

# MAGAZINE OHR HAIM VE MOCHE



UNDER THE AEGIS OF

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*To all our virtuous friends, Best Wishes !*

*In preparation for the holy holiday of Pesach, in*

*celebration of our freedom, due to  
Hachem's kindness.*

*May it be Hachem's will, to arouse  
compassion from above, onto Your  
children of Israel, wherever they  
shall be, for goodness and blessing,  
and shine upon us the aurora of Your  
countenance.*

*Please Hachem, bring on the final  
moment, for us to be redeemed quickly,  
brought forth from slavery to freedom,  
from sorrow to joy, from darkness to great  
illumination.*

*May it be Hachem's will that we all be united  
each as one, as one heart, and as one man  
to serve Him with delight. Amen*

*Wishing you a  
Kosher & joyous Pesach !*



בס"ד

בברכת חזק  
שמת וכגה ארסת  
בברכה והצלחה  
וצחה אלן ואלן  
ע"ה פנצ חנניה (נירנא) פ"ה

# An Interview with Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita by Elias Levy of The Canadian Jewish News

*The grandson and son of two eminent and leading figures of Moroccan rabbinic Judaism – Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal and Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto – Rabbi David Hanania Pinto is one of the most illustrious representatives of an ancient rabbinic tradition.*

**T**oday, this renowned spiritual leader directs a large network of Torah learning centers, consisting of 26 yeshivot and kollelim in Israel, France, Morocco, Canada, and elsewhere.

Rabbi David Hanania Pinto sat down with The **CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS** for an hour during his recent visit to Montreal, where he met with the primary spiritual leaders of our community and visited several centers of Torah learning.

**CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS:** *How do you see Judaism today?*

**RABBI DAVID PINTO:** Today Judaism is experiencing unprecedented growth. Never in the course of their history have Jews known a Judaism that is as vibrant and flourishing as the one they are experiencing today. We have never seen as many synagogues, kollelim, mikvaot, as much kashrut, Torah...it's amazing! Thirty years ago, in Paris, Lyon, and Marseille, it was instead a complete desert in terms of Judaism.

In Lyon at the end of the 70s, I was the first rabbi to build a yeshiva and a kollel. At the time, there was just a single mikveh in this city of the Rhône-Alpes region. Today there are seven mikvaot, four Jewish schools, a dozen kollelim, and kosher restaurants and establishments. Judaism has spread everywhere.

The more Torah there is, the more houses of study, the more rabbis. Yet what is crucial in a city is for the rabbis

of each community not to isolate themselves, but instead to remain united. I am against rabbis who become sectarian and avoid other rabbis and their respective communities. As for myself, I strongly urge people to be open to other communities. Rabbis must remain united and help one another. Jewish history shows us that when rabbis are united, then communities – of which they are the spiritual leaders – also remain united. Yet when rabbis are divided, G-d forbid, disputes suddenly arise, communities avoid one another, and sometimes they tear each other apart. Unity has always been the greatest strength of the Jewish people.

**CJN:** *You are the heir to a rich and ancient rabbinic Sephardic tradition that values unity among all Jews, regardless of their religious affiliation, and dialogue between communities.*

**RABBI DAVID PINTO:** Absolutely. I grew up in Morocco. My father, the late and venerated Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, may his soul rest in peace, welcomed religious and non-religious Jews into his home. He never made a distinction between Jews. For him, every Jew was a full-fledged Jew. He always said to me, “When someone asks you for a beracha – a blessing – whether he’s a religious Jew or not, or a Muslim, his religion doesn’t matter. Never refuse. Always receive him with open arms.” The education that I received from my parents is based on a fun-



On the Grave of His Rabbi, the Gaon  
Rav Chamai Tzan Zatzal

damental Jewish principle: Love your fellow. Thank G-d, this open-mindedness has helped me convince hundreds of young Jews to do teshuvah. The majority of those who have become my students did not observe Shabbat or Judaism's other precepts. It was not by using aggressive language or authoritarian methods that I convinced them to get back in touch with their Judaism. I simply taught them [using] a fundamental principle which my father transmitted to me: A good word. These youngsters did teshuvah through good words.

*CJN: Today, disputes between religious Jews and secular Jews must greatly upset you.*

**RABBI DAVID PINTO:** Yes. The terms charedi [orthodox] and chiloni [secular] exasperate me. In Europe, and I suppose in Canada as well, a Jew who drives to synagogue on Shabbat is called a "Jew," not a chiloni. There are some Jews who drive on Shabbat to pray at my yeshiva. I never reprimand or reject them. On the contrary, I calmly explain to them what Shabbat is, and what this sacred day represents for Jews. I speak to them calmly, without any animosity. On the other hand, if I see one of them relapsing for a second or third time on Shabbat, which would greatly disturb our community, I would then be forced to address him in a firmer tone.

Perhaps the words charedi and chiloni aren't used in Europe, France, and America because Jews there live in a society with non-Jews, whereas in Israel Jews live with other Jews, and people have unfortunately introduced these two pathetic terms into the national vocabulary. For me, a Jew is a Jew regardless of whether he is religious or non-practicing.

What I greatly love about Eretz Israel is that, when the

country is at war, there are no longer charedis and chilonis. All Jews are united as brothers at that point. I was in Israel during the last Lebanon war. In that extremely emotional time, the people of Israel gave Jews throughout the Diaspora, as well as everyone around the world, a magnificent and beautiful lesson in solidarity. With my own eyes, I saw examples of brotherhood that profoundly moved me. Non-religious Jews welcomed orthodox families into their homes with open arms as they were fleeing from bombs. These non-practicing Jews bought kosher food for them and even kashered their own kitchens. The religious also sheltered non-religious families in their homes. It's regrettable that it takes a war for such unity to become a tangible reality. In Israel, there is a very encouraging social statistic: A large opinion poll conducted last year reminded us that today a majority of Israeli Jews observe Yom Kippur and are committed to the main Jewish traditions, even those who define themselves as "non-practicing." It's very encouraging!

*CJN: Numerous students in yeshivot, married with several children and devoting themselves full-time to the study of Torah, are often forced to live off community charity or financial aid from family members, since the grants they receive from Torah institutions don't allow them to meet the basic needs of their family. Is the study of Torah incompatible with having a profession?*

**RABBI DAVID PINTO:** There is no incompatibility between being a pious Jew – of wanting to study Torah intensively – and having a profession. As for myself, I encourage youngsters to study Torah, but to also have a profession and meet the financial needs of their family. The yeshiva is not for everyone. Devoting oneself entirely to the sacred study of Torah demands great devotion and self-sacrifice. I strongly advise people to think twice before deciding to enter a kollel.



A person must not study Torah just because his brother, his uncle, or his cousin is studying it. I certainly don't want the study of Torah to become a fad! If learning the most sacred texts of Judaism brings a sense of fulfillment and great joy to the one who studies them, Hinei Ma Tov.



Lecture at the main Synagogue in Buenos Aires

It's the most beautiful thing that can happen to a Jew. However a student who decides to enter a kollel must be aware that learning Torah for the entire day, and sometimes for the entire night, requires great sacrifice.

**CJN:** *Are the grants which these yeshiva students receive not somewhat meager?*

**RABBI DAVID PINTO:** The grants which yeshivot allocate to their full-time students are entirely dependent on the funds which the directors of these institutions manage to collect during the year. Keep in mind that a yeshiva is not a private firm governed by a capitalistic sense of financial gain. According to economic forecasts that a company director establishes ahead of time, he can determine exactly how much to allocate to the salary of his employees. The financial situation of a yeshiva, however, is extremely precarious. There are no guarantees. A person who wants to study in a kollel must realize that there are risks to take. In a kollel, material imperatives don't exist. If tomorrow, one of the kollelim that I direct wouldn't be able to provide their students with a monthly allowance because funds were lacking, those students would have to deal with this harsh reality. In Bnei Brak and Ashdod, I personally know students in yeshivot who

don't eat meat all year round because they don't have the money for it. We must understand that learning in a kollel means accepting numerous sacrifices, both for oneself and for one's family. The majority of wives and families of yeshiva students have agreed with great emunah [faith] to share this ascetic lifestyle, this life of privation and self-sacrifice. In Torah the expression we use is *Toratam uManutam* [the Torah is their profession]. For those individuals who are completely devoted to the study of our sacred texts, learning Torah is their "profession"! It is their greatest enjoyment in life. For them, the material side of things holds no importance.

**CJN:** *In the last few years, numerous young Sephardim have joined Ashkenaz orthodox movements, of which they have become staunch followers. Some among them have even completely turned their back on the liturgical and rabbinic heritage which their forefathers left them. Does that shock you?*

**RABBI DAVID PINTO:** My rabbis were Ashkenazim. I studied and was educated in Ashkenaz yeshivot. Without a doubt, that is what gave me the inner strength to discover our Sephardic traditions. Let's stop blaming the Ashkenazim. If there's someone to whom we should be addressing our grievances, it's clearly the Sephardim.

Many young Sephardim have been drawn by religious movements such as Lubavitch or Breslov, because the leaders and religious people in their own community offered them nothing. Oftentimes, instead of creating a suitable and welcoming environment in which to



At the hilula of Rabbi Chaim Pinto in Morocco

study Torah, these Sephardic leaders and rabbis spent years bickering among themselves on the public stage. We have sometimes witnessed, unfazed, some awful disputes. Our youngsters then become discouraged and go elsewhere to learn.

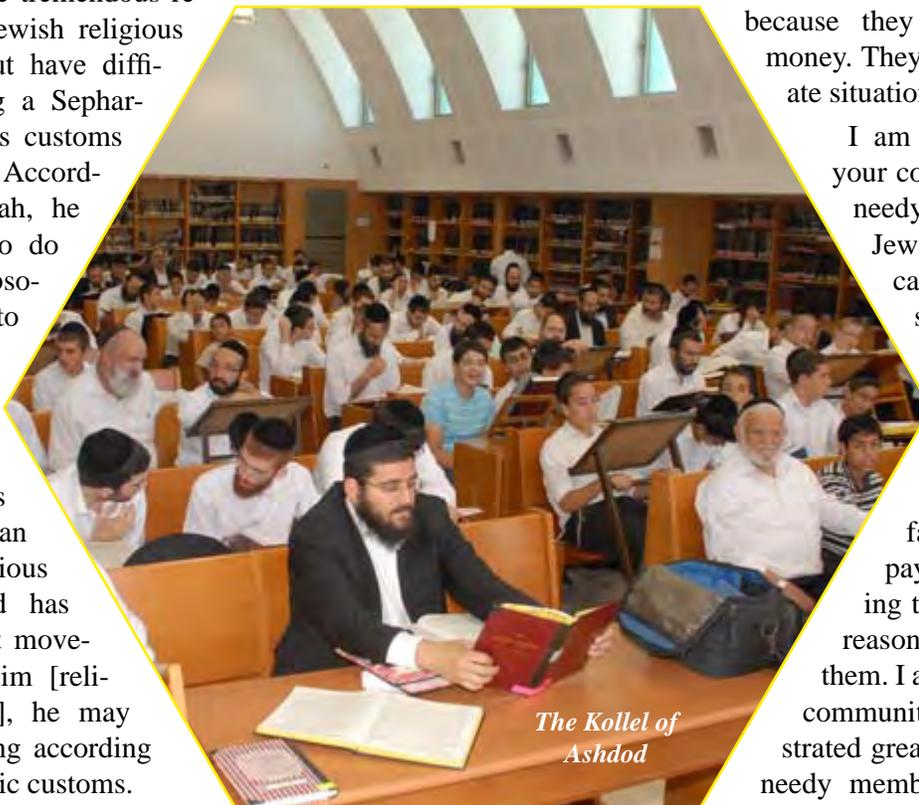
Personally, I studied with Ashkenazim but remained 1000% Sephardic! I can live my entire life among movements such as Lubavitch, Breslov, Satmar, or Belz, yet still remain Sephardic because I know who I am. Nobody needs to help me discover the extraordinary thing which I've already discovered: The wealth of Sephardic Judaism. I have tremendous respect for all Jewish religious movements, but have difficulty accepting a Sephardi changing his customs when praying. According to Halachah, he has no right to do this; he must absolutely adhere to his traditions. There is only one exception: If a Sephardi does teshuvah in an Ashkenaz religious movement and has adapted to that movement's minhagim [religious customs], he may continue praying according to non-Sephardic customs.

*CJN: Do you have a message for the Sephardic community of Montreal?*

**RABBI DAVID PINTO:** Montreal has an exceptional Jewish community. You are a model for Jews around the world. I have a compliment for your community: During my stay in Montreal, I met with hundreds of your fellow Jews who asked me to pray for them. I'm not the one giving them a beracha, but the Almighty. I'm only a humble intermediary. What greatly moved me is that all the Jewish Montrealers I met requested a beracha for someone who was sick, oftentimes for someone who wasn't even related to them. I admire this beautiful act of brotherhood and compassion for others afflicted by illness.

On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, I have a message for the magnificent and generous Jewish community of Montreal: Do not forget the most needy individuals and families. I know that there are many poor families in your community, especially during these difficult financial times. I also discovered that several of these needy families are ashamed to say that they are poor, that they don't have enough money to send their children to private Jewish schools. I met with families with their back to the wall, families with five, six, or seven children who were forced to take their children out of Jewish school and send them to a non-Jewish school because they didn't have enough money. They are living in a desperate situation.

I am asking the leaders of your community to help these needy families. Giving a Jewish child a Jewish education is one of the most sacred mitzvot in Judaism. I am asking the directors of Jewish schools not to completely shut their door on children from families which cannot pay full tuition. I am asking them to try and reach a reasonable arrangement with them. I am well aware that your community has always demonstrated great solidity with its most needy members. Above all, don't forget that when a community is united, Judaism grows, and when a community is divided, Judaism declines.



*The Kollel of Ashdod*



# Pilgrimage to Poland and the Ukraine Elul 5770

*In Order to Ascend, One Must Feel Deficient*

*“It will be when you enter the Land... and you possess it, and dwell in it.”  
(Devarim 26:1)*

**A**S in previous years, we merited visiting this year the graves of tzaddikim buried in various locations throughout Europe. We go and pray at their graves, so that they should be our advocates to be inscribed on Rosh Hashanah, in the book of tzaddikim, for peace and prosperity.

On Shabbat Kodesh, we merited staying near the grave of the spiritual beacon, Rabbeinu Baal Shem Tov, z”ya. It was a wonderful and uplifting Shabbat; indeed, we never before felt such strong spiritual elevation. The holiness of the tzaddik hovered over us, and his pure spirit blew through us and warmed us with his fire. A spiritual happiness enveloped us, something not from this world. Although we’ve frequented his grave in the past, and always felt a spiritual elevation every year, the spiritual experience was intensified above that of the previous year. This is because the tzaddik resting there also becomes more elevated and holier from year to year. When he is in the higher worlds, he is sitting in the Yeshiva Shel Maalah (Heavenly yeshiva), and engages in Torah. Chazal have told us (Brachot 17a), “Tzaddikim sit with their crowns upon their heads, basking in the splendor of the Shechinah.” He goes from strength to strength ascending and increasing in holiness. Consequently, we prostrate ourselves every year upon the grave of a ‘different’ Baal Shem Tov, one who is holier and purer, so to speak, from the one we recognized previously.

We also merited, with the help of Heaven, to visit the grave of the “Chochmat Shlomo,” the great Rabbi Moshe Shlomo Luria, z”tkl, better known as the Maharshal, whose explanations on Shas form the basis for understanding various concepts of Talmud Bavli. The truth is, as I was standing at his holy grave, a question arose and I wondered the following. How is it that this holy tzaddik, upon whom the entire world of Torah rests,

and all who enter the Beit Hamidrash mention his name and repeat his teachings, and all great men know of his spiritual might, rests in a secluded area, four amot in the ground, in a tight little plot, in such a faraway place... This feeling enveloped me when I went to visit the grave of the “Chozeh M’Lublin” z”ya, as well. In his lifetime, the entire land quaked before him; he saw everything and knew many hidden things. He knew secrets of the Torah, and reached the level of Ruach Hakodesh. And here he is, buried in a dark chamber...

At that moment, a cry emanated from my heart, “Woe unto those who attribute our world with any degree of permanence. In their foolishness, they contend that man was created to enjoy the pleasures of this world. They say, ‘Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we will die.’ Here, we see before our eyes, that there is an end to every person, even to devout tzaddikim whose lives were one long progression of self-sacrifice for Torah and mitzvot. Even they were subject to the Heavenly decree that all men must die, because this is the end of every person. There is no one who can escape death. We can only draw the conclusion that ours is a temporary, fleeting world, merely a vestibule and place of preparation for the great banquet hall, the World to Come, the world of eternity.”



in the Ohel of Rabbi Avraham Ha Mal’akh  
(Son of the Maggid of Mezrich)

But let us not forget that those tzaddikim who perished still maintain their spiritual powers. Their pure souls live on among us. Chazal have told us (Brachot 18a), “Tzaddikim are called living even in their deaths.” Furthermore, they state that (Chulin 7b), tzaddikim are greater in their deaths than in their lifetimes, as their lips move in the grave due to their Torah novellae being repeated by those learning Torah in the Beit Hamidrash. The Gemara tells us (Yevamot 96b), “Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, ‘What is meant by the statement, ‘May I dwell in Your tent forever’ (Tehillim 61:5)? Can a person live forever? What David Hamelech was asking of Hashem was the following, ‘Master of the world, may it be Your will that people repeat my words (of Torah) in this world, so that my lips will move in the grave as though I were still alive’ (Rashi). Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, ‘A talmid chacham whose words are repeated in this world, his lips move in the grave, as it says, ‘My slumbering fathers will move their lips.’ (Shir Hashirim 7:10)

Based on this, we can homiletically explain the pesukim in Parashat Ki Tavo (26:1), והיה כי תבוא אל הארץ, “It will be when you enter the Land.” In Avot (4:29), the Tanna states, “Against your will you were created; against your will you were born.” The neshamah is



At Auschwitz

not interested in coming to this world; she prefers to remain above, where she can bask in the glory of the Shechinah. For what reason should she subject herself to the filth of this materialistic world?! However, it is the decree of Hashem that the soul should descend to this world. And so the passuk says, “It will be when you enter the Land”- when a person makes his appearance in this world, “and dwell in it”- he should sit in the house of study, not wasting his time with idleness, “that you shall take of the first (מראשית) of every fruit of the ground”- he should strive to acquire spiritual assets of Torah for himself, as the Torah is called ראשית, “the first”. He should thus engage in it until his labors “bear fruit,” meaning, until he will produce Torah novella and bring fruits of Torah wisdom to light. “And you shall put it in a basket”- the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh z”ya writes that the numerical value of the word “אנט” (basket) is 60. This alludes to the 60 masechtot of Shas which every man is obligated to learn during his lifetime. We might also add that, “You shall put it in a basket” refers to the produce of mitzvot and good deeds which a person does. One must amass “baskets” of good deeds, to bring with him as provision for the World to Come. Furthermore, the word והיה in this passuk, has the same letters as the name of Hashem, This means to say that when a person will come to this world, Hashem will be at his side to assist him. A person should never despair, or ask how he can engage in Torah study and mitzvah observance, when the Yetzer Hara rests at the entrance of his heart, waiting to entice him to sin and trying to disturb his service of Hashem. How can he possibly overcome and subdue him? On this, the passuk states, “It will be when you enter the Land,” Hashem Blessed be He, will be there to help you upon entering the Land. Hashem tells man not to worry about the Yetzer Hara. If he would just begin to fight against him, and show a true interest in surmounting him, Hashem promises that He will help and save him from the Yetzer Hara’s tactics. Hashem’s name will be added to man’s, and thus be available to protect him from the Yetzer Hara, as it states, “But Hashem will not forsake him” (Tehillim 37:33).

Thus the Torah promises our reward. “It will be when you enter the Land”- if a person, upon entering this world, shall “dwell in it”- spends his time in a house of study, and “take of the first of every fruit of the ground” - sincerely making an effort to acquire spirituality and be involved in Torah, which is called, “the first,” bear-

ing fruits of Torah novella and Torah-true explanations, “and you shall put it in a basket”- and he prepares the mitzvot as provision for the World to Come - then the Torah guarantees that the way will be paved before him, to reach, “the place that Hashem will choose”- this is Gan Eden.

Man’s purpose in this world is to toil in Torah, perform mitzvot, and guard himself from sin. In this manner, he will arrive at the World to Come pure and clean of any spiritual scum or filth. On the passuk (ibid. 28:6), “Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out,” our Sages interpreted (Bava Metzia 107a), “That your exit from this world should be

be homiletically interpreted. When man toils in Torah, he succeeds in subduing his Yetzer Hara. Thus, at the end of his life, the entire Heavenly Assembly comes out to greet him and praise him, stating, “Fortunate is the one who arrived here with his Talmud in hand” (Bava Batra 10a). Even Hashem, so to speak, is incredulous, and inquires how he reached such an elevated level, overcoming his Yetzer Hara so admirably. “Then you shall call out and say before Hashem your G-d”- the person turns to Hashem and replies, “An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather.” The ‘Aramean’ refers to the Yetzer Hara who, indeed, tried to destroy him by all means possible, and entrap him in sin. But, “Then we cried out to Hashem, the G-d of our forefathers”- the person has the power of tefillah and he utilizes it by calling out to Hashem for succor from the Yetzer Hara. “And Hashem heard our voice”- Hashem indeed heard his prayers and came to his aid to be saved from the claws of the Yetzer Hara. “And saw our affliction, our travail, and our oppression.” Hashem sees the suffering of man and his pain, and he looked at the great labor he expended in the war against his Yetzer Hara. For this reason, He came to his aid and helped remove the stranglehold of the Yetzer Hara so he would not disturb the person’s avodat Hashem. If not for the help of Hashem, a person wouldn’t be able to stand up to his Yetzer Hara.

The pasuk continues with the man’s narration, “And now, behold! I have brought the first fruit of the ground” (ibid. 10). Hashem sees that the person arrives at the gates of the World to Come with the best of his produce, these being baskets full of mitzvot and good deeds which he sacrificed and toiled over during his lifetime. And Hashem responds, “And you shall prostrate yourself before Hashem, your G-d.” In the merit of the mitzvot which he performed, he will be drawn close to the Shechinah and enter Hashem’s inner chamber, to bow before Him. Therefore, “You shall rejoice with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you.” He can now rejoice in the great reward which awaits him in the world of truth, for all the effort he invested in Torah and mitzvot in this world.

We see from all this that the main purpose of a person in this world is to repair his actions and straighten out his deeds through Torah study and mitzvah observance. Alas, if he innocently believes that he is perfect in all his ways, he will never correct his soul, and will remain defective all his days. The Baal Shem Tov z”ya explains the passuk (ibid. 28:66), “Your life will hang in the bal-



On the Grave of Baal Ha-Tanya in Ukraine

like your entry. Just as you entered this world free of sin, so should you leave this world without sin.”

In a different vein we can connect this passuk to the month of Tishrei. “It will be when you enter... and you possess it” The Hebrew word וירשתה can be rearranged to spell ה-הו תשרי. This tells us that Hashem gives man the month of Tishrei in order to rectify his ways and do complete repentance from his sins. When this takes place, “ה-ה” the letters of Hashem’s name which were separated from “ה-ה” due to a person’s sins and iniquities, will be reunited to make Hashem’s name whole once again.

The passuk continues by telling us (ibid. 26:5) “Then you shall call out and say before Hashem your G-d, ‘An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather’.” This can also

ance, and you will be frightened night and day, and you will not be sure of your livelihood.” He states that a person must fear and worry lest he does not reach perfection and has yet much to repair. He must also search through his mitzvot and check them for deficiencies and faults. He should always be concerned about correcting them. This is what is meant by, “Your life will hang in the balance.” A person’s spiritual life should always be suspended before his eyes, and he should be aware of his many defects, which he has not yet corrected. “And you will be frightened night and day” by all these faults, and you will rush to amend them. “And you will not be sure of your livelihood” tells us that man should not feel secure in his righteousness, as the Tanna stated, “And do not believe in yourself until the day of your death.” A person must constantly be wary not to fall into the snare of his Yetzer Hara. One who feels incomplete and knows that there is much to work on and honestly tries to remedy his faults, is guaranteed success in achieving true perfection. But one who foolishly believes that he has nothing more to fix, is endowed with only good qualities, and feels complacent as if he accomplished all there is for him to do in this world, will certainly never arrive at his true goal.

