

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Shmini



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Shmini

"Aharon Remained Silent"

Reb Nissim Gaon relates the following Midrash:

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi once asked Eliyahu HaNavi to allow him to join him on his travels. Eliyahu HaNavi agreed on one condition. He cannot ask any questions.

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi agreed, and they set out on their travels.

At their first stopover, they knocked at the home of an elderly couple and said, "We are travelers, and we need a place to stay."

The couple took them in warmly and performed *hachnasas orchim* superbly. They gave them whatever they requested and honored them immensely.

Before leaving this home, Reb Yehoshua ben Levi heard Eliyahu HaNavi daven, "Please, Hashem, their cow should die..."

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi was shocked. The cow was the elderly couple's source of *parnassah*. Why did Eliyahu HaNavi punish them after they had treated them so well?

But he had promised that he wouldn't ask any questions, so he remained silent.

When nighttime came, they knocked on the door of a very stingy person and asked to stay in his home.

At first, he didn't let them in, but Eliyahu HaNavi pleaded with him, and the miser grudgingly allowed them into his home, but refused to give them any food.

In the morning, Reb Yehoshua ben Levi heard Eliyahu HaNavi daven, "Hashem, please, the wall that surrounds this house should be firm. Don't let it collapse..."

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi was baffled. "Why was Eliyahu HaNavi praying for the good of this person? He didn't give us food,

and he almost didn't allow us to sleep in his home!" But he didn't ask Eliyahu for an explanation, as he had promised.

They traveled on and arrived in a very unfriendly city. The residents pretended not to see them. No one invited them into their homes. Reb Yehoshua ben Levi heard Eliyahu daven, "May everyone in this city be a leader."

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi didn't understand, but he remained silent.

They traveled on and arrived in a very kind city where everyone wanted to host them. Reb Yehoshua ben Levi thought, "If Eliyahu blessed the inhospitable people each to become a leader, he will certainly give a special *brachah* to this fine town. But Reb Yehoshua ben Levi heard Eliyahu HaNavi say in his *tefillos*, "May only one person of this city be a leader."

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi decided that he couldn't travel with Eliyahu HaNavi anymore, because he didn't understand his ways at all. He told Eliyahu HaNavi that since they won't be traveling together anymore, he was permitted to ask for explanations of Eliyahu HaNavi's mysterious *tefillos*.

Eliyahu Hanavi replied, "At our first stop, we were at the home of an elderly couple who honored us well and served us a fine meal. I thought, 'What can I give them?' The woman of this home was destined to die shortly after we left, so I davened that their cow should die instead of her.

"Then we came to the home of a stingy person. He almost didn't allow us to sleep in his house, and he didn't give us a morsel to eat. He deserved to be punished for the way he treated us. The miser didn't know, but there's a treasure buried on his property, under the wall surrounding his home—the people who lived in his house before him

buried the treasure there. Naturally, the wall will collapse after some time, and the miser would find the treasure and become wealthy. I prayed that the wall should remain solid and firm, and it shouldn't fall in his lifetime. That way, he won't ever find the treasure.

"Then we arrived at the inhospitable city. No one even said *shalom aleichem* to us, and no one invited us to their home. I gave them what they deserve. I prayed that each of them should become a leader. This is to their detriment, because it is better when there is only one leader in the city. When there are many heads, there is *machlokes* all the time. No one will want to live in that city.

"As for the hospitable city, I blessed them with one leader, which is indeed a blessing."¹

From this story, we learn that although we see life in one dimension, there are other perspectives. If we knew about the reasons why things are the way they are, we would realize that everything is correct and fair, and everything is in our best interests.²

An example of this principle is found in this week's *parashah*, with the petirah of the holy tzaddikim Nadan v'Avihu.

Rashi (10:3) writes that Moshe said to Aharon, "Now I see that they are greater than both of us."

Nadav and Avihu were very great tzaddikim. Why did they die, and why did it happen on the happy occasion when the Mishkan was finally built, and the Yidden

1. The Chida recounted this story, and with it, he explains why we bring a כוס של אליהו to the Seder:

Originally, it was decreed that the Yidden would be enslaved for 430 years (see *Bereishis* 15:13)."

Hashem softened the decree in two ways:

(1)The Yidden were in Mitzrayim for 210 years instead of 430 years.

(2)The original decree was that they would be enslaved the entire time. Hashem softened that decree, and the bondage and hard labor began only eighty-six years before *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

$430 - 86 = 344$. This means they were spared from 344 years of slavery. Thus, we drink four cups of wine. כוס is *gematriya* 86, and $86 \times 4 = 344$. We are celebrating the 344 years we were spared from slavery.

But there is a fifth cup, the כוס של אליהו, which represents the difficult years. This is because we celebrate the years that we were enslaved, too, because even those years were certainly for our best.

We don't, however, drink the fifth cup, acknowledging that, at present, we still don't fully appreciate that hardships are actually good. However, we fill the cup with wine because we are certain (intellectually, if not emotionally) that even those painful years were for our benefit.

