The head and the heart are like two different people. A concept can be as clear as daylight to the mind, but if we don’t send it down the ‘information super-highway’ to the heart, it’s as though two different people are inhabiting the same body.

Amalek is the arch-enemy of the Jewish People. He is a master of ambush. He lies in wait along the highway between the head and the heart. He tries to kidnap the idea on the way to its destination — to the place where it will be crystallized into conviction — the heart.

Why does the Torah have to tell us here “that he happened upon you upon the way”? Upon which ‘way’? The way from the heart to the intellect. That is devoid of emotional conviction leads to cynicism and hedonism. Amalek’s two great protégés.

As E.M. Forster once put it: “Only connect the prose and the passion...” Only connect the head and the heart, and Man will reach his true destination.

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Bentch Like a Mentsch
Sara Miriam Beck
<smiriam@panix.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have a question. I know it is forbidden to stop in the middle of birkat hamazon [grace after meal, a.k.a. benching] and talk to someone. Would that apply the same if I am ‘talking’ to someone over the computer? Many times I am eating at my computer to stop typing in order to say Birkeh Hamazon or not?

Dear Sara Miriam Beck,

Asik sdk jlf? Sloop blek kurdifurma! OOPS! Sorry I made so many mistakes. I was talking to someone else while I was writing to you!

I’m kidding, of course. But you get the point: It’s rude to write one person while talking to another. So too, it’s wrong to thank Hashem for food while typing to your ‘key-pal.’

During blessings and prayers your mind shouldn’t wander, even to think about Torah ideas.

“If you walk with Me casually...” is the Torah’s uncomplimentary description of casual, haphazard mitzva observance. Not only Birkeh Hamazon, but all mitzvot should be done with full attention.

One way to help you focus during Birkeh Hamazon is to read the words in a siddur, instead of rattling them off by heart.

In Yiddish, when you ‘bentch’ someone, you give him a blessing. In Baseball, to ‘bench’ someone means to take him out of the game. When you ‘bentch’ Hashem after a meal, which one do you mean? Sources: • Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 191:3 • Ibid., Mishna Berurah 5 • Leviticus 26:21

Dear Elisheva Appel,

Hashem tells Moses to “lay his hand” upon Joshua (27:18), then when Moses does, he puts both hands upon him (27:23). Rashi says he does even more than he had been commanded. Why in this case is he allowed to do more than he was commanded, as opposed to when he struck the rock, rather than just speak to it, and is then punished? Thanks!

Dear Rabbi,

Here, Moses did more than he was told, whereas in the episode of the rock he did something completely different.

With one hand, Moses conveyed to Joshua political and military leadership, and with the other hand, spiritual grandeur. Hashem commanded Moses regarding the political and military leadership only. Moshe, on his own, blessed Joshua with the spiritual grandeur.

Jacob blessed his sons. Elijah blessed his student, Elia. They weren’t commanded to do so. Here too, Moses blesses Joshua with Torah greatness, though he wasn’t commanded to do so. Since Moses was giving of his ‘own’ holiness and spiritual inspiration, he could give it as generously as he wanted.

Sources: • Baba Kama 92, Tosafot and Maharsha

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked: In what non-life-threatening situation is there a positive mitzva to eat the meat of a neveilah — i.e., something that died without sh’chita (kosher slaughter)?

Answer: Chatat Ha’of.

A bird brought as an offering in the Temple wasn’t slaughtered with a knife. Rather, the bird was killed by a sharp thumbnail inserted in the back of it’s neck. If a non-Kohen ate it, he would be transgressing the prohibition of eating neveilah. Kohanim, however, were commanded to eat from this offering.

Sources: • Rambam, Hilchos Ma’aseh Korbotan 10:1,11:9

This space available for dedications. Please contact our office at 02-581-0315 for further information.
The Sacrifice of Learning Torah

The term “Torah” is used by the Torah in a number of passages in connection with sacrifices. This association inspires three different interpretations by our Sages.

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish focuses on the sacrifices. This association inspires three different passages in connection with sacrifice.

Rabbi Shimshon ben Lakish focuses on the passage (Vayikra 7:37) which states: “This is the Torah...” and then goes on to mention virtually every type of sacrifice, obligatory and voluntary. The message is that one who learns any part of the Torah receives credit as if he were offering those sacrifices. The Sage Rava sees in this same passage the power of the general learning of Torah to guard man from sin, and therefore make it unnecessary for him to bring any sacrifice for atonement.

Rabbi Yitzchak, however, points to the passages (Vayikra 6:18 and 7:1) which specifically link Torah to the atonement sacrifices of chatass and asham in a manner which suggests that the learning is limited to the laws of those particular sacrifices. Not only is the voluntary study of the Torah laws concerning a voluntary offering considered as if you actually made that offering, but even in the case of an obligatory sin offering the voluntary study of the Torah laws concerning those sacrifices is considered as if you actually achieved this atonement.

\* Adapted from Maharsha, Menachos 110a

The Man from Dan

Shechita – the ritual slaughtering of animals and fowl – is the subject of the first section of our new Mesechta. “Everyone is eligible to do shechita,” declares the opening mishnah. Does “everyone” include women? Yes, say the commentaries, and thus rules the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 1:1). They point out that it is so obvious that there is no reason for disqualifying women that the mishnah does not even deem it necessary to mention their eligibility as our Sages do in other situations where there is a cause for assuming a different rule for women. Even the Remah (ibid.) who notes that it is not customary for women to practice shechita concedes that her shechita will be valid.