Upon continuation of our trip among the graves of the tzaddikim in Poland and its environs, by the kindness of Heaven, we suddenly found ourselves at the foot of a large building, which bore the sign, “Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin.” This is the great yeshivah of the holy Gaon, Rabbi Meir Shapiro M’Lublin, z”tl, known as the originator of the Daf Hayomi. Great emotion overcame us. I asked the driver to stop there, so we could visit the place. To our dismay, we discovered a dilapidated, empty building. But a great holiness surrounded us as we entered the Beit Hamidrash. The wooden beams, soaked with Torah and yirat Shamayim from days bygone, instilled in us a longing for ahavat Hashem Yitbarach and His Torah. I told those around me that although this tzaddik is no longer with us, as he is sitting Up High, basking in the glory of the Shechinah, his Torah is alive with us here and now. His pure spirit hovers above us. His great enterprise, the learning of the Daf Hayomi, to this very day, bears fruit. In thousands of Batei Keneset around the world, thousands of Jews, from all circles, sit and engage in this daily study. Indeed, the building is old and deserted, but his spiritual edifice is alive and enduring, eternally glorious. From here I learned a life lesson. A person can ‘plant’ Torah and mitzvot, and his Torah can influence future generations for many years to

come. Fortunate is he who brings merit to the masses.

When we were in Lublin, I asked if we could visit the concentration camp, where over one million Jews were killed, may Hashem avenge their blood. We came only five minutes after the appointed time, yet the gentle watchman, full of impudence, tried angrily to send us away. He was coarse and violent, and wickedness oozed from his impure face. Anti-Semitism burned within him, and terrible cruelty darted from his eyes. All he needed to do was remove his pistol and shoot at us... I told myself, “Woe unto those Jews who were at the mercy of such Anti-Semites, cruelty and venom flowing from their hearts...” Also from this, I learned a lesson. Hashem wants to remind us that in every generation, enemies arise to destroy us. Let us not kid ourselves into believing



In the Ohel of Baal Shemtov in Ukraine

that the hostility of our enemies has dissipated with time. The hatred of the nations toward us is great and powerful. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai says (Rashi, Bereishit 33:4), “It is a given fact that Esav hates Yaakov.” We are in need of great Heavenly mercy to be saved from their claws.

We have related some of our impressions of our visits to the graves of tzaddikim buried in foreign lands, may their neshamot rest in Gan Eden. May their merit stand by us to be saved from all harm, and may Hashem decree only good upon us. May we be inscribed and sealed as one, in the book of tzaddikim, for long, good life and peace, Amen.

# *Educating our Sons to Torah and Mitzvot A Service of Hashem, Done for the Sake of Heaven*

**I**t is known that Chana, the Prophetess, mother of Shmuel Hanavi, was barren. Whenever she ascended to the Mishkan (tabernacle in Shiloh) for the holidays, she prayed and beseeched Hashem profusely for a son. Her words of prayer were (Shmuel I, 1:11), “Hashem, Master of Legions if You take note of the suffering of Your maidservant...and give Your maidservant male offspring, then I shall give him to Hashem all the days of his life, and a razor shall not come upon his head.”

Our Chachamim (Berachot 31a) endeavor to explain this. Why the double language of “הארת האר” – take note? They explain that Chana said to Hashem, “If You see fit to give me a child, that will be very good, and if not, You will take note.”

Chana was saying that if she would not be given the gift of a child, she would have no recourse but to seclude herself with another man. When her husband, Elkanah, would discover this, he would bring her to the Kohen who would give her the waters of Sotah to drink. After drinking these waters, they would enter her insides. Being that she never sinned, she would be worthy of the promise of the Torah, which states that a woman who secluded herself with a strange man but did not sin, will be blessed by these waters, and if she was barren, she will have children. In this way, she told Hashem, He will be obligated to give her children.

I saw that my brother, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, shlita, in his sefer, “Siftei Chaim,” finds this very difficult to understand. How could Chana, the tzaddeket (righteous woman), try Hashem, so to speak, by secluding herself with a stranger, in order to be given the Sotah waters? Chazal have stated (Ketubot 13, Chulin 13a), “There is no guarantee against acts of immorality.” What if, G-d forbid, the strange man would persuade her to sin? Then she would become forbidden to her husband. Who is to guarantee that she would emerge unscathed?



Furthermore, if she purposely put herself into danger of seclusion with a strange man, in order to challenge Hashem, she would certainly receive retribution from enforcers of the law. And, as we asked before, how can she be sure the stranger wouldn't sin with her, G-d forbid?

We know that the holy name of Hashem is erased by the Sotah waters. Could a righteous woman like Chana be willing to allow that to happen, just in order to force Hashem, so to speak, to give her a child?!

I didn't have a chance to see the explanation of the “Siftei Chaim,” as I had to rush on my way, but, in my humble opinion, I would like to offer my own explanation.

## ***1. The Advantages of Performing Mitzvot for the Sake of Heaven***

The righteous serve Hashem purely for the sake of Heaven. When performing good deeds, they have no vested interest whatsoever. We find that Rabbi Eliezer (Nedarim 20b), when having marital relations, did the mitzvah without any feeling whatsoever, completely out of fear of Heaven.

This is quite shocking, as we know that there is no greater pleasure than that of a husband when he is with his wife. Hashem has decreed that man and wife derive



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pleasure from one another. This brings them to love each another, thereby causing the Shechinah to rest in their midst. How will they come to love each other, and how will harmony rest between them, and how will they build a true home in Yisrael? Specifically by means of pleasure and love, will they live in peace, and the Name of Hashem will dwell among them, in their home. Hashem will always be in their presence, as it states (Shemot 25:8), “They shall make a Sanctuary for Me - so that I may dwell among them.”

Despite this, we see that Rabbi Eliezer performed the mitzvah without any physical pleasure at all. He conquered his Yetzer Hara (evil inclination), and endeavored with all his might not to derive any physical pleasure for himself. He did everything for the sake of Heaven, only for the purpose of the mitzvah.

We can bring an example from someone who has no livelihood in his city in the Diaspora. He decides to move to Eretz Yisrael because he thinks that here he will be able to earn a respectable living. Another example is someone who fears living outside of Eretz Yisrael because of the great rise in Anti-Semitism. Notwithstanding his performance of the mitzvah of inhabiting the Land, his original intent was otherwise. His entire settlement of the Land is merely a matter of love which is dependent upon something else, about

which Chazal have stated (Avot 5:19), “Any love that depends on a specific cause, when that cause is gone, the love is gone.” Another example would be someone who comes to the synagogue, when his entire purpose is to meet friends. This can hardly be called doing a mitzvah for its own sake.

Also regarding the mitzvah of marriage, we find this same trait. Many people enter marriage for the purpose of building a house in Yisrael and producing progeny who will perpetuate their name. Also, their intention may be to thwart the Yetzer Hara which is forever plaguing them with thoughts of sin, and therefore they marry, for we know that a woman shields her husband from sin.

Indeed, people often go to the tzaddikim to receive a blessing that they merit having children. They want children in order to keep alive their parents’ names. This deviates, though, from the true purpose of marriage, which is to have children who will be servants of Hashem all their days.

## ***2. Only for Hashem Alone***

When we delve into the matter, we see that the father of our nation, Avraham Avinu, had an entirely different perception. Hashem finally gave him a child when he was a hundred years old. What can be more precious than such a son? Yet, as soon as Hashem told him (Breishit 22:2), “Please take your son, your only one, whom you love-Yitzchak-and...bring him up there as an offering,” Avraham did not hesitate at all and immediately went, as soon as the sun came up, to bring his son, Yitzchak, as an offering on the altar.

This is quite amazing. Avraham had spent so much time praying that he merit a son who would inherit him. Indeed, Hashem granted him a son, and even promised him (Breishit 21:12), “Since through Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours.” Avraham also knew that through Yitzchak the entire nation of Yisrael would come. Suddenly, Hashem was requesting him to take his son and slaughter him on the altar and bring him as a sacrifice. Can we possibly imagine how Avraham felt at that time?!

Avraham knew, from the start, that he was asking a child from Hashem, not for his own benefit, but for the sake of Heaven. All his love toward Yitzchak was in the knowledge that he belongs to Hashem and not to him at all.

Therefore, despite the fact that Hashem had told him, “Through Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours,”

once Hashem told him to take this son and slaughter him, Avraham had no objection to Hashem at all, but went with a happy heart to the Akeidah (cf. Yerushalmi Ta'anit 82, Halachah 4). This was because he knew that Yitzchak belonged solely to Hashem, and Avraham loved him so dearly for that reason. Consequently, he didn't hesitate for even a moment, and went joyfully to carry out the command of Hashem.

Thus we see that Avraham's entire purpose in having a son was to teach him the Torah and the service of Hashem, not merely to love him in the capacity of a father. As we see, at the time of the upheaval of Sodom and Emorrah, Hashem stated that He could not withhold from Avraham that which He decides to do. What reason does the Torah give for this? (Breishit 18:19), "For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice."

Avraham's single goal was to train his progeny to be servants of Hashem and keepers of His mitzvot. Avraham's life mission was completely for the sake of Heaven, without any ulterior motive or personal benefit whatsoever. Toward that end, he craved a son, to increase Torah and mitzvot in this world, and to sanctify Heaven's name throughout the entire world.

### ***3. Shmuel Hanavi, Completely for Hashem***

Now we can better understand the actions of Chana in the Mishkan, when she asked for a son. Chana herself was not commanded to have children, as only a man has the mitzvah of bringing forth children (Yevamot 65b, Kiddushin 34a, Rambam Ishut 15:2). Elkanah already had children from his other wife, Penina, so why did Chana plead so much for a child? Why did it mean so much to her to bear a child, that she was prepared to place herself in danger regarding secluding herself with a stranger in order to receive the blessing of the Sotah waters?

Chana walked in the path of Avraham Avinu. She didn't want a son for the purpose of merely bestowing her motherly instincts upon him. She wanted a son in order to donate him to the service of Hashem. She wanted a son who would be equal to Moshe and Aharon. The Gemara (Berachot 31b) states that Chana heard a heavenly voice announce that a son will be born who will be the equal of Moshe and Aharon. All her aspirations were that this son be hers, so that she could consecrate him to Hashem all the days of his life.



In this matter, Chana distinguished herself from all other mothers who love their children dearly and raise children who reciprocate love. She desired a son who would be solely involved in the service of Hashem. He would sit in the House of Hashem all his life and a razor would never touch his head.

Chana sacrificed all her motherly instincts for the sake of Hashem. From the depths of her broken heart, she beseeched Him, "If You take note of the suffering of Your maidservant." This means to say, "Because I sacrifice myself completely for You, I ask You to see my suffering, that no mishap occur, G-d forbid, through me. Even if I seclude myself with a strange man, the waters should produce a blessing within me, and I should bear a child."

Indeed, because she sincerely poured out her heart before Hashem, until Eli the Kohen thought that she was intoxicated, Hashem immediately remembered her. Eli prayed on her behalf, in order that she should not reach the desperate situation of seclusion with a stranger.

We see proof of Chana's pure intentions, in the name which she gave her son - Shmuel. The name Shmuel is derived from the passuk (Shmuel I, 1:20), "I requested him from Hashem." This means to say that her son was



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considered by her as “borrowed” from Hashem for a short period of time. His entire being belonged to Hashem, and he was at home for only a short while. He would shortly be brought to the House of Hashem, to remain there for the rest of his life.

Therefore, the passuk which Chana sang in praise (Shmuel I, 2:9), “He guards the steps of his devout ones,” was valid. Hashem heeded her prayers. He did not want any misfortune to happen, as our Sages have said (Ketubot 28b, Chulin 7b), “Hashem brings no misfortune through the hands of the righteous ones.” This means to say that Hashem didn’t want Chana to stumble, even in thought, in secluding herself with a strange man, and arousing the jealousy of her husband. For that reason, he saved her, as it states (Tehillim 97:10), “He guards the lives of the devout ones, from the hand of the wicked He rescues them.” The Perek continues (ibid. 11), “Light is sown for the righteous.” Hashem blessed her with a great light, Shmuel Hatzaddik, a scion of the house of Korach, who is hinted at in the passuk (ibid. 92:13) “צדיק כתמר יפרח” - “A righteous man will flourish like a date palm.” The last letters of the words spell the name קרה.

We see from all this, that Chana wasn’t afraid to seclude herself with a strange man. She knew that Hashem would surely protect her from sin. This is because her intentions were purely for the sake of Heaven, to sanctify her son for Hashem, not for motherly love at all. Her trust in Hashem was so great that she knew no damage would result.

Hashem indeed saw her good intentions and immediately sent Eli the Kohen and Tzaddik to pray for her for a son. This was in order that she should not need to test herself by secluding herself with a stranger. Hashem does not desire that we should put ourselves in dangerous and difficult situations, even for the sake of Heaven.

We learn a great lesson from this story. Chazal state (Berachot 31b), regarding Chana who called Hashem, “Master of legions,” that since the time of creation of the world, no one had called Hashem by this name. What she was saying was the following. “Hashem, You have so many legions which You created in this world. Is it so difficult for You to grant me a child? I will, so to speak, force You to give me a son who will be righteous and serve You and do Your will.” For this reason, she didn’t fear of going into seclusion with a stranger. She was willing to undergo humiliation. She was ready to do anything in order to produce for Hashem a son who would love Him as much as she did.

Conversely, Chana trusted in Hashem that He would not forsake her, or bring mishap through her hand. She believed that He would send her a son who would be righteous. Therefore, she wasn’t concerned that the Heavenly name would be erased by the Sotah waters, since by their erasure His name would be sanctified all the more so. It would work wonders in her innards and bring the blessing of children who would sanctify Hashem’s name in public and glorify it throughout the entire world. Hashem saw Chana’s plight, and granted her request. He certainly did not want her to reach the point of tests and obstacles.

From this we learn a lesson for the generations. A person should not request of Hashem something which borders on immorality. Chana relied on Heavenly assistance, for she knew through Divine prophecy that she would beget a son, but Hashem did not want her to carry out her plan. All women must take heed and go in the footsteps of Chana the Prophetess, by praying wholeheartedly for what they need from Hashem, and not put themselves in danger or rely on a miracle.

#### *4. We Don't Rely on Miracles*

I would like, in my humble opinion, to add to this. Shmuel Hanavi himself, the son of Chana, rectified this matter of putting oneself into danger and relying on a miracle. How was this?

At the time that Hashem commanded Shmuel to go to Beit Lechem, and anoint David, the son of Yishai, as king, Shmuel asked Hashem (Shmuel 1, 17:2), “How can I go? If Shaul finds out, he will kill me.” (Shmuel had previously told Shaul that Hashem will tear away his kingdom from him.) Shmuel didn't want to place himself into a test and come to rely on a miracle to save himself. So Hashem told him to take a young calf and say that he was going to bring sacrifices to Hashem, and at that time Hashem would direct him further.

This act of Shmuel served to correct the action of his mother, Chana. She was prepared to rely on a miracle regarding seclusion with a stranger. Shmuel came and taught that it is incorrect to place oneself in a nisayon and then rely on Heavenly assistance for succor. One must go with Hashem with innocence. Even if we love Hashem as much as Chana did, we should not ask to be tempted to sin. And we mustn't rely on a miracle to escape sin.

Chazal tell us that King Chizkiyahu never married (Berachot 10a). Yeshayahu the Prophet, chastised him and said, “You shall die, and you shall not live.” Our Sages explain, “You shall die in This World, and you shall not live in the World to Come. Why? Because you did not get married.” Chizkiyahu replied, “I have not married, for I saw in Divine prophecy that I would beget unsuitable sons who are wicked and do not walk in the ways of Hashem.” Then Yeshayahu responded, “Why do you meddle in the accounts of Heaven? You must do what is mandated upon you, and Hashem will do as He sees fit.”

This is puzzling. Chizkiyahu was justified in not wishing to get married, because he didn't want to bring forth children who would desecrate the name of Hashem in this world. Why was he worthy of such severe punishment?

Yeshayahu explained to him the following. “You are causing the degradation of Hashem's name by abstaining from marriage. Did He not give you the commandment to be fruitful and multiply? Therefore, it is your obligation to take a wife. Hashem may have mercy and your sons may eventually repent of their evil ways. By their

going on the correct path, they will bring glory to His name in the world.”

Chana acted similarly. She said, “If I don't bring forth children, the glory of Hashem will be deficient. If I have a son, I will see to it that he will sanctify Hashem's name and increase His honor. Therefore, it is preferable that I erase the name of Hashem (in the waters of Sotah), so long as I have a child who will sanctify the name of Hashem. If I sit still and do nothing, the name of Hashem will certainly be obscured from the world.” Chana never suspected her son of going on the wrong path. She was certain he would be righteous, acting completely for Hashem. Chizkiyahu also wanted this, that his sons should follow in the ways of Hashem and increase His glory in the world, not to have those who he saw prophetically would one day be idol-worshippers.

#### *5. Spiritual Education, from Childhood*

Because of our many sins, we see today people who send their sons to Torah institutions, but their primary goal is that they should grow up as doctors, businessmen or lawyers... This implies that their sons' future in fleeting matters of the world is more important to the parents than their eternal life. Although they send them to study Torah, their main emphasis is on general studies.

These parents are substituting heaven in place of earth and earth in place of heaven. They subordinate what is of utmost importance, to that which is secondary. This failure in children's education strikes roots at the beginning of their lives. All these parents concern themselves with is their children's future livelihood; they pay no heed whatsoever to their children's Torah learning, which is really the essence of our lives.

It is fitting for these parents to take a lesson from King Chizkiyahu and from Chana the Prophetess. Chizkiyahu's main desire was that his sons be righteous people. He preferred not to marry rather than to beget disreputable offspring. Yeshayahu the Prophet had to explain to him that he needed to do his job, which was to give his children a proper Torah education, as Hashem has commanded.

Similarly, we see that Chana desired a righteous son, completely devoted to the service of Hashem. She stated, “A razor will not be lifted on his head.” The word for razor is מורה, which can also refer to ‘fear’ (מורא), which means fear, is spelled with א, which is interchangeable

with ה). She was asking for a son who feared none except for Hashem. This is a strong lesson in child education for all parents.

Long ago, I wrote an essay on Nadav and Avihu, who were punished (Vayikra 10:), “And they brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them.” This is difficult to understand. If they sinned, why were they referred to as tzaddikim, and why does it say about them (ibid. 6), “And your brethren the entire House of Yisrael shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem ignited”?

Nadav and Avihu intended to do a mitzvah for the sake of Heaven. This is what is meant by the words (ibid. 16:1), “When they approached before Hashem, and they died.” Their objective was to die as a sacrifice to Hashem. In this manner, they desired to show all generations that one must perform the mitzvot through self-sacrifice. That being the case, Hashem completely forgave them, and considered them tzaddikim. Through them, the name of Hashem was sanctified.

Yet, Hashem demonstrated, with their demise, that He does not overlook the iniquities of the righteous when they veer from the letter of the law in mitzvah performance. Moreover, Hashem does not want people to perish in pursuit of mitzvot. To the contrary, it says (ibid. 18:5), “And by which he shall live,” which Chazal have explained (Sanhedrin 74a), “And not that they should die by them.” This is true except in cases of chillul Hashem (desecration of the name of Hashem,) for then a person should die in order to sanctify Hashem’s name.

We see that Nadav and Avihu and Chana the Prophetess acted for the honor of Hashem and instructed future generations to behave likewise. Nadav and Avihu were of the opinion that one must be willing to sacrifice himself for each and every mitzvah, even to the point of death. Chana thought one could test Hashem, so to speak, and to rely on a miracle, in order for one’s prayers to be accepted.

However, Hashem likes neither this method nor that. There is more damage than profit gained by each, and both were, therefore, not accepted by Heaven. But since they meant to bring glory to the name of Hashem (in the ways of Avraham Avinu), they received their due reward. From this we should learn to do everything for the sake of Heaven and to labor to raise our children in the path of Torah and service of Hashem and true fear of Him.

## *In Summary*

Chana the Prophetess, upon asking for a son, used the language “If You take note and remember.” This means to say, “If You give me a son, good. If not, I will seclude myself with another man. You wrote in Your Torah that if the woman did not sin with the stranger, she would be blessed with children. I will thereby obtain the blessing of children.” It is hard to understand this. What if the stranger would sin with her? Then she would be deserving of punishment. How could she rely on a miracle to save her from sin? And how could she try Hashem in this way? Furthermore, how could she be responsible for the erasure of the name of Hashem in the waters of Sotah?

The great ones of our nation act for the sake of Heaven without any ulterior motivation at all. We see that Rabbi Eliezer performed the mitzvah of being with his wife as if he were forced into it. It is known that the essence of man and wife is to derive pleasure and love one from the other, in order to build a house in Israel. The purpose of this is to establish a home on the precepts of Torah and to educate the children to Torah and mitzvot.

Chana the Prophetess went on this path. She wanted a son who would be completely devoted to Hashem. He would be a tzaddik, equal in greatness to Moshe and Aharon. She knew this, and therefore to tested Hashem, so to speak, and relied on a miracle. She knew that Hashem would not allow any mishap to occur, but would grant her a son. Yet, Hashem didn’t want her to do such a test or come to be humiliated, being that her intentions were pure. He had Eli the Kohen pray for her immediately. She merited a son who was “borrowed” by her initially, but belonged completely to Hashem.

## *On a Practical Level*

Everyone has the mitzvah to be fruitful and multiply. But one must know that the purpose of having children is to raise upright children, to serve Hashem, in Torah and mitzvot. Personal interest or ulterior motives should not be involved. It is forbidden to try Hashem, so to speak, and then rely on a miracle for salvation. We should do everything in the proper way. We have seen this with Avraham Avinu. Chizkiyahu, Chana, and Nadav and Avihu also acted solely for the sake of and the glory of Hashem.

# The Importance and Benefit of Education of Our Children

The passuk states (Mishlei 22:6), “Train the youth according to his way”; even when he grows old, he will not swerve from it.” Our Sages have taught (Kiddushin 30a), “Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Nechemya disagreed. One said that educating a child is from the age of sixteen until twenty-two years, and the other stated that is relevant from the ages of eighteen until twenty-four. Rashi explains, “In these days, he should educate him in the way of mussar, which he will follow all his life. They also stated (Ketubot 50a), “In Usha, (where the Sanhedrin was located), they enacted a law wherein every father educated his son until the age of twelve, at which time, the son was responsible for himself.”

The truth is, that parents need to invest much effort in their children’s education, in order that they go on the right path. By nature, a child is born with negative attributes. The passuk states (Iyov 11:120, “Let the one who is [like] a wild ass be reborn as a man!” We also know (Breishit 4:7), “Sin rests at the door.” The Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) was put into a person at birth. For this reason, the Yetzer Hara is called ‘an old man’, whereas the Yetzer Hatov (good inclination) enters a person only at the age of thirteen years (Avot D’Rabi Natan 1:16).

In each child lie negative qualities which accompany him in this world. The parents’ job is to guide him, especially through personal example, in choosing the positive mode of behavior and refraining from the negative. If he will, indeed, correct his improper behavior, he will certainly be forgiven in Heaven for the wrong things he did. As David Hamelech requested (Tehillim 25:7), “Remember not the sins of my youth.”

But if parents don’t take this to heart, and don’t educating their offspring properly, then the converse will take place. “The consequence of a sin is a sin,” (Avot 4:2, Sifri Ki Teitzei 22:13). It will be very difficult to break the negative habits, as, “Even when he grows old, he will not swerve from it.” Since he habituated himself to yield to his temptations, it will become very difficult later on to free himself from them. Without his parents’ direction, a child doesn’t even know the correct way to go.

Moreover, it is the parents’ obligation to accustom their children and involve them in Torah. Our Sages have taught (Sanhedrin 7a), that when a person arrives at the Heavenly Court, he will be judged in matters of Torah before anything else. They also told us (Pesachim 50b), that a person should learn Torah, even if not for its own sake, for through learning for ulterior motives, he will eventually study it for its own sake. When a child is exposed to Torah study at a young age, the Torah cleanses him of his negative characteristics, and thus, when he grows older, he’ll be able to discern the sweetness that the Torah has to offer.

