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Parashat Miketz - Chanukah 5771 - #166

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## On Chanukah...

### It is Lucky that Yehudah the Maccabee Did Not Ask...

It is lucky that Yehudah the Maccabee did not ask politicians, because if he had they would have told him that one must consider the possible international pressure, and he would have sat and deliberated and deliberated.

It is lucky that he did not ask too many military strategists and experts, because they would have told him that there is no chance of delivering "the strong into the hands of the weak," and they would have broken his spirit.

It is lucky that he did not ask statisticians, because they would have revealed to him the secret that we are "the few against the many," and he would have been afraid of the demographic demon.

He also did not ask Roshei Yeshiva, because if he had, they would have ruled that it is forbidden for yeshiva students to interrupt their Torah learning, and then there would not have been a delivering of "the heretics into the hands of those involved in Your Torah."

He also did not ask too many Rabbis, because if he had they would have told him that it is forbidden to challenge the nations of the world, and that we do not rely on a miracle, especially where there is a real potential for danger, etc..., etc...

He also did not ask the humanists, because they would have revealed to him the secret that one soul of Israel is worth more than a few kilometers of land and is more costly for the Nation.

He certainly did not ask those who are pure-of-heart, because they would have depressed his spirit, and preached to him that it is not proper to kill or to be killed.

He did not ask deep thinkers, because – with their great depth - they would have confused him and stopped him with discussions of the order of priorities: Perhaps the Nation takes precedence, etc..., etc...

He did not ask the pacifists, because they would have illuminated his eyes to the greatness of peace, and that one should never use violence, and that goodwill will resolve everything.

He did not ask too many questions, but he fulfilled his national and spiritual obligation and jumped into the lion's den, with amazing self-sacrifice into the great battle which saved Israel. And then all of the politicians, all of the strategists, all of the statisticians, all of the Roshei Yeshiva, all of the Rabbis, all of the humanists, all of the pure-of-heart, all of the thinkers, and all of the pacifists became sages after the fact, and they lit Chanukah lights as a remembrance of the victory, and these lights illuminate our lives from those days until this time.

## Service of the Heart

[Be-Ahavah U-BeEmunah – Vayeshev 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

The Talmud comments, "'And to serve him with all your heart' (Devarim 10:12): What is 'service of the heart'? It is prayer" (Taanit 2a). This means serving G-d with one's emotions. We serve G-d many ways. We serve him with our intellect - through Torah learning. We use our intellect to serve G-d, and we process our intellect according to G-d's word. We serve G-d with our deeds – the mitzvot. We serve G-d with our wealth, i.e. Tzedakah and integrity in business dealings. And, we serve G-d with the heart, with our emotions.

A man is not just his intellect. He is also emotion. Both have to be balanced. Otherwise, the person limps. Certainly, intellect is higher than emotion, but emotion is closer to man, to life. We therefore need both, internal service and external service. (see Orot Ha-Kodesh 3:88). Action is external, the fear of G-d is internal. Wisdom is external. Will is internal. The intellect is external, while emotion is internal.

Torah learning is external, while prayer is internal, for even Torah learning can be external to man's personality. As our Sages said that the First Temple was destroyed because the Jews did not recite the required daily blessing before commencing Torah learning. As the Maharal explained, while they did study Torah, they forgot the Master of the Universe, the Giver of the Torah. One might think that Torah learning is an intellectual challenge, and that in Torah learning one does not stand before G-d. One therefore needs both external service and internal service, and then all is complete.

In prayer we stand before G-d. There can be two things missing in the synagogue: 1) If we view the prayers and the accompanying songs as a musical experience, then we are not serving G-d! 2) Another problem is when people chatter incessantly, having no control over their mouths during prayers. That is not what our Sages had in mind. Rather, they said, if someone talks between Yishtabach and Yotzer, he is committing a sin, and he must repeat his earlier prayers. (Hagahot Maimoniyot, Tefila 7:12, quoting the Jerusalem Talmud). Rather, one must pray with concentration, i.e., thinking about the content of every word. Obviously, we are not on the level of that chazzan who recited "Akdmut Milin" on Shavuot with such great concentration that his soul flew out of him on High, or of Rabbi Nachum of Riminov, who would invest such a great effort in prayer that after the Shemoneh Esrei that he would faint.

Still, we must strive to concentrate on every word. And even that is not on the level of the Tosafot, quoting the Jerusalem Talmud, who said that we must be grateful to our head, which bows of its own accord when we reach "Modim". All the same, we make an effort. Just as we do not deign to boast that we know Torah, but instead say that we "try to learn". And – not to confuse the holy with the profane – Socrates said, "I am not a sophist, i.e., a wise man, but a

philosopher, i.e., a lover of wisdom." Similarly, a rabbi is not called a Chacham - wise man, but a Talmid Chacham - the student of a wise man, a person who learns all his life. That is, likewise, how we must strive to pray.

Towards that end we prepare for prayer. The early pious ones would prepare for an hour (Berachot 30b). Some people, in preparation, would put on nice clothing (Shabbat 10a), and we prepare that way. "Be cautious when you go to the house of G-d" (Kohelet 4:17).

How fortunate we are to have merited a "miniature Temple" (Megilla 29a).

May it be G-d's will that we should merit the rebuilding of the Temple, speedily in our day. In the meantime, we serve G-d with our heart and emotions in that miniature Temple.

### *Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #20*

[adapted for middle-schoolers by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner's three-volume commentary on the siddur "Tefilat Amecha"]

We end Baruch She-Amar with a blessing in which we describe Hashem as Ha-Kel, Av Ha-Rachaman- the powerful G-d, merciful father. This has 3 parts.

