

Derech Ha-Rif

Teachings of the Admor Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto, Shlita
Parshat Beshalach | Issue 114 | 13 Shvat 5786



29 January 2026

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A person must walk in simplicity with the Holy One, blessed be He, and not try to interpret His thoughts.

- Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita

First Meal

"And it came to pass when Pharaoh let the people go..."

It is brought in our holy sources (Targum Yonatan 13:17) that when the Children of Israel left Egypt, the vast majority of the Tribe of Ephraim did not leave with them; rather, they went out early, before the appointed time. Consequently, the men of Gat came out and killed most of the Tribe of Ephraim.

One must ask: All the Children of Israel saw that the time for redemption had not yet arrived. What did the Tribe of Ephraim see that gave them the courage and the idea to leave Egypt before the time?

We can explain it this way: One of the reasons Bnei Yisrael (the Children of Israel) descended into slavery in Egypt was because of the sale of Joseph. Because the Holy Tribes sold Joseph, their descendants were punished with slavery in Egypt. The Tribe of Ephraim reasoned: "We are the sons of Joseph. Joseph the Righteous did nothing wrong; he was the one sold, pained, and sent to Egypt. Therefore, we—his children—do not need to suffer the pain of slavery." Thus, the Tribe of Ephraim permitted themselves to leave, deciding they did not need to be enslaved, and left Egypt early.

However, the Tribe of Ephraim erred. While the slavery was indeed partly due to the sale of Joseph, it was also due to the "Covenant Between the Parts" (Brit Bein HaBetarim). These two causes combined to create the slavery in Egypt. So, while they might not have deserved punishment for the sale of Joseph, they were still liable under the decree of the Covenant Between the Parts because they left before the time.

A person must know a great foundation: Often, several things connect together, and the Holy One, blessed be He, executes judgment based on multiple factors ("The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous together" - Psalms 19:10). Hashem gathers several reasons and brings a result upon a person based on all of them. The Tribe of Ephraim interpreted the situation based on only one factor, and that was their mistake. A person is forbidden to interpret the thoughts of Hashem; one must walk in simplicity (Temimut) with Hashem. When one walks in simplicity, only Heavenly assistance results from his actions.

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**Sending a person
on a mission with
joy brings
success to the
mission.**

- **Rabbi Yoshiyahu
Yosef Pinto Shlita**

"And it came to pass when Pharaoh let the people go..."

The Rebbe, the Noam Elimelech, asks on this Parsha: Why did Bnei Yisrael go through forty years of difficulties, pain, and harsh tribulations in the desert? He answers: Because when Pharaoh sent Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt, he sent them out with sadness. The Gemara says (Megillah 10b), "The word 'Vayehi' (And it came to pass) denotes nothing but sorrow." Therefore, Bnei Yisrael endured forty years of suffering in the desert.

Here, one must learn a great foundation: When a person sends off his friend, his son, or his wife—or conversely, when a wife sends off her husband or son—to any place and they are parting ways, one must part with joy. If they part in sadness, the path that person walks will be filled with sadness and great failure.

Pharaoh sent Bnei Yisrael away with sadness ("Vayehi" – sorrow); therefore, all the time Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, they experienced sadness and extreme difficulties. Therefore, a person must be careful: when sending off a friend, or a mother sending off her son—when people part and set out on a journey—they should leave in joy. For if one leaves in joy, the path will be joyful; if one leaves in sadness, the path will be sad.

Tu B'Shvat

Tu B'Shvat (The 15th of Shvat) is not the festival of the fruits of the tree; it is the festival of the sowing/planting of the tree. So why do we celebrate the festival of the planting now, when we have just planted it? We should celebrate the festival of fruits in Shavuot, or Tu B'Av, or another time—not now. Why do we do it now?

The reason is that the Holy One, blessed be He, counts and credits a person based on the effort (Hishtadlut) they made. You tried, you went to the field, you sowed, you toiled, you exerted yourself with all your strength, you got dirty in the mud, you prayed for rain, you dug the hole—you made the effort. You did Teshuvah (repentance), you did great deeds. Hashem counts these deeds for you.

