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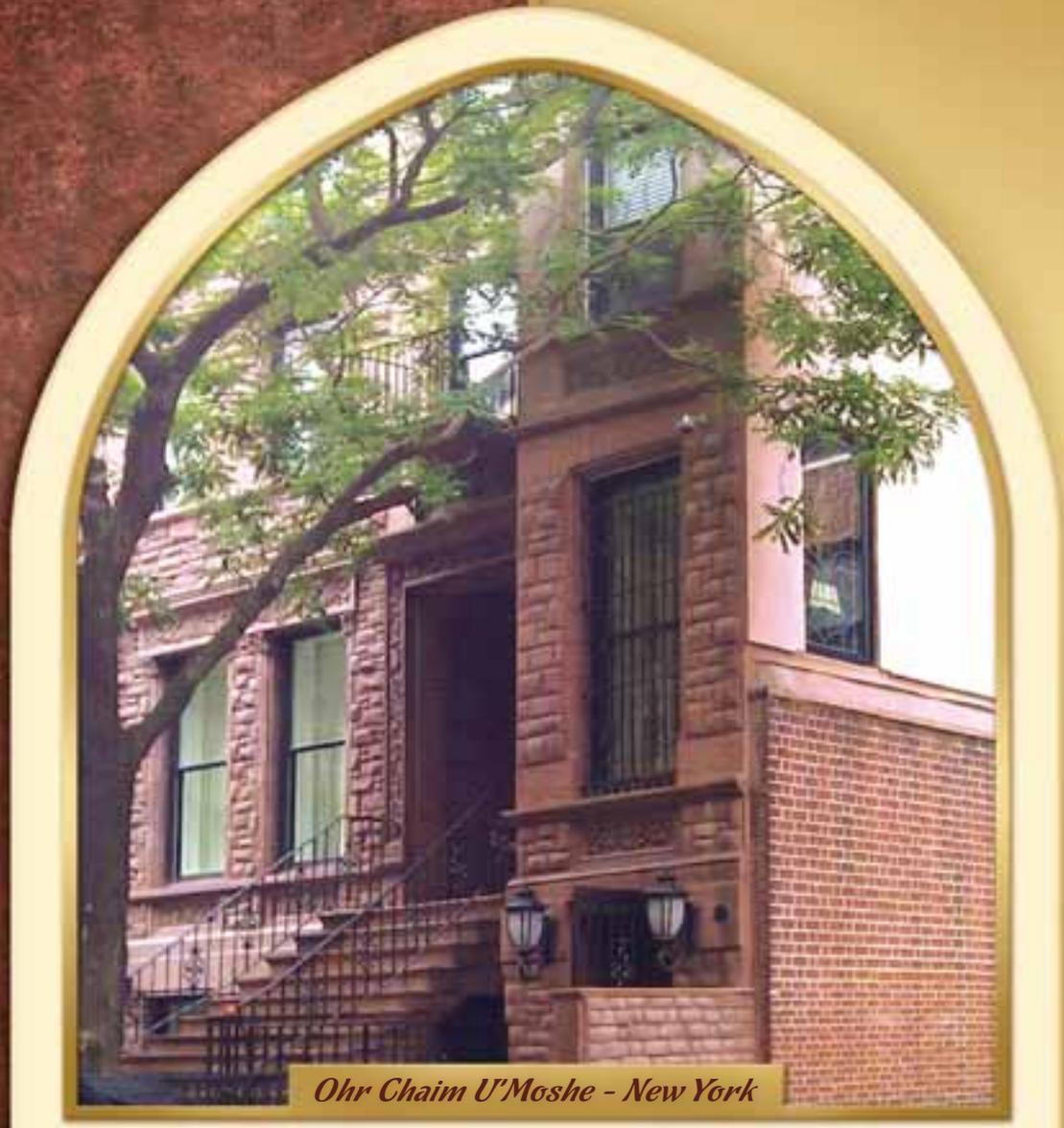
# Bechatzrot Hachaim

No. 15 - Nisan 5773

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Under the Auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik

Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita



*Ohr Chaim U'Moshe - New York*

*"How did America merit two crowns: the crown of Torah and the crown of greatness, as well as the wealth and honor that she also possesses? It is because America has always been a haven of Torah, and the government has always permitted the Jews living on its shores to toil in Torah without any disturbances. In a place where there is Torah, it follows that there will be greatness..."*

*(In the name of the Gaon, Rabbi Aharon Kotler, ztk"l, Rosh Hayeshiva Lakewood)*



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## Editorial

**“I will show [Am Yisrael] miracles, just as when you left the land of Egypt” (Michah 7:15)**

The whole world is in an uproar. Countries and regimes totter and crumble, one after the other. The financial climate is shaking well-established economic empires with a force that many find impossible to believe.

On an individual level, many people are financially insecure, or face health and various other problems. We live in difficult times.

We, as believers and sons of believers, know with certainty that just as Hashem showed us wonders when we came out of Egypt, so too, will he show us wonders now. Our merciful and compassionate Creator will not forsake His children, even in the most far-flung corners of the world.

Pesach is the time to strengthen ourselves in belief in Hashem and in His servant, Moshe. We are fortunate to merit the leadership and direction of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the Gaon and tzaddik, Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto**, shlita. Thousands of Jews all over the world seek his advice and blessings. Many come to him because of his holy work and because of the merits of his holy ancestors.

The Institute **“Peninei David”** publishes the Torah thoughts of the Rav in several languages, and these sefarim are distributed worldwide. You are holding one of these publications **“Bechatzrot Hachaim”** at this very moment.

We receive letters from Jews all over the world, stating how these publications connect them with bonds of love to the many blessed activities of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita, in his quest to bring merit to the masses and glorify the *kedushah* and Torah of Am Yisrael. They feel a tangible and personal connection with the wonderful, mighty world of Torah that has been built by the Rav in Eretz Yisrael, France, and many other countries.

We pray that this merit of *zikuy harabim*, as well as the merit of *emunat chachamim*, and the merits of the tzaddikim of the glorious House of Pinto will stand by all the Jewish people. Then, just as Hashem did miracles for our forefathers when they came out of Egypt, we will experience the miracles of the coming of Mashiach – may it be soon. “In Nisan they were redeemed, and in Nisan the future redemption will take place.”

*Pesach kasher v'samayach!*

The Editors  
**Bechatzrot  
 Hachaim**

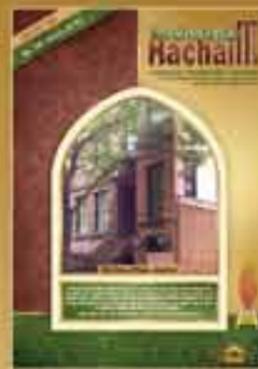


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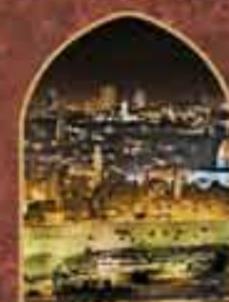
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## Words of Inspiration

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# Sefirat Haomer

## Valuing the Torah through Counting the Omer



**“And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the rest day... seven full weeks shall they be”**

(Vayikra 23:15)

It is a positive mitzvah to count Sefirat Haomer from the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, for seven weeks. The author of the sefer *Shibolei Haleket* (siman 236) writes, according to the Midrash, that the pesukim connect the festival of Shavuot to Sefirat Haomer, as it says (*Devarim* 15:9-10), “You shall count seven weeks for yourselves... and you shall observe the festival of Shavuot for Hashem, your G-d.”

When Moshe Rabbeinu was informed that Bnei Yisrael would receive the Torah after fifty days, the pasuk says (*Shemot* 3:12), “When you will take the people out of Egypt, you will serve (תַּעֲבֹדוּ) Hashem on this mountain.” The letter 'ו' of תַּעֲבֹדוּ is redundant. It has the *gematria* of fifty. This teaches that at the end of fifty days, Bnei Yisrael would serve (תַּעֲבֹדוּ) Hashem by accepting the Torah. In their great desire to receive the Torah, Bnei Yisrael counted each day. They would say, “Today, one day has gone by. Today, the second day has passed, etc.” This is because the fifty days seemed like an eternity, and they so greatly desired to receive the Torah. Therefore, Sefirat Haomer was established for all generations.

Sefirat Haomer must be said out loud with the requisite intention, with great joy and devotion, since it demonstrates our tremendous love for Hashem Yitbarach and how greatly we long for the wonderful moment of receiving the Torah.

Rabbi Yisrael of Salant, zy”a, writes that the days of Sefirat Haomer are days of preparation for receiving the Torah. They are days when we should perfect both our deeds and our character traits. It is impossible to receive the Torah without prior preparation, as the Mishnah says (*Avot* 6:6), “There are forty-eight ways with which to acquire the Torah.” Without making these preparations, a person is unable to merit the crown of Torah. Thus, we are given the period of Sefirat Haomer, so that a person can utilize each of the forty-eight days to attain these forty-eight ways of acquiring the Torah. Each day is to be utilized to gain one level. One uproots a bad characteristic and acquires in its place a good characteristic. On the forty-ninth day of the Sefirah, one reviews everything that he has done until now, making a final acquisition of all the traits. Thus, he reaches the long-awaited day of the Giving of the Torah, having completely corrected his character traits.

Moreinu, Harav Aharon Leib Steinman, shlita, asks a question on this. Rabbi Yisrael Salanter himself said that to correct one character trait is no easy matter, but takes much time and effort. To the extent that he once remarked, “It is easier to finish the whole Shas and know it clearly than to break a negative character trait.” Therefore, how is it possible for Bnei Yisrael, who were at the forty-ninth level of impurity when they left Egypt, to correct these

forty-nine negative character traits in such a short amount of time? Surely, even were a person to live for eternity, he would not be able to correct all of his negative character traits. One has much work waiting for him in this world.

Perhaps we can explain this in the following way. Although it is true that to correct one negative trait requires many years of hard work, when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, they merited tremendous *siyata di'Shemaya*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu helped them to purify their souls in a short amount of time in a way that was far beyond the norm, in order that they should be ready to receive the Torah. The proof that they were purified was that they were able to hear the voice of Hashem at the foot of Har Sinai, and that they merited the two crowns that the angels bestowed upon them, without feeling any fear.

Each person, whatever level he is on, needs much *siyata di'Shemaya* in spiritual matters. The Gemara (*Sukkah*) states that the *Yetzer* of a person increases every day, and without the help of Hashem, one would not be able to overcome him. David Hamelech says (*Tehillim* 37:32-33), “The wicked waits for the tzaddik and seeks to kill him, but Hashem will not forsake him to his hand.” This teaches that a person would never be able to withstand the *Yetzer Hara* and conquer him with his own powers, but is successful only because Hashem helps him.

After the Exodus, Hashem bestowed upon Bnei Yisrael immense *siyata di'Shemaya*, far greater than the norm, and assisted them to expunge the impurity into which they had sunk. He helped them uproot the negative traits that had entrenched themselves in their hearts, in order that they would be fitting to receive the Torah. Normally it takes many years to correct one's character traits. However, within forty-nine days, Bnei Yisrael merited eliminating



**Sefirat Haomer must be said out loud with the requisite intention, with great joy and devotion, since it demonstrates our tremendous love for Hashem Yitbarach and how greatly we long for the wonderful moment of receiving the Torah**

all evil and impurity from within their hearts and acquiring, in their stead, the forty-eight acquisitions with which the Torah is attained.

It goes without saying that one must have a genuine desire to change. If one does not want to distance himself from evil and be cleansed from the muck of impurity that has clung to him, and does not want to cleave to good, the greatest amount of *siyata di'Shemaya* will not help him. In Egypt, Bnei Yisrael attached themselves to evil in the worst way possible, until they descended to the forty-ninth level of impurity. Later, they followed Hashem Yitbarach in the Wilderness, as it says (*Yirmeyahu* 2:2), “So says Hashem: I remember the kindness of your youth... that you followed Me in the Wilderness, in a barren land.” The self-sacrifice that Bnei Yisrael demonstrated with this act merited their receiving

*siyata di'Shemaya* beyond the bounds of nature. This enabled them to extricate themselves from the forty-nine levels of impurity in which they were immersed. However, they also needed to taste the goodness of Torah and mitzvot, in order for them to desire to follow the good path and leave their former evil ways behind. How did they do this?

This is the reason behind the command to count the Omer every day. Counting toward the Giving of the Torah awakened a yearning and craving for the exalted moment that they would finally receive it. However, they still did not clearly understand the benefit of this gift; they did not yet realize the beauty of the Torah. When they began to count the Omer and say, “One day has passed; two days have passed...,” the counting itself impressed upon them a greater desire for the Torah. They began to realize that they were anticipating a tremendous gift, which would grant them infinite benefits and unending happiness.

Once they were aroused to prepare for *Kabbalat HaTorah* and desired to change, they merited receiving tremendous *siyata di'Shemaya* from Hashem. This generated within them a renewed spirit to make fundamental changes within themselves, as quickly as they were able. Thus, within forty-nine days, Bnei Yisrael were able to distance themselves from the forty-nine levels of impurity and cling to the forty-nine levels of purity.

This is the way of the holy Torah: at first it is difficult, but, in the end, it is sweet as honey. At first, a person does not have the will or desire to draw close to the Torah and labor in it, since the *Yetzer Hara* dwells in his heart and presents him with all sorts of difficulties in order to distance him from the good that is in the Torah. However, once a person has tasted the sweet taste of Torah, he will

follow in its ways willingly and happily. He will then be bound to the Torah with bonds of love. This is expressed by David Hamelech (*Tehillim* 34:9), "Taste and see that Hashem is good." Just as it is impossible to describe to a blind person the beauty of the dawn, so too, it is impossible to describe the appealing sweetness of the Torah to one who has never tasted it. That is why we are encouraged to "taste and see that Hashem is good." Only after a person has tasted the Torah is the desire for it awakened within him, and only then does he understand "that Hashem is good." The Creator is good, and His Torah is good.

The pasuk in *Shir Hashirim* (1:4) says, "Draw me close, and I will run after You." First "draw me close," and then "I will run after you." To start with, a person must be forcibly pulled toward the Torah. Once he has tasted its sweetness, he will run after it of his own accord.

This is expressed by the Ohr Hachaim, zy" a, on the pasuk (*Devarim* 26:11), "And you shall rejoice with all the good." He explains this according to the words of Chazal (*Avot* 6:3), "There is no good except for the Torah." If a person would feel the great goodness and sweetness of the Torah, he would go crazy over it and pursue it with all his strength. All the gold and silver in the world would be nothing in his eyes, since the Torah contains every type of goodness possible. This teaches that only after a person appreciates the wealth of goodness contained in the Torah does he have the burning desire to acquire it.

One of the most distinguished members of the yeshiva, Rabbi Gabi Elbaz, shlita, desired to set fixed times for learning, at the beginning of his journey to Torah-true Judaism. However, the *Yetzer Hara* was very strong and placed many obstacles in his path. He

found that he was unable to keep to his learning schedule. Each time that I tried to persuade him to at least attend one Torah class a week, he had a different excuse that prevented him from doing so.

One time, my efforts bore fruit. He came to a Torah class one evening, but afterwards stopped attending. When I next met him, I said, "Each time that you want a blessing, you come to me, and I try to do whatever you want. I now ask you to do what I want and try to come to a Torah lecture at least



once a week." He agreed to come. At first, he came once a week, but after he saw how the Torah gave him so much peace of mind and blessing, and how greatly he longed for it, he decided to attend a lecture on another day as well. After a while, he added another day, etc. *Bisiyata di'Shemaya*, for the last thirty years he has been coming to our yeshiva regularly to learn more than three hours consecutively, every day. He continually increases his Avodat Hashem and goes from strength to strength. He has, *bisiyata di'Shemaya*, merited becoming the president of the Yeshiva "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" in Lyon, France.

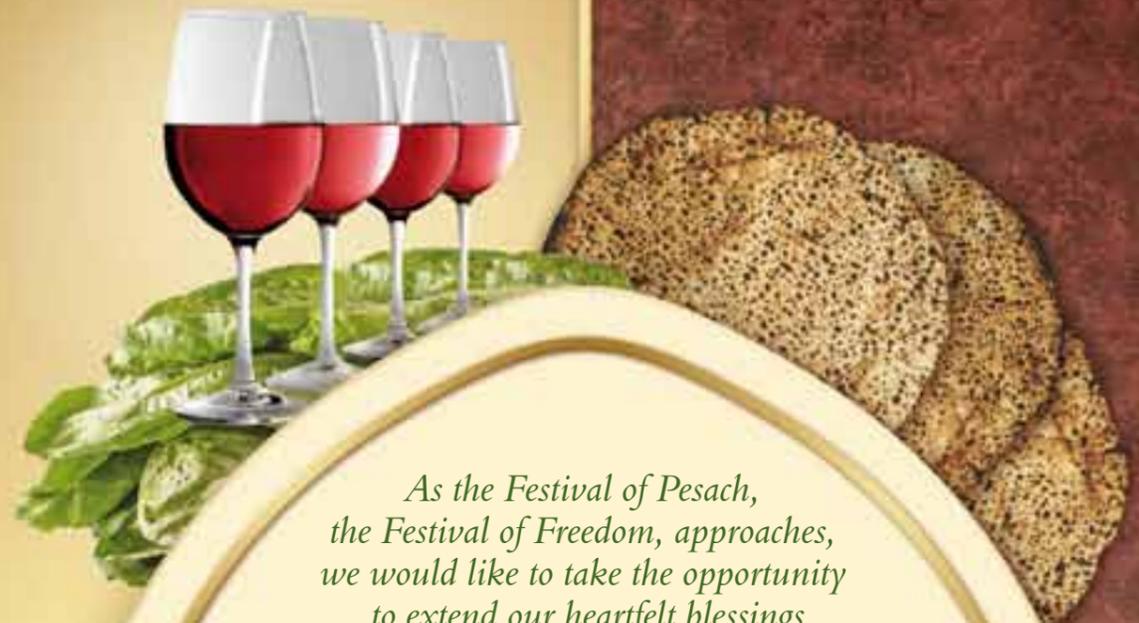
This path was difficult for him at first, because he did not yet appreciate the great value of Torah. However, after he tasted the sweet taste of Torah and felt the satisfaction and pleasure contained

within it, he decided to consecrate his time for Torah and cleave to it. For which fool would see the goodness and blessing of Torah in front of his very eyes and not desire to acquire it?

This is what happened to Bnei Yisrael when they left Egypt. At first, they did not appreciate the importance of the Torah that Hashem desired to give to them. Therefore, it was difficult for them to quickly break the bonds of evil in which they had become entangled. They did not know how to cleave to good. Thus, Hashem gave them the mitzvah of Sefirat Haomer, in order that they could prepare for the great day of *Matan Torah*. Counting the days toward this goal aroused a great longing in their hearts for the Torah. Thus, they were inspired to change and distance themselves from all evil.

Their ability to rectify their character traits in such a short amount of time was miraculous. Thus, when they demonstrated a slight laxity in Torah, this exacted a high price, in the attack of Amalek, who "cooled them off" considerably. Before this, they had been like a pot boiling on the fire with their fervor for Hashem's Torah. But now, they had suddenly run out of steam. They were so indifferent that Hashem removed His holy Name from them. This is the reason that the war against Amalek, which takes place in every generation, is fought only on the battleground of Torah.

May it be Hashem's will that just as Sefirat Haomer purified the hearts of our forefathers, inducing them to love Hashem and feel excitement over receiving the Torah, so too, may we exert ourselves during these holy days of the Sefirah to purify our hearts to love and fear Hashem. May we purify ourselves in order to become fitting vessels for the holy *Shechinah* to dwell amongst us, Amen.



*As the Festival of Pesach, the Festival of Freedom, approaches, we would like to take the opportunity to extend our heartfelt blessings to the Rabbonim and avrechim and all those who attend our institutions, as well as all Klal Yisrael*

### ***Pesach Kasher V'sameyach***

*May we merit celebrating the Festival of Matzot in joy and happiness*

*And may we merit fulfilling the blessing that "We shall eat there from the sacrifices and the Pesach-offering, whose blood will be sprinkled on the altar to fulfill Your will. And we will thank You for redeeming us and liberating our souls," speedily in our days, Amen.*

*From The Editorial Board of "Bechatzrot Hachaim"*

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*"Chevrat Pinto," Argentina, Mexico, and New York*



## Words of Inspiration

Delivered by the Gaon and Tzaddik  
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

# Lag B'Omer

## Being Satisfied with the Minimum



**“This is the way of the Torah:  
Eat bread with salt and drink a  
small measure of water, sleep on  
the ground and labor in Torah”**

(Avot 6:4)

Lag B'Omer is the *hilula* of the exalted tzaddik Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Let us examine his deeds and try to learn from them. He was far removed from the enjoyments of this world and devoted himself entirely to labor in the Torah of Hashem. All his actions and words were full of spiritual intentions. The Gemara (*Shabbat* 33b) relates that when Rabbi Shimon and his son, Rabbi Elazar, left the cave, after dwelling there for twelve years, they saw people plowing the fields. They said, “These people have abandoned the life of eternity and are occupying themselves with temporal existence.” They gazed upon these people, and immediately turned them into a heap of bones. A Heavenly Voice said to them, “Have you emerged from the cave to destroy My world? Return to the cave.”

