

# Derech Ha-rif

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

For the Torah portion of vayekra | Volume 21 | 3 Nissan



## First Shabbat Meal

"All your Mincha offerings should be sprinkled with salt; you shall not refrain salt - the Covenant of your Lord- from your Mincha offering. On all your offerings you shall place salt."

One should rejoice in the tribulations that come upon them for they diminish judgment from upon them.

Our Sages teach that the term "Brit", covenant was employed in regards to both salt and tribulations; as the "covenant" of salt tenderizes and renders meat kosher, so too the "covenant" of tribulations softens a person's situation.

Virtually every person undergoes difficulties, challenges and painful situations in their life. oftentimes these situations are accompanied with wonderment and complaining about the situation that has befallen them; what have they done to deserve this?

One mustn't allow such questioning thoughts to enter their mind or affect their emotions. One must know that difficult situations that come upon a person are for one's good; they replace much more difficult situations that were meant to come upon a person, situations that would be too difficult to bear.

It is recounted about the saintly Hida, Rabbi Chaim Yossef David Azoulay zt"l, that there once was a person who would continuously complain to him about his bitter lot. The Hida took him into his Beth Midrash, sat him at a table and left. Shortly afterwards, the man put his head on the table and fell into a deep sleep. He dreamt that he was in the celestial court, witnessing a his personal judgement. There a procession of evil angels revealed all the sins he had committed and good angels presenting all his good deeds.

To his dismay, his sins outweighed his deeds and began to tip the scale in their direction. He became very anxious of the outcome, which was surely to be sent to purgatory.

Suddenly, the merits of his pain and suffering were introduced on the scale and their weight began tipping the scale in the direction. However, it stopped just short of tipping the scales conclusively.

The man began to cry regretting that he hadn't gathered more merits in the form of suffering which could be of use to him at the most critical moment.

The lesson of the anecdote is clear: challenges, tribulations, pain and suffering atone for harsher punishment and make up for one's sins. Therefore a person must rejoice if Hashem presents them with this opportunity as these remove all evil from a person.



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## Soul Of the Rif

We often find that people worry themselves, become greatly distressed and remain anxious, sometimes for years on end. They keep anxiously considering, and reconsidering, various alternative options- what they should do, what they should not, how they will cope, what will happen and what will not etc. This state of anxiety and self-doubt may last a very long time. Despite the issue's apparent appearance as a great issue, upon closer inspection it is often revealed that the issue itself is actually not that great at all, and is actually a much smaller issue than was initially thought. The person's constant fret and concern with the issue inflates the issue out of proportions and creates the illusion that the issue is far greater than it actually is.





## 2nd Shabbat Meal

**"He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying"**

In this week's Torah portion, when The Torah narrates Hashem's calling of Moshe, the word Vayikra (He called) is written with a small letter aleph. Many commentators query why the letter aleph is written small, and they explain that Moshe Rabenu's great humility lead him to write the word Vayikra with a small aleph as he didn't want to publicize his being called by Hashem.

The following difficulty presents itself: In the Torah portion Mishpatim we find the verse "He called (Vayikra) to Moshe on the seventh day from the midst of the cloud" (Shemot 24, 16) where the word Vayikra is written with a normal-sized aleph. Following the above explanation, why did Moshe see fit to write a small aleph only in the portion of Vayikra and not in the earlier portion of Mishpatim?

We may resolve this difficulty based on the following Gemara (Nedarim 38a) "Rabbi Yochanan said 'Hashem only rests his Divine Presence on someone who is strong, wealthy, wise and humble. We learn (that) all of these (traits are necessary) from Moshe.'" Our Sages teach that Moshe became wealthy from the excess material of the second Tablets of the Covenant-Hashem had instructed Moshe to carve the Tablets and keep the excess material which was an extremely valuable precious stone, and thus Moshe became wealthy.

Now, during the time of the portion of Mishpatim (which was chronologically before Moshe had carved the second Tablets), Moshe Rabenu was not yet wealthy and therefore did not possess any haughty thoughts. Moshe felt that he was neither wise nor strong, humble or wealthy, and so had no reason to feel haughty.

However, during the time of the portion of Vayikra, when Moshe Rabenu had already become wealthy from the excess material of the Tablets, Moshe Rabenu was concerned that he may be inclined towards haughtiness. He therefore wrote the letter aleph small, to protect against any tendency he may have towards haughtiness.

A person should learn from this to always assess themselves, introspect and determine if they have some deficiency in their character traits. They should not think to themselves that in the past they had good character traits. Rather, they should reassess themselves every day to determine their current state and what their future state is likely to be. Thus, they will be able to take responsibility over themselves, their actions and their behaviors.



