

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Yaakov (Gerald) ben Reb Meir ע"ה Goldstein
Passed away on 21 Menachem-Av, 5774

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

times in recent months.

A Jew acquires (in this place and time) the most potent energies as well as the greatest privilege and responsibility to implore and cry out to G-d: "How much longer"?!...

* * *

Since we have already completed all the requirements of "our deeds and efforts,"⁵ which is why we cry out and demand "how much longer" (as was discussed earlier), the raging question remains the same: Since we have already accomplished everything, how is it that our righteous Moshiach has not yet arrived?!...

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Ekev, 23 Menachem Av,
Mevorchim Hachodesh Elul, 5751)*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה
Marenburg
Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
AND IN HONOR OF
Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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5. See *Tanya*, beginning of ch. 37.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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The timely theme now is the true and complete Redemption. As discussed several times, especially most recently, since one must "await his coming every day"¹ and all of the signs indicate that "behold, he (Moshiach) is coming"² we therefore continuously think and speak of the Redemption. We also make every effort to connect all matters of current concern with the Redemption. Our service now as Jews is to hasten the Redemption.

...It has been discussed many times that my sainted father-in-law testified and proclaimed that we have already completed all that was needed, including the "polishing of the buttons." The only thing left is the one simple gesture on G-d's part to take the Jews out of exile and to bring them to the Holy Land... Thus, Jews implore and cry out, time and again - and now with much more intensity than previously - "how much longer?!"...

...A Jew not only has the capacity to awaken himself and other Jews, but also to "arouse" G-d, as it were, to "come and let us calculate the calculations of the world."³ According to all calculations (which G-d had indicated in His Torah and in the miracles He wrought in the world), G-d should long ago have brought the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. [This should have happened] particularly in this year, which according to all of the calculations and the signs is "the year when King Moshiach will be revealed,"⁴ as was discussed several

1. The text of "Ani Ma'amin" published in prayer books etc. See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 23, p. 394.

2. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse.

3. Talmudic expression, *Bava Basra* 78b.

4. *Yalkut Shimoni* 499.

LIKKUTEI SICHOT

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

•

Volume X: *Devarim*

•

In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

EIKEV

CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD

On several occasions,¹ it has been explained that the task of transforming the world into a dwelling for G-d began after the entry of the Jewish people into *Eretz Yisrael*. The 40 years in the desert were to prepare the Jews for their Divine service in that holy land.

Divine service involves persevering in one's mission despite challenges and obstacles. For it is only by overcoming challenges that our innermost powers of soul are aroused.² For this reason, the 40 years of wandering were years of challenge for the Jewish people, as it is written:³ "to challenge you, to verify what is in your heart, that you will keep His commandments."

In general, there are two types of challenges: poverty and affluence.⁴ In the desert, the Jews were confronted by both. Indeed, both were associated with the manna. For the manna represented the ultimate in affluence. It was "bread from heaven"; it did not produce any waste,⁵ and in it, one could taste any flavor one desired.⁶ In contrast, "bread from the earth" produces waste and is limited in its flavor. Moreover,

Torah study and to one whose service involves the refinement of the world.

This will enable us to raise a generation prepared to give up its own possessions for the sake of other Jews, and to do so with happiness. Such *ahavas yisrael*, not motivated by intellect, but stemming from one's own initiative,²⁸ will atone for the unwarranted hatred which led to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*,²⁹ and will speed the coming of the true and complete Redemption. May it come in the immediate future.

(Adapted from *Sichos Chof Av*, 5711)



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1. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Shlach* in this series.
 2. See the *maamar* entitled *Acharei Havayah* and its explanation in *Likkutei Torah* (*Devarim* 19b ff.); *Derech Mitzvosecha*, p. 185b ff.
 3. *Devarim* 8:2.
 4. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Derushei Rosh HaShanah* (*Devarim* 60a) with regard to the exiles of Egypt and Ashur. See also *Mishlei* 30:8-9.
 5. *Yoma* 75b.
 6. *Ibid.* 75a.

