

Parashas  
Emor

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י"ט אייר תשפ"ה

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קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ

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# טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

## טיב הפרשה

קבלת התורה בכל השנה

Receiving the Torah all year

## טיב המערכת

Who decreed this matter

מי גזר על הדבר

There are many wings in the king's palace, and in each wing there are many servants doing their work. Each wing has one supervisor who oversees them and ensures everything is done in the best possible way. Over all the supervisors there is a general manager, and above him, of course, stands the king himself in all his glory. If one of the supervisors responsible for the workers' tasks comes and asks a worker to install a new shelf, of course the worker must do what he was asked. And if the supervisor tells him that the request came from the general manager, then certainly the worker will hurry even more to fulfill his duty. But if he hears that the request came from the king himself, then he will immediately drop all his other activities and go at once to install the requested shelf. Not only that, but he will do everything with utmost perfection, and all of it with tremendous joy.

Last week, we focused here on Rashi's holy commentary, where he explained the verse "I am Hashem" – "Faithful to give reward." And now, in our parsha this week, regarding the mitzvah of the prohibition of "Nosar" (leftover sacrificial meat), Rashi explains: "I am Hashem" – "Know who decreed this matter, and do not treat it lightly." Of course, we know that both explanations apply to all commandments, and we must infer from one mitzvah to another and understand on our own: it is Hashem Yisbarach Who decreed all the commandments, and He Yisbarach, is destined to give reward for all of them. But here, in the prohibition of *Nosar*, Rashi explains that all this is said only about the *intention* of leaving over sacrificial meat—not the actual *eating* of it. Therefore, it is fitting that specifically here Rashi interprets: "I am Hashem – know who decreed this matter, and do not treat it lightly," so that we understand that even for a mere thought, we must remember "who decreed this matter," and then our attitude will match accordingly.

Let us imagine ourselves as that servant in the king's palace, who upon hearing that the king himself is asking him to do something—he performs it joyfully and eagerly. So too, if we would always remind ourselves before every mitzvah "Who decreed this matter," then the performance of the mitzvah would also be entirely different—more complete, more beautiful, with thoughtful intention, and most importantly—with tremendous joy over the privilege we have been granted "to fulfill the will of our Creator."

וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת מיום הביאתכם את עמר התנופה שבע שבתות תמימות תהיינה: עד ממחרת השבת השביעת תספרו חמשים יום והקרבתם מנחה חדשה ליהוה: מושבתים תביאו לחם תנופה שתיים שני עשרונים סלת תהיינה חמץ תאפינה בכורים ליהוה: (כג:טו-יז)

yad eht refta yad eht morf sevlesruoy rof tnuoc llahs uoY ,gnivaw fo remo eht gnirb uoy nehW yad eht morf ,tser fo eht refta yad eht lItinU .etelpmoc eb llahs yeht ,skeew neves reffo llahs uoy dna ,syad yftfi tnuoc llahs uoy keew htneves secalp delttes ruoy morF .mehsaH ot gnireffo-laem wen a owt fo edam sevaol owt ,notiavele fo daerb gnirb llahs uoy dekab eb llahs yeht ,ruofl enfi eb llahs yeht ,shahpe-htnet (71-51:32) .mehsaH ot stiurf tsrfi ,denevaeL

This mitzvah of *Sefiras HaOmer* we learn from the Torah in its proper time and season—during the days of the counting themselves. Therefore, one cannot pass over these sacred *posukim* without deeply considering the essence of this mitzvah and its purpose, so that we may serve our Creator with the proper *avodah* for this time, and merit that this practice leaves an impression upon us, enabling us to attain abundant blessing with the coming chag of the Giving of the Torah.

Behold, in the *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 306), he elaborates at length regarding this mitzvah, and these are his words: "From the roots of the mitzvah, on the level of the simple understanding, is that the essence of the Jewish people is nothing other than the Torah... and it is the primary purpose and the reason that they were redeemed and left Egypt—so that they would receive the Torah at Sinai and fulfill it... Therefore... we were commanded to count from the day after the chag of Pesach until the day of the giving of the Torah, in order to express in our souls the great longing for the glorious day, which is so desired by our hearts, like a servant who longs for shade [as the verse states in *Iyov* 7:2, explained by Rashi there: like a servant who toils all day and yearns and desires for the evening shade to come], and he constantly counts when the desired time will arrive when he will go free. For the counting shows a person that all his hope and desire is to reach that time." Thus far are his holy words.

