

Derech Ha-rif

Excerpts from the Torah discourse delivered by The great Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita

For the Torah portion of Naso | Volume 30 | 7 sivan



First Shabbat Meal

Witnessing the Jewish Elders accepting the Torah had a major influence on the entire Jewish Nation

Just before the giving of the Torah, Hashem commanded Moshe to introduce the Torah to the Jewish people and get their reaction as to wanting to accept the Torah upon themselves. "As such (the Torah) you shall say to the House of Yaakov (i.e. the women) and the Children of Israel (i.e. the men) (the teachings of the Torah...)" Hashem then added the following loving words: "Behold! If you will listen to My voice and you will keep My covenant, you shall be for Me a special nation amongst all - for the entire world belongs to Me."

Hashem instructed Moshe to present three Torah to the mass of the nation itself- the women and men- but Moshe decided to present it to the elders of the nation. The verse then states that the nation responded in unity with the eternal, earth-shattering words of Naase Venishma'a, we shall (first) do and (then) we shall listen. Why did Moshe divert from Hashem's instruction to address the people?

The Sages reveal that Moshe feared that even a single person might respond inappropriately at that historically critical moment. One wrong utterance from a group or individual could sour the most important in history. In his wisdom, Moshe went to the elders with his message with the idea that they would transmit the message onward to all the elders of the nation and from there to each family. While Moshe was delivering Hashem's message to the elders of the nation, the entire nation was eagerly gathered around to hear the message. Then, something amazing happened: the nation was so touched by the conversation between Moshe and the elders, which took place with intense feelings of Heavenly Awe (yirat shamaim) and intimate connection to Hashem, that the nation cried out in unison and absolute devotion "Na'ase Venishma!"

What occurred there is testimony to the power of witnessing something through one's eyes rather than having it transmitted over verbally. Emphasizing this point is the fact that during the actual giving of the Torah, when pronouncing the Ten Commandments, Hashem made it as such that the words miraculously became visible. "And the entire nation saw the sounds...It was not enough that the people heard the Ten Commandments, Hashem willed that

they should view the words with their own eyes. The significance of personality witnessing an event versus hearing about its details is found in the laws concerning a judge who presented a verdict opposing the verdict of the Sanhedrin. This judge is stoned but during the holidays when the entire Jewish people would arrive to Yerushalaim. Generally, one who is awaiting capital punishment is not made to suffer by waiting, but the punishment is meted out at the court's earliest availability. This man however, is made to wait so that the entire nation can witness his stoning and take to heart the severity of opposing the High Court (Sanhedrin). The Torah tells us that Yitro, Moshe's father in law travelled to the Jewish encampment far off in the desert when he heard of the great miracles of the Splitting of the Sea and the war with Amalek. Yitro came because he understood that it wasn't sufficient to be aware of the miracles of the Jewish people, but it was necessary to witness them and the people face to face. If the nations of the world trembled in fear at the miracle of the Splitting of the Sea (as the verse testifies..), he contemplated, how was it that Amalek so brazenly came upon Israel with war? It must be they weren't sufficiently convinced. Ytherefore, Yitro got up and brought himself to the Jewish nation to witness what he needed to first hand. The Talmud in Bava Metzia 86b explains that regarding the miracles that Hashem performed for the Jewish nation during their first years, some Hashem directly implied Himself, while others He performed through messengers. The Talmud explains that Hashem mirrored Avraham, our forefather's actions in serving the three angels that arrived to his abode. In regards to serving them water to wash off their feet from the sand of the desert, Avraham sent Yishmael to perform the task, in order to educate him in the Mitzva of welcoming guests, Hachnasat Orchim. Correspondingly, Hashem provided for water in the desert through a messenger. The question is obvious: what was incorrect in Avraham's calculation of using the situation to teach his son about guests? Why was he punished that the water source to his descendants arrived indirectly? The answer is rooted in an evaluation of the good that was detracted in Avraham choosing to have Yishmael do the serving of the water to the angels. If Avraham would have performed the act on his own, Yishmael would have had the opportunity to witness how Avraham performed the Mitzvah and would be immeasurably more inspired and impressed that when he performed it on his own.



Soul Of the Rif

It is important that, before one repeats some speech that someone has said, they evaluate whether to repeat it based on the following three tests: 1. Verification of the accuracy of the contents of the speech- what exactly did you hear, from whom did you hear it, and in what context was it said?, 2. Is the repetition of this speech good or bad?, 3. For what purpose are you repeating this speech? These three tests will guide you to consider important questions such as: Does this matter involve Lashon Hara?, Will repeating this matter cause hurt to someone? This pre-evaluation of one's words is a vital principle for life.



