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OUR BELOVED RABBI SOKAVA REBBE

א"ר חמא בר' חנינא אם ראה אדם שהתפלל ולא נענה יחזור ויתפלל שנאמר
(תהלים כז, יד) **קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה'**
ברכות לב

Rabbi Ḥama, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, said: A person who prayed and saw that one was not answered, should pray again, as it is stated: "Hope in the Lord, strengthen yourself, let your heart take courage, and hope in the Lord" (Psalms 27:14).



RABBI YY JACOBSON
WILL BE IN TOWN FOR SHABBOS

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The Master Key

The Kav HaYashar (Ch. 25) tells the following story:

There was once a miser who never wanted to give charity to anyone. However, even though he never donated even a penny, he held a job as a mohel and performed circumcisions free of charge.

One day, a man showed up at the door of this miser. "Would you be able to perform a bris milah on my son?" he inquired. "No problem," the miser replied. And so, he gathered together all his belongings, and headed off on a three day journey through mountains and forests to the man's home.

Finally, the mohel and father arrived at a home in the middle of the forest. Looking around, the mohel was taken aback to see mansion after mansion. The homes in this unknown town were magnificent. As the mohel stepped foot off the wagon, the father called out that he'd put his horses in the barn and be right over. "Please go ahead into the house and check on the baby." "No problem," replied the mohel, as he made his way to the front door and walked inside.

Making his way through the house, he arrived at what seemed to be the baby's nursery. Giving a soft knock, he heard a voice from behind the door invite him in. It was the baby's mother. "Thank you so much for coming to circumcise my son," she said. The mohel graciously acknowledged the woman. "However," she continued, "there is something important you should know." The mohel presumed he was about to be informed about something relating to the baby. He was wrong.

"You should know that my husband is not a human. He is a destructive spirit." The mohel, believing the woman, was thrown into a panic. "And not only is my husband a spirit, but everyone in this city is too." The mohel was beside himself. What could he do now at this point? With this, the woman shared a piece of advice.

"If you don't take anything from a destructive spirit, they will have no control over you. Don't accept anything at all and all will be well. And please don't tell my husband that I told this to you."

The father soon thereafter entered the home, and informed the mohel that later that evening, he would be holding a pre-bris celebration with his close friends, and he'd love for the mohel should join. "To tell you the truth, it was a very long trip and I'm really tired. I want to go to sleep to make sure I'm awake and alert tomorrow when I perform the bris." That was fine with the father, who bid the mohel a good evening and went on his way.

The bris the next morning went well, until the

mohel was invited to the meal that was prepared in honor of the baby. "I really wish I could attend," replied the mohel, "but last night, I went to sleep and had a terrible, frightful dream. I declared that today, in order to ameliorate the dream, I'd fast. I therefore won't be able to participate in the meal, but thank you nonetheless." The father decided to postpone the festive meal until the evening, in a clever attempt to force the mohel into joining, but then again, the mohel bowed out, explaining that he was still very exhausted from the long trip.

But later that evening, as the father had imbibed himself with some wine and was in good spirits, he summoned the mohel. "Come with me to another room," requested the father. The mohel immediately grew anxious. "There are three rooms I'd like to show you," the father told the mohel. Nervously following behind the father, the mohel opened his eyes to the first room, which was full of gold. It seemed as if the room contained all the gold that had ever been lost or stolen. "Please take anything you want from here. After what you've done for me, coming all this way for my son, it would be my honor." The mohel had no intention of taking a single item from the father. But he'd need to use another excuse to hide behind. "I'm as wealthy as you," he said to the father. "Thank you, but I have no need for gold." So on went the father to the second room.

Opening the door, the mohel saw a room filled to the brim with diamonds and jewels. "Take anything you want!" invited the father. "I don't want anything!" the mohel firmly reiterated. "I don't need any of this! I have enough money." So on went the father to the third room.

Opening the door, as soon as the mohel's eyes met the items, he turned white. The whole room was full of keys. Thousands of keys. Turning to the mohel and seeing him so shaken up, the father asked if everything was alright. "That keychain over there is mine. All my keys are hanging on it. How did you get that?"

"Every person who comes into this world," explained the father, "is granted free will to choose the course of their life." The miser turned his head towards the father, taking in every word. By now, it was clear to the father that the mohel knew who he was. "The first time someone asked you for tzedakah and you said no, you still had the key to undo your miserliness and create a new habit. But you continued to say no and no and no, and not give anyone any charity, and now you've developed an addiction to stinginess. It's not possible for you to be generous with your money at all. I have your key.

"What you see there hanging on that key-chain are your keys. And that's because you



gave them up. I now have them." The miser looked at the father, alarmed and unsure what to do or say. "However," continued the father, "because you performed a bris milah for my son, I will give you back your keys."

But the miser was smart. He remembered the words of the wife, "Don't accept anything at all and all will be well," and with that, he declined the father's offer. "You must be very close to God," said the father. "No one knows that secret but us." But the father had one other secret. "Let me tell you that since these are your own keys, if I give them back to you, it's not as if you are taking something from me. They were your own, and accepting them from me will not cause you any harm. You can only be harmed if you take something new that is not yours."

The miser returned to his hometown, and from there, completely turned his life around. He built a yeshiva, shul, initiated communal charity organizations and generously gave tzedakah for the rest of his life.

The story ends here. Now you're probably wondering what relevance this has to your own life.

We all are born with keys. Keys that give us access to open doors in our life and accomplish. But there can come a point where we lose that key. We develop a habit of stinginess and can no longer access feelings of generosity; we create a chaotic lifestyle and can no longer harness self-discipline and control our impulses; our temper runs unfettered and we cannot regulate it. Our lives begin to spin out of control.

This story tells us the way back in.

If you've lost control about some part of your life, perhaps to a point of addiction, how can you gain your keys back? You don't plan on coming across a destructive spirit any time soon, so how can you regain your footing and get your life back in order?

The answer is that Hashem holds the master key. You may have lost your own key, and thereby be unable to access your previous lifestyle of health and equanimity, but you can always, always reach out to Hashem. And Hashem holds the master key, which can open any door. Pray to Him and turn to Him, and with that, He'll hand you the master key to any door you need to open in your life.

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PARASHOT SHOFTIM HAFTARAH

The Haftorah begins with the words of Hashem saying "Anochi Anochi, Who comforts you". Chazal quotes (see Yalkut Shimoni 474) Rebbe Abba in the name of Rav Shimon Ben Gamliel explaining the double expression of "Anochi Anochi". They give a mashol of a king who became enraged at his queen. He was so annoyed at her that he rejected her and banished her from the palace. After some period of time he reconsidered his actions and desired to reunite with her. He informed her of his intentions to which she consented on the condition that he doubled the amount of her "kesubah" (marriage financial agreement). Chazal conclude that this same situation exists between Hashem and the Jewish people. Hashem established His initial relationship with them when they accepted His Torah. At that time Hashem revealed Himself to His nation and proclaimed, "I am your Hashem." However, this relationship suffered much abuse and was eventually terminated. The Jewish people's behavior was so inexcusable that Hashem reluctantly rejected them and exiled them from Zion. Now, after so many years Hashem is displaying sincere interest in their return. Recognizing their failure during their first relationship, the Jewish nation is doubtful if this second one will be any better. Even after all the magnificent revelations at Sinai they managed to stray and forfeit their relationship. What would ensure that things would be any different this time? Hashem responds that He would increase His revelations which would guarantee an everlasting

relationship with His people. The double expression of "Anochi Anochi" stands for the double kesubah that Hashem will offer.

This Chazal is very difficult to understand. Firstly, it does not seem accurate; Hashem did not banish us from the palace, he had the palace burnt to the ground. Next in the moshol we see some time passes and the king reconsidered his actions, yet with Hashem, it is really a very long time, and it is not over yet. We are still waiting in galus! But the biggest inconsistency is that the moshol illustrates the queen as a victim whereas it was us, the Jewish nation, that violated the agreement. We were not helpless victims but the cause for the destruction. How can we deserve not only to return to the palace, but receive a double Ketuba as well? A Ketuba is a privilege for a wife when she acts in accordance to her obligations. If a wife violates the conditions of marriage she loses her Ketuba. Yet here we see we can ask for double when Hashem is kind enough to take us back? What is the meaning of this Chazal?

