

when I fled from Avshalom, your brother" (*Melachim* 1,2:7). This is an enormous reward for the little food they shared with him! For this reason, they have the merit of being guests at the king's table and having ready access to him at all times?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* began by bemoaning the spiritual difficulties that confront the *yeshivah* student on an almost daily basis. On the other hand, the opportunity for spiritual growth at such a time is unparalleled quite like David *Hamelech's* predicament, compelled to flee for his life lest Avshalom overtake him; indeed, he was a prisoner in his own country. While people respect the king, they fear the repercussions from the king's enemies, lest they allow the king into their home, lest they show him any form of favor. It is specifically at such a time that he who opens his door for the king – even if he gives him very little – earns exalted eventual reward! This is what Barzillai did – and this is why he was so rewarded. It was all in the timing. There was an unparalleled window of opportunity – and he seized the moment!

"This is the situation in our generation," declared the *Rosh Yeshivah*. "It is the generation of *Ikvesa d'Moshicha*, (the heel of *Moshiach*). Every *ben Torah* who toils diligently to study and teach, to observe and perform, regardless of its negligible value in comparison to (what was expected and performed in) previous generations, is sufficient for him to be among those who gaze upon the King and eat at His Table!" It is a time for seizing the moment. This could also be the reason for the unique *siyata diShmaya* that we are accorded today, unlike any other previous time.

When the *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, visited *Yeshivas Toras Chesed* in Lodz, Poland, the *Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Sender Diskin, zl*, asked the venerable sage to speak words of inspiration to the students. The *Chafetz Chaim* acquiesced. "I have always been troubled," he began, "and I have ruminated over this a number of times. The saintly *gaon, Horav Akiva Eiger, zl*, lived not long ago. Yet, in greatness in Torah, he is without peer. It is obvious from his responsa and novellae that his Torah study was blessed with unusual *siyata diShmaya*. His questions are earth-shattering; his expositions are so brilliantly put together that they bring boundless joy to those who study his words. I have wondered what was the secret – the reason – for such *siyata diShmaya*, which is unfound in the generation preceding him – or after him. Why did he merit to become a *gaon* among *gaonim*?

"I have thought about this very much, and I have arrived at one conclusion. During the generation of *Rav Akiva Eiger*, the scourge of the *Haskalah*, Enlightenment, reared its ugly head (author's translation). The apostasy and heresy which they spawned were devastating, destroying the lives of many of our unsuspecting co-religionists. The *shuls* were emptied; *yeshivos* were closed due to lack of attendance (anyone who studied Torah was labeled a

primitive parasite). The Torah was cast aside to a corner, like a pitiful orphan. Specifically in this generation, when the study of Torah had waned so miserably, that *Rav Akiva Eiger* rose to prominence. Every generation is allotted a certain amount of *siyata diShmaya*. He was there to take extra portions – because, sadly, no one else came forward."

The *Chafetz Chaim* concluded, "Today, it is not much different. We are living in a time when those who hate the Torah will do anything to prevent the *ben Torah* from achieving his goals. The *siyata diShmaya* out there is multifold and available to whoever seizes the opportunity! He will be blessed by Hashem with uncanny success in Torah!"

### Va'ani Tefillah

**אָהַבְתָּ אֶת הַיְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְאֶת הַיְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְאֶת הַיְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ – Ki mocheil v'soleiach Atah. For You pardon and forgive.**

Interestingly, we first ask Hashem for *slichah*, forgiveness (*s'lach lanu*), followed by our request for His pardon (*m'chal lanu*). Yet, when we conclude our petition, we praise Hashem as *mocheil v'soleiach*, He Who pardons and forgives, the sequence is altered. Why? *Iyun Tefillah* explains that, when we petition Hashem, we commence with *slichah*, forgiveness; it is casual. It is only afterwards that we present our intense request *m'chal lanu*, pardon us. At the conclusion, we are praising G-d. It is, thus, appropriate to laud His greater attribute: the ability to pardon, to do away with rebellious sin. We then mention His lesser attribute of *soleiach*, which He employs in addressing lesser sins.

