

L'Chaim! Weekly



פרשת תצוה, ט"ז אדר א' תשפ"ד

PARSHAS TETZAVE

23-24 February 2024 - 15 Adar 15784

TIMES FOR SYDNEY

Candle Lighting: 7.22 pm

Shabbat Ends: 8.17 pm



Living with the Rebbe



This week's Torah reading, Tetzave, is the only portion in the entire Torah following Moses' birth, in which Moses' name does not appear.

Our Sages explain that the reason for this was Moses' own request after the Children of Israel sinned with the Golden Calf: "And if not (if You will not forgive them), blot me out, I pray you, from Your book which You have written." The words of a tzadik, a righteous person, are always fulfilled, even if spoken conditionally. Thus, Moses' wish was granted, for his name never appears in the entire portion.

However, we find an interesting phenomenon: This chapter begins with a direct address to the very person whose name it omits! "And you shall command (ve'ata tetzave)."

A name is a means of identification and a way of being known to others. But one does not really need a name in order to live. A newborn baby exists as an independent being from the moment it is born, and only receives its name after several days. From this we learn that the use of the grammatical second person, "you," expresses an even higher level of relationship than calling a person by his given name, which was only bestowed on him secondarily. If such is the case, then it follows that the omission of Moses' name only serves to underscore the very special essence of Moses, which was even higher than the mention of his name could express.

Moses' whole life was Torah, to the extent that we refer to the Torah as "The Five Books of Moses." Yet, when the lowest elements among the Children of Israel sinned with the Golden Calf, explicitly expressing their desire to separate themselves from the Torah, Moses was willing to sacrifice that which he held most dear on their behalf. "Blot out my name from Your book," Moses pleaded with G-d, if You will not forgive them even this grave sin.

The commentator Rashi explains; "Moses is Israel, and Israel is Moses." When even some Jews sinned, Moses suffered a spiritual blow. Even though Moses was up on Mount Sinai when the Golden Calf was made, he was still affected by the actions of the others.

It was Moses' self-sacrifice and his desire to forgo that which was most important to him that express a unity that is beyond mere names. It is therefore precisely the portion Tetzave, in which Moses is not mentioned, that reveals his strength and his greatness. The willingness to sacrifice oneself for every fellow Jew, even one who sins, is the mark of every true leader of the Jewish People.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

SLICE OF LIFE

Young Rabbi Donates Kidney

BY BRURIA EFUNE

Eleven years ago, when Richard and Terri Davgin were looking for something more in their Judaism, they connected with Rabbi Leibel and Goldie Baumgarten, co-directors of Chabad of the Hamptons on the east end of Long Island. The couple never imagined just how far their relationship would go.

They soon became close friends with the Baumgarten family and were among the happy guests at the wedding of Aizik and Musia Baumgarten, today program directors at Chabad of East Hampton and co-directors of Chabad of Montauk, which operates during the summer.

Looking back, Richard comments that “when you select a rabbi, you look for spiritual healing. You don’t realize how much more you will get.”

That realization came at a powerful moment, when Terri was in urgent need of a kidney, and Rabbi Aizik Baumgarten stepped in to donate his own.

“It’s been a life-changing experience,” Terri Davgin said after the successful surgery. “Not just to live, but also to go through something like this that is just so amazing and wonderful. I don’t hope anybody else needs to go through it, but if they do, I hope it’s as wonderful an experience for them as for me, especially with such good friends like I have—from Chabad, my family, and my husband.”

Less than a year earlier, the Davgins had confided in Rabbi Aizik Baumgarten that Terri was in urgent need of a new kidney. The rabbi connected Terri with Renewal, a Jewish-run kidney donor organization. All four Baumgartens, as well as several community members, then got tested, in hopes that one of them would match.

It turned out that one of them was a match—the young rabbi. Rabbi Aizik rushed through the secondary testing process

knowing that Terri couldn’t wait very long.

“One day, on a Monday, I got the phone call,” recalls Terri. “On Tuesday, I had the first meeting at the dialysis center, and I was floating because I just couldn’t believe that the timing was so amazing. I said to the lady, “You’re not going to believe this, I just got a phone call that told me I have a kidney!” It really made things so wonderful for me.”

