

# HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE THE TORAH?

*by Shlomo Katz*

## **Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz**

### **Naso**

**Volume XVI, No. 31  
14 Sivan 5762  
May 25, 2002**

---

Today's Learning:  
Avodah Zarah 5:2-3  
Orach Chaim 648:5-7  
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 66  
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Challah 3

This week's parashah continues the census of the Levi'im begun in last week's parashah: In last week's parashah, the sons of Kehat, son of Levi, were counted. Now, our parashah opens, "take a census of the sons of Gershon, also, according to their fathers' households, according to their families."

The Midrash on the above verse cites Mishlei (3:15), "It is more precious than pearls." Says the Midrash: The Torah is more precious than anything. Therefore, although Gershon was older than Kehat, and the Torah usually accords honor to a firstborn, here the Torah mentioned Kehat before Gershon because the sons of Kehat carried the Holy Ark, which contained the Torah.

R' Yaakov Kaminetsky z"l (died 1986) observes that a similar lesson regarding the Torah's honor is learned from the Gemara (Eruvin 28b), which relates that when Rabbi Zera was too tired to study Torah, he would sit in a place where he knew Torah scholars would pass. He said, "Let me rise for

them and earn reward that way." From this story we can learn how our predecessors loved the Torah, says R' Kaminetsky. Surely the exhausted Rabbi Zera could have found a mitzvah to perform that did not involve physical exertion. Nevertheless, he chose to exert himself to honor Torah students, for this is part of the mitzvah of Torah study.

The Gemara continues, relating that as Rabbi Zera was sitting and waiting for scholars to pass, he entered into a Torah discussion with a young child. Moreover, that child taught Rabbi Zera a halachah regarding which Rabbi Zera had had a mistaken understanding. A true scholar, observes R' Kaminetsky, is one who is prepared to learn from every person, young or old, wise or simple. Such a willingness to learn from one's "inferiors" is a barometer of how much one loves the Torah. (Emet Le'Yaakov)

\*\*\*\*\*

*"Speak to Bnei Yisrael: 'A man or woman who commits any of man's [literally: "Adam's"] sins, by committing treacherous treachery toward Hashem, and that person shall become guilty'." (5:6)*

R' Chaim Tিরer z"l (see page 4) asks: Why does the verse say "who commits any of man's sins" instead of just "any sin"? Also, why the repetition "treacherous treachery"?

He answers: Kabbalists teach that the soul of every Jew was once part of the soul of Adam. When Adam sinned, his sin left a blemish on his soul, and therefore on the souls of all his descendants. Every sin is, in part, "Adam's sin."

But, do not think that this absolves us of guilt. To the contrary, each of us was sent to this world to rectify that blemish. Imagine your reaction if you were to give a nugget of silver ore to a silversmith to purify and he were to return it with even more impurities that it had at first! Likewise, every sin that we commit is a "treacherous treachery," i.e., a double treachery. Not only do we not rectify our souls, we cause them to become even more sullied. (Be'er Mayim Chayim)

\*\*\*\*\*

*"May Hashem bless you and safeguard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you. May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you." (6:24-26)*

R' Shmuel Tayib z"l (Djerba, Tunisia; 20th century) explains the verses of Birkat Kohanim / the priestly blessing as follows:

These verses include the three primary things that people desire - sustenance, children and long-life. The first verse, *"May Hashem bless you and safeguard you,"* refers to sustenance, as it is written (Devarim 15:18), "Hashem, your God, will bless you in all that you do." The latter part of the blessing ("and safeguard you") is a blessing that the wealth that you amass as a result of the first part of the blessing will remain in your hands.

The second verse, *"May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you,"* refers to

the blessing of children, as it is written (Bereishit 33:5), *"The children whom God has graciously given your servant."*

Finally, the third verse, *"May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you,"* refers to long-life, which is the result of physical and mental health. This is called "peace" because it comes about when all the parts of the mind and body work harmoniously together. Thus the Torah (Bemidbar 25:12) refers to Pinchas' reward of long-life as the "covenant of peace." (Afapei Shachar)

\*\*\*\*\*

*"It was on the day that Moshe finished erecting the Tabernacle... The Princes of Yisrael, the heads of their fathers' household, brought offerings..." (7:1-2)*

R' Shmuel Wosner shlita (rabbi of the Zichron Meir neighborhood of Bnei Brak and a prominent posek) asks: Why did the Princes start bringing offerings after the dedication was finished? Also, our parashah states (verse 89): "When Moshe came to the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him . . ." We read in Shmot (40:35), "Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of Hashem filled the Tabernacle." How can these verse be reconciled? If they happened at different times, when?

R' Wosner explains: Each tribe has a slightly different way of serving Hashem. These differences are represented by the twelve different stones of the Kohen Gadol's breastplate, and they are part of the reason that we have different versions of the Siddur. The purpose of the Princes' offerings was to dedicate the Tabernacle to each tribe. Although the Princes brought outwardly identical offerings, the inner thoughts of each were different, thus distinguishing them.

