

Reeh | 23 Av - 29 Av | July 10 -16



18FORSHAY.COM

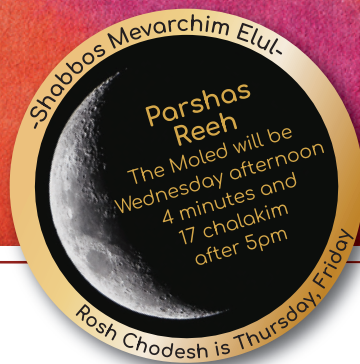
שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁבוּעַ
יִרְאֶה כָּל זְכוּרָךְ אֶת
פְּנֵי ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ
בַּחַג הַמִּצּוֹת
וּבַחַג הַשְּׂבִיעוֹת
וּבַחַג הַסִּכּוֹת

Inside:

**A Blessing
and a Curse**

**The Foundation of
a Jewish Home**

A Father's Love



MONSEY
URGENT CARE

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In front of Evergreen Shopping Center

Featuring: Rabbi Efrem Goldberg, Rabbi Avraham Twersky, Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser and more...



Kosher and non-Kosher

The Torah explains all the types of kosher and non-Kosher animals and directs us to which ones we are permitted to eat. "Any one among the animals that has a split hoof, which is completely separated into double hoofs, and that brings up its cud that one you may eat". The Torah describes the non-kosher animals; it first presents the kosher aspect of the animal, and then expounds why it is nevertheless not kosher. The Kli Yakar asks why does the Torah need to state the kosher part of the non-kosher animal, is it not sufficient to just state the non-kosher aspect that renders the animal as non-kosher? The Torah first explains that the camel, the hyrax, and hare chew their cud but do not have split hooves. By the pig it is reversed and states that it has a split hoof but does not chew its cud. Why does the Torah present the kosher aspect first, and then explain the non-kosher aspect after?

The Kli Yakar explains that the kosher sign on each of these animals only increases the impurity in them. This is because the signs might appear to show how they are pure and really they are not pure. Eisav is compared to a pig as stated in Bereishit Rabba (65-1) who displays his hoofs as if he is kosher. Eisav too flaunts his purity as the son of Yitzchak but really he is not pure at all. As Yaakov prayed "save me from the hand of my brother the hand of Eisav" which means, he may claim he is my brother but really he is Eisav the wicked one. His inner being is nothing like his external expression. He is a farce. In contrast the brothers of Yosef could not contain their ill feelings toward Yosef and they expressed it. They did not put on a false front and make believe all is well. This real expression, although it compromised the midot of the brothers, nevertheless exposes them as people who were real.

The Midrash states that the "gamal - camel" is symbolic of the Babylonian Empire, the "shafan - hyrax" of the Persian Empire, the "arnevet - hare" of the Greek Empire, and the "chazir - pig" of the Roman nation. These nations' internal being is contrary to their external nature. They are all in essence living a lie, something not being real and therefore, that made them even more impure. A lion is a lion; it never claims to be something else, and the same is true for all the animals of the world.

As Am Yisrael we are compared to sheep that are kosher with both signs of Kashrut. Have you ever wondered how is it possible that a fellow Jew can sink to such a low level *rachmanu letzlan*, which is worse than any non-Jew? According to the view of the Kli Yakar, the higher a person appears to be the uglier his misdeeds are. When a drunken homeless man picks from the garbage it is not as appalling as when a president would do the same. When we are corrupt from our elevated status it is uglier than one who was never prominent at all.

May we all merit maintaining our true G-dly image and continue to be a light onto the nations.

