TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



אמר

לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

ואשתו מרת גאלדא ב"ר יצחק אהרן ע"ה

ר'יעקב שמואל ב"ר צבי הלוי גרינספעלד ע"ה

ואשתו מרת חנה ב"ר דוד ע"ה

ר'שרגא פייביש ב"ר מרדכי צבי ערליך ע"ה

ר'יעקב ב"ר שלום הלוי פרידמאן ע"ה

ר'חיים דוד ב"ר אלכסנדר הכהן ריטשמאן ע"ה

ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

Yitzchok's Collections אוספי יצחק

אמר

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



וְכִי־תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח־תּוֹדָה לַה' לִרְצֹנְכֶם תִּזְבָּחוּ - ***"When you slaughter a feast thanksgiving-offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it willingly."*** (22:29)

R' Eliezer Dovid Gruenwald z"l (1867-1928) observes: A person is required to bring a korban todah if he was in danger and was saved.

We read in Tehilim (107:1-2), "Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good; His kindness endures forever. Those redeemed by Hashem will say it, those whom He redeemed from the hand of distress."

This verse reflects man's tendency to thank G-d after man has been saved. However, one rarely remembers to thank G-d for not placing him in danger in the first place. Thus our verse teaches, "When you slaughter a feast thanksgiving-offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it **willingly**." Don't wait until you are **required** to thank Hashem. Rather, thank Him voluntarily. (Haggadah Chasdei David)

"***Hashem derives greater pleasure when people are good to each other than when they are "good" to Him but not to each other." ~ Rabbi Yosef Telushkin.***

וְהַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל מֵאֶחָיו אֲשֶׁר־יוּצַק. אַלְמָנָה וּגְרוּשָׁה אֶת־אֵלֶּה לֹא יִקָּח
"***The kohen who is greater than his brothers . . . he shall not marry a widow.***" (21: 10,14)

The prohibition on the kohen gadol's marrying a widow reminds us how powerful a person's desires are, and how far one must go to distance himself from temptation. How so?

The commentary of the Ba'alei Tosfot gives as the reason for this prohibition that the kohen gadol may find himself attracted to a married woman, and on Yom Kippur, when he enters the Holy of Holies, he may pray for the woman's husband to die.

Of whom are we speaking?! Of the spiritual leader of all of the Jews, and at the holiest and most solemn moment of the year, no less. But such is the power of the yetzer hara! (Shai Latorah)

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מֹועֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מֹועֲדָי. שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֵּעָשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ...
"***Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, `G-d's appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations, these are My appointed festivals. For six days labor may be done, and the 7th day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation.***" (23:2-3)

Why does the Torah say that it will speak about the festivals, but before doing so, it speaks about Shabbat?

R' Aryeh Leib Zunz z"l answers: Our Sages say that a person's annual budget is determined on Rosh Hashanah except for what he spends in honor of Shabbat and Yom Tov. - **The Arizal** states that this is alluded to by the word "mo'ed". Specifically, the gematria of the letters `vav-ayin-dalet' equals twice `mem' — indicating that a person's wealth will be multiplied after he begins to honor the mo'ed. This, explains R' Zunz, is why Shabbat had to be mentioned here, so that it too would be considered a "mo'ed."

מוֹעֲדֵי ה׳ אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי. שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֵּעָשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן. אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה׳ מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם - ***"'Hashem's appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations; these are My appointed festivals. For six days labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest . . .' These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, the holy convocations, which you shall designate in their appropriate time." (23:2-4)***

R' Zalman Sorotzkin z"l (1881-1966; rabbi in Lithuania and Israel) observes that the above verses refer to Shabbat as "My appointed festival," while the holidays are called (in third person) "the appointed festivals of Hashem." This, he writes, reflects the closer connection that G-d has to Shabbat than to the festivals. (Oznayim La'Torah)



וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וַעֲנַף עֵץ־עָבֹת וְעַרְבֵי־נָחַל "***You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twig of a plaited tree, and brook willows***." (23:40)

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l wrote in one of his notebooks: It is worth paying attention to how delicately people handle their lulavim and etrogim, as a precious treasure. It is clear that this care is not motivated by the risk of damage to these expensive objects. Rather, the Jewish People are a holy people and they feel a deep love for the Four Species with which they fulfil G-d's command.

If so, he continued, how much more so must one take care to value and love another person, and to be careful with every person's honor- much more so than one is careful with his etrog. After all, with an etrog, one performs a commandment of the Torah only for an instant, whereas there is no limit to the number of mitzvot one can perform vis-á-vis his fellow Jew. (Quoted in Minchat Avot p.62)



מִחוּץ לְפָרֹכֶת הָעֵדֻת יַעֲרֹךְ אֹתוֹ אַהֲרֹן מֵעֶרֶב עַד־בֹּקֶר לִפְנֵי ה' תָּמִיד חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם - *"Outside the Curtain of the Testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, Aharon shall arrange [the Menorah], from evening to morning, before Hashem, continually ..." (24:3)*



Our Sages say that the Menorah testifies that the Shechinah/ Divine Presence rested on the Jewish People. How so?

R' Kalman Chaim Meitkes z"l (Skolka Maggid; Lithuania and New York; died 1932) explains: Commentaries write that the Shechinah rested on the Aron / Holy Ark, causing it to shine so brightly that a Kohen could walk in the otherwise dark Sanctuary by its light.

The Menorah's purpose was to create a second light source, so that the Kohen would not benefit from the light created by the Shechinah's presence. Thus, the need for a Menorah testifies that the Shechinah rests on the Jewish People. (*Chemdat Chaim*)

וְקִדַּשְׁתּוֹ כִּי־אֶת־לֶחֶם אֱלֹקֶיךָ הוּא מַקְרִיב - *"You shall sanctify him, for he offers the food of your Elokim."* (21:8)

The Kohanim were divided into 24 Mishmarot / "watches," each of which served in the Bet Hamikdash for one week at a time. Each Mishmar was further divided into family groups, each of which served for one day of his Mishmar's week. Thus, the average Kohen served in the Bet Hamikdash only twice a year, one day every 24 weeks.

R' Avraham Elkanah Kahana Shapira z"l (1914-2007; Rosh Ha'yeshiva and Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel) asks: Because

a Kohen worked two days a year, he should be shown honor and given tithes all year round?!

He answers: In order to be fit to represent the Jewish People in the Bet Hamikdash on two days of the year, the Kohen must work on himself every day of the year! (*Imrei Shefer* p.147)

In this week's parashah we find the laws of each of the holidays: Pesach, including the Omer-offering and Sefirat Ha'omer; Shavuot; Rosh Hashanah; Yom Kippur; and Sukkot, including the taking of the Four Species and the mitzvah of Sukkah. Following those passages, we find the laws of the Temple menorah, an allusion to the holiday of Chanukah (which is of rabbinic origin).

Kabbalistic works teach that reading the Torah verses connected with an event reawakens the spiritual awakening that occurred at the time of the event itself. Thus, **R' Chaim Meir Hager z"l** (the Vizhnitzer Rebbe; died 1973) would often comment when this parashah came around: "This parashah is very special! It includes all the holidays." One year he said, "An intelligent person can accomplish so much on this Shabbat." Another year he said, "From this Shabbat, one can acquire the spiritual benefits of all the holidays."

On this Shabbat in 5726 / 1966, he said, "This Shabbat deserves to be called `Shabbat Ha'gadol' / The Great Shabbat. Imagine! [Just by paying attention to the Torah reading,] one can do everything- eat matzah, sit in the sukkah, shake the lulav and etrog, etc. Is there any greater pleasure in the world than that?!" (Quoted in Otzrotaihem Shel Tzadikim p.407)

"Turn to Hashem for all your needs. He is always available, and He is always listening." ~ Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810)

R' Shalom Rokeach z"l (1779-1855; the first Belzer Rebbe) is quoted as saying: "From the telegraph, one can learn the value of speech, for one must pay for every word. From the railroad, one can learn the value of time, for being one minute late can mean missing the train." (Quoted in Orchot Rabboteinu p.22)



וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה חַג הַמַּצּוֹת לַה' שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מַצּוֹת תֹּאכֵלוּ - And on the fifteenth day of this month is the Festival of Matzos to Hashem. (23:6)



One year, **Horav Tzvi Hirsch Levin, zl**, had occasion to invite the mayor of Berlin (a gentile, but one that was quite respectful and friendly to the Jewish community) for the first Seder.

The mayor entered the home to observe the rich finery of the tablecloth and napkins on a table bedecked with the finest china and silver flatware. The mayor had a superficial knowledge of Jewish traditions and customs. He was, thus, taken aback that Pesach, when we sit as kings, the young child traditionally asks the Four Questions, which begin, "Why is this night different?" when, in fact, on Succos, a festival during which we sit in a flimsy Succah, he asks nothing.- One would think that a festival which emphasizes the

temporal nature of our existence would invoke greater incredulity in the mind of a child than a festival in which we sit as kings.

Rav Levin responded with a practical explanation. "A Jewish child grows up with the notion that everything around him is temporary. One day he can be ensconced in his home and, the next day, the dictator who rules the country where he lives decides that it is time to expel the Jews. Thus, on Succos, when he sits in a temporary dwelling which, at best, can be described as flimsy (this was before our modern-day structures that are made to withstand a tornado), he is not surprised. He is acutely aware that this is how Jews live. "On Pesach, however, he enters a home wherein the table is bedecked with finery; the chairs have pillows on them, on which the family members recline; fine wine accompanied by a rich meal is served – and the child asks questions: "'Why is this night different?' We are living like kings. Jews are supposed to be on the run; instead, we are reclining and relaxing. - Is it possible that our exile has ended?" the child wonders.

Let us analyze the difference between the Pesach Seder, which is experiential in nature and demands that we relive the Exodus by acting like free men, while never forgetting that we were once slaves; and the meal in the Succah, which is to remind us of the temporary nature of everything in life.

Pesach is to convey the message of freedom from slavery. Thus, we have marror, bitter herbs, on the table to serve as a reminder of the bondage. The Matzah reminds us of the urgency of our liberation, intimating that Hashem – not us or Pharaoh – was in control of our destiny. "Earlier in the day I was a slave – tonight I am a free man – a king!": This is the message of the Pesach Seder.

It is difficult for anyone – especially a child – to absorb such a metamorphosis. Therefore, he asks, "Why is this night different?" The Succos meal is standard fare – no reminders, no messages other

than the flimsy walls and leaky roof of the Succah. - We must trust in Hashem for everything, every movement, all of the time.

The Pesach message is: You are free, but never forget from whence you came; do not forget that you were once a slave. Thus, keep the marror prominently on the table amidst your finery. It belongs there.

The Succos message: Never forget that whatever you have is temporary; in the space of a moment, the nice, friendly neighbors whom you felt were your friends can turn on you. - It happened in Germany prior to World War II. Who says that it cannot happen again? Trust in Hashem. That is all that we can do.

Which message provokes questioning? Which scene beleaguers the mind of a young child more? I think the bowl of marror sitting right in middle of the table is a greater anomaly than sitting in the flimsy Succah. Paradox invokes question. Pesach is a greater paradox. After all – are we free, or not?

Veritably, Pesach and Succos both have parallels that end up being different from one another. Indeed, this is because the two Festivals have varied foci. Both Pesach and Succos address four types of Jews who are different from one another in levels of belief, commitment and knowledge of Judaism. Pesach is celebrated with four sons "sitting" at the Seder table: the wise and wicked sons together with their brothers, the simple son and the one who knows not what to ask. When the wicked son scoffs at the traditions which we observe, we blunt his teeth, intimating to him that with such an attitude, he has no business at the Seder table.

On Succos, we celebrate with the Four Species, which symbolize four classes of Jew: the Jew who has "taste" and "fragrance" ie, the Esrog, (this means that they have Torah, taam, taste – and maasim tovim, good deeds); the Lulav, which has taste, but no fragrance; those who have fragrance, but not taste, ie, the hadas, myrtle; last, the Jew who has neither taste nor fragrance, no Torah or maasim

tovim; the aravah, willow. Hashem instructs us to bind all of these together as one; thus, as a group, they all achieve atonement.

The question is obvious: Why on Succos are we instructed to include all factors, yet, on Pesach, we are told to blunt the teeth of the rasha, wicked son?

Horav Elchanan Sorotzkin, zl, distinguishes between Succos and Pesach, which is a family/home-oriented festival/celebration, seh labayis, a lamb for a household. The Korban Pesach, Pascal offering, is to be eaten together in a group in the house where all are included. In contrast, Succos is celebrated outside of the regular house, outdoors, under the sky, without the protection of the home. On Succos, we leave our homes and go into exile, while Pesach is about yetzivus, staying in one place. We are free men with a home. Free men celebrate their freedom in a concrete, stationary edifice. They are not compelled to move around.

When the celebration is homebound, family-oriented, stationary, our attitude concerning including the wicked son is clear: Sorry. We love you and want you to return, but this is a family celebration. We require a cohesive family, all of one mind and level of commitment. We are celebrating the Festival of Freedom. You are not free. You are enslaved to your desires, false ideologies, arrogance. When you repent and change, you will be treated with respect.

On Succos, we remove our family from the home and take them on the move into exile, protected by flimsy walls/roof and a prayer. Exile implies adversity, tzaros, troubles. Along the way, we will pick up the stragglers who are also suffering.

In exile, we are all together as one, bound by our common heritage and destiny. In exile, we turn our back on none. We wait – and wait – for the glorious day on which Hashem will send us Eliyahu HaNavi, who will return all of the lost and alienated and bring them "home."

שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מַצּוֹת תֹּאכֵלוּ – '***You shall eat matzos for a seven-day period***.' (23:6)

Every once in a while, I come across a story which is more dvar Torah than story. The episode is merely the medium for imparting an important Torah principle. The following story fits into this category.

The surplus of matzah, which has become a way of life for us, is a modern-day wonder. One hundred years ago, when Europe was in midst of a world war, whole communities went without matzah for Pesach. Food was at a premium, and the Jewish community was always at the bottom of the totem pole for receiving aid. As a result, ehrliche Yidden, observant Jews, often made do with alternative foods for Pesach to replace the precious matzah, which was unobtainable.

One year, the community leaders were able to obtain a small amount of matzah shemurah. What, today, would supply a small family for the seder night, was to provide an entire community with matzah for Pesach.

The community leaders were in a quandary concerning how to divide the pieces. Who would be included, and who would be excluded? As in all venues, each individual had his "people."

Finally, after some discussion, they arrived at a consensus of opinion: those Jews who, sadly, had waned in their observance would be left out. The reasoning was simple: They were going to eat chametz, leavened products, regardless of the few morsels of matzah that they would receive. So, why bother? Why go to bat for someone who was not even playing? Nonetheless, they decided to "share" their decision with the saintly **Chafetz Chaim, zl**.

How shocked they were to discover that, after the venerable sage had listened to their question/decision, he totally blew away their resolution.

He said that specifically those unfortunate Jews who were not yet observant – they should be given the precious morsels of matzah! It was expressly their lack of religious observance that made them prime candidates for the matzah.

The reason he gave was quite practical: Every kazayis, olive measurement, of matzah which they ate would prevent them from eating a kazayis of chametz! Thus, the more matzah available to them meant that these Jews would eat less chametz on Pesach. The observant Jew, however, would never touch chametz – even if he did not have any matzah. So, they will not have matzah! – nu! Chametz for sure they would not eat.

Several lessons can be derived from here. First, one does not go to the gadol last. If one has an issue, he should present it to the rav/rosh yeshivah first, so that he can hear what daas Torah has to say. The mere fact that the Chafetz Chaim's solution was totally diametrically opposed to theirs is indicative of their faulty approach to the issue.

Second, we see how a true gadol, Torah leader, thinks. His thoughts, and, thus, his decisions are always about Klal Yisrael, the entire nation – not just the Torah world. - Every Jew, regardless of his affiliation – or rejection thereof – is precious. No one may be rejected. No one may be left out.

"One need not just look at a tzaddik as a segulah for becoming G-d-fearing. We are told that all yidden are tzaddikim. Thus, if one will gaze deeply within himself, that too is a segulah for true fear of Heaven!" ~ R' Yitzchak Meri of Apta zt"l.

"We were not born winners. We were not born losers. – We were born choosers." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר - '***You shall take for yourself on the first day the fruit of a citron tree***.' (23:40)



Pri eitz hadar, "the fruit of a beautiful tree," is commonly accepted as referring to the esrog tree. In Sefer Likutim, the **Arizal** says that the letters of the word esrog: aleph, taf, reish, gimmel form an acronym for the pasuk in Tehillim 36:12, אַל־תְּבוֹאֵנִי רֶגֶל גַּאֲוָה, "Let not the foot of arrogance come to me."

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, explains this pragmatically. The pasuk in which David Hamelech deplores arrogance and prays that it not affect him in any way, is truly a pasuk fitting for the esrog.

This could be termed the "esrog's prayer," for the esrog is the one fruit that has a right to be arrogant. It is a beautiful fruit, completely unblemished, with nary a spot and bumps out of place, perfectly symmetrical, and very expensive. It is the specie of the "four species" that symbolizes the Torah Jew who observes mitzvos, studies Torah and performs acts of lovingkindness. It is the fruit replete with laudatory qualities, the fruit that all other fruits "envy." Thus, it prays to Hashem not to allow it to become arrogant, to elevate itself above others.

In Shaar Avodas Elokim 4, the Chovas Halevavos relates a dialogue between a chasid and his students. The chasid said, "If you would not have sins, I would fear something even greater than sin [He was thankful that his students had not achieved spiritual perfection.] "What is greater (more egregious) than sin?" they asked. "Arrogance," the chasid replied. Clearly, the chasid could not fathom that a sinner would have the audacity to arrogate himself over others. What does he have to lord over others: his sins?

Rav Galinsky relates a well-known episode concerning a middle-aged couple who came to **Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman**, **Z'tl**, to seek his sage advice concerning an "issue" which was causing tension in their relationship. Apparently, the husband was quite well-to-do. Yet, despite his enormous wealth, he drove a ten-year-old car, which his wife felt was demeaning. She had decided that the time had come for them to purchase a new car. Indeed, she had already selected the color!

Rav Shteinman looked at the husband and asked, "Nu, so what is the problem? [As if he had nothing else with which to occupy his time.] Why do you not buy a new car?"

"Rebbe, I fear an ayin hora, becoming the victim of an evil eye." (If someone will notice the new vehicle and become envious of its owner, it could create an evil eye, which is a sort of spiritual curse).

Rav Shteinman heard this and was impressed. Apparently, this individual did not want to bring attention to himself. He must be a person replete with qualities which people envy.

"Tell me," Rav Shteinman asked, "can I test you on Shas?" "What – am I a Kollel fellow; that I study all day, so that I can master the entire Talmud?"

"I understand," countered Rav Shteinman, "Perhaps you have mastered one or two sedarim of the Talmud?"

"Rebbe, I said that I am not a Kollel fellow; I have not mastered an entire Seder."

"Perhaps you are proficient in one meseches, tractate?"

"No, not even one tractate. I am a simple layman," the man replied, somewhat agitated.

"Let me see," replied Rav Shteinman, "You have neither mastered Shas, nor are you proficient in even one Seder. Worse, you claim not to have completed even one tractate! Yet, you fear someone's envy?

Why would anyone be envious of you?" (The sage was intimating that if his only quality was wealth, it was not worthy of envy. Thus, he had nothing to worry about concerning ayin hora.)

Rav Galinsky concludes with a powerful statement from **the Ohaiv Yisrael, the Apter Rav, zl**, who said, "There is no reason to have a discussion concerning arrogance. All one has to remember is, 'Nine Apter Ravs (individuals of such distinction) do not comprise a minyan, quorum. Ten baalei agalah, wagon drivers (representative of the simple, usually illiterate Jew), create a minyan, which is a setting for kedushah and Kaddish. It becomes, a place to which the Shechinah, Divine Presence, comes and goes."

It is not who one is, with whom he is affiliated, from whom he descends, or how much money he is worth: it is before Whom he stands – Hashem Yisborach; and, before Him, we are all the same. Even the esrog, by itself, without the support of the other three species, each representing another aspect of Klal Yisrael, does not effect the mitzvah. It requires all four minim, species.

Moshe Rabbeinu clearly represented the esrog of Klal Yisrael. Yet, when the nation sinned with the Golden-Calf, Hashem told him Lech reid, "Go down," from your high position (Shemos 32:7). A leader is only as exalted as his flock. When the flock fails, he fails.

I will add that, when one is endowed with a special gift, be it exceptional acumen, illustrious lineage, material abundance, all of which he uses properly for the betterment of others – while it is no reason to arrogate oneself – he is certainly worthy of kinaas sofrim, the envy of scribes, which spurs one to greater growth. One who truly cares about achievement is spurred on by the desire to emulate, and even surpass others. This form of jealousy may not be the ideal, but, if it serves as an incentive, it cannot really be that bad.

וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים - "***And you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, for a seven-day period***." (23:40)

The mitzvah of joy on the festival of Succos is intrinsic to the chag. It is an integral aspect of the festival's identity.

It occurred on one of the days of Succos that the daughter of **Horav Meir, z.l., m'Premishlan** became gravely ill. On Simchas Torah, the situation had deteriorated to the point that the young woman was at death's door. Yet, Rav Meir Premishlaner danced the hakafos, traditional Simchas Torah dance with the Torah, with his usual joy and devotion.

His chassidim were aghast at the Rebbe's behavior. How could he exhibit such jubilation at a time like this? They cried out to him, "Rebbe, do something for your daughter!"

Rav Meir went into his daughter's room, observed her laying comatose, near death, and walked out. He turned his eyes Heavenward and exclaimed, "Ribono Shel Olam, You commanded us to blow Shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and Meirel did as You asked. You commanded us to fast on Yom Kippur, and Meirel listened and fasted. You commanded us to be joyous and dance on Simchas Torah, and Meirel listened and danced. You made my daughter ill, and You commanded that we should accept even a harsh decree with joy. One is obligated to bless (Hashem) for a misfortune just as he blesses (Hashem) for a good occurrence. Chazal interpret this to mean that one should accept the raah, misfortune, with joy. But, Ribono Shel Olam, there is a halachah that states, 'Ein mearvin simchah besimchah,' 'One may not mix one simchah with another.' How can I serve You properly in both of these circumstances at the same time?"

Immediately, when he said this, his daughter's fever broke, indicating that she was on the road to recovery. This story illustrates the profound sincerity this great tzaddik demonstrated in fulfilling mitzvos and adhering to Chazal's words. He understood

that misfortune is from Hashem, oriented towards a specific purpose.

Our lack of understanding the ways of the Almighty neither precludes nor changes their inherent value, meaning, or purpose. Chazal say that one must bless Hashem for misfortune in the same manner that one blesses Him for a happy occasion. - Rav Meir did just that, to the point that he equated blessing Hashem regarding his daughter's illness with dancing on Simchas Torah. How far we are from the spiritual plateau of our ancestors!



יַעֲרֹךְ אֹתוֹ אַהֲרֹן מֵעֶרֶב עַד־בֹּקֶר -"***Aharon shall arrange it, from evening to morning***." (24:3)

The Torah tells us in this pasuk that Aharon HaKohen was responsible for arranging the lamps of the Menorah.

In Parashas Tetzaveh, when the Torah records this ritual, it mentions that Aharon's sons also arranged the lamps of the Menorah. Why is only Aharon's name mentioned here?

The Baal HaTurim explains that after Nadav and Avihu died in the Sanctuary, Aharon no longer permitted his remaining sons to enter alone. He always accompanied them into the Sanctuary.

These are amazing words! The Baal HaTurim's penetrating insight into Aharon's behavior is both profound and pragmatic. How are we to understand this?

Elazar and Isamar, Aharon's remaining sons, were not children. They were grown men, erudite and pious. Why would Aharon deem it necessary to accompany them into the Sanctuary?

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, feels that Aharon's action implies a profound truth in regard to child-rearing. Parents should not leave their children unsupervised, even in Hashem's Sanctuary! Being a parent denotes tremendous responsibility; one that cannot

and should not be delegated to the street or to friends and neighbors. Parents should personally observe and supervise their child's growth and development. Is the Sanctuary sacrosanct to the point that it is impossible to be adversely influenced?

It is for this reason that parents have an overriding responsibility to be cognizant of everything that involves their children. They must be sure that their children have responsible and spiritually refined friends and that they adhere to the parameters set forth by the institution to which they are sent to learn Torah.

This is true for those children who have made the Sanctuary their home. How much more so should we devote our attention and efforts on behalf of those children, who for a number of reasons, are not availed this opportunity?

Horav Zilberstein decries those parents who permit their children to "hang around," either on foot or riding around on their bikes a good part of the day, literally riding in circles with nowhere to go. (We must bear in mind that Horav Zilberstein is a rav in Bnei Brak – not in an American metropolis.) When children – regardless of their age – spend quality time, hours and hours unsupervised, aimlessly wandering, parents are asking for trouble.

Parents must realize that just because they are tired and need rest and relaxation, does not give them an excuse for permitting their children to be unsupervised. Would they chance losing an expensive diamond because they were too tired to take care of it?

Our children are our greatest and most valuable treasure. We should treat them as such.

"Feeling discouraged because of a failure is worse than the failure itself." ~ Slonimer Rebbe zt"l.

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הֲבִיאֲכֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה -"***You shall count for yourselves – from the morrow of the rest day***." (23:15)

Shavuos is not identified by the Torah with a specific day on the calendar, but as the fiftieth day after the Omer Offering. Each individual is to count every one of the days separately and clearly.

Horav Chaim, z.l., m'Volozhin, was wont to say that there is one mussar sefer, book of ethical discourse, that is not "counted" among the many volumes that are available for character development and introspection. It is a simple "sefer," with a compelling message and readily available – the clock. If a person were to stare at the clock on the wall and watch the seconds tick away into minutes, the minutes tick away into hours, and the hours tick away into days, he will come to realize the value of time and how it is just ticking away – while he sits and watches. This will, hopefully, spur him to wake up and do something about the time that is quickly ticking by.

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, z.l., applies Rav Chaim's analogy to the pasuk in Tehillim 90:12, לִמְנוֹת יָמֵינוּ כֵּן הוֹדַע וְנָבִא לְבַב חָכְמָה - "***Teach us to count our days, that we shall acquire a heart of wisdom***." - If we will learn to be aware and count our days, to make sure that they do not go to waste, we will then increase wisdom in our hearts.

The mitzvah of counting days between Pesach and Shavuos as a preparation for receiving the Torah is related to this idea. When one counts a day, he thinks to himself, "Another day has passed on the calendar, another day during which I should have prepared myself for receiving the Torah. Did I do what I was supposed to do – or did I waste another day? What will I now do with the remaining days till Shavuos?"

These thoughts will engender a feeling of introspection and sanctity within him, feelings that will bring him closer to being ready to receive the Torah.

וְהַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל מֵאֶחָיו אֲשֶׁר־יוּצַק עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה'- 'The Kohen who is exalted above his brethren - upon whose head the anointment oil has been poured.' (21:10)



The Kohen Gadol "stands" above the other Kohanim as a result of certain qualities with which he has been vested. Chazal enumerate five areas in which he was "greater" than the others. One of these was strength.

The Kohen Gadol was exceptionally strong. This is indicated by Aharon Hakohen's ability to consecrate twenty-two thousand Leviim - in one day. This process involved physically raising each one and moving them back and forth, up and down.

The magnitude of this task is evident when one realizes that this was all performed in the space of one day!

Let us analyze this statement. When we take into consideration that such an incredible feat could be performed only through the intervention of a miracle, it no longer serves as evidence of Aharon's amazing physical strength. Furthermore, what difference does it really make if the Kohen Gadol possesses remarkable physical strength? Does this make him a better, more virtuous person?

We find another mention of the concept of strength in the Talmud Nedarim 38a, wherein it is stated that the Shechinah rests only on one who is strong. Incidentally, in his commentary, the Rambam explains Chazal's statement as a reference to one's ability to overwhelm the blandishments of his yetzer hora, evil inclination. The commentaries, however, disagree with this interpretation, leaving a consensus that specifically refers to physical strength.

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, defines strength as one's ability to overcome a tendency towards indolence. We tend to find excuses for not doing a specific task: it is either too hard, unnecessary or unimportant. The true reason behind our excuses is laziness. Why are we lazy? Is it because we do not appreciate or value the task at hand? When one is machshiv, appreciates and holds a given endeavor in esteem, he will somehow find the strength and vitality to perform it.

It is difficult work to paint a house, but when it is one's own house, the difficulty seems to disappear. Why? Because the individual is machshiv his house more. When one values a project or endeavor, he attacks it with zest and vibrancy. No obstacles stand in his way. He overcomes any challenge that confronts him. Indolence creeps in when one does not have "cheishak," desire.

One who comes home after a day's work and finds the "time" and "strength" to study Torah, to leave the comfort of his home to attend a shiur, demonstrates his esteem for limud ha'Torah. One who is machshiv Torah will always find a way to study it. One who finds excuses to justify his laziness simply is not machshiv Torah!

It is obvious that lifting twenty-two thousand Leviim in one day is impossible. Aharon had every reason to defer from this task. How could he do it? - When one is machshiv, values, Hashem's command, however, nothing deters him.

Aharon's incredible strength lay in his attitude, his drive, his overwhelming desire to fulfill mitzvas Hashem. He undertook the impossible. Hashem responded to Aharon's effort by miraculously transforming the impossible into the achievable.

"As water extinguishes fire so does silence nullify the strength of anger." ~ Pele Yoetz.

בַּסֻּכֹּת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים – '*Every native in Yisrael shall dwell in booths*.' (23:42)

Every Jew is commanded to dwell in a succah for the prescribed period of seven days. Indeed, our ancestors went to great lengths to ensure that they fulfilled the mitzvah of succah according to halachah.

A poignant story occurred concerning **Horav Mordechai M'Nedverne** that, while its focus is not actually on Succos, teaches us a timely lesson.

In Rav Mordechai's city, there was an outbreak of cholera, a very contagious plague. The doctors warned the general populace to exercise extreme care in regard to sanitary conditions.

It just so happened that it was just before the festival of Succos. Despite the plague, Rav Mordechai built his succah as usual. The mayor of Nedverne, who was infamous for his virulent anti-Semitism, insisted that Rav Mordechai dismantle his succah, claiming that it was against sanitary regulations to have a succah. The rav ignored the mayor's message, refusing to take down his succah.

When the mayor saw that he was being ignored, he immediately dispatched a number of police to "reiterate" his demand and to warn Rav Mordechai of the dire consequences for non-compliance.

Rav Mordechai responded, "I made the succah that it should stand, not so that it would be torn down."

Overcome with rage, the mayor threatened the rav if he would not concede to his demand. Rav Mordechai looked at the mayor and said, "My great uncle was the great tzaddik, Rav Meir M'Premishlan ."

The mayor heard those words and scoffed in anger, "Who cares who your uncle was? Tear down the succah now!"

During this whole dialogue, Rav Mordechai never lost his temper. He remained calm and cool in the face of the mayor's rage. He

reiterated his statement yet again, which brought a torrent of threats to his physical well-being from the mayor. Yet, he would not budge.

Finally, he said to the mayor, "Let me tell you a story, so that you will understand why it is that I invoked the name of my sainted uncle. " There was once a priest who was blessed with ten tall, strong sons, who were the picture of health. The priest also was the proud owner of a beautiful garden filled with many fragrant flowers and trees. One day the priest decided that he wanted a small garden of little flowers. In order to fulfill his desire, it was necessary to cut down a number of beautiful trees. He proceeded to chop down the trees, planting little flowers instead. Suddenly, as soon as the priest completed his plan, his sons, one by one, became gravely ill and died. In no time, the priest was bereft of nine of his beautiful sons. All but one had died. Suddenly, the youngest son, the only child left to the unfortunate priest, became gravely ill. The priest turned to doctors, to magicians, to anyone who, in his desperation, he thought could help him. Alas, everything was to no avail as his son lay dying."

A number of his close friends suggested that as a last resort he should travel to Rav Meier M'Premishlan, who was the pre-eminent Jewish sage of the time. He was known to all to be a virtuous, holy man. The priest figured that he might as well go to the great Rebbe. After all, nothing else seemed to work. What did he have to lose?

He came to the Rebbe and recounted the terrible tragedies that had befallen him. He pleaded with the Rebbe to intercede on his behalf so that his last remaining son would live."

The Rebbe looked at him with stern eyes and said, "You had a beautiful garden in which grew wonderful fruit trees. You were not satisfied, however, with these trees. You desired a garden of flowers. So, you cut down the trees. Do you realize that you cut down G-d's trees! Are you aware that a man is compared to a tree. To cut down a tree is like destroying a life. The Almighty has taken your

sons as punishment for your avaricious behavior. - Your coming to me is an indication of your repentance. I, therefore, assure you that your remaining child will be spared."

The Rebbe prayed on behalf of the child, and his prayers received a positive response; the child lived."

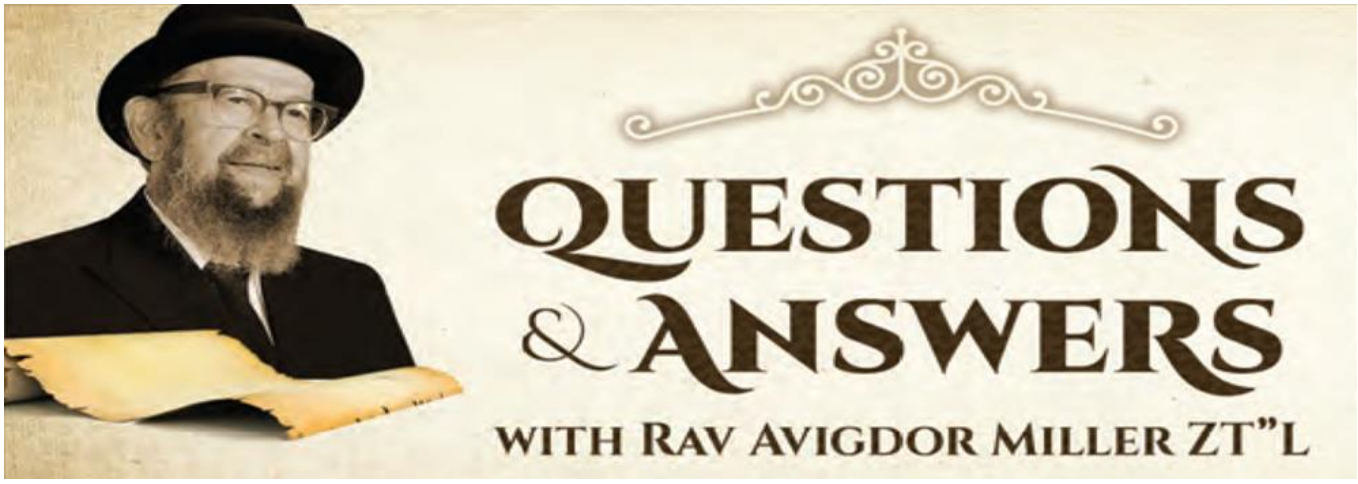
Rav Mordechai completed the story. Turning to the mayor, he said in an accusing voice, "You are that child that my uncle saved," How dare you repay the good that he produced for you by insisting that I dismantle my succah!"

When the mayor heard the story, he fell to his knees in shame, pleading with Rav Mordechai to forgive his insolence. "It is true. It is true," cried the mayor. "I was that boy that was saved. I have forgotten the meaning of gratitude. You may keep your succah and celebrate your festival in the manner that you desire."

While the story is loosely connected to the parsha, its message is timely. Hakoras hatov, recognizing the favor one receives and showing appreciation, is a phenomenon which is in great demand. If we would only open our eyes, we would see how much we owe to so many people. If we could only overcome the myopia with which so many of us are plagued, we would not only be better people, but we would also be happier people.

Some people came to inform Rabbi Chayim Halberstam of Tzanz that the wife of a recipient of charity was seen buying expensive duck meat.

"I am much obliged for you having told me," said Rav Chayim. "I had thought that this man's wife was able to manage with a small amount of money. Now that I know that she requires duck meat, I'll have to increase the weekly stipend of that family." ~ Haadmor Mitzanz as quoted by R' Zelig Pliskin.





What should have been the proper reaction of the Jews in Tel-Aviv to the missile attacks this week?

They should have huddled in their rooms in fear of Hashem, no question about it. It was a time to make an accounting. When a scud missle fell on Tel-Aviv, so the mayor of Tel-Aviv should have thought about what he said in defiance of the Orthodox Jews. The Orthodox Jews wanted to make a law that all places of amusement should be closed on Shabbos. So the mayor of Tel-Aviv said, "Nothing doing! In Tel-Aviv, I'll see to it that every Friday night all these places, the cafes and the theatres will be open all night long."

So when the scud fell on Tel-Aviv, he should have said, he should have announced, "I changed my mind." Because that's the purpose!

You think that's the end? I'm telling you, it's only the beginning. Saddam Hussein is only the first shot in the great battle against the evil that holds sway in Eretz Yisroel. It's only the first shot! Hashem is not finished at all.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent a warning. But for people who refuse to listen, He might have to send another one.



If it's ossur to think divrei Torah in the bathroom, then what should one think about?

What should we think about in the bathroom? You should think about what a chesed it is that you're able to go to the bathroom normally. You should think about it. Chasdei Hashem! Yes, you should spend time thinking about that. It's a tremendous chesed. Rofei Chol Basar U'maflee La'asos. Maflee la'asos means that it's a miracle. It's miracles upon miracles.

Now, some of the kadmonim didn't always understand this, so there are all kinds of peirushim on those words. But today we know that it's simply miracles and miracles. I'd like to explain a little more about how miraculous it really is but it would take too much time. But it's a miracle that you're able to expel the waste and you should be filled with happiness that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing this miracle for you.

Put thought into that. And then, when you get out of the bathroom and make the bracha of Asher Yatzar make sure to put all those thoughts that you had in the bathroom into the brachah.



What is the Torah view of Mother's Day and Father's Day?

Look; there's no question that the American public has been sold an item that was created for the purpose of filling the pockets of businessmen – the American public is the real proverbial sucker. Because no matter what you'll say about Mother's Day, it's a day when people make money. Not only florists!

Jewelers and bakers and candy stores – everyone is lining his pockets because of Mother's Day.





Now, Mother's Day doesn't have any significance based on historical reasons or some religious grounds. Mother's Day is not guaranteed by the Constitution, by the way. It was nothing but a ploy of the businessmen. That's all it is. Now you mothers will have to forgive me for being so crass and vulgar, but that's the plain truth.

Now, I'm going to say something that's going to be fifty percent unpopular. The authenticity of your celebration of Mother's Day depends on how much you celebrate Father's Day. Because Father's Day like Mother's Day is not genuine. The truth is that Father's Day was just an afterthought by the businessmen, that's all. They thought – "If we're going to cash in on the mothers, so what about the fathers too?" But it turned out to be a flop. Father's Day is a very small business item. So they sell a few cufflinks, a few cheap things to give the old man; but Mother's Day is it – that's the big day!

It's important for us to realize that we Jews have the days that are really important. If you want to celebrate, we have the days! In the Torah calendar there's a plenitude of happy occasions. Lag ba'omer is a glorious occasion! Celebrate it!

And there are plenty of other ones too. So why do you have to go shopping for Mother's Day and Father's Day? Not only are you shopping among the gentiles but you swallow the bait that the storekeepers and the chamber of commerce are hanging out for us.

We're silly suckers; because they say "Ooh," so we say "Ooh." So you'll say, "But now that Mother's Day already exists; now it's real – we can't ignore it." That's a different question; what to do now that it's here. But it's important to realize where it came from – that makes a difference too. But whether we actually should ignore it? That's a different story because there's such a thing as darkei shalom. Sometimes for the sake of harmony it pays to do certain things. I just want to emphasize that we shouldn't be slaves to the mode of the day and to go crazy because of things that businessmen invented.



Radin, A Town that Was

Today, ninety years ago, with the twilight of the 24th of Elul 5693 (Sept. 15, 1933), heartbroken Jews attended the funeral of the greatest of the generation, **Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaCohen Kagan, the "Chafetz Chaim"**, the tzaddik who left a mark on generations, the genius who enlightened the eyes of Israel in his halachic books, and gave the Jewish People the gift of life, "Who is the man who desires life ('chafetz chaim')…we will guard his tongue from evil…" (Psalms 34:13-4)

The Chafetz Chaim was a leader in a tumultuous time, between the two world wars when Jewish life, Jewish towns, and the well-rooted pure education, experienced upheavals and "the ship thought of breaking up…" (Jonah 1:4). The Chafetz Chaim was the captain, the leader, the guide, and the faithful shepherd.

Ninety years have passed since that day when thousands escorted the elderly leader to rest. The whole world knew about him and the leaders of countries went out of their way to honor him, while he

himself was always humble, always in a corner, always with a soft noble smile on his face, sitting in an old and simple house, and he despised the turbulent, new world that began to discover technology and progress.

Many of the Chafetz Chaim's descendants perished in the Holocaust that broke out just a few years after his passing, and his daughter, Rebbetzin Zaks, who was born to him when he was already over seventy years old, told in her old age that her father told her when she was still a child, that "people may wonder why I built a new house in my old age. It is not a common thing to get married again at my age, but the truth is that the reason for this is you. Of all my children, only you will remain as a memory of me in the 'lands of life.'"

The daughter of the Chafetz Chaim miraculously escaped from the burning Europe and her descendants, among them Torah scholars and and heads of yeshivas, are indeed the only grandchildren of the Chafetz Chaim, Torah and mitzvah observant Jews who bring joy to their illustrious grandfather, the rabbi of the whole Diaspora.

The fate of Radin was like the fate of all the towns of Eastern Europe. In October 1941, the Jews of Radin were transferred to the ghetto where almost a thousand Jews from other communities in the vicinity were also concentrated. In May 1942, a group of Jews who were forced to dig killing pits rebelled against the Germans. 17 Jews managed to escape, and the rest of the diggers were murdered. After that, about 1,000 of the ghetto's residents were also murdered in the aktion. Hundreds were left as workers, and hundreds fled or hid. Those who remained in the ghetto were transferred after about a month to the Szczecin ghetto.

The Radin Yeshiva, which had periods of glory, and endured wanderings and sorrows even during the First World War, was closed at the beginning of the war and most of its students were killed in sanctification of G-d's Name.

With the outbreak of WWII, the Soviet Union controlled Radin. Most of the yeshiva students moved to Vilna, Lithuania, while a minority of them remained in Radin, and among them were relatives of the Chafetz Chaim: Rabbi Mordechai Dov Roitblatt, Rabbi Hillel Ginzburg, who was the son-in-law of Rabbi Eliezer Ze'ev Kaplan, and Rabbi Avraham Trop. When the conditions in Vilna became too difficult, they decided, once again, to split the yeshiva into two. One half was located in Eishishok (Eisiskes), under the leadership of Rabbi Yehoshua Levinson, and the other in Utena. When the Soviets occupied Lithuania, the yeshiva ceased to function. Although great efforts were made to allow yeshiva students to escape, only a few were able to obtain visas and immigrate.

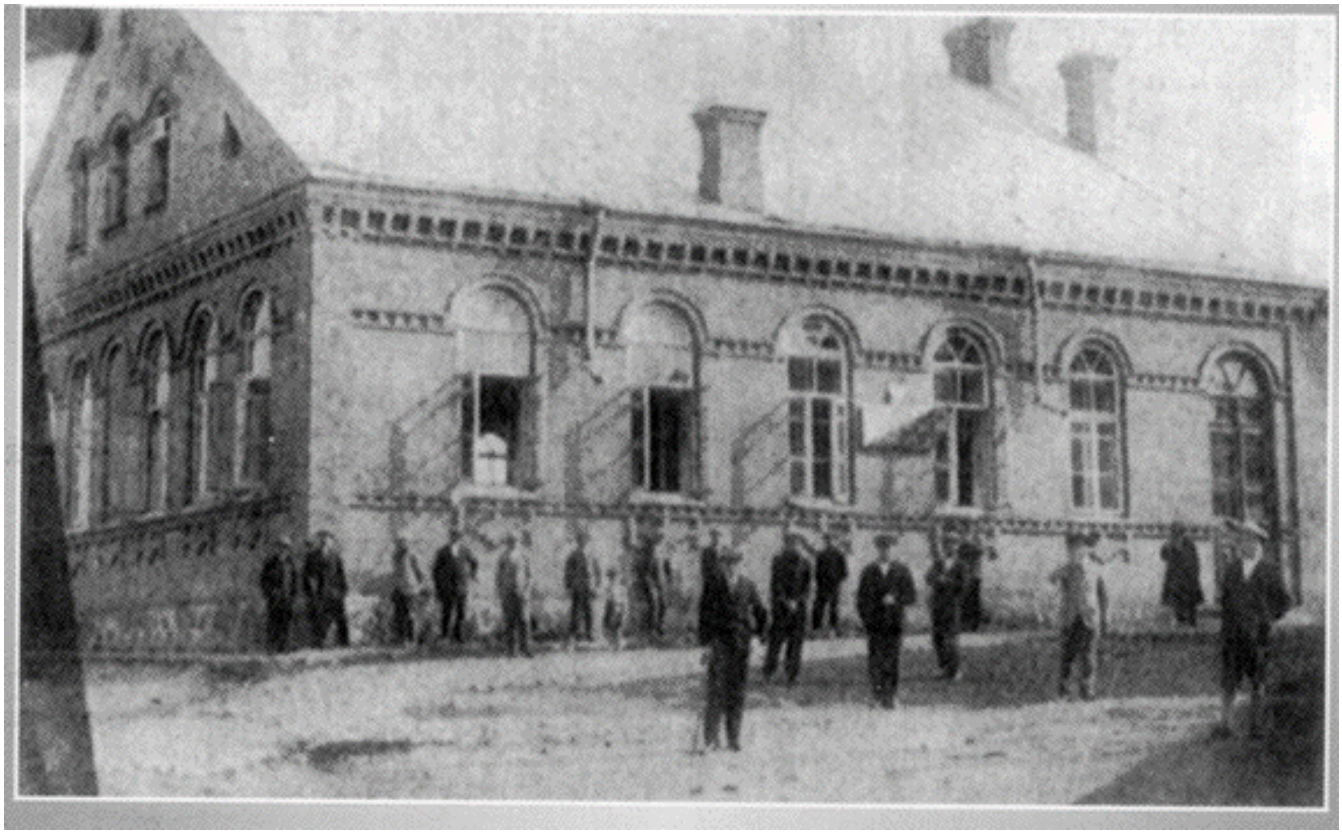
In honour of the Chafetz Chaim's 90th yahrzeit, we present photos from the town of Radin, from the archives of Ganzach Kiddush Hashem.



Home of the Chofetz Chaim



The bathhouse in Radin



Students outside the yeshiva building







Leviyah of the Chofetz Chaim [note his sefarim on the bier]



The Radin Yeshiva Building



Students outside the Radin yeshiva building



Radin street on Shabbos



Funeral of the Chofetz Chaim



Funeral of the Chofetz Chaim



Grave of the Chofetz Chaim



"A single act of kindness is more beloved and precious to Hashem than all the sacrifices offered by Shlomo HaMelech." ~ Yalkut Shimoni, Rabbi Shimon Ashkenazi of Frankfurt (Circa 1260)

This astonishing quote is brought down by **The Chofetz Chaim** in Ahavas Chesed [Chelek 2 Perek 5]: from the **Yalkut** based on the pasuk in **הושע** 6:6 **כִּי חֶסֶד חָפַצְתִּי וְלֹא־זָבַח** – '***For I desire loving-kindness, and not sacrifices***.'

כדאיתא בילקוט הושע (רמז תקכ"ב) על הפסוק (הושע ו' ו'): ', כי חסד חפצתי ולא זבח" אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: חביב עלי החסד שאתם גומלים זה לזה, יותר מכל הזבח שזבח שלמה לפני - (מלכים א' ג' ד'): "אלף עלות יעלה שלמה".
ויותר מזה מצינו בירושלמי דפאה (ג'.), דצדקה וגמילות חסדים שקולות כנגד כל מצותיה של תורה - "For I desire kindness and not sacrifice"- הקדוש ברוך הוא said: 'I love the kindness you reciprocate with each other, more than all the sacrifices that Shlomo Hamelech offered before Me.' **אֶלֶף עֹלוֹת יַעֲלֶה שְׁלֹמֹה עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַהוּא** – '***A thousand burnt offerings did Shlomo Hamelech offer upon that altar.'- 1 Kings 3:4). And more than that, we found in Yerushalmi Daf 3a 'Charity and acts of kindness are considered as equal to all the commandments of the Torah!'***

The actual words of the Yalkut are as follows: Remez 522:5

כי חסד חפצתי ולא זבח. אמר הקב"ה חביב עלי חסד שאתם גומלים זה לזה יותר מכל הזבח שזבח שלמה לפני אלף עולות יעלה שלמה וכה"א זאת התורה לעולה למנחה, זאת התורה לא עולה ולא מנחה....היה רבן יוחנן בן זכאי מהלך בירושלים והיה רבי ייהושע מהלך אחריו ראה בית המקדש שהוא חרב אמר אוי לנו על הבית שחרב מקום שמתכפרין בו עונותינו, א"ל בני אל ירע לך שיש לנו כפרה אחרת שהיא כמותה ואי זה זה גמילות חסדים..., לכך נאמר כי חסד חפצתי ולא זבח, ואומר אמרתי עולם חסד יבנה



An Unbelievable Hashgacha Pratis Story in Toronto – Rabbi Shlomo Landau

Over Pesach, somebody shared a story with me that they heard directly from the person that it happened to:

Just a few weeks before Pesach, on a random day at 11am when he usually in the office, he decided to go and learn. He lives in Toronto, so he went to Agudah South on Bathurst Street Toronto.



He unlocks the door, comes into the shul, sits down and he begins to learn.

Just a few minutes later there was somebody frantically knocking and banging on the door. He goes to open the door, and standing there is a distraught woman who said, "You've got to help me!"

He answers, "Are you ok, what's wrong?"

She said, "I'm from Oregon in the USA. When I heard that there was going to be a total eclipse across America on April 8, 2024, I decided to come and see this spectacular phenomenon at Niagara falls together with a million other people.

While I was there at the falls, I remembered that I had an elderly uncle, a holocaust survivor, who lived in an old age home somewhere near Toronto Canada. I decided that this would be a great opportunity to go and visit him. The home was actually in Hamilton Ontario.

When I arrived at the front desk and requested to see him, the receptionist said, 'I'm so sorry, but I must inform you of the sad news that your uncle passed away just a few days ago.'

'So where is he?'

'He's in the morgue. If he is not claimed within 3 more days, we are going to cremate him.'

[The way it works in Canada is that if there is no next of kin to claim a deceased person within 7 days, then there is a blanket rule that the body is disposed of by cremation!]

'You can't cremate him – he's my uncle – he's a Jew!'

'No problem. If you can arrange a burial and take care of all the arrangements, documents and proof of next of kin, we will be happy to release the body to you. – if not, DEFAULT – we will cremate him!'

I had no idea what to do. I was in Hamilton Ontario – an unfamiliar and strange place. But I knew that in Toronto there is a Jewish community, and Jews help Jews, so I hopped on a bus to Toronto. I

had absolutely no idea what I would do once I arrived, as I didn't know anybody there.



The bus went along Bathurst Street right past a small orthodox shul with the sign – 'Kielcer Congregation'.

Kielce is a city in southern Poland where over a hundred years ago, people who emigrated from Poland, established this shul. Eventually, all the original members died and it merged with Agudah, and became known as Agudath Israel South and Kielcer Congregation.

My Uncle came from the city of Kielce! Maybe they could help me.

I got off the bus and started banging on the door frantically. And you opened the door!"

"Help me", she says. "We can't let them cremate my uncle."

"You're right, let's see what we can do."

He contacted the necessary askonim, and was able to arrange a respectable Kosher burial within the parameters of halacha **כַּדָּת וְכַדִּין**.

****

What's incredible is that this man never learns in this shul at 11am. This woman '*radomly*' gets on a bus that goes down Bathurst Street and passes a shul named after the city that her uncle came from! And like they say, "The rest is history."

There is one more amazing detail in this story.

When they shared the story with the Rav of the shul, he said, "I will tell you the truth, but years ago we decided to drop the name 'Kielce' from the shul's name and call it just Agudath Israel South

Congregation, as all the original members have passed on, However, we have never got around to it! Now we realize there was a reason why!"

How magnificent and wonderful are the ways of Hashem!

Kielce, Poland



Kielce is a town located in southeastern Poland. Jews were excluded from Kielce by a royal "privilege" granted to the city in 1535. Kielce belonged to the estates of the bishops of krakow until 1818, and thus the prohibition on Jewish settlement remained in force. In 1833 a small number of Jews settled in Kielce. They were expelled in 1847 but returned shortly afterward. In 1852 there were 101 Jews in Kielce and the congregation was affiliated to the neighboring community at Checiny.

It became a separate community in 1868, and a cemetery was established. The Jewish population increased from 974 in 1873 to 2,659 in 1882, 6,399 in 1897, and 11,206 in 1909, mainly by

immigration from the adjacent small towns. A pogrom in 1918 did not prevent the growth of the community, which by 1921 numbered 15,530 (37.6% of the total population), and by 1931, 18,083. Jews pioneered in exploiting the natural resources of the region and developed industries, commerce, and crafts; among enterprises established by Jews were several banks. Jewish organizations included associations of Jewish merchants and artisans, an old-age home, and an orphanage, as well as a library, a high school, and a number of religious and secular Jewish schools. A Yiddish weekly was published jointly for the Kielce and Radom communities.

Holocaust Period

In 1939 about 25,000 Jews lived in Kielce. The German army entered the city on Sept. 4, 1939, and the Jews became the subject of terror and persecution. During the first months of 1940 about 3,000 Jews from krakow as well as Jews from Lodz and Lalisz and its vicinity were deported to Kielce, whose Jewish population swelled to about 28,000. On March 31, 1941, after 7,500 Jews arrived from Vienna, a decree was issued to establish a ghetto. On the eve of Passover the ghetto was sealed off from the outside world. A Judenrat was appointed, chaired by Moshe Pelc, who was eventually arrested and deported to Auschwitz for resisting German orders. His place was filled by Herman Levi, who tended toward collaboration with the Germans. The situation of the population in the ghetto rapidly deteriorated. About 4,000 people died during a typhus epidemic in 1941. In the course of three days (Aug. 20–24, 1942), about 21,000 Jews were deported to Treblinka and exterminated. The ghetto was virtually liquidated. The remaining 2,000 Jews were concentrated in a newly established slave labor camp. Preparations in the camp for an armed rising, conducted by an underground organization headed by David Barwiner and Gershon Levkowicz, did not succeed. In 1943 a number of deportations from the labor camp took place of about 1,000 people for slave labor camps in Skarzysko-Kamienna , Blizyna, and Pionki,

where only a handful survived. The last deportation took place in August 1944, when all the remaining Jewish prisoners were sent to Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Kielce became officially *judenrein*. Leon Rodal of Kielce was one of the commanders of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Postwar Period

After the war about 200 Jews went to Kielce; some were survivors of Nazi camps, or had hidden in the district, and others had come back from the interior of the U.S.S.R. Their reconstruction of the former organized Jewish community aroused anger among Polish antisemites, who opened a vituperous campaign against the existence of a renewed Jewish community in Kielce. The campaign culminated in an armed pogrom against the Jews – mostly by Polish nationalists and including a few Communists (July 4, 1946). The Jews had no adequate means for self-defense since the police had confiscated the few pistols among them just one day previously. In this pogrom, the largest attack on Jews following the Nazi era, 60–70 Jews were murdered, including children and pregnant women, and around 100 were injured. The pogrom gave impetus to the Jews in Kielce and to the other Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Poland, including those who had returned from the Soviet Union, to leave Poland en masse for the West. They reached the displaced persons camps and joined the massive *Beriḥah* movement to Ereẓ Israel. A monument was erected in the Kielce Jewish cemetery to perpetuate the memory of the victims of the Kielce pogrom. Organizations of former Kielce residents exist in Israel, the U.S., Canada, Argentina, and France.

A pogrom took place in Kielce, Poland, in July 1946. Forty-two Jews were massacred and about 50 more were wounded. The event touched off a mass migration of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Poland and other countries of eastern and central Europe.

While the pogrom was not an isolated instance of anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland, the Kielce massacre convinced many Polish Jews that they had no future in Poland after the Holocaust and spurred them to flee the country. Coming just one year after the end of World War II, the massacre shocked people around the world.

In 1939 there were approximately 24,000 Jewish inhabitants in Kielce or one-third of the town's population. Almost all of them were murdered during the Holocaust. By the summer of 1946, about 200 Holocaust survivors had returned to or settled in Kielce. A minority were able to reclaim some property which had been confiscated by non-Jews during the German occupation.

On July 1, 1946, a nine-year-old non-Jewish boy, Henryk Blaszczyk, left his home in Kielce, without informing his parents. When he returned on July 3, the boy told his parents and the police, in an effort to avoid punishment for wandering off, that he had been kidnapped and hidden in the basement of the local Jewish Committee building on 7 Planty Street. The Committee building sheltered up to 180 Jews, and housed various Jewish institutions operating in Kielce at the time. The local police went to investigate the alleged crime in the building, and even though Henryk's story began to unravel (the building, for example, had no basement), a large crowd of angry Poles, including one thousand workers from the Ludwikow steel mill, gathered outside the building.

Polish soldiers and policemen entered the building and called upon the Jewish residents to surrender any weapons. After an unidentified individual fired a shot, officials and civilians fired upon the Jews inside the building, killing some of them. Outside, the angry crowd viciously beat Jews fleeing the shooting, or driven onto the street by the attackers, killing some of them. By day's end, civilians, soldiers and police had killed 42 Jews and injured 40 others. Two non-Jewish Poles died as well, killed either by Jewish residents

inside the building or by fellow non-Jewish Poles for offering aid to the Jewish victims.

Three days after the pogrom, surviving Jews and local residents buried the victims in a mass grave in the Jewish cemetery. Government authorities ordered military units and local residents to attend the funeral as a sign of respect for the victims. Although the government executed nine of the attackers on July 14, following a hasty judicial investigation, the Kielce Pogrom sparked intense fear in the already traumatized postwar Polish Jewish community.

In September and October 1946, Polish authorities in Kielce indicted civilians, soldiers and police officers for their participation in the pogrom and complicity in the killings. Among the defendants were the commander of the Kielce Office of the Security Service, Major Wladyslaw Sobczynski, and the Chief of Police, Colonel Wiktor Kuznicki, as well as his deputy, Major Kazimierz Gwiazdowicz; of the three, only Kuznicki received a one-year sentence, while the other two were acquitted.

The Kielce pogrom became a symbol of the precarious state of Jewish life in Eastern Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust.



The Weekly Vort

Pirkei Avos

שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ולא אמרו עלוי דברי תורה כאלו אכלו מזבחי מתים – ***If three people ate at one table and uttered no words of Torah, it is as if they partook of sacrifices to the dead*** (3:3). When one realizes clearly, without doubt, that his sustenance comes only from Hashem, his Divine soul derives as much pleasure from his eating as Hashem Himself does from a *korban*. When one eats only to satisfy his hunger, however, his eating is comparable to a *korban* to his animalistic soul, which is like an offering to the dead. To avoid

this "idol worship," the Mishnah urges us to say words of Torah at a meal. For the light of the Torah clarifies that Hashem is the source of everything. This clarity was also Chazal's intent in mandating a *brocha* before eating. [**R' Tzadok HaKohein**] (Fathers and Sons)

Fascinating INSIGHTS



A Haircut in Meiron

The custom among many is to give a child his first haircut at the age of three. Many go to Meiron to the of R' Shimon Bar Yochai to do this. In fact, the **Arizal** took his young son with his family to the grave of R' Shimon Bar Yochai and gave him a haircut (*upsherin*) there on Lag Ba'omer, followed by a celebration.

The Ateres Yeshua shows us an allusion to this custom. The word **והתגלח**, which is written with a peculiarly large **ג** alludes to that at age three (as **ג** has a gematria of 3), we do **והתגלח**, give a haircut. Additionally, this word, **והתגלח**, is found in the 33rd pasuk in that chapter, which hints to performing the *upsherin* on Lag Ba'omer, the 33rd day of the Omer.

R' Ovadia Yosef remarks that some are accustomed to perform an *upsherin* on Lag Ba'omer in Meiron. However, nowadays where there is a breach in tznius there on Lag Ba'omer, it is better not to go (*Shev V'al Taaseh Adif*).



This first haircut is called a **חאלאקע** (chalaka), from the term **איש חלק**, smooth-skinned man, since when one has an *upsherin*, he now has a smooth head.

We have a principle known as a **ערלה**, the first three years of a newly planted tree or its grafted shoots, is forbidden for use. Since man is compared to the tree of the field (**כי האדם עץ השדה**), we therefore don't touch his hair for the first three years. In the fourth year all its fruit is 'sanctified to laud Hashem'. So too, on the beginning of the fourth year of a child, he is dedicated to Hashem as we introduce him to the Torah. Indeed, this is why we have a celebration by an *upsherin*.



Pesach Sheini

The *Zohar* writes regarding Pesach Sheini, - **"On this day, it is announced in heaven, 'Whoever hasn't yet seen the *Shechinah* should come now to see the *Shechinah* before the gates close... This is announced on the 14th day of the second month (Pesach Sheini). The gates [of heaven] will remain open for seven days. Afterwards, they close."**

The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l asks why the gates close after seven days. Why can't they remain open?

He answers that in this week, there is Lag b'Omer, a day of great salvations. The gates can close at the end of the week because all our needs were certainly granted and our tefillos answered, so they no longer need to remain open.

It is a very special seven days, a week of seeing the Shechinah and a week of salvations. It is a week when the gates of heaven are open; only a fool wouldn't take advantage of this tremendous opportunity.

Now is the time to focus on Torah and tefillah. Now, it is the time for growth and salvation. Now, it is the time to grab as much goodness as possible.

Tosfos Shabbos

Someone who loves Shabbos will try to have as much of it as possible. Friday afternoon, he will usher Shabbos in early, and Motzei Shabbos, he won't begin working the moment night falls. He will bring Shabbos into the night.

This is the spirit of the Mitzvah of the Torah called *Tosfos Shabbos*, which is to add onto Shabbos at its beginning and end.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu has immense joy when we perform *Tosfos Shabbos.*

The custom [on *Motzei Shabbos*] is to recite **והוא רחום** and **ברכו** in a long, sweet tune, to add some moments onto the Shabbos."

Although this adds only a few seconds to the Shabbos, it is also considered *Tosfos Shabbos*.

The Shaarei Teshuvah writes in the name of the Chida: "One who draws out **ברוך ה' המברך** on *Motzei Shabbos* will be saved from damage throughout the week. The Chida also writes in the name of Reb Chaim Vital, in the name of Rav Hai Gaon, *z'l*, that there is a **קבלה דמנסי**, a proven *segulah,* that if one draws out **ברוך ה' המברך** on Motzei Shabbos, he will succeed in all of his endeavors."

We learn from the above the incredible blessings one earns for *Tosfos Shabbos*, and even for just a short moment of *Tosfos Shabbos*. For that, he earns protection and success in all his endeavors!

The Yeitav Panim says, when we make *Tosfos Shabbos* we are bringing Shabbos in before its set time. Hashem acts with us *middah keneged middah*.

Just as we bring in Shabbos before its time, Hashem will also bring us the Shabbos of the future – **יום שכולו שבת**, the era of Moshiach – before its set time.

Benefits of Tosfos Shabbos



Chazal (*Kiddushin* 39:) teach us **שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא** -"The reward for keeping the mitzvos is not received in this world."

But there are exceptions to this rule. Some good deeds are rewarded in this world, too. One example is *Tosfos Shabbos*.

The Yeitav Panim writes that the rule **שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא** applies when one performs only the minimum requirement of the Mitzvah. When one goes beyond the bare obligation, like when one keeps Tosfos Shabbos, he is rewarded in this world, too.

One can merit **בני חיי ומזוני** children, health, and longevity, *parnassah*, and more from keeping *Tosfos Shabbos*.

The reward is without limit. Chazal (*Shabbos* 118.) say **כל המענג את השבת נותנים לו נחלה בלי מצרים**, "Whoever honors and enjoys the Shabbos, will be rewarded without boundaries."

The Ben Yehoyada says the Gemara is referring to the reward of keeping T*osafos Shabbos*.

Shabbos has a **גבול**, boundary – when it begins and when it ends. When one adds onto Shabbos, and increases its boundaries, his reward will be *midah kneged midah* - **נחלה בלי מצרים**, boundless and unlimited.

● **בני - Children**

The Arizal would instruct those who didn't have children to keep *Tosfos Shabbos* at its beginning and end and to teach others to do the same, because doing so is *mesugal* for bearing children.

● **חיי - Life**

Shulchan Aruch (256) requires people to finish their work early on erev Shabbos, so they don't end up working on Shabbos, *chalilah*. The Pri Megadim adds that we should be even more cautious during the winter when Shabbos arrives early.

He concludes **המוסיף מחול על הקודש מוסיפין לו חיים** - "Whoever adds from the weekday onto Shabbos, will live a longer life." - *Tosfos Shabbos* is *mesugal* for longevity.

● **מזוני - Parnassah**

Tosfos Shabbos is also *mesugal* for *parnassah*. Rebbe Mordechai Lechovitzer says, "*Baalebatim* complain that they don't have enough *parnassah*. If they listened to me, they would keep *Tosfos Shabbos,* and then they would lack nothing."

Reb Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* said that this is alluded to in the Gemara (Shabbos 118a) **עשה שבתך חול ואל תצטרך לבריות**. He explained, bring your Shabbos into the weekdays through *Tosfos Shabbos*, **ואל תצטרך לבריות** - and you will never need assistance from others.

The *Tola'as Yaakov* (*Sod HaShabbos* 6) explains that when one keeps *Tosfos Shabbos*, he is broadening the boundaries of *kedushah*, for he is turning the weekday into Shabbos. Heaven will therefore treat him in the same way and broaden his *parnassah*.

Be Ready for Shabbos Early

According to the Rambam, *Tosfos Shabbos* isn't an obligation. Nevertheless, even according to the Rambam, it is ideal to be ready for Shabbos early. It is an honor for Shabbos when one is prepared for Shabbos before Shabbos arrives.

Shulchan Aruch (262) states, "[*Erev Shabbos*] set the table, make the beds, and get the home ready, so everything will be in order when he comes home from shul… One should attempt to wear nice clothing, and to be happy when Shabbos arrives, like someone who goes out to greet a king or to greet a bride and groom."

Rachmei Ha'Av (*Shabbos*) writes, "One must be very careful to be a **שומר שבת**. This means to wait for Shabbos to arrive; it shouldn't be that Shabbos waits for him.

Most important, storeowners should practice *zrizus* and close their stores early. When it is close to Shabbos, the *yetzer hara* sends many customers to their stores. Some customers will say that they need to buy items important for Shabbos, such as Shabbos *lecht*. Don't pay attention to their pleas. They are messengers of the *yetzer hara*.

There are always many things to take care of. There are work, chores, and family obligations, but if you get carried away with these matters, you won't properly greet the Shabbos. - Shabbos requires preparation.

For example, Tzaddikim taught that it is good to sleep on *Erev Shabbos*, so you will be able to daven well and greet the Shabbos with joy. Being *maavir sidrah* on Friday also helps one welcome the Shabbos in the right spirit.

Perhaps you can also cook or bake something tasty for Shabbos in the kitchen. If you are the head of the family, it would be good for you to prepare the *parashah*, perhaps prepare a few inspirational stories, so you will have what to speak about during the meal.

The problem is, who has time for all this? But if you pretend you are dead on *Erev Shabbos*, you can dedicate your time towards preparing for Shabbos. - This is a good sign for you.

Miracle in Be'er Sheva – Rabbi Shlomo Landau



This past Friday was a sweltering hot day in Be'er Sheva. To avoid the heat in many of their homes, people were outside. Children were in playgrounds and in parks, when suddenly from a distance, the residents of Be'er Sheva saw a massive sandstorm cloud approaching.

Mothers grabbed their children. Families went running for shelter. When they ran into their apartments, they slammed the doors shut, and sealed up the windows. – No one wanted the sand to come into their homes.

Within moments, the air raid sirens sounded, as 10 rockets from Rafah scored direct hits on the city of Be'er Sheva!! One of the rockets demolished a playground which only moments ago had been packed full of families and children! - That sandstorm saved their lives! The riboino Shel Olam had prepared the *refuah* before the *makka*. - Yet another episode of the clear Yad Hashem.



Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



Rav Yaakov Galinsky, zt"l, was once sitting on a bus next to a man who did not keep the Mitzvos. Rav Yaakov saw that the man was interested in talking with him, so before they even started speaking, Rav Yaakov pre-emptively said to him that every Jew must have a "red line" in his Judaism, a line that he would never cross. - He asked the man, "Do you have such a line?"

The man thought for a moment and then said that his line was that he would never give up being a Jew. He had no desire to be a gentile.

Rav Galinsky said, "When I was young, I was passing through a town near the Black Sea, and I saw the mayor of the town giving a speech. The mayor was urging the people to make a stand against Hitler, ym"sh, who, if not stopped in their town, would have a clear path into the countries beyond. - The message was clear, to stop Hitler from reaching and overrunning there, he had to be stopped here.

It is the same with a person's red line," Rav Galinsky said. "If one wants to be assured that he will never cross over his line, he shouldn't set up his defences at that particular point, but rather, it should be much further away, in order to protect his red line!"



משל למה הדבר דומה

וחגתם אתו חג לה' שבעת ימים בשנה ... (כג-מא)

Many years ago in ancient *Yerushalayim*, lived a *tzaddik* by the name of **R' Nota Zenwirth *zt"l***. Many stories are told of his extreme piety and unwavering commitment to do the will of *Hashem*. Once, he entered his *Beis Medrash* holding a broom. This was very uncharacteristic of him, and he received many quirky looks for it.

Well aware of his actions, he nevertheless began circling the *Beis Medrash*. It took a few minutes but finally someone approached him and asked him why he was bringing a broom into *Beis Medrash*.

"I'm not," he replied. "I am holding a *lulav*." (Brooms in those days were made from a palm tree branch.) By now everyone in the room was watching. With everyone's full attention, he explained: "On *Sukkos* I took a *lulav* and performed the important *mitzvah* of shaking a *lulav*, because that was the will of *Hashem* at that time. Now, however, it is the will of *Hashem* that I take a broom and clean up this *Beis Medrash*. - Just look at the *Beis Medrash* you are all in," said R' Nota in an anguished tone, "it's impossible to *daven* here with the mess on the floor right now!"

This week's *parsha* discusses many of the exciting *mitzvos* we perform on *Yom Tov*. While much attention is given to these commandments, many other *mitzvos* - no less important - unfortunately get left by the wayside.

Indeed, many people go to great lengths to insure they perform the "high-end" commandments correctly, while losing sight of the less stimulating *mitzvos*. But this must not be the case. The *mitzvos* we perform on *Yom Tov* with much fanfare, should really be a catalyst for the greatly outnumbered *mitzvos* we perform during the year with far less fanfare. This is the ultimate *nachas* we can bring the *Ribbono shel Olam*.



Holocaust Survivors

A shomer-Shabbos hotel in Netanya once had to deal with a difficult predicament with a couple who wished to make a reservation there. After giving their deposit, the couple contacted the hotel and wanted to pay upfront for their stay. The front desk responded that since payment was only due when departing, there was no reason to pay upfront.

The couple then explained that since they'd be continuing their journey on Shabbos, when the front desk would be closed, they wanted to pay upfront to get the matter of payment squared away and dealt with.

Hearing this, the clerk then apologized and told them that their reservation would have to be cancelled, as the hotel's policy was that they only rent their rooms to *shomrei Shabbos*. Having admitted to plan to drive away on Shabbos, they obviously didn't fit the hotel's policy and couldn't stay in the hotel. They pleaded with the secretary to reconsider, but she said she couldn't do anything more than let them speak with the hotel manager, Mr. Schechter.

