

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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Chukas







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## Torah Wellsprings - Chukas

### Be Happy with your Lot

Rashi (19:2) writes, "The Satan and the nations of the world mock the Jewish nation, and say, 'What is this mitzvah [of *parah adumah*]? What is the logic behind it?' Therefore, it states חֲקָה. It is My decree. You don't have permission to ask questions about it."

Similarly, there are life experiences that resemble a חֲקָה, when we don't understand why things are as they are. But we rely on Hashem, as He knows what's best for us.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 25.) discusses the praises of Reb Chanina ben Dosa. The Gemara says, "Every day, a *bas kol* came forth and said, 'Everyone in the world earns their *parnassah* in the merit of my son, Chanina, and my son Chanina only eats a *kav* (small measure) of carobs the entire week.'"

He was penniless. His wife would heat the oven on *erev Shabbos*, just so people should think she was baking something. In reality her oven was empty.

Once, his wife told him, "For how long will we suffer in this world?"

Reb Chanina replied, "What can we do?"

She replied, "Pray that Heaven give you something."

He did, and a hand came from heaven and gave them a gold leg (from a golden table).

Reb Chanina told his wife, "I saw in my dream that in the future, tzaddikim will be eating at a table that has four legs, and we will eat at a table that has three legs."<sup>1</sup>

She asked him, "Does it bother you that everyone will have a complete table, and we will have a broken one?"

He asked, "What should we do?"

She replied, "Daven that heaven should take it away."

He did so, and Heaven took back the gold leg. Chazal say that the miracle that the leg was returned to heaven was greater than the first miracle, that the leg was given to them. Because the rule is that Heaven gives, it doesn't take away.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Brachos* 32., *Chulin* 86.) quotes this Gemara and explains that the four-legged table in Gan Eden represents the four mitzvos tzaddikim excel in: (1) Torah, (2) *Avodah*, (3) *Gemilas Chasadim*, (4) and *savlanus* (to be satisfied with your portion). Initially, Reb Chanina ben Dosa's wife wasn't satisfied with her portion, which is why they would be missing a leg in Gan Eden. But eventually, she acquired the attribute of *savlanus*, to be happy with her lot, and was permitted to receive the four-legged gold table in Gan Eden.

The lesson is that we must be satisfied with our portion. Some people may have more than you but be happy with what you have because you have the amount that's best for you.

There are countless stars in the skies and innumerable grains of sand on the seashore. On *motzei Shabbos* we request, זרענו וכספנו ירבה, כחול וכנוכבים בלילה, may our children and our money be as many as sand and as the stars...

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1. The *girsah* of our Gemara is that he told her that the tzaddikim will be eating at a table that has *three* legs, and they will eat at a table with *two* legs. The version above (four legs and three legs) follows the way the Chasam Sofer quotes this Gemara.

The association of זרענו וכספנו, children and money can be explained with the following story:

Two friends from the same neighborhood studied in the same yeshiva and were similar in various ways. They were both scholars of equal caliber; they were both beloved among their peers, and they were both betrothed in the same month. They even both chose the same craft for *parnassah* – to be shoemakers. One of them came up with the idea, and the other decided that he would do the same on the other side of the city so there would be *parnassah* for both of them.

They were similar for many years, but after their marriages, they became very different.

One of them succeeded in his shoemaking business, so he opened another store and then another. And then he expanded to other venues, and he became very wealthy. However, life wasn't easy for him. He was childless for many years until he bore his first child. He then had to wait many more years until his second child was born.

Life was the exact opposite for the friend of his youth. His shoemaking business never took off. When people needed a shoe, they preferred going to his friend rather than to him, even if that meant going to the other side of town. However, his good fortune was his *nachas*. His first child was born a year after his marriage. The next son was born a year later. He had eighteen children in all.

They would meet from time to time, and they marveled at how similar they were in their youths, and yet, how different was their fate later in their lives. At these times, the wealthy friend always gave his poor friend some money.

They spoke warmly and friendly; however, the poor man harbored jealousy in his heart. He saw his friend's fancy houses, large business, etc., and he would think, "This could have been my success. Why did he have to go into the same line I chose? If

he hadn't opened his shoemaking store, I would be the wealthy one today."

The wealthy man was also jealous, although he never admitted it. He wished he had a large family like his friend. He hoped that perhaps he would have many grandchildren, but that also wasn't meant to be. Each of his two children bore two children, and his family remained small.

One day, the two met, and this time the poor man opened up his heart and expressed the pain he was feeling all the years. "All your wealth could have been mine. If you hadn't copied my idea to be a shoemaker, I would be the wealthy one today."

The wealthy friend replied, "Don't think that you are the only one who is suffering. I'm jealous of you because all I have is four descendants, while you have more than two hundred. But unlike you, I'm not angry at you at all. I don't think you took children away from me, so why do you think I took money away from you?"

This is hinted at in the words זרענו וכספנו "our children and our wealth." Just as you understand that when someone has a large family, he didn't take away your children, similarly, realize that when someone has a lot of money, he didn't earn it by taking it away from you.

Reb Yitzchak Eizik of Zutchka *zt"l* (Korach) writes the following story (its origin is from early sources):

There is a wisdom called שיחות חיות ועופות, which is to understand the language of birds and animals. Obviously, they don't speak as humans do, but those who understand this wisdom can detect messages that they are saying regarding the future.

A student asked his rebbe to teach him that wisdom. He explained to his rebbe that it would be helpful for him to know the future.