I believe this is an incredible lesson in the process of creating peace. It is the responsibility of the greater person or Being to accept the blame in order to push forward and rebuild. Even if one is in the right and taking responsibility will cost double, a real relationship with tranquility is worth it. Let the past be the past; forgive, forget and rebuild. We expend much energy on proving how we were wronged that we are left too exhausted to repair the relationship. Although Hashem was always there for us and we sinned against Him again and again, He is willing to look past

our disloyalties. Hashem is willing to take us back and pay double for the sake of a tranquil and loving relationship.

May we all pursue lives of peace at all costs and enjoy the tranquility it brings. Amen.

Aaron Lankry

ב"ט

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Fifteen min, Half hour, One hour, One and Half hours,
Two hours
Rabeinu Taam

18 Main Bais Medrash

דברים	9:35	9:50	10:20	10:50	11:20
ואתחנן	9:25	9:40	10:10	10:40	11:10
עקב	9:15	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
ראה	9:05	9:20	9:50	10:20	10:50
שופטים	8:55	9:10	9:40	10:10	10:40
כי תצא	8:40	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30
כי תבא	8:30	8:45	9:15	9:45	10:15

NEW MINYANIM ADDED:

EARLY MINYAN MINCHA FRIDAY
1:29, 2:00, 2:30, 3:00, 3:30, 4:00

SHABBOS ZMANIM

EARLIEST KABBALAS SHABBOS	6:06PM
CANDLE LIGHTING	7:09PM
MINCHA 18 TENT	7:00PM
MINCHA BAIS CHABAD	7:19PM
SHKIYA	7:27PM
SHACHRIS VASIKIN- DAF YOMI SHIUR	5:45AM
SHACHRIS ASHKENAZ 18 MAIN	8:00AM
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
PIRKEI AVOS SHIUR 6	6:45PM
MINCHA SHALOSH SEUDOS	7:05PM
SHKIYA	7:25PM
MARRIV	8:05PM 18 TENT, 8:10PM

WEEKDAY ZMANIM

SHACHRIS
20 MINUTES BEFORE NEITZ 30 ON YOM TOV
S 6:06 M 6:07 T 6:07 W 6:08 T 6:09 F 6:10
MINCHA & MARIV
12 MINUTES BEFORE PLAG
S 5:50 M 5:49 T 5:47 W 5:46 T 5:45
MINCHA & MARIV
12 MINUTES BEFORE SHKIA
S 7:11 M 7:10 T 7:08 W 7:06 T 7:05
SEPTEMBER 04- SEPTEMBER 09
NEITZ IS 6:26 - 6:30
PELAG IS 6:02 - 5:57
SHKIA IS 7:23 - 7:17
MAGEN AVRAHAM
9:04 AM - 9:06
GRA- BAAL HATANYA
9:40 AM - 9:42

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קיץ
תשפ"ב

SHACHARIS MINYANIM

כותרות	20 Forshay ↑	Birchos 30 min/needs 20 min before Neitz
כותרות	18 Main Sefardi Minyan with Birchas Kohanim	
6:15AM	Tent א	
6:30	Tent ג	
6:45	Tent ד	
7:00	Tent א	
7:15	Tent ב	
7:30	Tent ג	
7:45	Tent ד	
8:00	Tent א	
8:15	Tent ב	
8:30	Tent ג	
8:45	Tent ד	
9:00	Tent א	
9:15	Tent ב	
9:30	Tent ג	
9:45	Tent ד	
10:00	Tent א	
10:15	Tent ב	
10:30	Tent ג	
10:45	Tent ד	
11:00	Tent א	
11:15	Tent ב	
11:30	Tent ג	
11:45	Tent ד	
12:00PM	Tent א	

Tent א - 18 Tent
Tent ב - 20 Tent
Tent ג - 22 Tent
Tent ד - New Tent

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MINCHA 5:45 PLAG 6:06



Rabbi Coren

THE ELUL CHALLENGE: PARSHAS SHOFTIM AND THE SWISS ALPS

The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva offers us the litmus test as to whether or not we have a successful Elul. He suggests that a person should love Hashem to the same degree as a man who can't stop thinking about a woman. When we love someone deeply, our mind is constantly lost in thoughts of the loved one and this is what we should be experiencing towards Hashem. We've expounded many times in the past on the definition of Hashem and it involves recognizing Him and drawing so close to being like Hashem



that we are able to emotionally delight in His presence. The Rambam in Sefer Hamitzvos shares with us his formula for attaining this expression of love. He suggests that if we want to be in awe and adoration of Hashem, we should analyze His creations. We should appreciate His magnificent world on such a profound level that we are transfixed by its splendor and yearn to connect with Him even more.

It is related that when Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch was in his later years, he yearned to go and see the legendary Swiss Alps. When asked why this was so important to him, he responded that "after reaching 120 I will come upstairs and Hashem is going to ask, 'Shimshi did you see my Alps?' I hope to be able to say I did." Last week my sons and I delighted in Hashem's world, capturing the exquisiteness of the Swiss Alps and sharing its splendor with many listeners through our daily videos.

Parshas Shoftim begins with a general requirement to appoint judges and policemen. The Nesivos Shalom quotes the Ari

Z"L who acknowledges that this can be interpreted as a personal journey for each individual. Each person should be stringent with his individual spiritual portals which include his eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth - seven gates that must be spiritually upgraded and protected.

I believe that the ultimate gate is the inner heart which is the seed of emotion and is the control system of our personal middos/traits.

One of the most important of these qualities is the willingness to forgive. I mentioned in our daily

videos that to be in an argument and hold a grudge during Elul is a spiritual contradiction. Hashem in Masseches Rosh Hashana tells us that if we are willing to forgive and let things slide then Hashem will do the same for us. When I mentioned this, several listeners shared with me through WhatsApp that this motivated them to "work things out" with their friends or relatives. It can be a very uncomfortable endeavor but if we approach it with a somewhat selfish motive, it will be much easier to get the job done.

As mentioned above, our goal is to reach the Love of Hashem. Hashem tells us that, 'Part of loving Me and having a relationship with Me is to see My image in the other person.' As the verse says, ואהבת לרעך ואהבת לרעך, כמוך אני השם. The last words are the key to how we can love each other: אני השם - I am Hashem.

Don't let the opportunity of Elul slip by without tapping into its goal. Shabbat shalom



MIDDOS TREE

BY RABBI COREN

During the month of Elul we need to reflect on our year, try to improve ourselves and work on developing our middos tovos / good character traits. One of the difficult challenges people have is giving the benefit of doubt to others. It is not always easy to try to find an excuse for another person's flaws and mistakes. It is really much easier to blame the other person and become annoyed or upset at him for what he has done to you. However, if a person works hard on this middah and tries hard to give the benefit of the doubt often enough, he trains himself to find the positive light in each situation and becomes a happier person for it.

A few weeks ago, I learned the most amazing lesson of giving the benefit of the doubt. A young chosson had scheduled his first chosson class with me. I was very tired that afternoon and since I had 30 minutes until he was scheduled to come, I thought I could take a quick nap. Unfortunately, I ended up sleeping for an hour and totally missed the class. I felt terrible and called the chosson to apologize. His reaction was stunning. He said that when his kallah asked him how the class went, he told her it was the best first chosson class ever. "Rebbe didn't show up because he wanted to give me the best Musar schmooze! A chosson needs to learn that though he may have certain expectations, it's possible that things won't go his way and things will actually happen to the contrary. It might be a no show and still we need to be positive." This chosson obviously has trained himself over the years to give others the benefit of the doubt, and he was able to take a situation that he understandably could have been very upset but instead turned the perspective totally around and taught me a very important lesson!

Good Shabbos

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Rabbi YY Jacobson

Have We Become Too Tribal?

