

# Derech Ha-rif

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

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## First Shabbat Meal

"To calculate and evaluate; to work with gold, with silver, and with copper."

The value of a person's donation depends upon their heart's intention

Rabbi Chaim Volozhin zt"l, primary disciple of the Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahou of Vilna zt"l), was the pioneer of the modern Yeshiva system so central to contemporary religious Jewish life. To gather funds for his Yeshiva, he would send out learned emissaries near and far. From time to time the emissaries would present the list of donors to Rabbi Chaim, so he would have an idea of what was going on and to bless them for their generosity.

Among the donors was a simple farmer who would make every effort to gather one hundred rubles-a sizable sum- to donate to the Yeshiva. This particularly heartfelt act very much touched and pleased Rabbi Chaim.

It so happened, one year, that one of the fund collectors of Rabbi Chaim requested that he have his horse and buggy replaced for a more elaborate chariot and powerful horse so that he could fulfill his mission in the fastest and most efficient way possible. Rabbi Chaim conceded to his demand and a fine chariot and horse were purchased.

When that fund collector arrived to the home of that especially generous farmer in his new wagon, he was welcomed very coldly. The farmer wasn't pleased at the sight of the new wagon and declined to make his usual donation. "I do not work so hard to pay for your fancy clothes, wagon and horse." And with these poignant words, the collector left the farmer's home.

Time came, and Rabbi Chaim, as was his habit, had a glance at the list of donors to get an idea of their donations and bequeath his blessing. His heart sank when he noticed the special farmer of one hundred rubles was missing from the list. Immediately, he called the collector to ask for an explanation. The collector recounted everything as it had occurred, ultimately the farmer's refusal to have his hard earned money go to unintended ends.

Without hesitation, Rabbi Chaim readied the wagon and at full steam headed to the home of the farmer. When he arrived, he presented himself and asked him about his declining to donate his usual amount. The farmer explained his concern to Rabbi Chaim, to which Rabbi Chaim responded if the man was familiar with the Talmud or Mishna. The man responded that he wasn't very learned and only familiar with the Chumash.

So Rabbi Chaim opened up to this week's Torah portion, which describes how Betzalel designed and constructed the Mishkan. "To do calculations, to work with gold, silver and copper." Betzalel knew the intentions- the inner calculations - of each person in giving their donations. Donations that were given with purest intentions, were diverted to the construction of the Holy of Holies. Donations of less pure intentions were diverted to less holier sections of the Mishkan. Betzalel was graced with the Divine Spirit which allowed him to sense the spirit found in each material donation.

So too, the donations that go to Torah institutions, Rabbi Chaim continued. Those that are given out of a pure heart go to the direct support of Torah study- Hashem see's it to that.

Conversely, those donations that are given with an ulterior motive in mind go to less sacred objectives- the wagon, horse and clothing of the fund collectors...

"You," concluded Rabbi Chaim, "donate with the purest of intentions. Hashem will make it that your donation will arrive to the right place. You have nothing to worry about. It will not go to any wagon or horse, but the direct support of Torah study."



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## Soul Of the Rif

True success can be characterized as achieving something that is connected to the essence of your soul. omething that you connect to, and is a fit for you soul. Objectives or activities that are not connected to the essence of your soul - even noble and significant activities - will tire a person and will be filled with hardships. The soul will remain unsettled and will keep on searching for that which it is truly yearning. Therefore, a person should introspect till they reveal the essence of their soul, so that they could focus on those matters. One should act wisely so as to reach great spiritual heights. One mustn't pursue what isn't theirs. One must recognize what is theirs and they should bring themselves to a state of being able to discern what is theirs and what isn't. Once one has identified what is theirs, they should pursue it wisely and tactfully, all the while pursuing the way of Hashem with sincerity.





## 2nd Shabbat Meal

"He said to them: These are the matters that Hashem has commanded to be performed".

A person must strengthen their emuna, to attain an understanding that even if they strive and exert much effort, they will ultimately receive what has been allotted to them from Heaven.

"These are the matters that Hashem has commanded to be performed"- Our Sages learn from this verse that there are matters that one is obliged to perform and others they should refrain from. The following parable will clarify this lesson further.

