



was it necessary for the Torah to warn us against desecrating Hashem's Name? If we are sanctifying His Name, we surely are not desecrating it.

This seemingly extra part of the *pasuk* is beautifully explained by *Sefer Ta'am v'Da'as*. He sees it as an allusion to a special kind of *chilul Hashem* that might seem to be a *kiddush Hashem*, but isn't.

It refers to people who join with *resha'im* in their parties and celebrations, deluding themselves that they are thereby making a *kiddush Hashem* since they are thereby being connected to their brethren and maintaining good terms with them.

The deluded people who do so see themselves as dwelling among the people and fulfilling ונקדשתי ונקדשתי. Therefore, the Torah passage goes on to say: אני ה' מקדישכם – "I, Hashem, sanctify you." This tells us that only if you go in Hashem's ways is it a *kiddush Hashem*, not if you are among the people to do the opposite of *kedushah*.

Furthermore, the Torah has a special admonition about *chilul Hashem* that is directed specifically to the *Kohanim*:

קדשים יהיו לאלהיהם ולא יחללו שם  
אלהיהם – They shall be holy to their G-d  
and not desecrate the name of their G-d.<sup>3</sup>

Why do the *Kohanim* need to be commanded not to make a *chilul Hashem*? As we just finished saying, everyone is commanded not to make a *chilul Hashem*, and that surely includes *Kohanim* as well.

The answer is that the Torah specifically commands the *Kohanim* in order to teach us a special message: *chilul Hashem* is measured according to one's personal level and status in life.

This message is not just for *Kohanim*. It's for us

<sup>3</sup> Vayikra 21:6.

as well.

Someone whose occupation is Torah and *avodas Hashem* needs to hold himself a different standard. Even if he doesn't commit outright sins, even if his deeds are technically correct and *al pi din*, he is still desecrating Hashem's Name if he doesn't behave in a holy manner. His standard of personal conduct needs to be commensurate with his status and his Torah wisdom.

This is why the Torah warned the *Kohanim* about *chilul Hashem*. The *Kohanim* are dedicated to *avodas Hashem* so they need to be more careful than others.

There are things permitted to ordinary people, but if a *kohen* does them, it is considered desecrating Hashem's Name. Since they are "holy to their G-d," they need to conduct themselves in an especially holy manner, and only then they will "not desecrate the name of their G-d."

The more a person occupies himself with serving Hashem, the more the boundaries of *chilul Hashem* expand for him to include things that might be permitted for other people.

This is a significant message for the "*Kohanim*" of our day and age, who are the *b'nei Torah*, the people who dedicate all their time to Torah learning.

The message applies as well to people who are *קובע עתים לתורה*, to those who maintain a schedule of Torah study in addition to pursuing their livelihood. Also to them, the Torah is saying: קדשים יהיו לאלהיהם – "They shall be holy to their G-d."

There are certain things that would be considered *chilul Hashem* for them, although others might be able to get away with doing them. So they, too, need to be extra careful that they are always sanctifying Hashem's Name through their deeds and by always displaying praiseworthy behavior in general. ●



# The Most Important Point

אלה מועדי ה'. (ויקרא כג, ד)

**These are the holidays of Hashem. (Vayikra 23:4)**

During the course of my life, I was fortunate to hear *Mussar* talks from great Torah personalities of the past generation [such as R. Yechezkel Levenstein and R. Chaim Shmuelevitch and others]. Many times I heard it emphasized that today's topic is "the foundation of the entire Torah."

The next week, the speaker would address a completely different topic, and again say that it is "the foundation of the entire Torah."

When the *derashah* was about Pesach, it would be emphasized that everything depends on Pesach. Not on Shavu'os or Sukkos or even Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Only Pesach. Since this holiday is the root and beginning of everything, it can put the whole course of a person's life in order, and someone who doesn't work on acquiring the spiritual content of Pesach is losing out on all the spiritual growth of that year...

When Shavu'os is approaching, the speakers come with the same message: everything depends on Shavu'os, which is the time of *Matan Torah*. And so it is with Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres. They always say that the current holiday is the foundation of everything.

