

שנה טובה ופתוקה תכתבו ותחתמו
 לחיים טובים ולשלום

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“TO PROCLAIM YOUR KINDNESS in the Morning and Your Faithfulness in the Nights”

by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita



On Friday evening, with the arrival of Shabbat, we usually recite the Psalm: “It is good to praise the L-RD, and to sing to Your Name, O Most High” (Psalms 92:2). Our Sages tell us that this Psalm was originally composed by Adam, and it was later taken by King David and inserted into his collection of Psalms. As we know, David’s soul was a spark from Adam’s.

The Chida explains the verse, “King David was old, advanced in days” (I Kings 1:1) in the following way: The final letter of each word in the phrase “David...advanced in days” form the name “Adam,” from which we deduce that King David emanated from a spark of Adam’s soul. In fact, how can we say that King David was old, since he died at the age of 70, which is relatively young? From here we derive another interpretation from the verse, namely that the years of David’s life completed the years of Adam’s life. It is actually brought down that Adam gave 70 years of his life to David, for Adam saw by Ruach HaKodesh that King David would die on the day of

his birth. Saddened by this fact, Adam decided to give 70 years of his own life to this exceptional soul, in order to grant David the possibility of accomplishing his great deeds in this world. We now understand why King David is described as being “old,” since the end of his life actually marked the completion of Adam’s 1,000-year life.

Our sacred books tell us the context in which Adam composed the Psalm, “It is good to praise the L-RD.” On the first Friday of Creation, the day on which he was created, Adam sinned by eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. According to the measure of strict justice, he should have instantly died. Yet in His compassion, the Holy One, blessed be He, prolonged his life by hundreds of years. Hence it was out of gratitude that Adam composed this Psalm. Moreover, the six days of Creation that preceded Adam’s sin had a particularly elevated aspect to them. Mankind’s first sin tarnished the brilliance of the holy lights that shined in the universe. Nevertheless, the arrival of Shabbat enabled these lights to continue in the world, until the close of that holy day, when Hashem put them aside. Adam, who had the merit of tasting the delight of that Shabbat (which was infused with these holy lights), hurried to compose this Psalm because his goal was to perpetuate the sweet sense of holiness that reigned before the sin. In fact the reading of this Psalm, composed in a spiritually elevated atmosphere, can infuse us with a sense of holiness. Finally, Shabbat foreshadows the World to Come, and Adam’s Psalm constitutes a thank you to G-d for this holy day’s extra dimension.

Before his sin, Adam was an extremely elevated being. Chazal tell us that Adam’s heel shined like the globe of the sun, to the point that the angels mistook him for a celestial being. This sin also brought about a deterioration

in nature, for originally a tree’s leaves and trunk had the same taste as its fruit, a benefit that trees lost after the sin. With each occurrence of Shabbat, a foreshadowing of the World to Come, we are being offered the possibility of immersing ourselves to a certain degree in the atmosphere of the world before the sin.

A person will usually thank Hashem, blessed be He, for things that clearly seem good to him. As for things that a person does not clearly see as good, he will not thank Hashem for them. Man’s task in this world is to learn to thank G-d for everything, including those which his human eyes do not perceive as being good. For example, the fact that a person gets up every morning in good health constitutes an immense kindness from the Creator. Yet the everyday nature of this event has made it so commonplace that a person loses all sense of gratitude, having come to regard it as something completely natural. A chassid originally from New York told me what happened to him. One Friday night he went to bed, and when he woke up on Shabbat morning, he found his wife dead. There are many other stories like this regarding people who are in perfectly good health, and yet one day they just die, G-d forbid.

I recently witnessed a similar incident. A man wanted to see me, and he tried to meet at a place where I was receiving people. He had not arranged for a meeting, and therefore he was given one for the following day. That same night, while he was having supper, he suffered a heart attack that proved to be fatal. From Adam, we learn our duty to thank Hashem every day. Just the fact of being able to wake up every morning in good health, despite our transgressions of the prior day, make us infinitely indebted to G-d.

We sometimes see that it is ostensibly simple people who merit miracles,

a privilege that does not seem to be granted to Torah scholars. I offer the following explanation: It often happens that such simple people possess the strongest faith, their entire lives being focused on the Holy One, blessed be He. On the other hand, there are great scholars who are versed in the most subtle secrets of Torah, and yet they lack the main thing – constantly having in mind the One Who gave us this Torah. Now the fear of G-d constitutes the foundation and prerequisite for observing the Torah. A person lacking this essential quality cannot witness an obvious manifestation of Divine providence. Such is the meaning of the verse, “Now, O Israel, what does the L-RD your G-d ask of you? Only to fear the L-RD your G-d” (Deuteronomy 10:12). From here it follows that the fear of G-d and genuine faith form the foundation of every Jew’s existence.

Another Jew, who was also from New York, told me that one Friday night some thieves made their way into his home and stole more than half a million dollars. This man had entered into a business venture and was planning on depositing the money in the bank. I told him that it was Hashem Who gives and it is Hashem Who takes back, and may this incident be an atonement for his soul. I also advised him to claim the stolen money from his insurance company. The man listened carefully to my words and accepted Hashem’s judgment with love. He even reached the point of coming to the following conclusion: Given that this was obviously a Divine judgment, it was no use to ask his insurance company to be reimbursed for it, since Heaven did not want to protect it.

It was then the turn of a woman, all in tears, to ask me for advice. Her husband, who was young and in good health, had suddenly died from a heart attack, leaving his entire family in tremendous distress. As I began to console this woman over the loss of her beloved, she interrupted me to say: “I didn’t come here to be comforted, but for a very specific problem. My husband bought me some jewelry that was worth two hundred and fifty thousand

dollars. He was planning on giving it to me for my birthday, but he passed away beforehand. I’ve looked all around the house, but can’t find it.” That was the cause of her pain and the reason for her coming to see me: Her husband had left this world without telling her where her jewelry was.

I was completely taken aback by this woman, who rather than being saddened by her husband’s passing and trying to find a way to elevate his soul, was instead preoccupied with her jewelry. My dismay only increased when I learned that her husband was a millionaire and had left her an immense fortune. In that case, why was she so worried about this jewelry rather than mourning her husband’s passing? I therefore concluded that this is the difference between a person who is a believer and respects the Torah and mitzvot, and a person who is immersed in the physical world – a world that blinds people and hinders every attempt to see the truth as it really is.

“It is good to praise the L-RD” – “good” is an adjective that designates the Torah. Hence this verse means that only a person who possesses a solid foundation in Torah can thank Hashem for all that happens to him in life, for occasions that are joyous and for occasions that are not.

The passage continues by stating, “To proclaim Your kindness in the morning and Your faithfulness in the nights” (Psalms 92:3). The term “good” at the beginning of verse 2 refers to someone with a solid foundation in Torah. Now a person who does not possess Torah and lives in darkness, let him at least be filled with faith, which can illuminate the darkness of his nights.

During one of my trips to New York, I was told of a man who was struck with a malignant brain tumor. His doctors predicted that he would soon die. Told of his case, I telephoned him and left a message in which I recommended that he strengthen his observance of Torah and mitzvot in order to tilt the balance in his favor. This man seriously heeded my instructions, strengthening his fear of G-d. In the space of a few days, his brain tumor disappeared, leaving his

doctors dumbfounded in the face of this miracle. Today, everyone who meets this miraculous man exclaims, “How great are Your works, O L-RD!”

It sometimes happens that the Holy One, blessed be He, reveals His omnipotence to His creatures in order to stir their hearts into having faith in Him. This can be illustrated by the following case: A man was diagnosed with cancer that had spread throughout his body, and he had no further hope of survival. Despite the somber predictions of his doctors, he is still alive today, already several years later. One of the doctors himself said to him, “Know that your survival is a miracle, because from a medical standpoint, you should have died a long time ago. Only your prayers, your faith in G-d, and your observance of mitzvot are the source of this extraordinary merit.”

The caretaker of my home in Morocco, Rav Mordekhai Knafo, told me the following story. The son of one of his friends, originally from Strasbourg, was seriously ill. In fact doctors gave him no chance for survival. Having lost all hope, his relatives and friends went to the grave of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto, and there they prayed from the bottom of their hearts for the sick youngster. Following these prayers, Rav Knafo told the father of the boy that the grandson of Rabbi Haim Pinto, namely Rabbi David Pinto, was now at the airport. Rav Knafo advised the man to present me with a bottle of water, on which I would recite a blessing. This man, who was a simple Jew, prayed for my plane to be somewhat delayed. He then arrived at the airport and managed to convince the airline personnel to let him come aboard. When he presented himself to me, I recited a fervent blessing for his sick son. Thank G-d, the boy completely recovered, and later on he even had the merit of getting married and having three sons. The American doctors who heard of this miraculous recovery could not believe their ears. This incident brought about a tremendous sanctification of Hashem’s Name.

During one of my trips to Montreal, Rav Meir Gabay told me that he often wanted to photograph the cemetery

in Essaouira. Yet each time, for some reason or another, he was unable to. Once when he was in Essaouira, he was finally about to realize his wish...until his camera fell to the ground and broke! Rav Gabay then left Essaouira, convinced that all the pictures he had taken were ruined. Imagine his surprise when all the pictures turned out alright except for those he had taken at the cemetery! He saw this as a sign from Heaven, for it seemed that the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto did not want his gravesite being photographed.

A close relative of Rav Nissim Loeb, who was a great follower of Rabbi Haim Pinto, told me that a grandson of Rav Nissim had been married for seven years, but was still fatherless. Medically speaking, he had no chance of ever fathering children. However his authentic faith that the merit of the tzaddik would work for him allowed him to overcome this physical inability. His wife later gave birth to a child in good health, contrary to all medical forecasts.

A woman originally from Montreal, who had been invited to the Hilloula of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto, asked Mrs. Maguy Moyal to give her an appointment to see me. She wanted me to give a blessing to her paralyzed son. In return, she promised to attend the Hilloula and make a large donation to my Torah institutions. I had to leave Montreal that day, however, and my extreme fatigue prevented me from receiving anyone. This woman, who was furious at having her appointment canceled, asked Mrs. Moyal to give her back the donation she had made. Mrs. Moyal returned it to this woman, all while advising her to fax me her request for a blessing. That way, she would certainly merit Divine intervention. At first she was reluctant, questioning the power of a blessing obtained by means of a fax. When she was finally convinced, however, she quickly faxed me her message. When I received it, I gave her son a blessing for a prompt recovery, writing that they should have the merit of witnessing tremendous miracles. I also promised to meet her during my next visit to Canada, and apologized for not having been able

to meet her as initially planned. When my blessing reached her, she wanted to return her donation, but Mrs. Moyal told her that she could give it to me in person once we met. One day I was receiving people in Canada, and a woman with a smile on her face, accompanied by her son, entered the room and gave me an envelope. She said that on the day she was told that I would meet her, she was busy on the telephone as her son was on the floor. Suddenly she felt something tugging at her foot, and when she looked down she saw her handicapped son standing on his feet! Thank G-d, this woman merited having the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto intercede for her to heal her son. The fact that she overcame her anger and was ready to make this donation also certainly contributed to the healing of her son, for “whoever overcomes his impulses merits to have evil decrees annulled.”

During one of my trips, a couple having problems came to see me. Their home was in complete shambles. When I learned of their problems, I tried to find some sort of a compromise between them, but without success. This couple owned a large factory that was missing a railing on its roof, from which one of their workers fell off and died. The owner was in shock, and I told him that it was his duty to place a railing there in order to comply with the Torah obligation, “You shall not bring any blood upon your house.” I added that “one transgression leads to another.” Furthermore, from the fact that this couple had been fighting with one another, the Holy One, blessed be He, brought about another disaster – the death of one of their workers. Who knows what harm could still happen? Perhaps one of their relatives could die as well? That same night, this couple returned to see me in tears. They said that their youngest son had fallen from that very same spot, but thank G-d had survived. This series of incidents greatly moved the couple, and they completely repented and reestablished peace in their home.

During another trip, I was visited by an elderly woman who was a Holocaust survivor. She told me that her daughter had committed suicide 30 years earlier,

and had been buried in a non-Jewish cemetery. She now wanted to transfer her daughter’s remains to a Jewish cemetery. When I inquired as to why she had been buried there, this woman said that her daughter had married a non-Jew, and he was the one who arranged for her burial. She took the opportunity to add that her grandson, the son of her daughter, had also married a non-Jew and was living a completely non-Jewish life. This woman begged me for help. I asked her if she observed Shabbat and ate kosher, to which she said no. I then asked her why she so wanted to die as a Jew and lie next to her daughter in a Jewish cemetery, since she had always lived at odds with Jewish law. This was like the case of the wicked Bilam, who had led a lawless life and yet wanted to die like a tzaddik. I told this woman that only a person who has lived like a Jew can merit to die like a Jew. It is important to realize the impossibility of holding to both extremes at the same time. A person who wants to die as a Jew, to die in sanctity, must also live in accordance with that ideal by sanctifying G-d’s Name, each person at his or her own level. I also gave this woman some practical advice, and I consoled her because I felt very bad for her.

A young woman who wanted to become engaged with a certain young man came to see me for a blessing. I asked her for their names, and then I blessed them. At that point I noticed that the young woman didn’t seem completely happy, and so I asked her about it. She told me that she was still thinking about her old boyfriend, a non-Jew that she had been seeing a few years earlier. I told her that today we are living at a time like that of the Hasmoneans, who managed to overcome the destructive influences of the Greek empire. I added that if these Chanukah candles did not influence her enough, it was certainly because she was still attached to her past to a certain degree. If she did teshuvah, she would be able to break free of her past. Thank G-d, she wholeheartedly did teshuvah and no longer had any longings for that time in her life. She merited marrying the young Yaacov.

Twenty years ago, I visited a certain

town whose Jewish community did not have a Sefer Torah. I did what was needed to obtain one, which brought great joy to the community. This town was known for its decadence, and I told a few of its residents, people that I was in contact with, to move away from there. They followed my advice. Some young men who moved away put a great deal of effort into observing Torah and mitzvot, going on to establish solid homes. One day a woman informed me of her plans to move away from that town, as well as to transfer the synagogue that was located in her building. It was difficult for them to assemble ten men in their neighborhood for a minyan, and her building, which was near the beach, was located in an environment that was known for its lewdness. It was agreed that the people who lived in that building should move out first, followed by their belongings, and then finally by the Sefer Torah that I had procured for them. The instant that the Sefer Torah was removed from there, the entire building collapsed. From this we clearly see that it was the Sefer Torah that had saved them and kept them alive during all the time they were living there, for the Torah protects and saves people from all danger. The woman who told me this story is a convert, and I thought that it could not have been a coincidence that she had witnessed this miracle. She had certainly emerged stronger in her battle against the non-Jews who wanted to marry her, and strengthened in her desire to marry a practicing Jew.

A certain Dr. Assaraf, a respected physician in Toulouse, told me that his son was involved in a serious accident. In fact he had lost consciousness and was close to death. This doctor knew that his son had practically no hope for survival. However the Rav of Toulouse, Rabbi Amram Castiel, spoke to him about the incredible wonders connected with Rabbi Haim Pinto, and he decided to pray for the merit of this tzaddik to save his son. Dr. Assaraf also showed a picture of Rabbi Haim Pinto to his son, who little by little began to regain consciousness. He says that he's convinced that it was the merit of this tzaddik which saved his son, since

medically speaking he had no chance of surviving.

Rabbi Castiel told me that when my father was dwelling in Morocco, he lived a very secluded life, and during the first years of his marriage he was extremely poor. Rabbi Castiel added that he learned from my father how "one who trusts in the L-RD, kindness will surround him." In fact his sustenance arrived at his door without him ever having to leave the house. They lived in Essaouira during that time, under conditions of extreme poverty. Many of them shared a small living space, and meat almost never appeared in their diet. It was almost miraculous that these women, having to cope with such dietary deficiencies, could give birth to healthy babies. Yet despite such crushing conditions, my father never had any worries about food, for even in the most extreme and seemingly hopeless of situations, the Holy One, blessed be He, came to his aid through an envoy – a person who had vowed to donate something to Rabbi Haim Pinto would miraculously visit him.

Rabbi Castiel also told me that my father was sometimes obligated to leave his home. One time he had to travel to Casablanca, and there all the residents in town, both Jews and Arabs, went out to see this amazing sight – that this tzaddik had left his home. The residents of Essaouira, who knew that my father was careful not to look out into the streets, brought blankets to cover him, thereby protecting the sanctity of his eyes. When my father took the bus, he also had the habit of placing a blanket over his head during the entire trip. Women who would see him traveling were overcome with emotion and exclaimed, "G-d of Meir, answer me!"

Rabbi Castiel also told me of another incident. When my father was very sick, Rebbetzin Castiel came to see him, but my mother refused to let her in. The Rebbetzin insisted, saying that she wanted to receive a blessing from the tzaddik. My mother then explained to her that she had already refused to let many rabbis come in, so how could she allow her this privilege? Suddenly, my father's voice was heard calling for the

Rebbetzin to be allowed in. When she came in, my father told her that he had written a letter that she had to bring to Toulouse. The Rebbetzin replied that she didn't need to see the letter, because she had just brought all the things that my father wanted and had listed in his letter. What could be more amazing than that! How could the Rebbetzin have brought precisely everything that my father had wanted even before having read his letter? This is a clear illustration of the principle, "The work of the righteous is done by others."

I heard the following story from Mr. Cohen, who heard it from Mr. David Mor Yossef Larach: Whenever people saw the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto, they would exclaim: "Money will come!" In fact whenever Rabbi Haim Pinto prayed for a person's livelihood, his sustenance was guaranteed.

I gave an important lecture at the Vincennes synagogue in Paris a few months ago. During that lecture, a woman insisted on speaking to me, saying that since she was old, she would not be able to see me once I started to receive the public. Despite the pleas of numerous people, I gave priority to this woman, at which point she told me the following story: Her daughter had come to see me several times before in order to ask for a blessing in finding a husband. Having still not had the merit of finding one, she returned once again. It was then that I had struck the table and exclaimed: "With G-d's help, and by the merit of Rabbi Haim Pinto, you will meet your future husband tomorrow!" In fact on the very next day, one of her friends invited her over to her home in order to meet her brother, and they ended up getting married and having children. I said to the woman who told me this story that I wasn't responsible for the miracle. It occurred solely because of the merit of my holy ancestors, and also because of the authentic faith of a mother and her daughter in the words of a Rav.



SHALOM BAYIT (PEACE IN THE HOME)

The torah shapes the character of man

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita)

It is written, “Gladden the beloved companions as You gladdened Your creatures in the Garden of Eden in former times. Blessed are You, O L-RD, Who gladdens groom and bride” (Ketubot 8a).

As newlyweds stand beneath the chuppah (wedding canopy), they receive seven blessings known as Sheva Berachot. Our hope is that these blessings will accompany them and help them establish a solid home among the Jewish people, a home based on Torah and the fear of Heaven.

In the sixth of these blessings, we wish the newlyweds the merit of loving one another and being united, following the example of Adam and Eve, who loved one another with a love that was absolute, without bounds. When G-d created man on the sixth day, He placed him in a perfect world that contained everything he needed. In fact man is G-d’s chosen creation, His most cherished work and the jewel of Creation. Furthermore, G-d wanted to create him only when the world was completely established and ready to receive him, so he could rejoice and be happy.

When Adam opened his eyes, he was surprised to see all of G-d’s amazing creatures, and he hastened to thank Him. Nevertheless, something hindered his joy. While all the other creatures had companions, Adam was alone in the world, having no companion with which to share his life. Above all, he found it impossible to perpetuate the human race. Our Sages have explained that when G-d saw Adam’s distress, He presented all the world’s animals to him, but he was only satisfied when G-d created his wife Eve from his side. Our Sages add that G-d used this approach in order for Adam to desire a companion that was like him in terms of essence and characteristics. Thus even when his wife would upset him, Adam would not be able to question her creation, since he knew that he had asked G-d to create a woman who was like him.

When Adam awoke from the deep sleep that G-d had placed upon him, and when he saw his wife Eve before him, no one could have been happier! Eve’s great beauty was apparently the reason for this joy, since she was so beautiful that the Matriarch Sarah – renowned for her beauty – was like an ape in comparison to her. It also seems that the joy that Adam felt for his wife Eve, as well as the joy that Eve felt

for her husband Adam, was related to the fact that there were no other human beings on the earth. Having no other choice, each based their desires exclusively on the other, and no couple could have been happier. They lived in this way, just as G-d had asked them to. It is obvious that they were motivated by a fear of Heaven, the proof being that it was G-d Himself who buried them in Ma’arat HaMachpelah (the cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron).

In our time, a large number of problems concerning shalom bayit (peace in the home) stem from the fact that people do not guard their eyes, nor do they invest enough time and effort into studying Torah. Thus a man will look at other women, some more attractive than his wife, and a woman will also meet men who appear to be more refined and caring than her husband. And when the eyes of husband and wife are not exclusively reserved for one another, problems of shalom bayit soon follow. This is because on the outside, people always appear better and more caring than in the home.

As the couple stir with emotion while standing beneath the chuppah, their love still intact, they are given the blessing that this love should continue to develop and grow, and that they should be happy together just like Adam and Eve. Here a question arises, for how can such a blessing be formulated today, given that modern times are so different than at the creation of the world? There were no other people in the time of Adam and Eve, and therefore it was natural for them to rejoice in one another and to love each other unconditionally. After all, they had no other choice, no other competition. In our time, however, there are so many men and women that the choice is huge. Therefore how can we formulate a blessing like the one above, a hope that runs counter to modern life?

I once saw a young man from London who, as he was standing beneath the chuppah, suddenly began to grow fearful, thinking that the young woman who was standing beside him was not blessed with all the characteristics that he was looking for. He abandoned her beneath the chuppah, leaving her covered with shame. I also heard the story of a young woman from Paris who fled from the chuppah, since she felt no real love for her young fiancé. In fact when the time came for him to say, “You are

consecrated to me,” she remembered another young man whom she loved, and she immediately fled, clothed in her wedding gown. These are difficult and painful examples of actual situations that, unfortunately, occur from time to time. Even some couples who appear to be living in peace and harmony really struggle with constant friction and arguments in the home, for husband and wife are no longer faithful to one another, their hearts and minds being directed toward others.

We might be tempted to defend these people by saying that, in the final analysis, it is G-d Who gave man an evil inclination, an inclination that leads him to sin with his eyes and mind. That, however, is not the whole story. To fight this inclination, G-d also gave man the Torah, as our Sages have said: “I created the evil inclination, but I also created the Torah as its antidote.” The Torah is therefore the remedy that heals the damaging effects of the evil inclination. By diligently studying and laboring over it, a person will be protected from the evil inclination. This allows us to understand the blessing given to the newlyweds, namely that they should merit to be like Adam and Eve. In fact the Torah, which was given to the Jewish people, is filled with laws and advice that have the power to protect a person from sin. Hence by establishing their home on the principles of Torah and the fear of Heaven, husband and wife will merit for love to constantly reign in their home and for strife and discord to be absent.

Man’s purpose on earth is to acquire virtues through the diligent study of Torah. At the same time, he must work on correcting his negative character traits, which can disrupt his service of G-d. In fact G-d placed numerous and varied abilities in each person, and it is possible to orient them in a positive way, for spiritual purposes, or in a negative way (G-d forbid), for destructive purposes. For example, a person who by nature is very stubborn can use this trait in a negative way – by clinging to his ideas without any hope of changing or making any effort to understand others. Such a person will be unable to recognize his faults, and he will refuse to change because he thinks that he is always right. Even if the members of the Beit Midrash (study hall) show him another way to think and try to explain to him why he is wrong, he will cleave to his position, as stub-

born as a mule. This proves that the Torah he has studied was not for the sake of Heaven, but only served to support his stubbornness and personal pride.

Alternatively, this same character trait – which can cause a person to stumble and lead him to the very brink of disaster – can also act as a virtue. For example, when a person studies a subject that is difficult to understand, and yet instead of losing hope and crossing his arms, he continues to learn and tries to understand, this constitutes a positive and beneficial type of stubbornness. In fact this is a kind of stubbornness that can elevate him to the highest spiritual levels, helping him to persevere and study Torah with diligence, and enabling him to get to the crux of issues.

It is written, “Let one who is [like] a wild donkey be reborn as a man” (Job 11:12). This verse teaches us that without the holy Torah, a person will focus all his abilities and desires towards materialism and physical desires. However Torah study and mitzvot observance push him to work on himself, enabling him to become a true man. Thus by properly channeling his abilities, a person can shape his character from a moral point of view, a character that can be gauged by his relationship with others. The closer his relationship with others is, the more his stubbornness will manifest itself – with the members of his own family foremost, and especially with his wife, who is like his own flesh.

The Torah commands a man not to have any contact with a woman in niddah (i.e., who is impure due to a flow of blood). Only when she has immersed herself in a mikveh (ritual bath), and only by having scrupulously observed all the laws regarding such a state, is a man allowed to touch his wife and have conjugal relations with her. On the face of it, this prohibition may seem impossible to keep, for how can a man – if he and his wife are alone at home – be ordered to overcome his desires and instincts by not having any contact whatsoever with his wife? The explanation is the following: The Torah is the source from which virtues are acquired, and the more a person takes on the characteristics of a true G-d fearing Jew, the more he can overcome hardship. Generally speaking, by working on himself a person shapes his character from a moral point of view. This morality is not only external; it is also effective when a person finds himself alone with his wife, completely hidden from sight. It is for this reason that the Torah commands him to pay attention to the prohibition regarding a niddah, for the Torah purifies a person’s traits and fortifies his character until

he is able to control his desires and submit them to the Torah’s will.

G-d created man in His image, infusing him with the life of the supernal realms. By doing so, He also created his character in the best possible way. Yet as soon as man sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, he lost this perfection. That incident has continued to influence the generations up to the present day. The sin of the first man led to the existence of the evil inclination, which tries to damage man’s spiritual traits and make him lose the character that was initially fashioned for him by the Creator. It is for this reason that G-d gave the Torah to His children, so that by putting an effort into it, they could correct their character and purify it in order to bring it back to its initial state before the sin. This is the blessing that is addressed to the newlyweds, namely that their love for one another should be like that of Adam and Eve, whose characters were perfect. How can they attain this love? When they work on their character traits through the holy Torah, they will receive the strength and the means to continue being faithful to one another and to constantly maintain their love.

It is known that husband and wife have very different personalities. They were, in fact, designed this way so that each of them could fulfill their designated mission. That being said, how can each of them eventually live together under the same roof, given that their personalities are so different, sometimes even diametrically opposed? It seems that when each tries to work on himself and does not attempt to correct the character of the other, they can establish a home in peace. However when each forgets their true role and constantly tries to improve the other, peace and friendship will quickly flee the home, and resentment and hostility will soon fill the void.

It seems that we can express our desire for a person in good health to stay that way, not to experience illness or pain. Likewise for a couple standing beneath the chuppah, our desire is for their love to remain constant and for peace to reside in their home. Every sensible person knows that peace in the home is not just something that is acquired, but rather is earned through hard work and dedication. Just as a young plant needs to be watered and constantly tended, likewise building a home requires constant work and devotion that is without limit. The first years of a marriage are the most critical. They determine, for the most part, the home’s future. The first area that requires work when establishing a home consists of shaping one’s character. When railroad tracks have been set down, a train

will naturally follow the path that was laid out for it. And just as it is necessary to maintain these tracks – to check for any debris that has settled on it, and to repair any twisted sections – likewise the work of maintaining peace in the home never ends. A sensitive heart and a watchful eye have to be maintained in order to check and repair any damage, lest the train jump the track, G-d forbid.

Living together as husband and wife requires a tremendous amount of patience and tolerance. A home in which a couple is constantly criticizing one another is bound to fail. Think of an infant taking its first steps. If its mother were to get angry each time it fell or dirtied its clothes, the infant would never learn to walk. Likewise, living under the same roof demands a tremendous amount of patience, tolerance, and understanding. The Rambam states that the event which had the greatest impact on his life occurred when a pious man was traveling by boat. Hoping for a little peace and quiet, he decided to descend into the ship’s holds and lie down. Suddenly a man entered and relieved himself on him. Rather than getting upset or lashing out at the man for his outrageous behavior, the pious man had pity on him, for he was a poor individual who was at a very low level. Then, without uttering a word, he went to wash his clothes.

The Rambam asserts that this is the most incredible story he ever heard. In fact it contains an important message about the power of silence when a person is insulted and does not answer in return. One who acquires the ability to keep quiet under the most trying circumstances has attained the greatest level in character building. On more than one occasion, I have heard rumors that the actions I have taken were done for selfish reasons, and that my real objective was to increase my own standing and honor in the eyes of the community. Such rumors are capable of robbing a person of his peace of mind and discouraging him. Nevertheless, I made it my goal to remain quiet and not respond, hoping that by this merit all my endeavors would succeed.

To summarize, living together as husband and wife demands a great deal of diligence and constant work. By working on oneself and honing one’s character traits through intense Torah study, a man will merit peace and contentment in his home.



FAITH

(By Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita)

“When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars that You have set in place....” (Psalms 8:4)

King David wrote in the Psalms, “When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars that You have set in place....” King David did not need to search for Who had created the world. All he needed was to look at the hosts of heaven in order to conclude that Hashem was the One Who had created the world. The term *shamecha* (“Your heavens”) is formed by the same letters as *shimcha* (“Your Name”). When King David gazed up to the heavens, he could see the Name of Hashem, which was enough to make him sense the presence of the world’s Creator and to believe in Him.

Today in our generation, however, this has become very difficult. I know because I have to put a great deal of effort into convincing people to wear *tefillin*, despite it being a fundamental and simple *mitzvah*. It is not obvious for many people because they lack simple faith. Thank G-d, after numerous efforts, I have been able to obtain promises from people who have taken it upon themselves to put on *tefillin*, and I have obtained commitments to observe the laws of family purity in every detail.

Someone once came to see me and said that he only put on *tefillin* when he had an opportunity and enough time for it. I asked him, “Have you given up eating with the same ease that you gave up putting on your *tefillin*? Or, since eating is essential, do you manage to eat something on the way out, even if you’re in a rush and don’t have an extra minute to spare? If you haven’t neglected eating because your body needs material sustenance to live, don’t forsake your *tefillin* either, because the body needs spiritual sustenance to act, and its spiritual sustenance consists of the *mitzvot* that the holy Torah has given us.”

A person must constantly realize that he needs tremendous faith in Hashem in order not to think that he is doing everything by himself in the world. I have noticed that most people who return to the Torah go through revolutionary changes in their lives when faced with great financial hardship, for during such times they do

not feel that they are doing everything by themselves. It’s a pity that it is only during difficult times that a person manages to wake up. Even in a normal situation, when everything seems to be going well, if we could only sense our need for Hashem, as well as His proximity, we could avoid the difficulties that precipitate a spiritual awakening.

I visited Rav Shach Zatzal several years ago in order to ask him how to improve the spiritual condition of Jews in France. He got up, looked at his hands, and told me that although it is the hands that act for man, this does not come to us for free. Hence every morning we wake up and give thanks by saying, “I offer thanks to You, O living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me. Great is Your faithfulness.” This passage acknowledges the fact that Hashem has restored our soul after we have been asleep, which is somewhat like death, and that in His mercy He has given us wondrous limbs that enable the body to move. All we have to do is to look at our bodies in order to realize that Hashem is the Creator of the world, His existence shining forth from every limb.

Rav Shach Zatzal descended to the Beit Midrash one Shabbat morning and asked his students, “Do you know what Gehinnom is? Do you realize how severe the punishment of Gehinnom is?” All his students looked at him with astonishment, taken aback by these words, words that they simply were not used to hearing from their Rav. He continued by saying, “Yesterday, I felt what Gehinnom is like. On Shabbat evening, while I was studying Torah, the timer suddenly switched off the light and I could no longer study. At that point I felt tremendous pain, like the pain of Gehinnom.”

This story teaches us the spiritual level of the *tzaddikim*. From it we learn just how great the faith of this *tzaddik* was. Only a man who imbued in himself a robust faith can appreciate the value of each precious instant of Torah study. We may say, “The *tzaddik* lives by his faith,” for only one who beats with faith can merit life.

I had a chance to see, not long before the destruction of the Twin Towers, an advertisement for a singer who promoted his

band by using a picture of the Twin Towers that depicted each tower upside down. When the advertisement was published a month later, the towers had already been attacked and were in ruins. Someone without faith will not think about this combination of extraordinary circumstances. Such a person will think, “It was only a picture for an advertisement.” Yet someone with faith will stop and think about it, realizing that it was not a coincidence. It hides great Divine providence, namely that even before the attack, this singer, who wanted to advertise his band by standing next to the towers, had prophesized even without knowing it, actually reversing the image of the towers so that they pointed towards the ground. Nobody asked him why, but it was certainly because Heaven wanted to hint to the world that the towers would come crashing down, which is what happened soon afterwards.

