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Tribute to Horav Reuven Scheiner zt"l

Beis Medrash Ohr Chaim owes a tremendous amount of Hakaros Hatov to Rav Scheiner zt"l. After all, it was the special warmth and love of Torah imbued in the atmosphere of his home which gave rise to our very unique makom of Torah and Tefila.

Reb Lazar and his wonderful wife Heather have dedicated themselves to our community and with their generous support and very active encouragement and participation, have built a makom Torah and Tefila which embodies the life and spirit of Rav Reuven Scheiner zt"l.

Rav Scheiner was born in 1931 to Reb Shmuel Yom Tov and Eidel Scheiner, modest people with a deep love of Torah and respect for Rabbonim. At the age of twelve, Rav Scheiner joined Torah Vodaath, living with relatives until his family moved to Williamsburg, the following year, from their hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania. In 6th Grade at Torah Vodaath, young Reuven immediately stood out as a tremendous masmid and role model for the other students.

Rav Scheiner formed close relationships with several Gaonim throughout the years including Horav Reuven Grozovsky zt"l as well as Horav Gedalia Schorr zt"l. When Rav Scheiner continued his learning in Bais Medrash Elyon he became well known for his expansive breadth of Torah knowledge.

In 1957, Rav Scheiner married Shoshana, daughter of R' Chaim and Shaindel Lichtenstein of Williamsburg. Together with a small number of Bais Medrash Elyon kollel families, these young couples founded kollel life in America. Despite the mesiras nefesh involved, Rav Scheiner always felt fulfilled, referring to his humble converted bungalow as the Gan Eden hatachton.



listen, teaching in Yeshiva Torah Vodaath - there's nothing better!"

Rav Scheiner went on to become a maggid shiur in the Bais Medrash and was a beloved Rebbe in Torah Vodaath for more than half a century. All those who saw Rav Scheiner learning were inspired by his devotion and sincerity; he left indelible impressions upon two generations of talmidim.

From the very beginning, Rav Scheiner was recognized as a Rebbe who truly cared. "A big chailek of how I teach my talmidim stems from the genuine care I felt from Rav Scheiner in my second year of Mesivta," shares Rabbi Nachman Siegel, himself a veteran mechanech. "I'll never forget the first test I took on Bava Metziah. I didn't do well and when Rebbe gave it back, he simply said, 'I'm

disappointed, you could have done better'. That comment, said with love rather than anger, went into my kishkes and for the rest of the year I got nothing less than 100 on every test. Over the years, without fail, even when I was already a zeide, every time I met Rav Scheiner he would greet me with: "Siegel, Bava Metziah, never less than 100!" And every time it made me feel like a million dollars all over again.

"I've never forgotten the words Rav Scheiner said to us on our last day of the year. 'I'm your Rebbe and I'll always be your Rebbe. Say

hello, come over to talk and I am here for you if you ever need anything.' Those words were without doubt the most powerful lesson of the year; words that I endeavor to live by."

Rav Scheiner's influence was felt far beyond the doors of the Yeshiva. He was Rav of Khal Ohr Yitzchok in Boro Park, sho'el u'meishiv in Yeshiva Chasan Sofer, Mesivta Be'er Shmuel, and Bais Medrash of Karlin Stoln. Rav Scheiner delivered the Daf Yomi shiur in the Alexander Bais Medrash for thirty years. From 1965 Rav Scheiner was one of the leaders of the Camp Torah Vodaath Masmidim Program and introduced landmark Israel Torah Tours to encourage Mesivta bochurim to learn in Eretz Yisroel.

After attending the ITT camp as a bochur, Rabbi Shmuel Machlis returned to work alongside Rav Scheiner in running the program for several years. "It was quite common to hear shouts of excitement from Rav Scheiner: "Boys, look at the harim u'gvohos!" as we would travel through the rolling hills of Eretz Yisroel. He took great joy in bringing the bochurim to the Gedolim for inspiration."

During Rav Scheiner's 75 years as part of the Yeshiva, catapulting from 6th Grade talmid to Rosh Chabura, Rav Scheiner influenced multitudes of students with his trademark combination of ahavas haTorah and ahavas Yisroel. Rav Scheiner especially enjoyed meeting former talmidim, remembering them not by the year they were in his class but by the mesechta he taught them.

In the last years of his life, Rav Scheiner could be found daily in the Torah Vodaath Bais Medrash, learning with his chavrusa, esteemed chaver hakollel, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Perlman. Doctors appointments were scheduled around his learning time; learning always was most important. He interacted with the bochurim and noticed if someone was not there. "How come you weren't here yesterday?!" Rav Scheiner would ask with a smile. It was inconceivable to Rav Scheiner to miss learning, yet he showed it as he had done his entire life, with love, respect and concern.

This is the lesson of Rav Scheiner which is exemplified in Bais Medrash Ohr Chaim. A genuine devotion to Torah, and above all, a pure love and respect for Klall Yisroel.

Bais Medrash Ohr Chaim would like to thank the revered Reb Stu E Hollander and Yeshiva Torah Vodaath for providing us with photographs and written background.



THE WEEK IN PICTURES



Rabbi Scheiner at the Bris of his son "Reuvein"



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א"ת Sunday June 27th תשפ"א

6:58 – פלג

8:32 – שקיעה

מנחה

1:30 18 Main	3:15 Tent א	5:00 18 Main	6:35 Tent א פלג מנין
1:37 Tent א	3:30 18 Main	5:15 Tent ב	6:45 Tent ב
2:00 18 Main	3:45 Tent א	5:30 Tent א	7:00 18 Main
2:15 Tent א	4:00 18 Main	5:45 Tent ב	7:15 Tent ב
2:30 18 Main	4:15 Tent א	6:00 18 Main	7:30 Tent א later מנין
2:45 Tent א	4:30 18 Main	6:15 Tent ב	7:45 Tent ב
3:00 18 Main	4:45 Tent א	6:30 18 Main	8:00 18 Main

מנחה followed by Maariv:

6:35 פלג מנין	Tent א	6:58 at פלג	Tent א
7:35 second מנין	Tent א	7:55 second מנין	Tent א
8:10 שקיעה מנין	Tent א	8:32 at שקיעה	Tent א
8:20 10 min before שקיעה	Tent א	8:40 10 min after שקיעה	Tent א
8:30 at שקיעה	Tent ב	8:50 20 min after שקיעה	Tent ב
8:40 10 min after שקיעה	18 ↓	9:00 30 min after שקיעה	18 ↓
8:50 20 min after שקיעה	Tent א	9:10 40 min after שקיעה	Tent א
9:00 30 min after שקיעה	Tent ב	9:20 50 min after שקיעה	Tent ב
9:10 40 min after שקיעה	Tent ב	9:30 60 min after שקיעה	Tent ב

July 4th

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BET Parshot Balak Haftarah

Micha was the Navi of the Jewish nation during the reign of three kings. King Yatom Ben Euzeyaho, Achaz Ben Yatom, Chizkiyahu Ben Achaz were the 13th, 14th and 15th of the 22 kings in the Davidic dynasty. Micha was a navi for a total of 52 years. He was also one of the Bal Masoret, the one responsible for the transmission of the Torah from one generation to next. He received his Masoret from Yeshaya Hanavi and some say he was a student of Eliyahu Hanavi. In his writings, he relates the prophecies of the exile of the ten tribes and events that will take place in the time of Mashiach.

Micha explains that in the end of days when many of the nations will want to wage war on Jerusalem, there will be a steady flow of Hashem's kindness on the Jewish nation. Hashem will bestow on us of great strength and we will annihilate our enemies. We will destroy their fortresses, their supernatural powers and eradicate their idols.

The Navi Micha reprimands the Jewish nation for the lack of a proper recognition

of Hashem; He proclaims, "My nation, think of all the good that Hashem has done for you. Hashem has taken you out of Egypt, and have sent you Moshe Rabainu to teach you Torah, Aaron Hakohain to forgive your sins, and Miriam Hanaviah to teach the women. Remember what Balak wanted to do to you together with Bila'am and curse the nation, but Hashem did not allow that to happen."

The Navi Micha defends the nation to Hashem: "How can we show our gratitude? Should we bring many Korbanot of young animals? Do you want us to bring a thousand Korbanot? Do you wish we bring our first child as a Korban?"

Hashem responds via Micha: "No absolutely not, but here are three things that Hashem requests, #1 we should do justice, #2 love to do kindness, #3 to go humbly in Hashem's ways.

