



OUR BELOVED RABBI
SOKAVA REBBE

BET

BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER

Journal

"E Pluribus Unum"
Latin for "Out of
Many, One" - Achdus



בית מדרש אור חיים

BAIS MEDRASH OHR CHAIM
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF RABBI AARON LANKRY
18 FORSHAY ROAD, MONSEY, NEW YORK 10952



NEW SHABBOS MINYAN

Beginning this week, There will be
a new Shabbos Morning minyan
starting at 8:00 AM
18 Forshay Rd. Main Shul



SHIURIM FOR ENTIRE COMMUNITY

**RABBI YY JACOBSON
WEEKLY CLASS** *Separate Seating*

SHABBOS
NO CLASSES
THIS SHABBOS

EARLY BIRD
DAILY SHIUR
MON - FRI 5:30 - 7:30AM

TUESDAY
TUESDAY MORNING
9:30 - 10:30 AM SHARP
20 FORSHAY RD
FOR WOMEN ONLY

SUNDAY
NO CLASSES
THIS SUNDAY



Pesach Sheni
Wednesday May 10

Pirkei Avos with Our Rav
Rabbi Aaron Lankry
Shabbos Afternoon 6:45 PM

Friday Summer Schedule Begins with Mincha at 7:00PM in the Tent



OUR BELOVED RABBI
SOKAVA REBBA

Dear Kehilla,

BET Parashot Achrei Mos Kedoshim

“Kedoshim Teheyu- and you should be Kadosh”,

what is the amount of Kedusha that a person needs in order to obtain the status of being a Kadosh?

The Ram"chal teaches that everything in the world can be transformed into Kedusha. When we make a bracha before we eat, that changes the food from physical nutrition into Kedusha spiritual nutrition. All of our actions in our life can be mundane but when we can add the spiritual component to it that transforms everything into Kedusha.

Rashi defines Kedusha as staying away from all types of forbidden relations and sins. This implies that Kedusha is not an action but staying away from negative actions. It is difficult to understand because the term “you should be Kadosh” is a positive commandment, not a negative one.

The Ramban argues with Rashi and defines the term Kedusha as not over-indulging in something that is halachically permissible. For example it's permissible to eat beef but to have a steak every day and night it is over doing it and is not considered as kadosh.

Hashem says to Moshe, “Speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, you shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy. **גַּאִישׁ אִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם**”

The next pasuk commands, “Every man shall fear his mother and his father, and you shall observe My Sabbaths. I am the Lord, your God.”

גַּאִישׁ אִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
What is the connection of this sequence of pasukim?

A prominent Rabbi was in the northern part of Eretz Israel to partake in a Bris. The Mohel was attired in sandals and shorts while he performed the Bris. The Rabbi found this to be quite out of the ordinary. The Mohel begins reciting the opening tefillos of the bris with a distinct perfect

Chassidic accent sounding much like a Rebba and this Rabbi nearly falls off his seat. He realized there is an interesting story here and hoping to find out what it was, he approached the Mohel and wished him Mazel Tov. After some polite questioning the mohel picked up on the Rabbi's curiosity and chuckling he began his story. The Mohel explained saying, “I was brought up as a chosid of Viznitz and lived in Germany. The Admor of Karlin came to town one day for health reasons and I went to visit him. I was doing well financially and had a wonderful family but our spirituality was slipping and my oldest daughter was dating a goy.

It was the week of Parashot Kedoshim and till today I remember his Drasha vividly. The sequence of the first few verses in the parsha doesn't seem to make sense. “Be holy” “Fear your father and mother” “Observe the Shabbat” “I am Hashem” what does one have to do with the other? It is enough to say “be holy” and I understand that includes honoring parents and observing Shabbat?

The Karliner Rebba, in his weakness, stood up and banged on the table saying. “There are Jews that have distanced themselves from Hashem, each to their own level. “Be holy” on the first level means to act as your parents did, follow their footsteps. If you are more distant from Hashem, at least remember the Shabbat. If you have already passed that point G-D forbid,” thundered the Reeba, “Remember there is a G-d in the world”. The mohel continued his story. “I was so moved by the Rebba's words, I sold everything I had in Germany and I immediately re-located with my family to Eretz Yisrael. Today I did the Bris on my grandson and I give all the credit to the Karlina Rebba who reminded me to run for my life and remember I am a Jew.”

There is no specific amount of kedusha a person must do to be considered “kadosh”. Each person has his own level and depending on his efforts he can reach his own individual level of Kedusha. This resolves the dispute of Rashi and Ramban regarding the definition of Kedusha. Rashi was referring to a very simple Jew that would be kadosh from refraining from committing an act of abomination. Ramban was referring to a holy Jew who would be kadosh from not overindulging.

May each one of us reach our own level of Kedusha.
Shabbat shalom

SHUL SCHEDULE



SHABBOS ZMANIM

EARLY MINCHA ON Friday AFTERNOON at 1:30pm

SHABBOS NIGHT	Candle lighting	7:39pm	SHABBOS DAY	Shachris Vasikin	5:15am - DAF YOMI SHIUR	SHAB EVENING	Mincha& Daf Yomi	6:00pm
	Mincha Tent	7:00pm		Shachris	8:00 & 9:15am - Kiddush		Pirkei Avos	6:50pm
	Shkiya	7:57pm		Shachris Youth Minyan	9:15am - 18 Forshay		Mincha	1:45pm, 7:35pm
	Mincha Bais Chabad 20 Forshay	8:07pm		Shachris Bais Chabad	10:00am - 20 Forshay		Shkiya	7:58pm
				Pirchei - Bnos	2:00		Maariv	8:38 & 8:43pm

WEEKDAY MINYANIM

SHACHRIS

20 minutes before Neitz (3) s 5:26 | M 5:25 | T 5:24 | W 5:23 | T 5:21 | F 5:20

6:15* (1) 7:00 (1) 7:30 (5) 8:00 (1) 8:30 (2) 9:00 (1) 9:30 (2) 10:00 (1) 10:30 (2)

MINCHA

1:30 PM - 20 Minutes After Shkiya - 50 Minutes After Shkia (1)

MINCHA & MAARIV

12 Minutes Before Pelag (1) s 6:19 | M 6:19 | T 6:20 | W 6:21 | T 6:22

12 Minutes Before Shkia (1) s 7:40 | M 7:48 | T 7:50 | W 7:51 | T 7:52

MAARIV

9:00, 9:30 (2) 9:45 (1) 10:00 (1) 10:30 (1) 11:00 (1) 12:45 (1)

LOCATION DIRECTORY

- (1) 18 FORSHAY DOWNSTAIRS
- (2) 18 FORSHAY UPSTAIRS
- (3) 20 FORSHAY UPSTAIRS
- (4) 20 FORSHAY DOWNSTAIRS
- (5) 18 FORSHAY TENT

* NO SUNDAY MINYAN

APRIL 30 - MAY 05

NEITZ IS 5:46 am - 5:30am

PELAG IS 6:31 pm - 6:35 pm

SHKIA IS 7:59 pm - 8:04 pm

סוף זמן
קריאת שמע
MAGEN AVRAHAM
8:44 AM - 8:41 AM
GRA- BAAL HATANYA
9:00 AM - 9:17 AM



Parshas Achrai Mos Kedoshim: After Thoughts of R Shayla

The parsha begins with the death of the two sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu who, according to the pasuk, died while getting close to Hashem. Not much else is added about this tragedy and the parsha continues with the main theme of this week's portion which is the Yom Kippur service.