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28. *Ahavas chinam* in Hebrew. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. II, p. 598, and the sources mentioned there.
 29. *Yoma* 9b.

difficulty. According to the *Babylonian Talmud*, Yoev had made a sacrifice which was not incumbent upon him.

Therefore Rabbi Meir, whose approach reflects light — which correlates with the *Jerusalem Talmud*, whose style of presentation is one of direct light²⁴ — maintains that primary importance should be ascribed to King David, for it is through his Torah study that the spiritual heights were reached, and Yoev was obligated to play his part in facilitating this process.

Rabbi Yossi, whose approach emphasizes the refinement of material existence — which correlates with the approach of the *Babylonian Talmud*, whose style of presentation is associated²⁵ with the verse:²⁶ “You placed me in darkness,”²⁴ since it involves a process of clarification through questions and paradoxes — maintains that since Yoev was acting on his own initiative, the primary advantage is his.

DOING SOMETHING FOR OTHERS

To relate the above to our own Divine service: Even when a person possesses something which, like the wood for the altar, cannot be replaced, he must be prepared to sacrifice it to help another Jew — even a person who must bring a sin offering. Moreover, he must make these efforts even if they never bring recognition. Furthermore, he should consider this such a great merit that the day will be considered a joyous festival for him and his family.

In order for this feeling to be perpetuated among one’s descendants — both physical and spiritual, as our Sages’ comment:²⁷ “Your sons,’ these are your students” — one’s own conduct has to be permeated by *mesirus nefesh*. This applies both to a person whose Divine service centers on

our Sages relate that jewels and pearls descended together with the manna, bestowing affluence upon the Jewish people in the most literal sense.

On the other hand, the manna also produced a challenge of poverty, as reflected in the verse:⁷ “He fed you manna... to give you hardship.” As our Sages explain,⁸ the hardship involved the fact that the manna did not provide complete satisfaction.

One opinion explains: “A person who has a loaf of bread in his bread box cannot be compared to one who does not.” The manna would descend day by day, and the Jews could not set any aside for the following day. This detracted from the satisfaction they felt while eating.

Another rationale is offered: “A person who sees what he is eating cannot be compared to a person who does not.” For although the manna could taste like any food the Jews wanted, they would see only manna, and this prevented them from feeling satisfied.

The question arises: How can one entity induce both poverty and affluence?

WHAT OUR POCKETS CANNOT CONTAIN

The two contradictory effects of the manna are a result of its transcendent nature. The wealth which accompanied the manna (the ability to taste any flavor, and the jewels which came with it) was a result of it being “bread from heaven,” a G-dly entity, for G-dliness is totally unlimited. For this reason, even after the manna descended and became part of our material world, its spiritual qualities were retained.⁹ Accordingly, it did not produce waste, nor was it limited to one

24. *Shaarei Orah* of the Mittlerer Rebbe, p. 44ff.

25. *Sanhedrin* 24a.

26. *Eichah* 3:5.

27. *Sifri*, *Vaes'chanan* 6:7.

7. *Devarim* 8:16.

8. *Yoma* 74b.

9. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Behaalos'cha* in this series, where this concept is explained.

particular flavor. Indeed, its perfection included precious stones, the ultimate in the realm of inanimate objects.

Because of the manna's unique spiritual nature, it could not be produced by ordinary worldly effort. Our plowing and sowing would not cause it to grow. It was given as a present from G-d, and not as a reward for our Divine service.¹⁰ For this reason, it was totally dependent on His initiative, and descended from day to day — reflecting the integration of spirituality (which is above time and space) and our material world, in which each day is different from every other.¹¹

For this reason, we could not see in the manna all the foods whose flavors it could manifest. For our limited mortal eyes could not appreciate the unbounded spiritual potential the manna contained.

This explains the manna's fusion of affluence and poverty. Since it was a manifestation of spirituality, it was not limited at all. Nevertheless, as it became part of our world, it was associated with poverty, for it left a person with nothing of his own. Nor was he able to see what he was eating. For the manna did not take on the appearance of even simple food.¹²

Thus although the manna represented ultimate wealth, with regard to its recipients, it represented ultimate poverty. For they could not point to it and say: "This is mine."

