

Re'eh | Aug 5 - 11, 2021 | 27 - 3 Elul 5781

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Parasat Reah

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".(11-3) As 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 Berashit 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, never the less exposes them as people who were real.

The Medrash states that the "gamal-camel" is symbolic to the Babalonian Empire, the "shafan-hyrax" is the Persian Empire and the "arnevet-hare" is the Greek Empire. 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 for all the animals of the world.

The Kli Yakar elaborates that all of these kingdoms were the dwelling grounds for some of the greatest Tzadikim. The Tzadikim lived in their midst, metaphorically speaking they bore them, and they were part of these nations' innards. At times they were even agreeable to the Jews and allowed them to prosper physically and spiritually but in reality they showed how much really they wanted to kill them and indeed did so.

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 that 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. Amen



Zmanim by our incredible Gabbi
EPHRAIM YUROWITZ
Tzvi Blech : Gabbai Sheini

NEW MINYANIM ADDED:

EARLY MINYAN MINCHA FRIDAY
1:38, 2:00, 2:30, 3:00, 3:30, 4:00

SHABBOS ZMANIM

CANDLE LIGHTING	7:48PM
MINCHA 18 TENT	7:00PM
MINCHA TENT ALEPH	7:30PM
MINCHA BAIS CHABAD	7:58PM
SHKIYA	8:06PM
SHACHRIS VASIKIN- DAF YOMI SHIUR	5:19AM
SHACHRIS ASHKENAZ 18 MAIN	8:00AM
BUCHRIM MINYAN 20	9:00AM
SHACHRIS - YOUTH 18 UPSTAIRS	9:30AM
SHACHRIS MAIN MINYAN 18 TENT	9:15AM
SHACHRIS 20 FORSHAY BAIS CHABAD	10:00AM
NEW SHACHRIS 18 MAIN	NEW 10:15AM
MINCHA	1:45PM
PIRCHEI	2:00PM
MINCHA	6:00PM
SHIUR ON PIRKEI AVOS PERK HEH	7:15PM
MINCHA SHALOSH SEUDOS	7:45PM
SHKIYA	8:05PM
MARRIV	8:45PM 18 TENT, 8:50PM

WEEKDAY ZMANIM

SHACHRIS

20 MINUTES BEFORE NEITZ 30 ON YOM TOV

S 5:39 M 5:40 T 5:41 W 5:42 T 5:43 F 5:44

MINCHA & MARIV

12 MINUTES BEFORE PLAG

S 6:24 M 6:23 T 6:21 W 6:20 T 6:19

MINCHA & MARIV

12 MINUTES BEFORE SHKIA

S 7:52 M 7:50 T 7:49 W 7:48 T 7:46

AUGUST 08 - AUGUST 13

NEITZ IS 5:59- 6:04
PELAG IS 6:36- 6:31
SHKIA IS 8:04 - 7:58
MAGEN AVRAHAM
8:54 AM - 8:57AM
GRA- BAAL HATANYA
9:30AM- 9:32 AM

Summer 2021

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WEEKDAY MINYANIM

שחרית

6:15AM	Tent 2
5:30	Tent 1
6:45	Tent 4
7:00	Tent 4
7:15	Tent 2
7:30	Tent 1
7:45	Tent 1
8:00	Tent 2
8:15	Tent 2
8:30	Tent 1
8:45	Tent 1
9:00	Tent 2
9:15	Tent 2
9:30	Tent 1
9:45	Tent 1
10:00	Tent 1
10:15	Tent 2
10:30	Tent 1
10:45	Tent 1
11:00	Tent 1
11:15	Tent 1
11:30	Tent 1
11:45	Tent 1
12:00	Tent 1

מנחה ומעריב

12 MIN.	Tent 2
12 MIN.	Tent 2
AT	Tent 2
10 MIN.	Tent 2
20 MIN.	Tent 2
30 MIN.	Tent 2
40 MIN.	Tent 2
50 MIN.	Tent 2
60 MIN.	Tent 2

מעריב

AT	Tent 2
AT	Tent 2
10 MIN.	Tent 2
20 MIN.	Tent 2
30 MIN.	Tent 2
40 MIN.	Tent 2
50 MIN.	Tent 2
60 MIN.	Tent 2
72 MIN.	Tent 2

מנחה 18 ↓

1:45	3:00	4:15	5:30	6:45	8:00
2:00	3:15	4:30	5:45	7:00	
2:15	3:30	4:45	6:00	7:15	
2:30	3:45	5:00	6:15	7:30	
2:45	4:00	5:15	6:30	7:45	

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BLUEBERRY HILL ZMANIM

EREV SHABBOS PLAG MINYAN 30 Dr. Frank Rd. Entrance on Humbert
MINCHA 6:20 PLAG 6:38



Rabbi Coren

ELUL IN AFRICA

Every year when Elul rolls around we try to focus on our Avoda. To appreciate the magnitude of this month we often quote the story of the Mir Yeshiva in Shanghai. The students at the yeshiva were running from the Nazis yimach shmam but Hashgacha had it that a Shul that had been built many years before was the perfect place for the Yeshiva to 'hide.' In fact, they were able to sit and learn like they never learned before. It was Rosh Chodesh Elul and the Mashgiach Ruchani of Mir, Rav Yechezkel Levinstein approached the bimah in order to give the inspiring speech that would officially bring in the special month of Elul, the month of Teshuva. This is the month where everything we do is raised to a different level, when we are woken up from an eleven-month sleep by the sounds of the Shofar. The Rambam writes in his explanation for the blowing of the Shofar *היתקע שופר בעיר והעם לא יירדו*—can the Shofar be blown in the city and no one will hear? In the same vein, the Navi Amos asks *אריה שאג מי לא ירא*—if the lion roars, who will not fear? The Mashgiach reached the bimah and looked intensely at the Yeshiva boys whose eyes were glued to him. He banged on the bimah and roared "Elul". Then he paused for a few seconds and went back to his seat. That Elul roar was enough to turn on the engine of Elul; it was a roar of trembling, a roar of an animal that is the—*מלך בשדה*—the king of the jungle... As the Chassidik literature teaches, when the king is out in the field, he is more approachable and we are able to reconnect and make amends. We can do Teshuva, a spiritual return to the person we really wish to be.

Studying the behaviors of animals from the eyes of Chazal and the Rishonim can be a fascinating experience. The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva specifically writes that one of the ways of reaching Ahavas Hashem, the love of Hashem, is by watching His creations. I heard from my uncle shli-ta whose father was close to Rav Yonatan Steif Z"l, a senior dayan of Budapest, that

when Reb Yonatan came to America he asked almost immediately if they can go together to the Bronx Zoo. He explained that this is how the Rambam teaches us how we can strive to reach Hashem's love for his creations.

Although the story of Mir Yeshiva focuses mostly on the aspect of fear and trembling, in truth Elul is also and perhaps even more so a month of love for Hashem.

The Rambam also writes that the ultimate Teshuva is *תשובה מאהבה* -- returning to Hashem by loving him. I heard from Reb Noach Z'l that the litmus test of a successful Elul is how much closer we've reached and how much more love we're experiencing by the time Rosh Hashana arrives. True Teshuva is really a combination of *יראה* and *אהבה* and even the *יראה* is a sense of awe which is a much higher level than fear of punishment. *יראה* includes understanding the consequences of our actions or lack of them but it comes from a king who loves us more than anyone else, a sovereign that wants us to succeed and suffers when we are pained and therefore directs us in the right path sometimes through *יסורים* afflictions (directions.)

