

# Derech Ha-Rif

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

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## First Shabbat Meal

With G-d's assistance, we are now commencing Sefer Devarim. The great Rabbi, Rabbi Elazar Rokeach, author of the 'Maaseh Rokeach,' taught that Heaven contains 955 Reki'im (layers) until the Throne of Glory. Moshe, before he died, desperately sought to enter the Land of Israel, but to no avail. The Rokeach brought the Midrash which records that Moshe made the following request from Hashem: "I have one request from You. I wish for all the Heavenly Gates to be penetrated, such that all can perceive that You are One, with Your greatness being revealed to all (Devarim Rabbah 11:8)."

The Ma'aseh Rokeach taught that Moshe wrote Sefer Devarim 36 days before his passing. Moreover, Sefer Devarim contains 955 verses, with each verse serving as a key to ascend to the Throne of Glory. It is known that the Angel Matatron has the ability to reach the entrance to the 995th Heavenly Gate, but no further. Only one who reads Sefer Devarim can reach the 995th Heavenly Gate. This is implied by the verse, "Take words (Devarim) with you, and return to G-d (Hoshea 3:14)." The verse informs us that if one internalises the 955 verses of Sefer Devarim and surpasses the 955 levels to reach Hashem's Throne of Glory, they will be able to truly return to G-d. Each time one reads Sefer Devarim, one is accompanied by Moshe, being gifted spiritual heights through Moshe's merits.

It is known that Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak of Peshischa, known as the 'Yid HaKadosh,' would take a Sefer Devarim everywhere, to read from it at every opportunity. People would ask him why he would focus on Sefer Devarim in particular, to which he would answer that it was the most powerful Sefer to build one's ethical character. Moshe wrote Sefer Devarim for every generation; his assistance shines down on every generation.

The Holy Sefarim teach that Hashem gave us the first four books of the Torah directly, however, the fifth book was given to us by Hashem, via Moshe. Thus, although it is wholly part of Torah She'bichtav (the Written Torah), this Sefer's human involvement, positions it midway between Torah She'bichtav and Torah She'b'al Peh (the Oral Torah), serving to connect the two. Indeed, the commentators explain, that if not for Hashem having given us Sefer Devarim via Moshe as an emissary, we would not have merited to understand Torah She'b'al Peh. It is Torah She'b'al Peh, through which we can hope to develop a greater love for Hashem, and this is only possible due to Sefer Devarim.

The Tzaddikim (righteous ones) explain that once we commence reading Sefer Devarim, we see salvation in every facet of our lives. Indeed, they forbade us to bring even one Sefer into prison, not even a Siddur. However, one of the people there brought us a Sefer Devarim from the Beit HaKnesset. From then on, we would spend every moment, from morning till night, reciting Sefer Devarim with tears flowing. After some time, the authorities allowed us a further Sefer, and it was in this Sefer which we found the above teaching of the Rokeach that Sefer Devarim's 955 verses correspond to the 955 layers in Heaven. This was a wondrous sign for us.

Thank G-d, since then, there are over 100,000 people who read Sefer Devarim each Shabbat. Rav Yoel Teitelbaum from Satmar, taught that once 22,000 people accept to sanctify something upon themselves, that thing will slowly spread amongst the Jewish people. Thus, if we have a committed band of 22,000 people who read Seder Devarim each Shabbat, it will create a pivotal shift in the world and give way to Hashem's Divine Flow of Light. We have therefore accepted upon ourselves, (albeit without a formal vow), to garner a further 100,000 people to recite Sefer Devarim each Shabbat before Rosh HaShanah to stimulate more bracha (blessings) in the world.



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## Soul Of the Rif

Many thoughts arise in a person's head, such as "I want this," "I want to do this," "I want to eat this," or thinking about a given topic or having an opinion on a given matter. If a person takes ten minutes to write all that occurs to them in that moment, without a program or preparation, one can discover their exact situation.

For a holy person, what comes up in their mind? Pure and holy thoughts. A person who is in an in-between state has medium level thoughts. A low level person has only selfish and earthly thoughts.