When the sea split, we read: “They believed in the L-RD and in Moses His servant.” These words raise a problem: Did the Children of Israel not believe in Hashem up to that point, despite all the miracles that He had performed for them in Egypt? Furthermore, did the fact that the Children of Israel went into the desert – without even taking food with them – not prove that they believed in Hashem, trusting in Him to feed them and see to all their needs? That said, how can we say that they demonstrated their faith only when the sea split for them?

I would like to explain this by saying that even before the sea split, the Children of Israel certainly believed in Hashem because of all they had seen beforehand. However they believed that all which had been done for them up to that point occurred by the merit of their holy forefathers. Hashem had promised the Patriarchs to bring their descendants out of Egypt through miracles and wonders. This means that Hashem had fulfilled His promise, and that these miracles were not done out of His love for the Children of Israel. When the sea split, however, they saw that everything was being done out of G-d’s love for them. In fact the splitting of the sea was not included among Hashem’s promises to the Patriarchs, and therefore it provided them with proof that He loved them and sought their good. When the Children of

Israel became fully aware of this, their faith in Hashem intensified, which is why the verse states: “They believed in the L-RD and in Moses His servant” – even after the sea split.

A Moroccan Jew whose father and grandfather were great tzaddikim, men who were known as miracle workers, came to see me. This man thought that I was going to receive him in a special way because of his lineage. When he realized that this was not the case, he asked me if I knew who he was. When I replied that I did not, he told me that he was the son and grandson of these great men. I said to him, “Of course I know your father and grandfather. You, however, I don’t know.” I continued by saying, “Is it possible that you’re a tzaddik like your forefathers, but that it doesn’t show – that you allow yourself to walk with your head uncovered and without putting on tefillin because your forefathers were tzaddikim? That just isn’t possible, just as it isn’t possible for me to use my wife’s passport to take a plane for France, since it’s my own passport that I have to use.”

Similarly, the Children of Israel believed in Hashem, but not with deep-rooted faith. This was because they believed that everything which had been done for them was due to the merit of their ancestors. However once the sea split – once they saw Hashem face to face – they realized the intense love that He had for them, and at that point they believed in Him with increasing intensity. Furthermore, the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to give them the Torah, which He had not given to the Patriarchs, and this added even more to their love for Him.

Living near New York City is a family that experienced a terrible tragedy. The mother, who was pregnant, slid and fell, killing both herself and her unborn child. This caused a tremendous upheaval in the community, and people asked various rabbis to offer them support and encouragement following this terrible incident. I too was asked to go and speak in this community and offer my support. When I arrived, the father came to drive me to the synagogue where I was to speak. During the ride he asked me if he could continue driving straight, rather than turning left. Although it would extend our journey, he wanted to show me the yeshiva that they had built. I was about to refuse, but since he promised me that it would only take a minute, I agreed.

When we got back on our way towards the synagogue, I was rattled. There had been a terrible accident in the exact same spot that we had passed a minute earlier. A heavy transport truck had violently collided with an oncoming car, and we didn’t know if the two occupants in that car had been killed or injured, for their bodies were lying by the side of the road. When I saw that, I was completely overcome with emotion, for we should have passed that spot at the same exact time that the accident occurred, and who knows what would have happened to us! A person has to be blind not to see that tzeddakah protects from death, for we were on our way to the synagogue where donations were being collected for the poor. The Torah also protects and saves, and I was saved by the words of Torah that I had to give. We clearly see from this story that there is someone Who guides the world and directs all things. He is the One Who decides man’s fate, either for life or for death. We left there with even greater faith, a greater understanding of the fact that there is a G-d in Heaven.

Hashem and His Shechinah have always been present in all places. Since the destruction of the Temple, the Shechinah is primarily found in synagogues and houses of study, meaning in places where people learn Torah. Furthermore, when peace exists between husband and wife, the Shechinah dwells in their home. Where there is faith, there is inevitably the observance of mitzvot, and when we correctly observe mitzvot, there is peace in the home. At that point the Shechinah dwells there and everyone benefits.

When a woman goes to immerse herself in a mikveh, she thereby proves that she has faith. How can we possibly explain that all the water in the world cannot purify a woman of her impurity unless she immerses herself in a mikveh? Hence the fact that she performs this mitzvah testifies to her faith.

A few years ago, a man came to see me for advice. He told me that he wanted to divorce his wife because she was making his life bitter, and since he saw that such a life was meaningless, he wanted my advice. I told him that he should not get a divorce, but instead should commit himself to putting on tefillin every morning and that his wife should observe the laws of family purity. In that case, with G-d’s help, peace would be restored to their home. In fact these mitzvot have the power

to bring peace and harmony, for when the Holy One, blessed be He, sees that a person is returning to Him and observing His mitzvot, He will also go out towards him and make things easier for him.

I met this same man a few years later, and he told me that for a long time he had been trying to reach me. He wanted to tell me that he had followed my advice and that, as it turned out, peace had actually returned to his home. The thought of divorcing his wife had completely left his mind.

I have seen what occurs in the world. Why are all eyes turned towards the land of Israel, this tiny country that can barely be seen on a map, and yet grabs the attention of the whole world? Furthermore, there are many countries that would like to destroy it, and its enemies never stop, changing all the time. Anyone who looks at history, which is filled with the suffering of the Jewish people, cannot ignore the fact that enemies have risen to destroy us in every era, as we say during the Passover Haggadah. Yet Hashem always saves us.

I believe that this stems from the fact that the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world by the power of Torah, upon which all the world’s religions are based. What proves the truth and eternity of the holy Torah is the fact that the Satan attacks all truth, threatening to destroy it because it cannot tolerate seeing the world dominated by truth. This is why non-Jews constantly rise up against us. When we believe in Hashem and cleave to His Torah, they cannot harm us. Yet when we neglect Hashem and His mitzvot, this gives them strength, at which point they can attack and wipe us out.

Hence there is no holiday in any religion that is entirely devoted to celebrating laws that were given to them. It is solely among the Jewish people that we see a holiday dedicated to the joy of the Torah, when we sing and dance with the holy Torah. We therefore prove that we are celebrating the Torah that was given to us, despite all the prohibitions and barriers it contains, for it is complete truth. A Jew’s soul comes from above, and it is drawn to this truth and yearns for it despite all the difficulties involved in practicing it.



“I WILL RETURN”

Why Does G-d Do “Teshuvah”?

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita)

These words have a mystical and secret connotation, a meaning that seems almost inexplicable. What is the response from G-d, Who is described as a “G-d of truth, without iniquity; righteous and fair is He”? We may speak of sin and transgression when it comes to man, who was created from the earth and possesses both a good and evil inclination. Yet what does teshuvah have to do with the Creator, Who is the ultimate good? For what “sin” must He do teshuvah?

On the Shabbat preceding Yom Kippur, all Jewish communities read the haftarah (a Biblical passage taken from the Prophets and read in synagogue on Saturday morning after the reading of the Torah) from the book of Hosea: “Return, O Israel” – Shuvah Israel – “to the L-RD your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity” (Hosea 14:2). Incidentally, this is one of the reasons that this particular Shabbat is termed “Shabbat Shuvah.”

Our Sages of blessed memory have provided us with a parable to explain this verse: “ ‘Return, O Israel, to the L-RD your G-d’ – It is like a prince who has fallen ill, and the royal physicians advise him to eat a certain type of food in order to recover. However his fear of eating it is so great that his father must comfort him by saying, ‘This won’t hurt you. Look, I’m eating it myself!’ Thus G-d says to Israel, ‘You are ashamed of doing teshuvah. I will be the first to do teshuvah,’ as it is written: ‘I will return to you, says the L-RD’ [Malachi 3:7]. Now if the One

Who never sinned or transgressed (G-d forbid) says: ‘I will return,’ how much more should we do teshuvah and return to G-d!” (Pesikta Rabbati 44).

The words of the Midrash are clear. It is not only Shabbat Shuvah for the Jewish people, but also for G-d. He does, as it were, teshuvah on the same day in order to teach us the importance and greatness of teshuvah.

This is astounding! King David stood and addressed the Creator of the world, acknowledging his sin and looking for a way to be judged. He did not want to be judged by the Sanhedrin, which would not allow him to offer a bribe, namely teshuvah and good deeds. In fact only the Creator of the world can accept bribes. It is true that in the World to Come, “He will not favor the offerer of bribes,” but in this world even the worst sinner can offer G-d a bribe: Teshuvah and good deeds!

G-d is not even content with sending us constant messages, for He does us yet another kindness by setting aside specific times by which a person can receive special Divine help for doing teshuvah. This refers to the Ten Days of Repentance, which according to our Sages is mentioned in the verse: “Seek the L-RD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6).

These words have a mystical and secret connotation, a meaning that seems almost inexplicable. What is the response from G-d, Who is described as a “G-d of truth, without iniquity; righteous and fair is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4)? We may speak of sin and transgression when it comes to man, who was created from the earth and possesses both a good and evil inclination. Yet what does teshuvah have to do with the Creator, Who is the

ultimate good? For what “sin” must He do teshuvah?

He Accepts Bribes from the Wicked

We may explain this difficult subject according to the teaching of our Sages in Yalkut Shimoni: “Another explanation: ‘Let my judgment come forth from Your presence’ [Psalms 17:2]. Rabbi Levi said, ‘The Holy One, blessed be He, said to David: “Have you set up a Sanhedrin for no purpose? Let them try you.” David replied, “Master of the universe, You have written in Your Torah, ‘Do not accept a bribe’ [Exodus 23:8]... but You allow Yourself to be bribed, as it is said: ‘He accepts a bribe from the bosom of the wicked’ [Proverbs 17:23]. And what is the bribe? Teshuvah... and good deeds.” ’ The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: ‘My sons, repent while the gates of teshuvah are still open, for I shall accept bribes offered in this world, but not when I sit in judgment in the World to Come, of which it is said: “He will not favor the offerer of bribes” [Proverbs 6:35]’ ” (Te-hillim Remez 670).

This is astounding! King David stood and addressed the Creator of the world, acknowledging his sin and looking for a way to be judged. He did not want to be judged by the Sanhedrin, which would not allow him to offer a bribe, namely teshuvah and good deeds. In fact only the Creator of the world can accept bribes. It is true that in the World to Come, “He will not favor the offerer of

bribes,” but in this world even the worst sinner can offer G-d a bribe: Teshuvah and good deeds!

Hashem Looks at the Heart

We can now understand the “sin” (so to speak) of the Creator, namely that He accepts a shochad (bribe). Let us think about this. The verse states, “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the L-RD looks at the heart” (I Samuel 16:7). When a person presents himself before the court in order to be judged for a sin that he committed, then even if he affirms that he is sorry and has repented, and even if he rips his garments and covers his head with ashes, he is still liable to punishment according to the law. This is true not only in our days, but also in the times of the Beit Hamikdash (the Temple in Jerusalem) when the Sanhedrin (high court) functioned at the pinnacle of its glory. When a person committed a sin by mistake or unintentionally, then even if he subsequently did teshuvah, the Sanhedrin was obligated to punish him, namely with corporal punishment or by obligating him to bring an offering. Although such was the case in the earthly court, G-d in the Heavenly court looks at the heart. When He sees that a person has done genuine teshuvah – teshuvah that was motivated by fear – then his intentional sins will be transformed into inadvertent sins. However if his teshuvah was motivated by love, then his intentional sins will be transformed into merits. Can we logically understand such a thing? Intentional sins – those committed with an attitude of rebellion – will be transformed into merits, into mitzvot! This is because G-d does not seek the death of the wicked, but instead wants the wicked to abandon his ways and live. G-d will patiently wait for this to happen – waiting until a person’s dying day – and when he does teshuvah, G-d will immediately accept it. This is how G-d accepts those who return to Him and repent, those who return to the Torah and good deeds. G-d does this, even if it means that He has to accept a shochad, as we have said.

The Attribute of Justice and the Attribute of Mercy

In his book *Ahavat Chesed*, the Chafetz Chaim Zatzal explains the pro-

found meaning behind the concept of a shochad. He states:

“The answer is that there are two factors by which G-d controls the world from above: The attribute of justice, and [the attribute] of mercy. Now it is known that man’s rewards and punishments in the World to Come will be determined by the balance of his mitzvot against the sins that he committed, as Chazal have asserted: ‘If the majority of a man’s deeds are righteous, he belongs in the category of tzaddik; if iniquitous, he belongs in the category of rasha.’

“Every intelligent person understands that once G-d takes His seat on the throne of justice during a trial, then even a man whose merits were exceedingly numerous would leave the Heavenly court condemned (unless he had strained with all his might to fulfill all the mitzvot in all their detail). Each of his mitzvot would be subjected to meticulous scrutiny in order to determine whether it conformed to every requirement of the law. Even what is normally hidden from view (the nature of his mental attitude at the time) would also be most carefully examined for the proper love, awe, and joy at its performance, as well as the other factors required in every mitzvah. These are described in *Sefer Charedim*, and as Scripture states: ‘For G-d shall bring every work into judgment concerning what is hidden...’ He would certainly find many mitzvot whose requirements were not completely fulfilled, and these would be excluded from the count. A person’s sins would therefore outnumber his good deeds and he would, G-d forbid, be designated as a rasha in Heaven.

“However if the Holy One, blessed be He, decided to deal with man in accordance with His attribute of chesed and compassion – although it certainly would make a great difference whether all the dictates of a mitzvah were obeyed or whether some details were overlooked – nevertheless, some redeeming feature would be found for his improper performance, and his merits would not be rejected. It is even conceivable that a person’s sins might outnumber his meritorious acts. Yet if G-d were to exercise the full measure of His compassion, sins would be reduced in number. Assuredly, many of them could

be termed unintentional or ascribed to some extenuating circumstance. If these would be deducted from the iniquities, then a person’s merits would outweigh his faults and the name tzaddik would be assigned to him” (*Ahavat Chesed*, Part II, Chapter 3).

Based on these words, the Chafetz Chaim goes on to explain King David’s intention in saying, “But you allow Yourself to be bribed” – namely that through teshuvah and good deeds, a person can be judged with goodness and compassion, and therefore end up being called a tzaddik. Now even if it is clear that this shochad is not really a bribe, the fact that David designated it as such, and that our Sages also defined it this way, demonstrates that this element is still present.

How to be Acquitted in Judgment

From this we can draw some useful insights regarding the coming days of judgment. In fact we have learned how we can be judged advantageously during the Days of Awe through teshuvah and good deeds. Imagine that we had to appear in court and that the stakes were high. What would we do if someone whispered into our ear and said that by giving the judge a certain amount of money, he would rule in our favor? Would we not reach into our pockets and gladly give this money? After all, the main thing is not to be found guilty. That said, how much more does this apply when we are being judged by the King of kings? Our Sages have whispered into our ears, telling us how to be acquitted in judgment – through teshuvah and good deeds.

“I Will Return” – Why does G-d do Teshuvah?

According to this, we can understand the words of our Sages that we cited at the outset, namely why G-d told the Jewish people: “I will return.” On the face of it, it is difficult to understand why G-d has to do teshuvah. The fact that G-d takes a shochad – from the wicked, no less – is in some way connected to the prohibition, “You shall not accept a shochad [bribe]” (Deuteronomy 16:19) and it is necessary to do teshuvah for this.

The Teshuvah of Manasseh

We see an example of “bribing” G-d in the account of Manasseh. It is said that he transgressed two prohibitions for which the Torah commands us to die rather than commit, namely murder and idolatry. Regarding murder we read, “Manasseh also shed very much innocent blood, until he filled Jerusalem from end to end with it; aside from his sin of causing Judah to sin, to do what was evil in the eyes of the L-RD” (II Kings 21:16). With regards to idolatry, we read that Manasseh “placed the Asherah idol that he had made in the Temple, concerning which the L-RD said to David and his son Solomon, ‘In this Temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, I shall place My Name forever’ ” (v.7). Manasseh sunk to the lowest possible level, having brought an idol into the Temple. He also made the people sin as he sat as king, as the leader of the people.

Despite all this, G-d accepted his teshuvah, even though it was not even complete. Thus we read: “But Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray to do more evil than the nations that the L-RD had destroyed from before the Children of Israel. ... So the L-RD brought against them the officers of the king of Assyria’s army, and they captured Manasseh with hunting hooks, brought him in chains, and led him off to Babylonia” (II Chronicles 33:9-11).

In the Midrash, our Sages give a detailed description of how Manasseh did teshuvah: “Rabbi Levi bar Hayyatha said: They made a mule of bronze and seated him on it and kindled a fire beneath it, and he cried out; ‘O idol [so-and-so], O idol [so-and-so], save me!’ When he saw that it was of no avail, he said: ‘I remember that my father used to read before me the verse, “When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you...He will not fail you” [Deuteronomy 4:30-31]. I will call unto Him: If He answers me, it is well; if not, then it is all one, and all gods are the same’ ” (Ruth Rabba 5:6).

This evildoer, who led tens of thousands of Jews into committing the most heinous sins of idolatry, and who spilled the blood of thousands – a man who placed an idol into the very Temple, and

who said before everyone, “Do I do this for any other purpose than to provoke my Creator?” (Sanhedrin 103b) – now found himself in distress, his body being placed in a furnace. As he was about to endure an unusual death, he called upon all the idols that he served during his lifetime, trying one after the other, and yet none answered him. Only then did he think about the Creator of the world, and so he prayed and repented – and even then with the thought that “if He answers me, it is well; if not, then it is all one, and all gods are the same.” Can this be considered proper teshuvah?!

Our Sages go on to describe what happened in Heaven following Manasseh’s words:

“At that moment the ministering angels arose and closed all the windows of Heaven and appealed to G-d: ‘Sovereign of the universe, will You accept the repentance of a man who set up an idol in the very Temple?’ He replied, ‘If I do not accept his repentance, then I close the door in the face of all who would repent in the future.’ What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He dug an opening for [Manasseh’s] prayer beneath the Throne of Glory, where the angels could not reach” (Ruth Rabba 5:6).

The angels were trying to prevent Manasseh’s repentance from coming before G-d, closing (so to speak) all the portals and windows through which teshuvah ascends to Heaven. They did not need many reasons to do this – the simple fact that Manasseh had placed “an idol in the Temple” sufficed. This was an idolatrous act of rebellion without equal, and therefore his only goal was to enrage the Creator. Could there be any possible teshuvah for this? Placing an idol in the holiest place, in the house of G-d, was the worst act of rebellion possible, so how could there be teshuvah for it? This is stunning, that a person could lead others to sin and spill innocent blood, and yet teshuvah is possible for him! G-d answered the angels indirectly. In fact their arguments may well have been justified in regards to Manasseh. However other people risked being affected – “If I do not accept his repentance, then I close the door in the face of all who would repent in the future.” Logically speaking, and from almost every other

point of view, Manasseh did not deserve to be forgiven. However the Creator was forced, so to speak, to create something new – a hole beneath the Throne of Glory – in order to prevent the angels from blocking his teshuvah. (Note: The Gemara in Sanhedrin recounts how G-d accepted his teshuvah despite the objections of the attribute of justice, which is in line with the statement of the Chafetz Chaim, cited above.)

The results of Manasseh’s teshuvah are recorded in Scripture. Thus every person who wants to do teshuvah, yet feels that it will never be accepted because of his many sins, should reflect upon what happened to Manasseh: “He prayed to [G-d], and He was entreated by him and heard his supplication, and He returned him to Jerusalem, to his kingship. Then Manasseh realized that the L-RD is G-d. ... He removed the strange gods and the image from the Temple of the L-RD and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the Temple of the L-RD and in Jerusalem, discarding them outside the city. He rebuilt the Altar of the L-RD and slaughtered peace-offerings and thanksgiving-offerings on it, and he commanded Judah to worship the L-RD, the G-d of Israel” (II Chronicles 33:13-16).

Manasseh did complete teshuvah. He was not ashamed to admit, before his subjects and people, that he had been wrong. He admitted that the L-RD is the true G-d and that there is none aside from Him. Furthermore, without the hole under the Throne of Glory which the Creator made in His great compassion, Manasseh would not have been able to change his ways through teshuvah.

Love Changes a Person’s Conduct

There has never been a greater shochoad than Manasseh’s teshuvah. Despite all his sins, his split-second teshuvah enabled him to “bribe” (so to speak) the Creator. He was acquitted of his sins and could correct his deeds and his ways, for this is how G-d acts in this world: “He accepts a bribe from the bosom of the wicked.” He acts the same way with His children every year, accepting bribes of teshuvah and good deeds from them, and granting them an extra year. It is because of this, so to speak, that He desires to do teshuvah.

From here we learn just how great G-d's love for us really is, to the point that He is ready to transgress His own laws, to change His ways and accept bribes. As the Midrash that we cited states: "Return, O Israel, to the L-RD your G-d – This is like a prince who has fallen ill, and the royal physicians advise him to eat a certain type of food in order to recover. However his fear of eating it is so great that his father must comfort him by saying, 'This won't hurt you. Look, I'm eating it myself!' Thus G-d says to Israel, 'You are ashamed of doing teshuvah. I will be the first to do teshuvah,' as it is written: 'Thus says the L-RD: I will return.' Now if the One Who never sinned nor transgressed (G-d forbid), has said: 'I will return,' how much more should we do teshuvah and return to G-d." Just like a father who loves his son and is ready to risk his kingdom, health, and everything else in order to demonstrate that something is not bad for him, likewise G-d is ready to modify the mechanisms that have been established since the creation of the world, to the point of doing teshuvah. As our Sages have said, "Love changes a person's conduct." Because of His love for us, G-d treats us above and beyond the strict letter of the law.

The World Was Created for Me

If G-d does so much because of His love for us, to the point of twisting what is right – to the point of straightening what is twisted and even digging a hole under His Throne of Glory so we can do teshuvah – then how much more should we learn to strengthen ourselves and do complete teshuvah! Although the King Himself is making an effort to bring His creatures closer to Him and rectify their distorted ways, do we take these things to heart?

We must deeply reflect upon why G-d has done so much good for us. We have learned from the passage in Sanhedrin, "For this reason was man created alone, to teach you that whosoever...saves a single soul of Israel, Scripture ascribes [merit] to him as though he had preserved a complete world. ... Therefore every single person is obliged to say: The world was created for me" (Sanhedrin 37a). The entire world in all its complexity,

along with all its secrets and mysteries – everything was created for man, the crown of Creation.

We should not make the mistake of thinking that man is the be all and end all of Creation. Our Sages say that man was also created to serve his Creator, as it is written: "Man is born to toil.... Yet I still do not know whether this toil is in Torah or [secular] conversation. Yet when it is said, 'This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth' [Joshua 1:8], I conclude that one was created to toil in Torah" (Sanhedrin 99b). In fact the entire world was created for man, whose role is to toil in Torah. The Sages have also said that if it were not for the Torah, Heaven and earth would not endure (Pesachim 68b). The Gemara (Nedarim 32a) also brings this same point regarding the verse, "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 Destiny of Man, the Crown of Creation

It is worthwhile to reflect upon this subject. Look around and see what G-d has created. Man is an incredible being, endowed with the ability to see – a sense that even today astounds thousands of scientists – as well as the ability to speak. A person's hands and feet have ten digits, each containing dozens of nerves that allow him to touch things, to sense hot and cold, wet and dry. It does not stop there, however, for G-d created man with two ears in order to hear his fellow. He also gave him a nose, endowing him with a sense of smell. The goal behind it all is for man to devote himself to the Torah, as it is written: "Man is born to toil" (Job 5:7).

Furthermore, in order that we may sit down and fulfill the mission for which we came into the world, G-d created other people, as the Rambam states in the introduction to his commentary on the Mishnah: "If it were not for the foolish, the world would lay in ruin." The Rambam qualifies "the foolish" as being those who abandon the holy Torah during their lifetime, and who work and strive solely for material goals. In fact the world could not last without such people, since it needs doctors, cooks, engineers, etc. Yet the Rambam describes

people whose goals are solely material as being "foolish," for man's goal in this world is to serve G-d and toil in Torah. Therefore anyone who puts eternal life aside in order to devote himself to this fleeting life is considered as being "foolish."

Teshuvah Above All

G-d is not content with all the kindnesses that He has lavished upon us until now. Out of His tremendous love for us, He has done even greater good by granting us teshuvah. As Rabbeinu Yona states in the introduction to his book Sha'arei Teshuvah:

"Among the favors that G-d has done for us, His creations, has been to provide us with a way to rise above our destructive acts, to avoid the traps that we set by our acts of defiance, to ward off personal devastation, and to deflect His anger by kindly and justly teaching us how to return to Him, and by alerting us to do this when we sin against Him, for He knows our impulses. Thus it is written, 'Good and upright is the L-RD, therefore He guides sinners on the way' [Psalms 25:8]."

The Creator has shown tremendous kindness to man, granting him abilities and talents, family and friends, as well as an infinite number of things. He has granted him Torah and Shabbat, and in His abundant kindness and righteousness, G-d has given him yet another gift: Teshuvah.

The more we reflect upon this gift, the more we realize just how great His love for us is. When a king of flesh and blood orders his subjects to respect him, and yet they sin against him, he will immediately imprison and punish them. The same does not apply to G-d, for He is patient and waits for His children to do teshuvah. Furthermore, G-d is not content with accepting teshuvah after a person sins, for He tells man that he can rectify himself even before he sins!

Has anyone ever heard of such a thing – that a king will command his subjects to do something, and at the same time he says that if they want to disobey his orders and rebel, they can still escape his wrath? Has anyone ever heard of such a king?!

THE POWER OF SIGHT *by the Merit of Torah*

Due to the Creator's goodness and righteousness, however, He has given us a way to correct ourselves and improve our deeds. Not only that, but He has shown us the path to follow.

In the Gemara, our Sages have said that punishment only comes upon the world on account of the Jewish people (Yebamot 63a). If an earthquake occurs in Turkey or a hurricane strikes the United States, it is on account of the Jewish people – in order to awaken and rouse them from their daily routine. This is because the Creator, in His goodness, does not want to harm us, not even for the sake of leading us to teshuvah. He first tries to awaken us through various signs: A punishment on the peoples around us or a change in the natural order of creation. It is only then, if we still have not repented, that He strikes us, at first with trees and rocks, and then directly (G-d forbid). This is all due to His great kindness.

The Ten Days of Repentance

G-d is not even content with sending us constant messages, for He does us yet another kindness by setting aside specific times by which a person can receive special Divine help for doing teshuvah. This refers to the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah (Ten days of Repentance), which according to our Sages is mentioned in the verse: "Seek the L-RD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

The Baal HaTanya writes that during this time, G-d is like a king who goes out into the fields (Likutei Torah, Deuteronomy 32:2). One possible way to explain this statement is that a king generally abides in the royal palace, almost never mixing among commoners. Therefore anyone who wants to present a request before the king must first ask for special permission to receive an audience with him. Even if granted an audience with the king, a person must dress properly and undergo rigorous security checks in order to ensure that he poses no threat. Afterwards, he must go before the king's guards and officials, ministers and servants, passing one hall after the next, until he finally makes it before the king. Even at that point, he is only allowed to speak to the

king for a brief instant. Of course, all of this only happens if he has found favor in the eyes of the king's ministers and servants, since in most cases it will be these ministers who transmit requests to the king. A regular individual will generally not have the privilege of seeing the king in person.

Yet such is not the case when the king goes out into the fields, for then he comes into direct and almost unlimited contact with the common people. Everyone can then approach the king and pour out his heart's request before him. It is, in effect, a favorable time when the king comes out to his people – when the king goes out into the fields.

The same applies to the Ten Days of Repentance. In fact the gates are closed during the entire year, and when teshuvah wishes to enter, it must take the royal path – it must break the gates and smash the locks. In other words, only teshuvah that is done correctly will be accepted. Such is not the case when "the king is in the fields," for one who asks will then be answered and his prayer will be accepted. Under such circumstances, there is a direct connection between king and commoner – between G-d and a regular individual.

Hence to not call upon the King when He is present – when He is so close – would constitute an act of rebellion against His kingdom. In His goodness, the Creator lavishes us with great kindness despite our bad behavior. Yet instead of doing good in return and coming closer to Him, we continue to attend to our own affairs as usual.

We must therefore take note of this and wake up. We must love the Creator, Who loves us, and come closer to Him. We must also give Him a sho Chad, namely teshuvah and good deeds.



The commentary Shaarei Chaim on Shaarei Teshuvah cites the Smag (38:13) in stating that even a very old man cannot neglect the study of Torah (Shaarei Chaim 3:28). This commentary recounts that when Rabbi Shmuel Houminer Zatzal showed the Smag's remark to Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, the latter said: "Let me tell you a terrible incident that happened when I was in Slutzk. One day a blind talmid chacham came to my home. He brought me two books that he had written, and he pointed to a certain passage and said: 'This was my last commentary.'

"I asked him what he meant by this, and he answered by telling me the following story: 'With G-d's help, I used to put a tremendous effort into studying Torah, and I invested great energy into discovering novel teachings. However this became more difficult as I grew older, and when I finished my last commentary, which was later published in my book, I told myself that I should stop pushing myself so hard. Instead, I planned on studying more easily. Then, all of a sudden, I could no longer see. I went to a renowned doctor, and after examining me thoroughly he declared: 'I can't restore your eyesight. However I'm surprised that you've managed to see up to now. After the examination I performed, it seems that you should have lost your sight about ten years ago. It's a mystery as to how you've been able to see up to now.'"

"The old man concluded: 'The doctor didn't know what had happened to me, but I knew. As long as I put an effort into studying Torah, I was able to see and come up with new Torah insights. Yet when I decided to stop pushing myself so hard, I lost my sight.'"

This teaches us just how much effort a person should put into learning Torah and performing mitzvot and good deeds, even in his old age.



MAKING PEACE REIGN

A Look Inside the Jewish Home by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita

I once saw a young man from London who, as he was standing beneath the chuppah, suddenly began to grow fearful, thinking that the young woman standing beside him was not blessed with all the virtues he was looking for. He abandoned her beneath the chuppah, leaving her covered with shame. I also heard the tragic story of a young woman from Paris who ran from the chuppah, uncertain of her decision to marry and her true feelings. She told herself that this young man was probably not for her.

Our Sages state, “Rabbi Yehudah ben Tema said: ‘Adam reclined in the Garden of Eden, as the ministering angels roasted flesh and strained wine for him’” (Sanhedrin 59b). Is this what we call simcha (“joy”) – eating meat and drinking wine? Is this the kind of joy that we wish for the newlyweds?

When a young yeshiva student prepares himself to establish a home, it is crucial that he think long and hard about the ideas and opinions of our teachers, the Rashei Yeshivot (yeshiva leaders) in general, and the teachers of mussar (ethics). How do they view the establishment of a Jewish home? What have they defined as being its essential components, and on what basis have they established their own homes?

The establishment of a home, which is essentially spiritual in nature, is similar to the physical construction of a house, which is made of brick and mortar. A person who wants to build a house must first decide what he wants, be it an apartment or a small house, a multi-story or one-story building. An engineer must then tell him where and how to lay its foundations, as well as where to place support structures and the like. He will also need an interior designer to plan the main stairwell, living room, kitchen, and other rooms. The very same thing applies to the establishment of a Jewish home. One must first set the objectives

that will serve as the foundations of the home, and then reflect upon how to attain them.

It is clear that in order to build a Jewish home, the “builder” does not need a degree from a university, nor does he have to be specialized in architecture from a school of higher learning. In fact with regards to such an important issue, we do not look for people who are expert home builders. Instead we look for Da’at HaTorah (the Torah view), the opinion of the great Torah figures of our generation, those who have built their own homes and those of their relatives and friends. These are individuals who have established “the house of Jacob [as] a fire, and the house of Joseph [as] a flame” (Obadiah 1:18). To that end, we need the advice of the great Torah figures of our generation, so that we may know how to build a Jewish home.

For this purpose we will first address our Rav and teacher, Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita, to hear his words and benefit from his experience on this subject, which he is constantly occupied with.

Before citing his words, however, we must add that the remarks made here not only address those who are preparing to build a new home, but also those who have already established one. Such people should check that they have gone about this task in the right way, performing a thorough “home inspection.” Does their home conform to the opinions of the great Torah figures of our generation? Has it been established on the foundations of Torah and the fear of Heaven? If not, a person must reevaluate his lifestyle and question a Torah scholar in this regard.

The Gemara states, “Our Rabbis taught: The blessing of bridegrooms is said in the presence of ten [men] for all seven days. ... What does one say? Rav Yehuda says: ‘Blessed are You, L-RD our G-d, King of the universe, Who has created all things for His glory’

and ‘Creator of man’ and ‘Who created man in His image, in the image of the likeness of His form, and prepared for him from his own self an everlasting edifice. Blessed are You L-RD, Creator of man.’ ‘May the barren rejoice and exult when her children are gathered in her midst in joy. Blessed are You L-RD, Who gladdens Zion through her children.’ ‘Grant abundant joy to these loving friends, even as of old You bestowed gladness upon Your created being in the Garden of Eden. Blessed are You L-RD, Who gladdens groom and bride.’ ‘Blessed are You, L-RD our King, G-d of the universe, Who created joy and happiness, groom and bride, rejoicing, song, cheer and delight, love and brotherhood, and peace and friendship. L-RD our G-d, let there speedily be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the sound of joy and the sound of happiness, the sound of groom and the sound of bride, the sound of the singing of bridegrooms from under their chuppah and youths from their joyous banquets. Blessed are You L-RD, Who gladdens the groom with the bride’” (Ketubot 7b-8a).

