

ב"ה

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לעילוי נשמת חיים בן מרדכי

IN MEMORY OF CHAIM SIMCHA BEN
MORDECHAI
CHAIM SIMCHA



משנה
בשמה For

MISHNA For NESHAMA



Cheit

is the eighth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'eight'. The meaning of chet is chayos which means life. Although we all want to live forever, we know that is not attainable. Our Rabbis teach us that when we follow in the footsteps of our departed loved ones and emulate their values, they are, in a sense, very much alive. As you mark their yahrtzeit, you can gift them eternal life by taking one of their special qualities and making it part of your life experience.

תרומות א,א

חַמֶּשֶׁה לא יתְרַמוּ; וְאִם תְּרַמוּ, אֵין תְּרוּמָתָן תְּרוּמָה. הַחֵרֶשׁ, וְהַשׁוֹטָה, וְהַקֵּטָן, וְהַתּוֹרֵם אֶת שְׂאִינוֹ שְׁלוֹ. נְכָרִי שֶׁתָּרַם אֶת שֵׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶפְלוֹ בְּרִשׁוֹת, אֵין תְּרוּמָתוֹ תְּרוּמָה.

Terumot 1:1

Five types of people may not separate terumah, and if they do, their terumah is not considered terumah: A deaf-mute, an imbecile, a minor, and one who separates terumah from that which is not his. If a non-Jew separated terumah from a Jew's produce, even with his permission, his terumah is not terumah.

Insights

When the Jewish people entered the land of Israel, they were obligated to give a percentage of their harvested crop to the Cohen and the Levite. The crop given to the Cohen was called terumah, and the crop to the Levite was called Maaser. There was also a percentage that had to be given to the poor.

Father Smith knocks on the Rabbi's door. Rabbi Cohen opens the door and sees his good friend standing there without his usual smile and twinkle in his eye. "Rabbi," he cries out, "you have to help me. I had a string of robberies. I need Divine intervention. Have you ever had a problem with robberies?"

"Not really," replies the Rabbi. "We have this thing we put on the doorpost called a mezuzah, and it protects our homes from harm." Father Smith begs him for one. The Rabbi doesn't see any problem with that; he gives him one and tells him how to affix it to his front door.

A few weeks later, there is a knock on the Rabbi's door. He opens the door and sees Father Smith holding the mezuzah. "Please, you can have to take it back."

"Why?" Asks the Rabbi, "were you robbed?"

"No, no," the Priest assures him, "no robberies."

"So why do you want to give it back?"

"Because the doorbell doesn't stop ringing ever since I hung it up. Each time a different man stands there, saying the same thing: 'Tzedakah please!'"

It is well documented that the Jewish people are the most benevolent and charitable. It is ingrained in us from the times of Abraham when he welcomed the three angels, portraying themselves as Arabs, into his tent.

The Sages state that if a Jew is not charitable, we should question his lineage.

On the day of the yahrtzeit, it is customary to give tzedakah in the memory of our departed loved ones to elevate their souls.



יומא ה,א

יום הַכַּפּוּרִים אָסוּר בְּאֲכִילָה וּבְשִׁתְּיָה וּבְרַחֲצִיָּה וּבְסִיכָה וּבְנִגְעֵילַת הַסַּנְדָּל וּבְתַשְׁמִישׁ הַמָּטָה. וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַכֹּלֵה יִרְחֲצוּ אֶת פְּנֵיהֶם, וְהַחַיָּה תִּנְעַל אֶת הַסַּנְדָּל; דְּבָרֵי רַבִּי אֶלְיעָזָר, וַחֲכָמִים - אוֹסְרִין.

Yoma 8:1

On Yom Kippur it is prohibited to eat and drink, bathe, smear oil on one's body, wear shoes, and have marital intercourse. However, the king, in deference to his eminence, and a new bride within thirty days of her marriage, who wishes to look especially attractive for her husband, may wash their faces. A woman after childbirth, who is suffering, may wear shoes. This is the statement of Rabbi Eliezer. The Sages prohibit these activities for a king, a new bride, and a woman after childbirth.