Mr. Schechter heard their situation, but he repeated to them that the hotel's policy was to only accept reservations from *Shomrei Shabbos*. They told him that this hotel was the only one in the area that they needed to be in, and that they couldn't go anywhere else. Mr. Schechter didn't acquiesce but said that he'd consult his Rav and get back to them with the final answer.

Mr. Schechter then went and sought the guidance of **R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv**. When he got into the room, it took several minutes before he was recognized, but once R' Elyashiv saw him, he presented to him the question. R' Elyashiv replied with his typical several-word response that contained great guidance: "Why should it bother you if they eat kosher for a few days?!" With that Mr. Schechter left the room.

In other words, R' Elyashiv was saying that being in their hotel would be one of the only times that these Jews would be eating kosher. Who knows what they eat the rest of the time? Now that they'd be eating kosher for several days, don't shoo them away. Let them have a few days of eating kosher, and don't let their Shabbos departure disturb that opportunity.

With these few short words, Mr. Schechter took his answer and headed back to the hotel, making an exception for this couple and allowing them to stay in his hotel.

When he called the couple back, he could tell from the other side of the line that they were touched beyond just the fact that they were allowed to stay in the hotel. Mr. Schechter asked them what moved them so, and they went on to explain.

They were Holocaust survivors who arrived in Israel with no family and no support system. Nobody in their new world showed them any interest in doing mitzvos, as they had done when they grew up in Europe, and so they slowly drifted away from their previous dedication. Eventually, they'd drifted so far as to stop observing Torah and mitzvos altogether.

When they heard how R' Elyashiv valued the mitzvos they'd do by eating kosher, enough to advise the hotel to go against their policy, it was the first show of support they'd been given for their mitzvos that they'd heard of in a long time. They saw how he valued their mitzvos, and the empty void they'd felt all those years could be filled yet again.

When that Shabbos finally came, something surprising happened. The staff assumed that they'd see the couple packing their bags, making an obvious departure on Shabbos, but they saw no such thing. Mr. Schechter assumed that they'd defiantly be seen violating the Shabbos, but to the contrary, they were seen observing Shabbos and taking in every aspect of it, absorbing it into their bones and cherishing every moment.

This story doesn't end here. Experiencing the uplifting aura of Shabbos left them motivated and inspired to start keeping other mitzvos. One mitzvah led to another, until over time they were observing all the mitzvos, no different than any other Yid. (*The Joy of Emunah*, p. 259)

By knowing how their mitzvos were cherished by R' Elyashiv, this couple built an inner appreciation toward Torah and mitzvos. We too, by knowing how our mitzvos are treasured by Hashem, we can build in us an inner recognition, appreciation, and admiration toward the mitzvos we do, leaving us with a strong pride, satisfaction and happiness in being able to serve Hashem.

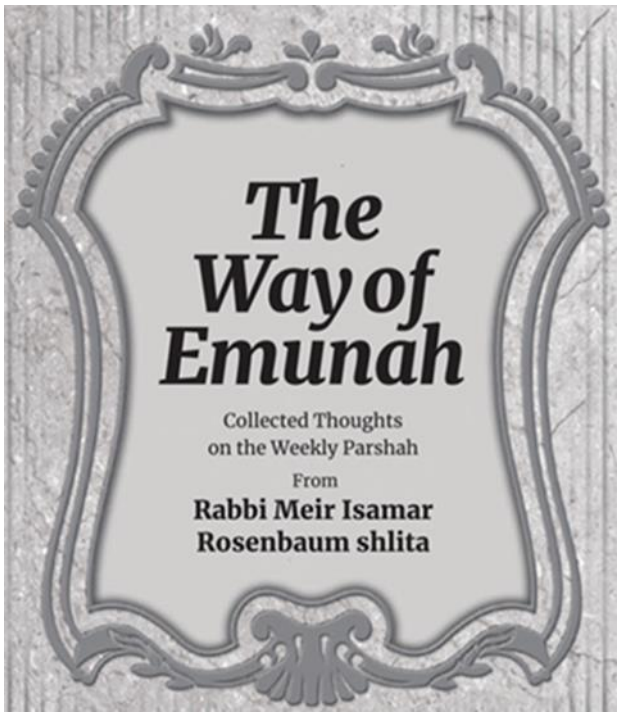
"A person is where their thoughts are. When they trust in Hashem, they are attached to Hashem's kindness. When they are worried, they are bound to din, to limitation. – Therefore, that is what they receive." ~ Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk.

Parshah Pearls (adapted from the Ba'al ha'Turim)

The Fortuitous Five

The five afflictions on Yom Kippur icorrespond to the five times "Nefesh" that are written in this Parshah.

And by the same token, the Kohen Gadol Toiveled five times during the Yom Kippur service and we Daven five Tefilos on Yom Kippur.



אֱמֹר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לְנֶפֶשׁ לֹא־יִטַּמָּא בְּעַמָּיו – '***Say to the kohanim, the sons of Aharon… not to become tamei to a person amongst your nation***.' (21:1)

● Tzadikei Hador Must Care for the public

Rashi explains: "**אמר ואמרת**' (say and you shall say), (this double expression comes to admonish the adult Kohanim to be responsible for the youngsters."

Sefer Emunas Moshe (Alexander) explains these words with a story involving Rav Mordechai Rakower zt"l, the "court badchan" of the **Chozeh of Lublin zy"a**.

Rav Mordechai understood that the tzadik hador, who brought down an abundance of Heavenly goodness to the world, needed to be joyful in order to perform such feats; therefore, he would raise the Rebbe's spirits with his humorous words.

Every day, R' Mordechai would ask the Rebbe, "What's cooking today?" One day, the Chozeh was very busy with his holy work and when R' Mordechai asked his standard question, he replied, "As far as I'm concerned, you can cook stones!"

R' Mordechai jokingly replied, "That's for the Rebbe. But what is for the chasidim?"

His intent was that tzadikim are able to manage with very little and suffer through affliction, but the general public cannot. They need Hashem to help them.

Accordingly, Rashi is saying that the gedolim have to be warned about the ketanim, meaning that the great men of the generation have to be reminded to worry about the small people, who are not on their level, and to be concerned about their physical and economic state.

After the Holocaust, the **Belzer Rebbe zy"a**, who had moved to Eretz Yisroel, expressed a desire to open a yeshiva for the surviving bochurim. It was suggested that a certain distinguished talmid chochom should serve as the Rosh Yeshiva, but the Rebbe rejected this idea because this individual was known to be very strict.

He said, "Klal Yisroel has had enough pepper. What we need now is a lot of sugar." In other words, the bochurim needed kindness and love, not strictness!

כִּי כָל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ מוּם לֹא יִקְרָב אִישׁ – '***Because every man who has a blemish cannot come close***.' (21:18)

● One Who Thinks He is Whole is Incomplete

Rav Meir Premishlan zy"a discerns from this pasuk that a person who considers himself as a "kol ish" - a "whole" and perfect person - meaning that he thinks he knows everything and has no room for improvement, is a blemished person who cannot come close to Hashem.

'We are obligated to thank Hashem for everything.' ~ Berachot 46b

מִמּוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם תָּבִיאוּ לֶחֶם תְּנוּפָה שְׁתַּיִם שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֹנִים סֹלֶת תִּהְיֶינָה חָמֵץ תֵּאָפֶינָה בִּכּוּרִים לַה׳ – '***From your dwelling places, you shall bring bread, set aside… they shall be baked leavened, the first offering to Hashem***.' (23:17)

● **Through Achdus, Aveiros Tranform Into Zechuyos**

Sefer Imrei Chaim explains the pasuk to mean that when Yidden sit together in their dwelling places and engage in avodas Hashem, even their "chometz" – their aveiros – are "baked" and transformed into merits, as if they are bikkurim – presents for Hashem.

בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשֶּׁה לַה׳ עֲצֶרֶת הִוא כָּל־מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ – '***On the eighth day, it shall be a holy occasion for you, and you shall bring a fire offering to Hashem. It is a day of detention…***' (23:36)

● ***Ahavah Leads to Achdus***

Rashi quotes the Medrash that says that Hashem tells Klal Yisroel: "I have detained you with Me." - "This is analogous to a king who invited his sons to feast with him for a certain number of days, and when the time came for them to leave, he said: 'My sons! Please, stay with me just one more day, it is difficult for me to part with you!'"

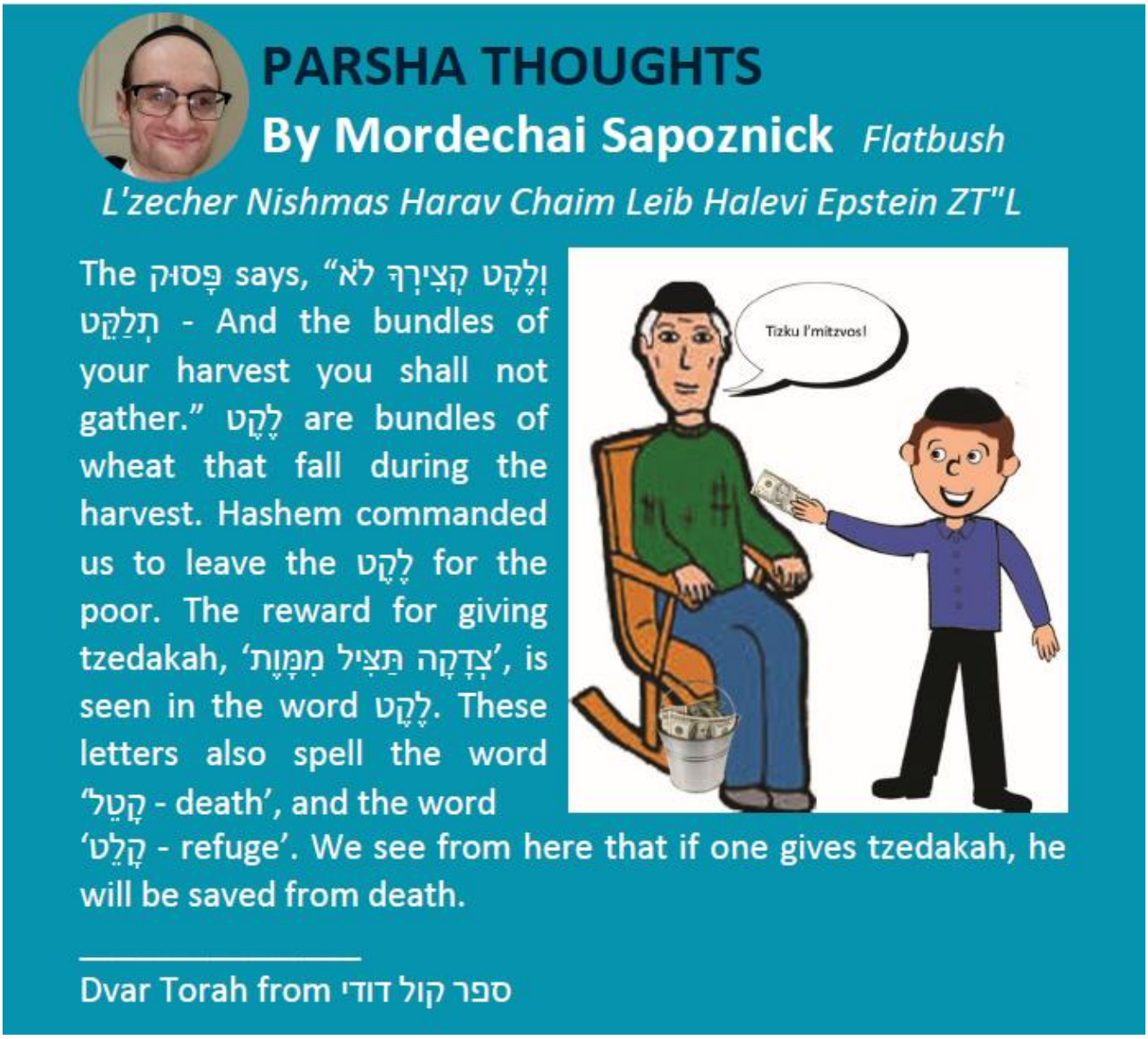
Sefer Ahavas Shalom explains that most fathers want their sons to get along and love each other. If they get into a fight, it pains their father. If he wants to make peace between them, a good strategy is to arrange a large feast and to use it as forum to discuss their disagreement. The gathering will create feelings of comradery, which the father can use to bring back their love for each other.

So too, Hashem wants His children to be united and to love each other. Therefore, he asks us to remain with Him for one more feast because "**קשה עלי פרידתכם**" – it is difficult for Him when we are apart from each other, and He wants us to be united as one.

● I Still Have One Kasha

Sefer Nifla'im Maasecha quotes the **Payer Rebbe zy"a** as relating the following story: **The Sanzer Rov zy"a** and the **Tzemach Dovid of Dinov zy"a** shared a close friendship. The Dinover Rebbe once was traveling and he stopped in Sanz to visit the Sanzer Rov. The two tzadikim spoke for a long time and when the Dinover was about to depart, he said, "Sanzer Rov, I have a kasha."

The Sanzer Rov asked him what his kasha was and he replied, "My kasha is **קשה עלי פרידתכם**. It is hard for me to part with you."



TORAHANYTIMES NEWSLETTER

Rabbi YY Jacobson - The Right Words

A number of years ago, I was invited to a *kumtzitz* for teenagers one Motzei Shabbos in Pomona, a neighborhood near Monsey. These were boys who'd generally be categorized as struggling teenagers and were studying in a particular yeshiva which provided the kind of warm environment and camaraderie they sought.

There they were, about forty of them, sitting around a fire pit. Guitars, drums, some other instruments, roasted marshmallows, hot dogs and hamburgers abounded, as the boys sang several uplifting melodies. There was a majestic and magical energy between us all. I had been invited to join them and spend the evening together, sharing some words, and I was taking it all in.

In the middle of one song, a boy came over to me. He put his chair right near me and put his hand on my shoulder, as you can picture friends sitting around a campfire. He then said these words: "Rabbi YY, why did my mother die?" I didn't expect such a question. I looked back at him, caught off guard, and said, "I'm sorry, when did she die?" "When I was eleven years old, nine years ago. We had a family of eleven children. I was one of the older kids, with many siblings under me. We were living in London when she got cancer and passed away. She was a young woman in her forties. Tell me, why did my mother die? I was so close to her. I loved her and she loved me. She was such a good mother."

I looked at him, as my hand went on his shoulder. "I don't know why your mother died," I said. "I'm so sorry." But the boy wouldn't have it that easy. "C'mon, tell me why! Why did she have to die?" I looked back at him. "I really don't know. But I would love to be here with you. It must be so painful. Nine years later you talk about it, and yet I can't give you an answer. But you know what? I can sing with you, I can cry with you, and I can listen to you." He started to cry, I

started to cry, and we sang together. He didn't say another word after that.

About twenty minutes later, he turned to me with tears in his eyes, again. "You know, you're the first one from dozens of people who said that they don't know. And this was the answer that I've been waiting a decade for." I wasn't sure I understood. "What do you mean 'this is the answer'?" "I went to so many people," he continued, "and everybody, and with good intentions, tried to explain to me some reason why my mother had died—whether it be relating to a *gilul, neshama, gan eden, kapparah, tikkun*—and it drove me mad. To me, it felt insensitive to my experience, even if they meant well. You were the first one to say, 'I don't know, but I can cry with you.'"

I realized at that moment how transformative those words had been for that boy. And indeed, this boy not only turned his life around, but became a powerhouse of inspiration and love for so many others.

Indeed, sometimes the right words, the right answer is, "I don't know, but I can cry with you." Those words say it all. They really do.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֱמֹר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

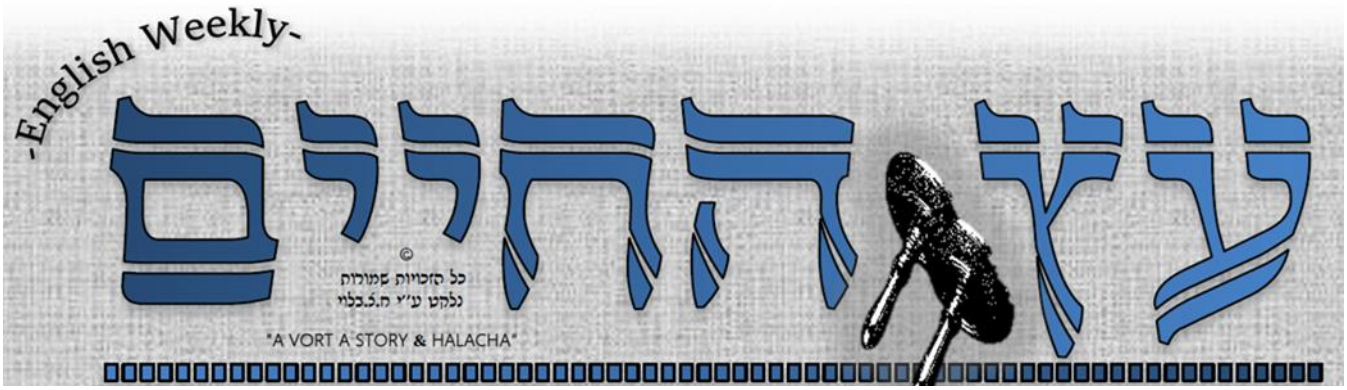
Much is discussed about the "double" language of Emor, V'Amarta, "say" and "you shall say" in the same posuk. If one pays attention though, it actually uses the word THREE times. While typically the Torah says, "Vayedaber HaShem el Moshe laimor," and G-d spoke to Moshe saying, this time it changes.

The posuk says, "Vayomer HaShem" (that's one) el Moshe, 'Emor el haKohanim B'nai Aharon' (that's two) 'v'amarta lahem,' (that's three.) Regarding the double language (mentions 2 and 3) Chazal say that it

is instructing the elders to teach the younger generation. However, the fact that HaShem chose to use the word "Vayomer, and He said" instead of "Vayedaber, and He spoke" is key. The word Amar/say is considered a "softer" tone, while Daber/speak is harsher.

When HaShem gave this command to Moshe, He did it by saying it softly, so as to set an example for Moshe how he should pass this command to the Kohanim, and they in turn to the younger Kohanim.

The lesson is that setting the right example is much more important than simply giving instructions if you want the listener to do it correctly.



Hot Bread?

There was a tremendous miracle with the Lechem Hapanim. What was the miracle? They would place it on the shulchan piping hot on Shabbos, and a week later on Shabbos it was still piping hot as though it had just been placed there that very day! When the Yidden came for the regel they would lift the Shulchan up high and show everyone this great miracle and how Hashem loves us.

Rav Elimelech Biderman Shlit'a asked; there were many miracles that occurred in the Bais Hamikdash. What did they see that was so special to show specifically this *nes* with the Shulchan and the Lechem Hapanim?

Rav Biderman answers that the Lechem Hapanim represent livelihood. When it comes to making money the natural feeling is that

if a person worked hard and made money that day they credit themselves. However, that is not the case. The Gemora says that all that a person will have that year is decided on Rosh Hashana.



This is the message we want to show the masses of Jews who come to be *oleh regel*. They say to them, "Take a look at the Lechem Hapanim, does it not look to you as if the breads were placed on the Shulchan TODAY? That they were baked TODAY? The truth is that they were baked a week ago!

This is the same message when it comes to parnassa. It LOOKS like what you worked today is what caused you to earn today, but the truth is that it was already decided in the beginning of the year that you would earn this money."

The lesson they are meant to take home with them after the regel is to strengthen their Emuna and from now on approach the inyan of their parnassa in an entirely different way; calm, relaxed and with menuchas hanefesh, knowing that it was all decided already and there is no need for unnecessary or too much hishtadlus to be done to bring the livelihood that they need.

The more you trust and believe that Hashem will give you everything you need, the less hishtadlus you have to do.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Quite often, we do not see the truth because we do not have the right perspective. If we change our "glasses" then we can see the truth more clearly.

Rav Shlomo Kluger ZT"L (1785-1869), the Rebbe of the **Beis HaLevi,** was a strong advocate of eliminating negative perspectives and biases that could obscure the truth. This would include recognizing the truth and appreciating Hashem's kindness.

He once asked a question regarding the Beracha in Shmoneh Esreh, "Barech Aleinu". In this Bracha, we ask Hashem to bless this year, "for the good". This Beracha is well understood when it is said in Shmoneh Esreh throughout the year. However, what about when we say this Beracha during the last Shmoneh Esreh of the year on the eve of Rosh HaShana? What "good" could possibly happen as the last moments of the year ebb away? - For example, is there enough time left in the year for our crops in the field to suddenly grow or for us to suddenly get a raise at work?

Rav Kluger answers that during this last Shmoneh Esreh of the year, we daven to Hashem for a change in our own perspective. At this time, we pray that Hashem should ***make us see*** that the year was good – to truthfully see and appreciate all of the blessings that Hashem has given us throughout the year.

Rav Kluger further notes that this explanation can apply when we say Barech Aleinu in Shmoneh Esreh at any time during the year - "Hashem, please ***make us see*** that the year we are having is for the good!"

"Songs of praise to Hashem brings down blessing from Hashem to all the worlds." ~ Zohar

SHABBOS STORIES

A Minyan at an Italian Gas Station - Rabbi Yosef Farhi



So here is a story from R' Goel Elkarif. A Jew who visited Italy told him this story about a group of Hassidic Jews who had been in Italy a week previously.

This Hassidic group was travelling on a private bus on the highway with many lanes, a highway that rarely has traffic. They intended to pray Minha upon their return to the hotel. For whatever reason, there was suddenly a big traffic jam on their highway. The Hassidim knew that they would not be able to arrive at the hotel before sunset. The told their guide that they wanted to stop at the nearby gas station to wash their hands and pray Minha properly.

The tour guide told them, "Just pray on the bus."

They said, "What? On the bus? There is no chance! We want to pray standing up, we want to wash our hands first…"

The tour guide said, "Are you insane? There is antisemitism around here in Italy! If people see you praying at the gas station, who knows what they will do to you!" But they insisted. "Someone who beautifies a Mitzvah, nothing bad will happen to them!"

The guide stopped the bus. The Hassidim got off the bus, washed their hands, and got ready to pray, deciding who among them should be the Hazzan. Suddenly, they see a huge motorcycle pull up right next to them, with a very loud and obnoxious engine-sound. The motor-biker had a ponytail and looked scary. He pulled off his helmet, and looked at the Hassidic group. "Minha?" he asked.

They said, Yes. He said, Great. He prayed Minha with them, and then said Kaddish. One of the guys approached him, and asked, "Excuse me. But the way you look, I would have never thought that you knew what Minha or Kaddish is, or what it even means to be a Jew…"

The biker said, "I grew up in Beit Yisrael neighborhood, in a Hareidi home. I went to Chutz La-aretz, and I went down in my spirituality, and in my religious observance. My father died a few years ago. Shortly before he passed, when we knew that his days were limited, he asked to speak with me. He said, "I begged you, that you put on Tefillin and keep Shabbat; but it seems that I have no one to talk to. One thing I am asking from you, please say Kaddish for me!"

I said to my father, You want me to say Kaddish!?! Better that I should not say Kaddish! I eat pork with my mouth, and I use my mouth to speak inappropriate talk. My mouth won't be able to help your soul with its Kaddish!!!

My father responded, "It seems that this is the Kaddish that I deserve… But all I am asking of you is to say Kaddish, once a year, on my Yahrzeit. That's it. Once a year!

O.k. No problem.

I said Kaddish each year on his yahrzeit. But today, I planned on travelling from my city in Italy, where I live, to Merce. 700

kilometers. As I was in middle of my trip, I remembered that today is my father's Yahrzeit. But as I was on the road, I realized that in all these small cities on the road, there are no minyanim, no Kaddish. As I road my bike, I turned to G-d and said, Master of the World! If you want me to say Kaddish for my father, please make it that I will have a minyan! This will be the sign. If my Kaddish is worth anything, I will find a minyan! But if my kaddish is not worth anything, I will not find a minyan!

I kept riding my bike, and the sun was setting. I understood that my Kaddish was not worth anything. Suddenly, I see a group of Hassidim at a gas station, out of nowhere, getting ready to pray. My heart jumped! G-d made it possible for me to say Kaddish on my father! G-d showed me that my Kaddish is worth something!

The Hassid told the man: G-d made this whole traffic jam, out of nowhere, in Italy, and a bunch of Hassidim who are not afraid of antisemitism, and who will do anything to pray the best Minha they can, because there is nothing in the world that is precious to G-d, like your Kaddish!!! So why do you say Kaddish once a year?! Say it as often as you can!

When we have something for a long time, we usually take it for granted. From the day we were born we have breathed air and seen sunlight and the beauty of nature. We have had sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch for such a long time we have lost our appreciation for them.

Make it a daily practice to view the world as if you were created today. Mentally picture yourself coming into the world for the first time and observe everything with a freshness. This exercise can transform the mundane into a thrilling experience. ~ R' Noson Tzvi Finkel zt"l

Dvar Torah

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

Rosh Hayeshiva



This week's Parshah is packed with the discussion of the Yamim Tovim. It is very interesting to note that smack in the middle of mentioning the festivals of Shavuos and Rosh Hashanah, the Torah tells us about the mitzvah of Pe'ah, to leave the corner of one's field for the poor.

What a seemingly strange place to insert this mitzvah! Why did the Torah specifically place this mitzvah here?

One answer is as follows. Both during the period leading up to Shavuos, the period of Sefiras ha'Omer, and during Rosh Hashanah, we are busy asking for our needs. During Sefiras ha'Omer we are supposed to pray for our material livelihood, that the crops should grow bountifully. On Rosh Hashanah we are judged for all of our needs of the coming year, and we pray for our ruchniyus and our lives.

The Torah here is teaching us something very important. - At the time we are busy and focused pleading for our own personal needs, we must not forget to think about others. "Leave the corner of your field for the poor" – never forget about the needs of others.

During the Israeli War of Independence, there was heavy shelling in Yerushalayim. The gadol ha'dor, **Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l** was hiding in a bomb shelter together with his talmidim, when a missile struck the wall of the shelter. The force of the impact caused large chunks of cement and bricks to break loose, and they came crashing down onto Rav Isser Zalman's leg.

The talmidim rushed to their rebbi's assistance and began to treat his bleeding leg. After unsuccessful attempts to stop the bleeding, one talmid told Rav Isser Zalman that he was going to leave the shelter to call for help.

The gadol adamantly refused, explaining that due to the dangerous situation outside on the streets, he would be endangering someone else's life should he call for help. "True," said Rav Isser Zalman, "I need help, but not at the expense of someone else's life."

Certainly it is important to be busy with our needs. Hashem wants us to daven and turn to Him for everything we need in our service of Him. However, the mitzvah of Pe'ah, sandwiched between the Yom Tov of Shavuos and the Yom Tov of Rosh Hashanah teaches us the importance of thinking about someone else.

Wishing you a good Shabbos

Lag B'Omer

Rav Yosef Nechemia Kornitzer zt"l [1880-1933 Rav of Krakow 1925-1933] asks, "What's so special about Lag B'Omer? What is it about this day that makes it so significant that the students of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying?

We know that the various sefiros correspond to the Avos Hakedoshim. Avrohom, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aaron and Dovid. Lag B'Omer is the 5th day of the 5th week - **הוד שבהוד**. Who is **הוד**? - Aaron Hakohen. – So Lag B'omer is the epitome of Aaron Hakohen. Aaron's middah was sholom - **אוהב שלום ורודף שלום**.

The students of Rabbi Akiva did not have shalom between them. But on Lag B'omer which is the epitome of **הוד שבהוד**, is the day that the students stopped dying.

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

Our parsha describes the mitzva of Lechem HaPanim. When the Beis HaMikdash was standing, the blessing of parnassa flowed to the world through a channel of kedusha. Namely, the Shulchan with Lechem HaPanim on it (see Sefas Emes on Torah, Emor 5652)

Since we don't have the Shulchan of the Beis HaMikdash today, what can provide a channel of kedusha for the blessing of parnassa nowadays?

Your dining room table! When words of Torah are spoken at any meal (Shabbos or weekday), the table at which the meal is eaten receives to some degree a status of the Shulchan! -This is based on the Mishna in Pirkei Avos **שְׁלשָׁה שֶׁאָכְלוּ עַל שֻׁלְחָן אֶחָד וְאָמְרוּ עָלָיו דִּבְרֵי תוֹרָה, כְּאִלּוּ אָכְלוּ מִשֻּׁלְחָנוֹ שֶׁל מָקוֹם בָּרוּךְ הוּא** (3:3) and the verse that the mishna quotes from the prophet Yechezkel **וַיְדַבֵּר אֵלַי זֶה הַשֻּׁלְחָן אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי ה'** (see Sefas Emes ibid.)



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● **What is the correct way to make oneself holy?**

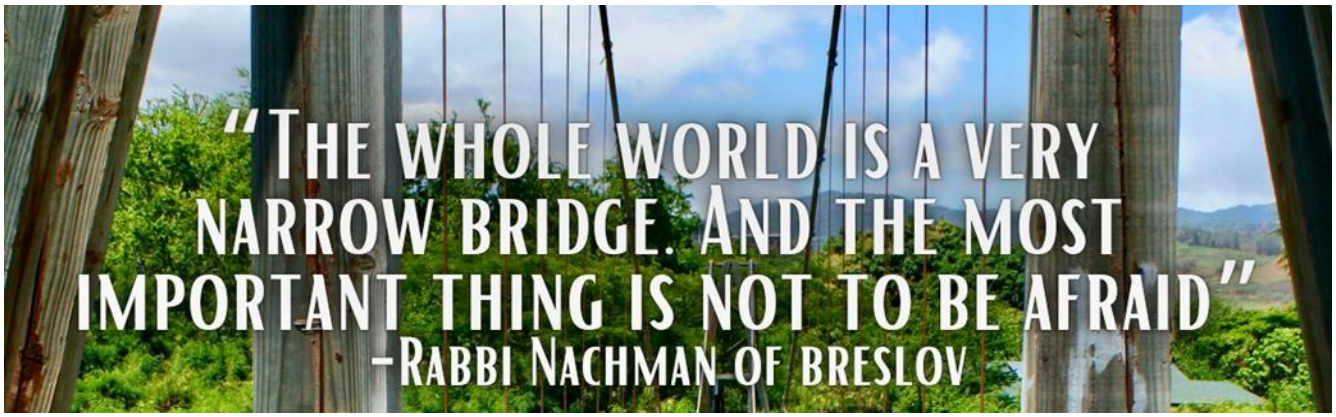
קְדֹשִׁים יִהְיוּ לֵאלֹקֵיהֶם וְלֹא יְחַלְּלוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹקֵיהֶם כִּי אֶת־אִשֵּׁי ה' לֶחֶם אֱלֹקֵיהֶם הֵם מַקְרִיבִם וְהָיוּ קֹדֶשׁ (21,6) "***They shall be holy to their G-d, and they shall not profane their G-d's name, because they offer up the fire offerings of Hashem, the food offering of their G-d, and they shall be holy.***"

It is well known that a person has to sanctify himself in all the needs of this world which are permitted to him - that even though they

are permitted he has to limit himself in these things as much as possible, as we discussed at length in parshas kedoshim, see there. But certainly one must go in stages. That is, initially a person should be careful with all the positive and negative commandments, and sanctify himself not to transgress the word of Hashem in any mitzvah, and only afterwards should he sanctify himself in those things which are permitted to him, and which are for his needs. But he should not first sanctify himself in things which are permitted to him, whilst he has not yet sanctified himself completely with that which is forbidden, and such conduct would be very contemptible, and completely intolerable.

This is what our posuk is saying: "They shall be holy to their G-d", that is, initially they shall sanctify themselves in that which is pertinent to their G-d, that which Hashem forbade them to do, in order that "they shall not profane their G-d's name" - because if they do not do this there will a great profanation of Hashem's name, "for they offer up the fire offerings of Hashem, the food offering of their G-d", and if great people like them transgress the word of Hashem, then there will be a great Chillul Hashem.

However, if they do keep Hashem's commandments, then it will be easy to for them to attain a much greater level than this, "and they shall be holy", that is, they shall be holy even in the things which are related to their needs and which are permitted to them.



Chabad.ORG

From our Sages

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הֲבִיאֲכֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה – *'You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the Shabbat, from the day on which you bring the Omer offering; seven complete weeks they shall be . . .' (23:15)*

The word *sefirah*, "counting," also means "illumination." On each of the forty-nine days of Sefirat HaOmer (the "Counting of the Omer"), we refine, develop and illuminate another of the forty-nine traits of our soul. (**Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezeritch**)

מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי – *'These are the appointed times of G-d, callings of holiness, which you shall call in their appointed time.' (23:2)*

A king was traveling through the desert, and his son, the crown prince, thirsted for water. But instead of dispatching a horseman to fetch water from the nearest town, the king ordered a well to be dug at that very spot and to mark it with a signpost.

"At the present time," explained the king to his son, "we have the means to obtain water far more quickly and easily. But perhaps one day, many years in the future, you will again be traveling this way. Perhaps you will be alone, without the power and privilege you now enjoy. Then the well we dug today will be here to quench your thirst. Even if the sands of time have filled it, you will be able to reopen it if you remember the spot and follow the signpost we have set."

This is what G-d did for us by establishing the festivals at those points in time when He initially granted us the gift of freedom on Passover, joy on Sukkot, and so on. (**Mar'eh Yechezkel**)

בַּסֻּכֹּת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים – '***You shall dwell in huts seven days.***' *(23:42)*

Sukkah is the only mitzvah into which a person enters with his muddy boots. (**Chassidic saying**)



◣ Shine Bright - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הֲבִיאֲכֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה - "***You shall count for yourselves, from the day after the day of rest [Pesach], from the day on which you will bring the Omer wave-offering…***" (23:15)

The Ohr HaChaim (Vayikra 23:15) writes: **וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם** (count for you) - the purpose of counting the Omer is for your own good, for your own purity. - Chazal tell us that the luchos were made from Sanpirin stone [sapphire], and that the neshamos of Yidden are compared to the luchos, but due to sins and impurity, they lost their luster.

The Torah says: **וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם** - make yourselves once again like sapphire stone. Shine brightly once again. - From this Ohr HaChaim we see that by simply counting the Omer, we are purifying our souls.

"Every morning when you wake up, Hashem is telling you: "I need you in My world today… today, my world cannot exist without you in it." Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein (1958-2022)

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner



Rabbi Aryeh Royde, a Belzer *yungerman* from Manchester who'd moved to Monsey, thought he knew all about *kiruv*. He studied the sources diligently, prepared to debate G-d's existence, and acquired an intellectual *chavrusa* through Partners in Torah. But although he engaged his phone-pal every week for two years, the fellow at the other end of the line still had no interest in keeping halachah. And then he travelled with his fellow Belzer friend Eli Bineth to Dallas for a community *kiruv shabbaton,* and their world was about to change.

"During the Friday night oneg, there was such warm chassidishe energy. Everyone was into niggunim, and this guy drives up in his car, comes into the shul, sits down next to me, and asks me for a beer," Rabbi Royde remembers. "I brought him a bottle, opened it for him as a gesture of friendship, and after that, we just bonded. On Motzai Shabbos at the *kumzitz*, he sidled up to me and said, 'You know, I'm 40 years old and haven't put on tefillin since my barmitzvah. Maybe you can help me do it tomorrow?' I was astounded. We didn't give lectures; we didn't prove Hashem's existence – we were just nice. We smiled. We danced. We sang. The people saw Shabbos. All I did was give him a bottle of beer, and the next thing I knew, he wanted tefillin."

This would become the formula for the 'Travelling Chassidim', an international *kiruv* venture that took outlying communities by storm. And it wasn't just the *leberdiker* Shabbos programmes, but much much more. Here is just one story.

"We did a *shabbaton* in Staten Island, and someone came in, someone who'd driven over to shul. The Rabbi placed him at my table and said, 'Hope he's okay with it."

"Despite the rabbi's reservations, we hit it off on Friday night. For Shabbos lunch, which is usually much quieter, we generally eat just with the rabbi and a few others. We decided to invite my new friend, Ryan, his wife Sherry, and their kids.

"Friday night, we chassidim are pretty much the stars of the show, but lunch is calmer, less of a show, more personal. Ryan sat next to me again, and over the course of the meal, he asked me if we could learn something together.

"I took his number after Shabbos and called him and texted him repeatedly, but he didn't respond. It seemed that he had been inspired, yet quickly lost interest.

"A year later we went back to the same community – we often do annual return visits – and the week before the *shabbaton*, I got a surprising call. It was Ryan. He apologised for not picking up before, and we decided right then that we'd learn *hilchos Shabbos* together.

"We started after the *shabbaton*. He thought I was going to tell him everything you weren't allowed to do – like not to drive his car on Shabbos.

"But I started by asking him what his Shabbos looks like. He said his wife lights some tea lights on the window sill, he sings a traditional song or two, and then they drift over to the sofa and watch TV.

"I had an inspiration. "Let me teach you about candles," I said. "Instead of tea lights, you should use five-inch-tall candles in seven-

inch-tall candlesticks. And on the windowsill? That confuses Shabbos with Chanukah. They should be on the table, a fully cleared table, upon which there's a white tablecloth. All the family should shower or bathe before Shabbos and wear their best clothing. Oh, and if she can, your wife should bake challah on Friday morning."

"What about the challah rolls from the bakery?" he tried.

"No, they're for Shalosh Seudos…" I said evenly.

"I knew I was pushing it, maybe taking a gamble. But it paid off. Within a few months Ryan wanted Shabbos. And why not? He was getting the *geshmack* of Shabbos in his own home. He came home from work each week, and the place was smelling of fresh loaves, his wife and children were wearing their best, there was a gleaming tablecloth, a cleared table, beautiful candles. Now they weren't running to the TV. They'd worked for Shabbos, and they were going to enjoy it.

"I was following Reb Noach's teaching: '*show them the beauty of our Jewish life, don't make it about halachah,*' but I'd gone roundabout with it – with Ryan, I started with supposed halachah so he could see the beauty for himself.

"The next year, the *sabbaton* in Staten Island was rolling around again, and Ryan invited my family to stay at his home.

I said, "You're quite far from shul, like a 35-minute walk, no?"

And he said, "Excuse me, because of you I do this every week."

"You got me," I said. "We're absolutely doing this. But your kitchen, it's got to be *kashered*."

"I went down to his house on the Sunday before the *shabbaton,* and did the *kashering*."

"That Shabbos we stayed at his newly-kosher home, and the joke was on me: On Friday night my wife lit tea lights on Ryan's windowsill.

"Ryan and his family were keeping Shabbos and kashrus for a while, but they'ed reached an impasse: They couldn't seem to move forward. And then, just like that, they took another leap. They sold their house and moved to a *frum* community.

"We're family friends now. They come to us, and we've been to them for Shabbos as well. The last time we went, Ryan's son, Stuart, who was in public school three years prior, had a question for me on the Gemorah he was learning."

This is just one of many stories about the 'Travelling Chassidim.' Changing people's lives through the beauty of Shabbos, smiling, singing, dancing and maybe a beer too.

Good Shabbos



102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

The Foiled Scheme

It's a reality that many women and girls work in offices together with men, whether it's the coworkers, the boss, or the clients and customers. If the proper protocols aren't maintained, this can present a serious breach of modesty. This kind of negligence is a huge risk that can lead to all kinds of problems and anguish.

It's for this reason that gedolei hador have laid out clear principles regarding just such a situation. A woman who is working with men may discuss work matters only, whatever is necessary to do her job, and no more. Moreover, the boss should not use his female employee's first name. Not "Chani" or "Rivky" but "Mrs. Cohen" and "Miss Berkowitz." And they should make sure that the conversation does not dissolve into jokes and frivolity. Even showing concern on a personal level can be problematic, such as when closing the window

to keep out the chill, one shouldn't say, "I closed the window so you won't be cold."

Maintaining such boundaries will spare all parties pain and trouble down the road, as illustrated by the following story about a businessman from Lakewood who earned a very good living. He managed a large real estate office, in which a number of frum women worked-wives of avreichim. This story happened to him and he related it firsthand.

It was eleven in the morning, and I was taking care of some urgent matters, when my cell phone rang. It was one of my employees, and I could hear in her voice that she was hesitant to speak. There were a few seconds of silence until she mustered her courage and said, "I wanted to clarify something. This morning, I received an email from you instructing me to transfer seventy thousand dollars to a certain bank account." She wanted a confirmation from me that I actually wanted her to make the transfer.

I was dumbstruck. I hadn't sent any such email.

I told her not to do anything, and after looking into it, I discovered that someone had hacked into my email account and sent an email in my name asking this employee to make the transfer to his bank account. It was clear the guy had done his homework, scanning my emails so he would be able to copy my style of writing. Thank G-d, his scheme didn't work.

After I calmed down and allowed myself to be happy that I'd been saved from the hacker's attempt to steal such a large sum of money, I asked my employee why it had occurred to her to confirm my request to make the transfer. Anyone would believe I had written the email myself.

"It's because you've set very firm boundaries in this office, that the male employees shouldn't call the female employees by their first name, neither verbally nor in writing. That's why I noticed that

there was something odd about the email you allegedly sent: you addressed me by my first name. Everything else fit your style of writing, but the use of my first name alerted me that something was off. That's why I decided to call you for a confirmation."

This businessman had maintained strict boundaries to prevent any breaches in modesty and he was rewarded as a result. We see that a one who keeps such boundaries will merit blessing and success and will certainly find favor in Hashem's eyes.



● Bread of Holiness - The Holy Bakery

In this week's *sedrah* the Am Yisroel is commanded by Hakodosh Boruch Hu to bake twelve loaves of bread and to display them on a golden table in the Beis Hamikdash: **וְלָקַחְתָּ סֹלֶת וְאָפִיתָ אֹתָהּ שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה חַלּוֹת** – *You should take fine wheat flour and bake it into twelve loaves … and you should set them up in two stacks, six in each stack, on the pure table, before Hashem* (Emor 24:5-6).

Now, there's a question here because we're talking about the holiest place on earth now, the place where the Shechina resides; it's the place where every act, every procedure, was *kodesh kodoshim* and here the Am Yisroel were commanded, by means of their

representatives, the *kohanim*, to be bakers! Not to meditate in the words of the Mesillas Yesharim or Chovos Halevavos but to bake twelve loaves of bread and to leave them sitting on the table all week long.

Now I must tell you beforehand, I must apologize because the Rambam says he doesn't understand the idea of the *shulchan* with *lechem hapanim*. A table with bread from which the *kohanim* eat on Shabbos? He says he has no explanation (Moreh Nevuchim 3:45). The Rambam says he doesn't know and here, in a little synagogue in Flatbush, a nobody is going to come along and give an explanation? It's uncomfortable but what can I do? What can I do – I can't help myself.

Don't Be a Horse

And so we'll say as follows: it's noteworthy that these loaves are the sole instance of an offering in the Sanctuary which is kept for display. It's true that the bread was eaten on Shabbos, but that was only the culmination of a week-long exhibition. And all week long, whatever *avodah* the *kohen* was busy with, every time he passed by, he took note of the bread being showcased on the golden table. And therefore it is obvious that the function of this *avodah* is to emphasize the supreme importance of bread.

Now, it could be that we don't see what's so special – it's only bread after all. But that's exactly the point! We're learning now that it's *not* just bread – it was *kodesh kodoshim*, it was *holy bread*. And you know why it's so holy? Because it's teaching us *daas*; it's giving us a mind. Bread is one of the great testimonies to the Creator's wisdom and the *lechem hapanim* is a symbol that the function of bread is to make us aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Now don't make any mistake about this; it's plain common sense what I'm telling you now only that it requires some thought. Because if you look at a piece of bread like a horse looks at bread, you'll have the

mind of a horse. But if you learn how to look at bread, you'll begin gaining a Torah mind.

How are you supposed to look at bread? Well, if you ever admired a beautiful diamond and wondered at the texture, the sparkle, the beauty of it, you should know that it's *nothing at all* compared to a piece of bread. Bread! Bread is unequaled in creation; there is *nothing* in the whole universe like it. Except your brain – you'll agree that your brain is superior. But bread is a miracle! Not one miracle – it's miracles upon miracles.

Out of Thin Air

Bread comes out of nowhere every day. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of bread materialize out of the atmosphere every day. Don't think it comes out of the earth. The *aretz* gives only a tiny contribution to the *lechem*. We say **הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ** because the roots of the wheat are in the earth but actually only a *tiny part* comes from the earth; the majority comes from the air. It's *mavhil;* it's just unbelievable. If you ever studied any science, you'll know that bread comes out of nowhere. You hear that? Bread is air! You have to become excited when you hear that!

How does air become bread? It's a *nes!* How did the starch come about? How did the plant produce starch? It's using the sunlight. The sun is sending its rays from 93 million miles away to the plant and the plant has a little chlorophyll — another *nes* — a material that is able to take the sunlight and produce starch.

But sunlight is not enough. To make bread you need some carbon dioxide too – it's part of the recipe. So the plant takes in some carbon dioxide from the air and it combines with the sunshine and gets to work making starch.

Now, carbon dioxide is only three parts out of ten thousand in the air. And the plant is standing here sucking the carbon dioxide from the air around it. In a minute, it has exhausted all the carbon

dioxide. So the plant should die. No! Hakodosh Boruch Hu made the wind. **אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְעוֹלָם בְּלֹא רוּחוֹת** – *Without the winds, the world couldn't exist* (Taanis 3b). The wind keeps the air moving, so as the plant exhausts the carbon dioxide from the air around it, the wind pushes some new air into place and the air keeps on moving – *nissei nissim*.

Eating a Miracle

And so, a little bit of water and carbon dioxide, some sunlight and chlorophyll, and the little wheat plant gets busy combining them and producing starch. That starch is the wheat; that's the bread. That's *cheilev chitah* – that's the fat of the wheat. And so if you're holding a piece of bread you have to know that you have in your hand a piece of miracle.

That's why our Sages decreed that **אֵין זוֹרְקִין אֶת הַפַּת** – *you can't throw bread* (Brachos 50a). *Derech eretz*! Let's say your son says, "Abba, throw me a piece of *challah* please." "Oh no," you say, "I don't play catch with *challah*. *Challah* is a *nes*." Would you throw let's say the *urim v'tumim*?! Imagine the Kohen Gadol said to you, "Hand me the *urim v'turim* please," would you throw it? You would take it with the biggest *derech eretz* when you hand it over to him.

You have to be polite with bread. It's Hakodosh Boruch Hu's miracle. The *urim v'tumim* is such a rare miracle, but bread is no less. The truth is it's bigger! The piece of bread is more *nissim* than the *urim v'tumim* – more *nissim*! It's a life-giving product that's created from sunshine combined with a little carbon dioxide and water. Not that the sunshine helps the food come into existence; *the sunshine becomes part of the food*. You're eating sunshine and carbon dioxide when you eat bread. That's what it is.

G-dly Wisdom

Now, the next time you're nice and hungry, why don't you go outside and see what you can do. You have everything you need after all; there's plenty of air and carbon dioxide and earth and sunshine. You

couldn't do a thing! Not only you. Nobody in the world can do it. Even the biggest chemical company can't make bread; it's such a *nes* that the greatest chemical geniuses at DuPont can't duplicate it. They'd become millionaires with the patent.

Now, that's how a *kohen* was thinking when he saw the *lechem hapanim*. He's busy with the *avodah*; he's walking past the open doors of the *heichal* carrying *dam* of the *korban* or whatever else he might be doing and out of the corner of his eye he sees the *lechem hapanim*; "Ooh wah! *Lechem*! Loaves of bread on a golden table!" And he's reminded to think about these things.

Other things too. He's thinking about the wheat seed. The farmer puts a wheat seed into the ground and it rots away and it produces a root and a stem. The seed rots away and a root and a stem begin growing out. How does such a thing happen? And the root always grows down and the stem always up. Never the opposite. No matter how you put the seed it never happens that the root goes up and the stem down. It's a miracle, *chochmas Hashem*.

That's the lesson of the *lechem hapanim*, the twelve loaves of bread that were on display on that golden table. It's so that we should know how to look at bread; we're training ourselves to make use of the bread that we see all the time and make sure to engrave the lessons of the *chochmas Hashem* on our minds – it means that the bread is for the purpose of creating our minds.

● The Gehenom of Anger

At the end of this week's *sedrah* we read the story of the *mekallel*, who committed one of the worst *aveiros* of all:

וַיִּקֹּב בֶּן־הָאִשָּׁה הַיִּשְׂרְאֵלִית אֶת־הַ' וַיְקַלֵּל-

– *And the son of the Israelite woman cursed the Name of Hashem* (Vayikra 24:11). - It was a terrible thing, one of the most tragic events that took place in the Midbar – a Jew should curse Hashem?! A very unpleasant story.

If you're interested you can look in the Chumash and in the *mefarshim* to see exactly what happened there, what the details were. But for our purposes it's enough to know that this man was very upset about his station in life, and in his distress and his anger he blamed Hashem for his plight and uttered blasphemous words.

Now, at the end of the story there begins a list of transgressions which seem to have no connection at all to the previous subject of the *mekallel*. It says there that Hashem told the Bnei Yisroel how to punish someone who 'curses the Name'. But then, before the story concludes with how they put the *mekallel* to death, it interrupts with various other sins that seem out of place: bloodshed (*ibid*. 17) and assault (18) and damaging someone's property (19) – various *aveiros* that a person might do. And only then after that list of sins, **וַיּוֹצִיאוּ אֶת הַמְקַלֵּל ... וַיִּרְגְּמוּ אֹתוֹ אָבֶן** – *the Bnei Yisroel took the mekallel out of the camp and stoned him to death.*

Now, to us it seems that all these other sins don't belong here at all. They're out of place.

The Common Denominator

And the explanation is as follows: The common factor in all of these subjects is the element of anger. How could it be that a person will do something as wild as cursing Hashem, *chas veshalom?* Because he's angry. And that's the lesson here: an angry person is a loose cannon who might do *anything!*

And so the Torah warns us here: 'Beware! Every kind of wickedness is on the table for someone unwilling to train himself to curb his anger. He'll curse Hashem! And even if he won't get so *meshuge,* but other things he'll do; he'll damage his fellow man's property or even assault and maim him. He might even shed the blood of a fellow Jew!

Don't think it's an exaggeration. We have Orthodox murderers today – and not in far-off places. In this neighborhood not so long ago a

man murdered his wife. An Orthodox man who wouldn't think of eating *tarfus,* but *shefichas domim* he did. How could that be? A *frum* murderer?! It's because an angry person is bound to do anything.

Kaas is guaranteed to bring a person to very many sins, big and small, because אַפִּלּוּ שְׁכִינָה אֵינָהּ חֲשׁוּבָה כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (Nedarim 22b). He's too busy fulminating in his frustration and nothing else matters – *even the Shechinah means nothing to him now!* Hakadosh Baruch Hu can wait – what matters now is that his neighbor is parked in his driveway! And that means he might do anything – he'll be up to his nose in sins before he finally settles down.

Anger is the All-In-One

And so we come back now to the angry fellow. Anger, the Sages tell us, is something different altogether. If you're prone to anger, if you have a tendency to flare up, you have to expect a Gehenom where *all the treatments* will be given to you – כָּל מִינֵי גֵּיהִנֹּם שׁוֹלְטִין בּוֹ. Why so many? Because it's not one sickness. The 'angry person is filled with sin'.

That's what the Torah is telling us here at the end of our *sedrah. A* person might do the worst things. He might say the worst things. He might damage or maim or hurt or kill. There have been boys and girls who ran away because of *kaas* and they accepted a cult instead of the Jewish faith; people have bowed down to idols to spite their families because of *ka'as!*

Talking to Ourselves

But we're not only talking about those extreme scenarios. We're talking now about ourselves, about people who learn Torah and perform *mitzvos.* And still when a person gets angry it brings him to be mean and to say hurtful words. People break other people's hearts in their anger. People say *lashon hara;* they slander others and ruin their lives. It brings *machlokes.* He fights with his neighbors and in-

laws. He's unhappy and frustrated and he blames Hashem. *Kaas* is not only anger – every *middah raah* and every sin comes as a result.

And because he'll be coming to the Next World with all types of sins – all types of cancers and lesions and disorders and ulcers and sores – they all have to be treated before he can get into Gan Eden. The indescribable joy of Gan Eden is waiting for him but first he'll be treated and readied for that eternal happiness.



ספירת העומר
by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

This week's Parsha discusses the cycle of holidays which the Jews celebrate every year. We know that amongst other things, these holidays are highly instrumental in helping us inculcate a fundamental belief and a trust in the Creator of the world. However, smack in the middle of this series of instructions, is the commandment to count the days between the second day of Pesach, when the Omer offering was brought, all the way through the holiday of Shavuos, which is a total of 49 days.

Each day of this period between Pesach and Shavuos, we have a scriptural obligation to speak out loud what number we are up to in the count culminating in the 50th day which is Shavuos. - Let us try to understand the apparent connection between this Mitzvah to count, and the annual festivals.

The Ramban says something quite surprising to solve this dilemma. He explains that indeed the holiday of Pesach and the holiday of Shavuos are actually one long holiday, and the counting in between can be compared to the intermediate days of Chol Hamoed to bridge the gap of this one extended holiday. This Ramban is an interesting foundation to appreciate that there is a strong

connection between Pesach and Succos, but he doesn't really flush out the full import of this relationship.

The Sefer Hachinuch explains what this means to us on a practical level. On this commandment (306) he explains that when the Jews left Egypt, their entire focus was on their eventual receiving of the Torah at Sinai like a slave yearns for freedom. They instinctively knew that this was their purpose on this earth, and in fact, the purpose for the entire creation. So the counting expressed their eagerness to reach the climax of creation and their anticipation to arrive at this monumental event.

We too are commanded to count toward Shavuos in order to emulate this feeling of yearning for the Torah that we are to receive in seven weeks time.

Based on this explanation, we should be counting down and not up. When a person is eagerly anticipating a long-awaited event, his impatience would dictate that each day gone by is another hurtle passed, hence he would mark it off appropriately as another obstacle overcome. Counting up in this instance would not be proper!

Perhaps we could simultaneously answer this difficulty and bring out another integral point about these days with the words of **R' Aharon Kotler**. It is well known that these days are meant to be a time in which we fix all of our character traits in preparation for receiving the Torah. R' Aharon theorizes that the 49 days of the Sefira correspond with the 48 ways mentioned in the Mishnah in the sixth chapter of Avos for acquiring the Torah, and the 49th day is the time in which we must combine all these traits which we have worked on in order to transform ourselves into evolved human beings who are capable of receiving the Torah. Each and every day we are meant to focus on a new feature mentioned in the Mishnah, each of which is essential in the ability to absorb and apply the Torah to our lives.

Based on this understanding, it is certainly clear why we would count up and not down. The days of the Sefira are like a ladder, during

which we ascend a rung each day and each successful day passed represents an accomplishment of no small measure. Since our goal is to ultimately reach the top, it is undoubtedly appropriate to count up toward this lofty goal.

There is a Midrash Rabbah on this week's parsha which strongly supports all that we have said. The Midrash comments on the verse, "And you shall count seven full weeks" by saying that just as the counting has to be perfect, without missing even one single day, similarly a Jew must perfect his service of Hashem during this time such that there is absolutely nothing missing from his service and he doesn't waist one precious day of this special period.

This Midrash is teaching us a valuable lesson in our growth as Jewish people. Our spiritual work needs to be consistent. In order to truly develop as servants of Hashem, it is not sufficient to spend a few hours studying, and then take off a few hours, or study one day and miss the next. Serious growth can only take place if a person has unswerving dedication to the cause he has committed himself too, and if there are frequent gaps in that dedication, he will certainly not achieve his goal.

The Vilna Gaon used to compare this to a pot in which one is trying to boil some water. If that pot is getting constantly removed from the fire, and sitting on the counter for hours at a time, its going to take a while before that pot will boil, whereas if one would just leave it on the fire for ten consecutive minutes, it would reach a ferocious boil with relative ease. The Midrash is teaching us that this principle is even more pertinent now, during the counting of the Omer than it is during the rest of the year if we hope to reach our goal successfully.

May we all merit during this very special period to become Jews fitting to receive the Torah in every way!

Shavuos - Torah

At the end of this week's Parsha, the Torah delineates all the different Jewish holidays, and their various details. However, there is one holiday whose laws and name are not spelled out clearly and is rather "hinted to" by the Torah, and that is the holiday of Shavuos, which we find ourselves preparing for right now.

The verse says, "And you will count fifty days from the second day of Pesach, and at the end of that term, you will bring up a 'new' offering" and this is the only reference to Shavuos. The reason it is called a new offering is because it is composed of produce grown from the current year, and cannot have any old produce mixed in.

The Kli Yakar dwells on this interesting anomaly, and tries to understand why the Torah couldn't have just spelled out the nature of Shavuos explicitly, like it did for the other holidays, and instead chose to only allude to it?

The Kli Yakar explains that by wording it this way, the Torah was intimating to us the very nature of Shavuos, which is the holiday which celebrates receiving the Torah. This intimation is trying to teach us that Torah study must be "new" in our eyes every single day. Even if we have seen a particular piece of Torah many times, each time we review it, we can find some new angle, difficulty, or novel point by scrutinizing the text and the nuances in language. Such is the nature of Torah, and by referring to it as a "new offering", the verse was teaching us how to properly relate to the Torah and what our thoughts and attitude should be when studying it.

This concept that the Torah must be new in our eyes is expressed in many different venues in Chazal. Chazal compare Torah study to a nursing baby. Just as a baby finds his mother's milk delicious each and every time he nurses, and never gets bored of the taste, similarly the Torah must be unique and refreshing in our mouths each time we learn.

In Krias Shma which we recite at least three times daily, the verse says, "That which I commanded you today," and Rashi comments based on the Sifri, that each and every Jew has to look at the Torah as if it was literally given today! Even in Halacha this concept takes root. If a Jew gets an Aliyah, he must ascend to the Bimah in the closest possible way. This is to demonstrate how the Torah must always be appealing and beloved in his eyes. We thusly find that Chazal are replete with this concept of making the Torah fresh and delightful in our hearts.

We must view the Torah and its laws as if they were given to us very recently, and treat them accordingly.

How does one get to this awareness in which he is able to develop a fresh understanding of the Torah and his service even though he has been involved with the same routine for many years and sometimes even decades?

R' Leib Shteinman once offered some very practical advice while addressing his students one Shavuos evening. He gave an example from oxygen. He said, "Every single day, we inhale and exhale thousands of times. Have you ever met a person who said, 'I'm just so sick of breathing, so I'm quitting'? - Of course not. This is because we currently need the air, and something which is necessary for life, one cannot grow tired of doing it".

Similarly, one must view the Torah in this light – that it is necessary for our very survival, and that each piece of Torah we study creates a new connection with the Master of the world, and that connection literally sustains us.

If we continue this thought we will realize another important truth, and that is that yesterday's Torah should be insufficient to us today when studying Torah or observing the commandments. The Torah that we study today, or the Mitzvos that we keep today are completely unique in that they are necessary for our survival today and we must therefore treat them that way.

Indeed, the senior Rosh Yeshiva has often commented that he can always tell in any field when a person has ceased being productive, and that is when he starts talking about the past. When one hears a person boasting about his previous accomplishments in life, it is a telltale sign that this person has ceased doing anything creative or productive in his life. Whereas when one listens to a person, and they are talking about what they are involved with right now, this too is quite indicative that the person in question is still capable of generating new ideas.

May we all merit to properly prepare ourselves to receive the Torah as a "new offering"!

Sefiras HaOmer

In this week's parsha we are given the mitzvah of Sefiras HaOmer. It is well known that the mitzvah of the counting the omer begins on the second day of Pesach and extends until Shavuos. Since the subject matter of the parsha coincides with our counting of the omer, I thought it fitting to expound upon the lessons we should be integrating at this particular time.

It is interesting to note that while we are joyously fulfilling the mitzvah of counting the omer, we are simultaneously mourning the deaths of Rebbi Akiva's 24,000 talmidim. The gemara in Yevamos 62b says that the reason for the tragedy was because of the lack of honor that the talmidim displayed for each other. Being that nothing ever happens by chance, why did the deaths of Rebbi Akiva's students take place during Sefiras HaOmer? It seems from the gemara that Rebbi Akiva's talmidim always behaved this way. Why did Hashem punish them specifically in this period of time as opposed to any other time of the year?

The Maharal says that the period from Pesach until Shavuos is the most important time of year to exert ourselves in planting a greater

reverence and honor for the Torah in our hearts. **The Sefer HaChinuch** says that this is actually the reason we are counting the omer. We are demonstrating how we much we treasure the Torah, counting each and every day until we reach Shavuos.

However, one does not honor the Torah merely by learning it. The primary expression of honoring the Torah and attesting to our yearning for it is honoring those who learn it and especially those who embody it. It is not by accident that Chazal and even the Chumash itself emphasize the importance of honoring talmidei chachamim and place rabbinical figures at the center of Jewish life.

The association of the Torah with talmidei chachamim is so pronounced that the gemara in Sanhedrin 99b even goes so far as to say that one who disgraces a talmid chacham is the quintessential example of an apikorus!

We can see clearly that the reverence due to a talmid chacham is very great. **The Maharal** asserts that this is why Rebbi Akiva's students were punished particularly at this time of year. Rebbi Akiva's talmidim were not rude to each other. However, on their level, the talmidim didn't honor their fellow colleagues in a way befitting Torah scholars. During Sefiras HaOmer, the talmidim should have taken the opportunity to increase their honor for the Torah and appreciate the immense value inherent in their chevrusas.

We who are alive today should learn from the terrible tragedy of Rebbi Akiva's students to increase our own honor for the Torah. Do we value our Rabbis and fellow talmidei chachamim? Do we treat our chevrusas with the respect that a Torah scholar deserves? If we lack such appreciation, we are missing out on a major aspect of cavod hatorah .

Rav Avraham Pam was one of the most influential rabbinical leaders of American Jewry in the last century. As the Rosh Yeshiva of the Torah VaDaas, Rav Pam was not only responsible for developing the yeshiva into a world center of Torah learning – he also built an entire

society of *talmidei chachamim* that continue to epitomize the beauty of Torah life.

Rav Yisroel Reisman says that the legacy of Rav Pam extends far beyond the yeshiva's walls. No matter where Rav Pam's *talmidim* find themselves today and no matter what careers they may have chosen to pursue, all are magnificent ambassadors for the Torah's honor.

A *talmid* of Rav Pam has a special pleasantness to him. He greets others cheerfully. *Talmidim* of Rav Pam are honest in business and even if life presents them with difficulties, they persevere calmly through their challenges. They love Jews regardless of how religious they may be and desire a good Jewish education for every Jewish child. There isn't a meal that goes by without a compliment to their wives and they never neglect reaching out to those who are in need even if someone just needs to be cheered up.

This is the legacy that Rav Pam left the world. One can observe the life of just one of his *talmidim* to see how glorious a *ben Torah* can be.

May we all be *zoche* to have *kavod hatorah*!!!

Daily Opportunities for Kiddush Hashem

In Parshas Emor, we are commanded to sanctify Hashem's Name (Vayikra 22:32) — the mitzvah of "*kiddush Hashem*," meaning giving one's life for Hashem.

Ever since the despot Nimrod offered Avraham Avinu the choice of bowing down to an idol or being burned alive, Jews have given up their lives to sanctify Hashem's Name. However, in most periods of our history, the mitzvah of *kiddush Hashem* as defined above by the Rambam was fulfilled only by rare individuals. Does that mean that the vast majority of the Jewish People have no part in this mitzvah?

The Rashba explains (citing the Zohar): If one reads *keriyas Shema* each morning and evening, and as he says the words, "You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all of your heart and with all of your soul," he resolves to be ready to give his life for the sake of Hashem, he has fulfilled the mitzvah of *kiddush Hashem*, at least on some level.

Second, the **Rambam** states later in the chapter quoted above: "If a person withholds himself from sinning, or does a mitzvah not because of any reason such as fear or honor, rather solely for the Creator, blessed be He, this is a sanctification of Hashem's Name" (Yesodei HaTorah 5:10).

Rav Chaim Friedlander explains that when we restrain ourselves and do not act on our base desires, we are, in effect, giving up our will for the sake of Hashem. Even though we are not giving up our lives, we are giving up our desires. This shows that the honor of Hashem is more important to us, and can therefore be called a degree of *kiddush Hashem*.

Someone told me recently that he was on an international flight, and suddenly a screen was lowered, and a series of films began that were not suitable for an observant Jew, to say the least. "Next to me was a young avreich. He took his hat down from the overhead compartment, pulled it down so it covered his eyes — even though this looked quite silly to those around him — and he remained that way for the next nine hours," he recounted.

As I listened, I thought to myself: "This is an example of *kiddush Hashem* the way the Rambam explained it in halacha 10." - Mitzvos such as these, which come with hardships but are done for Hashem's sake, are opportunities for all of us to sanctify Hashem's Name.

For *bnei Torah* in particular, we have the chance to sanctify Hashem's Name whenever we are in the presence of unlearned or irreligious Jews. As the sages state (Yoma 86a), when people see a *ben Torah* behaving with refinement, they say: Fortunate is his

teacher who taught him Torah. When a *ben Torah* exercises self-control and avoids pettiness when dealing with others, this is included in the mitzvah of *kiddush Hashem.*

Rav Yerucham Levovitz, would tell *bachurim* that they had a merit that earlier generations did not have. In previous times, when almost all Jews were observant, a *ben Torah* did not stand out as a representative of Hashem in the world. Today, however, the irreligious gaze at us expecting perfect behavior, and are only too happy to pounce upon any shred of bad behavior. On the one hand, this is a heavy responsibility, but on the other hand, it is a great opportunity to sanctify Hashem's Name in public, he would say.

Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel used to travel abroad to raise money for the yeshiva, even though he was suffering from Parkinson's Disease. Once, as he and his gabbai boarded a plane, they overheard a flight attendant comment: "Who would take such a sick person on an international flight?"

Rav Finkel told his gabbai that this person clearly did not understand what a great honor it is to be able to undertake a journey for the sake of Torah. - "I'm able to help Torah flourish in Eretz Yisrael, and I can also provide people in America with a living example of someone who cherishes Torah."

Rav Finkel's bracha to other roshei yeshivos, when they had to travel to raise money, was: "May your actions cause much *kiddush Hashem*."

Rav Finkel's own journeys abroad were very successful in this regard. People would flock to see him and receive his bracha. They often brought their children so they too could behold such a man, who despite his illness was willing to make such great efforts to support Torah. Each step of his journey generated tremendous *kiddush Hashem.*

May we be *zoche* to be *mekadesh sheim Shamayim*!

Why doesn't the Torah mention that the 50th day of the Omer is the day of the Giving of the Torah?

The Kli Yakar explains that the Torah did not want to associate the Giving of the Torah with a specific date so that we should feel *each day of the year* as though we received the Torah on Sinai. Similarly, Rosh Hashana is not described by the Torah as *Yom HaDin* as a person might sin all year long and intend to repent before the *Yom HaDin*. One must realize that Hashem sits in judgment each day and one must repent each day. (Torah Treasures)

The Story of Miriam the Washerwoman



If you visit Har Hamenuchos on Chof Daled Teves, you might notice a big group of Yidden gathered around a specific kever. But whose kever are they visiting? And why are they davening there?

Our story begins far away, in the Arab country of Kurdistan, where a woman named Miriam Mizrachi bas Mama, lived with her husband.

One day, her husband suddenly passed away, leaving her all alone. They had no children, and now, she had no husband. With tears in

her eyes, Miriam gathered some food and a few of her things and set out for Eretz Yisrael, where she hoped to live for the rest of her life. She walked on foot, through sandy deserts, under the blazing hot sun, for many weeks, until she finally arrived in Yerushalayim. Miriam was tired, hungry, and covered in sand. But where would she sleep?

Too proud to ask for tzedakah, Miriam began work as a washerwoman, cleaning houses and laundry for families who lived in Meah She'arim. She made just enough money pay for her food and her little, tiny house.

***

The sun rose over the small stone homes in Yerushalayim, shining a soft, warm light through the window. Miriam sat up and stretched. Today is going to be a good day. She reached for a pail of water nearby to wash negel vasser, listening to the cool water splashing into the small bucket. Miriam dried the last few drops off her hands and smiled. It was her favorite day of the week – the day she got to clean the home of the great Tzaddik, **Reb Shlomke of Zevhil**. There were many stories about Reb Shlomke making great miracles happen. Miriam knew it was a big zechus to work in his home.

She lifted her eyes to Shamayim and thought, Hashem, I will start the day by davening to You the only way I know how.

"Shalom, Shechinah," she said simply. "Shalom Avraham Avinu, Shalom Moshe Rabbeinu…" - Miriam said "Shalom" to all the tzaddikim she knew about, trying to connect with each of them, even though they weren't around anymore.

You see, she'd never gone to school when she was younger. She didn't know how to read the Alef Beis, or even how to make a bracha. These simple words to Hashem were the best she could do – and she knew Hashem was listening. After her short tefillah, Miriam cut a piece of bread and lifted her eyes up to Shamayim once more.

"Thank You Hashem," she whispered, before biting into the bread. She then rushed out the door and through the narrow streets of the old city, until she reached Reb Shlomke's home.

Miriam greeted everyone with a big smile. "Good morning," she said, before getting to work. Leaving a large pot of water to boil, she gathered all the dirty clothes and set them aside in a big pile.

As the water boiled, she cleaned the house and swept the floors. Soon, the house was sparkling. She then took the clothes one by one, soaking them in the boiling water and rubbing them against a hard wooden board to get the stains out.

I'm so lucky to help out in the home of such a great tzaddik, she thought with a smile. I wouldn't trade this for anything in the world. Soon, all the stains were gone. Miriam poured out the dirty, brown water and filled the bucket with clean water to rinse off the clothes.

Finally, it was time for everything to dry. She squeezed out all the water and then hung the clothes around the courtyard to dry under the nice, warm Yerushlayim sun. When she was done, Miriam's hands were tired and her bones hurt from all the bending and rubbing and scrubbing. She said goodbye and walked back through the tiny streets of Meah She'arim, until she arrived back home.

It was dark and empty, as usual. Miriam sat down and sighed – she was tired. If only I had a child, – she thought. How much happier my life would be. After whispering a short tefilla to Hashem, one that came straight from her heart, she closed her eyes and fell asleep.

Years passed. Week after week, Miriam dropped by the home of Reb Shlomke of Zevhil to clean and wash his laundry. But even though she greeted everyone with a smile, every day, she felt lonelier and lonelier. She really wished she had a child.

As she swished the clothes around the bucket with a big wooden stick, she couldn't help but think: If I don't have a child, who will remember me when I pass away?

One day, the pain became too much. After hanging all the clothing out to dry, she went back inside the house and walked, nervously, to the room where Reb Shlomke was learning. - The Tzaddik's holy face made her step back in awe. A bright light shone around Reb Shlomke as he bent over his sefer, thinking about the Torah's deepest secrets. For a few moments, Miriam just stood by quietly, until she finally said. "Rebbe, may I have a bracha for a child?"

For a second, it seemed like the Tzaddik hadn't heard her. Miriam held her breath, wondering what to do. - Suddenly, Reb Shlomke looked up from his sefer and shook his head from side to side. "I can't help you," he said, sadly.

Miriam felt dizzy, like she might faint. If the Rebbe can't help me – a Tzaddik directly connected to Hashem – if he can't help me, then who can? She thought, her desperate eyes filling with tears.

Reb Shlomke continued, "Even though I can't help you, I can give you a bracha. A very special real bracha. In your zechus, many other people will be able to have children."

Miriam stumbled out of the Rebbe's house and back home to her little apartment. She sank down into a chair, her head in her hands, hot tears flowing down her cheeks. When she had no more tears left to cry, she straightened her shoulders and let herself calm down.

So I will never have children, she comforted herself, but I have the Rebbe's bracha. Someday, somehow, I'll be able to help others have children. I won't be forgotten.