Special blessings were instituted for this specific occasion, the establishment of a “Jewish home.” It is a momentous time, when man and woman take their first steps as husband and wife, being given the privilege of rebuilding the ruins of Jerusalem and making the Divine Presence abide among them.

Therefore when people gathered at the chuppah – acquaintances, friends, and family members – says “Amen” to the blessings recited by the rabbi, they address these seven blessings to the newlyweds, blessings that were established by our Sages. Their wish and hope is for these blessings to accompany and help the new couple establish a solid foundation among the Jewish people, one based upon Torah and the fear of Heaven.

It is therefore fitting to expand upon our understanding of the characteristics of the “Jewish home.” We must delve into the secret of its tremendous power, so powerful in fact that Rabbi Elazar said: “If a man divorces his first wife, even the Altar sheds tears” (Gittin 90b).

Hence we must reflect upon these blessings, which were instituted by our Sages many centuries ago.

“Grant abundant joy to these loving friends”

In the fifth blessing established by our Sages, we say: “Grant abundant joy to these loving friends, even as of old You bestowed gladness upon Your created being in the Garden of Eden. Blessed are You L-RD, Who gladdens groom and bride.” Here Rashi explains: “Grant abundant joy. This is the blessing addressed to newlyweds – that they succeed in joy and happiness.” We pray for G-d to rejoice the newlyweds, just as He rejoiced Adam and Eve – “even as of old You bestowed gladness upon Your created being in the Garden of Eden.” They should succeed in building their new home in joy, just as of old, when Adam was in the Garden of Eden. Now exactly what was this joy in the Garden of Eden?

Here the Gemara states, “Rabbi Yehudah ben Tema said: ‘Adam reclined in the Garden of Eden, as the ministering angels roasted flesh and strained wine for him.’” (Sanhedrin 59b). Let’s think about this for a moment: Is this what we call simcha (“joy”) – eating meat and drinking wine? Is this the kind of joy that we wish for the newlyweds?

In order to properly understand this remark from our Sages, we will stop and picture the sequence of events at Creation. As the Torah states, man was created on the sixth day, after G-d had created the heavens and the earth, as well as after birds, mammals, creeping things, and everything else was created. It was only then that G-d created man, in a world which was then perfectly established, once G-d had prepared everything. The reason is because man is G-d’s “chosen” creature, His most beloved work, and the crowning achievement of Creation. Thus we read, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” – G-d created a creature in His image, as it were, a being who possessed a Divine spark, the crown of Creation. Furthermore, G-d wanted to create man only once the world had been perfectly established and ready to receive him, so he could rejoice in it and be happy. Not

only that, but Adam was spared from even the slightest effort, even the effort required to roast meat and press wine – to prepare food to eat – since the angels did everything for him.

Adam and the Rest of Creation

When Adam opened his eyes and beheld the splendors of Creation, the perfect and extraordinary work of G-d, he was stunned. Of course he quickly thanked and praised his Creator.

Nevertheless, as he contemplated and admired the marvels of Creation, something was spoiling his joy. While all the animals had companions, Adam was alone in the world, having no one with whom to share his life.

Our Sages have already mentioned this in the Midrash: “Rabbi Aha said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, He took counsel with the ministering angels, saying to them, ‘Let us make man.’ They asked, ‘What will be the nature of this man?’ He answered, ‘His wisdom will exceed yours.’ What did G-d do? He brought the animals, beasts, and birds before them and asked, ‘What should be the name of this?’ However they did not know. ‘And of this?’ They did not know. He then paraded them before Adam, and He asked him: ‘What is the name of this?’ ‘An ox.’ ‘And of this?’ ‘A camel.’ ‘And of this?’ ‘An ass.’ ‘And of this?’ ‘A horse.’ ... He said to him, ‘And what is your name?’ He replied, ‘It is fitting that I be called Adam, for I was created from adamah [the ground].’ ‘And what is My Name?’ ‘It is fitting that You be called Ad-nai [L-rd], for You are L-rd over all Your creatures,’ was the answer. ... He then paraded them again before him in pairs. He said, ‘Every one has a partner, yet I have none.’ Thus: ‘As for Adam, he did not find a helper for him’” (Bereshith Rabba 17:4).

The commentators explain that when G-d saw Adam’s pain, He brought all the animals before him. Perhaps he might find among them a helper whose essence corresponded to his. However Adam was only satisfied when G-d created his wife Eve from his own side.

Adam was even loftier than the angels (“his wisdom will exceed yours”). When the angels saw a horse or don-

key, they were unable to perceive their essence and give them appropriate names. They did not understand why one animal should be called “horse” and the other “donkey.” Because of his wisdom, Adam was able to perceive the characteristics of the animals presented to him and gave them appropriate names – calling one “horse,” another “donkey,” a third “cow” and so on. It was in this way that he realized that no animal was suitable for him. He found no living being able to complete and help him fulfill his task in the world. Finally, G-d had to create a new being, isha (“woman”), for she was taken from ish (“man”).

Why Was Eve’s Creation Delayed?

Our Sages raise yet another question. G-d knew that among all the living beings He had created until then, none was a suitable helper for man. In that case, why did He not create Eve before Adam asked for her? The Sages state, “Why did He not create [Eve] for him at the beginning? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that he would bring charges against her, and so He did not create her until he expressly asked for her. And as soon as he did, ‘The L-RD G-d caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept’” (Bereshith Rabba *ibid.*).

G-d did not want to create Eve right away, for He wanted Adam to desire a woman whose essence and characteristics were similar to his. If fact if Adam had not wanted her, he probably would have been jealous of her and complained when she caused him problems. However by creating her after Adam had implored G-d for a companion, arguing that he had no suitable helper, Adam could not complain. He knew that he himself had asked G-d to create a woman, a being similar to himself.

Adam’s Joy at the Creation of Eve

When Adam saw his wife Eve upon awakening from the deep sleep that his Creator had placed upon him, no one could have been happier! Adam knew that G-d had given him what he asked for, providing him with what he lacked to be complete until that point.

Here we must add something that will better explain Adam’s joy upon seeing

his wife. It was clear to Adam that Eve was “the mother of all the living,” the only being that was suitable for him, for he had searched among every living being but not found a suitable helper. There were no other human beings on earth, and therefore their eyes were set exclusively upon one another. Therefore no couple could have been happier.

We can now understand the simcha mentioned in the fifth blessing of the Sheva Berachot: “Grant abundant joy to these loving friends, even as of old You bestowed gladness upon Your created being in the Garden of Eden.” We say “Your created being” in the singular (not “created beings” in the plural), for the greatest joy was that which G-d gave to Adam. Up until that time, he had no suitable helper. He then found a helper he was certain of being the only one in the world who suited him. This is the greatest joy possible – when newlyweds know and feel that they complete one another, harboring not the slightest doubt or the least hesitation about one another, not even for an instant. This is the amazing blessing that we give to the newlyweds – that their home should be harmonious and their eyes be directed exclusively towards one another.

The Secret of Jewish Happiness

This is the meaning of Rashi’s statement, “Grant abundant joy. This is the blessing addressed to newlyweds – that they succeed in joy and happiness.” Herein lies the secret of Jewish happiness, when husband and wife sense this abundant joy. When they live in peace with one another, aware that if G-d arranged for them to be together, then it is truly “as of old, [when] You bestowed gladness upon Your created being in the Garden of Eden.” It is exactly like when G-d created Eve, “the mother of all the living,” exclusively for Adam. There exists no greater joy than this, no greater happiness than this. Thus the newlyweds bathe in joy and happiness.

In our generation, it happens that most problems regarding shalom bayit (“peace in the home”) stem from the fact that many people do not guard their eyes. In fact when the eyes wander, the heart will desire what the eyes see,

at which point doubts begin to creep into the heart of man and gnaw at him. “Maybe she really wasn’t meant for me,” or “maybe another suits me better,” these doubts will say. Although a person may succeed in chasing them away at first, once doubts begin to settle in the heart, they become increasingly difficult to eradicate. As soon as the evil inclination establishes a small foothold, it will not budge, and over time it will strengthen its hold and slowly inject its poison into a person. Thus little by little, various doubts make their way into a man’s heart, preventing him from seeing his wife who is standing by his side – the mother of all the living – as the “suitable helper” that G-d specifically created for him, and him alone.

Knowing How to Guard the Eyes – Emulating the Righteous Joseph

As we have said, problems arise when husband and wife do not guard their eyes, for they are not content with what has been reserved for them. Here we must emulate the righteous Joseph, for although he was only 17 years old and the wife of Potiphar tried to seduce him every day, he did not give in to his desires and refused to lay his eyes upon a person who was not meant for him. As the Gemara explains, “Rabbi Abahu said: Scripture states, ‘Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine through the eye.’ Let the eye that would not feed upon and enjoy what did not belong to it be privileged to eat as far as it can see” (Zevachim 118b). Joseph knew that he had a wife who was destined for him, a woman whose essence corresponded to his, who had been created for him. Hence “the wife of Potiphar” – who was married to another man – did not belong to Joseph, and so he was not to lay his eyes upon something that was not his.

Therefore everyone, both man and woman, must refrain from gazing upon something that does not belong to them. As soon as the eyes of spouses are not exclusively turned towards one another, problems of shalom bayit arise. Outward appearances can be deceptive, the work of the evil inclination. In fact outward appearances always seem better, for people appear nicer than they really are

within the home. Married individuals who think that someone else suits them better than their spouse are making a mistake. This is because things always appear nicer and better at a distance. If G-d has united a couple and decreed that they should be together, then this is the way it should be, just as it was with Adam and Eve.

Such is the blessing that we make at the chuppah. It is precisely as the newlyweds are stirring with emotion while standing beneath the wedding canopy, their love for one another still intact, that we recite this blessing. We offer them the blessing that G-d should make His Presence reside among them, just as He made it reside with Adam and Eve. Our hope is that they find joy in one another, just as Adam and Even rejoiced in one another.

Thus the foundation of the Jewish home lies in guarding one’s eyes. In fact the proper approach to adopt in establishing a home should be simple, clear, and direct: It is G-d Who forms couples; He is all powerful, and in His wisdom gave a wife to Adam, the love of his youth – “a help against him” (Genesis 2:18). Since G-d has decreed this, it means that this is how it should be. Even if it sometimes seems that others are more suitable, that perception stems from a spirit of foolishness. In fact everything depends on man, and so: “If he is worthy, she is a help to him; if he is not worthy, she is against him” (Yebamot 63a). If he acts correctly and guards his eyes – if he does not seek his own pleasure by looking at what does not belong to him – he will be worthy and she will be “a help.” However if he sins (G-d forbid), his wife will be “against him.” In that case she will be even more bitter than death.

How Can We Compare Regular People to Adam?

Another question arises at this point: It is true that the foundation of the Jewish home rests upon “guarding the eyes,” and the greatest happiness occurs when a man’s gaze is directed exclusively towards his wife, and vice-versa. Yet how can a person reach this level in such a spiritually desolate world, where the streets breathe arrogance and inundate

us with forbidden sights? How can we reach the level of Adam and Eve, who were the only two people on earth and therefore knew with perfect certainty that they were right for one another? It was only natural that they rejoiced, since there was no one else on earth besides them! Furthermore, they were not subjected to the difficult trial of having to guard their eyes. That being the case, how can we recite such a blessing for the newlyweds? Such a blessing does not seem to apply to them. Today the reality of things is so different than at the creation of the world. Today the streets are seductive and the surrounding culture is depraved. Even without such a bad environment, how can a young man who is searching for his soul mate know whether or not he is making the right decision? How can we bless a person to feel what Adam felt? This does not really seem like a blessing.

I once saw a young man from London who, as he was standing beneath the chuppah, suddenly began to grow fearful, thinking that the young woman standing beside him was not blessed with all the virtues he was looking for. He abandoned her beneath the chuppah, leaving her covered with shame. I also heard the tragic story of a young woman from Paris who fled from the chuppah, uncertain of her decision to marry and her true feelings. She told herself that this young man was probably not for her. Unfortunately, although such tragic cases are relatively rare, there are many similar cases, given that the vast majority of problems dealing with shalom bayit begin this way. Even if some couples seem to be living together in peace and harmony, in reality tension and disputes may be the norm in their home, for their eyes may no longer be turned exclusively towards each other. How can we fix this problem and reach the level of Adam and the righteous Joseph?

The Study of Torah

It seems that a person can, in fact, reach such a level. Be it an ordinary or refined individual, he can reach the loftiest heights and attain the level of Adam once he becomes aware of his abilities. Although man possesses an evil inclination and his temptations are very great,

G-d has also created a remedy for him, as it is written: “I created the evil inclination, but I [also] created the Torah as its antidote” (Kiddushin 30b). The Torah is this remedy, the cure for all the evil inclination’s ills. By laboring and toiling in Torah, a person will be protected from the evil inclination.

We now understand the blessing that is addressed to the newlyweds, when they are blessed to become like Adam and Eve. Despite the spiritual state of our generation and the temptations of the environment, newlyweds have a vested interest in deciding to change their behavior and build their home in the proper way. In fact a home based on “the pillars of Torah” – Torah, mitzvot, good deeds, and prayer – can never collapse. This is because the Torah, which contains numerous precepts that protect man and guard him from sin, was given to the Jewish people. Such is the blessing that we must give to the newlyweds, that they establish their home upon the foundations of Torah and the fear of Heaven. In this way they will merit for love to constantly be present in their home, and they will merit a home where discord and strife are completely absent.

This is what our Sages in the Gemara allude to by saying, “A house in which words of Torah are not heard at night, it shall be consumed by fire” (Sanhedrin 92a). As soon as man and woman are married, if their home is not established upon Torah principles and the fear of Heaven, the Divine Presence will not reside among them. Our Sages have already said in this regard, “When husband and wife are worthy, the Divine Presence abides with them. When they are not worthy, fire consumes them” (Sotah 17a). If the husband does not study Torah, the Divine Presence will be absent from the home, and “a fire will consume them.” Simply put: It’s either the Divine Presence or fire. (The commentators have already explained this by noting that the term ish [man] contains the letters of the word aish [fire] plus the letter yud. The word isha [woman] contains the letters of the word aish and the letter hei. Thus together they form the word aish and yud hei [G-d’s Name]. When the Divine

Presence resides among them, they are ish and isha [man and woman], but when the Divine Presence is absent, there is simply aish [fire].) In order to attain the level of Adam and his wife Eve – in order to succeed in protecting ourselves from sin (as the righteous Joseph did under the most difficult of circumstances) – we must cleave to the Torah. If a person no longer invests his time and energy into studying Torah, the fire of desire and jealousy will consume his home.

Working on Our Middot

In order to complete our discussion, we need to mention another point, which itself could be the subject of a long article. We will discuss it only briefly, and G-d willing we will expand on it when the time comes. It is known that men and women are different in terms of personality. In fact they are destined to fulfill different roles, and they were designed with different personalities and core characteristics.

Although they differ so greatly from one another, man and wife must live together under the same roof. How is this possible? We must realize that living a shared life demands a great deal of patience and tolerance. Furthermore, a home in which spouses are constantly criticizing each other is doomed to fail.

The situation can be compared to a child taking its first steps. If the child’s mother were to get angry each time it fell or dirtied its garments, she would hinder the child’s progress. Likewise living under the same roof requires a tremendous amount of patience, tolerance, and understanding.

To summarize, living together as a couple demands a great deal of diligence and constant work. By constantly working on himself and honing his character through intensive Torah study, a man can merit peace and harmony in his home.



THE STATUS AND GREATNESS OF WOMEN

By Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita

It is said concerning Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, the defender of Israel, that he once ordered his servant to buy him some beer from Jews in Berditchev on the day before Passover. His servant could not believe his ears, since beer contains chametz. How could anyone buy beer from a Jew on the day before Passover, especially at the command of the Rav! However since the words of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak constituted his orders, he went and knocked at the door of a Jew and asked him if he had some beer to sell. He replied clearly and without ambiguity, “We don’t have any beer on the eve of Passover.” When the servant heard this answer, he went from house to house asking for beer. Wherever he went, however, he received the same reply. He therefore returned to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak empty-handed.

The Rav addressed his servant once again, giving him a new order: “Go and purchase a large quantity of tobacco for me, as much as you can carry.” This seemed like a mysterious request to the servant, for the tobacco trade was outlawed in the region, and given the punishment that awaited those who broke the law, who would dare risk it? However since the Rabbi had given him an order, the servant immediately left for a new round of house calls in Berditchev, but this time to its non-Jewish residents. Not long afterwards, he returned carrying some carefully concealed bundles of tobacco, hidden from the prying eyes of the authorities.

The Rabbi looked at the bundles of tobacco, and with a smile of satisfaction on his face he raised his eyes to Heaven and said: “Sovereign of the universe, who is like Your people Israel? A fearsome and powerful Czar now rules the people, controlling judges

and policemen, guards and prisons, and yet when he decides that selling tobacco is a crime against the state, do any of his citizens obey him?”

“Your people Israel have neither judges nor policemen, soldiers nor courts, guards nor prisons, and yet because it is written in Your holy Torah that chametz must not be seen or found on Passover, You will not find the least bit of chametz among any Jew, for we could not find beer in even a single home within the city. Such is the uniqueness of the Jewish people, for although they have no supervision, they observe Torah mitzvot.”

I thought to myself that we find this same attribute among women. They constitute the essential part of the home, being responsible for everything pertaining to family purity and the integrity of the household, and who conduct themselves discreetly and with the utmost privacy. The very fact that women are completely entrusted to uphold their role by scrupulously observing Halachot – although nobody can truly know if they have observed them in every detail – demonstrates the importance and the greatness of women. It also demonstrates the tremendous honor and respect that is granted to them.

In the last few years, we have seen feminist movements sprouting like mushrooms, movements advocating equal rights for women. They loudly proclaim in every ear that the time has come for all women to feel equal to men. Just as men can assume important positions that demand special talents and great intelligence, women can imitate them and also take leadership roles without being seen as strange birds that have no business being there.

We must ask ourselves why the sounds of these feminist movements

have suddenly begun to make themselves heard. What has happened in the past few years to push women into emerging from the privacy of their homes to hear these cries? It seems that this has happened because we have lost the deep sense of respect that we owe to Jewish women and mothers, who raise their children at home with devotion and unbounded love. This respect is disappearing, and all the foundations of the home have become shaken and warped, for whoever consults books of Torah and Halachah immediately senses the great respect and esteem that they demonstrate for women. Yet during these last generations, many among our people have turned their backs on our ancestral traditions, thereby losing the correct perspective on the status of Jewish women.

A home managed by husband and wife is like a government. Just as a government cannot have two leaders at the same time, a home cannot function properly with two people in charge who want to fulfill the same role. When a woman wants to imitate her husband in terms of strength and talents, the home is already doomed to fail. We know the Midrash in which the Sages state that during the first six days of Creation, the Holy One, blessed be He, created the sun and the moon as being equal in size. The moon asked Hashem, “Can two kings wear the same crown?” In other words, how can the sun and moon be of equal size and strength? There needs to be a hierarchy in place in order to govern the world, with the greater above the lesser. The Holy One, blessed be He, immediately reduced the size of the moon, telling it: “You were the one who questioned My creation, so your punishment will be to be made smaller.” However since Hashem agreed with the moon’s argument

that two kings cannot wear the same crown, He gave the moon the hosts of heaven in the form of the stars. We must note that Hashem's anger with the moon was not directed against what it said, for the moon had a valid point, but against the way that it had dared to question His creation.

In fact for a government to function properly, it needs both a minister of domestic affairs and a minister of foreign affairs, the two being selected according to their particular talents and characteristics. As for a minister of foreign affairs, we appoint a person who has ties with leaders of other countries, someone who is skilled in languages and diplomacy. As for a minister of domestic affairs, we appoint a person who is competent in dealing with the needs of cities and their inhabitants, and who knows how to maintain good ties with mayors. We need a wise and intelligent individual who knows how to run local economies. Without a doubt, in cases where the state relies on both two ministers at the same time, they should not hesitate to help one another, realizing that each needs the other.

It is exactly the same in a marriage: When spouses see their relationship as being like two people vying for the same role – like two people trying to be the head of one government – their relationship is doomed to fail from the start. Yet when each spouse recognizes their individual role and is aware of their status, they can be assured of success.

In looking at this more closely, we see that a husband's role in the home is like a minister of foreign affairs. He is to supervise what happens outside the home, which is why the Holy One, blessed be He, created his body and soul in perfect harmony with this role. A man's body is strong and robust; he has a deep voice, and although he seldom speaks, he speaks with authority. He also has a bolder character than a woman, and he is more stubborn as well. These characteristics make a man better-suited to act outside the

home, to shoulder the responsibility of putting food on the table, and to fight when the nest is at risk.

On the other hand, a woman's body and her character traits are fashioned in keeping with the kinds of activities that take place within the home. Her body is delicate, her voice soft. She speaks at length, but gently, and she possesses a refined esthetic sense. Her character is such that she takes more things into consideration, and she is more sensible, more pliable, and better prepared for change. All these factors make a woman better-suited for the role of a minister of domestic affairs in the home. She is better able to raise children with patience and unbounded love, and to contribute to a warm and loving environment in the home. She also possesses special flexibility and a tendency to forgo her own opinions for the sake of her husband, which promotes greater peace in the home and the creation of a strong relationship between husband and wife.

Male and female characteristics resemble those of animals in nature. In looking at the animal world, we immediately see that the Creator has given carnivores two eyes located at the front of their head, giving them the ability to spot their prey and pursue it until caught. Animals that are destined to serve as food for larger animals, however, have received eyes located at the side of their head, enabling them to see what is happening around them and to flee from danger.

When we begin from the premise that created beings were given characteristics that best suit them for their tasks, life becomes much easier to understand, for everyone is familiar with their own talents and that of the other. They do not try to imitate others or take their place, for everyone has received the characteristics and talents that best suit them for their respective tasks. Just as fish do not desire wings like birds, since their role is to live in the water and not in the sky, a woman should rejoice in her role and recognize her status and greatness.

Likewise, we can compare the relationship between husband and wife to that of eating utensils. It is obvious that the function of a knife is to cut food, while the function of a spoon is to hold food and carry it to the mouth. True, food can be cut with a spoon and carried to the mouth with a knife, but only with great effort. However this is not the normal way of doing things, so why would people eat in such a complicated manner when they can do so in a calmer and simpler way? Just as this example is clear and uncontested, the same applies to the division of tasks within the home and to the role of each spouse.

Just as the function of a knife is to cut, a knife will sometimes need a fork to help with the cutting. Likewise we can understand that a husband may sometimes need his wife's help to put food on the table, in which case she should do what he asks. For his part, the husband should also be open to the needs of the household and lend a helping hand whenever necessary, just as ministers of domestic and foreign affairs hasten to help one another in times of need, or when eating utensils need to be used in concert with one another.

Concerning a woman of valor we read: "She will be blessed by women in the tent" (Judges 5:24). This clearly teaches us that, first and foremost, she has the great merit of raising her children in joy and love, without protesting or trying to change her role. As we mentioned at the outset of this article, the fact that the Torah has appointed women to supervise the education of children, as well as to preserve the holiness and purity of the home, demonstrates the tremendous importance and greatness of women.



MEN OF FAITH

Elul 26 marks the Hilloula (anniversary of the passing) of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol. Large numbers of people make their way to Morocco on this day, traveling to the grave of this great sage in order to recite silent prayers. As this date approaches, we have collected a few stories that can kindle within our hearts a love for the Torah and faith in the Sages of Israel. These stories can transport the reader into another dimension, one filled with majesty, the dimension of Rabbi Haim Pinto (may his merit protect us), a tzaddik for whom miracles were the norm. The accounts contained within these lines offer but a small glimpse into his life, providing us with but a sketch of her persona. He served as a veritable Cohen Gadol (High Priest) for his brothers, and we should be inspired by him.

After the passing of his first wife, Rabbi Shlomo Pinto decided to leave Agadir and travel to Marrakech. There he married again, his new wife being a righteous and G-d fearing woman from the Benbenisty family. Some time later Rabbi Shlomo returned to Agadir, where Divine compassion filled his home with joy by the birth of a son, whom he named Haim. This boy would grow up to become a famous kabbalist, none other than the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol. Regrettably, Rabbi Shlomo did not live to see his son grow in Torah, for Rabbi Shlomo left this world 12 years after his son's birth. He died on the first day of Nisan, the month of deliverance. May his merit protect us all. Amen.

“Leave...your father's house”

When Rabbi Haim Pinto was 12 years old – even before reaching the age of mitzvot observance, and having already lost both his father and mother – a serious earthquake struck Agadir. This forced the boy to go into exile, away from his home and his father's house. Agadir's port, which

was the main source of revenue for the city's residents, was destroyed. It was succeeded by a modern port that began to flourish in Mogador. Following this incident, members of the Pinto family (most notably the young Haim) were forced along with numerous other Jewish families to move to Mogador, where they could make an honest living.

Rabbi Gedalia Yaakov, a wealthy figure in Agadir, provided these newcomers with great financial help. In particular, he put Rabbi Haim Pinto in contact with his relative Rabbi Meir Pinto, who then served as the French Vice-Consul in Mogador.

It is said that Rabbi Haim arrived in Mogador at night, after a long and tiring journey. Although hungry and thirsty, for he had neither bread nor water with him, he did not want to go to Rabbi Meir because he did not want to wake him. Hence he approached the first synagogue that he saw – the synagogue of Rabbi Meir ben Attar – and there he fell asleep, completely exhausted.

The wealthy Rabbi Meir Pinto, one of the most important figures in the city, was sleeping soundly at the time, completely unaware of Rabbi Haim's arrival in Mogador. Yet while asleep, he had a dream in which two tzaddikim, the holy Rabbi Shlomo Pinto (Rabbi Haim Pinto's father) and Rabbi Moshe Tahuni Zatzal appeared to him. These two tzaddikim began to reprimand Rabbi Meir: “How can you be sleeping in your own bed, under your own roof, while the young Haim Pinto is sleeping in hunger and thirst?”

They continued: “Know that despite being young, a great light will emerge from him. Now arise and bring him to your home right away, and find him a rav who can teach him Torah.”

These two tzaddikim also appeared to Rabbi Haim Pinto in Rabbi Meir ben Attar's synagogue. They told him

that Rabbi Meir Pinto was coming to see him, and that he should learn Torah with him. In order to prove to Rabbi Haim that this dream was real, these two tzaddikim woke him up and stood before him while he was completely awake. They even gave him their blessing and took hold of his hand.

Upon awaking from his own dream, Rabbi Meir Pinto was overcome with fear. He immediately left his home and went to the synagogue in order to find the young man. When he arrived, he knocked at the door. “Who's there?” asked Rabbi Haim from behind the door. “Meir Pinto,” came the reply. Although Rabbi Haim was still young, and despite being tired from his journey and experiencing both hunger and thirst, he was still not satisfied with this answer. He therefore said, “Recite the Psalm Vihi no'am. That way I'll be sure that you're not an evil spirit” (evil spirits are afraid of the Psalm Vihi no'am, as those who are familiar with Kabbalah know).

Rabbi Meir recited the Psalm in its entirety, at which point Rabbi Haim allowed him into the synagogue. Rabbi Haim began to tell him that his father, Rabbi Shlomo, had appeared to him while awake and told him everything that was going to happen. Upon hearing this, Rabbi Meir began to shiver with fright. At the same time, he took it upon himself to bring the youngster to his home and tend to all his needs, both spiritual and material. Each day he would bring him to see the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Yaakov Bibas (may his merit protect us), with whom Rabbi Haim studied Torah until he became a great Torah scholar.

Thus providence arranged things in such a way that Rabbi Haim fulfilled the teaching of our Sages: “Exile yourself to a place of Torah.” He left his father's house for a place of Torah, his only goal being to devote himself entirely to learning Torah in a yeshiva that was

guided by a unique individual among the Torah giants of the generation.

While Still Young

From then on, the fame of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto began to spread throughout the land. First and foremost he was known as a gaon, a genius in Torah. He was also known as a veritable tzaddik – a person whose every thought was infused with holiness – as well as a miracle worker. Rabbi Haim devoted himself to learning Torah day and night, and none of its secrets evaded him. The pursuit of holiness and purity guided his every step, enabling him to reach new heights with each passing day. Needless to say, he was greatly respected by the people.

Rabbi Haim Pinto's renown quickly spread through the country. Even the local Arabs held him in high esteem, considering him to be a holy man and miracle worker. Requests reached him from all places, including Europe and Eretz Israel. Jews would ask him to pray on their behalf, imploring him for mercy, for deliverance from their troubles. They would ask Rabbi Haim to annul evil decrees that had come upon them. Although he lived in Morocco, his influence extended throughout the country and around the world, be it for blessings or for advice, and also in matters of law.

The door to Rabbi Haim Pinto's home was open at all hours of the day to everyone without exception – be they rich or poor. He strived to help all who turned to him, just as a father would do for his son. At the same time, he himself was still a student under the direction of his teacher the Rosh Yeshiva.

Devoted to the Community

After the passing of the gaon Rabbi Yaakov Bibas Zatzal, Rabbi Haim's teacher and Rav, the members of the community turned their eyes to him. They asked Rabbi Haim to take his place, to take up the reins of the Mogador Rabbinate. Because of his great modesty, however, Rabbi Haim refused. Yet after the leaders of the Jewish community insisted time and

time again, he agreed to take upon himself the yoke of the community, along with all that it implied.

Rabbi Haim Pinto was aided by his friend Rabbi David Hazan Zatzal, who helped in regards to managing the Rabbinate and leading the community, as well as with the extraordinary court that Rabbi Haim Pinto led.

Our Great Loss

Rabbi Haim Pinto also authored numerous books in every field of Torah, be it Halachah, Kabbalah, Shas (the Mishnah), and Chiddushim. Unfortunately, he did not publish his many writings, and the majority of them were lost. A great loss indeed. Only a few of his piyutim (liturgical songs) and Halachic rulings were recorded in the She'elot U'Teshuvot (Responsa) of other great Torah figures with whom Rabbi Haim discussed Halachah. These were his only teachings that were saved and published.

Like a Single (Echad) Person with a Single (Echad) Heart

During this same time, Rabbi Haim studied with two other holy tzaddikim: Rabbi Avraham Koriat and Rabbi David ben Hazan. Each day they would learn together as havrutot (Torah study partners), and they were also part of Mogador's rabbinic court. Now since "a three-ply cord is not easily broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12), they studied together and elevated themselves in the heights of Torah and the fear of Heaven. In fact the initials of their names form the word echad ("one"), for they loved one another with a deep love, like a single person with a single heart. They helped one another study Torah and acquire its wisdom, both with regards to its revealed and hidden teachings.

The Havruta Still Comes After his Passing

Every Friday night, Rabbi Haim Pinto and Rabbi David ben Hazan would normally study the commentaries of the Alsheich Hakodesh (may his merit protect us) on the weekly parsha.

They attributed so much importance to this study session that they entered into an interesting agreement with one

another: The first to be summoned to the celestial academy would return and reveal himself to his havruta in order to continue studying the commentary of the Alsheich Hakodesh on the weekly parsha!

In fact it is said that on the Shabbat following the passing of Rabbi David ben Hazan, Rabbi Haim Pinto waited for him to reveal himself. Since he delayed in appearing, Rabbi Haim called his shamash (assistant) and asked him to go to Rabbi David ben Hazan's home and ask his widow why her husband was not respecting his promise to come and study the commentary of the Alsheich that Friday night.

The shamash did not understand what his master meant by these words, and so he hesitated to go. Rabbi David had clearly died, and Rabbi Haim was fully aware of it, the shamash reasoned.

Rabbi Haim clearly understood the reason behind the shamash's reluctance, and therefore he repeated his request. At that point the shamash realized that the Rav's request was justified, for it went beyond his understanding. He then quickly made his way to the home of Rabbi David ben Hazan. Once there, the shamash asked the widow why her husband was not keeping his promise to study the writings of the Alsheich every Friday night with Rabbi Haim Pinto. "How does Rabbi Haim know that my husband is here at home?" she asked the shamash, who was stunned by what he heard. The widow was unable to answer the tzaddik's question.

The answer to this question did not take long to arrive, for Rabbi David ben Hazan appeared to his friend on that very night. He explained to Rabbi Haim Pinto that he had also promised his wife that he would appear to her every Friday night in order to recite Kiddush over the wine (as Rabbi Hakodesh had done). That being the case, he could not be in two places at the same time. He also said that from then on, Rabbi Haim would be the only one he appeared to while awake, whereas he would appear to his widow in a dream, since she had revealed the secret.

It was not by accident that Rabbi Haim Pinto established a fixed study session precisely with the tzaddik Rabbi David Hazan, for he understood the scope of his greatness and piety. In order to better perceive the greatness of this tzaddik, we will spend a little time describing their friendship with a few stories.