The fifth cup is called *kos shel Eliyahu HaNavi* because Eliyahu HaNavi teaches us (as in the story above) that even when things appear bad, they are always for the good.

2. The maror and the חזרת are both varieties of maror. Why are they both placed on the kaarah? We can explain that they represent two types of bitter people. There are bitter people who want to wallow in their bitterness. Whatever you tell them, and whatever they do, they will remain sad and upset. They are represented by the maror that is placed in the middle of the kaarah. In whichever way you will turn the kaarah, the maror remains in its place, in the middle. Similarly, these bitter people aren't ready to change. Regardless of what you say or do to try to help them, they will remain despondent.

But some bitter people try to pull themselves out of their bitterness. When the opportunity arises, they pull themselves out of their melancholy and return to being happy again.

They are represented by the חזרת, at the bottom of the kaarah. Turn the kaarah, and it is no longer on the bottom. The same is true with this second group of people. They try and are willing to make changes and get out of their rut. They don't want to stay there forever.

were celebrating its inauguration? It doesn't make sense to us, and yet, the Torah (10:3) tells us, וידם אהרן, "Aharon was silent." He didn't complain. He didn't ask questions.

Reb Meir Yechiel of Ostrovtza zt'l adds that וידם comes from the word דומם, inanimate objects. An example of a דומם is a stone, which doesn't have feelings. One can throw a stone, humiliate it, laugh at it, beat it, and it isn't bothered in the least. This describes how strong Aharon was when he endured this tragedy. וידם אהרן, he was as silent and as unaffected as inanimate items. He knew that

everything was for the good, even when we don't understand why and how.³

To Honor Others

The parashah begins with the korbanos that were brought to bring the Shechinah into the Mishkan. Aharon was to bring two korbanos, as it states (9:2) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל אַהֲרֹן קַח לְךָ עֵגֶל וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל אַהֲרֹן קַח לְךָ עֵגֶל וְאַיִל לְעֹלָה, "[Moshe] said to Aharon: 'Take yourself an egl for a chatas and a ram for a chatas...'"

Rashi writes, "This was to reveal that with this עֵגֶל Hakadosh Baruch Hu forgave him for the egl he made."

3. A few years ago, there was a lottery drawing, organized to raise money for a holy *kehillah* in Eretz Yisrael. The *kehillah* advertised that the winner would receive three prizes: A house in Teveria, a brand-new car, and ten thousand shekels per month, for a year's time. The drawing took place on י' אדר תשפ"א at eleven at night. They immediately called up the winner to give him the exciting news, but the winner doesn't answer the phone at those hours, so they left a message on his voice mail.

The next morning, the lucky winner heard the message and called the office to inform them when he would come over to pick up his prize. When he arrived, they spoke to him in a very excited and bubbly way, because they were sure he was very excited. After all, how often does one earn so much money, and so suddenly?

But they were surprised to see that he was totally calm. When they asked him about that, he replied, "I knew I was going to earn the prize."

He explained, "I'm twenty-six, and I haven't yet found my shidduch. My parents can't help me with the wedding, so when I find my bashert, the expenses of the wedding will rest entirely on my shoulders. Recently, my car broke down. I cannot work full-time, which limits my parnassah. Many people in my situation would be worried. I have many expenses, without sufficient income. But I was never worried. I was certain that Hashem would help me buy a house, a car, and have enough money to cover my daily expenses as well as pay for my wedding when the time comes. You don't see me all excited about winning because I was expecting nothing less."

It states (10:3) בְּקִרְבֵּי אֶקְדָּשׁ וְעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָעָם אֶכְבֵּד. Reb Yosef Shaul Nathanson zt'l (Divrei Shaul) said that בְּקִרְבֵּי refers to the tzaddikim, and וְעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָעָם refers to the average Yid. The pasuk says בְּקִרְבֵּי אֶקְדָּשׁ, when a tragedy occurs, tzaddikim know that this is certainly for the good. They know that a kiddush Hashem will certainly come from it. Whereas, וְעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָעָם, for the average folk, when a tragedy occurs, אֶכְבֵּד, it is a heavy pill to swallow. (אֶכְבֵּד means heavy.)

Eighty-five years ago, a young man was niftar, and his almanah was left with young yesomim. The oldest girl worked, so there should be some bread in the house. It was very hard for her, her childhood taken away from her so young, and she unburdened herself before Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l. The rebbe thought deeply about what the girl said, and then said, "For how much money are you willing to sell me your yesurim?"

The girl quickly understood that her yesurim were for her benefit, and she left. She wouldn't give up the opportunity that was given to her.

Rebbe Shlomke was one of the great tzaddikim of his generation, a person with ruach hakodesh. Yet, he would have gained from some more yesurim. This helps us understand how valuable they are.

Bnei Yisrael brought more korbanos, as it states (9:3) וְאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּדְבֹּר לֵאמֹר קַחוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים לְחַטָּאת וְעֵגֶל וְכֶבֶשׂ בְּנֵי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם לְעֹלָה, וְשׂוֹר וְאַיִל לְשִׁלְמִים. "To Bnei Yisrael, speak as follows: Take a goat for a *chatas* and a calf and a sheep in their first year – unblemished – for an olah. And a bull and a ram for a *shlamim* to slaughter before Hashem, and a *minchah* mixed with oil; for today Hashem appears to you."

