A Packet of Cookies

“One who will strike his fellow without knowledge...he shall flee to one of these cities (of refuge) and live.” (19:4,6)

If a person accidentally killed someone, the Torah provides for him to flee to a ‘city of refuge.’ There he had to stay until the Kohen Gadol passed away. However, if the fugitive emerged before the death of the Kohen Gadol, he risked being killed by the slain person’s ‘blood avenger.’

It could well be that the Kohen would be a young man, and so the fugitive could be coopered many long years, not able to go home.

Thus, he had a vested interest in the Kohen’s early demise.

To stop him from praying for the the Kohen’s premature death, the Kohen’s mother would send the fugitive regular “care packages” so that he shouldn’t pray for her son to die.

But how could a mere ‘packet of cookies’ compete with the longing to return to his home and his family? Did the Kohen Gadol’s mother really think that a little gastronomic bribery would stand up to the homesickness of the fugitive?

We can see from this a powerful idea: If we want our prayers to be answered we must pray with every last ounce of conviction.

During the Amidah — the standing prayer — a person bows four times. The Kohen Gadol (high priest), however, has to bow at the end of every bracha — 19 times. And a Jewish king has to bow at the beginning and the end of each and every bracha — 38 times!

Another opinion holds that the Kohen Gadol has to bow at the beginning and the end of every bracha, and a king bows once at the beginning of the prayer and stays bent over during the entire prayer.

The greater a person is the more he must humble himself before Hashem because the more Hashem has given him.

Also, the greater the person, the greater is the temptation to think that his greatness is of his own making.

For this reason, a king has two sifrei Torah, one of which he must keep with him the whole time. He needs a constant reminder that he is the servant of The Law, a servant of the Almighty, and all his power and status is only given to him to serve Hashem.

Talmud Berachos 34, Rashi heard from Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram

Living Links

“And you will come to the priests, the Leviim, and the judge who will be in those days.” (17:9) Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi was extremely sensitive to the smell of garlic and could not tolerate its odor. Once, he was teaching a group of students. He paused, the smell of garlic reaching his nose... “Would the student who ate garlic, kindly leave the room?” he asked. Not just one, but many students left. One of them was Rabbi Chiya.

The next day, Rabbi Shimon (Rabbi Yehuda’s son) chided Rabbi Chiya for his lack of consideration in eating garlic before attending the lecture. Rabbi Chiya replied “I didn’t eat any garlic. The reason I left was so that the offender should not have to be embarrassed by revealing his identity.”

Where did Rabbi Chiya learn the need for this sensitivity to the feelings of others? The Talmud teaches us that Rabbi Chiya learned this behavior from seeing Rabbi Meir conduct himself in a similar way. And from whom did Rabbi Meir learn it? From Shmuel HaKatan. And Shmuel? From Schania in the Book of Ezra. And Schania learned it from Yehoshua, who learned from Moshe Rabbeinu.

Why didn’t the Talmud skip all those generations and just get to the point? Why didn’t it just say “Rabbi Chiya learned his sensitivity and noble behavior from Moshe Rabbeinu?”

We stand at the end of an unbroken chain of generations. A chain of generations that stretches back ultimately to Moshe Rabbeinu and a moment of supreme contact with Hashem on Sinai. But our contact with that moment is with the great sages of our own generation. There are no “missing links” in the chain of the Torah. Every rebbe is a talmid of his rebbe.

When we seek wisdom and direction, we need look no further than our own living links to the past.

Based on Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz zt”l

Moshe tells the Bnei Yisrael to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem’s altar as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the Halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two Sifrei Torah, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn’t become haughty. Neither the Kohanim nor the Levites are to inherit land in the Land of Israel, rather they are to be supported by the community, by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided for someone who kills accidentally, in order to escape the blood-avenger from the family of the deceased. However someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger who may exact his revenge. Moshe cautions the Bnei Yisrael not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to “frame” a third are to be punished with that same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A Kohen is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in Hashem. Amongst those who are disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house, but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or faint-hearted. An enemy must be given a chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.


Grandma Drama

A woman wrote:

I am an actress. A wonderful part in a play has become available to me. It’s a truthful play dealing with prejudice and real emotions... with much humor and pathos. It is a play that touches the heart. However for the first time in my long acting experience, I am confronted with a moral decision. The play and the lines I have to say are not ones that I would be proud for my children or my grandchildren to hear (even though they will not see this play). My question is, is it right for me to consider taking this part?

Dear Babbe,

Guess what? All of us are confronted with your exact decision! This world is a ‘great play’ with fantastic scenery and ingenious props. We all have a wonderful part in it. But it is an improvisational theater; the lines of the play are ad-lib. I can only tell you how I try to make up the lines for my part. I don’t first look at my children to see how they will react to my performance. First, I look at the ‘Producer’ — the one responsible for giving me the part in the first place.