Zmanim by our incredible Gabbi

Ephrayim Yurowitz
Tzvi Blech: Gabbai



Rosh Chodesh is Thursday and Friday

See more Minyanim times on page 7

Shacharis — 20 min. before Neitz

Mincha & Maariv — 12 min. before Plag and 12 min. before Shkia

NEITZ

S 6:04 | M 6:05 | T 6:06 | W 6:07 | T 6:08 | F 6:09 | SH 6:10

SHEMA- Magen Avraham

S 8:45 | M 8:46 | T 8:47 | W 8:47 | T 8:48 | F 8:48 | SH 8:49

SHEMA- GRA

S 9:32 | M 9:32 | T 9:33 | W 9:33 | T 9:33 | F 9:34 | SH 9:34

TEFILA- GRA

S 10:41 | M 10:42 | T 10:42 | W 10:42 | T 10:42 | F 10:42 | SH 10:42

CHATZOS

S 1:00 | M 1:00 | T 1:00 | W 1:00 | T 1:00 | F 12:59 | SH 12:59

PLAG

S 6:31 | M 6:29 | T 6:28 | W 6:27 | T 6:26 | F 6:25 | SH 6:24

SHKIA

S 7:57 | M 7:56 | T 7:55 | W 7:53 | T 7:52 | F 7:50 | SH 7:49

Shabbos Zmanim

CANDLE LIGHTING	7:42 ^{PM}
MINCHA in tent Aleph	7:00 ^{PM}
CHABAD MINCHA	7:52 ^{PM}
SHKIYA	8:00 ^{PM}
SHABBOS SHACHRIS MINYANIM:	
VASIKIN followed by Daf Yomi Shiur, 20↑	5:23 ^{AM}
ASHKENAZ, 18 Main	8:00 ^{AM}
TENT ALEPH, Tent א	9:15 ^{AM}
MINYAN IN OHR CHAIM'S "BAIS CHABAD", 20↑	10:00 ^{AM}
SHACHRIS, 18 Main	10:30 ^{AM}
<hr/>	
PIRCHEI	2:00 ^{PM}
PIRKEI AVOS PEREK HEH	
MINCHA FOLLOWED BY SHALOSH SEUDOS	7:30 ^{PM}
SHKIYA	7:59 ^{PM}
MAARIV	8:39 ^{PM}
MAARIV	8:44 ^{PM}

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Parshas Re'eh and Elul

by Rabbi Daniel Coren

Parshas Reeh is unique in its name. "Seeing" wisdom is obviously a higher level of understanding than just internalizing the concept. How do we know this? In the passages of Matan Torah we are told that the nation saw the voices. And we encounter the word again in Parshas Vaeschanan where Hashem tells Moshe to go up the mountain and see the land of Israel in all directions. The Mefarshim explain that this embodies a deep vision of the future challenges and salvations of the Jewish people. This is the vision that Moshe Rabeinu is teaching the Jewish people before they enter the land of Israel. They go on to explain that Moshe's vision was infusing the land of Israel with kedusha.

I think we can better understand the message with the words of the Ohr Hachayim who has a unique explanation for why Moshe used the word 'reeh'-- see and adds the words 'Anochi'—me. Why is Moshe pointing to himself?

The answer given by the Ohr Hachayim is that Moshe was imparting to the Jewish people the most important message that will apply and will be the pivotal tool for their success: choose spirituality, choose the word of God and you will have blessing. Choosing the path of idols and rejecting God will result in a cursed life. Essentially Moshe was saying that if you want to be really fulfilled and happy and have a life of true blessings then don't fall into the trap of materialism which leads to forgetting Hashem when not used properly. Rather focus all your efforts on spiritual growth and if you were given the gift of wealth make sure you realize it's a test to see if you will use it for spiritual purposes or not.

So why indeed does Moshe use the words 'see' and 'Anochi'? Moshe understood that if a pauper without a penny to his name would show up and tell wealthy people who own fancy cars and houses that money and material possessions are harmful, their reaction would be somewhat hostile. "Listen my friend," they would say. "Just dip in my pool and live in my house for a week. You will change your perspective. After all, you haven't tasted real Olam Hazeh."

With this understanding, Moshe informs his people that despite all his riches—and they are many—his life's mission has been to keep Hashem's mitzvos. And that even while the Jewish people were busy amassing wealth during yiztiat mitzrayim and the crossing of the yam suf, Moshe was involved in the mitzvah of moving the bones of Yosef Hatzadik. We are entering the month of Elul. The Mefarshim explain that Elul is *ani ledodi vedodi li* which describes a love relationship between us and Hashem. There is no greater pleasure than the love of Hashem and that is exactly what Hashem wishes from us but it takes effort and a lot of choices between spiritual pursuits or physical ones. The Rambam tells us that Teshuva means returning to Hashem and loving him. It's about regaining the best possible relationship. May we all merit to return both individually and collectively.

Wednesday Night 8pm – Smichas chaver Rabbi Coren Office
Shabbos Morning - Vasikin Minyan & 8:00am Minyan

A Blessing and a Curse

Rabbi Avraham Twersky



"See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse" (Deut. 11:26).

R Yitzchok Meir of Gur says that Hashem has given a person the wisdom and understanding to be able to distinguish between right and wrong, between a blessing and curse.

We have not only the intelligence to make wise decisions but also the ability to do so. Yet, we often see people making unwise decisions that are to their own detriment, and they fail to use these God-given strengths in their own favor.

This thought occurs to me when I see intelligent and even scholarly people smoking cigarettes, knowingly poisoning themselves. True, it would require effort and some tolerance of discomfort to break the habit, but certainly one's life is dear enough that one should willingly accept the discomfort in the interest of survival. People who readily accept the discomfort of a surgical procedure to save their lives nonetheless appear unable to do so with regard to discontinuing smoking.

The reason for this discrepancy is that one's judgment is distorted by what one would like to believe. The Torah states this very clearly: "A bribe will blind the eyes of the wise" (Deuteronomy 16:19). One's wisdom is ineffective when a bribe has affected one's judgment capacity. A blind person would indeed wish to avoid falling into a pit, but he cannot help himself if he cannot see it.

This is true of every unwise decision. Smoking is just one stark example. We are constantly under the influence of biases that impair our judgment.

