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CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

“A man or woman who will take the vow of a Nazir for the sake of Hashem...from new or aged wine... shall he abstain” (6:2).

“Good evening! And here is the nine o’clock news. The perpetrators of last year’s spectacularly daring \$5,000,000 diamond heist were finally sentenced today, to life in prison...”

David leaned forward and turned off the TV, and then sinking back in his armchair he mused to himself “\$5,000,000! Their only mistake was they weren’t careful enough...if that had been me, I would have gotten away with it!”

In order to restore a husband’s trust in his wife after she has behaved in a way which indicates that she may have been unfaithful to him, the Torah provides a means of verifying her innocence. This is called the *mitzvah* of *Sotah*. If she is innocent her childbearing is blessed, but if not, she dies a spectacular and miraculous death. The Torah immediately follows this with the *mitzvah* of the *Nazir*: A person who takes upon himself additional stringencies such as refraining from wine and all grape derivatives. Rashi explains that the connection of the two sections is to teach us that someone who sees the terrifying demise of the *Sotah* should understand that indulgence in wine leads to adultery, and distance himself from anything to do with wine.

But the question remains, surely the spectacle of the grisly end of the *Sotah* should, in itself, be more than adequate warning! The implication here is that **we are more attracted by the crime than deterred by the punishment**: A person can always rationalize and say to himself: “They weren’t careful enough — I would have gotten away with it!” The spectacle of punishment enforces the idea of the feasibility of sin more than the danger of getting caught.

INSIGHTS

“ARE YOU RECEIVING ME? OVER.”

“May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you...” (2:22)

You can have the largest radio transmitter in town, blasting out 50,000 watts of power, but if the radio at the other end isn’t turned on, you won’t hear a thing.

In the above verse, ‘*Be(ing) gracious*’ means finding grace in the eyes of others. But the question arises — if Hashem illuminates his countenance for us, surely there can be no question that we will find favor in the eyes of others. So what can the additional *bracha* of Hashem being gracious — of giving us favor in the eyes of others — mean?

We can have all the best qualities but they can still go unrecognized. Our good qualities can live like a princess locked in the top of a castle with nobody recognizing our true selves.

When Yosef was in prison in Egypt, Hashem gave Yosef grace in the eyes of the prison guard. Yosef is called Yosef HaTzadik — Yosef the righteous — not Yosef a tzadik, but Yosef **the** tzadik. Yosef was the essence of righteousness, and yet Hashem still had to give him favor in the eyes of the prison guard.

There are some people who are unable to see the true virtue of a person, very often they perceive them as being the opposite of their true selves. It needs a special *bracha* for a person’s virtues to be recognized by the world. That’s the *bracha* of finding favor in the eyes of others — that their receiver will be turned on to us.

• Based on *Degel Machane Ephraim*

HEARING AID

“When Moshe arrived at the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him (Hashem), he heard the Voice speaking to him from atop the Cover that was on the Ark of Testimony between the two Cherubim.” (7:89)

The whole world proclaims the presence of Hashem! Every blade of grass, every bird singing, every plant growing, every nebula and star system being born on the fringes of space — everything is saying in a loud voice “Hashem is G-d!”

How come people find it so hard to hear the Voice? How come to some people the universe looks like a self-replicating absurdity or a cosmic bad joke? Why don’t they hear the Voice?

Rashi explains the above verse to mean that Moshe would go into the Tent of Meeting and there he would hear the Voice coming from on top of the Cover of the Ark of Testimony. What is this verse telling us? Surely Moshe could hear the Voice in all of nature, for everything sings the praises of Hashem, for nothing can exist outside of the Will of Hashem.

The Voice is everywhere, but if we want to *hear* it, we must do what Moshe did. First we must go into the Tent of Meeting, the *Beis Midrash* (study-hall) where the Voice emanates from the interior spiritual world of the Torah. Then, when we are filled with the wisdom and the clarity that comes from learning the Torah with single-minded application and dedication, and we have refined our character and behavior, then, only then, can we go outside and hear the Voice in the world at large.

This verse is hinting to that message: Moshe is to tell Israel that Hashem speaks to them from on top of the Cover within, and that Voice reaches to our ears and to our hearts which are outside the veil of the Holy of Holies.