In honor of

**Dr. Dennis and Marriane Glazer**

Peninim is published weekly by *Peninim Publications* in conjunction with the *Hebrew Academy of Cleveland*, 1860 S. Taylor Rd. Cleveland, Ohio 44118

©All rights reserved – prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

For a yearly subscription or Parsha sponsorship, please contact:

In Cleveland – Rabbi L. Scheinbaum (216) 321-5838 Ext. 165

Outside of North America – E. Goldberg +972 2-569 5185

Visit us at:  
<http://www.hac1.org>



## Parashas Emor

תשע"ז

פרשת אמור

והכהן גדול מאחיו

**The Kohen who is exalted above his brethren. (21:10)**

The *Kohen Gadol* is described as the individual who is the most exalted above his brethren. *Chazal* define this greatness as exalted in piety, wisdom, handsomeness, wealth (which, if he does not have, it is supplied to him), and strength. Obviously, the two most critical requirements are piety and wisdom, the other criteria are mentioned; so that the average person, who does not look beyond the external is still impressed. While appearance certainly does play a role, as does physical strength, why should wealth be important? Indeed, material wealth seems to be the antithesis of *ruchniyos*, spirituality.

The *Rebbe* of *Rizhin, zl*, was a *tzaddik* without peer; yet, he surrounded himself with fabulous wealth, such that it was the envy of everyone. All of his personal belongings, even his every day cutlery, were fashioned from the most expensive materials. The buttons of his *bekeshe*, silk frock, were of solid gold, studded with diamonds, and his pillowcase was woven from pure gold thread. Prior to his *petirah*, passing from this world, the *Rebbe* said, "Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi* attested about himself that he never benefitted from this world – not even the amount of a small finger. I testify about myself that I did not enjoy from this world – anything – not even the amount of a bit of thread. The reason for my grand and royal conduct was all *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven."

To understand this statement, we refer to an exposition of the *Rebbe* concerning a statement in the *Talmud Berachos* 17b. *Chazal* say, "Every day a Heavenly Voice declares, 'The entire world is sustained because of (in the merit of) Chanina, My son; yet, Chanina, My son, suffices (to live) on a *kav* of *charubin*, carob, from *erev Shabbos* to every *Shabbos* (week to week, this is all he requires to live).'" The *Rebbe* asks, "What is this *Chazal* teaching us?" He explains, "The Heavenly Voice bemoans the fact that, while the world is sustained on the standard which seems sufficient for Chanina, he is to live in depravation, feeling the constant pangs of hunger. Why is this?" asks the *Rebbe*, "Because Chanina needs no more than a drop of carob to sustain himself. When the *tzaddik* is able to live on a little, everyone else is sustained on that standard. A *tzaddik* who demands more, both in food and in material accretions to support his material lifestyle, it will trickle down to his flock. They, too, will be sustained on such a level."

The holy *tzaddik, Horav Uri, zl, m'Strelish*, who was known as the *Saraf*, fiery one, established a *chassidic* court

of students who represented the apex of spiritual devotion. They neither benefitted, nor sought to benefit, from this world in any way. For them, it was all about *ruchniyos*, spirituality. It is related that once one of the senior *Admorim*, a holy, saintly *Rebbe*, visited the *Saraf*, and he asked him, "Why is it that your *chassidim* live such a life of physical/material deprivation? Why do you not bless them with *parnassah b'harchavah*, good, sustainable livelihood? Why should they live in such abject poverty?"

Immediately, the *Saraf* called over a group of *chassidim* and said to them, "Here sits next to me one of the true *tzaddikim*, righteous persons, of our generation. You may request from him anything that you want. Whoever is in need may ask for the *Rebbe's* blessing." One *chassid* appeared and asked, "I would like to recite *Baruch She'Amar* (Morning Prayer) with the same feeling and devotion as the *Rebbe*." This was the type of *chassid* the *Saraf* produced; one that had no need for material wealth whatsoever. When the *Saraf* passed away, a number of his *chassidim* traveled to *Rizhin* to seek guidance from the *Rebbe*. It is important to underscore that these men were of a spiritual calibre without peer. Their exalted spiritual achievements were the consequence of a life of total devotion to spirituality.