Miriam tried to go back to her normal life, leaving her dream of having children behind her. Over time, she almost forgot about the bracha. She hadn't told anyone else about the Rebbe's promise, either. She spent her free time doing chesed, helping others, and sewing beautiful Aron Kodesh Paroches covers for many nearby shuls. Her faith in Hashem stayed strong, and she continued davening to Him in her special way.

On Chof Daled Teves 1964, nineteen years after Reb Shlomke passed away, Miriam's neshama returned to Shamayim. Her levaya was small and quiet. Very few people showed up to say goodbye. She/d been an old, lonely washerwoman, and she'd had no family of her own. No one was left behind to say kaddish for her neshama.

She was buried in Har Hamenuchos cemetery, and on her kever are the words: "Miriam bas Mama is buried here." No one ever knew her secret, that powerful bracha she'd been given by Reb Shlomke, The Rebbe of Zevhil.

Twenty-nine years passed. It was now the year 5753 (1993), the year for the Rebbe's promise to come true.

One day, the town of Yerushalayim was buzzing with excitement. - "Did you hear?" the women whispered to each other. "Miriam the washerwoman visited her old neighbor in a dream! - She said Reb Shlomke once bentched her that, in her zechus, others will have children! Miriam gave directions to her kever and said that any woman who davens there on her yahrzeit will be blessed with children!"

News of the dream spread fast. Everyone seemed to be talking about it. Could the dream be true? Could such a simple, lonely woman truly carry such a powerful bracha from Reb Shlomke? Could she really bentch other women with children?

People wanted to find out. That year, on Chof Daled Teves 1993, the pathways of Har Hamenochos were crowded with many people. All people who needed children. Buses came, one after another, filled with people heading to the kever of Miriam the Washerwoman.

A young man stood there, saying kaddish with tears in his eyes. "Amen," everyone answered, whispering their private tefillos and davening for miracles.

They cried bitter tears, feeling so sad that they, themselves, didn't have children.

Sure enough, their tefillos went straight up to Hashem. In that year alone, 32 childless women who davened at the kever became pregnant! Many of them had been praying for children for many years, and, after going to the kever, they were finally blessed.

Ever since then, people from all over the world come to daven by Miriam's kever on her yahrtzeit. The 24th day of Teves! And each year, many of them experience a miracle.

Miriam the Washerwoman lived her life simply, connecting with Hashem in whatever way she could. She scrubbed and rubbed and washed and soaked, humming to herself, grateful just to serve the great Tzaddik of Zevhil. And years later, she was zoche to bless hundreds of women with children.

To this day, every year on Chof Daled Teves, women from around the world visit her kever to daven for children. And each year, more and more miracles are born. Women with medical problems, women who'd waited many years for children, women who'd visited so many doctors… No matter their story, Miriam helped many of them have children, thanks to the Zevhiler Rebbe's amazing bracha. - A Tzaddik's bracha is as strong as ever!

Standing for Sefiras Omer

One stands for the B'rachah over the Omer, says the Rosh, because the Torah writes in Re'ei (16:9) מֵהָחֵל חֶרְמֵשׁ בַּקָּמָה -***"when the scythe begins to cut the standing crop.***", which Chazal read as בַּקָּמָה (whilst standing).

According to the Magid Meisharim, the three Mitzvos for which one is obligated to stand are Sefiras ha'Omer, Tzitzis and Tefilin, whose first letters spell 'Atzas', and which are therefore hinted in the Pasuk " עֲצַת ה' לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֹד ". In other words 'For the Omer, Tzitzis and Tefilin of Hashem, one should always stand'.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Who is Rich?

The Medrash Shmuel says on the Mishnah on Pirkei Avos - אֵיזֶהוּ עָשִׁיר – הַשָּׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקוֹ – 'Who is rich? He who rejoices in his lot.' He quotes the Maharam Alashkar: The word עָשִׁיר is an acronym for עֵינַיִם שִׁנַּיִם יָדַיִם רַגְלַיִם – eyes, teeth, hands and feet. One who has all these is a wealthy man!

There was once a man who was crying that he had no money to buy shoes. His shoes were terribly worn out, and he was desperate for new ones. He was so brokenhearted. But when he walked outside and met a man who had no feet… he was then spurred on to thank The Riboino Shel Olam for the fact that he had two feet! He felt like a wealthy man.

There was a person who came to Reb Moshe Yankel the shoemaker, known as the 'Tzaddik Nistar', and said that he needed chizuk.

"You came to me for chizuk?", the tzaddik asked him. "In the city where I used to live before I came to Eretz Yisrael, there was a man who was willing to pay me 2000 Rubles – just to look at me! – and you want me to give you some chizuk?"

These words were so uncharacteristic of him. Reb Moshe Yankel was a very humble man. But he repeated the same words over again…

Finally, Reb Moshe Yankel explained – "In the city where I used to live, there was a person who was blind, and he was willing to pay me 2000 Rubles – just to be able to see me! – And you need chizuk? What do you need chizuk for?"

People are always looking for chizuk. – Realize just how wealthy you are!

Short Story of The Week By Yoni Schwartz

Rav Refael Levin, the son of **Rav Aryeh Levin, zt"l**, was visiting a hospital. Nearby was the hospital rabbi, who was doing his daily rounds - going from door to door, speaking with and encouraging patients. When the hospital rabbi saw Rav Refael Levin, he got very excited, ran over to him, and asked if his father was also there.

The hospital rabbi said, "I have to ask you a question. I come to the hospital as it's my job. Your father comes, and it's not his job. I can spend an hour with the patients, but when I get up to leave, they say, 'So soon? You're leaving already?' - thinking that I don't really care about them and that I'm just here because I have to do my rounds. However, when your father visits, he only stays for a few minutes, yet when he leaves, there's always a smile on the patient's face. How does he do it?"

Rav Refael responded, "Well, he's here right now - why don't we go over and check?"

As they approached Rav Aryeh, they saw him enter a room. They looked at their watches: it was exactly 9:00 A.M. on the dot. When he walked out, they looked again. It was 9:02.

The hospital rabbi said, "I don't understand - he was in there for two minutes!"

Rav Refael responded, "Yes, he was only there for two minutes, but for those two minutes, he had all the time in the world."

"Bitachon is the awareness and trust that Hashem knows what is truly best for you. While challenges may seem difficult in the moment, they often reveal themselves as blessings in hindsight. Understanding that everything Hashem does is for your ultimate benefit is at the heart of bitachon. ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

There's a powerful *vort* from the **Sar Shalom of Belz *zt"l***. He asks as follows: We know that *Hashem* "keeps" the entire *Torah*. Now, in order to be **מהדר במצוה**, we are supposed to pay more, up to a third of the price, to "upgrade" to a nicer *mitzvah* item.

How is *Hashem mekayem* this *inyan* of **הידור מצוה עד שליש**?

The *Belzer Rebbe* answers, when a *Yid* works on himself to combat the **יצר הרע** and he is successful, say, two-thirds of the way, *Hashem* takes care of the final third. - Then he added, there are 49 days of *Sefirah*. The thirty-third day, *Lag Baomer*, is exactly two-thirds of **ספירה**. Thus, if we make a concerted effort to better ourselves, and mostly succeed, *Hashem* will "cover" the deficit. We can then be worthy to be *mekabel* the *Torah* **בשמחה ובטהרה** on the upcoming *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos*.



This week, Parshas Emor, includes the foundational mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem in the pasuk "V'nikdashti."

Even a simple smile, a kind word, or a sincere act of integrity can create a ripple effect of Kiddush Hashem. We don't need to be famous or influential to make a difference.

In a world darkened by confusion and moral ambiguity, even a small light shines with impact. Every Jew, no matter how "ordinary," has the power to bring honor to Hashem through everyday actions.

Thought of the Week

When you see something beautiful in someone, tell them. - It may take a second to say, but for them it could last a lifetime.



Hard to be a Kohain? Appreciating the 'Vayomer'

Parshas Emor contains the portion of Priesthood, beginning with instructions to the Kohanim regarding their special laws. These laws include the fact that a Kohain is not allowed to have any direct contact with a dead body except for his immediate relatives. Even after a Kohain buries a close relative, Rachmana litzlan, he may not go back to the cemetery. This is a very difficult thing, but that is part of being a Kohain.

Kohanim have other restrictions, beyond that of normal Jews. They are not allowed to marry divorcees. They have to be careful in their consumption of Teruma and Kodshim. If it is "difficult to be a Jew," as the world says, it is even harder to be a Kohain.

If that is the case, the choice of words that the Torah uses to begin this portion, seems strange. The verse begins "Vayomer Hashem el Moshe"[Vayikra 21:1]. We know that most chapters in the Torah begin with the words "Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe leimor".

Our Sages tell us that the difference between "Vayomer" and "Vayedaber" is that the latter is a harsher type of speech, the former is a much softer type of speech.

If that is the case, what choice of words should the Torah have used over here? Obviously, since the Torah was giving restrictions — in terms of who they could marry, in terms of what they could eat, in terms of what type of funerals they could go to — we would have expected "Vayedaber Hashem!"

G-d is asking them to give up a lot. It should need a harsher type of language. Yet, the Torah employed the much softer expression, Vayomer.

Rav Moshe Feinstein says a beautiful thought [in Darash Moshe]: The role of the Kohanim was to be the spiritual mentors of the Jewish people. "They teach Thy Laws to Jacob and Thy Teachings to Israel" [Devorim 33:10]. In order for a person to be an effective leader and teacher, in order to for him to be an effective role model, he cannot feel that his life is a drag. He cannot feel that he has a difficult life and that his restrictions are a pain.

If the person, who is supposed to be the leader and teacher, feels that his lot is a tough lot, then he cannot be an effective Kohain. In order to give over a heritage to someone, one must feel privileged, rather than burdened. If the Kohain feels that all the things that the Torah put on him are a burden rather than a privilege, then he can't be the spiritual leader that we want him to be.

That is why the Torah uses the language "Vayomer." Even though it may seem hard, they must accept it and feel as if it is easy.

Rav Moshe says that this is an ethical lesson to be learned by those who enter the Holy Professions, the work of teachers, the work of Rabbis and community professionals. Even though we all know the burdens that Torah teachers and Rabbis have to suffer, and that many times they are treated without the proper respect they deserve, but if the teacher or the Rebbe feels that it is a pain and he is constantly 'kvetching' about his situation, Rav Moshe says, he should get out. He cannot be an effective teacher.

The effective Rabbi, must feel that it is a 'Vayomer.' It is tough, but it is a privilege. Yes, we all may have our moments where we feel that it is too much, but they should only be moments. That must not be the way we always are. If we feel that it is too difficult, we can't give it over. If one can't give it over, according to Rav Moshe then he should get out now.

That is way the Parsha of Kohanim is said with 'Vayomer.'

Congratulations on Doing the Mitzvah, But…

The pasuk states, "They shall guard my safekeeping and they shall not bear sin over it and die because of it, for they will have defiled it, I am Hashem who sanctifies them." [22:9]. The context of this verse is the consumption of the Terumah by Kohanim. Rashi says that the sin referred to is the capital offense of consuming Terumah while in a state of impurity (Tumas haGuf).

Rav Yeruchum makes the following observation in his work on Chumash: Eating Terumah is a mitzvah. The Torah is warning that in the course of doing a mitzvah, one should make sure not to commit any aveirahs.

We are lulled into thinking that while we are in the midst of performing a mitzvah, we are 'exempt' and have immunity from any sins that we might be doing simultaneously. "I'm doing a mitzvah now, so I have nothing else to worry about." This is not true.

Sometimes a person can be doing a mitzvah, but in the course of doing a mitzvah he commits an aveirah. The admonition of this pasuk is not only referring to Terumah. Anytime one performs a mitzvah he needs to make sure that the mitzvah is complete and is not tainted by any simultaneous aveirahs.

The classic example of this is the person who comes in to daven Ma'ariv and parks his car in the middle of the parking lot (blocking other parked cars from driving away). He thinks "Well this other fellow is probably davening Ma'ariv as well. I'll leave right after Ma'ariv and won't be causing anyone any problem."

Of course, the other fellow did not come to daven Ma'ariv. He is now ready to go back home. He comes outside and finds another car sitting horizontally opposite his fender. Of course, the person who came in "just to daven ma'ariv" is caught in a conversation with a third person after ma'ariv. The poor fellow in the parking lot is stuck there because he can't get his car out.

Beautiful. Someone wants to daven ma'ariv. He wants to do it with a minyan. Wonderful. But "They shall guard my safekeeping and they shall not bear sin over it…" – Congratulations on doing the mitzvah. But be careful not to simultaneous sin in other matters.

Customs Going Back To The Days of Pharisees and the Sadducees

Parshas Emor contains the Biblical command of Counting the Omer: "And you shall count for yourselves on the morrow of the Sabbath, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving, seven weeks, they shall be complete." [Vayikra 23:15]. The interpretation of the phrase *"on the morrow of the Sabbath"* (m'macharas haShabbos) was one of the classic debates between the Tzedukim and the Perushim [Sadducees and Pharisees].

Rabbinic interpretation, based on the tradition of the Oral Law, was that the "morrow of the rest day" meant the day after the first day of Pesach, namely the 16th of Nissan. It is based on this tradition that our practice is to begin counting the Omer on the second day of Pesach.

The Tzedukim were literalists who did not believe in the Oral Law, and interpreted "the morrow of the Sabbath" to mean Sunday. Thus, the Sunday of Pesach would be the first day of the Omer count and the holiday of Shavuos would always be Sunday, 7 weeks later .

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach made an interesting observation. The Shabbos before Pesach is referred to as "The Great Sabbath" (Shabbos haGadol).

Rav Shlomo Zalman posits: We see from this pasuk that the first day of the Yom Tov of Pesach is called Shabbos. Thus, the week of Pesach contains within it two days called "Shabbos" — the normal Shabbos day, and the first day of Pesach which is also

called Shabbos. How does one differentiate between a "regular Shabbos" and "Shabbos that is really Pesach"?

Rav Shlomo Zalman answers that the regular Shabbos is called "Gadol" as it states (in the Sabbath addition to the Birkat HaMazon) "for this day is 'Gadol' (i.e. – great) before you". Since the regular Shabbos is called 'Gadol,' the Shabbos before Pesach — to distinguish it from the other day that week called Shabbos — is known as "Shabbos haGadol".

Rav Shlomo Zalman also has another interesting observation. When we call someone for an Aliyah to the Torah, we call him REB so-and-so ben so-and- so. Where did this term "REB" come from?

Rav Shlomo Zalman suggests that perhaps this custom began with the Tzedukim and the Perushim. The people who followed the Perushim were the Rabbanan (followers of the Rabbis). Every follower of the Perushim therefore had the title "Reb", that signified which camp he belonged to. It was a badge of honor to be called Reb, meaning the person was not a Tzeduki, but rather a follower of the Rabbis.

The Chofetz Chaim's Wish Was Granted

This week's parsha contains the pasukim "And you shall not profane my Holy Name; and I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel; I am the L-rd who sanctifies you. The One who took you out of the land of Egypt…" [Vayikra 22:32-33]. This is the positive Biblical commandment of Sanctifying G-d's Name.

The Sifra comments on the connection between this mitzvah and the description of G-d as 'the One who took you out of the land of Egypt': "It was on condition that you publicly sanctify My Name, that I took you out of Egypt." The whole purpose of the Exodus from Egypt was for the Jews to become the vehicle whereby the Name of G-d could be glorified and sanctified in this world.

If we take a poll among Jews, asking for the definition of "Kiddush HaShem" [sanctifying G-d's Name], the average reaction will be – martyrdom, dying for the sanctification of G-d's Name. This is a true definition. Come what may, under certain circumstances, we are called upon to give up our life to defend G-d's laws. A Jew must be willing and prepared to do that.

However, "Kiddush HaShem" does not only relate to death. It also relates to life. There is a mitzvah to live a life that sanctifies G-d's Name (living al pi Kiddush HaShem).

Rav Pam quoted an incident from the life of the **Chofetz Chaim**. A young yeshiva student was once standing in prayer close enough to overhear the prayers of the Chofetz Chaim. He testifies that the Chofetz Chaim was pleading and begging the Almighty that he should be given the opportunity to die in sanctification of G-d's Name.

The Chofetz Chaim's prayers were not answered. He did not die a martyr's death. He passed away in 1933, well before the Holocaust began. Apparently the Chofetz Chaim's wish was not granted.

But, Rav Pam said, "G-d does do the will of those who fear him" [Tehilim 145:19]. The Choftez Chaim wanted to fulfill the mitzvah in this week's parsha of "And I will be sanctified in the midst of the Children of Israel." That wish was granted. He did not die by way of Kiddush HaShem. He lived his entire life as a life of Kiddush HaShem. It is more difficult to live a life of Kiddush HaShem than to die through Kiddush HaShem.

Martyrdom is a very difficult test. We should never know from it. But it only takes a minute and then it is over. To live a life of impeccable sanctification of G-d's Name for 90 plus years may be even more difficult. The Chofetz Chaim was granted his wish. He did fulfill the mitzvah of sanctifying G-d's Name in the midst of the Jewish people.

Kohen Gadol In the Holy of Holies: High Potential versus High Risk

A regular Kohen may not marry a divorcee. However, unlike a regular Kohen, a Kohen Gadol may not even marry a widow. A Kohen Gadol must marry a woman who has never been married.

The Moshav Zekeinim al haTorah (a Biblical commentary from the authors of the Talmudic Tosfos commentary) suggests a reason for this restriction on the Kohen Gadol. Had the Kohen Gadol been allowed to marry a widow, we would have been afraid of the following scenario: Perhaps the Kohen would have his eyes on a married woman, who he really wanted to marry. When he went into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur to utter the explicit Name of G-d (Shem haMeforash — which has supernatural powers capable even of killing people [Rashi Shemos 2:14]), he might have in mind the husband of the woman who he wants to marry — and thereby cause his death. To avoid this potentially life-threatening situation, the Torah commands the Kohen Gadol to only a marry a woman who was never previously married.

This reason is literally mind-boggling. Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year. The location is the holiest spot on earth. The Kohen Gadol is going to utter from his mouth the holiest of syllables. And what are we afraid of? We are afraid that he might be thinking "I wish so-and-so would drop dead, so I can marry his wife!"

To make the matter even more astonishing, this interpretation is quoted in the Moshav Zekeinim al haTorah in the name of "HaChossid" — the pious one. (Rav Bergman says this probably refers to the Rokeach.) This interpretation came from a person who was famous for his piety and holiness!

Rav Bergman writes that we learn from this Tosfos that there is no limit to the depths to which people can sink. This very person, who

is ostensibly the holiest man in the Jewish nation, on the holiest day of the year, at the holiest place in the world, might have such evil and perverted thoughts. Such is the nature of the human being.

Rav Bergman says that as human beings, we are capable of the worst. There is no limit to the depths to which people can sink. Never think, "but we are speaking of civilized people". One only needs to read the Holocaust literature to understand that this is no argument. Human beings, without Torah and without Mitzvos and without Kedusha can think the worst of thoughts… _IN_ the Holy of Holies, _ON_ Yom Kippur. But by virtue of Torah and Mitzvos, a person can become elevated and transcend humanity. The Kohen Gadol can achieve such heights as well. This is a very, very, sobering thought.

"It Makes No Sense"

At the end of the parsha we study the famous incident of the blasphemer. The sin of 'giduf' (blasphemy) is euphemistically called 'one who blesses G-d'. It really refers to the opposite action, but we don't even want to say those words.

The Toras Kohanim is bothered by the language "And there went out the son of a Jewish woman, and he was the son of an Egyptian man…" [24:10]. The Toras Kohanim asks, "From where did he go out?" and cites the opinion of Rabbi Berachya "he went out from the immediately preceding portion of the Torah".

The blasphemer was disturbed by the previous parsha (that of the Lechem HaPanim). The Lechem HaPanim was put on the Table in the Mishkan, every Shabbos and was removed the subsequent Shabbos and was eaten by the Kohanim. The blasphemer had a 'problem' with this. He argued that a King should be served with warm, fresh, bread — not week-old stale bread. "What kind of stupid law is this?", he argued. "This doesn't make any sense!"

"This doesn't make any sense!" was the beginning of the end. The end was he cursed G-d. Obviously the Medrash is trying to instruct us, to teach us something. What does it mean "he had difficulty dealing with the parsha of Lechem HaPanim, until he came to curse G-d"?

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, zt"l, points out an interesting fact. What would have happened if this fellow would have waited a week? He would have seen a miracle. The bread was not hard and stale but retained its freshness for an entire week. He would have had no questions; he would not have — Heaven forbid — cursed G-d; and he would not have been put to death. His problem was a question on G-d's Actions and Behavior, something that with the passage of time he would eventually have understood. But he had no patience to wait. He had to know **now**, and if it did not make sense to him **now**, then the whole religion was not worthwhile — and he cursed G-d.

There are times in life when we don't understand G-d's conduct. We don't understand sickness; we don't understand why the righteous suffer; we don't understand things like Jewish history; we don't understand the Holocaust. We don't understand! It makes no sense to us. But the main thing to remember is that Hashem we believe, has His Master Plan. In the grand scheme of things, with the passage of time, sometimes, things begin to make sense.

This is the lesson of the blasphemer and the Lechem HaPanim. His inability to accept and his lack of understanding led him to a terrible death. Had he had the faith to accept and to wait — to question but to conclude "I don't know why, but G-d must have His ways" — had he waited one week's time, his entire life would have been different.

Sometimes only with the passage of time do things 'make sense'. Sometimes it is a week, sometimes years, sometimes centuries — but in the final analysis we believe that G-d is True and Righteous.

The Priest Does Not Perform 'Last Rites' in Judaism

Parshas Emor begins with the admonition to the *Kohanim* not to come into contact—or even to be in the same room—with a dead person, with the exception of his seven immediate blood relatives. Other than that, a *Kohen* can have nothing to do with death or dead people.

The *sefer HaKesav v'HaKabbala* advances an interesting theory regarding this halacha: Catholic priests (and perhaps priests or ministers from other denominations as well) play an important role in death. The priest administers the "Last Rites." When a person is on his deathbed, or even after a person has expired, the priest will inevitably be summoned to administer these "Last Rites."

The theory behind this religious ritual is that somehow the priest can get the dying or deceased individual into Heaven. If someone has this ceremony performed upon him he is, so to speak, "guaranteed to be a son of the World-to-Come." This means that a person could have lived a life of sin, but as long as he receives the Last Rites, he does not need to worry about "burning in eternal damnation."

In Judaism, there is no religious functionary who can get anyone into *Gan Eden* or *Olam HaBah* – neither a *Rav* nor a *Kohen*. The *Kohen* can bring a *Korban* for a person, and he can do other things to help a person fulfill certain aspects of Divine Service during his lifetime, but after a person dies, the *Kohen* has no power to get him into *Olam HaBah*. Therefore, says the *HaKesav v'HaKabbala*, the Torah insists on distancing *Kohanim* from any aspect of death.

In Yiddishkeit, the only person who will get you into *Gan Eden* or *Olam HaBah* is you yourself, and you need to earn it while you are alive. After death, it is too late. That is why the Torah placed this fence and obstacle between *Kehunah* and *Tumas HaMes* – in order that no one should think that when the time comes, "he'll get me in."

The Symbolism of Showing the Show Bread

I found the following thought in the *sefer* Imrei Baruch from Rabbi Baruch Simon (a rebbe in Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanon, Yeshiva University).

This week's parsha repeats the mitzvah of the *Lechem HaPanim*, the twelve loaves of 'Showbread' that were on the *Shulchan* in the *Mishkan* and later in the *Beis haMikdash*. The Gemara states (Chagiga 26b) that at the end of the three Pilgrimage Festivals when Jews came from all of Eretz Yisrael to the *Beis HaMikdash*, when they were about to leave, the *Kohanim* lifted the *Shulchan* to show the *Lechem HaPanim* to those who came up for the *Regalim*.

When they showed the *Lechem HaPanim*, the *Kohanim* would say, "See how precious you are before the Almighty – the *Lechem HaPanim* is still as fresh and warm now when we're removing it from the *Shulchan*, a week after being baked, as it was when it was first placed on the *Shulchan*." This was a great miracle that occurred week after week with the *Lechem HaPanim*. It remained warm a week after it was baked!

This was the parting message that the *Kohanim* delivered to the Pilgrims as they were about to return home after spending the *Shalosh Regalim* in the proximity of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Rabbi Baruch Simon comments that there were many miracles that the *Ribono shel Olam* performed in the *Beis HaMikdash*. Why was specifically **this** miracle pointed out and shown off to those who came up to *Yerushalayim* for the *Regalim*?

He cites an idea from the **Pri Tzadik, Rav Tzadok haKohen of Lublin**, that the warmth of the *Lechem HaPanim* was indicative of how the *Ribono shel Olam* loves *Klal Yisrael*. There were twelve *Lechem HaPanim*, corresponding to the twelve Tribes. When the Almighty kept the twelve *Lechem HaPanim* warm, He was making the statement "I love you. Our relationship is still warm. It has not

dissipated over the past week. And I love all twelve of the Tribes of Israel."

There is a universal *minhag*, based in *Halacha*, that a *Beis Knesses* has twelve windows. The reason for this practice is that each Tribe has its own "pathway" to the *Ribono shel Olam*. Contrary to what some people may think, *Klal Yisrael* is not monolithic. We are not a one-size-fits-all religion where just a single approach to Divine Service is appropriate for all Jews. Every *Shevet* had its own path to the Almighty, and this was signified in the *Beis HaMikdash*, where there were twelve windows, and so too it is signified in every shul, which also has twelve windows.

The approach of *Shevet Reuven* is different from the approach of *Shevet Shimon,* and the approach of *Shevet Gad* is different from the approach of *Shevet Dan*. But, the *Lechem HaPanim* of all those twelve Tribes is still warm a week after having been taken out of the oven, because the *Ribono shel Olam* loves the approaches advanced by **each** of the Tribes. We all know that. There is *Nussach Sfard* and *Nussach Ashkenaz*. There are Chassidim and Misnagdim. There are different approaches. Every Tribe has its own approach, and they are all dear to the Almighty.

What better message can be imparted to Klal Yisroel as they head back home to their communities where they live together with people who are different, and who may have different approaches. Their approaches are as valid as your approach. That is what will keep us together as a unified nation. When everyone has the affirmation that the approach of each Tribe – as long as it is done *k'Din u'k'Das* – is precious to the Almighty, then we will have greater *Achdus* in *Klal Yisrael*. This is the message that the *Olei Regalim* are left with as they head back home to their local communities.

What Set Off The Mekallel?

Parshas Emor contains the *mitzvah* of the *Lechem HaPanim*. 24:5-9

Each Shabbos, the *Kohanim* placed the twelve loaves on the Shulchan. The loaves remained there the entire week. The following Shabbos, the *Kohanim* removed the loaves from the Shulchan, placed new loaves on it and ate the loaves that they removed. In commemoration of this ritual, in some Chassidic circles, it is customary to have 12 challahs at the table when reciting the *HaMotzi* blessing on Shabbos.

Despite the fact that the Challahs lay on the table the entire week, the Talmud says that the bread remained fresh from Shabbos to Shabbos. Not only did it not become stale, but the bread also remained warm the entire week, as if it had just been baked.

Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin in his sefer Pri Tzaddik writes that the twelve loaves corresponded to the twelve tribes. With this miracle, Hashem wants to say, "These challahs are so dear to me — they stay warm from one Shabbos to the next — because you are dear to me." Each loaf, representing another tribe, symbolizes the love and endearment the Almighty feels for each segment of the Jewish people.

Classic Rabbinic literature emphasizes that the 12 tribes each had individualistic ways of serving the *Ribono shel Olam*. Despite the fact that we all have the same Torah and the same 613 *mitzvos* and despite the fact that we all believe in the same Master of the Universe, every tribe approached their Divine Service with different nuances of worship. For this reason, it is brought down in *halacha* that a *Beis Kenesses* should have twelve windows. The Magen Avraham and other commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch note that this symbolizes the fact that every tribe has a unique path to Heaven. Through each window, so to speak, passes the unique prayers of a different tribe of Israel.

This is the message of the twelve tribes and the twelve challahs: See how beloved you are before the Almighty. The *Ribono shel Olam* does not have a problem with our "differences" — as long as we are all keeping the same Torah.

Rav Tzadok says that now we can understand the next parsha in the Torah. "The son of an Israelite woman **went out** — and he was the son of an Egyptian man — among the Children of Israel; they contended in the camp, the son of the Israelite woman and the Israelite man." [Vayikra 24:10]. The Medrash asks, "From where did he go out?" Chazal say something very interesting (Rashi cites this opinion of Rav Berechyah): "He went out from the immediately preceding passage."

The *mekallel* was "ticked off" by the passage describing the *Lechem HaPanim*. He said, "What kind of business is this? Is it appropriate to serve one's King with week old bread? If this is the nature of this religion, I want to have nothing to do with it!" He then cursed the Name of G-d.

This is certainly strange behavior. Out of all the things in Torah that one might chose to take issue with, this *mekallel* focused on the *Lechem HaPanim*! What is this all about?

Rav Tzadok says that the *mekallel* was bothered by something other than the fact that the bread was a week old. Those twelve challahs represent the sanctity of every one of the twelve tribes. This individual had no tribe because he did not have a Jewish father. He was therefore lacking in complete *Kedushas Yisrael* [full Jewish sanctity]. This is a classic example of sour grapes. The people are told, "See how dear you are before the Almighty" and he feels left out. He has a problem with G-d's endearment with the members of the twelve tribes, because he does not possess that same sanctity. Therefore, his reaction is to curse the whole thing. - This is what set off the *mekallel*.



Towards the end of parshas Emor we are told **כַּאֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מוּם בָּאָדָם כֵּן יִנָּתֶן בּוֹ** - *'Just as he inflicted an injury upon a person, so shall it be inflicted upon him.'* The pasuk is clearly describing somebody who injures someone else, and what he must pay to compensate him.

The Gemara explains that he doesn't actually cause him bodily harm back in revenge, but rather how much he must pay back in financial terms.

The Baal Shemtov tells us a much deeper way of understanding this pasuk. And that is… When a person finds a blemish on someone else, it's a sign that he too suffers from the very same blemish.

The Mishna tells us that in regards to checking a person who has Tzoraas, a person may check somebody else's, but never his own. And this is meant to mean that it's so easy to look at somebody else's faults, but we rarely see the faults within ourselves.

Somebody walks into the 1st class section of the train, and he notices that there is only one other person sitting there. He makes himself comfortable in the plush seat, takes out a cigarette and starts smoking. The only other passenger in that compartment turns round to him and says, "Excuse me sir, but this is a non-smoking part of the train. You can't smoke here."

The other man looks at him and says, "I know" – and he continues smoking.

The other passenger was fuming. He stands up and storms out of the compartment of the train and goes to call the ticket collector. He

comes back a few minutes later with the inspector who says, "Excuse me sir, but it's forbidden to smoke here, and I believe that this other gentleman has already told you about this."

So, the man stares the inspector in the eyes and says, "I know, I'm so sorry, but you see the other gentleman has no right to tell me this because he's only got a 3rd class ticket, and he's sitting in the 1st class compartment."

The inspector promptly inspects the other man's ticket and confirms that he's only got a 3rd class ticket and drags him embarrassingly out of the 1st class compartment.



The journey continues, and at the end of the journey they both happen to get off at the same station. They meet at the platform, and the man who was escorted out asks, "Excuse me, but how did you know that I had a 3rd class ticket?"

The man looks at him and smiles, "What do you mean, your ticket was sticking out of your pocket, and I saw that it had exactly the same colour as my ticket!"

The Torah is telling us in this week's parsha that so often we look at others, and we see their faults and shortcomings. The Baal Shemtov says that when you look at somebody else, you are looking in a mirror, which means that you have the same faults yourself.

Have an amazing Shabbos!

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Meet and Greet

We are instructed to receive everyone **בסבר פנים יפות** with a pleasant facial expression.

There was a person who would give **R' Chaim Kanievsky** a hard time. Despite this, R' Chaim always greeted him with a special warmth. When R' Chaim was asked about why his reaction to this person was always one of warmth, he answered that it says **והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות** - 'receive everyone with a cheerful face' — that is, every person, and not just the people you like. Even those that annoy you.



R' Avraham Grodzinski (1883-1944) spent two years perfecting the attribute of "greeting every individual with a pleasant facial countenance." People would later attest to the extent he instilled this principle into his character. Even in the most horrific times in the Kovno Ghetto during the Holocaust, his pleasant facial expression masked his internal grief.

When **R' Shlomo Hoffman** (1922-2013) was young and learning in the Slabodka yeshiva he had a learning session with **R' Isaac Sher** (1875-1952) in his house. He once entered the house and R' Sher asked him why he was sad. Unaware of how sombre his appearance was, he responded that he wasn't sad. R' Sher told him, "You must have not looked in a mirror recently because if you did, you would be embarrassed to go out into the street with such an expression on your face. If you knew how

you looked, you wouldn't dare enter my house with such a look on your face."

For a long while after that encounter, R' Sher demanded that Shlomo wear a smile on his face whenever he entered his house. R' Sher assigned him several exercises to get him accustomed to smiling. One time he told him, "You are like a pit in the public thoroughfare. You cause damage to everyone around you with that glum expression on your face."



R' Chaim Friedlander, who was the mashgiach of the Ponovezh yeshiva and a student of **R' Dessler**, would have a particular smile when he would speak on the phone. He was asked why he smiles if the other person can't see him anyway. He answered that although they can't see the smile, but they can hear the smile. There is something that they can sense.

At one point during the Corona pandemic, the law in Los Angeles was that for teachers teaching indoors it was mandatory to wear a mask in contrast to those teaching outdoors. In a certain Jewish high school there, the staff had a meeting discussing which teachers would teach indoors and which outdoors. Before the debate ensued, one rabbi interjected and said that he would be teaching outside.

He explained, "For the past year I have been teaching while wearing a mask and it is recognizable from the way students looked at me that they weren't enjoying my words as much because they weren't able to discern that I was smiling as I was speaking. I need my students to see me smile as I speak to them.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Throughout his rabbinic tenure, **Rav Shamshon Refoel Hirsch ZT"L** was paid his salary by the congregation every quarter, receiving payment in advance. In his later years, as he faced the realities of aging, he became concerned about an ethical issue: what would happen if he died before the end of a paid quarter? He would have been compensated for time he did not serve. While many people might consider this level of concern excessive, for Rav Hirsch it was a matter of integrity and therefore, not a small matter.

He privately instructed his family that if he were to pass away mid-quarter, they should calculate any unearned portion of his salary and return it to the congregation.

Remarkably, Rav Hirsch passed away on the 27th of Taives—his Yahrtzeit, which this year, falls on Friday, January 16th. In 1888, however, the year of his death, that day corresponded to December 31st, the last day of the quarter (and year). His family did not need to carry out his instruction because he had completed to the very last day, the period for which he had been paid.

His students and community members saw this not as a simple coincidence, but as a fitting, divinely orchestrated ending for someone whose unwavering integrity extended even to the smallest details of life.

Every day won't feel the same and that's okay. Some days you'll feel strong and motivated, and other days you may feel tired or overwhelmed. Some days you'll move mountains, and other days you'll move from the bed to the couch. Both are progress. Both are necessary. It's part of being human.

One Step At A Time

Life comes with highs and lows, and you're not expected to be at your best all the time. Even the act of getting out of bed some mornings can be a powerful form of holiness. Whether you're running or crawling, what matters is that you keep showing up.

Your emotions are valid and it's healthy to acknowledge them without letting them control you. Be gentle with yourself, speak with compassion and remember that even on the tough days, you're making progress. Be proud of yourself for surviving the silent battles no one knows about. A little good – even one small point – should be sought out and celebrated.

Progress doesn't always roar. Sometimes, it whispers through the smallest steps you take. And one day, when you look back, you'll see that those quiet, gentle steps carried you farther than you ever imagined. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rebbe Nachman.

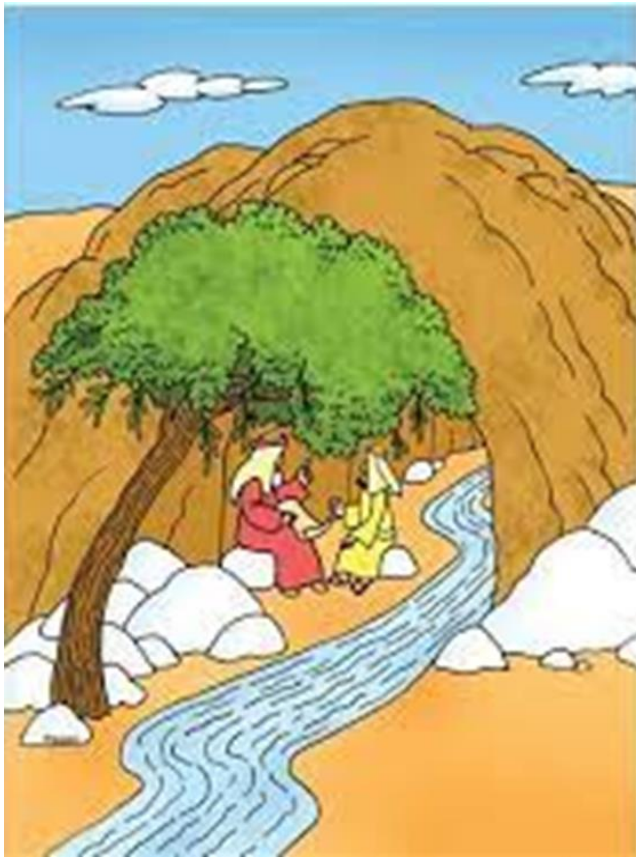
Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

The Difference Between East and West



The Gemara tells us that when the Beis Hamikdash was standing, the Mizbeach would atone for us. It is written **כרחק מזרח ממערב הרחיק ממנו את פשעינו**; as far as east from west, has He distanced our transgressions from us. The Gematria of **מזרח** is 255 while **מערב** is 312. When we take the difference (**כרחק**) of the sum between the two, we come to a result of 57, the same as the Gematria of **מזבח**! This alludes to that the Mizbeach atoned for our sins **הרחיק ממנו את פשעינו**

The Day Of R' Shimon



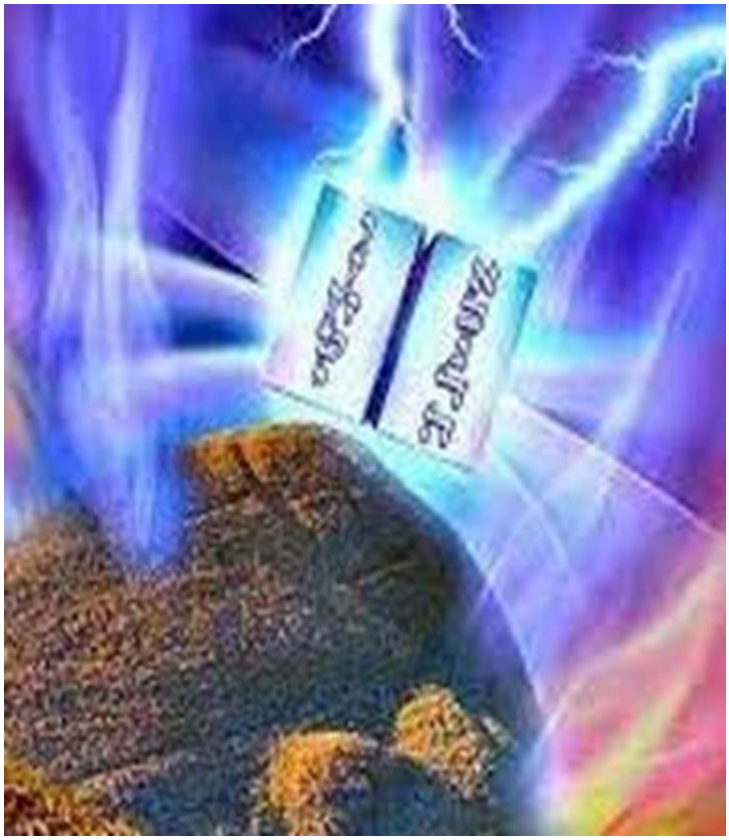
On Lag Baomer, we celebrate the Yartzheit of R' Shimon Bar Yochai who was the continuum of Torah after the students of R' Akiva died. In fact, the 33rd word in the Torah is **טוב** and Chazal say **טוב** refers to Torah. R' Avraham Simcha Horowitz points out that it is on the 33rd page of Mesachta Shabbos we are told of the story of R' Shimon Bar Yochai in the cave.

The Sefer Taamai Haminhagim tells us of another hint. There is a custom during Sefira to learn Mesachta Shavuos, which contains 49 pages. Being that a Mesachta starts on the second page (**דף ב**), the 34th page is what is learned on Lag Baomer. On that page it says **מחכו עלה במערבא...** . This refers to the celebration of Lag Baomer that takes place in Eretz Yisrael- **במערבא**.

Parshas Emor coincides with Lag Baomer. This is alluded to in the opening Rashi which states **להזהיר גדולים על הקטנים** as **להזהיר** is rooted in **זהר**, the Sefer that is attributed to R' Shimon Bar Yochai.

The Pasuk says **גל עיני ואביטה נפלאות מתורתיך** - open my eyes and I'll see the wonders of the Torah. **גל** consists of the same letters as **לג**, referring to Lag Baomer as this is when the hidden wonders of the Torah- Zohar- was revealed. The Pasuk states **מטמון... ויוצא אלהם שמעון** - he brought Shimon out to them. Another meaning is that Hashem revealed the hidden secrets of the Torah through R' Shimon Bar Yochai.

Piercing The Darkness



Chazal teach that at Matan Torah, Moshe received 1,000 **אורות** - lights which were subsequently removed from him because of the Eigel. **R' Shalom Kaminka** (1800-1852) tells us a fascinating allusion: there are 22 **ם**'s (this is what was suspended in the air in the Luchos, not the **מ**) and 2 **ס**'s in the **עשרת הדברות** from **אנכי** until **לרעך** . 22 multiplied by 40 (numerical value of **מ**) is 880. 2 multiplied by 60 (numerical value of **ס**) is 120. Adding 120 to 880, we get 1,000! These 1,000 lights originated from these 24 (**ס** and **ם**'s) at Matan Torah. This is because these two form the word **סם**, that which is lowly, and these are the lights that were removed from Moshe- the fallen lights.

Deeper Than Oil

The Gemara relates that the Romans once instituted 3 decrees against us- not to keep Shabbos, not to circumcise our sons and to have relations with Niddas. Who was the one that had these decrees ultimately abolished? R' Shimon Bar Yochai.

With this the **Imrei Chaim** explains the term **שמן** in relation to R' Shimon Bar Yochai- **שמן ששון מחבריך, שמן משחת קדש** in the Zemer Bar Yochai- as **שמן** are the initials **שבת, מילה, נדה** , the 3 decrees he eliminated.

The Strong Man



The word **יד** has a Gematria of 14. This alludes to the 14 knuckles one has on each hand. The number 14 is a 1 and a 4 since that is how the hand is divided up as the thumb is the 1 and then there are the other 4. The number 14 is that of a **י** (10) and **ד** (4). These two letters together make up a **ה** which has a Gematira of 5, referring to the 5 fingers.

The letter **י** is a spiritual letter as is shown in the following:

1) It is the only letter that remains aloof, above as it doesn't touch the line, symbolizing spirituality.

2) It is with this letter that **עולם הבא** was created.

The **ד** on the other hand refers to **עולם הזה** (physicality) as **ד** in Gematria is 4 alluding to the **ד' כנפות הארץ** - corners of the earth. So, when we perform an action, it is because our mind (**י**) tells the hand (**ד**, physicality) to do it. It also tells us when not to do an action. Thus, **יד** is comprised of the same letters as **די** !

True strength is with both hands. This explains why **כח** has a numerical value of 28, since there are 28 knuckles on both hands.

One who is mentally strong is called a **חכם**. This is at age 40 as in **בן ארבעים לבינה**. Hence, rearranging the letters of **חכם** we get **כח מ** (**מ** has a Gematria of 40).

Lag Baomer

On Lag Baomer, all gates of heaven (**רקיע**) are opened **עד בלי די** ; without limit. Is it any wonder that the initials of **יִ**ושפע **שֶׁ**פע **רַ**ב **בַּ**כל; through this may abundant bounty flow through all the worlds, spell **רשבי** (acronym for **ר' שמעון בר יוחאי**).

Many were healed from the prayers on this holy day at the gravesite of R' Shimon. **The Imrei Pinchas** informs us that Lag Baomer has the power to awaken **רפואה** since the Pri Eitz Chaim tells us that **רפואה** corresponds to **הוד** and Lag Baomer correlates to **הוד שבהוד**. Indeed, the first letters of **מֶ**לך **רוֹ**פא **נֶ**אמן **וַ**רחמן - Hashem is a faithful and compassionate healer, spell **מרון** .

24:11 וַיִּקֹּב בֶּן־הָאִשָּׁה הַיִּשְׂרְאֵלִית אֶת־הַשֵּׁם וַיְקַלֵּל



A young couple once came to the **Baba Sali, Chacham Yisrael Abuchatzeira zt"l**, and asked him for a beracha to have a child. They had been to numerous doctors who informed them that there was nothing to do in their situation. The Baba Sali took a bottle of water that he had blessed and he handed it to the couple. Then he told them to give 100 Lira to Tzedakah, and they will see Heavenly salvation. The husband and wife looked at each other and the man pulled out 100 Lira, which he deposited on the Baba Sali's table. They took the bottle of water and walked out.

While on the bus heading back home, the husband was disappointed. "What was the point of all this? To get a bottle of water? For 100 Lira? I could buy a bottle for 1 Lira?" The wife was silent but she, too, was disenchanted. The moment they got off the bus, a man walked up to them. He was the shamash of the Baba Sali, and he

explained that the Tzaddik had sent him with the 100 Lira they had left, and if they wanted it back in return for the bottle of water, they could do so. The couple grabbed the money and gave back the water. The next day, another couple came to the Baba Sali with the same issue. He gave them the same bottle of water and they happily left 100 Lira on the table. They made a beracha with special kavana on the water before they drank. Nine months later, almost to the day, they were blessed with a child!

The posuk says that the Mekallel (blasphemer) "went out." Rashi offers various explanations here, one of which is that he "went out" from the previous topic of the Lechem Hapanim and he mocked it. "A king should eat warm, fresh bread every day. Should a king eat nine-day-old bread?" He did not believe in the words of Moshe Rabbeinu who taught that the Lechem Hapanim remained warm and fresh from week to week. It was a miracle from Hashem. ***One who does not believe cannot merit salvation, and ultimately it can lead him to blaspheming against Hashem and the Torah.***

ויצא בן אשה ישראלית והוא בן איש מצרי בתוך בני ישראל וינצו במחנה בן הישראלית ואיש הישראלי (24:10)

Parshas Emor concludes with a tragic episode in which somebody cursed and blasphemed Hashem. How did this incident come about?

Rashi explains that the blasphemer was the son of a Jewish woman named Shlomis bas Divri and the Egyptian taskmaster who was slain by Moshe (Shemos 2:12). Because his mother was descended from the tribe of Dan, the blasphemer attempted to encamp amongst the tribe of Dan, but they refused to allow him to do so because his father was not from their tribe. Unable to resolve the conflict, they went to Moshe to rule on the dispute. When Moshe ruled in favour of the tribe of Dan, the man blasphemously uttered his curse.

Although the tribe of Dan was correct in their argument that the blasphemer was not legally entitled to dwell amongst them, the **Alter**

of Kelm questions why they were so adamant in their refusal. The Torah records (Bamidbar 1:39) that the male members of the tribe of Dan between the ages of 20 and 60 numbered more than 60,000, in which case the total number of men and women of all ages in the tribe numbered well over 100,000. - If so, why were they so insistent in their refusal to allow one additional person to live in their midst, especially if his mother was part of their tribe?

The Alter suggests that we may derive from here that one spiritually impure individual has the ability to corrupt and contaminate an entire tribe consisting of more than 100,000 people, and in order to protect themselves from his negative influence, they had no choice but to refuse his request to encamp amongst them.



When the **Chazon Ish** became Bar Mitzvah, he accepted upon himself a commitment to spend the rest of his life engaged in the pure study of Torah solely for its own sake.

Not surprisingly, he grew up to become renowned for his Torah knowledge. More recently, somebody asked **Rav Elozar Menachem Shach** what a boy becoming Bar Mitzvah in this generation should accept upon himself?

Rav Shach replied that he should make two commitments. First, he must pledge not to associate with friends who may serve as a negative influence. Second, he most promise not to idly linger in the streets, but rather to travel directly from his home to his yeshiva and to return home immediately upon the conclusion of his studies. Rav Shach added that somebody who sincerely does so is guaranteed to grow up to become a great Torah scholar.

Torah Tavlin - Concepts in Avodas Halev From The Family of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

לֶנֶפֶשׁ לֹא־יִטַּמָּא בְּעַמָּיו... כִּי אִם־לִשְׁאֵרוֹ הַקָּרֹב אֵלָיו לְאִמּוֹ וּלְאָבִיו וְלִבְנוֹ וּלְבִתּוֹ וּלְאָחִיו 21:1-2



Hashem told Moshe to talk to the Kohanim and tell them they must not become Tamei to any dead person, except for the seven close relatives: a wife, mother, father, son, daughter, brother and sister. On this posuk, my Zaida, the "Machsheves Halev" would say a vort. It is an especially meaningful and poignant vort because it is a true flashback to my Zaida zt"l. I loved calling my grandfather on erev Shabbos for a vort from his wellspring of derashos.

A few years ago, he shared with me a masterpiece. Why does the Torah refer to the kohen's wife here as **שארו** and not **אשתו**? He answered, that although she passed away and he lost a loved one, she left him a legacy via his children. So **שארו** here stems from the lashon of **שיריים**, something left over. Because that is a wife. She left him over a legacy of children.

I responded to him with an additional vort that fit in beautifully. **R' Zalman Sorotzkin zt"l** (Oznaim L'Torah) asks if the sequence is correct. **כִּי אִם־לִשְׁאֵרוֹ הַקָּרֹב אֵלָיו לְאִמּוֹ וּלְאָבִיו**. A person knows his father and mother before his wife, so why didn't the Torah mention them before his wife?

The answer is that the Torah is teaching us an important principle in life. A person's parents signify his past, whereas his wife is his future, his generations to come. Although the past is crucial, and even an integral part of his makeup, the focal point of a person is to build his future no matter what his past was.

Turn to Hashem and daven for Siyata D'shmaya for yourself and to build future doros. It is up to you to build and create a strong future for yourself. Thus, the Torah lists the wife before the parents.

Torah Tavlin

R' Yissachar Dov Rokeach zt"l (Belzer Rebbe) would say: Chassidim have a minhag to toivel in the mikvah every day. One who disgraces this minhag is nothing short of an Apikores. The reason is that the **Mahari'l** writes, one should go to the mikvah on Erev Yom Kippur because *'Teshuvah requires immersion in a Mikvah.'* Furthermore, Chazal tell us (Shabbos 153a), *'Do Teshuvah today in case you die tomorrow.'* Thus, since one must do Teshuvah every day (in case he dies the next day) and Teshuvah requires immersion in a mikvah, that is why Chassidim toivel every day."

Lost

The following story is told by Rabbi Pinchas Woolstone of Sydney, Australia. While I was in New York, I was approached by a prestigious Chassidic rabbi, who told me about a family that was searching for their long-lost daughter. She had been born and raised in Boro Park, and had married there. Unfortunately, the marriage ended badly, but her husband - for whatever reason - refused to give her a get (divorce). After this went on for a period of time, the wife suddenly disappeared. Her family had since learned that she had gone to Australia, but they had no idea where. Since I was from Australia, the rabbi who approached me thought that maybe I could

help them bring their daughter back to her people. I answered him almost jokingly, "Australia is geographically the size of the United States. Looking for someone in Australia without an address, or even a city, is like trying to find a needle in a haystack."

Before returning to Australia, I had an audience with the **Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l**, so I told him this whole story. He thought for a moment and then asked, "When are you going back?" I told him I was leaving this week. He said, "Sometime after you get back, maybe the week after, you should take a trip to Brisbane."

He didn't explain why, and I didn't have the temerity to ask. But a short time after I returned to Australia, I got on a plane to Brisbane. Now, Brisbane is a northerly city, about an hour's flight from Sydney, and it has a very small Jewish community. At that time, there was no Chabad emissary in Brisbane and Jewishly speaking, it was a desolate place. Flying there, I found myself sitting next to a Greek Orthodox Christian woman. Seeing that I was Jewish, she began asking me theological questions concerning the Bible. Toward the end of our conversation, she asked me something peculiar: "What is the Jewish view of a person who leaves the Jewish faith? Is such a person allowed back in, or is the door bolted?" I answered, "Nobody can ever be separated from Almighty G-d, and if for whatever reason, someone has not honoured his or her commitment to Torah and decides to come home again, the Jewish community will welcome that person with open arms."

She nodded and then said, "I want to tell you something. I own a chain of dress shops around Australia and in Cairns. I have a shop which employs a Jewish girl. I know she's Jewish because she once told me that she came from a very religious home in New York and I can see that she's living a very different life here from how she was brought up. She says she's happy, but I can tell that she's really not, and I believe that she would be better off back in her own community." At that moment, bells started ringing in my head. Here

I am going to Brisbane on the Rebbe's instructions without knowing why I am going there. And on the way, I meet a Christian woman who is telling

me about a Jewish girl who left home. Realizing what this could mean, I began to shake from excitement. I said to the woman, "You should know that I am going to Brisbane because a Rabbi in New York told me to after I asked him how I could find a lost Jewish girl."



The woman got so excited that immediately offered to pay all costs involved, so that I could meet this girl - though I declined her offer. From Brisbane, I flew to Cairns, and I walked into this dress shop. She wasn't there at first, and I had to wait a little until she came back from her break. But the moment she walked in, I knew it was her! Her face hadn't changed from the picture I was shown, just her outward appearance. Obviously she was not dressed like a religious girl from Boro Park, and she was clearly surprised to see me there - a chasid visiting a women's dress shop in a far-flung region of Australia.

Trying to find the right words, I decided it was best to just tell her why I was there. She wasn't too enthusiastic. She looked at me harshly and said, "Look, all I want - all I ever wanted - is a get! If you can help me with a get, then fine. But if not, then just leave me alone."

I called the people back in New York, and they finally managed to arrange her get. While I was making these arrangements, I met with her again, and I said to her, "You know that getting divorced from

your husband doesn't mean you must divorce yourself from your family, from your community, from your religion and from Hashem."

She heard me. She came back to America and began attending Shabbos dinners that were organized by a local Chabad group. Little by little, she became Torah-observant again. Today she is married again, and a mother of a beautiful family.

Chacham Rav Yehudah Tzadka Zt"L

The great Rosh Yeshivah of Porat Yosef, a leading Sephardic institution in Jerusalem, Chacham Rav Yehudah Tzadka zt"l, was characterized by his love of Torah and its Sages, and his desire and alacrity to perform mitzvos. He lived simply and encouraged his students to be content without luxuries. His most important mission in life was to teach Torah to students and laymen alike, and he conducted many shiurim to the impoverished and under-educated in the Sephardic community. Hundreds of people turned to him for advice, and he was most beloved by Jews of all stripes.

Beyond the walls of the yeshiva, Rav Tzadka was active throughout Israel, encouraging Sephardic families to give their children a Torah education rather than send them to secular schools. He spoke at rallies sponsored by the P'eylim organization on behalf of Torah education for new immigrants, and made the rounds on school registration days, begging parents to register their children in Torah schools.

Torah was his life and he wished to give this life to others. After the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, he visited absorption camps in which hundreds of thousands of Sephardic Jews who had left or been expelled from Arab countries were living, urging parents not to send their children to secular schools and encouraging established communities to open Torah schools for immigrant children. Many many Sephardic families are Torah observant today

because of the efforts of Rav Yehuda Tzadka. On one occasion, the Rosh Yeshiva needed to travel to an outskirts community for Shabbat to promote religious observance and speak to the community. He arranged for a local taxi service to pick him up on Friday afternoon and waited outside as the driver pulled up. Once inside, he opened a sefer and began to look inside.



It was a lively ride as the dispatch radio squawked constantly. On Friday afternoon, taxis are at their busiest. Rav Tzadka overheard the taxi driver take a call from his dispatcher offering him a job to drive a customer to the airport in Lod. It was a long drive. The problem was the job entailed him to drive once Shabbat had already started.

At first, the driver refused the offer since this meant working after his normal hours were over, but when he heard the exorbitant fare that the customer was willing to pay - six hundred shekel - he changed his mind and took the job. Rav Tzadka was listening in the back seat to the conversation, and he was instantly shocked and dismayed, to say the least.

He began to talk to the driver and plead with him not to take a job which will cause him to desecrate the holy day of Shabbat. The driver was polite, but insisted that he needed the money to feed his family. Rav Tzadka continued to plead but nothing seemed to work.

Finally, Rav Tzadka took six hundred shekel out of his wallet and offered the money to the driver. "Here, right now I will pay you the full fare you would have received for this journey, so that you won't lose out by not taking the job." The driver was stunned. He looked at the Rabbi and the money in his hand, moved by the lengths to

which this great man was willing to go to ensure that he, a stranger, would not desecrate the Shabbat.

It took great emotional fortitude on behalf of the simple taxi driver but he finally took hold of the Chacham's hand and kissed it. With tears in his eyes, he promised that from now on he would keep Shabbat at any cost.

Just then, the two men heard a crackling on the radio. The dispatcher was calling back with urgent information about the fare. The driver picked up the call and listened with a huge smile on his face as the man informed him that his big fare had just cancelled and it will not be necessary for him to travel on the Shabbat. Sorry, said the dispatcher, for losing the hefty fare, but the driver responded that he was not sorry at all. In fact, he was happy that Hashem was looking out for him!

After that experience, the driver became close with Rav Tzadka, who taught him and his family about Torah and mitzvos, until he became a complete Baal Teshuvah. And not only him, but his entire family also became religious. This "simple" taxi driver merited children and grandchildren who today live lives of Torah, keeping Shabbat to its fullest.

Military Draught

Receiving a draft notice to the Hungarian army in 1943 may not have seemed fortunate at the time, but ultimately it was this involuntary conscription that saved Louis Kopolovics' life. While the rest of his family stayed behind in their supposedly safe home in the Carpathian Mountains, Louis was sent to Komarno, a military installation situated on the banks of the Danube River.

Although the Hungarian army didn't discriminate when it came to the race of its draftees, it was the Jewish soldiers who were among those deliberately selected for the most physically taxing labour

that required them to be exposed to the brutal East European winters.

Later, Louis ended up in Budapest, where he was arrested by the Germans and shipped to the Austrian-Hungarian border to dig ditches they hoped would waylay enemy tanks. From there, he was forced to participate in a death march across the entire length of Austria, to the Mauthausen concentration camp.

When Mauthausen was liberated by the American army on May 6, 1945, he was among the skeletal figures who first welcomed the American troops. The next phase of his Holocaust trauma would unfold as Louis began his frantic, desperate search for the scattered remnants of his family - if indeed anyone had survived. Like many survivors, Louis hopped on trains to search for relatives. They didn't need identification papers, and the tickets were free.

He travelled back and forth between Prague and Budapest, where the U.N. Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the "Joint") had set up safe havens for refugees. There was always the possibility of running into someone who knew something about a loved one, and the walls and bulletin boards were scrawled with messages asking if anyone has seen ....? In fact, it was there that an unknown man informed Louis of his father's death in Buchenwald. However, the man had no news of the fate of his mother and siblings.

Louis continued to search. He would not give up; he could not. One day, Louis boarded a crowded train bound for Budapest. His shoulders sagged as he sought an empty seat. He was so bone-weary and drained after all his fruitless trips that he was finally considering giving up. All the compartments were filled. Louis kept opening and closing doors until he finally found one with a vacant bench. He was about to lower himself onto the seat when he suddenly realized why it hadn't been occupied. It was covered with mud. Louis had no more energy to find another seat. He'll just clean it up

himself, he thought. He looked about for a tissue or napkin, anything that could remotely serve as a shmattah (rag).

Finally, he spotted a discarded piece of paper on the floor. Louis bent down to pick up the stray paper and saw that it was a torn page from some kind of official document. He gave it a cursory glance, and then stood still in his tracks. A name leapt off the page, a name he knew well: Lenka Kopolovics. His sister's name on a random page! The document bore the official seal of the Swedish Red Cross and was a record of patients sheltered in their facilities. To his absolute shock, his sister was among them!

Louis jumped off the train at the next station. He practically ran back to Prague, where telegraph services had been restored. He didn't know whom to contact, so he simply sent a telegram addressed to "The Swedish Red Cross." Amazingly, Lenka received the message and telegraphed him back twenty-four hours later. He was alone no more. And the wonder of it all - something as trivial and mundane as a muddy seat had brought him back his sister.

On the day of their reunion, Lenka told her brother that their family had been rounded up from their home in the Carpathian Mountains, where they were sent straightaway to Auschwitz. Their mother did not survive. Louis' conscription into the Hungarian army turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as his trajectory was much milder than theirs.

A few months after he found his sister, Louis discovered that one other sibling, a brother named Bernie, had also survived, and had returned to their hometown of Szolyva. Louis travelled to Szolyva and began to look for Bernie. He didn't have far to go. As Louis walked on a small bridge from Szolyva heading north, he collided with his brother, who was walking south from Nelipeno. They fell into each other's arms and wept. The three siblings eventually emigrated to the United States.

Rabbi Ezriel Tauber



Several years ago, Rabbi Ezriel Tauber gave a lecture on the Holocaust in New York city to a secular audience. At the end of his talk, a young lady walked over and told him that she came from an assimilated family in Austria. She explained that her father had been religious before the war, but as the sole survivor of his family, he became so bitter against G-d that he went back to Vienna to raise an assimilated family. The woman had been fascinated to hear a positive interpretation of the Holocaust and eventually she became a complete baalas teshuvah. Her father was devastated. "I ran away from all that. Are you crazy to go back?" But she did go back and even made aliyah, settling in Jerusalem.

Some time later, Rabbi Tauber was invited to deliver a lecture in a hotel in Tiberias over Shabbos Chanukah. The very same woman was there, and she told him that her father was visiting from Vienna and she was spending some time with him in Tiberias. - Rabbi Tauber suggested that maybe if she brought her father that evening to his lecture, it might soften him up a bit towards Judaism.

She brought him to the packed lecture hall where Rabbi Tauber spoke eloquently. He drove home the message that each and every Jew is an ambassador of Hashem and as a result, every Jew has the chance to sanctify G-d's Name. Hashem gave every Jew a pure neshama, a candle to light up the dark, and no one can replace the light he will spread. The light that is not spread leaves a dark area in the world, which prevents Mashiach from coming.

He explained that there are two types of Kiddush Hashem. One is to die for Him and one is to live for Him. The second is more difficult. He illustrated this idea with a true story.

In Treblinka, one of the worst concentration camps, the Germans eliminated more than 800,000 Jews in less than one year. But they were not satisfied in killing them alone. They hung a paroches, the covering from an Aron Kodesh, at the entrance to the gas chambers inscribed with the words, "This is G-d's gate; the righteous shall pass through it."

These cynical Germans thought they could humiliate the Jews in the last moments of their lives, hoping they would curse G-d before they died. The exact opposite happened. Even the assimilated Jew, without understanding why, would sing, "Ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu" - How fortunate are we that we are being killed as Jews. This drove the Germans crazy. Instead of humiliating the Jews, they lifted them up.

"This," said Rabbi Tauber, "is called dying Al Kiddush Hashem. And if you are going to die, you might as well die sanctifying His Name. The challenge is for those who survived Treblinka. Finding themselves alone in this world without their family, those who walked with Hashem without complaints, who raised a family, made a new paroches that says, 'This is the gate of Hashem.'

In this generation, we are all Holocaust survivors. Every one of us is a victim of the gas chambers. We are victims of the Western gas chambers. Spiritually we are being poisoned. Our brains do not function. We are addicted to the stupidity of Western society. Those who live in the warmth of Yiddishkeit, are like those liberated from the camps. This is the time to rebuild ourselves by becoming proud Jews. This is the reason Hashem made miracles for us, enabling us to survive!"

When the lecture was over, this young lady ran over to Rabbi Tauber. She said that her father was in the audience, and he wanted to talk

to him. A few moments later she escorted her father to the front. He walked with his head down, and when he lifted his face up, Rabbi Tauber could see that his eyes were swollen with tears.

He said in a Polish Yiddish, "I was in Treblinka working at that gas chamber. I saw my family killed in front of my eyes. I saw the paroches which you spoke about, and that made me an apikorus. I couldn't forgive G-d for keeping me alive with all these horrific memories."

Rabbi Tauber asked him whether he had found his answer tonight. Hadn't he thought that he could get away with raising an assimilated family? And look, one daughter was married to a gentile and the other, who had been non-religious, had come back to Hashem. "Your daughter is the one who is making that new paroches with her own hands," he told him. "This is the Gate of Hashem. Can you run away from that?" Slowly but surely, the Yid from Vienna became a baal teshuvah.



Vechol Maaminim - The 'Korban' of Meah Brachos Brings Abundance into the World
והקרבתם על הלחם (כג יח)

Harav Yaakov Tzvi Yalish, author of Melo Haro'im, explained: Reciting 100 brachos each day brings down an abundance of food and sustenance to the world. This is alluded to in the name of Dovid Hamelech, who instituted this practice (Bamidbar Rabbah 18:21): "Dovid ben Yishai…Bais Halachmi" (Shmuel I, 17:58), to teach us that in his merit there is lechem, bread and food for the creations.

This passuk also alludes to this, **והקרבתם על הלחם** – if you are "makriv **על** which is numerically equivalent to 100 brachos, each day, Hashem will send you an abundance of parnassah from Above and you will never lack for bread. (*Kol Yaakov)*

Maaseh Emunim - A Son – Decreed by Beis Din



The gaon Harav Pinchas Epstein, zt"l, the Raavad of the Eida Hachareidis in Yerushalayim, was known for being zealous on every holy matter. As part of his job as the head of the batei din of the Eida Hachareidis, he was responsible for issuing kashrus certificates of the Eida Hachareidis, which is renowned for its hiddur, to businesses and factories that passed the strict kashrus criteria of the Badatz.

Business owners in Yerushalayim and beyond knew that it was not easy to obtain such a kashrus certificate from the Raavad, because he was very strict about every detail of every stipulation the beis din made, and refused to compromise in the slightest. His practices and his stringencies were catalysts for the success of the Badatz hechsher all over Israel, as people rely on it completely.

Aside for the many stringencies that he implemented in the kashrus organization that he led, the Raavad also refrained from giving a hechsher on products that were considered 'mosros,' excessive luxuries. He claimed that there was no justification for taking upon himself the responsibility of giving kashrus for something that was an extra. He was so responsible that he occasionally conducted surprise inspections in factories and businesses. Together with his

colleagues on the Badatz, he would arrive without advance notice to be able to see first-hand that the directives of the beis din were being adhered to. Indeed, these surprise inspections proved themselves, as it happened that a factory would be disqualified and lost its kashrus certificate as the result of kashrus violations that were discovered during these inspections.

One time, the Raavad and his beis din came for a surprise inspection at a candy factory that was owned by a G-d fearing Yid from the communities that immigrated from Romania.

When the members of the Badatz entered, the owner of the factory was surprised to see them, but he obligingly accompanied them on an extensive tour through the factory's various sections. He stood on the side anxiously, hoping that they would not, chalilah find something that would lead them to remove the hechsher from the factory into which he had invested his whole life.

For a long while, the Raavad and the members of the beis din walked around the factory, inspecting each and every machine, visiting the storerooms and the production floor, as they listened to the explanations of the one in charge of kashrus at the facility.

Finally, the inspection came to an end, and the members of the delegation were satisfied. The factory met all the kashrus requirements, and the rabbanim even expressed their admiration for the exceptional kashrus rules that were implemented.

As the Raavad was about to bid farewell to the factory owner, the man surprised them by saying: "Morai Verabbosai, in Maseches Brachos (31b), Chazal explain from the words of Eli HaKohen to Chana, the mother of Shmuel, after he thought she was inebriated (Shmuel I, 1:17): **לְכִי לְשָׁלוֹם וֵאלקי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתֵּן אֶת־שֵׁלָתֵךְ אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְתְּ מֵעִמּוֹ**- "from here we learn that one who suspects his friend of something that he did not do, should appease him, and moreover, should give him a brachah." From that brachah, as we know, Chana merited an exceptional yeshuah, and was blessed with a son."

Here, the man burst into tears, and continued in a choked up voice: "When you chose to come here for a surprise inspection, you did it only because you suspected me and doubted my faithfulness. Now that I have passed the inspection successfully baruch Hashem, I am therefore like Chana, as I was suspected of something that I did not do. My wife and I do not have children for many years already, and the doctors have given up. Therefore, I ask you that like Eli HaKohen at the time, you should also appease me, and decree, as a beis din, that we should be granted with offspring from Above!"

A deep silence hovered over the office, as the man spoke with deep emotion, in a broken voice; but his claim was clear! After a short consultation, Rav Epstein declared in a confident voice: "After consulting with one another on this man's claim, we have found that he is right, and therefore, we must appease him and bless him. Therefore, we hereby guarantee that in due time, he and his wife will be blessed with offspring, b'ezras Hashem!"

Indeed, as the beis din ruled, and against the prediction of every doctor, a year later, a son was born to the couple, to the joy of all who knew them. Right after the birth, the excited father hurried to the home of the Raavad to inform him that the brachah had been fulfilled, and to invite him to serve as a sandak for the new baby at the bris, which was to be held at the simchah hall in Bikur Cholim Hospital. The Rav rejoiced with him, and accepted the invitation and blessed him warmly.

After the man left, the Raavad said to the kashrus director, Harav Avraham Aharon Scheinberger, who was seated beside him, "Very soon, everyone will likely be talking about the 'moifess' that happened here, but you should know that this was no moifess at all."

He then continued, revealing a bit of his great piety: "When I returned home after our visit to the factory, I suddenly thought about the tremendous responsibility I had undertaken. This simple

Yid thinks I am a great person, and he is sure that the Raavad of Yerushalayim has the power to decree in the Beis Din Shel Ma'alah.

What will be if chalilah, my words would not be fulfilled? This could cause a chilul Hashem… "As such, I did not delay, and I took a Sefer Tehillim, and for several hours, I poured my heart out to our Father in heaven, to send a yeshuah to this man, and baruch Hashem, my tefillos were accepted and the man saw a yeshuah…"

24:2 וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כָּתִית לַמָּאוֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד



There was once a king who had three sons. The king wished to test his sons to determine which one of them had the fortitude to become the next king. He gave his first son 100 silver pieces, the second son 50 silver pieces, and the youngest son just 10 pieces. It was clear that he favoured his oldest son and expected him to succeed him on his throne. The king told his sons that they could buy whatever they wished, however, the challenge facing the next king would be for him to fill up one of the palace chambers, from floor to ceiling, with whatever items he purchased.

The oldest son bought many wagonloads of straw, and almost managed to fill up the room, but there was still space that was not filled.

The second son brought many loads of feathers and replaced the straw with his feathers. He did get further than the first brother but he still didn't reach the top.

Finally the youngest son arrived with a small satchel. Everyone wondered how he planned on filling up the entire room with the contents of a small bag? To their amazement, he took out ten candles and matches. The light of the candles filled up the room - and he became the next king.

The lesson is that it was specifically the one with the least potential who was victorious over the rest. Our job is not to always be better than others, but rather to take the capabilities that Hashem has given us and to do the best we can with our own capabilities.

The truth is that many people have greater capabilities than others, but does it mean that they will be greater? Not necessarily. It is very possible that we will reach our potential more than they will reach theirs.

R' Pinchos Koritzer zt"l (Imrei Pinchos) would say: אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם– I heard in the name of **Rav Mendel M'Premishlan zt"l**, that although in Eretz Yisroel, there is no Yom Tov Sheni (they only keep one day), in Chutz L'aretz, the main focus of any Yom Tov is the second day.