The Akeidah of the Prophet

For many years, Rabbi David ben Hazan and his wife were not fortunate enough to have children. He constantly asked G-d to grant them offspring, in order to have a son who would serve G-d and fear Him.

His prayers proved fruitful, for a certain time later Rabbi David rejoiced over the birth of a baby boy. His joy was short-lived, however, because the boy – his only child – died while still young, as the following story explains.

Rabbi David ben Hazan devoted himself to the study of Kabbalah and the hidden mysteries of the Torah. It once happened that as he was studying, his son (who was about seven years old), approached him and the two began to study the hidden Torah, including Kabbalah and its marvelous secrets. The young boy fully understood what his father was teaching him, and he even revealed Torah secrets to his father's students. All the residents in town began calling him "the prophet," and everything he saw turned out to be true. His father was very afraid, for it is forbidden to spread Kabbalah to the public. This is the hidden Torah, and it should remain hidden. In fact everyone received the order to grow spiritually with wholeheartedness, as it is written: "You shall be wholehearted with the L-RD your G-d" (Deuteronomy 18:13). The statement of our Sages concerning the four men who entered the "Orchard of Divine Wisdom" – the forbidden realm of Kabbalah – is known. Thus to preserve the honor of the Torah and the innocence of the city's inhabitants, Rabbi David prayed for his son to be taken from this world, which is precisely what happened. With his pure soul, the boy ascended

to the celestial heights. He was laid to rest in the cemetery of Mogador, next to Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol and the tzaddik Rabbi Yaakov Bibas, and to this very day he is still there, resting in peace.

A Companion for the Shabbat Meal

Rabbi David ben Hazan would usually have fish during each of the three meals of Shabbat, doing so in order to honor Shabbat Kodesh. He accorded a great deal of importance to the custom of eating fish (dag) on the seventh day. In fact the word dag is composed of the letters dalet (numerical value: four) and gimel (numerical value: three), which together come to seven (Shabbat). On Fridays, he himself would go to the market and purchase food for Shabbat, not worrying about his own personal honor or the time that it required.

One Friday, Rabbi David ben Hazan went to the market to buy fresh fish in honor of Shabbat Kodesh. Imagine his distress upon hearing the same response in each fish store that he visited: "No fish today." Surprised by this, he asked for an explanation and was told that a freak storm had broken out at sea, preventing the fishermen from casting their nets. Hence they returned to shore empty-handed.

At first Rabbi David ben Hazan was frustrated by the fact that he could not eat fish on Shabbat, as was his custom. However a solution immediately came to mind: Rabbi Haim Pinto always had abundant fish on his table. Thus on Friday night after Arvit, Rabbi David ben Hazan went to see the tzaddik.

During the meal, the tzaddikim enjoyed an abundant choice of fresh fish in honor of Shabbat Kodesh. They discussed Halachah and Aggadah during the meal, and they got so swept up in the enthusiasm of the Torah that they failed to realize how quickly time was passing, for the hour was growing late.

Rabbi David ben Hazan was also afraid of returning home at such a late hour, for the roads were dangerous at that time. Thieves and armed bandits

rained terror upon the residents of the region.

When Rabbi Haim Pinto realized this, he immediately summoned one of the demons (named "Gedadyaleh"). When this demon presented itself before him, Rabbi Haim ordered it to accompany Rabbi David to his home and to protect him from all harm.

Midway into the journey, a fascinating conversation took place: The demon took out its tongue and a flame emerged from its mouth. Seeing this, Rabbi David said to the demon: "I'm afraid that you've transgressed Shabbat."

The demon replied, "Please forgive me if I've dishonored you."

"Not at all!" said Rabbi David. "The prohibition against transgressing Shabbat was addressed only to humans – beings of flesh and blood – not to you, a being of fire."

It is known that demons once existed in Morocco. They also existed in France, but the Ba'alei HaTosafot (may their merit protect us) prayed for them to disappear from there, an absence that continues to this day.

"For they are life to one who finds them"

Rabbi Meir Pinto, may his merit protect us, recounts a similar incident. One year there was a tremendous shortage of fish. Rabbi Haim Pinto, who wanted to maintain his custom of eating fish on Friday night, summoned a fisherman and said to him: "Go out to sea and catch some fish for me in honor of Shabbat." The fisherman replied, "But Rabbi, there hasn't been any fish in the sea for some time now!"

Rabbi Haim listened to him and said, "Go out to the sea, and each time that you cast your net into the water, say 'Haim.' The fish will leap into your net each time." This fisherman obeyed the tzaddik, and not long afterwards he found himself with a huge catch – exceptional fish for Shabbat Kodesh.

When people heard that this fisherman had caught fish, a large crowd gathered around his counter, desiring to purchase his merchandise in honor

of Shabbat Kodesh. Yet this fisherman, who had witnessed a miracle with his own eyes, refused to sell even the smallest fish. He said that they did not belong to him, but rather to Rabbi Haim Pinto. Thus he went to see Rabbi Haim Pinto and brought him his entire catch. Rabbi Haim then distributed them to all the residents in the community, leaving only some for himself.

When his friend Rabbi David ben Hazan heard the news, he went to see Rabbi Haim on Friday night and said: "Rabbi Haim, I've heard that you have 'Haim' in your home." Rabbi Haim replied, "It's true. I do have 'Haim' in my home." They sat down at the table and began to eat the Shabbat meal, savoring the fish, according to the custom brought down in the books of Kabbalah.

The Rav's Order

The name of Rabbi David ben Hazan is also connected to the following story: The light in Rabbi Haim Pinto's room stayed lit until the late hours of the night, when all the residents in town were already soundly asleep. As was his habit, Rabbi Haim devoted himself to learning Torah without respite.

One night as he was studying, Rabbi Haim's eyelids grew heavy, and he began to fall sleep. Half-asleep, he mistakenly placed his foot on a holy book of Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto (the Rif, may his merit protect us). When Rabbi Haim awoke, he realized what had happened and was very distressed, for he had dishonored the Torah and the Rif. Although it happened by mistake, the damage had nevertheless been done. He immediately summoned his shamash and asked him to take a leather strap and come into his room. When the shamash arrived, Rabbi Haim asked him to strike his foot, the one that had mistakenly stepped upon the Rif's holy book.

When the shamash heard this, he began to tremble. In fact he refused to carry out his master's request: "How can I strike the Rav? I can't do such a thing!" Rabbi Haim insisted, however, commanding him to do what he had said. He

ordered the shamash to continue striking his foot until he said to stop.

Having no choice, the shamash began to strike Rabbi Haim's foot with all his strength. He continued doing so, as he had been ordered, until Rabbi Haim's foot became red and started to swell. This continued for several minutes, until the Rav finally told him to stop.

That same night, Rabbi Haim's pain was so intense that he could not get up to recite Tikkun Chatzot in synagogue, as he usually did. As for the shamash, he was able to make it to synagogue, as he did every night, but was surprised to find himself alone. He was still more surprised when he heard a voice emanating from the Aron Kodesh, a voice that was growing louder and louder. It asked, "Where is Rabbi Haim? Why did he not come to recite Tikkun Chatzot, as he does every night? Why is he not singing hymns and praises to the Creator? The entire Heavenly court comes at this time to hear his songs and prayers!"

Although the shamash was seized with great fear, he still managed to summon enough courage to ask, "Who is speaking?" The voice replied, "It is I, Rabbi Israel Najara. Go quickly and tell Rabbi Haim that he is a spark from the soul of the prophet Achiya HaShiloni. He should stop worrying, for his fault has already been forgiven." The voice continued: "The songs that I composed brought satisfaction to the Creator, and from the time that I left this world until today, only Rabbi Haim has grasped the depths of these songs."

The shamash was frightened by these words, and he quickly returned to Rabbi Haim's home and told him what he heard. He had barely made it back when Rabbi Haim said – even before the shamash could utter a word – "You heard the voice of Rabbi Israel Najara in synagogue. Happy are you and happy is your lot!"

The following night, the Rif appeared to Rabbi David ben Hazan in a dream and said, "Tell Rabbi Haim that he should not be grieved by what happened by mistake. Tell him to get up from his bed, for his foot is healed."

At the same time, the Rif also revealed himself in a dream to Rabbi Haim and said: "You have obtained the forgiveness of Heaven and earth. With G-d's help, you will be in good health when you get up."

The next day, when Rabbi David ben Hazan came to see Rabbi Haim to tell him about his dream, Rabbi Haim preceded him by saying: "The one who appeared to you in a dream also appeared to me." In fact when Rabbi Haim arose from his bed, he was able to stand on both feet, which were in good health.

"They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob"

As mentioned earlier, Rabbi Haim, as well as Rabbi Avraham Koriat and Rabbi David ben Hazan, were members of the Mogador rabbinic court. Together they dealt with the affairs of the various Jewish communities of Morocco, be it with regards to civil or matrimonial laws, as well regarding what is permitted and forbidden (issur v'heter). Nevertheless, as we can surmise, they also had to deal with the fifth section of the Shulchan Aruch, namely with matters of jealousy and disputes between people and among married couples.

At the time that they carried out their duties on the court, there existed no official collection of secular laws. Hence judges in secular courts were ruling on matters without a solid legal foundation. Each judge did what was right in his own eyes, and bribes rendered judges blind and twisted rulings. Thus it often happened that people left court with grievances and complains about the judge who had ruled against them, despite being in the right. Such litigants were unable to change things, however, given that their appeals were brought before the same judge that had ruled against them.

Little by little, people who came to Mogador discovered that there was a place – a single place – where rulings were rendered without bias, without fear or cowardice. This place was the court of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto.

The doors to this court were open to everyone, not only to members of the Jewish community, but also to their non-Jewish neighbors. Thus the name of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, was sanctified. Non-Jews, filled with great respect, presented themselves before the judges, especially Rabbi Haim Pinto, who in addition to his immense scholarship and understanding in all fields of Torah, was also an expert in worldly matters. He understood the customs and habits of people in both cities and villages, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Here on the bench, decisions were succinct and clear, and meandering or convoluted rulings had no place in court. Fortunately, Rabbi Haim Pinto's great wisdom enabled him to take each issue – be it the most difficult or complex – and make it understandable to all. His wisdom also enabled him to guide each discussion and lead inquests and investigations in a fair and just way, showing neither favoritism nor excessive justification.

Rabbi Haim greatly helped the non-Jewish residents of town. He also made an important contribution to the Moroccan government's secular judicial system by writing, along with the other members of his court, a compilation of laws and rulings regarding civil matters, legal arbitration, and financial contracts. This work served as a reference for those who appeared in court, both Jews and non-Jews. Thus non-Jews could not harm Jews through the legal process.

The Voice is that of Avraham

As we have said, seated on Rabbi Haim's exceptional court was the gaon Rabbi David ben Hazan, whom we spoke of earlier, and the gaon Rabbi Avraham Koriat, the author of Brit Avoth. Although he was one of Rabbi Haim's youngest students, Rabbi Avraham had the merit of sitting on the court and handing down rulings with him. This took place because of the following incident: Rabbi Haim Pinto and his friend Rabbi David ben Hazan were once walking along the streets of Mogador, when suddenly they heard a

sweet and pleasant sound emanating from a house. When they made their way to the house, they found a young man playing a violin and reciting piyutim. He was playing extremely well, for he was a skilled musician and poet.

For an entire hour, Rabbi Haim and Rabbi David listened to this young man, all while trying to determine who he was and where he came from. The young man replied that he was originally from Tetouan, and his name was Avraham Koriat, the grandson of the tzaddik Rabbi Baruch Zatzal. He lived alone in Mogador, without family or financial support. When Rabbi Haim and Rabbi David heard this, they said: "Such a wonderful voice! He should hear words of Torah. Come with us and study Torah, and we'll see to all your needs." Rabbi Avraham accepted their invitation and joined them for regular Torah study. Rabbi Haim was like a devoted and merciful father to him, especially when it came to seeing to his material needs. With time, after having perfected himself and acquiring a vast degree of knowledge and a solid understanding of every Torah field, Rabbi Avraham had the privilege of joining the exceptional court of Rabbi Haim and Rabbi David. From then on, these three were called echad (from the first letter of each Rav's first name).

Rabbi Avraham did not live long, for he left this world at the age of 45. When Rabbi Haim heard that he had died, he burst into bitter tears and tore his garments. He gave a long eulogy at his funeral, saying: "Woe to me, for I have lived to witness his passing. I see a world upside down. Instead of him dying young – instead of him giving a eulogy at my funeral – it is I, old as I am, who is reciting a eulogy for him." He then melted into tears, him along with everyone there.

After uttering these words, Rabbi Haim found an allusion to Rabbi Avraham's age, 45, in the verse: "Mah [How] abundant is Your goodness that You have stored away for those who fear You" (Psalms 31:20). The numerical value of mah is 45. Forty-five years

– that is what G-d reserved for Rabbi Avraham – for that was His will.

He Educated Many Students

Numerous students came to find refuge with this exceptional man, Rabbi Haim Pinto. They came to drink from his waters, a spring of purifying virtues. They came to hear his words and be infused with his novel Torah teachings. He warmly welcomed every single person and encouraged them to study Torah. In addition to Rabbi Avraham, who had the privilege of sitting with him on the court and ruling on legal matters, Rabbi Haim had other students who served as rabbis and teachers. Included among these were Rabbi David Zagury Zatzal (who later became the Rav of Lisbon, Portugal), the author of David Lehazkir, and Rabbi Yaakov Benschabbat Zatzal, the author of Ruach Yaakov.

"Render justice in the morning"

Although there were countless rulings that the court made, we shall cite one that demonstrates its great wisdom, the discernment that G-d gave it to render judgment.

A wealthy Jew from Mogador once came before the court. He had sold his apartment to a Jew from the city, and both the buyer and seller agreed to all details of the transaction. After the buyer paid in cash for the full amount of the apartment, he moved in. A few days later, it happened that the seller, who lived in a nearby apartment, opened his window shutters that overlooked the apartment he had just sold. He could therefore see everything that was happening there.

The buyer, who noticed this, asked the seller to close his shutters because he wanted to protect his privacy. This was a case of hezek re'iyah ("damage caused by visibility"). However his repeated requests fell on deaf ears. The seller did not want to listen to the buyer at all, and he continued to keep his shutters open. In his distress, the buyer turned to the court and summoned the seller to a din Torah (rabbinic judgment) with Rabbi Haim

Pinto. On the day of the case, both buyer and seller presented themselves before Rabbi Haim Pinto and explained their positions. When they had finished speaking, the Rav saw that the buyer was in the right, since the open shutters of the seller were harming him. Hence the Rav ordered the seller to close his shutters.

The seller did not appreciate losing his case, and he felt that his honor had been slighted. Nevertheless, since he feared Rabbi Haim, he obeyed the ruling and closed his shutters. Still, in his wickedness, he forged a document which stated that the buyer owed him a large sum of money. He kept it hidden for a long time, his plan being to eventually use it to claim money from the buyer.

Numerous years passed, and the buyer had a baby boy. In fact he was preparing for the child's Brit Milah, yet had nothing but a few pennies. In other words, he didn't know how he was going to pay for the ceremony. Not only that, but he didn't have enough money for the mitzvah meal, nor enough furniture in his home for his guests to sit on.

The buyer went out for a walk, quite worried. Without realizing it, his legs brought him to the local market. Although he had but pennies in his pockets, he placed his faith in G-d and prayed for help during this time of distress.

At the market, as he walked around in a sullen state, a woman drove past him in a donkey cart carrying fragrant herbs. With the little money that he had, he purchased all her merchandise and made his way back home.

The man's brother, who was staying with him at the time, immediately realized what had to be done, given that he had a sharp business mind. The value of these herbs was dozens of times greater than what his brother had paid. Realizing the financial difficulty that his brother was in, especially with the arrival of a newborn, he quickly took these herbs and sold it at the market for a huge gain. He then went to buy everything that was needed

for the meal, and with the money that remained he purchased some furniture for his brother's home. After the Brit Milah, the father of the child opened a business thanks to the Divine blessing that rested on his money. In fact his business flourished, and he gradually became a very wealthy man.

The more that his financial situation improved, however, the more that his wealthy neighbor (the man who had originally sold him his apartment) wanted to avenge himself. When he learned that his neighbor had become quite wealthy, he seized the opportunity to use his forged document in court. He therefore presented himself before Rabbi Haim's court to claim the supposed debt.

The former buyer was appalled by this false claim and affirmed to the Rav that it was completely fake. He had never borrowed money from that man, and apart from purchasing the apartment from him, he had never entered into any financial agreement with him whatsoever. Rabbi Haim reflected for a few moments. On the face of it, the man's claim seemed to be authentic, for he possessed an IOU to support it. On the other hand, the defendant was forcefully asserting that he had never borrowed money from him! What was Rabbi Haim to do? "Render justice in the morning" (Jeremiah 21:12). Rabbi Haim turned towards the men and said: "Come back to see me tomorrow morning, for I will render a decision at that time."

The next morning, the two neighbors went to see Rabbi Haim in court, where they repeated their positions. The plaintiff said, "I have an IOU that has been signed by the defendant," while the defendant denied the veracity of the document, asserting that no loan had ever taken place. Rabbi Haim turned towards the plaintiff and said, "Give me the document and I will verify its authenticity in the Aron Kodesh. If dots appear on the document tomorrow, it will mean that you are right and the defendant is guilty. However if the writing on the document disappears and the paper becomes entirely white, it means that your neighbor is correct

and you are lying – that your document is fake!"

Thus Rabbi Haim placed the document in the Aron Kodesh, and on the following day the two litigants once again appeared before Rabbi Haim. The tzaddik opened the Aron Kodesh with fear and awe as he whispered a prayer to render a just verdict. He then took the document out of the Aron Kodesh and showed it to the litigants – it was completely white!

"The paper is white; it is pure," said Rabbi Haim to the wealthy cheat. "The defendant is innocent, but you have forged a document in order to defraud him of money. Acknowledge your sin, for otherwise you will immediately receive a punishment from Heaven." Having no other choice, the man lowered his head and admitted that it was a fraudulent document. He acknowledged his sin and pledged to never repeat it. Rabbi Haim Pinto had thus rendered a perfectly just decision, receiving help from Heaven to acquit the righteous and condemn the wicked!

Let Him Awaken the Dawn

In the third chapter on the laws of Torah study, the Rambam writes: "Even though it is a mitzvah to study during the day and at night, it is only at night that a person gains most of his wisdom. Therefore anyone who wishes to earn the crown of the Torah should be careful with all of his nights, not to waste even one of them sleeping, eating, drinking, talking, and so on, but rather to engage in the study of Torah and words of wisdom" (Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:13). Rabbi Haim Pinto fulfilled these words to the letter. He remained seated during the nights – hour after hour, from midnight until dawn – devoting himself to learning Torah with extraordinary diligence. The members of his household knew that if during the day they were not to disturb him as he studied, how much more were they not to disturb him at night!

The Revelation of Eliyahu Ha-Navi

One night his daughter Mazal (may she rest in peace) entered her father's

study because she needed something inside. As soon as she entered the room, however, she saw another man that she didn't recognize. When Rabbi Haim noticed his daughter's presence, he sprang from his place and uncharacteristically exclaimed: "My daughter, why did you enter my room without permission? Know that the man whom you saw was Eliyahu HaNavi [the Prophet Elijah]. Since you saw his face without possessing the necessary merit, a decree has been enacted against you: Either the eyes that saw a forbidden vision will become blind, or you will leave this world, G-d forbid."

The young girl, paralyzed by fear and dread, could not speak. She was unable to explain her actions or implore her father the tzaddik for mercy. Her father begged the Creator for mercy again and again, praying for his daughter not to go blind before getting married. Rabbi Haim later told his daughter what he had done, and his daughter (who was a great tzaddek) accepted the decree with complete love.

Years later, it happened that Rabbi Aharon Melloul, the grandson of the holy tzaddik Rabbi Kalifa ben Malka (may his merit protect us), arrived in Mogador. Each time that he passed through the city, he would stay with Rabbi Haim Pinto.

When Rabbi Aharon Melloul saw the virtues of the young Mazal, her modesty and righteousness, he approached her father Rabbi Haim (as was the custom at the time) and expressed his desire to marry his daughter, who descended from a long line of tzaddikim. Without explaining why, Rabbi Haim Pinto categorically refused to give his permission.

Rabbi Aharon returned home upset and somber. He began to worry that the Rav had perhaps seen some flaws in his character, flaws that made him decide not to let his daughter marry him.

Soon afterwards, the tzaddik Rabbi Kalifa ben Malka revealed himself in a dream to Rabbi Haim Pinto. He said, "Rabbi Haim, I sent you my grandson happy and content, and you sent him home sad and upset." Rabbi Haim

replied, "Your honor certainly knows that there was a decree enacted against my daughter Mazal, a decree that she will become blind in both eyes because she saw Eliyahu HaNavi. It was for this reason that I refused to allow her to marry your grandson Aharon." Rabbi Kalifa said, "Don't worry, Rabbi Haim. My grandson will accept the decree, whatever may happen."

In the morning, Rabbi Haim sent a letter to Rabbi Aharon Melloul, asking him to come to Mogador. When he arrived, Rabbi Haim told him what had happened, as well as the sad fate that awaited him if he were to marry his daughter. Rabbi Haim explained that this was why he had refused to give her hand in marriage to him. Not frightened by what he heard, Rabbi Aharon said: "Even so, I'm prepared to marry your daughter. Merit such as hers does not present itself every day."

Thus it was arranged, and not long afterwards Rabbi Aharon Melloul was standing under the chuppah (marriage canopy) with the daughter of Rabbi Haim Pinto. They were married according to the laws of Moses and Israel.

As it turned out, the evil decree against Rabbi Haim Pinto's daughter was annulled. Because of the merit of her fathers, she continued to see normally, and both she and Rabbi Aharon Melloul lived a long time. In fact they merited seeing righteous offspring as well.

When the time came, they passed away within the same week and were buried next to each other in the old cemetery in Mogador.

Eliyahu HaNavi revealed himself at other times to Rabbi Haim Pinto and studied with him, although we don't know how many times. We do know of one such incident because of his shamash, Rabbi Aharon Ibn-Haim.

Rabbi Haim Pinto would begin his day in the service of G-d at midnight, as strong as a lion. Rabbi Haim's shamash, also awake at the time, would typically prepare a hot drink for him. One night, the shamash heard two

voices coming from Rabbi Haim's room. He thought, "If the Rav has a study partner tonight, I should prepare something for him to drink as well." That is precisely what he did, and he entered the Rav's room carrying two glasses.

In the morning, after Shacharit, Rabbi Haim summoned his shamash and said: "Please tell me why you brought me two glasses during the night, rather than one?" The shamash replied, "I heard you speaking with someone, and so I brought a second hot drink for your guest."

The tzaddik Rabbi Haim nodded his head in silence. He looked at Rabbi Aharon Ibn-Haim and said, "Happy are you my son, for you had the merit of hearing the voice of Eliyahu HaNavi. His was the second voice that you heard on that night, and I forbid you to reveal it to anyone."

Rabbi Aharon obeyed his master. For many years, he revealed nothing of what he had heard. Nevertheless, when Rabbi Haim left this world, Rabbi Aharon felt that the moment was right to reveal this extraordinary secret to the Rav's family – the revelation that Eliyahu HaNavi studied with Rabbi Haim Pinto.

As we noted at the outset, we are not claiming that these brief accounts can fully define the greatness and majesty of Rabbi Haim Pinto. Our goal has been to give people a heartfelt sense of this man, a giant among giants, in order that we may strengthen our love for the Creator, our faith in the Sages, and our study of the holy Torah. May the strength that people draw from this text be added to the merit of Rabbi Haim, who will be for us and all the Jewish people a defender at the coming of Mashiach and the resurrection of the dead. Amen.



THE DAYS OF MAN ARE FIXED

(By David Hanania Pinto Shlita)

It is written, “Let me know my end, O L-RD, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am” (Psalms 39:5).

King David turned towards Hashem and implored Him to reveal the day of his death, so he could prepare for it. Hashem refused his request, saying that He does not normally tell the living when they will die. Nevertheless, when David insisted with Hashem, asking to at least know what day of the week he would die on, He told him that it would be Shabbat.

King David was saddened when he heard this. He asked Hashem to let him die a day earlier, on a Friday, because he did not want to die on Shabbat. Hashem refused David’s request, however, telling him that each day in the life of a Jew is precious in His eyes, more precious than the thousand sacrifices that King David’s son Solomon would offer Him in the future. This is why He did not want to advance the day of David’s death, not even by a day.

King David turned to Hashem once again, asking Him to add a day to his life in order for his soul to leave the world on a Sunday, not Shabbat. Hashem again refused his request, telling him that if He prolonged his life, it would shorten King Solomon’s reign by one day, something that Hashem did not want. Hence there was no other way than for David to die on Shabbat.

This exchange between King David and Hashem reveals something astonishing. In fact how are we to understand that Hashem could not diminish the time allotted to Solomon’s reign by even a single day? Hashem can do anything! That being the case, it would be no problem for Him to add an extra day to Solomon’s reign at the end of his life. Why would it be impossible to add a day to David’s life without damaging Solomon’s reign?

It seems that we may answer this question by turning to the words of King David in the Psalms: “Moses and Aaron were among His priests, and Samuel was among those who called upon His Name” (Psalms 99:6). This means that David compared the importance of Moses and Aaron to that of the prophet Samuel, and found them equivalent. This verse seems quite astonishing, for how is it possible to say that Samuel, who was but a prophet, had the same importance as Aaron,

who was the High Priest, and Moses, who was the origin of all the souls of the Jewish people and whose soul was equal to that of all the people?

I think that Samuel merited this importance because he was among those “who called upon His Name,” meaning that he was among those upon whom Hashem’s Name rested. It is known that the Torah is composed of Hashem’s Names, and from the fact that Samuel diligently studied and traveled from one place to another in order to spread the Torah, Hashem let His Name rest upon him. Since Samuel was among those “who called upon His Name,” his importance was comparable to that of Moses and Aaron. True, Moses and Aaron were exceptional individuals, but they studied Torah in the desert and in complete peace and harmony, without having to go from one place to another. On the other hand, Samuel was unique in that he never established his home in a place of honor. Instead he would travel from one town to another in order to spread Hashem’s Torah among the Jewish people. Since he gave his soul for the Torah, he merited for Hashem’s Name to rest upon him, which is why he was compared to Moses and Aaron.

From all that we have said, we learn that there are no limits or boundaries to the value of the Torah; it is simply the most precious and lofty thing in existence. I can personally testify to the fact that the ability to understand a profound passage from the Talmud – or to resolve a question that has bothered me for a long time – is what gives me the greatest joy.

It is written, “There is a time for everything” and also, “Once the time for a sacrifice has passed, it can no longer be offered.” From these verses we learn that everything in this world has a fixed time. When that time has passed, it no longer has a reason to exist. If someone went to the Beit Hamikdash to offer a sacrifice, and yet the time for offering sacrifices had already expired, his sacrifice would be meaningless because the time to accept it had ended. In the same way, we may say that Hashem has given man a fixed number of years in this world, years that he must use to complete his mission. During his lifetime, he receives special Divine aid in order to help him fulfill his mission. Even if the years of his life are

shorter than those of another person, he can still accomplish the mission allotted to him during that time.

Numerous spirituals giants, men such as the Arizal, the Rema, and the Ramchal (may their merit protect us), died while still young. However that did not prevent them from leaving a profound mark on all the generations that followed. This is because they made the best out of the few years they were given, managing to complete their mission in this world. Hashem did not want to remove even a day from David’s life, for just a single day could have allowed him to complete his task. Likewise Hashem did not want to add even a single day to his life either – not because it would have been difficult for Him to add a day to Solomon’s reign – but because the addition of a single day would have been useless, for David did not need it. On the contrary, it could have tarnished the perfection that he had attained in his lifetime.

From here we learn that Hashem has reserved a fixed number of years for each person, a time in which one can elevate himself and fulfill the role for which he came into the world. Once that is done, if a person were to be given more years, they would serve no purpose because he has already fulfilled his task on earth. On the contrary, each extra day could only ruin what he has already accomplished and built through effort and determination.

From here we can derive a lesson about the importance of time. We learn that it is everyone’s responsibility to use each day of his life in the best possible way. A person must not come to the end of his days having failed to fulfill his mission in life. He must realize that this world is a place of action, after which he will no longer have the opportunity to rectify what needs to be rectified. Once a person’s days are over, even if he were to be given many more years to live, he would still be unable to rectify things in the same way that he did before, during the years that Hashem initially gave him.



Album



Mazal Tov, rav Pinto !

À l'occasion de son anniversaire, le rav David Pinto a donné une conférence à la synagogue de la rue Buffault. Devant une assistance très nombreuse, il a souligné l'importance de « regarder la vie avec les yeux de la Torah ».

LA SYNAGOGUE de la rue Buf-fault, à Paris était pleine, ce mercredi 9 juillet, pour accueillir les centaines de personnes venues assister au cours donné par le rav David Pinto. Un événement d'autant plus important qu'il avait lieu le jour même de l'anniversaire du rav. Ils étaient donc venus en famille de toutes les communautés de la région parisienne pour rendre hommage au petit-fils du rabbi Haim Pinto.

Il faut avoir été témoin du silence respectueux qui s'est soudain fait dans l'exubérante synagogue du IX^e arrondissement à l'arrivée du rav Pinto pour prendre la mesure de son aura auprès d'une part sans cesse grandissante de la communauté juive de France. Une influence internationale puisque les institutions de la Hévrat Pinto qu'il dirige sont désormais présentes, en plus de Paris et Villeurbanne, aux États-Unis, en Argentine et bien sûr en Israël.

D'une voix claire et forte, le rav Pinto a alors commencé son cours en enjoignant l'assistance à « regarder la vie avec les yeux de la Torah ». Et de poursuivre : « Lorsqu'un homme vit selon la Torah, alors la Torah lui voit pour lui. La tâche la plus importante dans la vie est de découvrir ce qui est important dans l'existence ! Or tout est dans la Torah et les mitsvot ! ».

Très concentrée, l'assistance ne perd pas une miette de ce discours didactique fait de mots simples et émaillés d'exemples tirés de la vie de tous les jours. Il y a là toutes sortes de Juifs : des hommes d'affaires et des mères de familles modestes, des ave'rim venus du kollel et des jeunes gens qui entament un processus de techouva. Mais à tous, le rav réussit à parler droit au cœur. Il est vrai que la émoana est souvent « contagieuse » et que la sienne est un véritable « héritage familial » ; celle d'une très lon-



Rav David Messas aux côtés du Rav David Pinto

gue lignée de tsaddikim marocains : « Mon père m'a appris comment aimer Dieu, explique ainsi rav David Pinto. Or, lui-même l'a appris de son père, qui l'a appris de son père, qui lui-même... ».

« Il a reçu les mérites de son père et de son grand-père ! », souligne Haim Attia, 27 ans, venu assister à ce cours en compagnie d'un ami. Avec lui on n'est pas jugé pour son veau de Torah, mais pour ce que l'on est vraiment. Et puis, lorsque je sors de l'un de vos cours, j'ai toujours envie d'en faire plus matière de mitsvot ». Et comme tous ce qui en ont bénéficié, le jeune homme se livre surtout à « puissance » des bénédictions et des prières du rav Pinto.

Ce pouvoir des béra'hot, le grand rabbin

ma guérison que toutes les thérapeutiques médicales, a-t-il souligné avec beaucoup d'émotion. De tout mon cœur, et pour tout ce que vous faites pour la communauté, merci rav David Pinto ! Je voudrais rappeler le nom de mon père [le rav Chalom Messas zatsal-Ndir] et celui du père de rabbi David pour qu'ils nous bénissent. Nous partageons, vous et moi, les mérites de nos pères ! Et je suis sûr qu'au Ciel, ils se sont retrouvés », a conclu le grand rabbin de Paris avant de souhaiter un joyeux « Mazal tov ! » au rav Pinto à l'occasion de son 56^e anniversaire, immédiatement imité en cela par l'assistance dans un tonnerre d'applaudissements.

Mais la soirée était loin d'être terminée puisque le rav Pinto a ensuite donné sa bénédiction à chacun individuellement. Un événement que Yéhoua Levy, qui a longtemps patienté dans la file d'attente, n'aurait manqué pour rien au monde : « Je tiens à lui manifester du kavod, explique-t-il. Car je connais le rav David Pinto depuis vingt ans et je n'ai jamais vu un homme aussi droit et honnête... Et puis, le jour de l'anniversaire du rav sa béra'ha est encore plus forte ! ».

SERGE GOLAN

Paris, David Messas, l'a également mentionné lorsque ce fut son tour de prendre la parole. « Lorsque j'ai été malade, vos béra'hot ont été plus importantes pour moi et





Reception in Los Angeles Honors Harav Dovid Pinto, *shlita*

By Rabbi Arye D. Gordon

The Los Angeles community was privileged to host Harav Dovid Pinto, founder of the worldwide *mosdos Pinto*, for four days. Harav Pinto, *mechaber* of the *Pachad Dovid* on *Chumash* and *Kerem Dovid* on *Pirkei Avos*, is a grandson of Harav Chaim Pinto Hakatan and a descendant of the *tzaddik* Rav Yoshiyahu Pinto, *mechaber* of the *sefer The Rif* on *Ein Yaakov*; he is also a grandson of Rav Yaakov Pinto, *mechaber* of the *sefer Mikdash Melech* on the *Zohar*.