The blind person cannot make himself sighted, but we do have the ability to overcome the blindness of our biases. We just need to be on the alert and on the defensive, realizing our vulnerability.

Moses chose his words very deliberately: "See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse." See, indeed. You have the ability to overcome the blindness of your biases.

Two Aspects of *Birchas Ha'nehenin* – a *Mitzvah* to Recite the *Bracha* and an *Issur* to Eat Without a *Bracha*

by Rabbi Nachum Scheiner



The Acharonim write that there are, in fact, two aspects in the requirement of birchas ha'nehenin:

1. Just as before performing a mitzvah, there is a mitzvah to recite a bracha, before eating, there is also a mitzvah to recite a bracha. If someone did a mitzvah without reciting a bracha, he has still fulfilled the mitzvah, but he has missed out on the requirement to recite a bracha. Similarly, if someone ate without reciting a bracha, he has missed out on the requirement to recite a bracha.

2. Besides the requirement to recite a bracha, there is also a prohibition to eat without reciting a bracha, and if someone ate without a bracha, he is considered stealing, as the Gemara tells us.

The Maharsha (Pesachim 102b) discusses these two dimensions. He writes that when it comes to birchas hamitzvos, if there is a question if one should recite a bracha, the rule is: "when in doubt, leave it out." Since the bracha is not a prerequisite in performing the mitzvah, and it is not clear if a bracha is needed, the bracha can be omitted. However, when it comes to birchas ha'nehenin, if there is a question if one should recite a bracha, he must recite the bracha, and we cannot apply the rule: "when in doubt, leave it out." He explains that if one is really required to recite a bracha, and he does not recite the bracha, he is considered stealing. Therefore, if he is in doubt he must recite a bracha, to be sure that he is not stealing.

Rav Leib Malin points out that this seems clear from the words of the Rambam, who writes that there is a mitzvah to recite a bracha before eating, and then adds that if one does not recite a bracha, it is considered stealing from Hashem. Rav Shach adds that the Rambam pointed this out for an important reason. If it would merely be a positive command to recite a bracha, if he is unable to recite a bracha, he can still eat the food. Now that we see that it is also an issur to eat without a bracha, since it is considered stealing, if one is unable to recite a bracha, he is not allowed to eat the food.

The Issur to Eat Without a Bracha is Based on the Mitzvah to Recite the Bracha

The Emek Bracha also discusses that there is a positive command to recite a bracha, as well as an issur to eat without a bracha, but he adds that the issur may depend on the mitzvah to recite a bracha.

He points to a machlokes between Rashi and the Rif if the workers need to recite a bracha before eating. Rashi writes that the workers do not recite a bracha before eating, since it is only a rabbinical decree, and they did not require this from the workers, who are on the clock. The Rif, however, writes that the workers do need to recite a bracha before eating, because there is an issur to eat without a bracha. He explains that Rashi holds that since it is only a rabbinical decree, and they did not require this from the workers there is no issur to eat

without a bracha.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach adds that this is why the halacha is that this is why when it comes to a question of a

bracha on food, we say, "when in doubt, leave it out." If there is an issur to eat without a bracha, one should be required to recite the bracha in order to be saved from stealing. The answer is that since it is only a rabbinical decree, and in a case of doubt they did not require a person to recite a bracha, there is no issur to eat without a bracha, either.

Summary

There is a mitzvah to recite a bracha before eating, as well as an issur to eat without a bracha, but the issur may depend on the mitzvah to recite the bracha.

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

Rabbi Nachum Scheiner

מוהל מומחה

CELL: **845-499-6354**



Rabbi Scheiner

KOLLEL BOKER | 7:00-8:00am

• **Chavrusa learning - Gemara**

Currently: מסכת ביצה

• **Friday** - Shuirim Beinyonei Dyoma and relevant topics

NIGHT KOLLEL | 8:15-9:45pm

• **Chavrusa learning - Halacha**

Currently : הלכות חול המועד

SHUIRIM BY ROSH KOLLEL & FEATURED GUEST SPEAKERS

• **Daf Yomi** | 8:45-9:45

• **Mishna Yomis** | 8:45-9:00

• **ZERA SHIMSHON SHIUR** | 8:15-9:00 Thursday Nights

ADDITIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS:

• Yarchei Kallah / Shuirim on Legal Holidays - by acclaimed Guest Speakers

• Yeshivas Bein Hazmanim

• Yeshivas Kiyumu v'Kiblu / Purim Shushan Purim

• Shovevim Program / Early Friday morning learning b'retzifus.

• Evening Shuirim in Halacha and Hashkafa by prominent Morei Horah

No Gashes



Rabbi YY Jacobson

There is a fascinating verse in this week's Torah portion, Reeh:

You are children of the Lord, your G-d. You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes, for the dead. (Deut. 14:1)

The custom of many pagans was to cut themselves in demonstration of grief over the death of a loved one. To vent their agony, they would make incisions in their flesh, pull out their hair, and flay their skin. The Torah prohibits this behavior. There must be limits to grief. This is the meaning of the Hebrew word "sisgodedu," to scrape off the flesh.