I thus heard a lot of "foundations of the entire Torah" and was puzzled by this. I wanted to know what is the true foundation on which the entire Torah is built?

When I started public speaking, I found myself making this same claim, and even more strongly. I almost always say that today's topic is the foundation of everything.

So what is the real foundation of it all?

The answer can be understood by way of allegory. When we talk about healing the human body, we might pose a question: which part of the body is most important? Which limb or organ constitutes the principal part of a human being? We might claim that the brain is the main thing because it is the center of the nervous system, and this is where a person's will and thoughts are to be found.

On the other hand, the value of the circulatory system is inestimable. **הדם הוא הנפש** – "The blood is the soul."<sup>1</sup> Without blood, life would be impossible to maintain.

And person can't survive without bones. If he doesn't have a skeletal system he is nothing. And he surely can't live without a heart.

So which part of the body is the main thing?

*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created the world in the way of **המרובה את המחזיק**, "the small contains the great." Every subject on its own might appear small, but its content is greater than itself and encompasses everything. We need to grab hold of each topic, each holiday, and understand in what way it is the foundation of everything. ●

<sup>1</sup> *Devarim* 12:23.



וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת וְגו' שִׁבְעַ שָׁבָתוֹת. (ויקרא כג, טו)

**You shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath... seven weeks. (*Vayikra* 23:15)**

*Sefiras Ha'Omer* is a time of preparation and purification for *Matan Torah*. It is a time of clarification for every Jew: is he fitting to receive the Torah? Thus the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva died at this time, since they did not treat each other with sufficient respect.

Rabbi Akiva had twelve thousand pairs of *talmidim*, from Geves to Antifras, and they all died in one period because they did not treat each other respectfully.<sup>1</sup>

This imperfection in the area of *bein adam l'chaveiro*, in the way they conducted their interpersonal relationships, impinged on their very right to live. דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה – “Proper behavior precedes Torah,” so someone who is lacking in proper behavior toward his fellow Jews is not fitting to come to the time of *Matan Torah*.

It is likely that at other times of year, too, Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim* did not show sufficient respect to one another, and were held responsible for it, but it did not cause their death. In *Sefiras Ha'Omer*, which is a time of preparation, a time of increasingly intense clarification, their lacking in this area stood out more, and had a greater effect, so much so that they were punished with death.

The more that a certain time of year is suited to high levels of spirituality, the greater is the responsibility for one's failures and lackings during that time. When we are preparing to receive the Torah, every person is examined extra carefully if he is fitting for the Torah. This is why the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva died at this time.

### Torah Atones

R. Chaim of Volozhin explains<sup>2</sup> that Torah learning has the power to atone for all sins. One who occupies himself with Torah study does not need the *korbanos* to atone for him because the power of Torah will atone for him and bring forgiveness for all his transgressions.

Occupying oneself with Torah study atones for all the transgressions of the sinning soul... We can see how great the power of Torah study is from the fact that it purifies the transgressors of the Jewish people when they do *teshuvah*, even if they were guilty of idolatry... If a person occupies himself with Torah study for its own sake – even if he previously sullied himself with tremendous sins and transgressions and sunk deep in the mud and filth of the depths of evil, *chas v'shalom* – by means of Torah learning he can still count on the light of Torah to bring him back to the good.<sup>3</sup>

We find the same idea expressed by *Rabbeinu Yonah*, who detailed the various categories of atonement for the various types of sins.<sup>4</sup> He explains that some sins are atoned by means of lashing, some by the death penalty, and some through *kares*, dying before one's time. The severity of the sin determines its form of atonement.

*Rabbeinu Yonah* states there in article 16 that if a person is guilty of desecrating *Hashem's* Name,

<sup>2</sup> *Nefesh Hachayim* 4:31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Shaarei Teshuvah* 4.

