

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
MAAMIN
Foundation

ISSUE # 379 | PARSHAS VAESCHANAN

FRIDAY AUGUST 16TH, 2024 | 12 AV, 5784

life


LESSONS

A GOOD MORNING

The parameters of *kiddush Hashem* can be expanded based on society's perception of right and wrong. In addition to refraining from behaviors that society frowns upon, this concept can even require us to take active steps to accommodate the values of society.

During his years as a student in Mesivta Torah Vodaas, Rabbi Moshe Sherer assisted Rav Elchonon Wasserman during his visit to America in 1938. Rabbi Sherer's first encounter with Rav Elchonon left an indelible imprint.

The young Moshe Sherer arrived at the Broadway Central Hotel one morning and made his way to the room of the *rosh yeshivah*. The two left and walked to the elevator. Before it arrived, Rav Elchonon turned to Rabbi Sherer and asked him, "How do you say 'Good morning' in English?" Rabbi Sherer told him, and Rav Elchonon began to pace back and forth in the hallway, repeating, "Good morning. Good morning. Good morning." When the elevator arrived, he turned to the non-Jewish attendant and said, "Good morning." Then he asked Rabbi Sherer in Yiddish, "Did I say it well?"

Let us learn from Rav Elchonon's example to train ourselves and our children to live in accordance with the rules of etiquette and manners that prevail in the society around us. Let us train ourselves to act with the sensitivity and *derech erez* that is the norm in the communities where we live. If we do so, we will certainly bring honor to Hashem and the Jewish people. 

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gem

OF THE WEEK

THE LAW OF THE LAND

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

The *pasuk* in Vaeschanan gives us a fact to keep in mind: "*limadti eschem chukim u'mishpatim...laasos kein b'kerev haaretz asher atem ba'im shama*"— You see that I (Moshe) have taught you laws and social rules in accordance with G-d's command, so that you should observe them in the land you are about to enter.


Thus, the Jewish people were presented with a fact that is important for our calling and for the significance of these laws, which sets us and our laws apart from all other nations: we are the only nation in the world that had a code of law before it had a land to implement it in.

Furthermore, these laws are not intended as a means to build up a national existence and to achieve independence and prosperity in the land. Rather, these laws are the end—it is the independence, prosperity, and land that are the means. Every other nation became a nation through its land, and afterward created laws for it. We, in contrast, became a nation through the Torah, and we received a land for the sake of observing it.

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powerful
PRAYER 

ELOKAI NESHAMA:
OUR REAL SELVES

Each human being is a combination of a *guf* and a *neshama*. Asher Yatzar thanks Hashem for the human body, but Elokai Neshama gives thanks for our spiritual dimension, the *neshama*. Your body is not the real you, it is the clothing of your *neshama*, which existed before your body was born, entered your body at birth, and will live on after you yourself leave this world. Death can be compared to a person taking off his jacket. He is still the same, though the jacket is left behind. The *neshama* lives on forever. This is what the *pasuk* in Bereishis means when it says that Hashem blew into Adam a *nishmas chaim*, a soul of eternal life. 

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom

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A JOYOUS YOM TOV

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

This coming Monday will be the fifteenth day of Av, which we commemorate by not saying Tachanun or fasting, including a *chassan* and *kallah* on the day of their wedding. In the times of the Beis Hamikdash, Tu B'Av was a full-fledged Yom Tov celebration, but today, we keep only these *minhagim*, a reminder and a shadow of what once was.

The Mishnah relates that Klal Yisrael never had such Yamim Tovim as Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av. (Yom Kippur is a happy day, despite of the difficulties of the fast, for we are able to achieve atonement for our sins.) On Tu B'Av, young women seeking husbands would go out and dance in the vineyards, wearing borrowed white dresses—borrowed, to avoid embarrassing the poorer girls who did not own nice clothing. Young men who were seeking a wife would go to the vineyards and offer marriage to the young woman of their choice. All this was done with modesty and holiness, and the custom continued from year to year without incident. But why was this day a Yom Tov? The Gemara lists seven events deserving of celebration that occurred on this date. This column will try to explain one of them.

Due to a serious blunder of Shlomo Hamelech, Klal Yisrael was split into two separate kingdoms upon his death. The ten tribes were to the north formed the kingdom of Yisrael, and two to the south became Yehuda. The first king of Yisrael, Yeravam ben Nevat, was very concerned for his *kavod*. He feared that if the people were *oleh regel*, they would be awed by the majesty of the Beis Hamikdash and restore their allegiance to Yehuda.

Yeravam therefore commissioned two golden calves, which he placed at the northern and southern borders of Yisrael. Because he was an exceptional *talmid chacham*, he was somehow able to convince the people that it was permissible to worship at these two shrines.

But the people still wanted to go back to Yerushalayim, to the Beis Hamikdash, as they always had. Therefore, Yeravam placed policemen on all the highways leading to Yerushalayim, threatening with execution anyone who tried to break the blockade. And Yeravam's successors all continued these practices.

Only during the reign of the very last king of Yisrael, the final moments before the ten tribes were exiled, were the guards removed, and permission given to anyone who wished to return to Yerushalayim. This was such a joyous event that it was established as a Yom Tov, celebrating the ability to once again be *oleh regel*.

The laws of other nations are the product of their unique character, formed by their land and by their changing needs. But our lawgiver, Moshe, the man from whose hands we received the Torah, never even saw the land. He never so much as set foot in it. The fact that his grave is in the wilderness is the Divine seal on the law that he transmitted; it testifies that these laws are eternal and unchanging, no matter where we are.

The laws of the Torah are absolute. They do not change with the ups and downs of our fortunes—rather, our fortunes and the fortunes of our land change in accordance with our faithfulness to the laws of the Torah.

Now, in Sefer Devarim, the Jewish people stood on the border of the land they are to enter, with the Torah in their arms, in order to observe it there in its entirety. And it was with the Torah in their arms that they were temporarily exiled. But again and again, we stand as a nation whose sole purpose is to live for the observance of this Torah.

So we await the moment when we will be able to once again enter the Land, which was given to us so that we may observe the Torah in its entirety. We, Yisrael, are the people of the Torah, not the people of a land, and without Torah, the land cannot be Eretz Yisrael.

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



wonder WORLD

CLEAN AS A... PIG?



Who is louder, a pig or a jet plane?

Despite being a symbol of non-kosher food, pigs have an important lesson to teach us. While they seem outwardly kosher because of their split hooves, pigs do not chew their cud, reminding us that what is on the inside is just as important. And despite their reputation for rolling in mud, pigs are actually very clean animals and will not use the bathroom near their living and sleeping areas. Pigs are very social and enjoy being in groups. They are fairly intelligent, with good memories and an ability to learn quickly. They can find their way home over long distances, and can be trained just like dogs or cats. Pigs can communicate with each other using different sounds and have a wide range of vocalizations. Their squeals can be as loud as 115 decibels, louder than a jet plane.

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