The *Chinuch* explains in his golden language that the entire idea of the Counting of the Omer is the immense longing for the *Receiving of the Torah*, for the entire purpose of the Exodus from Egypt was this—that ultimately תעבדון את האלקים על ההר 'you shall serve G-d on this mountain' (Shemos 3:12). And

from his words we learn that each and every year, the Jewish people merit anew the *Receiving of the Torah*, for since this mitzvah was given for all generations, its purpose must also be for all generations.

And words such as these we also find in the holy book *Avodas Yisrael* by the holy Maggid of Kozhnitz, and these are his words: *ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני* - 'On this day they came to the wilderness of Sinai' (*Shemos 19:1*), and *Rashi explains: It did not need to write 'on this day,' but rather to teach that the words of Torah should be as new to you as if they were given today. It appears to hint with his holy words that in truth, in each and every year, throughout all generations, that very matter which occurred in those days is revealed anew. For example, in the days of Pesach, when they left Egypt, so too in every year, there are souls among Israel who leave Egypt. And also in this month, since they drew near to Mount Sinai, it is revealed again that one can draw himself close to HaKadosh Baruch Hu and receive the Torah and bring himself near before Mount Sinai.*" Thus ends his holy words.

Now then, let the children of G-d come and say: If these matters are true, why have we not merited to feel it? Have we not, for many years now, merited to celebrate this holy chag, and yet we have not merited to feel the light of Torah renewed within us?

We find an answer to this in the Gemara (*Shabbos 88a*), which tells of the first *Kabbalas HaTorah*: "Rabbi Elazar said: At the moment when Israel preceded 'we will do' to 'we will hear', a heavenly voice emerged and said to them: Who revealed to My children this secret that the ministering angels use? As it is written (*Tehillim 103:20*), *ברכו ה' מלאכיו גברי כח עשי דברו לשמע*, 'Bless Hashem, His angels, mighty in strength, who do His word, to obey the voice of His word'—first to do, and then to hear." Thus far the Gemara.

To understand the intent of the Gemara, we will briefly mention what is brought in the words *Chazal* in other

places (see *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, chapter 41), regarding how HaKadosh Baruch Hu went around to the nations of the world to persuade them to accept the Torah. As it is told there, the nations refused, for each nation found in the Torah a commandment which, due to its evil nature, was difficult for it to fulfill. The nations themselves suggested to HaKadosh Baruch Hu that He give the Torah to Israel—[perhaps due to their hatred and fear of Israel, as mentioned in the Song at the Sea—and they wished for Israel to perish by accepting the Torah and then not fulfilling it.] Then, indeed, HaKadosh Baruch Hu appeared to the *Bnei Yisrael* and requested to give them the Torah.

Following this event, we can understand the intention of Israel in their statement, "We will do and we will hear", as a response to the argument of the nations who rejected the Torah on the grounds that it was impossible to fulfill. Israel revealed thereby that the Torah contains an unnatural power—it is that which gives man strength and courage to fulfill it even under superhuman conditions. However, one must first accept its yoke; and then, once he enters into the domain of Torah, the Torah will grant him supernatural abilities to fulfill it.

According to this, the declaration "We will do" was the acceptance of the yoke of Torah, and "We will hear" was the result of that acceptance. And this matter was a "secret" that had not been revealed to those below, in order to test whether they would accept the Torah based on trust in their Creator or not. The nations of the world did not pass this test, but Israel, who were already accustomed to miracles, overcame their natural inclinations and accepted the Torah out of faith in their Creator, that He would perform miracles for them so that they could fulfill it. This explains well the expression of HaKadosh Baruch Hu — "the language that ministering angels use," for the ministering angels indeed *function* under a supernatural order.