The reason is because the Divine illumination which descends on Yom Tov and provides its innate holiness, first goes to the Holy Land and only reaches the Diaspora on the second day of Yom Tov. (For this reason, mitzvos that cannot be done on Shabbos [Shofar, Lulav] can never be missed out on Yom Tov Sheni.)"

"The purpose of prayer is to unite our hearts and minds with Hashem – to express our gratitude, our hopes, and our fears, and to surrender ourselves to His will." – Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.



Sefiras Ha'omer

Our father **Rav Shimshon zt"l** was a person whose mind was always thinking and thinking. He was constantly creating chiddushim. And when he would develop a certain chiddush or an idea of chizuk, he would sit down at his computer and type it up. Our father's computer was thus full of divrei Torah and writings that he typed up for himself.

I am zocheh to have this computer, and I often dive into it and pull up precious pearls. This week I was blessed to find in it a few lines pertaining to Sefiras Ha'omer that contain an especially strong and important message:

"Sefiras Ha'omer. When we see that bricks are being orderly set in place, one next to another, one row on top of another, this is a sign that something is being built. There is a tremendous advantage to taking hold of something when it is in the stage of being built, because one can then build it beautifully and properly from the beginning, as one wishes.

It is not so when the building is already built, and one needs to make changes. At that point, it is many times more difficult, and it won't come out as good as if it was built that way in the first place. Furthermore, you can't always change it and fix it.

The period of Sefiras Ha'omer is when the human being is built, and it is very easy to build him healthy and whole in the first place." - **Harav Yosef Dov Pincus**

Pesach Sheni

Pesach Sheni, which falls this week, is amazing. It has no parallel in the Torah. The general rule is you can't bring yesterday's *korban* today. "When the time has passed, so has its *korban.*" Then came along some Jews who couldn't bring their *Korban Pesach,* and said, "Why should we miss out?!" They were allowed to bring it a month after its time.

It is common for people to miss an essential life opportunity, such as learning Torah in their youth. Perhaps one didn't grow up in an observant home. A person could say, "What can I do?" and leave it at that. Or he could say, "Why should I miss out?!" – in which case he may bring his *"Pesach Sheni."* He is late, but the Torah teaches that he, too, can get there.

This is the story of R. Akiva. He was totally ignorant of Torah learning, had a family, and was already forty years old. When he realized where he was, he said, "Why should I miss out?!"

He went on to become the extraordinary Torah sage whose tremendous influence is felt until this day.

When a person feels, "If only I could start my life over again and do it right!" he indeed can, in spiritual matters. He can throw himself into Torah study, he can learn to *daven* with *kavanah,* and the same with *berachos.* He can guard his mouth from *lashon hara,* and train himself to every other good thing.

We learn from Pesach Sheni that we can still do it and succeed at it!

"Emunah is the light that shines in the darkness; It's the hope that sustains us through the trials of life."– The Chofetz Chaim.

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֵּעָשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ כָּל־מְלָאכָה 23:3 לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבָּת הִוא לַה' בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם

The following story was told to a Rav in Israel while he was sitting on a bus. A sailor of the Israeli navy boarded the bus and sat down next to the Rav. Soon, the two were involved in a deep conversation with the sailor relating that he was a **חוזר בתשובה** - a Jew who returned to the fold of observant Judaism after he witnessed many open miracles.



He explained that he was a crewmember on the INS Chanit, when it was damaged on July 14, 2006 by a missile fired by Hezbollah. The flight deck caught on fire and crippled the propulsion system inside the hull. Four crew members were killed during the attack. It was a Friday night and several of the religious Israeli sailors on the ship approached the captain with a request. It was crucial for the success of their mission, they said, if the entire crew ate the Shabbos meal together. They begged the captain to not only permit this request, but to allow the entire ship to join in. They understood that such a request - to have all the crew members of a war ship eating a meal together - is not standard operating procedure. Under normal circumstances, the crew ate in shifts so as not to be vulnerable to the enemy at any point. This, however, was not a normal circumstance, and perhaps it was what was needed to invoke Divine protection on the ship.

The captain granted the religious sailors their wish insisting, though, that four men must remain on the deck at all times, as a security precaution. The sailor then explained to the Rav where he was when

it all happened. He had been very tired, and his next shift of duty was to begin at 12:00 am that night. He was planning to skip the dinner and take a nap to be re-energized for his shift. However, when he heard that everyone was eating together, he decided to pop in for a few minutes. He walked in in the middle of davening and was impressed to see Israelis of many different points on the religious spectrum answering Kaddish and singing Lecha Dodi in unison.

Following Kabolas Shabbos, they all sat down to eat the Shabbos meal together. Usually, Navy meals are eaten in shifts, often a bit rushed. Similar to eating lunch in the middle of a workday, these sailors have many responsibilities and cannot eat leisurely. This Friday night, however, they were all laughing, eating, enjoying themselves and singing for several hours.

When the meal ended, they started to recite the Birchas Hamazon out loud. The sailor told the rabbi on the bus that he ended staying for the entire meal and blessing afterwards. His plans to sleep were foiled. However, he now has a great appreciation to Hashem that he missed that nap. Moments after Birchas Hamazon began, the ship was smashed by a Hezbollah missile.

The sailor explained several possible scenarios that should have happened. First, the size of the missile should have sunk the ship. A big enough hole would have been created to sink the vessel, but the missile hit a huge anchor being stored on the deck that absorbed much of the impact. He also explained that the ship caught fire and tons of stored fuel in close proximity to the flames could easily have exploded. Miraculously, they did not. Then the most obvious miracle of all - if the crew had eaten according to their normal schedule, tens of sailors would have been on deck and most likely injured or killed. They were saved since the entire crew was eating together in one room on the opposite side of the ship - far away from where the rocket hit. The sailor ran down to his quarters and found his entire room, belongings, and bunk melted to ashes from the heat of the

fire. He personally knew what his fate would have been had he taken that nap - had the big Shabbos meal and davening not taken place.

But there's more to the story. Upon searching the ship after the missile attack, crew members found a Sefer Tehillim that was opened to chapter 124. The words of the posukim are astounding: "*A song of ascents, by Dovid. Had not Hashem been with us .... when men rose up against us, they would have swallowed us alive, when their anger was kindled against us. Then the waters would have inundated us; the current would have surged across our soul. Then they would have surged across our soul- the treacherous waters. Blessed is Hashem, Who did not present us as prey for their teeth. Our soul escaped like a bird from the hunter's snare ... Our help is through the Name of Hashem, Maker of heaven and earth.*"

Looking at the Rav with gleaming eyes, the sailor declared, "I have become a religious Jew from this experience."

Drush V'Chiddush

23:22 וּבְקֻצְרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אַרְצְכֶם לֹא־תְכַלֶּה פְּאַת שָׂדְךָ בְּקֻצְרֶךָ



Parshas Emor contains the rules and laws pertaining to the **מועדים** - Festivals. One entire section, from beginning to end, deals with these festivals. There is one exception: following the laws of Shavuos, there is one specific posuk that states: "*When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not remove completely the corners of your field .... you shall not gather the gleanings of your*

harvest; for the poor and the proselyte shall you leave them; I am Hashem, your G-d." These agricultural laws have apparently nothing to do with anything else mentioned in the entire section on the Moadim.

R' Meir Simcha Hakohen ZT"L (Meshech Chochma) offers a wonderful explanation. Everything other than a Divinely inspired law, as logical as it may seem, will not last. It is obvious to us that we need the Torah to tell us which animals are kosher, and which are not, since this is something which we could never have figured out on our own.

It is likewise obvious that we need the Torah to tell us that shatnez (linen and wool mixture) is forbidden in our clothing, since this, too, is something we could never have figured out on our own. These are "Chukim" - laws that are not readily understood, and we accept them unquestioningly when they are Divinely commanded and prescribed. However, do we accept laws that benefit others with the same level of equanimity? Would we accept them so easily if they were not also prescribed in the Torah?

Social laws, such as caring for poor people, are understandable but not always adhered to. For this reason, directly in the midst of the section on the Festivals - right after the holiday of Shavuos - when the eternal Torah was given to Klal Yisroel - the Torah tells us to take care of the poor. Societies can enact and repeal laws. But only a Divine law is eternal. The Torah wants us to recognize that Matan Torah was not just a revelation of "Chukim" but also includes mitzvos of "natural" human responses, such as showing compassion to the poor and to strangers.

"Emunah is the foundation of the world. Without it, everything would collapse." – Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

22:8 נְבֵלָה וּטְרֵפָה לֹא יֹאכַל לְטָמְאָה־בָּהּ אֲנִי ה׳



In Europe, it was the custom to fatten up geese in the months preceding Pesach, since many families refrained from using any oil other than goose fat. For six to eight weeks, the geese would be fed a full bucket of corn twice a day, so that by the time the holiday arrived they would be so huge they could barely waddle. There was just one problem, which confronted the poskim and demanded a resolution.

Two of the halachic giants of the day, **the Chasam Sofer, R' Moshe Sofer ZT"L, and the Yismach Moshe, R' Moshe Teitelbaum ZT"L,** differed in their rulings as to whether the practice of force-feeding rendered the geese not kosher. The question revolved around whether or not the sharp corn grains which were forced down the throats of the birds would damage the esophagus, thus categorizing the birds as "treife" (unable to live another year).

The Chasam Sofer held that when the birds would consume the corn, the esophagus does not become damaged, and so he ruled the practice permissible. Of course, it was understood that the geese had to be carefully checked before being consumed to prove that they were in fact kosher.

His contemporary, the Yismach Moshe, on the other hand, took a more stringent approach for it was his belief that since the corn kernels being swallowed by the geese were quite sharp, the likelihood was that the birds would be rendered treife by the force feedings. Thus, he ruled that geese fed in this manner would not be permissible. The outcome of this halachic dispute was eagerly anticipated by a great majority of religious Jews in Europe. Indeed, the entire practice and in many cases, the sustenance of many families over the upcoming Yom Tov, hinged on the final ruling. The

two tzaddikim corresponded back and forth, each presenting learned arguments to prove his point, their dispute purely **לשם שמים** - for the sake of Heaven. However, neither was able to convince the other of the legality of his argument and each one stuck to his original postion.

Finally, the Chasam Sofer suggested that instead of theorizing, they should put their rulings to a practical test. Each was to take ten geese and fatten them up by force feeding them corn kernels. Then, they would slaughter them, fill the esophagi with air and float them in a full tub of water. If the esophagus was damaged, air bubbles would escape into the water, thus proving that the bird was treife. If no bubbles were seen, the bird would be kosher.

The Yismach Moshe wholeheartedly agreed. When the birds were duly fattened and slaughtered, an amazing thing took place. After placing the esophagi in the water, all the birds from the household of the Chasam Sofer proved to be one hundred percent kosher, no air bubbles were seen.

Many miles away, however, when the birds belonging to the Moshe were tested exactly the same way, they were all found to be treife. It was clear that the legal rulings of these two great Rabbonim dominated the physical reality, proving the axiom that the rulings of true halachic authorities determine the actual reality of a physical situation.

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

The *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 263) states that one of the reasons for lighting Shabbos candles is because without light there would be no *shalom bayis*, peace in the house. *Perishah* comments (263:2) that the reason for this is that the light of the Shabbos candles causes us to feel *simchah*, happiness, inside ourselves.

21:21 כָּל־אִ֣ישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בּ֗וֹ מ֚וּם מִזֶּ֣רַע אַהֲרֹ֣ן הַכֹּהֵ֔ן לֹ֥א יִגַּ֖שׁ לְהַקְרִ֑יב אֶת־אִשֵּׁ֥י ה׳

Rashi teaches that if a kohen has a blemish (מום) on his body, such as one eye is larger than the other, or one leg is longer than the other, or he is lame, disfigured, or blind, he is not permitted to perform the priestly service in the Mishkan and Bais Hamikdash.

This is true, says Rashi, as long as the blemish is upon him; however, *"if the blemish has passed, he is kosher - deemed fit (to fulfil the avodah)."*

One can take from these words, a measure of solace as well as a source of encouragement. Often, people feel that misfortune has overtaken them, their lives are full of "blemish" - they lack what is necessary to succeed in their lives.

To these people - and to all people - the message is clear: As long as one considers himself "blemished" he is unable to serve and be productive in his life. However, if "the blemish has passed" - in other words, if the person himself has gotten past those issues in his life that make him feel lacking; he is able to proceed, to move on with his life and turn the "blemish" into an experience from which he can grow, at that point "he is kosher - deemed fit" - he will surely succeed in all the areas that he once found himself lacking. A person's weakness can often become his biggest strength.

A truly inspiring story is told of a ten-year-old boy who was once riding in a car with his parents, when the car was involved in a devastating accident. The boy was severely injured and rushed to the hospital, where his life hung in the balance for some time.

Eventually, doctors were able to save his life, however, they were unable to save his left arm, and it needed to be amputated. Following countless surgeries and months of recuperation, the boy slowly started to adapt to life without the use of a limb. As one can imagine, this caused him to become depressed and his parents, thinking that

he needed to get out and assert himself more, offered to send him to study the Japanese martial art known as Judo.



The boy began lessons with an old Japanese Judo master. At first, he was hesitant, thinking that with one arm, he could never succeed in martial arts and hand-to-hand combat. Yet, it didn't take long before the boy began enjoying his lessons and found he was quite skilled. One thing he could not understand, though. For three months, he was training with his Judo master, and yet, all he learned was one basic move. He studied it and practiced it over and over - but in the end, it really was only one skilful throw.

"Sensei," the boy finally demanded, "I am ready to learn more moves!" "This is the only move you know. This is the only move you'll need to know!" the sensei, his Judo master replied cryptically. Not quite understanding, but believing in his teacher, the boy kept practicing.

Several months later, the sensei took the boy to his first tournament. Surprising everyone including himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but after some time, his opponent became impatient and the boy deftly used his one move to win the match. Still amazed by his success, the boy was now in the finals.

This time, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. The one-armed boy, although adept enough to have come this far, appeared to be overmatched. Concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee wanted to stop the match. Before he could even

suggest it, though, the sensei intervened. "No," the master insisted, "Let him continue."

The match continued. At one point, the boy's opponent made a critical mistake; he dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his one special move to pin him. The boy had won the match and the tournament. He was the champion.

On the way home, the boy and sensei reviewed every move in each and every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind. "Sensei, how is it possible that I won the tournament with only one move?"

"You won for two reasons," the sensei answered. "First, you have practiced for months in order to master one of the most difficult throws in all of Judo. And second," the sensei cracked the hint of a smile, "the only known defence for that move is for your opponent to grab your left arm!" In the end, his biggest weakness became his biggest strength!

Look beyond your limitations and focus on what you have and can control. Always enter the arena of life with a positive, life-giving mindset.

Living Jewish - The One-Eyed Electrician at Meron

The students in the school in Ramat Gan were astonished. The man wearing the uniform of Hevrat Hashmal - the **I**srael **E**lectric **C**ompany - who had come to explain to them the dangers and safety precautions involved in electricity use, was wearing a black eye patch over one eye. Perhaps they thought he was a wounded war veteran? But when he gave the same talk a week later in the elementary school of Kfar Chabad, he no longer wore the eye patch.

After he finished, one of the teachers, Rabbi Chayim Ben-Natan, invited him to wrap tefillin. The man accepted with alacrity. When he finished saying the Shma Yisrael prayer and removing the boxes

and straps with the rabbi's help, Meir (not his real name) offered to tell Ben Natan his story.

For many years he has suffered from diabetes. Recently, he developed a painful eye problem and a loss of vision in one of his eyes. As this was diabetes-related, the doctors all insisted that no cure is possible. His most recent doctor gave him some salve to put on the bad eye to ease the pain, and a black patch to cover it so as not to compromise the vision of his remaining good eye. His incomplete vision made it impossible for him to continue working as a technician. Instead, the IEC trained him to give presentations to school children about electricity. One time he was driving in the Galilee to an appointment at a school in Carmiel.



On the way, he called his office to check in and confirm the directions. His supervisor, a religious Jewess, upon hearing his location, recommended that he detour to one of the holy burial sites in the North of Israel and pray there for an improvement in his condition. "Why not?" he thought to himself. "It can't hurt." And off he went to Meron, to the burial site of the great sage of the Mishna and Zohar, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

As he stood there praying with one hand on the tomb marker (clearly this was not on Lag b'Omer!), he heard a man at a nearby table groaning and repeatedly crying out, "Hashem, G-d, help me, please! In the merit of Rabbi Shimon, help me now!"

When Meir finished his own prayer, he turned away from the tomb marker.

The man who had been crying out stared at him in wide-eyed amazement and suddenly grabbed his arm! "Praise G-d! Give thanks to the Al-mighty. My prayers are answered. Rabbi Shimon sent you to me!"

"What are you talking about?" Meir said calmly. "Nobody sent me here."

"It's true. It's true!" proclaimed Uri (not his real name) loudly, refusing to release Meir's arm. "I have a wife and five children at home and no electricity. I've been praying for hours to get my electricity back, and here you are from the Electric Company." He pointed to the IEC insignia on Meir's uniform. "Clearly you were sent here to help me. Now give me back my electricity!"

Uri explained that his electricity had been cut off because he owed thousands of shekels in unpaid bills, which he could not afford to pay. He then resumed demanding that Meir give him back his electricity, speaking louder and louder. Meir tried to explain that the nature of his job was in no way related to Uris' problem, not technically, not financially. None of his disclaimers helped. Uri would not relent in his belief that "obviously" Meir had been sent by Heaven and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai to help him get his electricity restored.

Despairing of ever being able to make Uri be sensible, and in danger of being late to his assignment, Meir finally asked Uri for the number of his account. Uri showed him his most recent bill. Meir said, "Look, let me step outside, and I'll call someone very important in management, check what the situation is, and try to arrange something for you." Uri grinned in anticipation and stepped back. Meir went out, used his IEC internal communication device to check Uri's account, verified that he owed 2500 shekels…and paid the entire bill with his own credit card number!

Returning inside, he told Uri, "Okay, it is all arranged with the company. You can go home. In two hours, you will have electricity."

Uri pumped Meir's hand enthusiastically. He couldn't thank him enough. "You see," he said, "I was right that Rabbi Shimon sent you to me."

Meir went to his car, shaking his head in amazement at his own spontaneous kind deed. About ten minutes, later, halfway to his destination, he had to pull over to the side of the road. His bad eye was itching so badly he couldn't wait any longer to remove his patch in order to rub his eye.

Taking off the patch with his right hand, he moved his left hand towards his eye to massage it, when all of a sudden, he realized that he was seeing through the windshield with the eye that had been under the patch. Seeing normally! His vision was fully restored!

The various doctors that Meir had been seeing could not believe their own eyes. "This can only be a miracle,'' each one proclaimed, even if it was not clear that before this episode they believed in miracles. Meir smiled, understanding the simple formula: If you provide light for another Jew, G-d will provide light for you. And also, as the Talmud states, "Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai can be relied on in desperate situations." *(by Yerachmiel Tilles)*

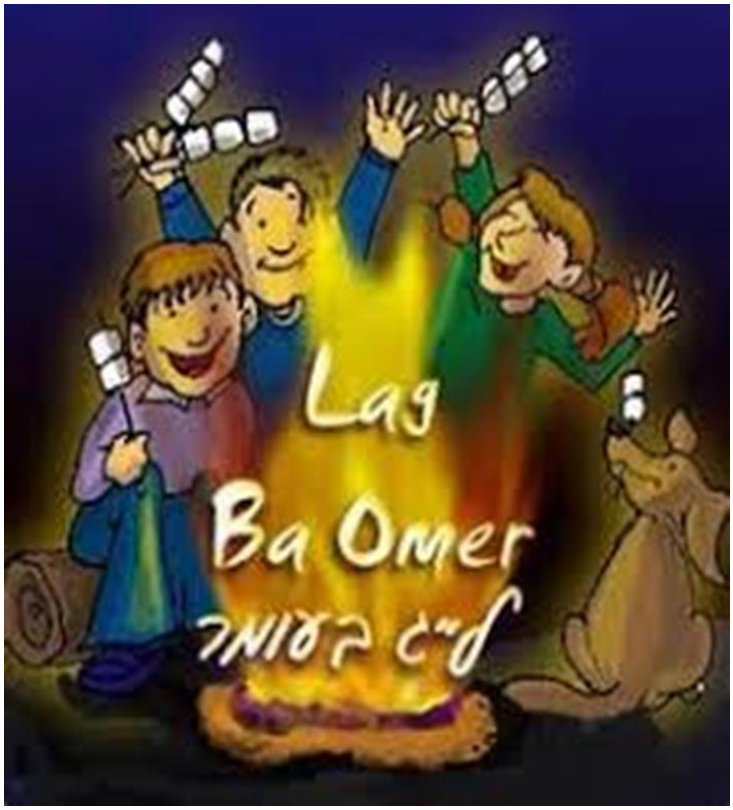
R' Leib Chasman ZT"L (Ohr Yahel) would say:

"Humility is the internalized awareness with every fibre of your being, that everything - yes everything - you have is not your own, but rather it is a gift of the Almighty Who bestows His kindness upon you. The more a person focuses on how special he is, knowing that it is all a gift from Hashem and not his own, the greater will be his humility."

"Anger in a home is like rottenness in fruit"-Talmud Sota 3b

Torah Gems

Lag Ba'Omer, the thirty-third day of Sefiras Ha'Omer, is a day of celebration because it was the day that the great Rabbi Akiva's students did not die. It is also the yahrzeit of the holy Tanna, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

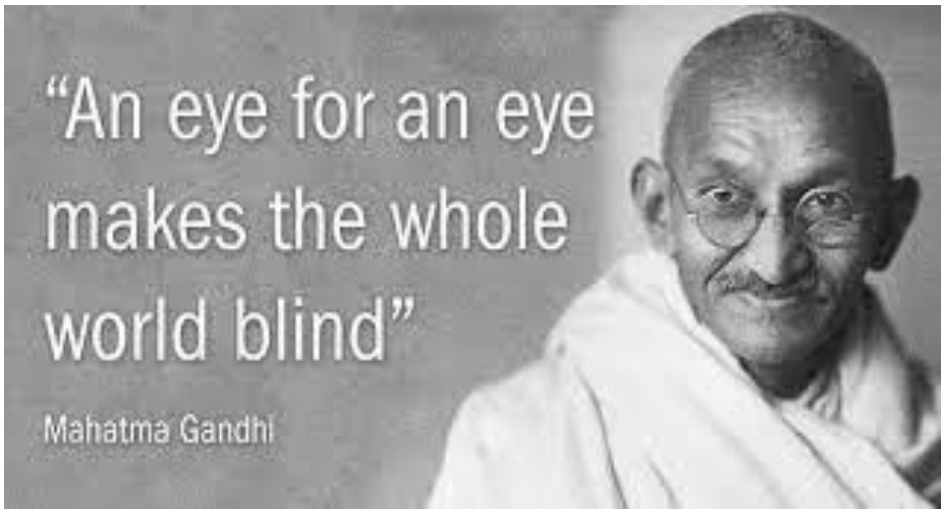


One year, on Lag Ba'Omer, the **Ponevezher Rov, R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman ZT"L**, gave a public sermon in which he developed a poignant point: "We speak of the greatness of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. But what of the self-sacrifice of the Jewish children of that time, who risked their lives to learn the teachings of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai? They also faced the death penalty the Romans had imposed on those learning Torah! Whenever we marvel at the spiritual heroism of our great Sages who spread Torah during a time of great danger, we must also marvel at the spiritual heroism of the children, who, in deathly fear, ran to hear the teachings of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

"Being the great leaders of the nation, it was no wonder that Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon were able to assemble the people. They did what all great Jews have done! As for their pupils, the children, it was expected that they would be fearful to risk their young lives to study from their masters. Yet, here lies the greatness of the disciples of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon; they went in the footsteps of their great teachers. In fact, here lies the secret of Lag Ba'Omer being primarily a children's holiday (with bows and

arrows, treks in the fields and woods), when Jewish children study the same Torah that Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon taught their students. We must especially remember the self-sacrifice of those students just as we remember the self-sacrifice of their teachers. This is the secret of Lag Ba'Omer, the great 'Holiday of Teacher and Student!'"

24:20 עַ֣יִן תַּ֤חַת עַ֙יִן֙ שֵׁ֣ן תַּ֤חַת שֵׁן֙ כַּאֲשֶׁ֣ר יִתֵּ֥ן מ֖וּם בָּאָדָ֑ם כֵּ֖ן יִנָּתֶ֥ן בּֽוֹ



משל: A blind woman was married to a man who loved her and was totally devoted to her wellbeing. He took care of her every need and would do anything for her happiness. He put his wife's name on a list for eye transplants but was dismayed to learn that it could take up to twenty years before her name would reach the top of the list. - He was heartbroken.

A month later, the husband came home all excited. "It's a miracle," he told his wife, "You're next in line! They found a donor just for you!"

She was overjoyed knowing that she was finally going to get eyes. He was thrilled. She had her operation, and it was a success. She could see!

The first thing she did was turn to her loving husband, only to discover that he was blind! Shocked, she tried to take care of him as best as he she could, but in her eagerness to see the world and all the things she had never seen before, she began to resent her

blind husband who could not participate. Eventually, the marriage fell apart and they got divorced.

The day he moved out; he left a note on his ex-wife's bed. It read: "I still care for you and I respect your decision to divorce me. But do me this one favour; ***please take good care of those eyes ... because not long ago, they were my eyes!***"

The Torah prohibits inflicting a blemish (**מום**) on another person, and one who does so must pay for the value of the injured limb. But there is a greater lesson to be learned from here. Even a non-physical blemish, even one who hurts another psychologically, must realize that he or she is responsible and potentially liable. An "eye for an eye" is a premise whereby one person robs another of an ability or potential that he or she may have enjoyed. ***How careful one must be with the feelings of others - their future may be in your hands!***

Torah Gems - 23:44 וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מֹעֲדֵי ה' אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל



The gemara Megila 32a states: "*And Moshe declared the appointed festivals to the children of Israel*' - The commandment is to read (about each holiday) in its time."

Chacham Yosef Chayim ZT"L (Ben Yehoyoda) says a remarkable thing. The three festivals (**שלש רגלים**) come to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf, and when we read about each festival in its time, this lends to our nation's forgiveness. How do the festivals bring us kaparah? The Jewish people served that false idol for a period of six hours until Moshe Rabbeinu came

down from the mountain and put an end to their misplaced worship. In the same manner that a piece of

non-kosher food that gets mixed up in a pot needs an amount of kosher food sixty times greater to be considered - nullified or dissolved so that the entire pot of food can now be considered kosher; so too, the six hours of sinning during the חטא העגל requires an amount of hours sixty times greater in order to achieve atonement. If one were to total up the number of hours during the (biblically prescribed) seven days of Pesach (168), seven days of Sukkos (168), and one day of Shavuos (24), it would come to 360 total hours, which is precisely sixty times greater than six (6x60=360).

Thus, we see that by celebrating the **שלש רגלים**, we can expiate and nullify the extant sin of the Golden Calf. Furthermore, when we read about the festivals in their proper time, we are fulfilling the dictum of our sages: "*One who studies the portions of the Korbonos, is as if he sacrificed the Korbonos.*" By reading about the festivals, the mitzvos associated with them and their individual offerings, it is as if we actually celebrated them in their most perfect manner and offered their unique Korbonos. In this way, we will have truly brought about the requisite atonement needed to cleanse the Jewish nation.

R' Elimelech of Lizhensk ZT"L (Noam Elimelech) would say:

"Do you know why so many people come to me and demand that I bless them with good health, sustenance and happiness from their children and families? - I do not know for sure, but I can only assume that it is because they realize that I am responsible for their troubles, for it is my multitude of sins that have tipped the balance of the world to the negative side!"

21:18 כִּי כָל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ מוּם לֹא יִקְרָב אִישׁ עִוֵּר אוֹ פִסֵּחַ אוֹ חָרֵם אוֹ שָׂרוּעַ



A story is told about the great escape artist, Harry Houdini (a Jew whose real name was Erik Weisz). An illusionist and stunt performer, noted for his sensational escape acts, he first attracted the public's notice by challenging police forces to keep him locked up. Soon he extended his repertoire to include chains, ropes slung from skyscrapers and straightjackets under water. He had the ability to escape from the most confining locks and cells.

Once a prison warden boasted that he had a cell that even the "Great Houdini" couldn't unlock. Houdini promptly accepted the challenge. A large crowd came to watch as Houdini was placed inside a heavily chained and locked cell. The moment he was left alone, Houdini went to work opening each lock and chain. However, to his astonishment, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't throw open the bolt to the door of the cell. He concentrated on the mechanism and worked more carefully, but still without success. Finally, in his exhaustion, he leaned against the door, which swung right open. It was never even locked! Even the "Great Houdini" couldn't open a lock - if it wasn't locked!

A person with a **מום** - defect, is unfit for service in the Temple. In some cases, the defect is obvious, but often in life, a person's **מום** is all in his head.

R' Twersky points out that from the story of Houdini, we learn that treatment can be effective only when there is an abnormality that

needs to be fixed. If a person just has an unrealistic expectation of the world and expects it to always conform to his wishes, he is beyond the scope of any treatment.

שׁוֹר אוֹ־כֶשֶׂב אוֹ־עֵז כִּי יִוָּלֵד וְהָיָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תַּחַת אִמּוֹ וּמִיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי וָהָלְאָה יֵרָצֶה לְקָרְבַּן אִשֵּׁה לַה׳ 22:27



The Yalkut Shimoni writes as follows: **שור** - Ox, in the merit of Avrohom, as it says, *'To the cattle Avrohom ran'.* **כבש** - Sheep, in the merit of Yitzchok, as it says, *'He saw and it was a ram.'* **עז** - Goat, in the merit of Yaakov, as it says, *'Take for me two good young goats' - good for me and good for your descendants."* A Jew is commanded to bring sacrifices from these three animals in the merit of the Avos - Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov - who sacrificed their entire existences for the good of their offspring.

The Targum Yerushalmi interprets this posuk similarly, with one notable amendment: Goats, in the merit of Yaakov Avinu, was when he wore the hairy goat skins on his arms in order to trick his father into thinking he was his brother Esav. This is the merit? Because Yaakov deceived his father with goat skins, we bring korbonos from goats?!

The answer, says the **Slonimer Maggid, R' Yehudah Aidel ZT"L (Afikei Yehudah)**, is that precisely because Yaakov used goat skins to trick his father, was he able to maintain his lifelong ideal of Emes,

truth in his every action! This seems to be a contradiction, but in fact, Yaakov could have easily gone into his father's room with a lavishly prepared meal, spoken gruffly and dishonourably like his brother Esav would, and his father would have never suspected a thing! Yitzchok asked Esav to come and here he is! But Yaakov could not talk, act or even imitate Esav; this was the height of deception and untruthfulness.

More than that - this was not Yaakov's way. Talk harshly? Impossible! Thus, in order to remain "in character" and untainted, Yaakov was required to "dress up" like Esav. Maintaining truth in life was Yaakov's legacy and the merit which he bequeathed to his descendants. The goats which we bring for korbonos, remind us of this legacy.

Rabbeinu Avraham Ibn Ezra ZT"L would say:



"We are all children of Hashem, as the Torah tells us: **בנים אתם לה'** *'You are 'Banim' - children of Hashem.'* Once you realize you are children of the Almighty, and He loves you even more than a mortal father loves his children, you will not grieve excessively over whatever He does to you. Whatever He does is ultimately for your good. At times you might not understand His ways, just as a young child does not always understand why his father does certain things. Nevertheless, the child trusts his father. You too should trust the Almighty."

Be Holy, and . . . by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

קְדֹשִׁים יִהְיוּ לֵאלֹקֵיהֶם וְלֹא יְחַלְּלוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹקֵיהֶם They shall be holy to their G-d, and they shall not desecrate their G-d's Name (21:6)

This verse commands the Kohanim to be holy; it then commands the Kohanim not to desecrate Hashem's name. Surely if the Kohanim are holy they would certainly not be desecrating Hashem's name? If so, the second half of the verse is superfluous?

To understand this, **Rav Moshe Shternbuch**, basing his words on the Rambam answers that the greater a person is, the greater care he must take to ensure that his behaviour reflects his elevated status. For if a person who is perceived as great performs an act which is seen in a negative light by people — even if it is not a sin at all — this constitutes a *chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's name*.



One Kohen who understood this concept was the **Chofetz Chaim**. At one point in his life, he became very ill. Concerned about the Chofetz Chaim's intense degree of concentration when learning Torah, the doctors warned him that if he continued to learn Torah before he felt better, the consequences would endanger his life.

In order to fulfil the requirement to look after ones' health the Chofetz Chaim acquiesced to the doctor's advice and did not learn until he recovered. However, at the same time, he was concerned that if people would see him not learning it would cause a great *chillul Hashem*, because on his great level, a lot more would have been expected of him. Therefore, whenever he was in public, the Chofetz

Chaim asked that a Gemora be placed open before him so that it would appear to all as if he was learning from it.

Whatever level we are on, we know the things that do not befit our status on a personal level and as the holy nation. Whether it is aggression behind the wheel, lack of impatience in a store, or something as simple as not saying thank you, we must know that our every action says a great deal to others about whom we are, and if our actions fall below our perceived level — even if no sin is committed — this could constitute a *chillul Hashem*, the exact opposite of what our purpose in is this world.



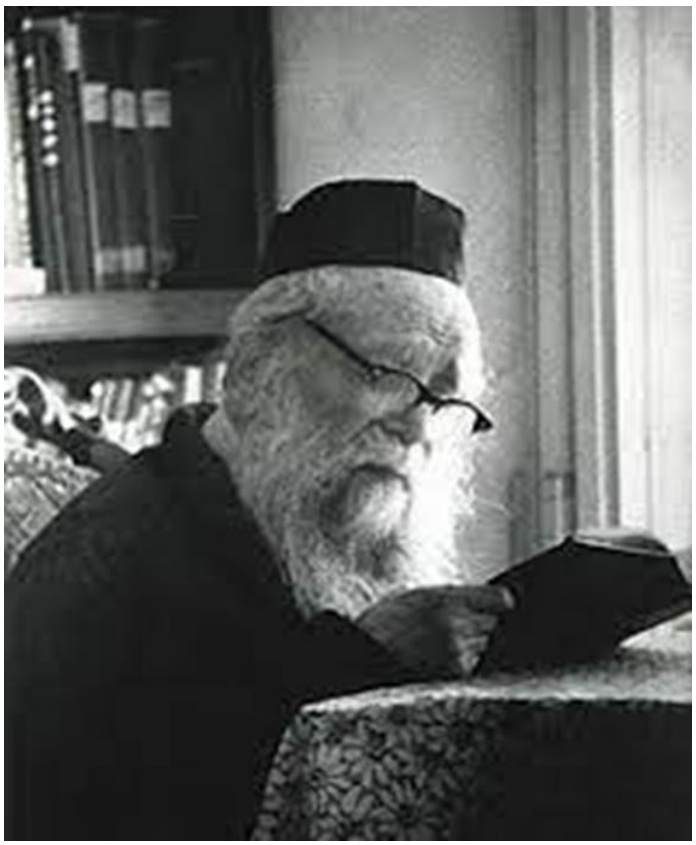
R' Chaim Kreiswirth ZT"L (quoted from Avos M'shulchan Rabboseinu) would say: "'What is the proper path that a person should choose for himself? Whatever is a credit to himself and earns him the esteem of his fellow men.' (אבות ב:א)

The 'fellow men' whose esteem a person should aspire to earn, are one's rabbis, Torah teachers and other Torah sages. The Gemara records שבת קנב: Rabbi Eliezer asked the sage Rav, 'Who is destined for Olam Haba?' Rav answered him, 'Anyone whose rebbeim are pleased with him.' We might have expected Rav to answer that one is destined for Olam Haba if he is meticulous in his performance of mitzvos, but this is not what Rav said. Rather, if one follows in his teachers' ways and they are proud of him, then he is destined for Olam Haba."

Torah Gems

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הֲבִיאֲכֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה 23:15

During the seven weeks of Sefirah, 24,000 students of Rabi Akiva died, and we mourn for them. But certainly, there has been no shortage of other tragedies in our history. Why do we mourn specifically for these students, specifically at this time?



R' Meir Chodosh ZT"L quotes the renowned Medrash (brought by Rashi), that when Bnei Yisroel arrived at Har Sinai, they were united **כאיש אחד בלב אחד** - "as one person, with one heart." It appears that the 49-day period from Yetzias Mitzrayim to Kabbolas Hatorah was a time when Bnei Yisroel learned not to be self-centred, not to focus on their personal necessities, but rather, to focus on the needs of others. This was a prerequisite to receiving the Torah. However, Chazal tell us that the reason the students of Rabi Akiva died between Pesach and Shavuos was, **מפני שלא נהגו כבוד זה לזה** - "Because they did not treat each other with respect."

Many Meforshim explain that this "lack of respect" refers to Lashon Hara and evil gossip that the students spoke against each other. (In fact, the gematria of **לשון הרע** [661] is equal to that of **מפני שלא נהגו כבוד זה לזה!** Clearly, their deaths during these weeks were not incidental; the Divine service of these weeks is to learn to care for others as the Jews did in the desert, yet the students of Rabi Akiva failed to incorporate this lesson and were summarily punished.

For this very reason, the Sages singled out this tragic event. It highlights the special significance of this period of the year, a time when we should demonstrate extra care for one another, drawing closer to our brethren in preparation for receiving the Torah "as one person, with one heart."

R' Dov Ber ZT"L (Mezeritcher Maggid) would say:



"The word **וספרתם** - 'and you shall count' stems from the same root as **ספיר** or 'Sapphire.' A sapphire is a precious and valuable stone which shines brightly and is beautiful to behold. Similarly, during the days of Sefiras Haomer, as the Jewish people count forty-nine days until Kabbolas HaTorah, the Torah is encouraging every Jew to work on himself and improve his inner beauty until he is bright and shiny like a sapphire."

When R' Yechezkel Abramsky z"l was the head of the Bais Din in London, he was approached by **Dayan Fischer**, one of the rabbinical Court judges. "Between you and me," said the judge to R' Abramsky, "You know that I can learn Torah just as well as you can, and you also agree that you speak English as badly as I do. Why then is it that people flock to your speeches, while mine are barely attended, and even the attendees don't pay attention?"

R' Abramsky's simple answer is a message for all of us with buried talents: "The difference is," explained R' Yechezkel, "that when I get up to speak, I focus on how well I know how to learn. When you get up, you focus on how poorly you speak English."

Compassion in the Heart of Evil

וְשֹׁור אֹו־שֶׂה אֹתֹו וְאֶת־בְּנֹו לֹא תִשְׁחֲטוּ בְּיֹום אֶחָד

"But an ox or sheep or goat, you may not slaughter it and its offspring on the same day." (Vayikrah 22:28)

Pablo Escobar was a Colombian drug lord. He was undoubtedly evil. He was responsible for the deaths of over 600 police officers in addition to killing other people. He was a ruthless kingpin who at one time controlled more than 80% of the cocaine shipped to the U.S. Additionally, he was the mastermind behind the bombing of a Colombian jetliner that killed 100 people in 1989.

That being said, this same bad guy also did a lot of good. He built houses for over 400 people that had literally lived on piles of garbage. He created clean water and sewer systems, built new airports and schools, funded churches and sports arenas, constructed a free zoo, and gave everyone a personal budget for medical care.



"If you find a bird's nest… and the mother is roosting on the young birds or the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young" (Devarim 22:6). First you are supposed to send the mother bird away and then you make take the young or the eggs for yourself.

Rambam explains that the reason is the same as why you may not slaughter a mother animal and its young on the same day. It is an act of cruelty since animals instinctively love their young and suffer

when they see them slaughtered or taken away. Ramban explains that these commandments are meant to develop the traits of compassion and mercy. Even a ritual slaughterer who kills the animals in a painless way, can develop the trait of cruelty if he slaughters the mother animal on the same day as he slaughters her child.

The Midrash (27:11) quotes a pasuk from Mishlei (12:10). "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel". The Midrash says that the "righteous man" refers to Hashem. Hashem gave three mitzvos to develop the traits of compassion and mercy. The Torah teaches not to take the mother bird with the young, not to slaughter a mother and child animals on the same day, and not to slaughter an animal for the first seven days of birth. The mercy of the wicked is cruel refers to Sancherev who killed women and their children on the same day.

Another explanation is that the wicked refers to Haman who wanted to annihilate all the Jews, including women and children. He wanted to kill the Jewish babies and wanted to kill parents with their children on the very same day.

The Maharzu explains that "the mercy of the wicked is cruel" means that Sancherev and Haman showed cruelty **where they should have shown mercy.**

It appears from the explanation of the Maharzu that Hashem had an <u>added</u> grievance against Sancherev and Haman because they did not act mercifully. Even though they wanted to annihilate all the Jews, they should have shown a measure of mercy by not killing mothers and children on the same day.

This seems absurd! How can there be a grievance against such wicked people that they should have shown some mercy during their act of killing? Would we think that such evil people can even have a trace of mercy in their hearts? Apparently (since this was an added grievance against them) such evil murders **do** have a measure of the trait of mercy embedded in their hearts. The evil Pablo Escobar had

a measure of mercy within him and used it. Sancherev and Haman also had a measure of mercy, deep inside themselves. After all, they were all created in the "image of Hashem" and the trait of mercy was implanted within them. However, they did not tap into it.

All people were created in the image of Hashem and have some positive character traits, even though they may be buried deep inside their hearts. Certainly Jews, who are specifically described as merciful, have this trait in abundance. We should never despair of arousing someone's compassion. Even if a person seems to be tough and callous, his heart can be receptive.



Kedushas Shabbes & Kedushas Yom tov Written by D Fine

Rashi (21:25) points out that the commandments of Shabbos and Yom Tov are put next to each other. Says Rashi that this is to teach us that if one is mechalel ('breaks') yom tov it is as if he has broken Shabbos. And if one keeps Yomtov it is as if one has kept the Shabbos.

The **Kotzker Rav** explains what Rashi is saying. He notes that the kedusha of Shabbos is all made by Hashem, whilst the kedusha of YomTov starts from our making it holy (eg we need to declare the month for the festival to occur). Therefore, Rashi is telling us that if one keeps Yomtov he is keeping Shabbos because in observing Yom tov he is extending the natural kedusha of Shabbos into Yomtov by infusing Yomtov with kedusha. And if one breaks Yomtov, he de-sanctifies the potential of the kedusha of Shabbos to spread out into Yomtov too.



We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.



Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]



To Do So or Not To Do So – That is the Question

"You are not to desecrate my Holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among the children of Israel…" (Vayikra 22:32). On the first two days of Succos we read, "You are not to desecrate my Holy Name…".

Hashem expects a Jew to act in a manner which sanctifies Hashem's name.

The Torah tells us, *"You are permitted to take interest from a non-Jew but not from a Jew, in order that Hashem, your G-D, will bless you in your every undertaking…"* (Devarim 23:21). If a Jew borrowed money from a non-Jew, agreeing to pay him interest on the loan, he may not renege on his word. The **Sforno** says that if he reneges, he is being dishonest. The **Sforno** adds, that he is also making a *chillul Hashem*, **profaning and desecrating the Name of Hashem**! *Chillul Hashem* is such a severe sin that one only achieves atonement for it with his death, unless he creates a *kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification of Hashem's name. (**Rabbeinu Yona** in sefer Shaarei Teshuvah).

However, if he <u>does</u> pay the non-Jew the interest on the loan that he had promised to pay then the Torah says that Hashem will bless all his work.

HaRav Henach Leibowitz zt"l questioned this **Sforno**. We would not think that the sin of reneging to pay the non-Jew interest on a loan

is so severe. We may think, true he had given his word to pay it. However, he could easily rationalize that the non-Jew would understand why he is not paying it and therefore he could renege on his word. He could tell the non-Jew that he is treating him the same way that he would treat his brother, a fellow Jew. Namely, that it is forbidden to pay interest to a fellow Jew even if he erroneously promised that he would.

However, it is clear from the **Sforno** that this is not the behavior that the Torah wants from us. Hashem wants us to act with honesty. If we promised to pay the interest to the non-Jew than we MUST do so. **Not to do so is considered treachery and a *chillul Hashem*!**

The **Rosh HaYeshiva** zt"l said that we live in a time when people are looking for monetary loopholes, especially when dealing with non-Jews. We must realize the gravity of the sin that our action is causing. We may be doing a terrible, terrible sin of causing a *chillul Hashem* that even Yom Kippur does not atone for. We must be very careful when dealing with non-Jews and with the government to always act in a very honest way. And, if we do so, the Torah promises that we will not lose out. Rather, we will gain because Hashem will bless our efforts.

We must always be honest in business and avoid any chillul Hashem. Hashem will give us extra blessings when we do so.

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

When the grandson of the ***Chidushei HaRim*** began to put on *Tefilin*, he told him that the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 26b) says that the *Tefilin* bag has *kedushah*, holiness, because the *Tefilin* are placed inside it.

The *Chidushei HaRim* said, if a bag can become holy because of the *Tefilin*, how much more so does a person become holy because he wears *Tefilin*!

Don't Place Me on Death Row!

וַיַּנִּיחֻהוּ בַּמִּשְׁמָר לִפְרֹשׁ לָהֶם – "He fought with a Jew and cursed him, using Hashem's Holiest Name…and was placed in jail, awaiting his punishment." (24:10-12)



Of the millions of Jewish women in Egypt, only one was attacked and abused. This tragic episode led to the birth of a son. A number of years later, in the midst of a disagreement with another Jew, this man cursed, using Hashem's Holiest Name. Moshe was unsure as to the correct punishment for this blasphemer. While awaiting instructions from Hashem, Moshe placed him in jail. Rashi says that he was placed in a different cell than the man who awaiting the death penalty for having desecrated Shabbos.

Why wasn't the blasphemer placed in the same cell?

Rashi explains that his fate was not yet known. Had he been put in the same cell as the one awaiting the death penalty, he would have assumed that his penalty was also death. This would have caused him to feel mental pain and anguish. To avoid his unnecessary suffering, he was placed in a different cell.

The Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, HaRav A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l, taught a beautiful lesson from this: Should we care about the mental anguish of an evil person? Perhaps we should make him feel as bad as we can, and then punish him? No, we should care about him! It's true he was a very wicked person, deserving punishment. Yet, Moshe had an obligation **not to cause him any extra or undue pain**. If he would not be given the death penalty,

staying on death row would have caused him undue pain and stress, by his thinking that he would be executed.

If someone bothers us and deserves a punishment, we don't have the right to give him any extra pain or discomfort. We may not hurt him or his feelings unnecessarily. Certainly, we must be sensitive and sympathetic to the feelings of our friends and family and not cause them any anguish or pain.

As Lag Ba'Omer approaches, we should remember to show care and respect, compassion and love for every Jew!

Victory is in the Mind!

Sam and Joe had been best friends for years. They were in their early 90's when Sam fell deathly ill. Joe visited him on his deathbed and reminisced with him about their long friendship. Joe then asked Sam for a favour, "When you die, please let me know if there's baseball in heaven".



Sam said that they had been long-time friends and certainly he would do this favour for him. Soon after, Sam died. A few days later, while Joe was sleeping, he heard Sam's voice. Sam told him that he had some good news and some bad news. The good news was that there **is** baseball in heaven. The bad news was that Joe would be pitching in a few days. (In other words, Joe will die in a few days.)

The **Midrash Rabba** (Emor 26:7) brings the story of King Shaul that is discussed in Neviim (**Shmuel I** perek 28 and perek 31). The Plishtim gathered their army to wage war against the Jewish people. King Shaul gathered all the Jewish soldiers to fight against them. King Shaul was afraid because the Plishtim's army vastly outnumbered his (**Metzudas Dovid**). [The commentaries discuss why King Shaul felt fear now, even though in the past he had always been confident of victory.] King Shaul wanted to know what the outcome of this battle would be. He tried three different ways to find out from Hashem what would happen. He asked Hashem through the Kohain Gadol's use of the Urim Vetumim, through prophecy, and through a dream. However, Hashem did not reveal the answer to him. [The commentaries discuss why Hashem did not answer him.]

King Shaul was afraid. So, together with his two generals, Avner and Amassa, he went to ask someone to bring up the spirit of the deceased prophet Shmuel. The prophet Shmuel's spirit told King Shaul that the Jews would lose the battle. He also said that this would be King Shaul's last battle since King Shaul himself, as well as three of his sons, would also die.

The prophet Shmuel also said that if King Shaul would accept Hashem's judgement (*midas hadin* as a punishment for a transgression of his) and would enter the battle with the intention of sacrificing his life to Hashem, then he and his sons would join with Shmuel and the other tzadikim in their portion in Heaven (**Rashi, Metzudas Dovid, Radak**). When King Shaul's generals asked him what the spirit of the prophet of Shmuel told him, he replied that they would be **victorious** in battle!

HaRav Henach Leibowitz zt"l explains that Shaul told this to them to encourage them to fight even harder. They had an obligation to go to battle whether they would win or lose. Such righteous generals would fight hard, either way. However, the knowledge of victory would spur them ever so slightly to fight even harder. Since that

would be the result, it was permitted and appropriate for King Shaul to tell that to them.

Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l said that we have to do our utmost to serve Hashem, regardless of the outcome. **We must try even if we will not accomplish our goal!** One of the tricks of the Yetzer Hara is to cause us to focus on our results. If we do not see success, we may be tempted to cease our efforts. We may feel that our efforts will not bear fruit so why bother trying.



A trick that we can use against the yetzer hara is to convince ourselves that our efforts **will** be successful. This will give us the extra motivation to work even harder towards our goal.

King Shaul used this technique with his generals. Sometimes, it is possible that the extra motivation caused by our feelings that we will succeed, will lead to success. ***Even if our extra efforts do not bring the results that we wanted, the attempt itself will be a fulfilment of our obligation of serving Hashem.***

From our Sages

אֱמֹר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים *Speak unto the priests* (21:1)

The name of this week's Torah portion-- "Emor"--"speak"--contains a lesson for us all: We must strive to always speak well of our fellow Jew and judge one another favourably.

Just as speaking ill of someone reveals his negative qualities, words of praise reveal the inner good. (**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**)

Beyond All Realms of Possibility! by Rafi Jager



Towards the end of this week's Parsha, we read about the heinous cursing of Hashem perpetrated by a Jew in the Israelite camp.

What follows is a series of laws – blasphemy is punishable by death through stoning, a murderer shall be put to death, and damage of property must be repaid through monetary compensation.

Finally, in the last pasuk we are told, the blasphemer is taken outside the camp and stoned to death, as Hashem had commanded in the aforementioned series of punishments.

Analysing this passage, it seems strange that the punishments for murder and property damage were included at this point in the Torah. If the subject of this section is the felony of blasphemy, why were the seemingly irrelevant punishments for these other crimes thrown in?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, answers that the Torah is highlighting for us the dangerous depths to which a person devoid of fear of Hashem can fall. When a person has slipped to the level that he can physically bring himself to utter a curse of Hashem, the ultimate sign of disrespect for divine rule, murder is no longer beyond his realm of possibilities.

And if, for whatever reason, the circumstances are that he cannot commit murder (because of public opinion or fear of punishment from the government), he is prone to cause damage in any way that he can. To whom will such a person be held responsible? Who will

keep him in check? Without fear and belief in a living G-d who will hold us accountable for everything that we do, there is nothing that a person cannot and will not rationalize. Unfortunately, we don't have to search back too far in history to find the ultimate catastrophic results of this mindset.

The Torah, therefore, places the punishments for murder and property damage immediately after the punishment for blasphemy, to convey to us that without maintaining a strong belief in Hashem, anything is possible. The welfare of society is dependent upon it.



Rabbi Yehoshua Zitron - The Kidney Transplant

Sam and Max had been close friends ever since they could remember. Having gone to nursery, elementary, middle and high school together, their friendship was as good as could be. As they soon became of marriageable age, Sam went on to get married, as did Max three months later. Within months, Sam had a baby boy, with Max following shortly thereafter with the same.

As Sam and Max's children grew up, they befriended each other as their parents had done and wound up attending the same school, which was a drive away from their respective homes. In order to ease the trip of taking the kids to school, Sam and Max decided to carpool their kids together. They would alternate days in which to take them.

Everything was working great until Black Monday occurred, as Sam's wife referred to it as. As was the case, Sam always carefully ensured that the one of the back doors which faced oncoming traffic was locked, while the other remained open for the kids to get out onto the curb.

It was a wise safety precaution, which successfully kept the boys in check. Max, however, was not as particular in locking one door and keeping the other unlocked.

One day, as Max parked the car and prompted the boys to get out of the car for school, the unexpected occurred. Sam's son stepped out onto the road as a car sped down in his direction. It was just seconds later that Sam's son was hit. Tragically, did not make it.



The shock and sadness which filled Sam's family was unparalleled and unbearable. Max as well felt absolutely terrible and terrified by what he had done. He could barely bring himself to pay a *shiva* call to Sam and his family, until a few days later.

Max eventually made his way over, though everyone knew that it was the last time he would ever see Sam. Their friendship which had been so close would be over. It could not weather the pain such a calamity brought in its wakening.

Max took it extremely hard as well. As could be understood, he struggled to live with the reality that he had taken a young boy's life. He begged Sam to forgive him and sooth the indescribable anguish this evoked for all involved, but Sam in no way responded to his pleas. Max persistently sought Sam, urging him to forgive his egregious mistake. But Sam would not hear of it nor forgive and forget Max's doing. He wanted nothing to do with Max at all ever again.

Within a month, Sam and his wife moved out to a new neighbourhood, intending to start life anew as best as they could. I year later, they were blessed with twins and shortly thereafter, with another child.

It in no way replaced the loss of their previous son but was taken as a gift of Heaven which in some small way eased their pain.

Life went on, as the kids grew up and attended school. One day, though, Sam's wife received a frantic phone call from the hospital. "If you could please come to the hospital immediately, your husband is here." She wasted no time and showed up in the hospital in a panic. "Your husband fainted at work," she was told, "and when he was brought to the hospital, we realized that he had suffered kidney failure and needed to go on dialysis." She looked over at her husband, a courageous, tough man who had now been brought to a less than compromised state. It wasn't long before he was forced to quit his job and devote himself to doing everything in the interest of saving his life.

A few months later, Sam and his wife received a message from the doctor overseeing Sam's recovery process. "I need to meet with you both as soon as possible," he urgently conveyed. "I was reviewing your charts and paperwork, Sam, and it is clearly evident that you are at the end stage of renal failure. It doesn't look good. You have about three more months to live until your condition becomes terminal and all your internal systems shut down. The only option at this point is to call for a kidney transplant. Yet, I must be honest, your blood type is very rare, and you will need to find someone else who likewise has this very unusual blood type."

"So, what does this all mean?" Sam and his wife unnervingly asked.

"We will put you on the waiting list and G-d willing, pray and do whatever you can. Hopefully, we will be able to match you with a donor."

As Sam and his wife took in this difficult news, they were beside themselves. Not too long before they had lost their beloved son and now Sam's own health was severely at risk. All that Sam's wife could think of doing was opening a Sefer Tehillim and begin reciting

chapter after chapter. Tears flowed from her eyes and streamed down her cheek's day after day as her heart poured out in prayer.

Sooner than later, Sam's wife felt it necessary to seek the advice of the rabbi of the community. After relaying to him the details and sequence of events, the rabbi replied, "Just continue praying and I will do my best to help your family in their plight." The rabbi's words somewhat comforted Sam's wife and allayed her worries, and with that, she returned home.

That very day she spoke to the rabbi, she finished Tehillim three times. Her daily routine was to do no less than recite Tehillim for hours on end. After around three months, Sam and his wife received a call from the hospital. "Please come in immediately; we've found a donor."

Fortunately, the surgery was successful. Sam began his recovery process and was able to regain his strength. Six months following the surgery, he began working again and reverting to his old, previous routine he had been used to.

One day, he showed up at his wife's office and called her down. "Please, I need to speak to you," he urged. This unexpected visit came as a surprise to Sam's wife and, understandably so, got her nervous.

"Is everything alright?" she anxiously asked.

"Yes, I just have something I need to tell you."

Sam's wife settled herself in a seat, feeling quite impatient.

"When I was ill with kidney failure, I began thinking about my life and contemplating everything that had occurred to me. One thing that really bothered me was how I treated my friend Max. I don't feel it was right how I reacted. He didn't do it on purpose and meant no harm. It was an honest, albeit terrible, mistake. My mind kept on returning to that incident, but I continued to mentally push it off.

But then, just the other day, I decided that I would call a mutual friend of ours and see how Max is doing.

"I started talking to our friend and caught up with him a bit. But then I changed the flow of topic and started discussing Max. 'How is Max doing?' I asked. 'Oh, Max is recuperating,' he replied.

'Recuperating? What happened?'

'He donated his kidney to somebody,' my friend replied. - As soon as I heard this, I nearly dropped the phone.

"I don't know what to say," Sam reiterated to his wife. "I don't know how this happened. I do have a strong feeling though that it was Max who in fact donated his kidney to me."

Sam's wife was just as shocked to hear of this as her husband was, though she began putting two and two together. "I think I know who may be able to help us. Let's go to the rabbi."

Rushing over to the rabbi's house, they enter inside looking haggard and overwhelmed like never before. It didn't take long for the rabbi to realize that something was amiss.

"I think something happened here with my husband's kidney and you were involved," Sam's wife said.

"Yes," the rabbi began, a serious yet soothing tone underlying his voice.

"When you both moved into this neighbourhood, your friend Max came to see me and told me everything that had happened and how he felt immeasurably terrible. He truly wished to make it up, though he didn't know what he could do. At the time, I didn't feel he was ready or in position to make any major move at rectifying the past. But then, months later, you came in here and mentioned that your husband was in need of a kidney and was looking for a compatible donor or else he likely wouldn't make it past three months. I then realized that it was now or never.

Without delay, I picked up the phone and called Max. After relaying to him all the details of your situation, he paused for a moment and said, "I am a match."

I found it hard to believe. "Really?" I said, "it is an extremely rare blood type."

"Rabbi," he repeated, "I know I am a match. When Sam and I were younger, we took a CPR course together where both of us needed to give blood, and it was there that I discovered we have the same odd type of blood."

The rabbi was surprised to learn of this information. "To be honest, if I tell him that you are the donor, I don't know if he will want to accept it. Instead, then, let us go through a different organization and keep your name anonymous, thereby avoiding this.'

Max went on to contact a particular organization and donate his kidney to you anonymously. But now that you have come here and figured out on your own that he is the donor, I feel fine with filling you in with all the details of the story."

The husband and wife were completely beside themselves. "Do you think you can arrange a meeting between us?" Sam and his wife asked the rabbi. Sure enough, a meeting was arranged, and Max and Sam and their wives planned on meeting each other the next day at one of the local hotel lobbies.

As soon as the husbands made eye contact and their faces locked in with each other, they could no longer hold themselves back. Their embrace engendered streams of tears, as their wives followed suit in hugging one another and reconnecting.

Both Max and Sam continued apologizing to each other for the hurt and pain they had caused one another, and before long, a long-lost friendship was regained and rekindled.

I short while later, as the two of them spoke one day, Sam turned to Max and said, "You know, I would have donated my kidney to you

anyway, regardless of anything that happened in the past. You are like a brother to me."

At times in life, we feel justified in bearing a grudge against another and maintaining frustration and dissatisfaction at how we were treated. The attitude of, "If I do not see the good between us now, and I never want anything to do with you," overtakes us. Days, months or perhaps years can go by in the persistence of this feeling. But we would be much wiser and happier to realize that in the process of doing so, we often are pushing away the people we love the most and perhaps need the most. Because, just maybe, they will come around one day to help us in ways that are nothing short of saving our life…

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון... בסכת תשבו שבעת ימים You shall take for yourselves on the first day… you shall dwell in Sukkos seven days (23:40-42)



Since the Torah mentions the Mitzvah of the four species before the Mitzvah of Sukkah, why does the Mishnah in Masechta Sukkah begin with teaching about Sukkah first, and does not reach the four species until the third chapter? **The Netziv** explains that even though the building of the Sukkah must begin days before Sukkos and is only a preparation for the Mitzvah, some consider it a Mitzvah unto itself and actually

recite a blessing over the building of the Sukkah. Therefore, since the Mitzvah of taking the Lulav is on the holiday itself and the building of the Sukkah is before the holiday, the Mishnah teaches the laws of Sukkah first. Additionally, one needs the Sukkah at night while the Lulav is not taken until the next morning. *(Rebbe Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, ztvk"l, as brought in Mesukim MiDvash)*

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

וערבי נחל ***And brook willows (23:40)***



Rebbe Reuven Karelensthein relates that **HaRav Segal**, **the Rosh Yeshivah of Manchester**, once came to the Eretz Yisrael. On Hashanah Rabbah, after Davening they all wanted to pass before him and say 'Shalom Aleichem' to him in the Bais HaMidrash. The Rosh Yeshivah, however, did not want to speak to anyone and he did not move. Why? Since all the leaves of the Aravos are a Mitzvah, and so that the Mitzvos are not denigrated by him, he did not want to accidentally step on any of the leaves. They began sweeping the Bais HaMidrash, and from that year on in Yeshivas Slabodka, no one moved in the Bais HaMidrash on Hashanah Rabbah until all the leaves of the Aravos were swept up. *(Umatok HaOhr)*

"The moment we stop seeing the faults of others and start seeing the struggles of others, the love will flow naturally." ~ Reb Menachem Mendel of Rimanov (1745-1815).

Parsha Potpourri Compiled by Ozer Alport

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפת תמרים וענף עץ עבת וערבי נחל (23:40)



In discussing the mitzvos of Sukkos, the Torah commands us to take four species: lulav, esrog, hadasim, and aravos. However, none of the species are referred to in the Torah using the names by which we know them. The esrog is called a **פרי עץ הדר**, the fruit of a beautiful tree, which the Gemora (Sukkah 35a) identifies as an esrog.

The Malbim explains that there are two seemingly synonymous words in the Hebrew language: **הוד** and **הדר**, both of which mean beauty. What is the difference between them?

The Malbim explains that the term **הדר** refers to external beauty, while the word **הוד** is used to connote internal beauty, such as when Hashem commands Moshe (Bamidbar 27:20) **ונתת מהודך עליו**– Place some of your **הוד**, your glory and internal beauty, upon Yehoshua.

Rav Yisroel Reisman points out that when the beauty of human beings is discussed in Tanach, sometimes the expression **הוד** is used, and at other times we find **הדר**, but they are never used in tandem. According to the Malbim's dichotomy, he explains that an individual person can either be beautiful on the outside or beautiful on the inside, but not both at the same time, as **הוד** and **הדר** are inconsistent with one another. A person who possesses external beauty is likely to be haughty and vain, while somebody who is beautiful on the inside tends not to focus as much on his outer appearance.

However, regarding Hashem we find (Divrei HaYamim 1 16:27) that **הוד והדר לפניו**– there is both internal and external beauty before Him, for He alone is uniquely capable of maintaining these two contradictory traits.

Migdal Ohr – J Gewirtz



R' Avigdor Miller z"l would say that when it rains, people shouldn't tell their children, "We can't do that because it's raining," or make it seem gloomy, because that's how their children will view rain their entire lives. Instead, speak of how wonderful and refreshing it is. Instead, marvel at what a miracle and kindness it is. It will give your children a better outlook on rain - and on life.

Each Friday, the young children of the class would have a Shabbos party. They would set a table with a white cloth, place candles, grape juice, and goodies on the table, and have a mock Shabbos meal. One week, the teacher told Yankel it was his turn to be the Shabbos Abba/Tatty/Daddy.

"Go ahead, Yankel," said the teacher, "Take your place by the Kiddush cup and begin the Shabbos party as if you were the father leading the meal." Yankel slowly walked over to the seat, plopped down in the chair, loosened his tie and belt and let out a huge groan. "Ooooyyyy…." he sighed. "Hob ich gehat a shvereh voch," (Did I have a tough week!!)

Parsha Pages



The Munkatcher Rebbe was asked about the difference that in the Parsha of the Blasphemer the punishment of stoning is done with an **אבן** -stone in singular; whereas in the case of the "Gatherer of Wood" the punishment involved **אבנים**- stones in plural.

The Holy Rebbe answered that the "Gatherer of Wood" did the forbidden act with holy intention (to show the severe punishment for violation of Shabbos laws). Therefore, when the time arrived for the congregation to throw stones, some understood the holy intention, and some did not. Thus, the stones were thrown with different intentions and the plural for stones was used in the verse.

However, in the case of the Blasphemer, all knew that his intention was not for good, and that through the stones all were united in their intention to rid the evil from their midst, and thus, the verse uses the word for stone in singular to convey that those that threw the stones were unified.

"Emunah is not something we possess, but rather it is something that possesses us. It is a constant connection to Hashem that permeates every aspect of our lives." – Rabbi Avram Twerski.

Keep Fresh Just like the Lechem Haponim!! Written by Benjamin A Rose



Towards the end of Parshas Emor the Torah commands us to bake the Lechem HaPanim and set them up on the Shulchan, inside the Bais HaMikdash. Reish Lakish says (Minachos 29a) that on the Shalosh Regalim they would pick up the Shulchan say "Ri'u Chibaschem Lifnei HaMakom"; look how beloved you are before Hashem. The gemara explains that they were pointing out the Nes of the Lechem HaPanim that stayed fresh and hot the entire nine days from when it was baked until it was eaten. Why does this show Hashem's love more than any other of the many miracles in the Bais HaMikdash?

Rav Elyashiv explains that the Medrash Yalkut Shimoni tells us that Hashem wants us to learn and love the Torah each day like it is a special message from the king. The first day everyone runs to hear it and abides by it. It is fresh and exciting. After that it gets stale and uninteresting. Not so the Torah. Each day we should treat it like it is the first time we are hearing it. "Asher Anochi Mitzavicha HaYom"; as if Hashem commanded us today.

The Shalosh Regalim is a time we come to Yerushalayim to reinvigorate our love and closeness to Hashem. This is the message of the Lechem HaPanim. When we bake a korban for Hashem, although nine full days have gone by, enough for it to get hard and stale, nevertheless to Hashem it stays fresh and warm. So too in our

Torah learning and avodas Hashem we must reciprocate Hashem's love for us with a constantly refreshing attitude towards Him and His Torah.

Sundays not Moondays!!! Written by Benjamin A Rose

The pasuk says (VaYikra 23:16) **תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם** - you must count 50 days from the Korban Omer and then celebrate Shavuos. All the Meforshim ask that Matan Torah actually came out 51 days after the Omer not 50.

Rav Yehonoson Eibushitz in Tiferes Yehonoson answers that the count is based on sun days and not moon days. During the war with Amalek, the Amaleikim figured out based on the stars that they could defeat Bnei Yisroel at night.



Therefore, the Torah tells us that Moshe held up the sun that night. This battle took place after Yetzias Mitzrayim and before Matan Torah. Therefore, one sun day was missing for a total of 50 days. Technically according to the moon and the months there were 51 days, but the count goes according to the sun giving a total of 50 days until Shavuos, just like the pasuk says.

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

Rabbi Fischel Schachter - Last Minute Lighting

על המנורה הטהורה יערך את הנרות On the pure Menorah shall he arrange the lamps (Vayikra 24:4)

Living in Toronto with her husband, a woman was unfortunately diagnosed with a serious disease. Tremendously worried, the couple decided that they would visit a doctor in New York who was supposedly capable of treating the illness. The doctor was a genuinely kind-hearted man and, after examining the woman's situation, believed he would be successful in treating her. But there was only one problem: it would cost a fortune.

"I think I can help your wife," the doctor said to the husband. "The only issue is that your Canadian insurance will not cover the expensive cost." While on the one hand the husband and wife were elated that there was a cure, they were simultaneously disheartened by the news that they could not afford it. Lamenting their pitiful circumstance, tears began to fall down their faces.

Catching sight of the couple's anguish, the doctor said, "I am terribly sorry. I personally would wave the bill of my treatment to you. The only problem is that you will still have to pay for the hospital bill. That itself is also quite expensive."

Sitting down silently, the husband and wife remained devastated. The doctor too was at a loss of what to say. But then he came up with the following idea:

"I have a student of mine who practices as a doctor in a small city just northwest of Toronto. If you would like, I could tell him the exact protocol to follow and give him directions step by step of what to do. If you are treated by him, your Canadian insurance will cover the cost." Hearing of this plan, the husband and wife's faces immediately began to brighten up.

Calling this doctor in Canada, they were unsuccessful in making an appointment with him. His schedule was simply too full to administer

a surgery. Finally, though, he called them back. "I have an opening on Friday afternoon. Would that work for you?"

As the husband began thinking how it would be cutting it close to Shabbat to schedule the surgery for Friday afternoon, aside from the fact that this particular Shabbat was the first night of Chanukah, he decided to call his Rav. "Do what you have to do," replied the Rav. "Stay in a hotel over Shabbat and make sure your wife is taken care of."

Administering his wife into the hospital, they met the doctor. And as expected, he informed them that he had spoken to the other doctor in New York and went over the details of the procedure with him. He reassured the couple that everything would go fine. As time passed, the husband remained in the hospital. Shabbat was rapidly approaching and so was the time to light the Chanukah candles. But the husband wished to wait until the doctor was available to be seen.

Five minutes before the latest time he could light the Menorah and Shabbat candles, the doctor walked into his office. Again reassuring him that everything would be alright with his wife, the husband felt a bit more at ease.

"But doctor," said the husband, "can I ask you a question? The first night of Chanukah is tonight and I need to light candles. There are only a few minutes before the last time to do so. Would I be able to light here in your office? I don't think I will have enough time to make it back to my hotel room." - Taking out his Menorah and candles, the husband looked at the doctor in a desperate plea.

"I'm sorry," the doctor replied, "but you cannot light candles in the hospital. There are smoke alarms all over and they will definitely go off. The Fire Department will be here in no time."

Faced with an answer he greatly wished to avoid hearing, time was running out. Looking all around, the husband noticed that the doctor had another small office in the back. Running there, he opened the

door and peered inside. There was no smoke alarm in there. Racing back to the doctor, he said, "Doctor, what about in your back office? There's no smoke alarm there."

"You're pushing me here," said the doctor.

"Please let me light!" insisted the husband. "I hate to say it, but you never know if this may be my wife's last Chanukah."

"If you must," finally relented the doctor, "but please do it quickly."

Hurriedly making his way to the back office, the husband fumbled to set up the Menorah. After finally situating the one candle in its place and preparing the shamash with which to light the candle, he opened the match box. There were two matches left. Striking one against the box, it caught fire. But then it flickered out. He was now left with one match. Wishing to himself that he had taken along a box with more matches, he attempted to light the second and last match. But it too flickered out before the shamash could catch fire. Now stuck without any matches, the husband did not know what to do.



Running back to the doctor, he frantically asked, "Doctor, do you have any matches?" Looking strangely at the husband, he guaranteed him, "No, I don't have any matches."

"There is only a couple minutes left. Look in your drawer; maybe there are some matches there." "I told you already," repeated the doctor, "I have no matches!" "Just please look," pleaded the husband.

Opening his drawer, there laid a lighter. Surprised, but knowing that the husband needed to light the candles as soon as possible, he

threw the lighter to him. It was literally minutes before the last time to light that the husband did so.

Walking back over to the doctor, the husband profusely thanked him. Standing there shocked was the doctor. "Let me tell you something," the doctor said. "For fifteen years there was no lighter here in the office! First of all, I am not a smoker. Second of all, there is no use for a lighter here because, as I told you before, there are smoke alarms all over the place. But you know why I had a lighter in my drawer? - Just this morning as I was leaving my house, I saw a group of teenagers, amongst them my own daughter, smoking on the porch. I was so angry that I grabbed the cigarettes and lighter from them and threw them into my briefcase. When I got to work, I shoved them into my drawer and forgot all about them. This all happened this very morning! You know what I think? G-d loves you."

Listening to the moving words of the doctor, the husband stared back at him and said, "No doctor, G-d loves you. I knew He was with me the whole time. He wanted to show *you* that He is there."

