

Many people who make a mistake in *halachah* convince themselves that they are not responsible due to the principle of “one who is *anoos* (subject to extenuating circumstances) is exempt.” They rely on this excuse for even the slightest reason – either because he likes to relax, he has some pain or illness, or his *yesser hara* is too strong. However these alibis will not assist him when he goes to the Next World, because only someone who is truly *anoos* is exempt for his failure to perform the *misvah*.

If a person wants to know if he is really *anoos*, he should imagine that he has an opportunity to gain a huge profit. If he would pass up the opportunity due to these extenuating circumstances, then he is genuinely *anoos*. But if he would push himself despite the circumstances, this is an indication that he is not really *anoos*. Such a person will have no defense on the Day of Judgment. As it is written in *Mishlei*, “If you seek it like money and search for it like a hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of Hashem.” This is a great principle in Torah.

An Open Miracle with a Perek of Tehillim

Rabbi C.E.P. from Mexico, a grandson of Rav Michael Peretz, *shlita*, one of the important *Rabbanim* in Latin America, told the following story:

A month ago, I received a phone call from a sixty-year-old man. His voice was familiar, and after he told me who he was, I remembered that I had seen him once. I did not have any special connection to him before that conversation, but he said, “I want to invite you to a *seudat hoda'ah*.”

He lives in my neighborhood, so I was happy to agree, although I couldn't understand why I'd been chosen to participate. “What is the *seudah* for?” I asked.

He said, “I had COVID-19. I was on a respirator in a medically induced coma for an entire month, and *Baruch Hashem*, I woke up.”

“*Baruch Rofeh Holim* – Blessed is the Healer of the sick!” I said with feeling. He had reached death's door and returned to life! Every such occurrence plants hope for others to recover. I still did not feel a special connection to this man, but I was happy for him, and I informed him that, with Hashem's help, I would come.

I was not the only one. There were eighteen people at the *seudat hoda'ah*. Some of the people knew the man better than others, but we were all wondering why he had specifically chosen to invite us. He didn't leave us in suspense for too long.

The man, who through Hashem's kindness had regained his strength, began, “While I was lying in a coma, I saw myself going up to *Shamayim*, and suddenly I saw my mother, who had already passed away. She said to me, ‘What are you looking for here? Go back down!’

“‘I want to go down,’ I told her, ‘but I can't.’

“‘Look down,’ she said, ‘and you'll see that you can.’ I looked, and what did I see? All of you! Everyone who is here at this *seudah*. You were all holding *sifrei Tehillim* and praying for me and pulling me downward. I came back to this world because of you!”

When he said that, a tremor ran through my entire body. I hadn't known. I can tell you that I never dreamed of the power of my *Tehillim*. Someone had given me that man's name and told me that he was extremely sick. I took a *sefer Tehillim* and said one *perek* – just one *perek!* – and then I mentioned his name. And I, with that one *perek*, helped pull him back down to the land of the living.

There are seventeen other people who heard this story from the man who was hovering between heaven and earth and was sent back to life. Now we know how we, healthy people, can help our ill brethren. (24/7)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאָה בַּת בְּהֵיָה

בס"ד

Congregation Magen Abraham

479 Monmouth Road - P.O. Box 444

West Long Branch, New Jersey 07764

(732) 870-2225



שַׁבַּת וַיֵּאֱכֹל-דֶּקְלֵי הַיָּדָבָר * SHABBAT VAYAKHEL-DEKULDEI

שַׁבַּת הַחֹדֶשׁ SHABBAT HAHODESH

Haftarah: Yehezkel 45:18-46:15

MARCH 17-18, 2023 25 ADAR 5783

Shir Hashirim/Minhah: **6:36 pm (upstairs)** Shaharit: **6:05, 6:45, 8:25, 8:30, 9:00 am**

Minhah: **6:36 (main shul)** Morning Shema by: **9:19 am**

Candlelighting: **6:46 pm**

Shabbat Class: **5:25 pm**

Evening Shema after: **7:44 pm**

Shabbat Minhah: **1:30 & 6:25 pm**

These times are applicable only for the Deal area. Shabbat Ends: **7:45 pm, R"Y 8:47 pm**

Weekday Shaharit: **6:45, 7:10 am**, Sundays: **8:15 am**, Weekday Minhah: **6:50 pm**

Rosh Hodesh Nisan will be celebrated on Thursday, March 23.