Chazal wonder about this connection and there are several explanations presented. One reasoning is offered by Rashi who teaches that Hashem was giving a warning to the Kohan Gadol that entering into the holy sanctuary, especially the Holy of Holies--the Kodesh Kodashim--must be done at a very explicit time and using a very specific process. This was the mistake of Aaron's children who entered on their own initiative without questioning if it was an appropriate time.

There is another insightful message that is taught in the Yerushalmi (yoma). The lesson presented there is that just as the process of Yom Kippur atones for the Jewish sins committed throughout the previous year, so does the passing away of the righteous atone for the sins of Klal Yisrael. How exactly does this work and what is required for this process?

When a righteous person dies (see Meshech Chochma) it is a time of great favor in heaven as righteous souls who are already there come to greet the new souls and it's an opportune time for forgiveness for people on earth. However it doesn't just happen automatically. Just as Yom Kippur requires us to prepare ourselves and go through Teshuva—a process of repentance—in order to become worthy of Hashem's forgiveness, so a person must repent and work on improving himself before being able to connect to the departing soul of the tzadik so he/she can be deserving of forgiveness. How do we do this? By emulating the special traits with which the righteous soul was imbued.

Last Erev Shabbos thousands of Jews flew to Hungary to visit R Shayla Kereszter's grave site. There are many sources that discuss the concept of praying at a tzadik's kever but it's my understanding that emulating the tzaddik's traits is certainly one way to bring down from heaven the blessings that the visitor is seeking. The logic is simple: working on a middah is more difficult than any other endeavor including learning Torah. This idea is hinted at in the words of the Mishna יפה תורה עם דרך ארץ (see Tosfos yeshanim in Yoma regarding the word עם).

There is another misconception that I believe exists when it comes to someone like R Shayla. I pointed out on my daily WhatsApp that when looking at R Shayla's picture, one might recall the legend surrounding him that he was the Rebbe that took care of mice problems and that he loved to distribute challah rolls to his guests. In truth, when reading the book Mofes Hador one can see a whole new picture of this person who, in order to do all these miracles, needed to work very hard on his Yiras Shamayim and his humility. R Shayla encountered incredible struggles with the misnagdim of that time who didn't want him to be the Rebbe because they thought he wasn't qualified for the job. The book relates (all stories are factual testimonies) that his Rebbe, the Liska Rav, said about R shayla that he was Shomer Habris and because of his carefulness in this middah of purity of thought and action he merited not to forget anything. One story reveals that when they brought him a kvitla with a listing of names he remembered that he saw these names 15 years earlier.

There is much more to speak about R Shayla and how we can emulate him but in the meantime we have less than 30 days to prepare for the Mattan Torah and each person has his own unique midda to work on.

Shabbat Shalom



PESACH SHENI MINHOGIM

This letter was addressed to Rabbi R. A.

B"H, 7 Tammuz, 5708 (1948)

Greetings and blessings,

With regard to your question whether it is customary to eat matzah on Pesach Sheni: In addition to what I told you in person: that our custom — based on the custom of the Rebbe Shlita's household (6th Chabad Rebbe, RaYatz) — is to eat matzah during the meal on the day of the 14th of Iyar. I recently found [related concepts] in printed texts. The text Likkutei Meir (authored by R. Meir Benet of Cherada, Hungary) speaks about Pesach Sheni in the second volume and quotes the text Likkutei Maharich, Vol. III, which states that it is customary for men [distinguished for] their deeds to eat matzah on the day of the 14th of Iyar.

Clarification is necessary, for the Pesach Sheni [sacrifice] was eaten on the night of 15 Iyar. [Indeed,] the text Zichron Yehudah states that the author of the text Imrei Eish and his father-in-law, R. David Deitsch, followed the custom of eating matzah and a cooked egg on the night of 15 Iyar.

The text Darchei Chayim VeShalom (by R. M. Gold of Munkatch), secs. 631-632, states that the Munkatcher custom was to eat matzah and maror during the daytime meal of 14 Iyar. Although the Pesach Sheni sacrifice was eaten on the night of the 15th, the sacrifice was offered during the day and the beginning [of the sacrifice] is of primary importance. It was, however, also customary [for the Minchas Elazar, the Munkatcher Rebbe,] to eat matzah on the night of the 15th.

With wishes for everlasting good in all matters,

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson

==== (Translation of a letter)

Note: the Nitei Gavriel Volume III, Chapter 9 foot-note 14, it says that it is Minhag Chabad, Belz, Spinka and Satmar to also eat Matzah on the night of the 15th of Iyar. The Chabad minhag is to eat on the 14th by day as it is written in this letter.

THE 4 STAGES OF JEWISH EXERCISE





Haircut During Omer

The Torah tells us that a "mitztaer" (a person in pain) is exempt from the mitzvah of Sukkah. One may say that this exemption of a mitztaer being pattur from Sukkah is only applicable to the mitzva of Sukkah as the Torah commands us to dwell in the Sukkah the same way one needs to dwell in his house a whole year.

The Radvaz, the Birkei Yosef and the Sdei Chemed all say that a mitztaer is not only pattur from Sukka, but from all other mitzvos too. The Chelkas Yoav differentiates between Sukkah and other mitzvos. Even the slightest tzaar is enough to patten one from the mitzvah of Sukkah; however, regarding other mitzvos one may be pattur only if he has a lot of tzaar.

The following question arises in the Shulchan Aruch in siman taf ayin bais, seif yud. How can the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch who states that despite the fact that one has tzaar from drinking wine one still needs to be mekayem the mitzvah of daled kosos be reconciled according to those opinions who say that the exemption of mitztaer is only regarding Sukkah?

The answer could be that daled kosos is a mitzvah of pirsumei nisa. It is so important, that the halacha states that one is required to sell the shirt off his back if need be to be mekayem the mitzvah of daled kosos. Therefore, one who is mitztaer is still required to do the mitzvah of daled kosos.