What comes out in the end—the fruit—is something else entirely. How the fruit turns out is a different matter. Perhaps this specific fruit will turn out good, perhaps not. But for what you sowed, for how you toiled, and for the effort you made, you will find a good fruit, an excellent fruit, a special fruit, somewhere else.

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A person who suffers and bears pain so that other Jews will not suffer merits a Soulmate (Zivug) and Livelihood (Parnassah).

Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita

Second Meal

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea... and the waters were split.

Our Holy Sages tell us: "A person's matching (finding a spouse) is as difficult as the Splitting of the Sea, and a person's livelihood is as difficult as the Splitting of the Sea."

We must understand: Why is it called "Kriat Yam Suf" (Tearing of the Sea)? In the Torah, it says "Vayibak'u" (And they were split/cleaved). Why does the Torah use language of splitting (Bekia), yet regarding matching/marriage, the Gemara (Sotah 2a) uses the language of tearing (Kria)? And regarding livelihood (Pesachim 118a), it also compares the difficulty to "Kriat Yam Suf." What is the difference between Bekia (splitting/cleaving) and Kria (tearing)?

Another question: If a person's livelihood and marriage are as hard as the Splitting of the Sea, we need to know—what happened at the Sea that merited the splitting, so that we may apply it to marriage and livelihood?

We can explain with a great foundation: The first time a thing is cut in two, it is Bekia (splitting). Kria (tearing) applies to something that was whole, was cut, was glued back together, and is then cut again—that is a "tear," as if tearing something that was already whole and is now torn a second time. Based on this, we can explain what our Sages say: When Bnei Yisrael left Egypt and reached the sea, Hashem split the sea for them. However, there were two men, Datan and Aviram, who did not go with Bnei Yisrael but remained in Egypt to help Pharaoh.

When Pharaoh said, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in," the Targum Yonatan explains that Pharaoh said to Datan and Aviram: "The Children of Israel are confused/entangled." Datan and Aviram stood with Pharaoh. But when Pharaoh began to chase Bnei Yisrael, they went with him. When Pharaoh drowned in the sea, Datan and Aviram wanted to cross the sea, and Hashem performed a miracle for them, and the sea was torn for them a second time.

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Thus, our Sages say there were two "Splittings of the Sea."

1. The first time, the sea was split (Nivka) for Bnei Yisrael, and they crossed on dry land. The water returned upon the Egyptians.
2. The second time, after the Egyptians drowned, the sea was torn (Nikra) again specifically for Datan and Aviram, and they crossed alone in a great miracle.

The Torah speaks of the sea being split (Bekia) for the nation. But when we say that marriage and livelihood are as difficult as "Kriat Yam Suf" (The Tearing of the Sea), it refers to the tearing that happened for Datan and Aviram the second time—not the initial splitting.

What did Datan and Aviram do to merit the sea tearing for them?

Our Sages say that Datan and Aviram were police officers/taskmasters in Egypt. When the Egyptians enslaved Bnei Yisrael with hard labor, they appointed Jewish officers in charge of groups of Jews. If the Jewish workers did not complete the work, the Egyptian officers would beat the Jewish officers so that they would force the workers. Our Sages say that even though Datan and Aviram were wicked, *they did not want to cause pain to Bnei Yisrael*. If a Jew did not do the work as the Egyptians demanded, Datan and Aviram accepted the beatings themselves rather than strike the Jew or pressure him.

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Because Datan and Aviram suffered pain and received blows from the Egyptians to avoid pressuring the Jewish people, they merited that the sea was torn for them alone. Even though they were wicked, and even though they stayed with Pharaoh, and even though they caused Moses great pain during every crisis—nevertheless, because they took blows from the Egyptians and did not distress the Jewish people, the sea was torn for them.

This is the great virtue of a Jew who suffers pain rather than causing pain to other Jews: **He merits great heights, that the Sea of Reeds will tear for his sake.**

Therefore, "Hard is a person's matching/livelihood as the Tearing of the Sea." If a person wants to know the merit by which the sea was torn for Datan and Aviram the second time, it is because they suffered for the sake of Israel and did not distress them.