His rebbe discouraged him, saying, "Why do you need to know this wisdom? You are

better off serving Hashem with *temimus*. As Rashi (*Devarim* 18:13) writes on the *pasuk*, תמים, "Go with Hashem with *temimus* [with belief that Hashem is leading us in the very best way]... Don't think about what will be in the future. Rather, whatever happens to you, accept it with *temimus*..."

But the student kept urging his rebbe that he wants to know this wisdom and that he wants to know the future until his rebbe agreed to teach it to him.

One morning, the student went to his barn to feed his animals, and he heard the oxen speaking with each other. The student could decipher their language, and this is what he heard:

One ox was moaning and groaning, and another ox was asking why he was whining so much. The ox replied, "We are going to be smitten with a *mageifah*, plague. All the barn animals will die."

The student sold all his animals to a butcher. He was happy that he learned the language of animals.

A month later, he was feeding his chickens, and he heard one chicken say to another that a disease will ruin the crops of his field.

The student sold his crops. Once again, this wisdom saved him from a financial loss. He was thrilled that he learned the language of animals.

A few days later, he heard an animal shouting, so he came closer to make out what it was saying. He heard the following message, "Woe to the student, to our baal habayis, because he is going to die."

The student ran to his rebbe and told him the dreadful message he heard. His rebbe told him, "The *Zohar* (*Tikunei Zohar* 143:) states, 'Some are punished with their lives, and others with their money...' Hashem wanted to punish you with your money to save your life. First, Hashem planned that your barn animals should die, but you sold them and

protected yourself from a financial loss. Next, Hashem wanted to ruin your crops with a disease. The financial loss would be your atonement so that you can live. But you knew the speech of animals, and you heard about the decree, so you sold your crops. The problem is that now you don't have anything left to atone for your sins. Therefore, now the *gezeirah* is on your life!"

The lesson is to know that everything that happens to us is for our best. Sometimes we don't understand how it is for our good, but it is undoubtedly so.

For a long time, the Cooper's searched for a house to purchase. They finally settled on a house in a decent location and at a reasonable price. The day after the deal was finalized, they heard of another place for sale at a far better price and a better location. The Coopers were upset that they didn't wait another day to make the better deal. Mr. Cooper expressed his distress to his mentor, Reb Mordechai Shwab *zt'l*.

Reb Mordechai Shwab told him, "You bought the house that is *bashert* for you. The proof is that the other house wasn't put up for sale until a day after you finalized the other house. Heaven arranged it that you buy the house that is better for you."

Everything is *bashert*, including the purchases we make.

Reb Mordechai Shwab told him a story of someone who finalized a *shidduch*, and afterwards he regretted his choice. Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* told this person that he shouldn't regret his choice because he made the *shidduch* destined for him. The proof is that that the *shidduch* occurred. It wouldn't have happened if it wasn't Hashem's plan.

### Happy with *Yesurim*

A relative of Reb Eisik Shor of Slabodka *zt'l* broke her foot, and she was home-ridden for a very long time until it cured. Being home so long was hard for her, and Reb



Eizik visited her and tried to give her some *chizuk*.

He asked her, "Do you remember the pain of pregnancy and childbirth?"

"Of course, I remember."

"Are those bitter memories or happy memories? I'm certain they are happy memories because they brought you a child who gives you so much *nachas*. Similarly, all suffering in life is like childbirth because something very good will come from it. We must believe that it is so."

The Vilna Gaon teaches, "If one loses a silver coin, he should praise Hashem as though he found a silver coin. And if he loses two silver coins, he should be happy as though he found two silver coins. The same is for every bad thing that happens to him; he should think that the bad is good.... והטובה היא לפי ערך הרעה, because the extent of the good is in accordance to the extent of the bad." This means that when things seem very bad, it is Hashem's kindness coming down on us to an even greater extent.

Rav Shach *zt'l* said to a person who was suffering from enemies, "ישועת ה' כהרף עין, Hashem can help you, and in a moment all your *tzaros* will go away. In the meanwhile, follow Chazal's counsel of not answering back (see *Gitin* 36:)."

Rav Shach brought him a cup of tea with a teaspoon of honey. Rav Shach said, "Bees frighten people, and sometimes they sting, but they give us honey. Similarly, regarding those who oppose you, believe that something very sweet will come from it."

The Ohr Hachaim writes, "All the descriptions of the *parah adumah* represent *dinim* (hardships). It's red, the color of harsh *din*. In fact, it must be completely red (אדומה תמימה, representing extreme *din*). It can't even have two black hairs. Even the horns and

the hooves must be red. They may not be black. They certainly can't be white (because the *parah adumah* must represent *din*, hardships, and white represents *chesed*). Another feature of the *parah adumah* is אשר לא עלה עליה עול that it never carried a yoke on its neck. This is because a yoke (hardships) removes *din*. As Chazal (*Brachos* 5.) say, יסורין ממרקין כל עוונותיו של אדם, afflictions cleanse all sins, and sins are *din*. [Likewise, the *parah adumah* must be an animal that never had any hardships at all, so all the *dinim* are within it, and they were never sweetened through the hardships and toil work.] Then the cow is burned in fire, and fire is *din*. All these aspects of *din* become concentrated in the ashes of the *parah adumah*, and this pulls the *tumah* out from the man who came in contact with a human corpse..."

In short, the *parah adumah's* ashes represent a strong force of *din* – like a gravitational force – and it therefore attracts all *dinim* to it. When the ashes are sprinkled on the person who became *tamei*, the *tumah*, which is *din*, flees from him. This is because *tumah* is *din*, and the *tumah* goes to the gravitational force of *din* of the ashes.