Sometimes we wonder how we will ever be able to make it through a situation. "It's impossible!" we tell ourselves. But then the lights turn on and Hashem reveals to us that He was with us all along. "I never left you My dear child. I love you and will never forsake you." While we may think we are groping in utter darkness all alone, we would be wise to reconsider. Even with just minutes to go until it is too late, a shining light of love and warmth from our Father in Heaven beckons on the horizon. Or perhaps more accurately, an illuminating light of love and warmth is awaiting us right in the drawer.

"The greatest growth often takes place where no one else can see it." ~ From the teachings of R' Shlomo Brevda zt'l.

Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff - The Elixir of Life

...וספרתם לכם - *And you shall count for yourselves… (23:15)*

As we find ourselves amid the days of Sefirat Ha'Omer and mourn the tragic loss of R' Akiva's twenty-four thousand students, it behooves us to gain insight into the underpinnings of what exactly occurred.

R' Akiva is known to have espoused the famous maxim, "Love your fellow as yourself – this is the great principle of the Torah." With this serving as his *raison d'être*, R' Akiva exuded with love for each and every Jew. That being the case, how in fact did his students miss the message? If R' Akiva infused his teachings and life's mission with such an important principle, how could his students die because they "failed to accord honour to one another"? (*Yevamot* 62b). Where did they go wrong?

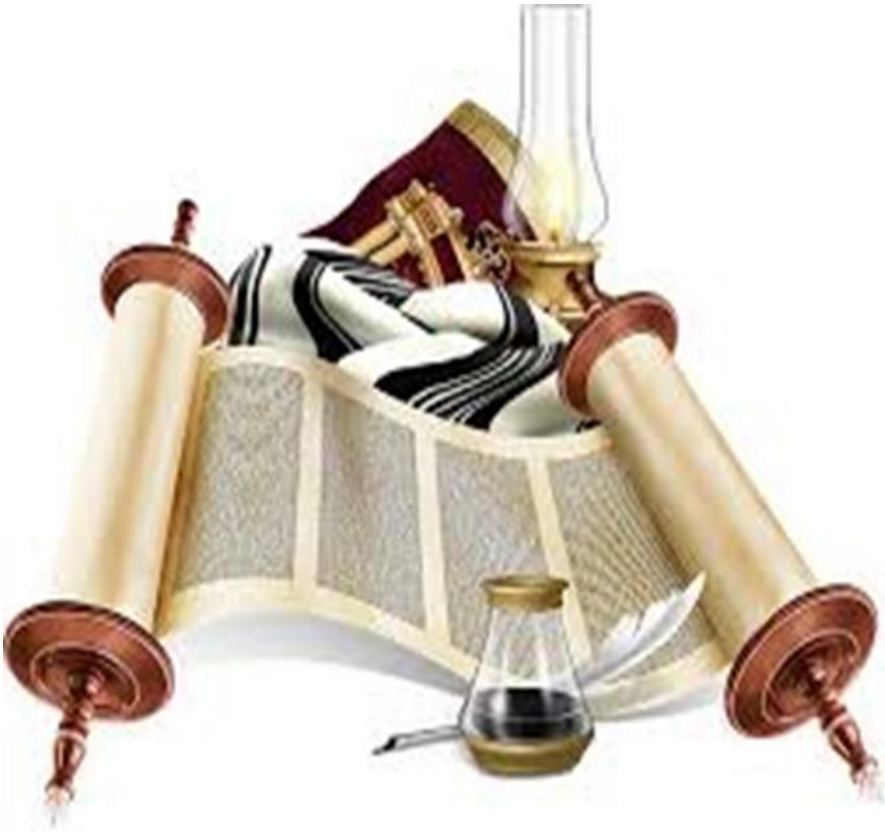
There is another essential Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 62a) to analyze in order to properly understand the essence of R' Akiva.

If two people are sojourning together on the road, and one is carrying a flask of water, of which there is only enough water for one person to survive, what should be done? Ben Peturah says, "The two of them shall split it, and neither of them shall witness the demise of his friend." R' Akiva, however, rules, "The one holding the flask shall drink it himself, for his life precedes the life of his friend."

This was another principle which R' Akiva lived by. Your own survival is of paramount importance and is no less valuable than your friend.

R' Akiva's twenty-four thousand students learned the lesson of this latter statement quite well. They realized that Torah is the elixir of life, the lifeblood of the Jew. They lived, breathed and slept Torah. Taking this message to heart, they were unwilling to give up their "last flask of water" under all circumstances. They were unable to capitulate on their own opinions when studying Torah with a fellow

student. They could not reckon with or tolerate someone else's understanding. "After all," they said, "how can I give up my elixir of life? My understanding of this Talmudic passage is my lifeblood; how could I acknowledge the validity of my friend's view and forego my own precious opinion? I would be giving up my life at the expense of my friend!" R' Akiva's students so greatly revered their understanding of Torah that they were unable to yield to another's opinion one iota.



But the lesson R' Akiva's students were soon to learn and we today must take to heart is just the opposite. The survival of Torah is precisely through giving it away to others. It is precisely through validating another's understanding in Torah and reckoning with someone else that Torah thrives and the Jewish people flourish. The Torah only functions as the elixir of life when it is shared with others. The ultimate dissemination of Torah can only take place when it is the collective Torah of all of Klal Yisrael and everyone's opinion is respectfully considered. Only when this holds true, will the august prestige of Torah find true expression.

"The Torah does not seek to remove us from life, but to teach us how to live it." ~ Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch zt'l.

Now or Later?

Once, a student of the great Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai traveled to do business, and he was very successful and became rich. When he came back to the Yeshivah, everyone saw how wealthy he had become, and some people were jealous of him.

Rebbi Shimon understood what his students were feeling and gathered them together. He took them outside and went to a certain valley. There, he davened to Hashem. He then called out to the valley, "Valley! Valley! Fill yourself up with gold coins!"

Suddenly, before everyone's eyes, the valley started filling up with piles and piles of gold coins!



Rebbi Shimon turned to his students and said, "If you want, take all the gold you like! However, you must know that you are taking from your own reward in Olam Haba. You may be taking all of it, or only part of it, but you can have it now if you like."

Each of the students realized that they were being taught a lesson from their Rebbe. They understood that they shouldn't look at what others have, but they should be happy with what they do have. Each of them decided not to take any gold, and left their reward for learning Torah in the World to Come! (Shemos Rabbah 52:3)

(Torah U'Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)

A Short Message From Mrs. Esther Pearlman



One morning, when I had to get all my little children off to school, there was one problem. I had lost my voice. With no other option, I whispered to the children.

It turned out to be one of the best mornings before school I experienced. All the children whispered back to me nicely and quietly and got along just fine. More than merely being successful that morning, it brought home the reality that the way we act is the way others react. If we act gently and calmly at home, in a classroom and in a marriage, we will receive a mirrored response in return.

Rabbi Yoel Gold - One Minute Late

I will never forget my first day on the job as a rabbi. Shacharis was called for 6:15 in the morning and I walked in one minute late. The digital atomic clock on the wall read 6:16. When I walked into shul, I was in for the shock of my life. I noticed that most of the elderly members of the congregation were already sitting wrapped up in their Tallis and Tefillin, waiting to start davening. I remember thinking to myself, "What is going on? My name is Yoel, and I grew up Chassidish where one minute late is half an hour early." I quickly put on my Tallis and Tefillin and prayed.

After davening, a ninety-year-old man walked over to me from the back of the shul. He introduced himself as Amram Deutsch and welcomed me to the shul, congratulating me on my new position. He then turned to me and said, "I noticed that you were late this

morning. Rabbi, it really hurts me to watch people come late to davening. Please, try to be on time tomorrow."

I was so ashamed and embarrassed. I resolved right then and there to come a half-hour early the next day. I was determined not to be outdone by a ninety-year-old congregant. But little did I know what Reb Amram was the one who opened the shul every morning at 5 o'clock, and so, by the time I walked in at 5:45, he was already sitting and learning Mishnayos, saying Tehillim and sipping his coffee. I had no chance. It wasn't until a year later that I finally understood what davening meant to Reb Amram.



It was a Shabbos afternoon, and we were discussing his experiences during the Holocaust. "I was fortunate enough to leave Auschwitz," he said, "and wound up working in a camp called Buna. I will never forget the letters '*Arbeit Macht Frei*.' I was forced to share a wooden plank with three other inmates to survive the freezing and frigid cold winter nights. We took turns sleeping so we could warm each other with whatever body heat we had left.

One day, my friend said to me, 'Amram, I am going to share a secret with you but nobody else. No one else will know about it. I am going to hide under the barracks where there is a pair of tefillin. I will go for two minutes, put on the tefillin and say Shema, making believe I was going to the restroom, and then you go for the next two minutes and do the same."

Reb Amram now tuned to me. "Rabbi, for six months, until we were transferred to Bergen Belsen where we couldn't take the tefillin

along, my friend and I woke up every morning fifteen minutes before roll call, snuck out of the barrack, and crawled underneath to put the tefillin on. We said the Shema and then finished davening on the way to work.

We risked our life every morning with the least amount we could do to thank Hashem for life. It was the greatest gift I had for six months. A few minutes gave me life."

Today, Reb Amram is ninety-four years old and he still opens the shul at 5 am every morning and still reminds me from time to time that I came a minute or two later. But as I watch him wrap his tefillin around the numbers on his arm, I cannot help but wonder who will teach our children what sacrifice means? Who will teach them how to stay proud of who they are, where they come from and what they stand for? Can a child of today appreciate what it means to be a Jew at all times?

For Reb Amram, he learned and lived that if there is a Ribono Shel Olam, then even if you experience tragedy and lose everything, if you are alive, you must continue with your mission as a Jew. We cannot rest so long as the job of keeping aflame the Jewish spirit for the next generation is in process. Every day, every hour and even every minute counts. With seconds, we can earn eternity and impart eternity unto our community, family and children.

וְהַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל מֵאֶחָיו *And he who is the Cohen Godol {High Priest} among his brothers* 21:10

The Cohen Godol must be **מאחיו** - of his brethren, a friend and a brother to every one of his people, sharing in their sorrows and joys, just as he would for a flesh-and-blood brother. • **The Chozeh {Seer} of Lublin ZY"A**

הָאוֹהֵב אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ כְּגוּפוֹ וְהַמַּדְרִיךְ בָּנָיו וּבְנוֹתָיו בְּדֶרֶךְ וְהַמְכַבְּדָהּ יוֹתֵר מִגּוּפוֹ יְשָׁרָה... עָלָיו הַכָּתוּב אוֹמֵר: 'וְיָדַעְתָּ כִּי שָׁלוֹם אָהֳלֶךָ'

The Gemara (Yevamos 62b) tells us that a husband must love his wife as much as he loves himself yet honour his wife more than he honours himself.

Why in fact must our Sages tell us this? And if there is something to it, why don't our Sages emphasize that we should love our brother and sister as well?

Loving another is a tall order since most people are very close to themselves. Our ego tells us that we are number one. Moreover, a husband-wife relationship is not a natural relationship, as it the case with siblings, but one which spans huge distances and needs to be brought together through hard work. - Brothers and sisters might not see each other for three or four years, yet they can still feel a deep connection the entire time since they share a natural relationship. A husband and wife, in contrast, do not share an innate, natural relationship, and must therefore exert much work and energy to create and maintain those feelings of love and care.

It is on this account that it must be emphasized that a husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself.

What An Amazing Parsha This Is!

Parshas Emor is very special since it includes all the holidays. In fact, says the **Vizhnitzer Rebbe (Imrei Chaim)**, this Shabbos deserves to be called 'Shabbos HaGadol' because an intelligent person can accomplish so much on this Shabbos.

Imagine! By paying attention to the Torah reading, one can do everything at one time: eat matza, sit in the sukkah, blow the shofar, shake the lulav and esrog, and bring the Omer, etc. Is there any greater pleasure in the world than that?

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS EMOR

A Bris Milah in the Communist Soviet Union

Rabbi Abba Dunner, O"BM, related an account of something that had occurred in the Soviet Union during the darker days of pure communism. A Jewish woman, not particularly Torah-observant, was expecting a child.

The doctor warned her harshly that if it was a male child that she had better not dare perform any barbaric blood rituals. When she gave birth to a baby boy, she wanted very badly to give her child a Bris (circumcision), but it was determined that it was not politically safe. Strangers were espied hovering nearby.

The eighth day passed. A month later, the couple evaluated again the possibility of making a Bris, but they sensed a watchful eye and so again nothing was done. Eleven months later the signal was given. The coast was clear.



Friends and family entered the apartment intermittently, so as not to arouse suspicion and they were joined by a Mohel. Quietly, the child was entered into the covenant of Avraham, an unbroken chain reaching back 3,600 years to the original event.

After the baby was given his Jewish name, he was returned to the arms of his mother and brought to a separate room. In the meantime, people were sitting down to enjoy a festive meal, when they were interrupted by a sudden thud and a cry. They ran into the

room and discovered the baby was crying and the mother had fainted.

As she was being revived, people were theorizing about what caused this to happen. Some said it was the excitement, while others figured it was the extra blood due to the advanced age of the child.

When the mother was revived, she revealed the real reason. She said, "I was afraid I would never make a circumcision for my boy, so I vowed never to kiss my child until the day he had a Bris Milah." When - after the Bris - she gave her child a first kiss all that motherly love that she had stored up came rushing forward at once and that's what made her faint.

The Dangerous Sea Storm



Rabbi Yechiel Spero writes a powerful story. In the year 1827 in Pinsk, the wife of Rav Yeshaya Bardaki had passed away after a sudden illness, leaving two orphans, a young boy and his older sister.

After much deliberation, Rav Yeshaya decided that the best thing to do for his children was to start anew, and he arranged to move to Eretz Yisroel, where he hoped he would be able to rebuild his life.

Shortly after Pesach, the family packed up their belongings and prepared for the long journey. They traveled from town to town, staying at inns or in people's homes. Rav Yeshaya would put his

children to sleep every night by telling them stories about the holy city of Yerushalayim.

Finally, after a few months of travelling, they were almost there. They had reached the city of Beirut, Lebanon, just north of Eretz Yisroel, where they were going to take a boat to get to Acco, and they hoped to arrive right before Succos.

As Rav Yeshaya reached the port, he saw a group of men loading a ship with wood to take to Acco in order to build a house for a wealthy gentleman who lived there.

Rav Yeshaya was anxious to board that boat, but the workers were not interested in taking along any extra passengers and baggage. Rav Yeshaya reached into his pocket and pulled out the last of his money, and gave it to the men in the hope that it was enough to convince them to change their minds, and it was.

They boarded the ship and started heading toward Acco, eagerly anticipating their arrival in the Holy Land. The trip was not supposed to be long, but as soon as they set sail, the sky darkened and a storm began to rock the ship. Rav Yeshaya Davened that everything should turn out well. The sailors were very concerned, but then, just as quickly as the storm had begun, it disappeared.

Everyone in the boat was grateful and relieved, especially Rav Yeshaya, who thanked Hashem for allowing them all to continue safely. The ship was now off schedule and would reach its destination a few days later than originally planned, and it became obvious that they would still be on the boat when Succos began.

The men on the ship graciously offered Rav Yeshaya some of the wood they were carrying so that he could build a Succah. This generosity made Rav Yeshaya realize that although they had not yet arrived in Eretz Yisroel, the Hand of Hashem was guiding and protecting him.

The next day, the winds picked up once again and another storm tossed the ship around, hurling them from one side of the deck to the other. This storm seemed to be much more intense than the first one. The thunder cracked and bursts of lightning lit up the sky. The sails fluttered wildly in the air, as the ship struggled to stay afloat.

Suddenly, a sailor screamed, "Land! I see land!" and pointed out in the distance, where land was visible a few thousand feet away. The enormous waves carried the boat high in the air, and then came crashing down violently, flooding the deck.

Rav Yeshaya held onto his little children, Davening that they would be saved. Some of the sailors thought that it was too dangerous to stay on the ship and they jumped into the sea, hoping they could swim to the shore, but Rav Yeshaya was not able to do this with his two small children.

Suddenly, a tremendous noise ripped through the air, as the ship had broken in two! Rav Yeshaya fell into the ocean, holding onto his children with all his strength. He tried his utmost to hold onto them, but his grasp was slipping. He looked at his children, each one holding tightly onto one of his arms. He felt that as much as he tried to swim with them, he couldn't do it, and he felt himself being pulled down.

He just wanted, more than anything he had ever wanted, to not to let go of his children. He cried out, "Please Hashem! Please help me!" Suddenly there was darkness and silence.

The next thing Rav Yeshaya knew, he felt the sun beating down on him as he lay on the shore. When he finally managed to open his eyes, Rav Yeshaya looked around and realized that he had made it alive! But where were the children?!

He looked down the shore and saw his son lying there. He ran over and picked him up, and after a moment, the little boy coughed and opened his eyes. He was alive!

Rav Yeshaya then looked around and noticed his daughter lying farther down the shore. He ran to her and with a feeling of dread, he bent down to pick her up, and just as what had happened with his son, she began to cough, and she too was alive! It was a miracle!

A short while later, she explained to her father that the two children had somehow managed to grab hold of one of the pieces of wood from the Succah on the ship and had floated on it to the shore. Rav Yeshaya held onto both of his children and looked up to Shamayim. How could he ever thank Hashem?!

He made his way to the center of town where he was welcomed, and the people helped him get settled. Soon after, he travelled to Yerushalayim, settled there, and became one of their most prestigious Rabbanim, where he was Zocheh to live with his children and grandchildren for the rest of his life.

When reflecting on this incredible episode, Rav Yeshaya Bardaki saw in it a very significant lesson. He compared it to times when people feel that they are drowning in life. When life has overwhelmed them, and they feel that they can't hold on or perhaps they don't deserve to continue because they have failed in their service to Hashem.

That is exactly when they must cry out, "Hashem! Please don't let go of me!", and Hashem will never let go. Hashem is our Father and has abundant compassion for each and every one of us. When He sees our fear of drowning in the sea and that we are desperately trying to hold onto Him with all of our strength, Hashem will not ever let go of us! *(Torah U'Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*

"Life is full of challenges, but we must always remember that with Emunah and perseverance, we can overcome anything. – Rabbi Shmuel Kaminetzky.

Rejection Won't Matter - By Rabbi David Ashear

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman told a story of a Rabbi from Israel who was struggling a great deal with parnasah. He was marrying off a child and needed an exorbitant amount of money that he didn't have. With no other choice, he decided to go to America and ask for charity.

Before he left, he went to his Rabbi to receive a blessing. The Rabbi told him, "No matter what anyone gives you, whether its $5000, $500, $5 or even 5 cents, always say thank you with a smile and make sure you keep learning Torah when you're not out collecting."

He went, but he was not having a pleasant experience. He was getting a dollar here, a dollar there, but most of the time he was just being ignored. The people there had heard his type of story again and again and they were not moved to give. It was very hard for him to keep smiling and say thank you for the small change that he was getting, but he managed to do it.

It was towards the end of his trip, and he had only collected a very small portion of the funds that he needed. An acquaintance sent him to an area with very wealthy people. This was his last chance. He didn't know anyone in the neighborhood, so he just went door to door knocking, but not one person answered the door.

Until, at last, at one house, the door finally opened, but the Rabbi was gripped with fear when he saw a large dog standing in front of him, barking loudly. He began to run, and then he heard a voice from inside the house, saying, "Don't be afraid; come in, Rabbi."

He walked into a large house which looked like a palace, and he saw the wealthy owner sitting with his feet up. "What could I do for you, Rabbi?" the wealthy man asked. The Rabbi explained his dire situation. The wealthy man then took out a ten-dollar bill from his pocket, he gave it to his dog and told his dog to go give it to the Rabbi.

It was bad enough he only received ten dollars, but to take it from the dog... the shame that he felt was too much. Instead of becoming angry, he remembered the words of his Rabbi and politely thanked the man for his contribution. He then went even further to make that man feel good.



Just a couple of hours before, he was learning a Gemara which said: "A person should not raise a bad dog in his house." So he told the wealthy man, "You have a good dog."

"What do you mean?" the wealthy man asked.

He explained, "The Gemara says you shouldn't raise a bad dog, which implies there must be such a thing as a good dog. Your dog knows how to give tzedaka, so he must be a good one."

The wealthy man then asked the Rabbi for a favor. He said, "Please, could you go across the street and tell my neighbour what you just told me about my dog?"

The Rabbi didn't want to do it, especially after he only got $10 from this man, but again he overcame his inclination and he said, "Sure, no problem." He went across the street and an older gentleman answered the door. The Rabbi gave him the message.

Minutes later, that man was across the street, hugging the first man. It was the father-in-law of the wealthy man. He had been so upset that his son-in-law got a dog, he hadn't spoken to him in months, but when he heard what the Rabbi said about the dog, he had a change of heart.

The wealthy man was so grateful; he wrote out a cheque to this Rabbi for $18,000 and gave it to him for the wedding. At that moment, all the rejection that the Rabbi experienced the past week didn't matter anymore. The Rabbi got what he needed. Hashem prepared him, right before the visit, with the right words to say and put him in front of the right person. And just like that, his trip was a great success.

We could all be helped. Continue hoping and praying to Hashem and b'ezras Hashem, we should all be helped with our needs.



Onkelos and His Uncle - The Roman King (Hadrian)

Onkelos was a nephew of the Roman King Adrianus (Hadrian). Onkelos was very fond of the Jews and wanted to convert so he could serve Hashem fully, but he was afraid of his uncle. Onkelos devised a plan and told his uncle, "I would like to go out in the world and learn business".

The king was happy to hear this and offered Onkelos money, saying, "You may take all the gold and silver you need to get started," but Onkelos answered, "No thank you. I want to learn how to build a business, and make money for myself. But please, dear uncle, what advice can you offer, so that I will succeed in my efforts?" Adrianus said, "Look around and buy merchandise that is cheap, because its value will eventually increase! - "Onkelos thanked his uncle and left Rome.

Instead of going to learn about business, he went straight to *Eretz Yisroel*, where he learned Torah and became a *ger*, a Jewish convert!After a while, Onkelos returned to Rome and went to visit his uncle, King Adrianus. When the king saw him, he asked why he looked so different. Onkelos replied that it was because he had become a Jew, learned Torah, and had a *bris*. The king became very angry and yelled, "Who told you to do such a thing?!"

Onkelos replied, "You did, Uncle!" The king was furious. "How dare you lie to me!"

Onkelos responded, "When I came to ask your advice about which merchandise to buy, you said to look for something that is low in value today, because eventually it will become valuable. I looked around at the nations of the world and discovered that the Jewish people were held in the lowest regard. According to your own words, they will one day become a great and important people! I decided to listen to your advice, so I became a Jew."

At that point, one of the royal advisors who was sitting nearby and heard the conversation said to King Adrianus, "It is true, what Onkelos is saying. I heard that one day even great kings will stand up for the Jewish people!" King Adrianus was not happy to hear this and slapped his advisor on the cheek. He asked Onkelos again why he felt he had to become a Jew.



Onkelos answered, "Because I wanted very much to learn Hashem's Torah." The king asked, "Why couldn't you just learn Torah without getting a *bris*?" Onkelos explained, "A Jew without a *bris* cannot learn Torah properly."

Onkelos left and went home. The king was very displeased with his nephew and sent a troop of Romans to arrest him. When the officers came to his house, Onkelos started a conversation with them about the greatness of Torah. The officers

were so impressed that they decided to also become *geirim*! Obviously, this greatly upset King Adrianus.

He sent another troop of officers to arrest Onkelos, but he told them, "Make sure you don't have any conversations with him!" As they were taking Onkelos out of the house, he said, "Do you mind if I ask you a small question?"

They agreed. Onkelos inquired, "Would a king hold a torch for his people, to light the way for them?" The officers answered, "No! The people hold the torch for the king!" Onkelos responded, "But Hashem is the King of all kings, and yet He held a 'torch' for the Jews in the *Midbar* when they left *Mitzrayim*, by giving them a Pillar of Fire so they would be able to see at night!" The officers were impressed and wanted to serve Hashem. They converted also!

Now King Adrianus was really angry! He sent a third group of soldiers and ordered them not to have any discussions at all with him! As they were taking Onkelos out of the house, he put his hand on the *Mezuzah* as they passed it. The officers thought it was a strange thing to do. Onkelos asked them, "Do you know what this is?" referring to the *Mezuzah* he was touching. They replied, "You tell us!"

Onkelos explained, "The way of the world is that a human king sits inside his palace and the servants guard him from the outside. But *B'nei Yisroel*, Hashem's servants, are inside, and Hashem, the King over everyone, guards them from the outside! That's what this *Mezuzah* does. We put it on the door to protect us, and Hashem watches over us!" The officers were so inspired that they converted also, and became *geirim*. After failing three times to arrest Onkelos, King Adrianus realized that he would not win and didn't try to arrest him again.

(Torah U'Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)



The Legacy of Shimon Zeitlin By Rabbi Reuven Semah

כי אשמרה שבת א-ל ישמרני "When I observe the Shabbat Hashem watches over me." (*Zemirot* of Shabbat)

Our *parsha* discusses all of the holidays, but it starts first with Shabbat. Let's hear a true story about a hero and about Shabbat, as told by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman.

Sam (Shimon) Zeitlin was born in Brooklyn in about 1945 into a non-religious home. His father passed away when he was five and his mother was often ill. Faced with these difficulties, young Sam always pushed himself to succeed.



In 1965 he joined the N.Y. State cycling team and became an instant sensation. Within a short period of time he won championships in the United States, Canada, Europe and Central America. As a cycling star, he became a target of anti-Semitism, some open and some hidden. Though Sam was not religious at the time, he was proud of his Jewishness and the hatred he was being subjected to was difficult to tolerate. It had been expected that he would join the U.S. cycling team in the forthcoming Olympic Games. However, Sam now decided that if he was going to participate in the Olympics he would do so as a member of the Jewish team.

Sam flew to Israel and joined the Israeli cycling team. He participated in the Maccabiah Games and it was predicted that he would win a gold medal at the Olympics.

One evening after a hard day of training, Sam decided to visit the *Kotel* for the first time in his life. At the *Kotel* he met some Rabbis who introduced him to Rabbi Noah Weinberg, who would later found *Yeshivah Aish Hatorah* in the Old City. Before long Sam was keeping all the *misvot* and experiencing a joy of life that he never felt before. He was still cycling and looked forward to participating in the Olympic Games that were fast approaching.

The Israeli Sports Federation announced that the cyclists' Olympic trials would be held on Shabbat. Sam informed the committee that he would participate on any day but Shabbat. They were wholly unsympathetic, saying the date was fixed and would not be changed, knowing full well that he was the only Israeli cyclist who had a possibility of winning an Olympic medal.

Sam was devastated. He had spent hundreds of lonely hours training and now was being denied the opportunity to compete in the Olympics.

He did not have to think the matter over. He was grateful that Hashem had led him to people who made him realize that keeping Shabbat was far more important than his cycling career. He did not participate in the Olympic trials and as a result Israel did not send a cycling team to the Olympics.

The year was 1972. At the Olympic Games in Munich Germany, Arab terrorists abducted the Israeli Olympic team from their lodgings in the Olympic village and murdered all of them, *Hashem yikom damam*.

Sam would often say, "I gave up my Olympic dream for Shabbat and Shabbat saved my life."

As we sing every Friday night at our Shabbat table, "Ki Eshmerah Shabbat Kel Yishmereni - When I observe the Shabbat Hashem watches over me."

The Secret Recipient by Yerachmiel Tilles



Rabbi Chayim Halberstam of Sanz, known as the Divrei Chayim, was deeply involved in the *mitzvah* of **tzedaka**, giving with an open hand from his own funds and soliciting from others as well. In keeping with the rabbinical dictum that charity collectors should travel in pairs, he always went on his rounds with a respected member of the community.

One time Rabbi Chayim set about to collect a large amount of *tzedaka* for a certain wealthy man who had gone bankrupt. He and a trusted companion went about from house to house soliciting funds, when they came to the elegant home of one of the richest men in the city.

They entered the beautifully appointed anteroom and were shown to a velvet sofa where they were served tea from a silver tea service while they waited for the master of the house to appear. After a few minutes a well-dressed gentleman entered and greeted the illustrious Rabbi warmly.

The Rabbi and his companion requested that the wealthy man donate the large amount of five hundred rubles for an unspecified "worthy cause. "The rich man considered their request for a few moments and then asked, "Tell me, exactly what is the cause you're collecting for? Is it for some public institution or for a private person?"

Rabbi Chayim replied that he was collecting for a wealthy citizen who had lost all his money and gone into bankruptcy. But this answer

wasn't sufficient for the man, and he began to inquire further about the identity of the person.

"I'm sorry," replied Rabbi Chayim, "but I cannot divulge the man's name, since that would cause him terrible embarrassment. You'll just have to trust me when I tell you that he's a very deserving individual."

The rich man refused to be dissuaded from his curious pursuit of the man's identity. "Of course, I trust you implicitly, and I would be only too happy to donate even several thousand rubles to help you, but I would first like to know for whom I'm giving the money."

At this point the man who was accompanying the Rabbi interjected his opinion that perhaps it wouldn't be so bad to divulge the man's identity in this case. Certainly, the rich donor wouldn't allow the information to leave the room, and it was a wonderful opportunity to amass the large amount of money to help a fellow Jew rebuild his life.

But Rabbi Chayim would say only that the man had up until recently been one of the pillars of the community and had himself contributed to many worthy causes before his unfortunate business collapse. Again he protested that he couldn't and wouldn't publicize the man's name.

The rich man, far from being silenced, was even more aroused in his curiosity. "If you tell me his name I will give you half of the entire amount you need." His fellow collector again tried to convince the Rabbi to tell the man's name, in view of the tremendous sum of money involved, but to no avail.

"You must understand," he replied, "that even though the sum you are offering is more than generous, the honour of this Jew is more important and valuable to me than any amount of money! If you were to give me the total sum that I require, I would still refuse to reveal the identity of the recipient!"

The rich man's countenance changed suddenly, and he became very still. He quietly asked Reb Chayim to step into an adjacent room, for he wished to speak with him privately.

Standing alone with the Rabbi, the rich man broke down into bitter sobbing. "Rebbe," he began, "I, too, have lost my entire fortune and am about to enter into bankruptcy. I was too embarrassed to tell this to anyone, but when I saw how scrupulously you guarded the other man's privacy I knew I could trust you. Please forgive me for testing you in such an outrageous manner, but I am a desperate man. I needed to know for sure that under no circumstances would you tell anyone about my terrible situation. I am in debt for such a huge sum, I have no hope at all of repaying it. I'm afraid that I will have no choice but to leave my family and go begging from door to door!"

The Sanzer Rav left the home of the rich man, and needless to say, not a soul ever heard a word of their conversation. Less than a week later he returned to the same man's house with a large sum of money. He had been able to raise enough money to rescue not only the original intended recipient, but this one as well. They were both able to pay off their debts and resume their businesses successfully.

The role of the saintly Sanzer Rav in this affair became known only many years later, after he left this earthly world.

Biographic note: **Rabbi Chayim Halberstam of Sanz Zt'l**: 25 Nissan 5553 - 25 Nissan 5636 (April 1793-April 1876 C.E.)] was the first Rebbe of the Sanz-Klausenberg dynasty. He was famous for his extraordinary dedication to the mitzvah of Tzedakah and also as a renowned Torah scholar; his voluminous and wide-ranging writings were all published under the title *Divrei Chayim.*

R' Moshe Sherer ZT"L would say: "A good speech is like drilling for oil; if you don't strike in the first five minutes - stop boring!"

Smoking Gun

It was during World War II in March 1944. The winds of war blew across the Atlantic, drawing United States forces into ground battle. R' Leizer Cohen was then thirty-six years old, married with three children. So, when an official looking letter from the United States Army appeared in the mail one day, R' Leizer did not become alarmed. But he was curious. R' Leizer opened the letter, wondering what the Army could possibly want from him.

When he read the contents, his face slowly lost its color until it matched the white paper in his hand. It was a draft notice! R' Leizer was overage, but the Army was understaffed. He was to report to the downtown Chicago address on Saturday morning. Anyone who failed to respond to the summons would be arrested. "On Shabbos?" R' Leizer whispered to himself. "There are no Jews downtown." But there was no getting out of it.

And this was just the beginning! How could he keep Shabbos— let alone observe all the mitzvos—if he was drafted into the army? Despite his misgivings, R' Leizer gathered his belongings that Friday afternoon to spend Shabbos in a downtown hotel. He brought along Shabbos provisions—candles, wine, challah, a siddur and a chumash.

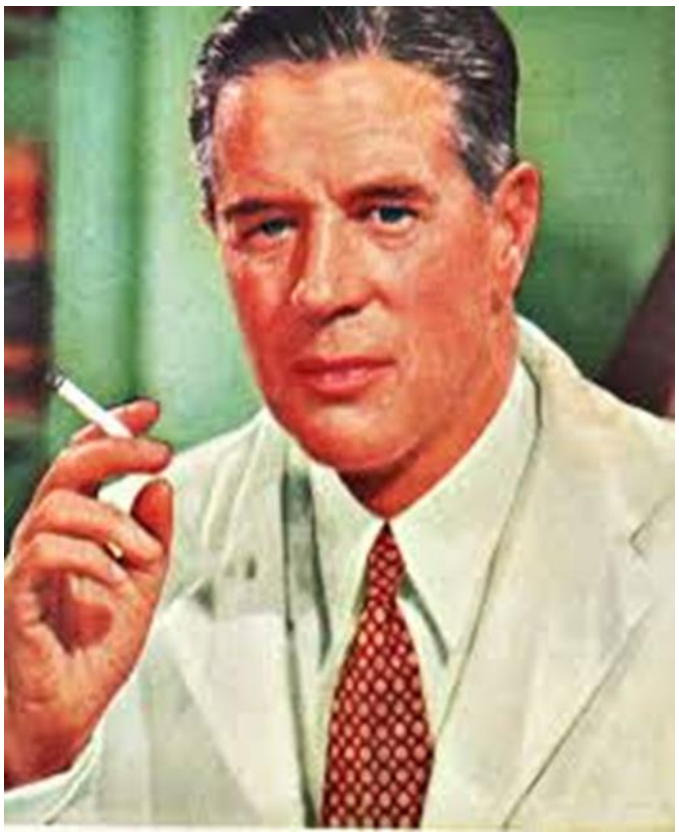
After his lonely Friday night meal, R' Leizer took out his chumash to review the weekly Torah portion, parashas Vayakhel. He reached the verse "**לֹא־תְבַעֲרוּ אֵשׁ בְּכֹל מֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת** - *do not kindle a fire in all your dwellings on the Shabbos day* (Shmos 35:3)."

For some reason, R' Leizer's mind refused to leave that verse. "Do not kindle a fire..." he kept repeating to himself. R' Leizer's eyes soon closed, but his mind still dwelled on the verse even in his dreams. "Do not kindle a fire..."

R' Leizer awoke the next morning, his heart heavy with dread. After davening alone in his hotel room, he joined thousands of people in the induction center waiting to be examined by the Army doctors. It was

a long day. R' Leizer was examined by doctor after doctor. For the first time in his life, he wished he wasn't in the best of health, but he passed each examination with flying colors.

Late in the afternoon, R' Leizer was seated opposite an obviously Jewish psychiatrist. After some routine questioning, R' Leizer voiced his concern about joining the Army. "Doctor, I'm an Orthodox Jew, and I'm very worried about how I'm going to be able to observe the Sabbath and all the other commandments in the Army. And who's going to take care of my wife and three children?"



R' Leizer waited for a response, but the doctor just shrugged, unmoved. R' Leizer watched him reach into his pocket to pull out a cigarette. As the match flared in the doctor's hand, the words of the chumash from the night before flashed through R' Leizer's mind. "Do not kindle a fire..." "Doctor, you look Jewish. Why are you smoking on Shabbos?" R' Leizer admonished him. The doctor rolled his eyes. "Listen, it's been a long day— will you give me a break?"

But R' Leizer did not relent. He continued to expound on the prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbos, that it was absolutely forbidden, and how could a Jew dare to do such a thing? As R' Leizer ranted on, the doctor furiously scribbled a few notes on the file in front of him. "Here," he said, interrupting R' Leizer mid-sentence. "Take this to the doctor in the next room."

The next doctor also appeared Jewish. R' Leizer handed him the file and sat down. The doctor looked down at the note, then peered up

at the man seated opposite him "Your name?" he began. R' Leizer responded dutifully to each question until this doctor, too, took out a cigarette and lit up.

The verse flashed again in R' Leizer's mind. "Do not kindle a fire..." R' Leizer couldn't hold himself back. "Doctor, you look Jewish. Why do you smoke on Shabbos?" The doctor looked up suddenly from the file and stared at R' Leizer "What?" he asked, incredulous. "Why do you smoke on Shabbos?" R' Leizer repeated. "Don't you know it's forbidden?" The doctor shook his head in disbelief.

"Oh, boy! You're too nervous for the United States Armed Forces. We don't need guys like you. Go home." Relieved, R' Leizer left the army induction center. He was so excited that he ran over four miles back home, where he told everyone about the miracle he had experienced. He went on to raise his family which continues to light up the world with mitzvos and chessed ... without of course ever "lighting up" on Shabbos!

We read about the holiness of Shabbos in this week's Torah portion Parshas Emor. When describing the Yomim Tovim the Torah begins with the holiest holiday: Shabbos. Although it is difficult for us to measure in such a way, the commentator the Chasam Soifer writes that there is more holiness in one minute of Shabbos than in all the Yomim Tovim combined!

Hashem tells us this week: "For six days labour may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation, you shall not do any work; it is a Shabbos for Hashem in all your dwelling places."

From this verse we learn many aspects about Shabbos. Shabbos is called a "convocation" which means "gathering." From here we learn the importance on Shabbos to spend time with family members with whom we may be too busy during the week to spend time. From the fact that the verse mentions "in all your dwelling places" we see the importance on Shabbos to be at home and not seek entertainment

out in the world. By being with our families at home on Shabbos, we Jews have been able to maintain a strong family unit throughout the centuries. This is only one of the benefits of keeping Shabbos properly.

Let us all therefore be inspired to make Shabbos "a day of complete rest..."

The Unused Negel Vasser



Rav Dovid Goldwasser once related a story: "A fellow Jew once called me to consult on a pressing parenting issue. The man begged me to make time for him at my earliest opportunity, because the matter was very urgent and needed immediate attention.

I agreed to meet with him first thing in the morning. The man who came into my office the next morning was deeply crushed and heartbroken. He sighed and tearfully began to tell his story.

"I was always very dedicated to my children's upbringing,' he said. 'I learned with them, paid for the best Chavrusas, did everything possible to ensure that they would grow up to be G-d Fearing Jews.

"But my 17-year-old son...' he groaned, and put his face into his hands. He continued, 'With children, you need a lot of Mazel. My son is completely off the path of the Torah. Shabbos means nothing to him. Yom Tov means nothing to him. I don't even know where or with whom he spends his day.'

The man went on. 'He comes home late at night, and sleeps till noon. He doesn't talk to us or to his sisters and brothers. I don't think he does anything Jewish at all. My wife and I have no more joy in life,'

he said. 'Even our family occasions are marred. How can we rejoice when our son has nothing to do with Judaism or with us?'

He continued, 'I always wondered why Yaakov Avinu mourned Yosef for 22 years. Why couldn't he accept the situation, and go on with life? Now I don't wonder anymore. I can't make peace with the situation. My own son! My own flesh and blood, whom I raised with such love, is going against everything I live for!'

With tears streaming down his face, the man told me that his Rebbi had advised him to speak to me. 'Rav Goldwasser,' he cried. 'What should I do? What can I tell him? What can I tell my wife and other children?'

I spent a long time with him, offering encouragement and guidance, and mapping out a plan he could follow. I suggested positive steps he could take, things he could say, things he could do. I also told him what not to say and do. He asked me Halachic questions, and listened carefully to everything I said. Finally, the man arose, thanked me, and turned to go.

He was at the door when he turned back. 'Can I please ask the Rav one more question?' he asked. 'Of course,' I said.



'I've been preparing the Negel Vasser in my house for years,' he said. 'Every night, I fill the basins and put them at the foot of every bed, and every morning, I spill out the used water. It's my special Mitzvah, my special Zechus.

But lately, when I collect my son's Negel Vasser, I see that the water isn't used. He isn't washing Negel Vasser anymore. I feel like a fool preparing it every night. It's just a waste of time. Should I continue preparing the water, or can I just skip it?'

The question hit me for a moment, and then I said, 'If you're asking me, I would continue to fill the Negel Vasser every evening.'

I could see that my answer surprised him. He seemed taken aback as he had not expected that answer. Three weeks later, the man called to let me know what was going on. Things were pretty much the same, he said, and he was getting discouraged. I gave him encouragement, and some new suggestions.

Just before he hung up, he asked, 'About the Negel Vasser, do you think that I still need to bring it to his bed? I feel like such a fool every day.' Again, I urged him to continue.

Three weeks later, he called me again. This time, he could barely speak. He seemed to be crying, as he was literally choking over his words. 'I listened to you, Rav Goldwasser,' he said. 'I listened to you! I filled my son's Negel Vasser every day, and emptied it, even though he wasn't using it.'

The man paused. 'This morning, I went to his room to collect the basin, and he was wearing his Tefilin and Davening!' Overcome with emotion, he paused to catch his breath. Then he said, 'I ran to him, and hugged and kissed him. It was the first time in months! I couldn't bring myself to hug him while he was 'gone'.

And then I asked him, 'Tell me, my dear child, what made you put on Tefillin today?' And my son said, 'I'll tell you, Dad. It was the Negel Vasser. You knew I wasn't using it, and still, you refilled it every day. I saw that you never lost your faith in me, and you made me feel that I shouldn't lose my faith in Hashem either!'"

(Torah U'Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)

"You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great."

A 1948 Miracle in Yerushalayim by Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

This week's Torah portion contains 64 commandments and one of them is the longest in The Book. It's called 'Counting the Omer' and it takes 49 days; namely counting aloud with a blessing, each of the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot.

The most significant of these 49 days is the 33rd when, on that date some 1800 years ago, a great Jew named Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai (a.k.a. RaShBi) passed away. It is a day of rejoicing and to this day hundreds of thousands of Jews visit his grave in the northern Israeli town of Meron (this coming Saturday night) to light a huge bonfire and rejoice in song and dance. In fact the entire land of Israel is dotted with tens of thousands of such fires and rejoicing in his honour.

The reason for all this is that Rashbi wrote the mystical book "The Zohar", which describes the soul of Judaism and in which G-d is quoted as saying, will bring Moshiach; world peace and universal prosperity.

At first glance all this is not so clear. Why is the Zohar so Important?

First, how can the Zohar be so important? After all, it's only a book! How can it bring such total benefit to all mankind?

Second, what type of commandment is counting days?

Third, what is the connection to the 33rd day of the Omer with the death of this great man?

Fourth, why do people rejoice on the day he DIED, and why bonfires?

And most important, what does this mean to us today?

In May of 1948, shortly after Israel declared statehood, the Jordanian army surrounded the Old City of Jerusalem with their best trained, best armed forces and sealed it hermetically for several weeks. Several futile attempts were made by the fledgling

Israeli army to break the siege, but they all failed tragically and after a while the Jews of the Old City of Jerusalem were suffering from hunger and thirst.



Only a few hundred Jewish soldiers with light weapons were defending the city and everyone knew that at any moment the Jordanian high command would give the word, Jerusalem would fall into their hands and all its inhabitants would be massacred. Nothing stood between the enemy and total victory.....almost.

Miraculously the few attempts the Arabs made failed. For instance, just a few days before Lag B'Omer they sent an expeditionary force of two tanks followed by several tens of soldiers to wreak havoc in the city.

The small force of Jewish defenders with no anti-tank devices seemed helpless against this armored force rumbling unhindered through the streets until, suddenly, one of the Jewish soldiers bravely jumped from nowhere onto the first tank, lifted the hatch, which miraculously was unlocked, threw in a makeshift Molotov Cocktail and jumped off unharmed all under a hail of bullets. The tank crew made a hasty escape, the tank blew up blocking the road and the invaders retreated.

But everyone knew it wouldn't last long. Every day another Jew died from the incessant Arab mortar fire and the Jordanians had the most modern and well-organized army and weaponry including artillery of all the 6 or 7 Arab nations attacking Israel - and they were motivated!

That Thursday would be Lag B'Omer when, almost 2,000 years ago, Rashbi revealed his deepest mystical secrets and declared it a day of rejoicing just before he passed away! - They had to make a fire and rejoice....but how!?

A fire at night would be suicide; it would draw enemy artillery, and everyone would be killed! (Previously the Jordanians had not used extensive artillery on Jerusalem because they were certain it would soon be theirs.)

Then someone had an idea! In Jerusalem it is the custom to light Shabbat candles 40 minutes before nightfall; there was no reason they couldn't do the same with the Lag B'omer fire! They would light it early while it was still light outside and then they could rejoice a little and do it quietly so as not to draw attention.

About thirty Chassidim showed up. They bought bottles of oil, several bags of old rags and even a few pieces of wood for the fire and made a 'parade', singing quietly, fearing every step, from the Synagogue of the Chassidim until the yard before the Shul of the Perushim.

There they quietly arranged their materials in a pile, lit the fire, held hands, formed a circle around the fire and resumed their stifled singing. But then, something happened. Suddenly they weren't afraid….only happy! They sang louder, began clapping their hands, smiling, dancing and jumping with the joy of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Before they knew it, they were singing at the top of their lungs, drenched with sweat and dancing with their eyes closed. A half hour had passed! It was getting dark!

Suddenly the enemy cannons opened up and fire and explosions woke them from their ecstasy. Never had they experienced such a barrage of artillery! Destruction was everywhere. The Jews scattered in all directions, obviously this was the attack on

Jerusalem they had expected and dreaded. Each man ran to his home to his family.

Buildings were falling; bombs were bursting with horrific destructive force. Close to a hundred Jews, rushed to the safest place they knew - the Synagogue! There G-d would save them!

The one writing this true account, Rabbi Avraham Yonaton Gotlieb, recalls how one Rabbi, Zev Isenbach, stood at the podium and read Psalm 91, 91 times begging G-d for mercy and protection. And it worked!

Suddenly another Jew, Rav Yosel Eichler, appeared in the Shul with a large bag on his shoulder and began distributing its contents, small loaves of bread dipped in oil, saying, "Don't forget that today is a holiday! This is for the joyous meal in honour of Rebbi Shimon!!"

After over an hour the bombardment stopped. Not one person had been injured and it was totally silent! The dreaded Jordanian attack never came.

Suddenly one of the Jewish soldiers who happened to be religious, ran in, waving his arms, with a wild, look screaming, "What did you do?! What did you do?! Are you crazy?! Are you all insane?! Did you light that fire and sing!? Was it you!? - He calmed down and continued. "You don't know what happened! The Jordanians retreated!! They must have been much closer than we supposed but when they heard your singing and saw the fire, they became afraid! They figured the only thing that would make you so happy was that reinforcements with new weapons must have arrived and were about to attack them! So they ran away! One of the Arabs told us!

"That's why they fired all their cannons! Their commander ordered them to cover the retreat as they were pulling back to keep us away!! It was a miracle! A miracle from Rabbi Shimon!! If it wasn't for your singing, they would have killed all of us for sure!"

On Friday, the day after Lag B'omer, both chief Rabbis of Jerusalem; Rabbi Minzberg and Rabbi Chazan, raised white flags and entered the Jordanian camp with an offer to surrender Jerusalem. But only on certain conditions; that all the populace would be allowed to leave unharmed etc.

Amazingly the Jordanians agreed to all the terms! It seems they were still under the effect of the Lag b'Omer scare and were happy they had not been attacked by the imaginary Jewish 'forces',

This answers our questions. There is a well known saying that even a little light can dispel much darkness. This is because darkness is really not a true entity; it is only the absence of light.

The light in this case is the awareness that G-d is creating each of us constantly, and He does so for a reason. When a human is aware of this; namely how close and good G-d is, then there is meaning, purpose and even joy in every moment of life. And this 'light' dispels all darkness; fear, confusion, loneliness and despair caused by false egotism.

This is the 'light' that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai brought us with his teachings in the 'Zohar'. And, as we saw in our story, it worked to dispel the Jordanian forces of darkness and destruction.

That is the commandment of 'Counting the Omer'. In Hebrew the word for 'counting' (Spor) also means 'to shine' (Sapire) and according to the Zohar 'counting the 49 days' means to shine meaning and blessing into each of the 49 aspects of human nature.

That is the connection between Rabbi Shimon and the 33rd day. According to Kabbalah this 33rd day (hod sh'b'hod) represents the ultimately lowest inner aspect of human nature (surrender and gratitude) which Rashbi aimed to illuminate.

This is why fires are lit on this day; to illuminate, to inspire our souls with joy and meaning and to automatically dispel all darkness.

The Great Miracle of the Volcano Shutdown



A universal crisis, millions of people stranded, billions of dollars lost, and one volcanic eruption in Iceland causes chaos across the European continent. Within all these tumult, one Jew merits a smile of loveliness from the Creator of the World, as if whispering to him - My son, the whole world was not created except for you **כל העולם לא נברא אלא בשבילי.**

The story begins with a young Yeshiva student, an 18 year old Yerushalmi, that came down with a fulminate hepatic failure and was mortally ill.

With little hope of receiving a liver transplant in Israel, Rav Firer sought to send the boy on an emergency trip to Brussels, the world center of liver transplants. The only problem, however, is that Brussels under no circumstances transplants non-EU patients. This is done in order to save the scanty supply of livers for Europeans. Nevertheless, Rabbi Firer decided to send him to Brussels despite the full knowledge of negligible chance of receiving a liver.

The young Yeshiva student had no choice but to add his name to the long waiting list for a liver transplant. In the meantime, he tried to maintain his learning despite the illness, consciously aware that it might takes weeks, months, or even years until he would be able to be given a new liver. Many patients were on the waiting list, and his name was somewhere on the bottom. And when his turn would finally arrive, it must completely match the blood type of the donor and

other medical criteria. If it's not a perfect match, he would need to continue waiting … for a miracle.

However, **רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום** - ***Many thoughts in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of Hashem shall stand.*** Hashem had a different plan for this young yeshiva student and Hashem's loyal servants produced avalanches of hot ash, rock and gas on Europe, causing Europe to completely transform its skies into a no-fly zone.

No one could leave and no one could enter the self-imposed siege in the European zone skies. It was during this time that the young religious Yerushalmi man staying in the capital of Belgium was sitting in the yeshiva learning Torah.

During the course of the shutdown of airspace above Europe, a person died in a hospital in the capital of Belgium. He had agreed a person to donate his liver to anyone that might need it. Astonishingly, a liver that was a perfect match for our young Yeshiva student.

Health authorities in Belgium began searching the waiting list for those needing a liver transplant. But 'unfortunately', not even one patient was able to fly into Belgium for the very needed healthy liver transplant because of the chaos due to the volcanic eruption in Iceland.

As they examined further down the waiting list, the Belgian medical authorities came to the name of the young yeshiva student. However, it was not offered to the boy due to his lack of citizenship.

As the clock closed in on the deadline for time in which the liver's lifespan for transplanting, the precious healthy liver cannot be wasted and must be swiftly replaced with a diseased liver, it was realized that one else was able to arrive in Belgium for the transplant except for this young Yerushalmi.

With the clear Divine Intervention, this budding talmid chacham received the liver and is now recovering from surgery.

The enormity of this miracle was even greater after the successful liver transplant. The doctors declared that the young yeshiva student's liver was very deteriorated and diseased, and it was only a matter of just a few more days before his liver would have stopped functioning completely.

The doctors unanimously believe that if this young man had to continue waiting for the liver transplant according to the normal sequence of events that were only disrupted by the volcanic eruption, he would have been long dead.



Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Concealed Good

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that we sometimes think that bad things happen to us. But later, we look back and discover how good that incident really was. For example, the Gemara (*Nidah* 31.) relates a story about a merchant rushing to catch a ship to do business overseas. As he was running to the boat, he accidentally stepped on a thorn. The pain in his foot slowed him down, and by the time he arrived at the port, the boat had already set sail. He was very upset. "If it wasn't for the thorn, I would have caught the boat," he said, disappointed.

Later, he found out that the ship sunk. Now, he praised Hashem for His kindness. He praised Hashem for placing the thorn in his path and thereby saving his life.

It is easy to praise Hashem in retrospect. Our job is to praise Hashem when things look bad. We must believe that, even then, everything that happens to us is by Hashem's merciful providence and for our good.

The Chasam Sofer says that this is alluded to in this week's *parashah* when the *korban todah*, the *korban* of thanksgiving is discussed. It states (22:29-30) **וְכִי־תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח תּוֹדָה לַה' לִרְצֹנְכֶם תִּזָּבֵחוּ.. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יֵאָכֵל לֹא־תוֹתִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר...**

"When you sacrifice the *korban todah*… eat it that very day. Don't leave it over until morning". The pasuk hints that **ביום ההוא יאכל**, praise Hashem the same day that something happens to you, even before you know why that occurrence is for your benefit. **לא תותירו ממנו עד בוקר** - don't wait until tomorrow to praise Hashem. *B'ezras Hashem*, tomorrow, you will understand why it was good for you. But don't wait until then. Praise Hashem now.

The Maharal says that the mitzvah of *omer* reminds us that everything happens by Hashem's will. Even nature is controlled by Hashem. When Bnei Yisrael recognize this, nothing bad can happen to them.



There is an orphan boy who lives in the north of Eretz Yisrael who enjoys listening to the music of a particular singer. He invited that singer to his bar mitzvah. He couldn't pay for the singer, but he requested that he come anyway. The singer wanted that the bar mitzvah *bochur* should enjoy this momentous day, and he had compassion for the orphan because his father wouldn't be present, so he came to the *seudah*.

When the singer saw the *bachur's* big smile when he arrived, he decided to stay longer than he originally planned. He was there for two hours, singing and entertaining the guests.

The next day, the singer was notified that the bar mitzvah *bachur* had just tested positive for Covid-19. All the guests had to be quarantined. When the singer started feeling unwell, he realized that he had caught the virus from the bar mitzvah *bachur*. This would mean at least ten days at home, without work.

The singer regretted that he did the *chesed*, to help the bar mitzvah bochur because he ended up with a significant loss.

Three weeks later, an organization in America invited this singer to sing at an orphanage that was staging bar mitzvos for several orphans. They said that they heard that he sang at a bar mitzvah in the northern part of Eretz Yisrael and that he did an excellent job at making the boy feel good, so they want him to sing for them. They would pay a large sum, but they had a condition: They will only hire him if he already had the corona.

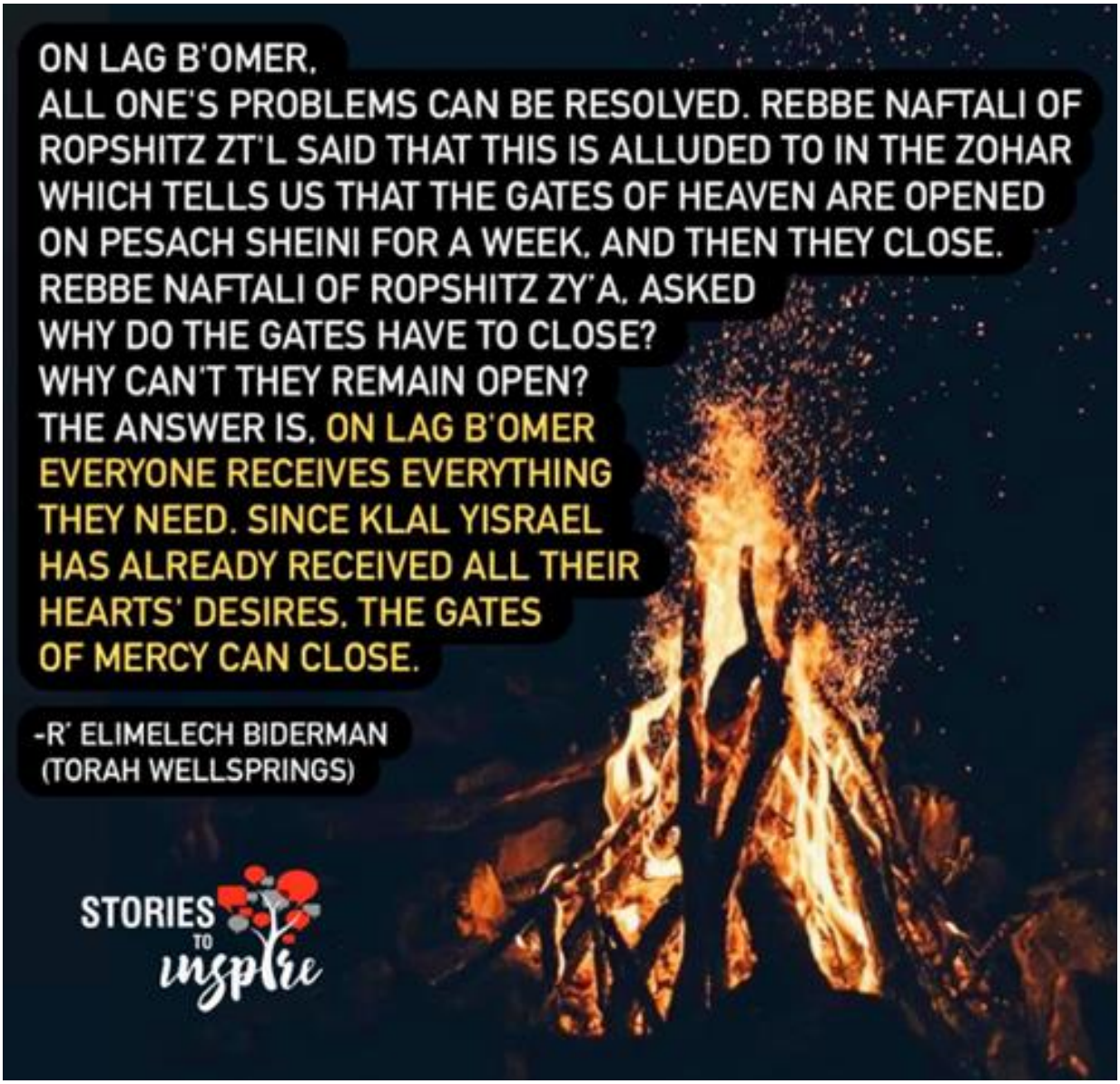
So, he discovered that his problem was for his benefit. Earlier, he regretted attending the bar mitzvah, but now he knows that because he attended the bar mitzvah, he landed this lucrative job.

The Desire To Learn Torah



A bachur came to Yeshiva Shor Yashuv for an interview. The Rosh Yeshiva, **Horav Shlomo Freifeld** זצ"ל, asked him if he came to the Yeshiva because he wants to learn. The bachur answered that he came because he ***wants to want*** to learn.

Rav Freifeld liked the answer and accepted him. The boy grew in his learning, and years later, he became a marbitz Torah.

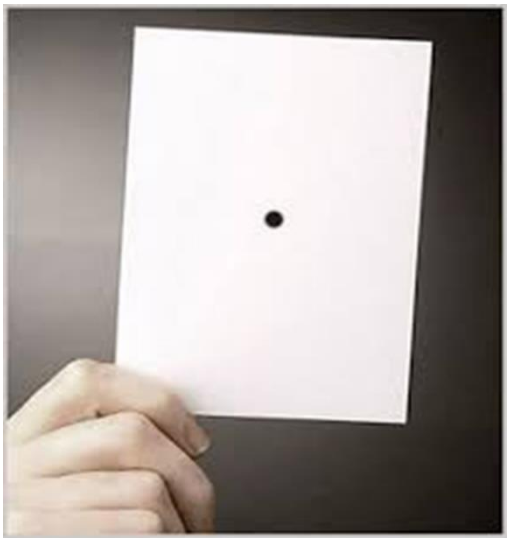


whY I Matter

וּבְקֻצְרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אַרְצְכֶם לֹא־תְכַלֶּה פְּאַת שָׂדְךָ בְּקֻצְרֶךָ וְלֶקֶט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תְלַקֵּט לֶעָנִי וְלַגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם ***And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap the corner of the field or the gleaning of the harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and the stranger.*** (23:22)

Rabbi Abdimi asked, "Why did Scripture choose to place this law in the middle of the section dealing with the festivals? To teach us that whoever leaves the "corners" and "gleanings" for the poor, it is as if he built the Holy Temple and presented his offerings there.

Focus on the Good



Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* once showed his students a blank sheet of paper with a black dot on it. "What do you see?" he asked them. They said they see a dark spot. Reb Eliyahu Dessler replied, "Why don't you tell me that you see all the white that goes around the dark dot? Because that is how people are: they focus on the smallest thing that isn't good and lose sight of all the good that surrounds them."



A husband once came home at the end of a long day and said to his wife, "What did you do all day? The sink is filled with dirty dishes!" She didn't reply. The next day, the dishes were piled even higher in the sink. "What did you do all day?" Again, she remained silent.

The next day was worse. The dishes from lunch were still on the table; she didn't even bother piling them on top of all the other dirty dishes in the sink. The children were dishevelled, and they were fighting with each other. The three-year-old was using her crayons set to decorate the dining room wall. The husband hopped over the clutter in the kitchen to see what his wife prepared for supper, but the pots and oven were empty. He found his wife reading a book, totally oblivious to what was happening in the home.

"What did you do all day?" he asked. "*Today,* I did nothing," she replied. She decided to do nothing that day, so her husband would recognize what she does every day.

The husband didn't realize how much effort is required to keep the house running smoothly. The husband's error was that he focused on what his wife *wasn't doing*, and he didn't think about all that his wife did do.

Similarly, some people focus on what they lack, and they have complaints on Hashem. ***Instead, focus on all the good you have, and praise Hashem for His kindness.***

Torah, Tefillah, and Parnassah



We all have a conflict of interest because we want to work and earn parnassah.

The Alter of Nevarduk zt'l told the following mashal:

Someone wanted a good vacation, so he checked into a five-star hotel with all the luxurious amenities. It was time for dinner, so he went all the way down to the kitchen, filled up his plate, and brought it up to his room. He got his meal, but his efforts were unnecessary. If he would have some patience, the food would come right to his room.

The same thing happens when people do unnecessary hishtadlus for making parnassah. They will get their parnassah, but they could have gotten the same with far easier means.

We must believe that the time one sets for Torah and tefillah will not detract from his parnassah.

The Alter of Nevarduk compared unnecessary hishtadlus to a person riding a train, and he pushes the walls of the train with his hands to help the train go quicker. Obviously, this will not accomplish anything. So too, doing unnecessary hishtadlus doesn't increase the results.

Perhaps we aren't on the level of bitachon to come late to work. Nevertheless, it is important to know the truth: parnassah comes from Hashem. It is not dependent on the amount of work we do. Therefore, if once in a while you come late to work, believe that you will still earn the amount that is destined for you.

On market day, all merchants want to be in the marketplace the moment the market opens. However, the **Yesod HaAvodah zt'l** (the first Rebbe of Slonim) advised his chassidim to begin their day with Torah and tefillah and told them to purposely come late to the marketplace. He wanted them to realize that parnassah comes from Hashem and that coming late to the market won't detract from their parnassah.

Regarding the manna, it states (Shemos 16:18)

ולא העדיף המרבה והממעיט לא החסיר those who collected a lot of manna ended up having the same amount as those who collected a small measure of manna. This is because each person receives the amount Hashem has destined for him.

"Similarly," the Yesod HaAvodah told his chassidim, "you will get the amount Hashem destined for you. Coming to the market early or coming late won't change the total of your earnings."

Actually, spending time davening and learning each day will increase your parnassah.

Some people rush out of shul immediately after hearing kedushah. They are rushing to their jobs. But they are leaving before they receive the keys for their parnassah. They aren't gaining anything.

A non-religious Yid was once in Yeshivas Kfar Chassidim when they were davening Minchah. Afterwards, people asked him for his impressions. He replied, "I saw bachurim swaying back and forth, but there was this elderly man, standing near the front wall, and it appeared that he was truly speaking to some-One." That man was **Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l**.

People said similar things about the tefillos of **Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l**. People had the impression that if they disturbed him in the middle of his tefillos, he would respond, "Don't you see I'm in the middle of speaking with some-One!"

Vechol Maaminim - Bivrachah Sheleimah Venomar Amen

תמים יהיה לרצון כל מום לא יהיה בו (כב כא) . There is a clearly stated halachah regarding korbanos (Megillah 28a; Menachos 64b) that even though all the animals in the herd are complete and unblemished, one should choose specifically the 'meyuchad,' the special one in the herd, as a korban. Moreover, even after someone has already slaughtered his korban, if he finds a nicer and healthier animal, it is permitted for him to sacrifice the latter in the first one's place. This is even considered a hiddur mitzvah.

From this halachah we can also learn about tefillah, which was instituted in the place of the korbanos (Brachos 26b); just like with a korban, the one who brings it must try to bring the 'select of the herd' as a korban, likewise in tefillah – the one who davens should try that his tefillah should be said in the most perfect way possible.



Therefore, because answering amen is part of the brachah (Rema Orach Chaim 167 2), and a brachah that is not answered with amen is not a complete brachah (Zohar Parashas Eikev p. 271 1), it is worthy that a person should be strict to make a brachah in front of others so that they answer amen after him. They should also answer amen after the brachah of others, and thus, he will be presenting a perfect korban before Hashem. *(Rav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, shlita)*

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

A person wanted advice on how to handle a certain situation that had come up in his life, so he decided to travel to *Eretz Yisroel* to get a *Brachah* and some guidance from **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, *zt"l***.

Rav Aharon Leib told him that there is one solution that can save a person from all troubles— and that is to be very careful in regard to keeping *Shabbos*. He said, "Be prepared early on *Erev Shabbos* and eagerly anticipate *Shabbos Kodesh*! It is a tried and tested *Segulah* that works for any and all problems."

Rav Aharon Leib added, "The real *Segulah* of being ready early for Shabbos, is to actually begin the *Shabbos* preparations as early as possible in the day!"

Time

Time is extremely precious. **Reb Yonoson Eibshitz *zt'l*** said that he is confident that a dying person is prepared to give up all his wealth if that will grant him even just one more day of life. That's how precious time is!

One of the Karliner tzaddikim said that if Heaven would allow a dead person to stand up and daven one tefillah in this world, he would certainly daven properly.



Moments before the **Vilna Gaon** was *niftar*, he cried into his *talis kattan*. He said, "In the merit of *tzitzis*, a mitzvah that costs just a few pennies, one merits to greet the *Shechinah*. When I leave this world, I won't have this mitzvah anymore."

Now that we are alive, and we are able to daven, wear tzitzis, perform the mitzvos, how happy we should be!

We must recognize the great privilege of time that is in our hands, and to use it well.

"Acts of kindness are greater than charity (Tzedakah) in three ways: Charity is done with money; kindness with one's person and money. Charity is for the poor; kindness for both the poor and the rich. Charity is for the living; kindness for both the living and the dead." ~ The Talmud (Sukkah 49b).

Living Jewish - When You Least Expect

The tzaddik, **Reb Meir of Premishlan**, once related: "One wintry day, while traveling with my Rebbe, **Reb Mordechai of Kreminitz**, our wagon reached an incline. It seemed the carriage would topple over at any moment. "Full of youthful courage, I prepared to quickly jump out, but my Rebbe held onto me with his hand and said, 'Sit down calmly; no harm will befall you.' So it was.



The wagon passed the incline safely. "After some time had elapsed, and I had already forgotten about my desire to jump out, the carriage, driving on flat land, turned over, and we all fell out unto the snow. "Reb Mordechai laughed: 'Nu, you see?' But I did not understand to what he was referring to. "Quite a while later, I realized he had been intimating a lesson in the service of Hashem: "Sometimes a Jew is worried that he will, G-d forbid, fall into the clutches of the yetzer hara, who is constantly out to ensnare him, and Hashem helps him stay safe. "However, when a Jew is confidently going along his path, and does not even realize that the yetzer hara is ready to pounce, specifically then he is likely to fall into his clutches…"

"A person's character is truly judged by how they interact with their spouse, regardless of their public contributions to the community." ~ Rabbi Benzion Shafier.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld-*Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

This week's parsha discusses in detail all the different Yomim Tovim that we have throughout the year. However, there is a Pasuk that **appears** to be in the wrong place. The Pasuk is in perek **כג:ב** .

וּבְקֻצְרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אַרְצְכֶם לֹא־תְכַלֶּה פְּאַת שָׂדְךָ בְּקֻצְרֶךָ וְלֶקֶט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תְלַקֵּט לֶעָנִי וְלַגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם ***When you reap the harvest of your Land, you shall not completely remove the corner of your field during your harvesting, and you shall not gather up the gleanings of your harvest. [Rather,] you shall leave these for the poor person and for the stranger.***



The Torah is telling us, that when you harvest your field, don't forget to leave over a corner of it for the poor people.

The Torah interestingly enough, places this Pasuk in between two subject matters - the discussion of the YomTov of Shavuous, and the YomTov of Rosh Hashana.

Asks Rashi, why on earth does the Torah remind us right now, to give to the poor people what they need, right in the middle of the subject of the Yomim Tovim?

I think that we can answer, as many of the *meforshim*, the ***Seforno, the Radak, the Avudraham*** explain that Shavuous is the culmination of the *sefiras haomer* period that we are in right now. What is sefiras haomer? Not only the anticipation of kabolas haTorah, but it was actually celebrating the success of the entire year's produce. This was dependent on the weather during these weeks. The days of the Omer, are not just days that we count towards Shavuous, but

they are days of tefilla – days that we constantly remind ourselves that we have to daven for success in our own parnossoh.

That is possibly why the Torah says that right after Shavuous, you should be careful. Make sure that you remember to give to the poor people what is due to them.

There is a tremendous lesson to be learnt here from what the Torah is telling us. So many of us, are worried and nervous about what is going to be with parnossoh? What is going to happen with all that we are going through? (Covid) Will my business recover? Will the job opportunities still be there? Who knows what is going to happen?

The Torah is telling us that the solution is to look after somebody else. Before you see to your own needs, ensure that everybody else has their needs taken care of.

This is what Hashem is teaching us. Be generous and demonstrate that we care for His children. As Rashi tells us in parshas ראה *"If you take care of my children, then I will take care of yours".*





There were two brothers that had a business selling I-pads/tablets. They had thousands in stock. There main income was to rent them out to businesses that required them for conferences etc. All of a sudden, Covid 19 came, and nobody required them, as most businesses were closed, and they were stuck with a warehouse full of them.

And then came "Zoom". The biggest "*beis hamedrash*" in the world. All of a sudden, all the schools were scrambling for supplies of I-

pads. They contacted this Jewish company and incredibly, they had enough for everyone.

How did that happen? Because at the very time that their business was basically shut down, they phoned all their tzedakah recipients that they regularly gave to, and told them that they will continue to donate, not only the same amounts as normal, but double the amounts!

Incredible! Hashem says, "You looked after my children, I will look after you". The Torah is telling exactly the same. Before seeing to your own needs, make sure that the Riboino Shel Olam's children are also looked after. ***Have a wonderful Shabbos!***

Zera Shimshon

שׁוֹר אוֹ־כֶשֶׂב אוֹ־עֵז כִּי יִוָּלֵד וְהָיָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תַּחַת אִמּוֹ וּמִיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי וָהָלְאָה יֵרָצֶה לְקָרְבַּן אִשֶּׁה לַה׳ When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain under its mother for seven days, and from the eighth day onwards, it shall be accepted as a sacrifice for a fire offering to Hashem.



The Medrash was troubled by why is it written "if an OX ... is born and not "if a CALF .... is born? A fully grown ox is called an ox but a baby ox is called a calf (aigel)! Therefore OXEN are not born, only CALFS are born!

The Medrash answers that Hashem didn't want to mention the word calf because it will be a reminder of the sin of the Golden CALF. In other words, the sin of the Golden Calf still torments us a long time after it took place.

Zera Shimshon quotes a second Medrash that seems to contradict this one. The Medrash says. "Why did Hashem pick the ox to be the preferred korbon over all of the other animals? R. Levi answers..... The nations of the world mocked Yisroel because of what happened with the Golden Calf. Hashem therefore chose the ox as the preferred korbon to declare that He studied that incident and concluded that there was nothing really substantially wrong in what they did. From here, writes Zera Shimshon, it seems that the sin of the Golden Calf wasn't really so terrible! How can we reconcile these two medrashim?

