

The  
Sweetness of Shabbos

## מתיקות השבת

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## Is a Gold-Covered Better than Pure Gold...?

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Shekalim 16) brings two opinions on the pasuk "וְצָפִיתָ אֹתוֹ וְהָבָה מָהוּר מִבֵּית וּמִחוּץ הַצִּפּוֹנוֹ" – "And you shall cover it with a layer of pure gold on the inside and outside". Rabbi Chanina holds that the ark that Betzal'el made was three separate arks within each other, the middle one was made of wood and the inner and outer ones of gold. Reish Lakish holds that there was only one ark made of wood that was covered with gold from the inside and the outside. Let us understand what caused Reish Lakish to say that the gold was only a covering of the wooden ark?

The Gemara tells us that Rava learns from the pasuk "מִבֵּית וּמִחוּץ הַצִּפּוֹנוֹ" – "cover it from the inside and the outside" that any talmid chacham whose inside is unlike his outside, is not a true talmid chacham (Gemara Yoma 72). The ark symbolizes that a talmid chacham has to be covered from the inside and the outside with gold, which are the good middos that are similar to pure gold.

**Why say the Aron Habris is one piece???** Now, if we explain that there were three separate arks and the gold arks were separate from the wooden one. We can compare it to a person who acts with good middos but they are separate from his personality. And he can remove them from himself whenever he wants. Therefore Reish Lakish explains, that there was only one ark, because the good middos have to be imbedded in the talmid chacham's soul like the gold cover of the wooden ark, which cannot be removed. The inside of the ark was

made from wood which symbolizes that a talmid chacham has to be like a tree that bears fruit which symbolize good character.

**Be humble as plain wood...**

According to Reish Lakish's explanation, the Aron teaches the talmid chacham to act like Dovid Hamelech. Dovid Hamelech in his heart was very humble like plain wood, but outwardly he behaved royally as gold. He acted this way in order to cause people to love and respect his kingship whose purpose was to crown Hashem in the world.

**Reish Lakish went off the derech...**

The reason that Reish Lakish is the one that says this, is because he was a baal teshuvah. Rabeinu Tam explains (in Tosafos, Bava Metzia 84) that Reish Lakish was at first a Torah scholar but then threw off the yoke of Torah to become a thief. This happened because at first he studied

Torah only for the sake of gaining wisdom but he didn't try to find good middos and love of Hashem in the Torah. Therefore he didn't find the "הַמְאוֹר שֶׁבָּהּ מְשִׁיבֵי לְמוֹטֵב" – "The light of the Torah brings a person back to the good".

The Torah is compared to honey that sweetens and makes food tasty, as it says in Mishley regarding the Torah - "דְּבַשׁ וְחֶלֶב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנֵךְ". Our sages teach (Kidushin 30), Hashem said to Am Yisrael, "My children, I created an evil inclination, and I created Torah as its (tavlin) antidote". Tavlin originally means spice. The spice's and honey of the Torah that save us from the Yetzer Hara, are the good middos and love of Hashem. And when learnt

**MY STORY!**

The Iron dome tefillin

**Hi, my name is Chaim and I'd like to share with you a story that happened to me.**

It was year 5765 and Eretz Yisrael was being bombed again. One morning as I entered the shul to daven Shacharis, I realized that we were missing a tenth person to complete our minyan. Still wrapped in my Tallis and Tefillin, I ventured outside to find someone who is willing to complete our minyan. Suddenly I heard a sharp whistle, and before I realized what was happening I was thrown off my feet, a white cloud descending in front of my eyes.

I realized that a missile had exploded nearby. I glanced down at my right arm and saw that it was filled with about 50 shrapnels, my fingers were also badly injured. "Help! I'm injured" I cried out. My friend Leizer rushed out to help me. My main artery was torn up and he quickly made sure to stop my blood, an act that saved my life.

The Hatzalah men arrived quickly and we sped off to the hospital. The quick treatment that has saved my life, was a real Hashgacha Pratis. Leizer was the only one of the mispallelim that knew first aid, and he never davens in our shul, only today he happened to miss his regular minyan, thus being there for me at the right moment and saving me in the nick of time.

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correctly the Torah teaches them to us, and they are "the light of the Torah brings a person back to the good". And since Reish Lakish did not learn correctly, he left the right path.

### The essence of the Torah...

Therefore after Rabbi Yochanan brought him back, he explained the pasuk as mentioned above; that the talmid chacham has to have his good middos as part of him, this way the Torah will be able to stay with him. And he was the one who said this, because he saw with himself how the Torah cannot exist without good middos. The good middos are the essence of the entire Torah, like Rabbi Akiva said, "וְאֶהְיֶה לְרַעְדָּה כְּמוֹהָ, וְהָ כֻלָּהּ בְּתוֹרָה", and Hillel said "That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation".