Now we can well understand the matter of the one who cursed (G-d). It states (Vayikra 24:10-11), “The son of an Israelite woman went out-and he was the son of an Egyptian man - among the Children of Israel; they fought in the camp, the son of the Israelite woman and an Israelite man. The son of the Israelite woman pronounced the Name and blasphemed - so they brought him to Moshe; the name of his mother was Shelomit daughter of Divri, of the Tribe of Dan.”



Brit M

Our Sages said (Vayikra Rabba 32:3, Tanchuma Emor 24), “Rabbi Chiya learned that this man wanted to pitch his tent in the camp of Dan, and the people asked him, ‘Why are you pitching your tent here?’ He responded, ‘I am from the daughters of Dan.’ To which they returned, ‘It states (Bamidbar 2:2), ‘The Children of Israel shall encamp each man by his banner according to the insignia of their fathers’ household.’ From this we derive, ‘And not their mothers’ household.’ He immediately entered the courthouse of Moshe Rabbeinu and was charged as guilty. He stood up and blasphemed the Holy Name.”

It seems puzzling. Here was someone who witnessed all the wonders that Hashem did in Egypt, took part in the Exodus, crossed the Sea, sang songs of praise to Hashem together with the entire Bnei Yisrael, heard the voice of Hashem at the giving of the Torah, ate of the manna, and saw the Mishkan. How is it possible for him to come, after all this, and curse the Holy Name?! (Sanhedrin 56a)

Moreover, was it because of the skirmish he had with his neighbor that he arrived at blasphemy? Did that appease him? And if it were mere coincidence which brought these two acts together, why does the Midrash write how

this great iniquity came on the heels of the argument?

Chazal state (ibid. Rashi), that the reason the Torah tells the name of his mother, and does not just relate the story, is to teach that his mother, through her actions, brought about the terrible sin which he did. Her name Shelomit, hints at her behavior. שלומית derives from the word שלום (“peace,” or the colloquial term for, “hello”). She would chatter with all and sundry, saying “Peace unto you, how are you?” She was called בת דברי (lit. “Daughter of Divri”), which means “speaking.” She would speak with anyone and everyone. This was the cause of her eventual downfall. “To the tribe of Dan,” comes to teach that a wicked person brings degradation to himself, his family, and his entire tribe.

Although she knew it is forbidden to engage in much talk with men, she wasn’t careful in this matter and brought others to stumble in the exhortation of the Sages, (Avot 1:5), “Do not converse excessively with a woman.” Consequently, she herself fell and was approached by an Egyptian (Vayikra Rabba 32:8). She begot an illegitimate child, and aside from his father’s innate impurity, he also inherited the negative attributes of his mother. Just as she spoke improperly, so, too, did her son. He eventually arrived at the brink of total destruction, by cursing and blaspheming the Name of Hashem (rachmana litzlan). It is for this reason that those who heard his blaspheming were told to be the first to kill him. This was in order that they always remember his punishment, and be afraid to even contemplate to say what he said. The Yetzer Hara might come and remind them of his terrible words. This could influence their holy minds in a most negative way. His immediate death would constantly remind them of the punishment due to one who behaves this way.

Had the blasphemer, on the other hand, been engaged in Torah study, he certainly would have been cleansed of his father’s impurity, and would not have fallen so low. Alas, he did not receive the proper education. Even though he resided with Bnei Yisrael who are all holy, he didn’t bother to learn from their ways. He stood on the outside and held onto the filth of his father and the negative traits of his mother. This is how he came to curse.

Specifically for this reason, the Torah relates the background of how he became embroiled in controversy. It shows us just how far a person can fall if he doesn’t receive the correct guidance in his youth. A mere argument can bring him to blaspheme the Holy



Wife of Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita's Grandson

Name, G-d forbid. The root of evil is already planted within his blood. This is the meaning of, “The son of an Egyptian man.” The Torah understood the background of the blasphemer, and what brought him to such degradation. It was the rotten roots of his parents. The accusation against him was that, with such a dubious background, he should have been on the alert to keep away as much as possible from any negativity that his parents implanted in him. He should have clung to the Torah which had recently been given, to protect him from wrong. Instead of reparation, he brought upon himself more and more damage, until he reached the lowest level possible.

In my humble opinion, the true blame belongs to his mother, who was aware of her son’s condition. He was the son of an Egyptian, and he had every likelihood of inheriting his father’s evil tendencies, especially that of cursing. We see that Pharaoh denied the existence of Hashem, as is stated (Shemot 5:2), “Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice?” The passuk also tells us (ibid. 2:8), “A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know of Yosef.” He made himself as if he did not know Yosef. In Sotah (11a), we are told that he who denies the good of his friend, will eventually deny the good of Hashem.

Instead of his mother educating him on the correct road, she continued in her evil ways, until he was totally corrupted. He ended up culpable and was put to death.

This is why each person must be extremely wary in the education of his children. He must see to it that they do not receive any negative influences or stumbling blocks. Without proper guidance, in the manner of pure Jewish education, the children can reach the level of degrading Torah and mitzvot, and be likened, in their attitudes to the nations, of the world, even arriving at blasphemy.

If parents eventually return and repent, they can repair only the blemishes on their own souls and bodies. But those that clung to their children prior to their repentance, are beyond their control. The danger lest their children grow up spiritually damaged is constant. Every one of us must constantly pray that none be banished from before Him, and no negativity become part of our offspring, G-d forbid.

About this it states, “Train the youth according to his way.” Parents must labor so that their children don’t maintain negative influences which they may have passed

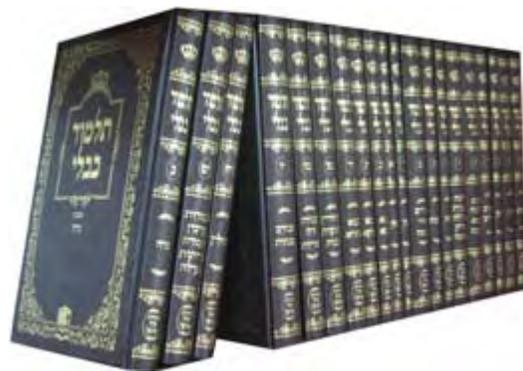
on to them from pregnancy onward. “According to his ways,” refers to the ways of Hashem, meaning that the child should not inherit any negativity from his parents’ deficiencies.

The numerical value of the words “חנוך לנער על פי דרכו” is equal to that of, “למען לך ולבניך אחריו עד עולם” -in order that it will be well with you and your children after you forever (Devarim 12:28).” This should be a source of inspiration for us. Those who give their children sound Torah education will be promised good for themselves and their children forever.

### *In Summary*

The importance of proper education is well known. Everyone arrives in the world with negative qualities and his job is to channel them properly. He is capable of doing this only if his parents guide him correctly. Moreover, it is mandatory upon parents to accustom their children to study Torah and be in good company; they must provide a pure and holy education for them. Only the Torah can cleanse their hearts and nurture fine character traits. to nurture them in good and fitting character.

This brings us to the matter regarding the blasphemer. Someone who witnessed all the previous miracles was able to reach such an abyss! What profit did he gain by his actions? His original education was corrupt. His mother was blameworthy for her overly friendly attitude, and his father, the Egyptian, certainly did not provide a good example. From the beginning of pregnancy, parents must pay attention to the direction of their children, to guide them properly. If they do so, then even when the children will reach old age, they will not veer from the correct path. Parents also need to pray very much for their children to receive proper training. By doing so, the children will grow up and bring honor to their parents.



# A journey of prayer

A fascinating journey with the tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita and his followers to pray at the tomb of his ancestors in Mogador

*Du Rav Yossef Sofer*

Throughout the years, Morocco merited being home to a sizeable amount of the Jewish people. The cities of Meknès, Salé, Marrakesh, Fez, Mogador, Tangier, Séfrou, and others, have made their mark as cities of Torah, home to great men, giants of the spirit, who illuminated Batei Midrashot the world over with their vast Torah knowledge. They lived in these cities side-by-side with (not such) ordinary Jews, who feared Heaven and served their Maker with simple faith.

With great trepidation, a group of young Torah scholars paid homage to this holy city. Our group was headed by our teacher and Rabbi, scion of holy lineage, the Gaon and tzaddik, Rabbi David Chananyah Pinto, shlita. This journey took place, as every year, a few days before Rosh Hashanah. We wanted to obtain additional zechuyot by praying on behalf of ourselves and all of Am Yisrael for a good year, at the gravesite of one of the saintly men of Morocco, the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, z"ya, whose hilula falls on the 26th of Elul.

We did not travel merely for a vacation. We did not take a tour for the sake of nostalgia. We left behind the walls of the Beit Hamidrash, our homes and families, for four days. It was a trip full of elevation, made by representatives of the kollelim of the Rav, shlita, and of other kollelim as well, all Torah students whom the Rav requested to bring along and include in the hilula of the great tzaddik. It was a trip that we merited to spend together with our great mentor, the tzaddik, shlita, praying at the graves of his holy ancestors.

The following are chapters of the log, which we wrote with great emotion, from the time we left Eretz

Yisrael, throughout our entire stay. It is impossible to completely describe the tremendous feelings we experienced there, but we will try to capture the elevated mood.

## ***Go from your Land***

### ***Wednesday, 22nd day in Elul, 5770, late at night***

Ben Gurion airport. The airplane rises, and we are on our way to Lyon, France.

At a late hour of the night, our plane lands at the airport in Lyon. There, the inviting smile of Shalom, awaits us. Shalom is a community member, who with utmost patience, loads our baggage onto his car and drives us to our hotel.

Only a few hours remain until he will arise for Selichot, but he does not rest until he is assured that we are settled, and have eaten our fill.

### ***Thursday, 23rd day in Elul, 6:00 A. M.***

The day opens with Selichot, and tefillat Shacharit at the Beit Hakeneset of Rabbi Refael Pinto, shlita. A special atmosphere greets us upon our arrival, a congregation praying with fervor. The members greet us warmly, offering us siddurim and places to sit. Just before prayers begin, another group of Torah students arrives from Eretz Yisrael. They came via a different route. They had complications with a flight cancellation and a long night flight. But who pays attention to such 'obstacles' when travelling on such a mission?!

After the tefillah, we experience a live lesson in hachnasat orchim from the kehillah. The table is set, and these good Jews see to it that we lack nothing.

At the beginning of the day, a rumor is heard that one of the flights scheduled to arrive at Mogador, was cancelled by the Moroccan airline. Rabbi Refael is concerned about this, and is trying to find other alternatives, together with the heads of the community. But the level of hospitality is not compromised in the least.

We hear about the wonderful work done in Lyon throughout the year. We visit the magnificent mikveh, built adjacent to the Beit Hamidrash which is vibrant with life. In general, we are very impressed by the communal life, established by Moreinu V'Rabbeinu, and led today by his eldest son.

### ***Thursday, 2:00 P. M.***

We travel to the airport. Little by little, others arrive, all emotional, some flying for the first time, and others

remembering previous flights. The emotion reaches a crescendo. We are travelling to the tzaddik! Even those who had travelled there before are excited...

We wait but a few minutes. At my side stands a fellow Jew. It seems to me that he needs to share his stormy emotions with me. It is his first visit. I look into his eyes and see tremendous faith. He speaks with contagious enthusiasm. He is certain that the delay is an inseparable part of the prepara-



tion, a necessary zechut to reach the great tzaddik. We are all caught up in his enthusiasm. Suddenly, all of the postponements do not bother us anymore.

Rabbi Amos, a man with a special smile, one who used to be very involved in running the Rav's institutions in Eretz Yisrael, holds in his hand a silver-headed cane. At my wonder, his smile broadens. He is proud to tell me, "This is the cane of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zt'l." It was an object which merited serving the tzaddik, upon which he rested. Would that it could open its mouth and tell us of the tefillot, the deeds and behaviors of the tzaddik to whom it was so close!

During take-off and landing, the plane plays Moroccan music. The passengers break into song and beat, in honor of the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy"a. A rela-

tively short flight brings us to another world. We reach the climate of Africa. Everything looks different, despite the culture and language being familiar to me from my childhood days.

### *All have Arrived*

Hundreds have come to Morocco, brought by a convoy of planes. Their destination is Mogador, also called, "Essaoira" by the people. The name Essaoira was designated because of the city's beauty, as the word means, "a picture postcard."

They arrive from Mexico, Austria, New York, Los Angeles and Argentina, from England, and obviously, from France, the headquarters of Rabbi David Chananyah Pinto shlita, who stands at the helm of this unique tour.

All seem excited at the zechut to participate in this great event, in honor of the great well-known tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"a. This is the 165th anniversary of his passing, the traditional hilula, which has taken place yearly for tens of years. Every year, more and more Jews join.

Many have left behind world-class business responsibilities, to travel to this North African city on the banks of the ocean. They envision the great tzaddik, famous throughout the Jewish world for his Torah erudition, his diligence in learning, his depth of knowledge, his tremendous sanctity, and the marvelous miracles which he wrought by the power of his Torah study.

Many come to spend time with his esteemed grandson, Rabbi David. He brought many of them close to Torah and mitzvah observance by his sweet words. They desire to hear more of his pearls of wisdom and to spend a Shabbat in true elevation of spirit.

Among those assembled, one group of youths is conspicuous. They are mainly from France. Their outward appearance suggests a modern westernized French lifestyle, and clashes with that of the others. They were brought here by the Rav's sons, Rabbi Refael, Rabbi Moshe, Rabbi Yoel, and Rabbi Michael, shlita. The reason for their participation is that in the past, all came to

the hilula had a spark ignited in their hearts, and they returned to Hashem with full force. As Rabbi Refael explained it to me, “Long periods of deep discussion, and much effort, don’t achieve what three days here can do for them in this electric climate.”

More planes arrive from different points on the globe, landing one after the other, at the special airport which was renovated just this past year for tourism in this city, a large portion of which is in honor of the hilula of the tzaddik.

Our Israeli passports were not stamped, due to the delicate diplomatic relations between the two countries. But the official who took our passports for the duration of our stay was especially courteous, and apologized for this ‘special treatment.’

### ***Thursday, 3:30 P. M. Local Time***

As we exit the airport, we board buses which bring us to our hotel, called, “Mogador.” After a hasty meal and Minchah prayers, the Rav speaks of the great zechut we have to arrive at the hilula of the tzaddik in the very city where he lived.

Tefillat Arvit is said in the atmosphere of the upcoming Rosh Hashanah. The hall is nearly full, and the words, “Amen Yehei Sh’mei Rabba” raise the rafters.

### ***Simchat Hatorah***

### ***Thursday, 9:30 P.M.***

Towards evening time, there is a hachnasat sefer Torah, which was donated l’ilui nishmat Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy”a. After the philanthropists and heads of the community publicly filled in the last letters, all are invited to a luxurious seudat mitzvah. The courses are interspersed with divrei Torah. The red carpets spread upon the floor, add a festive look to the pedestal which is covered in white lace. The authentic Moroccan band bursts forth, every so often, in pleasant song, the strains of which every Moroccan Jew recognizes.

During the course of the evening we are already able to see the tremendous power of kiruv, which we would experience for the next three days.

Suddenly, without advance warning, a group of youngsters approaches the dais and bursts forth in song! It is so full of energy that the guards at the door peek inside in wonder. The Moroccan waiters, carrying trays laden with food, also stop short in their tracks. It seemed as though the entire city holds its breath from this spon-



taneous outburst, which gains momentum from one moment to the next as more and more youths (as well as some adults) join in the exalted singing.

With beads of perspiration on their faces, they are swept up by the holy words put to music by Moroccan composers, side-by-side with popular Chassidic songs, which expresses deep yearning. The Rav encourages the singing. He himself stands on a chair in order to promote singing from all sides, which shakes the very building.

Suddenly, a song is sung in French. One sentence is repeated over and over again. It is a catchy tune, sung with devotion. I ask for a translation, and am surprised to hear, “Who doesn’t jump to hear a d’var Torah!” This means, “Who is not enthusiastic enough to exert himself to hear words of Torah?!” (This is a free translation as the original French is better...)

It's hard not to become swept up in this experience, which repeats itself throughout the next three days. These are young boys who just a couple of months ago had no knowledge of their Jewishness, barely maintaining ties with their heritage. And yet, here they stand, singing with all their might. Their faces are sweating and their hearts are beating with an intense longing. They proclaim how the most natural thing in the world is to crave words of Torah, to pursue them and to be warmed by them.

Later on, one of those close to the Rav points to one of the participants stating, "Do you see him? The one sitting over there, with the appearance of a Torah-observant Jew... Just three years ago he looked exactly like the others. Today, he sits and learns Torah six hours every day!"

"I do all in my power to bring them close," whispers the Rav to me, at an interval during the Friday night seudah between the singing and the pouring of a "L'chaim" for the long row of people who pass before him. This row is in essence a testimony to the loving manner in which the Rav brings so many people closer to their Father in Heaven. "What doesn't one do to bring another Jew closer?" sighs the Rav, after the fifth interruption (I counted!) from tasting anything of his Shabbat seudah.

### *Time for Tefillah*

*Friday, 8:45 A. M.*

Our goal is neither the tourist attractions nor the fortress; neither the colorful marketplaces, nor the Portuguese cannon exhibit called "Haskalah" which majestically overlooks the wide sea and has become a symbol of the city.

Rather, immediately after morning prayers, we all ascend onto the buses which bring us to the ancient cem-

etery. More specifically, to the cemeteries, for there are two of them, one opposite the other on either side of the street, on the river bank next to the impressive city walls.

In a hall especially built a few years ago for the hila ceremonies, we are treated to breakfast of the finest of Moroccan cuisine.

Giants of Jewry, who were true Torah scholars, are buried also in the newer cemetery. They resided in one of the most important Moroccan cities, in the country where greatness is measured by Torah values alone.

One of the sons of Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy" a, Rabbi Yehudah, who was called, "Rabbi Hadaan," zt" l, is buried here. His tombstone attests to one who was "the perfect scholar". Even more than inscriptions on his gravestone, word of mouth spreads his fame as a righteous, learned man.

Rabbi Hadaan excelled in the simplicity of his lifestyle. He was known as an ascetic. He behaved similarly to the Maharsha zt" l, who would tie the ends of his

peyot to nails in the wall, during his nightly learning sessions. As soon as he would begin to nod off, he would be awakened by the pulling of his hair.

They say that Rabbi Hadaan never wore new clothing. When a new pair of shoes would be brought to him, he would first immerse them in water, in order to make them look old. He was well-known for his acts of charity and kindness. He was most famous for his tremendous wisdom, and advice. He was called, "The wise one of the Jews." Many flocked to him for counsel. Even Binyamin D'Yisraeli, the Jewish ambassador to Great Britain, turned to him for advice. The famous philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore, visited his home.



The group of young Torah scholars stands out among the worshippers, praying for their own personal needs, as well as needs of the nation.

All turn to the burial place of the tzaddik whose hilula it is, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy”a. There is much crowding, as all desire to enter the room built upon his burial plot. They try not to damage the nearby gravestones. Afterward, many candles are lit in his memory, in a special holder built in a place set aside for this purpose. The candles quickly become one big flame.

Many turn also to pray at the grave of a nearby tzaddik. I join them, pondering for a moment or two, and suddenly my heart skips a beat. This is the grave of one of my ancestors! Rabbi David ben Baruch Hakohen Azug, grandson of Rabbi David ben Baruch the First. Our family continues to maintain strong ties with the Pinto dynasty, a connection ‘cemented’ eternally by the proximity of their graves.

My eyes overflow with tears as I pray on behalf of all my family members, the progeny of Rabbi David, zy”a.

### *In the streets of the Melach*

*Friday, 10:30 A. M.*

It isn’t pleasant to enter the Jewish melach (ghetto) in Mogador. The houses which greet us are dilapidated and covered in soot. At the entrance to the city, there are a few barber shops, the type that no self-respecting Westerner would dare to enter, unless he was in desperate need of a haircut, and this was the only place on earth to get one...

A few buildings over, a local Arab pleadingly invites us to enter the local Talmud Torah. The two-story building stands neglected for many years. The power of “bakshish” (“bribe” in the local vernacular; a popular key word which opens many doors in Morocco!) is great, and he shows us around. It seems relatively well-cared for. We take note of the niches in the doorposts, where mezuzot once stood sentinel (diagonally, naturally).

I stand in the courtyard of the Talmud Torah and close my eyes for a brief moment. I see before me a yard brimming with life; shouts of pure, Jewish schoolchildren fill the area. Hot tears well up in my eyes, as I long for a world which will be no more. How many of these children live in the Holy Land? How many of them succeeded in withstanding the ravages of life, and remaining steadfast in their Torah observance which they were

introduced to at this very place, between these dusty, silent walls?

It is hard not to become emotional at such thoughts. I must tear myself away from this bastion of Torah, and continue on with the rest.

When we arrive at the home of Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy”a, in the heart of the ruins of the melach, I am reminded of something I once read in the sefer, “Beit Tzaddikim Ya’amod” (The Home of the Righteous Remains Standing). The tzaddik Rabbi Chaim ben Atar, author of “Ohr Hachaim,” moved to Mogador to flee persecution. He lived for two years in a small room, overlooking a courtyard, until he left the city. The inhabitants of the city maintained his home as a sacred place, and didn’t even allow use of the land around it. Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy”a, decided that it



was the most appropriate place to establish a Beit Hakeneset, which he desired to build l’shem Shamayim. To that end he purchased the lot together with the small house. He used money which had been deposited into his hands by an anonymous Arab (on the condition that he could use it in the meantime), exactly at the time he needed it. The Arab never returned to claim his money. Later, Rabbi Chaim built a synagogue and a room to learn in near that small house. He employed only Jewish men to do the work, starting from the actual edifice, to the planting of trees and putting up fences.

After a time, he moved near this Beit Hakeneset and brought his Beit Din along with him. From that time on, the Pinto family lived in that house, until their departure from Mogador. For more than one hundred and fifty years, this house was a place of Torah and tefillah. It served as a spiritual lighthouse for all the local citizens. As time went on and the population increased, Rabbi Yehudah Pinto zt”l (son of Rabbi Chaim) added a second story, and prayers were held there. This house still stands, among the rubble and ruin of the rest of the homes in the neighborhood. A local woman, dressed in traditional Moslem garb, stands at the entrance to the house. She watches over it, as it has come under the auspices of the township of Mogador. It is regarded a historical landmark, and even underwent renovations some months back.

She points out various rooms, and I translate her words to the group. “In this room, all the generations of the family were born.” “This is the room where Rabbi Chaim Pinto slept.” “And in this room,” she continues, “Rabbi Chaim Pinto learned together with Eliyahu Hanavi.” She pronounces these Hebrew names in perfect Moroccan accent, just as any Moroccan Jew.

It is the same room in which Rabbi Chaim ben Atar resided, according to legend. The family members related to it with a feeling of awe. Only once a year, at the Pesach seder, would they use this room. Once in a while their father would seclude himself there. (This account is also written at the end of the sefer Vayaged Moshe, by Rabbi Moshe Vizgan, zt”l, head of the Marakash community). We all offer a heartfelt tefillah before the ancient Aron Hakodesh. In this building, many miracles and salvations took place. Certainly it is fitting to pray here on the day of the hilula of the holy tzaddik who performed miracles here.

### *Tears and Dancing*

We are overcome with emotion as we enter the room which is said to be the spot where the tzaddik was visited by Eliyahu Hanavi. A special chair, called the “Kisei shel Eliyahu,” stands in the middle of the room, and each person desires to sit on it for a short time, offering supplication for his family and friends. One person in particular seems to be in need of immediate aid, and all join in his prayer. They turn their eyes heavenward, crying with him, and pleading that he be helped right away.

After the weeping, joy bursts forth. As though it were pre-planned, all those assembled stand up and begin a spontaneous dance. Songs in honor of Rabbi Chaim Pinto are sung enthusiastically, with happiness and confidence that Hashem will heed our prayers. The Rav remains standing near the grave of his grandfather in the cemetery, beseeching Hashem on behalf of the hundreds who walk before his ancestor’s grave, one after the other. But his eyes gaze at us from his picture hanging on the wall. He is enrobed in kedushah and encouraging us, with his usual energy and hand motions, to keep on dancing. “Dance,” say his eyes, “For it is a big mitzvah to be happy. Much can be achieved through the power of joy.”

