

BET
BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER

בית מדרש אור חיים
BAIS MEDRASH OHR CHAIM



OUR BELOVED RABBI
SOKAVA REBBE



ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ

THIS COMING MONDAY EVENING
IS A GREAT TIME TO JOIN THE
SEMICHAS CHAVER PROGRAM
WITH

RABBI DANIEL COREN

SEE PAGE 13



MONSEY
URGENT CARE

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**BET Parasot Nasso
5780**

This week's Parasha is the largest one in the Torah, and its theme is a lesson on true unity. The Parasha begins by illustrating how all the Levites worked together in harmony; putting together and dismantling the Mishkan. The Torah goes into great detail discussing the number of people working together doing their specific job. Then the parsha relates about bringing the impure people to purity, followed by the subject of Sotah. Hashem, for the sake of unity and shalom bayit, allowed the desecration of His holy name. Because the events of Sotah can cause some people to be relaxed about their connection and unity with Hashem, the laws of Nazir is introduced to reconnect and strengthen our unity. Hashem then responds by giving us the blessings of the Kohanim, the blessing of peace that reinforces our

harmony as a nation. The Mishkan is assembled resulting in incredible outcome that brings heaven and earth together. The Divine presence now has a man-made home where the entire nation joins to connect to Hashem and each other. The Bais Hamikdash is the place where even the nations of the world can come and unite with Hashem.

The last part of the Parsha however, does not seem to fit into the theme. The princes of the 12 tribes present gifts to the Mishkan and the Torah spends many posukim relating these gifts. Each gift is identical to the other yet the Torah repeats each and every one of them. The Torah, which never has even one extra word, seems to be redundant in the twelve repetitious pasukim. Why is this so important to know that the Torah repeats itself? How does this fit in with the main idea of unity from the rest of the Parasha? The separate gifts of the different tribes actually seem

to connote diversity instead of unity. How do we understand this?

In Parshat Noach we learn of the great flood upon which the known world came to an end. This was due to the sins of man, mainly stealing. In the same Parasha we read about the rebellion of the generation of the Babylonian tower. Rashi states that the redeeming factor of that generation, which saved them from being destroyed, was that they were united. Harav Yochanan Zweig asks, if being united was their positive element, why introduce languages that would separate the people? The Rosh Yeshiva explains that when all people are identical it is not unity. When people are different yet they use their differences toward one goal and act together as one, this is true unity. Unity comes with a will to compromise ones position for the sake of unity.

Based on this understanding, I would suggest that the Torah is

illustrating this lesson with the Nissi'im. Each tribe was totally different from one another and wanted to bring something special for the Mishkan. They each had their own approach of what to contribute. Nevertheless the goal was the same; to Honor Hashem. Remarkably, they all independently came to the same conclusion. This is why it was necessary for to Torah to extend itself and spell out each gift. Additionally, the Torah calculates the total gifts that were given. This too seems unnecessary as we can easily compute it ourselves. Yet, it is written to illustrate the true unity of the Nissi'im. The leaders of each tribe understood that using their unique talents and tools towards one goal is the ultimate model of harmony. The incredible, identical result is the proof.

May we master this exemplary ideal of unity and merit the abundance of blessing that comes along with it.

Shabbat Shalom



Zmanim by our incredible Gabbai
EPHRAIM YUROWITZ

NEW MINYANIM ADDED:
EARLY MINYAN MINCHA FRIDAY
1:35, 3:00

SHABBOS ZMANIM

CANDLE LIGHTING	8:07PM
MINCHA TENT	7:00PM
SHKIYA	8:25PM
MINCHA 20 FORSHAY	7:30PM
SHACHRIS VASIKIN- DAF YOMI SHIUR	4:44AM
SHACHRIS	8:00AM
BUCHRIM MINYAN 20	9:00AM
SHACHRIS - YOUTH	9:15AM
SHACHRIS	9:15AM
SHACHRIS 20 FORSHAY BAIS CHABAD	9:45AM
MINCHA	1:45PM
PIRCHEI	2:00PM
MINCHA - DAF YOMI	6:00PM
PIRKEI AVOS 5 & 6	5:50PM
MINCHA SHALOSH SEUDOS	8:05PM
SHKIYA	8:26PM
MARRIV	9:06PM 18 TENT, 9:11PM

WEEKDAY ZMANIM

SHACHRIS
20 MINUTES BEFORE NEITZ 30 ON YOM TOV
S 5:03 M 5:03 T 5:03 W 5:03 T 5:03 F 5:03

MINCHA & MARIV
12 MINUTES BEFORE PLAG
S 6:40 M 6:41 T 6:41 W 6:42 T 6:42

MINCHA & MARIV
12 MINUTES BEFORE SHKIA
S 8:15 M 8:15 T 8:16 W 8:16 T 8:17

JUNE 07 - JUNE 12
NEITZ IS 5:23
PELAG IS 6:52 PM - 6:54 PM
SHKIA IS 8:27 PM - 8:29 PM
MAGEN AVRAHAM 8:34 AM
GRA- BAAL HATANYA 9:10 AM- 9:11 AM

June 2020

בית מדרש אור חיים
BAIS MEGASH OVR CHAIM
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER
18 FORSHAY ROAD | HONSEY NEW YORK 10852

WEEKDAY MINYANIM

שחרית	מנחה ומעריב
6:15AM 20 Forshay ↑	12 MIN. 18 Tent
6:30 18 Tent	12 MIN. 18 Tent
6:45 20 ↑	10 MIN. 20 ↑
7:00 20 Tent	20 MIN. 18 Tent
7:15 18 ↓	30 MIN. 20 Tent
7:30 18 Tent	40 MIN. 20 ↑
7:45 20 ↑	50 MIN. 18 Tent
8:00 20 Tent	
8:15 18 ↓	
8:30 18 Tent	
8:45 20 ↑	
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11:15 18 ↓	
11:30 18 Tent	

מנחה 18 ↓
1:45* 2:45* 3:45* 4:45* 5:45 | 6:45 | 7:45
2:00 3:00 4:00 5:00 6:00 7:00
2:15* 3:15* 4:15* 5:15 | 6:15 | 7:15
2:30 3:30 4:30 5:30 6:30 7:30

מעריב
AT 18 Tent
AT LATER * 20 Tent
AT שיקייה * 18 Tent
10 MIN. AFTER שיקייה * 20 Tent
20 MIN. AFTER שיקייה * 18 Tent
30 MIN. AFTER שיקייה * 18 Tent
40 MIN. AFTER שיקייה * 20 Tent
50 MIN. AFTER שיקייה * 20 ↑
60 MIN. AFTER שיקייה * 18 Tent
9:15 18 Tent
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11:30 18 ↓
11:45 18 ↓
12:00am 18 ↓
12:15 18 ↓
12:30 18 ↓
12:45 18 ↓

*Repeat Kiras Shma after nightfall

*Coming Back Soon

FOR MORE INFO: www.18forshay.com // Secretary@18forshay.com

BLUEBERRY HILL ZMANIM

EREV SHABBOS PLAG MINYAN 30 Dr. Frank Rd. Entrance on Humbert

MINCHA **6:30** PLAG **6:52**



RABBI COREN

Parshas Naso - Mind Over Heart

It is quite well known and becomes even more apparent when listening to the words in Parshas Naso, that this is the longest parsha in the Torah. It could have been much shorter - since most of the verses repeat the same offering required by the Nasi of each tribe to be presented during the inauguration of the Mishkan. The only difference is who brought it. So what is the reason for the numerous repetitions? On a humorous note I recall that when I became bar mitzva and began to laien on Shabbas in the local shuls I would divide the weeks with Rabbi Willig's shlitas. We were being paid by R Moshe Sofer Z'L a dollar per passuk which amounted to nice money even 30 years ago. When it came to this week's parsha we obviously fought who would get to read since the preparation was the same but the pay was much greater. (Halachicly one can argue that this is a problem since the payment would seem to be best paid for the time spent before Shabbas preparing the reading rather than doing the actual lanining.) [Those that are currently participating in our Semichas Chaver program will B"H be able to decide on this question in the coming month.]