The Navi singles out important events and places a special emphasis an Balak and Bila'am. Why was Balak and Bila'am chosen as a seminal event for Klall Yisroel to remember. The Navi Micha is giving us an amazing insight to Hashem's relation-

ship with Am Yisrael. All the events that took place in the desert we took a part in and witnessed it. If it would not have been written in the Torah we would still know about it because we experienced it. The incident of Balak and Bila'am however, all took place without our involvement. There was a distant king that hired a person with a special ability to curse us. Hashem exchanged his curses for words of blessings. We were oblivious to this wicked scheme and not part of anything that happened, but the Torah dedicates an entire Parasha to share with us a message. We should know that Hashem is watching our back even when we are not aware of the danger. This is a lesson for the generations to recognize Hashem is constantly protecting us.

We sometimes hear of an individual in Gaza that blew himself up by "accident" while building a bomb meant for us. Or stashes of weapons that were "accidentally" found and tunnels of warfare randomly stumbled upon. How many times the nations across the globe planned to hurt us but it didn't work out? These are modern day Parshat Balak's. We thank you Hashem for watching our backs...always.

NEW MINYANIM ADDED:

EARLY MINYAN MINCHA FRIDAY 1:37, 2:00, 2:30, 3:00, 3:30, 4:00

SHABBOS ZMANIM

Table of Shabbos Zmanim including Candle Lighting (8:13 PM), Mincha (7:00 PM), Shachris (4:46 AM), and Mincha (1:45 PM).

WEEKDAY ZMANIM

Table of Weekday Zmanim including Shachris (5:05 AM), Mincha & Mariv (6:46 AM), and Mincha & Mariv (8:21 AM).

JUNE 27 - JULY 02

Table of Zmanim for the period June 27 - July 02, including Neitz (5:25-5:28) and Pelag (6:55).

Zmanim by our incredible Gabbi EPHRAIM YUROWITZ



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WEEKDAY MINYANIM schedule for Beit Midresh Ohr Chaim Community Learning Center, including Shachris and Mincha times for various tents.

BLUEBERRY HILL ZMANIM

Table of Blueberry Hill Zmanim including Mincha (6:40) and Plag (6:58).



Rabbi Coren

PARSHAS BALAK AND THE THREE WEEKS

One of my favorite stories with regard to this week's parsha comes from the Apta Rav, also known as the Ohev Yisrael. The Rebbe was known to say that every parsha has in it the Mitzva of **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרַעֲךָ כְּמוֹךָ** (we will see later on that this is actually a Rashi in Maseches Shabbas). One day before Parshas Balak a chasid came to the Rebbe with a question which he thought could stump the Rebbe. "How can you find anything in Parshas Balak that has to do with loving another Jew?" he asked. "In fact, there is actually no mitzvah at all in the entire Parsha" (see Sefer Hachinuch who points this out פרשה פרשה who points this out מצוה מצוה additional clarification.) This was the chasid's challenge to the Rebbe. The Rebbe didn't flinch. He responded immediately by exclaiming, "What do you mean? Of course there is. The name **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרַעֲךָ בְּלֶק** itself spells out **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרַעֲךָ כְּמוֹךָ**." The chasid thought for a minute and replied, "But Rebbe, I may not be an expert in Hebrew grammar but one thing I do know is that **וְאָהַבְתָּ** begins with a **ו** not a **ב** and **כְּמוֹךָ** begins with a **כ** and not a **ק**."

The Rebbe looked the chasid in the eye and said, "If you're going to be so exact--with everything especially when it comes to Jews you will never be able to fulfill **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרַעֲךָ כְּמוֹךָ**."

The point of the story is insightful and I would like to add a practical addition to the words of the Rebbe which besides being a helpful guide will also serve as an inspiration to all of us especially during these three weeks called **בֵּין הַמְצִוִּים** when we must make an effort to increase our **וְאָהַבְתָּ יִשְׂרָאֵל**, the absence of which resulted in the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash and is the reason we fast on the 17th of Tammuz. (As mentioned in my last article, the first breach in the wall of the first Temple took place on the 9th of Av but since the destruction of the



second Bais Hamikdash occurred on the 17th and this was more devastating, we fast on that day.)

This practical message based on a Raish Lakish belief regarding the pasuk from **וְהִתְקַשְׁשׁוּ וְקִשְׁוּ - קִשְׁטוּ** states **עֲצֻמָּךְ וְאַחַר כֵּךְ קִשְׁטוּ אַחֲרָיִם**. He is advising us that before we are busy "beautifying" someone else we must be sure we ourselves are beautiful and worthy.

This idea is extremely potent and I actually caught myself twice this past week trying to correct someone about a flaw which upon closer reflection I realized I myself may be guilty of displaying. In truth the art and mitzvah of correcting someone has become very complicated. The Gemara already states that it is not certain these days if there is someone reliable enough to give Tocha'cha. This can be a dangerous outlook, however. The Shulchan Aruch was written long after the Gemara and the Rambam and many Rishonim have lengthy discussions on how and when to correct someone when they see them doing something wrong. We need a lot of Siyata Dishmaya and Tefilos that we should not engage endlessly in correcting our kids or friends and neighbors in areas we need to work on ourselves. We also need to improve the manner and tone used in naming weaknesses in others in the most beneficial manner. Too many times this is also done in a harmful and degrading way. The Rambam explains that if you're correcting someone, use love and patience, clarifying carefully your intent so you won't forfeit a reward of the world to come.



Rabbi YY Jacobson

THE MYSTERY OF DEATH: ELIE WIESEL'S EULOGY FOR MY FATHER

THE DAY MOSES' FACE TURNED GREEN

The Strings of the Heart

At the funeral of my father, eleven years ago, in May 2005, Elie Wiesel spoke. Wiesel and my father, Gershon Jacobson, were old time friends. Their friendship began in the early 1960's, when they both worked as young, ambitious Jewish and Yiddish journalists. They were both survivors, although in different ways: Wiesel survived Auschwitz; my father carried the wounds of the Stalinist purges in the Soviet Union that deprived him of a normal childhood. They shared a common language and a soulful vocabulary. They were both wise, educated, cultured, intimately familiar with the past and present traumas of the Jewish nation, and committed to telling the story and embracing the vision of "Netzach Yisroel," the eternity of Israel. They both understood pain, but never spoke of it.

Dr. Wiesel—who died two weeks ago, on July 2, 2016, was the only speaker at my father's funeral and his eulogy lasted for three or four minutes.

Elie Wiesel said two things that stayed with me since. First, the famed holocaust survivor said that he knew my father for almost half-a-century, and yet never heard him gossip. For an ordinary man not to gossip is an extraordinary feat; for a journalist? It would seem impossible. My father spoke a lot about people; he made his living from analyzing and writing about people. But he never gossiped. He never spoke about the "people," only about their ideas or behaviors. And he never got petty and personal.

Second, Dr. Wiesel asked, how does one mourn for a very close friend? Jewish law dictates the laws of mourning for parents, siblings, and other relatives. But there are no laws of how to grieve for a best friend.

Yet, "the heart possesses its own set of laws," said Elie Wiesel.

Loss

This week's Torah portion, Chukas, has one pervading theme: Loss and death. It begins with the laws for one who came in contact with death and the dead. It continues to tell the story of the death of the unique "trio"—the three siblings who led the Jewish people from slavery to freedom and molded our people during its infancy: Miriam, Aaron and Moses. The first two pass away in our portion. We never hear from them again. Moses is told in this portion that he will not enter the promised-land. It is, in many ways, a sad portion. In one week, the Jewish people are forced to bid farewell to Miriam, Aaron and Moses. The three faithful shepherds who guided the people during their formative years, are no more.

And my mind flashes back to one Thursday evening twenty-eight years ago, when I heard the Lubavitcher Rebbe address the same theme, explaining the opening law of the portion of Chukas. (His own passing would occur on the Sunday of Chukas, on the third of Tamuz 1994). One moving idea I will share in the following essay.

Ashes and water

In the beginning of the week's portion, we explore what the Sages defined as the most mysterious Mitzvah in Judaism, known as "the mitzvah of the red cow."

In short, the ritual worked like this: A red heifer was slaughtered and burnt, its ashes stored and preserved with much care. If a man or a woman became spiritually contaminated through contact with a human corpse, fresh water from a spring or a river was mixed with some of the ashes of the red heifer. The ash-water mixture was then sprinkled upon the contaminated human being, cleansing him or her from their ritual impurity.

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Manager
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from his home on President Street in Brooklyn.

The focal point of his talk was the above recorded Midrashic tale about Moses' exchange with G-d. The following thoughts are based on that address.

