

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



# עֵלֵי דֵשֶׁה

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

## Making it Count

וְאֵת שְׁעֵיר הַחֲטָאת דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ מִשָּׁה  
וְהִנֵּה שָׂרָף

*And the goat of the Chatas, Moshe sought insistently, for behold, it had been burned.* (Vayikra 10:16)

In *Birkas HaChodesh* (which we recite this Shabbos), we ask Hashem for חיים שיש בהם יראת שמים ויראת

One must toil in Torah with an intensity that will lead to yiras Shamayim, so that he will make this double inquiry: דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ.

חטא – *Life with fear of Heaven and fear of sin.* And in the following line, חיים שיש בהם אהבת תורה ויראת שמים – *Life with love of Torah and fear of Heaven.* The question is well-known: Why do we twice request *yiras Shamayim*?

The Gemara (Kiddushin 30a) notes that the earlier *Chachamim* were called *sofrim* (so their *takanos* are referred to as *divrei sofrim*). Why? The Gemara answers that *Sofrim* can mean “counters”; the early Sages would count the letters of the Torah. They marked the letter *vav* of (11:42) גַּחֲוֹן as the middle letter of the Torah, the words דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ as the mid-point in words, and the *pasuk* וְהִתְגַּלְחָה וְאֵת (13:33) לֹא יִגְלַח as the middle *pasuk*.

Surely the greatness of these *Chachamim* was not in their counting prowess; there is nothing special about that. The Gemara is expressing the great value the *Chachamim* placed on the letters and words of the Torah. Just as an ordinary person might count money or precious stones, the *Chachamim* lovingly counted each and every letter of the Torah, because they knew and appreciated the depth and treasures hidden in them. Thus, they were known as *Sofrim*.

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## Call to Action

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם ראש חֲדָשִׁים ראשון הוא לָכֶם  
לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה

*This month shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.* (Shemos 12:2)

The Gemara (Shabbos 147b) tells that the *Tanna* R. Elazar ben Arach travelled for some time to a city called *Diyumses*. This city was deeply entrenched in the pursuit of *Olam Hazeih*. Over time, the surroundings had an effect on R. Elazar, and he experienced a spiritual decline. Sometime after R. Elazar left *Diyumses*, he was called up to the Torah for the *pesukim* of *Parshas HaChodesh*. Reading the *pesukim* out loud, he confused the words, reading הָיָה לָבָם – *Their hearts were deaf*, instead of הָיָה לָכֶם.

Obviously, we are very far removed from R. Elazar's *madreigos*, and have no comprehension of what his “spiritual decline” meant. Nonetheless, our *rebbeim* commonly cited this story and drew lessons from it.

The *mekubal* R. Shimshon of Ostropole noted which letters R. Elazar mistakenly inserted – the *reish* of הָחַרַשׁ,

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# Making it Count

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There is a profound message in the Gemara's statement that דרש דרש חציין דרש דרש חציין של תיבות - דרש דרש marks the middle of the Torah in words. The Maharal<sup>1</sup> explains that the actual mid-point of the Torah is between these two words, so that the first word is in the first half of the Torah, and the second word is in the second half.

A reference to centrality is found elsewhere in the Gemara, as well. The Gemara (Yoma 54a) calls the place of the Beis Hamikdash "the center of the world." This means the most important place in the world, out of which the rest of the world was created.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, when our Gemara references the mid-point of the Torah in letters, words, or *pesukim*, it means that these are central, focal points of the Torah.

What is the most basic message of the Torah? דרש דרש, a persistent inquiry. Through the Torah, we can investigate our actions and determine if they find favor in Hashem's eyes. As the *Zohar hakadosh*<sup>3</sup> says, אורייתא, קא מודעת ליה חוביה - *The Torah notifies one of his shortcomings*. This is why the Torah is referred to as תורה אור (Mishlei 6:23); by its light one can search the depths of his soul and judge his actions.