Yud

is the tenth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'ten'. The meaning of yud is a Yid, a Jew. One of the great mysteries of civilization is the secret of our survival. The ancient nations have been reduced to chapters in a history book while we continue to flourish and grow. Why?

We see life as a never-ending relay race that started at Mount Sinai. And each generation is tasked with receiving and transmitting the Torah and tradition. As we reflect on the life of our departed, let us recommit to continue passing the baton to the next generation faithfully.

Insights

Our Mishnah lists the Torah laws for the year's holiest day, Yom Kippur. Even the least observant Jews will make their way to the synagogue on Yom Kippur. Perhaps, by understanding the deeper meaning of the Day of Atonement, we will better understand the significance of observing a yahrtzeit.

One of the unique practices of Yom Kippur is that during the synagogue service we wear a kittel, an all-white garment.

There are two explanations for this custom. The first is that the kittel is a shroud as the deceased wear when buried. The kittel is meant to remind us of the day of our death. What a sobering thought - on Yom Kippur to contemplate death. Another reason given is that the kittel is a garment of purity. It expresses confidence and happiness.

What are we meant to do on Yom Kippur - thinking of death, or celebrating life?

A verse at the beginning of Bereishit describing creation states, "Behold it is very good." The Sages ask: What is very good? Their response is challenging to comprehend. They answer: Death. There is nothing better than death itself.

Why?

Without death, no one would truly live. We would be alive, but we would not live. Only when we recognize that our life is limited can we choose to live it fully. Another important result of death is realizing what is significant in life, what truly matters. The kittel doesn't have any pockets, nor do shrouds.

You can't take anything with you. Not money, not the experiences. Not even all your self-discovery. You can only take what you give. Yom Kippur reminds us of our mortality not to depress us, but so that we can make decisions that matter.

As we mark the yahrtzeit, it would be wise to remember the inner meaning of the kittel and the eternal message it shares.



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Mem

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Torah, the most vital element in our spiritual lives, is referred to as water, as it states: "Water refers to Torah." Just as a human being cannot survive without water, a Jew cannot survive without Torah. By studying the mishnayot in this booklet, you will receive spiritual sustenance.

ברכות ג:א

מי שְׁמֵתוֹ מְטַל לְפָנָיו פְּטוּר מִקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע, וּמִן הַתְּפִלָּה, וּמִן הַתְּפִלִּין. נוֹשְׂאֵי הַמֶּטֶה וְחַלּוּפֵיהֶן וְחַלּוּפֵי חַלּוּפֵיהֶן, אֶת שְׁלֹפְנֵי הַמֶּטֶה, וְאֶת שְׁלֹאֲחֵי הַמֶּטֶה: אֶת שְׁלֹמֶטָה צָרָךְ בְּהֵן פְּטוּרִין, וְאֶת שְׂאִין לַמֶּטֶה צָרָךְ בְּהֵן חִיבִין. אֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ פְּטוּרִין מִן הַתְּפִלָּה

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Caring for the dead is referred to as Chesed Shel Emmes – genuine kindness. When our forefather Yaacov was on his death bed, he instructed his son Yoseph to ensure that he would be transported from Egypt and buried in Israel. Yaacov said to Yoseph, "If you fulfill my request, you will have performed an act of kindness and truth."

It is called genuine kindness because when you do a favor for a living person, in the back of your mind, there is always the thought that perhaps the recipient of my favor will repay me later. However, when doing something for the deceased there is no expectation of ever receiving anything in return.

Why do we observe "kavod ha-met", respect for the dead?

When a person passes away, the neshama (the soul) still feels a connection to its body and stays near it until the burial. During this time period, the soul is aware of how its body is being treated and derives comfort knowing that its body is being given the ultimate respect.

Another reason is the very core of existence and why G-d created the universe.

G-d wanted a home in the physical world. According to the Chassidic masters, this is why the soul descended from heaven and partnered with its physical body. Only the combined effort of body and soul can reveal G-d's presence in this material world. Therefore, when the soul returns home to its Maker, we must offer the greatest level of respect to the soul's worldly partner.

