

life

LESSONS

FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS

The Vilna Gaon was once imprisoned on trumped-up charges, but was so immersed in his learning that he barely noticed. He had always kept his windows shut to avoid improper sights, so prison was no different.

The Gaon's *talmidim* sent Rav Chaim Volozhiner to visit him. When he entered the cell, the Gaon asked, "Where is the paper?" Rav Chaim used to bring a written list of questions on his visits to his *rebbe*.

"I didn't come to speak in learning," Rav Chaim said. "I came to tell *rebbe* that he is in jail and in danger!"

"What difference does it make to me if I learn in my home or locked up in a cell?" the Vilna Gaon asked. He was indifferent to the danger of execution. "I will die *al kiddush Hashem*."

"They will burn *rebbe* with the lowest criminals, to disgrace Klal Yisrael and the Torah," Rav Chaim said.

At that point, the Vilna Gaon cried, "No! I don't want that! That would be a real *chillul Hashem*."

The Gaon was taken to court for sentencing. He wore his *tefillin* with his *tallis* over them, as usual. In front of the non-Jewish judges, he uncovered the *tefillin*. The judges were struck with terror. "Go!" they cried. "We cannot keep an angel in jail!"

The Gaon returned home. His *talmidim* were in awe of the miracle, but the Gaon dismissed it. "The Torah tells us, 'The nations of the earth will see Hashem's Name is called upon you, and will fear you,' and the Gemara tells us that this refers to the *tefillin shel rosh*. The *tefillin* have the power to strike fear and awe into the hearts of those who see them."

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gem

OF THE WEEK

YOSEF AND YEHUDA

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

The Jewish people camped in the desert in four groups, as directed in the *pasuk*: in the front to the east, under the flag of Yehuda, are the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun. To the right in the south, under the flag of Reuven, are the tribes of Reuven, Shimon and Gad. To the left in the north, under the flag of Dan, are Dan, Asher and Naftali; in the rear, opposite Yehuda, under the flag of Ephraim, are Ephraim, Menashe and Binyamin.

Each of the three tribes in Yehuda's camp played two roles. Yaakov Avinu described Yehuda as the leader holding a *shevet* and *mechokek*—a ruler's scepter and a lawmaker's stylus. Yissachar was the tribe of agriculture, with sufficient leisure to engage in learning. Zevulun was the tribe of commerce; at the same time, according to *shiras Devorah*, his sons produced literature. Thus, *machane Yehuda*, traveling in the lead, united all the basic elements of a nation's material and spiritual welfare: scepter and law, agriculture and scholarship, commerce and literature.

These two factors, the spiritual and the material, united in the leading camp, *continued on reverse side*

powerful
PRAYER

TEFILLAH:
AROUND THE WORLD



The words of our *tefillos* connect us with generations of our fellow Jews and communities all over the world. With some minor variations in *nusach*, Yidden have said these same *tefillos* in Bavel, in France, in Germany, in Syria, in Poland, in Morocco, and every other place where we have wandered in the 2,400 years since the *siddur* was composed.

When we say these words, we are reminded that we descend from a long line of ancestors who spent their lives serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom

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BODY AND SOUL: A PARTNERSHIP

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

In Parshas Naso, the topic of *nazir* immediately follows that of the *sotah*. The *sotah* is a woman whose husband suspects her of adultery. The Torah prescribes a miraculous test that establishes her innocence and enables the couple to be reunited. We next learn about the vow of *nezirus*, which prohibits the *nazir* from drinking wine. Chazal tell us that by placing the two sections together, the Torah hints to us that one who witnesses the fate of a guilty *sotah* should take upon himself a vow to become a *nazir*. Exposure to immorality weakens one's resolve against it, and wine causes one to lose self-control.

But this explanation begs the question. The person who witnessed the *sotah's* disgrace also saw the miraculous punishment that befell her. Shouldn't such a person be even more encouraged to refrain from *arayos*?

