PROPER MOTIVES

Our sages teach us (Rosh HaShana 4a) that if a person donates a coin to tzedaka saying, “This money is hereby given to tzedakah in order that I will earn Olam Haba’, or if he says that he is doing so “in order that my son will live in the merit of this mitzvah”, this person is perfectly righteous. In other words, a mitzvah predicated on the expectation that one receive a reward is acceptable. Yet, this must be understood in light of the Mishnah (Avos 1:3) which tells us that we are not to be as servants to the Master on the condition of receiving reward. How, then, can the Gemara consider one who announces his interest in earning a specific reward as being perfectly righteous?

In “Nachal Kedumim”, Chid’a suggests that perhaps the Gemara is dealing with a person who has already donated his full quota of tzedakah which he is required to give, and is now giving more for the sake of earning credit for the World-to-Come or that his son shall live. In reference to this case, the Gemara declares that the person’s motives are virtuous.

This message can be read into our verse. The Torah repeats its instructions for us to pursue righteousness – צדקה צדק קדימה. This can be interpreted to mean that if one adds an element of mitzvah beyond that which is minimally required, then the person may request that his merits be in order “that you shall live”, or in order that “you may inherit the land” – here referring to the acquisition of the eternal portion which one earns in the World-to-Come.

MIND, SOUL AND BODY

Shem MiShemuel notes that there are three specific areas of accumulating excess about which the king is warned. He is not to accumulate too much silver and gold, not to gather too many horses, and not to marry too many wives. The Hebrew words for these three items are כסף, סוסים, וswagen. The first letters of these three words spell out the word כסף, the same word used to describe the throne upon which the king sits as his reign is established. The lesson is that if the king guards against unnecessary and unacceptable excess on a personal basis, he is assured that his reign upon his throne will continue to be sustained.

Every individual is a kingdom unto his own self. Everyone must learn a lesson from the Torah’s directives regarding the king, and we must carefully monitor our bodies, our minds and our souls. The limitation of gathering excess silver and gold is directed to one’s mind. It is natural for a person to constantly be thinking about the means by which he can sustain himself, and he is always considering how he can fulfill his physical needs. If a person is successful in controlling his mind and keeping his attitude regarding his physical needs in check, while focusing primarily on his spiritual needs, he has perfected his character and this area of his service of Hashem. This can help satisfy the Torah’s mitzvah to serve Hashem “בכל מנעד - with all your resources”.

The restriction not to accumulate too many horses is associated with the forces which try to persuade a person to rely upon physical defenses and man-made barriers
for his security. Horses represent the might necessary to wage war, either on the conventional battlefront or with the challenges one confronts during his daily routine. The accumulation of horses is a challenge to the mission of one’s soul, which should develop an appreciation of trust in Hashem in every detail of one’s life. This is the fulfillment of "עָשַׂר יַעֲשֵׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפַרְשֵׁי אָוֶם". Finally, having an excessive number of wives is an attempt to satiate a person’s physical indulgences. One should instead try to curb one’s bodily cravings, and to perfect one’s mundane existence in order to fulfill the mitzvah of worshipping Hashem "עָשָׂר יַעֲשֵׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפַרְשֵׁי אָוֶם".

The passage of the king in the Torah concludes by stating (Verses 18-19) that the manner by which a person can hope to succeed in establishing the role of a ruler is by writing a Torah and carrying it with one’s self wherever one goes. The victory of a national leader is measured by the degree in which he publicly represents Torah. This is true on an individual basis as well, as a person can overcome the challenges to his mind, his soul and his body through Torah.

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OUR PROUD HERITAGE

"Fear not, nor be alarmed, nor tremble..." – Do not let your heart be faint at the neighing of the horses and the brandishing of swords. "Fear not" because of the crash of shields and the tramp of the soldiers’ footwear. "Nor tremble" at the sound of trumpets. "Do not be afraid" at the sound of battle cries. "For God, your Lord, goes with you." They come relying upon the might of flesh and blood, but you come relying on the might of the All-present. - Sota 42a

We find a fascinating story told in II Melachim (Perek 6). The King of Aram was being frustrated in all of his attempts to attack the soldiers of Yisrael, and he would inform the King of Yisrael of his location. Finally, the King of Aram set his aim upon Elisha himself, as he amassed many horses and armaments at Dotan to attack. Elisha’s assistant began to panic as he saw the forces building up against them, but Elisha assured him, “Our forces are greater in number than theirs!” The aide was puzzled, until Elisha prayed for Hashem to reveal the countless fiery horses and chariots which surrounded them as an invincible shield. The story ends with the army of Aram being defeated due to its utter confusion and being led away, never to return.

