



10TH OF SHEBAT 5781
JANUARY 23RD, 2021
CANDLE LIGHTING 5:38PM
SHABBAT ENDS 6:38PM



**CONSTANT
GROWTH**

**TEFILLIN: NA'ASEH BEFORE
NISHMA WE DO BEFORE WE HEAR**

**A LIGHT UNTO
THE NATIONS**

PARASHAT BO

Synagogue: 310 - 95th Street, Surfside, FL 33154 **Website:** www.hechalshalom.org **Tel:** (305) 867-6024
Mailing Address: Ness 26 Inc P.O. Box 546632 Surfside, FL 33154 **E-mail:** info@hechalshalom.org |
oroziel.bookkeeper@gmail.com

THIS WEEK'S BULLETIN HAS BEEN KINDLY SPONSORED LEILUY NISHMAT
שלמה בן יעקב ז"ל, BY HIS DEAR FAMILY.



		Standard time																			שבת תשפ"א	
January / February 2021	לילה לרבינו תם R' Tam's Nightfall	לילה Nightfall	שקיעת החמה Sun set	הדלקת נרות Candle Lighting	פגל המנחה Plag Mincha	מנחה קטנה Mincha Ketana	מנחה גדולה Earliest Mincha	חצות Mid day	סוף זמן תפילה Latest Shachris	סוף זמן קריאת שמע Latest Shema	הנץ החמה Sun rise	זמן ציטית ותפילין Earliest Tallis	עלות השחר 72 דקות Dawn 72 Minutes	דף היומי Daf Yomi	שבת תשפ"א							
14 Thu	7:03	7:03	6:28	5:50	ראש חודש 5:33	4:43	3:36	1:00	12:29	10:42	9:49	9:13	9:13	7:10	6:25	5:57	5:56	נד	חמישי			
15 Fri	7:04	7:04	6:28	5:51	5:33	4:44	3:37	1:01	12:30	10:43	9:49	9:13	9:13	7:09	6:25	5:56	5:56	נה	ששי			
16 Sha	7:05	7:05	6:29	5:52	[ארא]	4:45	3:38	1:01	12:30	10:43	9:49	9:13	9:13	7:09	6:25	5:56	5:56	נו	שבת			
17 Sun	7:05	7:05	6:30	5:52		4:45	3:38	1:01	12:30	10:43	9:49	9:13	9:13	7:09	6:25	5:56	5:56	נו	ראשון			
18 Mon	7:06	7:06	6:31	5:53		4:46	3:39	1:02	12:31	10:43	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:09	6:25	5:56	5:56	נח	שני			
19 Tue	7:07	7:07	6:31	5:54		4:47	3:39	1:02	12:31	10:43	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:09	6:25	5:56	5:56	נט	שלישי			
20 Wed	7:08	7:07	6:32	5:55		4:47	3:40	1:02	12:31	10:43	9:50	9:14	9:14	7:09	6:25	5:56	5:56	ס	רביעי			
21 Thu	7:09	7:08	6:33	5:56		4:48	3:41	1:03	12:32	10:44	9:50	9:14	9:14	7:09	6:24	5:56	5:56	סא	חמישי			
22 Fri	7:09	7:09	6:33	5:56	5:38	4:49	3:41	1:03	12:32	10:44	9:50	9:14	9:14	7:08	6:24	5:55	5:56	שב	ששי			
23 Sha	7:10	7:09	6:34	5:57	[בא]	4:49	3:42	1:03	12:32	10:44	9:50	9:14	9:14	7:08	6:24	5:55	5:56	סג	שבת			
24 Sun	7:11	7:10	6:35	5:58		4:50	3:42	1:03	12:32	10:44	9:50	9:14	9:14	7:08	6:24	5:55	5:56	סד	ראשון			
25 Mon	7:12	7:11	6:36	5:59		4:51	3:43	1:04	12:33	10:44	9:50	9:14	9:14	7:08	6:24	5:55	5:56	סה	שני			
26 Tue	7:12	7:11	6:36	5:59		4:51	3:43	1:04	12:33	10:44	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:07	6:23	5:54	5:55	סו	שלישי			
27 Wed	7:13	7:12	6:37	6:00		4:52	3:44	1:04	12:33	10:44	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:07	6:23	5:54	5:55	סז	רביעי			
28 Thu	7:14	7:13	6:38	6:01	סיון בשבט	4:53	3:44	1:04	12:33	10:44	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:06	6:23	5:53	5:55	סח	חמישי			
29 Fri	7:15	7:13	6:38	6:02	5:44	4:53	3:45	1:04	12:33	10:44	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:06	6:22	5:53	5:54	סט	ששי			
30 Sha	7:15	7:14	6:39	6:02	[בשלה]	4:54	3:45	1:05	12:34	10:44	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:06	6:22	5:53	5:54	ע	שבת			
31 Sun	7:16	7:14	6:40	6:03		4:54	3:46	1:05	12:34	10:44	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:05	6:22	5:52	5:54	עא	ראשון			
1 Mon	7:17	7:15	6:40	6:04		4:55	3:46	1:05	12:34	10:44	9:49	9:13	9:14	7:05	6:21	5:52	5:53	עב	שני			
2 Tue	7:18	7:16	6:41	6:05		4:56	3:47	1:05	12:34	10:44	9:49	9:13	9:13	7:04	6:21	5:51	5:53	עג	שלישי			
3 Wed	7:18	7:16	6:42	6:05		4:56	3:47	1:05	12:34	10:44	9:48	9:12	9:13	7:04	6:21	5:51	5:53	עד	רביעי			
4 Thu	7:19	7:17	6:42	6:06		4:57	3:48	1:05	12:34	10:43	9:48	9:12	9:13	7:03	6:20	5:50	5:52	עה	חמישי			
5 Fri	7:20	7:18	6:43	6:07	5:49	4:57	3:48	1:05	12:34	10:43	9:48	9:12	9:13	7:03	6:20	5:50	5:52	עו	ששי			
6 Sha	7:20	7:18	6:44	6:07	[יתרו]	4:58	3:49	1:05	12:34	10:43	9:48	9:12	9:13	7:02	6:19	5:49	5:51	עז	שבת			
7 Sun	7:21	7:19	6:44	6:08		4:59	3:49	1:05	12:34	10:43	9:47	9:11	9:13	7:01	6:19	5:48	5:51	עח	ראשון			
8 Mon	7:22	7:19	6:45	6:09		4:59	3:49	1:05	12:34	10:43	9:47	9:11	9:12	7:01	6:18	5:48	5:50	עט	שני			
9 Tue	7:23	7:20	6:46	6:10		5:00	3:50	1:05	12:34	10:43	9:47	9:11	9:12	7:00	6:17	5:47	5:50	פ	שלישי			
10 Wed	7:23	7:21	6:46	6:10		5:00	3:50	1:05	12:34	10:42	9:46	9:10	9:12	7:00	6:17	5:47	5:49	פא	רביעי			
11 Thu	7:24	7:21	6:47	6:11		5:01	3:51	1:05	12:34	10:42	9:46	9:10	9:12	6:59	6:16	5:46	5:49	פב	חמישי			
12 Fri	7:25	7:22	6:48	6:12	5:54	5:01	3:51	1:05	12:34	10:42	9:46	9:10	9:11	6:58	6:16	5:45	5:48	פג	ששי			

Friday (Feb 12) 6:19 AM + 4 מולד חודש אדר: חלקים 4 You text us, you get zmanim! > Send a text to (516) 261-6262

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SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Candle Lighting: 5:38pm
Mincha 5:40pm
 Shir Hashirim: 5:55pm
 Shaharit Netz Minyan: 6:10am
Shaharit: 8:15am
 Zeman Keriat Shema 9:14am
 2nd Zeman Keriat Shema 9:50am
Seudat Shelishit should be done at home prior to coming to the Bet Hakeneset.
 Shiur 4:45pm
 Mincha: 5:35pm
 Followed by Devar Torah & Arvit
Shabbat Ends: 6:38pm
 Rabbenu Tam 7:10pm
Avot Ubanim 7:45pm

Come & Join us every night Monday Through Thursday after Arvit for Shiur! New Participants Welcome!

Birkat Halebana BH Mosae Shabbat!

Tu Bishbat is Wednesday Night the 27th of January, & Thursday the 28th of January!

WEEKLY SCHEDULE SUNDAY

Shaharit: 6:30am
 Hodu approx.: 6:45am
Shaharit #2 Hodu 8:30am
 Mincha 5:40pm
 Followed by Arvit.

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

Shaharit 6:30am
 Daf Yomi 7:45am
Shaharit #2 Hodu 8:00am
 Mincha 5:40pm
 Followed by Arvit & Shiurim
 Shiur in Spanish Recess

We would like to remind our Kahal Kadosh to please Donate wholeheartedly towards our Beautiful Kehila. Anyone interested in donating for any occasion, Avot Ubanim \$120, Kiddush \$350, Seudat Shelishit \$275, Weekly Bulletin \$150, Weekly Daf Yomi \$180, Daf Yomi Masechet \$2500, Yearly Daf Yomi \$5000, Weekly Breakfast \$150, Daily Learning \$180, Weekly Learning \$613, Monthly Rent \$3500, & Monthly Learning \$2000, Please contact the Board Thanking you in advance for your generous support. Tizke Lemitzvot!

Donors Column

בס"ד

We Sincerely Thank you for your generous contributions this Week! We truly appreciate it! Hashem should Bless you all with Health, Happiness, Parnasah Tova, Success, & All the Berachot of the Torah Amen!

- **Mr. Jacky Benoudiz**
- **Dr. Jean Jacques Edderai**
- **Mr. Ariel Taieb**
- **Mr. Marcelo Romano**
- **Rabbi Meta**
- **Mr. Sammy Maya**
- **Dr. Daniel Guigui**
- **Mr. Sahba Azar**
- **Mr. Shimon Shoshan**

If anyone would like to contact our Synagogue, please feel free to email info@hechalshalom.org

Torah Teasers (AISH)

1. Aside from the actual plague of darkness, when else does the land of Egypt become dark?
2. In what context is an "east wind" mentioned in this parsha? Where else in the book of Exodus is an east wind mentioned?
3. The Red Sea is mentioned in Parshat Beshalach with regard to the splitting of the sea. In what context is it mentioned in this parsha - with regard to the ten plagues?
4. Which name of a plague from Parshat Va'erah is also mentioned in this parsha? (2 answers)
5. In this parsha, where is an animal hoof mentioned?
6. In this parsha, where is a dog mentioned? What other two places in the Torah is a dog mentioned?
7. In what way is the number 21 associated with the command to eat matzah?
8. In what context are shoes mentioned in this parsha?
9. Which law in this parsha involves a bone?
10. In what context are shoulders mentioned?
11. What two-letter word appears four times in this parsha, and has two different meanings?
12. What two-letter word appears 27 times in this parsha and has four different meanings in the Torah?

Answers

- 1) During the plague of locusts, the swarm covers the entire sky, darkening the entire land (Exodus 10:15).
- 2) In this parsha, the locusts are swept into the land with an "east wind" (Exodus 10:13). In parshat Beshalach, the Red Sea is split with a powerful "east wind" (Exodus 14:21).
- 3) Locusts are blown out of Egypt by a west wind in the direction of the Red Sea (Exodus 10:19).
- 4) Moshe warned Pharaoh that the locusts will eat any remaining crops not destroyed by the plague of hail (Exodus 10:5), the seventh plague mentioned in Parshat Va'erah (Exodus 9:18). The Israelites are commanded to place the blood of the Passover sacrifice on their doorposts (Exodus 12:7); blood is the first plague mentioned in Parshat Va'erah (Exodus 7:17).
- 5) After the plague of darkness, Pharaoh proposes that the Israelites leave without their sheep and cattle. Moshe refuses, insisting that "not one hoof will remain behind" (Exodus 10:26).
- 6) Moshe warns Pharaoh that during plague of the firstborn there will be terrible screams throughout Egypt, yet amongst the Israelites "not even a dog will bark" (Exodus 11:7). In Parshat Mishpatim, the Torah commands that flesh from a torn animal should be thrown to a dog (Exodus 22:30), and in Parshat Ki Teitze, the Torah prohibits offering any animal that was exchanged for a dog (Deut. 23:19).
- 7) The last day of Passover is the 21st day of the month of Nissan (Exodus 12:18).
- 8) The Jews in Egypt were instructed to eat the Passover offering with "their shoes on their feet" (Exodus 12:11).
- 9) The Torah states that one may not break any bones of the Passover offering (Exodus 12:46).
- 10) When leaving Egypt, the Jews carried matzah on their shoulders (Exodus 12:34).
- 11) The word "na" is used to mean "please" three times in this parsha (Exodus 10:11, 10:17, 11:2). The phrase "al tochlu mimenu na" - "Do not eat it [the Passover offering] raw" - has the alternate meaning of "raw" or "undercooked" (Exodus 12:9).
- 12) The word "ki" appears 27 times in the parsha. Throughout the Torah, it is translated in four different ways: if, perhaps, rather and because (Rashi, Genesis 18:15).

Community Announcements

(It is YOUR Community, make the most of it!)

Miscellaneous Announcements:

- **This Week's Congregational Kiddush/Seudat Shelishit & Breakfast** has been **Cancelled**.
- **This Week's Daf Yomi & Avot Ubanim** has been **Kindly Sponsored by Mrs. Jeannine Furhmann in memory of her Dear Sister Chantal Mazal Tov z"l Bat Hassiba Moyal** the 11th of Shebat. Tihye Nishmata Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen!
- We are trying to update our **Congregant's contact information**. We would like to start sending texts about different Events and Shiurim. We would also like to start emailing the weekly bulletin. **We would like to start a list of Nahalot/Azkarot/Yahrzeits**. We would also like to make a **Refuah Shelema list**. Please send your contact information to the Board at info@hechalshalom.org

Important Message!!!

Eruv Update: Surfside: The Eruv in Surfside now includes the walking paths along the beach. Pushing strollers and carrying is permitted on the paths, but not beyond the path or onto the beach.

Bal Harbour: The Eruv in Bal Harbour included the inner (western) walking path only. The pier at Haulover Cut is not included.

- Before hanging up anything anywhere in the Bet Hakeneset, please seek authorization from the Board. This includes flyers etc.
- Please be advised that prior to bringing any food or drinks for any occasion, you must first seek the authorization from the Board.

