

לעילו נשמת: אריה ישראל בן מרדכי ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Chukas



לזכות רפואה שלמה מלכה בת רחל ומינאל בן שלי

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## Parshas Chukas

**E**rev Shabbos Chukas, יחידים, special individuals (i.e. tzaddikim) fast, because on erev Shabbos Chukas wagons filled with sefarim were burned in France. They didn't establish that day as a fast day for in a שאלת חלום it was revealed to them that the decree was associated with the *parashah*. Unkelos translates זאת חקת התורה as דא גזירת אורייתא as this is the decree on the Torah. Furthermore, in ת"ח (1648) two large Jewish communities were decimated on that day, as written in the Selichos written by the Shach.

Since this Friday there was a decree on the Torah, it is an ideal time to renew our commitment to Torah study.

The *parashah* begins with זאת חקת התורה "This is the law of the Torah..." and discusses the laws of the *parah adumah*. The Rokeiach writes that the juxtaposition of *parah adumah* and Torah tells us that Torah

study purifies us like the *parah adumah* purifies.

The Shlah HaKadosh writes, "Even when there isn't a *parah adumah*, by studying Torah with *hasmadah* one becomes pure..."

A non-kosher cooking utensil is kashered by purging it in boiling water (הנעלה). An even more powerful method of koshering is to heat the cooking utensil in fire (ליבון) until the utensil becomes red hot. The Or HaChaim zt'l (*Rishon L'Tzion*) teaches that these two approaches of kashering represent two paths people take to attain purity from their sins. One way is through *yesurim*, such as afflictions, fasting, and the like. This method is compared to the boiling water, which cleanses and purifies the cooking utensils from their non-kosher status. Learning Torah is a greater purifier, because Torah is compared to



fire. As it states (*Yirmiyahu* 23:19), הלא כה דברי כאש, “Behold My words are like fire,” and fire is an even greater form of cleansing and kashering.

In addition to the purity from sins, studying Torah also directs a person on the right path. As Chazal say, “The light that’s in Torah will direct him to improve his ways.”

Towards the end of the *parashah* it states (21:27), על כן, יאמרו המושלים באו חשבון. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 78:) explains, “The מושלים refers to [the tzaddikim] who rule over their *yetzer hara*. [They say] באו חשבון, come and make the *cheshbon*, reckoning, of the world. הפסד מצוה כנגד שכרה ושכר, עבירה כנגד הפסדה, consider the amount you lose when you do a mitzvah<sup>1</sup> by how much you gain by doing the mitzvah.

And how much you gain from an *aveirah*, to how much you will be losing from it...” Contemplate this and you will understand that you should keep away from every sin and grab every opportunity to do mitzvos.

The next *pasuk* (21:28) states, כי אש יצאה מחשבון. Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* explains that the *pasuk* is saying: From making this *cheshbon*, contemplation, a fire comes forth. This means, contemplating on this idea will direct him onto the right path. He will not want to sin, because he realizes what is worth pursuing in the world and what is worth avoiding.

The next words are להבה מקרית “a blazing fire emerged from the cities of Sichon.” Targum Yonoson translates משיחין באורייתא as סיחון, “speaking

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1. The Rashbam explains that the loss he has from keeping the mitzvos is “because he will lose profit, since he is occupied with the mitzvos. And if he gives *tzedakah*, he loses money. [He should compare this loss] in contrast to the great reward in the future that he will get for doing the mitzvah.”

Torah." The *pasuk* is saying that a להבה, a blazing fire comes forth from studying Torah. Because although making a *cheshbon hanefesh* and contemplating what is important in life is like fire that directs people on the right path, it doesn't compare to the purity and direction that comes from studying Torah.

Therefore, it is important to study Torah each day. The brightness of Torah will purify the learner from all his sins, and direct him onto the right path.<sup>2</sup>

### Torah and Happiness

There is a correlation between joy and Torah, because Torah results with joy, and joy results with success in Torah.

Torah study makes people happy, as it states (*Tehillim*

19:9) פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב, "Hashem's mitzvos are upright; they gladden the heart." And in *Pirkei Avos* (6) it states that one of the 48 preparations one needs in order to acquire Torah is שמחה, joy.

Why is joy needed to acquire Torah?

The Maharal (*Derech Chaim Avos* 6) writes, "*Simchah* is a great level. When one is happy, he has perfection (*sheleimus*). And when he has perfection, he can receive Torah which is the perfection of man."

The importance of joy for success in Torah study can also be explained logically, because when one is happy, he can focus better, and he can understand and remember Torah. It is undoubtedly an

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2. The Kotzker *zt'l* and other tzaddikim taught that קבעת can mean steal (see *Mishlei* 22). Thus, קבעת עתים לתורה means one should "steal" time, to find time to study Torah. Everyone has many obligations, but one can sometimes stop everything, and devote time for Torah. He "steals" time from his general schedule to study Torah. This is hinted at in Chazal's expression, קבעת עתים לתורה.

important aid towards  
acquiring Torah.

The Ibn Ezra (in his *Igeres HaShabbos*) writes, “Every day, gates of תבונה, comprehension, open, but on Shabbos, 100 gates open.” Thus, it is much easier to understand Torah on Shabbos than during the weekdays. The Chazon Ish זt”l writes that on Shabbos one can understand the sections of Torah that he didn’t succeed to understand during the week.

Perhaps this is because people are happier on Shabbos, as Shabbos is called יום שמחתכם, “Your day of joy.” And joy is one of the 48 keys necessary for acquiring Torah.

### Torah on Shabbos

Towards the end of his life, Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz זt”l traveled to Vienna for medical purposes. His son, Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz זt”l, went along with him. They stayed in Vienna for a few weeks.