We quote this Ohr HaChaim to remind us that when one endures hardships, it mitigates and removes *dinim*.

Therefore, trust in Hashem and believe that everything is for the good, for it is indeed so.

### The Purity in Our Generation

We don't have a *parah adumah* anymore, but there are ways that we can attain purity in our generation, at least, purity from sin.

The ashes of the *parah adumah* are sprinkled on the *tamei* person on the third and seventh day after he became *tamei*.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim *zt'l* explains that the third day represents Torah (see footnote),<sup>2</sup>

2. The Torah is three, as Chazal (*Shabbos* 88.) say, "Baruch Hashem who gave us a three-part Torah (Torah, *Nevi'im*, *Kesuvim*), to a nation comprised of three (*kohanim*, *levi'im*, *yisraelim*) by a third (Moshe, who was the third-born child in his family) on the third day (of שלשת ימי הגבלה) and in the third month (Sivan)."

and the seventh day represents Shabbos. Because learning Torah and keeping Shabbos purify the Jewish nation from all the *tumah* of their *aveiros*.<sup>3</sup>

We begin with discussing the purity of the Torah, and then we will discuss the purity of Shabbos.

### The Purity of Torah

It states (19:12), הוא יתחטא בו ביום השלישי וביום, the ashes of the *parah adumah* are sprinkled on the *tamei* person on the third and on the seventh day after he became *tamei*.

The Shlah, Chukas, מוסר תוכחת דרך חיים writes, "This *pasuk* carries a great hint because although we don't have the ashes of the *parah adumah* anymore, a person can purify himself when he attaches himself to studying Torah, teaching it, and keeping it."

The Shlah explains that the third day represents the third millennium, the millennium we received the Torah. The seventh day represents the seventh millennium, which is the era of יום שכולו שבת, when the world, as we know it, will be destroyed, and the *neshamos* of Bnei Yisrael will bask in Hashem's presence. The reward of the seventh millennium is given to those who purify themselves with the Torah that was given to Bnei Yisrael in the third millennium.

As the Shlah writes, "Chazal say, 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu's day is a thousand years.' This means the seven days of Creation allude to the six thousand years that the

world will exist and another thousand years when the world will be destroyed (see Ramban, Bereishis). The Torah was given in the third millennium and is [represented by] the third day of Creation. The *pasuk* says, הוא יתחטא בו, ביום השלישי, which means when one purifies himself with Torah which was given on the third day, then, וביום השביעי יטהר, he will be completely pure in Olam HaBa, יום שכולו שבת. But if he doesn't become pure with the third day [which means he doesn't purify himself with Torah], he won't be pure on the seventh day. As Chazal say, מי שטרח בערב שבת יאכל בשבת, if you prepare from before Shabbos, you will eat on Shabbos."

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 42:) discusses, עמילן, של טבחים, which is dough made from not fully grown wheat kernels. This dough was placed on top of a pot that was cooking, and it drew out the זוהמא, the impure particles found in the food.

Tzaddikim said that the more common translation of עמילן is toil. Thus, Chazal are hinting that if you toil in Torah, this will draw out of you all your זוהמא, impurities.

### The Purity of Shabbos

We attain the purity of Shabbos by keeping Shabbos and by being happy on Shabbos.

It states (*Bamidbar* 10:10), וביום שמחתכם, "On your day of joy," and Chazal (*Sifri* 19) explain that this is referring to Shabbos.

We should be happy every day of the year, as it states (*Tehillim* 100:2), עבדו את ה' בשמחה, "Serve Hashem with joy." <sup>4</sup> But there is an

3. The Lev Simchah *zt'l* (*Ekev*) adds that the third day also hints to Shabbos. The ashes of the seventh day represent the purity that comes from keeping Shabbos, and the ashes are sprinkled on the third day, too, hint that the purity of Shabbos is enhanced and increased when one prepares for it during the weekdays.

4. There was a child who choked on a coin and his face was turning blue. The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said, "The only solution is to bring the child to the Ponovitzer Rav, because the Ponovitzer Rav is an expert in getting coins out of people, even out of the tightest places..."

Everyone laughed, including the child. This dislodged the coin and it found its way out. The Chazon Ish commented, "Happiness saves people from all *tzaros*."



added importance to be happy on Shabbos. As it says, *יום שמחתכם*, "Your day of joy."

We sing in the *zemiros*, *ביום השבת קודש שישו*, *ושמחו כמקבלי מתן נחליאל*, "Be happy on Shabbos as those who received the Torah." The joy should be complete.

Some explain that the *tochachah* (curses of the Torah) comes when people aren't happy on Shabbos. The hint is from the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 28:47), *תחת אשר לא עבדת את אלקיך בשמחה*, *ובטוב לבב*. The Bnei Yissaschar (*Igra d'Kalah*) explains that *תחת אשר* can be translated as "under [or after] the letters אש". In the order of the alef beis, the letters after אש are שבת. The *pasuk* is hinting that the *tochachah* comes for not serving Hashem with joy on Shabbos.

It states in *sefer Masuk m'Dvash* (from Reb Yitzchak Parchi *zt'l* 6), "We saw, with our own eyes, people who had a problem when Shabbos arrived, but they took their minds off the *tzarah*, and they were happy with the Shabbos, and didn't let their worries enter

their heart; when Shabbos was over, their problem was gone. Everything turned around to joy. They were saved from their *tzaros* through wonderful miracles."

Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman *zt'l* was from the *tzaddikim* who lived in America about a hundred years ago. He set an example that one can be an *ehrlicher* Yid even in America.

One of the mitzvos that he excelled in was *hachnasas orchim*. Every Shabbos, there were many guests at his table.

