

Kinder Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Chukas

The Yoke of Heaven

"Those oxen sure are working hard, Avi."

"Yes, pulling a plow is not easy, Chaim. I see something which helps them very much."

"What is that?"

"The yoke that they are wearing."

"What is a yoke, Avi?"

"It is the harness that fits over their necks like a collar."

"How does it help them?"

"It guides them, Chaim. The yoke lines them up and unites them into a team of oxen. When they are wearing that yoke, they must all pull together, in the same direction. Therefore, their strength is focused, which makes it much easier for them to pull."

"I see."

"These animals are not too smart, however. They think that their obligation to work comes from the yoke. They are naturally lazy and would rather be lying around doing nothing. Therefore, they sometimes try to throw off the yoke."

"Avi, they do not realize that the yoke is not a burden for them, rather it helps them. It is really like a parable to the first verse of Kriyas Shema – *kabalas Ole Malchus Shomayim* – the acceptance of the Yoke of Heaven."

"In what way, Chaim?"

"The verse states, 'A man was born to toil' (Iyov 5:7). Work is a fact of life. Just as everyone in this world must breathe air, so too everyone must toil. The question is, what will his work be? The choice is his. He can toil for Hashem by accepting the Yoke of Heaven. That is the best occupation. He joins the 'team' of *ovdei* (servants of) Hashem. He is focused totally on productive activities that are good for him, everyone around him, the entire universe, and the Creator. He works hard serving Hashem and the Almighty rewards him richly in this world and the next."

"A different person may not realize the exaltedness of this work. He will rebel and throw off the Yoke of Heaven, *chas v'shalom* (G-d forbid). He then proceeds to waste his precious time in this world pursuing worthless vanities. Even if he attains them, he will not be satisfied. Alternatively, Hashem may send him sickness, poverty, and other troubles that soak up his time, money, and energy. Either way he will end up with nothing; no deep satisfaction in this world, and no reward in the next world."

"Oy vey! What a terrible fate. I want the best work. I want to *mekabel Ole Malchus Shomayim*. How do I do it, Chaim?"

"One way is to be happy with whatever Hashem does for you, Avi, even if it is not pleasant. This does not exempt you from trying to improve the situation. However, you must accept that all the

results are from Hashem."

"That takes work."

"It certainly does. We can think of many reasons to be unhappy with Hashem's plan for us. A rebel may imagine that the situation is worse than it truly is, and subsequently panic. On the other hand, he may worry about future problems that will probably never come to reality. His ego may tell him that he does not deserve this difficult situation. He may get frustrated because he does not have the tools to handle the situation. He may try *hishtadlus* (preparative action), and not receive the desired results. He will subsequently get frustrated and rebel. *Sinas chinam*, desires for honor, or material pleasures may distort the reality and make him panic and rebel. We have to rise above all of this, Avi. We must realize that Hashem is the Almighty, All Merciful King. Therefore, His decrees must be good for us. We accept them whole heartedly."



"Do you have any other tips, Chaim?"

"Yes, Avi. Always do every mitzvah with great *zerizus* (quickness), *hislahavus* (excitement), *zehirus* (carefulness), sincerity, and *simcha*. Fulfilling mitzvos is the greatest privilege in the world! Relate to it this way. This is the type of *kabalas Ole Malchus Shomayim* that Hashem wants."

"Thank you so much Chaim. You have illuminated my whole approach to Hashem's holy mitzvos. May He help us to always work faithfully for Him."
"Amen."

Kinderlach . . .

We want to mekabel Ole Malchus Shomayim with all of our hearts, souls, and might, as it says in Kriyas Shema. We know that the yoke is good for us. It focuses our efforts into totally constructive work. It is good for everyone and everything. It gives us great reward, pleasure, and satisfaction. Most of all, it is the ratzon (will of) Hashem and gives Him nachas ruach. Fulfilling mitzvos is the greatest privilege in the world! Serve Hashem with simcha! Mekabel Ole Malchus Shomayim!

Think Big

"Abba, this waterfall is beautiful."

"Not only that, Chaim, it is very powerful."

"Abba, is there enough water in this waterfall for our family to drink all year?"

"Chaim, there are thousands of gallons of water falling every minute. This waterfall can do much more than provide drinking water. If a hydroelectric power plant were built here, it could provide enough electricity to power our whole town."

"Wow! How would it work, Abba?"

"The engineers build a dam across the whole river to channel the water through a generator. It pushes the blades which turn the generators."

"This river is so big. Couldn't they build the dam across just half of the river?"

"I'm afraid that it wouldn't work, Chaim. The water would flow over the waterfall and not over the dam. It is all or nothing."

"If the river does not put its full strength into the power plant, then it cannot produce any electricity at all."

"Exactly."

"I just asked for drinking water. I had no idea that this river could do much, much more."



How many times have we heard the words, "Don't work too hard. Don't kill yourself"? They are excellent advice for earning a livelihood. The last Mishna in Mesecta Kiddushin states that a person should look for a livelihood that is easy and free of sin. However, learning Torah is the opposite. "This is the Torah – when a man dies in a tent" (Bamidbar 19:14). The Gemora (Berachos 63b) explains that words of Torah will not be ingrained in a person unless he "kills himself" to learn it. This means that he must put his full strength into it. Just like the river in our story. If you harness its full strength, it can light up the town. Any less will produce nothing.

Why don't people put their full strength into learning? Perhaps they do not realize the awesome potential of the human mind. Just like Chaim. He thought that the river was only able to provide drinking water. He did not realize the tremendous power in those gallons of water.

Kinderlach . . .

There is only one way to succeed at learning Torah. Put your full strength into it. Half strength will not produce half results. Hashem gave you a magnificent brain that is tailor made to learn and understand Torah. There is no end to how much you can know. It just takes work. What is your ambition in life? The Noam Elimelech writes that tsaddikim who toil in Torah (for its own sake) build worlds. Think big. Why settle for a glass of water, when you can light up the world?