Reb Yissacher Dov was impressed by a certain *bachur* in Vienna who was studying with *hasmadah* throughout the entire Shabbos. Rebbe Yissachar Dov went over to speak with this *bachur*. The *bachur* said, “I was drafted into the army, and I had to work on Shabbos. I asked the head of my platoon to let me take off on Shabbos, and in exchange, I would work extra during the weekdays. He agreed! I realized this was a miracle, so I made a *kabbalah* to make Shabbos a day solely for Torah...”

Reb Yissacher Dov said, “Who knows whether this *bachur* isn’t holding back the redemption. Heaven has so much *nachas ruach* from his *mesirus nefesh* for Torah on Shabbos, and this *nachas ruach* won’t be there when Moshiach will come...”

In the *Aseres HaDibros*, keeping Shabbos is written next to the mitzvah of honoring parents. The Chida explains that the two mitzvos

are juxtaposed, because by keeping Shabbos one honors his parents. This is because the *Zohar* states that the *chidushei Torah* one creates on Shabbos become a crown for one's parents in Gan Eden.<sup>3</sup>

Chazal (*Shabbos* 114.) say *talmidei chachamim* are בנאים, builders. What do they build? The Ben Ish Chai (*Shemos*) says, they build spiritual structures in Olam HaBa with their Torah. Shabbos is מעין עולם הבא. On this day, it is as if we are in Olam HaBa. Therefore, Torah study on Shabbos builds so much more than on a regular weekday.

The Ben Ish Chai writes, "The *mekubalim* teach, 'One accomplishes a thousand times more with his studies on Shabbos than when he studies during the weekdays.'"

Reb Elyah Roth *zt'l* said, "A *daf* Gemara on Shabbos is

equivalent to five hundred pages of Gemara on a weekday. One chapter of *Tehillim* on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred chapters of *Tehillim* during the weekdays."

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said that if a non-Jew would know the pleasure Yidden have when they study a *daf* Gemara on Shabbos morning before *Shacharis*, they would convert, just to have that pleasure.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (p.144) says, "Studying a page of Gemara before daybreak on a weekday is גן עדן התחתון (the lower Gan Eden) and to study a page of Gemara before daybreak on Shabbos is גן עדן העליון (the upper Gan Eden).

The Beis Aharon adds, "If you will learn a *daf* Gemara with *iyun* (in depth) before *Shacharis*, you will say the נשמת כל חי differently."

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3. The Yesod v'Shores HaOvadah writes that for those who aren't able to create a *chiddush* in Torah, a *kabbalah tovah* is also sufficient.

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky ז"ל would say *Tehillim* chapter קי"ט on Shabbos morning<sup>4</sup> before *Shacharis*, and he would translate many of the *pesukim* into Yiddish. For example, he would repeat many times, חסדך ה', מלאה הארץ חוקך למדני, "Hashem, Your kindness fills the world, teach me Your Torah." And in Yiddish, he would say, "Hashem the world is filled with Your *chesed*. There are so many pleasures in the world. But I'm not asking You for any of that. All I ask is that You teach me Torah."

It states (*Tehillim* קי"ט, מה אהבתי תורתך כל היום היא שיחתי, "How much I love Your Torah! I speak it all day." The Chida says that היום means Shabbos. Dovid HaMelech is saying כל היום היא שיחתי, that he would study Torah the entire Shabbos.

### Loving Torah

One of the tzaddikim of our generation asks, why isn't אהבת תורה, loving Torah, listed among the 48 paths of acquiring Torah? When one loves Torah, he will certainly study it more. It seems that loving Torah should be counted among the 48 approaches for acquiring Torah.

Another question: The first acquisition stated (from the 48 acquisitions of Torah) is תלמוד, studying Torah. Isn't that obvious? How else can one acquire Torah, if he doesn't study Torah?

He answers, the Mishnah isn't discussing how one can acquire Torah knowledge; the Mishnah is stating 48 paths to attain *love for Torah*. Therefore, אהבת תורה isn't listed. אהבת תורה is the goal and the Mishnah is teaching

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4. The *roshei teivos* of קראת ימים אותו are *gematriya* 119. This hints to the ideal of saying chapter (קי"ט, 119) on Shabbos.



approaches how one can acquire it.

The first of the 48 paths is תלמוד, because when one studies Torah, he will love Torah.<sup>5</sup>

The Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l spoke with a Holocaust survivor. This man was just about the sole survivor of his chassidus, which was totally wiped out in the Holocaust. The Beis Yisrael asked him to repeat something he learned from his chassidus before the war.

The chassid replied, "We were taught that if someone loses *cheshek*, desire, for studying Torah, he should go outdoors, contemplate on Hashem's creations and think about Hashem's greatness. Then, he should think about the holiness

of Torah and the privilege we have to study it. With these thoughts, he will be inspired to study Torah."

The Beis Yisrael told him, "Our rebbes taught us that if one doesn't have *cheshek* to study Torah, he should learn without *cheshek*" and then the *cheshek* will come.

In *birchas HaTorah* we request והערב נא, "Make the Torah sweet in our mouths..." והערב also means "to mix," because we want the Torah should mix into our blood and become part of our essence. How does one accomplish that? The Sfas Emes zt'l said that this occurs when one experiences the sweetness of Torah.

Thus, the two translations of והערב function together,

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5. Reb Chaim Kreiswirth zt'l said, "A *segulah* for *hasmadah* is to study Torah." The explanation is, when one studies Torah and he sees a question, he wants to know the answer. And when he understands one line, he wants to know the next line. Thus, studying Torah develops love for Torah, until he will become a *masmid*. Each moment you study Torah, you are bringing yourself closer to loving Torah and to being a *masmid*.

because when the Torah is sweet to you, the Torah will mix into your blood and become a part of you.

