

בס"ד

דברי תורה ד'צבי אליהו  
**DIVREI TORAH**

בראשית

Bereishis

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## Sweetness

Rabbi Adam Singer

We grow through our efforts almost as much as we grow through our successes. This is not a novel concept. We've probably heard it before in one form or another. Sometimes it seems that all of our resolutions from last year were pushed to the corner of some drawer and never looked at again. Why should we try to grow again this year when we so often seem to miss the mark? Answer: the fruits of efforts may come, even if not in the quantity, frequency, and proximity we had hoped for. There is deep wisdom in this which deserves a clearer understanding.

The Torah tells us that on the third day of creation, G-d made vegetation including all of the trees and plants of the world. The following verse describes G-d's command to the earth to produce vegetation, "G-d said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, herbage, scattering seed *fruit tree making fruit* according to its species that has its seed within it on the earth, and it was so." (Bereishis 1:11). The words from this verse "*fruit tree making fruit*" have a beautiful depth which I would like to share.

Why does the Torah tell us that a fruit tree makes fruit? Isn't it obvious that a fruit tree makes fruit? Rashi (11<sup>th</sup> century) explains that the Torah's repetition of the word "fruit" is an allusion that the "fruit tree" was not referring to a tree which produces fruit, but rather to a tree that was supposed to *be* fruit. G-d commanded the earth to produce a tree whose bark, branches, leaves, and roots all tasted like fruit. Imagine tearing off an apple from an apple tree and then going

back to eat the stem, branches, and leaves where the fruit came from! That was G-d's command to the earth: "create a *fruit-tree*."

The earth couldn't create a *fruit-tree*, but it did succeed, if only partially. Even though it failed at creating a fruit-tree, it succeeded in bearing fruit. The bark and wood of the tree may taste like, well, bark and wood. The leaves may be tasteless, but with all of the efforts to create a fruit-tree, the earth was still expressed its sweetness: fruit. And so we are left with the ultimate metaphor for our lives and new year's resolutions: we are asked by G-d to become a complete expression of sweetness. Each of us is expected to achieve nothing short of perfection: to live with perfect joy in every situation in our lives, to be a source of blessing to all who meet us, and to wholly fulfill every mitzvah G-d has commanded us. These are very lofty expectations, and I dare say that few of us will really hit the mark all the time, but we are not allowed to stop trying. The tree is our metaphor. Even if our actions will sometimes be bland, unhelpful, or even complete errors, we will ultimately produce fruit. With all of the mistakes and all of the neglected resolutions, we can still produce thoughts, feelings, and actions which are sweet and benefit our world.

Take another look at your resolutions. If you have not made any, consider something small; it should be something small, something helpful to you, to G-d, and/or to other people. Take a deep breath and then take one more stab at becoming the perfect blessing G-d made you to be. It may not work out entirely, but with good effort, and good Torah, it will be sweet.

May we all merit a clear vision of the fruits which G-d asks from us, the strength to produce them, the wisdom to recognize them and a happy, sweet and healthy new year. GOOD SHABBOS!!!

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*It used to be only death and taxes.  
Now, of course, there's shipping and  
handling, too.*

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## **Shabbos: A Marriage Made in Heaven**

Yaakov Slatus

“G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because He abstained from all the work which G-d created to make” (Bereishis 2:3).

The Shabbos is unique in that it is not merely a mitzvah (commandment) that we observe, but it is a day that stands out, imbued with holiness and the blessings of Hashem. Furthermore, the verses in Exodus (31:16-17) reveal that Shabbos is of even greater significance. It is a “sign” of the special relationship the Jewish people have with their Creator. The Talmud (tractate Shabbos) relates that Hashem says “I have a special gift in My treasure house, and I wish to give it to my nation the Jewish people; that is the gift of Shabbos.” The Chofetz Chaim explains that the “sign” of Shabbos is like the wedding ring a husband gives to his wife. Though there may be difficult times in a marriage, a woman never removes the ring. The only time she takes off the ring is if the marriage

ceases to exist. This, the Chofetz Chaim explains, is what the Shabbos is. Shabbos is the “ring” G-d has given the Jewish people which forms an everlasting bond of love. If, G-d forbid, the “ring” is removed, i.e., the Shabbos ceases to be observed, the result is not just the lack of a mitzvah, but we have lost this special relationship with our Creator.

There was once a Rabbi who came to Miami Beach, Florida, on the yahrteit of the Chofetz Chaim, to relate stories of his greatness. The Rabbi was hesitant to relate one particular story since he did not know the ending, but he decided to relate it anyway. The story is as follows:

*It was discovered that a boy in the yeshiva of the Chofetz Chaim was smoking on Shabbos. The yeshiva board decided to expel the boy. Before he was to leave the yeshiva, the Chofetz Chaim asked to see him. The boy entered the room of the Chofetz Chaim, and emerged a short while later a changed individual, and he never desecrated the Shabbos again.*

At the conclusion of the story, the Rabbi lamented the fact that he did not know what the Chofetz Chaim had said to the youth; if he knew, he could perhaps inspire others – with that message – in their observance of Shabbos.

As the crowd dispersed after the speech, the Rabbi noticed an elderly man who had remained in his seat. “How do you know that story?” he asked.

“Is something wrong?” asked the Rabbi.

The man replied “I was that boy.”

“What was it the Chofetz Chaim said to you?” asked the shocked Rabbi.

The man replied, “He took my hands and closed his eyes. When he opened them, they were full of tears and he said to me three words ‘Shabbos, heilige Shabbos’ (Shabbos, holy Shabbos)”.

That boy was able to sense from the few words of the Chofetz Chaim what Shabbos really means to each and every Jew.

It is really difficult to part with the joy and beauty of Succos and Simchas Torah; days that are full of holiness and clinging to Hashem through the joy of His Torah. Yet there is something special G-d has given us every week to retain that joy and our feeling of closeness to Him. It is His gift of love, His “ring” of everlasting wedlock with his children, the Jewish people. It is the gift of Shabbos.