Therefore, once in a while, whether once a day or every three days, stop everything that you are doing. Spend ten minutes writing what occurred to you in that moment and you will know exactly where you stand, whether it be a spiritual place, an in-between place or a low place.





### The Great Power of Reading Sefer Devarim, Studying Torah and Prayer

Every Shabbat, when we finish reading from Sefer Devarim, spiritual elevation is felt and one's soul rises to a different place. The light of Sefer Devarim is a lighthouse for the entire week, when one feels empowered and strong during the week, this is from the great power of Sefer Devarim, which gives the soul the greatest power.

We think that the power which is felt in Sefer Devarim is both the power of Torah and the power of Tefilla (prayer) The Gemara makes a distinction between the power of Torah and the power of Tefilla. One passage in the Talmud (Bava Batra 116a) states: R' Pinchas bar Chama expounded: Anyone who has a sick person in their house should go to a Chacham and request mercy for the patient. A second teaching in the Talmud (Ta'anit 8a) says, "If you have seen a generation that the heavens are restrained like copper from letting down dew and rain, it is because of the lack of whisperers (i.e., the lack of prayer). What is his remedy? He should go to a devout person of the generation and increase Tefilla. A person with a patient in their house should go to a Chacham, our Rabbis say that this Chacham means a person who upholds a Yeshiva, and if a person has difficulty with their livelihood, the Gemara says that they should go to a devout person. Clearly, there is a difference between healing a sick person with the power of Torah and the need for income, where the power of a devout person can solve the issue. There are many explanations about the difference between a Chassid and a Chacham.

In any case, when we read Sefer Devarim, on the one hand one feels the power of a Chacham of the holy Torah, and on the other hand one feels the power of a Chassid of the pouring out of the soul and prayer. Therefore, if people are careful to read Sefer Devarim on Shabbat, they have the power of a Chacham of the Torah and the power of a Chassid, these two power will have a great impact on anyone who reads.

### "These are the matters which Moshe spoke to all of Yisrael" When a Person Does Teshuva out of Love, He stops the Effect of One Sin Causing another Sin

The words of holy Rabbis (Shemot Rabba 30:3) are known. They teach that in any case where the Torah uses the word, "these" this invalidates the earlier statements, they asked the difficulty, what did Moshe invalidate with his words, what did the opening lines of Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Bemidbar serve to invalidate?

Based on the Mishna (Avot 4:2), this can be answered. The Mishna states, "One sin leads to another," our Rabbis teach that through a person stumbling in one sin, this causes a further sin to come after, which in turn is followed by another sin.

For example, if a person lied, this dishonesty will cause something else, likewise, if a person steals, this will lead to something else. Let us ask, when will the effect of one sin causing another finally cease?

Our Rabbis shared an incredible concept, namely, when a person returns in Teshuva for the evil deeds which they have done, if they performed Teshuva out of fear and terror, the effect of one sin leading to another is not stopped. However, when a person performs Teshuva out of love for Hashem, then this effect stops. In this case, when Moshe rebuked the Jewish people before he died, they did Teshuva out of love, and this stopped one sin causing another. Therefore, the opening line of the book of Devarim, which says, "These are the words" comes to invalidate the preceding points, for from then on, one sin would not another for them. Thus, the term, "These" serves to indicate a stopping of the earlier effects of their sin causing subsequent sins.



### Q & A with the Rif



#### Question:

Dear Rabbi, I am a divorcee with a child and I am going out with someone who is a Kohen, I have already been doing so for some time. Is there any possibility to permit marriage for a divorcee with a Kohen in any way?

#### Answer:

Tzadika (righteous woman), do not do this. You should ensure that the Kohen guards his status as a Kohen, do not touch it. Kehuna (priesthood) is a holy thing, something elevated which must be left out of reach.







## 3rd Shabbat meal

### Tisha B'av

The Destruction of the Temple Created an Internal Lack in Every Person and we Need to Be Pained and Weep over This

One of the Kinnot [sad liturgical poems] which is engraved in the heart of every Jew is the one in which King David eulogised the Beit Hamikdash. He said, "By the rivers of Babylon, we sat and also wept when we remembered Tzion. We hung our harps on willows within it [Babylon]." David eulogised over the Jews who were exiled with Yechonya and other exiles to Babylon. The depth of these words needs to be understood, why did they weep specifically over the rivers of Babylon, and not in the synagogues or the Batei Midrash (study halls), or at least in the rooms of their houses, for every G-d fearing Jew should designate a small part of his home as a place of prayer to Hashem. Even one who has a small house should designate a table or a small chair, a small corner where he prays, weeps, sits and learns Torah, a place for Hashem.

