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SHABBAT PARSHIOT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI • 23 ADAR 5778 - MAR. 10, 2018 • VOL. 25 NO. 23

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## PARSHA INSIGHT

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BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

### A Wise Heart

*“Every wise-hearted person among you shall come  
and make everything that G-d has commanded ...” (35:10)*

There are two ways an observant Jew can look at an airplane flight: a series of tiring inconveniences punctuated by the occasional real bummer, or an opportunity to be an ambassador for the Jewish People and G-d.

Assuming that we all want to be in the latter category, here are some “*Guidelines for the Ambassador*”:

When you arrive at the check-in, make sure that you do not push in line. Better, offer to let someone who seems to be in a rush go in front of you. (It always amazes me how people want to jump ahead to get on the plane despite the plane’s departing at the same time for everyone.)

Smile. You’re on Candid Camera!

Make sure you say, “Have a nice day!” to people with whom you speak: the check-in person; the flight attendants; the security and the immigration personnel.

When you board the flight look for a shortish or elderly lady/gentleman who is struggling to put his/her bag into the overhead locker. Bound over and say, “Excuse me, can I help?” You have sanctified the name of G-d in front of a couple hundred people.

Before reclining your seat always make sure to ask the person behind if they mind.

Usually the “strictly kosher” food arrives before the rest of the plane is served. Better to wait till everyone else is served before starting.

In the arrival hall try to help a lady or elderly person remove their heavy case from the carousel.

Say “Thanks for looking after us!” to the police who usually supervise the luggage carousel when flights come in from Israel (or anywhere else).

Never smuggle anything!

When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem there was a revelation of the Divine Presence in the world that is impossible for us to imagine. It’s like trying to describe a sunrise to someone who was born blind.

We live in a world of spiritual blindness, where little light reaches our eyes. The Jewish People, however, still have the power to reveal the Divine in our midst. The verse says “And I will dwell in them.” G-d says that His Divine Presence will dwell eternally in the Jewish People, even when the wood and stones of the Beit Hamikdash have lain in ruins for millennia.

Just as it took a wise-hearted person to build the Mishkan that revealed G-d’s presence on Earth, so too can each one of us reveal the Divine Presence with a little wisdom of the heart.

## Avodah Zara 44 - 50

### The Rabbi, a Philosopher and a Statue

*Rabban Gamliel said, “We don’t say that the bathhouse was made for (the statue of) Aphrodites, but rather that Aphrodites was made for the bathhouse.”*

This is the second of three answers that Rabban Gamliel offered when explaining why he was permitted to bathe in a bathhouse that was located in the courtyard of the idol Aphrodites (ancient Greek for “Venus”, a statue for those who worship the planet by that name, and the pagan deity for marriage — Tiferet Yisrael).

The *mishna* on our *daf* teaches: Prokalus (a pagan philosopher) asked Rabban Gamliel in Acco, who was bathing in a bathhouse of Aphrodites, “Why are you bathing here? Isn’t it written in your Torah: And nothing that is doomed to destruction shall cling to your hand?” (Dev. 13:18, referring to the prohibition against receiving benefit from the spoils of an idolatrous city or from any idolatry)

The *mishna* continues: Rabban Gamliel said, “One may not answer (with words of Torah) in a bathhouse” (since people are undressed, it would be a dishonor to the Torah to speak words of Torah there, even in a foreign language — Rashi).

And then the *mishna* states: “*And when he went out, he said to him, “I did not come into its (the idol’s) boundary; it came into my boundary.”* (The bathhouse was built first, for all to use, and only later was the statue put there. It doesn’t have the right to steal the use of the bathhouse from the public — Rashi).

The *mishna* records a second reason that Rabban Gamliel gave for permitting the benefit of bathing there, despite the idol’s presence, “We don’t say that the bathhouse was made as an adornment for Aphrodites; rather we say that the statue of Aphrodites is there as an adornment for the bathhouse” (therefore the idol is “serving the bathhouse,” and is secondary and inconsequential relative to it — Rashi).

The third reason Rabban Gamliel offers in the *mishna*: “Even if a person would give you much money, you would not go in front of your idol in an undressed and impure state, and empty out your bodily wastes in front of it. But *this* idol is placed on the opening to the sewage drain from the bathhouse, and all of the people are emptying their wastes into the conduit that drains onto the statue. The Torah prohibits benefit from an idol only if it is treated as a deity (‘You will utterly destroy...their gods, upon the lofty mountains and upon the hills, and under every lush tree.’ — Dev. 12:2); but there is no prohibition to receive benefit if the idol is not treated with the ‘dignity’ of a deity.”

