cannot speak, it could still prove that the Halachah follows his opinion. This is because the world was created by means of the Torah and it is fixed in Creation. It knows how it was made, and it can prove what is true and what is not.

This is precisely why the Sages did not agree with Rabbi Eliezer. They allowed him to bring proofs from a carob tree, a stream, and the walls of the Beit Midrash because they knew that the Torah is found in all of Creation. It could therefore prove what is true, meaning that the Halachah did not follow his opinion. Thus precisely because the Torah is found in all Creation, they brought a proof that the Torah is not in Heaven, but rather is here on earth and fixed into everything of the world. This is why, in the end, they told Rabbi Eliezer that one does not bring proofs from that which does not speak, or from something in which the Torah is found, but only from man himself, who can speak.



The Tzaddik Rabbi Chalom Messas Zatsal bless Yoël Pinto

According to this, we will understand what Rabbi Eliezer said: "Again he urged: 'If the Halachah agrees with me, let the walls of the house of study prove it,' whereupon the walls inclined to fall. But Rabbi Yehoshua rebuked them, saying: 'When scholars are engaged in a Halachic dispute, what [right] have you to interfere?' Hence they did not fall, in honor of Rabbi Yehoshua, nor did they resume the upright, in honor of Rabbi Eliezer. They are still leaning" (Bava Metzia 59b). The walls of the Beit Midrash had heard much Torah, and their merit was great. They could therefore testify for Rabbi Eliezer. However Rabbi Yehoshua scolded them and said that they should not interfere with a discussion among the Sages.

In the end, when Rabbi Eliezer said that Heaven would prove him correct, Rabbi Yehoshua replied, "It is not in Heaven." It remains here on earth; the letters soar upwards, yet they remain here. If there is a discussion among the Sages, there is a principle which states that we go with the opinion of the majority (Exodus 23:2). Even if the majority is incorrect, we follow it. Rabbi Yehoshua came to teach this principle: The Torah that Moses brought down for the Jewish people is not found in Heaven, but is here on earth, and whoever wants to take it can come and do so.

His Lips Move in the Grave

When a Tzaddik leaves this world, his Torah remains here, as the Sages have said: "The lips of a [deceased] scholar, in whose name a traditional statement is reported in this world, move gently in the grave" (Yebamot 97a). The Torah that he studied during his lifetime certainly walks before him in the World to Come, as it is said: "Your righteous deed will precede you" (Isaiah 58:8). The Torah awaits him in the World to Come. However his mouth, which studied Torah, remains here, especially if he has written Torah commentaries. True, the Tzaddik is gone, but the letters of his Torah hover in the

air and pour out his saintly spirit on whoever desires it.

In the course of studying Torah, we often merit saying the same things as the Vilna Gaon or the Gaon Rabbi Akiva Eiger, or even one of the Rishonim. Are we like them? Do we possess their holiness? We do not even come up to their ankles! They studied so much Torah that they merited to give this or that explanation, whereas we, the small among the small, merit giving the same explanations as they did. This is something that we have already mentioned. It is the letters of the Torah of this Rishon, of this Rav, of this Tzaddik, which hover in the air. We have breathed them in and receive them from Hashem. We then have the merit to state them.

Rabbi Eliezer Hagadol, who was discussing the oven of Aknai with the Sages, certainly knew that in a Halachic matter the decision goes according to the majority (Berachot 37a). Yet if so, why did he argue with them? He certainly had no selfish intentions. Rather, he wanted to show the whole world that even when we bring proofs from all of Creation (from a carob tree, a stream, and even from a Heavenly voice), even then the Halachah does not follow the one who is alone in his view; it still follows the opinion of the majority. In fact it is stated in the Torah that we must go according to the majority (Exodus 23:2). In addition, even if Rabbi Eliezer was punished, since the Sages no longer spoke to him and they burned everything that he had pronounced pure, even then he kept quiet and accepted his rejection.

True, the Gemara recounts that Rabbi Nathan asked Eliyahu HaNavi, "What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do in that hour?" Eliyahu replied, "He laughed [with joy], saying: 'My sons have defeated Me, My sons have defeated Me' " (Bava Metzia 59b). This is because He had pronounced the oven to be pure, while the Sages had pronounced it to be impure. How can the Holy One, blessed be He, be defeated? Is there someone who has ever defeated Him? However He wrote

in His Torah that the Halachah follows the opinion of the majority, and in this His children defeated Him. The Torah is here, as it is stated: "It is not hidden from you and it is not distant.... Rather, the matter is very near to you – in your mouth and your heart – to perform it" (Deuteronomy 30:11,14). Consequently the Torah is found here, and so we have the duty to "learn it and learn it, for everything is in it" (Perkei Avot 5: 22). If you don't find something in it, it is because you have not looked through it enough. You are therefore not interested in it and have not put enough effort into studying it.

Such was the greatness of Rabbi Shalom Messas' Torah. I heard from his son, Rav David Messas Shlita, that a few hours before his passing on Friday, he was still writing a responsum with regards to releasing an agunah. This is truly astounding. We have also heard how this elderly man, a man filled with days, sometimes sat down to study for the entire night until morning, without the slightest realization that it was already daybreak. I once heard that he had to be told that it was time for Mincha, for he had studied so much during the night that he remained learning until Mincha of the following day. He had not realized it, for he was entirely immersed in Torah. This is because the Torah is not in Heaven, and from Heaven he was given help in Torah. Happy is he! Happy is his lot!

Consequently, the passing of this Tzaddik is a terrible thing for all Israel. Yet thank G-d, Israel is not abandoned, and Hashem has left us the remnant of the letters of his Torah, which hover in the air, a fragrance of his Torah. The Torah has not disappeared, and it was not burned. It did not ascend to Heaven, but has remained here and continues to nourish us.

May his memory be a blessing, and may he be a good defender for the entire community of Israel. Amen, may it be so.

THE GRAVITY OF A MACHLOKET

When the Children of Israel were about to receive the Torah at the foot of Mount Sinai, it is stated: "Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain" (Exodus 19:2). Rashi makes the well-known comment, namely that the verb "encamped" is in the singular, not the plural. This means that Israel encamped "As one person with one heart."

This underlines the fact that during the journeys of the Children of Israel in the desert, there was not one stage that was not marked by quarreling and dissention, or in short a machloket (dispute). However as they prepared to receive the Torah, they were united as a single person. The most complete harmony was to reign among the Children of Israel when they were to receive the Torah. This is the principle of kol Israel arevim zeh bazeh ("all Israel are guarantors for one another"), an expression that has a numerical value of 26, that of Hashem's Name. This means that if harmony reigns among them, the Shechinah (Divine Presence) will live with them (Sanhedrin 27b). If there had been an incident involving a machloket, Hashem would not have given them the Torah, and the world would have ceased to exist. In fact it is written, "If not for My covenant [the Torah], I would not have appointed days and nights, the decrees of heaven and earth" (Jeremiah 33:25).

This means that a machloket not only affects some people, but threatens all of humanity and puts the foundations of Creation at risk.

We will attempt to illustrate this by citing several incidents. Very simply, we suggest that we reflect upon this thorny issue together in order to not fall into the trap of a machloket. In this way, we will always be ready to receive words of Torah.

We shall first cite instances of a machloket as they appear in the Tan-

ach and Talmud. Then to finish, we shall refer to some recommendations that our Sages have given us.

Let us first cite the tragedy that Lot experienced after having unleashed a machloket: "There was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock" (Genesis 13:7).

The Results? Following this quarrel, Lot chose to live in Sodom, a city filled with the wicked and perverse. When a war broke out nearby, the enemies of Sodom took Lot captive. This did not spare Abraham either, who went to rescue him and exposed himself to all the risks inherent in such an undertaking. Next came the destruction of Sodom, in which Lot lost part of his family, his wealth, and finally his wife. He then sinned with his daughters.

As for the machloket involving Korach and his followers, everyone should draw a lesson from it. In fact concerning this subject, it is said in a Mishnah in the name of Rabbi Akiva: "Korach's assembly has no part in the World to Come, as it is written: 'The earth covered them over' – in this world – 'and they perished from the midst of the assembly' – in the next" (Sanhedrin 109b). The Zohar views this in the same way and teaches that Korach (who aimed at thwarting the unity of the world) was wiped out from all worlds (Zohar 176:1-3).

On the subject of Korach and his assembly, the Gemara states: " 'So Moses stood up and went to Dathan and Abiram' [Numbers 16:25]. Resh Lakish said, 'This teaches that one must not be obdurate in a quarrel.' Rav said, 'He who is unyielding in a dispute violates a negative command, as it is written: "Let him not be as Korach and his assembly" [Numbers 17:5]' " (Sanhedrin 110a). The Mishnah Berurah states that whoever maintains a conflict transgresses this prohibition (Mishnah Berurah 156:4).

The Sages have said, "Come and observe how grievous a thing strife must be, seeing that the Holy One, blessed be He, exterminates all memory of one who foments strife! For so it is written: 'A flame came forth from the L-RD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men' [Numbers 16:35]. Rabbi Berekiah commented: How grievous a thing must strife be! The Celestial Court as a rule inflicts penalties only on sinners who are twenty years old and upward, and the terrestrial court does so only on those who are thirteen years old or more, yet in Korach's strife babies of a day old were burned and swallowed up in the bottomless abyss, as it is written: 'With their wives, children, and infants...they and all that was theirs descended alive to the pit' [Numbers 16:27,33]" (Bamidbar Rabba 18:4).

The Mishnah's View of a Machloket

The Mishnah discusses two types of machloket: "Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have an abiding result; and that which is not for the sake of Heaven will not have an abiding result. Which is a dispute for the sake of Heaven? The dispute between Hillel and Shammai. And which is not for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Korach and all his assembly" (Perkei Avoth 5:17).

As for the differences between Hillel and Shammai, the Gemara specifies, "For three years there was a dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, the former asserting, 'The Halachah is in agreement with our views' and the latter contending, 'The Halachah is in agreement with our views.' Then a Bat Kol issued announcing, 'Both are the words of the living G-d, but the Halachah is in agreement with the rulings of Beit Hillel'" (Eruvin 13b). Once this decision was taken, the followers of Shammai yielded to it.

Even in times when debates were the liveliest, as for example when one school forbid while the other permitted, friendly relations between their disciples were never compromised. Despite their different opinions on the many problems concerning marriage and divorce, weddings took place between members of each school (Yebamot 13b). In this way they practiced the words of the prophet Zechariah when he proclaimed, "Love peace and truth" (Zechariah 8:19).

The Machloket of Rabbi Akiva's Disciples

The Gemara recounts that Rabbi Akiva had 24,000 disciples who all died at the same time, between Passover and Shavuot. A lack of Achdut (unity) may be considered as the beginnings of a machloket. Hence this entire tragedy was the result of a machloket, "for they did not treat each other with respect" (Yebamot 62a).

Thus it was because of a machloket that 24,000 Talmidei Chachamim died. Furthermore, we must not forget that these scholars, whom the Chafetz Chaim classified as artzei halevanon ("cedars of Lebanon"), devoted their entire lives to the study of Torah and its meticulous application in the service of both G-d and man. Yet in spite of this, their merit was unable to annul the death sentence levied against them because of a simple machloket.

Because of this machloket, the entire Jewish people were punished, as the Gemara underlines: With the death of Rabbi Akiva's disciples, "The world remained desolate" (Yebamot 62b). The Jewish people lost its teachers, its guides, its supports, and in short its foundations, thus exposing them to all possible dangers. Rabbi Akiva had to travel to the south, where he formed five new disciples, including Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Meir Baal Haness. It was only from these scholars that the Torah was reestablished. Cognizant of the caliber of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Meir Baal Haness, we can imagine the loss experienced

by the Jewish people with the death of 24,000 disciples who were as great as these two.

Because of this machloket, all the generations were punished. This is why we observe laws of mourning every year from Passover to Shavuot, meaning that there are no marriages, celebrations, and so on. This is how the machloket of Rabbi Akiva's disciples ended, with all its tragic consequences and aftereffects.

A Machloket Among Torah Scholars Concerning a Halachah

This machloket is described in the Talmud. The parties involved were, on one side, the Sages represented by Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua, and on the other side Rabbi Eliezer. The Halachah in question concerned a stove made from segments that had entered into contact with Tumah (spiritual impurity). In Rabbi Eliezer's opinion the stove remained Tahor (pure), whereas for the Sages (meaning Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua), the stove became Tameh (impure). To prove his point, Rabbi Eliezer appealed to miracles, but the Sages nevertheless maintained their stance. Since Rabbi Eliezer retained his view, the Sages excommunicated him. Such was Rabbi Eliezer's punishment following this machloket. When he learned of this, tears dripped from his eyes and even crops experienced a disaster that reduced them by a third.

We also know that Rabban Gamliel was a victim of this dispute.

First of all, as he was traveling at sea a huge wave arose to drown him. Realizing that this was a result of the machloket, he exclaimed, "It appears to me that this is on account of none other but Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus." The Gemara continues: "Thereupon he arose and exclaimed, 'Sovereign of the Universe! You know full well that I have not acted for my honor, nor for the honor of my paternal house, but for Yours, so that strife may not multiply in Israel!' With that, the raging sea subsided" (Bava Metzia 59b).

