

# Derech Ha-Rif

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

For the Torah portion of Vayechi | Volume 56 | 17 Tevet



## First Shabbat Meal

“And they should be called with my name and my fathers’ names (Bereishit 48:16).”

The proper form of prayer and Mitzvot is taught only in the Torah.

At the beginning of the Parsha, Yaakov blesses his two grandchildren, Menashe and Ephraim. He expresses his wish that his descendants be named after himself, his father and his grandfather. Yaakov’s choice to mention his name before those of his father and grandfather is slightly surprising. We would expect that Yaakov would honor his parents and mention their names before his own?

To understand Yaakov’s intention in doing so, we refer to the Mishna in Pirkei Avot (1:2): “On three pillars the world stands: On the Torah, Divine service and kindness.” These three are the primary foundations of the world, and each was embodied by one of the Avot. Avraham embodied kindness, Yitzhak Divine service and Yaakov Torah study. Technically, then, kindness should have been mentioned first, then Divine service and finally Torah Study. However, the Mishna chose the order to teach us a great lesson: First and foremost, the basis of everything is the Torah. One may serve Hashem through prayer or perform kindness, but if it is not according to the teachings of the Torah then it is not the way it should be done.

That is why the Mishna first mentions the pillar of Torah and also why Yaakov put his name before those of his father and grandfather. For one to pray properly and do kindness properly, they must follow the directives of the Torah, not simply do what they believe is the way it should be done. The Mishna in Pirkei Avot 1:5 emphasizes this point in different words: “An ignorant person cannot be pious.” Without knowledge of what the Torah defines as correct, whether one is righteous or not, one cannot reach the status of piety, or know how to pray or practice kindness.

Without an understanding of how to pray, namely of where in the prayer one can pause, or speak and so on, a person will almost surely err at some point. The same goes for giving charity; to whom to give and how to give, does one’s family have preference over the poor and Torah institutions, etc? Indeed, many other practical questions are critical to the proper practice of the Mitzvah. Torah study is a prerequisite for the proper practice of Mitzvot and that is why Yaakov placed his name before those of his father and grandfather in blessing his grandchildren.

כדאי הוא דבי שמעון  
לשמור עליו בשעת הרחוק

רק 5 בקות קריאה כיום  
ואתם שותפים מלאים בסיום הזוהר העולמי

לקריאה בקבוצות שקטות  
בווצאפ נא לשלוח הודעה למספר

054-2231166



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



## Soul Of the Rif

Nachat (satisfaction) and happiness come only from the holy Torah, these feelings only come from observing the Shabbat and other Mitzvot. Further, it can only come from the performance of good deeds, connection with Hashem and faith in Him. They do not come because of the conditions that a person makes before taking positive actions; in fact, any form of condition making which a person does or places within their own head is a stumbling block. This stumbling block will weigh down on them like an excessively narrow shoe, which causes pain until a person takes it off. When a person puts it back on, it will cause pain once again. Such a matter does not bring a person to true happiness, it brings them to an imagined happiness. A person needs to ensure that their wealth is from the study of Torah, the performance of Mitzvot and good deeds, rather than things which one thinks are causes for happiness. Indeed, it is possible for one to fool oneself into believing that a certain reality is happiness, although it is in fact a fantasy and devoid of joy. This allusion of happiness enslaves a person to being in pain. Much or even a majority of a person’s life is spent getting to something which they think is happiness, and in the end, when they reach it, it causes them satisfaction for only a few moments or a few days. Once this has passed, they seek the next condition, to be pained by it and deal with it, and through this, a person gets nowhere.





## 2nd Shabbat Meal

**"And Yaakov called to his sons, and he said 'Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days' (Bereishit 49:1)."**  
**Three things which a person must keep in mind when reciting Shema**

If one looks at the text of the Shema prayer, it is noticeable that the letter 'Ayin' appears once, whilst in the sentence 'Baruch Shem' it appears twice. The Gemara in Pesachim (56a) tells us that when Yaakov called his sons before his passing and wanted to reveal to them the events which would take place at the end of time, the Shechina (Divine Presence) departed from him. Yaakov perceived that the Shechina may have left him due to one of his descendants bearing a deficiency, he therefore asked them "which of you has questions of Hashem?" They answered him, with Shema Yisrael - "Listen Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, He is the One and Only. Just as there is One Hashem in your heart, there is only One Hashem in our hearts." Yaakov then responded saying "Baruch Shem - Blessed is the name of His Glorious Kingdom forever."

