

Derech Harif

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

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First Shabbat Meal

The degree of a person who learns Torah and teaches it to others.

"Man is born to toil - le'amal" (Iyov 5, 7). Our Rabbis teach that the word le'amal is an acronym for l'ilmod a'l m'emat l'elamed- 'to learn in order to teach'. The Torah which one studies with the intention of transmitting it to others is special and has great power. The Mishna in Avot (2,5) teaches: "Raban Yochanan Ben Zakai received from Hillel and from Shamai. He would say- If you have studied much Torah- do not hold good to yourself, because it is for this which you have been created." The essence of man's creation is so that he shall teach his Torah to others, the Rabbis explain.

The Gemarah in Sukkah (49b) states: "What is the meaning of the verse (Mishlei) 'Her mouth she opened in wisdom, and a Torah of kindness is on her tongue'. Is there a Torah of kindness and a Torah that is not of kindness? Rather, Torah learned for its sake- this is a Torah of kindness; Torah not learned for its sake - this is Torah that is not of kindness. Alternatively: Torah that is learned with the intention of teaching it to others- this is a Torah of kindness. Not to teach it- this is a Torah that is not of kindness. And a person should know the degree of meriting the public and the continuity of the learning when he teaches others. Here we have found in the book of Bamidbar (Bamidbar 10, 29) "And Moshe said to Chovav son of Reuel the Midianite, father-in-law of Moshe- We are travelling to the place which G-d has said 'It, I shall give to you'. Go with us and we shall do good to you. For G-d has spoken good on Israel. And he said to him- I shall not go. For my land and to my birthplace I shall go. And he said- Do not leave us now, since it is for this reason, that you have known our camping in the wilderness and you shall be as eyes to us. And it shall be, when you shall go with us. And it shall be that good which G-d shall do with us, we shall do good with you." And it is difficult- Why did Moshe urge so much and request of Yitro to go with them to the Land of Israel. For everything has a great implication at the time and for the coming generations, and if so, there is an obligation upon us to understand and educate ourselves what is the reason of Moshe's request and urge of Yitro to come with the nation of Israel to the land of Israel.

Rather it is possible to elucidate and say- it is brought in our Rabbi Chatam Sofer (Part 1, page 17) that he raises a difficulty based on that brought in the Prophet (Yeshaya 2,1): "The matter which Yeshaya son of Amotz foresaw on Yehudah and Yerushalaim. And it shall be at the end of days, established shall be the Mount of the House of G-d at the head of the mountains, and raised from hills, and all the nations shall flow to it. many nations shall go and say- Let us go and ascend to the Mount of G-d to the House of the G-d of Yaakov and he shall teach us of his ways, and we shall go in his paths, for from Tziyon the Torah shall emerge and the word of G-d from Yerushalayim."

Based on this, our Rabbi tzvkv"l elucidates that

Moshe Rabenu thought he will merit to enter the Land of Israel, and if he would have entered- the remediation would have been complete, and 'death has been destroyed for eternity' and there would have been no more death in the world and there would have been the resurrection of the dead. And then all the proselytes shall be the students that to them they will teach the Torah of G-d, for the nation of Israel will be at the time of the complete redemption at the loftiest of degrees 'And the land shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d'. Therefore Moshe Rabenu stood firm with a determined request of Yitro that he shall go with them to the Land of Israel, so that he shall be the head of the proselytes, and the head of the students to receive the Torah from the nation of Israel, after the great remediation that Moshe Rabenu thought there would be with his entry into the Land of Israel, for then the proselytes will be the students who shall study the word of G-d from the nation of Israel. And based on these holy words it shall be understood- For our holy Rabbis have elucidated that the linguistic form of the blessing of the Torah is "who gives the Torah" (Noten HaTorah). And they have raised the difficulty why "who gives the Torah" and not "who gave the Torah" (Natan HaTorah)? Rather our holy Torah is eternal and in every single moment we are obligated to study and to teach it and therefore it is said in the form "who gives the Torah". But we must strengthen a great foundation concerning the entire understanding and cleaving to the Torah. For, every Jew has a source from which the root of his soul draws sustenance, and draws the holy Torah, and every Jew is obligated to cleave to his rav, and therefore from many generations ago they were particular "set yourself a rav" (Avot 1, 6) and around the great ones of Israel many congregations gathered and straightened alongside them, to drink thirstily that which was given abundantly to the great ones of Israel, and every generation, had "each generation and its seekers".- The generation that are the students drew their strength from their seekers, which are their rabbis. And when a Jew fulfils the words of our Rabbis and sets himself a rav, a person must extract himself from doubt and to sanctify "set yourself a rav" in his Torah, in his way of life and his customs. And it is the advice of the evil inclination to come every morning afresh, to enter like "little foxes destroying vineyards" in order to mislead and corrupt the path of "each generation and its seekers" and of "set yourself a rav". And therefore we must be careful and to live concentrated on the path in which light shall fall with no superfluous words, and so the fulfilment of our holy Torah continues and shall continue, from Moshe received the Torah at Sinai and passed it on to Yehoshua, and so from generation to generation your faithfulness is great" until the coming of our righteous Mashiach, and all "who break a boundary shall be bitten by a snake"