It is worth mentioning that even after the burial, a part of the soul resides permanently at the gravesite. This explains why we visit our loved ones at the cemetery. We are not just visiting a slab of marble and lifeless remains, but rather, part of the eternal spirit of our beloved departed relative.

שבת כא,א

בְּוִטֵל אָדָם אֶת בְּנוֹ וְהֶאָבֵן בְּיָדוֹ, וְכִלְכְּלָהּ וְהֶאָבֵן
 בְּתוֹכָהּ. וּמִטְּלִטְלִין תְּרוּמָה טְמֵאָה עִם הַטְּהוֹרָה וְעִם
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 בְּאַחַד וּמֵאָה.

Shabbat 21:1

On Shabbos, one may take his son into the house, even though there is a stone, which is muktzeh (cannot be moved), in the child's hand. And it is permissible to take a basket with a stone inside on Shabbat. And one may move ritually impure teruma (food designated for the Cohen), which may not be eaten and is muktzeh (cannot be moved), with ritually pure teruma, as well as with non-sacred produce. Rabbi Yehuda says: One may even lift a measure of teruma that was nullified from a mixture of one hundred measures of non-sacred produce and one measure of teruma.

Insights

There are thirty-nine categories of work prohibited on Shabbat by Torah Law. Many have the misconception that Jewish law prohibits labor on the Shabbat and, therefore, they don't understand why we cannot turn on a light that takes no effort. Or driving a car to the synagogue, which takes less effort than walking.

The mistake lies in the inaccurate translation of one word in the Torah. When the Torah discusses the prohibition of not working on Shabbat, it does not use the word 'avodah' which is translated as work or labor. Instead, it uses the word 'melacha' which means a creative activity that demonstrates man's mastery over nature. By refraining from such actions, we acknowledge that G-d is the ultimate Creator and Master.

The Sages also enacted edicts whose purpose are to preserve the spirit of Shabbat as a day of rest and holiness. One such law is called muktzeh - certain objects must be set aside and not moved on Shabbat.

Some reasons for this law are: Since it is forbidden to work on Shabbat, one might utilize the free time to rearrange the items in their home and carry them from one place to another, in contrast to the spirit of Shabbat as a day of rest.

The Sages restricted the handling of items whose primary function is for an activity forbidden on Shabbat. Writing on the Shabbat is one of the thirty-nine Torah prohibitions. If we were permitted to hold a pen, inadvertently we may come to write with it. To safeguard this law, the Sages decreed that handling a pen is prohibited.



Nun

is the fourteenth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'fifty'. Nun means 'fish' in Aramaic, the language of the Talmud. When we stand by the sea and look down, all we see is water. Yet, we know beneath the surface there are thousands of different species of fish, coral, and vegetation. The fact that we can't see it does not negate its existence. Similarly, there is a spiritual world where the soul of the departed resides. Our inability to see it does not mean that it doesn't exist.

ש

Shin

is the twenty-first letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'three hundred'. On the tefillin worn on the head are two shins - one with three vertical lines protruding from the base and one with four. They symbolize our three forefathers and our four mothers. When one loses a parent, mourning is for twelve months. For all other blood relatives, mourning is for thirty days. When we lose a parent, we have lost the golden link in the chain that takes us all the way back to Abraham, Yitzchak, Yaacov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rochel, and Leah. Hence, the mourning is more intense.

שקלים גא

שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר שׁוֹפְרוֹת, שָׁל שָׁה עָשָׂר שְׁלֹחֲנוֹת, שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂר הַשְּׁתַחֲוִיֹּת הָיוּ בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ. שָׁל בֵּית רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל וְשָׁל בֵּית רַבִּי חַנִּינָא סֵגֵן הַכֹּהֲנִים, הָיוּ מִשְׁתַּחֲוִין אַרְבַּע עָשָׂר. וְהֵיכָן הִיְתָה יְתָרָה? כַּנְּגֹד דִּיר הָעֵצִים, שָׁכַן מַסֶּרֶת בְּיָדָם מֵאַבוֹתֵיהֶם שְׁשָׁם הָאָרוֹן נִגְנָז.

