

Ethics of the Fathers

It is customary to study *Pirkei Abot* (Ethics of the Fathers) during the six weeks between Pesah and Shabuot, one chapter every Shabbat.

(Abot 2:16) "וְנִאֱמָן הוּא בְּעַל מְלֶאכֶתֶךָ שְׂיִשְׁלָם לְךָ שְׂכָר פְּעֻלָּתֶךָ"

"And your employer is trustworthy to pay you the reward for your labor"

The word "*pe'ulatecha* - your labor" is superfluous. It would have been sufficient to say, "Your employer is trustworthy to reward you."

When a laborer runs into difficulty and a task ends up taking much more time than it should, the employer is upset and does not want to pay for the extra time. He argues, "It should not be my problem that it took you longer or that you had to work harder because of your inefficiency or inexperience." Throughout the world, remuneration is commensurate with accomplishment and not effort or struggle. The *Mishnah* says, "*pe'ulatecha* - your labor" to emphasize that Hashem's ways are an exception to human practice. He rewards effort.

For learning much Torah not only will one receive much reward, but one can be assured that the Employer, Hashem, will reward for "*pe'ulatecha* - your effort" and He is "*ne'eman* - trustworthy" that it will be rewarded in the fullest measure. (*Vedibarta Bam*)

Air for the Soul

"Air is the resource that is found in the greatest abundance, even more than water or soil. Soil is essential because it is the ultimate source of the food that we depend on to live. But air is more essential and is therefore much more abundant than soil. The layer of the atmosphere containing the air we breathe, is about 10 miles deep."

The depth of knowledge of the Torah is deeper than any ocean. Investing in spirituality is Air for the Soul, it's unlimited. (Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller's teachings with permission from Simchas Hachaim Gedola Bais Yisrael)

Dressing for the Occasion

The *Gaon* of Rogachov was once asked by a distraught mother for a *berachah* for her infant. Although the child was pleasant all week, Shabbat was just terrible! He was cranky all Shabbat and refused to eat. She had consulted doctors but could get no help. She thought that perhaps the child was possessed by a demon that resented Shabbat.

The *Gaon* said, "How can you expect doctors to help when they are totally ignorant of Torah!"

"The Talmud states that if someone owns an ox that habitually gores, he is liable for full damages it causes. If the ox generally gores only on Shabbat, he is only liable for full damages when it gores on Shabbat. Why? Because there must be something different about the way people dress on Shabbat that provokes the animal who is otherwise docile during the rest of the week.

"Your child is very sensitive. On Shabbat you dress differently than all week and the child is just not accustomed to this, and the strangeness irritates him. This Shabbat, just wear your weekday clothes. Next Shabbat wear your Shabbat clothes for one hour, and increase it every week. Let me know what happens."

The results were exactly as the *Gaon* predicted, and a few weeks later the woman reported that the child had adjusted to Shabbat beautifully.

It's all in the Torah, but it may take the *Gaon* of Rogachov to point it out. (Smiling Each Day)

The Lorraine Gammal A"H Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשִׁמַת לְאָה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

Congregation Magen Abraham

479 Monmouth Road - P.O. Box 444

West Long Branch, New Jersey 07764

(732) 870-2225



שַׁבָּת תַּזְרִיא-מֶסוֹרָה * מְלַחִים

Haftarah: Melachim II 7:3-20

APRIL 16-17, 2021 5 IYAR 5781

Early Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 5:47 pm	Shaharit: 5:16, 7:00, 8:00, 8:15, 9:00 am
Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 6:15 pm	Morning Shema by: 8:44 am
Late Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 7:08 pm	Shabbat Class: 5:55 pm
Candlelighting: 7:18 pm	Shabbat Minhah: 1:30 & 6:55 pm
Evening Shema after: 8:16 pm	Shabbat Ends: 8:17 pm (R"Y 8:49 pm)

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

This week's bulletin is dedicated in memory of Abraham "Al" Mizrahi
by his children לְעִילּוֹי נְשִׁמַת אֲבִירָהּ בֶּן אֶסְתֵּר

A Message from our Rabbi

(Vayikra 13:14)

"וַיִּבְיֹם הַרְאוֹת בּוֹ בְּשֹׁר חַי יְטֵמָא"

"On the day healthy flesh appears in it, it shall be contaminated"

Rashi, quoting the *Mishnah* in *Negaim* (3:2) explains that the word *ויביום*, on the day, which seems to be redundant, is coming to exclude the particular days upon which the *kohen* does not examine a blemish of leprosy.