2nd Shabbat Meal

Hashem's giving of permission to Moshe to hold on to the Throne of Honor provides an opening for all of us to do Teshuva (atonement).

The Gemara (Shabbat 88b) teaches that when Moshe Rabenu ascended to the Heaven to bring the Torah down, the ministering angels requested that Hashem keep the Torah in the Heaven and not allow it to be brought down to Earth. Hashem instructed Moshe to respond to the angels' claim, but Moshe replied that he feared that the angels shall burn him with their breath. Thereupon, Hashem instructed Moshe to hold on to the Throne of Honor and respond to the angels' claim. Moshe held on to the Throne of Honor and responded to the angels: "The Torah commands: 'You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal.' Do you angels have any animosity between you? Do you have a Yetzer Hara? How can you fulfil the holy Torah?- it is not relevant to you! The ministering angels immediately accepted Moshe's response and provided him with gifts. Even the angel of death provided Moshe with a gift. The difficulty is raised: for what purpose did Moshe Rabenu need to hold on to the Throne of Honor in order to respond to the ministering angels?

We may resolve this difficulty based on the following principle: People take for granted the ability to do Teshuva- If one has sinned, for example by stealing, lying or hurting someone, and then does Teshuva, then everything is alright. We hear the concept of Teshuva being bandied about so ubiquitously that people do not properly appreciate the power of Teshuva, and feel like Hashem is doing them a favor to forgive their sins and, so to speak, 'lets it slide' when they do Teshuva. Doing Teshuva is no simple matter- it is not a matter of Hashem 'being flexible with the rules' and 'letting it slide'; Hashem created Teshuva before He created the World! Teshuva is an almost incomprehensible phenomenon- If one breaks the law in a certain jurisdiction- the law cannot 'forgive' them.

If one drives through a red light and the policeman lets them off, then that policeman has broken the law, because they have no right to let the guilty person off. Indeed, if that policeman would be seen letting that driver off by their superior officer, they would be punished by the superior officer. Yet Teshuva operates contrary to this.

The ministering angels claimed that if Hashem were to give the Torah to the Jewish people, the Jewish people would sin, and the Torah will be unfulfilled. It would therefore be unwise to give them the Torah. Just as it would be unwise to provide a car to an irresponsible person who may cause an accident, or provide a firearm to an irresponsible person who may kill someone with it, it would be irresponsible to entrust the Jewish people with the holy Torah. Hashem responded to this claim by instructing Moshe to hold on to the Throne of Honor, thereby signifying to the angels that Teshuva exists, and that Hashem 'digs furrows under the Throne of Honor' to accept Teshuva.

This is what Moshe Rabenu was showing the angels by holding onto Hashem's throne- that Hashem has a furrow beneath the Throne of Honor to accept Teshuva. If you claim that the Torah cannot be given to the Jewish people because they will sin and not fulfil it, there is the remedy of Teshuva, symbolized by the Throne of Honor.



Scan the Qcode to join the great Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto Shlita's whataapp group

Q & A with the Rif



Question:

Dear Rav, I read the book of Devarim on Shabbat, but do not yet keep Shabbat. Do I have a chance of salvation?

Answer:

The very act of reading the book of Devarim on Shabbat has great influence.

Shabbat is the mother of all blessings, and has a very lofty degree. Certainly, one who begins to perform a Mitzvah is instructed to complete it, and a Mitzvah leads on to another Mitzvah (Avot 4, 2). Spiritually strengthening oneself on Shabbat is a greatly exalted matter, and has great power. The merit of the holy Shabbat is unfathomable.





3rd Shabbat meal

Each Jew has the power to soar to great heights like an eagle even if they've slacked to the lowest depths like a serpent.

At the Jewish encampment at the foot of Mount Sinai, the tribes surrounded the mountain divided into four groups. These groups mirrored the same positioning that the sons of Yaakov surrounded his casket in bringing him to his resting place in Hebron.

The four groups were headed by the tribes of Yehuda, Reuven, Ephraim and Dan, each with a unique flag. On the flag of Yehuda (in whose camp were also included the tribes of Yissachar and Zevulun) was embroidered a lion. On Reuven's flag was a human figure. On Ephraim's was a bull and on Dan's was an eagle. The Ramban explains that the symbols which were embroidered onto the flags represented the four figures which are found at the four legs of Hashem's Celestial Throne.