Recovery after loss

When G-d spoke to Moses of the contamination caused through contact with a human corpse, He was not only referring to the legalistic implications of impurity, namely, that a ritually impure person was prohibited from engaging in certain religious acts (like entering the Holy Temple or eating sacred foods, etc.). G-d was also referring to the psychological, mental and physical "contamination" that occurs as a result of death.

A person who experiences, heaven forbid, the death of a loved one, is forever transformed. Struck by the ultimate loss, a hole is formed in the depth of the survivor's heart, creating a scar, a wound that can never be understood by a stranger.

A friend of mine who lost his mother at a young age once told me, "Not a day goes by in which I don't mourn my mother." This he said to me 22 years after her death.

But unlike other times when G-d spoke to Moses about various forms of mental and psychological contamination, when G-d spoke of the contamination -- the anguish and despair -- caused as a result of human death, He did not mention anything about purification and healing.

So Moses said to G-d: "Master of the universe, if a person becomes contaminated through a human corpse, how shall he become pure?" This was no mere legalistic question on ritual law; it was a cry stemming from an aching and vulnerable Moses: How can a person ever recover after real loss, was Moses' question to G-d. Is there life after death for those who stay behind?

G-d did not answer. He remained silent.

G-d's silence was an answer. G-d was saying that He has no answer.

Moses is broke

"At that moment," says the Midrash, "Moses' face turned green."

Moses was devastated. If G-d Himself did not know or did not wish to share the answer to this question, it meant to Moses that death ultimately triumphed over life; that a person can indeed never truly regain his spirit and dignity after suffering a loss. This meant that with the death of a loved one, the survivor also died in some way. He could never really live again.

Only much later, says the Midrash, "When G-d reached the section of the red cow, did He say to Moses: 'When I communicated to you the laws of ritual impurity through contact with a human corpse, you asked Me, how can this person become pure, but I did not respond. Now I will give you the answer.'" And G-d proceeded to present the entire ritual of mixing the ashes of a red cow with fresh water and sprinkling it upon the contaminated human being.

With this mitzvah of the red cow, G-d was not only presenting a technical law on how to remove ritual impurity from the body of a contaminated person; He was presenting a response to death, a recipe for renewal, a roadmap for healing.

And the primary ingredients were mixing black ashes with fresh spring water.

The Beginning and the End

What is the secret behind mixing ashes and water?

Ashes are what remain after an object has been cremated and destroyed. Water, on the

way to achieve purity"? And G-d responded: "This is the law; it is my decree and there is no existing creature who can comprehend this decree."

Four questions

It is quite clear that this Midrashic tale contains dramatic symbolism and profound depth. How are we to understand this mysterious exchange between Moses and G-d?

Another few question come to mind:

1) Why did G-d, following Moses query, remain silent? Since G-d did have an answer "up His sleeve," and He ultimately did communicate it to Moses, why did He not say it to begin with, instead of allowing Moses to grapple with uncertainty?

2) Why did G-d's silence on this issue trouble Moses so deeply, as to transform the color of this man's unusually dazzling countenance to green? What's the big deal that G-d didn't tell Moses how a person who came in contact with a human corpse can return to a state of ritual purity?

One could find worse tragedies that occurred in Moses' life. Yet it was only in this instance that Moses' face turned green! Why such a dramatic emotional response?

3) Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of laws in Judaism are not explicitly stated in the Bible. They are deduced from existing biblical text via a very meticulous and complicated methodology that G-d presented to Moses, known as "the thirteen methods." When G-d refused to present Moses with an answer to his legalistic question, why did Moses not go in search for the answer himself, using the methods G-d had given him in order to deduce unspecified laws?

A Rebbe bids farewell to his wife

I will never forget the evening of March 10, 1988, or 21 Adar 5748. I was a young boy, fifteen years of age, but the words I heard that night remain etched in my memory because of the intense emotion and vulnerability they displayed.

Just thirty days prior to that, the Rebbe bid farewell to his wife, Rebbetzin Chayah Muskah Schneerson. Married for fifty-nine years and childless, bound together under Stalin's Russia, escaping together from Hitler's Berlin, running as one from the burning flames of Nazi occupied France, then living together for 47 years in the United States, the Lubavitcher Rebbe and his wife enjoyed an extraordinarily close relationship.

The Rebbe respected his wife immensely. After her death, during the Shiva, he told the then New York Mayor Ed Koch that "only G-d could appreciate her true value." The Rebbe's secretary told me that each morning before he went off to his office, the Rebbe would tell his wife what time exactly he would be home. "If the Rebbe saw that he would be delayed even by ten minutes, he would make sure to phone her" (a good lesson for all husbands reading this).

Right after the Lubavitcher Rebbe would conclude a public address, upon returning to his office, he would phone his wife and tell her that he was doing okay. Needless to say, this attitude was reciprocated by the Rebbetzin to her husband. The Rebbe once shared with his Chicago cardiologist, Dr. Ira Weiss, that the few moments he spent daily with his wife, drinking tea and talking, were invaluable and sacred for him.

Her sudden passing, in the middle of the night, while visiting the hospital for an examination, profoundly affected the Rebbe. All could see how pained and broken the Rebbe appeared. But the first time he actually spoke publicly about his emotions, was only thirty days after her passing, at a weeknight address

The mystery of this mitzvah is so profound that it inspired the brilliant King Solomon to make the following confession: "I said I would be wise, but it is far from me." The Midrash explains Solomon's words thus: Through my wisdom I gained insight into all of the mitzvos of the Torah; but for a comprehension of the mitzvah of the red cow, "I searched, I questioned, I scrutinized, and I discovered that it was far from me."

This explains an anomaly in the opening verses of the portion, where G-d says to Moses "They shall take to you a red cow." Why "to you"? The cow wasn't taken to Moses? The Midrash explains that G-d was essentially telling Moses, "Only to you will I reveal the secret of the red cow; but to everybody else [even King Solomon himself] it will remain a supra-rational decree."

But here is the big question. What makes this ash-water sprinkling ritual so enigmatic as to inspire a declaration by King Solomon that he understood all of the mitzvos save for this one? What makes this mitzvah so incomprehensible that G-d tells Moses that he is the only human being who may have some insight into this mitzvah?

Let's face it: Many other Mitzvos can be seen as equally mysterious. For example, when a Jewish woman culminates her monthly period, she immerses herself in a mikvah, a natural pool of water, which bestows upon her body a profound holiness and purity. Even if the woman showers ten times, it does not suffice; according to Jewish tradition, she must go to the mikvah.

Does this make more sense than sprinkling a mixture of ash and water on a contaminated person?

What about the mitzvah of tzitzis, of Jewish men having fringes hanging down from their four cornered garments? Does this make any sense? And how about the Jewish tradition to shake palm branches, citrons, myrtle branches and willows during the holiday of Sukkos -- why are these rituals any less mysterious than sprinkling a water-ash mixture on the body of a ritually impure person?

When Moses' face turned green

A dramatic tradition in Midrash records the following incident:

Throughout the entire Bible, whenever G-d told Moses about a person becoming spiritually impure through contact with a contaminated object or creature (say, a dead weasel), He immediately informed him of the means for purification. But there was one exception: When G-d informed Moses that according to Torah law a person becomes contaminated through contact with a human corpse, He did not proceed to present to Moses a means for purification.

So Moses decided to broach the topic on his own: "Moses said to G-d," the Midrash relates, "Master of the universe, if a person becomes contaminated through a human corpse, how shall he become pure?"

G-d remained silent.

"At that moment, Moses' face turned green."

Only much later, says the Midrash, "When G-d reached the section of the red cow, did He say to Moses: 'When I communicated to you the laws of ritual impurity through contact with a human corpse, you asked Me, how can this person become pure, but I did not respond. Now I will give you the answer.'"

And G-d proceeded to present the entire mitzvah of mixing the ashes of a red cow with fresh water and sprinkling it upon the contaminated human being, this bringing about his or her purification.

When Moses heard this answer, the Midrash continues, he protested and said, "Is this the



כעת יאמר ליעקב ולישראל מה פעל אל-כי לא נחש ביעקב ולא קסם בישראל

For there is no divination in Jacob and no soothsaying in Israel. In time it will be said to Jacob and Israel, 'What has G-d wrought?'

In an amazing moshel the Maggid of Dubna said:

There was an army minister who heard that in a distant land a wise man had invented a special ointment in which all who spread it on their body would render them invulnerable to weapons of war. Neither arrow nor sword would harm him.

The minister decided to get the miraculous ointment so he traveled to that distant land and brought back the miracle ointment. On his way back home he encountered bandits who attacked him with arrows and sword. He was fully protected from harm.