Yalkut Shimoni (remez 521, quoted in Ramban) writes, "Why did Yisrael bring more korbanos than Aharon? Moshe told them, 'You [Klal Yisrael] have an *aveirah* at the beginning, and you have an *aveirah* at the end. In the beginning, you have the *aveirah* of [selling Yosef, as it states] (Bereishis 37:31) וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת כְּתֹנֶת יוֹסֵף, 'They took Yosef's tunic, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the tunic in the blood.' And you have an *aveirah* at the end, as it states (Shemos 32:8) וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם עֵגֶל מִסֶּכָּה, that they made the *egel*. Therefore, bring a שְׂעִיר to atone for the *aveirah* of the שְׂעִיר [when they dipped Yosef's clothes in a goat's blood, to make the impression that he was killed], and bring an עֵגֶל to atone for the *egel*.⁴

Aharon was associated with the sin of the *egel*; therefore, עֵגֶל בֶּן בָּקָר לְחַטָּאת, he brought an *egel* to atone for the *egel*. Klal Yisrael brought more korbanos. They had to bring a שְׂעִיר as well. Because in addition to the *egel*, they had to atone for the *aveirah* of selling Yosef, when they dipped Yosef's tunic in the blood of a שְׂעִיר, goat, and gave it to their father and said (Bereishis 37:32) הֲפֹר נָא הַכְּתֹנֶת בִּנְךָ הוּא אִם לֹא, "Identify it, if you please: Is it your son's tunic or not?"

We understand that the sin of the *egel* needed to be atoned for. A primary purpose

of the Mishkan was to prove that Hashem remains with Yisrael, and that He forgave them, despite their sin with the *egel*. As Rashi at the beginning of parashas Pekudei (28:21) explains that the Mishkan is called מִשְׁכַּן עֵדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂוִיתָהּ לָהֶם הַקֶּב"ה עַל מַעֲשֵׂה הָעֵגֶל, שהרי עדות לישראל שויתר להם הקב"ה על מעשה העגל, "The Mishkan testified for Yisrael that Hakadosh Baruch Hu forgave them for making the *egel*, because, behold, the Shechinah resides among them."

But why was it necessary to atone for the *aveirah* of selling Yosef specifically at this time? Reb Yosef Nechamyah Kornitzer zt'l answers the question wondrously. Chazal say, כָּל הַמַּעֲבִיר עַל מְדוּתוֹ מַעֲבִירִין לוֹ עַל כָּל פְּשָׁעָיו, "Whoever goes beyond his limits, and he forgives others, Hashem will forgive all his sins." The way to attain atonement for the *egel* was for the nation to forgive one another, be *mevater* one another, and be in unity with one another. Just as they forgive one another, Hashem will forgive them, and the Shechinah will reside with them.

This is the reason they had to attain atonement for the *aveirah* of selling Yosef. This sin of *sinas chinam* had to be corrected, and there had to be love and unity among Yidden. When that was attained, Hashem could look beyond their faults and forgive them for their *aveiros*, and for the *aveirah* of the *egel*.

Reb Yosef Nechemyah bases his lesson from the ספרא on a pasuk (9:6). The pasuk states, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' תַּעֲשׂוּ וַיֵּרָא אֲלֵיכֶם, "Moshe said: 'This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you.'"

What did they have to do?

4. The Midrash adds that Klal Yisrael also brought an ox, as it states וְשׂוֹר וְאַיִל לְשִׁלְמִים, This was to atone for the *egel* that appeared like two animals. It appeared like an עֵגֶל, a young calf, as it states וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם עֵגֶל מִסֶּכָּה, and it appeared like a שׂוֹר, as it states (Tehillim 106:20) וַיִּמְצְאוּ אֶת כְּבוֹדָם בְּתַבְנִית שׂוֹר אֲכָל עֵשָׂב, "They exchanged their Glory for the likeness of a grass-eating ox."

Therefore, bring שׂוֹר to atone for the sin of the שׂוֹר and עֵגֶל to atone for the *egel*.

The ספרא states: אמר להם משה לישראל אותו יצר: "Moshe said to Yisrael, 'That yetzer hara, remove it from your hearts... and Hashem's honor will become revealed to you.'" "That yetzer hara" refers to the yetzer hara for machlokes. Remove that yetzer hara from your heart, and the Shechinah will reside in Klal Yisrael. The ספרא elaborates:

ותהיו כולכם ביראה אחת ובעצה אחת לשרת לפני המקום כשם שהוא יחידי בעולם כך תהא עבודתכם מיוחדת לפניו... "עשיתם כן וירא אליכם כבוד ה'". "You should all have the same fear of Heaven and the same counsel to serve Hashem. Just as Hashem is one in the world, your service to Him should be one... if you will do so 'וְיָרָא אֲלֵיכֶם כְּבוֹד ה'', "the glory of Hashem will appear to you."

