



Prepare for Success

Rabbi Yosef Dovid Rothbart, Rabbinic Administrator

Last week, the most celebrated *yahrtzeit* in Jewish history, the *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, eclipsed the *yahrtzeit* of the *Noda B'Yehuda* which precedes *Lag Baomer* by one day. Rabbi Yechezkel Landau is well known for many things including his opposition to *haskala*, his role in the Sabbatian controversy which impacted the Jewish world in 1751, and his attack on saying *l'shem yichud* before the performance of *mitzvos*. Someone had asked the great rav of Prague to explain to him the meaning of *l'shem yichud*. The response was a passionate one insisting that the proper question is whether to recite this at all – not what is its meaning. The *Noda B'Yehuda* waged a fierce battle to ban the recitation of *l'shem yichud* and took issue with those who had the practice of asserting it. Indeed, the great *posek* would not allow anyone who said *l'shem yichud* to shake his personal *lulav* and *esrog* (שו"ת תשובה מאהבה).

But regardless of whether this specific formula should be recited, the *Zohar* in *Parshas Tazria* does instruct us to proclaim before performing a *mitzva* that we are doing this act to serve *Hashem*. The Chofetz Chaim in his *Sefer Ahavas Chesed* adds that declaring this is itself a *mitzva* and will be rewarded separately from the *mitzva* act.

Expressing one's intention focuses their attention on the deed that is to be performed. This preparatory step elevates the *mitzva*, transforming it into an expression of desire to enhance the relationship that a Jew enjoys with *Hashem*. Such an action will accompany the person as he traverses this world, sheltering him from the physical and spiritual tempests that rage throughout a person's life. אומר מצוה – A person who

anticipates *mitzvos* and pauses אביו שמר (ואביו שמר את הדבר) to prepare for the performance of each *mitzva* לא ידע דבר רע – will come to no harm (*Chayei Adam*, 68).

Rav Asher Weiss (*Sichos Al Hatorah*) makes a powerful observation. In *Parshas Ekev* the Jewish people are told that adhering to the *mitzvos* will result in a utopian existence. והיה עקב תשמעון את המשפטים האלה ושמרתם ועשיתם. Yet, the *mitzvos* discussed are those *mitzvos* that we perform daily and are often overlooked (*Rashi*). It is not the fasting on *Yom Hakippurim* or the chanting of *Birkas Ilanos* that will draw down the promises. Rather, it is the *bracha* of *shehakol* which allows a coffee to be sipped, and *krias shema* that is whispered as one falls asleep at night that will serve as the conduit through which abundance will flow.

For when a person looks forward to these daily *mitzvos* (ואביו שמר את הדבר) and invests in them, no longer performing “en route” but rather with a passion and an appreciation that he is delighting *Hashem*, *Hashem* responds in kind.

The Vorker Rebbe gleans this lesson from the first *Pasuk* of *Parshas Bechukosai*, אם בחקתי תלכו. Even when a person is intending to perform a *mitzva*, he must not rush into it. He first needs to consider the best way to perform the *mitzva* and to prepare for it. He must think, אם בחקתי תלכו – if he should go and perform the *mitzva* now or wait for a more appropriate time; should he act in his present state or does he require more preparation. And when a person does this before the performance of each *mitzva*, he is promised the many *brachos* mentioned in this week's *Parsha*.

The Shofar Would Not Blow

As the month of *Elul* approached, it was becoming obvious that the disposition of the usually cheerful and upbeat R' Nechemia, had turned dark and despondent. R' Nechemia was primarily the *shochet* of the tiny Ukrainian village of Dlinetz. He however, was a man of many talents, and as such, served his small community in many capacities - he was a highly-skilled *mohel*, was the primary *ba'al tefilla* as well as the *shofar* blower on the *Yomim Noraim*, and gave *shiurim* daily between *mincha* and *ma'ariv* to the exhausted men who returned from their back-breaking jobs, but refused to allow themselves to go home to rest before hearing some words of *Torah*. He was the *ba'al koreh* every *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, officiated at all of the weddings in town as the *m'sader kiddushin*, and even answered halachic questions when they did not require greater, more learned rabbinic authorities. In short, he was not officially a *rav* but in fact, he did an excellent job functioning as if he indeed was one.

It was on *Rosh Chodesh Elul* when it became clear to the townsfolk what was troubling their beloved *kli kodesh*. *Shacharis* ended and the men attending the *minyan* stood expectantly, waiting to hear, for the first time that year, the sounding of the *shofar*, arousing everyone to prepare in earnest for the upcoming serious days of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* - but R' Nechemia did not get up from his seat - the *shofar* was not blown that day in Dlinetz.

