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CHUKAT

8th Tammuz 5776
Shabbat begins: 20:57
Shabbat ends: 22:12

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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

Devotion To Torah

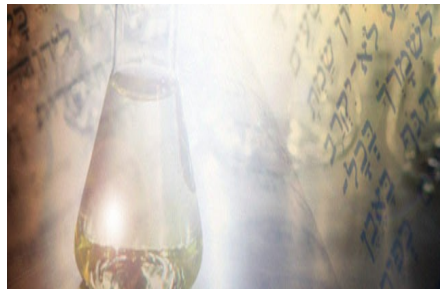
No, it's not your imagination. You really have been spending more time at the office since the recession hit back in 2008.

In Japan they call it *karoshi* and in China it is *guolaosi*. As yet there is no word in English for working yourself to death, but as more and more people put in longer hours and suffer more stress there may soon be. In 2005, an American survey concluded that long working hours increased an individual's chances of illness and injury. It noted that for those doing 12 hours a day, there was a 37% increase in risk compared to those working fewer hours.

Ronald Reagan was wrong, it seems, when he said: "Hard work never killed anyone." Death from overwork is not a new phenomenon in Britain but it is largely unremarked upon.

The Torah seems to take a different approach when it comes to studying Torah. Adam Ki Yamut B'ohel - "This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent" (Bamidbar 19:14).

The Gemara interprets this homiletically: "Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: From where do we know that the words of Torah endure only if one kills himself over them? As it is written: 'Zot haTorah, this is the Torah - Adam ki yamut b'ohel, a man who would die in a tent' (Ibid.), i.e. a man who kills himself in the tent, in the study halls of Torah, is privileged to master the Torah" (Berachot 63b).



The Rambam, in Hilchot Talmud Torah (3:12), cites this passage amidst his exhortation that Torah scholarship can only be attained by denying oneself a degree of comfort and enjoyment. A person who wishes to achieve Torah knowledge cannot indulge in sleeping, eating and other forms of physical enjoyment. He must rather devote himself tirelessly to this pursuit, at the *expense of physical comfort*. The image of "killing oneself" thus means compromising one's physical comfort.

The Taz, in his commentary to the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 47:1), explains this passage somewhat differently, in reference to the exertion required in the pursuit of Torah study itself. He focuses not on the withdrawal from physical delights as a prerequisite for success in learning, but rather the *hard work* that one must invest into his studies. A student cannot possibly achieve any degree of scope or depth in his Torah scholarship unless he is prepared to invest maximum intellectual effort into the field. "Killing oneself" thus refers to hard work, intense concentration and rigorous analytical thinking.

It's not just about the amount of time we spend learning Torah, it's about the quality of time we spend learning as well. This can sometimes be even more important.

The Midrash Vayikra Rabah (3:15) tells the story of how King Agrippas wished to offer up a thousand burnt offerings in one day. He sent to tell the High Priest: 'Let no man other than myself offer sacrifices today!' There came a poor man with two turtle doves in his hand, and he said to the High Priest: 'Sacrifice these.'

He said: 'The king commanded me, saying, "Let no man other than myself offer sacrifices this day."' "

He said: 'My lord the High Priest, I catch four [doves] every day; two I offer up, and with the other two I sustain myself. If you do not offer them up, you cut off my means of sustenance.'

The priest took them and offered them up.



Living with Mitzvos

1. When else in the year do we read from *Parshas Chukas*?
2. What is the connection between the *parsha* and the *haftora*?
3. How are we to understand *Moshe* and *Aaron's* sin of *Mei Meriva*?
4. Why was *Moshe* more scared to fight the giant *Og* more than the giant *Sichoin*?
5. *Moshe* set up a copper statue of a snake. How long did this remain in existence?
6. How does the lack of *Pora Aduma* relate to us nowadays?
7. What miracles in *Parshas Chukas* obligate us to say a *brocho* over the saving of the Jews?

Answers On Page 3

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In a dream it was revealed to Agrippas: 'The sacrifice of a poor man preceded yours.' So he sent to the High Priest, saying: 'Did I not command you thus: "Let no one but me offer sacrifices this day?"' Said [the High Priest] to him: 'Your Majesty, a poor man came with two turtle-doves in his hand, and said to me: "I catch four birds every day; I sacrifice two, and from the other two I support myself. If you will not offer them up you will cut off my means of sustenance." Should I not have offered them up?' Said [King Agrippas] to him: 'You were right in doing as you did.' Just like the poor person offers all from his heart, so to when a person devotes an hour of studying Torah, without any disturbances, he offers a special sacrifice that can match a thousand sacrifices.

Thus we have seen that we should reduce physicality's (Rambam), increase our hard work in studying (Taz) in order to succeed in Torah.



Would The Real Prophet Please Stand Up?

