



KINDER TORAH

נס"ד

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PARASHAS ACHAREI MOS

מוקדש לע"נ רבקה בת אברהם ישראל ע"ה

THE ROAD

"My laws - you shall carry out, and My statutes - you shall guard, to go with them . . ." (Vayikra 18:4). The verse states that we must go with Hashem's laws and statutes. Where are we going? Where did we begin? Where is our destination? The Keli Yakar has a beautiful explanation which defines our job in this world. In this world, a person is called a traveler. He goes from one spiritual level to another. This world is a dynamic situation, with opportunities for growth and spiritual development. Contrast this to the next world. The person's status is described as "sitting", as the Gemora (Berachos 17a) states, "The righteous sit with crowns on their heads". There is no room for growth over there. Only reward for the work done here.

Kinderlach . . .

Let's all hit the road. We have places to go and things to do. We're on the way up. Higher and higher in madrayga (spiritual level). Now is the time to work hard and accomplish. Get moving and keep moving in the right direction. Up and up.

THE SPICE OF LIFE

"Imma, can you please pass the potatoes?"

"My pleasure, Avi."

"They sure are delicious, Imma."

"I spiced them especially for you, Avi. Potatoes are nutritious. They give your body the energy and vitamins it needs to keep going. I wanted you to eat them; therefore I made them very tasty."

"Are they more nutritious when they are tasty, Imma?"

"Not at all, Avi. The food gets broken down in the digestive system. The nutrients then reach the blood system. The taste is gone. By the time the heart receives energy from the food, it makes no difference whatsoever what the taste was."

"Imma, that is amazing. It almost parallels the subject of our parashas ha'shavuah class."

"I would really like to hear the connection, Avi."

"Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l, the Mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva has an illuminating explanation to the verse, 'Carry out My laws and safeguard My decrees to follow them' (Vayikra 18:4). The prohibitions against stealing and murder are the type of laws that the *seichel* (common sense) would dictate. These are called *mishpatim*. Eating kosher, not wearing *shaatnez* (a mixture of wool and linen), and other decrees of this sort are beyond human understanding. They are called *chukim*. When one begins to learn Torah in depth, he delves into the reasons behind the *mishpatim*. Eventually, he comes to a verse, or a tradition upon

which the law is based. We must observe the law because Hashem commanded us to do so. Therefore, even the *mishpatim* are ultimately *chukim*. What is the difference between the two? Hashem gave a *taam* (reason) to the *mishpatim*, so that we will have a sweet *taam* (spice) when we learn them. He wanted us to enjoy our Torah learning; therefore he gave some of the mitzvos *taamin*."

"That is fascinating, Avi. I see the parallel. Hashem's 613 mitzvos are 'spiritual nourishment' for our souls. Each one feeds a different section. They provide necessary nourishment, regardless of their *taam*. However, The Almighty, in His infinite kindness, gave some of them a *taam*. Therefore, when we learn about them, we get pleasure, in the same way that the tasty food gives pleasure to our palate."

"That is exactly what Rav Yerucham says, Imma."

"Avi please let me share with you another insight that Abba once heard from an



Odom Godol (Torah Giant). The Gemora (Kiddushin 30b) states, 'I created the yetzer hora and I created the Torah as its *tavlin*.' The word *tavlin* normally means spice; however, it is translated in this context as antidote. The yetzer hora is like a disease and the Torah is like its antidote. This explanation begs a question. If the Gemora meant antidote, why did it not write the word *trufah* (medicine)? It used an inappropriate word - *tavlin*."

"What an insightful question!"

"Yes. The Odom Gadol gave an electrifying answer. The yetzer hora makes the lowly pleasures of *olam haze* (this world) look so tantalizing. He shows us riches, luxuries, and technologies that are beyond belief. He says, 'You can have it all. Just put your time and energy into acquiring possessions here, and forget about *olam habo*.' He has strong arguments. 'You have a lot of time until you get to *olam habo*. Who knows what it will really be like over there? Maybe it does not exist at all. I am offering you pleasure here and now. Take it!' How can the yetzer hatov answer these claims? They are so strong. The yetzer hora's 'reward'

is tangible, here and now. Therefore, the yetzer hatov needs a special weapon - Torah. The Torah is pure emmes. Only it can stand up to the lies of the yetzer hora. However, even the Torah alone is not enough. It must have a sweet taste to it. Learning Torah will fend off the yetzer hora, however, what if learning is not pleasurable? How can it match the yetzer hora's delights? Therefore, Hashem made the Torah *tavlin*. He made it delicious. He made Torah learning the sweetest thing in the world. One who learns Torah properly has no appetite for the puny pleasures of the yetzer hora. They are worthless in comparison to the sweetness of understanding a Tosafos. Answering a difficult question on the Rambam is more exhilarating than skiing down the Swiss Alps. What does the yetzer hora have to offer? Nothing!!! That is the *tavlin* of the Torah. That is the spice of life."

Kinderlach . . .

Do you want to taste something yummy? What is your favorite sweet? Cake? Cookies? Chocolate? Ice cream? Hashem has something that is far sweeter than all of these things. Torah. Although all of His mitzvos are ultimately true just because He commanded them, He gave some of them *taam*. We get pleasure using our *seichel* to figure out their laws and nuances. That pleasure - the sweetness that comes with learning Torah - is the antidote to the trickery of the yetzer hora. He tells us to eat cookies all day, wasting our time and energy on the delights of this world. We answer him, "Cookies?!? Yuck! They taste terrible compared to the sweetness of the Torah!" Enjoy the best treat, kinderlach - Torah - the spice of life.

Parasha Questions:

- Which day may Aharon HaKohen go into the Kodesh? (Rashi 16:3)
- Who takes the Seir La'Azazel out to the Midbar? (16:21)
- How many times must the Kohen Godol change his Bigdei Kehuna on Yom Kippur? (Rashi 16:23)

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