

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
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life

LESSONS

SPARKLING IN NETANYA

Once a year, R' Hillel Wagner* and his wife Hennie* of Har Nof would take their seven children on vacation. They were on a strict budget. With no car, they would rent a minivan and fill it up with food and snacks to avoid expensive stores on the way.

One summer, they stopped for a picnic lunch. Eight-year-old Zevi had to use the bathroom, so R' Hillel walked him to a restaurant and asked a waitress for permission. She hesitated and said OK. But the head waiter exploded. "This is not a public restroom! You are religious—is this right? Who gave you permission?" It was a *chillul Hashem*. R' Hillel could have pointed to the waitress, but she might be fired.

"We are planning to eat here," he answered. "My family will be here soon." He sent Zevi to call them. The children were shocked; they had never seen a restaurant menu. Would this cost them their trip?

At the end of the meal, waiters brought the family a special dessert. The manager told R' Hillel that the waitress had come into the kitchen crying. "That father brought all his children into the restaurant just to save me from getting in trouble," she said. "I thought I would lose my job and was already trying to think where else I could work." They had decided that they must do something for these special people. The manager presented him with a 50% discount for any future meals at the restaurant.

R' Hillel thanked them for the future discount, and then asked for the bill for their meal.

"We have a policy here," said the manager. "We only charge people. Not angels."

Adapted from The Grandeur of the Maggid by Rabbi Paysach Krohn, with the permission of the publisher



gem

OF THE WEEK

COUNTED BY G-D

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

In every count, things are categorized under one common concept. *Pekudei bnei Yisrael* are all those who are categorized as *bnei Yisrael*, in whom the idea of "*bnei Yisrael*" is embodied. The moment someone is counted among them, he learns to value himself as a *ben Yisrael*. At that moment, he is called upon to learn a lesson.

Not by his mere existence, by living for himself, is there meaning to his soul, and not by his mere existence does he become an integral part of a nation. Only one who gives is counted; only one who contributes gains the right to go on; only one who does what is required of him has a rightful place in the community of his nation. Only one who makes his contribution is entitled to be counted in the numbers of the Children of Israel. The moment he seeks to be counted without making a contribution—at that moment he forfeits his right to exist.

But who can contribute and meet his obligation so completely that he can claim for himself the right to exist for even one minute? Where is the

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

KRIAS HATORAH:
THE WATER OF LIFE



The rule that we read the Torah in public on Shabbos morning and on two weekdays stems from Moshe. Ezra instituted the reading on Shabbos afternoons. The Gemara (Bava Kama 82a) finds a reference to Krias Hatorah on the two weekdays in Shemos, when the people "walked for three days in the desert but did not find water" and then complained to Moshe. The Torah is compared to water. When they had wandered for three days without it, they began to revolt. Hence, the prophets ordained that the Torah be read on Shabbos, Monday, and Thursday, so that they would never be without it for three consecutive days.

Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk

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ONLY THROUGH TEFILLAH


By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

As we bentsh Rosh Chodesh Adar this Shabbos, the image of Purim is front and center on the screens of our minds. We cannot overlook the opportunity to present the significant role that *tefillah* plays in the story of Purim. Although it is a Yom Tov saturated with *simcha*, Purim is actually a very serious celebration. It is the story of a holocaust that was narrowly averted, but which could have become reality.

As I have written in the essay “A Historical Background of Purim,” the Jewish people had been ignoring and even persecuting *nevi'im* for hundreds of years. The threat of annihilation was their last chance to do *teshuvah*—which they did. The prophets had been warning the people since long before the destruction of Yehuda, but accepting responsibility and changing one’s actions are among the hardest things for a person to do. It was easy to shrug off the words of the *nevi'im* and go about their lives.

But there are some things that cannot be ignored. When Achashverosh removed his signet ring and gave it to Haman to seal the decree, the people were shaken. This time, they were receptive to Mordechai’s words. “The removal of that ring was greater than 48 prophets and seven prophetesses,” the *chachamim* tell us. “None of them were able to restore the people to the path of good—but the removal of the ring did.”


When Mordechai heard about the *gezeirah*, and was informed by Eliyahu Hanavi that it had indeed been decreed in heaven, he ripped his clothing and went into the streets, screaming. It was no spontaneous act of hysteria. Mordechai communicated to *am Yisrael* exactly what must be done under such circumstances: *teshuvah* and *tefillah*. His message was clear: Not through protests, bribery or political maneuvers will this decree be changed. There is no way out but *teshuvah* and *tefillah*.

The people understood. The Megillah records that everywhere the Jews heard about the decree, there was great mourning, with fasting and crying. They rushed to the shuls to plead for mercy. The decree had the desired effect: to return the people to their Creator. Indeed, the conclusion of the Megillah sums up the entire story as “a tale of their fasts and crying out.” It was only *teshuvah* and *tefillah* that prevented calamity. 

person who would not be betrayed by his imperfections and who would not require atonement? Therefore, *zeh yitnu*—when we count, it is not with what we have actually done for the common good, but with the symbolic expression of what we know is our duty.

There is no greater joy than to be among *pekudei Hashem*, those who are counted by G-d; to be remembered before Him—even for a fleeting moment, even if one lives in the most humble of conditions. Only one who resolves to do his duty will pass from the nondescript crowd of self-seekers into the noble circle of those counted before G-d.

The contribution required of each individual is symbolized by one half-*shekel*. Objectively, one individual’s efforts, no matter how perfect, cannot accomplish everything. To produce the whole, there must be an equally devoted investment on the part of his brother. No individual is asked to accomplish the entire task: *lo alecha hamelacha ligmor* (Pirkei Avos 2:16); he is simply asked to do his part.

One *shekel* is equal to 20 *gerah*. The individual is expected to contribute ten. No matter how small a fraction it is, he must spare no effort and no resource in promoting the accomplishment of the whole and furthering the welfare of the community. Although *lo alecha hamelacha ligmor*, nevertheless, *v'lo atah ben chorin lehibatel mimena*. 

Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.




wonder WORLD

KING OF THE ICE II



How do emperor penguins raise their children?

Like all birds, emperor penguins lay eggs. The mother lays one egg around June and gives it over to the father for safekeeping. She then goes away for about 75 days to eat fish in the ocean. Male emperor penguins have a special pouch above the feet where the egg stays warm through the winter. When it finally hatches, the father has not had anything to eat in months. It has just one meal prepared to give the baby. After that, the mother penguin returns, and the parents switch duties. The mother feeds and raises the baby, while the father goes to get food. After that, they take turns fishing and taking care of their babies until they are able to fend for themselves. 

Adapted from the Niflaos HaBoreh Explorer series by Rabbi Yaakov Lubin

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