It seems from his words that the problem was division, that was הרע העבירו מלבכם, "that yetzer hara" that they had to remove from their hearts. Only then will the Shechinah reside with them.

This discussion is especially applicable now, during the days of Sefiras HaOmer, for it is a time when we rectify our relationship with our fellow man. At this time, the students of Reb Akiva were niftar because they didn't honor one another, and we rectify this aveirah with increasing honor to our fellow man, and increasing peace, forgiveness, and tolerance towards our fellow man.⁵

The Chida (Lev Dovid 30:12) writes, "During Sefiras HaOmer a person must be extra

5. Some explain that this is why we learn Pirkei Avos on Shabbos during these weeks. The lessons in Pirkei Avos train us to improve our middos and to live in harmony with our fellow man.

When the Steipler Gaon's son-in-law, the gaon Reb Shaul Barzani zt'l, was niftar, the Steipler advised his granddaughters, children of Reb Shaul, to learn Pirkei Avos *l'iluy nishmas* their father. Women are permitted to learn Pirkei Avos, and it would be a benefit for their father's neshamah.

Therefore, it would be a good idea for a father to teach his daughters Pirkei Avos during these long Shabbos afternoons. This is a part of Torah that women are encouraged to learn. Today, there are sefarim that make this study easier to understand, and it will train the family to go on a good path.

Once, during Shalosh Seudes, Reb Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l became filled with *hislahavus*. He threw himself back on his chair, his head tilted backwards, and shouted, "A person can be a talmid chacham, a respected person, but if he harms the smallest hair of another Yid, he loses all his worth. He isn't worth anything." This is because respecting one's fellow man is a primary foundation of the Torah, and of being a Yid.

At another time, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai said that when a person has yesurim, his first assumption should be that it came because he failed in his obligation to honor his fellow man. If he examines his ways and he sees that he isn't guilty in that aveirah, then he can assume that it was because of bitul Torah. He explained that good middos is before Torah, as Chazal (Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Raba 1:1) say דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה, and therefore, why should one jump to consider that the aveirah that brought on the yesurim was bitul Torah? It is more likely that it came from the prerequisite and introduction for Torah, which is good middos.

With this lesson, he explained the Chazal (Brachos 5a) נחפשה במעשיו שגא' נחפשה דרכינו ונחקורה "If a person sees that yesurim are coming to him, he should examine his deeds, as it states (Eichah 3:40) 'Let us search and examine our ways and return to Hashem.' If he checked and he didn't find any aveirah to cause the yesurim, then he should assume that it is due to bitul Torah as it states (Tehillim 94:12) 'Praiseworthy is the man whom Hashem disciplines, and whom You teach Your Torah.'"

But the first assumption isn't *bitul Torah*. The first suspect is the lack of דרך ארץ, good middos, which come before the Torah.

Reb Chaim Vital zt'l said that middos aren't written in the Torah because they are קדמה לתורה, they come before Torah. They are the foundation upon which the Torah rests.

לטהר מסייען אותו, when a person desires to be pure, he is helped from Heaven. Especially since these days are mesugal for this, for it is the time that our forefathers purified themselves. This will occur when we go in their ways, and we are cautious with all aspects of *taharah*, and in particular, to be cautious from vain hatred because we know Reb Akiva's students were niftar between Pesach and Shavuot."⁶

The Avuduraham (Tefillos HaPesach, end ch.21) explains that the warm climate plants into people a desire for worldly pleasures. This is the reason we have Sefiras HaOmer at this time of year, to purify us from our taavos and tumos. This is also why we learn Pirkei Avos this time of year: to teach us the correct path to go on.

Sefiras HaOmer

The korban Omer brought in the Beis HaMikdash is called עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה, the Omer of waving, as it states (Vayikra 23:15) וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחָר הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הִבִּיאָכֶם אֶת עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, "You shall count for yourselves – from the morrow of the rest day, from the day when you bring the Omer of waving – seven weeks."

An עֹמֶר is a measurement (43 and 1/3rd eggs/beitzah). The *korban* was made from an omer measurement of finely sifted barley flour mixed with oil, and it was waved, as implied by its name עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה. The Rambam (Hilchos Temidim u'Musafim 7:12) writes, "On the sixteenth of Nisan, an omer ... of barley flour was taken and it is mixed with a lug of oil... and it was waved back and forth and up and down in the eastern side of the Beis HaMikdash..."

The תְּנוּפָה, waving, was part of this sacrifice, yet we wonder why this korban is called עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה? Why is it named specifically for the waving?

Furthermore, Bikurim and a korban Shlamim also have תְּנוּפָה but we don't find that these mitzvos are named בכורים התנופה or שלמים התנופה. What is significant about the korban Omer that it is called עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה?

The Nesivos Shalom zt'l answers that the korban Omer is followed with the counting of Sefiras HaOmer. The days of Sefiras Ha'Omer are days when we purify ourselves, as we say in the tefillah following Sefiras Ha'Omer, לתקן את נפשותינו ורוחותינו מכל סיג ופגם, "to rectify our *neshamos* from all blemishes; to purify and to sanctify us..."

The עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה, the waving of the Omer, up and down, right and left, tells every person to take hold of himself and 'shake himself up' and begin to change his ways. This is an appropriate preparation for the days of Sefiras Ha'Omer.

Reb Aharon HaGadol of Karlin zt'l once met with someone who was a great *baal*

aveirah, r'l. Reb Aharon Karliner understood that mere words of rebuke or hischazkus wouldn't help him anymore. So, he grabbed him by his jacket, pulled him forcefully and shouted, "How long will you be going about the world in this manner?" This aroused him, and he did teshuvah. Similarly, the Omer is a עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה, the waving of the Omer, up and down, right and left, telling the person that it is time to grab onto yourself and change your ways.

In Sefiras HaOmer, we count forty-nine days. There is also a mitzvah for beis din to count forty-nine years, the years that lead up to Yovel. As it states (Vayikra 25:8) וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים, "You shall count for yourself seven cycles of sabbatical years, seven years seven times; the years of the seven cycles of sabbatical years shall be for you forty-nine years."

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos p.280a) says that the Torah tells us that there is a mitzvah to count days (of Sefiras HaOmer) and the Torah tells us that there is a mitzvah to count years (to Yovel). This hints to us that each day of Sefiras HaOmer is a very special day that can be viewed as an entire year. The Chasam Sofer says, "This means we should sanctify these days, and we should count them... that these days should shine, until each day will be considered like it was a year, יוֹם לְשָׁנָה, 'a day for a year, a day for a year' (Bamidbar 14:34).

Based on the Chasam Sofer's lesson, we understand that each year, during Sefiras HaOmer, we have fifty years. The fifty days are equivalent to fifty years.

It is more than that. The Gemara (Bechoros 5a) states, מִנֵּה שֶׁל קְדוּשָׁה כְּפֻלָּה הִיא, the measurements of the Beis HaMikdash were double. This means that when we are measuring matters of kedushah, the measurements double. So, if there are fifty days of Sefiras HaOmer, and each day is like a year, we can now double that (because kedushah is measured in double) and the days of Sefiras HaOmer are like one hundred days, or like one hundred years!

The Chasam Sofer takes this a step further. A person's standard lifespan is seventy years, as it states (Tehillim 90:10) יְמֵי שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָּהֶם שְׁבַע עָשָׂר, "The days of our years among them are seventy years."

A person goes through approximately seventy Sefiras HaOmers in his lifetime. We explained that each one is like a hundred years. So, its $70 \times 100 = 7,000$. This represents the seven thousand years of the world's existence. Because the Gemara (Rosh Hashana 31a) tells us, שִׁיתָא אֶלְפֵי שְׁנֵי הוּא עֲלָמָא וְחַד חֲרוּב, "The world is for six thousand years, and another thousand years when the world is destroyed." The sefarim explain that just as a week has six days and then comes Shabbos, so too, the world has six thousand years, and then comes a seventh thousand years, a year of Shabbos. About this year, it states (Yeshayah

2:17) וְנִשְׁגַּב ה' לְבָדּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, "Hashem alone will be exalted on that day."

Within the days of sefiras haomer are hinted a far greater perspective of time and existence.⁷

Torah

During the days of Sefiras HaOmer, we should increase Torah study. First of all, Torah study is the best preparation we can do for Shavuos.⁸ Also, Torah purifies, and the days of Sefiras HaOmer are to purify us from all our *aveiros* and *tumah*. Chazal (Avos 6:2) say, וְכָל מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תוֹרָה הָרִי זֶה מִתְעַלֶּה, "Whoever studies Torah, he is elevated". The elevation is for all areas of life, for *parnassah*, for honor, and also for *ruchniyus*. Everything is attained through studying Torah.⁹

7. The Maharshal wrote a sefer called *Menoras Zahav Tahor*, which discusses the chapter of Tehillim (67) לְמִנְצָח בְּגִיטָה מְזֻמֹּר שִׁיר, etc., when it is written in the form of a menorah. He quotes from the Rokeach that when someone says this chapter each morning, at Netz HaChamah, reading it when arranged in the form of a menorah, there won't be any harsh decrees on him. Hashem will consider it like he lit the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash, and he is guaranteed to be a Ben Olam HaBa.

When one says it during the days of Sefiras HaOmer, in the morning after birkas Kohanim, he won't be harmed the entire year, and he will enjoy success with everything he does. The pasukim of this chapter discuss seven subjects (each pasuk another one). They are רַחֲמִים, שְׁמֵחָה, רִנָּה, יְשׁוּעָה, הוֹדָאָה, שִׁמְחָה, רִנָּה, compassion, blessings, light, salvation, praises, joy, and song. The seven branches of the menorah represent these seven qualities, and all of these benefits will be the portion of Yisrael. When one says it seven times while traveling, he will be protected and his trip will be successful and peaceful.