### The sweetness of zikui harabim...

The Gemara says (Beitza 29), "If one stole and does not know from whom he stole, he should use the stolen items for communal needs". Now, how does helping the public atone for the thief's great sin? Especially if he stole in one place and he helps the public in another place, how does it atone for his sin?!

Every Jew is required because of "areivus" – responsibility for fellow Jews. Everyone has an obligation to be "mezakeh harabim – to benefit the public" – including the one who was robbed. Therefore by the thief using the money that he stole to benefit the public, this merit goes to the one who was robbed. Even though he didn't get permission to do so from the victim, but "וְכִין לְאָדָם שְׂלֵא בְּפִנְיָו" – "one can give merit to another without him knowing". This is true even if the one who was robbed already helps the public, because there is no limit to this merit.

### How to delay the punishment of death...

Helping the public is so great that even the goyim will try to acquit themselves in the Day of Judgment by saying that they helped the Jews. They will claim that they built streets and bridges which were used by the Jews who

went to learn Torah. But Hashem will not accept their claim (Avoda Zara 2).

Even a Sota - a woman who sinned, the Gemara says (Sota 6) that her merits can delay the effects of the bitter waters that she drinks and push off her death for a couple of years. Ravina explains, what is her merit? That she sends her children to learn Torah, and lets her husband go to Beis Hamidrash to learn Torah and waits for their arrival back home. This is her merit, because in this way her husband and children will benefit the world with their Torah. We see that even punishment of death can be delayed by good middos and benefiting the public.

### Atonement by cleaning the Beis Hamidrash...

Therefore, every Jew can atone for his mistakes by benefiting the public, such as spreading Torah, cleaning the Beis Hamidrash etc., and this can atone for his sins or thefts where he doesn't know whom to pay. There is a ripple effect which will eventually reach the one he stole from.

Rabbi Akiva saw for himself that all his twenty-four thousand students who were great scholars died because they didn't respect each other, and nothing was left of their Torah, so he understood that Torah without good middos aren't worth anything in Hashem's eyes. As the Gemara says (Yevamos 109), "Anyone who says I have nothing but Torah, also Torah he doesn't have". Therefore Rabbi Akiva and Hillel said, each one in his own words, that the good middos which cause a person to benefit the public, is the entire Torah.

### A gate with no house in it?...

The Gemara says (Yoma 72), "Any Torah scholar whose inside is not like his outside is not a Torah scholar, and he is called loathsome. Woe to those, who immerse themselves in Torah and have no fear of Heaven. Such learning is like one who has no house but senselessly makes a gate for his house". The Torah is the gate, and the house is the fear of heaven. "Rava said

## The sweetness of the Mishkan

The Kohen Gadol is pointing at the techeles (blue color) in his garment, reminding the child of Hashem's kindness of all the blood vessels in our body. Then he points at the Avnei Milu'im - the stones on his shoulders, reminding him of the wonderful kidneys which purify and cleanse the blood all the time.

Another man whose foot was cut off, is explaining to the child standing on two beams with no legs, that the atzei Shitim of the Mishkan remind us the kindness of our bones that shape our body. Another Kohen is reminded from the golden Mizbe'ach of the glorious sun, and thanks Hashem for it.

David Hamelech is sitting on the floor in great humility, remembering through the red colored garment of the Mishkan, to thank Hashem for the blood in his body. He feels so humble because of it, and says about himself

"וְאֲנֹכִי תוֹלַעַת וְלֹא אִישׁ" – "I'm nothing but a worm". People around him mock him and make fun of his modesty, but those humiliations elevate him to his great level in this world and in the World to Come.



to the Sages: I beg of you, do not inherit Gehinnom twice", by exerting yourselves to study the Torah and not fulfilling your lifetime - that you didn't enjoy in your world (Rashi).

