



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

לולי תורתך שקשעני אז אברתי בעניי ... מה אהבתי תורתך כל היום היא שחתי ונו' (תהלים קי"ג-צ"ב)

*Chazal* tell us: “*V'Talmud Torah K'neged Kulam* - Learning *Torah* is equal to all *mitzvos*.” What is the meaning of this statement? If it means that learning *Torah* is more important than honoring one’s parents, visiting the sick and all the other *mitzvos*, then why even bother to mention them at all? Should we not just spend all of our time exclusively learning *Torah*?

The *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos* is a wonderful time when many *chassidim* travel to distant cities to be with their mentors as the holiday is primarily based around the concept of *Torah* learning and a reacceptance of faith. It is a period of time that fosters a feeling of rebirth, and a tremendous pride to be a member of the Jewish Nation - the Chosen Nation. Who better to spend it with than with one’s *Rebbe*? To spend *Yom Tov* attending the *Rebbe’s tish* is an unforgettable and uplifting experience of immense proportions. In the olden days especially, and even today, thousands upon thousands of *chassidim* leave their homes and opt to bask in the holy and rarefied presence of the *Tzaddik*, the *Rebbe*, who imparts lofty words of *Torah* and *Chasidus*, *Sherayim* (leftover food) and life-altering messages to the eager and adulating masses.

A *chassidish* boy of about 11 years old was stuck at home in *Bnei Brak* for *Shavuos* one year. Most of his friends had made their way to *Yerushalayim* to be with their *Rebbe* for *Yom Tov*, but this boy couldn’t afford the bus fare to get there, and so he stayed home for *Shavuos*. He was despondent and embarrassed, and didn’t want to venture to any of the *chassidish shtieblach* to be with other “*nebach’s*” who weren’t able to go. Instead, for the first time in his life he entered the *Beis Medrash* of *Ponovezh Yeshiva* after the *seudah* on *Shavuos* night, and sat down in a corner to say *Tikkun Leil Shavuos*.

A few minutes later, a *bochur* came over and asked him to move, since this was his seat. Shortly after he found another place to sit, someone else asked him to relocate for the same reason. The scenario repeated itself seven times, and as the boy just stood there helplessly scanning the cavernous *Beis Medrash* for an empty place, he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned around to see an older man who smiled at him and said, “Are you looking for a *chavrusa*? I need a *chavrusa*, do you want to learn?” The young *chasid* agreed and they found a place right upfront. The two sat together and learned *Maseches Shabbos* for five hours straight, and it was only in the morning that this eleven-year-old boy found out that his *chavrusa* was none other than the *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Ponevezh*, **R’ Elazar Menachem Mann Shach ז”ל**! “*V’Talmud Torah K'neged Kulam*”!

Of course, the literal meaning of the words must also be understood; that after all is said and done, there is not anything in the world as precious, as valuable, and as potent as actually learning *Torah*.

Shortly after joining the prominent *Mir Yeshivah* in *Yerushalayim*, a *bochur* was surprised and even somewhat shocked to learn that the elderly lady working diligently in the *yeshivah* kitchen was none other than the widow of the eminent late *Rosh Hayeshivah*, **R’ Chaim Shmulevitz ז”ל**. He saw her working hard in the kitchen every day and he felt uncomfortable that she was performing a menial job in order for him, a simple *yeshivah* student, to be able to eat.

He spoke about it to a friend and together they decided they had to do something to somewhat alleviate her burden. The next morning, they lingered around until breakfast was over and everybody had left the dining room. As *Rebbetzin Shmulevitz* began stacking up the many milk crates in order to drag them outside for the milkman to pick up as he delivers the milk early the next morning, he and his friend jumped into action. They quickly entered the kitchen and before *Rebbetzin Shmulevitz* could say anything or stop them, they stacked the milk crates and dragged them outside for the milkman to pick up.

