TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



אחרי -מות

לעילוי נשמת



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

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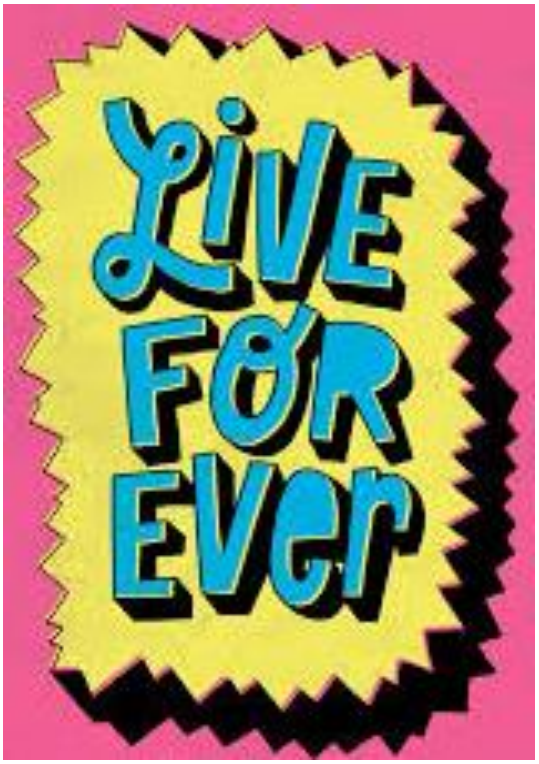
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Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם - "***You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live*** . . ." (18:5)



Onkelos translates: וָחַי בָּהֶם : לְחַיֵּי עָלְמָא - "*By which he shall live – in the World-to-Come.*"

R' Yisrael Meir Kagan z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) explains: All created things need sustenance from Hashem in order to exist. This is true of spiritual beings just as it is true of physical beings. Of course, the sustenance of spiritual beings in not like our sustenance; it is spiritual, the "food" of angels.

The neshamah needs sustenance. As long as the neshamah is hosted in the body, Hashem enables it to be sustained by the physical food that fuels the body. When the neshamah leaves the human body and moves on to the spiritual world it still needs sustenance, but it no longer can be sustained by physical food.

Firstly, how would the neshamah take in physical food? Also, physical food can sustain only for a limited time, whereas the neshamah lives forever in the World-to-Come and needs sustenance that will sustain it forever.

Therefore, writes the Chafetz Chaim, Hashem, in His great compassion, created something that can sustain the neshamah in the World-to-Come. That sustenance is Hashem's decrees and His laws, "which man shall carry out and by which he shall live – in the World-to-Come." - Indeed, only through observing Hashem's decrees and laws can a person live forever. (Mishnah Berurah: Introduction)

From the Haftarah . . .

הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם אֶת אֵלִיָּה הַנָּבִיא לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם ה' הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא - "***Behold! I send you Elyah the prophet, before the great and awesome day of Hashem.***" (Malachi 3:23)

R' Yitzchak Weiss z"l H'yd (Slovakia) notes that the initial Hebrew letters in the phrase, **הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם אֶת אֵלִיָּה הַנָּבִיא** - "Behold! I send you Elyah the prophet," have a gematria of 343. This alludes to the 343 out of the 613 mitzvot which cannot be practiced today.

After Eliyahu Hanavi heralds the redemption and mashiach arrives, we will again practice these commandments. (Siach Yitzchak p.151)

בִּגְדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ הֵם - "***They are sacred garments . . .***" (16:4)

R' Moshe Hager shlita (the "Vizhnitzer Rebbe") commented: What is the sacred garment that distinguishes a Jew?

Humility, signified by the word **הֵם** – the same Hebrew letters as "**מָה**" as in Moshe Rabbenu's exclamation of humility (Shmot 16:7): **וְנַחְנוּ מָה** - "*For what are we?*" (Sichot U'ma'amarei Kodesh p. 338)

כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יְשַׁבְתֶּם־בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּכְמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ־כְּנַעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵבִיא אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְחֻקֹּתֵיהֶם לֹא תֵלֵכוּ - *"Like the deed of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled you shall not do, and like the deed of the land of Canaan to which I bring you you shall not do, and do not follow their traditions."* (18:3)

R' Moshe David Valle z"l (Italy; 1697-1777) writes: We live in a physical world and, therefore, it is decreed that everyone must perform deeds of some kind. Nevertheless, says that Torah, do not choose to perform wasteful deeds as the nations of the world do, deeds that have no eternity. Rather, choose holy deeds, deeds that build eternity.

What are those deeds? The next verse explains: **אֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי תַּעֲשׂוּ וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ לָלֶכֶת בָּהֶם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם** - "*Carry out My laws and safeguard My decrees to follow them; I am Hashem, your Elokim.*" (Avodat Ha'kodesh)



וְשָׁפַךְ אֶת־דָּמוֹ וְכִסָּהוּ בֶּעָפָר – '***He shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth***.' (17:13)

The Torah commands us to cover part of the blood of the kosher birds or non-domesticated kosher animals that he slaughters.

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that the root of this mitzvah is in the relationship between the soul of the slaughtered animal or fowl and its blood. Blood is the life source of the living animal; thus, it is fitting for us to cover the soul and hide it from the eye prior to consuming its meat. When we eat the meat with the blood exposed, we acquire a tinge of cruelty in our souls. In other words, to have a

meal of meat or fowl, while the life source of this "meal" lays exposed, indicates a lack of compassion.

For the members of the nation for whom compassion is one of its three primary characteristics, this is considered inappropriate behavior.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates a powerful story which underscores the character trait of compassion, which is a priority and a critical component of the Jewish DNA. This vignette demonstrates to what extent the middah, attribute, of rachmanus, compassion, is inherent in a Jew, to the point that at the very last moment of his life he chose to thank his brethren, to grace them with one last act of compassion.

An elderly Jew, a G-d-fearing Torah scholar, had been interned in Auschwitz in his younger years. He witnessed countless brutalities, acts of cruelty, executed by demons in the guise of human beings, acts that one would never believe could be perpetrated by man. Yet, they were.

Although it was many years after the war, and he was living comfortably with his family in America, the brutality and heinous cruelty which he had witnessed continued to haunt him. In all public venues he acted like anyone else. Every Yom Tov, however, when the Kohanim blessed the congregation, he would act in an unusual manner, by covertly leaving the shul shortly before Bircas Kohanim and retuning just as the Kohanim concluded their blessing.

One day, the Rav of the shul decided to ask his elderly congregant why he did this. The man was willing to share his story with the Rav:

"Rebbe, you are well aware that all of the members of my original family were sacrificed in Auschwitz. I, together with a group of inmates, decided one erev Pesach that we had nothing to lose. Our families had all been murdered by the Nazis. We might as well have

one last spiritual 'fling.' We were going to bake matzos and eat them at the makeshift Seder which we were going to conduct.

"We did it!

One man was able (over a period of days) to obtain a small amount of flour. Another obtained the necessary utensils to form, roll and bake the three prize matzos that we succeeded in making. We were even able to obtain a small amount of wine. We all gathered together and began to recite the Haggadah from memory.

We were a group of broken shards, whose only joy in life was being celebrated with the recital of the Haggadah in anticipation for the eating of the precious matzah that we had prepared.

Suddenly, the door burst open, and in walked the camp commandant. When he saw what was going on before his very eyes, no words could describe his fury.

'Who is responsible for this outrage? I will kill you all unless you tell me who is behind this!' he screamed at us. Meanwhile, he had already moved over to my close friend, selecting him as his sacrifice.

'You! You are the one that is behind this rebellion! Did you think that you could get away with it?' he screamed. 'I will shoot you in front of your friends, so that they will not forget the punishment meted out to one who mutinies against us!'

"As the Nazi held the gun to the head of my friend, he had a moment of decency (if such a word could even be used in connection with such a blood thirsty savage), 'Do you have a last request before you die?' he asked.

The Jew replied, 'Yes, I do. I would like to speak with my brothers for two minutes.'

The Nazi permitted him to speak.

Moments before he was to die, our brother turned to us and said, 'Today is Yom Tov, and I am a Kohen. I would like my last living act

on this earth to be Bircas Kohanim. I would like to bless you for the last time.'

Before we could realize what was happening, he raised his hands and declared, Yevarechecha Hashem v'Yishmiracha! We responded with a loud resounding Amen! - He cried; we cried. He blessed; we said 'Amen.'

The Nazi came over to him and shot him in the head. He fell down to the ground, blood pouring out of the wound.

As long as I live I will never forget that moment. My friend's last act on this world was to care about us, to bless us with Hashem's protection.

"The war ended a few weeks later. I was a broken shard of my former self. It had gotten so bad that I had decided to renege my Jewishness. I would no longer adhere to our religion – not after what I had experienced.

Every time that I was about to execute that act, however, to perform the transgression that would sever my relationship with Yiddishkeit, my friend's Bircas Kohanim appeared before my eyes. His love, his compassion for us – I could not turn my back on him.

This encouraged me and gave me the strength to continue to remain steadfast in my commitment to our religion. Nonetheless, whenever the Kohanim raise their hands to recite the Bircas Kohanim, I have to leave. The scene brings back painful memories. I do not want to weep in the shul; so I go out and weep quietly in the hall."

Rav Zilberstein observes that exclusive of the unusual heroic act of compassion evinced by the Kohen, we derive from this incident how one experience can forever remain imbedded in someone's mind for a lifetime – inspiring him positively, and ultimately being the catalyst for maintaining his fidelity to Hashem.

Parents spend time, money and exert every effort to imbue their children with the proper hashkafah, outlook, in life. They want their

children to grow into the consummate bnei Torah and bnos Yisrael. They pray and weep, so that they merit to receive Yiddishe nachas from their offspring. Yet not all succeed. Why?

While I do not have the answers, one thing is certain: If parents personally maintain a lifestyle that is obverse to what they expect of their children, they are undermining their own efforts. The best medium for inculcating a child with the proper Torah values is to set an example by personally living such a lifestyle. "Do as I say – not as I do" is counterproductive and sends a destructive message.

While it is difficult to alter one's personal lifestyle, it indicates how much a parent really cares about his/her child's spiritual and moral growth. - One can hardly expect better from the son than to be a reflection of his father.



כִּי בֶּעָנָן אֵרָאֶה עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת – '*For in a Cloud will I appear upon the Ark-Cover*.' (16:2)

No one was permitted to enter the Kodesh HaKedoshim, Holy of Holies, except for Aharon HaKohen and future Kohanim Gedolim. This would take place once a year, on Yom Kippur.

It was in the Kodesh HaKedoshim, from within a Cloud hovering above the Kapores, Ark Cover, that Hashem's Glory was manifest. Hashem's Glory is hidden beneath many veils. It is within the innermost area of sanctity and, even then, it is shrouded within a cloud.

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, derives a powerful, inspirational lesson from Hashem's clandestine Presence. **כִּי בֶּעָנָן אֵרָאֶה**, "For in a Cloud will I appear."

Every time, every moment, at every juncture that a person feels his life inundated with darkness; he is within a murky cloud of ambiguity; his problems have trapped him into a corner; the vicissitudes of life have gotten to him; he sees no way, no avenue, no light at the end of

the tunnel – he should not give up. Concealed within the problems and darkness is Hashem's Presence. He is behind, hidden within the challenges. If one maintains his spiritual stamina, if he keeps the faith, he will find Hashem.

In his commentary to the Torah, Devarim 31:18, **וְאָנֹכִי הַסְתֵּר אַסְתִּיר פָּנַי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא**, **the Baal Shem Tov, zl**, explains, V'Anochi astir panim…, "And I will have surely concealed My Face." How can Hashem hide Himself from us?

He explains this with an analogy. A king placed a number of optical illusions on the road and in the palace, as he concealed himself within a room in the back of the palace. The average person might believe that the king is nowhere to be found. The astute observer understands that a king who cares, a loving Father in Heaven, does not leave. He is present, taking refuge behind various coverups which enshroud His Presence.

The true believer keeps looking for Hashem. He never gives up, because he realizes that Hashem will never forsake His children. The various canopies which seem to conceal Him are actually figments of our imagination. If we look – we will find Him.

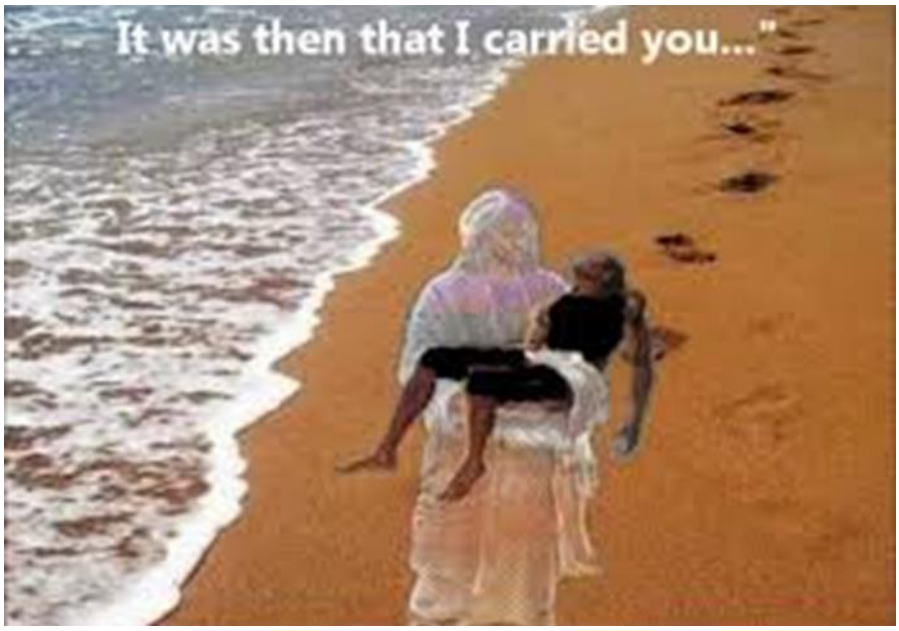
This is what our pasuk is teaching us. Whenever there appears to be a hastoras panim, concealment of the Divine Presence, it means that we must look harder and deeper, because Hashem is "hidden" within the Cloud.

A well-known analogy is worth repeating. There was once a man who was continually stricken with misfortune. Nothing seemed to go right. If it was not an illness, it was a financial problem, or an issue with a child – it was always something.

Feeling alone and forsaken, he looked Heavenward and asked the One Above, Keili, lamah azavtani? "My G-d, why have You abandoned me?"

One night, the man dreamed that he was walking on a long path. When he looked back, he saw two sets of footprints. The prints were not

consistent, since in areas in which the path narrowed, he saw only one set of prints. He contemplated the meaning of the dream, quickly realizing that the dream was about his life. The path represented his journey through life, from birth, childhood, youth and middle age, and finally the present: old age. As he traveled the road of life, he was accompanied by Hashem; hence, the two sets of footprints.



The wider road represented the good times, the happy times, when the sun shone on him. The narrower road symbolized the periods of adversity, times of challenge that he had experienced. This part of the road was bumpy, as well as narrow.

He was now even more troubled, since apparently when the road became difficult to traverse, there was only one set of footprints. Apparently, when he needed Him most, Hashem had abandoned him. What other explanation could there be for the single set of footprints?

He cried out to Hashem, "Why, why did You forsake me when I needed You most? Why did You leave me to travel alone at my most difficult time? It was then that I needed Your support more than ever!"

Suddenly, he heard a Voice gently say, "My beloved son, you are greatly mistaken. While it is true that there are difficult times, when the road narrows and it seems that you are walking all alone, it is specifically during these times when you perceive loneliness and abandonment, that quite the opposite is true. During those times a

wide path is unnecessary, because there is need for only one set of footprints – Mine. I do not walk beside you; rather, I carry you. Please realize that during those times when you feel most forsaken, when you feel that I have abandoned you – I am closer to you than at any other time. I know that you need Me, and I am there."

The man woke up a transformed person. He learned to rely on emunah, faith, in Hashem during his times of travail. Adversity no longer frightened him; challenges no longer overwhelmed him. He walked with Hashem.

We tend to ignore another aspect of adversity: Hashem's pain. A parent who cares, a teacher who is sensitive, invariably feels pain when punishment is required in order to maintain his child's / student's proper behavior and attitude. No one enjoys punishment – least of all the parent or teacher who is charged with meting it out. Why should our Heavenly Father be different?

The average person does not think this way. It is all about "me" and "my" pain.

The following vignette should prove inspirational. **Horav David Dubiner, zl**, was an outstanding holy Torah scholar who lived in Tzefas. For many years this righteous Jew, together with his wife, lived alone. Hashem had not yet blessed them with a child.

When a son was finally born to them, the simchah, rejoicing, was reflected throughout the entire community. The boy was raised in a pure Torah environment and, at the age of seventeen, he was engaged to be married to a wonderful like-minded girl. Alas, shortly prior to the wedding, the young man became ill and succumbed to his illness.

The shock and pain reverberated throughout the entire Torah community. The city's Jewish population all attended the funeral. Everyone shed bitter tears of grief over the tragedy and for the pain that the parents were experiencing.

One person did not cry – neither at the funeral, nor during the first three days of shivah, seven-day mourning period. Rav David listened to the visitors' comments, bent his head, and said nothing. There was no manifestation of grief on his face – only silence.

On the fourth day, he began to weep and continued to do so for the remainder of the shivah.

After the shivah, he explained his seemingly strange behavior: "I believe with complete faith that Hashem, Who gave me a precious gift – my son, took him back with complete justice. This is why, for the first three days of shivah, I remained silent. I did not protest Hashem's decree by shedding tears.

On the fourth day, however, I became calm enough to accept my tzarah, trouble, and reflect on the tragedy and how to react to it. "I felt that Hashem is certainly correct in punishing me so cruelly. In as much as the blow is immense, I must accept it without question, without protest.

Thus, for the first three days, I did not shed a tear. On the fourth day, however, I realized that when a father strikes his child, regardless of the justification, it causes the father great pain – even more than that of his son. It then came to my attention that Hashem's 'pain' over having to punish me so severely is far greater than my own pain. For this pain of the Shechinah, I cried."

R' Naftali of Amsterdam once commented to R' Yisroel Salanter, "Would that I could have the brain of the Shaagas Aryeh, the heart of the Yesod V'Shoresh HaAvoda, and the character traits of my mentor! Then I could serve Hashem properly!"

R' Yisroel answered, "Naftali, your job is to serve Hashem with your brain, your heart and your character traits. Only with what He gave you can you truly serve Him."

כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכֹּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם - "***For on this day he shall provide atonement for you.***" (16:30)

In a drasha, lecture, during the month of Elul, the **Klausenberger Rebbe, z.l.**, told the following story:

The author of the Yeshuos Yaakov lived in the city of Yarislov for a number of years following his marriage. He davened in that city's main shul. He witnessed the following : – One year, on Erev Yom Kippur shortly before Kol Nidrei, a man entered the shul and walked up to the amud to lead the service. This person gave the outward appearance of piety, virtue and dignity. He did not ask permission to daven; he just went up to lead the service.

Something about this individual's appearance and his awe- inspiring davening prevented anyone from stopping him from "taking over," even though there were regular chazzanim in the shul.

As soon as the visitor completed Kol Nidrei, he went on to lead Maariv. After Maariv, when everyone left to go home, he stayed in the shul to recite Tehillim all through the night. Certainly, his physical stamina was superhuman. In fact, people began to suspect that he might be a malach, Heavenly Angel.

Morning came, and the visitor was standing by the podium prepared to lead the services. This continued on all day: Shacharis, Krias HaTorah, Mussaf and Minchah.

As they prepared for the climax of the day, the Neilah service, everyone was sure that this person was not a human being. How could anyone stand on his feet all day without food and rest, praying in such a heart- rending and emotional manner, and not be superhuman?

After Neilah, the visitor led the Maariv service and wished everyone a Gut Yom Tov, referring to the upcoming festival of Succos.

One of the more distinguished members of the shul invited the "Heavenly" visitor to his house to make Havdalah and break the fast. The man accepted.

The Yeshuos Yaakov, who was privy to the entire drama of the day, felt that now they would know whether the visitor was a human or an angel based upon whether or not he would eat.

When a plate of food was placed in front of the guest, he said he was not hungry; he needed, however, a Gemara Succah so that he could learn. He said that he felt weak, not having had the opportunity to learn all day.

The visitor proceeded to learn all night without pausing to eat. When he completed the entire mesechta, tractate, he went to shul to daven Shacharis. After davening, the people discovered that the visitor was none other than the saintly **Kedushas Levi, Horav Levi Yitzchok, zl, m'Berditchev**.

There is a postscript to this story, which conveys the essence of this narrative's profound message.

The Klausenberger Rebbe noted that after an entire day of tefillos, which surely pierced the heavens, after the emotional pleas of a heart so pure that he was like an angel, the Berditchever still felt "weak." He needed his blatt Gemara, his Rashi and Tosfos to sustain himself. - Torah is, after all, the soul's true sustenance.

כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יְשַׁבְתֶּם־בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּכְמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ־כְּנַעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵבִיא אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְחֻקֹּתֵיהֶם לֹא תֵלֵכוּ - "***Like the practice of the land of Egypt…and like the practice of the land of Canaan…you should not do***." (18:3)

The Egyptian and Canaanite nations were the most degenerate of all nations. Immorality was their way of life, licentiousness was their culture. We are adjured not to follow in their statutes and traditions.

The Sefarim HaKedoshim add that even in those areas which are permitted to us, we should act with restraint, holiness and

refinement. In other words, we should abide by a Jewish standard of behavior, a Torah approach to living.

As Torah Jews, we must strive to act, live and interact differently than what is in vogue in contemporary society. Our lives are different, our goals are different, our purpose for living is different. Therefore, why would we want to act like those around us? Regrettably, the insecure nature of some of our people drives them to behave in a manner which, unfortunately, conforms quite well with contemporary society.

The Piaseczner Rebbe, z.l., the great tzaddik, wrote, lectured and inspired the broken-hearted Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II. When he reached the milestone age of forty, he said,

"What should I accept upon myself? What should I undertake? To learn more? I think that, to the best of my knowledge, I waste no time. To distance myself from lust and desire? Baruch Hashem, I think I have overcome that. What am I missing? Pashut, simply – to be a Jew!

I visualize myself as a human being with everything but a neshamah, soul. I now want to convert myself to be a Yehudi!"

What a penetrating statement from an individual whose moral/spiritual rectitude served as the paradigm of what a human being can achieve.

The Slonimer Rebbe, Shlita, explains that one can look and act like a Jew, he can go through the motions of Jewishness, but he can still lack his essential Yahadus, Judaism, which must penetrate to his inner psyche. Indeed, when the great tzaddikim recited the daily blessing of "Shelo osani goi," -"that He did not make me a gentile," they would momentarily reflect, asking themselves, "Is there any organ or part of me that might be lacking in Yiddishkeit?"

כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכֹּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם - "***For on this day, he shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you, from all of your sins***." (16:30)

Yom Kippur provides atonement – if it is not too late.

Horav Yitzchak Blazar, z.l., the famous **Rav Itzele Peterburger**, primary disciple of **Horav Yisrael Salanter, z.l.**, spoke prior to Rosh Hashanah in the Bais HaMussar of Kovno. After his ethical discourse, the assemblage began to recite various perakim, chapters, from Sefer Tehillim.

At the end, together they recited the verses of שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ, Hear our Voices, a heartrending appeal which follows the Selichos prayer.

When they reached the pasuk, אַל תַּשְׁלִיכֵנוּ לְעֵת זִקְנָה, "Do not discard us when we grow old," Rav Itzele stopped, turned around to the kahal, those gathered in prayer, and related the following story:

The Czar Nikolai conscripted men into the Russian Army in a manner unprecedented in its cruelty. Once they were drafted, it was extremely difficult to leave. Being a soldier in the Czar's army was a lifelong ordeal.

Anyone of draftable age would hide from the "recruiters," knowing fully well what it would mean if they were conscripted. Anyone caught avoiding the draft was immediately sent to Siberia. There, they were forced to do hard labor in the frigid cold without any letup.

Most of those who ended up in Siberia were never heard from again. One day, the Czar made an announcement to all of his subjects. As a one-time dispensation, he was allowing anyone who had previously been avoiding conscription to come forward, and all would be forgiven. They would be "accepted" into the army, and their pasts would be overlooked.

The announcement provided results for the Czar. Tens of thousands of Russians came out of hiding. Young, strong men, middle-aged and

older men, stood together in the recruitment centers waiting to be accepted into the Czar's army. As bad as the army was, it was a fate that was far more favorable than Siberia.

The officers walked into the rooms and immediately separated the young, strong men from the older applicants. These young men were immediately inducted into the army, while the others were taken to a kangaroo court where an army judge was to decide their fate.

"How could this be?" they clamoured to the judge. "We were told that if we come forward, we would be inducted into the army."

The judge looked at them and laughed, "Yes, the young, strong ones will be inducted into the army. What does the army need from you? You are no longer strong. You cannot fight. As far as the Czar is concerned, you are worthless. Yes, we will take you to Siberia where you can live out the rest of your lives. You should have come forth earlier when you could have provided a service. Now, we have no use for you."

As Rav Itzele finished the story, all those assembled began to cry. A number of them fainted. They understood the meaning of the story and its relationship to the Selichah, **אַל תַּשְׁלִיכֵנוּ**.

Rav Itzele continued, "We entreat Hashem, **הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ וְנָשׁוּבָה**, *Return us Hashem to You, and we will repent.*'

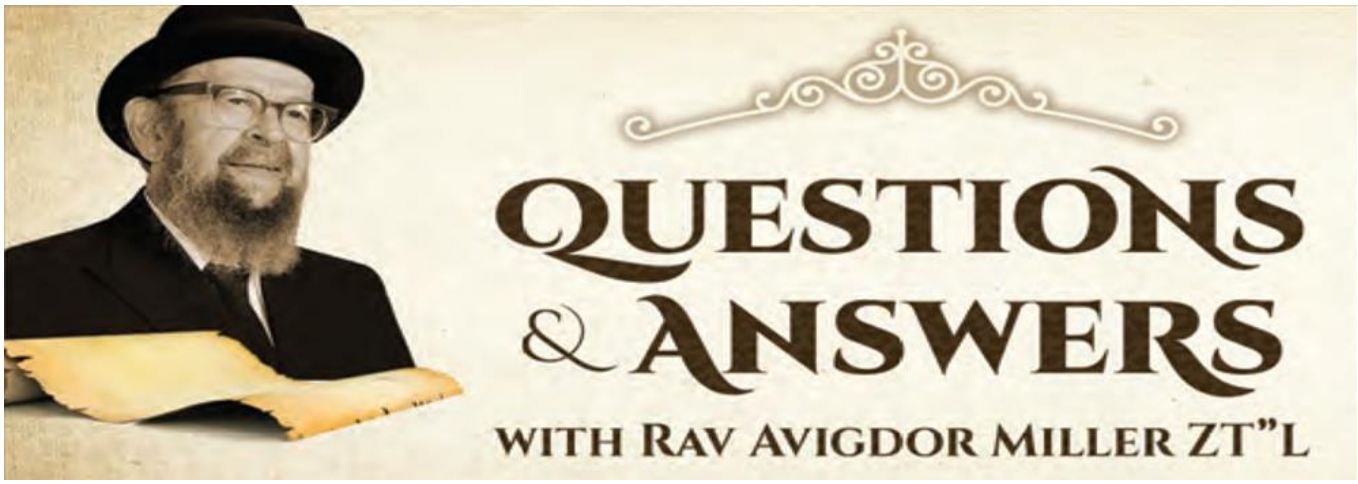
When a young man, with his whole life ahead of him, utters these words, there is some validity to them. He will be accepted by Hashem. He will grow and mature as a returnee.

When an older man, however, one who has enjoyed much of life, supplicates Hashem with these words, is there any efficacy to his request?

This is why we cry out to Hashem, 'Please do not discard us when we grow old. When we age, we need even greater compassion. Please, Hashem, do not discard us like a worthless object that has little value.'"

Perhaps we may supplement this with a thought from the **Mezritcher Maggid, z.l.**. He explains that every person is sent to this world to perform a function, to fulfill a purpose. Once that purpose has been completed, he is called back.

In order to increase our longevity, every person should accept upon himself new and greater responsibilities, so that there will be a "need" for him to remain in this world.





Is it possible to teach children to appreciate the world?

And the answer is absolutely! That's when it should be taught. You should teach a child and tell him, "Isn't it beautiful that the sun is shining right now?" Explain to him the benefits of the sun.

In the summertime, the sun warms you. Walk on the sunny side of the street and walk on the sunny side of life. And the sun gives you vitamins as it hits your skin. The sun gives you light. And it's all free energy! No landlord will send you a bill. Con Ed won't send you a bill for the daytime light. It's so beautiful, the sunlight. It's a mashal of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

The Gemara says the sun is a mashal of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Just like the sun floods the world with happiness and light and joy, so does Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And so certainly you can teach children to enjoy sun.

We must teach ourselves too, by the way. Let's enjoy the sun. The biggest bracha that we make in davening is on the sun. Doesn't that show the hypocrisy among us? The longest bracha in davening is on the sun -**בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' יוֹצֵר אוֹר** and it concludes **יוֹצֵר הַמְּאוֹרוֹת**.

The malachim are so excited over the sun that they say **קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ בְּרַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל** with great excitement they're praising Hashem — and we, we're the recipients of all this, and we're not interested. We're asleep. So there's a lot of work to be done on children and on ourselves.



By speaking in English, like we are now, aren't many ideas dangerous? Things that can be picked up by goyim that we are against them?

And the answer is, what I'm saying here, a goy can listen to it too. It is very good for goyim to hear these words. He will become a mentch if he listens to my words.

The truth is, divrei Torah are good for everybody. Only they are not allowed to learn it (Sanhedrin 59a), but the benefits of Torah procedure are good for all mankind. There's no question about it. **תורה - תחילתה גמילות חסדים וסופה גמילות חסדים**. The whole Torah is nothing but gemilus chassadim (Sotah 14a). And if you follow the Torah you will be successful in this world too.

So lehavdil, many goyim are reading the Bible today, many goyim, even today and they are gaining a certain perfection in character, no

question about it. And therefore, if they would come and listen… there's no question they'd go away satisfied and happy that they heard so many things that will help them succeed in life.

הרב קלונימוס קלמן בן אלימלך שפירא זצ"ל - A Life of Self-Sacrifice and Kiddush Hashem by Yaakov Rosenfeld, Ganzach Kiddush Hashem



In these days, days of sorrow and anxiety, worry and distress, it has been eighty years since the the Rebbe, **Rabbi Kalonymous Kalmish Shapira** was murdered in sanctification of G-d's name (kiddush Hashem) in the Trawniki camp, 40 kilometres from Lublin.

Eighty years since, the cry of the Holy Rebbe of Piaseczno has been silenced, the terrible cry that echoed in the ghettos of dying Poland.

And the days, the days of the "Operation Harvest Festival" – a code name invented by the diabolical German mind for a massive killing spree that was carried out immediately after the Treblinka and Sobibor uprisings – the Nazi command, fearing a similar scenario in other ghettos, ended up ordering the elimination of the rest of the surviving Jews, the inmates of the camps in and around Lublin.



The Piaseczno Rebbe, Rabbi Kalonymous Kalmish Shapira (second from left) with his father-in-law at his side, the Bolchow Rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Perlow at a place for healing.

The versions differ on the exact circumstances of the rabbi's death, but there is almost a complete consensus that it happened on November 3rd 1943/Cheshvan 5, 5704, this being after he resolutely refused to take advantage of a special permission obtained for him with toil and sweat and preferred to stay with the suffering Jews, those who found calmness and comfort under his wings.

The works of the Piaseczno Rebbe were published before and during the war, and until its end, in many different places and languages.

The story of his life, character, work, and thought, has already been revealed in long documents, and it seems that there is no one who has not been exposed to them to one degree or another.



As part of the educational and documentary enterprises of Ganzach Kiddush Hashem, special projects were carried out for the Torah lessons and chapters of the Rebbe's life; educational, literary ,and research productions have taken place over the years on the character of the Rebbe, whose thought and legacy have become iconic.

Worthy of mention is the textbook that was published for school students; a special and important production, full of high-quality, historical, and thoughtful content, encompassing the image of the tzaddik (righteous man) in every way.

The Rebbe, the man of education who raised up generations of righteous people and worshipers of G-d, did not stop educating and infusing the dew of revival even while he walked in the valley of death. The words of Torah that he wrote down with his own hands in the dark days and with the fear of death are silent testimonies to that sacred fire that never stopped whispering, flickering, and burning in hearts with the fire of faith and G-d's work until the last moments of life.

In this framework, we will discuss the life and the words of Torah of the Piaseczno Rebbe in the valley of tears, the words of Torah that were preserved and saved in the milk jug in which the treasures of the Oneg Shabbat Archive were buried and were miraculously discovered after the war during random building excavations.

Their publication at the time aroused intense excitement among the survivors in particular, and among Jews in general; to this day, the words that have already seen the light of day in many editions evoke a feeling of excitement and admiration in the hearts of readers. But before that, let's look at chapters of self-sacrifice and kiddush Hashem in his years of life, which are expressed in many of his books and writings.

His book Eish Kodesh (Holy Fire) is like a continuation of the two books that preceded it, those that, between the two wars, conquered the Torah world at every site and shone a miraculous light in the lives of many.

Although the book Eish Kodesh, by its very nature, deals a lot with self-sacrifice and kiddush Hashem, we find many echoes of these holy ideas in his previous books as well, those written long before the war, in the years in which Polish Jews were faced with the difficulties of earning a living and the hardships of the time. They did not dream of the nightmare scenario that they were going to experience during the years of horror and anger; they did not imagine that in a few years, most of them would all rise to the center of kiddush Hashem and there would be almost no survivors of glorious Polish Jewry.

Educational theories

In his work as a teacher, Rabbi Shapira attempted to reverse the trend toward secularization, which swept the Jewish community in Poland between the wars. The vibrant cultural life of the city, as well as the attractions of political movements such as Zionism eroded the number of students wishing to pursue a yeshiva education. These trends, Rabbi Shapira argued, could only be exacerbated by archaic educational methods, harsh discipline and rote learning, such as were often the practice of the day in *yeshivot*.

Rabbi Shapira argued that a child must be imbued "with a vision of his own potential greatness" and be enlisted "as an active participant

in his own development." Likewise, teachers "must learn to speak the language of the student, and graphically convey the delights of a life of closeness to G-d." Rabbi Shapira argued for positive, psychologically sensitive, joyous educational methods.



War years

Rabbi Shapira's only son, his daughter-in-law and his sister-in-law were killed during the Nazi aerial bombing of Warsaw in September, 1939. After the invasion of Poland, Rabbi Shapira was interned with a few of his hasidim in the Warsaw Ghetto, where he ran a secret synagogue. He invested enormous efforts in maintaining Jewish life in the ghetto, including arranging for mikveh immersions and kosher marriages. Rabbi Shapira was able to survive in the ghetto until its liquidation, avoiding the tragic deportations to Treblinka in the summer of 1942, because of the support of the Judenrat. Like other notables, he was given work at Schultz's shoe factory—a path to ongoing survival.

Rabbi Shapira is well known because of a book he wrote while in the ghetto. The book, which is a compilation of weekly sermons to his students, contends with complex questions of faith in the face of the mounting suffering of the Jews in the ghetto. When it became apparent to Rabbi Shapira that the end of the ghetto and all its inhabitants was near, he buried the book in a canister. This canister was found by a construction worker after the end of the war. The book was published in Israel in 1960 under the title *Esh Kodesh*.

After the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was crushed in 1943, Rabbi Shapira was taken to the Trawniki work camp near Lublin. Although offered the opportunity to escape from the concentration camp, he apparently refused. Following the Jewish uprising in the Treblinka death camp (August 2, 1943) and in Sobibor extermination camp (October 14, 1943), there was increasing concern among the Nazi authorities that there would be further outbreaks of violence at other concentration camps. For this reason, Aktion Erntefest (Operation Harvest Festival) was launched. During this operation, carried out on November 3, 1943, all the remaining Jews in Trawniki, including Rabbi Shapira, were shot to death.

Rabbi Shapira's memory is revered, and he is held as an example of faith under enormous duress. Rabbi Shapira's faith remained strong and unwavering, and he continued to inspire others to the end of his life.

May the merit of the Tzadik Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira protect us all. Amen

Honorable Mentshen by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

This week the Torah tells us about loving every Jew. It adds a special verse exhorting us to be especially sensitive to a special type of Jew the convert. ***"When a proselyte dwells among you in your land, do not taunt him. The proselyte who dwells with you shall be like a native among you, and you shall love him like yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt -- I am Hashem, your G-d"*** (Leviticus 19:33-34)

A person who converts has the status of a Jew. He is a full-fledged member of the community and every social, moral and ethical tenet applies to him. Though he may be exempt from particular laws concerning "kahal" (which would have implications in marital law), he

is otherwise as equal as any Jew. And that's why this verse troubles me. After all, if the convert is a Jew, why do we need a special command telling us not to inflict any discomfort upon him?

Hadn't the Torah told us in verse 18, ***"Love your neighbor as yourself?***" Why implore born-Jews to be nice to the newcomers through a series of commands that seem to use a moral approach: "You were once a stranger, so you know how it feels?" A convert is a Jew. And a Jew is a Jew is a Jew! All rules apply!

When my grandfather **Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky**, of blessed memory, was dean of Mesivta Torah Voda'ath back in the 1950s, he developed a professional relationship with a psychotherapist who worked with some of the students. The doctor would often call Rabbi Kamenetzky to discuss his treatment of some of the students under his care. They also would have discussions on psychology and education.

The doctor was a student of the famed psychotherapist, Dr. Sigmund Freud, and despite Freud's attitude toward religion, this particular doctor was always respectful and never attributed any of the students' problems to observance or religious commitment.

Years later, when Rav Yaakov was informed that the doctor had passed away, he felt it incumbent to attend his funeral. He assumed it would not be the type of service he was used to, and even understood that he, a frocked and bearded sage, would appear out of place among a medical community of his distinguished colleagues, assimilated German and Austrian psychotherapists and mental health professionals. However, Rav Yaakov's gratitude overruled his hesitation.

When entering the Riverside Chapel, Rav Yaakov was shocked to see that a distinguished Rav, a friend of his, was performing the funeral and that scores of Torah observant Jews were participating. After the service which was done in total compliance with halacha, Rav Yaakov approached his friend who had officiated.

How do you know the doctor? What connection do you have with him? "What do you mean," answered the Rav. "Of course I knew him. The doctor davened in my shul three times a day!"

My grandfather had never discussed religion with the man, he just respected him for his professionalism and abilities.

The Torah tells us that even though there is a universal command to love every Jew as yourself, an additional concept applies specifically to a convert. We must be kind to him as part of the overall moral obligation of a nation that also endured the trauma of being strangers.

In addition to loving Jews as their inherent birthright, it is also imperative to display love to them when our moral obligation demands it. The Torah is teaching us not only to act with affection as born Jews but as honorable mentshen.

Parsha Potpourri by Oizer Alport

Rav Yonason Eibeshutz was once collecting tzedakah for a poverty-stricken family in his community. He approached one of the wealthy men in town for a donation. The stingy man attempted to excuse himself by quoting the Gemora in Kesuvos (50a), which discusses the pasuk (verse) in Tehillim (106:3) **אשרי שמרי משפט עשה צדקה בכל עת** – Praised are those who guard justice and do acts of righteousness at every moment.

The Gemora questions how it is possible to do tzedakah every second, and answers that the verse refers to a person who sustains his own young children. The man claimed that he had no need to contribute to the Rav's cause, for through his children, he was already considered by the Gemora as somebody who gives tzedakah **בכל עת**– at every moment.

The quick-witted Rav Yonason responded to this argument by quoting the pasuk in Parshas Acharei Mos in which Aharon was forbidden to

enter the Kodesh Kodashim (Holy of Holies) at any time that he desired. Rav Yonason creatively interpreted it as saying **ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש**- A person who only gives tzedakah based on the Gemora's interpretation of the words **בכל עת** will not be permitted to enter holy places.



The Rare Event of Pesach Followed by Yom Kippur, and What We Should Do About It

A little over six months ago, after Succos had finished and people heard about the tragic events that took place on Simchas Torah (7th October), events that many people said Klal Yisroel haven't seen or heard since the Holocaust. Many people commented that if only we could have another Yom Kippur, and then we would *daven* and do *teshuvah* more seriously. Unfortunately, this didn't happen and straight after Succos there was no second Yom Kippur. There was a long six-month winter *zeman,* but no Yom Kippur, there were no second chances.

Although not so common, this year, immediately following Pesach, we have Yom Kippur, this year, the weekly *parsha* immediately following Pesach is *parshas Achrei Mos,* the *parsha* which talks all about the *avodah* of Yom Kippur. It is well known that the *parshiyos* that fall out during various times of the year, are not random. It is carefully orchestrated by the One above, that particular *parshiyos* fall out at particular times. It is not by chance, that this year immediately following Pesach we have the *parsha* of Yom Kippur. Therefore, although after Succos we never had the opportunity to have another Yom Kippur, after Pesach this year we do. The million-dollar question

is, however, what lesson should we take from this, and what should we do about it?





One of the central parts of the Yom Kippur *avodah* [service] is the *shnei seirim*, the two goats. The *pasuk* in this week's *parsha* teaches: **ומאת עדת בני ישראל יקח שני שעירי עזים לחטאת** – "And from Bnei Yisroel you shall take two male goats as a sin offering" (*Vayikra* 16:5). The Mishnah in Yoma states that the two should be identical in terms of color, height and value and that they should be purchased simultaneously.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch expounds on this idea: Let's imagine the thoughts of these two identical *seirim* [goats]. They are brought to the Kohen Gadol and, as they stand shoulder to shoulder, lots are drawn. One is designated to be *la'Hashem* - brought as a *korbon* [sacrifice]. The other, destined *la'Azazel* - to be thrown off a cliff.

At this point their paths diverge. As the *seir la'Azazel* remains standing alive, the *seir la'Hashem* is slaughtered and the blood is collected in a vessel. That vessel is then brought to the holiest place in the world, the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*, where the blood is sprinkled between the poles of the *aron* [the ark], on the *paroches* [the separating curtain between the *Kodesh* and the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*] and on the *mizbe'ach hazahav* [the golden altar]. The remainder of the *seir* is burnt outside of the *machaneh* [camp]

"Whew!!!! Did you see that?!?! Close call!!! That could have been my neck! My lucky day that I didn't draw his lot! 50-50 chance… Poor guy… I had taken a bit of a liking to him…"

The Kohen Gadol approaches the *seir la'Azazel*, places his hands on its head and confesses the sins of the nation. It is then led out of the *Beis HaMikdosh* toward the mountains outside of Yerusholayim…

"Ahhhh… boy, am I glad to be out of that place! Now I can relax and take a deep breath! Nothing like the country air! I'm glad they didn't carry me out the way they carried out my buddy! Beautiful scenery! This is the life!"

It is then brought to the edge of a high cliff…

"What a panoramic view! Incredible, absolutely incredible! Talk about a Kodak moment!"

… turned around with its back to the cliff…

"Oh, I get it, you want a shot with the mountain in the background…tell me when… say cheese…"

… and pushed off the mountain!

We must learn from the *shnei seirim*, two goats, a very important lesson. In life, we start out very similar to our peers, however, as time goes on, we have paths to choose and decisions to make. Often one path seems wrought with sacrifice and pain - the other blissful and serene.

We're often plagued with the questions: why give up pleasures? why restrain ourselves? why not get all that we can out of life? Why not take the easy option?

We see from the *shnei seirim* however, that it's the struggles and sacrifices in life which reveal and build our strengths as individuals. The easy path is rarely the fulfilling one. That which seems so tempting and easy is often catastrophic. When things are easy, we don't end up in the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*, we end up getting push off a cliff going *la'Azazel*.

Pesach is all about freedom, Pesach is *zeman charuseinu*, after going through a Pesach we are supposed to feel free. However, as it is with

all good things in life, there is a big catch, and being free comes with a great *ruchniusdike sakonah* [spiritual danger].

R' Chaim Kaufman relates a fascinating story: A certain Gerrer *chosid* survived the terrible trials of the holocaust but was heard to cry out on his release from the camps, **פתח לנו שער בעת נעילת שער** - "Open for us the gate at the time the gate is closing". - He meant that during the years of suffering in the concentration camps he felt a special closeness to Hashem but now that he was being freed to resume a normal life who could know if the same connection would remain. Therefore, he cried out that at this moment the gate to Hashem should remain open for him.

Although hopefully we have come out of Pesach feeling free, we have to realize that there is a great danger involved. We have to learn from the *shnei seirim,* which are such a fundamental part of the Yom Kippur *avodah,* that what one may picture as being the ultimate freedom is the exact opposite, and that what one may picture as being anything but freedom, is actually a *korbon la'Hashem* which is fitting to be offered up in the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*.

So, let's make sure to take this wonderful opportunity of Pesach being immediately followed by Yom Kippur, and learn from the *shnei seirim* what real freedom is, and to make sure to utilize our freedom in the best way possible. If we do this, *iy'H* the tragic events which all started on Simchas Torah will quickly be behind us, and we will merit the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days.

During the war, our people were indiscriminately hated, simply for being Jewish. After the war, we must respond by indiscriminately loving all Jews, simply for being Jewish. ~

The Bluzhover Rebbe, Reb Yisrael Spira (1881-1989)

Divrei Torah, Ba`er Heitev באר היטב פרש"י בע' לשון. דברי תורה, שמחה וחיזוק.

כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכֹּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' תִּטְהָרוּ – '***For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before Hashem***.' [16:30]

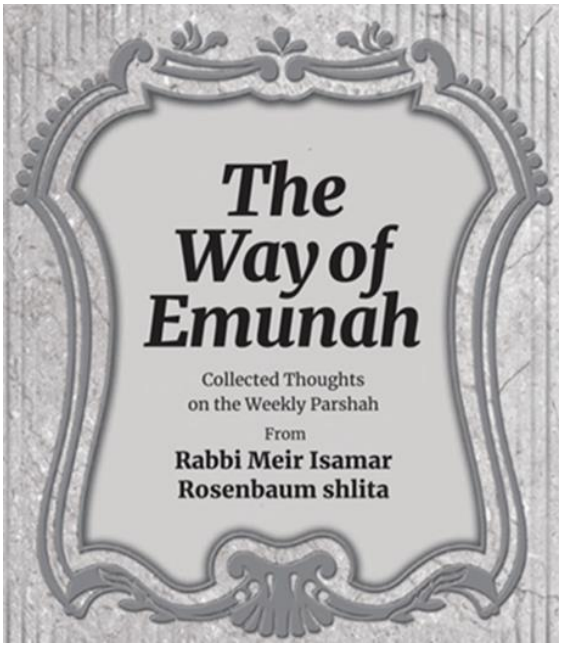
In the **Sefer Beis Aharon**, it is written that when his father [**Reb Osher of Stolin] ZY"A** would read on this Shabbos the Parshoh of Yom Hakipurim. He would have great yearning to the level of **כלות הנפש** (zenith of his soul). And he would say it is a **משל** to when a food is being formulated for a wedding feast before the wedding. Beforehand the food is also tasted. - So too, on this Shabbos one must awaken with this Hissorerus (awakening) of the Kedushoh of Yom HaKippurim.

L'Maaseh...

Before his marriage, **Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l** served as the rav of a full kehilla in Russia, and on top of his salary, they hired a woman to prepare meals for him.

One day, R' Moshe's sister came to visit and noticed that her brother had put on a bit of weight. The first evening, the two sat down to eat but when she tasted the food, she spat it out immediately as it was completely inedible. - She watched her brother finish the whole plate but was amazed when he asked for more.

R' Moshe was quick to explain that this woman was an almana and her source of parnasa was cooking for the rav. If he would complain, she would be out of a job. For a whole week, his sister watched in awe as R' Moshe ate every drop of the food he was served, while she emptied the contents of her plate into her dress, washing it out and letting it dry overnight.



וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקָרְבָתָם לִפְנֵי־ה' וַיָּמֻתוּ – '***And Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of the two sons of Aharon when they came close before Hashem***...' (16:1)

● A Leader's Obligation to Care For Klal Yisroel

Sifrei Chasidus states that by using the word "b'karvasam" (when they came close before Hashem), the Torah is hinting to the cause of Nadav and Avihu's death.

It is saying that while they did merit coming close to Hashem and connecting to Him, they only were concerned with their own stature. They only wanted for themselves to get close to Hashem, but they were not concerned about other people. Thus, the pasuk is saying that they themselves came close to Hashem, but they did not bring others close to Him. They did not emulate their father, Aharon, who brought others close to Hashem, and they were punished for this.

They were taken from this world because they weren't fit to become the leaders of the nation, as the main purpose of a leader of Klal Yisroel is to worry about the welfare of the nation and to ensure that they are well taken care of both in ruchnius and in gashmius.

This concept is clearly seen in the following incredible story: Shortly after the Holocaust, the **Ponovizher Rov, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahanamen zt"l,** opened a home in Bnei Brak for orphaned young survivors, where he took care of all of their needs. In 1948, three years after the end of the war, a 10-year-old orphaned boy arrived at the home. This boy had lost his entire parents in Auschwitz and a relative had looked after him and brought him to the home.

The staff warmly welcomed him, but the boy was severely traumatized and, as a result, he was cold and distant. The first night,

when he was served supper, he hid a few pieces of bread in his pocket. He was so used to being afraid that he would have no food that he was still obsessed with hiding food for later. When it was time to go to sleep, they brought him a set of pyjamas, but he insisted in sleeping in his worn-out, shabby clothes. He also refused to take a shower. This went on for several days. He refused to remove his clothes, no matter what. Even when he was promised sweets and prizes if he would change his clothes, he still refused.

The Ponovizher Rov was a surrogate father for all the orphans. He would hug and kiss them as if they were his own children. Every Friday, he would give them money to buy candy for Shabbos. - He approached the new boy and asked him why he wouldn't change his clothes or take a bath; however, the boy would not answer.

After another few days passed, the Rov saw that this must stop. He went to ask the **Chazon Ish zt"l**, who lived nearby, what to do. When the Chazon Ish heard about the problem, he immediately got up and went to see the boy. He smiled broadly at him and asked, "Why don't you want to bathe?" The boy finally opened his mouth and said in a pained voice, "I don't want to take off my clothes because whenever I take off my clothes they are taken from me. This happened in Bergen Belsen, in Auschwitz, and in every other camp I was in. My clothes were always stolen from me because I had no one to watch them. So I won't take them off again!"

Everyone there was shocked by his words. They were greatly saddened to see how the boy had lost his trust in humanity. - The Ponovizher Rov was so distressed that he ran out of the room and began to cry!

The Chazon Ish then told the child, "Don't worry. The housemother will stand guard over your clothing while you take a bath." - The boy said, "I don't trust her!"

The Chazon Ish then said that the Ponovizher Rov himself would watch his clothing, but the boy said that he didn't trust him either.

Finally, the Chazon Ish said that he would personally watch his clothing. The boy seemed doubtful. He couldn't believe that the Chazon Ish would stay there to watch his clothing but the Chazon Ish said, "I have never said a lie in my life. I promise you that I will watch your clothing."

The boy then said, "If you guard my clothing, I will do it."

The boy was given a bathrobe, and he went into his room. He came out a few minutes later and handed his clothing to the Chazon Ish, who took them from him. He was then taken for a bath.

After he left, the Chazon Ish said to the Ponovizher Rov in a tearful voice, "We must now be this boy's father and mother!"

The Chazon Ish took off his frock and got a large basin. He filled it up with water and the two of them began to scrub the boys' filthy clothes. The clothing were so dirty that the water turned black and had to be changed several times.

There was a young man who worked in the home named Rabbi Grondowitz who tried to stop the Rabbanim from doing such menial work, saying that he would wash the clothes instead; however, they insisted that it was their job. - When they finished washing the clothes, they hung them up to dry.

About a half hour later, the boy came back from his bath and he asked the Chazon Ish for his clothes. The Chazon Ish told him that they were still wet, but he promised to continue to watch them while the boy slept.

Slowly, the boy returned to a normal life, and he ultimately got married and built his own home. From this story, we can see that a manhig in Klal Yisroel has to worry about each individual. Even the Chazon Ish closed his Gemara and went to take care of a young orphan and to put him back on his feet.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Sometimes a person claims that he doesn't have time to learn Torah.

A person once met with **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Z'tl** and told him that he doesn't have time to learn Torah. He simply couldn't find the time.

There was a Bar Mitzvah gift sitting on the table with a rubber band next to it. [a rubber band is pretty small right?] - Reb Shlome Zalman demonstrated to the man, that if you stretch the band, it can stretch and totally encompass the gift which is much bigger than itself. – If a person really wants to, he can expand his time as well to accomplish much more than he thinks. If you waste it on unimportant things, you won't be left with enough time for the important things. – But if you really want to, you can find the time for everything that you need to do.



Rav Elya Lopian once told a bachur who was leaving for yeshiva, "If you pack your suitcase messily, in a random manner, you will fill it up in no time, and you won't be able to get everything else inside. But if you pack it neatly and in an orderly fashion, you will be able to get everything you need inside, with space to spare."

The same is true with your day; if you schedule your day properly, you will see that you have time for learning, and for all the other things that you need to do. – Everything will fit into your schedule.

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES



20 Minutes - The Klausenburger Rebbe - Avrohom Birnbaum

Meshulem lost everything in the war — everything. He was all alone. Even more than that, he was angry, and he decided that he was done with Torah, done with mitzvos. His friends tried to convince him…to no avail. Meshulem was not willing to listen to anyone. "But, Meshulem," his friends pressured, "the Klausenburger Rebbe is in the camp. Why don't you go to him? He knows how to give chizuk."

"I don't need chizuk," Meshulem retorted bitterly. "I saw everything with my own eyes. I saw what they did. I am done with chizuk! I want nothing more to do with G-d or religion."

His friends were persistent, and finally, Meshulem relented. "Fine!" he snapped. "I'll go to him, but on one condition — the Rebbe should not speak one word to me about Yiddishkeit." -The Rebbe agreed.

Meshulem walked in, and before the Rebbe could even say a word, Meshulem said, "Please only ask me 'yes' or 'no' questions. I will not answer with more than one word!"

The Rebbe asked him, "Are you angry?"

"Of course!"

"Why?" the Rebbe asked.

"What kind of a question is that?" Meshulem exclaimed. "I lost holy parents, brothers and sisters. All of them were tzaddikim. And me!" he exploded. "I was always the black sheep. I was a nothing! Yet, I am the one who remained alive. Is that called Hashgachah? Is that called Hashem running the world?"

"This also happened to you?" the Rebbe cried out in astonishment. "Just like it happened to me? I also lost parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, my wife, and all of my eleven children. I, the lowest of them all, am also the only one who remained alive!"

The Rebbe then put his hand on Meshulem's shoulder and began to cry, tears coursing down his cheeks. Meshulem also began to cry, shaking with sobs, the bitters tears streaming from his eyes.

One minute passed, two minutes…a full twenty minutes of heaving, cleansing crying. When R' Meshulem, who had come to the New York area to spend Yom Tov with his children who live in Flatbush, told this story to Rabbi Paysach Krohn, Rabbi Krohn asked him, "So, what made you do teshuvah and start living as a Yid again?"

"Those twenty minutes!" was his reply. "At that meeting, the Rebbe didn't speak to my brain. He spoke to my heart! After crying for those twenty minutes, after unburdening all the pain and anger from my heart, I was able to do teshuvah and start keeping mitzvos again."

• • • • • It was in Kiryat Sanz, Netanya, at the Shabbos sheva berachos of his oldest son, the current Sanzer Rebbe. The Rebbe began speaking, completely uncharacteristically, on a personal note.

He said, "I am standing here, amazed and astounded! What good thing could I have done in my life to give nachas to Hashem that He has repaid me with such berachah? - After thinking about this a lot, I came to the conclusion that I never, ever, expressed any displeasure or complaints against Hashem, no matter how much I suffered. Whatever I endured, I accepted Hashem's will with love…"

L'Maaseh...

A grandson of the **Chofetz Chaim** came to **Rav Aharon Kotler** and asked him why it is that his grandfather, who was a Gaon Olam and even wrote works such as the Mishna Brura which clearly prove it, was acknowledged by the world as a great tzaddik, but less so as the great Gaon that he was?