When Moshe shared the Torah, he only said 'Shema Yisrael,' and it is for this reason that we only recite the line of 'Shema' aloud, but say 'Baruch Shem' silently. As mentioned earlier, the line 'Shema Yisrael' contains the letter 'Ayin' once, whilst the line 'Baruch Shem' includes this letter twice, to make a total of three 'Ayins.' What is the significance of these three letters?

We can answer based on the teaching of the Tanna (Mishnaic Sage), Akavya ben Mahallalel in Pirkei Avot (3:1). He taught: "Look into three things and you will not come to sin. Know from where you came, and to where you are going, and before Whom you are destined to give judgment and reckoning. From where have you come? From a putrid drop. And to where are you going? To a place of dust, worms and maggots. And before Whom are you destined to give judgment and reckoning? Before the King of Kings, Hashem."

Therefore, when we say 'Shema Yisrael' and pronounce the first letter 'Ayin' which comes in the word Shema, one should have intent for the concept of needing to give accounting for one's actions before Hashem, this is the unity of the upper world. When a person says 'Baruch Shem,' and pronounces the 'Ayin' of the word le'olam, they should have in mind the question of where they have come from.

When saying the final 'Ayin' of the word 'va'ed,' they should keep in mind the fact that they are going to a place of dust, worms and maggots. A person who keeps these things in mind when reciting Shema achieves a great Tikkun (repair) for their soul.

אתם מקדישים

ואנחנו מפיצינו!!

עלות השתתפות בהפצת  
50 ספרים - 300 ש"ח  
לפרטים 052-510-6-510

## Q & A with the Rif



### Question:

Dear Rabbi, when I was younger my parents ran a shop in my name, and gave me the profits. Now that my father has died, my mother says that I need to return half of the earnings. Am I obliged to help her by doing so or not?

### Answer:

If your father gave the shop to you as a present, then this is an entirely different matter. If he did so on account of tax purposes and other things, then this is a different matter. If your mother is asking on account of Kibud Av Ve'eim (the Mitzvah of respecting one's parents), then one must always help her, as the Torah says, "Honor your father and mother (Shemot 20:11)." Honoring one's parents is an incredibly powerful merit. You should seek to go beyond the letter of the law to help her on account of this Mitzvah, and the reward will be repeatedly doubled.







## 3rd Shabbat meal

**"And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt...and the days of Yaakov...and the days of Yisrael came close to death (Bereishit 47:29)."**

**The souls of Yaakov and Yisrael are the strengths of every Jew to deal with any difficulty, whether it comes from far or near.**

The holy Torah tells us in this week's portion: "And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years, and the days of Yaakov, the years of his life were seven years and one hundred and forty years. And the years of Yisrael drew near to die (Bereishit 47:28-29)." Throughout the Torah, we find that he is sometimes called Yaakov and sometimes Yisrael. After Hashem changed Avram's name to Avraham, using his original name is a sin, but in the case of Yaakov, the Torah uses both names after the event. When recounting the passing of Yaakov, the Torah tells us that "the days of Yisrael came close to death," it does not say "the days of Yaakov," but the days of Yisrael.

It is necessary to be aware of a key concept, namely, that every Jew must be aware of the essence of the Jewish people, every Jew has one soul. Hashem took six hundred thousand souls and divided them, each Jew has one. Every Jew comes to this world several times through Gilgul (transmigration) in order to repair that which comes in the next world. If a person does succeed in their mission during their first Gilgul, they come again to complete their task in their second Gilgul. If it happens that they fail on their second time, they come back for a third time, etc. Therefore, a person must make efforts to determine their weaknesses in this world; the areas in which they feel weakness are the ones in which they will find their Tikkun (repair). Having done this, a person must exert themselves to fulfill their tasks. If a person does not do this, they will need to return through Gilgul in order to repair that which comes in the next world.

Sometimes a person who is strong in the performance of a particular Mitzvah acts in such a manner because the soul of a Tzaddik who was particular about that Mitzvah burns within them. For example, a person who is particular to give Tzedakah (charity), is led to do so because the soul of Tzaddik who was scrupulous in this Mitzvah burns within them. For every specific Mitzvah, the Tzaddik who is connected to that Mitzvah burns within the person and serves to enhance their soul.

