

# א ב י ס כ ל ת ו ר ה !

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א' תמוז תשפ"ה · קרח

## One Should Hurry to do מצוות Early (פסחים ד.)

By Amalya Fischer '26

קרח begins with משה's struggle with rebels who, distrusting his and אהרן's leadership, rally for a change in the Jewish nation. Shortly after G-d defeats the first wave of rebels organized by קרח, He commands משה to take one staff from each tribe, including one from the tribe of לוי containing an inscription of אהרן's name on it. Whichever staff G-d chooses to sprout will symbolize who G-d singled out to have special authority over the Jewish nation, putting a final end to the rebellion. Shortly after משה follows through on G-d's orders, אהרן's staff sprouts, while the other tribes' staffs remain unchanged: "וַהֲנִיחָהּ פֶּרֶךְ מִשְׁה-אֶהֱרֹן לְבֵית לֹהֵי וַיֵּצֵא פֶּרֶךְ וַיִּצֶץ צִיץ וַיִּגְמַל שְׂקָדִים לֵוי אֶהֱרֹן of the House of לוי sprouted, and it brought forth sprouts and blossoms and bore almonds" (במדבר י"ז:כ"ג). Thus, G-d singled out אהרן and established אהרן's special authority.

פסוק רש"י brings up an interesting difficulty in this: G-d could have chosen any fruit to be borne from אהרן's staff. Why did He choose almonds? רש"י teaches that almonds have a special characteristic: they blossom earlier and more quickly than all other fruits each spring. While רש"י explains that this characteristic shows how those who oppose G-d's chosen, כהנים - priests, will face punishment as quickly as an almond branch blossoms, one could take a more optimistic approach to this פסוק. G-d singled out אהרן and the tribe of לוי due to their wholehearted dedication to G-d and His service. They

do not drag their feet or hesitate to follow through on their duties. Rather, they are like almonds and perform their duties wholeheartedly, quickly, and - most importantly - with eager happiness and zeal to serve G-d. This is the biggest reason why G-d chooses אהרן and his tribe to be His "head" servants and distributors of authority in the Jewish nation: they do not only possess an innate righteousness and talent for authority, but also a willingness to submit to G-d and His orders. The reason this is such an optimistic message is because we - the nation of Israel - can all reach this point of "becoming" almonds and developing a willingness to quickly and wholeheartedly perform G-d's service. In שמות י"ט:ו, G-d tells משה that we are a "ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש" - "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." In other words, every inhabitant of the Jewish nation has the potential to reach a "priestly" status; we all have the potential to be like the priests of אהרן's tribe. We can all achieve a higher spiritual status through eager, quick, and lively service of G-d.

This principle of quick service of G-d does not only have religious applications. Even in our everyday lives, we should be conscientious to perform deeds both quickly and well. For example, when a parent assigns a list of chores, one should not tarry and procrastinate following through on their obligations. Rather, one should hurry to respect their parents and fulfill what is being asked of them. Or when someone is in need of assistance, one should not hesitate, telling themselves that someone else will come by and lend a hand. Rather, they should quickly make the correct choice and give out help as needed. These are

only two everyday applications of this principle. The thousands - millions even - others serve the same purpose of encouraging us to fulfill our societal obligations quickly and eagerly. A chance to show your parents respect or lend a struggling human being a hand should not be overlooked; rather, such chances should be seized and acted upon immediately, as such obligations are what elevate us to higher spiritual levels and truly make us deserving of being G-d's nation.

## Following צדיקים Makes תורה

By Amit Sage '28

Last week, the תורה talked about some benefits of being "bound" to a צדיק. This is a good week to talk about a disadvantage, perhaps the disadvantage, of being disconnected from צדיקים. We cannot study תורה superficially. We must realize there is much more than what meets the eye. We must probe as deeply as we can in order to have even the faintest glimpse of what is really taking place. There is something that is very curious about Hebrew: all of its letters are consonants. When one sees a word all by itself, one cannot be certain of how it is to be pronounced. Even in a sentence, when the word has context, the correct reading may not be obvious. The correct pronunciation and proper meaning of a word depends on its vowels. The נקודות are to the letters what the soul is to the body: they give it life. A תורה scroll has many, many letters, but נקודות no. So, what gives life to the letters, to the words and to the תורה?

The life is given based on how well one lives by the תורה in general, and especially how holy one is in regard to one's moral behavior. "How well" and "how

holy" depend on "how much" - how truly and sincerely one desires to live according to the תורה.

The desire and desires one has, for the תורה or for anything, are the life and soul of the תורה. When one studies תורה, the conclusions one reaches depend very much on what it is one wants from life. The letters, the body of the תורה, and how it is intellectualized, cannot be safely separated from the נקודות. The soul and desire to live as it should be lived, the way the genuine צדיקים live it.

This was קרה's big mistake. He thought the letters, which all Jews share equally, were also the soul of the תורה. "I have the letters. I can know the life these letters contain and how to live it. We are all holy enough. We do not need a צדיק to follow after!"

But this is not so. The letters of the holy תורה receive their life, their soul, only via the נקודות. The נקודות themselves are the positive desire and longing of the צדיקים, and of us ordinary Jews, who want (or at least, want to want) to live up to the תורה's ideals. We know that just as we need a משה רבינו to give us the תורה's letters, the body, we need him for the נקודות, the soul, in order to have a תורה that lives. Without such a צדיק, G-d forbid, we have nothing to stand on and the entirety of our lives gets swallowed up. We're as good as dead.

Where is קרה today? In בבא בתרא עד. tells us that he and his community are still in the hole that swallowed them alive. Every 30 days, at the beginning of the Jewish month (רשב"ס), they rise close enough to the surface so that those standing nearby can hear their message: משה and his תורה are true.

May our attachment to genuine צדיקים be sincere, so that we live the תורה the way it ought to be lived!

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