Seeing the wonders of creation is one window of *יראה* and *אהבה*. There is another important path that we can all take no matter where we are in the world and that is strengthening our dedication to learning *lishma* - learning with the intent and goal to get to know Hashem better, to become more like Him. This entails always working on our middos, the 13 attributes of Hashem that we shout out in prayer especially during the days of Slichos and which we strive to emulate. The more we increase our concern for others the more Hashem will show his compassion for us.

Good Shabbas and good Chodesh

Bais Medrash Ohr Chaim is looking for a Baal Koreh for Shabbos

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SELICHOT FOLLOWED BY שחרית

LOOKING FORWARD, MAY OUR TEFILOT AND TESHUVAH BE ACCEPTED WITH LOVE BEFORE יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים

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HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE ALIVE?

HOW TO BECOME A KOSHER HUMAN BEING: DO YOU HAVE STANDARDS? DO YOU CHALLENGE YOURSELF?

David Goldberg bumps into somebody in the street who looks like his old friend Jack.

"Jack," he says. "You've put on weight and your hair has turned gray. You seem a few inches shorter than I recall and your cheeks are puffy. Plus, you're walking differently and even sound different. Jack, what's happened to you?"

"I'm not Jack," the other gentleman tells him. "My name is Sam!"

"Wow! You even changed your name," David says.

TWO SIGNS

Land animals that are permitted, or kosher, for Jews to consume are identified in this week's Torah portion by two distinct characteristics.

Firstly, the animal must bring up its cud and chew it. This means that after swallowing its food, the animal must regurgitate it from the first stomach to the mouth to be chewed again. This regurgitated food is called "cud."

Second, the animal must have completely cloven hooves.

For example, the cow, goat, sheep, and gazelle possess both these characteristics and are thus kosher. The donkey and the horse, on the other hand, which lack both of these features, are defined as non-kosher animals. The pig, which has split hooves but does not chew its cud, and the camel, which chews its cud but has no split hooves, are non-kosher animals.

Why do these particular characteristics cause an animal to become kosher?

THE POWER OF FOOD

Judaism teaches that the physical attributes of an animal reflect the distinct psychological and spiritual qualities of its soul.

Another point expounded by Judaism

is that the food a person consumes has a profound effect on one's psyche. When a person eats the flesh of a particular animal, the "personality" of this animal affects, to some degree, the identity of the human consumer.

The split hooves and the chewing of the cud represent two qualities of the soul of these animals that are crucially necessary for the healthy development of the human character. When the Jew consumes the substance of these animals, he becomes a more "kosher" and refined human being.

MORAL SELF-DISCIPLINE

Cloven hooves -- the division existing in the coverings on an animal's feet -- are symbolic of the notion that one's movement in life (reflected by the moving legs) is governed by a division between "right" and "left," between right and wrong, between the permissible and the prohibited. A split hoof represents the human capacity to accept that there are things to be embraced and things to be rebuffed.

This process of moral self-discipline is the hallmark of living a wholesome life, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. A violin can produce its exquisite music only when its cords are tied, not when they are loose and "free." Similarly, a human being who allows himself to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, wherever he wants and with whomever he wants, robs himself of the opportunity to experience the inner music of his soul.

And when we have no clear differentiation between right and wrong, in a short time we tend to lose the very foundation of civil life. Nothing is a given, nothing is important, nothing is sacred, because nothing is even real. We end up in an endless wasteland, trying to numb our pain and anxiety through every possible distraction. The very core of the "I" gets lost in world where nothing matters besides the fact that nothing matters. Semantics, rather than conviction, becomes the stuff our soul is carved of.

Rabbi Adin Even Yisroel-Shteinsaltz (1937-2020), one of the luminaries of our generation who passed away last Friday, once shared a story about a philosophy professor in Israel who asked one of his students to make a presentation. The student began by saying, "I speculate that ..." The professor interrupted him: "Please,

before you continue, define the meaning of the word 'I.'" The student attempted thrice to define the word "I," but the teacher refuted every definition. The student gave up and sat down.

The professor stood up and said: "How many times did I instruct you guys not to use terms which you cannot define?!"

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

The second quality that characterizes a "kosher" human being is that he or she always chews their cud.

Even after a person "swallows" and integrates into his life certain values, attitudes, and behaviors, he must never become totally self-assured and smug about them. The spiritual human being needs to continually regurgitate his ideas to be chewed and reflected upon again.

Man must never allow himself to become fully content in his own orbit. Contentment breeds smugness; smugness breeds boredom, arrogance, and judgementalism. A person ought always - till his last breath - challenge himself, examine his behavior, and refine his character.

Or as Rabbi Adin Even Yisroel--Shteinsaltz once said: How do you know if you are alive or dead? If something hurts you, it means you are alive.

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**THIS SHABBOS MEVORCHIM
 CHODESH ELUL**

20 Forshay Rd. 7:30AM - 9:00AM
 (Followed by Rabbi Jacobson's Shiur)

29th of Menachem Av

THE POWER OF SHABBOS MEVORCHIM TEHILLIM

"Saying Tehillim every day and the entire Tehillim of Shabbos m'vorchim - be scrupulous about all of them. It is crucial for you, for your children, and your children's children" (Sefer Hayom 25th of Shev

ALL ARE INVITED TO JOIN IN COMPLETING THE ENTIRE SEFER TEHILLIM WITH A MINYAN



TOUCHING THE CRACKS OF THE KOSEL

The Poskim discuss whether or not it is permissible to stick one's fingers in the cracks of the stones of the Kosel. We know that the Kosel is a remaining wall of Har Habayis and one may not enter the Har Habayis when one is a zav or baal keri. The question is based on the Rambam in Hilchos Bais Hamikdash 3:18 that discusses whether or not a partial entering is considered assur, meaning if only part of the body enters in a kodesh place. The Rambam says it is forbidden Mi'deRabbonon and the Ravad says it is assur Mi'deOraysa. The Chazon Ish was machmir. The Maharil Diskin and the Steipler agreed that it is forbidden. The Avnei Nezer disagreed. Reb Shlomo Zalman says in the name of Reb Tzvi Pesach Frank, that one need not be machmir. Reb Shloma Zalman was machmir for himself.

One of the reasons to be meikil is because the choma around the Har Habayis was not built in the kodesh part. A proof can be brought from the Mishna in Middos 2:1 that says the dimensions of Har Habayis was 500 amos by 500 amos. The Achronim have a safek whether the Choma was outside the 500 x 500 or inside of it. The Rambam is mashma that the wall was outside the 500 amos, thereby rendering the wall as chol. The Mishkenos Le'Abir Yaakov writes that initially that was the opinion of the Maharil Diskin to be mattir. Another proof that the wall was out of the 500 amos is from the Meiri in Middos Ch 2 where he says the wall was around the Har Habayis where it was flat and the measurement where the mountain starts to slope upwards was 500 x 500 amos.

From all of the above it would seem that there would be no problem touching the Kosel or the cracks between the stones on the wall.

However, the sefer Har Hakodesh pg. 222 writes that the length of Har Habayis from East to West on the North side is 324 meters and on the South side it is 283 meters, as the walls running along the North and South are not even. According to Reb Chaim Naeh the amount of 500 amos translates to 240 meters so one of the two walls was definitely out of the 500 amos. This would be consistent with the Meiri mentioned earlier. On the other hand, if you go with the Chazon Ish's measurements, 500 amos would translate to between 299 and 300 meters. That would result that a part of each wall is within the 500 x 500 amos. Therefore, it would be consistent with his shitta that one should not touch the wall since part of the wall is built within the 500 amos of Har Habayis.