Rav Aharon had no answer, but since he was on his way to visit the **Brisker Rov**, suggested the grandson join him, so he could ask the Brisker Rov this question.

When they asked the Brisker Rov, he answered, "Retzon Yerie'av Yaaseh, Hashem does the will of those who fear Him." Rav Aharon explained that apparently the Chofetz Chaim davened to Hashem, begging Him to keep his Torah greatness hidden from the world.

"If so," asked the grandson, "why was his righteousness not hidden as well?"

To that, Rav Aharon had a very simple answer.

The Chofetz Chaim clearly understood his breadth and depth of Torah were astounding and far beyond the rest of the generation. However, when it came to tzidkus, the Chofetz Chaim did not see himself as any more special than any Jew trying to serve his Creator to the best of his abilities. Therefore, he didn't think he had any uniqueness in this area and saw no reason to daven!

On one of his many inspirational walks with a close talmid, **Rabbi Avigdor Miller Z'tl** passed by a hospital. Rabbi Miller stopped and pensively eyed the building from top to bottom.

He then said, "Imagine a whole building full of the sick and suffering. How can we pass by without saying a heartfelt Tefillah for them all?"

Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt"l, would say, "I know that in many ways I have the capacity of one thousand men, but because of this, my obligation to serve Hashem is also that of one thousand men."

As long as one is maximizing his potential, he is just as great as everyone else!

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank ZT"L was a Rav in Yerushalayim during the Ottoman era, the British mandate, and after the State of Israel was founded until 1960, when he passed away.

During this time, the residents of Yerushalayim were extremely poor. A woman was uncertain whether the chicken that she had purchased was Kosher, so she brought it to Rav Frank for a ruling.

Upon examination, Rav Frank realized that the chicken was Treif (not Kosher). He also realized that the woman, like many during that time, was very poor. Rav Frank did not want to tell her that her chicken was Treif, because she had no money to purchase another one. He also did not want to lie and tell her that it was Kosher. Accordingly, he quietly asked his wife if they had a chicken in the house. She nodded affirmatively and gave it to him. He brought out the second chicken and told the woman truthfully, "This chicken is completely Kosher according to all opinions!"

The woman did not realize that her chicken had been switched with Rav Frank's. She was relieved to hear the Rav's ruling and went happily on her way.

"Nothing is small, because everything that you do for Hashem and for other people lives on forever." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller Z'l



שמואל זנויל כהנא Shmuel Zanvil Kahana Zt'l (Chief Rabbi of Persian Jewry)

Teaching is only half of the act of education

דָּרֹשׁ דָּרַשׁ מֹשֶׁה -"***Moshe's sermon is needed***" (10:16)

Many parents nowadays complain that they are doing everything they could to instil high moral principles in their children, but today's young people are not ready to listen. Similarly, many teachers also lament the fact that, despite their attempts to instil moral standards and values in their students, they do not succeed at all in influencing their behaviour. why?

The answer to this is found in the interpretation of these three words: דָּרֹשׁ דָּרַשׁ מֹשֶׁה -"*Moshe's sermon is needed*". These words are exactly in the middle of the Torah; The word "Drush" ends the first half of the Torah, and the word "Drash" begins the second half.

Sages say that "drush" means to teach. However, this is only half the task; the second word, "drush", means "to give a personal example", to demonstrate the things we teach. This is the second half of the task of education. - It is not enough to only study, the individual must complete the task of educating others, in the right ways of thinking and doing.

"Don't worry, you are allowed to be both a masterpiece and a work in progress all at the same time." ~ Based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810).

וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיִּיטַב בְּעֵינָיו - "***And Moshe heard and it was good in his eyes***." (10:20)

On one Shabbat, a rabbi invited his guest, also a rabbi, to speak before the people of his congregation. That rabbi was tired and weary from the hassle of the journey and felt that he was unable to make demands in public; but he did not want to hurt his friend.

Therefore, he quoted the verse **וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיִּיטַב בְּעֵינָיו** - "And Moshe heard, and it was good in his eyes," and added: "Moshe was always teaching, and the people were always listening; However, in the verse before us, Aaron is the one who spoke, and Moshe listened - and was very happy. - Since I am also constantly talking and teaching, I would now like to hear what you have to say."

It is very important that we all cultivate the art of listening. Parents talk all the time to their children, and teachers talk all the time to their students; however, if we want our children and students to listen to us, the moment must come when we too must listen to what they have to say to us.

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, in the last years of his life, was so ill that he could only speak in a whisper. However, he continued to give lengthy lessons to his followers, who crowded around him so that they could hear every word.

Once a famous speaker came to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and when he heard the learned Rebbe speak to his followers and students in a whisper, he was very surprised.

"I don't understand," he said, "I have a thick and strong voice, but when I speak for more than half an hour, the people start to get bored and complain, whereas your Rebbe can hardly speak, yet you all lean towards him to catch every word he says and listen to him for hours and hours."

"It's simple," said one of the Hasidim, "we listen to him for many hours because we all know that if one of us would speak with the Rebbe, the Rebbe would lean towards him and listen to him." - Only those who know how to listen properly can also teach properly.



◣ Nothing Trivial Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

וּבָא אַהֲרֹן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד - "***Aharon shall come into the Tent of Meeting***..." (16:23)

Only then did he come into the Tent of Meeting in order to bring out the ladle and the shovel in which he had burned the incense in the Holy of Holies. (Rashi)

Even such seemingly menial functions as removing the ladle and the shovel had to be performed by no less a person than the Kohen Gadol.

The Baal Shem Tov notes that from this we learn that in ministering to a scholar, the clearing away of the utensils with which the scholar ate is also a mitzvah just as the removal of the ladle and the shovel after the burning of the incense in the Holy of Holies was part of the Temple service.

כל תפילה עולה לשמיים, ואין תפילה נאבדת לעולם -"Every prayer ascends to heaven, and no prayer is ever lost." ~ The Zohar

◣ Fatherly Love - Dubno Maggid

כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכֹּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' תִּטְהָרוּ - "***For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you from all your sins; You shall be clean before Hashem***." (16:30)

Rabbi Akiva said: "Fortunate are you, O Israel; before Whom you are purified. Who is it that purifies you? Your Father in Heaven; for it is written: 'You shall be pure before G-d.'" (Mishnah, end of Yoma)

When a physician heals a sick person, the physician typically does not stop to think whether the cure will cause the patient pain, but will do whatever is necessary to cure the patient. However, if the patient is the physician's own child, every effort will be made to find a way to cure the patient with as little pain as possible.

Hashem seeks ways of making atonement for our sins without causing us undue pain and suffering, gave us the holy day of Yom Kippur. "And who is it that purifies you? Your Father in Heaven."

◣ Soul And Body - Sochatchover Rebbe

וְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל נְבֵלָה וּטְרֵפָה - "***Any person (nefesh) who will eat that which died by itself or was mauled***..." (17:15)

The pasuk does not use the word "ish" for "person" but uses the word "nefesh," meaning "soul." This shows, as the **Rambam** declared, that when one eats forbidden food, both his body and soul - his physical and spiritual aspects - are affected.

"If you woke up today, you've already experienced Hashem's chesed: a beating heart, functioning lungs, seeing eyes, and the ability to walk, talk, and breathe-it's endless goodness from Hashem!" ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

◣ Lively Mitzvos - Sefas Emes

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם אֲנִי ה׳ - "***You shall observe My decrees and My judgements, which man shall carry out and live by them. I am Hashem***." (18:5)

This is to say that the performance of the mitzvos gives life, vigour, and vitality to the individual.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

When the *Rosh Yeshiva* called Reb Yaakov Zuker* into his office, Reb Yaakov had no idea what was in store for him. He presented himself at the appointed time and knocked on the door.

"Ah, Reb Yaakov, how are you doing?" is the way the *Rosh Yeshiva* greeted Reb Yaakov.

"*Baruch Hashem*, fine. How's the *Rosh Yeshiva?*"

"The *Rosh Yeshiva* is happy with his life, baruch Hashem, but I need your help."

"Why is that?"

"I'll tell you why, Reb Yaakov." The *Rosh Yeshiva* leaned back in his chair and heaved a sigh. "You know that I need a lot of money to run a yeshiva such as ours, right?"

Reb Yaakov nodded.

"In order for me to be able to raise that kind of money, I have, *baruch Hashem*, been able over the years, to develop a number of wonderful relationships with generous Yidden who, graciously, help me with sizable donations that keep us afloat. Now here's the problem. One of my major donors – a man who used to give me a million dollars a year, has recently suffered a major setback in his business and has stopped giving money to the institutions that he used to support. So here's what I want you to do for me."

Reb Yaakov waited, curious. What could the *Rosh Yeshiva* possibly want from him? He didn't have to wait long to find out.

"Reb Yaakov, I want you to get on a plane and fly to the city where this man lives. His name is Yossi Reich. I want you to talk to Mr Reich and I want you to return here with a cheque for a million dollars."

Reb Yaakov was speechless.

"*Rosh Yeshiva*," he said after several minutes silence, "I don't understand."

"What don't you understand?"

"The *Rosh Yeshiva* just told me that the wealthy Yid suffered a setback and stopped giving people money. So how am I supposed to convince him not only to give the yeshiva money but to give us a million dollars?"

"That seems like a good question," the *Rosh Yeshiva* replied. "But the truth is, it's not really a question at all. You just need to understand one simple idea. Reb Yaakov, you need to grasp something important. In life, we never really know if we are going to succeed at whatever it is we are trying to do. But our job is NOT to make sure we succeed. Our job is to try, to make our move, to do our *hishtadlus*. That's all Hashem asks of us. If we do that, then we have done everything we need to do, and the rest is up to the Big Boss. Understand?"

"So I'm supposed to get on a plane, find this man when I land, and somehow manage to convince him to help me though he isn't helping anyone anymore – and the point is that it's not a big deal because all Hashem wants from me is to try. Do I understand the *Rosh Yeshiva* correctly?"

The *Rosh Yeshiva* nodded. "Exactly," he said.

"When should I leave?"

"I want you to take the flight that will get you there on Thursday afternoon."

"And my return flight?"

"Sunday evening."

"So the *Rosh Yeshiva* is telling me I need to work the magic between Friday and Sunday?"

"Not you! Hashem. All you need to do is start the process. What happens, then, is not up to you. I look forward to seeing you back here next week with good news."

Reb Yaakov smiled nervously. "So do I." And he meant it very sincerely.

The flight was uneventful. Upon landing, Reb Yaakov took a taxi to the local Orthodox Jewish neighbourhood. There he found the house where he was going to stay and asked his host for directions to the nearest *shtiebel*, since he had to *daven Mincha and Maariv.*

The shul was full of Yidden but he found an inconspicuous spot to *daven.* During the break before *Maariv*, one of the locals came over to say hello and introduced himself.

"*Shalom aleichem,*" he said, "My name is Elchonon Stein; what's your name, and what brings you to our lovely city in the middle of winter?"

"Yaakov Zuker, from Eretz Yisroel. The *Rosh Yeshiva* of the yeshivah where I teach asked me to fly here and meet with Mr Yossi Reich, who used to be a major supporter of our yeshiva"

"So you came here to speak with Yossi Reich?"

"Exactly."

"I hate to tell you this, but Reb Yossi isn't meeting with anyone these days."

"I know that."

"So why did you come?"

"Because my *Rosh Yeshiva* asked me to find a way to meet with him."

"Reb Yaakov, Yossi Reich isn't meeting with **anyone** these days."

"Yes, I understand that, and that's why I'm asking you to suggest how I can speak to him – since that is the only reason I'm here."

"I like you," Mr Stein said after several moments, "and I want to help you. I can think of only one way for you to achieve what you came here for."

"Nu?"

"Okay. Tomorrow you will need to go to the shul across the road, where Yossi davens, very early in the morning. Get there around 5.30 am and when you arrive, go hang out in the *ezras noshim* until *davening* starts. I am telling you this because if you are sitting and learning in the main *beis medrash,* the *gabba'im* will ask you to leave before *davening* begins. They don't want people bothering Yossi Reich."

"Got it. So, you're saying I need to hide in the *ezras noshim* and then I should go into the shul after *davening* begins and then they won't ask me to leave."

"Correct. Then after *davening* has finished, go over to Mr Reich. He'll be wrapping up his *tefillin,* and you'll have a few minutes to introduce yourself and tell him why you flew halfway across the globe to see him."

After thanking Elchonon Stein, Reb Yaakov *davened Maariv,* and then, after returning to his host and eating supper, he set his alarm clock for early the next morning.

The shul was already open, and there were people sitting and learning. Instead of joining them, Reb Yaakov went upstairs to the *ezras noshim*, found a seat and a *sefer* and waited. At some point he heard the *gabba'im* asking some people to leave, and understood

that is meant that Yossi Reich would be arriving momentarily. A few minutes later he heard the *chazzan* begin *Pesukei d'Zimra*, and went downstairs and joined the *minyan.*

When *davening* ended, Reb Yaakov quickly packed away his *tallis* and *Tefillin* and approached Mr Yossi Reich, who was wrapping up his own *tefillin.*

"*Sholom aleichem,*" Reb Yaakov greeted Mr Reich.

Mr Reich barely looked up. It was clear he didn't want to talk to strangers.

"Listen," he said, "if this is about *tzedakah,* please speak to my secretary."

"I have a message for you from my *Rosh Yeshiva*. He asked me to tell you that he is upset at you for not taking his calls anymore."

"Who is your *Rosh Yeshiva*?"

Reb Yaakov told him.

"Please tell your *Rosh Yeshiva* that I apologize for not taking his calls. It's not personal. I'm just not taking calls for the time being from anyone."

"I will relay your apology."

"Thank you. At the same time, I have to tell you that what I said before is the truth. I am not giving money to **anyone** now."

"I hear you. But I do have one request."

Despite himself, Yossi Reich was curious. "And that is…?"

"Today is Friday, and I still haven't finalised where I'm going to be for the *seudah.* I want to know if you would be willing to host me for the *seudah* this evening. That's all I'm asking of you."

Yossi Reich thought it over for a minute. "That's all you want?"

"Yes."

"Ok, I'll be happy to host you for the *seudah* tonight."

The *Seudah* that evening was beautiful. The food was plentiful and delicious, and they sat at the table for a very long time. The *seudah* must have lasted for about five hours. They shared stories and *vertilachs*, and Reb Yaakov tried to give his host *chizuk* in his hour of need. At around midnight, Yossi Reich leaned back in his chair and said, "Reb Yaakov, I really like you, and I want to help you."

"Thank you."

"That said, I really cannot give you any money, now, as I said. So here's what I'm going to commit to do for you. If you manage to organise a parlour meeting, dinner, or other event while you are here in my city, I will attend the event and show my open support for you and your cause. Since I haven't been at any events for a very long time, the fact that I will attend yours will be a big deal for you and help you raise money."

"Reb Yossi," the visitor said, "there's one problem with your very generous offer."

"And that is?"

"The fact that I am only staying in this city until Sunday afternoon. How on earth am I going to be able to put together such an event in so short a time?"

"That's your challenge," Yossi Reich replied. "I didn't say it was going to be easy for you to do this. I said that if you manage, I will come to the event and show everyone that I support you."

They finished the *seudah* at around 12.30 in the morning. Yossi walked his guest to the door and Reb Yaakov left the house and started walking back to his *baal achsanieh* – a solid half-hour walk. It was the middle of winter and absolutely freezing outside. He kept warm by walking quickly, and was very happy to, finally, see the house where he was staying. He was shivering and his hands and feet were numb by the time he walked up to the front door and knocked.

Nobody answered. So, he knocked again. Nothing.

He tried the handle. Locked.

What to do?

He knocked and he knocked, but it was obvious that his host had gone to sleep and that nobody was going to hear the desperate knocking.

Reb Yaakov walked off the porch and started walking down the block looking for a house where people were still awake. Nothing. The entire block was dark, and there was no light emanating from any of the windows. By now his hands and feet were totally numb and felt like they might possibly fall off. He had never felt such intense cold in his entire life.

But all the houses were dark. The world was asleep.

Now what?

Reb Yaakov Zuker looked up at the star-strewn sky and said, "*Ribbono shel Olam*, I don't understand. Why did You bring me all the way across the world just to die in the street of cold?!"

As Reb Yaakov wandered around, not really knowing where he was going, he saw a house with an uncovered window. Through the window, he saw a *yiddisher* man pacing around inside the house, and with the last vestige of strength, he crossed the street and made his way to his front door.

He lifted his hand and knocked weakly.

A few seconds later, he knocked again.

From inside, he could hear a person coming to the door. Reb Yaakov was on the verge of collapse when the door opened and a *frum Yid* stared out at him.

"What's the matter?" he asked, and then he must have comprehended the state Reb Yaakov was in, because he stopped

asking questions and helped his frozen visitor walk into his house. He settled him on the couch and covered him with two blankets and a coat. It took him some time to stop shivering. Meanwhile the new host fed the 'patient' hot tea from a cup in his hand. Slowly but surely, Reb Yaakov felt the life that had been draining out of him start to return.

When Reb Yaakov was back to himself, the man started questioning him, as Jewish people do. He asked his name, when he was from, why he had come to his city. Reb Yaakov related who he was and what he did, and they soon realised that both of them where in the field of education and *kiruv* – and that they had a lot in common. Surprisingly, they ended up talking for almost an hour.

"You know something," his host said at last, "I like you and I want to help you out."

Again, the same line. Reb Yaakov waited to hear what he was going to suggest.

"I'm prepared to host a breakfast for you on Sunday morning."

Reb Yaakov couldn't believe what the man was saying.

"I graciously accept your offer," Reb Yaakov told him. "And when you spread the word about the breakfast, please tell everyone you know that Mr Yossi Reich is going to be there as well."

He looked at Reb Yaakov as if I had lost my marbles. "How can that be? Everyone knows that Reich hasn't left his house to go to any fundraising events in months!"

"I'm telling you; he will be there. Will you tell everyone that when you spread the word?"

The *baal habos* saw that his visitor was completely serious. "If you are sure, then I will tell them."

"Do you think Reich's coming will make a difference?"

"Big time," he said.

They ended up having a beautiful Sunday morning breakfast, and Yossi Reich did attend – just as he'd promised. Many people came to the breakfast, especially when they heard that Mr Yossi Reich was supporting the yeshiva. And by the time Reb Yaakov left the city and was on his way to the airport, he was holding cheques in his hand totalling **1.5 million dollars!** – without any actual money from Yossi Reich himself, but all raised with his support.

And that's my story, my friends.

You see, often we know that we need to do something, but we don't know how to get it done. And that is what I wanted to tell you. You don't have to worry about getting it done. You just have to start the journey and do whatever Hashem lets you do.

Leave the rest to Him. Don't worry. He's good for the money, too.

[based on a true story as told to Rabbi Nachman Seltzer]

Good Shabbos

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

There was a young boy who attended a cheder in Yerusholayim. He was a very sweet boy blessed with a good heart and wonderful middos, but these blessings did not extend to his academic capabilities.

The time arrived to start thinking about his Bar Mitzvah. At the shul where he davened the custom was that the Bar Mitzvah boy would *lein the Parsha*. His Cheder Rebbe, however, realised that asking this child to read the entire *Parsha* was to request something that was beyond his student's ability. He therefore, suggested to the boy's father that he should instead only *lein the Haftorah*. It was the *Parsha of Acharei Mos* which has a short *Haftorah*, and the Rebbe was confident that, with a little work, the boy could manage it. The father agreed.

The boy practiced the *Haftorah* for months with a Bar Miztvah Rebbe, going over it repeatedly until he had finally mastered it. He confidently looked forward to his 'performance' in shul.

A few weeks before his Bar Mitzvah, the Cheder Rebbe was having a talk with the boy and the subject of his *Haftorah* came up. The boy proudly told him he was ready and started to recite the first Pussuk by heart.

The Rebbe [face] froze. The boy noticed his Rebbe's pale expression, and his voice trailed off.

"What *Haftorah* have you been preparing?" the Rebbe gently enquired.

"The *Haftorah of Acharei Mos, Haloh Kivnei Kushi'Im…*" the boy replied.

"Oh. It's Rosh Chodesh on Sunday," the Rebbe said. "Your teacher should have prepared you for the *Haftorah of 'Mochor Chodesh.*"

The Rebbe's tone was gentle, but his words pierced the child's sensitive heart. He had been preparing so hard for so many months, and now it all seemed to have been for nothing. He looked at his Rebbe and began to cry. The Rebbe did not know what to do.

That evening the Rebbe decided to visit the boy's father and discuss the dilemma. The young boy would be devasted if he could not read the *Haftorah* on his *Bar Mitzvah*, but what was to be done if he prepared the wrong one? The father decided to ask Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (zt'l) for advice.

Rav Shlomo Zalman listened to the father, thought for a few minutes, and then said, "It's OK, your son should read the *Haftorah* he has prepared."

The father was stunned.

Rav Shlomo Zalman noticed the father's hesitation. "It's alright, a hundred percent," he confirmed.

The father felt like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. The Godol Hador had paskened that it was OK. He thanked his profusely and then rushed home to tell his son the good news.

The awaited Bar Mitzvah Shabbos finally arrived. Father and son came to shul a few minutes before 8.00 am, when davening was due to start. They entered the shul and were walking towards their regular places, when the father suddenly stopped in his tracks. For there, at the front of the Shul, he spotted Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach himself.

"What is the Rosh Yeshiva doing here?" he wondered. This Shul was almost a half hour's walk away from Rav Shlomo Zalman's home and his was no longer a youngster.

The father walked over to Rav Shlomo Zalman to greet him, but kept his other thoughts to himself.

After Shacharis, towards the end of leining, the big moment finally arrived. The gabbai took a deep breath and melodiously chanted the Bar Mitzvah boy's name calling him up for maftir. As he did, the father noticed that Rav Shlomo Zalman stood up, left his seat and walked to the bimah to stand next to the gabbi. This was very interesting indeed.

The young boy recited the brochos and Maftir perfectly. When the singing had died down and hagbah had been performed, the gabbai prepared to announce the correct Haftorah. Before he could get his words out, though, Rav Shlomo Zalman turned to him and said, "Announce that we are reading the Haftorah of *Achrei Mos*, not *Mochor Chodesh*."

The gabbai was perplexed and looked at the Rav. Rav Shlomo Zalman nodded to confirm his decision. The gabbai complied.

A quiet murmur of surprise passed through the crowd, but nobody objected. Rav Shlomo Zalman was standing right next to the gabbai – if *he* didn't object, it must be alright.

The young boy leined his Haftorah flawlessly.

After Davening, the father approached Rav Shlomo Zalman again to thank him for coming. This time, though, his curiosity got the better of him.

"How is it that the Rosh Yeshiva decided to come all his way and walk for than half an hour for this Bar Mitzvah?"

Rav Shlomo Zalman smiled his characteristically warm smile and explained. "When you came to see me, I paskened that your son should read the Haftorah that he had prepared, even though it was the wrong Haftorah for this week. Imagine what would have happened if you would have relayed that psak to the gabbai and he had announced it today. There would have been an uproar. The gabbai would, of course, explain that I had said this was what should be done. But what if there was someone for whom that was not good enough, and he would have challenged the gabbai claiming that perhaps he had not understood me, or who knows what. A whole back and forth would have ensued, while your *yingele* would be left standing there confused, upset and humiliated on his special day. Just imagine how he would have felt. So, I decided to come here and make sure that when the gabbai announced the Haftorah, I would be standing right next to him, so that if anyone at all should have any doubt and think of raising their voice in opposition, they would see me there and know that this decision had my complete backing. That way, your son could have a wonderful Bar Mitzvah."

Rav Shlomo Zalman was already in his later years when this story took place. But this incredible sensitivity led him to think ahead and walk all that way to avoid the possible embarrassment of a young boy on his Bar Mitzvah Day.

That is true sensitivity. That is true greatness.

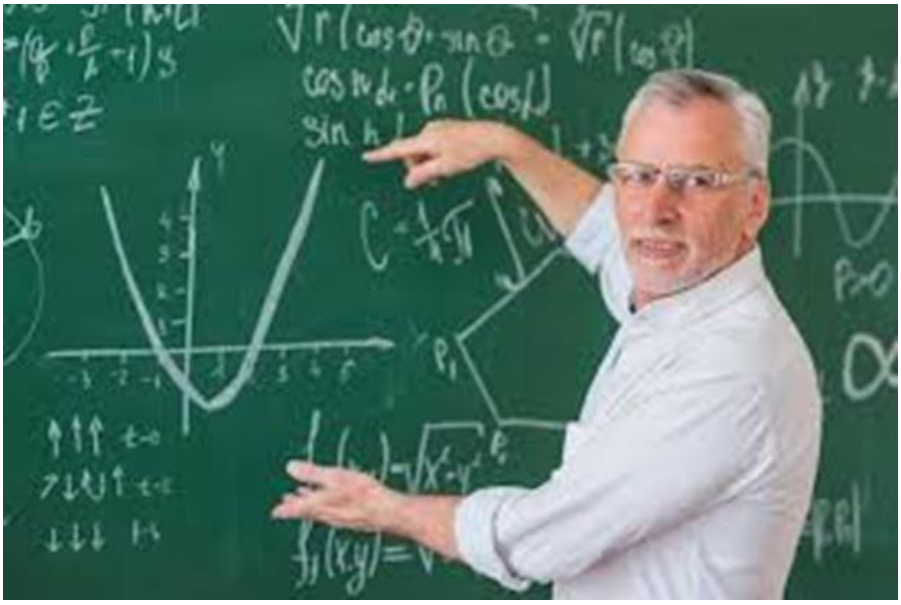
Good Shabbos

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

The Math Professor

The gedolei Yisrael had sent out the call: kollel yungerman were being recruited to deliver a weekly shiur on behalf of Lev L'Achim, a kiruv organization in Eretz Yisrael. In response to the call, I had managed to set up a shiur for a group of Russian immigrants.

Such an endeavour isn't simple. It isn't a simple thing to bring lost Jews back to Yiddishkeit. One needs plenty of siyata d'Shmaya to succeed, and that's what I davened for as I embarked on my new undertaking.



Two weeks after the shiur started, a mathematics professor joined us. Considered a genius in his field, he introduced himself and told me that he wanted to join our group-but under two conditions.

Then he launched his bomb.

"I was never circumcised," he said. "My father was an atheist. A heretic. I myself believe in the Creator, but I'm not prepared to have a bris milah. I'm fine with the way I am."

A bomb, indeed.

Besides this, he told me that he was happily married to a non-Jewish woman, and they had several children. His two conditions were that I could not speak to him about his marriage or about getting a bris

milah. I told him I would get back to him the next day, as I felt I needed guidance. As soon as the shiur concluded, I hopped on a 402 bus to Bnei Brak and got off at 5 Chazon Ish Street, the home of **Rav Aharon Yehudah Leib Steinman zt'l**.

I told him the entire story and asked whether I could allow this man to join the shiur.

"He shouldn't join the shiur," Rav Steinman answered, "but arrange to learn with him one-on-one. Learn with him Perek Hazahav in Bava Metzia." Then he warned me, "You shouldn't speak with him about bris milah or marriage at all, and you will receive siyata d'Shmaya."

I did exactly as Rav Steinman directed. I started learning with the professor, and I quickly realized I was in the presence of a genius. We progressed quickly through the Gemara and soon reached the sugya of "Tagarei Lod" (The Merchants of Lod).

It was the cherry on top of the whipped cream: the masechta was full of mathematical calculations. I said to the professor, "I know you love math. This sugya is full of complicated mathematical problems. You'll really enjoy it."

We started learning the sugya and to my surprise, he couldn't understand a thing. He had been rendered a dunce in the course of just a few weeks. We got stuck on those few lines of Gemara as the professor struggled to untangle what it was saying.

He took the Gemara home and tried to decipher the complex problems on his own time, but still didn't succeed in comprehending anything. Then he recalled that he'd once heard that in Yeshivas Chevron, a group of bachurim stayed up all of Thursday night learning.

At midnight on Thursday night, without telling me a thing, he drove over to the yeshivah, walked into the beis midrash, and scanned the boys he saw there, trying to discern which of them was the top bachur in the yeshivah.

He found him almost immediately and went over to the bachur and introduced himself.

"I'm a math professor," he said. "I've been learning Gemara for several weeks, and I'm trying to understand the sugya of 'Tagarei Lod,' but I don't understand a thing. Perhaps you can help me."

"With pleasure," the bachur told the professor.

They sat down in front of a couple shtenders. The boy explained the sugya clearly, but the professor just couldn't get a handle on it. The boy was astonished, wondering how a math professor could have such a hard time understanding a sugya that centered on mathematics.

As the bachur, an astute young man, mulled it over, he suddenly realized what the problem was. He looked at the professor and said, "The problem is that you're shrouded in impurity, which is blocking you from understanding the sugya."

The professor wasn't a genius for nothing. On Sunday morning he contacted Brit Yosef Yitzchak, an organization that arranges circumcisions for adults. This isn't a simple procedure for a grown man, but the people at the organization were experts.

That very day the professor had his bris milah. On Wednesday the professor called me and said he wasn't feeling well and couldn't come to our regular weekly learning session. I wished him a refuah sheleimah, completely in the dark about what had ensued since our last session.

A week later, the professor called and said that he was still feeling weak, though he was much better. Maybe I could come to his house to learn that week?

I grabbed two Gemaras and went over to his house.

The truth is that I was prepared to be disappointed. I expected him to still be stuck on the same few lines of Gemara we were in the middle of learning.

We sat down in the living room and started to learn. To my shock, the professor understood everything. Not only that, but he had some new insights to add and displayed a thorough comprehension of the material.

The professor noticed my surprise and said, "I'll tell you the truth. When I saw how hard it was for me to understand the sugya, I drove to Chevron Yeshivah and tried to learn the Gemara with the best bachur in the yeshivah. I still understood none of it. I felt broken. Then he intimated that my problem was related to the fact that I didn't have a bris milah. I decided then and there that I would get a bris milah."

He lowered his voice and confided, "From the moment I had a bris milah, I feel like a spirit of holiness has enveloped me, and I'm no longer able to live with my non-Jewish wife. She doesn't want to convert. What should I do? Should I get a divorce?"

I didn't respond. I didn't want to tell him what he should do.

When we met again the next week, the professor said to me, "I've

gotten a divorce. We divided our assets and parted. It's over."

Another week went by. The professor and I had just sat down to learn together when he turned to me with a penetrating gaze and asked, "Tell me, who advised you to do all this with me? You didn't say a word to me about getting a bris milah, you said nothing about my marriage to a non-Jewish woman, and you learned with me a sugya that revolves around difficult math problems, which broke me and led me to getting a bris milah and divorcing my wife. Whose idea was this?"

"You might recall," I said, "that when you told me you weren't circumcised and that you were married to a non-Jewish woman, I responded that I would get back to you the next day. That night I went to Bnei Brak and consulted with Rav Aharon Leib Steinman as to what I should do."

The professor said. "I don't understand why Rav Steinman told you to do this,"

"I have an idea," I said. "Pick me up tomorrow morning, and we'll drive to see Rav Steinman. You can ask him yourself."

The next day we drove from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak. When we were standing in front of Rav Steinman, I said, "This man is a professor of mathematics who is returning to Yiddishkeit. He came here expressly to deliver a chaburah on the sugya of 'Tagarei Lod.'"

The professor presented the sugya to Rav Steinman, and when he finished, Rav Steinman said, "What is this about? You came here just to give a devar Torah on the sugya of 'Tagarei Lod"?"

I said, "The truth is, a couple months ago I came here because this man had stipulated that he wanted to learn Torah, but he was uncircumcised and married to a non-Jewish woman. The Rosh Yeshivah advised me to learn with him the sugya of 'Tagarei Lod' one-on-one.

Rav Steinman looked at the professor and said, "You're circumcised now, aren't you?"

The professor started crying and said, "How did the Rosh Yeshivah know? Is it written on my forehead?"

"It is impossible for anyone to understand this sugya if he has not had a bris. If you understand the sugya so well, it's a sign that you are circumcised!"

(Rabbi Chizkiyahu Yosef Karlenstein)

"Let your kindness and compassion overflow; it may just be the only water someone finds in their personal desert." ~ Based on the teachings of Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809)

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



● Sefiras HaOmer

Preparing for Kabolas Hatorah Sefiras haOmer, our counting up from the Omer in anticipation of Kabolas haTorah, it's primarily a counting of gratitude. We're counting one day after another; one day of the chessed Hashem, a second day of chessed Hashem, and another, and another. And we keep counting until we can say, like Dovid Hamelech did, "Mah ashiv — Oh, Hashem! What in the world can I do to show You my gratitude?"

You know why Dovid said that? Because, "kosi revayah" — his cup was filled; it was overflowing with happiness. "Kosi revayah, my cup is overflowing!" he said. "So much happiness I'm getting!"



But our cups? You know why our cups don't overflow with the kindness of Hashem? Because when the kindness is given to us, for a moment we're happy, but it doesn't remain there. It doesn't remain in this kup! (The Rav pointed to his head). We put it into the kup but there's a hole in the bottom, and whatever goes in drips out.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is always giving us happiness and kindness, but when we look into our cup of happiness, we see nothing there. It all dripped out through the hole. - And therefore, we must get working on this avodah of sefiras haOmer by counting each day and remembering the happiness of the day before as well. Each day gets added to the next one, and our cup begins to fill.

It takes more than forty-nine days, by the way; it takes a lifetime of thinking. But the lesson we're learning is that each day counts — each day is important! And after a while a person begins to think, "Look what Hashem is doing for me! So many days of happiness!" And your mind begins to overflow with gratitude. It pours out; you can't help yourself. And you begin to ask yourself the same question Dovid Hamelech asked: "Mah ashiv laHashem, kol tagmulohi alai – What can I pay back to Hashem for all that He does for me?"

● Two Goats

The Sa'ir La'azazel you don't slaughter, and you don't sprinkle its blood. And nothing at all is offered up on the mizbeach to Hashem. All you do is lead the Sa'ir to a precipice, a high cliff, and you give it a shove; you push it over the edge and watch it roll down the rocky mountainside, crashing against the rocks. By the time it reaches the bottom, it's smashed to little pieces. That's how we bring this offering to Hashem!

It's a remarkable thing! And yet, this goat that doesn't seem to be a korban at all — it has none of the characteristics of a korban — achieves what no other korban can achieve. It's so potent that it has the power to be mechapeir, to atone, even for people who sin b'meizid, intentionally. - What's so special about this goat that it brings such a kaparah?

And for the answer to that question, we turn to a Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 65:15) that says as follows: **הַשָּׂעִיר עָלָיו, זֶה עֵשָׂו** — Who is this goat, this Sa'ir, that is being led out to the mountain?

It's Eisav." It's Eisav we are pushing off a cliff. That's it; that's the whole ceremony! We throw Eisav off a cliff and we have a kaparah!

It's a remarkable concept! Throwing the goat that represents Eisav off a mountain cliff should bring such a powerful atonement for the Am Yisrael?! And the answer is, if you want to know the reason for almost all the sins of Yaakov, it's because there's an Eisav around.

Now, I don't mean to blame only our Uncle Eisav; Eisav is a mashal for all the nations of the world. It's the nations who bear the responsibility for all those Jews who were misled by their false ideas. The shortcomings and imperfections of the Am Yisrael are almost always traced back to the umos ha'olam. Who broke up the Am Yisrael's established system of avodas Hashem? Who destroyed our communities of kedushah? Who broke us down and drove us out among the nations with their polluted ideas, which polluted us? Eisav!

And so, it's Eisav who has to carry our sins upon his shoulders because he is the one to blame. Of course, we have bechirah — no question about it. We have the free will to resist. But suppose someone comes and disturbs your good intentions; he's rodeif you, and then he tempts you, and pressures you, and now you yield. Is he innocent? You're to blame for not fighting back hard enough, but if he deliberately tempted you then he's the guilty one here. He's the one who has to go over the cliff.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

House of Cries of Happiness

Today, Rabbi Chaim Hershkowitz* is involved in many special projects. Looking at him, one would never guess the challenge he had as a young man – and the way he used it to change his life for the better. Here is his story in his own words.

"It was 1984, when I was 26. My wife and I had been married for a number of years and had still not been blessed with

children. Someone suggested that we visit a fertility specialist at UCLA Medical Centre, Los Angeles, USA. For the purpose of this story, I will refer to the specialist we needed to see as Dr Keith Jordan.

"It took months to get an appointment with Dr Jordan. When the day finally came, we waited another two hours in the waiting room. When we finally got our ten minutes of the great man's time, he instructed us to take a certain test.

""If the answer comes back negative, it means that you are not treatable," he declared.

"Not the world's greatest diagnosis, but I am a positive person by nature, so I chose not to dwell on the darker possibilities.

"Two weeks later, though, I came home and found my wife in tears. She had called the doctor to get the result of the test. Not only had he delivered the crushing news that it was negative, but he'd rubbed salt on the wound: "He said, 'Why don't you and your husband go pray to your voodoo doll or whatever it is that you people believe in? I promise you; you and your husband will never have any children."

"My first reaction was fury at this arrogant doctor, who had just reduced my wife to tears, making such a promise instead of offering sympathy and hope.

"When the initial fury faded, I found myself thinking, *what a strange thing just occurred. Why on earth do I need this guy to tell me to go and pray? Maybe Hashem is trying to tell me something.*"

"I was then a happy-go-lucky kind of person who had never had a serious life problem. Later, I would tell Rav Wolbe that the incident with Dr Jordan actually reminded me that I should never take anything for granted, and that I had to start taking my davening more seriously. After that, I began to put real effort into my tefillos.

"When we'd been married for almost seven years, we decided to take a sabbatical in Eretz Yisroel. We pictured ourselves basking in the holiness of the streets of Yerushalayim. We had no obligations holding us back, since we were still, sadly, waiting for children. Off we flew to Yerushalayim, renting a ground-floor apartment in the Bayit Vegan neighbourhood.

"When my in-laws came to visit us, my shver, a veteran talmid of Rav Moshe Shapira, asked his rebbi, who lived just a few buildings away, if he could come over for a visit. To my shver's pleasant surprise, Rav Moshe replied, "don't bother, I'll come to you after the seudah on Friday night."

"I don't have to tell you how much we prepared for his visit, which we enjoyed to no end. When the time came for Rav Moshe to leave, my shver asked if he could give us a brachah for children.

"Rav Moshe agreed, and said, "*Tiheye lachem tzaakot shel simchah babayit hazeh* [May there be cries of happiness in this house]."

"His words were kind of cryptic, but we were still thrilled by his blessing.

"Within a year we joyously welcomed our first daughter into the world. A few years later, we were overcome with more joy when we had twin girls. After a number of years, when my daughters were a little older, we returned to the States.

"I decided that the time had come for me to have a little conversation with Dr Keith Jordan.

"This time, it was not so difficult to make an appointment. By this point, Dr Jordan had been appointed the chairman of a major hospital and seemed to be at the very pinnacle of his profession.

"Can I go and pay him a visit? I had asked my rebbi.

"Yes, he said, "You can go and remind him of the story, but avoid a confrontation. Just leave out the *shtuch.*"

"I called the hospital and, unexpectedly, after being transferred a couple of times, I was put straight through to him. I explained that I was former patient from 13 years ago and I wanted to follow up with him on some new information. He told me that he had an opening that afternoon, and I could come right over.

"I still remember that 45-minute drive like it happened yesterday – the skies opened up in a downpour from the moment I got in my car until I pulled up to the hospital. I took the elevator up to the top floor of the hospital, where Dr Jordan had his office. The receptionist waved me in.

"It was obvious that Dr Jordan didn't recognise me. I couldn't blame him for that – it had been 13 years after all. I sat down across from his desk and he waited to hear why I had come to see him.

"I explained that my wife and I had been his patients, that he had told us to take a particular test that would indicate whether we would be able to have children. I told him that I had come home and found my wife in tears.

"She told me that she had just gotten off the phone with you," I said calmly. "You gave her the results of the test – which was bad news for us. And then you said, 'Why don't you and your husband pray to your voodoo doll or whatever it is that you people believe in? I promise you; you and your husband will never have any children."

"Dr Jordan paled. It was clear that he recalled the conversation and the hurtful things he had said.

"You may be wondering why I have come to remind you of this after so many years – and the answer is this," I said. "I want to thank you."

"His distress turned to shock.

"Yes, I want to thank you, because you told my wife that we should pray to our G-d. I wanted you to know that I took your advice and I

prayed – and the G-d of Israel was very good to us, because we now have three children."

"Dr Jordon was utterly speechless. After a few moments of collecting his thoughts, he finally spoke.

""I don't really have anything to say in my defence," he admitted. "All I can say is that I was totally wrong for saying such things to a patient and that I failed in my role as a doctor."

"I could see that he was honestly sorry for what he did, and that his words were coming from a place of sincerity. I left him shortly afterward – message delivered and received.

Fast-forward to 2012.

"Our kids were all grown up. I had been fortunate to develop my own close relationship with Rav Moshe Shapira. Our oldest daughter got engaged to a boy from Eretz Yisroel.

"The wedding was set for Rosh Chodesh Tammuz in Yerushalayim. We put word out that we needed a place to stay, and some old friends offered us the use of their apartment in Bayit Vegan.

"The address? You guessed it. The same apartment where Rav Moshe Shapiro had uttered those enigmatic words 23 years earlier: "*Tiheye lachem tzaakot shel simchah babayit hazeh*."

"As the kallah and her mother and sisters got ready on the wedding day, the rooms were filled with the cries of happiness that one hears in a kallah's home. On that wonderful day, the 23-year-old puzzle was finally solved.

"We were fortunate to be graced with Rav Moshe's presence at the wedding - a night that was filled with pure, unadulterated simcha. When I met Rav Moshe the next day, I was able to relate the story of how his brachah had come true in the most amazing way.

"Rav Moshe dismissed the story with a smile, commenting wryly, "*B'itonut shel hayom, hayo korim it zeh mofet"* [In today's newspapers, they'd probably call it a miracle…] His tone suggested that it was anything but. But we knew the truth. Tefillos from the heart can change our worlds.

Good Shabbos - Aaron Leitner



וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

At the end of Parshas **אחרי מות**, the verse says, "One must guard My commandments and do them and live by them". The Gemorah learns out from this positive language of "doing" that anyone who has a chance to transgress a commandment in the Torah, but holds himself back, gets the reward as if he "did" a Mitzvah.

This Gemorah requires explanation. Why did the Gemorah feel the need to compare such a person to one who did a positive commandment? Would it not have sufficed to merely say that he gets a lot of reward? After all, which positive commandment did a person who keeps his passion at bay perform?

Rabenu Yonah, in chapter three has a very interesting answer to this difficulty. He explains that from this Gemorah, it is apparent that the Mitzvah that one performs when one holds himself back is that he possesses a fear of Heaven, and that this Mitzvah is indeed the prerequisite to perform all Mitzvos. This is the "positive commandment" that the Gemorah referred to as the Torah says,

"You shall fear your G-d". - He goes on to explain that when a person is faced with a temptation, the only thing that could possibly help him is if he has fostered a fear of Heaven and this alone will prevent him from sin. This is especially true about sins that nobody else would ever find out about.

From the second half of this week's Parsha, there are two commandments which also teach us about the fear of Heaven. The first one says, "Do not put a stumbling block in front of the blind because you shall fear your G-d" and the second one says, "One must stand up before a wise person and fear G-d". What do these two verses have in common?

Rashi explains that they are both examples of commandments in which if one didn't perform them, nobody would every know. If a person gave another person a bad piece of advice, he can always say that he didn't think of a better solution. Or if a person doesn't stand, he can always say that he didn't see the wise person approaching. - However, only a person who fosters a true sense of fear of Heaven will not attempt to use these bogus excuses. - May Hashem bless us to foster a genuine fear of Him!

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner - She Lived!

We have all read stories of 'Refusniks', etc, who, despite not knowing very much about Yiddishkeit, except that they were Jewish, were *moser nefesh* in exceptional ways. We have thought that was in the past. However, this current story is so inspiring, to me, at least, that I wish to share it.

This is the story of a young Israeli woman who had never known about Shabbos.

Agam Berger was born in Holon, a bustling city near Tel Aviv, into a family that cherished both discipline and warmth. She was a twin, a daughter, a sister to Bar and Ilai, and a musician. From a young age,

she played the violin, her bow dancing across the strings with precision and grace. Music was not just a hobby – it was an extension of her, a conduit of expression.

She had spent her Friday nights immersed in music. Her violin was her sanctuary, her melodies filling the house. She was not brought up to see her mother kindle Shabbos lights; never sat at a table where Kiddush was recited, where her father never gave her a brachah, where zemiros were never sung; never waited for Havdalah to separate the holy from the mundane.

Her mother, Meirav, had also lived without Shabbos – until, for reasons not entirely clear even to herself, six months before the war, she began lighting candles on Friday night. At first it was a quiet act, something she wasn't sure she could fully embrace. But week by week, she was, silently, drawn deeper. She began attending shiurim, learning about mitzvos, about something larger than herself. And soon she discovered the solace of shemiras Shabbos.

Agam may have noticed, but she did not ask. She was too busy preparing for the army, adjusting to a world that had little patience for quiet moments. She had spent her whole life engaged in the exacting discipline of music, and now her entire focus was on the sharp lines of military protocol.

And yet, despite the lack of a religious context, Agam was known by her motto, based on the title of a popular Israeli song – "*Derech Emunah Bacharti*" (I have chosen the path of faith). It was on her screensaver, on her phone case, on a sign above her bedroom mirror, written on the back of her T-shirts. For Agam, it was faith alone that drove her to fulfil her destiny.

Living through the terror of October 7th, she was dragged into Gaza, violently, and was put in a dark tunnel. The air inside the tunnels was thick, suffocating. She didn't see daylight. Agam kept track of the days by counting each morning when the guards were called to prayer. One day, two, three. Six.

And then another began - The Seventh Day….

She counted. In the quiet moments between the guard's footsteps, she marked the days in the silence of her mind. And when it came, when the seventh day arrived, she gathered what remained of herself and built a sanctuary in the darkness.

There were no candles. No challah. No white tablecloth. No silver to catch the flicker of flame. But she remembered. She saw in her mind, she imagined her mother's hands striking the match, the small flame steadying, the light reflecting in the window. She had noticed it then. Now it was her very life.

She cupped her hands together, and she lit the fire within.

She sang, softly, so the captors would not hear. The words of Lecha Dodi rose from her lips like smoke from an invisible flame. She could not recall where she had heard the words before, but that did not matter now. The others – those who did not know the tune, who had no reason to – sat close, listening. They did not sing, but they felt. For a moment, there was something other than hunger, other than fear. There was Shabbos.

She whispered "Shema Yisroel." She spoke them into the void, clung to them like a thread tying her to the past, to her mother, to the world that once was. Mother's embrace. The hands that had once braided her hair. The candles flickering in their home. It all returned to her. She was not alone. Shabbos had found her.

Although her daily rations often consisted of a small portion of rice and pita, she was forced to cook meals each day for captors.

"Cook."

The word was an order. A demand. The captors shoved a pot into her hands. Agam looked at them, at the flames flickering in the makeshift stove. She was starving. She had not eaten properly in days. But for her, it was Shabbos.

"I can't," she said.

They frowned. "What do you mean, you can't?"

"It's Shabbat. I do not light fire on Shabbat."

They laughed. "Since when are you religious?"

She had no answer. She had never kept Shabbos before. And yet she knew she could not light the fire, nor cook. Something inside her had already decided. Her mother was holding onto Shabbos, and now she would, too.

They laughed. They mocked her. But they did not force her. They let her go hungry.

She did not cook. And in that moment, she realised – she had won.

The spark of Shabbos then found another spark.

Hunger was a living thing. It gnawed, scraped against bone, hollowed out the ribs. It pulsed in her temples, turned her limbs into stone, whispered in the emptiness of her stomach. It would have been so easy to surrender.

They bought her food – meat. But it was not kosher.

She shook her head.

At first, they laughed. Then they grew impatient. - "Eat!" - She would not.

The first time, they struck her, the sting sharp against her cheek. A lesson. A warning.

The second time, they let her be. Not out of mercy, but because they were other ways to punish. She learned them all.

The slow starvation, the kind that made the ribs press against her skin. The isolation, the silence so vast it became deafening. The ceaseless cruelty, the light that never dimmed, the noise that never ceased. She bore it all. But she would not break.

Days passed. Then weeks. The hunger did not fade; it became part of her, reshaping her from within. Still, she did not eat.

They stopped offering, convinced she would give in, convinced that in time, hunger would win where violence had failed. But she endured.

They watched, amused at first, then irritated. Then, perhaps, something else – an unspoken recognition of what they could not take from her. And one day, a shift. A plate was placed in front of her. Something different. Something kosher. A twisted kindness. A perverse victory.

And for 16 months, Agam survived. Sixteen months of meagre rations, of drinking seawater when nothing else remained. Sixteen months of hunger so profound it blurred the edges of reality. And still she remained steadfast. The secular violinist from Holon refused to eat non-kosher meat.

Not because anyone had taught her to keep kosher at all costs. But because she *chose the way of Emunah*. Because in a world where her choices had been stripped from her, where every dignity had been stolen, this – this she could hold. - This they could not take.

And so, she endured. She would not be undone. She would not be defiled. *She would not break.*

Every day, they placed a Quran before her. Every day, they waited. A gesture, a nod, the slightest sign of submission – something to prove they had begun to bend her will. And every day, she refused. "Give me a Siddur, not this" is all she would say.

Sometimes they coaxed, voices oily with persuasion. Other times, they commanded, the book thrust before her, their patience thinning. The spoke of mercy, of conversion, of an escape from suffering if only she would accept the book. - She did not.

Days stretched into weeks. She had lost count of how many times she had defied them. Her refusals were quiet, but they were

resolute. They could take everything from her – freedom, dignity, even food – but not this. Not the core of who she was. And then, something happened. She found it.

It was there in the dimness, wedged between the cracked concrete and rusted metal, forgotten by the world, but waiting for her. A *Siddur*. A soldier's *Siddur*, worn at the edges, its pages creased from hands that had held it before hers. Had it been left behind in haste? Dropped in battle? She didn't know. But she knew this: It had been placed there by the hand of Hashem. A gift, a reward, perhaps, for refusing the book of her captors.

She traced her fingers over the cover, feeling the weight of it, the presence of it. It was not just a book of prayers. It was proof. Proof that she was not alone. Proof that Hashem was here, even in this place.

The *Siddur* became her friend. She held it as she slept. She whispered its words when she woke up. She carried it like a secret flame, a defiance they could not see but that burned nonetheless.

And then *they* saw it.

Their voices slicing the air as they demanded she relinquish her Jewish book. She would not. They threatened. They struck. They swore she would regret it. But she held on, her fingers curling tighter around the worn leather. They could not take this.

While Agam was fighting in the shadows, her mother was fighting in the light.

She did not just grieve. She acted. She stood before the cameras, before the world, and she spoke of faith. She pleaded for her daughter's return, but with a different message: "Only through *mitzvot and massim Tovim* will my daughter be freed."

Over the past 16 months, Meirav's pursuit of *zechusim* has not ceased. Rabbi Shlomo Raanan, the director of Ayelet Hashachar, an organisation dedicated to fostering unity in Israeli society,

described Meirav's dedication. "Whenever Ayelet Ashachar is organising shiurim, tefillot and mitzvah campaigns, Meirav has been the first to join and help."

On Thursday, 23 Tevet/January 23, Meirav Berger was one of the leaders of a mas *hafrashas challah* event. More than 150 women from across Israel, many of them relatives of captives and victims, gathered at the Ayelet Hashachar tent in Hostage Square to bake challah and recite the *hafrashas challah brachah* together, all as a *zechus* for her daughter and for the other captives.

But when news came during the challah-baking event of the imminent release of the female hostages, she made an unthinkable request. Meirav took the microphone and announced to the large gathering: "I know you are all hopeful that I will soon be reunited with Agam. But please do not film her if she is released on Shabbat."

It was a plea that baffled many. Her daughter had been gone for almost a year and a half. How could she think of anything but holding her again? - But faith – faith is everything.

And then, the impossible. Agam's release was delayed. It would not happen on Shabbos. Her redemption, like her captivity, would be bound by faith.

Meirav showed the first message she received from Agam after her release – a photo with a caption: "There is life after death." - And in the helicopter on her way to the hospital, Agam wrote on a whiteboard: "The way of *Emunah* I chose, and with the way of *Emunah* I've returned."

For her, captivity was over. But the message of her endurance, her defiance, her *Emunah*, would not fade. Because in the tunnels of Gaza, she did not just survive. She *lived*. - One yiddisher spark didn't just light up her Shabbos, but her life too.

Good Shabbos.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Not Liable for the Blood Libel

In 1840 in Damascus, Syria, the infamous Damascus blood libel took place. On February 5th of that year, a Catholic monk named Padre Tomas and his Arab servant, Ibrahim Amara, mysteriously disappeared.

Padre Tomas was involved in dubious business and the two men were likely killed by merchants with whom he had conflicts. Nevertheless, rumors quickly spread that the Jews had murdered them to use their blood in baking matzos for Pesach.



Among those arrested was R' Yaakov Antebi. He was brutally tortured; at one point, an officer ordered a soldier to decapitate him.



The soldier first pressed the blunt side of his sword against R' Antebi's neck, asking, "Will you confess to killing the monk?" When Rabbi Antebi refused, the soldier turned the sharp edge of the sword against his neck and repeated the demand.

Later R' Antebi related the following explanation that entered his mind during the saga: He recalled the gemara (Brachos 10a) that says **אפילו חרב חדה מונחת על צוארו**, even if a sharp sword is on a

person's neck, he shouldn't refrain from praying for mercy. Why does it say "sharp sword"? Aren't all swords sharp?

R' Antebi explained based on his harrowing experience: The torturer had first used the dull side of the sword before turning to the sharp edge. Thus, the gemara highlights the moment of greatest danger — when the sharp blade itself is at one's throat — teaching that even then, one must not give up hope.



The Everlasting Discussion



As a young child, Shmuel Sespnor found learning very challenging. Barring in his pain, his father, Reb Yoel Tzvi told him a personal story that took place when he was a child that he'd never told anyone. He was willing to disclose it all in the hope that would serve as an inspiration and assist Shmuel in his motivation to persevere in his *avodas Hashem*:

Arriving alone in Eretz Yisrael, I found myself confronted with an unexpected challenge. While all my classmates had gone off to study in university, I had a burning passion to learn in a yeshivah. I pleaded with my parents to go overseas to learn, but my idea wasn't met with much favor. They believed that I must learn a profession, and going to learn in yeshivah wasn't what they dreamed for their beloved

child. But after seeing my perseverance, their hearts softened, and they *halfheartedly* gave me permission to go ahead with my life's desire, and they wished me well when I departed.

After I arrived in Eretz Yisrael, I had to arrange for myself entrance exams. So, here I was, this new immigrant in a new culture, finding myself having to deal with getting into yeshivah — on my own. But that was just the first half. The harder part was being faced with *rejection*. After taking the first entrance exam, I was told that I was not accepted. The *hanhalah* explained that their yeshivah wasn't cut out for me, and that another yeshivah would be more beneficial for me to fill my potential. I tried a second yeshivah, but again I heard the same song and dance.

I was heartbroken. I had made it all this way, and now all I was facing was *rejections*?! Despite the denials, though, I wasn't going to allow myself to fall into despair. I was strong until that point, and I wasn't going to let myself break. I kept trying, sure that I would find a yeshivah that would be just right for me. I took several other exams, but no matter how many refusals I confronted, I didn't allow the misery to get the better of me.

Walking down the street one day, a friendly boy noticed me, as I must've seemed a bit out of place, and he approached me. We chatted for twenty minutes while I related to the stranger the reason for my arrival in Eretz Yisrael and my many rejections.

Hearing my plea, my new "friend" advised me to take an exam in the yeshivah in Kfar Chassidim. "The *mashgiach* is **Reb Elya Lopian**," the new friend told me, "and I advise you to take a test there. Even if he won't accept you into his yeshivah, he'll be able to guide you as to where you *should* proceed. But before the test, choose a few *blatt Gemara* to learn, and learn them well. That way, you'll have something to present at your exam. That'll be a good incentive for them to accept you into their yeshivah."