WITHIN — AND BEYOND — OUR KEN

The above also helps us understand the interpretation of the verse:¹³ "He made you suffer, and He starved you by

10. See the *maamar* entitled *Vayancha Vayarivecha*, 5675.

11. *Nazir* 7a.

12. To cite a parallel: An extremely powerful light prevents a person from seeing.

13. *Devarim* 8:3. 6. This translation is based on *Koheles Rabbah* 5:10 and *Lekech Tov*, *Devarim*, 8:2, which explain that "He starved you" refers to the manna.

The simple meaning of the verse is that "He made you hungry and [to satisfy that hunger], fed you the manna." See the *maamar* entitled *Tanu Rabbanan*, *Minayin L'Bircas HaMazon* (*Siddur Im Dach* [p. 107c ff.], 0, which

on Yoev, whose Divine service involved waging war to refine the natural order.²²

THE PRESENT OR THE FUTURE?

The difference of opinion between these two Sages can be explained from another perspective.

In several places,²³ we find a difference of opinion between the *Jerusalem Talmud* and the *Babylonian Talmud* as to whether it is necessary to undertake a slight difficulty so that afterwards a great benefit will result. The *Jerusalem Talmud* maintains that since the benefit is much greater than the difficulty, one must undertake the difficulty despite the fact that it will take time for the benefit to appear.

The *Babylonian Talmud*, by contrast, maintains that the present situation is the determinant factor. Since the difficulty is immediate and the advantage — although significantly greater — will take time to manifest itself, there is no obligation to undertake the difficulty.

To relate this concept to the issue at hand: The advantage of King David studying Torah without worry is much greater than the difficulty which Yoev undertook by going to war. Nevertheless, David's Torah study came afterwards, and was dependent on Yoev's going to war. Therefore, the approach of the *Jerusalem Talmud* would oblige Yoev to undertake this

22. Both these thrusts of Divine service are alluded to in the *mishnah* in *Taanis* which mentions the descendants of Pachas Moav ben Yehudah as the family that brought wood on Av 20. The name Pachas Moav refers to Ruth, the Moabitess (*Rashi* and *Tosafos*, *Taanis*, *loc. cit.*). Her status as a convert alludes to the service of refining material existence. The name Yehudah, as explained above in note 20, relates to the revelation of light.

Both David and Yoev descended from Ruth and Yehudah, and therefore both were involved in these two thrusts of Divine service. For David also waged wars, and Yoev also studied Torah. Because of this interrelation, they each assisted the other. Nevertheless, King David's primary thrust was Torah study, while the primary thrust of Yoev was refining the world.

23. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1336ff., where this concept is explained.

study, removed from involvement in worldly affairs, while Yoev was involved with the world, waging war.

This is the focus of the difference of opinion between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yossi. The name Meir (מֵאִיר) relates to the Hebrew word *or* (אֹר) meaning “light.”¹⁸ Rabbi Meir’s approach focused on that which transcends the darkness of our world. Therefore, he placed the emphasis on King David’s Torah study.¹⁹

The name Yossi (יוֹסִי), by contrast, is numerically equivalent to G-d’s name *E-lohim* (אֱ-לֹהִים)²⁰ which itself is equivalent to the word *hateva* (הַטְּבַע), “nature.”²¹ For Rabbi Yossi’s Divine service related to the Divine energies that maintain the natural order. Therefore he placed the emphasis

feeding you the manna,” which implies that not only did the manna not produce satisfaction, it produced hunger. This is difficult to understand. Why did the manna produce hunger?

The concept can be explained as follows: Every entity in this world is a discrete creation, different from every other. This also describes “bread from the earth.” It is food, nothing else. It has a specific flavor. This can be sensed by a person, and this satisfies him.

