

OHRNET

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THE SECOND GOBLET

“We shall do and we shall listen!”

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

This was the response of our ancestors to the Divine invitation to receive the Torah over 3,300 years ago. This unquestioning trust which they put into the Creator set them apart from all the other nations who insisted on first knowing what was expected of them before consenting to commit themselves to such an all-encompassing Divine set of rules.

It is this trust that the Creator would not demand of them anything beyond their capacity to fulfill which is the usual understanding of the unique nature of our ancestors' placing “doing” before “listening”, an expression of faith which gained for each of them two angel-bestowed crowns – one for *na'ase* (we shall do) and one for *nishma* (we will listen).

There is, however, another perspective of *na'ase* and *nishma* which emerges from a *midrash* that focuses on the Prophet Yirmiyahu's call to his people to “listen” to the Word of G-d”. The parable presented by the *midrash* is one of a king ordering his servant to bring two precious crystal goblets to his palace. En route to the palace a calf bumps into the servant and causes one of the goblets to break. When the king encounters the servant he sees before him a man shaking with fear. Upon asking him why he is so agitated, the king hears about the accident which destroyed the first goblet. Rather than scolding him for the loss of this precious goblet, the king merely tells him that he will now have to be extremely careful to ensure that the second goblet is not

broken.

Jews were given two goblets at Sinai, explains the *midrash*, one for *na'ase* and one for *nishma*. The incident of the golden calf resulted in the breaking of the *na'ase* goblet. The prophet therefore warns us to be extremely careful not to break the second goblet of *nishma*.

In regard to Torah observance there are two areas — doing and listening. Doing is the fulfillment of all the Torah commandments. Listening is the area of studying the Torah. The faithless episode of the golden calf definitely hurt our capacity to faithfully fulfill our obligations but we were left with the second goblet of listening to G-d through our study of Torah and thus strengthening our ability to perform as well.

This relationship between doing and listening is crucial to our approach today to outreach to alienated Jews. It is extremely difficult to introduce such Jews to the actual performance of *mitzvot* so foreign to their disadvantaged upbringing. But they are invariably ashamed of their total ignorance of Judaism and are anxious to listen when information is properly presented.

So while our ancestors gained their crowns and their glory by putting doing before listening, for many of their descendants it must be a process of putting listening first in order that it will eventually lead to doing.

It is that second goblet of listening which we, as the servants of our King of Kings, must carefully guard so that we can extend a drink of Torah from it to those who are ready to listen and eventually do.

SECURITY CHECK

“Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Yisrael”

One of the more interesting experiences I had recently was a brief trip across the Jordan River to the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan.

This was occasioned not by a great love of tourism but because of the vagaries of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior. It's not uncommon to spend an entire day there renewing one's visa. In fact, it's possible to review great swaths of the Babylonian Talmud courtesy of the waiting room of the Ministry of the Interior. There was even a rumor that a cobweb was once seen growing between the wall and the head of someone who was waiting in line — but I can't vouch for the authenticity of this story.

On a recent trip to the north of the country, I attempted to renew my visa in a different and, hopefully, more time-efficient way. Just outside of Beit Shean in the northern part of Israel is the King Abdulla bridge. To cut a long, and quite interesting, story short, I presented myself at the border there, and after a short bus ride found myself on the other side of the Jordan in the midst of a very foreign culture. Had I thought about it before, I would probably have made some attempt to conceal the more obvious signs of my Jewishness, but there I was clad in a dark blue suit and a fedora, looking about as Arab as a blintz.

As I entered the immigration building on the Jordanian side of the river, something struck me as not being quite right; something was missing. However, it took me a few minutes to register what it was.

There was no security.

Absolutely no security. None. Zero. Zilch. No metal detectors. No X-ray machines. It was like walking through a time-warp into the late fifties, where hijacking was something only done by pirates under sail in the southern seas, and the word “terrorist” was virtually unused.

In spite of my eye-catching ethnic garb, no one searched me; no dog whetted its tongue nor sniffed its nose in my direction.

There was no inspection, quite simply, because they knew they had nothing to fear. When was the last time you read a news report of a phylactery-clad Jew detonating himself in downtown Amman?

Checking is a double-edged blade. A check can be for the good, or for the bad.

In this week's Torah portion, G-d instructs Moshe to “take a census of the entire assembly.... The Hebrew idiom for taking a census is “to lift up the head”. This phrase has two possible connotations. Either it can mean exaltation and elevation, or, as the Torah says in connection with Pharaoh's baker (*Bereishet 40:13, 19*), it can mean that the head is lifted higher than the body with a rope in execution.