He answers in light of a Medrash that implies that Bnei Yisroel wanted Aharon to make for them a golden OX and not a golden CALF. **The Sha"ch** on the Torah explains that the reason that Aharon not fulfil their request was in order to ridicule Benai Yisroel. They wanted him to build for them an image of a strong mature ox which would represent a powerful leader and a god. Aharon, however, build a baby cow to show them that their image is really weak and useless.

In other words, even though that from the outside it looked as if Bnei Yisroel had an idol that they wanted, the truth is that they never really got what they ordered. On the contrary, they were actually embarrassed with what they received!

We can now reconcile the two medrashim. On the one hand, Hashem didn't want to mention "if a CALF" because this is a remembrance of our sin. However an ox is the preferred korbon because this symbolizes that Aharon didn't do what Bnei Yisroel wanted and therefore it is not considered like they built it! And even more than this, the Gemorro says that Hashem forgives a person who is ashamed of what he did. Therefore since their request to build a golden ox caused them embarrassment and forgiveness it is certainly appropriate to be the preferred korbon!

HaRav Shimshon Nachmani – The "Zera Shimshon's" promise for people who learn his sefarim **"... *And your eyes will see***

children and grandchildren like the offshoots of an olive tree around your tables, wise and understanding with houses filled with all manner of good things... and wealth and honour..."

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein - Two Acceptances, One Marriage

As I am accustomed, every year before going up to Meron on Lag Ba'Omer, I visit my Rebbe, R' Gamliel Rabinowitz. Two years ago, he said to me, "Accept something upon yourself, and whatever you need, Hashem will answer you."



With me that year was my youngest daughter, Hindi. "If you'd like to become a kallah," R' Gamliel added, "go up to Meron with your father, accept something upon yourself, write it down, and keep to it very closely. You will see, that next year on Lag Ba'Omer, you will know your chassan."

What surprised her and my entire family was that R' Gamliel said that on the very day of Lag Ba'Omer, she will know her who she will marry. And that is exactly what happened. One year later, on Lag Ba'omer, she got engaged.

But Hindi never told her chassan anything about what had transpired with R' Gamliel and her personal kabbalah.

Until the night of her engagement, she mentioned to her chassan what had happened. "So what did you accept upon yourself?" he asked. Although she had told no one else, she confided in him. "I accepted that five minutes before Shabbos I would be ready." Her

chassan was speechless. "What? What did you say?" he asked, fumbling his words. "I accepted upon myself that five minutes before Shabbos I would be ready."

"You are not going to believe this," he said. "Last year, I also went to R' Gamliel, and he told me, 'If you want to know who your kallah is on next year's Lag Ba'omer, accept something upon yourself.' After I was told this, I wrote down on a piece of paper that from now on, I will make sure that I am ready five minutes before Shabbos."

They had both accepted to do the same thing without knowing about each other. Lag Ba'omer is an especially auspicious day to take something new on and commit to it. And it really works.

A $833,000 Kiddush Hashem - Jack E. Rahmey



There's an amazing story told in Rabbi David Ashear's Daily Emunah about a businessman who made a tremendous kidush Hashem. Steve received an order about four years ago from a customer in Algeria for 10,000 pieces of Samsonite luggage.

As a rule, Steve didn't ship the goods until he received the full payment. A check arrived for $833,000. Steve deposited it and then called his customer from Algeria to arrange the shipment.

The customer did not answer his phone. Steve continued trying by phone and email, but there was no response. Finally, almost two weeks later, Steve received a phone call from the owner of a large chain store saying he was waiting to receive that luggage from

Steve's customer in Algeria, but unfortunately, the man passed away suddenly.

The owner asked if he could buy the luggage straight from him for the same price he was going to pay the man in Algeria which was $900,000. Steve said, "*No problem*."

Now Steve had this extra $833,000 in his bank account that no one would probably ever find out about. He did not want to keep it, so he consulted with his rabbi, who quoted the Shulchan Aruch and said, "*This is a great opportunity to make Kiddush Hashem*."

Steve called the wife of his customer in Algeria and told her that he had some money that belonged to her husband that he wanted to return. She thanked Steve for the news and, strangely, she then asked if they could continue their conversation on Skype, because even though Steve called, she was being charged for the call.

So he gladly Skyped her and now she would also see that he's a Jew. She saw him wearing a Kipah and she said, "*Oh, I see that you're Jewish*." He replied, "*Yes, and I'm very happy to return this money to you.*" When she heard it was $833,000, she couldn't believe her ears. She thanked Steve profusely, and he then mailed her the check.

About a week and a half later, a stretch limousine pulled up in front of Steve's office. A man came in and practically bowed down on the floor, kissing Steve's feet.

He asked, "*What's this all about?*"

The man explained that he was from Dubai, and he's the first cousin of the lady who received that money. The man couldn't believe that Steve returned all that money. He said, "*You're an angel*." And he said, "*I'm a very wealthy businessman and I have a lot of wealthy friends in Dubai. Because of your honesty, I want to open up a whole new world of business for you in Dubai*."

So over the last three to four years, Steve has been making many multi-million-dollar sales to these people in Dubai that he never met before. He has earned far more than the $833,000 that he returned.

Recently, he received an order from one of those customers for 11 million dollars. Steve received the check, cashed it and called the customer to discuss the shipping arrangements.

However, this time Steve asked him a question. He said, "*I hope you don't mind me asking; I'm just curious to know. You have never seen me before and I live on the other side of the world. How can you just send me a check for $11 million trusting that I'll send you the goods? I could just take the money and run.*" The man on the other line said, "*If you didn't take the money from a dead man, you're not going to take the money from a live man.*"

Dozens of businessmen in Dubai sing the praises of the Jews because of Steve's honesty. This is a real Kiddush Hashem and Steve has gained both in this world and the Next. As the pasuk says: **וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם** - "*I shall be sanctified among B'nei Yisrael; I am Hashem who Sanctifies you!" 22:32*

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



"Hisbodedus – self solitude, is good for the soul. But the primary form of hisbodedus is actually when one is among people.- After all, when one is silent while alone, what restraint has he exercised?" ~ Harav Yitzchak of Vorka.

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון... בסכת תשבו שבעת ימים ***You shall take for yourselves on the first day… you shall dwell in Sukkos seven days*** (23:40-42)

Since the Torah mentions the Mitzvah of the four species before the Mitzvah of *Sukkah*, why does the *Mishnah* in *Masechta Sukkah* begin with teaching about *Sukkah* first, and does not reach the four species until the third chapter?

The *Netziv* explains that even though the building of the *Sukkah* must begin days before *Sukkos* and is only a preparation for the Mitzvah, some consider it a Mitzvah unto itself and actually recite a blessing over the building of the *Sukkah*. Therefore, since the Mitzvah of taking the *Lulav* is on the holiday itself and the building of the *Sukkah* is before the holiday, the *Mishnah* teaches the laws of *Sukkah* first. Additionally, one needs the *Sukkah* at night while the *Lulav* is not taken until the next morning. (***Rebbe Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, ztvk"l****, as brought in Mesukim MiDvash*)

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface R' Shmuel Winzelberg

Parashas Emor combines emotions from opposite ends of the spectrum: *Aveilus* – mourning, and *Simchah* – rejoicing. The *parshah* begins with a warning to the *Kohanim* not to become *tamei* by coming in contact with the dead, except for the seven specific close relatives mentioned in the Torah. The *parshah* ends with the rejoicing and happiness of the *chagim* and *moadim* – festivals and holidays of the year. These are days of peace and happiness for man.

What is the connection between the beginning of the *parshah* and the end of the *parshah*? This teaches us a *mussar haskeil* – a valuable

life lesson. Even though a person may be buried in sorrow and mourning, and living through days of sadness and grief, one must never sink so low as to despair that there is no hope and there is no salvation. Rather one must strengthen himself and realize that this is part of life and one must look forward with anticipation to the upcoming *yomim tovim* – holidays which are days of festival and *simchah. (Parperaos LaTorah, Introduction to the Parshah)*



Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface *R' Shmuel Winzelberg*

והוא אשה בבתוליה יקח (כא:יג) ***'And he (the Kohein Gadol) shall take a maiden for a wife.'*** (21:13)

The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (**פרק ה משנה כ"א**) states: **בן שמונה עשרה לחופה** - 18 is the appropriate age for marriage. Where is this hinted at in the Torah?

1. *Rashi* and *Tosfos Yom Tov* on that *Mishnah* point out that the word **אדם** appears 17 times from the beginning of the Torah until the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 2:23): **לזאת יקרא אשה כי מאיש לוקחה זאת** ***'This shall be called Woman, for from man was she taken.'*** The intent is that after 17 years and a man has reached his eighteenth year—that is the time for him to get married.

2. **The *Ba'al HaTurim*** on this *pasuk* says that the *gematria* (numerical value) of the word **והוא** is 18. Thus at age 18, **אשה בבתוליה יקח** —one should take a wife for himself.

3. **The *Chida*** in his *sefer Nachal Kadumim*, hints from our *pasuk* that the last letters of the words **אשה בבתוליה יקח** have a *gematria* of 18 (ה, ה, ח =18; 5+5+8). Thus, at 18 years of age a man is ready to get married. (*Chaim shel Torah*)



ישועת ה' כהרף עין

There was a widow from Elad who was suffering tremendously trying to raise her children with no real source of income. One day she travelled to the home of **Chacham Ovadia Yosef, zatzal**, and asked his gabai if a broken spirited widow could please come and talk to the Rav for a moment.

When she entered, she broke down crying, speaking of her difficulties. And then she said, "I didn't come for a beracha, but rather for financial help. Maybe the Rav could speak to someone on my behalf," she said.

Chacham Ovadia told her he was personally going to help her. He told her to come back every single month to pick up an envelope, but she shouldn't tell anybody about it, he wanted to do this great mitzvah as discreetly as possible. This went on for the next seven years until Chacham Ovadia passed away. At that time, it was tragic for the entire Klal Yisrael and it was especially hard for this widow who was living off the money the rabbi was giving her.

Five months later, she was in desperate need of the basic necessities for her children. She travelled by bus to Yerushalayim to pray by the kever of Chacham Ovadia. When she arrived, once again she broke down in tears. She stayed there for over three hours finishing the entire Tehillim. Then she took a bus back to Elad and returned completely drained and exhausted.

She fell asleep on the couch and saw Chacham Ovadia in her dream. He was telling her to stop crying. He said, "Don't worry, I'm going to continue helping you now like I did when I was alive. On Thursday, there's going to be a brit milah at the hall Beit Yisrael in Yerushalayim at 1:00 in the afternoon. There's going to be a man there named Shalom Saadon. Go to him and tell him Rav Ovadia sent you and he will help."

She followed the instructions. She travelled to that location on Thursday and, indeed, there was a brit milah scheduled for 1:00. From the ladies' section, she called to someone asking if there was a Shalom Saadon present.

This man, Shalom Saadon, in his younger years used to help Chacham Ovadia spread his Torah through the radio. Chacham Ovadia blessed him to have great wealth, for all his efforts in zikui harabim, and he indeed became very wealthy. Shalom Saadon was there, and he was asked if he could go speak to that widow.

She told him, "You're not going to believe me but I assure you, everything I'm telling you is the truth." She told him about how Chacham Ovadia used to help her and then how she went to his kever and prayed and then how he appeared to her in a dream with these instructions.

When Shalom heard this, he nearly fainted. He said he himself does not know any of the people at this brit milah. Chacham Ovadia came to him in a dream and told him he should come here and there would be a widow asking for his help. Shalom Saadon asked the widow how much Chacham Ovadia was giving her per month. She said 4000 shekel. Shalom told her, "From now on I'm going to give you 4000 shekel as if it was coming from Chacham Ovadia in his merit. And then I'm going to give you an additional 4000 coming from myself."

Hashem has infinite ways of helping us. We must always feel that our salvation can come in the blink of an eye and that Hashem could give it to us the greatest way possible.

In the beracha of **ראה נא בעניינו** in the Amida, we ask Hashem to redeem us from our personal problems and struggles. We don't just ask Him to help us get by, we ask for a **גאולה שלמה** , a complete redemption because we know Hashem could help us in the best way possible. And then we declare our belief in Hashem's abilities by saying **כי קל גואל חזק אתה.**

The recipe for salvation is to ask from the depths of our heart, with a true belief that Hashem could help us. As we have seen countless times, Hashem helps people in ways they could have never dreamed of.

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"ולקחת סלת ואפית אתה שתים עשרה חלות" *"And you shall take fine flour and bake it into twelve loaves."* (24:5)

QUESTION: Why do some people place twelve *challot* on the *Shabbat* table, while others place only two?



ANSWER: On the table in the *Beit Hamikdash*, the "*lechem hapanim*" consisted of twelve *challot*, six on each side of the table. The *challot* would stay on the table the entire week, and every *Shabbat* the old *challot* would be removed and replaced with fresh ones. To commemorate this, some people place twelve *challot* on the *Shabbat* table.

Others place two *challot* lengthwise before them, so that they look like two "*vavim*" ("ו"), each with the numerical value of six, for a total of twelve. Based on the above, round *challot* are used on *Yom Tov*, while oblong *challot* are used on *Shabbat*. (עיטורי תורה)

"A wife desires to be seen for who she is, not just for what she does." ~ Rabbi Sholom Landau.

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

The *minhag* is that the Shabbos candles are lit by the woman of the house. One reason for this is because she is home more and takes care of the house. Therefore this *mitzvah* was given especially to her (*Orach Chaim* 263:3 and *Mishnah Brurah* 263:11).

The *Zohar* (*Bereishis* 48b) teaches that the woman's mitzvah of lighting candles is a great *zechus* for her to merit having children that are *kedoshim*, holy, who will light up the world with Torah and *yir'as Hashem*. These precious children will also add more peace in the world. With this mitzvah, the *Zohar* adds, she also brings long life to her husband.



Waiting To See "The Children."

The Kotzker Rebbe *zt'l* said that he is still waiting to see "the children." He explained that parents don't learn Torah because they are busy working so their children should be able to study Torah. Those children also don't study Torah because they are busy working so their children should be able to study Torah.

He is still waiting to see those children who everyone is working for. Instead, it would be much better if everyone would designate times for Torah study, so each person can grow in Torah to the best of his abilities.

Sefiras Ha'omer

The Orah v'Simchah writes, "Hashem gave us the mitzvah of *sefiras ha'omer* to purify us from *tumah*. What is significant about this mitzvah that it has the *segulah* to purify us?

"We can explain, *bederech tzachus*: If a person has many sins when he performs a mitzvah, the mitzvah doesn't protect him because the mitzvah becomes *batel* (annulled) by his many sins. However, the mitzvah of counting the *omer* is **דבר שבמנין** , something that is counted, and the halachah is **דבר שבמנין אינו בטל** , something that is counted cannot be annulled. Since this mitzvah isn't annulled, it has the ability to purify us from our *tumah*."

Erev Shabbos – Rabbi Yehoshua Alt



R' Pam once remarked that what he missed from Europe was the Erev Shabbos. "Chatzos came and people stopped their activities, focusing entirely on the holy Shabbos. People would come to shul early and say Shir Hashirim, learn a sefer on the parsha and so on. You felt Shabbos entering."

R' Yaakov Kamenetzky expressed it in this way: "At the beginning of the 1900s, there was Chillul Shabbos in America. Over the years we recaptured the Shabbos. However, we have yet to reclaim the Erev Shabbos."

The holy Amoraim would prepare for Shabbos in their way. To name just a couple: Rava would salt fish for Shabbos whereas R' Huna

would light lamps (Shabbos 119a, See the Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 30:6). This shows happiness and anticipation for Shabbos.

We know that there is a distinct Yetzer Hara for arguing and getting angry on Erev Shabbos. To counter this, we need to be ready early.

Erev Shabbos should be peaceful and not rushed. Then we can receive Shabbos amid abundant gladness.

On Shabbos we should feel as if all our work is done and that our worries are gone. We should have a sense of tranquillity on our faces. This is how we should welcome Shabbos .

We need to be ready with time to greet Shabbos. We should live up to the words **לקראת שבת לכו ונלכה**, let us go welcome Shabbos (Lecha Dodi).

The Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 30:2) writes …one should wrap himself in tzitzis and sit with proper respect, waiting to receive Shabbos as one goes out to greet a king.

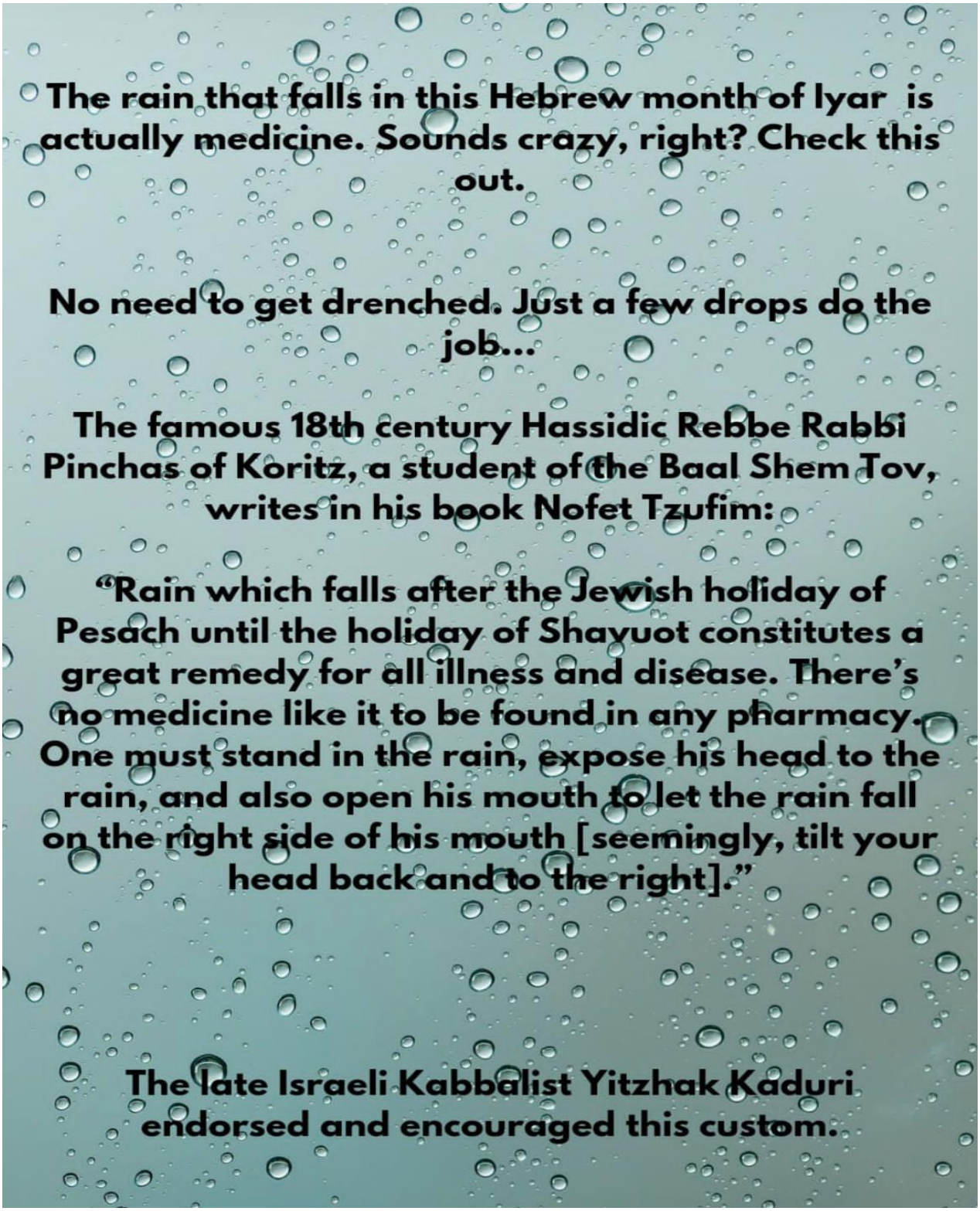
R' Chanina would wrap himself in finery and stand towards evening on Friday and say **בואו ונצא לקראת שבת המלכה**, come, let us go out to greet Shabbos the queen.

R' Yanai would put on his Shabbos clothes on Friday and say **בואי כלה בואי כלה** (Shabbos 119a).

One can already feel Shabbos on Erev Shabbos. Indeed, **ערב שבת** means mixture , since Erev Shabbos has the kedusha of Shabbos mixed into it and one can already feel it on Erev Shabbos (See Sichos Hischazkus, Chanuka, 5758, 1).

The Meor Einayim would actually feel Shabbos through his Shabbos preparations such as the Mikva and the like.

Once, on Erev Shabbos after his preparations, he still felt some Kedusha lacking. He then realized he was wearing his weekday socks!



"The commandment to honour parents is a debt of gratitude (Hakaras HaTov). One must realize that they brought you into this world and laboured for you; therefore, you owe them your very being." ~ The Ramban.

Bend and Grow By R' Meir Simcha Sperling



There was a toddler and his older brother that walked into a store with their mother. The toddler was screaming that he really wanted one of the "glow sticks". The mother said, 'not now.' He was screaming so much that his mother said he can only hold it, and we will see when we get to the checkout.

The older brother saw that his younger brother had taken one and was shaking it. So, he grabbed it out of his hand, and the toddler started screaming, "Give it back to me."

The mother was about to rebuke the older son, when he took hold of it and cracked it in half. His brother was by now, creating a scene, bawling his head off.

The mother said, "What are you doing?"

The older son said, "Wait, don't get upset with me, let me explain."

The way a "glow stick" works is that if you want to see the real light, and awesomeness, you have to crack it first. Otherwise it doesn't glow if you just hold it.

Sometimes in life, we go through situations that are so bitter and painful. And sometimes Hashem cracks and bends us in order to bring out our light and realise our potential.

Sometimes the sweetest things come out later. Rest assured that Hakadosh Boruch Hu loves you and wants the best for you. Sometimes through the most bitter things that you go through,

whatever difficulties or tragedies you are struggling with, they will come out the sweetest. This will bring you to the next level.

Sometimes you have to bend to grow to the next level.



After Lag b'Omer, **Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l** would bless his chassidim, **האסט געפועלט אלעס גוט**, that their tefillos on this day should be answered.



The Sifsei Tzaddik explains that Reb Shimon redeems us from judgement and from punishment, which means on Lag b'Omer we have atonement similar to Yom Kippur.

Generally, aveiros prevent our tefillos from going up to heaven, but on Lag b'Omer, when our aveiros are removed, our tefillos can go up to heaven.

The Chidushei HaRim *zy'a* says that every year, on Lag b'Omer, Reb Shimon bar Yochai repeats his famous statement, ***"I can free the entire world from punishment!"***

On Lag b'Omer, Hashem sees our good, ignores our bad, and loves us immensely, which is why our joy is great on this day.

The Beis Yosef writes that we celebrate Lag b'Omer because Reb Akiva's students stopped dying on that day. **The Pri Chadash** argues that this isn't a cause for celebration. The students stopped dying because there weren't any students left! Rather, the Pri Chadash explains, we are celebrating the continuity of Torah.

After the tragic passing of his students, Reb Akiva took his five remaining students: Reb Meir, Reb Yehudah, Reb Yossi, Reb Shimon, and Reb Elazer ben Shamoa and taught them Torah and made them the future leaders of Klal Yisrael. Their names are found in most Mishnayos, their lessons are discussed in the Gemara, and this is how the Torah was perpetuated to this day.

On Lag b'Omer we celebrate the continuity of Torah; it happened because Reb Akiva didn't lose hope. He lost most of his students, and many in his position would give up and allow themselves to wallow in self-pity. So much was lost but Reb Akiva forged ahead and did what he could, and that's what brought about the continuation of Torah.

If we follow in his footsteps and keep trying, despite all hardships, we will also accomplish great things in our lives.

A hint is that **שמעון בר יוחאי** is gematriya (Yeshaya 6:10) , **יבין ושב ורפא לו** –"He will understand, do teshuvah, and be healed."

The Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l said, "Lag b'Omer is the greatest day of the year."

Reb Moshe Rozvedover would say that there isn't a better day in the year than Lag b'Omer, and if he could, he would hold onto the sun with his teeth and he wouldn't let the sun set, so he wouldn't have to leave Lag b'Omer.

Tefillos

Lag b'Omer is a day of salvation, and therefore, fortunate are those who invest in tefillah on this day. Here are a few recommendations of what one should daven for on this holy day:

1] Good children.

The Gemara (Makos 17:) states that a mother should daven that her children be like Reb Shimon bar Yochai. The Minchas Elazar (Shaar Yissaschar) says that the Gemara refers to someone who is davening on Lag b'Omer.



On this day, anything is possible. On this day, one can ask for the greatest things – even that one's child be like Reb Shimon bar Yochai.

2] Parnassah.

According to one Midrash, the mon began to fall on Lag b'Omer. Thus, Lag b'Omer is an ideal day to daven for parnassah.

The Chasam Sofer (Yorah Deiah 233) makes the following calculation:

Chazal tell us that when the Yidden left Mitzrayim, they ate matzos for thirty days. They finished their matzos on Pesach Sheini. The Midrash adds that they didn't have food to eat for three days, and then the mon fell. According to this calculation, the mon first came down on Lag b'Omer.

Taamei HaMinhagim writes, יושפע שפע רב בכל העולמות - "A great bounty [of parnassah, etc.] should come to all worlds" is roshei teivos, **רשב"י.**

3] Refuah.

שמעון בר יוחאי is gematriya **ורפאתיו** . This is a hint that Lag b'Omer is mesugal for refuah.

The Tzemech Tzedek taught that **מרון** is roshei teivos **מלך רופא נאמן ורחמן**, the King Who heals.

4] Children

The Shem Shlomo of Munkatch zt'l taught that to bear children one should have kavanah during the brachah of **רפאנו** because being able to bear children is a medical issue. Lag b'Omer is **הוד שבהוד** , a day mesugal for refuah, so Lag b'Omer is mesugal for bearing children.

5] Shidduchim

The Avnei Nezer zt'l told his chassidim that Lag b'Omer is mesugal for shidduchim, because about Reb Shimon it states, **הציל הלחוצים**, "He saves those who are stressed and worried," and who is more stressed and worried than someone waiting for their shidduch?

6] Ruchniyos

We should also daven for success in ruchniyus.

The Sfas Emes (Emor 5652) writes, "I heard from my grandfather [**the Chidushei HaRim zt'l**] that on Lag b'Omer one can attain yiras Shamayim." We can pray for success in avodas Hashem, and our tefillos will be answered.

Shabbos Treasures The Precious Gift of Shabbos

The mitzvah of lighting the Shabbos candles is extremely precious. *Rabbeinu Bachya* in *Parashas Yisro* teaches us that when the Shabbos candles are lit with *simchah*, genuine happiness, it has the power to have all of one's *tefilos* answered by Hashem!

It also gives one the merit to have children that shine with the light of Torah. (*Otzar HaShabbos*, *Hachnasas Shabbos*, p.141)

The Way of Emunah – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

While Eating, One Can Bring About Salvations:



At the seudah on the night of Rosh Hoshanah, we recite: יְהִי רָצוֹן, שֶׁיִּרְבּוּ זְכִיּוֹתֵינוּ -May it be Your will…that our merits increase.

There are those who question the importance of a tzadik's tish. But they can't argue with a clear Shulchan Aruch. The Shulchan Aruch clearly says that the best time to daven for a good year is specifically during a seudah.

At that time, we ask Hashem to grant us "a good and sweet new year" and make many other requests from Him. This is because serving Hashem through eating and drinking is on an even higher level than serving Him through tefillah. Serving him through tefillah is considered like doing teshuva out of fear, while serving Him through eating and drinking is like teshuva done out of love, which is on a higher level. And through this, we merit to increase our merits.

"The root of the Hebrew word for love (Ahavah) is Hav, which means 'to give.' - In other words, giving leads to love". He further taught that when we give to another person, they become an extension of ourselves, making the command to "love your neighbour as yourself" a tangible reality. ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler

Emunoh In Our Chachomim



י"ז אייר marks the *Yohrzeit* of **Rav Yechezkel Landau זצ"ל**, the **נודע ביהודה**, one of the **גדולי הדור** and famous **פוסקים** of his day. Born in 1713 to R' Yehuda and Chaya Landau in Apta, Poland, he learned with his father who was the **פרנס** of the town before going to learn in Brody after his **בר מצוה**. At the age of 18 he married Rebbetzen Liba from Dobnah. At the young age of 20 he was appointed one of the **דיינים** in Brody and 10 years later he became **רב** in Yampol.

When he turned 42, he was appointed **רב** in Prague, the largest Jewish **קהילה** in the world at the time. The **מנהג** was that when a **רב** came for his interview, they would put out many different foods on the table to see if the **רב** knew **הלכות ברכות** and could place the foods in their correct order.

Rav Yechezkel, due to his nervousness, picked out a fruit and proceeded to make a **ברכה**. The **ראש הקהל** said, "There is **מזונות** here, why didn't you make that **ברכה** first?!" - Rav Yechezkel responded, "I don't eat cake". Because of that statement, he never ate cake again!

He came to Prague just after the *Yidden* had returned after expulsion, and established close connections with the Habsburg Empire which controlled Prague at the time, and interceded with the Government to thwart decrees from the infamous anti-Semitic Empress Maria Theresa.

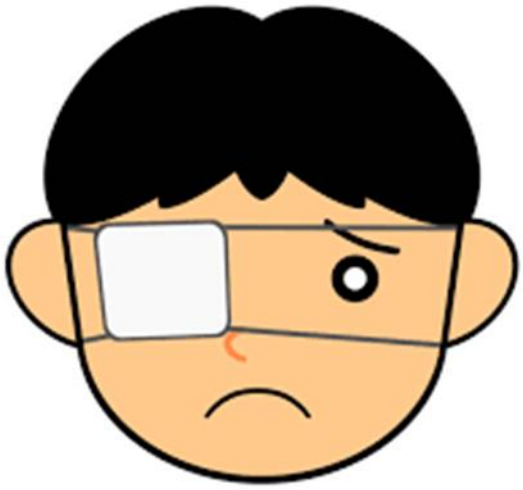
During his time in Prague, the **השכלה** were trying to make changes to traditional *Yiddishkeit* and the **נודע ביהודה** fought tooth and nail

against them, successfully upholding the **מסורה**, until the unfortunate demise of *frum* life in Prague not long after his death. He also fought valiantly against the proliferation of **קבלה** amongst the masses, due to the damage that had been caused from misuse of **קבלה** from **שבתי צבי** and his followers.

His named his famous **ספר** on **הלכה, נודע ביהודה** after his father and his **פירוש** on *Gemara*, **צל"ח** after his mother. He also wrote the **דגול מרבבה** , a **פירוש** on **שולחן ערוך**.

All his **ספרים** are learned and widely used to this day across the **תורה** world. He was **נפטר** in 1793 and is buried in Prague. **יהי זכרו ברוך.**

Parsha Potpourri by R' Ozer Alport - Eye For an Eye



Even though the Torah seems to require (Leviticus 24:20) "an eye for an eye" - that somebody who harms another person shall be punished by having that same wound inflicted on him - the Talmud (Bava Kamma 84a) teaches that this is not meant literally. Rather, the damager must financially compensate his victim for the harm that he caused him. Why did the Torah write this law in a manner which could be misunderstood if this isn't its true meaning?

The Chazon Ish (Kovetz Igros 3:102) explains that one of the purposes of the Torah is to teach us proper character traits, and by studying its laws and mitzvot, a person can acquire accurate values and outlooks. The greater the punishment prescribed by the Torah for a sin, the more a person should be repulsed by it and distance himself from it. Therefore, even though the actual punishment for physically harming another person is financial in nature, the Torah expressed it in stronger terms, implying that the damager will be

punished with the loss of whatever limb he injured, so that we should appreciate the severity of hurting another person and take the necessary precautions to avoid doing so.



The Radical Hassidic Rabbi We Need More Than Ever

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, the Kotzker Rebbe, was a 19th-century Hasidic Rabbi known for his sharp wit, radical teachings, and uncompromising approach to Judaism. Despite his influence on Jewish thought, the Kotzker Rebbe was a reclusive figure who spent the last 25 years of his life living alone in the forest, scaling the heights of spirituality.

Born into a distinctly non-Hasidic family in 1787, the young Menachem Mendel became attracted to the central tenets of Hasidic thought, namely that of emotional cleaving to G-d, serious spiritual introspection, and truth. As he evolved into a spiritual figure in his own right, the Kotzker was expelled from the town of Tomaszów, as his congregants were simply too uncomfortable with his rigorous expectations of the self. Finding solace in the nearby town of Kotzk, the Rebbe would live there for the remainder of his life, never leaving the area again.

Although his sons tried to carry the mantle of leadership after his death, the movement was strictly limited to the Rebbe's lifetime, as his demands for spiritual purity were too much for later generations to adhere to. For example, the Rebbe held that prayer done simply to fulfill one's religious obligation is nothing short of idolatry.

Prayer can only be performed when the individual subjects himself to total submission to the Divine will, something human beings typically fall short of. His expectations exceeded the religious sphere and permeated daily routines. He criticized man's constant desire to accommodate the judgments of others, famously explaining: "If I am I because I am I, and you are you because you

are you, then I am I and you are you. But if I am I because you are you and you are you because I am I, then I am not I and you are not you!"

Tellingly, the world of Kotzk is seldom studied or understood, owing somewhat to its limited acceptance in the broader Jewish community and its scrupulous standards.

The Kotzker Rebbe was known for his radical teachings which challenged conventional wisdom. He believed that the pursuit of truth was the highest goal of Judaism, which required a willingness to question and challenge established norms and beliefs.

At a time when charismatic Rabbinic leaders competed for spiritual followers, it was his disdain for such a practice that ultimately led to his isolation. Ironically, the more he rejected his growing influence, the larger his following became.

He emphasized the importance of individual responsibility, believing each person had a unique role in the world and that it was up to the individual to fulfill his or her own potential and purpose. The Kotzker would routinely chastise individuals for making the trek to Kotzk to seek a blessing from him, which was customary for a Hasidic Rebbe to give to his adherents.

He viewed a personal blessing as too often being used as a quick spiritual fix to their woes. Instead of praying for his practitioners, he would encourage them to seek their own salvation through personal reflection and repentance and take ownership of one's own spiritual journey.

The Kotzker Rebbe had no tolerance for faux pas religious piety. He believed that true religious devotion could not be measured by outward displays of religious observance, but rather by a person's inner commitment to living a life of integrity and righteousness.

He had a deep concern for social equity and believed that Jews were responsible for actively working towards creating a more just

society built on the precepts of truth. He believed that the wealthy and powerful had a responsibility to use their resources to help those in need. Famously, he would cite the ideal practice of a leader: when faced with a cold snap, many opt to warm themselves in a fur coat. The true mark of the righteous is when they instead build a fire, thereby ensuring those who gather around will also be consoled.

Similarly, when his wife Glike Nay noticed their silverware had been stolen, the Kotzker was completely unperturbed. "Impossible," he exclaimed. "The Torah explicitly teaches us not to steal. It simply cannot be, therefore, that a Jew would." His genuine desire to live in a world strictly adhering to G-d's will often made him unwilling, and perhaps unable, to consider that others wouldn't.

After someone mentioned that the holiest time of the year is the last moment on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement before the Gates of Heaven close, the Kotzker banged his fist on the table: "No, no, and no!" he yelled. "The holiest time," he continued, "is today. The holiest person is you, and the holiest place is right here." Such teachings represent the essence of the Kotzker: unabashedly confident as to the spiritual heights any individual is capable of reaching.

The Kotzker Rebbe was deeply respected by his followers and has continued to influence Jewish thought to this day, albeit in more subliminal ways. He deliberately burnt all of his Torah novellas and writings in a fire, horrified that people in later generations would rely on his approach to Judaism rather than devise their own.

Undoubtedly, the Kotzker would probably be furious to learn that 164 years after his death, this article was being written. Nevertheless, his authentic and unique approach to man's relationship with the world at large and with the Creator of the world, as well as his immovable quest for authenticity makes him a surely needed figure today.

Circle Time - This date in Jewish history



On the 13th of Iyar, 5027 (1267), the church council of Vienna passed a law requiring all Jews to wear a particular hat. This was supposed to announce to all who the Jews were, so that people could keep separate from them. The requirement for distinctive clothing for Jews had started a few years earlier and continued in various forms in many countries all the way until the mid-1900s, when Nazi Germany forced all Jews to wear the yellow star.

The special hat used in Vienna was a silly contraption called the pileum cornutum. It was a pointed yellow hat that can be seen in drawings of Jews from that period. Other countries passed similar rules; the council in Breslov did so the same year.



According to some reports, Jews liked wearing the hat; it was like their yarmulke. Many countries continued to require the hat over time, but it changed in size and shape over the years and in different places until it possibly became the familiar fur-rimmed shtreimel worn by Jews in Eastern Europe. The chassidim adopted the shtreimel, originally made from fox tails, as a mark of pride.



The Siddur Speaks

Rav Yissochar Frand once related a story of an Israeli woman who had lost her only son in war, in a battle in Lebanon. She was inconsolable. She refused to go to any family Simchas, and she would only go to funerals. She was a widow who lost her only son. She would say, "What joy is there any more in life?"

One day she went to a family Levaya, and a woman accompanied her to the cemetery. Following the burial, they stopped at the grave site of **Rav Aryeh Levine, the Tzadik of Yerushalayim**, to say some Tehilim.

On Rav Aryeh Levine's Kever, she saw the following written on the stone: Anyone who comes to Daven at my grave should first say, 'I believe with complete faith in Techiyas HaMeisim, that a Resurrection of the Dead will happen, and it will occur when it is the Will of Hashem Yisbarach.'

The woman read those words and it touched her heart. Suddenly, it became a reality to her, and she proclaimed, "One day I will get my son back!"

From that moment on, she began to live her life again, because the hope that there will be Techiyas HaMeisim had consoled her!

This is a concept we mention each time we say Shemoneh Esrei, and many people have the Minhag to say this in the list of 'Ani Ma'aamins' every day when they Daven. May we merit to see this day very soon!

New York 1928





Who would ever imagine that a traditional Jewish Polish dish would save my life one day.

Let's fast forward to May 40th 1948.

I was flying one of Israel's first two fighter planes. My mission was to stop an armoured Iraqi convoy from reaching the coast and dividing Israel in two.

Just two weeks before, David Ben Gurion declared Israel's independence, leading to an invasion by five neighbouring armies. The city of Tel Aviv was being bombed by Egyptian airplanes, causing the tragic loss of many innocent lives.



During that time, Israel, under an arms embargo, secretly obtained and built a few fighter planes, flown by experienced Israeli and international volunteers like myself.

I gained my experience during World War II before helping my brothers in Israel. My plane was hit by enemy fire, and I had no choice but to bale out and leave it over the sea.

Injured from the rough landing, I swam to the beach, where I encountered a surprising challenge.

The Jewish farmers of the nearby Kefar Vitkin, who were unaware that Israel had fighter planes, mistook me for the enemy!



I didn't know a single word of Hebrew, so I had to think fast. In a desperate attempt to communicate with the farmers, who didn't speak English, I started shouting the only word I knew in Yiddish:-

"GE-FILL-TE FISH!

GE-FILL-TE FISH!"



The farmers, surprised by the so-called Egyptian pilot crying out for a Jewish dish, quickly realised their mistake, and I was saved.

I then continued to participate in important missions for Israel, fighting for the country's survival against all odds.

This true story honours Milton (Milt) Rubenfeld (1919 – 2004)

"A husband must take the initiative to please his wife... it is an obligation in every sense of the word". - He taught that a wife values "light banter" and feeling like a true partner in her husband's daily life more than formal propriety. ~ The Chazon Ish Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz.



Value Life and You Will Be Rewarded

שור או כשב או עז כי יולד והיה שבעה ימים תחת אמו... ושור או שה... אותו ואת בנו לא תשחטו ביום אחד... וכי תזבחו זבח תודה לד' לרצונכם תזבחו... ולא תחללו את שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל

An ox, lamb or goat, when it is born shall be with its mother for seven days… (22:27)

But an ox or a sheep… you may not slaughter and its offspring on the same day… (22:28)

When you slaughter a feast thanksgiving offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it to gain favour for yourselves. (22:29)

You shall not desecrate My Holy Name, rather I shall be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael. (22:32)

Four *pesukim* in sequence: the first three address *korbanos*, offerings; the fourth *pasuk* addresses *chillul* and *kiddush Hashem*, profaning and sanctifying Hashem's Name. Clearly, the Torah's arrangement of *pesukim* is not haphazard. Every *pasuk*, every letter, every crown, is in its specific place by Heavenly design.

What is the rationale behind the positioning of these four *pesukim*?

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl (*Rav* Schwab on *Chumash*), examines the common denominator in these *pesukim*. It is about life and living. First, the Torah teaches us that not just any animal, regardless of age, may be sacrificed. It must be, at minimum, eight days old.

Second, it is prohibited to sacrifice a cow and its offspring on the same day. Third, the Torah discusses the *Korban Todah*, thanksgiving offering, and the importance of gratitude. The Torah

leaves the sacrifices of animals and directs us toward the ultimate sacrifice: giving up one's life for Hashem.

We are admonished never to profane His Holy Name, but rather, sanctify it – in any manner possible. [One need not give up his life to sanctify His Name. Living a moral/spiritually correct life is *kiddush ha'chaim*, sanctifying life, which is also a *Kiddush Hashem*.]

Horav Schwab explains that the goal of Jewish life is to create a *kiddush Hashem*. The question which we must first answer is: What does life mean to us? How much do we really value life?

The Torah gives us three examples which emphasise the value of life itself. First is the law that prohibits slaughtering an animal until it is at least eight days old. This demonstrates the reverence the Torah has for life.

The popular notion is that a short life is an incomplete life. Every minute of life has the greatest infinite value. We have no idea of the value of a short life lived well, in contrast to a longer life which had many "gaps" of time not used to its fullest potential.

General Douglas McArthur was wont to say, "***Some people die at the age of thirty, but are not buried until they are seventy***."

Second, the prohibition against slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day underscores the revulsion associated with genocide and emphasises the supremacy of life.

Last, the *mitzvah* to bring a thanksgiving offering after one has survived a harrowing life-threatening experience demonstrates the importance of recognising and appreciating our greatest Heavenly gift: life.

Making the ultimate sacrifice has greatest significance when one's life has meaning and value. Someone who, due to circumstances beyond his control, is relegated to living a wretched life of poverty, serious illness and other *tzaros*, troubles, is unable to truly value life. One who nonetheless does, is a G-dly person who sees beyond

the ephemeral and recognises that living to serve Hashem, regardless of the circumstances, is in and of itself a privilege.

A person who lives in misery and feels miserable does not sacrifice as much with his life as one whose life is filled with positive joy and success. Thus, the Torah is teaching us the precious nature of life and how important it is to cherish every moment.

The Torah teaches us this so that, if by some Heavenly decree, he is called upon to pay the ultimate sacrifice, he will do just that, give up something that is of ultimate value to him.

A principle in *halachah, pikuach nefesh* (literally watching over one's soul), enjoins us to do everything possible to preserve Jewish life. This *halachah* overrides every other rule in Judaism.

When a person's life is in critical danger, most laws are not applicable. Human life is sacrosanct and takes precedence over other *mitzvos*. Thus, if someone endangers himself to save a Jewish life, or, even if it is not dangerous, but he gives of himself to save a fellow Jew, he is performing a special service to Hashem.

With the aforementioned in mind, the barometer for determining the level of reward for such an act of self-sacrifice is the individual's personal outlook on life and his appreciation of its value.

The following story, related by Rabbi Tzvi Nakar, demonstrates how far an individual was willing to go to save the life of a new-born infant and the incredible reward he received.

The story dates back to the early twentieth century when the Rh factor incompatibility was not yet understood scientifically. As a result, a child whose blood type was at variance with the mother's blood type (mother Rh negative; fetus is Rh positive) did not survive very long after birth. Sadly, while the medical field was searching for answers, infants who had this blood type succumbed shortly after birth.

A *Yerushalmi* couple fell victim to this condition, losing their child within hours of his birth. Everyone in the community *davened*. It was all they could do, hoping for a miracle to avert another tragedy.

It was an unusual case for a medical community that was, at best, breaking ground in the field of modern medicine. The doctors were stumped.

Word of the case reached a distinguished European professor who specialised in neonatal mortality. Deeply moved by the story, he contacted the parents and suggested that, given the mother's incompatible Rh factor, the fetus's blood should be immediately changed at birth by transfusing it with a compatible blood type.

The parents were overjoyed. They had hope! They had, however, a problem: the transfusion had to come from someone who had a specific blood type, and it should take place immediately at birth. This meant that the donor had to be at the birth in anticipation of any complications.

It was a challenging search. This was in the days before the computer and even before the phone. The parents placed advertisements in newspapers throughout the world-Jewish community, hoping for a positive response from someone who had the heart, time and wherewithal to undertake this life-saving endeavour.

It was a daunting challenge, but someone came through for them. A wealthy American Jew was willing to participate in saving a life – and, by extension, a family.

The months of pregnancy passed and, as the woman entered her ninth month, the donor from America made plans to leave home for *Eretz Yisrael*. He arrived in time and accompanied the family to the hospital where the mother gave birth to a beautiful, otherwise healthy baby. The doctor professor was on hand as blood was taken from the donor and transferred to the newborn.

The grateful parents had no words to express their overwhelming sense of gratitude to the man from America. He was honoured with being *sandek*, holding the baby on his lap, as the *bris* was performed.

The man played down his role in the lifesaving experience. "I only did what was right. How could I turn my back on the life of a child?" he remarked.

The family shared every milestone in young Moshe's (his given name) life. From his *upsherin* (cutting his hair for the first time at the age of three), his starting to learn *aleph bais*, then *siddur*, followed by *Chumash* and *Rashi*. They sent pictures of everything, including his starting to learn *Mishnayos*, then *Gemorah*.

Moshe was an exceptional student, brilliant and diligent. He was on the road to becoming a Torah leader. The donor attended Moshe's *bar mitzvah*, being treated by everyone as a surrogate father. He beamed with *nachas* and joy as his "son" rattled off his *pshetl*, speech, as if he were a *Rosh Yeshivah* addressing his students.

Moshe was accepted into one of *Eretz Yisrael's* most prestigious *yeshivos*, where, for the next eight years, he rose to the top of each class.

During this entire time, his parents would make a point to share their joy and offer their profound gratitude to the American philanthropist who had given more than money – he gave life.

It was now time for Moshe to establish his own home. His parents were *redt*, suggested, an outstanding girl who was the daughter of an American family who had the wherewithal to support a son-in-law for as long as he chose to learn. They were insisting, of course, on a young man who was exceptional and not only in his erudition – but also in his character traits and *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. They wanted a special young man for their special daughter.

By now, the reader has guessed the names of the players in this *shidduch*. Moshe's *Rosh Yeshivah* suggested a young woman from

America, whose father was well-known for his love of Torah and his performance of *chesed*. Money was no object.

Forty days before Moshe was born, Heaven decreed that he would marry the daughter of the man who was Hashem's *shliach*, agent, to save his life. Little did the man know that he had saved the life of the child who would one day become his son-in-law!

Appreciating Hashem Yisbarach! By Yisroel Besser

The Avnei Nezer, the Rebbe of Sochatchov, was travelling to a bris to serve as sandek. The chassidim were surprised, because the Rebbe's every moment was sacred, and he wouldn't generally travel elsewhere for a bris. They checked who the baalei simchah were, and were surprised to learn that the new parents were relatively simple, quiet people.

One of the older chassidim asked the Rebbe directly why he was joining this particular simchah, and the Avnei Nezer explained his reasoning.

The new father, a tailor from a nearby village, had come to ask the Rebbe to participate a few days earlier, sharing his story. "Rebbe," he said, "my wife and I have been married for fifteen years without children, but now the Ribbono Shel Olam helped us and my wife gave birth to our bechor. Would the Rebbe come serve as sandek at the bris?"

"Do you hear?" the Avnei Nezer asked. "Today, everyone who gets helped tells you where they got helped — this one in Ger, the other in Radzimin and the third in Alexander...but this Yid made a kiddush Hashem, telling me that the One Who helped him was Hashem Yisbarach! I haven't heard that in a while, and out of appreciation, I am joining his simchah."

Va'ani Tefillah

והבדילנו מן התועים ***And He separated us from those who stray.***



The ability to have clarity is a blessing. This is especially true in a world where so many people who think they see clearly are actually blind, and so many people who feel that they have clarity are mixed up and victims of misconception.

A king built a palace community, a home for himself and homes for his ministers. He used the latest state of the art materials. The structures were a marvel of steel and stone. The palace was fitted out with massive windows which allowed the king to look out at the entire city.

One day, a man whose vision was crossed – which caused him to see everything on a slant – walked by the edifices and screamed that they were all leaning to the side and would soon topple over.

Obviously, this man's problem was his vision. Nothing was structurally wrong with the buildings. Anyone whose vision was fine laughed at this man, understanding that his eyesight was failing.

Some people, however, with limited acumen and intelligence, believed this man and, as a result, began to escape from the community.

A wise man who saw what was happening made a loud declaration, "Quickly, call a doctor!"

The people who were escaping looked at him like he was mad: What can a doctor do for buildings that are about to fall over?

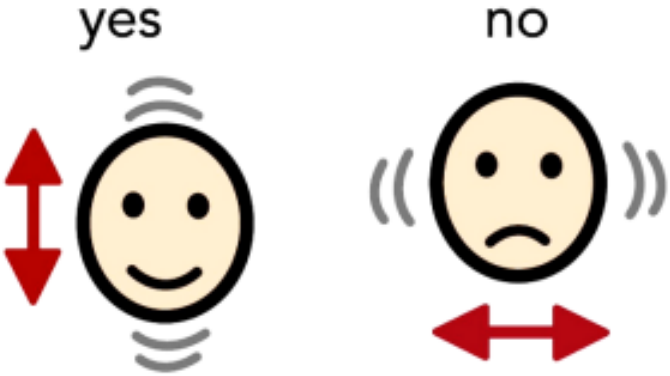
The man replied, "We do not need a doctor for the buildings, but rather, to cure that man whose vision is crossed, so that he can see clearly."

The *Chafetz Chaim* explains the lesson to be derived from here. Our Torah and our way of life are rock solid – and most of us know this. Some people, however, have deficient vision, causing them to have a distorted view. We cry out to them, "You are blind! If only you would open your eyes and see with clarity, you would realise how wrong you are."

These naysayers said Orthodoxy was doomed. Apparently, they were quite wrong.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

The Yes and No Movement



Innately we shake our heads sideways to express negation ("no movement") while we shake our heads up and down to express affirmation ("yes movement"). Why is this?

Man understands deeply within his soul which direction leads to improvement and progress (expressed by the yes movement), and which direction leaves him without progress (expressed by the no movement). The yes movement points in a straight line, without diversion to the sides. When a person shakes his head in negation, he communicates that there is no continuance of the line, no progression and no addition or forward moment. It is as if he is saying, "We are still at the same spot."

Affirmation of something stems from the importance one attaches to leaving mundane reality and advancing. An affirmation expresses a natural feeling that is innate to man — to progress and ascend spiritual heights.

Sensational Spirituality

The pasuk (Breishis 3:19) states **כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב** - ***we are from dust and we will return to dust***.



The Chidushei Harim explains that we may be "dust" yet we have potential to conquer worlds. What a shame it would be if **ואל עפר תשוב** - we return to the grave not having accomplished something with our lives.

The Gra tells us that we are either ascending or descending in this world, as we can't remain static. This is alluded to in **מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין** — If we don't want to fall and want to live the reality of **ואין מורידין** , then we must be **מעלין בקדש**.

With this we can explain why we are referred to as a **הולך** whereas a Malach is called an **עומד**. This is because a Malach stays on one level as he doesn't grow, contrary to a human.

In the summer of 1992, a Rabbi visiting prisoners told them that you are limited only because you can't get whatever you want. But the truth is everyone is like that as everyone has boundaries. We can't walk past the ocean and the like. These are just horizontal borders. Vertically though, we are the only ones who stop ourselves.

There are many lessons we can obtain from observing the natural world. **The Pnei Menachem** pointed out a message learned from gravity: We are pulled down to the earth, physicality. To physically raise ourselves, we need to fight the gravitational pull. Likewise, to elevate and raise ourselves spiritually, we need to fight the material world that brings along base desires.

Adam was created **בצלם אלה -ים** , in the image of Hashem. If we spell out the name of Hashem, **י-ה-ו-ה**, we get **יוד, הא, ואו, הא**. This comes to a total of 45, the Gematria of **אדם**.

The greatness we can attain is because we have an infinite soul within us, a piece of Hashem — **חלק אלו-ה ממעל**.

Nothing can attenuate our worth. Just as if a person crumpled a 20-dollar bill and threw it in the dirt, people would still want it since it didn't lose its value, likewise even if we stumble and fall, we still have our value.

Reb Shmuel Donn – Remez



וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר ***And you shall take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the hadar tree***… (23:40)

Why is the mitzvah of taking the '*Hadar*' on Sukkos specifically with an Esrog?

The Medrash Rabbah in Bereishis 15:7 tells us that the עֵץ -tree, that Adam and Chava ate from in Gan Eden – was an Esrog tree.

The Arizal explains, that when we take the Esrog on Sukkos for the mitzvah – we are able to be **מתקן** the aveirah of the Eitz Ha'Da'as. Now, through Adam and Chava eating from this tree, they were

suddenly able to understand the difference between GOOD and BAD - **טוב** and **רע**.

The **פנים יפות** says as follows: In order to fix the sin of the Eitz Ha'Da'as, we have to remove the **רע** – 'the evil', which rests inside this tree.

Let's REMOVE the gematria of the word **רע** – 270 from the gematria of **עץ הדעת** (639). - 639-270 = 369

369 is the gematria of **עץ הדר** !

Reb Shmuel Donn - Remez

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וַעֲנַף עֵץ־עָבֹת וְעַרְבֵי־ נָחַל (23:40)

On Sukkos, we take the Esrog in one hand, and the Lulav, the hadassim, the Aravos in the other, and we are ready to make the bracha **על נטילת לולב**.

If we are holding FOUR different species, then why do we only make a bracha on the Lulav?

So, the Gemara in Mesechta Sukkah 37b answers that since the Lulavis the tallest from these 4 species, it is considered the most important one. It holds the other ones together – so the bracha is made on the Lulav.



Shlomo HaMelech writes in Shir HaShirim (7:9) that Hashem boasts about Klal Yisrael to the Mal'achim, that His Name is made great through our listening to the Torah: **אָמַרְתִּי אֶעֱלֶה בְתָמָר**.

Says the **Vilna Gaon Zt'l** – besides for the simple meaning of the Pasuk, there is also an amazing Remez here to the Lulav being the most important one of the **ד' מינים**:

אעלה בתמר – הַדסים – לַולב – עַרבות – אַתרג - All bound to the Lulav!

שמואל זנוויל כהנא **Shmuel Zanvil Kahana Zt'l (Chief Rabbi of Persian Jewry)**

A leader must win the support of the public

קָדֹשׁ֙ יִהְיֶ֣ה לָ֔ךְ כִּ֥י קָד֖וֹשׁ אֲנִ֣י ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶֽם "***it shall be holy to you, for I am Hashem who sanctifies you***" (21:8)

Why should the people sanctify the priests? Do the priests really need to be sanctified by humans? Isn't it enough that G-d sanctifies them? For in our passage itself it is explicitly said: **אֲנִי ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם**.

It turns out that it is not enough that the priests get to be sanctified from above; they must also be sanctified by the people. The Cohen, or any other leader, will not be able to influence properly if he does not gain the appreciation of the people he serves and leads.

In the Torah it is said that even though Reuben was the eldest among Jacob's sons, he lost his right to the birth-right, which Jacob passed on to Joseph. If so, we should have expected that the leadership of the people of Israel would pass to the descendants of Joseph.

What is more, it is said that Jacob trained Joseph for the position of leader, and Joseph proved that he was indeed worthy of it. But despite this, Judah, and not Joseph, is the one chosen to stand at the head of the people, כִּֽי יְהוּדָה֙ גָּבַ֣ר בְּאֶחָ֔יו וּלְנָגִ֖יד מִמֶּ֑נּוּ וְהַבְּכֹרָ֖ה לְיוֹסֵֽף "***for Judah prevailed over his brother and became governor over him, and the firstborn went to Joseph***" (Divrei Hayamim I- 5:2).

Judah became the leader because his brothers declared him to be the leader. The people recognized him and accepted him: יְהוּדָה אַתָּה יוֹדוּךָ אַחֶיךָ יָדְךָ בְּעֹרֶף אֹיְבֶיךָ יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְךָ בְּנֵי אָבִיךָ "***Judah, you will be your brother's friend ... the sons of your father will bow down to you***" (Beraishis 49:8).

High titles and glorious ancestry will be of little use to public leaders, if they are not accompanied by the support of the public they represent and lead.

How To Evaluate a Gift

וְהֵבֵאתֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן "***And you brought the Omer at the beginning of your harvest to the priest***" (23:10)



In the Kabbalah it is said that in return for bringing the Omer sacrifice, which is the first sheaf of barley, Hashem promised Avraham that his descendants would enter the Holy Land.

Nowadays the Omer sacrifice is seen as an unimportant act, and certainly without any proportion between him and the promised reward for it. However, to Hashem it is not what the sacrifice is, but how it is brought. It doesn't matter how big the gift is, as long as it is given from the heart.

In the Gemara (Shabbat 156b) it is said that an astrologer prophesied that one man, who went to work in the forest with several others, would die that day. However, late in the afternoon all the workers all returned home together - alive!

When the astrologer saw that his prophecy had not come true, He was surprised, and asked the workers to tell him everything that happened to them that day.

The man said: "We worked together until noon, then we sat down to eat. One of my friends forgot to bring food with him.

"Where did you sit when you ate your meal?" asked the astrologer.

"On a bench, under a tree," replied the man.

"Take me to this bench," asked the astrologer, and the man took him to the place where his friends were sitting and eating their hearts out.

The astrologer looked and saw on the ground a poisonous snake coiled like a cocoon.

"You see?" The astrologer said, "This snake is meant to kill you, but what can I do if your G-d is content with a slice of bread? G-d spared your life because you had compassion for your neighbour and shared your meal with him."

Hashem said to the Israelites in the desert: "*For forty years I gave Each and every one of you has money every day. All I ask in return is that you show me your love and faith by bringing me one sheaf of barley once a year.*"

If so, a sheaf of barley is also a worthy sacrifice - if it is indeed offered wholeheartedly.

"The highest form of Chesed is that which we do for those closest to us, yet it is often the hardest. - To do Chesed for a parent is to combine two of the greatest Mitzvos [Chesed & Kibud Av V'Em] into one act." ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.



וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר (23:40)

There was a *melamed* who had a side job selling *esrogim*. **The Pnei Menachem of Gur *zt'l*** told him, "You don't only work with *esrogim* before *Succos*, you work with *esrogim* the entire year because each student is a precious *esrog*.

A talented *esrog* merchant knows how to clean an *esrog* so it appears beautiful. A careless *esrog* merchant can scratch and ruin a beautiful *esrog*.

Students are the same. Handle them with care, and they will shine. Mishandle them, and you ruin them, *r'l*."

פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר (23:40) "***You shall take for yourselves on the first day a beautiful fruit of a tree***."

Chazal tell us that **פרי עץ** means the tree and the fruit should have the same taste. (This refers to an *esrog* because an *esrog* and its tree taste the same.)

The Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz *zt'l* said that fruit connotes children, and the tree indicates the parents.

Our goal is, **עצו ופריו שוה** - the tree and the fruit should be the same. The children should be as good as their parents (or better than their parents).

Sefiras Ha'Omer

The Chasam Sofer zt'l would teach mesechta Shavuos during Sefiras Ha'Omer because it has 49 daf. Every day, he taught the daf that corresponded to that day's sefirah. (Others do this with Mesechta Sotah, which also has 49 blatt.)

Tzaddikim would keep in mind the count of the Omer throughout the entire day. For example, when **Reb Mendel of Riminov zt'l** reminded himself of the Omer, he would count again **היום יום ...לעומר**.

Lag b'Omer

Reb Moshe Rozvedover would say that there isn't a better day in the year than Lag b'Omer, and if he could, he would hold onto the sun with his teeth and wouldn't let it set, so he wouldn't have to leave Lag b'Omer.

Lag b'Omer

The Sar Shalom of Belz once spoke about the greatness of Lag b'Omer, and his son, **Reb Zundel *zt'l***, said, "Lag b'Omer is like Yom Kippur." His father said that he was correct. - **The Chasam Sofer** (*Drashos* vol.2 280.) also writes that Lag b'Omer is like Yom Kippur.

On Lag b'Omer, we sing: **אמר ר' עקיבא אשריכם לפני מי אתם מטהרים ישראל**, "*Fortunate are you, Yisrael! Before Whom do you purify yourselves and Who purifies you*!"

These words discuss Yom Kippur, but we sing them on Lag b'Omer because also on Lag b'Omer, our sins are removed like on Yom Kippur.

The Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l said, "Lag b'Omer is the greatest day of the year." His son, **Reb Yehoshua zt'l**, immediately lowered his head and said, "Father, give me a brachah."

Yiras Shamayim

The Sfas Emes writes, "I heard from my grandfather [the **Chidushei HaRim** ***zt'l***] that on Lag b'Omer, one can attain *yiras Shamayim*."

The Imrei Emes zt'l teaches: *Tehillim* (chapter 19) has five sentences to praise Torah and mitzvos, and each line has five words:

1. תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש (Hashem's Torah is perfect, restoring the soul.)

2. עדות ה' נאמנה מחכימת פתי (The testimony of Hashem is trustworthy, making the simple one wise.)

3. פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב (Hashem's orders are upright, gladdening the heart.)

4. מצות ה' ברה מאירת עינים (Hashem's mitzvos are clear, enlightening the eyes.)

5. יראת ה' טהורה עומדת לעד (The fear of Hashem is pure, enduring forever.)

The fifth phrase, which has five words, discusses *yiras Hashem*. This is similar to Lag b'Omer, which falls on the fifth day of the fifth week (**הוד שבהוד**).

The Imrei Emes says that this hints that Lag b'Omer is an ideal time to attain *yiras Shamayim*. It is also an ideal time to daven for children with yiras Shamayim. The heavens are open, and our tefillos will be accepted.

"The measure of a person's greatness is not in what they possess, but in how much they give of themselves to others." – Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.

Seudah on Lag b'Omer

Another aspect of the Lag b'Omer celebration is to make a seudah in honour of this special day and in honour of Reb Shimon.

It is surprising that we eat on this day. Generally, a yahrtzeit is a fast day. For example, Moshe Rabbeinu's yahrtzeit (the seventh of Adar) is called "*taanis tzaddikim*," a day for fasting.

is also a *yahrtzeit*, so why is it celebrated with eating and drinking?

We can answer as follows: Chazal tell us that when Moshe Rabbeinu was *niftar,* many halachos of the Torah were forgotten. In contrast, when Reb Shimon bar Yochai was *niftar*, secrets of the Torah were revealed. - This explains why many fast on the 7th of Adar and rejoice on Lag b'Omer.

The Taamei HaMinhagim offers another explanation:

The *Zohar* tells us that Reb Shimon bar Yochai annulled harsh decrees with joy (unlike most tzaddikim who annul harsh decrees with fasting).

Therefore, on Reb Shimon's *yahrtzeit* we eat and celebrate. This is how we abolish harsh decrees on this day.

Lag B'Omer

According to tradition Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai passed away on Lag B'Omer, tremendously joyful on account of the Torah's secrets he had merited to reveal, which were written in the **Zohar**.

Lag B'Omer thus came to be celebrated as a "yom hilula" (literally a wedding feast), a joyous occasion. Accordingly, even though it is customary to mark the anniversary of the passing of a righteous person by fasting, Lag B'Omer is a time of jubilation, for such was Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's wish. (**Sefer HaToda'a**)





REB YECHIEL EMANUEL | ר' יחיאל עמנואל שליט"א



Lag Bo'Omer Trip Fez – Morocco 8-10th May '23 / 5783

FEZ (Fès) is among the best-known cities in medieval Jewish history. It is the fourth largest city in Morocco and the capital city until 1912. Indeed, it was once the home of one of the most influential Talmudic scholars of all times, **Rabbi Isaac Alfasi**, as well as of **Maimonides (Rambam)** in the years 1160 to 1165.

Fez is located in the northeast part of Morocco between the Riff and the Middle Atlas Mountains on the two shores of the wadi (valley) Fez. The city is situated in a narrow valley and positioned on the old crossroads of caravan routes connecting the Saharan empires with the Atlantic and the Mediterranean shipping lanes.

Fez remained a commercial centre for much of its history. The estimated population in Fez is 300,000 with a tiny Jewish presence.

Fez was founded by Idriss I in the eighth century. His goal was to convert all his subjects to Islam, but his son and successor was more tolerant. Under Idriss II, the fledgling city expanded and Idriss

surrounded the left bank with walls. After his death, further development was delayed until the 11th century when Prince Youseff Ibn Tachfine united both halves of the city and built a wall around Fez. This security inaugurated a prolonged period of prosperity that would peak in the 14th century under the reign of the Merinides Dynasty.

Jews played an important role in the commercial and cultural life of Morocco's capital city. Idriss II (808) admitted large numbers of Jews from Andalusia, whose commercial skills and wide regional contacts were instrumental in enriching his kingdom. They paid an annual tax of 30,000 dinars, an indication of their wealth. The influence they wielded and the respect they commanded are further demonstrated by a legendary tale that has been associated with the community.

According to tradition, in 860, the ruler of Fez became infatuated with a young Jewish woman. He forced his way into a public bath in the Jewish quarter (al-Funduk al-Yahudi), where she was at the time. Though he was the most powerful person in the realm, his offence against the widely respected Jewish community caused a violent uprising throughout the town.

The golden age of the Jewish community in Fez lasted for nearly three hundred years. From the 9th to 11th centuries, its yeshivot (religious schools) attracted brilliant scholars, poets and grammarians. Sages such as **Dunash Ibn Labrat**, and **Rabbi Isaac Alfasi** spent most of their lives in Fez before they migrated to Spain. The invasions of the Almoravides and Almohades, fanatic Muslim sects, caused destruction and suffering to the Jewish community in Fez, just as it did throughout Andalusia. In fact, the most famous refugee from the Almohade terror in Fez was **Moses Maimonides,** who escaped with his family to Egypt in 1165. He had lived in Fez for five years after being uprooted from his home in Cordoba, Spain.

After these traumatic times, the welfare of the Jewish community was never certain. Depending on the ruling dynasty, Jewish life alternated between freedom and prosperity and merciless persecutions. During one such decline in 1438, the Jews were forced to live in a special Jewish quarter situated on the site referred to as the Mellah in New Fez. Mellah is Arabic for salt, and the community got the name because the Jews were forced to salt the heads of executed prisoners prior to their public display. And yet, the sultan turned to the Jews of Fez to help straighten out the public finances.

When he appointed a Jew as Prime Minister in 1465, the town rose up in anger, assassinated the sultan and his minister and massacred most of the Jewish community. In 1492, the influx of Spanish exiles reinvigorated the community, and it managed to survive.

Ironically, the Spanish exiles and the Jewish natives of Fez feuded often. Eventually, the Spanish newcomers gained the upper hand, and many of their customs became the *minhag* of the community and they held the office of *nagid* established at the beginning of the 16th century.

As Fez declined in political and economic importance in the late 16th century, many wealthy Jews left Fez. New Jewish arrivals to Fez from Dila brought diversity to the Jewish community, however much of its Spanish character was lost. During this period, Jews were involved in manufacturing gold thread, lace, embroidery and many were tailors or metalworkers.

In 1790, Jewish synagogues were destroyed, and the Jews were expelled from the city. They were allowed to return in 1792, however the community had diminished significantly.

In the 1800's, Jewish learning was reawakened, and a number of Jewish schools opened, including 5 yeshivot.

A revolt broke out in 1912, two weeks after the French protectorate was founded. The Jewish community was ransacked, and their property was burned. In 1925, most of the Jews left the old Jewish quarter and settled in the new sections of Fez. The Jewish population reached 22,000 in 1947. It decreased significantly during the 1950's and 1960's when many Jews emigrated to Israel, France, and Canada, and by the 1990s, fewer than 10,000 remained.

In 1997, Morocco had a Jewish population of 6,500; of that, 5,000 Jews lived in Casablanca and only 150 lived in Fez.



The exquisitely restored sanctuary of the Ibn Danan synagogue in Fez.

Morocco's first official Mellah, or Jewish quarter, was established in Fez in 1438 in the shadow of the sultan's palace. This picturesque neighbourhood adjoins the royal palace, noted for its recently constructed bright brass doors. Jews took shelter in this palace during the 1912 pogrom.

The nearby cemetery contains the tombs of more Jewish saints than any other cemetery in Morocco. Two synagogues, the Ibn Danan and Slat Al Fassiyine, are further examples of exquisitely restored synagogues. Each sports a green-and-white tile floor with mosaics that border the Ark. In the

newer part of the city, Roben Bensadoun synagogue welcomes visitors to fill its pews on Shabbat.

In addition to the mellah, traces of Fez's Jewish past can also be seen in the heart of the old city (*Fez I-bali*), where one of the districts is named *funduq I-yihud*, which literally means "hostel/warehouse of the Jews."





Step into the tiny eatery deep in the market of the world's largest walled city and you'll find framed portraits of the Rambam, fragments of Hebrew prayers and even an old one shekel note that bears his image.

Chez Maimonide provides a brilliant metaphor for the history of the Jews in Morocco. It speaks to the rich Jewish culture and influence that once flourished in this North African nation and that in many ways continue to this day, despite the departure of the vast majority of the country's Jews in the second half of the 20th century.

The complex legacy of the community, which once numbered between 250,000 and 300,000 and now hovers somewhere between 2,000 and 2,500, continues to be probed and rewritten.

As a first-time visitor to Morocco, I grappled repeatedly with two key questions: Why did the Jews leave? And why do tens of thousands of Moroccan Jews come back each year to visit this land?

Most of the gleaming jewellery shops in sections of the sprawling souk of Fez's medina (old city), were once owned by Jews.

Though being Jewish in a Muslim country always presented its challenges, Jews flourished for centuries in many Muslim nations even as they were accorded second-class status as *dhimmi*. This gave them protection but also subjected them to special taxes, restrictions and, in some cases, violence.

As the largest community in the Arab and Muslim world, the Jews of Morocco also experienced a blend of benevolence and degradation but, compared to other nations, they were by and large a successful and highly acculturated community.

By the mid-20th century, after the number of Jews peaked at some 280,000, the population began to decline dramatically due to a variety of factors, according to historians and locals alike. The first wave of departures came between 1948 and 1951, with the establishment of the State of Israel.

In Fez, now home to fewer than 50 Jews, the Roben Bensadoun synagogue in the newer part of the city survives only because of the tourists that fill its pews most Shabbats and holidays.

Fewer than 10 local Jews show up each week, and even the rabbi doesn't usually appear, according to Shalom Turjman, the 60-year-old caretaker. Though the rest of his family has left the country, Turjman stays, he says, because he's the youngest member of the community and the only one left to take care of the synagogue.

Most of the country's synagogues are not operational, though some occasionally host a wedding or bar mitzvah for young Jews of Moroccan descent whose families come from abroad.

Instead, these synagogues, as well as many cemeteries, serve as part of the culture of Jewish memory—a culture that is being preserved largely by Muslim men and women.



These caretakers—once they are tracked down, not always a simple feat—are eager to unlock the gates and welcome visitors. They are quick to open the Arks to display the Torahs or uncover hidden mikvehs. At the cemeteries, they graciously escort the tourists to see the most elaborate tombstones, ones etched with flowers and books and lengthy epitaphs. They proudly provide facts and figures, to the best of their ability, that attest to the rich Jewish heritage.