The Chafetz Chaim points out that we, too, should realize that “greater are the forces that are with us than are those that are with them”. When we conduct ourselves according to the Torah, we are traveling along a secure and paved path, associating ourselves with hundreds of Tanna’im and Amora’im, and dozens of prophets who preceded them. This is an illustrious heritage with which we link ourselves.

This is truly an illustrious heritage with which we link ourselves.

Even before them was the generation that witnessed revelation, a group consisting of over 600,000, the least of whom was on a level higher than the prophet Yechezkel. This is truly an illustrious heritage with which we link ourselves as we travel along the path of trust and faith in God. The pitiful cry of latter-day scoffers pales without any foundation, as the scorers fabricate their various criticisms in order to rationalize their abandonment of Torah and to excuse their indulging in physical pursuits.

We must strengthen ourselves in our holy mission to the utmost of our ability. We should not be discouraged by any vicious assaults cloaked as philosophical arguments, as they are merely isolated complaints meant as mockery rather than a genuine pursuit of truth.

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A FRUSTRATION AND DISTRACTION

This is a matter of great frustration. -- Rashi

The verse is referring to soldiers in the Jewish army who are being addressed by the Kohen as they approach the battlefront. Anyone who has built a house but has not yet lived in it is sent away from the battlefront, lest he die and someone else will live in the house he built. The Imrei Emes points out that it seems a bit strange that the major concern which is mentioned is not necessarily that the person might die, but the fact that someone else would move into the new house that he built. Rashi explains that this is a very frustrating and almost intolerable concern. On the one hand, we can imagine that it is very disappointing for a person to work very hard to build a house but not be able to enjoy the fruit of his
Instead of thinking thoughts of teshuva and matters of his soul, he will be distracted.

The final plea of the judges who perform the service of the “Egla Arufa” is that Hashem should remove the innocent blood from His midst by our doing that which is right in His eyes. What does this mean?

The Gemara (Shabbos 31a) tells the famous story of the convert who came to Shamai and asked to be taught the entire Torah while standing upon one foot. Shamai dismissed him. When he came to Hillel, however, he was accepted, as Hillel simply taught him, “Do not do to your friend that which is spiteful in your eyes. This is the entire Torah. Go and learn it.”

In his Sefer Ateres Mordechai, Rabbi Mordechai Rogow insightfully wonders what Hillel meant when he said that the rule of loving one another is the basis for the entire Torah. Although this is the foundation for the mitzvos which are between man and his fellow man, what connection does this have to those mitzvos which are between man and Hashem? The Mishnah and Gemara (Kiddushin 39b) tell us that a person should view the entire world as being half guilty and half meritorious. If he does one mitzvah, he merits for himself, and he causes the entire world to be weighed to the side of benefit. However, if he commits even one sin, he then is guilty, and he condemns the entire world as well, for on his account the balance of the world is swayed to doom.

According to this Gemara, every time a person sins against Hashem, he is also harming his fellow man. Every sin has the effect of causing destruction and calamity to the world. On the other hand, when a person does a mitzvah, even in a discreet or unknowing manner, he has simultaneously shown compassion and love for the entire world. On his account, the world is now blessed and deserving of goodness and bounty.

On his account, the world is now blessed and deserving of goodness and bounty.

Finally, Rabbi Rogow notes that our verse can be understood within this context. A person can avoid being responsible for the shedding of innocent blood by doing that which is correct and proper in the eyes of Hashem. This is because the actions of one person who is irresponsible and sinful can result in innocent victims being harmed as the world is condemned. However, this can be alleviated by a person conducting himself properly in the eyes of Hashem, and no one will suffer due to the actions of others.

Halachic Corner

Pirkei Avos: Chapters 1 & 2

Kriass Shma - Sat. 9:35  Tefilla - Sat. 10:39  Shachar - Sat. 8:59  Sunrise - Sat. 7:16  Sunset - Sat. 7:14

According to the Guan of Vihna

If a person finds the lost article of a fellow Jew, he is obligated to return it, even if it is worth as little as a peruta. The owner must describe the article in order to prove that it is really his. If the finder does not know the identity of the owner, he must keep the article in his home. However, if it is something that may spoil or die, such as fresh food, or an animal, he should sell it and hold the money for the owner. At the same time, he must make a public announcement that he found the article, giving a general description of it. In the time of the Beis HaMikdash, outside of Yerushalayim who had lost property, those who had found items would come to announce their findings, and those who had lost anything would come to inquire about it. After the destruction, announcements of lost and found property were made in the synagogues and Batei Midrash.