There is another reason to be meikil because even if we hold that biah be'miktzas is called a biah, and therefore even a partial entering in the Bais Hamikdash makes one chayav, that is only if had he tried, he could have gone in totally; just because he chose to only enter partially does not exempt him for the biah. In our case, where it is physically impossible to enter in the cracks of the stone with one's whole body, one would be exempt on such a biah be'miktzas.

We need to understand and show hakoras HaTov to Hashem as the Kosel Hamaravi is the only spot in the world where the Shechina has never moved from. It is the highest point of hashroas Shechina which has never lost its kedusha. This is the reason the place is mesugal for tefillos, and a strong reason we should refrain from touching the wall as to be makeer that this is the only spot in the world where the level of hashroas Shechina, which was so great, never budged. Additionally, the mitzvah of aliya beregel still applies to the Kosel. How lucky are those who visit and treat that holy place with the proper respect!

May we all be zocheh to once again enter the Bais Hamikdash Bikedusha uvetahara!

LISTENING IS THE KEY TO BROCHA

את הברכה אשר תשמעו אל מצות ד' אלקיכם...

הקללה אם לא תשמעו (יא, כז - כח).

Everything is dependent on listening. If a person does not hear, he may turn light into darkness, good into evil and sweet into bitter.

There once was a shepherd, who was grazing his flocks outside the city, and his wife would bring him his food at six o'clock. Once his wife fell ill and did not come. Being very hungry, the shepherd decided to go home and eat but he needed someone to watch his flock while he was gone. He noticed a man pitching hay and said to him, "Take good care of my flock until I return, and I will pay you handsomely. The hay pitcher was deaf and thought the shepherd was asking him for hay for his flock and signaled to him that I need this hay for myself. The shepherd who deaf as well thought he was agreeing to watch the sheep.

He went home and then came back and saw that all the sheep were still there. As a reward, he picked a nice sheep that was perfect in every regard except for the fact that it had a lame leg. The second man thought that the shepherd was accusing him of hurting the sheep's leg and begins screaming at him. They began screaming at each other and would probably be screaming at each other today if not for the fact that that old age crept up on them and took them both.

On this the Scripture said (Isaiah 55: 3) " Incline your ear and come to Me, hearken and your soul shall live, and I will make for you an everlasting covenant, the dependable mercies of David ." Incline your ear, and go unto me, hear, and live your souls; Just as the study of the Torah depends on the hearing power of the ear, so the yetzer hora tries to interfere with it

And this is what the posuk is saying. I am giving you today a blessing and a curse, I gave you the Torah and you can use it for good and G-d forbid the opposite. However, you must hear because if the hearing is not there then you will lose everything and not know what to watch out for.

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ON INFLUENCERS' INFLUENCE

Yellowstone National Park, which is larger than the states of Rhode Island and Delaware combined, contains its own Grand Canyon, considered by many to be the most breathtaking sight inside the park. The canyon is 20 miles long, up to 4,000 feet wide and has a 1,200-foot drop. On our recent trip to Wyoming with the amazing Rustic Elegance, we visited the platform from which you can see the beauty and splendor of God's magnificent artwork.[1]

Almost everyone else present, ourselves included, stayed behind the low wall at the edge of the platform, protecting us from inadvertently falling and plummeting to a certain death. As we were admiring the remarkable scene, we suddenly saw a young man and woman stepping over the wall and somewhat carelessly climbing towards the very edge of the cliff. I couldn't understand, why in the world would they be risking their lives? Was the view that much better a few feet over?

When they reached the very edge, turned around and one of them pulled something out of her backpack, I understood. With the wind blowing and loose gravel beneath their feet, inches from slipping and falling to a gruesome demise, the girl extended her selfie stick and the two of them posed for a picture. Though the scenery was among the most beautiful on the planet, all of us couldn't take our eyes off these two individuals to see what would happen. (I have since learned they are among a special breed called Tourons of Yellowstone—"Touron" being a portmanteau of "tourist" and moron"—and there are websites filled with pictures and videos of such individuals engaged in foolish and dangerous behavior.)

We left before they climbed to safety, so I don't know their fate. But, just this month, a 32-year-old woman from Hong Kong died while trying to take a selfie at the edge of a cliff. Every headline that reported on her death described her as an "influencer." She, like the aspiring influencers at Yellowstone, was compelled to capture the perfect picture at the perfect angle, but it came at the expense of her life.

Though the word influencer has been used in English since the mid-1600s, it has more recently taken on a new meaning. Though the term can apply to a wide variety of people, influencers essentially are people who engage their large social media followings by sharing experiences, knowledge and advice. Influencers get paid for featuring or endorsing products, with some making as much as \$1 million for a post. Indeed, influencer marketing is predicted to be worth \$10 billion by 2022.

This term has now made its way into the Jewish vernacular, including the orthodox community. Websites list the top Jewish influencers and Jewish organizations discuss which influencers might be worth engaging in order to spark change. Social media platforms, most notably Instagram, are filled with Torah-observant young men and women trying to build their followings as they share and promote Jewish products and lifestyle advice. Those with a substantial audience are often treated like Jewish celebrities.

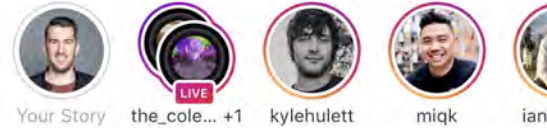
There are some wonderful things that have resulted from this phenomenon including the sharing of Torah ideas and inspiration, spreading modest fashion trends, promoting kosher recipes, and more. For some, it is a new way to leverage their skill set into a source of honest income. We have also seen the ability of influencers to effect meaningful change in the community: for example, a group of Jewish influencers recently had an enormous impact in bringing attention to the Agunah issue and helping coordinate social pressure that resulted in several men finally giving their wives the get they deserve.

With all the positives, however, I am concerned about potential unintended consequences that come from fully accepting and embracing what we see online at face value and from craving to find "influence" primarily in that way.

The Hebrew word for influence is hashpa'ah and those who influence others are mashpi'im. In Judaism, influence is not determined by social media status, it emanates and flows from being authentic, practicing what one preaches, serving as a role model and example of our values. While we have all been impacted by things we have read or seen online, our greatest influences have been offline: the personal interactions, relationships, explicit and implicit teachings and lessons that have been shared with us.

The biggest Torah influencers never saw their identity defined by how many followers they had. They never set out to earn that title and likely wouldn't be proud to be ascribed it. In 1975, the New York Times observed Rav Moshe Feinstein explaining to students how he got the position of Posek and "Giant of the Generation." Typical of his modesty and humility, he told them, "You don't wake up in the morning and decide you're an expert on answers. If people see that one answer is good and another answer is good, gradually you will be accepted."

Rav Soloveitchik ordained more rabbis than anyone in his time and most any other. And yet, he often referred to himself not as an influencer, but as "a poshete melamed," a simple teacher of Torah. A documentary was just released on the life of Rav Avraham Pam. When he was recruited to sit on the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, the Agudah's board of Judaism's "greatest influencers," he resisted, refused and ultimately only gave in because



of respect for Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky. When the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe passed away, leaving the position of "chief Chabad influencer" open, it took an entire year for the last Rebbe, Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, to be convinced to accept the position. The only influence he wanted was to inspire generations who would selflessly and positively influence all with whom they came in contact.

The greatest, longest-lasting influence on the laws that govern how we daven was not someone with a public following. The Talmud (Berachos 31a) tells us that our davening is modeled after Chana, who in the privacy of the Mishkan, with what she thought was nobody watching, poured out her heart to Hashem. She didn't have a social media handle, but she had a handle on life and her influence is felt every single day, three times a day across the world.