True Religion Must Embrace Diversity

First anecdote:

A man goes out with a woman on their first date. For the first three hours he talks only about himself, his history, accomplishments and interests. Finally, he turns to her and says: "Enough of me speaking about myself; let me hear what you have to say about me."

Second anecdote:

The rabbi was hospitalized recovering from a heart attack when the president of the congregation visited him. He said: "Rabbi, I have good news and bad news." "First the good news" the rabbi said. "On behalf of the board of directors I am here to wish you a speedy recovery."

"That's wonderful" said the rabbi, "and what's the bad news?" "The vote was 7 to 6."

Despising Single Stones

This week's Torah portion, Shoftim, communicates the following commandment:

"You shall not erect for yourself a pillar. This is something which the Lord your G-d despises."

The biblical commentator, Rashi, explains this as a prohibition against erecting an altar of a single stone, even if the intent was to use this altar as a place where offerings were presented to G-d.

Though the Torah elsewhere clearly allows the existence of altars made of stone in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and in the Tabernacle in the desert, Rashi explains that this is only true of altars made of many stones, not of a single stone. Yet one wonders about the logic of distinguishing between an altar built of many stones that is deemed desirable by G-d vs. an altar built of a single stone which the Torah defines as an object of G-d's hate.

Does it really make a difference whether you present an offering on an altar of one stone or of many stones? Rashi explains that the difference is not intrinsic but historical. In the times of the Patriarchs, Rashi writes, they would build single stone pillars for the sake of presenting offerings to G-d, and "it was beloved by G-d." However, once the Canaanites adopted this practice and began building single-stone altars for idolatrous offerings, G-d rejected them.

Yet the question remains, why did the Canaanite idol worshippers embrace the single-stone altar? Logically, the converse should have occurred: An altar of many diverse stones seems consistent with the polytheistic approach—worshipping many

diverse gods—while an altar made of one piece is more reflective of the monotheistic Jewish faith that insists all worship must be directed to a single, universal G-d.

Why did history dictate that the pagan polytheists embraced the single-stone model?

Shunning Diversity

What this prohibition against the single-stone pillar may be teaching us is that though there is one G-d, the altars constructed by man to serve Him need not—Indeed should not—be of one stone, of one color, or one dimension, shape and quality.

Perhaps the greatest challenges facing humanity today is the ingrained belief by many a Muslim that those of us who do not embrace Islam as a faith and a lifestyle are infidels who need to be converted or killed. Many Muslim leaders are laying the groundwork for a grand war between Islam and the West (and of course Israel), in order to restore the world to its appropriate equilibrium, a world dominated by Islam.

On another level, and in a far more subtle and fine way, one of the challenges facing many Jewish communities today (a challenge that has pervaded the history of all religion from the beginning of time), is a sense of tribalism that found a nest among many devout Jews. This is the feeling that my way of serving G-d is the only true way, and if you have a different path, you are on the "wrong team."

Many of us feel that in the construction of the "altars," the structures in which we serve G-d, there is room for only a single stone, a single path, a particular flavor and style, to the exclusion of anything else that does not fit our religious imagination or upbringing. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely the path of paganism and polytheism that invite a singular altar, made of one stone, while the monotheistic path of a singular G-d welcomes the diverse altar, made of many distinct stones. Why?

Embracing Diversity

Paganism is founded on the notion that a human being creates god in his own individual image. When G-d is a product of my image, that G-d is inevitably defined by the properties of that image. Since no two human images are identical, it follows that your god, the god of your image, cannot serve as my god as well. My god must be worshiped in my way, based on my perception of who he is and what he stands for. Therefore, my altar must be constructed of one stone: my own.

The faith of Israel – the progenitor of Christianity and Islam – on the other hand, declares the oneness of G-d and the plurality of man. The transcendent G-d of Judaism is the G-d, who not only transcends the natural universe, but also the

spiritual universe articulated in every single heart, and who imparts fragments of His truth into every human spirit. The challenge set forth by Judaism is to see G-d's image in one who is not in my image. Judaism teaches that every person knows and feels something no one else does.

None of us knows all the truth and each of us knows some of it. Like a symphony composed of many notes, each of us constitutes an individual note in the divine symphony, and together we complete the music. If G-d wanted you and me to experience Him and serve Him in the same way, one of us would be superfluous.

Diversity within religion is not only a factor we must reluctantly accept; it is a cause for genuine celebration. It grants us the opportunity to encounter G-d, since it is only in the face of the other that we can discover the part of G-d that we lack in our own face. The result of a relationship with a transcendent G-d is a growing appreciation of people's differences, not merely as tolerable, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human and religious experience.

"Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common, celebrate it every day," a wise man once said. There is a profound truth to this: Diversity is the trace of an undefined G-d on the human species.

Diverse Models of Worship

This may be the reason the Torah teaches us that the altar to worship G-d must be constructed from many different stones. This represents the Jewish vision that the structures constructed by man to serve G-d ought to be diverse and individualistic.

This does not mean that G-d condones every act done in His name. The G-d of the Bible created absolute universal standards of morality and ethics that bind us all. At times, people allow evil choices to totally eclipse the trace of G-d within them. To the Jewish people, G-d presented an absolute system of Torah and mitzvos.

Yet within this framework, every human possesses his or her unique path to Truth. One of the great masters put it this way:

"The concrete laws of Torah are the same for us all, but the spiritual experience of Torah, the feelings of love and awe, contain infinite pathways, one for each person, according to his individual identity."

We may compare it to the 88 keys of the piano that lend themselves to infinite combinations. Authentic religion must welcome, not fear, diversity and individualistic expression. When you truly cultivate a relationship with G-d, you know that in the presence of other-ness, you can encounter a fragment of truth that you could never access within your own framework.



Rabbi Reisman

PARSHAS SHOFTIM A PATSCH FROM ABOVE

”ותפחד תמיד כל היום מפני חמת
המציק כאשר כונן להשחית, ואיה
חמת המציק

Haftorah Parshas Shoftim – Yeshaya 51:13
”ותפחד תמיד כל היום מפני חמת המציק” –
”כאשר כונן להשחית, ואיה חמת המציק” –
”And you will be in terror the whole day
because of the oppressor’s fury as if he were
preparing to destroy; where then shall the
oppressor’s fury be?” Shabbos 156a – There
is no Mazel for Klal Yisroel. What is the
meaning of this Gemara? Certainly, Hakodosh
Boruch Hu gave over certain power to the
stars and Mazalos, and that power extends
over Klal Yisroel as well.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave certain power to
the Mazalos, and they use it for bad, such
as the Mazalos, שבתאי and מאדים. People
born under their Mazalos may have bad
things happen to them. However, Hakodosh
Boruch Hu deals with Klal Yisroel with much
Chesed, that if there was a certain Mazal or
star which had power over a Yid, and was
going to cause something bad to happen to
that Yid at a certain time – before that time,
Hakodosh Boruch Hu makes something sim-
ilar happen to the person, but with a much
lower magnitude. This fulfilled that which the
Mazal or star wanted to do, and therefore the
Yid only had something minor occur to him,
instead of something which could have been
significantly worse, and perhaps even devas-
tating. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is in control of
all the Mazalos and the stars, but being that
He gave them a certain power, He generally
likes to keep it that way. This tactic of giving
much smaller Yisurim to Klal Yisroel prior to
something much worse happening, fulfills
that which the Mazalos and stars wanted to
do, but on a much lower level. If one sees
Yisurim come upon him, he should not despise
it, for it was given to him for his good, to
save him from something much more severe,
which could have been catastrophic.