What emerges from all this is that the Torah was not given except through effort, and had Israel not strengthened

their hearts to receive it, the Torah would not have been fit to endure with them. And now we may say: just as it was then, so it is now. Each year on the chag of Shavuot, a portion of the light of Torah is assigned to every person. However, so long as one does not make himself a vessel to receive it—meaning, he does not devote himself to receive it—then the portion assigned to him is considered unnatural relative to his current state. Therefore, he does not merit for it to be absorbed within his being. But one who wishes to make himself a proper vessel to receive blessing must reveal in these days *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) for Torah—meaning, to sanctify and increase the time he devotes to Torah, and to toil to understand the depths of its sayings. Then, even if at first it appears difficult, after some time he will merit to feel its sweet and wondrous lights.

And there is support for our words from what the Torah says after the commandment of counting the Omer: "And you shall bring a new grain-offering to Hashem... from your dwelling places you shall bring bread of waving..." For the word "you shall bring" (*והקרבתם*) alludes to drawing near and *mesirus nefesh* (devotion), for after one gives his soul over to Torah, he will merit that the Torah becomes for him a "new offering" "to Hashem"—meaning, given to Israel from HaKadosh Baruch Hu. And what is this *mesirus nefesh*? On this the Torah says "from your dwelling places"—from wherever and whatever level you may be, you can achieve this by "bringing bread"—drawing forth sustenance, and there is no bread except Torah, as it is written (*Mishlei 9:5*), *לבו לחמו* - 'Come, eat of My bread'; "waving"—an acronym of "tenu peh" ("give your mouth"), meaning, that you should subdue your mouth to sanctify it for Heaven, and in these days increase your Torah study beyond your usual measure. For then it shall be fulfilled in you (*Mishlei 16:26*): *נפש עמל עמלה לו כי אכף עליו פיהו* - 'The soul of the laborer labors for him, for his mouth urges him on.'

**'A messenger at the door'**  
**'שליח עד הפתח'**

On Purim, I wanted to send Mishloach Manos from Ramat Aleph in Beit Shemesh to Ramat Dalet. On a regular day, that's a half-hour bus ride, but on Purim it can take up to two hours with all the traffic jams. I asked a friend to do me a favor and take it with his car, and he agreed, but I could see on his face that he wasn't too happy with the request.

I felt that it wasn't right on Purim to send Mishloach Manos at the expense of someone else's discomfort, and I asked Hashem for a solution to this matter. Not a second passed, and I saw the very person I had wanted to send the Mishloach Manos to standing right outside my building! I quickly ran and gave him the Mishloach Manos with joy and gratitude to Hashem for His amazing solutions!

מ.ה.

**'Reward for restraint'**  
**'שכר על הפרישה'**

You know how it goes when you're sitting in shul between Mincha and Maariv, and a speaker gets up to give a *dvar Torah*—but he does not know how to stop on time?!

Well, that's exactly what happened to us on the chag. The speaker had prepared a one-hour *drasha* instead of twenty minutes, and he had already gone over by half an hour and still had plenty more to say. He was trying to shorten it, but was not stopping, and it was uncomfortable to tell such a distinguished man that it was already time for the Yom Tov meal (*seudas chag*), and there were guests, and people needed to daven and get home.

Personally, I sat and listened, but the clock was stressing me out, and I could see that even the gabbai was at a loss. But what happened next could not have been planned any better.

In the row in front of me sat a young man with special needs who, from time to time, blurts out unclear words loudly into the air—which does not bother the regular congregants who know and are used to him. But suddenly, in the middle of the overlong *drasha*, he shouted something that sounded like "How much longer?!" The speaker, who did not know him, got flustered and said, "I'm finishing soon!" Two minutes later, the young man blurted out another word, and the speaker again apologized and said he was about to finish. One more word—and the speaker wrapped up the *drasha*.

In my heart, I laughed, and I saw the gabbai quietly laughing too, happy about the *hashgacha pratit* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu brought about a natural way to stop the speaker—who likely would have continued for quite a while longer and caused even more burden on the congregation (*tircha d'tzibbura*) than he already had.