The Shulchan Aruch in siman resh tzaddik alef says that if one has tzaar eating seuda shlishis he is exempt. This would be a proof that mitztaer applies to other mitzvos besides the mitzvah of Sukkah. One may argue with this and say that Seuda Shlishis is different as the mitzvah was given as an Oneg for Shabbos and one who is in pain does not have oneg; therefore one would be exempt from eating Seuda Shlishis if one is in pain.

What is the case regarding a mitzvah MiDerabbonon where Chazal say that "bemakom tzaar lo gozru Rabbonon?" Would this apply in a case where a person needs to shave or take a haircut since he is in pain?

I am not going to pasken here. I will just state various shittos and reasonings. For an actual psak one should consult a Rov.

The Radvaz says that since mitztaer is pattur from all mitzvos (not just Sukkah), one may shave or take a haircut during sefirah.

According to the Mishna Berurah one is exempt from eating the third meal on Shabbos if one is in pain because he does not have oneg when in pain. Therefore, this argument does not apply during sefira so one would not be able to shave or take a haircut even if one is in pain.

The Chavos Yair in siman kuf tzaddik alef says that there is a rule: (gadol kvod habriyos that it is docheh issurim DeRabbonon) a person's honor is so important that it supercedes a prohibition that is DeRabbonon. Therefore, a kal v'chomer may be seen, where one is in pain, he most certainly would be exempt.

The Ohr Sameach argues with this and says that "bizayon" embarrassment is certainly worse than pain.

Regarding Sefira, the halacha might be more lenient as it is just a minhag.

One may argue and say that this minhag is based on aveilus for the talmidim of Rabbi Akiva and therefore being in pain might be the exact thing that is required to remind us of the zman of aveilus.

These are just thoughts on this topic, not a psak.

Acharei Mos Kedoshim

Following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, G d warns against unauthorized entry "into the holy." Only one person, the kohen gadol ("high priest"), may— but once a year, on Yom Kippur— enter the innermost chamber in the Sanctuary to offer the sacred ketores to G d.

Another feature of the Day of Atonement service is the casting of lots over two goats, to determine which should be offered to G d and which should be dispatched to carry off the sins of Israel to the wilderness.

The Parshah of Acharei also warns against bringing korbanot (animal or meal offerings) anywhere but in the Holy Temple, forbids the consumption of blood, and details the laws prohibiting incest and other deviant relations.

The Parshah of Kedoshim begins with the statement: "You shall be holy, for I, the L rd your G d, am holy." This is followed by dozens of mitzvot (divine commandments) through which the Jew sanctifies him- or herself and relates to the holiness of G d.

These include: the prohibition against idolatry, the mitzvah of charity, the principle of equality before the law, Shabbat, morality, honesty in business, honor and awe of one's parents, and the sacredness of life.

Also in Kedoshim is the dictum which the great sage Rabbi Akiva called a cardinal principle of Torah, and of which Hillel said, "This is the entire Torah, the rest is commentary"— "Love your fellow as yourself."

Haftorah Amos 9:7-15.

This week's haftorah foretells the exiles and punishments that will befall the Jews because they strayed after the ways of the heathens – behavior that this week's Torah reading proscribes.

The prophet Amos delivers G d's message, reminding the people of G d's kindness to them – taking them out of Egypt and singling them out as His chosen nation. Nevertheless, because of their misdeeds, . G d will destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel; but will not completely destroy the house of Jacob. The Jews will be scattered amongst the nations, but eventually they will return to their land – on the day of the redemption. G d will then reinstall the House of David to its former glory and there shall be peace and abundance upon the land.

The haftorah ends with G d's promise: "And I will return the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild desolate cities and inhabit [them], and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their produce. And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no longer be uprooted from upon their land, that I have given them, said the L-rd your G d."

Just so you should know...

WE LOVE CHASSIDIM!

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by "The Sokover"

1 3 7 DAYS UNTIL UMAN



פרשת אחרי מות – קדושים

”ושמרתם את כל חוקתי ואת כל משפטי ועשייתם אותם ולא תקיא אתכם הארץ אשר אני מביא אתכם שמה לשבת בה.”

אני חייב לספר גופא דעובדא היכי הוי, משום שהכל בהשגחה עליונה ממש, היום אני עומד בתור בבנק בעיר מונסי שבארה"ב וניגש אלי יהודי ובפיו דברי האור החיים הק' בסוף פרשת קדושים ששואל מה צורך לתורה שוב להדגיש שמי שלא שומר התורה הארץ תקיאו, מאחר שבפרשת אחרי (פרק יח פסוק כו) כבר הוזכר, ועל זה כתב וזה לשונו: "נתכון לומר שצריכין לשמר המצות לכל יתבטלו בין מהם בין מזולתם, ובזה לא תקיא הארץ, (והיינו בזה ששומר שהוא לא יתבטל מהמצות וכן חבירו אזי הארץ לא יקיא) ומסיים האור החיים הקדוש בדברים מבהילים שלא כל אחד אוהב לישמוע את הדברים כמו שהם אבל זהו דבריו "הא למדת שאם לא יהיו נשמרים המצות תקיא הארץ גם השומרים על שלא מחו בשלא שמרו" ע"כ דברי קדשו.

והנה כיום נעשה הנושא הזה בלע"ז "קענשעירווישל" אבל כיון שיצאו הדברים מפי קדשו של רבינו חיים בן עטר זיע"א מי אנחנו להרהר אחריו ח"ו.

והנה הביאור הוא, שמי שלא מוחה במי שעובר על רצון הבורא כמי שהוא עבר על אותה עבירה ממש, משום שלנו איש המושכל הישראלי יש חיוב אחריות לראות שכבוד ה' נתרבה בבריאה, בין בקום ועשה בין שלא יעברו בשב ואל תעשה, ומצד רצון הבורא בבריאה היכא שמתחלל רצונו והיה לו לימנע מזה, נעשה ממש כמי שהוא בעצמו עבר אותה עבירה, והיינו שנתחדש לנו דין מחאה, וכמו בדיון קנין וחזקת קרקעות שיש לו למחות בנכנס לתוך רשותו, שאין אדם רואה הנכנס לרשותו ושוקק, וממילא השתיקה ראייה לחזקתו, כן בדיוק ברשות גבוה יש לכל יהודי להיות גובר שלא יתחלל שמו יתברך, ומי שפוגע בכבוד ה' ומחלל ה', זהו חילול השם הגדול שעושה שנעשה חלל בעצם הבריאה, וחלול בעצם רצון וכבוד ה', וזהו כמי שירה חץ כביכול בו בליבו של קובה כביכול, וזהו החילול השם הגדול שיכול להיות, והיינו בכל מצוה ומצוה שיש לנו הזהרה ממש לשמור שלא יתבטל כי הוא זה ...