The Talmud, however, adds a second meaning to this commandment:

The Torah is saying: Do not splinter yourself into separate groups. ("sisgodedu," from the root word "agud" or "agudah," means groups.)

This is a prohibition against the Jewish people becoming divided. Practically, this is a prohibition against one Jewish court dividing into two and guiding the community in a conflicting fashion creating division and conflict.

One practical example would be this. If a synagogue has a certain tradition of how to pray, one may not come and begin praying in a different tradition without the consent of the community.

But there is something strange here. The Talmud and the Midrash often present various interpretations for one biblical term or verse; but nowhere do we find two interpretations that are completely disconnected. On the simple level, "sisgodedu" means scraping off your skin. Now the Talmud tells us that it also means, "don't split up into separate groups." How do these two divergent instructions come together in a single word? Why would the Torah communicate such two disparate ideas in one word-lacerating your body and dividing a community?

Or to put it more poignantly and humorously, the sages, it seems, by imposing this second meaning are "violating" the very injunction they are trying to convey. They take a simple word in the verse and they "splinter" its meaning.

One Organism

Yet it is here that we can once again gain insight into the depth of Torah wisdom.

The truth is, that the two interpretations are not only not divergent, they are actually one and the same. They both represent the same truth—one on a concrete, physical level; the other on a deeper, spiritual level.

The Torah prohibits us from cutting our skin as a sign of bereavement. Our bodies are sacred; our organism is integrated, precious and holy; we must never harm it. We must not separate even a bit of skin from our flesh. Even difficult moments of grief don't allow us to give up on our life and on the sacredness and beauty of our bodies.

But that is exactly what we are doing when we allow our people to become splintered. The entire Jewish nation is essentially one single organism. We may number 15 million people, and come from different walks of life, profess extremely different opinions, and behave in opposite ways, but we are essentially like one "super organism." When I cut off a certain Jew from my life, when I cut myself off from a certain Jewish community, I am in truth cutting off part of my own flesh.

When I cut my skin, I am lacerating my body. When I cut you off from me, I am lacerating my soul, because our souls are one.

Womens Shiur **Tuesday** 9:45am (18 Main)
Chassidus Shiur **Monday & Thursday** 7:45am (18 Main)
Shabbos: Friday Night – before Barchu (20 Upstairs)
Morning 9:00 (20 Upstairs)
After Davening 12:00pm (20 Upstairs)

UFARATZTA



THE FOUNDATION OF A JEWISH HOME

SHIDDUCH: To someone who needed help to decide.

... Regarding your doubts: Consider how a physical house is built: Even though its externals are beautified, what is of primary importance is that it be built on a strong foundation, using strong materials that are appropriate for the people who must live in it and not just for the sake of appearance to passersby in the street.

How much more so should these principles apply to building a Jewish home. Of primary importance is that it be built on a strong foundation of Torah... for the Torah is called "THE TORAH OF LIFE." In simple words, that name implies that the Torah provides a way of life for one's day-to-day affairs.

What a passerby in the street thinks about the external beauty of the home is entirely secondary. True, human nature is such that whether a person is happy with his portion or not is often measured against such opinions*. Nevertheless, ultimately, these are secondary matters when compared to the primary ones mentioned above. ...

chabad.org/therebbe/letters/The most important elements to seek in a shidduch

* Worried about what people would think

Held to A Higher Standard

בנים אתם לד' אלקיכם, לא תתגדדו ולא תשימו קרחה בין עיניכם למת 14:1

Klal Yisroel are told that they are the nation chosen to receive the Torah Hakdoshah as well as having the special status of being children of Hashem. The Torah then proceeds with laws to forbid self-mutilation to express mourning of a loved one. Why does the Torah specifically state that Klal Yisroel are children of Hashem at this point in time?

Hashem is letting Klal Yisroel know that they are His children, and His love for them is greater than the love of a father for his son. The Torah then tells Klal Yisroel not to maim themselves on account of anything that happens in this world. All that occurs to a Yid in this world is for the good. There are times that one may not be able to see the good, just as a young child doesnot always understand what his father does, and does not see the good.

However just as the child learns to rely on his father that everything his father does is for his good, so too Klal Yisroel must rely on their Father in Heaven, Hashem, that everything that happens to them is for their good. The Torah goes on to list the laws of foods, which ones are permitted to eat and which ones are forbidden. The other aspect which Klal Yisroel must know is that because they are children of Hashem, they are held to a higher standard. A prince needs to behave in all

facets of his life in a distinguished manner befitting a prince. So too, Klal Yisroel must act in a manner of a prince. They must be careful with what they eat and how they act because they are the "holy nation", the children of Hashem. (אבן עזרא)

When one loses a loved one, it is a very emotional time. A person can be wrought with emotional pain, and loneliness. One might question why it is fair that the person died. It is at this integral point that one must strengthen his Emunah in Hashem. One must be cognizant that we are all children of Hashem. While a father of flesh and blood wants only good for his children, he is not always in control. The father may make decisions that are harmful to his children, or there are things that are beyond his.