Getting back to the main question: why repeat the same idea more than a dozen times? Another point that requires explanation is why the key word used for counting or appointing is routed in the word naso which is the name of the parsha and seems to be its central theme. The choice of word also needs further explanation.

And lastly, the beginning verse has one additional word that is also strange: נשא את ראש בני גרשון גם. Why is the word גם which means also used here?

I think the answer to all of the above is the idea that we discussed previously regarding the name of Sefer Bamidbar also known as Pekudim, the book of numbers or even better translated as the book of appointing. The idea is that in a successful army every military position is necessary and when each soldier embraces his appointed position success follows. But if jealousy turns into envy and negative action is taken then failure and destruction is on its way.

I would like to add an additional point and that is how to deal with resentment and detrimental emotions and ensuring that it doesn't turn into unmanageable and harmful action.

For example, the family of Gershon as mentioned here literally means 'lift'. We all need to be raised up, encouraged and strengthened to remember that living up to our job—however menial—is given the same credit as what seems on the surface to be a more important position. Gershon could easily have felt jealousy towards the family of Kehas who were given the privilege of carrying and

safeguarding the Ark and the inner parts of the Mishkan. But they worked on their feelings by filtering the emotions in their minds and figuring out acceptable responses—i.e. which mitzva of the six constant mitzvos should their minds run to. Should they repeat to themselves the words that Hashem is one or that he is our God who loves us and knows exactly what is best for us? I was thinking that this might be the reason for the word גם which hints at גם זו לטובה --no matter what is happening in our lives if we remember that it's all for our good then we can tap into our feelings and actually take control. We have been able to do this successfully in the past and sometimes it just happens that we are mad and upset at something and have convinced ourselves that injustice has been taken and then suddenly one insight or news or fact enters our mind and our heart jumps to an entirely different emotion.

This is the job of a Jew--to feel emotions and be excited but ensure that those sensations are first reviewed in our brains; sometimes we need an outside resource like a Rav or friend to make sure we're not biased, otherwise we might lose much more than we think we can possibly gain.

Shabbat Shalom

בס"ד



בית מדרש אור חיים

BAIS MEDRASH OHR CHAIM
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

Early Friday Mincha- 18 Main

1:30 (Not before מנחה גדולה)

2:00 **Coming Back soon**

2:30

3:00 **Coming Back soon**

3:30

4:00 **Coming Back soon**

WHY BIRCHAS KOHANIM?



RABBI BERACH STEINFELD

The posuk in Bamidbar 6:23 says that Hashem commanded Aharon and his sons to bless the Yidden. The Sefer Metzach Aharon discusses an interesting question. Why did Hashem choose the Kohanim to be the ones to bless Klal Yisroel? We know that the greatest kedusha

Klal Yisroel has is via the Torah Hakdosha. It would stand to reason that Hashem should give the bracha to Klal Yisroel via those who excel in learning the Torah. The gemara in Bava Basra 116a says that Rav Pinchas bar Chama said that if someone has a sick person in his household, he should go to a chacham who will daven on the cholah's behalf. The Nimukei Yosef and Rema in Yoreh Deah 335:11 and the Meiri in Moed Koton 9a say that the bracha of a talmid chacham should be beloved to a person and one should go to great lengths to receive the bracha. In the Midrash Tanchuma in Vayeichi 7 we see that Hashem says that in the past I (Hashem) would have to bless my people. From here onward, the Kohanim and tzadikkim will be the ones to bless the people. We see from this that the bracha of a kohein and a talmid chacham seem to be equal. To top it off, we find in Horiyus 13a that a mamzer talmid chacham comes before a Kohen who is an am ha'aretz. Why are the Kohanim the chosen vehicle to bring brachos to klal Yisrael?

There are a number of answers to this question. The first answer is based on Sotah 38b that we only give a kos of a bracha to one who is a tov ayin as the Maharsha explains that the kavana of the mevarech goes into the bracha. That is why Hashem chose the Kohanim. The Kohanim have no chelek in Eretz Yisroel so they can give the bracha whole-heartedly, without any misgivings. A second tirtutz is that since the Kohanim are the ones bringing korbanos, which bring a kapara for every Yid, it is therefore fitting that they are the mevarchim. In a similar vein, we can answer that Kohanim are considered the shaliach of Klal Yisroel as we see in Kiddushin 23b. It is therefore fitting that they are the Hashem's shaliach to bentch Klal Yisrael. A fourth tirtutz is that since the Kohanim were commanded with more mitzvos, they are on a higher level and therefore able to bentch Klal Yisrael.

The sefer Minchas Shmuel discusses the fact that part of the bracha uses the terminology "Koi sevarchu." The word Koi is b'gematria 25. The Kohanim received the chof daled (24) matnos Kehuna. The twenty-fifth matana they received was that they are the ones to bentch Klal Yisroel. A sixth tirtutz is that since the Kohanim never sinned regarding the Eigel, it is only fitting that they should be the defenders of Klal Yisroel and therefore be able to bring bracha unto Klal Yisroel. A seventh tirtutz is similar to the Kli Yakar's explanation as to why the Kohanim were appointed to see the tzoraas even though talmidei chachamim were known to be the ones who would not veer from halacha, neither to the right or left. The Kohanim were known as rodef shalom and had the great quality of being humble. They were therefore in a position to pasken negaim and for that same reason, they were the ones chosen to bentch Klal Yisroel.

The eighth and final answer is that the bracha of the Kohanim does not come from the Kohein himself; the Kohein is just the vehicle of the bracha. The Rambam Hilchos Tefillah 16:6,7 says that even a Kohen who is not so medakdek be'mitzvos can and should duchen and bentch Klal Yisroel. The bracha is from Hashem, and the Kohein is just the shaliach. A bracha of a tzaddik can be understood as "Tzaddik gozer ve'Hakadosh Baruch Hu mekayem." The bracha of the tzaddik may not end up being the one that Hashem intended to give. Conversely, when a Kohein gives a bracha it will always reflect Hashem's will. We therefore want the bracha of the Kohanim!

May we be zocheh to be gebentched from Hashem via the Kohanim in the Bais Hamikdash!

Rabbi Fischel Schachter Do You Want This Shidduch?

As we know, Yaakov Avinu spent fourteen years learning in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, after which he traveled off to the house of Lavan to find a wife. Chazal tell us that he did not sleep one night during those fourteen years. He diligently learned day and night and was arguably one of the top learners in the yeshiva. Why then would he need to travel away and marry Lavan's daughter? Why didn't one of the Roshei Yeshiva or wealthy men in the community offer him his daughter and take him as a son-in-law?

The truth is, homiletically speaking, that whenever any of the respected Rabbanim or wealthy folk looked into Yaakov, they discovered a less than favorable background. His grandfather, Avraham Avinu, was a baal teshuva; his brother, Eisav, was off-the-derech, as was his uncle, Yishmael; his maternal grandfather, Besuel, didn't have the greatest reputation either. "Yaakov is a nice boy, but not for my daughter..." they would say.

Anyone who said this immediately discarded the potential of becoming an immediate and integral part of the dynasty and destiny of the Jewish people. They discounted Yaakov and thereby discounted themselves of becoming a valuable link and forebearer in the chain of the G-dly nation which would miraculously leave Egypt and receive the Torah.

The lesson is quite clear. We can often look at a picture and see all the problems and disregard it completely, writing it off without a second thought, but we would be wise to look again and not hastily jump to a conclusion. Sometimes the greatest potential and future rests in the hands of whom we think of least.

UFARATZTAH

THE SHLUCHIM ATTITUDE



On Shavuos, 1951 - the first Shavuos that the Rebbe accepted the leadership of Chabad as Rebbe -Turning to Reb Yitzchok Gittelson, he exclaimed: "Being that two ships carrying Yidden arrived here, you must know that these ships are in your possession in order for you to form a bond with these Yidden and bring them closer to Yiddishkeit."