מחאה זהו ביטוי של כאב על דבר מה שמכאיב לו, וכדאמרי אינשי "כשכואב צועקים" והנה כיום נעשה הדבר כמין דבר מופקע מהנורמל, שכאילו אם צועקים אז שייכים בזה לקבוצה מסוימת של קיצוניות... הגע בעצמך מי שנוהג ברכבו על הדשא שלפני ביתך והורס את כל הדשא והפרחים, צעקות שיקבל הנהג הנ"ל זה עדין על איזה סוג נזיפה הוא עלול לחטוף, בגלל שהוא פגע ברשותך, ק"ו בן בנו של ק"ו מי שרומס את מצות ה' כסדר כסדר, ולא על ענין של מצות ודאי וודאי בעיקרי הדת שחייבים לצעוק ולמחות עד שמי שמים מכאב של חילול רצונו, (ורק אנחנו רדומים בהבלי הזמן פשוטו כמשמעו ואין לנו לב מרגיש כמעט, וקשה לנו אפילו להשיג האלו שכן כאובים מעוברי רצון הבורא ברוך הוא) עכ"פ וודאי וודאי כשיש כל מיני עוקרי הדת, שאין זה כלל וכלל ענין של מה בכך בענין פוליטי שנמצא בארץ, אלא יש כאן פגיעה בבת עינו של כביכול יתברך, יש הזוממים לפגוע בצאן קדושים, ומי שלא מוחה או עכ"פ מביע כאב במצב של רדיפת הדת על אף שהוא עצמו אינו פוגע בעצמו, אומר האור החיים הק' שהארץ תקיא גם אותו, שיש להרגיש אותו יתברך ולהיות "בן איש חי" והיינו בשר מרגיש, בבחינת "וחי בהם" והיינו כמו שכתבו הספרים הקדושים (עיין חי' הרי"ם) שזהו מקור החיות שלנו מעצם הדביקות ברצונו ממש, וממילא מובן מה שהמונע מזה נוטלו בעצם ממקור חיותו.

מה נאמר ומה נדבר, שניזכה להרגיש הדביקות וקירבת ה' ולקדש שם שמים ולראות ששמו יתברך מתקדש, וניזכה שמלא הארץ דעה את ה' כמים לים מכסים, ותמו חטאים מן הארץ.

שבת שלום ומבורך
דוד יהודה פיירסטון

Parshas Acharei Mos-Kedoshim

How Much is the Truth Really Worth?

מאזני צדק אבני-צדק איפת צדק והין צדק

אני ד' אלוקים אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים

Keep your scales monitored so they are correct... I am the L-rd who brought you out of Egypt.

The Torah implores us in Parshas Kedoshim to be impeccably honest in the way we conduct our business- the weights we use in retail and wholesale trade must be exact.. for if we are to benefit from being dishonest, our entire purpose for being and our relationship with G-d could be affected. We have all descended from the Olam HaEmes (A truthful world) down to this world which the Zohar calls.. Alma D'Shikrah, a world of challenges and falsehoods. But this trip was made for a reason. We are urged to pass the tests of honesty in this world even though they are difficult, for to fail would be tantamount on some level, to the denial of our Creator whose entirety is Truth/ Emes.

The lack of justice and truth in this world, should bother us all very deeply. Integrity and truthfulness are not only noble attributes, but traits that we as G-ds representatives in this world, must value above all others. Let's learn this lesson together from an interesting parable.

It was a peaceful year in the kingdom... The King, afraid that his citizenry might become a little bit too bored for their own good, decided to initiate an unusual contest!

"I want to hear a lie... not a regular lie, but the best, most grandiose lie anyone can conjure up and I am willing to reward a large sack of gold coins to anyone in my kingdom who can tell me a great lie that cannot be easily disproven!

The liars; both professional and amateur, tricksters, hoodlums, pranksters and con men, all headed towards the kingdom, to compete for the gold.

But the King was acting with discretion, "I have already heard this one years ago!".. "Is that the best you can do?" nothing whatsoever satisfied the King..

He chastised his populace- "Even for falsehoods, for utter lies.. you are not successful.. what will become of you?" And he turned one wishful dreamer after another away from his court..

The King sent his courtiers out on fast horses to announce that the contest was current, but alas there were still no serious contenders.

After days of rejection, the King's court remained empty- no one dared to compete. The fear of being scolded by the King had made everyone reconsider.

"Can't someone bring me a real good story.. something juicy and clever?.. Is there no one in my kingdom qualified to do so?" lamented the good King.

There was a faint knock at the Kings chambers and the doors opened to reveal a new visitor - the poor old man who lived on the mountain..

Dressed in tattered clothes, he yielded a walking stick and walked slowly towards the King. His ageless blue eyes and shining countenance were recognized by all. In years past, the King and his royal advisers had called upon the old man for his sage advice.

The poor man looked straight at the King. He held a plain, large, white cotton sack in his hands with nothing else encumbering his simple existence.

"What are you of all people doing here? Have you joined the crew of royal liars as well? Do you desire a large sack of gold? Is material wealth missing in your life?" the King asked.

"No, your majesty, I have come with important news. I am advancing in age and occurrences that have been concealed for many years must now be revealed. I feel an old debt must finally be paid.

More than thirty years ago, your father the King was experiencing financial difficulties. Taxes and other monies had disappeared from the Royal treasury and the King visited me, his unofficial advisor and asked for a large loan, which to this day has not been repaid!

"I have come today to collect the debt."

The King was shocked.. "Have you lost your mind! Am I to believe that my father with all his wealth, asked you, a desperately poor man who lives on a mountain, for a loan?"

"In any case, Your Majesty, my sack must surely be filled with gold. - If I am telling the truth, the debt must be paid.. if I am not, then I have succeeding in winning the prize you are offering!"

The King smiled and commanded his minister to start filling the poor man's sack with gold coins. He had finally been outsmarted by someone in the kingdom, but wait.. there was one question that still bothered him.

"What will you do at your age with all these riches?" he asked the old man.

"The coins?.. I would very much like to return the riches to the King if I may- surely His Majesty has some destitute families in the kingdom that can benefit from this windfall. Please spare no time in setting up a fund for these souls!" the man replied. "But I will not take possession of this fortune."

"But why?!? asked the astonished king.

"Your majesty... Since we are living in a land where falsehoods and lies are valued so highly and the truth is scorned.. I feel I must never benefit from this prize, for I would rather be remembered as a poor man who treasured the truth than as a wealthy liar."