Soul Of the Rif

There are many matters a person feels bad about, feels not good about, feels damaged,, feels that bad matters have occurred to him. However, when the bad matters are analysed, we find those bad matters: "From your afflictions, I shall heal you" (Yirmiyah 30, 17)- from those very matters which appear as afflictions- healing have emerged, great things have emerged.

For any matter which is negative, look where the positive is. In every negative sequence of events there is a great positive inside- just know how to see it and how to find it.



2nd Shabbat Meal

Hardship and Punishment are Proportional to The Sin.

At the beginning of the Parasha, concerning the drowning of the Egyptians Yitro proclaims "I now know that Hashem is the greatest of all deities, because in the manner they plotted, He came upon them." The meaning of this verse, Rashi explains, is that as the Egyptians attempted to annihilate the Jewish People by drowning all their newborn males, fittingly they were punished in that they were drowned in the Red Sea.

This passage holds a fundamental lesson of life. Every man's life is filled with trials and tribulations. One who wishes to rid of his troubles must analyze the nature of the trouble to determine its source; the form of the trouble reveals the sin that caused it. Every sin that one committed resembles the punishment that ensues. In our context: the Egyptians drowned the Jewish male newborns in the Nile, therefore they were punished by drowning. Revealing the sin that causes a particular suffering and rectifying it, removes the reason for the suffering and it thus vanishes.

When one observes, analyses and comes to understand the essence of one's pain, that is, to identify the sin or error that resembles the sin in nature, when they rectify their behavior and repent, Hashem brushes away the suffering. That Hashem put such a system in place—that the punishment is a reflection of the sin that caused it—is a great act of kindness. This is the meaning of the passage in Tehillim (62:13), "And to You, Hashem, is kindness, in that you repay man as his action."

This lesson must be emphasized time and again: when one is afflicted by difficulties or suffering, they should search for sins that they committed which resemble their affliction in nature. One who is insensitive and offends others will in turn be victim of similar behavior. One who thieves will be robbed himself. And, one who harms others in any manner will endure precisely similar experiences. Alas, when they recognize their fault and repent, Hashem will forgive and the afflictions that were once their will vanish.

"You repay man as his action," is a fundamental lesson of life: that the suffering (punishment) is a reflection of the sin that caused it.

The Merit of Torah and Good Deeds mustn't be used for Mundane Matters.

The Parasha recounts Yitro's travel to the Jewish encampment in the desert. As he arrives to the camp, he announces his arrival to Moshe with the words, "Behold, it is I, your father-in-law, Yitro who is heading your way." Yitro's statement is particularly surprising, as everyone—the entire Jewish Nation and obviously Moshe—knew that Yitro was Moshe's father-in-law. What was Yitro teaching us in his deliberate choice of words?

In truth, there is a very valuable lesson to be learned here. At times, for example, a person seeks to obtain a rebate on a purchase they wish to make and they will come forward with their request in the merit of the Torah that they represent (as a Rabbi or scholar) or good deeds they have done at some point in time. As expressed in an anecdote in Chovat Halevavot (Gate of Yichud Hama'ase, Ch.5) in which, a pious individual attempted to purchase a certain item. When the seller perceived who was standing before him, he kindly offered the item free of charge, as due respect to him being such a respectable Rabbi. Without hesitation, the pious individual left the store and explained that he had come to make a purchase in money and not in the merit of his Torah study or good deeds. It's practically prohibited for a true Tzaddik to obtain any benefit in the merit of their Torah study or righteous deeds. Similarly, Yitro, who was a great and very respected personality, realized that the Jewish Nation would grant him very much respect and fulfill his every request if he were to present himself as the Yitro that was respected the world-over. Thus, he arrived at the Jewish encampment with the declaration that he was arriving as 'Moshe's father-in-law'—and nothing more. He wished to communicate that he didn't want to be respected for the great deed he had come to perform (converting). He categorically refused to derive any benefit from the Torah or good deeds he was about to perform. It's not uncommon for one to employ the stature of Torah or righteous actions to obtain a rebate or some benefit of sorts, but that is improper. It's essential to know this. One must be careful never to employ the merit of the Torah or Mitzvot to obtain a benefit of any sort. That could be achieved or obtained with money or negotiation skills. The sanctity of the Torah must be safeguarded and its value shouldn't be employed for mundane matters.