The same is true, G-d forbid in a negative direction. If a person commits sins, the soul of an evil person burns within them. Often, one sees good and respectable people, who are beloved and suddenly change their path, and they become entirely different. It is not understandable why they have done this, a person can be a Tzaddik one day with beautiful Middot (character traits) and the next day, become a Rasha with evil Middot. The reason for this transformation is because the soul of a bad thing burns within them, causing them to be entirely different people.

On account of this, David said "All of mankind is deceitful (Tehillim 116:11)," meaning that within every person, the dishonesty of an evil soul can exist. In effect, the person would be lying, and not truly good. A person therefore needs to guard themselves and ensure that an evil soul does not enter into them. It is also necessary to be aware that if they merit for the soul of a Tzaddik to burn within them, at the moment they become angry, all of the good souls leave them. Based on this, a tremendous concept can be suggested and explained. Yaakov, who was an exceptionally holy person, had one soul placed in him when he emerged from his mother into the world. This soul was the soul of Yaakov. However, when he battled with the angel of Eisav, and became strengthened to the degree that he could battle with angels as well as humans, his soul ascended higher, and Hashem gave him something exceptional. No one has two main souls which have a tangible presence within their body, but Hashem gave Yaakov just this. He gave him not one soul with the intermittent interference of other souls, but rather the two complete souls of Yaakov and Yisrael. When Yosef the Tzaddik vanished, and Yaakov did not know what had happened to him, and thought that he had been consumed by a wild beast,

he felt tremendous pain. Yaakov underwent a deathlike experience, as the soul of Yaakov departed from him, and only the soul of Yisrael remained. On account of this, the Shechina (Divine Presence) was not with him for twenty-two years. When the tribes told him that Yosef was in fact alive and ruling over Egypt, Yaakov saw the wagons which Yosef had sent, and his spirit was immediately revived (Bereishit 45:27). Our father Yaakov merited to undergo the resuscitation of the dead in his lifetime, as the soul of Yaakov returned to his body, he once again lived with these two souls, Yaakov and Yisrael. Our holy Rabbis comment on Yosef's entry into the house of Potiphar to perform his work. According to one view, he wanted to sin with the wife of Potiphar, and then the likeness of his father appeared to him in the window. The soul of Yaakov which had departed from Yaakov was attached to Yosef and helped him to withstand all the challenges which he faced.

It is important to know that when a person dies and arises again, they cannot die and rise again for a second time. Therefore, when Yaakov died in this week's portion, our Sages explain that he did not die. The Gemara (Ta'anit 5b) and the Zohar (Teruma 174a) say that just as his children are alive, he too is alive. If so, we understand that when Yaakov died, it was in fact only the soul of Yisrael which died. Therefore, the Torah says "And the days of Yisrael drew near to die," the Torah highlights that this was the soul of Yisrael, however, the soul of Yaakov remained whole and complete, just as his children did not die, Yaakov himself did not die. The soul of Yaakov could not die again, since he had already died and been resuscitated. One cannot die and be resuscitated twice, therefore our father Yaakov is alive and did not die. Based on this, it is possible to explain that there are two paths within Avodat Hashem (the service of G-d). There are matters which a person deals with on their own in the short term, and there are other things a person deals with on a long-term basis in life. There are enemies which a person battles with face-to-face, and there are other enemies one strikes by firing arrows at them from afar. The same is true in regard to matters of sanctity. For some things, a person needs to pray and make their Avodat Hashem into something attached to themselves in order to be saved. However, there are other things for which one needs to ask from a distance that their prayers be effective so that a person be saved from that which they find difficult. Likewise, in regard to the study of Torah, there is Torah study which protects a person during the day in the constant battle which they fight with the Yetzer Hara (Evil Inclination), and there is Torah study which protects a person from things which come from afar. As Yaakov said to Yosef, "And now I assign to you one portion more than to your brothers, which I wrested from the Amorites with my sword and bow (Bereishit 48:22)." Targum Onkelos translates this to mean "with my supplication and my prayer." The proverbial sword is one form of prayer, fighting against people who are physically near to a person. The bow is a type of prayer against enemies who are located far away and other things which threaten to damage a person. Likewise, it can be explained that the name of Yaakov is a holy and strong name with which to battle with the Yetzer Hara which fights against a person in a face-to-face manner. The name Yisrael corresponds to the war with the angels and the angel of Eisav who are found in heaven above. The name Yaakov did not die but remained in this world to help the Jewish people deal with difficult things and be saved from them. The name Yisrael died and ascended to the heavens to fight against the Satan and the angel of Eisav.