When the robbers saw that this person was invulnerable, they panicked and turned to flee. The minister called to them and said: "Stop, don't run and do

not be afraid. Come and I will honor you with wine and food."

The robbers were amazed. We tried to kill you and you treat us so well?

"You have done a great favor for me," said the minister, "I bought a wonderful ointment capable of protecting its owner from harm, but the entire time, the fear that it may not work bothered me." Maybe the ointment is not helpful at all? I was afraid to put it to the test but when you attacked me I had no choice. Now I know, I can't be hurt and I have you to thank."

That is the moshel, the Maggid concluded - throughout the years Israel knew intellectually that magic of any kind would have no effect on Yisroel. Yaakov worked for Lavan (Billam) for years and Billam could not influence him with magic.

Just as the minister in the story, they were afraid to put this fact to the test.

When Balak sent Balaam to curse and harm Yisrael with his charms and he did not succeed, G-d said to Balak: "You have done a great favor for the children of Israel by proving to them that magic has no effect on Klall Yisroel,

other hand, represents the commencement of life: A fetus develops in its mother's womb while submerged in water. Water embodies the beginning; ashes -- the end.

Spring water is fresh and vibrant, invigorating an exhausted spirit, quenching a thirsty body and bringing comfort to a parched soul. Ashes, on the other hand, are dark and bleak, representing feelings of melancholy, dryness and despair. Water represents life; ashes -- death.

G-d was essentially telling Moses about the human duty to mix the ashes of death with the waters of life. A human being, G-d was saying, ought to intertwine the end with the beginning, to remember that every end also harbors a new beginning, both for the soul that ended its journey on earth and for the people left behind. Each sunset creates the opportunity for a new dawn.

When Moses heard this answer, the Midrash continues, he protested and said, "Is this the way to achieve purity?" Even after this revelation Moses could still not come to terms with the reality of a life that was and is no more. To which G-d responds: "This is the law; it is my decree and there is no existing creature who can comprehend this decree."

And even though G-d tells Moses, "To you will I reveal the secret of the red cow," to the rest of humanity it remains a sheer mystery. Nobody could ever put his finger on the paradox of life and death; no one can ever feel that he fully closed the lid on the dynamic of death.

That is what King Solomon meant when he spoke of this mitzvah of cleansing a person who came in contact

with death and declared, "I said I would be wise, but it is far from me. I searched, I questioned, I scrutinized, and I discovered that it was far from me." Of course, intellectually and theologically one may understand that a soul never dies; that death is only the beginning of a new life on a different plane. One might understand that those who truly live are not afraid to die, because the end of something is only frightening for one who never owned it in the first place.

Philosophically this may work. But emotionally and experientially, the mitzvah of the "red cow" remains the quintessential mystery of life and of Judaism. The mitzvah that we must march forward with life, optimism and faith is one that we are committed to with every fiber of our being; but one that is accompanied by a very real and deep question mark.

Even G-d Himself remained silent after Moses' cry, "How shall he become pure?!" Only later would G-d present to Moses a path for rejuvenation. Why?

G-d's silence was in itself an answer. G-d was saying that the appropriate response to loss was silence, for there is something about death that is forever inexplicable and could never be integrated. A gap between the mind and the heart was expected and normal. All the explanations in the world and beyond, could not eliminate the devastation, the tears, the pain, the shock and the grief.

The first and primary answer to death, G-d was telling Moses, is that there is no answer. In a very vulnerable way, G-d was embracing the human truth that death can never find a comfortable space in our hearts.



Writing a Sefer Torah or Buying PT 2

We can answer all questions from last week by explaining two foundational concepts in writing a Torah. The first yesod is from the Divrei Yatziv that says there are two reasons for writing a Torah. The first is that it is a proof of the Shira, Ha'azinu. The second is that one will be able to learn it. The posuk therefore says it twice; first in the command where Hashem says, "Now write this Shira" and then it says, "Teach it to the Yidden." At the completion, the posuk again says, "Moshe wrote the Shira" and thereafter it says, "And he taught it to the Yidden." The other yesod is that one is able to serve Hashem in two ways. A person may do things because he is used to it since that is what he saw by his parents. The other way is to serve Hashem out of love or fear.

With this we can differentiate whether one needs the whole Torah to be written, or whether it is sufficient if he has the Shira still intact while the rest of the Sefer Torah may have rotted. If the mitzvah is just for Shirah, then it would not suffice since we need to have the whole Torah written, but if the reason is for learning purposes, then of course one may write parts of the Torah, like a chumash, so that children can learn.

The reason the Gemara in Sanhedrin says that one would not be yotzei the mitzvah if he inherited a Sefer Torah is because that shows the person is doing it just mitzvas anashim melumada, which the posuk in Yeshaya says can cause one to forget the Torah that he learned. It is important for a person to write his own Sefer, thereby showing that he wants to learn, whether it is mi'ahava or mi'yirah.

The same difference would be regarding women writing a Sefer. If it is being written for learning purposes, then women would be able to write it since they have sections in the Torah that apply to them. However, if it is being written as an eidus for the Shirah, then a woman would not be able to write one since they have no chiyuv of U'lemaditem.

The Sha'agas Aryeh in siman 36 asks, in today's day and age, where we don't have the knowledge of which words are malei and which words are chaseir, why would we write a Sefer Torah, if it is not kosher to begin with? The reason is, if one buys the Torah, the Gemara calls that as if he is a chotef min hashuk. The Rambam says that if one writes a Torah with the intention of completing it later, the Sefer Torah is Kosher. In the event when he buys it, he knows that there are chaseiros and yeseiros we don't know about, but he is ready to have it fixed when Mashiach comes, then he is yotzei the mitzvah and that is like a chotef min hashuk since he invests in something but does not know if he will make money. When Moshiach comes he will have completed the Mitzvah.

In the event someone has a Sefer Torah written, it is like he accepted it from Har Sinai. We know that a person who can't do a mitzva is considered an oness and is patur. As long as a person writes the Sefer Torah properly, according to our mesorah, he is yotzei the mitzvah right now. This contrasts with the case of a person buying a Torah with which he will not be yotzei until Moshiach comes.

The Chasam Sofer's question can be answered by explaining that since the ikkar mitzvah is to learn from the Torah, then whatever yeseiros and chaseiros would make a difference lehalacha we have a kabala to know which are the correct yeseiros and chaseiros. That is why we may write tefillin and mezuzos and the parsha of Sotah. That is why, halacha le'maaseh, if there is a chaseir or a yeser that won't make a nafka mina in teich or halacha. It doesn't passel such a Sefer Torah.

We also see why the malach switched from the posuk of Torah tziva lanu, which is a posuk proving that we just inherited the Torah. We are not doing the Torah mi'yirah or me'ahava. Once we have the posuk of Ve'ata kisvu, which shows it is as if we were mekabel the Torah, that is what the malach was showing was needed in order not to be chayev misa.

May we all be zocheh to write and learn the Torah properly!



What to Say (and Not Say) When There are No Words

How to best interact with someone going through a crisis.

When people in our lives are struggling or suffering, we desperately want to help but often are at a loss for what to say or what to do. In her insightful book, *Option B*, Sheryl Sandberg describes that people going through a difficult time often find that they are no longer surrounded by people, but platitudes.

One of the most popular, not said out of malice or insensitivity, but rather in the absence of anything more thoughtful, is 'If there is anything I can do, please let me know.' She quotes Bruce Feiler who writes, "While well-meaning, this gesture unintentionally shifts the obligation to the aggrieved. Instead of offering 'anything,' just do something."

Sandberg suggests instead of asking, "Do you need a meal," ask "What toppings do you like on your pizza" or "What do you not want on your burger." She writes, "Specific acts help because instead of trying to fix the problem, they address the damage caused by the problem."

Sandberg quotes therapist Megan Devine who explains why doing something specific is important. "Some things in life cannot be fixed," she writes, "They can only be carried."

When someone we know and love is struggling, our mandate is to lessen their burden, to carry it with them and ensure they don't feel they bear it alone.

That phrase struck me because it is exactly the language our rabbis use when they describe a character trait we are to acquire as a prerequisite to receiving the Torah. Pirkei Avos (6:6) tells us that one of the 48 ways that Torah is acquired is nosei b'ol im chaveiro, carry the burden with your friend.

When someone we know and love is struggling, our mandate is to lessen their burden, to carry it with them and ensure they don't feel they bear it alone.