The *gemara* raises a question regarding Rabban Gamliel’s initial reply: “One may not answer (with words of Torah) in a bathhouse.” Since halacha forbids speaking words of Torah there due to the undressed state of the people there, how could Rabban Gamliel provide this reply, which itself is a statement of Jewish Law, that it is forbidden to speak words of Torah in a bathhouse?

The *gemara* answers by citing a *beraita* with a different text than we see in our *mishna*: “When he went out, he replied, ‘One does not speak words of Torah in a bathhouse.’” What is meant by this answer? Tosefot notes the Rashbam’s explanation: “After he (Rabban Gamliel) went out of the bathhouse, he said, ‘The reason I didn’t answer your question until now, earlier on the inside, is because the halacha is that one may not speak words of Torah inside a bathhouse.’” Rabban Gamliel only then proceeded to give his three answers to the original question of why he was permitted to bathe there.

Tosefot mentions an alternate text of the *beraita*: “And when he went out, he replied, ‘One does not speak words of Torah in a bathhouse.’” This text implies that this is the *only* answer he gave when he went out. HaRav

*Continued on page twelve*

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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### VAYAKHEL

1. On which day did Moshe assemble the Jewish People?
  2. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat written prior to the instruction for building the Mishkan?
  3. Why does the Torah specify the particular prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbat right after it had already noted the general prohibition of doing work on Shabbat?
  4. What function did the “*yitdot hamishkan*” serve?
  5. What function did the “*bigdei hasrad*” serve?
  6. What was unusual about the way the women spun the goat’s hair?
  7. Why were the *Nesi'im* last to contribute to the building of the Mishkan? How does the Torah show dissatisfaction with their actions?
  8. Who does the Torah identify as the primary builders of the Mishkan? From which tribes were they?
  9. What time of day did the people bring their daily contributions for the construction of the Mishkan?
  10. For what was the woven goat’s hair used?
  11. What image was woven into the *parochet*?
  12. Why does the Torah attribute the building of the *aron* to Betzalel?
  13. Where were the sculptured *keruvim* located?
  14. How many lamps did the *Menorah* have?
  15. Of what materials was the *mizbe'ach haketoret* composed?
  16. Of what material was the *mizbe'ach ha'olah* composed?
  17. The *kiyor* was made from copper mirrors. What function did these mirrors serve in Egypt?
  18. How did the *kiyor* promote peace?
  19. The *kiyor* was made from the mirrors of the women who were crowding at the entrance to the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Why were the women crowding there?
  20. Of what material were the “*yitdot hamishkan*” constructed?
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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Vayakhel’s questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

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1. 35:1 - The day after *Yom Kippur*.
  2. 35:2 - To emphasize that the building of the Mishkan doesn’t supersede the laws of Shabbat.
  3. 35:3 - There are two opinions: One opinion is to teach that igniting a fire on Shabbat is punishable by lashes as opposed to other “*melachot*” which are punishable by death. The other opinion is to teach that violation of numerous “*melachot*” at one time requires a separate atonement for each violation.
  4. 35:18 - The edges of the curtains were fastened to them. These were inserted in the ground so the curtains would not move in the wind.
  5. 35:19 - They covered the *aron*, the *shulchan*, the *menorah*, and the *mizbachot* when they were packed for transport.
  6. 35:26 - It was spun directly from off the backs of the goats.
  7. 35:27 - The *Nesi'im* reasoned that they would first let the people contribute materials needed for the Mishkan and then they would contribute what was lacking. The Torah shows its dissatisfaction by deleting a letter from their title.
  8. 35:30, 35:34 - Betzalel ben Uri from the tribe of Yehuda; Oholiav ben Achisamach from the tribe of Dan.
  9. 36:3 - Morning.
  10. 36:14 - It was made into curtains to be draped over the Mishkan.
  11. 36:35 - *Cherubim*. (See Rashi 26:31)
  12. 37:1 - Because he dedicated himself to its building more than anyone else.
  13. 37:7 - On the two extremities of the *kaporet* (cover of the *aron*).
  14. 37:23 - Seven.
  15. 37:25,26 - Wood overlaid with gold.
  16. 38:1-2 - Wood overlaid with copper.
  17. 38:8 - These mirrors aided in the proliferation of the Jewish People. The Jewish women in Egypt would look in the mirrors so as to awaken the affections of their husbands who were exhausted by their slave labor.
  18. 38:8 - Its waters helped a woman accused of adultery to prove her innocence.
  19. 38:8 - To donate to the Mishkan.
  20. 38:20 - Copper.
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## PARSHA Q&A?