Once, his daughter was very ill, and Reb Yaakov Yosef and his Rebbetzin remained with her in the hospital around the clock.

When Shabbos was approaching, they decided to go home, so they could perform their weekly mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*.

At the same time, there was another Herman in the hospital, not related to them, and that Herman was *niftar* on Shabbos.

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We'll add that the boy wasn't really happy. He was laughing because he saw that everyone else was laughing. But that was also enough to save him. Because when one isn't able to be truly happy, he should pretend that he's happy, because that will also bring *yeshuos*.

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* said that a hint to this is from the words (*Devarim* 16:16) *והיית אך שמח*. The first letters spell *שוא*, falsehood, and hints that a person can have a false joy too, because a false joy will eventually become a true joy.

There was a Slonimer Chasid who lived in Teveria called Reb Mordechai (Motke) Lider *zt'l*. From time to time, Reb Motke took the very long trip to travel to Slonim, Lithuania, to be by his Rebbe, the Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l*. (In those days, this was an extremely long trip.)

Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalayim, asked him why he takes such long trips, and what is lacking in his *avodas Hashem* if he remained in Teveria.

This is what Reb Motke replied:

The Mishnah (end of Sotah) states, *משמת ר' מאיר בטלו משלים*, "When Reb Meir was *niftar*, it became *batel*, annulled, the people who knew how to tell parables. *משמת בן עזאי בטלו שקדנים*, when ben Azay was *niftar*, it became *batel* truly diligent Torah scholars, who study with *hasmadah*..." The Mishnah lists other things that became *batel* over time. Then the Mishnah writes, *משמת רבן גמליאל הזקן בטל כבוד התורה ומתה טהרה ופרישות*, when Raban Gamliel the elder was *niftar*, the honor of Torah was *batel*, annulled, and purity and *prishus* died." Notice that by the final words, the Mishnah doesn't say that *prishus* became *batel*, rather that it died. This means *טהרה ופרישות* is still there, but in a dead state.

Reb Motke explained, "This is because there are people who practice purity and *prishus* (which means they detach themselves from unnecessary pleasures) but they do so with a heavy, sad heart. They don't really want to separate from the pleasures of this world. I travel to Slonim because there I learn how to have *taharah* and *prishus* with *simchah*. Because *prishus* should be alive, and kept with joy. It shouldn't be dead."

According to American law, the hospital had to notify the next of kin as quickly as possible, so they sent a messenger to the Herman home. But accidentally, they confused the two Herman families, and the messenger was sent to the home of Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman.

When the messenger arrived at the door with a letter, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Herman refused to accept it. It was Shabbos, and Shabbos is a day for joy.

The messenger left the letter at the home of one of the Herman relatives. That relative came to the Herman home to tell the parents the terrible news, but they refused to listen to what their relative was saying.

After *havdalah*, another messenger from the hospital arrived at their door. "We're so sorry," he said. "We made a mistake with the last letter. Your daughter is doing fine. In fact, over the past twenty-four hours, her health has improved. There was another Herman in the hospital who passed away. We meant to send the letter to that family, and accidentally sent the letter to you. Once again, you don't have to worry. Your daughter is doing very well."

Their joy on Shabbos healed their daughter.

Here is another person who merited salvation when he was happy on Shabbos.

Friday morning, after his checkup, the doctor told him, "Your suspicions were correct. You have a kidney stone. And not just one. You have three kidney stones piled one on top of the other. The bottom stone is size 6, above it is a stone size 4, and on top is a stone size 2. We'll give it a couple of weeks, and maybe matters will improve. However, if things don't become better, we will need to operate."

It was hard for this *yungerman* to be happy that Shabbos, due to his illness and fear of operation, and his melancholy affected all the family members. No one was

in the mood of singing *zemiros*, and the delicious Shabbos food tasted bland.

But suddenly, the *yungerman* became happy. With joy, he took out a Gemara *Bava Metzia* and studied *daf* 25. His face was shining as he sang the Gemara, and his family watched on, not understanding how and why his mood changed so quickly.

After studying the Gemara a few times, he told his family, "The Gemara discusses someone who found three coins of three different sizes, one on top of the other. The largest coin is at the bottom, a medium-sized coin is in the middle, and a tiny coin is on top. The Gemara says that it is evident that these coins didn't fall in this manner. Obviously, someone placed it there in this formation. Therefore, the finder must announce that he found it because the formation is a *siman*."

"I remembered this Gemara and realized that my kidney stones are in the same formation: the largest stone at the bottom and the smallest stone at the top. As the Gemara explains, this formation means that the stones didn't develop by chance. It was placed there, purposely, by Hashem. And since it is from Hashem, I know that it is for my good."

A week later, the stones left his body naturally. The joy of Shabbos brought him the remedy.

The renowned *gabbai tzedakah* Reb Dovid Leib Shwartz *zt'l* was very cautious with keeping Shabbos with all its halachos. Even in the concentration camp during the War, he kept Shabbos as best as he could.

One week he told his friends that he wanted to eat three meals on Shabbos. His friends laughed at him because all they had to eat was a small piece of bread in the morning and nothing else. But he didn't let their teasing prevent him from hoping and from aspiring that he will eat three meals on Shabbos.

Erev Shabbos, the commander of their barrack, gave everyone a loaf of bread and explained, "The bread isn't for today. Sunday, we will be trekking for three days, and this is all you will have for three days, so save the bread for then."

Reb Dovid Leib didn't heed the warning. He wanted to eat three meals on Shabbos. Friday night, he made Kiddush on the bread, and ate some. He ate another piece in the morning, and he finished it at *shalashudos*.