I wholeheartedly believe in harnessing the power and reach of technology to share Torah, build connections, and add value to one another's life. I admire and applaud those who have done so and have earned a large following who seek to grow and gain, consistent with a Torah way of life.

Many "influencers" have a carefully crafted and curated profile and presence online but, by design, we know little about how it conforms to their life and impact offline. I am not God-forbid trying to suggest that all influencers are categorically bad people or deliberately showing one side to the world and hiding another. Rather, we must remember that if we aspire to have a genuine influence and meaningful impact in this world, we should start with who we want to be, how we want to live, and what difference we want to make offline. Our effort to influence strangers online should never come at the expense of spending time with, being fully present for, and impacting loved ones offline. Falling off a cliff is not the only way to lose your life in the pursuit of fame and influence.

The word hashpa'ah, influence, comes from shefa, which means that which flows from the Divine. We can enjoy the entertainment and infomercials available on social media, but when aspiring to channel the shefa from Above, remember that the greatest influencers in our illustrious history made their difference without ever looking at or caring how viral they had gone. Don't sacrifice your life in pursuit of becoming an influencer, live your life to its fullest and you may just have an impact on others.

[1] Indeed, the Gemara (Berachos 10b) quotes the pasuk "אין צור כאולקינו" there is no rock like our God, and tells us to creatively read it as אין צייר כאולקינו, there is no artist like Hashem.



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7:00-8:00am

18 Upstairs Bais Medrash

Shacharis

6:15 & 8:00am

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Thursday

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Thursday

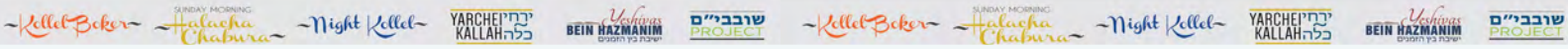
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A Spoon and a Handle

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

First, the Torah tells us (15:7), "If there be a pauper among you, one of your brethren, in one of your gateways in your land that God your Lord has given you, do not harden your heart nor close your hand tight against your impoverished brother." This is clearly telling us to give charity to the poor person. Then the Torah continues, "For you shall surely open your hand to him and provide him with the necessities he is missing." This seems to call for a higher level of charity not covered by the first commandment.

There was once a Jew in Vilna who took a great interest in local history. In the course of his research, he would often go out to the old cemetery and read the inscriptions on the tombstones. He was able to gather a surprising amount of information in this fashion.

One day, he came across two adjacent graves. According to the inscriptions, the two men were brothers, both talmidei chachamim, both extraordinary baalei tzedakah, philanthropists. Strangely, the two tombstones shared an inscription from Eishes Chayil, the last chapter of Mishlei (31:20). The inscription began on one tombstone with "she extended her palm (kappah) to the poor" and was completed on the other with "and she stretched out her hand (yadeha) to the pauper."

The man was puzzled. First of all, he had never seen an inscription shared by two tombstones. Second, inscriptions from Eishes

Chayil were used almost exclusively for women. There was obviously a story behind all this, and by all appearances, an interesting story. The man sought out one of the oldest men in the Vilna community and asked him about the inscription. The old man indeed had a story to tell.

These two brothers were Torah scholars of the highest order, and they were also wealthy and extremely generous in their charities. They were much respected and admired in the community.

Suddenly, their fortunes took a turn for the worse. Some of their businesses failed. Their investments stagnated. People began to wonder and whisper. Why would such a thing happen to such sterling people?

The Rabbinical Court of Vilna also heard the stories and took the matter under advisement. "How can this be," declared one of the judges, "that two such exemplary talmidei chachamim should be going bankrupt? It is a chillul Hashem! We have to do something about it!"

"But what can we do about it?" asked another judge. "Should we give them a loan?"

"No, of course not," said the first judge. "We have to get to the bottom of this and correct it."

"But how?" said the second judge.

"There is a simple way," offered a third judge. "We have to summon the brothers to court and interrogate them about everything they've done for the past few years. I have no doubt they will answer our questions truthfully."

The Rabbinical Court questioned the brothers for hours and discovered only one instance of wrongdoing. The Halachah demands (Kesubos 50a) that a person should not give away more than a fifth of his wealth to charity, but the brothers often exceeded this limit.

Their only crime was that they gave too much charity!

What was to be done about this? The Rabbinical Court decided that the brothers could not be trusted to stay within the prescribed limits. Therefore, they themselves took control of the finances and decreed that anyone approaching the brothers for charitable donations should come to the Rabbinical Court's appointed administrator of the brothers' accounts.

The poor appeared on the doorstep of the brothers, and they duly directed them to the court-appointed administrator of their accounts.

"We've been to him already," they protested, "and he is not nearly as generous as you've always been. We'll never feed our children on what the administrator gives us."

The brothers' hearts melted, but what could they do? They didn't have control of their money. So they began to give away the silver in their cabinets to the poor. Eventually, this trove was also depleted, and they were left with one silver spoon between them.

The next day, when a beggar approached each of the brothers, they broke the last spoon in half. One took the spoon part and gave it to a beggar, and the other took the handle and gave it to a beggar.

This wonderful act of charity was memorialized on their tombstones, relying on a word-play. The beginning of the verse, "She extended her palm (kappah) to the poor" – kappah also meaning "her spoon" – appeared on the first tombstone. The completion of the verse, "And she stretched out her hand (yadeha) to the pauper" – yadeha also meaning "her handle" – appeared on the other.

This is an example of "opening the hand" of the highest order.

SHIDDUCH: HOW TO RECEIVE BIRKAS HASHEM

(Continued) Rebbe's letter 13th of Tamuz, Part III

I would like to conclude with a further important point. If it is always necessary to have G-d's blessing, how much more so in the matter of a Shidduch which is to last a lifetime.

The way to receive

G-d's blessings is, as the Torah states clearly, "If you will walk in My statutes, and will observe My commandments and do them"—then follow all the good blessings, not only spiritual but also material.

And although one is expected to do everything in the natural order of things... it is well to bear in mind that the blessing is from

UFARATZTA



G-d, as it is written, "And He will bless you in all that you do. Therefore, every additional effort in matters of Torah and Mitzvos will bring you an additional measure of Divine blessing.



Rabbi Reisman

ADVICE TO FIND RACHMEI SHAMAYIM

This is an important and critical idea from the Parsha. 13:18 וְנָתַן- (וְנָתַן-). One of the most famous Pesukim in the Torah. HKB"H says that he will give Yidden Rachamim. The Middah of Rachmanus. The Gemara in Masseches Shabbos 151b (9 lines from the bottom) כל המרחם על הבריות מרחמין עליו מן השמים. HKB"H says if you are a Rachamim then I will have Rachmanus on you. וְכֵן שֵׁאוּנו מֵרַחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת אֵין. (מֵרַחֵם עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם).

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh makes a point here and it is pretty much his Shittah in many places in Chumash, that a person creates his own reality. If a person lives in a world of Achzoriyos, if the person is an Achzor so HKB"H does the same thing to him. HKB"H treats him with Achzoriyos. If a person is himself a Rachamon so then he creates a world that he is in, the world that he exists in. Whatever a person creates that is how HKB"H treats the person.