### PEKUDEI

1. Why is the word Mishkan stated twice in verse 38:21?
2. Why is the Mishkan called the “Mishkan of Testimony”?
3. Who was appointed to carry the vessels of the Mishkan in the *midbar*?
4. Who was the officer in charge of the *levi'im*?
5. What is the meaning of the name Betzalel?
6. How many people contributed a half-shekel to the Mishkan? Who contributed?
7. Which material used in the *bigdei kehuna* was not used in the coverings of the sacred vessels?
8. How were the gold threads made?
9. What was inscribed on the stones on the shoulders of the *ephod*?
10. What was on the hem of the *me'il*?
11. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear between the *mitznetfet* and the *tzitz*?
12. What role did Moshe play in the construction of the Mishkan?
13. Which date was the first time that the Mishkan was erected and not dismantled?
14. What was the “tent” which Moshe spread over the Mishkan (40:19)?
15. What “*testimony*” did Moshe place in the *aron*?
16. What function did the *parochet* serve?
17. Where was the *shulchan* placed in the Mishkan?
18. Where was the *menorah* placed in the Mishkan?
19. Who offered the communal sacrifices during the eight days of the dedication of the Mishkan?
20. On which day did both Moshe and Aharon serve as *kohanim*?

## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Pekudei's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 38:21 - To allude to the *Beit Hamikdash* that would twice be taken as a “*mashkon*” (pledge) for the sins of the Jewish People until the nation repents.
2. 38:21 - It was testimony for the Jewish People that G-d forgave them for the golden calf and allowed His *Shechina* to dwell among them.
3. 38:21 - The *levi'im*.
4. 38:21 - Itamar ben Aharon.
5. 38:22 - “In the shadow of G-d.”
6. 38:26 - 603,550. Every man age twenty and over (except the *levi'im*).
7. 39:1 - Linen (See *Rashi* 31:10).
8. 39:3 - The gold was beaten into thin plates from which threads were cut. (See *Rashi* 28:6).
9. 39:6, 39:7 - The names of the tribes.
10. 39:24,25 - Woven pomegranates and golden bells.
11. 39:31 - *Tefillin*.
12. 39:33 - He stood it up.
13. 40:17 - *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* of the second year in the desert. For seven days before this, during the consecration of Aharon and his sons, Moshe erected and dismantled the Mishkan. (*Rashi* 39:29)
14. 40:19 - The curtain of goatskin.
15. 40:20 - The *Luchot Habrit*.
16. 40:21 - It served as a partition for the *aron*.
17. 40:22 - On the northern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed*, outside the *parochet*.
18. 40:24 - On the southern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed* opposite the *shulchan*.
19. 40:29 - Moshe.
20. 40:31 - On the eighth day of the consecration of the Mishkan

## PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אחינו כל בית ישראל  
“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## Hurdles and Heights

### From: Henry

*Dear Rabbi,  
There's a particular prohibition that I am regularly and particularly challenged by. In all honesty, I "fall" time and time again. This makes me very upset, and I'm wondering why G-d puts this barrier before me, and how I can possibly serve Him with joy when I'm weighed down by this recurrent sin.*

Dear Henry,

From the way you perceive and thus describe the phenomenon that you are experiencing, it certainly seems frustrating. Nevertheless, G-d certainly does not intend for it to be an insurmountable barrier, or an unbearable burden.

On the contrary, as odd as it may initially seem, the dynamic you refer to is actually a series of hurdles which, when navigated properly, are liberating and enable one to serve G-d with joy.

The great thinker and Kabbalist Rav Tzadok HaCohen (1823-1900, Lublin) writes that every person has individual tendencies to transgress specific prohibitions. And the specific area in which he is weakest is the very area in which he has the greatest potential to receive G-d's blessing if he returns to Him with all his heart, realizing that these tendencies have been placed within him by G-d Himself (Tzidkat HaTzadik 181).

There are areas in which the evil inclination has a special strength, either because a person has an especially powerful desire or extra difficulty in battling a specific weakness. G-d does this in order to make a person aware of his shortcomings. But this failure to resist temptation is intended to be the battle-cry which rouses him to wage the war of self-perfection.