Hashem is the ruler of the world, אין עוד מלבדו. Hashem does not make mistakes, and is in control of everything. Hashem makes sure that all that happens to His children is for their good. We must always make sure to be respectful of our Father in Heaven, and act in the proper manner. Even when one may be very emotional, he must remember that his Father above is watching to make certain that he is taken care of. By the same token, we must make sure to make our Father in Heaven, Hashem, proud of us by acting in a way that befits the children of the Melech Malchei Hamlachim Hakodosh Boruch Hu. By acting in a manner befitting a "true prince", we will be Zoche to have a D'veikus to Hashem.

Are We Running Away from Ourselves?

Take a good look at yourself Everyone has felt it. The phantom ring of the cell phone.

It might be Shabbos or any time when you are sure that you're not carrying your phone with you, but yet you feel or hear a vibrating device, if only for a moment. Or maybe you were somewhere without a phone, perhaps you forgot it or (Heaven forbid) lost it. Uh oh, no phone. You can't entertain yourself digitally. What are you to do with all this free time?

But alas, our time is not free, far from it. Our time is not even ours. We are slaves to the device. The truth is we are uneasy and uncomfortable without our phone. Amazing, but easily explainable. When you don't want to deal with your issues- distraction is king. If our generation has a credo, it must be we cannot ever be alone with our thoughts, with ourselves.

To some of us, the idea of being alone with ourselves and not being able to "talk digitally with our friends" is horrifying, terrifying. When did all this happen? It's not only our phones. Any distraction, anything that entertains us when we are "alone" It could be a husband or wife that works crazy long hours. or any other addictions r"l. They all have one common denominator: they help us run away from ourselves.

Now to be sure, recreation is necessary and healthy. All work and no play makes Yaakov a dull boy. To keep ourselves from burning out we must engage in healthy activities. But the question here is, and everyone knows it's

RABBI BEN ZION SNEH



about time we asked: Are we afraid to spend time with ourselves? We have to work hard to truly confront our challenges, and living in this pampered generation has made us all weaker and infinitely less patient with ourselves and those around us.

Real growth only occurs when there is resistance, correction and discovery, when we change old habits- instead of constantly giving in to them. As the Maharal observed, a seed which does not break, remaining whole and beautiful without cracking open; it cannot bring forth a tree or any growing matter. We spend our valuable time running away from ourselves to swim in the pleasurable sea of technology. It's constant, day and night. We all have challenges to confront, pain to deal with. Not everything is fine. But we choose the narcotic of not knowing, not seeking and not caring, over the painful albeit fulfilling tour of our inner lives. But we really can't be blamed; inner work is difficult. But can only be accomplished when we turn down the static of our technological "friends." An action that is easier said than done. None of this self-searching is new.

May we merit to live our lives in a most real and honest way, taking the time to find out who we really are, not hiding behind our devices and our perceived identities.

And may this honesty help us achieve both greatness in our relationships and growth in our spiritual challenges.