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## Q & A with the Rif



### Question:

Dear Rav, I have now been in shidduchim for eight years. I was once almost married and the wedding was called off. Since then, every match I've been out with doesn't ultimately go through, and I can't get married. What can I do?

### Answer:

You should know the following important principle when it comes to shidduchim. I initially heard this principle was told over by the "Baba Meir" (Rabbi Meir Abuchatzera), and have subsequently found that this principle was told earlier by the Alshech Hakadosh. This principle is based on the Gemara (Sota 2a) which states that forty days before a fetus is created, a Heavenly Voice declares to whom that person will be matched.

The Baba Meir would explain the pattern of events that occurs in Heaven: The angels make matches suggesting perhaps this soul is fitting for that soul, and so on. Ultimately the match is finalized by the Heavenly Voice that declares which two people will marry. On Earth, a person needs to go through the process of meeting all those matches suggested by the angels before ultimately finding their match which the Heavenly Voice declared. Sometimes only one angel suggests a single match for a person, and sometimes there are many angels with multiple suggestions- Every match a person meets brings them closer to their ultimate match which is fitting for them.

Take heart, and do not lose hope!- It is written in Heaven when you will get married, how you will get married and to whom you will get married. Forty days prior to a fetus's creation, Hashem declares the ultimate match- Therefore, every match that a person advances through is meaningful and is a cause for great rejoicing.





## 3rd Shabbat meal

"A soul that will come to sin inadvertently regarding any of Hashem's commandments, and it will transgress one of these."

Some sins have repentance while others represent a critical breach and have no repentance.

The Talmud in Berachot (10a) recounts that Rabbi Meir Baal Haness was disturbed by local Jewish gangsters and prayed that they perish. His wife, Beruria, thought otherwise, and advised him that rather than pray for their harm, he should pray that they repent, as Tehillim states (104:35) "Sins shall be no longer on earth." The verse states sins not sinners... Sinners should repent, not that they should be eradicated. Rabbi Meir listened to his wife and prayed for the repentance of those gangsters, and sure enough, they repented.

There's support to the idea of praying for sinners to repent rather than perish from a verse in Mishlei (15:8), "The slaughtering of sinners is an abomination to Hashem, and the prayer of the righteous is His Will." Hashem does not will the destruction of sinners, rather their repentance. True character of one who is confronted with sinners is to influence and pray they repent rather than perish and disappear.

It is recounted about Shmuel Hanaggid, a great sage from the Golden Period of Spanish Jewry and intimate friend of the king of Spain, how he once accompanied the king on an evening stroll and was loudmouthed brazenly by a man from the streets how he, Rabbi Shmuel was funneling away the funds of the empire. The king was furious and ordered Rabbi Shmuel to punish the man and have his tongue cut out.

A year went by and Rabbi Shmuel and the king found themselves taking a nightly stroll together, when they came across a loud and rude man shouting at passersby. The king recognized him as the man who had once loudmouthed Rabbi Shmuel, and asked Rabbi Shmuel why he'd let him have his tongue. Rabbi Shmuel answered wisely: "See here, dear king, how he will behave when he notices our approaching." Sure enough, when he saw who was coming his way, the man began to emit sweet praises onto Rabbi Shmuel and the king... "It's not a praiseworthy act to cut out his tongue. That will teach him nothing. Rather, I made him understand his wrongdoing and changed his perception and action."

There are wrongdoers whose actions haven't breached the point of no return. They, as Bruria told her husband Rabbi Meir, are worthy of repentance and one should make an effort to pray on their behalf.

However, there are other sinners, who commit grave sins which breach the very delicate line of fundamental elements of the Torah.

As long as this line hasn't been breached, one should employ his power of speech to influence their betterment.

"Hashem called to Moshe, then spoke with him from within The Ohel Moed."

Moshe's mark of greatness was that he remained humble even if he maintained a very intimate relation with Hashem.

The very first word of this week's Torah portion has one of its letters miniaturized, the Alef of Vayikra.

All the commentators ask about the meaning of this miniaturization. The Torah is extremely precise with its form; so what is the true meaning of this miniaturization.

The answer is based on the fact that Moshe was in continuous connection with Hashem. Thus there is possibility that someone in his position may begin to develop arrogance, Heaven Forbid. Hashem tested Moshe.

The following parable transmits these ideas very well. There was once a king who raised one of his close friends and to the highest level of minister, however wanted to verify his trustworthiness. He paid very particular attention to how he held up his head, and if he gave off any air of arrogance. Ultimately, does he remember the days when he was more modest. Similarly, Hashem saw how Moshe remained humble.