"REPENT! The end is drawing near!" So says the preacher in Stamford Hill. We laugh her off (and rightfully so). She is crazy after all.

How do I know when Hashem has spoken to someone? Hearing intelligent words from a rabbi or another person can be convincing, but what if they instruct me to do something I do not (and cannot understand)?

Though we have already been commanded to be careful not to wear shatnez (and other 'chukim', super rational mitzvot) we are only, properly introduced to the concept of Chukim in this week's portion. The law of the Red Heifer – Parah Adumah, how it is prepared and how it brings purity to one who has come into contact with the dead, is called 'the chok of the Torah'. Why is that after forty years in the desert, we are now

There is a further ingredient (and explanation) offered by Rabbi Menachem Tzvi Taksin, in his work Or Yekarot to Masechet Shabbat. He explains that one must keep to his schedule of Torah studies even if it requires that he act as though he is "dead" with respect to other responsibilities. Many people understand the need to allocate time for Torah study, but they find themselves unable to afford the time to do so. The Gemara, according to this reading, teaches that a person must occasionally see himself as "dead" with regard to other matters. Just as a dead person obviously cannot tend to these matters, so must a Jew allocate a period of time each day where he simply cannot engage in other responsibilities, when regardless of other concerns he devotes himself to Torah.

On Rabbi Eliezer Yosef Lederberg's tombstone in Jerusalem, it states that Rabbi Lederberg reviewed the tractates Rosh Hashanah and Beitzah 4,000 times.

being taught that mitzvot (or at least certain ones) are beyond (our) understanding? Is there a connection between this and the prior Torah portions?

I believe that Behaalotchah, Shlach and Korach, all demonstrate our belief in Moshe and in his uniqueness. Miriam and Ahron spoke ill of Moshe because they assumed that he was a prophet just like them. G-d responded, "If there be prophets among you...I will speak to him in a dream. Not so my servant Moshe...I speak mouth to mouth; in a vision and not in riddles...". Moses is on

The land of the seven nations (Israel) is connected with the Breaking of the seven Midot of the world of Tohu Those tremendous sparks of holiness fell. The arrival of the Jewish people heralded an era of fixing and elevating those sparks

a totally different plane. His prophecy is completely different than all other prophets.

The kabbalists explain the sin of the spies. The land of the seven nations (Israel) is connected with the Breaking of the seven Midot of the world of Tohu. Those tremendous sparks of holiness fell. The

Rabbi Lederberg, an ostensibly simple Jew who lived in Batei Warsaw, Jerusalem, was a storekeeper. Every spare moment was spent learning Torah. He once needed to have brain surgery. The doctors informed him that although he needed the surgery to save his life, he might never see again. "How long can I delay the operation?" he asked the surgeon.

He was told that the maximum was six months. During that time he learned the two tractates, Rosh Hashanah and Beitzah, by heart, so he would be able to review them constantly if he went blind. The surgery was a success and not only did it save his life, his vision was not affected. He kept reviewing the two tractates wherever he was, until he died in 1954.

In Japan they call it karoshi and in China it is guolaosi. We call it Amelut BaTorah – through exerting ourselves, we are not dying we are living! Ki Hem Chayenu VeOrech Yamenu - for they are our life and the length of our days!

arrival of the Jewish people heralded an era of fixing and elevating those sparks. Midot can be intense and leave no space for another view point. Think of your child in a temper tantrum... The spies were afraid to enter the Land and face those challenges. "Vayahas Kalev et Ha-Am El Moshe", "Kalev silenced the people towards Moses". The words "towards Moses" seem superfluous. Kalev attempted to silence them by connecting them to Moshe. Moshe is ultimate humility, the very epitome of it and symbolises complete subservience to Hashem. G-d's will is to conquer the land (and our Midot etc) and we certainly can.

The Talmud tells us of an Arab who told Rabbi.. about an amazing thing in the desert. Rabbah bar bar Hana bent down to listen, and he heard a voice (Korach's voice), emanating from the bowels of the earth, saying, "Moses and his Torah are true, but Korah's company are liars". If we see (and accept), Moshe superior prophecy, His humility and the truth of His teachings, we will be ready to accept Chukim. All that he teaches us is the word of Hashem whether we understand it or not.

Let us hearken to do the words of our Chachamim, representatives of Moshe. Though we may not always understand their pronouncements we accept that they have superior knowledge and humility not to be making anything up on their own.

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HALACHA
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HILCHOT TEPHILLAH

The Repetition of the Amidah

In order for those who cannot read to be able to pray the Amidah, the Rabbis instituted that the Chazan read the Amidah aloud following the congregation's silent Amidah. By listening to the Chazan and answering Amen to each Beracha those who are unable to pray themselves are considered to be saying the words uttered by the Chazan. The Rabbis instituted this as

standard practice, to be recited by the Chazan in the presence of a minyan. The format requires at least nine people attentively listening to the Berachot, in the same way someone who needs to be included would listen, irrespective of whether there are actually people present who cannot read.