Special Announcements

- We are pleased to announce that Ness 26 is part of the **Amazon Charity Program**, which would allow our community to collect 0.5% of all the orders made by any of you on Amazon.com. In order to register you need to log on smile.amazon.com and select Ness 26, Inc as the Charitable Organization you want to support, and from then shop on smile.amazon.com instead of www.amazon.com. It won't cost anything more, and is an easy way to contribute to our budget needs.
- Anyone wishing to receive the **Daily Halacha** please send a whatsapp message to Simon Chocron 786-351-1573

Community Calendar:

- **The program for Teenaged Boys** ages 13-18 Started again with Great Succes with Shiur & Supper on **Sunday Evenings After Arvit at around at 6:30 pm With Supper**. New Participants Welcome! Anyone wishing to sponsor this Shiur Please contact the Board. Tizke Lemitzvot! In Recess
- We have started the **Mishmar Program** Every other Thursday evening at 8:00 pm **with Chulent, Beer, & Snacks. Everyone is welcome!**

Avot Ubanim: This Mosae Shabbat at 7:45pm **In Recess**

Youth Minyan

- We are very proud of our YOUTH/TEEN MINYAN lead by our Dear Dr. Ari Benmergui geared to train and teach our future generations on the different Tefillot and Parashiyot. Please encourage your children to come early & participate. Looking forward to seeing lots of Nahat from them!

Refuah Shelema List

Men

Women

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yosef Zvi Ben Sara Yosefia, • Yosef Haim Ben Mesouda • Mordechai Ben Brucha Malka Shmalo, • Yizhak Abraham Ben Sheli, • Yosef Yizhak Ben Sara Hana, • Mordechai Ben Miriam, • Meir Raymond Ben Mathilde • Menahem Ben Shira • Aviv Ben Luba Miriam • Mordechai Ben Mercedes • Yaacov Refael Ben Alegria • Avraham Ben Leah • Moshe Ben Rahel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaac Ben Mesoda, • Haim Ben Marcelle, • Yizhak Ben Simja • Reuben Ben Eta, • Michael Ben Aliza, • David Ben Freha Rina • Netanel Sayegh Ben Rosa • Shalom Gibly Ben Fortuna • Yaakov Ben Simha Alegria • Ruben Leib Ben Eta • David Benichu Bar Aicha • Nathan Moshe Hai Ben Miryam Jaqueline Sandy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simja Bat Esther, • Rachel Bat Sarah, • Nina Bat Rachel, • Gitel Rina Bat Yael, • Miriam Bat Sofy, • Rahma Bat Simha • Esther Bat Fortuna • Malka Bat Dina • Raizel Bat Miriam • Leah Bat Rivka • Camouna Bat Fortuna • Sol Bat Perla 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Leticia Bat Mesoda, • Alegria Simha Bat Esther, • Naomie Bat Rarel Adda, • Malka Bat Joyce Simja, • Sivan Simha Bat Yehudit, • Natalie Rachel Bat Nancy, • Abigael Haya Bat Esther • Madeleine Bat Esther • Nurit Jacqueline Bat Rahel • Chana Bat Bilha • Marcelle Mesoda Bat Alegria • Eva Bat Yael Khayat

Hechal Shalom / Or Oziel

We Would like to Wholeheartedly

Thank our Dear Friends

Yanick Ayache

For generously

Donating the Rent of

Shebat 5781

In Honor of My Dear Wife Shira Yaffa Bat Sara. May Hashem Bless you with Health, Shalom, Happiness, and may you continue to be the light of our family!

We truly appreciate it.

In this Merit,

May Hashem Bless you & your Wonderful Family with all the Berachot in the Torah Amen.



DAF YOMI SPONSORS



THIS YEAR'S LEARNING OF THE DAF YOMI
IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY

THE KAMHAZI FAMILY

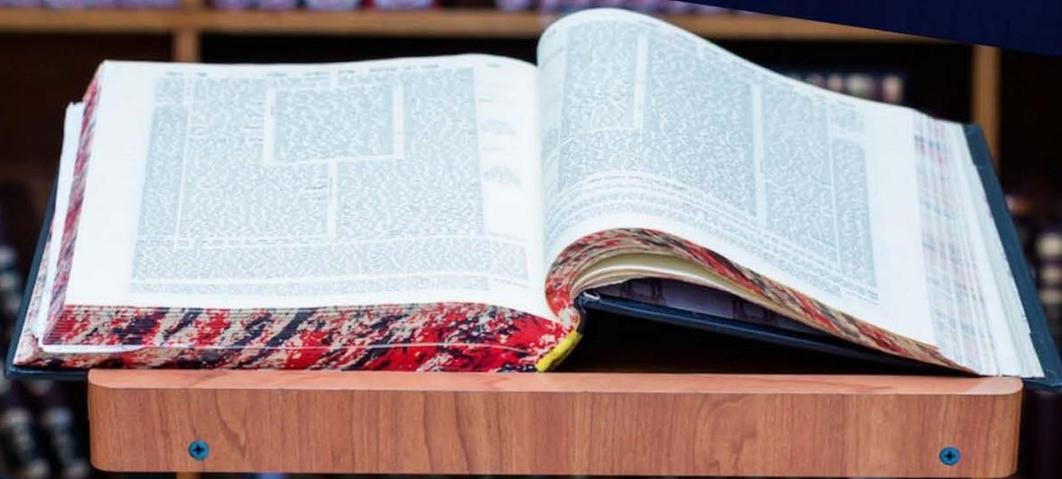
IN MEMORY OF THEIR DEAR FATHER

SHELOMO BEN YAAKOV Z"l

& FOR HATZLACHA OF THE WHOLE FAMILY.

HASHEM SHOULD BLESS THEM WITH

HEALTH, HAPPINESS, & LONG LIFE, AMEN.



THIS YEAR'S LEARNING OF DAF YOMI IS
GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY

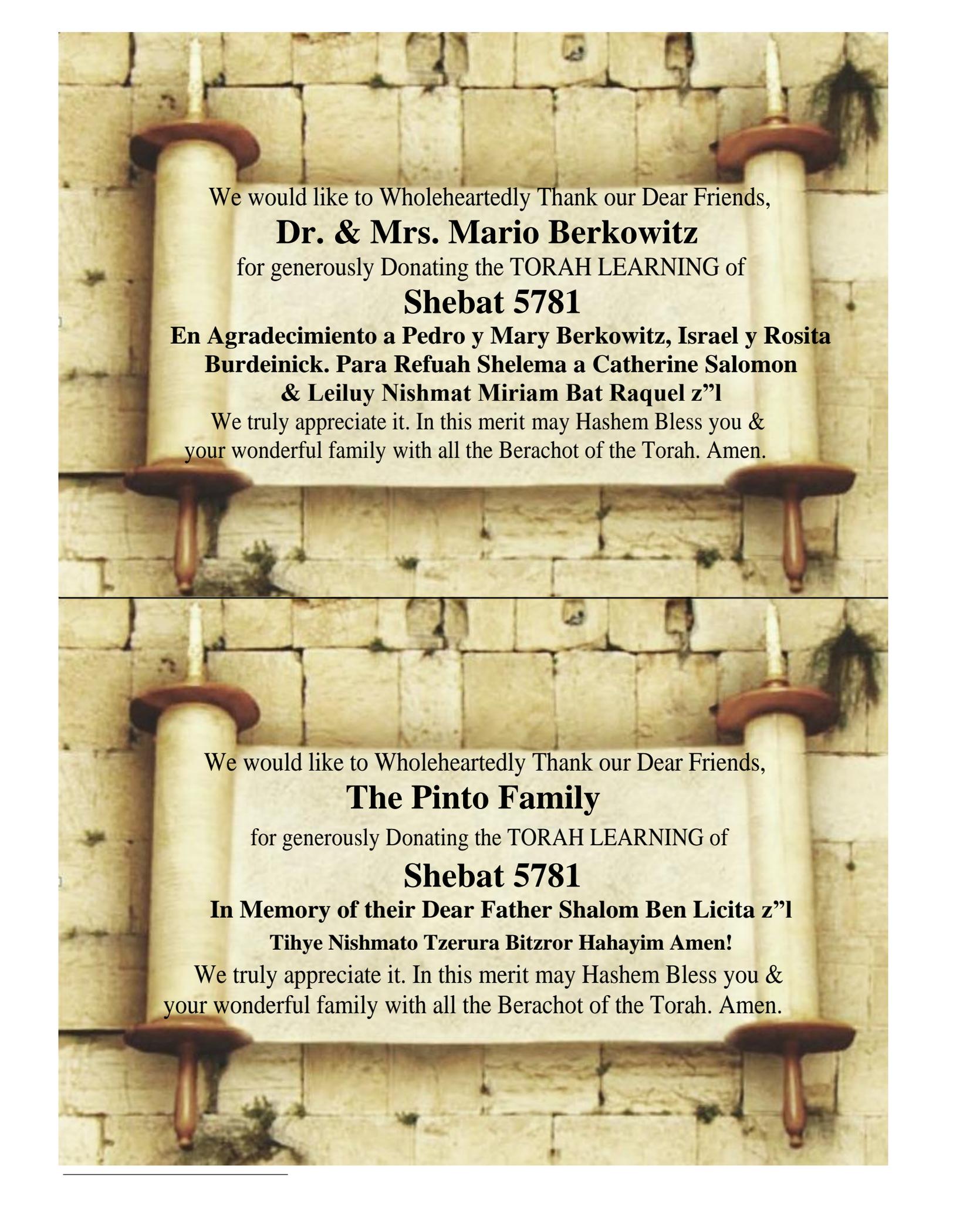
THE AKKAD FAMILY

LEILUY NISHMAT

אברהם בן גרסי-ה ז"ל, שלמה בן תמם ז"ל, אליהו בן רחל
ז"ל, ותמם בת אורו ז"ל תנצב"ה

HASHEM SHOULD BLESS THEM WITH

HEALTH, HAPPINESS, & LONG LIFE, AMEN.



We would like to Wholeheartedly Thank our Dear Friends,

Dr. & Mrs. Mario Berkowitz

for generously Donating the TORAH LEARNING of

Shebat 5781

**En Agradecimiento a Pedro y Mary Berkowitz, Israel y Rosita
Burdeinick. Para Refuah Shelema a Catherine Salomon
& Leiluy Nishmat Miriam Bat Raquel z”l**

We truly appreciate it. In this merit may Hashem Bless you &
your wonderful family with all the Berachot of the Torah. Amen.

We would like to Wholeheartedly Thank our Dear Friends,

The Pinto Family

for generously Donating the TORAH LEARNING of

Shebat 5781

In Memory of their Dear Father Shalom Ben Licita z”l

Tihye Nishmato Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen!

We truly appreciate it. In this merit may Hashem Bless you &
your wonderful family with all the Berachot of the Torah. Amen.

We would like to Wholeheartedly Thank our Dear Friends,

Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Bengio

for generously Donating the TORAH LEARNING of

Shebat 5781

In Memory of the Dear Rav Yehuda Kelemar Ben Dov Ber zt"l

Tihye Nishmato Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen!

We truly appreciate it. In this merit may Hashem Bless you & your wonderful family with all the Berachot of the Torah. Amen.

Happy Birthday To

- Eliyahu Aquinin – Fri. Jan. 22nd,
- Adina Benmergui – Wed. Jan. 27th,
- Yosef Eliyahu Benmergui – Wed. Jan. 27th,
- Mr. Ben Romano – Fri Feb 5th,
- Mrs. Arielle Albergel – Sun. Feb. 7th,
- Mrs. Julia Cohen – Sun. Feb. 7th,
- Moshe Benmergui – Mon. Feb. 8th,
- Miss Arielle Miriam Gad – Mon. Feb. 8th,
- Mrs. Esther Benhayoun – Tue. Feb. 9th,
- Andrea Refaela Zonana – Tue. Feb. 9th,
- Shai Cohen – Thurs. Feb. 11th,
- Mrs. Anais Becker – Fri. Feb. 12th,
- Mrs. Zari Werta – Sun. Feb. 14th,
- Mrs. Sultana Aquinin – Sun. Feb. 14th,
- Daniel Yosef Perez – Sun. Feb. 14th,
- Clara Aquinin – Tue. Feb. 16th,
- Yaniv Shlomo Cohen – Shabb. Feb. 20th,
- Perla Aquinin – Sun. Feb. 21st,
- Mr. Arnaud Sitbon – Sun. Feb. 21st,
- Channah Natalie Allouche – Mon. Feb. 22nd,

Happy Anniversary To

Nahalot

- Beno Ben Sali z"l Shabbat the 11th of Shebat (Father of Mrs. Silvia Cohen)
- Yaacov Cohen Bar Meir z"l the 11th of Shebat (Grandfather of Dr. Max & Mr. Isaac Nahon)
- Chantal Mazal Tov z"l Bat Hassiba Moyal the 11th of Shebat (Sister of Mrs. Jeannine Fuhmann)
- Yitzchak Chocron Ben Freha z"l the 12th of Shebat (Father of Mrs. Perla Edderai)
- Aicha Courchia Bat Simha z"l the 12th of Shebat (Mother of Mr. Jean Paul Courchia)

Next Shabbatot:

- Clara Bat Perla z"l the 19th of Shebat (Grandmother of Mr. Albert Belecen)
- Dr. Abraham Romano z"l the 19th of Shebat (Father of Mr. Marcelo Romano)
- Isaac Edderai Ben Nedjma z"l the 20th of Shebat (Grandfather of Dr. Jean Jacques Edderai)
- Abraham Benbeniste z"l the 22nd of Shebat (Father of Mrs. Lina Genoun z"l)
- Azriel Strulovic Ben Avraham z"l the 22nd of Shebat (Father of Mr. Yom Tov Levi)
- Moshe Belecen Bar Yamin z"l the 25th of Shebat (Grandfather of Mr. Albert Belecen)

WEEKLY INSPIRATION

Constant Growth

(Rabbi Mansour Daily Halacha)

Parashat Bo tells us of G-d's commands to Beneh Yisrael regarding the Korban Pesah – the paschal sacrifice which they offered on the night of the Exodus, before they left Egypt. G-d commanded Moshe to instruct the people to place the blood of the sacrifice on the two sides of the doorposts ("Mezuzot") and on the top of the doorframe ("Mashkof" – 12:7). Interestingly, however, when Moshe relayed these commands to the people, he reversed the sequence, instructing them to place blood on the top of the doorframe and then on the posts. Why did Moshe deviate from G-d's instructions, and reverse the sequence?