When a limited human being eats “bread from heaven,” by contrast, he can feel its transcendent, spiritual nature. And yet, for that very reason, it does not satisfy him. For his appreciation of its unlimited nature causes him to desire more. Since the object of his desire is unlimited, his hunger for more is never sated. This concept is alluded to in the continuation of the verse cited above¹³ which describes the manna as something “which neither you nor your ancestors knew,” i.e., something which cannot be grasped by our conceptual framework.¹⁴

What is the way to relate to this unbounded potential? To step beyond one’s own boundaries and limitations.

WHEN ADDING CAUSES A LOSS

On this basis, we can understand how the 40 years in the desert prepared the Jews for their observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* in *Eretz Yisrael*, giving them the spiritual fortitude to overcome the challenges of both poverty and affluence.

Overcoming the challenge of affluence means negating the thought that “my strength and the power of my hand brought

18. See *Eruvin* 13a.

19. As a reflection of this, in Rabbi Meir’s Torah scroll, instead of כתנות עור (“garments of leather”), it was found written כתנות אור (“garments of light”), (*Bereishis Rabbah* 20:12) i.e., the material world did not cause concealment for him (*Derech Mitzvosecha*, p. 8a). This represented a level similar to that experienced by Adam before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge (see *Torah Or* 5b). For that reason, Rabbi Meir was able to find rationales that enabled him to rule that the impure was pure (*Eruvin*, loc. cit., as explained in *Likkutei Torah*, *Vayikra*, p. 24d).

20. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 223a; see also *Sanhedrin* 56a, and the series of *maamarim* entitled *VeKachah* 5637, sec. 80.

There the differences of opinion between Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Yehudah are discussed. It is thus evident that Rabbi Yehudah also reflects a level of G-dliness that transcends the refinement of our worldly environment. Thus Rabbi Yehudah (יהודה), as his name implies, was associated with the Divine service of *hoda’ah* (הודאה), thankful acknowledgment, which relates to the *sefirah* of *Malchus* (*Torah Or*, p. 44a). For it is possible to explain that his Divine service represented the thankful acknowledgment and *bittul* that characterizes *yichudah ila’ah* (see *VeKachah*, loc. cit.; see also *Torah Or*, p. 45d). A parallel can be found in the *bittul* manifested by King David (who is also identified with the *Sefirah* of *Malchus*) during the study of Torah. Therefore, with regard to the identity of the descendants of Adin (*Taanis* 28a), Rabbi Yehudah follows Rabbi Meir’s opinion.

21. *Pardes, Shaar* 12, ch. 2; From the *Sheloh, Shaar HaOsios, Os Kedushah*, p. 89a, in the note, it appears that the source for this concept is in the *Zohar*.

explains this latter interpretation according to *Chassidus*, stating that it was hunger from ordinary food that made it possible for them to receive the manna.

14. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 14a, which interprets this verse as meaning that our ancestors lacked comprehension of the manna.

me this prosperity,”¹⁵ for it is “G-d who gives you the strength to prosper.”¹⁶

Overcoming the challenge of poverty means realizing that no evil descends from above,¹⁷ and that it is man who is responsible for any difficulties he suffers. For this reason, we should not reject our sufferings, but should instead accept them with happiness.¹⁸

In this context, the manna can teach a significant lesson. Influence which descends from above is unlimited, the ultimate in affluence. Nevertheless, since all created beings are by nature limited, in order for that affluence to remain intact, man must not tamper with G-d’s influence. Indeed, not only will tampering not bring him any gain — as the Torah relates with regard to the manna, “he who took more did not retain it”¹⁹ — he will lose. He will introduce poverty into matters which are by nature associated with the ultimate affluence.

The way to achieve affluence is to rise above one’s limited existence and desires, to forget about self-pride and to rely totally on G-d. This makes man into a receptacle for G-d’s influence, not only in spiritual matters, but also in material matters, opening him to an affluence that extends beyond the scope of our ordinary mortal capacities.²⁰

15. *Devarim* 8:17.

16. *Ibid.*:18.