Rabbi and Mrs Nachum Scheiner will be making a kiddush

after the 8 am Shacharis
in honor of the birth of their daughter

**פרשת ראה
Mincha & Maariv
At the Later Plag**

7:33pm | Tent ב

*Remember to repeat שמע קריאת

**Late Maariv
Motzei Shabbos
Every 15 Minutes!**

דברים - ואתחנן

9:45 pm – 11:45 pm

עקב - ראה

9:30 pm – 11:30 pm

שופטים - כי תצא

9:15 pm – 11:15 pm

כי תבוא - נצבים

9:00 pm – 11:00 am

In 18 Main Beis Medrash

Sephardic Selichot

Starting Sunday August 20

18 Main | 4:30

Selichot followed by שחרית

Summer 2023

Early Friday Mincha

מנחה גדולה (between 1:31-1:34) | 1:45

2:00 | 2:15 | 2:30 | 2:45 | 3:00 | 3:15

3:30 | 3:45 | 4:00 | 4:15 | 4:30 | 4:45

5:00

18 Main Bais Medrash

ערב ראש חודש אלול

יום ד' פרשת שופטים

Wednesday Aug 16th

Shkia 7:53

1:30pm | Tent ב

1:30 | 20 ↑

2:30 | Tent ב

3:30 | Tent ב

4:30 | Tent ב

5:30 | Tent ב

6:00 | 20 ↑

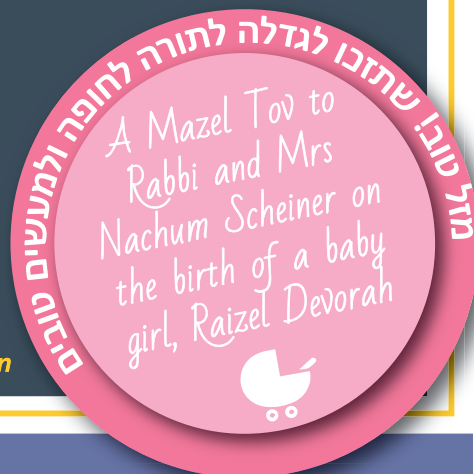
6:30 | Tent ↑

7:00 | 20 ↑

7:30 | Tent ב

8:00 | 20 ↑

Open עזרת נשים



Shiurim



SHIUR

Monday August 14
יום א' פרשת שופטים
12:00pm

18 Main Bais Medrash

RABBI YOSEF VIENER

Rav, Kehillas Shaar Hasamayim of Wesley Hills

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Questions can be submitted in advance.

Call/text: 845-270-8922

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Secretary@18forshay.com,

or follow the prompts on our website

18Forshay.com.

Recorded shiurim are also available on CD at the shul – 18 Forshay Main Lobby.

Introducing the next generation
Rav Yehuda Zweig, Rosh Yeshiva

Bais Medrash v'Kollel R' Moshe Chaim

Talmudic University of Florida, Miami Beach



August 20th | 10-11am
18 Main

Alumni Host Committee:

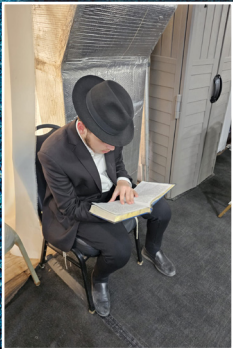
Rabbi Yochanan Katz, Rabbi Mordechai Nakdimen, Dr. David Schneeweiss, Ami Schwab, Yoni Senter, Motty Shulman

Refreshments will be served

Shiur & refreshments sponsored לרפואה שלימה- אסתר בת בוליסה

בית מדרש אור חיים
BAIS MEDRASH OHR CHAIM

Camp Aguda visiting 18 Forshay



Live Shechita Demonstration at the Yeshivas Bein Hazmanim





Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman

There's No I in Happy

If you want to be happier, should you focus on yourself or on others? In a study entitled "Do unto Others or Treat Yourself? The Effects of Prosocial and Self-Focused Behavior on Psychological Flourishing," Katherine Nelson and colleagues reported their research findings that doing acts of kindness for others, or for the world at large, provided a bigger boost for better mood and increased well-being than doing acts of kindness for oneself.

These results align with previous research that indicates that spending money on others increases happiness levels over spending money on oneself. This stands in contrast to the more popular conception that in order to be happy, you should focus on self-care.

In one of my favorite stories, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks retells what he heard about the Lubavitcher Rebbe, when he visited him in 1968. Someone had written to the Rebbe that "I am depressed. I am lonely.

I keep mitzvot but find no peace of mind. I need the Rebbe's help." The Rebbe's total response to the letter was to just circle the first word of every sentence; "I."

The word simcha, which can be roughly translated as happiness or joy, appears seven times in this week's Torah portion. Fascinatingly, in each of the seven times, the simcha is communicated in the context of others. It is what Rabbi Sacks calls happiness shared, or collective joy. When we rejoice, it is with others present and others in mind. We share the happiness with our families and with strangers, orphans, widows, and Levites. There is no "I" in happy and there is no "I" in joy.

Yet there is another pattern amongst the seven contexts of the word simcha. Not only is simcha presented in relation to others, but as Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik highlighted, it is also bound to being lifnei Hashem, before Hashem. Being in the presence of Hashem both obligates and generates feelings of joy. The experience of transcending the self and experiencing the Divine, provides a framework for true simcha.

This is why there is a commandment to be happy on the Three Festivals when everyone would visit the Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the place where the Divine Presence rested. It is also why the Kohen Gadol, who was in the presence of Hashem every day, had a continuous obligation to be happy. Rabbi Soloveitchik developed the idea further, explaining that there is a commandment to be happy on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur as well, since those are both days where we attain spiritual closeness to Hashem.

It is striking that happiness is explained exclusively in the context of the other. It is only before Hashem and it must be shared with other people. Focusing exclusively on the "I" to boost happiness will inevitably fall short. Rather, if we want to enhance our experience of simcha, let us look for opportunities to do for others and to become closer to Hashem.

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman is an assistant professor at Yeshiva University's Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education, the assistant rabbi at Kingsway Jewish Center, and a licensed psychologist practicing in Brooklyn.

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My brain is smart; my body is dumb



by Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

During a recent Shabbos, prayed at the synagogue with probably the worst decorum in the world.

People were talking, some were screaming, shrieking, and hollering, others were stomping their feet, banging on the tables, hitting the walls, and jumping up and down. It was the most distracting service I've ever experienced – and by far the holiest I've been privileged to witness.