Dr. Brene Brown describes that true empathy rarely starts with the words, "at least." She writes, "Fixing your loved one's problem is not often what is needed, nor is it necessarily your job or even within your ability to do so. Sharing a listening, caring ear is something most people can do."

Yet sadly, because of the inherent discomfort and the challenge to find the right words, rather than unburdening those struggling, many add to the burden by talking instead of listening and by describing how hard it is for them, rather than focus on the one for whom it is truly most difficult.

Susan Silk, a clinical psychologist, wrote an op-ed for the LA Times in which she shared her fantastic "Ring Theory" that address this phenomenon and provides helpful guidelines:

Draw a circle. This is the center ring. In it put the name of the person at the center of the current trauma. Now draw a larger circle around the first one. In that ring put the name of the person next closest to the trauma. Repeat the process as many times as you need to. In each larger ring put the next closest people. Parents and children before more distant relatives. Intimate friends in smaller rings, less intimate friends in larger ones. When you are done you have a Kvetching Order. One of [my] patients found it useful to tape it to her refrigerator.

Here are the rules. The person in the center ring can say anything she wants to anyone, anywhere. She can kvetch and complain and whine and moan and curse the heavens and say, "Life is unfair" and "Why me?" That's the one payoff for being in the center ring.

Everyone else can say those things too, but only to people in

larger rings. When you are talking to a person in a ring smaller than yours, someone closer to the center of the crisis, the goal is to help. Listening is often more helpful than talking. But if you're going to open your mouth, ask yourself if what you are about to say is likely to provide comfort and support. If it isn't, don't say it. Don't, for example, give advice. People who are suffering from trauma don't need advice. They need comfort and support. So say, "I'm sorry" or "This must really be hard for you" or "Can I bring you a pot roast?" Don't say, "You should hear what happened to me" or "Here's what I would do if I were you." And don't say, "This is really bringing me down."

If you want to scream or cry or complain, if you want to tell someone how shocked you are or how icky you feel, or whine about how it reminds you of all the terrible things that have happened to you lately, that's fine. It's a perfectly normal response. Just do it to someone in a bigger ring.

Comfort IN, dump OUT.

The Ring Theory is a brilliant prescription for how best to interact with someone going through a crisis. It captures something we intuitively know yet too often fail to practice. In fact, it probably should be posted on hospital room doors and on entrances to shiva homes.

However, for all of its brilliance, the Ring Theory takes something for granted that, unfortunately, is not a given at all. The theory provides guidance for those choosing to engage. But ask anyone who has gone through a crisis and he will tell you, the majority of people in his life didn't comfort or dump, neither in nor out. They simply disappeared.

Yes, at the moment of crisis, family, friends and community often rise to the occasion. But what happens when the acute crises passes? How present are we in the lives of those we claim to care deeply about when the urgency subsides and the catastrophe dissipates?

Staying silent towards someone struggling with illness, loss, divorce or unemployment can be more painful than saying or doing the wrong thing.

As time goes on, without consciously intending to, many take an "out of sight, out of mind" approach, leaving the afflicted person feeling forgotten, neglected, insignificant and alone. What the "Ring Theory" doesn't



THE HIDDEN CHESSED OF HASHEM

There is an absolutely beautiful Vort from Rav Leibele Eiger, very few Vertlach of his have remained. There is a Sefer Toras Emes from Rav Leibele Eiger and there in Parshas Balak he has the following thought regarding the Galus of Klal Yisrael.

Rav Leibele points out that there are two types of Tzaros and Yeshuos which Klal Yisrael experiences. One type is the typical type, so to speak typical. That is that there is a Tzarah, a difficulty. Yidden get together and are Mispallel Klapei Maila. Yidden get together and hopefully do Teshuvah and the Yeshua comes. We find such a thing when Klal Yisrael is in Mitzrayim as is found in Shemos 2:23 (וַיֹּאנְחוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן-הָעֲבֹדָה). They had a difficulty and HKB"H answered and Klal Yisrael was helped.

Similarly with Amaleik. Amaleik attacks, Moshe Aharon and Chur go to the top of the mountain, Klal Yisrael was Mistaklin Klapei Maila and a Yeshua comes. That is a so to speak typical experience of Tzar and Tzarah of Klal Yisrael in Tanach.

However, there is a second type of Tzarah and Yeshua. And that is K'ain Parshas Balak. That happens when the Tzar or Tzarah or threat comes and the Bnei Yisrael don't know anything about it. Klal Yisrael is totally oblivious to it and HKB"H helps Klal Yisrael without Klal Yisrael being aware of what has taken place. That is what happens in this week's Parsha. Klal Yisrael is traveling through the Midbar totally unaware of the Tzar or Tzarah and HKB"H is helping Klal Yisrael.

In the Haftorah we Lain from Michah. In 6:5 it says (עֲמִי, זָכַר-נָא מִה-יַעֲזַב בְּלֶקַח מְקָרֵי מוֹאָב, וּמִה-עָנָה אֶתּוֹ, בְּלֶעָם בֶּן-בְּעוֹר--מִן-הַשְּׂטִיִּים, עַד-הַגְּלִגְלִי, לִמְעַן, דַּעַת צְדָקוֹת יְרוּר). Remember the story of Bilam and Balak (לִמְעַן, דַּעַת צְדָקוֹת יְרוּר). So that you should know HKB"H's kindness.

The Gemara in Maseches Berachos Daf 7a (22 lines from the top) Darshuns (מֵאֵי לִמְעַן) דעת צדקות ה' א"ר אלעזר אמר להם הקב"ה לישראל דעו כמה צדקות עשיתי עמכם שלא (כעסתי בימי בלעם הרשע). The point is a recognition that HKB"H's Chesed comes in more than one form. It comes when the Tzarah and the Yeshua are clear and obvious, and it comes when the Tzarah and the Yeshua are not known to Klal Yisrael.

Every person's life has that type of experience. Has an experience where the Tzar and Tzarah he is Mispalleil for and Mi Yodea, who knows how many time there are things that could threaten a person and HKB"H helps

anyway without the person's Tefillah and without anything happening Mitzad the individual himself.

The Gemara says in Maseches Berachos 12b (22 lines from the bottom) that (אמר) רב יהודה בר זבידא בקשו לקבוע פרשת בלק בקריאת שמע ומפני מה לא קבועה משום טורח (צבור). Parshas Balak almost made it into Kryias Shema but because of Tircha D'tzibura it is too long of a Parsha to say every day.

The Pnei Yehoshua in Maseches Berachos 12 says that the Hava Amina to place Parshas Balak into Kriyas Shema comes from this Posuk in Michah. It seems to be a command (עמי, זכר-נא) to remember. While it is not in Kriyas Shema, the Chida writes that still it is a Mitzvah to keep the commandment of the Navi and (זכר-נא), remember that which HKB"H does for us is not always known.

The Nikuda to add to all of this is an important lesson. We are asked to emulate the ways of Hashem as it says in Devarim 28:9 (והלכתם בדרךיו). Very often, most Ragil, the Tzaros and Yeshuos that come your way, when you are not the Baal Tzarah (G-d forbid) but the Yeshua, is when someone has a problem he comes to you for help. Someone has a difficulty and says that he needs your help to make a Chasunah, I need help to feed my family and you go and you help the person. That is one type of Tzarah and Yeshua. But you are capable of doing something else and that is doing the Yeshua when the person is totally unaware, totally oblivious to what is happening. In that type of a situation, you are emulating HKB"H of Parshas Balak. You are helping Klal Yisrael without them being aware that they are being helped. Quietly, secretly, you go to grocery and you pay the bill of someone who can't afford to pay his grocery bill. You go and you help somebody in a way that he is totally unaware of.

It happened to me in my years in the Kollel that it came time to prepare my tax returns at the end of the year and I looked through my checks from the year and I realized that I hadn't paid property taxes on my house the whole year. I asked someone to look into it. I was afraid that I would find myself subject to a seizure of my property. The person that I asked came back and said someone is paying your property taxes. Until today I don't know who did it. I would love to thank him. But someone did it without telling me, without anything. That is a Chesed M'ain the Chesed that we find HKB"H doing in Parshas Balak. Use your imagination, do Chesed in a wonderful way, in the best way possible. That is one lesson from Parshas Balak.

These shiurim have been transcribed from an actual drasha. As speed is of the essence, spelling and grammar may be compromised

account for is that doing nothing and staying silent towards someone struggling with illness, loss, divorce or unemployment can be more painful than saying or doing the wrong thing.