The teaching of our holy Rabbis is known that the study of the Zohar and other hidden forms of Torah are like a bow. (Thank G-d, we study these in the community of Shuva Yisrael. During the days of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, a rainbow was never seen. The same is true of the study of Zohar, it entails firing arrows against the accusers and other evil things which have not yet reached a person, and are currently far away. The study of Zohar stops them and sweetens them. Studying Halacha and Mussar (works of self-improvement) in one's Avodat Hashem gives a person the strength and ability to deal with the Yetzer Hara which is nearby.

## Treasure charms from the Rif



*It is known that Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli understood the verse, "But I, through Your abundant love, enter Your house; I bow down in awe at Your holy temple (Tehillim 5:8)" to be informing us of our ability to be saved from the Ayin Hara.*

*Rabbi Shimshon elucidated the verse, explaining that there are three times during which one's prayers to be saved from the Ayin Hara will be received. The first is the moment at which the Synagogue Sanctuary is opened; the second is the moment the Sefer Torah is lifted following the Synagogue Torah reading, and the final moment is during the special Priestly prayer.*





## The fourth Post Shabbat meal



## Stories from the Rif



Rabbi Yaakov Ahuhatzzeira, also known as the Abir Yaakov, was a leading Moroccan Rabbi; he personified sanctity and reached a greatness that we can fathom. Below is the relatively unknown story of how he came to be born.

Rabbi Yaakov's father, Rabbi Masud Abuhatzzeira, was a tremendously pious scholar renowned throughout all of Morocco. He served as Rabbi of the prestigious Moroccan city of Tafilat, and merited to be married with a lovely family.

One day, a married couple appeared before Rav Yaakov's Beit Din (Rabbinic Court). The couple, who had not yet merited children, were undergoing marital tension and they had decided to approach the Beit Din to request a Get (Divorce Document). Rabbi Masud sat and listened to both the husband and wife, and upon hearing what they had to say, he consented and instructed the Beit Din to write a Get for the couple. The Beit Din complied and wrote a Get for the couple; the husband handed it to his wife and the divorce was finalized.

Some time passed and news reached Rav Masud that the woman was having a hard time following the divorce. He and his wife noticed that she was spending most of her time at home, crying and suffering from all that she had been through. The Rabbi's wife contacted the lady and urged her to come and spend some time at their home. The woman willfully consented and came to the Rabbi's home, grateful for the company. She sat with the Rabbi's wife for one hour, which turned into a second, until eventually nighttime approached. The Rabbi's wife turned to the lady and encouraged her to stay with them for the night. She explained that she shouldn't feel hurried to leave bearing in mind the intensely traumatic experiences she had undergone; rather she should spend the night with them. Sure enough, the woman agreed and stayed the night.

That same evening, Rabbi Masud had a dream. He dreamt that that very same woman who had endured the divorce in fact harbored a unique potential within. He dreamt that she in fact contained an incredibly bright light of potential which she had to give birth to. The dream concluded with Rabbi Masud being instructed to marry this lady and thereby facilitate the birth of the unique gifted soul.

Rabbi Masud awoke totally bewildered by what he had been told; he was terrified by the dream's connotation. What would he do? The prospect of asking his beloved wife to agree to let him take this woman as a second wife mortified him! Therefore, he resolved to keep the dream secret and say nothing.

The next morning came around and the lady was still having a hard time. Rabbi Masud's wife discerned her pain and encouraged her to remain with them for the day to give herself a break and assist her recovery. The woman gladly accepted her offer and stayed with them once again. That evening the Rabbi's wife went to sleep and had a dream. She dreamt that Heaven was instructing her that an awesomely great soul was destined to emanate from the very same woman who had stayed with them. The dream concluded with Heaven entreating her to give her husband permission to take her as a second wife, because only this lady could bring such a lofty soul down into this world.

Rabbi Masud's wife awoke in the morning and immediately related the dream to her husband. She explained that although she understood that the dream seemed strange, she wanted him to marry this woman. Rabbi Masud was astounded, but after he regained his bearings, he informed his wife that he had experienced the same dream the previous night but had been too embarrassed to inform his wife of it. However, if they both had the same dream, then it must be fate, and he would ask the woman to marry him.