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Elazar did not understand how it is possible to live even for a moment without Torah. They could not bear to see a person wasting his time by plowing and sowing seed, occupying himself with matters of this world, rather than occupying himself in the holy Torah, which has eternal qualities. They did not pay attention to material things, such as eating and drinking, and thus could not understand how a person could spend time in acquiring food and drink. They trusted that Hakadosh Baruch Hu would provide their sustenance. They were satisfied with the most basic requirements, as long as they could devote all their time, to the last second, to learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvot, which provide a person with everlasting life.

In fact, they were provided with only the most basic needs. Hakadosh Baruch Hu made a miracle that a carob tree grew outside the cave, and a stream flowed next to it. This was all the sustenance that they received for the twelve years that they remained in the cave, except for on Shabbat, when the carob tree was transformed into a fig tree, in order that they could enjoy Shabbat.

This raises a question. Since Hashem miraculously caused the tree to grow, why did He not change it into an apple tree or a vine? Why did He specifically make a carob tree, whose fruits are hard to eat and are not particularly enjoyable?

Perhaps we can answer that because they separated themselves so greatly from materialism, they preferred to eat a food that was as far removed from

material pleasure as possible. The carob fruit has neither taste nor scent. It is full of hard seeds, and one can break his teeth on them, if he's not careful. This fruit symbolizes being content with the minimum. This is expressed in the following Gemara (*Berachot* 17b), “Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rav: Every day, a Heavenly Voice emanates from Har Chorev and says: The whole world is sustained in the merit of My son, Rabbi Chanina, who sustains himself with a mere measure of carobs from one Shabbat to the next.”

It was this character trait of being satisfied with the minimum that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai exemplified. He desired to cut himself off from materialism to the greatest extent possible. This is expressed in the song about him, “*Let us make man* was said about you.” It was worth creating the world, and man himself, in order that one particular man would come into existence – Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. He could not understand how a person could labor in temporary matters, working the field in order to grow tasty food for himself. Surely such a person was making a terrible mistake. Why could he not be satisfied by a meager carob? Why did he need to exert himself so greatly in material matters, in order to provide himself with the best quality food? This was the contention of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

The Gemara (*Berachot* 35b) states, “Many people have acted as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and have not succeeded.” We certainly cannot emulate his holy ways. His outlook on life is appropriate only for great individuals in every generation. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile for us to at least try to understand who Rashbi was, and what exalted levels he reached, in order that we can raise ourselves a little and contemplate what a lifestyle of Torah and mitzvot should look like. In this way, we will be able to distance ourselves somewhat from the materialism of this world.

It is the nature of man to try to attain luxuries. I am not saying that there is no need for food or drink. Of course, one must eat healthily in order to serve Hashem Yitbarach. However, why is it necessary to expend so much energy in the pursuit of luxuries? A person may spend fortunes on material things in order to be able to live comfortably, rather than in a modest way. However, when it comes to Torah and mitzvot he does know how to minimize and be satisfied with little.

Let us look at our own lives. On Friday night, a person returns from the Beit Hakeneset, he sits at the Shabbat table and digs in to the delicious salads spread before him. He's so hungry that he gobbles them down, hardly leaving any room in his stomach for the fish, which is served next, let alone the main course of meat and side-dishes. He's so full that he can't eat another mouthful, and by doing so, he shows what a glutton he is. This scenario repeats itself every Shabbat, week after week. From the start, he knows that he will have difficulty in eating such great quantities of food. But he is used to having it all prepared for him every week. This is because it is man's nature to want more than what is absolutely necessary; he desires luxuries and enjoys them as much as he is able. He is not able to be satisfied with the bare minimum.

This attitude turns man into a materialistic being, as it says (*Devarim* 32:15), “And Yeshurun became fat and kicked.” This is not the correct way to live. One should curtail his pursuit of material matters and increase his pursuit of Torah and mitzvot, at whatever cost. In spiritual areas, one may not be satisfied with the minimum. On the contrary, one should strive to expand his spiritual side. Whoever increases his spirituality only gains.

As we mentioned earlier, Rabbi Shimon's worldview was on an extremely high level, which applies only to elevated individuals. However, we must learn from it and at least



***“Let us make  
man was said  
about you”.***

***It was worth  
creating the  
world, and man  
himself, in order  
that one particular  
man would come  
into existence -***

***Rabbi Shimon  
bar Yochai***

stem the tide of the pursuit of comfort that prevails today. We should strive our utmost not to drown in the sea of luxuries.

This outlook is encouraged by the Ramban. The pasuk in parashat *Kedoshim* (*Vayikra* 19:2) says, “You shall be holy, since I Hashem am holy.” The Ramban explains

that this means that one must sanctify himself in that which is permitted to him. One should not indulge excessively in the permitted, to the extent that he becomes immersed in its pursuit. Such action soon leads to a person becoming “depraved within the bounds of the Torah.” For, if a person ensures to enjoy everything that is permissible to him to the greatest degree possible, he may find that he eventually does aveirot. This is because he has not accustomed himself to live with restrictions and boundaries, as Rabbi Shimon taught.

When Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to Heaven to receive the Torah, the pasuk says (*Tehillim* 88:19), “עלית – למרום שביט שבי – You ascended on High, you captured captives.” The Arizal explains that the word שבי is the acronym for שמועון בר יוחאי – Shimon bar Yochai. Perhaps we can also explain this pasuk in the following way. Rashbi merited being taken into captivity and placing all the enjoyments of this world into captivity also. He captured all the delights of the material world and locked them up behind bars. He lived a life bare of these pleasures, as was evidenced by his food – the carob fruit that he ate in the cave. Thus, he could not understand how people could expend so much time and effort in the transitory pursuits



of the here and now. When he gazed at these people, they died.

The *hilula* of Rabbi Meir Ba'al Hanes is celebrated shortly before the *hilula* of Rashbi. Similarly, because of his great piety, he could not bear to see people forsaking the ways of the Torah. This is described in the following Gemara (*Berachot* 10a). Rabbi Meir had neighbors who were hooligans. He wanted to pray that they should die. However, his wife disagreed, quoting the words of David Hamelech (*Tehillim* 104:35) as support for her opinion: “יתמו – חטאים מן הארץ – Sins will cease from the land.” She explained that the pasuk says חטאים (חוטאים), rather than sinners (חוטאים). He should therefore pray that they should do teshuvah, for then their sins would cease. Thus, their souls would be spared. Rabbi Meir’s first reaction was that they should die, since he could not understand how a person can deny Hashem’s will and abandon Torah and mitzvot. This was the exalted level of Rabbi Meir Ba'al Hanes and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

The great holiness of Rashbi dwells within each one of us, as it says that the tzaddik is greater in his death than in his lifetime. In every generation, wonders and miracles are performed in his merit. I would like to take this opportunity to relate

my personal experience at the grave of Rashbi, zy”a.

One time a woman came to me who was soon to give birth. She told me that she was not interested in keeping the baby, but intended to give him up for adoption to the French government authorities. I explained to her

the importance of not doing so, since the child might be given to a non-Jewish family. Then, he would be brought up as a gentile and would forget that he had even been born a Jew, *chas v'shalom*. I urged her to give him to a Jewish family. However, the law forbade adoption of a child without the permission of the government. Thus, I requested that she should use a lawyer in order to ensure that everything was done in the correct manner.

The child was born, and I was the *sandek* at his *brit*. Rabbi Poltorak, a”h, was the *mohel*, and Rabbi Yosef Tzeruyah, shlita, also attended. The child was given over for adoption to a Jewish family, but not through a lawyer. This was a blatant violation of French law.

A few months later, the mother demanded that the baby should be returned to her. The police got involved, and their inquiries unearthed the fact that I was the one who had encouraged her to give her child to a Jewish family, in a way that was not approved by the government. That very evening, I and the two Rabbanim who had attended the *brit* found ourselves behind bars. The next morning, we were taken to court, where the judge asked me how I could have advised the woman to act contrary to French

law.

“I am a Jewish Rabbi,” I answered. “I am not allowed to give any advice that contravenes the laws of our holy Torah. Just as this country has laws, so is the Torah comprised of laws and decrees.”

The judge accepted my words and released us. But this was not the end of the story. I wanted the court to confirm in writing that I was completely innocent and that the file had been closed. I did not want to have a criminal record in the hands of the police.

A few days later, I had the opportunity to visit my daughter, *tichyeh*, in Eretz Yisrael. We went to the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. I prayed there from the depths of my heart concerning the event that had just happened in France. Afterward, I told my wife that I felt positive about things, and was sure that in a few days I would receive a letter from the court saying that the file against me had been closed. I also told her that to corroborate that my prayers had been accepted, on the way back to Ashdod, I would meet two men called Shimon, as it says (*Devarim* 19:15), “A matter will be confirmed by two witnesses.”

As I was just about to get into the car, I heard a voice call out behind me. I turned around and saw Rabbi Shimon Dahan, who had come to ask about my welfare and request a *berachah*. I was very happy to see him and kissed him so joyfully that he wondered why I was so especially elated to see him... My wife asked me, “What about the second Shimon?” I answered her



with a smile that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was the second Shimon. She was not satisfied with this answer, saying that I had meant another person called Shimon. I told her not to worry and that, with Hashem’s help, we would yet meet another Shimon.

We then traveled to the grave of the Arizal in Tzfat. As we were leaving, my sister’s son, Shimon, from Canada approached me. He had come to pray at the graves of the tzaddikim. I happily embraced him, rejoicing in the fact that the second sign had appeared. Moreover, when we returned to France, a letter was waiting for me from the court, saying that I was totally innocent and the file had been closed.

This is an example of wholehearted faith in the tzaddikim, such as the exalted Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his holy associates. When a person prays to Hakadosh Baruch Hu from the depths of his heart, the merit and righteousness of these tzaddikim stands by him and warrants him salvation.

From earliest childhood, I was raised on the lap of pure faith and prayer, to the extent that every hair on my head is infused with faith in the Creator, and every hair of my beard is imbued with the prayers that I have uttered. My hair has turned

white before its time as a result of my worries over the suffering that the members of the community endure. I beseech Hashem in prayer that He will guard His people, wherever they are. Prayer is the expertise of Bnei Yisrael. I place my confidence in the Creator that He will act kindly toward me and hear my prayers

and supplications, just as I had simple faith that in the merit of Rashbi I would be saved. Baruch Hashem, in that case, the verse “I will answer him before he will call out to Me” was fulfilled.

We must learn from the holy actions of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to minimize materialistic pursuits and devote our time for Torah. We should strive to set fixed times for learning every day. Even someone who works until the evening is obligated to set aside one or two hours daily for learning Torah, no matter what, since this is the purpose of man. When he will arrive in the Heavenly Court, after 120 years, and it will be revealed how much time he wasted on empty pursuits, he will plead to be able to return to this world so that he can learn a little Torah. But it will be too late. We must have forethought and strengthen ourselves in the holy Torah.

On this day of the *hilula* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, let us strive to strengthen our commitment to the Torah, even by learning one hour a day. We do not appreciate the power of just one hour of learning. It will stand by us to protect us, and will advocate for us, helping us merit eternal life in the Next World. Take heart and be strong! ●

## Words of Inspiration

Delivered by the Gaon and Tzaddik  
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

# Shavuot

One Who Labors  
in Torah Tastes  
Its Sweetness

**“In the third month after Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, on this day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai”**

(Shemot 19:1)

Why does the pasuk say “ביום הזה – on this day”? If it is to indicate that Bnei Yisrael came at that time to the Wilderness of Sinai, surely it should say, “on that day.” Let us ask another question. On each of the Pilgrimage Festivals, we make the blessing, “Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this time.” We must thank Hashem for the miracles that He performed for us thousands of years ago. But what connection do they have with “זמן הזה – this time”?

The Arizal states that each year, on every festival, the same spiritual influences are awakened as the first time the festival occurred, and confer upon us abundant purity and holiness from on High. For example, the Midrash (*Pesikta d’Rav Kahana* 12:1) relates, “Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Bnei Yisrael: Read the parashah containing the Ten Commandments every year on the festival of Shavuot, and I will consider it as if you are standing before Me at Har Sinai, receiving the Torah.” This is because this is the day of *Matan Torah*. Each year it experiences the same spiritual awakening that took place at the holy and exalted event that our forefathers experienced when they stood at Har Sinai.

This can be inferred by what is said to happen with a calamitous event. Tosafot (*Sotah* 14a) explains: Why was Moshe buried opposite Beit Peor? The Midrash Aggadah teaches that every year, at the time that Bnei Yisrael sinned with the women of Moav, Beit Peor ascends on High to prosecute them by reminding Hashem of this sin. However, when it sees the burial place of Moshe, it immediately goes back down to its former place.

If in a case of calamity, prosecution is leveled against Bnei Yisrael every year, on the same date that the original event occurred, how much more so do the beneficial influences that affected our people on a certain date return on it to benefit them once again. Thus, each year it is as if we left Egypt once again at this very time, and as if we are again standing at the foot of Har Sinai in order to receive the Torah.

This is why the pasuk states “on this day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai” rather than “on that day.” For we, too, in our generation, accept the Torah anew, every year, on Shavuot.

How does one acquire the Torah? The Mishnah (*Avot* 6:6) states that there are forty-eight ways to acquire Torah. A person must labor to attain these acquisitions. Only in this way will he truly acquire the Torah. Moreover, it is impossible to acquire the Torah without prior preparation. This is why we are

given the forty-nine days of Sefirat Haomer. During these days, a person purifies his heart and corrects his deeds in order to be worthy of receiving the Torah.

On reflection, we see that the preparation that our forefathers made for receiving the Torah was very different from the preparation that we make. Our forefathers came to Har Sinai after they had merited seeing many wonders and miracles, both in Egypt and at the Yam Suf. Moreover, they had been enveloped by the Clouds of Glory and were sustained by the Heavenly manna. Without a doubt, these miracles instilled within them a great love for their Creator and His holy Torah. They came to Har Sinai with great longing and desire and on a tremendously exalted level.

In contrast, we do not merit seeing such wonders and open miracles before receiving the Torah. Therefore, even if we make extensive preparations and try with all our might to purify ourselves for receiving the Torah, we cannot compare the spiritual enlightenment that we experience to that which our forefathers did before *Matan Torah*. Since this is the case, how can we prepare ourselves fittingly to receive the Torah?

In order to explain this, let us first examine what it means to labor in Torah. The pasuk (*Vayikra* 26:3) says, “If you will go in My statutes and keep My commandments, and do them.” Rashi says that the words “If you will go in My statutes” does not mean to fulfill the mitzvot of Hashem, since the pasuk continues

by saying “and keep My commandments.” He explains that this means that one must “labor in Torah in order to be able to fulfill the commandments.”

Why does Hashem desire that we labor in Torah? Why is it insufficient to learn Torah in peace and tranquility?

We see that the wicked Amalek attacked Bnei Yisrael when they were lax in Torah. The pasuk (*Shemot* 17:8) says, “And Amalek came and attacked Bnei Yisrael in Refidim.” Chazal (*Bechorot* 5b) explain that the word Refidim (רפידים) alludes to the fact that they (רפו ידיהם) weakened from Torah. Chazal do not say that they stopped learning Torah altogether, just that they became weak in their learning. They still learned, but did not do so with the requisite effort. For this reason, they were punished and Amalek attacked them. This incident teaches the importance of laboring in Torah.

Let us further examine why one must labor in Torah.

Chazal extensively describe the awesome powers of the *Yetzer Hara*. He is an angel made from fire, whom a person of flesh and blood overcomes only with great difficulty. Chazal (*Sukkah* 52a) even state that Hashem regretted creating the *Yetzer Hara*. They also say (*Kiddushin* 30b) that the *Yetzer Hara* is so difficult to deal with that Hashem calls it “evil.” This is because it does not leave man alone for a second, but constantly



*If people would appreciate the sweetness and pleasantness of the Torah, they would go crazy over it. They would not value gold and silver at all, for the Torah encompasses all the goodness to be found in this world*

(Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh,  
Parashat Ki Tisa)



pursues him in order to influence him to do an aveirah and fall in his trap. Chazal express this in the following way (*Berachot* 61a), “The *Yetzer Hara* is compared to a fly that sits between the two chambers of the heart.” They also say (*Sukkah* 52a), “The *Yetzer Hara* is hidden in the heart of man. He stands close to his heart and waits for a crack to open so that he can enter it and cool down man’s Avodat Hashem and distance him from the correct path.”

If the *Yetzer Hara* has such awesome powers, how can man withstand him? The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 30b) states, “Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Bnei Yisrael: I created the *Yetzer Hara*, and I created the Torah as its cure.” This is expounded on in the sefer *Mesillat Yesharim* (Chapter 5): The matter is simple. One is able to be cured from this malady (of the *Yetzer Hara*) only by this cure (the Torah). A person who believes that he can be saved from the *Yetzer Hara* in a different way is sorely mistaken. He will realize his mistake when he dies in sin. For the *Yetzer Hara* is extremely strong and subdues a person, ruling over him without him even realizing it. One may try all the tricks in the world to prevail against him, but if he does not use the cure of Torah, he will not be conscious of how sick he is until after he dies in sin, and his soul perishes.

Hashem has created one force to counteract another. As powerful as the *Yetzer Hara* is, its remedy is just as powerful. This is in order to assist man in overcoming it. If a person strengthens the power of Torah within himself, laboring in it with all his might, then the Torah will protect and save him from the machinations of the *Yetzer Hara*. Only the person whose every thought is in the world of Torah and who “kills himself in the tent of Torah,” holding onto it at all times, is promised that the *Yetzer Hara* will have no dominion over him. The *Yetzer* will find no



crack in which to enter into such a person’s heart.

Conversely, if one desires to live an easy and peaceful life, and is lax in Torah, unwilling to expend the requisite effort in learning it, the *Yetzer Hara* will find the doors of his heart wide open. This is expressed by Chazal (*Ketubot* 59) as follows: “Idleness leads to boredom, and boredom leads to sin.” A person who does not labor in Torah with his 248 limbs and 365 sinews, and does not sweat and exert himself to thoroughly understand what he is learning, is in the category of being idle. Because he does not learn as he should, he will come to sin. This is because Torah learnt in this way does not have the power to protect him against the *Yetzer Hara*.

Similarly, Adam Harishon and Chava sinned by eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge because they lived a life of tranquility and ease. Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 59b) say that they did not have to labor at all. The Guardian Angels would roast meat for them and pour them wine. They would walk at leisure through the Garden of Eden. When the Snake saw that they lived a life of calm and serenity, he realized

that this was the opportune moment to entice them, since idleness and lack of activity produce the ripe fruits of sin. Thus, the Snake came and started a conversation with Chava in order to persuade her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. She, in turn, persuaded her husband to do so, and thus, they flouted the will of Hashem and sinned.

When Hashem saw that ease and tranquility had spoiled everything and caused them to sin, He immediately decreed (*Bereishit* 3:19) that man would “eat bread by the sweat of his brow.” Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to him, “Man was born to labor.” When a person labors and expends much effort to gain his sustenance, he does not have the time to listen to the suggestions of the *Yetzer Hara*. Hard work counteracts boredom and idleness, but in order to ensure that one is protected against the *Yetzer Hara* and will not sin, he must labor in the Torah. Chazal teach (*Berachot* 17), “Fortunate is the one who labors in Torah and gives pleasure to his Creator.”

The *sefarim hakedoshim* write that one hour of Torah learning on Shabbat is equal to a thousand hours of learning on a weekday. Why does Hashem reward us so greatly for learning on Shabbat, to the extent that it is worth one thousand times the reward for learning during the week? We can explain in light of the above. During the six days of the week, a person is busy earning his livelihood; however, on Shabbat he rests and does not work. It is precisely now, when he enjoys tranquility and repose that the *Yetzer Hara* has the greatest opportunity to attack and cause him to sin. One’s only recourse against the *Yetzer* is to labor with all his might in Torah. In order to encourage a person to do so, Hashem promises him such great reward.

This explanation sheds light on the following Gemara (*Berachot* 5a): “If a person sees that troubles

overcome him, he should examine his deeds. If he finds nothing wrong, he should realize that the cause of his troubles is because he has become idle from Torah.” This is difficult to understand. Surely, if he examined his deeds and found nothing wrong, then there was also nothing wrong with his Torah learning. Why then is he told to attribute his suffering to his lack in Torah learning?

The words “יתלה בביטול תורה – He should attribute it to idleness in Torah” imply that he is lacking in the aspect of laboring and striving in learning Torah. Even if he examined his deeds and found that he did learn Torah, and believes that he was not lax in it, Chazal are teaching that this is not the case; there is a certain lack of effort present in his learning which needs to be corrected. This lack is equated with failing to labor in Torah.

As well as saving a person from sin, laboring in Torah enables a person to experience its sweetness and desirability. The holy Torah is invaluable and truly desirable, as it says (*Mishlei* 3:15), “It is more precious than pearls, and all your desires cannot compare to it.” David Hamelech says (*Tehillim* 19:11) that the Torah is “more desirable than gold and much fine gold, and is sweeter than honey and honey-combs.” He also says, (*ibid.* 119:72), “The Torah of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.” A person who labors extensively in Torah, and kills himself over it, is able to appreciate its great worth and taste its sweetness.

