

forward to helping relatives due to the lack of gratitude associated with his assistance. On the contrary, often he receives complaints for not doing more. One must be acutely aware that disregarding the plight of a relative is Biblically prohibited. This may be defined from the fact that a *Kohen* may not defile himself to anyone, but he must defile himself to his closest relatives. (*Peninim* on the Torah)

Ethics of the Fathers

It is customary to study *Pirkei Abot* (Ethics of the Fathers) during the six weeks between Pesah and Shabuot, one chapter every Shabbat.

”רַבִּי יַנַּאי אוֹמֵר, אֵין בְּיָדֵינוּ לֹא מַשְׁלוֹת הַרְשָׁעִים וְאֵף לֹא מִיִּסוּרֵי הַצְּדִיקִים”
"Rabbi Yanai said: It is not within our ability to understand the tranquil well-being of the wicked or the afflictions of the righteous" (*Pirkei Abot* 4:15)

We ask why some good people suffer and some bad ones prosper. Then we are assuming that we know who is really wicked and who is righteous. It would mean further that there are two sharply defined, hard-and-fast types or categories, the good and the bad, and that once a person is designated "righteous," he should not be punished for anything, while anyone bad or wicked is entitled to no reward whatsoever. It would mean further that we know what is "prosperity" and what is "affliction," and that the one is always good, while the other must be bad.

All these assumptions, Don Isaac Abrabanel points out in his commentary, can be questioned. Can we be sure we know who is righteous? One man may sport a luxurious beard and pray as if in great devotion, wrapped in an embroidered *tallit*, and yet be overly harsh to his employees and charge his tenants exorbitant rent, bringing hardship to the poor. We might see only his overt religiosity, and when afflictions beset him, we could cry to the Supreme Ruler, "It is not just!" Another person may seem utterly irreligious, yet perhaps he performed some heroic act of kindness, unknown to us, for which he is entitled to his present good fortune.

Then again, can we truly judge when people are happy or unhappy? With a magnificent town car and country home, a person may be perfectly miserable, precisely because of his wealth and its effect on the character of his children. Some laborer with only enough for the barest essentials may thrive happily in his life, as his children grow strong in character. This may indeed be the meaning of our *Mishnah*: "It is not within our ability to judge the happiness of the wicked" - to know if they are truly wicked or truly happy! The same applies to the righteous who suffer misfortune. (Ethics from Sinai)

You Rang?

It was 3:00 in the morning; everyone in our house – indeed in the whole neighborhood – was asleep. The shrill ringing of the phone woke us. Even though it lies within hand's reach, my wife somehow couldn't find it. By the time she managed to pick it up, it had stopped ringing. Who on earth would be calling us at that hour?

As we settled in to go back to sleep, we became aware of a faint burning smell. Jumping out of bed, I rushed to the hall and found it filled with smoke. My wife followed me as I ran to the kitchen where, to our utter horror, we found that a low flame had been left burning under a pot on the stove. The food in the pot had been all but burnt to a cinder, and clouds of smoke had spread through most of the apartment. *Baruch Hashem*, the pot had not yet caught fire.

With burning eyes and choking throats, we lifted the pot off the flame, doused it in the sink and opened all the windows.

We cannot remember ever receiving a phone call at such an hour, and although we tried, we could not trace the call. (When the Time is Right)

The Lorraine Gammal A"H Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאָה בַּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

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SHABBAT EMOR ☆ עֶשֶׂת יָמֵי חֹמֶשׁ

Haftarah: Yehezkel 44:15-31

APRIL 30 - MAY 1, 2021 19 IYAR 5781

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Early Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 5:58 pm | Shaharit: 4:57, 7:00, 8:00, 8:15, 9:00 am |
| Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 6:25 pm | Morning Shema by: 8:31 am |
| Late Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 7:22 pm | Shabbat Class: 6:10 pm |
| Candlelighting: 7:32 pm | Shabbat Minhah: 1:30 & 7:10 pm |
| Evening Shema and Omer after: 8:30 pm | Shabbat Ends: 8:31 pm (R"Y 9:03 pm) |

Day 34 of the Omer These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

This bulletin is dedicated by the Hazan family
in memory of Isaac Hazan לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת יִצְחָק בֶּן רִינָה

This bulletin is dedicated by Mitchell & Robin Antar
in memory of Rose Antar לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת רוֹז בַּת אֶסְתֵּר

This bulletin is dedicated by the Betesh family
in loving memory of Sharon Betesh לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת שָׂרוֹן בַּת שָׂרָה

Mabrook to Joey & Janel Matalon on the birth of a baby boy. Mabrook to the grandparents, Jack & Debbie Matalon.