The operation was scheduled for seven weeks later, on May 23—just three days before Shavuot, and right in time to save Terri’s life.

The holiday of Shavuot, and the summer vacation which follows shortly after, is the busiest time of year for Hampton rabbis, but Baumgarten didn’t think much of it. “This is about saving a life, it takes precedence over being physically ready for any busy season. There’s no question about what we needed to do, and when. It’s when Hashem wanted, it’s what is meant to be!”

He told the Davgins that he felt it was an opportunity given to him from G-d. “That I’m able to help in this way, and the fact that it’s such close friends makes it so much better and enjoyable.” He added, “The fact that I can help with spiritual needs is so much deeper now that I can do it also with my kidney.”

Terri Davgin woke up from the operation elated, immediately feeling better. “I absolutely feel great. I can’t believe how good I’m doing. I took a long walk today, and I really feel a difference in my body to have a working kidney to live. I had trouble walking two steps before, and now I’m doing great!”

Her rabbi was also in cheerful spirits, claiming he simply did what was the right thing—an incredible duty that he was given. “I feel very satisfied and happy that she now has a much better quality of life, hopefully for many years to come—and that I was the one who was able to facilitate that,

it humbles me and I feel great.”

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The rabbi helps Richard Davin don tefillin before the surgeries.



Rabbi Aizik Baumgarten, left, just before donating a kidney to Terri Davgin, center, with their spouses, Musia Baumgarten and Richard Davgin.



The Baumgarten family welcomes their father home after the surgery

It Happened Once



Many years ago, in the time when the Holy Temple stood, there lived in Jerusalem two storekeepers named Rabbi Elazar ben Tzadok and Abba Shaul ben Botnit.

The two men were neighbors and friends and had known each other most of their lives. But in addition to being friends, they shared a wonderful and rare character trait - absolute and strict honesty.

It is related in the Talmud that as a favor to their fellow Jews, these two men would prepare stores of wine and oil before every holiday so that the people of Jerusalem would have what they needed to celebrate the holidays properly.

Tens of thousands of Jews would stream into Jerusalem for the holidays and would be welcomed into homes throughout the city. With so many guests, it was no wonder that their gracious hosts would sometimes run out of oil or wine during a festival.

Whenever that happened, they could go to Rabbi Elazar or Abba Shaul and take what they needed. Of course, no money would pass hands on a festival, but there would be no lack of those two necessities to prepare for the festive meals.

Even during the intermediate days of the pilgrimage festivals of Sukkot and Passover, the two generous merchants would prepare in advance and make their goods available to those in need so that they could spend their time studying Torah.

Not only did they practice these deeds of great kindness, but even on regular work days they were outstanding in their adherence to the mitzva (commandment) of honesty. When they would finish pouring the contents of one of their containers into a customer's container, they would sit their container on top of that of the customer and allow the dregs of the jug to drip into the customer's receptacle. Only then were they sure that they had given the customer everything that was due him.

Despite their stringencies, the two rabbis feared that a bit of oil and wine would still cling to the edges of the jugs. So what did they do? Each man had a special container into which he would pour the last tiny drops. Over many years, they accumulated three hundred barrels of oil and three hundred barrels of wine.

One day, they decided to bring all of these barrels to the Holy Temple. After all, they did not consider it their property, yet they could not give it to the customers either. They decided to consecrate it to the Holy Temple. When the porters arrived, they were met by the treasurers of the Temple.

"What have you brought?" they asked.

"We have brought three hundred barrels of wine and three hundred barrels of oil for use in the Holy Temple. It has taken us many years to accumulate it, allowing it to drip from the sides of our jugs. We did not want to benefit from anything which does not belong to us, and we couldn't give it to our customers."

"It was certainly not necessary to collect those small leftovers," remarked the treasurers. "Your customers understand that tiny drops adhere to the sides of your jugs, and they expect there to be some waste."

"Nevertheless," the men continued, "We don't want anything that is not rightfully ours."

"Since you wish to keep such a high standard, we will accept your offering. The oil and wine will be used for the good of the community. We will sell them and from the profits we will dig wells for the pilgrims to have water on the festivals. The residents of the city will also be able to use them. So you see, even your own customers will benefit from your offering, and your own minds can be at ease."