Yet the consequences with regards to Rabban Gamliel did not end with that trying voyage. Actually, the tears that Rabbi Eliezer shed following his excommunication got the better of Rabban Gamliel, and shortly afterwards the shofar was sounded to announce his death. This tragedy had been predicted by Rabbi Eliezer's wife as she saw him crying, for she said: "I have received this tradition from my father's house: All gates are locked, except the gates of wounded feelings."

Although it began by words of Torah, this machloket ended in tragedy.

The Destruction of the Temple

Above all, let us not forget that a machloket creates hatred, which was the cause of the destruction of the second Temple. As for the first Temple, it was destroyed because of the three cardinal sins: Idolatry, adultery, and the spilling of blood. We must therefore conclude that hatred is as serious as these three sins, for which a person must allow himself to be killed rather than commit.

In light of these events, which were experienced by the entire Jewish people, it is not surprising to see our Sages persistently teaching us in each generation the dangers that the authors of a machloket expose themselves to, dangers that extend to their family and friends, even to the entire Jewish people. This instruction will enable the Temple to be rebuilt and prevent us from stumbling into this sin.

Here are some points to ponder: We must realize that those who engage in a machloket will also say that it is for the sake of Heaven. This reasoning, however, is a ruse used by the evil inclination, a trick by which it tries to make a person perish. After all, is it not said that the road to hell is paved "with good intentions"?

We also need to realize that a machloket must be extinguished from its very outset. Otherwise it will quickly evolve and become, G-d forbid, uncontrollable and destructive.

Following an incident in which certain people opposed an orthodox organization, Rav Steinman Shlita expressed himself in one of his letters as follows: "In a machloket, each person is convinced that he is right, and nobody thinks that he is wrong. In such a case, the other person is obviously considered to be wicked, and therefore it seems permissible to belittle him by all possible means, even if this means denouncing him to the authorities or bringing him to court."

To our great sorrow, in recent times we see more and more widows and orphans (G-d help us). Who knows if this does not have its origin in the sin of disputes? Although the individuals punished have nothing to do with disputes, we know that with Klal Israel, people are "guarantors for one another." How much more is this true when we lend an ear to quarrels or believe what we hear in them!

Given the gravity of a machloket, a person should strive with all his might to flee from it as from death (Peleh Yoetz). Let us keep in mind the words of our Sages (as cited by the Chafetz Chaim): "A home in which discord reigns finishes by being destroyed; a synagogue in which discord reigns will see its faithful dispersed and remain deserted; in a city in which discord reigns, blood will be spilled. When two Torah scholars from one city, or two rabbinic courts in one city quarrel, they finish by dying. Dissension between rabbinic courts brings destruction into the world. As long as peace reigns among the hosts of Hashem, it also reigns among the celestial hosts, as it is written, 'He establishes His sublime abode in the Heavens and founds His unity on the earth' (Amos 9:6). When is His sublime abode established? When His unity is founded on earth, meaning when the Jewish people are united in harmony" (Derech Eretz Zutah 9). How great is the person who has never been caught up in a machloket! Nevertheless, he should not exhibit pride about this. The only situation about which a person should feel pride is one in which he was mistreated (be it by a slight to his honor, his person,

or his money) yet he did not react in kind. A person's wisdom is not measured by his scholarship, but rather by the lack of his reaction (i.e., by his silence) with regards to those who attack him (Perkei Avoth 3:13). Moreover, those who allow themselves to be humiliated, rather than to humiliate others – those who suffer insult and do not react in kind – are described by the Torah as being "like the powerfully risen sun" (Judges 5:31). It is in this sense that our Sages interpreted the passage, "He suspends the earth upon nothingness" (Job 26:6). It is also in this sense that they say, "The world exists only on account of him who restrains himself in strife" (Chulin 89a)

Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita affirms that even a wicked individual who commits sins, yet refrains from speaking ill of his neighbor and does not like disputes, will end up repenting. If unity reigns among Jews, they will finish by taking to the right path, even if they are devoted to idolatry. This is what we see with warriors in the generation of Ahab, who because of their unity were always victorious, even though they were idolaters.

Rabbi David also underlines the gravity of interfering with the discussions of the Torah scholars of the generation: "Who can assure us that we can raise a generation of youngsters, upright and G-d-fearing, if we speak in such a way against Tzaddikim and Rabbis? It is not in vain that this is called 'freedom of expression,' for the ways of expressing oneself so harmfully then become completely free, leading to a total rejection of the yoke of the Torah and mitzvot. Now the Sages have said, 'Beware of their glowing embers, lest you be burnt – for their bite is the bite of a fox, their sting is the sting of a scorpion, their hiss is the hiss of a serpent, and all their words are like fiery coals' [Perkei Avoth 2:10]. Are these not terrifying things? Does a person not realize that after 120 years he will have to give an accounting for such talk, that he will have to explain why he listened to disparaging remarks about Torah scholars, yet did not protest?"

Rabbi David Pinto continues:

"When there is a discussion between the Tzaddikim of the generation, it is not up to us to stick our noses into the business of these spiritual giants. We do not have the right to get involved, for in any case our personal opinions will not be heard. We have no influence on the matter. Consequently, why should we get involved? Why should we open our mouths to speak against a cherished and holy person of the Jewish people? How can we speak against Tzaddikim, Rabbis, or Torah scholars?"

"We must adopt an attitude of faith. We must believe in Hashem and be certain that all His ways are fair and straight. However it is impossible to believe in Hashem if we do not believe in the Tzaddikim of the generation, regardless of who they are. In fact it is written, 'They believed in the L-RD and in His servant Moses' [Exodus 14:31]. If we believe in the Tzaddik, we will arrive at faith in Hashem, and in so doing we will see good fruits in this world and in the World to Come. Amen.

"Let us therefore work on our midot [character traits], whatever our level may be, for this will enable us to love one another and not quarrel with each other in any way. Let us not forget that the main thing is the effort that a person puts into coming closer to Hashem. May it be His will that we be truly guarantors for one another, for this will bring us to the Final Redemption. Note that the numerical value of arevim zeh bazeh ['guarantors for one another'] is the same as geula kerova ['imminent redemption'], yavo shilo, and mashiach, namely 358."

Let us therefore be careful to erase all traces of division, and may shalom (peace) and kavod reign among us. The word vehitpaleg has the same numerical value as the expression kabtzenu yahad meherah ("gather us quickly"). Because of this, the world will continue to exist and even satisfy the Holy One, blessed be He, Who will allow us to fully enjoy the goodness of Heaven as well as the coming of Mashiach, speedily in our days. Amen!

THE HILLOULA OF RABBI HAIM PINTO ZATZAL - ESSAOUIRA, MOROCCO Elloul 5763 (September 2003)

On Friday, September 19 at 6:00 am, close to 150 people gathered at Roissy airport outside of Paris. A member of the organizing committee of the 5763 Hilloula of the Tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal welcomed the group of pilgrims, assembled there to take a flight specifically chartered for Hevrat Pinto by Mondair. The scheduled flight is direct and non-stop to Essaouira, Morocco.

In the concourse of Roissy airport, people greeted one other and began to chat. Some already knew one another quite well and had made several pilgrimages to the Sage of Mogador (Essaouira), Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal. Thus one portion of the pilgrims constituted the nucleus around which the Hilloula was maintained. Rabbi David Pinto Shlita knew that he could count on them, much like an army general relies on his loyal and devoted soldiers.

In fact surrounding Rabbi David Pinto Shlita were several hundred, perhaps thousands of people from around the world, there to become partners of Hevrat Pinto. They were there as much from France as from the United States, Latin America, Israel, and generally from every country where there are

institutions connected to Rabbi Pinto. The faithful that frequent these institutions, those around Rabbi David Pinto Shlita, are their benefactors.

On the tarmac of Roissy airport, the Hevrat Pinto group headed toward the plane that would bring them to Essaouira. After takeoff, some passengers donned their Tallit and Tefillin and prayed Shacharit, and thus a prayer service took place at close to 30,000 feet. The tzibur constituted a cross-section of the Jewish people, and in it could be found a great number of different nationalities, all united by the same Hebrew prayer.

Standing before us was a melting pot in which Askenaz and Sephardic origins merged to unite the Jewish people. The connection that is Torah is undeniable.

It is in this way that the miracle of Judaism is explained, wherein each soul represents a link in the chain that stretches back to our Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We constitute a single group in which one is responsible for the other. This also illustrates the principle that there is much more than a Jewish people; there is more than a Jewish community permanently connected simply by denominational links.

At the end of the nearly three-hour flight, during which a strictly kosher breakfast was served, the arrival at Essaouira's airport made a very solemn impression. Besides an outside temperature hovering around 75°F, it was about a quarter past ten in the morning local time, and Rabbi David Pinto Shlita personally welcomed each pilgrim as they got off the plane.

Such a scene bore a much greater resemblance to an official trip from a political figure than to a religious gathering. The Rav insisted on personally welcoming each participant. Thus despite the terrorism problems that Morocco experienced, those who usually undertook the Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal pilgrimage still came to honor the Tzaddik of Mogador.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita accorded each person great importance. The support of the pilgrimage, despite the suicide bombing that Morocco recently experienced, as well as the murder of a Jew a few days earlier, took on great importance.

Following a warm welcome at the airport, the group was transported by bus to the Ryad Mogador Hotel in Essaouira, which was hosting the participants of the Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal pilgrimage for the fifth time.

As always, it must be said that the quality of the hotel and the catering were at a level befitting the occasion. We must underline the professionalism of the entire team from Hevrat Pinto and the patience of the organizers, particularly Mr. William Marciano, Mr. Knafo, and Mr. Afryat.

During lunch, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita addressed the group in the dining room. He explained their scheduled program in Essaouira, especially the atmosphere of kedusha (holiness) in which the three-day pilgrimage was to proceed.

As the Rav made clear, we were the ambassadors of those who were not able to make the trip, and who therefore depended on us for their prayers to be answered.

The Rav encouraged the faithful to travel as early as that afternoon, if they so desired, to the grave of the Tzaddik of Mogador, whom





we had come to honor and who would give us his blessing. Among the faithful, one group made it to the Jewish cemetery in Essaouira to pray by the grave of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal, and there they implored G-d's mercy through the merit of the Tzaddik. Meanwhile, hundreds of others rested themselves after the tiring journey, while still others visited the city of Essaouira. Soon the time came for welcoming Shabbat.

At about 6:00 pm local time (8:00 pm in Paris) in the hotel's prestigious ballrooms, Mincha was observed, followed by Shir Hashirim that precedes Arvit. During the reading of Shir Hashirim, one tune followed another, as each person sang with both heart and voice, accompanied by the sounds of talented paitanim.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita led the Arvit prayer of Friday night, then gave a drasha on this special Shabbat preceding Rosh Hashanah. The Rav thanked all those who, from near and far, were participating in the Hilloula. He told us that it was because of his faith in Hashem that he decided to proceed with the pilgrimage, despite the uncertainty of the moment connected with the problems of terrorism.

On that occasion, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita personally thanked all the participants to the Elul 5763 Hilloula. He also used that time to refer to a letter from His Majesty King Mo-

ammed VI, in which the Cherifien Sovereign was pleased to hear of our pilgrimage, and guaranteed that it would take place under the best possible conditions. During the course of this short drasha, the Rav referred to events that were transpiring in Israel, to the attacks, the dead, and the wounded.

For the Rav, the difficult situation endured by the Jewish people in Israel and throughout the world is painful and difficult to understand. The proximity of the holidays of Tishri, for which we were preparing ourselves, incites repentance, Teshuvah and soul-searching in general. The Rav made it clear to the audience that each of us must undertake our own spiritual accounting when the year draws to an end.

The Rav then alluded to an idea that he had this past Friday morning in his room, namely how Hashem can (according to certain Chachamim) judge the world on Rosh Hashanah in the blink of an eye, while according to other Chachamim He makes each person stand before Him, judging each person individually, case by case.

The Rav concluded his Davar Torah, explaining that there is one method of judgment, and that it is both rapid (meaning in the blink of an eye) and exacting for each member of Klal Israel who are judged individually. At 8:45 pm, we went to eat in a dining room in which the atmosphere of Shabbat was pal-

pable. After Kiddush and the end of the first course, the Rav was adamant that our joy should intensify.

Songs followed one another in an atmosphere of warmth, and we could hear all the participants wholeheartedly singing Hadi Hilloula Mazal Mazal, as well as the song Mashiach Habibi Ya Habibi, which Rav David Pinto Shlita loves hearing.

That Friday night was studded with songs and increasingly sumptuous dishes. The meal ended with magnificent fruit baskets that were distributed to each table.

Saturday morning at 7:00, the Rav assembled a group of individuals to whom he gave his first Davar Torah on that Shabbat day.

Gathered around Rabbi David Pinto Shlita were pilgrims from Latin America (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, etc.). The morning service began around 8:15 am, taking place in an atmosphere of Kedusha and contemplation.

We listened, as is the custom, to the reading of two parshiot (Nitzavim and Vayeilech), which Mr. Roger Haziza brilliantly read with great fervor and special enunciation of the cantillation notes.

At the end of the Torah reading, the Rav gave a Davar Torah in which he insisted that the congregation there on this Shabbat in Essaouira should hear what Mr. Shalom

(Charlie) Dadoun, a pilot with American Airlines, had experienced a few days before the events of 9/11.

A descendant of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal, Mr. Dadoun explained that the merit of the Tzaddik has come to his aid on several occasions in his life.