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 81.) teaches: מפני מה אברה הארץ? על שלא ברכו בתורה תחילה, “Why did they lose Eretz Yisrael? It’s because they didn’t make the *brachah* over Torah.” The Baal Shem Tov ז”ל (quoted in *Degel Machaneh Efraim, Bishalach*) explains that they didn’t pray והערב נא that the Torah should be sweet. Torah protects us from all bad and losses, but that *segulah* is solely when Torah is sweet and pleasurable to us.

### ***Derech Eretz***

One of the 48 acquisitions of Torah is מעוט דרך ארץ. The Midrash Shmuel explained דרך ארץ to mean good manners and etiquette.

Why should one have מעוט דרך ארץ, an insufficient degree of *derech eretz*? Isn’t *derech eretz* essential?

The Midrash Shmuel explains

that those who have a lot of *derech eretz* will have a hard time acquiring Torah. When they have guests they will feel obligated to spend a lot of time speaking with them, because it isn’t *derech eretz* to ignore guests. Similarly, he will go to every wedding he is invited to, and to every bris, and he will be there from the beginning to the end, because it isn’t *derech eretz* not to attend. But the consequence of his dedication to *derech eretz* will be that he will not have sufficient time to study Torah. Therefore, to succeed in Torah one must have מעוט דרך ארץ, an insufficient degree of *derech eretz*, and instead, involve himself in the pursuit of studying Torah.

### **Becoming Close to Hashem**

Sometimes, in the *tefillah*, we speak to Hashem in what’s called “third person.” Other times, we address Hashem directly.

Reb Binyamin Mendelson ז”ל writes in a letter, “I was

thinking today about *Maariv*. The first *brachah* is in 'third person.' As we say, אשר בדרבו, מעריב ערבים, 'By His word He makes it nighttime...' In the next *brachah* we speak to Hashem, directly (as we say, עמך אהבת ... למדת... נשיח בחוקך, "You love Your nation... You taught us Torah... We will discuss Your Torah..." etc. This is because Torah elevates the person and enables him to speak directly to Hashem."

### Everyone Can Be a *Talmid Chacham*

The people of Alexandria asked Reb Yehoshua ben Chininah (*Nidah* 70:): If a person desires to be wise in Torah, what should he do?

Reb Yehoshua ben Chininah replied: He should spend a lot of time learning Torah in yeshiva and he should be less engaged in business.

The people of Alexandria said: Many did that and didn't succeed.

Reb Yehoshua ben Chininah replied: He should pray to

Hashem, the One that wisdom is His, that Hashem should grant him success in Torah.

The Gemara asks: If the counsel is to pray, why did Reb Yehoshua initially tell them that success in Torah comes from studying a lot?

It's because, הוא בלא הא לא סגיא, one needs both. One must immerse himself in Torah and one must pray for *siyata dishmaya*. With *hasmadah* and with prayer, he will succeed.

Every one will succeed in Torah if he follows this program of *hasmadah* with *tefillah*, as the following stories demonstrate:

A renowned *askan* had a plan that there should be yeshivos geared specifically for *bachurim* with weak minds. They would learn less, but at least all the *bachurim* would be able to keep up. (Today, there are many such yeshivos, but at the time, it was still unprecedented.) The Chazon Ish ז"ל didn't approve. He said, "A *bachur* may cross

the street one day, and when he began crossing the street he had a weak mind, and by the time he reaches the other side his mind is sharp, and he is capable of understanding Torah. This is because his mother, grandmother, etc., prayed for him every week when they lit the Shabbos candles, and at that moment, their *tefillos* were answered. Now he can understand Torah."

The Chazon Ish believed that everyone has the potential to become great in Torah, with the combined recipe of *tefillah* and *hasmadah*, and therefore he didn't want there to be yeshivos which would prevent them from reaching their full potential.

Reb Menachem Rikanti (who lived in the era of the Rosh and the Rashba) wasn't wise in Torah, and one day, everything turned around. His story is written in the *hakdamah* of his *sefer*, Rikanti:

"Reb Menachem Rikanti loved Torah, but he was born with a very weak mind (גם השכל מאוּד). He prayed a lot and he fasted that Hashem should open his heart and mind to understand Torah. Once, on one of his fast days, as he prayed to be able to learn Torah, he fell asleep in the beis medresh. In his dream he saw someone holding a bottle of water in his hand. This man woke up Reb Menachem Rikanti and told him to drink from the water. Before Reb Menachem finished drinking, the man disappeared. Reb Menachem returned to his studies, and he saw that his mind was sharp... He had become a new person. That's when he wrote his commentaries on the Torah..." This occurred when Reb Menachem Rikanti was approximately eighty years old — two years before his *petirah*. All the *tefillos* of his lifetime finally paid off, and in the last two years of his life he wrote wondrous *sefarim* that are studied by scholars.

The Steipler Gaon *zt'l* (*Chayei Olam* vol.2, 12) brings down this story and writes, "Even if one has a weak mind, if he will place all his strength in studying Torah, he will get *siyata dishmaya* and become a *gadol* in Torah, even if that is beyond his natural abilities."<sup>6</sup>

A seventeen-year-old *bachur* came to the Chasam Sofer's yeshiva in Dreznitz, and told the Chasam Sofer that he wants to join the yeshiva and begin learning Torah. The *bachurim* who heard him say this, laughed, because they knew that this *bachur* had never learned Torah before. The *bachurim* couldn't imagine how he could possibly learn together with them in the Chasam Sofer's yeshiva. The Chasam Sofer saw matters differently. He said, "Why do you laugh? Whoever wants to learn can join the yeshiva."