כ.ה.

**Torah Study Activates the Mitzvah One Learns**

מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרְאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָיו... אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' מִקְרְאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם (כג:ב,ד)

***These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, these are My appointed festivals... These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at their appointed times (23:2–4).***

Commentators say this *pasuk* hints at the profound power of *Kerias haTorah*, teaching that "the reading awakens the time," meaning that such readings and Torah study spiritually activate the essence of what is being read. Thus, *Chazal* taught (*Menachos* 110a) that "one who studies the laws of a burnt-offering is considered as if he offered a burnt-offering."

In our *parashah* too, reading about the *mo'adim* and *regalim* arouses their holiness. In some communities, during this holy Shabbos, they recited the stanza *Bo'i Beshalom* [in *Lecha Dodi*] differently, saying "berinah, besimchah, uvetzahalah," akin to what is said on the Shabbos of *Yamim Tovim*, because the *Kerias haTorah* evokes the sanctity and joy of the *Chagim* on the Shabbos.

Thus, the *pasuk* teaches: *The festivals of Hashem, which you shall read (תִּקְרְאוּ) as holy convocations, these are My appointed festivals*—by reading about them in *Kerias haTorah*, their essence and sanctity are awakened.

The continuation of the *pasuk* emphasizes the idea again: *These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, holy convocations, which you shall read at their appointed times*—signifying that by reading them and studying about them in their appointed times, we reinforce their power and essence.

This last idea is echoed in the Gemara (*Megillah* 32b), which derives from the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 23:44) - וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - *Moshe spoke of the appointed festivals of Hashem to Bnei Yisrael*, that Moshe mandated that we read about each *chag* when it comes in *Kerias haTorah*. And the Gemara adds, "Moshe established for Yisrael that they should inquire and teach the matters of the day, the halachos of Pesach on Pesach, the *halachos* of Shavuos on Shavuos, the halachos of Sukkos on Sukkos."

In a small village near the famed city of Volozhin, the local *baal koreh* (Torah reader) passed away, leaving the community without anyone to fulfill this vital role. The village, home to a small Jewish community with only one shul, urgently needed a skilled Torah reader.

The *shul's gabbai'im* searched tirelessly for a suitable candidate to take on this esteemed responsibility, but to no avail. Desperate, they approached each community member individually, hoping to find someone capable of reading the Torah.

In their search, they discovered a respected villager, a devout and upright man who had previously served as a *baal koreh* in another town and was well-versed in the nuances of Torah reading. However, to their dismay, the man declined the role, citing the difficulty of preparing the Torah readings as his reason.

The *gabbai'im* pleaded with him, explaining the great necessity of his service to the community. Yet, he refused, stating that the labor-intensive preparation was too taxing for him.

The holy Zohar indeed states (*Parashas Vayakhel*, vol. 2, 206b) that it is forbidden for a *baal koreh* to read the Torah without prior preparation. As it states there:

"Whoever ascends to read from the Torah should prepare those words beforehand in his home; if not, he should not read from the Torah. From where do we learn this? From where do we know this? For the *pasuk* says of the time before the Torah was heard by the holy nation, (לְיוֹן 28:27) - אָז רָאָה וַיְסַפֵּר הַכִּינֹה וְגַם תִּקְרָה, - Then He saw and recounted it, he prepared it and also examined it. And afterward, it says (ibid. 28:28), - וַיֹּאמֶר | נִאֲדָם הוּא יִרְאֵת אֲדֹנָי הִיא חֵכְמָה - And He said to man, behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, etc.

Faced with no alternative, the *gabbai'im* and the community leaders brought their dilemma to the great Rav Chaim of Volozhin *zt"l*, known for his dedication to the needs of both the community and individuals. They asked if he could intervene and persuade the reluctant candidate to accept the role of *baal koreh*.

Rav Chaim agreed. When the man next came to Volozhin and entered *shul* for *Maariv*, Rav

Chaim requested to speak to him. The villager, honored by the invitation, accompanied the Rav to his home. During their conversation, Rav Chaim told the man an extraordinary story, urging him to listen closely and draw a meaningful lesson from it.