King Shlomo teaches us in Mishleh (3:16), "Orech Yamim Bi'yminah Bi'smolah Osher Ve'chavod" – "Longevity is to the right [of Torah], and to the left is wealth and honor." It has been suggested that the doorposts, which stand to the right and to the left of a person as he walks through, symbolize these blessings of longevity, wealth and honor. Sometimes a person involves himself in Torah for ulterior motives, hoping to earn reward. He commits himself not out of a genuine devotion to the Almighty, but rather to receive the rewards promised for involvement in Torah. The Gemara in Masechet Pesachim (50b) famously teaches that although learning "She'lo Li'shmah" – for insincere motives – is less than ideal, it is nevertheless acceptable. The reason is that once a person begins getting involved in Torah out of self-serving motives, he will, with time, reach the level of "Li'shmah" – learning Torah for sincere, altruistic reasons. Accordingly, G-d instructed Beneh Yisrael to begin with the "doorposts" – the rewards for Torah. Before we can rise to the level of "Li'shmah," where we learn and practice out of a deep-seated and genuine love of G-d, we should first begin with the more modest level of "She'lo Li'shmah," involving ourselves in Torah in order to reap the practical benefits that it offers us.

The question then becomes, why did Moshe reverse the order? Why did he tell the people to start with the "top," with the ideal level of "Li'shmah," and only then to descend to the "doorposts," to the ulterior motives for learning Torah?

The answer is that growth is an ongoing, lifelong process. Every time we rise to a new level of spiritual achievement, we must look further to the next level. The new level we have achieved should, with time, seem to us unsatisfactory, such that we then set our sights upon a more ambitious level. This is indicated by the Gemara's formulation in Pesachim: "A person should always engage in Torah and Misvot even not for their sake..." The Gemara teaches us that one should always study and practice "She'lo Li'shmah." Once a person reaches a level of "Li'shmah," that level should then seem like "She'lo Li'shmah." The level of sincerity we achieve now should seem to us later as insincere. We must constantly be striving to raise our standards, to grow in our level of sincerity and purity of motives. And thus, Moshe told the people that after they reach the "Mashkof," the exalted level of "Li'shmah," they must then descend, so-to-speak, and see themselves back on the level of the "Mezuzot," the level of "She'lo Li'shmah." What seems to us as an admirable spiritual achievement now must seem insufficient as we continue to grow and develop in our religious commitment.

This is one of the vital messages that Beneh Yisrael were taught at this moment, as they were about to leave Egypt and become G-d's sacred nation. They were told that they need to constantly grow and advance, that no achievement is ever sufficient. Every new level we reach should be celebrated, but we mustn't stop there. We must continue working to progress and reach ever greater heights, each day of our lives, one modest achievement at a time.

Our Top Priority

(Rabbi Eli Mansour)

After being warned of the impending plague of Arbeh (locusts), Pharaoh enters into a dialogue

with Moshe, expressing a willingness to allow Beneh Yisrael to leave Egypt. He asks Moshe, "Mi Va'mi Ha'holechim" – "Who are the ones going?" – and Moshe responds that he intends to bring with him the entire nation: "With our youth and our elders we will go...for we have a festival to G-d." Pharaoh flatly denies this demand. He tells Moshe that he is prepared to allow the older members of the nation to leave, but not the youth. At that point, the negotiations break down, and G-d unleashes the deadly plague of locusts against Egypt.

Pharaoh understood one of the basic truisms of Jewish survival – it's all about the youth, the younger generation. He was ready to allow the adults to leave and worship their G-d. He was not worried about them. What he insisted upon was that the youngsters remain in Egypt, exposed to the lures of Egyptian culture and society. The youth are impressionable, and Pharaoh did want them to come under the influence of the religious observance that Beneh Yisrael had planned to conduct upon leaving Egypt. He wanted the Israelite youth to remain in Egypt, under the strong influence of Egyptian culture, so they would harbor no feelings of loyalty to their religious traditions.

Moshe therefore firmly declared, "With our youth and our elders we will go." Significantly, he first mentioned the youth before the elderly, because the young generation was his priority. For the precise same reason that Pharaoh refused to allow the youth to go worship G-d, Moshe demanded that the youth go – and even made them the priority. From Moshe's perspective, if there would be room on the bus out of Egypt for either the youngsters or the older folks, the youngsters would be given the seats – because they, more than the others, needed to be removed outside the influence of Egyptian society, and brought into the service of the Almighty.

This is a critical lesson for us, especially in contemporary society, where the influence and lure of anti-Torah culture, beliefs and behaviors is so strong and so pervasive. Now, perhaps more than ever before, we must prioritize our children's education. Certainly, we must take care of the adults and elderly, too. But Moshe's proclamation – "With our youth and our elders

we will go" – must serve as our motto, as well. The youth's education comes before all else. Impressionable minds in today's society, when people walk around with the very worst that culture has to offer in their pockets, need protection. And we must make this protection our highest priority, just as it was for Moshe.

Tuition affordability is certainly a major challenge facing American Jewry. But let us ask ourselves: if, Heaven forbid, an observant couple had a child who was considering marrying a non-Jew, how much money would they be willing to spend to convince him or her to end the courtship? I imagine they would be prepared to pay whatever sum was needed, even if this meant mortgaging the house and pawning their valuables. When we look at it from this perspective, the price of tuition does not seem quite so daunting. This is the price we need to pay in today's society to protect our children and guide them to a life of Torah observance.

Baruch Hashem, our community is successful because it makes and has always made Torah education its highest priority. This is the model and example we must continue to follow, so that our children can successfully withstand the pressures of contemporary society and grow to be loyal and worthy heirs of our sacred tradition.

Tefillin: Na'aseh before Nishma / The Power of a Hint

(Rabbi Frand from Torah.org)

Insincere Converts Will Put on Their Tefillin Backwards

In the last *pasuk* of Parashat Bo, the Torah, in speaking about the Mitzvah of *Tefillin*, states: "And it shall be a sign upon your arm, and for *totafot* between your eyes, for with a strong hand Hashem removed us from Egypt." [Shemot 13:16] The mitzvah of *Tefillin* is to have *Tefillin* both on one's arm and on one's head. The Mechilta, which is a collection of Tannaitic teachings relating to the laws taught

in the chapters of the Book of Shemot, interprets this *pasuk* as teaching that as long as one's hand-*Tefillin* are on his arm, his head-*Tefillin* needs to be worn on his head. The practical import of this instruction is that the sequence for putting on and removing *Tefillin* is that first we put on the hand *Tefillin* and then we put on the head *Tefillin*; first we remove the head *Tefillin* and then we remove the hand *Tefillin*.

The sefer *Bei Chiya* raises an interesting question. The Talmud states, "We will not accept converts in Messianic times" [*Avodah Zarah* 3b]. The reason for that is that in Messianic times, everyone will want to jump on the bandwagon of the Jewish people. Everyone will want to become a part of the obviously "Chosen Nation." However, we do not need Johnny-come-lately type of additions to *Klal Yisrael*. The Gemara notes that for similar reasons, converts were not accepted during the monarchies of David or Shlomo. This was the apex of Jewish history, and then too, everyone was anxious to join the premier nation, which was the envy of the world.

The Gemara says that despite these restrictions, there are people who will say, "We want to join the club anyway." They are going to put on *Tefillin* on their heads and *Tefillin* on their arms and *Tzitsit* on their clothing - to appear as Jews. However, when these insincere converts see the pre-Messianic War of Gog and Magog and the associated trauma and stress that will impact the Jewish community in that time, they will say "Forget it! We do not need this." They will abandon their *Tefillin* and *Tzitsit* and walk away from them.

It is interesting to note that the Talmud, in mentioning the practices of these "insincere converts," says that they put *Tefillin* on their heads and *Tefillin* on their arms. Now, as we mentioned before, that is the wrong sequence! Once they are already putting on *Tefillin*, they should do it right: It should first be *Tefillin* on their arm and then *Tefillin* on their head! The sefer *Bei Chiya* gives an interesting explanation:

Even though there is a halacha that the hand *Tefillin* must be worn at all times when the

head *Tefillin* is worn, there is a great symbolism in this as well. It basically echoes the same concept as "*Na'aseh v'Nishma*" (the proclamation the Jews gave at Sinai: "We will do and we will understand.") Jewish theology is based on first doing and then asking questions and coming to an understanding of why I am doing. We are willing to do, even if in the interim we do not understand.

This differentiates between *Klal Yisrael* and the Nations of the World. The famous Medrash teaches that the Almighty took the Torah and went to offer it to the various nations of the world. Each one first inquired "What is written therein?" To one nation He said "You shall not murder." To another nation He said "You shall not commit adultery." A third nation was taught that theft is prohibited. Each nation rejected the Torah because they refused to commit to the prohibition the Almighty called to their attention.

Rav Weinberg always used to say that the problem with the nations' answer was not that they said "Well, I cannot accept a prohibition to murder", "I cannot accept a prohibition of adultery", "I cannot accept a prohibition of thievery." The nations were already disqualified as soon as they asked "What is written therein?" even before hearing a sample command and rejecting it. The very inquiry as to what is written there implies a refusal to commit. Someone who refuses to commit cannot accept Torah.

This is in sharp contrast to what *Klal Yisrael* said - *Na'aseh v'Nishma!* No questions asked! We sign a blank check and we allow Him to fill it in! We had such faith in the Master of the Universe that we were willing to do that. This is what *Chazal* mean when they say "Who revealed to My children this secret?"

This is why hand *Tefillin* precede head *Tefillin* (when being put on). *Tefillin* can be on the arm (implying action) without there being *Tefillin* on the head (implying understanding); but if the *Tefillin* are on the head (implying making an attempt to understand) without being on the hand (implying commitment for action), that does not work. Understanding (the brain) in Judaism must always come after action (the hand).

Now we understand perfectly the Talmudic reference to insincere converts who put *Tefillin* first on their heads and then on their arms. It was the same theology and philosophy of life as the nations who refused to accept the Torah: First explain it to me. I will decide afterwards whether to accept it or not. We see that they did not last. One who lacks the "*Na'aseh v'Nishma*" commitment is disqualified from being part of the Jewish nation.

Pharaoh! Wake Up and Smell the Coffee!

The Medrash in this week's parsha, on the *pasuk* "Go to Pharaoh..." [Shemot 10:1], states: "Rabbi Yehuda began by saying, 'Fortunate are the people who understand the call of the *Teruah* blast; *Hashem*, in the Light of Your Presence they walk.'" [Tehillim 89:16] This *pasuk* from Psalms is obviously associated with *Tekiat Shofar*. It is recited on Rosh Hashanna after the completion of blowing the first set of Shofar blasts.

This is a beautiful *pasuk*, but what on earth does it have to do with "Go to Pharaoh..."? There are many fundamental *mitzvot* in Parashat Bo - *Pesah*, *Hametz*, *Tefillin*, *Bechor*. The *mitzva* of *Shofar* does not appear in this parsha! What on earth does "*Ashre ha'Am yode Teruah*" have to do with "*Bo el Pharaoh*?"

The Chidushe HaRim cites in this connection a very famous Rambam in the third chapter of Hilchot Teshuvah. The Rambam writes there: "Even though blowing shofar is a Divine Decree (with no apparent logic), it carries a tremendous message within it (*remez yesh bo*): Arise those who slumber from your sleep, wake up from your drowsiness and repent."

A *remez* is a 'hint' and sometimes a 'hint' can be even more powerful than a long speech. Sometimes even the wink of an eye or the nod of one's head - the slightest gesture - can deliver a far greater impact than a twenty-minute oration. "A hint suffices for the wise."

When the Rambam says that *Tekiat Shofar* contains within it a hint (*remez*), he is saying

that *Klal Yisrael* respond to the *remez* of *Tekiat Shofar*. There are no words that come out of the shofar - it is merely a series of sounds that emerge. But that sound is enough to send a message that I need to wake up from my slumber. This sound can sometimes be more powerful than the most eloquent of *drashot*.

The first time we hear the shofar - perhaps even in Elul, but certainly on the first day of Rosh Hashanna - we start to tremble. It sends a message. There is no screaming, there is no yelling, there is no fire and brimstone, just that *kol shofar* - the hint within it. And *Klal Yisrael* responds.

The Chidushe HaRim explains that Rabbi Yehuda in the Medrash means as follows: Come and see the difference between the Jewish people and Pharaoh. Parashat Bo contains Plagues #8, #9, and #10. Pharaoh has already gone through seven plagues. He has been banged over the head time and time and time again. Wake up and smell the coffee, Pharaoh! Don't you see where this is headed? Why can't you figure it out? Why don't you respond? Are you blind? Are you deaf? Are you dumb? What is it that you do not get? They are going to take your entire country down the drain!

Such is sometimes the nature of people. They can be hit over the head, they can be yelled at, they can be slapped in the face, they can have cold water poured over their head. Everything! And still they do not wake up.

Rabbi Yehudah began and expounded: Fortunate is the nation who knows the *Teruah*. *Klal Yisrael* understand the *Teruah*. They hear one sound and already they intuitively understand the hint contained within it. That one sound already arouses them to repent. Such is the difference between Pharaoh and *Klal Yisrael*.

A Light Unto the Nations

(Rabbi Zev Leff)

The Israelites [also] did as Moses had said. They requested silver and gold articles and clothing from the Egyptians. G-d Made the

Egyptians respect the people, and they granted their request. [The Israelites] thus drained Egypt of its wealth (Shemot 12:35-36).

Prior to the Exodus, Hashem caused the Jews to find favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. The immediate reason for this was so that the Egyptians would readily offer their vessels of gold and silver to Bnei Yisrael, in fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Avraham that his descendants would leave their servitude with great wealth. But if that were Hashem's only intention, it would have been sufficient to cause the Egyptians to give over their wealth out of fear of Bnei Yisrael.

We must, therefore, seek another explanation for the miracle of the Jews finding favor in the eyes of the Egyptians (see Ramban to Shemot 113)-i.e., some reason why it made a difference whether the Egyptians loved and respected us or merely feared us?