Further, Rav Tzadok explains why each person has a different, specific area of weakness. He writes that the area in which the evil inclination attacks most fiercely, and in which a person transgresses most, is

the area for which he is most prepared to cleanse, purify and achieve a unique rectification for his soul. This is because everyone was created to repair some specific detail to which his being is bound, and he was created to correct that very thing (Tzidkat HaTzadik 49).

Thus, one must not despair, but rather view this as an indication of the area for which he was uniquely created to serve G-d. Specifically here is the place where, if he rises to the challenge, he can find special rectification and purification. This knowledge then liberates one from the shackles which fetter him, enabling him to rise above the hurdles and rejoice in his service.

Rav Yitzchak Hutner (1906, Warsaw-1980, NY) once wrote a letter addressing a student with a question similar to yours. His words are thus also applicable to you:

"The wise King Solomon wrote, 'Seven times will a *tzadik* fall and rise' (Prov. 24:16). People think this means that despite transgressing, he will not despair, but rather will rise to the occasion of serving G-d. But the real meaning is that, not *despite*, but rather precisely *through falling*, he becomes elevated.

"The Sages comment on the verse, 'And He saw all that He did, and it was very good (*tov me'od*)' (Gen. 1:31). '*Tov*' — good, refers to the good inclination. '*Me'od*' — very, refers to the evil inclination. Had your letter related all the learning and good deeds that you've been doing, I would have said that I received a *good* letter from you. Now that you've conveyed the failures you've suffered, I can say that I've received a *very good* letter from you. Your spirit clamors to be great. Specifically in those areas where you find yourself failing so often, there you are capable of being a vessel of excellence for the glory of Heaven" (Igrot Pachad Yitzchak, 128).

• Sources: *Crown Him with Joy*, Rabbi Hadar Margolin, pp. 32-36

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## LOVE of the LAND

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

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### Peki'in

In the center of the Peki'in village in the north of Israel there is a cave which is purported to be the one in which the Sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Elazar hid for thirteen years. Lag B'Omer is the *yahrzeit* (anniversary) of Rabbi Shimon's death.

This great Sage, who authored the classical Kaballistic work "*HaZohar*," was condemned to death by the Romans for publicly criticizing their oppressive



rule in Eretz Yisrael. He subsequently fled to a cave for safety. The Talmud recounts that he and his son were sustained with the fruits of a carob tree and water from a spring that miraculously appeared out of nowhere.

Next to the cave there is a synagogue which the Israeli government renovated and which serves as a prayer site for visitors to the cave.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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### VAYAKHEL

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts *Bnei Yisrael* to keep Shabbat, and requests donations for the materials for making the Mishkan. He collects gold, silver, precious stones, skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the *menorah* and for anointing. The princes of each tribe bring the precious stones for the *Kohen Gadol's* breastplate and *ephod*. G-d appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. *Bnei Yisrael* contribute so much that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were designed for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards in silver bases were connected, forming the Mishkan's walls. Betzalel made the Holy Ark (which contained the Tablets) from wood covered with gold. On the Ark's cover were two figures facing each other. The menorah and the table with the showbreads were also of gold. Two altars were made: A small incense altar of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger altar for sacrifices made of wood covered with copper.

### PEKUDEI

The Book of Shmot concludes with this Parsha. After finishing all the different parts, vessels and garments used in the Mishkan, Moshe gives a complete accounting and enumeration of all the contributions and of the various clothing and vessels which had been fashioned. *Bnei Yisrael* bring everything to Moshe. He inspects the handiwork and notes that everything was made according to G-d's specifications. Moshe blesses the people. G-d speaks to Moshe and tells him that the Mishkan should be set up on the first day of the first month, i.e. Nissan. He also tells Moshe the order of assembly for the Mishkan and its vessels. Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner. When the Mishkan is finally complete with every vessel in its place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that G-d's glory was resting there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the Mishkan, *Bnei Yisrael* would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire.

