



# Kinder Torah

For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table  
Parshas Chukas



## Take an Accounting

Since, the king of the Amorite nation did not let the Jewish people pass through his borders on their way to the land of Israel. Instead, he and his nation came out to wage war against them. They were defeated, then the Jewish people temporarily settled in his city of Cheshbon. The poets of the time composed a poem commemorating their victory which began with the following words: "Regarding this the *moshlim* (poets) would say, 'Come to Cheshbon . . .'" (Bamidbar 21:27). The Gemora (Bava Basra 78b) makes a beautiful *drosho* on this posuk. The word *moshlim* can also mean rulers. The word *cheshbon* can also mean to take an accounting. Rebbe Yochanan says that the *moshlim* are those who have learned to rule over their *yetzer hora* (evil inclination). They come to take a *cheshbon*, an accounting. This accounting is what enables them to rule over their *yetzer hora*. They consider the loss of time and money that they will incur as a result of doing a mitzvah. Rashi explains that they could be working making money at that time. The mitzvah may actually cost them money (for example giving *tsedaka*). This has to be weighed against the reward of a mitzvah. The reward of a mitzvah is incomprehensible.

The following story about the Chofetz Chaim illustrates this point. The Chofetz Chaim's yeshiva in Radin was in very difficult financial straits. One of the students wanted to help the yeshiva. He had an idea. He would sacrifice his reward for the mitzvah of *tefillin* for one day. In exchange for that reward, he would ask Hashem to bless the yeshiva with financial support. The young man asked the Chofetz Chaim what he thought about the plan. The Chofetz Chaim answered with a parable. A very poor peasant once found a coin worth a million rubles. He was overjoyed. His days of poverty had ended. He hurried quickly to the grocery store to buy the milk and bread that his family sorely needed. He picked out a few items and went to pay. He handed the coin over to the storekeeper and the storekeeper laughed at him. "You can't pay with

this," he said. "W-w-why not?" stammered the peasant. He was afraid the coin was counterfeit. This coin is worth more than all of the merchandise in the store, and the store itself put together! I can't possibly give you enough change for the million ruble coin." It is the same with a mitzvah, explained the Chofetz Chaim. The reward for one day's mitzvah of *tefillin* is worth much more than all of the money in the world!

The Gemora continues the *drosho*. They (the *moshlim*) consider the reward of an *aveyrah* against its loss. The reward of stealing is illegal profit. The reward of pushing ahead of someone in line is saving time. However, the loss caused by an *aveyrah* is far greater than any possible profit gained. Those who rule over their *yetzer hora* carefully consider all of these things before making their decisions, and inevitably decide to do the mitzvah and refrain from doing the *aveyrah*.

### Kinderlach . . .

We can all take a lesson from the accountants. They carefully weigh the profits and losses of each project before they make their decisions. They make very careful decisions based on the *cheshbon*. Aren't our lives at least as important as any of their projects? Let us run our lives with the same kind of careful *cheshbon*. *Davening and saying berachos with kavannah is worth the time invested. Stopping to help someone while on your way to play is another valuable time investment. Giving tzedaka is a much better use of money than buying a treat. Pretty soon, kinderlach, you will be the moshlim!*

## The Power of Speech

It happened again. Another misuse of the power of speech. Over and over again, the Torah records sins related to speech. The sin of the snake in Gan Eden. The sin of the Jews who saw Moshe Rabbeinu kill the Egyptian. The sin of the spies. Now, the complaints about the miraculous food called *man*. It was truly a wonderful gift. The man fell

every day ready to eat for every Jew. They did not have to plow, plant, reap, grind, or bake it. It tasted like whatever food they wanted. What could be better than that? Yet, they complained about it. "It is not digested like normal food. It will make us sick." You complain about Hashem's acts of kindness? The reward is swift and deadly. "Hashem sent the fiery serpents against the people and they bit them. A large number of them died." (Bamidbar 21:6). Rashi explains: The snake comes. He was punished for speaking *loshon hora*. Therefore, he comes to punish those who speak it. To him all foods taste like dust. He comes to punish those who had one food that tasted like everything.

### Kinderlach . . .

We speak a lot about speech because the Torah speaks a lot about speech. The Chofetz Chaim zt"l explains in his book "*Shmiras Halashon*" the reason why speech is so powerful. Speech is totally spiritual and spiritual forces are more powerful than physical ones. Our speech goes straight up to the heavens and causes big things to happen up there. If we speak words of Torah, we bring lot of blessing to the world up there and down here. If we speak *loshon hora*, destruction comes. As we said before, make a *cheshbon*. Use your power of speech the right way to bring blessing to yourself, your family, friends, neighbors and the whole world.

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