There was a very wealthy Yid, who was a
high-ranking official, and was very nice to all
the poor of the town. He always had his door
open to them, and all who stretched out their
hand to him would not leave empty handed.
He would also give out lots of money to the
poor in the Bais Hakneses. One day, a poor
person, walking with a heavy solid walking
stick, waited on line with the other poor peo-
ple to see the wealthy man to receive money.
When the poor person reached the wealthy
man, he raised his stick and hit the wealthy
man on his forehead numerous times, until
blood was flowing from his forehead like a
fountain. The servants of the wealthy man
saw what occurred, and attacked the poor
man, and beat him until he was in the throes
of death. The wealthy man ordered his men
to stop, for if they would hit him again, he
would die. He had the poor man taken to his
home and imprisoned there. He would wait
until the poor man regained some strength,
and then would have him beaten again. As
the wealthy man journeyed home, he began
to think, why would the poor man, or anyone
for that matter, hit him on the head with such

malice? He was a nice kind man and took
care of the poor people. Why would a poor
person hit him? Additionally, even if the poor
man had some reason to have something
against him, didn’t he know with certainty
that the guards of the wealthy man would
get him and cause great harm upon him? So,
even if he wanted to hurt the wealthy man, it
would be a very silly thing to do, for he would
end up being hurt worse than the wealthy
man.

The wealthy man had these questions asked
to the poor man, while he stood on the side
and listened to the answers. The poor man
responded that he certainly knew that by
hitting the wealthy man there was a good
chance that he would be killed, but he was
willing to do it due to his compassion for
the wealthy man, and all the poor people he
helps. The poor man said, ”Last night I had
a dream that the wealthy man was walking
on the roof of the Bais Hakneses, and he fell
off the roof and his blood was flowing like
a river on the ground – and he did not sur-
vive. I hit him and made his blood flow on
the ground so that it should suffice for what
was supposed to happen to him, and this
way he would live, and be able to continue to
help the poor.” The wealthy man heard this,
and knew that he was telling the truth, for
he too had an identical dream. The wealthy
man kissed the poor man, removed him from
prison, fed him, gave him fancy clothing,
and gave him two hundred gold coins, for he
recognized that the poor man saved his life
by hitting him and causing him to bleed. This
is what happens with Klal Yisroel. Hakodosh
Boruch Hu gives them the relatively minor
Yisurim, to save them from the more severe
Yisurim. One needs to be joyous when
Yisurim come upon him, for perhaps by his
pricking his finger, who knows if it saved him
from much greater pain. This is what the
Posuk is telling us here. Will one be scared
of the Mazalos? If one will ask, but how can
I avoid it, one must know that Hakodosh
Boruch Hu is in control of all, and although
He gave them power, there is a way around
it – and that is when Hakodosh Boruch Hu
brings minor Yisurim which causes the major
Yisurim to disappear.

There are times that one can
receive a ”patsch” from Hakodosh Boruch Hu
and it may hurt. A person may say that he
does not think that he deserved that which he
received, and perhaps may even Chas V’sho-
lom become angry with Hakodosh Boruch Hu.
This is a way for the Yetzer Hara to attempt
to get one to sin. One must rise to the chal-
lenge and know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu
is completely righteous, and everything that
happens to him is just.

But there is a much deeper and profound
thought that one should have when he Chas
V’sholom receives a ”Patsch.” In truth, the
pain that the person experienced should have
been much more severe, however due to the
great Rachmanus from Hakodosh Boruch Hu,
it was mitigated. We should not see Yisurim
with a intolerable eye, rather we should be
grateful for it may have saved us from much
worse. May we be Zoche to appreciate the
Yisurim from Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and be
Zoche to have a חתימה טובה.

A CRITICAL NETZIV ON THE BEGINNING OF THE PARSHA.

A critical Yesod is found in a beautiful Netziv in the beginning of Par-
shas Shoftim. The end of Parshas Re’eh 16:17 (כְּבִרְכַתְּ יְדוּ, כְּמִתְנַת יְדוּ, אִישׁ
אִישׁ, כְּמִתְנַת יְדוּ, כְּבִרְכַתְּ יְדוּ, אִישׁ אִישׁ) ends with Bracha. The beginning of Parshas
Shoftim is 16:18 (שִׁפְטִים וְשִׁטְרִים, תִּתֶּן-לָךְ) (שִׁפְטִים וְשִׁטְרִים, תִּתֶּן-לָךְ). Says the Hameik Davar, the
Netziv says beautifully (דְּבִרְכָה מְצוּיָה בְּזִמְנָן שֶׁמְכַבְּדִין אֶת הַדֵּיּוּנִים) (דְּבִרְכָה מְצוּיָה בְּזִמְנָן שֶׁמְכַבְּדִין אֶת הַדֵּיּוּנִים). In a so-
ciety in which people show respect to Dayanim, show respect to the
rule of the land, show respect to integrity of financial dealings, such a
society has Bracha. A society in which it is the Wild West that people
do what they want. They cheat others, the convince themselves that
they are allowed to take this money without a clear Psak that it is
Muttar. They go and think that they could apply for government ben-
efits to which they are not entitled and they have no source for being
allowed to take it. They go and they take money of others or cheat
others and they are Melamed Heter on themselves. Such a society is
not Bracha Metzuya, doesn’t have a Bracha found there. So therefore,
(אִישׁ, כְּמִתְנַת יְדוּ, כְּבִרְכַתְּ יְדוּ, אִישׁ אִישׁ) is right next to the Bracha of (אִישׁ, כְּמִתְנַת יְדוּ, כְּבִרְכַתְּ יְדוּ, אִישׁ אִישׁ). And he refers back to Parshas Mishpatim (לֹא, אִישׁ
אִישׁ, לֹא) (לֹא, אִישׁ אִישׁ) to show respect for a Nasi, for a Beis Din
is right next to the Posuk of (מְלֵאֲתֶךָ וְדִמְעֶךָ, לֹא תֵאָחֵר). (מְלֵאֲתֶךָ וְדִמְעֶךָ, לֹא תֵאָחֵר) means
your good crop, your crop that is full.

A third source. The Netziv says (וְיָהִי רָעַב, בְּאַרְץ) (וְיָהִי רָעַב, בְּאַרְץ).
Rus begins in the days that the judges judged, there was a hunger.
Says Rashi, Dor Sheshoftim Es Shoftov. It was a generation that
didn’t show respect for the Dayanim. They second guessed their
Dayanim. Such a place, (וְיָהִי רָעַב, בְּאַרְץ) there was a hunger in the
land. The point again being that in order to have a society that has
Birchas Hashem there must be a society that shows respect for the
rule of Bais Din.

With this it explains why in Navi there was a great king Yoshiahu
Hamelech – Vayikonein Yirmiyahu Al Yoshiahu when we talk about
him in Kinno. He was a great king. He became king at the age of 8.
The first thing he did before getting Klal Yisrael to get rid of Avoda
Zorah the first thing he did was to straighten out the Batei Dinim,
straighten out the places of judgement that there should be Bracha
by Klal Yisrael. There has to be integrity and honesty in financial deal-
ings.

We should be Zoche to have that integrity and honesty and IY”H it
will bring Bracha and Hatzlacha to all of us. May it be a Gebentched
Elul, a Gebentched Elul where we have an Aliyah IY”H. A Gutten Shab-
bos 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*

STORIES FOR SHABBOS

THE WOMAN'S PRAYERS FOR BURIAL IN THE OLD KRAKOW CEMETERY



The Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l heard the following story from his father, Reb Tzvi of Rudnik zt'l: There are 2 cemeteries in Krakow (Poland). In the older cemetery are buried many ancient scholars, such as the Bach, the Megaleh Amukos, & the Rema. A local Krakow woman wanted to be buried in the older cemetery, but that was almost impossible. For hundreds of years, no one had been buried in the old cemetery. Even the rabbanim of Krakow were buried in the new cemetery. But this woman didn't give up. Three times a day, by shacharis, minchah, & maariv, she came to the beis knesses & davened that Hashem have compassion on her, & she be buried in the old cemetery. She was so obsessed with this desire that all children in Krakow knew to greet her, "Good morning, aunt. May you be buried in the old cemetery." This is what she trained them to say. At the weddings of her children, grandchildren, & great-grandchildren, she would ask the chasan & kallah to bless her that she be buried in the old cemetery. It was really insane because why was this so important to her? Furthermore, it was almost impossible to be buried in the old cemetery. But she was stubborn with her wish. On the day she left the world, there was a heavy snowstorm & snow piled high on the ground. The chevrah kadisha couldn't carry her to the new cemetery, so she was buried in the old cemetery. Reb Tzvi of Rudnik

commented about this story, "This taught me that even when one davens for something insane, Hashem will listen to his tefillos & answer them. So great is the power of tefillah!" Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

