

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
MAAMIN
Foundation

ISSUE # 382 | PARSHAS SHOFTIM

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2024 | 4 ELUL, 5784

life

LESSONS

ALL THE SAME

In the *sefer* Barchi Nafshi, Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein relates that an influential Jewish man in another country once consulted him regarding a yeshivah *bachur* who had been sentenced to a lengthy imprisonment after committing a reprehensible act. The questioner felt that he could use his connections to secure the boy's release from prison. At the same time, the man's connections were still unaware of the case, and he feared that they were likely to conclude that all *bnei Torah* were capable of such deplorable actions.

Rav Zilberstein ruled that the matter should not be brought to the attention of these government officials, even though it meant that the *bachur* would have to languish in prison. Bringing their attention to the *bachur's* misdeeds, he explained, would be forbidden, and the Chazon Ish had taught that *chillul Hashem* is an even more severe offense than the three cardinal sins of *avodah zarah*, *giluy arayos*, and *shefichas damim*.

Most of us do not contend with issues of this nature on a day-to-day basis, but we certainly find ourselves in many situations in which there is a potential for *chillul Hashem*. How hard do we work to avoid desecrating Hashem's Name? How careful are we to see to it that our own actions are a credit to Hashem and that we do not create even the slightest trace of a negative impression?

Reproduced from Living Kiddush Hashem by Rabbi Shraga Freedman with permission of the copyright holders, ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications, Ltd.



gem

OF THE WEEK

CHASING PROPHECY

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Tamim tiyeh im Hashem Elokecha, we are told, but what does it mean to be *tamim*? Not even the smallest details of our lives can be detached from G-d. Consequently, all the supernatural fortune-telling practices described in the *parsha* are banned. Only G-d is the Director of our fate.

Sticks, black cats, or even the dead cannot predict what lies in store for us. We may not use them to decide what to do. We can ask only Hashem about our future—assuming that knowledge of the future is even necessary for a person who is *tamim* with Hashem. We can only seek instruction from Hashem—assuming Hashem had not already given us the instructions of the Torah. One who is *tamim* is so engrossed in Hashem that he thinks only of his duties at the present moment. As for his success and his future—he puts his trust in Hashem. One who is *tamim* is serene, immune to worry.

Other nations lack such trust in G-d. They need success to satisfy their passions, and chasing after success makes one feel helpless in the randomness of the external world. And so they resort to soothsayers and

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

VEHAAREV NAH:
OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY



We ask Hashem to grant that our children and grandchildren be *yodei shemecha* and *lomdei sorasecha lishma*. What does knowing Hashem's Name have to do with Torah? When we learn properly, we remember that Torah is the word of Hashem, His instructions to us. It makes it possible for us to connect to, know, and understand Him as much as is possible for a person of flesh and blood. For more than 3,300 years, our number one priority has been to give over the Torah to our children. In the same *bracha* where we thank Hashem for the mitzvah of learning, we daven that our children continue learning and serving Hashem too.

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom

To sponsor a weekly newsletter for \$100,
please email amfmainoffice@gmail.com

ELUL: SOUNDING THE ALARM

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

During the month of Elul, there is a universal custom to blow the *shofar* in shul after Shacharis. The purpose, of course, is to remind us that the Yamim Noraim are approaching and we need to wake up and prepare. We will continue blowing the *shofar* until Rosh Hashanah (with the exception of *erev Rosh Hashanah*, to divide between the *shofar* of a *minhag* and that of a mitzvah).

The Rambam tells us that the mitzvah of *shofar* serves to wake us from our slumber and do proper *teshuvah*. If so, isn't the *shofar* blowing of Elul enough? Are the *tekios* of Rosh Hashanah superfluous? How many times must we be woken up?

There is another, similar mitzvah in the Torah: to blow the trumpets in the Beis Hamikdash when bringing *korbanos*, during wartime, and on other occasions of distress. The Sefer Hachinuch explains that human nature is to go through life as if in a deep slumber. Our emotions are not aroused unless acted upon. Therefore, the Torah commands us to blow the trumpets at those times when we most urgently need to be awake and focused to plead for Hashem's help.

When the alarm clock goes off in the morning, many will press the snooze button and go back to sleep. They might keep doing it until forced to get out of bed. When Elul first arrives, we have not yet totally recovered from a more relaxed period of summer activities and vacations. We need that first alarm to go off again and again, lest we hit snooze and go back to sleep. Hopefully, with the *shofar* sounding straight through Elul, even the sleepest among us will be aroused to do what needs to be done.

Perhaps we underestimate the severity of our current situation—the war, the hostages, the rising tide of hatred and violence. The United States, the self-styled “leader of the free world,” the nation that others fear to oppose, has failed to rise to the defense of the Jewish people, whether in Israel or within its own borders, and is tearing itself apart in a hostile election. We are in a time of great danger.

We must remember that it is the Ribbono shel Olam alone who elevates human beings to positions of leadership: “The hearts of kings and princes are in the hand of Hashem; He turns them whichever way he wants.” Hashem can use any candidate as His instrument to deliver goodness, or, conversely, harsh decrees. When Rosh Hashanah comes, and we declare Him to be the only authority Who can declare “who will live and who will die,” let us remember that all that took place this year was decreed at Rosh Hashanah last year.

“*Teshuvah* and good deeds are a shield for retribution.” Let us turn our hearts to our Father in Heaven, and be *zoche* to a good year in 5785.

fortune-tellers to conduct their affairs.

But for us? G-d drew us close and entered into a relationship with us. Torah, both written and oral, contains everything we need to accomplish our life's mission. *Lo bashamayim hi*—the Torah is entrusted to the intellect. To study, teach, and observe it, we do not need supernatural insight. In the study of Torah, not even prophecy carries weight. We have no need for further disclosure from the heavens.

We do have prophets, but not in place of the superstitions found in other nations. Hashem sends us *nevi'im* not so that we can find out what we want to know, but so that the navi may tell us what Hashem wants us to know. The pasuk says *eilav tishma'un*, not *oso tishalun* - you should not consult him; you should obey him. The prophet is not our tool; he is G-d's.

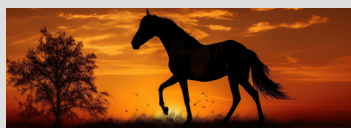
Generally, miracles and predictions are not the real mission of *nevi'im*. Prophets give the people insight into themselves and Hashem. They give over an understanding of the present and expectations for the future, so as to encourage their people to do good. They inspire courage and faithfulness to Hashem and the Torah through all the trials of the ages. That is the real calling of the *nevi'im*. Thanks to them, we became a people who go through history with open eyes that see G-d.

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



wonder WORLD

STUBBORN AS A MULE



Why are they so uncooperative?

Mules are the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse, giving them a mix of traits from both parents. However, because horses and donkeys have different genes, the mule inherits an uneven amount of chromosomes, and therefore cannot have children of its own. Mules are known for their strength and stamina. They can carry heavy loads, work for long hours, and have tougher skin and harder hooves than horses. Mules come in different sizes and can be used for many tasks, including farming, transportation, and even racing. Despite the saying “stubborn as a mule,” mules are actually very intelligent and cautious animals. Sometimes their perceived stubbornness is due to their awareness of a potential danger ahead.

Please feel free to take newsletter home to share with your family.

For more information please call (845) 418 2122 or email info@animaamin.org • To subscribe to this newsletter send an email to subscribe@animaamin.org