17. *Bereishis Rabbah* 51:3.

18. *Berachos* 60b; *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 22.

19. *Shmos* 16:18.

20. When a person has no desire for material objects as ends in their own right, these material entities become like spiritual entities, and do not take up space. This is reflected in the manna which although it descended into the realm of the material, provided spiritual nurture, and thus was absorbed totally into the Jews’ bodies without taking up place. (See the maamar entitled *Lecha Amar Libi*, 5696, sec. 3 and the maamar entitled *Ani LiDodi*, 5700, sec. 3.)

efforts in Torah study. And conversely, it was only because Yoev could replace him at the front that King David was able to study without disruption.¹³

Indeed, the fact that both concepts arise from the same verse indicates that they share a connection.¹⁴ Thus it can be said that it was not only that King David’s merit helped Yoev be successful, but that Yoev had a share in King David’s Torah study. For had Yoev not been successful at war, David would not have been able to study. Because of this symbiosis, King David’s Torah study helped Yoev.

The Divine service of both King David and Yoev was characterized by *bittul* and *mesirus nefesh*. There was, however, a difference in focus. King David expressed these qualities through Torah study. This elevated his study, for there is an advantage to Torah study characterized by *bittul*. And therefore our Sages interpreted¹⁵ the verse:¹⁶ “And G-d was with him [David]” as “the *Halachah* follows his opinion.”

Yoev’s *bittul* and self-sacrifice, by contrast, involved worldly matters, helping make a dwelling for G-d in this material world by waging war against the gentile nations that opposed this ideal.

All the qualities of holiness are interrelated. Therefore, David’s and Yoev’s Divine service complemented one another.¹⁷ The wars Yoev waged helped David study, and David’s study brought Yoev success in battle. Each one, however, had his primary area of focus: David’s being Torah

13. See the interpretation of the *Maharsha* to that passage.

14. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Toldos* in this series, (*Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. VI,) where this concept is discussed.

15. *Sanhedrin* 93b. See the *maamarim* entitled *Vayidaber* and *BaYom HaSheini*, 5627.

16. *I Shmuel* 18:12.

17. Therefore the name Adino HaEtzani refers to either King David or Yoev (*Rashi, Taanis* 28a). For as *Moed Kattan* 16b explains this name alludes to both the thrusts of Torah study and waging war.

GIVING WITH SELF-SACRIFICE

There is another factor involved. The wood these families originally brought to the *Beis HaMikdash* was not itself a sacrifice; it was needed so that others could bring sacrifices. Thus the sacrifices offered with the wood this family brought were not necessarily their own, nor were they only communal offerings in which they had a share. Instead, the wood was for the sacrifices of the entire Jewish people.

Moreover, among the sacrifices offered with this wood were guilt offerings and sin offerings brought by people seeking atonement. Nevertheless, these families took the trouble to plan ahead, not for themselves, but to help others — including those guilty of sins — offer sacrifices and gain atonement.

They gave up something which could not be replaced to help a sinful person, and did so with joy. So great was their happiness that this day was considered a festival for that family.¹¹

So the Sages asked: Did the virtue to make such sacrifices stem from King David or from Yoev ben Tzeruyah?

THE SWORD OF IRON AND THE SWORD OF TORAH

Our Sages teach:¹² “Were it not for David’s [Torah study], Yoev would not have been able to wage war. And were it not for Yoev, King David would not have been able to study the Torah.” For Yoev’s success in war came as a result of David’s

b) They did not volunteer to bring the wood on the first of Teves. Rather, they were chosen by lot (*Tosafos Yom Tov, Taanis 4:5*).

11. The above concepts share a connection to the Divine service of my revered father and teacher, whose *yahrzeit* falls on this date. Without thinking of his greatness as a scholar in both the *Talmudic* and mystic disciplines of Torah study, my revered father and teacher sacrificed himself to spread the observance of Torah and strengthen Jewish practice even among simple people. And this despite the fact that he suffered great hardships as a result, including exile to remote Kazakhstan. Yet he carried out this service with joy.