Practical Lesson: If a person wants a *Segulah* (spiritual remedy) for livelihood or marriage—if you want to find a spouse quickly or if livelihood is difficult—**suffer for the sake of Jews and do not distress Jews.** If there is something that causes pain to Jews and you can take it upon your own body to prevent their pain, by taking that upon yourself, you will merit a match and you will merit livelihood.

Q&A with the Rif

Question: Honorable Rabbi, we wanted to ask if having a savings account indicates a lack of faith (Emunah)?

Answer:

A person who works, gives charity, does acts of kindness, gives Ma'aser (tithes), does what is required, and has a savings account—this is not a lack of faith.

A person should have things. Abraham our Father had silver (money); Isaac had silver; Jacob had silver. It is not a sin for a person to have money.

If a person worked and toiled and earned money through pain and effort—Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi was wealthy. The Gemara says (Eruvin 86a) that Rabbi Akiva used to honor the wealthy. If a person worked and earned money, it is his. Why be jealous or think it is a lack of faith? No, it is permitted.

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**A person without
Torah has no
calm, joy, or
security.**

**Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef
Pinto Shlita**

Third Meal

"And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water."

The Gemara says (Bava Kamma 82a) that Bnei Yisrael walked in the desert and found no water, and "water" signifies nothing other than Torah. At that point, the prophets among Israel stood up and established that the Torah should be read on Mondays and Thursdays. The foundation of reading the Torah [on these days] comes from the prophets in the desert who saw that Bnei Yisrael went three days without Torah, and this was dangerous. Therefore, they established reading it on Monday and Thursday.

We must ask: Why specifically Monday and Thursday? Why not Tuesday and Wednesday? What did they see in Monday and Thursday to take out the Sefer Torah then?

We can explain according to our holy sources:

- On **Monday**, the construction of the Heavens and the Earth was completed. They are the witnesses and guarantors for the existence of the world, as it says, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Since the creation of Heaven and Earth was completed on Monday, we take out the Sefer Torah.
- On **Thursday**, the Holy One, blessed be He, created the fish. Fish symbolize the Holy Torah, as in the parable told by Rabbi Akiva (Berachot 61b) about the fox who met the fish and asked why they were fleeing. The fish answered, "From the fishermen's nets." The fox suggested they come out to dry land where he would protect them. The fish replied, "If in our distinct environment (water) we are afraid, how much more so in the place of our death (land)!" The metaphor is the Holy Torah: if there is no Torah, a person cannot survive or be saved from anything.

Thus: **Mondays** and **Thursdays** were chosen for reading the Torah because Monday is the completion of Heaven and Earth (the witnesses), and Thursday is the creation of fish (symbolizing the Torah). Therefore, these are the days we take out the Sefer Torah.

A person must know a great foundation: If a person does not have the Holy Torah, he has no vitality. He has no protection; his soul is anxious. We see people without Torah searching all day for how to calm their souls. The soul without Torah is sad, worried, and constantly panicked. The moment a person has the Holy Torah, he has relaxation and joy. The Torah enlivens a person and infuses him with happiness. Therefore, Monday and Thursday were fixed so that three days would not pass without reading the Torah which enlivens the person.

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The way to sweeten the bitter things in a person's life.

Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita

"And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet."

If we look at the Parsha, we see: "And they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." Bnei Yisrael arrived at Marah, and the water was bitter. Bnei Yisrael were in distress and crying. Death by thirst is the hardest death; dying of hunger is less severe than dying of thirst. Moses cries out to Hashem. Hashem shows him a bitter tree and tells him to throw it into the water, and the bitter waters will become sweet. Moses took the bitter tree, threw it into the water, and "the waters became sweet."

We thought to ask: To sweeten bitter water, one should throw in something sweet—honey, sugar. Yet here, Hashem says to throw something bitter to sweeten the bitter. If you want to sweeten the bitter, put in something sweet, not bitter! How does Hashem tell Moses to take a tree that is bitter to sweeten the water?

We can explain it this way: Moses is teaching us, via Hashem's command, that upon bitter waters, you place another bitter tree, and only then will they become sweet.