There is, however, one dissenting voice coming from a mysterious source. Rabbi Eldad ben Machli arrived from Eretz Yisrael about a thousand years ago with a claim that he was from the lost Tribe of Dan, and that he was in possession of a number of laws which his tribe followed on the basis of a tradition going back to Moshe. One of these “Laws of Eretz Yisrael” cited by the man who went down in history as “Eldad the Danite” was that women are ineligible for shechita. This opinion did not gain acceptance amongst Jewish halachic authorities, just as a number of the other laws he reported failed to gain recognition. Amongst these were rulings that if one fails to make a blessing before shechita or performs the act bare-headed his shechita is invalid.

The position of the authorities was that even if there was a remote part of the Jewish people living according to these rules, they were not laws – since the indication from the Talmud is contrary to them – but only stringent customs which the Danites accepted upon themselves, but were not accepted by the rest of the nation.

\* Chullin 2a

1. The captive woman must change out of her ‘captivity garment.’ Why?
2. How do a first-born and his brother split three equal portions of land inherited from their father?
3. What does a ‘ben sorer u’moreh’ (wayward and rebellious son) do to incur the death penalty?
4. What will become of a ‘ben sorer u’moreh’ if his parents don’t bring him to court?
5. What do you do if you find a lost object that costs money to maintain?
6. Why does the Torah forbid wearing the clothing of the opposite gender?
7. Why does the Torah link the mitzvah of ‘sending away the mother-bird’ with the mitzvah of making a railing?
8. When is it permitted to wear wool and linen?
9. Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People, the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?
10. Why is it worse to cause someone to sin than to kill him?
11. If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
12. What is the groom’s obligation to his bride during their first year together?
13. What type of object may one not take as security for a loan?
14. When is a kidnapper guilty of a capital offense?
15. “Remember what Hashem did to Miriam (24:9)” To what event does the Torah refer?
16. “Fathers will not be put to death because of their sons...” What does this mean?
17. If a poor person finds money, does “everyone” include women? Yes, say the commentaries, and thus rules the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 1:1). They point out that it is so obvious that there is no reason for disqualifying women that the mishnah does not even deem it necessary to mention their eligibility as our Sages do in other situations where there is a cause for assuming a different rule for women. Even the Remah (ibid.) who notes that it is not customary for women to practice shechita concedes that her shechita will be valid.

Answers on back page
Because she’s barren, she should sing?” Surely the question should have been asked on the first phrase — i.e., “Because she hasn’t given birth...” — because Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous.” (Yevamos 64) and He withheld progeny from them. However, they are called ‘barren’ because after all was said and done, it was as a result of their prayers that they eventually conceived and gave birth to children. That point it was evident that they weren’t barren at all, rather that Hashem had wanted their prayers and had therefore withheld children from them. However, if they had not merited children even after they had prayed, one couldn’t say that their ‘infertility’ was because Hashem desired their prayers.

Therefore the Talmud couldn’t have asked its question on the phrase “because she’s barren, she should sing?” For it could well be that her infertility is only a sign that Hashem desires her prayers. She herself has cause to sing, because her infertility is a sign that she is a very elevated and righteous soul.

However, if “she has not given birth” — and this, even after all her prayers — then the question becomes highly relevant — “because she hasn’t given birth, she should sing?” What cause does she have for singing?

It is to this question that the Talmud answers “Rather Sing, Congregation of Yisrael, who is like a barren woman, who should sing because she has not given birth to children who will be sent to Gehinom.”

• Rabbi Mahari Hakohen, zt”l, in Mayana shel Torah

Answers to this Week’s Questions!
All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated.

1. 21:13 - Because it is a beautiful garment which she wears for immoral purposes.
2. 21:17 - The first born gets two portions and his brother gets one.
3. 21:18 - Stealing, and eating meat and wine gluttonously.
4. 21:22 - He will eventually rob and kill to support his physical indulgences.
5. 22:2 - Sell it, and save the money until you find out who the owner is.
6. 22:5 - It leads to immorality.
7. 22:8 - To teach that one mitzvah leads to another.
8. 22:12 - Wool tzitzis on a linen garment.
9. 23:8 - Because it is a beautiful garment which she wears for immoral purposes.
10. 23:9 - Murder takes away life in this world, while causing someone to sin takes away his life in the World to Come.
11. 23:21 - Three; two negative commandments and a positive commandment.
12. 24:5 - To make her happy.
13. 24:6 - Utensils used to prepare food.
14. 24:7 - If he works the victim as a slave and sells him.
15. 24:9 - Hashem punishing Miriam with tzara’as for speaking Lashon Harah.
16. 24:15 - Fathers will not be put to death based on the testimony of their sons. That is, relatives are invalid as witnesses.
17. 24:19 - From the mitzvah to leave the ‘forgotten bundle’ for poor people.
18. 25:8 - The yavam (brother-in-law) and the yavama (his childless brother’s widow).
19. 25:16 - “An abomination (to’evah) to Hashem your G-d...”
20. 25:18 - Those who lost the protection of the ananei kavod due to their sins.

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Rivka and Rachel, were ‘barren’ because “Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous.” (Yevamos 64) and He withheld progeny from them. However, they are called ‘barren’ because after all was said and done, it was as a result of their prayers that they eventually conceived and gave birth to children. At that point it was evident that they weren’t barren at all, rather that Hashem had wanted their prayers and had therefore withheld children from them. However, if they had not merited children even after they had prayed, one couldn’t say that their ‘infertility’ was because Hashem desired their prayers.

The Mothers of the Jewish People, Sarah,