Over the next week, I took the first five *blatt* of *Mesechta Beitza* and learned them many times. I reviewed them until I knew them thoroughly. At the exam, Rav Lopian asked me if I had a *shtikel Torah* to offer, but I replied in the negative.

"Do you have anything to put forth for the test?" asked the Mashgiach.

"Yes. The opening *blatt* of *Mesechta Beitza*."

The Mashgiach posed some questions, but he very quickly realized that I wasn't able to respond with the answers. Even the simplest of what he asked I left unanswered. Then he asked, "So what do you do with an egg that's laid on Yom Tov?"

Anxious over getting rejected, I thought for a moment and replied: "You make egg salad." (It's one of the Shabbos courses, but that's *not* what the Mishnah says.)

Stroking his clean white beard, Rav Lopian elucidated, in his soft voice: "Truth be told, that that's not what the Mishnah says, yet from your imagination, I can see that you contain '*sechel ha'yashar*.' When you forgot the words of the Mishnah, you began to imagine what the Mishnah *would* have said, and based on that, you offered your answer. From where your imagination led you to, I see that you hold '*sechel ha'yashar*,' and that is the primary qualification for *limud haTorah*. The doors of this yeshivah are opened wide for you, and I'm sure that you'll succeed in your Torah learning."

The Mashgiach sent two boys of the yeshivah to assist me with transporting all my belongings. Over the next several years, I took the passion that had been brewing within me all that time and never let it go. I spent the entire day in the *beis medrash* filling my most inner desire — "*Shivti b'veis Hashem kol yemei chayay*."

By the time I left the yeshiva, I had finished all of *Sedrei Nashim* and *Nezikin*, along with all the *Tosfos*. Those words of the Mashgiach

echoed in his mind ever since he accepted me into the yeshivah, and I lived up to what he believed I had in me.

While putting his hand around his shoulder, Reb Yoel Tzvi told his dear son: "The Mashgiach is no longer with us to tell you those words. But let me tell you, if he told *me* that, he would surely tell *you* that too. Whatever minimal amount mindpower you think you have, I had *less*, and yet he reassured me and gave me that confidence. Now it is my turn to give that to you. You have what it takes to succeed, and by perseverance and determination, you'll prosper."

Parsha Potpourri by Rav Ozer Alport

18:5 וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם אֲנִי ה׳

In Parshas Acharei Mos, the Torah commands us to guard Hashem's decrees and laws and live by them. From the emphasis on observing the commandments and living, the Gemora (Sanhedrin 74a) derives that mitzvos were given to us to live, not to die. Accordingly, if fulfilling one of them will endanger a person's life, he must disregard the law to protect his life, except for sins involving murder, idolatry, and forbidden relationships.

Although the idea of doing something that is normally forbidden because of pikuach nefesh is a situation in which many of us hope not to find ourselves, our Gedolim viewed it differently. Self-preservation is one of the 613 mitzvos, and it should be done with the same joy and fervor as any other mitzvah.

The Brisker Rav was quite weak and ill at the end of his life, and he viewed v'chai bahem – keeping himself alive – as one of the primary purposes of his existence at that point. As he constantly measured his various medications, he did so with the same precision and focus that he applied to every other mitzvah.

This perspective is not surprising, as he recounted that when his father, **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik**, had to eat on a fast day for medical

reasons, he specifically ate in full view of others for two reasons. First, there were sick people in Brisk who might have felt uncomfortable eating on a taanis and hesitated to do so, thereby jeopardizing their lives. When they saw the respected Rav of the city publicly eating without any compunctions due to his physical state, they would do so as well.

Second, if Rav Chaim insisted on eating where nobody could see him, he would be demonstrating that he saw what he was doing as less than ideal. This attitude is incorrect. The reason we fast is to fulfill Hashem's will, and the same G-d Who instructed us not to eat on certain days also commanded us to eat on those days if fasting would endanger our lives.

Rav Ezriel Tauber recounted that at the end of his father's life, he was wheelchair bound and no longer able to spend his time engrossed in Torah study as he had done for so many decades. To encourage his father and prevent him from becoming depressed, Rav Tauber told him that Hashem loved him and was taking good care of him. - His surprised father asked for an explanation.

Rav Tauber asked his father to identify a Biblical mitzvah he had never done lishmah. His confused father replied that he had always striven his utmost to do every mitzvah with pure motivations.

Rav Tauber suggested that there was one important mitzvah his father had always performed for ulterior motives: the mitzvah to live. He explained that his father loved mitzvos so much that he had always lived to study Torah, daven, and do acts of chesed, but he had never once lived only for the purpose of living, and he had never once breathed for the sole purpose of v'chai bahem – to give Hashem a living Jew. Because Hashem loved the elder Rav Tauber so much and saw his tremendous dedication to mitzvos, He wanted to give him the opportunity to finally fulfill the mitzvah of living for no other reason than because Hashem gave him a mitzvah to live. - To do so, Hashem had no choice but to place him in a wheelchair and take away

his ability to learn Torah and do chesed so that he would finally be able to perform the mitzvah of living lishmah.

Rav Tauber said this perspective was consoling and uplifting to his father, who repeated it often to those who came to visit him.

BITACHON POWER

HaRav Shalom Shwadron זצוק״ל said over the following story: There was a gentile Soldier called Mike who was on duty during World War II. In combat, he got injured by some shrapnel which penetrated his body. The law was that any soldier who was injured received his full wages from the government, while being able to rest and do nothing all day. Every few months Mike was obligated to go to a doctor to get an evaluation to see if he was still eligible for his monthly stipend.

During his "sabbatical" Mike began to think about life, he did some serious soul searching. He traveled around while trying out many different cultures, until one day he realized **כי הכל הבל הבלים** and the only true place was by the chosen nation – the Jewish people. Mike became a **גר צדק**. Soon after, Mike became Michoel, and he went to Yeshiva and was striving for greatness. Michoel was a masmid, and he still had full support from the government.

A short while after becoming a Yid, Michoel miraculously completely recovered, and the doctor told him that he was now a healthy man. They sent him a notice that he would no longer be receiving his monthly stipend. This was bad news for Michoel. How would he have the money to be able to support himself to sit and learn Torah?

Michoel would not give up. He decided he was going to appeal and try to make a claim against the decision that he should not receive

money anymore. He went from doctor to doctor, but each one told him there had no chance, he was healthy. His last try was to arrange a court date with the government court.

The day of the judgement came, and Michoel stated his position. The judge told him, "Sir, your claim is irrational, the doctors say you are perfectly healthy what right do you have to claim this money". Michoel responded, "Dear Judge, if I fail to receive this monthly stipend how will support myself? I have no source of income. I have no job!"

"Why don't you go and get a job?" The judge asked.

"Dear Judge, I sit and learn Torah all day and I am learning how to be a talmid chachom".

"Talmid chachom?" The judge asked. - Let me tell you a personal story. During the war days I oversaw driving a submarine. During that time, something malfunctioned and we were obligated to remain under the water for quite some time. Everyone on our submarine was terribly frightened and depressed. Every day I had to "break my head" with all sorts of ways to cheer up the other soldiers.

There was one exception. In our submarine, there was one cabin that I went into where a group of three Jews were studying from Jewish books. Happiness always resonated from their faces. Not once did any of these three men need to be cheered up.

I once asked them, "What it is that you are doing that makes you so happy in this prison? We don't even know if we will get out of here alive!" -They told me they were becoming talmidei chachomim!"

So, my friend, if you are telling me that you are doing the same acts as they were, I will make sure you that will be taken care of for the rest of your life."



A Kal V'Chomer From Kisuy haDam

Parshas Achrei Mos contains the Biblical command of covering the blood after slaughtering a bird or 'chayah' [non-domesticated animal]. This Halacha, known as 'Kisuy haDam', requires that at least part of the blood of a slaughtered bird or 'chayah' be covered with dirt.

The Talmud [Chulin 87a] derives from the Torah's wording juxtaposing the verb for slaughtering with the verb for covering that just as the bird is slaughtered with one's hand, so too the blood is covered with one's hand. This excludes covering the blood by kicking dirt upon it with one's foot (which might be the most convenient way to accomplish the covering). The reason given is so that the commandments not become shamed for him. It is disrespectful to perform a biblical mitzvah with one's foot when it can be performed with one's hand. Whenever we do a mitzvah, we should do it in the most respectful manner possible.

Although Kisui haDam is the paradigm for all such concepts, the same concept is applied elsewhere as well. For example, throughout Succos, an Esrog must be treated with respect – since it is used in the performance of a mitzvah. It takes on the status of a "cheftza d'mitzvah". Likewise, the boards used for the Succah during the holiday have the "Name of Heaven" declared upon them and need to be treated respectfully. The day after Succos, they are just boards again and they can be used for whatever purpose one desires.

The Beis haLevi says a very interesting concept in Parshas Terumah. When a poor person approaches in shul and asks for money, at that moment he is a "cheftza d'mitzvah" through which one fulfills the mitzvah of charity. If the Torah tells us we need to treat the

blood of a slaughtered chicken with respect "so that mitzvos not be treated shamefully" how much more so should we treat a human being who has feelings respectfully when we are performing a mitzvah with him!

Due to the overwhelming needs of our people, we are all often bombarded – in our homes and in our businesses – with requests from needy people for charity. These requests come at all times of day and night and some time we feel "just get out of my way!" It is important to keep the "kal v'chomer" of the Beis haLevi in mind: If we must cover the blood with dirt using our hands rather than our feet, so that we do not treat mitzvos in a callous fashion, how much more so do we need to be extremely sensitive when dealing with alive, breathing, and feeling, human beings.

The Desecration of Molech: We Will Be Held Accountable For Our Priorities

The end of Acharei Mos contains the prohibition of giving one's children over to the pagan worship of Molech. This tragic form of Avodah Zarah (idolatry) involved transferring one's child to the priest of Molech, who would then pass the child through fire as an act of worship to the pagan god. In some forms of this worship the child would in fact be burnt to death. The Torah verse that prohibits this act says. "…that you will not thereby profane the Name of your G-d, I am HaShem." [Vayikra 18:21]. In other words, beyond the intrinsic prohibition of the idolatry involved, there is another prohibition, that of Desecrating the Name of G-d (Chillul HaShem).

The Ramba"n elaborates on the unique desecration of G-d's name that accompanies worship of Molech. The Ramba"n explains that it will be a Chillul HaShem when the nations will hear that Jews honor their G-d by offering animal sacrifices, but that they honor Molech by offering their children.

Rav Dovid Kviat (in his Sefer Succas Dovid) observes that this concept — that a person can cause a Chillul HaShem by showing greater homage and honor to some other area in life than to the Master of the World, is a phenomenon which is far less foreign to us than the cult of Molech.

In the book of Shmuel we learn of the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines. It remained with the Philistines for a certain period of time and caused havoc to them, such that they sent it back to Israel. Initially, upon its return to Israel, a plague occurred in Israel as well, smiting the residents of Beis Shemesh [Samuel I Chapters 4-6]. The Medrash asks why the residents of Beis Shemesh were punished. The Medrash answers that they had been more worried when their hens were lost than when the Ark of the Covenant was captured. This is a terrible criticism and a terrible Chillul HaShem.

This is the same type of Chillul HaShem that the Ramba"n identifies with Molech worship. It is the same type of Chillul HaShem in which we all unfortunately engage, to a greater or lesser extent, when we do not demonstrate the proper priorities in terms of manifesting our care and concern.

The transmission of our car breaks. This upsets us. We come back from a vacation and find that the refrigerator stopped working and all the food is ruined. The house stinks. Everyone gets upset! Little things like this upset us.

The situation in Eretz Yisroel should upset us far more than life's trivialities, about which we get so worked up. Every day's curse is worse than the previous day's curse. The situation there is terrible. But does it bother us more or less than if our refrigerator breaks? Does it bother us more than a transmission?

What bothers us? What makes us upset? What makes us lose sleep at night? G-d was upset at the people of Israel for being more concerned about a hen then about the Ark. We read

the Medrash with disdain for the people of Beis Shemesh. We think, how could they be more concerned about a chicken than about the Aron! But we need to look in the mirror and ask ourselves — are we more worried about our own businesses and our own refrigerators and transmissions and all the other trivialities of life, than we are with what is going on with Klal Yisroel?

To be more worried about the former than the latter is in effect the admonition mentioned in this week's parsha: "And you shall not desecrate the Name of your G-d, I am HaShem". G-d holds us accountable for our priorities – how we treat Him and how we treat other things.

An Enabler or Facilitator Gets Credit As if He Was the Doer

The *pasuk* says, "From the assembly of the Children of Israel he shall take two he-goats for a sin-offering and one ram for a burnt-offering." (16:5) The *Kohen Gadol* brought *korbanos* for himself, for the *Kohanim* and for all of *Klal Yisrael*. The two goats mentioned include one that was offered on the *mizbayach* and one that was sent to be thrown off the Azazel cliff.

I saw an interesting observation in the *sefer* **Shemen HaTov**. I was amazed that I never thought of this question myself: Why does the Torah say that two goats are taken for a *chatas* (sin-offering), when, in fact, only one of them is offered as a *chatas*?

A chatas has very specific *halachos*. It needs to be *shechted* by a *Kohen* and it needs to be *shechted* in a very specific place. The second goat, the *sair l'Azazel*, even though it is called a "*chatas*," was not really a "*chatas*." It is not brought on the *mizbayach*, it is not *shechted* and the blood is not sprinkled. It is thrown down a mountainous cliff. It has few if any of the *halachos* of a *chatas*, and yet the Torah says "take two he-goats for a *chatas*". Why is the *sair l'Azazel* called a *Korban Chatas*?

The Shemen HaTov suggests the following: The Gemara says that these two goats need to be identical – matching in value, in voice, and in appearance. Basically, they need to be twins. The *Kohen Gadol* drew lots between the two with the result being that one would go to *Hashem* and one would go to Azazel. This procedure of drawing lots to determine the fate of each was essential.

If both goats are not present, the one to be offered on the *mizbayach* cannot become a *Korban Chatas* either. The only way one of them becomes a *Korban Chatas* is by having the other one present and going through the lottery process so that the true *Korban Chatas* can be identified and designated. Since the *sair l'Azazel* **causes**, **enables** and **facilitates** the other goat becoming a *Korban Chatas*, it too is called a *Korban Chatas*.

When you are essential for something else happening then you receive the same status as that other thing. - If I enable someone else to sit and learn Torah, then it is as if I am sitting and learning Torah. This is not news to us: "…Rejoice Zevulun in your excursions, and Yissocher in your tents." (Devarim 33:18). Chazal say that the Torah not only gave **equal** billing but actually gave **primary** billing to Zevulun because he enabled Yissocher to be able to sit and learn. The facilitator of something has the same *halacha* as the person who actually does it. So the *sair l'Azazel*, without whom you could not have a *sair l'Hashem* – that *sair l'Azazel* also has the status of a *Korban Chatas*.

The *sair l'Azazel* has a status of a *Korban Chatas* because it is a facilitator: Without it, the real *chatas* could not be offered!

"To have a positive influence on someone, first love and accept them unconditionally; the rest will follow." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994)

Rav Chaim's Request For Forgiveness

Achrei Mos is the parsha of the Yom Kippur service. The pasuk says, "For on this day, He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you, from all your sins before HaShem shall you be cleansed" [16:30].

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria (in the last Mishneh of Yoma [8:9]) derives the following lesson from that pasuk: Sins between man and G-d Yom Kippur atones for, however Yom Kippur does not atone for sins against one's fellow man, until he first appeases his fellow man.

The Gemara [Yoma 87a] states in the name of Rav Yitzchak "Whoever angers his friend needs to appease him." Rav Yitzchak cites as a proof a series of pasukim in Mishlei [6:1-3]: "My son, if you have been a guarantor for your friend, if you have given your handshake for a stranger, you have been trapped by the words of your mouth, snared by the words of your mouth, do this, therefore, my child and be rescued; for you have come into your fellow's hand. Go humble yourself before him and placate your fellow."

At first glance, this teaching of the Amora Rav Yitzchak seems very strange. Why do we need his exegesis from the pasukim in Mishlei to teach us the fact that one needs to appease his friend, if we have an explicit pasuk from Chumash — cited by the Tanna Rav Elazar ben Azaria — that teaches us the same thing?

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik explained the novelty of Rav Yitzchak's teaching to his son, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, during an incident that happened in Brisk.

A certain butcher came to the Beis Din of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik (Rav of Brisk) and Rav Simcha Zelig (Dayan of Brisk) asking them to adjudicate a din Torah involving a sum of 3,000 rubles. Rav Chaim suggested they make a compromise, but the butcher refused. The Beis Din then heard the case and decided aginst the butcher. The butcher reacted angrily to this, and started yelling at Rav Chaim, calling him a thief and a murderer.

Rav Chaim answered back: When you came to this court, I suggested that you compromise with your disputant, but you refused. Since it was you who refused the compromise, it is not my fault that you have now lost 3,000 rubles. It is your own fault. The butcher yelled even louder at Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim then said, "You disrespectful one, get out of here!"

On Erev Yom Kippur, Rav Chaim told his 3 sons that he must go to the butcher and ask for his forgiveness for the harsh words they exchanged that day in court. The Rav of Brisk accompanied by his 3 sons went to the shul where the butcher davened. Everyone was davening with their tallesim over their heads so it was impossible to tell who was who. Rav Chaim went around from person to person until he finally found the butcher. Rav Chaim then said, "I want to ask your forgiveness for calling you disrespectful and sending you out of my court." The butcher turned to Rav Chaim — right before Kol Nidre — and said, "I do not forgive you. You are a thief and a murderer!"

Rav Chaim responded: "The halacha is that I must ask you three times in front of three people for forgiveness. I have brought my three sons here with me. Will you forgive me?" Again the response was "No!"

The exchange was repeated three times and then Rav Chaim said "I have discharged my duty and am ready to leave." Before leaving he turned once more to the butcher and said, "You should know that at this point I am no longer obligated to ask for your forgiveness. In fact, you were the one who insulted me in the first place, and I had a right to respond in kind to your insolence. The only reason I came to appease you is because it is meritorious to overlook one's honor and accept embarrassment rather than cause embarrassment to others. I was not obligated to ask your forgiveness, but I did it anyway, three times in front of three people. I am leaving. Now it is your problem!"

When they left the synagogue, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik asked his father why he went in the first place, when he never did anything wrong and it was the butcher who should have been asking for forgiveness all along.

Rav Chaim explained to his son that this was in fact the novelty in the ruling of Rav Yitzchak in Yoma. The pasuk in Achrei Mos cited by Rav Elazar ben Azaria in the Mishneh teaches that if one WRONGS his fellow man, he must ask forgiveness. The pasukim in Mishlei expounded by Rav Yitzchak teach that if one angers his fellow man — even justifiably so — he still needs to try to make peace and ask for forgiveness.

This was not the type of "mechila request" which would have held back the effectiveness of Rav Chaim's Teshuva vis a vis sins between man and G-d. Those are only for sins where you in fact harmed someone or insulted him inappropriately. Rav Yitzchak is saying a stronger teaching: Even when I am 100% right, if I utter harsh words against my fellow man, it is still appropriate for me to beg forgiveness and a ttempt to restore friendship between us.

This, Rav Chaim, said is the meaning of the Shulchan Aruch when it states that on Erev Yom Kippur, every person needs to ask for forgiveness from his fellow man. This halacha is difficult — if I wronged someone, why should I wait until Erev Yom Kippur to make amends? The answer is that this law is not speaking about a case where I've wronged someone. Nevertheless, on Erev Yom Kippur there is a special obligation to make peace even when, strictly speaking, no amends are called for.

We can learn three things from little children: they're always happy; they're always busy; and when they need something, they always cry out for help. ~ Maggid of Mezritch

"Achas B'Shanah" [once a year]

The Torah section in Achrei Mos dealing with the laws of the Yom Kippur Service in the Bais Hamikdash concludes with the words "This shall be to you an eternal decree to bring atonement upon Children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And (Aharon) did as Hashem commanded Moshe." [Vayikra 16:34]

(As an aside, it is interesting to note that even though each of the Jewish holidays comes out only once during the year, Yom Kippur is the only holiday which the Torah explicitly categorizes as being "Achas B'Shanah" [once a year]. Chazal explain that the death of a righteous person (Tzadik) serves as atonement as does Yom Kippur. Therefore, when the Torah says that Yom Kippur will serve as atonement for us once during the year, it may be interpreted as a blessing. The Torah is in effect saying that there should only be one "day of atonement" this year, not a second equivalent day of atonement that year, i.e. — a day marking the death of a Tzadik in the community.

On that note, I saw a story whereby one year, **Rav Eliyahu Lopian** got up before Neilah, repeated the above thought, and began crying bitterly. He said loudly before the congregation "Halevai (let it only be so) that we just have one Yom Kippur this year, that we not need to experience any additional "Yom Kippur -like" days of atonement. Unbeknownst to him, when he made this moving declaration, the Brisker Rav [Rav Yitzchak Zeev Soloveitchik] had just passed away.)

Rav Eliyahu Lopian once said that Emunah [Belief] is not demonstrated by the intensity of the Tehillim (prayers) recited during a crisis but by the intensity of the Hallel (praises) recited after the crisis. Everyone says Tehillim with his or her heart during a crisis, but Emunah is demonstrated after it is all over.

The Torah Any Times Newsletter

Rabbi Yitzchok Fingerer - A Very Important Person



It was a known fact in the school. One particular boy was notorious for being a difficult student who wouldn't follow school rules and classroom directions. Teachers were not too thrilled to have him as their student each year, considering that they could just imagine the challenges they were bound to confront.

But one day during his sixth-grade year, it all changed. The surprising thing was that it literally changed overnight. One day he was misbehaving, non-compliant and disruptive, and the next he was respectful, attentive and studious. His friends and even more so his teachers were at a loss to explain the cause for such a turnaround in his behavior and attitude. A few years later, after developing even more as an excellent student, he went on to become the 8th grade valedictorian and serve as the recognized pride of the entire school. It was quite phenomenal.

While he and his friends and teachers placed his past history of elementary school years behind him, one teacher was particularly interested in something. No one had ever asked the boy what was it that brought him to where he was that day of graduation? It was a puzzling mystery that no one had ever understood. What was the impetus for him completely changing and becoming such a great a student? That was the million-dollar question.

"No one has ever asked me about this," the boy told the teacher, "but I'm glad you have." The boy then went on to explain. "There was a day in my life when things were pretty rough. I had gotten into trouble in class and I knew the principal wanted to have

a talk with me. I was called into the office and the principal sat me down. We began talking until, all of a sudden, he received a phone call, to which he answered. But the conversation did not last that long.

"Excuse me," the principal told the other person on the line, "would you be able to call me back later; right now I have someone very important in my office." And with that, the principal hung up the phone and turned back to me to resume our discussion. I ended up not getting expelled from the school, although I was not in the greatest position at that time.

That night I went home a bit confused. Who was the very important person in the principal's office that he was referring to? As far as I knew, it was only the principal and I in the room. I tossed and turned at the thought of who he could have meant, but it simply baffled me. Until, to my surprise, I figured it out. He must have been referring to me. I was the very important person. I had never before been called important, let alone by the principal or any other esteemed authority figure. But there must be something to it.

I began thinking of why I was in the principal's office altogether, and if the very important person I was understood to be in fact belonged there. I rightfully concluded that I could expect much more from myself, and ought to in fact try to do so. I decided to do my best to improve my behavior and work harder to become a better student. Sure enough, I began to see improvements, which my teachers also noticed. By the end of the year, I was looked upon as a completely different student than I had been before. And things only progressively got better from there. I scaled up and up the academic ladder of achievement and proved to myself and everyone else that I did have the capability to be an exceptional student.

It all began at that moment in the principal's office - "Excuse me, would you be able to call me back later; right now, I have someone very important in my office." Those words were seared into my heart

and mind and provided me with the motivation to achieve extraordinary results, the likes of which neither my teachers nor I ever anticipated.

We are all important. Our children are important, because they come from parents who are important and are surrounded by friends, family and teachers who are also important. It is precisely this attitude which creates standards which we strive to attain and sets goals which will propel us to heights that we never imagined we were even capable of. But indeed, we are.

Rabbi Yosef Palacci - The Candy That Saved a Jew



There was once a young boy who left the fold of Judaism and planned on marrying a non-Jewish girl. He went on to get engaged to her, after which his family went into a tailspin. They were beyond distraught at the news, and all their efforts to convince him to reconsider his decision that would affect the rest of his life were to no avail.

The wedding was soon just around the corner. It was the last Shabbat before his wedding. That Shabbat afternoon, the man's uncle said to him, "I'm going to shul to pray Mincha. I know you don't even keep Shabbat, but it's the last week before you get married. Do you think maybe you can make an exception to the rule and come with me to shul? At the moment, there is a rabbi who is giving a class."

"No, I'm good," he said. "But by the way, who is the rabbi giving the class?' "His name is Rabbi Shteinman," replied the uncle."

"**Rabbi Leib Shteinman?**" "Yes, Rabbi Leib Shteinman." "For him, I'll go," the man said. Without any further questions, on went the uncle and the man who was to get married later that week.

He entered the shul and saw the rabbi delivering his class. Afterwards, they had a moment to talk. Amidst the conversation, after hearing that the man was not religious and planned on marrying a non-Jew, Rav Shteinman asked, "It seems as if you do not keep Shabbos either. How long ago did you stop keeping Shabbos. "About two years ago," he replied. "How did you feel when you began to stop keeping Shabbat?" "Yeah, Rabbi, I felt bad about it." "Wow," replied Rav Shteinman. "So you did teshuva?"

The man stood there, taking in Rav Shteinman's words that he had done teshuva. The man walked away from the conversation, his mind turning about his future. Rav Shteinman had planted the seed within his mind as to whether he should go on to marry a non-Jew. After all, he had done teshuva once before, and now, it was not too late to renege on marrying her and changing the trajectory of his life.

His uncle asked the obvious question. "Why did you come when I told you that Rav Shteinman would be speaking? If it would have been a different rabbi, you wouldn't have come?" "I'll tell you why," he replied. "It's because Rav Shteinman came when I was a young boy in third grade to my classroom to test us in our learning. He went around the room and said, 'I have a bag of candies. If you get the answer right, you get a candy.' And he began asking questions and handing out candies to the boys. And then he came to me and asked the question. But I didn't know the answer. He then asked an easier question, but I still didn't know the answer. He asked an even easier question, and I still didn't know what to say. So I didn't get a candy.

When class was over and everyone was leaving, Rav Shteinman asked if he could speak with me. He then pulled out three candies, and said, 'I am going to give you three candies.' 'Why?' I asked, curiously. 'Because you tried. You put in effort. When it comes to Torah, all you must do is try your best. And I can see that you are trying your best; it just was hard for you. But you tried your very best, and that is why I am giving you three candies.'

This made me feel so good. And to this day, I remember Rav Shteinman. I remember his kindness, his caring and his sensitivity, and I said to myself that I'll go hear him speak one last time.

And look at the influence Rav Shteinman had. While he didn't immediately change the man's mind about marrying a non-Jew, it was the beginning of him reflecting on his Jewish identity and considering his decision. That is the power of what a small effort, a small gesture can do.

We must do our very best in life. Sometimes, after putting in a great deal of effort, nothing appears to have happened. "What's going to be?" we wonder to ourselves. "I've done so much and it doesn't seem like there's any payoff from it!" But that is not what we need to be worried about. Hashem has great things awaiting us in Gan Eden. We cannot imagine that even for the smallest of efforts, Hashem has the greatest of rewards awaiting us.

The efforts you put in life will carry their result. It may not be here, but it will be there. You may want to bring someone closer to Judaism, so you go all out of your way to study Torah with them, show them the beauty of Judaism and you end up spending hours, perhaps years, with them. But then, suddenly, you find that the person moved out of town, and it's no longer going to be. "Why did I spend all that time?" you might think.

Every ounce of effort you will be repaid for. It's not about the end goal, but the effort that you put towards the end goal. Yes, of course, you want the result, for the sake of the person who you are helping. And it should happen. But don't let it bring you down if you didn't actually complete it. Every step of the way counts. And if your effort didn't make something happen here, Hashem will make it that your effort will have its effect there. It's a lesson to remember for life.

SHABBOS STORIES

Advance Authorization by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser



The daughter of **R' Yaakov Yosef Herman** related that a special *sefer Torah* had been sent to her father when Eretz Yisrael was under British rule. When her father went to claim the package in the Customs Office, he was informed that since it was *tashmish kedusha* he would not have to pay any customs tax.

When Rabbi Herman inquired whether the *sefer Torah* was in fact totally tax exempt by law, the official conceded that according to the strict letter of the law he would still be obligated to pay the customs tax. Rabbi Herman then insisted on paying the full tax for the *sefer Torah.*

Many years later, R' Herman's son, R' Nachum Dovid, went to make a large withdrawal from his bank account. He arrived only a few minutes before closing time, and did not have proper identification with him, so the bank officer denied his request. R' Nachum Dovid needed the money immediately for an urgent cause and asked to speak to the president of the bank.

When R' Nachum Dovid gave the president his name in response to his query, the president asked, "Do you have any connection to R' Yaakov Yosef Herman?" "Yes," said R' Nachum, "he is my father."

The president then cordially invited him into his office and revealed that he had headed the Customs Office when the older Rabbi Herman had come to pick up the *sefer Torah.*

"Individuals like your father and members of his family can withdraw money from the bank without any identification. The name Herman speaks for itself, and you don't need a passport here. Even though your father could easily have been exempted from paying the exorbitant tax, he wouldn't consider circumventing one of the laws of our land. He was one of the most honest people I have ever met in my life."

With that said, the president signed the form releasing the monies that R' Nachum Dovid had requested.



The Non-Shomer Shabbos Philanthropist

Once, a Shul in South Africa received a very generous donation from a wealthy man who was not a Shomer Shabbos. Since their Rav had a strict policy not to use money given by such a person, for fear that it would be tainted with Chilul Shabbos, the Gaba'im held back from cashing the check.

Meanwhile, the donor visited Eretz Yisroel. One of his acquaintances from South Africa was also there, and he suggested that they go together to meet with the famous Rosh Yeshivah of the Ponevezh Yeshivah, **Rav Elazar Shach, zt"l**. When they appeared before Rav Shach, the acquaintance introduced the man from South Africa to the Rosh Yeshivah as a generous supporter of Torah institutions in his home country.

The wealthy man lowered his head to receive a Brachah from the Gadol, but Rav Shach placed his hands on the wealthy man's head and spoke directly, and lovingly, to his visitor instead.

He said, "My son, if you want a Brachah, you should keep Shabbos, because Shabbos is the source of all Brachah. Every nation has its flag, and the flag of the nation of Israel is Shabbos! Shabbos is the symbol and the sign that we are Jewish. Shabbos is the guarantee of the continuation of the Jewish nation forever.

"If we do not identify with our flag, we are in grave danger of losing our Jewish identity. Without Shabbos, we are in serious trouble in so many ways. What guarantee do you have that your children will remain Jewish? Who will guard them from marrying out of the faith, if not the Holy Shabbos herself?"

These warm and heartfelt words penetrated to the heart of the man. They affected him so profoundly, that right after leaving the presence of the Rosh Yeshivah he announced, "From this moment on, I will be a Shomer Shabbos!"

The acquaintance who had brought the wealthy man to meet Rav Shach immediately called the Rav in South Africa to tell him the good news, and the Gaba'im were then able to deposit that check, which was so vital to the Shul! *(Torah U'Tefillah compiled by Rabbi Yehudah Winzelberg.)*

Coffee and Cake by Rabbi Elimelech Biderman



One week, after immersing in the mikvah on Friday afternoon, **Rebbe Aharon of Belz zy'a** asked his gabai Reb Shalom Fogel z'l to bring him cake and coffee. Reb Shalom Fogel z'l was surprised at this unusual request.

Reb Shalom brought the coffee and cake to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe said, "Bring them to So-and-So who is in the beis medresh. When I was in the mikvah, I heard him say, 'After a hot mikvah like this one, all that's missing is a cup of hot coffee with a piece of cake,' and I want to grant him his wishes."

The True You!



There is a story with the **Netziv** that shows this idea of conquering the Yetzer Hara. **The Netziv, Rav Naftoli Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, zt"l**, lived in Lithuania a few hundred years ago. He was the most famous Rav of his generation, and it's said that in the forty years he headed the Yeshivah in the town of Volozhin, some 10,000 students studied under him.

The Netziv wrote commentaries on all parts of the Torah, and once, when he had published a particularly difficult work called HaAmek She'eilah, he called together his friends for a special celebration, where he told them the following story:

"When I was a child, I never paid attention in school. I was lazy and did not want to concentrate. I would busy myself with things that wasted time, and I spent my days engaged in mischief with my friends.

"Then one day when I was eleven years old, I came home from school and heard my parents talking. My father was explaining how he'd spoken to my Rebbe, and together, they had concluded that I would never amount to anything in terms of Torah learning. So, my father explained, he was arranging to enrol me to become an apprentice shoemaker as soon as I became Bar Mitzvah.

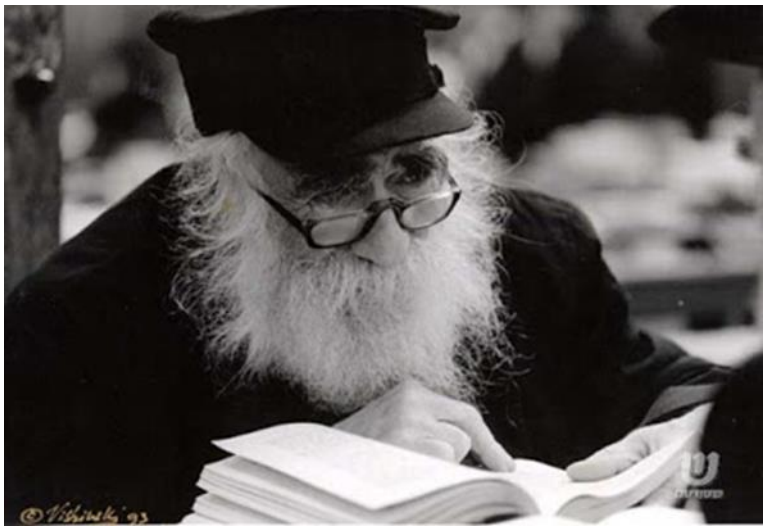
"I was so shocked by this conversation that I ran to my parents and exclaimed, 'I'm sorry I've been so negligent with my learning! Please give me one more chance to prove that I'm a good student!' And from that day onward, I applied myself to learning Torah with tremendous strength and dedication. Since then, I have not wasted a moment

and it is that devotion which has enabled me to write the Sefer that we are celebrating today."

The Netziv then continued, "But just imagine what would have happened had I not overheard my parents' conversation. I'd probably have ended up as a shoemaker. And I'd probably have been a pretty good shoemaker!

But think of what would have happened at the end of my life when I'd get up to the Heavenly Court in Shamayim, and they would ask me, 'Naftoli, show us what you've done with your life.' And I'd proudly show them my beautiful shoes, with the fine workmanship, the quality leather, and the fancy design. And then they would ask me, 'But Naftoli, where are all the Sefarim you were supposed to publish? Where are your 10,000 students?'"

The Netziv looked at them and said, "And what would I possibly respond??" (***Torah U'Tefilah by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg***)



A Deadly Pair of Dogs by Yerachmiel Tilles

(Reb Mendel Futerfas, a"h.)

A Jew in a Soviet Siberian prison camp in the mid-1900's went to fellow inmate Rabbi Mendel Futerfas one winter day and asked him for a blessing. "Tomorrow night I'm planning on escaping from here, and I want a blessing from you for success."

Reb Mendel was shocked. "It's a clear risk of life to try and leave this place, and well against the odds! There are guards and dogs, barbed wire, and high walls. How can you even think of such a thing?"

The man explained that for a very long time he had been diligently knocking small holes into one of the outer walls in a large circle. "It's at the point now where I just have to push into the center and the entire hole will cave in." More recently, he had observed and discovered that every night at a certain time, there is a window of opportunity for 30 minutes when the guards are changing their positions.

The next night, Reb Mendel watched as this man waited for his half-hour window. When the moment arrived, he went to the wall and pushed into the circle, and just as he had said, a large round hole appeared and he crawled through.

As soon as he emerged on the other side he started running. R. Mendel watched incredulously as two huge dogs appeared out of nowhere and began to chase the speeding Jew. When they almost caught up to him, he saw the Jew reach into his pocket, pull out two huge pieces of meat and throw them behind him. The dogs stopped in their tracks and began tearing apart their surprise meal.

R. Mendel noticed that there was a guard atop the wall in the tower, who had watched this entire scene unfold. Right then he lowered his rifle, aimed at the feasting dogs and shot twice. R' Mendel watched in horror as both dogs died instantly.

R. Mendel couldn't comprehend the series of events his eyes had witnessed. After a few days he walked over to the guard and asked him, "Why did you feel the need to kill the dogs? What did that accomplish? All you did is cause a loss for their owners."

The guard hesitated, then decided to answer R. Mendel. "We spend months of time and a lot of money and energy to find the right dogs for this job. They are hand selected and bred and then trained for service. If all it takes is a couple of pieces of meat to reverse all of that training and all of their pedigree, then what purpose could they possibly serve? We don't need them and they might as well be shot."

Reb Mendel would append to it the following take:

"The Creator puts us in this world to deal with a multitude of trials from Heaven. If all it takes is a little bit of tasty meat for us to be sidetracked and fail a test, then what good are we? We are no better than a dog that cannot stay on course whenever a little bit of temptation comes his way!



The Burial Place of Rav Mordechai Banet, zt"l

Rabbi Banet's tombstone, in Mikulov

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Zt'l, writes this story in Sefer Siach Nechamah. Rav Mordechai Banet, zt"l, was the Rav of Nikolsburg for many years. Though he was old and weak, he agreed to travel to the city of Carlsbad to attend an important meeting of Rabbanim.

The trip turned out to be too much for him and he passed away while he was in Carlsbad. The day he passed away was on Erev Shabbos, and in order that his burial not be delayed, his Levaya and burial took place in the city where he died.

The people of Nikolsburg were very upset about this and wanted their beloved Rav to be buried in the city he had served so faithfully for so long, so that they would be able to regularly visit his Kever.

Despite this, the people of Carlsbad refused to comply. They wrote a letter to the **Chasam Sofer**, the Gadol HaDor, to rule on the question of where Rav Banet should be buried.

There was a delay of a few months in his response, but finally, the Chasam Sofer sent a Psak, a ruling, that Rav Banet should be transferred to his hometown of Nikolsburg.

The Chasam Sofer, who usually immediately answered all questions that came to him, especially such important ones, was later asked why it took him so long to send a response to this particular question, and he gave the following incredible explanation.

As soon as he had received the letter with the question, he sat down and wrote a lengthy answer ruling that Rav Banet's body should be returned to Nikolsburg. However, as soon as he finished writing it, his inkwell tipped over and spilled all over the letter and ruined everything he had just written.

The Chasam Sofer felt strongly that this was a sign from Shamayim that he should not rule to move the Rav's body from its current burial spot, so he simply didn't respond at all.

Three months later the Chasam Sofer had a dream in which Rav Banet appeared to him and related, "Many years ago, I was engaged to a girl from Carlsbad, and we were engaged for three months. However, I broke off the Shidduch. Since I caused pain to this Bas Yisroel, it was decreed in Shamayim that I be buried near her for three months, and for this reason, I had to pass away far from my home and be buried in that cemetery, near the grave of that girl. Now that three months have passed, my body is allowed to be transferred to Nikolsburg, where my community awaits my return."

When the Chasam Sofer woke up, he wrote a new letter permitting the transfer of Rav Banet to his hometown, and he added on an apology to his letter and wrote, "My response was delayed until now!" *(Torah U'Tefillah compiled by Rabbi Yehudah Winzelberg.)*

"Our limited minds cannot fully understand Hashem's ways, but with simple faith, we can trust that everything He does is for our good. In time, we'll see that even challenges were for our benefit." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

Davening Like a Baby

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, O"BM, approached a person after davening once. He said to the man, "Bzzzzz, Bzzzz."

The man looked at Rabbi Levi Yitzchak uncomprehendingly. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak repeated himself. The Rav (who was known for his love of other Jews) then gently and privately admonished the man, "That is how your prayers sounded! How do you expect Hashem to understand your words if you cannot even understand them yourself?" The man hung his head in shame.

When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak returned home, he heard his baby babbling. His wife turned to the baby and said, "Oh, you must be hungry. I will bring you food in a moment."

The Rav asked his wife, "How do you know that the baby is hungry?"

"A mother understands her baby's sounds," she replied confidently. "Oy," Rabbi Levi Yitzchak cried. "I was mistaken! Even if a person garbles his prayers, our Father in Heaven understands his intentions."

Rabbi Shalom Schwardron, O"BM, would remark: "Although it is true that Hashem may understand such prayers, it is still embarrassing when an adult garbles their words like an infant."

How often do we do a Mitzvah in a lackluster way with the justification that Hashem will understand that we are tired, hungry, busy, or distracted and accept it anyway? Even though Hashem understands where we are coming from, that doesn't excuse us from putting in more intense effort into our Divine Service.



"If we do not help a man in trouble, it is as if we caused the trouble." ~~ Rabbi Nachman of Bresslav



Henny Machlis: A Truly Great Jewish Woman -*Aish.com*

How did an ordinary Jew from Brooklyn become one of the greatest lights of our times?

What qualified Henny Machlis, who passed away [5 Cheshvon 5776/October 16th] at the age of 58, as one of the world's greatest Jewish women?

Jerusalemites would say it was her cooking for and serving up to 300 guests every Shabbos in her cramped Jerusalem apartment. The guests – almost 150 for the Shabbat night meal and over 100 for the Shabbat day meal – ranged from curious tourists and university students to lonely widows and singles to drunks and mentally ill people who considered the Machlis family's love and warmth more delectable than even their ample food.

Henny cooked 51 weeks a year (except only for the week of Pesach) from her tiny kitchen. Starting as newly-weds 35 years ago, the Machlises' open Shabbos table expanded gradually over the years until the overflow of guests had to be seated in the courtyard and outside the front door. Henny's great dream was to enclose the courtyard so guests could sit there even in the winter. Alas, she never lived to see her dream's fulfillment.

The Machlises' *chesed* was not restricted to Shabbat. Homeless people slept on their couches, some for weeks at a time, and those whose mental instability might have endangered the Machlises' fourteen children were accommodated in the family van. When Rabbi Mordechai Machlis would leave for work as a teacher in the mornings, he would know how many van guests he had by the number of shoes in the windshield.

For those who gauge greatness by the level of selflessness a person attains, Henny also scored off the charts. At her funeral her oldest son Moshe recalled how, after he got married and moved away to

start Kollel, his mother encouraged him: "If you ever aren't making it financially, tell me and I'll sell my jewelry."

"Ima," Moshe called out in a tearful voice, "you forgot that you didn't have any jewelry. They had all been stolen by the guests over the years. And your diamond ring – you loaned it to someone twenty years ago, and never got it back."

Henny was sometimes visited by the unfortunates who – even those decades older than she – considered Henny their mother. When one homeless woman came to visit her in hospital, Henny gave her her own bed. A relative discovered Henny, wrapped in a hospital blanket, wandering in the hospital corridor looking for a place to lie down.

Henny's son Moshe was pushed aside at the crowded funeral by one of the Machlises's mentally ill "regular guests," who proclaimed, "I have to get closer. She's my mother."

For those who equate spiritual greatness with G-d-consciousness, with the ability to see G-d's hand always and everywhere, Henny had indeed achieved those spiritual heights. At the funeral, a tearful Rabbi Machlis related just one story: He invited a destitute man whom he always saw at the Kotel to come home with him to eat.

That day Henny served her homemade whole-wheat pizza. The man loved it. He came back to their house every day asking for a slice of whole-wheat pizza. Finally, Henny suggested that she could teach him how to make whole-wheat pizza himself. Painstakingly and with infinite patience, Henny taught him how. One night several days later, at 3 AM, there was a knock on the door. "Not on the front door," Rabbi Machlis related. "Our front door is always unlocked. Someone was knocking on our bedroom door."

The loud knocking woke them up. Alarmed at what must be an emergency, Rabbi Machlis went to the door and asked, "Who's there?" When the man identified himself, Rabbi Machlis asked, "What's wrong?"

The man replied, "I forgot how to make whole-wheat pizza. I need your wife to explain it to me again."

Rabbi Machlis was exasperated. "At 3 o'clock in the morning, you need to remember how to make whole-wheat pizza?"

But Henny calmed him down. "It's a test," she assured him. "It's from Hashem."

Then Henny reiterated to the man, step by step, how to make whole-wheat pizza. Henny emanated radiant joy all the time.

For me personally, the sign of Henny Machlis's greatness was the radiant joy she emanated all the time. Whenever I ran into her, her wide smile and the joyful light she radiated conveyed that seeing me was the best thing that had happened to her all day. And although I knew that she greeted everyone the same way, I nonetheless was charged by this encounter with a holiness and saintliness that lit up the world – or that tiny piece of the world where Henny Machlis stood.

The question – indeed the challenge – of Henny's life is: How did an ordinary Jew born to a regular middleclass family in Brooklyn in 1957 become so great? Henny kept on going and giving and loving and inspiring.

For the Machlises, the tremendous scale of their success cost them over $2500 every Shabbat, a financial load that defied Rabbi Machlis's modest salary as a teacher supplemented by donations from well-wishers. But unlike most of us, their adamantine faith in G-d and love for the Jewish people kept them from compromising on their ideal. They mortgaged their apartment to the hilt, took out personal and bank loans – and kept on going.

As Henny once told me: "We are living in the midst of a spiritual holocaust. Most Jews today have no idea of the beauty and depth of Judaism. How can we not do everything in our power, including going into debt, to reach out to our fellow Jews?"

The only difference between Henny Machlis and the rest of us is the voice that asserts, "I've done enough. I don't have to do more." Henny never harkened to that voice. She kept on going and giving and loving and inspiring – until last Friday, when she was called to her Heavenly reward.

How to Feed a Yeshiva Student



Once, when **Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman** (may Hashem avenge his blood) finished delivering his class, he went down to the kitchen of the European Yeshivah he was teaching in. The student's curiosity was aroused as to what the Rosh Yeshivah could need there and peeked through the window to "snoop." R'Elchonon came over to the cook and asked for a portion of the midday meal students received. The cook complied and Reb Elchonon took the plate straight to the home of R'Lubchansky, Yeshivah director/Mashgiach.

In an openly critical tone, R' Elchonon said, "Is it possible that we are serving students starvation rations like this? This will lead to them growing weak and falling sick!"

Rav Lubchansky replied that the Yeshiva's financial woes were common knowledge and all those who joined the Yeshiva were informed that the type of food provided will be far from five-star cuisine. He concluded: "I have every prospective student sign that he willingly accepts these conditions, and all agree that they come with one intent in mind: only to hear the Rosh Yeshiva's classes and develop into scholars!"

Reb Elchonon responded: "Such practice is a Torah violation and their signatures are absolutely worthless!"

Reb Elchonon immediately discontinued his classes, packed his bags and went off to America to raise money for the Yeshivah so that students would receive sufficient nourishment."

Living Jewish



כִּי בֶּעָנָן אֵרָאֶה עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת ***For in the cloud, I will appear upon the ark-cover*** *(16:2)*

This teaches that we must never despair even in the worst of the times, for G-d's Presence rested upon Israel precisely "in the cloud." No matter how dark or hopeless a situation appears we must never give up or become dejected. ***(Rabbi Meir Shapira of Lublin)***

Whose Chukim? Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

As we all know, Chukim are laws that have no rational explanation. They are directives from the Almighty, and their observance is testimony to our constant and unconditional commitment to His every desire.

That is why it is difficult to understand the juxtaposition of two verses mentioning chukim. *"Do not perform the practices of Egypt where you have dwelled or the practices of Canaan where you are*

going and in their chukim (decrees) do not follow. (However,) My laws and chukim (decrees) you shall follow" (Vayikra 18:3-4).

Chukim are hard enough to follow as Jews. So why would anyone follow irrational and unexplainable customs and decrees that are meted by gentiles? Why should the Torah warn us from following the chukim of the gentiles?

Jews who find themselves driven by rationale and reasoning often scoff at the complexities of decrees that transcend the human mind, surely would not fall prey as to follow blindly the strange whims of idol-worshippers or cults. Or would they?

Many years ago as a talmid in the Philadelphia Yeshiva, I heard a story that was probably as apocryphal as it was amusing:

An eighteen-year-old student was travelling by train from Philadelphia to Harrisburg. The young man sported a beard, wore a long dark coat and a large wide-brimmed black hat. After placing his bags over his seat, he sat down next to a well-groomed businessman who looked at him scornfully. For the first twenty minutes of the trip, the secular gentleman kept eyeing the student as if he wanted to tell him something.

Then he could no longer contain himself.

With passion in his voice the man began to shout, "You know I'm sick and tired of Jews who think they are still in the Middle Ages! You are a disgrace! I'm Jewish, too. I even speak Yiddish. But do I wear a black coat? Do I let my beard grow? Must I wear an oversized hat? No! Why do you wear those clothes? Why do you wear that beard? Why do you need that hat? It's time you woke up and joined the modern world - the world of America!"

The startled student looked at his accuser quizzically. In a perfect Pennsylvanian accent, he began to speak.



"Jewish? he queried. "Excuse me, sir, I'm Amish, and I'm on my way back home from a visit with relatives in Philadelphia. I am sorry if I offended you with my style of dress, but this is part of our heritage and culture. It was passed to us from our families in Europe to our families here in Lancaster. I am sorry if I have offended you."

The businessman's face turned ashen. "I'm awfully sorry," he whimpered, "I truly did not mean what I said. In fact, I think it is wonderful that you maintain your heritage, culture, and tradition with such enthusiasm. It shows courage, fortitude, and commitment. Please forgive me. I was truly insensitive.

Suddenly a wide smile broke across the young man's face. In perfect Yiddish he asked the reeling traveller one simple question. - "For the gentile it's wonderful but for the Jew it's a disgrace?"

Sadly, mitzvos that are difficult to understand often discourage Jews who have not encountered a total Torah-experience. Those mitzvos become the scapegoat for their lack of adherence of even simple and very understandable commands. Yet, many of those same intellectuals struggle to understand the culture, customs, and unexplainable rituals of both the societies they live in and, in many instances distant cultures. While the misplaced sensitivity is undoubtedly due to the inherent respect that Jews have for all humans, there still must be a balance.

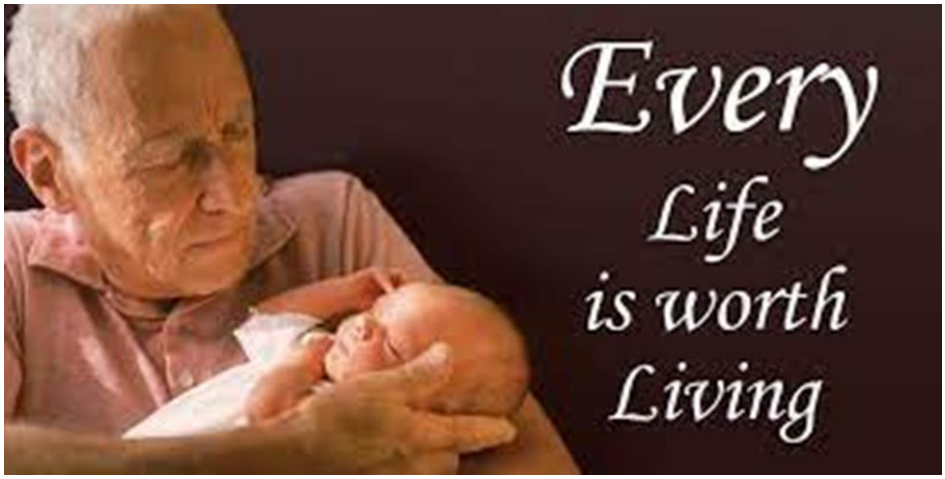
I have met scholars who studied the sociological nuances of the Zulu tribes but never devoted more than elementary level study of their own heritage. One can study the sartorial Chukim with awe and admiration if they sit on top of a gentile's head yet would never give

thought to those anomalies were they protecting a skull adorned with a beard and payos. Thousands of unaffiliated college youth who buy tapes of monotonous Gregorian chants, are wary of hearing the melodious chants of 'vas zugt Rava', 'vas zugt Abaye', that emanate from the halls of Yeshivas.

The Torah tells us to abscond from the actions of the Egyptians no-matter how politically correct that may be. For there are no better chukim to try to understand than those that come from your very own home.

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

ושמרתם את חקתי ואת משפטי אשר יעשה אתם האדם וחי בהם אני ד' (18:5)



In Parshas Acharei Mos, we are commanded to guard Hashem's decrees and laws and live through them. From the Torah's emphasis on observing the commandments and living, the Gemora (Sanhedrin 74a) derives that the mitzvos were given to us in order to live, not to die. Therefore, if keeping one of the commandments will result in a potential danger to a person's life, he should disregard the law for the purpose of pikuach nefesh – in order to preserve his life, with the exception of sins involving murder, idolatry, or forbidden relationships.

The idea of doing something that is normally forbidden for the purpose of pikuach nefesh is a situation in which many of us hope not to find ourselves, our Gedolim viewed it differently, as simply one of

the 613 mitzvos that a person may perform in life, one which should be done with the same joy and concentration as any other mitzvah.

At the end of the **Brisker Rav's** life he was very weak and ill, and he understood that the primary purpose of his life at that point was to perform constantly the mitzvah of v'chai bahem - keeping oneself alive - and when he was counting and measuring out his various medications, he did so with the same precision and focus that he applied to every other mitzvah.

This perspective is not surprising, as he recounted that when his father, **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik**, was required to eat on a fast day for reasons of health, he made sure to eat in full view of others for two reasons. First, there were sick people in Brisk who may have felt uncomfortable about eating on a fast day and hesitated to do so, thereby jeopardizing their lives, but when they saw the respected Rav of the town eating publicly due to his physical state without any compunctions, they would do so as well.

Second, if he insisted on eating privately where nobody could see him, he would be demonstrating that he felt that what he was doing was on some level less than ideal. Such an attitude is incorrect, as the reason that we fast is in order to fulfill Hashem's will, and the same G-d Who instructed us not to eat on certain days also commanded us to eat on those days if fasting would endanger our lives because we are sick.

The Brisker Rav added that just as everybody understands that circumcising an 8-day-old baby boy on Shabbos is not only permitted but required, and nobody would ever insist on doing so in private due to the fact that drawing blood is otherwise prohibited on Shabbos, so too nobody should feel ashamed when performing Hashem's will by eating on a fast day for the sake of his health.

In one of his lectures, **Rav Ezriel Tauber** recounted that at the end of his father's life, he was wheelchair-bound and no longer able to spend his time engaged in Torah study and mitzvah performance as

he had done for so many decades. In order to strengthen and encourage him and to prevent him from falling into a state of depression, Rav Tauber approached his father and told him that Hashem loved him and was taking good care of him. His surprised father asked for an explanation.

Rav Tauber responded by asking his father to identify a Biblical mitzvah that he had never successfully performed lishmah (for its own sake), to which his confused father replied that he had always striven his utmost to do every mitzvah with pure motivations.

Rav Tauber continued and suggested that there was one important mitzvah that his father had always performed for ulterior motives: the mitzvah to live. He explained that his father loved mitzvos so much that he had always lived in order to study Torah, to pray, to give tzedakah, and to do acts of chesed, but he had never once lived only for the purpose of living and had never once breathed for the sole purpose of v'chai bahem – to give Hashem a living Jew.

However, because Hashem loved the elder Rav Tauber so much and saw his tremendous dedication to mitzvos, He wanted to give him the opportunity to finally fulfill the mitzvah of living for no other reason than because Hashem gave him a mitzvah to live. In order to do so, Hashem had no choice but to place him in a wheelchair and take away his ability to learn Torah and do chesed, so that he would be able for the first time in his life to perform the mitzvah of living lishmah.

Rav Tauber added that this perspective was tremendously consoling and uplifting to his father, who repeated it often to those who came to visit him, and it should strengthen and encourage us in the present circumstances which prevent many of us from performing mitzvos in the manner to which we are accustomed.

If you're healthy, you're wealthy.