The Truth/Emes is Hashem's seal and He has given it over to us, to carry proudly. We must treasure it, regardless of any losses that might be incurred. It will bring us closer to the G-dliness within and strengthen our bond with the King of all Kings whose unlimited goodness rewards each and every one of us beyond our comprehension.

This closeness is the biggest treasure we can ever receive.

Good Shabbos

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6:00 PM



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Harav Kenig from the Holy City of Tzfas

A project of the Bais Medrash Ohr Chaim Youth Minyan ... Rabbi Yossi Fried





Pirkei Avos : Perek 3

1. Akavya ben Mahalalel said: Reflect upon three things and you will not come to sin. Know from where you came and where you are going and before whom you are destined to give account and reckoning. From where have you come?—from a putrid drop. Where are you going?—to the place of dust, worm, and maggot. Before whom are you destined to give account and reckoning?—before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he.

2. Rabbi Chanina, an assistant of the high priest said: Pray for the welfare of the government, since but for fear of it men would swallow each other alive.

3. Rabbi Chananiah ben Teradion said: If two sit together and no words of Torah are interchanged between them, theirs is the session of the scornful, as it is written (Psalm 1:1): “Nor sit in the seat of scoffers.” But when two sit together and words of Torah pass between them, the Divine Presence rests between them, as it is written (Malachi 3:16) “Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name.” Scripture speaks here of two. Whence do we learn that if even one sits and occupies himself in the Torah, the Holy One blessed be he, appoints him a reward? Because it is written (Lamentations 3:28): “to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it.”

4. Rabbi Shimon said: If three have eaten at one table and have not spoken over it words of Torah, it is as though they had eaten of the sacrifices of the dead, for it is written (Isaiah 28:8) “All tables are covered with filthy vomit; no place is clean.” But if three have eaten at one table and have spoken over it words of Torah, it is as if they had eaten from the table of God, for it is written (Ezekiel 41:22) “He said to me, “This is the table that stands before the Lord.”

5. Rabbi Chaninah ben Chachinai said: He who stays awake at night and goes on his way alone and turns his heart to idle thoughts is liable for his life.

6. Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakanah said: Whoever takes upon himself the yoke of Torah, from him will be taken away the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly care; but whoever throws off the yoke of Torah, upon him will be laid the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly care.

7. Rabbi Chalafta ben Dosa of Kefar Chanania used to say: If ten men sit together and occupy themselves with the Torah, the Divine Presence rests among them as it is written (Psalm 82:1) “God has taken his place in the divine council.” And from where do we learn that this applies even to five? Because it is written (Amos 9:6): “And founds his vault upon the earth.” And how do we learn that this applies even to three? Because it is written (Psalm 82:1) “In the midst of the gods he holds judgment.” And from where can it be shown that the same applies even to two? Because it is written (Malachi 3:16) “Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened.” And from where even of one? Because it is written (Exodus 20:24) “In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.”

9. Rabbi Jacob said: If a man is walking by the way and is studying and then interrupts his study and says: “How fine is this tree?” or “How fine is this ploughed field?” Scripture regards him as though he was liable for his life.

10. Rabbi Dostai ben Yannai said in the name of Rabbi Meir: He who forgets one word of his study, Scripture regards him as though he was liable for his life; for it is written (Deuteronomy 4:9) “But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as not to forget the things that your eyes have seen.” Could this apply even if a man’s study was too hard for him? Scripture says (ibid.): “Nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life.” Thus a person is not guilty unless he deliberately puts those lessons away from his heart.

11. Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa said: He in whom the fear of sin takes precedence of wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but he in whom wisdom takes precedence of his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure.

12. He used to say: He whose works exceed his wisdom, his wisdom endures; but he whose wisdom exceeds his works, his wisdom will not endure.

13. He used to say: He who in whom fellow people find no delight, in him the God finds no pleasure.

14. Rabbi Dosa ben Hyrcanus said: Sleeping away the morning, drinking at noonday, childish playing and sitting in the meetinghouses of the unlearned remove a man from this world.

15. Rabbi Elazar of Modiim said: If a man profanes things which are sacred, and offends the holidays and puts his fellow to shame publicly, and makes void the covenant of Abraham our father, and teaches meanings in the Torah which are not according to halakhah, even though he has a knowledge of the Torah and good works, he has no share in the world to come.

16. Rabbi Yishmael says: Be submissive to an elder and courteous to the young. Receive every man with good cheer.

17. Rabbi Akiva said: Jest and frivolity lead a man towards promiscuity. Tradition is a safeguarding fence around the Torah. Tithes are a fence to wealth. Vows are a fence to abstinence. Silence is a fence to wisdom.

18. Rabbi Akiva used to say: Beloved is the man that he was created in the image of God; an extra love is made known to him that he was created in God’s image, as it says (Genesis 9:6) “for in His own image God made humankind.” Beloved are the Jews that they are called sons to God; an extra love is made known to them that they are called sons to God, as it says (Deuteronomy 14:1) “You are children of the Lord your God.” Beloved are the Jews that there has been given to them the precious instrument; an extra love is made known to them that they were given the precious instrument of the world’s creation, as it says (Proverbs 4:2) “For I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.”

19. Rabbi Akiva said: All is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given. The world is judged in goodness, yet all is proportioned to one’s work.

20. Rabbi Akiva used to say: All is given against a pledge, and the net is cast over all living; the shop stands open and the shopkeeper gives credit and the account book lies open and the hand writes. Every one that wishes to borrow let him come and borrow; but the collectors go their daily rounds and exact payment from man with or without his consent; for the collectors have that on which they can rely; and the judgment is a judgment of truth; and all is made ready for a feast.

21. Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah used to say: Where there is no Torah there is no culture; and where there is no culture there is no Torah. Where there is no wisdom there is no fear of God, and where there is no fear of God there is no wisdom. Where there is no knowledge there is no discernment; and where there is no discernment there is no knowledge. Where there is no food there is no Torah; and where there is no Torah there is no food.

22. He used to say: He whose wisdom is more abundant than his works, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are abundant but whose roots are few; and the wind comes and uproots it and overturns it, as it is written (Jeremiah 17:6) “They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.” But he whose works are more abundant than his wisdom, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are many; so that even if all the winds in the world come and blow against it, it cannot be stirred from its place, as it is written (Jeremiah 17:8) “They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.”

23. Rabbi Elazar Ben Chisma used to say: The rules about bird offerings and the rules about ritual impurity of women are essentials of the Torah; but astronomy and linguistic numerics are incidentals to religious learning.

Tuition Crisis
There was this Executive Director of a Yeshiva who was having difficulty collecting tuition from a particular parent. After reviewing the account and realizing that the student was not to blame, the Executive Director decided to give the student a scholarship.

That year, the Executive Director having heard of the extraordinary spirituality that one can obtain by going to Uman for Rosh Hashanah, decided to make the trip.