The Chasam Sofer asked several *bachurim* to contribute one hour of their day to learn with the new *bachur*, which they did.

In addition to having no background in Torah, the *bachur* had a terrible memory. Even if he reviewed something a hundred times, he forgot it by the next day. But he didn't give up; he kept learning with *hasmadah*. *Chazal* say, רבא לטורר מסייעין אותו, "When one wants to be pure, Heaven helps him." Eventually this *bachur* became a great *talmid chacham*, and he was renowned for his *yirei shamayim*. He held rabbanic positions, first as one of the rabbanim in Mattersdorf (under the auspices of the Chasam Sofer) later he was rav of Shleining, and then the head of the *beis din* of Neizetz.

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6. The Steipler explains that people think people stop learning because they have a weak mind. Actually, it's the opposite: They have a weak mind because they stopped learning. Had they persevered they would have succeeded in Torah.

As the Chasam Sofer predicted, if one exerts himself in Torah he will have *siyata dishmaya* and succeed.

The Maharam Shi'k is another example of someone who had limited intelligence in his younger years, but strived with all his strength to grow in Torah, until he became one of the *gedolim*.

The Maharam Shi'k told the following to his students at the beginning of the *zman*:

The Gemara (*Yoma* 35:) says, "Reb Elazar ben Charsom obligates the wealthy, Hillel obligates the poor."

The Gemara explains, if someone says that he was wealthy, and he didn't have time to learn Torah, the court of Heaven will say, "Were you wealthier than Reb Elazar ben Charsom? He found time for Torah, why didn't you?"

If one will say that he couldn't learn Torah because he was poor, and he was always occupied earning his

living, Heaven will reply, "Where you poorer than Hillel? He was able to learn Torah, why couldn't you?"

The Maharam Shi'k added, "And I obligate all people who say that they can't learn Torah because they have a weak mind."

In this *drashah*, the Maharam Shi'k told his students that there were times when he had to learn a Gemara forty times until he understood it. Before each time, he prayed with tears and he begged Hashem, "I'm also obligated to learn Torah, despite my weak mind. Therefore, compassionate Father, give me intelligence so I can understand Torah..." Each time he said this prayer, there was improvement, and he was able to understand better. This happened every day, for a long time.

"Therefore, I obligate all those who claim they can't learn Torah because they had a weak mind. Please, don't say that. Instead, pray to Hashem



every day that you should understand the *shiur* of that day, and review the *shiur* until you know it by heart. If you will do so, Hashem will help you..."

Reb Shaul Brach *zt'l* (Rav of Kashau) writes, "I knew a family of many boys, most of them had minimum intelligence. But the brothers who studied Torah became sharp and wise. I also heard that the Mahara'm Shi'k *zt'l* had a weak mind in his younger years, but his mind became sharpened through studying Torah. The Maharam Shi'k's wisdom and teachings are now studied throughout the world."

He writes that this is the explanation of the Mishnah (*Avos* 6:2), כל מי שעוסק בתורה הרי, זה מתעלה, "Whoever studies Torah will be elevated." He will become wise, because Torah is מחכימת פתי, 'makes fools smart.'"

There were two *bachurim* who were both very successful in

their Torah studies. The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* once said about them, "It will be interesting to see which one of them will end up being a greater *talmid chacham*."

Years later, these two men met. They reminded one another what the Beis Yisrael said. One of them said, "Nu, so which of us ended up being more successful?"

The other replied, "We aren't finished yet. We're still in the middle." Because regardless of one's age, he has potential to grow in Torah knowledge.

The Chayei Adam writes, "*Chazal* (*Avodah Zara* 3.) say, אין הקב"ה בא במרוניא עם בריותיו, Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't request from a person more than he can do. Therefore, a student who has a poor mind, and he studies Torah and understands to the extent he can, he has fulfilled his obligation. This person is precious to Hashem like the greatest *gaon*... As *Chazal* (*Menachos* 110.) say, אחד המרבה,

ואחד הממעיש ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים, 'It is the same the one who does a lot and the one who does little, as long as the heart is for Heaven.' It is possible that the Torah of those who have weaker minds is even more significant than the Torah of the wise Torah scholars, because when one has a sharp, open mind, he enjoys studying Torah, and he finds pleasure from the Torah's vast wisdom. While those who have weak minds find learning Torah a burden. Chazal (Avos 5:2) say, לפום צערא אגרא, 'The reward is according to the difficulty.' Therefore those who study with a weak mind will earn an even greater reward..."

And as stated, if they follow the program of *hasmadah* and *tefillah*, they too, will eventually become great in Torah.

### Temimus with the Mitzvos

We say (in the *korbanos*), אילו היה נותן בה קרטוב של דבש אין אדם

יכל לעמוד בפני ריחה. ולמה אין מערבין בה דבש? מפני שהתורה אמרה כי כל שאור וכל דבש לא תקטירו ממנו אשי לד', "If some honey were added to the *ketores*, [the scent would be so wonderful] people wouldn't be able to stand up because of its smell. So why don't we add honey? It is because the Torah says 'Do not sacrifice sourdough and honey to Hashem.'"

Why are these words in question and answer form? It seems that the words, ולמה אין מערבין בה דבש, "So why don't we add honey?" are extra. It could have stated, simply, "We don't add honey because the Torah says..."

Most of the Mishnayos aren't written in question answer form; why is this statement different?

The answer is, common sense dictates that we should add honey into the *ketores*, since it will enhance the scent immensely. So why don't we? The answer is, the Torah doesn't permit it.