You do not sweeten difficulty with sweetness or empty things intended to distract the mind. **You sweeten the difficulty with more work.** When you continue to cope with the pain and the problem—when you continue to struggle—eventually, it becomes sweet for many years.

If you put "honey" (escapism) inside, the bitterness will remain sweet only until the honey fades, and then the bitterness returns. But if you confront the bitterness and continue to struggle with it, then when the waters finally become sweet, they will be sweet for a long time, and their entire essence becomes good.

This is a great foundation in life: Sometimes a person studies Torah and finds it hard, or has difficulties in the Beit Midrash, or financial troubles. He says, "I will take something sweet; I'll take a vacation or go for a walk to solve the problem." Similarly in work, if he has issues with his boss or employees, he says, "I'll add something sweet, take a break, run away from the problem, and it will be solved."

But a person must know: **The "sweet thing" does not sweeten the bitterness.** Rather, one must throw more bitterness onto it—stand firm, cope with it—and in the end, the bitter will become sweet.

Whoever thinks they can sweeten the bitter with sweet is mistaken. If you try to run from the problem, it will become harder. Strengthen yourself, stand with all your might, and in the end, the bitter will become sweet.

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Segulot (Spiritual Remedies) of the Rif

We find in this week's Parsha the great virtue of the Song of the Sea (Az Yashir). It is known from our master the Chida (Tziporen Shamir 2:24) that every time a person reads the Song of the Sea in the morning prayer, he should imagine in his soul that he is standing before the Sea of Reeds. The sea is in front of him, the Egyptians are chasing him from behind, and the wilderness with wild beasts is at his sides. He stands in distress, not knowing what to do—just like the situation Bnei Yisrael faced. And then, the Holy One, blessed be He, performs a miracle for him, tears the sea, and the person crosses through the sea on dry land.

The Chida says that if a person stands and visualizes this in his soul, surely the Holy One, blessed be He, will save him from every trouble and problem and forgive all his sins. A person should know throughout his life: Every morning when saying "Az Yashir Moshe," he should paint this picture for himself. He should know that this is a Segulah for salvation, for erasing sins, for Heavenly assistance, and for all great things—when he reads it with joy and visualizes the situation of Bnei Yisrael standing at the sea.

*May the Merit of the Admor stand for the success
of the entire House of Israel.*



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**Dying for the
sanctification of
G_d's Name
(Kiddush Hashem)
—there is no
greater level.**

- **Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita**

Fourth Meal

Today is a very holy day, a day with great light and power, the Hillula (anniversary of passing) of Rabbi Yitzhak Abuchatzeira. Rabbi Yitzhak was holy of holies, possessing a lofty holiness without parallel.

It is known that Rabbi Yaakov (Abuchatzeira) had four sons and two daughters. After fathering three sons, he separated from his wife. After a period of separation, he had a great revelation from Heaven telling him that the soul of the holy Arizal was waiting to come down to the world. Rabbi Yaakov returned to his wife, she conceived, and a son was born. He named him Rabbi Yitzhak. Why Yitzhak? After the holy Arizal (Rabbi Yitzhak Luria). Rabbi Yaakov used to say that the soul of Rabbi Yitzhak was the soul of the holy Arizal. To see Rabbi Yitzhak, his holiness, his stature, his massive greatness—it is unfathomable.

They tell a story regarding the piyut (liturgical poem) "A'ufa Eshkona": When did Rabbi Yitzhak write it? It is a holy poem, exalted in the extreme. Rabbi Yaakov used to study with his son as a study partner. One day, when Rabbi Yitzhak was twelve years old, he was delayed. When he arrived, Rabbi Yaakov asked, "Where were you?" He replied, "I was delayed; I was writing something." Rabbi Yaakov said, "Show me what you wrote." Rabbi Yaakov took the paper. At the age of twelve, he had written "A'ufa Eshkona." Every word there is holy; every word is a sword; every word is a sharp arrow into the heart of a person.