Mimeila, Zagt Rav Chaim Shuelevitz in the Sichos Mussar Taf Shin Lamed Gimmel Maimar Chaf Ches, an Eitzta to have your Davening answered, an Eitzta to be answered in Din, an Eitzta to find Rachamei Shamayim. He calls it Eitzta V'segula B'din. Since our whole Davening is asking Hashem for Rachmanus on us, he says therefore, we have to gird ourselves with the Middas Harchamim. We ask HKB"H for Rachamim K'racheim Av Al Banim, we also have to be people who have Rachmanus. We have to think about it when we Daven. When people come around collecting, to have the Hergish of Rachmanus. If someone feels that his Davening is so important that he should ignore another Yid who needs something, he is not practicing the Rachmanus. He creates that reality he is sitting right there in the Bais Medrash of the Midda that lacks Rachmanus.

The same thing if someone is in Shul and he is not Melameid Zechus on someone else who is not Davening properly, even a child who is not Davening properly and the parent is very tough and is not Melameid Zechus, so then he creates the reality also.

With this, Rav Moshe explains some-

thing that is almost impossible to explain in Navi (Shmuel II 19:1). Dovid's attitude towards Avshalom. His son Avshalom rebels against him and runs after him to kill him. Yekalkeil Pilagshei Aviv Befarhesya, in front of everybody. He does things that are improper with his father's wives. How can it be that when Avshalom is killed David says B'ni Avshalom, B'ni B'ni (וְיָרַגוּ הַמְּלָכִי, וַיַּעַל עַל-עֲלִיַּת הַשָּׁעַר--וַיִּבְרַךְ; וְכֵן אָמַר בְּלִכְתּוֹ, בְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם, מִי-יִתֵּן מוֹתִי אֵינִי תִהְיֶה, אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנֵי (בְּנֵי). He talks with so much Rachmanus towards his son that did such things to do. L'mayseh, he was a Rasha. How can he be so callous.

As a matter of fact, Yoav Ben Tzeruya gives him Mussar and says is that the way you deal? Yidden just went to battle with Avshalom and risked their lives to save you from Avshalom and now you mourn over Avshalom's death? It is a very hard thing to understand in the Middah of Dovid.

Zagt Rav Moshe, we understand it. The job of a person in this world is to create around him an aura, a sense, a Seviva of Keracheim Av Al B'no. A Seviva of immense Rachamim even when a Ben doesn't deserve it. It creates a world, a reality in which HKB"H is Meracheim on us. Rachameinu K'racheim Av Al Banim. Since this was Dovid's goal in life to create all the overwhelming Rachamim, so what better moment than having a child who is totally not deserving to show that Rachamei Ha'av exists and in that way to be M'oreir Rachamei Shamayim.

This is an Eitzta going into the month of Elul. It is hard to believe that it is here. To be M'oreir Rachamei Shamayim on Klal Yisrael, to be people who are more Meracheim on others. To have opportunities to be Racheim on others. May HKB"H give us a really extraordinary Elul. A month of Elul which is time to be closer to Hashem. Elul is not just to be able to score points for Rosh Hashana. It is to be able to become a human being who has a closeness to the Borei Olam, to care and feel about Ruchniyos. A Gutten Shabbos to one and all!

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

DR. SIMCHA

I took a keen (in -sight) look at my cell phone number & I was able to spot the light.

8+4+5 = 17 = TOV

5+5+8 = 18 = chai

4+0+2+7 = 13 = love , aleph heh Bais vase heh = 13

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The Magic of Shabbat – A Signal from Heaven

The Chatam Sofer tells us that if one is asked to perform a *chesed* (kindness) or a *mitzvah* it is a signal from heaven that one has the capacity and the talent to accomplish it.

A number of years ago I was very surprised to receive a call before the summer season to spend Shabbos in a Federation camp. The contact person was very enthusiastic about the concept and implored me to accept the invitation.

This was a very large camp of over 500 young people from diverse Jewish backgrounds. For many, their only affiliation with Judaism was through birth, and this would be a unique opportunity for me to reach out and kindle that innate spark of Yiddishkeit (Jewishness).

To say the least, I was skeptical, and hesitant to respond in the affirmative. There were many considerations to take into account. What type of Shabbos would this be? What was the ambiance in the camp? Who could give assurance about the *kashrut* of the food? What kind of *davening* (prayer services) could I anticipate?

After the third or fourth call encouraging me to participate in this innovative plan for a Federation camp, my resistance was worn down. The administration sincerely wanted to create an authentic Shabbos experience in the camp, and believed that my visit would have a great impact on the lives of all concerned. I agreed to be their Shabbos guest.

The camp driver picked me up early Friday morning. On the way he gave me some more information about the culture and the environment of the camp. He

elaborated on the camp's activities and the facilities that were available. Special preparations had been made to accommodate me, in deference to specific requests that I

had made.

We began Friday night with an unprecedented gathering for *davening*. For many this was their first exposure to praying with a *minyan*. Although attendance was not mandatory, the administration was shocked when every staff member and camper came to the *minyan*.

The setup in the area designated for the service was not adequate, and the services had to be moved outdoors. In fact, most of the participants had to sit on the grass as it was not a practical idea to begin *shlepping* benches from the dining room which was some distance away.

Those who were familiar with the prayers began to raise their voices in heartfelt unison, singing the familiar *niggunim* (melodies) and responding to the *baal tefillah's* (one who leads the prayer service) intonations. An aura of reverence and admiration pervaded the

air as each participant joined in his own way.

It would be difficult to sufficiently describe the special Shabbos spirit that was created that weekend. After the Friday night meal, I conducted a "*tisch*", lasting late into the night, exclusively for the staff members, to imbue them with Shabbos "dessert" and to draw them closer.

Before I sat down at the *tisch*, I went into the kitchen to thank the staff for preparing such a beautiful Shabbos meal and attention to detail.

When I walked in, some of the kitchen staff were "*schmoozing*," and I noticed that one young man looked familiar. I recalled that he had attended a Jewish day school in my neighborhood. Just then, he turned towards the commercial dishwasher at his side, and his hand reached out to flip on the switch. I instinctively shouted, "Wait! You can't do that! It's Shabbos!"

He looked up at me in disbelief, and said that he was on kitchen duty, and it was his job to make sure that all the dishes were clean. It was a yeoman task and he had to take care of it immediately, he insisted.

"But you can't do it," I said.

"Why not?" he angrily demanded.

"Because it's Shabbos," I gently explained.

He told me he was not religious so it made no difference to him.

"It makes no difference," I told him.

"This is my job," he belligerently asserted, "and I have every intention of doing it."

"You can't," I said again.

"Tell me again why not," he challenged.

"Because if you will wash the dishes it will affect the *kashrut* of the dishes," I said.

He looked at me dubiously and said, "So you're telling me that I'm not allowed to do my job."

"Not right now," I answered.

After a few tense moments, he removed his apron, threw it down on top of the table and left. The silence that overwhelmed the kitchen was deafening, as I stood there stunned.

I spent much time ruminating about the conversation that had taken place in the kitchen. Obviously, there was no way I could refrain from speaking up against the destined *chilul Shabbos* (desecration of the Sabbath). Notwithstanding the Rambam's instruction that if one sees his fellow man doing a transgression he should admonish him (*hochei'ach tochi'ach es amisecha*), I nevertheless regretted the ill-fated interaction.

Although I kept an eye out for the young man, I didn't see him again the entire Shabbos. On *Motzoei Shabbos*, I once again spent an inspirational evening with the staff at a *seudas Melave Malka* of Torah thoughts and inspiration. It was a most memorable occasion.

The hour was getting late, and as we were beginning to wind down, I requested some volunteers to help me out in the kitchen. Within one minute I had twenty volunteers. The staff immediately got to work. The dishwasher was turned on, the pots were scrubbed and put away, and the counters were wiped clean. When the last load was finished, every piece of cutlery and every dish was quickly put in its proper place. Within a short time, the kitchen was immaculate.