To be hired by American Airlines, a pilot must accumulate a certain amount of flight time, and as it turned out, Mr. Dadoun was missing the minimum amount of hours. He nevertheless called Rabbi David, who put him at ease by telling him to immediately go for an interview. The merit of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal, Rav David said, would handle the rest.

After a test on a flight simulator, it became evident that Mr. Dadoun had the piloting skills of someone who had twice as many hours as the flight instructors had ever seen. Thus the company hired him.

During a flight several years ago, a non-Kosher meal was served to Mr. Dadoun,

(where he was making a stopover) and told him to immediately go to the nearest hospital because his colleague was suffering from a case of food poisoning. If he had eaten the same meal, his life could be in danger. He was sure that he was saved by the merit of the Tzaddik, and he committed himself to eating only kosher food from then on.

Today Mr. Dadoun is an observant Jew, and as such he observes Shabbat and the holidays.

During the summer of 2001, and continuing up to a few days before September 11, Mr. Dadoun was piloting flights 93 and 92 on Boeing 737s and 747s. He had been piloting these flights, from New York to San Francisco, for more than four years.

A few weeks before the catastrophe of 9/11, American Airlines decided (given its increasing number of passengers) to use Boeing 767s for these flights. Fortunately for Mr. Dadoun, he had no experience in piloting this type of aircraft, which ended

At that point, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita underlined the merit that we had to participate in the pilgrimage of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal.

At the end of the morning service, the Rav greeted each participant.

The Shabbat meal began at 1:00 pm, with different, evermore sumptuous dishes being served. Songs then followed one another, each more beautiful than the preceding one. The meal lasted almost two hours.

During the course of the afternoon, the Rav gave a class to women.

Meanwhile, other rabbis gave classes for the entire afternoon, and even ordinary pilgrims from Latin America assembled to study the Torah in Spanish.

The Mincha prayer service began at around 5:30 pm, followed by a royal Seuda Shelishit that was served on the patio of the hotel. It included delicious cakes and drinks that the guests savored with delight.



and having the moral fortitude to adhere to his religious heritage and saintly origins, he did not eat it. Instead, he gave it to a flight attendant who had asked him if she could have it for herself. Mr. Dadoun therefore gave her his own meal, and on that very night the company's head office called him in his hotel room

up saving his life. However his entire crew, the one with which he normally flew up to a few days earlier, perished. Mr. Dadoun expressed himself both in English and in French, and the entire audience was moved by his account and the miracle he had experienced.

Arvit began close to 7:15 pm, followed by Havdalah. Everyone then prepared for the night of the Hilloula, which would take place in the hall of the Ryad Mogador Hotel in Essaouira, then at the Jewish cemetery.

A devoted participant of the Hilloula, Mr. Elie Mellul and his orchestra ensured the suc-



cess of the event with the help of Charlie (a participant of the pilgrimage) until 1:00 in the morning. He provided a musical atmosphere that allowed everyone to fondly remember the tunes that they loved. The Hilloula that evening began at 9:30 pm, when Rabbi David Pinto Shlita gave a Davar Torah. During his discourse, he first thanked Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal for welcoming us to his town: "The Tzaddik of Mogador is with us at this time. It is we who need him, that his light may guide us and show us the path to follow."

For Rabbi David Pinto Shlita, participating in a Hilloula of this nature means taking a little Kedusha and bringing it home.

The Rav recalled a story that some were familiar with. Once in Mogador some fishermen were unable to catch fish for Shabbat, since a storm was raging. The Tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal therefore gave one of the fishermen a shoe, which he was to throw into the sea. When he did so, fish were caught for both Jews and all others in Mogador.

During the course of his speech, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita explained that for a Hilloula, it is important to be happy and joyful. We must understand that joy has an effect in Heaven, that Hashem appreciates the joy of the Jewish people. The Rav recalled the importance of the holidays and joy. He explained that we must demonstrate our faith in Hashem; we must have emunah (faith), which enables a person to overcome many obstacles.

For the Rav, a man who does not believe in Hashem has a difficult life indeed.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita recounted the story of a man that he had met during one of

his trips. Some doctors had told this man (a Jew) that he had only a few months to live. One piece of advice that he received from them was that he should travel while waiting for the end. The man was in great despair, and Rabbi David Pinto Shlita advised him to undertake a pilgrimage to see the Tzaddikim of Morocco and Israel, and to pray to Hashem, to cry out and beseech G-d to save him. He did what the Rav advised, and a few months later this man returned to see his doctors, those who had told him to travel while awaiting his end.

In light of the prognosis that the doctors had made, they questioned whether it was really him who had been sick. Perhaps it had been his brother? He seemed to have been cured, for the signs of his illness had disappeared. The man's doctors asked him which physician had treated his illness.

Aware that his answer would seem paradoxical, he replied, "I was healed by the dead." In fact the Tzaddikim that he addressed himself to had given him the healing that he awaited.

Prayers, tears, emunah, and hope annul harsh decrees.

Addressing himself to all the participants who had come for the pilgrimage, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asked them to thank the Tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal for having allowed them to undertake it.

The moment then arrived for the selling of mitzvot, in which donors from around the world once again demonstrated that money is not an end in itself. Rather, the duty of one who possesses money is to share it – to open

his hand to the poor – which will not in any way detract from his wealth. On the contrary, it is a way of connecting oneself with others and performing mitzvot. We left for the ancient Jewish synagogue of Essaouira at about 1:30 in the morning, and in the middle of the night nearly 500 people gathered to recite selichot and blow the shofar.

That was the high point of the pilgrimage, when hundreds of people gathered around and within the mausoleum of the Tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal and cried out to Hashem. Rabbi David Pinto Shlita made it clear that the gates of Heaven were open and that harsh decrees would be annulled and good would be granted.

Women followed after the men into the mausoleum. Thus added to the sounds of prayer and shofar blasts were the shouts of women. At about 3:30 in the morning, candles were lit in designated places and their flames illuminated the night sky of Essaouira.

It was during this occasion that we could see just how much effort the Moroccan authorities had put into ensuring that the Hilloula would take place under the best possible conditions. Welcoming hundreds of people in a very short time frame and arranging for the many journeys and security of every participant is quite a feat. More than 500 military and police officers were in charge of security during the course of our pilgrimage.

Upon returning to the hotel, a short night awaited the group. Shacharit took place from 8:30 to 9:00 in the morning, followed by breakfast.

By about 11:30 am, the pilgrims once again found themselves in the mausoleum of the Tzaddik of Mogador, continuing the pilgrimage that began the night before. Each participant had the opportunity to pray and be greeted by Rabbi David Pinto Shlita. It is with definite peace of mind that we found ourselves being led in such circumstances.

At 1:00 pm, the Hilloula began in the large hall adjacent to the new Jewish cemetery in Essaouira. It is located in front of the ancient cemetery in which Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal is buried, near the Atlantic Ocean.

The meal on that Sunday afternoon was eaten in the presence of the Moroccan authorities. They had come on the occasion of the Hilloula of the Tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal to greet Rabbi David Pinto Shlita and all the pilgrims who had traveled to Essaouira. The official delegation as a whole took the opportunity to eat with our group.

The Rav recited a blessing for King Mohammed VI, the royal family, and the Mo-

roccan people. During his sermon, the Rav explained that from his point of view, the Tzaddikim who are buried in Morocco must be rejoicing to be in such a land. He pointed to the Moroccan flags that were waving in Essaouira's Jewish cemetery, a powerful symbol that attested to Morocco's attachment to the Tzaddikim buried there.

In response to the Rav's words, a representative of the Moroccan Royal Kingdom expressed their thanks and delivered a message of peace and tolerance. She confirmed her desire that we return on a regular basis to Morocco, where we are at home. On this occasion, a solemn tribute to King Mohammed V and King Hassan II was made. Their good relations with the Jews of Morocco was a fact, and a message of friendship and encouragement from His Majesty King Mohammed VI was read:

"Our goal is to courageously fight against terrorism and to maintain tolerance. This pilgrimage is a testament to great courage, and we must fight against those who repudiate the message of Judaism and other revealed religions. For Morocco, this consists of being united to protect the heritage of all who have lived here, and it is with reference to this past that the future can be built."

Mr. Gaby Kaddoche, the President of the Jewish Community of Marrakech and the person responsible for all the holy sites of Morocco, then said a few words. He recalled the attachment of the Jews of Morocco – wherever they may be in the world – to the land they were born in and to their departed holy rabbis.

After lunch, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita and the members of the official delegation went to the Tzaddik's mausoleum. During that ceremony, the solemnity of the place and the day brought about a special holiness. We also saw how, within the span of nearly three decades, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita had carried in his wake men and women of every origin, people who have learned a little more of the importance of Tzaddikim as a whole.

Therefore the more that Torah values are taken into consideration, the more the memory of sages from previous generations is perpetuated.

Time does not diminish faith; it strengthens it.

This annual visit to Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal by means of the pilgrimage allows us to affirm that this ritual, rooted in the practices of Jews from around the world, strengthens the universal message of the Bible. We may

say that when a Tzaddik leaves this world, his greatness becomes amplified with time. As the Torah says, a Tzaddik is called alive even after his death.

We are the witnesses to such an evolution, with the merit of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal increasing day after day. The aid that he provides to those who beseech him increases from year to year, with pilgrims becoming stronger in their faith and observance of Judaism, bringing their families and friends with them, and becoming ambassadors of Hevrat Pinto around the world.

At the end of these pilgrimage celebrations, a special flight chartered by Hevrat Pinto from Mondair brought us back to Paris, filled with spiritual energy and good resolutions. We were certain to have been heard in Heaven by the merit of our venerated Tzaddik, Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal. May his merit be a source of blessing for us and the entire Jewish people, and may Hashem bless and protect our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita and his entire family. May Hashem also help him with all his institutions for the glory of the Torah. Amen.



STORIES OF THE TZADDIKIM

After the death of our revered teacher, the author of Megaleh Amukot, a young man living in Krakow went to see the administrator of the Chevra Kadisha because he wanted to purchase the burial plot adjacent to the grave of the Megaleh Amukot. This young man was not known as a famous Talmid Chacham, which is why the administrator rejected his request, one that seemed marked by a sign of pride and vanity. The Gaon and Tzaddik who had just left this world was among the greatest names of Torah. He had written many works, and it was impossible to give the plot adjacent to his grave to someone who was unknown, a common man, this being contrary to Halachah.

Yet the young man did not give up, and when all the administrators went home, he went to speak to one of the oldest ones who remained there. He implored him to give his approval for this purchase, for his soul ardently yearned for that place close to the Gaon and Tzaddik. "No price will seem too much for me," he repeated to the elderly man who was over 80 years old. "I will give you whatever price you ask."

"Do you agree to pay 1,000 silver rubbles?" the old man asked with a little sarcasm. The answer did not take long: "Yes!" the young man declared, and he took out the money from his wallet and handed it to the old man. This elderly administrator told himself, "What's preventing me from taking this money? I don't have much longer to live. I'm old and this man is young, hardly 20 years old. From now until the time he passes away, there will be other administrators, and who among them will come to me and claim this money?" Now the next day, the bitter news spread that this young avrech had suddenly died. The Chevra Kadisha was called upon to take care of his burial, but since no one was aware of the secret agreement that he had concluded with the old man, the administrators chose a burial plot that seemed appropriate to them. The night following the burial,

the young man appeared in the dream of the old administrator that had sold him the burial plot adjacent to that of the Megaleh Amukot, demanding that he transfer his body to the grave that he had purchased.

This dream, which the old man paid no attention to in the beginning, occurred again the next day and the day after that. The young man warned the Chevra Kadisha's administrator that if he did not obtain the adjacent plot, he would convene him to the Celestial Court.

This severe warning greatly worried the old man, who did not know how to get out of this predicament. It was to the point that, in his fear and distress, he went to find the Rav of the city and told him everything that had happened and asked him for advice. The Rav was astounded when he heard the story. He severely reprimanded the old man for what he had done, and demanded that he give him the money he had received so that he could give it to charity. This would allow the avrech's soul to rest in peace. Nevertheless, the Rav absolutely refused to give him permission to transfer the dead man's body to the unused burial plot adjacent to the grave of the Megaleh Amukot. The old administrator was overcome by fear. What was he now going to do? The Rav gave him his cane and ordered that he go to the grave of the young man and summon him to Din Torah at the Rav's home three days hence in the afternoon. Since the old man feared for his life, he obeyed. To his great surprise, the dead man accepted to present himself to a Din Torah as the Rav had asked.

When the old man arrived at the Rav's home at the prescribed time, he saw that in the room in which the Rav studied was a partition that had been set up, behind which the dead man was to be. The Rav was seated on the other side, and with him was the Chevra Kadisha's administrator. The spirit on the other side of the partition presented his grievances: "I obtained the rights to the burial plot and purchased it with my own money. No one has the right to chase me away

from it." The Rav asked the dead man to identify himself by name, but he responded that this was forbidden for him to do. To calm the dead man, whose voice could be heard coming from the other side of the partition, the Rav said, "As a result, if it is forbidden for you to identify yourself and to give your actual name, we cannot grant your request. The money has thus been distributed to the poor for your soul to rest in peace. And now, go and rest in peace." However the dead man refused to give in. He repeated that the administrator had not kept his word, and he demanded that he rectify his mistake.