He didn't know how he would walk three days without food, but in the meanwhile, he was happy that he ate three meals of Shabbos.

After Shabbos, their commander told them that there was a change of plans. "Everyone must return the bread. We won't be traveling for three days, as originally planned." Everyone returned the loaf of bread, except for Reb Dovid Leib, who already ate his bread *l'kovod Shabbos*.

### **Zemiros**

One primary way to be happy on Shabbos is by singing *Shabbos zemiros*.

Singing songs on Shabbos is an old custom. The Gemara (*Megillah* 12:) states that at Achashveirosh's feast, the Jewish nation sang *zemiros*.

Tosfos (*Sanhedrin* 37: ד"ה מכנה) writes, "The *Teshuvos HaGeonim* writes that the people in Eretz Yisrael only say *kedushah* on Shabbos. This is because it states (*Yeshayah* 6:2), שש כנפים, לאחד, that the *malachim*, the *chayos hakodesh*, have six wings, and with each wing, it sings a song on each of the weekdays. When Shabbos arrives, the *chayos* say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'We don't have another wing with which to sing before You.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, 'I have another wing, which will sing before Me. As it states (*Yeshayah* 24:16), מכנה הארץ זמירות שמענו, 'Songs will be heard from the wing that's upon the earth.'" This is referring to Bnei Yisrael, who sings songs to Hashem on Shabbos.

We can't begin to imagine the holiness and greatness of the *malachim*. Yet, on Shabbos, we take their place, and we sing to Hashem.

The Chidushei HaRim (quoted in *Sfas Emes*, *Vayikra*, תרמ"ח) adds that wings are used for flying. Singing is called כנף, wings, because with song we can fly up to high levels.

Reb Shlomke Zvhiller *zt'l* said, "Every mitzvah one does on Shabbos is five hundred times greater than the same mitzvah performed on a weekday. A *daf* Gemara studied on Shabbos is equivalent to studying five hundred *daf* Gemara on a weekday (about five *masechtos*!). A chapter of *Tehillim* on Shabbos equals five hundred chapters of *Tehillim* on a weekday (more than three times the entire *Tehillim*)."

We understand that if one sings a *zemer* on Shabbos, it is like he sang five hundred songs to Hashem. And if one sings for an hour on Shabbos, it is like he sang for five hundred hours.

### **Chinuch HaBanim**

Among the many benefits of singing songs on Shabbos is that it creates a good atmosphere for the children so that they will love Shabbos and Hashem.

The Mahari"t (son of the Mabi"t) writes in his *sefer Tzafnas Paneiach* (*Devarim* 22:6), "There is a bird that stays far away from people, and only comes near humans to raise its children. Hakadosh Baruch Hu implanted this nature in this bird. Generally, they [live in the desert], far away from the traps and nets that humans set to catch them. Whenever humans come near, they fly far away. But for their children's sake, they hover over them. And at these times, even if people approach it, the birds remain sitting silently over their offspring. They risk their lives and are prepared to die, if need be, because they are devoted to their offspring."

This bird's devotion to its children is a lesson for us. How much devotion we should



have for our children! People are busy, there is much to do, but for your children's sake, you must be available for them. Be prepared to be *moser nefesh* (to go beyond your comfort zone, and to devote yourself) for your children's sake. Learn with them, speak with them. You don't have time, it is hard to do it, but that is our obligation, in order to raise Jewish children.<sup>5</sup>

Hashem told Moshe, *Bamidbar* (27:18), קח את יהושע בן נון איש אשר רוח בו, "Take Yehoshua bin Nun, a person who has the spirit in him." How do you take him?

Rashi explains, קחנו בדברים אשר יקח להנהיג, "Take him with words. Say, 'Fortunate are you, having merited to lead Hashem's children.'"

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* said that these words aren't only told to Yehoshua. These words are said to each *mechanech*, regardless of whether he is teaching Gemara to yeshiva students, alef beis to four-year-olds, or a girls' school teacher. A *bas kol* comes forth and tells them, אשר יקח להנהיג, בניו של מקום, "You are fortunate because you have the merit to be the leader for Hashem's children."

We'll add that this *bas kol* is also for parents. Hashem tells them, אשר יקח להנהיג, בניו של מקום, "You are fortunate to lead Hashem's children."

This privilege comes along with responsibilities, and we must devote ourselves to this service.

## Toil in Torah

We wrote above from the Shlah HaKadosh that studying Torah purifies the Jewish nation from all tumah.

Hashem loves when we toil in Torah study. As we say in *Akdamos*, צבי וחמיד ורגיג, דילאון בלעותא, "Hashem loves and desires that we should become exhausted over Torah study."

The Gemara (*Brachos* 63:) says, "How do we know that Torah knowledge exists exclusively with those who are *moser nefesh* to know Torah? Because it states (this week's *parashah*, 19:14) זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל, "Where do you find Torah? By those who die in the tents of Torah."

To "die in the tents of Torah" means to study Torah with all your strength.<sup>6</sup> It also means to study Torah when you hardly have time because you have so many other obligations.

For many people, earning a living takes up most hours of the day. And then they are exhausted. How will they find time for Torah?

Chazal (*Shabbos* 31) say that we will be asked in heaven, קבעת עיתים לתורה, "Did you set times for Torah?" One translation of קבע is to steal (see *Mishlei* 22:23). The Kotzker *zt'l* said that we will be asked, קבעת עיתים לתורה, did you steal time away from your busy schedule to study Torah.