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

18:6 אִישׁ אִישׁ אֶל־כָּל־שְׁאֵר בְּשָׂרוֹ לֹא תִקְרְבוּ לְגַלּוֹת עֶרְוָה

The Torah makes it very clear to us that one may not marry a close relative. Why? When looking for a prospective spouse, don't we always try to find someone who comes from a similar background, to make the couple more compatible? Marriage is challenging enough and it would certainly make things easier if the couple was coming from the same place!

Rabbeinu Bachyei tells us no. The Torah forbids a marriage of two people that are too close because they will not be able to grow. There will be no real fruit from a union that is too similar! The fact that a husband and wife are different from each other, in fact opposites in many aspects of their personalities, is meant to be a clash. This clash is not to create strife; it is meant to achieve greatness! This idea applies in all spiritual endeavours. One cannot come up with a brilliant Torah chiddush unless there is a question that bothered him to make him think! One does not stretch his middos muscles unless he is pressured to do so.



R' Ezriel Tauber shlit'a speaks about the art of diamond polishing. He says that the only thing strong enough to polish a diamond is an opposing diamond! They are put on a wheel that causes them to turn in different directions and rub against each other. The machine makes loud shrieking noises as they are literally polishing each other by pushing the other to it's limit. If both diamonds were to turn in the same direction, they would never touch each other and simply go in circles, never bringing out the other's shine. So it is with marriage

and any other area of spiritual growth. The only way to raise oneself up is to have an opposing force pushing one to his limit in avodas Hashem. Undergoing difficult times in life do not pull a person down and make him miserable. Quite the contrary; it is the areas in life that are hardest which contain the greatest potential for growth, greatness and happiness! So don't get upset at the hardships of life - tell them: "Thank you for being the diamond that polishes mine!"

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - The Period of Sefira



The Mishna asks what is the best trait for a person to acquire.. Among the traits mentioned, R' Elazar says **לב טוב** - a good heart, and the Mishna ends off that **לב טוב** includes the other traits mentioned there.(Avos, 2:13)

The Bnei Yisosschar points out that **לב טוב** has a numerical value of 49 which refers to the days of the Sefira. These days are broken up into two parts: the first 32-until Lag Baomer- which is the equivalent of **לב** and the last 17, the equivalent of **טוב**. It is with a **לב טוב** that we work on our Middos during Sefira. The term **עומר** means a measure, to gather (as in the Melacha in Hilchos Shabbos- **מעמר** and enslave (as in **לא תתעמר** ; don't enslave her). This is because this is the time of year that we work on our character which takes us out of our enslavement to our bad traits leading us to unity.

The Avoda of the first 32 days of the Sefira is to works on our traits. We are told the students of R' Akiva died during the first 32

days of the Sefira because **שלא נהגו כבוד זה לזה** - they didn't treat each other with respect. This is alluded to in the word **כבוד** as it yields a Gematria of 32. They died at this time specifically as this is the time to work on our Middos. This gives us a deeper insight as to why R' Akiva is the one who said **ואהבת לרעך כמוך** - love your friend as yourself is a **כלל גדול** - great rule- since he experienced the loss of 24,000 students because of lack of Middos.

It says **ליבי ובשרי**. **ליבי** is from the word **לב** which has a Gematria of 32. This refers to the first 32 days of Sefira. The word **בשרי** rearranged spells **רשבי** - R' Shimon Bar Yochai. This refers to Lag Baomer which is the 33rd day. Additionally, it says **כבוד ועז** - honour and might (Tehillim 29:1). **כבוד** is 32 in Gematria referring to the first 32 days of Sefira. The last 17 days we prepare for Torah. **עוז** is Torah as it says **ה' עז לעמו יתן** ; Hashem will give might to his nation (Tehillim 29:11).

R' Avraham Borenstein zt"l (Admor M'Sochatchov) would say: **וְכָל־נֶ֫פֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל נְבֵלָה֮ וּטְרֵפָה֒ בָּאֶזְרָ֗ח וּבַגֵּר֙ וְכִבֶּ֣ס בְּגָדָ֔יו וְרָחַ֥ץ בַּמַּ֖יִם וְטָמֵ֣א עַד־הָעֶ֑רֶב וְטָהֵֽר** 17:15

With regard to eating forbidden (unkosher) food, the posuk does not say, **וכל איש אשר יאכל** - ***'And any man that eats ...'*** but rather, **וְכָל־נֶ֫פֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל**- ***'And any soul that eats ...'***

The reason is because if a person eats forbidden food, **חס וחלילה**, it does not simply affect his body; it goes all the way through and affects his soul. Like the famous words of the **Ramban** who said that **מאכלות אסורות** cause the entire person to become impure - not just his body - but his entire essence- **מהות** and his pure soul is sullied."

"Trust in Hashem is greater than all the praises one can say to Hashem." ~ Sefer Ha'Ikrim.

Selfless



The Pasuk states **ואהבת לרעך כמוך** - ***love your friend like yourself.***

How can one accomplish this if everyone loves themselves more?

The bigger you are, the more people are included in your world. Some people include just their wife since they feel **אשתו כגופו** - one's wife is like his own self. Others spread this to their offspring as in **ברא כרעיה דאבוה** - a son is an extension of his father. A unique few may extend this to their neighborhood as in **אך עצמי ובשרי אתה** ; you are my flesh and blood. Then there are those who include all of the Jewish people as in **כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה** - all Jews are guarantors for one another.

During the 1200's, as a result of the constant persecution, many German Jews emigrated abroad and to Eretz Yisrael. In 1286, the **Maharam of Rothenberg** (1215-1293) was leading such a group when he was seized and thrown into prison. The king demanded an exorbitant sum for his release. Although the Jewish community was ready to raise the sum, he himself prevented this since then the government may use this as a precedent for imprisoning others to extort ransoms. He spent the next 7 years in prison until his death in 1293.

R' Shimon Sofer- the son of the **Chassam Sofer**- was offered by the residents of Krakow the position as Rav, which he rejected continually for several years. They even sent him money for travel expenses in addition to giving him a government certificate nominating him as the Rav of Krakow. However, he returned everything. In 1861, when people wrote to him saying that the town

was in danger, for if he refused to become their Rav they would bring in a reform rabbi, he accepted and became the Rav of Krakow.

Here is one last story that illustrates our point. A principal came to **R' Chaim Kanievsky** to tell him that a boy who initially wasn't accepted to a Yeshiva was now granted entry. R' Chaim exclaimed let me tell my Rebbitzen- although she is sleeping- because she hasn't slept well since she heard this boy wasn't in Yeshiva.

17:13 וְאִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר הַגָּר בְּתוֹכָם אֲשֶׁר יָצוּד צֵיד חַיָּה אוֹ־עוֹף

In his book Moments of Inspiration, Rabbi Dr. Tsvi Schur recalls how he once shadowed a vastly experienced mohel. Before one bris, which was held in the "Bris Room" of a Jewish hospital, the mohel asked the father of the child what the Hebrew name of his son was going to be. "We're naming the baby after my grandmother's brother," the father said. "We're actually not sure what his name was, but my grandmother would know. You can ask her, since she's here at the bris." The mohel approached the grandmother and asked her what her brother's name was.



"Vilda Chaya!" (wild animal) the grandmother proclaimed with certainty. The mohel tried to explain to her that this name was not really a name, just a description. The grandmother became extremely agitated. "That is the name my father always called my brother, and that was in fact his name," she insisted. The mohel again tried to convince the grandmother that this couldn't have been his name, but only a term that her father had used. She became even more incensed and

belligerent, stating that his name was in fact Vilda Chaya and this was the name to be used. "What are you going to do?" Rabbi Schur asked the mohel. "Well, you heard her. What can I do?" The baby was named Vilda Chaim - one can just imagine how that boy was called up to the Torah on his bar mitzvah!

Of course, this story is humorous, but there is a lesson to be gleaned from it. A Jew always wishes to hold onto something from his or her past. No matter how far removed a Jew might be from the path of Torah, there is always something - anything - that might trigger a memory or evoke a connection to Yiddishkeit. A Jew is never lost. When we see people who have strayed from Torah and mitzvos, we must recognize that they really aren't too far away. One old Yiddish expression, or a picture of an "Alte Zaida" can create a retention that might affect a full return to the Torah.



Chacham David Chanania Pinto would say:

"The last letters of the words **אחרי מות** is gematria (410) as the word **קדוש**. Many people can testify that they are often faced with an internal conflict whether to act in a way that is correct, or whether to act improperly but gain instant pleasure. These battles are extremely difficult, throwing a person into throes of indecision. However, there are those who earn their World in only one second (ע"ז יז.). These are people who are **קדוש** - in one instant they decide to forgo instant gratification and choose instead everlasting pleasure, which is the lot of those who fulfil Hashem's will."

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

18:5 וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם אֲנִי ה׳



The Gemara in Yuma (פה) teaches us a great lesson on this posuk: **וחי בהם ...ולא שימות בהם** - If you must eat chametz on Pesach, or desecrate the Shabbos, or eat non-kosher food, in order to save your life, you are required to do so. Your priority is to live by the mitzvos and not to die for them!

This halacha refers to every mitzvah except the three cardinal sins: idol-worship, murder and immorality. Targum Onkelos and Rashi both agree that the words **וחי בהם** refer to life in Olam Haba.

R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l says that the most precious thing in life is doing mitzvos because we "live by them" - in other words, through them we will be zoche to a great eternal life in the Next World. And, R' Moshe adds, one may be mechalel Shabbos to save another person's life in order that he should be able to observe many more Shabbosos for the rest of his life.

They once asked the **Brisker Rav zt"l**, "How come you are machmir in all your rulings, except for those pertaining to **פיקוח נפש** where

you are maikil?" He answered, "I am not maikil at all. I am extremely machmir on the mitzvah of pikuach nefesh!"

The Gerrer Rebbe zt"l (Sefas Emes) offers a chassidishe interpretation of the words **וחי בהם** . Not that it is a **חיוב** (obligation) to do the mitzvos, but rather, the way to do mitzvos is with **חיות** - with life! With liveliness! Doing a mitzvah should be your spark of life, it should bring you excitement!

My machshava here is that since doing mitzvos is our passport into Olam Haba, the way we do mitzvos and our kavanos constitute the kind of exciting life we will live in Olam Haba. As we know, our bodies consist of **רמ"ח איברים** (248 limbs) and **שס"ה גידים** (365 sinews). Together, they total 613, each one representing one of the Taryag mitzvos. Therefore, each mitzvah that we do has a designated **אבר** (limb) that it represents and brings it to life, and it will remain living in Olam Haba as well. May we all be zoche to: **ועשיתם את כל מצותי** - and do all the mitzvos so that our life in Olam Habah will be complete.



וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם You shall observe My decrees and My judgments, which man shall carry out and live by them (otam) (18:5)

In this verse the word **אֹתָם** (alef-tav-mem) is written without a vav, leaving the same three letters as the word **אמת** meaning truth.

From this we learn, by way of allusion, that a person who reveres the truth and is always honest with himself and others can rest assured that he will "live by them" - be blessed by G-d with a long life. *(Degel Machane Efraim)*

חוקת הגוים

The Torah warns us not to follow in the ways of the gentiles , and regardless of the technical applications of this prohibition, it is clear that Hashem demands a higher code of moral and ethical behaviour from His Chosen Nation than that which we see practiced around us. By doing so, we set ourselves apart and remain a light unto the nations.

A number of years ago, a Jewish manufacturer of fine jewellery would order a specific amount of raw gold with which to create his special line of jewellery pieces, and at week's end, whatever was left over was inventoried and calculated to know exactly how much gold was actually used and what was left over.

He began to notice that small quantities of the precious metal were missing from the inventory list and after careful consideration and determined scrutiny, he decided that the thief must be one of his non-Jewish workers. He watched the man carefully and the more he did, the more he was convinced that he was the thief.

On one of his trips to Israel, the jeweller travelled to Bnei Brak and went to visit and receive a beracha from **R' Aharon Leib Shteinman**. While he was there, he decided to ask the great Sage's advice. He explained that one of his workers was stealing gold from his inventory and he suspected that it was a specific non-Jewish worker. What, he asked the Rav, should he do? Should he confront the man, accuse him publicly, or just fire him outright?

R' Aharon Leib listened closely and then shook his head. Adamantly, he insisted, "A goy (non-Jew)? It's not worth starting up with a goy ... *vayl a goy ken hargenen (for a non-Jew can kill)!*" The man nodded obediently and listened to the Rav's advice. He came home and continued to monitor the situation closely, however, he did not say a word to the suspected thief or confront him at all. Upon the advice of friends and colleagues in the business, he installed security cameras in his showroom and work areas and now he was able to

watch all of his workers constantly, intending to catch the thief red-handed. And that is exactly what happened!

While watching the hidden cameras from the safety of his private office, he clearly saw the man in question steal small amounts of the raw gold that was left over. Now, armed with irrefutable proof, he planned to call the man into his office, demand that he return what he stole, and then he would have him summarily fired from his job. Before he did this, though, he decided to consult with R' Aharon Leib once more. He asked a friend of his to go into the Rav and present the question, this time adding that due to the addition of his security cameras, he had actual proof of the man's guilt.

To his utter surprise, the answer that came back to him was exactly the same as the first one: "It's not worth starting up with a goy ... *vayl a goy ken hargenen (for a non-Jew can kill)*!" What should he do? Just allow the situation to continue? This was no way to run a business, thought the man. Perhaps the question wasn't presented to the Rav properly, or he had misunderstood the response.



This time, he sent another close friend of his into R' Shteinman's house and told him specifically, word for word, how to ask the question. The man did precisely as he was told, but when the response came back with the exact same reply, word for word like the previous two, he knew that R' Aharon Leib understood the situation and was giving him an iron-clad response. It wasn't but a few short weeks later, when the jewellery owner received a phone call that his non-Jewish worker was arrested. He had been standing in line at a local bodega when another man accidentally bumped into

him. The first man took exception and the two hoodlums got into a shoving match. Before it was all over, the non-Jewish worker pulled a gun out of his belt and shot the other man at point blank range, killing him instantly!

The police arrived on the scene and arrested the man, and he was now facing murder charges, in a case which was sure to put him away for a very long time! The jewellery owner stared at the phone in his hand in shock! He sat in his place for a long time, as the sound of R' Aharon Leib's voice echoed in his mind: ***"It's not worth starting up with a goy ... vayl a goy ken hargenen (for a non-Jew can kill)!"***

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

בְּזֹאת יָבֹא אַהֲרֹן אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ 16:3



Parshas Achrei Mos relates the avoda of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur. Doesn't it seem odd that the posuk which begins discussing this holy pursuit starts with the word **בְּזֹאת** meaning "with this" which seems entirely superfluous? There is a famous vort in **ונתנה תקף** on the words we proclaim loudly **תשובה ותפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזרה** We find the words **צום - קול - ממון** in every machzor above these words written in small print.

The Meforshim say that each of these three words has a gematria of 136, which total altogether 408. That is the exact numerical value of the word **זאת**. Therefore, the Torah is hinting to us that before the Kohen Gadol can enter the Bais HaMikdash on Yom Kippur, he

himself must work to accomplish these three things - Repentance, Prayer and Charity - so that his avoda can avert any negative decrees against Klal Yisroel.

My machshava here is that this relates to each individual as well. In Pirkei Avos we say that the world rests on 3 things: Torah, Avodah and Gemilus Chasadim. This is similar to the 3 words mentioned previously. **צום** relates to Avoda; **קול** is Torah; **ממון** is used for Tzedaka/Chessed. Every Yid must incorporate these three aspects into his life in order for the berachos of our Rosh Hashana/Yom Kippur tefillos to be answered. Therefore - **בְּזֹאת** - with all three attributes totalling 408, every Yid can come and ask Hashem to answer all his tefillos. As Dovid HaMelech so eloquently tells us: **אם תקום עלי מלחמה בזאת אני בוטח (תהלים כז'ג)** . Homiletically, after 120 years of life, when the Heavenly Tribunal will ask if we are worthy of entering Gan Eden, they will look to see if **בזאת אני בוטח** - were we faithful in - **בזאת** - to live a life of **תורה עבודה וגמילת חסדים** as well as **צום - קול - ממון** . If we do, then this will ensure our entry into Gan Eden.

A Short Message From Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi



It is interesting to note that the words **משפחה** (family) and **שמחה** (happiness) share just about the same letters. The only difference lies in the letter pei, cognate to the word peh, meaning mouth.

It is through expressing kind, encouraging and uplifting words to one's spouse and children that happiness is infused into the home. The mouth is no less than the key to a happy home.

18:5 וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם אֲנִי ה׳



When World War II broke out, **R' Boruch Halevi Leizerovski ZT"L**, a Rav in the Polish town of Lodz, was shipped to Auschwitz and became another non-descript prisoner in that most blood-soaked of all human habitats. Upon arrival, all inmates underwent the "selektzia" - selection, by the inhuman beast, Dr. Mengele. With a minor indication of his finger, this "elegant monster" indicated who would live and who would die. Like hundreds of thousands before him, R' Boruch passed by and, as a healthy young man, was directed to the right - the work brigade - rather than to the gas chambers.

Close to three horrifying years followed, years of backbreaking labour and starvation, years of indescribable pain and anguish. At a later date in the war, R' Boruch was ordered to pass by Dr. Mengele again. Of course, he understood its meaning, having been educated with blood and tears in the definition of that most dreadful word in the entire dictionary, selektzia: the weak would perish, while the fate of those appearing in better health would be postponed until the next selektzia.

At the time, R' Boruch had contracted an abscessed wound at the heel of his foot causing extreme pain with every step he took. When his turn came to pass the beast, he controlled himself with an iron will from displaying any pain, making his passage with a normal stride. Mengele did not discern R' Boruch's agony and motioned him to the right.

Not a moment passed before R' Boruch realized what a terrible mistake he had made and was overtaken with deep remorse. Memory flashes came back to him from the first moment the Nazis marched into Lodz and the atrocities they carried out, acts that are simply unfathomable to a normal human mind. Why, thought R' Boruch, would he want to continue to experience this pain, this torture? For what? A few more days of pain and torture? "Have I suddenly become clever, deciding my own destiny?" R' Boruch said to himself.

No, he made up his mind firmly. "Let Hashem decide. He, who has guided me these last three years without the slightest planning on my part, will follow me through to wherever I'm destined to be, either among the survivors or among the kedoshim - martyrs." Without another thought, R' Boruch slipped out of the group of men he was in, eluded the guards milling about and sneaked back into the line of people about to pass Mengele. He wanted to pass by one more time, with his true pain showing. This time around, when he passed by, he did not camouflage any of his symptoms, not even the facial contortions associated with his painful walk.

Mengele motioned him to the left, together with a group of sick and infirm inmates. They didn't need to be told where they were headed. The brutal facts of life in Auschwitz and all Nazi concentration camps had taught them all too well what to expect. R' Boruch, like the other religious members in the group, began to prepare for his final passage, the imminent crossing of that fateful bridge into eternity.

But Hashem had other plans; He doesn't follow a human script. The infirm were not taken to the gas chambers. Rather, they were loaded onto trucks and taken to a modern hospital facility in the Auschwitz compound that the Nazis had built for one specific purpose: to dupe the International Red Cross into believing that the Germans provided outstanding medical attention to their prisoners! He spent close to two weeks in the hospital in the care of world-class

physicians. They attended to his foot and largely restored his general well-being.

Sometime later, he found out that the entire group that was directed to the right side was ordered to participate in a "death march." These marches were so named since the objective was to cause as much death as possible. At the final stage of the war, when the Nazis realized that the end was nearing, they ordered the last remnants of the concentration camps, including Auschwitz and Birkenau, to march daily tens of kilometers aimlessly, with almost no food or drink. To our great misfortune, the vast majority perished, may Hashem avenge their blood.

"Imagine what would have happened to me," said R' Boruch later, "had I ended up on the right side, with the healthy ones. My ailing foot could have never survived even half a day of those marches. Reclassifying me as sick was Hashem's method of saving my life."

The City Of Vilna



Vilna was founded many centuries ago through an amazing tale involving a young child. But we have it on no greater an authority than the holy **Ben Ish Chai, Rabbeinu Yosef Chayim of Baghdad zt"l**, that this story is absolutely true.

Close to eight centuries ago, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Gediminas, was hunting in the forest near the Valley of Šventaragis. Tired after a successful day's hunt, he went to sleep and began to dream.

A huge iron wolf was standing on top a hill and the sound of hundreds of other wolves inside filled all the surrounding fields and woods.

Upon awakening, the Duke consulted his pagan priests to interpret the meaning of his dream.

He was told, "The iron wolf represents a castle and a city which will be established by you on this site. This city will be the capital of the Lithuanian lands and the dwelling of their rulers, and the glory of their deeds shall echo throughout the world."

Gediminas was excited and began to plan the construction of his great city. But before he could continue, the pagan priests issued a dire warning: "The gods have decreed that for the city to achieve success, it is necessary for a woman to come forth of her own free will and offer her only son as a sacrifice to the gods. This son must become the foundation stone of the new city. This sacrifice will ensure the successful completion of this grand endeavour."

The Grand Duke, like most people in the Dark Ages, was superstitious, and immediately sent forth messengers throughout the land in search of a woman willing to sacrifice her only son for the "greater good" of the Lithuanian people.

This was easier said than done and it required much time and effort to locate such a devoted woman. Soon enough, though, a simple woman from a distant village near the border, came forward and offered her one and only son, a bright twelve-year-old boy, to be just the sacrifice the Grand Duke needed.

Of course, Gediminas was ecstatic to hear the news. A day was chosen for the event when the child would be buried alive, and the city would be founded. It would be a joyous occasion, a holiday for the entire population. Everyone, from the country's nobility to the common folk, gathered for this auspicious event - to witness a mother sacrificing her only son.

The child was brought to the public square. The trumpets blared and the drums pounded. Suddenly, the boy spoke up. "Why did you bring me here?" he asked, his obvious intelligence shining forth. "I cannot

believe that our god is party to such a terrible injustice. Indeed, the priests claim to have seen this in a vision, but perhaps they misunderstood what they saw. I, therefore, request to be allowed to ask the priests three questions. If they answer these questions correctly, I will concede to their wisdom and go to my death quietly and peacefully, for I will know that this is the true will of the gods." Intrigued, the Grand Duke immediately granted the boy's request. The boy turned to the pagan priests and asked, "What is the lightest thing on the earth? What is the sweetest thing in the world? What is the hardest thing of all?"

The priests snorted derisively and answered in unison, "You call these questions? Why everyone knows that the lightest thing in the world is a feather; the sweetest thing is honey, and the hardest thing is a stone!"





The crowd laughed merrily. Now it was the boy's turn to scorn. "Your grace," he said to the Grand Duke, "the priests do not understand my questions. If they cannot interpret the questions of a young boy like myself, how can they be expected to understand the will of the gods?

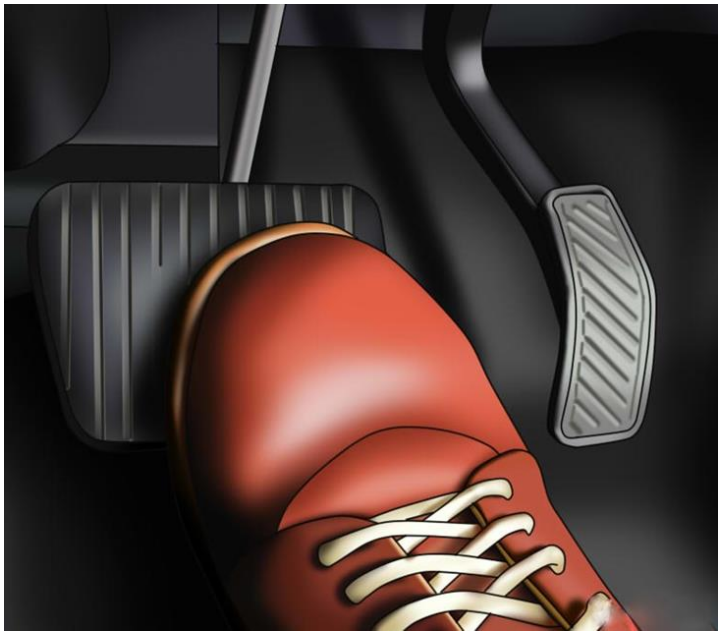
I am no fool. I would not ask a question which has an obvious answer. I was looking for the obscure, the answer which only an astute man can answer. Even a young child knows that a feather is light, honey

is sweet and a stone is hard. I am asking about that which appears heavy, but is really light; seems bitter, but is actually sweet; seems soft, but is in reality very hard.

"Your majesty, the lightest thing in the world is an only child being carried in his mother's womb. He may seem heavy, but for his mother, he is no burden. The sweetest thing in the world is a mother's milk to her nursing child. The hardest thing in the world is the heart of a mother who is prepared to sacrifice her one and only child!"

Gediminas and all those assembled were astonished by the young boy's incisive mind. His penetrating wisdom mesmerized all those who had gathered to see him sacrificed. An announcement was made that the priests had been mistaken and human sacrifice was indeed an injustice. At once, the child was set free.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]



Put a Temporary Brake on Your Intense Emotions!

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקָרְבָתָם לִפְנֵי־ה' וַיָּמֻתוּ ***"Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died." (Vayikrah 16:1)***

There is a famous story quoted in some sefarim. A very simple Jew heard his rabbi discuss the lechem hapanim and their importance. The lechem hapanim was one of the services that the kohanim were involved with. They were the 12 loaves of bread that were put on the Shulchan (table) in the Beis HaMikdash and remained fresh for the

entire week. This simple Jew was so inspired. He decided that **he** would bring the lechem hapanim as an offering to Hashem. Every week he would bake 12 loaves of bread and put them in the aron (ark) in the shul. Each week the loaves were gone.

This Jew was so happy. It seemed that Hashem was accepting his offering each week. One Friday the rabbi met this Jew in shul as he was placing the loaves in the aron. The rabbi questioned what the Jew was doing. When the Jew told him, the rabbi said that it was ridiculous. They were probably taken by the shamash (the shul caretaker). The two of them waited silently. The shamash soon entered the shul and walked straight to the aron where he took the 12 fresh challahs. The simple Jew was devasted. He thought that Hashem was taking the challahs and accepting his "offering". He felt so broken and so silly when he saw that it was the shamash taking them.

Soon after, the **Ari z"l** (Rabbi Yitzhak Halevi Luria Ashkenazi, a master of the Kabbalah, the hidden secrets contained in the Torah) asked the rabbi why he made the simple Jew feel so bad for his act of total sincerity and love. The Ari z"l told the rabbi that this simple Jew had brought Hashem so much nachas with his sincere "offering".

On the other hand, we see that sincerity alone isn't always enough. Two of Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, were killed by Hashem. On the day that the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was set-up, the holy Nadav and Avihu brought an unauthorized korban (sacrifice) of ketores (spices) to Hashem. As a result of their actions, Hashem sent forth beams of fire which entered their nostrils. Their souls were taken while their bodies remained intact.

There are various opinions about which specific action of Nadav and Avihu caused them to be punished by death. Targum Onkelus explains that their punishment was for the "aish zara", the unauthorized korban that they brought. What was their rationale for doing so? The dedication of the Mishkan was such a special

moment. Perhaps Nadav and Avihu had such an intense love for Hashem that they wanted to show that love by bringing a korban (see the Sifra).

This wasn't the first time that Nadav and Avihu showed such intense love for Hashem. At the time of the giving of the Torah, those who were greater were able to come closer to Har Sinai. Obviously, Moshe went up Har Sinai. Aharon was the next closest. After Aharon, the next closest were Nadav and Avihu. At that time, they stared at Hashem's Holy Presence "while eating and drinking" (Shmos 24:11). Targum Onkelus explains that Nadav and Avihu did not actually eat and drink. Rather, they felt such intense love for Hashem and such pleasure that they felt **as if** they had just enjoyed a good meal and a good drink.

There are times in our lives when we feel intense emotions and want to act upon them. That can be very good, as seen by the actions of the simple Jew in the above story. However, we must put a temporary hold on the action that our emotions are encouraging us to do. We must stop to think (using our intellect) and ask ourselves, "Is this truly a good idea? Am I doing a harmful action just because I have such intense feelings? Am I doing what Hashem truly wants of me? Am I harming others in my zeal?" As we saw from Nadav and Avihu, their intense love for Hashem may have led them to do the wrong thing which caused their punishment.

On the one hand, when we feel especially close to Hashem, we should <u>act</u> upon those feelings to bring us even closer to Hashem. On the other hand, we must first evaluate if that action we want to do for the sake of Hashem will indeed bring pleasure to Hashem.

"Love, compassion, and kindness to every Jew" is a fundamental requirement of a successful life. ~ The Pele Yoetz.

Why I matter



כְּתֹנֶת־בַּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ He shall wear a holy linen coat. (16:4)

The High Priest wore only linen garb in the Holy of Holies, rather than the gold clothing which he wore the entire year while performing his duties. This is because Israel built the golden calf, and even a reminder of that sin should not be brought into the Holy of Holies. *(Tz'ena Ur'ena)*

One Small Mitzvah

One Friday afternoon, a family on their way home to Bnei Brak, found themselves stranded. They had just missed it as the last bus had pulled out of the station. A non-religious young man was driving past on his way to Tel Aviv and kindly offered to give the family a lift.

When they arrived, it was too close to Shabbos and the kind young man would not have made it to Tel Aviv before nightfall. The family begged him to stay with them and he finally consented. They had a wonderful Shabbos together, but the young man was not prepared to change his lifestyle just like that and become a Ba'al Teshuva. Then again, neither did he wish to forget this unbelievable experience.

"You've been talking about mitzvos all day," he told the father, "how about teaching me something small and unnoticeable that I can do privately that my friends won't bother and make fun of?" The father thought for a moment and then suggested a small mitzvah. "A

Jew serves Hashem in every way, even in the manner with which we put on our shoes. Why not do this mitzvah?



First put on your right shoe and then the left shoe. Now, tie the left shoe first and afterwards tie the right. I'm sure, no one will notice." The young man agreed and tried as hard as he could to keep this one mitzvah. Even when he would forget, and it happened quite often, he would start all over and retie his shoes. The young man was soon conscripted into the army. Even there, he struggled to remember and tie his long, laced army boots in the Torah way.

It happened that one time, when his unit was on parade, he realized that he had not tied his boots properly. He begged his Commanding Officer to allow him to return to his room to take some aspirin for a migraine headache. Once there, out of sight, he could remove his boots and put them on again - right shoe first, left lace first. The C.O. was none too happy about it. "There is a training helicopter due to pick up the entire unit in a few minutes. But if you're unfit - well, go and be quick about it." The soldier hurried but by the time he returned to the parade grounds, the helicopter had gone.

That day, two Israeli army helicopters, with seventy-three soldiers aboard, collided in mid-air, killing all those aboard! One young soldier, however, was not aboard that helicopter - all because of a shoelace and a determined effort to keep a small mitzvah. When he finally came to terms and realized what exactly saved his life, he made an about-face. Today, this Ba'al Teshuva is a full-time yeshiva student, learning in one of the prominent Israeli yeshivos.

וְנָתַן אַהֲרֹן עַל־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִם גֹּרָלוֹת גּוֹרָל אֶחָד לַה' וְגוֹרָל אֶחָד לַעֲזָאזֵל And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for the L-rd, and the other lot for Azazel (16:8)



Rashi notes, "One would be placed to his right and the other to his left." Our Sages said that it was considered a good sign if the "lot for the L-rd" came out in Aaron's right hand, according to the principle: "The left hand should push away, while the right draws nearer." This is because the goat "for Azazel," which was sent into the wilderness, rendered the Jews pure from sin, whereas the one that was offered as a sin offering brought them closer to G-d. *(Avnei Nezer of Sochatchov)*

Rabbi Yosef Richtman - Clean Up

The final time the Kohen dons his white garments on Yom Kippur is to retrieve the incense pan and spoon from the Kodesh Hakadoshim. **The Bal Shem Tov** asks why it is necessary to get dressed once again just to clean up the used utensils. Based on this, he concludes that cleaning up from the avodah is just as choshuv as the actual avodah.

If serving a Talmid Chacham is choshuv, then cleaning up after him is just as choshuv. This goes for Shabbos as well, getting ready for Shabbos and cleaning up after Shabbos are on the same level.

וְלָקַח מְלֹא־הַמַּחְתָּה גַּחֲלֵי־אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וּמְלֹא חָפְנָיו קְטֹרֶת סַמִּים דַּקָּה וְהֵבִיא מִבֵּית לַפָּרֹכֶת *And his cupped handful of finely ground incense-spices. (16:12)*



The Kohen Gadol is finally prepared to appear before Hashem to implore His atonement on behalf of Klal Yisrael. He has said his Viddui and slaughtered his personal Korban Chatas. He is now ready to offer the Ketores, incense, in the Kodesh Ha'kodoshim.

The Kohen Gadol enters the Holy of Holies once a year, on Yom Kippur. The first service he performs, the first request he makes of the Al-mighty, is to seek atonement for the sin of lashon hora, speaking gossip and slander. The Ketores serves as the vehicle for this request. How does the offering of the finely ground incense-spices symbolize lashon hora?



Horav David Feinstein offers an insightful explanation. He quotes Rashi, who, in citing the interpretation of Chazal, questions the need for emphasizing that the incense-spices were finely ground. Ketores was brought every day in the Bais Ha'mikdash, and it was finely ground. Why should it be different on Yom Kippur?

Chazal conclude that while it is mandatory to finely grind the spices during the year, on Yom Kippur it is essential that they be exceptionally fine. Consequently, the spices are ground again on the day before Yom Kippur. Ketores was offered twice daily, in the morning and in the afternoon. These offerings served to atone for the sin of lashon hora. The recurrence of this sin is noted by the twice daily offering of Ketores.

On Yom Kippur, something more than the average Ketores was needed. On this day, when Klal Yisrael must receive atonement for all sins, it was essential that focus be brought on the form of lashon hora that is the most subtle and most common - avak lashon hora, dust of lashon hora. This "innocuous" form of lashon hora is like fine dust, very elusive, at times even sophisticated and well-meaning, but lashon hora no less. It affects most people. Thus, Klal Yisrael must atone for it on the day when everyone stands in prayer begging for forgiveness. Avak lashon hora is the source of most sin.

Many sins begin with a simple derogatory remark about someone which becomes magnified over time. This "humble" beginning can lead to the most unspeakable forms of behaviour. It is, therefore, especially appropriate that we grind up the incense a second time, so that we make it as fine as possible, symbolizing the "fine dust" of lashon hora. *(Peninim Al Hatorah)*



כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכֹּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' תִּטְהָרוּ

For on that day shall [the High Priest] make an atonement for you (16:30)

The Jewish people are likened to a walnut. A walnut is edible even if it falls into dirt and filth. All one must do before eating it is wash it off, for the inside meat remains unsoiled. The same may be said of the Jewish people. No matter how sullied they become by their misdeeds a whole year, Yom Kippur comes and "washes" them off. A

sin affects only the external part of the Jewish soul; the inner essence is always untouched and pristine. *(Midrash Rabba)*



The B'nei Yisrael are likened to a number of noteworthy trees and vines and their fruits. In various contexts, the people of Israel - and/or their most righteous representatives - are compared to an almond tree, a grapevine, a pomegranate, an olive tree, olive fruit, an etrog and a date palm. Yet it may come as a surprise to learn that the rabbis found the walnut tree and its nuts to be especially suggestive of the personality of Israel.

In the Song of Songs (6:11), Hashem goes down into an egoz garden - **אֶל־גִּנַּת אֱגוֹז יָרַדְתִּי**. Egoz is equivalent to the Aramaic egoza, a nut - usually walnut - tree. In the accompanying Midrash, Song of Songs Rabba, the people of Israel are likened to a pile of walnuts. When one of them is moved or disturbed, each walnut in the pile is affected. Just as it is impossible to pluck one walnut without making the whole tree shake, so it is impossible for an individual to commit a sin without ripples of what he did affecting the entire Jewish people.

The letters in **אֱגוֹז** have the numerical equivalent of the word **חט**, the Hebrew word for sin. For this reason, nuts should not be eaten on Rosh Hashana, when Hashem examines and judges us, weighing our good deeds against our sins.

In this context, the **Ramban** (Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman) sees walnuts as illustrating the principle of **כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֵבִים זֶה לָזֶה**, that each Jew is responsible for every other, particularly when it comes

to protesting the sight of another Jew committing a sin. When one walnut tumbles from the pile - when one Jew from the family of Israel sins - the rest come tumbling down along with it. Yet, when it comes to sin, the Midrash instructs, it is also therapeutic to think of ourselves as walnuts. Just as a walnut can be totally submerged in garbage and filth without damage to its inner kernel, so too the Jew.

Walnut roots exemplify the process of repentance or return to Hashem. The roots of other trees need to be covered, but walnut tree roots require exposure. Similarly, the sins of Israel can only be expiated if they are explicitly revealed through vidui or confession.

Those who recklessly climb high into a walnut tree without thinking, the Midrash continues, are destined to fall and be killed. This is due to the walnut tree's smooth and slippery bark. According to Resh Lakish, just as the walnut tree upon which the climber carelessly ascends plays a role in his death, anyone in Israel who reaches a position of leadership through reckless exploitation of the public is destined to be brought down by the public as well.

The walnut illustrates the ancient "Doctrine of Signatures," which held that the appearance of plants and their fruits signified their curative properties. Thus, heart-shaped strawberries would be good for the heart and kidney beans would improve kidney function. Consumption of walnuts, which resemble the brain, would strengthen that organ. Indeed, research has revealed that walnuts contain serotonin, a chemical manufactured in the brain and whose lack is often reported among individuals suffering from a variety of mental disorders.

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it – is like wrapping a present and not giving it.

Rebbetzin Shira Smiles - The Neshama in the Supermarket

Considering the fact that most supermarkets in Israel tend to have very narrow, packed aisles, it is quite a relief to walk into a spacious store where there is easy accessibility to all of one's needs. It makes shopping all the more pleasant when you don't have to anxiously manoeuvre your way around worrying that someone or something will be knocked over.



I was therefore extremely excited when a friend of mine one day told me, "There is a great store in the Beit Shemesh area with wide aisles. It is in fact so spacious that you can pass by someone else walking in the opposite direction with a cart." Very excited to hear about this, I headed to the store with my daughter.

Grabbing a cart, we started making our way around. However, I was soon to discover a small detail that my friend was remiss in telling me about. The store carried just about every item you could imagine. Food, clothes, household items and more. It was overwhelming to the point that I could not handle it. All I wanted were a few items, and here I was surrounded by an innumerable amount of other amenities I had no interest in.

Turning to my daughter, I said, "I'm not doing too well. There is just too much to choose from. I think we should leave." And indeed, we left.

As we were walking out of the store, my daughter said to me, "You know Ima, this is a very good experience for you." "Oh, really now?" I said. "Yes. Now you know how your neshama feels every day when it enters your body. All it yearns to do is the will of Hashem and learn Torah and perform mitzvot. However, not before long, it becomes distracted from fulfilling its true calling and mission. Ensconced in a world with so many pulls in so many directions, it becomes overwhelmed and faces the risk of floundering. The uneasiness you were feeling in this store is exactly the same way your neshama feels when it comes into this world and must overcome the many challenges life presents it with. Now you know how your neshama feels."

We would be wise to closely listen to this ever-important lesson. Living in an age where distractions are rampant and the demands of life present many daily challenges, we must always remember that we have a higher calling. Our beautiful neshama only desires to carry out its intended mission in this world and nourish itself with spirituality. And while the challenges we face may be intimidating and overwhelming, we all possess the inner conviction to stand up strongly during those trying moments and carry out that which our neshama truly yearns to do.

Living Jewish

On Lag B'Omer, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Rashbi), was illuminated with the light of Moshiach, thereby attaining the highest level of his lifetime, and revealed it partially to his students. Hence, Lag B'Omer is a day of revelation of pnimiyus hatorah, the inner aspects of the Torah.

The Arizal said that it is a mitzvah to rejoice on Lag B'Omer, because Rashbi called his yahrtzeit a celebration.

Shabbos Treasures The Precious Gift of Shabbos



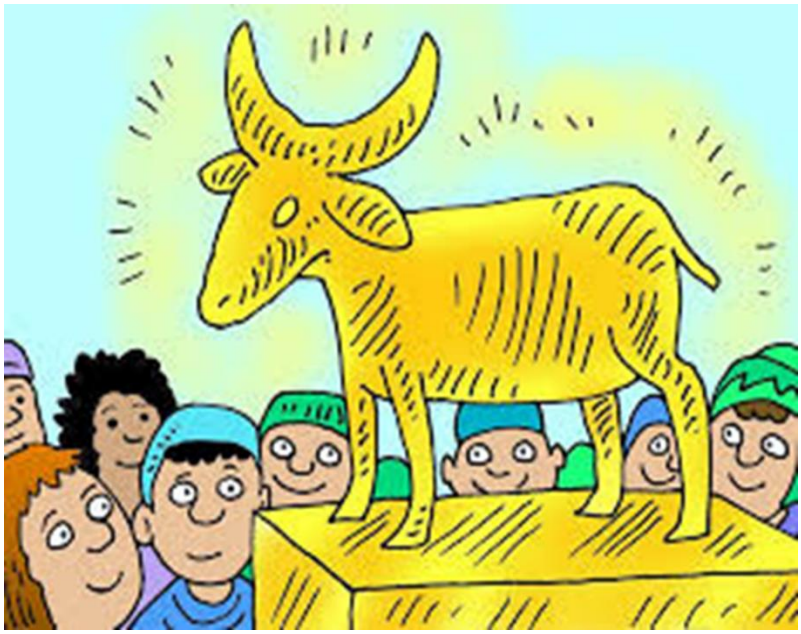
Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein once related about a woman who had become an observant Jew, but her husband refused to join her, and he would not take on doing the Mitzvos with her. She tried, at least, to get her husband to stop smoking in the house on Shabbos, and she told him that it disturbed the atmosphere of Shabbos that she was trying to create, but her husband adamantly refused.

She went to her Rav and asked him for advice with her situation, and the Rabbi came up with a suggestion for a compromise, that the husband should refrain from smoking only for as long as the Shabbos candles were lit. The husband thought that the suggestion was reasonable, and he agreed. At first the wife used standard Shabbos candles, but soon, she switched them and started using thicker candles, which burned longer. The husband, true to his word, refrained from smoking as long as the candles burned.

As the weeks went by, the woman used thicker and thicker candles until eventually she began using candles that lasted 24 hours, the entire duration of Shabbos. The husband dutifully kept to his pledge, and as result of his wife's Shabbos candles, he increased his own observance of Shabbos! *(Aleinu L'Shabei'ach)*

There is no Jew who does not have a moment of closeness to Hashem. For every Jewish soul is bound to its Source. ~ The Bnei Yissaschar zt"l.

After the sin of the eigel (golden calf) Moshe Rabbeinu prayed for atonement.



He said, "If You won't forgive them, people will say that I wasn't worthy to pray for them" (see Rashi on Shmos 32:32). Moshe Rabbeinu is the most humble person who ever lived. Why would it bother him if people will say that he wasn't worthy to pray for the nation?

The Beis Ahron answers, Moshe Rabbeinu considered himself to be the lowliest yid, and therefore he wanted his tefillos to be answered. He figured that this would prove that Hashem listens to everyone's prayers, even of the lowly people. If Moshe's tefillos weren't answered, people could say, "Who knows whether my tefillos will be answered either."

Shabbos Stories For Parshas Acharei Mos

The Beauty of a Quick Shabbos Meal

Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt"l, was once invited by one of his students to join him in a Shabbos Seudah. The Rav said that before he accepts, he must know how the meal is conducted.

The student told his Rebbe, "We have a Seudah that is beautiful from beginning to end! Only the best Kosher food is used, and we have a fine cook who prepares everything. In between the many courses we say over Divrei Torah, learn Shulchan Aruch, and sing Zemiros late into the night!"

After hearing all the details, Rav Yisroel said, "I will accept your invitation, but on one condition. The meal must be carried out very quickly."



The student realized that he had no choice and agreed to his Rebbe's condition. That Shabbos evening, each course was served immediately after the next, and they were up to Bentching within an hour. At this point the student turned to Rav Yisroel and asked why he had requested that the Seudah be so quick?

Instead of answering, Rav Yisroel asked for the cook to come into the dining room. He said to her, "Please forgive me for making you tired by serving things so quickly and without giving you a break."

The cook answered, "All blessing should come to you, Rebbe, and I wish you would come here every week! I'm usually so tired from working the whole day cleaning and cooking, and then serving food until late at night, that I can hardly stand! Thanks to you, I am free to go home early and rest!"

Rav Yisroel turned to his student and said, "That's your answer to why I requested that the Seudah should go quickly.

(Torah U'Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)

"Hashem desires truth from within, not greatness on the outside. For Hashem seeks the heart, not the display." ~ R' Moshe of Kobrin zt"l.

Asking All the Right Questions By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Chaim Salominski was a dunce. That was the general consensus of his Bar Mitzva Class. In secular learning; math, history and biology, he was quite bright, but in Torah learning he just didn't get it.



Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt"l

What could he do? He wanted so badly to please his father and learn Torah but it just didn't 'go'. As soon as the teacher told everyone to open their Gemoras, he began daydreaming so vividly that at the end of every class he had no idea what had been said.

His father was a Holocaust survivor from Poland that had been taken away by the Germans with his entire family when he was just a young man in his early twenties They were separated, scattered in various death camps and he finally ended up in Auschwitz where, despite the hunger, torture, disease and exterminations, miraculously survived. He returned home to discover that his family had been murdered, his house had been occupied by Poles and he had nowhere to live.

So he moved to a relocation camp in Austria where after a year or so he met young Jewish lady who had also lost her family and they married. A year later their first child, Chaim, was born and a year after that they moved to America to the East Side in New York to begin a new life.

Chaim's father, despite all he had been through, remained an observant Jew and even considered himself to be a Chassid; in Poland

he was attached to the Rebbe of Sossov and he had hopes that his son would also walk in the way of the Torah. He enrolled the boy in Torah academies and dreamed he would be a Torah scholar - but he wasn't.

In fact, by the time Chaim reached the eighth grade he was at the bottom of the class. He managed to hide it from his father, but that was the bitter truth. There were children in that class who had memorized entire tractates of Talmud; hundreds of pages, while the only thing poor little Chiam knew was one small Mishna of several lines that he had been forced to learn as a punishment for bad behavior. The rest was an opaque blur of words and ideas he couldn't really relate to. He was a Torah dunce.

The winter of 1960 was a monumental date for his parents; they had accomplished the impossible! They, charred embers saved from an inferno of destruction, were going to celebrate the thirteenth birthday of their son! Chaim was going to be Bar-Mitzva!

Chaim worked day and night on the few blessings he was to read from the podium in Shul on Shabbat until he had them memorized. Then his father came home with more joyous news. He had arranged a private audience with the holy Lubavitcher Rebbe for both of them!! The Rebbe would bless Chaim before the big day!!

At first Chaim was also overjoyed. He even told all of his friends in school about it. But one of them put a needle into his balloon.

"Hey, don't you know that the Lubavitcher Rebbe always asks the Bar-Mitzva boys something about what they are learning in class? Chaim, what are you going to do? Do you even know what book we are learning? If I were you, I wouldn't go." Suddenly everyone fell silent. Chaim was confused and broken. It meant so much to his father...he had to go. But on the other hand, his friend was right. What would he do if the Rebbe asked? And he was sure to ask! He asked EVERYONE! The thought of how embarrassed his father was going to be began to break his heart.

The day arrived. Chaim's father was dressed in his best suit and so was Chaim. The taxi-ride to the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, although it was less than a half-hour, seemed to take forever. Finally they entered the Rebbe's headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway, asked one of the young men there what to do and took their place in line before the Rebbe's door. Just after midnight their turn came.

They entered together. Earlier, one of the Chassidim told his father that it wasn't proper to shake the Rebbe's hand or to sit down even if the Rebbe asked, and sure enough when they entered the first thing the Rebbe did was extend his hand and tell his father to sit.

They remained standing. Chaim still remembers the sound of his knees knocking against the Rebbe's table as he stared transfixed at the Rebbe's kind face.

The Rebbe spoke seriously for several minutes to his father in Yiddish. His father offered an envelope containing a donation but the Rebbe told him to please speak to the secretaries about that and then turned to Chaim whose poor knees were knocking so hard he almost couldn't stand. But as soon as the Rebbe began speaking they stopped.

He asked if he understood Yiddish and Chaim replied yes. Then the Rebbe, without asking him what tractate he was learning asked him a Torah question. Chaim winced; he was short of breath. But the Rebbe repeated the question and suddenly Chaim realized that he knew the answer! Then the Rebbe asked another question and another, it was a miracle! The Rebbe asked questions only on the few lines of Mishna that Chaim knew!

Chaim felt like the Torah genius of New York! He answered with such joy and certainty that for the first time in his life he felt that the Torah was his!! When they went outside and the door closed behind them, Chaim's father turned to him, tears of joy running down his cheeks, lifted him and hugged him with all his might for several minutes. He was so overcome with emotion that he could not speak.

The scene was so unique that the Chassidim crowded around, thinking that perhaps the Rebbe had given them some special message to pass on to mankind.

And really, he had. The message is that if you see the good in everything, especially every Jew, the results are miraculous.

Chaim was so encouraged that he eventually improved his Torah learning and became a principal in of the Chabad elementary schools.

How a Rainy Wedding Saved a Life By Naomi Brudner

Throughout the world, and perhaps especially in Israel, rain is extraordinarily important and not to be taken for granted. Every year, Jews throughout the world pray for rain, adding the words *mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem*, "He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall," to our daily prayers from Shemini Atzeret until the first day of Passover, when we substitute the words *morid hatal,* "He causes the dew to descend."

Because it can be dangerous, we ask that it be rain of blessing: "For You are G-d Who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall ... for blessing, and not for a curse. Amen. For life, and not for death. Amen."

This true story that happened recently reflects the significance of this prayer.

A wedding was set to take place in Israel and, like all weddings, it was carefully planned and scheduled. The reception was called for 6 p.m., the *chuppah* for 6:30 p.m., and the family members of the bride and groom—many of whom were not from the same city—were asked to be at the hall by 5 p.m. for photos. Nevertheless, "There are many thoughts in a person's heart, but G-d's plan—that shall stand." And so it was.

As all the family members were preparing to come to the wedding hall, raindrops started to fall. And then more and more fell until the sky was dark gray, and the rain was coming down in torrents!

A heavy downpour also slows traffic, which meant family members were arriving at the hall later than planned. And so, the wedding portraits were put on hold while they waited for everyone to arrive.

But the rain kept pouring, it was getting later and later, and key people were still missing. The reception had to start on time since guests were arriving, and before long, it would be time for the *chuppah*.

Eventually, all the family members arrived—wet and stressed. By the time they had all dried themselves and were ready to join the wedding party, there was no time for the family photos, which would now have to be taken afterwards.

Despite the delays, the *chuppah* was holy and beautiful, and the wedding proceeded as festive as ever. The food was delicious, and the music and dancing were joyous and lively.

The wedding ended late and only then could the families of the bride and groom begin the photography session that should have happened hours earlier. They all posed patiently, smiles of happiness evident and genuine, while simultaneously checking their watches because by that time, everyone was tired and wanted to go home.

Finally, the pictures were over, and the families wished each other final *mazal tovs* and went their separate ways.

Driving towards their hometown, one of the families had to pass a security check. As they stopped, the driver's wife, Sara, noticed a car stopped at the side of the road with its blinkers on. Though she had never done so before, and was exhausted from the festivities, Sara asked the security guards why the car was parked there.

He told her that a woman in the car had to give birth earlier than expected—meaning now!—and they were waiting for an ambulance to

arrive. Sara, who just happens to be a professional midwife, quickly ran to the vehicle.

She opened the door and saw a terrible sight. A woman was crying hysterically beside her lifeless baby. Knowing she couldn't afford to lose a moment, she attempted to resuscitate the infant. She pressed her fingers into the baby's chest, then quickly and rhythmically, breathed into the baby's mouth, and repeated this process again and again. She did everything exactly as she had learned, but nothing worked.



Though it seemed helpless, Sara continued to try to bring the baby back to life, and she begged G-d to help her. Suddenly, she remembered a complication that sometimes occurs at birth. If a baby swallows amniotic fluid that has meconium in it, this can cause respiratory distress in which case the newborn needs resuscitation.

Though it seemed too late for that—and she had no equipment with her—Sara decided to try whatever she could to save this child's life. She put her open mouth over the baby's nose and mouth, and suctioned air from the baby as deeply and thoroughly as she could. She did this again and again until finally something came out of the baby into Sara's mouth and she spat it out, and then quickly suctioned again and again.

Sara continued doing this over and over, and suddenly saw that the baby's hand moved. Soon after that, she heard the most beautiful cry in the world—that of the baby whose life she had just saved!

The baby she was able to save because she was there at exactly the right moment, because she was late for the wedding, because of the rain that caused the pictures to be taken much later than planned.

Yes, the One who makes it rain and determines when it will rain, and how hard and for how long, made it rain that day and evening, bringing down *gishmai bracha*, "rain of blessing ... rain for life." *(This true story was heard recently from Rabbi Yitzchak Fanger. Names have been changed.)*

Misplaced Wallets By T. Gestetner

It was a couple of days before Pesach and Rabbi Chaim Zaid was on his way back home to Bnei Brak from Elad where he had just given a shiur. Aside from the special *shiurim* and presentations he is renowned for, Reb Chaim is greatly involved with his *talmidim* and numerous *chesed* projects.

Sitting on the bus, Reb Chaim watched a man board. He put his hand in his pocket and withdrew it empty. He must have left his wallet at home. The voices were getting louder as the man and the bus driver negotiated.

"I travel this route every day at this hour. Please let me get on without paying today. Tomorrow I will pay double."

The driver refused. "Either you pay or you get off the bus!"

The man attempted to convince the driver. "If I don't take this bus, I will be late to work," he pleaded. "I can't come late. Please, just this once..."

The driver was not swayed. "Off!"

Hearing the argument, Reb Chaim jumped out of his seat and ran to the front of the bus. He withdrew some cash from his pocket, gave it to the driver on behalf of the anonymous fellow, and then returned to his seat.

The grateful passenger followed him and asked, "What's your name?"

"What difference does it make?" Reb Chaim replied modestly. He did not want his beneficiary to feel obligated to return the money.

The man pressed him. "Tell me!"

"My name is Chaim Zaid."

The bus arrived to Bnei Brak and Reb Chaim got off at his appointed stop, the incident with the bus fare completely forgotten.

Pesach was approaching and, as every year, Reb Chaim was heavily involved in a *Kimcha d'Pischa* organization. He spent many hours at a distribution warehouse loading boxes and boxes laden with Pesach products and delivering them to poor families.

When his route was done, Reb Chaim returned home. As he removed his jacket, he realized that his wallet was missing! He checked the pocket of his coat, where he had last placed it, but it was empty. He rummaged through all his pockets, but the wallet was gone!

After a long search, with the wallet still not found, Reb Chaim began to make phone calls. The wallet was ever so important to him. It contained a lot of cash, a number of checks and most importantly, essential documents. They checked the car and combed the warehouse.

Reb Chaim was very disturbed by his wallet's disappearance, but he was determined to positively accept Hashem's will. About three hours later, Reb Chaim received a curious phone call.

"I'm calling from the shop at the gas station in Bnei Brak," the caller said, "Your wallet was found and it is here. You can come get it."

Hoping desperately that he would find at least the documents intact and wondering if it was at all possible that the cash and checks were still inside, Reb Chaim rushed over to the gas station.

He arrived at the store, hardly catching his breath, and approached the cashier. The cashier looked familiar. Reb Chaim looked again and

it dawned on him that he was none other than the anonymous man for whom Reb Chaim had paid the bus fare just two days earlier!



The cashier related how the wallet arrived at his shop. - "It was just about night when a man drove up to the gas station to fill up his tank. He approached the little window of the shop to pay. He passed a credit card inside and called out, 'Three hundred shekels.' Then he turned to his car and I could not see his face at all. I picked up the credit card and the name on it jumped out at me, 'Chaim Zaid!' I was so excited! Hashem sent you to me so I would have the opportunity to repay you! 'Zaid, Zaid,' I called out after the man's retreating back. But he continued to walk toward his car, without turning his face at all. At that second, it dawned on me that perhaps the card was stolen.