A groom is given a respite for all of the days of *sheva berachot*, and on *yom tob* (holidays) every Jew is given a respite. Even though the blemish might well be one that under normal circumstances would be found to be *tameh*, the *kohen* does not look so as to allow the groom perfect joy and to avoid disturbing the joy of the *yom tob*.

Rabbi Yaakov Bender says, this is remarkable. The blemish is there, it would seem to be a reality – but here we see that the reality of a blemish is itself subject to the laws of "*rahmanah*," the merciful One who gave us the Torah.

There is a whole section in the *Mishnayot* teaching us the laws of leprosy blemishes, but the entirety of Torah is teaching us about sensitivity.

The gossip is missing this sensitivity. He disparages and belittles, unable to perceive the reality of others, but the Torah addresses him: "Feel with another, think of another, see their reality, and perhaps you will be kinder, gentler and more sympathetic."

There is another lesson in sensitivity as well. Do not underestimate the importance of Jews' joy on *yom tob*. The joy of the holiday is compared to the joy of a groom opening a new home.

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt"l wrote that the greatest lie propagated by the history books is that the simple Jew lived a life of misery due to extreme poverty. No historian or sociologist was capable of gauging the rich inner life of these seemingly ordinary men. Yes, they had Shabbat and *yom tob*, and when they walked home from shul, their hearts were singing, their souls racing as they anticipated sitting around the table with their children enjoying the Shabbat delicacies.

There was no one prouder than the Jew coming home on the Seder night or on the first night of Succot. The books may not get it but we do! The joy of *yom tob* of a Jew is everything. Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Reuven Semah

Lost and Found

The *Midrash* tells the story of a peddler who went from town to town in the vicinity of the city of Tzippori, selling his wares. He used to call out, “Who wants to buy the elixir of life?” Rav Yannai, the *Talmudic Sage*, was sitting there, and he heard the peddler’s sales-pitch. Rav Yannai said, “Sell me the elixir!” The peddler said, “You, and people like you, do not need what I am selling.” Rav Yannai persisted and said, “But, nu – tell me. What are you selling?”

The *Midrash* continues that the peddler took out a volume of *Tehillim* and showed Rav Yannai the *pasuk* “Who is the man who wants life...? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good...” [*Tehillim* 34:13-15]. These famous *pesukim* from Psalms pose the question – what is best way to guarantee life? The *pasuk* suggests the answer: Watch your tongue!

The *Midrash* concludes that Rav Yannai proclaimed, “My entire life I have been reading these *pesukim* and did not understand what they were teaching, until this peddler came along and informed me as to their meaning.”

The question is obvious: What did the peddler tell Rav Yannai that he did not previously understand? Certainly, Rav Yannai knew how to translate a *pasuk* in *Tanach*. The interpretation of these words is straightforward: “Who is the man who desires life? Guard your tongue from (speaking) evil.” Rav Yannai claims that he never understood what the *pesukim* meant until now. How is that possible? What novel interpretation did the peddler provide?

The *Kotmot Ohr* references a very frightening passage in the *sefer Hobot Ha’Lebabot* (“Duties of the Heart” by Rabbi Bachye ibn Pakuda). The *Hobot Ha’Lebabot* writes in the “Gates of Acquisition” (Chapter 7) that when Reuven speaks *Lashon Hara* about Shimon, Reuven’s (prior) *misvot* are transferred to Shimon and Shimon’s (prior) sins are transferred to Reuven! Slanderers will find on the Day of Judgement that they will not be receiving reward for good deeds that they did do, and will—on the contrary—receive punishment for bad deeds which they did not do!