It is the custom in many communities that people begin singing when a *chasan* says a *drashah* to prevent him from completing his *drashah*. The Pnei Menachem *zt'l* explained that this custom teaches the *chasan*,

5. Keep this in mind in regard to technology. Some adults say that they need access to the internet for their business, etc. Very often, they are exaggerating. They can manage without it. And even if they do need it for their job, they should remember that parents are *moser nefesh* for their children. Because if you have it, what will prevent your children from having it?

6. A chassid told the Chidushei HaRim that he finds *avodas Hashem* very hard. The Chidushei HaRim replied, "It would be a disgrace to us if serving such a great King came easy for us."

"Until now, you were single, and you didn't have disturbances. When you wanted to study Torah, nothing stopped you from doing so. But now you are married, you have obligations, and there will be chores that will prevent you from studying Torah. Sometimes, you will begin studying Torah, and suddenly you will be interrupted. Now you need to get accustomed to studying Torah, despite all the interruptions."

A hint is from the *pasuk*, אדם כי ימות באהל, that even when you are in an אהל, in your home where you have disturbances and interruptions, even then strive to be, זאת חקת, to sacrifice to learn and know Torah.

Rebbe Aharon Roth *zt'l* (*Shomer Emunim*) writes in a letter that there was a time when he tasted death in every word of Torah and tefillah. He was going through a spiritually difficult time, and he simply wasn't able to say one word without feeling bitterness.

One day, he visited a grave of a tzaddik, and he prayed there with tears that he should pass this difficult test. Then, he took out a Gemara and opened it to a random place. It opened to the *Rosh* in *hilchos mikvaos*. He told himself, "I'm not leaving this spot until I understand this page." It was bitter, but he kept on studying. And then he tasted the sweetness of learning Torah, and that difficult test left him.

This is hinted in the words, זאת התורה, the acquisition of Torah is, אדם כי ימות באהל, when you allow yourself to feel the bitter taste of death, and even then you don't stop learning.

You keep on studying until the Torah becomes sweet for you.<sup>7</sup>

Torah study requires toil, but that is for our benefit. As it states, לפום צערא אגרא, the reward is according to the hardships.

It states (*Avos* 5:5), עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים, רווחים. The Ra'v Bartanura *zt'l* explains, "צפופים comes from the word צף על המים, to float. Because there were so many people in the Beis HaMikdash, the people were pressed together until their feet were raised above the ground, and they stood suspended in the air. Nevertheless, משתחוים רווחים, when they bowed down, a miracle occurred; they bowed down with plenty of space, and each person was four *amos* removed from his fellow man. This was so that one won't hear his friend's *viduy*, when he confesses and repents on his *aveiros*."

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (שו"ת יו"ד רל"ד ד"ה) asks that Hashem could have made a miracle that there be enough place for everyone also when they stood. Why did they need to stand so tightly together in the Beis HaMikdash?

The answer is that this was to increase their reward. As Chazal (*Brachos* 6:) say, אגרא, דכלה דוחקא, the reward [for going to a popular Torah *shiur*] is for the discomfort (because of the many people present).

Similarly, for all those who have a hard time learning Torah, we tell them that this is for their benefit. Because of their hardships, they will earn a greater reward.

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7. The Tiferes Shlomo (*Chukas*) explains that זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל means that one should imagine that he is dead, and that he was granted one day to return to the world to study Torah. If you study Torah with that thought in mind, you will devote all your efforts to the Torah.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* says that at the times set for learning, one should imagine that he is dead. People will come and tell him that he must help them, but he should answer, "If I were dead now, you would manage some other way. When I'm learning, it is like I'm dead." This is hinted in the words, זאת התורה אדם, כי ימות באהל, to acquire Torah, you must consider yourself as though you are dead, and you are not available to do anything else.

## Everyone can Toil in Torah

Toiling in Torah is for everyone. Not everyone will indeed be a *gadol b'Torah*. Some might not even become a *talmid chacham*. But that shouldn't prevent us from studying Torah and trying our best. Our obligation is to toil, and that is something everyone can do.

The Midrash (see *Chofetz Chaim, Toras HaBayis* 13) tells a story of a king who commanded his servant to fill barrels with water. For each barrel filled with water, the worker will receive a gold coin.

One of the workers stopped working, and he sat on the side. Someone asked him, "Why aren't you working? The king hired you to fill the barrels with water, and you will be rewarded for each barrel."

The man replied, "All the barrels have holes in them. Even if I fill the barrels with water in a short time, all the water will seep out. So what's the purpose?"

The man replied, "That's not your problem. You do your job, and you will get paid for each barrel you fill."

The *nimshal* is, many people feel that Torah study isn't for them because whatever they study, they forget. We tell them, "You must study Torah, and you will be rewarded for each time you do. If you forget what you learn, that won't detract from your reward. So why should you care? Carry out your mission, and don't worry about the rest."

Eisav is described as (*Bereishis* 25:27), איש יודע, ציד, an expert hunter. Yaakov isn't described as, יודע תורה, a Torah scholar. Rather, יושב אהלים, someone who sits in the beis medresh, someone who studies Torah. It doesn't say that he excelled in Torah.

Reb Shmuel Wosner zt'l (*Drashos v'Sichos Shevet HaLevi* ט' תשנ"ט p.60) explains that regarding matters of this world, only perfection and success counts. Therefore, Eisav's pride is יודע ציד, that he is an expert hunter.

But for spiritual matters, trying is the ultimate. Therefore, Yaakov's praise is יושב אהלים, that he sits in beis medresh and he studies Torah. Trying the best you can is the greatest praise.