Guests gathered at the home of Rav Zvi Ryzman, a prominent businessman and *baal tzedakah*, to hear *divrei Torah* and receive a personal *brachah* from Harav Pinto. In thanking his host, Harav Pinto pointed out that if one loves Torah, Hashem provides him with the opportunity to engage in business and still find time to study and teach Torah and to write *chiddushim*, as Rav Ryzman does.

"Time," he said, "is a gift from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu...* The time that Hashem gives you is the amount of time that you

need, no more, no less. It is similar to the *mann* in the *midbar*; you couldn't take more than you needed for that day."

Rav Pinto elaborated on the *passuk* "*Veyikchu Li terumah*," asking what kind of gift we can possibly give the *Ribbono shel Olam*. Rashi explains that *Li* means "for Me, for My Name." What exactly does "My Name" mean, and why did Hashem ask *Bnei Yisrael* to bring Him an offering for the construction of the *Mishkan*? Did He really need gold and silver? The Torah emphasizes the fact that one who gives an offering should be firmly convinced that he has in fact given nothing, since everything belongs to Hashem.

And for the *terumah* that a person gives, the *Ribbono shel Olam* gives us the blessing that the *Shechinah* will accompany us in all our undertakings. Hashem tells us, "Your offering helps you to know *Shemi*, My Name." In the final analysis, the *terumah* offering given for the construction of the *Mishkan* serves those who give it. It uplifts them in such a way that the *Shechinah* resides within

them.

Harav Pinto added that people tend to interpret *nidvos lev*, contributions of the heart, as money, but actually it means

dedicating one's time to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. He exhorted listeners not to waste time but to dedicate it to Hashem, in the merit of which we can bring the

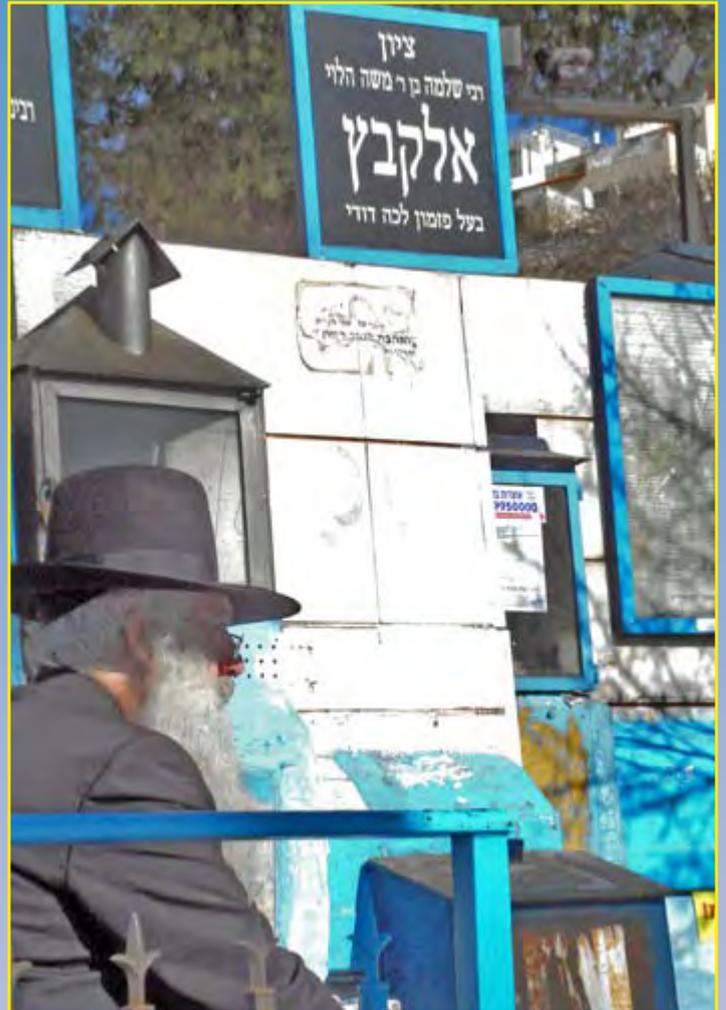
Shechinah to rest within us.

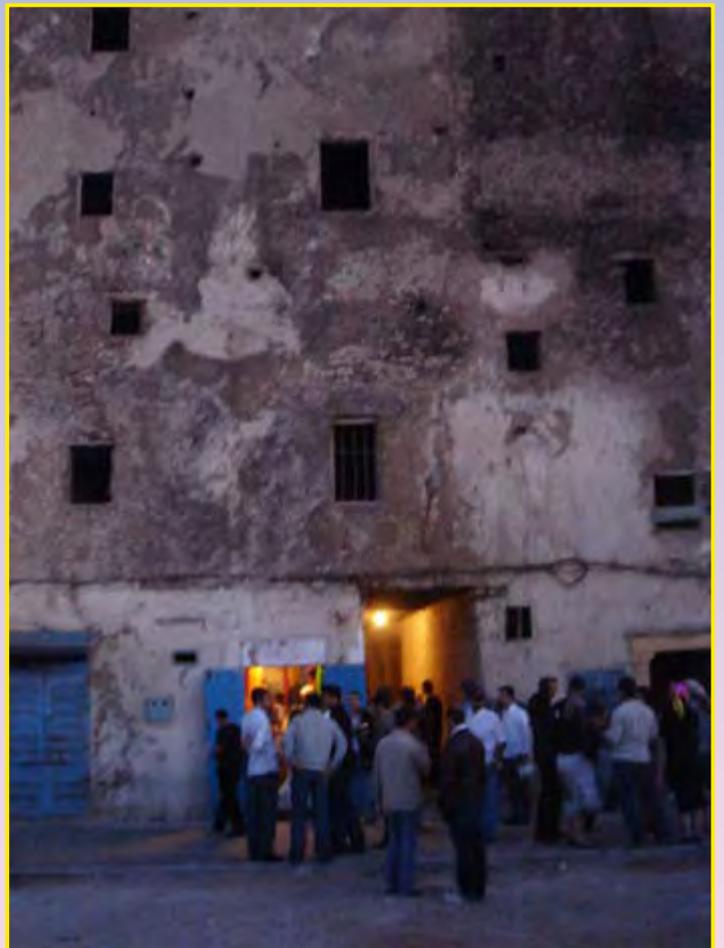
"In *Shamayim* there is no time," he concluded, "only in this world. And if we misuse it in this world, it is lost forever."



Harav Dovid Pinto, founder of the worldwide *mosdos Pinto* (R), speaking at the reception at the home of Rabbi Zvi Ryzman (second L). ARYE D. GORDON











THE HILLOULA OF THE TZADDIK

Rabbi Haim Pinto in Morocco (September 2007)

Each year lends its own special qualities to the Hilloula of the tzaddik of Mogador, Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal. In fact celebrating the Hilloula of the tzaddik on the very day of his passing adds even greater significance to the event.

The tzaddik passed away on Elul 26, which for the year 2007 corresponds to Sunday, September 9.

As early as Thursday morning, most notably in Paris, several hundred people participating in the Hilloula boarded planes for Essaouira (Mogador) Morocco. Besides those who were traveling to Essaouira for the Hilloula by other means, two planes were specifically chartered by Hevrat Pinto for this event. These flights to Essaouira were chartered on Royal Air Maroc, which illustrates the importance of Rabbi Haim Pinto's Hilloula.

Over the last few years, the organizing committee for the Hilloula has consisted of Mr. Mardoché Knafo, Mr. Albert Knafo, Mr. Daniel Afryat, Mr. William Marciano, as well as other individuals who will forgive us for not mentioning them by name.

Following a flight of nearly three hours, during which time a strictly kosher meal was served, our arrival at the Essaouira airport was a particularly solemn event. After all, we were a group of people whom Judaism and faith had brought together on Moroccan soil, where numerous tzaddikim were buried. The temperature at that time of the year hovered around 25°C (77°F).

The participants settled in their respective rooms at the Hotel Ryad Mogador Hotel in Essaouira, which regularly hosts the Hilloula.

Some people took the time, as early as that Thursday afternoon, to visit the mausoleum of Rabbi Haim Pinto

Zatzal in order to pray by the grave of the tzaddik.

Around 6:30 pm, Mincha began in the hotel's main hall, which would serve as a synagogue for the remainder of our stay. At the end of the service, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita took the opportunity to remind us of the importance of the days preceding Rosh Hashanah, during which time repentance should help us return to the wellsprings of Judaism. The Rav stressed the importance of the tzaddik's role in Jewish life, especially the role of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal, for whom this Hilloula was organized. Regarding the three days that were to follow, the Rav underlined the importance of tzniut (modesty) and the precautions that people were absolutely required to take with regards to their manner of dress.

Around 8:15 pm, the participants boarded chartered buses that took them to Essaouira's Jewish cemetery for the Hilloula's first evening. A lavish meal was served around 9:00 pm, and all the participants appreciated the musical entertainment provided by Mr. Elie Melloul's band on that night. Rabbi David Pinto Shlita addressed the participants, stressing the importance of the tzaddik's words. He recounted a story told by Mr. David Cohen about a person who had known Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto Zatzal (Rabbi David Pinto's father) three decades earlier: On a recent trip, Mr. Cohen found himself in synagogue reading a book of Psalms that contained photographs of some tzaddikim. The person sitting next to him cited the names of these great men. When Mr. Cohen came to Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto Zatzal, this person (who turned out to be Ashdod's police chief) recounted how, more than 30 years earlier, he had a son who experienced epileptic seizures. The man was told

to go see Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto Zatzal, who uttered the words n'daba ma ("no more evil"). As it turned out, his son was healed at that very moment. Thus the man pointed out to Mr. Cohen that his very own son – having been healed by Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto Zatzal – was leading the prayer service at that exact moment.

As Rabbi David Pinto Shlita pointed out, when the tzaddik makes a pronouncement, Hashem supports and instantly carries it out. Thus the tzaddik always works for the good.

That first Thursday evening of the Hilloula was marked by the inauguration of a new Sefer Torah, which was offered by the Cesar family. It essentially marked the first inauguration of a Sefer Torah in Essaouira in the last 50 years.

A drive to collect funds for the poor was organized by a sale of letters for the last words of the Sefer Torah, followed by a sale of other mitzvot.

Selichot were recited around 11:45 pm, as men gathered around the mausoleum of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal. These prayers were recited only by the men. On that very night – Thursday, September 6, 2007 – close to 400 people prayed within the confines of Essaouira's ancient Jewish cemetery.

At the end of these prayers, and accompanied by the sound of shofar blasts, everyone went to pray by the grave of the tzaddik of Mogador. Rabbi David Pinto Shlita then took the opportunity to discuss the importance of teshuvah. This Hilloula was taking place at a fitting time for teshuvah. Most of the people gathered there were praying around the grave of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal, as others were lighting candles.

At around one in the morning (3 am in France), buses returned the partici-

pants to the hotel, where they went to sleep for a few hours and prepared themselves for Friday's activities.

The most courageous among the participants began their morning on Friday by reciting Selichot around 6 am, followed by Shacharit. A second morning service also took place, gathering a large part of the faithful.

We ate breakfast around the pool at the Ryad Mogador Hotel. For reasons of tzniut, the pool was closed during the entire Hilloula. Breakfast included Moroccan cakes, donuts, coffee, tea, and juice.

At around 9 am, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita welcomed a group of women to the mausoleum of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal, where they had the opportunity to receive his blessing. Afterwards, people who wanted to visit the house of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal in the old Jewish quarter of Essaouira (close to the Jewish cemetery) could do so.

The house had recently been renovated, and the quality of the workmanship added special flair to the building. The blue and white colors of the house were in complete harmony with the sky and the sea.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita welcomed a group of men inside and gave a Dvar Torah, stressing the holiness of the house. At the end of this visit, some people went to the market in search of bargains and to purchase souvenirs. Another group of participants gathered on that morning to visit the mausoleum of Rabbi Nissim ben Nissim Zatzal, located along the road between Essaouira and Marrakech.

Lunch awaited us at around 1 pm on that Friday afternoon, beginning with entrées consisting of salads, and followed by grilled sardines. The fishing industry in that part of the Atlantic Ocean is quite advanced. We were then served fresh fruit for desert.

Everyone had a chance to prepare for Shabbat during the course of that Friday afternoon. The Atlantic Ocean served as a mikveh for those who

weren't afraid of dipping in slightly cool water.

The faithful gathered in the Ryad Mogador Hotel's main hall at around 6 pm, as the men prayed Mincha and the women lit candles for Shabbat.

In the hall that served as our synagogue, about 300 people gathered to pray. For the reading of Shir HaShirim and Arvit, we heard all those who possessed a beautiful voice and could sing well. It was an opportunity to hear traditional Moroccan songs that possessed the appropriate local flair. The architecture of the walls and ceilings, as well as the building as a whole, made it clear that we were really in Morocco.

During the course of his speech, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita stressed the path that we must take in life and the drive that exists in us all. For the Rav, the time preceding Rosh Hashanah – a time that we were now experiencing – is suitable for doing teshuvah. He recalled the principles of Torah, Shabbat, and Faith.

The Rav mentioned that someone had come to see him for a beracha (blessing). This person regularly participated in the New York City Marathon, and he wanted to be among those who won it. His performance in previous marathons, however, did not bode well for a future victory. Nevertheless, the important thing was for him to participate in the upcoming marathon. The main thing was for him to be there – “to participate because that was his choice.”

As he usually does, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita described miracles that he personally witnessed. The faith and greatness of a tzaddik enable spectacular events to take place. Such was the case regarding an 18-month old baby that had swallowed a coin and was facing the possibility of surgery. The parents, from the Asseraf family, lived in Agadir, and it was the day before the Hilloula of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal. Although the parents were advised to bring

the baby to France for surgery, the coin “naturally” emerged from the baby following a beracha, meaning that a surgical intervention became unnecessary.

Following the Friday night service, we sat down to eat supper in the hotel's main hall. As usual, the quality and superb organization of the Hilloula was illustrated by, among other things, the efforts put into the catering. Thus the participants appreciated exquisite meals on that Friday night.

The evening was adorned with songs befitting the occasion. Rabbi David Pinto Shlita encouraged the most reluctant among us to demonstrate their enthusiasm, since everyone should participate in the joy of the Hilloula.

As usual, all the faithful in the hall began singing Mashiah and Habibi Ya Habibi together. Finally, the traditional Haoua Ja Y Douina in honor of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal was also sung. During the course of the evening, we were visited by Mr. André Azoulay, an advisor to His Majesty King Mohammed VI.

The meal ended at 11:30 pm, and on Saturday morning classes began at 7 am for the early risers among us. Each of the rabbis in Essaouira chose a particular subject to speak about. Rabbi Hai Amram underlined the role of the shofar during the prayers of Elul and Tishri.

The Saturday morning service finished at 12:30, during which time the faithful had an opportunity to fully appreciate the caliber of the “Chazanut” of certain participants. Fervent prayers were recited, and Rabbi David Pinto Shlita delivered a speech on the theme of teshuvah.

Lunch was served after the morning service, and all the participants found the meals delicious and reinvigorating, including of course the “Dafina.” Songs were recited during the meal in honor of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal. As on the previous day,

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita stressed that everyone should participate in the singing.

Following this meal on Shabbat afternoon, some people took a nap in order to better prepare themselves for the Hilloula of that evening. During the course of the afternoon, various Torah classes were offered. We had the opportunity to hear a Dvar Torah from Rabbi Y. Benchétrit, who stressed the importance of communication between human beings and the significance of words.

Mincha then took place, followed by Seuda Shelishith around the hotel's pool. Other Torah classes were given as people awaited the evening service. As soon as Arvit ended, Havdalah was recited in the hall used for prayers.

The Hilloula began in the main hall at around 8:30 pm. We were visited by Mr. André Azoulay and His Excellency the Governor of the Province of Essaouira. Rabbi David Pinto Shlita thanked the Moroccan authorities for the reception we received and the efforts made to facilitate our stay in Essaouira, as well as for the security forces deployed for the Hilloula.

The Rav discussed the importance of commemorating the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal on Elul 26. Rabbi David Pinto Shlita stressed the love that we should have for others, and he recited a blessing for King Mohammed VI and the Moroccan people. Accompanying the Hilloula celebrations of that evening was the music of Elie Melloul's band, which played the traditional repertoire of "hilloulotes."

Around midnight, the participants boarded buses that took them to the grave of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal.

The reading of Selichot began at the cemetery around one in the morning. These prayers were marked with special kedusha, uttered in unison and spurred on by Rabbi David Pinto Shlita to the accompaniment of shofar blasts. A Psalm for parnasa (suste-

nance) was then recited. During this time, hundreds of men and women gathered to pray to Hashem and invoke the merit of the holy Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita gave us a blessing at that late hour. The Rav asked us to transmit this blessing to others upon returning to our families and friends, in the hope of seeing Mashiach. He added that we can certainly hasten his arrival, for we are believers and children of believers, and nothing is impossible for Hashem.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita gave a blessing to each of the faithful, blessings said in the merit of his forefather, the holy and venerated Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal. At the end of the ceremony at the cemetery, we returned to the Ryad Mogador Hotel for a short sleep.

On Sunday morning we enjoyed breakfast around the pool. The first of two morning prayer services took place in the large hall that served as the hotel's synagogue, followed by the second. It was then time to return to the building adjacent to the Jewish cemetery. Thanks to well-organized planning, buses allowed us to travel between our hotel and the cemetery. We must once again thank the Moroccan authorities for the efforts they made in providing us with the best possible security. As a local taxi driver explained to me, police officers and soldiers were usually seen during the Jewish pilgrimage for Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal.

A light meal was then served. Joining the participants at that time were the Governor of the Province of Essaouira and Mr. David Azoulay, official Moroccan representatives. Rabbi Raphael Pinto (the son of Rabbi David Pinto Shlita) then said a prayer for King Mohammed VI and the Moroccan people for this special occasion, the Hilloula of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal.

We must thank everyone, both near and far, who helped make this

pilgrimage a success. This includes the efforts made by the Moroccan authorities, as well as by everyone connected to Hevrat Pinto. We also cannot forget the work done by all the staff at the Ryad Mogador Hotel in Essaouira.

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita headed towards the mausoleum of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal. In his remarks, the Rav stressed to everyone that they had to write down all the requests that they wished to make of the tzaddik. The participants then followed one another to the grave of the tzaddik of Mogador in an atmosphere of serenity. Some participants read Psalms, others prayed on their knees by the grave, while still others lit candles in designated areas.

Within the mausoleum, groups of men followed groups of women in uttering personal prayers, sorrows, and wishes.

For most of the participants, the return to Paris took place early that Sunday afternoon. During the final visit to the mausoleum of Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal, everyone came for one last time to invoke the merit of the tzaddik of Mogador, may his merit protect us.

Prayers, hymns, and the sound of shofar blasts accompanied the participants, and it was not without some regret that the Hilloula ended. People returned to their homes following a flight from the Essaouira airport. For Jews returning from the 5767 Hilloula of the tzaddik of Mogador, this event marked an important step that brought them closer to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, for Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal provides us with real help in life. May his merit protect us all! Amen.



GROWING STRONGER IN FAITH

and the Service of Hashem

By Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita

In the Shacharit prayer of Shabbat we say, “Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion, for You called him a faithful servant.” On Friday, the eve of Shabbat, my father always helped out at home, and he would say in a loud voice: Yismach Moshe be’ matnat chelko (“Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion”). I asked my father if he was saying this because his own name was Moshe. He told me that this wasn’t the reason why, but that the meaning of these words had to be understood. My father told me this when I was young, and I did not realize just how profound it was, although today I understand the meaning of “Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion.” What was the gift that Moses received from G-d? The answer follows immediately afterwards: “You called him a faithful servant.” This is the gift that Moses rejoiced in – being called a faithful servant of Hashem.

We must realize that it is not only Torah study which leads a person to become G-d’s servant. Simply put, it takes a real effort to become G-d’s servant. What kind of “service” does this consist of? It consists of perfecting one’s character traits and concentrating in prayer. Furthermore, a servant of G-d is the happiest of men. I once saw someone who was smiling as he prayed, although I didn’t know why. I later asked him why he had been smiling, and he told me that it was the first time in his life that he sensed the concept of “the holy King.” Someone who prays with so much effort and reflects upon the words he recites is a servant of Hashem.

It seems surprising that someone who prays in this way, reflecting upon the meaning of his words, is considered to be G-d’s servant, since he is asking Him for so many things. How can this be? In general, a servant does not ask his master for things, but instead provides them. Therefore how can servants of G-d ask for so many things as they pray? The

answer is that man does not ask Hashem for help with his own things. Instead he asks for help with regards to sustenance, understanding, holiness, and the like in order to serve Hashem with perfection. Hence we ask Him: Grant us wisdom, sustenance...in order to serve You with a perfect heart, for our desire is to serve You to the best of our abilities.

Moses also felt that it was a gift that G-d considered him to be His servant. In fact even more is said with regards to Moses: Not only was he a servant, but “a faithful servant,” something that car-

We must realize that it is not only Torah study which leads a person to become G-d’s servant. Simply put, it takes a real effort to become G-d’s servant. What kind of “service” does this consist of? It consists of perfecting one’s character traits and concentrating in prayer. Furthermore, a servant of G-d is the happiest of men.

ries a whole other meaning. There is a tremendous difference between a faithful servant and an unfaithful servant. A person can have a servant who serves him eagerly, and yet steals from him at the same time. Such a servant is not faithful, and his service is not at all ethical. Thus with regards to G-d, there can be faithful and unfaithful servants.

I once had a very bad experience when I was young boy. It was the Shabbat before Tisha B’Av, and I was in synagogue. There I saw a collection box for tzedakah, and an evil thought crossed my mind – the thought of taking it. Happily, the shamash arrived and saved me from this, but I remember it to this day. The evil inclination is so powerful that it can push a seven-year-old boy to take a tzedakah box on Shabbat. A person must therefore really sense that he is serving Hashem, and even in such situations he must realize

that we are faithful servants, meaning that we do not take things that do not belong to us.

Young unmarried yeshiva students should realize that they can reach this level while they are in yeshiva. This is because the service of Hashem is something that we must acquire through much work, and it is impossible to attain it without effort. Yeshiva days are a time when it is possible to reach this level. I remember that when I was in yeshiva, I always wanted to reach an age at which I could take classes given by Rabbi Chaim Lopian Zatzal, and thank G-d I did. If a person really yearns for something, he can attain it.

Yeshiva students must realize that during this time in their lives, they should elevate themselves and become faithful servants of Hashem. They must especially focus on perfecting their character traits and relationship with others. It is also important for them to be neat and organized, and to respect themselves insofar as being the sons of the King. A person who grows in terms of his relationships with others will experience happiness throughout his life, for by doing so he will also learn to respect and appreciate his wife. This will lead to love and friendship between husband and wife, and the Shechinah will reside among them.

I once saw a young man looking at himself in a mirror. He was dusting himself off and carefully examining his hair and overall appearance. I approached and asked him what this all meant. He said that he was about to conclude a shidduch, and he wanted to look appropriate. When I thanked him, he immediately asked me: “When you had a shidduch, didn’t you do the same thing?” I told him that I did not, but I still thanked him for having taught me just to what point we must look good before Hashem. In fact if a person goes to such lengths in order to look good for a woman, with whom he will live for

just a few decades – although his soul exists for eternity – then how much more should we adorn our deeds and habits in order to please Hashem, the eternal G-d?

The Sages teach, “He overturned the mountain on them like a barrel,” and it is written: “The people saw and trembled and stood from afar” (Exodus 20:15). Now if Hashem overturned the mountain on the Children of Israel like a barrel, it means that they were standing beneath the mountain. However the verse states that they stood at a distance! Exactly where were the Children of Israel standing? The fear of Heaven comes in two forms: That which results from misfortune, and that which results from personal effort. I once met a person in Paris who was very ill, and on his face it was clear that his life was nearing an end. As his dying day approached, he changed his ways and began to put on tefillin and do other things, for he possessed a fear of Heaven that resulted from misfortune. This is one way of attaining the fear of Heaven, but there is another way, one that results from personal effort. Thus the verse states, “What does the L-RD your G-d ask of you? Only to fear the L-RD your G-d” (Deuteronomy 10:12). Here the Gemara asks, “Is the fear of Heaven such a minor thing?” (Berachot 33b). It is a major thing! Therefore how can the verse say, “Only to fear the L-RD your G-d”? Actually, it was a minor thing for Moses, since he was Hashem’s servant through and through. This fact is concretely expressed in a statement by the Ba’al HaTurim: “The name Moshe is formed by the same letters as Hashem.” Moses served Hashem with all his strength, to the point of ascending to Heaven in order to bring down the Torah. Hence the letters of his name are those of Hashem, and Moses’ fear of Heaven stemmed from the power of his own service of Hashem.

Let us now explain this in a different way: At first the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain on the Children of Israel like a barrel so they could possess the fear of Heaven that results from external factors, meaning that it was forced upon them. Later on,

however, they stood at a distance and attained the fear of Heaven by themselves, by their own realization of the Creator’s existence. This is a higher form of the fear of Heaven. Thus both things were true: At first the Children of Israel were coerced, and later on they themselves put an effort into acquiring the fear of Heaven.

We know the story of the gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer Zatzal, who once saw one of his students standing by a window. When he asked him why he was standing there, the student replied: “To get some fresh air.” Rabbi Yitzchak said to him, “Perhaps you are a thief?” Shaken by what he had just heard, the student replied that he was not a thief, but was simply standing there for some air. Rabbi Yitzchak told him that by standing in front of a window, he was stealing the air of others who were inside, for he was blocking the air that would have otherwise reached them. From here we learn just to what degree we must consider the needs of others. This is called the fear of Heaven, and it requires that a person be sensitive to what others are feeling. It requires that a person serve Hashem in truth by concentrating in prayer, especially without harming others.

Rav Shach Zatzal said that the fear of the day of judgment is not about being judged per se, but about standing before Hashem. Simply being summoned in judgment awakens fear in man, who grows fearful even if he is righteous, for “there is no righteous man on earth who does good and never sins” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Only a perfect servant of Hashem has nothing to fear.

The Gemara recounts the story of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai, whose son became ill. He prayed for him, but his prayer went unanswered. When his disciple Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa prayed for him, however, his prayer was answered. The wife of Rabban Yochanan asked him if his disciple was greater than him, since his prayer went unanswered while Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa’s prayer did not. He said that Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was like a servant before the king, who comes and goes as he pleases. This is astonishing:

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa could come before Hashem whenever he pleased because he was like a servant (since servants can always come before the king to inquire of his needs), but Rabban Yochanan could not do the same because he was like a nobleman, and noblemen only appear before the king at fixed times.

Rabban Yochanan said that Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was like a servant, being able to come before the king at any time. He truly was like a servant, for he never came to ask for himself, since he completely ignored his own desires. Hence he was considered to be Hashem’s servant. When Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was in need of sustenance, he prayed to Hashem and a golden table leg immediately appeared for him. He then had a dream in which he was eating upon a table that was lacking one leg. From this he understood that because of the table leg he had received, his table in the World to Come would be lacking a leg. This requires an explanation, for does it mean that a person is forbidden to ask G-d for his sustenance? If someone asks for something and receives it, does it mean that it will be deducted from his reward in the World to Come? The answer is that Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was a complete servant of Hashem. Now as we know, what a servant acquires belongs to his master. Hence everything he possessed really belonged to Hashem. Yet in this instance he asked for something for himself, and it would not belong to his master. He would therefore be lacking it in the World to Come. At his level, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa could not even ask for his sustenance, since he was truly a servant of Hashem.

These are extremely profound concepts, and we must all aspire to be a “faithful servant” of the Holy One, blessed be He. Not only should a person become a servant, but a faithful servant. How does one become a faithful servant of Hashem? It is only by annulling his own desires before Hashem’s will.



SETTING A PERSONAL EXAMPLE

The Secret to Exerting a Real Influence on the Community:

Question: *What difference do you see between Jews living in Eretz Israel and France, from where you are returning?*

Answer: In terms of spirituality, there is no difference. Wherever a person might be, he can grow. I have seen people becoming great Torah figures precisely in the Diaspora, for there we know our limits; we know our place and our desire is to move to the Holy Land. On the other hand, there is a tremendous degree of assimilation within the Diaspora, and only the Torah can protect a person. This is not only from a physical point of view, but above all from a spiritual point of view. A person who pays no attention to his spiritual state is in danger regardless of where he finds himself. Thus as soon as the Torah is present, there is no difference, as it is written: "In all places where I cause My Name to be pronounced, I will come to you and bless you" [Exodus 20:21], as well as: "I am with him in distress" [Psalms 91:15]. Likewise our Sages say that the Divine Presence accompanies the Jewish people wherever they have been exiled. Still, the main problem throughout Europe and the Diaspora is assimilation. Only a person who respects the limits imposed on him by the Torah will be saved from it, for he will know what is forbidden and will stay away from it. It is for this reason that I have been working in France for more than 30 years now, in order to explain to people that Judaism is not just about reciting Kiddush on Friday night. Instead, it is about personal devotion. The Torah warns the Jewish people that although a person may sometimes be called to a certain place, he is still forbidden to adopt the local customs. He must instead burn their idols. Now it is possible to burn idols, but one cannot burn an entire culture. Only the Torah can burn a culture and make it disappear.

After spending three years in Eretz Israel, I felt a tremendous spiritual elevation, but meanwhile the students that I had left behind in France began to regress. I therefore had no other choice but to return. Baruch Hashem, the religious community in Eretz Israel is at a tremendous level, possessing a great deal of Torah and a large number of people doing teshuvah. All the same, working on one's middot [character traits] is essential. Leading Torah institutions, mainly yeshivot, have a great role to play here. We must first completely eliminate the cell phones of

What everyone can do is to learn mussar [ethics], as it is written: "Hold fast to mussar; do not let go. Guard it, for it is your life" [Proverbs 4:13]. Before going to sleep, I also study mussar or read accounts of the tzaddikim, for this rouses the emotions, which is important.

young yeshiva students and supervise them closely. Such devices have no place in a yeshiva, for they generate tremendous impurity. Likewise it is crucial to impose limits on outings, for numerous students have met death during such excursions. Even while on vacation, we must know what youngster are doing.

Baruch Hashem, I was very content whenever my teachers would reprimand me. I think that in general we have to emphasize the study of mussar [ethics], which leads to the fear of Heaven. A man must recite prayers while wearing a hat and suit, not simply a dress shirt. My father and teacher, may his merit protect us, always told me that

when a man wears a kippah and a hat, thereby sensing that his head is always covered, he becomes infused with the fear of Heaven.

I once heard it said in the name of a great rebbe that people would wear heavy coats when going to see a tzaddik, even if it was very hot. They wanted to sense the warmth of the tzaddik through these garments. We must approach prayer with the same attitude. We must be able to sense the difference between those who live in Eretz Israel, and those who live in the Diaspora. Now sometimes it is the opposite, for in the Diaspora there are Jews upon whose faces we can see the fear of Heaven.

Throughout the Talmud, there are numerous discussions between the Sages of Babylon and those of Eretz Israel. We know that the air of Eretz Israel is conducive for acquiring wisdom, since it is "a land that the L-RD your G-d cares for. The eyes of the L-RD your G-d are always upon it." All the same, purity and impurity always come in pairs, and it is known that a place which contains a large degree of kedusha [holiness] also contains a great degree of tumah [impurity]. The gates of Gan Eden and the gates of Gehinnom are both found in Hebron. In Eretz Israel it is possible to grow to a great extent, but it is also possible to take a tremendous spiritual plunge there, G-d forbid. We are witnesses to a stunning phenomenon, one that takes place nowhere else. Some people prevent the spreading of Torah, while others study and spread it. Although I don't get involved in politics, I have often shed tears as a result, and I have prayed for hearts to return with G-d's help.

Some mitzvot apply only in Eretz Israel, such as the observance of the Shmita year. The goal of these precepts is to increase kedusha in the land and to diminish tumah.

Q. What areas must a person strengthen himself in during this vacation period, with the month of Elul approaching?

A. What everyone can do is to learn mussar, as it is written: “Hold fast to mussar; do not let go. Guard it, for it is your life” [Proverbs 4:13]. Before going to sleep, I also study mussar or read accounts of the tzaddikim, for this rouses the emotions, which is important.

We often see reshaim [evildoers] succeeding. This can lead a person to think that he can also act badly and succeed. Yet this is not so. Our Sages teach that the reshaim succeed in this world because G-d gives them their reward in this world, whereas punishment awaits them later on, in the World of Truth.

A well-known physician came to me and said that it was precisely his friends that worked on Shabbat who were successful. I said to him, “But what purpose does all their money serve? You also have a great deal of money in safekeeping with G-d, Who will repay you.” This man told me that he wanted to see his “savings” now. I replied that he had to die in order to see them; there was no other way. Hence external influences are so great that we must study mussar regularly, each and every day. It is also very difficult not to fall into the trap of Lashon Harah [gossip], which is impossible without studying mussar.