After the dancing, we sit down in what seems to be the living room of the house. One of those present relates stories which took place here, between these very walls. Outside, the sounds of the sea breakers are very clear. Waves come and go, crashing against the wall of the ghetto. But here, as we listen to the miraculous stories, the Jewish nation seems unshakable in their belief in Torah and its scholars.

Much Torah study took place in this house, and was even recorded in writing. But, as the author of the book about the miracles of Rabbi Chaim ben Atar testifies, “I



*Rabbi Michael  
Pinto Shlita*



*Rabbi Yoel  
Pinto Shlita*



*Rabbi David  
Pinto Shlita*



*Rabbi Raphael  
Pinto Shlita*



*Rabbi Moshe  
Pinto Shlita*

found lodging, after eating and drinking their fill. From here, they continued on their way after being given food for the road. From here, also, were sent forth Rabbi Chaim's responses in halachic matters, as well as those of his illustrious sons and grandsons.

***Fishing String for Shabbat***

***Friday, 11:30 A. M.***

After we leave the home of the tzaddik, I am informed by those close to the Rav, my good friends Rabbi Moshe Mirelli, and Rabbi Aryeh Mousabi, that they are going to the nearby market. "Purchases for Shabbat," they state, their smiles hiding a secret.

"What do they still need?" I ask in wonder. The hotel has everything necessary for Shabbat, and in such abundance! I have a feeling that it would be a good idea to join them.

I am not left long to wonder. As they arrive in the market, they ask the passersby where one can obtain fishing string. Then I begin to wonder all over again. "Do they lack fish for Shabbat that these busy people came all the way here in order to go fishing?"

Their single-mindedness in obtaining their request, passing through crooked alleyways and totally ignoring the interesting items on display all around us, demonstrate that they didn't come here for recreation.

They finally find what they are looking for, at a fishing equipment store. It turns out to be quite a popular store, as a sizeable portion of the tourism is located on the banks of the ocean. They refuse the first type of string offered, stating that it is too weak. When they finally find the correct string, the store owner asks, matter-of-factly, how many meters they would need.

Rabbi Aryeh and Rabbi Moshe surprise the shopkeeper and myself, by responding with a huge smile, "All of it!" The shopkeeper clarifies to make sure there isn't a mistake in translation, but again they state, "We want to buy the entire bolt of string!"

A few minutes later, when I ask politely how many fish they are planning on catching, they burst out into laughter. "It is for the eiruv!" they proclaim.

Rabbi Aryeh was asked by the Rav to ensure that an

come to inform you that the Rav wrote many beautiful

essays, but, unfortunately, in the war with Spain, which took place here in Essaoira, they were lost to us." (this was written in Moroccan, and translated recently by a disciple of Rabbi David.)

Rabbi Chaim didn't limit the spread of his Torah teachings to this house. He knew that Torah was the best fortification against the alien winds which were blowing in Mogador. He established and supported a yeshiva gedolah in his town, Mogador, and placed tremendous talmidei chachamim there, who continued his teachings and disseminated them further.

After a while, we leave the house, full of spiritual baggage. We nearly walk out backward in awe, with feelings of holiness. From this door, the light of Rabbi Chaim Pinto spread out to the entire world. From here, he gave charity and performed acts of kindness for all who came. Between these walls, innumerable indigents

eiruv would be set up in order to prevent chilul Shabbat.

### *Chachamim will Inherit Honor*

Shabbat Kodesh, Shabbat of the Hilula of the Holy Tzaddik, in the City where He Influenced the Entire World

Throughout the entire Shabbat Kodesh, we merited many moments of elevation, uplifting tefillot by gifted singers, and an atmosphere filled with longing to come closer and closer, to be placed under the shadow of the tzaddik, our great Rabbi, shlita. We desired to hear more and more of his marvelous messages, which he transmitted at every possible opportunity.

The beautiful singing at the meals, the smiling countenance of the Rav to each of the hundred of participants of the Seudot Shabbat, the tremendous happiness at the distribution of “L’chaim” from the hands of the Rav, the great kiddush Hashem before the local ruler, and the perfect organization with which everything was arranged, was astounding to behold.

Above all, I was uplifted by the divrei Torah which were delivered on Shabbat afternoon. The Rav shlita, and his two sons, each delivered a lecture to a different group. The Rav gave a central talk for all those who came from far and wide to participate, and his sons spoke to the large groups of yeshivah boys who attended, mainly from France. It is difficult to describe the ahavat Torah that became apparent during these lectures. There was a tremendous thirst and a never-ending longing, as they listened intently, not missing a word. It was a combination of respect for Torah, for Chachamim, and faith in them.

### *Kavod HaTorah*

A picture is worth a thousand words, as the saying goes. It is no small feat to express the value of Torah to youth who have no idea of its value, and didn’t imbibe it when they were young. The Rav, shlita, manages to do this with great success. Throughout the Shabbat, we all witness the great value of Torah and its adherents in the eyes of the Rav, in a most practical way.

It is Friday night, Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech. In the grand hall – a tremendous tent built especially for this occasion – hundreds gather, wealthy magnates and the most influential individuals among European Jewry. They all enter and find their place cards.

Approximately one hundred and twenty tables fill up. Only one small group remains standing. This is the

group which has the greatest sign of honor. They await the arrival of Rabbi David Chanayah Pinto shlita, in order to sit together with him, at the grand dais which stands in the center of the room.

The Rav arrives and all stand up in his honor. The group of young Torah scholars, who represent various kollelim, are given the most respect of all. They have the distinction of sitting together with the Rav.

The Torah students are considered the most important in the eyes of the Rav. Those who delve in Torah are the crown jewel of our nation. Torah study is



paramount. If someone wishes to come close to Hashem, he must first study Torah. Only through Torah can one merit reaching the light of yahadut, the light which was part and parcel of our forefathers’ lives from Matan Torah. To our dismay, this light was neglected for generations. But we find that many children are

returning in droves. Many return home, thanks to the approach of Rabbi David Pinto shlita.

### *A Letter from his Majesty the King*

In the midst of the Seudah Shabbat, someone appears and whispers in the ear of the

companied him the first evening we arrived. He arrives bearing a letter from the king himself- Muhammad the Sixth- personally sent.

The Rav accepts him in the center of the hall, away from the table. All of the inhabitants of Morocco, as well as the king himself, are in the midst of their Ramadan fast. The Rav understands that we must honor our guests and be sensitive to their lifestyle. This is another reason for the removal of alcoholic beverages.

The Rav requests that all stand up, and the governor reads the letter of the king in a loud voice. He understands that no microphone is available...

After the Rav thanks the governor for his personal visit, he blesses the king and his empire, his officials and advisors. Only after he escorts them outdoors does the former Shabbat hilula atmosphere return.

On the flight here, we were already informed by one of the organizers that we will be arriving at a Moslem land, during a month when they are forbidden certain pleasures, like eating, drinking, and even smoking.

The unexpected Shabbat visit was a visual lesson of the sensitivity with which the entire hilula was organized.

When the king himself later arrives, late at night, the password is 'respect'. He comes with an especially large entourage of all the local rulers, heads of police, the army, and all important officials. Aside from the police and army officials, everyone, including the king himself, wears traditional Moroccan uniforms, including a shining jalibiya (special cloak), and a magnificent fez.

They sit at a designated table and watch the entire evening, in wonder at all of the goings-on. A new world opens before their eyes. They are especially transfixed by the contagious singing of the youth. Where else can one find such a large number of boys, dancing and rejoicing in honor of the Torah?

At the end of the evening, when it is already very late, the Rav travels together with the king to the grave of the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy" a. It is a token of appreciation for the king's help, which contributed

Rav. The Rav immediately becomes serious and orders all alcoholic beverages be removed from the table (Kiddush wine and such). His eyes turn toward the doorway. Moments later, the local governor appears, escorted by members of his retinue, who had ac-



to the success of the entire journey. There, before all of his attendants, the Rav conducts a special prayer for his success and well-being. Of course, he also makes the special blessing established by Chazal which one recites upon seeing a king.

### ***Hilulat Hatzaddik***

#### ***Motza'ei Shabbat Kodesh, 8:45 P. M.***

Hundreds of people come from all corners of Morocco to join with those who arrived at Mogador on Thursday. They all gather and participate in the giant hilula which is prepared in honor of the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy”a.

Divrei Torah, songs, and an uplifting spirit of true unity pervade the atmosphere. Everything revolves around the axis of emunat Chachamim. All believe in the merit of the tzaddik and his great righteousness, and in the position of his grandson, Moreinu V’Rabbeinu shlita, at the helm of the hilula.

All of the previous sights, which we observed at the hachnasat sefer Torah, and throughout the seudot Shabbat, are repeated with greater intensity.

Tremendous levels of joy and song break all bounds. Stories of the Rav shlita, about the yeshuot which took place in the days of the holy tzaddik, whose hilula we were celebrating, are interspersed with personal stories of those assembled. There are accounts of people in our times who found salvation through the advice and blessing of the Rav. These are stories which can be validated as completely true, as they are told over by those who experienced them. The impression made upon their hearts brought them to make a change in their lifestyle, to come closer to the ways of our forefathers, to a life of Torah and mitzvot.

“This is my greatest nachat,” the Rav tells me in a private discussion. “To hear that in the zechut of our fathers, we succeeded in bringing another Jew closer to our Father in Heaven. That is why we put so much effort into the hilula. This is true respect for the tzaddik.”

### ***Tekiat Shofar in the Fog***

#### ***Motza'ei Shabbat 12:30 A. M.***

One of the highlights of the trip was the heartfelt Selichot prayers, heard above the din of the crashing waves against the wall surrounding the cemetery, as well as the squawking seagulls. After the Motza'ei Shabbat hilula, all assembled for tefillat Selichot in the

cemetery building, which is set apart from the burial section.

The heavy fog prevented photographers from capturing the event on film, but the hearts captured the enormity of the occasion, as approximately one thousand people shouted the thirteen middot to the cry of the shofar blasts – the original shofar of Rabbi Chaim Pinto zy”a.

Two days earlier, upon leaving the gravesite of his illustrious grandfather, Rabbi David Chananyah had told me, “Many of those gathered here have numerous stories of deliverance, which they experienced in the merit of Rabbi Chaim.” There is not enough space to recount all of the stories I heard there. I would like, though, to retell some of the accounts of the Mexican contingent, which I managed to hear. For lack of time, I didn’t succeed in listening to all of them. But it would bring honor to the tzaddik if I were to report even a few lines regarding the “yeshivah which was established on his burial plot” – an appellation for the institutions founded by Rabbi David which are spread across the world.

Hundreds of young Torah scholars learn Torah at these institutions. A prominent yeshivah gedolah was established a few years ago in Ashdod. Many young To-



rah students were turned away for lack of space. On the trip to Mogador, I saw an additional ‘yeshivah’. This is the one in which the Rav ‘builds up’ people, nearly from scratch.

At the local marketplace, I was impressed at the way the merchandise on the fruit stands was arranged in a most appealing manner. Thousands of olives were set up with utmost patience, one upon the other, in a perfect pyramid. Similarly, one Jew at a time, each the product of years of work, is joined together with others, to form one big congregation, whose branches reach all corners of the world. These are all people who were directly affected by the fiery personality of Rabbi David.

At the beginning and at the end of our journey, I was hosted, together with the group of Torah scholars from Eretz Yisrael, in the city of Lyon, the starting point of this Torah network. Today, the center of the Rav’s work is located in Paris. His son, Rabbi Refael, shlita, runs the institution on a high level. The hachnasat orchim which we experienced was unique by any standard. The hosts went out of their way to make our visit as pleasant as possible. Members of the congregation took us from the airport and back again on our return trip home. (On one of the trips, we merited our own miracle, while travelling in a car, which, although elegant, was extremely

small, yet was able to contain so many people...) Their concern that all our needs be met, in all kinds of weather, was amazing.

Furthermore, it was astounding to take note of fellow Jews, who, in Israeli terminology, would be called, “Amcha,” the simple street-Jews, “householders,” at best. Here, with all their less-than-yeshivish mode of dress, they arrived to learn Torah for long hours each day. Some came to hear shiurim, while others came to study Torah in-depth, with study partners, Torah students who were talmidei chachamim.

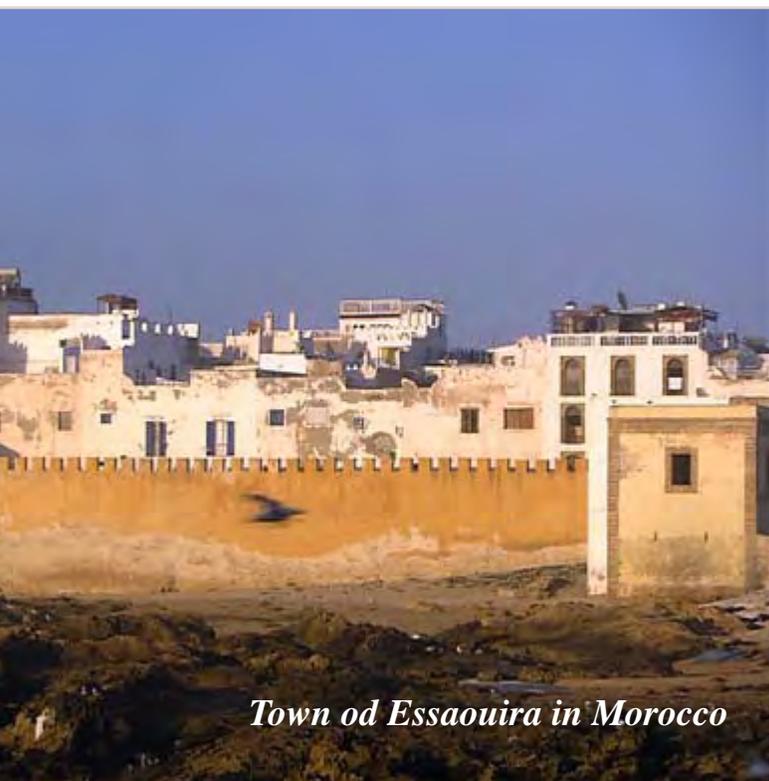
“How do you do this?” I asked Rabbi Refael Pinto, shlita. “What is your father’s secret? What draws these people, with eyes closed, to follow him, accept his rulings, even in basic life matters?” Rabbi Refael smiled his pleasant smile, thought a moment, and answered simply, “They are like our brothers. Many of them grew up with us, eating at our Shabbat table. They received the warmest feelings of family from our father shlita. It seems most natural to me that they would follow in my father’s ways, given such warmth and love.”

A Jewish tycoon, by the name of Gabi Elbaz, president of the kehillah in Lyon, hears my question, and laughs out loud. “What connects me to the Rav? What brings me to attract others to our heritage and accept the guidance of our Rav? Love! I feel that he loves me. Each word of his, every rebuke, comes from a loving heart. How can I not respond?”

### *A Picturesque City*

Mogador is a beautiful city. That is why it’s called ‘Essaouira’, a picture postcard. On the tour we took in the marketplace bordering the Jewish ghetto, we had a picture of another Mogador, the one of difficult day-to-day life: women dressed colorfully, completely covered, only the eyes peering out, shooting arrows of fear.

In recent years, the Fundamentalist factions gained power. The police force is well-prepared...at every street corner, we found security officers, ready for action. This is not how the city usually looks. Law reinforcement was provided twice on behalf of the hilula. Government cooperation was noticeable in all areas. We had police escort on the buses to our hotel and the hilula site. Traffic was halted and displays of respect were granted to us, in a city that knows how to value respect.



*Town od Essaouira in Morocco*

The difference between our reception in Mogador and that of the Jews in Lyon, France (where we spent two days), is clear-cut. In Lyon, many Jews are afraid to appear in public in Jewish dress!

For security purposes, we were booked at a hotel on the edge of the city, overlooking endless sand dunes. Another nearby hotel was designated for the huge crowds. As we open the window of our room, a camel caravan passes by, alongside the wall of the hotel.

The smell in the air from the direction of the sea reminds us that we are in a port city of the past. Not far, stands the fish market with stalls overflowing with fish, one of the city's symbols. One of the fishermen even remembers the Jews of his youth. His greeting of, "Shalom" in Hebrew, together with a few other words in that language, proves this. He tells of many tourists who arrive at this city, who wax nostalgic over the rich past of the Jewish community that once existed here.

### *City Merchants*

"Do you see this group of stores?" asks 'Abed-Rachim,' a shoemaker, who sits together with his brother, in the 'exclusive' section in the center of the local market. "All these stores originally belonged to Jews, or were partly owned by Jews." He stated the name of the original owner of the adjacent store. I immediately recognized his description and the name of his son – a prominent talmid chacham who heads a Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael. He added, "What a shame. After the Jews left, everything changed. There is less livelihood and less commerce. Everything has deteriorated."

In the past, the city was teeming with Jews. In the aftermath of Sultan Mohammed ben Abdullah's closing off access to the ports of Morocco to European merchants, all business was forced into the city. As a result, Essaouira gained acclaim as an outstanding city of industry. The Sultan chose ten wealthy Jewish families, and asked them to reside in Essaouira and develop its export trade. He even bestowed excessive privileges upon them, and exempted them from paying the Jews' tax. These businessmen received the honorary title, 'the Sultan's merchants.' They were held in great esteem as the city developed, and the Jewish community took shape.

Approximately one hundred and fifty years ago, twenty-four out of thirty-nine of the king's merchants were Jews. About forty years ago, thirty out of fifty city corporations were owned by Jews. A portion of the Jews held diplomatic positions, for example, consuls of foreign countries such as Austria and the United States. They had business dealings with European countries, specifically with England and France. (Approximately one hundred and fifty years ago, most of British commerce was operated by four Jewish families.) They were in constant contact with Jewish communities the world over. The Jewish population stood at 17,000, whereas the gentile populace was merely 10,000. They lived side-by-side in peace and harmony.

The city maintained its position until France overtook Morocco, and developed other port cities, such as Casablanca, Tangier, and Agadir. The shallow harbor couldn't contain the modern ships. The Jews began to leave.

"In the early years," one of the long-standing attendees of the hilula recounts, "The look of the city was much more dismal than it is today. Poverty was more widespread. Since the hilula of the tzaddik began taking place here annually, the city began to flourish. Tourism has risen, and commerce has been on the up. It is clear that the locals understand this."

### *From Strength to Strength*

"I became elevated," stated one of the young Torah students on our return trip. "There was a different atmosphere there, something I never experienced anywhere else."

On our return flight, we passed through Frankfurt, and, from there, to Eretz Yisrael. We landed in the wee hours of the morning, after the harrowing flight and the hassles of going from one terminal to the next in foreign countries. The very next morning, I know for certain that the young Torah scholars, among them this one whom I had spoken with, sat in the Beit Hamidrash, in various kollelim in Ashdod and Yerushalayim, poring over their tomes. His words weren't mere platitudes; he really felt a spiritual elevation.

# If a Man and Woman Merit, the Shechinah Rests Among Them

***“Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way, when you were leaving Egypt, that he happened upon you...you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven - you shall not forget!” (Devarim 25:17-19)***

We must understand why the Torah commands us to remember the wrongdoings of Amalek and eradicate them. Why is there so much anger vented against them? The Torah even repeated the injunction of remembering Amalek’s iniquities, by stating, “You shall not forget!” We don’t find this by any other mitzvah. For example, regarding the mitzvah of Shabbat, the passuk states, “Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it” (Shemot 20:8). There is no mitzvah not to forget. We have another mitzvah in our parsha (Devarim 24:9), “Remember what Hashem did to Miriam,” and here, too, there is no mitzvah not to forget. What is it that makes the mitzvah of obliterating the name of Amalek so unique that the Torah doubles our obligation to remember?

In order to understand, let us delve into the matter of marital harmony. To our great dismay, we often hear of Jewish homes which are replete with strife and dissention. Because this situation has become so common, it seems natural to excuse it by saying that some couples are suitable for each other and some are not. But upon further analysis, we notice that the arguments and baseless hatred found in Jewish homes are really quite perplexing, and have no justification whatsoever. At the beginning of their marriage, every couple had intense love for each other. She was his choice of heart and he was hers. Each one delighted in the other. The chatan saw the epitome of all good traits and perfection in his kallah. She, in turn, saw her chatan as the perfect specimen, blessed with the finest qualities. How then, is it possible for these couples to make such a drastic turnaround and exchange their mutual love for hatred, and their marital harmony for dissention?

In order to elucidate, we will preface with a saying of Chazal (Yevamot 62b), “Our Sages learned that he who loves his wife as himself, and honors his wife more than himself, upon him the Torah says, “Then you will call and Hashem will respond; you will cry out and He will say, ‘Here I am!’ (Yeshayahu 58:9).” The Rambam rules (Hilchot Ishut, 15:19), “Our Sages have commanded that a man should honor his wife more than himself, and love her as himself. If he is wealthy, he should spend lavishly on her, as much as he can afford. And he should not place extreme fear upon her. He should speak softly to her, never in a sad or angry manner. Likewise, the woman is enjoined to honor her husband excessively and he should be, in her eyes, like a nobleman or a king. She should do as he wishes and distance anything which he dislikes. This is the path of Jewish men and women, holy and pure in their marriages. When following this code of conduct, they ensure a comfortable home.”

Many misunderstand the injunction to love a wife like himself, and think that their wives need to behave as they do. If they neglect their outward appearance, and pay no heed to their dress, they expect their wives to do likewise, making do with the minimum amount of clothing, simple and cheap. They certainly don’t expect their wives to make themselves up with jewelry and the like. For this reason, they are stingy regarding clothing expenses, and don’t provide their wives with their needs. They should know that they are making a huge mistake, and translating the command of the Torah wrongly. This is not what is meant by, “He should love her as himself.” Rather, it is a man’s obligation is to sympathize with his wife’s feelings and be considerate of them. It is in a woman’s nature to beautify herself before her husband. Therefore, her husband must understand her, and provide for her needs, even purchasing beautiful and respectable clothes with which she can adorn herself. Rashi states (ibid.) that to scorn a woman is a greater sin than to scorn a man. On the contrary; let the husband learn from his wife to wear respectable clothing, which are pleasant and neat, so that his wife will delight in his appearance. This will certainly foster marital harmony, as his esteem in her eyes will be raised. Similarly, regarding their house, if she is pedantic about neatness and cleanliness, let her husband learn to be that way. He should bear in mind that the middah of cleanliness is a basic foundation to reach heights in Torah achievement. As Rabbi Pinchas Ben Yair said (Avodah Zara 20b),

“Cleanliness brings one to ruach hakodesh.” The foundation of cleanliness of spirit begins with cleanliness of our physical surroundings. This is what Chazal meant by their statement that he should love her as himself. They should be as one, with one mindset. Just as she is punctilious with order, and appreciates a clean and orderly atmosphere in the house, so, too, should he keep himself tidy, and maintain order in his house. By preserving his self-respect, his wife will certainly come to respect him.

This is a fundamental element in every Jewish home. Often, harmony is lacking because the husband pays no attention to his outward appearance. He looks slovenly and disheveled. He has no idea that this hurts his wife immensely. She is, by nature, a lover of neatness and orderliness. To our dismay, there are even talmidei chachamim who take no heed to their physical appearance, as befits the sons of a King. The Gemara (Shabbat 114a) tells us, “Rabbi Yochanan stated that a Torah scholar who has a stain on his garment deserves death.” We see that the Rambam (Hilchot Deot 5:9) rules similarly, stating, “The clothing of talmidei chachamim should be pleasant and clean. No stain of any type may be found on them. Talmidei chachamim shouldn’t dress with excessive elegance, in gold or rich purple, which is fit for kings, because this will be too eye-catching. They shouldn’t wear the clothing of paupers, which shames their wearer. They should wear average garments, which are pleasant to the eye. They should not wear clothes which drag on the ground, as the coarse ones do, but, rather, wear clothes which reach just until their ankles. Their sleeves should reach just until their hands. Their shoes should also be respectable, not made up of patches...” He continues,

“Our Sages have exhorted a person to eat less than the norm, if need be, in order to be able to afford appropriate clothing. He should honor his wife and children in this area excessively.”