The two merchants left the precincts of the Holy Temple with hearts full of joy, knowing that they never departed from their customs of strict honesty and kindness.

Smile, it's Shabbos!

Did you hear about the Italian chef who died? He pasta-way.



Did you hear about the guy who invented the knock-knock joke? He won the "no-bell" prize.

What's red and bad for your teeth? A brick.

What do you call a Frenchman in sandals? Phillippe Floppe.

Why do you never see cows hiding in trees? Because they're pretty good at it.

What do you call a blind dinosaur? Do-you-think-he-saurus?



'L'Chaim Weekly' is published weekly by Mivtzoim Sydney

Prepared by Gavi Sufrin

To sponsor an issue, email MivtzoimSydney@gmail.com or call 0402 702 352.

Special thanks to Lubavitch Youth Organisation, NY and Chabad.org

Can We Enjoy Cricket?

By Rabbi Aron Moss

Question of the Week

I can't get my head around the rules of Shabbos. It's supposed to be a day of rest, no? So how can you relax while worrying about breaking some law or another, like opening a packet of chips the wrong way, or accidentally touching the light switch? My vision of a day of rest is sitting on the couch watching the cricket. Or even playing a game of it myself. But then I might rip some grass and that's considered ploughing...

Answer

You make a good point. What you're saying makes a lot of sense. So maybe you can help me knock some sense into a new friend of mine. This fellow recently arrived from South America. He heard that Australians are cricket mad, and had never heard of the game before. He asked me to explain what cricket is in simple English.

So I tried to give over the basics of the game, like this:

"A guy stands at one end of a rectangular patch of dirt, which is called a wicket. In his hands he holds a smooth plank of wood, called a bat. He is called the batsman.

"Behind the batsman, on the edge of the wicket, are three sticks stuck in the ground. These sticks are also called wickets.

At the other end of the rectangle is another player, called the bowler, who holds a cork ball covered in red leather. He runs up and hurls the ball towards the first guy.

"Note: he is not allowed to throw the ball. He must keep his arm straight as he releases it. And he must be standing behind a line. If he crosses the line before releasing the ball, the other team gets a point. He is trying to hit the wickets (that is, the three sticks) with his ball. If he does, the batsman is out. Which is called a wicket.

"So the batsman tries to stop that happening by hitting the ball with his plank, the bat. But the plank holder has to be careful. If he hits the ball in the air, it could get caught by other players spread around the field. If they catch the ball, he is out. That is also called a wicket.

"On the other hand, if he is not caught, he can run to the other end of the rectangle, and that scores him one point. But he'd better be quick, because if the ball is returned to the three sticks before he reaches the other end then he is out, without scoring the point.

Another important thing: if the ball hits the plank guy's leg in such a way that, had he not been standing there, the ball would have hit the wickets (the three sticks), then he is out (a wicket). Unless of course the ball first bounced on the wicket (that is, the patch of dirt) not in line with the wickets (the three sticks). Then it is not a wicket. If you know what I mean."

By now my friend was completely bewildered. He couldn't believe grown adults actually do this. He started asking questions:

"So you're telling me that people enjoy throwing leather-bound cork balls at sticks with a guy holding a plank standing in the way?

And if the idea is to have fun, why all the rules? How does the bowler's arm being straight or bent enhance the experience? Why should the batsman have to worry about being caught?"

It was at that point that I said, "Forget this. Just come to the park and we'll play. You'll see it is fun."

The rules of the game, when spoken in abstract, sound technical, pedantic and quite boring. But when playing it in real life, it just works. Like notes in a symphony, on paper they are plain black and white. But when you play it, it comes alive.

What's true of cricket is also true of Shabbos. The rule book sounds intense, extremely detailed and not much fun at all. But when you live the experience of Shabbos, those rules are notes in a symphony. They create a mood and a mindset, an atmosphere of sacred rest and a space for inner rejuvenation. The power of the Shabbos laws cannot be explained. You just have to try it.

There is no word to describe the feeling of keeping Shabbos properly. So what do we do when we don't have the right word? I guess we just call it a wicket.

**Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Moss**