DANGER TO HEALTH

By Rabbi Nosson Muller

Due to health reasons, Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin was not allowed to have any salt in his food. Even a little salt could have a catastrophic effect on his wellbeing. One day during shiur, he asked a student to bring him

a glass of hot tea in order to ease his sore throat. Erroneously, the student mistook the salt for the sugar and put two heaping spoons of salt in the tea instead of sugar! Rav Yehoshua Leib drank the tea as if nothing was wrong despite the horrible taste & danger to his health. A few minutes later, his wife, who had noticed the salt container out on the counter and realized what happened, came frantically running to the shiur room and motioned to her husband to come out of the shiur. "Did you drink the tea? There was salt in it!" she exclaimed. "How could I not?" was Rav Yehoshua Leib's answer. "What do you mean?" his wife said. "Your health is in danger!" The rav answered, "It might be detrimental to my health, but my not drinking that cup of tea would have been an embarrassment to that boy who made the tea. That would be like killing him and that I could not do, regardless of my health!" Excerpted from ArtScroll book "Pirkei Avos: Generation to Generation" by Rabbi Nosson Muller.

THE FATHER OF ALL CONTEMPORARY SEPHARDIC KABBALISTS

Rabbi Shalom Sharabi -- The Rashash - is considered the father of all contemporary Sephardic kabbalists. Rabbi Sar-Shalom Mizrachi Dida ben Yitzchak Sharabi, known as the "Rashash" [initials for "Rabbi Shalom Sharabi"], was born in 5480 (1720) in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. After being miraculously saved from a difficult situation, he fulfilled his vow to go to the Holy Land of Israel in order to live in Jerusalem. After a journey that led him through India, Baghdad and Damascus, he arrived in Jerusalem. ...he was determined to keep his abilities hidden in the Holy Land. Although he had already established himself in his previous countries of residence as a significant Torah scholar and Kabbalist, he was determined to keep his abilities hidden in the Holy Land. He approached Rabbi Gedalia Chayon, the head of Beit El Yeshiva, the major center for Kabbalah study, and applied for the job of shammash (caretaker). All he asked for in return was a roof over his head and some food. The headmaster took pity on the young orphan and gave him the job. In this way he was able to stay anonymous yet quench his thirst for Torah. His official job was to wake up the students for the Midnight Rectification Prayer, keep the shelves of holy books in order, bring water and serve hot tea. This enabled him to stand innocently in the corner during lessons as if he was not part of the privileged group of students [which included the famed Chidah], yet he was listening intently. No one dreamed that this simple shammash was actually a great scholar. Once,

an extremely difficult question arose which no one could solve. Young Shalom noticed Rabbi Gedalya's disappointment and that evening, after all the students left, he wrote down what he knew to be the answer and inserted the note into one of the Rosh Yeshiva's books. The next day Rabbi Gedalya was delighted, "A note from G-d," he thought. But after this act was repeated a few times, Rabbi Gedalya realized it must be one of his students. He proclaimed, "I decree that the writer of these notes should reveal himself and that we will allot him the respect he deserves." For the sake of modesty and his desire to stay anonymous, Rabbi Shalom still did not confess, so the issue remained a mystery. Chana, the daughter of the Rosh Yeshiva, realized how much her father wanted to find out who was the individual leaving the notes. She decided to spy at nights through the window. Finally, one night she saw the Rashash sticking a paper inside a book on the Rosh Yeshiva's desk. She immediately notified her father. The Rashash was forced to admit to him his authorship. He pleaded to be allowed to remain hidden, but Rabbi Gedalia took his daughter's discovery as a sign from Heaven that it was time for the Rashash to be revealed. After Rav Gedalia's death in 5507 (1747), the Rashash, then only 27 years old, was appointed Rosh Yeshiva, according to Rabbi Gedalya's dying wish. He was already married to Chana, with a son whom they named Yitzchak. Among his students were the Chidah, and the Maharit Algazi who became the Rosh Yeshiva after the passing of the Rashash. He wrote a commentary on the Etz Chaim of which Rav Yeddiya Abulafia said that whoever learns Etz Chaim without the commentary of the Rashash is like a blind man feeling his way in the dark. Among his most famous writings is the Siddur HaRashash, known for its special Kabbalistic intentions for prayer, which has become the standard for all [Sephardic] Kabbalists today. The Rashash passed on to his heavenly reward on the 10th day of the Jewish month of Shevat, in the year 5537 (1777) at the age of 57, in Jerusalem. He is buried on the Mount of Olives, where his grave is a pilgrimage site until this day. The great Kabbalist, Rabbi Chaim Pelaji, testified that Rabbi Shalom Sharabi's soul was that of the holy Ari of Tzefat. Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri used to say, "One can have memorized all of the written teachings of the Ari, and have studied them and the commentaries upon them in great depth, but "...if you have not learned the works of the Rashash, you have not yet entered into the study of Kabbalah." He is considered the father of all contemporary Sephardic kabbalists. [By Rabbi Yerachmiel TillesChabad.org] R' Yedidye Hirtenfeld's parshasheet whY I Matter for the Young Israel of Midwood in Brooklyn



JUDGES AND TZEDAKA

In Devarim 17:18 the passuk tells us that there should be Judges in every city. In the end of Parshas Reeh the passuk says that one should give tzedakah like the Bracha that Hashem shared with you. The Baal HaTurim says that from the fact the Torah has these pesukim next to each other, we learn that Judges are required to give tzedakah to a poor person. The question arises, the passuk in Shmos 23:3 says that a poor person should not be shown preference in a Din Torah as Rashi explains that one should not try to get the poor person to be innocent, thereby winning the case, but rather the case is judged on it's merits. If so, how can we say the Judges are required to show preference for a poor person?

The first answer could be is that there is a special mitzvah on Bais Din to enforce that the communities should give tzedakah!

The second tirutz is based on Gemara in Bava Metziya 24b and it is also paskened in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 259:5 that if one finds a lost object in a place where most of the people living there are non-Jews, one can keep the aveida for himself. As there is yiush even if a Jew gives simanim nevertheless, he knows the majority of people there are not Jewish so he is meyaesh. But the Shulchan Aruch says that it is good and proper to do lifnim mishuras HaDin to return it to the Jew who gives a siman. The Rema adds that this applies only where the one who lost the object is poor. But in the case where the one who lost it is rich and the finder is poor, he would not be required to do lifnim mishuras HaDin. This would explain the Baal HaTurim that the rules would vary if the finder or the loser is poor.

A third answer could be, if one finds two lost objects and they are both the same value. But he can only return one of them. One belongs to a poor person, and one belongs to a rich person. It would be obvious he should return the one belonging to the poor person! This would only apply if both lost objects were of the same value. But in the case where the rich man's lost object is worth more than the poor man's object, he should return the rich man's object because there is a separate mitzva for each pruta of the aveida!

The fourth and final answer is that one who is ameil baTorah his learning serves as a gemilas chessed for all of klal Yisroel. Bais Din by meting out the laws of the Torah are in effect helping all the poor Yidden who are not as learned as them. Thereby being gomlei chessed with all Yidden.

May we all be zocheh to keep the Mitzvos of Tzedaka and Chessed!



שופטים ושוטרים וגו'..
למען תהיה

Complete Faith in Hashem

Remember to guard yourself against sinning .. but (L'maan Tichye) do so in the context of a healthy life.

It's true that some parts of our religion tend to mimic or come dangerously close to obsessive compulsive behavior if taken too far.

For example- cleaning our homes for Pesach..how clean is clean? Even davening, before we get into pronouncing the words of Krias Shma correctly (should we repeat them until we get it right?), what is the goal of prayer, to say every word regardless of how fast or how accurate- or is it better to say less with more kavanah. And if we don't daven fully (following path number two) does guilt creep in?

