

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



על דשא

AL E I DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Koheles

On Sukkos we read Koheles to remind us of the vanity of this world. Instead of wasting our lives pursuing worthless pleasures, we should channel all our desires toward Torah and *mitzvos*.

The *Sfas Emes* explains¹ that Sukkos is the opportune time for such a lesson. It is difficult to have the resolve to abstain from the pleasures of this world, but Chazal tell

By utilizing all our senses and rejoicing with the Torah to physical exertion, we teach our body that this world is empty. Koheles becomes more than an intellectual pursuit; it becomes alive.

us (*Shabbos* 130a) that any mitzvah Klal Yisrael accepted with joy continues to be performed with joy. This does not apply only to the original *Kabbalas HaTorah*; it is true every

time a Yid undertakes a particular mitzvah. A *kabbalah* made out of joy is a true *kabbalah*, and it will last. Sukkos is a time of *simchah*. There is no better time to joyfully accept upon ourselves to abstain from the physical pleasures of this world. The strength of such a *kabbalah* will last through the whole year.

There was a period when the Avnei Nezer fell ill and the doctors forbade him from learning *b'iyun*. The Kotzker, his father-in-law, found him learning the sefer *Bechinat Olam*,² a sefer which describes the banalities of this world in an easy-to-read, poetic style. The Kotzker remarked that although the sefer does a great job describing the emptiness of this world, he failed to see its benefit. With even a little introspection, a person's mind can recognize clearly the emptiness of this world; it is the physical body which fails to follow. The battle does not take place in the mind, but in the heart. Our mind wants to perform only Torah and *mitzvos*, and our physical nature wants to enjoy this world. Our will is pulled in both directions. The only way to train the physical—the Kotzker concluded—is by purifying it through intense, *b'iyun*, Torah learning. Only in this way will the body begin to see the truth.

Shemini Atzeres

Geshem

על הקלע הר ויצאו מים.

He hit on the rock, and water came out (Tefillas Geshem).

In this portion of *Tefillas Geshem*, we ask Hashem to give us rain in the *zechus* of Moshe Rabbeinu. It seems odd to mention his hitting the rock instead of speaking to it. Why do we mention Moshe Rabbeinu's mistake?

On Yom Kippur, when the *kohen gadol* was in the *Kodesh Hakadashim*, he would daven for Klal Yisrael. His *tefillah* was brief so the people would not worry over his delay. The Gemara (*Yoma* 53b) tells us that among the few requests spoken by the *kohen gadol* is that Hashem should not accept the *tefillah* of those who are traveling (*overei derachim*). When it is raining, a traveler may naturally ask Hashem to stop the rain; however, this would not be good for the rest of the world, which needs rain. The *kohen gadol* would daven that these *tefillas* not be answered.

It is mind boggling that someone as holy as the *kohen gadol*, at the holiest time of the year, in the holiest place in the world, would think of something so mundane. No one was even allowed in the *Heichal* at that time who might possibly remind the *kohen gadol* of the need for rain. And isn't it far-fetched to worry about the *tefillah* of a few lone travelers?

¹ 5641 s.v. *basukkos*.

² By R' Yedaiah Hapenini son of R' Avraham Bedersi.

Koheles

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Shouldn't the Kotzker's point apply to Koheles as well? How does it help for Shlomo Hamelech to point out all the vanities of this world, if we can easily recognize that on our own?

Perhaps this is why, after the *simchah* of Sukkos, we place our energies into rejoicing on Simchas Torah. By utilizing all our senses and rejoicing with the Torah to physical exertion, we teach our body that this world is empty. Koheles becomes more than an intellectual pursuit; it becomes alive. With this, we are able to make a steadfast *kabbalah* to place all our desires in Torah and *mitzvos*: a *kabbalah* that will take us through the year.

In the *reshus* for *Chassan Torah* we say: – מסלילים בה כחדשה ולא כישנה שעברה – *Studying the Torah as if it is new, and not as if it is old and outdated*. However, there is something to be said for the old; the Rishonim write³ that when one learns a topic he has previously learned, he should learn it on a higher level. He is able to go into greater depth and find

greater meaning. Why diminish 'old Torah,' when in fact it carries a benefit?

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26b, *Megillah* 18a) relates that the *Chachamim* did not know the meaning of the pasuk (Mishlei 4:8) סֵלֶסֶלָהּ. One day they heard the maidservant of Rebbe berating someone who was playing with his hair. She said, "How long are you going to be מסלסל with your hair?" The *Chachamim* then understood that מסלסל means to search through and turn over. If one searches through the Torah, turning it over and over and plumbing its depths, the Torah will cause them to become uplifted.