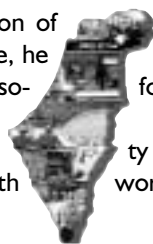
The result of scrutiny can go either way. Similarly, at Rosh Hashana, the “head” of the year, when G-d dissects our actions and thoughts, when He takes the yearly census of our *mitzvot* and negative actions and thoughts, He can “raise our heads” in one of two ways in this ultimate security check.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

TIFRACH — THE BLOSSOMING LAND

When the Prophet Yeshayahu uttered his vision of the ultimate redemption of the Jewish People, he described the accompanying revival of the desolate Holy Land which will “blossom like a rose” (*Yeshayahu 35:1*). The Hebrew term for “to blossom” is *tifrach* and that is the name of a settlement in the south



of Eretz Yisrael. The nearby settlements of G'ilat, Ronen, Maslul and Peduim are also named for terms found in that prophecy.

There is a famous yeshiva in this observant community which attracts students from all of Israel and the world.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of Bamidbar — “In the desert” — begins with G-d commanding Moshe to take a census of all men over age twenty — old enough for service. The count reveals just over 600,000. The *levi'im* are counted separately later, because their service will be unique. They will be responsible for transporting the *Mishkan* and its furnishings and assembling them when the nation encamps. The 12 Tribes of Israel, each with its banner, are arranged around the *Mishkan* in four sections: east, south, west and north. Since Levi is singled out, the tribe of Yosef is split into two tribes, Ephraim and Menashe, so there will be four groups of three. When the nation travels, they march in a formation similar to the way they camp. A formal transfer is made between the

first born and the *levi'im*, whereby the *levi'im* take over the role the firstborn would have had serving in the *Mishkan* if not for the sin of the golden calf. The transfer is made using all the 22,000 surveyed *levi'im* from one month old and up. Only *levi'im* between 30 and 50 will work in the *Mishkan*. The remaining firstborn sons are redeemed with silver, similar to the way we redeem our firstborn today. The sons of Levi are divided in three main families, Gershon, Kehat and Merari (besides the *kohanim* — the special division from Kehat's family). The family of Kehat carried the *menorah*, the table, the altar and the holy ark. Because of their utmost sanctity, the ark and the altar are covered only by Aharon and his sons, before the *levi'im* prepare them for travel.

ISRAEL Forever

COMPENSATION FOR SUFFERING

Whenever as a nation or as individuals we undergo a measure of suffering, we may derive some comfort from the census of our ancestors reported in this week's Torah portion.

All the tribes of Israel were counted and the smallest of them all was the tribe of Levi with only 22,300 males above the age of a month, less than half of the smallest of all the other tribes.

How could it be that the tribe chosen to be the servants of G-d in His Sanctuary should be so relatively small in number?

One of the answers to this question offered by Ramban is that the population explosion of all the other tribes was a miraculous Heavenly response to the Egyptian effort to limit their population growth by imposing upon them rigorous slave labor. To the Egyptian goal of birth control “lest they multiply”, Heaven proclaimed “they shall multiply”.

The tribe of Levi was exempt from Egyptian slave labor. Their reproduction rate was therefore normal while all the others tribes enjoyed their reward for their suffering.

As Israel suffers today from insecurity, we can look forward to a Heavenly compensation for Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

“GIVE ME BACK MY SON!”

This outcry from Leah Aks came as she saw a woman approaching her on the deck of the ship “Carpathian” carrying an infant. Both of these women were among the 750 survivors of the “Titanic” shipwreck in April 1912, which claimed the lives of 1500 people. They had been picked up from lifeboats to which women and children had been given first access.

One male passenger on that ill-fated ship had become so incensed by the crew refusing him entry to the lifeboats that he seized Leah's baby and threw it overboard, yelling “Women and children first, eh?”

A despondent Leah had to be forced into a lifeboat when her turn came. She had virtually given up on ever seeing her

Ephraim Fishel again and now that she finally saw him she encountered resistance from the woman holding him and insisting that it was her child. The commotion arising from their argument brought the captain of the ship aboard. He summoned them to his quarters and listened to the impassioned stories of two women who had been separated from their babies.

Then came an inspiration to Leah. “I can prove that I'm right,” she cried. “Since I'm Jewish, if the baby is mine it would be circumcised.”

Leah got the baby back and came to the United States with him. A Jewish baby was thus saved both in body and soul and went on to be blessed with many children and grandchildren.

PARSHA Q&A?