Q & A with the Rif



Dear Rav, I have lived with my mother z"l my entire life for 30 years together with my husband and children, as my mother was a widow. Due to us living together, there were tensions and I didn't always honour her, many times I also caused her to be upset. Now, after she has passed away, I am very saddened, and I don't know how to give her Nachat (peace, satisfaction) and to atone for what I have done.

We are sure that on the other hand you also caused a lot of Nachat to your mother. You lived with her, you did many good things for her. Look at the positive side of all the good things you did to your mother.

A person naturally always searches for the negative in order to enter a state of depression, and the evil inclination makes the negative appear great, and makes the negative appear strong. Look at the positive which you did for her, that you lived with her and helped her and sacrificed yourself and gave of yourself, which is an extremely great merit.

And regarding those matters you believe you caused her to be upset - you should do for the uplifting of her soul, go to her grave, apologise, ask for matters for the uplifting of her soul, and so you shall sweeten it. But you should not live a life of 'I have distressed her, I have upsetted her' - see also the positive. There is much positive which you did for your mother in your life - put this in front of your eyes.

Not only the matters that you think negatively - It is the advice of the evil inclination to only apply negativity, for then a person has only negative, and then a person falls and is crushed and loses everything.

Therefore, apply positivity, and regarding the negative - ask forgiveness and do for the uplifting of her soul and thus B'ezrat Hashem the way will be good.



3rd Shabbat meal

“And the sound of the shofar would continue and become very strong- Moshe would speak and G-d would respond to him with a (great) voice”
In every act of Torah study and every Torah novelty, Moshe Rabenu is reminded of the Torah which he forgot and his strength is awakened.

In this week's Torah portion we read about the giving of the Torah- the most exalted moment when HKB"H descends from Mount Sinai and gives the Torah to the Jewish people. And the holy Torah says: "And the sound of the shofar". In this verse there are great and lofty secrets that cause a great trembling just to think of this verse. The holy Torah tells us that Moshe Rabenu ascended to Heaven to bring the Torah down and was there for forty days and forty nights. Our holy Rabbis say (Shemot Rabbah 41,6) 'Rabbi Abahu said- All forty days that Moshe did above, he would study Torah and forget'. In those days HKB"H would teach Moshe the Torah and at the end Moshe Rabenu would forget everything. So, for forty days Moshe Rabenu would learn and subsequently forget everything. On the fortieth day HKB"H gave to Moshe Rabenu that Torah, which he studied and forgot, as a gift. And HKB"H gave to Moshe Rabenu the Tablets of the Covenant- the Written Torah. We must ask some difficult challenges on this. We are not discussing a children's game here- HKB"H himself, Master of The Universes, sits with Moshe Rabenu, teaches him the Torah and Moshe Rabenu forgets. First question: If HKB"H teaches him and Moshe Rabenu forgets- HKB"H should give him memory so that he should remember, why does HKB"H teach him and he forgets? A further question: HKB"H is eternal and never-ending, how does Moshe Rabenu forget? It should stay with him! If so, how does HKB"H teach him and Moshe Rabenu forgets? And on the fortieth day HKB"H gives the Torah to Moshe as a gift- why did he need to receive it as a gift? "Ve'ata- And now, Im shamo'a tishme'u- if you shall surely heed my voice, and guard my covenant, you shall become a treasure to me of all the nations." Matters of Torah and Mitzvot that come to a person need to be seized and performed in completeness without thinking. We find that before the giving of the Torah Moshe Rabenu stands and says to the Jewish people: "Ve'ata- And now, Im shamo'a tishme'u- if you shall surely heed my voice, and guard my covenant, you shall become a treasure to me of all the nations." And Rashi (ad loc.) says- 'If you shall now accept upon yourselves, it shall become sweet to you henceforth, for all the beginnings are difficult'. These words are very difficult- why does Moshe Rabenu use a duplicated linguistic form and say Im shamo'a tishme'u, and also we should ask: what is the explanation of "Ve'ata - And now"?

