

A PARASHA THOUGHT

For Goodness Sake

Imagine that you're walking down the street and suddenly you notice two Jewish boys running by. You turn to see what's going on, and you notice they are running to help an old man cross the street. "Wow, what nice boys," you think. What you don't realize is that, in reality, the boys are doing the same thing with very different intentions - and that these intentions have very different results.

Why?

Because there is 'doing good,' and there is 'doing GOOD.'

In this week's *parasha*, *Parshas Emor*, the *Kohanim* are told not to eat *tenumah* while in a state of ritual impurity. This is interesting because, for a *Kohein*, the act of eating sanctified food is a *mitzvah*. The Torah is telling us that it is possible for a *mitzvah*, an act of great good, to itself be a transgression.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz, the great *baal mussar*,

derived an important principle from this: even when a person is involved in doing the Almighty's service, he must be careful not to violate any transgressions in the process.

Take our scenario: one of the boys sees that the old man needs help, and he runs to help because it is the right thing to do. He wants to align his actions with his values. However, the other boy runs because he knows that if his parents witness this *mitzvah*, they will be proud and will agree to buy him an ice cream cone when he asks for one later. When all is said and done, not only is the strength of the *mitzvah* of the first boy so much stronger, but he is making himself into a more elevated person by doing so.

(Of course, we should be happy that both boys are doing the right thing, and that the man is being helped across the street, but clearly one is doing good, and one is doing GOOD.)

This reminds me of *Eishes Chayil*, which is at its core more than an ode to the perfect woman. The entire song is a *meshal* (parable) representing the relationship between the Almighty and the Jewish people. One verse says that the *eishes chayil*'s actions are "good and not bad" her entire life. The question is, once we say the *eishes chayil* does good, don't we know she also doesn't do bad? Why do we need to specify both? Because there is doing good—not bad—and there is doing good—real GOOD, for the right reasons.

The power of a Jew is tremendous. As the *Nefesh HaChaim* clearly says, our actions allow us to become "G-d-like." We can turn ourselves into the kinds of people who help create a better world, or *chas v'shalom*, into World Destroyers. The depth of this concept is better understood by looking closely at both the deeds that we do, and WHY we are doing them. When our external life becomes

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED  
ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH  
RABBI YITZCHAK PREIS

Q. I noticed that when listing parents (as in this week's parsha several times), the Torah switches off as to who is listed first — sometimes father and sometimes mother. Is this just to be balanced and fair, or are there context-relevant factors for each?

A. Nothing in Torah is arbitrary and there are, in fact, reasons for each choice of wording.

As you referenced in your question, in our *parasha* we find that when discussing the obligation for a *Kohein* to "impurify" himself upon the deaths of his relatives, mother is listed first before father. When discussing the prohibition of a *Kohein Gadol* (high priest) to become impure even at the deaths of his parents, father is listed first.

*Meshech Chochma* explains the change in order as follows:

The *Kohein Gadol* is restricted from involvement in the burial of his mother even if there is no husband left behind to tend to her needs. (The exception being if absolutely *no one* is available, rendering the deceased a *meis mitzvah*.) The Torah indicates this broad restriction by listing father first. Even after the death of his father, and the likelihood that the *Kohein Gadol's* mother is now an unmarried widow, the *Kohein Gadol* is precluded from being involved with her burial.

When the mother of a standard *kohein* passes away, the Torah demands that this *Kohein* involve himself in the burial. The *Kohein* might mistakenly think that this is true only if there is no one else who can be expected to tend to her needs. The Torah lists mother first to stress the

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Kuntzitz תשפ"ב  
on Fire

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led by Avraham Yeshaya Nakdimen

~10:00PM Maariv  
~10:30PM Maariv

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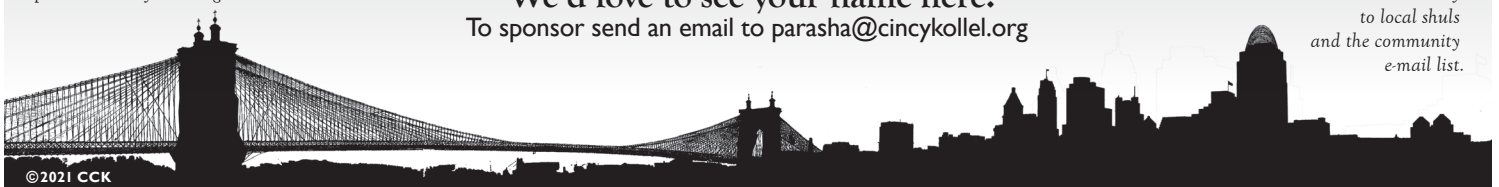
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## THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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need for him to participate even if she predeceased the *Kohein's* father, who is alive and well. Even in such case, the *Kohein* is expected to disregard his generally mandated aversion to *tumah* (impurity) and tend to his mother's final needs. 🕊️

