

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

To Life and Beyond

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
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"After all, to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure."

Professor Albus Dumbledore*

I'm no *talmid* of Dumbledore's (the Sorting Hat sent me off to Brisk), but you gotta give him credit when it's due. Though the quote excerpted above is surely cloaked with layers of esoteric meaning, for our purposes, I'd like to discuss how it goes to the very heart of Purim's essence and the focus of our *avodah* (service) in the days that follow. The Gemara tells us that the requirement to read the *Megilla* on Purim is based upon the following logical deduction: "*u'ma mei'avdus l'cheinus amiran, mi'misa l'chaim lo kol shekein*" — "if we are obligated to say *shira* to commemorate the transition from servitude to freedom (on Pesach), then we certainly are obligated to say *shira* to commemorate the transition from death to life (on Purim)." This analytical formula is called a *kal va'chomer* (a fortiori). But there appears to be a problem with this particular analysis; as they say in Brisk (and Hogwarts) it's no "*tzu-shtell*." For a *kal va'chomer* to be effective, the two items being contrasted must be perfectly aligned in their dynamical construction. Here, this does not seem to be the case. On Pesach, we celebrate a transition that actually occurred. Servitude was experienced in real time, from which we were then redeemed. Not so on Purim. On Purim we did not transition from death to life; rather, we circumvented death entirely. This logical distinction makes the *kal va'chomer* difficult to comprehend.

The commentaries struggle with this question, and the ones with a more *kabbalistic* bend provide an answer that is truly astonishing. Says they, our assumption is incorrect. On Purim we did not simply circumvent death. On some level, we experienced it—and were

miraculously revitalized. Somehow, the decree in Heaven that the Jewish people be destroyed was issued with such potency that, on a spiritual dimension, it is as if it actually happened. The miracle, therefore, was one in which we transition from the throes of death to a newly acquired, freshly rejuvenated, life.

If this concept seems abstract, it needn't be. Its message is fully relevant. On Purim we were imbued with a new breath of life, a *t'chias ha'meisim* (resurrection of the dead) of sorts. This miraculous reality allows us to leave all negativity behind, relegated to a pre-Purim lifetime. On Purim, and the days that follow, we return to infancy, with the ability to reestablish our destinies and reshape our futures.

And maybe, just maybe, this is the secret of reading *Parshas Parah* on the Shabbos following Purim. The *parah adumah* (red calf) removes the impurity rendered by death's icy touch, imbuing us with the purity, joy, and energy of life itself. This is a perfect finale for the process of *t'chias Ha'meisim* that began on Purim. So, was Dumbledore correct? Well, maybe only partially. Through faith, prayer, and repentance, death can be conquered and transformed into the blessed opportunity of Life. To the well-organized mind, it is the greatest adventure. *L'Chaim!* 🍷

*Rowling, June 26, 1997, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 297.

A RIDDLE FOR YOU

When would a person be required to repay something even though it is worthless? (Hint: Think *chometz*.) 🍷

See reverse side for the answer

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

During the time the *Beis Hamikdash* (the Holy Temple) existed, our Sages enacted that Torah scholars should lecture publicly on the laws related to each festival thirty days before the festival. Therefore, beginning Purim, our rabbis should teach the laws of Pesach. The source for this is that Moshe stood right before Pesach and taught the laws of Pesach *Sheini* (a makeup offering on the 15th of Iyar for those who were unfit earlier). Though there are those who want to suggest, based on the above, that this obligation is Biblical, the consensus seems to be that it is only Rabbinic in nature. The reason for this requirement was so that all Jews could learn the laws about how to inspect and prepare animals for the offerings which each individual needed to bring to the *Beis Hamikdash* on the festival. Even though the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, this requirement was not abolished. Rather, it was enacted in order that one be proficient in the laws of the festival and know how to conduct himself.

Therefore, there is a *mitzvah* to study the *halachos* of Pesach during the thirty-day period before Pesach in order to review its basic laws (e.g., *kashering*, *biyur chometz*, baking matzos, how to fulfill the *mitzvos* and run a Seder properly, etc.) (O.C. 429:1 M.B. 2). In an effort to fulfill this *mitzvah*, there are those who begin learning *Mishnayos Pesachim* at their Purim seuda (meal), since it is always exactly thirty days prior to the onset of Pesach.