This begs the question: many tribes had an animal attributed to them by Yaakov Avinu in the final blessings to his descendants. Yehuda the lion, Yossef (i.e. Ephraim, his son) the bull, and Dan the snake. Regarding Dan, why was his symbolic animal of a snake replaced by the eagle.

To answer the question we look further into the story of the Primordial snake at the beginning of the creation of the world. At his creation, the snake was like a human creature, walking on two feet and with a pair of hands. His intelligence was greater than of all other animals. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 59b) even laments the failure of the snake as a great loss to humanity, as if he hadn't sinned and been removed from his stature, each Jew would have as servants two snakes. These would do all their master's bidding and bring them fine jewels. In a manner, the snake would have taken the place of man's best friend. However, once he sinned, Hashem removed his arms and legs, cursed him and reduced him to the lowliest creature. The snake, thus, represents ultimate failure, falling from the mountain top to the lowest pit.

Somehow, the snake had a connection to Dan. The Torah recounts how a certain Micha, from the tribe of Dan, brought the nation to sin with the golden calf. At the time of Exodus, he searched for a sacred item from which he could form an idol. He found a special golden amulet with which Moshe used to miraculously raise Yossef's casket from the Nile. Inscribed on it was Hashem's name. During one of the greatest times in Jewish history, not long after the splitting of the Sea, during which even the simplest maidservant saw heavenly visions greater than Yechezkel the Prophet, Micha sought a way to make the Jewish people sin.

He retained the special amulet in secret, awaiting the perfect moment to cause the people to sin. He found the moment, precisely when Moshe ascended Mount Sinai to begging down the Torah til the Jewish people. Micha had those sinful thoughts already from Egypt and he found the perfect moment- unfortunately- at the giving of the Torah.

Thus, the snake represents utter evil, and it would not be fitting to be the animal of symbol on Dan's flag. Rather, at the foot of Mount Sinai, Hashem replaced the snake with the eagle as the animal to have on Dan's flag. The change was to represent the fundamental idea of change and repentance; even one who reaches the very lowest of levels can and must look up to renewal, repentance and hope. The eagle is the noblest of birds, and its plumage, which renews itself entirely every number of years, serves as a metaphor of hope for those who have descended low.

As such, choosing to replace the symbol of Dan from one of sin and failure to one of repentance and hope was Hashem's expression of love for his nation: "And His flag, to me, expressed His love (Shir Hashirim 2:4)." Hashem gave hope to His children that no matter the situation, they can repent, find hope and renewal in their lives like the grand eagle.

קריאת קודש
 לאור מצבו הרפואי של האדמו"ר
 רבי **יאשיהו פינטו** שליט"א
 שאמור לעבור בשבוע הקרוב טיפול רפואי ארוך ומורכב
 נקראים בזה כל איש ישראל אנשים נשים וטף לקבל על
 עצמם היוזק רוחני, ולהעתיך בתפילה לרפואת האדמו"ר
 רבי **יאשיהו יוסף** בן זורי
 לרפואה שלמה
 והן א-ל כבוד לא ימאס תפילת רבים

Treasure charms from the Rif



There is a tradition received from the holy Rav of Lublin, that if one has a sick person in one's home, one should accept on oneself that on the first Tuesday following the sick person's recovery, one will hold a festive meal for Torah scholars and G-d-fearing Jews in the honor of the soul of Hoshea Ben Be'eri. It would be good for the sick person themselves to accept this matter upon themselves, and before the acceptance recite the following two verses (Yeshaya 8, 19-20): "If people say to you, 'Inquire of the necromancers and the diviners who chirp and snort,' [respond:] 'Should not a people inquire of their own G-d? [Should we inquire] of the dead for the living?! [I swear] by the Torah and the teaching that they will make this statement to you, that has no light of dawn.'"



Rabbi Yisrael Ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov.

The story of how the great luminary, the Baal Shem Tov, came to the world is well known:

The Baal Shem Tov's parents had waited for children for many years. One Erev Purim whilst everyone was busying themselves with the Mitzvah of Mishloach Manot (sending portions of food as gifts), the Baal Shem Tov's father sat and studied Torah. In line with the verse (Yirmiya 33, 25) "If not for My covenant day and night, I shall not put in place the laws of Heaven and Earth", it is taught that the world's existence cannot be sustained if there was a moment without Torah study. At that time the Baal Shem Tov's father was the only one in the world studying Torah, and the whole world was being sustained off his back. In that merit he was given a son who would light up the entire world- the Baa Shem Tov.