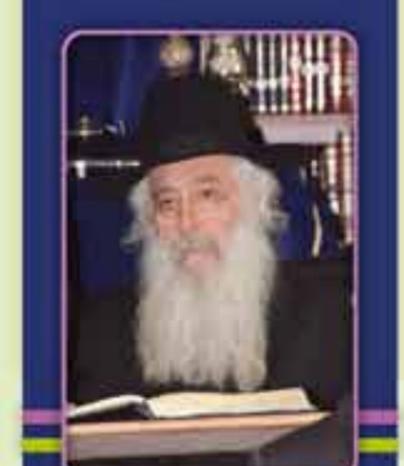
The Ohr Hachaim writes (*Devarim* 26:11), “If people would appreciate the sweetness and pleasantness of the Torah, they would not value gold and silver at all, for the Torah encompasses all the goodness to be found in this world.” Moreover, Chazal (*Devarim Rabbah* 2:26) say, “One who loves Torah, is never sated

by it.” However, in order to truly appreciate it, it is not enough to learn Torah, but one must labor and exert himself in it, and totally devote himself to it. Then, he will taste the pleasantness of its words and will not want to ever part from it.

This helps us understand why the preparations that our forefathers made to receive the Torah were different from ours. When Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, they were unable to appreciate the worth and significance of the holy Torah, because they had not yet received



*If one wishes to taste the good taste of the Torah, and merit all the wonderful things contained within it, he must labor and exert himself in it with all his means, to the extent that he kills himself in the tent of Torah in order to understand it. Only then, will he merit attaining it.*



it. How could they know how sweet it is? Therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu made many signs and wonders for them, in order to arouse within them the desire to come close to Him and receive the Torah. We do not need such wonders, since we have already received the Torah. If we labor in it in the required manner in order to understand its depths, there is no doubt that we will appreciate its sweetness, beauty, and splendor. We do not need to be impressed by miracles in order to open our hearts to appreciating the Torah. We pursue it without these things, and desire to gain it at any price. Since we have already tasted the sweet taste of Torah, we never want to part from it. However, this is on condition that we truly labor in Torah, for only then will our hearts be open to feeling the satisfaction and pleasure contained within it.

Chazal (*Bereishit Rabbah* 70) say that the Torah is compared to bread, as it says (*Mishlei* 9:5), “לכו לחמו בלחמי – Come and partake of my food.” Why is the Torah specifically compared to bread, rather than any other food? Perhaps we can explain according to what we have said above. The production of bread requires much work. First, the farmer must plow the field, sow the wheat, and harvest it. He must then separate the wheat from the chaff, grind and sift it, knead the dough and bake it. Only then is it ready to be eaten, and palatable to the taste.

Likewise, if a person wants to taste the good taste of the Torah, and merit all the wonderful things contained within it, he must labor and exert himself in it with all his means, to the extent that he kills himself in the tent of Torah in order to understand its words. Only after he does this, will he merit making himself into a fitting vessel to accept the Torah. For only one who labors in Torah merits wearing its crown.

# Sights and Sounds from *New York and Miami*



A short time ago, the whole world was shaken by the tremendous tragedy of the sinking of the luxury liner, the *Costa Concordia*, off the coast of Italy. This Italian cruise ship boasted 17 decks and had a capacity of 3,700 passengers. It was one of the largest ships in the world, until it sank in the winter of 2012.

At the time that it sank, there was a Jewish couple from Miami standing on the deck of this magnificent ship. Some time after this event, this couple attended the *kabbalat hakahal* that Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita, hosted in Miami. With great emotion, they related to him the details of the wondrous miracle that they experienced on the ship:

During dinner time, loudspeakers announced that there was "a problem with one of the generators." However, it soon became clear that the ship had collided with a rock shelf, and everyone must go to the lifeboats. Plates and glasses were falling off the tables and noisily smashing on the floor, because, by that time, the ship was leaning on its side. This added drama to the already dramatic events



*During dinner time, loudspeakers announced that there was "a problem with one of the generators." However, it soon became clear that the ship had collided with a rock shelf, and everyone must go to the lifeboats*

that were taking place, proving to the passengers that the situation was much worse than they were being informed. Afterwards, it was discovered that when the ship hit the rock, it ripped a hole in its left side that was fifty meters wide. Seawater gushed into the ship, which then sank.

At the time of the accident, there were 3,229 passengers and 1,023 crew members on the ship. Thirty passengers were found dead; two have still not been found. *B'chasdei*

*Hashem*, most of the passengers survived, their lives granted them as gifts. They were pulled out of the water and saved. This is the largest ship that has ever sunk.

The panic was indescribable. Everyone was running to escape the sinking ship as fast as possible. In their minds was the bitter end of the luxury liner *Titanic*, which became a parable and byword for disaster throughout the world, the ship whose builders had proclaimed was impossible to sink. And just like the *Titanic*, there was tremendous tumult all over the *Costa Concordia*, as everyone ran to ensure himself a place on the lifeboats. Each person's true colors were revealed in those moments: for better or for worse. Some exhibited extreme selfishness, and others, wonderful generosity of heart. In those difficult moments, the inner character, which is usually hidden from the sight of others, and also from his own eyes, was revealed to all.

"We were among those who were saved," this couple excitedly told the Rav. "The Creator had mercy on us and kept us alive. We feel as if we have received our lives as a gift."

When he heard this, the Rav turned to them and asked them pleasantly, "Have you made any changes in your life due to the wonderful miracle that you experienced? Have you become more committed to spiritual values because of it?"

They answered, "We try to eat only kosher food when we are at home. Outside the house, it is difficult for us to keep kosher..."

The Rav was astounded and replied, "Is it possible to be Jewish only at home, but not outside the home?"

With a heart full of emotion, the Rav continued, "You must understand that Hakadosh Baruch Hu saved you from drowning in the sea for the express purpose that you should wake up and come closer to Him truthfully and with all your heart. You were at the gates of death; it was only Hashem who saved you. Is this not reason enough to strengthen your commitment to keeping Torah and mitzvot properly? If you turn your back on Hashem, *chalilah*, you will awaken justice against yourselves, *rachmana litzlan*, and will suffer a bitter fate."

It is proven that words spoken from

the heart enter the heart. This couple suddenly understood the enormity of what had happened and that it was the right thing to make real changes in their lives. Then, the Rav brought the husband close to the Aron Hakodesh, opened the door, and asked him to place his hand on the Sefer Torah.

"Promise Hashem," he said, "and yourself, that with His help you will not put into your mouth a morsel of food that has any question of being kosher."

With tears streaming down his face, the husband wept out loud, the sound of his wife's weeping joining his. It was a very emotional scene, a private *Kabbalat HaTorah* of precious Jews. In those moments, the lights of their *neshamot* suddenly burst forth, as they accepted upon themselves to come closer to Hashem Yitbarach in a true manner – as a sign of gratitude toward Hashem for saving them from drowning in the depths of the sea.

Time passed, and because of the firm commitment that this couple had made, they merited rising in levels of holiness and purity. All the members of their family also followed the wonderful light that had been lit in

their *neshamot* during those exalted moments with the Rav. With the help of Hashem, they have all become His servants, possessing true *yirat Shamayim*.

The Rav, shlita, told over this story as a response to all those who are surprised at the amount of effort that he puts into his visits to New York and Miami. It proves that his time is well spent in doing so. But, first things first...

**"How did America merit two crowns: the crown of Torah and the crown of greatness, as well as the wealth and honor that she also possesses? It is because America has always been a haven of Torah, and the government has always permitted the Jews living on its shores to toil in Torah without any disturbances. In a place where there is Torah, it follows that there will be greatness..." (In the name of the Gaon, Rabbi Aharon Kotler, ztk"l, Rosh Hayeshiva Lakewood)**

New York, the hustle and bustle of America. Life is lived 24/7. It is the



*"When I saw this, I resolved to establish, with the help of Hashem, a center specifically for these precious people, and others like them, who desire to act in similar fashion. This would enable each person to come to the Beit Hamidrash at the time that suits him, in order to quench his soul's thirst for the pure waters of Torah."*

location of the World Stock Exchange, the economic center of the world. Skyscrapers rise from the ground in every direction; a constant stream of humanity rushes this way and that. Each person busy with his own thing; each person immersed in his own plans.

In the middle of all this, there rises the sweet song of eternity. A pure spring bubbles up between the stormy waves, the well of Torah. For amongst all the noise and tumult of the street, the sounds of the eternal Torah burst forth and rise ever upwards.

In the evening, when the city begins to quiet down, one can see many businessmen, who have just finished another day of hard work, making their way to the magnificent Beit Hamidrash established by **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Harav Hagaon, the tzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita**. The Rav has expended tremendous effort and self-sacrifice to establish it. His pure aspirations to enhance the kingdom of Torah have merited him establishing such institutions throughout the world. Here, in New York, all those who enter the portals of this building are overcome with the wonderful atmosphere of spirituality that fills it.

When one sees this, he wonders if this is really happening in New York, the bustling economic and business

center of the world! Are these men in the Beit Hamidrash, who are giving their all to the Gemara, the same people who can be seen rushing to work among the throngs filling the streets in the early morning? Yes!! This is all the fruit borne from the tremendous efforts of **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita**, in establishing this holy institution, where, with the help of Hashem, many residents of the city fix times to learn Torah.

"*Baruch Hashem*, our businesses are successful and thriving," report all those who merit combining the toil of the business day with the blessed toil of Torah. "We are given special *siyata di'Shemaya* in our businesses. And we know without a shadow of a doubt that the merit of the Torah, to which we devote specific hours of the day, stands by us and enables us to succeed in everything that we do..." Thus, they fulfill the pasuk (*Mishlei* 3:16), "Length of days is at its right, and wealth and honor at its left."

**"If, as a result of all the efforts that I expend, I merit saving only one Jewish person, it is all worthwhile in my eyes. For, if I merit returning one person to his Jewish heritage, I have fulfilled the statement of Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 37): Whoever saves one Jewish soul is considered to have established a whole world"**

(From the words of **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the Gaon, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita**)

This generation faces a multitude of trials. The *Yetzer Hara* tries his utmost to push away the *Shechinah* and to turn the hearts of the *bachurei yeshiva* away from the service of Hashem. In this darkness that covers the earth, **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita**, sacrifices himself in his concern over every individual. He toils without stop to bring people closer to Hashem and help them taste the sweetness of Torah.

For this purpose, he has established the magnificent Beit Hamidrash in New York, under the direction of the Gaon, Harav Eliezer Jacker, shlita. Many *ba'alei teshuvah* of all ages flock to it. Harav Jacker has employed his exceptional qualities in welcoming them, and has merited sowing the seed of revival in their hearts. Torah lectures and discourses on Mussar are given at fixed times and bring those who hear them closer to their Father in Heaven.

At an appropriate moment, we were able to ask **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita**, who has established a worldwide empire of Torah: **How has the Rav managed to establish this Torah empire in New York? What made the Rav decide to build a Beit Hamidrash specifically here? The Rav has already merited, with *siyata di'Shemaya*, founding many institutions throughout the world, shouldering an enormous burden in doing so. Why has the Rav added New York to his list?"**

The Rav's face lit up as he replied, "I am well acquainted with New York, since I have been coming here for the last thirty years, in order to strengthen the holy communities in the city. *Baruch Hashem*, I have seen much success in my endeavors. Hundreds of people have got married, *Baruch Hashem*, and now have many children, adding thousands to the community, *bli ayin hara*. Many Jews have merited, with the help of Hashem Yitbarach, coming closer to their Creator through our help. At first, these people were far from a life of Torah and mitzvot and did not possess even the most basic knowledge of Judaism.

"Chazal have told us that in the

*"One should know that everything that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has created, He created for His honor, as it says (*Yeshayahu* 43:7): Everything that is called on My Name and that has been created for My glory, whom I have fashioned and made"* (Introduction to Perek Shirah)

New York and Miami are only two of the cities that have merited hosting **Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita**, and his activities. A glance at the Rav's schedule for a month, or longer, leaves one astounded. It is difficult to comprehend how one man can make the effort to visit so many places and expend so much energy in helping others: encouraging and advising, supporting and strengthening, comforting and gladdening the hearts of Jews in every situation.

The blessings, advice, and words of the Rav give encouragement to Jews all over the world, which lasts from one visit to the next.

These trips force the Rav to be constantly on the road, taking whatever type of transportation available. "I try," the Rav explains, "to take a practical lesson from whatever I see in each place that I visit." He constantly reiterates that everything that Hashem has created can teach us something. If a person would only take this to heart, he would realize: "It is fitting to search [for a lesson], and fitting to implement it."

**On one of the Rav's visits to Miami**, he went on a boat that was passing through a large river filled with crocodiles of all different types and sizes. "As we were sailing through these crocodiles, I imagined the Nile in Egypt, which was also filled with all sorts of crocodiles. Pharaoh boasted to his people (*Yechezkel* 29:3), "I created the Nile, and I created myself." He believed that he was a god, *rachmana litzlan*, and that he was omnipotent. It is interesting to note that, according to Kabbalah, Pharaoh was called "*Tanin* – Crocodile/Serpent," since he drew his impurity from the negative force of the Great Serpent in the Upper Worlds, about whom it is said (*ibid.*), "The great serpent that crouches in its rivers."

The sight of these crocodiles provided the Rav, shlita, with an original and wonderful answer to the question of why Chazal compared Pharaoh to a crocodile, rather than any

other creature. There were the most enormous crocodiles there, lying at the side of the river without moving. On first glance, one could think that they were dead. Even when people would throw something at them to get them to stir, they would continue lying in the mud, without shifting.

Pharaoh behaved just like a crocodile. The crocodile does not pay attention to its surroundings; it stays in one place, without moving. So too, Pharaoh Harasha was obstinate and refused to subject himself to Hashem, even when he saw the terrible plagues that smote Egypt.

Even though he knew that these plagues were Heaven-sent, in order that he should be roused to allow Bnei Yisrael to leave, he continued to rebel against Hashem and hardened his stubborn heart. He was exactly like the crocodile, which refused to move when things were thrown at it...

This aspect of Pharaoh hints to the *Yetzer Hara*, who causes a person to be obstinate and refuse to change his wicked ways and return to Hashem in teshuvah. The *Yetzer Hara* strives to make a person feel complacent. He convinces him that he's okay and does not have to make any steps in improving his service of Hashem. In this way, he prevents him from ascending in holiness and purity.

No one wants to live like a crocodile. What is man's purpose? To fight the good fight! To harness his strength in order to withstand the blandishments of the *Yetzer Hara*, and to stop wallowing in the mud of complacency. Everyone knows that if he wants to become rich, he must work hard. Similarly, if one desires to merit loving Hashem Yitbarach and attaining pure *yirat Shamayim*, he must work hard in spiritual areas. He must strengthen himself in order to break his negative character traits, and he must distance himself from false ideologies and foreign outlooks.

This is a constant

task, difficult and unending. However, without a doubt, fortunate is the person who fulfills it. Apart from meriting ascending in *yirah* and purity, he also enables others to do so. He is fortunate on both counts. Thus, we see that everything in Creation can teach us a practical lesson and strengthen us in our service of Hashem.

While speaking about his trip to Miami, the Rav revealed his secret aspirations and the thoughts that filled his mind when he was there. "My dream is to establish a magnificent Torah center in Miami, just as in New York. In this place, all who desire will be able to come close to Hashem and be enlightened by the light of Torah. With the help of Hashem Yitbarach, a Beit Hamidrash will be founded in Miami, which will serve as an address for all those who wish to fix set times for studying and fulfill 'sitting in the House of Hashem,' whenever they can.

"These thoughts, that enveloped me when I was in Miami, give me the strength to take upon myself the tremendous amount of work involved in establishing another spiritual center there, as well as in other places. They inspire me to continue expending all my efforts and abilities in order to strengthen the Jewish people in Torah and *yirat Shamayim*. This is despite all the difficulties I face in building the world of Torah in New York and Miami, as well as in Eretz Yisrael, and throughout the world.

"I pray from the depths of my heart that Hashem will not forsake me, and that I should merit fulfilling this project, in order to increase and strengthen the bastions of the holy Torah and bring honor to His Name. Then all will recognize His Kingdom, and we will merit the fulfillment of the pasuk, 'And Hashem will be King over the whole world. On that day, Hashem will be one and His Name will be one.'"





*"Traveling a great distance every morning is not something to take for granted ... But nothing stood in the way of those upright Jews, since their strong desire for Torah and holiness overcame any difficulties put in their path. This pure and whole-hearted longing for Torah is also what encourages me to continue sacrificing my energies to increase my activities. It strengthens my resolve to spread Torah all over the world."*

place where *ba'alei teshuvah* stand, complete tzaddikim cannot stand. These people have merited becoming true *ba'alei teshuvah*, who are careful to keep the most stringent halachot. How fortunate they are! These precious Jews impact their surroundings with the powerful spiritual light that glows within them. I thank Hashem every day and every hour that, in His great mercy, I have merited being His messenger to bring these wandering people closer to Him.

"Take, for example, the couple who were saved from the sinking Italian liner, *Costa Concordia*, last year. In one moment of inspiration, this couple merited experiencing their own, private *Kabbalat HaTorah*. These are mature people, their lifestyle worked out, who had never dreamt of changing their lives in such a significant manner. However, they merited smashing the barriers that had until now prevented them from coming close to Hashem. In that one moment of clarity, they said to Hashem, 'We are Your children, and You are our Father. We desire only to take shelter under the wings of Your *Shechinah* and keep Your mitzvot.' In this manner, they became included in the exalted category of *ba'alei teshuvah*, who stand in a place that even complete tzaddikim cannot reach. Has it not been worthwhile to help these people, and others like them, by establishing a spiritual center worthy of this title?"

The family members of the Rav revealed to us the story of a whole family that merited sheltering under the wings of the *Shechinah*. The return of the whole branch of this family was effected by... a *kamaya*. Some time ago, the Rav was visited by certain members of this illustrious family, who are all *yerei Shamayim*, and whose appearance testifies that they conduct their lives in purity, according to the dictates of the Torah. Whilst they were speaking, they mentioned that their mother, *tichyeh*, had attended a *kabbalat kahal* of the Rav in New York, many years previously. At that time, she and all the family lived a

life totally uncommitted to the ways of the Torah.

For some reason, the Rav wrote a few words on a *kamaya* and gave it to the mother of this family. This was the beginning of her path to the world of Judaism, and all the rest of the family followed in her footsteps! Some members of this wonderful family are now *avrechim*, who learn Torah all day, and the mother herself gives Torah lectures to women, strengthening them in different areas of Judaism. She often tells her family how she merited taking her first step toward this lifestyle, after receiving the blessing from the Rav at the *kabbalat hakahal*. She still keeps this *kamaya* as a memento of the wondrous miracle that happened to her in her spiritual life.

On hearing this story, the face of the Rav lit up with a special glow. He described how his heart was filled with immeasurable joy and gratitude to Hashem Yitbarach. "This is the greatest proof that my holy work in New York finds grace before the Creator."

The Rav, shlita, often describes the strong emotions that overtake him when he witnesses the self-sacrifice of *ba'alei teshuvah*, who desire with all their hearts to become true servants of Hashem. "At the beginning, when I first started to receive people at the *kabbalat hakahal* and to give lectures in New York, I did so in the Beit Hakeneset *Yad Avraham*, in Manhattan. I merited witnessing how many businessmen would come from afar in the early morning to attend the *Daf Hayomi shiur* given by the Gaon, Harav Yosef Kletzky, shlita, the Rav of the Beit Hakeneset. They would pray *Shacharit* there, and only afterward go to their various jobs.

"It is important to note that Rav Kletzky gave the *shiur* himself, at 6.30 a.m. This necessitated him rising at 4.00 a.m., in order to travel to Manhattan, a journey of one and a half hours...

"Traveling a great distance every day so early in the morning is not something to take for granted... But nothing stood in the way of those upright Jews, since their strong desire for Torah and holiness

overcame any difficulties put in their path. This pure and whole-hearted longing for Torah is also what encourages me to continue sacrificing my energies to increase my activities. It strengthens my resolve to spread Torah all over the world, because I have not seen such self-sacrifice in other places."

"When I saw this, I resolved to establish, with the help of Hashem, a center specifically for these precious people, and others like them, who desire to act in similar fashion. This would enable each person to come to the Beit Hamidrash at the time that suits him, in order to quench his soul's thirst for the pure waters of the Torah."

The job was not easy. In order to build this beautiful Beit Hamidrash, the Rav required a large amount of funds. He was already committed to the upkeep of other holy institutions that he had established in Eretz Yisrael and around the world, requiring enormous sums of money. On one hand, the Rav needed funds to build the Beit Hamidrash in New York. On the other hand, he needed the money to continue supporting the *avrechim* devoting themselves to Torah, who had whole-heartedly abandoned a life of materialism in order to acquire eternal life, and were toiling in the *kollelim* that he had founded.

**How could he do both? From where would he draw the strength to withstand all the difficulties involved? People asked the Rav this question, over and again.**

"I obtain the strength to do this from these pure-hearted people, who sacrifice themselves to live a life of Torah," the Rav would always reply. He would then point to the multitude of *avrechim* joyfully devoting their time to learning, in order to fulfill the will of Hashem.

The Rav continues, "When I see their faces light up with a spiritual light, I say to myself that my life has been worthwhile, since I have merited enlarging Hashem's army. Sometimes, when the economic situation is not easy (to say the least), I offer a prayer to the

Creator that He should help me bring glory to His Name, in the merit of the self-sacrifice of these people, who come to the Beit Hamidrash.

"The whole purpose of my life is to proclaim the Name of Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the world, and to encourage others to love Him. There is no greater reward than bringing another person closer to Hashem."