The *chassidim* presented their *kvitalch*, written requests, to the *Rizhiner*, who scanned them and noticed that each one requested only spiritual ascendance. There was not a single request for material sustenance. The *Rizhiner* returned their petitions and said, "It is written in *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim* 60:5) that he who recites the first *pasuk* of *Krias Shema* without proper devotion and intention does not fulfill the obligation to recite *Krias Shema*, since this is the primary opportunity for *Kabbolas Ole Malchus Shomayim*, accepting upon oneself the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom. Additionally, in *Shulchan Aruch* (57:4), it is written that he who does not have proper *kavanah*, intention, when he recites the *pasuk Poseiach es Yadecha*, 'Open up Your hand, (in *Ashrei*)' also does not fulfill his obligation. He must repeat his request. This teaches us that it is not enough to ask only for spirituality. One must also see to it that his material needs are addressed!"

והכהן הגדול מאחיו... ועל כל נפש מח לא יבא לאביו ולאמו לא ימח

**The Kohen who is exalted above his brethren... he shall not come near any dead person; he shall not contaminate himself to his father or his mother. (21:10,11)**

The *Chassidic* Masters posit that the *Kohen Gadol* is prohibited from defiling himself ritually (*metamei*) to relatives

– including even his parents, because, as the individual who stands at the spiritual helm of the nation, he should feel equally close to all Jews. The concept of “family” should not apply to him, since all of *Klal Yisrael* is his family. This is, of course, a very noble concept to which an individual who climbs the ladder of spiritual ascendency should aspire. Veritably, feeling a stronger sense of closeness to one’s family is entirely normal. The *Ohaiv Yisrael*, *Horav David*, *zl*, *m’Lelov*, would bemoan, “How can people refer to me as a *tzaddik*, righteous person, if, in fact, I feel closer to my son and immediate family than I do to others?”

Once, *Rav David*’s son became gravely ill, causing his entire community of followers to pray fervently for his return to health. The *chassidim* loved *Rav David*; they knew that he acutely felt their pain. Thus, they reciprocated. They kept praying in prayer groups 24/7 until the doctor informed them that the danger had passed; he was on the road to recovery. The community’s representatives came to *Rav David*’s house to wish him a *Shehechyanu* and found him immersed in sadness, crying profusely. They immediately asked what was wrong. Amid his tears he replied, “If anyone else would have taken ill, would you have gone to such extreme length to pray on his behalf? No! You did this only for my son. Should I not cry?”

The *Rebbe* was certainly appreciative of the efforts on behalf of his son. He was concerned, however, that other Jews could not hope to have a support system such as he had. I think it boils down to reciprocity. Students/*chassidim* feel close to their *Rebbe* because he feels close to them. The *Lelover* was an extremely warm and caring person whose students were his life. Thus, they reciprocated. Should it necessarily be this way, or should the students’ relationship be in return for the material, the Torah and ethics that the *Rebbe* is imparting to them? For that matter, should a child’s relationship with a parent depend on how “nice” the parent is to him/her, or should it be so because the parent partners with Hashem in the child’s creation? Undoubtedly, the Torah that we study should catalyze our love, but, due to the fact that we are human beings, subject to the whims of human nature, it would require very mature students and children to rise to such “spiritual appreciation.”

Love for a son or a student can, at times, overshadow all else. One becomes so obsessed with pride over his son’s/daughter’s success that he forgets that the fellow with whom he is speaking either has no children or has not been fortunate in raising them properly. Arrogating over others does not necessarily have to be about material blessing. One can be the recipient of incredible spiritual blessing and unknowingly, without thinking, rub someone’s face in the dirt with his comments.

The young (*Horav*) *Zelig* Reuven Bergis was an outstanding genius, whose *hasmadah*, diligence in Torah study, was legendary. As a young boy, he longed to go to *yeshivah gedolah* where there were Torah giants from whom he could expand his erudition in Torah. His parents wanted the best for their son, and they began contemplating the merits of each *yeshivah*. It came down to two *yeshivos*: *Mir* and *Volozhin*, both outstanding schools whose leadership was without peer. It was a personal proclivity which one would best serve the needs of their budding young scholar. Finally, *Rav Tzvi* Bergis turned to his son and

said, “My child, the decision is yours. We will abide by it. I ask one favor: please do not inform me of your decision. Simply pick the *yeshivah* of your choice, travel there, settle yourself, and, in a few months, when all is well, you will drop us a line telling us where you are and how you are doing.”

*Rav Tzvi* saw the look of incredulity in his son’s eyes, so he explained the reason behind his strange request, “My son, your mother and I realize Hashem’s blessing in granting us such a son as you. Your superior mind and outstanding desire for learning has enabled you to leave for *yeshivah* at an age at which other boys are still playing games. Most people are not so fortunate. Some have no children. Others have children that are not *yeshivah* material, and, yet others, either do not have the wherewithal or the desire to spend what they should to provide for a *yeshivah* education. So, you see, we raise up our hands to Heaven with incredible *hakoras hatov*, gratitude.

