

ב"ה



לעילוי נשמת קלמן בן בנימין

IN MEMORY OF KALMAN BEN BINYAMIN
KALMAN



משנה
For נשמה

MISHNA *For* NESHAMA

נדרים ח,א

ק

Kuf

is the nineteenth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'one hundred'. The Talmud tells of a time when one hundred of King David's soldiers would perish daily from an epidemic. David beseeched G-d for help. G-d's reply was to institute the recital of one hundred blessings a day, which David enacted to counteract the one hundred deaths. When we make a blessing, we are expressing gratitude to G-d. The more gratitude we display to G-d and our fellow man, the happier and more rewarding our lives will be. A simple thank-you can be life-changing and life-extending.

קוֹנָם יֵין שְׁאַנִּי טוֹעַם הַיּוֹם - אֵינוֹ אֲסוּר אֶלָּא עַד שְׁתַּחֲשֵׁךְ; שַׁבָּת זֶה - אֲסוּר בְּכָל הַשַּׁבָּת, וְשַׁבָּת שְׁעֶבְרָה; חֹדֶשׁ זֶה - אֲסוּר בְּכָל הַחֹדֶשׁ, וְרֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ לְהִבָּא; שָׁנָה זֶה - אֲסוּר בְּכָל הַשָּׁנָה, וְרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לַעֲתִיד לָבוֹא; שְׁבוּעַ זֶה - אֲסוּר בְּכָל הַשְּׁבוּעַ, וְשַׁבְּעִית שְׁעֶבְרָה. וְאִם אָמַר: יוֹם אֶחָד, שַׁבָּת אֶחָד, חֹדֶשׁ אֶחָד, שָׁנָה אֶחָד, שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד - אֲסוּר מִיּוֹם לַיּוֹם.

Nedorim 8:1

If one vows: "Wine is forbidden to me as if it were an offering and for that reason I will not taste it today", he is prohibited from drinking wine only until nightfall. "This week", he is prohibited from drinking wine for the remainder of the week. And the upcoming Shabbat is considered part of the week that passed. "This month", wine is forbidden to him for the remainder of the month; and as the New Moon is considered part of the next month, he is permitted to drink wine on that day. "This year", he is prohibited from drinking wine for the remainder of the year; and as Rosh Hashanah is considered to be part of the upcoming year, he is permitted to drink wine on that day. "This seven-year Sabbatical cycle", wine is forbidden to him for the entire remainder of the seven-year cycle; and as the Sabbatical Year is considered part of the cycle that passed, he is prohibited from drinking wine during the upcoming Sabbatical Year. But if he said, "one day", or "one week", or "one month", or "one year", or "one seven-year" cycle, he is prohibited from drinking wine from the day and time he took the vow to the same time the next day, or week, etc.

Insights

As children, we either said or were told, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." There is little to no truth to it. King Solomon in Proverbs strongly disagrees with it, as he writes, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

One of the 613 commandments is the prohibition of Ona'at Devorim, loosely translated as 'Words that Hurt'. We are prohibited from speaking in a manner that will be hurtful and painful to another human being. The Talmud writes that speaking in a hurtful way is more severe than stealing from the same person. Why? Money can be returned, whereas hurt feelings cannot be undone. A medieval scholar writes, "The root of this commandment is well-known - it is to give peace among the creatures. And great is peace, as through it blessing is found in the world; and difficult is disagreement - how many curses and tragedies are caused by it."

Being a man of his word was always considered a badge of honor

amongst the Jewish people. According to Jewish law, the sale or purchase of an item is deemed finalized once the item has been transferred from the seller to the purchaser.

However, the Sages frowned upon someone who wanted to renege on a deal once a verbal commitment had been established. And the individual would be told the following. "The One Who punished the people of the Generation of the Flood and Who punished the people of the Generation of the Dispersal following the construction of the Tower of Babel will punish the one who does not keep his word."

A great Rabbi remarked that we need to be as careful with what comes out of our mouth as what enters it.



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

וְהָיָה לְיָלֵד וְהָיָה לְיָלֵד
וְהָיָה לְיָלֵד וְהָיָה לְיָלֵד
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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 sukkah (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 sukkah. 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.

ברכות ג:א

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.

מי שמתו מטל לפניו פטור מקריאת שמע, ומן התפלה, ומן התפילין. 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.

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.

שבת כא,א

בְּטֵל אָדָם אֶת בְּנוֹ וְהֶאָבֶן בְּיָדוֹ, וְכִלְכְּלָהּ וְהֶאָבֶן
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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.

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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

נְשִׁלָּשָׁה נְשִׁלָּשָׁה עֲשָׂר שׁוֹפְרוֹת, שֶׁל נָּה עֲשָׂר
נְשִׁלָּחוֹת, נְשִׁלָּשׁ עֲשָׂרָה הַשְּׁתַּחֲוִיֹּת הָיוּ בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ.
שֶׁל בֵּית רֶבֶן גַּמְלִיאֵל וְשֶׁל בֵּית רַבִּי חַנִּינָא סָגֵן
הַכֹּהֲנִים, הָיוּ מִשְׁתַּחֲוִין אַרְבַּע עֲשָׂרָה. וְהִיכָן הִיטָּה
יִתְרָה? כְּנֶגֶד דִּיר הָעֵצִים, שָׁכָן מַסֶּרֶת בִּידָם
מֵאַבוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁשָּׁם 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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ברכות ט,א

הַרוּאָה מְקוֹם שֶׁנֶּעֱשׂוּ בּוֹ נִסִּים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, אוֹמֵר
"בְּרוּךְ שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה". מְקוֹם
שֶׁנֶּעְקְרָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה, אוֹמֵר "בְּרוּךְ שֶׁעָקַר
"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.