

ב"ה



לעילוי נשמת נתנאל בן אהרון

IN MEMORY OF NASANEL BEN AARON ZELIG
SHRENKER
NASANEL SHRENKER



משנה
בשמה *For*

MISHNA *For* NESHAMA

שבת כא,א

בְּטֵל אָדָם אֶת בְּנוֹ וְהָאָבִן בְּיָדוֹ, וְכִלְכְּלָהּ וְהָאָבִן
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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.

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ברכות דא

תפלה תפלת השחר עד חצות; רבי יהודה אומר: עד ארבע שעות. תפלת המנחה עד הערב; רבי יהודה אומר: עד פלג המנחה. תפלת הערב אין לה קבע. ושל מוספין כל היום; רבי יהודה אומר: עד שבע שעות.

Berachot 4:1

According to the Sages, the morning prayer may be recited until mid-day. Rabbi Yehuda says: It may be recited only until four hours after sunrise. According to the Sages, the afternoon prayer may be recited until the evening. Rabbi Yehuda says: It may be recited only until the midpoint of the afternoon. The evening prayer may be recited throughout the night and is not limited to a specific hour. According to the Sages, the additional prayer may be recited all day. Rabbi Yehuda says: It may be recited only until seven hours after sunrise.

Insights

As outlined in our Mishnah, we are obligated to pray three times a day. Before the morning prayers, we recite a prayer as soon as we awaken and while still in bed. The prayer is called the Modeh Ani - 'I give thanks'. With this prayer we thank G-d for giving us another day of life. The prayer translated into English: 'I thank you, living and enduring King, for You have graciously returned my soul within me. Great is Your faithfulness.'

The Chassidic Masters offer two very profound insights into the deeper meaning of this prayer. Firstly, we don't simply thank G-d for giving us another day of life which is worth expressing gratitude to the Almighty. We explicitly thank G-d for returning to each and every one of us our own soul. By G-d returning our soul to us, G-d is telling us that we count and have a unique mission that no other human being can accomplish. What an uplifting and motivating idea!

The second idea that we need to contemplate: We acknowledge

that the night before, while sleeping, our soul returned to Heaven to give an account of our daily actions, and the soul was probably in less than pristine condition. G-d, in His infinite kindness, gave us another chance. And so it goes, every day we spend on Earth G-d is saying: I will give you the benefit of the doubt, and hopefully, today will be better than yesterday.

We, therefore, thank G-d for giving us another opportunity to get things right. We thank G-d for giving us a second chance.

Imagine if we treat everyone we encounter in the same manner and give them the benefit of the doubt, a second chance. What an impact it would have on our family, community, and perhaps whole nations! If we feel it is too much to expect, remember the only reason we are alive today is because that is how G-d related to us.



Taf

is the twenty-second letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'four hundred'. It is the final letter of the aleph-bet. It is, in a sense, the culmination of all existence. Not by chance is it the first letter of the words techiyat hameisim, the resurrection of the dead, when the souls of all our departed loved ones will be reunited in their physical bodies here on earth. May it be soon in our time.

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ברכות ה,א

אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כבוד ראש.
 חסידים הראשונים היו שוהים שעה אחת
 ומתפללים, כדי שיכינו את לבם למקום. אפלו
 המלך שואל בשלומן, לא ישיבנו. ואפלו נחש כרוך
 על עקבן, לא יפסיק.

Berachot 5:1

One should begin to pray only with a reverent feeling. There is a tradition that the early generations of pious men would wait one hour in order to reach the solemn frame of mind appropriate for prayer, and then pray, so that they would focus their hearts towards G-d. Standing in prayer is standing before G-d and, therefore, even if the king greets him, he should not respond to him; and even if a snake is wrapped around his heel, he should not interrupt his prayer.



Aleph

is the first letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'one'. The meaning of alef is aluf which means a master. The first letter impresses upon us how we need to be conscious that there is a Creator and that G-d is the Master of the universe. Knowing that there is a G-d and that all we experience is part of His Divine plan should offer us a level of comfort when we face the loss of a loved one.

Insights

Mr. and Mrs. Cohen decided it was time for their son, Moshe, to learn how to pray. They employed a teacher, but as much as he tried, Moshe couldn't learn how to read. Moshe was no fool; he knew all the football teams and their players. Moshe's teacher decided to teach him at least how to read the Kaddish.

A few weeks later, Mr. and Mrs. Cohen stormed into Moshe's teacher's home screaming, "What is this teaching our son Kaddish? We are only 30 years old." "Don't worry," replied his teacher, "I promise, you will live to 120 yrs. and your son, Moshe, still won't be able to recite the Kaddish."

Many people believe that they know how to pray if they can read. However, prayer is much more than simply reciting the words. Prayer affords us the opportunity of having the most important conversation of our lives. We are able to converse with the Creator of the universe, with the Al-mighty.

We recite 'to serve G-d with all your heart' three times a day. The Sages ask, what is considered service of the heart? They explain it means prayer. How does one serve G-d through prayer? Based on the writings of King David in Psalms, prayer consists of serving G-d with fear and serving G-d with joy.