Rav Chaim of Volozhin began his story: "In my youth, there was a *baal koreh* in our town who was an unlearned man, a simple Jew with little knowledge of Torah or even basic halachah. Yet, he cherished his role as a *baal koreh* and devoted himself to it with great enthusiasm.

While he didn't understand much of what he was reading—being a complete ignoramus—he knew the *trop* (cantillation notes) perfectly and practiced diligently each week. His love for the task and his meticulous preparation resulted in a reading that was exemplary. The entire *kehillah* praised and admired his Torah reading.

Privately, I often wondered: What would become of this *baal koreh* after his passing? On the one hand, he had little Torah knowledge and was likely guilty of numerous halachic violations. Yet, on the other hand, his Torah reading was filled with love and sweetness, a melody of devotion to Hashem. When his time came, he passed away and ascended to the World of Truth. Shortly thereafter, I had a dream where I saw this *baal koreh* running frantically, trying to escape from terrifying destructive angels chasing after him. These angels—created by his sins—were far faster than him and soon surrounded him, roaring with dreadful voices, ready to devour him.

*But just as they closed in, a miraculous sight appeared: a bimah of fire descended from Heaven, landing between the baal koreh and the angels. The moment the angels saw the fiery bimah, they fled in all directions, leaving him unharmed.*

From this dream, I understood the profound teaching of Chazal (*Sotah* 21a), that Torah protects and saves—both in this world and the next. The Gemara states:

"Rav Menachem bar Yossi expounded, כִּי נִרְמָזוּ, וְתוֹרָה אֹר - *For the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is light* (*Mishlei* 6:23). The *pasuk* compares a mitzvah to a lamp and the Torah to light. Just as a lamp provides temporary protection, so too, a mitzvah only protects temporarily. But just as light provides constant illumination, so too, the Torah offers eternal protection. As the previous *pasuk* says (*ibid.* 22), בְּהַתְּהַלֵּךְ תִּנְחָה אֶתְךָ בְּשֶׁבֶר תִּשְׁמֵר - *When you walk, it shall guide you in this world; when you lie down, it shall guard you in death; and when you awaken, it shall speak with you in the World to Come.*

"This is like a man walking in darkness, fearing thorns, pits, wild beasts, and robbers, unsure of his path. He came across a torch of fire and was saved from the thorns and pits, but he was still afraid of beasts or robbers and did not know which way to go. When dawn breaks, he is saved from beasts and robbers but still does not know which way to go. Upon reaching a crossroads, he is saved from them all."

Thus, Torah is a light that shields and saves a person at every stage of life and even after death.

The dream revealed that the unlearned *baal koreh*, despite creating countless destructive angels through his sins, was ultimately shielded and saved by the Torah that he lovingly read every Shabbos in the shul. His huge dedication and great love for Torah reading earned him this protection. This story moved the reluctant man deeply. Upon returning to his town, he joyfully informed the *gabbai'im* that he had decided to accept the honored position of *baal koreh* and served faithfully in this role for many years."

A Jewish man approached the renowned tzaddik Rav Avigdor Miller, zt"l, tearfully recounting a grim diagnosis given to him by doctors. He had been afflicted with the dreaded disease, which was ravaging his body and consuming his vitality. In deep pain, he sought Rav Miller's guidance and a remedy for his dire situation.

Rav Miller listened carefully and then asked, "Tell me, dear Jew, are you careful not to speak during *tefillah* and *Kerias haTorah*?"

"Yes!" the man replied with conviction. "I have always been scrupulous about this prohibition. I never speak during prayer or the Torah reading."

"And what about the people around you in your *shul*?" Rav Miller pressed.

The man sighed heavily and admitted, "In my *shul*, unfortunately, many are not careful. It pains me to see people chatting freely during the *davening* and Torah reading."

Rav Miller responded firmly: "If that is the case, how can your prayers ascend to Heaven? How can they reach the Throne of Glory to transform judgment into mercy? You should surely know that in a *shul* where people talk during prayer and Torah reading, the gates of Heaven are sealed shut! Even if you are not guilty of this grave sin, the entire *shul's* prayers are blocked.

