

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Don't Sleep at the Wheel

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As Rashi explains it, the Torah relates an incident of a Jewish man cursing G-d in frustration over a court-ruling issued against him by Moshe *Rabbeinu*.

It is difficult to understand how a person who had experienced such wonderous miracles as the exodus, giving of the Torah, and the availability of the *manna* could so suddenly scorn G-d on account of a civil dispute. We would assume that a person who was witness to the open revelation of G-d and who lived in an environment intimately close to Hashem's presence, would have been of solid spiritual caliber. How could this man have fallen to a level at which it was possible to blaspheme Hashem? Furthermore, Moshe *Rabbeinu* was a person of impeccable stature who Heaven sent to serve as the emissary between Hashem and the Jewish people. How could someone so blatantly deride the verdict of such a credible and eminent leader?

The answer is that the man got angry. Rav Shimshon Pincus explains that it all happened in an instant. The antagonist had indeed been righteous, but he entered court expecting a ruling in his favor and when that did not happen his moral fabric crumbled. All levels of spirituality achieved by living so close to the Divine, any recognition of the sovereignty of Hashem or of Moshe's

authority, melted away in flash of rage. As alluded to in the wording of the Torah, "The son of an Israelite woman went out...and blasphemed," it was just as he left court that he suddenly stumbled into the abyss. In a moment, an upstanding individual had plummeted into depravity.

Something we can learn from this is that we cannot take our spiritual achievements for granted. To ensure we remain on the proper path, we must be ever cognizant of where we stand in our service to G-d, of the state of our character, and of how we interact with others. Much like driving a car, even years of experience cannot excuse a momentary lapse of caution. Living life is like driving on a highway, says Rav Pincus; constant vigilance coupled with prayer can keep us safe. We need the awareness, and we need the prayer because, after all, past performances do not guarantee future results. 🙏



THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Q) I see regarding the *mitzvah* of the *Omer* that the Torah uses the word *Shabbos* to reference the first day of the *yom tov* of Pesach. Is this a common thing that the Torah refers to any holiday as "Shabbos"? If not, is there some significance here that the Torah does describe Pesach as *Shabbos*?

A) It is certainly not common to refer to Pesach as *Shabbos*; however, the *Malbim* explains that it is specifically appropriate here. *Shabbos* is not a word that exclusively refers to the seventh day of the week. Rather it means a cessation of work which most commonly refers to the seventh day of the week, but can also refer to *yom tov* when there is also a cessation of work. If the Torah meant the seventh day of the week, it fails to identify which Saturday/*Shabbos*. The *Malbim* suggests we look at what other possible terms the Torah could have used to refer to the day after the first day of Pesach. The terms "*chag*" or "*mo'eid*" are terms exclusive to *yom tov*. However, if the Torah had used either of them, it could have been

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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understood to refer to the day following the **last** day of Pesach. If it had used the term “Pesach” it could have been understood as the day following *erev* Pesach when the Pesach sacrifice was offered. However, one might argue that it could still be understood as referring to the day after the last day of Pesach when there is also a cessation of work. To this, the *Malbim* offers an explanation. I myself would respond to this using the *Malbim*’s earlier point that “*chag*” or “*mo’eid*” could be understood as after the end of the holiday, i.e.: the seventh day. Therefore, if, when the Torah writes “the day after Shabbos,” it meant after the seventh day, it should have used the term “*chag*” or “*mo’eid*,” which more clearly refer to *yom tov*. 🤖

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week’s)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein tells the story of a girl named Abby who had experienced tremendous challenges in many areas in her life and, on her road to healing, had spent a lot of time in his home. She was progressing beautifully and was a “new” person, but there was one thing that she was holding on to that bothered Rabbi Wallerstein. Her tongue ring. Every once in a while, he would ask Abby if she would give it to him but she always told him, “Rabbi that’s one thing that you will never get away from me; it is part of who I am.” One Simchas Torah night as the Wallersteins walked home from their shul together with Abby, Rabbi Wallerstein was hit with a thought. He had heard recently of a Rabbi in Israel who would decorate the *paroches* in front of the Ark in his shul with piercings that he received from the teenagers that he would learn with. He could do his own thing with Abby’s ring. He suddenly said to Abby, “Abby, if you give me your tongue ring, I will keep it in my *tallis* bag forever, and every day when I put on my

A BA’AL HATURIM FOR YOU

The Torah in *Parshas Emor* gives us the *mitzvah* of sanctifying G-d’s name using the words, “*V’nikdashti b’soch b’nei yisrael*,” meaning “and I should be sanctified amongst the Jewish people.” These words have the same numerical value as the phrase “*Zehu ain omrim k’dusha b’pachos mei’asara*” that “this tells us that we may not say *k’dusha* with less than quorum of ten,” hinting to all the parts of prayer that sanctify G-d’s name such as *kadish* and *k’dusha*, may not be said with less than a *minyan*. 🤖

tallis and *tefillin*, I will think of you.” “Really, you’d keep it in your *tallis* bag?” “Yes, Abby I promise it would always stay in my *tallis* bag.” “Close your eyes and put out your hand Rabbi.” Rabbi Wallerstein complied and a moment later had a little wet piece of metal in his hand. Dealing with the first sensation of disgust of having a tongue ring fresh out of someone’s mouth in his hand, Rabbi Wallerstein thanked Hashem for putting the right idea in his mind at the right time. Now, Rabbi Wallerstein relates, he has about thirty different kinds of rings in his *tallis* bag. 🤖

THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

CRYPTO-SABBATIANS – NECHEMYAH CHIYUN (PART IV)

From Prague, Chiyun made his way to Berlin, where he began to search for a sponsor for the publication of his manuscript *Divrei Nechemyah*, which was now accompanied by the approbations of two great rabbis of Prague – Chief Rabbi Dovid Oppenheim and Rabbi Naftali Cohen. Although Chiyun had amassed considerable wealth from his amulets, nonetheless he searched for a sponsor. Once again Nechemyah Chiyun struck gold. It so happened that there was an on-going dispute in the Berlin Jewish community between the Liebermann and Magnus families, both of whom were owners of successful businesses as well as real estate tycoons. So Nechemyah Chiyun cleverly donned the hat of the “saintly” *kabbalist* from Eretz Yisrael and publicly sided with the Liebermann family. Mr. Liebermann, now a close friend of the visiting rabbi, funded the publication of *Divrei Nechemyah*, which was printed several weeks later by one of the leading Jewish printing houses of Berlin.

With the printing of *Divrei Nechemyah* in Berlin and loyal supporters back in Prague, Chiyun was nearing the pinnacle of his crypto-Sabbatian career; however, true success depended on the widespread dissemination of his heretical work. In the early summer of 1713, Nechemyah Chiyun triumphantly left Berlin with a wagon load of his freshly printed *Divrei Nechemyah*. His destination was Amsterdam, a thriving center of Judaism, where he anticipated to distribute his “holy” writings. After several weeks of travel, on the 6th of Tammuz, Nechemyah Chiyun arrived in Amsterdam, Holland.

The bitter and heated controversy which was about to erupt in Amsterdam, which would entangle the undisputed leader of Ashkenazic Jewry at the time, would be from the most bitter rabbinic polemics in the history of crypto-Sabbatianism. 🤖