Herein lies a great lesson. Perhaps we can explain it with a parable. In times gone by, there were traveling *maggidim* who visited towns and lectured the people to improve their ways. Let us imagine that one such *maggid* arrived in a village on *erev Shabbos*. He was invited to speak, but was informed that there was no *shul* or gathering place in the village large enough to hold all of the townsfolk together. The *drasha* would have to take place in the open field outside of town on Sunday morning.

On Sunday morning, just as the *drasha* was about to begin, a man who had been away for Shabbos rode into town on his horse. Realizing that he would not have time to stable his horse before the *maggid* began, he tied it to a tree at the back of the crowd and sat down to listen. The *drasha* was inspiring, peppered with jokes, stories and parables. All the people in attendance were genuinely uplifted. But what about the horse? He was there too. Did he, too, do *teshuvah*? It is a laughable question. Of course the horse learned nothing.

And so it is with one who witnesses the disgrace of the *sotah*. As human beings, we are a mix of the physical and the spiritual. The intellect is a function of the *neshama*. It sees the punishment and is impressed with the severity of *arayos* and the need to distance oneself. But the body is a creature of the earth, a simple animal that does not understand spiritual messages. It is the horse. It is pulled toward its desires, not away from them.

As we enter the summer, we must keep this message in mind. No matter how strong our *hashkafos* are, we can still struggle with the challenges of *tznius* that exist in the immodest society around us. Strengthening ourselves with inspiration does not always help, because this is not the language of the body. We must find ways to avoid these tests altogether and protect ourselves, understanding this partnership between our bodies and our souls.

are divided into two subordinate camps, which follow the leading camp on either side.

Reuven, Shimon and Gad are at Yehuda's right hand, so to speak. Reuven has intellectual gifts and a keen sense of justice, but his soft character makes him unfit to lead. Flanking him are Shimon, the impetuous avenger of honor, and Gad, the avenger of unprovoked attacks. These are the *midos* represented by the tribes on Yehuda's right: the courage to fend off insults and attacks, but with gentle mercy.

Marching at Yehuda's left are Dan, adroitly cunning; Asher, representing refinement of taste; and Naftali, the tribe of eloquence. Thus, on the left side, under the flag of Dan, there was richness in spiritual creativity, just as under Reuven was development in strength and force.

Efraim, Menashe and Benyamin are to the west, under Efraim's flag opposite Yehuda in the east. Their national significance is not as clear as the other tribes'. Efraim and Menashe represent Yosef, but Yaakov's *bracha* to Yosef refers more to Yosef himself. Of Efraim, Yaakov said that he would become great and his descendants would be *melo hagoyim*, which can be taken to mean as the armor reinforcing the defenses of the other tribes. Thus, in the camp of Efraim, we should see strength and courage. For the nation's sake, these were positioned directly facing Yehuda.

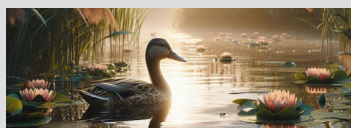
Later in history, instead of complementing Yehuda, the House of Yosef came into conflict with it, usurping the crown of leadership. This spelled disaster and brought about the nation's downfall. Estranged from the *eidus*, the House of Yosef perished, dragging the ten tribes of Yisrael down with it.

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



wonder WORLD

LIKE A DUCK TO WATER



What is the most common bird in North America?

Ducks belong to a group called waterfowl, which also includes geese and swans. They are the most common type of bird in North America, found all over the continent, even in states without other waterfowl species like Alaska and Nevada. There are nearly 130 different species of ducks, with an average lifespan of 5 to 8 years.

Ducks have an incredibly high metabolism, drinking over a gallon of water and eating up to 12% of their body weight every day. They are designed by Hashem for life on the water, with special adaptations including webbed feet, waterproof feathers, beaks that act as filters to strain water, and bones that are less dense than land birds', helping them to float.

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