12. *Sanhedrin* 49a.

HUMAN WISDOM AND DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

Wisdom is described with the analogy of food. For just as food is ingested and becomes part of a person’s being, so too, intellectual ideas are absorbed by our minds and become one with them.²¹

As above, there are two general categories of food: “bread from the earth” and “bread from heaven.” Similarly, with regard to the study of Torah, there is “bread from the earth” (mortal intellect) and “bread from heaven” (Divine intellect).

To explain: All forms of wisdom other than the Torah have their limits. Aside from the fact that they are restricted to intellect and do not involve other potentials, every idea is limited, just as ordinary food is limited to one taste. Moreover, all ideas developed by mortal intellect lead to certain irrelevant matters, “waste.”

Use of our mortal intellect to comprehend ideas leads to satisfaction. Figuratively speaking, a person “sees what he is eating,” and has “a loaf of bread in his bread box,” for these concepts are accessible. For these reasons, the study of mortal wisdom can lead to self-satisfaction and pride.²²

The opposite is true with regard to the wisdom of the Torah. The Torah is pure truth, with no waste. And it is unlimited, including all “flavors.” Moreover, the Torah also leads to actual material wealth (as the manna contained jewels and pearls).

For this reason, when studying Torah, a person feels that he cannot grasp it in its totality; the Torah’s unlimited truth transcends his comprehension. As a result, Torah study will never lead to pride; indeed, it leads to self-nullification. As the verse states:²³ “As one adds knowledge, one increases pain.” The more one studies the Torah, the more one feels an

21. See *Tanya*, ch. 5.

22. See the *maamar* entitled *VaYomer Moshe*, 5709, sec. 2; *Toras Shalom*, p. 101.

23. *Kohles* 1:18.

acute lack in one's comprehension, and a great thirst and hunger to study.

Extending the analogy, both of the categories exist within the Torah itself.²⁴ *Nigleh*, the revealed dimension of Torah law, is G-d's wisdom and will. Nevertheless, it is presented in a form which has descended until it relates to mortal intellect and material entities. For this reason, it has certain limitations, and there is a parallel to waste, as our Sages comment:²⁵ "If one is unworthy, the Torah becomes like poison." Thus it can be described as "bread from the earth."

P'nimiyus HaTorah, the Torah's mystic dimension, by contrast, is utterly without limits and produces no waste whatsoever. It is "an elixir of life,"²⁴ "bread from heaven."

WHO A JEW REALLY IS; WHAT MAKES HIM HAPPY

The *yetzer hora* is "experienced at its craft."²⁶ It realizes that it is impossible to convince a Jew to deny the importance of the Torah, for every Jew holds the Torah dear. Indeed, the *Tanach* relates²⁷ that Achav, who voluntarily committed the sin of idol worship, considered the Torah as "the treasure of [his] eye." Therefore, when it desires to draw a person away from the study of the Torah in general, and the study of *P'nimiyus HaTorah* in particular, the *yetzer hora* offers indirect arguments.

It claims: "The Torah is unlimited; no matter how much you study, you will never be able to comprehend it entirely. Indeed, the more you study, the farther you feel from complete comprehension. Therefore the best course of action is to

day. Our Sages relate⁷ that from Av 15 on, the power of the sun wanes and trees would no longer be cut down for use on the altar. Their wood would not dry in time, and thus could become worm-infested and thus unfit for the altar.⁸

Av 20 was the first time that wood was brought after Av 15. Thus this wood had to have been cut beforehand. Moreover, the family bringing it would have had to have this offering in mind even before the wood was needed. They had to have considered the matter thoroughly and made preparations.⁹

Therefore, the importance of the wood offering brought on Av 20 (and similarly, that brought by the family responsible for the delivery on Elul 20), surpassed that of earlier wood offerings brought by other families. For the other families had the opportunity to cut down other wood after bringing their offerings.

Thus bringing wood on Av 20 required unique virtue. Our Sages differed as regards whose hereditary qualities spawned this virtue.¹⁰

7. *Taanis* 31a.