We should always strive to do our best and not shirk our obligations, but in the end how hard should we be on ourselves, realizing we are only human?

Going over the top religiously is especially poignant in this season of teshuvah. Since the Parsha of Shoftim usually ushers in the month of Elul, it is telling that the very words quoted above hint at a healthy and functional approach to guarding ourselves from sinning.

Yes, guard yourselves well- but after all the guarding.. If we feel a sense of inadequacy, if we feel that we have failed, if we feel broken, we have followed the wrong guidebook. We should not approach the days of reckoning with an attitude of "I will never be excused, I have committed to change so many times.. but once again, I have not. G-d will not be happy with me."

This is not the right path. We should rather strengthen ourselves knowing that the One above is watching over our actions with love and understanding, applauding our every effort to grow. A question that comes to

mind this time of year, illustrates this point.

Our behavior on Rosh Hashanah is somewhat puzzling. Why do we sit down to a celebratory holiday meal replete with zemiros, delicious fish and meat dishes and fine wine.. the night before we are to be judged for the next year. We are facing a possible harsh decree (who will live and who will die) and we celebrate this way?

Which sane person facing a trial the next morning acts in this manner the night before?

Perhaps the following parable can explain our behavior and shed a new light on our individual spiritual journey.

A young child sits on a large dock waving his hands, waiting for the huge ocean liner to pass by.

"Don't worry" he told the people standing alongside him. "The captain himself will notice my movements and wave to me as he passes by."

Poor child they thought..this will never happen.

You will never be noticed.

"I am 100% sure that he will notice me."

And indeed, as the large boat passed, the captain blew his horn and stepped out onto his private deck, waving back at this child.

"How were you so sure?" they asked him.

The captain is my father...he said.

And so it is with us.. We say Avinu Malkeinu. We pray to our King.. but He is also our caring Father.

The Omnipotent and all powerful Creator is concerned with our struggles as well as our victories. In our path to repentance we must always feel this love as our guiding light. Yes we will have a trial, but the judge is our loving Father, and a fathers love overrides all.. Our celebration reflects this confidence that we will surely be inscribed for a good sweet year!

Good Shabbos!

Translated by Rabbi Reich

PARSHAS SHOFTIM

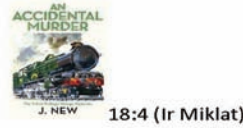
Can you figure out what each picture has to do with the parsha?



Rabbi Dani Staum

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Shoftim – Key to Parsha Pix



The Unique Beauty Of Eretz Yisroel

Rav Shlomo Wolbe, ZT”L, a very soft-spoken man. In his quiet manner & measured words, whose messages impacted thousands through profound talks & prolific writings. Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky visited him one day & was discussing a bit about his Swedish roots & European topography. They came to the subject of the Swiss Alps, and Rabbi Kamenetzky mentioned that he heard in the name of the Brisker Rav, ZT”L, the revered mentor of Rav Wolbe’s generation, that when the Moshiach will come, he will transport the Swiss Alps & transplant them in Israel.

Upon hearing Rabbi Kamenetzky say those words, Rav Wolbe’s tranquil demeanor changed immediately. He stood up to his full height with fire in his eyes. “The Brisker Rav could never have said that!” he boomed. Rav Wolbe continued with a soliloquy whose passion was palpable: “There are no mountains as beautiful as those in Tzfas, there are no lakes as beautiful as the Kineres, & there is no city that sparkles like Jerusalem! Moshiach need not bring anything here! It is all here!” Comment: Moshe Rabbeinu begins Parsha Va’eschanan by telling the Jewish people how he pleaded with the Hashem to let him see the Land of Israel. We find that Moshe was pleading to enter as an expression of the Jew’s eternal longing, appreciation, and passion for Eretz Yisrael. Moshe’s statement, (Devarim 3:24) “Hashem, you have just started to show me the power and the glory” was though Moshe understood that all the miracles, the splitting of the sea, the miraculous manna, the water from the rock, were only a prelude to Eretz Yisrael & would not compare to the greatness attainable from the majestic experience of entering the land. *To-rah Sweets.*





Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

DO YOU HAVE A SPIRITUAL COMPASS?

Once, when I met with the Skverer Rebbe, he asked me a lot of questions about the community, truly curious about what it is like here. At the end of ten minutes, he said he had one more question. He turned to me and he said, Rav Goldberg, are there mevakshim in Boca Raton? Does your community have seekers, people who are looking for Hashem? I was so proud to give him a resounding yes, but I found it fascinating that this was his pressing question and it struck me, it should be our question of ourselves as well.

Last week's Parsha informs us about a special place of complete holiness:

כִּי אִם-אֶל-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יְבָרַךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל-שִׁבְטֵיכֶם לָשׂוּם : אֶת-שְׁמִי שָׁמָּה לְשָׂם לְשִׁכְנִי וְתִדְרָשׁוּ וּבָאתָ שָׁמָּה :

"But look only to the site that the Hashem your G-d will choose amidst all your tribes to set His name there, you shall inquire after His dwelling and come there."

The only problem is we are not told explicitly where it is. What is this mysterious place that Hashem wants us to find? Why doesn't Hashem provide the coordinates for it? Why not give an address for Moshe to plug into his GPS?

The Chizkuni explains that it took time for the Beis HaMikdash to finally be built in Yerushalayim and its precursor, the Mishkan, moved around quite a bit, so a specific place to find Hashem's presence was not clearly provided. In fact, Rashi comments that the שמה, come to "there" is not talking about the Beis HaMikdash but the Mishkan, which would be housed in Shiloh for 369 years.

The Ramban, however, has an entirely different way of understanding what שמה, "there," the pasuk refers to. Firstly, suggests, the Ramban, the adverb "there" is indeed referring to the Beis HaMikdash. If that is the case, why not give the specific location it is meant to be? The Ramban says this is by design. Hashem wants us to seek it, to calibrate our compass towards holiness and to find it. Rather than give a location, Hashem wants us to intuit the location of the holiest place on earth and then confirm it with a Navi, a prophet.

Sure enough, that is what happens. Chazal tell us that Dovid HaMelech first studied the Torah text and the geography of the land and with that information posited that the future location of the Beis HaMikdash would be on Har HaMoriah. Later, Gad HaNavi confirmed that Dovid was correct.

The Ramban offers a second understanding that the word שמה, "there" is not referring to a geographical location but to לשינו, to feeling Hashem's presence and influence. The Torah is saying תדרשו, if you want to feel Hashem in your life, seek Him, look for Him, reveal Him, connect with Him.

Rabbi Soloveitchik suggests that the Ramban's two understandings are really one. Whether it is the geographic location of the Beis HaMikdash or the spiritual experiences and moments we long for, the coordinates are not provided to us, we aren't given a map to arrive at the destination, we have to calibrate our own spiritual compass and find it. We have to ask questions, have our spiritual antennas extended, and be receptive to picking up the signal. תדרשו, we have to look for Hashem.

The Kotzker Rebbe disagreed with Uncle Moishe. Once, when asked, where can Hashem be found, the Kotzker Rebbe did not answer Hashem is here, there and everywhere. He answered, Hashem is only where you let Him in. It is up to us to have that relationship to make that connection, to see behind the curtain that Hashem is there all along.

In Havdalah, we distinguish between several things: בין אור לחושך בין ישראל לעמים בין יום השביעי ליום המעשה, between light and dark, Jews and gentiles, the seventh day and the first six. The Rav points out that light and darkness are clear for all to perceive. Even animals respond to the difference in these stimuli.

But the Havdalah between kodesh and chol, what is holy and what is profane, is much different. It cannot be perceived or measured by the naked eye. A person needs to have a special intuition, to see with his or her heart, as this separation can only be sensed, not seen.

The Midrash (Tanchuma Vayera) says when Avraham went with his entourage to the Akeida, he saw Har HaMoriah from a distance and turned to Yitzchak and asked, what do you see? Yitzchak answered, I see a beautiful and praiseworthy mountain and a cloud envelops it. He asked Eliezer and Yishmael, what do you see? They said, we see a barren desert. He said to them, שבו לכם פה עם החמור, stay here with the donkey, for the donkey does not see and you do not see, ואני והנר נהלך עד כה, Yitzchak and I will go until there.