A person who had been a *Shomer Shabbat* his entire life will ascend to the World of Truth and he will suddenly discover that he is not receiving any credit for his Sabbath observance! On the other hand, he will be punished for sins that he never committed. When he will express astonishment at this apparent injustice, it will be explained to him that his spiritual rewards and punishments have been switched with those of so-and-so, against whom he spoke *Lashon Hara*.

The *Hobot Ha’Lebabot* cites an incident involving someone about whom *Lashon Hara* was spoken. Shimon heard that Reuven spoke *Lashon Hara* about him. Shimon then sent Reuven a fruit basket as a present. Shimon told him: “You did me such a favor, so I feel that I need to repay it!” Reuven asked “What did I do for you?” Shimon responded, “You spoke *Lashon Hara* about me. Therefore, I received all of your merits. This is a tremendous present! It is only right that I should send you a present in return.”

This idea is the novelty that Rav Yannai did not understand. When Rav Yannai learned the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* “Who is the man who desires life...” he thought that this was speaking about (life in) this world. The epiphany that he had because of the peddler’s insight was that the *pasuk* is teaching, “If you want life in the next world, the best way to achieve that is by guarding your tongue from speaking evil. If you work your whole life—you meticulously do *misvot*, keep Shabbat, are a *ba’al hessed*, and (after 120 years) you want to reap the rewards for all your efforts, the only way to guarantee that the reward of this “good life” will be preserved for you is to guard your tongue from speaking evil. Otherwise—according to the *Hobot Ha’Lebabot* et al—a person can lose his *misvot* and lose his reward. He can, Heaven forbid, wind up with sins that he did not do and with *misvot* that were lost! (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

Self-Destruction

There is an underlying theme to the message of the *Mesora*. This spiritual disease that causes discoloration of the skin or of hairs upon the skin is caused by sins of speech, gossip, slander and the like. When a person notices the discoloration, he is to immediately approach a *Kohen* and show him the abnormality. It is up to the *Kohen* not only to determine the status of the affliction, but to actually invoke the status of impurity on the man through his ruling on the matter.

When a man is declared as *tameh* (impure) he is kept in isolation. The Torah explicitly explains: “All the days that the affliction is upon him he shall remain contaminated; he is contaminated. He shall dwell in isolation; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.” The question is simple. If the sins of anti-social behavior cause the malady, why is the man isolated? Would it not be better if he is embarrassed within the community and learns to better himself through communal interaction? How will solitude help him cure his societal ills?

There is a classic tale of the gentleman who purchased a plane ticket from New York to Los Angeles. The man was quite finicky about traveling, and asked the agent for a window seat. Somehow, he was not placed by the window, rather in the aisle. During the entire trip, he fidgeted and squirmed. Immediately after the long journey the man went straight to complain.

“I specifically asked for a window seat,” he exclaimed. “Your agent in New York assured me that I would be getting a window seat, but he placed me right in the aisle!”

The customer relations agent in Los Angeles was not fazed. She asked the man, “Did you ask the person in the window seat to trade places?”

This time the man was irate. “I was not able to!”

“And why not?”

“There was no one in the seat.”

My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, in his classic work *Emet L’Yaakov* explains. People often blame the ramifications of their doings on everyone else but themselves. Truth be told, a person who is afflicted can circumvent confinement by not reporting the *nega* to the *Kohen*, or even by pulling out the hairs that are discolored.

In essence, a *nega* is merely a Divine wake-up-call. It is Heaven’s way of letting him know that there is something wrong. It is a personal message and must be taken personally. And so in solitude the man sits and ponders what exactly needs correction.

If a person wants to correct himself, he need not cavort with others to do so. If one can remove the barriers of false flattery and social mendacity, he can do a lot better for himself: because self-improvement is dependent upon self-motivation. Without the truth meeting the self, any attempt toward self-improvement may lead to nothing more than self-destruction. (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)