"If you're embarrassed, say it in my name. Tell them that there's a Yid named Mendel Schneerson who doesn't speak a clear English, who speaks with a heavy accent to the point that people only understand half or a quarter of his words, and makes statements that don't comply with the American norm... Speak in my name, and the words will have their desired effect. === Derher

This is the attitude of a typical young couple shluchim going out to a city that could be anywhere. This city has Jews that are waiting for us to bring them the beauty and truth of a Torah life. It is not about me, how qualified I am to run an Organization or my command of the language of the country where the city resides. It's about the Jews in that City, they should get to know the beauty of Yiddishkeit.

====
Sivan 1941, the Rebbe arrived in America.



Parshas Naso

Get Back to Where you Once Belonged

I am not astonished by the fact that governments and police forces, sometimes use force to achieve their means,

(I bet you didn't expect to read that here) as I attended more than one JDL demonstration in the 1970's helping to free our brothers in the Soviet Union. (Rabbi Meir Kahane anyone?)

I also know that rioters will be rioters and there's not much one can really do that won't trigger even more demonstrations and martyrs- its a conundrum (Watts, Chicago etc) . But time and discipline will send solace, with Hashem's help.

I was thinking.. There is no word in lashon Hakodesh for conspiracy- but for the current phrase "back story"(what's really going on in the background) there are two words.. Emunah and Bitachon.

Jews who believe, know intrinsically that Hashem is behind everything..everything.. Thats the real back story.

Now that we dealt with the big stuff- let's try to learn a lesson we can take home with us.

But first, can you tell me (Rabbi Sneh wants to know also) How tough should we be?

This past week we started opening up our Shuls again.

Boruch Hashem.

Minyanim at Ohr Hachaim are running with responsibility and order. I would expect nothing less from our terrific staff and Rabbonim! Thank you!

As we approach the shul with trepidation, we know deep inside that this time must be different.

Surely the last few months have changed us.

We cannot go back to our tefilah, as just another davening.. Catch a maariv.. Speed through Shacharis. Talk to one another without taking into consideration that we were literally banned from our places of prayer and are now being given a reprieve.

Rabbi Sneh sent me a short clip of one of his inspirational minutes that he gives everyday after the Neitz minyan (in Yiddish) and by email in Hebrew.

These inspirational minutes are literally one of a kind. In their intensity, content, humor and relevance- simply fantastic.

Ask anyone that has heard him-(Email Zev Yurowitz to join) if the neitz is too early for you)

It is worth it!

Harav BenTziyon Shlita brings a Shem MiShmuel that should make us all tremble and rethink what we just went through.

Explaining our expulsion from the Bais Hamikdash - he comes up with a novel reason.



During the times that the Mikdash was functioning, anyone could do an aveirah and get kapporah..almost right away.

This was a good thing- but it also has another side.

We became complacent and numb to the fact that we must take mitzvos seriously.

This complacency (see inside for why we bring a korban for shogieg not meizid- in some ways it's stricter) was insipid and made us view the mitzvos with less kavanah- after all you can buy a kapporah - why be so strict.

So what did Hashem do? He took it all away from us totally with a mandate to show Hashem, with our Torah and Tfillah, how much we "missed Him."

It's especially poignant that we opened again on Shavuos.

The Malbim brings a few pesukim that bring this idea to life.

From Dovid Hamelech's Tehillim - the soul of every Jew.

Dovid Hamelech implores us to come to Hashem's gates (the Temple) with gratefulness, Bo-u Shearav b'Sodah. Enter His gates with much praise..

Why not be thankful inside? Why just outside?

In addition, King David asks, begs Hashem-Shivti b'Veis Hashem. Let me sit in the study halls- But may I only be a visitor Be Heichalo- in His Chambers. Visitor?

The answers are one and the same.

If when we come back to the shul, the study hall- we are not full of excitement - if our hearts do not jump when we approach the shul- what message have we learned from all this?

Similarly if learning has the same excitement as our vacations . Then we will have gotten "it."

If not - it's time for reflection.

Good Shabbos!





RABBI YY JACOBSON

Harmony, Expulsion, Frustration

Don't Get Frustrated by Your Frustration

The Levite Family Tree

Levi, one of the 12 sons of Jacob (the third of our forefathers, a grandson of the first Jew Abraham), had three sons - Gershon, Kehas and Merari - as well as a daughter, Yocheved. While Yocheved mothered Moses and Aaron, the teacher and High Priest of Israel, her three brothers fathered the Levi tribe who dedicated their lives to the spiritual service of the Holy Tabernacle and at a later point the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, an abode the Jewish people erected for the manifest presence of G-d.

In this week's portion, Naso, the Torah relates how these three Levite families were charged with the mission of carrying the Tabernacle and its accessories when the Jewish people traveled in the Sinai desert for 40 years.

The Kehathites carried the holiest items of the Tabernacle: the ark, candelabra, table, altars and all their utensils. The Gershonites were given the job of carrying the coverings and curtains of the Tabernacle. The third of the Levite families, Merari, was responsible to carry the planks, bars, pillars and sockets of the Tabernacle structure.

Three Personalities

One of the axioms that define traditional biblical scholarship is the idea that each event recorded in the Torah may be understood also from a psychological and spiritual point of view, granting all biblical events timeless significance.

This obviously is valid for our sub-

ject as well. While on the surface, the intricate description of the three Levite families as the movers of the Tabernacle bears no relevance to our lives today, a deeper look at the spiritual meaning behind their respective roles allows us to glean wisdom and inspiration for our daily challenges and struggles.

Let's examine for a moment the names of the three brothers who fathered the Levite families -- since names of people do express something of their inner soul. The translation of the Hebrew name Kehas is harmony.

The meaning of the name Gershon is expulsion. The third name Merari is translated as frustration. Now, the spiritual Divine soul existing within each of us is defined in the Kabbalah as a "microcosmic Tabernacle," a sacred and vulnerable place in the depth of our hearts where G-d is manifestly present.

Gershon, Kehas and Merari personify three distinct psychological and spiritual states of man, each of which may become in its own unique way a carrier and porter of the spiritual Tabernacle existing in the human heart.

Kehas -- Harmony

Kehas -- the name of the Levite family that carried the sacred items and utensils of the Tabernacle -- represents the human being who succeeds in integrating all of the facets of his personality into a cohesive and harmonious whole. This remarkable individual manages to transform all of his traits and characteristics into sacred items and all of his limbs and organs into sacred utensils, housing the presence of the Divine reality.

Gershon -- Expulsion

Gershon - the name of the Levite family assigned to carry the coverings and curtains of the Holy Tabernacle -- personifies the human being who constantly needs to expel and drive away the immoral impulses and sensations that intrude on his psyche. This individual cannot define himself as harmonious and complete. His job in life is ensuring that the sacred Tabernacle existing within his heart remains protected and shielded from the many physical and emotional hazards that threaten to undermine it (expressed by the fact that Gershon carried the coverings and curtains).

Merari - Frustration

Merari - the name of the family that carried the pillars and planks of the Tabernacle - personifies that individual who may not even be expelling the negative patterns of his daily life. Yet he is not apathetic to his lowly condition; he is frustrated and disturbed by it. He longs for wholesomeness and redemption. One may think that a human being in this state of mind is not one of the carriers of the Divine tabernacle. After all, he is so distant from the spiritual sacredness of his soul.

Yet, in truth, it is this disaffected and frustrated human being who carries the very foundations of the Divine Tabernacle. This is because the beginning of all healing and the foundation of all change is a feeling of frustration and yearning. The disappointment and lack of contentment with one's present condition is what propels man to discover new horizons in his life.

Simply put, if you are truly frustrated by your present situation, you are in a place far better than you can imagine. Now get on with the journey in stride.



We Are Special

The Power of One Kind Act

There is a story about the beauty of doing chessed like a Jew.

There once was a woman who passed away who was in need of an advocate. The police determined there would need to be an autopsy on this nifteres, because she was found alone and didn't have family. Rabbi Bender from Long Island took it upon himself to advocate for this person and call the local investigator for help. The rabbi explained that according to Jewish law, the body can't be disturbed and they have to do everything they can to avoid the autopsy. The police investigator was extremely kind and sensitive, listening intently to Rabbi Bender's concerns. He did everything he could, and he pulled strings and helped give this woman a proper Jewish burial.