Rabbi Masud and his wife approached the woman and related the dreams to her and informed her that they believed Heaven willed for her to marry Rabbi Masud. The woman listened carefully, and was overcome by the request, being completely humbled by all that she heard. She was a righteous and humble person and felt totally unworthy of being married to the great Rabbi, however after taking some time to absorb the information, she agreed to marry Rabbi Masud.

The Rabbi and his wife were overjoyed to be able to fulfill the will of Heaven. They set the wedding date for three months to comply with the Halachic requirement that a divorced woman must wait three months after divorce before remarrying (Shulchan Aruch - Even HaEzer 13:1). The wedding date came, and Rabbi Masud joyfully took the woman as a second wife. Upon getting married, the woman speedily became pregnant, bearing the future Rabbi Yaakov Ahuhatzzeira.

From the moment that Rabbi Yaakov was born, the loftiness of his soul was evident. Indeed, Rabbi Masud perceived this and thrust all of his sanctity and spiritual virtues into his prized wonder son. Rabbi Yaakov seemed to bear a latent purity, which his father further nurtured through learning Torah with him; he became imbued with an absolute devotion to Hashem.

It is recorded that on one occasion a messenger came to visit Morocco from Eretz Yisrael to collect funds for the needy. The individual paid a trip to Rabbi Masud's home to seek funds. During their meeting, Rabbi Masud recognized that the messenger was in fact a Talmid Chacham (scholar) of note. As such, Rabbi Masud asked the man to remain for the time being and teach Torah to his son, Rabbi Yaakov. The man who had journeyed all the way from Yerushalayim, perceived a certain greatness in Rabbi Yaakov, and therefore agreed to the Rabbi's request and began to teach Torah to the young boy.

Below is a further story illustrating Rabbi Yaakov's first interaction with Eliyahu HaNavi (the prophet):

When Rabbi Yaakov was ten years old, Morocco was struck by a terrible famine. The land was bereft of food and water, with people unable to locate even a tiny grain of wheat. The situation was so hopeless that even the household of the great Rabbi Masud found themselves without any food whatsoever.

Rabbi Yaakov approached his mother and asked if there was anything he could eat. With tears in her eyes, she responded that they had no food in the house. Rabbi Yaakov responded that he would go out and seek some food for the family. His mother, although appreciative of the gesture, explained that all their workers had scouted the entire town and simply couldn't find any food. Undeterred, Rabbi Yaakov relented and said that he would go and try and find some food. He concluded with the single request, requesting that if he did return with some food, his mother would provide him with a few coins as a gift of thanks. His mother, seeing her son's conviction, nodded her agreement.

Rabbi Yaakov left the house and began his search. Almost as soon as he had started, he spotted a gentleman riding on a donkey, sporting large sacks on either side. The man was all sooty, disheveled, and unkempt. Not put off by the man's appearance, Rabbi Yaakov approached him and asked who he was. The man responded that his sacks contained flour and he was traveling through the town, trying to find someone to sell them to. Rabbi Yaakov couldn't believe his ears! He told the man to follow him back to his house, assuring him that his mother would certainly purchase the flour from him. The man agreed and followed the ten-year-old Rabbi Yaakov to his home.

The two went to Rabbi Yaakov's home and when they arrived, Rabbi Yaakov asked the man to wait outside, while he went inside to fetch his mother. A couple of minutes later, Rabbi Yaakov came outside with his mother, yet to his surprise the man was nowhere to be seen. All that remained was the donkey tied to a tree, with the sacks of flour on its sides.

Rabbi Yaakov and his mother were absolutely taken by this episode; they were simply awestruck by the mysterious series of events. They related what had happened to Rabbi Masud and asked him to explain the unusual episode. Rabbi Masud smiled knowingly and explained that the man had in fact been Eliyahu HaNavi. He explained that his son, Rabbi Yaakov, was so exalted that it had been only fitting for Heaven to answer his request for food via Eliyahu HaNavi. Indeed, the verse assures us that "He (Hashem) will do the will of those who fear Him (Tehillim 145:19)," and therefore Hashem saw to it that Rabbi Yaakov, who truly feared Hashem, would be answered speedily.

The below story highlights that even from a young age, Rabbi Yaakov truly was an exceptionally holy individual.

To receive the above and to join the great Rabbi's holy WhatsApp groups send a message to 052-5106510 