This teaches us a lesson in *temimus*. We don't keep the mitzvot when it makes sense to us, and we don't add on to the mitzvot when our common sense says we should. We keep the Torah with *temimus*, according to the laws and guidelines Hashem set for us. Our opinions and feelings are irrelevant when it comes to keeping the mitzvot.

A *mashal* is told of an alcoholic who drank vodka that contained ninety-six percent alcohol. His friends had *rachmanus* on him and said, "Why are you an alcoholic? You're ruining your *shalom bayis*, your friends are leaving you, and you are destroying your health. Why don't you stop?"

The man, still holding the bottle in his hand, answered, "You're absolutely right. There are ninety-six good *taamim*, reasons, to stop drinking. But this ninety-six percent alcohol has a *taam* (a taste) that overrides all your ninety-six *taamim*.

When keeping the Torah, common sense might tell us ninety-six explanations why we should do things differently. But we accept with *temimus* what Hashem tells us. We follow His will over human logic, our opinion, and all other considerations.

When watches and clocks were first invented, a villager bought a clock in the city and showed it to the villagers back home. They were all very impressed.

One of the villagers was jealous, and began saving up for a clock of his own. His family rebuked him, "Why do you want a clock for? You will only be causing yourself trouble. You will be obligated to live by the clock. Let's say you are hungry, but the clock says it isn't noon yet, you won't be able to eat lunch. If you are very tired, and the clock says that it's still early, you won't be able to go to sleep. What do you need all this for? Forget about buying a clock."

The man agreed. He wouldn't be a fool. He quickly went to his friend and said, "I feel so bad for you because you bought the clock. I'm certain your life has become so much harder because of it. Now you can't eat when you want to, sleep when you want... You are bound by the dictates of the clock. I truly pity you."

The man replied, "I thought about this problem, but I found a solution. If I'm hungry, and it isn't yet noon, I just move the hands of the clock to 12:00 and then I'm able to eat. And if I'm tired, and it isn't yet 10:00 P.M., I move the clock to 10:00 and I can go to sleep..."

This is how it appears when people try to adjust the Torah to their needs. They change things here and there to fit their agenda. But we embrace the Torah as it was taught to us, as Hashem gave us, and we don't change it, *chalilah*, to fit our personal needs.

We learn this lesson from the

*parah adumah*. The *parah adumah* is a חוק, a mitzvah that we don't know its reason. But we keep it anyway, because we don't keep the mitzvos when we understand them. We keep the mitzvos because they are Hashem's decree.

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* (*Yismach Yisrael, Chukas, 1*) writes, "Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorka *zt'l* explains that the sin of the *egel* was that they lacked *emunah*. They didn't believe that Hashem took them out of Mitzrayim and they didn't believe in Moshe. Their *teshuvah* (תשובה המשקל) was to have very strong *emunah*, and that is why Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded them to make a *parah adumah*, which is a *chok* without a reason, so they would observe this mitzvah solely because of their strong *emunah*..."

### Guard Your Eyes

Tamuz and Av correspond to the eyes. We should therefore be extra cautious with our eyes in these months.

Chazal (Sotah 3.) state, "A person doesn't sin unless a foolish spirit enters him."

Where does one get that foolish spirit? It is by being negligent with the eyes. As it states (Devarim 28:34), והיית

משוגע ממה שאתה רואה עיניך, "You become insane from what you see."

The Mishnas Chasidim (Choshev Machshavos)

explains that you get that foolish, insane spirit when you aren't careful with your eyes.

In Kiddush on Friday night we

say, אשר קדשנו במצותיו ורצה בנו,

"Who made us holy with His mitzvos, and Who desires us..." It seems the order

should be different. It should state, "Who desires us," and

since He desires us, "He made us holy with the mitzvos."

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of

Lelov zt'l explained that *kedushah* is written first,

because when one is holy, Hashem desires him. If it will

be רצה בנו it will be קדשנו.

This means if you are cautious with your eyes and with your

thoughts etc., Hashem will desire you.

When Reb Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz zt'l was a *bachur*,

he was traveling to Vilna to learn Torah. But he realized

that he was in a situation where there was an איסור יחוד.

He jumped out of a wagon to avoid the *aveirah*, and he

broke some bones. He had to lie in bed for nine months.

This is because for *kedushah* one must be ready to be

*moser nefesh*.

Similarly, one must be extremely cautious with one's

eyes. It is worth being *moser nefesh* for this mitzvah.

*Shemiras einayim* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. The Beis

Avraham teaches this from the *pasuk*, והמן כורע גר ועינו כעין,

הברולה. This can be translated, והמן, the amount of *parnassah*

one receives, כעין הברולה, is dependent on the purity of

the eyes.

A *cohen* may not become *tamei* from a human corpse,

but he may become impure from his seven closest relatives when they are *niftar*. A *cohen gadol* can't become *tamei*, even from those seven relatives. The same applies to a *nazir*, for he can't become impure, even from his close relatives.

The difference between the *cohen* and the *cohen gadol* (and *nazir*) is that a *cohen* is holy because he inherited the holiness from his parents and grandparents who were *cohanim*. The *cohen gadol*, however, was chosen due to his righteousness. Similarly, the *nazir* became holy because of his own *kabalos*, to refrain from wine, etc. When one is holy because of his own deeds, he is holier

than those who were born into that position.<sup>7</sup>

For our discussion, when one is cautious with his eyes, he is holy by choice, and that is the ultimate holiness.

The following story is stated in early *sefarim*, and Reb Chaim Kanievsky *shlita* writes it in one of his *sefarim*:

Once, a father and son were traveling together. The son rode on a donkey, the father walked alongside it. Someone met them and rebuked the son. "Is that *derech eretz*, to let your father walk?" They knew he was right, so they switched places. The father rode, and the son walked.