We have seen many Torah leaders, throughout the generations, who enhanced their appearance. They maintained magnificent homes. An example of this is the Chief Rabbi of Turkey, Rabbi Chaim Phalagi, zt”l. Once, one of the great Ashkenazic Rabbis visited him, and expressed wonder at the opulence of his home. “Didn’t Chazal say (Avot 4:21), ‘This world is like a lobby before the World to Come.’?! Why do you invest so much in a transient world? Also, we learn (ibid. 6:4), ‘This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground... but toil in the Torah.’ Is it fitting for a talmid chacham of your stature to display such splendor?!” Rabbi Chaim responded, “Chazal told us, ‘If a man and wife are meritorious, the Shechinah resides among them.’ This being so, my home is an abode for the holy Shechinah. How can I not adorn the home of the Shechinah, in a majestic, splendid way, as befits the palace of the King?!”

Likewise, we have observed Rabbi Yisrael MiRuzhin, zt”l, one of the great Chassidic masters, who was a descendent of David Hamelech. He conducted himself with magnificence and royalty. His home was beautiful and well-appointed, as befit the child of a monarch. When questioned about this, he responded, “Inside of me resides a holy, pure neshamah, which contains a spark of Divinity. How can I not honor her befittingly?!” Obviously, their intentions were for the sake of Heaven, to bring glory to Hashem Yitbarach and His Torah, and not, G-d forbid, for self-aggrandizement.

From this, one should



learn to be careful with his appearance. It should be neat and clean. He should not act as the neglected and sloppy ones do. When his wife will then take note of his respectable appearance, and his pleasant manners, she will surely be delighted, and respect him all the more. This will bring peace between them and be a catalyst for the Shechinah to dwell among them.

Often, it is the 'routine' which prevents harmony from prevailing in the home. In the matter of mitzvot, we are told (Devarim 11:13), "You will listen to My commandments that I command you today." Rashi there explains, "That they should be as new to you as if you heard them on that day." We are enjoined to be wary of habitual performance of mitzvot, and try to imbue them constantly with novelty and freshness. This injunction holds true in the matter of marital harmony, as well. A man should act toward his wife with respect and deference, as though she were his kallah on the day of their marriage. He should delight in her presence, as though he were experiencing his first month of marriage together with her. Neither partner should allow routine to run its course. Rather, they should reawaken their feelings of love which they had for each other at the beginning. This should be a basic component throughout their marriage.

Along these lines, I thought to translate the following passuk. "I recall for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your nuptials, your following Me into the Wilderness, into an unsown land" (Yirmeyahu 2:1). Am Yisrael became sanctified to Hashem at Matan Torah, as a chatan sanctifies his kallah. Shir Hashirim (3:11) states, "On the day His Law was given and He became one with Israel." Great love prevailed then between the Jewish nation and Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The Navi tells us that Am Yisrael felt such a strong bond with Hashem at that time, as if it were the day of their wedding, when a chatan loves his kallah exceedingly. This is the way Am Yisrael loved Hashem all the years in the Wilderness, just as at Matan Torah. They constantly renewed their love and desire for Hashem and His Torah.

Now we can understand why the Torah was so severe regarding Amalek, and enjoined us to wipe him out completely from this world. Furthermore, we are exhorted to never forget his despicable actions. The reason is that Amalek disturbed the great love which existed between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven. He "cooled off" the flame of affection which was in their hearts. He, so to

speak, created a partition between the chatan, who was Hashem, and the kallah, Keneset Yisrael. From then on, their renewed love for Hashem dwindled as a result of Amalek's attack. The damage will exist until the arrival of the Mashiach, when our original love for Hakadosh Baruch Hu will be restored to the status of the day of our wedding with him, at Har Sinai.

Therefore, we are told to constantly remember his acts, and are again reminded, "You shall not forget!" We should always renew our hatred toward Amalek. This is measure-for-measure for the renewed love we had toward Hashem which was smothered by Amalek. He thwarted the initial love of marriage which we had with Hashem. We have a mitzvah to utilize the power of renewal toward Amalek, and make an effort to never forget what harm he caused us. In this manner, a burning desire to obliterate his name will be built in our hearts, as strong as the fire he ignited by attacking us in the Wilderness.

We can now understand the obligation to remember the Churban Beit Hamikdash every day, at mealtime, during prayers, and on the holidays. Likewise, on the day of marriage, which is the most important day in the lives of the chatan and kallah, the Churban is remembered, as the chapter in Tehillim states, "If I forget thee, O Yerushalayim..." The reason for recalling the Churban is to dwell on its cause, which was baseless hatred. In this manner, we can make a personal accounting and rectify our actions.

We are commanded not to forget the damage Amalek wrought upon Bnei Yisrael, who were prepared to go after Him in the Wilderness, an uncivilized land. They were likened to a woman who follows her husband, Hakadosh Baruch Hu. It was then that Amalek appeared and "cooled off" the faith that they had in Hashem. Bnei Yisrael were instructed to do battle with them, and overcame them, after which they returned to Hashem. We mustn't forget this episode. Only by recalling Amalek's actions and what he caused, will we maintain our faith in Hashem.

May it be the will of Hashem that such rejuvenation be continually within us, in our avodat Hashem as well as in matters pertaining to marital harmony. A man should always feel excessive love and affection toward his wife, as their first days of marriage. Consequently, the Shechinah will find a comfortable resting place in Yisrael, and the Redeemer will arrive, Amen.

## From our Readers



From our Readers

Subject: A BIG THANK YOU

Date: 06/10/2010 01:54:59 Paris

To: [hevratpinto@aol.com](mailto:hevratpinto@aol.com)

I would like to thank you twelve years after a miracle you did for me by the birth of my children.

Good Evening Rav Pinto,

Twelve years after experiencing several miscarriages, I was advised to meet you, something which I did, Baruch Hashem.

During my visit, I explained to you that I was still pregnant, but that doctors had told me that the thick, 3 mm nape of my unborn child pointed to the possibility of Trisomy 21 [Down's Syndrome]. I therefore had to have an amniocentesis, which itself could cause a miscarriage. At that point you prayed for me, and I felt a strange sensation. I had a lump in my throat, difficulty swallowing, and churning in my stomach. After this prayer, I felt as if I were drunk.

You then told me that my pregnancy would go to term and that I would have a boy, followed by several other children, and that I would return to prove it to you.

Thank G-d, today I have five children: Jonathan, Ilana, Yaniv, Keren, and Eli, all in good health thank G-d!

I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart, rav pinto. May G-d bless you and give you a long life, 120 years! Amen!

B.N., age 34 - Chelles, France



From: Arie Ellstein

Date: 2011/3/6

Subject: Letter to Rab Pinto

To: [hevratpinto@aol.com](mailto:hevratpinto@aol.com)

Dear Rab,

Yesterday just ended the Shabaton with you. I wanted to tell you that it has been the most joyful day of my life. I am so grateful to you, for your blessings, your teachings and the

great lessons you have left in my life and my family's life. I finally understood the importance and spiritual meaning of kashrut. I always heard, here and there, what kosher was, but only with you, with your wisdom and spiritual magnitude, was clear how important it is to keep this mitzvah. There is no way to have a kosher behavior if we don't have kosher habits. There is no way to have a kosher life if we don't feed ourselves and our lives in a kosher manner.

And also the meaning of Shabbat took another dimension. I recently read in the Torah that, we Jews, must keep Shabbat under penalty of death. When I read that, I thought it was an exaggeration. But now, after just one Shabbat with you, your son, your son in law, my eyes opened. Your light clarified to me what Shabbat means in the upper levels. Shabbat keeps us alive, not only physicaly, but spiritualy. Shabbat gives life to the family and its interactions. It is the medicine against modern daily life. It brings closeness in all senses. No wonder why Shabbat is the Malkah.

I feel now as a leaf that went up with your air, your Ruach Kodesh. I clearly understand that after the Shabaton it is our responsibility and opportunity to stay in those high levels through the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of the mitzvot. There are no magical formulas. It is a day by day effort. I am willing and ready to do the changes. Once the light is put in front of our eyes, once the message is so clear, once the message is received from You, we can only proceed to do and learn what our ancestors inherited to us, which by the way, is what we will inherit to our sons and their generations.

After a long search, I finally found in You, my dear Rabbi, the spiritual leader I was looking for. Your highness as a person, as a teacher, as a moral influence is magnificent. You are coherent in thoughts, words and actions. You represent what I want my life and my family to become. I am eager to follow the path you have depicted during these days that I had the immense blessing to be close to you. I am certain it will bring us fulfillment and long-lasting joy.

Thank you very, very much.

With all my love, respect, and gratitude.



Subject: THE STORY OF A MIRACLE

Date: 30/11/2010 15:35:47 Paris

To: [hevratpinto@aol.com](mailto:hevratpinto@aol.com)

Where to start?

Let me start at the very beginning.

My name is J.A. I'm 29 years old, and I work at Generali, which has about 5,000 employees. I work in the OPCVM [mutual fund] department, which has about 10 employees,

and I live in Drancy [a Paris suburb].

I pray every Shabbat at the Blanc Mesnil synagogue.

The grind of a daily routine caused my prayers to start lacking kavana, and I was slowly but surely wandering from religion. A young woman from my community married a tzaddik from the 19th district [of Paris]. The name of this tzaddik is Jeremy. During his prayers, I could sense true and sincere kavana. This gave me a desire to pray with the same kavana, and even to learn. That's when my teshuvah began in earnest.

I studied with Jeremy every other Shabbat. We would try and outdo one another on the chiddushim of the parsha.

One night Jeremy called me and asked if I wanted to attend a Torah class on Plateau Street. I agreed without hesitation. In fact I had often started to learn with other rabbis, but could never get hooked on it.

The class given by Rav Yoel focused on teshuvah, and at the end of three sessions I was less enthusiastic about attending. In fact the evil inclination – which to me was the best speaker in the world – had me believing that this class wasn't for me. After all, my teshuvah was already well underway, and it was solid. Yet sure enough, I had a drastic and painful fall. I then humbly started to attend Rav Yoel's class again, and by coincidence he began one session by saying that it's once we start thinking that our teshuvah is rock-solid that it is, in fact, the most fragile. Coincidence? Yes, if you believe that coincidence is G-d's way of going about unnoticed.

From then on, I took it upon myself to NEVER refuse an invitation to attend a class. In fact Rav Yoel offers the best after-sales service: Always available, he is quick and precise. He has my utmost respect.

The class continued, but I felt that I was missing something.

That's when I had the class, and it changed my life. During that class, Rav Yoel clearly taught us how to pray. It appears simple when described like this, but today who knows how to pray? In school we're taught how to read, and we're taught the prayers. But we're not taught how to pray. And yet it's the foundation of everything.

At the end of the class, my kavana was at its height. We began Arvit, and with my tremendous kavana I began complaining to Hashem: "Why did this happen to me? Why?"

And then Hashem answered me before my very eyes: A young, physically handicapped man who regularly attended our class began to step forward, walking slowly and with difficulty. It took a long minute for him to move just a few meters. This young man placed himself before the tevah and began to pray with a degree of kavana that was infinitely

greater than mine, thanking Hashem for the happiness He had brought him. How could he thank Hashem? It was the greatest smack I had ever received in my life. My concept of life had just done a complete 180.

I hadn't been able to understand why my teshuvah had never succeeded. In fact my impatient and impulsive character took me from one extreme to another. Following Rav Yoel's advice, I then decided to progress slowly but surely in my teshuvah. When I felt ready, I would start observing another mitzvah.

I was happy at Generali, thank G-d. I was content with my work and lifestyle. My co-workers were nice, except for possibly one person, who was average.

Her name is J.V. She's about fifty years old, owns a Labrador Retriever, and loves Brittany. It's clear to me that she's a racist (if you don't have blond hair and blue eyes, she won't like you).

Go figure. I challenged myself to change her, or at least to change her into a racist who was less anti-Semitic.

It began with a few cups of coffee, which out of politeness I would offer to her at the vending machine. Little by little, her view of Jews began to change. It's still a Kiddush Hashem that you win.

One Thursday morning in November, I got up in a good mood and decided to start observing a new mitzvah: Giving ma'aser. The day progressed extremely well. At night I attended Rav Yoel's class, in which he explained to us that every action which Hashem does is for our good, even if we don't see it that way. We should also thank G-d for every situation in which we find ourselves. I was a little confused.

I gave my ma'aser and was super-happy for having performed this mitzvah. I asked G-d to give me more so I could give more.

That night I traveled home with my friend Jeremy. At a roundabout, around 10:30 pm, we saw an elderly Jewish man with a cane and carrying a gas cylinder, walking with great difficulty at this roundabout close to Petit Street.

Jeremy said to me, "Last week I saw this man at the same roundabout, and I offered to give him a lift, but he refused." I felt a deep shiver go up my spine, since I too had seen this man at the same roundabout and on the same day, BUT thirty minutes later. How was that possible????

Jeremy then said to me, "Ask him if we can bring him somewhere." I complied, and this elderly Jewish man said that we could give him a lift, and so we began traveling together. Jeremy knew the area well, and he told me that given the speed at which the man had been walking, and the place he was going, it would have taken him two hours to get there.

This elderly Jew blessed us, and Jeremy and I were pumped. We had done another mitzvah, and we had received a blessing!

I dropped Jeremy off at his home (on Petit Street). I was pumped [yet] calm. I had added the mitzvah of ma'aser, I prayed with kavana, and I couldn't remember any sin. Who could do better? Nothing could happen to me now!

About 20 minutes later, I arrived at the street where I lived. I was a few meters away from my home, which I could see. It was midnight, and I came to a red light. All clear – no one there – so I went through.

I then heard police sirens. Two pseudo cowboys emerged from their police car and said to me, "Hello sir. Please pull your car over to the side."

I politely and calmly complied. My last experience, in which I let impulsiveness and anger get the best of me, left me with a bitter taste.

That's when my conversation with these policemen began.

POLICEMAN 1: Look, you just burned a red light. Show me your driver's permit and vehicle registration.

ME: Officer, I don't have my papers on me. I left everything in my other coat. You see that building over there? I live on the third floor. I'll leave you my car keys to demonstrate my good faith, and I'll go get everything you're asking for.

POLICEMAN 1: That's not my problem. You should have your papers on you.

I then showed him a document that was in the car, and on it was my first and last name.

The first officer radioed headquarters to check that my driver's license was valid. He was told that it was. He then got back into his car to write out a ticket for me.

I received a fine for the red light, a fine for not having my license, a fine for not having my car registration, a fine for not having my insurance papers. It was all starting to get expensive.

While the first officer was writing out the ticket, the second officer walked up to the front of my car. He then looked at me and tapped his left fist on his right palm. He was clearly trying to provoke me. Since G-d gave me great physical strength, I would have jumped him if this had happened in the past. However my willpower prevailed.

The minutes passed slowly. I began thinking about the class in which Rav Yoel said that we shouldn't hesitate to "deal with G-d" – to speak to Him out loud and ask Him to be present during difficult moments.

I then began to speak out loud, crying out in my car. I started by complaining: "HASHEM, TODAY I DID EVERYTHING FOR YOU, AND YET THIS HAPPENED TO ME! BUT I'M NOT ANGRY WITH YOU. I EVEN WANT TO THANK YOU, FOR I'M CERTAIN THAT IT'S FOR MY OWN GOOD THAT YOU'VE DONE THIS TO ME!!!! THANK YOU. THANK YOU. THANK YOU!!!!"

The second officer approached me with his menacing night stick in hand, telling me to step out of the car.

We then had a conversation:

POLICEMAN 2: Who were you speaking to? Were you on your cell-phone?

ME: No, I wasn't on my cell-phone.

POLICEMAN 2: Don't play games with me. Who were you speaking to? Don't you have enough fines?

ME: Okay, I'll tell you everything: I was speaking to G-d. I was thanking Him for everything that's happening to me. I'm paying for my sins in this world, so I won't have to pay for them in the next world.

The second policeman then put me up against my car and started searching me for drugs and alcohol. Too bad for him, I don't smoke or drink. He then administered a breathalyzer test.

After having thoroughly searched me, the second policeman found my Generali ID card, which has my picture on it.

The first policeman returned after 40 minutes, and a conversation ensued:

POLICEMAN 1: We have to seize your car and bring you to the station to verify your identity, for nothing proves to me that you're J.A.

ME: I live right over there. Come with me and you'll get everything you're looking for. It will be quick for you and for me.

POLICEMAN 1: That's not how things are done.

POLICEMAN 2 to POLICEMAN 1: His name is really J.A. I found his Generali ID card with his picture on it.

The first policeman began to smile and started speaking to me.

POLICEMAN 1: So, you work at Generali?

ME: Yes, officer.

POLICEMAN 1: By any chance, do you know J.V.?

(Now although 5,000 people work at Generali, J.V. works with me in a group of just 10 employees.)

ME: Yes, why?

The first policeman then made a call on his phone: "Hello dear, how are you? Do you know a certain J.A.?"

I then heard her voice shouting over the receiver: “You leave him alone. I adore that guy!”

The first policeman took out the traffic ticket he had written and tore it up. He apologized and directed traffic so I could return home.

There are three lessons in all this:

1. Gam zu le'tova [“This too is for the good”]. Learning and mitzvot protect us.
2. When a policeman issues a ticket, he can also tear it up.
3. In a couple, it's the woman who decides.

This entire story is true. Nothing has been added or removed. If I hadn't cried out in my car, I would never have been searched, my work ID (which I usually never carry) would never have been found, and this miracle would never have happened.

Kol Tov

J.A.



Subject: A BIG THANK YOU

Date: 30/11/2010 21:18:58 Paris

To: [hevratpinto@aol.com](mailto:hevratpinto@aol.com)

Hello,

I went to see Rav David Pinto for a bracha for little Aura bat Myriam less than two weeks ago, when her life was in danger.

Rav David Pinto immediately realized that she had breathing problems.

Just a few days ago, she still was on a respirator and was being fed through a feeding tube.

Thank G-d, and by the merit of the Rav, today she has fully recovered. She returned to her parents on this very day. The doctors are describing it as a miracle.

It was a magnificent Chanukah gift that this happy family received.

I am sending you a picture of the little princess.

On behalf of the entire family, thank you!

Chanukah Samech!



Mrs. R. Hamias

From S.B. of Montreal

I am the mother of two children, married, and successful in my personal and professional life. Three years ago, doctors discovered that I had a brain tumor. It was operable, but the operation was liable to damage my vision. On the other hand, without an operation it was impossible to know if the tumor was cancerous or not.

During that stressful time, many of my relatives spoke to me about Rabbi Pinto. They even called him from Israel, London, Paris, and from here in Montreal to ask him for advice.

With great confidence, Rabbi Pinto said: “Everything will go well,” and ended the conversation without another word.

I therefore underwent the operation. It lasted 9 hours. The doctors admitted that they could not tell if it was cancerous, and had only been able to extract a small sample for a biopsy. It proved to be a benign tumor, but was growing at a rate that would eventually compromise my neurological functions.

Everything had to be done to remove it. Yet who would do it, and how?

I approached Rabbi Pinto, who encouraged me to get more medical opinions and to consult other doctors.

After having selected a second neurosurgeon, I again went to see the Rabbi. He was as reassuring as ever: “Everything will be alright.”

He gave me his blessing and handed me a biscuit that I wrapped in a towel. When I reached my car, I carefully unwrapped the towel and began eating the biscuit, which was round like my tumor. With every little morsel that entered my mouth, I thought that they would remove it, morsel after morsel until crumbs were the only thing that remained. I ate them and thought: “They won't leave the slightest trace of the tumor.”

The second operation seemed successful. However a few weeks later, an MRI still revealed a dark region. I went to see the Rabbi and shared my concerns with him. This time he raised his hands and told me with great confidence: “You have nothing to worry about! You'll see, it's nothing more than inflammation!!!”

Three months later, another MRI revealed that this dark region was smaller than at first. The doctor finally declared, “It's definitely inflammation.”

I thank Rabbi Pinto for having calmed me down and given me faith during those difficult times. In the hardest periods of doubt, I reminded myself that the Rabbi said that everything would be alright.

What still surprises me is his confidence and resolute tone, which helped me to remain calm, even optimistic, during those stressful moments.

I thank the Almighty for having given me the privilege of seeing my children grow up and blossom. Higdil Hashem la'asot imanu hayinu semechim [“Hashem has done great things for us; we were joyful”].

Likewise, I pray for all the sick among the Jewish people and the world. May G-d grant them a complete healing, as He did for me. Amen.



A story that was told by Mr. Chaim Zwebner, at the wedding of his son, David (“Dovi”).

In order to give you, Dovi and Orlee, a bracha from all of us, I must first introduce a miraculous story and event which is very personal to me, and one of my life experiences. I have waited, and reserved this story, for many years, until tonight

This story goes back a few years ago, when Rabbi David Chanania Pinto came to Toronto, a couple of weeks before Rosh Hashana. It was a mid week, I believe a Tuesday, and I went to visit him. For those of you who do not know Rabbi David Chanania Pinto, he founded the institutions Chevrat Pinto, and is a talmid chacham, a big mekarev, and a mechazek, and an incredibly spiritual man, a descendant from Rabbi Chaim Pinto who lived in Morocco about 200 years ago, and a lineage from a long list of mekubalim that trace all the way back to Rabbi Chaim Vital. I have been visiting him several times a year, and keeping in contact with him, for about 18 years now.

Last week I was in fact in Miami, and I went together with Dovi to Rabbi Pinto, who also happened to be in Miami for Shabbat, to get a bracha. And I asked him if I should repeat this story at the wedding or not. I have been debating whether or not to do so, yes/no; yes/no, and could not make up my mind, and he said yes, say it, with the details. Give a thank you to the Ribono Shel Olam. Why not. Give a thank you to the Ribono Shel Olam.

And I would like to add, that more chasadim that Hashem bestows upon us, the more one must realize how puny and undeserving we are, and how not kochi veotzem yadi it is, and how much more so a person needs to be mashpil himself and mitvadeh himself to the Ribono Shel Olam, and recognize that our existence and our possessions are only bechasdei Hashem.

And anything and everything that exists, and that we receive bechasse Hashem, is solely for the purpose of the glorification of the name of Hashem our G-D.

And with this approach shall I attempt to tell this miraculous story for this purpose.

So, a few years ago when Rabbi Pinto was in town, I go to Prosper Lugassy’s home who was hosting Rabbi Pinto. Upon my turn, I go into the study, and I say Shalom Alechem L’Harav. He answers Shalom, and indicates me to sit down.

He then looks at me for a few moments and says - Chaim - I do not have good feeling. I feel there is a very bad g’zeira

on you, I feel chas v’shalom something very bad, and he waives with his hand signaling as if kaput.

I was not prepared for this, and I did not know what to say, I was speechless.

A after a few moments he then said to me I want you to give me a Kaparat Nefesh, give tzdaka. I said OK, fine. And, he said to me, which he had never said before. How much are you going to give?

I am not sure what drove me, but I instantly committed to \$9,000 almost without even thinking. He nodded his head, looked at me and said, I want you to add a bit more. Push yourself. I said fine and I added another \$1000. He said OK. And I gave him a check for \$10,000. He called me over, put his hands on my head, and blessed me, and said Hashem Yishmor Otcha. And I left.

A few days later, the following Sunday evening I went to bed, and I had a dream.

I dreamt that I was in bed and saying kriyat shema, word after word.

Shema yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem echad, and so on.....

And as I am saying it, I am crying, and tears are dropping down my face.

I finish kriyat shema, and I say hamalach hagoel otee mikal ra .....

Again, mila bemila, word after word, and also crying, and tears are dropping down my face.

At the end of hamalach I say miyemini michael, mismoli gavriel, and after finishing the words: v’al roshi shechinat kel - I scream out in my dream Elaka d’meir aneni, Elaka d’meir aneni and I wake up with a jolt.

I jump up and sit up on my bed. I was sweating, and I touch my pillow and it was soaking wet from the tears from my crying. I did not know what to think, but I knew something was amiss, and I had in mind to call Rabbi Pinto when I get to the office.

I got up, showered, dressed, and went about my way like every other day, and was debating should I tell Leora, yes or no, yes or no, and decided not to. I did not want to worry her or scare her.

I went to the office, and like every other day, the minute I walked in, all kinds of demands needed my attention, and the day wore on.