8. *Middos* 2:5; *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Issurei Mizbeach* 6:2.

9. This reflects the advantage their wood offering possessed over the offering brought by the descendants of Saneah on Av 15 itself. For on Av 15, there was no need to consider the matter beforehand and make preparations.

Moreover, on Av 15, there was still time to cut new wood. Although our Sages' expression "From Av 15 onwards, the power of the sun wanes" might appear to indicate that on the 15th itself no trees should be cut, this is not so. On the 15th, trees for the altar were also cut, as the *Rashbam* (*Bava Basra* 121b) comments: "That day (Av 15), they would complete a great *mitzvah* (the cutting of the wood for the altar)."

10. A similar concept applies with regard to the difference of opinion in the Talmud about the identity of the descendants of Adin, who brought a wood offering on Elul 20.

These considerations do not apply to the descendants of Paroush, who brought their wood offering on the first of Teves. Two distinctions can be made:

a) This was not the first time they brought wood to the *Beis HaMikdash*, for they had previously brought wood on Av 5. As such, it did not present as great a challenge, for "all beginnings are difficult" (*Mechilta*, *Rashi*, *Shmos* 19:5).

24. See the *maamarim* entitled *Vihayah Ki Savo*, 5666, *Emar Rabbi Akiva*, *Ashreichem*, 5667. See also the *sichah* from *Parshas Behaalos'cha* in this series where this subject is discussed.

25. *Yoma* 72b; see the explanation of this concept in *Kuntres Eitz HaChayim*, ch. 11ff.

26. [See *Shabbos* 100b.]

27. *I Kings* 20:6, based on *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Shmos*, sec. 29, and *Rashi*. Note a slight disparity in comparison to *Sanhedrin* 102b.

There are two opinions regarding the identity of the descendants of Pachas Moav ben Yehudah, the family who brought the wood offering on Av 20.⁴ Rabbi Meir maintains that they were “the descendants of David ben Yehudah,” i.e., of King David. Rabbi Yossi, by contrast, maintains that they were the descendants of Yoev ben Tzeruyah, commander of King David’s armies.

This passage raises a fundamental question. How is it possible for there to be two correct opinions regarding an historical fact? With regard to other differences of opinion in the *Talmud*, we are told: “These and these are the words of the living G-d,”⁵ i.e., both opinions communicate spiritual truth. But how can this maxim apply with regard to a point of history?

One could answer that the difference of opinion between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yossi does not concern historical fact, for the descendants of Pachas Moav ben Yehudah were related to both David and Yoev, since the two families married together and thus their lineage was intertwined.⁶ The difference of opinion between the Sages centers on which of the two families should be given precedence. Rabbi Meir maintains that it was the merit of King David which prompted them to bring wood to the altar, while Rabbi Yossi maintains that it was Yoev’s virtues that spurred this initiative.

WHEN WOOD CAN NO LONGER BE CUT

To understand the above, it is necessary to explain the problems inherent in bringing wood on Av 20, and why it was necessary to have ancestral merit to bring wood on that

4. *Taanis* 28a.

5. *Eruvin* 13b; *Gittin* 6b. See also *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 6b.

6. To cite a parallel, our Sages (*Sotah* 43a) cite two interpretations regarding the identity of Putiel: that the name refers to Yisro, or that it refers to Yosef. Our Sages reconcile the two interpretations by explaining that the two families intermarried.

deal with entities which you can comprehend. Devote yourself to material things. This will satisfy you, for material entities can be fully comprehended.”

Nor does the *yetzer hora* tell a person to ignore Torah study entirely. It agrees that one must know how to observe Torah law, and therefore should study a fixed amount of Torah in the morning and a fixed amount of Torah in the evening. “But,” argues the *yetzer hora*, “it should be a fixed amount, a law or two. If you want to be meticulous, an entire chapter, and if extremely meticulous, one should attend a class. But by no means should you make an overwhelming commitment. You will never be satisfied, for there is no way you can grasp it entirely. All you will do is cause yourself suffering.”