Undoubtedly, during those exile, The Jewish people kept and designated a place for prayer in their homes, which for them was the gate to the heavens. Therefore, why did they sit by the rivers of Bavel and weep? There are several other questions which need to be asked. Which is the meaning of "We also wept," what does the term "also" come to include? What is the meaning of the willows there on which we hung our harps?

Perhaps this can be explained based on a tremendous concept. The navi (prophet) Yeshaya says "For the world will be filled with awareness of Hashem, as water covers the seabed (11:9)." Our holy Rabbis explain that when Hashem created the world, He made a third of it desert, a third water and a third inhabitable land. The Talmud (Shabbat 56b) says that at the hour that King Shlomo married the daughter of Pharaoh, the angel Gavriel descended and thrust a reed into the seabed, and a sandbank formed around it. On this bank the great metropolis of Rome was founded. It was Rome that destroyed Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdash. The Gemara teaches that on the night before Shlomo finished building the Beit Hamikdash, Shlomo was kept asleep by the daughter of Pharaoh. Hashem was particular with Shlomo for marrying her that night and it was then that Gavriel went and thrust this pole into the sea, leading to the foundation of Rome.

Our holy Rabbis teach (Megilla 6a) that between Rome and Yerushalayim, if one is in ruins, the other stands, and vice versa. Therefore, until the moment that Shlomo married the daughter of Pharaoh, all was balanced, but from that moment onwards, the division of three equal thirds became uneven.

Based on this, we can answer. Bnei Yisrael were in pain in exile and searched for a partner with whom to cry. The water was also in pain as the world was no longer split into three equal thirds, and this will remain so until the Messiah, because there is still Rome. The Jews and the oceans are the two parties in the world who are in mourning since the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. The ocean knows that when Yerushalayim will be rebuilt Rome will be destroyed, and the balance will be restored.

Bnei Yisrael searched for somewhere to weep, and none better than the sea was found to weep with them. Thus, the verse, "On willows within it we hung our harps" is understood. For it is known that the willow has neither test nor smell, and in exile, Bnei Yisrael reached a situation that we no longer feel the exile as we have houses and everything good. In the Diaspora, we do not have the pain and trouble we once had in exile. The story is told of a wealthy Jew who was in his house on Pesach and began to sing, "Next year in the rebuilt city of Yerushalayim." The non-Jewish maidservant asked him what he was saying, he told her that he was praying to G-d that there should be redemption in the coming year and he will be in Yerushalayim. She said, "If only this man's exile will be as it is, everything is good for him, and he is not enslaved."

Today, because of our many sins and our reality of living among gentiles, the enslavement is blurred, it appears that there is nothing lacking and all is good for the Jews. However, the depth of the redemption is that, "In inner chambers, my soul weeps (Yirmiya 13:17)." Hashem weeps about hidden things. We place Tefillin and fulfil Mitzvot as they once did, the same Tefillin which the Ari and all the Tzaddikim placed. But Hashem cries on the hidden things in the heart, in their hearts there was great connection to high places. Therefore, we cry with the sea which also weeps for the Destruction of the Temple, and our weeping must be on something internal which we lost due to the destruction.

Externally, it looks like the Jews lack nothing, as they have wealth and good. However, we must reach the internal point, that our souls weep. A person feels the lack in his heart and then his soul weeps. Feeling pain over the loss of the Beit Hamikdash is the great Tikkun (remedy) to bring us close to the building of the Beit Hamikdash.

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## Treasure charms from the Rif



This Shabbat we will restart the recitation of Sefer Devarim. Sefer Devarim contains 955 verses, and each verse corresponds to a Heavenly Gate. It is told that even the Angel Matatron is unable to gain entry to the final 55 Heavenly Gates. However, one who meticulously studies each of the 955 verses in Sefer Devarim is able to ascend to each of these Gates. Such a person personifies the verse, "Return Israel to Hashem, your G-d (Hoshea 14:2)," in that they can truly attain a closeness to Hashem.