Some of the men approached R' Nechemia afterward, wondering what had happened. With teary eyes, their always reliable *ba'al tokeah* admitted to them that about two weeks prior to *Rosh Chodesh*, he took out the *shofar* for some practice blowing, but when the sound came out, it was awful. Moving and re-adjusting the *shofar* on his lips proved to be futile - something was wrong. Checking the *shofar* closely, he was mortified to discover that there was a crack running almost the entire length of the *shofar* which rendered it

pasul. It was not that it was impossible to procure a replacement, but R' Nechemia was upset because he sensed that this was a bad omen, particularly for him personally. His dejection and fear deepened to the point where he thought that he would no longer be *zocheh* to blow the *shofar* for his congregation, that perhaps he would, *c'v*, not even 'be around' for *Rosh Hashanah*!

Immediately upon hearing the story, money was raised for the procurement of a new *shofar*. Within the hour, two men were escorting a large ram that they had just purchased, to the home of the *shochet*, R' Nechemia. He tried to crack a smile in gratitude to the men, for he knew that at least in part, their intentions were to console him - yet he was still somewhat shaken up by his fears. Deftly and with great care, he *shechted* the animal properly, and placed the two large horns into the already-prepared barrel of boiling water to soften them up, the first step in the *shofar* making process.

As he stood over the barrel, not taking his eyes away from the horns, the unthinkable happened. One of the horns began to sink - the heat had melted the horn to the point where it was now useless! R' Nechemia instantly pulled out the other horn, laid it down on a table and inspected it - it seemed *b"H* fine. A few minutes later he began the de-boning process and... crackkk! Suddenly, a noticeable gap started to form in a jagged line from the very top of the horn, to its bottom! R' Nechemia stood there frozen for a few minutes before he broke down in tears. The deepening of his depression was abrupt and severe.

To be continued...

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Questions from the H.I.T. HOTLINE

My neighbour had carpool and asked me to babysit her kids while she was out. I was watching my siblings in front of the house, and I was happy to help. Initially I had intended to do it as a favour, but when my friend asked me to get a slurpee with her and I realized that I could use the money, I changed my mind. Am I allowed to take the money now?

The *Ketzos* in *siman* 12 cites a *Maharshal* who maintains that if a person is owed money and mentally makes up to forgive the debt, the debt is forgiven and he can no longer collect it. The *Ketzos* disagrees with the *Maharshal* and contends that a mental commitment to forgive a debt would not be binding except in very specific situations. The *Nesivos Hamishpat* in *Siman* 12, 5 agrees with the *Ketzos* but points out that a mental commitment to forgive a debt is not binding only after the debt was established. If, however, a person decides not to charge someone for a service before he begins to provide it, he can no longer change his mind after he completed the service for the service rendered is deemed a gift. Therefore, in your case, if you had made up to babysit as a favour and after the neighbour returned you changed your mind, you would not be allowed to charge her. If you changed

your mind prior to her return, then you could only charge for the time that followed until she returned for the time which past was already deemed a gift. If the neighbour insists on paying you as a gift you would be allowed to accept what she gives you.

Someone asked me to bring something to his son in New York as a favour. I put the item in my suitcase and the suitcase got lost. I have insurance that pays \$500 for each lost suitcase. Who does the money belong to?

If the insurance is paying for your suitcase regardless of what it contained then the money would belong to you. But if the payment was a larger payment because of what the suitcase contained, then you would be obliged to give the sender whatever amount the insurance added to the payment because of his item. The reason for this is that by putting the package in your suitcase you do not become partners in the suitcase and you are merely a *shomer* שומר who is not responsible unless he was negligent. Therefore if insurance is paying you exclusively for the suitcase and not what it contains, the payment belongs solely to you.

**To have your question answered
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In this week's Parsha the Torah warns us that one of the consequences of not adhering to its dictates is that people will fear the sound of rustling leaves. Here are some interesting phobias that do exist.

- Arachibutyrophobia: Fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth.
- Pogonophobia: Fear of beards
- Sesquipedalophobia: Fear of long words
- Aurophobia: Fear of gold
- Chaetophobia: Fear of hair
- Kathisophobia: Fear of sitting down

RIDDLE



When would someone have to repeat *shemona esrei* on *Motzei Shabbos* if he said *havdala* (אתה חוננתנו), but if he did not do so, he would not have to repeat it?

Please send in your answers to yrothbart@halachainstitute.com. Any correct answer that is received by Tuesday will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 gift certificate to Miriam's Judaica.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE: In the *tefilla* of *Shabbos* we refer to *Shabbos* as חמדת הימים. Where is this hinted in the *Torah*?

ANSWER: *Targum Yerushalmi* explains the words וחמד as ויכל אלקים ביום השביעי מלאכתו (see Ba'al Haturim on the pasuk and ד, הכתב והקבלה בראשית לז, ד).

Thank you to all those who sent in an answer to last week's riddle.

WINNER OF LAST WEEK'S PRIZE: Esther Gerstel

Under the leadership of the Rabbonim of H.I.T.
Rabbi Yacov Felder, Chairman

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