4:30 pm in the afternoon I get a phone call from a person called Pepi at a company called H.D. Brous. This is a company that we were looking to do business with. He said to me, Charles, you know the meeting we set up for tomorrow, well, Mr. Brous, the principal cannot make it. Do you still

want to come and meet the team, or re-schedule for another time?

Immediately on the spot a flicker went into my mind that said *baruch hashem* I am able to cancel the meeting. In this way I can take Dovi to selichot.

I had scheduled to take a 6:20 am flight to New York, arrive around 7:30, daven somewhere along the way to the meeting, who knows where, and take a cab to be there on time for a 9am meeting. I should never have scheduled the meeting at that time in the morning in the first place, especially during selichot days, it was a big mistake, and now this opportunity to cancel was perfect. I remember saying, thank G-D I can take Dovi to selichot. And that's it.

And that is what I did, I got up the next morning Tuesday took Dovi to Selichot, and davened b'tzibuur.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my appointment that morning with HD Brous was scheduled for 9 am, and it was on September 11 2001, the same day and morning that the planes flew into the world trade center at 9:10 AM, and my meeting was scheduled to be in the upper floors of the world trade Center. If not for taking Dovi to selichot, which was the core reason for canceling the meeting, I would not be alive, and I would not be here today.

The Ribono Shel Olam with some turn of events, had saved my life, and I can repeat again with heartfelt meaning.

“Hodu Lashem Ki tov Ki Leolam Chasdo”



### *True Stories*

#### **We Can't Use Tricks With G-d**

As a youngster, our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita arrived home one day to hear his father, the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto Zatzal (may his merit protect us), asking him where he had been. He claimed that he was returning from the home of a friend, whose name he mentioned. His father then asked him what he did there, to which he replied that they had studied Torah.

Now, we must admit that in his youth, our teacher was an avid player of checkers. As we know, today his only pleasure is learning Torah, but checkers held special interest for him in his youth.

Thus on that day, he was not returning from the home of his friend, whose name he had mentioned, nor had he been learning Torah. Instead he was returning from his sister's home, where he had been playing checkers with his brother-in-law.

His father was completely aware of this, which is why he asked him all kinds of questions in regards to what he had

learned. He eventually realized, with the look on his father's face, that the latter could clearly see what “game” he was playing, and knew that he was lying to him.

When he realized this, he asked his father: “If you knew what I was doing, why did you bombard me with questions?” In his great wisdom, his father replied: “I wanted you to learn not to try and trick G-d, nor to lie. If you had really spent your time learning, you would have had the right to say so. But if you spent your time differently, don't claim to have done something that you didn't. ‘Know what is above you: An eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all your deeds are recorded in a book’ [Pirkei Avoth 2:1].”

#### **Fulfilling their Vow in its Entirety**

On the winding and meandering road that ran through the mountains of Morocco, two men were driving a truck full of merchandise from Agadir to Mogador.

Due to the fact that the brakes on their truck were worn out and practically useless, great danger awaited them. If their truck were to fall off the sheer drop on either side of this twisting road, they would crash into the 1,500 foot ravine below!

Hence before undertaking this journey, our two friends made a vow: If everything went well, they would make a donation to Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan, may his merit protect us.

Suddenly, the driver of the heavily-loaded truck lost control, and it careened into the ravine. As it began its deadly plunge, which for these two men translated into certain death, they suddenly remembered their vow and once again invoked the name of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol. They added that if they were to survive, they would donate all their possessions to Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan, may his merit protect us.

Against all odds, a miracle occurred: As their truck plunged into the abyss, it did not turn over or get wrecked. In fact the two men escaped safe and sound!

Drawn by the racket of the truck plunging into the ravine, the Arabs who lived nearby came running to the scene. When they realized the magnitude of the miracle that had just taken place, they kissed the hands of these two Jews and exclaimed with admiration: “It's not possible! You must be angels! How could you have escaped unhurt from such a fall?!”

Afterwards, these Arabs helped to get them and their merchandise out of the ditch, after which our two friends got back on the road to Mogador.

As they approached the city, they started to regret the vow they had made to give all their possessions to Rabbi

Haim Pinto, thinking instead that a small contribution would be sufficient to extricate themselves from their vow.

Nevertheless, one of them began to have doubts: “What if, through Ruach HaKodesh [a level close to prophesy], the Rav learns of our vow?” However his friend quickly replied, “In that case, we’ll give him all our money. If not, we’ll just give him a token amount.”

Upon arriving in Mogador, they met Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan, may his merit protect us, who warmly greeted them. Having greeted him in return, they gave him a small donation, and then returned to the road as if nothing had happened. They secretly winked to one another as one of them said, “Thank G-d, Rabbi Haim isn’t aware of anything!”

Imagine their disappointment, however, when they heard Rabbi Haim addressing them with a tone of rebuke: “Aren’t you ashamed of yourselves? You disturbed my grandfather, who is resting in the World of Truth, in order to come and rescue you. Yet once rescued, you’re not respecting your commitment! Have you already forgotten how you miraculously escaped death and suffered absolutely no harm?”

Upon hearing this well-deserved rebuke, the two men began to tremble. They begged the tzaddik to forgive them, after which they fulfilled their vow in its entirety.

### **What Emerges from Your Lips**

It is written, “You shall observe and carry out what emerges from your lips” (Devarim 23:24).

Our holy teacher, the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, may his merit protect us, always kept his word. As we know, he remained confined in his home for 40 years upon his father’s order. As soon as he yielded to this demand, he considered himself bound to it by oath, which he would not betray for anything in the world.

During this period of isolation, circumstances compelled him to move to another city. Thus an impregnable wall of men surrounded him on all sides, such that when he actually moved, he was not “outside” per se. In this way he would not be breaking the oath he had made to his father, so great was his integrity and attachment to the truth.

At another time, he walked to a synagogue located an hour and a half away by foot, even though his foot was fractured and walking was extremely painful. He did not yield to the pleas of his relatives at any cost, for they were imploring him to forgo this arduous task. He declared that he had committed himself to it, and did not want to break his word; he therefore had to fulfill it without delay.

Thus despite the suffering he endured, he walked for an hour and a half to reach the synagogue. For him, the most important thing was being faithful to his word.

### **Cleaving to the Truth**

Our teacher, Rav Shach Zatzal, paid special attention to ensuring that the classes he gave in yeshiva were in complete conformity with the truth. When he had doubts as to the veracity of a certain point, although he could have supported his statements using various proofs, he would avoid such a point in class. It once happened that in the middle of one class, he immediately stopped himself when some students raised a question that contradicted his remarks. He did so despite being able to demonstrate that his remarks were accurate, and with supporting evidence. At another time, one student interrupted him in the middle of his explanation and raised a point that contradicted him. The Rav immediately stopped giving his explanation. An hour later, he took this student aside and presented him with a response to his point. “In that case,” the young man asked, “why did you stop your explanation in the very middle?” Our teacher replied, “Although this answer came to mind right away, I needed time to verify its accuracy, and I didn’t want to lose time in the middle of class. That’s why I preferred to stop my explanation.” (This bachur is well-known to us, since today he is the gaon Rabbi Yehuda Ades Shlita, the Rosh Yeshiva of Kol Yaakov.)

In his youth, Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita studied in the Lomza Yeshiva in Petach Tikva during the time that Rav Shach was teaching there. Rav Kanievsky said that on numerous occasions, Rav Shach had various doubts about certain points he had made in class. He would then immediately go from student to student in order to inform him of his mistake.

“I happened to ask my teacher why he so frequently reviewed what he taught and questioned his initial ideas. I mentioned that, besides the fact that most people couldn’t understand why a rav of his stature would contradict himself, it was liable to affect the respect that people had for him and diminish his authority in the community.

“He answered me in an authoritative tone, ‘You’re afraid that this will affect the respect that people have for me? But my respect has no importance whatsoever! Such repugnant “respect” will not prevent me from seeking the truth and cleaving to it! You’re afraid for my authority, but nothing can justify remaining in error!’ ”

In a speech that he gave at the beginning of the year 5753, he said: “In order to maintain one’s level, a person must strive to be humble, not to get angry, and not to grow proud. In regards to what he does not know, a person should admit his ignorance. There is absolutely no shame in affirming something that you don’t know. On the contrary, when you don’t know something and admit it, that will earn respect. Conversely, not knowing something – and not admitting it – is a sign of weakness.”

# An Empire of Torah and Chesed

## The World-Wide Projects of Harav David Pinto and His Sons / Adar 1 5771

### *“He took and placed the Testimony” (Shemot 40:20)*

Rabbi Moshe Midneri expounds on the unique mention made in this passuk. Regarding Moshe’s actions in building the Mishkan, the Torah mentions only the actual placing of its vessels. For example, “He placed the Table,” “He put the Menorah,” etc. Why, though, by the luchos, does the passuk state, “He took and placed”? The answer is, in order to teach us that when it comes to Torah, a person must be a ‘taker’ as well as a ‘giver’. He must accept, and influence others as well. One should not keep his Torah knowledge to himself; he must offer and share it with others.

These words are what guide Moreinu V’Rabbeinu, Rabbi David Chananyah Pinto, shlita, as he tries with all his might, amidst mesirut nefesh, to share his Torah with others and disseminate it among Klal Yisrael. This is our job. Every Jew who is capable of inspiring others to live a life of Torah and mitzvot has a moral obligation to do so, to the best of his ability. He must give those far from Judaism the opportunity to merit absorbing the teachings of our holy Torah. This has been his goal for many years. Baruch Hashem, today his dear sons, may they be blessed, are also pursuing this goal, and they, too, bring zechut to the public, with Siyata di’Shemaya, by sharing their Torah with others.

Rabbi Refael shlita, the eldest son of the Rav, walks in his father’s footsteps, serving as an example for his younger brothers. Rabbi Refael has accomplished great achievements in the cities Lyon and Marseilles in France, as well as throughout the world. Baruch Hashem, he sees today the fruits of his labors. Hakadosh Baruch Hu has blessed him with unique charisma, and

hundreds gather daily to hear his pearls of wisdom. With his sweet and eloquent words, he satiates the thirst of the many who voraciously drink in his words.

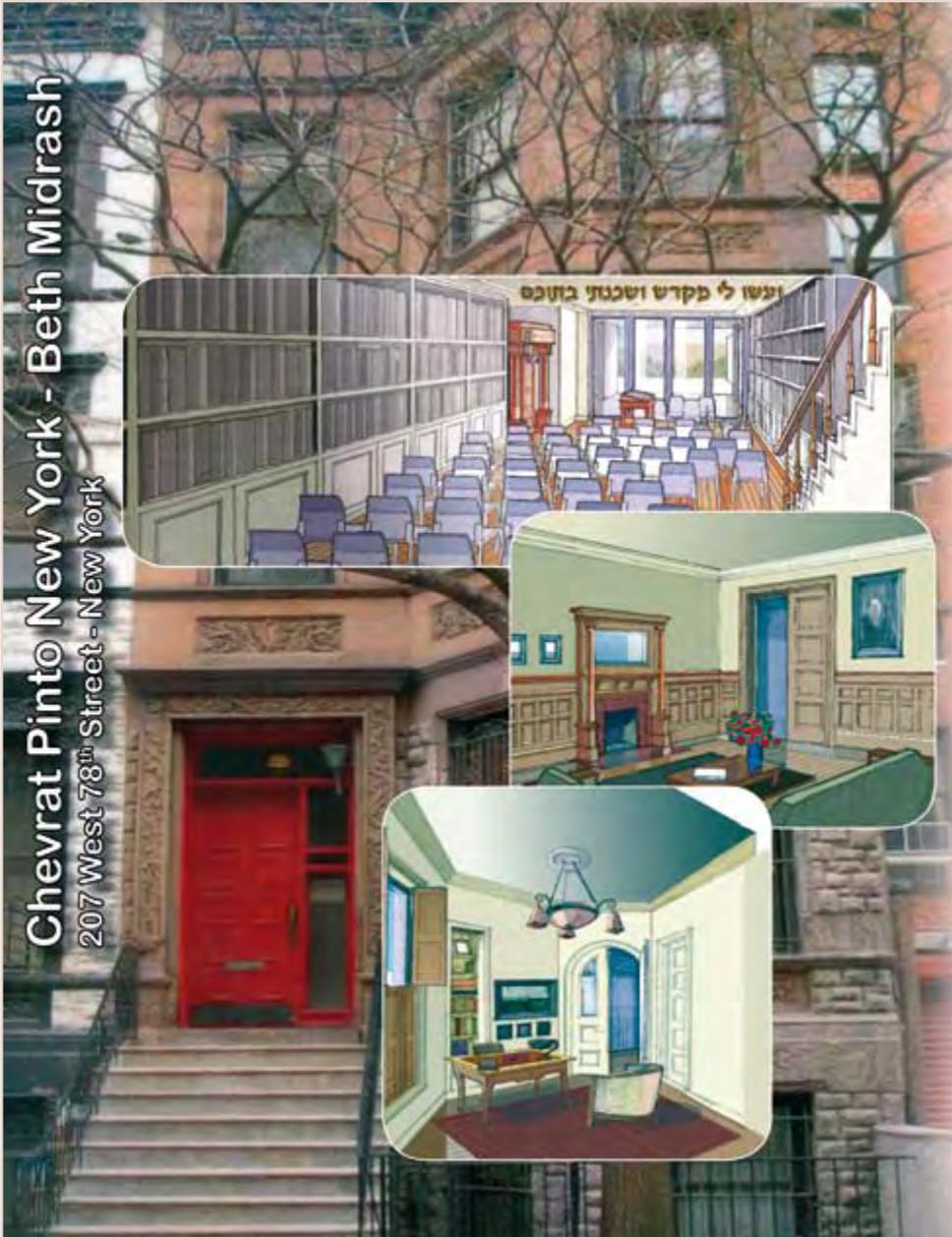
Chazal (Masechet Berachot) state, “One who has fear of Heaven, his words are accepted.” Indeed, the hearts of many have been transformed by the lectures of Rabbi Refael shlita, and they have become true ba’alei teshuvah. Members of their families have also followed after them and returned to their source. Even those who were far removed from any vestige of Judaism, today recognize Hashem and appreciate the beauty of our Torah. They allow themselves to take a refreshing hour break from their daily obligations, and arrive en masse at the Beit Hamidrash to enjoy a ‘taste’ of Torah study.

Chazal (Berachot 34b) say, “In the place where ba’alei teshuvah stand, even perfect tzaddikim cannot stand.” This



*Visit in Buenos  
Aires in Argentina*

Chevrat Pinto New York - Beth Midrash  
207 West 78<sup>th</sup> Street - New York



is because the ba'alei teshuvah have tasted sin and become accustomed to wasting their time in materialistic pursuits. In order to repent, they have to exert vast amounts of energy, tearing themselves away from the vanities of this world. The tzaddik, though, never experienced life on the other side of the fence, and his neshamah was always steeped in kedushah. The nisyonot facing the ba'al teshuvah are thus unimaginably greater. In order to reach the ba'al teshuvah, tremendous patience and fortitude is necessary, combined with wisdom and sensitivity. Baruch Hashem, the sons of Moreinu V'Rabbeinu were blessed with these virtues. With pleasantness and kind-heartedness, they draw these neshamot, with ropes of love, to Torah and mitzvot. As Shir Hashirim (1:4) states, "You have drawn me near, we

rushed with perfect faith." These words are fulfilled by the return of these precious ba'alei teshuvah. In the beginning, they needed to be attracted to the Torah, but once they tasted it, they pursue it willingly and with great joy.

This is in addition to Moreinu V'Rabbeinu's wide-ranging work done throughout the world. He heads prestigious kollelim in Eretz Yisrael. There is the "Kollel Peninei David" in Yerushalayim, as well as a kollel for ba'alei teshuvah and French-speaking mitchazakim in Ashdod. Likewise, there is a Torah institute in the city Ra'anana. There is a prominent kollel in Lyon, France, which is the handiwork of Rabbi Refael. His burden is unbearable, yet he approaches it joyfully, welcoming the work with open arms. His objective is to help Hashem's children, those who never merited recognizing the truth, to return to their Father in Heaven and keep Torah and mitzvot.

Rabbi David's other sons, Rabbi Moshe Aharon and Rabbi Yoel, may they be blessed, perform their sacred duties in the city of Paris. Over one thousand young men find shelter under their wing, attending the shiurim they give throughout the week. They instill into their disciples' hearts the desire to live a lifestyle of Torah and Yirat Shamayim. All this is done with love and tolerance, amidst great self-sacrifice. Realize that in our day and age, it is no simple matter

to bring wayward souls back to their source. The world at large has made tremendous advances in alluring the souls of our children. The Internet, non-kosher mobile devices, and the entire world of computers, reveal all forms of depravity and licentiousness. With the click of a mouse, the image of Hashem within a person can become destroyed. His desires can become uninhibited and corrupted, rachmana litzlan. Tremendous doses of Siyata di'Shemaya and mesirut nefesh are required in order to bring back such a neshamah, one which was exposed to the mire and muck of the media. It takes untold amounts of Heavenly help and self-sacrifice to bring forth the spark of this neshamah, and return it to a life of Torah and mitzvot. Baruch Hashem,



Rabbi Raphael & Rabbi Meir Pinto Zatsal Torah Center in Manchester

bring them to the light of Torah.

Their all-embracing activities aren't limited to a few hours each week. From morning until night, they dedicate themselves to the needs of the public. The onus of the congregation is on their shoulders, in spite of their young age. One can find petitioners approaching them at all hours of the day (and night), each with a different story. One requests a berachah for salvation from his plight, while another asks for advice. Another visitor asks for help in understanding a difficult passage in Gemara. Of course, whatever they cannot resolve, they pass on to their

the dear sons of Moreinu V'Rabbeinu shlita are quite successful in this endeavor. They receive Divine assistance, and see blessing in their exertion. With their pleasant manner they manage to bring back more and more lost sons to their Father in Heaven.

Of course, such extensive activities demand incredible sums of money. Here is but one example. They recently arranged a trip to Eretz Yisrael for these boys. The purpose of this trip was to visit the graves of tzaddikim and give them a feeling of love for the land, so that they should desire to come closer to a Torah way of life.

Most of these boys were not asked to pay for this trip. This is in addition to the considerable expenses involved in organizing Shabbatot and other meals. Similarly, a gala Melaveh Malkah was coordinated in the building of the "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" institute in Ashdod until the wee hours of the morning. Even the smaller details such as obtaining tzitzit and tallitot, are taken care of. All of these expenditures add up to large amounts. The Rav's dear sons willingly solicit funds to supply the boys with all their needs, so long as they are able to

father. In spite of their load, their hearts are filled with joy and satisfaction at what they have merited accomplishing. Their goal is to spread Torah and glorify it. The sons of Rabbi David shlita, Rabbi Refael, Rabbi Moshe Aharon, and Rabbi Yoel, have become famous throughout the world. Rabbinical figures who visit from other countries are impressed, even awestruck by their level of mesirut nefesh. These young men are paradigms of what these



Rabbis want their students to emulate.

The following lines were written in the personal diaries of two representatives who arrived from Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Yitzchak Shitrit, and Rabbi Moshe Benisti. They visited the Torah institutions in Paris, and their hearts overflowed with emotion when they observed a sampling of the wide-ranging activities taking place.

“In the evening hours, Rabbi Moshe Aharon delivers a shiur in the building of the Beit Hamidrash. Approximately one hour beforehand there is already noticeable preparation. Many young men arrive in cars, looking for difficult-to-find parking spots. Others come via long train rides.

Rabbis and their encounter with our institutions in France. Paris, the city of lights, is lit up with the light of kedushah.

Rabbi Yitzchak Saban shlita, son-in-law of Moreinu V’Rabbeinu, trods the same path. He, too, draws from the Rav’s wealth of Torah, and gives others to drink from its wellspring. Today, he heads the esteemed kollel “Orot Chaim U’Moshe” in the city of Ashdod. The kollel numbers over one hundred and fifty young married men, may their numbers increase. They engage in the words of Torah both day and night. The Rav has great joy knowing that they bring a tremendous zechut to the public, one which crosses seas and international borders, done strictly for the sake of Hashem.

Baruch Hashem, the sound of Torah is like the blast of the shofar, reaching far and wide, with institutions in Eretz Yisrael, and throughout the entire world reverberating with its Heavenly melodies. This widespread activity, with its blessed results, requires vast sums of money for its upkeep. Toward this end, Rabbi David visits all corners of the globe, paying no attention to his lack of strength or time. His purpose is to solicit Torah supporters to join him in carrying this heavy burden. Logically speaking, one would assume that he would concern himself solely with the upkeep of his own institutions. He has plenty to take care of; why

should he add to his yoke with those of others? But this is not the way of Moreinu Hatzaddik. He does not refuse helping any Torah institution which disseminates Torah and yirat Shamayim. He knows that Torah is not the possession of the individual, owned by one specific person. Rather, all are equal in the eyes of Hashem. One objective stands before him: That Torah should be disseminated throughout the entire world, and Hashem’s honor should be elevated. What difference does it make to him whether he publicizes Hashem’s Name or others do so?

To the contrary, a major element of Rabbi David’s de-



*Visit of Rabbi David Pinto Shlita in Israel*

The common factor they share is their strong desire and great craving to taste a life of Torah. They yearn to hear the words of Rabbi Moshe Aharon, delivered with grace and warmth for every single Jew, no matter who. Faith in the words of tzaddikim is frequently spoken about. A great yearning for Torah and Yirat Shamayim enters the hearts of the listeners. They sit at the edge of their seats, enraptured by his every word.”An onlooker will notice that the room is packed with overflowing crowds. But that doesn’t stop people from arriving, in their desire to become closer to Torah. These few words summarize the visit of these

votion to the public is to help out any Torah institution, wherever it may be. Representatives of various yeshivot from all parts of the world arrive at France and ask Moreinu to arrange an appeal on behalf of their establishment. Prominent yeshivot and institutions such as “Mir,” “Shaarei Tzion,” “Kol Torah,” and “Beit Rivkah,” are but a few examples. There are many others, too numerous to record. This is besides the institutions in France itself, which, although not directly connected to him, still request his help, which he willingly provides and helps by raising funds.

Another amazing aspect of the Rav’s character, is that he always tries to be the “Nachshon,” the first to contribute to any worthy cause. He offers huge amounts of money. His enthusiasm is contagious; whoever observes it is swept up to contribute as well.

He realizes that after contributing to other causes, many benefactors will not be in the position to donate to his institutions. One would assume that soliciting on behalf of others would detract from his own funding. But this doesn’t bother him in the least. He feels, in his pure heart, with his rock-hard faith, that to think that he is losing out due to another’s gain, is lacking emunah in Hashem. One who sincerely believes in Hashem, understands that, “One never touches that which is designated for his friend, even by a hairsbreadth.”

Rabbi David shlita relates an incident that drives home this point. “A famous Chassidic Admor, who lives in Bnei



*Lecture of Rabbi Moshe Pinto in Paris*

Brak, came to visit France (Erev Tu B’Shevat 5771). He wanted to arrange a Tu bi’Shevat table, and at the same time, raise funds for his holy institutions. Large bulletins were hung up in the streets of the city, informing of the tzaddik’s arrival and calling upon one and all to partake of this special event. Among the names of those who were slated to speak on behalf of the Rebbi and his establishments, was my name. Furthermore, the day before the dinner, the Rebbi invited me personally to participate, stating, ‘The Torah rests upon you tonight.’

A short while before the event was scheduled to take place, I was told that a majority of the invitees did not respond. It could be that there wasn’t sufficient publicity, and a large turnout was not expected. At first, I thought of declining, and I stepped out of my car in order to go home.

What was the point in speaking before a small audience? But then I calculated, telling myself the following. ‘This event is not personally mine. Were this to be my dinner, I would want large groups to arrive, and important Rabbis who would sit beside me. I would be most shamed and humiliated if there would be only a small turnout. The Rebbi is certainly most disappointed. Why don’t I, at least, attend, and give him encouragement?’ I immediately went into action. I turned on my heel, and made my way to the auditorium. Baruch Hashem, we had a great measure of Divine assistance. Although the masses didn’t come in droves, as anticipated, I spoke before the few who were there, in-



*Rabbi Raphael Pinto shlita with his followers in Lyon*



*Lecture of Rabbi Yoel Pinto shlita  
at 32 rue du Plateau - Paris*

spiring them and warming their hearts to the virtues of supporting Torah. With Siyata diShemaya, we raised a sizeable sum on behalf of the Rebbi's institutions. At first, I donated a respectable amount, and the public followed suit. In this manner, I arrived home, happy and glad of the chesed I merited doing that evening. Obviously, I was helped from Above because I put myself in the place of the Rebbi, thinking how I would feel were I in his shoes."