A Message from our Rabbi

“And he made the laver of copper.” (*Shemot* 38:8) “וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַכִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת”

The *Kiyor* was a very large copper basin in the courtyard of the *Mishkan*, which was used by the *Kohanim* to wash their hands and feet before performing the *abodah* (service in the *Mishkan*). The copper did not come from the regular contribution of copper, as we see later that the *Kiyor* was omitted from the list of items made from copper. The *Kiyor* was made of shining copper mirrors used by the women in Egypt during the slavery. Moshe was reluctant to accept them because a mirror is an item that can be used to awaken the *yesser hara*. But Hashem wanted them because they were instrumental in the survival of the nation in Egypt.

If we look at the words of the *pasuk*, the mirrors are called *mar'ot haseva'ot* (mirrors of the legions). It's interesting that this term is used here. The first time Hashem was called Hashem *Haseva'ot*, was by Hannah, the mother of Shemuel *Hanavi*. Hannah was childless for nineteen years. She did not even have a womb with which to hold a child. Finally, Hashem granted her request. What exactly was her request? Hannah told Hashem, she didn't want a child to cuddle. She wasn't looking for a child to show off to others. Hannah wanted one thing and one thing only. She wanted, more than anything else, to have a child who would be a soldier in Hashem's military, one who would fight Hashem's battles, so much so that she promised to give away the child to be raised in the *Mishkan*.

We can suggest that the conversation in Egypt between the husbands and wives

revolved around this concept. The husbands were reluctant to have more children, since it was a time of extreme suffering and not the time for it. The women answered, it's true now is the wrong time. However, they explained, the purpose is to add soldiers to the army of Hashem. In the darkest times, more than any other time, the army needs soldiers. With this in mind, the husbands acquiesced, making way for the future Jewish Nation.

These actions were so important in the "eyes" of Hashem, that there is no size given for the *Kiyor*. Hashem wanted every mirror to be included no matter how big the *Kiyor* would be.

As parents, we must take note of the noble intentions of these women, never losing sight for a moment of the real purpose of raising children.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

Just Do As You're Told

It was the day after Yom Kippur. Moshe had come down from the mountain for the second time, and he immediately summoned all the people to a mass meeting. A surge of excitement swept through the Jewish encampment in the desert. What was the purpose of this urgent meeting? Had Hashem truly forgiven them for the sin of the Golden Calf?

The answers were not long in coming. Moshe was carrying a message of reconciliation from Hashem. He had instructed the people to build a *Mishkan*, a holy Tabernacle, in which the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence, would reside among the Jewish people. This would serve as atonement for their transgression and bring a new closeness between the Creator and His chosen people.

It is interesting to note, however, that this message came with a preface – a stern warning that Shabbat not be desecrated. What was the purpose of introducing the building of the *Mishkan* with the prohibition against desecrating Shabbat? *Rashi* explains that it was meant to teach that the building of the *Mishkan* had to be interrupted at sundown on Friday. But the question still remains: Numerous laws apply to the building of the *Mishkan*. Why then was this particular rule, the suspension of work on Shabbat, singled out for special mention?

The commentators explain that this stern warning was meant to steer the people away from the dangerous path that had led to the Golden Calf. The people had known full well that building an idol was forbidden, but the fear that Moshe would not return drove them into a panic. How would they communicate with Hashem in the absence of Moshe? In desperation, they sought another medium. They took the liberty of rationalizing that the pressing needs of the moment were paramount, and if it took a Golden Calf to establish contact with Hashem, so be it. In actuality, however, they should not have presumed to judge when to keep the rules and when to break them.

This was the message of the prohibition against building the *Mishkan* on Shabbat. One might think that this project was of such transcendent importance that nothing could stand in its way. But not so! I am the judge of these things, said Hashem, not you. Our acceptance of the Divine Wisdom must be absolute, unquestioning, without rationalizations, because we cannot possibly know all the factors which enter into the divine decision-making process.

