

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

י' אב תש"פ

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## Full of Flavor

R' Bachaye<sup>1</sup> tells us just as the body gets pleasure from the taste of honey so too does the soul get pleasure from wisdom. With this, we can explain ויחזו את האלהים<sup>2</sup> ויאכלו וישתו<sup>2</sup>, they gazed at Hashem and they ate and drank, which is stated by Matan Torah, as the pleasure of seeing the Shechina is compared to eating and drinking. So, one can get satiated through spirituality.<sup>3</sup>

The Ohr Hachaim comments on תורתך בתוך מעי, your Torah is in my innards,<sup>4</sup> that one can get to the point where he feels that his learning is like eating and satiates him just as food does. Moshe epitomized this when he was by the mountain for 40 days without eating or drinking. His body was satiated from spirituality just as one who eats and drinks and is alive because of it.

After the Yeshuos Yaakov got married he lived by his father-in-law in the city of Yaroslov. In the shul there where he was davening in for Yom Kippur, a man suddenly came in and went up to be the Shliach Tzibur. He led the davening for Kol Nidrei, Maariv, Shacharis, Mussaf, Mincha, Neila, and Maariv after Yom Kippur with such התעוררות in addition to staying up all night reciting Tehillim, being the Baal Korei at Krias Hatorah and blowing the Shofar. After Mussaf, the Yeshuos Yaakov wondered to himself if this was a Malach or a human. As Yom Kippur came to an end, they decided there was no doubt this was a Malach. At the conclusion of Yom Kippur the Yeshuos Yaakov invited him for Havdala. He took up on the offer and led Havdala with fervor. After drinking from the Havdala wine, he fell onto a chair from exhaustion expressing that he doesn't feel good. He requested that they bring him something to give him

<sup>1</sup> End of Hakdama to Parshas Vayakhel.

<sup>2</sup> Shemos 24:11.

<sup>3</sup> Rashi (Brachos 17a, s.v. ויאכלו וישתו) remarks they were satiated from the radiance of the Shechina as if they ate and drank.

<sup>4</sup> Ohr Hachaim, Vayikra 18:2. Tehillim 40:9.

strength. Realizing he wasn't a Malach, they rushed to bring him food in which he pushed aside. He then requested a **Gemara Succa** (as it was the Yom Tov following Yom Kippur) **in order to strengthen himself**. He then began to learn with tremendous yearning all night. The Yeshuos Yaakov hid under the bed in the guest's room until he fell asleep. When the Yeshuos Yaakov awoke, it was already morning and the guest was engaged in learning until he finished the Mesachta. Afterwards, it was revealed that this guest was the Kedushas Levi.<sup>5</sup>

A group of boys from the Navardok yeshiva<sup>6</sup> stuck in a ghetto during World War Two were extremely stressed from not having Gemaras to learn from. Knowing the Germans allowed cheese to be brought in from outside the ghetto,<sup>7</sup> the boys had their friends wrap the cheese in pages of Gemara. One by one they collected these pages until they had several complete Mesachtos. They then thought maybe they shouldn't have used the Gemaras in such a way since it was disrespectful. The question was presented to a renowned Posek. His response: it was permitted for them to do so for two reasons. First, it was honor for the Torah when they demonstrated their desire to learn. Additionally, for those boys it was פקוח נפש, life-threatening, to be provided with a means of studying Torah.

In regard to the מן, it says "let them pick each day's portion on its day so I can test them לא יהיך בתורתי אם לא, whether they will follow my teaching or not."<sup>8</sup> In light of what we mentioned we can grasp a different meaning in these words. Many of us in this physical world get our variety, renewal, and excitement from that which is physical—especially the various foods we eat. Where does one who learns Torah all day, with a simple lifestyle as in במלה תאכלי<sup>9</sup> get his variety from (symbolic of one who eats the same מן every day)? They get it from the Torah. This is what is meant in יהיך בתורתי אם לא. In this way, we can grasp yet another meaning in ויאכלו וישתו as one can get his variety in spirituality just as others get it from eating and drinking.

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## A Desert with Greenery

The Rema<sup>10</sup> writes that we are accustomed to spread greenery for Shavuos in Shul and our houses. This is because this is what surrounded Har Sinai as it says ...הצאן והבקר אל ירעו... the flock and cattle shouldn't graze facing the mountain,<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> 5:211. The Kedushas Levi, who was a student of the Magid of Mezrich lived from 1740-1809.