Sadly, there are many in our community suffering from illness, loss and other sources of pain. Simply put – they rely on us, their friends and community, to care enough to enter the Ring. Perhaps we will be towards the center of the circle, or maybe we will be in one of the outside concentric rings. But the worst thing we could do is to disappear from the picture altogether.

Rabbi Grajower suggests, "One of the hardest facets of going through an illness or tragedy is the profound sense of loneliness that accompanies such tribulations... In my experience, the best way to help that person/family feel less isolated is to reach out frequently, with very short messages. Even now, a few people text me every Friday to wish me a good Shabbos. Some friends call or text randomly just to let me know they are thinking of me. These simple messages, which take only a few seconds to send, can be extremely touching and powerful in combatting the loneliness."

Reach out, visit, send a text, spontaneously drop off flowers or a Challah, invite for a meal, or just let them know that you pray for them, think about them, and empathize with them. Find the important balance between showing up and providing them necessary space.

It is so hard to see people we care about in pain. It is even more challenging when there is nothing we can do to relieve it, reverse it or make it go away. At those times, our responsibility is to grab on to the burden and do our small part to carry it. Knowing we are praying from the depths of our hearts, doing tangible practical things and making sure to only comfort in can make it the smallest bit lighter for those that we love and care about.

HASHEM ALWAYS LOVES US

By Rabbi David Ashear

Hashem always gives us much more than we deserve. If we would make an accounting based on our deeds, we would find that we owe Hashem so much. He loves to give us anyway, because we are His children. If we would really know how much Hashem loves us, we would never feel distant.

Rabbi Pruzansky told a story about a Rabbi Brown, a principal of a high school for troubled girls. The Rabbi discovered that one of his former students had totally left Judaism. She was living in downtown Brooklyn, away from her parents and far from religious life.

He thought to himself, "Her poor parents are such nice people. It must be so hard for them to see their daughter slipping away like this."

One day he called to invite her for Shabbat. She initially agreed, but on Friday afternoon, she called to cancel, saying that she wasn't feeling up to it. The Rabbi said that he was sorry to hear, but he invited her to join them on Sunday for their Purim Seudah. The girl was silent for a moment, and then she said, "Oh. Sunday is Purim? I didn't realize. Let me think about it and get back to you."

After the Rabbi hung up, he told his wife that their guest would not be coming. Mrs. Brown then said, "Let's at least send her food for Shabbat. I am sure she could use it." She packed up food, including Challot and Grape Juice, and the rabbi drove with his children to her apartment building.

He called her from the lobby, saying he had a Shabbat package for her. The girl came down moments later with tears in her eyes.

"Thank you, Rabbi. This is exactly what I needed. After I hung up with you, I was really down. I couldn't believe that I had fallen so far from Judaism that I didn't even know that Sunday is Purim. I cried and prayed to Hashem for the first time in a very long time. I said, 'Hashem, please show me that you still care about me. I know that I have fallen, but show me that I am still your daughter.'

"The next thing I know, you and your family are here bringing me food for Shabbat. What more of a sign could I ask for? I feel cared for. I feel loved."

Baruch Hashem, she came back to live with her parents; she came back to her Father in Heaven. When we know that Hashem always loves us, we can be close

to him at all times. Daily Emunah.

RAV YOSEF CHAIM SONNENFELD DRAWING WATER AT THE WELL

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zt"l, was a great Talmid Chacham and was always looking to help another Jew, regardless of who it was. One day, Rav Yosef Chaim was late in returning home from Shacharis. This was unusual, since he was a very punctual person.

His wife was concerned, and he sent their daughter to search for Rav Yosef Chaim. She went out looking and found her father drawing water from a well and pouring it into pitchers, which two little boys would then carry to their home. The boys emptied the water into a large barrel and then quickly returned to the well for more water.

The daughter asked her father what he was doing, and Rav Yosef Chaim explained, "As I was returning home from shul, I noticed these two little boys bending over the well trying to draw water. What they were doing was dangerous, and I told them so.

"They replied that they had no choice because there was no more water at home, and they couldn't afford to hire a water carrier. Their mother had recently given birth, and their father was sick in bed with a bad case of the flu."

Rav Yosef Chaim said to his daughter, "What could I have done? I had to help them. I immediately took off my Tallis and Tefilin and began to draw water for them. I will stop when their water barrel is full."

His daughter asked, "But what will people think when they see a great Talmid Chacham like you doing such lowly work?"

Rav Yosef Chaim replied, "I care much more about what they would say in Shamayim if I were to leave these small children who are putting their lives in danger trying to help their parents, while I go sit and eat breakfast!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5777 email of Torah U'Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Stories as Compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.

REB SHLOMO ZALMAN AND THE MENTALLY- CHALLENGED CHILD

The parents of a mentally-challenged child came to Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, of blessed memory to discuss

institutionalizing him. When the Rav asked what the boy said about the proposal, they replied that it had not occurred to them to ask him.

Reb Shlomo Zalman was irate. "You intend to evict him from his home and consign him to a strange place with a regimented atmosphere," he sternly told them. "He must be encouraged and not allowed to feel that he is being betrayed." Reb Shlomo Zalman then asked to see the youngster and the parents fetched him.

"What is your name, my boy?" Rav Shlomo Zalman asked.

"Akiva," came the meek reply.

"Akiva, my name is Shlomo Zalman. I am the Gadol Hador - the greatest Torah authority of this generation - and everyone listens to me. You will be entering a special school now; I would like you to ask you for a big favor. Please represent me by taking the job of Mashgiach (spiritual leader) in the school and look after all of the religious matters in your new home."

The boy's eyes were riveted to Reb Shlomo Zalman's face and the awe-struck parents sat with their mouths agape as the Rav continued. "I shall now give you Semichah (Rabbinical Ordination) which makes you a Rabbi. I want you to use this honor wisely."

From that point on, the boy walked around with a spring in his step due to the acknowledgement and honor shown to him by a great Rabbi like Rav Shlomo Zalman.

Comment: One of the reasons we are placed in positions of stature or are given certain rights and privileges is for the benefit of others. One's societal standing is valuable, as the Talmud (Kiddushin 7a) teaches that a woman can give an important man a gift and the pleasure she receives from the acceptance of the gift is worth a Shevah Perutah, the minimum amount needed for the marriage to take effect.

We have many opportunities on a daily basis to build others by associating with them (such as inquiring of their well-being and actually sticking around to hear their reply). There are numerous people in the world who feel abandoned and useless. We will be surprised to know that spending even five minutes talking with them can not only boost their day, it can spark a change in them that lasts a lifetime. So, let's open our eyes, find someone down on themselves and try to take interest!

Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5776 email of Reb Mendel Berlin's Torah Sweets Weekly.

Achi—My Brother

Celebrating Shabbat at the Highway 6 Gas Station

There is a great story in Chaim Walder's People Speak 12 about a family that found itself stuck at a gas station over Shabbat and managed to unite Jewish people from all walks of life. A young rabbi, his wife and kids decided to travel from Ma'alot Tarshiha to his mom's house in Ashkelon for Shabbat. His sister and her husband asked to come with him, so he borrowed a friend's car to fit everyone. It was a 2-hour trip to Ashkelon, & they left 4 hours before Shabbat, thinking that was plenty of time. Big mistake! The car stalled about an hour into the trip. The rabbi and his brother-in-law had no knowledge of mechanics. He called a few garages, and they all said they'll be there soon. When no one showed up, he flagged down a car who stopped to help. The driver offered assistance, and he replaced one of the spark plugs. The car started, and they continued on their way. When they pulled onto Highway 6, the car stalled again.

A telephone in the emergency Highway box rang, & the operator said, "We see from the cameras that you pulled over; we're sending you a service vehicle." 10 minutes later,

it arrived. "A plug went," the mechanic said. "I just replaced one 20 minutes ago," said the rabbi. "Another must have burned out," the mechanic clarified. He replaced another spark plug, & the family resumed their journey, hoping to arrive in Ashkelon before Shabbat. All hope was lost when the car stalled again. Another mechanic was dispatched, and the rabbi asked the mechanic to follow him while he pulls over and into a gas station. They somehow manage to crawl there before the car sputtered & died for the 4th time that day.