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## ANATOMY OF A MITZVAH

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

# Be Positive — Don't Be Negative!

*“Turn from evil and do good; pursue shalom (completeness)...” — Tehillim 34:15*

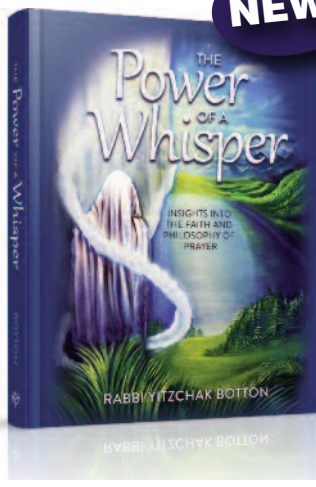
If one were to purchase the finest wine, yet carelessly place it into a vessel with cracks, he will find that his precious wine will go to waste. So too, if one were to concentrate only on the performance of the positive commandments, while at the same time carelessly transgressing the negative ones, the benefit from the positive commands will be offset by the spiritual damage caused by the transgressions. It is also explained that the positive commandments are rooted in love, while the negative commandments are rooted in fear and reverence. Accordingly, though one who fulfills the positive commands shows his love for G-d, one must also express his awe and reverence by guarding the negative commands.

Thus, before receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Jewish People proclaimed *“Na’aseh v’nishmah,”* meaning “We will *do* and we will *listen*.” This *double* statement can be explained to correspond to both the positive and the negative commandments in the Torah: “doing” applies to the active *mitzvot*, such as praying and giving charity, while “listening” applies to keeping the negative *mitzvot*, such as not stealing or not eating forbidden foods.

The opening verse above first exhorts us to turn

from evil, and afterwards to do good. Similarly, we are taught that before one can become cleansed from spiritual impurity one must first abandon sin. Once disconnected from sin, a person will then be able to become sanctified through performing the positive commandments. This is the meaning of “pursue *shalom*, completeness.” Only when one’s Divine service is complete, including both the fulfillment of the positive commands and guarding the negative commands, does the soul truly become complete, acquiring holiness and purity.

The Baal Shem Tov offers us a different way to attain spiritual wholeness. At times it is too difficult for a person to break away from sin first. He explains that sometimes it is necessary to skip the first step and jump straight to doing positive *mitzvot*. When one finds himself too attached to sin, the active involvement of doing *mitzvot* can help provide the necessary strength to break away. This is because when one does a *mitzvah* he becomes enveloped by the light of the Divine presence, which helps a person conquer the evil forces that push him towards sin. Thus, according to the Baal Shem Tov, the instruction to turn from evil is included in the act of doing good.



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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

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BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

### Mercy or Pity

As Moshe prayed to G-d to forgive the Jewish People for sinning at the golden calf, G-d revealed to Moshe His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. Those attributes are key to understanding how G-d runs the world, and how one can attain atonement/forgiveness for sins. Although we generally refrain from using adjectives to describe G-d, these Thirteen Attributes are presented as such. In this article we will focus on two of these attributes that both mean “mercy” — *rachum* and *chanun* — and attempt to understand what exactly they entail.

In his commentary to Exodus, Rabbeinu Bachaya writes that *rachum* and *chanun* represent G-d's way of forgiving sinners who ask for forgiveness, repent, and experience some form of affliction, but he does not explain how the two terms differ from each other. Elsewhere he writes that G-d's attributes of *rachum* and *chanun* are actually one and the same. They both denote His practice of heeding one's prayers in times of need, even if that person had not yet repented his misdeeds. Rabbeinu Bachaya finds support for this argument in the fact that the Bible often uses both terms together, while sometimes placing *chanun* before *rachum*, and sometimes stating *rachum* before *chanun*.

We can discern the difference between *rachum* and *chanun* by way of an analogy in human interactions, specifically by looking at the relationship between a victim and one who has the power to save him. In that relationship the word *chanun* focuses on the victim, while the word *rachum* focuses on the savior. *Chanun* denotes the idea of the victim finding “favor” (*chein*) in the eyes of the savior (when talking about G-d, this may come through prayer), or simply deciding to grant (*choneh*) him a reprieve of sorts. Rashi (to Deut. 3:23) explains that the word *chanun* recalls the notion of a “free gift” (*matnat chinam*), so it denotes giving somebody relief that he does not necessarily deserve. On the other hand, the trait of *rachum* focuses on the savior who sees the victim's downtrodden situation, empathizes with him, and ultimately decides to save him. One who is *rachum* does not necessarily save the victim directly for the

victim's sake, but rather for his own sake.

Other commentators offer other ways of differentiating between these two terms, and what follows is a brief potpourri of such explanations:

Rabbi Yosef Bechor-Shor writes that *rachum* is for the poor because it denotes mercy and the decision to help save one from his dismal situation, while *chanun* is for the rich because it simply denotes granting somebody a present, regardless of how dire his situation is.

