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**THE LIGHT, LIFE  
& LEGACY OF  
RABBI  
FORSHLAGER  
ZT"l**

Parshas Chukas



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## The Light

In this week's Parsha it says, "This is a Torah [of] a man who dies in a

tent” (Bamidbar, 19:14). Chazal say that we learn from this pasuk that Torah can only be acquired by someone who is willing to die over it (Shabbos 83b). The question is, why is this the only way to acquire Torah?

The explanation is as follows: Torah study and the pursuit of earthly pleasures are nonaligned. When an individual’s focus is entirely directed at pursuing material pleasure, it leaves little room for acquiring Torah knowledge. As the Rambam says “One should turn to Torah study and the pursuit of wisdom, because impure thoughts only arise in a heart empty of Torah” (Issurei Biah 22:21).

The deeper understanding of this is that both holy thoughts and immoral thoughts arise in one’s mind. Depending on the thought pursued, it will gain strength over the other thought and ultimately lead to an action; either positive or negative.

If one is to pursue a life full of Torah knowledge, one must separate themselves first from impure and materialistic thoughts. When one’s mind is filled with Torah knowledge, it has a special power of protection against evil thoughts. As stated in Gemara in Sotah, “Torah shields and protects”, (21a). Beyond its spiritual protection, it also protects the mind from impure thoughts since the mind cannot hold adequate space for both.

Furthermore, aside from guarding one’s mind from impure thoughts, one must be vigilant to guard one’s heart from becoming enslaved to earthly passions. The heart is the source of passion, and when the heart is directed at physical desires the mind gets pulled in as well.

One should avoid an excess of earthly pleasures including food and drink because that empowers his own evil inclination to become even stronger within his body. Chazal echoes this in many places. “The filling of the stomach is amongst the bad sins” (Brachos 32a). “The Yetzer Harah can only be found through food and drink” (Zohar Trumah 154:2). When strong physical desires are fed into, the Yetzer Harah has control over the body and holiness can’t find a place to exist. This is what Chazal meant when they said that Torah can only succeed in someone who is willing to sacrifice themselves-sacrifice their materialistic desires. When one is thus aligned with spirituality the Torah can have a long lasting hold.

The Gemara says something similar. “If a person eats like a wild beast who attacks and eats his food, Torah will succeed within him. And if he doesn’t, it won’t” (Eruvin 54a). A person must eat like a beast who eats its food as is without special preparations. This will allow an individual to eat purely for spiritual sustenance. Thus, illustrating the traits of a person who pursues spirituality in his heart and mind.

Toras Michoel Parshas Chukas

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## The Life

How worthy are the words of this Torah shared by Rav Forshlager who exemplified this message. He spent his life pursuing Torah in

a pure way, exempt from pursuing earthly pleasures that were not necessary for his daily sustenance.

Rav Forshlagers custom for many years was to eat just one small meal a day. His meal would often consist of dry, leftover challah from Shabbos dipped into some soup. Often times this meal was only eaten when his wife would place it in front of him. Otherwise, he would completely forget to eat. When asked, he couldn't remember if he ate or not. His food was purely there to sustain his learning.

His sister Genendel related an illustrative story. "For a long time, my brother Rav Forshlager would come visit us every Sunday. I would prepare a special cake for him, of which he would only eat a small piece. One day I asked him, 'Michael, do you like the cake?' He looked up at me with a puzzled expression on his face and said one word; 'Genendel?' as though to say 'I don't understand the question at all. What does "like" have anything to do with this cake'.

As aforementioned, Torah knowledge and piety endures when one makes space for it by limiting/removing oneself from earthly pleasures. Indeed, we see that Rav Forshlager's Torah has endured until today, decades after he is no longer in this world. May we merit to 'Liggen in lernen'- being immersed in learning - as his Talmid Rav Gifter once famously said.

Excerpt from Michael Be'achas, Bergman, B., (2013) pp 57-58.

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## The Legacy

With great honor and joy, we announce the publication of Toras Michoel on Vayikra, Bamidbar, and Devarim. With this volume, the monumental Toras Michoel al Hatorah is complete. We would like to take this opportunity to thank R' Bentzion Bergman for his dedicated work in publishing the seforim. These seforim are a beautiful and accessible collection of divrei torah based on the weekly parsha. Additionally, we would also like to thank the generous individuals who contributed towards the printing - and ultimate success of the seforim. The new seforim should be in stores starting next week.

There are currently several more projects in the works. When Chizuk Emuna - the shul Rabbi Forshlager taught Torah at voted to remove their mechitzah, he wrote a long response about the importance of the holiness in Klal Yisrael. This piece is now being developed for publication. In addition, the acclaimed Hebrew biography Michoel Be'achas, is slated to be re-printed in a new and expanded edition in honor of the Yahrtzeit.

Additional Update: We are excited to announce that there is a portable restroom available to suit the needs of visitors coming to Rabbi Forshlagers kever. The bathroom this month was sponsored by R' Duvid Freund. May he merit continued success. We are currently working on a more permanent solution and invite those who want to join in on this special venture to reach out using the contact

information as listed below.

The Address to the kever is:

B'nai Israel cemetery

3701 Southern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21206.

Rabbi Forshlagers resting place is a place where many thousands of people come to pour their hearts out and find salvation. If you have experienced a personal yeshuah that you would like to share, please email [RabbiForshlagerFoundation.com](mailto:RabbiForshlagerFoundation.com) or call 845-263-0781. The stories will be publicized in the future l"yh.

For more information visit [RabbiForshlager.com](http://RabbiForshlager.com)



**Ohr Michael**

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