With 8 minutes until sunset, suddenly it hit him. The rabbi, his

wife, his 2 young children, his brother-in-law, & sister were all going to spend Shabbat in a gas station on Highway 6! He quickly ran into the convenience store and bought packaged rolls and snacks. As it grew darker, more and more people started to approach the car. "Hey, you're religious. Why are you here?" "Our car died," the rabbi said. "We're having Shabbat at this gas station." "Oh no, please let me give you all a lift," countless people offered. The rabbi looked at his family, "Thank you. But it's Shabbat, we can't travel." People found it hard to leave the gas station & a crowd started to form. The rabbi went up to them and asked, "Want to help me?" Everyone said, "Sure! Whatever you need, let us bring you home!" "No, no not that. Please join me for a minyan." And so, in the middle of nowhere, at a gas station on Highway 6, a group of unrelated, mismatched Jews start to sing Lecha Dodi. The rabbi was so touched, he started to cry uncontrollably. They prayed arvit together, said Shabbat Shalom, & the rabbi invited people to join the seudah on a stone table. He made kiddush on a bottle of coke and handed everyone a small piece of a roll with chips and pretzels.

Other Jewish people stopped at the gas station and they all had suggestions: "I have an Arab friend who can take you home." "Come have your Shabbat at my house, it's only 10 minutes away." But the rabbi gently reminded them he can't travel on Shabbat, & he offered for them to come sit with their happy group. The rabbi started to give a Devar Torah. It was a scene beyond belief. Thirty random Jewish people sat with the charedi family and enjoyed Shabbat together with food and Torah. All of them asked for the rabbi's phone number so they can check on the family after Shabbat was over. He gave his name but not his phone number, afraid they would write it down. "Call information after Shabbat and give me a call!" The singing ended, night fell, and it started to get really cold. The rabbi said to his wife, "You and my sister stay in the car with the children, and my brother-in-law and I will sleep on the benches." At this time, people milled around the station to fill their tanks. Hundreds of Jews passed through the station, approached the family that was stuck, and offered help. The rabbi & his brother-in-law fall asleep on the benches, unaware that cold temperatures can be extremely dangerous.

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approached the family that was stuck, and offered help. The rabbi & his brother-in-law fall asleep on the benches, unaware that cold temperatures can be extremely dangerous.

At midnight, they were so weak from their freezing state, & they heard some voices. A few buses carrying fans of rival soccer teams heading home from a game stopped at the gas station on Highway

6. "Let's cover them so they don't freeze to death!" One after the other, they removed their team scarves, red & yellow, & placed them on top of the rabbi & his brother-in-law. Dozens of scarves covered them, & their temperatures slowly rose back to normal. When he came to, the rabbi held the makeshift blanket and asked, "Where did these come from?" One of the soccer fans crouched down, "Achi—my brother, we are fans of 2 rival teams. Enemies. During a game, they need policemen & armed security guards to keep us apart. But we heard what you people did here for Shabbat, & look, here are scarves in both colors. We're here together to warm you up. Come dance, so you can bring your temperature back up." Hundreds of fans gathered in a circle and danced with the rabbi & his brother-in-law, while the women & children looked on in wonder.

The next day, more people came to the station with ideas, and the rabbi asked again for a minyan. Motzei Shabbat arrived, and with it, hundreds of calls to the phone to see how the rest of Shabbat went. Most of the people who called said they decided to keep that Shabbat, a first in many years. 5 years later, the rabbi is still in contact with dozens of people he met at the gas station, with a dozen now fully keeping Shabbat. He is now known as the Rabbi of Highway 6, & he is incredibly grateful for being able to experience a Shabbat with Am Yisrael, who went above and beyond, and who forgot all their disputes, uniting to help a stranded family. *Jack E. Rahmey based on the teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*



PARSHA OVERVIEW

Rabbi Yaakov Asher

Balak, king of Moav, is in morbid fear of Bnei Yisrael. He summons a renowned sorcerer named Bilaam to curse them. First, G-d speaks to Bilaam and forbids him to go. But, because Bilaam is so insistent, G-d appears to him a second time and permits him to go. While en route, a malach (emissary from G-d) blocks Bilaam's donkey's path. Unable to contain his frustration, Bilaam strikes the donkey each time it stops or tries to detour. Miraculously, the donkey speaks, asking Bilaam why he is hitting her. The malach instructs Bilaam regarding what he is permitted to say and what he is forbidden to say regarding the Jewish People. When Bilaam arrives, King Balak makes elaborate preparations, hoping that Bilaam will succeed in the curse. Three times Bilaam attempts to curse and three times blessings issue instead. Balak, seeing that Bilaam has failed, sends him home in disgrace.

Bnei Yisrael begin sinning with the Moabite women and worshipping the Moabite idols, and they are punished with a plague. One of the Jewish leaders brazenly brings a Midianite princess into his tent, in full view of Moshe and the people. Pinchas, a grandson of Aharon, grabs a spear and kills both evildoers. This halts the plague, but not before 24,000 have died.

UFARATZTA

THE FAST DAYS WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO FESTIVALS

A fast day is an Eis Ratzon as we say in the Haftorah of a fast day: "Seek Hashem while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near."

The ultimate good in a fast day is that eventually it will be transformed into a festival. In the words of Rambam: "All these fasts are destined to be abolished in the days of Moshiach; moreover, they are destined to become festivals and days of gladness and joy."

Although the original root of a fast is a tragedy, the end result of a fast will be a festival — and

"everything follows the end." Because this eventual festival follows prior tragedy, it is greater than a regular festival, as light that follows darkness is more intense than light of itself. ===== Excerpt of 17 of Tammuz talk.

The Rebbe would always mention in talks and in writings that these sad days will be transformed into happy days. (Rambam: end of Hilchos taanis. Zecharya 8,19)



My Minds Made Up - Dont Confuse Me With The Facts!

"Balak, the son
of Tzippor"
(22:2)

*It takes one to
know one.*

In Moav, proficiency in the black arts was as common as a cold. Balak was the greatest sorcerer in Moav. In those times, people could predict the future by creating talking birds. They would take gold for its head, silver for its beak, and copper for the wings. The parts had to be assembled at a certain time of day. Finally, they placed in its mouth the tongue of a real bird. Then they put it on the sill of an open window so that by day it faced the sun, and, by night, the moon. Seven days later, the birds tongue began to make a ringing sound. The sorcerer would then take a golden needle and pierce the birds tongue. And then the bird would begin to talk. Using the powers of impurity, the bird would reveal the secrets of the future.

No one was more skilled in this form of divination than Balak. For this reason he was called Balak ben Tzippor. In Hebrew, the word tzippor means "a bird." In other words, the name implied, "Balak, who can foretell the future through a magic bird." Amongst other things that the bird told Balak was that he would at first be victorious over the Jewish People, but finally he would fail.

Once, Balak was preparing a bird to prognosticate the downfall of the Jews. While he was

bowing and offering incense to the bird it suddenly took wing and flew out of the window. Balak was very disturbed when the bird did not return.

After some time, Balak saw the bird returning. However, pursuing the bird was a plume of flame. The flame singed the birds tail. Balak knew that this was a sign that the power of the Divine Presence would eventually conquer the power of the dark side.

In spite of this, Balak still invited Bilam to curse the Jews.

There are a couple of things in this bizarre story that dont quite add up. First, if Balak was the chief sorcerer in Moav, why did he need Bilam? Was he looking for an apprentice? Also, if Balak saw the portent of the plume of flame, what did he hope to achieve by inviting Bilam to curse the Jewish People. Wasnt it obvious to him that he would fail?

The answer is that the obvious is never an impediment to self-interest. Balak didnt want to be confused with the facts. Balak was so intent on the destruction of the Jewish People that he ignored the obvious portent of the bird and surmised that the Jewish People, like all other nations, were subject to the natural forces of the constellations. However, the Jews are above the stars. G-d supervises us with specific Providence.

And to answer our other question, Balak was not in need of a sorcerers apprentice. Both he and Bilam had expertise in different areas of sorcery. Balak was well versed in the outer facets of magic, the practical day-to-day aspects of cursing and spell-casting. Bilam, on the other hand, had knowledge of the inner workings of the black arts. Balak surmised that together they would make an unbeatable duo, able to overcome clear indications of incipient defeat.

Balak proves the old adage: "My minds made up. Dont confuse me with the facts!"

Jokes

Car Trouble

Wife calls her husband and says, "My Precious, the car is broken, it won't start."

"What?! It's in perfect order, what's wrong with it?"

"It's water in the carburetor, my dear."

"Oh no, where are you right now?"

"Um, in the little lake behind the house..."

US vs Russia



When NASA first started sending up astronauts, they quickly discovered that ballpoint pens would not work in zero gravity. To combat the problem, NASA scientists spent a decade and \$12 billion to develop a pen that writes in zero gravity, upside down, underwater, on almost any surface including glass and at temperatures ranging from below freezing to 300 degrees Celsius. The Russians used a pencil.