The Shul at Camp HASC is filled with boys and girls and men and women with special needs, physical and developmental disabilities including autism, Down's Syndrome, cerebral palsy, and others. Few can participate in the prayer service in the traditional sense; many are not verbal, and most don't seem cognitively capable. Yet one cannot help but feel the noises being transmitted from the holy, pure souls of HASC's campers ascend to the highest places of prayer.

I met an autistic, 15-year-old young man named Zev, who is mostly nonspeaking. Until recently, little was known about his thoughts, feelings, and aspirations. After days of diagnostic testing, the "experts" had determined that Zev had the intelligence of an 18-month-old. But in the last few years, Zev and his similar friend and fellow camper Srulik have worked with an extraordinary communication therapist who utilized the latest techniques to teach how to type and communicate non-verbally.

It turns out that while on the outside Zev and Srulik seem developmentally stunted, often unable to understand, they take it all in and are full of deep thoughts, ideas, and words of Torah.

Last month, in honor of his sister's wedding, Zev's parents published a booklet of his Torah thoughts that he typed letter by letter. Zev's first entry said the following:

Moses could not talk perfectly. In spite of this disadvantage, he was our greatest teacher. It seems to me the lesson is clear. It is not the talking that makes a man great, it is the listening and understanding of the messages of Hashem. I think I never had the ability to know my listening was my strength because I looked only at a lonely, quiet life. Now I have hope for my future, the chance to learn Torah, to become a mensch, may you be inscribed in the book of life!

One of the first things Zev shared was: "My brain is smart; my body is dumb."

As I read this pamphlet and looked at Zev, I simply couldn't believe it. What was happening on his inside did not match what I could see on the outside. Externally,

he was "broken," disabled, and seemingly a typical special needs individual. On the inside, he was whole, smart, capable, thoughtful, and articulate. The staff member who introduced me to Zev and his booklet told me this breakthrough not only enormously transformed the way he views Zev, but it has also had a tremendous impact on the way he views all the campers, especially the non-verbal ones.

The bottom line is this: We have no idea what is going on inside a person, what is happening beneath the surface. This lesson is true outside the walls of Camp HASC and it applies in both directions. How many people who seem "whole" on the outside are really broken inside? How many who seem abled on the surface, are in fact disabled emotionally or spiritually beneath it?

Remember, there is an entire person before you, an inside and outside, what you can see and know, and what you will never fully understand. While some look broken on the outside, they are whole on the inside, and there are those who look whole on the outside, but really are struggling with brokenness inside.



A Powerful Story of A Father's Love



A remarkable true story that every parent must read

- Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser -

"זורקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם" -- I will shower pure water upon you and you will become cleansed... (Yechezkel 36:25)

Rav Schwadron explains the concept of this verse with the following illustration. A father wants to present his son with a special gift, but the son runs away. Disappointed, the father tosses the gift after him.

Like a wayward child who does not appreciate the kindness his father is offering him, says Rav Schwadron, we all -- at one time or another -- turn away from our Father in Heaven and do not welcome Hashem's intention to purify us. What does Hashem do? He showers us with the purifying water. The establishment of that connection with Hashem results in וטהרתם -- we ourselves set in motion the purification process and seek to return to Hashem.

A fellow Jew once called me to consult on a pressing parenting issue. The man begged me to make time for him at my earliest opportunity, because the matter was very urgent and needed immediate attention. I agreed to meet with him first thing in the morning.

The man who came into my office the next morning was deeply crushed and heartbroken. He sighed and tearfully began to tell his story.

"I was always very dedicated to my children's upbringing," he said. "I learned with them, paid for the best tutors, did everything possible to ensure that they would grow up to be G-d Fearing Jews. But my 17 year old son ... " he groaned, and put his face into his hands.

"You know, - with children, you need a lot of mazel . My son is completely off the path of the Torah. Shabbos means nothing to him. Yom Tov means nothing to him. I don't even know where or with whom he spends his day."

The man went on. "He comes home late at night, and sleeps till noon. He doesn't talk to us or to his sisters and brothers. I don't think he does anything Jewish at all. My wife and I have no more joy in life," he said. "Even our family occasions are marred - how can we rejoice when our son has nothing to do with Judaism or with us?"

"You know," he continued, "I always wondered why Yaakov Avinu mourned Yosef for 22 years. Why couldn't he accept the situation, and go on with life? Now I don't wonder anymore. I can't make peace with the situation. My own son -- my own flesh and blood, whom I raised with such love -- is going against everything I live for."

Tears streaming down his face, the man told me that his Rabbi had advised him to speak to me.

"Rav Goldwasser," he cried. "What should I do? What can I tell him? What can I tell my wife and other children?"

I spent a long time with him, offering encouragement and guidance, and mapping out a plan he could follow. I suggested positive steps he could take, things he could say, things he could do. I also told him what not to say and

do. He asked me halachic questions, and listened carefully to everything I said.

