



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Bechukosai

The end of our parsha discusses the laws of ערכין. When a person obligates himself to donate the “value” of a specific person to הקדש, the Torah designates the amount to be given, based on the age, and gender of the person.

If someone declared that he will donate the value of a man between twenty and sixty years of age, the Torah obligates him to donate fifty shkalim. For a woman of that age, he must donate thirty shkalim. However, if the man is over sixty, the required donation goes down to fifteen shkalim, while for a woman over sixty, the required donation goes down to ten. In other words, after age sixty, the ערך of the man goes down by more than a third, while the ערך of a woman only goes down by a third.

Rashi explains the discrepancy by quoting a common saying, "סבא בביתא, פחא בביתא, סבתא בביתא סימא בביתא, וסימא טובא בביתא". (An old man in the home is a burden. An old woman in the home is a treasure and a good sign for the home.)

A man over sixty can become a burden, because he was used to leaving home each day to pursue his livelihood. He has no experience with housework. When he passes the age of sixty, and is no longer able to pursue his career, he feels imprisoned in his own home. The resulting depression and irritability, can quickly lead to his becoming a burden in the home.



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On the other hand, a woman who is used to housework, continues to contribute in her older years, often with even more energy. She is the “treasure” in the home.

This principle is not limited to careers and vocations. First and foremost, we must apply it to avodas Hashem. A young תלמיד חכם is called "צורבא", a term that reflects his fiery devotion to learning Torah in depth. As he matures, so does his wisdom. However, in his older years, he may no longer be able to learn with the same intensity or in the same depth. Since he has no experience learning easier material, such as Tanach, Midrashim, Mishnayos or Mussar, he may lose שמחת חיים, and become depressed רח"ל.

By portraying the sixty-year-old retiree as a burden in the home, Chazal hoped to inspire all of us to prepare early, for the limitations of old age. This approach of thinking ahead applies to more than chronological progression. The Magid of Kozhnitz זי"ע applied this principle to the qualitative shifts that everyone experiences in their lives.

“During elevated times, a person must prepare kedusha that will help him during his low points... Our master R. Elimelech of Lizhensk זצ"ל, writes in his holy sefer that Chazal’s comment on the words – אמור ואמרת – teaches us to utilize days of גדלות, to prepare for days of דקטנות.”

Everyone, old or young, experiences difficult periods of מוחין דקטנות. The Navi Yechezkel describes the movement of malachim as והחיות רצוא ושוב, sometimes drawing close and sometimes retreating backwards. Someone who doesn’t utilize the good periods to prepare himself for difficult times, will be unable to withstand challenges. He may disintegrate and become a פחא בביתא, a burden in the home.

In the parsha of ערכין, the Torah reminds us that all of us will experience ups and downs in life. One way to prepare for these shifts is to adopt a schedule of short sedarim. You should learn Mishnayos with enjoyment,



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and learn a portion of Midrash and Tanach each day. Not only will these sedarim increase your knowledge in so many important areas of Torah, they will also prepare you to grow and progress even during difficult times. With this preparation, you can become a **סימא בביתא**, a treasure in the home, by finding the treasure that is available, even during times of **מוחין דקטנות**.

Aside from Mishnayos, Midrash and Tanach, a person should also take time to learn the Siddur. The Pnei Menachem זיע"א told me that when he was a child, his father the Imrei Emes זיע"א set times to learn the Siddur with him. The Imrei Emes wanted him to know the meaning of each word in the Tefila. It is important to note that the Imrei Emes was incredibly busy. He led tens of thousands of people. Each day hundreds of people came to his door for advice and assistance. At the same time, he maintained multiple sedorim during the day in all areas of Torah. He was known for his incredible hasmoda, utilizing every minute of his day. Nonetheless, he felt it was important to designate time for learning the peirush of the davening with his child.

Once, they were learning the Birchos Krias Shma of Shacharis. The Rebbe explained the phrase, **פינות צבאיו קדושים רוממי ש-די**. He said that in the commentary of the Rokeach, **שרים של מעלה** are translated as **פינות**, as we find in **י"דל"ח** שמואל א' שרי העם **פינות העם**. The Pnei Menachem was amazed by this translation of a very uncommon word. He went out into the Beis Medrash and asked some of the chasidim if they knew the meaning of the word **פינות צבאיו**. Many did not, even though they had been saying those words for years.

No one should claim that since he learns Torah b'iyun, spending time on these topics would be considered **ביטול תורה באיכות** (qualitative bitul Torah). You can learn these things in between your other sedarim, utilizing those small time periods that otherwise go to waste. My dear friend, זיע"א הגה"ח רבי אריה אלטר זצ"ל, the son of the Pnei Menachem, was a great Gaon, and a tremendous masmid. He served as Rosh Kollel for hundreds of avreichim. Nonetheless, he maintained a special seder of



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learning Mishnayos when he needed to wait for something. Those minutes added up to hours, during which he finished seder Taharos, and other sedarim, multiple times.

The **אם בחוקותי** wrote forty-two peirushim on the words, **אור החיים הקדוש** תלכו. One peirush is that the Torah tells us to learn even while walking, as we say in Krias Shma, **ובלכתך בדרך**. In this way we fulfill the words of Mishlei, **באהבתה תשגה תמיד**, (I constantly think about the love of Torah).

We must understand that when someone is walking, he cannot concentrate on the deep, difficult areas of Torah. He must learn simpler topics. If he does that, he is considered an **עמל בתורה**, who fulfills **בחוקותי** תלכו, and merits all of the wonderful **ברכות** described in the beginning of the parsha.

אכי"ר when we adopt this way of learning, we will be zoche to a lifelong connection to Torah, that will flourish even in times of difficulty or spiritual downfall. Then we will be a **סימא בביתא**, a treasure in our homes.



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