Code Talkers

When NASA was preparing for the Apollo project, some of the training of the astronauts took place on a Navajo reservation.

One day, a Navajo elder and his son were herding sheep and came across the space crew. The old man, who spoke only Navajo, asked a question that his son translated. "What are these guys in the big suits doing?"

A member of the crew said they were practicing for their trip to the moon. The old man got all excited and asked if he could send a message to the moon with the astronauts. Recognizing a promotional opportunity, the NASA folks found a tape recorder.

After the old man recorded his message, they asked his son to translate it. He refused. The NASA PR people brought the tape to the reservation, where the rest of the tribe listened and laughed, but refused to translate the elder's message.

Finally, the NASA crew called in an official government translator. His translation of the old man's message was: "Watch out for these guys; they have

come to steal your land."

A Joke of Little Value

Did you hear about the mathematician who's afraid of negative numbers?

He will stop at nothing to avoid them.

Language

Someone mistakenly leaves the cages open in the reptile house at the Bronx Zoo and there are snakes slithering all over the place.

Frantically, the keeper tries everything, but he can't get them back in their cages. Finally he says, "Quick, call a lawyer!"

"A lawyer? Why??"

"We need someone who speaks their language!"

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RABBI NACHUM SCHEINER

ROSH KOLLEL

EARLY SHABBOS

WHY IS FRIDAY NIGHT DIFFERENT?

We have seen from various sources that there is a special dispensation for Friday night, and one can daven early, even if this contradicts his practice during the week. We still need to explain why this is so. Why is Friday night different, that we allow davening Maariv at a time that one usually davens Mincha? There are a number of reasons that are given for this dispensation for the “early-bird” Maariv on Friday night. The Pnei Yehoshua offers three reasons:

1. This practice is allowed because of the mitzvah of Tosfos Shabbos. The Magen Avraham (as well as the subsequent poskim) also mentions this reason.
2. Rav had this practice because one cannot start eating until after davening Maariv and reciting krias Krias Sh'ma, and he did not want to wait until nightfall to start his Shabbos meal.
3. As we know, Shachris and Mincha correspond to the Korbanos Tamid that were offered each morning and afternoon. Maariv, on the other hand, corresponds to the leftover fats and limbs that were put on the mizbe'ach during the rest of the day and through the night. During the week they were not in a rush to finish putting everything on the mizbe'ach before nightfall, and they were able to finish through the night. On Friday evening, however, since they were not allowed to put the fats and limbs on the mizbe'ach once Shabbos commenced, they would make sure to finish before Shabbos. Since the Friday evening fats and limbs were placed on mizbe'ach to be burned before Shabbos, we can also daven Maariv on Friday evening before nightfall. The

Magen Avraham also mentions this reason.

These are some of the reasons for allowing one to daven Maariv on Friday evening after Plag Hamincha, even if, during the week, one usually davens Mincha at that time. However, as the poskim point out, one must still be consistent on that day and if one wishes to daven Maariv after Plag, he should be sure to daven Mincha, on Friday afternoon, before Plag.

EARLY SHABBOS – BUT NO SO EARLY

When exactly is Plag? As mentioned previously, a halachic day is split into 12 hours, with each segment considered “an hour,” known as sha'os zmanios (halachic hours), and Plag Hamincha is an hour and a quarter before the end of the halachic day. There is a major dispute between the Rishonim how to calculate the halachic day for sha'os zmanios. According to some we calculate from alos (dawn) until tzeis hakochovim (nightfall), and according to others from sunrise until sunset.

Generally, the custom is to follow the earlier time for Plag – a halachic hour and a quarter before sunset – which would mean that one who is making an early Shabbos would be required to daven Mincha on that day before Plag, which can be very early. Therefore, some choose to follow the later Plag, which is almost an hour later. That can also be problematic, since it gets very late, almost defeating the purpose of making an early Shabbos.

That being the case, the question arises as to whether there is any way that one can make an early Shabbos, which is somewhere in the middle – not too late and not too early? For example, some shuls like to have a 7:00pm minyan throughout the summer, starting with Mincha, followed by Kabbalas Shabbos

and Maariv. Is that a halachically viable option?

To be continued...

IN CONCLUSION

The Shulchan Aruch rules that one must be consistent and not daven Mincha and Maariv after Plag and before nightfall, even on different days. On Friday night one can daven early, even if one usually davens Mincha at that time, because of the mitzvah of Tosfos Shabbos, in order to start the Shabbos meal, or because the Friday evening fats and limbs were placed on mizbe'ach before Shabbos. However, one should, try to daven Mincha on that day before Plag and Maariv after Plag, in order to avoid the issue of being inconsistent.

There is a now a Kuntres of shiurim on the topic of “Early Shabbos” available, including topics such as:

Earliest Time For Hadlakas Neiros

Correct Times for Mincha & Maariv

Kidush and the Seudas Shabbos

Early Shabbos-Krias Shma & Bentching

Husband & Wife, Yochid & Tzibur – Do All Have to Keep the Same Time

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MY GRANDFATHER, REB REUVAIN SCHEINER ZT”L



I would like to share some of what I spoke about at the bris that I was zoche to perform on my son. The baby was named after my grandfather, Reb Reuvain Scheiner zt”l, whose 2nd yartzeit falls this coming week, the 19th of Tamuz.

Parshas Chukas discusses the shira which was sung for the well, the be'er of Miriam. The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh wonders why we only find that they sung for the water, when there were many other wondrous miracles which took place in the desert: the man fell daily from heaven, the ananei hakovod, the heavenly clouds which guided them and smoothed out the way, and what greater miracle was there than the giving of the Torah. Why was there no shira sung for all these great miracles?

He answers that, indeed, this song was really a shira for the Torah, as water represents the Torah. This shira describes how we received and connected to the Torah:

בְּאֵר הַפְּרוּהָ שָׁרִים - The Torah

was dug by the great leaders, a reference to the avos. The Torah is really very deep and beyond human comprehension, and for this reason we needed the great avos to dig and open up these wellsprings of Torah.

כְּרוּהָ נְדִיבֵי הָעָם - Even after the avos opened the wellsprings of Torah, we still were unable to appreciate and understand the Torah. Moshe Rabeinu then brought the Torah down to us, helping everyone connect to the Torah, and to be able to taste and enjoy the sweet waters of Torah. So, this shira was indeed for the Torah, which was the greatest wonder of all.

My grandfather was a prime example of this concept, helping everyone develop a connection to the Torah, and get a true joy in learning. His intense joy and enthusiasm in teaching Torah was obvious, and many talmidim testified that seeing this excitement is what instilled in them a true geshmak in learning. Even hearing a dvar torah from others was an experience. I saw this clearly every time I would tell



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him a dvar torah. I could tell him a Ketzos - one that he may have learned dozens of time before - and he would show excitement and ask questions about what I was saying.

Where did he get this thrill and enthusiasm from? What was his secret? For my Zeidy, learning Torah was a shira, a song that he kept singing, literally until the end of his long and productive life, either giving shiur or learning with others.

Not only learning, indeed every aspect of Torah was a shira. As a talmid related, besides the actual Torah that he learned from my grandfather, he learned how to have a true pride in yiddishkeit. Every opportunity for a mitzvah was another gem, another reason to be excited. When he took boys to Eretz Yisroel as part of his summer camp - Israel Torah Tours, he would take them to the gedolim and to places where they can learn and get excited about the different mitzvos that can only be performed in Eretz Yisroel, the mitzvos ha'tluyos ba'aretz.

The story goes that two people came to Rav Moshe, who were both moser nefesh for shmiras Shabbos, giving up their jobs to be able to keep Shabbos. Yet, one family continued in his ways and one didn't. They asked the great gadol why this happened. Rav Moshe famously responded that there was a fundamental difference between the two. One of them came home with excitement. He was happy to have been given the zechus to give up for Hashem and His Torah. This excitement, this shira, was contagious, and the children were excited to follow in his ways. The other father came home and let out a sigh, "Oy, it is so hard to be a Jew!" seeing that he complained the children had no reason to continue his legacy.

This shira was the legacy of my grandfather, living a life of geshmak, enjoying Torah and mitzvos. In fact the word שירה is an acronym for: רֵאוּבֵן שִׁינֵינֵר יִהְיֶה, being that his very essence was a song to Hashem, a song of Torah, a song of mitzvos, a song of ashreinu ma tov chelkeinu, the simcha and true joy of being a Yid.

May he be a meilitz yosher for the entire family and for his talmidim, as well as every Jew who he loved so much.

Wishing you a Wonderful Shabbos,

Rabbi Nachum Scheiner



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