

# Derech Ha-Rif

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

For the Torah portion of Semot | Volume 57 | 25 Tevet



## First Shabbat Meal

**"And Moshe grew up and he went out to his brothers and saw their suffering (Shemot 2:11)."**

**A Person Who has Patience Can be Victorious over the Evil Inclination and Subjugate it and Every Difficult Thing**

One of the things which every Jew must work on within themselves in this generation is patience. That which the mind will not achieve, time will; patience is one of the most important things for a person to have in the present time. If a person does not work on their patience, their life will not really be life. In this week's portion, we see that the Torah tells us that Moshe grew up and he went out to his brothers and saw their suffering. However, our holy rabbis teach that we should not read the word as *besivlotam* - their suffering, but *besivlanutam* - their patience.

He saw that Bnei Yisrael were very patient during the enslavement which they suffered in Egypt. Despite all the harsh and evil things that Pharaoh did to them, with initiatives which pained and oppressed them in the harshest and most downgrading ways, they conducted themselves with patience rather than acting hastily. Hashem saw how they accepted everything upon themselves with patience and had mercy on them.

The Gemara (Eiruvin 54b) tells of how Rabbi Pereda had one student who had difficulty understanding and would not comprehend anything that he was taught until it was repeated to him four hundred times. One day, Rabbi Pereda needed to go somewhere. He sat down and began to teach this student the given material four hundred times, as they did every time, but on this occasion, the student did not understand. Rabbi Pereda asked him, "Why is today different?"

The student explained that since he knew that Rabbi Pereda needed to leave, he had been afraid throughout their studies that he would depart at any moment and was therefore unable to concentrate. Rabbi Pereda instructed the man to concentrate and began to teach him another four hundred times! A Bat Kol (heavenly voice) rung out and said, "Which option do you prefer: Four hundred years can be added to your lifetime, or you and your entire generation can merit a portion in Olam Haba (the world to come)?" Rabbi Pereda responded that he preferred the latter. The Bat Kol responded that he would receive both rewards.

We see a tremendous concept from this story. During the time of Rabbi Pereda, there were people who conducted themselves improperly and did unfitting things, yet the patience of Rabbi Pereda caused everyone in his generation to merit, even those who acted wrongly. A person who has the strength to be patient carries immense power with which they can overpower and be victorious over the Yetzer Hara (Evil Inclination) and anything difficult which they encounter. There is nothing which can withstand the might of patience.

The Gemara (Eiruvin 13b) also recounts how Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel contended for three years over the issue of whether the Halacha accords with Beit Shammai or Beit Hillel. In the end, a Bat Kol went out and announced: "Both these (the view of Beit Shammai) and these (the view of Beit Hillel) are the words of the Living G-d (i.e., both are true Torah), but the Halacha accords with Beit Hillel.

"The reason for this is because Beit Hillel were calm when insulted, and not only this, but they would state Beit Shammai's words before expressing their own views. They were particular not to rule on matters of Halacha until they had first heard the logic behind Beit Shammai's position. A person who argues with another does not have the patience to hear the other side, but Beit Hillel listened to the reasoning of Beit Shammai before stating their own thinking. A person must strengthen themselves with all their might in being patient, with the power of patience a person can be victorious and ascend, gaining access to all forms of holy things.



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## Soul Of the Rif

A person must know that life is filled with worries and they need to determine which worries actually require them to be concerned and which do not. There are matters in life which Hashem will resolve. One must know the extent to which one is supposed to make one's own material effort in dealing with the challenges of life. The level to comprehend the precise extent to which one should take such efforts can be attained only through the purity gained by the study of Torah. The Talmud teaches that in regard to that which is concealed from you, you should not seek (Chagiga 11a). The moment a person experiences something which is hidden from them, namely those things which are exclusively for Hashem, then any worry about that thing is in vain. It is a form of worry which cannot solve any problem and cannot achieve anything. Worries of such a type only lead a person to despair and dependency.





## 2nd Shabbat Meal

**"And Bnei Yisrael became fruitful and teemed, increased and they became very mighty, and the earth became filled with them (Shemot 1:7)."**

**A person needs to be like the Earth and accept everything from Hashem with love and joy.**

Within this week's portion, we find written: "Bnei Yisrael became fruitful and teemed, increased and became very mighty, and the earth became filled with them (Shemot 1:7)." The question must be asked, if the Jewish people became fruitful and proliferated, surely it is obvious that the earth became filled with them. There are no unnecessary words in the Torah, so if it was the case that the Jewish people "teemed and increased", what is the meaning of the phrase, "and the earth became filled with them?"

