

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

5780 - A New Kind of *Sh'mitah* Year

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One of the many fascinating *mitzvos* that we do not merit to fulfill in its entirety here in the diaspora is the *mitzvah* of *sh'mitah*. Every seventh year, the farmer must let his field lay fallow, and provide the land with a year of rest. Yet it is incumbent upon us to derive some lesson from every *mitzvah*, from the myriad options that exist in depth of each commandment, and apply it to our own lives and *Avodas* (service of) Hashem as best we can.

It is interesting to note that the Torah refers to the *sh'mitah* year as "Shabbos." The rudimentary explanation for this terminology is that, just as we rest on the seventh day of the week, so too must the land "rest" on the seventh year. However, there is most definitely room for additional explanation for this somewhat puzzling description.

I once saw an uncomplicated yet penetrating insight into this choice of words. On Shabbos, we are of course instructed to refrain from doing *melacha*. Yet this does not mean we cannot do any strenuous activity. We are most certainly welcome to climb as many flights of stairs as we'd like, and to lift up our couch and put it back down if we so desire. However, to turn on the ignition of my brand new Jaguar SUV (hey, a man can dream!) would be prohibited. For it is not work per se that is disallowed. Rather, it is *creative activity* that we must refrain from on Shabbos.

Shabbos serves as a reminder that although we were created *B'tzelem Elokim*, and are able to create thoughts, ideas, and the manifold advancements that come with them, these do not belong to us. It is precisely because we are created in the image of the ultimate Creator that allows

us to engage in all of the creative activity of daily life. On Shabbos, we must cease from all creative activity in order to remind ourselves of the true source of all of this creative energy.

Sh'mitah serves the same purpose. It is referred to as "Shabbos" since it serves as a potent reminder of He who is really in charge. We allow the land to go barren and uncultivated, so as to demonstrate to ourselves the firm belief that the Almighty is the one who will truly provide for our needs.

A pause of any kind is designed to provide us with a moment to ponder that which we have just experienced. This is why Hashem made spaces in between the paragraphs of the Torah - to allow Moshe the opportunity to ponder that which he had just learned. When life gives us a break from the usual routine, and things are not functioning as "normal," it is a perfect opportunity for a "Shabbos" reminder. We can turn around and look at what life looked like just a moment ago, and remind ourselves of Who put us here and what we might need to do to achieve His goals. 🕊

Mazal Tov to

Rabbi & Mrs. Spetner & Family
 on the engagement of Rachel to
 Yaakov Apter. 🕊

A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Which person would be offered to eat every single Yom Kippur? 🕊

See reverse side for the answer

THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM
 ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

A Jew once married a Jewess who bore him a child. Soon after their marriage, World War II broke out, and the wife was tragically killed in the Holocaust. The husband was saved by a gentile woman who wrote his name on her passport as her husband. He lived with her and she gave birth to a gentile child. His Jewish son had no connection with his father because he lived in a different country.

One day, the Jewish son received a legal notification that his father died and left an inheritance of \$50 million, \$25 million of which was his! The son immediately traveled to his father's town and arrived before the funeral.

An argument then developed between the Jewish and non-Jewish son as to where their father should be buried. The Jewish son wanted his father to be buried in the Jewish section of the cemetery, while the gentile son wanted his father buried in the non-Jewish section, near his mother. Their case was brought to court and the judge ruled that the father's body should be cremated and the ashes be split between the two sons.

The Jewish son shuddered upon hearing the verdict. His lawyer suggested to offer \$50,000 to his brother for the right to the father's body—a small sum from the father's large inheritance. The son was thrilled with the suggestion, whereupon he promptly made the offer to his gentile half-brother. His response was, "If honoring your father is so important, then relinquish your privileges to the entire inheritance; let me have all \$50 million, and you can have your father."

The Jewish son realized that he would

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

not be able to arrange a proper Jewish burial for his father unless he relinquished his rights to the inheritance. Facing the tremendous *nisayon* (test), he gave up all the money, received his father's body, and gave him a proper Jewish burial.

Q *Shulchan Aruch* (Y.D. 240:5) rules that expenses used to honor one's father should be from the father's money, not the son's. Was the son obligated to give up all that money which he already acquired and was considered his, in order to bury his father in a Jewish cemetery?

A *Shulchan Aruch* rules (C.M. 253:31) that one who gifts many assets to others, and left few assets for his inheritors, they (the inheritors) are obligated to bury him. *Sm"ā*, *ibid*: 70, and *Prisha* explain that they stand in place of their father, and the money they inherit from him is used to bury him and considered his for this purpose. Even if the father requested

A LESSON LEARNED

The Aish HaTorah center in Manhattan had a weekly visit from the CEO of an up-and-coming Jet taxi service. His name was Jay and he was there to learn about his spiritual heritage. Out on the street he was a man whose name represented everything that the American dream stood for. Inside the Aish center though, he was a simple Jew learning about the heritage that no one taught him as a child. His reading of Hebrew was like a young child, and even the simplest of Torah

not to be buried, *Beis Din* (Jewish court of law) authorizes using the father's money to pay for his burial, and may certainly take money he left for his inheritors for this purpose.

Certainly then, in our case, the Jewish son must relinquish all the money to prevent his father's cremation, despite the fact that the gentile son squeezed the money from him; nonetheless, the father's money is reserved to cover his burial. 🕒

thoughts and lessons were new to him. One day his study partner could no longer contain himself. "Jay, I can't help but think of the contrast. Out of these doors you're a respected business executive on top of the world, and in here you're learning the basics. Does it strike you, too?" Jay's answer would astound his dedicated study partner, whose life was already dedicated to helping his fellow Jew connect to G-d. "You have to know this; the most exhilarating part of my life is when I come in here and learn Torah. It's here that I'm on top of the world." 🕒



Reminder: Marching to Sinai series. This Sunday at 2pm featuring Dr. David Pelcovitz on "Resilience in a time of Uncertainty"

RIDDLE ANSWER

The desert. 🕒

A preview of the upcoming week's one minute videos on cincyvirtualkollel.org



BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Jonas Phillips arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1756 as an indentured servant to a Moses Lindo. His family would become interconnected with most of the observant community of America. After earning his freedom, Phillips made his first attempt in business and married into the Machado family, prominent members of the Shearith Israel Congregation of New York (the first Synagogue in America). After marrying in 1763 until his last child was born in 1786, his wife Zipporah would give birth to 21 children. His business attempt failed and, understandably needing a source of income, he received the position of *shochet* for the Shearith Israel Congregation. As his family's needs grew past the income of a *shochet*, he once again put his hand to business, this time in the city of Philadelphia. He was more successful and became a prominent member of Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia. Already the father of many children, he joined the Philadelphia militia in 1778. Phillips is especially remembered for his letter to the constitutional convention in Philadelphia, addressed to George Washington (interestingly, the letter is dated with both the Hebrew and English date), where he requests the removal of the words, "I do believe... the... New Testament to be given by divine inspiration" from the constitution of Pennsylvania. 🕒

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. "Jonas Phillips: Orthodox Colonial Jewish Businessman." Jewish Press. 2014.
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-05-02-0291>
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12108-phillips>

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