Sefer Chassidim (תתקמ"ה) writes, "Contemporary scholars are less knowledgeable in Torah compared to the scholars of past generations. Nevertheless, in Hakadosh Baruch Hu's eyes, the less-wise scholars of the present are equivalent to the genius scholars of the past, because, otherwise, every generation can claim, 'Why didn't you create me in an earlier generation, and I would know a lot more Torah?' The answer is that the amount you know isn't what counts. You can know little or a lot; the main thing is that your intention is for Heaven. Don't waste time; study Torah whenever you can, even if you aren't as sharp and as wise [as the scholars of the past]."

Dovid HaMelech said (*Tehillim* 119:54), זמירות, "Your Torah were like songs to me." The Gemara (*Sotah* 35.) says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was upset that Dovid said this. Torah shouldn't be called זמירות.

Why not?

The Brisker Rav zt'l explains that some people don't know how to sing. They can't carry a tune. Calling Torah *zemiros* is an indication that it isn't for everyone.

The Gemara says that Dovid HaMelech was punished for calling Torah *zemiros*, and he erred in halachah, and permitted the *aron* to be carried on a wagon. He forgot the halachah of (*Bamidbar* 7:9), בכתף ישאו, that the *aron* must be carried by the *levi'im*, on their shoulders (see *Shmuel* 1, 6:19). This was his punishment for calling the Torah *zemiros*.

The Brisker Rav explains that the punishment reminded Dovid that when it comes to Torah, all one needs is בכתף ישאו, to place the yoke of Torah on his shoulders, and to try his best. Success isn't your obligation. Just to do the best you can.



The Magen Avraham (end of 580) writes, "Friday *parashas Chukas*, some people fast because twenty wagons filled with sefarim were burned in France on this day. The date wasn't established on the date of the month (that it occurred, rather the fast is on the Friday of *Shabbos Chukas*). This is because in a *shaalas chalom* (a prophetic dream) it was revealed that the tragedy is associated with the *parashah*. Because on the words זאת חקת התורה, Onkelus writes, דא גזירת אורייתא, this is the decree on the Torah.

"Another reason for this fast is because on this day, two large communities were destroyed in the massacres of the years ת"ח ת"ט, as written in the *selichos* authored by the Shach..."

Today, most people don't fast on this day. Nevertheless, we understand that if this is a day that the Torah was burned, *r'l*, it is also a day for us to take on our shoulders the yoke of Torah, love Torah, and make its study our life's mission. Whether we succeed or not isn't as crucial as our attempt to learn and to know as much as we can.

### Salvation Comes from Toiling in Torah

The *Zohar* (vol.3, 216:) states, "Whoever toils in Torah his *mazal* changes." If he had a *mazal* to be poor, childless, or any other kind of *yesurim*, his *mazal* improves in the merit of toil in Torah.

Eighty years ago in Yerushalayim, someone had a *kameya* (קמיע) (amulet) that was written by the Ta"z. He would lend it to the ill and to childless women, and there were many salvations.

Once, a person received the *kameiyya* and opened it. He wanted to copy what was written inside so that he could have a *kameiyya* of his own.

He was wrong for doing this for at least two reasons:

(1) Even if he copied the Taz's *kameiyya*, it wouldn't have healing powers because it isn't solely *what* was written in the *kameiyya*

that healed, but also *who* wrote the *kameiyya*. The Taz's *kameiyya* brought salvation, and copying it wouldn't accomplish anything.

(2) He also didn't realize that by opening up the Taz's *kameiyya*, the *kameiyya* lost its healing powers.

Nevertheless, he opened it, and this is what he found inside. "I, Dovid ben Shmuel HaLevi, toiled to understand Tosfos (*Chulin* 96.) and in this merit, may Hashem help that all the barren should have a salvation, and all the ill should be healed."

Generally, a *kameiyya* contains names of *malachim*, but this time, all the *kameiyya* said was that he toiled in Torah. The toil in Torah brought the salvations.

The Taz had many merits. For example, he could have written that he wrote a primary commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*. But these merits weren't mentioned, only that he toiled in Torah. That alone is enough to bring salvation.

A *bachur* asked the Chazon Ish *zt'l* whether he should follow the doctor's counsel and have an operation. The Chazon Ish heard the details of the situation, and he told the *bachur* that he should go ahead with the procedure.

The *bachur* then said, "Can I speak in learning with the Chazon Ish? I have a question I want to discuss."

The Chazon Ish enjoyed speaking in learning with *bachurim*, and they discussed a deep topic in *Kodshim* for about an hour.

The Chazon Ish was impressed by this young man's erudition. The Chazon Ish said, "Regarding the operation, I changed my mind. You don't need the operation."

The *bachur* asked the Chazon Ish why he changed his mind. The Chazon Ish replied, "When you asked me whether you should have the operation, I didn't know that you are a *talmid chacham*. But now that I see you are among the עמלי התורה, those who toil in Torah, you don't need the operation. Because

Hashem deals with עמלי התורה in an entirely different way (*Maaseh Ish* vol.1, p.77).

Some years ago, Reb Malkiel Kotler *shlita*, *rosh yeshiva* of Lakewood, repeated this story, and an elderly person stood up and said, "I am the בעל המעשה." The story happened to him.

### **Parnassah**

Reb Moshe Aharon Stern *zt'l* was in Switzerland to raise funds for Yeshivas Kamenitz, where he served as the *mashgiach*. He was planning to daven *shacharis* in a particular shul where wealthy people daven, but when Reb Moshe Aharon heard that this minyan davens after the *zman tefillah* (or perhaps it was after the *zman kriyas Shema*), he decided to daven elsewhere.

