

# Derech Ha-Rif

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

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## First Shabbat Meal

“And Hashem called to Moshe and spoke to him from the Tent of Meetings saying.”

One needs to maintain an open heart to receive Hashem's light.

In our Parasha we find that Hashem spoke to Moshe from the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meetings). Although from our human perspective, it is difficult to comprehend the workings of Hashem's voice, we are informed that it marked a miraculous dichotomy. On the one hand His voice was powerful, such that it should have been audible to all in the vicinity, however on the other hand, we are informed that miraculously, only Moshe heard it.

We find a similar idea with the Beit HaMikdash. The Torah informs us that they would offer Korbanot in the Beit HaMikdash, and the smell of the Korbanot would waft all the way from Yerushalayim to Yericho. However, the Torah also informs us that although the smell could be smelled in Yericho, it could not be smelled in the distance in-between the two cities. Likewise, the singing of the Leviim was audible from the Beit HaMikdash until Yericho. However, it was only those on a lofty level that were able to perceive it, even if others were within that range.

Similarly, the Mishna (Avot 6,2) states that a Heavenly Voice emanates each day from Mount Horeb saying, “Woe unto humankind for their contempt towards the Torah.” It is explained that although this voice emanates each day, only those worthy of hearing it, can hear it.

The above phenomena illustrate the power of spiritual words. They can only be perceived by some, but not by others who aren't fitting to receive them. Only one adequately worthy will be fitting to hear the Heavenly Voice from Mount Horeb, the singing of the Leviim, and the smell of the Korbanot. If we elevate ourselves, we can refine our spiritual sensors and experience a more wholesome reality.

In the Torah, Hagar, Avraham's wife, stood right next to the well, however she only saw it once Hashem alerted her attention to it. Man needs to pray to Hashem to be gifted the ability to see things for what they are and live the truth. All too often, we can reside right next to the truth and completely miss it. Being able to see the world through a transparent lens, perceiving the truth, is a tremendously important concept which we ought to strive for through praying to Hashem.

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## Soul Of the Rif

A person needs to know how to maximise each moment with joy, Teshuva, Torah and prayer. One should avoid putting things off, for there is nothing in life which you have the right to push off having in mind that it should come at another time. Every time a Mitzva comes to your hand, do not let it become Chametz (Mechilta 12:7), i.e., do not let it be delayed. Every action, every Mitzva that comes your way, should be done quickly without delay. In regard to one brief moment, if you allow it to leaven [i.e., delay], you have lost it. Guard it, make it, preserve it, and act on it immediately. Do not let it become Chametz, do not let things deteriorate with thoughts, inclinations etc. Within all that a person has, blocked up, sealed within their minds, the empty things that one has heard, the forbidden things that one has seen, the forbidden foods that one has eaten, all of these things impact a person's soul and lead him to thoughts of sadness, depression, bad thoughts, unhealthy thoughts, one cannot allow this sort of evil dominate over a person.

בס"ד

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## 2nd Shabbat Meal

**"And all of your Mincha offerings, you shall salt with salt, and do not allow the salt of the covenant of your G-d to rest [i.e., cease] from upon your Mincha offering. Upon all of your offerings, you shall offer salt (Vayikra 2:13)."**

**A person must rejoice about the suffering which comes upon them for they sweeten the judgement from upon them.**

Our holy Rabbis (Brachot 5a) note that 'Brit' (covenant) is stated both in regard to salt and in regard to suffering. Just as the covenant stated about salt makes the meat fit for consumption and sweetens it, so too, suffering refines and sweetens the situation and the difficulties that a person must cope with.

Many times in life, a person passes through tests and great suffering. When undergoing these, a person complains about why Hashem is giving them these difficulties, which are not easy or pleasant. However, a person must know that they should not think or feel this way. They need to know that their suffering makes everything which is tough easier. All the suffering which a person may undergo is in fact for the good and they transform that which is impossible for a person to cope with into becoming manageable.