A Message from our Rabbi

(Vayikra 23:15)

”וַיְסַפְּרֶתֶם לָכֶם מִמּוֹחֶרֶת הַשַּׁבָּת”

“You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the rest day.”

In this *perashah*, the Torah introduces the *misvah* of counting the *Omer* from Pesah to Shabuot. That particular period has also become one of national mourning because 24,000 pupils of Rabbi Akiva died during these weeks of counting. Since we believe that nothing happens by chance, there must be some connection between counting and the tragic death of those scholars.

Rabbi Pinchos Roberts explains, our Sages inform us that their demise resulted from the fact that they did not accord one another the high degree of honor that was their rank. They did not treat each other with contempt, but the correct level of respect was sadly missing. This analysis poses two problems. Firstly, why in fact did such great men, tutored by Rabbi Akiva, not treat their fellow scholars with proper esteem? Secondly, why was this fault considered so serious as to warrant the punishment of death?

Rabbi Eliezer Lopian suggested the following explanation. Those people who are of a high spiritual caliber strive constantly to improve their standard in search of perfection. It happens sometimes that in their quest, they are disturbed even by the presence of a minor fault, to such an extent that it overshadows everything else. Instead of acknowledging and appreciating what has been achieved, they notice only the defect, that which has not yet been corrected. This is similar to a great musician listening to a performance. The orchestra could play perfectly except for one false note, but for the fastidious musician who spots it, the beauty of the entire performance is lost on him. Similarly, a leading artist can view a painting which everyone else admires, but his eagle eye rests only on one amateurish stroke and the whole picture lacks appeal.

In a like manner, the pupils of Rabbi Akiva were so great and demanding of themselves in every facet of behavior that if they noticed even slight character flaws in their associates, they felt unable to hold them in esteem. Instead of recognizing their overall distinction, their critical eyes rested only on the weaknesses with such an exacting attitude that the result was bound to be “they did not act with honor towards each other.”

The second question was, why such a severe punishment? The severe punishment that they received was a consequence of their conduct. Whenever a great person sins, even a minor sin, in Heaven it is viewed seriously because he should have been more careful. However, he can receive a lighter treatment if he is a person who overlooks the flaws in others. As he views others, Hashem views him. Since they didn’t overlook the minor flaws in their fellow students, their own flaws stood out.

This is not just history. It’s a lesson for us to appreciate the good points in people, and not to dwell on their weaknesses. The fact that it happened during the *Omer* is not by chance. This is a time earmarked for working on and improving those character traits in advance of Shabuot, the time we received the Torah. May Hashem help us succeed in this great mission, Amen. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Misvah Watch

Observation does not necessarily mean participation – at least in a grammatical sense. Dealing with Jews who do not keep *misvot* has led me to hear, “Of course Rabbi, I’m an observant Jew. If someone does a *misvah* in my presence, I observe a *misvah*!”

Of course, when one is called an observant Jew, he does much more than watch! He or she participates in *misvah* performance; watching is not enough. So that is why I was troubled this week, when I noticed a particularly expressive exhortation to *misvah* performance *u’shmartem et misvotai, v’asetem otam* — watch the *misvot* and do them.”

What does “watch *misvot*” mean? If one does a *misvah*, he is surely doing more than watching them. Why then does the Torah tell us to watch the *misvot* in addition to performing them?