In this way, all those who themselves learn Sefer Devarim, and encourage others to do so, bring the Jewish people closer to Hashem and bring the Redeemer closer.





## The fourth Post Shabbat meal

## Stories from the Rif

Our teacher, Rabbi Yosef Pinto, who is buried in the city of Ouarzazate, was an exceptionally exalted individual, about whom people said "he poured water on the hands of Eliyahu (Melachim II 3:11)."

It is known that the great heights attained by any Jew, are, on some level, a revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi, or a spark of Eliyahu. Eliyahu is revealed to the Tzaddikim and aids them in understanding the depths of Torah.

We are blessed to have visited the graves of many great Tzaddikim, and to have been accorded great levels of understanding while there. However, the light which we experienced while at the grave of Rav Yosef Pinto, was the most acute clarity which we have ever merited to experience.

Rav Yosef Pinto was the son of Rav Yaakov Pinto, who was himself an incredibly holy individual, recognised for having attained a uniquely profound understanding of the deepest areas of Torah. Rav Yaakov both lived and is buried in the city of Marrakesh. It is recorded that one day, Rav Yosef entered into his father's office and declared that the Kavanot (intentions) people had during Tefilla (prayer) were incorrect and needed to be modified. His father, Rav Yaakov investigated his young son's claims and discovered that alas he was correct. Yet despite this, he informed his son that the town of Marrakesh had maintained the same Kavanot, established by great Kabbalists, for hundreds of years, such that it would be improper for the city to change. However, he continued, and instructed his son, that since he had been able to reach such depth of understanding to appreciate the new Kavanot, he should relocate to another city, and set up a Yeshiva there, in which they would pray with the new ones. Thus, Rav Yosef gathered his students to the city of Ouarzazate. Henceforth, the city of Ouarzazate, and specifically his grave, became a fitting receptacle for one to draw from and reach tremendously deep levels of understanding.

It is for this reason, that we request for members of 'Shuva Yisrael' to publicise that his gravesite is holy land, and fitting for one to visit and draw from. Indeed, the Neshama (soul) of the deceased descends upon their grave on the eve of Rosh Chodesh and in the middle of the month. Moreover, the grave of a Tzaddik, also maintains a remnant of the Tzaddik's soul all year-round. May the depth which we have merited to gain from his grave accompany both us and our entire holy Kehilla (community).

### Rabbanit Simha Abuhuhatzaira

Today commemorates the death of our holy elder, Rabbanit Simha Abuhuhatzaira, the wife of our holy elder, Rav Meir Abuhatzaira. She was an exceptionally holy person, who served as an unwavering pillar of support for her husband. She was a great friend to all, and exuded her kindly influence on others, serving as the sun who illuminated our world.

Since the founding of Shuva Yisrael, our practice has been to conduct a feast to elevate her soul on the night following Tisha B'Av. The Holy Sefarim teach that during times of Middat HaDin (Strict Justice), commemorating the dead, arouses mercy in Heaven, evoking great strength to combat the Middat HaDin. Rabbanit Simha was an extraordinarily righteous person, whose merits shine on all of us to sweeten the Middat HaDin. Let Hashem sweeten all of our judgments and have mercy on us, such that we merit the true redemption.

Tisha B'Av is a day of Cheshon HaNefesh (introspection), on which we pray that Hashem will bring us to a true genuine self-accounting. Many times one conducts a distorted Cheshbon HaNefesh. This can resemble one counting one's money, who intentionally begins counting with the incorrect figure to result in an incorrect sum. However, on Tisha B'Av, Hashem gives us the guidance to conduct a just accounting. The Cheshbon must be underpinned by the verse "you shall be pure with Hashem, your G-d (Devarim 18:13)." Namely it should be underpinned by honesty and integrity.

The merit of Rabbanit Simha, whose influence has been so profound upon us, should be showered upon our entire community. Let all of us be imbued with mercy, love and joy, and embrace Tisha B'Av in all its grandeur.

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