Rabbi Bender asked the police investigator why he was so helpful and sensitive, when he really didn't need to be. The man answered, "Two years ago, I was stranded on a highway in New Jersey with a flat tire without a phone. Suddenly, a car pulled up, and a man got out. He had curls on his sideburns and he was wearing a black overcoat and a skullcap. I immediately recognized him as an Orthodox Jew. "He asked me if I needed any

help, and I told him I had a flat tire and I'd be so grateful if I could borrow his phone and call a tow truck.

"The man waved his hand and said, 'Let me take a look.' After my embarrassed protests, he bent down and assessed, he then went back to his trunk and brought out a jack, a spare tire, and some other tools. He immediately got to work! I couldn't believe my eyes! "When he finished I reached into my pocket to give him a reward, but he waved his hands away again and said, 'Absolutely not!' "I asked him why he's doing this and how I could repay him. He said, 'This is who we are, we're here to help!'

I was so awestruck and impressed, I will never forget what that Jewish man did for me. When you called me and explained that you needed help upholding Jewish law, I immediately thought back to what was done for me. Of course I wanted to help! It became so personal for me."

This man from Chaverim on the highway did what many Jews would do. He performed an act of kindness purely for the sake of doing it, without expecting anything in return. He thought he was changing a stranger's flat tire. Little did he know, he helped to get a Jewish woman a proper, dignified burial.

Rabbi Amram Sananes as written by Mr. Jack E. Rahmey.

By Rabbi Yitzchak Oelbaum

Years ago, at one wedding which Rav Avrohom Pam was in attendance, the father-in-law of the bride had ordered a kesubah which was very expensive. Hand-made, it was a beautifully designed piece of art, which was a source of pride to the newlyweds & specifically to the father-in-law.

Right before the proceedings of the wedding were to begin, however, a mistake was

noted in the kesubah, deeming it invalid.

An alternative kesubah was readily made available, yet it was not made by hand & was a far cry from the beauty of the previous kesubah. The father-in-law was unbelievably distraught, as his dream of having such gorgeous artwork hang in his children's house would no longer be a reality.

Rav Pam, noticing what had happened, went over to the father-in-law, & whis-

pered something into his ear. From then on, throughout the rest of the night, the man had a big smile on his face. Later, when asked what Rav Pam had said which calmed him down, the father-in-law related, "He told me that for some reason, it had been decreed in Heaven that my daughter-in-law would need to have 2 kesubos. "There are two ways this could have worked out. Either she would receive a second kesubah because she would have gotten divorced or one of the spouses would pass away. "Or, alternatively, as has happened now, a new kesubah would need to be written. Hashem provided you with the easier option, with 1 kesubah becoming unusable, so a second one would be needed. Once I heard this, I immediately settled down." Oneg Shabbos (London, U.K.)

The Rabbi and the Missing Money

When anyone came to leave money for safekeeping with the Rabbi Avraham Shag, OB"TM, he would write the name of the owner on the bundle & place it in a closet. Once, a Jew brought a large sum to deposit while the Rav was in the middle of learning. Absorbed in his studies, R'Shag wrote the name down & placed the money in his sefer, subsequently forgetting about it.

After a while the owner returned to reclaim his money. The Rabbi went to the closet, but could find no parcel with the name of this Jew. He tried to figure out where the

money could be, & the thought crossed his mind that his Jewish maid had been desperate for cash & had taken it. After all, she was the only stranger there who could come & go as she pleased. Immediately he reconsidered & silently chastised himself for suspecting a loyal & devout Jewish woman of theft. However, all his good will

would not enable him to find the money to return to the Jew who was waiting. The Rav borrowed money to give to him. Once the man had left, Rav mentioned to his wife to keep an eye on the maid & not to leave valuables unattended.

Months went by & the weeks preceding Pesach found Rav Shag cleaning out his seforim. As he cleaned out a large sefer, a bundle of money fell out onto the table. His feelings over having suspected an innocent person gave him no peace. Finally, he called for the Jewish maid & related the entire story to her. Bursting into tears of remorse, the Rabbi begged the woman to forgive him. Seeing this as her opportunity, she tearfully informed Rav Shag that she surely forgave him, but he should promise her that she would have a child. The Rav blessed her with an assurance that she would have a child within a year & would furthermore merit to live a lengthy life. That very year, after being childless for 15 years, the maid gave birth to a girl!

Torah Sweets Weekly.



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AMERICAN JEWRY IS DISAPPEARING



by Rabbi Efram Goldberg

The recent Jewish People Policy Institute study found that outside of Orthodoxy, fewer Jews are getting married, those marrying are marrying later and having fewer children and intermarriage rates are increasing. The combination of these three factors raises the daunting question of the future of American non-Orthodox Jews.

Shockingly, the study shows that among all non-Orthodox Jews in the 25-54 age group, just 15% are married to a Jewish spouse and have Jewish children.

An additional 8% have a Jewish spouse, but no children, 4% are single parents, 36% are single and have no children, 13% are intermarried and have Jewish children, 8% are intermarried and have non-Jewish children, and 17% are intermarried and have no children.

Among all non-Orthodox Jews in the 25-54 age group, just 15% are married to a Jewish spouse and have Jewish children.

Intermarriage rates increase the younger the generation. Among those aged 40-44, 60% are intermarried. Among those aged 35-39, it is 73%, and 75% of those aged 30-34 have a non-Jewish spouse.

In contrast to the other denominations, studies show that the Orthodox community is on the rise and exhibit high levels of demographic stability. While that conclusion is gratifying and validating, it is absolutely no cause for celebration or triumphalism. Realize that the hemorrhaging of other denominations is not the result of Jews flocking to the Orthodox community.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l wrote (Tradition, Spring 1982):

Nor do I share the glee some feel over the prospective demise of the competition. Surely, we have many sharp differences with the Conservative and Reform movements, and these should not be sloughed over or blurred. However, we also share many values with them – and this, too, should not be obscured. Their disappearance might strengthen us in some respects, but would unquestionably weaken us in others. And of course, if we transcend our own interests and think of the people currently served by these movements – many of them, both presently and potentially, well beyond our reach or ken – how would they, or klal Yisrael as a whole, be affected by such a change? Can anyone responsibly state that it is better for a marginal Jew in Dallas or Dubuque to lose his religious identity altogether rather than drive to his temple?

If the muscles of the left arm atrophy or the arm needs to be amputated, it is hardly a comfort that the right arm is strong and has larger muscles than ever. Sadly, rather than an honest review and return to tradition, ritual and halacha, there has been a doubling down of the policies and ideology that have brought these results to begin with.

Some have suggested an embrace of patrilineal descent as a solution. Others argue it is time for rabbis to officiate at intermarriages. Aside from representing gross distortions of Jewish law, tradition and the will of the Almighty, these suggestions don't actual address the core issues. They simply attempt to put a Band-Aid over a deeply infected wound that is gushing blood. Indeed, they are the

equivalent of keeping the books or manipulating earnings so that they appear to report profit instead of loss. Recognizing patrilineal descent or accepting intermarriage just gives the illusion of addressing the problem; it doesn't actually do anything to address the very real threat facing the future of American non-orthodox Jewry.

The antidote to these devastating demographic findings is not less adherence to Jewish law, but more.



If one thinks the Orthodox community is unaffected by these suggested monumental shifts in policy, they are grossly mistaken. Individuals and families who will have grown up thinking they are Jewish will meet children from observant homes through NCSY or at their college Hillel and their Jewish status will come into question. Children who apply to attend day schools or families that will seek membership in Orthodox shuls may have questionable statuses. This potential shifts in policy and practice will not only fail to stem assimilation, but it will further divide our people. This is not a hypothetical issue that may arise in the future. This is happening now in our own institutions and among families in our own community. I see these issues arise frequently – and tragically.

The antidote to these devastating demographic findings is not less adherence to halacha, Jewish law, but more.