This intense inquiry into oneself is twofold, דרש דרש. One part is on one

side of the Torah, and one part is on the other.

Before approaching to learn Torah, one must investigate and determine whether he is presently fit to learn Hashem's Torah. The Kotzker Rebbe said of the Chiddushei HaRim that he wouldn't begin learning Torah until he had purified himself such that he saw the Name of Hashem before him. This is far above our level. Nonetheless, one must prepare himself to learn Torah with thoughts of *teshuvah* and *taharah*, according to one's own level. This is דרש, the first inquiry.

דרש, the second inquiry, must come after one finishes learning. At this point, after his eyes have been illuminated by the Torah's light, he must contemplate whether he now properly fulfills Hashem's mitzvos - with *hislahavus*, *simchah shel mitzvah*, and *yiras Shamayim*. Also, is he implementing what he has just learned? As the Ramban wrote,<sup>4</sup> "When you rise from a *sefer*, examine what you have learned to see if there is anything you can fulfill."

One must toil in Torah with an intensity that will lead to *yiras Shamayim*, so that he will make this double inquiry: דרש דרש. When one exerts himself in learning to attain *yiras Shamayim*, even topics in Torah that don't have a practical application

will help him be rid of his *yetzer hara*. He will become uplifted; his *neshamah* will be purified and he will clearly see which areas he needs to improve.

The Baal Shem Tov took the *pasuk* (Bereishis 7:1) בא וגו' אל התיבה - *Come to the Teivah*, as referring to the words (*teivos*) of Torah and *tefillah*. Within these words, one can save himself from the *mabul* of sin that deluges the world around us.

This is the meaning of the Gemara's statement, דרש דרש חציין של תיבות. Before entering the *teivah* of Torah, one must examine his level of *yiras Shamayim* and seek to grow in it through his learning; and when completing learning, one must again examine his deeds to the light of the Torah.

And this is why in *Birkas HaChodesh* we daven twice for *yiras Shamayim*, sandwiched around a request for *ahavas Torah*. We are beseeching Hashem to grant us דרש דרש, an inspiration of *yiras Shamayim* both before and after learning Torah. These words of *tefillah* also show us what we must strive for: Torah learning begun and completed with thoughts of *yiras Shamayim*.

(בנאות דשא - שמיני תשפ"ג)

1 *Tiferes Yisrael, perek 67*

2 See Maharsha

3 Vol. 3, 23b

4 *Iggeres HaRamban*

# Call to Action

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the *yud* of היה, and the *beis* of לבם. R. Shimshon explained that these letters spell the name of the *kelipah* that causes one to forget one's learning. This *kelipah* caused R. Elazar to err by forgetting the correct words.

וְאֶהְרֵת אֶת ה' אֶלְקֵיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ  
וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ – *You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources* (Devarim 6:5). Rashi cites Sifri: “*With all your heart* – Your heart should not be divided with Hashem.” What does this mean? Surely,

One must be like a *Korban Mussaf* – being continuously *mosif* (adding) onto his *avodas Hashem*

this *pasuk* isn't only addressed to those with weak *emunah*.

The Gemara (Megillah 29b) cites a debate concerning which *parshah* is read for *Parshas Shekalim*. Rav maintains that we read צו אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם (Bamidbar 28:2) – the *kriah* of Rosh Chodesh. This *parshah* discusses the *Korban Tamid*, and then continues with the *Mussaf* of Rosh Chodesh. Rav's reasoning is that Chazal explicate the *pasuk* (28:14) זָמַת עֹלֹת חֹדֶשׁ as an allusion for חֹדֶשׁ וְהָבֵא קֹרְבָן חֹדֶשׁ – *Renew and bring a korban from the new contributions* (of *shekalim*). Hence, a reference to *shekalim*. Shmuel disagrees, maintaining that we read

of the mitzvah of donating *shekalim* at the beginning of Parshas Ki Sisa. The halachah follows Shmuel's opinion.