**"Who is like Your people, Yisrael? One nation in the land" (*Divrei Hayamim I 17:21*)**

**Am Yisrael are one unit, since each member of the nation is responsible for the other. As the pasuk says (*Bereishit 46:27*), "כל הנפש לבית יעקב הבאה מצרימה" – All the people coming with Yaakov to Egypt." It does not say נפשות (people) in the plural form, but נפש (person) in the singular form, since all the members of Am Yisrael are one unit (In the name of the Chafetz Chaim, ztk"l)**

This is the mission statement of the Rav, shlita, in all his undertakings in New York and Miami. All Am Yisrael are responsible for each other. Thus, in spite of all the difficulties, a most splendid kingdom of Torah stands firmly on its foundations.

Each Jew bears an awesome responsibility to concern himself over the spiritual status of his fellow. Anyone who is able must devote himself to this extremely important mitzvah, because if someone far from a Torah lifestyle tastes the sweetness of the holy Torah, he will certainly merit enjoying its light.

The Rav often quotes the words of the holy *Tanna*, Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel, zy"l, that we are called *Yehudim* after Yehudah (one of the holy Tribes), since he was the embodiment of mutual responsibility, as he demonstrated by taking full responsibility for his brother Binyamin, to the point of self-sacrifice... This is the secret of our nation's survival: that each person devotes himself to the welfare of the other, rather than only looking out for himself.

We are living in the generation that is



*"The whole purpose of my life is to proclaim the Name of Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the world, and to encourage others to love Him. There is no greater reward than bringing another person closer to Hashem."*



termed *The Footsteps of Mashiach*. This is a generation that thirsts for Torah and Judaism, as it says (*Amos* 8:11), “Behold, days are coming, the word of Hashem, and I will send a famine in the land. Not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but to hear the word of Hashem.”

Although it may seem difficult to realize, many of those Jews, both in New York and elsewhere, who walk around without displaying any outward sign of Jewishness, are “*tinokot shenishbu*.” A warm Jewish heart beats within; one just needs to light the spark of their *neshamot* that has been temporarily extinguished. Each person who merits bringing the hearts of those who have strayed closer to their Father in Heaven will gain tremendous reward.

The Rav, shlita, related a compelling story that proves this point: “On one of my visits to Miami, I was invited to the house of one of the residents of the city, a man who was highly esteemed and very generous. He very much wanted that I should visit his house, and it was obvious that he had been looking forward to this opportunity. When I saw this, I agreed to his request and came to his house with my aides. He took me into the magnificent lounge and with great emotion said to me, “Honorable Rav, the whole top floor is at your disposal!”

In a manner fitting for kings, he escorted me to the stairway leading to the upper floor. However, when I began to walk up the stairs, I was astounded: wherever I looked, there were the most inappropriate pictures hanging on the walls. I was shocked. Immediately, I turned around and went back down the stairs. I met the host in the hallway and in a pleasant manner explained the problem. I will never forget his reply: “Honorable Rav,” he said in great distress, “please forgive me for causing you pain, I didn’t know that there was any problem with these pictures, or that it is forbidden to look at such things.”

My heart ached when I heard this. I raised my eyes to the heavens and said, **“Ribbono shel Olam, how great is the simple faith in the hearts of these pure Jews, Your beloved children. See how they respect and honor the**



**Torah and those who learn it, and how they believe in You and Your servants, the tzaddikim, with such wonderful simplicity. How painful it is to see that they don’t even know the most basic Torah concepts.”**

This experience filled me with renewed strength to invest all my efforts in bringing close the hearts of these people far from Judaism, and to fortify our fellow Jews in spiritual matters. I realized how terribly necessary this is, specifically in the United States. For this country is considered to be the symbol of western culture, a culture which is unfortunately dominated by materialism, a culture which advocates the pursuit of every pleasure and the constant accumulation of wealth. I realized how important it is to spiritually strengthen our Jewish brothers who live there, and teach them the true purpose of the life of a Jew, which is so different from the life of a gentile.

**In a place like New York, one witnesses contradicting scenes, which unfortunately also exist in the homes of Jewish people living there.**

During Chanukah of this year, the Rav, shlita, visited New York. This year, Chanukah was celebrated close to the date of the secular New Year celebrations. When walking in the street, one’s eyes were accosted by the most bizarre scene. In almost all the houses, the lights of a menorah

shone through the windows, a burst of pure Jewish light that has continued throughout the history of the Jewish nation, silently bespeaking the fantastic miracle of the victory of the few and weak against the many and strong, the victory of the light of Torah.

In the very same window, right next to the menorah, was an Xmas tree, *rachmana litzlan*, to mark the beginning of the secular New Year and the gentile celebrations. “As I looked at this scene, my heart filled with grief,” the Rav, shlita, later said to his close associates. “A thought flitted through my mind: The forces of impurity are trying to hint that it is possible to combine these two things, as if the most exalted levels of purity can coexist with the worst levels of impurity. As if it is possible for a Jew to light up his soul with the lights of the menorah, the symbol of strength throughout the generations, and to place alongside it the symbols of the gentiles. This shows how far the materialism of America has made inroads in the spiritual existence of the Jews, mixing Torah and, *l’havdil*, gentile ideals together.

“Is this really possible? We clearly know that a person cannot live in such a paradoxical manner. Hashem has made a condition in nature that light and darkness cannot coexist. Similarly, it is impossible for a *ben Torah* to live a life of wanton abandon, chasing the lusts and luxuries of this world...”

“Eliyahu Hanavi declared this to the

prophets of Ba’al, on Mount Carmel (*Melachim* I, 18:21), ‘For how long will you vacillate? If Hashem is G-d – follow Him! And if the Ba’al is G-d – follow him!’”

However, the Rav (in his usual manner) brings out a positive lesson from such distressing thoughts: “This situation impels me to increase the boundaries of holiness in the United States to the best of my ability, especially in New York and Miami. With Hashem’s help, I gird myself with strength in order to increase the powers of holiness, so that they should withstand the raging winds of the times and overcome the darkness of the *Yetzer*.”

**“And they believed in Hashem, and in Moshe, His servant”**

(*Shemot* 14:31)

**“Moshe commanded us the Torah, the inheritance of the Congregation of Yaakov” (*Devarim* 33:4). The word מורשה (possession) has the same root as the word ירושה (inheritance), since when one learns the holy Torah, he connects to the light of Moshe Rabbeinu, a”h. Torah and faith have been the two foundations of the Jewish nation throughout the generations**

(From the holy writings of Moreinu v’Rabbeinu, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita.)

During a *kabbalat hakahal* in Miami, a woman from the Lalush family came to the Rav, shlita, and requested a blessing in the merit of his holy ancestors. She did not come for any particular reason, and just requested a general blessing for success. However, the Rav surprised her by blessing her in a very specific way: **“May it be Hashem’s will, that He should sweeten the judgment, and you should hear good news.”**

The woman was very surprised and shaken when she heard this blessing. “Honorable Rav,” she said, “Why did you bless me in this manner? Everything is fine with us, *Baruch Hashem*.” Nevertheless, she immediately strengthened herself in the understanding that the blessing from the Rav came from a pure heart and was in the merit of his holy forefathers, zy”a, and had not

been uttered in vain. Therefore, she whole-heartedly answered “Amen.”

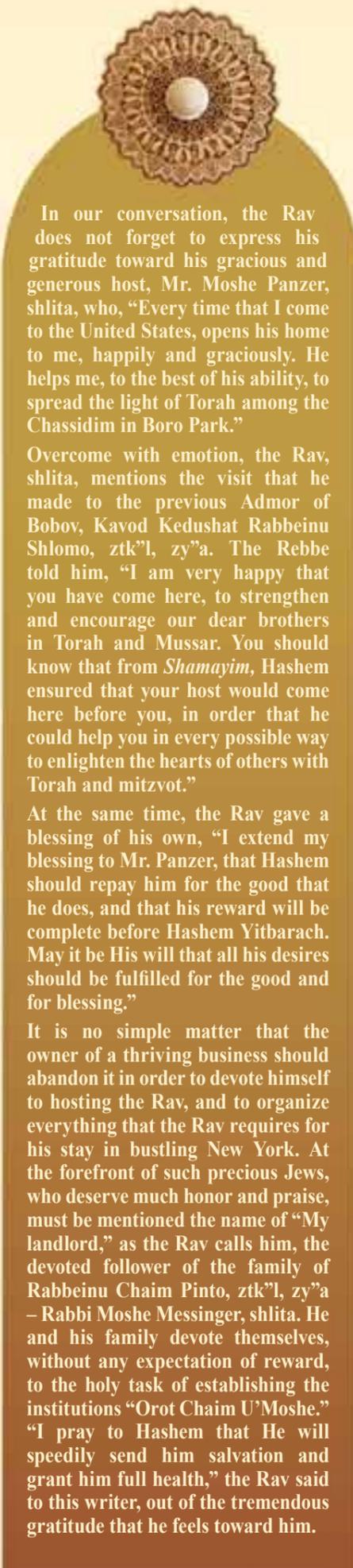
When those close to the Rav asked him why he had given such a blessing in the face of her simple request, the Rav answered that he didn’t know, but felt he had been directed by Hashem to say these words.

The woman went on her way, and the whole incident was forgotten. But not for long. The next day, the woman returned, but this time, she was very emotional. “I and my family just experienced a tremendous miracle,” she exclaimed to all those listening. This is her story:

“After I merited being blessed by the Rav, shlita, I decided to travel to a certain place with my family. We all got into the car, and the driver set off. In the middle of the journey, we were involved in a terrible accident. The reason for the accident is unclear. Suddenly, the car swerved to the side of the road and turned over. It was totally smashed up. The emergency crews who had been called to the scene were shocked to see a car at the side of the road, which had no semblance of a car anymore, it was so twisted up. They were sure that after such an awful crash, there could not be any survivors, Hashem should have mercy.

“They approached the car in order to remove the corpses, *rachmana litzlan*. Yet, when they pulled us out of the car, they got the surprise of their lives to see that all of us were alive and well! None of us were injured in any way. This was a tremendous *kiddush Hashem*, and proved how Hashem watches over his creations in the most wondrous way.

“I am sure,” the woman concluded her enthralling tale, “that the blessing of the Rav sweetened the judgment against us, in the merit of his illustrious forefathers, zy”a, saving us from a bitter death. And because of our belief in the blessing, we merited that this decree was sweetened, and Hashem granted us our lives anew.”



In our conversation, the Rav does not forget to express his gratitude toward his gracious and generous host, Mr. Moshe Panzer, shlita, who, “Every time that I come to the United States, opens his home to me, happily and graciously. He helps me, to the best of his ability, to spread the light of Torah among the Chassidim in Boro Park.”

Overcome with emotion, the Rav, shlita, mentions the visit that he made to the previous Admor of Bobov, Kavod Kedushat Rabbeinu Shlomo, ztk”l, zy”a. The Rebbe told him, “I am very happy that you have come here, to strengthen and encourage our dear brothers in Torah and Mussar. You should know that from *Shamayim*, Hashem ensured that your host would come here before you, in order that he could help you in every possible way to enlighten the hearts of others with Torah and mitzvot.”

At the same time, the Rav gave a blessing of his own, “I extend my blessing to Mr. Panzer, that Hashem should repay him for the good that he does, and that his reward will be complete before Hashem Yitbarach. May it be His will that all his desires should be fulfilled for the good and for blessing.”

It is no simple matter that the owner of a thriving business should abandon it in order to devote himself to hosting the Rav, and to organize everything that the Rav requires for his stay in bustling New York. At the forefront of such precious Jews, who deserve much honor and praise, must be mentioned the name of “My landlord,” as the Rav calls him, the devoted follower of the family of Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, ztk”l, zy”a – Rabbi Moshe Messinger, shlita. He and his family devote themselves, without any expectation of reward, to the holy task of establishing the institutions “Orot Chaim U’Moshe.” “I pray to Hashem that He will speedily send him salvation and grant him full health,” the Rav said to this writer, out of the tremendous gratitude that he feels toward him.

By: Rabbi Yosef Elkoubi

# Pesach: Festival of Faith and Education



Pesach, the festival of freedom, is the day we were released from Egypt. One would assume that the main responsibility of the Seder night would be the fulfillment of the directive “Man is obligated to view himself as though he himself left Egypt.” But an examination of the Torah’s words indicates that the primary purpose of this evening is fulfillment of the verse “And you shall tell your son.”

The word Haggadah comes from the word *maggid* (telling). The Haggadah which we read is called by this name because it is all about telling over what took place so long ago. And our target audience is “your son and your son’s son.”

In an atmosphere permeated with the heady aroma of tradition, we sat down to a discussion replete with nostalgia, together with Moreinu V’Rabbeinu, HaGaon Hatzaddik, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita. He spoke about the home of HaRav Hatzaddik, Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zt”l, his revered father. He reminisced about the Pesach preparations, as well as the holiday itself. Strains of longing tugged at the heart, at the memories

of a past long gone. At the same time, it was a conversation full of guidance, a map to chart our path, to observe and to emulate.

## When the Tzaddik Climbed a Ladder

I asked how they prepared the children for the Seder Night.

The Rav answered: When we discuss the Seder, it is imperative, firstly, to relate to the numerous preparations. All of the family members, with my father at the head, participated in the preparations. I vividly remember my father taking a paintbrush in hand, and climbing a ladder to plaster and paint the house in honor of the holiday. Father never considered this a demeaning task, *chalilah*. He wanted to physically participate in the preparations for the festival of freedom. When we would all sit around the holiday table, we would truly taste freedom.

I was but a young child when I was sent off to learn in a faraway yeshiva. Nevertheless, the hustle and bustle of pre-Pesach preparations has remained indelible in my mind.

My mother, may she live long,

attended to the necessary tasks which were placed on her shoulders. During the days of Pesach, we ate only fresh fruits and vegetables, and foods which we ourselves prepared. Everything was homemade. Mother cooked all of the foods herself, as well as attending to cleaning the house of all vestiges of chametz.

Looking for chametz on the eve of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan was done most thoroughly. Father did the checking, while we followed him from room to room, searching in every corner and crevice. It was a most unique experience!

An unforgettable impression was made by the ceremony of burning the chametz. Flames of fire leaped before my father’s holy visage, revealing his burning love for this mitzvah. We saw him completely enveloped in this act of pure faith, doing the will of the Creator, Who commanded us to burn our bread, with unbounded love. This scene instilled within us, as well, a measure of pure faith.

## An Answer for Every Question

The Rav continued: We reached

the peak of faith as we observed the behavior of our father, zt”l, on the Seder Night. Father conducted himself in a unique fashion, which indicated his deep understanding of the mind of children. Immediately upon returning home from Tefillat Arvit in the Beit Hakeneset of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, Father hurried to the Seder table, sitting majestically. (This Beit Hakeneset still stands today, on the top floor of the tzaddik’s house). My siblings and I were young, and Father quickly went through the Haggadah. The entire recitation took, at the most, one and one-half hours.

Nowadays, families remain at the Seder table until two or three o’clock in the morning, asking and answering questions, explaining and discussing. In our home, there were no questions! The Torah’s injunction, “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying,” demands one accomplishment: to instill faith in the hearts of our children, as we are told, “So that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son...” The message of faith must be transmitted with special care. One who tries to fulfill his obligation by mere lip-service is liable to sit with his son for hours on end, through effort and exertion, by passionate persuasions, and at the end of the day, nothing enters the heart of his child!

His message is likely to go right over his son’s head!

Father’s method was to actualize the events for his sons. This is the correct way to achieve lasting results.

In contrast to the custom nowadays, we children did not ask questions. Nowadays, from a young age, the children are taught to recite the *Mah Nishtanah*. They stand up at the Seder table and parrot the words of the Haggadah. But do they feel the meaning of these questions? Are they questions that really bother them? Or do they just feel it is a mere duty?

At my father’s table, he himself would ask the *Mah Nishtanah*, and translate the words into Arabic. He would explain the content of the questions on our level, and arouse our curiosity, drawing us to find the answers to the questions. He would announce that as we read the Haggadah, we would find all the answers.

We would all burst forth in unison with the recitation of *Avadim Hayinu*, the answer to all of our uncertainties, with Father’s wonderful explanations. (The rest of the Haggadah would be read by us in silence, as Father read aloud.)

This point was the most impressive of all of my Seder memories from my father’s home. I will never forget it. It

has left its imprint on my heart until this very day, as is more significant to me than everything else.

## With Trepidation

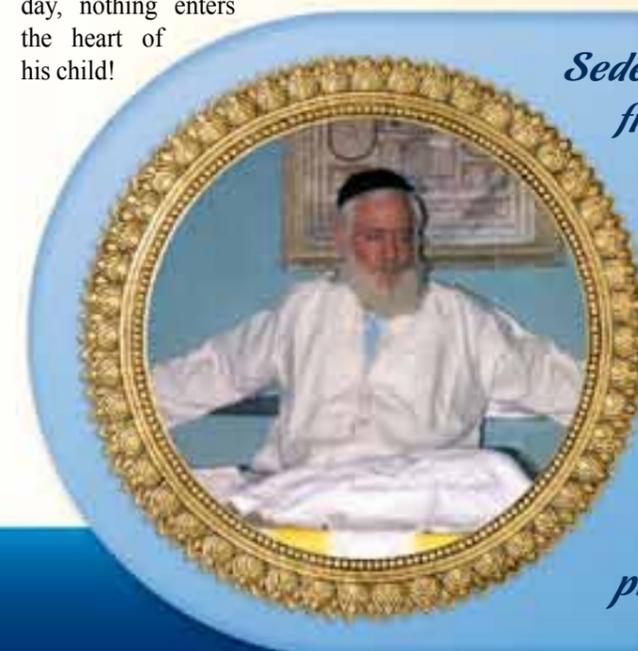
I asked how the Seder continued.

The Rav expounded: Father would recite the entire Haggadah in Lashon HaKodesh. But he would translate each passage immediately into Moroccan Arabic. In this manner, we understood every word of the text. But more importantly, we absorbed the manner in which he explained the Haggadah. It was simply fantastic! Every description of his would enter our hearts with tremendous strength and utmost love.

The Rav, shlita, continued on the road down memory lane. It was evident that he was experiencing everything anew, seeing his father, zt”l, as he performed *Yachatz*.

With a shining countenance, Father broke the middle matzah. What excitement! We were hypnotized to his actions, feeling as though we were witnessing the Splitting of the Sea.

In our home, there was no concept of stealing the Afikoman. Everything remained in its place. We were not taught to steal, but,



*Seder night reached a climax as Father filled the cup of Elijah the Prophet, excitedly telling us, “Now we will open the door in honor of Elijah the Prophet.” Such faith and enthusiasm accompanied him as he opened the door! We would follow Father to the door. As he opened it, he would call out, “Welcome, Eliyahu! Welcome! I prepared a place for you to sit.”*

*“At the conclusion of the Seder, we would discover, each year anew, how all our questions and uncertainties became resolved during the course of the Seder, through Father’s wonderful explanations.”*

rather, to understand and live the Haggadah. This reality is what kept all the children awake throughout the Seder.

Moroccans have the custom to recite the words, *Bivehilu Yatzanu MiMitzrayim* with a soulful tune. Father would sing this song while holding the Seder Plate over our heads, as was the custom. He would recite the Arabic version, which described the main points of the Exodus. We felt as though we ourselves were leaving Egypt. We truly felt the fulfillment of the injunction, 'Man is obligated to view himself as though he himself left Egypt.' Father's face reflected this.

This experience left an indelible impression on us, along with memories of *Yachat*, eating the Afikoman, the Four Cups, and everything else.

At the conclusion of the Seder, we would discover, each year anew, how all our questions and uncertainties became resolved during the course of the Seder, through Father's wonderful explanations.

### Go See Elijah the Prophet

The Rav was excited to continue sharing with us: Seder night reached a climax as Father filled the cup of Elijah the Prophet, excitedly telling us, "Now we will open the door in honor of Elijah the Prophet." Such faith and enthusiasm accompanied him as he opened the door!

The Rav's voice rose an octave in emotion: We would follow Father to the door. As he opened it, he would call out, "Welcome, Eliyahu! Welcome! I prepared a place for you to sit." We would look all around, but see nothing. We asked each other, "Does Father see something which we don't see?" Only afterward did we gather the courage to ask him about this. Father would turn his compassionate glance to us, and ask, "Did you see anything?" We answered in the negative. Then he fixed his gaze upon us, and

assured us, with limitless love, "*Be'ezrat Hashem*, when you grow older, you will see him. You, too, will invite Eliyahu into your homes and act like I do. You will merit to see him and pour a cup of wine for him. On this night, all of the angels accompany Elijah the Prophet and observe our Seder table. They then return to Hashem and proclaim: 'See Your children, Am Yisrael. See how they celebrate the holiday of freedom, through anticipation of the final redemption, crying out the words Next year, in Jerusalem!'"

We would continue the recitation of the Haggadah with the hope that one day we would merit seeing Eliyahu Hanavi.

We eventually grew up, married, had children, and even grandchildren. We try to actualize to our offspring our father's reality of pure faith. Pesach is the festival of faith, a holiday of preparation for *Matan Torah*.

All of the roots of Judaism originate in this festival. Whoever did not receive a message of faith from this holiday lacks the means for accepting the Torah. This point is so fundamental that the Arizal states the following: Whoever is scrupulous with even a tiny amount of chametz on Pesach is guaranteed that he will not sin all year. The fact that we transgress in various areas throughout the year, attests to the fact that we didn't experience the essence of Pesach.

The tzaddikim who truly feel what Pesach is all about, are careful not to waste even a moment of this tremendous festival. They certainly merit to avoid sinning during the rest of the year.