Before the Baal Shem Tov's greatness was revealed, he had many opponents who vehemently disagreed with his approach of Chassidut, so much so, that they would throw rocks at him when he would pass, and totally rejected his approach. The city of Broide was one such city. Although many of its inhabitants were righteous and G-d-fearing, they rejected the Chassidut approach of the Baal Shem Tov.

The wife of the city of Broide's Rav believed in the Baal Shem Tov's greatness already then, and so came to the Baal Shem Tov, crying, and requesting that he pray for her that she be blessed with children. The Baal Shem Tov promised her that she would beget a male child next year, and sure enough a year later she gave birth to a baby boy. Upon the birth of her son, the city of Broide's Rav's wife requested that the Baal Shem Tov be the Sandak (be granted the honor of holding the baby during the circumcision) at her son's Brit.

A great tumult ensued in the city of Broide, as most of the townspeople were strongly opposed to the Baal Shem Tov as they believed his approach to be an inappropriate path to serve Hashem, and that he should therefore be given no public honor.

On the Shabbat before the Brit, the city of Broide's Rav's wife, stood up in the synagogue and made a public vow that she would not permit anyone other than the Baal Shem Tov to be the Sandak of her son, making this vow in such a manner that it could not be annulled. With no other choice, the townspeople reluctantly accepted the Baal Shem Tov to be the Sandak, and sent a messenger to notify him.

The Baal Shem Tov was highly aware that whenever one comes to approach a great deed, there is a great Yetzer Hara in the form of haughtiness, both before the performance of the deed and after its performance. If one submits to this Yetzer Hara of haughtiness, they lose everything they strived to achieve. Many good people perform acts of Tzedaka and study Torah, but when they submit to the haughtiness that enters their hearts, Hashem refuses to live with them 'in the same basket'- Hashem cannot live with haughty people, and distances Himself from them.

Now, the city of Broide was a city of Lithuanian Jews who were opposed to Chassidut. The Baal Shem Tov was concerned that the city of Broide's Rav's wife forcing the townspeople's hand to have the Baal Shem Tov as Sandak may, G-d forbid, give him feelings of haughtiness. The Baal Shem Tov was therefore in a great predicament as to how he should proceed. That night the Baal Shem Tov's students saw the Baa Shem Tov crying in great anguish. When they asked him why he was crying, he explained to them that he was greatly distressed as he feared that haughtiness may enter his heart. The Baal Shem Tov's students attempted to comfort and dissuade him from the thought, but to no avail.

The following morning, the morning of the Brit, the Baal Shem Tov decided that he would go to the Brit. A horse and wagon were rented for the journey, and the Baal Shem Tov took the wagon-driver's seat and drove the wagon himself to Broide. He did this in order to break his haughtiness by performing the lowly task of driving the wagon.

Everyone waiting at the Brit was stupefied to see that the wagon-driver was none other than the Baal Shem Tov himself, and the lengths to which he had gone to break his character trait of haughtiness.

The Baal Shem Tov, due to his great humility, merited that the day of his passing was the same day as David Hamelech's passing- on Shavuot- the day of the giving of the Torah.



It is well known that the Baal Shem Tov in his beginnings was a simple person, before his light became revealed to the world.

The Baal Shem Tov started out as a healer- People would come to him with various ailments, and he would advise them which medications to take, and thereby earned his living.

This profession didn't always provide a steady income, and one time the Baal Shem Tov was not able to make ends meet and didn't have sufficient funds to purchase food for Shabbat. He proceeded to knock twice on the window of a random home, and turned back on his way, saying to himself that everyone must perform Hishtadlut (personal effort) for one's livelihood, but the amount of Hishtadlut that he himself required was not very much, two knocks on a window suffice.

The Baal Shem Tov only managed to take a few steps on his way before the homeowner came rushing out. The homeowner asked the Baal Shem Tov why he had knocked on his window, and when the Baal Shem Tov explained to him that he was in poverty and wished to perform Hishtadlut for his livelihood, which he assessed that for himself would be two knocks on a random window. Upon hearing this, the homeowner provided the Baal Shem Tov with funds for Shabbat.

