



Real Victory

Parshas Chukas

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

It was late at night during the autumn of 1977, and I was about to go to sleep, when I heard a loud knocking at my door. By now I had already grown accustomed to midnight guests.

Dozens of youths were standing at the door and shouting over and over "Ye'sh Elokim" – "There is a G-d." they pulled me from my home and we started dancing. The entire country was in a state of euphoria, celebrating Israel's victory over the Russian National Basketball team. Not the holiest of occasions, I thought to myself, but if it was helping to bring G-dliness in the world, why not?

At that same time, sitting quietly in the *Beis Midrash*, the study hall, of Migdal Ohr, was a young man named Yaakov Shmuel, a local from Migdal Ha'Emek whose parents could not understand his steadfast dedication to his holy studies. His father would often complain to me: "All he does is read, he reads all day, and he reads all night!" I calmed him down telling him that he would have much *Nachas*, satisfaction and pleasure, from his son's devotion.

I took special interest in his education. After further inquiry, it was revealed that at the young age of seventeen this unique young man was about to make a *siyum*, a completion, of the study of the entire Talmud. I reflected on the juxtaposition of this tremendous accomplishment of the studying of the entire Talmud with the Israeli National Basketball Team's victory. I decided to hold a festive celebration for Yaakov's enormous scholastic achievement so that all of his peers could rejoice in the delight of Torah.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef joined us for the event and shared with us an interesting insight. Rabbi Yosef spoke about the last *Mishnah* in the entire Talmud, where it is written:¹ "Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi said: in the World to Come the Holy One, blessed be He, will make each righteous person inherit three hundred and ten worlds, for it is written: 'That I may cause those that love me to inherit **ש'** - *Ye'sh*'"².

He explained that Yaakov Shmuel is alluded to in the *Mishnah*, the Hebrew letters **י** and **ש**, the acronym for **שמואל** - Yaakov Shmuel, who most assuredly merited great blessings for his study of Torah. The youth danced all night in honor of the Torah and those who scrutinize its depths, further endearing the Torah and its centrality in the eyes of so many.

In my address, I implored those in attendance to take to heart accomplishments in the study of Torah as a true victory over our enemies. Over the many generations of exile it was the Torah that which kept us united, I stressed. What is the real victory? It is that the reward for the study of Torah that is received in the World to Come,

and those who push themselves to their limit in the tent of Torah will merit rewards that will outlive this physical existence - vanquishing enemies without and within.

Once, Yaakov Shmuel came to me to for words of encouragement for his endeavors; I took out Tractate Brachot and showed him the words of our Sages:³ "Resh Lakish said: Where do we learn that words of Torah are firmly held by one who toils extensively for it? Because it says, 'This is the Torah, when a man shall exhaust himself in the tent'⁴".

I then referred him to the Shach's introduction to his book. "I truly struggled much and occupied myself with nothing else, giving no sleep to my eyes for many years. Those who were not with me could not believe the painstaking efforts I went through combing through the Talmud and the halachic authorities." Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, wrote the praises of his teacher, the Gaon of Vilna: "He did not eat nor drink for days and nights, he did not sleep until his countenance darkened, he gave his soul for every halachic ruling which he wrote".

"Yaakov, you have merited a great deal for your perseverance!" I told him. He leaned over and kissed his Talmud lovingly.

One day I saw a grim expression on Yaakov's face and I inquired to the cause of his trepidation. Instead of an answer he burst into silent tears, saying "I have a serious ailment and must undergo treatment."

I placed a comforting hand on his shoulder and told him to return to his studies and that I would make sure all his arrangements were taken care of. Making a few calls, it was quickly revealed the gravity of his situation, and after much deliberation it was decided that he must undergo an operation for which I requested that a particular well-known surgeon conduct the procedure. I went about the task of preparing Yaakov and his family for what was in store.

It was Rosh Chodesh, and as was his custom, the Lelover Rebbe was holding a *Tisch*, an opportune time to get a blessing from the Rebbe. I took Yaakov and shared with the Rebbe his great accomplishments and commitment to Torah. The Rebbe slammed his hand on the table and began to shower him with blessings: in the merit of his scholastic achievements, he should be protected, happy and healthy.

We left strengthened and optimistic. A few days later we returned to the hospital for a series of tests, and to the great astonishment of the doctors, all the tests came back negative. It was as if the enemy had been completely vanquished. "**יש אלוקים**" - "Ye'sh Elokim" I said to the mystified doctors.

¹ Ukzin, 3:12.
²ש', (substance) numerically equivalent to 310. This is a recognized Rabbinic exegetic device called Gematria. The pleasure awaiting him who has made the study of the Torah his 'chief delight' and his meditation day and night' will be 310 times greater than any kind of earthly pleasure

³ Brachot 63b.
⁴ Bamidbar 19:14.