Upon hearing these words, the Rav was filled with great consternation. He finally had the idea of saying, "If such is the case – if your soul is so great that it is forbidden to reveal your identity – then take action yourself and make your body role from its present resting place to the burial plot that you asked for and purchased with your own money on the day before your death." The Rav promised him only that he would make the Chevra Kadisha aware of this decision so that the plot adjacent to the grave of the Megaleh Amukot would not be given to anyone else. The next day, when the members of the Chevra Kadisha of Krakow went to the cemetery, they found a new grave that they did not recognize and which they had not dug. The administrators then convened to discuss the situation and decided to erect a headstone upon it, and since they were unaware of the dead man's name, they decided to inscribe the following words upon it: "His Neighbor will Testify for Him." This story spread far and wide.

(An Excerpt from the Archives of the Krakow Chevra Kadisha)

Remove Anger from Your Heart and Evil from Your Flesh

Rabbi Chaim of Kossov, author of the Torah work entitled *Torat Chaim*, related that he once traveled to a town to perform a certain mitzvah there. While on route, he stayed in a

village and readied himself to spend the night with a local Jew. The latter was very happy to be able to host him, and he prepared a bed for Rav, who then retired for the night. After midnight the Rav heard someone reciting the blessing for Torah study with great concentration. He then heard him beginning to study Gemara. When daylight broke and there was enough light to make out shapes, the Rabbi saw a blind old man lying in a bed and studying with great devotion. The old man said that he was the father of the Rav's host, and that for 20 years he had separated himself from all worldly things and was occupied exclusively with Torah study and serving G-d. He had not the slightest contact with anyone, and he wanted nothing other than Torah. He lived with his son, who took care of all his needs, and was completely free to devote himself to serving G-d. The Rabbi, who then realized that he was in the presence of a man of great spiritual stature, asked that he enter into a firm pact with him, such that whoever would die first would come back in a dream and tell the other how he was judged in Heaven. He accepted, and they agreed to their pact.

Some years later the blind man died. He kept his promise and came to Rabbi Chaim in a dream. He told him the following: "When my soul rose to Heaven, there was a great problem among the Heavenly host. When they brought me into the Celestial Court and began to examine my case, they realized that during the last 20 years of my life I was spiritually elevated and pure, and as a result I had atoned for my sins, to the last trace of impure thoughts, to the extent that I was clean of all sin and filled with Torah and mitzvot. Then all of a sudden an angel dressed in black cried out, 'You wish to grant Gan Eden to this man? Yet he has scorned the Torah in public and has still not repented!'"

The angled explained what he meant in detail.

When he was younger, the man had taught young boys in a village far from where he lived. He stayed there all winter long and returned to his hometown for Passover, where he was known and honored as a Talmid Chacham. Once he went to Synagogue to pray on Shabbat, but when

he was given the fourth Aliya his heart was filled with anger. He waited until the end of the service and went to express his irritation to the Gabbai. "To someone as honored as myself you give only the fourth Aliya? Someone of my status should get the sixth, or the Maftir!"

In Heaven the verdict was immediately pronounced, and the deceased was given the choice of either (1) Coming back in another incarnation to repair this sin, or (2) Suffering three minutes of shame in Heaven. Naturally, he chose the second penalty.

All of a sudden, the gates of Gan Eden were opened and an angel came to bring him to where he was to be put to shame before all the Tzadikim in Heaven: "See this putrid drop – he had the insolence to say that the fourth Aliya was not enough for him."

When Rabbi Chaim would relate this story, he would finish by saying: "Know that the Holy One, blessed be He, had pity on that great man, lessening his punishment so that he did not feel too much shame. Otherwise, he would not have been able to withstand it any longer, and he would have asked to return on earth rather than to suffer this shame, be it only for a minute more. From this we learn what harm we do to ourselves by anger and stubbornness.

A Mistake Rectified

Rabbi Shemuel Shtrashun (the Rashash) directed, among other things, a free-loan fund that issued loans of substantial amounts to whoever was in need. Now the reality of things is that if any such institution treats its borrowers gingerly, it ends up slowly disappearing. Therefore Rabbi Shemuel established very strict rules governing the repayment of loans, demanding that borrowers make regular, monthly payments.

One day, a G-d-fearing but unlearned Jew from Vilna arrived at the Rashash's free-loan fund and borrowed 100 rubbles, which he was to repay in one lump sum three months later.

When the time came for repaying the loan, the borrower came to Rabbi Shemuel to give it back to him, but he did not find him at home. He then went to the Beit Midrash, where Rabbi Shemuel studied every morn-

ing, and there he saw him immersed in his studies, oblivious to the fact that someone had just arrived. The man was hesitant to disturb him, but ended up telling himself that he had to reimburse his debt on time. He therefore approached Rabbi Shemuel and said that he had come to pay back his loan, then deposited a bill of 100 rubbles on the Rav's open Gemara.

Meanwhile Rabbi Shemuel, absorbed in his studies, noticed neither the identity of the Jew who had suddenly appeared, nor the money that was on his Gemara. He had the vague impression that someone had been standing next to him, and out of politeness he had nodded his head in his direction. The Jew, however, took this as a sign that Rabbi Shemuel had acknowledged his repayment of the loan, and at that point he left the Beit Midrash.

When the Rav finished studying, he closed his Gemara without noticing the bill within it. He then put it back on a shelf and went home.

Rabbi Shemuel had the habit of checking the free-loan fund ledger every week to verify that payments were being made on time. To those who had not yet made that month's payment, he sent a reminder letter. As he was checking the ledger that day, his eye spotted the name of a Jew whose repayment date had already passed 15 days earlier, yet there had been no sign of him. Rabbi Shemuel gave him the benefit of the doubt, telling himself that the borrower was no doubt in a tight situation, and that he should give him one or two more weeks until he could repay such a hefty loan. Two weeks then passed, but still nothing, so Rabbi Shemuel sent him a notice to repay.

"But I already reimbursed you about a month ago, at the due date," the man responded.

"I don't understand what you are saying!" Rabbi Shemuel told him, gently but firmly. "When did you pay me, and where is your receipt?"

"How can the Rabbi have forgotten?" the borrower responded in astonishment. "I placed a 100 rubble bill in front of you in the Beit Midrash, and you even nodded at me to indicate that everything was in order. Perhaps I should have asked for a receipt, but I

didn't want to disturb you, and I relied on your memory."

"Never!" Rabbi Shemuel said resolutely. "I did not see you at the Beit Midrash, and you did not give me any 100 rubble bill. You're simply trying to avoid paying your debt. I'm not in the habit of accepting loan repayments without issuing a receipt or returning an acknowledgment of debt.

For his part, the Jew continued to assert that he has already paid. True, he did not have a receipt, but he knew that he had repaid his loan.

Rabbi Shemuel told him that since the money belonged to the community, he did not have the right to overlook it. Furthermore, if he did not repay his loan within eight days, he would summon him to a Din Torah.

After a week, Rabbi Shemuel summoned the borrower to a Din Torah, at which the latter vigorously asserted that he has already repaid his loan. The judges were about to render their decision, but Rabbi Shemuel intervened and told them that he was prepared to wait a few more weeks. Perhaps the Jew would feel remorse during that time, admit to the truth, and repay his debt.

In the meantime, news of what had happened spread. People heard that the Rashash had summoned the man to the Beit Din, and that he had the gall to unabashedly contradict the Rashash. It goes without saying that the general public took the Rashash's side, with some people even venting their fury on the man by heaping insults on him. His assertion that he had already repaid his loan was viewed with scorn, and he was fired from his job, one from which he was already squeezing out a meager living. His boss openly told him that if he could lie to the Beit Din for 100 rubbles, he could also steal from him, which perhaps he had already done!

The man had a son of tremendous virtues who studied in a yeshiva in Vilna, yet the shame he felt was so great that he had to leave both the yeshiva and Vilna!

Then one day, as Rabbi Shemuel consulted the same Gemara where that ill-fated treasure lay, he saw the bill of 100 rubles. At that very instant it all came back to him: A Jew had in fact entered the Beit Midrash on that day! Rabbi Shemuel began to go over

the events of that day. He had probably been immersed in study, and the Jew had entered and no doubt spoken to him of this loan repayment. Yet at the time nothing of this registered in his mind, and without wanting to interrupt his study, the man must have placed the bill on the open Gemara and thought that the Rashash had noticed, then he must have quietly left. It was in this way that Rabbi Shemuel reconstructed the incident, followed by which a terrible feeling of anxiety overcame him. He had but one question in his heart: How could he get this Jew out of the mud?

Rabbi Shemuel did not hesitate before having the man summoned, who appeared before him with an icy stare. The Rashash rose before him, and without any explanation as to why he was asking for his forgiveness, he went straight to the point: "Tell me yourself how I can obtain your forgiveness for all the suffering that I caused you. For my part, I am ready to forgive you in public before everyone and explain what happened in order to give you back everything you have lost."

The Jew, who was completely broken, remained still. He responded to Rabbi Shemuel's proposal with the certitude of a man who had lost all hope: "For me, that means nothing. People will say that your honor wanted to save me from the misery I was in. My name has already been used as a byword for disgrace. My son had to leave the city he was in, so great was the shame he experienced. What can you give me, or what can you add to such a request for forgiveness?"

These somber words pierced the noble soul of Rabbi Shemuel, for he possessed a great heart and had now fully understood the scope of this good Jew's distress in all its horror. He then began to reflect upon the situation very carefully, and all of a sudden he straightened up and his face lit up. He looked at the man straight in the eye and spoke to him with an almost ecstatic voice: "Your son is in another town? Send someone to get him and have him brought to me. I will take him as my daughter's husband!" (Note: The Rashash's daughter was an orphan that he had adopted as a young girl).

The eyes of the Jew lit up as a smile broke out on his face. He be-

gan to regain his vitality, like someone who had gone from the lowest depths to the greatest heights, and tears of joy welled up in his eyes. He was unable to make a sound. He grabbed the hand of Rabbi Shemuel with such warmth, it seemed that all the shame he had experienced up to that point was worth it just to hear this fabulous news. It placed him in a state of joy that he would have never dared imagine in his sweetest dreams.

Thus the two men were happy. One had found a way to rectify his mistake, and the other had found a wonderful wife for his son. They departed from each other warmly, and after a few days the engagement was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony in the Rashash's home, accompanied by the presence of Torah scholars and dignitaries of Vilna.

In Vilna itself, people were saying that Heaven must have decreed this marriage from the outset, for who would have had the idea to propose such a match to the Rashash? This event thus transformed itself into a marvelous matchmaker.

(Hizorharu Bichvod Chavareichem)

The Power of a Good Deed

From the story that follows, I learned just how great an influence a good deed has, even the simplest one, when done by an upright man with the intention of performing a mitzvah.

We know that in his final years the Chofetz Chaim decided to journey to Eretz Israel, with his plan being to settle in Petah Tikva. In view of this great event, the small town built a beautiful home for the greatest Rav of the generation, and public restroom facilities were also built nearby for those who wanted to come and meet the great Tzaddik. For various reasons, the Chofetz Chaim was prevented from fulfilling his dream of coming to Eretz Israel, but be that as it may, everything was still built. Then one year on the eve of Yom Kippur, the Gaon and Tzaddik Rabbi Eliyahu Dushnitzer Zatzal began to bustle about in the public restrooms, cutting and preparing toilet paper for Yom Kippur. A non-observant boy passed by at the time, and he looked with great curiosity at Rabbi Eliyahu's activities. He finally

approached and asked him what he was doing. Rabbi Eliyahu explained to him, patiently and gently, that since tomorrow was Yom Kippur and many people were expected to come to pray, he had to make preparations for the good of the public.

The boy was so astonished by this noble deed that he told him that every piece of paper the Rav had cut had made a deep impression in his heart. By the influence of that deed, the boy came to the Yom Kippur prayer service and completely returned to G-d. He would often burst into tears when recounting that every piece of paper that the Tzaddik tore had also torn his heart.

The Reward for Helping Young Newlyweds

We know that wearing a Tallit effectively protects a person against evil spirits. However during the time of Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, the inhabitants of his town believed that even the merit of giving a beautiful Tallit to someone enables a person to arrive in peace in the hereafter, in a world that is completely good. Here is that story:

One day Rabbi Chaim of Sanz set aside his Torah study in order to accomplish the mitzvah of helping a young woman to get married. With that in mind, he went with his friend Rabbi Moshe Rappaport to make the rounds of the well-to-do in town. While on route they stopped by the place of a wealthy man who was hospitable to neither G-d nor men, for he took Torah mitzvot lightly and was not among the orthodox of the community. Yet despite this he respected the Rabbis, and the visit of these two Torah greats gave him immense satisfaction.

When Rabbi Chaim explained their reason of their visit, the rich man inquired as to the sum that they still lacked for the wedding. "We still need money for the shtreimel and the Tallit," the Tzaddikim told him.

Such items were considered to be expensive during those times, and not everyone could easily afford them. Yet the rich man did not hesitate, and he gave them the entire amount that they lacked. The two Rabbis were very pleased by this kindly act, and Rabbi Chaim

above all kept this matter in mind so that he could repay him measure for measure when the time would come. However the rich man remained wealthy for his entire life, and so the Rav never had an opportunity to pay him back for his good deed.

Many years passed, and the rich man left this world. However Rabbi Chaim had still not forgotten his good deed for the impoverished bride. He ordered his assistant to inform him when the rich man's funeral would take place, for he wanted to be in attendance.