1. Why were the Jewish People counted so frequently?
2. What documents did the people bring when they were counted?
3. What determined the color of the tribal flags?
4. What is the difference between an “ot” and a “degel”?
5. How do we see that the Jews in the time of Moshe observed “*techum Shabbat*” - the prohibition against traveling more than 2,000 *amot* on *Shabbat*?
6. What was the signal for the camp to travel?
7. What was the sum total of the counting of the 12 tribes?
8. Why are Aharon’s sons called “sons of Aharon and Moshe”?
9. Who was Nadav’s oldest son?
10. Which two people from the Book of Esther does Rashi mention in this week’s Parsha?
11. Why did the *levi'im* receive *ma'aser rishon*?
12. Which groups of people were counted from the age of one month?
13. Name the first descendant of Levi in history to be counted as an infant.
14. Who assisted Moshe in counting the *levi'im*?
15. Why did so many people from the tribe of Reuven support Korach in his campaign against Moshe?
16. Why did so many people from the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar, and Zevulun become great Torah scholars?
17. In verse 3:39 the Torah states that the total number of *levi'im* was 22,000. The actual number was 22,300. Why does the Torah seem to ignore 300 *levi'im*?
18. The firstborn males of the Jewish People were redeemed for five *shekalim*. Why five *shekalim*?
19. During what age-span is a man considered at his full strength?
20. As the camp was readying itself for travel, who was in charge of covering the vessels of the *Mishkan* in preparation for transport?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week’s Questions!

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

1. 1:1 - They are very dear to G-d.
2. 1:18 - They brought birth records proving their tribal lineage.
3. 2:2 - Each tribe’s flag was the color of that tribe’s stone in the breastplate of the *kohen gadol*.
4. 2:2 - An “ot” is a flag, i.e., a colored cloth that hangs from a flagpole. A *degel* is a flagpole.
5. 2:2 - G-d commanded them to camp no more than 2,000 *amot* from the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Had they camped farther, it would have been forbidden for them to go to the *Ohel Mo'ed* on *Shabbat*.
6. 2:9 - The cloud over the *Ohel Mo'ed* departed and the *kohanim* sounded the trumpets.
7. 2:32 - 603,550.
8. 3:1 - Since Moshe taught them Torah, it’s as if he gave birth to them.
9. 3:4 - Nadav had no children.
10. 3:7 - Bigtan and Teresh.
11. 3:8 - Since the *levi'im* served in the *Mishkan* in place of everyone else, they received tithes as “payment.”
12. 3:15, 40 - The *levi'im*, and the firstborn of *B'nei Yisrael*.
13. 3:15 - Levi’s daughter Yocheved was born while the Jewish People were entering Egypt. She is counted as one of the 70 people who entered Egypt.
14. 3:16 - G-d.
15. 3:29 - The tribe of Reuven was encamped near Korach, and were therefore influenced for the worse. This teaches that one should avoid living near the wicked.
16. 3:38 - The tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar, and Zevulun were encamped near Moshe, and were therefore influenced for the good. This teaches that one should seek to live near the righteous.
17. 3:39 - Each *levi* served to redeem a first born of the Jewish People. Since 300 *levi'im* were themselves first born, they themselves needed to be redeemed, and could therefore not redeem others.
18. 3:46 - To atone for the sale of Yosef, Rachel’s first-born, who was sold by his brothers for five *shekalim* (20 pieces of silver.)
19. 4:2 - Between the ages of 30 and 50.
20. 4:5 - The *kohanim*.

THE RULE BORN FROM THE EXCEPTIONS

Both the blood and certain fats (*chelev*) of animals are forbidden for consumption. But there are differences, says the *mishna*, between the extent of the two.

While the ban on blood applies to both domesticated and undomesticated animals and to fowl, the ban on *chelev* is limited to domesticated animals alone. When it comes to the blood and *chelev* of sacrificial animals it is the other way around. Should one make use of such *chelev* for private purposes he is guilty of *me'ilah* – embezzling from the Sanctuary. But if he makes such use of the blood of a sacrifice, he is not guilty of *me'ilah*.

In its explanation of why there is no *me'ilah* involved in using the blood (for fertilization purposes as was customary) after it has already been applied to the altar, the *gemara* states the rule that *me'ilah* cannot apply to anything which has already been utilized for the mitzvah for which it was designated.

This is an interesting rule because it is based on the exceptions to it. The shovelful of ashes which was daily taken from the altar by a *kohen* had to be placed at the side of the altar to be miraculously absorbed there and could not be appropriated for private use even though these ashes had certainly completed the mitzvah for which they were designated. The other exception dealt with the four garments which the *Kohen Gadol* wore for the Yom Kippur service in the Holy of Holies of the *Beit Hamikdash*. The Torah ordered that they be put away forever and be forbidden for any use.