This can be explained based on the following: Our Rabbis teach that the reason that the earth is called "Eretz" is because when Hashem created the world, everything had [proverbial] windows. For example, the ocean has proverbial windows, as it has matter both below it and heavens above it. Only one creation accepted the judgment upon itself and was happy, and this was the ground. The ground rejoiced because it reasoned that if this is what Hashem wants of me, I am happy to do it. The reality that people trample on me is a cause for joy, as this is what Hashem wants, and I accept it.

This is a tremendous concept, namely, that a person needs to accept whatever Hashem does with love. The verse states that, "And Bnei Yisrael became fruitful and teemed, increased and became very mighty, and the earth became filled with them." In Egypt, the Jews did not complain to Hashem at all, but rather accepted everything with great love and with joy. "And their cries ascended to Hashem (Shemot 2:23)," they cried out in prayer but did not complain. "And the land became filled with them," for just as the earth accepted its judgment without complaint, the earthliness filled Bnei Yisrael and gave them the strength to accept Hashem's will.

**"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh or that I should remove the Jews from Egypt (Shemot 3:11)?"**

**A person who wishes to bring people nearer always needs to act in a straightforward and humble manner.**

When Hashem asked Moshe to go and redeem the Jewish people, Moshe responded: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh or that I should remove the Jews from Egypt?" In effect, he said, 'Master of the Universe! There is an enormous problem. You are asking two things of me. The first is that I speak to Pharaoh, and the second is to take the Jews out of Egypt. These are two distinct matters; to converse with Pharaoh, one needs to argue and contend with him. Whilst bringing the Jews out of Egypt requires soft words which bring different people to unite and bring opposite sides together. A person who argues with others cannot unify others, whereas someone who unites others is unable to argue.'

Moshe required a unique promise of a rarified ability from Hashem. On the one hand, he would need to argue with Pharaoh and challenge him, yet simultaneously he would need to conduct himself with humility in order to bring Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. He would require humility because going down to the level of people who are on a low level requires simplicity and humility. This was necessary in order to redeem Bnei Yisrael. Until Moshe received the guarantee of these two strengths from Hashem, he was unable to go and redeem them. There is a key concept which people must know: A person who wishes to bring people closer together must conduct themselves with humility and simplicity, one who fights with others cannot bring people together.



## Q & A with the Rif



### Question:

**Dear Rabbi, my husband returns from Yeshiva every evening and shares with me that he finds his studies difficult, and he thinks that he is not successful in Torah. Moreover he refrains from saying a Chiddush (Torah novelae) or Torah thought as he is concerned that he will be disgraced because of it. This causes me terrible pain and also makes my daily activities more difficult; how would you advise me to deal with this?**

### Answer:

**Heaven forbid. A woman must strengthen her husband and give him self-confidence and encouragement. She should ask him to share his new insights with her, and she should give him a glowing look upon hearing them. By doing so, she empowers, strengthens and builds him. She should encourage him with good words and push him to share words of Torah, this is a fulfillment of the adage that "the wisdom of women builds their homes (Mishlei 14:1)." The highest level of a woman encouraging her husband is doing so in regard to his Torah, if she does so, her reward will be repeatedly doubled.**







## 3rd Shabbat meal

"Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians (Shemot 3:22)."

When Hashem promises reward for a Mitzva, it will reach a person in the end, one just needs to wait patiently.

In this week's portion, we read, "Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters." Hashem commanded the woman and children to borrow clothes, gold and silver from the Egyptians so that they will have these when they leave Egypt. The question must be asked, why did Hashem only command the women and children to borrow clothing, why did He not command the men also, for they too require clothing. What is the reason why this matter was specifically instructed to women and children?

The Torah tells us: "The clothes upon you did not wear out, nor did your feet swell these forty years (Devarim 8:4)." Rashi and our holy Rabbis comment on this verse, that when the Jewish people were in the desert, their clothes did not wear out. As a person grew, their clothing lengthened to fit them, if a person became fatter, their clothing widened. However, this was only true for the clothing that people wore, but not for those which they kept stored in their closets. The clothing which remained in storage became worn out, whilst those that were worn remained whole. It is necessary to know a key concept. The Torah tells us that when Pharaoh chased after the Jews, he brought all of his clothing and jewelry with him. Additionally, the Torah relates that only the Egyptian men pursued the Jews, but not the Egyptian women. When the sea spat out the Egyptian males, the Jewish males retrieved their clothing and took them to clothe themselves. Hashem wanted the women and children to also have clothing, however the female Egyptians' clothing was not brought down to the sea. The Jewish men could not request the beautiful clothing of the Egyptian men because they would not agree to lend them to the Jews; they would keep them to chase after Bnei Yisrael at the Yam Suf (Red Sea).

Therefore, Hashem commanded that the women and children borrow clothing from the Egyptians at this point in time, since their clothing would not be provided later by means of the Egyptian pursuit. The men would acquire expensive clothing from the soldiers who had died after chasing them.