To everyone's surprise, during the funeral Rabbi Chaim stayed close to the casket at all times. People were astonished because Rabbi Chaim was known for his great diligence in Torah study, yet now he had left his studies to accompany a deceased man whose life was filled with rumors of impropriety.

Their surprise increased when they saw Rabbi Chaim waving his hand in all directions, as if he felt something there. Yet there was nobody next to him. When the funeral procession arrived at the cemetery and the deceased was about to be lowered into the grave that had been dug for him, Rabbi Chaim once again waved his hands to the four cardinal directions, and he also waved the cane that he was holding in his hand. That being done, Rabbi Chaim went home. One of those close to Rabbi Chaim asked him to explain his strange behavior during the funeral. Rabbi Chaim told him of the deceased's noble act when he was collecting funds for a poor bride, and because of that deed he wanted to attend his funeral. "Then," Rabbi Chaim said, "when I was following the deceased, I saw a great number of destructive angels who wanted to steal his soul away, claiming that it belonged to them. Seeing that, I began to wave my hand and I chased them away. However at the cemetery they returned and assembled together to remove him, so I again tried with all my strength to chase them away, and I succeeded. He therefore merited being laid to rest in peace in a world that is entirely good, all because of the mitzvah of the Tallit that he purchased with his own money for the groom.

The Repentance of Rabbi Saadia Gaon

People say that throughout his life, Rabbi Saadia Gaon Zatzal mortified himself by rolling in the snow and by performing other acts of penitence. His disciples found his behavior strange, to the extent that they asked him, "Our teacher, how can you repent? Do you sin? We know that you are a great Tzaddik, so why all this suffering?" He replied to them, "My dear students, there are two types of repentance: A person can regret his sins, or a person can regret even his mitzvot. It is for the latter that I repent, for each day I become more aware of the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, and each day I perfect myself more than the day before. I repent from my imperfect past, and I truly regret not having known the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Torah as I know them today!"

He continued: "I learned this from a very simple Jew. One day I found myself in a distant city, and I went to a Jew who didn't know me. Naturally, he acted with me in accordance with the mitzvah of hospitality, as he should. After a few days, some people who recognized me came by and told others that I was staying there. The entire city was buzzing with excitement, and everyone came to receive my blessing and to ask for my advice. When my host saw all this, he was overtaken by remorse, bitterly regretting that he had not welcomed me with greater honor. From that point on, he provided me with finer sheets and served me meals fit for the holidays. Despite all this, however, when I left his place he fell to my feet and begged my forgiveness: 'May our Rav forgive me for not having honored him as I should.' I told him that he had done everything he possibly could, and I thanked him very much for it. Nevertheless, he did not stop asking for my forgiveness, and I gave him my blessing."

Rabbi Saadia Gaon finished his story by saying: "From that day on, I drew a lesson from a Kal Vachomer: If a person can feel so much regret that he has not sufficiently honored a human being, how much more should a person feel regret when it comes to properly honoring the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He? And how greatly should one feel regret for the omissions of the past!"

Enchanted Paradise

Rabbi Chaim Elazar Shapira of Munkacz assembled his disciples and told them the following story:

"Before closing his eyes for the final time, the great defender of Israel, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, may his merit protect us, said to those gathered around him on his deathbed: 'Are you not surprised that all the Tzaddikim who moved heaven and earth all their lives to annul evil decrees against the Jewish people remained silent when they rejoined the Celestial Assembly? Why did they not shake the Throne of Glory? Where is the Tzaddik of Sas-sow, Rabbi Moshe Leib, who loved Israel so much that even a baby crying in its cradle gave him no rest? Where is the holy Baal Shem Tov himself? Why are they not encouraging Mashiach to come and put an end to the sufferings of Israel?' Nobody in his entourage, however, could answer these questions. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak then gathered his strength and said, 'When a Tzaddik ascends to Heaven, a place in Gan Eden is immediately made for him. Angels welcome him with love, gather him in their arms, and lead him to palaces of glory. The utter splendor of a palace's brilliance and the radiance from on high blinds the eyes of a Tzaddik. Because of his amazement, he completely forgets the anguish of this world and the suffering of the people who remain in it. A Tzaddik would suffer if he were to separate himself, be it only for a moment, from the worlds of splendor of the Ten Sephirot to look upon the suffering of men. Everything concerning them in this lower world holds almost no interest for him.' Rabbi Levi Yitzchak reflected for a little and then assured them by saying, 'I promise you, however, that I will not be blinded there. I will not soar about in Heaven in complete serenity while here below the Jewish people live in pain and poverty as they anxiously await Mashiach. I will not listen to the voices of angels and I will not enter Gan Eden. I will stand before the Creator and shake the Throne of Glory. I will not rest until my prayer for the Jewish people is granted. Only then will I take my place with the Tzaddikim in palaces of glory.'"

The Rabbi of Munkacz went on with his story:

"When Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum, the Tzaddik of Ujhely, heard what the Tzaddik of Berdichev had promised before his death, he said: 'Well, you

are certainly asking yourselves what happened to the great defender, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. Why did he also fail to end the exile? Had he not promised that he wouldn't be blinded, that he would shake the Throne of Glory and that the heavens would be torn asunder?' The Tzaddik of Ujhely continued: 'When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak left this world and his soul ascended to the heavens, the ministering angels welcomed him and were about to lead him to the palaces of Gan Eden, just as they had done with other Tzaddikim. However Rabbi Levi Yitzchak stubbornly said to them, "Leave me alone with your Gan Eden – I will not be blinded by it! I left the lower world where mortals suffer and await the redemption of Mashiach. I will go to the Throne of Glory and present my case before the Creator Himself! I will convene a Din Torah and not leave from there until the dark exile below is ended. Only then may you lead me to Gan Eden!" A noise was heard from the midst of the Celestial Assembly. Since the time that there had been a Gan Eden in the heavens, nothing like this had happened before. The place of a Tzaddik such as Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev had been set aside in Gan Eden! Besides, all the great Tzaddikim, all the Tannaim and Amoraim, the entire holy congregation of the Baal Shem Tov, awaited him there. However Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was obstinate: "I beg your pardon, but I will not enter! I fear that the brilliance of the splendor of these palaces will turn my heart away from the sufferings of those living below." What did the angels do? As we know, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak loved music and also played the violin, with which he accompanied his melodies of Kaddish. The angels went to get King David and placed him near the gates of Gan Eden. King David then began to play one of his psalms on the violin, and little by little the sweetness of the melody drew Rabbi Levi Yitzchak up to its gates. At the moment that the Tzaddik's feet crossed the threshold of Gan Eden, he was blinded by its brilliance. Thus he too, the great Tzaddik, also forgot us and abandoned us to our anguish.'

'However,' the Tzaddik Rabbi Moshe of Ujhely said, 'I do not know how to sing and I have never held a violin in my hands. King David will not draw me into Gan Eden. I will stand outside, prostrating myself before the Creator. I will take a vessel filled with tears to spread out before the Throne

of Glory, and I will not move from there until I hear the footsteps of Mashiach.'

The Rabbi of Munkacz was quiet. He interrupted his visionary story, lost in his thoughts. One of his disciples arose and asked, "What happened to Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum, the Tzaddik of Ujhely, after he left this world? Had he not promised that he would not rest until the steps of Mashiach were heard?"

The Rabbi of Munkacz answered his disciples:

"So, you want to know what happened to the Tzaddik Rabbi Moshe of Ujhely? Before him too the gates of Gan Eden were immediately opened, but he was obstinate and refused to enter. The angels begged him, but he had only one answer: 'No! My heart will not permit me to sail into a sea of light with the greatest Tzaddikim, while below mortals drown in a sea of tears.' Once again a storm arose in the Celestial Assembly. Was it possible that a Tzaddik such as Rabbi Moshe, who had arrived in Heaven filled with Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds, was standing outside Gan Eden? This time as well, the angels found a way to make Rabbi Moshe forget his promises. What did they do? The Tzaddik of Ujhely was a tremendous Torah scholar and greatly loved to discuss difficulties in Torah. He was also a tremendous speaker who used to speak in public for hours. The angels approached him and told him that beyond the gates of Gan Eden was a group of Talmidei Chachamim who wished to hear words of Torah from him. A terribly powerful desire to utter words of Torah began to fill Rabbi Moshe. He approached the group and started to present novel teachings to them and words that ear had never heard and mouth had never spoken. Up to the present time, he is still discussing Torah with that group in Gan Eden, and once again we no longer see an end to the exile."

The Tzaddik of Munkacz finished his story by saying, "Thus, everyone in Heaven dwells in the presence of the Shechinah and forgets our world below. The merit of our holy Tzaddikim certainly protects us in this world and in the World to Come, but we can only count on our Father in Heaven, for He never forgets."

A TSADIK HAS LEFT THIS WORLD - THE GAON RABBI NISSIM REBIBO ZATSAL

By Rabbi David Hanania Pinto

Each time that a Tzaddik leaves this world, it is deprived of one of the foundations upon which it rests. As we know, the world endures by the merit of the Torah and those who study it day and night.

French Jewry has still not recovered from its shock. It still does not truly realize who it has lost – a man gone to his resting place while leaving us to our sorrows – our teacher Rabbi Nissim Rebibo, may his merit protect us.

Not only was he one of the greatest Poskim of our generation, he was also one of the greatest men of our time because of his lofty midot, the full measure of his greatness and deeds not being describable by words. Woe to us, for the world has lost a Tzaddik and a Chassid. Who will give us his equal? He left us prematurely – suddenly – we had no time to prepare. If he had departed in the usual way, our grief would have been lessened. Yet now, in our situation, the passing of this Tzaddik is a punishment for us. Our pain is even greater for not having appreciated the true value of his greatness during his lifetime.

It is only now that he has left us that we discover the greatness of his holiness, his Torah, and his midot. The pain of his passing is excruciating, and our eyes still weep over the death of the Tzaddik. Woe to us, woe to us! Who will now support us in difficult times? We know that the world endures only through the merit of the Torah, and today who in the world of Torah and among the rabbanim can take his place?



I had the great merit of studying with him for a few years at the Sunderland yeshiva. He was the lion and leader of our group, and all the rabbanim respected him and appreciated his Torah knowledge. They knew that he was born for greatness and called upon to become great in Torah. Despite all this, he was discreet and extremely humble. In our generation, there was no other Gaon and Tzaddik in Torah and midot who knew how to conceal his deeds as well as him.

Woe to us, for he left us as orphans, devoid of our spiritual father. Who can we rely upon today? Who can lead us in the paths of the holy Torah?

We know that the evil inclination attacks a man with full force when he is immersed in Torah study. We also know that it vigorously attacks one who desires to be insignificant before the Torah and men, one who desires to grow in the midah of humility. Rabbeinu Nissim Zatzal possessed the two most important

midot that enable a man to achieve greatness: Diligence in Torah study and humility. He possessed these to the point that people were not aware of his greatness, for he concealed them in his immense wisdom in order not to fall into pride – “This is why I cry!”

Thirty years ago, when we were still young, whenever we looked for our teacher Rabbi Nissim Zatzal, we always knew where to find him. Be it day or night, during holidays or vacation time, he was always in the Beit Midrash, hidden beneath a pile of open books that he was diligently studying. He was happy with his lot. He never protested to G-d when experiencing great hardship, and he never stopped studying. When his wife the Rebbetzin fell ill, he studied with still greater fervor in order for her to recover by the merit of the Torah. In fact Hashem heard his prayers and completely healed her.

Our teacher always hid in every Beit Midrash in such a way that nobody realized that he was sitting there at the back of the room. One day we met during an important event to benefit the kollel, and I asked him to speak in order to motivate the audience. He replied that it was precisely me that he wanted to hear speaking. Hundreds of books could be written about his life, about his greatness in Torah, his humility, and his generosity.

It was only when we heard the exceptional praise from all the rabbanim delivering eulogies at his funeral, when they revealed the importance of this giant among giants who lived among us in our generation, that we understood that there



had been a great light in our midst. We never realized it, however, and I asked myself how it was possible, when he was still among us, that we were blind to the point of not perceiving his greatness! We keenly sense his absence now that he is gone, a sign that our generation was not worthy to benefit from his light. Here it is that today a little of his glory and brilliance have been revealed to us. Of individuals like him it is written, "They have gone to their resting place; they have left us to our sorrows."

I had the merit of studying with him every Thursday for the entire night in the Sunderland yeshiva. Everyone loved him, and he had no problems with any Rav or other person, for he was honest with Hashem and others.

May it be Hashem's will that he pray for us in Heaven, in order that

we may completely return to Hashem. May it be that through the merit of his Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, will hasten the coming of Mashiach. Amen and amen. May he intercede for his wife the Reb-

betzin, for his sons and entire family, and for the holy community. May he know in Heaven that today we miss him very much, and may we merit seeing the resurrection of the dead. Amen and amen.

This is the proper place to recount an amazing story that happened to me, one that will allow us to understand, be it ever so slightly, just who is Holy One, blessed be He, and to realize that everything that we do comes from Him, Who directs even the minutest details of events.

This is what happened.

On Wednesday, July 29 1998 I received a call from Dayan Rav Nissim Rebibo Shlita, the Av Beth Din of Paris, who asked me to come that night to a fund-gathering event being sponsored for the yeshiva. I told him that I had to go to Chicago, where a gathering of thousands awaited me. Yet Rav Rebibo repeated that if I came, this would encourage people to give generously, and so asked me, out of love for the Torah, to accept.