I called out on the speaker system, asking the customer to return because there was a problem with his card. 'I need your *Teudat Zehut* (Israeli identification number, similar to a Social Security number in the United States),' I said.

The man entered the shop, placed his wallet on the counter, and pulled out the *Teudat Zehut* card from inside. He began to read the numbers off the card. This raised another red flag as most Israelis know their numbers by heart, given how often it is needed.

'Is this *your Teudat Zehut*?' I asked him in the sternest voice I could put on. Meanwhile, I turned the security camera to shine on

his face. The man panicked, realizing that his theft had been discovered. He turned around and ran out of the shop, jumped into his car and sped away from the gas station, leaving the stolen wallet on the counter. Here! The wallet is yours!"

The cashier finished his story and handed the wallet to Reb Chaim. He was astonished to find every last bill, check, and document inside!

The cashier's face was positively glowing, elated that he had been able to return a favor to one who had done him a favour, in wondrous full circle.

The Rabbi's Purchase of a Rack of Lamb



Lashon Hara has been known to destroy lives, and there are many stories that portray this concept. The way to avoid Lashon Hara is to look upon everyone with Ayin Tova and give others the benefit of the doubt, because you never know what's behind another person's actions.

There's a story of a Rabbi from a local Yeshivah in Boro Park that was seen in the butcher shop buying a rack of lamb for $132. The lady standing in line behind him overhears what the Rabbi is buying and texts her friend: "*My son's Rebbe is buying a rack of lamb for $132, no wonder my son's tuition is so high*!" That person tells her friend the same thing and says and we only eat chicken to save money!

Another person then complains through text, "*the Rabbi is spending way above his pay grade!*"

Another person said "*I know their son from camp and he is a little weird*!" Someone else says, "*they tried to make a shiduch with his son, but B'h it didn't work out!*"

Then someone else texts that her sister who lives next door says, "*This makes sense because they just LOVE food*!"

Then someone else responds, "*I don't think this Rabbi is a good role model for our children*!"

Now they want to report the Rabbi to the principal of the school because they feel he has serious issues! Another person agrees and says,"*We'd better nip this problem now before it gets out of hand!*"

Now the wife of the Rabbi gets a call from her friend in Lakewood that she's hearing all kinds of problems about her husband's spending habits! Finally, the Rabbi gets home and his wife tells him: "*People are saying bad things about you and telling everyone that you spent $132 at the Butcher shop today?!*"

The Rabbi replied, "*Of course, Mr. Schwartz asked me to do him a favour and pick up his order of rack of lamb at the butcher for his son's Sheva Berachot tomorrow night!*"

At 2:29 this afternoon this Rabbi was a beloved Rabbi in the community and by 2:55 his reputation was destroyed. From the time it took the Rabbi to walk home from after doing a good deed, over 100 people from BORO Park to Flatbush to Monsey to Williamsburg and all the way to Lakewood NJ all had heard about the extravagant and fictitious spending habits of this Rabbi.

But None of it was true! This is a made-up story but it can easily happen. ***If lashon harah is like a gun and can destroy a person...lashon harah on the internet is like a weapon of mass destruction***! How many people have been harmed like this? How many times have we destroyed the Bet Hamikdash today? Next time you're about to send an email or text...**Think before you click SEND!**

Rav Chaim Volozhiner And the Fancy Gold Watch



When Rav Chaim Volozhiner, zt"l, was the Rosh Yeshivah, it was almost unheard of for anyone to own a watch. In those days, watches were very expensive and most people could not afford them.

Once, late one night, Rav Chaim was learning with a small group of students, and he asked if anyone knew what time it was, but no one was able to tell him the time.

Rav Chaim then said to them, "It seems that we don't have enough Emunah, faith in Hashem. If we had perfect Emunah, we would have a watch to know what time it is—even a good gold watch." Rav Chaim then started teaching his students about the different aspects of Bitachon, trusting in Hashem. As the Shiur continued, the door to the room suddenly swung open and a young soldier entered and approached Rav Chaim.

He said, "Rebbe, I need your help. I come from a very wealthy home, and I have been drafted to go into the Russian army. My father had arranged for me to be exempted by a doctor, but there was a confusion and the doctor exempted someone else while I had to go report for service. Now it is too late and I have no choice but to comply. Right now, I am the only Jew in my group. I have with me a very expensive gold watch, and I am very afraid that it will be stolen. I am too far from home to return it there, and I don't know anyone in this town. Could I please ask the Rav to hold my watch for me until I come back to claim it?"

Rav Chaim replied, "My son, I would very much like to help you, but my home is wide open to everyone, and I can't guarantee that your watch will be properly guarded." When he heard this, the young

soldier said, "In that case, Rebbe, I am giving you the watch as a gift. I would rather it belong to you than to some thief!"

Before Rav Chaim had a chance to protest, the man took his watch and placed it in Rav Chaim's hand and ran out the door. Rav Chaim immediately ran after him, but he was unable to find him outside in the dark.

Rav Chaim returned to his students and said, "As I told you. If we truly have Emunah in Hashem, He will supply us with all of our needs, and look, Hashem even sent us a nice gold watch!"

(Torah U'Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg)

Why Rebbetzin Dessler Was Not Joyful



R' Eliyahu Dessler z"l is known as a giant in mussar, self-improvement through the study of traditional Jewish ethics. His esteemed wife was no less involved in proper self-guidance and looked at the world through the prism of Torah and midos tovos, good character traits.

Once, she saw someone admiring something in the window of a pawn shop. When she asked what the person was doing, the woman replied that she did not intend to buy any of the luxury items she saw, but simply enjoyed looking at the beautiful merchandise in the store window.

Rebbetzin Dessler replied, "I simply cannot take any joy from looking at the items in a pawn shop window. It is there because someone came upon difficult times and had to part with a dear possession. How can we possibly be happy to see something which is the symbol of someone else's unhappiness?" ~ *(Jonathan Gerwitz's Migdal Ohr.)*



The Rebbe and the Bad Bachur

A bachur came to the **Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l** and told him that he was thrown out of his yeshiva. The Klausenberg Rebbe summoned for the mashgiach of the bachur's yeshiva and asked him why he threw this bachur out.

The mashgiach told him all the bad deeds the boy committed, and concluded, "It's impossible to keep him in the yeshiva if he does these things." "That's true," the Rebbe agreed, "but I spoke with the bachur, and he told me that he's ready to change."

The mashgiach said in exasperation, "This bachur promised me a thousand times that he will improve, but he never keeps his word."

The Rebbe held his white beard and said, "Throughout the many years of my life I promised Hashem even more than a thousand times that I will improve, and I haven't done so yet. According to what you're saying, I should give up. But actually, as long as a Yid lives, he still has potential to improve his ways…" ~ *(Torah Wellsprings : Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.)*

Rabbi Aurbach's Old Jalopy By Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Blau



Harav Moshe Ahron Aurbach, זצ"ל who was known as a great Baal Chesed in Toronto, was once driving with two passengers in the back of his car. As they were travelling, his passengers started to speak lashon hora. Rav Moshe Ahron repeatedly asked them to change the topic, but to no avail. His entreaties fell on deaf ears.

Rav Moshe Ahron brainstormed. After thinking for a few moments, he fearlessly stopped his car in the middle of a very busy intersection and pretended that his car had stalled! He pulled out the keys and got out to "fix" the car.

The scene was incredible – there were cars coming from every direction! People were honking and beeping, and there was traffic backed up all over. After a few minutes tinkering with the motor, Rav Aurbach closed the hood, gave it a few good bangs and got back into the car.

He jiggled the key in the ignition, and the car started. For the rest of the ride, the only topic his passengers could talk about was "Rav Aurbach's old jalopy"!

Connect the Dots by Rabbi David Ashear

The reward for Mitzvot is not paid in this world. Hence, a Tzadik will not necessarily enjoy a life of bliss here. The rewards are stored up for **עולם הבא** which has the capacity to compensate properly. Nevertheless, performing Mitzvot does produce "side benefits" in this world. Often, Hashem will show us how He sees and appreciates our efforts. Sometimes, decades later, He allows us to witness His Hashgacha in using those deeds to benefit us.

It was a summer afternoon, and a handful of rabbinical students at a renowned Yeshiva stepped outside during their lunch break. They were speaking about the complexities of a Gemara that they had just learned, and as they were absorbed in discussion, one of the young men noticed a hearse driving up the road.



He said, "Look how sad-one lone hearse, unaccompanied by a procession of mourners." Everybody felt bad. How could someone go to the grave completely alone? Where were the family members? Where were the neighbours and friends? They decided to follow the hearse to the cemetery and participate in the burial. But first they went back into the Yeshiva and told everyone to come join in this great Mitzva. Soon, the hearse was escorted by a long and impressive line of hundreds of students.

When it reached the grave, a rabbi emerged from the hearse and said, "This is very fitting. How did you all know about her death? No one even knew she existed anymore. She lived the life of a hermit for the last fifty years." The young men looked at him strangely,

puzzled by his assumption. One man said, "Excuse me Rabbi. We don't know who the deceased is. We just came because we felt bad that there was no one to escort the hearse."

The rabbi began to cry. "My friends, your presence here is clearly from Heaven. Seventy years ago, a wealthy Jewish businessman donated an expensive property to build your Yeshiva. He continued to support it throughout his lifetime. As he got older, the Yeshiva wanted to do something to recognize his philanthropy, but he was very humble and didn't want any recognition.

"He had only one daughter, and he asked that if his daughter should ever need help that the Yeshiva should be there for her. They told him, "We will always be there for your daughter." After he passed away, his daughter veered off the path of religion and disconnected herself from the Jewish community. She was in and out of psychiatric institutions all her life.

"The rabbis tried to keep contact with her and lend support, but she refused to have a connection with anybody. That group of rabbis eventually passed away, and that daughter led her life alone away from society. But my friends, it is her funeral to which you have coincidentally come to today! The funeral of the daughter of the benefactor who built your Yeshiva. By your presence here today, you have fulfilled your rabbis' pledge and your benefactors' request."

Later, the students found out that the hearse was not planning on driving down their small obscure street. The driver made a wrong turn and drove down their street by accident. This was Hashem, 70 years later, remembering the deed of the philanthropist and insuring that at least his daughter would have an honorable funeral.

Hashem sees and remembers all our deeds. We can't always connect the dots and see the benefits of our deeds, but we do know that the real reward will be very clear and very big - in the World to Come.



The Mother Who Thought That Learning Torah Would Protect Her Son



Nachlas Tzvi relates a powerful story that demonstrates the devotion and commitment which a young Yeshivah student demonstrated, as well as the reward he achieved for his sacrifice in order to study Torah.

During World War I, **Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, zt"l**, decided to close his Yeshivah in Kletzk, stating that he could not take responsibility for the safety of his students. He therefore sent everyone home for their own benefit.

Upon returning home, one young student was asked by his mother, "Why have you come home?" He said, "The Rosh Yeshivah sent everyone home for their own safety."

The mother began to raise her voice, "Do you think that you are more safe here than in the Yeshivah? I want you to return to the Yeshivah to learn Torah!"

The boy said, "But Mother, I have no money to purchase a ticket for the train."

She responded, "Then you will walk. Return immediately to the Yeshivah. The Torah will protect you!"

The young student listened to his mother, and he began to walk the few hundred kilometers back to the Yeshivah. After almost a week of walking, the young student appeared before Rav Isser Zalman and said, "Rebbe, I have come to study Torah!" Rav Isser Zalman said, "Why are you here? I sent you home for your safety!"

The student related his conversation with his mother and how he walked back to the Yeshivah. Hearing this, Rav Isser Zalman was overcome with emotion. He was impressed with a Jewish mother's selfsacrifice to risk her child's life for the sake of Torah. To have such amazing faith in Hashem was incredible! To see this devotion transmitted to her son, who was willing to walk hundreds of kilometers to learn Torah, was overwhelming.

Rav Isser Zalmen said to the student, "I would like to buy your shoes from you. I will treasure the shoes that were worn by a young Yeshivah student who displayed such remarkable devotion for Torah study!"

Hashem repaid this student for his unparalleled devotion to Torah, as he eventually became the Gadol Ha'dor, the preeminent Torah sage of the generation— **Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach!**

The King's Friend By Bentzion Elisha

Once there lived a gentile king who delighted in having an audience with a particular rabbi who lived in the kingdom's capital. The two would converse on various subjects, and the rabbi's acuity and sharp intellect amazed the king again and again. No one could compare in counsel and wisdom to the charming rabbi.

The king had a fascination with outings to the country, and he would invite the rabbi so that they could discuss the kingdom's happenings. The rabbi had a way of always weaving into the conversation the idea of *hashgacha pratit*, divine providence, constantly seeking to connect the unfolding events with G-d's underlying presence and guiding hand.

On one of these outings, the king decided to go hunting. Accompanied by the rabbi, his companion of choice, the king insisted that the rabbi also hunt together with him.

Unfamiliar with the sport, the rabbi fumbled with the rifle, and a shot accidentally escaped from the weapon. A bitter scream pierced the forest, a scream from none other than the king himself! The rabbi had mistakenly shot the king, damaging his hand forever by shooting off one of his fingers.

Enraged, the bleeding king had his guards imprison the rabbi immediately, with swift orders to put him into one of the dungeon's prison chambers.

Months passed, and the king's injury slowly healed. His hand was getting stronger, and his desire to go on one of his outings finally made him plan a most extravagant trip to many far-off lands.

Throughout his trips, he missed the wisdom and companionship of the brilliant rabbi. In one particularly exotic location, the king was warned not to leave the camp grounds, because hostile natives lurked. But the king's adventurous spirit was sparked by the idea of seeing the area as it was.



On one of his forays outside the camp, the king was captured by cannibal tribesmen. As was their custom, they inspected their "merchandise" before cooking. They were alarmed to find that the enticing specimen before them had a missing finger. Immediately they declared it a bad omen, and discarded the king close to his campgrounds. The king was beside himself with joy. The rabbi's "blunder" had saved his life.

He immediately changed course and directed his entourage to return home. He had to speak to the rabbi.

When they arrived at the capital, the king immediately set the rabbi free. He asked him: "Dear rabbi, you have always spoken of divine providence, and how everything comes down from heaven for our good, and I see that here. But rabbi, I have one question: what was the divine providence as it relates to you? You were in the dungeon for months; where is the good in that?"

The rabbi smiled as he answered, "Your majesty, if I wasn't in the dungeon, I would have been with you, and the cannibals would have eaten me, G-d forbid."

"What lesson can we take from all this?" asked the king.

After some thought, the rabbi answered - ***"Perhaps the lesson is that everyone is essentially a friend of the ultimate King, the Creator of heaven and earth. Since He is a true and good friend who wants the very best for us, we must have faith that all our experiences, even the seemingly negative ones, are really for the best."***

A Wise Man would say:

"Do you want to know who your friends are? Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down!"

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Shimshon Pincus said: *"When we Daven, we are talking to Hashem. When we learn Torah, Hashem is talking to us. Let's keep the conversation going!"*

The Story of the Miraculous Glasses



Many years ago, in the city of Lemberg in Galicia, there lived a family by the name of Brill. According to legend their name was derived from the miraculous "brillen" (glasses in Yiddish) at the heart of this story.

One time, a baby boy was born into a Jewish family. Their joy was short-lived, however, when it was discovered that the child was blind. As the doctors could do nothing to help, the parents accepted the Divine decree and loved their child even more. The boy's first name is not known, but for our purposes we will call him Michel.

When Michel was three years old he was given his first haircut and brought to school. Although he obviously could not learn to read, the teacher began to teach him the blessings and prayers by heart.

It soon became apparent that the child was unusually intelligent. Whatever he heard was immediately remembered. Over the next few years he memorized the entire prayer book, many books of the Bible and many tractates of Mishna. The child acquired a vast amount of Torah knowledge and was beloved by all.

Michel was especially drawn to sefarim, Jewish holy books. Even though he couldn't read, he would remove them from their shelves and lovingly caress their pages. Passing his fingers over the holy letters, he seemed to absorb their sanctity. Each book received a kiss before being put back.

One time Michel asked his brother to bring him to the main study hall in Lemberg. As was his habit, he began to take the sefarim off the shelves and straighten out their pages. He came across a very thick volume covered with dust; it was obvious that no one had used it in a very long time.

He opened it and was surprised to feel something hard between the pages. It was a glasses case that someone had forgotten. The boy opened the case, took out the glasses, and playfully put them on. He thought he would faint: unbelievably, he could see! The entire world suddenly came into focus.

Michel thought he must be dreaming. He took off the glasses and again was blind. Putting them back on, he could see his younger brother and the square-shaped letters on the pages before him. It was a miracle. Michel fought against the urge to cry out about what had happened. But he was still in shock and needed a little more time to assimilate the change. Instead, he put the glasses in his pocket and asked his brother to take him home.

Michel's parents could see that something was wrong. The poor boy's hands were trembling; he was deathly pale and could barely eat. But when they asked him what the matter was, he insisted that everything was fine. That night he waited until everyone had gone to sleep to try on the glasses. Again, he could see as if he had never been blind.

A few days later he could no longer keep the secret to himself and told his parents about the miraculous glasses. The entire household was filled with gladness and light. The whole city of Lemberg marveled at the miracle. Everyone agreed that there was no one more deserving of such good fortune than he. Moreover, now Michel could begin studying Torah in earnest.

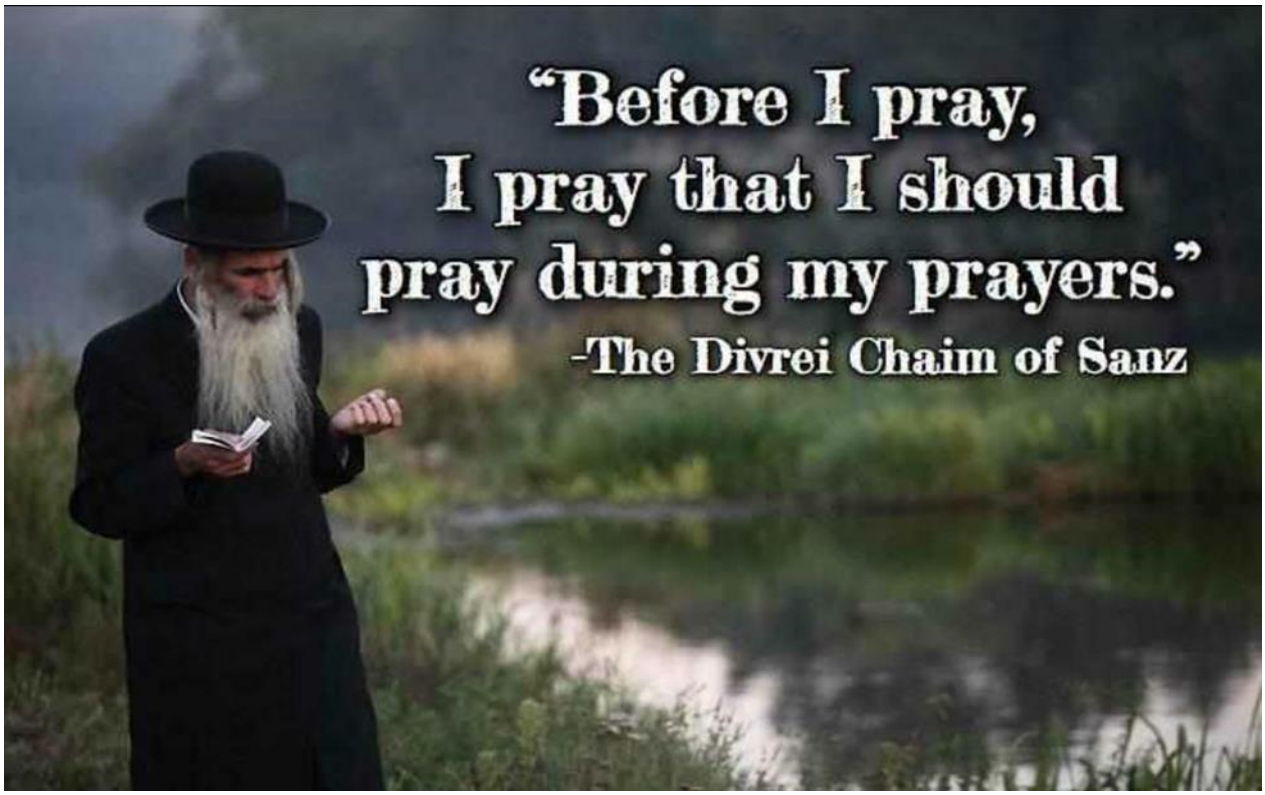
Sometime later Michel went back to the study hall to take a good look at the book in which he had discovered the glasses. It was an ancient volume of Kabala (mysticism), and although he had made great strides in his studies, he could not understand much of what was written. Michel was determined to learn more about the book and the glasses, but no one was able to answer his questions.

Finally, he found a very old man who remembered that as a young child, he had often seen the Rabbi of the town poring over that

particular volume and wearing similar glasses. Further questioning revealed that the rabbi was none other than the famous Torah scholar known as the "Pnei Yehoshua" for his commentary on the Talmud [Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk, 1680-1756], who later headed a community in Germany.

Astoundingly, Michel later learned that he had found the glasses on the exact date of the rabbi's passing (yartzeit)! For the rest of his life he observed the Pnei Yehoshua's yartzeit as a special day of thanksgiving.

Michel Brill grew up to be not only a Torah scholar but also a successful businessman who gave generously to charity. Years later, when he passed away after a long and fruitful life, his descendants gathered to divide up their inheritance. Everyone was willing to relinquish everything their father had left them aside from his miraculous glasses. In the course of their argument the glasses fell to the floor and shattered, and so each of his children ended up with a small sliver of glass...



Every Part Of The Tefillah Is Precious.



The Rebbe of Husiaten was one of the great tzaddikim who lived in Tel Aviv. (He was niftar sixty years ago, 5719). Ten years after his demise, his friend, Reb Nachum Mordechai Frum, saw the rebbe in his dream. The rebbe revealed something that was unknown before. He said: "When Moshe Rabbeinu descended from Har Sinai, Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him that the Kaddish after ein kelokeinu has the potential to bring all sorts of yeshous and refuous."

Ein kelokeinu is said at the end of the tefillah, and people tend to become lax at this point. They don't realize that even from the last parts of the tefillah, one can also acquire all his heart's desires.

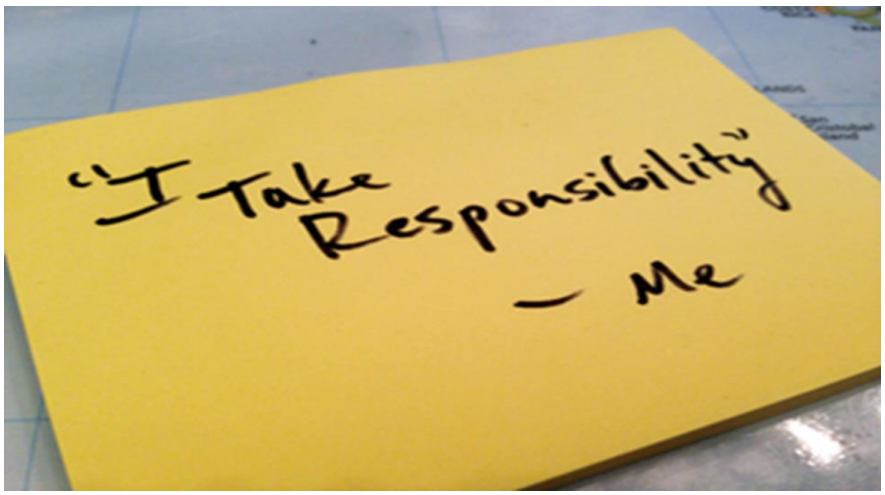
Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach called Aleinu "tefillas haderech" because people say it as they leave the beis medresh. We can add that if Aleinu is tefillas haderech, then by Ein kelokeinu people are packing their bags for the journey (they are already taking off the tefillin and getting ready to leave). We must learn to value tefillah, from the first word to the last.

אין דבר העומד בפני הרצון

People often think talent determines success, but it's our desire to achieve that truly matters. When we push through challenges with determination, Hashem blesses our efforts and helps us succeed. ~ Baba Sali.

Short Vort – Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן *After the death of the two sons of Aharon (16:1)*



The *Gemora* relates that Nadav and Avihu were punished because they were once walking behind Moshe and Aharon when Nadav turned to his brother, Avihu and said "When will these two old people die so that me and you will lead the generation?"

One can therefore gain some understanding why Nadav was punished. But why was Avihu, who said nothing, also punished - the *Gemora* does not show that he agreed with Nadav nor that he encouraged Nadav in any way?

One answer could be that even though Avihu may not have said anything to encourage Nadav's words, he should not have stood idly by as he heard them being said – he should have offered gentle rebuke or at least showed disapproval of what Nadav said. He should have stood up for what he knew was right.

The importance of standing up for what is right is emphatically demonstrated in the *Rambam's* monumental work, *Yad Chazaka*. The *Rambam* describes Avraham's rise to fame throughout the world and relates how Avraham would travel from city to city calling out in a loud voice, telling everyone about Hashem; this way, he gained tens of thousands of followers.

On the *Rambam's* description, the *Kesef Mishna* answers the question posed by the *Ra'aved* – how could it be that Shem and Ever did not protest against the idolatry that surrounded them - why was

it left to Avraham? The *Kesef Mishna* answers that from here we see that Avraham was indeed considered greater than Shem and Ever, because, whereas Shem and Ever taught those who came to them, Avraham went out and taught others how to have a relationship with Hashem.

We see from here that even though Shem and Ever were studying Torah every moment of the day, Avraham was 'considered greater' since he stood up, went out, and did what was necessary to build Hashem's army.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman-Torah Wellsprings - Tefillah



Chazal say that a person should pray word for word, in the same manner one counts money.

The **Abir Yaakov of Sadigeira zy"a** once gave his gabai a package and said, "There is twenty-five pounds in here. Give them to the Ponevezher Rav for his yeshiva." The gabai did so. **The Ponevezher Rav zt"l** counted the money and saw that there was twenty-six pounds. The gabai returned to the Abir Yaakov to tell him about the error. The rebbe said that it wasn't a mistake. He explained, "I am concerned that when I go up to heaven, they will tell me that I wasn't careful to daven word for word, like someone counting money. Therefore, I decided that even when I count money, I will not be exact. I allow myself to give a little bit more. Maybe this will help me in my judgment."

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם *"You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live . . ." (18:5)*



Onkelos translates: "*By which he shall live - in the World-to-Come.*" **The Chafetz Chaim z"l** explains: All created things need sustenance from Hashem in order to exist.

This is true of spiritual beings just as it is true of physical beings. Of course, the sustenance of spiritual beings in not like our sustenance; it is spiritual, the "food" of angels. Like other creations, the neshamah needs sustenance. As long as the neshamah is hosted in a person's body, Hashem enables it to be sustained by the physical food that sustains the body. When the neshamah leaves the human body and moves on to the spiritual world, it still needs sustenance, but it no longer can be sustained by physical food. Firstly, how would the neshamah take in physical food? Also, physical food can sustain only for a limited time, whereas the neshamah lives forever in the World-to-Come and needs sustenance that will sustain it forever.

Therefore, writes the Chafetz Chaim, Hashem, in His great compassion, created something that can sustain the neshamah in the World-to-Come. That sustenance is Hashem's decrees and His laws, "which man shall carry out and by which he shall live - in the World-to-Come." Indeed, only through observing Hashem's decrees and laws can a person live forever. *(Mishnah Berurah: Introduction)*

Ahavas Yisrael



During Sefiras Ha'Omer, we are extra careful to increase our ahavas Yisrael. As the gemara states, "Rav Yehudah the son of Reb Nechemya died during Sefiras Ha'Omer because he insulted Reb Tarfon." (Menachos 68:) This is because during these days, heaven is more demanding and stricter of our obligation to honour our fellow man, and to be careful not to insult him.

The Shulchan Aruch teaches, "The custom is that people do not make chasunos between Pesach and Shavuous, until Lag b'Omer, because the students of Reb Akiva were niftar at this time of year…" (493:1). There certainly were other great misfortunes that befell the Jewish nation. What is unique about the students of Reb Akiva that we mourn them? Why do we mourn for them more than any other calamity of the past?

To answer this question, we will bring down a vort by **Reb Yechezkel of Kozmir zy"a**: When Yosef and Binyamin met, after years of separation, they cried on each other's shoulders. Yosef cried for the two Batei HaMikdash, which will be built on Binyamin's lot and will be destroyed, and Binyamin cried over Mishkan Shilo, which will be built on Yosef's lot and will be destroyed (see Megilah 16). They just met after years of separation. Was this the ideal time to cry over the churban? However, the brothers were coming together and

amending for the sin of sinas chinam (baseless hatred) which had them separated for so many years. Yosef and Binyamin saw with ruach hakadosh that the rectification wasn't complete. In the future, the seeds of sinas chinam will still be growing poisonous fruit, causing the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and the Mishkan. Their crying was related to what was going to happen at that time. With this thought we can understand why we cry and mourn for the students of Reb Akiva more than for any other of the Tana'im or Amora'im.

Chazal tell us that the students of Reb Akiva were niftar because they didn't honour one another (Yevamos 62) and we are still guilty of this liability. Therefore, we mourn specifically for them more than for the others because their fault is still related to us, and we must seek to improve our ways. The Yerushalmi (Demay 1:3) tells that Reb Pinchas ben Ya'ir had to cross the Gina'i River. He ordered the river to let him pass and the river stopped flowing, and Reb Pinchas ben Yair was able to walk through to the other side. His students asked whether they may also pass through. They wanted to know if the water will stand up like a wall for them as well. Reb Pinchas ben Yair replied, "Whoever never mistreated or disrespected another yid may pass through." We learn from this the severity of disrespecting another yid. Reb Pinchas ben Yair didn't state any precondition for the river to split, other than refraining from harming and disrespecting another yid .

When we count the amount of pesukim in the Torah that discusses kashrus, in contrast to the amount of pesukim of the Torah designated for the laws of tzaraas and lashon hara, we see that the pesukim related to lashon hara are threefold. This indicates that one should be more careful with what comes out of his mouth, than what comes in. Obviously, we must be extremely careful with kashrus, but we should be even more careful never to harm another yid.

How does one ensure that he will always honour his fellow man, and be careful never to insult or disrespect him? It begins with your thoughts. If you will focus on the good of your fellow man, and avoid thinking about his faults, and you will be able to honour him constantly.

The Chovas HaLevavos (Shaar Hachnaah) teaches that one should always consider his fellow man to be better than him. With these thoughts in mind, he will certainly honour his fellow man.



On Your Own- Written by D Fine

Rav Pinkus used to borrow a pasuk from our sedra וְכָל־אָדָם לֹא־יִהְיֶה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בְּבֹאוֹ לְכַפֵּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ עַד־צֵאתוֹ וְכִפֶּר בַּעֲדוֹ וּבְעַד בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעַד כָּל־קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל (16:17) to answer an age-old Shabbos question. In the pre-Kiddush shalom Aleichem sing-song, we end off by telling the angels to 'go in peace.' Now this doesn't seem to be pleasant etiquette at all – we have just welcomed the angels in and a minute later we are asking them to leave?



Rav Pinkus used to answer via **Rav Avigdor Miller's** principle that Shabbos matches the Beis HaMikdash (e.g. they both have special clothes, candles, song, and easy death penalties, amongst other similarities). Now since the highest point of the avodah in the Mikdash is the Yom Kippur ketores service, when *'no man is to be in the ohel mo'ed when he comes in to atone…' (16:17)* – for HaShem mandates a direct connection between Him and the Kohen Gadol (acting on behalf of Klal Yisrael), so too on Shabbos does HaShem want a direct connection and relationship with us – with no angels in the way. So the angels are asked (politely) to 'leave in peace' so that we can 'live with HaShem' alone, and experience that direct relationship with Him that is part and parcel of who we really are.

L'Maaseh - A Tale to Remember

Baruch was a young man learning in the **Chofetz Chaim's** Yeshivah in Radin, where he excelled and became a Talmid Chacham. It reached a point where his parents felt he should leave the Yeshivah to come home and get married. Baruch went to the Chofetz Chaim's house to say goodbye and get a Brachah before he departed. After telling the Chofetz Chaim of his plans, the Chofetz Chaim gave him a stern look, and asked Baruch to promise that he would never be Mechalel Shabbos. Baruch didn't know whether to laugh or cry, since he was never Mechalel Shabbos in his life, but realized that maybe his Rebbe saw him do something once.



He promised the Chofetz Chaim that he would never desecrate Shabbos, but the Chofetz Chaim kept his stern look, and extended his hand. He said, "Shake my hand and guarantee me that you will never, under any circumstance be Mechalel Shabbos."

Now, Baruch felt like crying because obviously his Rebbe suspected him. Baruch shook the Chofetz Chaim's hand and made the promise. He left feeling dejected instead of uplifted. At home, Baruch met Rochel, got married and started building a family. They had four children. Baruch learned in the Kollel and worked a few hours a week in the local grocery, and they somehow made ends meet.

Everything changed when war broke out, and Baruch and Rochel made the difficult decision to leave for America. This meant to change everything they had ever known in their life, and say goodbye

to their family, not knowing if they would ever see them again. They boarded the boat and came to America, and it was not long before they realized that the streets were not paved with gold, and it certainly wasn't the land of opportunity, especially for someone Frum.

Baruch got a job in the textile industry for a low wage, and he didn't have time to learn much anymore since he was focusing on bringing home food for his family. He became known as a reliable, hard worker and worked his way up in the company.

Soon, The Great Depression set in, and his meagre salary was cut, making things even more difficult. One day, Baruch came to work and received notice that his boss, Mr. Mark, wanted to see him. He had always been on good terms with his boss. Mr. Mark told him, that the company was not doing as well in the poor economy, and they would be forcing all employees to work seven days a week. He told Baruch that he understood that he was a religious Jew and that this would be hard on him, but he wanted Baruch to be one of the first to know.

Baruch finished work and made his way home at the end of the day and broke the terrible news to his wife. He refused to work on Shabbos and he would have to quit his job. He already knew many people who were out of work as it was and looking to be off for Shabbos made it more difficult. Few people were able to start new jobs on Sunday but were fired the next Sunday when they didn't show up to work on Shabbos. How was he going to find work?

Slowly, their small meals became even smaller and most nights the children went to sleep starving. Day after day Baruch went on interviews, but with all the same result: no job unless you work on Shabbos. One night, Baruch and Rochel made the horrible decision for Boruch to go to work on Shabbos, because they simply could not survive anymore. They rationalized that this was a case of Pikuach Nefesh because the children were suffering so much, and their very lives were likely at risk.

The next morning, Baruch got set off to go find a job where he would work on Shabbos. Suddenly he burst into tears and his hands began to tremble. He had forgotten about his promise to the Chofetz Chaim!

Baruch turned back the other way and went home. Through tears, he told his wife of his promise, so many years earlier. Rochel started to cry herself, and said how much she regretted the decision, saying that the suffering of the children affected her.

They were sitting at the table thinking of what to do to somehow make ends meet, when there was a knock at the door. Baruch opened his door and was surprised to see Mr. Mark, his old boss standing there and asked if he could come in. He said he came to apologize. Mr. Mark explained that he had a partner who didn't like religious Jews very much. He said that the most important thing to a Jew is money, and if put under a little pressure, their religion would be tossed out the window. Mr. Mark disagreed, and they made a bet that they would pick one Jew in the company to test. They picked Baruch because he had grown in the company, and he stood to lose more than others.

Mr. Mark said to Baruch: "You won the bet. You didn't give in to the pressure and agree to work on Shabbos." He then took out an envelope from his briefcase and gave it to Baruch. It contained a fortune of $10,000. He also gave Baruch a promotion and made him manager of his branch in the company. After Mr. Mark left, Baruch and Rochel cried tears of joy, astounded at how close they had come to being Mechalel Shabbos. Baruch attributed it all to his Rebbe, the Chofetz Chaim, and the hand shake from so many years ago. This is the power of influence that a Tzaddik can have!

If we cannot do what we will, we must will what we can.

Secure Your Mask Before Assisting Others-Dovid Manson



When the Torah says that the Cohen Gadol asked for forgiveness for himself, his family and of the nation as a whole (16:17) why does he not just ask for forgiveness for everyone, which would clearly include himself and his family?

The answer is that before we think about fixing the entire world, we need to fix ourselves and our surroundings. As the airlines say, "secure your mask before assisting others."

The word "forgiveness" in this verse is only mentioned once. The verse does not speak about asking for '*forgiveness* for himself, *forgiveness* for his family and *forgiveness* for the nation as a whole' . It suffices to merely gain forgiveness for himself which will in turn effect his family and his entire nation.

It states (Mishlei 24:16) כִּי שֶׁבַע יִפּוֹל צַדִּיק וָקָם - "For though the tzaddik may fall seven times, he will arise…"

Reb Don Segal Shlita explains that the number seven specifically is used here because seven represents nature (there are seven days in a week, and many other aspects of nature are divided into seven parts). - The pasuk discusses a person who falls from his spiritual levels so many times that it seems that it is in his nature to fall, again and again. Even so, וָקָם, he can get up and rise to high levels. In fact, שֶׁבַע יִפּוֹל צַדִּיק tells us that he is called a tzaddik, even when he falls. That is, if in the end he is קָם, and rises again.

Why I matter - בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בֶּעָשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ תְּעַנּוּ אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם



In the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and not do any work (16:29) **The Apter Rav** said: "If I had the power, I would revoke all the public fast days on the Jewish calendar, as the generations have become weaker and more exhausted. That is, with two exceptions: Tisha B'Av, the day on which the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. For on Tisha B'Av, who can bring himself to eat? And on Yom Kippur, who needs to eat?"

Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



At the end of discussing the service of Yom Kippur, the Torah states, "To atone for the sins of Bnei Yisroel, once a year" (16:34). The reiteration of Yom Kippur occurring once a year seems superfluous! Rav Shimon Sofer suggests that this is a guarantee from Hashem that if we fulfill all of the Mitzvos of Yom Kippur with the proper intentions and focus, that atonement alone will cover for the entire year, and we will not need punishments or difficult times to complete the atonement for our sins!

Rabbi Fischel Schachter - Mixing the Medicine



Potato Starch, Pregelatinized maize starch, Magnesium stearate, Talc and Colloidal Silica …

If you have any idea what the above words are, you're a step ahead. Many people have no clue. It's the inactive ingredients in Paracetamol! Why most of us have no idea what they mean is because we are not pharmacists. If we were, these ingredients would make perfect sense.

This fact should not come as a surprise to us. But think for a moment. Don't we tend to mull over the ingredients in our own lives again and again and wonder why and how they are there? We ask and wonder why things happen in the world as they do.

The answer, though, is the same as above for the pharmacist. Hashem mixes the elements in our lives exactly the way they need to be. He knows what ingredients need to go in and exactly how much of each. We, in contrast, have no familiarity of the breadth and depth of the chemistry which makes up our world and lives, and cannot begin to assume we will comprehend it. Our job is rather to realize that the medicine has the perfect mix, and what happens to us and around us is with absolute rhyme and reason.

Just think about it. What is coffee? It is made up of bitter beans, sweet sugar, hot water and cold milk. A most tasteful drink comes together from the most basic of contrasts. In our lives too, one day we will look back and see how every contrast perfectly fit together. In the here and now, our vision becomes blurred. We often become convinced that the world is going haywire, and there is not much to

hope for in our personal lives. We become frustrated and dejected. But, then again, Hashem whispers to us, ***"Trust me. I know exactly where you are and why you are there."***

The more we believe that the more peace and serenity will be added to our lives. Hashem will help us. He is our Father, and He will never ever abandon us. He is simply mixing the medicine that will enable us to become the best person we can become.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman-Torah Wellsprings



Even people who don't go to Meron should be joyous on Lag b'Omer. The Chida (Moreh b'Etzba 223) writes, "Be happy in Reb Shimon bar Yochai's honour, because Lag b'Omer is his hilula, and it is known that he desired that people rejoice on this day."

Why are we so happy? There are several answers to this question:

The Beis Yosef says that we celebrate Lag b'Omer, because Reb Akiva's students stopped dying on this day. Some meforshim disagree. They say that the students ceasing to die isn't a reason to celebrate, because the reason they stopped dying is because there were none left! All 24,000 students died. Rather the reason for our rejoicing is the celebration of the continuity of Torah. Because when Reb Akiva saw that he didn't have any students left, he went to the south and taught Torah to five students: Reb Meir, Reb Yehudah,

Reb Yossi, Reb Shimon, and Reb Elazer ben Shamoa. Their lessons were recorded throughout the Mishnayos and the Gemara, and this how the Torah was perpetuated until today. On Lag b'Omer we celebrate Torah's continuity, and it happened because Reb Akiva didn't lose hope. Even after losing all his students, he forged ahead and did what he could, and that's how Torah continues until this day.

Reb Shimon bar Yochai also didn't lose hope, and that brought him to the highest levels.

Another reason for our joy on Lag b'Omer is because, on this day, Hashem judges everyone favourably. Hashem sees our good deeds, focuses on our good desires, and He ignores our faults.

Bow and Arrow and Rainbows



The tzaddik **Reb Mendel of Rimanov** explains that the game of bow and arrow is played because no rainbow, a sign of Hashem's anger, was seen during the life- time of Rashbi, for he protected the entire generation. Reb Mendel's student, the tzaddik **Reb Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov** (the Bnei Yisaschar), further explains this game, according to what is written in Zohar, that an especially bright rainbow is a sign of the imminent revelation of the light of Moshiach. Being that this light is revealed in the Zohar to some extent, we play the bow and arrow.

The Rebbe explains that an arrow can attack the enemy even from a distance. This alludes to those matters of holiness which defeat the Yetzer Harah in advance (i.e. davening and tzedakah), allowing the person to learn Torah undisturbed.



Tefillos – What We should Daven For Lag b'Omer is a day of salvation, and therefore, fortunate are those who invest in tefillah on this day. What should you pray for? Pray for whatever is on your heart.

Here are a few recommendations for tefillah:

1] *Daven* for 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*) explains that the Gemara refers to someone who is davening on Lag b'Omer. On this day, everything is possible. On this day, one can ask for the greatest things – even that one's child be like Reb Shimon bar Yocahi.

2] Daven for *parnassah*.

According to a Midrash, the *mon* began to fall on Lag b'Omer. Therefore, 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 the 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. The Taamei HaMinhagim writes, שפע רב בכל יושפע העולמות , "A great bounty [of *parnassah*, etc.] should come to all worlds" is *roshei teivos* **רשב"י**.

3] Daven for *refuah*.

שמעון בר יוחאי is *gematriya* **ורפאתיו** , so Lag b'Omer is also *mesugal* for *refuah*. The Tzemech Tzedek taught that **מרון** (without the **יו"ד**) is *roshei teivos* מלך רופא נאמן ורחמן.

4] Pray for the Barren to bear Children

The Shem Shlomo of Munkatz *zt'l* taught that to bear children, one should have *kavanah* in the *brachah* **רפאנו**. Therefore, Lag b'Omer, **הוד שבהוד**, which is *mesugal* for *refuah*, is undoubtedly also *mesugal* for bearing children.

5] Daven for *Shidduchim*

The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* told his chassidim that Lag b'Omer is *mesugal* for *shidduchim*, because about Reb Shimon it is said, **הציל הלחוצים**, "He saves those who are stressed and worried," and who is more stressed and worried than someone waiting for their *shidduch*?

6] *Daven for Ruchniyos*

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 all kinds of success in *avodas Hashem*, and our tefillos will be effective.

7] Daven for Klal Yisrael's Salvation The *Zohar* (*Idra* 296) says that when Reb Shimon was buried in Meron, a *bas kol* came forth and said, "Many *kitrugim* are silenced on this day, in your merit." Tzaddikim say that this occurs every year on Lag b'Omer. The *malachim* that slander and seek to harm Klal Yisrael are silenced on Lag b'Omer.

The *Zohar* writes that the gates of heaven open on Pesach Sheni and remain open an entire week. Afterward, the gates close. Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zy'a* asks, why can't the gates remain open longer?

The answer is that during this week we have Lag b'Omer, and on Lag b'Omer everyone prays and receives everything they need. Since Klal Yisrael has already received all their hearts' desires, there is no reason to keep the gates open.

Reb Shimon's Hillulah



Finally, we are happy because this is Reb Shimon's holiday. When Reb Shimon was niftar, on Lag b'Omer, a bas kol announced, "Gather and celebrate the holiday of Reb Shimon." Reb Asher Zelig Margolis zt'l said that this bas kol emanates and is heard every year. The proof is in the many people who desire to celebrate on this very holy and special day. Obviously, in the depths of their souls, they hear the call of the bas kol, and they gather to celebrate.

The Chida (*Moreh b'Etzba* 223) writes, "Be happy in Reb Shimon bar Yochai's honor, because Lag b'Omer is his *hilula,* and it is known that he desired that people rejoice on this day." The Mishnas Chassidim writes, "It is a mitzvah to be happy on this day, the joy of Reb Shimon bar Yochai."

Seudah

Part of the Lag b'Omer celebration is to make a seudah. This seudah is considered a seudas mitzvah. As the Maharil (**החדשות ק"ד**) writes, "The meals at a *bris milah*, *pidyon haben*, *siyum mesechta* [are all seudas mitzvah]. Chazal say, 'Whenever *talmidei chachamim* sit at a meal, it is like enjoying from the light of the *Shechinah*. Therefore, Lag b'Omer is also considered a *seudas mitzvah*."

Surprisingly, we eat on this day. Generally, a yahrtzeit is a fast day. For example, Moshe Rabbeinu's yahrtzeit on the seventh of Adar is a day for fasting and is called "*taanis tzaddikim*." Lag b'Omer is also

a *yahrtzeit*, as it is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Shimon bar Yochai. So why is it a day of eating and celebrating?

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 on Lag b'Omer we celebrate while some people fast on the 7th of Adar.

The Taamei HaMinhagim offers another explanation: Reb Shimon bar Yochai was unique in the manner he annulled harsh decrees. Most tzaddikim fast to annul harsh decrees, but the *Zohar* tells us that Reb Shimon bar Yochai annulled harsh decrees through joy. Therefore, on Reb Shimon's *yahrtzeit* we eat and celebrate. That is how we annul harsh decrees on this day.

One who truly loves Hashem will be meticulous about never wasting time – even for a moment. Don't idle time away but grab hold of it and involve yourself with Torah and Mitzvos as much as possible. As it says in the pasuk יְקָרָה הִיא מִפְּנִינִים וְכָל חֲפָצֶיךָ לֹא יִשְׁווּ בָהּ – ***'The Torah is more precious than pearls and all desires cannot compare to it.' (Mishlei 3:15).***

Praiseworthy is the man who understands the incredible value of a Mitzvah, for with this we are given the unique ability to please Hashem.

יָפָה שָׁעָה אַחַת בִּתְשׁוּבָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, מִכָּל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא - ***Every minute is precious, for one hour of Torah and good deeds in this world is more precious than the entire life of the 'World to Come'. (Avos 4:22) ~ Pele Yoetz.***

"Joy opens gates that cannot be opened in any other way." ~ The Bas Ayin.

Giving Drinks in Meron



The Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Bentzion Halberstam, wrote a letter to Reb Yaakov Yisrael Shmerler of Jerusalem, in 1932, asking him to distribute 18 rotel (54 liters; approximately 57 quarts) of drinks at the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron on Lag B'Omer. He asked to have this done for one of his chassidim, who heard from Jerusalem Jews that this is a segula to be blessed with children. Rabbi Shrage Shnitzer of Agudas Ohel haRashbi in Meron tells many amazing stories of singles who have found their spouses, and of patients who have recovered after their doctors had lost hope, after they, or someone in their name, had given 18 rotel of drinks to distribute to the worshipers in Meron.

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"דבר אל אהרן אחיך ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש"
***"Speak to Aharon your brother he shall not come at all times into the Sanctuary."* (16:2)**

QUESTION: The phrase *"bechol eit"* — "at all times" — forbids the Kohen's constant presence in the Sanctuary but seems to permit occasional visits. Since he was allowed to come in only on *Yom Kippur*, what is the reason for the strange construction of this verse?

ANSWER: It is Satan's mission to continuously induce the Jew to sin. The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 20a) notes that "*hasatan*" (**השטן**) — "the Satan" — has the numerical value of 364. From this we may infer that, during 364 days of the solar year, the Satan has permission to cause trouble, but on the 365th day of the year — *Yom Kippur* — this permission is revoked. Thus, the day of *Yom Kippur,* is very different from the other 364 days of the year.

The message that Hashem conveyed to Aharon was that he should not come "*bechol eit*" — "at all times" — any ordinary day of the year. The only day when he could enter the Inner-Sanctuary was on the special day of the year — *Yom Kippur*. (**כלי יקר**)

Vedibarta Bam

"כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם" - *"For on this day He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse."* (16:30)



QUESTION: With regard to Hashem forgiving the sins of the Jewish people, the prophet says, "If your sins will be like scarlet (red), they will turn white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). Why the colours red and white? The opposite of white is usually considered to be black, not red. To emphasize Hashem's compassion, the prophet should have said, "If your sins will be like black, through *teshuvah* Hashem will convert them to white"?

ANSWER: A public debate was once held between a Reform Rabbi and Orthodox Rabbi regarding Torah and Reform Judaism. The astute Reform Rabbi decided that the best defence was an offence. When he was called upon to make the first presentation he avoided all discussion of theology, Jewish law, etc.

but instead, to everyone's surprise, he commenced by asking the president of the Orthodox synagogue, who was in the audience, to rise, and then asked him the following question: "Are you truly a Torah observer?"

The president of the Orthodox synagogue became red-faced, hemmed and hawed, and with a deep sigh of embarrassment admitted that he was not. The Reform Rabbi then asked the other officers of the Orthodox synagogue to rise and he asked them the same question. They, too, stammered their response that their Torah observance was lacking.

The strategy of the Reform Rabbi became clear when he said, "Ladies and gentleman, you see, there is no difference between my officers and their officers: neither of them are real Torah observers, so why debate, we are both equally non-observant?"

During all this time the late, venerable **Ponavezer Rav, Rabbi Yosef Kahanaman** — sat in the audience as a curious onlooker. He asked for permission to ask a question. He mounted the platform and asked the president of the Reform Temple to rise and he asked him, "Are you a Torah observer?" The president of the Temple burst into laughter, saying, "Why, of course not!"

"This," said the *Rav* with quiet triumph, "is the difference between the two presidents, namely, the sense of shame that was so evident in the Orthodox President's word's and that was so utterly lacking in the reply of the Reform President." A person who turns red-faced with shame when confronted with his wrongdoing, exhibits remorse.

The Prophet's words are teaching us that when shame is gone there is less hope for moral regeneration, but if a person's sins cause *reddening* with shame, there is hope that the person will do *teshuvah* and Hashem will forgive him and turn everything to "white." (**הרב דוד שי' הולונדער**)

Vechol Maaminim



We have been promised by Rabi Shimon that in the merit of answering amen:

- The Gates of Heaven open, and Am Yisrael's tefillos are accepted. (Vayeilech 285 2)
- Tremendous joy pervades all the worlds. (ibid)
- One merits arichus yamim. (Shelach 162 1)
- One's decrees of seventy years are torn up. (Tikkunei Zohar)
- One merits special protection, as it says (Tehillim 31:24): "Emunim notzer Hashem." (Vayeilech 286:1)

In honour of the hilula of Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai, let us take upon ourselves to be careful to elevate and glorify Shem Shamayim by answering amen with kavanah after Birchos Hashachar and after every tefillah and brachah. Thus we will surely merit all the yeshuos and brachos.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The *Gemara* (*Yerushalmi*, *Pei'ah*) says that Rebbe Yehuda *HaNasi* once got a gift from the king, and he sent back to him a *Mezuzah* as a return gift. Rebbe Yehuda *HaNasi* told the king in regard to the *Mezuzah*, "The gift you send me is so valuable that it will have to be guarded, while the gift I gave you will guard you, even while you are asleep!"

בְּזֹאת יָבֹא אַהֲרֹן אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּפַר בֶּן־בָּקָר לְחַטָּאת וְאַיִל לְעֹלָה "With this Aharon shall enter the Holy; with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering" (16, 3)

A young bull is alluding to Avraham Avinu and a ram for a burnt offering is alluding to Yitzhak and a goat is alluding to Yaakov. Then what alludes to our matriarchs?



It says "They shall be of equal weight (Vayikra Rabba 21, 11) How do we know that also in the merit of the matriarchs? As it says, "He should wear holy linen shirt…and linen pants…and a linen sash…and a linen cap – these refer to the four matriarchs (Pesikta). If you take the first letter of each piece of the Cohanim's clothing –

אַבנט מצנפת כתונת מכנסים - sash, cap, shirt, pants, you get the word **אמכם** – your mothers. ***(Rebbi Shimshon from Astropoli Zt'l)***

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Towards the end of her life, **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's** mother-in- law lost her eyesight, and she could no longer recite Tehilim as she had so much loved to do.

Rav Shlomo Zalman taped the entire Sefer of Tehilim, so she could continue her practice!

Weekly Wisdom - Pesach Sheini Insights Second Chances



When counting Sefira, many have the minhag to say Perek 67 of Tehillim. Sefer Minhag Yisrael Torah (493:10) cites the Beis Naftali who notes that this perek has 49 words (not counting the introductory pasuk). According to the Arizal, each word corresponds to that night of the Omer, and one should have that word in mind on the night he is counting. The same applies to the fifth pasuk, which has 49 letters.

Based on this, we see that the day of Pesach Sheni, the fourteenth of Iyar, is the 29th day of the Omer, corresponds to the word **תנחם** and the letter **י**. The word **תנחם** has the numerical value of 498, and when **י** is added the total value is 508, which is also the numerical value of the words **פסח שני**.

Both Sefiras HaOmer and Pesach Sheini have a similar basic principle – they are second chances in life. Although me may have been all the way at the bottom, on the 49th level of Tuma'ah, we can raise ourselves up and purify ourselves once more. Pesach Sheini is the same. If you were tamei the first time, Hashem will allow you to come back and try once more after you become tahor. We must always try to keep this is mind, for Hashem will never forsake us.

Pesach Sheini



What is Pesach Sheini?

During the time of the Bais Hamikdosh, one who did not bring the korbon Pesach had a second opportunity to do so on the fourteenth day of Iyar. This day is generally called Pesach Sheini, because the korbon is offered in the second month - Iyar.

- This is the only mitzvah where we get a second chance. Some say that this resulted since the yiddin asked for a second chance.
- There are a few differences between Pesach and Pesach Sheini: 1. On Pesach one is not allowed to have any chometz, but there is no such restriction for Pesach Sheini. 2. Pesach Sheini is only one day. 3. Work is permitted on Pesach Sheini. 4. Pesach requires hallel while eating the korbon Pesach and Pesach Sheini does not.
- Although Pesach Sheini is not a Yom Tov, one should still have extra simcha because it is a holy day.
- Although the custom of omitting tachanun on Pesach Sheini is not discussed in the Shulchan Aruch, the custom of many is that tachanun is not recited at shacharis or mincha since that was the day the korbon Pesach was brought. Some say that this even applies to the mincha on the previous day, while others disagree. Some say that no tachanun is recited on the fifteenth day of Iyar since that is the day when the korbon was eaten, while others argue. Others have the custom to refrain from saying tachanun for seven days from Pesach Sheini, but most people do not follow this custom.

- One of the most common customs on Pesach Sheini is to eat matzah. Some say this is done as a remembrance to the korbon Pesach which was offered on this day, while others say it is a remembrance of the matzah that was eaten together with the korbon Pesach. This custom has been accepted in Chassidishe circles. Some have the custom to eat matzah on the fifteenth night as well since the korbon was eaten at this time. Some say to eat the matzah which was left over from Pesach, while others permit all forms of matzah. The custom of most people follows the first view. Many people do not eat matzah at all. For those who do have the custom to eat matzah on Pesach Sheinei, it is not advised to eat the matzah in the morning. Rather, it should be eaten after chatzos, or on the fifteenth night.
- Some people make a seuda on Pesach Sheini and eat marror as well, but most people do not follow this custom.
- There is a discussion in the poskim if one is required to relate the exodus from Mitzrayim on Pesach Sheini. The custom is to be lenient regarding this.
- There is a discussion in the poskim if roasted food should be avoided on Pesach Sheini just as it is on the night(s) of Pesach. The custom is to be lenient regarding this.
- Some have the custom to learn the halachos which apply to Pesach Sheini.
- Many have the custom on Pesach Sheini to visit the grave of Rabbi Meir Ba'al Ha'nes. Some explain that it is nearly Lag B'omer, when many people would go to Meron to visit the grave of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Since Rabbi Meir was a student of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, we visit his grave as well. In addition, he was a student of Rabbi Akiva who also spread Torah after all the students died.