A gloss to *Tosefot* (*Rosh Hashana* 17b) explains that the word *rachamim* denotes a form of clemency whereby G-d withholds a calamity from befalling an individual, while the word *chanun* denotes G-d granting someone a special reprieve while he is in the midst of distress.

Rabbi Elazar Rokeach of Worms explains that *rachum* denotes acting with mercy beyond that which is required by the letter of the law, while *chanun* denotes using the system of justice to heed another's call for clemency. Nonetheless, others explain the opposite: the trait of *rachum* is only applied to one who asks for mercy, while *chanun* is even if one does not request mercy.

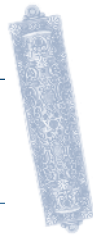
Rabbeinu Bachaya writes that *rachamim* is G-d's general way of overseeing the world, while *chanun* is His way of specifically overseeing each element of Creation.

Rabbi Avraham bar Chaim Ibn Ramoch (in his commentary to Psalms 86:16, 112:4, and 145:8) — who lived in Spain at the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition — writes that *rachum* refers to saving another from any form of suffering, while *chanun* refers to granting him intellectual gifts (which allow him to help himself).

The Malbim discusses two more words (which do not appear as part of G-d's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy) that also conjure the notion of mercy: *chus* and *chemlah*. The Malbim explains that *rachmanut* applies only to having mercy on somebody who is intelligent. Indeed, one pities a child or an animal in a different way than one pities an adult. As mentioned above, the idea of *rachmanut* is that one is

*Continued on page nine*





BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

## Women's Obligation in Mezuzah

*Q: I am a single woman and have recently moved into my own apartment. I've asked my brother to come over and put up my mezuzot, but he is an accountant in the middle of "tax season" and keeps on having to cancel. Is it right for a woman to put up a mezuzah?*

A: Women are fully obligated in the mitzvah of mezuzah, as it is not a time-bound commandment. You should put up the *mezuzos* by yourself and not delay your mitzvah further by waiting for your brother. The Talmud points out that the Torah's blessing of long life in reward for the fulfilling the mitzvah of mezuzah properly is equally relevant for women as for men!

*Q: I will be supervising the move into our new house, as my husband will only be home in the evening. I would like to wait for my husband to affix the mezuzot, but my brother in Israel told me I should put them up right away by myself as soon as the furniture is delivered. Can't I wait?*

A: Ordinarily, a married woman should defer to her husband to affix the *mezuzot*. A husband may, of course, share the mitzvah with his wife, as they are both obligated.

However, since this house is not a rental, it requires

*mezuzot* immediately, and your deference to your husband will cause a delay. Therefore, you should put up the *mezuzot* yourself.

Contrary to a common misunderstanding, a thirty-day leeway before putting up *mezuzot* only applies to a rental in the Diaspora, and not to a purchased home or apartment. Truthfully, in practice, *mezuzot* should be put up immediately even in a rental unit, albeit without a *berachah* at the time. (The details of *mezuzot* in rentals will be discussed in a later column.)

Incidentally, a mezuzah can be affixed at night.

- Sources: *Berachot* 17b; *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 291:3; *Chovas HaDar* 9:3; *Shevet HaLevi* 2:158; *Aruch Hashulchan* 289:4; *Agur B'ohalecha* 8:24; Cf. *Teshuvos v'Hanhagos* 4:238:3; *Yoma* 11a; *Bi'ur Halacha* 135 cited in *Agur B'ohalecha* 17:39; *Sha'arei HaMezuzah* 16:6:13; *Mezuzos Beisecha* 289:3; *Sha'arei HaMezuzah* 16:15

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### What's In a Word...continued from page eight

bothered by seeing the suffering of another, so he has mercy upon him. The terms *chus* and *chemlah*, on the other hand, can apply to having mercy on any entity, not just an intelligent person. In English we call this "caring".

*Chus* refers to having mercy on something out of a refusal to allow it to be destroyed because then he will lose whatever benefit he gains from that item/person/entity. The first word of the phrase *chas v'shalom* (loosely translated as "G-d forbid" or "Heaven forefend") is a conjugation of the word *chus*. The word *chemlah* is a form of pity that one refuses to

allow something/someone's destruction because of an innate quality of that thing/person. That quality could be some form of aesthetic beauty or another perceived type of completion, which one does not want to see ruined. As Rabbi Wertheimer points out, the concept of *chemlah* as pity can be applied to pitying he who does not have the ability to ask for help (e.g., a child or somebody lacking the mental capacities to ask for help).