One should always use ‘clean’ language, and never utter an offensive or coarse word. Even words such as ‘p - i - g’ should be avoided when possible.

Your embarrassment in the face of your children is telling. When Joseph’s brothers plotted to kill him, Judah said, “What good is it if we kill our brother, and cover his blood?” I heard from Rabbi Yisroel Simcha Shorr, shlita, an explanation of the words “and cover his blood.” Judah told his brothers: “However justified we may feel in killing Joseph, the fact that we have to ‘cover it up’ indicates that, under no circumstances, all we know it’s wrong.”

Now, I have a question for you. Will the play be performed Friday night, or Saturday night before dark? No? Good.

Dear Alan Shear,

I asked this question to Rabbi Sholom Yosef Elyashiv, shlita. He rules that provided one is capable of making the monthly payments, he should say shehecheyanu at the time of purchase.

Since the shehecheyanu blessing depends on ‘simchat halev’ — happiness of the heart — one should say it as soon as possible, while he still feels the ‘simcha’.

Speaking of the bank owning something — or having a ‘lien’ on it:

A king once wanted his vassals to pay higher taxes. “But what if they don’t pay?” asked the king’s advisor.

“We’ll slap a lien on their property,” said the king. “What shall we call this ‘lein’ imposed upon the vassals?’ he asked.

“Please,” said the king. “Don’t try to force me into making a bad pun.”

Dear Bubbe,

If one purchases a car, which will belong to him in a few years time (since actually the bank owns it until the owner can pay back fully for it) but does not currently belong to him, may he make a Shehecheyanu blessing on it — or should he wait until the car is fully paid for, and actually belongs to him, and then say the blessing?

Sources:
- Bereshit 37:26
- Tractate Pesachim 3a

In what non-life-threatening situation is there a positive mitzvah to eat the meat of a neveilah — i.e., something that died without mazon and tzaidah — i.e., something that died without a niftar or having a ‘lien’ on it:

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Sources:
- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 223:4

Yiddle Riddle

In what non-life-threatening situation is there a positive mitzvah to eat the meat of a neveilah — i.e., something that died without shechita (kosher slaughter)?

- Riddle submitted by Reuven Miller <millerr@ashur.cc.biu.ac.il>

Ask the Rabbi

This question was asked to me at a halacha shiur I gave:

If one purchases a car, which will belong to him in a few years time (since actually the bank owns it until the owner can pay back fully for it) but does not currently belong to him, may he make a Shehecheyanu blessing on it — or should he wait until the car is fully paid for, and actually belongs to him, and then say the blessing?

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MENACHOS 100 - 106

WHEN ONE MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

If someone makes a voluntary meal offering (mincha) he may bring any amount from one issaron of flour – the standard amount of a mincha – to 60 issronim in one basin.

Why is there a limit of 60? Two explanations are offered:
1) Rabbi Yehuda’s reasoning is based on the fact that the most issronim we ever find offered by the community along with its sacrifices is 61. This happens when the first day of Sukkos is on Shabbos and this is the calculation: Regular daily lambs – 2; additional lambs for Shabbos – 2; additional lambs for Sukkos – 14; total lambs – 18; one issaron per lamb = 18. Additional rams for Sukkos – 2; two issronim per ram = 4. Additional bullocks for Sukkos – 13; three issronim per bullock = 39. Total issronim 61.

Since the most the community can bring is 61 it makes sense that the individual should be one step down and offer only 60.

2) Rabbi Shimon’s explanation is that the one lug of oil which must be mixed with the flour to make the dough can only be effectively mixed into 60 issronim, not one more.

This explanation encounters two challenges:

If 60 issronim can be blended with oil does it make sense that one more cannot?

The rule is that even if the oil is not actually mixed into the flour the mincha is kosher. Why does it matter then if 61 issronim cannot be mixed with the oil?

In regard to the first challenge, Rabbi Shimon declares that all of the standards and measurements stated by the Sages are precise. If a mikveh has forty se’ah the one who immerses himself in it has become purified. If it lacks a drop from this amount he remains impure.

As far as the second point, the insistence is not on the actual mixing of the oil and flour but rather on the possibility of it taking place. This is the famous rule of: “When anything is capable of being mixed together, the actual mixing is no longer an absolute prerequisite; if it is not capable of being mixed then this is an absolute prerequisite.”