What soap is for the body, tears are for the soul.

B'Rinah Yiktzoru

A summary of the points in the Parashah

1. After the deaths of Nadav and Avihu (the sons of Aharon HaCohen), Hashem warns about the prohibition of entering the Beit HaMikdash and the holy of holies when it is not the time of service.

2. The service of the Cohen Gadol on Yom Kippur (when he enters the holy of holies four times – the blood of the ox and the goat, the frankincense, and taking out the ashes).

3. The laws of Yom Kippur- fasting, forbidden to do work, and atonement.

4. The punishment of Karet for one who slaughters animals or who brings holy meat out of the Beit HaMikdash.

5. The Mitzvah of the Jewish nation being holy:

A. Not following in the ways of the other nations.

B. The prohibition of marrying certain family members.

C. The prohibition of giving a child over to the Molech (idolatry) and the prohibition of causing a desecration of the name of Hashem.

Simple Path to Joy

You ask, "How can I be happy if I am not?"

True, you can't control the way you feel, but you do have control over your conscious thought, speech and actions.

Do something simple: Think good thoughts, speak good things, behave the way a joyful person behaves—even if you don't fully feel it inside. Eventually, the inner joy of the soul will break through. ~ **R' Tzvi Freeman.**

Chabad.Org - 10 Facts About Pesach Sheini

1. Pesach Sheni Means "Second Passover [Sacrifice]"



In Temple times, Jews spent Passover in Jerusalem. On the afternoon before the holiday, they sacrificed a lamb or kid, referred to as the Korban Pesach to eat during their Seder that evening. If someone was unable to participate in the Passover offering at the proper time, they would offer the sacrifice a month later.

2. It Was Initiated by the People

One year after the Exodus, the People of Israel celebrated their first Passover as free people. Some, however, had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, and could not, therefore, prepare the Passover offering on that day. They complained to Moses and Aaron, "Why should we be deprived, and not be able to present G-d's offering in its time, amongst the children of Israel?"[1]

In response to their plea, G-d established the "Pesach Sheni" for anyone who was unable to bring the offering at its appointed time.

3. It Is Observed on 14 Iyar

The second Passover sacrifice was offered on Iyar 14, exactly a month after the rest of the Jewish people had sacrificed their Paschal lambs in Jerusalem. Though Iyar 14 did not have the status

of a festival or holiday, we commemorate the offering on the same day that it was sacrificed, not on the evening after, when it was actually eaten, which would be Iyar 15.

4. The Second Passover Was Eaten With Matzah and Bitter Herbs

Like the primary Passover offering, the lamb of the Second Passover was to be roasted over fire and eaten on the eve of the 15th, together with matzah (unleavened bread) and maror (bitter herbs). The other mitzvahs and rituals of the Seder, however, were not observed.

5. It Could Be Eaten With Chametz in the Home

The Second Passover only concerned the sacrificing of the Paschal Lamb. There was no obligation, however, to purge one's home from *chametz*. Another difference between the two Passovers was that Psalms of Praise (Hallel) were said during the consumption of the first Passover offering (as we do today during the Seder) but not while eating the lamb on Pesach Sheni.

6. The Second Passover Was Even for Wilful Offenders

The Torah states that the Second Passover was principally for those who had been impure or distant from Jerusalem (15 *mil* away) on the morning of Nisan 14. But anyone else who neglected to bring the sacrifice the first time around could make amends on Pesach Sheni, even those who did not have a good excuse.

7. Today We Eat Matzah

In our post-Temple reality, there is no Passover sacrifice, and, until Moshiach comes, Pesach Sheni has lost its primary function. Nevertheless, Jews around the world still celebrate this meaningful day by eating some matzah (but not bitter herbs).

Pesach Sheni is also marked by the omission of Tachnun (prayers of penitence) from the day's service.

8. It Is an Independent Holiday

Although it is called the Second Passover, Pesach Sheni is actually a distinct sacrifice in its own right. This plays out in a fascinating law:

If a person converts to Judaism (or a minor who was not part of a Passover offering and then becomes bar/bat mitzvah) during the month between the first and second Passovers, he or she must bring the sacrifice on Pesach Sheni. If Pesach Sheni were only a catch-up for those who missed the first round, why would the convert need to bring the sacrifice? They lacked nothing, since they were not Jewish at the time. Rather, Pesach Sheni is an independent mitzvah—an opportunity for growth and improvement.

9. It Was Once Called "Minor Passover"

This date is universally referred to as Pesach Sheni. In the Mishnah, however, it is referred to as Pesach Katan ("Minor Passover").

10. The Lesson: It's Never Too Late

Pesach Sheni is an extraordinary mitzvah. G-d legislated it only after a group of Jews, impure ones at that, sincerely demanded a second chance. The lesson for us is clear: No matter how far we may wander, or how impure we may become, G-d will pave the way for us if we sincerely want to make amends.

Just like the impure Jews of old were not afraid to ask for the opportunity to become closer to G-d, neither should we.

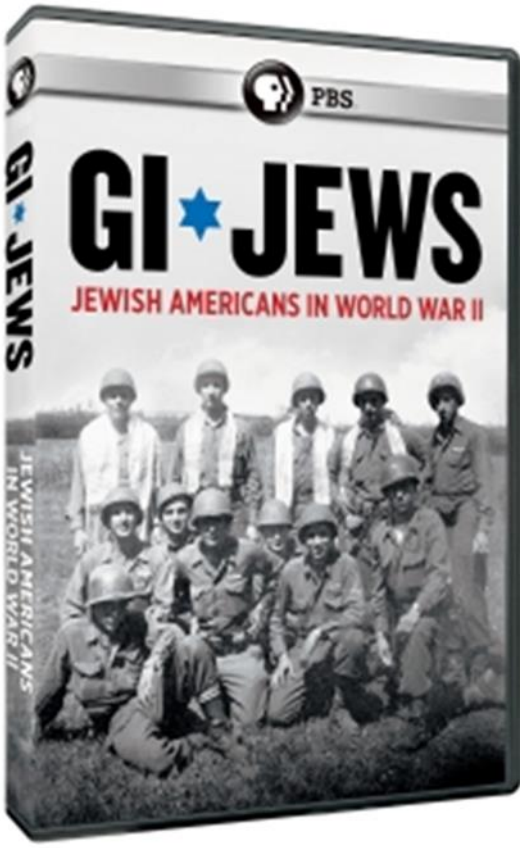


R' Yissocher Dov of Belz ZT"L would say:

"You want to know what true "Greatness" is? To feel truly united with another person in his experience, either joyous or sad, is a mark of tremendous sensitivity and real greatness."



Shabbos Stories for Parshas Acharei Mos



A World War II Minyan In a Combat Zone

Rav Boruch Brull writes a story. Louis Herman was a young Jew who lived in Canada during World War II. After hearing about the terrible things that were happening to the Jews in Europe, he decided to enlist in the army to fight against the Germans.

When he finished his training, young Louis was transferred to Italy. As a sergeant in the army, he was assigned to the front, in the midst of heavy fighting. Throughout the difficult months of the war, Louis kept as many Mitzvos as he possibly could.

On the day of his mother's Yartzeit, despite being many miles away from any Shul, Louis wanted to say Kaddish for her. This prayer, however, would require a Minyan, and finding ten Jews in the middle of a battlefield in Italy was not going to be easy. Louis knew of only five other Jewish soldiers in his unit.

Louis approached the army chaplain, who was a priest, and explained his predicament. Louis asked the chaplain if he knew of any other Jewish soldiers in the area. To Louis's surprise, the chaplain not only knew where he could find other Jewish soldiers, but he also understood the meaning of a Minyan.

"See that area over there?" The chaplain pointed to a tall observation tower. "That is where our soldiers guard our unit and watch for advancing German soldiers. When they see any activity, they radio the information back to the artillery unit to help us aim our bombs more precisely.

"There are four Jews who occupy positions in the observation tower. If you'd like, I can put in a call to them and ask that they come over to our area for your Minyan."

Louis was overjoyed. He would have exactly the ten men required to make up a Minyan! And to his great relief, the soldiers were happy to oblige. Louis was able to say Kaddish on his mother's Yartzeit with a Minyan. After they finished Davening. Louis thanked everyone for joining him and enabling him to fulfill this meaningful personal obligation.

As the four soldiers turned to walk back to the observation tower, they suddenly heard a loud explosion and saw a most startling sight. The entire observation tower and its contents had just been blown up! Only the four Jewish soldiers, who had just 'happened' to be busy doing a very important Mitzvah, had escaped certain death!

Rav Brull adds, "The Gemara teaches us (Pesachim 8b) that messengers who go to do a Mitzvah are saved from harm. Not only do acts of Chesed help others, but those very acts can also save us!"*(Torah U'Tefila compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*



Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

אחרי מות שני בני אהרן (טז:א)
***'After the deaths of the two sons of Aharon…'* (16:1)**

Midrash Rabbah (**פרשת שמיני פרשה יב אות א**) states that Rebbe Shimon taught that the sons of Aharon only died because they entered into the *Ohel Moeid* after drinking wine.

***Rabbeinu* Ephraim** writes that this is hinted in the *pasuk* itself. The last letters of the words **שני בני אהרן** spell out the word **יין** – wine, to teach us that the demise of the sons of Aharon was because they entered the *Ohel Moeid* after drinking wine.

Rabbeinu Ephraim adds that the letters of the word **שני** when rearranged are the beginning letters of the words **שתויי יין נכנסו** – 'They entered after drinking wine'. (*Chaim shel Torah*)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



Once, a G-d-fearing *shochet* (slaughterer) came to **Rav Yisroel Salanter** and told him that he wished to leave his job. He stated that he was afraid of all the responsibility that was involved in making a mistake and accidentally passing meat as kosher, when there was a chance that it was not. Rav Yisroel asked him what he planned to do instead. The man responded that he would open a store.

Rav Yisroel Salanter was astounded. He said: "You are worried about *shechitah*, which only has the prohibition of *kashrus* involved in it. How much more so is there to worry about in business, which involves *many* prohibitions— such as stealing, oppressing, coveting, cheating, lying, and keeping inaccurate measurements! You are not only better off staying as a *shechet*¸ but you are exactly the right person for the job— one who is afraid of making a mistake— that way you will always double-check yourself."

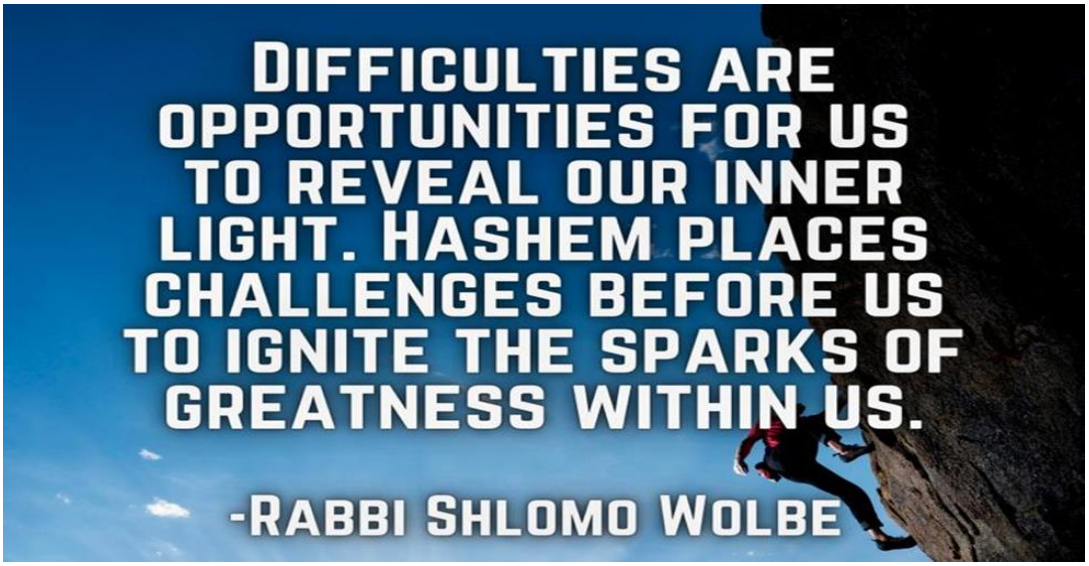
Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



When **Rav Pinchas of Koretz** was still living in Ostrov, **Rav Baruch of Mezibuzh** was raised and educated in his house, and after his marriage, Rav Baruch continued to visit his Rebbe frequently. He was once taking a nap in his Rebbe's room, when Rav Pinchas said to the people who were with him at the time, "If you stand around my student's bed, I will show you something very unusual."

He approached the door post of the bedroom and with his hand, he covered the *Mezuzah*, and blocked it from Rav Baruch. Immediately, Rav Baruch began to stir in his sleep, as if he was about to wake up, but the moment his Rebbe removed his hand from the *Mezuzah*, he continued to sleep soundly.

After Rav Pinchas had repeated this several times, he said, "You have now seen a man of true holiness! Even when he is asleep, Rav Baruch is not diverted from being attached to Hashem!"



L'Maaseh

One summer, it was scorching hot. Many people who lived in the city had gone out to spend the summer in the mountains, but that summer, it was sweltering even in the mountains. **Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l***, who suffered from respiratory issues, was affected much more by the heat. Some people went out and bought an air conditioner for Rav Moshe, but when it was brought to his room to be installed, he objected. He said "Do you expect that I should enjoy the air conditioner, while the *Yeshivah Bochurim* suffer in the heat? And what about all the other families that are here?"

The *Bochurim* were amazed by his refusal to have the air conditioner installed. There was an elderly man there who was close to ninety years old. Seeing their amazement, he said to them, "If you would have asked me, you would never have even thought of bringing the air conditioner to Rav Moshe in the first place!"



He explained, "You don't know him, but I remember Rav Moshe from back in Luban. Rav Moshe began to serve as *Rav* in our town before he was married, and I remember his wedding in the town. It was held on a Friday afternoon, as was customary at the time, and it took place the week after Shavuos. There was one fiddler in the town, his name was Itzeleh, and he informed the *Rav* that he would play music at the wedding from beginning to end. However, since the *Sefirah* period had just ended and no weddings had been made recently, that same day was the wedding for the daughter of the shoemaker and the daughter of the tailor.

Since there was only one fiddler in the town, Rav Moshe insisted that either Itzeleh attend all three weddings and play music, or he should not come to Rav Moshe's wedding either! And in order to ensure that the fiddler would indeed play at all the weddings, Rav Moshe announced that his *Chupah* would be held last of the three!

Of course a person who thinks like that would not accept an air conditioner when other people don't have one!"

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

אחרי מות שני בני אהרן בקרבתם לפני ה' וימותו (טז:א) ***After the death of the two sons of Aharon when they approached before Hashem, and they died*** (16:1)

The ***"Ahavas Yisroel"*** was accustomed to saying that hidden in this *posuk* are the words of *Chazal* in *Mesechta Avos* (3:1) that teach us that in order for a person to prevent himself from sinning, he must constantly have three things before his eyes: **דַּע מֵאַיִן בָּאתָ, וּלְאָן אַתָּה הוֹלֵךְ, וְלִפְנֵי מִי אַתָּה עָתִיד לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבּוֹן** -"Know from where you came and to where you are going, and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning." Through a person's consideration for this, he will be successful and will not come to sin.

These three things are hinted at in this *posuk*: "After the death" reminds a person where he is going, "the **sons** of Aharon" indicates where he came from, and "when they approached before Hashem" causes one to consider before Whom he will give justification and reckoning when the time comes. (*Umatuk HaOhr*)

"I don't just want that my Chasidim shouldn't do Aveiros. - I want them not to have time to do Aveiros!" ~ Kotzker Rebbe zt"l.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



For most of his life, **Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, *zt"l***, had a strict routine for learning, which he always maintained. No matter what was going on in his life— or in the world, his learning never stopped. He started his day learning at three o'clock in the morning, and often ended past eleven o'clock in the evening.

Rav Elyashiv started this regimen when he was twelve years old, and maintained this schedule until approximately six months before he passed away, at the age of 102.

This shows us that if one disciplines himself to make learning his way of life, and persists in it day after day and decade after decade, a person can grow to a tremendously lofty and holy level in *Ruchniyus*, even in this lowly physical world!



R' Shmelke of Nickolsburg ZT"L would say:

"On the wall of my beis din hangs a knapsack and staff as if to say: This Rabbi is beholden to no one. - Should I lose this position I will pack my bag, take up my staff and move elsewhere, rather than compromise my values."

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

וחי בהם *'And live by them'* (18:5)

Hashem tells us to observe the *Mitzvos* and to live 'in' them, as the letter *Beis* in the word *'Ba'hem'* can also mean 'in'.

Rav Aryeh Leib *HaKohein* (author of the *Ketzos HaChoshen*) offers a beautiful explanation of living through *Mitzvos*. He explains that when one does *Mitzvos*, he is being productive, and therefore, he can be considered *alive*. As long as he is being productive and growing, he is alive. Therefore, by living a life of doing *Mitzvos*, he is actually living *in them* and *through* them!

Parsha Potpourri by Oizer Alport - ובחקתיהם לא תלכו (18:3)



Rav Chaim Kanievsky is world-renowned for his encyclopedic knowledge and memory, as well as for his characteristically terse replies to questions. Somebody once wrote to him to ask for the source of the concept of having a party to celebrate one's birthday, wondering whether it was perhaps based upon an obscure Medrash or the writings of one of the early Rishonim.

He was quite surprised to receive Rav Chaim's concise reply: **מנהג פרעה** – it is a non-Jewish custom which originated with the practices of the wicked Pharaoh (Bereishis 40:20)!

For this reason, it is recorded that the **Aderes, Rav Eliyahu Dovid Rabinowitz-Teumim**, would get upset at those who extended to him wishes for a "happy birthday." He added that if the Gemora in Eiruvin (13b) concludes that it would have been better for man had he not been created, how could a person possibly celebrate the day on which something occurred that wasn't in his best interest!?

The Taam V'Daas writes that for these reasons, the **Chasam Sofer** claimed that Yidden shouldn't celebrate the day on which they were born but rather the day on which they were circumcised and entered into the Covenant.

In the interest of presenting a balanced perspective, it is interesting to conclude by relating that a Rabbi once said that when his wife was in seminary, the teacher was discussing the Jewish view of birthdays and presented the aforementioned non-Jewish origins of the concept.

One of the girls raised her hand and innocently protested, "But my Zeide sends me a birthday card every year!" The teacher didn't want to insult the girl's grandfather and suggested she should continue to enjoy them, but emphasized that the girls should understand that the idea of celebrating one's birthday isn't a Jewish tradition.

Undaunted, the girl pressed her point, arguing that "my Zeide surely knows what he's doing, and if he sends birthday cards, it must be a Jewish custom!" The teacher felt bad for the girl, but once again reiterated her philosophical stance for the rest of the class. To her surprise, the girl exclaimed, "You don't understand! My Zeide is….. **Rav Moshe Feinstein!**"

"Every person is capable of becoming as righteous as Moshe Rabbeinu, or as wicked as Yeravam." - The choice is yours. ~ The Rambam zt"l.

Torah U'Tefilah - Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg - Middos

There was a man who survived the horrors of the Holocaust, and after the war, he moved to Eretz Yisroel. However, due to his terrible experience, he completely abandoned his Yiddishkeit, R"L, and even went so far as to eat on Yom Kippur.

After that first Yom Kippur, he had a very frightening dream. He saw his deceased father and a teenage boy standing together. His father said, "Son, you are Chayav Kareis for eating on Yom Kippur. If you don't do Teshuvah, you will not live out the year!"

When the young man woke up, he decided to pay no attention to his dream. He reassured himself and said, "It's just nerves." But since he kept on having the dream night after night, he thought he would stay at a friend's house to help calm him. Sure enough, at his friend's house, the dreams ceased. His stay lasted a week, but as soon as he returned home, he had the same frightening dream again. This time, however, his father's manner seemed even more menacing. He said, "This is the last time I am warning you! You have a simple choice. Either do Teshuvah, or you will die!"

This note of finality scared the young man so much, that he decided to travel to consult with the **Chazon Ish, zt"l**. The next day he took off from work and travelled to Bnei Brak, and the young man told the Chazon Ish all that had happened. The young man began to cry and said, "Please! I want to do Teshuvah!" After advising the new Baal Tehsuvah, the Chazon Ish asked, "What Zechus do you have that you merited to get such a message from Shamayim?"

The man thought for a minute and said, "Well, maybe it's because I give a lot of Tzedakah to poor people." The Chazon Ish shook his head and said that was not the reason. He said, "Try and remember something that you did with tremendous self-sacrifice."

Suddenly the man remembered, and said, "I know! During the war, my sister lost her son. They lived in a nearby village which did not

have a Jewish cemetery. My father asked me to bring the body to our town, so that we could bring him to Kever Yisroel, and give him a Jewish burial.



Although this was very dangerous, I agreed. Throughout the entire journey, I was trembling like a leaf, but I kept telling myself, 'I am doing a double Mitzvah. I am going to bury a Meis Mitzvah, and at the same time I am honouring my father."

The Chazon Ish exclaimed, "That is the reason you had the Zechus of getting this message, and the boy who was with your father in your dreams was your nephew that you buried with such Mesiras Nefesh!"

TORAH Sweets

Short Story of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

Rav Yitzchok Volozhin, ZT"L, (a son of **Rav Chaim Volozhin ZT"L**) once accompanied his father on a visit to the great **Vilna Gaon (the Gra), ZT"L**, Reb Chaim's Rebbe. Reb Chaim, a great Talmid Chochom with encyclopaedic knowledge of Torah, customarily kept a notebook of his unresolved Torah questions.

A few times a year he would travel to the Gra and present all the queries that perplexed him. The Gra would amazingly immediately answer each problem!

Rav Yitzchok described the reverence that his father had for the Gra and how it manifested. As they began the trip, his father's face darkened with fear and trepidation. The closer the wagon came to Vilna, the more unrecognizable his father's face became. As they entered the Gra's home his father literally had difficulty walking, as his limbs seized up from fear.

Reb Simcha Zisel of Kelm, ZT"L, wrote in a letter to his disciples who had reached Eretz Yisroel that they should not go to the Kosel too often, for if they went regularly, they would possibly lose the fear and trepidation that one must have at *the Makom HaMikdash*, the site of the Bais HaMikdash.

Comment: The Torah states that a Kohen may not enter into the Holy of Holies too often (Vayikra 16:2). ***Reb Michel Feinstein, ZT"L****, explains the reason for this. A Kohen must properly prepare for entry into the holiest room. Before entering on Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol spent seven days in isolation, readying for the transcendental moment. If a Kohen would be allowed to enter too frequently, it would become commonplace for him, and he would be lax in his preparation.*

What an incredible lesson on the proper approach to holy people and places!

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

The yetzer harah seeks to steal both worlds from us. First, it convinces us to sin – so that we forfeit the World to Come.

Then it prods us to misbehave – causing us to lose This World as well. [Harav Noach of Melchovitz]

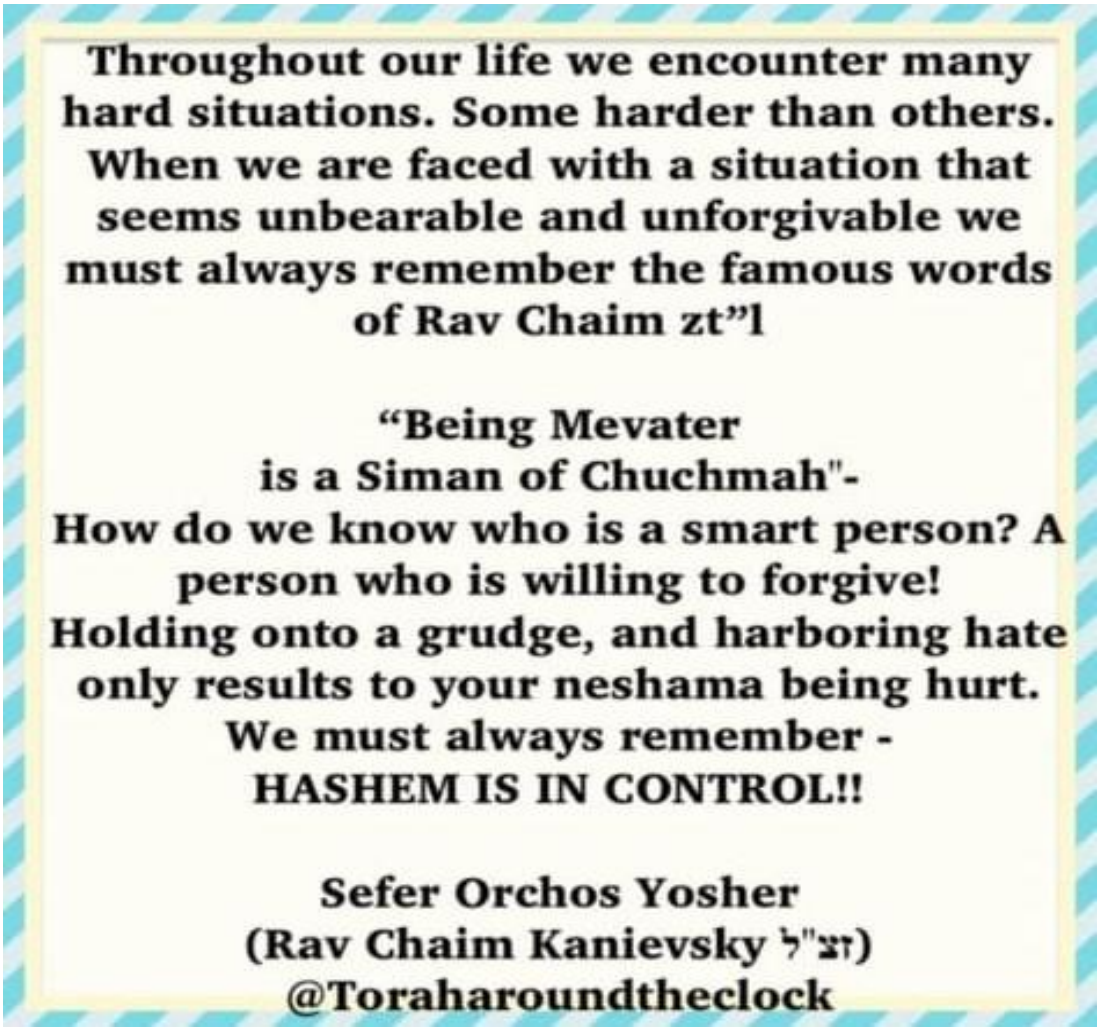
Saying of The Week with Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"If you use your mouth for an evil end, it won't function for Tefilah (prayer)."

The Torah (Vayikra 16:4) states that Aharon went into the *Kodesh Hakedoshim* (Holy of Holies) with white linen clothing. Rashi (ibid.) points out that he couldn't go in with the golden clothing that he wore for all other services. Why was that so?

The answer is that since gold was used for the sin of the *Eigel* it couldn't be used for defending the Jews on Yom Kippur.

The Chofetz Chaim, ZT"L, (*Shmiras Haloshon*, Sh"z 7) says that according to this reasoning one who uses his mouth for evil talk will ruin its capability to ask for any of his needs from Hashem.



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Ups and Downs During Sefirah

While the Jewish nation was in the desert counting fifty days up to the giving of the Torah, they went through many ups and downs. In Eilim, where there was no water to drink and the Torah tells us, the nation complained to Moshe (Shemos 16:2). In Refidim, they had doubts in emunah and Amalek attacked them, Is Hashem amongst us... and Amalek came (Shemos 17:7-8). Despite that, they counted each one of those days in joyous anticipation for the giving of the Torah.

We too, shouldn't be fazed by the hardships of life, by all the ups and downs that we go through. Even when you have challenges and tests, keep on going forward and you will merit to receive the Torah.



Trust Hashem

Rabbi Ilan Guzel told a story of a young woman who was travelling to her home in Tiberias in a shared taxi van. At one of the stops, a few boys got in and started using the most foul, disgusting language.

The young lady was afraid for her neshama, listening to their vulgarity. She went over to the driver and asked him if he could tell them to stop, but he refused . She then told the driver, "If you're not going to stop them, then please let me off." The driver said he would let her off at the next stop which would be in about 10 minutes.

She said she couldn't wait that long and requested to be let off immediately. The driver then pulled over and let her off right on the side of the road. A rabbi on the bus who was listening to a Torah class and didn't hear what was going on saw the driver pull over and let this girl off on the side of the road. He asked what was happening while the driver was pulling away. When he found out, he

complained that it was irresponsible to let off that girl there. The driver didn't seem to care, and he kept going.



The rabbi was worried about the girl. When he arrived at the kever of Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes, he was surprised when he saw that girl getting out of a car with another woman. He went over to her and asked her how she managed to get a ride. She said, while she was standing on the side of the road, she told Hashem she only got off because she was trying to do His will, and then she asked Him if He could send someone to pick her up. Less than 30 seconds later, a car stopped with a religious woman behind the wheel, by herself, asking if she needed a ride.

On the road the woman said she was on her way to the kever of Rabbi Meir. She explained, a few years before this, her daughter was diagnosed with a terminal illness and time was of the essence. There was a trial procedure that had not been proven yet that had a 50% chance of working, but there was also a 50% chance of fatality.

She went to a gadol for advice and blessing. He told her she had to go forward with the procedure, but at the same time she should do an act of mesirut nefesh as a zechut for her daughter. He suggested that she pay the full wedding expenses of a needy bride. She told the rabbi, "If Hashem heals my daughter, I'll pay for a needy bride's wedding every single year on the anniversary of the day my daughter is declared healed."

The Rabbi told her to go to the kever of Rabbi Meir and pray. She went there and while she was there, she found a needy bride. Baruch Hashem, her daughter was healed, and she paid for the entire wedding of that bride.

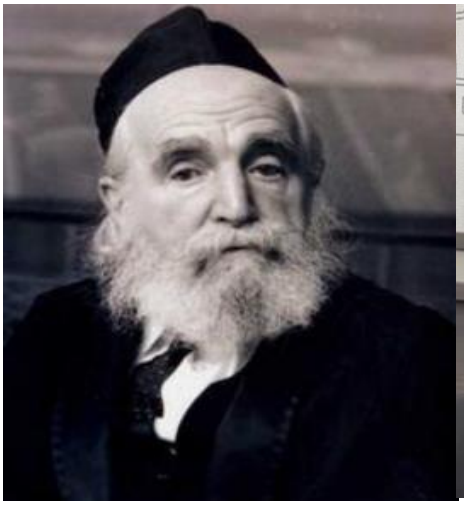
Every year after, she comes to the kever of Rabbi Meir to thank Hashem. While driving this young lady, she said she was on her way

to the kever because today is the anniversary. She then asked the young lady if she knew of any needy brides. The young lady replied, she is a needy bride, her family has no idea how they are going to pay for her upcoming wedding which was going to take place in two months. The lady was so happy to tell her, "I'm going to pay for the whole thing."

This young lady was in great need. She did the will of Hashem by protecting her ears from hearing the wrong thing and Hashem connected her with the perfect person who was able to help her.

Hashem could help us with all of our needs, and He could do it in the simplest way possible.

Defending the Honour of Orphans




Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan

There was a story told by **Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan** about **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt'l**. Years ago, right after World War II, there were many orphans that arrived here on American shores, after being left without family. A lot of these orphans were sent to New York to learn in Rabbi Moshe Feinstein's *yeshivah* on the Lower East Side. The people involved with the *yeshivah* started collecting money to buy the orphans clothing.

The president of the *shul* in the city planned a huge fundraiser, a black-tie dinner, to help collect the money these young orphans needed for clothing and essentials. Everyone from the community

was invited to help raise money for them. The well-meaning president stood up in front of all the guests and began to thank the very generous benefactors for their donations for the "Orphans of World War II."

He said, "I would like to ask the orphan boys in this crowd to stand up and give a respectful *hakarat hatov* to the donors here tonight." Of course, these young boys would stand out of humility and respect, but before anyone could get up, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Rosh Hayeshivah*, shot up from his chair in the front of the room. When the people saw the great Reb Moshe Feinstein standing, the entire room stood up to honor him. And with the whole room standing, no one could tell who was an orphan, and who was not.

The greatness of this *gadol* was so incredible. With barely a second to think, he immediately reacted and thought about the honour of the children there that day. He was known to have an enormous amount of sensitivity, and just as we learned in *Tzav*, the Torah goes to great lengths to protect the dignity of those less fortunate.

The Beauty of Every Jew - Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber Avtzon

In the late '70s or early '80s, the shliach in Be'er Sheva, Reb Yitzchok Dickstein went to a prison to speak and put on teffilin with the inmates. Being a cheerful fellow, many of the inmates gravitated towards him and looked forward to his weekly visit.

One Friday, one of the inmates mentioned to him that there is another Jewish inmate who doesn't come to this meeting and in fact, he doesn't leave his cell to meet anyone.

Hearing this Reb Yitzchok said although he doesn't want to meet me, but I want to see him, and I will go to his cell.

The guards allowed him in and Yitzchok walked over to that person's cell and began a conversation. Contrary to his expectations

this inmate was extremely talkative. He began relating his life story and his grievances against various people and the authorities.

Reb Yitzchok not only heard him out, but he listened attentively to what he had to say and showed empathy to what he had experienced. After the inmate spoke for a half-hour, he asked, "And why did you come to visit me?"

Reb Yitzchok replied, "I come here every Friday to help the Jewish inmates to put on tefillin. Perhaps you would like to put them on?"

"Definitely," he replied "what do I have to do?"

I will place one of these boxes on your left bicep and the other one on your head and you will say the Shema.

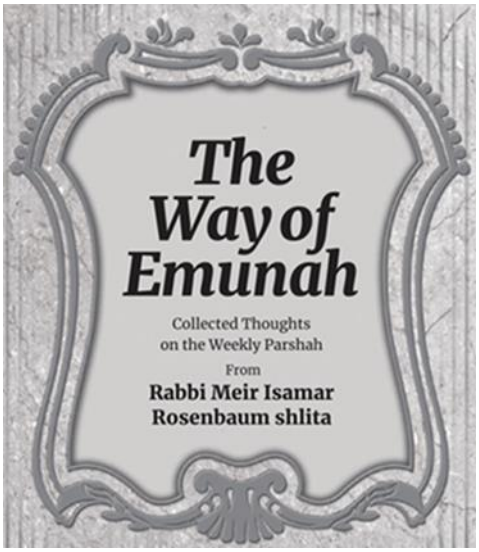
He rolled up his sleeve and Yitzchok rolled his eyes in disgust. There was a tattoo that perhaps some would say, it is preferable not to put tefillin over it. However, after a moment's thought, he decided I came so far with this individual, I will put it on.

After the inmate repeated the Shema, Reb Yitzchok wished him a good Shabbos and said I will see you G-d willing next week.

The following week when he came the inmate gave him a strong bear hug and said Rabbi, I love you. You are the first person who validated me. You might not have agreed with the actions I took, but you showed compassion for what I endured.

He then began to roll up his sleeve to put on tefillin and this time Yitzchok was horrified. The inmate's bicep was almost raw. The image was indeed gone but the skin also was all gone

The inmate saw his reaction and said, Rabbi last week I noticed your displeasure with the tattoo I had, and I decided to remove it. So, every day I took some salt and continued to rub it over the picture until I succeeded in removing it. The only thing is that it also removed some skin that should come back. - Mi kiamcha Yisroel.



Neshamos Are Raised From The Depths to Return to The Shechinah

This idea is hinted to in this week's Parshah. The pasuk states: **אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן**, after the two sons of Aharon died. The words **מוֹת שְׁנֵי** have the same letters as the word Mishnayos. This teaches us that learning Mishnayos is of great benefit to people after they die.

It is so powerful that it can raise them from the depths of purgatory and lift them up to Gan Eden. This is also hinted to in the pasuk in Tehillim (30:4): **הֶעֱלִיתָ מִן־שְׁאוֹל נַפְשִׁי** - ***You raised my soul from the depths***.



The first letters of the words of this verse spell the word Mishnah. Again, we see that Mishnayos can raise a soul from Gehenim and the lowliest depths and bring it to full rectification. Thus, the verse in our Parshah concludes: "When they came close to Hashem." Through the study of Mishnayos, a soul can be perfected and fixed and brought close to Hashem to sit in the shade of His Shechinah and bask in His light.

A Wise Man would say:

"When Hashem solves your problems, you have faith in His abilities; when Hashem does not solve your problems, He has faith in your abilities."

Learning Mishnayos is a Segulah for Parnassah

Rav Chaim Palagi zt"l says that the word "Mishnah" has the same gematriah as the word "parnassah". This teaches us that if one learns Mishnayos, he will have a livelihood. He says that because the learning of Mishnah has decreased in our times, parnassah has also decreased. A similar thing is said by the **Koritzer Rebbe zy"a** in Sefer Imrei Pinchos.

Hagaon Rav Sheftel Hakadosh zy"a, writes in his will (printed at the end of Sefer Yesh Nochlin): "I have a tradition that anyone who is an expert in Mishnayos will never see the face of Gehenim."

Etz Hachaim – C T Blau – Zechuyos

Harav Binyomin Diskin the Rov of Brisk, did not come to shul at the regular time on the night of Kol Nidrei. The entire Kehillah was waiting and wondering why the Rov did not appear as Rav Binyomin Diskin generally came on time. They sent the gabbai of the shul to go and look for the Rov. Where was the Rov?

The gabbai went to the Rov's house and what he saw almost caused him to faint. He saw Rav Binyomin sitting and learning a perek of mishnayos with his son! The gabbai stood there in astonishment. "On the night of Kol Nidrei! This is what the Rov is doing!"

The Rov, rather than answering, broke into a sobbing cry and said to the gabbai, "I made a cheshbon hanefesh and I realized that I am short of so many zechuyos and I asked myself in the very few short moments that I have left, what is the single, greatest mitzvah that I can do in order to gain the maximum amount of zechuyos?

I concluded that sitting and learning a perek of mishnayos with my son would give me the maximum amount of zechuyos that I would be able to accumulate at this particular time. "**ללמוד וללמד**."

Parsha Potpourri by R' Ozer Alport

וְאִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר הַגָּר בְּתוֹכָם אֲשֶׁר יָצוּד צֵיד חַיָּה אוֹ־עוֹף אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל וְשָׁפַךְ אֶת־דָּמוֹ וְכִסָּהוּ בֶּעָפָר ***And any man of the children of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who traps a quarry of a wild animal or bird that may be eaten, and sheds its blood, he shall cover it [the blood] with dust.***(17:13)



Parshas Acharei Mos contains the commandment to cover with dirt the blood of a bird or wild animal after it has been shechted (ritually slaughtered), a mitzvah known as kisui hadam.

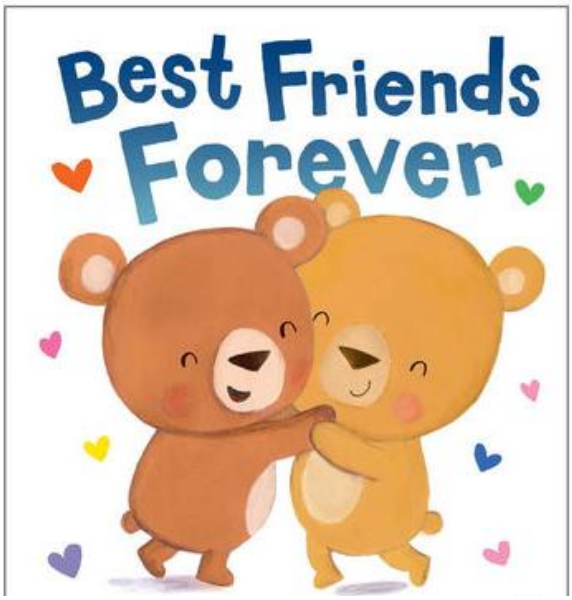
The Gemora (Chullin 87a) derives from the juxtaposition of the verbs "to slaughter" and "to cover" that just as shechita is done with one's hand, so too covering the animal's blood must also be done with the hand. Although it may be more convenient to kick dirt on top of the blood using one's foot, the Gemora explains that it is disrespectful to do a mitzvah in this manner.

The Beis HaLevi (Parshas Terumah) writes that the concept of honouring mitzvos is not limited to kisui hadam. On Sukkos, the boards used to build the sukkah and the esrog become sanctified through their use in the performance of mitzvos, and they may therefore not be treated irreverently (Rema Orach Chaim 639:1, Sheiltos Shelach 126). The Beis HaLevi adds that when a poor person approaches us with a request for tzedakah, he is transformed into a cheftza shel mitzvah – someone through whom we fulfil the mitzvah of giving charity.

Because of our busy lifestyles, Rav Yissocher Frand notes that we often feel bombarded with requests to help needy individuals and

organizations. In times of stress, we may feel tempted to ignore them or even respond in a harsh tone. Whether the encounter is in the synagogue, on the street, at our door, or on the phone, we must remind ourselves that if the Torah requires us to treat the blood of a dead chicken with respect, how much more so must we be sensitive and considerate when interacting with a living, vulnerable human being with feelings.

Machar Chodesh



When Rosh Chodesh falls out on Sunday like this week, we read the Haftorah of Machar Chodesh. It recounts the story of Yehonason and Dovid (Jonathan and David,) son and son-in-law of King Shaul.

The king began to hate Dovid because he feared that he would usurp the throne (albeit by Divine will) and take it away from his son, Yehonason. For his part, Yehonason had nothing but love and admiration for Dovid and he felt that Dovid was more worthy of the throne than he. They used the Rosh Chodesh feasts as a means of testing King Shaul's deepest feelings and when it was clear that he intended to kill Dovid, Yehonason conveyed to Dovid that he had to run away.

The Haftorah ends with the two embracing and vowing that they and their children would remain friends for all time. Ironically, King Shaul felt that his son was casting away his due place in history by willingly relinquishing the throne, but it is precisely this greatness of spirit and humility that earned Yehonason eternal honour and recognition as the paradigm of a true, loyal friend.

Emunoh In Our Chachomim

ל' ניסן marks the Yahrzeit of **Rav Yaakov Emden זצ"ל**, commonly known as the **יעב"ץ**. Born Yaakov Ashkenazi in the year 1698 in the town of Altona, Germany, his primary **רבי** was his illustrious father the **חכם צבי זצ"ל**. At the age of 18 he married Rochel, the daughter of **Rav Mordechai Katz זצ"ל**, the Rov of Ungarisch – Brod, Moravia, and he learned in his father-in-law's **כולל** after his **חתונה**.

For many years he refused to take any official position, working as a private jeweller before accepting the position as **רב** of Emden. He returned to Altona where he built a private **בית מדרש** for select **צדיקים**, and obtained permission from the King of Denmark to establish a printing press in Altona which published many **ספרים**.

He lived in the post- **שבתי צבי** period of enlightenment and was one of the staunchest defenders of traditional *Yiddishkeit* and **מסורה** as well as fiercely fighting the Sabbatean sects which still existed from the days of **שבתי צבי**. Due to the fallout of all the anti-Sabbatean accusations, Rav Yaakov was forced to leave Altona and settled in Amsterdam. Besides for his short stint in Emden, Rav Yaakov refused to accept any other **רבנות**, joking that each day he made a **ברכה** of **שלא עשני אב בית דין**. Nevertheless, he was widely regarded as one of the **גדולי הדור** and a **תלמיד חכם מופלג**.

On one bitterly cold day, his **תלמידים** didn't come to his **שיעור** because of the weather. Many hours later they appeared and saw him so engrossed in his **ספר** that he was unaware that his beard had frozen to the table due to the frigid temperatures!

He wrote dozens of **ספרים**, including his famous **סידור בית יעקב**, a widely used **סידור** which includes many **מנהגים** which many still keep, and his **שאילת יעב"ץ** and **ספר מור וקציעה** on **שולחן ערוך אורח חיים**. He was **נפטר** in Altona on **ראש חודש אייר** in the year 1776. **יהי זכרו ברוך**

Circle Time – Gematria

כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכֹּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי ה׳ תִּטְהָרוּ ***On this day He will atone for you from all your sins. In Hashem's Presence you must purify yourselves.*** (16:30)



Chazal teach us that when someone does teshuvah and overcomes his yetzer hara completely, Hashem places a crown of light on his head. The Torah says that Yom Kippur is the best day for teshuvah, as it says in the above pasuk that we can purify ourselves by doing teshuvah.

The word in the pasuk for "purify yourselves" is **תטהרו** and the gematria of that word is 620, which equals that of the word kesser **כתר** –crown.

Divrei Torah Ba'er Heitev

אֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי תַּעֲשׂוּ וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ לָלֶכֶת בָּהֶם *You shall do my judgments, and keep my ordinances, to follow them; I am Hashem your L-rd.* {Vayikra 18:4}

It is not enough for one merely to study Torah and observe the Mitzvos in a mechanical manner, which is habitual and routine. We are commanded to renew our enthusiasm and rekindle our efforts daily.

The verse describes our involvement in terms of a commitment to "walk, **ללכת** ,with the Torah". The word **ללכת** implies movement. We must always be moving and growing, always striving to elevate ourselves to a higher level. – **[Chasam Sofer]**

The Latest and Greatest by R' Eliyahu Maksumov

Rav Shach Zt'l *was once being escorted out of a hospital by the head cardiologist who was Jewish, but non-religious. As he was walking together, he thought that it would be an opportune time to be mekareiv the doctor and to give him some chizuk.*

He turns to the specialist, and asks him, "If you don't mind me asking, what car do you drive?"

The specialist was a little taken aback. 'Why is the Rabbi so curious as to what car I drive? What' the difference what type of car I drive?'

"If you really must know, I drive a Mercedes."

"And what type of car did you have before that?"

"Also a Mercedes."

"And the one before that?"

"Also a Mercedes."

"Why do you keep buying the same car?"

"Rabbi, I know that you don't know much about cars, but every few years, they produce a newer model which is better, faster and sleeker than the previous model. So I always update the model to the newest and improved model there is."

"So, you are telling me that the next model is going to be even better than the one you have now?"

"Absolutely!"

Rav Shach then asked, "The heart – is there anything that you can do to improve it?"

"Absolutely not."

"What if you move a valve, or make the heart more functional to perform even better?"

"There is nothing that can be done to improve the heart,"

"Why is that? The Mercedes they are able to improve, but not the heart?"

"I must admit, it is because the Mercedes was invented by humans, who are not perfect, and are prone to errors, whereas the heart was created perfect by Hashem, and everything that He does is perfection."

The lesson to us is, that Hashem does not make mistakes. He gets it right every time. He is perfection.

If we had this in mind, we would realise, that nothing in our lives is a coincidence, accident or random. It is just that we must learn to deal with our lot in the best way that we can, and overcome any challenges that we find ourselves in.

You can't improve perfection – just improve yourself!

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



In his later years, the **Tchebiner Rav, Rav Dov Ber Weidenfeld, zt"l**, required an operation. However, the Rav was so frail that the doctors were afraid that if he fell asleep under anesthesia, it would be a great danger to him, and he might never wake up again. Yet, to perform the surgery without anesthesia was unthinkable.

When the Rav heard the dilemma, he told the doctors that he had a solution. He could assure them that he would not fall asleep under anesthesia, but he would need his Tefilin.

Neither the doctors nor the family members could understand this, and the Rav explained. "It is Halachically forbidden for one to sleep while wearing his Tefilin." He assured them that if he was wearing his Tefilin, they could give him the anesthesia, because the awe and concentration he always had while wearing his Tefilin would keep him awake.

The doctors agreed.

The Tchebiner Rav put on his Tefilin, and the operation was performed, and despite that he was under heavy sedation, the Rav did not fall asleep for a moment. Incredibly, the Rav could defy the laws of medicine, but he could not for a moment defy the laws of the Shulchan Aruch!

613 Mitzvot By R' Chaim Dahan ZT"L



A person has a neshama. Let's say that it has 613 light bulbs. If I do the mitzva of Kibud Av, so the kibud Av light bulb illuminates. If I do the mitzva of eating Matzah, then the Matza light bulb illuminates.

I need to illuminate all 613 lightbulbs, and if any are missing, Hashem says that my neshama has not reached perfection.

How is it possible for any human being to light up all 613 light bulbs? Some of the mitzvos do not apply to every single person.

The answer is that if you feel connected and in love with your friend, when he does a mitzvah that you can't do (e.g. he's a Cohen) – than not only does his light bulbs light up for a particular mitzva – astonishingly, your light bulb also illuminates – and so on, and visa versa. This is because you feel like one entity and you are one entity. Just like when you do a mitzva with your hand – does Hashem reward

just your hand? No, of course not, because you are connected to your hand – it is all one entity.

To ensure all 613 light bulbs get illuminated, we have to be b'achdus, and one with each other. This is how our neshama can reach perfection.

When the non-Jew went over to Hillel and said, "I want to become Jewish, but I want to reach perfection in one lifespan, at one time, whilst I am standing on one leg."



Hillel told him, "If you want to be mekayem all the mitzvot of the Torah while you are standing on one leg – do whatever you can, but this one thing you must keep… וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ. And if you keep this, then whatever mitzvot that you can't do, but your friend did it, will be reckoned as though you did it as well. You will get credit for these mitzvot as well, and it will be possible to fulfil the whole Torah – all 613 mitzvot.

R' Yisroel Baal Shem Tov ZT"L would say:

Tehillim 104:23 states: יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפָעֳלוֹ וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עַד־עָרֶב - ***'Man goes out to his work; his labour (to be done) by evening.'***

Every soul sent down by the Almighty into this world has a mission to accomplish - 'his work.' This mission is considered the soul's work and labour, for it was for the purpose of accomplishing this task that the soul was sent to this world. Thus, it is important that, 'his labour be done by evening' - the task must be accomplished before it is too late!"

Sing it for Me by Rabbi Yechiel Spero



Yair Yisraeli did not have an easy childhood. When he was just a little baby, his father passed away and a few years later, his mother also died. Raised through the kindness of others, he never forgot the importance of being sensitive to those in need.

Rav Yair grew into an exceptional person, a rosh yeshivah of Tiferes Yisrael Yeshivah in Rishon LeZion and a baal chesed extraordinaire. Rav Yair was beloved by one and all. For many years, he influenced thousands of talmidim, who cherished their rebbi and kept a connection with him long after they left his tutelage.

Additionally, many sought out Rav Yair when checking into medical references. He was well connected and informed. Just to give you an inkling into what type of person Rav Yair was…

On one occasion, he attended a cello recital for a little boy. It seemed strange that a rosh yeshivah would show up to a musical performance. When someone asked him why he had come, he admitted that he didn't know the family, but he knew the boy was a yasom and the mother an almanah. "Since there was no father to attend, I thought it would be nice if I would go and then compliment the boy on his talent. The mother was so happy I came."

At the end of his life, Rav Yair was very sick, confined to a bed in Maayanei Hayeshua Medical Center. During those days, **Rav Chaim Kanievsky**, who felt extremely close to Rav Yair and valued his relationship, visited him. Yet, though his family knew how special Rav Yair was, nothing could prepare them for the greatness they were to witness in the final few days of his life.

The doctors informed the family that the situation was dire, and they themselves could see that Rav Yair was slowly leaving them. During that time, his family and close talmidim stood around his bed. He didn't ask for much; there wasn't much they could do for him.

Although he had been a luminous figure, the illness had taken its toll. Rav Yair had little strength or energy left. When a group of singers made their rounds in the hospital to cheer up the patients, they stopped in Rav Yair's room and asked if he had any requests.

At first, he graciously declined. Then, out of the blue, he seemed to change his mind. He cleared his throat and motioned that he had a request — but it was an unusual one. Rav Yair wanted the choir members to sing a song: a Russian song.

Now this was very strange. Either there was something about Rav Yair's childhood his family and talmidim were unaware of, or his mind was slipping. However, when he repeated his request, the singers did their best to accommodate him. A few of them knew a Russian folk song and they began singing it to the best of their ability.

Rav Yair smiled; he appeared so happy that they were fulfilling his request. When they finished, he asked for another one and they duly cooperated. When they finished that song, he requested one more. With each song the singers sang, the situation seemed more and more bizarre. But soon everyone would understand.

As soon as they finished the third and final song, Rav Yair leaned over. Next to his bed was a curtain. He pulled it away slightly and began conversing with the man in the bed next to him. A man from Russia. Although Rav Yair's strength was sapped after the little choir's performance, he smiled at his neighbor and asked if he'd enjoyed the songs.

Had he ever. Unfortunately, the Russian man had no visitors. While Rav Yair's side of the room was constantly buzzing with activity, his roommate had no one. In truth, however, he did. He had Rav Yair.

One day later, Rav Yair returned his neshamah to Shamayim, after spending his final day on this earth doing his best to bring joy to another Yid. *[ArtScroll Shabbos Table.]*



את משפטי תעשו ואת חקתי תשמרו ללכת בהם ... ושמרתם את חקתי ואת משפטי... וחי בהם

Carry out My laws and safeguard My decrees to follow/go (in) them… You shall observe My decrees and My laws … and by which he shall live. (18:4,5)

The *Ksav Sofer* writes that a Jew's primary function is to go forward, not to remain stagnant, relegated to living a life of spiritual status quo. This means, *Laleches bahem*, to go in them, to grow in them, with Torah and *mitzvos* serving as the vehicle for spiritual expansion.

Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl, was examined by a well-known eye doctor. As part of the examination, the doctor placed drops in *Rav* Shteinman's eyes. As the doctor was putting the drops in, *Rav* Shteinman mused, "Doctor, do you not become bored doing this day in and day out?"

The doctor was taken aback by the question. Where does boredom enter into the picture?

Rav Shteinman continued, "I am not your first patient, nor am I your last. Doing the same thing over and over again without variation can become boring. However, one who studies Torah, who is engrossed in plumbing its depths, never has reason to become bored. He could learn a *tosfos* many hundreds of times, and each time will be different from the previous time. Every review brings new and

deeper insight. This is one of the amazing attributes of studying Torah, something which is not to be found in any mundane endeavour."

The concept of attachment to Torah, with the resulting growth that bond, takes on new meaning when it impacts the mind of a child.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates how a young boy's actions impressed a group of *kollel avreichim*, research fellows, who, although spending their entire days and nights immersed in Torah, were privy to an inspirational lesson concerning love of Torah from a young *cheder* student.