The Rav concluded this memorable reminiscence: This was how the Seder night looked in my father's home, and in the home of his father, Rabbi **Chaim Pinto**, zt"l, as well. The Seder tables of my mentors bore similarities to these. Our great-grandfather, Rabbi **Chaim Pinto HaGadol's** Seder certainly was similar to my father's.

I don't know exactly how he recited the Haggadah with his children, but I am sure that it was saturated with faith, transmitted to us from holy sources, with deep feeling and strength.

As an aside, the Rav, shlita, remarks that Rabbi **Chaim Pinto HaGadol** (grandfather of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, the Rav's grandfather) did not sleep the entire night of the Seder. Most likely, he remained awake and delved into the meanings of the Haggadah, together with his colleagues.

He candidly tells us: I try to transmit to my sons that which I acquired from my father. It is planted deep within my heart. I hope and pray that they, too, feel what I felt at my father's table.

The next question stays on our tongues. How dare we ask? But the Rav smiles as he preempts us: My children also asked me whether or not I saw Eliyahu Hanavi as I welcomed him to our Seder table. When they asked me this, I was brought back in time, to many years ago. I answered them with my father's words, "When you are grown, you will see Eliyahu and welcome him into your homes."

Now they are grown. Do they see him? Did I see him? Did Father see him? No one has ever seen Eliyahu with human eyes. But they merited seeing him with the power of their faith.

Faith stands firm when we cannot see with our limited vision. Generally, "seeing is believing." But we, as believing Jews, are adjured to believe even what we cannot see. This is the essence of faith.

I asked the Rav how one acquires faith.

The Rav replied: The level of faith instilled in our children from their youth is what will grow with them as they mature. If they internalize faith in the innermost recesses of their hearts, it will become an integral part of them, and can never be taken away. This is referred to in the Shabbat Morning Prayer, in the



For decades, the tzaddik, **Moshe Aharon Pinto**, zt"l, was scrupulous in a specific area. On a daily basis, he lit approximately fifty lights, in special glasses, which he would fill with olive oil. He would light these lights in memory of the souls of tzaddikim whose names he would recite, one after the other. At the same time, he would mention the requests and troubles of people who came to him for help. Like a son before his father, he would supplicate on behalf of the petitions that came to his door, weeping copiously for his brethren who demonstrated their faith, requesting him to arouse the merit of his forefathers and other prominent tzaddikim.

He was especially careful to light a flame on the day of the *hilula* of specific tzaddikim. He would mention their names in awe, and pray fervently that their merit should stand by all in need of salvation at that time.

On the day of the *hilula* of the well-known tzaddik, Rabbi **David ben Baruch**, zy" a, the tzaddik lit candles of wax instead of the usual oil lights. After they were lit, Rabbi **Moshe Aharon** began praying in his usual way. Suddenly, after only a few minutes, one of the candles fell onto his jacket. After the accompanying commotion died down and the fire was doused, the tzaddik sank deep into thought. He was wondering what was the cause of this incident.

When a mishap occurs, tzaddikim are wont to examine their actions, to determine the cause of the misfortune. They never ascribe events to natural causes (for instance, "a strong wind came," or, "the table was unsteady"). With every step they take, they contemplate the cause and effect of their actions.

At that time, his sons were young and not yet married. They were nurtured on the concept of faith. They were imbued with the belief that every single thing that happens in the world is calculated precisely by the Creator, Who supervises His creatures constantly. The tzaddik's son, Rabbi Chaim, shlita, saw his father in this state, and asked why he had decided to veer from his custom, and light wax candles instead of olive oil.

His sons tried to console him, telling him that the candle fell, most likely, due to the honor of the tzaddik, Rabbi David ben Baruch, zy" a. It was in order that his honor not be demeaned by the wax candle which was lit in place of the oil. His son, Rabbi Chaim, saw that their words were not having the desired effect, so he cried out, "Father! Do not worry. I am certain that the reason is as we said. And I am also sure that the tzaddik himself will make sure to grant you restitution for the damage, already today."

They spoke some more, and the topic of the cost of the damage became a sign which would indicate that the entire episode occurred due to the honor of the tzaddik in whose memory the candle was lit. As soon as Rabbi Moshe accepted upon himself that which was incumbent upon him, he would be duly recompensed.

Night fell. Rabbi Moshe was still worried. He told his son that it was already evening, yet he had still not been reimbursed. He continued learning Torah, but a cloud of worry covered his. Toward midnight, knocks were suddenly heard at the front door. The family awoke from their sleep, and went to answer the door. There stood Mr. Isimoni, carrying a jacket and an envelope of money for the Rav.

*How great is the power of faith!*

words, "All of my bones shall say: Hashem, who is like You?"

Everything is dependent upon the way it is transmitted. Torah was transmitted by Moshe to Yehoshua, etc., throughout the generations, thereby maintaining its endurance. So, too, if a person is completely convinced of the veracity of something, this belief has the power to transmit the message with everlasting endurance.

The transmission of faith which we received from our fathers came from deep within their hearts, with perfect clarity. This is what kept us trusting with perfect faith, believers, sons of believers.

It is now our job to transmit the message further, for, "the Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov." As Moshe passed the Torah to us, we continue passing it further.

I took up the thread, and asked: Many supernatural phenomena transpired in the homes of your father and his fathers. Did they speak of these occurrences? Did they discuss the cases of people who received salvation in merit of their blessings?

The Rav responded: The deeds of my ancestors, their customs and powers, were considered matter-of-fact.

People relate miracles which occurred in the merit of the tzaddikim. At some point, we stop becoming overly excited about these miracles. I hear these stories on a daily basis. This one did not have children, this one did have children, but one had the terrible illness... I could write an entire book about the miracles I hear which transpired in the merit of my forefathers. These miracles



occur  
n o t  
only in  
the merit of  
my forefathers, but  
also in the merit of the faith  
of the protagonists themselves!

The Rav, shlita, suddenly sinks deep in thought. Finally, he brings a case in point.

Not long ago, I was asked to give my blessing for the recovery of a certain Jew.

Only afterward did I learn that this man had become blind. When I had been asked to bless him, I wasn't told what his ailment was. But the doctors had declared that he lost his eyesight!

I blessed him and gave him advice.

A short time later, his wife told me that, much to the doctors' amazement, the man suddenly began to see again!

I asked her why they had kept his blindness a secret from me.

To which they rejoined, "Had you known he was blind, you wouldn't have prayed as hard. We preferred to keep it from you, so that you would pray in the merit of your holy ancestors, which endures through the power of faith."

I don't get excited over the miracles which I hear daily. In my eyes, the greatest miracle occurs when a person does not become

influenced  
by the  
street! The  
greatest dangers lurk in  
the streets. Every morning, when a  
person arises to pray, he must bear  
in mind that the *Yetzer Hara* is a  
powerful force and wants to hinder  
him from prayer. Every time one  
vanquishes his *Yetzer Hara*, it is a  
mighty miracle!

Every yeshiva students  
who studies Torah against the  
temptations of the street is a living  
miracle.

A boy who sits and learns without  
a cell phone – is this not a miracle?

One who sets aside fixed times  
for Torah study – is this not a  
miracle?

One who is scrupulous in  
protecting his eyes – is this not a  
miracle?

These are all miracles! These  
people are the unsung heroes of our  
generation!

In order to be worthy of such  
miracles, we must behave according  
to the words of Rabbi Meir, "to eat  
the fruit and discard the shell." Our  
generation is compared to a fruit  
stuck to its peel. You walk into  
the Beit Hakeneset, but instead  
of praying, you are accosted by  
the *kelippah* (lit. peel or shell, a  
reference to the negative forces), in  
the form of the cell phone, improper

thoughts, etc. Now it is up to you to  
remove the fruit from the shell.

Whoever enters the Beit  
Hamidrash must remember to  
leave the shell outside. If he has a  
cell phone or money or a check in  
his pocket, how will he manage to  
extract pure Torah study from the  
shell of negativity? Only one who  
knows how to discard the shell and  
preserve the fruit will succeed.  
This is the greatest miracle in our  
day. Whoever succeeds in this will  
merit Hashem opening all of the  
Heavenly gates before him and  
accepting his prayers on High.

The Rav explains that the entire  
essence of this holiday is faith. We  
must instill faith in ourselves and  
others by injecting it into our hearts  
and minds. In this manner, our  
beloved children, too, will merit to  
stand up to the negative influences  
of the outside. They, too, will merit  
the great miracle of detaching the  
shell from the fruit. They will merit  
seeing the fruits of their labor as  
they witness miracles, as result of  
their toil, on a daily basis.

"Ben David (Mashiach) will  
come only in a generation which  
is completely meritorious or  
completely liable." The *Ba'al  
HaTanya* explains that these words  
cannot be meant for the generation  
as a whole, for there will never be  
a generation completely meritorious  
or completely liable. Rather, it  
is referring to each individual.  
Everyone must work on himself to  
be completely meritorious, for if  
not, he will be completely liable.

May Hashem grant that we  
become strengthened in Torah and  
*yirat Shamayim*. In the merit of  
the blessings, may Hashem accept  
our prayers and send us Mashiach.  
May He help us to be true believers,  
and never be shamed by those who  
claim that our faith wasn't complete.  
May each of us attempt to extract  
the fruit from the shell and become  
as meritorious as possible. May we  
merit the complete *geulah*, Amen. ●

## Salvation in the Merit of the Tzaddik

No. 1

*From all over the world, Jews of every stripe and color come to celebrate the hilula in Mogador. Many of them have stories to tell of the salvations that they merited there. We requested that they should write them down and send them to us for publication, in order to strengthen the faith of others. We requested, and they complied. Many letters, in all different languages, arrived at the desktop of the Institution "Peninei David." Each letter was read with the appreciation that the writer had invested his heart and soul in writing it. The translators labored to translate each word correctly, conveying the nuances contained within it. We expended much effort in contacting the authors of these stories to verify them, as much as we were able. In this merit, we are able to bring you these stories in a way most faithful to their origin, in the language of the heart, as they were related to us. Read and be inspired.*

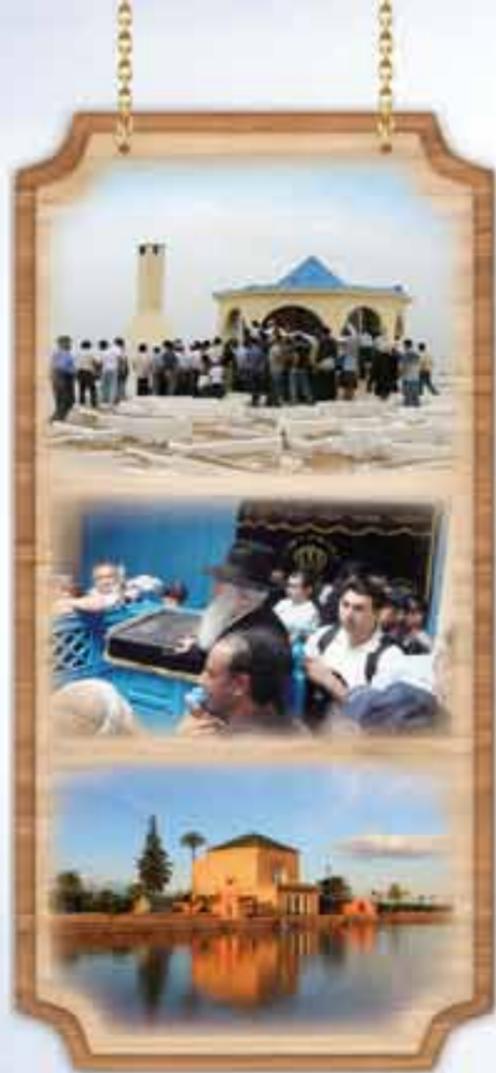
By Rabbi Yosef Elkoubi

### A "Listening" Stone

Once a year, many thousands of Jews gather together from all over the world to one place. They come in packed planes, surrounded by a special atmosphere of faith in the *Chachamim*. They come to the city of Mogador in Morocco, in order to celebrate the *hilula* of the tzaddik, well-known for performing miracles, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a, who lived and was buried in this city. It is a beautiful city, like a picture postcard (in fact, in the Moroccan language it is called *Essaouira*, which means *picturesque*). However, it is not because of this beauty that the Jews congregate here in their thousands. They do not come to see the splendid beaches or the architectural structure of the place. Enwrapped in holy feelings, they have lists of names of their family and friends, who have asked them to beseech their welfare at the monument of the tzaddik. Each person who approaches the grave spends exalted moments there.

It is difficult to describe this to someone who has never been there. However, in this special place, a few steps away from the waves of the sea that pound at the walls of the cemetery, and far from the tumult of the busy city, many boundaries are broken. Here, one can see dignitaries alongside ordinary people. Everyone weeps copiously, clinging to the grave of the tzaddik in prayer. They plead that the merit of the tzaddik should stand by them and their children.

This stone has "heard" many troubles and the whisperings of many a broken heart and oppressed spirit. Limitless numbers of Jews have come away from here strengthened and encouraged. They trust in the righteousness of the tzaddik, and that his great merit will stand by them to save them, with the help of



Hashem.

From here, from the place that is so difficult to part from, they continue to walk on foot on the path to the "Malach," the Jewish Quarter. This is the place where the Jews of Mogador lived. They, and their leader, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, ztk"l, the crown of their heads.

Visiting the Jewish Quarter arouses tremendous longing for days gone by. The ruins of the houses cause the visitors to think about the many Jews who used to live here in past generations. If one listens carefully, between the noise of the waves crashing on the shore a few meters away, he hears the voices of the sweet children who used to play right here, in the courtyard of the Talmud Torah that stands in ruins. On the way to their destination, nostalgia envelops those who walk here. They have not come to see the remnants of the houses of the Jewish Quarter, but have come straight from the grave of the

tzaddik to the middle of the Quarter, to his house and the Beit Hakeneset next to it.

In this building, which, according to tradition, was built on the house once occupied by the gaon, the holy Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, many tears were shed by those who came to pour out their hearts to the holy tzaddik during his lifetime. They came to him bowed down with troubles, and left upright, with heads held high, encouraged and filled with *emunah* that in the merit of the tzaddik's blessing they would gain salvation. In this Beit Hakeneset, the tzaddik prayed. He devotedly offered up the whispered prayers of so many Jews to the place where all prayers are accepted, and from where true salvation comes.

### A Wondrous Visitor

Miracles and wonders were commonplace in this Beit Hakeneset. However, not many people know that the Beit Hakeneset itself was also founded on miracles, in a way that caused a great stir among the residents of Mogador of the time.

This story is corroborated in the writings of the Av Beit Din, Rabbi Moshe Wizgan, zt"l, in his sefer *Vayaged Moshe*. Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol, zy" a, was known in his city and in his generation as "the Father of Justice," the arbitrator in every matter, small and large. He was well aware of what was happening in the city, and his broad heart carried the troubles of all its members. He did not pray in a specific Beit Hakeneset, and since he was the Rav of the city, who led his flock with love, he used this situation to his advantage, in order to pray in a different Beit Hakeneset every Shabbat. He would address the congregants with words of Torah and encouragement, concerning whatever events were currently happening in the city.

One Shabbat, in the middle of his

lecture, he heard one of the simple people, whose enjoyment of Shabbat consisted of the pot of *chamin* waiting in his house, complaining about the length of his lecture. This man said the word "*berachah*" as "*barka*," which colloquially meant "enough."

Rabbi Chaim was not upset and did not hold it against him, but merely stopped giving his discourse. Afterward, he raised his hands heavenward and said, "Ribbono shel Olam, when will I merit having my own Beit Hakeneset so that I do not have to be dependent on the kindness



of others?" He went down from the *bimah* and wholeheartedly forewent his honor.

Shabbat passed, and during the week an Arab, whom he did not know, came to the house of Rabbeinu, zy" a. He was of impressive bearing and fine manners. He entered the chamber of the Rav and asked, "I have in my purse a large sum of money. I wish to travel far away and I am afraid to take it with me on this dangerous journey. Would I be able to leave this money with the Rav for safekeeping, until I return?"

At first, the Rav did not want to take responsibility for such a large sum of money. However, he then remembered his wish that he had mentioned a few

days before. So he said to the Arab, "I will guard your money on one condition: if you allow me to use the money to build a Beit Hakeneset."

The Arab's eyes lit up. He willingly agreed to the condition of the Rav and added, "When I return, the Rav does not need to return the money immediately. You may give it back in installments, as you are able."

With this respectable sum of money, the Rav was able to build a beautiful, large Beit Hakeneset, which is still standing today, and to which people flock from all over the world in order to visit and pray there.

And the Arab?

He did not return to retrieve his money. No trace of him was ever found.

The prayer that emitted from the depths of the tzaddik's heart bore fantastic fruit. The Creator answered him immediately and fulfilled his desire, because his purpose was only to bring pleasure to Him. His sole aspiration in building a Beit Hakeneset was *l'shem Shamayim*, only for the honor of Hashem Yitbarach. He desired to glorify the House of Hashem and build a Beit Hakeneset to praise and exalt His Name.

### Five Years and Three Months

Approximately two years ago, the author of this story participated in the *hilula* of the tzaddik in Mogador, Morocco. He was with a group of distinguished avrechim, representatives of the splendid institutions of their Rav, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita, in Eretz Yisrael. This group had been chosen from among all the avrechim who diligently learn in the "tent of Torah" with great self-sacrifice, every day, in the holy institutions of the Rav. In order to ensure the continuation of these institutions, the Rav, shlita,



travels around the world, expending much effort to support them. The institutions are founded on the merit of the tzaddikim, may their merit protect us. These avrechim had received the blessing and sanction of the Rav, shlita, to travel to the grave of the tzaddik and take part in the *hilula*.

One of these precious avrechim had come with a specific purpose: He and his wife had been married for five years, yet had not merited having children. They had tearfully beseeched Hashem to fill their empty house, but their prayers had not been answered. This avrech had donated much money in order to disseminate the Torah of the Rav, shlita, in the hope that he would gain salvation by bringing merit to the masses.

Our trip to Mogador was not easy. First, we had to fly from Eretz Yisrael to Lyon, France. Then, we had to wait almost a whole day until the flight to Morocco, which was followed by another flight to Mogador. The outstanding hospitality of the Jewish community in Lyon, headed by the oldest son of the Rav, Harav Hagaon Rabbi Rafael Pinto, shlita, (both on our outward trip, and our return) truly warmed our hearts. They made us most comfortable and took care of our every need.

When we came to Mogador, this particular avrech was very tense. "When will we ascend to the grave of the tzaddik?" he asked, again and again. He waited in great anticipation for the moment that he could beseech

Hashem in prayer at the grave of the tzaddik, in order that He should bestow upon his household the greatest blessing that there is – the blessing of children.

The great moment arrived. The image of that avrech immersed in prayer is forever etched in my memory. At that time, I did not know what he was praying for. Now I do, for he sent a letter to the Machon, relating his story. In order to clarify the details, I spoke to him on the phone, which was a truly elevating experience.

After he had prayed at the tomb of the tzaddik, the avrech entered the room next to it, which is at the edge of the old cemetery of Mogador. In this room, the Rav, shlita, received the participants of the *hilula* in order to give them blessings and advice. The Rav gave the avrech a clear and decisive blessing: "In the merit of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, this year you will merit having a child." The avrech was astounded. Would five long years of waiting now end? On the day that he merited to ascend to the tomb of the tzaddik, would the gates of Heaven, which had been closed until now, suddenly open for him? Would he have a child?

He returned to his home in Ashdod, his heart filled with hope and faith in the power of the merit of the tzaddikim. The words of the Rav rang in his ears, again and again, "In the merit of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, this year, you will have a child." He constantly had a broad smile on his face.

After about three months, the phone rang in this avrech's house. He answered it and was filled with excitement: the Rav, shlita, was on the line on a transatlantic call. The Rav first asked about a certain person who was connected with the *shiur* given in Ashdod, and then he asked with great compassion, "What's doing? I gave you a blessing at the grave of the tzaddik in Mogador!"

Even after a year, I could hear the same degree of excitement in the voice of the avrech. He replied to the Rav, "Just today, we received the positive result of the pregnancy test that my wife took! It is as if the Rav himself has received the results from the Kupat Cholim."

The avrech did not attend the *hilula* the following year. He was unable to do so because of the merit of the tzaddik and the blessing that the Rav had given him and his wife. *Baruch Hashem*, she gave birth to a healthy baby.

### To Find Savta

"Fifty-four years have passed since anyone from the family has visited the grave of Savta, a"h," related the distinguished avrech, Rabbi Shalom Lugasi. His story continues: It was fifty-four years since the death of this woman, who was surrounded with merits. Savta served her Creator with great devotion. She fulfilled the mitzvot with great care and supported the Beit Hakeneset in the Jewish Quarter in Mogador, in which many Jews prayed.

Some weeks prior to the last *hilula* (Elul 5772) that took place in Mogador, I visited the grave of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zt"l, in Ashdod, where I prayed with wholehearted belief in the tzaddikim to merit traveling to the great *hilula* in Morocco. I wished to visit the city where my forefathers had lived, to beseech Hashem in prayer, and also to find the grave of my grandmother.

A short while later, Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the tzaddik, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita, came to give an in-depth *shiur* in the kollel that I attend. He himself established and directs this kollel, and he travels across the globe in order to support it.