Reb Chaim Palagi (Moed l'Kol Chai 5:21) quotes the Igeres HaRamban, "During the days of Sefiras HaOmer, after birkas Kohanim, one should say Tehillim (67) לְמִנְצָח בְּגִיטָה מְזֻמֹּר שִׁיר, etc., in the form a menorah, and this is a wonderful segulah to succeed in all his deeds, and he won't be harmed the entire day. The Sefer Shevet Mussar writes this as well, but doesn't specify that it is for Sefiras HaOmer. It seems that he understood that this *segulah* is potent the entire year."

8. The Sfas Emes (Shavuos 5660) writes that people's temptation for worldly matters decreases when one has an abundance of it. (For example, if a person ate his favorite food every day, his desire and temptation for it would lessen with time.) But Torah is the opposite. The more Torah one knows and studies, the more he will want it. Therefore, the best preparation for matan Torah is to study Torah.

It is a good idea to make a kabbalah not to speak devarim bateilim during the first half-hour of each learning seder. Make this kabbalah now, at least until Shavuos. That will help us study with hasmadah (and we probably won't be tempted to talk later on). It will help us be devoted and attached to Torah.

9. A person moved into an apartment, placed his suitcases on the floor, and he immediately saw that there were rats and rodents in his apartment. He quickly picked up his suitcases and bags and placed them on a table, but soon the rodents were on the table, too. So he placed his bags on top of a closet, but the rats came there, as well.

He went outside and asked some experts, "Is the entire city infested with rats and rodents?"

Therefore, even a person who works many hours a day for his living can find some time for studying Torah, and he should make these times sacred, never to transgress them. If he does so, he will attain immense taharah and kedushah, and this will be a proper preparation for Shavuos.

It states (Yirmiyahu 9:23) **כִּי אִם בְּזֵאת יִתְהַלֵּל הַשָּׂפִיל וְיָדַע אוֹתִי**, "For only with this may one glorify himself – contemplating and knowing Me."

The roshei teivos of **יִתְהַלֵּל הַשָּׂפִיל וְיָדַע** are the letters of Hashem's name, and the order of the letters **י - ה - ה - ו** is Hashem's name associated with Iyar. (As it is known, the letters of Hashem's name **יהוה** can be written in 12 ways, and each combination represents one of the months of the year.) The Maor v'Shamesh writes (quoting from mekubalim), "This month is more mesugal for understanding Torah than other months," just as the pasuk that hints to this month represents, as it states (Yirmiyahu 9:23) **כִּי אִם בְּזֵאת יִתְהַלֵּל הַשָּׂפִיל וְיָדַע אוֹתִי**, "contemplating and knowing Me."

This month is mesugal for knowing Torah and for knowing Hashem. The Maor v'Shamesh says that this is the reason rosh chodesh Iyar is when *yeshivos* begin studying again. It is an old custom, for generations, and the reason is that Iyar is mesugal for growth and understanding Torah. (See also Bnei Yissaschar Iyar 1, who elaborates on the specialness of studying Torah in this month.)

One of the primary parts of the Seder is **והגדת לבנך**, to tell the children about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. But if you ask children what part of the Seder was most interesting for them, they will probably tell you the Afikomen.

It seems that the purpose of the Seder was overlooked. The Afikomen was only to keep them awake, so they could hear about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, but their focus remained on the Afikomen. How does that fulfill the mitzvah of **והגדת לבנך**? And in general, it doesn't seem correct to teach children to steal. Isn't this training them to do something forbidden?

We can answer according to the Kotzker *zt'l* that we are teaching children to steal time to study Torah. **קביעות עיתים לתורה** means to steal time from a busy schedule to find time to study Torah, as **קבע** means to steal (see Malachi 3:8, and Rosh Hashanah 26b).

When one devotes himself to Torah study, Hashem gives him success and grants him all his needs. As the Gemara (Avodah Zarah 19) teaches, "It is written in the Torah, and repeated by the nevi'im, and stated a third time in the kesuvim: Whoever studies Torah, his properties succeed.... Whoever studies Torah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu does for him all his needs." The Maharsha explains that he will succeed, even without doing any *hishtadlus* at all.¹⁰

They replied, "Not at all. It is just that you entered through the basement. These rodents live underground, so you found them there. Go up a flight. Upstairs, you won't have to deal with any rodents."

We can say the same for people who suffer in whichever manner, and they don't know how to solve their problems. The counsel is to study Torah. That releases people from all their tzaros and kelipos. As the Mishna says (Avos 6:2), **וְכָל מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תוֹרָה הָרִי זֶה מִתְעַלֶּה**, "Whoever studies Torah, he is elevated." When you study Torah, you are in a higher place, a location where the kelipos and tzaros cannot reach you.

10. The Rambam (*Hilchos Shmitah v'Yovel* 13:12-13) asks: "Why didn't Levi receive an inheritance of land in Eretz Yisrael? It is because Levi was designated to serve Hashem and to teach his good ways to the masses... Therefore... they don't go to war together with Yisrael, and they don't inherit... They are Hashem's army... and Hashem Baruch Hu gives them their portion, as it states (Bamidbar 18:20) **אֲנִי חֶלְקְךָ וְנַחֲלָתְךָ**, 'I am your share and your heritage.'"