• Based on *Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt”l*

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the sons of *Gershon*, *Kehas*, and *Merari*, the *Bnei Levi*. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those who are ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor’s property after having sworn to the contrary in court, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object, and bring a guilt offering to atone for his transgression. In the event that the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *Kohen*. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings his wife, a *Sotah*, to a *Kohen*. The *Kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with a certain dust and a special ink that was used for inscribing Hashem’s Name on a piece of parchment. If she is

indeed innocent, the potion does not harm her — in fact it brings a blessing of children. However, if she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *Nazir* is someone who voluntarily vows to dedicate himself to Hashem for a specific period of time. He is obliged to abstain from all grape products, let his hair grow, and avoid all contact with corpses. At the end of this period, he shaves his head and brings special offerings in the Temple before returning to normal life. If he fails to successfully complete his count, he needs to begin the count anew after shaving his head and bringing an offering in the Temple. The *Kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nissan* in the second year after the Exodus. The Princes of each Tribe make a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

OVERVIEW



דרור יקרא

“FREEDOM SHALL HE PROCLAIM...”

“And we shall open wide our mouths and we shall fill them.”

This is a variation of the words of King David in *Tehillim* (81:11) in which he issues the Divine invitation “I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Egypt; open wide your mouth and I shall fill it.” In *Mesechta Brachos* we are taught to be humble when requesting something from Heaven in the manner that a beggar at the door keeps his requests down to a minimum. When this lesson is challenged from the above-mentioned invitation to open wide our mouths and ask for a lot the response is that when it comes to asking for assistance in spiritual matters of Torah the sky is the limit. It may be suggested that when we sing about opening our mouths wide on Shabbos we are also referring to our prayers for the opportunity to spiritually grow through filling our mouths with the spiritual sustenance of Shabbos food.



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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**
Web Advisor: **Rabbi Reuven Lauffer**
Production Design: **Lev Seltzer**

Contributing Editors:
Weekly Daf, Sing My Soul:
Rav Mendel Weinbach

Ask the Rabbi:
Rabbi Moshe Lazerus,
Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz,
Rabbi Reuven Subar
Insights, Overview, Haftorah:
Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
Parsha Q&A:
Rabbi Eliyahu Kane

Produced by the Office of
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Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro, Director

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EXTINGUISH AND DISTINGUISH

Brian Connack from Jerusalem wrote:

I would like to ask the rabbi a question. I have noticed that when people put out their havdalah candles after Shabbat, rather than blowing the candle out they put it out in the spilled wine. I was also at a birthday party recently and the hostess insisted that the birthday boy not blow out the candles, rather she put them out by hand. I would like to know if there is any basis to this custom and if there is, what is the difference between blowing out a candle and extinguishing it by hand.

Dear Brian,

There are actually three customs here:

- **Extinguishing** the havdalah candle after havdalah
- Extinguishing it in **wine**
- Not **blowing** out candles in general

Before light bulbs were invented, they used candles!

Extinguishing the havdalah candle immediately after havdalah demonstrated that it was lit solely for a mitzvah, and not as a regular source of light.

‘Wine spilling like water,’ says the Talmud, is a sign of blessing. In order to start the week off right, we fill the cup of havdalah so that a little spills out. And not only do we spill wine, but we spill it ‘like water.’ That is, we use it lavishly — to put out a flame; something you would never think of doing with wine.

As for not blowing out candles in general, the following reason has been said in the name of Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (the ‘Steipler’), *zatzal*:

There’s an angel whose name is the same as the sound produced when you blow out with force. According to Kabbalistic tradition, it’s improper to make use of the names of holy angels. Many people, therefore,

extinguish candles by hand in order not to pronounce the name of this angel.

Another explanation: The Torah depicts man’s soul as being a ‘breath’ from Hashem. The soul is also compared to a flame. Using your breath to blow out a candle is an ironic gesture, using one ‘soul’ to extinguish another, so to speak.

I know a rabbi who puts out candles by saying the word ‘Purim,’ forcefully emphasizing the letter ‘P’. And a friend of mine saw his Kung Fu instructor put out a candle by punching it!

Sources:

- *Rama, Orach Chaim* 296:1
- *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 296:5
- *Kaf Hachaim, Yoreh De'ah* chapter 116 halacha 115
- *Responsa Rivevot Ephraim IV* 45:35, that one shouldn't blow out a flame



ANOTHER WORKOUT

Follow-up:

Gili Houpt, Yeshiva University
<haupt@yu1.yu.edu> wrote:

In *Ask the Rabbi* a few weeks ago you recommend daily exercise. I just wanted to say that it’s very refreshing to hear a rabbi giving such advice. I’m a Yeshiva U. student who’s been involved with *kiruv* (Jewish education). Sometimes I see *ba’alei t’shuva* who feel they must reject everything that won’t directly enhance their quest for spiritual perfection. Also — you might suggest to Yoel that he try learning Torah while on the treadmill. I’ve found this a very useful way to ‘kill two birds with one stone.’