This story illustrates just how compassionate is the Rav's heart in helping others, and just how open is his hand. Measure-for-measure, Hashem helps him to keep up his various establishments.

His perfect faith, combined with his exalted level of kindness, is portrayed by the following incident, told over in his own sweet manner.

"At a dinner arranged on behalf of a yeshivah in Eretz Yisrael, a wealthy man approached me, holding a bulging envelope in his hand. He said, 'Honored Rabbi, this is for your institutions.' I turned to him, and said, 'Thank you very much, but at present, we are collecting contributions for a different establishment. Please, I ask of you, donate this to their institution.' I did this will full knowledge that I would not lose out by my show of kindness to another cause. I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Hashem would make sure I receive what I needed."

After this show of strength and an astonish-

ing level of faith, the miracle did not take long in coming. Rabbi David continues his narrative. "Hashem's chesed is with me always. He grants me a special level of Siyata di'Shemaya. A short time after that dinner, I was in desperate need of \$125,000 to pay the kollel members their stipend. I had the option of borrowing the cash, but my father, Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, taught me that this displays a lack of faith. He always used to tell me, 'Borrow from Hashem and not from human beings.' Meaning, 'Ask from Hashem, and He will grant you all you need, with a wide, open hand.'

That is what I did. I prayed that I acquire the necessary amount, never losing faith in Hashem that He would rescue me and not let me down.

"I would like to interject an episode here, in order to explain the wonders of Heavenly Providence. Earlier, a wealthy Jew contacted me, telling me bitterly that his dear son wasn't developing normally, and he was considerably shorter than other boys who were his age. He asked that I bless him. I responded to his request, and added that there are growth hormones on the market, which could aid his son's growth process. 'Correct,' answered the father, 'But the problem is that they are beneficial only if given at a young age. My son is already fifteen years old.' 'Who told you this?' I demanded. 'Go and ask your doctor to give you these hormones, and B'ezrat Hashem, you will have a salvation.' The doctor, a specialist in his field, heard the father's words, and reacted with scorn, stating that he had missed the deadline. The father, who had emunat chachamim, asked the doctor to give him the hormones nonetheless. The doctor eventually yielded.

At that time, I was in London, when I received a call from the man. He wanted to remind me that the test results



*Lecture at the New  
Beth Midrash at the  
City in Ashdod*

were due to arrive the next day. They would reveal whether or not the hormones were effective. The man told me, 'I did all which you told me to. I hope and pray to Hashem that the condition improves.' I answered, 'Don't forget that I have a huge debt to pay, and I ask you to help me.' His answer was, 'If I hear good news, I promise to donate the sum of...\$125,000 to the Rav!' He specified the exact sum which I needed. I hadn't even told him how much money I needed on behalf of our institutions. This was obviously an act of Divine Providence. The next day, the man called to tell me that the hormones which his son took were more successful than anticipated, much to the doctor's amazement. He witnessed a clear medical miracle. The wealthy man immediately kept his end of the deal, and sent me the entire sum, the exact amount which I needed so urgently.

This is just one example among many. From this we should learn just how strong our faith in Hashem should be. We should never worry that we will lose out by helping others and caring for their needs. To the contrary; one who concerns himself with others and helps them, is helped from on High, above the laws of nature.

The great Kabbalists tell us that Hashem influences the entire creation with His unlimited light, and even so, it does not become diminished in the least. So, too, one who influences others and helps them establish institutes of Torah and chesed is guaranteed that he will never be lacking, and will merit blessing in all he does."

A spirit of purity is spread over all of the activities of Moreinu. Hashem blesses his work. He has merited building beautiful mikvaot throughout the world. This year



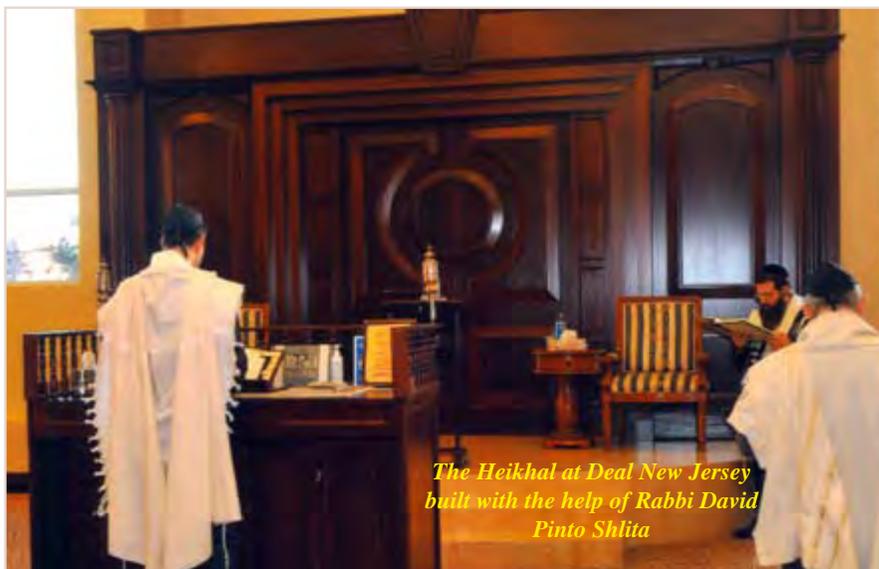
*Under construction the Mikveh in Russia*

(5771), he will unveil a magnificent mikveh in Russia. The Rav describes the events which led to this building, "We were praying at the grave of the Baal Shem Tov in the Ukraine, on the 18th of Elul, 5770. The Rabbi of one of the small congregations in the region approached us, telling us that there were approximately thirty families living there, whose children had reached marriageable age, but weren't able to marry for lack of a kosher mikveh... I asked him, 'Why don't you try to establish a mikveh here?'"

He answered, 'The sum of approximately \$120,000 is needed for this undertaking.'

I immediately sprang into action, and was the first to donate for the worthy cause of establishing a mikveh in the area... I divided the rest of the amount among the others with me, each one committing to give what seemed feasible to him. One donated \$5,000, and another, one of more means, donated \$10,000. In this manner, we reached the necessary figure, Baruch Hashem, and we delivered the money to the Rav. It is difficult to describe the great emotion which enveloped us, being part of such a valued mitzvah. Im yirtzeh Hashem, within a short time, the beautiful mikveh will be complete and open to the public, with much grandeur and splendor.

I did all this with self-sacrifice and tremendous love. I couldn't bear to see a Jewish community without a mikveh. Even though I myself am in need of enormous funds for the upkeep of my kollelim and yeshivot, still, I didn't hesitate from offering help. The purity of the Jewish family is the foundation of Judaism and one of the principles of our Torah."



*The Heikhal at Deal New Jersey built with the help of Rabbi David Pinto Shlita*

Speaking of Torah, how appropriate and touching is the following story we merited hearing from him. “I was once staying in Toronto, Canada, for the sake of strengthening Jewish awareness there. On a whim, I decided to travel to Deal, New Jersey for the upcoming Shabbat. This didn’t logically make sense. It would have been preferable for me to remain in Toronto, for one of our supporters was marrying off a child, and it would have been financially beneficial for our institutions had I stayed put. But Hashem led me to decide to fly to New York. Chazal (Sukkah 53a) state, “Man’s feet lead him on the path in which Hashem wishes him to go.”

The Rav continues, demonstrating in a most exciting manner how one who dedicates his life for the sake of Torah is never abandoned by Hashem. To the contrary, Hashem helps him in all his endeavors. “A huge seminary for girls was opened in France, called ‘Beit Rivkah’. The dean of the school is Rabbi Shontal shlita, a real tzaddik and man of chesed. This seminary is founded on the pillars of Torah and yirah. But a large debt was accrued by the completion of the building and loomed over them. It was decided to arrange a dinner, in the hope of raising these pressing funds. I was asked to emcee the event, encouraging the participants to open their hearts and their pockets for the sake of this cause. But just that week, my precious

grandson, Chaim Saban, became ill and had to be admitted to the hospital. My spirits were low, and I had no interest in attending the dinner.

On the other hand, I knew that a large audience was awaiting my appearance. The seminary faculty members were all depending on me, assured that I would be the ‘agent’ to raise great sums of money. I didn’t know what to do. So I turned to Hashem, and said, “Ribono Shel Olam! See what nisayon You have placed before me. I certainly have no complaints against You, because I know that all You do is good. Still, let us make a deal. I will go to the dinner, for the sake of Your honor. I will do all that I can to help establish their Torah institution. And You, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, please favor us with a refuah shelaimah for my grandson. In this way, we will all profit.”

After a few hours, my daughter received a phone call from the hospital. They happily informed her that the test results were fine and they were pleased to discharge her son from the hospital... Great joy filled my heart, for I tangibly felt Hashem’s Presence with me. I went to the dinner calmly. When I came up to the podium, I related this miracle... Tremendous emotion overtook the crowd, and all began shouting, “The G-d of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, answer us...” Baruch Hashem, there was a special level of Siyata di’Shemaya, and we merited collecting the entire amount necessary to cover the seminary’s expenses.”

The Rav’s wide range of activities is not limited to building Torah institutions and establishing yeshivot, nor is it bound to helping fund mikvaot. “Without flour (ba-



Upon my arrival in Deal, I was accorded great honor. I delivered lectures on safeguarding our religion, strengthening them with inspiring words. During my speech, I noticed that although the Beit Hakeneset was gloriously built, there was no Aron Kodesh to house the sifrei Torah. When I questioned them about this, I was told that there were plans to build an impressive Aron, befitting such a splendid Beit Hakeneset, but they hadn’t yet obtained the necessary funds. I thought to myself that this must have been the reason why Hashem sent me here. From thought to action, I gathered the congregation, and described the virtues of honoring Torah. I stressed the importance of the mitzvah of donating toward an Aron Kodesh. To my utter amazement, not a few minutes passed until the entire sum of \$150,000 was collected.”

sic monetary essentials), there is no Torah.” Man cannot live without money. There are many precious Jews who face financial strains. They cannot make ends meet. Moreinu HaRav is very touched by their plight, and tries to alleviate it with some monthly support. These stipends stabilize them, and often prevent a Jewish home from crumbling.

If this is their day-to-day financial situation, how much more so when facing the expenses of the holidays. The expenses incurred can be astronomical, and people of limited means have no way of obtaining the resources for the basics of the festivals. With the chesed of Hashem, and great mesirut nefesh, good Jews make sure to provide these families with all they are lacking.

Especially at the advent of Pesach, Rabbi David assists those in need in Eretz Yisrael, France and elsewhere. These families are granted ‘kimcha diPischa’ (food parcels designated especially for Pesach), in a most respectable fashion. Included are basic food items, meat, poultry and produce. All this is done discreetly, to prevent these families from feeling any shame. Similarly, the distribution is done away from curious eyes, avoiding shame and embarrassment on the part of the recipients.

Obviously, this empire of chesed demands mammoth amounts of funding. The yearly expenditures total in the millions... but Rabbeinu relies on zechut avot. He believes, “In the merit of our ancestors we trust.” He has faith that Hashem, in His great mercy, will provide for his budget, in order to be able to keep up his holy endeavors. He who assists others is granted assistance from Heaven.

Rabbi David describes how Hashem, in His compassion, allowed him the merit of helping yeshivot in Argentina. “To date, we



*Rabbi Aaron Moshe Pinto  
Zatsal with Rabbi David Pinto  
his son Rabbi Raphael  
January 1985*

are in the midst of establishing a yeshivah in Argentina, which is geared to ba’alei teshuvah. We acquired the building through Hashgachat Hashem and no small measure of Siyata di’Shemaya, above the laws of nature. For three years, the building was sitting empty. In spite of its central location, nobody thought of purchasing it, and it was all but invisible. But just as soon as I decided to

buy it and build a yeshivah there, buyers started popping up all over, desiring its purchase for businesses... I was very afraid of missing the opportunity to obtain the building. What would be with Torah? Suddenly, a complete stranger, one of the local residents, and not even a man of means, came to the real-estate office and stated that he wished to purchase the building. They asked him, “Where do you have the money to buy it?” To which he answered, “I am buying it without knowing why. I may even lose my deposit. B’ezrat Hashem, when the right person comes along, I will transfer ownership to him, and he will pay the required amount...” In this way, he ‘saved’ it for us. Besides that, we were able to purchase it for the original amount. This building is destined to become a place of Torah study, and G-d willing, a yeshivah for ba’alei teshuvah!”

The chesed of Hashem accompanies Moreinu V’Rabbeinu on every step he takes. He sees quite concretely, how Hashem supports and helps him raise the banner of Torah. This is because his intentions are l’shem Shamayim. His entire purpose in this world is to elevate Hashem’s Name and glorify it throughout the world. “I am certain that the merit of my holy fathers stands at our side in all our undertakings, and they come before Hashem, seeking assistance, that we may succeed in all we do.”



*Visit of the Gaon Rabbi Yehuda  
Leib Steinman at the Yeshiva of  
Ashdod*

An oft-repeated statement of Moreinu V'Rabbeinu is the following. "If my berachah on behalf of someone effected a yeshuah, through Heavenly kindness, do not make the mistake of assuming it was my doing. I know that I have no inherent worth, rather, it was the merit of my holy fathers, which stood by me, to have my tefillot accepted.

"When I was staying in London, a woman approached me. She had been childless for many years, and requested a berachah for a child. The sefer Brit Yitzchak, which people have the custom to read the day before a brit, was lying nearby. I blessed her, and instructed her to take the sefer, telling her to hold onto it and return it to me after she gave birth. Approximately one year later, I found myself again in London. A woman came over to me, emotionally informing me that she had a baby boy... She began showering blessings upon me. I said, 'You should know that the main part of the yeshuah was brought by you yourself. I simply gave you the sefer, which ignited the spark of emunah in your heart. But you fanned that spark into a flame within you, believing wholeheartedly that Hashem would hasten your yeshuah. Therefore, you merited it.' There is no doubt in my mind that this woman will forever remember this miracle. In the wake of it, she will come closer and closer to Hashem. When people see how Hashem loves them, and does wonders and miracles for them, they repay Him with love and attach themselves to His Torah. They try their utmost to do His will."

Rabbi David was also the 'agent' to increase the sound of Torah in the United States. He tells of the difficulties he encountered when trying to found Torah institutions there. "We merited building a large edifice in Manhattan, as benefit a place of Torah study. But the Satan gained a foothold, and we had bureaucratic issues to overcome. We must realize that the Yetzer Hara fights with all his might to deter us from raising the banner of Torah and disseminating it among Am Yisrael. He tries to do whatever he can to place stumbling blocks in our path, so long as he can prevent an increase in Torah study. These delays were another ploy of the Yetzer Hara, who does not want to see the establishment of a yeshivah, where the sound of Torah is heard. But it is our moral duty to fight the Yetzer Hara and overcome him. To the contrary; the greater the difficulties placed in our path, the greater the yeshuah we will merit, as the saying of our Sages, 'According to the difficulties, is the reward.'

This edifice of Torah was built and consecrated literally with self-sacrifice. After all was in order, Rabbi Yisrael Baruch Messinger, shlita, (may Hashem grant him a refuah shelaimah), arrived, in order to affix a mezuzah on the entranceway to the women's section. Due to poor

lighting, he suddenly fell into an open pit... He was miraculously saved from death rachmana litzlan, but he was badly bruised, and bleeding profusely. He is, at present, in rehabilitation after a long hospital stay. May Hashem heal him.

I thought to myself that this is the fulfillment of the passuk, 'I will be sanctified by those close to Me.' This miniature Beit Hamikdash was inaugurated and sanctified by the blood of this dear Jew. We thank Hashem for rescuing him from death. Rabbi Yisrael Baruch is very cherished by me, in a personal way. May Hashem lengthen his life with only happiness, Amen.

"Let us learn from here that the Yetzer Hara doesn't stop for a minute. He always tries to disturb Torah study. He is even prepared to strike at a precious soul, so long as he can decrease Torah study. We are obligated to resist his pressures at all costs, and fight him to the end. We should never despair, for we will eventually triumph, as Chazal promise, 'He who comes to be purified, is helped from Above.'"

After recounting these episodes, which speak for themselves, Rabbi David desires to bless the donors, wherever they may be, from the bottom of his heart. They are the ones who help to keep up the wonderful institutions, and raise the banner of Torah, so that Torah can be proliferated to greater and greater degrees: "Hakadosh Baruch Hu should send His berachah from Above, that your hand always be open and your heart compassionate to continue helping Torah institutions. May you always be from the 'givers'. May Hashem grant you your hearts' desires, and those of your households, with all good and blessing.

"I bless my son, Rabbi Michael, who portrays the image of a true Ben Torah, all while bringing closer to Avodat Hashem. May he grow in Torah and true Yerat Shamayim.

"The berachah of Hashem should come upon the Rabbanit, who sacrifices her soul, day and night, for the sake of strengthening bastions of Torah, which are constructed by her sons. There is no doubt that their results are accrued to her merit. This is just like what Rabbi Akiva stated about his wife, Rachel, 'Mine and yours are hers.'

"May it be Hashem's will that she see nachat from them, with long life. May she merit watching them and their children engage in Torah and mitzvot, through health and abundance of Heavenly blessing and success.

"May Hashem's hand be present with us, and may my fathers' zechuyot protect us, Amen."

With best wishes for a Chag Pesach Kasher V'Sameach, and may we merit the geulah sheleimah speedily, in our

# Internet

## The Modern-day Idolatry

By Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita

***“And you shall not bring an abomination into your home and become banned like it; you shall surely loathe it and you shall surely abominate it, for it is banned.” (Devarim 7:26)***

Moshe Rabbeinu commands Am Yisrael before they enter the Land to completely eradicate all of the idols of the nations who resided there. These idols were considered an abomination. Demolishing them was not enough; Am Yisrael were commanded to distance themselves from them, and feel utterly repulsed. From this mitzvah we see just how disgusting and repulsive avodah zarah is in the eyes of Hashem.

In our day and age, there aren't many nations who still serve idols. We do find Eastern religions which worship the constellations or the cow (as in India.) In the past, idol-worship was widespread. Nowadays, with the advent of technology, idol-worship has decreased, reserved for a few backward, primitive countries.

But let us not fool ourselves into thinking that avodah zarah has really disappeared. Although serving idols is out of style, there is a very real modern version of idolatry, and it has claimed many sacrifices.

This modern-day idolatry is the Internet. In spite of all its good, its curse is greater than its blessing. We can't deny or ignore its benefits. With the mere click of a key, whole worlds open up before one's eyes. Instead of running around from place to place, by tapping on the keyboard and moving the mouse, one can bring the entire world on their screen. Due to its wide usage, it has penetrated into thousands upon thousands of households and offices, and the computer has become a vessel for disseminating Torah lessons and Jewish thought. In the past, there were those who declined attending Torah lectures, with the excuse that they didn't have time. But with the development of technology and the availability of the media, it has become much simpler to hear words

of Torah, and during their free time, people can tune in and hear shiurim on any Torah topic, thereby strengthening their Yirat Shamayim.

I do not downplay the effectiveness of this tool, which has shown itself so beneficial and valuable. But, by the same token, I cannot ignore its tremendous danger. Because I am daily involved with the public, I hear all about their problems. I know for a fact that the Internet poses a real threat to the harmony in the home, and to the education of our youth.

I have heard many cases of adults who were caught in the 'web'. They were enticed by its sweetness, but quickly became stuck in its seductive allure. A large percentage of married couples complain about infidelity. They may think that their age immunizes them from the depravity of the streets, yet they fall captive to the Internet. Not employing a filter to protect them exposes them to all forms of corruption and promiscuity.

The Internet, then, is the idol of the 21st century. A person can be drawn to the most immoral 'sites', without anyone watching over him. Whose heart doesn't shudder at the thought of the dangers which lurk at the doorstep of our fellow Jews? Because of its untold benefits, their eyes are blinded to its innate peril.

If the danger to the adults is so great, how much more so to the pliable neshamot of our children, who cannot filter what their eyes take in, and don't have the stamina to withstand the great allure of the Internet. This modern-day avodah zarah poses a real hazard for them.

I remember a case in which a couple came to me, weeping bitterly. They bemoaned the fact that their four children wasted all their time and energy on the Internet, until they had no time left to do their schoolwork. I rebuked the parents, stating that the blame rested with them. They should have foreseen the danger in advance, and prevented their children from becoming entangled

with this destructive machine. Even the gentiles have publicized urgent warnings, appealing to parents to safeguard their children from the Internet, which draws the hearts of the young like a magnet and causes them to spiral downward.

The Internet contains a vast storehouse of worldly wisdom, the good, as well as the bad. With a click of a key, one can obtain information about any and every subject. The souls of these children thirst for knowledge, and they keenly desire to learn more about the wide world. Unfortunately, they easily slide into unsavory sites, even the most corrupt and obscene ones. They witness murder, immorality, and other forms of abomination. The easy accessibility of information, coupled with the pleasure of surfing, attracts the youth to the entrance of abyss. Who knows where they will end up?

Additionally, due to their great interest in the Internet, children have no desire to invest time in their studies. Parents complain that their children spend so much time at the computer, much more than with their schoolbooks. Instead of doing homework, the youth surf the sites of the Internet, wreaking destruction to their souls and debasing their moral values. In this way, all of the proper conduct and moral ethics which they are meant to obtain during their formative years pass them by, rendering them empty of any real substance.

One of the modern-day Torah leaders stated that when children, who are accustomed to computers, sit in front of a black-on-white book, they are terribly bored. They can't sit still for so long, and thus fall behind in their studies. The glamour and glitz of computers, especially of the Internet which is full of animation, fast-moving pictures, and the like, has captured their hearts. The colors and attractive sights, flashing before them at dizzying speeds, combined with all sorts of advertise-

ments popping up on every side, simply fascinates them. Is it any wonder that when they try to concentrate on the written word in a schoolbook or a sefer kodesh, their minds are elsewhere? Besides the terrible images shown on the Internet, these children have utter disinterest in their lessons.

Just like Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe to command Bnei Yisrael to destroy the idols of the nations, and to be disgusted by them, we must do likewise. We must remove and despise this modern-day avodah zarah called the Internet. Even where there is a need to bring it into the house, for work or the like, one should consult a Torah authority on the matter, seeking advice as to how to monitor this potentially dangerous machine.



One who wants to do what is right is helped by Heaven. When Hashem sees a person's sincere desire to come close to Him and remove the dangers of the Internet from his family, he will be successful. In this merit, may kedushah and taharah be showered upon him, and may he be blessed with all forms of berachah, enjoying nachat

from his children, and having peace and harmony reign in his home.

### ON THE DANGERS OF THE INTERNET

*“Come, I shall advise you what this people will do to your people in the End of Days” (Bamidbar 24:14)*

Bilaam merited lofty heights of prophesy and recognized the greatness of the Creator. He prophesized what would happen at the End of Days. Yet he remained a rasha, the essence of corruption. His evil knew no bounds. Immense levels of tumah adhered to him and his head was constantly immersed in thoughts of lust and lechery. Chazal (Sanhedrin 105b) state that he even cohabited with his donkey.

Bilaam desired to transmit this tumah to Bnei Yisrael and defile them as well. When he was unable to curse them, he advised Balak, “The G-d of this nation hates incest. They require linen (for the preparation of tzitzit). Listen to my idea. Set up stalls for the sale of this cloth. Place an elderly woman outside, and a young maiden inside. In this manner, you will be able to entice the men to sin.” His advice was accepted, causing many to sin with the daughters of Moav (ibid. 106a). The passuk (Bamidbar 25:1) states, “Israel settled in the Shittim and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moav.” Hakadosh Baruch Hu became incensed at Yisrael, and a great epidemic broke out, killing twenty-four thousand of our people (ibid. 25:9).

We may not have the attraction of the Bnot Moav in our generation, yet, unfortunately, the same inclination to sin and see all forms of immorality still lurks within our camp, destroying the best of our young men, rachmana litzlan. Today, modern technology has wrought a spiritual holocaust. Any usage of the Internet or a non-kosher cell phone has the capability of bringing a person to the lowest depravity.