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7. The Torah states, וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו כי בן זקנים הוא לו, "Yaakov loved Yosef more than all the other brothers because he was a son of זקנים" (*Bereishis* 37:2). The Baal HaTurim writes that זקנים is *roshei teivos* for five of the *shishah sidrei mishnah*: זרעים, קדשים, נשים, ישועות (נזיקין), מועד. Yaakov taught Yosef all of the above, and therefore he loved him. Why is *seder טהרות* missing from this list?

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* answered that it's impossible to teach טהרות. One must acquire טהרות on his own. One must be cautious with his thoughts, and pass difficult tests, and then he can be called טהור.



They met with another person who rebuked the father. "You are strong; your son is weak. You should let your son ride the donkey."

Once again, they understood that he is right, so the father got off the donkey. But now the son didn't want to ride on the donkey. He was already taught that it isn't proper for him to ride a donkey while his father walked. So they both walked on either side of the donkey.

They met up with a third person, who laughed at them. "You have a donkey, why aren't you riding it?" The father and son recognized how foolish they appeared, walking alongside the donkey. They also knew that it isn't right that only the son or only the father should ride on the donkey. So they rode the donkey together.

They met up with a fourth person who shouted, "Tzar

*baalei chaim!* The donkey isn't strong enough to carry two people!"

So they put the donkey on their shoulders and carried the donkey to their destination.

When you try to appease everyone all the time it looks just like this story. Instead, one should do what he understands is correct and proper.

Regarding *shemiras einayim*, there will always be people who will say, "You don't have to be so cautious. It's ridiculous to be so *frum*" and similar rebuke. ("I just want to show you something on my phone. Why are you so afraid to look at it?") But remember, you only have to answer to yourself. Follow your conscience and do what you know you is right.

### **Seeing the Good in Others**

An aspect of *shemiras einayim*, holy eyes, is to see only the good in others.

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* of Alexander traveled to the wedding of his brother's son, and remained there for the entire week of *sheva brachos*. On the seventh day, the *chasan's* mother said suddenly, "I don't like the *kallah*. I can't even look at her. I don't like her attitude and her ways. I want our son should divorce and return home with us."

The Yismach Yisrael was very upset when he heard this.

At the final *sheva brachos*, the Yismach Yisrael spoke, and he revealed a secret of *chassidus* that many people aren't aware of.

He said: How one perceives another person has an effect on that person, and what will become of them.

This is because everyone has two sides to their personality — a good side and a negative side — and depending on what you focus on, creates an imprint on their essence. If

you focus solely on the other's good and you judged him favorably, your positive opinion creates an impact on that person's *neshamah*. That person will improve because of your positive eye. If you focus on someone's faults it will impact that other person negatively, and they will have a spiritual descent.

Avraham told Sarah (*Bereishis* 16:6), עשי לה הטוב בעיניך, "Do to her what is good in your eyes." The Targum Yonoson translates it, עבדו לה דחקין, בעיניכו, which can mean, "Fix her with your eyes." Avraham told Sarah that if she isn't happy with Hagar and her attitude, she should transform her by looking at her with a positive eye.

With this *dvar Torah* the Yismach Yisrael was hinting to his sister-in-law that if she will focus solely on the good of her new daughter-in-law it will transform her daughter-in-law, and she will

be רתקין בעיניו, fixed with her eyes, and begin to act in a preferred manner.

The mother-in-law accepted the counsel, and the marriage was saved.

It is important for parents and educators to be aware of the influence they have on their charges just by having a positive opinion about them. What they think of, and how they perceive them, affects them.

This is certainly true when a child knows what the adult thinks about them. But even when they don't know, the fact that their parents or educators are thinking positively about them has an influence on the child's soul.

It is in the parents and educators hands to transform the hearts and minds of their charges by viewing them in a positive light. They should tell themselves over and over

again, "He is good. He is very special..." because this will cause their natures to turn over and become good.

The halachah is that when one finds *tzaraas* on his body or on his house or clothing he must show it to a *cohen*. Only a *cohen* can determine whether it is *tamei* or not.

The Mishnah (*Nega'im* 2:3) states, כהן הסומא באחת מעיניו אינו רואה את הנגעים, "A *cohen* who is blind in one eye may not be called upon to look at the *tzaraas*."

We can explain that *tzaraas* represents one's faults and sins. If a *cohen* only has one eye, and he only sees the negative side of a person, he may not look at people and judge them. He judges everyone negatively, because he is unable to see the other side of the story. Only someone who has two eyes, and can see the good too, may look at others and judge them.

The Mishnah also states that the *cohen* doesn't look at *tzaraas* on a cloudy day. We can explain this halachah allegorically. A "cloudy day" suggests to when one is having a bad day. Everyone has ups and downs, and there are especially "cloudy days" when one is at a low, spiritually. The Mishnah says, "Don't look at *tzaraas*, at the bad of others, on a cloudy day, when they are having a hard time spiritually. If you study their ways on this day, you will get a very negative impression about them. Rather, look for their good on a good day.

We can also explain this Mishnah that when one is having a spiritually challenging day – a cloudy day – he shouldn't judge others, for on such a day he will most likely have critical opinions on others. Rather, he should judge others on a day when he feels satisfied with himself, for on such a day he can find the good in others too.

### ***Mikvah***

We don't have a *parah adumah* today, but we still have *mikvah*, which is a source of immense purity for the Jewish nation.

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* said that he came to his levels because of *mikvah*.

The Radvaz (vol.3 415) states, "For *teshuvah* for every type of sin, one needs *mikvah* first." This is one of the reasons everybody goes to *mikvah* on *erev Yom Kippur*. One of the steps of the *teshuvah* process is to purify yourself in a *mikvah*.

