



A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

With The Whole Soul!

UNFORTUNATELY, MANY PEOPLE LIVE WITH THE misconception that they are doing God a favor by davening, keeping kosher, putting on Tefillin. Whatever mitzvos we can think of, there are times when we are so into our routine that it is easy to forget why we're doing them. This is a mistake. The relationship we build with our Creator is directly corresponding to the focus and intentions we put in. Rabbi Motti Berger always teaches, "A relationship is only as strong as the least interested party." I think we already know who that is between us and God.

There is one commandment that requires us to give our lives, dreams, plans, homes, everything. The mitzvah is kiddush Hashem (22:32). The Torah tells us not to defame Hashem's name.

Paraphrasing Rashi, we should do the mitzvos on the condition that we would be willing to die. That is, we should have the intention that we would die for this mitzvah, rather than think that Hashem will make a miracle to save us. Yet again, what is our intention. Do we really believe this stuff, or is it just another excuse to be part of a social club?

Rashi continues, "Anyone who gives his life for the sanctification of the name of God, with the intention that Hashem will make a miracle for him, is guaranteed there will be no miracle." Anyone who expects a miracle will not be granted one.

We might ask, "Why? I'm counting on Hashem! I'm willing to die, but I'm counting on Him to save me, just like Avraham Avinu

and Chananya, Mishael, and Azaria!" That's not how Hashem works. We don't go in expecting to get "saved." We go in because it's the right thing to do. We must remember that we can't do anything for the Infinite. He doesn't need our kiddush Hashem. The whole thing is for us. The entire Torah is meant for us to build the relationship, seek what is true, and enjoy closeness with our Creator.

The story retold on Tisha B'Av describes the great Rabbi Akiva. He lived in the time of the Roman persecution, which forbade teaching Torah. Eventually, the Romans caught up with Rabbi Akiva and skinned him alive with iron combs. When they began this torturous process, he recited Shema. His students, dumbstruck with awe exclaimed, "ad caan" (until here?)" ["Rebbi, even you're being torn apart alive, are you obligated to say the Shema?"] Rabbi Akiva's response was, "My whole life, I was worried about this mitzvah. When will I be able to fulfill it? Now that I have the opportunity, should I not fulfill it?"

When we say Shema, we say we must love Hashem with our entire heart, soul, and possessions. To love God with our soul means to be willing to die for the mitzvos. Everyone is going to die, but Rabbi Akiva figured, "I want to die in a way that the entire Jewish people will know there is a God."

Does God really want our death? Of course not! He wants us to live by the mitzvos! However, if you don't know what you're willing to die for, then you're not really living. You're playing with Monopoly money. Life is a real investment. Every moment is an opportunity for kiddush Hashem. God is teaching us how to live. Say Shema and mean it! Not just when it's easy.

RABBI
ARYEH
PRIDONOFF

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Q The Torah is taken out and read from publicly several times a week. Often, when you look around shul, you will find that some people are standing while others are sitting. What is the correct position for one to be in during krias haTorah?

A Although the koreh (one reading the Torah aloud) and the person receiving the aliyah must stand the Torah is being read, the congregation is not required to stand. Indeed, there are three views in the Poskim as to what is preferred:

1. Some hold that it is preferable to stand while the Torah is being read, since krias haTorah is compared to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai where everyone stood (Rama O.C. 146:4, as explained by the M.B. 19).

2. Others maintain that there is no preference and one is free to sit or stand as one wishes (O.C. 146:6).

3. A third view holds that it is preferable to sit while the Torah is being read (Kaf haChayim 146:20 citing the view of the Ari Z"l but already sourced earlier in the Teshuvos Rama mi-Pano 91). The author himself has attended a shul where a sign has been posted saying that in this place everybody is expected to sit during the reading of the Torah!

The basic halachah follows the middle view that there is no preference whether to sit or stand during krias haTorah and one can choose to do as one desires. There are, however, some people who are stringent and insist on

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Name a word in the Torah that is vowelized with four *patachs* in a row.

See reverse side for the answer

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

standing while the Torah is being read.

However, most Poskim agree with the following:

- * A weak person who will find it difficult to concentrate should sit.

- * Between aliyos there is no reason to stand.

- * For Barechu and its response, everyone should stand (Halichos Shelomo 12, note 30, that the accepted practice is to remain seated even during Barechu), but during the recital of Birchos Hatorah themselves there is no obligation to stand.

- * The practice in most congregations is that everyone stands while the Aseres Hadibros (Ten Commandments) and Shiras Hayam (Song of the Sea) are read (Igros Moshe O.C. 4:22). As with all customs, one should not deviate from the custom of the shul where one is davening. 🕒

GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL

"Home Beis" [no that's not a typo!] allows college students to make themselves "at home" in the Kollel "Beis Midrash. Each Tuesday night, students were provided

dinner and enjoyable one-on-one Torah study with Kollel Rabbis and several very admirable lay volunteers.



IT HAD TO BE HASHEM

RABBI SHOLOM SCHWADRON OF JERUSALEM HAD a daughter, Chaya, who was not walking. Her second birthday came and went as well as her third and she was still not able to walk. Her younger sibling was able to walk and still nothing happened. She was not delayed in any other way or function which puzzled the doctors even more. The doctors said they did not foresee her circumstances changing and did not have much hope of Chaya ever walking. In the era of prewar Jerusalem there weren't any experts to consult. There was a *tzaddik* in Je-

rusalem known as Rabbi Shloimka Z'vihler (R' Shlomo of Z'vihl). Mrs. Schwadron decided to go see him to ask his blessing. Upon entering the *tzaddik's* room she began to tearfully relate that the doctors had said that her daughter would probably never walk. R' Shloimka told her, "there is a tradition in Jerusalem that someone who prays for something at the Western Wall for forty days straight will be answered." Mrs. Schwadron, hoping she did not sound too *chutzpadik*, said to R' Shloimka, "I am a mother of young children, there is no way for me to make it to the Western Wall for forty days, you should be my messenger."

There was a pause and R' Shloimka answered, "Fine. I'll do it." Mrs. Schwadron counted forty days from the day of her visit, even though she didn't know when he would start going to the Western Wall. On the fortieth day, all of a sudden, her children began shrieking from the next room. Chaya had done it. She had taken her first step and was working on another. 🕒

RIDDLE ANSWER

U'vakachas (Devarim 28:25), V'lobachas (Vayikra 14:26), Hatoras (Z'mos 26:24), V'lobachas (Vayikra 13:45). 🕒

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

From the time that mass immigration of eastern European Jews to America began in the early 1880s, the European Torah leaders worried about how to help their American brethren stay strong in Torah observance. The passing of Rabbi Yoseph Ash in 1887 (see last week's article) only increased their worry over the situation of Jews in New York. The leading *halachic* authorities of Europe wrote a letter to several congregations in New York urging them to together install a Chief Rabbi in order to help organize religious infrastructure. The result was the Association of American Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, made up of over fifteen congregations, that together began to scout for a Chief Rabbi of New York. The man chosen by the association was the *maggid* (communal preacher) and judge of Jewish monetary law in the city of Vilna, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef. The community of Vilna was saddened at the news that their beloved Rabbi Yosef would be leaving them, while in New York synagogue leaders celebrated that they had finally found the man to combat Jewish religious apathy in America. 🕒

SOURCES: Rakeff-Rothkoff, Aaron. "The Silver Era." PP 22-24. Feldheim. 1981.

Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • kollel@shul.net • cincykollel.org

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