Later that day, Reb Moshe Aharon met with another *meshulach* who told him, "It's a shame you weren't with us for *shacharis*. There was one wealthy person in the beis medresh, who gave one hundred francs to anyone who approached him."

One hundred francs was a lot of money in those days.

Reb Moshe Aharon went to that beis medresh for *minchah*, and that wealthy man gave him a hundred francs.

After *minchah*, the wealthy man asked the *gabbai*, "Who is the person, with the impressive appearance, who just asked me for money? He looks like a *talmid chacham*."

"He's an exceptional *talmid chacham*," the *gabbai* replied, and he described, a little bit, Reb Moshe Aharon Stern's stature.

The wealthy man gave Reb Moshe Aharon another three hundred francs.

After *maariv*, the wealthy man approached Reb Moshe Aharon. He said, "I live in America and came here for business. Tomorrow I will be returning home. I came to Switzerland with a bag of bills designated for *tzedakah*, but there were fewer

*meshulachim* than I expected, and I still have a thousand francs left. Here, take them."

So, Reb Moshe Aharon earned enormously by being cautious about davening *shacharis* at the right time. If Reb Moshe Aharon had been in the shul in the morning, he would receive one hundred francs like everyone else. By being scrupulous with the halachah of *zman tefillah*, Reb Moshe Aharon received fourteen times more.

Let this be a reminder that we should set times for Torah and tefillah, and this won't detract from the *parnassah*. On the contrary, we will earn more money. Keeping halachos and devotion to Torah will never take away from your *parnassah*.

Germany gave reparations money to people who suffered during the war. One person had the potential to receive a lot of money from the Germans, but he would have to lie on a detail. (He would have to write that he left the country two weeks after he actually left.) He asked the Brisker Rav *zt'l* whether he may tell this lie to get all that money. The Brisker Rav didn't want to answer, and he sent him to the Chebiner Rav *zt'l*. The Chebiner Rav said, "In my opinion, there is no mitzvah of *hishtadlus* with falsehood (see שר התורה p.480).

Because *hishtadlus* doesn't give us the *parnassah*. Hashem does. Therefore, the more loyal we are to halachah, the greater the likelihood we will earn *parnassah*.

### **Speech**

The Midrash says that if Moshe would have come to Eretz Yisrael, the Beis HaMikdash would never be destroyed. Many commentaries explain that whatever Moshe built remained for eternity. Therefore, if Moshe would come to Eretz Yisrael and build the Beis HaMikdash, it would remain forever.

The Prashas Drochim has another approach. He explains that if Moshe came to Eretz Yisrael, the Jewish nation wouldn't

commit the aveirah that caused the churbon. The first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *avodah zarah*, and if Moshe came to the land, they wouldn't sin with *avodah zarah*, and automatically the Beis HaMikdash would endure, forever.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Toras Moshe* ד"ה יען) asks, the second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *lashon hara*. Moshe being in Eretz Yisrael would prevent the nation from worshipping *avodah zarah* (as the Prashas Drachim elaborates), but what will a guarantee that the nation won't speak *lashon hara*? Perhaps the Beis HaMikdash won't last forever, rather it will be destroyed because of *lashon hara*!

The Chasam Sofer answers that Moshe's *aveirah*, which prevented him from coming to Eretz Yisrael, was that he hit the stone instead of speaking to it. If Moshe had spoken to the rock and it would give forth water, Klal Yisrael would recognize the power of words, and with that awareness, they would never speak *lashon hara*. People speak *lashon hara* because they think, "It's just words. How much harm can words cause?" However, if Moshe could draw water from the stone with words, the nation would appreciate the power of words, to do good or bad, and they would stay away from *lashon hara*.

Therefore, if Moshe wouldn't have hit the stone and would come to Eretz Yisrael, the Beis HaMikdash would never be destroyed. There would have been no *avodah zarah* or *lashon hara* that caused the churbon Beis HaMikdash.

How is speech so powerful? How can it cause so much harm?

Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l* explains that it is because speech can do so much good. There's a rule, *זה לעומת זה*, everything has an opposite side, a counterforce. When there is *kedushah*, there is an opposing force in the *tumah*. Therefore, since a person can accomplish so much good with his words (through tefilla and *divrei Torah*) there must be an opposing force on the side of *tumah*. This explains the great tragedy of speaking *lashon hara*.

As it states (*Mishlei* 12:18), *יש בוטה כמדקרות חרב*, ולשון חכמים מרפא, "Some people speak and cause harm like a stab of a sword, but the words of the wise heal." This means that since words have a healing potential and can accomplish so much good, they also can hurt like a sword.

The Torah (19:15) says, *וכל כלי פתוח אשר אין צמיד פתיל עליו טמא הוא*, "Every [earthenware] vessel that is open and not firmly closed becomes *tamei* [when it's in a room together with a human corpse]."

The Avodas Yisrael (*Parah*) says that implied in this halachah is that a person must keep his mouth sealed shut, *צמיד פתיל*, firmly closed, or he will become *tamei*. "The *pasuk* is saying that if a person speaks everything he desires and never closes his mouth, he will certainly speak *lashon hara*, *rechilus*, and *nivul peh*, too. The *pasuk* says, *וכל כלי פתוח*, if his mouth is opened to speak all kinds of *devarim beteilim*, *אין צמיד פתיל עליו*, he doesn't have any control over his words, this person is *tamei*," because he will surely also speak forbidden words.

Therefore, we should train ourselves to be careful with our words.