The Rambam continues, "It isn't solely Shevet Levi. Every person... who understands that it is proper to separate himself to stand before Hashem, to serve Him, and to know Hashem... and he throws off of his

The Kedushah of Someone Who Studies Torah.

The kedushah of a person who studies Torah is immeasurable. The Maharal (Nesiv HaPrishus 1) says that most human beings can't become קדוש, holy, because of the physical body. In fact, humans aren't expected to be like the malachim. So, what is the meaning of the mitzvah (Vayikra 19:2) קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ? It means that we should *act* like someone holy, even if we aren't actually holy. Only a malach can be truly holy.

However, the Maharal adds that this is regarding a Yid who doesn't study Torah. However, when a Yid studies Torah, "He becomes holier than the malachim. He goes to the *kodesh kodoshim*, where malachim can't get to."

The Bas Ayin (Bishlach) describes it this way: A Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur can go between the poles of the *aron*. But someone who studies Torah is greater. It is like he goes into the *aron* itself. This is alluded to in the pasuk (Mishlei 3:15) יְקָרָה הִיא יְקָרָה הִיא, and Chazal (Horiyos 13a) say that this means *יקרה היא מפנינים מכהן גדול שנכנס לפני ולפנים*, someone who studies Torah is more precious than the kohen gadol who enters the Kodesh Kadoshim. The kohen gadol stands *between* the *בדי הארון*, the *aron's* poles, and the Torah student is permitted to go *into* the *aron*.

Therefore, someone who studies Torah can perform the mitzvah of קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ in a

very literal manner. He literally becomes holy before Hashem.

With these ideas, we can explain the difference between the kedushah we say in Shacharis on Shabbos morning and the kedushah that we say at Mussaf. In Shacharis, we say, נְקַדִּישְׁךָ וְנַעֲרִיצְךָ כְּנוּעַם שִׁיחַ שְׂרָפֵי קוֹדֶשׁ, "We will make You holy, and we will praise You like the speech of the holy malachim..." This means we emulate the malachim, and we will praise Hashem in the same way that malachim praise Hashem.

Also, in *nusach Ashkenaz*, the same point is made, נְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּעוֹלָם כְּשֵׁם שְׁמִקְדִּישִׁים אוֹתוֹ, בשְׁמֵי מְרוֹם, "We will praise Hashem in the world in the same manner that they make Hashem's name holy in the heavens...." Once again, the meaning is that we emulate the malachim and praise Hashem as they do.

However, in Mussaf we say, כְּתֹר יִתֵּנוּ לָךְ ה', אֱלֹקֵינוּ מִלְאָכִים הַמּוֹנִי מַעֲלָה עִם עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל קְבוּצֵי מִטָּה, "A crown will be given to You, Hashem our G-d, the many malachim in heaven *together* with Your nation Yisrael who gather below." With this kedushah, it seems that we are saying kedushah *together* with the malachim, as though we are on the same level as them. We aren't merely copying them; we are at that high level of the malachim.

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l explains that Mussaf is said after kriyas HaTorah. After studying Torah, we rose to the level of the malachim, and can give Hashem a crown *together* with the malachim.¹¹

shoulders the calculations that most people are involved in, this person becomes extremely holy, kodesh kadoshim, and Hashem will be his portion and inheritance forever and ever. Hashem will grant him his needs, as the kohanim and the levi'im received their needs. As it states (Tehillim 16:5) ה' חֶזְקַת חֶלְקִי וְכֹסֵי אֱתֶה תְּלוּמִיךָ, 'Hashem is my allotted portion and my share. You guide my destiny.'

11. Reb Sheftel Ish Levi zt'l (the father of the Shlah Hakodesh) teaches: To study Gemara, *Rashi*, and *Tosfos* each day is no less an obligation than it is to wear tefillin every day.

The Ramchal zy'a says that when one studies Torah, he should consider it as if he's in the middle of *Shemonah Esrei*, and cannot interrupt his studies.

(It would be a good thing if others would also think of those who are learning Torah as though they are in the middle of davening *Shemonah Esrei*, and not interrupt them.)

Kashrus

The Chasam Sofer asked two people from his kehillah to arrange a meeting with the mayor, and said that the matter was urgent.

The two men went to the mayor's house and asked the secretary for an appointment for the same day, because the matter was urgent. The secretary said, "All slots are filled for today. It is impossible to make an appointment on such short notice. If you want, we can schedule it for next week..."

The delegates repeated to the secretary that the matter was urgent, and it couldn't be postponed.

It wasn't easy, but their determination paid off, and a meeting with the mayor was arranged for that day.

They entered the mayor's room, and the mayor offered them a cup of coffee.

"No, thank you," they replied.

"Why not?" the mayor asked. "Is it because it isn't kosher?"

That was indeed the reason. The milk wasn't *chalav Yisrael*.

The mayor went into a rage. "If I offer you a drink, you should accept it!" he said.

As he was ranting and raving, the secretary opened the door and asked the mayor whether he had a cup of coffee.