Having grown up in a Torah environment, and having been initiated into it since my childhood in my parents' home, I thought of how I was ready to do anything, without exception, for the sake of Torah. This was equally the case of the Sefat Emet of Ger, who at an early age was already





from New York on Wednesday night (via Geneva). I prepared for the trip for close to four days, then cancelled, but then decided to go anew, yet cancelled again. The end of the story is that I cancelled my trip to New York and I left for Chicago, via New York, with a return via Zurich. And all this because I had deferred my trip to Chicago a month earlier because of Rabbi

a great intellectual, having written numerous works, without mentioning that already at age 23 he was appointed as Rebbe of thousands of Ger Chassidim. One day his accomplishments were being told to the Maggid of Mezritch, who, far from being surprised, responded with the following parable: Someone wished to scale a very high mountain, but one that was very dangerous to climb. For months he climbed without stop, but finally managed, all exhausted, to arrive at the top. And once there, what did he see? A small child sitting there. "I had to labor for months and months to get up here! How did you - how could you do it?!" he asked the child. The child replied, "You had to climb the mountain, but I was born here." And so it is with the Torah. Many have to go through a lifetime of struggles to develop the traits necessary to acquire the Torah and reach the highest levels, yet there are others who are, so to speak, born there. Such was the case with the Sefat Emet of Ger. And that is why I didn't refuse what Rav Nissim Rebibo's request, for I know the value of Torah, having been

born into it, and having grown up among the great and righteous of the generation.

I therefore told him that I would take part in the event of that night, an event dedicated to the study of Torah, and at the same time I cancelled my flight to Chicago. But think well - who won in all of this, me or Rabbi Rebibo? If I had left for Chicago, I would have raised an enormous amount for my institutions, while in cancelling I was losing money for them. In addition, not only did I speak in that night's activities to bolster Rabbi Rebibo's institutions (which, thank G-d, brought in a lot of money) but I also influenced others to give generously and gave them my blessing. It would seem therefore that I was the loser, while Rabbi Rebibo was the winner. But the conclusion of the story will show you to what point I was the winner in this extraordinary tale.

A month later I was on vacation in Nice, where I began to prepare for a trip to New York. I was hesitating between going to New York (via Geneva) on Sunday with the return on Tuesday, or going on Monday with a return

Rebibo's event.

And what a miracle! The same New York-Geneva return flight that I had cancelled ended terribly, as the airplane crashed and all aboard perished. If I had declined Rabbi Rebibo, I would have left for Chicago, and a month later I wouldn't have cancelled the trip to New York; I would have taken that New York-Geneva flight. But by the merit of Rabbi Nissim Rebibo, I had my life given to me anew, and I had been saved. Thus it was I who won out in all this, all because of faith in G-d, a faith that I felt so vividly, I could see it before my very eyes.

This story illustrates something that we've often said, and it is that the evil inclination, which is the same thing as the Satan and the Angel of Death (Bava Batra 16a), wants to root out faith from the hearts and minds of men, and to make them forget all of G-d's goodness and generosity. This is why the Torah begins with "Bereshith," in the beginning - to indicate to us that it consists of a beginning, but that we, the Children of Israel, are the end. We must by faith take on that role. For without Israel, there is no beginning.

כתבי חידושי תורה ממנו הם מצויים כאן. הצדיק אמנם נפטר, אבל האותיות פורחות באויר ומשפיעות רוח קדושה על כל מי שרוצה. פעמים רבות זוכים אנו בלימוד התורה לכווין לדעת הגאון מוילנא, לדעת הגאון רבי עקיבא אייגר, או לדעת אחד מהראשונים. וכי אנו כדוגמתם, כקדושתם, והרי לא הגענו לקרסולי רגליהם. שהרי הם עמלו כל כך בתורה עד שזכו לתרץ איזו קושיא, ואילו אנו קטנים שבקטנים זוכים מיד לתרץ כמותם. אלא שדבר זה כבר נתחדש, כי הם האותיות שפורחות של אותו ראשון, רב, צדיק, אותם אנו שאפנו וזכינו לקבל אותם מאת ה', ואז זכינו לומר אותם.

ואף גם, רבי אליעזר הגדול שחלק על חכמים בתנור של עכנאי, בוודאי ידע כי יחיד ורבים הלכה כרבים (ברכות לז), ומדוע נחלק עליהם. אלא שהוא בוודאי התכוין לשם שמים, שכן רצה להראות לכל העולם שאפילו שהוא מביא ראיות מכל הבריאה, מאמת המים, מהחרוב, ואפי' מבת קול, אפילו הכי אין הלכה כמותו כי יחיד ורבים הלכה כרבים. שכן התורה כאן ונאמר בתורה (שמות כ"ג ב') אחרי רבים להטות. ולא עוד, אפילו שקיבל על כך עונש, שהרי חכמים לא דברו עמו ושרפו את כל טהרותיו, אף על פי כן שתק וקיבל את הנוזיפה של חכמים.

ואמנם, מצינו שם בגמרא (ב"מ נט:) כי רב נתן שאל את אליהו הנביא: מה עושה הקב"ה בשעה זו, ואליהו השיבו: הקב"ה שמח ואומר נצחוני בני, נצחוני בני, שכן הוא מטהר וחכמים טימאו.

וכי במה אפשר לנצח את הקב"ה, וכי מיהו שינצח את הקב"ה. אלא, שהקב"ה כתב בתורתו יחיד ורבים הלכה כרבים, ובזה נצחוני בני. וכיון שהתורה כאן, כמו שנאמר בתורה (דברים ל' יא, יד) לא נפלאות היא ולא רחוקה היא, כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפך ובלבך לעשותו, אם כן התורה נמצאת כאן. וכיון שהתורה נמצאת כאן, מוטלת עליך החובה להיות (אבות ה' כ"ב) הפוך בה והפוך בה דכולה בה. ואם אתה לא מוצא בה מאומה, זאת בגלל שאינך הופך בה, ואינך מתעניין בה ולא עמל בה.

וזאת היתה גדלותו בתורה של רבי שלום משאש. שמעתי עליו מפי בנו הרה"ג ר' דוד משאש שליט"א, כי כמה שעות לפני שנפטר בערב ש"ק עוד ישב וכתב תשובה בענין היתר עגונה. והדבר פלא פלאים. ועוד שמענו עליו, כיצד זה אדם זקן ושבע ימים, פעמים שהיה יושב ולומד כל הלילה עד שהאיר הבוקר, ולא ידע כלל כי האיר הבוקר. פעם שמעתי שבאו ואמרו לו הגיע זמן תפילת המנחה. כל כך ישב ולמד כל הלילה עד לשעת מנחה שלמחרת, מבלי להרגיש כלל. שכן כל כולו היה שקוע בתורה. זאת מכיון שהתורה לא בשמים, וסייעו לו מהשמים בתורה, אשריו ואשרי חלקו.

הרי אם כן, שסילוקו של צדיק זה הוא דבר איום ונורא לכלל ישראל. אבל ב"ה, לא אלמן ישראל, כי השי"ת השאיר לנו שריד ופליט את אותיותיו של תורתו הפורחות באויר, את ריח תורתו. כאשר התורה לא נגמרה ולא נשרפה, היא לא עלתה השמימה, אלא נשארה כאן, וממנה אנו ממשיכים להתקיים.

יהי רצון שזכרו יהיה ברוך,

ויהיה למליץ טוב ולמליץ יושר על כל

כלל ישראל, אכי"ר.

ר' אליעזר פעל רבות כדי להצדיק את דבריו, עד שאמר חרוב יוכיח, אמת המים תוכיח, כתלי בית המדרש יוכיחו, מן השמים יוכיחו. אמנם החכמים נתנו לו לעשות כן אבל בכל פעם דחו אותו ואמרו לו שאין מביאין ראיות מדברים אלו.

והדברים קשים מהבין. אם כל העת החכמים דחו את דבריו ואת ראיותיו, מדוע לכתחילה הניחו לו לעשות כן. ועל כולנה, לבסוף כשאמר ר' אליעזר מן השמים יוכיחו, יצאה גם בת קול ואמרה כי הלכה כמותו. או נעמד רבי יהושע על רגליו ואמר: התורה לא בשמים היא, התורה כאן בארץ, ואין משגיחין בבת קול. והדבר פלא פלאים, אם ר' יהושע דחה גם את דברי התב קול, מדוע הניח לר' אליעזר לומר כן. מדוע היה צריך שתצא התב קול, האם כדי להשתיק אותה. וכי למה בכלל עשה כן רבי יהושע.

אלא, ידועים דברי חז"ל (זוה"ק ח"ב קסא:) הקב"ה איסתכל באורייתא וברא עלמא. כלומר, התורה נמצאת בכל הבריאה, כי כל הבריאה יודעת שיש תורה, והתורה חקוקה בכל דבר שבבריאה. אבל מכל הבריאה רק האדם יכול לדבר, מה שאין כן כל הבריאה לא יכולה לדבר, כי התורה ניתנה רק לעם ישראל. משום כן רצה ר' אליעזר הגדול, שאפילו שכל הבריאה לא יכולה לדבר, אבל היא יכולה להוכיח שהצדק עמו והלכה כמותו, משום שהעולם נברא על ידי התורה, והיא חקוקה בבריאה ויודעת במה היא נבראה, ויכולה להוכיח מה אמת ומה אינו אמת.

ולכן דווקא החכמים נחלקו עליו, והניחו לו להביא ראיות והוכחות מהחרוב, מאמת המים, מכתלי בית המדרש, כי החכמים ידעו שהתורה נמצאת בכל הבריאה והיא יכולה להוכיח מהי האמת, שאין הלכה כמותו. שהרי מזה דווקא שהתורה נמצאת בכל הבריאה הם הביאו הוכחה שהתורה לא נמצאת בשמים אלא נמצאת כאן בארץ. ובכל דבר בעולם חקוקה התורה. ולכן דווקא לבסוף אמרו לו שלא מביאים הוכחה מדבר שאינו מדבר, שלא מביאים הוכחה מדבר שהתורה בו, אלא רק האדם עצמו יכול לדבר ולהוכיח.

ועל פי זה נבין את מה שאמר ר' אליעזר כתלי בית המדרש יוכיחו, ואז נודעונו כתלי בית המדרש ועמודי ביהמ"ד. גער בהם רבי יהושע והם לא נפלו משום כבודו של רבי יהושע, אבל גם לא נזקפו משום כבודו של ר' אליעזר, ועדיין מטין ועומדין. דהיינו, כתלי בית המדרש שמעו הרבה תורה, וזכותם גדולה, והם יכולים להעיד ברבי אליעזר. אבל אז גער בהם רבי יהושע שאין להם זכות להתערב בוויכוח בין החכמים.

ואז לבסוף, כשאמר רבי אליעזר מן השמים יוכיחו, השיבו רבי יהושע: התורה לא בשמים היא. התורה כאן בארץ. האותיות פורחות והם כאן. ואם יש ויכוח בין חכמים, הרי שהכלל הוא "אחרי רבים להטות" (שמות כ"ג ב') אפילו שהרבים לא צודקים, והולכים אחר הרבים. כלל זה בא רבי יהושע ללמד, כי התורה שמשא רבינו הוריד לעם ישראל לא מצויה בשמים אלא כאן בארץ, וכל מי שרוצה ליטול - יבוא ויטול.

ו. שפתותיו דובבות בקבר

כל צדיק שנפטר, תורתו נשארת כאן, כמו שחז"ל אומרים (יבמות צו.) כי כאשר מדברים בשבחו של צדיק שפתותיו דובבות בקבר. התורה שלמד בחייו בוודאי הולכת לפניו לעולם הבא, כמו שנאמר (ישעיה נ"ח ח') והלך לפניך צדקך, והתורה מחכה לו לעוה"ב. אבל הבל פיו שלמד תורה נמצאת כאן, ובפרט כשיש

מגן לנו, כל הספרים שכתב, כל פסקי ההלכות שפסק, כל העגונות שהתיר, כל אלו נשארו לנו. פעם בצרפת התעוררה אצלי בעיה בקשר לאשה שהיו לה עשרה ילדים, והיה חשש של ממזרות אצל כולם. אז שאלתי את רבי שלום ופתר את הבעיה, שכן ידע לפתור גם בעיות קשות כאלו.

ברוח הקודש שלו, ברוח התורה שלו ידע לומר מיהו ממזר ומיהו לא, באשר היתה לו סייעתא דשמיא, והקב"ה סייע בעדו, עד שפעם אמר לי בלשון קדשו: "רבי דוד, אני בטוח שבשמים עוזרים לי". זאת היתה עבודתו וכוחו של רבי שלום. והיה רצון שזכותו תגן עלינו אכ"ר, ובזכותו הקב"ה יביא לנו את משיח צדקנו במהרה בימינו אמן.

ד. וידום אהרן; כל מאי דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד

מצינו בתורה הק' (ויקרא פרק י'), לאחר פטירת שני בני אהרן, בא משה רבינו לנחם את אהרן אחיו ואמר לו; בקרובי אקדש. פי' ידעתי שיתקדש שמו של ה' בחנוכת הבית, אבל לא ידעתי במי יתקדש, או בי או בך, ועכשיו שמתו שני בניך, רואה אני שהם קדושים ממני וממך, ועליהם התכוין ה' בקרובי אקדש. מיד "וידום אהרן". אהרן לא השיב מאומה אלא שתק, ועל השתיקה שלו קיבל שכר, כי אח"כ הקב"ה התייחד אליו בדיבור (ויק"ר י"ב ב').