Throughout our galut, we have been mocked, hated and killed by the nations of the world. We have had to strengthen ourselves not to concern ourselves with those who deride us because of our service to Hashem (see Rema to Orach Hachaim 1:1). There is a danger, however that this state of affairs will be seen as being the way things are meant to be, that we will view the mockery to which we are subjected as an indication of the perfection of our avodah.

The Torah teaches us that the opposite is true "Learn and observe [the Torah] for it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear of all these laws and proclaim that this is truly a great, wise and understanding nation" (Devarim 4 6). It is clear that the Torah attaches importance to the respect given us by the nations of the world.

The Netziv writes (Ha'amek Davar to Bamidbar 14:21) that the goal of creation is that G-d's glory fill the entire earth i.e., that all human beings recognize Him. As we proclaim twice daily in the Shema, our perception of the oneness of G-d will only be complete when Hashem, Who is acknowledged now only by the Jewish People, will be the one G-d recognized by the entire world. "When Hashem will be King over the whole world, on that day will He be One and His Name one" (Zechariah 14 9).

This acknowledgment of G-d by the nations of the world is so important that the miracle of the splitting of the Sea was performed in order that "the Egyptians should know that I am G-d" (Shemot 7 5). Ibn Ezra adds that the Egyptians referred to were those who drowned. Thus the splitting of the Sea was warranted even for the few seconds of recognition of G-d by the drowning Egyptians. The World to Come is not limited to Jews; the righteous gentile, who observes the Mitzvot incumbent upon him as Divine imperatives, also merits Olam Haba.

We, the Nation of Priests, represent Hashem to the world by our exemplary lifestyle, and imbue the world with knowledge of His existence. "We are a light unto the nations" (Yeshayahu 42:6). The Netziv explains that this function could have been achieved by the Jewish people settling in Eretz Yisrael and inspiring the entire world through an awareness of the miraculous Divine Providence that guides the Jew in his land. We did not merit this. As a consequence, it became necessary to spread the knowledge of Hashem by living among the nations and causing them to witness how we sacrifice ourselves for G-d's Name. Our survival as a solitary lamb among seventy hungry wolves points to the existence of a Divine Creator, whose Divine Providence guides and protects His nation.

The halachah consistently exhorts us to act in a way which will effect a kiddush Hashem (sanctification of the Divine Name), and thereby brings us respect as a holy and upright people. We are forbidden to desecrate G-d's Name by giving the gentiles reason to castigate us for conduct unbefitting a holy nation (see Choshen Mishpat 266 regarding returning lost articles to a non-Jew). Kiddush Hashem is a facet of the mitzvah of ahavas Hashem, love of G-d. Rambam in Sefer HaMitzvos writes that this mitzvah includes an imperative to call out to all mankind to serve G-d and acknowledge Him.

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 6) says, " 'And he is a witness,' this refers to Yisrael, as it says, 'You are my witnesses, says Hashem, and I am your Lord....' If you will not testify, you will carry His sin." If you do not relate My existence to the nations, says Hashem, I will exact punishment from you. The nations of the world should

ideally function in unison with us to proclaim and acknowledge the Creator.

We bring seventy sacrifices on Succot for the benefit of the seventy nations, yet we bring them in descending order to intimate that the nations should decrease. There is no contradiction in this. The need for seventy distinct nations is only a result of the Tower of Babel at which mankind united to deny G-d. As a consequence, G-d created divisions among them to thwart this attempt to countermand the purpose of man. The ideal, however, is that mankind should unite in the service of G-d. As the prophet Zephaniah proclaims, "Then will I return to the nations a clear language so that they can all call on the Name of Hashem and serve Him in unison" (Zephaniah 3 9).

As G-d's representatives, we must ultimately command the respect and favor of the nations of the world in order to fill the world with His glory. That occurs, says Rashi, only when we fulfill the Mitzvot properly. A mitzvah fulfilled properly is G-dly and perfect and can only command respect and admiration. If we fail to perform the Mitzvot properly, however, then we will be considered fools. Derision and mockery will be our lot, for the portion of the mitzvah improperly performed is not Divine and therefore elicits ridicule that then spreads and encompasses the entire mitzvah.

Chazal explain that the verse, "All nations of the earth will see that G-d's Name has been called upon you and will respect and fear you," refers to the tefillin placed on the head. The Vilna Gaon added that this means not just the tefillin on the head but the tefillin in the head - i.e., the internalized intention with which the mitzvah is performed.

The scorn of the nations of the world is not a sign of our perfection, but rather that something is lacking in our service of Hashem, that we have failed in our role of leading a life of holiness separate from the nations and their lifestyles. The halachah "Esav hates Yaakov" guards us against the possibility of assimilation and spiritual self-destruction. But when we fulfill our role properly, the entire world will want to share in our service of Hashem.

Prior to our first redemption-the model of the final redemption to come-Hashem brought us favor in the Egyptians' eyes so that we would not forget this ideal. The Egyptians readily gave us vessels of gold and silver to enhance our service to Hashem in the desert. The clothing they gave us represented the honor and glory in which they wished to garb us. And so it will be in the final redemption.

May we merit, through our meticulous performance of the Mitzvot the respect, honor, and admiration of the entire world, rather than the mockery and abuse that is our current lot. Then all nations will follow our lead in serving Hashem and bringing the world to perfection.

Pidyon Haben Redemption of the Firstborn

Sanctify to Me every firstborn that initiates the womb among the Israelites (Shemot 13 2).

The Torah explains the requirement of redeeming the firstborn in 1 terms of Hashem having acquired all the firstborn of the Jews when he killed the firstborn Egyptians. But there is a problem with this explanation the slain Egyptian firstborns encompass many more types of firstborns than those we are required to redeem. The killing of the firstborn of Egypt affected both firstborn male and firstborn females and the firstborns of both mothers and those of the fathers.

But the Torah requires only the firstborn male of the mother to be redeemed.

When one is the beneficiary of a miraculous salvation, he, as it were, draws from his bank account of merits. Thus, the salvation of one is "on credit" and must be paid off with future Mitzvot. G-d's beneficence creates reciprocal obligations for those who do not deserve the benefits bestowed. Thus the blessing we recite upon being delivered from a dangerous situation, birkas hagomel, can be translated as "... He who grants the obligated benefits."

The redemption of the firstborn stems from the fact that our redemption in Egypt was an undeserved miracle, which therefore created an

obligation of extra service to Hashem. The Kohen from whom the firstborn is redeemed stands in place of the firstborn in fulfilling this added responsibility.

We can now understand why the firstborn females need not be redeemed. Although Jewish males sunk into idolatry in Egypt, the women remained steadfastly faithful to Hashem. It was in the merit of the righteous women in Egypt that our ancestors were redeemed. Therefore, the firstborn females deserved to be saved, and their miraculous salvation entailed no redemption.

The explanation of why only the firstborn of the mother requires redemption is different. We read in the Haggadah that G-d alone smote the firstborn Egyptians "I and not an angel; I and not a seraph; I and not an agent; I am Hashem, I and no other." And yet Hashem explicitly warned the Jewish people to stay indoors that night so the "destroying angel" would not harm them (Shemot 12:22-23). And Chazal interpreted the preceding Hashem in the verse, "And G-d (veHashem) smote all of the firstborn," as referring to the Heavenly Court. So it would seem that the angels did take part in this plague.

Chelkas Yoav notes that it is impossible for either an angel or man to determine the firstborn of the father. Thus only Hashem could kill the firstborn of the fathers Ani Hashem-I am Hashem Who distinguished between the seed that formed a firstborn and the seed that did not form a firstborn." The firstborn of the mothers, however, were killed by the destroying angels, which can determine whether a woman has previously given birth.

When Moshe first describes the killing of the firstborn (Shemot 11:5), he says that every firstborn in Egypt "from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the slavewoman" will die. But when the plague actually took place, the Torah describes G-d as smiting every firstborn "from the firstborn of Pharaoh until the firstborn of the captive in prison" (Shemot 12:24). The first verse merely says that all firstborn in Egypt will die, not specifically that G-d will smite them. Hence, it refers to the firstborn of the mothers as well, and the slavewoman is mentioned. The second verse, by contrast, says that Hashem

smote all the firstborn, and therefore refers to the firstborn of the father. Thus, the male captive is mentioned as the furthest extent of the punishment.

We know that when Hashem gives over the power of destruction to an angel, the angel does not distinguish between tzaddik and rasha; all are affected equally. It could be, however, that this only goes so far as including those who may not deserve being killed under normal circumstances, but does not include those who have a specific merit to protect them.

When Hashem Himself brings destruction, only those deserving of such destruction are affected. Thus, the Jewish firstborn of the fathers -whose Egyptian counterparts were smitten by G-d personally- were not saved miraculously. There was simply no specific reason why they should be killed, and therefore no redemption is necessary as a consequence of their being spared. The firstborn of the Jewish mothers, however-whose Egyptian counterparts were smitten by the destroying angels-were miraculously saved, since normally they would have required some special merit to save them. Thus, only the firstborn of the mother is included in the mitzvah of redemption of the firstborn. But this only applies to the male firstborn of Jewish mothers, for the females did possess the special merit of not being sunken in idolatry.

If one has only enough money to pay for his expenses to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for one of the three Festivals or to redeem his son, the pidyon haben (redemption of the son) takes precedence. This is surprising, for generally a mitzvah that has a set time takes precedence over pidyon haben, which can be fulfilled at a later date.

On the three pilgrimage Festivals, a Jew came to Jerusalem to see and be seen by Hashem. He was, as it were, reviewed by the King to determine his share of service in G-d's Kingdom and to set his responsibility for the coming months, when he would return home to serve G-d with the bounty he had been given. Pidyon haben, on the other hand, is the payment of a debt past due, for being given a firstborn son, who is the product of an undeserved miracle. One cannot begin to establish future

responsibilities and contributions to G-d's Kingdom before he has paid his past debts to that Kingdom. Hence, pidyon haben takes precedence over the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

May we recognize our indebtedness to Hashem for all the undeserved bounty He provides us and commit ourselves to serve Him with all our hearts and souls.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Marital Survival Guide: From M to P

A therapist's practical advice on improving your marriage. (By Dr. Alan Singer)

M

Marriage is not a big thing; it is a million little things.

Research from various social scientists emphasizes the idea that when it comes to building emotional longevity in relationships, small intentional moments hold more weight than isolated extravagant gestures. Dr. John Gottman adopted the motto "small things often." This doesn't mean that you shouldn't take your spouse out for a wonderful dinner or an enjoyable weekend getaway; those are important too. This is a reminder to appreciate the little things.

Make Time:

"Happy healthy couples do not find time to be together, they make time to be together" (Dr. Debbie Cherry). The shortage of time together is known in the mental health field as a "time famine" and it affects most spouses but especially those in dual career families.

Modeling Behavior:

A couple once remarked to me that they never disagree in front of their children. I asked them to clarify: Do you mean that you never argue or fight in front of your children? They said no, they

never ever disagree even about minor matters even the dinner menu. I suggested that they rethink their strategy and that they would be better role models if they would show their children how to properly communicate and compromise on issues where there is a difference of opinion.

Mocking:

This is one of the worst behaviors in marriage. Contempt and contemptuous behaviors can doom a marriage. They are to be avoided at all costs.

Money Matters:

This is one of the five common perpetual issues in healthy marriages. For instance, in a case where the husband was raised in a thrifty home and the wife family enjoyed spending money on the things they liked and were extravagant, does this foretell disaster? Absolutely not. What's essential is communication and compromise.

N

Nest (Empty):

Couples who put their marriage on the back burner to focus on raising children come to discover decades later that they forgot how to focus on their marriage. The greatest danger of a child-centered family is that when the children leave home so can the marriage. The second danger is choosing vital parenthood but devitalized marriage.

The third danger is the most benign but still regrettable. Spouses manage to refine their marriage after the children leave and the light shines bright again. That is a positive but sad outcome for two reasons: the many years of unmet marital potential and the lack of good marital role models for their children (Dr. Bill Doherty).

Newborn:

Regardless of the preparation for that great day, the arrival of a child throws the household into bedlam and mayhem. It's especially frustrating to deal with these factors on almost no sleep. When a father watches and listens to his spouse and baby gazing and purring at each other, a man sees clearly that the baby needs

his mother and the mother needs her baby. What he cannot see is: who needs him? In actuality, they both need him, not as a competitor with the woman who is mothering nor the baby who is being mothered; they need him in the uniquely male role of father (Dr. Penelope Leach).

Normal:

You can live a perfectly normal life, if you accept the fact that your life will never be perfect or normal (R. BenTzion Twerski).

O

Obituary Virtues:

New York Times columnist David Brooks explains that there are two sets of virtues: the resume virtues and the eulogy virtues. The resume virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral (kind, brave, honest, or faithful etc.) Were you capable of deep love? Eulogy virtues are more important than resume ones. But many of us are clearer on how to build an external career than how to build inner character. Brooks' conclusion: Wonderful people are made not born.

Obsolete:

Planned obsolescence is a term we've heard forever. With the advent of no-fault divorce, it became much simpler to leave a difficult marriage than to stay and try to fix it. In fact, marriage is a counter-cultural act in a throw-away society (Dr. Bill Doherty).

Office:

The cliché is true: No one on their deathbed ever said, "I wish I had spent more time at the office." What do people say? "I wish I had spent more time with my spouse and children because they are my heart and soul and I just wish that God will grant me more time to look at them and listen to them."

Occasions:

It is your responsibility to know how your spouse wants to minimize or maximize the celebrations such as birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. I suggest taking notes so that you remember it accurately year after year. You can thank me later.

Optimism:

In order to walk the walk, you'll need to talk the talk. Don't start discussions with pessimistic phrases such as, "If we're still married in 10 years..." It may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Don't say: "If we manage to get things back on track I hope we can have a second child." Instead try to say: "I am ready to do my part to fix our relationship so we can welcome another child." When Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski was asked if he was worried that he would be giving couples false hope he replied, "I'm more concerned about giving them false despair."

P

Pandemic:

The coronavirus has wreaked havoc on the lives of hundreds of millions of families. Some couples despise it and some don't mind it that much because they like spending time at home with their family. Couples with young children are having a particularly rough time with some of their children in actual school and some children in ZOOM school. I am most worried about abused children, where investigators have not been able to make home visits for months. Interesting how this virus has given birth to so many new words such as:

Covidivorce, quarantedium, and virus-snitching.