Can the Chazan say the repetition in the presence of a minyan where some are still praying the silent Amidah?

No, there must be at least nine people listening to his prayer and answering each beracha. Since in essence the repetition was instituted to include those who can't read, the format requires people to answer the berachot. Whilst the Rabbis didn't stipulate that there actually needs to be someone present who can't read, they instead required that a minyan listen as if being included in the Chazan's berachot.

What if a few spaced out or the Chazan started before nine had finished their silent Amidah, leaving less than nine answering?

Saying the repetition in the presence of a Minyan fulfils the intended purpose of

repetition in a limited capacity and is therefore not entirely in vein. However since it was not said in the ideal format stipulated by the Rabbis the berachot recited are close to being in vein. Reciting a beracha in vein is an extremely serious transgression and so these situations must be avoided.

Is it ok for some to walk out if they return in time to answer Amen to the beracha?

As mentioned the format includes listening to the whole of each beracha not just answering Amen. There must be at least nine people listening to the full text of the Amidah in addition to answering Amen.

This is very difficult with a small minyan. How can we be sure to do the repetition correctly?

Those present must be constantly reminded to focus on the Chazan's words and certainly no talking is permitted during the repetition. A widespread custom is to leave out the repetition entirely when only ten people are present since it's almost inevitable that the repetition would not be carried out correctly, by one losing focus at some point.



STORIES OF OUR
CHACHAMIM

In the Porat Yosef Yeshiva, a young student suddenly went missing. The staff was clueless as to this student's whereabouts. After several days, the famed Rosh Yeshiva, Hacham Ezra Attiya (1885-1970) one of the greatest Torah scholars in the 20th century in the Sephardic world (his students included Hacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, Rav Kaduri, and more) became very concerned and decided to pay a visit to the student's home.

When Hacham Attiya spoke to the father, the father explained that the family business was a small grocery store and he needed

the help of his son as a delivery boy. The Hacham attempted to convince the father of the importance of Torah study, and tried to find a solution to the manpower issue, but it was to no avail. The father would not budge.

The next morning when the father went to the store, he was shocked to find Hacham Attiya, the Rosh Yeshiva himself, standing outside the store in work clothes. When questioned by the father he replied, "Your son's learning is unquestionably more important than mine and you are murdering the Gadol (great rabbi) of the next generation. So I will be your delivery boy in his place. Just send your son back to yeshiva!"

The father understood the seriousness of the Rabbi and sent his son back to the study halls. This boy turned out to be Hacham Ovadia Yosef z"l."

Living with Mitzvos

1. The beginning of *Parshas Chukas* is also read on the third of the *Four Parshios*, known as *Parshas Pora*.
2. The both discuss the approaching of the kings surrounding Eretz Yisroel when the Jews sought to enter the Holy Land.
3. There are so many opinions as to what the actual sin was that I am not going to discuss it. What I want to bring out from it is why and how can there be so many opinions as to what the sin was? The answer is that when dealing with such great people, a higher standard is demanded from them. They are judged like a thin hair, every small thing is magnified. Since the sin is so minute and can hardly be seen by placing a finger and saying this is it, this gives room for all the different opinions as to what it actually was!
4. Either because *Oig* himself had merits and *Moshe* was scared that this would assist him. (See Rashi, 21:34) Alternatively, *Moshe* was scared that the Jews had sinned by taking for themselves booty from the battle with *Sichon* and this would weaken the Jews and thereby assist *Oig*. (Midrash)
5. The Gemora (Pesochim 56a) brings that *King Chizkiya* instituted six things. For three of these actions the *Sages* criticized him while they agreed to the other three. One of the agreed actions was to destroy the copper snake statue set up by *Moshe*. The reason was that the Jews were coming to believe that the statue had the power to heal, instead of attributing this power to Hashem.
6. The ashes of the *Pora Aduma*, red heifer, purify us from the *tuma*, impurity, that comes from contact with dead bodies. Nowadays since we don't have ashes from the *Pora Aduma*, nor the means to sacrifice it according to the din, we cannot achieve purity from this *tuma*.
7. The Gemora (Brochos 54a-b) tells the story of a miracle in *Parshas Chukas*. Two mountains moved together and killed the enemy hiding in caves waiting to ambush the Jews. The *Aron* went ahead of the Jewish people in the wilderness, flattening mountains and moving aside all obstacles. Thus this great miracle was only discovered afterwards. Two people afflicted with *tzara'as* who were therefore following the Jews outside the encampment saw blood from the enemy gushing into a river. When a person sees this place, *Nachalai Arnon*, he is obligated to say a *brocho* over this miracle.

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