The following story is told about our teacher, the Chida, a genius among our nation, who was an exceptionally holy person. A man once approached him, complaining about all the suffering which he faced. The Chida had the man sit down in his Beit Midrash (study hall) and the man fell into a deep sleep. While the man was asleep, he dreamed of the Beit Din Shel Maala (heavenly court) and saw evil angels showing all of his sins. Correspondingly, there were good angels, displaying all the good which he had done. The Chida told over how the weight of the good deeds the man had done was light, whereas his sins totalled an enormous weight. His good deeds and misdeeds were placed on opposite sides of a scale, and of course, the side of his sins weighed down further. The man was in great pain and very worried that his judgement would end with a bad sentence and that he would be sent to Gehinnom (Hell). Suddenly, all of his suffering entered, his suffering was then placed on the scale, piece by piece, and slowly, the balance scale began to shift. However, there were not quite enough troubles and difficulties to sweeten everything. The man began to cry in his dream and scream, "Why do I not have more suffering? Why do I not have further problems?"

A person must know that this world is transient and passing, when a person undergoes suffering, this sweetens a person's judgement and the bad things that they will need to cope with. A person must rejoice about the suffering that they undergo, as it causes evil to depart from upon them.

**"A man who offers from among you a Korban (offering) to Hashem (Vayikra 1:2)."**

**Only one who brings the masses close to Hashem is called a human.**

Our holy teacher, the Ohr HaChaim comments on this verse, asking, who is fit to be called Adam, a man? He answers that a person who brings other people to perform Teshuva is called an 'Adam.' The level of such a person is high and distinctly important in the eyes of Hashem.

A Jew must know that when he leads people to return to Hashem in Teshuva, he gains a tremendous and unparalleled merit. Even if a person puts on Tefillin, but perhaps did not have all the proper intentions and thoughts in mind, when another Jew merits to put on Tefillin with the right intentions, he completes the Mitzva of the person who did not have proper intention. A person may study Torah but not in the manner that they should, however, when he brings other Jews nearer, leading them to study Torah, perhaps they will learn in the complete and proper way. When they do so, they complete the Torah study of the one who led them to learn.

Therefore, when a person leads others towards Teshuva, he himself is elevated to the highest level. Such a person brings the Geulah (redemption) nearer and brings Kedusha (sanctity) near; they cause the Shechina (Divine Presence) to feel joy, and they reach an incredibly high level. Therefore, our teacher, the holy Ohr HaChaim, teaches that a person fit to be described as 'Adam' is 'Adam Ki Yakriv' - a person who draws near. This means that a person who draws people closer to Hashem, is fit to be called an 'Adam.' Therefore, a person must make efforts with all their might to perform every Mitzva which comes their way in order to cause merit to others through the fulfilment of that Mitzva.

## Q & A with the Rif



**Dear Rabbi,  
My wife constantly degrades and disgraces me, what should I do?**

**Answer:**

In regard to a wife who is harsh to her husband, this is not a straightforward matter. One being nasty to another is a form of violence. If a person cries out, be it a child who cries out, or a child who is hit, or even a child who hits, it must be that this child is hurt by something. A woman who is difficult to deal with must be dealing with something which pains her. Perhaps she is imitating her mother (it is important to explain that this is not good), perhaps something disturbs her internally and this is the cause of why she is acting this way.

You are married, this is life. You have children and should not break something which already exists. A person has to approach and deal with the problem, when people face problems, they must try to fix them. There is nothing which happens without a cause; if a table moved, someone moved it.

A person who is difficult to deal with is also acting this way on account of a cause. If someone is sometimes difficult but not at other times, then there must be something which is annoying them. Perhaps, a wife is disturbed by financial concerns, issues with children, your conduct, or perhaps something else. One needs to get to the root of the matter, it will then be possible to solve things. Of course, there are exceptions, but a person needs to have understanding. One must look at things from an understanding angle, and realise that everything is either a problem or a solution. If something is a problem, then there is a solution, however, you may not have found it yet. Leaving the problem ongoing allows it to continue, and by doing so, one is fanning the flames and this will not lead to good results.