When talking about the mitzvah of tzitzit (fringes on a four-cornered garment), our rabbis (Bamidbar Rabbah 17:6) provide the following metaphor. A person was once cast into the sea and was drowning. The Coast Guard threw the person a rope and said grab on. If you hold onto it, you will survive but if you let go, you will be swept away and disappear. Wearing tzitzit reminds us of our commitment and responsibility to a life of Torah and mitzvot. Grabbing on to those ropes and what they stand for gives us life. Tzitzit themselves are not the solution, but they are symbol of a lifestyle of mitzvot. “The Torah is the tree of life for those who grab onto it.” Let it go and you will be swept away.

The storms of change are raging around us. The current is getting stronger and stronger and sweeping more and more people away. The only way to stay safe, and remain true to our values, our traditions and our obligations, is to make a commitment to not only hold on to Torah, but to demonstrate a willingness to swim upstream at times, to go against the tide, to dare to be different and to be

willing to stand out. This is no easy task and takes great courage, but we have it within our very DNA because our great patriarch Abraham planted it there. Abraham was called Avraham Ha'Ivri meaning me'iveir, on the other side. When the whole world took one position and stood on one side, he had the courage to stand out, remain true to the vision and will of the Almighty and to stand on the other side, even when it meant standing by himself.

The great Piacetzner Rebbe, R' Kalonymous Kalman Shapira writes in his spiritual diary, Tzav V'Ziruz:

You cannot remain static in this torrent river just by standing firm in your place – you must actively swim against the flow. You may not be successful in swimming upstream, but at least you will not be swept down by the flow. So it is with spiritual life and the purity of spirit that you have attained. You cannot retain them against the flow unless you continue to struggle for spiritual growth. You must swim upstream without respite – upward, onward against the flow. There may be a limit to how far you can go, but at least you will not be drawn down with the flow.

W.C. Fields once said, “Remember, a dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live one to swim upstream.” Those who are spiritually dead, cut off from our timeless and time tested traditions, are floating away. We, the community who are willing to swim upstream, must not only swim harder, but we must be willing to grab on to those around us and share our life preserver (the Torah).

A dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live one to swim upstream.

The potential demise of other denominations is no cause for celebration. It is an opportunity – and an obligation – to reach out and share the beauty, majesty, meaning and joy of a Torah lifestyle. These findings demand a mass movement of outreach. The needle won't move and the problem won't be solved by outreach professionals and rabbis alone. A difference will only be made when every Torah shul, institution and individual sees as part of their core identity and personal mission to not only hold on to the sturdy tree of Torah to prevent being swept down the river, but to reach out and extend a hand to those floating by.

Milton Friedman, the great Nobel Prize-winning economist and professor at the University of Chicago, had a very simple suggestion for how to identify a person or institution's priorities. Many people eloquently describe their beliefs, values, and principles and talk about what is most important to them. Friedman advised to ignore what they say. If you want to truly know what someone's priorities are, it is simple – Look at someone's budget and you know what is important to him/her. See how someone prioritizes their money and you will know their priorities.

We claim to care about outreach but do our institutions, shul and schools have an outreach budget? Do we have dedicated people working on this cause? Do we put our money where our mouth is?

This is our generation's test; it is our challenge. It has been said that in Europe they killed us with hate and in America they are killing us with love. These statistics bear out that truth and challenge us to ask ourselves, will we rise to our generation's test and care enough to not only be willing to swim upstream ourselves when necessary, but to extend our hand to those around us who are being swept away. If the answer is not a resounding “yes,” the consequences will be devastating.

JOKES

Crushed By A Piano

My uncle was crushed by a piano....

His Funeral was very low key

Bank Teller

Bank Manager: We are looking for a new teller

Employment Agency: Didn't we send over a new teller a few weeks ago

Bank Manager: That's the one we're looking for



Who Owns The Cows?

After his graduation from college, the son of a Spanish lawyer was considering his future. He went to his father and asked if he might be given a desk in the corner from which he could observe his father's activities and be introduced to his father's clients as a clerk. His observations would help him decide whether or not to become a lawyer. His father thought this was a great idea and immediately helped to set it up.

The first client the next morning was a tenant farmer--a rough man with calloused hands who was dressed in workman's clothing. He said,

"Mr. Lawyer, I work for the Gonzales farm on the east side of town. For many years I have tended their crops and animals, including some cows. I have raised the cows, fed them and looked after them. And I was always given the understanding and the belief that I was the owner of these cows. Now Mr. Gonzales has died and his son has inherited the farm. He believes that since the cows were raised on his land and ate his hay, the cows are his. In short, we are in dispute over who owns the cows."

The lawyer said, "Thank you. I have heard enough. I will take your case. Don't worry about the cows!"

The next client to come in, a young and well-dressed young man, was obviously a landowner. He said, "My name is Gonzales and I own a farm on the east side of town. We have a tenant farmer who has worked for my family for many years, tending crops and the animals, including some cows. I believe the cows belong to me because they were raised on my land and were fed my hay. But the tenant farmer believes they are his because he raised them and cared for them. In short, we are in dispute over who owns the cows."

The lawyer said, "Thank you. I have heard enough. I will take your case. Don't worry about the cows!"

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After the client left, the lawyer's son could not help but express his concern. "Father, I know very little about the law, but it seems we have a very serious problem concerning these cows."

"Don't worry about the cows!" the lawyer said. "The cows will be ours!"

AMEN, BROTHER!

Two elderly, excited women were sitting together during a sermon listening to a fiery preacher. When this preacher condemned the sin of bearing false witness, these two ladies cried out at the tops of their lungs..."AMEN, BROTHER!"

When the preacher condemned the sin of stealing, they yelled again..."PREACH IT, REVEREND!"

And when the preacher condemned the sin of lying...they jumped to their feet and screamed, "RIGHT ON, BROTHER...TELL IT LIKE IT IS...AMEN!"

But when the preacher condemned the sin of gossip, the two got very quiet, and one turned to the other and said, "He's done quit preaching and now he's meddlin'."



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RABBI REISMAN

BENTCHING PROPERLY IS A ZCHUS FOR US

This is an absolutely beautiful Vort that I saw in a Kuntres over Pesach. At the end of Bentching we add (בְּמִרוֹם) (לְלַמְדוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַלֵּינוּ זְכוֹת שְׁתֵּהָא לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת שְׁלוֹם) it is a very unusual request. We say (בְּמִרוֹם) in the higher spheres in Heaven (לְלַמְדוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַלֵּינוּ) they will say about us (זְכוֹת שְׁתֵּהָא לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת שְׁלוֹם) and that Zechus will bring us (וְנִשְׂא בְּרַכָּה מֵאֵת ק.). (וְצִדְקָה מֵאֵלֵינוּ יִשְׁעֵנוּ). What is going on? Since when do we say that in Heaven (לְלַמְדוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַלֵּינוּ זְכוֹת)? Usually our Davening is either a praise of Hashem or a request, a direct Bakasha. Here we have something that is similar perhaps to what we say on Yomim Noraim where we Daven to Hashem and say Has Kateigar V'yikach Saneigar Bim'komo. We say silence the accusing angel and let a defending angel take his place and bring merit to Klal Yisrael. It is strange that (בְּמִרוֹם לְלַמְדוֹ) should be so unique and certainly calls for an explanation. The explanation offered is the follows.

The Mishnah in Maseches Shabbos says that the Malachim ask the Ribbono Shel Olam, you write in your Torah in Bamidbar 6:26 (וְנִשְׂא יְרֵךְ פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים) that Hashem shows favoritism to the Jewish people but on the other hand it also says in Devarim 10:17 (אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִשְׂא פָּנִים) that Hashem doesn't show favoritism. Isn't that a contradiction? The Ribbono Shel Olam answers them that Jews Bentch even when they eat a small amount of food and therefore, they are deserving of this extra Beracha. According to what we are saying now we understand that. This is because

Beracha brings Shefa and when Yidden Bentch they bring that Shefa from Heaven and therefore, in Bentching we say that (בְּמִרוֹם לְלַמְדוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַלֵּינוּ זְכוֹת שְׁתֵּהָא). Therefore, Kavayochel Hashem gives to Klal Yisrael at times when Klal Yisrael does not otherwise deserve.

