

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

KNOWING THEIR PAIN

The noted speaker and storyteller Rav Sholom Schwadron lost his father when he was just seven years old. For the rest of his life, Rav Sholom always showed tremendous sensitivity to orphans.

When he was an older man, he gave a *sefer* to a nephew as a gift for his *bar mitzvah*. This nephew was also an orphan. Rav Sholom inscribed the *sefer* “*kamocho kamoni*—just like you are an orphan, I am an orphan.”


He never forgot the loneliness.

When he was a young man, Rabbi Paysach Krohn’s family used to host Rav Sholom when he was in America. The first time he visited after Rabbi Krohn’s father was *niftar*, the Krohn boys and their mother went to greet his ship.

Rav Sholom saw them running towards him and stopped in his tracks for a moment. He then started walking again, much slower.

When he caught sight of Mrs. Krohn, the widow of his beloved friend, he shook his head, sat down on a bench, and wept.

After a few moments, he looked up at the family as if to say something, but motioned helplessly that he could not talk. The man of a million words had none.

The tears on his face spoke instead, and the silence touched them. They knew he knew their pain. 

Courtesy of Agudas Yisroel of America



gem

OF THE WEEK

EVERY JEW COUNTS

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow


Whenever there is a census, the things that are counted fall under one idea, and each thing counted is considered a bearer of that concept. In the counting of Bnei Yisrael, those who are counted are all those in whom the concept of “Bnei Yisrael” is embodied.

The moment someone is counted among *pekudei Bnei Yisrael*, he learns to value himself as a *ben Yisrael*. This awakens in him a sense of self-worth, and he sees himself as the embodiment of his nation. At that moment, he must learn an important lesson: not by his mere existence does his life have meaning and value, and not through his enjoyment of life does he become an integral part of the nation. The mere fact of his being does not entitle him to anything. Only one who contributes is counted; only one who gives of himself as required gains a rightful place in the community. Only one who makes his contribution is entitled to be counted among the numbers of the Children of Israel. The moment he seeks to be counted without giving back, claiming the right to live for himself without contributing—at that moment, he forfeits his right to exist.

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER 

BIRKAS HAMAZON:
A TIME TO ENDURE

Historically, the *bracha* of Racheim has been adapted to the conditions of that particular time period. Under the rule of David Hamelech, it was a prayer for Hashem to bless *klal Yisrael* and Yerushalayim. Under Shlomo, “*al habayis hagadol vehakadosh*” was added, as well as a *tefillah* that *malchus Beis David* endure. This explains the order of the requests at the beginning of the *bracha*: for *klal Yisrael*, Tzion, Beis David, and the Beis Hamikdash. Later, in *galus*, these *tefillos* for endurance were changed to *tefillos* that they be restored. 

Adapted from *World of Prayer* by Rabbi Elie Munk

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THE FLAVOR OF A MITZVAH, PART II

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

The Sefer Hachinuch makes a noteworthy statement, one that is very relevant to our times. In mitzvah 117, he discusses the *issur* to add *chametz* or fruit juices to *korbanos*: “The roots of this mitzvah are very concealed from finding even the slightest hint. However, I have stated in the introduction to this work that my intention in offering rationale for *mitzvos* is merely to accustom the youth to have a pleasant feeling when they are first introduced to the words of our *sefarim*. They should know that words of Torah have reasons and benefits. Then they will accept them with their immature understanding, and the *mitzvos* will not seem to them like a closed book. Otherwise, in their adolescence, they may rebel forever and go off into empty ways of life.” This pleasant feeling is not a luxury—it is a vital necessity, whether in thirteenth-century Barcelona or anywhere else.

Sometimes we may forget that the *mitzvos* are not a favor we do for Hashem—the favor is for us. Hashem lacks nothing. What we do does not affect Him at all. “What does Hashem ask of you? Only to fear Him...for your good.” Another *pasuk* elaborates, “Hashem commanded us to keep all these *chukim*, to fear Hashem our G-d, so that it should be good for us all the days, to give us life.”

The Midrash makes an intriguing statement: “What difference does it make to Hashem if a person slaughters an animal at the neck or at the back of the head? So you see that the *mitzvos* were given to purify Hashem’s creatures.” This means, says Ramban, that each mitzvah has its own unique way of purifying us. The benefit is for us, not for Him.

To return to the words of the Sefer Hachinuch: “Know, my son, that all that Hashem derives from people doing His *mitzvos* is that He wants to do good for us. When a person is ready, through doing the *mitzvos*, to receive good, then Hashem will grant him good. Therefore, He informed them of the good path, the way of the Torah, so that they can become good people...Hashem asks nothing of you in your doing His *mitzvos*, other than that he wants, in His great goodness, to do good to you. As is written, ‘Behold! Hashem your G-d owns the heavens, the heavens above the heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Only in your forefathers did Hashem delight to love them. He chose their descendants after them [that is you], like this very day.’

“This means that He does not need your *mitzvos*, but only out of His love for you to give you merit.”

But where is the man whose contribution is enough to meet his obligation so completely that he can stake a claim to his own existence? Where is the man with no imperfections, who does not require atonement? Where is the man who would dare be counted without it?

So when the time comes to count, we do not count each person by the amount that he actually does for the common good, but by the symbolic expression of what he knows is his duty. Thus is each man *over al hapikudim*, passing into the ranks of the counted.

There is no greater distinction and no greater joy than to be among the *pikudei Hashem*, counted by G-d for the sake of His Name and remembered before Him, even for a fleeting moment of a transitory existence, even living in the humblest conditions. Only one who resolves to do the whole of his duty will pass from the nondescript crowd of self-seekers into the ennobled circle of those counted before Hashem, and attain the joyful awareness that he is now among those whom G-d numbers as His own.

But the contribution required of each person is just a *machatzis hashekel*, one half-shekel. Objectively, not even the most complete and perfect contribution of any one individual can accomplish all the work that must be done. The input of any individual is only a fragment; in order to produce the whole, everyone else must put in an equally devoted effort. *Lo alecha hamelacha ligmor*; no one man is asked to do it all, only to play his part.

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



wonder WORLD

GONE HAYWIRE



What grain can drive you crazy?

Beyond the familiar wheat and barley, there are another three types of grains that have special status in *halacha*: spelt, rye, and oats. Only bread made from these five types of grain requires a *hamotzi*, and the *issur* of *chadash* only applies to them. Like barley, rye can be used to produce alcoholic beverages, in this case whiskey. It is also unfortunately vulnerable to a type of deadly mold that causes insanity.

There are other species, such as amaranth, quinoa, millet, sorghum, and buckwheat, which are not considered grains in *halacha*, but which are widely available as alternatives to more popular grains.

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