The "there," was Har HaMoriah, the future place of the Beis HaMikdash. Avraham intuited holiness, Yitzchak was drawn to holiness, the others saw mundane, they saw a barren desert.

To be a Jew, is לשינו תדרשו ובאת שמה, to be able to make Havdalah, to distinguish between holy and profane, spiritual and mundane and be drawn to holiness, seek spirituality. A donkey sees everything as superficial, only at its surface level. A donkey wants to satisfy its appetite and to be happy. If we fail to understand certain images, ideas, media, language, behaviors are profane, they are the opposite of holiness, we are no better than a donkey. Our mission is to see beneath the surface, to distinguish between what is holy and profane, what brings out the best in us and what satisfies a craving that is only skin deep. We don't strive for happiness, we strive for and are to be drawn to holiness. To be the progeny of Avraham is to intuit holiness, to calibrate our compass of kedusha and שמה, ובאת שמה, go to it.

To go to "there" is to see Hashem in everything. Search for Hashem's presence in the here and now. Search and you will find Him. In every bite of

an apple, every sunrise, every meaningful experience and every contact with kindness, you can feel Hashem. In the words of the Kotzker, let Him in, make room, invite Him into a relationship.

We are now in Chodesh Elul, which we all know is an acronym for Ani L'dodi V'dodi Li – I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me. When we are in a period of courtship, of falling in love, we are tidre-shu, we are drawn to the other. We keep checking our phone to see if they have called or texted, we count down until the next time we will be together, and we struggle to hang up the phone, no matter what time of night.

Dr. John Gottman, the marriage expert who spoke here a few years ago, explains what we were doing when we stayed up all night talking or finding it hard to get off the phone. He says we were drawing love maps, learning about one another, being inquisitive, in the process of discovery and that creates electricity, excitement, and brings romance and love.

But then we get married, life, children, responsibilities get in the way and we stop drawing love maps. We have no time or emotional energy to discover, to learn, to ask about the other's inner world, hopes and dreams. This is why many marriages struggle. Gottman says continuing to draw love maps is critical to a healthy marriage. In fact, you can get a deck of cards (actual cards or digital ones from any of several apps) with great questions couples can use to ask one another and continue to learn about one another deep into marriage.

לשינו תדרשו ובאת שמה, Hashem doesn't provide the coordinates or the address, He wants us to draw the map in our relationship, to use our spiritual intuition to find Him, and to let Him in. How? The same way as in marriage. By learning, inquiring, being curious about Hashem's "inner world."

In this month we renew our relationship with Hashem, we bring ourselves back to a time when we struggled to hang up with Him and just wanted to talk all night, finding out more, experiencing more. Relationships, human and with Hashem, need nurturing. They are fed with a diet of time, communication and attention. Our relationship with Hashem needs all three.

Are we mevakshim, are we dorshim, are we searching Hashem by learning about Him, talking to Him, listening to Him. In these next 40 days, set aside time to learn daily, challenge yourself to listen and think, talk to Hashem in davening in a way you haven't in a long time. Draw your new love maps, reignite the energy and don't let your relationship be stale.

UFARATZTA

TEHILLIM: FIRST DAY OF ELUL UNTIL YOM KIPPUR

When the Tzemach Tzedek was nine years old the Alter Rebbe said to Him: I received from my Rebbe (the Maggid) who received from his Rebbe (the Baal Shem Tov) in the name of his well-

known Rebbe that from the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur we should say three kapitlach Tehillim every day. Then, on Yom Kippur, thirty-six kapitlach: Nine before Kol Nidrei, nine before sleeping, nine after Musaf, and nine after Ne'ila. Whoever did not start on the second day of Rosh Chodesh should start with the Tehillim of the day on which he realizes

his omission and complete the missing Tehillim later. ===== Hayom Yom Elul 1 The Tehillim 'Ohel Yosef Yitzchok' has a chart for the Elul Tehillim.



THE JURY LEARNING ABOUT DEMOCRACY

I taught my kids about democracy tonight by having them vote on which dinner the family should order.

I then picked the dinner because I'm the one with the money.

LUNCH WITH THE LAWYERS

Two attorneys went into a diner and ordered two drinks. Then they produced sandwiches from their briefcases and started to eat. The owner became quite concerned and marched over and told them, "You can't eat your own sandwiches in here!"

The attorneys looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders and then exchanged sandwiches.

PAY FOR THE FOOD

There was a poor old Irish cobbler whose shop was next door to a very upscale French restaurant.

Every day at lunch time, Mike, the Irish gent, would go out the back of his shop and eat his soda bread and maybe a kipper while smelling the wonderful odors coming from the restaurant's kitchen.

One morning, the Irishman was surprised to receive an invoice in the mail from the adjoining restaurant for "enjoyment of food"

Mystified; he marched right over to the restaurant to point out that he had not bought a thing from them.

The manager said, "You're enjoying our food, so you should pay us for it."

The Irishman refused to pay and the restaurant took him to court.

At the hearing, the judge asked the restaurant to present their side of the case. The manager said, "Every day, this man comes and sits outside our kitchen and smells our food while eating his. It is clear that we are providing added value to his poor food and we deserve to be compensated for it."

The judge turned to Mike and said, "What do you have to say to that?" The old Irishman didn't say a thing but smiled and stuck his hand in his pocket and rattled the few coins he had inside. The judge asked him, "What is the meaning of that?" The Irishman replied with a mile wide grin, – "I'm paying for the smell of his food with the sound of my money."

DEFINING A PESSIMIST

What is a Pessimist?

The real world dictionary defines a 'pessimist' as an optimist with no experience.

HARRY UNDER STRESS

Harry had been feeling sick lately and was finally convinced to see the Doctor after his wife Suzy's urging.

After a thorough examination, and much thought, the Doctor was ready to tell Harry and a very worried Suzy, his prognosis: Harry was too stressed out. He would need 6 months of pure relaxation.

Suzy, very agitated, took out her notepad to begin writing down his list of orders for these months of relaxation.

"How should I go about it?" asked Harry. "OK," said the doctor, "to begin, I would like your wife to take one tranquilizer four times a day..."

LENGTHY SPEECHES

A Rabbi, known for his lengthy sermons, noticed a man get up and leave during the middle of his message. The man returned just before the conclusion of the service. Afterwards the pastor asked the man where he had gone.

"I went to get a haircut," was the reply.

"But," said the pastor, "why didn't you do that before the service?"

"Because," the gentleman said, "I didn't need one then."

ARM EXERCISE

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side. With a 5-lb potato sack in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax. Each day you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb potato sacks. Then try 50-lb potato sacks and then eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-lb potato sack in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute. (I'm at this level.)

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each of the sacks.



NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW

Later in the parsha we read the laws of appointing a king. "You shall surely set over yourself a king whom Hashem, your G-d, shall choose; from among your brethren shall you set a king over yourself; you cannot place over yourself a foreign man, who is not your brother." [Devorim 17:15].

The Torah warns that the king may not have too many horses; he may not have too many wives; he should not have unlimited wealth. In all these limitations, the Torah is concerned "Lest his heart stray" (after non-essential material possessions.) We know what can happen if a person has too many wives, as we see with the case of Shlomo HaMelech.

Chazal say that Shlomo was over-confident and said about himself "I will be able to exceed the limit without having my heart stray." He felt that these Torah laws applied to everybody else, but that he would be able to control himself. "I am not going to let it happen to me. I can have many wives. (He had 1,000 wives!) It is not going to affect me."

The Medrash says in Shir HaShirim that when Shlomo HaMelech said "I can have many and I will not stray" the letter *Yud* of *Lo Yarbeh lo Nashim* (He shall not have too many wives) came to the *Ribono shel Olam* and said "Look, he is not listening to this *pasuk*." The Medrash has very strong language here: "Let Shlomo HaMelech and a thousand like him become nullified (*batel*) but a *Yud* in the Torah will never be discarded."

