

Sheva Brachos for Danny and Chloe Miller
December 23, 2025
KTM
Dr. Jesse Hefter

It brings me great pleasure to share some words of Torah this evening in honor of our Chossen and Kallah, Danny and Chloe. Dan and I go way back, as do Brenda and I, and Sue and Chuck.

I want to share a piece of a Mishna in Pirkey Avos that I will guess is well-known to many.

The Mishna states – Ayzehu ashir – who is wealthy? The answer given is HaSameach B'Chelko – the individual who is satisfied with their portion. In other words, regardless of what life throws at us, the challenges and the heartaches, the Torah reminds us to “keep the faith”.

In passing, I will note that Dan has a penchant for knowing stuff about lots of things. In this particular case, he might add (immediately) and the phrase “keep the faith, baby” is attributed to Adam Clayton Powell Jr, the American politician and Baptist pastor who represented Harlem in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1945 to 1971.

The Mishna is telling us that whatever Chelek, portion, that God provides to us is precious, as it is our portion. There is no intermediary, no messenger. The situations that confront all of us during our lives can be difficult, really difficult. But our Masora, our tradition, reminds us to “keep the faith” – i.e., to believe that things can get better.

I want to share a short story attributed to Reb Nachman of Breslav that illustrates the extent to which our portion in life is ours and the optimism and happiness that we must have even in the face of challenges.

He tells the story of a very poor man who earned a living by digging up clay and selling it. One day, while digging, he discovered a precious stone which was obviously worth a great deal of money. Since he had no idea how much it was worth, he brought it to an expert for an appraisal.

The expert told him that no one in their area could assess the gem's value, so the man should travel to London, the capital, and possibly sell it there.

The man was so poor that he could not afford to make the journey. He sold everything he had and went house to house collecting funds for the trip. Finally, he had enough to get to the seaport.

He wished to board a ship but had no funds. He went to the ship's captain and showed him the jewel. Immediately, the captain welcomed him aboard with honor, assuming he was a very trustworthy person. He provided the poor man a first-class cabin and treated him like a wealthy individual.

The poor man could see the sea from his cabin and sat near his room's window during the voyage, looking at the gem and the sea and rejoicing about his good fortune. At mealtimes, he would take the gem with him, since eating while looking at it put him in great spirits.

One day, he sat down to eat with the gem in front of him on the table, and after eating, he dozed off. Meanwhile, the waiter came by, removed the tablecloth, and shook it out along with the meal crumbs and gem into the ocean. When the poor man awoke and realized what had happened, he became very upset. What was he to do now? The captain was also known as a ruthless man and might kill him for his fare on the ship.

With no other options, the man continued to act happy, as if nothing had happened. The captain would come by daily to speak with him, and this particular day, the man radiated even more happiness so that the captain would not suspect anything had happened.

The captain told him that he wanted to purchase a large quantity of wheat and sell it in London for a significant profit. He continued, saying he was afraid someone might accuse him of stealing from the King's treasury. So, the captain told the poor man that he would arrange for the wheat to be bought in the poor man's name. And the captain concluded – I will pay you well for your trouble.

The poor man agreed. As soon as the ship arrived in London, the captain became ill and died. The entire quantity of wheat was in the name of the poor man, and it was worth many times more than the gem.

Reb Nachman concluded the following: "The gem did not belong to the poor man, and the proof is that he did not keep it. The wheat, however, did belong to him, and the proof is that he kept it. But he got what he deserved only because he remained happy – he was "happy with his portion". And at that moment, his portion (the gem) no longer existed. He had faith.

We are privileged tonight to be in the presence of royalty – our chosen and kallah, Dan and Chloe. We bless them with infinite happiness. We bless them with the joy that comes from looking at your life partner and realizing the incredible portion/Chelek that each of you has been given. We bless you with a paraphrase of the last verse of Birchas Kohanim: first, that you will always recognize the personal attention that HaShem bestows upon both of you and, second, that HaShem give both of you peace/Shalom. Finally, that your home will be a Bayis Ne-eman – a Jewish home filled with Emunah – faith; faith in the Ribbono Shel Olam and faith in your love and dedication to each other. Mazel tov!