There once was a destitute Jew who would travel from city to city collecting alms for themselves. One day he reached a town fatigued and hungry from his long journey, and so asked the townspeople where he may find a place to eat.

The townspeople told him to go to the far end of town where a very generous Jew lived, and he would be able to provide for all his needs. Exhausted from hunger and fatigue, the Jew reached the far end of the town, knocked on the door of the first Jewish home he could find, and asked for a donation and some food. The homeowner responded that he would provide him with food and drink if he would firstly aid with chores in his home.

Although hungry and tired, he gathered his last bit of strength to complete the chores he had been promised food in return. When he completed the chores, he approached homeowner with the plea to complete his end of the promise and provide him with food.

The homeowner took him outside, pointed to a large house a few streets away, and said "Go there. Tell them that I sent you and they will give you food." The poor man rejoiced, and when he arrived to the home, he found a table brimming with food and so

sat to finally calm his hunger.

When he finished eating, he exclaimed to the people at the table "Thank Hashem! I worked very hard for this food, but at least I was given food." The people glanced to one another with puzzled expressions on their face, and asked him what had he meant when he said he had done hard work to earn this food. To which he recounted all that had transpired earlier that day. Pitifully, the people remarked: "The food here is offered free of charge. All your hard work was for nothing, and a great waste of your time!"

The lesson is clear: a person toils all year, believing that he will earn more if he works harder and exerts himself more. Most often a person's toil is in vain, very much like the poor person in the parable. Ultimately a person receives his allotted sustenance from the place where food is given out for free.



## Q & A with the Rif



Dear Rav, I know two people who were once very close friends, but due to an unfortunate past event they do not talk to each other anymore, and this has lead to much Lashon Hara and arguments. How can I make peace between them without, Heaven Forbid, causing or enduring insult or injury?

**Answer:**

Firstly, why are they not talking? Every Jew must maintain the channels of communication open with his fellow! It doesn't matter how severe the argument is- connections must never be broken. One must maintain the channels of communication flowing, for when they're halted, the consequences can be terrible. Everything must be done to regain peace. "Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta said that Hashem found no vessel that could contain blessing for Israel other than peace (Oktzin 3,12)." When there resides peace, "He makes your borders peaceful, (and) satiates you with the cream of wheat (gives you abundance) (Tehillim 147, 14)."

If the basis of an argument is spiritual- how to serve Hashem in a specific scenario, or how to distance the wicked who desecrate the saintly Torah, then matters are different. Regarding the wicked, King David says: "Sinners will cease from the earth, and the wicked will be no more" (Tehillim 104, 35). Great people have already condemned and cursed the wicked.

However, if a dispute is concerned with money, honor or inconsequential matters- one must make every effort to restore peace. For one who makes peace merits to attain great spiritual levels.





## 3rd Shabbat meal

"The men came with the women; everyone whose heart motivated him"

The mystical intentions one should focus on when giving tzedakah.

The Ariza"l teaches that when one gives tzedakah to the poor, they should contemplate the holy name yud-keh-vav-keh as follows: The money he holds in his hand represents the letter yud, his hand with its five fingers represent the letter heh, the arm stretching itself out represents the letter vav, and the five fingers of the poor person's hand receiving the money represent the second letter heh. Thus, Hashem's name yud-keh-vav-keh is composed when giving Tzedaka. This practice unifies Hashem's alluded to in the verse y'ismechu h'ashamayim v'etagel h'aaretz (The Heaven will rejoice, and the Earth will become gladdened).- Through the giving of tzedaka he causes the Heaven to rejoice and the Earth to become glad, and unifies the name yud-keh-vav-keh.

When the charity is done between opposite genders, the process is slightly different. But how should a woman who would like to give tzedakah to a male poor person, perform this unification of yud-keh-vav-keh? It would be inappropriate to perform the procedure described above, from male to female and vice-versa, as the Mishna teaches that one who works in an environment with women, should be wary not to connect to seclude himself with one of them. The word seclude (yichud) can also be understood allegorically to mean unify Hashem's Name by mystical intentions. It isn't possible for a woman to perform the yud-keh-vav-keh unification by transferring the money from her hand to that of a poor male person's hand. How then can she perform the unification?