We see from this how all that Hashem says and promises is fulfilled, including even to the last and finest detail. Many times, a person may ask, 'I have done so many things for Hashem and He has promised that whoever does this Mitzva will receive this and that, and I have still not received the thing which the Torah has promised.' A person must wait, because there is nothing hidden or concealed from Hashem, whatever the Torah guarantees that a person will attain, will ultimately come their way, down to the last detail. Hashem promised that Bnei Yisrael would leave Egypt with great wealth, and He ensured that all were privy to this; the Egyptians who pursued them did not bring clothing of women and children so He arranged that these would be provided nonetheless.

He promised that everyone would be satisfied and happy, so in the critical moments between the plagues and the Jews' departure from Egypt, Hashem said "And a woman will ask of her neighbor" - the women would go and borrow, and the men would not, since their provision was already arranged to be collected at the Red Sea.

It is necessary to be aware of a key concept: There are many matters in which one does not see quick outcomes, and one needs to wait to see results. A person must have patience. That which the mind does not produce, time will produce, and this will atone for all.

A person needs to wait until the end of the journey in order to see the complete fulfillment of that which Hashem and the Torah have guaranteed, everything is upheld.

Our Rabbis teach (Avoda Zara 5b) that a person does not fully comprehend the teachings of their teacher until forty years later. Only if one waits, can one expect to see the fulfillment of something related earlier; all of the confusion will eventually be resolved, with everything coming round full circle.

A person must work on their patience, for when a person lacks patience, they can lose their world. When a person has patience, then they will endure the waiting with calm and joy, and eventually they can be assured that they will merit the fulfillment of that which they waited for.

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## Treasure charms from the Rif



There is a known incident which involved the holy Tzadik, Rabbi Shlomo Leib from Leczna. One day, one of his followers who was a noted philanthropist approached him in tears. The follower explained that in recent years he had become increasingly depressed, to the degree that he felt that he no longer felt had the strength to continue living. The Tzadik listened to his disciple and instructed him to be particular to host a respectable feast to celebrate the upcoming Rosh HaChodesh (start of the new month). He explained that if he did this, he could be assured of the fulfillment of the contents of the following saying in the Rosh HaChodesh prayers: 'May this Rosh HaChodesh mark the end of all our troubles, may it mark the start of the redemption of our souls.' This practice in fact originated from Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Rabinowicz of Peshischa, known as the 'Yid HaKadosh' (the 'Holy Jew'). He explained that anyone suffering from depression should have a Rosh HaChodesh feast. Indeed, if one has the time and means to do so, it is virtuous to host a Rosh HaChodesh feast and thus beautify Hashem's name in public.





## The fourth Post Shabbat meal



## Storys from the Rif



Below is a story involving the great Tzadik, Rav Zushe from Anipoli. Rav Zushe lived in the town of Anipoli alongside the main Rabbi of the town, such that there were two Rabbis living in the town.

Rav Zushe was always happy, and anyone who met him, would recall that they had never met someone who exuded so much joy. Rav Zushe was also an exceptionally poor person, he lived an impoverished life and endured numerous challenges throughout his life; yet despite all this, he was the happiest person one could know.

The other Rabbi who lived in Anipoli was tremendously wealthy, lacking nothing, yet despite this, was a somber individual. It is told that this Rabbi was always down, feeling resentful and unsatisfied with life. One day the Rabbi approached Rav Zushe's home in the depths of night, so as not to be noticed by the townspeople. He gently knocked on the door and was warmly greeted by Rav Zushe. The Rabbi explained that he wished to discuss a personal matter with Rav Zushe, for this reason, he had come at night so as not to be noticed. Rav Zushe smiled and assured the Rabbi that he could speak in confidence. The Rabbi explained that he wished to ask Rav Zushe a question. He explained that despite his wealth, his wonderful family, and his prominent standing within the community, he was always upset. In contrast, he was conscious that Rav Zushe did not enjoy the same prominence nor wealth, but he was always happy. The Rabbi asked Rav Zushe how he could always be joyful; whilst he, the Rabbi, was always down.

Rabbi Zushe responded as follows: He explained that one month prior, Moshe, the wealthiest man in the town, had made a wedding for his daughter. Rav Zushe asked the Rav if he had been invited to the wedding. The Rabbi responded that he had indeed been invited to the wedding. Rav Zushe then asked the Rav when he had been invited to the wedding, to which the Rav answered that the wealthy man had sent his assistant to invite the Rabbi one week before the wedding. Rav Zushe then asked the Rabbi, about what had occurred when he was invited. The Rabbi explained that he had glanced at the guest-list which the assistant had been holding and had seen a long list of guests. He had noticed that his name was the sixteenth or seventeenth name on the list.