Passion-Fest:

What makes for a good marriage is not necessarily what time makes for a good romantic relationship. Once you are married it is not about who you want to go on vacation with, it's more about who you want to run a household with. Therapist Lori Gottlieb observes, "Marriage is not a passion fest; it is more like a partnership formed to run a very small mundane and often boring non-profit business." And she means this in a good way.

Pendulum:

Drastic changes in behavior, like large swings of a pendulum, are not useful. Incremental and consistent change has been shown to be the most effective.

Permanent:

Permanent commitment is the starter motor for a marriage. It not only launches us when we marry but we crank it up every day. We call on it especially when things are not going well. Tentative commitment, on the other hand, means being committed as long as we make each other happy, as long as our individual life goals lineup, and as long as we don't fight too much. This is also known as "commitment-as-long-as." In other words, "We are together not as long as we both shall live, but as long as things are working out for me."

"Commitment-no-matter-what" is the long view of marriage in which you do not balance the ledger books every month to see if you are getting an adequate return on your investment. You are here to stay. (Dr. Bill Doherty).

Phubbing:

The practice of ignoring one's spouse in order to pay attention to one's phone or other mobile device. Knock it off, or else!!

Platinum Rule:

We're all familiar with the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Based on "Love your neighbor like yourself" Lev. 19:18). Anthropologist Dr. Helen Fisher suggests that in our generation we utilize the Platinum Rule: "Do unto others as they would want to have done to them."

Play:

John Gottman recently studied 40,700 couples who are in marital therapy to find out what these couples are fighting about? He found that 76% fight about financial matters. 86% fight about not having fun anymore. Seems like we should take fun much more seriously, right?

Psycho-Archeological digs:

This is a term that I coined for digging deeper and deeper into memories from the recent and distant past. Of course, we can't change the past and we don't know what the future holds therefore, we must stay focused on the present!

Pushing Buttons for Good:

Picture this: You're enjoying date night with your spouse and all is going well. Is there something that you could do which that flip the night on its head and make it end in a big

argument? We all know the negative buttons that can quickly turn paradise into a firestorm. We all know how to push those buttons that lead to a meltdown. We should focus on devoting time and energy into pushing our spouse's positive buttons for connection and friendship! (Michele W. Davis).

Kids Are Out of Control and What You Can Do About It

The pandemic has brought out risky behavior in our children.

(By Slovie Jungreis-Wolff)

The conversation I had with a child healthcare professional was disturbing.

"You cannot imagine what I am seeing," he said. "Kids who never got into any trouble before are taking all types of risks and parents don't know what to do. The kids are out of control."

A few discussions with parents and educators confirmed what I was hearing. We are talking about behaviors that compromise values and character. Kids who are sneaking out of the house while parents are sleeping, testing boundaries, chatting inappropriately on social media platforms, and experimenting with substance abuse. Many are grappling with their faith.

Children are losing their soul.

Why now?

Vulnerability

Teens and preteens have been dealing with months of uncertainty. Do we have 'in school' learning or remote? Many activities once taken for granted have been canceled or changed. Live graduation ceremonies, senior year, bar and bat mitzvah celebrations, family gatherings, Shabbat and holidays with grandparents and friends, summer camp, school trips, team sports, just to name a few. The kids are dealing with fear of the unknown unlike anything they have ever experienced before. Stories of covid-related illness, death, and the sense of living in

a world out of control overtakes a child's being. There is a huge sense of feeling vulnerable.

Less Routine

Less routine means there is a void in a child's day. Left with emptiness, many kids discover that the solution to boredom and a lack of schedule is risky behavior. What do you do when you have extra time on your hands and nothing to do? Kids are trying out activities that would not normally enter a child's sphere or have seemed possible in their mind.

Remote learning is lonely. Being home for extended time is tiresome. Some kids are sitting alone in their rooms while parents are working or occupied with other children. Kids need friends and in person contact. Solitude means seeking more online connections. Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok, Snapchat are the virtual door out. Many kids have found themselves jeopardized after sending inappropriate photos, texts or having engaged in improper conversations, the result of unfilled hours in the day.

FOMO

The feeling of missing out (FOMO) can drive a child to behave in ways he never could have imagined. If everyone is out partying, than why shouldn't I? If my classmates are breaking curfews, rules, and hanging out, I can't be the one staying home and out of it.

There is also a sense of entitlement that has taken hold. "This was supposed to be my graduation year." "We were supposed to have our family trip that you promised me." The feeling that because I feel shortchanged I am now going to make up for it and do something exciting can bring a child to make huge mistakes.

What can we do?

Parents are exhausted and burned out. I know how difficult it is. But now is not the time to give up. We are living the true definition of being a parent – to guide, to lead, and to inspire. Our children need to us to be captain of our ships. They must see that in times of challenge and chaos we are present in both body and soul. We care.

Begin with a conversation. Don't wait for the situation to unravel in your home. I've spoken to parents who have been shocked with the behavior their 'good kids' have gotten into. Communicate in a non-threatening way. Acknowledge the challenges your child is facing. Don't be busy with everything and everyone else and then be forced to confront the damage done.

Speak about the loneliness, the vulnerability, the boredom, the sadness and the frustration from losing out on times that were always counted on to happen. Be prepared to limit screen time. Pay attention to your child's online hours. They can easily run from morning to evening, unwatched. Don't let days and nights go unsupervised even if you are beyond exhausted. See to it that if your child is home, you check in with him and that he takes healthy breaks throughout the day.

If your child is spending a lot of time indoors and school is sporadic, stay engaged. Be informed. Ask: who is my child spending time with? What is he doing all day? Think about filling the empty time with more engaging activities.

Confusion and fear bring kids to seek out new ways to deal with the chaos confronting them. They grasp for whatever will bring them a sense of calm. Uncertainty can bring a child to experiment with vaping, smoking, drinking or using nonprescription drugs. Stay alert. Don't be that home where parents are caught snoozing while their children are raiding the liquor cabinets or making bad choices that cause devastation and harm.

When children go through turbulence and stress we, parents, tend to feel sorry for them. That's normal. We open our hearts to our children's fear and pain. Children need to feel that we hear them, that we understand them. But we can't feel so badly that we look away at their responsibility to live with character. That would mean living with misplaced compassion. We've tried for years to raise our children with soul. We cannot allow this pandemic to strip our children of the morals and wisdoms we've sacrificed for. This challenge becomes one of our greatest missions.

Every generation has their test; the pandemic has become ours. And parents, be sure to tell your children that you believe in them, that you know they have a special soul and that you love them, no matter what.

Going to the Gym During the Pandemic

It's the small gestures that make such a difference. (By Emuna Braverman)

While waiting for our house to be ready, we've been using the local gym – clad in appropriately modest attire and masks of course (allaying all readers' concerns). Although exercising with a mask can be challenging (my husband suggests we'll be prepared for high altitude running, not that I'm ever anticipating that need), we are grateful for the opportunity. And even though we don't plan to continue once we are situated with our in-home equipment, we are struck by some elements of the experience that have nothing to do with the quality of the treadmill or the careful hygiene procedures.

Every day when we enter the gym they take our temperature (there are many people with COVID who don't have fevers and I feel that it's a little like making everyone take off their shoes at the airport but that's a side point). Some of the employees do it very perfunctorily and mutter "fine" or something like that. Others take a totally different approach. With a big smile, they say "hello" and "you're good to go".

A similar scenario plays out when leaving. You have to checkout so they can watch the numbers – they're only open at 25% capacity. When leaving, some of the employees just completely ignore us. There is nothing they need to do or say so that's really fine. But others (the same ones who greet us so brightly) notice our going, smile again, and wish us a good day.

I don't know their names or anything about their lives. I don't expect to ever see them again once we actually move – but they change my whole experience at the gym. I go on the treadmill in a better mood (which is no small deal since I usually rely on the exercise itself to change my mood!) and I walk out into the parking lot in a

better mood – not just buoyed by a good workout, but by the good wishes.

In our polarized and estranged world, these small actions can make all the difference.

It's been said before but I think it can't be said too often – what a difference a smile makes, a friendly greeting, a human connection – this is always true but even more so in our unconnected, isolated times.

It seems so small, so effortless – yet not all the employees do it. And not all of us do either.

I notice other small gestures that make a difference as well – those fellow exercise enthusiasts who hold the door open for me upon leaving or entering versus those who don't, those who say good morning (at least that's what it sounds like underneath the mask) versus those who don't...you get the picture.

It's the simple things that make us feel noticed, that make us feel part of a community (however loosely defined), that acknowledge our common humanity.

You may think I'm going a little overboard here – it's only a smile or a greeting for heaven's sake! But it really isn't. And in appreciating them, I'm forced to turn the magnifying glass a little inward. I'm forced to confront myself and ask if I'm smiling and saying hello or just turning away. Do I look at strangers as irrelevant to my life or as fellow travelers? In our polarized and estranged world, these small actions can make all the difference.

It's so hard to read emotions behind the mask. It's part of what makes communication so difficult these days. But you can see a smile. You can tell by the way a person's whole face lights up, by the way the muscles move, by the way their eyes light up. You can just tell.

So I'm appreciating everyone who smiles at me these days (and all days) – whether at the gym or in the grocery store, at the doctor's office or the pharmacy (that's the extent of my outings) and I'm doing my best to smile back. It won't change everything but I think it's a good start.

DAILY HALACHA

Halachot of Shabbat

(Daily Halacha)

The Custom to Read Shir Hashirim On Friday Night

There is a time-honored practice – dating back many centuries – to read Shir Hashirim on Friday night. Some communities read it before Minha on Friday afternoon, others between Minha and Arbit, and some after Arbit.

The text of Shir Hashirim is, essentially, a love story between a man and a woman. The Seror Ha'mor (Rav Abraham Saba, 1440-1508), in his introduction to Shir Hashirim, bemoans the fact that the Apikorsim (heretics) interpret Shir Hashirim literally, as describing an actual relationship between a man and a woman, Heaven forbid. This profanes Shir Hashirim, which our Sages describe as "Kodesh Kodashim" – the most sacred of all the texts in the Tanach. This book allegorizes the close relationship between Am Yisrael and the Almighty, describing the deep love He feels for us and we feel for Him. One verse in Shir Hashirim says, "Shehora Ani Ve'na'ava" – "I am black but beloved," referring to the fact that Beneh Yisrael are beloved to Hashem even when we're "black," darkened by sin.

The simplest explanation for why we read Shir Hashirim at the beginning of Shabbat is because Shabbat is like the "wedding" between the Jewish People and G-d. This is why we sing, "Bo'i Kalla" ("Come, O bride") when Shabbat begins, and we dress up in our finest clothing and have an elaborate meal, just like at a wedding. Furthermore, in our Friday night prayer, we refer to Shabbat in the feminine form – "Ve'yanuhu Bah," whereas on Shabbat morning, we use the masculine form – "Ve'yanuhu Bo," and at Minha some have the custom to recite the plural form – "Ve'yanuhu Bam." Some explain these passages as allusions to the bride and groom, who come together on Shabbat afternoon, the time of the "Yihud," the culmination of the "wedding," the height of love and closeness between G-d and

His special nation. Appropriately, then, as we celebrate this "wedding," we read Shir Hashirim which tells of the unique feelings of love between G-d and Am Yisrael.

The Hida (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806), in his work Kiseh Rahamim, brings another reason. He cites the Seder Ha'dorot as stating that although Beneh Yisrael spent 210 years in Egypt, they worked as slaves for only 117 years. The number 117, then, is associated with the end of exile and suffering, and the onset of redemption, as it was after 117 years of labor that Beneh Yisrael were freed. Our Sages teach us that if we all observe Shabbat properly, then we become worthy of redemption. So, on this day we read Shir Hashirim, which contains 117 verses, as though telling the Almighty that the merit of our observance of Shabbat should bring the end of our exile. Just as G-d redeemed our ancestors from Egypt after 117 years of slave labor, we, too, hope for our redemption in the merit of Shabbat observance, alluded to by the 117 verses in Shir Hashirim. (This is likely the reason why it is customary to read Shir Hashirim after the Seder on Pesach, because of the association between the 117 verses of this book and the Exodus from Egypt.)

Another explanation is based on a teaching of the Roke'ah (Rav Elazar of Worms, Germany, 1176-1238). The Zohar comments that the wicked who suffer in Gehinam are granted a reprieve during the 24 hours of Shabbat. (Our lighting of a candle on Mosa'eh Shabbat signifies the rekindling of the fires of Gehinam.) But in addition, the Zohar writes, the fires of Gehinam cease to burn also when Am Yisrael recites each of the three daily prayers – Shaharit, Minha and Arbit. Specifically, the Zohar says that when Am Yisrael recites one of these prayers, the fires of Gehinam stop burning for an hour and a half – or 4.5 hours each day. Now the six workdays have a total of 144 hours (24 * 6), and among those, the fires of Gehinam are not burning for 27 hours (4.5 * 6). It turns out, then, that the fires of Gehinam burn for a total of 117 hours (144-27). The Roke'ah teaches that King Shlomo composed the 117 verses of Shir Hashirim as a prayer that the merit of this sacred text should save people from the punishment of Gehinam. We therefore

recite Shir Hashirim at the end of the week so that the merit of our recitation will save us from the 117 weekly hours of suffering in Gehinam.

Summary: It is customary to read Shir Hashirim on Friday night, either before Minha, after Minha, or after Arbit. The simplest reason is because Shir Hashirim talks of the special love between G-d and Am Yisrael, and Shabbat is the "wedding" between us and Hashem. There are also Kabbalistic reasons for this practice.

DAF YOMI

Daf Yomi Masechet Pesachim

(Daf Notes)

Torah before the World and the World for Torah

The Gemara states that HaShem created Torah before He created the physical world, as it is said: HaShem made me (the Torah) as the beginning of His way, before His deeds of yore. The Medrash states that the word Breshit, in the beginning, is expounded to mean that for reshit, a reference to the Torah that is called elsewhere reshit, the world was created. This Medrash would seem to indicate that the creation of the world preceded the Torah. The obvious resolution to this question is that Torah is spiritual, so the Gemara means that HaShem created the Torah before the creation of the physical world, and the Medrash is stating that the only purpose of creating a physical word is so the Jewish people can study the Torah. Although this may seem elementary, there is a profound message that lies within this answer. One must be certain that all his actions to be within the realm of Torah, because otherwise there is no purpose for a physical existence. When Haman decreed that the Jewish people should be annihilated, the Jewish People repented and reaccepted the Torah. When faced with physical extinction, a Jew must accept the yoke of Torah upon himself, as Torah is the sole purpose of creation.