"You have two options: Either work to change the situation in your *shul*, ensuring that no one speaks during these times—a practice that is a well-known and effective *segulah* for longevity, as hinted by the acronym of the word *seivah* (old age): שתיקה יפה בשעה קריאת התורה is praiseworthy during the Torah reading, and שתיקה יפה בשעת התפילה—silence is praiseworthy during prayer.

"If you cannot change the situation, it is better for you to leave that *shul* and pray in one where no one talks during prayer and Torah reading. In this way, your prayers will ascend and be accepted with mercy and favor, bringing salvation and healing."

The man heeded Rav Miller's advice and switched to a different *shul* known for its strict observance of silence during prayers and Torah reading. To everyone's astonishment, he experienced a miraculous recovery in a short time. His illness completely disappeared, and he returned to full health—a testament to the profound power of maintaining the sanctity of prayer.

As many *sefarim* mention, the Zohar holy repeatedly warns about the severity of speaking in the *shul*. In *Parashas Terumah* (2:131b) the Zohar writes: "One who speaks mundane words in the *shul*, woe to him, for he demonstrates separation

from Hashem. Woe to him, for he diminishes faith. Woe to him, for he has no portion in Elokei Yisrael. He shows that he has no God, and God is not found in him, and he has no portion in Him, and he does not fear Him, and he brings calamity on the *tikkun* of the highest above. For at the time when Yisrael arrange songs and praises and the order of *tefillah*, three camps of supernal angels gather, etc."

I remember from my youth when I accompanied my father and teacher, zt"l, to *Shacharis* on Shabbos at the *shul* where he regularly prayed; during the Torah reading, a serious question arose about the validity of the sefer Torah. The *gabbai'im* and the *koreh* were confused and unsure how to proceed—whether the sefer needed to be replaced with another from the *aron*.

The *beis midrash* was tumultuous. Several outstanding *talmidei chachamim* present began to debate the halachah, each proposing a different view, yet they could not reach a conclusive decision. Throughout, my father stood silently on the side, as was his custom, not intervening at all. Eventually, the *gabbai* asked my father's opinion.

Immediately, my father approached the bookshelf, took out the Mishnah Berurah, opened it directly to the relevant section, and showed them explicit and clear guidance precisely on this question. Everything was resolved, and peace was restored.

*What struck me more than the clarity of his halachic knowledge was the refinement of his character. Despite knowing the halachah clearly, he refrained from intervening until his opinion was sought. This behavior left an indelible impression on me.*

My father always stood throughout the Torah reading until his final days, even in his old age and frailty, as ruled in the Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 141:1); see there.

It is also worth mentioning my father's admirable *minhag* of always carrying the holy Kitzur Shulchan Aruch with him. Whenever he had a few free moments, whether while waiting at a *bris milah* or in similar situations, even for just a few brief minutes, he would immediately take out the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and study it. Despite his renowned greatness in Torah, he found this greatly beneficial.

Once, when he needed to travel to the hospital for urgent surgery, he requested that they bring him the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* so he could study and review the relevant *halachos*.

*He often quoted the haskamos to the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, which referenced the pasuk (Rus 2:4), וְהָיָה בֹּאֵזְרָא - And behold, Boaz came from Beis Lechem and said to the reapers (קוֹצְרֵי) Hashem be with you. הקוצרים can mean those who are brief (קצר), hinting that Hashem is with those who study the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch. This aligns with the teaching in Sanhedrin (93b), - וְהָיָה עִמּוֹ - And Hashem was with him (Shmuel I 16:18)—this means the halachah follows him in all cases.»*

Let us all strengthen ourselves in this great mitzvah of *kerias Hatorah*, refraining entirely from speaking during the reading—even between *aliyos*. Through this, we will merit the blessing of the holy Torah (*Mishlei* 3:16), אֶרְךָ יָמִים בְּיַמִּינָהּ בְּשֵׂמֹאלָהּ עֲשֵׂר וְנִבְדָּד - *Length of days is in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor, Amen.*