When the dedication of the Mishkan was first completed, the Mishkan was indeed too holy for even Moshe to enter to receive prophecy. Only after each tribe drew G-d's presence into the Mishkan through its own mode of service could Moshe receive prophecy there, for Moshe received prophecy only through the merit of the Jewish people. Thus, before the Princes' offerings, "Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting." After, "Moshe came to the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him." (Derashot Ve'sichot Shevet Halevi)

\*\*\*\*\*

*"The Princes of Yisrael, the heads of their fathers' households, brought offerings; they were the leaders of the tribes, they were those who stand at the census." (7:2)*

The Midrash comments:

The verse (Mishlei 20:15) states, "Yaish / There is gold and many pearls, but the lips of wisdom are a precious vessel." If a person has gold, silver, gems and pearls, but he has no wisdom, of what good is his wealth? "There is gold and many pearls" - this refers to the offerings of the Princes. "But the lips of wisdom are a precious vessel" - Moshe was crestfallen, for he said, "Everyone else brought

offerings to the dedication of the Mishkan, and I did not."

Hashem told him, "By your life! The words of your lips are more beloved to Me than anything." The proof of this is the fact that He did not call to anyone else but Moshe, as it is written (Vayikra 1:1), "He called to Moshe."

R' Shlomo Ephraim z"l of Lenshitz (died 1619; author of the Torah commentary Kli Yakar) writes: The implication of this Midrash is that the Princes were people who had gold, silver, gems and pearls, but no wisdom. Why do they deserve that label?

R' Shlomo Ephraim explains that the Midrash is not labeling the Princes as lacking wisdom. Rather, the Midrash speaks of three levels. He writes: The Midrash is bothered by the expression in the verse: "Yaish / There is." One can only use the word "yaish" in connection with something that has real substance. For example, Olam Haba is called "yaish" as in the verse (Mishlei 8:21), "To bequeath to those who love Me - yaish." How, then, can gold, silver, gems and pearls be referred to as "yaish"?

The answer is that these items have substance when they are used for tzedakah and other mitzvot, for then they are preserved for Olam Haba. It goes without saying that if a person does not have the wisdom to use his wealth for mitzvot, his wealth lacks substance and is of no use. The Princes, however, did use their wealth properly to donate generously to the Mishkan. Thus, "Yaish / There is gold and many pearls"; their wealth had substance and was preserved for Olam Haba. Even so, says the verse, there is a higher level; "The lips of wisdom are a [more] precious vessel." Moshe's Torah takes precedence even over the tzedakah of the Princes. (Amudai Shaish: Amud Ha'Torah, end of Ch. 1)

A related thought:

We read in Tehilim (34:10) and recite in Birkat Hamazon: "Fear Hashem, you holy ones, for 'ain' / there is no deprivation for His reverent ones." Is this true? asks R' Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov z"l (see page 4). It seems that many G-d-fearing people live lives of deprivation.

He explains: "Ain" is the opposite of "yaish" (which refers to Olam Haba). Thus, "Ain" refers to "Olam Haze" / "This World," and the verse may be read: "Fear Hashem, you holy ones, for 'ain' - only of This Worldly things -- are His reverent ones deprived." However, their "yaish" is not lacking and is complete. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Ezrat Avoteinu p. 198)

\*\*\*\*\*

## **R' Chaim Tirer z"l**

R' Chaim Tirer, better known as R' Chaim of Czernowitz, is considered to be one of the fathers of chassidut in Bukovina and Bessarabia (today, in northeastern Rumania and neighboring Ukraine). He was born in 1760 in a village near the town of Buczac. In his youth, he studied under the rabbi of Buczac, R' Zvi Hirsch Kara, and his closest friend was the rabbi's son-in-law, R' Avraham David

(whose biography appeared in a recent issue of Hamaayan). At the same time, R' Chaim became a follower of the second generation of chassidic leaders, particularly, R' Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, a student of the Ba'al Shem Tov.

R' Chaim's first rabbinic positions were in Galicia, but a communal dispute that included personal attacks on him lead him to uproot to Czernowitz. Tradition records that he arrived there in approximately 1789, and was soon elected rabbi. R' Chaim left Czernowitz in 1807, but is it by that city's name that he is known. His later rabbinates included Mohilev and Kishinev.

Sometime before 1814, R' Chaim settled in Tzefat, in Eretz Yisrael. His tombstone records that he died on 7 Kislev 5578 / 1817, but there is some evidence that he passed away a year or two earlier.

R' Chaim was a fierce fighter for traditional Judaism in Bukovina and an equally fierce defender of the chassidic movement. His great popularity and influence allowed chassidut to "capture" Bukovina and Bessarabia without the opposition that it encountered elsewhere. R' Chaim also founded a Jewish hospital in Kishinev.

R' Chaim is sometimes referred to as the "Ish Shabbat" / "Man of the Sabbath." Chassidic legend records that he was a head taller on Shabbat than during the rest of the week. Of his three classic works of chassidut, the only one he published in his lifetime is a work about Shabbat entitled Sidduro Shel Shabbat. R' Chaim was also outstanding in his love for Eretz Yisrael. Among other praises of the Land, he wrote: "The holiness of Eretz Yisrael is such that one can absorb it just by eating the bread of that Land."

R' Chaim's other works include a Torah commentary, Be'er Mayim Chayim, and a work about prayer, Sha'ar Ha'tefilah. He also left a number of sons and daughters. (Source: Encyclopedia La'chassidut pp. 551)

*Sponsored by  
The Cooper family  
in memory of father and grandfather Harry L. Cooper  
(Tzvi Hersch ben Baruch Reuven a"h)*

*The Edeson and Stern families  
in honor of the birthdays of  
Shaya Stern and  
Nathan, Ian Hillel, Shmuel Hirsch, and Helene Edeson*

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

---