On the *Shabbos* after you leave, I will go to *shul*, and people are going to ask, “Where is Reuven?” My friends have sons who are wonderful, lovely young men, who are working as an apprentice or simply are not *yeshivah* material. If I tell them that you went to *Volozhin* or *Mir*, which are today’s preeminent *yeshivos*, they will feel a twinge of jealousy. Why would I want to cause another Jew pain? Now, however, when they ask me where you are, I will say I told you to look for a *yeshivah*. I honestly do not know where my son is presently. I will be telling the truth and not offending anyone. Later on, they will forget about it and you can write to me.”

A father’s love for his son was superseded by his sensitivity of other Jew’s feelings.

**אלה מועדי ד' מקראי קדש... בחדש הראשון... בין הערבים פסח לך**

**These are the appointed Festivals of Hashem, the holy convocations... in the first month... in the afternoon is the time of the Pesach-offering to Hashem. (23:4,5)**

In his *Chorev* (23), *Horav S.R. Hirsch*, *zl*, explains why the Festivals, the *Yamim Tovim*, are referred to in the Torah as *Moadim*, which means appointed times. He writes, “The *Moadim* summon us to submit ourselves entirely to the contemplation and inner realization of those ideals which lie at their foundation. The *Moadim* are days which stand out from among the other days of the year. They summon us from our everyday life to halt and to dedicate all of our spiritual activities to them. They (the *Moadim*) give us the spirit, power, and sanctity for the future by reviving those ideas upon which our whole life is based.”

We have noticed one common misconception with regard to the *Moadim* – and all consecrated milestone occasions, for that matter. We are under the impression that we celebrate the time period designated as *Pesach* (for example) because we were liberated from Egypt at that time. The liberation was the reason for *Pesach*; thus, these days became a *Moed*, time of meeting with Hashem. This is the misconception. When Hashem created the world, He infused specific periods with a unique character, i.e., freedom/rejuvenation; exile/mourning; joy/festivity, etc. During those periods in which a certain spiritual character prevails, Hashem performed specific miracles and

occurrences endemic to the “times.” Thus, since the month of *Nissan* is *mesugal*, a preordained time for rejuvenation, and freedom, it was the perfect time to redeem the Jews from Egypt. This concept is reiterated both by the *Chassidic* masters and Ethicists. The period of time and its character were the precursors for the events that occurred at that time.

Since the first *Moed* (following *Shabbos*) cited by the Torah is *Pesach*, we will use it as the paradigm for establishing the relationship between the “time” and the designated *moed*. The days which we call *Pesach* comprised a special period in the spiritual cosmos even before the Jews were redeemed from Egypt. Avraham *Avinu* triumphed over the four mighty kings on the first night of *Pesach*. It was on this night that Hashem “visited” Lavan and warned him not to harm Yaakov *Avinu*. It was also on this night that Hashem warned Avimelech not to touch Sarah *Imeinu*. (The source for this dateline is the *piyut* in the *Haggadah – V’chein vayehi ba’chatzi halaylah*.) *Yitzchak Avinu* blessed Yaakov *Avinu* on the first night of *Pesach*. Avraham was informed on *Pesach* night that *Yitzchak* would be born. Indeed, *Yitzchak* was born on *Pesach* night.

Apparently, the days that we traditionally celebrate as *Pesach* have great spiritual significance – a significance which predates *Pesach*! *Horav Elimelech Biderman*, *Shlita*, quotes *Horav Levi Yitzchak Berdichever*, *zl*, who says that these are days on which Hashem reveals His love for His People and bestows His goodness on them. The first day of *Pesach* is most *mesugal*, appropriate, for this spiritual flow of beneficence. *Pesach* is a time for miracles. Thus, rather than *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Egyptian exodus, being identified as the reason that we celebrate *Pesach* on *Nissan* 15, it is just the opposite. *Pesach* occurred when it did because this period of time is most appropriate for it. On *Pesach*, Hashem’s love for His children is more pronounced.