*Eiluy Nishmat* my mother Bracha bat R' Dovid and my grandmother Shprintza bat R' Meir

BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

## Melechet Machshevet

If Shabbat is meant to be a day of rest, then why are some of the most effortless activities prohibited? Turning off a light, one would think, would not be prohibited on this “day of rest,” and yet the act of flipping the switch is a Torah prohibition. And at the same time, strenuous activities may be permissible. Many Jewish thinkers have tried to formulate a conception of the Laws of Shabbat, and the explanation of Rav Hirsch stands out as most satisfying to the modern mind.

Shabbat is a testimony to G-d as the Creator of heaven and earth — after six days of creation, He rested on the seventh. We are instructed not to perform any work on Shabbat; it is a day for G-d. By ceasing work on the seventh day we demonstrate that we are not masters of the world. When we cease creative activity we acknowledge that the world is not ours to change or improve. Every object and action, every single breath, moment, movement, skill, and even creative spark is from G-d, and for G-d. When He enjoins our work, we lay ourselves, and our mastery over the natural world, in homage at His feet.

On Shabbat, we cease all *melachah*. It is not *laborious* work that is prohibited; it is *creative* work. The word *melachah* is related to *malach*, a messenger or agent. *Malach* means “angel” because an angel is primarily an agent or messenger of G-d. *Melachah* denotes an action that is subservient to the will and bidding of intelligent man. The act of *Melachah* is the agent of the mind — it endows the material or object with a new form, more fit for the purpose we assign to it. This creative, productive activity exercises our mastery over the natural world.

The nature of prohibited activity is seen clearly from the defining feature of *melachah*. *Melachah* always also takes into account the product, the outcome, and not just the general intention. For activity to be prohibited it must have an intelligent, creative purpose — only *melechet machshevet*, intelligent work, is proscribed.

The concept of *melachah* applies only to construc-

tive, not destructive acts. The same act, however strenuous, when performed with intent to destroy is not prohibited by the Torah. For example, if one were to knock down a house simply with the idea of destroying it, this is not *melachah*. (We discuss here Torah prohibitions to understand the nature of *melachah*; this sort of destruction is prohibited by rabbinic law.) If, however, one were to destroy a house with the constructive purpose of clearing the site for rebuilding, the act is prohibited *melachah*.

Similarly, to be considered *melachah* the work must be intentional — i.e. a messenger of the productive will of man, not an unintended byproduct. Furthermore, if an act is performed in an unusual manner, it is not considered to be *melachah* — *melachah* requires the full application of human intelligence in the manner in which intelligent man will do something.

All of the thirty-nine categories of *melachah* are productive activities which engender productive change. Any act, however small or effortless, which demonstrates man’s mastery of nature by exercise of his intelligent and creative skill, is prohibited. Striking a light, washing a garment, tying a knot, baking bread, plowing a field, and building a house are all marks of man’s conquest of nature, regardless of the spectrum of energy and effort they may or may not require.

By complete renunciation of constructive, intelligent activity on Shabbat, man pays homage to his Creator. He affirms that the world does not belong to him but to He Who created man and the world, and it is only because of G-d’s dominion, and His endowment of creativity, that man achieves any mastery at all. The restraint from *melachah* on Shabbat infuses all of weekly creative activity with awareness of its true Source.

- Sources: *Commentary*, Shemot 35:1-2; 20:9-10; *Collected Writings VIII, The Jewish Sabbath*, p. 211; *Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld, The Sabbath: A Guide to Its Understanding and Observance, Feldheim, 1959*

BY RABBI SHLOMO SIMON

## Harry Lask

**Age: 27 Philadelphia, PA - Temple University, BA in Risk Management and Insurance (2015)**

“**W**hat’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet.” (Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2) Jewish thought contradicts Shakespeare. We believe that names have a very great influence on the thing named. This dates back to the first man, *Adam HaRishon*. G-d told him to name all the animals. He looked into their essence and came up with the perfect name for each of them. The same is true of people. Their names contain their essence. Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, the children of Yaakov and their progeny for all generations, all have names which give us a key to who they are, what they are, or why they are. I’m not saying that the fact that Harry Lask shares a first name with perhaps the most famous magician the world has ever known, Harry Houdini (who also just “happened” to be Jewish), has anything to do with the fact that he became a magician, but it is, at the minimum, an interesting coincidence.