After the *shiur*, I approached the Rav and requested to attend the *hilula*. I received an answer three days later: "The Rav accedes to your request." I was overjoyed, but all the more so was my mother. We all remember the stories of my father, z"l. He grew up in the Mogador of former times. He would regale us with stories of his youth, a time when there were still men of faith in Hashem and the *Chachamim*. The alleyways were trodden by Jews whose hearts were pure and filled with faith, alongside great *talmidei chachamim*. From time to time, all these people would go to the cemetery that was situated at the edge of the city, on the coast, and pour out their hearts in prayer at the graves of the great people of the city, the tzaddikim of the House of Pinto, headed by Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"l."

"Finally, a member of the family will ascend to the grave of Savta, the tzaddek," my mother said. Tears of longing filled her eyes, and also mine.

The long hours of the difficult journey seemed like minutes. After we landed in Mogador, I left my belongings in the splendid lodgings provided for all those who had come for the *hilula*, and went to the cemetery. I prostrated myself on the graves of the tzaddikim, praying for all the members of my extended family, many of whom had merited to pray here decades ago.

Afterward, I decided to find the grave of my grandmother. I approached the cemetery guard and asked if he knew the location of the grave of "Mima Lugasi." His answer astounded me, "I have been working here for ten years and am familiar with every centimeter of the cemetery, and I'm sure that there is no such grave here. I don't know of it, and that means that there is no such grave. You're wasting your time," he added.

He was sure that he was right, but I was spurred to search for it by the memory of my father, z"l, and my strong desire to give pleasure to his mother, a"h, as well as the image of my mother's tearful face and the longing for a world that was no longer. My father had told us that his mother was buried here; that was enough for me. The problem was



that the sun was about to set, which gave me about ten minutes of light in order to search among thousands of closely-packed graves. My quest seemed impossible.

"My only option is to strengthen myself in *emunat chachamim*," I said to myself and my son, who was accompanying me. "This journey started with my fervent prayers at the grave of Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zt"l, and continued with the blessing of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Rabbi David Chananya, with whose help I have merited to just now pray at the tomb of the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, ztk"l."

According to the laws of nature, there was no chance of me finding the grave that I was seeking. I started running between the graves, all the while praying, with tears streaming down my cheeks, "I have come for the honor of my grandmother and to give pleasure to my father, z"l. I believe that the merit of the tzaddikim will stand by me so that I will find what I am looking for."

Suddenly, I stopped in front of one of the graves and read the name written on it. It was not the grave of my grandmother. I continued to run between the crowded rows of graves, and in my heart I further strengthened my faith in the power of the merit of the holy tzaddikim buried in the cemetery. I had almost reached the edge of the cemetery, when I stopped once more and read the gravestone in front of me. I thought I was imagining things.

It read, "Yemima Lugasi." I read it again another few times. I even read it out aloud in order to prove that I wasn't dreaming. The name "Yemima Lugasi" floated before my eyes, together with other information that proved that I had found what I was searching for: the resting place of my grandmother, a"h.

My son could not believe what was happening. He ran to me from the entrance of the cemetery, sure that my great desire to find this name had caused me to imagine seeing it. But he also understood that the merit of my prayers and the merit of the tzaddikim had guided me, like a blind man who is guided out of the darkness, from Eretz Yisrael to far away Mogador in Morocco. Later, I told this story to the Rav, and he was very moved by it and rejoiced with me.

Throughout Shabbat, I could not calm down about this tremendous event. I returned to Eretz Yisrael greatly strengthened in *emunat chachamim*.

On that Shabbat, I also merited seeing the Rav bring merit to many Jews from all over the world. Till now, I had only experienced his greatness in Torah, through the deep *shiurim* and inspiring Torah speeches that I had heard from him. Now I experienced another aspect of his greatness.

### A Spiritual Test

Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zt"l, had tremendous powers during his lifetime. However, Chazal teach

(Chulin 7b) that “tzaddikim are greater after their death than during their lifetime.”

A certain woman, called Mrs. Bitton, attended the *hilula* conducted in honor of Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, ztk”l, at the end of Elul 5771. She accompanied thousands of others who beseeched Hashem for the physical and spiritual welfare of their family members at the grave of the tzaddik.

One of the highlights of the *hilula* is the custom, which has now become tradition, of Moreinu v’Rabbeinu, the gaon and tzaddik, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita. Early in the morning, he enters the tomb of his grandfather, the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim, ztk”l, and all those who have joined the *hilula* file in front of him and mention their names, in order to receive his blessing for success in every area. Rabbeinu, shlita, who is enveloped in an aura of prayer and pleading, blesses each person according to whatever he requests.

The Rav also blessed Mrs. Bitton, taking care to pray that both she and her family should merit a good year, full of blessing, in the merit of the tzaddik buried there. A long time later, after the Rav had finished blessing all the people who had come to the *hilula*, he turned to leave the tomb of the tzaddik along the path that wound between the ancient tombstones. He beheld the congregation standing solemnly opposite him, and his eyes rested on Mrs. Bitton, standing in a corner. “I don’t know why,” the Rav said later, “but I called her and blessed her once more, from the depths of my heart, that she should have a speedy recovery and much success.”

When she returned to her home in Casablanca, Morocco, Mrs. Bitton shared the exalted moments that she had experienced at the *hilula* with her husband. She related the ideas that the Rav had expressed in his speeches that had been so inspiring and strengthening. With great emotion she told her husband how she had merited receiving the first blessing from the Rav, and how he had afterward added that she should have “a full recovery,” when he had left the tomb of his holy grandfather, zy”a.

When he heard about the second blessing, her husband’s face turned white. His heart told him that this blessing was more than a regular blessing. He said to his wife, “If the Rav repeated his



encouraging tone: “It is important for you to know that this terrible disease is just at the beginning stages. Medically speaking, you have come at the last minute. At this stage, we will need to do a series of intensive treatments. With the help of Hashem, we will succeed in banishing the disease from your body.”

Without delay, they began the required treatments, and with *siyata di’Shemaya*, the doctors were successful in vanquishing the disease.

And who was the honored guest at the festive thanksgiving meal that the family made to praise Hashem for saving Mrs. Bitton, in the merit of attending the *hilula* of the tzaddik? Of course, it was Moreinu v’Rabbeinu, shlita, who told them to publicize the kindnesses of Hashem in public, after such a great *kiddush Hashem* had been made with her recovery. Repeatedly, the Rav averred that it was the merit of the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy”a, at whose grave she had beseeched mercy, that had stood by her and saved her. “I was only the messenger to ensure that she would take the tests,” he said.

### The Sting of a Gun

This story was told to me directly by Mr. Yehuda Dahan, from Montreal, Canada, in the name of his father, a”h. He himself witnessed this shocking story, which corroborates the statement of Chazal: (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 3:1) that one who is not careful with the honor of the *Chachamim* and tzaddikim, endangers himself, since “their bite is like the bite of a fox, and their sting is like the sting of a scorpion. Their whisperings are like the whisperings of a *saraf*, and their words are like fiery coals.”

It was at a time when the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy”a, was staying in their house, on his way to Marrakesh. When he came to the outskirts of the city, all the inhabitants, both great and small, came out to meet him and accord him honor. Suddenly, an uncouth

blessing to you and added that you should have a speedy recovery, it seems that we must look into this.” He urged his wife to go to the doctor and have tests conducted.

His suspicions proved to be correct. When he got the results of the test, the doctor phoned in tremendous agitation to inform them that the dreaded disease had spread throughout her body, *rachmana litzlan*.

Devastated and very afraid, the couple listened to the terrible predictions of the doctor. As if in a nightmare, they heard the voice of the doctor explain the situation. Then, he continued in a different, more

gentile burst out from the crowd and spat in the face of the Rav. He could not bear to see the tremendous honor that the people were according the tzaddik. The Jews were furious at this terrible offense and wanted to avenge the Rav’s honor. However, Rabbeinu prevented them from doing so, saying, “Hakadosh Baruch Hu will take revenge on him.” He said no more.

As the Rav was speaking, a French soldier appeared. Suddenly, a bullet was accidentally discharged from the rifle that he was holding in his hand. A few seconds later, the coarse gentile fell on the ground, dead. The bullet had gone right through his head. “So may all of Your enemies perish, Hashem.”

### Constantly on His Lips

A Jew was standing beside the grave of the tzaddik in prayer, wondering whether his pleas would be accepted.

This precious Jew was blessed with seven sons and one daughter. His daughter was born paralyzed, which completely changed the lives of all members of the household. The efforts required to take care of her caused much tension in the house and doubled the pain caused by her paralysis. After his daughter was born, this Jew raised his eyes heavenward and prayed many prayers to Hakadosh Baruch Hu each day, weeping copious tears for her recovery. He also lit candles *l’iluy nishmat* Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, in order that his daughter should merit salvation in the merit of the tzaddik.

He would start every day by praying Shacharit. Immediately afterward, he would return home and help his wife get the children ready for school. He tried to help in whichever way he could, in order to ease the burden of taking care of his daughter, and he tried to be happy. However, his appearance showed the bitter and difficult emotional suffering that he endured.

One morning, as he was davening, this man felt tremendous spiritual elevation. He lengthened his pleas, praying with great intention from

the depths of his heart. He requested that the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, pray for his daughter’s recovery. When he returned home, he thought that maybe his wife was upset with him for coming late and not helping her. In anguish, he put forth a short prayer: “Ribbono shel Olam, may it be Your will that in the merit of Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, zy”a,



my daughter will recover and she should be the one to open the door for me. May the time now come that the bitter screams heard in my house be transformed into cries of joy.”

He arrived home. He stood at the door, his heart thumping in his chest, and knocked lightly on the door. Suddenly, he heard shouts of joy inside the house. The door opened, and his beloved daughter stood in front of him. She had opened the door.

His dream had materialized! His breath was taken away by his great surprise and joy. Everyone thanked and praised the Creator. His daughter had recovered in a wondrous way, and harmony returned to his household. They clearly saw the salvation of Hashem, in the merit of his wholehearted faith in the tzaddik, zy”a.

### A Garbage Can Strengthens Belief

The following story was related with great emotion by Mr. Mordechai

Ben-Shushan from Paris.

It is well-known that many Jews go to the grave of Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zy”a, in order to pray to the Creator. The tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon merited following in the ways of his holy ancestors. He was also exalted in holiness and purity and acted with great self-sacrifice in order to fulfill the Torah and mitzvot. For forty years he did not leave his house. Throughout this time, he toiled in Torah night and day and did not say a word that was not Torah. Therefore, Hashem fulfilled his will, and his prayers were accepted in Heaven, as Chazal say (*Tanchuma, Vayeira* 19), “One who fulfills a mitzvah – this refers to the tzaddikim, who keep the mitzvot of Hashem – Hashem fulfills their decrees.” Tzaddikim are greater in their death than in their lifetime. Many people have experienced salvation at his grave.

Mr. Mordechai Ben-Shushan relates that there was a sick man who required certain medications which caused him to forget things. He suffered greatly from this. He went and prostrated himself on the grave of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zy”a, in Ashdod. He pleaded with abundant tears that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should help him in the merit of the tzaddik. This Jew possessed pure, whole-hearted belief, and when he finished praying, he felt as if a tremendous weight had been lifted off his shoulders. He believed that his heartfelt prayers would be answered.

His faith in the power of the merit of the tzaddik was so strong that when he left the grave, he threw the medications into the garbage can that was next to it, in the cemetery.

He went straight from the cemetery to his doctor and requested that he run new tests on him. The doctor was tremendously surprised when it was revealed that this man’s disease had disappeared! “You don’t need any more medications,” he excitedly told him.

### A Childhood Friend at the Terminal

This story also took place in Paris. About thirty years ago, the tzaddik,

Rabbi Moshe Aharon, ztk"l, joined the *hilula* of the tzaddik Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, zy"l, in Morocco, for the last time. This was about two years before he died.

One of the participants was Mr. Massoud Ben-Chayoun, z"l, a wonderful man, who had helped Moreinu when he first started disseminating Torah. He helped him establish his institutions and felt great love toward the tzaddikim of the House of Pinto.

It was difficult for this man to attend the *hilula*. He was faced by many problems in order to do so. When Moreinu, shlita, told his father, ztk"l, that Mr. Ben-Chayoun was going to attend the *hilula*, his father requested that Rabbeinu meet him at the airport in Cassablanca. Rabbi David Chananya thus traveled to the airport. However, when he got there, he discovered that Mr. Massoud Ben-Chayoun had not been allowed entry into Morocco because his passport had expired. He could do nothing but return to his house in Paris on the next flight out, which was on the following day.

Moreinu stayed with him that night at the airport, saying, "If Father instructed me to accompany you to the *hilula*, it is understood that he was giving you a blessing that you will attend it with us." In this way, he strengthened Mr. Ben-Chayoun's faith.

In the morning, the Rav noticed that one of the clerks had arrived and immediately said to Mr. Ben-Chayoun, "Go and tell her what's going on." When she heard his story, she sent him to the manager of the airport. Mr. Ben-Chayoun went to his office and entered. He was inside for a whole hour. During that time, the Rav, shlita, stood outside, anxiously waiting to know what would happen to Mr. Ben-Chayoun.

His tension increased when he saw the plane that was due to fly to France, the plane that Mr. Ben-Chayoun was supposed to board, on the runway with its doors closed. It was about to start traveling down

the runway before take-off, and Mr. Ben-Chayoun was still in the office of the airport manager...

A few moments later, Mr. Ben-Chayoun came out of the office, his face wreathed in smiles. He related that he had been given permission to stay in Morocco without his passport, for one week only. This was exactly



the amount of time that the *hilula* would be celebrated.

The Rav saw the hand of Hashem evident in this episode. The prayers of his father, the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon, ztk"l, were accepted, and Mr. Ben-Chayoun participated in the *hilula*. The Rav was even more astounded when he heard what had actually taken place. Mr. Ben-Chayoun told him that when the airport manager was verifying his story and asking him questions about himself, it became apparent that they had been childhood friends, who had learned together in the same school. They embraced and began to remind each other of stories from their childhood. This continued for an hour, and then the manager gave Mr. Ben-Chayoun permission to stay in Morocco.

When they came to the *hilula*, the Rav asked Mr. Ben-Chayoun to wait outside for a few minutes. The Rav went to his father, zy"l, and began to relate the series of events that had just taken place – how Mr. Ben-Chayoun had not been allowed to enter Morocco and had been told to return to France. The tzaddik cut him off mid-sentence, saying, "It's not possible! I see with my own eyes that he will attend the *hilula*!"

When he heard that Mr. Ben-Chayoun would indeed be attending the *hilula*, he was filled with great joy, as were all the participants.

### When the Sandek Did not Understand

Not only do our prayers help, but the merits of our forefathers also help prevent tragedies.

When Moreinu v'Rabbeinu was in Morocco, staying at the house of Mr. Mordechai Knafo, may he live long, he was asked to be *sandek* at a *brit*. This mitzvah is particularly beloved to the Rav, and he does not forgo it, even when it entails much effort. However, in

this case, the Rav refused to accept the honor, even though there seemed to be no logical reason for doing so. Everyone was very surprised, including the Rav himself.

A few days later, news spread that the baby had died after having his *brit*... Upon hearing this, the Rav said that he saw tremendous Divine Providence in what had happened. Hashem had saved him from being involved in a *chillul Hashem*. If people would hear that he had been the *sandek*, they might have attributed the baby's death to him. He averred that the merit of his holy forefathers had stood by him, guarding him from stumbling. This event confirmed the statement of Chazal (*Yoma* 87), "Fortunate are the tzaddikim; not only are they meritorious, but they confer merit upon all their future descendants." The Rav commented that many times he had experienced Hashem's help in the merit of his holy forefathers.

### The Judge Who Was Influenced by an Article of Clothing

Among those who participated at the *hilula* in Mogador was a group of wonderful people who had come straight from different countries

in South America: Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico, and others. During the *shiurim* and speeches of the Rav, shlita, they would listen attentively, and one of the important members of their community (a man who had many merits himself) would translate for them.

In the summer of 5768, the members of the community in Mexico merited a "Joint Shabbat" led by the Rav, in a wonderful atmosphere of Torah. All the participants enjoyed tremendous spiritual elevation, rejoicing in the joy of the Torah. Their hearts were open to hearing *mussar* and words of Torah. The Rav realized that this was an opportune time and placed before them seventy pairs of tzitzit, in order that they could accept upon themselves the yoke of Heaven enwrapped in them. At this peak moment of the evening, the Rav exclaimed, "Whoever has taken upon himself to keep the mitzvah of tzitzit may ask Hashem for whatever he desires, and Hashem will fulfill his request."

Later, the Rav explained to those close to him that he had thought that only a few people would take the tzitzit. However, to his great surprise, all the men there took the tzitzit and placed them over their clothes. "Fortunate are you, Israel," the Rav exclaimed.

One of these participants, R' Chaim Korson, may he live long, related a story that happened in the merit of these tzitzit. One of the women of the community in Mexico had been imprisoned for quite some time, on charges of evading government taxes. Her husband was very upset by this and requested to have her name given to the Rav so that he should bless her that she should merit a speedy salvation. R' Chaim said that on the day after that Shabbat, he went to this man and told him, "Last night, Rabbi David Pinto, shlita, gave us tzitzit, which have wonderful properties. I am prepared to give you my tzitzit – put them on over

your clothes and you will experience wondrous things." The man took the tzitzit, and, with pure, whole-hearted faith, put them on.

Indeed, the salvation of Hashem was not long in coming. In the Mexican justice system, it is very rare for the court to accept a plea for a second hearing. However, the judge presiding over the case of this woman agreed to such a plea, and a second hearing was held.

To the great surprise of everyone attending this hearing, the moment that this woman entered the courthouse, the judge declared, "You are free." He ordered the clerk to return her passport to her, as well as her identity card and all her papers.

Everyone living in the surrounding region was amazed at this miraculous turn of events. They clearly saw the results of keeping a mitzvah, such as tzitzit. It was clearly proven that one who fulfills the mitzvot of Hashem wholeheartedly is protected by Him. He will save him from all misfortune.



### Two Names and One Salvation

Mr. Rosenthal is extremely close to the Rav, shlita. He is very instrumental in helping the Rav, contributing large sums for the upkeep of the many institutions that the Rav has established. One year, he participated in the historic journey that the Rav makes to the graves of the tzaddikim in the Ukraine, and afterward, as is understood, to the grave of Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"l, in Morocco.

During the journey, Mr. Rosenthal approached the Rav with a private request. "I am very happy that, *Baruch Hashem*, I have merited to return to Hashem in teshuvah. Please could the Rav pray that my relative and her husband should also merit doing so." He beseeched the Rav to do everything in his power to help his relatives do teshuvah.

The Rav warmly answered him, "May Hashem help me and put the right words in my mouth so that I will be able to persuade them to do teshuvah, and may they accept what I say."

Some time later, when the Rav was receiving petitioners near where they lived, Mr. Rosenthal brought his relative and her husband to him. When they were sitting together, the Rav asked them, "Why have you come?"

They answered, "We don't really know why. Mr. Rosenthal asked that we should come with him."

The Rav tried a different tack, "Is everything okay with you on a daily basis?"

Again, they innocently answered, "Yes, everything's fine."

The Rav saw that he was making no progress. He did not know what to do. "I did not know how to direct our conversation to topics of spirituality," he said. He prayed that Hakadosh Baruch Hu would help him and continued to inquire about their lives and circumstances.

Suddenly and "without prior intention," as the Rav avers, he thought of the name of a woman who had come to him earlier that morning in order to request a blessing to be cured of a disease. She had a Spanish name, which was difficult for anyone unfamiliar with that language to pronounce. However, the Rav remembered it and mentioned it to this couple.

Immediately, the expression on both their faces changed. In great

surprise they asked, "Why does the Rav mention this woman? What is his intention in doing so?"

Again, the Rav mentioned her name, and the couple became very emotional, and even began to cry!

"Why are you so disturbed by this name?" the Rav asked them.

They replied, "A gentile woman with exactly the same name that the Rav has just mentioned has been embittering our lives for many years. We have suffered terribly from her, and just the mention of her name causes us great pain. How," they continued, "did the Rav know about this?"

The Rav understood that Hakadosh Baruch Hu had sent His help from Above, and had put the name of this woman in his mouth in order to open the hearts of this couple and help him bring them closer to their Father in Heaven. With great mercy, He had enlarged for them the "tiny pin-prick" that they had made (by coming to the Rav) into a "large hall" leading to their hearts. This was a clear sign that the Rav was the right messenger to bring them back in teshuvah.

The Rav said to them, "Be aware that if you accept upon yourselves the yoke of Torah and keep the laws of family purity and Shabbat, this woman will not be able to do you any harm!"

This is exactly what happened. A few days later, Mr. Rosenthal came to the Rav and emotionally told him that the couple had begun to make improvements in their lives, and *Baruch Hashem*, they were on the road to teshuvah...

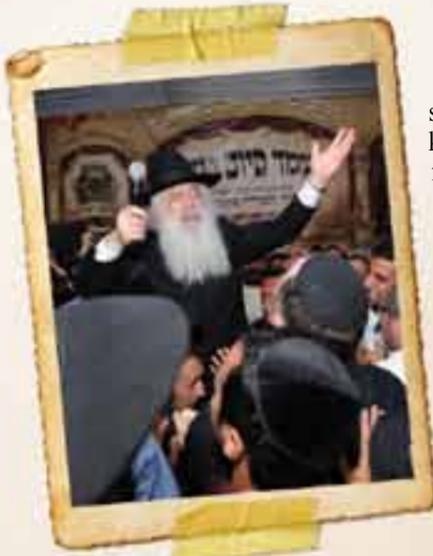
### One Merit for Two Salvations

The Rav, shlita, constantly stresses, "If in the merit of one of my blessings, one person does teshuvah, I am elated that, *Baruch Hashem*, another Jew has returned to his Father in Heaven."