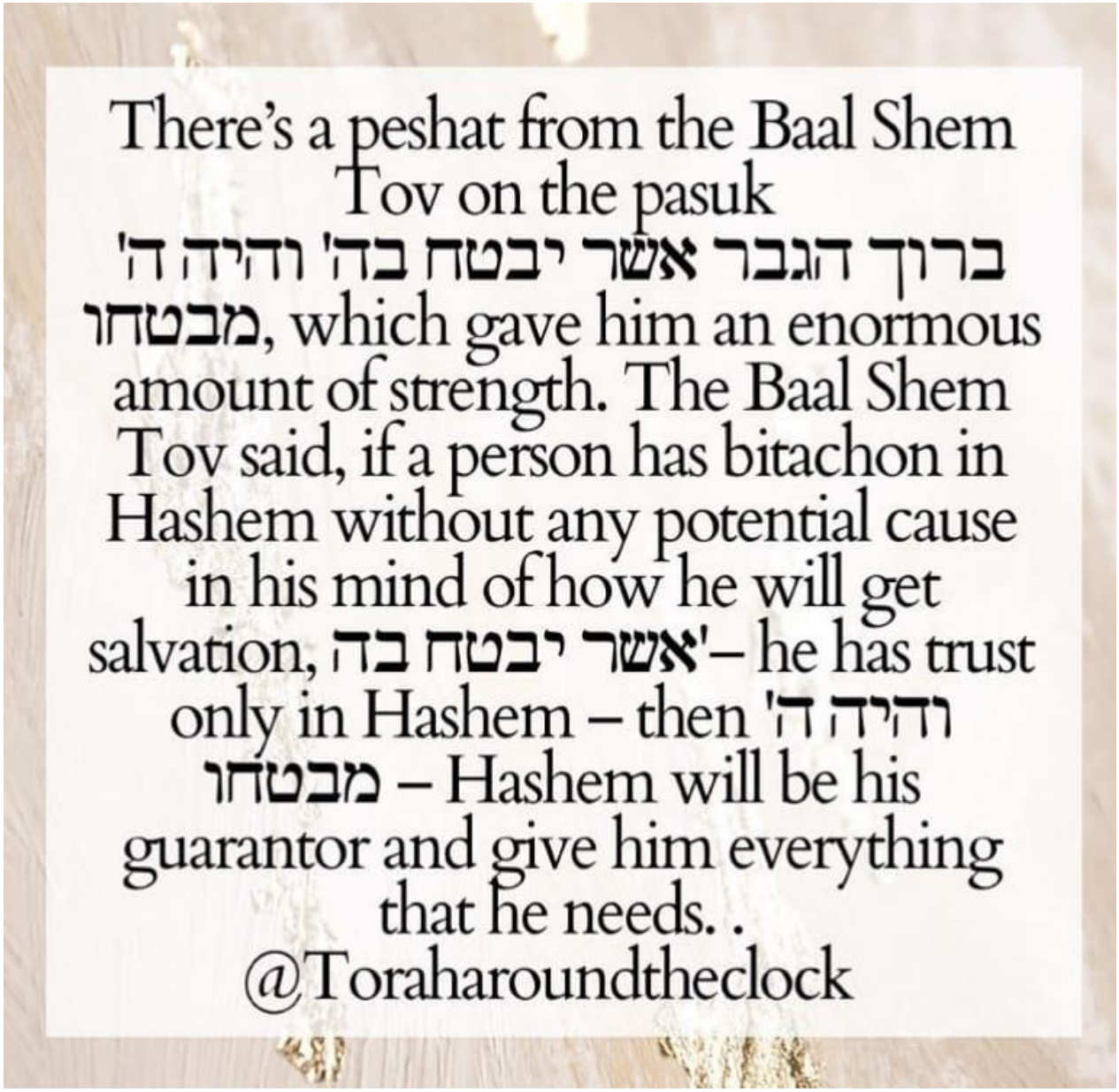
The building which housed the *kollel* also served as the venue for a *cheder*. The *cheder* was located on the lower floors, and the *kollel* was on the top floor.

It happened one day that the *rebbe* of one of the classes arrived late to class. How late and for what reason does not affect the story. Apparently, the *menahel* was neither made aware of the *rebbe's* tardiness nor given an excuse. As a result, the boys, who were quite active, realised that no one was in charge. No *rebbe;* a *menahel* who was clueless. It was a recipe for disaster.

One could not expect the boys in the class to sit around reciting *Tehillim* until someone showed up to teach them. So, they acted as any group of lively boys would act. The single exception was one boy who seriously wanted to learn. He was disturbed that no one was present to teach them. He wanted to learn.

Aware that there was a *kollel* of young Torah scholars to whom learning was paramount, the young boy decided to elicit their help. He walked into the *kollel* and in a loud – but respectful voice – called out, "I want to learn Torah. My *rebbe* did not come to *cheder* today, so there is no one to teach us. Please, will anyone among you come to my classroom and teach us?"

This young boy was far from being a scholar, but he understood that Torah study must be *laleches bahem*, to walk in them. In order to fulfil this mandate, Torah and *mitzvos* must be *v'chai bahem* – life itself. How can we take off a day of life?



"Worldly riches are like nuts; many a tooth is broken in cracking them, but never is the stomach filled with eating them." - Rebbe Nachman Of Breslov

Reb Shmuel Donn - Remez

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן – And hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of the two sons of Aharon…



Our Parsha begins with the tragic death of Nadav and Avihu, and then immediately continues with the Avodah of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur.

What is the connection?

The Gemara teaches us in Mesechta Rosh Hashana (26a) that when the Kohen Gadol entered the Kodesh HaKadashim on Yom Kippur, he would wear only linen garments and nothing with gold.

This was because the Eigel was made out of gold, and on a day when we are seeking mercy and forgiveness for our aveiros, we don't want to remind Hashem about our sin by dressing in gold.

Rashi says in Parshas Eikev 9:20 that Aharon's two sons died as a result of the sin of the Eigel.

Harav Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l explains that this is the connection to our Parsha. After mentioning the death of Nadav and Avihu – a result of the Eigel, the pesukim turn towards the avodah on Yom Kippur and the pure linen which the Kohen Gadol wore – without gold. (**טעמא דקרא**)

"Don't be afraid to dream big and aim high. Your potential knows no limits." – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



"The only place in the Shulchan Aruch where we find an option to meet halfway, is in Choshen Mishpat regarding interpersonal financial settlements. From this, we may derive that in areas of halacha between man and his Creator, there is no room for compromise." – Harav Shalom of Belz.

Yom Haatzmut! What Our Torah Leaders Tell Us About the Zionist Movement and The State Of Israel

"*Maybe it would have been better to establish Yom Haatzmut as a fast day!*" – ***The Chazon Ish***

"*I want to raise a point. Today is Yom Haatzmut. What is the essence of Yom Haatzmut? A day of idolatry! A day when they demonstrate … to all the power of Israel with weapons and so on…*" – ***Rav Chatzkel Levenstein***

"*Who is a frumme apikores nowadays? Someone who says that the Gedolim caused deaths in the Holocaust, and one who celebrates Yom Haatzmut!*" – ***The Chazon Ish***

"*Even if the festival of [Yom] Haatzmut would be a good practice, since evil people do it, it would be forbidden to keep it … and this is exceptionally bad, since the heretics did not establish this a festival for HaShem but to thank their idols of "Kochi V'otzem Yodi" and their denial of HaShem's Hashgocha on the world and on His people, and if so one who joins them appears to concede to idolatry.*" – ***Rav Reuven Grodinsky***

"They are destroying Eretz Yisroel, not building it … they attempt to force us to fly their flag, and if we do not it is a "terrible tragedy", they come with complaints why we did not fly their flag… they want to force us to stand still and silent during the siren [on Yom Hazikaron], and if we do not, it is a "offence to the nationality" – but they are just empty-headed and ignorant, who do not know between their right and left – and to travel on Shabbos is not an "offence to the nationality"?!" – ***Rav Shach***

The State: Good or Bad? "The State is not even a small salvation, it is a tragedy for Klal Yisroel!" – ***Rav Yisroel Elya Weintraub in the name of the Brisker Rov.***

"It is a terrible sin to think that establishment of the State helps Klal Yisroel at all…" – ***Rav Dovid Solovetchik in the name of the Brisker Rov.***

"The State is not a redemption; it is a progression from exile into an even deeper exile…" – ***The Steipler***

"My father-in-law asked the Chazon Ish if we could at least judge the Zionists favourably in making the State in that at least there would be less intermarriage with non- Jews. But the Chazon Ish was insistent, and declared: you'll see, one day they'll bring non-Jews into the State for them to marry!" – ***Rabbi Shurin***

"The Zionists did not want to make a state and therefore had to destroy Judaism. They wanted to destroy Judaism, so they made the State as a means of doing so" – ***Rav Meir Soloveitchik in the name of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik.***

"***The Brisker Rov*** told me: the entire purpose of the founding of the State was to uproot the Torah! I did not understand, and asked him, did they not have other purposes in mind as well? He replied: If I would need to, I would take open the Aron HaKodesh and make an oath that this was their only intention! But I know you will believe me without this." – ***Rabbi Shlomo Lorentz***

"*We must know: they have no desire to save Klal Yisroel; they want the "Medinah" but not the "Yisroel", not the Jews, so they come with new ideas, in order to destroy the original form on Klal Yisroel.*" – ***Rav Shach***

"*This is not a [real] state; one day we will get up in the morning and we'll see that the State will be no more…*" - ***The Chazon Ish***



Q & A with Rav Avigdor Miller - Yom Haatzmut

Q. How should we celebrate Yom Haatzmus?

A. The answer is that you should not. … When atheists get together and they pass a law that this and this day should be celebrated by the Jewish people, then we honour them with a sneeze. We ignore them entirely. … We celebrate Yom Haatzmus by ignoring it entirely!

The Israeli Flag. - **Q**. Was it a Chillul HaShem when some people burned the Israeli Flag?

A. The Israeli flag is a symbol of Zionism. Zionism is not just some political movement; it represents the principle that in order to be a Jew all you need is to subscribe to the idea of Jewish state. You don't need any Torah. You know you can be an atheist and you can still be a very good Zionist! … It's the flag that is the Chillul HaShem! … And therefore that is a travesty of the name "Jew", and so I think it's not a Chillul HaShem at all to burn the Zionist flag; and we shouldn't be ashamed that we did it.

The Zionist State. …the Zionists are trying to destroy the Jewish people. … They are doing terrible things in Eretz Yisroel. … It's important for us to know – to truly recognize – that the resho'im are mashchisim. They're destroying the world…

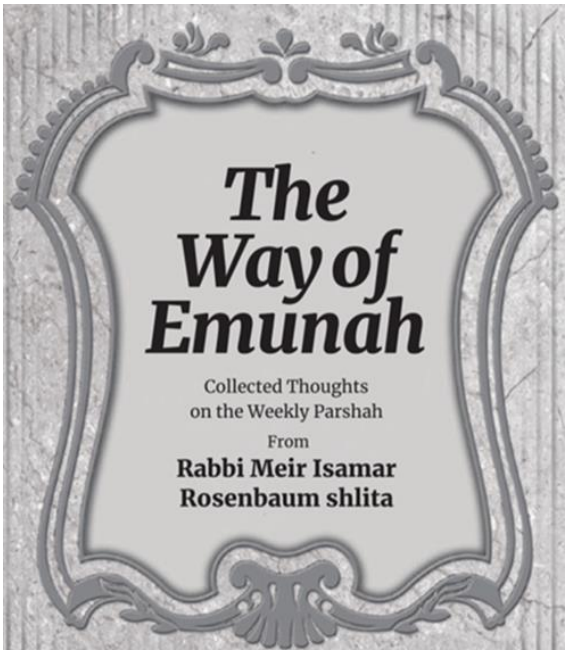


בְּזֹאת יָבֹא אַהֲרֹן אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּפַר בֶּן־בָּקָר לְחַטָּאת וְאַיִל לְעֹלָה
"***With this Aharon shall enter the Holy; with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering***" (16:3)

A young bull is alluding to Avraham Avinu and a ram for a burnt offering is alluding to Yitzhak and a goat is alluding to Yaakov. Then what alludes to our matriarchs?

It says "They shall be of equal weight (Vayikra Rabba 21:11) How do we know that also in the merit of the matriarchs?

As it says, "He should wear holy linen shirt…and linen pants…and a linen sash…and a linen cap – these refer to the four matriarchs (Pesikta). If you take the first letter of each piece of the Cohanim's clothing – **אַבנט מַצנפת כֻּתונת מִכנסים**- sash, cap, shirt, pants, you get the word **אמכם** – your mothers! (**Rebbi Shimshon from Astropoli Zt'l**)



They Died Because They Entered Together

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקָרְבָתָם לִפְנֵי־ה' וַיָּמֻתוּ ***And Hashem spoke to Moshe after the two sons of Aharon died when they brought close before Hashem***… (16:1)

The Medrash (Vayikroh Rabbah 20:8) lists four reasons why the sons of Aharon died. One of them is because they did not take advice from each other ("shelo natlu eitzah zeh m'zeh").



Sefer Likutei Yehuda quotes his grandfather, **the Imrei Emes zy"a**, as explaining this by citing the pasuk (Vayikroh 16:17) that says: "And no man shall be in the Ohel Moed when he comes to atone in the Kodesh." This means that when the Kohen Gadol entered the Kodesh Kodashim to atone for himself, for his household and for all of Klal Yisroel, he must be alone. No other person may go in with him.

Nadav and Avihu decided that they would enter the Kodesh Kodashim and do the avodah of the Kohen Gadol. If they had consulted about the matter, they would have known not to go in at the same time. They would have realized that they were both planning on going in and since two men may not go in together, they would have desisted, and they would not have died. But since they did not consult with each other, they each went in on their own, without knowing that the other one was going in as well.

Since they went in together, they transgressed the Torah's prohibition that more than one man may not be there, which is why they died.

"When a person suffers ר"ל, he shouldn't say that things are 'bad.' Rather, if he must, he should say, the situation is 'bitter.' - The Almighty does nothing bad. Just as a medicine, although it might be bitter, is beneficial to the person taking it, so too, events orchestrated by Heaven are always beneficial even if they are bitter!" ~ R' Moshe of Kobrin Zt"l.

The Journalist Remembers the Sins

וְסָמַךְ אַהֲרֹן אֶת־שְׁתֵּי יָדָיו עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשָּׂעִיר הַחַי וְהִתְוַדָּה עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־כָּל־פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל־חַטֹּאתָם וְנָתַן אֹתָם עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשָּׂעִיר וְשִׁלַּח בְּיַד־אִישׁ עִתִּי הַמִּדְבָּרָה ***And Aharon shall lean both of his hands upon the live he goat's head and confess upon it....and send it off to the desert with a man of the times. (16:21)***



Rav Meir Shapiro zy"a once jokingly said that this pasuk is a proof that there were newspapers and journalists even in the days of old.

It says that all of the sins of Klal Yisroel have to be confessed and mentioned, meaning that none should be left out. But who remembers every sin ever committed?

The Torah takes care of this problem by saying that "***a man of the times***" should be there.

This title can be understood to refer to a journalist (the Times is a common name for a newspaper that writes about the events of the times). And one can be certain that a journalist not only makes it his business to know about every bad thing anyone does, he also is adept at making up sins that never happened!

"If I had already died and the Almighty told me I could come back to life again, imagine how happy I would be.

Now that I am still alive, shouldn't I still feel that same joy?" ~ R' Nochum of Horodna zt"l.

בס"ד

למודי משה

אחרי מות / קדושים - גליון קס"ט

A Sharp Response from Rav Yonason Eibeshutz

ויאמר ד ' אל משה דבר אל אהרן אחיך ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש

"Hashem told Moshe, speak to Aharon your brother, and tell him that He may not enter the Holy of Holies at all times" (16:2).

Rav Yonason Eibeshutz was once collecting *tzedokah* for a poverty-stricken family in his community. He approached one of the wealthy men in town for a donation. The stingy man attempted to excuse himself by quoting the Gemara in *Kesubos* (50a), which discusses the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (106:3): **אשרי שמרי משפט עשה צדקה בכל עת** – "*Praised are those who guard justice and do acts of righteousness at every moment*".

The Gemara questions how it is possible to do *tzedokah* every second, and answers that the *pasuk* is referring to a person who sustains his own young children. The man claimed that he had no need to contribute to the Rav's cause, for through his children, he was already considered by the Gemara as somebody who gives *tzedokah* **בכל עת** – at every moment.

The quick-witted Rav Yonason responded to this argument by quoting the aformentioned *pasuk* from this week's *parsha* in which Aharon was forbidden to enter the *Kodesh Kodashim* [Holy of Holies] at any time that he desired. Rav Yonason creatively interpreted it as saying: **ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש** – A person who only gives *tzedokah* based on the Gemara's interpretation of the words **בכל עת** will not be permitted to enter holy places. (**R' Ozer Alport**)

"Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die."



18:5 **וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם**

Rashi and Onkelos explain that **וָחַי בָּהֶם** references Olam Haba, that when one lives a life fulfilling the Dvar Hashem, it will enable him to live on after he or she has passed from Olam Hazeh. In order to live in the next world, we must live, so to speak, in this world, by investing our time in Limud HaTorah and Kiyum Hamitzvos.

The Shlah Hakadosh zt"l adds that it's not enough to merely live a life replete with mitzvah observance. "V'chai bahem" means that one must imbue his life of adherence to mitzvos with "life" itself. It's not enough to engage in G-dly behaviour by rote. There needs to be feeling, there needs to be excitement, there needs to be enjoyment. His actions must come alive.



When R' Yisroel Gustman zt"l was only twenty years old, he was appointed a dayan on the beis din of **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky zt"l**. R' Chaim Ozer was the Rav of Vilna, and a leader of world Jewry in the years preceding the second world war. R' Yisroel served as a dayan on R' Chaim Ozer's beis din for twenty-five years. What was the secret to R' Yisroel Gustman's greatness?

Many stories are told of R' Gustman's perseverance and self-sacrifice as he survived and thrived through the horrific years of

the Holocaust. R' Yisroel was a partisan for five years during the war, hiding out in forests together with his wife and daughter, as they fled from the Nazis. He once survived being shot in the head at point blank range. He hid for six months in a pit with his family, living on scraps thrown in by a non-Jewish farmer - and during that time he learned Meseches Zevachim from memory twenty times. His entire existence was Torah - a life of "V'chai bahem."

After the war, R' Gustman came to the **Budapester Rav, R' Yisroel Veltz zt"l**, and asked him, "Does the Rebbe remember the five shailos (halachic questions) that he sent to R' Chaim Ozer a number of years ago?"

The Budapester Rav was surprised at this young man before him and replied, "I do remember the shailos, but I never received answers, because just at that time, the war broke out."

R' Gustman continued, "R' Chaim Ozer gave me the shailos and told me to write answers to them, which I did. I could not send them to you because of the war, but I remember the answers quite clearly." He then proceeded to tell the Budapester Rav, by heart, the answers to all five questions, which he had written five years earlier. Each answer was six or seven pages long! After so much pain, after so many troubles, he remembered each complete answer.

It was his Ameilus b'Torah that protected him through the war and carried him through the rest of his life. He imbued his entire existence with "life" - Torah study and mitzvos, even during the darkest hours. When R' Yisroel came to Eretz Yisroel in 1971, he went to see the great **Steipler Gaon zt"l**. The Steipler could not hear well, and his visitors had to write down what they wanted to say. R' Yisroel asked for a beracha and signed the note, "Yisroel Gustman."

Upon reading the signature, the Steipler asked him, "Was your father a dayan on R' Chaim Ozer's beis din?"

R' Gustman replied, "My father? - That was me!"

The Steipler read the words, and he looked up in astonishment. "That was you?!" exclaimed the Steipler.

The elderly Gaon could not walk well, and sometimes could not even go to shul. When he would walk, he would tread slowly, step by step. Yet, upon hearing who stood before him, the Steipler stood up and ran to R' Yisroel, hugging and kissing him, saying, "You do not know the esteem in which R' Chaim Ozer held you!"

A short while later, R' Yisroel went to visit the **Tchebiner Rav zt"l**, and the same story repeated itself.

"Did you have a relative who was a dayan on R' Chaim Ozer's beis din in Vilna?" asked the Tchebiner Rav. "That was me," came the reply. "That was you?!"

The Tchebiner Rav stood up, donned his hat, and made a beracha, "בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחָלַק מֵחָכְמָתוֹ לִירֵאָיו" (the beracha recited upon seeing an outstanding talmid chacham)!

The Tchebiner Rav said the complete form of the blessing (with Hashem's name), and did so wearing a hat and jacket, the way he would dress when davening to Hashem. He did not make this beracha for everyone, but R' Yisroel Gustman was an unusual person - a talmid chacham who truly used his life to toil in Torah. One who spent his entire life "living" the Torah.

"Guard your spare moments well for they are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be known. Improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life." ~ R' Raphael of Emden zt"l.



A Moment Alone

וְכָל־אָדָ֗ם לֹא־יִהְיֶ֤ה בְּאֹהֶל֙ מוֹעֵ֔ד בְּבֹא֥וֹ לְכַפֵּ֖ר בַּקֹּ֑דֶשׁ עַד־צֵאתֽוֹ *No man shall be in the Ohel Moed when he enters to atone in the holy place, until he leaves*. (*Vayikra* 16:17)

On Shabbos evening, when we come home from shul, we recite Shalom Aleichem.

שלום עליכם- בואכם לשלום- ברכוני לשלום- צאתכם לשלום – We greet the angels, ask them to bless us, and at the end we recite *Tzeis'chem l'shalom*, requesting of the angels to leave.

This is surprising. Why do we ask the angels to leave, saying to them **צאתכם לשלום** ? Why not let them stay; are they bothering us?

The *Chofetz Chaim* was asked this question, and he answered that we are saying **שלום עליכם** to the angels of *Shabbos* who are coming, and **צאתכם לשלום** to the weekday angels, who are leaving.

This is reminiscent of Yaakov's Ladder, on which the angels who protected Yaakov when he was in *chutz la'aretz* ascended, because they were leaving Yaakov as he entered *Eretz Yisrael*, and the angels of *Eretz Yisrael* descended, in order to protect Yaakov inside *Eretz Yisrael*.

There is room to offer an additional answer. Let us consider the presence of angels, *malachim*, in *Beis Hamikdash*. Were there *malachim* there?

In *Beis Hamikdash*, when a *kohen* would perform the regular *avodah*, there was no prohibition for other people to be there at the time.

But when the *Kohen Gadol* entered the *Kodesh Kodoshim* to perform the special *avodah* of Yom Kippur, the Torah commands : **וְכָל־אָדָ֗ם לֹא־ יִהְיֶ֤ה בְּאֹהֶל֙ מוֹעֵ֔ד בְּבֹא֥וֹ לְכַפֵּ֖ר בַּקֹּ֑דֶשׁ עַד־צֵאתֽוֹ** – no other person may be there until he comes out.

The *Midrash* explains what is included in this: Not even those about whom it is written **וּדְמוּת פְּנֵיהֶם פְּנֵי אָדָם**, "*The likeness of their face is like the face of a person*" [are allowed to be there]. Not only ordinary human beings but even the angels were forbidden to be present when the *Kohen Gadol* performed his special *avodah.* - What was the reason for this?

When the *Kohen Gadol* entered the *Kodesh Kodoshim* it was a moment of privacy. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and His people *Yisrael* were alone together. This was a time of *yichud* and connection and deep relationship that required total privacy. So even the angels, despite their awesome greatness and holiness, needed to leave.

When we leave *shul* on *Shabbos* evening, angels escort us home, where we find a *Shabbos* table that is set and ready. We stand up and say *Shalom Aleichem* to the angels. We greet them and ask them to bless us. And then we say to them **צאתכם לשלום**.

We are saying to them, so to speak: My honoured angels, we are about to recite *Kiddush* and hold a *Shabbos* meal, which is called **סעודתא דעתיקא קדישא** , "*The banquet of the Holy Ancient One.*" It is *Hashem's seudah.* At this *seudah,* no one else may be present. So, I respectfully ask of you to please leave now, because this is a moment of *yichud* between *Hashem* and His people *Yisrael,* and at such a time, even angels are not allowed to be there.

"Greatness is not measured by how much Torah one knows, but by how deeply the Torah has reshaped the person who knows it." ~ R' Mordechai Gifter zt'l.



AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation

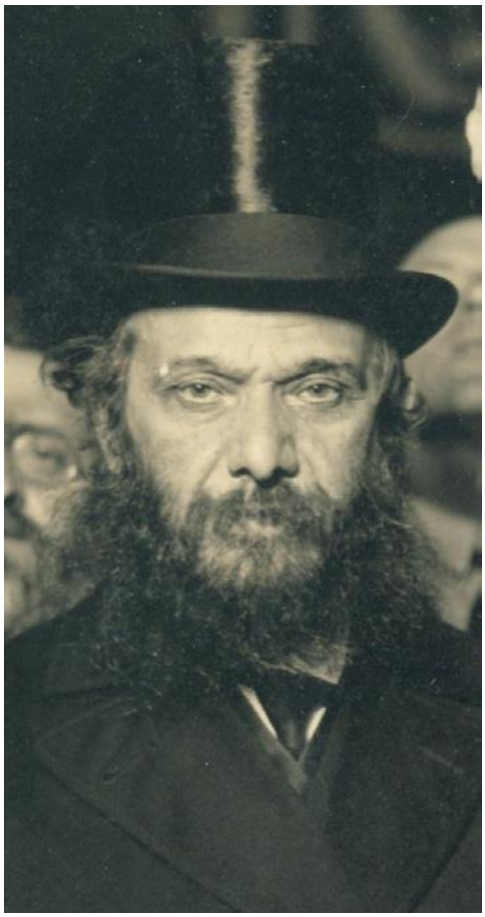
WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

Early Differences - by Rabbi Moshe M. Lieber

שְׁנֵי שְׂעִירֵי עִזִּים לְחַטָּאת Two he-goats for a sin offering (16:5).

Of the two he-goats for the sin-offering, one was offered as a sacrifice in the Beis HaMikdash, and the second one was sent to Azazel in the Wilderness. We can gain insight into why this was done through a principle put forward by **Rav Yisrael Salanter**. There are two reasons a person sins: One is that he is driven by passion. The second is because he wishes to rebel against G-d. Passion can be redirected and used to study Torah and perform mitzvos properly. Rebelliousness, however, cannot be used in the service of G-d.

The two sin-offerings represent these two motivations. The goat, which symbolizes the sins of passion, is offered before G-d, as we dedicate ourselves to use our passions properly. The second he-goat, which represents rebellious sin, is sent far into the Wilderness, for it has no place in the House of G-d and His service (**Rav Yisrael HaKohen of Baltermintz**).



Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein notes the Gemara's ruling (Shevuos 13b) that the two he-goats must be nearly identical in appearance, height and value. Two trains that were on parallel tracks pulled out of the station, one headed east and the other west. As they picked up speed, the distance between them became greater and greater. Although they had been side by side, with time, the gap between them became huge.

This is true of people as well. We often see people who seem to be very different from one another in their attitudes and levels of observance. We might find, however, that this was not always the case. They may have started out together. However, at some early stage in their lives, they began to head along tracks that led in opposite directions. While early on the differences between them seemed minor, with the passage of time the distance becomes astonishing. When people came to the Beis HaMikdash on Yom Kippur, they were taught an important lesson about educating their children. The two he-goats were almost identical. Nevertheless, one found himself brought to the holiest of places, while the other was pushed off a cliff far outside the camp.

This is equally true with children. While two children may initially seem the same, their direction in life will depend on how they set

out. A child who follows the path of Torah is headed toward a life dedicated to Hashem and the holy of holies. If, however, he takes even small steps in another direction, he runs a much higher risk of ending up "outside the camp."

The slightest difference in the beginning can make all the difference later on.

Israeli Flag Flies on The Roof of Ponevezh Yeshivah



Yeshivas Ponevezh continued its annual minhag on Wednesday of hanging an Israeli flag on the yeshivah's roof on Yom Ha'atzmaut.

The minhag began after the establishment of the state on the order of the **Ponevezher Rav, HaGaon HaRav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, z'tl**, to fly the flag on the roof of the yeshivah for eight hours.

Since then, the flag is hung from the yeshivah's roof every year on Yom Ha'atzmaut from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. [YWN]

Once, at the Seudas Shabbos Rav Zalmen Brizel ZY"A exclaimed, "Ah Baal Geivoh (bigshot) is worse than an oiveid avodoh zoroh (idol worshiper). An ovoid avodoh zoroh has only one getchkoh (idol), whereas a baal gaeivoh 'dient yeneh ohn yeneh.' (serves each and every person)".

The Amazing Ahavas Yisroel of the Rebbes of Lelov

The Rebbes of Lelov, zt"l, were all known for their incredible Ahavas Yisroel.

Rav Dovid of Lelov's Ahavas Yisroel was so intense that he simply could not believe that a Jew was capable of doing an Aveirah. He always judged his fellow Yiden favorably. Once, Rav Yitzchok of Vorka tried to prevent Rav Dovid from entering the home of a Jew who would brazenly commit terrible Aveiros in public.

He protested, "Rebbe, this man is truly a Rasha!" But Rav Dovid exclaimed, "But look! There is a Mezuzah on his doorpost! How can you say he's a Rasha?!"

One day, a visitor came to Rav Moshe Mordechai of Lelov and asked him to daven for a woman who was suffering from a heart condition and was in critical condition. The next day, the Rebbe asked a member of his family to find out how the woman was feeling.

When the family member later returned to the Rebbe to inform him that the woman's condition had improved, the Rebbe sighed with relief and told his son, "Now you can bring me a warm drink." Rav Moshe Mordechai was so concerned about the woman's welfare that he couldn't take a drink until he knew she was feeling better!

When Rav Moshe Mordechai fell ill, his pain was so intense that he couldn't sleep for more than a few minutes at a time. One day, after a rare fifteen-minute nap, the Rebbe told his Shamash that his grandfather, Rav Dovid Tzvi Shlomo, had visited him in a dream.

The Shamash said hopefully, "I'm sure the Rebbe took advantage of this opportunity to ask for a Refuah Sheleimah."

But Rav Moshe Mordechai replied, "When I saw my grandfather, I didn't think of my personal troubles. I asked him to plead with Hashem to put an end to the Tzaros of Klal Yisroel!"

The Arizal's Advice to His Distinguished Host

A distinguished Yid once had the special opportunity of hosting the Arizal in his home, and he went to great lengths to show his appreciation and Kavod for the great Tzadik.

Just before the Arizal left, he thanked his host for all his kindness asked him, "What can I do for you? How can I repay you for your outstanding hospitality?"

The host replied, "When my wife and I got married, Baruch Hashem we were bentched with children. But then suddenly, for no apparent reason, we have stopped having children for many years. Can you please daven for us to have more children?"



The Arizal said to the host, "At one time, there was a ladder that was at the side of your house, and the chickens would use it to reach the water bucket that was on the shelf near the top of the ladder. One day, your wife instructed the maid to remove the ladder.

"Certainly, her intention was not to cause any pain for the chickens, but, inadvertently, this is what happened. The chickens couldn't reach the water anymore. As a result of this, the chickens have been unhappy. Hashem has compassion for all of His creations, as we say in Ashrei, Hashem is good to everyone and has mercy on all of His creations.

"Hashem sees the distress of these chickens. If you can correct this, Hashem will answer your Tefilos and you will be Bentched again with a child. The man immediately returned the ladder to its original place, and shortly after, the couple was Bentched with a child!

Unbelievable Stories of Our Gedolim Stories by Rabbi David Ozeri - Stories to Inspire

The following text is an ultra-verbatim, fully expanded written rendering of stories shared by Rabbi David Ozeri. Nothing has been shortened, summarized, or condensed. The stories appear back-to-back in continuous form, preserving the narrative flow, dialogue, pacing, and emotional weight of the original delivery.

The Yeshivos That Escaped the Shoah

In the early years of World War II, as Nazi Germany swept across Europe, Jewish communities were being dismantled piece by piece. Borders closed. Governments turned hostile. Torah life was collapsing. People did not know where to turn, and there was panic everywhere.

At that moment, Roshei Yeshiva and Gedolei Torah were faced with an impossible responsibility: how to save Torah itself. Not individuals, not families alone, but entire yeshivos — rabbeim, bochurim, and the living chain of mesorah.

They mapped out a route that sounded completely insane. From Poland and Lithuania, across Soviet Russia, under the noses of hostile regimes, all the way to Shanghai, China. People said openly that the Gedolim had lost their minds. They said, "You are going straight through danger." They said, "This is suicide."

They said, "An entire yeshiva cannot survive such a journey." But the Gedolim were not operating on human logic. They were guided by daas Torah and siyata d'shmaya. Those who listened survived. Those who trusted escaped. - Those yeshivos rebuilt Torah worlds that exist until today.

We do not see what they see. We do not understand what they understand. But history itself testified that they were right.

Rav Elchanan Wasserman and the Muddy Boots

Before the Holocaust, Rav Elchanan Wasserman, Rosh Yeshiva of Baranovitch, would personally travel to raise funds for his yeshiva. One winter day, after trudging through muddy, unpaved roads, he arrived at the home of a wealthy supporter wearing heavy boots.

As he approached the front door, he remembered that the home had a magnificent white carpet at the entrance. Not wanting to dirty it, he went around to the back door and knocked. The homeowner opened the door, greeted him warmly, and then became serious. "Rebbe," he said, "you are ruining my daughters' chinuch."

Rav Elchanan was shocked. "How?"

The man pleaded, "How could you enter through the back? Please go back to the front door and walk across my white carpet with your muddy boots. Let my daughters see that kavod haTorah comes before beauty, before luxury, before my home."

Rav Elchanan went back and entered through the front.

Both daughters later married Roshei Yeshiva of Telz.

Rav Moshe Feinstein and the Pacemaker

Before undergoing pacemaker surgery, Rav Moshe Feinstein could not sleep. He conducted a complete cheshbon hanefesh, reviewing every mitzvah and every possible failing.

He told his son that he could not find any aveirah — except for feeling satisfaction decades earlier after winning an argument with a chavrusa. That sensitivity, he believed, explained why his heart needed repair.

Rav Shach and the Promise That Could Not Be Broken

Rabbi David Ozeri once brought a shy, unmarried bachur to Rav Shach. Rav Shach demanded that the bachur promise to get married that year. The bachur resisted, cried, and felt incapable. Rav Shach refused to let him leave. Only after the bachur promised did Rav Shach give a bracha.

Six months later, the bachur married a girl whose family had also received a promise from Rav Shach that same week.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky and the Neder Remembered

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky once said casually that when he turned ninety, like the Chafetz Chaim, he would wear Rabbeinu Tam tefillin. Those words became a neder.

Fifty years later, on his ninetieth birthday, he remembered and fulfilled that promise exactly.

The Steipler Gaon and the Surgery That Saved a Life

Rabbi David Ozeri related a personal story involving a close relative who became dangerously ill at a young age. The doctors examined him carefully and said there was nothing left to do. The illness was terminal. There was one possible surgery, not to cure him, but only to make him comfortable in his final days. The doctors warned that the patient was so weak that he could die on the operating table.

Rabbi Ozeri did not know what to do. Instead of deciding on his own, he boarded a plane and flew to Eretz Yisrael. He went straight to the home of the Steipler Gaon. The Steipler was already elderly and hard of hearing, so Rabbi Ozeri wrote down the entire medical situation in detail.

The Steipler read every word carefully. After finishing, he looked up and said firmly, "Go home and do the surgery immediately."

Rabbi Ozeri leaned in and raised his voice. "But they say he could die on the table!"

The Steipler raised his own voice and responded, "Ani mevin! Ani mevin! I understand! Go home and do the surgery."

Rabbi Ozeri returned home and pushed everyone — doctors, family, and anyone hesitant. The surgery was scheduled for forty-five minutes. It lasted eight hours. The family was convinced the patient had died and the doctors were hiding the truth.

Finally, the surgeon emerged and said, "Cured." It was not cancer at all. It was a massive benign tumour, the size of a grapefruit, growing in the duodenum.

After seven bypasses, it was removed completely. The patient lived another twenty years, almost exactly to the day.

The Vilna Gaon and the Pot of Food

In Vilna lived the Vilna Gaon, the undisputed Gadol HaDor, though he held no official position. The town's official posek was Rav Shmuel. One Friday, a desperately poor family had only one pot of food for Shabbos when a serious kashrus question arose. The mother sent her son to the Vilna Gaon. The father, unaware, ran to Rav Shmuel.

The son returned saying the Gaon ruled it treif. The father returned saying Rav Shmuel ruled it kosher. Terrified of undermining halachic authority, Rav Shmuel ran to the Vilna Gaon and pleaded that his authority not be destroyed. - The Vilna Gaon said, "I am coming."

They went together to the home. The Vilna Gaon was prepared to eat the food. Before anything happened, a candle made of animal fat fell directly into the pot, rendering it unquestionably treif.

The Vilna Gaon had been prepared to sacrifice his own honor to preserve kavod haTorah.

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld and the Runaway Chassan

At a wedding in Yerushalayim, the chassan panicked moments before the chuppah and ran away.

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld arrived, gathered the bochurim, and promised olam hazeh and olam haba to anyone who would marry the kallah that night. - One man agreed.

Fifty years later, he testified that he had everything.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

Operation Wedding



It was early morning on June 15, 1970 – barely light outside – when **Yosef Mendelevich**, and his friends, made their way across the cracked pavement of Smolnaya Airport. Their destination – a wedding. That was the story they'd given the airport staff, anyway. So why were their hearts pounding and their palms slick with sweat? They weren't worried about flowers, seating plans, or getting to the chuppah on time. Not even close.

You see, this wasn't a wedding party at all. If anything went wrong with their flight, they wouldn't be dealing with irate mechutanim or missing the shmorg. They could be facing ..a firing squad!

Five years earlier: Yosef Mendelevitch was only a teenager when he attended a secret meeting in a *beis hakvaros.* It was Chanukah, 1965, and the Jewish-Russian teen barely knew what that meant. Communism, though only about 50 years old, had already

done a very effective job of wiping out Jewish education. But as he watched someone light the Chanukah candles among the graves, Yosef felt something burning inside himself. Though he barely understood what he was witnessing, he stood up and made a promise, to himself, to live as a *Yid* – even if doing so meant risking his life.

After that night, Yosef joined an underground group that held secret meetings. Their biggest wish – to get out of the Soviet Union and reach Eretz Yisrael, where they could, finally, live openly as Jews.

Slight problem: back then you couldn't just book a plane ticket, pack some Bissli in your carry-on, and waltz out of the USSR.

To move to another country, you needed an exit visa – but applying for one – was considered an act of treason. *Leaving the Soviet Union? Why would anyone want to leave this paradise?* Anyone who dared apply, was labelled a "refusenik." Instead of getting permission to leave, they usually earned something else entirely: losing their job, getting arrested, being shipped to Siberia, or just…disappearing.

But Yosef and his friends wanted out at any cost.

In the Soviet Union, walls had ears, floors had ears, even teapots had ears. (Seriously – Russians bugged samovars.) So Yosef Mendelevich and his refusenik buddies met only in places the KGB couldn't easily monitor. Parks and forests where their voices got lost in the wind. Quiet cemeteries, because the dead were the only ones guaranteed not to be listening. If they talked in an apartment, they'd keep the water running full blast.

How to get out? The question consumed them. And then, they came up with an insane plan: They'd hijack an aeroplane…and fly right out of the country! It seemed crazy…but there was a chance it might work. They'd book themselves as a cheerful group of 'wedding guests', board a plane, and once in the air, have one of the refuseniks,

who was a pilot – Mark Dymshits – take control. He'd land in a remote spot, leave the real pilots behind unharmed and with snacks, and fly everyone to Sweden. From there, they'd make their way to Eretz Yisrael.

At first, they imagined dozens of people escaping together. But the more they ironed out the details, the more obvious the danger became. The KGB were everywhere. There were all sorts of dark jokes about it: *Comrade, whisper! The mice in this building report to the KGB immediately. Don't talk in your sleep. The KGB already knows what you dreamed. If you lose your keys, ask the KGB. They've had a copy for years.* How could they keep a plan, that involved a large number of people, secret?

So they cut the numbers. Only a core team would go: Mark Kymshits, the pilot; Eduard Kuznetsov, one of the leaders of the plan who had already spent years in prison; his wife, Sylva Zalmanson and her brothers Wolf and Israel, Yosef Mendelevich, and about nine others.

As they ironed out the details, Yosef and his friends became suspicious that they were being watched by the Soviet authorities. But they, bravely, decided to forge ahead anyway. *What's the worst that could happen?* they asked each other. The Russians might shoot their plane out of the air, that's what. On the other hand, even if the plan failed, it would draw worldwide attention to the terrible plight of the Yidden trapped in the Soviet Union.

Early that summer morning, the group walked towards the small plane waiting on the edge of Smolnaya Airport. They moved in twos and threes, just like any other passengers heading to a short domestic flight. They'd bought every seat on the small Soviet aeroplane, just to make sure no innocent passenger would end up caught in a hijacking.

They were close. So close. Just a few more yards and they'd be climbing the metal steps into the plane they had spent months planning to seize.

But….the KGB had been waiting for this exact moment. They'd managed to get hold of every detail of their plan…and they were now lying in wait.

They pounced. Agents grabbed Yosef Mendelevich and forced his hands behind his back. Other agents did the same with the others, and within seconds, every member of the group was restrained. Within minutes, they were being pushed into vans and driven away for interrogation.

Chanukah 1970. It had been six months since the would-be hijackers had been arrested and the courtroom was packed for the trial. Reporters later described the atmosphere as 'electric terror.' When it was Sylva Zalmanson's turn to be questioned, she stood, faced the judges, and declared, *"Im eshkacheich Yerushalayim, tishkach yemini."* [If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill] - then translated those words into Russian. The judges were not impressed. Dymshits and Kusnetsov were sentenced to death. Mendelevich and Zalmanson received 12 and 10 years of harsh labour, respectively. The remaining defendants were given sentences ranging from 4 to 15 years, depending on their roles.

The judge may have been unmoved by Sylva's words, but yidden around the world were galvanized. As news of the trial landed on front pages of newspapers from New York to London to Paris, Jewish communities erupted – there were marches, rallies, emergency meetings, student demonstrations, and nonstop petitions demanding the prisoners' release, besides the tephillas being said by yidden around the world. Suddenly the plight of the trapped Soviet Jews – something the Kremlin had spent decades trying to keep quiet – was

global news. The Soviets thought they had crushed a plot. Instead, they had ignited a movement.

The refuseniks might have been freezing in Soviet forced labour camps but because of all the international attention to their plight, the Soviets were under tremendous pressure. Within one year of the trial, more exit visas were granted to Soviet Jews than ever before. By 1973 more than 35,000 yidden had finally been allowed to go free.

The death sentences for Dymshits and Kuznetsov were commuted to life in the *gulag,* and these 2 were eventually freed in a prisoner exchange between the USA and USSR in 1979. The rest were freed after serving their full sentences.

Throughout his ordeal, Yosef Mendelevich secretly davened every day. He fasted on Yom Kippur even though he was starving, and kept Shabbos as best as he could in the prison camp. After 11 long years in the gulag, Mendelevich was finally freed. He headed straight for Eretz Yisrael where, today, Rabbi Mendelevich spends his days teaching the Torah that he had risked everything to reclaim.

Good Shabbos Aaron Leitner

Don't Love Studying Torah?

Someone once said to the **Pnei Menachem of Gur zt"l**, "What can I do? I just don't enjoy studying Torah?"

The Pnei Menachem replied, "What can I do? I love studying Torah?"

Meaning, the Pnei Menachem wished he could also have such challenges because then the value of his Torah and its reward for studying it, would be far greater!

Venezuela and the Jews



Venezuela has been home to a Jewish presence for nearly half a millennium. Here's a brief history of Jews in Venezuela and the crucial role Jews have played in Venezuelan history. That history is especially relevant today, as Venezuelan officials once again recycle an old antisemitic trope, falsely claiming that the recent capture of Nicolás Maduro has "Zionist" motivations—echoing centuries of conspiratorial accusations used to scapegoat Jews during moments of political crisis.

Secret Jews

Jews likely settled in the territory of present-day Venezuela close to 500 years ago. After a period of German exploration, Spain began settling the area, eventually forming the Kingdom of New Grenada, made up of present-day Columbia, Panama, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Spain imposed their harsh Inquisition on colonies in Latin America, forbidding Jews from living in Spanish territories and imposing the death penalty on anyone found to be practicing Jewish rites in secret. Nevertheless, historians believe that some crypto-Jews, Jews who converted to Christianity yet maintained their

Jewish practice and identity in secret, lived in South America. Many settled in the Venezuelan towns of Maracaibo and Caracas.

Early Venezuela was particularly exposed to Jews given its proximity to the island of Curacao, just 40 miles off its coast. Originally settled by Spain, Curacao fell into Dutch hands in the 1630s and – free from the strictures of Spain's Inquisition – began to develop a vibrant Jewish community which continues to this day.

Tucacas, a Jewish Town

In the late 1600s and early 1700s there was one part of present-day Venezuela that wasn't bound by Spain's draconian Inquisition: the town of Tucacas near Venezuela's coast, which was governed as a separate Dutch territory for a time.

In 1693, a group of Jews moved to Tucacas from Curacao and built a largely Jewish town. Tucacas Jews cultivated land, raised cattle, and traded a wide range of goods with merchants from throughout the area, including from modern day Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. Tucacas became a major hub of the cacao trade and a bustling merchant town where visitors came to shop for European goods. Its synagogue was named *Santa Imandad,* "The Holy Brotherhood", and its president, Samuel Hebreo, also served as the town's mayor, under the title "Senor de las Tucacas."

Tucacas was never safe from Spanish attacks. The Jews living there built a fortification around the town and fought off Spanish sorties with the help of other local residents and the Dutch navy. In 1717, Tucacas was incorporated into the rest of Venezuela in Spanish-run New Grenada, which announced its new priority: eliminating what they called the Jews' "illegal" trade in Tucacas.

New Grenada's Viceroy appointed a special official to capture Tucacas; he attacked the town with 40 ships and a specially built army dedicated to eradicating the region of Jews. Tucacas finally fell in 1720. Spanish troops destroyed the synagogue. Tucacas' Jews

burned their own houses down rather than have them fall to Spanish hands. Tucacas' sizeable Jewish majority fled to nearby Curacao; it took dozens of boats – 40 ships by one count – to ferry all the Jews to safety from the marauding Spanish troops.

Jews Fighting for Independence

Known as the Liberator of the Americas. Simon Bolivar fought Spanish troops, eventually creating an independent state in present-day Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. Some of his earliest and most ardent supporters were Jews. Richard and Abraham Meza, brothers who lived in nearby Curacao, financially supported Bolivar's army.



When Spanish forces forced Bolivar out of Venezuela in 1812, he retreated to Curacao, where another Curacao Jew, Mordechai Ricardo, came to his aid, offering houses for Bolivar and his family to stay in. One of these houses still stands: it has a distinctive octagonal shape and is today known as the Octagonal Museum in Curacao.

Bolivar eventually returned to continue fighting Spain. Two Jewish Generals – Gen. Benjamin Henriquez and Gen. Juan Bartolomeu de Sola – fought with Bolivar with distinction. In 1821, Bolivar created a massive country called the Republic of Grand Colombia, which gave religious freedom to Jews for the first time in the region's history. In 1830, after Bolivar's death, Venezuela withdrew from this project and declared itself a separate republic. Amidst the excitement of this new political experiment, a group of Jews once again moved to Venezuela from Curacao, this time setting up a Jewish community in the coastal city of Coro.

Venezuelan Pogrom

By 1831, Coro was home to about 20 Jewish families who prospered in the new nation of Venezuela. Local non-Jewish inhabitants resented the Jews' success and rose up to attack the Jews of Coro. Local Venezuelan officials intervened and put down the uprising, but told Coro's Jews that they would have to pay twice as much in business taxes to reimburse the new country of Venezuela for protecting them. Despite this burden, and despite the hostility of the population, the Jewish merchants of Coro prospered.



Synagogue in Coro

The Jews of Coro paid this tax until 1855 when locals once again turned on the Jews in their midst and attacked them. A direct handbill blamed the "distorted avarice" of the Jews for the "misery and helplessness" of the populace.

It concluded by warning the Jews to leave Coro. Two nights later, a band of 30 armed men wandered through the streets, "shooting at Jewish homes, tearing doors down and looting the shops" belonging to prominent Jewish merchants.

This time, city officials refused to protect their Jews and demanded that Coro's Jewish community leave. All of the Jewish residents of the city - 168 people - fled Venezuela, moving to the safety of nearby Curacao.

On May 6, 1858, a pamphlet circulated in Coro proclaiming, "The people of Coro do not want Jews. Get out, get out like the dogs; and

if you don't leave soon the vultures will enjoy your corpses." - "With great joy in our hearts we see today our land is free of its oppressors . . . The Jews have been expelled by *the people*." [With them, of course, went the funds for any loans.]

Restricting Jewish Immigration

For generations, the Jewish population of Venezuela remained tiny. An 1891 census found there were 247 Jews in the entire country; the population was 475 in 1917 and 882 in 1926. With the rise of fascism in Europe, some German and eastern European Jews began to move to Venezuela, a development that seemingly angered the nation's non-Jewish population. While threats to Jews were rising in Europe, Venezuela authorities decided to drastically restrict Jewish immigration.

In 1938 Venezuela was one of just 33 nations that participated in the Evian Conference in France, devoted to finding countries around the world that were willing to take in Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria. The Evian Conference was called after the *Anschluss*, Germany's absorption of Austria, which saw spontaneous orgies of antisemitism across Austria.

Crowds of victorious Austrians rushed into Vienna's Jewish neighborhood, where they dragged Jews out of their homes and forced them to scrub the streets. Thousands of Jews were beaten up, killed, and deported to concentration camps. At Evian, in France, 33 nations debated whether any might be willing to open their doors to save fleeing Jews.

The answer was no. One by one, the 33 participating countries explained why they were prepared to admit only small amounts of Jews. Venezuela declared that they could take only Jewish agricultural workers. They restricted nearly all Jewish immigration until long after the conclusion of World War II. Only about 600 German Jews were able to move to Venezuela during the Holocaust.

Welcoming Sephardi Jews

Jews began to move to Venezuela in greater numbers in the late 1940s. By 1950, about 6,000 Jews called Venezuela home. From 1950 to 1958, Venezuela was governed by the dictatorial President Marcos Perez Jimenez and wasn't seen as an attractive destination to which to move. With Pres. Jimenez's fall from power in 1958, about a thousand Jews moved to Venezuela from throughout the Sephardi world, including Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

After the Six Day War between Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria and Israel, life became even more difficult than it already was for Jews in Morocco, and some began moving to Venezuela. Rabbi Pynchas Brener, Venezuela's Chief Rabbi from 1967 until his emigration to Miami in 2011, recalls that "after the 1967 War, there was an influx of Sephardic Jews came from the Middle East and North Africa, primarily from Morocco." They were drawn to Venezuela's because of the nation's then "burgeoning economy, stable political life, and thriving civil society. The tolerant nature of Venezuelan society added to the attraction Venezuela held for Jews." By the mid-1990s, about 25,000 Jews, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, called Venezuela home.



Holocaust Memorial at the Jewish Cemetery in Caracas

Growing Hostility to Jews Under Pres. Hugo Chavez

Populist President Hugo Chavez's election in 1998 marked a major turning point for Venezuela's Jews. Pres. Chavez was outspokenly antisemitic. In his 2005 Christmas address, Chavez said that "the descendants of those who crucified

Christ" have taken the world's "riches" from those who are meant to have them and are hogging them for themselves. It was the rawest form of antisemitism and one that Chavez encouraged during his long rule from 1999 until his death in 2013.



"Judíos (Jews) Go Home" graffiti on the wall of the Israeli Embassy in Caracas.

Rabbi Brener recalled: "Before Chavez, every president of Venezuela visited my home on one occasion or another, and also visited my synagogue…Under Chavez, things began to change as the government began to make alliances with states such as Iran and related non-state actors such as Hezbollah, which historically have been hostile to Israel and Judaism, and because of these relationships the government under Chavez became more rhetorically hostile to us." Chavez began accusing Jews and Jewish institutions, including Rabbi Brener, of being spies for Israel or the United States. Even as his country fell apart because of his disastrous economic policies, Chavez directed his spy agencies to spy on Venezuelan Jews.

Meanwhile, Pres. Chavez turned his back on the West and embraced Iran. Between 2001 and 2013, Chavez and his Iranian counterparts exchanged two dozen diplomatic visits, signed about 300 agreements, and Iran had invested approximately $15 billion in Chavez's Venezuela. In 2008, Pres. Chavez broke off Venezuela's diplomatic contact with Israel. This new political tilt affected ordinary Venezuelans' views of Jews. Antisemitism skyrocketed and Jews began eyeing the exits, leaving Venezuela for Miami, Israel, and elsewhere.

Raiding Jewish Institutions

In the early morning of November 29, 2004, over two dozen armed police officers descended on the *Centro Social, Cultural y Deportivo Hebraica,* a Jewish school and community center, just minutes before about 1,500 students were due to arrive. The officers were ostensibly there to search for "evidence" that local Jews had murdered State Attorney Danilo Anderson, who'd been killed a week and a half earlier in a car bombing.

The police occupied the building for hours. Salomon Cohen, president of Venezuela's central Jewish organization the CAIV (*Confederacion de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela*) later recalled the raid as "a direct attack on Venezuela's Jewish community. They wanted to let us know who is in charge." (Though the police didn't find any weapons or evidence, they nonetheless filed a complaint against the center.)

Three years later, Venezuelan forces raided the *Hebraica* building again, ostensibly looking for weapons. The raid came on the eve of a major national political referendum and seemed clearly designed to terrify the 900 Jews who were attending a wedding nearby and to send them a strong signal that Jews weren't welcome in Venezuela.



Caracas' Tiferet Israel synagogue

Synagogue Attacks

Caracas' Tiferet Israel synagogue is one of the oldest in the city and has been the site of several terrifying attacks.

In 2004, and again in 2009, Pres. Chavez openly took Hamas' side in their conflicts with Israel and held public demonstrations to

excoriate Israel. He baselessly accused of orchestrating a "Holocaust," of being evil, and of seeking to harm Venezuela. In the midst of a febrile atmosphere, demonstrators marched on Tiferet Israel in 2004, calling then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon a war criminal. In 2009, in the midst of Hamas attacks on Israel, Pres. Chavez broke off diplomatic relations with Israel and held anti-Israel rallies in Caracas.

On Shabbat, January 31, 2009, a large group of armed protestors, including a dozen police officers, once again attacked Tiferet Israel, breaking into the synagogue and tying up the building's two security guards. The intruders then rampaged through the building, occupying it for hours. They destroyed the synagogue's Torah scrolls, wrote graffiti saying "death to Jews" and "property of Islam," and calling for Jews to be expelled from Venezuela on the walls, and stole a list of Jews living in the city.

A month later, Tiferet Israel received a bomb threat. When synagogue members later cleaned up, they did so under armed guard. Pres. Chavez had clearly ratcheted up the tension and anti-Jewish hatred in Venezuela, yet he baselessly insisted the synagogue attack was the work of his political opponents. A month after the second Tiferet Israel attack, someone threw a bomb into a residential area in Caracas with a large Jewish community; luckily, no one was hurt, though the Jewish community in Caracas was left terrified.

Fleeing Venezuela

Given this long history of extreme antisemitism, Venezuelan Jews have been fleeing in droves. Today, just 4,000 Jews remain in Venezuela.

Yet Jewish life still goes on. There are 18 synagogues, schools, and Jewish charities. Even though Venezuela currently has no diplomatic ties with Israel, residents note that Venezuelan Jews are highly Zionist, and support a range of Israel-related causes.

Blaming Israel for Pres. Maduro's Arrest

These days, blaming Jews and Israel for perceived wrongs is baked into Venezuelan politics. When Pres. Maduro claimed victory in his disputed 2024 presidential election, crowds took to the streets protesting his obvious theft of the election. Pres. Maduro baselessly blamed "international Zionism" for "supporting" and financing the protestors and Venezuela's opposition parties. "All the communication power of Zionism, which controls all the social networks, the satellites and all the power is behind" the protests, he implausibly claimed.

In the days since Pres. Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores were captured by the United States, Venezuela's acting president, Delcy Rodriguez, has again blamed Jews for Venezuela's misfortunes, baselessly blaming "Zionist"s for their arrests.

As Venezuela contemplates this new political chapter in their country, they will have to address the deep-seated hostility to Jews that has long infected their politics if it wishes to move on and restore a more moderate era of political discourse.

Today, all that remains of the Jewish community of Coro are a few small commercial establishments owned by the descendants of the early Jewish settlers, and the old cemetery in which the settlers are buried.

The Terror Victim's Request That Changed Everything By Daniel Agalar - Stories to Inspire

I would like to share with you an incredible story that I just read in the book **Chesed Under Fire by Rav Nachman Seltzer**. The story takes place right after October 7th in Eretz Yisrael. Terror attacks were happening, the war was raging, soldiers and civilians were being injured, and hospitals were overflowing.

During that time, there was a Yid named Shai Graucher. Shai felt a deep sense of achrayus to remind himself to be there for Yidden who were hurting. He went from hospital to hospital, visiting the wounded, sitting with them, encouraging them.

Everywhere he went, he asked the same simple question: "What can I do for you that will make you feel better?" Sometimes the answers were simple. One soldier wanted something to distract himself. Another wanted something to lift his spirits.

Then one day, Shai walked into the room of a young Haredi girl who had been injured in a terrorist attack. Her jacket had been torn by a bullet. Her mother sat quietly at her side. Shai assumed she might ask for a new jacket or clothing for Shabbos — something understandable, something normal. So he asked his question.

Her answer was completely unexpected. With tears in her eyes, she said there was only one thing she wanted. She explained that her father was a Rosh Kollel. In order to support the kollel, he had to travel frequently, often to America, to raise money. Every trip meant leaving his family. Every trip meant less time learning, less time teaching, and less time at home.

