

D'var Torah:

Office of The
CHIEF RABBI

Shavuot

Oil, water, wine and milk are like Torah - how?



Video transcript: In our tradition, Torah is compared to four different types of liquids. Let us focus on this in anticipation of the festival of Shavuot through which we will dedicate ourselves to the study of Torah and celebrate Zman Matan Torateinu, the season of the giving of Torah.

The prophet Isaiah (55:1) compares Torah to water and he declares,
"Hoi kol tzamei lechu lamayim." - "Let all those who are thirsty come for water."

Here the prophet wants us to know that our souls have a natural thirst for Torah which is just like water

In this spirit, Rabbi Akiva in the Gemara Masechet Brachot taught that just as fish cannot live on dry land, so too the Jewish nation cannot survive without Torah in our lives.

The Sifri tells us that Torah is compared to wine. Its message is that just as wine gladdens the heart, so too Torah always brings great

simcha, much rejoicing in our lives. In addition, wine matures and gets better as time goes on and so too we are discovering today that the Torah is more relevant in our fast moving sophisticated and creative 21st Century than it has ever been before, and that is certainly something to rejoice about.

The Midrash Tanchuma tells us that Torah can be compared to oil, and its message is that just like the more than one crushes the olives, the better the quality of the oil will be, so too, the more we are engaged within our Torah study, the deeper our knowledge will become and the greater will be our appreciation of it.

And finally the Gemara in Masechet Taanit compares Torah to milk. In the same way as milk cannot be preserved very well in expensive vessels such as gold and silver vessels, and is best preserved in cheap cartons, so too Torah stays within the hearts and minds of those who are humble. Where there is arrogance, there is less Torah study and appreciation. So therefore, in anticipation of the festival of Shavuot, let us learn the lessons of these four liquids and let us make the most of the greatest gift on earth that has ever been given, which is the Torah for us to study and to enjoy.

I wish you all chag sameach.

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