Just as we were shutting the lights, the young man in charge of the kitchen walked in. He looked around, noted the spotlessly clean kitchen, and wordlessly walked out.

Before I left the next morning, I once again tried to find the young man. I had the deepest desire to placate him so that there were no hard feelings between us. Unfortunately, no one seemed to know his whereabouts. For a long time I was troubled by the thought that my words may have negatively affected any possible reconnection with Yiddishkeit on his part. I really wanted to have the opportunity to explain what had happened a little more clearly and to ask for his forgiveness. I tried to find him, but he seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

Time passed and, every once in a while, I would recall the incident and wonder if there was any possibility, *chas v'shalom*, that I might have been instrumental in pushing him further away from Judaism.

Years later I was invited to address a large gathering in Passaic on behalf of Bonei Olam. When I entered the building, some people were milling around in the front. Suddenly a man approached me and said, "Rabbi Goldwasser, I am sure you don't recognize me. I was the individual at the Federation camp who was about to turn on the dishwasher on Friday night in the kitchen. I want you to know how strongly your gentle words affected me. No one had ever stopped me from pursuing my weekday activities on Shabbos until you came along. There was something in your tone, your words, your sincerity, your care and concern that made a tremendous impact. You stood up for what is right. Little by little, I began my journey back to Torah observance. It is thanks to you that I am here today with my *eishes chayil* (wife of valor). She is a true Bais Yaakov girl."

We read in *Koheles* that "for everything there is a time ... a time to be silent and a time to speak" (3:7). The Yismach Yisroel notes that this certainly does not refer to engaging in forbidden speech or idle chatter. One is commanded to always refrain from such speech. Rather, Shlomo HaMelech is telling us that even when it is necessary to verbalize or express certain thoughts — such as *mussar* (rebuke) that may be harsh — there is a time to be silent. Sometimes it is preferable that an individual opt not to speak his mind, for it may not be an opportune moment. By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser



CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

R. YEMIMA MIZRACHI

There are two words that are used repeatedly throughout these verses—the word *lo* with an alef, which means “no,” and the word *lo* with a vav, which means “to him,” referring to giving. The word “Elul” is comprised of two words—*lo* with an alef and *lo* with a vav. During the month of Elul, we must turn the *lo* with an alef into the *lo* with a vav. Instead of being greedy, we must begin acting with generosity. If our hearts were closed, we must now open them to others.

This is actually the reason that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the woman. As He said, “*Lo* (with an alef) *tov* *heyos* *ha’adam* *levado*. *E’eseh lo* (with a vav) *ezer* *kenegdo*” (Bereishis 2:18). If there is no one else with him, a man becomes selfish. Hashem therefore created the woman to teach the man how to give.

It is interesting to note that the only month in the Jewish calendar with a feminine *mazal* is the month of Elul, whose sign is a *betulah*. The *mazalos* of the other months are masculine, but the month of Elul is feminine. It is in a woman’s nature to nourish others, to feed them and to help them grow. The woman has a *recham*, a womb, a word that has the same root as the word for mercy. And that, in essence, is the core of the month of Chodesh Elul—*rachmanus*, mercy. A question arises: Isn’t mercy an essential component of a Jew’s nature? It is written that the Jewish people have three central traits: they are *bayshanim*, *rachmanim* and *gomlei chasadim* (they have shame, they are merciful and they perform acts of kindness).

Why, then, does Hakadosh Baruch Hu have to remind us again and again to show mercy to others? There is a commandment in the Torah that no other religion has: “*Aniyei beisecha kodmim*, the impoverished of your own household come first.” Rashi writes in this week’s *parshah* that if there are many poor people in your city, you are required to assist the poor members of your own family first. This is an incredible concept that we do not see anywhere else, certainly not in Western law. One may actually wonder about it. What kind of commandment is this? In a sense, it seems almost selfish to help one’s own family first!

The Torah is teaching us something beautiful. Let’s say, for example, that there is a kind woman who has mercy on all the distressed people around her—on her friend whose son

has left *yeshivah* and on another friend with *shalom bayis* problems. Her heart goes out to them, and she does everything she can to help them. However, this same woman, who so readily helps her distraught friend, may act with a certain amount of cruelty toward her own son who left *yeshivah*. And why doesn’t she show her own husband the same amount of tolerance, kindness and understanding? Therefore, the Torah commands us to have mercy on our own families. Hashem says to us: *Am Yisrael*, you are *gomlei chasadim* by nature. But you have another trait as well—*bayshanus*, shame. When your friend’s son or your student is suffering, you are able to help him because you don’t feel shame.

When your own son is suffering, however, or you are experiencing problems in your own marriage, or even health problems, you suddenly feel so ashamed. You may think to yourself, “How did this happen to me? How could this happen in my own family?” It is this shame that can cause you to act cruelly toward your children, because it is so difficult to admit that such a problem could occur in your own family.

The three characteristics of a Jew must therefore go hand in hand. You are a *bayshan*, you have shame; it is so difficult to admit that you failed, that there is a problem in your family. The humiliation can be hard to bear. Still, you must act with mercy and kindness.

The *mitzvah* of “*Aniyei beisecha kodmim*,” assisting the impoverished members of your household first, is perhaps one of the most difficult *mitzvos* to fulfill properly. It means that you yourself must take the advice you so readily dispense to others, even though it can be extremely shameful to admit that you need it. Later on the *pasuk* (15:10) states:

“*Nason titen lo velo yeira levavcha besitcha lo ki biglal hadavar hazeh yevarachecha Hashem Elokecha*.” If you have mercy on your own family members, Hashem will bless you.

The *Or Hachaim* Hakadosh explains the word *biglal*. The world, he says, is *galgal*, a wheel. The tides of life go around and around; what occurs in your friend’s family may happen in your own family one day. It is therefore incumbent upon us to feel the deep shame of others when we share advice and sympathy with them. Realize that when a friend confides in you and shares her struggles, she is full of shame. At times Hashem may help you experience your friend’s shame by testing your own family in a similar manner.

When you truly feel the shame of your friend, you will be able to help her, and even more than that—you will feel her humiliation and empathize with her in an authentic way. And that is the true Jewish combination. We are *bayshanim*—and also *rachmanim* and *gomlei chasadim*. When you have mercy on your own family members, it will transform you. You will become an empathic person. You will have the ability to help others in a real way because you won’t just be giving advice from an “expert’s” perspective. You will be empathizing on a personal level because you will feel their shame. And that is real *rachmanus*—a very beautiful thing.



Reading Glasses

As the three ladies picked up a menu, each put on a pair of glasses.

"I really only need mine for close reading," explained the first.

Remarked the second, "I only use mine when the light is bad."

The third confessed, "I rarely wear mine - except when I want to see."

Name The States

Mr. Jones, the elementary school principal, made it a practice to visit the classes from time to time. One day he walked into Miss Sandy Smith's 4th grade class, where the children were studying American History. Mr. Jones asked the class how many states they could name.

They came up with about 40 names. Miss Sandy Smith came up with four more.

Not impressed, Mr. Jones told them that in his day students knew the names of all the states.

From the back of the room Little Beryl yelled, "Yeah, but in those days there were only 13!"

I can't hear you

Three old ladies met on the street on a very stormy day. The wind was so strong and loud that they had difficulty in hearing each other.

"It's windy," said one.

"No, it's Thursday," said the next.

"So am I," said the third. "Let's go and have a drink!"