Rabbi Israel Salanter Zatzal said that even the generation of the desert, the generation that ate the manna, needed 40 days of preparation in order to receive the Torah. That generation also included people who transgressed Shabbat. That being the case, how much more does it apply to us? ... In every situation that we find ourselves, we must try to elevate ourselves through the study of mussar and books on Chassidut such as Avodat Halevi, as well as through the works of the Vilna Gaon, Rabbeinu Yerucham Zatzal, Rav Shach Zatzal, and others.

I read a passage from the Ben Ish Hai which explains the fight between the Patriarch Jacob and Esau’s angel.

They were fighting for control over the month of Elul. There it is said that Jacob took the month of Nissan and Sivan – the month of preparing to receive the Torah, which is well-suited to rectifying our middot – as well as the month of Iyar, which is well-suited to healing our middot: “I am the L-RD your healer.” Esau took the months of Tammuz and Av, difficult months for the Jewish people, as well as the month of Elul. However Jacob came and fought with him, taking the month of Elul. How did he manage to defeat Esau’s angel and take the month of Elul from him? We must realize that the Torah saves and protects. When the Jewish people use the days of Av and Elul – days of vacation belonging to Esau, a difficult time for the Jewish people – to study Torah and perform mitzvot, it then becomes possible to obtain the days of Elul. It was in this way that Jacob defeated Esau and also managed to take control of Elul.

The reward that we receive for the Torah is proportional to our effort. A person who devotes himself to Torah during this vacation period will merit a tremendous reward. The Patriarch Jacob greatly elevated himself during the months of Tammuz and Av, thanks to which he was able to take the month of Elul away from Esau. We are therefore obligated to effectively use the month of Elul so as not to be blamed for having taken it away from Esau without using it to grow.

Q. In the yeshivot where you studied as a younger, what was the atmosphere like in the month of Elul? How was Elul unique with Rabbeinu Gershon Liebman Zatzal? Could one see that he was afraid? And what was it like in the yeshivot that you frequented afterwards, with the gaon Rabbi Chaim Shmuel Lopian Zatzal?

A. Elul is the month of mercy. The great Torah figures of the generation feel tremendous fear during this time, just as great joy appears on their faces during the month of Nissan. When I

studied in yeshiva with my teachers and rabbis, with the gaon Rabbi Shammai Zatzal and the gaon Rabbi Chaim Shmuel Lopian Zatzal in Sunderland, and in France with the tzaddik Rabbeinu Gershon Liebman Zatzal, we could sense the tension, as the verse states: “The entire people saw the thunder” [Exodus 20:15]. The fear and anxiety were palpable. Elul was engraved upon the faces of these teachers.

The letters composing the world Elul form the initials of the verse Ani ledodi vedodi li [“I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine” – Song of Songs 6:3]. It would seem that the word dodi designates Esau. The explanation is the following: The month of Elul, which belonged to “dodi” – to Esau – now belongs to us. During a battle, opposing forces each raise a flag over territory they control. Once a territory has been conquered, the flag over that territory changes. Likewise we must change the flag of the month of Elul. We must change Esau’s flag with our own, thereby justifying the fact that we took control of the month of Elul from Esau.

Q. Describe the atmosphere in the home of your father, may his merit protect us, during the Days of Awe. What was the atmosphere like in the city of Essaouira?

A. In the home of my teacher and father the tzaddik, may his merit protect us, one could sense a great preparation taking place during the month of Elul. It could be seen on his face, just as it was with my teachers, may their merit protect us. During this time, my father Zatzal added a special saying to the blessing he recited: “Shana Tovah [a good year], a year as good and as sweet as honey.”

The Moroccan town of Essaouira contained numerous synagogues, and during the entire month of Elul we could hear Selichot [supplications recited during Elul] coming from every direction. When I was young, I would go to the synagogue of Rabbi Shimon Amar Zatzal. He was the chazan, and he made us listen to audio tapes of Torah lectures that he heard from his teachers.

For the entire year, we waited for this time in order to hear Rav Amar Zatzal and his tapes. It was truly extraordinary for us, because few people had tape recorders at the time. That was how we felt about the month of Elul, and it awoke us! There is a famous saying: “He who does not exert himself on the eve of Shabbat will not eat on Shabbat.” In other words, in order to eat on Shabbat – something that everyone desires – we must first exert ourselves. The same applies here, for each person is aware of his sins and knows what needs to be fixed, which he must do while there is still time. One must scrupulously analyze his deeds in order to know what needs to be fixed. In fact without deep introspection, it will be impossible for a person to realize just how much he needs to rectify himself.

“On this day the world was created” – on Rosh Hashanah we are judged and on Yom Kippur the verdict is issued. The Satan knows that it is a period of judgment, but does not know who G-d is judging at each instant. This is why it is difficult for the Satan to accuse. A person must realize that the Satan is weak during these days. We must also use this opportunity to return to G-d, for otherwise the accusations against us will be even greater.

With G-d’s help, we can all do complete teshuvah and emerge from exile. The verse, “great is our joy” will be fulfilled in us. After this deliverance, we will forget all the misfortunes that we lived through, and we will experience true joy.

Q. Because of special Divine aid, you have succeeded in assembling thousands of Jews to listen to G-d’s words. What do you tell such large audiences in order to strengthen and encourage them?

A. First of all, to succeed in returning a person to G-d, one must first set a personal example. I often ask myself, “Have I already rectified my own deeds? Am I an appropriate example for others?”

There are many tzaddikim who have never sinned. Their words are really like a fire, words that penetrate the

heart, especially the words of the Baal Shem Tov, the gaon Rabbi Akiva Eiger, Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal and others. From the time they were created until they left this world, they lived in holiness and purity as they devoted themselves exclusively to the Torah. All their actions were unselfish, as it is said regarding Moses, who went from the people to the mountain, and from the mountain to the people, without tending to his own affairs.

I’ve heard that the holy Rebbe Haim of Sanz Zatzal would sell his share in Gan Eden every day, and then give the money to tzeddakah. These were true tzaddikim, men whose greatness we cannot even grasp.

The tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto, may his merit protect us, was endowed with the Divine spirit, and all his words were fulfilled to the letter. Nevertheless, we ourselves are still very far from this level, having numerous personal interests at heart. I often try to rid myself of personal interests; sometimes I succeed, and sometimes I don’t. True tzaddikim, however, succeed in doing this all the time, for the Torah is their real occupation. We, on the other hand, handle large amounts of money, and anyone who does so cannot claim to have purified their heart. Although money allows us to build and support Torah institutions, we must nevertheless decide what and how much to give each one, meaning that personal interests can come into play, G-d forbid.

Thank G-d, I’ve had the merit of bringing many people back to G-d in France, Argentina, Eretz Israel, and other places. Because of my experiences, I can give people advice and even warn them by citing what happened to certain individuals. Thank G-d, I’ve benefited from tremendous Siyata Dishmaya [Divine aid] in this regard, which seems to have come from the merit of my fathers. Without this great merit, I would not have been able to return even a single person to G-d. Of course, it goes without saying that with each person who does teshuvah, I also gain strength.

Q. What impression did you have when the great Torah figures of our generation, the gaon Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman Shlita and the Rebbe of Ger Shlita, visited France?

A. Their visit was a very important event that led to tremendous spiritual growth. Although it was very brief, their presence had an enormous effect. A man from Marseille was about to marry a woman who was not Jewish. Now this visit from the great Torah figures of Israel, and the acceptance of the Divine yoke that I recited before thousands of people, made him change his mind and decide to do teshuvah. Naturally he left his non-Jewish girlfriend and promised that he would visit the Gedolei Israel [great men of Israel], who changed the course of his life and gave it meaning, allowing him to merit true paradise. Today numerous Gedolei Israel diligently devote themselves to Torah and live a simple life, seeking neither glory nor honor. I’ve paid several visits to the gaon Rabbi Michel Yehuda Lefkovitz Shlita. This tzaddik could have been very wealthy, but instead he left everything behind for the Torah and the Jewish people. Unfortunately, many people wrongly assume the title of “Rabbi,” for they are singularly devoted to obtaining money, with no free time to devote to the needs of the community. Although true Gedolei Israel are few in number, thank G-d we still have some. We should avail ourselves of their knowledge and emulate their ways. May it be G-d’s will to grant them long days. Amen.

May it be His will to make us succeed in our path, and may we merit to continue growing and honoring the Torah in Eretz Israel and the Diaspora. Amen, may it be so.



SHABBAT – THE SOURCE OF BLESSINGS

(By Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita)

For six days work shall be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a Sabbath of rest to the L-RD. Whoever does work on it shall be put to death. (Exodus 35:2)

Moses gathered all the people and gave them the mitzvah of Shabbat. According to the verse, we may say that the expression “shall be done” teaches us that it is not man who does work – nor does he become rich as a result – for work gets done by itself. This is because Hashem orders it to be done, just as the world was created by the word of Hashem. It follows that a person has no reason to grow proud of his success. Rather, he should realize and become attuned to the fact that work gets done by itself during the six days of the week. In other words, it gets done not because of a person’s efforts, but because of Hashem’s will. There are people in this world who do not have to work hard to earn a living; they make a few phone calls and their work is done. On the other hand, there are others who must put an enormous amount of effort into earning a living, and yet they are unsuccessful and barely make enough to eat. This teaches us that a person’s sustenance does not depend on him alone, nor on his efforts or commitments. Everything is fixed for him from the beginning of the year to its end, and only Hashem decides who will be rich and who will be poor.

Also from the same verse, we learn that the time for work is exclusively the six days of the week, for the seventh day is a “Sabbath of rest to the L-RD.” We sometimes see people who do not observe Torah and mitzvot, people who open their businesses on Shabbat. When we speak to them and reprimand them for this, they quickly explain that Shabbat is their most lucrative day, and if they were to shut down on Shabbat, they would lose

an enormous amount of money. We can tell them that they are mistaken, that this is an argument of the evil inclination, for the money that people earn by desecrating Shabbat carries no blessings. It only appears that a person becomes wealthy because he keeps his store open seven days a week. The truth is that everything can be done during the first six days of the week, and a person has no chance of seeing blessings emerge from the work that he does on the seventh day. As we already mentioned, the work is already done, and it only seems to a person that he becomes wealthier by increasing his work. In fact the very opposite is true.

Moses tried to arouse faith among the Jewish people and make them realize that a person’s livelihood comes to him from Heaven. He tried to teach them that everything has its own time. A person is forbidden to spend his life chasing after money by desecrating the sanctity of Shabbat, for in that case he is not helping himself. On the contrary, he only does himself harm. Likewise there are many people who make no effort to pray with a minyan, claiming that they have to hurry off to work and open their stores so that nobody has to wait for them to open. When a person does not know how to divide his day and establish a clear boundary between the sacred and mundane, he loses more than he gains. He thinks that because he manages to open his store earlier, at the expense of communal prayer, he will earn more money. The reality, however, is that he will lose true riches, the capital awaiting him in the World to Come.

A person will lie in his grave after 120 years on earth, and all the wealth that he amassed on earth will stay behind; he will take none of it with him. Because of this fact, a person must search his soul and think about what is more important: Money, or the mitzvot and good deeds that accompany

him in the World of Truth and speak in his favor. Looking at this more closely, we see that the first letters of the expression sheshet yamim (“six days”) form the term shai (“gift”), whereas its last letters form the term tam (“upright” or “blameless”) and met (“dead”). This seems to indicate that whoever works on the six days of the week will merit a “gift” and blessing from Hashem insofar as his endeavors will be successful. It also indicates that a person who conducts himself uprightly with Hashem will merit an abundance of blessings and success. On the other hand, a person who is not content with working on the six days of the week – meaning someone who tries to work on Shabbat – will quickly find death, as the verse states: “Whoever does work on it shall be put to death.”

A person is forbidden to think that the more money he makes and the larger his bank account grows, the longer he will live, for everyone eventually dies. What will he be able to tell the Creator about the fact that he desecrated Shabbat and lost eternal life?

Someone once came to see me and said that his wife was constantly complaining and getting upset at him because he devoted too much time to observing mitzvot instead of working. This man wanted to know how to deal with his wife’s complaints. When I heard this, I tried to convince his wife that a person does not lose anything on account of observing Torah and mitzvot. On the contrary, doing so bestows blessings upon a person and enables him to prosper in every possible way. His wife, however, refused to listen. When I saw that it was no use trying to convince her, I told the man to listen to his wife and spend more time at work. The man returned to see me a year later, but this time he was very distraught. He asked me why I had told him to spend more time at

work, for he was now bankrupt and had even lost what he had before! I replied that I had given him this advice because I was afraid he would lose both his money and his wife. He said to me, “Today that’s exactly where I stand – I’ve lost both my money and the peace in my home.” When he finished telling me about his misfortunes, I advised him to return to his former habits by spending more time learning Torah and practicing mitzvot, promising that the Holy One, blessed be He, would help him in all his endeavors. I also told him that even if he does not see the shai (“gift”) that Hashem gives to those who study Torah in this world, it does not mean that he will not receive a reward. Instead, he must realize that the Holy One, blessed be He, sometimes chooses to reward such deeds in the World to Come, giving a person shai (310) worlds of deliverance and blessing.

Another person came to ask me why he was unsuccessful, and why he saw no blessings from all that he did. I asked him if he observed Shabbat, and he said that he did. I then asked him if he watched television on Shabbat, and he said that he did, but only with a timer. I said to this Jew, “You should realize that although you are not transgressing Shabbat by performing one of the forbidden forms of work on it – since you’re not turning on the television yourself, but have it on a timer – the very fact that you’re watching television gives Shabbat a mundane taste and dampens the special holiness and purity of this lofty day.” I also said that it is written that Shabbat is the source of blessings, and that we must put an effort into observing and sanctifying it as much as possible. As such we will merit for the Holy One, blessed be He, to allow us to see blessings in this world.

It is said that Shabbat is a foretaste of the World to Come. This means that a person is given a real sense of the World to Come through the observance of Shabbat, so he may taste the flavor of Shabbat and acquire the life of the World to Come. In fact the path

towards the World to Come passes through the avenue of Torah learning and mitzvot observance. The observance of Shabbat strengthens a person in his Torah study and observance of mitzvot. We can compare this to a person being given a very hot cup of tea to drink. Although the tea is sweet and very flavorful, it cannot be swallowed all at once. It has to be tasted a little at a time, until a person gets used to the heat and manages to taste its flavor. Likewise the World to Come is perfect in every way, a pleasure beyond all description. Yet before a person can properly attain and absorb this Heavenly delight, he must first get used to the spiritual experience of observing Shabbat, studying Torah, and practicing mitzvot.

I’ve read statements by the Chafetz Chaim and other commentators that learning Torah on Shabbat entails a tremendous reward, much more than learning Torah on a weekday. We need to understand why this is so. I think the answer is that during the weekday, a person is occupied with earning a living and seeing to the needs of his home. He therefore cannot put all his energy into studying Torah. When he sits down to study, his head will still be occupied with thoughts of unpaid bills, the neighbor that he needs to talk to, and so on. Thus his Torah study is not completely untainted, but mixed with the worries of this world. On the other hand, Shabbat enables us to rest from all our work, and our minds become clear and free of all the problems that have assailed us during the six weekdays. This is why we can completely devote ourselves to learning Torah and wholeheartedly immerse ourselves in it on Shabbat. This situation – when a person completely immerses himself in learning Torah and his mind does not delve on other things – is why Torah study on Shabbat is pure and considerably greater than during the week. Hence the reward for such study is much greater. I have read in the Ben Ish Hai that Shabbat was only given to

the Jewish people so they could study Torah in peace and harmony.

The Gemara cites a difference of opinion between Rabbi Ishmael and the Sages regarding whether it is permissible to study by the light of a lamp on Shabbat. The Sages say that it is forbidden, since a person is liable to tilt the lamp by mistake while immersed in Torah study. Rabbi Ishmael believed that nobody could ever forget that it is Shabbat, even when immersed in study, which is why he felt that it was unnecessary to forbid studying on Shabbat by the light of a lamp. A certain time later, Rabbi Ishmael was studying on Shabbat with his students. As he was doing so, however, he moved his hand to tilt the lamp, having forgotten that it was Shabbat. He immediately corrected himself and regretted not having listened to the words of the Sages. If he had not opposed their words, he would not have tilted the lamp. In fact he was so upset by what he had done, he stated that he would bring an offering when the Temple is rebuilt.

We need to ask ourselves something regarding this point: If the study of Torah on Shabbat is so important and spiritually uplifting, why did the Holy One, blessed be He, not arrange things such that a person could not desecrate Shabbat as he studies? The answer is that Hashem wanted to teach us that despite the tremendous importance of Torah study on Shabbat, the observance of Shabbat is even more important, for with regards to Shabbat it is written: “Whoever does work on it shall be put to death.” Such a statement is not made with regards to one who neglects the study of Torah. This means that despite the great need to put an effort into learning Torah, especially on Shabbat, we must be fully aware of the immense importance of Shabbat and strive to observe it in holiness, for it is the source of blessings.



SHABBAT

Let Us Go and Welcome Shabbat, For it is the Source of Blessing

The Shabbat table is the ideal place for members of the Jewish household to grow together spiritually.

The atmosphere is even more conducive for spiritual growth when family members gather around the dinner table to savor the delicious meals of Shabbat and enjoy its marvelous songs. They can best absorb the eternal and fundamental values of Judaism in this setting, and the discussions that take place at such times remain indelibly engraved in everyone's mind, the long term benefits of which are significant.

We all know that it is impossible to correctly observe Shabbat if we do not study the laws that relate to it. Everyone can testify to the truth of this.

These laws are presented in a way that makes them accessible to everyone. With regards to the main laws, the language of the Poskim ("legal decisors"), as brought by the Mishnah Berurah, has been meticulously preserved so as not to deviate in any way from their words.

As the reader will see, these laws have been divided and organized by chapter. Each Shabbat corresponds to one chapter, and at each meal one page deals with a series of laws related to the subject of that chapter.

In order to make learning more enjoyable, a short story is presented on each page. Each story describes the vigilance of previous generations with regards to the honor and sanctity of Shabbat. These stories are meant to infuse the reader's soul with a fear of Heaven.

It is by regularly studying these articles, on each Shabbat and at every meal, that a person will be able to derive a tremendous benefit from it.

The great teachers of Israel have told us that studying laws at the Shabbat table is a unique way of elevating Shabbat in the eyes of family members, either by reading them together or by choosing one of the children to read them.

We hope that this endeavor will attain its objective, which is to spread Hashem's word to each Jewish home and among all its children. With G-d's help, the detailed knowledge of these laws will only increase.

STORIES OF SHABBAT

By the Merit of Observing Shabbat

It was the year 5634 (1874), and the Sabbath queen was descending upon the city of Frankfurt. Joyous emotion reigned in the palace of the Baron of Rothschild, a prominent and wealthy figure. The community would often invite a Rav, a talmid chacham, or some other noteworthy individual to spend Shabbat with them in order to gain strength through his words of Torah. Everyone knew that it was the Baron of Rothschild who would have the honor of welcoming the distinguished guest into his luxurious home. He literally treated his guest like a king. Thus when Rabbi Aryeh Mordechai was on his way to Eretz Israel, he was invited by the community to spend Shabbat with them, and as usual it was the Baron who had the privilege of hosting him.

All during Shabbat, an atmosphere filled with kedusha (holiness) reigned in the home of the Baron. Divrei Torah (words of Torah) followed one after the other as topics of conversation sprang up from every direction. And it goes without saying that the Shabbat meals were served in abundance. The Baron also had a splendid custom: Each time that he hosted a special guest in his home for Shabbat, he would invite all the members of the community for an Oneg Shabbat (to savor the "delights of Shabbat"). He also wanted them to have the privilege of sitting next to a tzaddik, in order for them to be soothed by his amazing songs and chiddushim (novel teachings) on the weekly Torah section. The members of the community cherished those moments, aware of the renewed spiritual strength that they could derive from them. Thus they came in large numbers, wanting to be seated as close as possible to the Rav and drink in his words of holiness.

This Shabbat as well, crowds flocked to the residence of the Baron. People rejoiced in hearing the Rav's divrei Torah and talking about what awaited him in Eretz Israel. The Rav recounted experiences in his life, and he spoke to them of his forefathers. He also

The Laws of Hadlakat Nerot

Introduction

Over the course of the generations, the mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot Shabbat (lighting the Shabbat lights) has been carried out with the greatest of care and attention. Still, the details of this mitzvah are quite numerous. Some laws apply when a person is at home on Shabbat, “Every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard” (Numbers 1:52). Other laws apply when a person is invited to someone else’s home for Shabbat, or spends it elsewhere. In order to properly fulfill the mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot, it is necessary to study and clarify the details concerning this mitzvah.

The Mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot

The mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot Shabbat was instituted by our Sages: Each person must have a lit ner (light) at home during Shabbat, this being to fulfill the mitzvah of Oneg Shabbat (experiencing pleasure on Shabbat).

Hadlakat Nerot Where One Eats

In general, the essential part of the mitzvah consists of lighting nerot (lights) where one eats. The fact that they provide light for the Shabbat meal constitutes a major part of the oneg, the pleasure being to eat in a place where there is light. As Chazal have said, a person should have his meal only during the day, or in an illuminated place at night.

Large Nerot

This is why the nerot of Shabbat should be sufficiently large, so they can remain lit until the end of the meal.

Chapter 1

Lighting Nerot for Shalom Bayit

In addition to where we eat, we must also light nerot in other rooms of the home that will be used during Shabbat. This is in order to allow shalom bayit (peace in the home) to reign. In fact there should be no dangerous places in the home. Therefore when there is light in a room, family members will not trip over a piece of wood, a rock, or any other object, allowing them to live in peace within the home.

Illuminated Places

In reality, by lighting nerot where we eat or in rooms that we use on Shabbat, we are fulfilling the mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot. Hence if the light of the nerot also illuminates other rooms in the home, it is not necessary to have a ner in each room, since there is no reason to worry that people will trip over an object. We have thereby fulfilled the mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot, which is incumbent upon every Jew.

revealed what his plans were upon arriving in Eretz Israel.

Once Shabbat ended, but before Rabbi Aryeh Mordechai left, one of the Baron’s servants presented him with a tray upon which dozens of letters had been placed, letters that had arrived during Shabbat.

Wealthy individuals such as the Baron of Rothschild had business dealings with various Gentiles all around the world. Now in the Diaspora, mail was delivered on Shabbat as well as during the week. Nevertheless, the Baron of Rothschild would always say, “I don’t attend to my business affairs on Shabbat. The Sabbath queen is the source of blessing, and all mundane things that I deal with on Shabbat will not succeed. Everything can wait until after Shabbat!”

That said, the Baron withdrew to read his mail once Shabbat ended. Among the letters that he had received during Shabbat were three of a particular color, indicating that they were telegrams. The Baron saw them and noticed that they all came from the same sender: The Russian government. He placed them in the order which they had arrived, and then he began to read them. When he read the first telegram, a look of surprise came over his face. When he read the second, it was the look of shock and confusion. And when he read the third, his face began to shine. In fact a smile of great satisfaction appeared on his face.

The Baron asked his guest to forgive him for having attended to his mail, at which point the Baron explained its contents. A few years earlier, the Baron had built a large factory that produced steel cables. It was a time when the demand for steel products, especially cables, was quite high, and the Baron had invested a great deal of money into building his factory and starting its production run. The price that he had been asking for his cables had apparently been too high, however, for a competitor in another country was selling the same kind of merchandise at a greatly reduced price. Thus his inventory of steel cables remained unsold, and he almost had to shut down his factory. The Baron ended up losing a great deal of money in that venture.

Likewise, when other rooms in the home are illuminated by street lamps or other lights (and especially if there is already a light shining in the room itself), this light will suffice, and there is no need to light nerot there.

Nevertheless, we must always respect the rule imposed by our Sages, namely that every person should have a light in their home (the main part of the mitzvah being, in general, to light nerot where we eat). Even when the home is filled with light, we must light nerot for Shabbat.

Chapter 2

Those Obligated to Fulfill the Mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot

Men and women must have a ner (light) in their homes that remains lit during Shabbat. Even a poor person who lives off of tzeddakah is obligated to observe this mitzvah, and he must ask for money in order to purchase a ner for Shabbat and light it, since this is an obligation of One Shabbat.

Women Have Precedence Over Men

Women are given more warnings than men with regards to the mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot. Thus if a woman is at home, she has precedence over a man in fulfilling this mitzvah. Even if a man desires to light the Shabbat light, a woman has precedence in this regard.

The Rambam explains that the reason for this is that a woman is at home and deals with the needs of the household. Hence this mitzvah is more incumbent upon women.

The Midrash brings another reason: It is because a woman extinguished the light of the world, namely Adam. Since it was a woman (Eve) who made him sin by giving him to eat from the Tree of Knowledge – thereby darkening his soul, which is called a ner (light), and thus bringing about his death – it is women who have received the mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot. This is in order to obtain atonement for her sin and rectify what she damaged.

The Obligation for Men to Light

A single man who lives alone should light the nerot at home and recite the blessing. Likewise, a married man whose wife is not at home (or does not light the nerot for some reason), is obligated to light the nerot himself and recite the blessing.

Chapter 3

The Preparation of the Nerot by the Husband

Although it is a woman who lights the nerot, the Poskim have nevertheless stated that it is good for a man to also participate in the mitzvah by preparing the nerot.

Now, however, the Russian government had suddenly decided to purchase his inventory of steel cables. In the first telegram that had arrived on Friday night, a government official had offered to purchase a large quantity of his cables, but at a low price (albeit higher than what the Baron's competitor had been asking). Receiving no response from the Baron on that night, the government official concluded that the Baron was not willing to sell at such a low price. He therefore sent a second telegram, this time on Saturday morning, in which he offered the Baron a higher price for his merchandise. The Russian official had no idea that the Baron simply did not read his mail on Saturday, and when he realized that the Baron failed to reply to his second telegram, the official sent a third one on Saturday afternoon. In it, he offered to purchase the Baron's cables at a price that was about double that of his initial offer!

"My honored guest can see," the Baron concluded, "just how much good Shabbat does to those who observe it, even with regards to their business ventures. Because of the price that the Russian government was willing to pay me, I can now reopen my cable business, recoup my losses, and even make a nice profit."

Rabbi Aryeh Mordechai left the Baron's home, stunned by how a single man could possess so much Torah and wisdom on one hand, and wealth and fear of Heaven on the other. Every Shabbat in Eretz Israel, he would recount the story of the Baron and describe his extraordinary devotion to Hashem and His Torah.

The Sanctity of Shabbat

During the Second World War, the Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Ben Tzion Zatzal, was being chased by the Nazis, whose efforts to catch him were unsuccessful. Having fled with Rabbi Mordechai Rokach Zatzal, the Av Beit Din (head of the rabbinical court) of Bulgaria, the Bobover Rebbe reached a small town in the middle of Shabbat. As he was preparing to continue on his journey, he turned to Rabbi Mordechai and asked to borrow his Shabbat clothes for a brief instant. He then replaced his weekday

Thus even before a woman lights the nerot, a man should make sure to light them and then immediately extinguish them. A woman will then be able to light the nerot more easily.

One Who Regularly Lights Will Have Talmidei Chachamim as Sons

The Gemara states in Masechet Shabbat: “He who habitually practices [the lighting of] the lamp will possess talmidei chachamim [Torah scholars].” Rashi explains these words according to the verse, “For a mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light” (Proverbs 6:23). This verse teaches us that because of the ner of the mitzvah of Shabbat, we will merit the light of the Torah.

This is why a person must be careful to embellish the ner of Shabbat, especially by purchasing beautiful nerot for this mitzvah.

A Woman’s Prayer When Lighting

Since the reward of the mitzvah of Hadlakat Nerot is meriting sons who will become talmidei chachamim, it is fitting for a woman, after having lit the nerot and recited the blessing, to pray for G-d to give her sons who will shine in Torah. Whenever we fulfill a mitzvah and pray at the same time to merit its reward, it is a favorable time and G-d listens even more to prayer.

It is good to give tzedakah before lighting the nerot.

Chapter 4

How Many Nerot Should We Light?

We usually light two nerot, one for zachor (“remember the Sabbath day”) and another for shamor (“guard the Sabbath day”). Some say that one ner corresponds to the man and the other to the woman. Nevertheless if the need arises, we can light just one ner in honor of Shabbat.

In addition to two nerot, it is possible to light even more. Some people have the custom of lighting a ner for each of their children.

A woman who usually lights a certain number of nerot should not light less than this number.

Some have the custom, when spending Shabbat outside their home, to light only two nerot. In such cases, there is no reason to worry about lighting less nerot than usual.

A Woman Who Forgets to Light the Nerot of Shabbat

A woman who has forgotten to light the nerot of Shabbat should, from then on, light one ner more than she usually does. This is a kind of “penalty” to ensure that she is more careful with regards to the honor of Shabbat.

clothes with those for Shabbat. He thereby prepared himself for the prayers of Shabbat, which he fervently recited.

Rabbi Mordechai recounts, “I then looked at him and saw that he was literally transforming. The look of distress on his face disappeared, as if it had never existed. His face began to radiate joy, shining with the holiness of Shabbat.”

Candy for Shabbat Kodesh

Near the end of his life, Rabbi Aharon Kotler Zatzal lost consciousness. He was unable to eat normally and had to be fed intravenously.

His mouth was extremely parched, and he could barely speak. Yet for medical reasons, the doctors forbid him from eating and drinking, not even so much as a drop of water.

Eventually one doctor allowed him to suck on a candy in order to ease his suffering.

The student standing by Rabbi Aharon’s bedside was happy when he heard this, and he joyfully announced the good news to his Rav. Yet Rabbi Aharon, with great effort, said to him: “I’ll save the candy for Shabbat Kodesh.”

It wasn’t Friday when he said this – it was only Wednesday!

The Chafetz Chaim Prepares for Shabbat Kodesh

Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak Poupka, a student of the Chafetz Chaim who served for a brief time as the Rosh Yeshiva of Torat Haim in New York, recounted the following story:

“I once found myself in the home of the Chafetz Chaim as Shabbat was approaching, and I could see the great effort he made in preparing the nerot of Shabbat. I offered to help him, but the Rebbetzin intervened and said: ‘He doesn’t even allow me to do anything, since this is his mitzvah. How much more will he not allow you to do anything!’ ”

The Prayer of a Simple Mother

The gaon Rabbi Aharon Shemuel Kaidanover Zatzal was one of the leading Torah

Spacing Out the Nerot

When several women light nerot in the same place, such as in a hotel or hospital, they should be careful not to place the nerot too close to one another. Otherwise the heat emitted by the flames can melt a ner, in which case the mitzvah will not have been fulfilled. (Note: With regards to the reciting of the blessing in such places, see Chapter 11.)

Chapter 5

With What Do We Light?

The nerot of Shabbat should be lit using oil and wicks, which will provide good illumination. Our Sages have forbidden the use of wicks or oil that do not light or illuminate well, lest a person tries to “tilt” the ner in order to bring more oil towards the wick. By doing this, a person transgresses the prohibition against mavir (“kindling”).

Lighting with Olive Oil

It is better to use olive oil for lighting the nerot of Shabbat. This is because olive oil is better absorbed by the wick than other oils.

Furthermore, since our Sages have said that people who regularly light the nerot of Shabbat will merit talmidei chachamim for sons, it is better to use olive oil. This is because the Torah is compared to olive oil, and therefore they will merit having sons who will shine in Torah.

It is also stated that using olive oil to light the nerot of Shabbat is a segula for long life.

If a person does not have olive oil, it is a mitzvah to use other oils that produce a bright light. It is preferable to use these oils rather than wax candles.

A person should use wax candles rather than candles made from fat, since wax candles produce a better flame.

The Mishnah Berurah states that we must choose nerot with regards to the quality of the flame they produce. The candles that we buy which are made from a refined base of combustible products (stearin, paraffin, etc.) no doubt produce a better light than wax candles. Furthermore, we do not attempt to tilt them in order to increase their light. It is also preferable to use them instead of wax candles, and maybe even all oil-based lights, for it is certain that we will not attempt to tilt them.



scholars of his generation. He was the author of the famous book Birkat HaZevach (a reference work on Seder Kodashim), Tiferet Shemuel on the Rosh, and other books.

It is said that his mother was a simple woman who didn't even know how to pray. However when it came time to light the Shabbat nerot, she raised her hands to Heaven and prayed in Russian, her mother tongue. She would say, “May it be Your will that my son Shemuel becomes great in Torah.”

Needless to say, her prayers were answered.

Jews of Times Past

The Rebbe of Toldot Aharon said that there was a time when people would feel the sanctity of Shabbat as early as Wednesday. Everyone waited for Shabbat with great anticipation, and people everywhere could sense the unique atmosphere of Shabbat.

The sense that the Sabbath Queen was approaching was constantly with them, accompanying all their deeds and endeavors.

Hovering over every street corner was a solemn atmosphere, as well as a sense of joy brought on by the approach of Shabbat.