Reciting Shema and not Appearing Arrogant

The Gemara records a dispute between the Chachamim and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel

regarding a groom reciting Shema on the first night of his wedding. One opinion in the Gemara states that the Chachamim permitted the groom to recite the Shema because everyone else is reciting the Shema so the groom will not appear arrogant. It is interesting to note that if one person would be reciting Shema when no one else is reciting Shema, that one individual would be considered arrogant. We find that the Medrash states that when Yosef appeared to Yaakov after not having seen him for twentytwo years, Yaakov recited Shema and Yosef did not.

The Maharal explains that Yaakov channeled his love for his son Yosef and therefore he recited Shema. Yosef, however, was engaged in the mitzvah of honoring his father so he was exempt from reciting Shema. Based on our Gemara, we can suggest that Yaakov recited Shema because he was certain that he was pious and he could concentrate properly, and he would not be considered arrogant for reciting Shema. Yosef, however, was preoccupied with affairs of the state and if he would recite Shema, he would appear to be arrogant by demonstrating that he could concentrate on the recital of the Shema even in such a stately position.

Revealing the End of Days

The Gemara states that Yaakov sought to reveal the End of Days when the Divine Presence left him. One must wonder why Yaakov was so insistent on revealing the End of Days. How would this help the Jewish People in the long run?

It is well known that the Rambam had a family tradition to calculate when Moshiach would arrive, although the Rambam himself rules that those who calculate "the ends" should expire. It is a fundamental of Jewish faith to believe in the arrival of Moshiach, and the Gemara states that one of the questions that the Heavenly Tribunal will ask a person after he dies is whether he anticipated the salvation. Yaakov wished to demonstrate to his children that although the End of Days was far off, they should view themselves on that day as if they were experiencing the Ultimate Redemption. Indeed, we are all obligated on Pesach to view ourselves as if we are presently experiencing the Exodus from Egypt.

The Sfat Emet writes that it is ones faith in this concept of redemption that allows him to experience the liberation. Yaakov was teaching his children and subsequently, their descendants,

that faith is what allows us to be redeemed from our long and bitter exile.

shavim, Your right hand is extended to accept those who repent.

The right hand and the left hand

The Gemara states that Yissachar ben Barkai was punished for disgracing the service in the Bet HaMikdash. Regarding the procedure of receiving the blood of the sacrifices, it is said: the Kohen shall take from the blood of the offering. The extra words the Kohen teaches us that the Kohen must perform the service with his body, and nothing can interpose between the utensil and his skin. By wearing a silk cloth, Yissachar from the village of Barkai invalidated the service, and furthermore, Yissachar disgraced the service by not handling the flesh and blood of the offerings directly with his hand. Yissachar was punished by the king who said, "Since this man has no fear of the king, let us cut off his right hand." Yissachar gave a bribe to the king's servant, and he had his left hand cut off instead. The king heard about this and he had Yissachar's right hand cut off also. The Maharsha writes that Yissachar lost his right hand because most of the services that were performed in the Bet HaMikdash were performed with the right hand.

The Ben Yehoyada writes that he lost his left hand because he used his left hand to warp the silk around his right hand. Since his sin began with his left hand, he lost his left hand first. The significance of the right hand and the left hand are noted in many places in the Torah and in the Gemara. One who is right-handed will tie his Tefillin with his right hand on his left arm. One must place his right shoe on his right foot first, then place the left shoe on his left foot, and then tie the left shoe, and afterwards tie the right shoe.

Apparently the right hand always receives precedence to the left hand. The right represents chesed, kindness, and the left represents din, judgment. One should always make the effort to judge someone's action favorably before accusing someone of committing a sin. When HaShem created the world, He thought, so to speak, of creating the world with judgment only. When HaShem foresaw that the world could not exist only on judgment, He created mercy, and this is what allows the world to continue to exist. Let us always remember the Right Hand of HaShem which is extended to all of mankind as an opportunity to repent, as we recite in the High Holidays Prayers, *ki yemincha peshutah lekabel*

KIDZ CORNER

INTERESTING MIDRASH

(from Torah Tots)

No "Back-Sies"

Remember when the Egyptians handed over their treasures to the *Bne Yisrael* during *Yetziat Mitzrayim*? Well, over 1000 years later, the Egyptians had the opportunity to haul the *Bne Yisrael* to court over the matter! That's right! The Egyptians and Jews went head to head in a battle for the "bullion" in the court of Alexander The Great. Here's what happened:

Our story begins way back in the days of Avraham *Avinu*. *Hashem* reveals to our forefather that his descendants are destined to become a great nation. There is just one catch. In order to become that great nation, they would have to be strangers in a strange land, becoming slaves and live in bondage for 400 years. But there's good news: *Hashem* promises to take these slaves out of bondage and make them very rich in the process.

Here's the problem: *Mitzrayim*, the destined strange land in which Avraham's descendants would be strangers, is a very poor country. Well, this just won't do. So *Hashem* comes up with the whole famine thing... you know: Yosef, the dream, seven years of plenty, Yosef storing away the grain for seven years of famine. People from all over the world come to purchase food and *Mitzrayim* becomes the wealthiest country in the world.

As the revelation goes, Yaakov eventually gets sucked into the famine vacuum and sends his sons to *Mitzrayim* to purchase grain. There, they meet up with their long-lost brother, Yosef, the viceroy of *Mitzrayim*. The entire family ends up settling in *Mitzrayim* and, as we all know, the *Bne Yisrael* are forced to become Pharaoh's slaves. But then the second part of *Hashem's* promise kicks in and the *Bne Yisrael* are led out of *Mitzrayim*.

Now, the wealth acquired by Pharaoh and the Egyptians is handed over to the *Bnei Yisrael*. First, Moshe instructs the Jews to ask their Egyptian neighbors for all their silver, gold and fancy clothes. Many Jews hesitate for fear that the treasure will weigh them down on the journey, But before the Jews have a chance to refuse, the Egyptians have already emptied their safes and force the treasures on their Jewish neighbors.

Fast-forward one thousand years to the court of Alexander The Great, ruler of the entire civilized world... The Egyptians send a representative to file a claim that the Jews took all of *Mitzrayim's* treasure. Their proof? It's written in the *Torah!*

Now Egypt wants it back.

Okay, it's an old claim, but Alexander will play along. The Jews are ordered to answer the accusation. Back in *Yerushalayim*, the sages wonder how they can answer this claim in a way that a secular king will understand. Finally, *Gevihah ben Pesisa* steps forward and says that he will go before Alexander The Great's court. *Gevihah* figures that if he wins, it's good for the Jews. And if he loses, the sages can always say he's a renegade who doesn't really represent the Jewish nation.

So *Gevihah* arrives in court and begins his defense.

"What evidence do you bring that we owe you such a great treasure?"

"From your own *Torah*," is the reply.

"Hmm, since you use the *Torah* as a source to show that we took your treasures, let me use the same source to refute the claim. Isn't it true that there were 600,000 Jews who left *Mitzrayim*?"

"Well, I don't -"

"Tut-tut-tut... it says right here in the *Torah* (*Shmot* 12:37). So if you accept the *Torah* as a source for your claim, you must accept these figures too."

"I suppose so," is the only answer the Egyptian reps can give or else all claims are lost.

"Then you must also accept that the *Torah* says the Jews were in *Mitzrayim* for 430 years (*Shmot* 12:40), right?"

"You got it. But where are you going with this," the Egyptians and Alexander wonder at this point.

"Here's the thing." *Gevihah* continues. "Our ancestors worked as slaves for *Mitzrayim* for (210 of the) 430 years - for free! It is our claim that the Egyptians owe us wages for 600,000 workers for (210 of the) 430 years. At minimum wage, you'd have to empty out all the treasuries (and gold fillings) of every Egyptian to come up with a minimum wage of one silver coin a day for 600,000 workers for (210 of the) 430 years - or 45,990,000,000 (and don't forget the compound interest!). If we pay your claim, will you pay ours?"

At this point, the Egyptians are powerless to proceed. Perhaps if they claim that the Jews were slaves, then *Gevihah* would have no claim for the money, since slaves don't get paid. But the Jews were not enslaved the usual way - captured during a war or imprisoned. They came to *Mitzrayim* and settled in Goshen at Pharaoh's invitation. Therefore, the claim would be worthless.

With this, the Egyptians drop their claim.

Kid'z Korner (Revach)

A Special Request

(Adapted from *Mishlei Yaakov*, pp. 124-125)

"Please speak to the people, and let each man request from his [Egyptian] neighbor gold and silver articles. Let every woman make the same request of her neighbors." (Ex. 11:2)

The Midrash notes the unusual language of G-d's request - "*please* speak." The Sages explained that G-d was asking the Jewish people for a favor. Please borrow from the Egyptians gold and silver items, so that Abraham will not complain to Me: "They will subjugate and persecute them" - that part You did; but "afterwards they will leave with great wealth" - that part of the promise You did not keep.

The Maggid of Dubno asked: Was this request only in order to satisfy Abraham? Did not G-d promise that they would leave with great

wealth? In any case, G-d needed to keep His promise!

The Battle of the Two Warriors

There were two kings who fought against each other for many years. One day they decided that this was a terrible waste of national resources and lives. Instead, each country would choose a champion to represent it, and those two soldiers fight each other. Whichever soldier would win - his king would be victorious and take control of the other kingdom.

Each king chose the best fighter in his kingdom. Then they carved out a deep pit in the ground. The warrior who would succeed in throwing his opponent into the pit - he would be the winner.

After much anticipation, the great match began. The two warriors started to wrestle, while their respective kings stood at the sidelines to watch the fight. Suddenly one of the warriors succeeded in grabbing the other one. He lifted his opponent into the air and carried him to the edge of the pit!

But just as the two warriors reached the pit, the one held aloft succeeded in overcoming his opponent. He slipped out of his arms and pushed the other warrior into the pit, thus securing the battle - and victory - for his king.

The winning king went over to his champion to congratulate him. He told the fighter: "I will not deny that you are a true champion and you won the battle. Nonetheless, I have a complaint about your behavior in the match. When you allowed your opponent to grab you and lift you up and take you to the edge of the pit, my heart almost stopped. I thought that all was lost, that I had lost the battle and my crown!"

Satisfying Abraham

The Midrash says that the riches that the Israelites recovered at the sea from Pharaoh's jewel-decked army were far greater than the wealth that they borrowed from the Egyptians in Egypt. G-d's promise that "They will leave with great riches" was in fact fulfilled at the Splitting of the Sea.

If that's the case, why did the Jews need to borrow gold and silver from the Egyptians before they left Egypt?

G-d knew that this promise would be fulfilled later on at the sea. But until then, He didn't want Abraham to be upset and claim that G-d had not fulfilled His promise that "They will leave with great wealth."

Revach Stories

Tzedaka - When It's Destined To Go, There Is No Way To Hold On

Rebbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai (Baba Batra 10a) saw in a dream that his nephews were destined to lose seven hundred dinarim. Without revealing this to them he forced them to give as much tzedaka as he could. They gave a total of 683 dinarim. On Erev Yom Kippur some guards came from the Emperor's palace and took 17 dinarim from them.

They were very worried that this would become a constant occurrence. Rebbi Yochanan ben Zakkai told them not to worry. He told them about his dream in the beginning of the year and explained to them that these 17 dinarim couple with their tzedaka of 683 dinarim totaled the 700 that they were going to lose anyway.

They then asked their uncle Rebbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai why he didn't reveal his dream to them so that they would have given away the full seven hundred to tzedaka rather than lose it to the Emperor's coffers. He answered that he wanted them to have the mitzva of Tzedaka Lishma.

A similar story is told about a man who came drying to the great Mikubal Rav Mordechai Sharabi that he is having an operation the next day to remove a tumor. Rav Sharabi looked at the x-rays and told him not to worry everything is fine, but he should give the cost of the operation to tzedaka. He did and the next day after taking another x-ray the doctors told him he was perfectly fine and the operation was canceled.

The only thing you lose by giving tzedaka is the tzarot that come with any other way the money will need to be taken from. You can try to save a few hundred dollars here and there by not giving to tzedaka but at the end it will all be lost anyway in a more aggravating fashion, starting from a broken washing machine and busted pipe to even worse chas v'shalom. You may as well spend it in a more productive and gratifying manner.

Ben Yehoada: How Shabbat Can Make Your Dreams Come True

"Kol HaMi'aneg Es HaShabbos Nosnim Lo Mishalos Libo", whoever delights the Shabbat will be granted the wishes in his heart (Shabbat 118b). This is quite a reward as it is chosen by the person himself rather than fixed. Why is this so and how does this work?

The Ben Ish Chai in the Ben Yehoada says that delighting Shabbat does not mean with actions or words. What we do and how we speak is not called delighting Shabbat, it is required by halacha. Delight is like the whipped cream, it is over and above what you are required to do. Chazal tell us that on Shabbat we may not speak about Devarim Shel Chol, however Hirhurim Mutarim, thinking is not forbidden. Therefore says the Ben Yehoada, delighting the Shabbat means that even your thoughts are about Shabbat and your weekday thoughts of business and the like are banished from your mind. That is Oneg, that is delight!

Hashem rewards us Midah K'Naged Midah. For resting the heart and mind from weekday activity, we are rewarded with being granted the wishes of the heart and mind. He says there is a remez for this in the hours of Shabbat. Shabbat itself is 24 hours. Add the seven hours on Erev Shabbat starting with the fifth hour of the day when the light of Shabbat begins to set in on the world plus the one hour after Shabbat that we cut into, to be Mosif Kodesh Al HaChol, give us 32 the gematria of the word "Lev".

So if you have big plans for Motzaei Shabbat or upcoming business or vacation the next week, or if you bought a lottery ticket, don't even think about it on Shabbat. Then your dreams will come true!

Rav Shlomo Zalman Stays Around To See The Presents

The Rav of Ramat Chen, Rav Y. Auerbach, the nephew of Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, z"tl was orphaned from his mother and father, and Rav Shlomo Zalman took care of all his needs. When he married, Rav Shlomo Zalman took the place of his father at the wedding. The wedding took place in Tel Aviv, and the chassan and kallah were planning on living in Tel Aviv after the wedding.

