



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS SHEMINI

ROTTEN BONES

"Shalom Imma, I'm home."
 "Shalom Devora. How was school?"
 "Not so good."
 "I'm sorry to hear that. Let me pour you a hot drink and we'll sit down and talk about it."
 "Thanks Imma."

Devora sips at the sweet hot chocolate and begins to talk.

"It's that girl who sits in front of me in class."

"What did she do?"

"We had a spelling contest and she won. I studied so hard for that contest. I wanted to win."

"Devora, no effort is ever wasted. I'm sure your spelling has improved tremendously."

"But Imma, she always wins."

"What do you mean?"

"She gets the best grades on her report card. She has the most friends. She has the nicest clothes. She has wonderful *middos* (character traits). She is just perfect. I'm so jealous of her."

"Devora dear, I doubt very much that she is perfect. However, even if she is, that is no reason to be jealous of her. Jealousy is a very bad *middah*. Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men wrote, "Jealousy rots the bones" (Mishlei 14:30). Our sages added to this when they said, "Jealousy, desire, and honor take a person out of the (real) world" (Pirkei Avos 4:21). The Mesillas Yesharim explains that a person gains nothing from jealousy. It does not make him any better nor his friend any worse."

"You're so right, Imma."

"Devora, we must all work on our *bitachon* (trust) in Hashem. He provides us with everything that we need. Our friend has what he needs. If we do not have what she has, that means that we do not need it. Therefore, why be jealous? Would you be jealous of a baby's dress which is ten sizes too small for you?"

"Of course not. It's not for me."

"You friend's dress, which might happen to fit you, is not for you either."

"Thank you so much, Imma. I am going to focus on thanking Hashem for what He has given me. I am so fortunate."

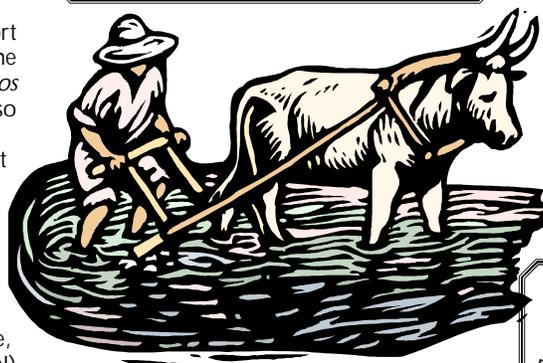
"So am I, Devora. To have a daughter like you."

"A fire came forth from before Hashem and consumed them (Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon HaKohen), and they died before Hashem" (Vayikra 10:2).

What sin that caused their deaths? One interpretation comes from the Gemora (Sanhedrin 52a). Nadav and Avihu walked behind Moshe and Aharon saying, "When will these two elders die? Then we will rule this nation." The Maharsha zt"l comments that their sin was jealousy.

Kinderlach . . .

"He got a new toy and I didn't." He needed one and you did not. "She got two cookies and I only got one." She worked harder to earn them. "She has more friends than I do." She has a more outgoing personality. You are more the quiet type. "He runs faster than I do." True, but you think faster than he does. Hashem gave you each your own special talents. Your job is to work with what you have. Don't be jealous of the other one. You have everything you need to be the best possible you.



THE YOKE

"Abba I feel that I am working hard to prepare for Pesach."

"Are you doing a lot of cleaning, Avi?"

"Well, ummm, not really. I was referring to spiritual preparation."

"Oh, you must be talking about the four parshios."

"Yes, Abba. Two weeks ago (Parashas Shekalim) I worked on dedicating the *gashmius* (material possessions) to Hashem. Last week (Parashas Zachor) I hated the evil of Amalek and wiped him out of my life."

"Fantastic, Avi!"

"What shall I work on this week, Abba?"

"This week is Parashas Parah, Avi. It is about the purification process, which requires the ashes of the Parah Adumah. In the times of the Beis HaMikdash, every Jewish male went to Yerushalayim for the *Shalosh Regalim* (three pilgrimage festivals). They would offer *korbonos* (sacri-

fices) in the Beis HaMikdash. They needed to be *tahor* (spiritually pure) in order to offer the *korbonos*. Therefore, they would purify themselves, using the ashes of the *Parah Adumah*, before the *regel*. We read the beginning of Parashas Chukas, which details the mitzvah of Parah Adumah, as the special Maftir of Parashas Parah this week, to commemorate that purification."

"Does Rav Zeidel Epstein zt"l say anything more about this parasha, Abba?"
 "Ahhhh. You remember his beautiful drashas from the last two parshios, Avi. He has an insight on Parashas Parah also. The Parah Adumah is called a '*chok*' – a mitzvah whose underlying reason we do not understand. We accept the mitzvah, however, and perform it exactly as Hashem prescribes, even though we do not understand it. This is a crucial aspect of *kabolas ole malchus Shomayim* (acceptance of the yoke of Heaven). We keep the mitzvos for no other reason than Hashem commanded them to us. This is the *yesod* (foundation) of our avodas Hashem. We are Hashem's servants and perform all aspects of His will at all times, under all circumstances."

"I'm ready, Abba. I'm serving Hashem no matter what!"

"Be matzliach, Avi!"

Kinderlach . . .

Did you even see a plow being pulled by oxen? They wear a yoke around their necks. The yoke keeps them under control of their master. They cannot deviate from the path that he wants them to travel. We are like the oxen, Hashem is the master, and the yoke is the mitzvos. We follow all of the mitzvos, even those that we do not fully understand, because The Master commanded them to us. Kaballas ole malchus Shomayim – that is Parashas Parah.

Parasha Questions:

- Which two words mark the middle of the Torah, and what is their significance? (10:16)
- How does a sherez make an earthen keli tomei? (11:33)
- If someone touches a nevayla while he is in a mikveh, does he become tahor? (Rashi 11:36)
- Which restrictions on mourning did Aharon and his sons have? (10:6,7)

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