When he got out of his taxi on Pushkina street imagine his surprise when he saw the parent he had given the scholarship to sipping coffee and eating cookies at Starbucks. He was a bit perturbed so he walked over to the parent and asked, “What are you doing here?” The parent explained that the neighborhood he lives in was going through a difficult time and the community had put up the money for him to come to Uman and daven by the Heiliga Reb Nachman for the welfare of their community.

A few months later, the Executive Director having been spiritually enriched in Uman decided to make a pilgrimage to Lizhensk to be mispallel. This is a small town and as he is walking in the street who does he meet, its none other than the same parent. A bit upset, he again asks him what he is doing there and the parent tells him that the shul he davens in was in the middle of a severe machlokes. The shul had put some funds together so that he could be mispallel for the shul at the kever of this great tzadik.

It was just after Pesach when the Executive Director decided to make a trip to Kerestir. Wouldn’t you know it but who is standing in front of the hachnosas orchim eating a sandwich but the very same parent.

The Executive Director is really upset and is ready to go over to him and give him a piece of his mind when the parent quickly goes over to him and says, “this time I had mileage.”

Business Plan
An American businessman was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The American complimented the fisherman on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them. The fisherman replied that it only took a little while. The American then asked why didn’t he stay out longer and catch more fish. The fisherman said he had enough to support his family’s immediate needs.

The American then asked, “But what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siesta, and stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, señor.”

The American scoffed. “I am a Wharton MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats. Eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then L.A., and eventually New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise.”

The fisherman asked, “But how long will this all take?”

To which the American replied, “Fifteen or 20 years.”

“But what then?”
The American laughed and said, “That’s the best part. When the time is right you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions.”

“Millions? Then what?”

The American said, “Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your friends

Which Haftarah do we read this week ?

An interesting halacha that concerns us is which haftarah is read when there is a double parshah, like this year. Although the Abudraham cites two disparate minhagim with no actual ruling - one to read the first parshah's haftarah and 'the Rambam's minhag' to read the second - nevertheless most other Rishonim, including the Sefer Haminhagim, Mordechai, Ramban, Haghos Maimoniyos, Shibolei Haleket, and Tur, rule to read the second parshah's haftarah. This is also methodized as the proper ruling by both the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 284: 7) and Rema (Orach Chaim 428: 8), and, as far as we can see, this was accepted by all of Klal Yisrael. The main reason to do so is to enable reading a haftarah similar to what was just concluded in the Torah leining, which translates to the second parshah just finished and not the first parshah. So we see that, generally speaking, the haftarah of the second parshah is read, as that is the Torah reading that we just concluded. (as we did with parshiyos Sazria-Metora)

Acharei Exception

Yet, when it comes to the parshiyos of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim, it seems that it is not so simple. Although the Shulchan Aruch does not mention any difference between these and other double parshiyos, the Rema, citing the Sefer Haminhagim and the Mordechai, writes that the haftarah of the first parshah, Acharei Mos, is the proper one to read.

The reason for the uncharacteristic change is that the haftarah of Parshas Kedoshim, 'Hasishpot', from sefer Yechezkel, includes what is known as 'To'avas Yerushalayim', referring to a revealing prophecy of the woeful spiritual state and the terrible events that will befall the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael for not following the word of G-d. The Gemara in Megillah (25b) relates a story of Rabbi Eliezer and one who read such a haftarah, who was subsequently found to have his own family's indiscretions exposed. Ultimately though, the Gemara concludes that that haftarah can indeed be read, and even translated.

Despite that, it seems that, whenever possible, we should try to avoid having to read this condemning passage as the haftarah. Additionally, the content of Acharei Mos's haftarah, 'Halo K'Bnei Kushiyim' (from Amos in Trei Asar Ch. 9) has similar content to Parshas Kedoshim as well. Therefore, the Rema rules that when the Torah reading is the double parshiyos of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim, and as opposed to every other double parshah, the haftarah of Acharei Mos is read instead of Kedoshim's.

Although the Levush (who is customarily followed in laws pertaining to Haftarah's) vehemently argued against such a switch, and suggested that it is a printing mistake in the earlier authorities to suggest such a switch, nevertheless, the Rema's rule is followed by virtually all later poskim & Ashkenazic Kehillos.

However, it must be noted that this switch was not accepted by Sefardic authorities and when Acharei Mos and Kedoshim are combined, they do indeed read Kedoshim's haftarah, 'Hasishpot'.

Hashem is the Shadchan

By Rabbi David Ashear

I read a remarkable story told by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer. One day, a man who was friendly with Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach saw him on the street, and Reb Shlomo invited him to a wedding that was taking place in his Shul that night. He said that it would be a big Mitzva to attend this wedding, as there was a special story behind it. The man happily agreed and stayed to the very end. At that point, Rabbi Carlebach sat him down and told him the following story.

A while back, he was on a flight and got up to ask one of the flight attendants for a drink. To his amazement, he saw the stewardess standing in the back, praying intensely with a Siddur in her hand. After she finished the Amidah, he said, "I guess you were praying. I never met a religious stewardess before." She said, "Actually, I converted to Judaism," and she proceeded to tell the Rabbi her story. She was very sincere and had a real passion for religion.

A short while later, she approached the Rabbi's seat and asked him if he could possibly help her. After she had been Jewish for some time, her friend set her up with a nice religious man. After a few dates, it was obvious that they were perfect for each other. However, when his parents found out that she was a convert, they forbade their son from seeing her anymore.

The rabbi said, "I feel very bad. What could I do to help?" She replied, "Maybe if you give his father a call, you could change his mind."

When he called, the father heard the suggestion and immediately responded, "It is not subject to discussion. I have only one son, and being that I went through the war, I have a responsibility to my family who perished to carry on the tradition in the best way. This does not include my son marrying a girl who just became Jewish a few months ago. I don't know her intentions. I just want my son to marry a Jewish girl from a regular Jewish family like us."

The Rabbi tried his best to convince the father, offering to verify that she was truly sincere. Nonetheless, he was not successful. It seemed that the case was closed.

Several months later, Rabbi Carlebach received a phone call from the stewardess, explaining that there were some new developments. Two days before, she received a phone call informing her that her mother was on her deathbed. They had not been in touch since she made the decision to change her life, and she did not even know that her mother was sick.

When she arrived, her mother made a strange request. "Please promise to bury me in Jewish cemetery." It did not make any sense. She asked her mother, "Why? And why are you asking me? Ask Dad to do it."

The mother replied, "I can't trust him to do it. You see, we never told you, but really, we are Jewish. After we survived the Holocaust and made it to America, we made a firm commitment never to reveal that we were Jewish. Your father was always worried that there would come a time when it would happen again here. We raised you the way we did, because we thought it would be for your benefit. However, it ended up being a mistake. Please, bury me like a Jew."