“Magic,” which is derived from the ancient Persian name for the actions of their Zoroastrian priestly caste called *Magi*, is a fascinating art. The illusion of taking a rabbit (or a rabbi) out of an empty hat or making the Statue of Liberty disappear is a source of wonder and entertainment to the audience. Its practitioners are highly skilled and trained. Harry started reading books on magic at age 14, and has been studying the subject and developing his art ever since. There are different categories of magic tricks, but the one that Harry is most drawn to is called “sleight of hand.” It involves extreme physical dexterity and keen observation. Harry asked me to look carefully at a deck of cards he was rifling through and remember one of the cards. He knew which one I had chosen. He can shuffle a deck of cards and know the position of each card. Of course, I had no idea how he does what he does. That’s the entertaining and wondrous thing about magic tricks. It



has other benefits as well. Harry told me: “Magic is good for shy people. Performing for an audience forces you out of your shell. It makes people happy and is a good icebreaker. Today the norm is that people don’t communicate; they’re constantly on their phones. Magic is something that I can do to bring people together and out of their bubble.”

Harry is from a very traditional family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His father is a pharmacist and his mother is a Hebrew School teacher. His older sister is religious, married and living in the Old City of Jerusalem. In addition he has a younger sister in Philadelphia. Harry went to a Modern Orthodox middle school from sixth to eighth grade, and then to a public high school. He graduated from Temple University in Philadelphia in 2015 with a BA degree in Risk Management and Insurance.

After graduation he decided to become more involved in *Yiddishkeit* and heard about the “jInternship Program” at Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem. He applied and was accepted, and worked in a large insurance company in Israel as an intern for three months. He valued the experience but wanted to learn Torah more intensely. He’s been in the Mechina Program for the past year, and is now in its highest level *shiur*, given by Rabbi Shlomo Zweig.

His plans are to return to Philadelphia for Pesach and get a job in the insurance industry. He’ll be performing magic tricks in the time he’s not working or learning Gemara. Maybe one day his hobby will be his profession. But whether he succeeds in that endeavor or not, the magic that Harry felt while learning in Ohr Somayach will stay with him for the rest of his life.

*(Editor’s note: “As to the permissibility of “sleight of hand” tricks, see the Ohr Somayach “Ask the Rabbi” column #52: <https://ohr.edu/ask/ask052.htm>)*

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Rabbeinu Elchanan says that this seems problematic, since the text of our *mishna* suggests that he answered the original question when he went out (in three ways!), and didn't just explain why he didn't answer it before going out. Tosefot quotes the "Ri", who clarifies what actually happened, based on a *gemara* in Masechet Shabbat (10a). There are three rooms in a bathhouse: an inner one where people are undressed, a middle one where people are both dressed and undressed, and an outer room where the people are dressed. In the inner room no words of Torah are allowed. In the middle room, although one is not permitted to speak words of Torah, it is more lenient than in the inner room, and, for example, "*sheilat shalom*" (a greeting) is permitted. In the outer room words of Torah are permitted. Initially, Rabban Gamliel was in the inner room and gave absolutely no reply. And when he went out to the middle room, where words of Torah are still forbidden, he nevertheless permitted himself to explain that that he wasn't yet allowed to answer the original question there. He was permitted to do so in order to maintain peace with the pagan and not potentially provoke his wrath. When he reached the other room, where Torah is permitted, Rabban Gamliel answered the original question in triplicate.

To summarize: Rashbam: On the inside he answered nothing; on the outside he answered everything and explained why he didn't answer on the inside. Ri: Inner room, nothing; middle room, explanation of why no answer yet; outer room, full answers.

The Tiferet Yisrael asks why Rabban Gamliel didn't simply tell the pagan, when he was still inside (either in the middle room or even in the inner room), that *he would tell him later*? This would not be speaking words of Torah and would at least be a response that should lessen the chance that the pagan would become angry with him in the meantime for not saying anything inside, something that could possibly lead to danger. After the Tiferet Yisrael first answers that this too might upset the powerful pagan, he suggests a perhaps more profound answer. Had Rabban Gamliel initially stalled by saying "Later," it may have appeared to the pagan that he did not have an answer to the question, and was stalling for time to think some more. For the Rabbi to be benefiting there without apparently knowing why it should be permitted might be construed as a *chillul Hashem*, and Rabban Gamliel therefore explained as much as he could as soon as he was permitted.

• Avoda Zara 44b

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