Never liked bakers

NED: I don't get along with bakers.

ED: Really.

NED: Let's just say, there's no loaf lost between us.

Here, I bought you a calendar. Your days are numbered now.

If I got 50 cents for every failed math exam, I'd have \$ 6.30 now.

What are a shark's two most favorite words?

-Man overboard

I heard that it is easier to find a shidduch when you have things in common.

So Shadchanim, I like to breath.

It is so cold outside I saw a politician with his hands in his own pockets.

"Money talks. But all mine ever says is goodbye."

"Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad."

"I'm skeptical of anyone who tells me they do yoga every day. That's a bit of a stretch."

"A computer once beat me at chess. But it was no match for me at kickboxing."

"I have a lot of growing up to do. I realized that the other day inside my fort."

"The easiest time to add insult to injury is when you're signing somebody's cast."

A Modern Day Yonah...

As the storm raged, the captain realized his ship was sinking fast. He called out,

"Anyone here know how to pray?" One man stepped forward. "Aye, Captain, I

know how to pray." "Good," said the captain, "you pray while the rest of us put on

our life jackets - we're one short."

Rabbi Yaakov Asher

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the nation enters Eretz Yisrael they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar.

Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in Eretz Yisrael meat may be shechted anywhere.

Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a "prophet" tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot.

Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. Bnei Yisrael are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted Hashem will bless the person in all ways.

A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year.



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20 FORSHAY - UPSTAIRS

OF ELUL, L'DAVID & GOLEMS

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

There is near universal Ashkenazic custom during the month of Elul to recite the Chapter of Tehillim (27) "L'Dovid Hashem Ori" during davening, both every morning and evening, and all the way up to Shmini Atzeres, as preparation for the Yomim Noraim. This custom is based on the Midrash Shochar Tov that elucidates that various phrases of this chapter contain allusions to the holidays of the repentance period - Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos, as well as to the month of Elul itself.

The Malbim, in his commentary on Tehillim, offers an alternate explanation. In this chapter, Dovid HaMelech, the author of Tehillim, asked to cleave to Hashem and that all obstacles that block coming close to Him should be removed. The Malbim explains that when we strive to do so, Hashem will attach Himself to us with a higher level of personalized supervision. It is thus quite apropos to recite "L'Dovid" during the month of Elul, whose name hints to the acronym "Ani L'dodi V'dodi Li - I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me" (Shir HaShirim Ch. 6, verse 3). Elul is a month which symbolizes our relationship to Hashem, and one in which proper repentance is more readily accepted.

WHERE'S THE SOURCE?

But, the obvious question is where and when did this minhag start? It is not mentioned in the Gemara, nor in the Rishonim, and not even referenced in the Shulchan Aruch or its main commentaries. It seems a bit odd that such a common custom would not stem from a primary source! Much research has been done and many works have been written to try to find the earliest source for this meaningful minhag.

Although many erroneously concluded that the original source of reciting "L'Dovid" throughout the entire month of Elul was the controversial 'Chemdas Yamim', first printed in 1731, history has since proven that an earlier source

has been found. Many now attribute this minhag to the noted Kabbalist and famed author of "Amtachas Binyomin", Rav Binyomin Beinisch Cohen, in his sefer "Shem Tov Kattan", first printed in 1706. There he writes that one should be scrupulous with reciting "L'Dovid" daily from Rosh Chodesh Elul until after Simchas Torah, averring that this has the potential to avert and even nullify Heavenly decrees.

WHO'S WHO?

Yet, there is possibly an earlier source. In the sefer "Nezer Hakodesh - Minhagei Beis Ropschitz" a story is told about the Baal Shem Tov, where he mentioned a Tzaddik, known as Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem, who had saved the Jews of a certain town from eviction by successfully promising the childless non-Jewish mayor a son within a year. The Baal Shem Tov mentioned that this Tzaddik, who lived in the late 1600s, was the one who established the custom of reciting "L'Dovid" during Elul. However, it is unclear whom exactly he was referring to.

Although much detailed information has been obscured with the passage of time, still history has shown that there were two Tzaddikim known by this name. The better known of the two was Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem of Chelm, a talmid of the great Maharshal, Rav Shlomo Luria, and an ancestor of the luminaries commonly known as the Chacham Tzvi (Rav Tzvi Ashkenazi) and his son, the Ya'avetz (Rav Yaakov Emden).

A GOLEM AS A TZENTER?

Here is where it gets interesting. Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem of Chelm was best known for being of such stature that he created a Golem. In fact, both of his aforementioned illustrious descendants have written responsa on the topic of the Golem that their grandfather created. The Chid"ra, in his encyclopedia of Gedolim throughout Jewish history, 'Shem Gedolim' also attested to its existence.

But before our readers decry the supernatural turn this article has taken, they should realize that Golems actually do have a place in the halachic realm as well. The issue that these Gedolim were debating was whether a Golem can count for a minyan! Although the Chacham Tzvi (Shu"t Chacham Tzvi 93) at first remained undecided, his

son, Rav Yaakov Emden (Shu"t Sheilas Ya'avetz vol. 2, 82) ruled unequivocally that a Golem cannot count for a minyan! Apparently not just a theoretical topic, it is even cited and debated by such contemporary authorities as the Mishna Berura (55, 4) and the Chazon Ish (Yoreh Deah 116, 1)!

The Mishna Berura does not actually rule, but rather addresses the issue and concludes that it is a safe; which is actually the main thrust of the Chacham Tzvi's teshuvah – that he personally was undecided as to the proper halacha. Although the majority consensus is that a Golem would not count for a minyan, there were several other authorities who defended the Chacham Tzvi's logic allowing a Golem to count for a minyan.

The Chazon Ish, conversely, concluded, akin to the Ya'avetz's position, that a Golem would undeniably not be able to count for a minyan, as it not only would be excluded from the rights and privileges of a Jew, but even from those of a human being. One of Rav Yaakov Emden's main proofs to this is that we find that in order to be considered having a neshama, a creation needs to have the potential for speech [see, for example the Ramban's commentary to Parshas Bereishis (Ch. 2, verse 7; based on Targum Onkelos ad loc.)], an ability a Golem sorely lacks.

What is lesser known (and actually seemingly unknown to many later authorities, including the Mishna Berura) is that, posthumously, another son of the Chacham Tzvi, Rav Meshulem Ashkenazi, in his responsa, appended and printed a later teshuva from his father (Shu"t Divrei HaRav Meshulem vol. 1, 10 s.v. shayach); in it the Chacham Tzvi actually retracted his original position and ruled strictly as well. Either way, and regardless of what one might want to assume about his fellow mispallelim, the vast majority of poskim rule conclusively that a Golem cannot be counted for a minyan.

THE SECOND RAV ELIYAHU

Back to figuring out who originated the recital of "L'Dovid" in Elul. The other Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem was Rav Eliyahu Luentz, known as a master Kabbalist in the 17th century. He authored a seminal volume on the Zohar titled "Aderes Eliyahu", and was a disciple of my ancestor and namesake, the renowned

Reb Avraham Greenblatt and his Aishes Chayil

They have enhanced the Aron Kodesh in Tent Aleph while allowing our shul to use their magnificent Sefer Torah housed within.

May they enjoy many years of Nachas from their entire family and merit Arichas Yomim to continue the incredible chessed that they are known for.

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ישר כח גדול



Maharal M'Prague, (who, as an interesting side point, and incredible Torah works aside, is regrettably nowadays best 'known' for having also created a Golem).

In conclusion, although we are left uncertain as to whom the originator of this powerful minhag was, we can rest assured that it has a reliable source. We can thus appreciate the significance of saying this chapter of Tehillim throughout Elul, as it underscores the major goals of the season of repentance.

