Pulse OF Emunah

ANI MAAMIN Foundation

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life LESSONS

FINDING CONTENTMENT

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Let us take a look at *Megillas Rus*. Rus was a princess who left fabulous wealth to subsist on charity. What led her to make such a tremendous sacrifice?

Today, we are surrounded by excitement; nothing we can offer is able to compete. Parents, *mechanchim*, and *kiruv* professionals attest that no prizes inspire interest in Torah; the attraction of the outside world is too strong. We must find another way.

Naomi's influence on Rus can be seen in her name: Naomi means pleasant (*Rus Rabbah* 2:5). Pleasantness and sweetness were the hallmarks of Naomi's personality, and this was more attractive to Rus than all the riches available to her in Moav.

There is no need for us to augment the Torah with thrills—it offers something more appealing than fun. The Torah is pleasant; it creates authentic happiness. True, it does not generate heart-pounding excitement, but excitement fades. Long-lasting satisfaction is more fulfilling than a superficial thrill.

When people see true happiness, they learn not to be fooled by cheap substitutes. The pleasure of *Shabbos*, the beauty of truth, a strong, loving family, the inner satisfaction of living with morals and discipline, the security fostered by *emunah* – all of these enable people to withstand the allure of the world.

We cannot fight fire with fire; we cannot compete with the outside world on its own terms. Rather, we should expose our children to something entirely different: the contentment of a Torah life

gem OF THE WEEK

WITNESSES AND GUARANTORS

Based on excerpts from the commentary of Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher

"Ha'azinu hashamayim va'adabeira v'seshma ha'aretz emreifi", this is the appointment of heaven and earth as witnesses and guarantors. being called upon to represent *Hashem's* covenant with *am Yisrael,* and of what will be said regarding *Yisrael's* future.

A person can listen to someone speaking words, yet in contrast, can hear without wishing to do so. Heaven is active; the earth is essentially passive, a receiver, because all of the blessing and curse in the physical development of the earth, and in human affairs that depend on that development, results from the cosmic changes that occur outside the earth, and these are included in the concept of *hashamayim*.

Heaven and earth will not rest until the Torah will finally become accepted and absorbed by the nation. Moshe *rabbeinu's* mission resembled the active *shamayim* and was sent to bring the field of mankind's development the seeds of light and warmth, of truth and life. The Torah will thaw the nation's frozen heart, break up the clods of its hard soil, so that the seeds of warmth and light, of knowledge and life, may germinate and bear fruit.

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powerful PRAYER

RETZEI: SERVICE OF THE HEART

Chazal tell us that *tefillah* is a form of *avodah*, just like bringing an animal to the *Beis Hamikdash* and offering it on the *mizbei'ach*. By *davening* to Hashem, thinking about Him, asking Him for what we need, and realizing that He is in total control of the world, we "bring a *korban*" in our hearts. For this reason, in the same bracha where we ask for the return of *korbanos* and their acceptance by Hashem, we also ask Him to accept with grace all the *tefillos* of *klal* Yisrael

Adapted from Biur Tefillah (Ani Maamin Foundation)

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inspiring A GENERATION

THE SIMCHA OF TESHUVA

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

Yom Kippur is on the tenth day of Tishrei, as is repeated numerous times in the Torah. Yet, there is one verse that could be misread to mean that we must fast on the ninth day of Tishrei. "On the ninth day of the month, in the evening, from evening to evening, you shall keep the Sabbatical day (of Yom Kippur)." Of course, if we read it carefully, we understand that it means on the evening following the ninth day will be the fast day. Nevertheless, the Torah worded it in a very unusual manner.

Chazal explain that the verse means something quite different. On the ninth day we are obligated to eat a festive meal, which will then be followed by Yom Kippur from the evening on. The Torah worded the *pasuk* this way to convey the following message: Whoever eats on the ninth and fasts on the tenth will be credited as if he were commanded to fast both days, and did so.