Now, she asked Rabbi Carlebach to please call back that father and explain to him that she was, in fact, Jewish from birth. The Rabbi called, but the father was very skeptical.

"She's making this whole thing up just to marry my son. I'm not falling for this."

"Please," said the Rabbi, "Let's be reasonable. What if I come to your house with her and her father? This way you will be able to meet them and I am sure you will be convinced."

The father agreed and the three of them arrived at the house. When the door opened, the two fathers looked at each other in shock. "Yaakov is that really you?" the stewardess's father whispered. "Moshe?" whispered the boy's father.

Suddenly, they were in each other's arms, laughing and crying, hardly daring to believe what had just transpired. These two men had been childhood friends who grew up together in the same shtetl.

"Yaakov," said Moshe, "Do you remember our pact?"

"Remind me."

"We promised one another that when we get married and have children of our own..."

"Oh yes," interrupted Yaakov. "We promised that if one of us had a boy and the other a girl, we would marry them off to each other."

"Well then," Yaakov laughed, "It looks like it's time to keep our promise."

Rabbi Carlebach concluded, "That is how we ended up dancing at this wedding tonight."

Hashem brings people together in wondrous ways. Never give up. We can always be helped.

Parshas Acharei Mos/ Kedoshim "Life"

This week we have two Torah portions, one deals with the death of the sons of Aharon, and the second one deals with the concept of purifying oneself and distancing oneself from what is permitted to him (or her). The Kli Yakar asks on the verse in the first Torah section, it states "And don't come in (to the holy of holies) at ANY TIME". Why is it written "at any time"? If the truth is that he went in exclusively on Yom Kippur, why have an implication that he can go certain times a year, when it really is only once a year?! Another question one can ask, is that according to Rashi, the reason why we are mentioning the death of the Sons of Aharon is because Aharon should learn what not should do, in order to have a prolonged life. If so, why are we focusing on the negative, on their death? If really the main thing is that he should perform the service perfectly, with going in exclusively on Yom Kippur? Just state that he should go in once a year! Why bring up the memory of his children's death? One more question which is based on the second Torah section, is a very basic question. The verse states that "Though shall be holy, because I am holy" And the Maor Einayim says in a lengthy piece that Hashem gets his bounty of holiness that he bestows to everything from us. How is this supposed to be internalized by us? This statement is very pressurizing, and seemingly non-comprehensible to us.

R' Moshe Feinstein Zt"l says that the reason that they had died was simply because they had tried to attain a level of spirituality and holiness that was not at their level. Yet how is this a lesson for Aharon HaKohen who was the High Priest? We are telling him to remain a simple Jew?!

We can answer that we all have a natural will to live, yet traits of death and darkness are brought upon ourselves. They are signs of depression, anxiety and impurity. We have to focus on taking away those bearings of "death". Once those are away, we can feel life in its purest and happiest form. We tend to associate life with many distractions of stringencies, and concepts, and not SIMPLY. By living simply we focus more on Hashem and are more accessible to happiness, and a full life. This is why we are focusing on the death of his children.

The best way to access life, which is eternal (in relative terms) is by accessing Hashem within our lives, as he is completely eternal. Hashem therefore is clearly found in those moments and episodes of clarity and happiness, where there is no boundaries and limitations to his eternity. However, in order to internalize Hashem, we have to do what he has told us to do. If we do only according to our intellect and emotions we are only attaching to ourselves, but not to Hashem.

Therefore, to answer the Kli Yakar's question... We have MANY opportunities to attach to Hashem, and we should never lose out on them, however we have to realize that it is all for ONE opportunity! To attach to Hashem, and to his word! (Symbolized by Yom Kippur). Now to answer the question on our expectancy for holiness... We are expected to become holy, simply because the only way to live life, is by attaching oneself to Hashem! This is done by living life in clarity, with happiness, joy and by following the path he has put out for us.

The horror and hope I saw in Rome

So the Romans erected an arch and Coliseum to celebrate their victory over Judea. Where are they now?

Rabbi Elchanan Poupko

It was a trip I would never forget. On our way to Israel, my wife and I stopped in Rome for a tour of the city. What sounded like a benign tour of a European city, ended up being a traumatizing and reinvigorating trip, shedding light on the past and future of the Jewish people.

As we approached the Colosseum in ancient Rome, we marveled at its greatness; 157 feet high with a circumference of 620 feet, it was a sight hard to ignore. At its peak, the Colosseum would seat more than 50,000 people from a city that was the center of Western Civilization. At the same time, a flashback from the past, could not let me rest.

As we watched the beauty of the structure and its adjoining arches and buildings, 2000 years later, I could not help myself from hearing the cries and the jiggles of the chains of 97,000 slaves from destroyed Judea described in the writings of Josephus. I could hear the echoes of the shouts of my brothers and sisters--those who led proud and meaningful lives in the beautiful mountains of Judea-- now living in slavery and humiliation in Rome. I could hear the heartbreaking screams of Jewish women who led dedicated and dignified lives in their regal homes in Judea, now living in shame and disgrace in a foreign land, with cruel and merciless slave owners as their masters.

I recalled the recently deciphered inscription found near the Colosseum which read "The Emperor Caesar Vespasian Augustus had this new Amphitheatre erected with the spoils of war", the war being the recent destruction of Jerusalem. I can just imagine the vessels of which I read in reverence in the book of Exodus—the Menorah, the Table, the Altar, and more—in front of my eyes, in the exact spot it was featured to the Roman people, celebrating "Judea Capta"—Judea has been captured.

Tragedy did not end there. Some 60 years later, after the brutal crushing of the Bar Kochva rebellion, thousands of Jews who survived the Roman mass slaughter, were also sent to Rome - as slaves. One can just imagine the horror of going from being a proud and pious land owner in Judea to being an abused and perpetually tortured slave in a foreign land, under an idolatrous and cruel foreign people.

Those voices and collective memories haunted me as I remembered one of the most difficult times in our people's history. But then I looked around and saw no Romans.

We had stopped in Rome on the way to Israel for Pesach, and during the Holiday, on a late evening, we headed over to the Old City and the Western Wall. It was 12:30 AM, a time one can assume a quiet and peaceful walk through the beautiful streets of Jerusalem. Again, things turned out differently that I had expected.

Walking the streets of Jerusalem—at midnight- we were slowed down by tens of thousands of Jewish people heading over to the Western Wall, and this was at the slower time of the day.