Postscript: There are a few communities, including many of Germanic origin, and the Chassidic communities of Sanz, Bobov, and Kamarna, however, who do not recite "L'Dovid" during Elul[16]. The Kamarna Rebbe of Yerushalayim recently told this author that although in his shul "L'Dovid" is recited, as most of his congregants are not Kamarna Chassidim and nearly everyone's custom is to recite it, nevertheless, he personally does not. It is also known that the Vilna Gaon and the Maharsha did not approve of this addition to davening as it possibly constitutes 'tircha d'tzibura'. The general Sefardi minhag as well is not necessarily to recite "L'Dovid" specifically during Elul, but many nonetheless recite it all year long as an addition after Shacharis, with many Moroccans reciting it instead daily before Ma'ariv. There are other variations of reciting "L'Dovid" during 'Yemei HaRachamin V'HaSelichos' as well, with some communities doing so only after Shacharis (including Telz and KAJ), while most communities additionally recite it either at the end of Mincha (generally Nusach Sefard) or Maariv (generally Nusach Ashkenaz).

Much of this article is based on Rabbi Eliezer Brodt's fascinating sefer Likutei Eliezer - Ch. 1.

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RABBI NACHUM SCHEINER

ROSH KOLLEL

Repeating Krias Sh'ma for Those who Daven Early

We have seen that there is a machlokes if one can start the meal within a half hour before nightfall, since the time for reciting sh'ma is "on the horizon."

Interestingly, those who always daven Maariv at the early plag minyan – every day of the week – may be better off in this regard. Although we have seen that the Magen Avraham was stringent on Friday night, the Magen Avraham himself – in hilchos Maariv – rules that one who davens Maariv early can eat supper after nightfall as long as he will recite sh'ma before retiring for the night.

The Acharonim (Machatzis Hashekel, Shulchan Aruch Harav, and Yad Efraim) explain his reasoning as follows: Someone who davens early on a steady basis is "programmed" to repeat the full krias sh'ma before retiring for the night and we are not concerned that he will forget. On the other hand, someone who generally davens after nightfall and is only davening early on Friday night is not necessarily used to repeating krias sh'ma before going to sleep, and he may forget to repeat krias sh'ma. We are, therefore, more concerned about such a person starting the meal, and he cannot start his meal without repeating krias sh'ma.

Furthermore, there may not even be a machlokes. The Shaar Hatzion points out that even the Taz, who allows starting the meal without repeating krias sh'ma, may be referring only to someone who davens early on a steady basis. On the other hand, a person who usually davens after nightfall and only davens early on Friday night, it is possible that all will agree that one cannot start his meal without repeating krias sh'ma.

Davening During Bein Hashmashos

This question may actually be applicable for many throughout the year, even if they are not davening at the early minyan. Many shuls daven Mincha right before shkia, continuing with Kabbalas Shabbos, and then start Maariv when it is still during bein hash'mashos – which is a halachic question

mark if it is night or day. In this case, must one repeat krias sh'ma before beginning the meal, even when krias sh'ma was recited during twilight?

At first glance, we would say that since it is questionable if krias sh'ma was recited at the proper time, and one is definitely required to repeat krias sh'ma, it should be necessary to fulfill this requirement before eating. On the other hand, one can argue that since it is possible that he has already fulfilled his obligation, there may room to allow starting the meal and repeating krias sh'ma afterwards.

The halacha in this case of one who recited krias sh'ma during bein hash'mashos is a question in the poskim. It is therefore recommended not to start the meal within a half hour of nightfall, without first repeating krias sh'ma. This is especially true if by the time one is ready to start eating it is already nightfall and the time to recite krias sh'ma has arrived.

Halachically Speaking

The Mishna Berura writes that the consensus of the poskim is that one should try to start the meal prior to the half hour time period before nightfall, as per the concern of the Magen Avraham. However, if by the time one is ready to start the meal it is already within the half hour of nightfall, one can rely on the Beis Yosef and the Taz and start the meal. Of course, he must make sure to repeat sh'ma later. But, he adds, this is only true within the half hour before, but once nightfall has arrived – whenever halachical nightfall is – and the actual time has arrived that one is required to recite krias sh'ma, one should not start the meal without first repeating krias sh'ma.

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

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If you would like a copy, or for any comments and questions, please send a request to: RabbiScheiner@18forshay.com, or call 845 372 6618.

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OTHER REASONS TO REQUIRE A MINYAN AT A SHEVA BROCHOS

We previously discussed that some explain that sheva brochos needs a minyan is because it is a davar shebkdusha. However, not all agree that sheva brochos is considered a davar shebkdusha. The Aruch Hashulchan writes that sheva brochos is not considered a davar shebkdusha, but a minyan is needed for a different reason. He writes that the reason to require a minyan is to show respect. Since in these brochos we mention the honor of Hashem, and the honor of the people gathered, it would not be proper to do so with less than a minyan.

The Tiferes Yisroel on the aforementioned Mishna also explains the reason for a minyan at a sheva brochos in a similar way. He writes that the list in the Mishna which requires a minyan is split into two. The requirement of a minyan for the first part of the Mishna, such as borchu and kedusha, is because they are considered a davar shebkdusha. On the other hand, the second part of the Mishna, which includes sheva brochos is not because they are a davar shebkdusha, but because it is not proper to do so without a minyan.

There are other reasons for the requirement of a minyan at a sheva brochos.

Rav Yosef Engel and Rav Moshe Feinstein explain that the reason to have a minyan is because that enhances the joy of the choson and kallah ("the more the merrier").

And the Rambam, in Moreh Nevuchim, writes that a minyan is needed to publicize the marriage.

To be continued...

YESHIVAS BEIN HAZMANIM

Ohr Chaim's 21st season of Yeshivas Bein Hazmanim is in full swing. This has been going on for the entire month of Av, with Matan Schara B'tzida. The learning takes place from 10:00am-1:00pm, with breakfast and lunch served. YBH will continue until Friday, Aug 6.

Recently, one of the people running the YBH noticed some new faces – a father learning with two boys. In the true friendly Ohr Chaim style, he welcomed them, and the father said they were visiting Monsey all the way from Germany (!), and heard about the learning program and came to join.

Another new boy commented that he came because he heard about the learning from his friends, as the "in place" to go during Bein Hazmanim.

Another Israeli Baal teshuva with a pony tail was learning and commented that he truly appreciated the friendly atmosphere, and overtaken by the pleasant ambiance. He exclaimed that "this is amazing and he will be back." Another large group came together from a yeshiva, Toras Dovid

New for this season: Rabbi Yosef Fried has been giving a daily 25 minute chabura at Yeshivas Bein Hazmanim, on a variety of exciting and intriguing topics. Some of the topics covered are:

- Listening to music
- Techeiles
- The proper brocha on pizza and mezonos bread
- Sherry casks
- And much more

This has really brought a great excitement to the learning, as many boys came after the chabura for close to an hour, well after the official learning time is over – all to discuss the topics further. This has been continuing even into the time designated for lunch and beyond, which is a clear indication of how the learning is being enjoyed by all.

A seasoned talmid chochom came to the chaburos, and was involved, together with boys decades younger. The sincerity and humility of so many stripes joining together – connecting to



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Now is the perfect opportunity to come and get clarity in these important subjects. Feel free to contact me by email: RabbiScheiner@18forshay.com, or reach out to me: 845 372 6618, and I will try to set you up with the best chavrusa.

Wishing you a Wonderful Shabbos,

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