## 3rd Shabbat meal

“When a soul [i.e., a person] unintentionally sins with one of the commandments of Hashem that may not be done and he commits one of them (Vayikra 4:2).”

A person who disgraces Mitzvot and does not value them will descend and deteriorate until they sin deliberately.

The holy Torah tells us in this week’s portion, “A soul, when it sins unintentionally” – a person who commits a sin unintentionally must bring a Korban as an atonement for the sin which they committed.

Our teacher, the holy Alshich, asks, if a person sinned unintentionally, this is not a sin, they made a mistake, they are not guilty. In which case, why did the Torah command that person to declare that they sinned accidentally, after all he acted without intent?

Above and beyond this, the Alshich asks another difficulty. When a person sins accidentally, and they want to know what they are bringing a Korban for, they ask their friends and are embarrassed in front of everyone. They then go and ask their rabbi, who tells him to do Teshuva, he is then embarrassed before the Rabbi. Upon hearing which Korban he must bring, a person ascends to Yerushalayim with the Korban in hand, everyone sees that he has done a sin and is going to bring a Korban for the sin that he has done. This entails an incomparable level of embarrassment. Why does a person need to be so disgraced, to the extent that everyone sees them, particularly when this person acted without intent? Why does the Torah not have mercy on their dignity if they acted without intent?

The Alshich explains a key and critical concept: If one takes great care in a certain thing, Hashem will not allow them to stumble in that matter. A person who disgraces something and does not take care in regard to that thing will stumble in it. The Alshich says that if a person is careful and avoids any matter of sin will not come to sin accidentally either. Mistakes come to a person when they disgrace Mitzvot; when a person does not know the level and the value of Mitzvot, then without intention, they make mistakes. They then descend and reach lower levels because of their lack of scrupulousness.

Our teacher, the Ba’al Shem Tov, once saw a Jew desecrate the Shabbat and was in great pain. His students asked him why he was in such pain, since he did not do anything and saw another Jew profane the Shabbat. The Ba’al Shem Tov answered that a few days before, he heard someone say Lashon Hara about a Talmid Chacham (Torah scholar) and did not object. He then explained, “Since I did not object, Hashem caused me to see a Jew desecrate the Shabbat.”

A person who is careful about everything is privy to become the subject of the verse, “Hashem guards the simple (Tehillim 116:6).” Hashem guards such a person such that they will not sin even accidentally. Life is like a mountain of nuts, the moment one moves one of them, they all move. If a person is not careful in regard to one Mitzva, even if one does not sin, this will cause one to deteriorate and sin accidentally in another area.

However, a person who makes fences and ensures that all is closed and sealed will never come to sin, even accidentally. Therefore, a person needs to be careful and very particular to distance themselves from any form of evil. When a person does so, Hashem will guard them from sinning even accidentally.

“When a man from among you brings a Korban [offering] to Hashem, from the cattle, from the herd and from the flock, you shall bring your Korban (Vayikra 1:2).”

A person needs to attach themselves to a Tzaddik, for by a Tzaddik opens an entrance to solve problems through their prayers.

In this week’s portion, the holy Torah tells us: “When a man from among you brings a Korban [offering] to Hashem, from the cattle, from the herd and from the flock you shall bring your Korban.”

The difficulty must be asked, it is known that the Torah is precise with every single word, there is no word within it which does not carry precise and exact reasons to be included. In which case, why does it say “Adam Ki Yakriv – a man when he offers” in the singular form but afterwards [within the same line] it says Takrivu Et Korbanchem” – you shall bring your Korban [in the plural form]? Either the entire line should be in the singular form or in the plural form, but not a contradictory mix of the two. Since everything in the Torah is precise, why is this verse framed in part in the plural form and in part in the singular?