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing [parasha@cincykollel.org](mailto:parasha@cincykollel.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 PARASHA THOUGHT

CONTINUED

an expression of our internal love of Hashem and desire to do good simply because it is the right thing to do, we elevate ourselves and the entire world around us. This is the purpose of the Jew; this is what it means to be created in the image of Hashem. In today's world of superficiality, where social media posts take the place of real action, where bumper stickers and 'one-liners' replace a thought-out life philosophy, we as Jews must strive ever harder to become true to ourselves, to know why we are doing the things that we do, and to understand the incredible responsibility that comes with being the *Am Hanivchar*. We must endeavor, like the *Kohanim* in our *parasha*, to not let our *mitzvos* be downgraded by adding intentions that are incorrect and skewed. If we can learn to want to BE good instead of satisfying ourselves with simply LOOKING good, we can actualize our greatness and fulfill *ratzon* Hashem by building our world into a truly better place. 🕊️

## A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

Recap: Rabbi Reich has an old tapestry in his car that he bought at a thrift shop for his new shul. He gives a ride to a woman, and she recognizes it as the tapestry she made for her husband, who she assumes perished in the Holocaust.

Very shaken, Rabbi Reich asked her, "Do you want it back?" "No, use it in the *shul*. That's the best place for it," she replied. Purim came and the shul was filled with excitement as people showed up who hadn't been in *shul* in years. On erev Purim, Rabbi Reich noticed an older man in the front row who was just staring at the woven Magen David on the wall and was as white as a ghost. He went over to the man and said, "Welcome to the new shul. You seem quite shaken. Is everything ok? Is there anything I can do for you?" "That tapestry—where did you get it from?" asked the man. "I got it from the thrift shop up the block. Why do you ask?" "It's mine," replied the man. "My wife gave it to me before the war and the Nazis took it from me. I haven't seen it or my wife in 40 years." The rabbi was stunned and told him, "Wait until after the Megillah reading; I have a special surprise for you." After the Megillah reading, Rabbi Reich took the man in his car and they drove out to New Jersey; all the while, he slowly broke the news to the man. When they arrived at the woman's house, Rabbi Reich went inside and slowly told the woman who he found in his *shul*. Finally, the man entered his wife's home, and the couple, with tears of joy, were reunited after 40 years through a tapestry in a thrift shop. 🕊️

## TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

The *Birchas Hashachar* continues with the *bracha* of *Malbush Arumim*, thanking Hashem for the great gift of clothing. Beside the tremendous benefit that clothing provides to protect us from the elements, specifically to Yidden clothing have an added benefit. In *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim siman 2*) Rav Yosef Karo brings laws of *tznius* that both men and women are required to have most of their body covered. Rabbi Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik explains that the laws of *tznius* are not only to avoid attracting attention to oneself, but they are also to protect the holiness of a Jew because, in addition to our souls being holy, the body of Jew is also full of *kedusha*. This idea is based on the *Gemara Shabbos* that one who is by the death of a Jew needs to rip his clothing as if he saw the burning of a Torah, because the body alone of a Jew is full of *kedusha*, and therefore needs to be protected. This is the source for why a *Kohein* wears four garments during the *Avodah* and a *Kohein Gadol* wears eight – because their higher levels of *Kedusha* require extra protection and cover. (*Megeg Givos Oilm* vol. 2 page 38) 🕊️



## ABARBANEL: FUGITIVE OF KING JOAO II OF PORTUGAL (PART I)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

During the reign of Alfonso V, whose political views allowed for the dukes and feudal lords to gain immense power and wealth, Abarbanel amassed a great deal of wealth and became politically influential. But Alfonso died suddenly during a plague in 1481, and his son and successor, Joao II, was radically opposed to his father's views and policies. His first goal was to restrict the power and influence of the dukes and lords in his kingdom. Essentially, this meant that any princes or lords who possessed great wealth would be the targets of Joao. The most successful and influential duke under the reign of Alfonso V was the Duke of Braganza, who was said to possess 50 towns and castles and nearly a third of the land of Portugal. His three brothers were also powerful and influential princes, one of whom controlled the royal army of Portugal. Thus, the Duke of Braganza and his three brothers were the greatest obstacles and Joao's first targets.

Predictably, Joao's attempt to diminish the power of the dukes was met with resistance. At this point, the Abarbanel, although unaware of it, was also marked a target of the king. This was presumably because the king assumed that he supported the Duke of Braganza in his plans to revolt. The Abarbanel, unaware that his loyalty would be in question, heeded the request that he visit the king. On May 30, 1483, Abarbanel set out for the king's court completely unaware that the king's prime target, the Duke of Braganza, had been arrested just the day before while conversing with the king at a castle in Evora (due east of Lisbon).

To be continued... 🕊️

Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • [kollel@shul.net](mailto:kollel@shul.net) • [cincykollel.org](http://cincykollel.org)

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