It's often that when we bring someone close to us, the boundaries of respect are breached. Moshe was different: the more Hashem brought him closer to himself, the more humble he named.



## Treasure charms from the Rif



People often seek segulot for livelihood. But what is the greatest segula for livelihood? When you feel anger, and have good reason to be angry, but choose to stop and not give in to your anger- at that moment, whatever you request regarding livelihood, Hashem will give you. Therefore, everyone should work on their anger and improve their character traits, and thereby be blessed with abundant livelihood.





Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshil, The 'Ohev Yisrael' of Apta.

We may learn a great lesson from the following story of the Ohev Yisrael of Apta.

In the town of the Ohev Yisrael, there was a Jewish wine merchant, who, over a very brief period of time, unexpectedly became recognized as a great Tzadik. People would come to him with health and other problems, he would bless them, and invariably his blessings would be fulfilled.

The Ohev Yisrael wondered how, all of a sudden, this person became a Tzadik. It is well known that becoming a Tzadik requires years of hard work and effort improving oneself. How could a person possibly become a Tzadik so quickly? There is surely no magic pill to become a Tzaddik overnight!

Just as it isn't possible for a person to become wealthy overnight- For their is a great kabbalistic principle that anyone who becomes wealthy overnight will subsequently lose their wealth, and anyone who becomes poor overnight will ultimately return to their wealth. Only when a person builds up slowly, do they reach a stable steady state.

Our Sages learned this principle from the Sun which when it rises- rises slowly, and when it sets- sets slowly. Hashem does not bring about unexpected surprises- success and failure both come bit by bit. If you see a person failing and everything crumbling for them overnight, wait and see that one day they will rise up once more- for this was a short term unnatural occurrence, but Hashem leads the world in the way of nature in the long term. To find someone with enduring success, search for someone who has built themselves up bit by bit. If they fall once, this is just an anomaly, and they will rise once more.

Following the above principle, the Ohev Yisrael decided to investigate the matter of this person, who became a Tzadik over such an unnaturally short period of time.

The Ohev Yisrael went to this person's home disguised, so that he wouldn't be recognized, and asked if he could stay over as a guest. The person acquiesced to his request and the Ohev Yisrael stayed over for two days. During that time, the Ohev Yisrael keenly observed his host, but couldn't find anything particularly special about him.

He didn't appear to be particularly pious or learned. On the contrary, he appeared to be quite ordinary. The Ohev Yisrael approached him revealing his identity, and demanded that his host explain how he suddenly became a great Tzadik over such a short period of time.

The host responded to the Ohev Yisrael that he was a simple person, neither wise nor pious, but he did have great emuna in Hashem.

He recounted that he had had financial difficulties, and didn't have enough capital to sustain his wine business. His wife urged him to seek out a business partner to fund the enterprise, but he had refused, following the Mishna's teaching that 'the best of partners is the partner of Amalek.' The Mishna teaches that partnerships are inherently unsustainable, and often culminate in ruin and losses for all parties. It is better where possible, to avoid entering a partnership.

He told his wife that he didn't want to operate in partnership, but following his wife's protestations to the dire financial situation at home, he resolved to go to the city and find himself a business partner.

On his way to the city, he began crying out to Hashem "Hashem, please help me. I do not want a business partner. Please help me out." An idea sprung to his mind and he exclaimed "Hashem- I choose You as my business partner. You will provide for me, and we will split all profits on an equal basis- I will give half the profits to You. I do not want any business partner except for You!" With sincere emuna in Hashem, he returned home to his wife and told her that he had found a business partner. When his wife enquired as to the identity of his business partner, he fobbed her off with excuses and didn't disclose the identity of his 'business partner'.

The next morning he went to his wine business, sure of the success his new 'partnership' would bring. Sure enough, many customers arrived that morning, revenues increased exponentially and he became very wealthy. He abided by his promise and at the end of each day would set aside half the profits for Hashem, and half he would keep for himself.

The host told the Ohev Yisrael that he was careful not to tell his story to anyone, not even to his own wife. He said "Hashem is my partner, because of my sincere emuna in Hashem and my simplicity, whatever I request of Hashem - He helps me with, and answers my requests."

That person merited to all that he merited, not through studying much Torah or greatly pious deeds, but through his simple and pure emuna in Hashem.

One should know that one can attain extremely great spiritual levels, if he follows Hashem simply and wholeheartedly with sincere commitment. If he follows Hashem with emuna and simplicity, Hashem helps him too.