As they came back inside to go upstairs to the *Beis Medrash*, *Rebbetzin Shmulevitz* came over and thanked them profusely for their tremendous assistance. She then added, “*Über zolst vissen az tzum blatt Gemara kumt ess nisht!*” which loosely translates as, “As appreciative as I am of your help, you should know that sitting and learning a *blatt Gemara* is a greater and more worthwhile use of your time!” “*V’Talmud Torah K'neged Kulam*”! (Adapted from *Portraits of Prayer*, by Rabbi Eliezer Abish)

ורגליהם רגלי ישראל ... (דווקא א-ה: הפמרה ליום א' של שבועות)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

*Chazal* say that in every generation, a person should consider himself as having personally received the *Torah* on *Har Sinai*. In the *Haftorah* of the first day of *Shavuos*, *Yechezkel HaNavi* is shown a most outstanding vision of the Almighty. *Yechezkel* is standing at the river *Kvar* while in exile in *Bavel*, where he sees the holy *Shechina* atop a Divine, throne-like chariot. The chariot is held up by a group of four-faced living creatures. Those creatures were angels with their legs fused into one single, rigid leg.

**R’ Avraham HaKohen Pam ז”ל** quotes *Chazal* who say that a practical lesson may be learned from this fact. The *Gemara* (*Moed Kattan 17a*) states: “*If a Rebbe resembles an angel of Hashem, then seek Torah from his mouth*” - this is

based on the words of *Malachi HaNavi*, “*For a Kohen’s lips shall guard knowledge, and teaching should be sought from his mouth, for he is a messenger of Hashem,*” (*Malachi 1:7*).

**Rav Pam** then quotes the **Baal Hafla’ah** who explains how a *Kohen* is compared to an actual *Rebbi*. He says that the characteristic of an angel is that it is an “עומד” - a stagnant being, who stands in one place in time with no chances or opportunities to grow any higher than it already is. In this manner, a *Rebbi*, one who imparts *Torah* wisdom to others, must learn to accept the fact that he is required to put his student’s growth above his own. Therefore, a *Rebbi* is akin to an angel, and his self-sacrifice for his students’ benefit makes him worthy of having them “*seek Torah from his mouth.*”

הכל מודים בעצרת דבעינן נמי לבם ע”כ (פסחים פ”ה)

לעילוי נשמת אבנו מורנו הרבנו הרב חיים יוסף בן ר' ישראל אברהם קויפמאן זצ”ל

# מחשבת הל"ב

An almost universal *minhag* among *Klal Yisroel* is eating a *milchig seuda*, or at least *kiddush* with a dairy pastry on *Shavuos*. *Myriad* explanations are given. The **Mishna Berurah** quotes a *minhag* to eat honey and milk which metaphorically refers to the *Torah*, as it is written “דבש וחלב תרת לשונך”. The **Chofetz Chaim** (elsewhere) asks: this seems to contradict an explicit *posuk*, “ומתוקים מדבש”. The *Torah* is sweeter than honey, not just equal. I saw an answer as follows. The **Rashba** writes that honey has two powers. If a small piece of an insect would fall into it, the honey would have the ability to transform it, over time, into honey. It also has the *koach* to preserve a complete object. (See *Bava Basra 3b*) The *Torah* too has these unique aspects of honey - to transform something and alter its actual physical makeup. So both are true - the *Torah* is sweeter than honey. Yet the *Torah* is also equal to honey in its ability to effect a transformation. This is why the word “חסטא” which appears by every *korban mussaf*, is conspicuously missing by *mussaf* of *Shavuos*. Because when one accepts the *Torah*, its honey elements kick in and converts him into a different person. Thus, not only are the sins no longer his, it’s as if he never sinned!

*Chazal* tell us: “הכל מודים בעצרת דבעינן נמי לבם”. Why is there is an emphasis on לבם? Seemingly the holiday celebrating the *Torah* should be completely *ruchniyus*! Perhaps we can say the following *machshava*, a homiletical *teitch*. Other *Yamim Tovim* help elevate us to attain new levels in *ruchniyus*. *Shavuos* is when *Hashem* says, “בעינן נמי לבם” - “I need you”! Your essence changes, and you become a new person. One who takes his *Torah* learning seriously knows how it impacts his entire being. This happens every year on *Shavuos* with a new *Kabbolas HaTorah*. Let us all be *mekabel* the *Torah b’simcha* זאיש *Amen!* במהרה בימינו *Moshiach* אתה הראת לדעת כי הוה האלקים in unity and B”H witness with the coming of *Moshiach*!