Finally, the man arose, thanked me, and turned to go. He was at the door when he turned back.

"Can I ask the Rav one more question?" he asked.

"Of course," I said.

"I've been preparing the *negel vasser* (hand-washing) in my house for years," he said. "Every night, I fill the basins and put them at the foot of every bed, and every morning, I spill out the used water . It's my special mitzvah, my special *zechus*. But lately, when I collect my son's *negel vasser* , I see that the water isn't used. He isn't washing *negel vasser* anymore. I feel like a fool preparing it every night -- it's just a waste of time. Should I continue preparing the water, or can I just skip it?"

The question hit me for a moment, and then I said, "If you're asking me, I would continue to fill the *negel vasser* every evening."

I could see that my answer surprised him. He seemed taken aback as he had not expected that answer.

Three weeks later, the man called to let me know what was going on. Things were pretty much the same, he said, and he was getting discouraged. I gave him encouragement, and some new suggestions.

Just before he hung up, he asked, "About the *negel vasser* -- do you think that I still need to bring it to his bed? I feel like such a fool every day." Again, I urged him to continue.

Three weeks later, he called me again. This time, he could barely speak. He seemed to be crying; he was literally choking over his words.

"I listened to you, Rav Goldwasser," he said. "I listened to you! I filled my son's *negel vasser* every day, and emptied it, even though he wasn't using it." The man paused.

"This morning, I went to his room to collect the basin, and *he was wearing his tefillin and praying!*"

Overcome with emotion, he paused to catch his breath. Then he said, "I ran to him, and hugged and kissed him. It was the first time in months! I couldn't bring myself to hug him while he was 'gone.' And then I asked him, 'Tell me, my dear child, what made you put on *tefillin* today?'"

"And my son said, 'I'll tell you, Dad. It was the *negel vasser*. You knew I wasn't using it and, still, you refilled it every day. I saw that you never lost your faith in me. You made me feel that I shouldn't lose my faith in Hashem, either.'"

Every day of the year, Hashem showers each and every one of us with purifying waters, even those who have become alienated or estranged. It is up to us to take advantage of this exceptional kindness and to come forward to purify ourselves. *V'tihartem!*

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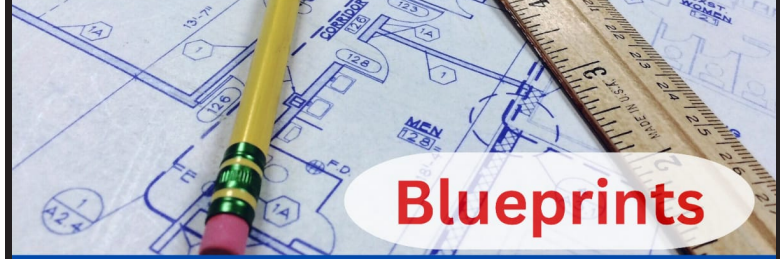
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JOKES

I walked passed a burnt out building with a broken sign saying "Fireworks". How right they were.

Marriage

Chaim is 44 years old and he is still single.

One day, a friend asked, "Why aren't you married? Can't you find a woman who will be a good wife?"

Fred replied, "Actually, I've found many women that I have wanted to marry, but when I bring them home to meet my parents, my mother doesn't like them."

His friend thinks for a moment and says, "I've got the perfect solution, why not find a girl who's just like your mother?" A few months later, they meet again and his friend says, "Did you find the perfect girl? Did your mother like her?"

With a frown on his face, Fred answers, "Yes, I found the perfect girl. She was just like my mother. You were right; my mother liked her very much."

The friend said, "Then what's the problem?" Sadly, Fred replied, "My father doesn't like her."

The Parrot

Barry passes by a pet shop in Monmouth Mall and notices a parrot in the window selling for \$1,000. He goes inside and asks why it costs so much. The salesman tells him the parrot speaks five languages.

"Five languages!" exclaims Barry. "Does it speak Yiddish?"

"Sure it does," says the salesman.

As his mother lives by herself in Forshay, Barry decides to send her the parrot as a present - it'll keep her company. So he pays the \$1,000 and arranges for the shop to deliver the parrot to his mother. The next day he phones his mother. "Mom, Did you like the parrot I bought you?"

"Mmm, it was delicious!" she says.

"What do you mean delicious?"

"I made soup out of it, it came out great!"

"But mom, the parrot wasn't for eating. It spoke five languages including Yiddish."

"So why didn't it say anything?"

Mothers

Abe was 75 years old and had a medical problem that needed complicated surgery. Because his son Jacob was a renowned surgeon, Abe insisted that Jacob perform the operation. On the day of his operation, as he lay on the operating table waiting for the anesthetic, Abe asked to speak to his son.

"Yes dad, what is it?"

"Don't be nervous, Jacob, do your best and just remember, if it doesn't go well, if Heaven forbid something should happen to me, your mother is going to come and live with you and your wife."



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