How can we pray with two opposing emotions? When we prepare for prayer, we must recognize how distant we are from G-d and who are we to have the audacity to ask for our needs or even praise Him? However, once we begin to pray we should do it with gladness of the heart. We should rejoice that G-d is listening to every word we utter from our lips.

Let us pray with dignity and with decorum and, please G-d, our prayers should be answered.



Lamed

is the twelfth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'thirty'. Lamed means 'to learn' and 'to teach'. A great teacher is someone whose influence bears fruit even after the students leave the classroom. Our time on earth is limited, yet our influence can be eternal. We teach by what we do and not by what we say. How we lead our lives will go a long way in defining our legacy. The day of the yahrtzeit is an opportune time to ask ourselves how we want to be remembered after 120.

סוכה ד:א

לִּילָב וְעֶרְבָה שֶׁשָּׁה וְשִׁבְעָה; הַהֵל
 וְהַשְׁמִיחָה שְׁמוֹנָה; סֵכָה וְנִסּוּךְ הַמִּים שִׁבְעָה;
 וְהַחֲלִיל חֲמִשָּׁה וְשֶׁשָּׁה.

Sukkah 4:1

The altar is encircled with the lulav and willow branch for six or seven days. The altar is encircled with the lulav and willow branch for six or seven days. The obligation to recite the entire Hallel and the mitzvah of rejoicing, i.e., eating the meat of the peace-offering, is in effect for eight days - seven days of Sukkot and Shmini Atzeret (the eighth day of Assembly).

The mitzvah of Sukkah and the water libation ritual on the altar are in effect for seven days. The flute is played in the Temple for five or six days.

Insights

The festival of Sukkot is celebrated soon after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We are commanded to leave our warm, secure homes on Sukkot and dwell for seven days in a Sukkah, a temporary hut with a roof of foliage. The word 'sukkah' literally means a shaded booth.

What is the underlying message of the festival?

Faith: The Sages stated in the Tractate of Sukkah, 'Go out from your permanent dwellings and live in a sukka (a temporary dwelling)' to teach us that a man must not put his trust in the size, strength, or conveniences of his house, even though it may be filled with the best of everything; nor should he rely upon the help of any man, even though he may be the lord of the land. But he should put his trust in Him Whose word created the universe, for He alone is mighty and faithful, and He does not retract His promises. (Menorat Hamaor)

Humility: The festival of Sukkot occurs during the harvest season. A person may delude himself into believing that the bounty

crop results from his hard work and ingenuity. Therefore, we are instructed to live in a humble sukka. A flimsy hut through which we can see the stars is to remind us that everything we possess comes from the One Above. (Rashbam)

Gratitude: When we became a nation at Mount Sinai, we lived in simple huts. This puts our lives in perspective and gives us reason to thank the Almighty for all He bestows upon us. (Rambam)

The Chasidic Masters reflect that the mitzvah of Sukkah is unique since it encompasses the whole person. Other mitzvot are done with part of our body, such as tefillin which involves only the hand and the head.

Furthermore, all mundane activities, such as eating or drinking, are considered a holy and spiritual experience when performed within the four walls of the Sukkah.

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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 וא

שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר שׁוֹפָרוֹת, שֶׁל שָׁה עָשָׂר
 שְׁלֹחָנוֹת, שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה הַשְׁתַּחֲוִיּוֹת הָיוּ בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ.
 שֶׁל בֵּית רֶבֶן גַּמְלִיאֵל וְשֶׁל בֵּית רַבִּי חַנִּינָא סֵגֶן
 הַכֹּהֲנִים, הָיוּ מְשַׁתַּחֲוִּין אַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה. וְהִיכֵן הִיטָּה
 יִתְרָה? כְּנֶגֶד דִּיר הָעֵצִים, שָׁכֵן מַסְרֵת בִּידָם
 מֵאַבוֹתֵיהֶם שְׁשָׁם הָאָרוֹן נִגְזָר.

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.

ברכות ג:א

מי שמתו מטל לפניו פטור מקריאת שמע, ומן התפלה, ומן התפלין. נושאי המטה וחלופיהן וחלופי חלופיהן, את שלפני המטה, ואת שלאחר המטה: את שלמטה צרך בהן פטורין, ואת שאין למטה צרך בהן חיבין. אלו ואלו פטורין מן התפלה

Berachot 3:1

One whose deceased relative is not yet buried is exempt from reading the Shema and the Amida prayer, and from the mitzvah to wear tefillin, until the deceased has been buried. Concerning the pallbearers and their replacements and the replacements of their replacements, those located before the coffin who have not yet carried the deceased and those located after the coffin: Those who are needed to carry the coffin are exempt from reciting Shema; while those who are not needed to carry the coffin, are obligated to recite Shema. However, both are exempt from reciting the Amida prayer.

מ

Mem

is the thirteenth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'forty'. The word mem stands for mayim, which means water. A human being cannot survive without water.

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.

Insights

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.



ברכות ט,א

הַרוּאָה מְקוֹם שֶׁנֶּעֱשׂוּ בּוֹ 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."

ה

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.

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.