## משל למת הדבר דומה

ויאמרו כל אשר דבר ה' נקשה ונשמח ... (שמות כ"ד)

משל *Mazel Tov!* cried the excited crowd as the newly engaged *chosson* and *kallah* walked in the house. They looked shyly at each other, beaming with joy. Thus, began extensive preparations for the upcoming event. The siblings of each side began the phone call marathon, booking all the relevant appointments. The *chosson* went shopping for his new attire and his parents began making all the necessary arrangements pertaining to the wedding. Expensive or not, a wedding is a festive event well deserving of all the expenses.

Except for the *kallah*. She reasoned that it was ridiculous to spend such enormous amounts of money on a gown, flowers, and the like, when its only going to be used for four hours. Instead, she went to a local department store and picked out a beautiful dress, far less costly than the usual elaborate gown. She got fake flowers for half the cost of real

ones. These she could even use after the wedding!

When the parents of the *chosson* found out what she was doing, they were quite disappointed. After discussing it with the appropriate parties, they called off the *shidduch*. They called the *shadchan* and explained their decision: “A wedding is a commitment of dedication between two sides. This is an extremely exciting time and an enormous amount of preparation goes into it. This girl is apparently not dedicated and therefore not very excited. Therefore, this *shidduch* is off!”

**נמשל**: When *Klal Yisroel* received the *Torah*, explains **R’ Shimshon Pinkus ז”ל**, we were so dedicated to this new commitment that we automatically cried out, “*Naaseh V’Nishma - We will do and then we will listen!*” This is the theme of this holiday. There aren’t any special *mitzvos* we are commanded to perform on *Shavuos*, rather *Chazal* command us to enjoy lavish meals and joyous celebrations, to show our dedication to this one-of-a-kind, exciting event!

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SELOMO

# דרגה יתירה

*Shavuos* means weeks. The *Chag HaShavuos* is actually dependent on the weeks that precede it. We are counting the weeks. *Shavuos* is the day that the world has been waiting for since the beginning of time. It is the day we make “*shavuos*” promises. We promise *Hashem* that we will refocus on our goals. We will realign our lives to fulfill the purpose for which we came here.

When *Hashem* was preparing to give the *Torah* to *Am Yisroel*, the angels argued that the *Torah* is so holy, it should stay up in Heaven and not be given to man. *Hashem* said to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, “Answer them.” *Moshe* held onto the *kisei HaKavod* and asked them, “Were you in *Egypt* that *Hashem* took you out? Do you have parents to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Kibud Av V’aim*?”

Did the angels not know this? They realized that *Torah* observance does not apply to them. So, why did they want it to stay in Heaven? The answer is because *Torah* has many levels. On a deeper, higher level, *Torah* does apply to angels. They said, “*Tein lanu m'hodcha.*” Let us keep the *Torah* on the highest spiritual level. But what *Moshe* was telling them was that if you cannot keep *Torah* on ALL levels, even on the simplest level, then it is not for you. If the *Torah* was given to US, then it is OURS. Whether it is fulfilled on the most simple level, or on the deepest, most spiritual level, *Torah* was given to us. And only the holy Nation of *Yisroel*, with our physical bodies and exalted *neshamos*, can truly appreciate and fulfill the *Torah* on all levels.

The Jewish people are the perfect match for the *Torah*. *Hashem*, who is the Master *Shadchan* of the Universe chose us to be the *shidduch* for His *Torah* which means that *Torah* matches our *neshamos*. Every single Jew has a connection to *Torah*. Even if we don’t have the head to understand the depths of *Torah*, we all have a heart to love *Torah*. It is this Jewish heart that has kept the fire of *Torah* alive throughout our history. It was the love for *Torah* that burned in the hearts of *Yidden* in every generation, which is the reason why we are all here today. Wishing all of *Klal Yisroel*, a wonderful and uplifting *Chag Sameach!*