

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI MOSHE FUCHS

The Mirror of the Heart



Pharaoh said to Yaakov, "How many are the days of the years of your life?"

Yaakov answered Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourns have been 130 years. [They] have been few and bad, and they haven't reached my forefathers' lifespans..." (47:8-9)

DA'AS Z'KEINIM WRITES THAT YAAKOV SUFFERED severe punishment for his words of complaint—he lost 33 years of his life, corresponding to the 33 words that were spoken during this meeting with Pharaoh!

Rabbi Avraham Pam quotes Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, who posed the following question: Those 33 words include eight

which were spoken by *Pharaoh*. Why was Yaakov punished for them?

The answer is that Pharaoh only questioned Yaakov's age after seeing the creases and folds in his face and "reading" the hardships and sorrow Yaakov had gone through. Yaakov was therefore punished for his appearance, which betrayed his troubles.

But, again, why?

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter would say a person's heart is a *r'shus hayachid*, a private domain, but his face is a *r'shus harabbim*, a public space. When a person walks around looking sad and forlorn, he affects the people around him. He causes others to lose their cheer. On the other hand, when a person's face portrays happiness, he can gladden and uplift the people around him.

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A HALACHA FOR THE Z'MAN

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

This coming Sunday is 10 Teves, on which the prophet Zechariah (8:19) instructed us to fast. On it, the wicked Babylonian King Nevuchadnetzar started his siege of Jerusalem, foreshadowing the beginning of the end of the first Temple. (*Aruch haShulchan* O.C. 549)

Let us discuss some fasting FAQ's.

By default, every adult is obligated to fast on public fast days. (O.C. 550:1)

Pregnant or nursing women need not fast on Asara (the tenth) b'Teves (*Aruch Hashulchan* 550:1); neither do they need to make up the fast on a different day. Nonetheless, a woman who isn't fasting should only eat what is necessary, and not for enjoyment. (M.B. 550:5)

The same holds true for someone who isn't feeling well, even if it is not life-threatening. (O.C. 554:6)

One need not train children—even boys of twelve and girls of eleven—to fast. However, some families have the custom that boys observe the three fasts before their bar mitzvahs.

This fast does not begin the preceding night. Rather, it commences at *alos hashachar* (dawn—in Cincinnati, this year, 6:45am) and ends with *tzeis hakochavim* (nightfall—here, this year, at 6:13pm). (O.C. 564:1)

One should not brush one's teeth or rinse out one's mouth during the fast, unless he is experiencing discomfort. (M.B. 567:11)

Medication and caffeine pills may be taken, if needed, during the fast. If one

— CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE —>



Rabbi Stettin tells *do like it is!* (With a smile, of course...)

THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On 8 Teves, 5622 (1861), Arnold Fischel, a pulpit rabbi from New York, had an audience with President Abraham Lincoln, to protest the exclusion of rabbis from serving as chaplains in the U.S. military. Although Fischer had been selected by Colonel Max Friedman to serve as chaplain of his regiment, his application was denied by Secretary of War Simon Cameron—Congress had passed a bill the previous July, requiring that army chaplains be Christian ministers. (The only congressman to protest had been Rep. Clement L. Vallandigham of Dayton, Ohio, who opposed both the Civil War and every military bill.) President Lincoln was sympathetic to Fischel's appeal, and he proposed an amendment. Congress passed it seven months later, on July 17, 1862.

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A HALACHA FOR THE Z'MAN

(CONTINUED)

has difficulty swallowing pills, he may use the smallest amount of water needed to swallow them. (Rabbi S. Kamenetzky, *Kovetz Halachos*, p. 32)

If one ate on a fast day, either by mistake or on purpose, he should nevertheless continue fasting afterwards. (O.C. 568:1; M.B. 568:1)

Someone who cares deeply about mitzvah observance should be strict and not bathe in hot water or anoint himself. However, it's permitted to bathe in cold water and to wash one's hands, feet, and face with hot water. (M.B. 550:6, *Sha'ar haTziyun* 550:8) It is preferable, as well, not to listen to music or take a haircut on 10 Teves. (*Pri M'gadim* 551:10; *Kovetz Halachos* p. 27)

The primary purpose of fast days is to inspire us to remember the sins—ours and our forefathers'—which caused the tragedy which is being commemorated, and do *t'shuva* (repent). People who waste time when they are fasting have missed a major point of the fast. Nonetheless, one may not exempt oneself by only doing *t'shuva* instead of fasting, because fasting on these days was ordained by our prophets. (M.B. 549:1) 

GREAT ACTS OF SIMPLE PEOPLE

A SURVIVOR OF WORLD WAR II, YOSSEL HIRSCH arrived in New York in the late 1940's with nothing more than the shirt on his back, but he found a job working in a bakery.

One day, Moshe Kantesky, a supplier, made his usual delivery. "Why don't you open your own bakery?" Moshe suggested, "I'll lend you the money. You can repay me when you're able."

Yossel was taken by surprise. He accepted a loan of twenty thousand dollars and opened a bakery in a different neighborhood. Yossel's store became very popular, and before long he paid back the loan.

A while later, Moshe Kantesky passed away, and he appeared to Yossel in a dream. "Yossel, remember that big favor I did for you? Well, now I need your help."

Yossel was bewildered.

"It's my children. I left my business to my two sons, and they began to argue. One thing led to another, and now the families will not speak to one another. My elder son

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU


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In what prayer do we say 24 words in a row that end with the Hebrew letter *chaf*?

The answer will appear next week's edition.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE:

Q When is a non-Kohen called first to the Torah, in the presence of Kohanim?

A When he is the only non-Kohen. *Mishnah B'rurah* (135:12) explains that this is to prevent the Kohanim from quarreling over who will go first. 

is making a bar mitzvah, and he didn't invite his brother. My soul cannot rest. Please help me!"

Yossel awoke feeling troubled, and he decided to make inquiries. He began by calling Moshe's older son and reminiscing about old times.

"Don't talk to me about the business," the son sighed. "Thanks to my brother, we nearly lost the whole thing. I suppose I shouldn't blame my brother completely... But let's talk about more cheerful things. Did you know that I'm making a bar mitzvah soon?"


"Mazel Tov!" Yossel congratulated him. "You know, a *simcha* is a perfect time to make amends. Why not invite your brother and his family? I already spoke to him, and he really would like to attend."

"Really?" the older brother mused. "I didn't know that. Well, I'll consider it."

Yossel hung up and immediately called the younger brother. "Why don't you go to the *simcha*?" Yossel asked. "I can't go," the

younger brother said dispiritedly. "I didn't even get an invitation."

"But I spoke to your brother," Yossel urged. "He didn't invite you because he thought you would never agree to come, but he really would like you to be there."

When the bar mitzvah night arrived, both brothers arrived at the hall and fell into each other's arms. Yossel knew that the ultimate *simcha* was taking place in Heaven, as a father watched his two sons reunite in harmony. 

The Mirror... CONTINUED

Our faces, by nature, mirror the feelings of our hearts. But a *tzaddik* (a righteous man) of Yaakov's stature should not have displayed his heart openly, on his face, and risk affecting other people negatively. It is a sign of greatness when a person can conceal his pain and hardships, and greet people with a smile. 