Lighting the Shabbat Nerot in the Early Morning

The author of Hit'orerut HaTeshevuah was known for the zeal with which he practiced mitzvot. As early as Friday morning after prayers, even before having taken off his tefillin, he hurried to prepare the Shabbat nerot for his wife. He did not wait until the last minute, but instead hurried to perform this task as early as the morning.



AMAZING STORIES

Our Sages ask: Why did previous generations merit to witness so many miracles, supernatural phenomenon that have become more and more uncommon? Our Sages explain that the first generations performed Torah mitzvot out of love. They also merited seeing the hand of G-d and witnessed miracles from time to time. Yet just as the spiritual level of the generations diminished with time, likewise the people's devotion to fulfilling G-d's word diminished as well. It is for this reason that we have not merited to see miracles, extraordinary events that previous generations witnessed. Miracles occur in our generation as well, although their magnitude certainly cannot compare with the splitting of the sea, or with the miracles that took place in the desert. Nevertheless, a person who wants to see G-d's guiding hand in this world can easily do so. All he must do is open his heart and eyes.

In every generation G-d sends tzaddikim (righteous individuals) into the world, sparks from prior generations. It is through them that people witness miracles. Otherwise, the merits of the people would be insufficient to change the laws of nature. These tzaddikim, an elite group, protect the generation. In fact everyone turns to them and seeks their help and prayers. Now by praying for someone who is sick, it seems that a tzaddik is putting his life in danger, since his prayer is an act of war against the accusers standing at the head of the sick person and asking G-d to kill him. Thus when a tzaddik prays for the sick to be healed – when he fights against accusers – he is sacrificing himself for the community. Even if the attribute of justice cannot bring an accusation against him, by his devotion the tzaddik merits that G-d

will perform miracles. We can now understand how personal devotion brings about miracles, tremendous supernatural events.

Mr. Arthur Dahan was struck by cancer that spread throughout his body, and his doctors gave him a month to live at best. His wife told him to go and pray by the graves of the tzaddikim for G-d's help, but Mr. Dahan said that he didn't believe in this. If his doctors, who were alive, could not save him from his illness, how could the tzaddikim, who had already left this world, help him? His wife continued to insist, finally telling him that even if it did not help, it certainly could not hurt.

Mr. Dahan finally consented. He therefore traveled to the grave of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto (may his merit protect us) to pray. When he arrived, he saw people weeping and praying over the tzaddik's grave, and his initial reaction was one of ridicule. How could these people think that the dead could save them? After a few minutes, he realized that everyone was praying over the grave except for him, who was standing beside it. He then resigned himself, somewhat unwillingly, to say a few prayers over the grave of the tzaadik. At first his prayers were cold and dry, and he wasn't feeling like himself. However as he continued to pray, his heart slowly opened up and he began to implore Hashem from the depths of his heart to protect and completely heal him by the merit of the tzaddik.

This prayer, said over the grave of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto, had its desired effect. Mr. Dahan left with renewed strength and complete faith that G-d had heard his prayer; he felt that he would live by the merit of the tzaddik. When G-d sees that a person has pure intentions, He helps him to advance along the right path. And so

it was that Mr. Arthur Dahan had the merit of being shown, from Heaven, just how influential the tzaddikim are, for they are called alive even after they have died. When Mr. Dahan returned to his doctors and they examined him, they were stunned to see that his cancer had stopped progressing. In fact soon afterwards, it completely disappeared from his body, something that his doctors could not logically explain.

One day Mr. Abittan was struck by tragedy. Doctors told him that his baby was suffering from a brain tumor, and that surgery was necessary. Although the doctors were not very optimistic about their chances of success, they explained that there was no other way of saving the baby. Panic-stricken, Mr. Abittan did not know what to do. In his distress he decided to go to the yeshiva, and there he promised to offer a meal in honor of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto. He also wanted to go to the yeshiva each day and study Torah for the healing of his son. I told Mr. Abittan that he should be very careful not to limit his pledge to the period in which his baby's life was in danger, meaning when he needed G-d's help, since such teshuvah would be considered temporary. By doing so, he would run the risk of being reminded once again (G-d forbid) to wake up and return to the right path. He took my words to heart, committing himself bli neder (without making a vow) to study Torah at the yeshiva.

On the day of the scheduled operation, the doctors took x-rays of the baby's brain to verify the state of the tumor. Yet to their utter astonishment, the x-rays showed no signs of the tumor! When the doctors told Mr. Abittan about his strange occurrence, he said to them: "What is difficult for you to explain

and achieve is not difficult for the tzaddikim.”

My mother-in-law Zal once told me that her grandfather, a tzaddik who worked at the Chevra Kadisha (“holy society” – those who prepare the dead for burial), was overseeing the burial of a woman. Upon returning home, he realized that he had lost his wallet, which no doubt had fallen from his pocket during the burial. He therefore decided to return to the cemetery to look for it. It was nighttime, and when he arrived he could hear the groaning sounds of a woman, sounds coming from near a grave. To his utter shock, it seemed that the woman he had buried on that same day was sitting there! She was weeping and tearing out her hair. He asked her, “Are you the one that we buried today?” She said that she was. As he stood there in shock, she commanded him to warn all the women who did not cover their hair that their fate would be similar to hers. She warned him not to divulge her name, lest he die on the very same day.

My mother-in-law continued. She said that from then on, her grandfather organized meetings for women in order to warn them about the importance of the mitzvah of covering the head. He would tell them what he had seen, without mentioning the dead woman’s name of course.

It once happened that he was trying to convince a woman who was about to get married that she should cover her head. This woman was stubborn, however, and absolutely refused to cover her head. Having run out of arguments, he told her the story of the woman at the cemetery, but her name escaped from his lips. He died on that very same night, his soul rejoining the Heavens.

During the month of February, the Rav, accompanied by Rav Yossef Bentata, went to Bne Brak, Israel, to take part in an evening reception. For this occasion, the Rav Shemuel Halbershtam, director of “Mifaal Ha-

shass” came to see him for a blessing because he was expecting a verdict the following morning in Jerusalem. While in discussion with him, Rabbi David pulled a nail out of the wall and said to Rav Halbershtam that by the virtue of Rabbi Haim Pinto, he bury the nail that night. Rav Halbershtam asked if this had anything to do with the verdict. The Rav said that it absolutely didn’t. So he did as Rabbi David asked. The next day, the verdict was in Rav Halbershtam’s favor and he had a doubt; maybe the nail did have something to do with it. That afternoon, he went to Bne Brak and a terrible multiple car crash occurred. There were unfortunately several deaths and injuries. Rav Shemuel’s car was seriously damaged but, Baruch Hashem, he and its occupants came out of the accident unscathed. This incredible story was told to us by Rav Shemuel Halbershtam himself, three hours after this deplorable accident.

A more recent fact! Sunday evening, March 5th 1995, at around 10:00 pm, the phone rang at Rabbi David’s residence. It was a great Hassid of the Rav calling from Brooklyn he was present at the Bar Mitzvah of Raphael in Paris. He had a serious problem. A woman who was recently married started seeing another man who was a friend of this hassid. He tried to convince them, in vain, to put an end to this forbidden relationship. He asked Rabbi David for advice. The Rabbi called the young lady himself, explain the gravity of her acts and give her a lecture about morals. But instead of listening to the Rabbi’s advice, this young lady said the following: “What you say is not true. I do not believe in you and everything that you do is only an illusion”. To this, the Rabbi replied: “Do you want proof of the veracity of my words?” “Yes”, the woman answered. The Rabbi then said harshly: “The proof is that your lover is at risk of going through a

difficult time for Hashem doesn’t forgive this kind of behavior”. Several moments later, on another line, there was an emergency call and the Hassid was told that his friend just had a heart attack and a sudden respiratory arrest. This person has now gotten out of the coma he was in.

These are two stories among the thousands which came this year. By the virtue of Rabbi Haim Pinto, we are only telling them in order to strengthen the Emuna in Hashem and his Tzadikim. And when the Rav sees that practically all he says comes true, we can’t help thinking of the words of our Sages who say: “He who sacrifices himself completely to Hashem; Hashem will grant him miracles”. We can see that the strength of Hashem reveals itself through the service of man and everything depends on the Sacrifice that man makes for Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

During one of his trips to Israel, Rabbi David was accompanied by Rav Yossef Bentata of the Kallel of Lyon Villeurbanne. They were going to a meeting in Bne Brak. More than 300 Talmudei Hakhamim (students) were present and many Rabbanim came from all around Israel. When the event was over, everybody went to see Rabbi David for a blessing. Among them was the brother-in-law of Rav Rahamim Bar Moshe, Director of Yeshiva of Rabbi Yoel of Satmar in Bne Brak. He approached Rabbi David but hesitated to confide to him that his mother was seriously ill. At that exact moment, Rabbi David looked him in the eyes and said: “Your mother will be cured of the lung infection that is afflicting her”.

Stunned and surprised, this person who had never spoken to Rabbi David, let alone mention anything about his mother, couldn’t believe his ears. He quickly ran to the hospital and found his mother surrounded by doctors. They couldn’t understand the

changes in the course of the disease. But she was no longer suffering. In fact she was feeling well and looking forward to go home.

The Great Hizuk (Strengthening of Faith) fell upon Bne Brak, and even now, people are still talking about it. We were happy to learn that this person lives a normal life and doesn't have any more difficulty in breathing.

This story, authentic as all the others, concerns Mr. Knafo and more precisely his daughter Fabienne. By the way, she recently got married (Mazal Tov, again.) and despite of the fact that on the day of the Hupa, Rabbi David wasn't feeling well and even came over dizzy for 20 minutes, he still decided to take the plane because he and Mr. Knafo built close ties and it would be inconceivable for him not to be there.

Anyhow, Mr. Knafo had to request a new passport for his daughter. She was about to start her studies in Accounting in France. But the passport was lost and one can imagine the consequences related to such a loss.

Mr. Knafo came back home saddened, anxious and even nervous. This was quite counter to his usual joyous mood. He drank a small shot of whisky, lit a candle in memory of the Holy and Venerated Rabbi Haim Pinto and said: "I have been loyal to you for 15 years and I did the work in the rooms meant for the Hillulot. If you decided that I shouldn't do so any longer, tell me. But I only want one thing: that the passport be returned to me."

He drank another shot of whisky and lit a second candle, this one in the name and memory of Rabbi Moshe Aaron Pinto and said: "You know how much I love you, but if you think that I shouldn't serve your son Rabbi David Pinto, tell me so. All I want is my passport."

A third shot was necessary and our friend Mr. Knafo lit a third candle, this one in memory of Rabbi Yehuda

Pinto (son of Rabbi Haim Pinto of Mogador) and said: I have just restored your tomb. If you don't want me to come near it, say so. All I want is my passport, otherwise I will never be seen again."

As soon as he finished pronouncing these bold words, there was a knock at Mr. Knafo's door. When he opened it, a Moroccan was holding the passport in his hands saying that he found it and that it had to be returned to its rightful owner. And the man disappeared, never to be seen again.

The moral of this story is that the true Ness which favored Mr. Knafo can be achieved through Emuna in the Tzadikim which breaks all barriers.

On Shabbat Nasso (June 2nd, 1990), we had the joy to receive one of our friends, Mr. Elie EZERZER of Los Angeles accompanied by his wife, born Patricia MARCIANO. She is the daughter of one of our very good friends, Mr. and Mrs. MARCIANO of Marseille.

During his sermon, Rabbi David spoke about an event that Mr. Armand EZERZER, Elie's uncle, lived through.

During the "war of Yom Kippur", Mr. EZERZER was on the Bar-Leev front. Surprised as many others, he managed to escape the massacre that some of our young soldiers were victims of.

Mr. EZERZER was suddenly being aimed at by an enemy. He immediately called upon the Holy and Venerated Rabbi Moshe PINTO (Z.L.), Father of Rabbi David, to rescue him, and the Kalashnikoff rifle jammed.

He was aimed at a second time and again he called upon the Holy and Venerated, while trying to hold back his fear. The weapon jammed once again.

The enemy soldier decided to use another weapon. Understanding the danger he was in, Mr. EZERZER pretended to fall and camouflaged

himself with the other bodies that were scattered on the ground.

The Israeli Military Command notified the "death" to the "widow". She started to mourn and took the usual steps required for this kind of situation. It was all the more tragic since the Red Cross mistakenly returned Mrs. EZERZER her husband's personal items. But, thanks to G-d, Mr. EZERZER was actually taken prisoner.

Mrs. EZERZER and her friend who unfortunately lost her husband (on another front), decided to see the Holy and Venerated Rabbi Moshe Pinto (Z.L.) for moral comfort.

First, the Saint addressed the prayers for Mrs. EZERZER's friend. He then turned to Mrs. EZERZER and gazed at her. After a few seconds which seemed very long, he said: "I cannot offer the prayers you are asking for. I see that your husband is still alive, and I feel that he will be back home very soon."

Stunned and shaking, Mrs. EZERZER couldn't believe her ears. One week after this conversation, an officer came to her house to offer the Tsalal apologies. He also said that Mr. EZERZER was among the prisoners that the Red Cross was negotiating the release of with Egyptian authorities.

All's well that ends well. A year after this stunning story, Mrs. and Mr. EZERZER Armand had a boy and named him...Moshe.

Mr. EZERZER Elie, who prayed with us at the Yeshivah had tears in his eyes and a lump in his throat. He could hardly answer Rabbi David's questions. It's very understandable...



THE REVOLUTIONARY

By Aharon Granot

Like a spiritual meteor landing on our planet, the tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto has revealed the world of Judaism in all its grandeur. He opened a yeshiva in France and a kollel in England when he was only 29 years old. Jews around the world suddenly discovered him, which led to hundreds and then thousands of people attending his lectures. As for Rabbi Pinto himself, he once thought of becoming a merchant!

It is impossible to understand what the Orot Haim OuMoshe center adds to the dozens of Torah institutions and Talmidei Torah that already exist – until we step inside the magnificent edifice located at the entrance of Ashdod, the third largest Charedi city in Israel. After visiting the five kollelim operated by Orot Haim OuMoshe, and after having heard accounts of the happenings in Paris and other cities around the world under the influence of its leader, we realize that a social revolution in Torah is taking place. In fact the prestigious building that houses this Torah center has witnessed the growth of exceptional bnei Torah who call out to the people. They have grown up in the Beit Midrash, nourished with a Torah education that includes – besides the standard studies for the exams of the dayanut (for becoming a rabbinic judge) – a deep understanding of Torah and hashkafa (Jewish thought) this is designed to produce exceptional bnei Torah, future leaders of the Jewish people. This revolution is being dynamically led by our Rav, the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita. He is perpetuating the traditions of his holy ancestors the tzaddikim: His grandfather the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto (may his merit protect us) and his father the tzaddik Rabbi Moche Pinto (may his merit protect us). Although the Rav lives in Paris, his influence extends around the world. His Torah centers reflect the personality of their leader, going beyond standard learning and teaching its students to deeply probe all areas of Torah.

The Uninterrupted Sound of Torah

The center's magnificent edifice, whose very construction is a story in itself, houses five kollelim. First and foremost is a classic kollel where 60 avrechim learn. It is a traditional yeshiva kollel in which tractates are studied in great depth, and it is led by two Torah giants: The gaon Rabbi

Shmuel Ezriel and the gaon Rabbi Avner Revah. A second kollel ("Even Haezer") was established to produce rabbinic judges, and it is led by the gaon Rabbi Shlomo ben Hamou. There is also a kollel for ba'alei teshuvah that is led by the gaon Rabbi Mordechai Ohayon. Avrechim at a higher level of learning, as well as ba'alei teshuvah who have deepened their connection to Torah and mitzvot, study there. Another kollel, recently established, is designed to produce teachers. Led by the gaon Rabbi Nissim Attia of Jerusalem, the laws of Yoreh Deah are studied in this kollel. Finally there is a kollel for ba'alei batim, which operates primarily at night. It is designed for men who work full-time during the day, and who therefore come to study at night. Leading this kollel is the gaon Rabbi Yossef Ya'akovi, who also gives classes to those who study full-time during the day.

Upstairs, the sound of young men learning Torah reverberates. These individuals joined the Rav after having been swept up in the revolution that he initiated. It is also on this floor that a mechina (preparatory class) for the Torat Haim yeshiva ketanah takes place, where the youngest pupils prepare for a more thorough and complete study of Torah. This mechina has given birth to an extra shiur aleph class in the yeshiva ketanah. The team of educators, who are very familiar with the vision of the center's leader, began to prepare youngsters for their mission in the world, to help Rav Pinto lead his Torah revolution. It does an incredible job of creating deep and special bonds with youngsters in order to educate and transform them into bnei Torah who are able to lead. The team wants to help them absorb the message and have them transmit it in turn. This has given birth to a superb yeshiva ketanah, one of exceptional quality that is found nowhere else.

On Friday (which in Israel is part of the weekend) many ba'alei batim who want to participate in Rav Pinto's revolution flock to the center. They come to immerse themselves in an atmosphere of Torah, to study and deepen their understanding. They want to join the bnei Torah studying there during the week and acquire a Torah perspective on the world. This revolution must be able to reach everyone, even those who cannot be present during the entire week. In order to establish a connection between these ba'alei batim and the bnei Torah being educated at the Orot Haim OuMoshe center, a "Friday kollel" has been established, a kollel that unites the ba'alei batim and bnei Torah in order to give learning its broadest possible scope.

The Rav is also concerned with children. He recently established a Hevrat Tehillim program in Ashdod called "Pninat David." This program attracts numerous children, who come to recite Tehillim and participate in other activities offered to them. In fact this Hevrat Tehillim program is meant as a stepping stone to attract children to the great Torah revolution being led by the Rav. It organizes activities for children during religious holidays and Chol HaMoed (mid-holidays).

In the summer as well, during the bein hazmanim (yeshiva vacation) period, the center overflows with activity. In fact the kollel of the ba'alei batim never goes on vacation. Ba'alei batim circulate in the building, each studying at his particular time from morning till night. A Daf Yomi program is also offered within the framework of the kollel. A bein hazmanim yeshiva, meant for the children of Ashdod who study at other yeshivot during the year, has also been opened. These young yeshiva students go there to study for a few hours during the day, so that they will not neglect their studies even during their yeshiva vacation.

Apart from the bein hazmanim period, when the building is humming with avrechim who are studying in various capacities, ba'alei batim come and go each day from morning till night. The center is truly overflowing with Torah, as avrechim spend countless hours there.

Leaders of the Jewish People

Members of the yeshiva listen to classes given on Jewish philosophy and perspective, with the goal of becoming leaders of the community, talmidei chachamim (Torah sages). Such individuals do not keep their Torah knowledge to themselves, but use it to guide the people and spread Torah among them. This is where the flames shoot out, the flames of the Torah revolution being led by our Rav, the gaon Rabbi David Hanania Pinto.

"The programs are extremely important, and the Rav has even more projects that he wants to put into effect," testifies the Rosh Kollel, Rabbi Shlomo ben Hamou.

The Rav does not simply want to produce bnei Torah, but exceptional bnei Torah who will enlighten everyone around them. To that end, he has asked the leaders of the kollelim to work very diligently with the avrechim. "I passed through several yeshivot," says Rabbi Shlomo ben Hamou, "and somebody told me that there was a Jew in Bayit Vegan that I should meet. I was taken there almost by force. A meeting of 15 minutes with this charismatic figure created a deep bond. After 10 minutes of speaking with

him, I realized that I was standing before a Jew who was in a class by himself, a tzaddik who yearned for perfection. He wanted to enlighten the entire country by means of bnei Torah who would lead the people and be able to initiate a revolution of their own. I've answered the call, and I've been with him ever since."

The Rav envisions this world of Torah as being connected to the ba'alei batim with an unbreakable bond, men who themselves become bnei Torah. Little by little, they acquire a Torah view of the world, seeing things in a way that the Torah does. They all become a single group carrying the banner of this Torah revolution. "I'm looking for special avrechim – insightful, full of energy, able to deepen their Torah understanding on one hand, while knowing how to establish a living bond with the outside world on the other. They must be able to integrate the outside world and the Torah world with a Torah perspective," says the Rav as he restates, time and again, his apprehension of the world.

It is also on the basis of this vision that a learning program has been established in all the centers he directs. And the Rav gets results. He makes frequent visits to his center in Ashdod and closely monitors the progress of the avrechim and the results of their studies. Not only is he personally interested in each avrech, he also wants to know how the centers have influenced life around them. He wants to know if his centers have drawn new groups of ba'alei batim to them, individuals who have adopted a Torah perspective and have Torah figures as examples in their lives.

It is not simply Even Hazer that is studied in these kollelim, the usual practice in yeshivot over the generations. Also offered are courses dealing with perspectives onto the world, perspectives based on Jewish thought. The avrechim, even those studying to become rabbinic judges, listen to numerous courses on the weekly parsha, thereby acquiring an understanding of the text and its commentaries. "Rabbanim [teachers] and leaders must be able to address the people," says the Rav. "Yet the people want to hear the parsha of the week, not discourses on civil law; they want to be guided along the path to follow. An avrech who leaves this place must be able to speak to Jews. I want him to know how to guide them in the path of the Torah, to know how to confront challenges. These are the kind of avrechim that the Jewish people need." The Rav goes further: "An avrech who knows how to study The Kuzari and Moreh Nevuchim will also be able to go deeper in terms of practical learning. It is like a driver who starts his car and goes out onto the road. If he knows that he has a job to do, he will drive much more seriously, because he knows what his objective is."

The Rav asks for an effort from all the leaders of his centers, for it is important to see the merits of Klal Israel increasing. "The generation needs bnei Torah like these, and there is no time to wait," he constantly says.

He also asks that the leaders of the kollelim deal with the problems faced by the avrechim, problems that are likely to prevent them from reaching their goals. Thus the leaders of his centers often find themselves resolving problems encountered by the avrechim. This enables them to study in peace and invest all their efforts into Torah so as to advance the goal established by our Rav. The fire of the Torah burns with all its strength in the Orot Haim OuMoshe center of Ashdod.

It is a veritable revolution that is taking place in Torah, and it is what the Rav demands. "If Rav Pinto could," say those who know him, "he would cover the entire planet with a huge Gemara." More than once, wealthy individuals have offered to establish gmachim (free loan societies) and chesed (charity) organizations, but the Rav has declined them all. "My role," he says, "is to spread Torah, to increase Torah. There are some people whose role is to revive chesed. My role is to revive Torah."

Connecting the Ba'alei Batim to Torah

"Just as I want the ba'alei batim to be connected to Torah, I also want them to be receptacles of Torah," the Rav often says. "I want to hear the sound of Torah resounding from the four corners of the earth. I want to see ba'alei batim who have learned to open a Sefer because of you," the Rav repeats to his avrechim.

The Rav's vision also influences the approach taken in accepting avrechim into various programs. Whereas avrechim in other places are sometimes confronted by a lack of space, this does not happen in Rav Pinto's programs. If an avrech fulfills the required criteria – if his character is that of a future supporter of the Torah revolution, if he will become a leader of the Jewish people – then he will be accepted in a kollel even if there is "no space" for him. Thus the Orot Haim OuMoshe programs are constantly filled with new avrechim who are destined to lead the Torah revolution being waged by the leader of the center, the tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto.

People from various regions around the world have been able to get acquainted with the exceptional personality of the tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto. He is regularly invited to give impassioned discourses before wealthy individuals from various places around the world. His words have resounded in prestigious halls, where he also tries to influence people into joining his Torah revolution. "We sometimes hear about new yeshivot for ba'alei teshuvah and bein hazmanim yeshivot being

created as a result of his influence around the world," people say.

Returning from his worldwide journeys, the Rav confides in his avrechim: "I speak before wealthy and famous individuals, multi-millionaires." He tells them, "They live in complete darkness, thinking only about money. That is what speaks to them. Now a man who has no connection to Torah is a man whose light has been extinguished, a person who has no real objective in life or in the world. I prefer speaking in an ordinary synagogue to 100 avrechim, full of Torah enthusiasm, than in a luxurious hall built of marble and gold to 3,000 wealthy men who are empty and dark. They have possessions and money, but are empty. When I speak before you," he tells his students, thereby giving them a sense of satisfaction, "I'm filled with spiritual joy and can recharge my batteries. This is what enables me to speak to people whose light has gone out, people before whom I must speak."

Twenty-five Thousand Miles for a Single Jew

Although Rabbi David Hanania Pinto has become famous in Eretz Israel, his impassioned personality as a revolutionary Torah figure is known around the world. The Rav travels from city to city and from yeshiva to yeshiva in order to spread his teachings. The places where he speaks threaten to "collapse" under the weight of those who flock there to hear G-d's words from his mouth. Rabbanim, leaders of the community, wealthy individuals, members of yeshivot and batei midrash – they all implore him to reveal a dimension of the Torah that is readily accessible to every Jew. As for the Rav, those who know him say: "He will travel 25,000 miles by plane in a week if he knows that a Jew will be strengthened by his words. He is content with sometimes getting two hours of sleep a day if he knows that his words will contribute even in the slightest way to strengthening the Jewish people."

A director of one of the most important yeshivot in Eretz Israel, aware of the Rav's tremendous power, asked that he accompany him to a dinner he was preparing for his yeshiva in a European capital. The Rav had just finished traveling around the world, during which time he had spoken to tens of thousands of people. He arrived at the dinner exhausted, which frightened the Rosh Yeshiva. After all, if the Rav wasn't in top form, who was going to be swayed by his words? It requires skills of persuasion in order to convince a Jew to make a donation. Yet not the Rav, as the Rosh Yeshiva describes: "He went into the hall and told the audience, 'Morai v'rabotai, there are 300 men here and an important yeshiva is at stake. Let everyone give \$1,000 for the mitzvah.'"

He didn't have to say anything else, for not a single person went against the Rav's sanctified words. Each person took out his wallet and gave \$1,000 by either cash or check. It was in this way that \$300,000 was raised for the yeshiva in a span of ten minutes.

About a year ago, after having lived in the holy city of Jerusalem for a few years, the Rav felt obligated to leave this captivating place and return to where he had started his Torah revolution, namely France. He did this after consulting with the Gedolei Israel, who told him to go. Since he had been away in Eretz Israel, the work that he had started so many years earlier in Paris was about to collapse.

Since the Rav had moved from Paris to Jerusalem, Torah centers in France were slowly flickering out as their activities diminished. Yet those who thirsted after G-d's words were more numerous, clamoring for Torah and understanding. The Gedolei Israel who guided our Rav told him to return to Paris, which is precisely what he did.

"In order to act, we need the power of Torah. Without it, nothing will work," said Rav Pinto to the gaon Rabbi Yehoshua Salomons, the Rosh Kollel in Paris. In an old building that they were planning to renovate, he opened a kollel in which about 25 avrechim study iyun (intensively) for the whole day. People study Torah there just as they do in a classic yeshiva in Eretz Israel. Someone finding himself there would not suspect that he was really in the middle of Paris. Instead, he might think that he was in the heart of Bnei Brak. "We are now studying tractate Sukkah very intensely," says the Rosh Kollel Rabbi Yehoshua Salomons.

This old building, located in the 19th district of Paris, does not know the meaning of rest. In fact the Rav was not content with just having a kollel that operates during the day, for he decided to strengthen the Torah's ranks by also opening an erev (evening) kollel in the same place. Ba'alei batim who want to taste a little kedusha after a full day's work flock there from all around Paris. They come to the kollel and join the avrechim in their studies, meaning that the building is buzzing with activity both day and night.

The Left Pushes Away and the Right Draws Near

"The most interesting thing," says Rav Salomons, "is that from time to time the Rav himself will join the men as they study, behaving exactly like one of them. He sits among the avrechim and his greatness makes itself known." The Rav studied Torah in batei midrash and yeshivot during his youth, and today he transmits what he learned to the young men who study there. He offers explanations and arguments, clarifying tractates as he adds to the "fire of the Torah" of the avrechim. It is not hard to imagine what an

avrech must feel like as he sits in the presence of the center's director and closely sees what devotion for Torah really means.

Not long afterwards, the Rav added another program: "The Sunday kollel." Sunday is part of the weekend in Europe, when people do not work. It was therefore possible to use this time for learning Torah. Dozens of ba'alei batim who have rediscovered the Torah now join the avrechim in learning on Sunday. They came to the Beit Midrash for a spiritual revival, to taste authentic Torah study. In all, about 60 avrechim learn in the Paris kollel.

Each week the Rav gives a lecture on topics currently being studied, a lecture in which all his greatness in Torah is revealed. The Rav combines his immense understanding of Gemara, Halachah, Chumash, Kabbalah, and Jewish thought in firing up his listeners. He encourages them to serve G-d, study Torah, abandon materiality, and put an effort into spirituality. "He has an uncanny ability to combine the left, which pushes away, with the right, which draws near," say Parisians. On one hand he soothes his listeners and reassures them, while on the other hand he delivers stinging words of mussar that pierce the heart. He says everything that is on his mind, without weighing the pros and cons, for truth knows neither fear nor shame. He will remind people of their absence from a Torah class, and he will encourage them to set aside a time to study Torah. He tells businessmen, some of the largest supporters of Torah institutions, that their wealth means nothing if they do not set aside some time for Torah. His listeners know that all his words of mussar are said with a sincere love for them, and it shows. It is perhaps for this very reason that he attracts so many people.

Since the Rav arrived in Paris, members of its Jewish community say that something has changed. The Beit Midrash has exploded every night with people who come there to learn, leaving not a single spot available. The ba'alei batim find study partners, and the avrechim have "adopted" the ba'alei batim. New study groups have been created that gather each night, with everyone studying together in the Beit Midrash.

Three Hundred Students a Week

And that's not all. Our Rav also has sons who are following in his footsteps. His son Moche Pinto, who is just 21 years old, assists his father. During the day he studies intensively for two sedarim, which is standard practice in yeshivot in Eretz Israel, while at night a large number of students come to listen to his classes, which take place in the ezrat nashim (woman's section) of the synagogue. This young man is full of energy; he is overflowing with life and has a great influence on the students. Thanks

to him, some of them have become much more mitzvot observant, saying that they would have almost assimilated without his classes. About 50 students come to the ezrat nashim each night. In all, the young Rabbi Pinto, along with his brother Yoel (who was named after the Satmar Rebbe, may his merit protect us), have a hand in educating 300 students a week.

The chavruta (study partner) of the young Rabbi Moche Pinto says of him, "It doesn't come to him automatically. Sometimes he sits down to prepare his shiur, hesitating on the choice of answers that he should propose for certain issues. His puts all his focus into answering the concerns of youngsters in the most relevant and effective way possible, all through the greatness of Torah."

The high point of the students' Torah revolution occurs on Shabbat, which is spent close to the Rav himself. Moche Pinto invites the students over for Shabbat, and his father also joins them. These Shabbats are an extraordinary experience for all who participate. The Rav sings with them, dances with them, and delivers divrei Torah as they delight in his light and his presence. "With our Rav on Shabbat, it's like being with a rebbe," say the members of his community who participate in these Shabbats, a source of spiritual growth. The Jewish community is now trying to rent a small hotel in which these Shabbat celebrations can take place. The demand is increasing all the time, and nobody knows where it will end!

Activities in Lyon

Another of the Rav's sons, Rabbi Raphael Pinto, is also working closely with his father in Lyon, France. He has established a network of Torah classes for ba'alei batim in the city, thereby pursuing the work of his father, who began his Torah revolution in Lyon. Rabbi Raphael also directs a kollel for avrechim, and like his father he never refuses anyone; indeed, everyone must join him for the sake of Torah. In fact since Rabbi Raphael's arrival in Lyon, a Torah revolution has begun, exactly like the one his father started all around the world. He is accomplishing all this in close collaboration with his father, Rabbi David Hanania Pinto, who travels to Lyon from time to time in order to help his son. He also strengthens the members of the community with his profound Torah lectures, which draw hundreds of people. After these lectures, the Rav receives people and gives them advice and blessings. Our Rav has had the merit of raising a generation of righteous sons, individuals who are carrying on his work around the world.



THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN EXILE ON ACCOUNT OF STRIFE

(by Chlomo Kouk)

Thousands of Jews from every background and community have come from the four corners of the world to see the Rav, the tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita.

Chlomo Kouk accompanied Rabbi Pinto during his journey in Eretz Israel, as the Shovavim period (Shabbat Shemot to Tetzaveh) approached. The goal of Rabbi Pinto's journey was to strengthen the Jewish community, and Chlomo Kouk heard the Rav speak out on burning issues, painting a portrait of his personality in the process.

Concerning the world of Torah, the Rav said: "There has never been a generation in which the Torah is as ever-present as our own."

Concerning the knowledge of G-d, "It is true that in our community we study and pray. But do we truly know G-d?"

Concerning the fire of strife, "The Jewish people were exiled – an exile that continues to the present day – on account of strife among the tribes, even though it was for the sake of Heaven."

Concerning his activities, "Had I never benefited from the merit of my fathers, I would not have been able to bring even a single person back to G-d."

It is the Hebrew month of Tevet (corresponding to December-January), but on Ha-Admour Mi-Belz Road in Ashdod, the atmosphere is more like the awesome days of Elul and Tishri.