The following story, heard from a first-hand witness, illustrates the power of a mitzvah and how one person can bring merit to another,

even a complete stranger. Once, when the Rav was staying in England, with his usual host, Mr. Abadi, a Reform Jew came to him and asked to be blessed with a son.

"How can I give you a blessing when you don't believe in Torat Moshe?" the Rav asked him. After a few moments' thought, he turned to the man and suggested a deal: "If you accept upon yourself to keep the mitzvot of tefillin and Shabbat, I will give you my blessing."



The Rav added words of encouragement to strengthen this man's faith in Hashem. Fully understanding the implications, the man committed to his side of the deal, and the Rav wholeheartedly blessed him that he merit having children.

He left, and another person entered. This time, a woman stood in the doorway, sorrowfully relating that she had been married for many years, yet had not merited bearing children. She requested a blessing from the Rav.

The Rav raised his hands and with great emotion exclaimed, "Ribbono shel Olam, in the merit of the man who just now accepted upon himself the mitzvot of tefillin and Shabbat, may this woman also merit having a son." Before she left, the Rav presented her with the sefer *Zocher Habrit*, by the gaon, the Ben Ish Chai, ztk"l, and said to her, "With the help of Heaven, next year, you

will give birth to a son in the merit of Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, zy" a, and the Ben Ish Chai, zy" a. Keep this sefer as a *segulah*, and when you return to tell me the good news, you will give it back to me."

About a year later, when the Rav returned to England, he was greeted with two sets of good news: both petitioners had merited sons, born in the same week! Of course, they both asked the Rav to act as *sandek* at the *brit* of their sons...

### It Was Worth the Effort

In his own town and the surrounding area, Mr. Ben-Attar was known as a man who possessed both fear of Hashem and material wealth. His good name preceded him in everything that he did. However, his virtues and accomplishments caused the jealousy of one of the tax collectors of the city. This man constantly plotted against him, trying at every opportunity to cause him harm.

On one occasion, this clerk gave him a fine, which was totally unwarranted, of hundreds of thousands of euros. The charge he leveled against him was completely false.

Mr. Ben-Attar did not know what to do. He realized that he would be saved only by a miracle. The most obvious person to approach for help was Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the tzaddik, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita. He poured out his heart, describing the chain of troubles that had befallen him. The Rav asked him to meet with the clerk in order to make peace with him and straighten matters out, so that the charge against him would be nullified. When Mr. Ben-Attar tried to fulfill the command of the Rav, the clerk laughed in his face and said, "The fine has already been approved. There's nothing to talk about."

Mr. Ben-Attar returned to the Rav in frustration and related the unpleasant conversation that had taken place. The reaction of the Rav was surprising: He told him to try again. So he went back to try to make an appointment with the clerk. The clerk again refused to meet him

and angrily said, "If you continue to bother me, I'll call the police."

When he told this to the Rav, he was told, "If you wholeheartedly believe in the tzaddikim, the holy miracle workers, and in Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, ztk"l, listen to my advice. Phone the clerk again, and don't despair..."

Full of fear and with trembling hands, Mr. Ben-Attar fulfilled the demands of the Rav. The clerk answered in a different manner this time. "You are disturbing me at work," he said. "Nevertheless, tell me what you want."

Mr. Ben-Attar answered, "I would like you to look at my papers again. I am sure that there's a mistake and that I have been penalized without reason."

The clerk replied that he was going to give all the papers over to the court on the following day, and that the judge would decide if there had been any mistake.

Mr. Ben-Attar was extremely worried when he heard that his file was going to be given to the court. He felt that he had fallen "from the frying pan into the fire." In great consternation, he returned to the Rav and said, "Honored Rav! What should I do? I fulfilled the request of the Rav, but now it looks like the court will do me great damage, for surely the court will rule in favor of the clerk. What will become of me?"

The Rav calmly answered him, "Do not worry. Before the court-case, light a candle *l'iluy nishmat* Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto, zy" a. He will pray on your behalf that Hashem should bring you speedy salvation."

At the beginning of the hearing, the judge turned to Mr. Ben-Attar



and said in an accusing tone, "It is written here that you bothered the clerk on several occasions, when he was faithfully fulfilling his job. How do you have the nerve to say that there must have been a mistake in calculating the fine?"

Mr. Ben-Attar stood his ground and replied, "All the documents upon which the clerk based his decision are in front of you. I request that the honorable judge examine them again."

To the surprise of all present, the judge acceded to this irregular request. The judge told both litigants to wait outside the court so that he could examine the documents in

front of him. For an hour and a half, he carefully scrutinized the contents of the file.

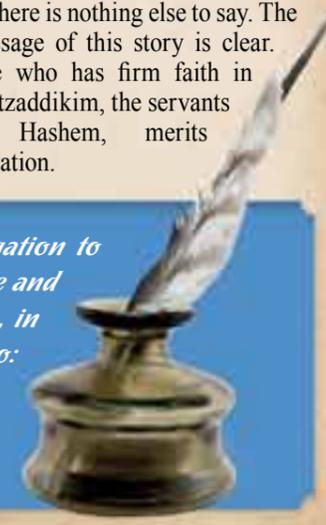
Mr. Ben-Attar was in terrible suspense. But, at the same time, he was accompanied by the firm belief that the merit of the tzaddik, zy" a, was standing by him and would save him. "The tzaddik decrees, and Hashem fulfills his decree." He reminded himself that these words were said to him by the Rav in order to encourage him, and that the Rav had blessed him that the merit of his holy forefathers would bring light to the judgment. He told himself that Hashem would surely save him and deliver him from narrow straits. These thoughts filled his mind, and he maintained pure, strong faith in the tzaddikim.

After what seemed like an eternity, Mr. Ben-Attar and the clerk were called back into the courtroom to stand before the judge. To his tremendous surprise, Mr. Ben-Attar witnessed the judge shout at the clerk in fury, saying, "How can an experienced, trained clerk like you, make such a stupid mistake?! How could you have fined an upstanding citizen with such an enormous fine, when it is totally unwarranted?"

The clerk's face fell. However, the judge was not finished. He continued in his rage, "First, you will drop all charges against the defendant. Second, you must pay him compensation for the aggravation that you have caused him."

There is nothing else to say. The message of this story is clear. One who has firm faith in the tzaddikim, the servants of Hashem, merits salvation.

We would like to invite the honorable members of our congregation to continue sending personal stories to us. Please include your name and contact information, so that we can verify the details of the story, in order to strengthen and benefit others. Please send your stories to: Machon Peninei David (for "B'chatzrot HaChaim"), 8 Bayit Vegan St. YJerusalem P.O.B.... Email:p@hpinto.org.il Tel: 02-643 3570





It is the last Shabbat of 5773.

In a few more minutes, a new year will begin.

How much have we gone through in the past year! How many good moments have we experienced, and how many moments could have been better? When was it decided that we would experience all these things in the past year? On the previous Rosh Hashanah.

Yes! A whole series of events was decreed for us at the very moment we were praying in synagogue, as we were listening to the shofar and praying for our deeds of the previous year to ensure that we would be inscribed for another good year. That year has now passed, and we have discovered what was written for us.

### Peace and Blessing, or the Opposite?

How much would we give just to exchange certain moments of the previous year for better ones! Just how much effort are we willing to make in order to obtain leniency and a better judgment? And what about what we already have? Are we guaranteed that all the good things we have in life will be ours next year as well?

These great days are fast approaching, and we – the children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, believers and children of believers – know that everything is decided and written above according to our deeds below. We also believe in the Sage’s teaching that until the very last moment, we can influence our own deliverance, changing and even reversing the worst decrees against us.

### Who Can Remain Indifferent?

Every year on Elul 26, the hilula of the tzaddik Rabbi



Chaim Pinto *zt”l* – a man known for

working miracles – is celebrated in Mogador, Morocco. It is conducted by his great, great grandson, the well-known *tzaddik* Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto** Shlita. By the merit of his illustrious forefathers, Rabbi David has brought deliverance to countless men and women through his advice and blessings.

Today people face numerous difficulties and are inundated with worries. Everyone is affected by the difficult economic situation in the world, and Jews are confronted by problems that require assistance well beyond the norm, be it in matters of health, income, finding spouses, or having children. As a result, our teacher Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto** Shlita has agreed to conduct the hilula by the graves of the *tzaddikim* of Morocco in Marrakech, Mogador, and Safi.

Such a pilgrimage has not been seen in Morocco for many years. Hundreds of Jews from all around the world will be participating, a pilgrimage conducted in holiness and purity. This journey rests on the great merit of our forefathers, the merit of the holy *tzaddikim*, and the merit of the community who will come in great numbers. Like a single man with a single heart, they will be united in their request for the great *tzaddikim* and leaders of times past – men who always stood by their communities, praying for the success of each and every individual – to now stand as their defenders before the Throne of Glory.

These *tzaddikim* will beseech Hashem to inscribe each of His beloved children into the Book of Life for a sweet and good year, a year filled with every possible blessing, and for all evil decrees to be revoked.



## Marrakesh, Mogador, and Safi are some of the most beautiful cities in Morocco

Marrakech, Mogador, and Safi are among the most beautiful cities of Morocco. The red houses of Marrakech give the town not only its name (“red city”), but also lend it a magical appearance. Its numerous side streets and market places, with their varied sights and sounds, draw thousands of tourists to Marrakech from all around the world.

One doesn’t need to elaborate on the beauty of Mogador. Suffice it to say that in Morocco it is known as *Essaouira*, which means “picturesque.” Its Portuguese fortress (the *skala*), topped by a row of ancient cannons, is magnificent to behold, blending into the backdrop of huge ocean waves breaking against the seawall and attracting tourists to Mogador from all around the world. Furthermore, the ancient colorful fisherman’s port is no less delightful than the authentic shops where juniper wood articles are sold.

The bustling fishing port of Safi is considered the largest in the sardine industry. Above all, the city is known for its attractive ceramic art and the treasures scattered within it.

For centuries, these places have drawn numerous Jews to settle in the cities of Morocco, where they earned a respectable and honorable living. These

established communities were often led by outstanding Torah scholars, men who left their mark on the entire Jewish world with their extensive contribution to expanding Torah study. They also strengthened holiness and purity in the Jewish community, impressing all with their splendor and compassion.

Among these great leaders were a host of *tzaddikim* and illustrious Jews, men whose feet walked the earth but whose heads gazed towards the heavens. Their exceptional righteousness and ability to perform miracles have transformed their gravesites into hubs for Jews from all walks of life. It is to these graves that Jewish men and women come to pray, fully aware that “the *tzaddikim* are greater [have greater powers] in death than they are in life.”

In fact, the simple faith of these people in the merit of *tzaddikim* has saved many of them following their sincere prayers.

It is here that the hilula will take place. It is here, at these very holy sites, where participants will join together, led by the *gaon* Rabbi David Chananya Pinto *Shlita*, to bring deliverance and mercy to all.

## Who can pass up an opportunity to have such effective defenders on the Day of Judgment?

Many Jews seek to participate in this historical journey of salvation to the graves of the *tzaddikim*, a journey led by a miracle worker in his own right, the *tzaddik* Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto** Shlita.

*However space is limited!*

*Sign up today to be a part of the greatest event of the year.*





Salat Lazama

**The following is a partial list of the holy sites that participants will visit during this grand pilgrimage:**

The ancient Salat Lazama synagogue, which was built by refugees of the Spanish expulsion. Here, the sounds of Torah and prayer have not ceased for hundreds of years.

**The gravesites of the tzaddikim:**

- Rabbi Hanania HaKohen Zatzal, known as the "Ari of Marrakech" and the "Kotel HaMa'aravi" of the Jews of Marrakech.
- Rabbi Avraham Azulai Zatzal, a holy kabbalist and descendent of the Chida.
- Rabbi Moshe Pinto Zatzal, a holy chassid.
- Rabbi Avraham Pinto Zatzal, a famous tzaddik.
- Rabbi Mordechai ben Attar Zatzal (the "Ba'al HaKamea"), a holy kabbalist and descendent of the Ohr HaHaim Zatzal.
- Rabbi Massoud bar Mocha Zatzal ("the Angel").
- Rabbi Yitzhak Daluya Zatzal, an outstanding authority in halachah who met and decided cases with the Beit Yosef Zatzal.
- Rabbi Avraham Mur-Yosef Zatzal, a tzaddik and gaon.
- Rabbi Avraham Abitbul Zatzal ("the strong hammer"), an outstanding gaon.



Rabbi Chananya Hakohen ztz" data-bbox="27 507 125 524"/>



Rabbi Avraham Azulai ztz" data-bbox="27 762 125 779"/>



Rabbi Yitzhak Daluya ztz" data-bbox="376 250 471 267"/>



Rabbi Elazar Halevi ztz" data-bbox="376 507 468 524"/>



Rabbi Kalifa Ben-Malka ztz" data-bbox="376 762 473 779"/>



Rabbi Pinchas Jacobson zatzal" data-bbox="527 256 621 273"/>



Rabbi Yaakov Bibas zatzal" data-bbox="527 516 621 533"/>



The Cemetery in Mogador" data-bbox="527 773 623 791"/>

- Rabbi Elazar Halevi Zatzal, one of the greatest and most important rabbis of Morocco, who transmitted deep Torah insights and ethics in the last generation.
  - Rabbi Shlomo Cohen Zatzal, an outstanding gaon.
  - Rabbi Pinchas HaKohen Azug Zatzal, a tzaddik of holy lineage.
- The "Mul Almazan," of whom the Ben Ish Chai testified that rain fell in times of drought due to his merit.
- The cemetery of Marrakech, where countless tzaddikim have been buried for the last thousand years, righteous men who lived and worked in this important city.
  - In Safi, by the glorious graves of Olad Bnei Zamiro, the seven righteous brothers from the Zamiro family. It is here that people have been rescued from their troubles after praying by these holy graves.
  - Finally in Mogador, by the gravesite of the holy tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Zatzal, whose Hilloula we will be celebrating, and by the gravesite of his son, the famous kabbalist and tzaddik Rabbi Yehuda Pinto ("Rabbi Hadan") Zatzal. Also by the gravesite of Rabbi David ben Baruch Zatzal, and by the graves of other the tzaddikim buried in the cemetery of Mogador. May their merit protect us and all those participating in this historical pilgrimage to their graves.



Rabbi Haim Pinto zatzal" data-bbox="877 256 969 273"/>



Rabbi David ben Baroukh zatzal" data-bbox="867 516 977 533"/>



Rabbi David Hazan zatzal" data-bbox="871 773 973 791"/>

**First Group:**

**From Paris to Marrakesh**

Leaving on Wednesday 08.28.2013  
Returning on Sunday 09.01.2013

**Second Group:**

**From Paris to Mogador**

Leaving on Thursday 08.29.2013  
Returning on Sunday 09.01.2013

**Register Now:**

In France, phone: ++0142082540 • +0650617338

In the USA, phone: +1-212-721-0230

In Mexico, phone: +525- 5545-5098

In Israel, phone: +972-26433-605

In Argentina, phone: +54-911-4070-4098

E-mail: [nourithm@gmail.com](mailto:nourithm@gmail.com)

בית הכנסת "זכור לאברהם"  
 רחוב יעקב צור 21  
 גבעת משואה ירושלים  
 שעה: 19:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב אליאסף יצחק גר

בית הכנסת "חזון נחום"  
 רחוב המור 3  
 שכ' גילה ירושלים  
 שעה: 17:40 (אחר ערבית)  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב דינר שמואל

בית הכנסת "אורות החומה"  
 רחוב יצחק ניסים 76  
 הר חומה ירושלים  
 שעה: 19:15  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב איוונשטיין זאב

בית הכנסת "בני ציון"  
 רחוב ברזיל קרינצי 4  
 רמת גן  
 שעה: 20:45  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב פטרמילך אברהם נתנאל

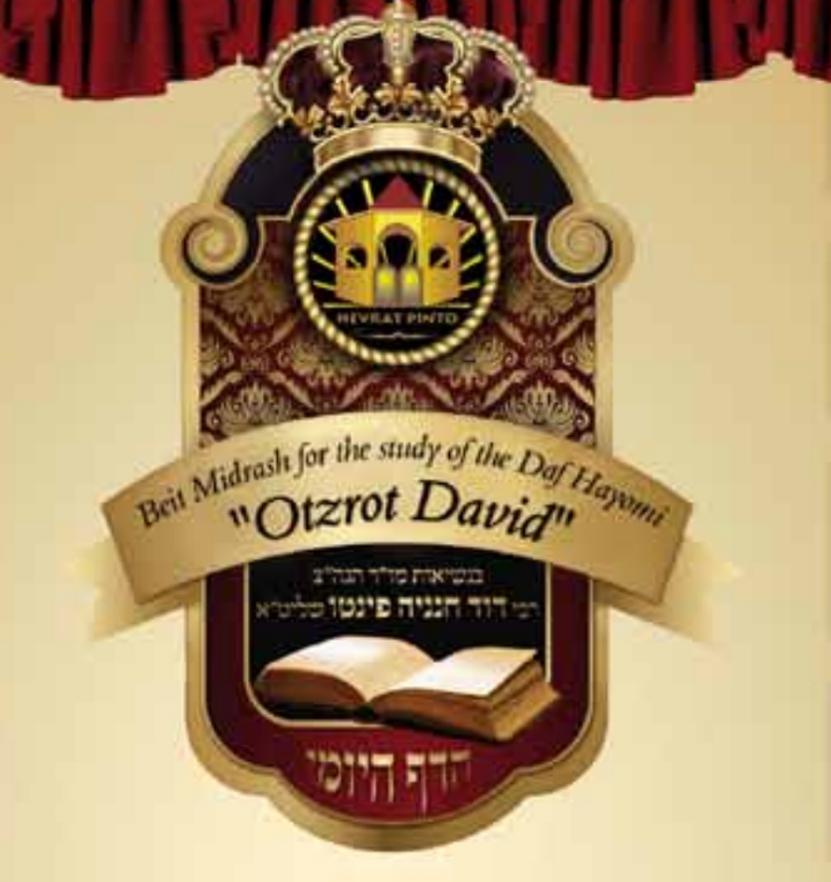
בית מדרש  
 "אורות מאיר ורפאל"  
 11 rue du Plateau  
 75019 פרזי - צרפת  
 שעה: 10:00 בבוקר  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב נפתלי וויל

בית מדרש  
 "אורות מאיר ורפאל"  
 11 rue du Plateau  
 75019 פרזי - צרפת  
 שעה: 07:30 בבוקר  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב אשר ווינד

בית כנסת  
 "אור חיים ומשה"  
 32 rue du Plateau  
 75019 פרזי - צרפת  
 שעה: 06:00 בבוקר  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב אלקובי

בית כנסת  
 ע"ש רבי חיים פינטו זיע"א  
 13 rue laugier  
 75017 פרזי - צרפת  
 שעה: 8:30 - 9:30 / 12:00 - 13:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב אליהו בן חיים

בית כנסת "מוסדות פינטו"  
 20 bis, rue des Mûriers  
 69100 ליון - צרפת  
 שעה: 17:30  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב דניאל כהן



*Bisiyata di'Shemaya,  
 the new cycle of learning  
 the "Daf Hayomi" has begun*

*Lectures in Eretz Yisrael  
 and throughout the world*

*Have been established  
 by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the Gaon and Tzaddik,  
 Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita*

בית הכנסת ביהמ"ד ז גבעונים  
 מחנה צבאי צומת אסף  
 הרופא - צריפין  
 שעה: 12:30  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב זלושינסקי יעקב

בית הכנסת "הצבי"  
 רחוב ברזיל  
 קרית יובל ירושלים  
 שעה: 20:20  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב מובשוביץ יצחק

בית הכנסת "אור יחזקאל"  
 רחוב רשב"י 21  
 מודיעין עילית  
 שעה: 10:00 בבוקר  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב ממן מיכאל

בית הכנסת "אוהל אליהו"  
 רחוב השייטים 14  
 אזור ד' אשדוד  
 שעה: 19:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב דבש בנימין

מרכז רוחני  
 ע"ש ברקוביץ  
 רחוב ירושלים 162 נתיבות  
 שעה: 19:15  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב אברג'ל יהונתן

בית הכנסת "בית דוד"  
 (עולי ארגנטינה)  
 רחוב רש"י 5 אלעד  
 שעה: 19:30  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב עמי בן ציון

בית הכנסת "אורות חיים ומשה"  
 רחוב האדמו"ר  
 מבעלז 43 אשדוד  
 שעה: 19:15  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב שמואל עזריאל

בית הכנסת "אורות חיים ומשה"  
 רחוב האדמו"ר  
 מבעלז 43 אשדוד  
 שעה: 20:30  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב אבנר רווח

בית הכנסת  
 "נאות ירושלים - אור החיים"  
 רחוב התזמורת ראשון לציון  
 שעה: 18:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב שבי יעקב חיים

בית הכנסת "אוהל מועד"  
 רחוב אנדיר (פינת ירודי  
 הסירה) אזור ב' - אשדוד  
 שעה: 19:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב בן ששון דניאל

בית הכנסת "גריבה"  
 רחוב שי ענגון 15  
 קרית אונו  
 שעה: 18:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב רחמים גיא

בית הכנסת "היכל ישראל"  
 רחוב בן צבי  
 טבריה  
 שעה: 19:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב כהן גבריאל

בית הכנסת "פניני דוד"  
 רחוב בית וגן 8  
 ירושלים  
 שעה: 20:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב אליהו מאיר

בית הכנסת רב ברכות  
 רחוב הגלגל 40  
 רמת גן  
 שעה: 20:30  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב ניסן שמואל

בית הכנסת אמרי יוסף  
 רחוב צוננוב 8  
 פתח תקוה  
 שעה: 20:00  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב סאלם נאור

בית הכנסת "אורות חיים ומשה"  
 רחוב האדמו"ר מבעלז  
 43 אשדוד  
 שעה: 09:15 בבוקר  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב בנימין הראל

בית הכנסת "אורות חיים ומשה"  
 רחוב האדמו"ר  
 מבעלז 43 אשדוד  
 שעה: 11:00 בבוקר  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב בנימין הראל

בית הכנסת "אורות חיים ומשה"  
 רחוב האדמו"ר מבעלז  
 43 אשדוד  
 שעה: 17:15  
 מגיד השיעור:  
 הרב בנימין הראל

# A Description of Avot U'Banim Paris Ashdod

"A wise son gladdens his father" (Proverbs 10:1)  
 "My son, when your heart becomes wise,  
 then my heart will also rejoice" (ibid. 23:15)



The life of a person in this world is like a fleeting shadow. He lives for seventy or eighty years, and his life zooms past. He expends endless toil and sweat in the pursuit of his daily bread. He constantly chases the next wretched coin in order to provide himself and his family with a livelihood.