In honor of 7 Adar, the *yahrzeit* of Moshe *Rabenu*, it was decided to give recognition to the community *Hevra Kadisha* (burial society). Rabbi Paysach Krohn addressed a large gathering at Brooklyn’s Bais HaChaim Chapel. His inspiring talk concerned the delicate issues of death, dignity, and decorum. He related the following story:

Rabbi Yehuda Laib Lewis is the Rav of a *kehillah* in Amsterdam. As in every *kehillah*, they have a *Hevra Kadisha* which tends to the needs of the deceased, insures a dignified burial, and helps the mourners through the process of bereavement.

Membership is a privilege, and only outstanding members of the *kehillah* are selected. There is one group of people who, no matter how outstanding they are, can never serve as part of the *Hevra*. You see, *kohanim* are not allowed to come in contact with a dead body, so burying the dead is one *misvah* that they rarely perform!

It so happened that Rabbi Lewis’s community purchased a plot of land to consecrate

a new cemetery for the *kehillah*. Not long after the purchase, a member of the *kehillah* passed away. He would be the first to be buried in the new cemetery. The next day the friends and mourners arrived with the deceased at the cemetery. Shovels in hand, they approached the grave to begin burying the inaugural plot for the deceased.

They were shocked to see that the plot had been dug!

After burying the man, they found out the true story. Moshe Cohen, a member of the community and a *Kohen*, wanted to participate in the great *mitzvah* of burying the dead, all his life. However, there are very few limits to the restriction of a *Kohen* coming in contact with a dead person. But when Mr. Cohen heard that there was a new cemetery being consecrated and that there was no one interred in it, he saw the opportunity that he had watched and waited for. And the first one buried in the new cemetery had his grave ready and waiting, dug by none other than Moshe Cohen!

The *Hatam Sofer* reminds us of another time the Torah uses the word “watch.” The Torah tells us of Yosef’s dreams of glory and that his father, Yaakov, “watched the incident.” *Rashi* explains that “watched” means waited in anticipation of fulfillment.

The *Hatam Sofer* explains that the Torah in this week’s *parashah* tells us to do more than perform *misvot*. It tells us to watch for them. It exhorts us to anticipate their fulfillment. It teaches us to wait for the opportunities that arise, ready and able to perform when opportunity knocks!

Rabbi Akiva, his body raked by burning iron combs, told his students, “All my life I waited for the *misvah* to give one’s soul for the Almighty. I wondered, ‘When would it come to my hands so that I may fulfill it?’”

The Torah tells us this week, watch for the *misvot* and then observe them! It is not enough to be a Jewish observer, rather one must be a Jewish anticipator as well! (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

All in the Family

The Torah teaches that it is a *misvah* for a *Kohen* to defile himself to his seven close relatives – his father, mother, son, daughter, wife, brother and unmarried sister. Indeed, *Hazal* say that if the *Kohen* refuses to ritually contaminate himself to any of them, we compel him to do so. In a way, this is a form of sacrifice. A *Kohen* who is sincere about his station in life might get carried away. He might feel that even for a close relative, it is just not worth it. Heretofore he has maintained his purity. Why should he ruin his spotless record? Obviously such a *Kohen* has no clue concerning *kedushah*, holiness and *taharah*, purity. One is holy and pure as long as he adheres to Hashem’s word. When his perspective on religiosity becomes subjectively flawed, he has a very serious problem.

Family plays a significant role in Jewish life. Even though the *Kohen* must maintain a strict and highly elevated level of personal purity, he must nonetheless defile himself to a member of his family. If family is so important, why is it that individuals who are normally quite generous suddenly shy away and disappear into the background when an extended member of their own family is down and out? Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz explains that it all boils down to *kabod*/respect, payback/gratitude, and recognition of all the things that we want for ourselves in return for being “nice” to someone in need.

Let’s face it, when one helps a stranger he is acknowledged and overwhelmed with abundant gratitude. When it is a family member whom we have helped, it is quite possible that we will not even receive a “thank you.” Why? Because it is only right that one should help his own. It is expected. On the contrary, Heaven help him if he turns a deaf ear to the pleas of a family member. Family expects to be supported, there are no plaques or public accolades. It is difficult to help when there is little or no appreciation.

Rav Gamliel quotes Rav Mottel Slonimer who explains that one does not look