Dozens of Jews whose hearts are stirring with emotion are standing at the entrance of the majestic "Orot Haim OuMoshe" Torah center.

This evening marks the beginning of the Shovavim, as people flock there from all corners of the country. The gathering is not limited to the members of the community of the Rav and tzaddik, Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita. All groups are present – Sephardic and Ashkenaz, Chassidim and Lithuanian, religious and non-religious, young and old, busi-

ness tycoons and brilliant young yeshiva students. All are ready to implore Rabbi David for help and draw strength from his impassioned speech, which he is about to give during this large gathering for the period of the Shovavim. He has traveled from France just for this occasion.

When Rabbi David appears on the floor of the study hall, silence reigns supreme. At the entrance, dressed in formal attire, dozens of children from the "Pninat David" Tehillim program run towards him. They kiss his hand and ask him for a blessing, each waiting to receive his share.

Meanwhile in the study hall, a song suddenly rings out: Yamim al ye'mei melech.

It's impossible to stop the singing, and for many long minutes the audience refuses to stop. It's hard not to get swept up in it!

Rabbi David walks through the audience and blesses the people, making his way to the podium. Only after a long time does the evening formally begin with the reading of psalms, recited by the youngest, as the signal is given.

The highlight of the evening, the speech of the Rav and tzaddik, lasts more than an hour, the audience remaining completely focused. Every few minutes or so, more Jews join the hundreds already there. The Beit Midrash is filled from one end to another, and there's no longer any place to sit. Everyone present, standing or sitting, is captivated by the Rav's speech, which is a combination of words of wisdom, Aggadah, and Mussar, all conveyed in plain language and containing messages that everyone can relate to.

"The Shovavim are awe-inspiring days that are meant to rectify deficiencies, to rectify the exile. They are days during which we must return to G-d and do teshuvah," exclaims Rabbi David. He concludes his speech by accepting the yoke of Heaven with those gathered there: "May He annul evil decrees and may we merit the coming of Mashiach our righteous one!"

Cries of Shema Israel pierce the gates of Heaven, the atmosphere on that night being like that of Neilah on Yom Kippur. "Each person must take it upon himself to observe one mitzvah," Rabbi David enjoins the crowd. "The best way is to undertake the Shnayim Mikra V'echad Targum [reading of the weekly Torah section twice in Hebrew and once in Aramaic]. We must increase the time that we commit to Torah study, and we must abstain from speaking during prayer, for that is what brings most evil decrees upon the Jewish people. Strengthening yourself in Torah study and prayer also means turning off your cell-phone for a few

minutes of Torah study or prayer.” Rav Pinto then assures the crowd that “a cell-phone won’t lead anyone to the World to Come.”

During such uplifting spiritual moments, the hundreds of people gathered there had the feeling that he – Mashiach our deliverer – was present, just behind the wall, and that he would immediately appear. Only when people left the building did they feel disappointed to return to their regular routine.

Such was the scene during Rav Pinto’s first night of his short visit to Eretz Israel. During the next few days, each minute was obviously used to the utmost. Rav Pinto went to see the Gedolei Israel (great Torah figures of our generation), his self-effacement and admiration for them being famous. He also prayed by the graves of the tzaddikim and gave lectures to thousands of people.

Four days after that evening in Ashdod, we had the privilege of touring Rabbi Pinto’s “Orot Haim OuMoshe” Torah center on Bayit Vegan Street in Jerusalem. At the back of the room we could hear the sounds of dozens of avrechim who were studying in the kollel, and outside, on the other side of the door, crowds of people were gathered together. We once again found the same variety of people as in Ashdod. What they had in common was that they were all Jews who had heard that the Rav was in town for a short time, and they all wanted to get his advice or obtain his blessing. One person came with his wife, another came with his three-year-old son for his chalakeh (first hair cut), while another came with his business partner.

Rabbi David was still under the influence of the prayers that he had recited by the graves of the tzaddikim, especially in Hebron.

With an emotional tone in his voice, his eyes shining and deep, the Rav addressed the audience. “We went to pray by Ma’arat HaMachpelah [the tomb of the Patriarchs] in a bulletproof bus, which greatly upset me,” the Rav told us with sincerity. “I asked myself: How could this be? Does someone go visit his father in a bulletproof bus? What’s happening here? When I arrived in Hebron and saw the room in which Esau’s head is buried, I asked yet another question: What is the head of this evildoer doing in our father’s

house? Not only that, but they made a special room for him!

“The answer is that the problem lies with us, among the Jewish people. It is obvious that the house of the holy Patriarchs is open to every Jew, at least like the house of our Patriarch Abraham, which was open to the four winds. In Hebron, the gate of Gan Eden is open. Yet what happens? Ishmael bars the entrance, Esau bars the entrance. We are prevented from going to see our father. Why is that? It is because we have deficiencies. The gate is open only when we possess Torah, chesed, prayer. When that happens, everything is open. Now if we cannot enter, it is because we are lacking something. When we follow Hashem’s path, everything is open and there is nothing to fear.”

In the end, the choice is ours. Why do we choose to travel in a bulletproof bus?

“It is true that if a person travels in a bulletproof bus, it’s because he is lacking something. If we had been whole, there would naturally have been no reason to be afraid. Incredible stories of Rabbi Haim ben Attar, the Vilna Gaon, and the Baal Shem Tov have been told regarding the fact that they were afraid of nothing but G-d. On the contrary, evildoers were afraid of them! It is plainly spelled out: ‘Then all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the Name of the L-RD, and they will fear you’ [Deuteronomy 28:10]. If we fail to inspire this fear, however, it means that we must still ‘work.’”

Rabbi Pinto proceeded to adopt a more optimistic tone: “On the other hand, as I left Ma’arat HaMachpelah, I thought to myself: It is simply the kelipah that wants to scare us, for there has never been a generation in which the Torah is as ever-present as our own.”

Rabbi David interrupted the flow of his words and forcefully struck the table, saying: “I’ve done some investigating. I have traveled around the world, and I have seen that there is no generation in which the Torah is as ever-present as our own. There’s an important spiritual awakening taking place today that didn’t exist before, with thousands of people doing teshuvah and thus spreading the fragrance of Mashiach.”

Is this happening in France as well?

“Of course, it’s happening all around the world. During a lecture that I gave in France last Hoshanah Rabba, more than 2,000 people attended.

“Each day I say: Today, Mashiach will arrive. I sense that he can come at any minute, unless it’s Friday, for our Sages have said that Mashiach will not come on the eve of Shabbat, nor on the eve of a holiday. My heart tells me that he must come any day now, but transgressions stand in the way.”

Are we witnessing Ikveta d’Meshicha [a term given by our Sages to designate the period just before the arrival of Mashiach] today?

“Almost all the signs are here. We sense that he must come, for the situation today is bad. ‘The face of the generation is like the face of a dog.’ Today we see the audacity that children show to their parents, even to the point of striking them, G-d forbid. How many people come to me with bruises on their face, bruises given to them by their very own children! How many people! In Morocco, Paris, the United States, there is no shame! There is also a great deal of immorality, people whose eyes have no fear, G-d help us! Today it is absolutely necessary to strengthen ourselves.

“Today, Baruch Hashem, ‘The spirit of G-d moved upon the face of the waters’ [Genesis 1:2]. What is the spirit of G-d? It is the spirit of Mashiach, as the Gemara says. It is for this reason that G-d created this spirit at the creation of the world, in order for the remedy to precede the illness.”

The Knowledge of G-d from Intensive Torah Study

“The verse states, ‘The living should take it to heart’ [Ecclesiastes 7:2],” Rav Pinto continued. “What must a person take to heart? What does the heart accept? The answer is that a person must take the chai – meaning his own life – to heart. He should understand from where he comes. This is the meaning behind the verse. Instead of devoting his life to the pursuit of pleasure, a person must take his own life to heart.

“We must start a revolution in this area. Baruch Hashem, we study and pray in our community. But do we know G-d as we should? A Jew possesses the key to

attaining the knowledge of G-d, namely the Torah – an intensive study of Torah. We must use this, for otherwise we will be missing the basis, the foundation, the root. However we must remember that the Torah by itself is not enough, for ‘it is good to combine derech eretz [good manners] with Torah.’

“A person may think that he knows G-d, but deep down he may not be completely committed to Him. Such a person will spend the entire day thinking about his work, and when he comes before G-d to pray, his mind will be filled with the futile thoughts of this world.

“The knowledge of G-d is acquired through the study of Torah. When a person studies it, he becomes aware of his actions and thereby finds himself connected to his Creator.

“We must also pray. Without prayer, the situation becomes like that described in the verse, ‘The pit was empty; there was no water in it.’ I now want to speak on a personal note. There is no father like G-d. When I was a child and I wanted something, I would go to my father. Sometimes he would refuse my request, in which case I went to my mother and eventually got what I wanted. The question is, how do we ask? If we pray for something and do not receive it, this in no way means that nobody is listening, G-d forbid. It is either because we have not prayed hard enough, or we do not fully realize to Whom we are praying. No prayer is ineffective. If a person is thinking about meat as he prays, his prayer will help the butcher.”

“I Want to be a Businessman”

During the course of his speech, Rabbi David evoked the memory of his father and forefathers on several occasions. Yet more than that – and something that could clearly be seen in a corner of that incredible edifice – were 11 tzaddikim from the Pinto family (may their merit protect us) whose memories had been immortalized. It was as if to say: These men comprise the powerful engine of this great and holy house, under whose guidance we find today, from the same family line, the Rav and tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita.

This glorious lineage has its origins in Damascus about 400 years ago. Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto (may his merit protect

us), the author of the Rif on Ein Yaakov, was the ancestor of this dynasty, and later on, Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol (may his merit protect us), the great-great grandfather of Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita, followed in his footsteps. Rabbi David was born in Mogador (Essaouira) Morocco, the son of Rabbi Moche Aharon Pinto (may his merit protect us), who was the son of Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan (may his merit protect us).

The young David Hanania exiled himself to a place of Torah in France, where he infused himself with the Torah of Novardok through Rabbeinu Gershon Liebman Zatzal.

As a young man, Rabbi David Pinto went to study in a yeshiva in England, where he cleaved to his teacher and Rav, Rabbi Chaim Shemuel Lopian Zatzal.



Rabbi Chaim Shemuel Lopian Zatzal

Later on, he studied with his teacher and Rav, Rabbi Zeev Kaufman Shlita, the Rosh Kollel of Manchester, England.

After the Six-Day War, Rabbi David Pinto’s parents left Morocco for Israel, but Rabbi David stayed in Europe, thereby following his father’s instructions. As Rabbi David revealed to us, “I didn’t move to Eretz Israel when I was a young man because my father didn’t allow me to. My father told me, ‘You’re the foreign minister of your grandfather, the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto. There are enough Torah centers and yeshivot in Eretz Israel. You have to spread Torah in the Diaspora.’ He continued: ‘When the time comes, you will come and live in Eretz Israel.’

“I acted in accordance with my father’s demand, not moving to Eretz Israel. After I got married, however, I wanted to become a businessman. At the time, I didn’t see myself working with people in order to bring close those who were far. I then remembered the words of my father Zatzal, and I decided to give it a try.”

Rabbi David Pinto opened his first kollel in Manchester, being only 29 years old at the time.

The rest, as we say, is history.

Besides a brief period when you lived in Ashdod, you still haven’t stopped living in Europe. Is that because your father’s demand is still in effect?

“I still feel an obligation to fulfill the duties of Rabbi Haim Pinto’s foreign minister, and G-d willing when the time comes, I will move to Eretz Israel and settle down there.”

Rabbi David’s children pursue the very same path, thereby strengthening the chain of this great dynasty. It is upon his son, Rabbi Raphael, that the Torah revolution in Lyon, France is based, while his father visits from time to time in order to offer his encouragement and support. His younger sons, Moche Aharon and Yoel, study at the yeshiva and give Torah classes at night. Attending these classes are hundreds of French students, many of whom have been brought closer to observing mitzvot as a result.

“I Don’t Get Involved in Politics”

What’s the difference between the spiritual situation of Jews in Eretz Israel and Jews in the Diaspora?

“In terms of spirituality, there is no difference. Wherever a person might be, he can grow. I have seen people become Gedolei Israel precisely in the Diaspora, for there we know our limits; we know our place and our desire is to move to the Holy Land. On the other hand, there is a tremendous degree of assimilation within the Diaspora, and only the Torah can protect and save a person. A person who lives his life by respecting the limits imposed on him by the Torah will be protected from assimilation.

“This is why, after more than 30 years of working in France, I tell people that Judaism is not limited to reciting Kiddush on Friday night, but instead is based on

self-sacrifice. The Torah warns the Jewish people that there are places where they must burn all their idols.

“A person can burn idols, but he cannot burn an entire culture. Only the Torah can burn a culture and extinguish it.

“It is known that the air of Eretz Israel is conducive for gaining wisdom, since it is ‘a land that the L-RD your G-d cares for. The eyes of the L-RD your G-d are always upon it.’ Now purity and impurity always come in pairs. The gates of Gan Eden and the gates of Gehinnom are both found in Hebron. It is possible, in Eretz Israel, to spiritually grow to a great extent. However it is also possible for a person to, G-d forbid, take a tremendous spiritual plunge.

“We are witnesses to a stunning phenomenon that takes place nowhere else. Some prevent the spreading of Torah, while others study and spread it. Although I don’t get involved politics, I have often shed tears as a result, and I have prayed for hearts to return, with G-d’s help.”

Thank G-d, each day new avrechim are joining the national Kiruv Rechokim program [the aim of which is to bring close those who are far]. Since you have dozens of years of experience, what must a person do if he wants to bring his brothers closer?

“In order for a person to bring someone back to G-d, that person must himself set an example. I often ask myself, ‘Have I already rectified my own deeds? Am I an appropriate example for others?’

“Thank G-d, I’ve had the merit of being an emissary to bring many people back to their Father in Heaven. And with every person who does teshuvah, I also strengthen myself.

“There is tremendous *Siyata Dishmaya* [Divine aid],” Rav Pinto acknowledges. “I think that because of my experience with people, I can offer advice and sometimes warn them by citing what happened to so-and-so. It seems to me that I’ve been successful because I’ve benefited from the great merit of my fathers. Without that merit, I would not have succeeded in returning even a single person to G-d.”

We have also seen great figures and wealthy individuals asking for advice and blessings.

“Many people live in complete darkness. They think only about money. That is what speaks to them. Yet a person who has no connection to the Torah is a person whose light has been extinguished, a person who has no real objective in life or in the world.

“I prefer speaking in an ordinary synagogue to 100 avrechim, full of Torah enthusiasm, than in a luxurious place filled with marble and gold to 3,000 wealthy individuals who are empty and dark. They possess goods and money, but they are empty.

“When I speak to avrechim who study in our kollelim, I’m filled with spiritual joy and can recharge my batteries,” Rav Pinto concludes. “This recharging allows me to also speak to those who regularly attend my classes, before whom I’m obligated to speak.”

And These are the Names...

This tremendous Torah revolution, which is being dynamically led by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto through his “Orot Haim OuMoshe” Torah centers, is the fruit of immense efforts that combine a dozen giant enterprises spread out in several countries.

At the core of these Torah institutions is the “Orot Haim OuMoshe” center in Ashdod, which includes no less than 5 kollelim, a yeshiva ketanah called “Torat Haim,” and a Tehillim program for children called “Pninat David.” Orot Haim OuMoshe kollelim and yeshivot are also found in Jerusalem, Paris, Lyon, New York, and Toronto. There is also a Kiruv Rechokim movement and large-scale charity projects that work discreetly, thereby finding favor in the eyes of its recipients.

In Jerusalem, the Torah center’s building is located in the Bayit Vegan neighborhood, and it houses one of the Rabbi Pinto’s greatest projects, namely Orot Haim OuMoshe’s publication center. It is there that dozen of books and works from Rabbi David and great teachers of our people are published.

The results of this work are clearly visible. During our visit to Ashdod, we could see crowds of people passionately reading each word from *Derech Haim*, the weekly journal of his Torah centers.

May Hashem Bless and Protect You!

It is difficult, if not impossible, to part

from him. After a long time in Rabbi David’s presence, which nevertheless passed very quickly, and during which time I had the merit of receiving his blessing and hearing his views on current issues, I felt like a magnet being pulled off some metal. Just before leaving, after we said goodbye to one another, Rabbi David called me back.

With a warm gesture, he placed both hands on my head, closed his eyes, and gave me a fervent blessing: “May the L-RD bless and protect you. May the L-RD shine His face upon you and be gracious to you. May the L-RD lift up His face upon you and give you peace. They shall put My Name upon the Children of Israel, and I shall bless them.” Many people have tried to understand the “secret of his success,” the reason why he is held in such high esteem by Gedolei Israel from every background and community. “It’s true,” they say, “that he receives *Siyata Dishmaya*” – Divine aid – “but there’s something else.”

His greatest secret, the one that allows him to lead this worldwide Torah revolution, is his great love for every Jew. The Jewish community, in all its diversity, returns this love to him a thousand times over.

Yet his greatest strength lies in finding the right balance between demonstrating love and admonishment. That is, he knows when to show his students and admirers overflowing love, and when to admonish and encourage them to observe mitzvot, regardless of whether it is his closest student or wealthiest supporter.

An article that appeared in a local Ashdod newspaper immediately after Passover illustrates this remarkable quality of the Rav:

“A harshly worded criticism, without precedent, regarding the *Mimunah* festivities that were organized by the city of Ashdod, was issued at the conclusion of *Mimunah* by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto, who is considered to be one of the most influential figures in Ashdod religious circles. It occurred in front of hundreds of people, gathered to hear lectures and discourses on current issues from rabbis who had emigrated from Morocco. This event was called ‘Moroccan Judaism – Its Customs and Sages.’ Contrary to what he normally does, Rabbi Pinto expressed one of the most harshly worded criticisms

on the events surrounding the Mimunah festivities that had just unfolded on that same day and the day before at Ashdod's opera center.

“I usually don't express my opinion on what happens in Ashdod, nor in Israel, for I don't live here,” he began. “But this time I must protest. Mimunah was an initiative of the rabbis of Morocco, who called this day Mimunah because of the word emunah [faith]. It was an evening and a day meant to bring hearts closer to G-d, and to strengthen Jewish faith. Yet what happened today in Ashdod has no connection to emunah or to Mimunah. If the rabbis of Morocco were to rise from their graves and see what was happening, they would shudder,” he concluded.

“Rav Pinto continued by saying, ‘Forgive me gentlemen if I am lecturing you on ethics, but I cannot remain silent. I don't know if anyone has already spoken up against this, but I must do so.’”

One more thing – something that nobody can deny – is Rabbi Pinto's “sixth sense.”

A chassid, a rav from a well-known religious neighborhood, gave us a first-hand account of it this week. Like many other people, he visits Rabbi David from time to time for advice. Once, when his son was hesitating about whether he should continue studying in his yeshiva or change to another one, the chassid entered the room where Rabbi David was in order to tell him about his son's doubts. Even before greeting him, Rabbi David turned to him and briefly said, “I don't think he should change yeshivot.”

That's what he said, not a word more.

“The merits of Rabbi David are numerous in every area,” this same chassid added. “He is level-headed, elevated above the people, connected to Heaven, G-d-fearing, and he spreads Torah to thousands of people around the world. Happy is he and happy is his lot!”



A LETTER TO Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita

From Mr. Maurice O. of Paris

November 4, 1999

Dear Rabbi,

I would like to use this opportunity, Rabbi David, to describe to you what will forever remain engraved in my memory. However to do this, and at the risk of seeming longwinded, I need to relate everything to you.

In 1999 I went through a difficult and painful period in my life. As it turned out, I was deprived of my liberty. During this time you met with my mother, who conveyed your blessings to me, as well as your certainty that I would soon be released. You also assured her that I would be by your side at the Hilloula set to take place in Essaouira during the month of September.

Now at the time, my lawyers (who were quite prestigious) weren't telling me such good news. On the contrary, they expected me to be incarcerated for several months.

During my first appearance in court, and to the great surprise of my lawyers (and myself for that matter), I was instantly released.

It was my mother who reminded me that I had to immediately travel to the pilgrimage that was to begin on the day after my release. I therefore took steps to book a flight, but it was impossible to make it to Essaouira without transgressing Shabbat. My mother and I agreed that I had to cancel the trip. Ten minutes after I made this decision, however, you called me from Essaouira and told me that you were waiting for me at the big event.

I again contacted my travel agent, and this time she told me that a seat was available. It was to leave for Casablanca on Sunday, September 5 at 6:00 am. My travel agent also found a private flight from Casablanca to Essaouira.

Arriving at Roissy in Paris for my trip to Casablanca, I found no trace of the flight on the monitors, and I was told at the information desk that the flight didn't even exist. I insisted that it did and got out my ticket, thinking that maybe it was flying out of Orly. It turned out that it wasn't. A manager at Royal Air Maroc was therefore called and did a little bit of searching. He then discovered that an empty plane was being sent back to Morocco, and that I should never have been sold a ticket for a non-commercial flight.

Thus a flight had appeared on my travel agent's monitor on a Friday (when it shouldn't have appeared), and yet on Sunday it didn't appear at all! How was that? Only G-d knows.

The pilot eventually accepted me aboard as the only passenger. Without a crew, I was the only one on the plane with the pilot and copilot, as the accompanying photo shows and my travel agent can attest to.

I hope to be among your guests for a long time to come.

Very touched by your concern and your blessings, I wanted to present this story so everyone can believe in the power of a tzaddik's blessing. I swear before the Alm-ghty as to the accuracy of my statements.

Rabbi, I thank you with all my heart..

Rabbi David Pinto's Comment:

A person who wishes to attribute the things mentioned in this letter to a combination of coincidences, or simple luck, by finding all sorts of “logical” explanations for them, will only end up decreasing his faith and increasing his doubts. On the contrary, one must always be certain that everything is the fruit of Divine providence, not the result of coincidence. Hashem is present in all places, and a person's entire life is filled with miracles. The more that a person increases his faith and allows himself to be guided by Hashem, the closer he will get to Him and the more he will serve Him with a love that grows stronger and deeper.



YOSSELE “THE RASCAL”

There was a young boy from the town of Slutzk known as “Yossele the rascal,” a mischievous boy that everyone knew. In contrast to the other boys his age, Yossele could never stay seated in his cheder class. Instead he preferred to spend most of his time walking on the rooftops with the pigeons or in the streets with the dogs. Other times, he would go swimming in the river with the non-Jewish children.

When Yossele was 12 years old, he was walking along the streets in town when he suddenly heard a voice of reprimand coming from a house. He approached the window and quickly glanced inside. He saw a father striking his son for his bad behavior, saying to him: “What were you thinking? Do you want to become a scoundrel like that boy Yossele? I’ll never let you become like him!”

Yossele was very hurt by these words, and he thought: “What? Have I sunk to the point that my name means something shameful in Slutzk? Has it gotten to the point that children who are acting fooling get reprimanded and told that they’ll become like me?! If that’s the case, I have to change!” He therefore went to see his father and said, “Papa, I’ve decided to go study in yeshiva!”

When his father heard this, he was dismayed. He thought, “What’s gotten into the boy’s head, and who knows what he really plans to do?” He therefore said, “You’re giving me a headache. Go play with your pigeons and dogs, and leave me alone!”

Yossele, however, didn’t budge: “Papa, I’m completely serious. I want to go to yeshiva, and if you don’t let me, I’ll go on my own!”

His father had to think about this. He looked at the boy straight in the eyes and said, “It seems to me that you’re serious this time.” He then asked him, “What yeshiva do you want to attend?” The boy replied, “The Volozhin yeshiva.”

His father burst into laughter. “Volozhin?! You want to go to the Volozhin yeshiva? You’ve never learned a thing! To get into Volozhin, you have to know at least two tractates of Gemara like the back of your hand. You don’t even know a single page of Gemara!”

“Papa, I don’t care. I want to go to the Volozhin yeshiva and start learning.”

Faced with such determination, his father gave him a small sum of money and helped him pack his things for the trip to Volozhin. Thus Yossele began his journey. He traveled by wagon, and then by foot. Three days after

leaving, he arrived in Volozhin.

Upon arriving in the city, he took the road to the yeshiva, and once there he asked some young students to show him the Rosh Yeshiva’s office. Yossele knocked at the door, and he was summoned inside. “Shalom Aleichem, Shalom Aleichem. What can I do for you, my young boy?” the Rosh Yeshiva asked him.

Yossele replied, “I want to study in the yeshiva.”

“And what have you learned?”

“I’ve learned nothing, but I want to study!”

Rabbi Haim fixed his glimmering eyes upon him and realized that standing before him was a boy with a promising future. He pinched his cheek and said, “If you really want to study, you can. Get up and enter the yeshiva!” Without hesitating, Yossele entered and sat down to study. Rabbi Haim assigned teachers to help him in Chumash, Mishnah, and Gemara. Yossele put a great deal of effort into studying, and after three months he was able to learn Torah in a rigorous manner, demonstrating tremendous diligence.

Two years passed, and he celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at the yeshiva. By the age of 14, he already reached the level of a young scholar in various fields, and he continued to diligently study Gemara, Rashi, and Tosaphot. He even joined the privileged group of “the 18” – a concept in Volozhin wherein young men would study 18 hours a day, devoting only six hours to their needs (eating, sleeping, etc.).

Years passed, and Yossele earned a reputation as a great Torah scholar.

One day he received a letter from his mother. The news was not good. She wrote that a fire had broken out in the city, and that his father’s shop, along with others, had been destroyed. She said to him, “You’re already an adult, and you’ve studied quite a bit. The family really needs money, so come back home and help your father restart his business.”

Yossele was stunned by the news. On one hand, his mother’s heartfelt request called to him. On the other hand, given that he had already reached a high level in Torah, how could he now close the Gemara and return home? In his distress, he went to the Rosh Yeshiva and handed him his mother’s letter. Rabbi Haim carefully read it and let out a deep sigh. A moment later, he said: “Listen to me: Return to your studies.” Yossele returned to his studies. The administration of the yeshiva then sent a

large sum of money to his mother in order to help the family.

A short time later, Yossele received a second letter from his mother: “Your father has become deeply depressed over our situation. In fact he’s fallen ill and is confined to bed.”

Yossele went to see the Rosh Yeshiva a second time, who sighed once again. “Listen to me: Return to your studies.” Yossele followed his teacher’s instructions and returned to his learning. He then received a third letter from his mother: “You’re father has died!” Yossele burst into tears and hurried to see Rabbi Haim, who could only join him in weeping. He said to him, “Observe shiva [the mourning period of seven days that follows the death of a relative] and return to your studies.”

Several years later, the Rav of Slutzk passed away. After the period of mourning had passed, five members from the Slutzk community traveled to Volozhin. They sought Rabbi Haim’s recommendation for a new Rav, whom they were committed to supporting in every way. He said to the delegation, “Wait for a moment. I have a Rav for you.” He immediately summoned Rabbi Yossele. When he entered the room, Rabbi Haim rose from his seat as a sign of respect, and had him sit next to him. He then asked the delegation, “Do you remember an unruly child in Slutzk by the name of Yossele? Do you know what happened to him?” They replied, “We don’t know what became of him.” Rabbi Haim said, “Rabbi Yossele, get up. This is Yossele – who will be your new Rav!” Rabbi Haim then began to praise him in the presence of the delegation. “Do you agree with my recommendation,” he asked them. “Of course, if that’s what you say.” They drank a le’chaim and had a light meal.

Rabbi Haim later said to Rabbi Yossele, “Do you remember when your mother asked you to return home, and I ordered you to continue studying Torah? This tested your incredible devotion. It certainly wasn’t easy for you to stop your mischievousness behavior as a boy and take upon yourself the diligent study of Torah. You were tested three times, and the third time was the most difficult of all. Nevertheless, you overcame them all. Your father is happy in Gan Eden, and he is rejoicing in your Torah.”

From this story we see just how powerful a person’s will can be. At the same time, we pray to Hashem with a contrite heart to allow us to properly educate our children, and that they become G-d fearing and upright.

BY THE MERIT OF GENUINE FAITH

The sage Rav Meir Cohen once told me the following story: A Jew needed some money for a specific project, but was short a certain amount. Not knowing how to solve his predicament, he implored the Almighty to save him by the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto. As he was beseeching the Creator, his hand slipped into his pocket and suddenly felt the presence of some money, the very same amount that he needed! This story serves as a lesson for us all. The Holy One, blessed be He, rewards a man for having genuine faith, rescuing him and sending him blessings, even if He has to overturn the laws of nature in order to do so.

The same scholar recounted another incident to me. One of our relatives, Yehoshua Derhy, suffered from an excruciating tooth ache. In fact the pain was so severe that he could not even eat whole fruits and vegetables, only soup. He decided to go to the grave of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto and lament his sharp pain. Logically speaking, only a professional dentist could have relieved his pain, but since he possessed genuine faith, he was convinced that the tzaddik would help him. His faith produced fruit, and from then on he felt considerable relief from the pain that had previously been a regular part of his day.

Rabbi Meir Cohen recounted a third incident to me. Three men, originally from Essaouira, were looking for an honest way to make a living. They decided to open a peanut business, purchasing peanuts at a low price and selling them at a high price. Unfortunately, the price of peanuts kept on falling after they purchased them, to the point that our friends were about to lose all their money. When their failure became painfully obvious to them, they went to see the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto and implored him for help. In fact they promised that if their business prospered, they would devote a portion of their profits to charity, to the merit of the tzaddik. At the time, Morocco had commercial links with England, which imported peanuts from Morocco. Overnight, England made an urgent request for a large shipment of peanuts from Morocco, much larger than usual. Despite the greatly elevated price asked by our friends, England agreed to buy their produce. The result was that these men prospered, and they did not forget to keep their promise.

Therefore when a person places all his faith in G-d and implores Him for help, he can only emerge a winner. Someone once told me that he waited numerous years before finding a wife. As it turned out, she had been living in his neighborhood for close to 20 years, but had never been introduced to him before. I told him that if he had implored the Almighty with greater fervor, beseeching Him to help him find a wife, he could have avoided such a long and frustrating wait.

I also heard another interesting story about a man who was preoccupied with a personal problem. He never stopped thinking about it, even at night, for he would dream about it. In his dreams, he promised that if he managed to find a solution to this problem, he would donate a certain amount of money to Rabbi Haim Pinto. The next morning, barely after waking up, he suddenly heard someone knocking at his door. Who could be knocking at so early in the morning? Imagine his shock when he opened the door and found himself face to face with the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto! When the man asked the Rav why he had come to see him in person, Rabbi Haim Pinto replied: "I know that you made a vow in your dream to give a certain amount of money to tzeddakah when your problem is solved. I therefore came right away, for I need the very same amount, and with G-d's help your problem will be solved at the right time." The man stood there stunned, asking himself how the Rav could have known about his dream. Yet the look on Rabbi Haim Pinto's face prevented him from asking any further questions.

Chazal explain that although the Children of Israel breached the 49th gate of impurity, they were still delivered from Egypt by the merit of having remained faithful to three customs: Their names, their language, and their manner of dress. They managed to resist Egyptian influences in these areas on account of their ardent faith in G-d, Who would soon save them from their long exile. I remember the words that I once heard from Rav Shach, who said that it is actually quite easy to acquire faith in G-d. All a person needs is to notice his fingers moving, his feet walking, his heart beating, or his blood coursing through his body. Doing so is all that is needed in order to recognize the handiwork of G-d, Who endowed such an

extraordinary being with life. This simple recognition is enough to awaken our faith, for it provides us with evidence that man cannot be considered a simple mechanism, but instead was fashioned by the hands of the Holy One, blessed be He. Today, some of the most respected doctors have concluded that the extraordinary complexity of the human body could only have occurred by constant and individual Divine supervision. A person who places all his faith in the Almighty can even be the recipient of miracles that defy the laws of nature.

It is important to realize that stories regarding the tzaddikim have the ability to awaken faith in the heart of man. For that matter, I have met simple people – those who do not know how to study the Gemara or the Poskim in great depth – who are infused with ardent faith and supported by their habit of reflecting upon the meaning of stories about the tzaddikim. Conversely, some people are very well-versed in the Gemara, and yet their faith remains very tenuous. These people have never accustomed themselves to be inspired by such stories.

Many non-practicing Jews who have been struck by a grave misfortune – be it an illness, marriage problems, childlessness, or financial difficulties – have come to me for advice and blessings. Thank G-d, prayers on their behalf were accepted and their problems disappeared, after which they adopted a completely different way of life. I sometimes get jealous of the pure faith of such simple people, people who are convinced that G-d will save them from all their difficulties. When a child asks his father for something, he knows that his father will do all that he can to fulfill his request. We should turn to the Holy One, blessed be He, in the same way, by considering Him as our merciful Father ("our Father is a merciful Father") Who does not have the heart to ignore our requests.

Written within the mezuzot that are affixed to our doorposts is the term Shad-ai, which constitutes the initials of the expression "Guardian of the gates of Israel." The plural term "gates" tells us that the Almighty possesses numerous ways of pouring out His storehouse of blessings upon His children.