Rav Zushe asked rhetorically what the Rav had thought when he realized that his name was not the first on the guest-list.? Rav Zushe, without waiting for a response, said that the Rav had likely been angry, saying to himself that he ought to have been first, in line with his position as the town's Rabbi. Rav Zushe continued to explain that the Rav's resentment had led him to resolve to arrive at the wedding two hours late. Moving to the wedding day, Rav Zushe explained that the Rabbi's decision to arrive late, meant that he had missed the Chuppa and arrived during the dinner. Therefore, when he walked in, everyone was eating and failed to notice him; therefore, he had felt slighted that the community failed to give him the respect he deserved.

Rav Zushe continued to take the Rabbi through his experience at the wedding. He explained that upon arriving he had tried to find a chair to sit on, but all those in the center of the hall had been taken; he had therefore been forced to be satisfied with a chair at the side. The Rabbi had sat there for half an hour surrounded by people enjoying themselves, whilst he had remained unnoticed, and had become increasingly bitter, and disillusioned by the joy around him. After half an hour, Moshe, the wealthy man, began circling the room and spotted the Rav, and apologized that he had been sitting at the side. He immediately brought him to sit on the top table, however, when the Rabbi arrived there no-one stood, as they were fully engaged in the joyous affair and didn't notice him.

Throughout the entire episode, Rav Zushe explained, the Rav had become increasingly miserable. He had become bitter that he hadn't been offered one of the honors at the Kiddushin (wedding ceremony), and that he had sat at the side of the hall and that everyone had been too busy to appreciate his prominence as Rabbi of the town. In fact, even upon being sat at the top table, he didn't even have a plate to eat from and only looked at everyone else eating around him, raging with discontent. At a certain point, Moshe had noticed that the Rabbi didn't have any food and had hastily requested some food for him from the kitchen. However, the food had been all but finished, such that the Rabbi had had to eat the scraps left at the end. This had spurred further thoughts of resentment; he couldn't believe that he had been treated like this despite his standing as the town's Rabbi!

Rav Zushe paused and then continued to relate the Rabbi's experience at the wedding. He said that despite the woeful wedding, the Rabbi had still harbored some hope. He realized that the meal was coming to an end, and had thought that surely, he, as Rav of the town, would be given the honor of reciting one of the Sheva Brachot during Birkat HaMazon (Grace after the Meal). However, Birkat HaMazon came round and sure enough the Rabbi was not given an honor. Rav Zushe turned to the Rabbi and concluded that once the wedding had concluded, the Rabbi had returned home furious, unable to believe the entire town's audacity! He had begun cursing the groom and the bride and their relatives and indeed everyone he could think of. Moreover, once home, his wife had angered him, as had his children, and the resentment the wedding had triggered, remained with him today, one month later.

Upon concluding his recall of the Rabbi's experience, Rav Zushe proceeded to recall his own very different experience of the same wedding. He said that upon being invited by Moshe's messenger he was overjoyed to be able to partake in the prestigious event. He immediately ran to Moshe and expressed his appreciation at being invited and offered to help him prepare for it in any way possible.

On the day of the wedding, he had arrived one hour early to ensure that he could assist the bride and groom in any way possible. When the Chuppa came around, seeing as he had been there so early, he officiated and ensured that all ran smoothly. After the Chuppa, he had been led to the most prestigious position on the top table and provided with a sumptuous plate of food, fit for a king. Sure enough, when it came time to say Birkat HaMazon, he had been honored with reciting one of the Brachot.

Rav Zushe looked at the Rabbi and summarized the difference between them. He said that in life the Rabbi felt an entitlement to be respected and prioritized by others, and as such, when people's conduct towards him didn't match up to his lofty expectations, he felt bitter. However, he, Rav Zushe, felt no such entitlement, and therefore saw whatever he received as a blessing, beyond that which he deserved. He would accordingly rejoice at all that he received and praise Hashem and others for everything. This, explained Rav Zushe, was the difference between him and the town's Rabbi.

Although the above events transpired in the 1700s in Anipoli, its message is just as prevalent today in 2024. In this generation, anyone who always desires and demands things for oneself, harboring lofty expectations of what he deserves, will experience great anguish and misery like the Rabbi above. They will feel that others intentionally fail to give them the respect they deserve and will become infuriated. However, one who actively seeks to give of himself by helping others, and forgoes honor, will be joyful. Indeed, the Talmud states that 'anyone who flees from honor will be pursued by honor; whilst honor will flee from anyone who pursues it (Eruvin 13b).' In this light, it is essential to appreciate that one who forgoes things and gives of himself will receive tremendous blessings from Hashem.

To conclude, it is imperative that one dispel any expectations or demands. Rather, one should focus on giving of oneself, because constantly waiting to receive from others, will just lead one to become resentful, and failing to attain happiness in life. Only giving and appreciating that which one receives can lead to true happiness.

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