It is possible to explain this feature based on a tremendous concept. We find that when Elisha the prophet saw his teacher Eliyahu ascend to the heavens in a storm, he said, “My father, my father, the chariot of Yisrael and its horsemen (Melachim II 2:12).” In every generation, there is a Tzaddik who has this aspect of being the chariot of Yisrael and its horsemen. When that Tzaddik prays, with his power of prayer, all of the nation ascend with the Tefilla of that Tzaddik. His prayer is like a chariot, which raises the entire nation’s prayers which do not yet have the merit to ascend to heaven. Therefore, Hashem sometimes causes a Tzaddik to lack certain things in order that he will pray for that thing. When he does so, the salvations for the entire nation come as a result of the power of his prayers.

Our holy Rabbis say that on the day that our mother, Sarah, was blessed with a child, all of the barren women who lived at that time also became pregnant. The reason for this is because Sarah’s prayer carried this aspect of “Yisrael’s chariot and its horsemen” – the prayers of all of the barren women ascended heavenwards together and all of the barren women were remembered.

We see the same throughout the generations. Hashem makes Tzaddikim lack income or children or endure some sort of pain. When a Tzaddik is in pain and prays, an opening is made for others who suffer the same difficulty, their prayer then ascends upwards together with that of the Tzaddik.

Based on this, the verse, “A person who brings from among you” can be understood. This first phrase refers to a Tzaddik, “You shall bring your Korbanot” [in the plural form] refers to Klal Yisrael, the entire nation which ascends with the Korban of the Tzaddik who has the proper intentions. Therefore, a person needs to attach their soul and their thoughts to a Tzaddik, and when the Tzaddik prays, a person is attached to them, and therefore, one’s own prayers ascend to Hashem and will be accepted by Him.

## Treasure charms from the Rif



Our Rabbis relate a great Segulah (charm) to be performed during the Purim Seudah (feast).

During the Seudah one should say “Baruch Mordechai” (Blessed is Mordechai) 120 times, and say, “Brucha Esther Bat Avichail” (Blessed is Esther, the daughter of Avichail) 24 times.

Through performing the above Segulah, please G-d, we will experience redemption, and enjoy much success.



During holy times, the Yetzer Hara (Evil Inclination) tries with all its might to distract people from the period's true opportunities.

Our Rabbis explain that every Purim, the power which engendered all the miracles and wonders which saved our ancestors during the days of Mordechai and Esther, is reignited. As such, even in our days, during Purim, one can draw on that power to save oneself from any trying experiences through wondrous miracles. Indeed, this is one interpretation of the line: "During those days, during our time," in that every generation is privy to the unique power of that time.

The Rabbis further explain that one can only tap into this power if one makes oneself into a receptacle to be able to contain the miracles. This can only be achieved if one feels connected to the days of Purim, rather than just treating them as ordinary days, no different from any other.

Below is a Mashal (allegory) expressing the Yetzer Hara's tactics on Purim:

The king's life was in great danger, and a certain man saved his life. The king felt incredibly indebted to the man and decided to thank him. The king announced that he was going to escort the man to his treasure house and permit him to take all the spoils that he could gather during a single day. The king's servants heard the announcement and were extremely concerned. They realised that a day was a long period, during which the man could gather tremendous riches, be it gold, silver, or diamonds, and severely deplete the king's resources. Accordingly, the king's wise chief advisor sought to hatch a plan to protect the king's assets.

The chief advisor inquired as to the man's character and investigated which types of music, foods and drink the man enjoyed. When the day of the great reward came, the advisor ensured that the shelves at the entranceway of the treasure house were laden with the man's favourite foods. Moreover, he set up a speaker playing the man's favourite music in the next room. Sure enough, when the man arrived, he was so enamoured by his favourite foods that he remained in the entranceway for hours on end, entranced by the endless feast. Once he finally entered the treasure house, he was met by his favourite music and favourite drinks, and remained in that room, simply basking in the music, and enjoying the drinks. Once the man finally resolved to enter further into the treasure house, he realised that the day had finished, and with that, he had squandered his opportunity to attain unending riches.