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Questions for Thought and Study

1. What is the connection between the mentioning of the number of holidays (3) at the end of last week's parasha and setting up courts at the beginning of this week's parasha? 
   See Ba'al HaTurim 16:16

2. How does the Torah indicate that the Sanhedrin was helped by the location in which it was placed? 
   See Ha'amek Davar 17:10

3. Why is a king not supposed to have too many horses? See Rashi and Ramban to 17:16

4. How many טְבִיטִים (abominable acts) does the Torah prohibit Bnei Yisrael as they enter אִירָא? Why are they listed in this order? 
   See Rabbeinu Bachya 18:10

5. When the Kohen speaks to inspire the troops, what language does he need to speak? Why? 
   See Rashi 20:2

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This Week Likutei Peshatim is Sponsored

• By Stern - Hebrew Theological College announcing that the Sunday morning Gemara Shiur given by Rosh HaYeshiva Rabbi Avraham Friedman will resume this Sunday, September 8th, at 9:15 AM, held in the Yeshiva Beis Midrash, studying Chulim, Perek Gid HaNaSheh and the Halachos of Ta'aruvos. If possible, please bring your own Gemara.

• Need help building your sukkah? Let Fasman Yeshiva High School boys do it for you. Call 312-469-0632 to schedule your appointment now. Limited spots available.

• Are you downtown? Got 5, 15, 30 or 45 minutes? Learn & daven at M. Geller, Ltd, 29 E. Madison, Ste 1805. 1:05 PM, 30 minute shiur; 1:35 Mincha; 1:47, 5 minute dvar Torah. Shiurim led by: Mon.-TBD; Tues.- Chicago Community Kollel- Rabbi Shmuel Sussman; Wed.-TBD; Thurs.-TBD. Info: 312-984-1041.

• Park Plaza Senior Living Community enriches the quality of life for our residents through daily shiurim, live music, exercise classes, lectures, outings and much more. Park Plaza also has beautifully furnished apartments for rent: daily, weekly and long term or for your simcha. For more information, visit our website at www.park-plaza.org or contact Adina at 773-465-6700 or at adina@park-plaza.org.

• TAG Chicago is here to help! Offering filtering solutions for smart phones, tablets and computers. We offer free volunteer assistance to keep your devices safe. Visit tagchicago.org, call 847-920-8245 or email Help@TAGChicago.org to book your appointment. 8150 Central Park, Skokie. Remember - “Call before you buy!” We will help guide you.

• You are invited to an intriguing presentation by Professor Dovid Yehuda Imbo: “Thinking Beyond the Possible: Chance, Necessity, and Truth in Secular and Torah Wisdom”, Tues. Sept. 10, 7:30 PM, at Chabad of Northbrook, 2095 Landwehr Rd. (near Techyn). 847-208-1795/info@chabadnorthbrook.com. Dr. Imbo is a professor in the Department of Physics of the University of IL. His research focuses on the connections between quantum physics, pure mathematics, formal logic and pure philosophy.

• Congregation KINS is proud to welcome its new Assistant Rabbi, Rabbi Yechiel and Davina Bresler and family. The community is invited to meet and formally welcome the Breslers to town at a college campus. Great food, kids activities, moon bounce, a friendly pickup softball game, and more! For more information to sign up, please visit www.congkins.org.

• Darchei Noam Glenbrook looks forward to welcoming Rabbi Yona Reiss, Av Bet Din of the eRe, as our scholar-in-residence this Shabbos, September 6-7. Rabbi Reiss will be speaking at a special Friday night dinner and before Musaf, and at a lunch open to the entire community. For information on Shabbos hospitality in Northbrook, please contact the shul office at 224-226-2780.

• Ohr Naava presents Avinu Malkeinu 14! Rav Gav Friedman and Rabbi Wallerstein! Tuesday night, September 17. Inspiration for Elul. At Beis Medresh Mikor Hachaim, 2849 West Chase Avenue. Separate seating for men and women. Doors open at 7:30; event starts at 8:00. VIP tickets also available. For more information, call 847-614-1292.