**The Torah can be like poison...?!**

The Gemara (there) continues, "One who learns Torah and he's trained to learn from it good middos and love of Hashem,

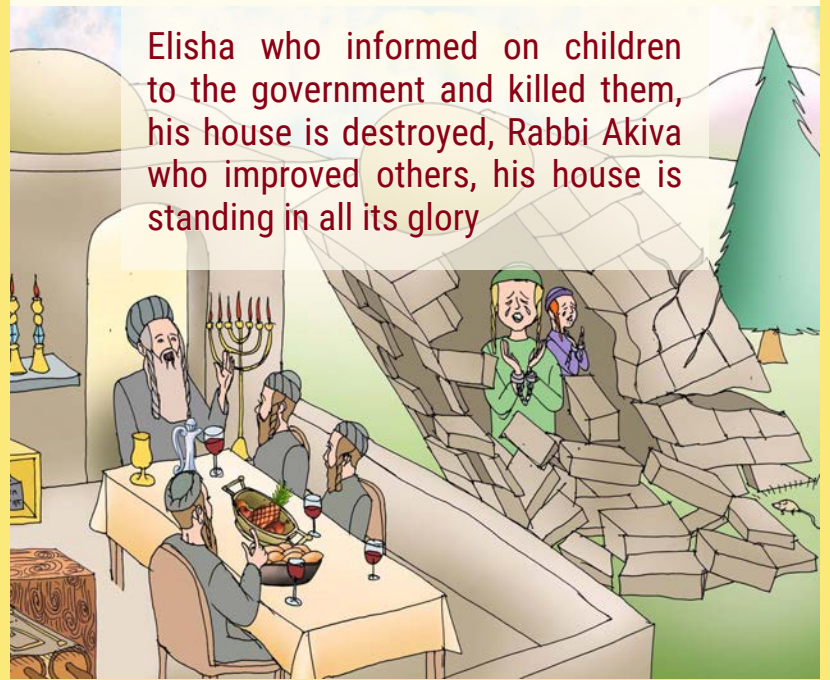
his Torah is like – the elixir of life", and this Torah causes him happiness and purifies him from his bad middos. It teaches him good middos which give him a good life. "But if not, his Torah is like – poison", Since he doesn't learn from it good middos, He will become prey to arrogance, jealousy, vengeance, hatred and pleasure in the other's shame.

The lesson Elisha had to learn from Rabbi Akiva

Elisha is pointing at his misdeeds in despair, and Rabbi Meir tries to strengthen him from what his Rebbe, Rabbi Akiva went through before he started learning Torah.



Elisha who informed on children to the government and killed them, his house is destroyed, Rabbi Akiva who improved others, his house is standing in all its glory



Elisha Ben Avuya did not listen to Rabbi Akiva when he warned him and his friends; when you enter the Pardes – a garden of secret knowledge and you see pure marble stones, do not say 'water water'. Meaning, do not see the Torah which is compared to water, as physical water. He did not listen to him, and therefore fell and became a kofer ba'ikar. When Rabbi Meir tried to bring him back, he didn't want to and was in despair because he killed many children, so he didn't believe he's still able to do teshuva.

He compared himself to a house built with no foundations, which will eventually collapse. He too was without the foundations of emunas chachamim. He would oppose Rabbi Akiva and twist his words, saying to Rabbi Meir, "Your Rebbe did not say so" [even though he was also his Rebbe].

This is the foundation of a person's house, which are his Torah and good deeds, as it says in the Parsha "וַיִּבֶן מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן... – "and Moshe built the Mishkan...", because Moshe is the foundation of the Jewish home. So, since Elisha was lacking this fundamental attitude, he understood that all his vessels – his good deeds, are built in a way that they cannot survive. They are like a cup without a base that all its contents spill right out.

Rabbi Meir replied that he has to humble himself in the dust of Rabbi Akiva's feet, as Rabbi Meir did. And if Elisha had a hard time with it, since he was the same age as Rabbi Akiva, he has to learn from Rabbi Akiva himself who humiliated himself to sit among little children to learn the letters of the Alef Beis. He ought to learn from Rabbi Akiva, who although was in the beginning an am ha'aretz and hated talmidei chachamim, yet he repented in his older years and became to be a great tzaddik, built up a house with strong foundations and had great talmidim.

Rabbi Akiva acquired vessels that have permanence, like the klei hamikdash; he was like the aron habris, like Rabbi Chanina's opinion, that it had three arks; the inner and outer were made of gold like the good middos of gemilus chasodim which the talmid chacham has, and the middle one, was made of wood, is like the Torah he has, as it says "עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא לַמְחַיִּימִים בָּהּ" – "it (the Torah) is a tree of life to those who hold onto it", and it brings a person to help and improve others.

But Elisha did not want to repent. Therefore, he mistakenly thought that Hashem said that He does not want to accept his repentance.

## The bitterness of one who retires from the Torah

## MY STORY!

>>>Continued from pg. 1

Also, the Hatzalah arrived immediately due to the fact that the missile I'd been injured by was the third in that area, and they were already there treating other injured people.

By the time I reached the hospital I was unconscious, I received many units of blood to help me recover from my blood loss. I also underwent an operation that was Baruch Hashem successful, even though the doctors claimed that I almost lost my life on four occasions during the operation.