Rather, it is possible to explain and say a great foundation. HKB"H makes an offer to the Jewish people to receive the Torah. When the Jewish people heard Moshe Rabenu's offer to receive the Torah, they could tell him- give us some time to consider whether it is beneficial for us, whether it is worthwhile for us to receive the Torah, or give us some more time to consider if it is worthwhile to fulfil it. But Moshe Rabenu tells them: "Ve'ata - And now"- it is advisable that that this moment, now, you receive the Torah, and then "Im shamo'a tishme'u- if you shall surely heed my voice"- accept it immediately and then "you shall surely heed". This is like a person who loves someone, and that someone is speaking to him. Whatever he tells him, that person will immediately accept without thinking. This is the degree and the greatest matter, and that is what Moshe Rabenu tells them: "Ve'ata - And now"- now, immediately receive the Torah, and if you receive the Torah immediately, then- "Im shamo'a tishme'u- if you shall surely heed my voice"- it will be easy for you also in the future to heed, to accept, to do everything out of happiness. However, if a person says they want to think about what they have accepted. Then when he begins to fulfil the matters, it becomes more difficult for him- he has more difficulty in fulfilling the matters. If he accepts the matters immediately, it becomes easier for him to continue to accept the matters. Our Rabbis have

compared this to a person who takes a bar of iron. When the iron is hot, it can be bent in any shape or direction desired. But when it has already cooled down, it is difficult to fold it and bend it to any side desired. And that is what Moshe Rabenu is telling them: "Ve'ata - And now"- now, immediately, I am offering you the Torah. Take it, accept it, and then shamo'a tishme'u "you shall surely heed"- you will have strength to heed, and in future you will also have strength to heed. But if you wait, then you should know that all the beginnings are difficult, all the matters a person would like to accept upon themselves afterwards are difficult, and so a great foundation must be known- when a person is offered a matter of Torah, a matter of a mitzvah or a good deed- a person should immediately seize the opportunity and take the mitzvah in completeness. So too, when a rav approaches a student and tells him to accept a matter upon himself- if the student immediately accepts it upon himself- it is easier for him, shamo'a tishme'u- he heeds, he accepts, so everything is comfortable for him and good for him. However, if he would like to consider and it takes him time, he floats the thought up and down and considers- he loses the root and the strength, and afterwards he enters times and periods when it is difficult for him to fulfil what his rav requested of him. Therefore, in any matter of a mitzvah, a person should act in accordance with "a mitzvah that comes to your hand - do not let it go" (Mechilta, Shemot 12, 7) and as we have found with Avraham Avinu when HKB"H commanded him over the binding of Yitzchak- immediately he rises early in the morning to action the matter with the heat of the Torah and the mitzvah- for when a person is in a state of being heated, he has great power. Therefore, Moshe tells the Jewish people "Ve'ata - And now"- now accept the mitzvot and the Torah. Not soon, when time will pass, and you will request more time to consider, because then, the whole degree of the Torah and the Mitzva will have decreased. "And the sound of the shofar would continue and become very strong- Moshe would speak and G-d would respond to him with a (great) voice", A person who finds novelties in the Torah causes thoughts of repentance to enter other people. Perhaps we can further analyse the verse "And the sound of the shofar would continue and become very strong- Moshe would speak and G-d would respond to him with a (great) voice"- the shofar symbolises repentance- when the shofar is blown it is the time of repentance as we see on Rosh Hashanah that even if HKB"H sits on a throne of judgement- it is brought in the Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 29,10) 'And on Rosh Hashana they take their shofars and blow before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and he stands from the throne of justice to the throne of mercy and is filled with mercy over them'- HKB"H hears the shofar blows and passes from the throne of justice to the throne of mercy. "And the sound of the shofar was"- when does the sound of the shofar enter people's hearts and their hearts contain thoughts of repentance? It is when "Moshe would speak"- when Torah scholars speak, "and G-d would respond to him with a (great) voice"- then the thoughts of repentance are awakened- "and the sound of the shofar was". If so, when a person sits, studies Torah, and finds novelties- there are people in other places- "and the sound of the shofar was" is awakened in their hearts- an awakening to repent. And when we see a person sitting alone at home, and suddenly thoughts of repentance begin for him with no apparent reason- where do they come from? From "Moshe shall speak"- the thoughts of repentance come from a Torah scholar who sits and studies and awakens the Torah of Moshe, which he forgot during the forty days, and then "G-d would respond to him with a (great) voice" and this is "the sound of the shofar would continue and become very strong".