<sup>1</sup> *Yevamos* 62b.

undergoing suffering is not sufficient to atone for his sin. However, he writes:

He can attain atonement by means of constant Torah study and toiling in Torah, as *Chazal* say,<sup>5</sup> “אם יתכפר עון בית עלי בזבח” – “The House of Eli shall not be atoned for by animal offerings and grain offerings.”<sup>6</sup> By animal offerings and grain offerings they cannot attain atonement, but they may attain atonement by words of Torah.” ...Thus we see that Torah study heals even the most grievous of wounds. Therefore it says, “The healing of the tongue is the Tree of Life.”<sup>7,8</sup>

Torah learning transcends the whole system. It is above and beyond the regular spiritual rules. It is the underlying reality of life and of the world, so Torah has the power to atone for all of a person's sins, even those that *korbanos* cannot atone.

This is why R. Chaim of Volozhin wrote that a person can, by occupying himself with Torah study, purify his soul from even the deepest and filthiest evil. As *Rabbeinu Yonah* said, “Torah study heals even the most grievous of wounds.” It even atones for *chilul Hashem*.

## The Superhuman Ben Torah

*Hashem's* world is composed of mineral, vegetable, animal and human. To truly reach the level of “human” it is not enough to just walk on two legs. A truly “human” being is a Jew who properly learns Torah and carefully keeps *mitzvos* and perfects his character traits. The whole purpose of man's creation is for him to perfect his character traits according to Torah and *mitzvos*, to live his life according to the Torah's ways. His deeds of *chesed* and proper performance of *mitzvos* are the glorious expression of his humanity.

But there is a level even higher than that of “human.” There is the level of the *ben Torah*. A *ben Torah's* learning of Torah is different and loftier than

that of an ordinary person. His character traits and performance of *mitzvos* are different. They are not a matter of shape and order; rather, his entire being is attached to *Hashem* and Torah.

Someone who sacrifices sleep for another examination of the *sugya* under study is a *ben Torah*. Only someone whose constancy in Torah learning is not limited to the regular, scheduled study sessions is living in a place above the physical world.

A lot more is expected of a *ben Torah* when it comes to his behavior toward other people. A *ben Torah* needs to display kindness and compassion at all times and in every situation. There is no such thing as a person or a type of behavior that he can't stand. So during the period of preparing and clarifying before *Matan Torah* he needs to conduct his interpersonal relations in a loftier way. His *bein adam l'chaveiro* needs to be on a higher level.

This was the time of year when Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim* were held to account for not treating each other with sufficient respect. In order for the world to continue to exist properly, the place of Torah needs to be as it should. Lack of respect for others damages one's own right to exist. And when they died, “the world was desolate,” as *Chazal* say. This indicates that the world cannot exist, there is no life, without *bnei Torah*.

It is hard to maintain this high level of connection to Torah, *mitzvos* and *midos tovot*, but it is important for us to know the truth. The way to reach the level of *ben Torah* is in stages. *Deveikus* to Torah study or proper devotion to *Tefilah*, working on one's *midos* or on enhancing one's *mitzvah* performance. Each person according to what is most relevant to him can connect to the level of being a *ben Torah*. This is a level that lifts a person above the world, a level that not dependent of one's scheduled learning periods and is not limited to the days and times of year when *yeshivah* is in session.

Just as the Torah enables the world to exist, so the *ben Torah* bears on his shoulders the world's existence. He is the perfected human being whose deeds keep the world going. This is an unlimited, unending *chesed* that encompasses the entire world. ●

5 *Rosh Hashanah* 18a.

6 I *Shmuel* 3:14.

7 *Mishlei* 15:4.

8 *Shaarei Teshuvah* 4:16.

Lag b'Omer is when R. Shimon bar Yochai passed away, and many Jews go up to his tomb on this day for his *yahrzeit*. There is hardly a custom like this in honor of any other great Torah personality from any generation.

There is an interesting point regarding this day that we will take a look at. By way of introduction, it has been said by great people that the *zemiros* and other liturgical hymns widely accepted among the Jewish people were composed with *Ruach Hakodesh*. The majority of these songs and poems have *Hashem* as their subject.

When it comes to Lag b'Omer, however, the songs sung on this day are all about R. Shimon bar Yochai himself. For instance, there is the song called *Bar Yochai*, which begins, בר יוחאי נמשחת אשריך, שמן ששון מחבריך. This is a long and detailed hymn all about the honor and greatness of R. Shimon bar Yochai.