After the wedding, Rav Shlomo Zalman informed the family that he wished to spend the night in Tel

Aviv. All the relatives were shocked since they were sure that Rav Shlomo Zalman would return directly to his house in Yerushalayaim after the wedding. Whoever was familiar with Reb Shlomo Zalman's tight schedule of learning and davening, knew that it was very rare that he spent a night away from his home, if at all.

For many years, Rav Shlomo Zalman's nephew was unaware of the reason his uncle decided to stay the night in Tel Aviv. He eventually discovered the reason when he merited to also tend to the needs of an orphan, including accompanying him to the chupah. Rav Shlomo Zalman called him before the wedding and said, "I hope that you do for the orphaned chassan what I did for you." His nephew didn't understand what Rav Shlomo Zalman was referring to, until he reminded about the night after his wedding when he stayed the night in Tel Aviv.

Rav Shlomo Zalman explained, "Every chassan and kallah receives many gifts on the day of their wedding. One of the happiest moments after the chasunah is when the young couple opens their presents, and afterwards they show them off to their parents. You had no parents, and I knew you wouldn't be able to enjoy these happy moments. Therefore, despite the difficulties it involved for me, I stayed in Tel Aviv the night after the wedding so that you could show me your presents the next day." (Alenu Leshabeach)

PAR LA FRANCOPHONE

(Rav Itshak Nabet)

Inspiré du livre Sihot Ithaskout chovavim et Nétivot Chalom

Afin de se Souvenir de la Sortie d'Egypte...

Nous assistons dans la paracha de la semaine, Bo, aux trois dernières plaies d'Egypte: les sauterelles, les ténèbres et la mort des premiers nés. Et ce sera en pleurant son fils aîné que Pharaon suppliera Moché Rabénou de partir, lui et tout son peuple. De nombreux commentateurs de la sortie d'Egypte s'interrogent sur l'utilité de ces dix plaies. Pourquoi Hachem a-t-Il eu besoin de tout cela?

Tous les ans, nous chantons: "S'Il n'avait tué que les premiers nés, Dayénou"; alors finalement pourquoi Hachem ne s'est-Il pas contenté de cette unique plaie pour nous délivrer?

Les sages expliquent que tous les miracles de la sortie d'Égypte avaient pour but de dévoiler à quel point Hachem nous aime. L'essentiel de cette libération n'était pas de sortir de ce pays, mais de montrer aux milliers de bné Israel combien ils étaient chers aux yeux de leur Père. Et comme un fiancé séduit sa bien-aimée en lui offrant des cadeaux et en l'impressionnant, chaque plaie rapprochait ainsi le peuple d'Israel vers son Créateur. Cette romance à travers le désert, comme le symbolise Chir Achirim, se termina au Mont Sinai. Où Hachem sanctifia Israël parmi les nations en tant que peuple élu. Et les bné Israël acceptèrent le contrat de mariage, la Torah. Comme vous le savez, chaque jour et chaque nuit, nous avons pour mitsva de nous souvenir de la sortie d'Égypte. Et, plus encore, de nombreuses mitsvot ont pour but de remémorer cet événement, par exemple le Chabat, les Téfilines, Pessah, Soucot, Chavouot... Nous allons essayer de comprendre le sens de cette mitsva.

Le Hovot Halévavot et le Baal Chem Tov zrou tam yagen alé nou enseignent que l'objectif de toute la Torah et des mitsvot est de parvenir à aimer Hachem. Comme nous le lisons dans le Chéma "Ce sera lorsque vous écouterez les commandements que Je vous ai ordonnés aujourd'hui, afin d'aimer Hachem votre Di-u de tout votre coeur et de toute votre âme."

Or le Hafetz Haïm explique que le meilleur moyen, à notre époque, pour arriver à ancrer ce sentiment en nous est de réaliser combien Hachem éprouve de plaisir à notre service divin. Il faut être conscient que chaque prière, chaque étude, chaque Lachon Ara évité entraîne une joie immense à notre créateur. Même si, a priori, nous constatons combien notre service est bien loin de celui des générations précédentes. Il faut savoir que la valeur de nos actes ne dépend pas de leur qualité mais de la génération et de l'époque. Ainsi une petite mitsva effectuée aujourd'hui représente l'équivalent de nombreuses mitsvot que nos ancêtres ont pu faire, enseigne Rabbi Haim Vital zal.

Nous devons savoir que lorsque nous répondons Amen, ou faisons une bénédiction, cela provoque plus de joie et de lumière dans les sphères célestes que le Séder de Pessah ou les sonneries de Chofar de grands Tsadikim des générations précédentes. Hachem sait combien il est difficile, à notre époque, de garder la Torah et les mitsvot. Combien la recherche des plaisirs et du repos sont devenus le centre d'intérêt de notre monde. Alors, lorsque le Créateur voit dans une maison qu'il y a encore de la pureté et de la vérité, il danse au-dessus de nous. Comme il est écrit dans notre Paracha " Lorsque je verrai le sang dans vos maisons, Je sauterai au-dessus de vous." Le rav Moché leb Missassov zal explique que ce verset parle de la génération d'avant Machiah. Pour nous enseigner que lorsqu' Hachem voit avec quel dévouement ses enfants effectuent son service, Il danse dans nos maisons et chante "ici habite un juif, ici habite un juif".

Lors de la plaie des premiers nés, Hachem descendit Lui-même dans l'endroit le plus malsain du monde, à l'heure la plus obscure de la nuit, pour prouver à ses enfants combien Il les aimait. Et cela même si les bné Israel se trouvaient aux portes du cinquantième degré d'impureté, pratiquaient l'idolâtrie... Le Tout Puissant nous dévoila ainsi que le lien qui nous unit avec Lui ne dépend pas de notre intégrité: c'est une passion indescriptible qui dépasse toute logique. La sortie d'Égypte représente donc la déclaration d'amour d'Hachem pour son peuple. Et comme nous l'avons expliqué, le but de toute la Torah et des mitsvot est d'arriver à réveiller un sentiment réciproque. C'est pourquoi nous avons l'obligation de nous souvenir de la sortie d'Égypte plusieurs fois par jour, afin de ne jamais oublier combien Hachem nous chérit, afin de réveiller notre amour pour Lui.

Un Sacrifice pour Sortir d'Égypte

Dans la paracha de la semaine, **Bo**, la Torah nous raconte les trois dernières plaies qu'Hachem envoya aux Egyptiens: les

sauterelles, l'obscurité et la mort des premiers nés. Quelques jours avant le coup de grâce, Moché annonce aux bné Israël la volonté du Tout-Puissant: chaque famille doit prendre, le 10 Nissan, un mouton ou un bélier sans défaut, et qui n'a pas encore un an. Pendant quatre jours, cette bête sera attachée au pied d'un des lits pour être sacrifiée le 14 Nissan, puis grillée et mangée la nuit du 15 Nissan.

"Vous placerez du sang de ces animaux autour de vos portes et vous ne sortirez pas de vos maisons jusqu'au matin. Ainsi, lorsque sortira Hachem pour frapper les Egyptiens, Il verra le sang et vous épargnera..." ordonna Moché aux bné Israel.

De nombreux commentateurs se sont interrogés sur la nature de ce commandement. Comme nous le savons, Hachem a promis à Avraham avinou que sa descendance serait esclave sur une terre étrangère pendant quatre cent ans puis qu'elle sortirait avec une grande fortune. Or Rachi zal nous explique que les années qui séparent la naissance d'Itshak avinou de la sortie d'Egypte sont au nombre de quatre cents. En d'autres mots, la première partie de la promesse était déjà accomplie: Hachem devait réaliser la fin de sa prophétie: *"et ils sortiront avec de grandes richesses"*. Si c'est ainsi, pourquoi avoir demandé aux bné Israël de prendre l'idole numéro un des Egyptiens et d'en faire des grillades devant leurs anciens maîtres? Imaginons un instant la scène. Dès le 11 Nissan, tous les Egyptiens ne devaient parler que de ça. "T'as entendu, les juifs veulent égorger et griller nos Di-ux!! On peut pas laisser faire ça!" Combien d'Egyptiens ont-ils dû prendre des couteaux pour se jeter sur des juifs? Demander une chose pareille peut être comparé à ordonner de prendre un cochon et d'aller l'égorger dans une mosquée en Iran. Alors pourquoi Hachem obligea-t-Il les enfants d'Avraham, Itshak et Yaacov avinou à se mettre ainsi en danger? Ne pouvait-Il pas tout simplement les libérer comme Il l'avait promis? De plus, pourquoi leur demander de mettre du sang sur les portes? Hachem avait-Il vraiment besoin de signes pour séparer les juifs des Egyptiens? Cela fait presque dix mois qu'Il punit les uns et épargne les autres?

Le rav Avdala Somekh zal explique que les bné Israël s'étaient dégradés en Egypte au point

d'atteindre le 49^e degré d'impureté. Ils ne ressemblaient plus du tout à leurs ancêtres. Ainsi, même si Hachem avait juré à Avraham avinou de délivrer sa descendance, il n'y avait plus rien à sauver. Les juifs se comportaient comme des Egyptiens et pratiquaient l'idolâtrie encore plus qu'eux. Comme nous l'enseigne le Midrach Chimoni (Devarim 828) au nom de Schmouel bar Nakhman: "si ce n'est que le Créateur lui-même avait juré de nous libérer, jamais nous ne serions sortis d'Egypte".

C'est pourquoi Hachem exigea des garanties que ce peuple avait toujours un lien avec leurs aïeux. Et puisqu' Avraham avinou, Itshak avinou et Yaacov avinou avaient été prêts à donner leur vie pour Hachem, leurs enfants devaient les imiter pour mériter se s'appeler leur descendance. Et c'est ainsi que les bné Israël prirent des moutons malgré le danger que cela représentait, pour prouver à Hachem qu'ils étaient eux aussi prêts à mourir pour Lui. En plaçant le sang des animaux sur leurs maisons, ils témoignaient que seule leur extériorité s'était abîmée. Malgré leur impureté et leurs fautes, ces millions d'individus étaient bel et bien les enfants d'Avraham avinou. C'est ainsi que le Midrach (Mékhilta Bo, 11) explique le verset: *"// verra le sang et vous épargnera, Hachem verra le sang du sacrifice d'Itshak."* Ce signe n'était donc pas pour qu'Hachem distingue les juifs des Egyptiens, mais il devait permettre aux bné Israël de montrer qu'ils étaient eux-mêmes différents des autres peuples.

Comme vous le savez, nous avons une mitsva de nous souvenir de la sortie d'Egypte nuit et jour. Un des sens de cette mitsva est de se rappeler cet enseignement. Même si nous sommes des enfants d'Israël en naissant d'une mère juive ou en nous convertissant, il existe une condition pour pouvoir se rapprocher d'Hachem et de la Torah. Il faut être prêt à se sacrifier! A l'image de nos ancêtres qui mirent leur vie en péril pour sortir d'Egypte et recevoir la Torah, chacun doit être capable de donner de sa personne s'il désire avancer. Bien évidemment, le Créateur ne nous demande pas de nous suicider pour montrer notre attachement pour Lui. Mais Il nous demande de prendre ce qui nous est cher et de Lui offrir. Chacun à son niveau possède des choses qui l'empêchent d'avancer. Hachem dans la

paracha Bo nous demande de prendre "ces cultes étrangers" qui nous détournent de Lui et de les sacrifier! Nous ne devons pas avoir peur, même s'il paraît parfois impossible de se séparer de certaines choses auxquelles nous sommes habitués. Car ainsi que notre Délivreur nous protégea des foules égyptiennes lorsque nous ligotons leurs divinités, Hachem accorde son aide et sa protection à chaque juif qui veut accomplir Sa volonté. En outre, les maximes des pères ne nous ont-ils pas promis que le salaire est en fonction de l'effort? Alors que le Tout Puissant nous donne les forces de nous dépasser et de sortir de nos limites afin de mériter de nous réjouir des mitsvot et de Sa Torah...

REFLEXION SEMANAL

(Rav Yonatan Gefen)

La Tercera Etapa de la Redención

La porción de la Torá de esta semana describe las tres plagas finales y los eventos que llevaron a la salida del pueblo judío de Egipto. El Midrash nos dice que hubo cuatro etapas en la redención de Egipto ⁽¹⁾, basándose en el versículo de Vaerá en donde Di-s le dice a Moshé: "Te sacaré (*hotzetí*) del sufrimiento de Egipto, te salvaré (*hitzaltí*) de la esclavitud, te redimiré (*goaltí*) con mano fuerte y con grandes juicios. Y te tomaré (*lakajtí*) como nación y seré un Di-s para ti..." ⁽²⁾.

Los comentaristas explican que las primeras dos etapas representaron la liberación de la esclavitud, mientras que la tercera representó la salida de Egipto. Fue en la cuarta etapa, la de *lakajtí*, cuando el pueblo judío se convirtió en la nación de Di-s ⁽³⁾. La cuarta etapa culminó en la Entrega de la Torá ⁽⁴⁾.

Sin embargo, pareciera que el proceso de convertirse en una nación santa comenzó cuando el pueblo judío aún estaba en Egipto. Lo sabemos porque las primeras mitzvot que se le ordenaron al pueblo como nación fueron entregadas en la parashá de esta semana. Más

aún, la mitzvá de *Korbán Pésaj* (el cordero pascual) que se encuentra en la porción de esta semana, simbolizó la aceptación del pueblo judío del pacto entre ellos y Di-s ⁽⁵⁾.

Hay un aspecto muy interesante de la transición entre la tercera y la cuarta etapa de la redención, que se refleja en una ley sobre las 'cuatro copas de vino' que tomamos en la noche del Séder de Pésaj (las cuales corresponden a las cuatro etapas de redención). El *Shulján Aruj* ⁽⁶⁾ legisla que está prohibido beber entre la tercera y la cuarta copa de vino ⁽⁷⁾, implicando que estas dos copas deben estar conectadas entre sí, sin que haya una separación entre ambas. Hay razones *halájicas* (legales) para esto, pero también se puede sugerir una filosófica ⁽⁸⁾.