Rabbi Meir of Parmishlan explains that when a woman would come to ask him for tzedakah, he would take the money in one hand, contemplate the letter yud represented by the money, then the letter heh represented by his five fingers, then again the letter vav represented by his arm and then transfer the money to his other hand, whose five fingers represent the second letter heh, and so the yud-keh-vav-keh unification was completed. He would then place the money on the table for the woman to take.

Similarly, in context of the Mishkan, when a woman would donate tzedakah, she would not transfer the money directly from her hand to the hand of one of the trustees. Rather "the men came with the women", so that the woman would be able to perform the unification of yud-keh-vav-keh by transferring the money to her husband's hand, and he would subsequently transfer it to the trustee.

We should strive to perform this unification when giving

tzedakah, as Hashem's name is thereby sanctified and the Redemption is hastened.

"Moshe assembled the entire assembly of the Children of Israel" The high degree of the portion of Vayakhel which was given over to all the Jewish people together.

In this week's Torah portion Hashem commands Moshe to assemble the Jewish people for the giving over of the Torah portion. What was the difference between a portion for which Hashem commanded that the Jewish people be assembled, and a portion for which He did not?

When Hashem would command Moshe regarding a specific mitzva e.g. the mitzva of tefillin, Moshe Rabenu would enter the Tent of Meeting and hear from Hashem all the halachot, laws and details of that mitzva. Moshe would then leave the Tent and transmit all the details of the Mitzva to Aharon. Upon completion, Aharon would stand to his right. Then, Aharon's sons would be called in and Moshe Rabenu would recount the teachings to them too.

Them too, upon completion, would stand to Moshe's right and the elders would then enter and hear from Moshe the details of the mitzva. Finally, Hashem would instruct Moshe to teach His commandment to the Jewish people. The elders would stand to Moshe's right, the entire Jewish people would enter and Moshe would transmit them the teachings. What results from this method is that every matter which Hashem commanded Moshe was heard by Aharon four times, by his sons three times, by the elders twice and by the Jewish people once.

All the commandments in the Torah were transmitted the same manner, with the exception of this week's Torah portion, which was communicated in a different manner. Hashem instructed Moshe Rabenu to speak to all of the Jewish people at once. Everyone sat together, the poor, rich, Kohens, Levites and Israelites.

We now know the immense power of this week's Torah portion. Moshe transmitted the portion to all the Jewish people as one united entity. Therefore, the sanctity that we can derive from this week's Torah portion has an unfathomably great power.



## Treasure charms from the Rif



There is a known great segula the Jewish people have performed for many years- to light a candle on Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan for the uplifting of the soul of Rabbi Yeshaya Ben Avraham- the Shla"n Hakadosh.

After lighting the candle, a special prayer authored by the Shla"n Hakadosh is to be recited. This prayer is a great segula for livelihood, good upbringing of children, great wealth and many other matters.

The prayer is as follows:





## The fourth Post Shabbat meal



## Stories from the Rif



"You are Hashem Who feeds all creatures from the horned beasts to eggs of lice, and it is You who prepares all their needs. In addition to supplying them with their indispensable needs, You are also the One Who gives in full measure, granting profits and wealth and honor. All this You do from the generosity of Your Good Heart, for You are truly generous-not like a person who is called generous sometimes, for his generosity is not truth, for even though he gives, it is to gain advantage or to repay a favor, so he is more of a trader than a real giver. However in Your case, who has preceded to do You a favor which You must repay? Yet with the generosity of Your Good Heart, You are Good and grant good things to all.

You have been nicest of all to me, Your servant, and You have granted me wealth and honor, everything from Your Hand. You have blessed me with everything, just every single thing! You have granted me many books, much gold and silver, dignified clothing and a dignified home. I have fallen far short of deserving all the kindnesses You have performed with me, your servant. Indeed I am fearful that my assets should not be, Heaven forbid, a kind of wealth which has negative impact upon its owner, that I might be fed from the few merits I do hold. If that is the case, please withhold my blessing so I will not lose out badly in the Next world, the eternal world.