The Gemara cannot be taken simply. Is it possible that the *Chachamim* did not know the meaning of the pasuk? And why was it specifically through such a story that they learned its meaning?

The Gemara (*Nazir* 9b) speaks of a man who the *yetzer hara* tried to lure by showing him his beautiful hair. When the Gemara speaks of someone playing with their hair it is an

allusion to his struggle with the *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* wants to make us believe that the world is glamorous and is ours to enjoy.

The *Chachamim* knew that only the Torah protected them from falling prey to all the offerings of this world, but, being locked in the *beis midrash*, they did not realize the extent of the offering. Once they saw a person who was battling his *yetzer hara*, they realized how great the temptations of this world can be. Now they understood the greatness of the Torah; how it could transform even physical bodies, purifying them from all the desires of *Olam Haze*.

Each day the *yetzer hara* comes up with new tactics to trap us (*Kiddushin* 30b). The Torah wants to protect us against the new lures as well as the old, ולא כחדשה, ולא כישנה. tells us that we must toil in Torah anew each day to protect us from the new tricks of the *yetzer hara*.

(סעודה שלישית ונעילת החג, שבת קודש שמיני)

עצרת ושמחת תורה תשפ"ד, מאמר א)

3 See Ramban, *Bava Metzia* 29b and *Nemukei Yosef* ibid. 15b according to the pages of the *Rif*.

Simchas Torah

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sod ha'ibur and if there was a harsh decree, they were able to arrange the times for Yom Tov accordingly.

Even in our times, when the months are not established based on witnesses in *beis din*, we can still place our hope in the words of the Chortkover's father—the *heilige* Ruzhiner: The pasuk says (Bamidbar 23:19) לא איש א-ל ויכזב וכן אדם ויתנחם, ההוא אמר, *G-d is not human to be capricious, nor is He mortal to have a change of heart; would He speak and not act, promise and not fulfill?* Generally, it is the role of *tzaddikim* to nullify bad decrees. The Gemara (*Moed Katan* 16b) tells us that when Hashem issues a harsh decree against Klal Yisrael, a *tzaddik* has the power to have it nullified.

But when there is לא איש, when there is no human, א-ל ויכזב, to make Hashem seem capricious in His *gezeiros*, *k'vayachol*... and when there is no mortal, ויתנחם, to make Hashem have a change of heart, *k'vayachol*... ולא יעשה ודבר ולא—then Hashem Himself speaks kindly of Klal Yisrael, and He nullifies the *gezeiros*.

Today we ask: Hashem, we don't know the *sod ha'ibur*, and we have no one to daven for us—ומפגיע. Please, You Yourself, Hashem, come in our defense and may there be no more sorrow among the Yidden!

In another vein: The wars of Zevulun can allude to the war with the *yetzer hara* – the real enemy.

The Gemara tells us (*Chagigah* 26a) that on Yom Tov, all Yidden are on the level of *talmidei chachamim*. Even those that do not fit the bill; if they are Yidden, they are able to come to the Beis Hamikdash and see Hashem. On Yom Tov, every Yid has the ability to overpower the *yetzer hara*, and accept upon himself to be a proper Yid. Such a *kabbalah* can last through the year.

Zevulun goes to wage war with the *yetzer hara*; when is the best time for this? On Yom Tov. Yissachar sets the time for Yom Tov, while Zevulun wages the war.

(קידושא רבא, שבת קודש שמיני עצרת ושמחת תורה תשפ"ד)

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Rav Uri of Strelisk explained⁴ that *overei derachim*—literally, ‘passing through the paths’—refers to one of the tactics of the *satan*. When Klal Yisrael is to receive good things from Hashem, the *satan* wants that it all channeled through him. Even when we get wonderful things, we must daven that it come through pure channels.⁵

even in the dark of night we must have simchah. Even as we wait for the geulah, and our simchah is not yet complete. We must still rejoice with Hashem and His Torah.

All *gashmiyus* is symbolized by ‘*geshem*,’ rain. The *kohen gadol* asks Hashem to deny the *satan*’s request. All the abundance that is due to come should not come through the *satan*, but through sources of *kedushah*.