We are sometimes faced with situations which tempt us to compromise on the values and ideals of the Torah in order to achieve some greater good. But it is not for us to make these kinds of cosmic calculations, which are better left to our Creator. (Rabbi Naftali Reich)

Private Matters

Parashat Vayakhel contains a review of the process of constructing the *Mishkan* and its furnishings, beginning with the solicitation of donations for the various building

materials necessary for this construction. Among the significant items brought was *Atzei Shittim* (Acacia wood). The *Midrash* in *Shir HaShirim* speaks of the central beam (*Beriach haTichon*) that wrapped around the walls of the *Mishkan* being 32 cubits long.

Where did they find such long beams? *Hazal* teach that Avraham *Abinu* originally planted the trees for the wood for the *Mishkan* in Be'er Sheva, and when Ya'akov *Abinu* relocated to *Mitzrayim*, he took the wood from those trees with him to *Mitzrayim*. The people took this wood with them when they left *Mitzrayim*. They carried it to the *Midbar* and eventually used this "wood with a pedigree" for the beams of the *Mishkan*.

We know that *Hazal* praise Moshe *Rabenu* for the fact that he spent his final hours in *Mitzrayim* locating and retrieving the bones of Yosef which he took with him. Why is there no praise given to the people who made it their business to gather up the Acacia wood that Ya'akov brought down to *Mitzrayim* and schlep it out with them? If we consider that the central beam was approximately 64 feet long, then that was certainly a cumbersome task, to say the least. There is no doubt that it was much harder to take responsibility for all that wood than to take responsibility for Yosef's bones. What is the difference between Yosef's bones and Abraham and Ya'akov's Acacia wood?

Work to build a shul is an attractive *misvah*. People will come to shul and see the wood that I broke my back schlepping. It is a *misvah* that will bring me praise and social accolades from my friends and neighbors. It is not hard to find people anxious to work for such a *misvah*. However, it is not so easy to find people willing to do a private kindness for someone else. A personal *misvah ben Adam l'Chavero* has neither the glory nor the publicity of a *misvah* involving public worship in a *Mishkan* of Hashem. Such a public *misvah* is actually less of a *misvah* than a private *hessed* to an individual. Yosef *Hasadik* had children and grandchildren. Really, it should have been their responsibility to take care of their grandfather's bones. The fact that Moshe *Rabenu* chose a *misvah ben Adam l'Chavero* has value and superiority that trumps even a *misvah ben Adam l'Makom*.

I heard an interesting incident that bears this out. Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein tells a story concerning the *misvah* of *Birkat Ilanot* (making a *berachah* on the first blooming fruit trees of the spring season). There is a Kabbalistic concept which emphasizes the preference of making this *Berachah* specifically over two trees.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was walking down the street in *Nissan* and he passed a house with a fruit tree. He paused in front of the house and prepared to recite the *berachah*. Another Jew passed by and said to the Sage, "If you go two blocks down the street, you will find a house with two blossoming fruit trees in front of it. Why don't you wait two blocks and fulfill the *misvah* in accordance with the Kabbalistic preference?"

Rav Shlomo Zalman pointed out to this Jew the window of the house in front of which he was now standing. "Do you see the woman in the window? She is a widow. She is standing in the window and is bursting with pride that I, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *posek* of the generation, am making my *Birkat Ilanot* on her tree! It is better to do a *hessed* by bringing pleasure to a widow, even if it means making the *berachah* on just one tree, rather than adding the dimension of the *Zohar's* preference of making the *Birkat Ilanot* on two trees."

This is again an example that if a person can combine into his Man-God *mitzvot* a dimension of a Man-Man *misvah*, that is indeed preferable. Thus too, the private *hessed* that Moshe *Rabenu* performed with the bones of Yosef *Hasadik* was an even bigger *misvah* than schlepping the wood for the *Mishkan*. (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

Weekly Pele Yoetz

Each week we will offer a brief excerpt from the *sefer Pele Yoetz*. **This week's topic is: Extenuating Circumstances – וְיִנְחָם.**