One day as I was still recovering, one of the big doctors came to see me together with a group of medical students, and explained to them how I was injured and was recovering. The medical students couldn't understand; how had the shrapnel not reached my heart?!

The doctor who wasn't a believer in G-d said, "**The only explanation I have to how this happened is that when he was injured he was wrapped in a Tallis and Tefillin, and they served as a protective shield to his body**". My whole body was hurt and injured except for the parts that were covered by the Tallis and Tefillin; my left arm, the upper part of my body and even my head; one of the shrapnel hit the Tefillin shel Rosh and bounced back saving my head and neck from being injured.

As soon as I was released I went to shul and recited Birkas Hagomel, and in outside in front of the shul I recited the blessing of "**she'asah li nes – blessed is Hashem that performed a miracle with me in this place**". Baruch Hashem, today I have recovered completely and I thank Hashem that saved my life and protected my body, thanks to the Mitzvah of Tallis and Tefillin.

meriting of Olam Haba.

### The foundations of the Torah...

Elisha Ben Avuya compares a man who has many good deeds and has learned much Torah, to four things: **1.** A house built on strong foundations. **2.** Bricks plastered with cement. **3.** A cup that has a base. **4.** A horse controlled by reins. One who has learned Torah but does not have good deeds is the opposite of all these.

First he says, a man building a house has to first make strong foundations; otherwise the house will collapse. Then the cement has to plaster the bricks – to prepare the house to live in it, and if not for the cement a little bit of rain softens and weakens the bricks. Then he spoke of a cup with a base. If not for the base the contents spill right out. So too, a person who doesn't have good deeds loses all his Torah right away.

Then he spoke of a horse which brings a man from place to place and also goes to war with him. The horse is similar to the Yetzer Hara, encouraging the person to sin. If he doesn't have good deeds and only has Torah, he cannot rein in his horse and when he is tested he has no ability to control himself.

### Why did Rabbi Akiva succeed in his learning?

Elisha Ben Avuya continues, "*One who learns Torah in his youth, the Torah goes into his blood and comes out of his mouth in a clear fashion. One who learns Torah in his adulthood, the Torah does not enter his blood and do not come out of his mouth in such a clear fashion*". How can he say such a thing? Didn't he see Rabbi Akiva who started learning at age forty and was successful?!

Rather it means, a man ought to learn with the humility and honesty of a young child. He shouldn't feel proud, old and wise, because the Torah exists only in one who is humble. Since Rabbi Akiva humiliated himself for the Torah to learn together with young children, he succeeded in his learning even though he learned only in his adulthood.

Elisha Ben Avuya (Acher) did not listen to Rabbi Akiva's warning when entering the Pardes – a garden of secret knowledge (see last week's issue). Acher fell and became to be a *kofer ba'ikar*. This teaches us that one who learns without *emunas chachamim* – faith in the sages, his Torah is like clay and once it breaks it has no repair. Like Rabbi Shimon Ben Chalafta said, "*Hashem couldn't find a more suitable vessel to hold blessings for Am Yisrael than the vessel of peace*". Who brings peace? The *talmidei chachamim*, as it says "*תלמידי חכמים מרבים שלום בעולם*". They are the vessel that holds the blessing, and once their value lessens and breaks in the person's mind, it has no repair.

### Learning Torah sheba'al peh from a sefer?...

Elisha Ben Avuya said what he felt about himself (Avos d'Rabbi Nasan 24:5): "*Divrei Torah are as hard to acquire as gold vessels, and are as easy to lose as glass vessels*". He was referring to his attachment to Rabbi Akiva, because in those days when they didn't have the Torah sheba'al peh written down, it would pass down only through direct connection with the *talmidei chachamim* who taught them. Nowadays, Torah sheba'al peh is written down. This has a disadvantage; a man learns it only through the sefer without feeling the fire and excitement which can be acquired only directly from the *talmidei chachamim*.

### The talmid chacham only as a gold jar?!

Our sages tell us (Sanhedrin 52), "*A talmid chacham seems first to an am ha'aretz like a jar of gold. If he speaks of him he seems to him like a jar of silver. Once he benefits from him he seems to him like a jar of clay, and once it breaks it has no repair*". But Acher did not understand that the *talmid chacham* is not only like a gold jar, but also like the honey inside the jar and even much more than that. Not only is he worth so much, but he is also very sweet and beneficial to a person.

Why did the Mishnah bring Elisha Ben Avuya's words if he went off the Derech? Because *davka* those who go astray, and have tasted the bitterness and emptiness of the temptations of this world, can teach us how not to fail as they did, and how to appreciate our good portion in Torah and our