

Carob Midrash

From: Uri Orbach, "Donkeys and carobs", Sages for the ages.

Once upon a time there was a pious man whose name was Honi. Honi came from a family of people who could receive God's mercy when they prayed for rain and whose prayers to God in general were always answered.

One day, Honi was going along the road. He saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him: "what are you doing?" The man answered: "planting a carob tree". Honi answered: "this I can see". I wanted to ask you why are you planting a carob tree?" "I didn't get your question" said the man "what do you mean by 'why do I plant a carob tree'"? Honi answered: "I will ask the question in another way. How many years does it take to bear fruit?" The man thought and said: "many years. Sometimes it can take seventy years until it bears fruits" "Oh, I can see we are making progress", answered Honi, "and do you think you will still be around in seventy years to enjoy the fruits?" "No way. I myself am already forty eight, I am not a child, I will never reach that age". "So why waste efforts? If in any case you will not enjoy the fruits, why are you investing efforts?" The man answered: "look Mr. Honi, my head doesn't think like yours. With all due respect, I don't make a circle and ... a carob tree grows. I know that I have to make efforts in order to get fruits". Honi started thinking about the words of the man, and the man continued: "when I was born I enjoyed the carob trees my ancestors planted for me, so I plant trees for the next generations. Everyone leaves something behind for the next generations. I found a world with carob trees and my grandchildren, will also find a world of carobs."

Honi went on thinking, because he loved to think. He set near a rock and fell asleep. His thoughts were deep as was his sleep. Workers walked by and moved the rock so Honi couldn't be seen by people walking there.

His sleep was very deep and long. A rock formation rose around him, he became hidden, and he slept for seventy years. When he rose, he saw a man, whose face was familiar to him, picking fruit from the tree. Honi said to him, "sorry sir, what are you doing?"

The man answered: "picking fruit from the tree".

"This I can see", answered Honi. "I wanted to ask if you are the one who planted this tree and already pick fruits?"

The man smiled and said to him, "No my grandfather did, I think you are a bit confused. A carob tree cannot grow in one day. I didn't plant this tree".

Honi asked then: "so who planted the tree?"

"My grandfather, of blessed memory planted this carob tree", the man answered. "the old people in the village say that I look exactly like my grandfather. But he planted this tree and all the trees around. I pick the fruits from the tree he planted for us. I will also plant carob trees for the next generations. Do you want to join?"

Honi smiled: "I was very tired. Therefore, I must have slept for seventy years to find out that this grandfather was right. Everyone should take care of future generations. If we will only pray and not plant trees, we will not be able to make the land flourish.

He turned to the man and said, "May you have success, young man. You truly resemble your grandfather like two carob seeds."