When we say Birchas Hamazon, most of time it is not a Bentching D'oraissa, most of the time it is a Birchas Hamazon described in this discussion. At that time when we are Bentching we say to Hashem let's keep to that promise (בְּמִרוֹם לְלַמְדוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַלֵּינוּ זְכוֹת). That in heaven let them be Melamed Zechus on all of us. A beautiful explanation and even more beautiful when we look as we look at the Birchas Kohanim in the Siddur. As you know, in the Siddur there are Pesukim that are attached to each word of Birchas Kohanim. These are the Pesukim that the Rama says we should not say and most of do not say it. Nevertheless, these Pesukim are somehow attached to the word. Each word has a Posuk. The word (וְנִשְׂא) which we are discussing right now (וְנִשְׂא יְרֵךְ פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים) the one that talks about Hashem looking at Klal Yisrael in a favorable way has two Pesukim. One is in Tehillim 24:5 (וְנִשְׂא בְּרַכָּה, מֵאֵת ה') and the other is in Mishlei 3:4 (וְנִשְׂא-חַן וְשִׁבְלָה-טוֹב-- בְּעֵינָיו). These are Pesukim quoted in (בְּמִרוֹם לְלַמְדוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַלֵּינוּ זְכוֹת). These are the two Pesukim that are mentioned on which the (בְּמִרוֹם לְלַמְדוֹ) Nusach is based. Therefore, it fits so beautifully, it is such an insight into what we have been saying since we are little children without thinking. Now we can think about it, understand it, have a Bakasha about it, (בְּמִרוֹם לְלַמְדוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַלֵּינוּ זְכוֹת). Hashem there is a big Yeitzer Hora not to Bentch and not to Bentch properly. When we do Bentch properly, HKB"H, that is a Zechus for us.

פרשת נשא

בעניין חיוב ושמירת התורה עד יום מותו



ראיתי בספר מדרש שמואל (להגר' שמואל די אוזידא מתלמידי האריזל) שהביא מלשון מדרש רבה (יא ה) ד"א "וישמרך" ישמור נפשך בשעת מיתה עייש, והקשה בזה דממה נפשך אם וישמורך קאי על הנפש בשעת מיתה היאך אפשר שתועיל ברכת כהנים לישראל על הדבר הזה, כי לא ימנע, אם הם צדיקים ראויים להיות נפשם שמורה מכל רע אף שלא יבורכם הכהנים ברוכים הם, ואם הם רשעים מה תועיל הברכה וכי ברכת כהנים תועיל שלא יהיה לרשע רע ברשעתו? עייש מה שביאר בזה דרכו הממוקת בטוב טעם ודעת.

ואענה אני גם חלקי בזה בעזרת השם.

ובהקדם נביא בזה לשון הרמב"ם (פרק א מהלכות תלמוד תורה הלכה י') וז"ל: "עד אימתי חייב אדם ללמוד תורה עד יום מותו שנאמר 'פן יסור דבר מלבבך כל ימי חיך' וכל זמן שלא למד הוא שכח" עכ"ל וקשה טובא ראשית כל מה תועלת של מחייב זו כיון שזה כבר יום מותו למה הוצרך הוא כבר לתורתו לעת עתה? ועוד יש להעיר וזה יישב את הקושיה הראשונה, שהרי ידוע מה שהרחיבו בזה בספרים הקדושים לבאר שיש שני ענינים במצות תלמוד תורה, א. לימוד התורה, ב. ידיעת התורה, (עיינין אור ישראל לרשכבה"ג הגר"י סלנטר סימן כ"ז, ועוד עיינין לאדוננו הגר"ד בקידושין סי' כ"ז, וכן בשם משמואל ואתחנן, ועוד ואכמ"ל) עכ"פ לפ"ד יש להבין כיון שיש מחייב בלימוד התורה מצד עצמו, כמו שמרחיב עוד הבית הלוי (בתשובות בהקדמה) בשני ענינים אלו בטוב טעם ודעת, לברר מהו הנעשה ונשמע ומהו הקדימה ואכמ"ל, עכ"פ ה"ל לרמב"ם לנקוט חייב ללמוד מצד חיוב לימוד מצד עצמו, ומהו שכתב כמו שסיים בדבריו שאם לא ילמוד יבא לשכחה, משמע שזהו דין מצד לימוד של ידיעת התורה, וצ"ב.

יודעים הביאור ברמב"ם מפי קדשו של אחרון מעתיקי השמועה ממיר הגר' שמואל בירנבוים זצוק"ל שפשוטו משי"כ הרמב"ם שזהו דין שלא ישכח התורה, זה קאי כאן בעולם הזה, אולם אמר שלא זה הפשט, ואלא שכוונת הרמב"ם הוא שלא יבא לשכחת התורה לעולם האמת, כידוע לשון הש"ס סנהדרין (ז), אין תחלת דינו של אדם אלא על התורה שנאמר "פוטור מים ראשית מדון", וממילא כתב הרמב"ם שאסור לבא לשכחת התורה עד יום מותו בכדי שלא יבא לשכחת התורה לעלמא דאתי, וממילא לפ"ז מובן מה שנקט הרמב"ם מחייב ללמוד עד יום מותו מצד חיוב ידיעת התורה ולא מצד חיוב לימוד בעצם מצד עצמו.

ומדויק שזהו כוונת הרמב"ם שזה מדין ידיעת התורה וכן יש גרסאות הרמב"ם שכתב "כל זמן שלא למד הוא שכח" ולא כתב "שוכח" והיינו שלשון "שכח" משמע למפרע, שזהו גם חלק בלימוד התורה שלא יבא לשכחה, וחו"ו בשוכח הפשט שחסר למפרע בלימודו והיינו מצד לימודו יש מחייב שלא יבא בשום פנים ואופן לשום סוג של שכחה, וכמו שידוע ממשי"כ הגר' ראובן בהקדמה לברכת שמואל חלק ב שהגר"ב זיע"א שלא כתב חיזושי תורה ערב שבת מחצות כיון שאיתא בשו"ע שהעושה מלאכה ערב שבת לא יראה סימן ברכה, וממילא שייך שיבא בזה לשכחה ח"ו, וכמוכן כנ"ל שזה מצד עומק ידיעתו לעולם הבא.

וזוהו דרשו חז"ל "אשרי אדם מפחד תמיד" שקאי אדברי תורה שלא יבא לשכחה לעולם ולכן יש איסור הסיח הדת מהתורה שלא יבא לשכחה כלל וכלל, וכן מבואר בכתב סופר אבות במשנה פרק ו הלומד תורה לשמה זוכה לדברים הרבה, כיון שמרוב עיינו בסוגיות יבא ח"ו לשכחה העוסק בתורה לשמה בזה יזכה לא לשכוח כלום ממשנתו.

לפ"ז יש לבאר בדברי המדרש שזהו מה שמברכים בברכת כהנים "וישמרך" ישמור נפשך בשעת מיתה, היינו כנ"ל שאפילו ביום מותו מברכים שא יבא לשכחת התורה שצריך שמירה ח"ו ואלא שיבא לעולם האמת ותלמודו בידי, ובזה מובן כוונת המדרש בטוב טעם ודעת לענ"ד.

ולא באתי אלא להאיר וידיכם דודי פיירסטון

WHERE THE BAAL TESHUVAH STANDS

Our Sages taught, "In the place where ba'alei teshuvah stand, even the righteous cannot stand" (Berachos 34b). This is because the stature of someone who has repented is much loftier than that of the Tzaddik.

How can someone who never tasted sin, who never transgressed the Torah or its mitzvos, stand in the same place as the ba'al teshuvah? The Tzaddik is attached to the divine force that gives life to all of creation. But the penitent, who is seeking the way back to Hashem, must attach himself to the primordial will that even preceded Creation, to the spiritual realm of teshuvah, also known as the "realm of thought." (It is said that teshuvah was created before the world existed, so teshuvah exists in the realm of thought, where the world existed only in potential.)