What's the point of all this? What does he hope to bequeath to this world after he dies? Our hard work – these are the children. Everything that a person toils for in this world, all the hardships that he suffers, and everything that he endeavors to achieve in his lifetime: it is all for his children. It is all so that he can establish upright descendants, who will act righteously with Hashem and with others. This is the most important task that he can fulfill in this world.

If one visits "Avot U'Banim" he will be greeted with the most wonderful sight of fathers delighting in learning Torah with their children, and children devotedly drinking in the wisdom of their fathers. Gathered together are those who spend their days working with those who sit in the tent of Torah, talmidei chachamim with those who have recently become ba'alei teshuvah and are now sharing the light of Torah with their precious children.

Words are insufficient to describe the delight and sweetness experienced here, the tremendous beauty of the scene transpiring in the Beit Hamidrash, which is bustling with the exuberant sounds of children learning together with their fathers.

They toil and receive reward in this world. The pleasure and satisfaction of learning with one's son cannot be compared to any material pleasure. This is what we strive for all our lives. This is what gains us the merit to continue living: teaching our children, and our grandchildren, the Torah and the mitzvot.

*When a child begins to talk, his father should speak to him in lashon hakodesh and teach him G'orah. If the father does not do this, it is as if he is killing his son, since the pasuk says, "And you shall teach them (words of G'orah) to your sons to speak in them." If you teach words of G'orah to your children, "your days and the days of your children will be increased..."*  
 (Sifri, Eikev 46)



## Words of Inspiration

Delivered by the Gaon and Tzaddik  
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

# Bein Hametzarim

*Torah and Tefillah*  
*Two Central Pillars for Bnei Yisrael*

*“G-d, the nations have entered Your inheritance and defiled the sanctuary of Your holiness”*

*(Tehillim 79:1)*

The Gemara (*Gittin 56a*) relates the beginning of the *churban*. Just before the destruction, the Biryonim in Yerushalayim refused to humble themselves and make peace with the enemy. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai requested to secretly meet with the leader of the Biryonim, Abba Sikra, who was his nephew.

When they met, Rabban Yochanan said to Abba Sikra, “How long will you persecute the Jewish people, leaving them in such desperate straits, with no sustenance and lacking everything? Go and make peace with the Romans.”

Abba Sikra answered, “What should I do? If I act against the wishes of the Biryonim, they’ll kill me.”

However, he thought of an idea. He suggested that Rabban Yochanan pretend to be very sick, and that his followers spread the news throughout Yerushalayim that he had died. Then his students should take his bier outside the walls of the city in order to “bury” him. In that way he would be able to meet with the Roman Caesar and negotiate a peace treaty.

Rabban Yochanan accepted the advice of Abba Sikra. When his students came to the gates of the city wall with his bier, the guards, who were Biryonim, wanted to pierce the body with their swords to make sure that he was truly dead. However, Abba Sikra stopped them, saying that if they would do such a thing they would be accused for having dishonored the body of Rabban Yochanan. The Biryonim agreed, but wanted instead to push the body in order to make sure that it made no noise and that Rabban Yochanan was really dead. Abba Sikra told them that then they would be blamed for pushing the leader of the Jewish people.

The Biryonim felt that they had no choice and listened to the words of Abba Sikra. They opened

the gates of the city, and Rabban Yochanan was carried through to his “burial.” After he had been carried a long distance away from the city, he was taken to the palace of Vespasian, who was the commander of the Roman forces at that time. When they met, Rabban Yochanan greeted him with the following words, “Greetings to the King.” Vespasian replied that Rabban Yochanan deserved a double death for these words. First, he had called Vespasian the king, when he was not; second, if he was the king, why had Rabban Yochanan waited till this day to come to him?

Rabban Yochanan replied, “You should know that only today has the kingship been transferred to your hands, as well as the city of Yerushalayim. And I have not been able to come to you before, since the Biryonim have prevented me from doing so.”

On that very day, the Roman government appointed Vespasian as Caesar. Because Rabban Yochanan had found favor in his eyes, Vespasian allowed him to request any favor that he wanted. Rabban Yochanan asked for three things: to spare the city of Yavneh and its scholars from destruction; to preserve the house of Rabban Gamliel, so that the line of King David should not be wiped out; and to send a doctor to cure Rabbi Tzadok, who was very sick from all the fasts with which he had afflicted himself in order to forestall the destruction.

All this happened because the Biryonim listened to the advice of Abba Sikra, who had told them not to touch the “body” of Rabban Yochanan in order that they should not be denigrated by the Romans. This

*Rabban Yochanan requested the preservation of Yavneh and its Sages... he knew that Yavneh would provide the consolation for Bnei Yisrael after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. Torah and tefillah would continue to flourish from that place*

is very surprising. Did the Biryonim care so much what the Romans would say or think about them? They were wicked people, who did not obey the directives of the leaders of the generation, let alone honor them. Why would they be bothered if the Romans would say that they had either pierced or pushed the body of the Jew’s Rav?

Moreover, how would the Romans know that they had done this? The Biryonim were inside the gates of Yerushalayim, whereas the Romans stood on the other side. They would not have seen what the Biryonim did.

This reveals an insight into the greatness of the people of Yerushalayim. Even the most wicked amongst them were filled with mitzvot and would never have conceived of dishonoring the Torah or its teachers. The Biryonim did not

listen to the directives of the Sages and did whatever they felt was right. They would not accept the advice of the Sages, who were urging them to make peace with the enemy. They exerted their control over the people of the city against the wishes of the Sages. Notwithstanding all this, they did not want the Romans to view them as people who denigrated their Rabbis and Sages. They also understood that there is no greater disgrace than disparaging the words of the Torah leaders.

To what can this be compared? To a person who is empty of all spiritual content and lacks Torah and mitzvot. He is unaccustomed to listening to *da’at Torah* or the instructions of the Sages. However, if he would meet someone who would dare speak derogatorily about one of the Sages, he would immediately raise his voice in objection and vigorously silence him. This is because he is deeply hurt by another’s trampling the honor of the tzaddik. Even though he himself does not pay attention to the tzaddik’s words, or follow in his ways, in the depths of his heart he recognizes the tremendous worth of the tzaddik and is therefore unable to hear him being denigrated.

This is exactly what happened with the Biryonim. They themselves did not follow the path of Torah and refuted the advice of the Torah leaders; nevertheless, they could not bear the thought that the Romans would witness their ignominy in disgracing their honor. Deep in the recesses of their hearts, the Biryonim understood that they had done a terrible thing by not listening to the Torah leaders.

The Romans were on the other side of the city gates and would probably



not see if the Biryonim either pierced or pushed the “body” of Rabban Yochanan, thus it would have been kept a secret. Notwithstanding this fact, they were afraid that the Romans would win the war, and when they would interrogate their Jewish captives, they would find out what had really happened. This would besmirch the honor of the Biryonim terribly. They would not allow themselves to be disgraced in such a way.

The Ba’alei Mussar give an interesting explanation to Vespasian’s question as to why Rabban Yochanan had not come to him earlier if he was already the king. They say that this question indicts each and every person for not returning to Hashem in teshuvah, and for being lax in keeping Torah and mitzvot. When a person realizes that he no longer has many years left to live and “wakes up,” returning to his Maker, this is surely better than not doing anything at all. However, he can still be charged with the claim that “I, Hashem, am King. Why have you not come to Me until today?” Why only now does he remember Hashem? Why has he waited so many years to come close to Him and keep His Torah and mitzvot?

This is a very strong claim that cannot be answered. Each person should make the effort to return to Hashem as soon as he can. One should not put it off, thinking that he will do so at a later date, since he will be asked why he delayed for so long. David Hamelech says (*Tehillim* 112:1), “Fortunate is the man who fears Hashem.” The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 19) asks why the pasuk says “the man,” surely women also need to do teshuvah. Rav Amram answers in the name of Rav: Fortunate is the one who does teshuvah while he is a man. Rabbi Yochanan ben Levi explains that this means: Fortunate is the one who subjugates his *Yetzer Hara* while he is a man, i.e., while he is still young.

To Vespasian’s question as to why he had not come to him earlier, Rabban Yochanan answered that the Biryonim had prevented him from doing so. This was not a very satisfactory answer. Vespasian could have countered that just as Rabban Yochanan had managed to outsmart the Biryonim on



this occasion and escape the city, he could have done the same earlier. It was surely Divine Providence that the Roman commander did not ask such a question. Rabban Yochanan would not have been able to give a fitting answer.

However, this question remains valid; why had Rabban Yochanan not tricked the Biryonim and escaped the city at an earlier date?

The answer is simple. Rabban Yochanan wanted to delay the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash for as long as possible. If he had met with Vespasian sooner, the Beit Hamikdash would have been destroyed sooner. This is because when they met, Rabban Yochanan revealed through Divine inspiration that Vespasian was the king, and that Yerushalayim and the Beit Hamikdash would be delivered into his hands. Thus, Rabban Yochanan delayed meeting with Vespasian until the situation was desperate, since many Jews had been slain, and starvation was haunting the city in the wake of the siege. Now there was no other option.

Each additional day that the Beit Hamikdash stood was another day of tremendous spiritual and material potential. Each additional day presented another opportunity for Bnei Yisrael to do teshuvah and annul the decree of destruction. Thus, Rabban Yochanan waited until the very last moment.

This teaches the great importance of each moment of a person’s life. Every moment can be used for teshuvah, which will annul any evil decrees

against him. This idea is expressed in the *haftarah* of Yom Kippur. Yonah Hanavi says to the sailors (*Yonah* 1:12), “Lift me up and throw me into the sea.” The author of the sefer *Ohr Yahel* (Introduction) asks why it was necessary for Yonah to say, “Lift me up.” He could have just said, “Throw me into the sea.” This teaches that Yonah wanted to use the little time that he had left in this world to the utmost. By being lifted up, he would gain a few extra seconds of life that he could use for doing teshuvah. Maybe he would be able to avert the decree against him.

This was the reasoning of Rabban Yochanan. He knew that each moment of life has tremendous potential and every extra day that the Beit Hamikdash stood presented the opportunity for teshuvah and averting the decree against the nation. It was only after all hope was lost that he went to meet Vespasian.

Two of the requests that he made from Vespasian were to preserve the Torah center of Yavneh and its Sages and to heal Rabbi Tzadok, who was the spiritual support of the nation at that time. Rabban Yochanan knew that Bnei Yisrael cannot survive without the foundations of Torah and *avodah*, which is tefillah. When one of these pillars crumbles, the edifice of Bnei Yisrael falls to the ground.

Yavneh was the base of Torah knowledge and dissemination during that era. Rabban Yochanan knew that Yavneh would provide the consolation for Bnei Yisrael after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. Torah and tefillah would continue to flourish from that place. He also requested that Rabbi Tzadok should be healed, so that he could continue praying on behalf of the nation, since his prayers protected it like a wall. Indeed, after Rabbi Tzadok died, and his prayers were silenced, this pillar that supported the nation collapsed and the terrible destruction began.

May we be worthy that Hashem, in His great mercy, should speedily bring the final redemption, and may we witness the consolation of Tzion and the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash, Amen.

# Tishah B'Av

## The Connection between Eretz Yisrael and Torah Yisrael



### “Why was the Land destroyed? Hashem said: Because they forsook My Torah” (*Yirmeyahu* 9:11)

Our connection with the Land of Israel is dependent on our keeping Torah and mitzvot. Hashem gave us the Land for this very purpose, and in order that we should go in His ways. Bnei Yisrael are warned not to do aveirot (*Vayikra* 18:24-25): “Do not become contaminated through any of these, because the nations whom I expel before you have become contaminated through them. The Land became contaminated and I recalled its iniquity upon it, and the earth spewed out its inhabitants.” The Torah further warns us (*ibid.* vs. 28), “Let not the Land spew you out because you contaminated it, just as it ejected the nations before you.” Chazal (*Torat Kohanim* 20, 153) explain that this can be compared to a prince who ate spoiled food that he could not digest and vomited it. So too, the Land cannot contain those who do aveirot.

Today, on Tishah B'Av, we all sit on the ground as mourners. We weep inconsolably over the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash and the holy city of Yerushalayim, as well as the bitter exile that we suffer. For we have been exiled from our land and distanced from our inheritance. It is imperative for us to understand that this all stems from the fact that we have abandoned the Torah of Hashem and neglected His mitzvot, rather than following in His ways. Hashem Himself told us the reason for the destruction: “Because they have forsaken My Torah.” The holy Land cannot contain those who

do aveirot.

This message is also imparted by the Torah portion that is read on Tishah B'Av (*Devarim* 4:25-26), “When you will have children and grandchildren, and you will have been in the Land for a very long time, you will become corrupt... and you will do evil in the eyes of Hashem to anger Him. I bring witness this day the heavens and the earth that you will surely be swiftly destroyed from this land, which you are crossing the Jordan to inherit. You will not enjoy length of days on it, for you shall surely be destroyed.” This pasuk clearly expresses that Bnei Yisrael merit living in the Land on condition that they follow the ways of Hashem and labor in Torah and mitzvot. The Land will spit out those who do aveirot, since it cannot withstand those who distance themselves from Hashem.

In light of this, we can explain the following pasuk in *Tehillim* (137:5), “If I forget thee, Yerushalayim, may my right hand (ימיני) forget its skill.” The word ימיני refers to the holy Torah, which is called the “right hand” of Hashem, as it says (*ibid.* 118:17), “The right hand of Hashem is exalted.” David Hamelech is teaching that Yerushalayim was forgotten by Bnei Yisrael and thus taken from their hands and destroyed only because ימיני תשכח – they forgot the holy Torah that is called the “right hand” of Hashem and neglected His mitzvot. Without this condition, Bnei Yisrael forfeit their right to the Land.

When Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to enter the Land, he implored Hashem with 515 different prayers,

as it says (*Devarim* 3:23), “And I implored (ואתחנן) Hashem at that time, saying.” The Ba'al Haturim explains that the word ואתחנן has the same *gematria* as the word שירה (song). Along these lines, we can further explain the intent of Moshe Rabbeinu’s song. The Torah itself is called a song, as it says (*ibid.* 31:19), “And now, write for yourselves this song, and teach Bnei Yisrael, place it in their mouth.” Moshe Rabbeinu beseeched Hashem that He would allow him to enter the Land for the single purpose of “singing the song”: in order that he could keep the Torah and mitzvot there. By the use of the word שירה, Moshe assured Hashem that his sole desire in entering the Land was to uphold the conditions for living there: to sing every note of the song. However, in His unfathomable wisdom, Hashem refused Moshe’s request.

In a similar vein, we can explain another connection between the word ואתחנן and the word שירה. After the splitting of the sea, the pasuk says, “אז – שיר משדה – And now Moshe sang.” Rashi (*Shemot* 15:1) comments that this is written in the future tense rather than the past tense. This teaches that in the future, Bnei Yisrael will sing a song: the song of the future redemption. Moshe pleaded (ואתחנן) to be allowed entrance to the Land in order that Bnei Yisrael would be able to immediately sing the song (שירה) of the future redemption. Moshe did not openly request this, but concealed his intent in the number of prayers that he said, in order to prevent the impure forces and the Satan from

hindering the redemption. However, Hashem commanded Moshe to stop beseeching Him, for the time of the redemption had not yet come.

Today, to our great sorrow, instead of singing the song of redemption, we sit on the earth and sing dirges. And, due to our many sins, all the warnings of rebuke written in the Torah have been fulfilled during our exile, *rachmana litzlan*. Bnei Yisrael have endured the most terrible, bitter sufferings that we can hardly imagine possible. We need merely mention the awful famine that the people of Yerushalayim endured at the time of the destruction, to the extent that mothers became so cruel that they literally ate the flesh of their children in order to still their hunger. About this, the Prophet Yirmeyahu says (*Eichah* 4:10), "The hands of merciful mothers cooked their children..."

Now, we sit in mourning, bemoaning the terrible situation in which we find ourselves, and we say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "You have acted righteously in bringing all these things upon us. You have acted truthfully, and we have acted wickedly." We beseech Hashem that just as He brought upon us all the aspects of the retribution, so too, He should fulfill the prophecies of consolation and speedily redeem us from this difficult exile.

Hashem replies that He desires nothing more than this, on condition that we return to Him in teshuvah. It is incumbent upon each one of us to turn away from his wicked deeds and come close to Hashem, by connecting to the Torah and mitzvot. Thus, we implore Hashem "Return us, Hashem, to You, and we will return," since although we desire to return to Him,



we need His help to enable us to do so.

The mazal of the month of Av is a lion. This hints to Yehudah, about whom it says (*Bereishit* 49:9), "Yehudah is the cub of a lion." The name Yehudah (יהודה) contains the same letters as the Name of Hashem (יהוה). This hints to the following. Although the month of Av is represented by the lion, which tears up anything that comes in its path, the lion hints to Yehudah, who embodies the Name of Hashem. Thus, we should not despair, since Hashem is with us particularly in this month, and His protection envelops us during these days. Of course, this applies only if we do teshuvah and reconnect to the holy Torah.

The Prophet Yirmeyahu bemoaned (*Eichah* 1:1), "How (איכה) does she sit in solitude." Similarly, Moshe Rabbeinu used the same word (איכה), when he said (*Devarim* 32:30), "How could one pursue a thousand, and two make ten thousand flee?" To our great sorrow, this came true in the Holocaust, thousands of times. There are many hair-raising photographs of

as few as two German soldiers, may their names be obliterated, lording over many downcast and subjugated Jews. The terror in the eyes of the Jews is clear for all to see. They were unable to do a thing to save themselves.

Notwithstanding all these tribulations, we must know that Hashem is always with us and is watching over us. This is hinted to in the two pesukim mentioned above. The two words איכה have the *gematria* of seventy-two, hinting to the seventy-two letter Name of Hashem. Even when we endure the worst suffering, Hashem is with us, as it says (*Tehillim* 91:15), "I am with him in his distress."

Moreover, when adding one for the unit, the two words איכה have the *gematria* of עג (73). This hints to the word עיגול, a circle, which represents unity, since a circle has no beginning or end, and each point along it is equidistant from the center. The Admor of Sanz, zy"va, states that we eat round matzot on Pesach in order to hint to the unity of Bnei Yisrael, in merit of which they were redeemed from Egypt.

We can take a lesson from this: If we truly desire to bring an end to this bitter exile and be freed from the retribution of איכה, we must grasp the trait of unity and increase peace between man and his fellow. We must act with loving-kindness toward each other and increase harmony between all Jews.

May Hashem witness our suffering and bring an end to our tribulations. May He gather the exiles speedily in our time. May the day of Tishah B'Av be converted to a day of rejoicing and happiness, and may we soon merit the future redemption, Amen.



קול ששון וקול שמחה קול התן וקול כח

במזל טוב      בסמך טוב

## תשית לראשו עטרת פז

ב"ה

*Heartfelt blessings to the glory of our generation, who enlightens us with the light of Torah and illuminates our ways, paving the straight path for us in life, who teaches us wisdom, from the depths of the holy Torah, and leads us on the path ascending to the House of Hashem, with unending self-sacrifice, one who sustains others, sowing the seeds of righteousness and making salvation sprout in the merit of his holy ancestors, the tzaddik, foundation of the world, and pillar of Torah and loving-kindness in our generation*

*Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, HaGaon HaTzaddik, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlita,*

*And to his illustrious wife, HaRabbanit, tlita, the mother of royalty*

*On the occasion of the engagement of their son*

*The pride of his family in wisdom from his early youth, the descendant of holy and exalted ancestors, the son of the mighty,*

### Yoel Yichyeh Shlomo

*may he live for many long years*

*May Hashem grant his future wife to be like Sara, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah. May their home be a haven of peace, and may they both give much nachat to their illustrious families.*

*May Hashem grant long life to Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita, so that he can direct this empire of Torah and gain true nachat from it, according to the pure desires of his heart. May he merit seeing future generations from his family, with the help of Hashem. And may he and his family only experience good things.*

*From the depths of our hearts,*

*The Rabbanim and members of the yeshivot and kollelim*

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