The Jewish cemetery is located in "Fes El Jdid" neighbourhood meaning in the area of Fes where the Royal Palace is. It is on the edge of the Jewish District called Fundunk al Yahudi or Mellah.

The Mellah, along with the cemetery enclosed within, remains one of the most prominent Jewish features of the city today. There are no functioning synagogues in the Jewish quarter at the moment, but with UNESCO funds, several are being restored. One such building

attached the cemetery is currently being used as a museum to house Jewish artifacts and memorabilia.



The white graves on the backdrop of the Mellah's residential buildings, once populated by Jews

Walking into the cemetery in Fez, one is greeted by a square grid of white stone half-cylindrical gravestones. The ancient Jewish cemetery, called a Gisa, continued even after a new cemetery grew out of where victims of the pogrom of 1465 were buried at a particular space near the mellah's entrance. The Jewish cemetery was an indelible part of Jewish communal life.

Burial customs are a unique blend of Jewish Law (Halacha) and customs particular to North African Jewry. For instance, the entire community traditionally carries the deceased's coffin on their shoulders on the way to the cemetery, while a shofar is sounded. During the shiva period of mourning, the deceased's family camped at the gravesite while the entire community gathered around to declare publicly their charitable contributions in the deceased's memory.

Among the rabbis of the generation who are buried there are **Rabbi Pinchas HaCohen**, who is said to have saved the life of Thami El Glaoui, **Rabbi Shlomo Tammuzat, Rabbi Abraham Azoulay and Rabbi Hanania HaCohen.**



A burial chamber where some of Morocco's former chief rabbis are buried

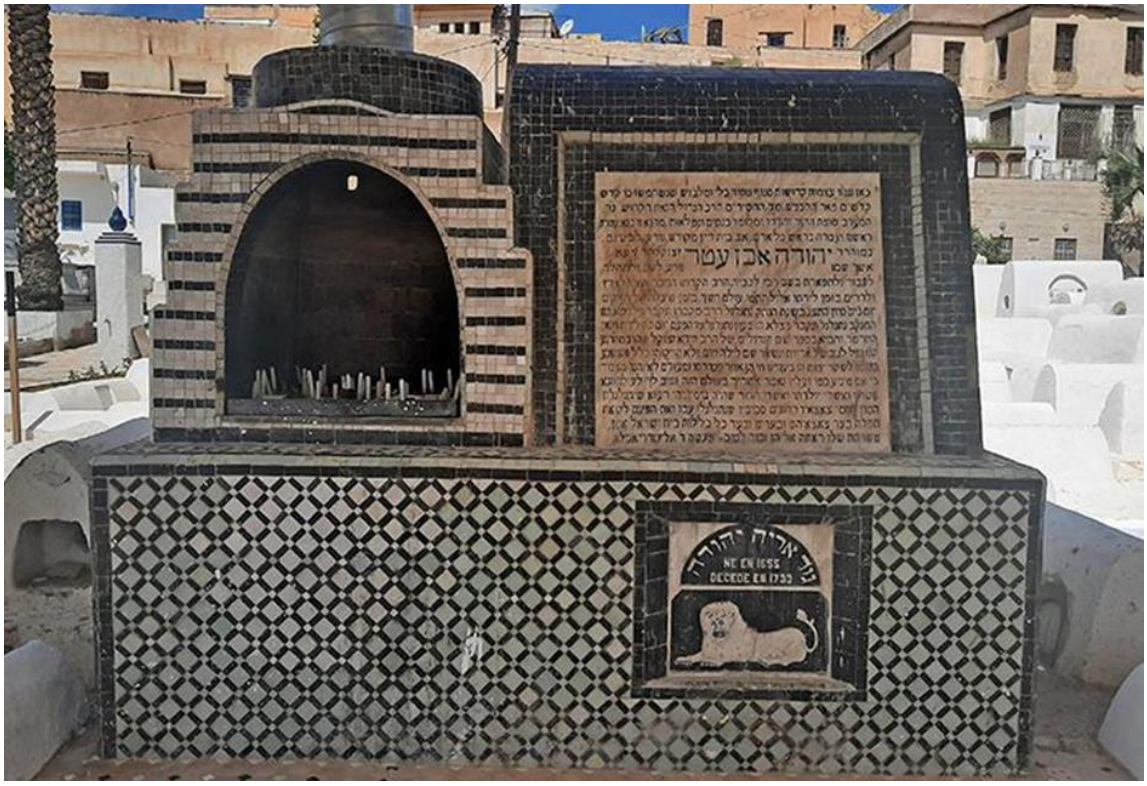


Dozens of rows of blank half-cylindrical graves



A broad perspective, with the blueish tomb of Solica standing out in the middle

Rabbi Yehuda Ben Attar Zt'l (1655-1733)

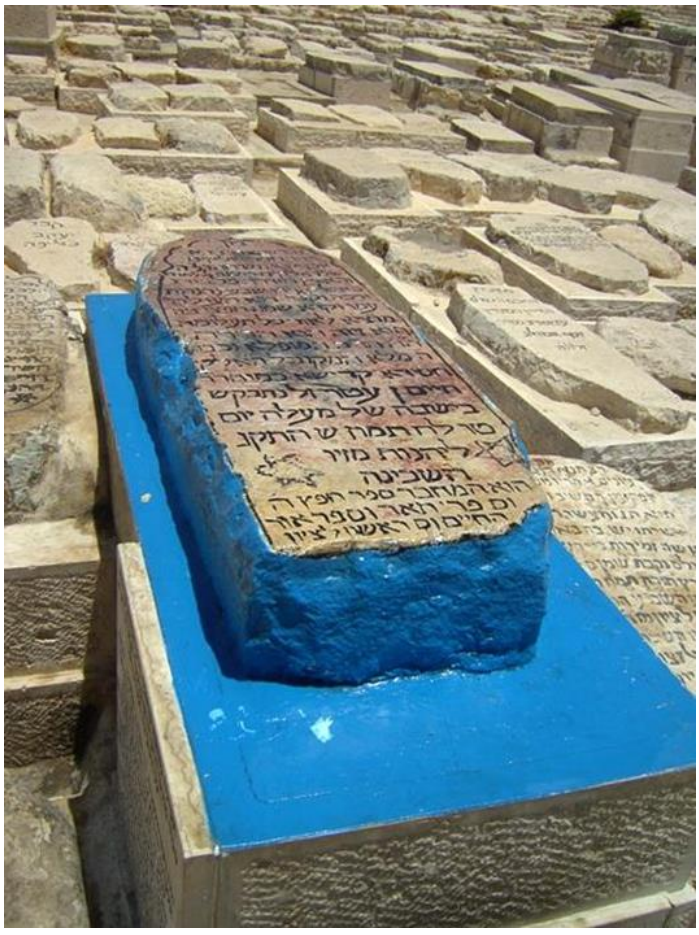


A prominent tomb which features white and black tiles as well as a big niche for candles and a chimney, is where Rabbi Yehuda Ben Attar was buried.

Around three hundred years ago, the light of Rav Yehudah Ben Atar shone in Morocco. **The Chida (Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai)** wrote in his book Shem haG'dolim about Rabbi Yehudah: "the great, sacred Rabbi, the head of the rabbinical court in Fez (Chief Rabbi and Av Beis Din) ," and that "he was trained in miracles."

The Chida adds, "My ears have heard of several wonders that occurred to him, both during his lifetime and after his death. I heard from our rabbis, the sacred ones of the West, that he was a sacred man of G-d, that he was cast into a lion's den (a ploy by the Moslems to extract money from the Jews) and was untouched by the hungry lions after having spent there a day and a night.

"It is highly doubtful that we will ever be able to reach his exalted levels of sanctity. After all, "If the early ones were like angels, then we are but human beings." Nevertheless, we are obligated to learn to walk in his ways and follow his superior conduct and fine qualities.



The Ibn (Ben) Atar family was one of the most famous Jewish families in Morocco. Another famous member of this family was **Rabbi Chaim Ben Atar (Ohr HaChaim)** (1696-1743). Morocco and Jerusalem; author of Ohr Hachaim commentary on Torah.)

Rabbi Yehuda Ben Attar was the uncle and teacher of the famed Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar).

The teachers of Rabbi Yehudah were **Rabbi Vidal HaTzorfati and Rabbi Menachem Serero**. Rabbi Yehudah went up to be the head rabbi, head of the Jewish court and

head of the Yeshiva in Fez for 40 years. His book Minchat Yehudah is his commentary on the Torah.

During his forty-year career, Rabbi Yehouda Ben Attar had been able to establish several *Takanos*, namely decrees or regulations that the rabbis establish to correct some habits that are harmful to the community. One of these Takanos was implemented to limit the excess in the celebration of life cycle events.

Some families in the community spent too much on the celebration of weddings. Others did not want to be left behind. And this caused many community members to take loans and get into big debt to spend like everyone else.

As the following incident demonstrates, together with his greatness, we find his remarkable humility. Once, Rav Yehudah, the head of the rabbinical court in the kingdom's capital, walked past a stand where a merchant sold coals. The man turned to him and said, "Rabbi, Rabbi, I am hungry. Is it okay if you stay here to watch my merchandise while I run home to get something to eat?" The great rabbi consented willingly, and the merchant went off.

Soon afterwards, Rabbi Yaakov Ibn Tzur passed by and was astonished to see the revered head of the rabbinical court sitting in the marketplace by a stand of coals. He inquired as to what was going on, and the rabbi explained that he was asked to watch over the merchandise while the shopkeeper enjoyed his meal.

"But what about the honour of the Torah?" asked Rabbi Yaakov. Rabbi Yehudah smiled and said, "I have always wondered about the testimony of Rebbi (Rav Yehudah HaNasi) that he was prepared to fulfil the wishes of every individual: 'Anything a person tells me, I would do.'

Now I understand what he meant, that even if he would be asked to watch over bags of coals, he would agree. And if Rebbe would agree, then certainly I must."

Born in Fez during the month of Elul in the year 5415, Rabbi Yehudah ben Attar was one of the great rabbis and Kabbalists of Morocco. He became the Av Beth Din of his city and undertook important decisions aimed at strengthening the spiritual life of his community. For many generations the Jews of Fez remained connected to his teachings, and many are the stories that are told linking his name to miracles.

He left this world in the year 5493 (1733) at the age of 77. May the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Yehudah Ibn Atar, protect us all, Amen.



The Chida (Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai) recounts the following story.

When he had already become famous for his learning and saintliness and could have held an honoured position as a great Rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva, he declined to be paid for these services. He preferred to earn his money from the work of his hands, for he was a very skilled goldsmith.

Being an excellent goldsmith, Rabbi Yehudah ben Attar could have earned a lot of money. But he had no desire to earn any more money than was absolutely necessary for the modest needs of himself and his family. It was his custom, therefore, to take no more time out from his learning than was necessary. As long as he had money in his pocket for the day's needs, he did not work at all, and spent all his time in his saintly studies.

Rabbi Yehudah ben Attar made sure that he would not be bothered by wealthy customers. He simply opened no workshop of his own. Instead, he hired himself out to the best known local non-Jewish goldsmith for several hours a day, or whenever he chose to work in accordance with his needs.

Now, the goldsmith for whom Rabbi Yehudah worked was no friend of the Jews, but he valued Rabbi Yehudah's work so much, that he

let him work whenever he wanted. Rabbi Yehudah never argued about his wages. He was satisfied with whatever his employer paid him. Indeed, once the goldsmith tried to tempt Rabbi Yehudah by paying him more than before. He found out, however, that far from being tempted, Rabbi Yehudah was now able to stay away from work even longer, so he reduced his pay as much as he could without driving him to his competitor.

It came to pass that the Sultan was getting ready to marry off his daughter. He sent for the goldsmith and placed a large order for very fancy jewellery, to be ready before the wedding.

It so happened that Rabbi Yehudah still had some money left from his previous earnings and did not come into the goldsmith for work. When the day came for the royal order to be delivered, the goldsmith had not completed it. The Sultan became very angry and threatened to have the goldsmith thrown to his lions. But the sly goldsmith put the whole blame on Rabbi Yehudah, saying that it was his Jewish assistant that had let the Sultan down by not coming to work. So, the Sultan ordered that Rabbi Yehudah be thrown to the lions, to be devoured alive.



The Sultan had a beautiful park behind his palace. In the park there was a special area surrounded by high walls, where the Sultan kept his man-eating lions and tigers. Anyone who was sentenced by the Sultan to die, would be thrown to these ferocious beasts. This, the Sultan decreed, was to be also the fate of Rabbi Yehudah.

When the Sultan's guards came to fetch Rabbi Yehudah, he asked them only to be allowed to take some of his sacred books with him,

and his Tallis and Tefillin. The guards laughed, and said, "Are you going to teach the big cats the wisdom of these books?" Nevertheless, they granted his request.

As Rabbi Yehudah was led through the streets, Jews closed their shops and stalls and accompanied him. They wept bitterly to see their beloved Rabbi being led to his horrible death, while some of the local Arab populace jeered and made merry. Rabbi Yehudah took no notice of the jeering crowd, but he consoled his grieving brethren, saying to them: "It is G-d Who takes life and gives life; He redeems and saves in time of distress. I am confident that He will spare me from the lions' teeth. Trust in G-d."

The procession came to the gates of the Royal Palace. Rabbi Yehudah was led away behind the gates and taken to the lions' den. Here he was placed in the hands of the keepers to carry out the Sultan's sentence.

The keepers put a rope around Rabbi Yehudah's waist and lowered him down into the den, while he was clinging tightly to his precious books and Tallis bag which contained also his Tefillin and Siddur. The keepers knew what to expect: Blood-chilling shrieks, roars and snarls of the beasts, and then deathly silence. They had done such jobs many times. It was always the same, or so they thought.

This time, however, it was different, very strangely different! There were no screams, and no roars and no snarls. The lions and tigers remained in their places and made no attempt to attack their "meal." The keepers decided that the beasts were not hungry and walked away.

Three days later, the keepers came to feed the beasts, expecting to find only the broken bones of the Rabbi. They could not believe their eyes when they saw the Rabbi sitting in the centre of the den, wrapped in his Tallis and Tefillin, and studying his holy books. The wild beasts were crouching all around him, keeping a respectful silence, as if they were listening to his melodious voice.

The keepers rushed to tell the Sultan what they saw. In utter disbelief, the Sultan went to see for himself, and he, too, was amazed and terrified at the awesome sight.

The Sultan ordered that a rope ladder be lowered for the saintly Rabbi, to climb out of the den. When Rabbi Yehudah came up, the Sultan humbly begged his forgiveness. "Now I know that there is a G-d, the Guardian of Israel!" the Sultan exclaimed. He asked the saintly Rabbi to be his friend and adviser and promised that the gates of the palace would always be open for him. The Sultan liberated the Rabbi and accorded him great respect for as long as he lived.

It was a day of light, gladness, joy and honour for the Jews, while the enemies of the Jews no longer dared lift a hand, or even speak an insult, against any Jew. As for Rabbi Yehudah ibn Attar, he returned home with deep gratitude to G-d, and with even greater humility in his heart.

In the city of Tunis, a Jew and a Muslim decided to operate a commercial business together. Their work succeeded greater than they had imagined, and the Jew made a great amount of money. As for the Muslim, he didn't know much about the work or the accounts that his Jewish colleague had set up for him.

The Muslim had complete confidence in the Jew and depended on him for all the details of their association together. It follows that he had no reason to complain about the trust that he had put in the Jew, since he saw with his own eyes how well the business was doing.

Over the years the non-Jew never demanded his part in the earnings of the business, so much in fact that the amount that the Jew owed him grew ever more.

One day, despite everything, the Muslim wanted to leave the business and claim everything owed to him. He informed his colleague, the Jewish merchant, but unfortunately the latter

(knowing that the Muslim had no proof of their business association) had the audacity to completely deny everything, including the fact that they were even business partners! The non-Jew was terribly distressed. His Jewish associate had betrayed his trust, and he himself didn't know how to recoup his money.

Finally, he pressed the Jew to swear that his words were in accordance with the truth and that he didn't really owe him anything. He didn't ask him to swear to a simple oath; he asked him to swear by the name of his Rav, Rabbi Yehudah ben Attar.

Knowing what the truth was, the Jew refused with all his might to utter the oath. The non-Jew then understood that this refusal represented his opportunity. He understood to what point the name of the Gaon Rabbi Yehudah ben Attar was important in the eyes of his Jewish business partner.

From then on, he didn't leave the Jew in peace or stop insisting that he swear to him as he had requested. The Jew eventually finished by swearing by the life of the Gaon Rabbi Yehudah ben Attar that he owed him nothing now, and that he had never owed him even the least penny. After having thus given his oath, the Jew happily returned home. He therefore rid himself of the presence of the non-Jew, a presence that had weighed heavily upon him.

He was happy because he had now taken possession, without the least effort, of the wealth of his former business partner. In fact, he was so happy that he decided to offer a Seuda for his family and all his friends. During the course of the meal, the Jew went to the cellar to get some wine in honour of his guests.

Unfortunately for him, in leaving the cellar with the bottles in hand he forgot to extinguish the candles that he had lit when he went down. A few moments later a fire started in the cellar and spread to the whole house, and thus all his wealth and unfortunately his children were lost in the flames.

When the non-Jew heard the news, he was so affected that he left Tunis, his city, and travelled to Fez in Morocco. There he went to the home of the Gaon Rabbi Yehudah ben Attar with gifts. He entered his home, kissed the hands of the Tzaddik, and told him everything that happened. He insisted that he accept the gifts that he had brought.

"I came to honour the holy rabbi, to tell this story and express my gratitude," continued the rich businessman who had travelled all the way to Fez to see Rabbi Yehuda Ben-Attar. "I am certain the ruin of my ex-partner is because he used your name to swear falsely."

The visitor took out a purse full of money and tried to give it to the rabbi as a token of his gratitude and admiration. But Rabbi Yehuda, who worked as a silversmith and never took any public funds for himself, declined the gift.

"Firstly, I don't take gifts from people. Second, I cannot benefit from money coming as a token of thanks for the downfall of another, however deserving he may be of Divine punishment."

Rabbi Yehuda directed him to the charity director in Fez, and this large sum of money was distributed to tzeddakah and to schools where Torah was taught and among the poor.



Integrity and Temptation: He famously refused gifts from a wealthy merchant who wanted to reward him for a wise judgment. He stated that he would not benefit from money given as thanks for the "downfall of another," even if that person deserved punishment.

Divine Protection through Torah: A recurring theme in his teachings is that the Torah serves as a shield. He attributed his survival in the lion's den to the fact that his commitment to Torah study was his sole occupation and protection.



Rabbi Daniel Glatstein - Journey to Morocco: Fez - The Kever of Rebbi Yehuda ben Attar Zt'l - A Place Where Many Have Experienced Miraculous Salvations

We have been to many **מקומות הקדושים** where traditionally people have come, and there are all kinds of folklore that miracles that have happened there.

But here we have the **קבר** [*kever]* of someone of eminent power and Limud HaTorah. This is somebody who the **Orach Chaim HaKadosh** went to for *haskama* on the Sefer **חפץ ה'**. This is someone who was the pre-eminent Talmid Chacham in Morocco.

The Chida himself writes: It is known that people who are **משתטח** (present themselves) here, experience **ניסים ונפלאות**. This is not a matter of legend or folklore – this is what the Chidah relates in his Sefer **שם הגדולים**.

It says on the headstone – **כאן נגנור עצמות קדושות מגוף טהור** – '***Here is buried the holy bones of a pure body***.' This is very telling. What does this mean?

Because when he was *niftar* in 1733, his bones rolled from their place three times. There is a tradition -*yesod* that they had to roll, but his bones are located right over here.

It says on the headstone, 'He was **פאר הרבנים, נזר החסידים**'

– I want to share with you the very rare terminology that the Chida uses. He writes in Sefer **שם הגדולים: Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Attar was סלת נקיה** –"The cleanest finest flour!" Of all the gedoilim, of all the tzaddikim who ever lived, he is considered from amongst the highest echelon of them!

When he was born, he radiated light over the whole world!

Now, the Chida was not a storyteller. But he does bring down the following: He was **מלובד בנסים** – '***Loved by miracles***' (This is an expression used many times by others, but not by the Chida.) He

says many miracles happened whilst he was alive and **לאחר פטירתו למתפלל על קברתו**. I don't believe that the Chida writes this elsewhere about anybody else, that a person who davens by a gadol's kever experienced miracles.

The Chida than continues to relate the story of the lion's enclosure as related earlier in this compilation and is mentioned on the headstone. The Chida writes that the whole of Morocco would swear by him, but if anybody swore falsely, then **ימות** – he would die immediately!

ועוד נפלאות שמענו ונדעם הן בעודנו חי ואף כי אחרי מותו למשתטח על מצבתו

We are talking about one of the great old-time tzadikim, to the point that they wrote these words of the Chida on the headstone.

Now, he was a Tzadik, and he didn't take any money from the kehilla. He was **רגיל בגילו אליהו הנביא**! Eliyahu revealed himself to him. Not only him, but his attendant (female) as well!

The Yaavetz of Fez writes about him – 'That in order to mourn him properly, we must write a kinah in order to appreciate his gadlus.'

The community of Fez revered him so much, that on the Yomim Tovim, the whole city lined up to kiss his hand! However, it became very tiresome for him to hold his hand out for hours at a time, so they made him a specially adapted stool with an armrest.

He was such a great talmid chacham that he had the title of distinction - **רבי לכביר** (the eminent one). Any edict in Fez that did not have his (amazing – see below) signature on it, was considered pasul. His was the address to go to for all matters of Torah and Halacha.

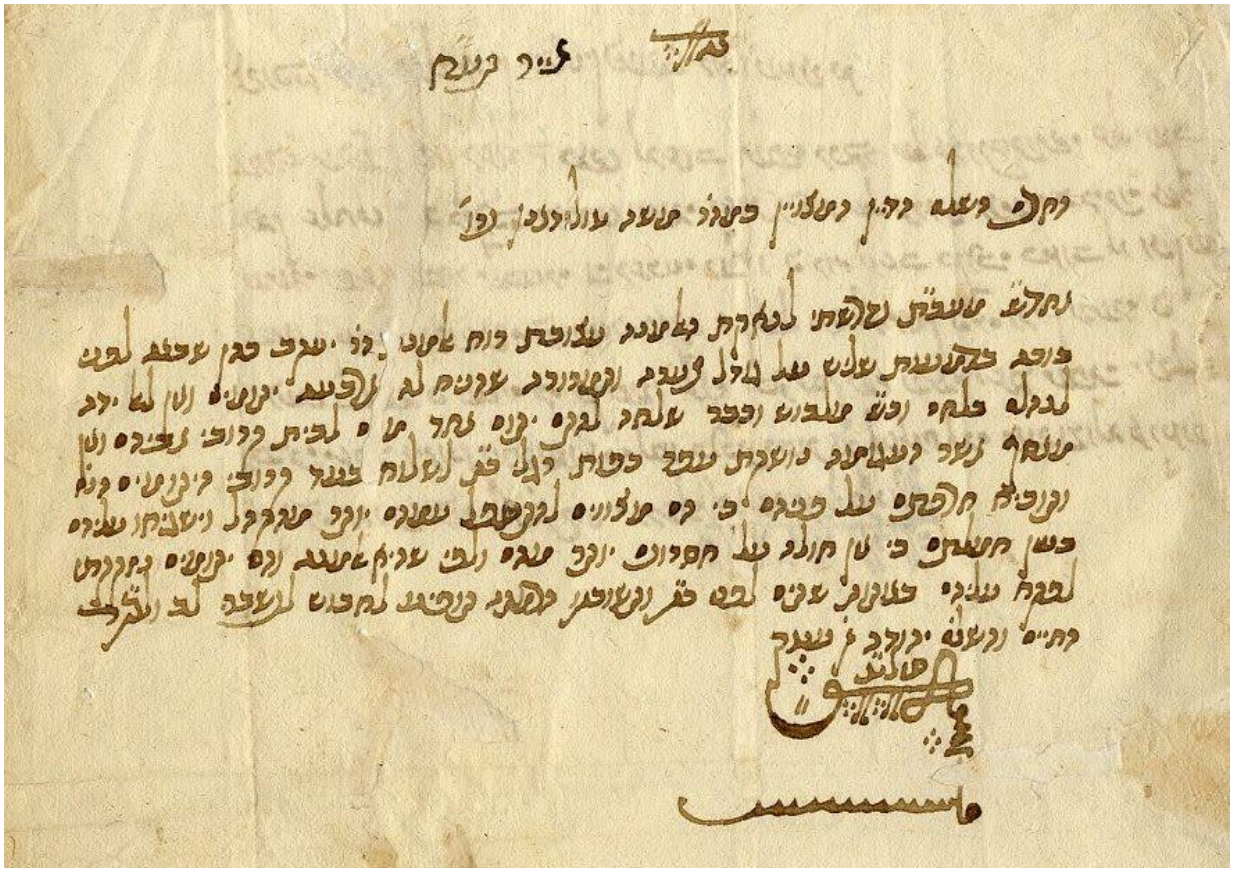
Somebody who the Chida wrote – that he was **סלת נקיה** - **ניסים ונפלאות** for anyone who is **מתפלל** and **משתטח** at his kever! ZY'A.

This is really, halachically and al pi mesorah, one of the most powerful kevarim to daven at - in the whole world!

On the base of the kever there is a depiction of a lion with the words **גור אריה יהודה** – The story goes, that one of the Chachamim in the city wrote a Teshuva where he disagreed with Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Attar.



In a dream, a lion came and attacked him aggressively! He didn't understand what happened. The Chachamim of the city told him, "How dare you start up and disagree with the Tzadik Rabbi Yehudah Ibn Attar! – He is a **גור אריה יהודה**!"



Letter Handwritten by the Wonder Rabbi Yehudah Ben Attar. 1718

One of the important saints buried in the cemetery is **חגואל סוליקא** HY'D - Sol Hachuel, who was killed for refusing to convert to Islam. The Jews called her "Sol ha-Tzaddikah" (The righteous Sol), and the Arabs called her Lalla Suleika (the holy lady Suleika)



Suleika's story had two versions to it, in fact, one that is narrated by Muslims and another one that is cherished by the Jews. However, the two accounts agree on one thing, which is her tragic execution. It all started for the beautiful lady when she was a teenager. Her beauty has made everyone in the neighbourhood attracted to her and because of her faith, marrying her was nearly impossible.

Jewish women in Morocco uttered her name with awe and admiration, pilgrims visit her tombstone in Fez to these days, almost two centuries after her death, and hundreds of poems, lamentations, piyyutim, essays and books in numerous languages were written about her. But Sol Hachuel is still a mystery.

Was Sol Hachuel – Solica – a hasty teen whose one mistake costed her with her life? Was she a breath-taking beautiful martyr, tangled up in a romantic affair which led to her decapitation at the age of 15 for "rida" – the sin of heresy in Islam?



One fact can be agreed upon. Sol Hachuel was indeed executed by the Muslim authorities. The exact date, according to historians, was June 5, 1834. What was the course of events that led to that tragic ending? And what about the numerous legends woven about the protagonists – do they settle with the historical facts?

The first record to shed light on the tragedy of Sol Hachuel was written immediately after the events, by Drummond Hay, who served as the British consul in Tangiers 1829-1845.

Five days after Sol's execution, Hay updated his diplomatic log regarding a 14 or 15 years old "Jewess by the name of Sol Hachuel, executed according to a ruling by the Ulama (a body of religious scholars) for heresy, after denying her original religion due to a domestic argument, during which her mother hit her. Jews of Tangiers urged the innocent girl to return to her religion, and as a result, the Muslim authorities arrested her. It seemed that the cadi was determined to achieve a death sentence for that unwise girl"

So, in a nutshell, we hear of a teenager who quarrelled with her mother, cried out some heretic words against Judaism, then when she tried to take them back, after scaring off the entire community – it is too late, as she was already considered by the law to be a Muslim, therefore had to obey the heresy laws of Islam.

According to Quran laws, as interpreted by the authorities back then, a person who regretted converting to Islam was called murtad. The murtad had three days to repent or expect an execution. Sol Hachuel refused to acknowledge her conversion, therefore on June 5th 1834 was forced to the Fez market square, where she was publicly executed by decapitation, surrounded by cheering crowds. It was reported that just before taking her last breath she shouted, "I was born a Jew and shall remain a Jew."

Thus ends the British counsel's account, which is considered reliable, yet leaves quite a lot of holes in the mysterious story.

Another account of Sol's death is by Israel Joseph Benjamin, a Jewish traveller who visited Morocco in the middle of the 19th century. According to his narrative, Hachuel's beauty was so breath-taking, that the Muslims were saying it was a waste to leave such a gem in the hands of the Jews.

Following her friendship with her Muslim neighbour, Hachuel met a Muslim fellow who fell in love with her and demanded that she converts. Though she had feelings for him too, she refused to convert after being urged by her community. Though it cannot be determined whether she converted at all, or converted and changed her mind, the authorities claimed that she did, therefore she was tried and executed in Fez a while later.

«A boy from one of the wealthiest neighbouring Muslim families espied Solica and desired to marry her. Solica's family knew that in order for the marriage to a Muslim to occur, the young woman would have to abandon her faith. The young man's father threatened that Solica's family would suffer bitterly if they did not allow her to convert to Islam and to marry his son. Hachuel was summoned to court and forced to kneel in front of the governor and admit that she had indeed converted. She refused and the pasha threatened her with horrible tortures such as heavy chains, her flesh eaten by wild animals, starvation imprisonment, for spurring prophet's rage.

Hachuel was not intimidated by his threats and died very heroically.».

Another version of the story insists that her «perilous beauty caught the unwanted attention of the Pasha, the highest authority in Tangiers». To put it in other words, the Pasha was enchanted by Suleika and promised to marry her if she converted to Islam.

In a different book entitled «Sephardin : The Jews from Spain» (1992) and written by Spanish writer Paloma Diaz-Mas, more details were given regarding Suleika's life and execution.

All historical and even fictitious novels based on the Sol's story agree on the fact that she refused to abandon her faith. Sol was betrayed by her friend and trapped after rumours spread in the city, insisting that she converted to Islam. When the Pasha, as above-mentioned, knew about that he ordered to see Suleika who, unbeknown to her, denied her conversion stating that she would never leave Judaism.

The Execution

She then was executed for apostasy of Islam as confirmed by Issachar Ben-Ami in his book «Saint Veneration Among the Jews in Morocco» (1998). «*All versions agree on the fact that, even under pressure from her parents, the King, his son, and the rabbi, -Suleika refused to repudiate Judaism preferring to die rather than give up her religion*».

Indeed, Sol's supposed love affair and her conversion became so important that it led her to Fez, where she was executed. Historical accounts suggest that the Jewish girl was sentenced to death after she preferred death over changing her faith.

According to Hatchwell, she told her executor «***do not make me linger, behead me at once, for dying as I do, innocent of any crime, the G-d of Abraham will avenge my death***».

In a very dramatic scene, Sol was decapitated when she was 17 years old in a public square in Fez. Describing the situation, Romero wrote : *«with all his equipment, the executioner began his disgusting task. He abruptly parted the girl's magnificent raven coloured braids.*

With the well-sharpened knife, he made the first cut to the martyr's neck. Solica, with her body bloodied from her wound, raised her eyes heavenward and muttered : **שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹקינוּ ה' אֶחָד.**

The right hand of the executioner separated the head from the trunk, which fell to earth in a pool of blood».

Legendary decorations were added to the story as time went by, that made it harder to reach the historical essence: did Sol convert to Islam hastily, after a quarrel with her mother and then went back on her word? Did she even convert at all, or was falsely accused? Was there even a love story involved?

Like in many other myths, does it really matter? The heroic self-sacrifice of Sol Hachuel made her a martyr and inspired many literary works, art pieces, lamentations and piutim, including one by the famous poet Shmuel Elbaz, and another by rabbi Yaakov Abuhassira, a great rabbi in Morocco, who praised Sol and her act.

Hachuel is admired among Muslims, too, who refer to her until now as Lala Solica (Solica the saint lady). The Jewish martyr became a legend and symbol among Jews from Morocco, remembered with other martyrs such as Judith and Hannah.

Other sources continue explaining that Sol's body was later purchased by a Jewish family and given a proper burial. Suleika, Solica or Lalla Suleika's grave is now a pilgrimage in the Jewish cemetery in Fez that is visited both by the Jewish and Muslim community in Morocco. She is regarded as a martyr who died to stay true to herself and her religion.

Rabbi Daniel Glatstein - Journey to *Morocco*: Fez- The Tradition of the Power of Praying and the Concentration of Shechina at the Fez Cemetery



In the Fez cemetery there are four kevarim that are in close proximity to each other - **סוליקא** - Sol Hachuel, Rav Avner Yisrael Hassarfati , Rabbi Vidal Hassarfati and close by, Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Attar.

There is a tradition that the chachamim of Fez saw with perfect truth an image of a fiery menorah descend on this area - indicating that there is a special divine presence over here.

In fact, there is a kabbalah from the chachmei Morocco That – "***Anybody who davens at these kevarim,*** **אין תפילה שחוזרת ריקם** – ***There is no prayer that is empty, there is no prayer that a Jew utters that will not work!***"

There is another kabbalah that says - **לעולם השכינה שורה במקום זה** – "***The Shechina always resides in this place!***"

So, this is a very important location, which has a lot of spiritual energy. May all of our tefillos be accepted and answered.

Jews and Morocco: Fascinating Historical Facts

As Israel and Morocco establish full diplomatic ties, take a look at some of Morocco's epic Jewish history.

1. Oldest archaeology



There have been Jews in Morocco for at least 2,000 years when some 30,000 Jews fled to North Africa following the destruction of the Second Temple. It is believed there had been Jews there even earlier too, perhaps as long ago as 2,500 years.

The oldest known evidence of Jewish life in the country are two menorah shaped oil lamps from the 3rd century, found at the site of Volubilis (*now in the Rabat Museum of Archaeology)*, a once Roman city located at the southwest extremity of the Empire, today near to the city of Fez.

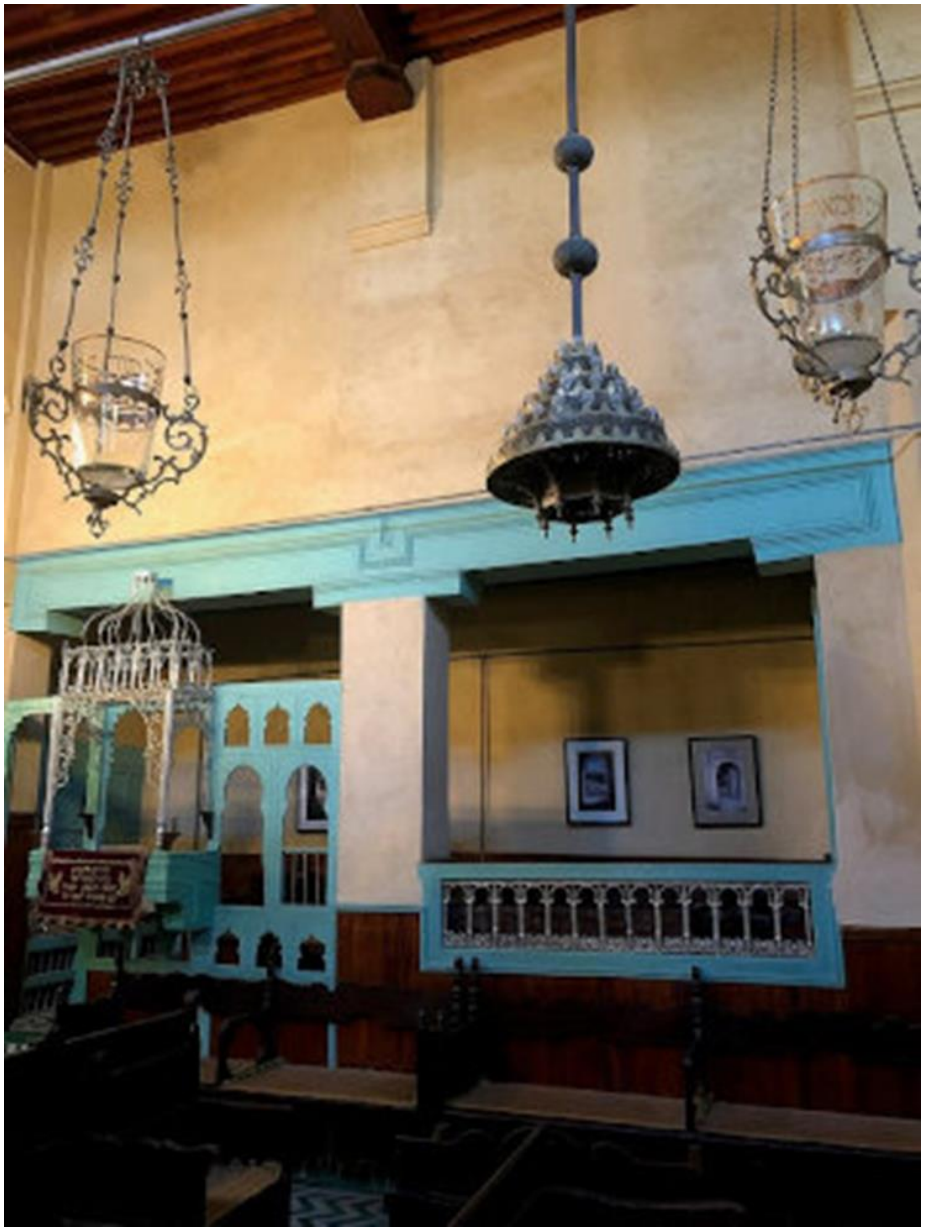
Jewish gravestones, some in Hebrew and some in Greek, were also found, with one referring to the head of the synagogue.

2. Darker times

One of the periods of harsh persecution of Jews in Morocco was during the reign of the Almohads dynasty, (1121- 1269) a radical Muslim dynasty bent on enforcing a strict and pious observance of Islam's rituals and laws. Jews were faced with conversion to Islam or death, compelling many to convert, or at least pretend to (which was possible due to the many similarities between Jewish and Islamic practice). In 1557 Spanish Jewish historian Joseph HaKohen wrote about the fierce persecution that "no remnant of Israel was left from Tangier on the northern tip of the country, 100 kilometers south to the port of Mehdya."

The later Almohads were not content with Jews stating they had accepted Islam upon themselves and forced them to wear a yellow cloth for a head-covering, making them the focus of even greater scorn and attack.

3. Golden Age of Tolerance and Jewish study



The Ibn Dahan synagogue, Fez

Following the first Arab conquest in 703, Morocco and especially Fez a spirit of tolerance pervaded attracting a diverse kind of population, including many Jews who contributed their commercial capabilities.

A thriving and vibrant community developed in the old city, known as the Medina. This beckoned in a golden age for the Jewish community which lasted for almost 300 years, from the 9th to 11th centuries and saw the creation of yeshivahs, attracting and producing brilliant scholars, poets and grammarians. The tolerance of this period left a powerful imprint in Moroccan culture. Today, the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in suburban Casablanca is the only museum on Judaism in the Arab world.

4. Home to Maimonides



Rabbi Moses Maimonides, one of the most prolific and influential Torah scholars in the Middle Ages, lived in Fez from 1159 to 1165. Originally from Cordova in Spain, he had fled with his family to escape the Almohad persecution of Jews. (Later this same persecution would see him leave Fez, eastward for Egypt)

It was in Fez that Maimonides, as well as serving as working as a physician to the Sultan, wrote one of his most famous works, his Commentary on the Oral Law. The stone home where he lived, still stands.

5. Mellah, the Moroccan Jewish quarter.



The entrance to the Mellah of Fez

The first *mellah*, a forced quarter for Jews, was created in 1438 in Fez and continued to recent times. The original pretext given was that the tomb of a Muslim saint had been located in the Medina. By royal decree, all non-Muslims were ordered to leave and resettle elsewhere.

The word *mellah* means salt, because the new Jewish quarter was based on salt deposit. It was the first of dozens of such areas, which due to Jewish commerce became busy areas for markets and trade.

A *mellah* was often surrounded by a wall with a fortified gateway and usually situated near the royal palace or the residence of the governor, in order to protect its inhabitants from recurring riots since its inhabitants played a vital role in the local economy.

To this day, Mellah's have bustling and lively markets, with many of their road names bearing the memory of once bustling Jewish populations.

6. Jewish prime minister

Aaron (Harun) Ibn Baṭash, was just one of many Jews to reach the highest position of vizier, in Morocco. A courtier and confidant of Sultan Abdel al-Haqq, Ibn Batash had moved to Morocco on account of the Inquisition in his native Spain and settled in Fez.

After a prolonged association with the court as a banker or tax collector, he was appointed vizier in 1464. As a result of his influence, Saul Ibn Batash, a close relative, was appointed chief of the police and director of the sultan's palace.

Ibn Batash imposed heavy taxes on the population but was accused by the Muslim leaders of using the money to support the impoverished Jews of the town. In addition, he was perceived as violating the code for dhimmis (non-Muslim minorities) by serving in such a high office, riding on horseback and wearing a sword. In consequence Muslim leaders incited the mob to attack the Jewish quarter. The sultan and his Jewish vizier were both assassinated.

7. Giants of Kabbalah

Morocco was home to some of the greatest kabbalists of the Jewish world including Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar, also known as the Or ha-Chayyim (The light of Life) after his kabalistic commentary on the Torah. Rabbi Abraham ben Mordecai Azulai (c. 1570–1643) was another such giant who wrote a commentary on the Zohar.

Among the pilgrimage sites for Jewish travellers in Morocco, the most popular is the tomb of Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Attar in Fez (1655–1733), who served as the chief rabbi of Fez. A saintly and pious man, he was known as a miracle worker and was revered by the local Jews and Muslims alike, who refused to accept a salary from the community.

8. Protecting its Jews

As a French colony, Morocco was subject to antisemitic decrees from Nazi-allied Vichy France during the Second World War. In 1941, Sultan Mohammed V refused to deport Morocco's 250,000 Jews to the killing factories of Europe.

As Morocco was under Vichy control, Mohammad V had little power in the prevention of Vichy discrimination laws, but he expressed his moral objection to them in his dealings with French officials.

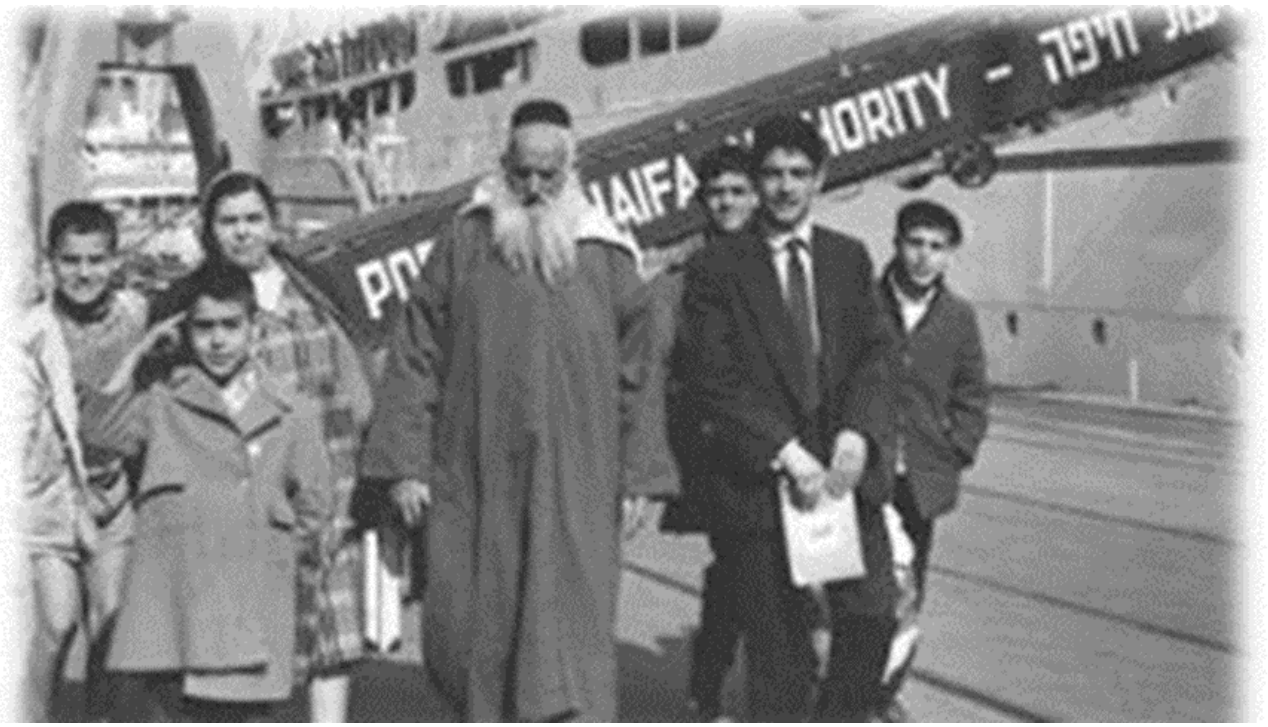
Mohammad V did protect the Jewish population in some ways, preventing the use of the Star of David as an identifier of Jewish subjects from use in Morocco. Mohammad V also insisted Vichy laws apply only to those who identified religiously as Jewish, rather than on birthright as was standard in Nazi policy. When asked by the nazis, "How many Jews are there in Morocco." He replied, "There are no Jews, we are all Moroccan!"

Despite this stand to shelter the Jewish community, some antisemitic laws were imposed on Morocco, with Jews working in colonial administration, physicians, bankers, pharmacists,

journalists, teachers, hospital nurses and others forced to abandon employment positions.

On November 7, 1942, American forces landed on the shores of Morocco as part of Operation Torch and quickly took control of the country.

9. Largest Jewish community in the Muslim world

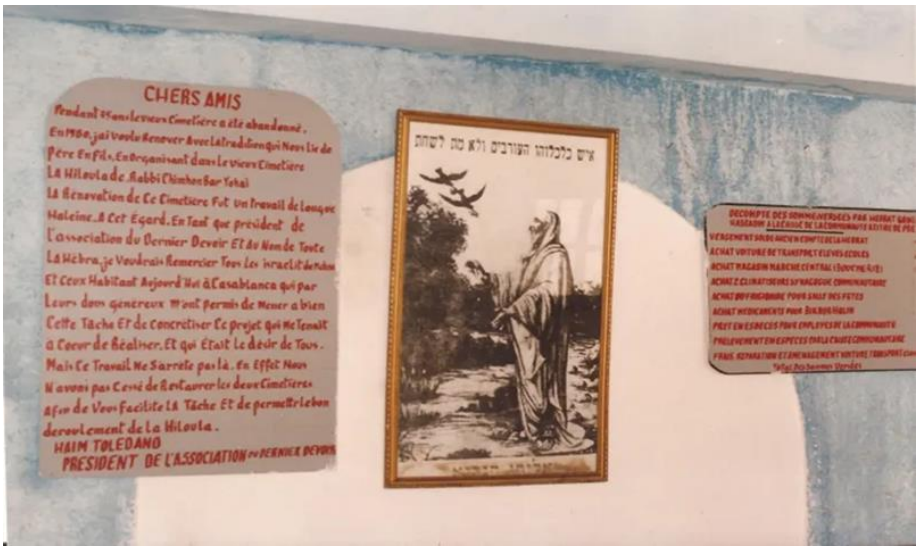


In 1948, before the majority began moving to Israel, the Jewish community of Morocco numbered 265,000 making it the largest Jewish community in the Muslim world.

Three reasons can explain this. Firstly, the continued presence of a Jewish community without expulsions, secondly the large influx of Spanish Jews from the inquisition there in 1492 and lastly, aside from the notable exception of the Almohad rule, Moroccan Jews were not forcibly converted with minorities, receiving protection from the King in return for protection dues.

The community has good relations with King Mohamed VI who encourages religious tolerance. Morocco has dozens of beautifully preserved and active synagogues.

Meknes



Meknes, the city of Moulay Ishmael, is one of the only cities in Morocco where the *mellah* does not adjoin the royal palace. It is also the only city where Jews decided to create a new *mellah* after the French Protectorate was installed. The European city houses several synagogues as well as a community centre. The new *mellah* is still the home for some of Meknes's 100 Jews, and one can visit a beautiful synagogue, the El Krief, nearby the new cemetery.



Jewish Cemetery Entrance

On the other side of the new *mellah* and adjoining the old *mellah* is the old Jewish cemetery. The cemetery of Meknes is unique with tombs embedded in the historic wall.

Several saints are found in the two cemeteries, including **Haim Messas, David Boussidan, and Raphael Berdugo**. In the Royal city of Meknes, the tomb of Moulay Ishmael memorializes the Alaouite Sultan who protected the Jews while securing control of the Moroccan empire.

The cemetery was founded in 1682 for Jews of the Meknes *mellah*, or Jewish quarter. One of the more notable kevarim is the shrine of

Rabbi Raphael Berdugo, a 19th-century "master of the Torah." Raphael Berdugo, a son of Rabbi Mordecai Berdugo, was a dayan, a scholar, and an influential Moroccan rabbi. Berdugo was respected by his contemporaries, and his decisions continue to be a source of inspiration to Moroccan rabbis.

His family - The Birdugo family is known in Morocco and especially in Meknes, as a dynasty of rabbis and dayan Poski Halakha, who began in the seventeenth century, served in the city.



Hacham Raphael Berdugo, known also as *HaMal'akh* (the Angel) Raphael, was born to Rachel and Hacham Mordecai, known as *HaMarbitz*, in 1747, in Meknes, Morocco. He began his studies with his elder brother, Hacham Yekutiel. At night, they would study by the light of the moon because they did not have the means to purchase candles.

In 1762, when he was 15 years of age, Hacham Raphael Berdugo's father died, and he continued his studies in dire poverty. Hacham Raphael Berdugo never forgot his life of poverty and when he reached adulthood he stood up for the Jewish poor. He often spoke in their praise in his commentaries on the Torah as well as when ruling public amendments (*takanot hakahal*).

Growing up, Raphael Berduga was a devoted and committed disciple. He used to «study the Torah at night in the basement of his house», Ben-Ami wrote, recalling that the Rabbi used to keep «his legs tied with a rope so that if started to doze, he would wake up and not miss his Torah studies.» [Some say that he tied his *payos* to a peg in the wall. There was also a cold pail of water on the floor in front of him, that would soak him and wake him up if he dozed off! He told his student not to tell anyone about this, but after his demise, this dedication to learning Torah should be publicised.]



Tombs Built into Wall

Berdugo was famous for making commentaries in Arabic to help his students and people who were not fluent in Hebrew to get a better understanding.

Hacham Raphael Berdugo married, and we know of four of his sons, one of whom was Hacham Maimon Berdugo, known as the MEVIN and author of the book, *Lev Mevin*.

Hacham Raphael Berdugo wrote his commentary on the Talmud, *Sharvit Zahav*, in 1771, when he was 24 years of age. He was appointed *Av Beit Din* (President of the Rabbinic Court) of Meknes while still in his thirties, and was considered his generation's foremost teacher of Halakha by the Maghreb communities.

He never forgot his life of poverty and when he reached adulthood he stood up for the Jewish poor. He often spoke in their praise in his commentaries on the Torah as well as when ruling public amendments.

As a community leader, Hacham Raphael Berdugo was a source of comfort and support for the Jews of the Maghreb, during the droughts and epidemics of plague that the Maghreb underwent in those years, and particularly during the riots that broke out between the years 1790 and 1792.

The riots were triggered in 1790 by the death of Mohammed, the Alawi Sultan and by the subsequent battles between his sons over the inheritance. Mulay Yazid, the son who seized power, went on a murderous rampage against the Jews of Morocco.

Hundreds of Jewish martyrs including women and children died horrible deaths, and the houses of the Jews were burned to the ground. The famous lamentation by Hacham David Hassin, the poet of that period (who was married to Hacham Raphael Berdugo's sister), was written to memorialize those riots.

Because of his pious and ascetic ways, Hacham Raphael Berdugo earned the name of "Raphael the Angel". On 21 Tishrei 5582 (1822), Hoshanna Raba Eve, after having completed the study of the *Idra* from the Book of Zohar and completed the *Tikun*, Hacham Raphael Berdugo passed away, at the age of 75. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Meknes unusual for that time - in a coffin. (see below)

Hacham Raphael Berdugo had many amendments made and authored books in various domains, some of which still remain in manuscript form. His published work includes *Mishpatim Yesharim* – Responsa, in two volumes; *Mei Menuhot* – on the Torah; *Sharvit HaZahav* – a commentary on the Talmud; *Hessed VeEmet* – sermons and eulogies; *Torah Emet* – on the *Arba'a Torim*; *Rav Peninim* – sermons; *Rokeach Mirkakhot* – on the legends in the Talmud; *Mesamchei Lev* – on the Torah; *Leshon Limudim* – on the Bible; *Kitzur Takanot Hachmei Castilla* – on the ritual slaughter and verification laws according to Maghreb custom.



A quote from the Rabbi on 'Torah Study' in which he teaches that "Torah is his craft" refers to those who study during the entire time when they are not engaged in their craft.

To whom does "Torah is their craft" refer? To those who engage minimally in a craft or commerce for their livelihood and review Torah or study on a regular basis, whenever they have a free moment … A Torah scholar for whom "Torah is his craft" returns to his studying at every opportunity that he is freed from his dealings. There have been Torah scholars who have a shop and spend most of

their day dealing in commerce, sitting in their shop all day, such as the one in Bzazin.

Just before his demise, he gathered all the sages of Meknes, and told them that the most important thing in life is to be diligent in Talmud Torah and Avodas Hashem.

And then, he insisted and commanded that he be buried in a coffin - **לפי שכל ימיו לא ראה טיפת קרי אפילו באונס** . **The Ramak** (Rabbi Moshe Cordevero quoted by R' Avraham Azulai) says : Somebody who is not a total Tzadik, should avoid being buried in a coffin. [The only person in T'nach buried in a **ארון** was Yoseph Ha'Tzadik.]

In 1821, Rabbi Raphael died, but his death was linked to a miracle. Two years after his death, the «king wanted to use his burial place», wrote Ben-Ami. They had to remove the saint's bones and «buried him some place else».

But what was surprising is that «when Berdugo's mortal remained were being removed from one place to another, they found the cloth enshrouding his body still pure white and his face shining as though he was just napping!».

The same book indicates that Berdugo's family «went to light a candle at his burial place on the eve of every Sabbath, new month, and holiday».

Rabbi Raphael Berdugo's hillulah is celebrated on Lag b'Omer, a Jewish holiday celebrated on the 33rd day of the Counting of the Omer, which occurs on the 18th day of the Hebrew month of Iyar.

May the merit of the tzadik Rabbi Raphael Berdugo protect us all.

Rabbi Berdugo emphasized that silence in the face of wrongdoing is a personal failing. He taught: If you encounter an injustice, you have a moral obligation to speak up.

Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan zt"l - הרב עמרם בן דיוואן בן אפרים זצ"ל

Av 15 , 5542 / Av 9 , 5542

It is always with a feeling of respect and awe that the Jews of Morocco evoke the holy name of Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan.



Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan was born in Jerusalem, and later he settled in Hebron. In 5523 (1743), he was chosen by the Rabbis of Hebron as an emissary to Morocco with the mission of collecting money for the yeshivas of the Holy Land.

He decided to settle in the Moroccan town of Wazan, and there he founded a Talmud-Torah and a yeshiva where numerous students

came to quench their thirst for study by drinking from the source of his words.



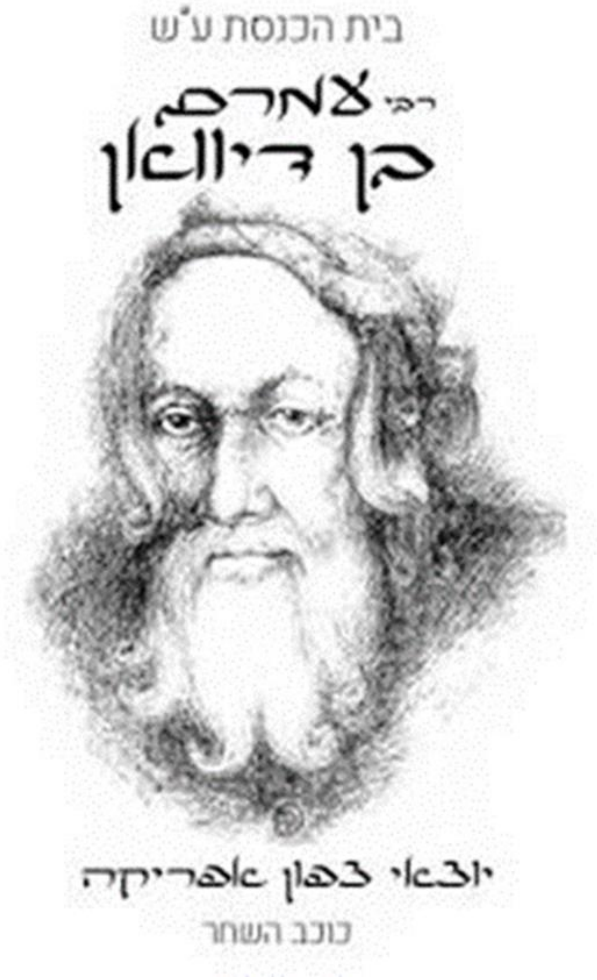
Rabbi Amram became attached to his students. His fatherly affection created a solid connection between him and his students. He provided for all their material needs, and spiritually directed them on the path that leads to the performance of G-d's will. By his rich and varied pursuits, he contributed to the elevation and dissemination of Torah in all the communities of Morocco. Rabbi Amram was also known for his miracles. His blessings always came to pass, and Jews would travel from all the towns of Morocco to urgently seek him in order to be delivered, through his merit, from their troubles.

He occupied himself with the well-being of everyone in particular, and the well-being of the community in general. His home was always open to all the afflicted who came knocking at his door, hoping that the Tzaddik would be their staunchest defender before our Father, the Holy One, blessed be He.

After a long stay in Morocco, Rabbi Amram felt a great longing for the Land of Israel. He therefore interrupted his holy work. His students, to whom he had taught Torah, had themselves become great scholars over the course of the years. Thus he decided to return to the Holy Land. When he arrived in Hebron, he became friends with Rabbi Haim Bagoyo and Rabbi Avraham Gedalia, the Rabbis of the city. Together they studied Torah and penetrated

many of its wondrous secrets, ascending day by day the rungs of perfection in Torah study and Divine service.

However, Rabbi Amram's stay in Hebron was short-lived. An unfortunate incident caused his departure, forcing him to take up the mantle of sojourner once again and return to Morocco. The following story describes what happened.



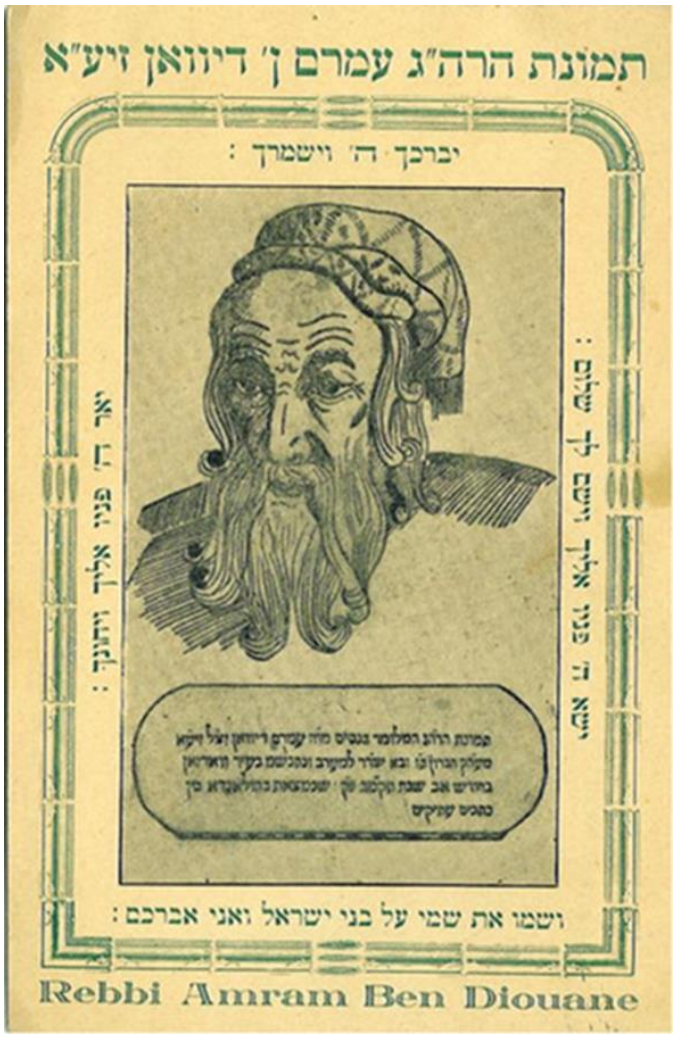
At that time, Jews were not permitted to enter into the tomb of the Patriarchs. However, for Rabbi Amram, this prohibition did not in the least quench his fervent desire to pray by the tomb of our Fathers. [primarily to expedite the Geulah and also pray for the recovery of his ill son.] He therefore disguised himself as an Arab, and without being noticed he entered the cave with the rest of the Muslims that had also come there to pray.

Imagine his emotions when he approached the tomb of the Patriarchs! As his face became drenched with tears, he quietly uttered his prayers, beseeching the Creator of the world to hasten the Final Redemption.

No one doubted that this "Muslim", so absorbed as he was in his prayer, was nothing other than a Jew. Suddenly, as Rabbi Amram was preparing to leave, an Arab saw and recognized him. Immediately, he ran to the Pasha and informed him of the offence.

Rabbi Amram incurred heavy suffering for such a sacrilege. A friend of Rabbi Amram, who was also a servant of the Pasha, hurried to warn him that he intended to arrest him. In the middle of the night,

Rabbi Amram, accompanied by his young son, Rabbi Haim, left their home.



They feared returning to Jerusalem or a neighbouring country because during that era Turkish power held sway over several countries. He therefore decided to return to Morocco.

As soon as he arrived in Fez, the city's inhabitants welcomed him with great honour. Many of the city's notable men quarrelled over the merit of having him as their guest. He was finally received by Rabbi Menasheh Ibn Denan, one of the leaders of Fez's Jewish community.

There are many fascinating stories of the yeshuos of those who were zoche to daven at the kever of the great tzadik and mekubal Reb Amram Ben Diwan in Morocco.

The story is told by Mr. Solomon Levy (president of the Community in in Gibraltar).

He told us about his nephew who was crippled from birth. *The parents of the boy decided to go to the tzion of Reb Amram.*

After praying, they went for a walk and left the boy in his wheelchair to continue praying by the Tzadik. The boy prayed a little then drifted off into a slumber.

In his dream a man with a white beard appeared. He said, "What are you doing in a cemetery? You are a Kohen. You must leave at once."

The boy replied, "I can't walk. How can I leave?"

Reb Amram replied, "Just pick yourself up and walk out." The boy awoke and, miraculously, he used his own two feet to wobble out of the kever. He continued with physical therapy and today is walking like a normal person!

The story is told that Rabbi Menasheh's children were all girls, and that another girl had just been born to him. Rabbi Amram advised him to name her Fedina, which means, "we have finished". In other words, we have finished giving birth to girls. And it was thus that after this girl, Rabbi Menasheh had only boys.

Not long after his arrival in Fez, Rabbi Amram and his son Rabbi Haim travelled to all the towns of Morocco in order to spread the teaching of Torah. He arrived in Sefru, where he lodged in the Elbaz home.

Having no children of their own, they asked him for a blessing to have a son. Rabbi Amram blessed them and promised that in the following year, at the very same time of year, the wife would give birth to a son who would later become a great Torah scholar.

The blessing of the Tzaddik came to fruition. The son who was born to the Elbaz family was given the name of the Tzaddik, Amram, and afterwards the name of Rabbi Amram of Sefru became famous as a Gaon and great Torah Scholar.

While Rabbi Amram was staying in the Elbaz home in Sefru, his son Rabbi Haim fell deathly ill. The doctors gave him no chance at recovering.

Rabbi Amram prayed to the Creator of the world that He take his soul in place of his son's. His son, Rabbi Haim, recovered from his illness. When he recovered, he was desperate for figs to eat. So Rav Amram sent a messenger to go to the market to buy figs. The messenger replied that there are no ripe figs to be had anywhere in Morocco. Rav Amram told him, "Just go."

Suddenly, somebody tapped him on the shoulder, and asked him, "would you like to buy figs?"

He thought the man was joking, but he said, "Let me see these figs."

The trader takes out 5 large luscious fresh figs.

He takes them to Rav Amram, who was not surprised and retorted – "Of course, they are **מגן עדן!"**

When they arrived in Wazan, Rabbi Amram himself fell gravely ill, and soon afterwards rendered his soul to his Creator.



Before his demise, he marked the place that he wanted to be buried under this ancient olive tree.

There is some speculation as to the exact date that he was niftar. On this plaque, which is not his actual burial plot, he wrote that he did not want a matzeivah, but just a pile of stones. (like Pinchos ben Yair.)

It says that **שנתבקש יום ט'ו** -that he passed away on the 15th of Av. This does not appear to be accurate.


ואת מצבת קבורת

הח' הש' והכו' זרע קודש
המלומד בנסים המקובל האלקי
מורינו רבינו עטרת ראשינו
מעוז ומגדול סבא רמשפטים
בבור ו המעולא רבי
עמרם ן' דיואן
שנתבקש יום טו אב ר'ש' תקמב (5542)
בעיר וואזאן ועשה נסים
עם העקרות והחולים זכותו תעמור לנו
ת נ צ ב ה

Rav Chaviv Toledano, who was related, maintained that he was actually niftar on **תשעה באב** but they waited 7 days until **יום ט'ו** so that they could celebrate his Hillulah.

The primary Hillulah for Rav Amram is celebrated on **ל"ג בעומר**.



Entrance to the cemetery of Rabbi Amram ben Diwane in Azjèn

The shrine of Rabbi Amram ben Diwane is one of Morocco's major Jewish shrines. It is located in the village of Azjèn (sometimes spelled Asjèn), about 6 kilometres north-west of the Sufi town of Ouezzane (or Wazzân). A paved road leads from Ouezzane directly to the shrine.

The tomb of Rabbi Amram became a place of pilgrimage for all the Jews of Morocco. Each year on Lag BaOmer, thousands of Jews come to Wazan to make the pilgrimage to the grave of the saint.

Numerous miracles are said to have occurred on his tomb: Incurable illnesses have been healed, the blind have regained their site, the mute have found their voice, the paralyzed have returned home on their own, and infertile women have had children after having prayed there.

They relate that a French military sergeant had a son who remained paralyzed after a serious illness. This sergeant had a Jewish friend that advised him to take his son to the tomb of Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan in Wazan. At first, the sergeant was sceptical and refused, but then later promised that if a miracle were to happen and his son would be healed, he would build a road with his own money in order to facilitate access to the tomb of the Tzaddik.



The tomb of Rabbi Amram, surrounded by an arcade

The miracle occurred: As soon as his son approached the tomb of Rabbi Amram, he was healed. The happy father kept his promise and constructed a road that leads to the tomb of Rabbi Amram.

The great poet, Rabbi David Ben Hassin, composed a liturgical poem especially in his honour, a song that is sung by the Jews of Morocco on the day of his Hilloula.

His son, Rabbi Haim Ben Diwan, continued his father's work. He travelled from town to town with the goal of instructing Torah. He died at a ripe old age and rests in the village of Anranz, south of Marrakech.

When he came to Morocco, he was held in high esteem for the quality of his drashos, but more so for the ability of his brachos which were accepted and answered and in being a **פועל ישועות - *'a miracle worker.'***

The Sefer Malchi Rabbanan describes how awesome Rav Amram and this place is.

וכמה נסים נעשים למשתטחים על קברו – הפלא ופלא - ***"How many countless miracles have occurred for those that daven at this location."***

אין הפה יכולה לספר מעט מהמעט ואחד מני אלף *"We can't even begin to recount all the miracles that have taken place."*

This is literaly from the most visited mesugal, powerful places of any kever in the entire world. May his merit protect us and may all our tefillos be answered - Amen.

"Faith is not found in the miracle; the miracle is found because of the faith." ~ Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan zt"l.

He taught through his actions that a person's prayer is effective only when they have completely nullified their ego (Bittul) and care only for the pain of their fellow Jew.

This is why thousands still travel to his grave in the mountains of Morocco every year on his Hiloula (anniversary of passing) to pray for healing.

Rabbi Amram taught that the "gates of heaven" are always open to those who approach with absolute sincerity.

The Fez Riots 1912 - Nisan 30 5672

The Fez riots in April 1912 broke out in protest against the French imposition of the protectorate regime in Morocco. They erupted in Fez, then the Moroccan capital, on Wednesday, April 17, 1912. The Fez Riots were also known as the Fez Uprising or Mutiny, the Tritl-התריתל "the Pillage"and the Bloody Days of Fez.



Since each of the involved groups had its own historiographic perspective on the event, it is not surprising that Moroccan Jews referred to the violent riots that engulfed them as "the Pillage", whereas Muslim nationalists have dubbed them "the Fez Uprising", and French colonial historians speak of "Fez's Bloody Days."

According to the report on the front page of Le Matin on April 19, 1912, the riots broke out in Fes at about 11:00 am Wednesday April 17, 1912. The rebels killed three wireless telegraphy workers and injured a fourth to cut connections with the outside world.

The sultan, Abdulhafid, was besieged by rebels at his palace. The soldiers attacked their French commanders, then left their barracks and attacked the European and Jewish quarters of the city.

According to the Moroccan historian, "the French commander, General Brulard, thinking that the Jews were supporting the insurgents, ordered his artillery to shell the mellāḥ, causing great devastation, and wounding and killing many people, both Jews and Muslims."

Rioting broke out in the Mellah, the Jewish quarter of the city of Fez, Morocco, in response to Sultan Malai Hafiz's decision to make Morocco a French protectorate. 5000 armed soldiers rebelled against their French overseers, shooting and killing them, then marched against the French embassy.

Confronted by intense French rifle fire, they retreated to the Mellah, whose Jewish inhabitants tried unsuccessfully to lock the gates and keep the army out.

Breaking into the Jewish quarter, their attacks quickly turned into pogroms. The rioters, both soldiers **and** civilians, looted private homes, stores and synagogues, attacked and killed Jews wherever they found them including women and young girls.

Fifty-one Jews were killed in what became known as the Tritel, including eighteen women and ten children; dozens more were severely wounded.

The twelve thousand Jews living in the Mellah fled to safe havens in the Sultan's private zoo and menagerie. They were forced to spend weeks in conditions of severe overcrowding and lack of sanitation, often in cages next to wild lions!

Apart from the victims maimed and killed, and the damage to property, hundreds of rare manuscripts were destroyed in the Tritel, including some works existing only in a single copy which were thus lost forever.

The rebels surrendered after two days. The death toll included 66 Europeans, 51 Moroccan Jews and some 600 Moroccan Muslims.

"A terrifying scene is presented there for hundreds of emaciated human beings are huddled together in empty cages of the Sultan's menagerie, and these are surrounded by cages containing wild beasts, which maddened by the sight and smell of human flesh fill the gardens with their roars…."



Jewish families emerge from the safety of their enclosures. Note the lioness in the neighboring cage!

Shocking images of the Jews sheltering, behind bars were splashed across the front pages of Jewish newspapers around the world, driving home the terrible tragedy that befell the Fez Jews and leading to an outpouring of support from communities around the globe.



MASSACRE AT FEZ.

MOORISH SAVAGERY.

JEWS THROWN FROM HOUSETOPS AND VIOLATED.

800 RIOTERS KILLED.

The events were mentioned by several rabbanim who lived in Morocco at the time. Rav Yosef Messas, later the rav of Tlemcen -Algeria, and Haifa , was residing in Meknes at the time. He recounted how as soon as local Jews heard the news, they travelled to Fez with food and supplies, even as the violence was still raging.

