

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Simply Awesome

YAAKOV AVINU AWOKE FROM HIS PROPHETIC dream and declared, “*Mah nora hamakom hazeh* (how awesome is this place) . . . *v’zeh shaar hashomayim* (and this is the gate to heaven).” I was once privileged to hear Rav Moshe Shapiro ז”ל expound on the word and concept of *nora* used here by Yaakov Avinu. He pointed out that the letters of the word *nora*, when transposed, spell *aron*—the holy ark. The place where Yaakov slept, was indeed, the future spot of the holy ark.

The Gemara in *Yoma* (21a) tells us of an incredible phenomenon involving the *aron*. The holy of holies where the *aron* sat was 20 *amos* wide, and yet if you measured the space on either side of the *aron*, the space alone totaled 20 *amos*. The *aron* took up no space at all! The essence of *nora* is a paradox of physical reality.

Later in *Yoma*, the Gemara (69b) de-

scribes how, after the destruction of the *beis hamikdash*, the Jews stopped using the word *nora* to refer to Hashem. He was no longer manifest in the world as *nora*. The *Anshei Kneses Hagedola* however, when returning to the land, reinstituted the use of *nora*. They explained that Hashem was still manifest as *nora*, only in a different way. The continued existence of the Jewish people as a “sheep among 70 wolves” also defies the norms of physical reality. Hashem is now *nora* through the open miracle of Jewish history.

These two manifestations of *nora* are really one and the same. Just as there really is no space for the *aron* to exist within the walls that contain it, so also there really should be no “space” for a Jewish people’s longstanding existence in a hostile environment. It is Hashem’s will that makes the seemingly impossible, possible. That is simply awesome. 🍕

RABBI
DOVID
SPETNER

A HALACHA FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Our sages tell us that from the words *Va’yifga Ba’mokom* in this week’s *parasha*, we derive that Yaakov instituted the *tefilah* of *Maariv* (evening prayers).

We all know that *kavanah*, concentrating on what one is saying, is not always easy, but is a central part of davening. The question arises: which parts of *Shemoneh Esrei* require *kavanah*?

Preferably, one must concentrate on the meaning of all the words in the entire *Shemoneh Esrei*. Sometimes, however, it may be difficult to maintain that level of concentration. In such a case, one must make an effort to have as much *kavanah* as possible. At the very least one should try his hardest to concentrate for the first blessing of *Avos*, the blessing of *Modim*, and the ending of each blessing (MB 101:1). If one was completely out of focus when reading the first *bracha* of *Avos*, he has not fulfilled his obligation (OC 101:1). The *Poskim* discuss and argue whether it is considered as if he recited 19 *brachos l’vatalah* (in vain) or not.

In the above scenario, one may not, however, repeat the first blessing, since there is a strong possibility that he will not have the proper *kavanah* the second time either. If, however, he realizes before he finishes the first blessing that he did not have proper *kavanah*, he should begin anew (from *Elokei Avraham*, etc.). Once he says *Baruch Atah Hashem*, however, he must continue to recite the rest of *Shemoneh Esrei*, with particular concentration on the blessing of *Modim*.

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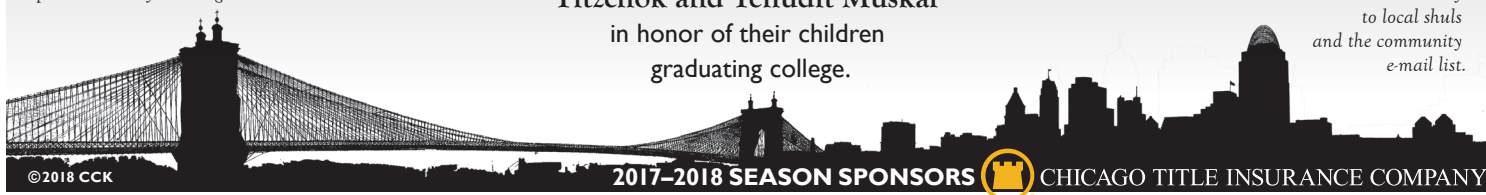
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A HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

CONTINUED

When one finds himself in such a situation, the Chazon Ish (brought in *Orchos Rabeinu* 1:59) advises that before continuing the Shemoneh Esrei, one should review the first *bracha* in his mind and then continue.

Some advise (*Biur Halachah*), that instead of continuing, one should wait and listen carefully to the *chazan* when he recites the first blessing during *Chazaras Hashatz* (repetition). Obviously when davening alone, or during *Maariv*, this solution would not work.

An interesting *chiddush* from the Mishna Berura (*Sha'ar ha-Tziyon* 96:2) is that if one failed to have proper *kavanah* during the first blessing because of a specific distraction, such as a disruptive child or because he was holding something, he may repeat the first blessing (or the entire *Shemoneh Esrei*) once the source of the distraction is gone.

It goes without saying that one who is temporarily unable to concentrate even during the first blessing, is advised not to daven just then (*MB* 101:3) even if he will miss the halachically correct time for davening. He should instead daven the next *tefillah* twice, as a *tashlumim* (makeup). 


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A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER


How many different names (proper nouns) are selected and given in this week's *sidra*?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 

GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE


RABBI MORDECHAI BECHER RELATES THAT WHEN he and his wife were in the process of moving from Australia to Israel, they were searching for an apartment with a rent they could afford. Through the Aliyah office they found one with a new resident discount. The caveat was that they could only sign for the lease if they had four guarantors to cosign with them. When

they showed up at the bank after their trip to take care of the signing, the bank employee looked up and told them, “you only have four signatures, you need a fifth one.” Their pleas that they were told four and not five fell on deaf ears. Desperation began welling up within. If they didn't sign by that afternoon, they would lose the apartment, but where would

they find a fifth person who would be willing to co-sign their lease? Rabbi Becher began to look around the bank and he looked troubled enough that a person passing by stopped and asked if everything was okay. When Rabbi Becher explained the problem, the man told him, “I'll sign.” “But you don't know who I am!” “That's fine.” And sign he did! 

TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On the 8th of Nisan, 5706 (1946), the Vaad Ho-ir (Orthodox Council) of Cincinnati opened a non-profit restaurant in a downtown building opposite the Shillitos Department store. Rabbi Silver, as head of the Vaad Ho-ir, created a committee to establish a restaurant because he felt it a necessary part of an Orthodox community, even so far as to establish that if it did not turn a profit the community would make up the difference through donations. The restaurant was originally planned to be open Shabbos and Yom Tov as well, for those who paid in advance or established credit. As the restaurant was opened just before Passover with this plan in mind, its opening menu was entirely Kosher for Passover. The restaurant even advertised that it would be hosting a Passover Seder the first two nights of Passover led by the dean of the Eitz Chaim Yeshiva and rabbi of the Love Brothers Synagogue, Rabbi Bencion Parchewski. Following Passover, Rabbi Silver announced that the restaurant would indeed remain closed on Shabbos and Yom Tov due to the difficulties of running then. Within a year the restaurant would be sold to Efraim and Ida Deustcher. 

SOURCES: Segal, Alfred. “Old Testament Restaurant on 7th St: It's conducted by laws of Deuteronomy.” *Cincinnati Post*, 9 April 1946. Ad, Every Friday, 12/26 April 1946.

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