<sup>6</sup> Incidentally, the father-in-law of the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, Shmuel Ben-Artzi (1914-2011), studied in Cheder and in a branch of the Navardok Yeshiva in Ukraine. After leaving Yiddishkeit as a young man he later returned to Torah and Mitzvos. He moved to Eretz Yisrael in 1933 when Yeshivas Novardok sent him to help start its Eretz Yisrael branch in Bnei Brak called Beis Yosef, which was headed by the Steipler when he arrived in Israel in 1934. A year later he left the Yeshiva and went to work in agriculture, believing the task of building the state of Israel to be a foremost priority. Later he joined the Irgun and the Hagana, eventually working as a teacher in secular schools. He had four children with his wife who was a descendant of the Vilna Gaon's students. He authored different books including that which speak about his recollections as a student at Yeshivas Novardok.

<sup>7</sup> The Germans allowed this because then they wouldn't have to feed them.

<sup>8</sup> Shemos 16:4.

<sup>9</sup> Avos 6:4. See Taamai Haminhagim, p. 145, s.v. ובספר קהלת משה.

<sup>10</sup> Orach Chaim 494.

<sup>11</sup> Shemos 34:3.

indicating that there was pasture there.<sup>12</sup> If the Torah was given in a desert, how can there be greenery there, since it doesn't grow in such a place (This is just as Rashi defines a desert as a land that is parched where nothing grows.<sup>13</sup>)? The answer is it was a miracle!

On Shavuos in 1932, which fell out on Shabbos that year, R' Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich<sup>14</sup> at Shalosh Seudos explained the following: Since the Shechina descended to Har Sinai and we accepted the Torah, that area became sanctified. As a result, a miracle occurred and grass grew. This is just as we see with the stick of Aharon that when it was in the Ohel Moed, it blossomed and brought forth almonds.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, we see that the sanctity of a place can change nature.

What lesson does this miracle teach us? One who sins may despair from becoming better. The truth is that one must never give up hope as he can always do Teshuva. This lesson is taught from this miracle, explains the Drashos Lechem Shlomo, since if a wasteland (symbolizing one who sins, as he is devoid of sanctity just as a desert is empty of life) can grow greenery, then surely one who sins is able to transform himself and become great by rectifying his past.

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### Partner in Pain

When Paroh's daughter opened the basket and saw Moshe it says והנה נער בכה, behold, a youth was crying—referring to Moshe.<sup>16</sup> The Gemara<sup>17</sup> questions these words והנה נער בכה, since the Torah called him a child (ילד)<sup>18</sup> which could mean an infant and then it calls him a youth implying an older person. The Gemara explains והוא ילד וקולו כנער, he was an infant but his voice was like that of a youth (i.e. much deeper). R' Meir Shapiro gave the following explanation: People cry, whether they are babies or adults. What is the difference between a baby crying and a mature person crying? A baby cries for selfish reasons—because he is hungry, needs a diaper change and the like. A baby is unable to cry for others, in contrast to a mature person. והוא ילד וקולו כנער means that although he was a child, his voice was like that of one who was older. That is to say, although he was saved by Basya, he still felt the pain of his brethren in the enslavement.<sup>19</sup> This is why he was crying!<sup>20</sup>

R' Hanoch Teller writes a story he personally witnessed regarding a young man, Jamie, who had recently become Torah observant and went to immerse in a busy Mikva in Yerushalayim. As he walked towards the Mikva, he held his hands over his arms, attempting to cover his tattoos. As he stepped into the Mikva, he slipped and the tattoos that lined his biceps were now exposed for all to see. At an earlier time, Jamie

<sup>12</sup> Mishna Brura, 494:10. Levush 494:1.

<sup>13</sup> Chullin 88b, Rashi s.v. במדבר לא. Similarly, the Pasuk says במדבר בארץ לא, following Me into the wilderness, into an unsown land (Yirmiya 2:2).

<sup>14</sup> Drashos Lechem Shlomo, Shavuos, 115. R' Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich (1863-1944) was a Rav in Simleu until he was murdered in Auschwitz. In addition to the many Sefarim he authored, some of which were lost in the Holocaust, he also established a Yeshiva for choice students. When the law was passed in Poland requiring that animals be stunned before their slaughter, the Jewish leaders gathered together to think of a solution to the decree. The Chafetz Chaim said that the question must be sent to "the tremendous genius" of Simleu (who wasn't at the gathering), as he was capable of properly examining the matter.

<sup>15</sup> Bamidbar 17:23.

<sup>16</sup> Shemos 2:6.

<sup>17</sup> Sota 12b.