Yonasan R. of Jerusalem commented, “Weren’t you a bit too tough on that poor guy?”

Thanks, Gili and Yonasan and everyone else who commented.

Yiddle Riddle

Reuven Davis <davisr@cs.man.ac.uk> wrote:

“I heard the following riddle from Avigdor Frankenhauser — Which verse do we say every day in the prayers, that starts and ends with the same three words in the same order?”
(Answer next week)

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THE DOUBTER AND THE IGNORAMUS

Any *kohen* who does not believe in the divine origin of the service in the sanctuary (but that Moshe himself thought it up - *Rashi*) is not entitled to any share of the sacrificial flesh or meal offerings along with the other *kohanim*.

This ruling which Rabbi Shimon bases on a passage in the Torah suggests that the only criterion is faith and that there is a need to disqualify a *kohen* who is a faithless scholar. But in *Mesechta Chullin* (130a) Rabbi Yonasan seems to communicate the opposite when he rules that one should not give his tithes to a *kohen* who is an ignoramus in Torah. He bases this ruling on a passage in *Divrei Hayamim* II (31:4) which records the exhortation of King Chizkiyahu to the residents of Jerusalem to give their tithes to the *kohanim* and levites so that “they might adhere firmly to the Torah of Hashem.” This limits such gifts to those who adhere firmly to the Torah and eliminate those who are ignorant of its contents. He does not even bother to mention the need to avoid giving tithes to a faithless *kohen*, indicating that this is so obvious that it requires no passage to communicate it.



Tosefos resolves this problem by pointing out that tithes are given by individuals to the *kohen* of their choice and it is therefore obvious that if we are to refrain from giving to an unlearned *kohen* then we are certainly expected to do so in regard to a faithless one. But when it comes to sharing in the sacrificial portions the Torah states that all *kohanim* who are on duty should share equally. This would seem to indicate that every *kohen* is entitled to a share, even if he is a doubter. A Torah passage is therefore required to disqualify him.

• *Menachos 18b*

Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle.

HOW GREAT THE LOVE OF TORAH

“How I loved your Torah; all day long it was the subject of my conversation.” (*Tehillim* 119:97)

This was the tribute paid by Rabbi Elazar ben Shamoah to the extraordinary love of Torah demonstrated by his disciple, the Sage Yosef Habavli.

The latter had asked Rabbi Elazar what the rule was when someone slaughtered a sac-

rificial animal with the intention of leaving some of its blood unattended till the next day — does this disqualify the sacrifice in the same manner as it is disqualified according to Rabbi Yehuda if the slaughterer intended that all of the blood be left till tomorrow?

When the question was first raised at night Rabbi Elazar responded that the sacrifice was kosher. When the question was repeated in the morning and again at noon the reply was the same. Finally, in the later afternoon the same question elicited a qualified response: “Kosher — but Rabbi Eliezer disqualifies it.”

At that moment the face of Yosef Habavli lit up in joy. Rabbi Elazar interpreted this as a sign that his previous responses were not acceptable to his disciple. “Your responses were correct,” the disciple reassured him, “But I recalled once learning that there was a dissenting opinion of Rabbi Yehuda and when I unsuccessfully checked with all of his disciples for corroboration I began to have misgivings that perhaps my memory had failed me. When you now mentioned a dissenting opinion I was overjoyed at recovering an item of Torah which I feared I had lost.”

When Rabbi Elazar heard this explanation tears came to his eyes and he exclaimed: “How fortunate are you, Torah scholars, that the words of Torah are so precious to you.”

It was then that he drew the parallel between his beloved disciple and King David, the author of *Tehillim*.

• *Menachos 18a*

1. The *Levi'im* were responsible for the transport of the *Mishkan*. What other service performed by them is mentioned in this *Parsha*?
2. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *tameim* out of the camp?
3. Name the three camps in the desert.
4. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
5. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. When he later confesses his guilt, what are his financial obligations?
6. What member of the Jewish People has no heir?
7. Who determines which *Kohen* gets the *Matnos Kehuna* (gifts that must be given to the *Kohanim*)?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives the *Kohen* the *Matnos Kehuna*?
9. In which four ways is the *Minchah* offering of the *Sotah* (a woman accused of adultery) different from other *Minchah* offerings?
10. What does the *Kohen* do to the hair of a *Sotah* in order to disgrace her?

11. When a *Sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
12. How does the *nazir* keep his body holy?
13. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?



14. What is the meaning of the blessing, “May Hashem bless you and guard you”?
15. What is the meaning of the blessing, “May Hashem lift up His countenance upon you”?
16. What was the role of the *Nesi'im* (Princes of the Tribes) in Egypt?