"If there were enough money," she said, "so my father wouldn't have to travel for a while — so he could stay in Eretz Yisrael, learn, and be with us — that would make me happy."

Here was a girl who had just been wounded, who could have asked for anything — and all she wanted was to support Torah.

Shai was deeply moved. He told her, "First, I'm giving you money for a new jacket. That's not a question." Then he said, "Now let me take care of your father." He asked for the father's phone number, stepped outside, and made the call. Shai introduced himself and said, "I'm here in the hospital with your daughter. I asked her what would make her happy. The only thing she wants is to help you raise money for the kollel."

Shai asked how many avreichim were in the kollel. Then he said, "We're wiring you $26,000 today." Just like that. The money was transferred that afternoon. - But HaKadosh Baruch Hu was only beginning to show how far this chesed would go. When word spread, a Yid from Lakewood heard the story and was so inspired that he immediately started a campaign and raised another $26,000 for the same kollel. Now the Rosh Kollel could stay home, learn with menuchas hanefesh, teach his talmidim, and be with his family.

Months later, Shai was riding bicycles with his children when a yeshiva bochur suddenly ran over to him, crying. The bochur told Shai, "I was slipping. I couldn't sit and learn anymore. I felt myself spiralling." "But then I saw the clip of that injured girl. I heard what she asked for. I saw what real chesed and kavod haTorah look like — and something changed." "That day, I went back to yeshiva. I'm learning three sedarim a day. And it's because of that story."

Later, Shai met the bochur's mother. She told him, "You don't understand. It's not just that my son is learning again. He loves learning." And it all came from that one moment of chesed. One girl. One request. One act of chesed. A Rosh Kollel. A kollel. A yeshiva bochur. And untold others. Lives were changed.

The chapter ends with Shai realizing something very powerful: Sometimes Hashem sends us a message quietly — through chesed, through Torah, through doing what needs to be done without fanfare. A reminder to keep going. To keep helping. To keep being mechazek Yidden and Torah wherever we can. Because when we support Torah, we never know how many neshamos are being lifted along the way.

Even the smallest details of your life are decreed from Above. - Nothing happens by accident. ~ Based on the Baal HaTanya.

Rabbi Yoel Gold - Of Sensitivity and Scorpions

I once spoke to Rabbi Yaacov Haber from Ramat Bet Shemesh, who shared with me the following.

When Rabbi Haber was newly married, he and his wife lived in a small apartment in Jerusalem. In their neighborhood there was a homeless Jewish man who would knock on doors asking for a bit of money or a warm meal. As young newlyweds, Rabbi Haber and his wife felt compassion and invited him in. They gave him food, treated him with dignity, and welcomed him from time to time.

Over time, however, the situation began to change and the man grew increasingly comfortable. He started coming almost daily, and eventually, he stopped knocking altogether. He would simply walk in. The boundaries blurred, and the couple found themselves unsure how to handle it.

Eventually, their lease ended. They were also expecting a child and needed a larger apartment. Before moving, they asked a halachic authority whether they were obligated to inform the homeless man of their new address. Given the circumstances, they were told that they were not. They moved, and the man no longer knew where they lived. Naturally, the visits stopped.



Shortly after settling into the new apartment, one morning, Rabbi Haber's wife put on her shoe and felt something inside. She shook it out—and a scorpion fell to the floor.

Alarmed, they called an exterminator. Yet nothing more was found. But then another scorpion appeared. And another, this time in the kitchen, and then in the bathroom. They brought in multiple professionals, but no one could explain what was happening. The apartment was deemed safe, yet the scorpions kept appearing.

At a loss, Rabbi Haber decided to seek guidance from Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg zt"l. When he described the situation, Rav Scheinberg responded calmly. "You have scorpions? Let's see what the scorpion says."

He opened Perek Shirah, the ancient text that assigns a verse of praise to every element of creation, and looked up the scorpion. The Pasuk read:

"Hashem is good to all, and His mercy extends to all His creations" (*Tehillim* 145:9).

Rav Scheinberg offered no interpretation. He simply said, "I don't know your story. Take this message and do with it what you will." Rabbi Haber left, still unsure what it meant. But as he boarded a bus to return home, he looked out the window, and there he was. The homeless man. Walking the street.

In that moment, everything clicked.

"Stop the bus!" he called out. He ran off, embraced the man warmly, and said, "I haven't seen you in so long. We moved. Please, come with me now." He brought him home, gave him a hot meal, and treated him once again with warmth and kindness.

From that moment on, the scorpions never appeared again.

This story is not a simplistic message about ignoring boundaries. Halachah matters and boundaries matter. The couple had acted correctly according to the ruling they were given. But *teshuvah* is not only about technical correctness. It is about repairing what was broken, restoring compassion where it quietly slipped away, and responding when Heaven nudges us to look again at our actions.

Hashem, in His great mercy, sometimes sends us messages not to accuse us, but to invite us to grow. *Teshuvah* is more than just regret. It is the courage to make things right.

One Act of Chesed — Two Lives Saved By Rabbi Shlomo Farhi - Stories to Inspire

There was a Jew living in Eretz Yisrael named Michael. A simple man, quietly supporting his family, living modestly and gratefully. One day, he went for what he thought was a routine medical checkup. Nothing dramatic. Nothing urgent. But the doctor grew unusually serious. "Your numbers are not normal," he said. "I need you to come back immediately for further tests."

Those tests revealed devastating news. Michael was suffering from a rare and life-threatening condition. Without a highly specialized operation, his life was in danger. And worse still—there was no one in Israel capable of performing the procedure. There was only one specialist in the world who could help him: a professor in London.

Michael was stunned. He had walked in for a routine visit, and now he was being told his life depended on a complex surgery abroad. The cost was staggering—$60,000. Michael barely had money for groceries. He turned to every avenue he could. A gemach helped him scrape together funds for a plane ticket. Another organization managed to collect $5,000. But it was nowhere near enough. The gap was impossible.

Finally, someone gave him a name. "There is a benefactor in Tel Aviv," they said. "A man known for his generosity. His name is Chaim. Maybe—just maybe—he can help."

With no other options, Michael took a bus from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. He walked up the long path to a beautiful home set back from the street. His heart pounded as he knocked. Chaim opened the door. Michael told his story—his diagnosis, his children, his fear, the surgery in London. He finished speaking, unsure of what would come next. Chaim asked him to wait a moment. He went inside, returned shortly thereafter, and placed a check in Michael's hand—for the entire remaining amount. The full $60,000. - Michael was speechless.

When he finally found his voice, he asked, "Why? What made you do this?"

Chaim answered simply: "I heard the desperation in your voice. I heard your concern for your family. And today, Hashem sent me unexpected funds from a business sale. I could reinvest it… or I could use it for something eternal."

Michael left overwhelmed with gratitude. Before traveling to London, he decided to express his hakaras hatov. He purchased a beautiful silver menorah and arranged for it to be delivered to Chaim's home—specifically during the time of his surgery.

The surgery in London was successful. Baruch Hashem, Michael's life was saved. That very night, the silversmith set out to deliver the menorah. When he arrived at Chaim's home, there was no answer. He rang again. Nothing. Then he heard something faint. A sound of groaning. He listened closely. It wasn't an animal. It was coming from inside the house.

He made a split-second decision. He broke down the door. Inside, Chaim lay on the floor—alone, clutching his chest, suffering a massive heart attack. Emergency services were called. CPR was administered. Chaim was rushed to the hospital. His life was saved. - Later, when he regained consciousness, Chaim asked who had found him. They brought in the silversmith. "I only came," the man said quietly, "to deliver a gift—from a man whose life you saved today."

At that very moment—while Michael's life was being restored in London—Chaim's own life was being returned to him in Tel Aviv.

The pasuk tells us: **שַׁלַּח לַחְמְךָ עַל־פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם כִּי־בְרֹב הַיָּמִים תִּמְצָאֶנּוּ** – "*Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it.*" (Koheles 11:1) And Chazal teach us: **צְדָקָה תַּצִּיל מִמָּוֶת** (Mishlei 10:2) - One act of chesed. Two lives saved. Hashem runs the world - measure for measure, kindness for kindness.

Hashem Was Writing This Story for 80 Years By Rabbi Joey Haber - Stories to Inspire

Recently, someone reached out to me with a simple message. "Rabbi," he wrote, "I have Holocaust stories. I think they're stories you could share."

I told him I was interested. I mentioned that I would soon be traveling to Poland with a group of girls—to inspire them, to help them daven, to help them feel the weight and the meaning of our history.

The next day he texted again. "I see you'll be in Far Rockaway on Monday night. If you have ten minutes, maybe you could stop by my house. I'll share one of the stories with you." - I agreed.

I pulled up to his home, walked up the steps, and went inside. He sat me down and said, "Rabbi, I'm going to tell you one story. And with this story, everything comes together."

He told me about a Jewish family living in a city near Kiev, during a time when Poland was split and parts were under Russian control. What many people don't realize, he said, is that during that period, Ukrainian mobs were going city to city. Every few days, another town was attacked - homes marked with X's, families slaughtered, entire communities destroyed. Each city was another October 7.

Kiev was one of the last cities on the path. They knew it was coming. A river ran near their city, and day after day, bodies floated past. They knew exactly what that meant. So the families did the unthinkable. They dug bunkers under their ovens—tiny spaces beneath the place that once brought warmth and food—hoping it might hide them from death.

One boy hid under the oven with his grandmother. When the Nazis finally entered the city, they heard boots pounding above them. The air was thin. The fear was unbearable. And then it happened. The grandmother sneezed—loudly. The boy froze. He was certain it was

over. But nothing happened. The Nazis passed. - That was miracle number one.

Eventually, the boy escaped. To do so, he had to cross a raging river. He couldn't swim. Halfway across, the current pulled him under. He was being dragged downstream, helpless. And somehow—against every law of nature—he made it across. - Miracle number two.

Later, in Romania, he managed to get a visa and a ticket on a boat (*Mafkura* sometimes identified as the *Mefkure*) headed for Eretz Yisrael. He waited on the shore as names were called. Exhausted, broken, and alone, he fell asleep. They called his name. He didn't answer. The boat departed without him. - A day or two later, it was subsequently sunk by a German submarine with no survivors. - Miracle number three.

After the war, the boy lived in DP camps near the Skolina River in Romania. One day, he heard a man [the **Skulener Rebbe]** standing by the river crying out Shema Yisrael—with such heart, such fire, such truth—that it pierced him. That moment changed his life. The Rebbe's fervent cry of *Shema Yisrael* left an indelible mark on him, leading him to conclude that his life, having been "gifted" back to him three times, must be devoted entirely to Hashem and the Jewish people.

He eventually moved to Eretz Yisrael, founded yeshivot, and authored many sefarim. One of those sefarim [entitled **B'chayil U'veruach** - "In Strength and Spirit".] was written specifically for soldiers—guidance on how to conduct themselves when stationed in foreign territory, including halachic rulings for situations of danger and captivity. - His name was His name was **Rav Chaim Druckman**.

Fast forward eighty years. October 7. Jewish soldiers enter Gaza. Among the chaos, a young Israeli woman—completely irreligious—was taken hostage. In captivity, something awakened inside her. She decided she would become stronger in her Judaism. She began

keeping kosher, refusing the food she was given. But her life was at risk.

One day, while held in the Hamas tunnels, one of her captors handed Agam a sefer—randomly, casually, almost mockingly. She opened it. It was Rav Chaim Druckman's sefer for soldiers. Inside, she read that in a situation of life-threatening danger, one is permitted—even obligated—to eat non-kosher food to survive. - She ate. And that decision helped save her life. Her name is Agam Berger. [A 20-year-old Israeli soldier and talented violinist who became a symbol of faith after being held hostage in Gaza for 482 days.]

Eighty years earlier, Hashem placed a boy under an oven. He saved him—once, twice, three times. He guided him to Torah. He inspired him to write a sefer. All so that one Jewish girl, in captivity on October 7, could live—and emerge to tell the world: "I chose the path of Hashem."

Agam Berger was released on Jan 30, 2025, and has since shared her story to inspire faith and advocate for the remaining hostages. - Everything that happens to a Jew is a piece of a puzzle. And sometimes, it takes eighty years for the picture to become clear.

Menuchas HaNefesh By Rabbi Shlomo Landau

One of the wealthiest Jews in Klal Yisrael decided to make a wedding like no other. Not just elegant — lavish beyond imagination. A country club in North Jersey, personalized invitations, place cards, tables arranged with military precision. - This was a chasunah meant to impress.

Among the guests was his first cousin from Lakewood. The cousin was a yungerman in BMG. He sat and learned. Five children. A simple life. He received the invitation and barely recognized it as a wedding invite — the envelope alone looked expensive. Still, of course he went. Family is family.

After finishing second seder, he drove straight to the wedding. By the time he arrived, the chuppah was long over and dinner had begun. He walked into the ballroom looking for the usual signs: Kallah's family, Chassan's friends, Cousins. There were none. Only place cards. Confused, he walked table to table until he noticed one empty seat at a large round table — eleven men already seated.

"Is this seat taken?" he asked. - "One fellow was supposed to be here," they told him. "He's away on business. Please, sit." - He had no idea that he had just sat down at a table with eleven of the wealthiest men in Klal Yisrael.

He washed, made hamotzi, and sat quietly. One of the men turned to him and asked, "What's your name?" They asked what he did for a living. Healthcare? Real estate? E-commerce?

"No," he said. "I learn in yeshivah. B'shmiras kava'ah." They nodded politely. Then one man leaned forward and asked bluntly, "How do you make it? You have five kids. How do you survive financially?"

The yungerman answered simply: "My wife works. I learn with a few people at night. My in-laws help a little. We live very simply. Everyone around us lives simply. Somehow, we make it."

A few minutes passed. Then the same man pressed again. "You know the kallah's father makes in one day what you make in five years. How does that make you feel?"

The yungerman paused. Then he said quietly, "I have something that he doesn't have." - The men leaned in.

"I have enough!"

The table went silent. Then — one by one — every man around that table nodded.

Menuchas HaNefesh doesn't come from having more. It comes from knowing you have enough.

📖 The Guardians - bringing Jewish history to life!

"*Torah and wisdom are inseparable.*" Who do you think said it?

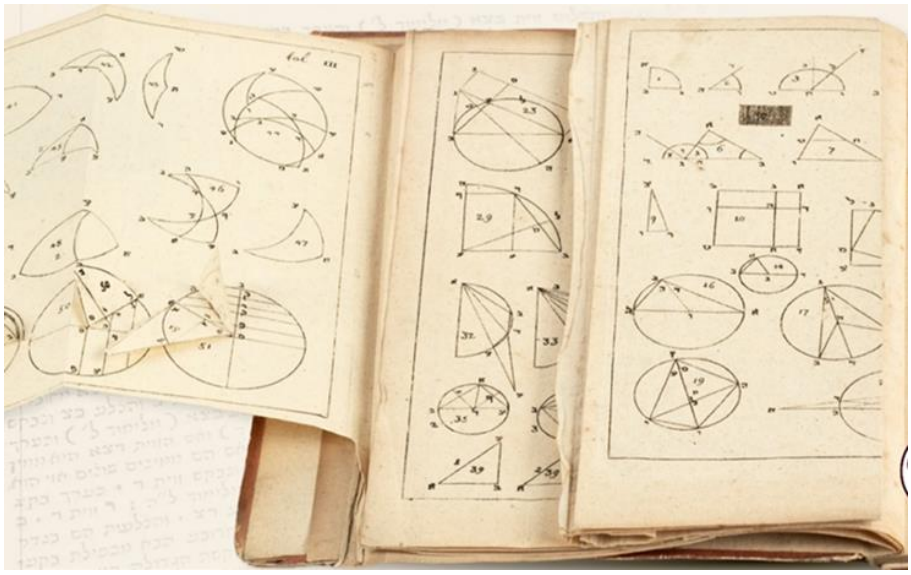
Sounds obvious, but who actually said it? If you know, you know. If you guess - you might just get it right.

👍 Rambam - ❤️ Don Isaac Abarbanel - 💙 The Vilna Gaon -

🔥 Rav S.R. Hirsch

A Rare Statement from the Vilna Gaon

He was known as a giant of Torah. A sage whose brilliance bordered on superhuman. The Vilna Gaon—one of the greatest Torah minds in Jewish history. But few know this surprising fact: The Gaon didn't just permit the study of secular wisdom—he encouraged it.



In 1778, Rabbi Baruch Schick of Shklov, a student and respected thinker, visited the Gaon and asked about science, math, and the wisdom of the nations. The Gaon answered without hesitation:

"Torah and wisdom are inseparable."

He went further. He told Rabbi Baruch to translate the greatest works of ancient science into Hebrew—so Torah Jews could access them in their own language.

Rabbi Baruch did just that. In 1780, he published the Hebrew edition of Euclid's Elements (geometry). Four years later, he translated Kaneh HaMidah—a cornerstone of classical mathematics.



When **R' Yisrael Meir HaKohain Kagan z"l** published the sefer whose name he would become forever known by, the **Chofetz Chaim**, (Who Loves Life?) and its companion, the sefer Shmiras HaLashon (Guard Your Tongue,) it was the first time the laws of Lashon Hara, evil and prohibited speech, were codified and laid out systematically in one place.

Some people complained to him. "Your laws are too voluminous, too difficult to follow. Now, with your book, we can never open our mouths to speak!"

"On the contrary," replied the sage. "Until now, you should have been afraid to open your mouths for fear of transgressing one of the myriad prohibitions and sins. My book finally allows you to successfully navigate this dangerous road and avoid the pitfalls that are so easy to fall into. Only now do you finally have the ability to speak freely, knowing that you know what to watch out for."

Living Kiddush Hashem FOUNDATION מקדשי שמך

Societal Norms and Etiquette

In this week's attachment, we explore a fascinating shaila with profound implications for Kiddush Hashem and Chillul Hashem regarding societal norms and etiquette.

The question arose in a Beit Knesset in Algiers, founded by Jews who had emigrated from Spain. Some of the mispallelim insisted that anyone entering the synagogue remove their shoes, following the local Muslim custom of removing shoes before entering their places of

worship. They felt that wearing shoes inside the synagogue would be a sign of disrespect toward the sanctity of the space.

Incredibly, the **Rashbash** [**Rabbi Shlomo ben Shimon Duran** (c. 1400–1467), a major 15th-century Halakhic authority and Chief Rabbi of Algiers.] agreed with their position. He explains: "It is known that a Beit Knesset should be glorified, exalted, honored, and protected from any disparagement. 'Honor' is whatever people consider to be honorable."

He further clarifies that wearing shoes in a Beit Knesset in a Christian country would not be considered disrespectful, because the local society does not view it as demeaning.

However, in a Muslim land, where societal norms dictated that shoes be removed before entering any house of worship, or even before meeting an important person, it was certainly required to show the same respect to the synagogue, the "house" of Hashem (Shu"T Rashbash, 285; quoted in Birkei Yosef, 151:8).

The lesson is clear: even when we meticulously observe every halachah, we must remain sensitive to societal norms, which vary based on time and place. Ignoring them can unintentionally lead to Chillul Hashem, whereas adapting appropriately can enhance Kiddush Hashem.

Have a wonderful Shabbos, Rabbi Shraga Freedman

The Kindness You Don't See

Chazal (Sifri, Ha'azinu) describe Hashem as saying: "Whenever I bring יסורים (difficulties or suffering) upon them in this world, let them remember how much kindness I am giving them in the next world."

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 1

Since our arrival to Manchester (December 16th 1955) from Chile, on Erev Shabbos Chanukah, our lives have been continuously connected and influenced by the Rov, Horav Menachem Mendel ben Horav Dovid Zvi Schneebalg ZZ"L, who was niftar on Acharon Shel Pesach 5781.

I have written a collection of incidents, stories, experiences and interactions that I personally can recall, for the benefit of my dear children and grandchildren, and others who may be interested. This is about the Manchester Rov, a title he naturally earned, because he led this town from what was a fletching community to a city that became an Ir vEm bYisroel.

Manchester, back then, consisted of scores of Ba'alei Batim, most of whom were immigrants from all over Europe, living scattered about in the Broughton Park and Sedgley Park Areas of Manchester. The only Minyonim, I remember, were the Machzikei Hadass (in an old dilapidated building), the Zeirim and Yekkes Minyonim housed in the Aguda (35a), The Rumanian Shul (now at Vine St), Shotzer Minyan (10 Wellington St), Chasidisher Minyan (11 Wellington St), Ohel Torah (in Levi House) and Damesek Eliezer (the Stiebel) in Prestwich. Some of these Minyonim were only open on Shabbos.

Jewish Day School and Broughton Jewish School, were the only Jewish Primary Schools. But there were no Jewish Senior or Grammar School. The Manchester Yeshiva existed, and also provided evening classes after school for senior boys. But there were no Kollelim, nor Daf Hayomi Shiurim/Chaburas. Pirchim and

Zeirim provided social activities for boys and bochurim, whilst the girls went to 'Bnos Aguda'.

There were Kosher butcher shops and kosher milk, but no heimisher bakery (someone baked Challos from home for those who wanted). Fuldas Hotel existed already then, as well as a kosher restaurant on Kings Rd. The Mikvois were relics from the past. But there wasn't an established Chevra Kadisha.

Over the years, Manchester has bloomed into a vibrant Heimisher City with numerous Botei Midroshim catering for the full spectrum of Yiden, there are Schools for all ages and all levels, there are Yeshivos, Kollellim, Seminaries, Kosher Heimisher Shops stocked up high, every form of Chesed organisations, Kosher eateries, and much much more.

Although for most of my adult life, Machzikei Hadass Shul was my mokom Tephillah, both on Shabbos and weekdays, I was privileged to work for the Shul for 5 years (approx. 30 years ago) and after that in the Kehillah Office. Being involved on a day-to-day basis whilst working in a shul/kehillah environment, one experiences the basic fabric of the institution, and comes into close proximity with its leaders, and uniquely, its Rov.

What follows are personal reminisces, and as such, are not in any chronological order.

Although the Rov started back then as the initiator of the Steibel Minyan in Prestwich, in his own house, he later took over, as Dayan of Machzikei Hadass, from his father around the time of my Barmiztvah, and led the Kehilla into what has become a multi-faceted and much sought-after community. Having arrived in Manchester on Erev Shabbos Chanukah, we stayed for that Shabbos at Uncle Shul's (Opa's Brother) in Prestwich. The Sefer Torah that we brought with us, was put in the Oron Hakodesh at the Stiebel, until the Adass Yeshurun Shul was built, then it was moved there. Many Shabbosim we used to daven at the Stiebel, and especially

Simchas Torah, when Opa would dance with the Sefer Torah. That brought us into close proximity to 'Reb Mendel', as he was known then, when we were still boys.

Machzikei Hadass has always been a hub of activity for the morning minyonim, but still only had one minyan for Mincha and Maariv each day, Mincha was half an hour before Nacht and Maariv at Tze's Ha'koichovim. The Rov gave a mishnayos shiur in between (more on this later). Being a Chasidisher inclined minyan, Mincha was always after Shekia and therefore Tachanun was never said.

It troubled me that for Shacharis we were having countless minyonim, but for Mincha and Maariv we were only having one minyan. In winter, I would lock up the Shul shortly after 5.00 pm (after Maariv). Over time, I introduced several new Minyonim, which very soon became a full programme, all afternoon and evening.

The question arose at the start, regarding Tachanun. Some said that MH never say Tachanun, (which is true because they always davened Mincha after Shekia), whilst others argued that Tachanun needs to be said if it's still before Shekia. I wasn't going to get involved either way. The Rov, himself made it clear, that he wasn't makpid to daven Mincha before Shekia and wouldn't be drawn on the issue of Tachanun. However, the first time he joined an early minyan for personal reasons, all eyes turned to the Rov after Chazoras Hashatz. Without a moment's hesitation, he proceeded to say Tachanun. That, then, clarified the question for all times.

The Rov used to give a Mishnayos Shiur every day between Mincha and Maariv. Over the years he went through Shas several times. For many years I attended that shiur, and sponsored a siyum, L'ilui nishmosom of Opa ZL and Oma OH

I once cleared out the storeroom of the MH Shul and found 2 plaques. One was a statement that the shul building was built with money received from Germany. (this plaque only hung for a week), but the second plaque used to hang near to where the Rov learnt

mishnayos. This stated that the mishnayos was learnt l'ilui nishmosom of the 6 million yiden that died in the war. Apparently, this hung for many years, and was only removed whilst the Beis Hamedrash was being decorated and never put back.

The Rov had a place at the head of a long table where he gave that shiur. When I started working in the Shul, and keeping the Seforim and Shul tidy as part of my job, I noticed that the chair that the Rov sat on was old and not very firm. The Rov had never said anything but would sit very still. Now I understand why. Shortly afterwards, I overheard that another Shul had a special chair which was surplus to their requirements. I went to have a look at it, then asked someone to 'quietly' buy and bring it on my behalf.

A few days later, The Rov called me to his home and asked me to find him a comfortable chair that he could use at home every day. (This was the days before google, online or even mobiles). I phoned around, and found a shop in Prestwich that specialised in furniture for senior citizens. Among the features the furniture store highlighted, and the Rov was subsequently very happy with, included a higher seat, tall back with side pieces, padded armrests, and was extra wide. Nowadays, this type of furniture is widely available – but not 30 years ago.

One of the regulars to this daily Mishnayos Shiur, was Reb Boruch Hersch Dresdner ZL, who used to sit with his finger on the place listening intently to every word the Rov learnt. I always had the impression it was like a cheder boy being promised a sweet if he paid attention. However, on the days that the Rov was away, Reb Boruch Hersch would give the shiur fluently and clearly.

The Rov would often arrive very early for Mincha, and it was a time when people would come forward and talk things over with the Rov. Another early arrival to Mincha was Reb Shlome Josephs (Josefovitz) ZL (formerly Shochet and Melamed in Brighton). One day I overheard the Rov and Reb Shlome reminiscing about their

experiences in the labour camps during WW2. They were comparing how they managed to keep mitzvos during that time. At one stage, the Rov stated, "we managed to leig Tephillin every day," which was countered by Reb Shloime that they had also. A "how did you, and how did you" debate ensued. One related that one person in their barrack had a pair of Tephillin. They didn't have a chance during the day to put them on, because they were taken out at day break and only returned late at night, so before they went to sleep, they handed round the Tephillin for each person to put on, relying on the opinion that one may put on Tephillin on night. They didn't have much of a choice. Now it was the other ones turn. He stated that they also had one pair between them all, but they used to smuggle it out with them every day, and take turns to hide behind the trees whilst the others worked and covered for them.

To be continued with part 2, IYH, next week.

Good Shabbos , Aaron Leitner

■ **אחרי מות שני בני אהרן – *after the death of Aharon's two sons***

The Midrash says that Nadav and Avihu died because they entered the *Kodesh* without the *bigdei kehunah*,. The Midrash makes note of the fact that they were not wearing the *me'il*, the outer coat.

Yam HaTalmud explains why the *me'il*, more than all the other garments, was noted as being missing. Chazal teach that Nadav and Avihu spoke *lashon hara* about Moshe and Aharon, stating that they were already too old to lead and wondering when these two elderly people would die, so that they could assume the leadership. Chazal teach that the *me'il* provides atonement for the sin of *lashon hara*, and since Nadav and Avihu were missing that garment (and thus atonement for that sin), they incurred punishment and died. (**Maayanah Shel Torah**)



וְנָתַן אַהֲרֹן עַל־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִם, גֹּרָלוֹת--גּוֹרָל אֶחָד לַה' וְגוֹרָל אֶחָד לַעֲזָאזֵל (טז/ח)

רב שמשון רפאל הירש זצ"ל tells us to picture for ourselves what happened on **יום כפור** in the **בית המקדש**.

Two goats; both the same height, size and value, are brought before the **כהן גדול** who holds a box with two lots inside. On one of them is written **'להש** and on the other is written **לעזאזל**. This **גורל** is going to determine the future of these two goats. Their ways will be separated and they will be led in opposite directions. The goat on which the **גורל** of **'להש** was placed is quickly **שחוטד** with intense **כוונה** by the **כהן גדול**. Its gushing blood is gathered into a **כלי** and brought into the **קודש קדשים**. There it is sprinkled in front of the **ארון** and some is sprinkled on the **פרוכת** and the **מזבח הזהב**. After all that the whole animal is taken outside and burnt on the **מזבח**.

All this time the second goat is watching and breathing a sigh of relief. This whole procedure could so easily have been performed on him. He could have been the one to be shechted and then burnt... To his great fortune he is alive and some thoughts of **גאווה** may begin to form in his little mind. My poor mate; yes it was a **זכות** for him that his blood went on the **מזבח** but now he has no life. I have a long life ahead of me. I can go on to accomplish all my dreams. I will be famous in the whole goat kingdom.

As he is led out to the mountain he is thinking to himself, 'Wow! Look at this! I am out of the restricted **בית המקדש**. What a life! I am out in the open. Just look at the beautiful scenery!'

As he reaches the peak of the mountain he stands there with his head held high, commiserating his poor friend who lost out on all this, while he is at the top of the world...

If only this goat would know the real reason why he was kept alive and why he is at the top of the mountain, he wouldn't be thinking

such haughty thoughts. In just a moment all his inflated success will be shattered. In just a moment he will be pushed down the mountain, where his body will be torn to bits and scattered across the ground.



Now We Know Who Was Truly The Lucky One.

So too, says **ר' שמשון רפאל**, each person has two paths in front of him. One is the path of **תורה** and **מצוות** which leads closer to **ה'** and into the **קודש קדשים**! Yes, sometimes this path requires that we give up some **עולם הזה**, and there may be what we perceive as restrictions written in the **תורה**, but these bring us closer to **הקב"ה**. The second path leads a person out into the open, to a life of **תאוות** and **גשמיות**; the absolute opposite of **תורה**.

Those who choose the first path are **זוכה** to true happiness in **עולם הזה** and in **עולם הבא**. However, those who choose the second path, think they are having a great time living without restriction, and they look at those on the first path feeling sorry for them. But the truth is, very soon their end will come, and it will be a bad and bitter end. Just like the **שעיר לעזאזל**. All the pleasure and joy come to an abrupt end as he tumbles down the cliffs. (**לקח טוב**)

Rav Shach loved Torah as a father loves an only child. When Rav Shach's vision deteriorated. Rav Shach was offered a magnifying device that the sefer would be placed on the device and the words of the Sefer would appear on a screen with enlarged letters. - Rav Shach refused the offer explaining, "I cannot learn that way. When I learn, I have to be able to hug the sefer!"

Touched by a story 4

It was 1956 when most people in their midteens were starting to make plans for college and Levi Mecklowitz, even though he was learning in a frum high school, felt no differently. He thought that Gemara was not for him; "Why bother wasting time with all this old Aramaic study? –It's so difficult to read and it just all seems so pointless!"

But Naftali Gross, his chavrusa, was constantly encouraging him and urging him to persevere and to keep on learning.

On one particular morning Levi once again staggered into school late. He mumbled something to his rebbe about oversleeping ....His Rebbe told him that the class had just started **בבא קמא** and encouraged Levi to learn well with Naftali. Levi was obviously not in the mood of learning. He was thinking, 'Eight more months of this torture. How will I ever survive?' Naftali, who was always perky, upbeat and enthusiastic, exclaimed cheerfully, "So, Levi are you ready to begin the new **סוגיא**?"

Levi was thinking to himself, 'There is no worse place than the **בית המדרש**.' But Naftali began learning the **גמ'** on the first **עמוד** of **בבא קמא** eagerly: **לימא מתניתין דלא כבן ננס** – Let's say that our **משנה** does not go like **בן ננס**. Levi stares up and says "This is stupid! Who cares if the **משנה** goes like **בן ננס** or not!?!" With that outburst Levi stood up and stormed out of the **בית המדרש** and was never heard of again.

Fifty years later Rebbe Naftali Gross, the **ראש ישיבה** of **ישיבת אוהבי בנים**, was sitting at the top table at his yeshiva's dinner. Hundreds of his past **תלמידים** came to show respect for and pay tribute to the **ראש ישיבה**. The **ראש ישיבה** gave his speech of **חיזוק** to the gathering. One by one his **תלמידים** approached Rebbe Naftali to thank him and gain a few moments of his personal attention.

"Meat or chicken?" the waiter, a man in his 60's whose face showed that he'd had a difficult life, asked.

Reb Naftali glanced up. "Chicken please." But as he did his eyes locked onto the waiter's eyes Reb Naftali looked deeply into those eyes and noticed that they had begun to fill with tears. "LEVI?!" he exclaimed incredulously.

The waiter began to cry, "Yes. Rabbi Naftali. It is me, your **חברותא** from high school. I now understand the difference it makes whether our **משנה** goes like **בן ננס** or not.



Hashem Dwells With Us Even In Tumah - Living Emunah on the Parashah 2 by Rabbi David Ashear

The pasuk says (Vayikra 16:16): הַשֹּׁכֵן אִתָּם בְּתוֹךְ טֻמְאֹתָם – *'That dwells with them amid their contamination.'* Rashi explains that even though the Jewish people become impure, Hashem still dwells among them.

The meforshim (Iyun Yaakov, Yoma 57a) add that this applies even when the impurity results from sin. A person may feel that because of a wrongdoing he committed, Hashem no longer wants to be close to him. But that is not true. Hashem does not become "offended" as people do when we don't listen to them. Instead, He feels compassion for us and yearns for us to return in teshuvah.

The Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu (Ch. 31) testifies that more than a woman longs for her husband or child to come home from a long journey, Hashem longs for every single Jew to come back and be close to Him. Sometimes He will even use the merit of a single good deed performed by a sinner to open the door for that person to turn his life around.

There is always hope for everyone. For that reason, we should daven with all our hearts for people we know who could use chizuk to grow in Torah and mitzvos.

R' Ephraim Sharabani told the story of a certain car thief in Eretz Yisrael. One day, he jumped into a car and sped away — but after two minutes on the road, he noticed a baby in the backseat who looked like he was about to suffocate from the heat. Instead of making his getaway, the thief drove straight to a hospital and saved the child's life.

He contacted the parents and told them that he had broken into the car to save their baby. They were overcome with gratitude and could not thank him enough.

The following week, they invited him for Shabbos. He had not experienced a Shabbos since his youth and accepted eagerly. That Shabbos, he went to shul, davened, heard divrei Torah, sang zemiros — and felt something awaken deep in his soul.

The baal habayis introduced him to the Rabbi and told the Rabbi how he had saved the baby's life. The man asked to speak to the Rabbi privately. There, he confessed that in truth, he had broken in to steal the car — not to save the baby. He told the Rabbi he regretted his life of theft and wanted to repent. The Rabbi encouraged him and said he was already halfway back, and he would help him complete the journey.

Then the Rabbi asked, "I'm amazed that Hashem gave you the zechus to save a life in the middle of a theft — and that this became the catalyst for your return to Torah. It must be that you had some merit from another good deed. Can you think of what it might be?"

The man insisted, "Rabbi, I don't do anything good."

The Rabbi pressed him to think harder.

Finally, the man said, "Well, maybe this — even though I steal cars, I never want the owners to lose anything personal. I know they'll be

reimbursed for the car, but if I find jewellery, pictures, or any other items, I always mail them back to the owners."

The Rabbi replied, "That must be it. Hashem saw the small bit of purity amid the tumah — and used it to light the way back to Him."

Every single act that shows care for others is precious to Hashem. The Gemara (Megillah 6a) tells us that every Jew, no matter how far he seems to be, is replete with mitzvos. Let us pray for Hashem to give even the most distant Jew opportunities to return fully to Him.

Rabbi Shimon Kaplin



"We don't change the מסורה"

The Belzer Rov said: Just like the **תפילין** and **מזוזה** cannot be changed one iota, if one letter is changed, or two letters are touching, or instead of putting it on parchment you put it on a gold leaf, it's **פסול**, you cannot make any changes to a **תפילין** or **מזוזה**. So too, the way we give over our **מסורה** to our children it must be in the way we received it, there should be no changes whatsoever, if there are any changes, it's no good, it's not going to work.

A few years later I heard that in America in Tristate that there was a **חשוב'ער** Rov who decided to make a kumzitz in shul after **מעריב** on **תשעה באב**, it was very inspiring and people were uplifted, they all cried and felt the **חרבן**.

One of the big **פוסקי הדור** called up this Rov who was his Talmid and voiced his displeasure, telling him not to do this again because there is no source for this in **הלכה**.

We are very much **תולה** on our **מסורה**, on the way things have been and to keep to exactly to what it says in **שולחן ערוך**. That is who we

are, we daven like our parents daven, our grandparents and great grandparents, we follow their **מנהגים** as to how we celebrate our **ימים טובים**.

Small changes

If we look around today we think: How many frum **אידן** are there which keep **תורה ומצוות** properly? Maybe a million **אידן** or maybe two million. They say that before the second world war there were eighteen million **אידן** but only a small percentage were Orthodox. - The frum **אידן** today are only a small percentage of the total population of **אידן** around the world.

How is it possible for this to happen? Of course, there are a few reasons, but one of the main reasons is because people changed things, they changed and then the next generation changed further. When the reform began in the times of the **חתם סופר** they only changed a very little thing, they brought the ladies from upstairs to downstairs, however with a proper **מחיצה**.

The **חתם סופר** wrote a very strong and fierce letter against the change they were trying to institute; he wrote with such sharpness that this was going to lead to terrible things. The original reform leaders who created the reform movement only changed very small things, but then the children changed more things, and their children changed more things until eventually you have the reform today who don't keep **שבת** and drive their cars to shul on **שבת**, and they have absolutely no **שייכות** to the yiddeshkite that we know. It didn't happen overnight, it was a slow process of not keeping to the **מסורת** and changing things, that is what brought about what we see today so many millions of assimilated **אידן**.

The person who wrote the book "The bamboo cradle" writes that when he wanted to become closer to Yiddishkeit he went first to a reform shul, and when it came to the Friday night davening the **חזן** said that his voice wasn't doing good today so instead he is going to play a recording of a good **חזן**, and he put the recorder on the **בימה**.

This fellow who was trying to come close to yiddishkeit was disgusted, he said to the Rabbi afterwards, "I have a better idea, next week I will bring a recording of the community's response and I will put the two recordings on the **בימה** and then we can all stay at home, why are we coming to shul?"

It's very important for us to hear this, people change from the way they were brought up, they don't even mean so badly, but it's an **אש זרה אשר לא צוה**, they want to do things different to their parents, and nebech if we look at their children we often see they have drifted even further away as they think if my parents don't look like my grandparents

so I don't need to look like my parents, and when this happens the clock can't be changed back it's too late.

Singing in shul

There are **בתי כנסיות** today, where often the **טפל** unfortunately becomes the **עיקר**.

A few hundred years ago there was a big controversy in Europe between **גדולי ישראל** if singing was allowed in shul. Today **גדולים** have instituted that we do sing.

However during the past thirty, in some shuls it has become all about the singing, of course there are a lot of struggling youth that won't go to shul without this type of atmosphere, however people who don't need it shouldn't be going to a shul where it's all about the singing and the **עיקר** is not so important. The danger of this is that it becomes the main part of davening, it becomes all about the **לכה דודי**.

I davened a few years ago in a shul out of town where the singing had become the **עיקר** of the davening, I was enjoying the **לכה דודי**, it was amazing listening to everyone singing so nicely! - Then we davened **מעריב**.

When people finished **קריאת שמע** and waited for the Rov to finish, they started shmoozing to the fellow next to them. In **הלכה** it's **אסור** to shmooze during **ברכות קריאת שמע**, and then again during **קדיש** there was shmoozing.

I'm just bringing out the point, that in this shul it was all about **לכה דודי**, that had become the **עיקר**, talking in **קדיש** and speaking in **ברכות קריאת שמע** wasn't important, they felt free to talk without even feeling that they were doing anything wrong.

Making the **טפל** the only thing that is important is like an **אש זרה אשר לא צוה**. Sometimes some people need this, they are struggling and they need a type of shul which make a big fuss about the singing otherwise they wont go to Shul but its got to be done in a correct manner not forgetting the **עיקר**, there needs to be emphasis on the **עיקר** as well, like saying **קריאת שמע** properly which is **דאורייתא**.

I davened in **רמת שלמה** in **קהילה קדושה** Friday night, the **לכה דודי** was so uplifting but the whole Davenning was serious, there is no such thing as talking in that Shul, everything was important.

If we don't need it then doing things that make us feel good can be a slippery path, who knows where it can end, **כל נדרי** might turn into a kumzitz! - Please don't get me wrong, a kumzitz can inspire, but it must be done in the right way with the backing from the right people who understand how to make decisions about these **ענינים**.

Doing new things, even if when we mean well, and doing it with a bren, can be an **אש זרה אשר לא צוה**, if it's not been commanded then it's dangerous, it can lead to **עבירות**.

There is a **בית הכנסת** in Seattle Washington which was established in 1891, it's called the **ביקור חולים** shul. Interestingly, this shul is 135 years old and it is still a **חרדי** shul. Most shuls in America which were established at the end of the 1800's are today assimilated shuls, reform, conservative, liberal, they didn't maintain the orthodox

appearance over the past 130 years, however this shul is a perfectly frum shul.

There was a **איד** called R' Binyomin Ganower, who died a few years ago at the age of 104. He told the following story: when he was a child in the 1920's he davened with six brothers and his father in that shul, his father was called Reb Moshe Yitzchok.

At that time in America there were lots of movements in the Jewish world to integrate into American society and change things in the shuls. Many shuls were changing, although the immigrants were frum people from Poland and Russia and other parts of Europe, however they were changing things, where they put the ladies, they changed the **מחיצות**, they felt that times were different and it was time to change things.

This shul which had been running for thirty years hadn't yet changed anything, and they were losing some members who left to other shuls who were changing, that was sadly the atmosphere in America at that time.

The **מנהג** of the shul was that on **כל נדרי** night the president spoke. In 1920 the president got up and said, "We're losing some members, I feel we need to make some changes in the shul, in relation to where we place the ladies..." and he carried on telling the shul about the changes he wanted to make.

Said Reb Binyomin that his father R' Moshe Yitzchok stood up and screamed at the top of his voice, "***Sheigatz!! Get off the* בימה**!"

He said over that he was a little boy at the time, and he was so embarrassed to see his father scream like this in front of the whole shul that he wanted the ground to swallow him up! - He wasn't sure what was going to happen next, he was shaking.

There was silence in the shul.

There were a few more **קנאים** in the shul who stood up and said, "We support Reb Moshe Yitzchok!"

The president went red in the face and walked off the **בימה**. After **יום כיפור** he resigned.

That mantra, "Sheigatz! Get off the **בימה**!" stayed in the shul for years to come, that was the joke of the shul when anyone would try to make a change.

That shul remained frum and today it is still frum, the **ביקור חולים** shul. There were seven sons of Reb Moshe Yitzchok and each one brought up a big **משפחה**, some of his descendants still daven in that shul today, that was the **תקיפות** of Reb Moshe Yitzchok, "Sheigatz! Get off the **בימה**!" We're changing nothing.

In Ponevezh they don't sing **לכה דודי**.

ר' לייזר קופמאן שליט"א told me that he remembers that one **בחור** once got up and tried to sing it. **ר' דוד פווארסקי זצ"ל** told him to stop singing, and after davening he called him over and told him off.

In Gateshead **ישיבה גדולה** they don't sing **הלל** in the week like many other places.

When I was a **בחור** I asked the **גבאי** if I can daven for the **עמוד** on **ראש חודש**, and I had decided with my friends to sing **הלל**.

I stood by the **בימה**, I said **ברכות**, then as I was saying **קרבנות** suddenly **ר' מתתיהו זצ"ל** walked over to me, I don't know how but he must have caught on to my plan, and he said to me, "Daven **הלל** like we always daven, don't make any changes," I didn't dare to sing the **הלל**.

After **הלל** he said to me, "The **מנהג** here is not to sing **הלל**, we don't change the **מנהג**, the **ישיבה** was **מיוסד** by **גדולי ישראל**, the **חפץ חיים** sent **ר' משה לנדינסקי זצ"ל** to be the **ראש ישיבה** and we don't change the **מנהג**."

"A person should direct himself toward the purpose for which he was created." - To come to know Hashem and become complete. ~ Ralbag.



מדרגת אהרן

After the tragic passing of the two sons of **אהרן הכהן**, the **תורה** writes **"וידם אהרן" (י, ג)**. Why did the **תורה** use this word and not simply "**ושתק אהרן**" like translation of the **תרגום**?

The **מאיר עיני חכמים** explains that this word is **מלשון דומם ואדמה**, which means an object or matter without any life, such as a rock or a piece of earth. Had the **תורה** used the term "**ושתק**", it would mean he kept quiet but nevertheless inside he was changed, he was broken, he wasn't the same as before.

The **תורה** is telling us "**וידם אהרן**", he was like a **דומם**, just like when you smash a rock and break it, nothing has really changed, so too by **אהרן הכהן** nothing had changed, he was the same as before unaffected due to his great **מדרגה**. Smashing a rock is different than when you break a tree or a plant or something with real life in it, when smashing something with real life, it is completely different afterwards, the life has gone away.

The **תורה מרמז תחיית המתים** in the first word of the **שירה**, as **חז"ל** teach us why the **תורה** uses a **לשון** of "**אז ישיר משה**" - Then **משה** will sing, in future tense, this is coming to teach us that not only did **משה** and **כלל ישראל** sing at that time **שירה**, but they "will sing" again **שירה** after **תחיית המתים**. Why is this the place where the **תורה מרמז** this important message?

נחמה after WW2

After the Second World War many broken people approached the **Belzer Rov זצ"ל**, exclaiming, "How can we continue to live?! We have lost all our family!! Please give us some **חיזוק**..."

The Belzer Rov asked the above question and then said to them the following: "How could the **אידן** sing **שירה** just after they had lost most of their family, as **חז"ל** tell us only one fifth left **מצרים**, the rest died in **מכת חשך**?!"

"And the answer is," he continued, "because they focused on **תחיית המתים** when they will be reunited with their close family that had died, this removed the pain and enabled them to carry on and sing **שירה** after **קריעת ים סוף**."

We say in **שמונה עשרה** a **ברכה** for **תחיית המתים** three times a day. This **ברכה** should always be a **חיזוק** for us when we suffer a loss or hear about someone else's loss or hear about a terrorist attack, the present physical life that we know is only a small fraction of our existence, our existence is eternal and we will be reunited again in the future.





Horav Yisroel Friedman Shlita - Letters Of Chizzuk During The Coronavirus Pandemic

רב ישראל פרידמן רב קלויז טשארטקוב מנשסתר

מכתב התחזקות

ו' אייר תש"פ, כ"א למסב"י

In this period that we now find ourselves in, all the yeshivos and moisdos of chinuch are closed. There are those who wonder to themselves, can this truly be the wish of Hashem, how are we supposed to prepare ourselves for Kabbolas HaTorah by closing all the moisdos?

The answer is be found in the words of the Medrash: (**קהלת רבה פ"ג ס"ט**) "Said Rebbi Yitzchok, Bnei Yisroel were worthy of receiving

the Torah as soon as they left Mitzrayim, but Hashem said, the shine and the sparkle of my children has not yet returned, they have just emerged from slavery and harsh work and cannot yet receive the Torah.

This is comparable to a king whose son recovered from an illness, they said to the king, your son can now resume his studies in school. Said the king, his healthy colour and complexion has not yet come back and you want that he should already go to school! Let him first fully recuperate for two or three months with good food and drink and then he can go to school.

Similarly, Hashem said, the healthy complexion of my children has not yet returned, they have come from slavery and harsh work and I should now give them the Torah! Let them first recuperate for two or three months with Mon, the Be'er (well of water) and the Slov, and afterwards I will give them the Torah in the Chodesh Hashelishi".

Although the day of Kabbolas HaTorah was "the day the Creator had been waiting for, the day the Torah, the world, the higher and lower creations had all been anticipating, when will Klall Yisroel finally arrive at Har Sinai" (words of the Ohr HaChaim, Shmos 19, 2), still, Hashem preferred to delay Kabolas HaTorah as long as Klall Yisroel had not fully recuperated.

This is also our avodah in our present situation, to look after our physical and emotional wellbeing and this also forms part of our Avodas Hashem. This is stated very clearly by the Rambam (**הלכות דעות פרי ג**) who writes as follows: Someone who conducts himself according to the dictates of refuah, should take to heart to ensure that he has a healthy and strong body that his nefesh be upright to know Hashem, for it is impossible that he can understand and delve into chochmah, if he is hungry and sick or afflicted with pain.

Someone who lives in accordance with this derech, is serving Hashem constantly, because his mind is preoccupied that he stay healthy in

order to serve Hashem. Even when he sleeps, if he sleeps in order to rest himself that he not become ill and be prevented from serving Hashem because of illness, such a person- even his sleep is an avodah to Hashem, and about this our Sages have commanded us 'All your actions should be performed leshem Shomayim' and this is what Shlomo HaMelech meant in his great wisdom 'Know Hashem in all your actions and He will straighten your ways'".

One of the Gedolai Yisroel once heard about a certain person who had fasted on Yom Kippur, although he was dangerously ill and forbidden to fast. This godol later remarked: This person was exempt from all the mitzvos of Yom Kippur due to his illness. The only mitzva that he was obligated to keep was to eat and fulfil the mitzva of **ונשמרתם מאוד לנפשותכם** and protect his life, and that one and only mitzvah that he had, he went and violated it!

At present, we are unable to fulfil the mitzvah of davening with a minyan, we are unable to learn properly in the normal way with a chaburah. Many other mitzvos we are also unable to keep properly. Every morning straight after **ברכת התורה** we declare:

אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהם בעוה"ז והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא ואלו הן: כבוד אב ואם וגמילות חסדים והשכמת בית המדרש שחרית וערבית והכנסת אורחים ובקור חולים והכנסת כלה ולוית המת ועיון תפלה והבאת שלום בין אדם לחבירו ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם.

Almost all these mitzvos we are unable at present to keep in the normal and proper way. We are unable to visit our parents, we cannot visit people, we cannot enter the beis hamedrash, we cannot invite visitors, visit the sick, go to weddings or levayohs **רח"ל** and we cannot sit and learn in the regular fashion!

So we have to mechazeik ourselves with those mitzvos that we can fulfil properly. Charity starts at home and Chazal exhort us to be extra careful to speak pleasantly and calmly to one's spouse and not to display anger. The gemara (**שבת לד**:) explains that someone who

speaks to his wife and family pleasantly **בניחותא** will merit **וידעת כי שלום אהלך** there will be peace and harmony in their home.

The Vilna Gaon zt"l wrote in his famous letter (Igeres HaGra) to his wife: "Be careful to gladden the hearts of others with kind and positive words, for this is a great mitzvah which is incumbent on every person. A person will be asked after his petirah; 'Did you make others feel important, and good about themselves. Most of the Torah is to make people happy. If one wronged the other in any way, please forgive each other, and le'maan Hashem please live together in sholom". The Vilna Gaon said further: "The main labour of a person in this world is to focus and rectify all aspects of aveiros bein odom le'chaveiro".

This is doubly poignant to us now, we are at home all day, and we are also in the period of Sefiras HaOmer. The Chida writes "In the days of the Omer, a person has to be extra careful in the service of Hashem with Torah and mitzvos, and he has to be especially careful not to transgress the aveiroh of sinas chinon, because we know what happened to the talmidim of Rebbi Akiva in these days".

The sefer Bnei Yissocher tells us that the 49 days of the Omer correspond to **לב טוב** which has the same gematria of 49. During the Omer we have to strive to attain a Lev Tov, about which Rabbon Yochonon Ben Zakai proclaimed (**אבות ב י**) that it is the most important of all the middos, for he who has a Lev Tov has the key to acquire all other middos tovos.

Through being careful with mitzvos bein odom lechaveiro, a person can ascend to the highest madreigos. The gemara (Taanis 22:) relates that Rebbi Beroika Chozoha once met Eliyohu HaNovi in the market place and asked him if there were any people there who were Bnei Olam Habo, to which Eliyohu Hanovi answered that there was nobody, except for two brothers. Rebbi Beroika went over to these two brothers and asked them who they are. They replied that they were badchonim, whenever they saw someone who was sad they

would cheer him up. If they heard of two people who had an argument they would make peace between them.

A second amazing story of the power of mitzvos bein odom lechaveiro is related in a Medrash: "Rebbi Yehoshua ben Ilam was informed in a dream; 'Rejoice that you and Naanas the Butcher will be next to each other, and have the same portion in Gan Eden'. When Rebbi Yehoshua woke up, he said to himself 'Woe is to me! From the day I was born, I was constantly occupied with fear of Heaven, I did not toil in anything except for Torah. I never walked four amos without tzitzis and tefillin, and I taught eighty talmidim, and now all my actions and my Torah are only equal to that of a butcher?!'

He sent for his talmidim and he told them that he cannot come back to the beis hamedrash. He first has to meet this person, Naanas the butcher, and discover what type of person he is, and what his actions are. Rebbi Yehoshua travelled from place to place, until he came to the town where Naanas the butcher lived.

Rebbi Yehoshua went to see him and asked him; 'What are your deeds and what is your job?' 'I have elderly parents, and they can no longer stand on their feet, Naanas replied. Every day I help them get dressed and washed, and then I give them to eat'.

Straight away Rebbi Yehoshua stood up and kissed Naanas on his head and said to him; 'My son happy are you and fortunate is your portion, and happy am I, that I have merited to be next to you in Gan Eden!'"

From these stories, we see how great is the power of mitzvos bein odom lechaveiro. However, it isn't always so easy for a person who is accustomed to a certain way of life and a certain derech, to suddenly alter and change his focus.

The Maharshag (Rav Shimon Greenfeld zt"l) who was one of the great poskim in Hungary a hundred years ago, addresses this dilemma in one of his seforim. "There are people who have a certain

custom, for example they fast every Monday and Thursday, or they learn 18 chapters of mishnayos every day. Sometimes it can happen, that on a particular day a very important mitzva has come their way, such as hachnosas orchim or bikur cholim. If they are now going to perform this mitzvah, they will no longer be able to learn their daily quota or keep their regular custom of fasting.

The person will say to himself, how can I possibly break my minhag which I have never missed even once over many years? If a person can speak like this, it shows that his performance of the mitzvos is not to do the will of his Creator, but for himself, that he can be proud of his record. If this person was acting leshem shomayim, he should understand that the point of all his actions and the aim of all he is trying to achieve, is only to bring nachas to Hashem.

In the same way that the merchants used to go only to the great market in Leipzig, afterwards when the market started in Vienna, they stopped going to Leipzig and went to Vienna. Later on, they realised that the merchandise in Leipzig was superior, they then resumed going to Leipzig. (until here are the words of the Maharshag).

So it is with avodas Hashem, as I heard in the name of the Chozeh of Lublin that a person must not be inflexible in his avodas Hashem. One of his great talmidim once gave him a note on which he had recorded his daily seder. This talmid had written an exacting timetable for himself, detailing hour by hour what he would learn and do in that time. The talmid asked the Chozeh if he approved of the schedule. The schedule found favour in the Chozeh's eyes, but at the end of the note he wrote: "but sometimes you should do just the opposite..."

In the same vein the Bnei Yissocher writes (**אגרא דכלה פר' ראה**) "I have heard in the name of great tzaddikim, that there are people who have a strict schedule how much they learn and how many chapters of Tehillim they say etc. A wise person should realise that

one day is not the same as the next, as Shlomo Hamelech writes in Sefer Koheles that there are 28 different periods. " **עת לפזר ועת לכנס**" 'There is a time to be spread out, and there is a time to come together'. There are times, when a particular mode of behaviour is befitting that situation, and there are days when one has to behave differently.

Sometimes a particular mode of action is considered a mitzvah, but on the following day that very same action will be deemed an aveiroh. One cannot always explain this, but a wise person will understand it by himself. Sometimes a particular minhag is very commendable on a certain day, and the next day it is just the opposite".

At the moment, our daily schedules and seder hachaim have been dramatically altered. We are all being asked to do a different form of avodah, and our mode of behaviour which we are normally accustomed to has been suspended. This year we have a different form of preparation for Kabbolas HaTorah than that of other years. May "the shine and the sparkle of Klall Yisroel return speedily."

יהי רצון שנזכה לעשות רצונך בלב טוב ובלב שלם.

ידידכם ישראל פרידמן