Shekalim 6,1

In the Temple there were thirteen chests, thirteen tables and thirteen prostrations. Members of the household of Rabban Gamaliel and of Rabbi Chanina, the chief of the priests, would prostrate fourteen times. And where was the additional prostration? In front of the wood storage yard, for they had a tradition from their ancestors that the Ark was hidden there.

Insights

King Solomon built the First Temple in 827 BCE, and it lasted for 410 years until the Greek Assyrian Empire destroyed it. The Jewish people were sent to exile in Babylonia for 70 years. It was during this period that the miracle of Purim happened. The Jewish people then returned to the Land of Israel, and under the guidance of the Prophets Ezra and Nechemya the Second Temple was built. It was completed in the year 349 BCE and lasted for 420 years. During this period the miracle of Chanukah occurred. It was destroyed by the Roman Empire in the year 69 CE. The third and final Temple will be built by Moshiach speedily in our days.

Three times a year - Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot - all males would make a pilgrimage to the Temple. There were ten constant miracles in the Temple. One of them was that even though the altar was outside and exposed to the heavens, the rain never extinguished its fire. Similarly, even though the altar was open to the elements, the winds never disturbed the smoke from rising straight upward

like a pillar.

The Temples were the center of Jewish life. Our prayers focus on beseeching G-d that He should bring the Jewish people home and rebuild the Temple.

There is a fascinating discussion concerning the actual construction of the Third Temple: Either Moshiach and the Jewish people will build it, or as others say, it will descend from heaven. The Lubavitcher Rebbe suggests that the two opinions are not necessarily contradictory. One of the suggestions he offers is that the Temple will initially be built by Moshiach together with the Jewish people. And then, a spiritual covering will descend from heaven and enclose the Temple, thereby ensuring that the structure will be eternal.



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Hay

is the fifth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'five'. The soul has five levels: nefesh, ruach, neshama, and yechidah Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Chabad Rebbe and the founder of Colel Chabad, writes that the soul is 'truly a part of G-d above'. Therefore, there is no such thing as a distant Jew as our souls are always bound and one with G-d.

ברכות ט,א

הַרוּאָה מְקוֹם שֶׁנִּעְשׂוּ בוֹ נִסִּים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, אוֹמֵר
 "בְּרוּךְ שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה". מְקוֹם
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 "עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה מֵאַרְצֵנוּ".

Berachot 9,1

One who sees a place where miracles occurred on Israel's behalf recites: "Blessed... Who performed miracles for our forefathers in this place." When in a place where idolatry was eradicated, one recites: "Blessed... Who eradicated idolatry from our land."

Insights

What is the secret of Jewish survival? Throughout our history we have lived through pogroms, the crusades, the inquisition, and the holocaust, and somehow, we have survived. And not only have we survived, but we have also flourished.

There is only one explanation we can offer, and that is Divine intervention. Our existence is truly miraculous.

In truth, our very beginning was miraculous. The first Jew to be born was Yitzchak, the son of Abraham and Sarah. Both were of an age where they could no longer bear children. G-d performed a miracle and they were blessed with the first Jewish child. From that moment on, our survival has been nothing short of miraculous.

A great Rabbi who lived in the middle-ages wrote: Every time I wake up in the morning and see myself in the mirror, I am witnessing a miracle far greater than the splitting of the sea. I see a Jew who has lived through the destruction of Two Temples. I

see a Jew who has been dispersed to the four corners of the globe and has been exiled for over 1500 years. I see a Jew who has lived through the crusades, the inquisition, and the pogroms.

We can add that when we look in the mirror, we see a Jew who lived through the holocaust and lost 6 million family members. And yet, we are still here. Is this then not the greatest miracle of all? People often say that if we saw miracles like the Jews who left Egypt, we would believe.

If you saw freedom for 8 million Jews from the Former Soviet Union, then know you saw the freedom of 3 million Jews from Egypt.

If you saw our soldiers at the Western Wall on June 7, 1967, then know you have seen a shepherd boy slaying the mighty giant Goliath.

And if you saw the whispering embers rebuild the Jewish world, then know you saw the dry bones of Ezekiel come back to life.