17. Why did the *Bnei Gershon* receive only two wagons, while the *Bnei Merari* received four wagons?
18. In what order did the *Nesi'im* offer their gifts during the dedication of the *Mishkan*?
19. The Tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this honorable position?
20. From where did the voice of Hashem emanate?

I Didn't Know That!

The Mitzvah for the *Kohanim* to bless the *Bnei Yisrael* begins with the words: “*Ko Tevarchu...*” “In this way you shall bless...” The *gematria* of the word “*Ko*” is 25; the word “*Bracha*” occurs 25 times in the Torah, and the word “*Shalom*” also occurs 25 times. Therefore, *Bircas Kohanim* begins with *Bracha* and ends with *Shalom*.

• *Ba'al HaTurim*

Bonus Question ?

Why was the honorable duty of taking care of the *Aron* given to Kehas son of Levi (*Bamidbar* 4:4-6) instead of to Levi's firstborn, Gershon, who was assigned the task of taking care of certain parts of the *Mishkan* (*Bamidbar* 4:24-26)?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

1. 4:47 - The *Levi'im* would sing and play music with cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
2. 5:2 - The day the *Mishkan* was erected.
3. 5:2 - The Camp of the *Shechina* was in the center, surrounded by the Camp of *Levi* which was surrounded by the Camp of *Yisrael*.
4. 5:2 - A *Metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *Zav* was permitted in the Camp of *Yisrael* but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the Camp of the *Shechina*.
5. 5:6,7 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and must bring a *Korban Asham*.
6. 5:8 - A convert who dies without leaving a Jewish descendent.
7. 5:10 - The one who gives it.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:15 - Her offering is: 1) barley, 2) unsifted flour, 3) lacking oil. 4) without frankincense.
10. 5:18 - He uncovers it, because it is disgraceful for a married woman to have her hair exposed to the public.
11. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
12. 6:8 - By avoiding contact with the dead.
13. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
14. 6:24 - "May Hashem bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
15. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
16. 7:2 - They were the Jewish overseers who were beaten because they helped the Jewish People (*Shemos* 5:11).
17. 7:7,8 - The burden of the *Bnei Gershon* was lighter than that of the *Bnei Merari*.
18. 7:11,12 - According to the order in which their Tribes traveled in the desert.
19. 7:18 - The Tribe of *Yissachar* was well versed in Torah. Additionally, they proposed the idea that the *Nesi'im* should offer gifts.
20. 7:89 - The Voice issued from Heaven to the place between the *Cherubim* and from there it filled the *Ohel Moed*.



Recommended Reading List

RAMBAN	SEFER HACHINUCH
5:2, 5:6 Organization of this <i>Parsha</i>	362 <i>Tumah</i> and <i>Kedusha</i>
5:20 Waters of the <i>Sotah</i>	364 Confession
6:11 Sin of the <i>Nazir</i>	365 Marital Peace
6:24 Blessings of the <i>Kohanim</i>	366 <i>Sotah</i> Offering
SFORNO	374 Appropriate Asceticism
7:13 Gifts of the <i>Nesi'im</i>	378 The Blessing of the <i>Kohanim</i>

Bonus Answer!

If the duty of taking care of the *Aron* — the prime representation of Torah — was given to *Levi's* firstborn, people might think that Torah is received as an 'inheritance,' as is the Crown of Royalty and the Crown of *Kehuna*. The Crown of Torah, however, is available to be the property of anyone who toils in learning the Torah and rightly deserves it.

• *Kli Yakar*

HAFTORAH: *Shoftim* 13:2-25

Shimshon (Samson) is the most famous *Nazir* in *Tanach*, and thus this week's *Parsha*, which describes the laws of the *Nazir*, is complemented by the story of the birth of Shimshon. "The angel of Hashem said to him, 'Why is it that you ask for my name? It is hidden'" (13:18).

of *Esav*, the representative of the *yetzer hara* (the evil inclination), what was his

The angel of holiness has a name but it is *hidden*, whereas the *yetzer hara* has no name — **the yetzer hara has substance only when we don't seek to know who and what he really is.** If a person will examine the "identity papers" of the *yetzer hara*, even for a second, he will realize that it has no substance whatsoever, and thus no name...

"The angel of Hashem said to him,
"Why is it that you ask for my name?
It is hidden" (13:18).

The more you seek the essence of the angel of holiness — to ask his 'name' — the more elusive and hidden he becomes. But when *Yaakov* asked the angel

name, he **also** said "Why is it that you ask my name?" However, there is a difference:

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