



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Re'eh

August 6, 2021

A Taste of Torah

Good-Looking Unity

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

In this week's parsha, Hashem commands the Jewish Nation (Devarim 14:1), "You are children to Hashem, your G-d, do not cut yourselves, and do not place a bald spot between your eyes, on account of a dead person." Rashi explains: Since you are Hashem's children, you are special and it is appropriate for you to look handsome, rather than cut up and with bald spots. The Ramban provides an additional explanation, saying that cutting oneself and making bald spots over the loss of a loved one is an act of excessive mourning. Although the Torah not only allows, but commands, some level of mourning, excessive mourning is not allowed (see Mo'ed Katan 27b). Since we are Hashem's children, we are special to Hashem and a holy nation. That being the case, we can assume that although the departed has passed on from this world, his *neshama* (soul) will be kept and preserved by Hashem for all of time. Mourning the physical loss of the deceased is appropriate, but excessive mourning would show a lack of belief in our special connection with Hashem and the eternal nature of the *neshama*.

The Gemara (Yevamos 13b) says that the Hebrew wording of the above prohibition to cut oneself, "*lo sigodidu*," teaches an additional prohibition, that we may not make "*agudos agudos*," separate groups, which means that one city may not have two different courts of law which rule and dictate differing views. The Rambam (Sefer Hamitzvos *lo sa'ase* 45) understands that the idea behind this prohibition is to prevent *machlokes* (conflict) in general.

What is the connection between the simple prohibition of this verse, cutting oneself over a dead person, and the inferred prohibition against conflict and having dissenting views and practices in one city?

The Shem Mishmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornshtain of Sochatchov; 1855-1926) answers this question based on a problem with the aforementioned explanation of the Ramban. Although the fact that the *neshama* of the deceased is preserved for eternity offers some comfort, why would excessively mourning the loss of the physical person from This World, which is indeed tragic, not be appropriate? The answer to this question, explains the Shem Mishmuel, is that although there is obviously a purpose for a person's physical existence on earth, that purpose is not a physical existence in and of itself; rather, it is in the spiritual endeavors and accomplishments that we achieve in this world. Therefore, although the loss of a loved one may be painful, since the main purpose of the *neshama* is to achieve spiritual growth and a connection to Hashem, and because we are special and we are children to Hashem, we are confident that the *neshama* has achieved this. Stressing the loss of the physical person is indeed inappropriate in the face of the comforting reality that the *neshama* has achieved its purpose and is joined with Hashem.

Based on this, the Shem Mishmuel explains the connection between the prohibition to cut oneself over the dead and the prohibition against having *machlokes*. At their roots, the souls of all Jews are intertwined into one collective whole. Dissension and

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Stories for the Soul

Staying Power

Rabbi Eliezer Moshe Rabinowitz (1954-2016) lived in Jerusalem for a number of years after his marriage before returning to the United States, where he eventually served as the *menahel* (principal) of Yeshiva Keren Hatorah in Lakewood, NJ.

One year during his time in Eretz Yisrael, shortly before Yom Kippur, he heard that a person he knew had undergone surgery two days after Rosh Hashana and was recovering in a hospital near Tel Aviv. Rabbi Rabinowitz went to visit the man a few days before Yom Kippur. While there, he asked the man who would be staying with him during Yom Kippur. The man responded that he had nobody to be with him, as people were very reluctant to be in the hospital for Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Rabinowitz told the man he would remain in the hospital with him for Yom Kippur.

"Are you sure?" asked the man. "There's no *minyan* here. There's nothing here for you on Yom Kippur."

"I don't need a *minyan* or a *chazzan*" said Rabbi Rabinowitz. "I need to be here with you and to assist you."

To make sure he was doing the right thing, Rabbi Rabinowitz went to Rabbi Shalom Eisen, a great halachic authority of Jerusalem, and shared the dilemma.

"You have to ask me such a question?!" exclaimed Rabbi Eisen. "What is the thought to do otherwise? Hashem will laugh at you sitting in *shul* while an ill person who needs you remains alone in the

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Kollel Happenings

DEDICATION **EVENT/**
CHANUKAS **HABAYIS** **ON**
AUG. 15

The Kollel will hold a Celebration of Torah with a Kollel Torah Center Dedication Event/Chanukas Habayis on Sunday, August 15. Harav Malkiel Kotler shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood, will grace the event and present the keynote address. Musical inspiration by Eitan Katz. Visit www.denverkollel.org for more details.

SPRING-SUMMER **AVOS**
UBANIM **ON** **SHABBOS**
AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: When would one fulfill his obligation after reciting just the first blessing of *Birkas Hamazon*?

Answer: If one mistakenly recited *Birkas Hamazon* after drinking wine/grape juice or after eating dates, he has fulfilled his obligation. In addition, if one mistakenly recited just the first

blessing of *Birkas Hamazon*, *Hazan es ha'olam kulo*, after eating these foods, he has fulfilled his obligation, and does not say the subsequent blessings.

This week's question: When would recitation of *al hamichya* on a beverage fulfill the *bracha acharona* obligation?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XI

While it did garner support from a number of Torah leaders of the era, the Agudah, as it is colloquially referred to, was opposed by some Torah leaders due to various reasons. Some saw the formation of an official representative organization

as caving to modernity. Another concern was that because many different groups were included, the organization would be forced to adopt views on important religious issues that were at odds with the positions of some Orthodox groups.

A Taste of Torah

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strife only happen on the physical level, where each person has a separate physical existence and therefore may focus on himself to the exclusion of others, creating conflict. Therefore, the prohibition against cutting oneself over the dead, which underscores the fact that the essence of our living and being is for spiritual achievement, is also the tool to create greater unity amongst ourselves and is a call for unity. In the essence of our reality, which is in the spiritual realm, we are all connected and one.

On a more practical note, we can explain the connection between not cutting oneself over the dead and not having *machlokes* based on Rashi's explanation presented above:

The prohibition against cutting oneself stems from the inherent value and greatness that every Jew possesses, in light of which defacing oneself and looking unpleasant is inappropriate. If a person would internalize the fact that this specialness is not singular to any particular Jew, but that every single Jew is inherently special and great, he will only view other Jews in a positive light, thereby negating any thought of *machlokes*.

Every Jew contains an eternal *neshama* and is a child of Hashem. Realizing our great self-worth can go a long way in deterring us from acting in a way which is inappropriate for our personal greatness, as well as the greatness of our nation!

Stories for the Soul

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hospital."

And so Rabbi Rabinowitz returned to the hospital and spent Yom Kippur there caring for a fellow Jew who was in need.

In this week's parsha, the Torah warns

us not to forget the poor, the widowed, and the orphaned during our holiday celebration. This is not limited to holiday celebrations, though, as one must sometimes forgo the spiritual opportunities of a holiday to help the less fortunate, as well.

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