Had the Torah wished us to derive from either of these cases a rule that *me'ilah* applies even after the mitzvah has been completed, it would have sufficed to make this point with one of them. The fact that this is found in two cases indicates that these two are the exceptions, and that the rule for all other cases is that there is no *me'ilah* in regard to something which has already completed its mitzvah role.

• Chullin 117a

IS LIQUEFYING TRANSFORMATION?

Liquefying foods is a practice which has become quite common in our health-conscious society. How does the transformation from a solid to a liquid affect the status of food as far as halacha is concerned?

A number of cases are discussed in our *gemara*:

- Liquefied chametz drunk on Pesach carries the same penalty of *karet* (extirpation) as the eating of solid chametz.
- Liquefied matzah eaten to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah on the first night of Pesach does not qualify for this purpose.
- Liquefied *chelev* – the forbidden fats of a domesticated animal – carries the same penalty of *karet* as the eating of solid *chelev*.

The explanation of the difference between liquefied chametz and *chelev* on the one hand and liquefied matzah on the other is based on the terminology used by the Torah in regard to each.

Matzah is described (*Devarim 16:3*) as the “bread of affliction” so that the term “bread” – even though it is a reference to matzah rather than leavened bread – rules out the liquefied form of this substance.

In regard to chametz and *chelev*, however, the situation is different. Although in both cases the Torah prohibits the *eating* of such foods, which would indicate that this does not apply to drinking, when it comes to spelling out the penalty for their consumption the Torah states that “the *nefesh* (soul) which will consume it will be extirpated” (*Shmot 12:19* and *Vayikra 7:25*). *Nefesh*, explains Rashi, indicates that the penalty of *karet* applies to the consumption of anything which brings comfort to a person, even if it is consumed through drinking, because this is considered as satisfying the needs of the *nefesh*.

• Chullin 120a

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SLEEPLESS SHAVUOT IN SHICAGO

From: Sam in Chicago

Dear Rabbi,

This is my first time experiencing Shavuot in a yeshiva environment. I'm told that everybody stays up all night studying Torah, which sounds interesting, but at the same time I'm a little wary of doing so. In school I once had a paper due the next day that I stayed up the entire night writing; in the morning my brain felt like fried tofu and I could hardly function. How important is it to stay up all night on Shavuot and why? Is it perhaps more important to get a good night's sleep to fulfill the mitzvot of the day?

Dear Sam,

Many, especially in the Yeshiva world, have the custom to stay awake and study Torah the entire night of Shavuot. Many Sefaradim and Chasidim follow a special order of study initiated by the Arizal (based on a passage in the introduction to the Zohar) whereby they read selected portions of the entire 24 books of the Tanach, the 613 mitzvot, as well excerpts from some esoteric texts.

Shavuot celebrates the day when G-d gave us the Torah on Mount Sinai. By studying all night, we show our love and enthusiasm for this precious gift. Indeed the 24 books of Tanach mentioned above are referred to as 24 bridal ornaments with which the Jewish people decorate themselves in preparation to receive the Torah, their wedding document, from the Groom.

Another explanation for staying up all night is that the Jews at Mount Sinai over-slept on that historic Shavuot morning! G-d had to "wake them up" to teach them the Torah (sound familiar?). We rectify this by staying up all night, to ensure that we won't sleep late on this day.

Staying up all night is not a halacha nor a Jewish law, but rather a custom for those who feel they are physically up to it. If staying up all night may cause one to sleep late, what was intended to rectify would be ruined. Even if one was able to stay up, but wouldn't be able to concentrate and enjoy the prayers, the Torah readings, and the other mitzvot of the day such as the holiday meal and making one's family happy, he should not stay up the whole night.

Regarding this type of situation our Sages taught, "Whether one does a lot, or whether one does a little — the main thing is to direct one's heart to Heaven". Happy Shavuot!

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

GOING DOWN IN SMOKE

Question: In view of the wide range of medical opinion that cigarette smoke is dangerous to health, is it proper to tell a smoker that you object to his smoking in your presence and to even suggest that he stop smoking altogether?

Answer: In his new 151-page book entitled "Life without Smoking According to the Torah", Rabbi Yechezkel Ischayek cites a ruling by the late great halachic authority, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *zatzal*, that smokers who expose others to their smoke must compensate them financially for the damage they cause and equates the mitzvah of sav-

ing people from smoking to that of redeeming Jewish captives.

Although the author's position is clearly that smoking is a violation of halacha, none of the halachic authorities he quotes in his book go that far. They do say that it is wrong to start but as for one already into the habit, all they do is urge him to quit. There are, however, other prominent rabbis not quoted in the book who have gone on record as condemning smoking as "slow suicide" and even suggesting that they are guilty of a sin deserving of lashes.

So go right ahead and tell him to stop smoking!

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