We don't know of any hymns composed for the honor of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Nor for Moshe Rabbeinu, Yehoshua bin Nun, Ezra Hasofer or other great *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*. (But according to *Minhag Ashkenaz* there is a hymn that some sing on Simchas Torah that speaks in part about the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu: התקבצו מלאכים זה לזה וכי משה (עלה למרום והוא הוריד עון מבטחה) Songs like this were written only about R. Shimon bar Yochai, and this requires explanation. Why was he so exceptional that hymns were composed about him?)

### Let Us Make Man

The hymn we mentioned above, *Bar Yochai*, says a lot of awesome and wondrous things that relate to the Torah's secrets. It speaks of things that are beyond our comprehension.

One of the praises of R. Shimon mentioned there is נעשה אדם נאמר בעבורך – “Let us make man’ was

said for your sake.” On a simple level, it means that R. Shimon was a true “man,” a true human being.

It is written in *Tanach*: אָתָּם אָדָם – “You are man,”<sup>1</sup> and *Chazal* interpret this to refer specifically to the Jewish people, to the exclusion of non-Jews.<sup>2</sup> This indicates that the true, correct concept of what a human being is finds expression only among the Jewish people. When *Hashem* said נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו, “Let us make man in our image and likeness,” the exalted quality to which this refers is expressed in Torah-observing Jews.

Along these lines, the song *Bar Yochai* is saying that R. Shimon was the quintessential Jew. When *Hashem* said, “Let us make man,” He especially had in mind R. Shimon bar Yochai.

There are two points we need to clarify about this. First, what is signified by the term *adam*, “man”? There are other Biblical words for describing a human being, such as איש, which carries a connotation of importance, as in והאיש משה,<sup>3</sup> and as David said to Avner: הלא איש אתה,<sup>4</sup> implying that Avner was a distinguished personality. By contrast, the term *adam* does not necessarily imply importance. On the contrary, it derives from the word אדמה, “soil.” Yet, the song *Bar Yochai* says נעשה אדם נאמר בעבורך, as mentioned above, highlighting R. Shimon's greatness.

What is the greatness inherent in the term *adam*?

The other point we need to clarify is why R. Shimon bar Yochai exemplifies the concept of *adam*. What is it about him that makes him the shining example of what *adam* is meant to be?

### Hybrid Man

There is a special blessing that we recite over the

1 *Yechezkel* 34:31.

2 *Yevamos* 61a.

3 *Bemidbar* 12:3.

4 I *Shmuel* 26:15.

creation of *adam* and we recite it several times a day: **אשר יצר את האדם בחכמה וגו'**. We conclude this blessing with the words **ומפליא רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות** – “He Who heals all flesh and performs wonders.”

What do we mean when we say in this blessing that *Hashem* “performs wonders”? The *Tur* explains:

“And performs wonders” – this means as it says in the Midrash on the verse, “For You are great and perform wonders”<sup>5</sup>: A person is like an inflated leather flask. If you make a tiny hole in it, all the air goes out. Yet, a person’s body has many orifices, and his spirit remains within him. In this way, *Hashem* “performs wonders.”<sup>6</sup>

It goes without saying that everything *Hashem* made and everything He does is wondrous. Every grain of sand, every drop of blood, and surely every piece of fruit, and for sure an eye or an ear, and definitely the sun and the moon and so forth – it’s all one giant, tremendous wonder. But the greatest wonder of all, which is the subject of the blessing **ומפליא לעשות**, is the connection between soul and body that constitutes the creature called *adam*.

The body is physical, it is made of soil from the ground, as is wood and stone. The soul is spiritual. How can the physical go together with the spiritual? Their qualities are so very different. They seem to have nothing in common at all. What combines them and holds them together?

To illustrate the point, let’s say we would take a big pot from the kitchen and put in it a *pasuk*, spiritual words, such as **בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ**. Would you say that the pot and the *pasuk* connect to one another and combine with one another? How do you even put words inside a pot?

