



A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI DOVID SPETNER



The Limits of Dignity

“AZ IZ PAST NISHT FAR DIR!”

“It’s beneath your dignity!”

“Zeh lo mat’im l’cha!”

In whatever language we use, inculcating in our children—and in ourselves—an inner sense of our dignity as people and as Jews is critical. Among its many purposes, our sense of personal dignity is what keeps us from indulging in behaviors that would corrupt us.

However, we see, from a comment by Rashi (and our Sages) on this week’s Torah portion, that we can not always rely on our personal dignity alone to keep us in line.

In Moshe Rabbeinu’s appeal to Hashem after the Jews’ Sin of the Golden Calf, he says

“Vaya’asu lahem elohei zahav—they made themselves a god of gold.”
(32:31)

Rashi quotes the Midrash, which explains that Moshe was, somewhat incredibly,

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

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Where in the Torah do five two-letter words appear consecutively?

The answer will appear next week..

LAST WEEK’S RIDDLE:

Q Which four people’s names from Chumash also appear (as names) in Megillas Esther?

A Kush (B’reishis 10:6, Esther 1:1)
Madai (B’reishis 10:2, Esther 1:3)
Yair (B’reishis 32:41, Esther 2:5)
Yehuda (B’reishis 29:35, Esther 2:6) 🏆



A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

During the time when the Temple stood, our Sages enacted a rule that, thirty days before a festival, Torah scholars should lecture publicly on the laws related to that festival—e.g., beginning on Purim, they should teach the laws of Pesach. According to some authorities, this rule applies to all of the Festivals, not just Pesach. This was aside from the general obligation imposed by Moshe Rabbeinu to study the laws of each Festival throughout the Holiday itself. (MB 429:1)

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THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On 20 Adar 5559 (1799), following his conquest of Egypt, Napoleon captured Gaza, home to an ancient Jewish community dating back to the Second Temple. In an effort to win Jewish support, Napoleon proclaimed “the re-establishment of ancient Jerusalem” as a Jewish homeland. Many Jews, still recovering from Muslim oppression, greeted Napoleon’s invasion with high hopes, some even anticipating the beginning of the Messianic Redemption. Napoleon then took over Ramlah, Jaffa, and Haifa. A Jewish delegation reportedly visited Napoleon after his conquest of Jaffa.

Despite his courtesies, Napoleon apparently did not curtail his soldiers’ looting of the land.

His progress was stopped in June at the city of Acre, where an unsuccessful siege led to his retreat from the Holy Land back into Egypt. 🏆

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A TIMELY HALACHA

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The reason for this requirement was in order that all Jews could learn the laws of inspecting and preparing animals for the offerings that they would need to bring to the Temple on the Festival.

Even though the Temple was eventually destroyed, this requirement was not abolished. Rather, it was institutionalized, in order that everyone be proficient in the laws of the Festival and know how to conduct themselves.

Therefore there is a mitzvah to study the laws of Pesach (Passover) during the thirty-day period beforehand, in order to review its basic laws—i.e. koshering; the elimination of chometz (leaven); baking matzos; and fulfilling mitzvos like running a Seder properly.

Included in this is the well-known custom for the rabbi of a congregation to deliver a lecture on the Shabbos before Pesach (AKA Shabbos haGadol) and review the laws of Pesach.

Over the next few weeks, G-d willing, we will go through some practical and interesting rules which are essential to observing the many laws of Pesach. 📖

At the Kollel

EVERY DAY

EVERY WEEK

Sunday *Free brunch!*

👤 **Boys' Learning Program**
for fourth, fifth, & sixth graders—
Mishnayos

Rabbis Moshe Fuchs
and Izy Newmark..... 9–10 AM

*Parents who are interested can e-mail
Rabbi Fuchs—splashwen@gmail.com*

👤 **Beginner's Gemara**
(Maseches Sukkah)

Rabbi Ezra Stettin..... 9:10–10 AM

👤 **Beginner's Halacha & More**
(skills-building)

Rabbi Moshe D. Zeffren.. 9:30–10:30 AM

👤 **Shivti** (Self-contained learning,
geared toward practical halacha)
Rabbi Avrohom Weinrib..... 10 AM–noon

🍷 *Homemade refreshments served*

Monday

👤👤 **Torah Treasures for
Seniors at the Mayerson JCC**
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 10:30–11:15 AM

Tuesday

👤👤👤 **Partners in Torah
at the Mayerson JCC**
Rabbi Michael Soroka..... 8 PM

Wednesday

👤👤 **Downtown Lunch-n-
Learn at Strauss & Troy**
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 12–1 PM

Thursday

👤👤👤 **Halacha**
in the former Back Office
Rabbis Yisroel Kaufman
and Chaim Heinemann 9:10–10 PM.

KEY: 👤 Beginners 👤 Intermediate 👤 Advanced 🧑 for men and women

Chavrusos are available for private and group learning—
speak to Rabbi Chaim Heinemann! weekdays noon–1 PM • Sun.–Thurs. 8–9:45 PM

DAVENING TIMES CAN BE FOUND AT CINCYKOLLEL.ORG/MINYAN-SCHEDULE/

GREAT ACTS OF SIMPLE PEOPLE

IN BATTEI NATAN, AN OLD AGE HOME IN JERUSALEM, the elderly Reb Shmuel never missed a *shi'ur* (Torah class).

He actually understood very little Torah, having been forcibly conscripted into the Russian army as a “Cantonist” throughout his teen years and into adulthood. Nevertheless, Shmuel attended *shi'ur* after *shi'ur*, sitting in the back like a fly on the wall.

His wife, impatient with him, pleaded with him to stay home and do something useful. She complained to the rabbi, who

The Limits of Dignity CONTINUED

“blaming” Hashem for the people’s sin—for having showered the Jews with gold, thereby enticing them to sin.

Certainly this claim requires an in-depth explanation. However, I would like to focus on Rashi’s parable.

A king gave his son to eat and drink, dressed him up, hung a purse on his neck, and stationed him at the entrance of a brothel. What can the

one day pulled Shmuel aside and asked for an explanation.

Tears welled up in Shmuel’s eyes. “From my early teens, I served in the Russian army. To show our loyalty to the Czar, we stood at attention each morning and recited from memory the names of the monarchy, officers, and cabinets.

“When I get to the World to Come, I want to declare my loyalty to G-d. I’ll recite the names of His monarchy, officers, and cabinets—Rav Papa, Abaye, Rava, Rebbe,

son do, that he shouldn’t sin?”

“What can the son do that he shouldn’t sin”—what do you mean? Where is his sense of dignity? After all, this is the prince we’re talking about, not some common peasant!

As our Sages often tell us, “*Kol Yisroel b’nei melochim heim*—all Jews are princes.” In the analogy quoted by Rashi, they are telling us that there are times and situations where anyone’s guard can be down, when

Rabbi Yochanan. I sit in on these *shi’urim* to learn the names of the royal family and its members!” 📖

MAZAL TOV!

- To Dr. Steven Cahn and Rabbi Yisroel Kaufman, who recently completed Mishnayos Maseches Yoma.
- To David Harris and Rabbi Dovid Spetner, who recently completed *Nefesh haChayim*.

we cannot rely simply on the sense that “*Az iz past nisht*.” The only safe route is to keep ourselves out of temptation’s way.

We live in a world where much immorality can be accessed anonymously. Anonymity, in particular, can be a dangerous enemy to the virtue of dignity. We owe it to ourselves to do our best to safeguard our means of access, so that we safeguard our *n’shamos*, our souls. 📖