Continuing, the *yetzer hora* also addresses itself to the subject matter studied: “You should study only *nigleh*, not *P’nimiyus HaTorah*. After all, *P’nimiyus HaTorah* deals with concepts which we cannot grasp. These ideas are by nature above mortal intellect.”²⁸

A person must realize that these are the arguments of the *yetzer hora*. The argument not to involve oneself with “bread from heaven,” but instead deal solely with “bread from the earth” is the first step away from the path of Torah. By accepting one aspect of the *yetzer hora*’s argument, a person allows himself to fall deeper and deeper into its snares. In this vein, our Sages say²⁹ that the *yetzer hora* is at first like a passerby. Afterwards, it is like a guest; ultimately, it becomes the owner of the home.

Based on the above, we can appreciate the lesson taught by the Torah with regard to the people’s complaints about the manna. They did not want “bread from heaven,” food that is above the material realm. Instead, they wanted ordinary food, food which produces waste.

28. See the explanation in *Kuntres Limud HaChassidus*, ch. 11ff.

29. *Sukkah* 52b. See also *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 22; *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 267b.

And this initiated a downward trend. Soon they were “weeping with their families,”³⁰ interpreted by our Sages³¹ to mean, “lamenting the prohibitions against incest and adultery.”

Moreover, the *yetzer hora*’s argument that it is the material, and not the spiritual which will bring satisfaction is also faulty. The essence of a Jew’s being is spiritual. If, heaven forbid, he cuts himself off from the spiritual and involves himself in material matters alone, he will never be sated. Regardless of how much he achieves, he will not be satisfied. There is no way he can, for this is not who he is.³²

It is the spiritual which reflects his essential nature. And thus, if he becomes an empty receptacle and sheds his self-concern and individual limits, he will be able to receive, being granted not only spiritual things, but also material things. He will enjoy G-d’s abundant generosity, more than a mortal is able to accept.²⁰ Since he regards the spiritual and the material as the same, he will be granted unlimited blessings in both realms.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Eikev*, 5721)



30. *Bamidbar* 11:10.

31. *Yoma* 75a; Rashi, to this verse.

32. See the *maamar* entitled *Lecha Amar Libi*, 5696, sec. 2, and the *maamar* entitled *Ani LeDodi*, 5700, sec. 3.

CHOF MENACHEM AV

WHICH FAMILY BROUGHT WOOD ON AV 20?¹

The date Av 20 is mentioned only once in the *Talmud*,² in tractate *Taanis*. There the *Mishnah* relates that this was a holiday for the descendants of Pachas Moav ben Yehudah, for on that day they would bring an offering of wood in the *Beis HaMikdash*.

To explain: At one time, there was a shortage of wood in the *Beis HaMikdash*, and several families agreed to donate wood for the altar. When the wood which one family brought was used up, another family brought more. In commemoration of their generosity, our Sages ordained that even when there was enough wood, the descendants of these families would bring wood on the days when their ancestors had, and their wood would be used on that day. These families would celebrate the day as a holiday.³

1. The *yahrzeit* of the saintly sage and Kabbalist, R. Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the Rebbe’s father. He passed away in exile in the city of Alma Atta, Kazakstan, in the year 5704 (1944). An overview of his life has been published in *Kovetz Lubavitch*, issue 4.

2. *Taanis* 26a.

Av 20 is also 40 days before Rosh HaShanah. In the customs of the *Kehillah Kadishah Beis E-I Yachbutz* (printed in the text *Divrei Shalom*), it is written that on Av 20 vows should be annulled, because this date is 40 days before Rosh HaShanah. This is not a custom followed in *Chabad*.

It is stated that Rosh Chodesh Elul begins the service of preparation for Yom Kippur, for it is 40 days before that holiday. Significantly, *Yechezkel* 40:1 refers to Yom Kippur as Rosh HaShanah. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 58a.

3. See *Taanis* 28a, and Rashi, *Taanis* 12a, entry *SheYom Tov*.