It is even more unlikely that the spiritual entity called *sechel*, “intellect,” could connect and combine with the head, the brain, the heart and the other physical faculties of the human body.

This wondrous combination between the body and the soul earned the special blessing of **ומפליא לעשות**. When we call something a *pele*, a “wonder,” we mean that it seems to contradict the laws of nature in some way, such as the miracle of “the small containing the large” which took place when *Moshe Rabbeinu* brought the entire Jewish people – six hundred thousand men – to stand between the two poles of the *Aron*, which has a width of just two-and-a-half *amos*, approximately four feet. This miracle was performed also by Yehoshua. This is a “wonder” because it constitutes a contradiction to the laws of nature and goes against our common sense and natural knowledge.

This helps us understand the greatest wonder of all, which is *adam*, a human being. An **אדם** comes from the earth, from the soil (**אדמה**). The word **אדם** is composed of two parts: **א** and **דמ**. The letter **א** always express wondrousness. The letters of the word **אל** are also the letters of the word **פלא**. The creation of the world begins with the letter **ב**, since the letter **א** is wondrous and is beyond this world. **א** expresses spiritual power and *kedushah*. In the writings of Kabbalah, **כתר** is expressed through the letter **א** (since the letter **ב** expresses **חכמה**). **כתר** is the source of everything. So to speak, all spirituality and infinity is expressed by **א**.

The second part of man’s name is **דמ**, “blood,” which is clearly a very physical substance. It is written:

**כי הדם הוא הנפש** – The blood is the soul.<sup>7</sup>

This verse tells us that the physical blood contains within it the spiritual soul. And this is the wonder we have been talking about. This is the **פלא** that forms a human being, an *adam*.

## Jews are Human

Every human being, Jew and non-Jew alike, is called *adam*. When we see in front of us a non-Jew, we see a living human being. He walks, eats, sings, etc. This is a sign that he, too contains a certain

<sup>5</sup> *Tehillim* 86:10.

<sup>6</sup> *Tur, Orach Chayim* 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Devarim* 12:23.

degree of connection between the physical and the spiritual.

But just walking, eating and singing doesn't express the full significance of *adam* because spirituality is more than that. The life of a person who just walks, eats and sings is revolving around material matters. This is not what *Hashem* had in mind when He created *adam*.

The soul of *adam* was hewed out from the Heavenly Throne of Glory. The *neshamah* derives from *Hashem's* very breath, from the deepest place of *kedushah*. When this *neshamah* is combined with the physical body, the result is a human being, an *adam*. The goal of the whole Torah is to build a perfected *adam*, to properly combine the material with the spiritual.

There is an essential difference between the Jewish outlook and that of other religions regarding the concepts of righteousness, abstinence and sanctity. Other religions consider spirituality and sanctity to be in total contradiction to material and physical matters. They don't see any way to connect the א to the אד and create אדם.

Thus, a non-Jew considers himself faced with a choice. He can be a "man of the spirit," and abstain from worldly matters, such as drinking wine, getting married, etc., or he can live a this-worldly life.

But a Jew has Torah, and Torah connects heaven to earth.

## R. Shimon is our Ladder

*Moshe Rabbeinu* deepened the connection between the physical and spiritual by bringing the Torah down from heaven to earth. He thereby built up the Jewish people and gave them the form and shape of *adam*. However, Moshe's generation was unique. They were the generation that left Egypt and stood at Sinai. Following generations did not have the same level of connection to Torah.

R. Shimon bar Yochai innovated something wondrous. It says in the Zohar that in the merit of R. Shimon and his Torah teachings, the *Mashiach*

will come.

What does this mean?

The source of everything that R. Shimon added was surely *Moshe Rabbeinu*. (It is written that R. Shimon himself was a spark of *Moshe Rabbeinu's* soul.) Nevertheless, R. Shimon had a *chiddush* that no one before him did. He took the deep, inner meaning of the Torah (not just the Torah's simple meaning) and revealed it in a wondrous way that even the coming generations – including the generation right before the coming of *Mashiach* – will be able to understand it.