THE GIFT OF POVERTY

A subtle distinction is made by the Torah in describing one who offers a sacrifice. In introducing the chapter on the voluntary offering of an animal or bird the expression used is: “If any man of you brings an offering” (Vayikra 1:2). The chapter concerning the voluntary meal offering (Vayikra 2:1) begins: “And when a ‘nefesh’ (literally, a life) will offer a meal offering.”

What is the reason for the use of the word “nefesh” in regard to a meal offering?

Rabbi Yitzchak explains that it is as if Hashem was saying to us: “Who is accustomed to bringing a meal offering if not the poor man. (In Vayikra 5:11 the rule of the sliding scale for certain sacrifices entitles the poor man who can afford neither animal or bird to achieve his atonement with a meal offering.) I shall consider it as if he had offered his very life to Me.”

The commentaries have already pointed out that every sacrifice is a vicarious offering of one’s own life, and that the objects designated for sacrifice are either ones which are physiologically similar to man or materials which nourish him.

This concept is apparently difficult for the more prosperous individual to truly identify with because he has so much left after making his offering. The poor man, however, is probably sacrificing his last bit of food, and can more readily imagine that he is offering Hashem his very life.

• Menachos 103b

1. What is the role of Shofrim? What is the role of Shotrim?
2. May a judge accept a bribe, if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
3. What is the source for the concept ‘Seek out a good portion of the shearings to a Kohen? ’
4. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
5. What does it mean to ‘prepare the way’ to the cities of refuge?”
6. How many horses may a Jewish king own?
7. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
8. How was Shaul Hamelech punished for disobeying a ‘minor’ command of the prophet Shmuel?
9. What is meant by ‘Nachalas Chamisha’ and ‘Nachalas Shiva’?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the din of chazeh, shok, and keiva? Which ones?
11. How many sheep must be shorn before the owner must give a 

I Didn’t Know That!

“Who is the man who built a new house...planted a vineyard...betrothed a woman...? He should return home lest he die in battle...“(20:5-7) These military exemptions do not apply to the battle for the conquest of the Land of Israel. For this, even ‘a bride from her canopy’ goes out to the fray.

• Mishna Sota 8:7, Sforno

Bonus Question?

“In order that he live long in his kingship... (18:20)” Why does the king need a special promise of long life?

Answers on back page
Throughout the long night of exile, it is only the promise that Hashem will one day redeem us and bring consolation for all the tragedies which have befallen us that sustains the Jewish People. We know that Hashem is close at hand, and even when the darkness threatens to overwhelm us, we take strength from the words of the Prophet, “It is I, It is I, Who comforts you...”

1. 16:18 - *Shaftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
3. 16:20 - “*Tzedek tzedek tirdof...*”
4. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
5. 17:9 - To teach that although the judge of a particular generation may not be as eminent as those of previous generations, the Jewish People are still obligated to obey him.
6. 17:16 - Only as many as he needs for his carriages.
7. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
8. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
9. 18:2 - Nachalas Chamisha is the land of the first five tribes to claim their inheritance: Reuven, Gad, Menashe, Yehuda, and Ephraim. Nachalas Shiva is the land of the remaining tribes, who didn’t inherit until after Joshua’s death.
10. 18:3 - *Chayos* (undomestic-type animals).
11. 18:4 - Five.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn’t hear, prophesies something that was told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post signs saying ‘Refuge’ at the crossroads to point the way.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - 1)Written testimony sent to the court; 2)Testimony given through a translator.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute judgment in a just fashion they will be victorious in war.
18. 1) Clanging their shields 2) Making their horses stomp and whinny 3) Shouting 4) Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The *Sanhedrin*.
20. 21:9 - He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

**Answers to this Week’s Questions!**

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**Recommended Reading List**

**RAMBAN**

16:21 Trees
17:11 Obedience
17:15 Kingship
17:20 Concern
18:15-16 Prophecy
19:8 Our Borders
19:13 Self Defense
20:8 The Torah Army

**SEFER HACHINUCH**

491 Securing Justice
496 Antidote to Anarchy

**SFORNO**

16:21 Beautiful But Bad
17:3 The Sun And the Moon
18:14 Above the Stars

**Bonus Answer!**

“Leadership positions bury those who occupy them (Pesachim 87).” Being in a position of leadership tends to shorten a person’s life. It is for this reason as well that the blessing ‘*Yechi HaMelech!* ‘May the king live!’ is offered at the king’s inauguration.

**HÄFTORAH: Isaiah 51:12-52:12**

Throughout the long night of exile, it is only the promise that Hashem will one day redeem us and bring us consolation for all the tragedies which have befallen us that sustains the Jewish People. We know that Hashem is close at hand, and even when the darkness threatens to overwhelm us, we take strength from the words of the Prophet, “It is I, It is I, Who comforts you...”

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