During the *Yamim Noraim* we do things to confuse the *satan* and silence him: We blow *shofar* extra times, and we bribe him by sending a goat to *Azazel*.⁶ When we daven *tefillas Geshem* and ask for *gashmiyus*, we want to avoid the *satan*’s request that it be channeled through him—and so we mention Moshe Rabbeinu’s mistake, to confuse the *satan*. He will think that the

geshem will be channeled through Moshe Rabbeinu’s mistake. But, in truth, hitting the rock was not a sin,⁷ and the *geshem* can be channeled through channels of *kedushah*.

(קידושא רבא, שבת קודש שמיני)

(עצרת ושמחת תורה תשפ"ד)

Rejoicing in Galus

From the pasuk וְהָיִיתָ אֶךְ שִׂמְחָה And you shall have only joy (Devarim 16:15), the Gemara (*Sukkah* 48a) derives the obligation of *simchah* even on the night of Shemini Atzeres. How do we know there is a requirement on the day of Shemini Atzeres? Rashi explains that if there is a requirement of *simchah* during the night, which is only secondary, then certainly during the day, which is the main part of Yom Tov, there is an obligation of *simchah*.

The Baal Shem Tov⁸ would explain *oneg Shabbos* with the following *mashal*: There was a royal prince in captivity, who received a secret letter from his father, the king, promising that a plan was in place and he would soon be able to escape. The prince longed to rejoice and celebrate this news, but of course he could not share the news with anybody. He bought wine and spirits, and distributed them to the people around him. While everyone reveled in drunken pleasure, the prince danced and rejoiced along with them—yet his rejoicing was something entirely different. Much like the prince, the *neshamah* on Shabbos longs to rejoice with a celebration of *ruchniyus*, a

deveikus with Hashem, but it is unable to celebrate while trapped in a body. With the mitzvah of *oneg Shabbos*, we give pleasure to our body, and our *neshamah* can rejoice along.⁹

Night alludes to *Olam Haze*. The *simchah* of the night is only secondary in nature. True *simchah* is that of the day, which represents *simchah* in *Olam Haba*. What is true *simchah*? The *simachah* of Simchas Torah.

The Gemara uses the plural term, לילי, לילי טוב האחרון, in referring to the night of Shemini Atzeres.

The *tzaddikim* spoke of the long winter nights as “the golden nights.” These long winter nights can be reserved for many continuous hours of learning. Perhaps the Gemara’s use of the plural לילי alludes to these nights. The *hisorerus* of Simchas Torah should not be confined to the night of Simchas Torah, but it should accompany us through every night of the winter, helping us use them all for *avodas Hashem*.

Perhaps לילי טוב האחרון also alludes to the *Geulah*, the Yom Tov at the end of days. We may be in the dark of night; we are in the dark of night; לילי טוב האחרון; but Chazal tell us that even in the dark of night we must have *simchah*. Even as we wait for the *geulah*, and our *simchah* is not yet complete. We must still rejoice with Hashem and His Torah.

May Hashem grant that our rejoicing be complete.

(הקפות ליל יום טוב, שמיני עצרת ושמחת תורה תשפ"ד)

⁴ *Imrei Kodesh, Yom Hakippurim*.

⁵ The Baal Hatanya said that if Napoleon had been successful, there would have been great bounty for the Yidden, but, having come through improper channels, it would have ruined them.

⁶ See Ramban, Vayikra 16:8.

⁷ As *mefarshim* explain in manifold ways.

⁸ *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*.

⁹ See Baal Shem Tov on Torah, *Bereishis* #86.



Candle Lighting	Motzei Yom Tov
Brooklyn	6:00
Lakewood	6:02
Baltimore	6:12
Chicago	5:51
North Miami	6:36
Los Angeles	6:02
	6:56

Simchas Torah

The Perfect Torah

תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש עדות ה' נאמנה מחכימת פתי.

The Torah of Hashem is perfect, renewing life; the decrees of Hashem are enduring, making wise the simple (Tehillim 19:8).

Nefesh refers to the will,¹⁰ the true will of a Yid. The entire year we have wasteful wants as we seek the inane pleasures of this world. How are we to right ourselves and tap into our true desire? Through the Torah. The Torah is תמימה. It was created before the world (*Pesachim* 54a) and it is immune to the deficiencies of this world. It is complete.

Hashem, we don't know the sod ha'ibur, and we have no one to daven for us— Please, You Yourself, Hashem, come in our defense and may there be no more sorrow among the Yidden!

By *ligen in lernen*, by accepting upon ourselves *deveikus baTorah*, we will merit נפש נכש. We can purify our desires and channel them properly.