He did it in an exceedingly wondrous manner. On the one hand, the teachings retained their honor and beauty, they remained *nistaros haTorah*, and on the other hand, the book of the Zohar is open and available to anyone who is fitting and interested to study it. (Not only that, but we were promised that the last generation will see a special revelation of the inner teachings of the Torah, as we indeed see, beginning with the period of the Arizal.)

R. Shimon was the one who connected the two opposite ends, the two extremes. He connected the profound inner teachings of the Torah to the generation of the "heel of the *Mashiach*," which is an exceedingly lowly generation (*chutzpah* will multiply, and so forth<sup>8</sup>). This is the greatest wonder, the greatest מפליא לעשות, that can be imagined. And it came through R. Shimon bar Yochai. This is why נעשה אדם נאמר בעבורך – "Let us make man' was said for your sake." The connection that R. Shimon made was the greatest and most glorious expression of *adam's* unique quality.

This is why we sing a special song in honor of the holy Tanna R. Shimon bar Yochai. It is because he is the one who connects us to the world of spirituality. By grabbing hold of R. Shimon and his Torah teachings we can climb higher and higher on the סולם המוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה – the ladder whose feet are on the ground and whose head reaches heaven. ●

8 Sotah 49b.

# STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RAV SHIMSHON PINCUS ZT" L



## A Vessel for Siyata d'Shemaya

In one of his famous *shmuessen*, Rav Shimshon highlighted the absolute necessity of *siyata d'Shemaya* in all realms of life, especially for those involved in communal affairs. “Anyone involved in anything big or important in public affairs thrives on *siyata d'Shemaya*. How do we merit this gift? With *tefilah* — and especially *tefilah b'tzibbur!* In contrast, someone who endeavors to increase *kevod Shamayim*, who teaches Torah and performs *chesed*, but is lax in *tefilah b'tzibbur* loses out on the critical vessels that he needs in order to absorb the bounty of *siyata d'Shemaya* to accomplish his goals; *chas v'shalom*, his efforts can culminate in failure.”

## Tefilah during Trying Times

In his *sefer She'arim B'Tefilah*, Rav Shimshon describes at length the obligation of *davening* like a pauper begging for bread. Unlike all other creations, he explains, man is afflicted with troubles and adversities just so he will lift his eyes to the *Ribbono shel Olam* and supplicate Him for all that he lacks, which ultimately leads him to achieve the exalted level of *deveikus* through *tefilah*.

He cites the famous *machlokes* regarding *hilchos tefilah*: the Rambam states that it is a *mitzvah d'Oraysa* to *daven* once a day, while the Ramban maintains that it isn't. In most circumstances, *tefilah* is a Rabbinic obligation. As proof, he cites *Chazal* in *Sifri* who say, “*U'lovdo, zeh talmud oh tefilah* – ‘And to serve Him,’ this refers to learning or prayer.” The Ramban thus writes: “Included in the commandment of *avodah* is learning His Torah and praying to Him in times of tribulations, and that our eyes and hearts should be directed to Him, as the eyes of servants to their Master.”

Rav Shimshon thus highlights what he terms “an awesome practical *halachah*”: Any time a person suffers

through a difficult time, he is immediately bound to fulfill the imperative *mitzvah d'Oraysa* of *tefilah*, even if he has already davened *Shacharis*. Similarly, if during the course of that day he again confronts a new challenge or trial, he is once again obliged to offer even a short *tefilah*.

Rav Shimshon uses this to explain the Brisker Rav's custom of frequently repeating the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 49:18), “*Lishuascha kivisi Hashem*, I hope for Your salvation, *Hashem*.” Most people presumed that the constant repetition of this *pasuk* was a reflection of the Brisker Rav's tremendous *deveikus* to *Hashem*, which is certainly true. Yet Rav Shimshon also discerned a deeper underlying element to this unusual custom: The Brisker Rav, known to diligently fulfill all *Halachic* opinions, sought to fulfill also the Ramban's approach. Thus, cognizant that any hour of the day could swiftly become an *eis tzarah*, which would compel *tefilah d'Oraysa*, he engaged consistently in *tefilah*.