Hashem is the all powerful G-d. He can do everything and has power over everything and anything. He can make us cease to exist. He can make the world cease to exist. So you might think Hashem doesn't care about human beings. But He does. He is the Father and he is deeply involved with His world.

So you might think Hashem may care about the whole human race, but he doesn't care about us as individuals. But this also isn't so. He is the merciful Father. He cares about each and every human being. Once we now understand that Hashem is all at once all powerful, our Father, and merciful, we are ready to say Psukei De-Zimra - verses or praise to Him.

### *Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for*

*the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships*

#### Weaning

*While nursing and dependence are pleasant, it comes time to wean from the nursing in a physical way and from the dependence in an emotional way. The weaning must obviously be in stages.*

*There are parents who are not interested in weaning their child. The child grows but is still a baby. When he informs his parents that he is getting married, the parents are insulted: "How can our child abandon us in order to go with a stranger? Why did we raise him – in order to stay with us until old age! Most of time, no such thing is said, but a feeling is created that the child's marriage is a transgression against the parents.*

*Weaning a baby is therefore very important and, as we said, it should be done gradually. The child needs to feel that his parents are happy with him and he was not born by some mistake.*

*Weaning in no way nullifies the love, which is essential at all ages.*

### Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample:

Bad Breathe

Q: My good friend has terrible bad breathe. Should I tell him? He will be hurt.

A: Tell him gently that you have an unusual sensitivity.

#### Funeral

Q: Is it a Mitzvah to go to a funeral of an acquaintance?

A: It is a Mitzvah, but not obligatory.

#### Netilat Yadayim for a Baby

Q: Does a two month old baby require Netilat Yadayim?

A: No, only from the age of education. Shulchan Aruch Ha-Rav (chap. 4).

#### Physical Abuse

Q: If a man purposefully touches me on the bus or in a public place, is it permissible for me to yell at him, or should I be concerned about embarrassing him?

A: You should certainly yell at him as loud as you can, and if he is embarrassed, he deserves it. He brought it on himself. Not only is it permissible to yell at him, it is a Mitzvah.

#### Traveling outside of Eretz Yisrael

Q: What is the source for the prohibition of traveling outside of Eretz Yisrael for a trip?

A: Rambam, Melachim 5:9. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 531:4.

Q: To visit close family?

A: It is permissible if they do not come here.

#### Trip to Jordan

Q: Is it permissible to visit Jordan?

A: It is Eretz Yisrael, but not under Israeli sovereignty. One should therefore refrain from traveling there. And the same applies to the Sinai (Shut She'eilat Shlomo 3:312).

#### Picture of Rabbis

Q: Is it permissible to hang pictures of Rabbis in a room where we change the baby's diaper?

A: Yes.

#### Free Choice

Q: If Hashem knows everything before, then I don't have free choice?

A: There is both Divine knowledge and free choice. This is a complex subject for a text message. See Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah, end of chap. 5 or Shemoneh Perakim, chap. 8.

#### Cigarettes

Q: If a friend asks me to buy him a pack of cigarettes, should I refuse?

A: Yes, but do not get into a dispute.

#### Discount

Q: I work at a store and receive a discount. Can I buy something for friends? It is accepted behavior.

A: You nonetheless need explicit permission.

#### Separating Challah

Q: Is it permissible to separate Challah after the dough has already been baked?

A: Yes. This is how it is done with Matzah.

#### Electric Shavers

Q: Under what circumstance is it permissible to use an electric razor?

A: An older type which is less efficient. Do not put it too close to the skin, so that you can still feel the scruff (Ha-Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank brought in Shut Minchat Yitzchak 4:113. Halichot Shlomo – Tefilliah chap. 2 p. 11).

#### Woman dancing at a Wedding

Q: Is it permissible for young woman to dance at a wedding in the inner circle before the bride and groom in order to bring joy to their good friend?

A: It is forbidden for women to dance in front of men, and we do not perform a Mitzvah through a transgression (Gan Naul, p. 149).

#### Cemetery at Night

Q: Is it forbidden to visit a cemetery at night?

A: No. It is only forbidden to sleep there. Nidah 17.

#### Immersing Utensils

Q: Is it permissible to immerse utensils in a regular Mikveh?

A: Yes. With permission of the person who is responsible, since sometimes utensils fall in, break, or make it dirty.

#### Supermarket Bags

Q: Is it permissible for me to take bags from the supermarket for personal use after shopping there?

A: Certainly not.

#### Female Dentist

Q: Is it permissible for a man to go to a female dentist or hygienist?

A: Yes. Just like for a doctor.

#### Martial Arts for Kids

Q: Is it permissible to organize a martial arts class for kids, or will it be an opening to violence?

A: Yes. It is not an opening to violence but to self-control, and it will help them like all physical activity.

#### Shoes with a Magen David

Q: Is it permissible to wear shoes with a Magen David on the sole?

A: Yes. There is no holiness to a Magen David.

#### Picture of a Rabbi

Q: I have a picture of a Rabbi on my cell phone screen. Can I bring it into the bathroom?

A: Yes (see Shut Igrot Moshe Yoreah Deah 1:173. Shut She'eilat Shlomo 4:237).

#### Women in Tzahal

Q: Is it permissible for women to serve in the army?

A: It is forbidden. The ruling of the Chief Rabbinate.

#### Bride's First Immersion

Q: Is it the custom for friends to accompany a bride to her first immersion in the Mikveh?

A: Yes. They wait for her in the outer room with food, singing, and dancing. But this is on condition that she immerses in the day when the Mikveh is empty, and not at night, when it will bother the other women who come to immerse.

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