The pasuk concludes by describing the Torah as מחכימת פתי. We are instructed not to be foolish: to keep away from the *yetzer hara* and make sound business decisions for our *nefesh*. Let us reserve our desires for Torah, *tefillah*, and *avodas Hashem*.

(הקפות ליל יום טוב, שמיני עצרת ושמחת תורה תשפ"ד)

The Greatness of Torah

The Mishnah (*Horayos* 13a) teaches that a *talmid*

chacham takes precedence over a *kohen gadol* who is not a *talmid chacham*, even if the *talmid chacham* is a *mamzer*. The *sefarim* point out that a king is even greater than a *kohen gadol*. Since a *talmid chacham* comes before a king as well, shouldn't the Mishnah tell us a greater *chiddush*—that a *mamzer talmid chacham* comes before a king?

The Gemara (*Berachos* 8a) relates: Rava said to Rafram bar Papa: "Tell us some of the wonderful things regarding *tefillah* that you related in the name of Rav Chisda." Rafram replied: "The pasuk (*Tehillim* 87:2) says: אֱלֹהִים ה' שְׁעָרֵי צִיּוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יִשְׁכָּן – Hashem loves the gates in which they learn halachah even more than batei kenessios and batei midrashos."

Rava asked to hear great things Rav Chisda said in praise of *tefillah*; Rafram answered by quoting that Hashem loves Torah even more than *tefillah*. Why did Rafram choose this saying, which seems to suggest that *tefillah* is inferior? The *Asarah L'meah*¹¹ explains: Torah is not at all comparable with anything in our physical world. Rafram was telling Rava that if Rav Chisda measured *tefillah* together with Torah, *tefillah* must be on a tremendously high *madreigah*. Otherwise, we could not say that Torah is greater; they would simply be incomparable.

The *Ezor Eliyahu*¹² explains our Mishnah (*Horayos* 13a) along similar lines. A king's job is to take care of the needs of the people. His position is tied to *gashmiyus*, and so he cannot be compared to a *talmid chacham*. But a *kohen gadol* enters the *kodesh hakodashim*; he is on a tremendous level of *kedushah*. The Mishnah tells us that a *talmid chacham* is even greater than the *heilige kohen gadol*. With Torah we can reach the greatest heights.

(קידושא רבא, שבת קודש שמיני עצרת ושמחת תורה תשפ"ד)

Yissachar

and Zevulun

וְלִזְבוּלֹן אָמַר שְׂמַח זְבוּלוֹן בְּצִאתְךָ וְיִשָּׁכָר בְּאֵהְלֶיךָ.

To Zevulun he said: Rejoice Zevulun in your journeys, and Yissachar in your tents (Devarim 33:18).

The Targum explains: Zevulun should rejoice as he goes to war with his enemies, and Yissachar should rejoice when he goes to Yerushalayim to establish the times for Yom Tov.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 28a) relates that there was a dispute between Rabban Gamliel and Rabi Yehoshua about the timing of Rosh Hashanah. Rabban Gamliel demanded that Rabi Yehoshua come travel to him carrying his money and his walking stick on the day which, according to Rabi Yehoshua's calculation, was Yom Kippur. When Rabi Yehoshua came, Rabban Gamliel kissed him on the head, commenting, "Come, my *rebbe* and my *talmid*—my *rebbe* in wisdom, and my *talmid* because you acquiesced to my demands."

If Rabi Yehoshua was greater in wisdom, why did Rabban Gamliel not accept his ruling?

Rav Dovid Moshe of Chortkov explained that when there are *gezeiros* against the Yidden, Hashem reveals the secret to the leaders of the generation, and with this information, they are able to add days to a month, or months to a year, to change the *mazal* and nullify the *gezeirah*. This is what Chazal refer to as *sod ha'ibur* – the secret of extending the month or year. Rabban Gamliel told Rabi Yehoshua that although he was his *rebbe* in wisdom, he had to forgo Rabi Yehoshua's calculation. The reason was a secret, a *sod*, which he could not reveal.

Zevulun would go to battle while Yissachar established the times for Yom Tov. Yissachar knew the

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10 The pasuk (*Bereishis* 23:8) writes וְיִשְׁכָּן אֱלֹהִים יְשׁ אֶת נַפְשְׁכֶם—Rashi explains it to mean *your will*.

11 #4. Written by the father of the Rebbe R' Bunim.

12 R' Eliyahu Horshavsky – *Parshas Naso*.