Ohev Yisrael, Bereishis

TESHUVAH BEFORE LEARNING TORAH AND PRAYER

The Apta Rav taught that we can say that the verse "Speak to Bnei Yisrael that they should settle down and camp before Pi HaChiros.." (Shemos 14:2) is issuing us a directive for all generations. In this pasuk, the Torah is guiding us on the proper path of how to conduct ourselves when we sit down to study Torah or prepare for prayer.

First the verse says that he "should settle down and camp" — he should relax his mind so that it is clear and prepared for study or prayer.

The next word of the verse, "before," can be understood to mean that he must prepare himself before his Maker, to realize before Whom he is standing, as it is taught, "Know before Whom you are standing [in prayer]" (Berachos 28b). Similarly, the Sages taught (ibid. 30b) that the pious people of the generation would spend an hour before praying to prepare their minds and direct their thoughts and hearts toward Hashem.

This is how we interpret "They should settle down and camp" — they should settle their minds and thoughts — "before

Pi HaChiros." The final words of the verse can be understood to mean "before pi cheirus — before they achieve freedom," before they free their mouths for prayer and study before Hashem.

The pasuk can also be translated, "V'yashuvu...— They should turn back and camp before Pi HaChiros." This implies that they should do teshuvah before they achieve "freedom for their mouths."

Ohev Yisrael, Beshalach

THE CHIEF OF FORGETFULNESS

The Apta Rav taught that the realm of teshuvah is so lofty it is beyond the reach of many individuals. How then do we open the gates of teshuvah? Through the righteous Tzaddik.

If the Tzaddik is constantly attached to avodas Hashem with no interruptions whatsoever, then his very self and his very existence could be nullified because He is attached to Hashem with such fierce love and devotion. In order to keep him alive, Hashem causes the Tzaddik to sometimes falter and fall from this lofty level. This occurs by some foreign or inappropriate thought that clashes with his lofty spiritual level.

But immediately the Tzaddik picks himself back up and repents. He bangs and hammers on the gates of repentance to pry them open so that his teshuvah will be accepted on High, so that his mistake will be forgiven and he will be absolved of the sin of transgressing "Be careful lest you forget Hashem.." (Devarim 6:12).

Through his teshuvah, the Tzaddik also elevates all the mistakes and blemishes the wicked have done and injects the desire for repentance into all the hearts of even those who have fallen into the deepest pits of despair. In this way the gates of repentance are opened for everyone through the Tzaddik's forgetfulness.

Such a Tzaddik is nicknamed Menasheh, which connotes "forgetfulness." Since the entire world is elevated through the Tzaddik's forgetfulness and his subsequent teshuvah, he is also called "nasi" — the uplifted one. This is the implication of

the verse "The nasi of Bnei Menasheh.. Gamliel ben Pedahtzur" (Bamidbar 7:54). The Tzaddik realizes that this forgetfulness occurs because he has fallen from his lofty level, and he recognizes that as a result, even those who have fallen into the darkest, deepest pits of despair are able to repent and find salvation. In their hearts they can still say, "Gamliel!"; that is, "Gam li E-I — I, too, still believe in G-d!"

Why is he called "Ben Pedahtzur — the Son of Hashem, the Rock and Redeemer"? It is because he knows that he has fallen in order to elevate others back up with him — that because of him, Hashem, who is the "Tzur," Rock of Israel, redeems ("podeh") them and the sparks of holiness that have fallen into the pits.

Ohev Yisrael, Naso

FOR SOME SINNERS HASHEM OPENS THE GATES

A heavenly voice rang out and proclaimed, "Return, My wayward children — all except for Acher [Elisha ben Avuyah]" (Chagigah 15a). This is astonishing. How can this be? We are taught that nothing stands in the way of repentance (see Talmud Yerushalmi, Pe'ah 1:5), and even someone as wicked as Menasheh, a king of Yehudah who greatly angered the Creator, was forgiven when he repented (see Melachim II 21:1-18; Divrei HaYamim II 33:1-9).

It seems to me that if Acher had done teshuvah, Hashem would have accepted his repentance as well. Hashem has compassion over all His creatures, even sinners, and no one is forsaken. Therefore, Hashem sends them pangs of remorse and thoughts of teshuvah through the heavenly voice that rings out daily, asking them to repent and return, as we know from the holy writings (the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov and his talmidim). This awakens them to fully and sincerely repent. Then Hashem Himself opens the gates of teshuvah and pleads for each and every individual to repent and return.

For a great sinner, however, Hashem does not lower Himself thus. The sinner is required to awaken himself



to repent and take it to heart that he must return without an awakening from on High. He must of his own volition confess before Hashem wholeheartedly and pour out his anguish, begging for heavenly aid to complete his teshuvah. Then surely even his teshuvah will be accepted, so long as he leaves his wicked ways behind.

Ohev Yisrael, Yemei HaRatzon V'Hateshuvah

TESHUVAH EVEN FOR THE THREE CARDINAL SINS

The Apta Rav once told a sinner who had transgressed in a grievous way that we see that Hashem never forsakes anyone from a verse in Eichah. The verse hints to us that everyone has it in his power to fully repent and start anew. The verse he was referring to is "Return us to You, Hashem, and we will return; renew our days as of old" (Eichah 5:21-22).

The word for "old" in the verse is kedem, which can be read as an acrostic for the names of three biblical figures: Kayin, David, and Menasheh. Each personality is a symbol of teshuvah for one of the three cardinal sins: murder, immorality, and idolatry. Kayin was the first murderer in history; he regretted spilling his brother's blood and repented. David repented his relationship with Batsheva. Menasheh, king of Yehudah, did teshuvah for his acts of idolatry.

From their example, we see that even someone who sinned against Hashem to such a degree as they did should not give up hope. He should repent and his days will be "renewed as of old" — that is, like

"KeDeM": Kayin, David, and Menasheh.

Yalkut Ohev Yisrael

MIRRORED TESHUVAH

Our Sages teach that a person has difficulty seeing his own faults and shortcomings (Mishnah, Nega'im 2:5). The Apta Rav concludes that therefore a person should pay attention to the misdeeds and improper actions of other people. He should then ask himself, "Why did Hashem orchestrate events so that I should witness those misdeeds? It must be that Hashem wanted me to see this so that I will realize that I have the same shortcomings, but I am blinded from seeing them by my own evil inclination." Then he can return to Hashem by doing teshuvah over these misdeeds, and Hashem will have mercy on him.

Ohev Yisrael, Likutim Chadashim

THE TASTE OF TESHUVAH

The Apta Rav taught that a Tzaddik who was born righteous and never tasted sin cannot possibly condemn evil. How can a person testify regarding something he himself has never experienced?

Someone who was once a sinner and repented can testify that good is truly good and that it is correct to choose the path of good and attach oneself to goodness. Only he can give testimony to the nature of evil and its negative affects, only he can convey how disgusted we should be by its loathsome qualities, because he once tasted all the pleasure that the side of evil offers and rejected it. Now his mind is clear and he can see how all the pleasures of this world are nothing; they are false vanities, disgusting, loathsome, and empty.

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Our commentators note that only Shlomo HaMelech could truly reject the empty vanities and pleasures of this world and sincerely declare that "hevel havalim hakol hevel – falsehood and emptiness, everything is vanity!" (Koheles 1:1; see Ramban there). This is because he ruled over the entire world and lacked none of the physical pleasures available therein, but nonetheless,

with his holy, pure, refined mind he was able to recognize that the pleasures of this world are nothing but false vanities. He alone was capable of testifying to the truth: that this world and its pleasures are empty.

Ohev Yisrael, Haggadah



THE ISSUR TO EAT BEFORE DAVENING

The Gemara in Brochos (10b) states that one is not allowed to eat before davening. The Gemara brings two reasons. One is based on the pasuk in Parshas Kedoshim: 'לא תאכלו על הדם' – "Do not eat on your blood." This means, says the Gemara, that one cannot eat until davening for his life. In addition, the Gemara says, that one who eats and drinks and then davens is disgracing Hashem. Hashem declares that such a person is first taking care of his own personal needs and only then does he accept the yoke of Heaven, and think about his Creator.

