



A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Living For Eternity

Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. So says the colloquial expression of how to deal with the ephemeral nature of life. Popular wisdom says that the source of the expression is the reaction of the Jewish people to the warnings of the prophet Yeshayah that they would lose their share in the world to come because of their sinful ways and they responded, "Eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (Yeshayah 22:19). If all we have is this world, then let us enjoy ourselves! It would seem though, that the roots of such an attitude are found in our *parasha*. Our *parasha* relates the narrative of Eisav selling his birthright to Yaakov for a pot of red lentils. When

Yaakov named the birthright as the price for the lentils, Eisav responded, "Behold I am going to die, why do I need the birthright?" The birthright carried with it eternal implications for his offspring, but all Eisav thought about was that he would not enjoy it in his lifetime, while the lentils he would. Yaakov, on the other hand, was galvanized to ensure the eternity of his offspring. We are all faced with the fact that life is fleeting. There are two roads that are open to us in how we deal with this. We can be Yaakov or we can be Eisav. We can say that it's all going to end before we know it, so we might as well enjoy ourselves, or we can say, let's

shoot for eternity. We can create and prepare for an eternal existence in the world to come. This is what our sages meant when they said in *Avos*, "This world is an entrance hall before the world to come. Prepare yourself in the entrance hall so that you may enter the banquet hall." Even though shrouds don't have pockets, as another expression goes, that which we accomplish in this world that is eternal doesn't need to be in a pocket to come with us! ☞



A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

In the *parshiyos* that we are reading now, the Talmud teaches us (*Brochos 26b*) that our *avos* (patriarchs) established our *tefillos* (prayers). Let's focus a little on the *mitzvah* of *davening* (praying) with a *minyan* (a religious quorum: ten males over *Bar Mitzvah*). Even though the idea of *minyan* is Rabbinic in nature, it has a Biblical source: When Avraham begged Hashem (G-d) to save Sodom in the merit of the *tzaddikim* who dwelled there, he ceased pleading when he realized that there were fewer than ten righteous individuals. This, says the *Ibn Ezra* (*Bereishis 18:28*), is because the fewest number of people that can constitute a *tzibur* – the basic unit for communal prayer – is ten. It follows that *tefillah*, should be conducted within a *tzibur* so that its many benefits will be realized. In the same vein, some scrupulous individuals make a point to *daven* together with *Talmidei Chachomim* (Torah Scholars) since all the prayers combine and ascend together! Indeed, the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Tefillah 8:1*) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C. 90:9*) rule that all men should make every effort to *daven* all *tefillos* with a *minyan*, for *tefillah b'tzibur* is much more than a nice idea or preference—it is a Rabbinic obligation (*Igros Moshe O.C. 2:27*).

There are, however, several cases or circumstances discussed in *Shulchan Aruch* where one is called an "o'nes" (forced) and would be exempt from a *minyan*.

For example:

- It is forbidden to eat before *davening Shacharis*. A weak person who must eat before *davening* should *daven* at home in the morning before eating and, if possible, go to *shul* afterwards to answer

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

A ruling may not be given on *Yom Tov* for what two *halachic* matters? ☞

See reverse side for the answer

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A HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

CONTINUED

Kaddish and *Kedushah*, etc. (*Biur Halachah* 89:3).

- If *tefillah b'tzibur* would cause a monetary loss, one may *daven* alone. But if it merely causes one to earn less profit, he is not allowed to skip *tefillah b'tzibur*. A deduction from a paycheck due to lateness caused by *tefillah b'tzibur* is considered a monetary loss (quoted in the name Harav S.Y. Elyashiv).

However:

- It is forbidden for a scholar to learn until late at night if it will cause him to miss *tefillah b'tzibur* the next morning (*Igros Moshe* O.C. 2:27).
- Even if one can concentrate better at home, he is still required to *daven* with a *minyan* as long as he can concentrate sufficiently to understand the simple translation of the words he is saying (*Igros Moshe* O.C. 3:7).

There are other *halochos* and scenarios in which one is exempt from *davening* with a *minyan*, which we will discuss another week. 🕊

GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL - THE KOLLEL ANNUAL EVENT



with HaRav Ben-Zion Abba Shaul.” Rav Shaul was a leader of Sephardic Jewry and Shmuel felt he owed it to his employer of many years to comply. They went to meet Rav Shaul, and Shmuel was given a chance to air his feelings. Rav Shaul listened patiently and then said, “I understand why you feel that way, but I think if you understood better what you were really doing when you took children to school you wouldn’t leave your job so fast.” “What do you mean,” asked Shmuel. “Every one of those children that you take to school is the future of the Jewish people and you are charged with bringing them to learn Torah, which ensures

the future will be bright. You are not just driving a bus; you are driving an Ark filled with living Torah Scrolls!” Shmuel walked out of the meeting with a changed attitude as the Rav’s words swirled around in his mind. The next morning as he opened the doors and the children began to run off the bus, many stopped to say thank you, and to each one Shmuel gave a resounding, “No! Thank YOU!” 🕊

A LESSON LEARNED

Shmuel was a bus driver for a religious Sephardic elementary school in Jerusalem who was getting tired of his occupation. All the noise, the asking of children to behave, was taking its toll. After all, he was reaching middle age and he didn’t have patience like he used to. Maybe driving a delivery truck would be better for him, he thought. One morning he walked into the principal’s office to officially resign. “Shmuel,” said the principal, “we cannot let you go so fast. At least come talk about your decision

RIDDLE ANSWER

It is a firstborn animal that is placed in a basket if you slaughter it on Yom Tov. 🕊
 (1) If a firstborn animal had a blemish (birth) if you slaughter it on Yom Tov. 🕊
 (2) Whether a negah is tameh or not.

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

When a person is told via telegram that an immediate family member has passed away and the person are too far to attend the burial, when does the period of mourning begin? This *halachic* issue, though not specific to America, was exacerbated by the immense size of the United States, and was brought to several *halachic* authorities. Normally, the mourning period begins when the burial has been completed. However, the *Talmud* states that those who “turn their back” on the bier, meaning they will not be involved in the burial, begin mourning the moment they turn away from following the bier to the cemetery. Rav Eliyahu Henkin, therefore, argued that people who receive news by telegram and are too far away to attend would begin mourning immediately upon hearing the news because they would not be involved in the burial. This ruling was disputed by Rabbi Chaim Fishel Epstein, at one time a rabbi in Cincinnati. He quoted the opinion of Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, head of the Volozhin Yeshiva of which Rabbi Epstein was an alumnus, that the above passage of *Talmud* allowing one to begin the mourning period before burial is only when the mourner is in the same city and decides not to follow the bier. Someone in a different locale, according to Rabbi Epstein, would therefore have to wait until after the burial to begin mourning. 🕊

SOURCES: Schwartz, Rabbi Gedalia Dov. “*Shaarei Gedulah*.” PP. 190-191. Chicago Rabbinical Council. 2007

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