The *sefer Chayei* Adam explains what the Torah means. Fasting is a difficult *mitzva*. Eating is, of course, an easy *mitzva*. Hashem wants to give us reward for eating on *erev* Yom Kippur as if we had been commanded to fast and done so. A wonderful explanation, but still leaves a question. Why does Hashem want to give us the reward for a hard *mitzva* when all we have done is perform the easy *mitzva* of eating?

Rabeinu Yona in his classic work *Shaarei Teshuva* explains this in the following manner: There are differing requirements of *teshuva* to be fully atoned for an *aveira*. For breaking a positive command, basic *teshuva* is sufficient: regret, stopping the sin and committing to not repeat it, and confession. However, for a negative commandment, *teshuva* alone is only a partial atonement. Continuing the *teshuva* through Yom Kippur is also needed.

Therefore, if a person transgressed a negative command, (i.e. wearing *shaatnez*, shaving with a razor, eating *chazir*), and he did *teshuva*, he should long and wait expectantly for Yom Kippur to arrive, so that he will once again be in Hashem's good favor. Therefore the *chachamim* said that one who eats on *erev* Yom Kippur is given credit as if he had fasted, "because he shows his deep regret over his sin, and his great happiness when the time of atonement arrives."

An *aveira* is serious business. Rav Yisroel Salanter compares a sin to the stars. To us, the stars look like tine dots in the sky, but in reality they may be many times bigger than our sun. Hence, Yom Kippur is a great cause of *simcha*, which we usher in with a loud *Shehechayanu*. May we all be *zoche* to do complete *teshuva*.

A *g'mar chasima tova* to all

gem OF THE WEEK

continued from previous page

The purpose of *shira ha'azinu* is to answer the people's complaints and confront them with the truth. It is also intended for times when dire sufferings have already befallen the people on account of the sin of their betrayal of Hashem. Yet, instead of blaming themselves, they blame Hashem; for He no longer demonstrates His saving and protection, compared to better times.

Hashem says that He is firm as a rock, unchanging in His existence. We are the ones who have changed. Instead of accusing Hashem, we should realize that Hashem did great and wonderful things for us, the likes of which He did do for no other nation, and it is His Will to continue doing so in the future. Do we think that He did this so that in the end we should become as morally and spiritually corrupt as all the other nations?

When we had material riches and pleasures, after emerging from the wilderness and reaching the land of milk and honey, the pasuk 32:15 says "Yeshuran grew fat and kicked." Turning its back on Hashem, Yisrael regarded the forces of nature and man as the source of its happiness and joys, and from them sought protection. However, Hashem wants Yisrael to be a shining example, to ascend to the double pinnacle of earthly achievement: material, spiritual, and moral perfection.

The pasuk says in 32:39 "See now that I am indeed I, and there is no God beside Me", everything in which you placed your trust has been proven to be useless and futile, and help and salvation are nowhere to be seen. Hashem is Absolute, dependent on nothing, and will never change. Compared with Him, all else is dependent, and in contrast to Him, all else is insignificant.

Therefore, He alone will remain for you, after all else has already forsaken you, as He did, when you forsook Him. We will see that Hashem did not abandon us to be lost from Him, rather, by roundabout ways — even over paths of death and suffering — Hashem restores us to His exclusive control and guidance

wonder WORLD

FASCINATING FORCES

Is staying small the ultimate power move?

For centuries, people believed bonsai trees were small because they lacked nutrients, but that is not the reason. Devarim 32:2 describes a heavy type of rainstorm that physically pressed upon the vegetation. This downward mechanical force triggers a fascinating phenomenon known as mechanomorphogenesis. When plants repeatedly face heavy rain, high winds, or physical manipulation, they experience cellular stress. This causes the plant to stop growing tall and thin —making it vulnerable to snapping— and, instead, redirect its energy to grow wider, denser, and thicker, compacting its wood and deepening its roots. This exact defense mechanism is what allows bonsai artisans to shape miniature trees, not only by trimming leaves, but by using wires and weights to simulate the harsh, downward forces of a natural storm. This tricks the tree's internal biology, resulting in a majestic, incredibly strong, centuries-old giant forest tree perfectly miniaturized into a small pot