AN ISSUR MIN HATORAH OR MIDRABANAN

Since the Gemara quotes a source from the Torah for this prohibition, we would assume that this is an issur Min Hatorah. In fact, the Gemara in Sanhedrin (63a) uses this pasuk for many different issurim, such as not partaking from an animal before it is dead and that the members of the Sanhedrin cannot eat on the day they would give a death sentence. The Gemara calls this a "lav she'bichlalos – a pasuk which teaches us multiple prohibitions," and one does not get malkus when he transgresses one of these prohibitions. What about the prohibition of not eating before davening: Is that also included in the Scriptural prohibition?

The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 248) writes about the many issurim that are included in this pasuk, and also makes reference to this prohibition of not eating before davening. The Minchas Chinuch writes that we see from here that the Chinuch considers this prohibition of not eating before davening a Scriptural prohibition, as well. The Minchas Chinuch points out that other Rishonim, including the Talmidei Rabeinu Yonah (on the Rif) disagree and consider this a rabbinical issur, and the pasuk 'לא תאכלו על הדם' – an asmachta, a Scriptural allusion to the issur of not eating before davening.

The Minchas Chinuch adds that this should depend on the well-known machlokes if davening every day is a Scriptural commandment or a rabbinical mandate. If the mitzvah of davening is Midrabanan, the issur to eat prior to davening must also be Midrabanan, since the Torah is not prohibiting eating before davening, if there is no such requirement in the Torah. The Sefer Hachinuch, who rules that the issur before davening is Min Hatorah, fits with his opinion (Mitzvah 433), in following the opinion of the Rambam that davening is a mitzvah Min Hatorah.

The Minchas Chinuch points out that the Rambam (Tefilah 6:4) does not mention the pasuk 'לא תאכלו על הדם' as a source for not eating before davening, which would imply that he holds like the opinion that it is only Midrabanan. However, he does quote the pasuk in his Sefer Hamitzvos (Shoresh 9), when he delineates the various prohibitions that are learned from this pasuk, so we see that he also understood that the issur is a Scriptural prohibition.



WHAT IS EXCLUSIVE ABOUT EATING BEFORE DAVENING

When discussing this issur of eating before davening, one may wonder why a special prohibition is needed for this. In general, before one performs any mitzvah, there is an issur to eat. The Gemara in Sukah (38a), as well as the Shulchan Aruch (652:2), spell this out clearly, that one may not eat before netilas lulav. That being the case, why is there a need for a specific issur to eat before davening? According to the opinions that the issur of eating before davening, is a Scriptural prohibition, we can answer that this is indeed unique, since the issur of eating before other mitzvos is usually of a rabbinical nature, whereas this issur of eating before davening is Min Hatorah. However, according to those who opine that eating before davening is also a rabbinical one, why is there a need to have a specific issur to eat before davening?

The Yismach Moshe (in his teshuva sefer – Heishiv Moshe) writes that this issur of eating before davening is fundamentally different, as it includes even a te'ima, having a small bite. When it comes to other mitzvos, such as lulav and megillah, the Shulchan Aruch (652:2, 692:4) uses the expression "eating." The Mishna Berura points this out, adding that a small bite, up to an egg-size of bread, is allowed. However, before davening, even a bite is forbidden, as the Rambam (Tefilah 6:4), and the Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 248) write clearly.

SUMMARY

There are two sources for the issur of eating before davening, and even a small bite is forbidden. One is that one cannot eat before davening for his "blood," and the second is that one cannot eat before accepting the yoke of Heaven. There is a machlokes if this prohibition is Scriptural or rabbinical.

Comments and questions are welcome and can be sent to: RabbiScheiner@18forshay.com.

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SEUDAS BRIS

A SEUDAS MITZVAH

We have seen that there are many sources for having a festive seuda after a bris. However, we still have to clarify if it is a chiyuv, something required, and if it is considered a seudas mitzvah.

The Rama adds that the seudas bris is, indeed, considered a seudas mitzvah. The poskim also write that even if the bris did not take place on the 8th day, the seuda is a seudas mitzvah.

However, a seudas bris is not the same level as a full-fledged seudas mitzvah, such as a chasuna or sheva brochos. We see this in hilchos sukah, where the Shulchan Aruch writes that when there is a sheva brochos taking place on Sukkos, the attendees are not required to sit in the sukah, if the sukah is not big enough to hold everyone. But when it comes to a seudas bris on Sukkos they are not exempted. As the Magen Avraham explains, although it is a seudas mitzvah, since there is no mention in the Gemara of a requirement to have a seudas bris, it does not exempt a person from the mitzvah of sukah.

A REQUIREMENT

Not only is it a mitzvah to make a seuda after the bris, according to some, it is a bona fide requirement.

The Gra points to the aforementioned Pirkei D'R' Eliezer, where it states one is required to make a seuda, just as Avraham did after Yitzchok's bris took place. The Sefer Chareidim, in his list of mitzvos, has a compilation of rabbinical mitzvos one does with the mouth and throat, and counts the seuda after a bris as a rabbinical mitzvah.

The sefer Ohr Ne'elam takes this a step further and writes that making a seuda may actually be considered a Scriptural mitzvah. He bases this on a Gemara that asks why the bris is done on the 8th day and not right after birth. The Gemara answers that this is so that the father and mother can also rejoice along with everyone at the festivities that take place after the bris. We

see from here that the festive meal is already alluded to in the Torah. The Shaarei Teshuva, however, takes issue with this, and asserts that it is not considered a Scriptural mitzvah.

WHAT SHOULD BE SERVED AT THE SEUDA

The Shulchan Aruch tells us that one cannot eat a big meal on Friday, so that one will have an appetite for the Shabbos meal, unless it is a seudas mitzvah, such as a seudas bris. The Magen Avraham quotes the Levush who writes that one is allowed to eat at a seudas bris on Friday, even if that will cause him not to be able to eat the Shabbos meal.

He then quotes the Shelah, who writes that his rebbi, the Maharash of Lublin, was once a sandak at a bris that took place on Friday, but did not want to eat at the seuda, since there was a minyan there without him. The Maharash adds that one will only fulfill the mitzvah of celebrating at the seudas bris by eating meat. However, the Shelah there seems to hold that eating meat is not required, and the seudas bris can be celebrated with dairy, as well.

The Yaavetz also rules that one must eat meat to fulfill the simcha at the seuda of a bris, just as we find that the mitzvah of simchas yom tov is fulfilled by eating meat.

Rabeinu Ephraim, one of the early commentators on the Tporah, finds an allusion to having meat at a

bris from a pasuk in Parsaha Re'ah (12:20): "תאכל בשר" – you shall consume meat." The word בשר stands for: ראש חודש, שבת, ברית, – the times that one is meant to have meat at the meal, which is an allusion to the meat eaten at the seuda after a bris.

IN SUMMARY

The seuda after a bris is not only a custom, but a seudas mitzvah, at least rabbinical in nature or possibly even Scriptural.

There is a machlokes among the poskim as to what should be served at the seudas bris. Some rule that meat must be served, just like on yom tov, and others maintain that milchigs is also fine.

To be continued...

COMMUNITY KOLLEL NEWS

With much gratitude to Hashem we are happy to share the news that 18 Forshay has once again opened its doors for learning and ddavening. There was a nice crowd who came to learn on Shavuos night, with refreshments and a beautiful kids program. And of course the night's learning culminated with a few different minyanim in the morning.

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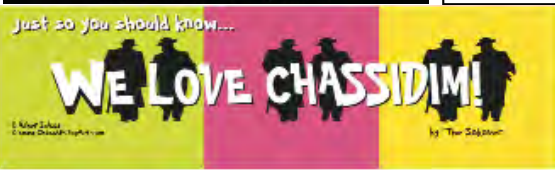
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