Treasure charms from the Rif



Let us strengthen a great foundation of livelihood. A person who sees that the state of his livelihood is not comfortable and wants to strengthen his livelihood- should take in his hand two candles and say that these two candles- one is for the uplifting of the soul of Rabbi Elazar Ben Charsom and the second candle is for the uplifting of the soul of Hillel the Elder, and should set aside some coins for charity and say: Master of the Universe- May it be your will that the merit of the awesome Tzaddikim: Rabbi Elazar Ben Charsom who was very wealthy and Hillel the Elder who was poor and destitute, shall protect me and avail me with livelihood and success in an honourable manner, and I shall be spared of the curse of "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread" (Bereshit 3, 19). So, a person should be careful to do so, and it is brought that this matter has a great power and a great segula- that a person will merit that day to livelihood and great success.



Harav Moshe Galanti, Hamagen

The following story is told of the great Tzaddik, Rav Moshe Galanti, who lived in Tzfat during the time of the holy Ar"i. Rav Moshe was an exceptionally righteous person, and was known as well for his generosity. Once, he came to the holy Ar"i, to which the latter remarked: "You are a righteous, pious and G-d-fearing person. You possess all the good traits possible - but you possess all the good traits possible, but you have one negative trait.

"And which one is that?" he asked. "There is theft in your possession. It can be seen on your face that you are a thief." Upon hearing those words, Rav Moshe became very distressed. "Can it be that I've stolen? My entire life revolves around charity and righteous deeds. Why does the rav say that I've stolen?" To which the holy Ar"i answered: "You steal. There's theft in your possession."

"Where?" insisted Rav Moshe.

"Go -search!" replied the holy Ar"i.

Rav Moshe, who was righteous and also very wealthy, went to his office and searched amongst all his papers. "Where have I committed theft? Why does the rav believe that I've committed theft?"

He meticulously reviewed his personal accounts, but could find no error, nothing that could be considered theft.

So, he called all his employees, set a pile of money on the table and, pleadingly, announced: "Whoever feels I am stealing money from them is free to take from this money before you. Do not feel embarrassed. Whoever feels that I owe them money should come forward and take as they see fit."

Touched by the Rav's words, they responded unanimously: "The Rav is righteous. The Rav is correct. Heaven forbid, the Rav has never taken anything from us." Suddenly, an elderly woman got up, reached for the bowl and took two coins. "These are mine. These are rightfully mine." Rav Moshe was shocked at what had just transpired, but made no remark, rather he returned to the Holy Ar"i for an explanation.

As he stood before the Holy Ar"i this time around, the holy Ar"i glanced at him, and announced: "Now, there's no trace of the sin of theft on your face. Now we can see that you are not a thief."

"What happened?" Asked Rav Moshe, "tell me."

"All your workers are good," replied the Ar"i, "but that woman works better than the rest. She's old, but an expert at what she does. The salary you pay her is not commensurate with her experience; she deserves more - two coins, more - than you currently pay her. As long as you owed.

her that addition in her wage, the sin of theft tainted your face. Now that you've rectified that, its trace has been cleansed."

This story teaches us a critical lesson in our personal finances. We can sometimes think that we've paid someone their due wage, but in truth they are worthy of more.

We give them a hundred dollars and they accept it without ... but in truth they are worthy of being paid 120. They may not ask for it, but if you withhold it, what is rightfully their's- you may be guilty of pseudo-theft, this can be the case even if you agreed upon that specific amount beforehand, but as situations can change, you should be meticulous, if the person still thinks you owe them, and you are in doubt whether they are correct, then you have identified a point that may be considered theft.

One must be meticulous in all personal matters, especially monetary ones, as a soul may be obliged to reincarnate in order to return a small coin which they took from their fellow; for the minutest of sums a person may be destined to reincarnation. One must be careful and meticulous in order for all their actions to be holy and pure. When one treads the path of Hashem, strengthening, elevating themselves and keeping to the true service of Hashem, especially through challenging times, Hashem personally sees to their success (Siyata Di'shmaya).



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