Puede decirse que era esencial que la cuarta etapa de la redención ocurriera inmediatamente después de la tercera, sin ningún *hefsek* (interrupción). ¿Por qué? Porque en la tercera etapa, *goaltí*, el pueblo judío se liberó por completo de la esclavitud de Paró. Sin embargo, una vez que se liberaron de esta esclavitud, existió el riesgo de que quedaran en un vacío sin tener alguien a quien servir. Tal situación hubiese sido muy peligrosa, porque es inherente en la naturaleza humana la necesidad de servir y admirar a algún ser o entidad. Entonces, era esencial que el pueblo judío reemplazara a Paró de inmediato como objeto de su servicio, con, *lehavdil*, Di-s. Es por eso que Di-s les dio las mitzvot que iniciaron su relación con Él incluso antes de que escaparan. Apenas dejaron Egipto físicamente, comenzaron el proceso de convertirse en una nación de Di-s. En consecuencia, la ley que prohíbe interrupción entre la tercera y la cuarta copa de vino simboliza que no podía haber ningún espacio entre la tercera y la cuarta etapa de redención, a las que corresponden. La etapa de 'dejar el servicio de Paró' debía ser inmediatamente seguida por el 'comienzo del servicio a Di-s'.

Una idea importante que puede derivarse de esta explicación es que el deseo de servirle a algo o a alguien es inherente a la naturaleza humana. Esto ha sido evidente a lo largo de la historia mundial. Hasta hace unos pocos siglos, la idea del ateísmo era virtualmente

desconocida; todo el mundo adoraba a una o más entidades. La existencia de poderes en el mundo, a los que las personas debían servir, era algo incuestionable. Vemos, de la necesidad de transición inmediata de 'esclavos de Paró' a 'sirvientes de Hashem', que la ausencia de una figura a la cual servir es muy peligrosa para la mente de una persona.

Basados en esto, vemos que es importante analizar cómo, en los tiempos modernos, pareciera que las personas se han liberado alegremente del yugo de 'servir a alguien'. ¿En dónde vemos, en las fuentes de Torá, una manifestación de este deseo de no servir a nadie?

La respuesta puede encontrarse en las palabras de Rav Jaim Shmuelévitz, respecto a una abominable forma de idolatría: la de Báal Peor⁽⁹⁾. El Báal Peor tiene muchos aspectos extraños. Uno es la forma en que lo idolatraban: sus idólatras realizaban actos desagradables frente al ídolo, siendo el más asqueroso de ellos la forma más alabable de adoración. Más aún, esta forma de adoración fue una con la que el pueblo judío demostró tener una afinidad particular, como se ve en el trágico incidente al final de la parashá Balak, en donde miles de judíos adoraron a Báal Peor. ¿Cuál es la naturaleza de este ídolo? Rav Shmuelévitz explica que la esencia misma de Báal Peor era el deseo de no estar subyugado a ningún poder, y que una consecuencia de esta "libertad" es la eliminación de todos los límites que acarrea la subyugación a una fuente superior. Todos los otros idólatras reconocían la necesidad de respetar y honrar al objeto de su idolatría, mientras que los adoradores de Báal Peor buscaban desarraigar el impulso humano hacia el servicio genuino, reemplazándolo con la degradación de la autoridad. En conformidad, cuanto más irrespetuoso fuera el acto, ¡mejor era como forma de adoración! Basándonos en la explicación de Rav Shmuelévitz, pareciera que los adoradores de Báal Peor trataron de eliminar el impulso humano hacia el servicio a una entidad superior, dirigiéndolo hacia la idea de que uno puede hacer lo que quiera.

Con este entendimiento, podemos explicar una enigmática Guemará sobre el Báal Peor. La

Guemará en Sanhedrín nos cuenta sobre una mujer no judía que estaba muy enferma. Ella prometió que, si se recuperaba, adoraría a todos los ídolos del mundo. Se recuperó, y mantuvo su promesa. Cuando llegó al Báal Peor, le explicaron cómo adorarlo. Al enterarse, dijo, con desprecio, que preferiría enfermarse de nuevo antes que adorar a un ídolo de una manera tan aborrecible⁽¹⁰⁾.

Que haya aborrecido esa forma de idolatría, es entendible. Ahora, ¿por qué su respuesta fue tan fuerte? Ella tenía el deseo que tiene la mayoría de las personas: servir a una fuerza superior. Por eso, estaba dispuesta a adorar a toda supuesta "fuerza" en el mundo. Sin embargo, cuando oyó sobre el Báal Peor, reconoció que su esencia contradecía por completo la idea del servicio, ya que implicaba que 'servir a alguien' era innecesario, que uno podía hacer lo que quisiera. Esta actitud le pareció tan despreciable que prefirió enfermarse de nuevo a realizar tal adoración.

El ateísmo de los últimos siglos parece también estar basado en la actitud del Báal Peor. Mientras que sus adherentes afirman que sus valores están basados en filosofía, en ocasiones admiten que la razón real de su ateísmo es permitirse vivir una vida no restringida por la religión⁽¹¹⁾.

Mientras que la idolatría está, obviamente, equivocada, y es ampliamente criticada por la Torá, muchos pensadores de Torá han notado que el ateísmo es tanto más desdeñoso como peligroso que la idolatría. Una razón para esto es que quien adora ídolos reconoce, al menos, la necesidad de 'servir a alguien'. Para esta persona, no es un gran paso abandonar el servicio a dioses falsos para servir al Di-s verdadero. Sin embargo, quien no cree en nada, está más lejos de aceptar el yugo de 'servir a alguien'.

Notamos antes que el pueblo judío fue particularmente susceptible al Báal Peor. Pareciera que fue este tipo de idolatría el que probó ser más tentador, porque el *iétzer hará* busca hacer que se sientan limitados por el yugo del servicio Divino y los tienta con un sistema de creencias que les permite liberarse de todas las limitaciones.

Todos enfrentamos esta prueba en nuestra vida; hay muchas tentaciones que nos dan la oportunidad de sentirnos libres de la carga. Sin embargo, debemos advertir que la única fuente de satisfacción real es el servicio Divino. Como nos enseñan nuestros Sabios, la única libertad es la que viene como resultado de seguir la Torá.

Notas: (1) *Shemot Rabá*, 6:4. (2) Vaerá, 6:6. (3) Ver *Or HaJaim*, 6:6. Ver *Táam VeDáat* para una explicación de la razón por la que el quinto término de redención, "Y los traeré a la tierra..." no corresponde a una quinta copa. (4) *Ibn Ezra*, 6:7. (5) Ver mi ensayo, "The Individual's Covenant With Hashem" (en mi libro "A Light in Time", p.207) que trata esto en profundidad. (6) Traducido literalmente como *La mesa servida*. Escrito por Rav Josef Caro a finales del siglo XV, es la obra estándar de ley judía. (7) *Shulján Aruj*, Óraj Jaim, Simán 479, Seif 1. Hay leyes adicionales respecto a si uno debería abstenerse de beber entre las otras copas, pero esta es la única tratada en la Mishná y todas las autoridades concuerdan respecto a ella. (8) La explicación a continuación está basada en una variedad de fuentes. (9) *Sijot Musar*, Maamar 84, Parashat Balak, 'Báal Peor', p.362. (10) Sanhedrín, 64a. (11) Un librito de Aish HaTorá cita al famoso autor ateo, Aldous Huxley, quien admitió al final de su vida que toda su filosofía atea fue nada más que una excusa para justificar la inmoralidad.

Pensar

Uno de los aspectos más distintivos de las Diez Plagas fue la persistente negación del Faraón a reconocer el error de su accionar y aceptar que el Di-s de los judíos era realmente Todopoderoso. La sucesión de milagros no lograron persuadirlo de que Moshé era en realidad el mensajero de Di-s y no sólo un hechicero experto.

Durante las primeras cinco plagas, el Faraón se rehusó a liberar a los judíos mientras estaba en absoluto control de su libre albedrío. En las segundas cinco plagas, él habría dejado en libertad a los judíos de no haber sido porque Di-s endureció su corazón.

El Sforno explica, sin embargo, que esto no quiere decir que las plagas habrían causado que el Faraón se arrepintiera y reconociera la grandeza de Di-s. Él habría permitido que los judíos se marcharan ya que no habría podido soportar más plagas. Consecuentemente Di-s, al endurecerle el corazón, le dio la fortaleza para superar su temor natural y le permitió así

poder decidir si rehusarse o no al pedido de Moshé mediante el uso de su libre albedrío ⁽¹⁾.

A Rav Aharón Bakst, Rosh Ieshivá de Lomza, le llamó mucho la atención la aparentemente sobrehumana terquedad del Faraón. Rav Bakst solía dar una clase en su casa los viernes por la noche después de la cena. En una ocasión, sus estudiantes entraron a su casa y se sorprendieron al verlo caminando de un lado a otro por la habitación hablando solo: "¿En qué estaba pensando el Faraón después de ver todos esos milagros con sus propios ojos?". De repente, dejó de caminar, giró hacia los estudiantes y explicó: "**¡Simplemente no estaba pensando!** ¡Una persona sólo puede ignorar milagros tan impresionantes sin que lo influyan en lo más mínimo si no está pensando!" ⁽²⁾.

Esta explicación del ilógico comportamiento del Faraón nos ayuda a entender por qué la gente no cambia después de vivir eventos impactantes. Puede que las personas incluso reconozcan que ocurrieron milagros, pero no piensan en sus consecuencias. Un ejemplo de esto fue la reacción de los israelíes ante los milagros abiertos de la Guerra del Golfo, en la que 39 misiles *scud* mataron sólo a una persona ⁽³⁾. Mucha gente reconoció que el país claramente había atestiguado la mano de Di-s. Sin embargo, no necesariamente actuaron en base a esta nueva consciencia de la Providencia Divina.

Uno podría preguntarse, ¿en qué estaba pensando esa gente?; ¡Claramente habían visto la mano de Di-s protegiendo al pueblo judío y sin embargo no cambiaron! La respuesta está justamente en la explicación de Rav Bakst: No pensaron. Si la persona hubiera reflexionado seriamente sobre los increíbles eventos que ocurrieron, seguramente habría cambiado de alguna forma.

Rav David Kaplan cuenta sobre otra sorprendente ilustración de este fenómeno. Rav Iejzekel Levenstein estaba viajando en un taxi cuyo conductor era secular, el cual le contó la siguiente historia:

"Hace muchos años, estuve viajando en las junglas de África con algunos amigos. De repente, una serpiente atacó a uno de mis amigos, envolvió su voluminoso cuerpo

alrededor de él y comenzó a sofocarlo. Después de varios esfuerzos nos dimos cuenta que no teníamos chance alguna de salvarlo, por lo que le sugerimos a nuestro amigo que dijera el Shemá antes de morir. Él lo dijo con presteza y la serpiente inmediatamente se desenrolló y se fue. Mi amigo, que había sido salvado milagrosamente, se vio profundamente afectado por este evento y gradualmente volvió al judaísmo hasta ser completamente observante”.

Luego de escuchar cómo este evento había cambiado de forma tan drástica la vida de su amigo, Rav Levenstein le preguntó al conductor por qué él, habiendo presenciado ese milagro, no había cambiado a causa de este. El conductor le explicó: “Oh, es que eso no me pasó a mí; ¡le pasó a él! (4)”.

El conductor presenció un evento lleno de potencial para cambiarle la vida a cualquiera que lo observara, pero no cambió. ¿Por qué? Porque no pensó, no permitió que las obvias consecuencias de este milagro le hicieran reflexionar sobre la dirección de su vida.

También vale la pena notar que su amigo, el que fue salvado por el milagro, sí cambió. En ocasiones, un evento puede ser tan poderoso que una persona no puede evitar pensar en él y dejar que influya en su vida. Sin embargo, a menudo no somos nosotros los afectados directamente por el milagro y necesitamos, en consecuencia, un esfuerzo más consciente para forzarnos a *pensar* en las ramificaciones de los eventos que vemos y sobre los que oímos.

El primer paso para cambiar es aprender la lección del Faraón y *pensar*, dejar que los eventos que ocurren en el mundo en general, y en nuestras vidas privadas en particular, nos hagan reflexionar sobre nuestras vidas y hacer los cambios necesarios. Espero que todos ameritemos *pensar* sobre lo que ocurre a nuestro alrededor.

Notas: (1) Sforno, Vaierá 9:12, 35; Bo 10:1. (2) Citado en 'Mishluján Gavoa', Parashat Bo, p.70. (3) En la misma guerra, un solo misil *scud* en Arabia Saudita mató docenas de personas. (4) Kaplan, *Impact*, p.85.

NAHALOT

Nahala of the “Ran” This Friday the 9th of Shebat

Rabbenu Nissim ben Reuven, the Ran (1308-1376), author of a commentary to the Talmud and a halachic commentary to the work of Rabbenu Yitzchak Alfasi (the Rif). His extant commentaries on the Rif cover mesechtot Shabbat, Pesachim, Ta'anit, Rosh HaShanah, Betza, Sukkah, Megillah, Ketubot, Gittin, Kiddushin, Shevuot, & Avodah Zarah. He wrote in reply about 1,000 responsa, of which only seventy-seven have been preserved.

Nahala of the “Rashash” Shabbat the 10th of Shebat

Rav Shalom Mizrachi Dida Sharabi, the Rashash (1720-1782 [1777 per Yated 2008]). Born in Sharab, Yemen, he traveled to Yerushalayim, where he learned under Rav Gedalyah Chiyun of Yehivat Bet Kel. He married Rav Gedalyah's daughter, Chana, and after his rebbi's petira, led the yeshiva for 30 years. Among his greatest students are the Chida (Rav Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai) and Rav Gershon Kitover (the Ba'al Shem Tov's brother-in-law). His sidur was known as the "Sidur HaKavanot," and is still used by the mekubalim today for prayer.

Nahala of the “Pene Yehoshua” Wednesday the 14th of Shebat

Rav Yaakov Yehoshua Falk Katz, the Pnei Yehoshua (1680-1756). Born in Cracow, he studied at Lvov (Lemberg), where he became Rav in 1718, succeeding the Chacham Tzvi.; Rav of Berlin in 1730 and Metz in 1734, succeeding Rav Yaakov Rischer (the Shevut Yaakov); Rav of Frankfurt in 1740. He sided strongly with Rav Yaakov Emden in his controversy with Rav Yonatan Eibeshutz. On the 3rd of Kislev of 1702, he was trapped under fallen rubble following an explosion that killed a total of 36 Jews of Lemberg, including his wife, Leah, and their only daughter, Gittel. He vowed that if he got out alive, he would write a sefer. He was miraculously saved, and thereafter wrote the Pnei Yehoshua.