Included in this is the well-known *minhag* for the Rav to deliver a *drasha* on the Shabbos before Pesach, also known as *Shabbos Hagadol*, to

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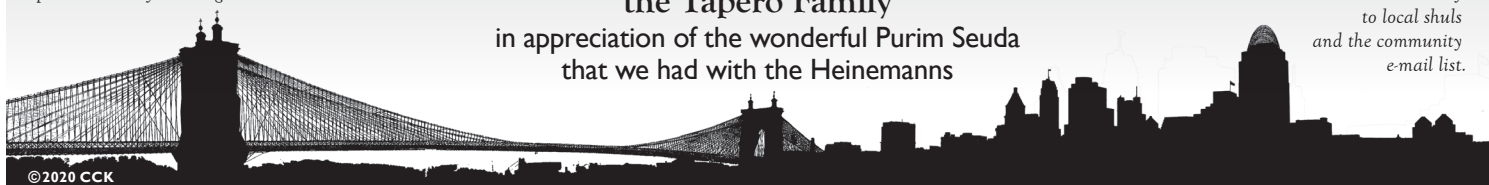
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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

review with the congregation
hilchos (the laws of) Pesach.

All this is aside from the general obligation set up by Moshe Rabbeinu to study the *halachos* of each Yom Tov throughout the holiday itself (MB 429:1).

The next few weeks we will, IY"H, go through some practical and interesting *halachos* which are essential to observing the many laws of Pesach properly. 🕒

IT HAD TO BE HASHEM

Silas Hardoon was a wealthy Jew, originally from Iraq, who lived in Shanghai, China. In 1920, Hardoon was battling an illness from which he would not recover when he saw his father in a dream asking him why he had not done more for the Jewish people. Upon awaking he resolved to listen to his father and asked for the rabbi, *Chacham Ibrahim*, to come visit. After he related his story, he asked the *Chacham* what he could do for Shanghai's Jews, and was told that he should build a synagogue building for the Shanghai community. He did, and it was named Beis Aharon Synagogue. No expense was spared during the building and it was as up to date as possible for the times. There was a modern kitchen, large dining areas, a library, beautiful furniture, and even a *mikvah*. *Chacham Ibrahim* was hoping that

this would help attract more Jews to Shanghai and contribute to the growth of the community, but it was not to be. The building stood mostly unused except to host celebrations and the like. Fast forward twenty years when the Jewish refugees from Lithuania were sent to Shanghai. Among them was the *Mir Yeshiva*, the only *yeshiva* to escape the inferno of Europe in its entirety. The *Mir Yeshiva* now needed a place to call home in Shanghai where its Torah learning could continue unabated. Rabbi Meir Ashkenazi, now Chief Rabbi of Shanghai, had a marvelous idea—the

Beis Aharon Synagogue! When the *yeshiva* members went to see the building, they were amazed to find that not only was there a beautiful building equipped with everything they would need immediately available for them to move into, but there was even the exact number of seats in the main sanctuary as there were students in the *yeshiva*! 🕒



RIDDLE ANSWER

It's a riddle about a Jewish holiday. The answer is: **Shabbat**. 🕒

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

There was a movement at one point for European immigrants to start agricultural colonies in America, and there were more than twenty such colonies created in America. One of the most notable, mostly for how badly it failed, was created outside the little village of Cotopaxi, Colorado, in the midst of the Rocky Mountains. The idea for this spot came when a Jewish businessman named Emanuel L. Greenbaum* learned that the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society might be interested in helping start an agricultural colony. He wrote to Michael Heilprin, one of the leaders of HIAS, extolling the virtues of the Cotopaxi region, as well as promising to help finance the project by providing housing, barns, and all other farming necessities for the immigrant farmers. Heilprin was excited by the idea, and identified over 20 families, totaling more than 60 people, with farming experience (which was a rarity in Russia, as Jews could not own farm land) to kick off the project. When they arrived in New York, they were very shortly thereafter sent on the train to their new home and opportunity. What they found was not what they had been told to expect. The land itself was arid, rocky soil and subject to flooding in the spring. They had been told there were twenty houses, but they found only twelve. The houses were eight feet square and did not have basics like windows, doors, or a chimney. The immigrants gamely tried to get in a crop in the short growing season, but an early frost killed that crop. Just to get by, the men took jobs on the railroad lines. Even that was not enough, and it was only through generosity of the Jewish community in Denver that they survived at all. The next two years saw their attempted crops destroyed by late season blizzards; the group disbanded and the people moved on. To add insult to injury, they found out in the end that while they had been toiling under the impression that under the Homestead Act they would eventually be given title to the land from the U.S. government, the land that had been picked for them by Satiel was already designated as part of Cotopaxi's town-site and therefore was not eligible for private ownership. The whole time they had been doing nothing more than squatting on town land. Almost all of the families, though, did settle in the western United States. 🕒

SOURCE: Levine, Dr. Yitzhak. "Jewish Colonial Farming in America: An Experiment That Went Terribly Wrong." 2009.

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