<sup>18</sup> The Pasuk (Shemos 2:6) reads ותראהו את הילד והנה נער בכה, she saw the boy and behold a youth was crying.

<sup>19</sup> Upon hearing the pain of one of his Chassidim, the Rebbe said "What a great tragedy. I don't have answers for you but I can cry with you."

<sup>20</sup> This is just as it says וירא בסבלתם, he saw the burden of his brethren (Shemos 2:11). We also see this idea when he saved the daughters of Yisro from an encounter at the well (Shemos 2:17).

had viewed his tattoos with pride, but that afternoon he felt humiliation. An elderly Jew stepped forward and in a heavily accented English declared, "Look here, I also have a tattoo." Stretching out his frail arm, the man pointed to the row of numbers tattooed on his arm. "It seems we have both come a long way."

Moshe told Yisro כי יהיה להם דבר בא אלי, when the people have a matter, one comes to him and he (Moshe) judges between the two people...<sup>21</sup> The wording is inconsistent as it begins in the plural—להם—and then continues in the singular—בא אלי. Why doesn't it say באים אלי, in the plural, just as it began in the plural? The Chassan Sofer<sup>22</sup> (1835-1883) explains that when someone came to Moshe with a problem it became Moshe's problem, since he cared<sup>23</sup> and felt their pain.<sup>24</sup> So, people came to Moshe with their issues (כי יהיה להם דבר) and then בא אלי, the issues became Moshe's. בא אלי refers to Moshe, not the ones who came to him. Consequently, it is in the singular.

R' Zeira was asked במה הארכת ימים, with what did you merit longevity. Among what he mentioned was לא ששתי בתקלה, חבירי, I didn't rejoice when my friend stumbled.<sup>25</sup> What is the novelty of this, since this is basic decency? R' Yitzchak Vorka<sup>26</sup> (1779-1848) explains it in a different light: I couldn't be happy with my Simcha while my friend was going through a difficult time.<sup>27</sup>

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Tz"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the *Sefer, Fascinating Insights: Torah Perspectives On Unique Topics*. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

<sup>21</sup> Shemos 18:16.

<sup>22</sup> The Chassan Sofer was R' Shmuel Ehenfeld, a grandson of the Chassam Sofer. חידושי תורה נכד סופר is an acronym for חידושי תורה נכד סופר, the Chidushei Torah of the grandson of the Chassam Sofer.

<sup>23</sup> On the night R' Yehoshua Hartman got engaged, he told his Rebbe, R' Yitzchak Hutner, about these plans. On this night of his engagement, he arrived home at 3:30 in the morning. At 3:45 in the morning, R' Hutner called him and wished him Mazel Tov! Then he asked, "Why didn't you call me?" R' Hartman replied I was planning on calling at 8:30 a.m. when it is a normal hour. R' Hutner's reply: "If it was your father or mother, would you wait until then also?!"

<sup>24</sup> A catholic cleric from 15<sup>th</sup> century Spain relates what occurred during the Spanish expulsion in 1492: Wealthy Jews spent their last coin to secure passage on the final ships leaving Spain for poorer Jews who were in danger of being left behind to forced baptism.

<sup>25</sup> Megila 28a.

<sup>26</sup> He was introduced to the world of Chassidus by his father. He became a devoted Chassid of R' Dovid Lelover, the Chozeh of Lublin, and R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischa. R' Dovid Lelover would travel with him to the courts of Tzadikim which is how he became a student of the Chozeh and R' Simcha Bunim. After the death of R' Simcha Bunim, he chose the Kotzker Rebbe as his mentor, becoming the Kotzker's closest friend and disciple, together with R' Yitzchak Meir of Ger (known as the Chidushei Harim) and R' Chanoch of Alexander. Among the Vorker Rebbe's students, there are known to have been 114 leading Chassidic Rebbes. His Torah thoughts and anecdotes about his life were collected in a Sefer entitled Ohel Yitzchak. R' Yitzchak Vorka's son was the founder of Amshinov Chassidus.

<sup>27</sup> R' Yitzchak Vorka commented on וטמא הכהן עד הערב, the Kohen shall remain contaminated until evening (Bamidbar 19:7), which it says by the Parah Aduma, that the essence of the Parah Aduma—purifying those who are spiritually impure—is the concept of לרנך כמוך, love your fellow like yourself (Vayikra 19:18). His grandson, R' Mendel of Vorka, explained that this is because the priest who was involved in the purification process himself became impure by the same process that purified the person who came to him. Giving up something yourself in order to help another is the ultimate love for one's fellow man. When one truly loves another, one feels pleasure in all the sacrifices made for him.