If I can prevail upon Your Good Will to give me and not to take, I ask that You place in my heart and the hearts of the people who are connected to me, not to use Your gifts for bodily pleasures. Instead, please help me to support Torah scholars, fine people, honest people. Please help me to do a lot of charity, and acts of kindness both to relatives and to others. Hashem, whatever You say is what will stand. May the expressions of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You; Hashem, You are my Protector and Redeemer."

May Hashem grant everyone salvation, happiness and success, and may it be Hashem's will that this Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan, we see miracles and wonders as the verse states "as the days in which you went out from Egypt, I will show them wonders" (Micha 7, 15).

**Rabbi Yoshiyahou Pinto, the Rif of Ein Ya'akov.**

The patriarch of the great and saintly Pinto family was Rabbi Yoshiyahou Pinto. He was particularly noted for his efforts to eradicate idol worship from the world. He was the son in law of the saintly disciple of the Arizal, Rabbi Chaim Vital zt"l, and his nephew as well from his mother's side. His saintliness was extraordinary; there were two notable instances where Rabbi Chaim Vital sent Rabbi Yoshiyahou to remove harsh plagues, noting that "only his saintliness was capable of such protection."

His saintliness, radiance and attachment to Hashem were extraordinary.

There is a particular anecdote about Rabbi Yoshiyahou which depicts his holiness and power. He and group of intimate colleagues once decided they would seal themselves in a cave and pray and study until they would precipitate the oncoming of Mashiach. As Rabbi Yoshiyahou would later exclaim, they were pressing for Mashiach when it was not yet the propitious time for him to be revealed and their plan got halted midstream. One Friday afternoon, during their stay in the cave, an Arab vagabond assaulted and stabbed the Rabbi's son in the heart. Upon receiving news of his son's passing, he declared: "We have pressured Hashem too much before the time." He concluded his self imposed seclusion and returned to Tzfat. He was a disciple of the great Rabbi Ya'akov Abulafia of Spain and the last disciple to receive his unique and controversial rabbinic ordination, semicha. Rabbi Yoshiyahou was unique in his saintliness and power.

Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, whom we consider to be our Rabbi in heaven, cites Rabbi Yoshiyahou as the basis of several fundamental teachings.

The Ben Ish Hai zt"l rules that it is permissible for a woman of sephardic lineage to immerse herself in a heated mikveh to purify herself even if the Shulchan Aruch explicitly forbids it. This is because there is an explicit citing from Rabbi Yoshiyahou Pinto testifying that he had personally heard the Shulchan Aruch retract from his original ruling. Thus, the permissibility for sephardic woman to use a wotan warm mikveh is thanks to Rabbi Yoshiyahou. The following is the famous story of how Rabbi Yoshiyahou annihilated idolatry with his incredible angelic saintliness. There was once a poor peddler who came across a magical piece of copper which through sorcery was able to speak. This bewitched object decided that it would reveal secrets of gaining wealth - where treasures were found or good business ventures were worthwhile on condition that the Jewish peddler would light a candle and serve it as a powerful entity. Being naive that he was, he did all that copper price commanded him to do and in a brief bit of time became outstandingly wealthy. He was very charitable too, and that drew Rabbi Yoshiyahou to his home. As he approached the home, he paused and remarked that he felt the negative power of idolatry present there so called the host over to investigate. He pressured the host- who was a God fearing individual - to reveal the source of his great wealth. Without much effort the host revealed his secret to Rabbi Yoshiyahou. When he concluded, Rabbi Yoshiyahou pleaded that the idol be brought before him so that they can destroy it. And so they did: they smashed and ground the idol into fine pieces and scattered the pieces in a stream.

Rabbi Yoshiyahou then prescribed to the Jewish peddler a particular routine of repentance to rectify the sin he had unintentionally committed. Shortly afterwards the man's entire wealth got destroyed in a blaze, and the man was forced to rely then-on on the support of the community.

Rabbi Yoshiyahou was unique in his holiness and powers of holiness.

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