Following Rav's reasoning, if the point is to read זָמַת עֹלֹת חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדֶשׁוֹ, why does the *kriah* begin with the mitzvah of *Tamid*, and not as on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, directly with the *Mussaf* of Rosh Chodesh?

The answer seems to be that since the *Korban Tamid* of Rosh Chodesh Nissan – which preceded the *Mussaf* of the day – was already brought from the new *shekalim* collection, we begin the *kriah* with that *korban*. But if so, why indeed is זָמַת עֹלֹת חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדֶשׁוֹ written regarding the *Mussaf*, and not regarding the *Tamid* – the first *korban* brought from the new *shekalim*?

These last *parshiyos* of *HaChodesh* and *Shekalim* lend an air of spiritual renewal. Any Yid who is spiritually in tune begins to seek rejuvenation in *avodas Hashem* during these days; the season itself offers assistance. One must take care to ensure that after this period has passed, he isn't the same person he was before. One must not be unchanging like a *Korban Tamid*; rather, one must be like a *Korban Mussaf* – being continuously *mosif* (adding) onto his Torah learning, mitzvos, and *avodas Hashem*. If one does so, this season of renewal will have served its purpose.

Thus, זָמַת עֹלֹת חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדֶשׁוֹ – the *pasuk* of renewal – is written regarding the *Mussaf* and not the *Tamid*. A renewal must be in the spirit of the *Mussaf*, adding more and more to one's *avodah*.

R. Elazar ben Arach mistook the words הִזְהָרְהוּ לְכֹחַ הַחֹדֶשׁ for להרהר היה לבם. The lesson is that we must not allow our hearts to be deaf; we must awaken them to hear the revitalizing call of הִזְהָרְהוּ לְכֹחַ הַחֹדֶשׁ, so that our actions will become revitalized and uplifted, too. This is what Chazal mean: “*With all your heart* – Your heart should not be divided with Hashem.” When Hashem provides special times of the year to inspire and uplift us, we must grab the opportunity and better ourselves; we must not leave our hearts “divided with Hashem” by foregoing the chance.

וַיִּקַּח וַיִּתֵּן אֶת הַעֵדוּת אֶל הָאָרֶן – *He took and placed the Testimony (Luchos) into the Aron* (Shemos 40:20). The *mefarshim* note that the expression “*ויקח* – *He took*” is used only regarding the *Luchos*; regarding the other *keilim* the *pasuk* simply says, וַיִּקַּח אוֹר וַיִּתֵּן, *he placed*.

This contains a lesson for us. The *Luchos* – the Torah – should not simply be replaced to its spot after being learned. First, we must “take” of it – we must seek to apply its teachings to ourselves. As the Ramban wrote in *Iggeres HaRamban*, “When you rise from a *sefer*, examine what you have learned to see if there is anything you can fulfill.”

As we approach the month of Nissan and Pesach, let us awaken within ourselves a listening heart, which will discern and act upon the special *kochos* of this time of year. If we do this, we can look back several months later and see the lasting impact these days had upon us.

(בנאות דשא – פקודי-החודש תשפ"ג)

# Precisely the Point

אַךְ מֵעַיִן וּבֹר מִקְוֵה מַיִם יְהִי טָהוֹר

Only a spring or cistern, a gathering of water, shall remain pure. (Vayikra 11:36)

The Tosefta (Parah 8:6) states: “A *mikvah* that contains exactly forty *se’ah* – if one immerses in it, he becomes *tahor* and the *mikvah* becomes *tamei*.”

*Chasdei David* and the Gra explain that “the *mikvah* becomes *tamei*” means it cannot purify anyone else. When the person came out of the *mikvah*, some water came out with him, so the *mikvah* no longer contains forty *se’ah*, the minimum volume of water necessary for a *mikvah*. (We may add that according to the Rambam<sup>5</sup> who maintains that a gathering of water less than forty *se’ah* is receptive to *tumah* even if it is set into the ground (*mechubar l’karka*) – the Tosefta might mean that the *mikvah* is now able receive *tumah*.)