ואם התורה כותבת וידום אהרן, הרי שיש איזה סוד ואיזה לימוד עבורנו. שהרי, דבר זה אינו קל לאבא ששומע שבניו גדולים ממנו, קדושים ממנו, והם נפטרים על פניו. הכאב גדול על שלא זכה ליהנות מבניו, ליהנות מאור תורתם וקדושתם. וא"כ וודאי שהדבר הזה כאב מאוד לאהרן. ובמקום שאהרן הכהן ישיב למשה רבינו שיש לו צער מפטירת בניו, הוא לא משיב אלא וידום.

הן אהרן הכהן יכל לומר למשה רבינו; מדוע הם מתו דווקא יום זה של חנוכת הבית, מדוע מתו שניהם ולא אחד מהם, מדוע הוא (אהרן) לא מת במקומם, והרי הם לא נשואים עדיין, והוא כבר לא יוכל לראות את בניהם שהם בבחינת "בני בנים הרי הם כבנים" (יבמות סב:). ועם כל זאת אהרן שתק. בוודאי השתיקה הזאת מורה על גדולתו של אהרן הכהן שהרגיש את הקב"ה בכל מקום, וידע שהכל מאת הקב"ה, ואם ה' עשה כן - זהו רצונו, ומי הוא אהרן שיבוא להרהר אחר מעשיו של ה', מי הוא שידבר נגד מעשי ה'. רק אדם גדול כאהרן הכהן שידע שהכל מאתו יתברך, וכל מאי דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד (ברכות ס:) יכול להגיע לדרגה כזאת מבלי להתלונן.

מטבע האדם, כשהוא מתאבל הוא מתלונן, הוא בוכה ומצטער. אבל אהרן הכהן ע"ה שתק - וידום אהרן. שכן אהבת ה' בערה בקרבו, ועד כדי כך, שכאשר שמע שזהו הכבוד של ה', שבזה הקב"ה מתכבד, מיד קיבל את הדברים. רק אדם שאוהב את הקב"ה ואוהב את הכבוד של הקב"ה, ואינו רואה את עצמו כלל בעוה"ז, רק הוא יכול לשתוק ולא להגיב.

כזה היה אהרן הכהן. כששמע שכבודו של ה' מתכבד במיתת בניו, שתק, ושתיקה כהודאה. שכן, אהבת ה' והרגשת ה' היא רק בשעת המבחן, בשעת הבחינה, אז אפשר לראות אם באמת האדם אוהב את הקב"ה, או שהכל רק מן השפה ולחוץ, כי הוא אוהב את ה' רק כשטוב לו ואילו כשרע לו הוא מתלונן, ואז הוא מפגין כלפי חוץ את החסרונות שבו, ואז אהבתו את ה' אינה שלימה.

רבי שלום משאש זצ"ל סבל צער רב ויסורין בחייו, אבל רק מדיבוריו על הקב"ה, מאהבתו הגדולה שאהב את הקב"ה, מזה לבד אפשר לומר גם עליו וידום אהרן. שכן קיבל כל דבר שבא מהקב"ה בשמחה. הוא היה אוהב שלום ורוחף שלום, כמו ששמענו מרבנים, שכן לא היו לו מתנגדים, לא בירושלים לא במרוקו ולא בכל העולם, אלא שפה משותפת היתה לו עם כולם, ועם כל אחד ידע איך להלך. זאת משום שהתורה נקנית בשלום.

כמו שנאמר (משלי ג' י"ז) דרכיה דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום. זאת כוונת התורה - נתיבותיה שלום, אבל לא כל רב מבין שהכווין של התורה הוא שלום, אפי' שכל רב מתכוין לשלום, אבל כשיש ח"ו מחלוקת יש פגם בפסוק "וכל נתיבותיה שלום". אבל לא כן רבי שלום, גם כשפגעו בו וידום שלום - וידום אהרן. וכך רחש לו אהבה של כולם. ועליו אפשר לומר שתורתו פורחת באויר, והא ראייה, כי מכל העולם באים להספידו, ואף כאלו שלא שמעו עליו באים לשמוע הספדים עליו. סימן הוא הדבר שתורתו פורחת באויר וכל הרוצה ליטול יבוא ויטול. שכן, תורתו לא עלתה השמימה, היא לא נשרפה, אלא נשארת כאן, כמו שנאמר (דברים ל' יב, יד) לא בשמים היא... כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד.

ה. התורה לא בשמים, אלא קרובה אליך לעשותה

בפסוק נאמר (תהילים קי"ב ט') פור נתן לאביונים צדקתו עומדת לעד. אדם המלמד תורה לבני עניים שאין בהם תורה, או לעמי הארצות צדקתו עומדת לעד, שכן מי שמלמד תורה נקרא נותן צדקה, כי התורה נקראת צדקה (ילקו"ש וירא פ"ב). כזה היה רבי שלום, הוא היה מפורסם אצל העניים, אצל האביונים, אצל עמי הארצות, ודווקא איתם התעלה והתגדל, כי לימדם בדרכי נועם. שהרי מי שמלמד תורה למי שיודע תורה יש לו זכות גדולה, אבל מי שמלמד תורה לאדם שאינו יודע זכותו גדולה פי כמה. כמו שאנו רואים אצל משה רבינו ע"ה שלימד תורה לעם ישראל, ככתוב (דברים ל"ג ד') תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב, וגם נאמר עליו (מלאכי ג' כ"ב) זכרו תורת משה עבדי. ועליו נאמר וצדקתו עומדת לעד, כי עשה צדקה גדולה עם בני ישראל. וכך עשה גם רבי שלום משאש. זהו שאמרו חז"ל (נדרים פא.) הזהרו בבני עניים שמהם תצא תורה, כי התורה היא האושר הגדול, ואם אדם מלמד תורה לבני עניים הרי שהוא מחיה ומקיים אותם, כי אח"כ אותם בני עניים נהפכים להיות בני תורה, ואין לך עשיר כמו אדם שיש לו תורה. באשר, אדם שהוא עשיר בכסף חושב שהכסף שלו, אבל תלמיד חכם אף פעם לא יפסיד מאומה, כי לכל מקום שילך יכבדוהו ויעריכוהו, כי התורה מרוממת אותו. ועל זה אנו בוכים, כי תורתו של רבי שלום פורחת באויר, וכל הרוצה יבוא ויטול.

ולא עוד, התורה יכולה להשפיע אפילו על גוי, כמו שאכן מצינו אצל רבי חנינא בן תרדיון (ע"ז יח.), כי כששמע אותו גוי (שהיה ממונה על השריפה) כי תורתו של רבי חנינא פורחת באויר, אותיות פורחות, הרהר בתשובה וזרק את עצמו לתוך האש, וזכה לחיי העוה"ב. וכי מה הכניס בו הרהורי תשובה, אלו האותיות שהיו פורחות באויר, הם שהחזירו אותו בתשובה, וזכה יחד עם רבי חנינא לחיי העולם הבא.

מצינו בחז"ל (בבא מציעא נט:.) במחלוקת הידועה של תנור של עכנאי, כי ר' אליעזר בן הורקנוס טיהר וחכמים מטמאין, ושם

עליהם צריך לבקש מחילה סליחה וכפרה. ואם כן, המעשים הרעים מקורם בגאווה, ועצם זריקת השעיר מראש ההר, הוא כדי לעורר בכל אדם את המידות הרעות שיש בו, שבגללם נעשו אנשים רבים, ואולי אפילו בניו, שהרי יומתו בנים על אבות רח"ל.

ג. התורה נקנית במידת הענוה

כשאנו מדברים על רבי שלום משאש זצ"ל, האדם הגדול בענקים, אנו נזכרים מיד בענוה העצומה שלו. זוכרני, במרוקו, עת הייתי בגיל עשר, כשרבי שלום היה עובר ברחוב הייתי רץ אליו ומנשק את ידיו. כולו אומר כבוד. כשמלך מרוקו היה מתארח אצלו בביתו הוא לא היה מפרסם דברים אלו בעיתון. גם כשאנשים גדולים וחשובים היו רבות בביתו, לא פירסם זאת ולא דיבר מכך. שכן, נתקיים בו מאמר הו"ל (ברכות סג:) אין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה. וגם אמרו (תענית ז.) כי התורה נקנית רק במי שמנמיך עצמו עליה. ורבי שלום, אכן הנמיך את עצמו על התורה. ואכן, מי שהכיר אותו זכה, ומי שלא, בוודאי שמע עליו סיפורים מדהימים.

הייתי אצלו בשנה שעברה, לילה קודם הבר מצוה של בני, ושאלתי אותו כמה שאלות בהלכה, בנוגע למנהגים שלנו. מה אומר ומה אדבר; השכינה שרתה על פניו, תורה וגדולה במקום אחד, ענוה עצומה, ובכזאת ענוה, מתוך פשטות ענה לי על שאלותי. לאחר מכן הוא ביקש ממני בקשה, והיא: הוא קרא לבנו רבי דניאל, ואמר לו: דניאל, המקור שלנו ממרוקו. אני אבא שלך, אבל לפעמים אינני יכול ליעץ לך עצות. אבל הוא (ואז הצביע עלי) בגיל שלך, והוא יכול ליעץ לך. ואז השבתי לו: רבי שלום, כבוד הרב הוא האבא שלו והוא אוהב אותך, ורק כבוד הרב יכול ליעץ לו מה לעשות. וכי אדם אחר יכול ליעץ לבן שלו מה לעשות. היש ענוה גדולה מזו. כזהו היה רבי שלום משאש; פשטות וענוה.

רבי שלום משאש זצ"ל שהתבקש לישיבה של מעלה, נמצא למעלה ומביט עלינו, מביט על בניו ועל כל הקהל הקדוש הזה שבא לכבודו. ואם כן, בוודאי הוא שלח מן השמים קבוצה של שליחים ומלאכים האומרת: תרדו ותראו מה אומרים עליו האנשים. ומה אומרים עליו, מכיון שיש כל כך הרבה מה לומר עליו, הרי שאין מה לומר, בפרט על מידת הענוה העצומה שהיתה בו. ועל זה אפשר לומר חבל על דאבדין ולא משתכחין, חבל שדורנו לא זכה לדעת מי היה רבי שלום משאש. המאירי אומר (בתחילת מסכת פסחים), כי הצדיקים דומים לכוכבים. הכוכבים מאירים גם ביום כי הם מקבלים את אורם מהשמש, אבל לא רואים את אור הכוכבים ביום, מכיון שאור השמש מסתיר את אורם. אבל בלילה, כשהשמש נעלמת רואים היטב את אור הכוכבים.

כך הם הצדיקים, כל זמן שהם חיים, הם מאירים כל כך עד שבכלל לא רואים את אורם, ואי אפשר כמעט ליהנות מאור התורה שלהם. אבל לאחר פטירתם (כפי שהסברנו לעיל), כאשר האותיות פורחות באויר, וכבר לא רואים אותם יותר, כי אז מיד מתחילים לראות ביותר את האור של הצדיקים, ועכשיו אנו מרגישים באור הזה שכבה.

אמנם, ניצחו אראלים את המצוקים ונשבה ארון הקודש (עפ"י כתובות קד.), הוא נלקח מעמנו, אבל התורה שלו לא נלקחה, האותיות פורחות באויר, ומי שרוצה ליטול יבוא ויטול. תורתו

שהרי טוב היה לוא היו קודם שוחטים את השעיר ורק אח"כ זורקים אותו, כדי למנוע ממנו את המות הרע הזה. אלא, מצויים אנו ימים מספר קודם חג השבועות, חג מתן תורה. אבל כדי לקבל את התורה צריכים להתכונן, וההכנה לקבלת התורה מתחילה כבר מפסת. ומי ההכנה מפסת, תיקון המידות. שכן, אין מי שיכול לומר כי כל מידותיו טובות, באשר תמיד צריך לתקן עוד ועוד את המידות. וכבר מצינו אצל רבי אלעזר ברבי שמעון (בר יוחאי) (בבא מציעא פד:) שגם לאחר פטירתו יצאה תולעת מאוזנו, כיון ששמע לשון הרע על תלמיד חכם ולא מיחה.

וא"כ יש להתכונן ולתקן את המידות, כי זאת עיקר ההכנה כמו שאומר הגאון רבי ישראל סלנטר, כי יש מ"ח מידות טובות שיש לקנותן, ולעומתן יש מ"ח מידות רעות שיש לעקור אותן ולתקן בימי הספירה עד שבועות, וביום המ"ט לספירה בודקים שוב אם תיקנו את כל המידות, ורק אז זוכים לקבלת התורה. ואז רצים אל ה' לקבל את התורה. אבל מי שלא התכונן מה יקבל. רק אם היתה הכנה יש מה לקבל. הוא שאי' (אבות א' א') משה קיבל תורה מסיני, ולא נאמר "ה' נתן תורה למשה בסיני", אלא משה קיבל תורה מסיני. כלומר, ה' רוצה תמיד לתת אבל האדם צריך לרצות לקבל.