The Sefer Koheles Yitzchak asks a simple question: Why was it specifically the letter *Yud* that came to complain? Shlomo's act of ignoring this law affected the letter *Reish* also and the letter *Beis* also of the word "*lo YaRBeh lo nashim*." He shares a beautiful thought. The letter in Hebrew which grammatically turns something from the past or the present into the future is the letter *Yud*. *Ro'eh* means 'to see'. *Yireh* (with a *Yud* in front of the *Ro'eh*) means WILL see. *Ochel* means eat; *Y'Ochal* means 'to eat' in the future.

The *Yud* is a letter which always makes something into the future. Shlomo HaMelech was right. He was capable of theoretically having a thousand wives and not having it affect him. But not everybody is capable of that. A person must worry about the future. Not everyone is a Shlomo HaMelech. The reason the *Ribono shel Olam* let this happen and let this affect Shlomo HaMelech is to prove this very point – that no one is above the law and no one can say "It does not apply to me." For with such an attitude, everything can be discarded.

Therefore, it was the *Yud* which represented the future which precisely formulated the problem: Maybe you, Shlomo, can get away with it – but we are talking about Kings of Israel for generations to come. They will not be able to do it.

A similar thought is found in the Gemara [Shabbos 12b]. The Sages said a person may not read by an oil-burning candle. The concern was that a person would become preoccupied with his studies and absent-mindedly tip the candle (thereby violating the prohibition of kindling or extinguishing fire on Shabbos). The Tanna Rav Yishmael learned by a candle and said "I am confident that I will not come to tip the candle." Unfortunately, he became so absorbed in his studies that he did tip the candle. He then said, "How wise are the Sages who forbade a person to read on Shabbos by candlelight." No one can say "This doesn't apply to me."

When the author of the *Minchas Chinuch* (Rav Yosef Babad [1800-1874]), was already an old man, a woman came in to ask him a *Shaylah* and she closed the door behind her. The door locked. Here he was together with a woman in a situation of *Yichud*. He was an old man, beyond the stage of *Tayvas Nashim* (strong sexual desire). He could have very easily rationalized, "I do not need to worry about this *Yichud* prohibition. It does not apply to me in my stage of life." What did he do? He jumped out the window! He was so afraid of the *Issur Yichud*, he ran for the quickest exit which was the window.

No one is above the law. This is the lesson of *Lo Yarbeh lo nashim* and the misplaced confidence of Shlomo HaMelech that it did not apply to him.

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RABBI NACHUM SCHEINER

ROSH KOLLEL

SHAATNEZ IN SUKAH DECORATIONS

As we approach the yom tov of sukkos, one may wonder: can the curtains of a sukah or the sukah decorations be made from shaatnez material? The Darkei Moshe writes that one should not make the curtains out of shaatnez. The reason, as we saw earlier, is that there is a concern that one might make use of the curtains, by wrapping them around his hands on a chilly day, and transgress the issur of shaatnez.

He adds that if the curtains are high up and out of reach then there will no such concern. There are various opinions in the poskim as to how high it needs to be: 1) higher than one's shoulders, 2) higher than one's head, 3) beyond arm's reach.

The Beis Hillel (Y"D 301) adds that this is not only for a concern in a sukah; the same restriction would apply to the drapes in one's home.

The Toras Ha'shatnez asks: why is the fact that it is out of reach a reason to allow it? In other halachos we find that Chazal did not allow it across the board and being out of reach does not take away the prohibition. For example, Chazal said that one may not read by candle light on Friday night because of the concern that he will adjust the candle. Chazal enacted this issur across the board, even if the candle is out of reach and there is no concern that he will tilt the candle. That being the case, why is the fact that the shaatnez is out of reach – making it impossible to use – enough of a reason to allow it?

His answer is that we find that we are more concerned when it comes to items that are sometimes allowed and sometimes forbidden. This is because a person can unwittingly do this action, since it is sometimes allowed. For example, there is much stringency that Chazal instituted when it comes to chometz because these items are around throughout the year. Shaatnez, on the other hand, is something that people know to stay away from, and placing the item out of reach is a sufficient safeguard.

The Kaf Hachaim, in the name of the Panim Me'iros, adds that if the curtains are tied up to the wall, then there is no concern that one will wrap them around his arms, and it will not be a problem. However from the other poskim – including the Chayei Adam, the Shulchan Aruch Harav, and the Mishna Berura – it seems that they hold that it is always forbidden unless it is out of reach.

SHAATNEZ IN PURIM COSTUMES

When it comes to Purim costumes, there are some earlier poskim who allowed wearing shaatnez which is only of a rabbinical level. The Darkei Moshe explains that since

the person is doing it for the sake of simchas Purim and does not have any intention to derive benefit, there is no issur min Hatorah. This is similar to the Mishna which allows one to wear shaatnez for the sake of avoiding the tax collector, since the intention is not to derive enjoyment from the garment.

However, as explained in an earlier shiur, this heter would only be true according to the Rosh. According to the Rambam, one cannot wear a garment of shaatnez, even if he has other reasons for donning the garment. That may be why the Rama only allows this practice for donning shaatnez of a rabbinic level. The later poskim, however – including the Mishna Berura, in the name of the Shelah, and the Aruch Hashulchan – reject this heter entirely and do not allow one to wear any form of shaatnez on Purim.

IN CONCLUSION

- The Paroches or anything kept in the Aron can have shaatnez.
- According to the Rama, the cover of the bima cannot be made from shaatnez.
- The cover of the sefer torah (the mantel) is a machlokes. The Mishna Berura rules that one should not.
- A tallis bag cannot be made out of shaatnez.
- The tefillin bag is a machlokes. The Mishna Berura rules that one should not.
- Sukah walls or decorations should not be made from shaatnez unless it is placed higher up. If it is attached it is a machlokes.
- On Purim, one should stay away from wearing shaatnez.

There is a kuntres of shiurim on the topic of shaatnez available. If you would like a copy of any of these shiurim, or for any comments and questions, please send an email to: RabbiScheiner@18forshay.com, or call 845 372 6618.

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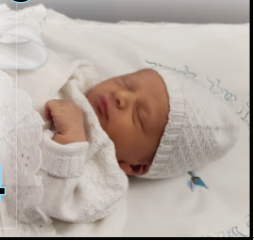
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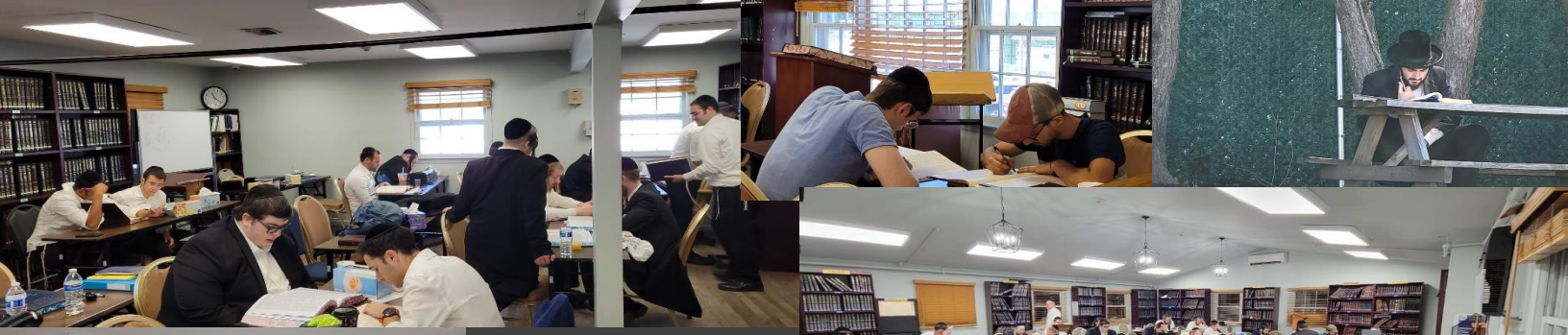


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