*Tzafnas Pa’ane’ach*<sup>6</sup> and *Ohr Hameir*<sup>7</sup> disagree with *Chasdei David* and the Gra’s interpretation, and explain the Tosefta literally: the *mikvah* becomes *tamei* when the person emerges from it. How? *Kesef Mishneh*<sup>8</sup> writes that one who immerses in a *mikvah* becomes *tahor* only when he emerges from it. Accordingly, in the case of the Tosefta, when the person is about to emerge, he is still *tamei*. As he breaks the surface and removes some water from

the *mikvah*, he makes the *mikvah tamei*. Still, the person becomes *tahor*, since he has emerged from a *mikvah* of forty *se’ah*. The *mikvah* water does not make him *tamei* again, since it is a *rishon* of *tumah*, which cannot make a person *tamei*.

The *Acharonim*<sup>9</sup> discuss this opinion of *Kesef Mishneh*: does he mean that as the person’s first hair emerges, he becomes *tahor*, or only when he emerges entirely or mostly? It seems from *Tzafnas Pa’ane’ach* that he understood the first way. This is the opinion of most *Acharonim*, as well.

Seemingly, when the Tosefta speaks of “exactly forty *se’ah*,” it doesn’t mean down to the drop; it would be impossible to be so exact.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, when the person’s first hair comes out of the water, making him *tahor* – the small amount of water it removes would not be enough to invalidate the *mikvah*. If so, both the person and the *mikvah* would remain *tahor*. This runs contrary to the understanding of *Tzafnas Pa’ane’ach* and *Ohr Hameir*.

My son Rav Avraham Mordechai suggested that perhaps the Tosefta refers to a slightly different case: A person immerses in a *mikvah* of forty *se’ah*, and another person then removes a cupful of water from the *mikvah*. The person in the *mikvah* is now seen as having emerged,

since after all, he is no longer in a *mikvah* of forty *se’ah*. And at the same time he “emerged,” the *mikvah* became invalid. Having immersed in forty *se’ah*, he is now *tahor*, but the *mikvah* is now *tamei*, since leading up to the moment of the *mikvah*’s invalidation, the person was *tamei*.

This could be true in the Tosefta’s words; the Tosefta doesn’t speak of “exiting” the *mikvah*, per se. However, it goes against the simple reading of the Tosefta, which implies that the one who immersed caused the *mikvah* to become short of forty *se’ah*.

My son suggested another reading, as well – which seems correct. The Tosefta speaks of “exactly forty *se’ah*.” True, as above, a human cannot measure down to the drop. Nonetheless, the Tosefta means that if Heaven would know a *mikvah* to be exactly forty *se’ah* – to the drop, then when a person would emerge from it, he would become *tahor* and the *mikvah* would become *tamei*. The small amount of water that emerges with his first hair would bring the *mikvah* below forty *se’ah*, so while having immersed in a kosher *mikvah*, he would become *tahor*, the *mikvah* would become *tamei* since until that point the person was *tamei*.

(בבואות דשא – שמיני תשכ"ג)

5 *Peirush Hamishnayos*, beginning of Mikva’os; *Yad HaChazakah*, *Hilchos Tum’as Ochalin*, beginning of perek 15

6 Warsaw edition, no. 276; New edition of *teshuvos*, vol. 1 no. 73

7 R. Meir Shapiro. End of no. 41.

8 *Hilchos Avos HaTum’os*, end of perek 6

9 See Zera Avraham, *Sugyos* no. 75 (the second), in footnote; *Chelkas Yoav*, vol. 2 footnote 20; *Devar Avraham*, vol. 2 no. 15 in *mafteichos*, and vol. 3 no. 19

10 This may be why Chazal often speak of “forty *se’ah* minus a *kortov*,” and don’t say “minus a drop.” The latter would be too exact to be defined, so they speak instead of a *kortov*, which is a small measure.