"No. The mayor replied angrily. "I was about to, but these fellows ruined my appetite. I offered them a coffee, but they declined... because of kashrus."

The Gemara says, "All opinions agree that the Torah was given on Shabbos." This hints that no desire or opportunity to earn money should take us away from the times we set for studying Torah. No rationally thinking G-d fearing Jew would work on Shabbos to earn money. Similarly, even when we have opportunities to make money, this shouldn't cause us to neglect the times we set aside for Torah study.

A chassid wanted *hatzlachah*, and he wrote this in a *kvittel*, which he gave to Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrivka *zy'a*.

Rebbe Yochanan replied, "Dovid HaMelech was also a great Rebbe, and he advises us that for success, one should study Torah. As it states (*Tehillim* 1), *כי אם בתורת ה' חפצנו... וכל אשר יעשה יצליח*, if you desire Torah, you will succeed in all your endeavors. This isn't solely a *brachah*; it is a guarantee. If you study Torah, you will succeed."

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zy'a* would say, "Someone who doesn't study Gemara is *נישט קיין איד און נישט קיין מענטש*, "not a Yid, and not even a human being."

He explained that this is the reason the *brachah* השיבו in *Shemonah Esrei* (the *brachah* for *teshuvah*) begins with a request for Torah, as we say, *השיבו אבינו לתורתך*, because without Torah, one is *נישט קיין איד און נישט קיין מענטש*, "not a Yid, and not even a human being."

It is written, *והי ראשית ממלכתו בבל* (*Bereishis* 10:10). Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* would say that implied in this *pasuk* is the importance of learning Gemara. *והי ראשית ממלכתו בבל* "One should begin with Talmud Bavli."

The tzaddikim of Slonim *zt'l* teach:

Each hour of the day, without Torah, is a zero. If you study Torah for an hour, you have a #1. If you place that one before all the zeros, it becomes a very large number.

How do you place the one hour of Torah at the beginning, before all the zeros? You do this when you consider the time you set aside for Torah as the most important hour of your day.

If you consider your work more important, then the one hour of Torah comes after all the zeros, and the number is small. But if you recognize that this hour is the most important and precious hour of your day, this places the #1 at the beginning, and you end up with a very large number, which will result in a very great reward.

"Good," the secretary replied. "I'm glad you didn't have coffee because the milk is contaminated. Those who drank this milk got sick. After checking the milk, a doctor determined that it was filled with unhealthy germs."

The mayor immediately changed his tone of speech and spoke to the two delegates respectfully. He told them, "I always admired the rabbis of the Jewish nation for their superior wisdom. I forgot about that, of late, and I was considering banishing all the Jews from Pressburg. But now that you reminded me of the wisdom of the Jewish sages, I will cancel that decree."

The two delegates returned to the Chasam Sofer and told him what happened at the meeting. The Chasam Sofer replied that there was a *kitrug* in heaven on the Jewish community because they weren't careful enough with kashrus and with חלב עכו"ם. In the merit of the delegate's *mesirus nefesh* to keep the laws of kashrus, the decree was abolished. (Heard from Reb Elchanan Halperin zt'l of Radumishla, who heard it from his father-in-law, Reb Shmuel Unsderfer zt'l, a descendant of the Chasam Sofer.)

This week's *parashah* tells us that we are not allowed to eat worms and bugs. As it states (11:43), אל תשקצו את נפשתיכם בכל השרץ השרץ, ולא תטמאו בהם ונטמתם בהם.

The Or HaChaim elaborates, "A person must be extremely careful not to eat anything that might be infested with worms. Especially in recent generations, the atmosphere and the earth have become polluted [in a spiritual sense], and everything that grows has worms and bugs. Therefore, the cautious must be aware."

Many chassidim have the custom of eating *shalosh seudos* in the dark. My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l, spoke longingly of this custom. There is undoubtedly something very special about singing inspirational songs and hearing holy divrei Torah in the dark, at *shalosh seudos*. He said that he would do the same, but was concerned that he wouldn't see what he was eating in the darkness. There may be an insect in his food, and he won't know about it.¹²

Reb Chaim Vital zt'l writes, "Regarding food, one can transgress many *aveiros*. There are the forbidden fats (חלב), blood, insects; there's also טבל and כלאים and several other prohibitions. But if a person is always careful, to the best of his ability, and always checks the food before he eats it, Hashem will help that the food he eats will be kosher, and he will not sin, even inadvertently."

12. Reb Yonoson Eibshitz (*Kriesi u'Pleisi* 84:19) writes, "To eat a salad [that might be infested] is a ספק תורה... *Bitul* doesn't apply. Therefore, it is a ספק תורה, and *chas veshalom*, one mustn't be lenient. When men and women check leafy vegetables in a hurry, because they are in a rush to get to their other chores, I don't rely on them. It is my custom, from my youth (מיום עמדתי על דעתי), that I won't rely on their checking. This is how all Torah Jews should do, because it is likely that there is a transgression."

The Be'er Heitev (84:10) writes, "[Insect infestation] differs from country to country, and from year to year. There are years when there are many worms, and there are years when there's less. A righteous person, should be careful..."