It is known that Rabbi Yitzhak was holy, separate, and pure. He went to a certain city to collect money for the poor and Torah scholars. When he finished collecting, he bid farewell to the townspeople as if he would never see them again. He asked, "How do I get to the next city?" They told him, "That city is far, and there are no Jews there. What will you do there? There is no charity to collect, nothing there, not a single Jew." Rabbi Yitzhak told them, "I go by the decree of the King; I must go there." He went to that city, and as he entered, an Arab came with a knife, stabbed him in the heart, and thus Rabbi Yitzhak passed away.

We have heard—though we do not know to what extent it is accurate—that Rabbi Yitzhak wrote the piyut "Yom HaShevi'i Hu Yom Menucha" on the day he was killed.

Rabbi Yitzhak was holy of holies. When we find ourselves on such a holy day, the day of the great holiness of Rabbi Yitzhak who sacrificed his soul for Kiddush Hashem—what is greater than a man who is holy, pure, righteous, exalted above the people, entirely separated and pure, who also dies for Kiddush Hashem? In the place of a person who dies for Kiddush Hashem, no other creature can stand. There are levels of Torah, holiness, devotion—but the level of one who dies for Kiddush Hashem is a place no one else can enter. Rabbi Yitzhak possesses all the great virtues and died for Kiddush Hashem. How great is this!

Surely, Rabbi Yitzhak's power is great, exalted, and lofty. Rabbi Yitzhak will influence a great abundance from all the worlds upon each and every one of us. May there be, with Hashem's help, salvation, joy, great Heavenly assistance for everyone, success, blessing, light, and may everyone see light in all their dwellings.

We are in a generation of great concealment (Hester). The Evil Inclination fights the person. But when there are people who were holy and became a great light in the world, illuminating the whole world, it awakens everything, cleanses and refines the souls, and brings us closer to our Father in Heaven—a closeness with no second. May the power of Rabbi Yitzhak protect us all.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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Men of Faith

Excerpts from the book Men of Faith on the lives and deeds of the House of Pinto

THE WISDOM OF THE LEADER

We knew a righteous, holy Jew through whom we saw salvation: Rabbi Daniel Frisch. Many years ago, on the eve of Yom Kippur, we had not yet been blessed with children.

Ten years had passed. It was Erev Yom Kippur, and a righteous Jew from Antwerp, very beloved to us, said: "We are printing all the books of Rabbi Daniel Frisch. He is a great Tzaddik. We want the Rav to see him before Yom Kippur."

We traveled to Jerusalem and went to his house. He was holy and exalted. His fingers bore signs of the Holocaust and the hard things done to him. He took out written materials for us and said: "Study this and this." He told us: "You will be remembered/blessed within three months." In that very month, we were blessed with [our son] Rabbi Yoel.

Rabbi Daniel Frisch was holy and exalted. We are connected in our souls to the "Matok Midvash" (his commentary on the Zohar) very deeply; it is a holy book.

Before his death, Rabbi Chaim Hakatan met an old man in Morocco called Moshe and told him, "You have four coins in your pocket. Give me one coin, and with the remaining coins go buy a lottery ticket today and you will win 900 pesos." Armed with the blessings of the tzaddik and with the mitzvah of tzedakah, which he readily performed, Moshe approached the lottery booth and bought tickets with his three remaining coins. He, indeed, won the huge amount of 900 pesos. 337 A few days later, Moshe met the Rav again. After inquiring if he had bought the ticket, Moshe answered in the positive. "Did you win money?" the Rav asked. "I did," answered Moshe, without elaborating in detail. "How much did you win?" asked the Rav. "A large amount," he replied. Rabbi Chaim told him, "You don't want to tell me how much you received! You won 900 pesos. May you have much success!" Days passed, and Moshe overheard that Rabbi Chaim Pinto had died. Since he strongly desired to merit the holy mitzvah of lowering the body of the tzaddik into the grave, he hurried to the cemetery in order to place his bid for the precious mitzvah. But it was already too late, and two other people had merited performing this mitzvah. Moshe was crestfallen about the missed opportunity and began to cry. That night, he dreamed that he was standing on the roof, and Rabbi Chaim was consoling him, "Moshe, do not be sad! The mitzvah is all yours. Hashem considers a good intention as if it was actually performed."



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