

Deep Meaning

"Okay, let's go over this again, Chaim. Who was the sister of Lotan?"
 "Ummm . . . Adda?"
 "No, she was the mother of Elifaz"
 "Ummm . . . Bosmas?"
 "No, she was the mother of Reuel. Do you want to try again, or do you want me to tell you the answer?"
 "Please tell me, Abba."
 "Timna was the sister of Lotan."
 "Now I remember. Abba, may I ask you a question?"
 "Of course, Chaim."
 "I hope it is not out of line."
 "Don't worry, Chaim."
 "Why do I have to know who the sister of Lotan was? I know that it is written in the Torah, but do I need to know everything that is written in the Torah? Aren't some things more important than others?"
 "Chaim, Rashi address that very question in this week's parasha."
 "Really? Where?"
 "The verse states, 'For it (the Torah) is not an empty thing for you. For it is your life' (Devarim 32:47). Empty? Who would ever possibly think that the Torah is empty, *chas veshalom* (Heaven forbid)."
 "No one, Abba."

"Exactly, Chaim. Therefore, the verse must be teaching us something. Rashi explains it by using the very same verse that we are learning. Timna was from a royal family. Her brother, Lotan was one of the princes of Seir. She could have married one of the princes of her own nation. Yet, she chose instead to be a concubine to Eisav, the seed of Avraham. This demonstrates the greatness of Avraham Avinu. Timna would rather be a concubine in Avraham's house than a princess in her own nation."

"Wow, Abba."
 "Yes, Chaim. Rashi here in Parashas Haazinu explains that nothing in the Torah is empty of meaning. If you search, you will be rewarded. Our sages found deep meaning to the words, 'And Timna was the sister of Lotan.'"

"Abba, you have given me a whole new perspective on my learning. All of the Torah that I learn is very meaningful. If I don't see the meaning right away, I just have to search a little harder."

"Chaim, with an attitude like that, you are on your way to becoming a *talmid chochom*."

*Kinderlach . . .
 What is the excitement of receiving a gift? Unwrapping it. Sometimes there are several layers of wrapping paper. As you remove each one, your excitement grows. Sometimes the deep meaning of a verse or a Mishna or a Gemora is "hidden". We have to get to work "unwrapping" it. Layer by layer. Until we get to the gift. A real treat. Enjoy those sweet words of Torah, kinderlach. They are the best.*

Cheshbon Hanefesh

"Okay, let's go over this again."
 "Yes, my dear."

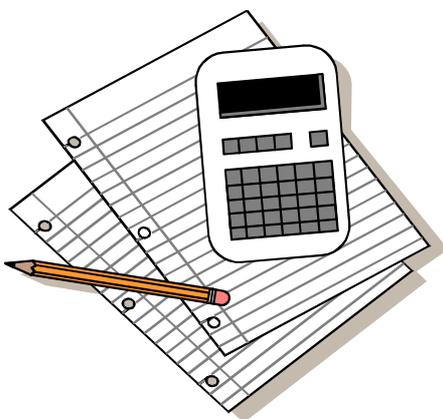
It was late at night, but the husband and wife were still awake in their grocery store, going over their notes.

"Those new pickles sold very well this week."

"Yes, 117 cans."

"Good. Let's increase our order next week. What about the whole wheat cookies?"

"When they were on the front shelf, they sold a lot better than when they were in



the back of the store."

"Let's move them to the front. They are a high-profit item. Which hour of the day was the busiest?"

"Between 4-5 in the afternoon."

"Good. Let's make sure that all of our workers are there during that hour."

And so it went. They husband and wife methodically and patiently went through every aspect of their business. They looked for their strengths and weaknesses, and searched out ideas about how to improve. Thus, their business prospered.

Take an accounting of your soul (*cheshbon hanefesh*). What are your strong middos, and what are your weak ones? When are your most productive times of the day? How much time do you waste on unnecessary things? How many unnecessary words do you speak? How much Torah did you learn? How well did you pray? How many times did you

become angry? All of these issues are taken into *cheshbon*. The Mesillas Yesharim speaks about the importance of *cheshbon hanefesh* in the third chapter. A well-known Rav once remarked that *cheshbon hanefesh* is the most powerful tool for *tshuva*, as the following story illustrates.

"Avi, you look very happy."

"I am extremely happy."

"Why?"

"I just found a gold mine."

"Where? Tell me all about it."

"I was examining my daily schedule and I noticed something interesting. I could add 20 minutes of productive time to my day with almost no effort whatsoever."

"So you started digging for gold during those 20 minutes."

"In a manner of speaking. I decided to devote them to learning something new. Then I began to make a *cheshbon*. Twenty minutes a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year times seventy years equals . . ."

"Let me guess. One hundred hours?"

"More."

"A thousand hours?"

"Not even close."

"Please tell me."

"The total is 8500 hours which equals a whole year. With twenty minutes a day, you can add a whole year to your life."

"That is astounding. Now I see why you are so happy. You really have discovered a gold mine."

"Why don't you go looking for buried treasure also?"

"I've started digging already."

Kinderlach . . .

We are now in the midst of "aseres yimai (the ten days of) tshuva". Take a cheshbon hanefesh. If not now, when? Think about what you have done, what you are doing, and what you will do. Are you doing the right things? Is there room for improvement? The Rabbeinu Yona zt"l, in Yesod HaTshuva points out several good times to take a cheshbon. When you wake up each day, before each meal, and before sleep. Once a week before Shabbos, and once a month before Rosh Chodesh. Also yearly, during aseres yimai tshuva. Take a cheshbon, and watch your soul prosper.

Parasha Questions

- Who are Moshe Rabbeinu's witnesses that he warned Klal Yisrael about their fate if they sin? (Rashi 32:1)
- Give two reasons why they are good witnesses. (Rashi 32:1)
- Give examples of Hashem's mercy. (32:8 and Rashi)
- How is the eagle merciful on its young? (Rashi 32:11)
- Give an example of how good the fruits of Eretz Yisrael are. (32:13,14 and Rashi)
- What is the danger of too much enjoyment of food? (32:15)