Tzaddikim said, "If *mikvah* can turn a goy into a Yid, imagine what it can do for a Yid!"

We can add, if one feels like a goy because of his sins, he should go to *mikvah*, because the *mikvah* turns a goy into a Yid.

The Mishnah states, כל שבים, מזהר, "All sea creatures are pure." The Iglei Tal

(introduction) explains that when one goes to the *mikvah*, he is in a place where there are no impurities, and therefore all *tumah* falls off.

The holy *sefarim* teach that when one goes to *mikvah*, he becomes like a newly born child. The Bnei Yissaschar (*Tishrei*, 4:11:31) explains that in a *mikvah*, one bends his head towards his chest and appears like an embryo. When one comes out of the *mikvah*, he can consider himself as though he was just born, and has a fresh slate.

### **Everything is from Hashem**

Reb Yankele Galinsky *zt'l* told the following story: A successful businessman bought a ticket to sail on the Titanic. Before leaving, he went to the Tchorkever Rebbe *zt'l* to say goodbye. The wealthy man explained, "It has become very difficult to do business here. America has more opportunities, so I'm moving there."

The Tchorkever gave him his

*brachos*, and added, "Send regards to the G-d of America."

The man was shocked. What did the Rebbe mean? Why should he "send regards to the G-d of America"? Hashem is everywhere. He expressed his confusion to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe replied, "That's my point. Hashem is here too, so why do you need to move to America? You can become wealthy here, as you can be wealthy in America..."

The man remained in Europe. (This counsel saved his life, because the Titanic sank.)

Reb Hershele was a wealthy chassid of the Pachad Yitzchak of Boyan *zt'l*. When he came to Boyan for Yom Tov, the chassidim knew that there would be plenty of money for food and drinks for their *farbrengens*, because Reb Hershel would sponsor those gatherings whenever he visited Boyan. He generally wouldn't join them, as he was a simple

person and didn't understand what they were saying. But once, he passed a group of chassidim and heard them talking about *hashgachah pratis*. Reb Hershel wanted to share his outlook (though he didn't exactly know what *hashgachah pratis* meant) so he sat down with them and said, "I'm a big businessman, so I'm familiar with this concept. Believe me, it isn't *hashgachah* and it isn't *pratis*.

It's all from Hashem!"

This week's *parashah* discusses Miriam's well, a dry stone that provided water for entire Jewish nation (much more than 600,000 people) and their livestock for forty

years in the desert. This teaches us that Hashem can do anything and everything. The Shem MeShmuel (*Chukas*, 5672) writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu can change nature and He can overrule nature. The nations of the world also know that, somewhat... But the *emunah* of the Jewish nation is greater, for they know that all of creation is like nothing; it doesn't have essence and existence without Hashem's decree. What appears like nature is Hashem's will..."<sup>8</sup>

### Hashem's Mode of Communication

Hashem told Eliyahu HaNavi (*I Malachim* 17:9), "Go to

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8. On Pesach we say, רם הודע כי לך היום אף לך הלילה. Rebbe Yaakov of Pshevorsk *zi'l* explained: הודע, Hashem, let us know, כי לך, that everything is from You. If we have that awareness it's היום, daytime, the *emunah* is true and clear like daylight. However, if we think אף לך, it's also You, which means we think that Hashem helps, but we *also* do things, הלילה, then our *emunah* is murky like nighttime.

Many people start their day with a brachah *shehakol* on a cup of coffee. Coffee is bitter, sugar is sweet; the water is hot, milk is cold. We say שהכל נהיה בדברו to remind ourselves that the bitter times and the sweet times; when one is in "hot water" or when life is cool and comfortable, all these circumstances are שהכל נהיה בדברו, directed and planned by Hashem.



Tzarfata in Tzidon and live there. הנה צויתי שם אשה אלמנה — לבלכלך — Behold I commanded a widow who lives there to support you..."

The Chofetz Chaim asks: This widow wasn't a נביאה, prophetess. How did Hashem command her to support Eliyahu?

The Chofetz Chaim (*Shem Olam, Shaar Shmiras Shabbos* 3) answers that humans communicate with speech or by sending letters, but Hashem can send a thought or desire into a person's heart, and thereby communicate His will. A person often doesn't know that Hashem planted the thought in his mind; he thinks it was his own idea. But it was Hashem speaking to him. This is how Hashem told the widow to support Eliyahu.

Based on this idea, Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zy'a*

explained the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 19:21), רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום. Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa said, עצת ה' Hashem's plan, היא תקום, will always transpire, רבות מחשבות בלב איש, via the many thoughts in man's heart.

Shim'i ben Geira cursed Dovid HaMelech. Avishai ben Tzeruyah said to Dovid HaMelech, "Why should this dead dog curse my master, the king? I will chop off his head!"

Dovid replied, "Why should it make a difference to me or you if he curses. *If Hashem told him to curse*, who can ask him, 'Why are you doing that?'" (*II Shmuel* 16: 9-10).

The Tanya (*Igeres HaKadosh* 25) asks, "When did Hashem tell Shim'i to curse Dovid? The answer is, the thought that came into Shimi's mind to curse came from Hashem."<sup>9</sup>

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9. The Tanya writes, "*Chazal* say, 'Whoever becomes angry, it is as though he worshiped idols.' This is understood to the wise, because

The Midrash states that the hatred the brothers had for Yosef was also sent to them from Above.

The Midrash (84:18) states, "When You wanted, You put love in their hearts, and when You wanted, You put hatred into their hearts..."

The brothers said (*Yeshayah* 63:17), למה תתענו ד' מדרבך, "Why did You make us stray from Your way?" because in

a way, Hashem caused them to sin.

