

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Comeback Nation

In this week's *parasha* the Jewish nation was given their first *mitzvah* of *kiddush hachodesh*, the sanctification of the new moon. The question is, why is this *mitzvah* so important that it had to be the first *mitzvah* given to *Klal Yisrael*? In the beginning of *Bereshis*, *Rashi* brings a *medrash* that the Torah did not have to start with the beginning of *Beresishis*; it could have started with the *mitzvah* of *kiddush hachodesh*. We clearly see that everything up until that point was not a necessary part of the building of the Jewish nation and that this *mitzvah* was the beginning of the Jewish nation. The question still is why this *mitzvah*? And why at this time?

When Hashem told Moshe about the *mitzvah* of *kiddush hachodesh*, He said, "This month should be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year" (*Shemos*, 12:2). The *Sfas Emes* explains that for 210 years the Jewish nation was enslaved by the Egyptians and according to natural law there was no way for them to escape, let alone become a nation. With the *mitzvah* of *kiddush hachodesh*, Hashem was telling them that they were

different than every other nation. With all other nations in history there is a natural order where some rise and then fall, and many just disappear over time. But the Jewish nation is different. It is compared to the moon, and just like the moon waxes and wanes, so to the Jewish people, although they have their ups and downs, will always come back. At this integral point when they were about to leave Egypt and become a nation, G-d was telling them that they were different. Even though, naturally, there was no way out of Egypt, the Jews were different, and because they were G-d's nation, they could be taken out. Everyone in life has ups and downs and has times when he or she sees no hope. Hashem was teaching us this message as we were becoming a nation. At the time when the moon looks like it may almost disappear, that is when we have Rosh Chodesh. We celebrate the ability to rejuvenate, because we know that it will come back again. So too a Jew, even in the darkest moments when he sees no hope, has the power within to become a full moon again and shine brightly. 🌕



RABBI
 EPHRAIM
 SKOLNIK

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

The Rambam tells us (*Hilchos Avel* 1:1) that Moshe *Rabbeinu* established the "*Shivas Y'mei Mishteh*," the seven days that the *chossan* and *kallah* rejoice together following their wedding

The phrase "*Sheva Brachos*" refers to the set of blessings, usually seven (*sheva*) in total, recited in conjunction with the marriage ceremony and at a meal eaten in honor of the new couple during the first week of their marriage.

Since such *seudos* are common in general and *B"H* (thank G-d) more recently in the Kollel, it is important to review the various applicable *halachos*.

In order not to embarrass a groom who wouldn't be able to recite them himself, and since the blessings are meant especially for the *chossan* and *kallah*, it is customary for the *chossan* and *kallah* to honor attendees by appointing them to recite the *Sheva Brachos* and for the men reciting the *brachos* to face the *chossan* and *kallah*.

Even though there is an opinion that the same person recites all the *brachos*, the near-universal practice is to permit dividing the *brachos* among various people. This way several people can be honored by the family.

There is a specific setup and sequence to the *brachos* and they should be recited in order. If, however, a *bracha* was skipped by mistake, the missed *bracha* should be recited. The one exception is the *bracha* of *yozer ha'adam*, which cannot be made up after the *bracha* of *asher yatzar*.

A *minyan* is required in order to say all the *Sheva Brachos*, whether under the *chuppah* or during the week after. The *chossan* is included in the *minyan*. If only three are present, the blessing on the

➔ CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ➔

Mazal Tov to

the Crystal family on the birth of their daughter Chava Rena 🌕

A RIDDLE FOR YOU

When would it be permitted to cut a spot of *tzara'as* off of a person's body? 🌕

See reverse side for the answer

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

wine and the final *bracha* (*asher bara*) can still be made.

For a *chossan* or *kallah* who were never previously married, any meal that is made in their honor for the seven days following their wedding, with the wedding day counting as day one, has the status of *seudas mitzvah* and the seven blessings can be recited if bread was eaten and *Birkas Hamazon* is said. If it is a second marriage for both the *chossan* and the *kallah*, the *y'mai hamishteh* are only for three days, and *sheva brachos* is only recited following the *seudah* at the wedding if the meal began on the same Hebrew day as the wedding.

Many *Poskim* permit *Sheva Brachos* to be said even if only three out of the ten attendees ate bread and the rest ate or drank something.

In order to recite all seven *brachos*, a *panim chadashos* must be invited. This is someone who had not been at the wedding or any previous *Sheva Brachos*. Women and children do not qualify for this *halacha*. The *minhag* seems to be to allow strangers or waiters to count as *panim chadashos*. 🕍

IT HAD TO BE HASHEM

The refugees have successfully crossed the perilous Sea of Japan and have landed at the Japanese port of Tsuruga...

There was a Jewish community in the Japanese city of Kobe to which the refugees now headed. The community in Kobe warmly welcomed the refugees and arranged food and shelter for the whole group. The group found out quickly, however, that passage to the Dutch Indies and Curacao, which had been their "official" end destination, was not possible, and with their transit visas in Japan only valid for ten days, they feared what would happen next. The community leaders successfully lobbied local

GLIMPSSES OF THE KOLLEL



officials to extend the visas for a little longer, but even then, the time on the extension soon passed. An unexpected visitor to the new arrivals would prove to be their savior. Dr. Setsuzo Kotsuji, who was the Professor of Semitic languages at the University of Tokyo, heard about this group of Jewish refugees who had arrived in Kobe and, infatuated with Judaism, came to meet them. Dr. Kotsuji, who was the son of a Shinto priest, had found a bible translated into Japanese as a young teenager. He was taken by the text and was committed to learn more about it. Between two extended trips to America over 17 years, he earned a PhD in Bible studies. When Dr. Kotsuji learned of the refugees predicament, he called in a favor from a friend, Yosuke Matsuoka, who had since become the Foreign Minister of Japan and was the same Foreign Minister who had told Sugihara not to issue visas in the first place, to once again extend the visas of the arrivals from Europe. There were those among the

group who were able to now find passage to America (such as Rabbi Aharon Kotler and Zorach Warhaftig) and a number did stay in Kobe throughout the war. The large majority of refugees would end up staying in Kobe for eight months before they were told that they would have to leave the mainland of Japan. The fact that they were given the ability to stay under Japanese jurisdiction was also partly due to the efforts of Dr. Kotsuji. (Fifteen years after the end of World War II, Dr. Kotsuji immigrated to Israel and converted to Judaism.) However, the Nazis caught wind of the large group of refugees who had reached Japan and senior officials were dispatched to discuss the fate of these new arrivals with their military ally. *To be continued...* 🕍

RIDDLE ANSWER

It is on the forehead where the Bris Milah is to be performed. 🕍

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Before the concept of Jewish schooling began to stick in the late 1800s, there were many attempts to create a *cheder* to give children a Jewish education. The first attempts were by the Sephardic community in colonial times. A congregational school of the Shearith Israel Synagogue actually had to be closed because of the Revolutionary War. The next significant attempts were made by German congregations, such as the Anshei Chesed Synagogue. Sephardic children attended as well, and to satisfy all parents, dual pronunciation of Hebrew was used. The *cheder* lasted for only one year before closing because of a lack of funds. The next serious attempt was more than ten years later by the B'nei Yishurun Synagogue. That school eventually became a once-a-week *Talmud Torah* because of low registration of students. The popularity of public schools would prevent the successful establishment of Jewish day schools for another 40 years. 🕍

SOURCE: Landau, Yonah. "The Rav HaKolel and His Generation." 2019, p. 69-72.

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