I myself know many who have fallen prey to this malady. One who is connected in any way to the Internet, or owns a non-kosher cell phone, should know that he is playing with dynamite. The consequence of using these devices is beyond imagination. Any parent who allows his children to watch videos (even “kosher” ones!), or lets them use non-kosher cell phones, should know that he is digging them a ditch. He will bear full responsibility for their descent into the abyss.

One shouldn’t justify his connection to the Internet by saying that he needs it for work. Today he will use it just for work-related purposes, but tomorrow his Yetzer Hara will entice him to use it for other things. Little by

little, he will spiral downward. Chazal (Shabbat 105a) tell us, “This is the way of the Yetzer Hara. Today he tells a person to do such-and-such... until he prevails on him to serve idols.” This is similar to what transpired to Bnei Yisrael upon the advice of Bilaam Harasha. Initially, the Jewish men left their homes just in order to purchase linens for the mitzvah of tzitzit. Their intentions were certainly l’shem Shamayim, to fulfill the command of Hashem. But, in the end, the Yetzer Hara drew them into the vile trap of abomination. The Gemara (Ketubot 13b) states, “There is no guarantee against immorality.” In this area, the Yetzer Hara wields tremendous influence. A person must distance himself as far as possible from him. If he doesn’t grant this matter the gravity it

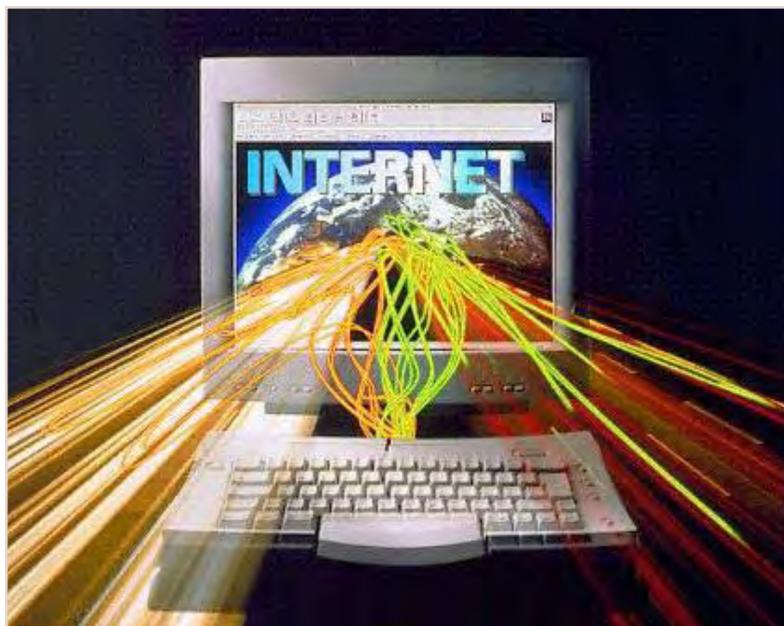
deserves, he is assured to experience a spiritual downturn. He will fall deeper and deeper until he arrives at the lowest possible level, rachmana litzlan.

A Torah scholar, who was once a respected communal figure, told me the following. He once sat in front of the Internet screen, looking for a specific address. Suddenly, an indecent picture flashed before his eyes. After that another, and another...

Without even realizing

it, he was sitting and gazing at the immodest and offensive photographs which appeared on the screen. He ended up being devastated. He had innocently used the Internet with naive assumptions, totally unsuspecting. But the Yetzer Hara, with his bag of tricks, grabbed his attention. With captivating videos and alluring photographs, full of obscenities and perversion, he spoiled his pure neshamah.

Unfortunately, we witness much suffering. People die young, from unusual illnesses, rachmana litzlan. Tragic road accidents take place all too often, Hashem Yiracheim. A person should know that these misfortunes occur because of breaches in tzeniut. One who does not protect himself from the modern mediums of communication and their uncensored media, which are so re-



pulsively replete with licentiousness, will be abandoned by Hashem and subject to outside forces, rachmana lit-zlan. The Torah exhorts us not to let Hashem (Devarim 23:15), “See a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you.” A person should always remember the words of Bilaam, how “Their G-d hates immorality.”

Even the precious Bnei Torah who are constantly involved in Torah study, so distant from all the aforementioned obscenities, should know that they also must take proper precautions. The Yetzer Hara awaits them already at the exit of the Beit Hamidrash. Upon leaving its holy portals, they are liable to become allured by forbidden ‘sights’ which defile the eyes and irreversibly stain their pure neshamahs. We should constantly strive to be found within the four walls of Hashem’s house. The Yetzer Hara has no foothold in the Beit Hamidrash. There, his influence is made null and void, without any control over us. This is why Chazal (Kiddushin 30b) have stated, “If you encounter this degenerate one (the Yetzer Hara), draw him into the Beit Hamidrash. If he is made of stone, he will break; if he is made of iron, he will shatter.”

Let us try to understand the following. If Bilaam merited recognizing the greatness of the Creator and the importance of Torah, why didn’t he succeed in correcting himself? How can it be that he remained unchanged in his wayward ways?

There are many explanations given. I would venture and say that he had another shameful middah, which was the cause of his downfall and kept him on his path of perversion. He did not know how to recognize the good that others did for him. One who contemplates will see that Bilaam merited attaining great heights in prophecy in the zechut of Moshe Rabbeinu a”h. Rashi (there 22:5) states, “If you ask why Hashem allowed His Shechinah to rest upon a wicked idolater, this is the answer. It was so that the gentile nations will not be able to say, ‘Had we had a Navi like Moshe Rabbeinu, we would have done teshuvah.’ He thus gave them a Navi (Bilaam), and they (still) caused untold destruction.” From here we see that Bilaam received his prophesy in merit of Moshe Rabbeinu. Yet, instead of showing him gratitude, he hated him with a terrible hatred, desiring to eradicate him and his nation through his curses.

Chazal tell us that denying the kindness of one’s friend is considered similar to denying the goodness of

Hashem. One who does not have the tools to recognize the good his friend does for him will find the road to denying Hashem’s good very short. Therefore, although Bilaam knew of the greatness of Hashem, he still denied it, thereby insulting the Torah and mitzvot.

L’havdil, (conversely), we find how careful Moshe Rabbeinu was regarding this matter. He even acknowledged the kindnesses wrought upon him by inanimate objects. We see that he did not smite the Nile by the Ten Plagues, for he found protection in it when he was placed there as a baby. Likewise, he refused to hit the earth, for it had concealed the Egyptian (whom he had killed in self-protection and buried). It is a sign of perfection to display gratitude to others, thanking them for every small thing. Such a trait leads one to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for all His kindnesses, and urges him to keep His mitzvot as a measure of gratefulness.

Every person is enjoined to acquire this most noble middah of hakarat hatov (gratitude). It forms the basis of our spiritual ascension. To this day, whenever I visit the grave of my father, zt”l, I express gratitude to him. With seeming cruelty, he had sent me to a yeshivah far away from home, when I was merely at the tender age of twelve. At first it was hard for me to accept my new situation, and I held a grievance toward him. I constantly asked him why he did this to me. But as I grew older, I began to realize the magnitude of what he did for me. Had he not sent me to yeshivah then, I would never have come to disseminate Torah on such a world-wide scale, as I have merited today, by Hashem’s great kindness. I now acknowledge and appreciate my father’s hand in this, with all my heart. Hakarat hatov is a simple obligation, and is incumbent upon every person. Bilaam wanted none of it. He was full of his own self-aggrandizement, and had no room left to recognize the good of others.

When I went to visit my father’s grave, I visited the local kollel. The Rosh Kollel related this amazing story. For a long period of time, a certain young girl had the habit of visiting my father’s burial plot. She constantly prayed to merit finding her proper match. She even promised that if her prayers were answered, she would arrive there on the day of her wedding, dressed in her bridal gown, to thank Hashem for the good He had done for her. Baruch Hashem, her prayers were answered, and she went to keep her promise. But when she got there, to her dismay, she found the gates locked. She called up

the Rosh Kollel, requesting the cemetery keys. He answered that she could just as well pray from outside the gate. The kallah was adamant in her desire to stand in close proximity of the tzaddik's gravestone. As she was contemplating what to do, the gates suddenly opened, in a most miraculous way, as though they hadn't been locked at all! Those in her vicinity were dumbfounded; they couldn't believe their eyes. She then stood before the tzaddik's grave, her eyes brimming with tears of joy. She thanked Hakadosh Baruch Hu for her salvation, and expressed appreciation to my father for his intervention on her behalf in finding her appropriate shidduch. A person's true level is measured by his appreciation to others, and his expression of thanks for all they do for him.

Furthermore, Bilaam Harasha never bothered making a personal accounting of his life. He never examined his actions or scrutinized his behavior to see if they were right or wrong. He didn't check to see if anything needed correction. He conceitedly held himself the peak of perfection. Had he merely looked at his actions, he surely would have found deficiencies and shortcomings. It is possible that he would then have done teshuvah. From this we can learn that one who is really concerned about his spiritual level, must take a short break every once in a while. He should make a halt in the rat-race of life, in order to examine his deeds and assess his spiritual level, as well as his mitzvah performance. If he will look over his deeds, he is guaranteed success in rectifying all that is in need.

I was visiting Argentina at the time of the World Champion Soccer games, which are called, "Mundial." During the games, there was not a living soul found outdoors. The streets were completely empty. All sat indoors, transfixed to the screen, watching the game and worrying lest their team lose. An eerie silence pervaded the streets. As soon as one of the teams struck a goal, the silence would suddenly be shattered, and loud shouting, like the roar of lions, emanated from all the windows with tremendous fervor. This can lead to a Heavenly accusation. Any person who makes an honest reckoning of his life, believes that after death, his entire lifetime will be reenacted. He will then see how he went crazy at the time that his team reached their goal. And a strong accusation will be placed before him. Did he ever, in his entire lifetime, respond, "Amen, Yehei Shemei Rabba" with such enthusiasm? Did he ever display such excitement over a d'var Torah? These are very strong allega-

tions. Woe to the person who is charged with them and has no response.

But if a person accustoms himself, from time to time, to make a penetrating analysis of his condition and examines his deeds well, he will make the following conclusion. He will conclude that he should become joyous and excited over Torah matters and mitzvot. He will look to do them in the best manner possible, the way that Hashem desires.

Bilaam, in his foolishness, perceived himself as perfect. He thus never entertained the thought of examining his lifestyle. Hence, in spite of his vast knowledge and his tremendous levels of prophesy, he maintained his wickedness and descended to Gehinnom.

Bilaam was called the "Man with the open eye" (Bamidbar 24:3). Chazal (Sanhedrin 105a) state, "Rabbi Yochanan said that Bilaam was blind in one eye." There is a great hint contained in these words. With one eye, he saw the greatness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and recognized His power, but with the other eye he blinded himself from acknowledging Hashem. When it came to appreciating Torah and mitzvot, he immediately closed his eyes, pretending not to recognize his Creator and His mitzvot, rachmana litzlan. We must all beware of this pitfall.

A terminally ill woman once approached me, requesting a blessing to be healed from her ailment. I advised her to keep taharat hamishpachah, but she complained that she wasn't accustomed to it, and it was difficult for her to change her entire lifestyle... I turned to her and said, "Do you know who I am?!" "Yes," she answered, "You are Rabbi David, shlita." To which I replied, "I am also a professional specialist, and I am informing you that the waters of the mikveh are your sole remedy." She immediately was won over, and agreed to immerse in a mikveh.

This is an example of the "one open eye" syndrome regarding Torah and mitzvot. A person may seal his eyes shut, claiming it is too hard to change. But in matters of health, when a doctor prescribes a change in lifestyle, every person is prepared to change and follow instructions. Similarly, a person is obligated to open both his eyes to Torah and mitzvot, observing them completely, with all their halachot. Then, his salvation will be guaranteed. May Hashem give us the merit to walk in the right path, cleaving to the road which ascends to His House, Amen.

# Torah Studies Calculation

## *During the Week*

Learning even one letter of Torah is considered Torah study, as our Sages (Avot 6:3) have stated, “He who learns from his fellowman... even a single letter, must treat him with respect.”

Every word contains, on the average, four letters (based on the standard word on any given page of Gemara).

“Talmud Torah is equal to them all” (Peah 1:1). The Gra (Shnot Eliyahu) expounds, “Every single word of Torah learning is equal to all of the mitzvot.”

$$(613 \times 4 = 2,452)$$

The Chafetz Chaim (Torat Habayit 2:3), states that a person is capable of saying 200 words per minute.

$$(2,452 \times 200 = 490,400)$$

Every hour contains 60 minutes

$$(490,400 \times 60 = 29,424,000)$$

## *On Shabbat*

“Torah learnt on Shabbat is one thousand times greater than that learnt during the week” (Ben Ish Chai 20, Shemot)

$$(29,424,000 \times 1,000 = 29,424,000,000)$$

## *With Joy*

“Whoever does a mitzvah with joy will receive one thousand times more reward than one who does it with a burdensome attitude (Orchot Tzaddikim, Sha’ar Hasimchah).

$$(29,424,000,000 \times 1,000 = 29,424,000,000,000)$$

## *With Additions*

Learning Torah with (minimal) discomfort or labor is worth one hundred times that of learning without such discomfort, as our Sages (Avot d’Rabbi Natan) have taught, “Better for a man once with discomfort, than one hundred times with ease.” “If even a little bit more discomfort is added to one’s mitzvah, the reward will further be multiplied by one hundred” (Michtav M’Eliyahu part 3:14).

$$(29,424,000,000,000 \times 100 = 2,942,400,000,000,000)$$

One who learns Torah at a time when others are lax in Torah study (Erev Shabbat, Shabbat day, Bein Hazemanim, days of Ta’anit, etc.), receives reward for all of those who are not learning (at least tenfold, for a minyan of men, but usually much more). Our Cha-

chamim said, “Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai states, “If you see that people are remiss in Torah study, strengthen yourself in it, and you will receive reward for all” (Yerushalmi Berachot 9:5).

$$(2,942,400,000,000,000 \times 10 = 29,424,000,000,000,000)$$

Torah studied with a partner or in a group will multiply one’s reward according to the number of people studying together (at least double, for oneself and for his partner). This is what our Chachamim meant when they said, “When many people do a mitzvah together, each one receives reward as though he did it on his own” (S’dei Chemed 40:197)

$$29,424,000,000,000,000 \times 2 = 58,848,000,000,000,000$$

When one influences others to learn by his example, and/or he makes a Kiddush Hashem through his Torah study, his reward is multiplied according to those who learn from him (even just one person). Our Sages (Bava Batra 9) have stated, “Greater is the one who influences another to do a good deed than he who actually does it.”

$$(58,848,000,000,000,000 \times 2 = 117,696,000,000,000,000)$$

One who reviews his Torah study one hundred and one times, increases his reward. Chazal (Chagigah 9b) state, “One who reviews his learning one hundred times cannot be compared to one who reviews one hundred and one times.”

$$(117,696,000,000,000,000 \times 2 = 235,392,000,000,000,000)$$

## *The Value of One Hour of Torah Study*

*On Weekdays*      **29 Million Mitzvot**

*On Shabbat*      **29 Billion Mitzvot**

*With Joy*      **29 Trillion Mitzvot**

*With Additions*      **235 Thousand Trillion Mitzvot**

The Gemara says, “I teach my son only Torah, for a person eats of the dividends in This World, and the capital remains for him in the World to Come” (Kiddushin 82a). Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin in his sefer Nefesh Hachaim (Perakim 4:82) writes, “Torah study is extremely precious in the eyes of Hashem, even if it is not l’shmah (for its own sake), more than any other mitzvah done l’shmah.” The Ben Ish Chai elucidates (Binayahu Taanit 11a), “For the quality will increase...if he is in a sanctified place, on a holy day...the place and the time have the power to intensify the quality of Torah and mitzvot. One cannot compare studying Torah in a Beit Hamidrash to studying Torah at home. Similarly, Torah studied on Shabbat cannot be compared to Torah studied during the rest of the week. The sefer Lekach Tov (Toldot 159) states, “The value of a mitzvah is according to its worth in the eyes of the one who does it.”

“Calculate the loss of a mitzvah against its reward.”

Now think:

How many mitzvot does one hour of Torah study equal?

# The Wedding of Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, Son of the Tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita

## *All roads lead to Avenue Hall near Ben-Gurion Airport.*

A huge crowd, including chassidim and men of action from all walks of life and every community, begins to flow like a river. All are headed to the same place, with everyone trying to get to the hall as early as possible. A caravan of taxis can be seen headed there, and why not? A wedding will soon take place at this hall, the wedding of a young man who is exemplary in Torah and the fear of Heaven, Rabbi Moshe Aharon Yoshiahu. The son of the Rav and tzaddik, the Admor Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita, Rabbi Moshe will be marrying Miss Miriam Elhadad of Canada.

Does this seem like a trivial matter to you? Rav David Pinto Shlita is marrying off his third child. Is there a Jewish heart that is not rejoicing? People's eyes strain to see and be seen, to hear and be heard, to participate with body and soul, with all 248 limbs and 365 sinews in this sacred joy that will certainly bring an abundance to all the worlds. It will exert an influence of joy, success, and everything that is good upon all the Jewish people.

### The High Point: The Moving Chuppah Ceremony

The place is abuzz with people. Everyone waits for the crucial moment: The chuppah ceremony. Rabbi David Shlita and his wife the Rebbetzin accompany their son towards the chuppah, as all eyes try to catch a glimpse of him and share in this moment.

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

The event is very moving, and all eyes are fixed on the chuppah to witness the ceremony. We then hear a murmur among the crowd – the kallah has arrived, arm in arm with her parents, and the ceremony begins. You can truly cut the silence with a knife. It brings to mind the Ma'amad Har Sinai, when not even a bird chirped or flew, when there was no lowing of cattle, and when the entire universe stood silent to

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

The chuppah ceremony has begun, and the Rav Shlita, the father of the chattan, covers himself in his tallit and begins to initiate the wedding ceremony: "...Who sanctifies His people Israel through chuppah and kiddushin." The father of the bride, Rav Saadia Elhadad Shlita of Montreal, says a few words in honor of bride and groom. Rabbi Haim Pinto Shlita, the older brother of our teacher Rabbi David Pinto and the Chief Rabbi of Ashdod, recites the wedding blessings. The atmosphere is truly electrifying. It is an atmosphere of absolute purity and holiness, and it hovers over the heads of this sanctified people. From the bottom of their



hearts, they bless this young couple that has just established a home in Israel and added a stone to the ramparts of the Jewish people. The Shechinah hovers over them, just as the Sages have said: "When husband and wife are worthy, the Shechinah dwells with them" (Sotah 17a).

### *Great Joy in All Corners of the Globe*

The chuppah ceremony has barely finished when joyous celebration breaks out in full force. All the participants form circles and begin dancing wildly in honor of the great joy that has just erupted. The crowd then presses together from all directions in order to pass before Rabbi David Shlita and congratulate him, and also to receive a blessing from his

sanctified lips that produce miracles. As we know, this is an extremely elevated moment, a time of joy for the chattan and kallah, when the entire community is blessed in a prayer for the newly-established home to be an eternal edifice.

Thousands of people pass before the Rav Shlita to congratulate him and receive his blessing, and the Rav Shlita warmly greets each one with great joy. At the same time, the students of Rav Moshe who traveled here in great numbers from Paris to honor him, now rush in his direction as they sing and dance.

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

Besides the many guests who have come here from all around the world, we see a great number from France, students of Rav Moshe and his brother Rabbi Yoel, who have made every effort to make it here. Of course there are the faithful followers of Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita from all around Europe, not to mention the Canadians who have come in great numbers to attend this wedding.

It is for good reason that they have made the effort of traveling to Israel, the Holy Land, for this wedding. It was to show the Rav Shlita how much they seek to emulate him, in accordance with the verse: “As water reflects a face back to a face, so one’s heart is reflected back to him by another” (Mishlei 27:19). The eyes shine in seeing just what a Jewish celebration is. The eyes glimmer in seeing a Jewish home worthy of the noblest families of Israel.

### *The Wedding Meal and the Joy of the Talmidei Chachamim*

If we are speaking about the nature of a wedding meal, we can describe it by what the Sages have said: “If one partakes of a meal at which a talmid chacham is present, it is as if he basked in the light of the Shechinah” (Berachot 64a). Everyone clearly sees that the radiance of the Shechinah hovers over those who are seated. If such is the case at each table, then a glimpse at the head table (where the Rav Shlita is seated next to the father of the bride, Rabbi Saadia Elhadad Shlita, along with other tzaddikim and gaonim) clearly proves what the Sages have said: “The tzaddikim sit with their crowns on their heads basking in the light of the Shechinah” (Berachot 17a).

Everyone is seated, yet in reality almost no one pays attention to the sumptuous meals abundantly placed before

each of them, for all eyes are glued to the table of honor. Arriving there one after the other are Torah luminaries, tzaddikim, gaonim, and also ordinarily individuals who want to congratulate the Rav and receive his blessing. With reverential fear, the guests kiss the hand of the Rav Shlita and receive a blessing and some words of Torah from him, for this is a spiritually elevated and important time. It is a moment that certainly contains the key to blessings, a key that can open even the most firmly locked gates of deliverance and mercy for all. This is why everyone seeks a personal blessing, thereby obtaining an abundance of blessings and success at this spiritually elevated and holy time.

### *Words of Torah and Blessing During the Meal*

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



With reverential fear, people listen to impassioned words from the gaon Rav Shlomo Amar Shlita (the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel), from the gaon Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita (the Rosh Yeshiva of Ateret

Israel), and from the gaon Rabbi Saadia Elhadad Shlita, the father of the bride. In their speeches, they also describe the joy of a wedding as they bestow blessings upon the young couple.

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

#### You Shall Rejoice: Joy Breaks All Bounds

The meal continues, yet at the same time great joy breaks all bounds. Between servings, the Rav Shlita descends from the dais and heads for the dance floor, like Moshe Rabbeinu descending from the mount toward the people, and with all his energy he begins to dance, as if uplifting the earth. Joy is overflowing as everyone sings and dances in honor of the newlyweds. Yet legs do not tire, hearts do not seek rest, bodies do not stop moving, and with intense energy crowd dances with incredible enthusiasm, over and over without stop, without respite.

People eventually get back to their seats and continue the meal, but all of a sudden the dancing starts again with even more people! The groom is then

carried on people's shoulders, as everyone dances around in his honor, for a groom is like a king. It seems that we could say, "One who has not seen the joy of this celebration has never witnessed joy in his life." The sons of the Rav, Rabbi Raphael, Rabbi Yoel, and Rabbi Mikhael, rejoice for their brother and do not stop dancing and leading the crowd of youngsters. Breslov dancing energizes the dance floor even more. From time to time, the Rav Shlita takes someone by the hand – either one of his students or someone who is dancing – and dances with him in the middle of a circle, and then we hear shouts of joy that reach the heavens. He is not just dancing with those who live in Israel, but also with people who have come from abroad, and even with those who have come closer to Judaism by the merit of the Rav, for they also deserve to be close to him. They also merit a tap on the shoulder or a friendly hug by the Rav, who wants to elevate them above the material world.

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

With the end of the meal comes the public Birkat Hamazon, followed by the Sheva Berachot.

#### *An Abundance of Blessings and Success for All the Jewish People*

This magnificent wedding celebration finishes very late into the night, and it certainly exerts a positive influence in the spiritual and material realms for everyone. It has already been said that the word beshirah ("through song") is formed by the initials of Yushpa Shefa Rav Bekol Haolamot ("great abundance spreads to all the worlds"). In reality, through the power of shirah (song) and music, the ensuing joy spreads tremendous abundance to all the worlds and upon the Jewish people, collectively and individually – an abundance of blessings and success, children, life, and bountiful sustenance – in order that we may announce only good things and be told only good things.

May Hashem help us in order for this joy to truly exert an influence upon the entire Jewish people, that they may experience deliverance and mercy. May we all merit the long sought-after goal that "all flesh together will see that the mouth of Hashem has spoken" by the construction of the Temple in all its glory, and by the revelation of Mashiach our redeemer, speedily in our days, Amen.