The commentaries explain that the brothers had free will. If they wanted to, they could have realized that their hatred was wrong. Nevertheless, it was a difficult test, because the hatred was sent to them from Above.

### Guard Every Fort

It states (21:26), כי חשבון עיר סיחון והוא נלחם במלך מואב הראשון ויקח

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when one is angry, it means that he lost his *emunah*. If he would believe that whatever occurred was from Hashem, he wouldn't become angry."

The Tanya explains, "Although a man with free choice cursed him, hit him, or caused him financial loss... nevertheless, the damage was predestined, and Hashem has many messengers..."

Once, Reb Dovid Budnik *zt'l* (called 'The Saraf of Novardok') was in the forest near Mezritch, focusing on *mussar*, when a large dog charged at him and bit him. Reb Dovid fainted. Other students of Novardok revived him, and asked, "Why were you so afraid? Did you learn in Novardok to be afraid of a barking dog?"

"I wasn't afraid of the dog," Reb Dovid said. "I realized that the dog was simply fulfilling Hashem's decree. Hashem commanded the dog, 'go bite Dovid ben Chayah,' and the dog was fulfilling its mission.

"I fainted because when I saw the fire burning in the dog's eyes and when I felt the heat of the dog's breath on me, I perceived the degree of passion a creature can have when doing Hashem's will. I asked myself, 'Dovid, did you ever say *kriyas Shema* with such passion? Did you ever wear tefillin with this level of *hislahavus*?' I fainted from shame and embarrassment."

את כל ארצו מידו, "Cheshbon belongs to Sichon, because Sichon fought with Moav's first king, and took all his land from him..."

The following next *pasuk* states, על כן יאמרו המושלים באו, השבן, and Chazal (*Bava Basra* 78:) state that this *pasuk* is urging people to make a *cheshbon hanefesh*. How are these two *pesukim* related? How is making a *cheshbon hanefesh* related to Sichon's conquest of Cheshbon and Moav?

Reb Yehonoson Eibshitz ז"ל (*Yaaras Dvash* vol.1, 5) answers that Cheshbon was a small, weak city on Moav's border, and Moav didn't consider it important to guard it. Sichon took advantage of the poorly guarded city and occupied it. After Sichon had a foothold in Moav, he was able to conquer Moav's entire country.

This story can be used as a *mashal*, to teachingteach us

that we shouldn't allow the *yetzer hara* take the smallest foothold. Because the *yetzer hara* will take advantage of every small conquest to conquer more and more of us. We We must be cautious even from small sins — from matters that we don't think are so important to be cautious about — because if we will are negligent with them and permit the *yetzer hara* gain a stronghold, he will uses them that as a springboard to conquer so much more.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz writes, "Had Moav had a military presence in 's king guarded Cheshbon, Sichon couldn't have conquered it. But since Cheshbon wasn't a very large city, Moav didn't place its military strength there. After that conquest though, Sichon was able to conquer the entire Moav .... The *nimshal* is, if you will allow the *yetzer hara* to conquer a small amount, afterwards he will conquer everything, and he will rule over you, as he desires... "

Thus, the *pasuk* (21:26) states, כי חשבון עיר סיחון, Sichon first conquered Cheshbon, ויקח את כל, and after this conquest, Sichon was able to conquer Moav's entire land.

The *pasuk* concludes, על כן יאמרו, we should draw a *mashal* from this story, regarding our battle against the *yetzer hara*. באו חשבון, and remember what happened to Cheshbon, and be cautious with the small battles, too.

### Clothing

As Bnei Yisrael approached Eretz Yisrael, Amalek came out and fought with them. As it states (*Bamidbar* 21:1), וישמע הכנעני מלך ערד יושב הנגב כי, בא ישראל... וילחם בישראל, “The Canaani, king of Arad, who dwells in the south, heard that Yisrael was approaching.... And waged war with Yisrael...”

Amalek didn't succeed in this war. The Torah writes, וישב ממנו שבי, that Amalek took only one captive. Rashi writes the captive was a *shifchah*,

maidservant. Afterwards, וישמע ה' בקול ישראל ויתן את הכנעני ויחרם אותם ואת עריהם ויקרא המקום חרמה, “Hashem heard Bnei Yisrael's prayers and He gave them the Canaanites. They destroyed the people and their cities and they called the place חרמה, destruction.”

The question raised by the commentaries is that the *pasuk* doesn't state clearly that this war was with Amalek. In fact, it states the war was with Canaanites.

The words יושב הנגב, “who lives in the south,” is an indication that the war was with Amalek, for Amalek lived in the south of Eretz Yisrael. But why does this *pasuk* call the Amalekites Canaanites?

Rashi answers, “[Amalek] changed their language and spoke Canaanite, so Bnei Yisrael should pray to Hakadosh Baruch Hu to deliver the Canaanites into their hands. However, even though they spoke the language, Bnei Yisrael noticed

that they were dressed like Amelak. So they prayed ambiguously, **אם נתן תתן העם הזה**, “if you will give this nation in my hands...” and Hashem answered their *tefillos*.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* asks, Amalek should have also dressed up like the Canaanites? If they would have done so, the Jewish people wouldn't suspect a ruse. Why did they only change their language, but not their clothing?

The Chidushei HaRim replies, if Amalek would speak like

Canaan and dress like Canaan, they would be Canaan. Because if one dresses and speaks like a nationality, he has adapted that nationality as though it were his. The Amalekites would have actually become Canaanites. And had the Jewish nation prayed that Hashem deliver the Canaanites into their hands, their *tefillos* would be answered.

See This episode tells us the importance of maintaining the Jewish garbdress code. It is not as insignificant as people tend to think.

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