כל אחד צריך להיות בבחינת מקבל. פי', לא צריך להתחנן ולבקש מכם; בואו לשמוע שיעור תורה, אלא כל אחד צריך לרוץ לקבל, להיות מוכן לשמוע ואז הנותן יכול גם לתת ולמסור, כי כבר לפני שמציעים לבוא ללמוד אתם מוכנים לקבל על עצמכם לבוא ללמוד. ולפני שמבקשים מכם לעשות איזו טובה לזולת, אתם כבר מוכנים לעשותה. ובשביל להגיע למדרגה זו צריך הכנה על ידי תיקון המידות, ואז מקבלים. אלו דברים שבין אדם לחבירו, ואף דברים שבין אדם למקום.

אם כן איפוא, מתורצת השאלה ששאלנו. ביום כיפור כל אחד שואל את השאלה הזאת: כמה מסכן הוא השעיר שזורקים אותו מראש ההר כשהוא עדיין חי. אבל התשובה לשאלה מונחת בתוך השאלה. מדוע זה יש לך צער ורחמנות על השעיר שזורקים אותו מראש ההר, ולמה אין לך צער על מה שצער את חבירך במשך כל ימות השנה.

ומה בדבר הצער שצער את הבורא עולם כל השנה. ומה על צער השכינה שלא פעלת לאוקמי שכינה מעפרא. על כל זה אינך מצטער, ואף גם על הביטול תורה ועל ביוון התורה שבטלת ושביזית, על זה אינך מצטער, אלא אתה מצטער על בהמה שזורקים אותה מראש ההר. כדאי לך איפוא להצטער על דברים שבין אדם למקום, ועל דברים שבין אדם לחבירו. ואפשר שזאת אחת הסיבות, מדוע רצה הקב"ה שדווקא ביום כיפור יזרקו את השעיר מראש ההר בלי לשחוט אותו, וימות במיתה משונה, כדי שאדם יתעורר לשאול את השאלה הזאת. ומה שאלה שהוא שואל את עצמו, מיד הוא מתעורר מאליו וחושב; על מיתת הבהמה הזאת אני מצטער, ואילו אני מצטער על מעשי הרעים במה שבטלתי אנשים אחרים מתורה, שהרי אולי כמה אנשים נעשו בגללי.

וכאשר יחשוב כן, יצטער באמת מדוע חבירו צריך למות בגלל הלשון הרע שדיבר עליו, כדי שיצטער על התפילות שלא התפלל כראוי כל השנה, ועל כל המעשים הרעים שעשה. שכן

גוילין נשרפין, ואותיות פורחות

תורתו מגן לנו

הספד על הצדיק הגאון רבי שלום משאש זצ"ל, רבה של ירושלים עיה"ק
מאת רבי דוד חנוניה פינטו שליט"א

בבחינת ספר תורה, שתורתו ממשיכה לרחף עלינו, בבחינת אתפשטותא דמשה בכל דור ודור.

כזהו היה הצדיק הגדול הגאון רבי שלום משאש זצוק"ל, הוא הלך מהעולם לעולם אחר, אבל התורה שלו נשארה כאן, תורתו עדיין פורחת, ומי שמצטער על סילוקו, וודאי נהנה מהתורה שלו, הוא נהנה מהזכות של התורה שהוא למד. ועל ידי שאנו בוכים על סילוקו של הצדיק הגאון רבי שלום זצ"ל, אנו זוכים ליהנות מתורתו, אולי הקב"ה יפתח את ראשו, יפתח את שכלנו ונוכל להבין יותר בתורתו של רבי שלום זצ"ל.

לפני כשמונה שנים, הייתי בחג הפסח במרוקו, בקזבלנקה אצל ר' יהושע דהאן. רבי שלום משאש זצ"ל היה כאן בארץ, ואז, באותה תקופה אשתו לא הרגישה טוב. הוא התקשר למרוקו לר' יהושע לאחל לו חג שמח, ואז ר' יהושע אמר לו שאני נמצא אצלו. באותו רגע ראיתי איזו מידה של ענוה היתה לרבי שלום. הוא דיבר עימי וביקש ברכה עבור אשתו. ואני השבתי לו: רבי שלום, אני לא גדול אני קטן, ואילו כבודו ראש אב בי"ד, מרביץ תורה ברבים, ויש לו זכות אבות, ומה לו לבקש ברכה ממני. את תשובתו איני רוצה לומר, אבל עצם הדבר, שאדם כזה, גדול בענקים, שמבטל את עצמו בשביל לבקש ברכה עבור אשתו, הרי שזו ענוה עצומה. אדם שמוכן לבטל את עצמו כדי לקבל ברכה - זה אומר דרשני. ואז אמרתי לו: "רבי שלום, רק בעבור שכבוד הרב מבקש ממני ברכה, רק בעבור הביטול הזה, השי"ת ישמע את התפילה שכבוד הרב מתפלל". זה היה רבי שלום משאש.

ב. צער על סילוקו של צדיק

חז"ל אומרים (שבת קה:): כל המוריד דמעות על אדם כשר, הקב"ה סופרן ומניחן בבית גניזו. וכבר ידוע שמי שבוכה על צדיק, הקב"ה מחשיב לו את הדמעות ואת הצער שיש לו, והקב"ה סולח לו. והנה, דבר פלא אנו רואים; ביום כיפור אנו נוטלים שני שעירים, שער אחד לה' ושעיר אחד לעזאזל. את השעיר לה' שוחטים והוא כפרה על עם ישראל, ואילו את השעיר לעזאזל נוטל אותו אדם למדבר, ושם זורקו מראש ההר, והוא לא מספיק להגיע לחצי ההר עד שנעשה איברים איברים, מתוך התפרקות, וכך הקב"ה היה סולח לכל העוונות של עם ישראל. והדבר קשה מאד מהבין. אנו יודעים שהקב"ה רחמן, והוא מרחם על בריותיו, ואף גם הוא מרחם על חיות ובהמות, כמו שנאמר (תהילים קמ"ה ט'): ורחמיו על כל מעשיו, ולמה כאן אצל השעיר לעזאזל אנו רואים אכזריות שכזאת. מדוע הקב"ה לא מבקש ליטול את השעיר, וקודם לשחוט אותו, ורק אח"כ לזרוק אותו מראש ההר.

וסימוכין לדבר מצינו על רחמיו של השי"ת. חז"ל מספרים על רבינו הקדוש (בבא מציעא פה.) כי י"ג שנים סבל יסורין, משום שפעם אחת רצה השוחט ליטול עגל ולשוחטו, ברח העגל והתחבא מתחת כסותו של רבי. כשראה רבי כך, לא ריחם על העגל אלא אמר לו: לך לשוחט, כי לך נוצרת. כשראו בשמים שרבי לא מרחם על הבריות, גם לא ריחמו עליו והוא סבל יסורין י"ג שנים. אבל אח"כ הם הלכו, שכן ראה ששפחתו מטאטאת מהבית עכברים קטנים, ואמר לה: עזבי אותם, שכן נאמר ורחמיו על כל מעשיו, ואז פסקו יסוריו כי ריחם על הבריות. ואם כן, מדוע כאן אצל השעיר הקב"ה לא מרחם עליו. מדוע כאן רואים אכזריות שכזאת,

א. אותיות פורחות, התורה נשארת לכלל ישראל

חז"ל מספרים (עבודה זרה יח.) כאשר הרומאים חזרו מהלווייתו של רבי יוסי בן קיסמא, מצאוהו לרבי חנינא בן תרדיון שהיה יושב ועוסק בתורה ומקהיל קהילות ברבים וס"ת מונח לו בחיקו. הביאוהו וכרכוהו בס"ת, והקיפוהו בחבילי זמורות והציתו בהן את האור, והביאו ספוגין של צמר ושראום במים והניחום על לבו, כדי שלא תצא נשמתו מהרה. וכו'.

אמרו לו תלמידיו: רבי, מה אתה רואה, אמר להן: גוילין נשרפין ואותיות פורחות. אמר לו קלצטונירי (מי שהיה ממונה על השריפה): רבי, אם אני מרבה בשלהבת ונוטל ספוגין של צמר מעל לברך, אתה מביאני לחיי העולם הבא. אמר לו: הן השבע לי. נשבע לו. מיד הרבה בשלהבת ונטל ספוגין של צמר מעל לבו, יצאה נשמתו במהרה. אף הוא (אותו ממונה) קפץ ונפל לתוך האור. יצאה בת קול ואמרה: רבי חנינא בן תרדיון וקלצטונירי מזומנין הן לחיי העולם הבא.

באותו זמן היה חושך בעולם, שכן הרומאים הרגו בעם ישראל, וגם הרגו את עשרת התנאים, הרוגי מלכות. אבל מדברי רבי חנינא אנו למדים ענין מופלא, כי רבי חנינא אומר: אני רואה אותיות פורחות. מהי הכוונה באותיות פורחות, מהי המשמעות של אותיות פורחות, דווקא כאשר ספר תורה נשרף ח"ו. הרומאים ימ"ש רצו להשכיח את התורה מעם ישראל, והם חשבו שדווקא על ידי שריפת התלמוד, שריפת התורה הם יעשו את זה. אבל לא נכון הדבר. וזכרנו, ראיתי פעם בצרפת בספר, כי לפני מאות שנים נטל אחד ממלכי צרפת את כל ספרי התורה, ואת כל הספרים הקדושים שהיו בצרפת ושרף אותם באש. כך עשו גם ברוסיה, וכך עשו כל האויבים שלנו. כולם רצו דווקא לשרוף את התורה, לא לקרוע. שכן כשקרעים נשאר איזה זכר, אבל כששורפים הכל כלה ואבר, נשאר רק אפר ותו לא.

לזאת בא רבי חנינא בן תרדיון ומלמד אותנו, כי אפילו שהגויים שורפים את התורה, התורה לא נשרפת. האותיות של התורה פורחות ונשארות באויר, ומי שזוכה רואה את האותיות, כי התורה לא נעקרת ח"ו. אדם שבוכה על שריפת התורה, בוודאי אותה תורה לא הולכת ח"ו לאיבוד, אותה תורה נשארת פורחת באויר, ומי שיש לו צער זוכה לשאוף את האותיות הללו, ונהנה מהשפעת התורה של אותו צדיק. נמצא, שהתורה לא בשמים היא, ותמיד ממשיך העולם ליהנות ממנו.

ולפי זה, גם אותו אדם שהיה ממונה על השריפה, אפילו שהיה גוי, בור ועם הארץ, מכיון שכאב לו הצער שנעשה לרבי חנינא בן תרדיון, זכה להרהר בתשובה, וזרק את עצמו ג"כ לתוך השריפה, ותוך רגע זכה גם הוא לחיי העולם הבא. זהו המושג אותיות פורחות. כשבוכים על צדיק שמסתלק מן העולם, הקב"ה עושה שגם אנו נוכל ליהנות מהתורה שלו, כי התורה שלמד אותנו תנא או אותו צדיק פורחת באויר, כי העולם צריך שיהיה מוגן בזכות אותה תורה של אותו צדיק.

זהו שאמרו חז"ל (תקו"ז ס"ט קיב.) אתפשטותא דמשה בכל דרא בשיתין רבוא נשמתין (של בני ישראל), כי התורה שלימד את בני ישראל במדבר נמסרה להם, וכאשר נסתלק לישיבה של מעלה תורתו נשארה אצלנו, וככל שאנו עוסקים בתורה מסייעים לנו מהשמים לשאוב אל תוך לבנו מתורתו של משה רבינו שהיה

KOLLEL YISMACH MOSHE TORONTO (CANADA)

For community to possess a Kollel is truly a sign of its maturity and sophistication, as a Kollel in its midst can further raise the level of its community to new heights.

The Kollel is unlike any of the existing institutions in the community. It is a unique force and a unifying force. It declares that the Torah is our guiding light and we all stand staunchly behind it.

The Sephadi Kollel in Toronto was a realization of a dream, particularly of Mr. Prosper Lugassy, while dream are usually experienced while asleep, with Mr. Prosper Lugassy a group of visionaries dared to dream awake. It is due their leadership, convictions, courage and relentless focus that the Kollel came to be. This was a monumental task. Because of genuine humility, the names of those who envisioned a community Kollel, will not be mentioned.

The Kollel Yismach Moshe, on the name of the venerable Tsadik Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto Zatsal, is comprised of family men who commit themselves to spending their entire days from morning till late evening, seven days a week in advanced Torah study. Under the very capable leadership of the Rosh Kollel (dean) Rabbi Eliyahu Attias Shlita, a compatible group of families was identified and invited to join in being amongst its first. Their level of commitment and caliber is second to none. In a relative short term, the Kollel has earned respect and renown, both locally and abroad.

Yismach Moshe is an educational/religious institution. A place, where the holy words of G-d and our venerable sages are studied virtually around the clock. The learning of these rabbis and that of their wives is as serious and important to them as their role as teachers. Each member is responsible to

lead many individuals and groups in their own pursuit of Torah studies. This is done at all levels; from introductory to advanced, in four languages, always with much enthusiasm and devotion. From all the directions, the sounds that fill the Bet Hamidrash are the most beautiful sounds of sanctity.

The Kollel is open for the participation of all. As per literal translation of the Word Kollel – inclusive, the entire community is welcome to avail themselves of the Kollel; indeed are bid to.

The Kollel is most deserving of the support of everyone. The Kollel grows both in numbers and activities. Support for the Kollel is of utmost priority.

May the merit of the venerable Tsadik Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto protect you and your Family. Amen



SEFARADI KOLLEL OF TORONTO “YISMACH MOSHE”

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