## Nine Measures

Rav Shimshon taught that aside from the obligation to pray during an *eis tzarah*, pain and suffering are also a means of drawing prayer from the heart. *Chazal* in *Kiddushin* 49b teach: “Ten measures of speech descended to the world, and women took nine.” This statement reflects positively on the Jewish woman's character and role in the world. A woman is naturally surrounded by a variety of aches, pains, and challenges, be it pregnancy or childbirth, caring for infants or small children who steal precious hours of sleep from their eyes, maintaining their homes, or raising children of all ages, which is accompanied by no shortage of anxiety and physical toil, etc.

Why were only women burdened with these particular challenges?

Rav Shimshon answers that man's primary role in this

world is to learn Torah — which is the soul of the world. To do this, he requires peace of mind, along with the capacity to leave the house for the *beis midrash* to learn.

In contrast, the focus of a Jewish woman's existence and mission is encapsulated in *tefilah*, which like Torah, also sustains the world. Since the power of *tefilah* is enhanced when one is alone and secluded from the hustle and bustle of the outside world, the natural location for this is the privacy of one's home — and for this reason, *Hashem* placed her in the environment where she can best fulfill her mission in life, pouring out her speech to *Hashem*.

The challenges, struggles, and anxieties that *Hashem* sends her way are constant reminders to continue fulfilling her role in life — *tefilah* — so that her husband and sons can succeed in their life's role, which is *limud Torah*. For this same reason, women are more prone to tears, since tears are also a stimulus for prayer and supplication for her husband, children, *cholim*, and all of *Klal Yisrael*. Thus, the immense challenges and emotional struggles that child-rearing entails bring her to fulfill her unique role in this world. It is for this reason that a woman is granted nine measures of speech — so she can constantly *daven* to the *Ribbono shel Olam* throughout her day — while cooking, cleaning, tending to her children, and accomplishing a huge variety of other tasks.

## The Rebbetzin's Tehillim

The sections above present a riveting portrayal of Rav Shimshon's approach to *tefilah*, but the end of this chapter illustrates its practical application as manifested by the pure *tefilos* recited by his wife, *Rebbetzin Chaya Pincus*. The *Sefer Tehillim* printed in the back of her *Korban Minchah siddur* which she received from her mother as a gift during adolescence was the *Rebbetzin's* best friend and constant companion, both in times of *simchah* and tragedy. It was no secret that she eventually

knew *Tehillim* by heart, reciting the entire *sefer* every week from the time she was a teenager.

The *mizmorim* of *Tehillim* were the same timeless *mizmorim* that she recited countless times throughout her life, yet the melody would change based on the day and hour. It was the *Rebbetzin's* unique melody of *tefilah* that indicated whether the tears flowing down her cheeks were tears of sadness, supplication, joy, or thanksgiving.

Her daughters relate:

We'd sit next to her at home and just listen. When her tone was calm and pleasant, we knew that these were happy, sweet moments. The tears she shed in *davening* were different than the ones she shed during *Tehillim*.

When she'd recite *Tehillim*, and we glimpsed tears glistening in her eyes, then we knew that these were different tears than those that she'd shed during *Shemoneh Esrei*. When she davened *Shemoneh Esrei*, she would cry loudly — so loud that it sounded throughout the house — and then we knew that she was crying for us, for *Tatty*, or for other family members who needed *yeshuos*. However the tears she shed when reciting *Tehillim* were something else entirely — tears of closeness and yearning for the *Ribbono shel Olam*.

There was also the *Tehillim* that she said “on the road.” As a beloved educator in the *Bais Yaakov* of Tifrach, she bused daily between the two towns with a group of other teachers. Yet unlike the others, she rarely used the travel time to chat with her friends, devoting it instead to reciting the timeless chapters of *Tehillim* and strengthening her bond with the *Ribbono shel Olam*.

The *Rebbetzin* infused her very being into each *perek Tehillim*, and the words emerging from her lips burst out of the old, dilapidated bus rumbling its way down the cracked desert roads, soared heavenward, and pounded mightily on the gates of Heaven. When she completed her daily quota, her countenance glowed with deep spiritual gratification. ●

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