The *Levlover Rebbe* goes on to say that many miracles happen to us in the merit of the holy *Seder* which we celebrate on *Pesach* night. When we are informed of a time in which Hashem is especially close to us, we should take advantage of this news. The *Zohar* teaches that on *Pesach* night Hashem Himself, together with His Ministering Angels, visits every Jewish home and listens to their recital of the *Pesach* story. Imagine if He comes and our “story” is lacking, our involvement in sharing it with our family is deficient. Need I say more? *Horav Shimon Shkop*, *zl*, would say nothing at the *Seder* but words of Torah, due to the presence of the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence.

One stipulation must be noted. While the *Seder* night is a night designated for miracles, and the opportunity to avail oneself of this good fortune is open to everyone, in order to merit a fortuitous result, one must invest effort. Without effort, it is like having the keys to a car that has no gas. If one does not fill the tank – he is going nowhere.

*Horav Leible Eiger*, *zl*, observes that we eat an egg on *Pesach* night for a variety of reasons. He suggests a powerful implication to be derived from the egg. Just as an egg has the potential to become a chicken when it is warmed under a hen, likewise, many great and wonderful things can happen to us on this night. We must, however, bring the warmth, our enthusiasm and joy to the *Seder*; otherwise, it will remain an egg, unrealized potential. The

moment is ripe; the opportunity is there. We must seize the moment!

**ויצא בן אשה ישראלית והוא בן איש מצרי... ושם אמו שלומית בת דברי**

**The son of a Yisraeli woman went out – and he was the son of an Egyptian man... the name of his mother was Shlomis bas Divri. (24:10,11)**

*Chazal* (*Midrash Rabbah*, *Vayikra* 32) state that *Klal Yisrael* was redeemed from Egypt due to its high standard of morality. Indeed, not one Jewish man or woman was involved with an Egyptian, except for *Shlomis bas Divri*, who is singled out in the Torah. This is our Torah’s way of teaching that no other Jew or Jewess had sinned. A powerful statement, attested to by the Torah. How did they do it? It is not as if *Klal Yisrael* was perfect. Veritably, the people clung steadfast to certain traditions and lifestyles, but to rise above the moral turpitude that was the symbol of Egyptian culture demanded superhuman commitment. From where did they derive this extraordinary adherence to morality?

*Horav Chaim Kamil*, *zl*, quotes the *Talmud Megillah* 29, where Rabbi *Shimon bar Yochai* states that, wherever the Jewish people have been exiled, Hashem’s Divine Presence has accompanied them. This was especially true in Egypt. The *Maharasha* questions the proof from Egypt, since it was obvious that Hashem revealed Himself often to *Moshe* and *Aharon* in Egypt. He explains that Egypt was unique in that the bar of *gilui Shechinah*, the revelation of Hashem’s Presence, was raised there to the point that it was on a scale equitable with the Divine Presence in the *Mishkan* and the *Bais Hamikdash*. This now applies everywhere that we have made our home. Hashem is always there with us. (Perhaps, some of us must look a little harder.)

We now understand *Klal Yisrael*’s secret for success during the Egyptian exodus. *V’Hi sheamdah l’aavoseinu*, it was the *Shechinah* accompanying our ancestors in Egypt that protected them from falling into moral bankruptcy. They did not defile themselves due to the merit that the *Shechinah* was among them. With this in mind, we can never say that we are unable to cope with the spiritual challenges that confront us in *galus*, exile. We are not alone. We have Hashem in our midst. Can we ask for more? Do we need more than the ultimate *siyata diShmaya*, Divine Assistance, of Hashem’s Presence?

We often feel lost in a generation whose societal culture has descended to such a nadir of depravity that it would probably be the envy of the Egyptians. While it is true that Torah study is thriving like never before, the challenges to one’s spirituality presented by various media and technology in tandem with a society in which everything goes is like nothing we, as a people, have ever experienced. Knowing that Hashem is with us in this last *galus* is encouraging.

*L’sitcha Elyon* relates that *Horav Baruch Ber Leibowitz*, *zl*, *Kaminitzer Rosh Yeshivah* and author of *Bircas Shmuel*, once spoke to an assembly of *yeshivah* students concerning the spiritual descendency of the generations (*yeridas ha’doros*). He quoted *David Hamelech*’s enjoyment to his son *Shlomo* (*Hamelech*): “Towards the children of *Barzillai*... act with kindness, and they shall be among those who eat at your table, for, in this way, they befriended me