The Yetzer Hara works in the same way. There are certain periods saturated with opportunity, which are illuminated by a great Heavenly light. If one embraces and grasps these moments, they will be able to ascend to great heights and become elevated. However, the Yetzer Hara seizes these periods and implants secondary pleasurable experiences into them, seeking to misdirect one's focus away from the focal pleasure opportunity, towards a comparatively meaningless pleasure. In this way, the Yetzer Hara seeks to stuff one with futilities, rather than matters of true importance, such as Yirat Shamayim (Fear of Heaven) and Avodat Hashem (Service of G-d).

The above phenomenon plays out especially during auspicious times, in which one has the potential to become elevated. An example of such a time is Shabbat, a day on which we can reach tremendous heights. Our Rabbis teach that the Yetzer Hara wades in on Erev Shabbat (Friday) in a bid to ruin the tranquillity of the oncoming Shabbat. The Yetzer Hara lights a fire as it were, bringing

about all manner of stressful situations on Erev Shabbat to scupper the oncoming Shabbat, and redirect one's attention away from the Kedusha (sanctity) of the day. Indeed, the Yetzer Hara performs the same trick during the climax of prayer, the Shemoneh Esrei, during which we are suddenly pummeled with random thoughts, all in a bid to distract our focus from the true essence of the prayer.

Purim is an exceptionally lofty day. Our Rabbis say that all the festivals will cease in the future, other than Purim which is eternal (Yalkut Shimoni, section 942). The Chatam Sofer said that when learning Megillat Esther (the Scroll of Esther), one can reach the fiftieth level of understanding, surpassing the level of understanding one can reach through learning the rest of Torah, which is capped at the forty-ninth level. Moreover, many of the Tzaddikim merited to be born to their parents via the power of Purim. In this vein, it is known that one year on Purim, the Baal Shem Tov's father was the only person in the world to be learning Torah, and thus merited him to have such a son.

It is this very grandeur of Purim which triggers the Yetzer Hara to wage war and barrage us with ridiculous futilities to distract us from being able to tap into the day's greatness. Purim is the day on which Hashem's 'treasure house' is opened, for all to become elevated and enter in to gather the extraordinary gems of understanding.

Below we will relate a story which has been in our mind for almost thirty years, since we opened the Yeshiva, Shuva Yisrael.

In the early days of the Yeshiva, we received a phone call, informing us that a troubling incident had occurred in the Yeshiva. We went to the Yeshiva and alas the event had transpired; it was extremely painful.

The next morning, we went to visit one of the leading Rabbis of the generation, Rabbi Shmuel Auerbach. With trepidation, we informed him what had happened the previous evening.

Rav Shmuel listened patiently and told us to refrain from throwing the two students involved out of the Yeshiva. He explained that throwing them out would ruin them for life, damaging their self-esteem and hope for further growth. Instead, he recommended that we give it time for the incident to blow over and if needed, we could gently encourage them to move to another Yeshiva in four or five months. He explained that this approach would prevent damage to their self-esteem and would also protect the Yeshiva's glowing reputation.

Today, those two students are distinguished Torah scholars, with wonderful families, rich in Torah and good deeds. If we had followed our instinct and expelled them from the Yeshiva twenty-eight years ago, then all of this would have been lost.

This episode continues to guide us. It illustrates the importance of safeguarding every single Neshama (soul), and especially the Neshamot of children. If a child is playing up, provided he is not negatively influencing the children around him, it is helpful to give him a job to help with things. We never know the greatness that each child contains, which just needs to be uncovered with love and gentle encouragement.

Greatness is buried within all of us, every Jew is a diamond which needs to be polished in order to allow it to spread its light and reach its full potential.