Proud Jews, living in the land of Israel, speaking the language of Israel, and celebrating the God of Israel, were all coalescing to head to the Western Wall. "For there is a day, the watchers shall call on the mountains of Ephraim; Rise! Let us go up to Zion, to the Lord, our God"(Jeremiah 31)

I reflected back on the Colosseum. I remembered seeing mostly tourists at the site; no Roman's, no gladiators, no Caesar, no Latin being spoken--just remnants of an Empire that is no longer. Suddenly the Colosseum no longer seemed glorious or glamorous; it was just a sad relic of a bygone past.

As the Jewish people continue to face adversaries, challenges, difficulties, and failures, I look to the Colosseum and remember: Am Yisrael Chai, the Jewish people continue to live on. We should never forget the difficulties we have been through or those who we have lost during those perilous times. But we must always remember: losing hope is never an option for the Jewish people. Am Yisrael Chai

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INTRODUCTION TO BRIS MILAH – ITS UNIQUE SIGNIFICANCE:

I would like to share some of the highlights of the shiur given this week at the Night Kollel, on the unique significance and power of the mitzvah of milah.

The Tur, in his introduction to hilchos milah quotes the Gemara, that tells us the importance of the mitzvah of milah and that it is considered the greatest mitzvah of all mitzvos. This needs to be understood: What is unique about this mitzvah, that it is titled the greatest mitzvah? Additionally, we find this expression in regards to other mitzvos. For example, we find that tzitzis is considered to be the equal of all mitzvos. So, that being the case, which is really the greatest mitzvah?

The Shem M'shmuel quotes his illustrious father, the Avnei Nezer, who elucidates this concept with an analogy to one's body. A person is made up of many different limbs and organs. Some are more vital to our existence than others. A person can live a long and healthy life, even if he is missing one finger. However, there are certain organs – the brain, heart, and lungs – without them one cannot live.

Similarly, the 248 mitzvos correspond to the 248 limbs of a person's body. Indeed, every mitzvah is significant and no mitzvah should be underestimated, however there are certain mitzvos that are our spiritual lifeline and are vital for our very existence. These mitzvos are considered the equivalent of all the other mitzvos, because without their fulfillment one would not be able to exist.

The mitzvah of milah is one such example, and the Tur goes on to delineate many of the dimensions and powers that are tapped into by fulfilling this essential mitzvah, thereby making this mitzvah so extraordinary:

Bris milah is one of the only mitzvos that failure to perform is punishable with kareis. Avraham Avinu did not achieve his highest level of complete spirituality until after his circumcision. The Jewish nation only received Eretz Yisroel in the merit of this great mitzvah.

In fact, the holy Zohar points out that the mitzvah of milah has such great power

and can actually bring about a bona fide connection in the person to the upper spheres. The Zohar attributes the fact that Yishmoel and his descendants (i.e., the Arabs) have domination in Eretz Yisroel – and the withholding the settling of the land by the Jewish nation – to the merit of their adherence to performing bris milah. The Zohar then adds that they will continue to have dominance in Eretz Yisroel until the merits that they have from fulfilling this mitzvah is terminated. The Zohar continues by saying that there will be constant wars – on land and on water – but the Yishma'eilim will not lose their hold on the land.

Additionally, the Tur continues, the bris milah is not just an externality, as is talis and tefillin; it is a symbol embedded in our bodies, testifying to our unique and inbuilt status as the Chosen Nation. Thus, this mitzvah is indeed very powerful and a part and parcel of our very lifeline.

COMMUNITY KOLLEL NEWS:

As we continue to count the seven weeks to Shavuos, come join one of our many learning programs and prepare for the yom tov of Kabalas Hatorah.

The Kollel Boker has resumed their trek through Meseches Beitzah. The Night Kollel has started Hilchos Milah. Additionally, The Night Kollel has a number of different tracks for various learning styles, including a Daf Yomi Shiur, as well as Daf Hashavuah.

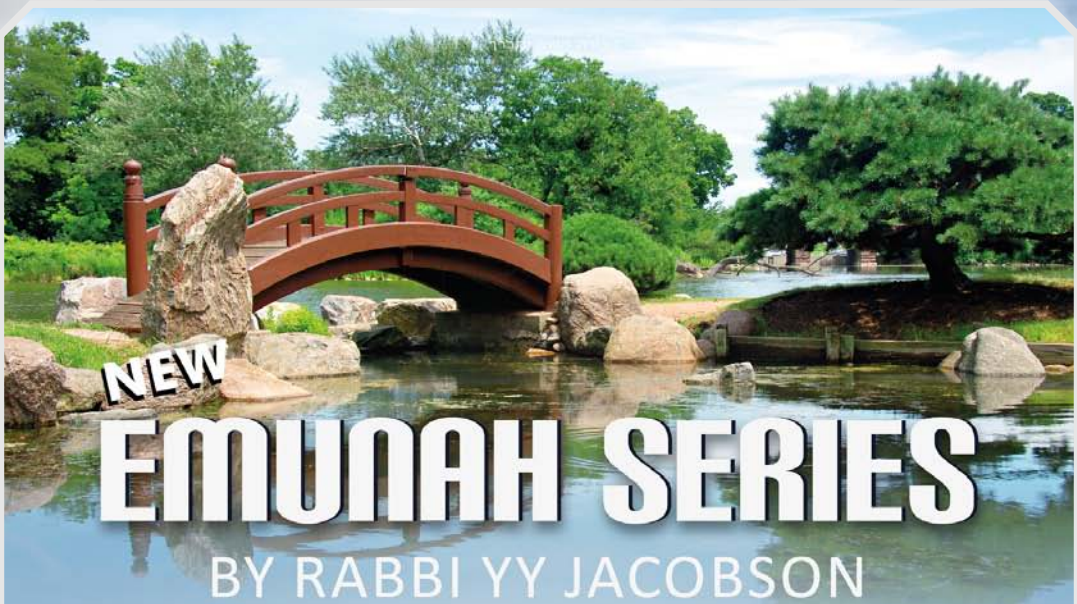
The Night Kollel, learning hikchos milah, will be hosting a shiur next Wednesday, May 10th @ 8:45pm, followed by Q&A. The speaker will be Rabbi Eliezer Krohn, son of the renowned Maggid, Rabbi Pesach Krohn, and 6th generation mohel. Rabbi Krohn is a well-known and popular speaker and teacher.

The Night Kollel would like to welcome some of our new members: Avromi Rand, Shuah Frank, Rofi Cohen. The Kollel Boker would also like to welcome their new members: Shuah Frank, Moshe Langsom, Yehuda Grotko, Asher Senderovic, Avi Weinberg, Dovid Kabasa, and Dovid Liff. We are already enjoying their presence.

Wishing you a wonderful Shabbos,
Rabbi Nachum Scheiner



The Kollel Boker began the new zman with fresh energy, as they continue learning Meseches Beitzah.



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