Due to the violence, the capital of Morocco was moved to the city of Rabat, where it remains to this day. Meanwhile, France ruled Morocco until the Treaty of Fez was undone by the Franco-Moroccan Joint Declaration on March 2nd 1956.

English Weekly
בס"ד
עץ החיים
© כל הזכויות שמורות נלקט ע"י ח.ב.בלוי

Two Lions



At times, one will see on top of an **ארון הקודש** two **לוחות** with a figure of a lion on each side. The question is: Why are there lions over there?

On one side of the **לוחות** are written the **מצות בין אדם למקום** and on the other side the **מצות בין אדם לחבירו**.

There are Three Types of People:

1 – A person who when it pertains to his **עבודת ה'**, he is the best *davener*, the best **עובד ה'**, etc., however, when it comes to **בין אדם לחבירו**, if someone by mistake sits in his **מקום קבוע** they are finished…

2 – A person who when it comes to **בין אדם לחבירו**, he is the world's biggest **בעל חסד**, everyone knows that if they need help, they can turn to him. He is kind, and nice to others, and a pleasure to be around. However, when it comes to his **עבודת ה'**, he davens half asleep, he wastes his time most of the day, he is very weak in his **עבודת ה'**.

To be a proper Jew, there is no concept of just having one without the other.

The 2 **לוחות** were put together because one cannot just take the **אדם בין למקום**, without the **בין אדם לחבירו** or vice versa **ח״ו**.

Therefore, these lions are on each side of the **לוחות** are there to stand guard, hinting to this idea. They are "making sure" that no one takes one without the other.

3 - The ultimate Yid that we attempt to be is one who has both attributes, one who is **שלם** in his service to Hashem ***and*** **שלם** in the way he acts toward other people. This is the definition of "A mentch".



The Saga of The Chopped Esrog

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר (23:40) "*You shall take for yourselves on the first day a beautiful fruit of a tree*."

There was once a simpleton who went to the big city to purchase the most beautiful esrog for his new son-in-law. Upon coming back to town, his friend, also a simpleton, saw the beautiful esrog and begged to buy it.

The first simpleton would not agree. "I'll buy half!" his friend offered. On that he agreed. The esrog was cut in half and they were both happy. The simpleton who had travelled to the big city came running to his new son-in-law and handed him his precious gift. The fresh son-in-law opened the box and sees half an esrog!

He looks at his new shver angrily and asked him "What's this!?" "What do you mean? Why are you upset at the most beautiful esrog that I bought for you!"

His son-in-law explained, "If you would have bought me an esrog that wasn't beautiful, but complete, I would have showered you with Bracha. Now that you gave me an esrog that is chopped in half, what is its value? His shver understood and was very ashamed of what he did! (mashal by the **Chofetz Chaim**.)

The Chofetz Chaim explained that the same is true if someone is medakdek in his Bein Adam LaMakom but fails to work on his bein Adam Lachavaro.

Frum.org - Weekly Dvar Torah - Michael Winner

וְכִי־תִזְבְּחוּ֙ זֶ֣בַח־תּוֹדָ֔ה לַיהוָ֖ה לִרְצֹנְכֶ֥ם תִּזְבָּחֻֽהוּ "***When you sacrifice a thanksgiving offering to Hashem, sacrifice it so that it may be acceptable in your favour***" (Vayikra 22:29).

The "Korban Todah," the "Thanksgiving Offering," is the only one that the Torah uses the language "acceptable in YOUR favour," compared to the standard language "His favour." To understand this, we first need to explain the famous pasukim from Tehillim that is used in Hallel.

אָנָּ֣ה ה' כִּי־אֲנִ֣י עַבְדֶּ֑ךָ אֲנִ֥י עַבְדְּךָ֗ בֶּן־אֲמָתֶ֫ךָ֥ פִּתַּ֥חְתָּ לְמוֹסֵרָֽי "*O L-rd, I am Your servant, Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have undone the cords that bound me.*

לְךָ֣־אֶזְבַּ֣ח זֶ֭בַח תּוֹדָ֑ה וּבְשֵׁ֖ם ה' אֶקְרָֽא *I will sacrifice a Thanksgiving Offering to You and invoke the name of the L-rd* " (Tehillim 116:16-17).

The Maharit explains it as follows:

" *O L-rd, I am Your servant, Your servant, the son of Your maidservant*" – I am a mere human. Son of a mere human. I am also Your servant. A servant who is completely dependent on you for everything in life, including life itself. How can I possibly do anything against Your will?

"*You have undone the cords that bound me*" – Yet … You have given me free choice. I can either do Your will or go against it.

"*I will sacrifice a Thanksgiving Offering to You*" – The word "Todah" is related to the word "Hodah," to agree or to acknowledge. And there is no concept of "Hodah" unless there is the ability to not agree or acknowledge (for example, we don't acknowledge the sun or air, since it's there and there's no room to disagree on that point). Therefore, Dovid HaMelech is saying, "Even with my free choice to not acknowledge Your presence in this world, I WILL acknowledge it! And I will call out Your name!"

With that, explains **Rav Yom Tov Lipman Halprin**, is the key to the Korban Todah. A person does not bring a Korban Torah to thank Hashem for the bounty of the physical world (for Hashem's favour). Rather he brings it to thank Hashem for the ability to choose whatever he wants, and nevertheless he says, "I'm dedicating my 'choice' towards You and I'm acknowledging Your constant presence in my life. He's, in essence, thanking Hashem for the ability to direct HIS "favour" in the way he sees fit.

We see how great the "power of choice" is. Hashem did not create robots to serve Him but created Man to choose to serve himself in Hashem's direction.

Be kinder than necessary. Everyone is healing from something, and behind every smile may rest an untold struggle. A gentle word or kind gesture can be the lifeline someone has been waiting for.

Compassion may not solve every battle, but it reminds the fighter they're not alone. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810).

Reb Yoel Rottenstien on The Parsha

רבי זלמן סורוצקין פרק כב:כח

ושור או שה אותו ואת בנו לא תשחטו ביום אחד ***"An ox or a lamb, the mother and the son, you should not slaughter on the same day."***

The gemara learns from here that even if Reuven does shechita on an ox it's assur for anyone else to slaughter that ox's son on that day. We see that as soon as one person kills an ox the child becomes assur to the entire Klal Yisrael .

We see from here how each person in Klal Yisrael is connected to everyone else.

Klal Yisrael comes from one large neshama with many separate bodies. Bnei Yisrael are all part of a greater whole.

"Sefira is not just about counting the days; it's about making the days count."

וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת כג:טו ***"And you should count for yourselves, from the day after the day of rest (Pesach)..."***

Why do we count sefira between Pesach and Shavous ?

The main purpose in leaving Mitzrayim was to receive the Torah on Har Sinai . This means that every Jew must occupy himself as much as possible with learning Torah.

Unfortunately, people do not understand the value of time and they waste time that could have been used for learning.

Counting sefira before Shavous is a preparation for Kabalas HaTorah . Sefira serves as a reminder to every Jew to use every free moment for learning Torah.

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֱמֹר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לְנֶפֶשׁ לֹא־יִטַּמָּא בְּעַמָּיו

The secret of success in chinuch is how we speak to our children. Rashi tells us that the reason it says twice in the posuk "TO SAY" ("**אֱמֹר- וְאָמַרְתָּ**") is to teach the adults what to say to children. And what should they say? "BNEI AHARON"!

This is not only to WHOM it should be said; this is also WHAT should be said!

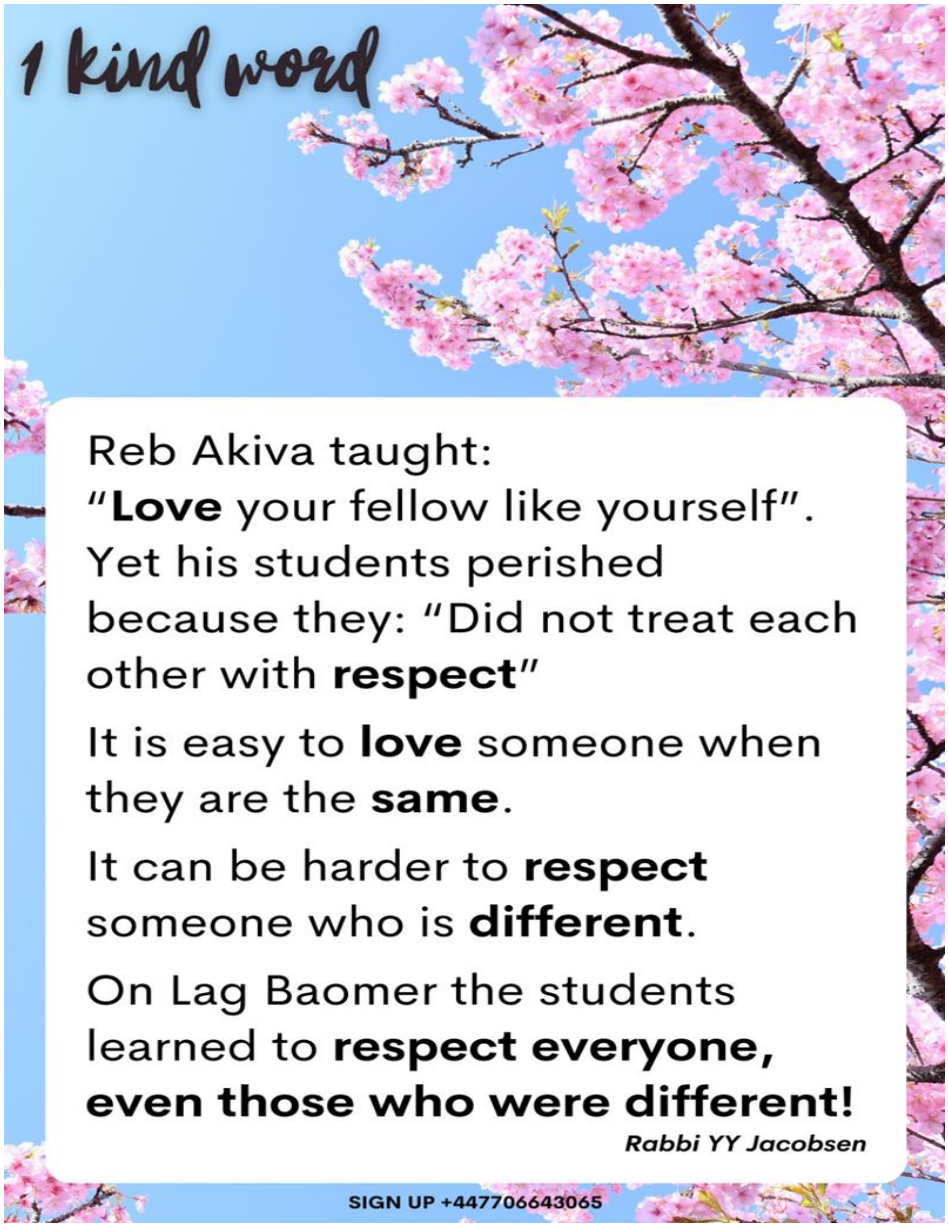
In other words, says the **Cheshev Sofer zt"l**, tell your children, "YOU are the great and holy children of Aharon. You must not make yourselves impure because YOU are special!"

There are two paths in avodas Hashem: "**סור מרע**" - stay away from evil, and "**עשה טוב**" - do good.

Says the **Kotzker Rebbe zt"l**, the way to stay away from evil is by doing good! Only with good will one get good! It is not necessary to harp on the negative. Giving our children speeches on all the things they do wrong will usually create anger and resistance. Praising our children for what they do right and telling them how special they are - this will Bezras Hashem create self-confidence and pride in themselves and a desire to please their parents.

Talk to your kids like they are truly special, and you will be pleasantly surprised!

"Eliyahu Hanavi will not enter through the door or even the window. He will come by way of your heart and your mind." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.



Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֱמֹר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לְנֶפֶשׁ לֹא־יִטַּמָּא בְּעַמָּיו

The Pasuk says, **אֱמֹר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים** – Say to the Kohanim… **וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם** and say to them.

Why does the Pasuk use the word 'say' twice?

The first **אֱמֹר** is to tell the Kohanim about performing the actual mitzvos, and the second **אֱמֹר** is to tell them to love and cherish the mitzvos. [Dvar Torah is from **ספר עלינו לשבח**]

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת...תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם 23:15-16



Parshas Emor contains the mitzvah known as Sefiras HaOmer – counting the Omer. During each successive day of this 7-week period, we are commanded to count the passing days and weeks.

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein relates that a weak and sickly centenarian once approached him shortly before Pesach with an interesting question.

A person who forgets or for any reason is unable to count even one night of Sefiras HaOmer is unable to continue counting on successive nights with a blessing, as the nightly counting for seven weeks is considered one extended mitzvah. According to many opinions, the blessings recited until then are retroactively considered to have been in vain.

The man's doctors told him that based on his poor medical condition he would surely die before Shavuos, seven weeks later. He wanted to know whether he was permitted to recite the nightly blessing when beginning to count Sefiras HaOmer, as the laws of nature seemed to indicate that he would be prevented from completing the mitzvah, thereby invalidating his blessings.

Rav Zilberstein responded that when a clever child has a tremendous craving for a sweet that his mother refuses to give him, he will shrewdly recite its appropriate blessing **שהכל בדברו נהיה**, essentially forcing his mother to give him a bite so that his blessing should not be in vain.

Similarly, Rav Zilberstein advised the man that by beginning to count with a blessing, he could in effect "force" the Heavenly Court to allow him to remain alive until after Shavuos to complete the mitzvah.

It should not be surprising that, contrary to the doctor's prognosis, the man indeed passed away the week after Shavuos.

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

A Talmid Chochom

וְלֹא תְחַלְּלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם קָדְשִׁי "And you shall not profane my Holy Name" [Vayikra 22:32].

The Chofetz Chaim once sent his son on a mission. The Chofetz Chaim warned his son to be careful as to how he acts. For if he would act in a fashion which was even slightly inappropriate ("es passt nisht") for a Torah scholar, it would be a Desecration of G-d's Name.

Rav Pam relates that the Chofetz Chaim's son inquired of his father, "But, I am not a Talmid Chochom? I certainly do not fall into the category regarding which the Ramba"m writes 'a great Torah authority, an individual renowned for his religiosity…' I am a simple Jew."

The Chofetz Chaim responded, "To create a Chilul Hashem, you are enough of a Talmid Chochom".

The Chofetz Chaim wrote an entire sefer, Ahavas Chesed, dedicated to the idea that doing kindness is not a "bonus" but a daily obligation that draws down Divine protection.



וְכִי־תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח־תּוֹדָה לַה' לִרְצֹנְכֶם תִּזְבָּחוּ It is normal to thank *Hashem* after having come through a difficult or traumatic experience. Indeed, in **הלכה** there are four types of people who are obligated to bring a **קרבן תודה**, or today say **ברכת הגומל** such as someone who has been released from prison or someone who was ill but has now recovered.

However, every day throws up its own challenges, even if they're not particularly drastic, and **for every challenge we overcome we should also offer thanks to *Hashem***.

The **שיח השדה** quotes the **אוהל יעקב** who says that if can we learn to acknowledge *Hashem's* kindness for overcoming the small problems we face then we will in fact avoid the big problems.

This can be learnt from the *posuk*: **ששון ושמחה ישיגו ונסו יגון ואנחה** … In other words, by feeling and expressing joy for everyday miracles, greater and more painful problems will be diverted away from us.

When a person is able to master the "attitude of gratitude", he will spend his every day in a state of **שמחה** , days that he desires and enjoys. He will then be able to thank *Hashem* without having to first go through hardship in order to generated that gratitude.

This can be seen in our *posuk*: ***When you bring an offering of thanksgiving to Hashem, "for your desire", you should offer it...*** Meaning, ideally your gratitude should come from a place of constant contentment rather than a life resembling a roller coaster of ups and downs.

By stopping in the middle of a busy day to take stock of your blessings, you can both feel the joy of that moment as well as warding off more unpleasant moments…

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

Parsha Pearls

In this week's parsha the Torah speaks about Shabbos Kodesh: **שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים֮ תֵּעָשֶׂה מְלָאכָה֒ וּבַיּ֣וֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִ֗י שַׁבַּ֤ת שַׁבָּתוֹן֙ מִקְרָא־קֹ֔דֶשׁ**... ***[For] six days, work may be performed, but on the seventh day, it is a complete rest day, a holy occasion***… [23:3]

In Tehillim we see the following words in connection to Shabbos Kodesh: **מִזְמ֗וֹר שִׁ֥יר לְי֨וֹם הַשַּׁבָּ֜ת׃ לְהַגִּ֣יד בַּבֹּ֣קֶר חַסְדֶּ֑ךָ וֶֽאֱמוּנָתְךָ֖ בַּלֵּילֽוֹת** ***A mizmor song for the day of Shabbos...To talk about Your kindness in the morning and Your faith at the nights***. [92:3]

Why does the mizmor for Shabbos day tell us that it is proper to talk about Hashem's kindness in the morning and His faith at nights?

In his commentary on Tehillim, the **Radak** writes the following explanation of the above-mentioned verse: By day and by night we need to relate about the kindness that You did for us - in that You gave us the day of Shabbos for menucha.

Hence, what's appropriate for a Jew to do, is to thank Hashem for Shabbos when he wakes up each morning. And before he retires each night, thank Hashem again for Shabbos. Take this advice and see if your Shabbos will be different from now on!

וְעִנִּיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם בְּתִשְׁעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ ***And you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth of the month.*** 23:32

"*One who eats and drinks on the ninth day of Tishrei (the day before Yom Kippur) is regarded by Scripture as if he had afflicted his soul on both the ninth day and the tenth.*"{Berachos 8:2}

Why should eating on Erev Yom Kippur be regarded as afflicting one's soul?

Said The Rebbe **Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk ZY"A**; "If, on the eve of Yom Kippur, one would contemplate the holy and fearful day about to begin, how could one possibly wish to eat?

Indeed, observing the commandment to eat on the ninth day of Tishrei would then become a real hardship." – **Sipurei Chasidim**

Pearls of Wisdom…

The Vilna Gaon, zt"l, was once asked to explain what Bitachon means, to have trust in Hashem. He cited a Pasuk in Tehilim (131:2), where Dovid Ha'melech says that he taught himself to be content like a child is content by his mother. A little child is never nervous about the next time he will be fed. He knows that if he is hungry, he will scream out, and his mother will come and feed him.

The Vilna Gaon explained that people who don't live constantly with Hashem feel the need to create their own sense of security. In this way, they are really only trusting in themselves.

To trust in Hashem means to be calm and comfortable like a baby is, knowing that his mother will feed him when he calls out for her!

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 59a): Underscores the need to honour one's wife, as blessings in the home are attributed to her.

וּבְקֻצְרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אַרְצְכֶם לֹא־תְכַלֶּה פְּאַת שָׂדְךָ בְּקֻצְרֶךָ וְלֶקֶט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תְלַקֵּט לֶעָנִי וְלַגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם *When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap the corner of the field or the gleaning of the harvest. Leave them for the poor.... (Lev. 23:22)*

Rabbi Abdimi asked, "Why did Scripture choose to place this law in the middle of the section dealing with the festivals? To teach us that whoever leaves the 'corners' and 'gleanings' for the poor, it is as if he built the Holy Temple and presented his [festival] offerings there.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

עשה לך רב! - Make for yourself a Rov!

A personal reflection on the impact on my life by the Manchester Rov, Horav Menachem Mendel Schneebalg, Zt"l (b 5681 – nifter – Acharon Shel Pesach 5781), presented as a three-part series.

Part 2

Whilst working for the Shul, one of my duties became to organise the Chuppa. This involved overseeing the setting up of the Chuppa, and ensuring everything was at hand that might be needed. Ba'alei Simcha would often ask advice and seek guidance. Often that would include questions about where to obtain the standard copy of the MH Kesuba and how to fill it in. My usual response was to purchase it from one of the local mocher seforim, and then take it to the Rov. He would fill in the blanks and then bring the Kesuvoh to the Kabolas Ponim/Chuppa. (I would also remind the Baal Simcha that it's correct to give 'an envelope' to the Rov).

As time went on, the Rov's handwriting wasn't as clear as it used to be, and I could hear people commenting on it. This greatly bothered me. Things came to a head, when after one particular Chuppa, some people close to the wedding family, decided, after the Chuppa, to write another Kesuba, but made a mistake whilst writing it, so

proceeded to write a second one. This one turned out to be faulty, so they wrote a third one, which also turned out to be wrong. They decided to ask a Posek in Eretz Yisroel as to what they should do. The reply they got was, "what's wrong with the original one?"

This incident spurred me to do something for the Rov's Kovod. There were instances where the Baal Simcha had presented other formats for the kesuba, ie, graphic drawings, or artistic drawings with all the relevant details already inserted. Taking a cue from these, from then on, I told the Ba'alei Simcha, to take the Kesuva to one of the local Sofrim, with a copy of the invitation, and ask him to fill in the blank spaces, and then take it to the Rov. The Rov only asked a couple of times as to who had written in the details. When he heard that a local Sofer had done it, he expressed his satisfaction and didn't ask again. This then became the norm.

The Rov once called me to his house and entrusted me to arrange for his passport to be renewed. Besides getting the relevant form, and filling out all the details, I needed to obtain a new passport photo. I obviously couldn't take him to a photo machine, so I arranged to take the Rov to Yaffe the photograph shop on Cheetham Hill. Mr Yaffe remembered the Rov from the days he used to be the photographer at Heimishe events.

I was actually embarrassed to have bought the Rov to this shop because the walls were full of various wedding portraits. But the Rov kept his eyes focused on the floor. After the photo was taken, we had to wait a few minutes for the print to be ready; the Rov continued to look downwards. Suddenly he said to me in yiddish, "there is a heimisher photo up on top". I remember glancing around and seeing that at the top corner was a barmitzvah photo of a Chasidisher Man with his son. I was amazed as to how the Rov noticed the photo without even looking up.

On another occasion, the Rov called me before a yom tov, and told me that in his opinion there are more people now who don't wear

Tephilin on Chol Hamoed, than that do, so he wanted me, in his name, to make arrangements for Tephillin wearers to Daven in the lady's shul or in the Hall. The Gabboyim were surprised, but with a clear notice on the yomtov zemanim sheets that I published, it soon became the new norm. It should be explained that until this time, the minhag hamokom was never established, because the original settlers all had different minhogim from before the war.

Once when I was driving the Rov to visit the milk farm before Pesach, he explained why he preferred to give hashgocho for pesach sugar from 'Silver Spoon' sugar refinery instead of Tate and Lyle, where everyone else seemed to get it from.

He related that one year he took Dayan Weiss zzl, the Minchas Yitzchok, to view the Silver Spoon factory. The Minchas Yitzchok used to boil his sugar before pesach. After completing the tour, The Minchas Yitzchok said he liked the factory because the sugar beet is harvested in the UK, and the whole production can be seen, whereas Tate and Lyle use sugar cane which comes from African countries already partially processed. The Rov said he is makpid to see the whole process and was pleased that the Minchas Yitzchok approved.

Whilst I was working in the Shul, The Rov once asked me after Maariv, whether there was a Levonoh. I said that I had been out to look but it was cloudy and therefore the moon was not visible.

The Rov said " it's your job to make sure there is a moon!", Responding to what I perceived as the Rov's humorous remark, I said "If the Rov says it's my job, then I accept it as my job".

In Manchester, the sky is often cloudy, especially in the evenings, but every time I went out to look for the moon, after this incident, and the sky was cloudy, I waved my hands in the air, and waited a few minutes, and watched the clouds part, giving a clear view of the moon. - Even a word said in jest by the Rov, had a tremendous power.

On one occasion, I had arranged to accompany the Rov to visit a factory. In order to arrive at the factory at the appointed time, we needed to daven at the first Minyan and leave straight after. It happened to be the day England was playing football against Argentina, in South America. Due to the time difference, the match worked out at 9 AM (UK time). One of the Ba'alei Batim asked the Rov (tongue-in-cheek) whether he was davening early so that he could follow the match. The Rov replied, "Avade (sure)". On the way out, the Rov remarked to me, "I don't even know who is playing". His Ba'alei Batim loved him for his sense of humour.

The Rov was very much involved in the machine matzoh production for the Kehilla, although he himself only ate handmade Shemurah Matzos. He would travel himself to the bakery, to ensure everything was done to his satisfaction. Until I worked in the MH office, I didn't know that the Rov always had a box of machine matzos in his house over Pesach, although, as stated above, he didn't eat them, but felt the responsibility to show that he held they were perfectly ok. When the Rebitzen was not well, later in her life, the Rov requested extra boxes of machine matzos.

Whilst being involved in the distribution of the Kehilla machine matzohs, we started getting asked for Shemurah Matzoh Meal. I asked the Rov, what was the point of Shemurah Matzoh Meal if it was going to be used for baking and cooking. Wasn't this the opposite of what Shemurah matzoh is all about? He answered that Pesach is a time when people take on chumras and have minhogim handed down from parents. It is not a contradiction to be machmir only to have Shemurah Matzoh per se but still use matzoh meal for cooking. This is now the only Matzoh Meal that MH make.

To be continued with Part 3, next week, IYH.

Good Shabbos -Aaron Leitner

The Weekly Vort

■ **כי אם לשארו הקרב אליו – *Except for the relative who is closest to him*** (21:2).

This refers to the Kohein's wife. - Why is a wife considered one's closest relative?

Yalkut Sofer explains: Other relationships are not unique to one person. A mother is a mother to all her children; a child is a child to both his parents; a sister or brother is common to all of their siblings. Only a husband or a wife are uniquely related to their spouse. Thus, the Kohein's wife is his closest relative. (The Torah Treasury)

10 Seconds That Changed His Life by Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

There was a man who once signed up for a seminar run by an organization called Arachim. These seminars were designed for Jews who had never really been exposed to Torah—to give them a chance to ask questions, to explore, to see if there was something real there.

But this man? He wasn't interested. Not even a little. He sat through the sessions—uninspired, disconnected, unmoved.

On the second day, one of the rabbis—**Rav Shimshon Pinkus**—approached him. "How are you enjoying the seminar?" he asked.

The man didn't hold back. "Honestly? Nothing. I'm not enjoying it at all. I already paid, so I'll stay—for the food, maybe the pool… but this? It's not for me."

Rav Pinkus smiled gently. "Can I ask you for one small favor?"

"You've been nice to me. Sure. What do you need?"

"It will take you ten seconds," the rabbi said.

"What is it?"

"For the next few nights… count the Omer."

"That's it?"

"That's it. Tonight, say: 'Today is 14 days.' Tomorrow night: '15 days.' The next night: '16 days.' Just say the words."

"To make you happy? No problem."

That night—he counted. The next night—he counted again. By the third night—something had already begun to change. Within days, the organizers couldn't believe what they were seeing. This man—who had been completely closed—was opening, connecting, becoming inspired.

They went to Rav Pinkus. "Rabbi… what happened?"

Rav Pinkus answered with something profound. "The nature of counting the Omer," he said, "is that it expresses value." "It says—I care. I'm counting toward something. I want the Torah." "And even if it's just for ten seconds—for those ten seconds… he told Hashem: 'I love You. I want a relationship with You.'" "And that changes everything."

The Torah tells us: **אִם תַּעַזְבֵנִי יוֹם, יוֹמַיִם אֶעֱזָבֵךְ** -"If you leave Me for one day—I will leave you for two." But Chazal teach: **מִדָּה טוֹבָה מְרוּבָּה** —Hashem rewards good far more than He responds to distance. One moment of connection can outweigh so much more.

That man gave Hashem ten seconds. Ten seconds of connection. Ten seconds of saying: I care. And those ten seconds opened a door—to Torah, to tefillah, to meaning.

Sometimes people wait for something dramatic. But sometimes… it's just ten seconds that change everything.

Success is the maximum utilization of the ability that you have.



You Are So Special!

Between 1880 and 1942 there was a mass immigration of Jews to America. The Jews came to escape violent pogroms, poverty, and persecution. Life in America was very difficult for them. The immigrant parents often struggled with economic hardship and the challenges of keeping Shabbos. Most jobs at that time required working on Shabbos. Employees who did not work on Shabbos were fired. Often, they would have to look for another job every week to support their families. It was very challenging.

Unfortunately, the mantra that many of these Jews said to their families was, ***"Es iz shver tzu zein a Yid"***, "It is hard to be a Jew". They constantly conveyed their struggles to their children. Thus, they created an impression that Torah observance is a burdensome life to avoid.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l remarked that the constant repetition of this mantra created a negative attitude towards Judaism. That attitude caused massive assimilation and loss of Torah observance in America. Rav Moshe zt"l said that Jews must fulfill the mitzvos with joy and highlight the privilege of Jewish identity rather than the burden.

Hashem calls us a holy nation, "mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh" (Shmos 19:6). We are "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The Jewish People are holy, are responsible for serving Hashem, and are meant to be a positive influence on the world. The standards are higher for a prince than for a regular person. Accordingly, we Jews are held to higher standards than others. We are considered Hashem's children. "Banim Atem LaHashem Elokeichem", "You are sons to Hashem…" (Devarim 14:1).

There is an unbreakable, loving bond between the Jewish people and Hashem, like that of a parent and child. Hashem's love is unconditional as a parent's love is to a child. Hashem also tells us, "if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own treasure from among all peoples for all the earth is mine" (Shmos 19:5).

When we follow the Torah and the mitzvos we will be considered Hashem's treasured people. Sforno says that even though all mankind is important to Hashem, the Jewish People will be treasured above and beyond.

The first words of the pasuk (Vayikra 21:1) are "**וַיֹּאמֶר ד׳ אֶל מֹשֶׁה**", "***And Hashem spoke to Moshe***". Why doesn't the Torah use the more common phrase, " **וַיְדַבֵּר ד׳ אֶל מֹשֶׁה**"?

Our Sages tell us that the latter is a harder type of speech, the former is a much softer type of speech. Since the Torah is giving the kohanim a list of restrictions such as what they can eat, whom they can marry and, for which people they can become impure for burial purposes, we would think that the Torah would have used the harder type of speech. Yet, the Torah employed the much softer expression. Why?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (sefer Darash Moshe) says a beautiful thought:

The role of the kohanim was to be the spiritual mentors of the Jewish people (Devarim 33:10). For a person to be an effective leader and teacher and an effective role model, he cannot feel that he has a difficult life that is full of restrictions. To be able to give over a heritage to someone, one must feel privileged, rather than burdened. If the kohain would feel that all the requirements that the Torah put on him are a burden rather than a privilege, then he would not be the spiritual leader that we want him to be. That is why the Torah says, "Vayomer". Even though it may seem hard, the kohanim must accept it as a privilege and feel as if it is easy!

Rav Moshe zt"l adds that this role of spiritual mentor is not restricted to the Tribe of Levi. Any person who devotes his life to teaching Torah, despite the challenges, should not feel as if he is burdened. Rather he should feel privileged! Then he will be capable of transmitting our beautiful heritage to others.

All Jews need to feel blessed and fortunate to be Jews. Then we can be a link in a chain to pass down our rich heritage properly to our descendants and all other Jews.



Besamei HaTorah
…Beneath the Surface

By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg



Parashas Emor combines emotions from opposite ends of the spectrum: Aveilus – mourning, and Simchah – rejoicing. The Parshah begins with a warning to the Kohanim not to become Tamei by coming in contact with the dead, except for the seven specific close relatives mentioned in the Torah.

The Parshah ends with the rejoicing and happiness of the Chagim and Moadim – festivals and holidays of the year. These are days of peace and happiness for people.

What is the connection between the beginning of the Parshah and the end of the Parshah?

This teaches us a Mussar Haskeil – a valuable life lesson. Even though a person may be buried in sorrow and mourning, and living through days of sadness and grief, one must never sink so low as to despair that there is no hope and there is no salvation. Rather, one must

strengthen himself and realize that this is part of life, and one must look forward with anticipation to the upcoming Yamim Tovim – holidays which are days of festival and Simchah! (Parperaos LaTorah, Introduction to the Parshah)



Short Story By Yoni Schwartz

There was a growing Jewish community in Manchester, New Jersey, that wanted to build a mikvah, but the township was giving them an incredibly difficult time. Seeing that there may have been some antisemitism at play and that it would likely never get approved, they decided the only choice they had left was to secretly build a mikvah in the shul's basement. However, this was very risky, and one complaint from the neighbours could ruin everything. They had to go to each person's house, explain the situation, and make sure that he or she was on board before proceeding.

They knocked on the first door, and when they saw who opened it, they thought they had made a huge mistake. The man on the other side was 6'6", built like a football player, covered from head to toe with tattoos, and had a massive chain and a long white beard. The tall man greeted them warmly, welcoming them into his house and even offering them a beer (which they declined).

When they finished explaining the situation, the tall man said, "Let me ask one question: Would **Rabbi (Shlomo) Gissinger** approve of your plan?"

The men were shocked by this question. They answered, "Yes, he would."

"Then…" exclaimed the tall man, "it's done!"

"What?" asked the men.

"I'm on the township board, and everyone answers to me. You don't have to worry about doing anything secretly. I'll take care of the

approval, and it should be done in a week. If Rabbi Gissinger would approve it, then it's fine by me."

Very excited, the men thanked him profusely but were bursting with curiosity. They asked him, "How did you know Rabbi Gissinger?"

The tall man responded, "Years ago, my wife and I were struggling to have children. One of my Jewish friends suggested that I go to Rav Gissinger. I told him that I'm not Jewish, but he responded that Rav Gissinger cares about everyone and helps people from all walks of life. So, that's exactly what I did. We saw him, and he guided us through the process. Thankfully, we now have a big family, all thanks to him."

The men left having learned two powerful lessons. First, the power of making a Kiddush Hashem, and the way of our gedolim is to genuinely care about all people, no matter where they come from. Second, we shouldn't judge people based on how they look.

Comment: In this week's Parsha, Emor, we are commanded not to make a Chillul Hashem/Desecration of Hashem's Name (Vayikra 22:32). In the Gemara, we learn how the great Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai would make a Kiddush Hashem: whenever he went through the marketplace, he was the first person to greet everyone - Jew and non-Jew alike - with a warm greeting. Such is the way of the Torah.

In the lovely words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "The supreme religious challenge is to see G-d's image in one who is not in our image."

The Maharal (Gur Aryeh, Vayikra 22:32) explains that when a person acts with kedusha and rises above his natural desires, he draws down a form of Divine hashgacha that transcends the natural order. This, in turn, leads to Kiddush Hashem, as Hashem reveals Himself through those who strive to be kedoshim.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

A person wanted advice on how to handle a certain situation that had come up in his life, so he decided to travel to Eretz Yisroel to get a Brachah and some guidance from **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zt"l**.

Rav Aharon Leib told him that there is one solution that can save a person from all troubles— and that is to be very careful in regard to keeping Shabbos. He said, "Be prepared early on Erev Shabbos and eagerly anticipate Shabbos Kodesh! It is a tried and tested Segulah that works for any and all problems."

Rav Aharon Leib added, "The real Segulah of being ready early for Shabbos, is to actually begin the Shabbos preparations as early as possible in the day!"

Lag BaOmer – a day filled with hidden light, inner joy, and renewal. It is a time that carries deep spiritual energy, reminding us of the enduring strength of our people and the light of Torah that continues to shine even in difficult times.

Appreciating the Small Things in Life



Showers: What a treat it is that we can step into a nice cool shower in the summer and a hot shower in the winter, adjusting the temperature to our liking.

Hillel taught that washing ourselves is a mitzvah since we are created in Hashem's image; our bodies are due to be looked after properly, it houses our *neshamah*.

בס"ד

למודי משה

Why Is Lag B'Omer Such An Auspicious Day?



There are several reasons mentioned by the *poskim*:

1) It is the day when Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 *talmidim* stopped dying.

2) According to one opinion in the Medrash, the *matzah* that Bnei Yisroel took out of Mitzrayim lasted for thirty days until the fifteenth of Iyar. They then went for three days without bread, and on the eighteenth of Iyar (Lag B'Omer), the *mon* started to fall. In order to remember this great miracle, this day is celebrated as a Yom Tov (*Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah* 233).

3) It is the day when Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son, Rabbi Elazar came out of the cave they hid in for thirteen years (*Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim* 493:7).

4) It is Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's *yahrtzeit*, however, it is important to note that this understanding might actually be based on a simple printing mistake, and many authorities, including the Chida and Ben Ish Chai, maintain that Lag B'Omer is not truly his *yahrtzeit*.

5) It is the day when Rabbi Akiva gave *semicha* to his five new *talmidim* (including Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai) after his 24,000 *talmidim* died, allowing the Torah's *mesorah* to perpetuate (See *Yalkut Me'am Loez* (*Parshas Emor*), *Sdei Chemed* (*Maareches* Eretz Yisroel 6) and the *Pri Chodosh*).

6) It is the day when Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's hidden Torah, the *Zohar*, became revealed to the world.

7) The *sifrei kabbollah* explain that while the entire time period of *sefirah* is one of *din* [strict judgment], Lag B'Omer is day of total *rachamim* [mercy], and is therefore worthy of being celebrated (*Sha'ar Hakavanos, Sefiras Ha'omer* 12).

Living Kiddush Hashem ונקדשתי Our Ultimate Mission

Mashal And Nimshal: The Crew And The Passengers

R' Elchonon Wasserman asked: Why is a Jew obligated in 613 mitzvos while a non-Jew is responsible for only seven? He answered with a powerful mashal about a ship. (Heard from R' Avrohom Chaim Feuer.)



On a large ship headed toward a distant and special destination, two distinct groups are on board: the passengers and the crew responsible for navigating the vessel. The passengers follow basic rules meant to ensure their own safety and the smooth functioning of the vessel. The crew, however, carries a far more demanding responsibility: guiding the ship to its destination. They study complex charts, follow precise directives, and maintain continuous vigilance.

So too, Klal Yisrael serves as the crew guiding the world toward its ultimate purpose, filling creation with the presence and goodness of Hashem. To fulfill that mission, we were entrusted with many

mitzvos. They refine us, elevate us, and enable us to reflect Hashem in all we do.

A Nation With A Mission

Mashal: The crew works with focus and purpose. Charts, instruments, and communication systems guide

their every move. Each crew member has a role, and the ship depends on their coordinated efforts. The passengers, meanwhile, enjoy the voyage, following basic guidelines of law and order that keep everyone safe.

Nimshal: Klal Yisrael is the crew. Torah and mitzvos are our navigational tools. We are focused on our glorious responsibility to bring the world to its destination. Our lives are filled with purpose as ambassadors of Hashem. Life is a journey toward a destination, not an end in and of itself.

Different — Standing Apart

Mashal: The crew necessarily conducts itself differently. Their dress, their quarters, and their schedule are distinct from those of the passengers. They live with discipline and responsibility. Even when passengers invite them to relax or socialize, they decline, not out of superiority, but because they must remain committed to their role, without distractions or outside influences.

Nimshal: Klal Yisrael is not meant to blend into its surroundings. Our choices, lifestyle, and commitments set us apart. The world may celebrate entertainment and distraction; we gravitate toward holiness and G-dliness. Our distinctiveness is dedication.

In The Face Of Opposition

Mashal: At times, passengers pressure the crew: "Let's detour to that island," or "Let's change course to a different destination." But the crew knows the plan set by their captain. They don't stray and

don't give in to pressure. They answer to the one in charge, not to the passengers.

Nimshal: At times, the world may oppose us. Others may question our priorities: "Why act like that?" "Why commit so much time to learning?" "Why not join us?" But we are not guided by shifting cultural winds. We follow the directives of Hashem. Our task is to reflect His will and stay loyal to His destination.

Among Each Other

Mashal: The responsibility that the crew members have for each other is even greater. They must work together in harmony. A successful voyage demands unity. The navigator relies on the mechanic; the signal officer depends on the deck crew. If one falters, the mission is compromised. Mutual respect and cooperation are essential. They are like one family.

Nimshal: Ensuring the success of every Jew is fundamental. Uplifting and encouraging one another is essential. Achdus is foundational to Klal Yisrael. Different communities, different strengths, but one shared purpose. Our chessed networks, our communal support systems, our genuine concern for each other all reflect a nation working in harmony to fulfill its mission.

Relationship With The Passengers

Mashal: Though crew and passengers play different roles, the crew treats the passengers with courtesy and dignity. They maintain a pleasant atmosphere on board. They remember that the captain cares about every person on the ship.

Nimshal: Klal Yisrael interacts with the world with respect and integrity. Though we are different, we are not indifferent. Our goal is not to cancel, but to uplift, through derech eretz and kiddush Hashem. Every interaction is part of our responsibility as the crew of Hashem's world.

Staying In Touch

Mashal: Throughout the journey, the crew reports regularly to their captain, seeking guidance, addressing challenges, and receiving direction. The captain guides them, watches over them, and ensures their safety and protection from dangers or mutiny.

Nimshal: Tefillah is our ongoing communication with Hashem. It keeps us uplifted and focused on our role and destination. On Rosh Hashanah and every day, we ask not only for comfort, but for the strength to fulfill our mission. We seek parnasah, health, and protection so we can serve more fully. Hashem guides and supports us as we bring His holiness into the world.

Reaching The Destination

Mashal: The ship arrives. The beauty of the destination surpasses anything imagined. The passengers are awed and appreciate the crew's tireless efforts, and the crew is honored and rewarded. They have completed their mission.

Nimshal: When the geulah arrives, the world will be filled with the presence of Hashem. Peace and joy will fill the land. The nations will acknowledge Hashem, and Klal Yisrael will be rewarded beyond their wildest dreams for the hard work of bringing the world to its destination. (Adapted from Living Kiddush Hashem, published by ArtScroll Mesorah.)

Someone came to the Skulener Rebbe for a segulah for parnassah, and the Rebbe told him to say Parshas HaYirah. The man thought it was a mistake and explained he needed parnassah, not yiras Shamayim.

The Rebbe answered, טרף נתן ליראיו – "He gave food to those who fear Him." - When you fear Hashem, you will have parnassah.

בס"ד

למודי משה

Going Up to Meron on Lag BaOmer – *A* Big Mitzvah or *Bitul* Torah?

Going Up and Gathering in Meron for Lag BaOmer

There is an ancient custom amongst the Sephardim, Chasidim and Yerushalmi's to go up to Meron in large groups on Lag BaOmer and to daven by the kever of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Every year R' Elimelech Biderman brings out an entire booklet with many wonderful sources, on the great virtues and importance of going up to Meron on Lag BaOmer, to participate in the joy of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, which is a sublime and holy day, and has the power to bring salvation. He always brings many stories of miracles and wonders, which we have seen with our own eyes even in our time. It is known that Rabbi Shlomah of Zevil would say, that the money one spends on traveling to Meron is included in the Shabbos and Yom Tov expenses, and does not count towards a persons expenses (i.e. any money that is spent, one will receive back).

It is accepted from the Arizal that Lag BaOmer is the hilula of R' Shimon Bar Yochai and the day has many virtues. In his sefer Ad HaGal, Rabbi Yaakov Hillel shlita, writes at length and brings many proofs that the correct version in the Pri Eitz Chaim is that Lag BaOmer is the day of **שמחת רשב"י** – rejoicing of R' Shimon, and not like those who say it is **שמת רשב"י** – the day that R' Shimon died. Those who have the wrong girsa [textual version] struggle to understand why it is such a happy day, however, being that the correct girsa is **שמחת רשב"י**, we can understand the reason for joy. Therefore, he concludes that there is a big inyan to go up to Meron on Lag BaOmer (provided one doesn't see any pritzus and lightheadedness).

What Will be With the Learning of Torah?

On the other hand, many great Litvishe Rabbonim and Rosh Yeshivos have said, that Torah should not be abrogated in order to go to Meron on this day, to be by the kever of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

In Berachos (35b) Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai comments, regarding a person who plows during the plowing season, sows during the sowing season, reaps during the harvest season, threshes during the threshing season, and winnows when it's windy, "What will be with the Torah?", some have wittingly applied this comment to going up to Meron on Lag BaOmer.

R' Nissim Karelitz zt"l in Chut Shoni (Hilchos Yom Tov, end of pg. 291) brings that the Chazon Ish would remark to those who traveled to Meron on Lag BaOmer, "Do we close the Gemara to travel to Meron?".

R' Menachem Elazar Shach (Machsheves Mussar, Vol. 1, pg. 425) speaks very strongly about this. He writes that everyone agrees the Chazon Ish was mehadar when it came to mitzvos, and if there would be a mitzvah to travel to Meron he would do so, yet we don't find he ever did, it must be that the only reason we consider doing so is because we do not sufficiently appreciate the opportunity to remain in the yeshiva learning. Although it is a great merit to daven by kivrei tzadikim, Lag BaOmer is not the correct time, due to lack of tznius, and that one must interrupt learning in the middle of zeman.

R' Michal Yehuda Lefkowitz (Darchei Chaim, Part 1, Page 223) would answer people very firmly telling them not to travel to Meron on Lag BaOmer. He would add in the name of R' Elyashiv, that we have Rabbi Shimon in the Gemara. The same idea is brought down in the name of R' Dovid Povarsky (Kol Nehi Arima, page 53).

In Shu"t Vayishma Moshe (Vol. 1, pg. 168) they bring that they asked R' Elyashiv whether it is advisable to go to Meron on Lag BaOmer and he answered, if one wants to learn during that time, that is best. If,

however, one knows he won't be learning then anyway, then he should travel to Meron.

When R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l was asked (Mo'edei HaGrach, Sefiras HaOmer, page 81; Teshuvos HaGrach, Vol. 2, pg. 744) whether there is an inyan to go to Meron on Lag BaOmer? He replied: It is not customary among us. It is better to learn.

Lag Ba'Omer

Rav Shmuel Heller zt"l tells about the time **Rav Chaim ben Atar, the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh** came to Meron for Lag b'Omer:

"When he reached the bottom of the mountain of Meron, he got off his donkey, and he crawled up the mountain, on his hands and feet, and grunted the entire way. He shouted, 'How can the lowly me enter this awesome place, where Hakadosh Baruch Hu, all the angels, and souls of tzaddikim are present?!' - And at the hillulah he was very happy."

Crowning Your Friend - Rav Dovid Ashear Shlita

As we conclude the mourning period for the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva, it behooves us to learn one of the lessons that Chazal told us we are supposed to take from their deaths.

The Gemara says they died because they did not give each other the proper kavod. They were great Torah scholars and most certainly did not belittle each other. But they were held accountable for not honouring each other the way they were supposed to.

Chazal tell us when a person stands in judgment in front of Hashem after 120, he is going to be asked if he crowned Hashem king and if he crowned his friend king. This means that Hashem expects us to view others as if they are kings. A Jew is compared to a Sefer Torah.

The same respect we have for a Torah, we have to have to our fellow man. The Torah calls us children of Hashem, and we must respect people accordingly.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot tells us, when we talk to people, we are supposed to make them feel that we are so happy to be able to speak with them.

Rabbi Dessler writes, included in the concept of **דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה** is that a person has to feel obligated to give every person that he meets the honour that is befitting him.

The Gemara says about Rabban Yohanan Ben Zakkai that he knew every facet of Torah. He even knew the conversations that the angels had. He knew how to understand the language of the trees. He perceived the full depth of Hashem's Heavenly Chariot. Yet, even while he was engrossed in Torah, walking the streets, listening as well to the birds talking and the trees talking, the Gemara testified that in his entire lifetime nobody ever greeted the Rabbi first, including gentiles.

Although the Rabbi had so much kedusha and was so busy with his Torah, he understood his obligation as an Eved Hashem to give every person the honour that he needs, which includes giving them a warm greeting.

Everybody wants to be recognized. Everybody wants to feel important. And we have the ability to fulfil that need of others. It is not just a nice thing to do. It's a full-fledged obligation. Everyone needs to hear positive things about themselves. Everybody needs reassurance that they mean something. Even Gedolim could use chizuk.

Rav Elyashiv once told his mechutan, **Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach**, that his grandfather, known as the **Leshem**, first put out his sefer, Leshem Shevo V'Achlama, in Yerushalayim, and nobody really grasped its greatness. When the sefer eventually reached the hands

of the **Ben Ish Chai** in Baghdad, he told his students to get dressed up in their fine Shabbat clothing, and they were personally going to go to the house of the Leshem and thank him for putting out a wondrous sefer that will light up the world in Torah for generations to come.

After they came to the Rabbi and praised him, he said afterward he wished they would have come earlier, because by this time he could have put out volume two of that sefer.

This story shows us how important it is for us to say a good word to others. Even the greatest tzaddikim need chizuk. If someone would have told the Leshem how great his sefer was before, that would have given him the chizuk to write another one.

As we prepare for Matan Torah, we must increase our efforts in giving other people kavod, treating them the way that Hashem wants His children to be treated.

Bonfire on Lag Ba'Omer - Rav Meilech Biderman Shlita



There are many reasons given for the reason of having a bonfire on **ל"ג בעומר**. Rav Biderman cited the **דברי חיים**, **the Sanzer Rov**. On the **פסוק** which states **אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח**, the **דברי חיים** commented that when there is a passion and a **התלהבות** for **עבודת ה'**, then indeed (as the **פסוק** concludes), **לא תכבה** – it will not be extinguished.

If one's **עבודת ה'** are performed by rote, with no excitement, there is no guarantee that the **תורה** and performance of **מצוות** will last and continue in subsequent generations. However, if there is fire, it will continue.

Rav Biderman gave a **משל** of alcohol placed in a freezer. If the freezer is off, (unlike other substances) alcohol will not go off, it will remain unaffected because it has a "fire" within it, which ensures it will not go off. - The practice of having a fire on **ל"ג בעומר** represents the fire of **רבי שמעון בר יוחאי**. When one has such a fire, **תורה** will continue.

רבי שמעון came into **יבנה** and said that the **תורה** will never be forgotten from **כלל ישראל** . We make a fire to highlight this point: if **עבודת ה'** is performed with a fire, then **רבי שמעון** 's promise will continue to be fulfilled.



The Zohar (Idra 296) says that when Reb Shimon was buried in Meron, a bas kol announced, "In your merit, many kitrugim [harsh decrees] are silenced on this day."

This occurs every year on Lag b'Omer. It is a day when the kitrugim are silenced, and Hashem sends all types of salvations to Bei Yisrael.



The holy Kabbalist Ateret Yeshua of D'zhikov wrote: "Lag Ba'Omer is a day on which one can attain parnassa (livelihood), be blessed with a holy child, receive complete healing, attain fear of Heaven, and acquire all that one is lacking."

He further explained that the name רַשְׁבִּ"י - רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בַּר יוֹחָאי can be seen as an acronym for the phrase "יוּשְׁפַּע שֶׁפַע רַב בְּכָל הָעוֹלָמוֹת" - "A great abundance will be poured into all the worlds."



You don't need to be seen to shine. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai taught that even in hiding, you can change the world.



On Lag Ba'Omer, the gates of Heaven are wide open to receive our prayers. This day is considered by many to be as holy as Yom Kippur—a time when sins can be erased and forgotten.

The spiritual power of Lag Ba'Omer has the ability to sweeten judgment, annul harsh decrees, and draw down immense Yeshuot (salvations) and Hashem's Rachamim (mercy).

The Sefas Emes teaches that it is even greater to study a Tsadik's teachings than to visit his gravesite. Learning from a Tsadik's teachings has a profound impact on a person's Neshama, and creates a deep spiritual bond between the individual and the Tsadik. - This connection links their souls, allowing both to influence each other and forging strong ties between them. Through this bond, the Tsadik sends down an abundance of blessings.

Visiting the kever is certainly a special experience that brings great blessing, but through prayer and learning the Zohar, the teachings of RASHB'I, we can form a deep and meaningful connection with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches:

Those who are disrespectful/rude are likened to idol worshipers.

Those who greet guests with a full and sincere heart, it is as though they are greeting the Shechina.

It is better for a person to throw himself into a fiery furnace than to embarrass his fellow Jew in public.

Honoring one's father and mother is so great that the Holy One, Blessed be He, placed it above even His own honor.

Work is great, for it brings honor to the one who performs it.

Hashem says to am Israel, if you honor my commandments (mitzvot), you are honoring me. If you overlook them, it is as thought you dismiss my honor.

Tsedaka (charity) suppress the attribute of strict judgment and calamity, preventing them from coming into the world.

Peace is so great that all blessings are included within it, as it is written, "Hashem will give strength to His people; Hashem will bless His people with peace" (Hashem oz le'amo yiten, Hashem Yevarech et amo BaShalom) (Tehillim 29:11).

If Israel were to observe just two Shabbatot properly, they would be immediately redeemed.

Help those who stray away from Torah to return, and you will be rewarded for your action.

Lag Ba'Omer is a powerful time to open your heart and pour out your soul in tefillah to Hashem. Use this sacred day to thank Him for all the blessings in your life, and to sincerely ask for everything you and your loved ones need—both spiritually and physically.

May all your heartfelt prayers rise up with the light of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and be answered for good.

The gates of Shamayim are wide open. Don't miss this moment. Speak to Hashem in your own words, in your own language. Ask for everything, over and over again. Be persistent. Be heartfelt. There is no doubt that, b'ezrat Hashem, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai will intervene on our behalf in Shamayim.

B'zchuto, in his great merit, may all our prayers be answered, and may we see open miracles, salvations, and Hashem's mercy poured upon us.

Chag Lag Ba'Omer Sameach – Happy Lag Ba'Omer!

May it be filled with light, joy, tefillah, and yeshuot for all of Am Yisrael.

🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥

May the merit of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai be with us and all of Am Yisrael, and may it bring upon us countless miracles, wonders, protection, healing, and blessings—b'ezrat Hashem. Amen. Ken Yehi Ratzon.

🔥 🏹 🔥 🏹 🔥 🏹 🔥 🏹 🔥 🏹 🔥





The Kozhnitzer Magid zt'l writes, "the entire Sefirah we await Lag B'omer because that is when there is a lot of rachamim." Lag B'omer is a day of salvations - fortunate are those who invest in tefillah on this day.



The parsha ends with the incident involving the Mekalel. He cursed in the worst possible manner. The Torah tells us that after he committed his sin, he was placed in a cell to await the punishment he was to receive. Rashi, quoting the Medrash writes that at the same time there was another sinner awaiting his fate. The Mekoshesh, (Parshas Shelach) - he broke Shabbos, but was placed in a separate cell.

There was a key difference in the situations of the two men. It was known that the Mekoshesh, the one who broke Shabbos, was to be punished by death, but it was not known which form of execution should be used. In contrast with regards to the Mekalel, the one who cursed, they didn't know whether he was to be punished by death at all.

The Sifsei Chachamim asks, "Why could they not just be put in the same cell? Why separate them?"

He answers that had they put the two in the same cell, it could have caused the Mekalel extra pain because he would have expected to also receive the death penalty, just like the one with him in the same cell, the one who broke Shabbos. So, in order to spare him from any unnecessary pain, he was put in a separate cell.

This is amazing. Here we have a sinner. He cursed Hashem. He did the worst aveira, and yet we're still worried about his dignity. We're still sensitive to his feelings!

My grandfather came from a small shtetl Rozwadow in Poland, and it was known that the rebbe there was a huge tzaddik. One time, there was a Yid in the kehilla that unfortunately wasn't blessed with

children, and for years and years he pleaded with his rebbe, "Please, when will I be able to have a child?" And every year his rebbe gave him a brocha.

One year, this Yid approaches his rebbe with a request. He said, "The rebbe has a brother in Krakow who's known to be a miracle worker. I wanted to ask the rebbe permission, can I go to your brother for Rosh Hashanah, so perhaps I can get a brocha from him and finally be zocheh to a child?"

The rebbe said, "Absolutely. With my greatest blessings, go, and I'm looking forward to seeing the results."

A few days later on Rosh Hashanah morning, the rebbe sees this Yid sitting in the shul. He can't believe it. Wasn't he meant to go and spend Yom Tov with my brother?

After davening, he calls him over and he says, "Why didn't you travel to my brother to get a brocha for a child?"

Listen to what he said. It's a lesson for life.

He said, "Rebbe, I thought about it. Imagine, if I went to your brother and he gave me a brocha for a child and I had a child, what's everyone going to say? Everyone knows I was by you for years, and obviously your brochos weren't successful to have a child. I go one Yom Tov to your brother and I have a child. I simply couldn't do it to you. I didn't want to embarrass you, even if it means never having a child."

The rebbe gave him a brocha, "For your sensitivity to somebody else, I guarantee you a child." And a year later he had a child!

That's the sensitivity. That's the sensitivity this week's parsha is teaching us. And it's perfect timing specifically now during Sefiras HaOmer, when we're working on בֵּין אָדָם לַחֲבֵרוֹ, as we know the talmidim of Rabbi Akiva, 24,000 of them died שֶׁלֹּא נָהֲגוּ כָּבוֹד זֶה לָזֶה. They weren't sensitive to each other in some way. Therefore, the Torah this week is teaching us, be sensitive to someone else's

feelings. Watch what you say. Watch how you say it. It can affect someone forever.

Have an amazing Shabbos.





Horav Yisroel Friedman Shlita - Letters Of Chizzuk During The Coronavirus Pandemic

רב ישראל פרידמן רב קלויז טשארטקוב מנשסתר

מכתב התחזקות

י״ב אייר תש״פ, כ״ז למסב״י

On the fourteenth of Iyar falls Pesach Sheini, this year, the lessons of Pesach Sheini have for us an added dimension, from which we can derive a big chizuk. It is already over seven weeks that we have been unable to daven with a minyan, or learn in the Beis Hamedrash, and people are missing the **כח הציבור**. The Torah tells us, that when Klall Yisroel were about to offer up the Korban Pesach, some individuals had become **טמא**, because they had buried a **מת מצוה**. They approached Moshe Rabbeinu and asked **למה נגרע**, why should we lose out and not be allowed to bring the Korban Pesach?

The Chasam Sofer zt"l poses the following question. It is difficult to understand their reasoning, why did they feel they were losing out? We have a rule **עוסק במצוה פטור מן המצוה** a person who is busy with one mitzva is exempt from another mitzva. Instead of bringing the Korban Pesach, they had been busy with another very great mitzva, that of burying a **מת מצוה** (or carrying the Oron of Yosef Hazaddik) so why did they feel they had lost out?

The Chasam Sofer points out that those Yidden specifically mentioned that they were upset that they had been denied the right

to offer up the korban **"במועדו בתוך בני ישראל"** In its appointed time **amongst Bnei Yisroel"**.

It's true that they had been busy with a very great and important mitzva, but it was a mitzva done in seclusion (**ביחידות**) by a few individuals. As a result, they felt that they had been deprived of partaking in the public mitzvah (**מצוה בציבור**) of Korban Pesach which was being performed by all of Klall Yisroel together.

Indeed, Chazal have taught us, "One cannot compare a mitzva in which many participate, to a mitzva which is only done by individuals" Thus the reward for a mitzva performed together with others, is far greater than the reward of a mitzva which is done (**ביחידות**) in private as an individual. Therefore, they felt that they had lost out by not being together with the rest of Klall Yisroel and not able to be **בתוך בני ישראל**.

How then did the bringing of Pesach Sheini which was only brought (**ביחידות**) by a few individuals, compensate and act as a replacement for their being left out of the public bringing of the Korban Pesach? This is the chiddush that Pesach Sheini teaches us. When a person wants to perform a mitzva and was prevented from doing so, he receives a reward as if he had fulfilled the mitzva. When a person fulfilled a mitzva in seclusion (**ביחידות**), and was prevented from performing the mitzva with a tzibbur of Yidden, he will also get the reward (sechar) as he had performed the mitzva **בציבור** together with all of Klall Yisroel. The private offering of Pesach Sheini has the reward and the status of a korban which was offered in the presence of the whole of Klall Yisroel.

We have also been unable to daven with a minyan because we were **עוסק במצוה** in guarding our health. Pesach Sheini teaches us that we will receive the full reward as if we davened with a minyan.

The words of the Chasam Sofer are also a chizuk for us, in the approach to Lag Be'Omer. Every year, many tens/hundreds of

thousands of Yidden **כן ירבו** travel to Meron to be present at the Hadloka and daven at the kever of Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

The Boyaner Rebbe shlita lights the main Hadloka, fulfilling a tradition that dates over five hundred years, and is already mentioned in a letter written by Rabbeinu Ovadiah MiBartenurah in the year 1489:

"On the 18th of Iyar the yahrtzeit of Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai, people come from all the surrounding areas and they kindle large fires, besides the Ner Tomid that they light. Many childless women have a salvation and many ill people are healed through the neder and nedova that they promise to the place." The Sdei Chemed writes: We heard that our teacher the Beis Yosef, and other gedolim of his period, would travel to Meron to rejoice and partake in the yahrzeit of Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai".

The first Sadigerer Rebbe explained the significance of this hadloka. "Not every neshoma is fortunate enough to be able to have an aliyah by itself, but on Lag BeOmer when the hadlakah is lit and Rebbi Shimon's neshoma soars ever higher, he elevates the neshomos of many thousands of other Yidden with him as well".

Those who were unable to travel to Meron, would gather together in their local beis hamedrash and celebrate with a seudah and singing and dancing. This year however, the roads to Meron have fallen silent and people are unable to go, confined to their houses. For many people, being in Meron on Lag Be'Omer, is one of the highlights of the year, and not to be missed under any circumstances.

However, when a Yid yearns to do a mitzvah and feels **למה נגרע** and he wants to be "**בכנופיא**" together with all other Yidden at the hadloka, Rebbi Shimon accepts him as if he was there. This is the lesson of Pesach Sheini, that the yearning of a **יחיד** an individual, who longs to keep a mitzvah **בצבור** with other Yidden, it is as if he has done so.

This point is highlighted by the following two stories. For many decades, Reb Osher Zelig and his brother Reb Velvel Sofer never missed a Shavous being with their Rebbe, the first Chortkover Rebbe zt"l. One year however, Reb Velvel was unable to go, something occurred that simply made his trip impossible. Reb Velvel wrote a letter to his brother telling him what had happened, and asked him to at least mention to the Rebbe how upset he was not to be there.

After yom tov was over, Reb Osher Zelig was granted an audience with the Rebbe. He told the Rebbe how upset his brother was not to have spent yom tov with the Rebbe. '**Your brother was here for Shavous,**' the Rebbe told him. '**We even drank le'chaim together!**' Reb Osher Zelig wondered greatly at the Rebbe's words but didn't dare ask for an explanation. After he left the Rebbe's room he asked the elder chassidim, but they were just as puzzled.

When Reb Osher Zelig met his brother and told him the Rebbe's words, Reb Velvel wasn't surprised. 'It's true,' Reb Velvel exclaimed. 'We did drink le'chaim together. Let me explain what I mean.'

The first day of yom tov at the hour when the Rebbe normally starts the tish, I was sitting at home with a heavy heart. To miss being at the Rebbe's tish was a bitter pill to swallow. Whilst I was engrossed in my thoughts, I dozed off in my chair for a few moments and I started to dream. In my dream I found myself in Chortkov standing at the Rebbe's tish.

Everything was crystal clear just like in real life. I didn't receive any wine with which to drink le'chaim, but the Rebbe noticed and commanded the gabbai to pour for me a cup. I drank le'chaim and reached out to touch the Rebbe's hand. As I touched his fingers a slight smile lit up his face. My joy was indescribable, not just in the dream, but also when I woke up a few seconds later. I was positive that through his heavenly influence, the Rebbe had felt my sorrow and wished me le'chaim!"

A similar story is related about the first Boyaner Rebbe zt"l. A chossid who used to be a regular visitor to the Boyaner Rebbe wasn't in Boyan for over seven years due to various problems that prevented him going. When the Yid finally travelled to Boyan, he apologised for his absence, saying it had been a long time since his previous visit. "I know," the Rebbe told him. "It's already been three years since you were last here."

The Yid was puzzled by the Rebbe's words, but didn't dare ask for an explanation. Instead he asked the Rebbe's son, Reb Menachem Nuchem, for an explanation. "If my father said that you were here three years ago, he must have had a reason," Reb Menachem Nuchem told him. "Perhaps you intended to come and then in the end you didn't make it," Reb Menachem Nuchem asked him.

The Yid suddenly remembered and answered, "So it was! Three years ago I decided to come to the Rebbe and I made all the necessary preparations to come. I was already at the train station waiting for the train to leave to Boyan, when I was suddenly forced to turn back and cancel the trip." "You should know," Reb Menachem Nuchem told him, "As soon as someone prepares himself to come to my father, my father takes him on his shoulders, **and it is as if that Yid is already here.**

Indeed, we find an allusion to this concept, in regards to Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai, as Chazal tell us (**פסחים נא**:): "One can rely on Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai in his presence and even not in his presence." "**כדי הוא רבי שמעון בן יוחאי לסמוך עליו בפניו ושלא בפניו**".

The power of Rebbi Shimon to intercede of behalf of others, is not affected by the fact that we can't travel to Meron to daven at his kever. If a Yid wants to come and was prevented, it is as if he was there.

The Rebbe of Ruzhin zt"l was imprisoned in an underground Russian prison. He sat in the dark windowless cell for over a year and a half. Shortly before he was imprisoned, he said: "There are those that

think that the power and ability of a tzaddik is dependent on the amount of chassidim that he has. Those who think so are foolish, like those who think that kedushas Shabbos is dependent on a big piece of fish and a white bekeshe (as was worn by the rebbes of the time)! **If they are correct, what did Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai do when he was in the cave and didn't have all of this?!** Obviously, the truth is that Shabbos is not dependent on this, and a tzaddik is also not dependent on this!"

With these words, the Ruzhiner wanted to teach and show his chassidim another lesson, namely, that his holy avoda would continue, even when he was separated from them, sitting in a dark and lonely cell. This lesson we can also derive from Lag Be'Omer. During Rebbi Shimon's incarceration in the cave, he ascended ever higher in his holy avoda. This is what we sing in the song "Bar Yochai" **במערות צורים שעמדת שם קנית הודך והדרך** - "In the cave where you were hiding, **there** you attained your greatness and glory". It was "there", in the cave that Rebbi Shimon sitting in isolation with his son Rebbi Elozor, climbed to the highest heights.

The gemara tells us (**שבת לג**:) that when Rebbi Shimon left the cave, and his father in law Rebbi Pinchos Ben Yo'ir saw his poor physical state, he started to cry and said: "Woe is to me that I see you looking like this", to which Rebbi Shimon replied "Happy are you that you see me looking like this. It is because of what I have endured that I have attained the level that I am on now".

The gemara goes on to explain that before Rebbi Shimon had fled to the cave, his father in law would give him twelve answers for every question Rebbi Shimon posed. Now the tables were reversed. Every question that Rebbi Pinchos Ben Yo'ir asked, Rebbi Shimon answered him in twenty four different ways. The suffering that Rebbi Shimon had endured, caused him to grow ever higher in Torah and kedusha.

We have to use our quarantine as a time and opportunity to also climb higher, through the new and different avoda that we have been

given. Although we are unable to enter the Beis Hamedrash, and have been exiled to our houses, we can be comforted with the words of Rebbi Shimon who proclaimed (**מגילה כט.**) "Look how beloved Klall Yisroel is to Hashem, whereever they have been exiled to, the Shechina follows them, and is with them there as well." Hashem is with Klall Yisroel in every situation, even in one's own home a person can merit **השראת השכינה**.

In the brocha of **ברוך שאמר** that we recite every day, we thank and praise Hashem and we say "**ברוך גוזר ומקיים**" "Blessed be He who decrees and fulfils His decree". A gezeira normally denotes something which is harsh and difficult. If so, surely we would prefer that Hashem not make such decrees, and if unfortunately such a decree was made, we would rather beg Hashem to annul the decree. So why are we praising Hashem for making decrees and carrying them out?

The first Sadigerer Rebbe zt"l was imprisoned in a Russian dungeon for over a year under terrible conditions. He was forced to spend many hours standing on his feet in damp and freezing conditions and was denied basic food.

When he was asked how he had managed to survive the ordeal, the Rebbe said: "When a mortal king decrees a punishment on a person, it is possible that the person won't have the strength to endure the punishment. But when Hashem is **גוזר** a decree on a person, He gives the person the strength to endure **ומקיים** that he won't collapse under the strain. This is what we mean when we thank Hashem, "**ברוך גוזר**" whilst at the same time He is "**ומקיים**" giving the person the endurance that he should manage.

This lesson we can derive from Lag Be'Omer. Hashem decreed that Rebbi Shimon sit in a cave for thirteen long years, but at the same time "**ומקיים**" Hashem gave him the inner strength to manage, and to rise ever higher from the experience. Similarly, we should all merit

that our quarantine should also be for us a period of spiritual growth, to grow and climb higher and higher.

תורתו מגן לנו היא מאירת עינינו ימליץ טוב בעדנו אדוננו בר יוחאי

ידידיכם ישראל פרידמן

Halachic Midair Dilemma: Rav Ezriel Auerbach Summoned to Cockpit Over Sefiras HaOmer Question



An extraordinary photograph that surfaced a few weeks ago captured a rare halachic drama unfolding thousands of feet above the Atlantic, as renowned posek Rav Ezriel Auerbach was summoned to the cockpit of a flight passing over Greenland to resolve a complex question involving Sefiras HaOmer.

The image shows the senior posek standing beside the aircraft's captain while examining the flight's navigation route on the cockpit display screen.

Behind the unusual scene was a complicated halachic issue that arose during Rav Auerbach's trip to the United States. Shortly after

takeoff, the Rav began investigating when passengers aboard the flight would be able to count Sefiras HaOmer.

It soon became apparent that throughout the route, the aircraft would effectively remain in continuous daylight due to the flight path and time-zone progression, seemingly "skipping" nighttime entirely.

The matter deeply concerned Rav Auerbach, who sought to analyze the issue thoroughly. In order to assist with the inquiry, the chief pilot personally invited the Rav into the cockpit and presented him with the aircraft's precise navigation map and global flight route.

During their discussion, the pilot explained that the plane would soon cross the Greenland region. Although sunlight was still visible at the aircraft's cruising altitude, conditions on the ground below in Greenland had already entered twilight and darkness due to the geographic positioning and angle of the sun.

After carefully reviewing the geographical and navigational details, Rav Auerbach issued a halachic ruling that has since generated considerable discussion in the Torah world.

"Since on the ground beneath the aircraft it is currently twilight and nighttime, the airplane is halachically considered to be located in a place where it is night," Rav Auerbach ruled.

Based on that ruling, Rav Auerbach instructed the passengers waiting for guidance — and personally followed the ruling himself — that during the brief period while the aircraft passed over the darkened region, it was both permissible and necessary to count Sefiras HaOmer.

Passengers aboard the flight reportedly hurried to fulfill the mitzvah during the flight itself.

One passenger related: "All of the frum passengers on this flight were especially moved that we merited to have the posek hador himself traveling with us and determining whether and when

to recite the brachah. There was tremendous amazement among all of us at the remarkable fusion of science, technology, and Torah, which guides a Jew wherever he may be. There is nothing that the gedolei Yisroel and poskim cannot determine — even in the heavens above."



אלא הם מועדי. ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי שבת וכו' (כג-ב,ג)

The first Possuk contains an introduction to the Yomim Tovim, but instead of a description of the festivals, there follows the prohibition against work on Shabbos. How can we explain the connection here?

The Gaon, R' Eliyohu ZT"L of Vilna, offers an ingenious solution to this problem. When it says "**ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה**" - Six days you may do work, it is referring to the six days of Yom Tov specified by the Torah during which all labor related to the preparation of food is permitted. They are: The first and last days of Pesach, one day of Shavuous, one day of Rosh Hashanah and the first and last days of Sukkos.

The Torah allows that on "Six days you may do work" - for on the above-mentioned six days of Yom Tov, you may perform labor that is related to cooking and the preparation of food. But there is one festival on which this kind of labor is expressly forbidden. That is Yom Kippur - as is expressed by the words "**וביום השביעי שבת שבתון...כל מלאכה לא תעשו**" - The seventh day is Shabbos of solemn rest...you shall do no work, on the seventh Yom Tov - Yom Kippur.

"Just to do what's right and be good is not enough, when better is expected!"