• Community Safety Network, in partnership with Congregation KINS, presents “Civilian Response to Active Shooter Event”, this Monday, September 9, 7:30-9:00 PM. This training and informational program has been developed by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Texas State University. The entire community is invited to attend. For information or to RSVP, please email info@csnchicago.org.

• Book sale at Young Israel of West Rogers Park, 2706 W. Touhy, Chicago, this Saturday evening, September 7, 9:00-11:00 PM, and Sunday, September 8, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Dozens of sefarim and Judaica. Priced to sell.

• Last chance for Bais Yaakov High School of Chicago's “Sucess in Yerushalayim” Raffle - Drawing September 16th! First Prize: 7 round-trip airfares to Eretz Yisroel, 11 days luxurious accommodations and $1,000; or take $12,000 cash! Second Prize: 6 round-trip airfares to anywhere in the continental United States! Add the $50 Chai option to be able to win an additional $18,000! Call 872-241-5440 or www.succosraffle.com.
The cRe wishes Rabbi Ephraim and Rebbetzin Yitty Friedman hatzlacha on their move to North Miami Beach. Rabbi Friedman has served as a beloved Dayan at the cRe since February 2006.

Please join The ARK and No Shame On U for Kadima Drop-in Groups this Tuesday, September 10th, 4:30 PM, at The ARK. Connect with others in the community, overcome isolation, gain mental health tools, find peer support, feel empowered. Drop-In Groups for ages 18 to 45. Second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, 4:30-5:30 PM. For more information, contact Na’ama Wasserman at NWasserman@arkchicago.org or Miriam Ament at Miriam@noshameonu.org.

Congregation Or Torah and Hebrew Theological College invite the community to celebrate the publication of the new edition of “Faith After the Holocaust”, the latest in the Maggid Modern Classics series. Rabbi Zev Eleff, Chief Academic Officer of HTC and author of the new volume’s Afterword, will discuss “Faith After the Holocaust” with Eldon H Sheppard on Sunday, Sept. 15, at 10:00 AM, at Cong. Or Torah. The book is available for purchase at Rosenblum’s World of Judaica.

Simcha Link has a triple mazal tov!!! We wish a heartfelt mazal tov to Yechiel Dubovick and Dassy Hamaoui; Yogi Fordsinski and Chavi Brand; Yosef Hildesheim and Simi Cardash, and to their families on their engagements. May HaKadosh Boruch Hu grant them birkas kol tuv. Simcha Link shadchanim may be reached at www.simchalin.org.

Mazal tov to our Yachad family friends, the Susses and the Polsteins, on the recent engagement of their children, Ezra and Etta! May you see much nachas from them! May we be zoche to go from simcha to simcha b’Yachad!!

Yachad thanks the 80+ participants who attended and planned our opening Seniors & Rayim BBQ event this past Sunday! Thanks to Shlomo Kastel for DJing and to the Gordons of Lincolnwood for opening their hearts and home to our Yachad family. Special appreciation to a presentation of a picture memory book was made to Chana Polisky, who is making Aliya this Sunday 67 ב’תש”ף. Tseischem LeShalom! We look forward to a wonderful year of programming! Info: bakerd@ou.org, Yachad.org/Chicago.

Yachad’s first Rayim Shabbaton of the year for adults is here! Thank you to the Cinnamon, Gershman, Jacobson, Kanter, Kleinman, Porush, Ross, Silverman, Singer and Zissman families for hosting Yachad members this Friday night for inclusive community meals and housing. Thank you to KINS for hosting all of davening and our Shabbos afternoon meal. Thank you to the Rovenwaters for hosting our daytime oneg and to the Broners for hosting shalosh seudos. #BecauseEveryoneBelongs.

Mark your calendars! Chicago Community Kollel invites you to its annual Teshuva Drasha on Wednesday, September 25th, with special guest speaker, HaRav Avrohom Schorr, נ’תש”ו, at 8:30 PM, followed by Maariv at the Kollel, 6506 N. California. For men and women.

Keep the summer feeling going! Our popular learn-to-swim program at Bernard Horwich JCC in West Rogers Park is managed by British Swim School, an international leader in water safety and survival skills. British Swim School utilizes small group lessons to build on the fundamentals of water safety for infants through adults. Learn more at jccchicago.org/swim.

The cRe thanks the six shuls who hosted our recent Vegetable-Inspection Training Seminars: KINS, Kehilat Chovevei Tzion, Congregation KJBS, Bais Chaim Dovid, Congregation Or Torah, and Bnei Ruven. Thank you to Rabbi Yisroel Langer, cRe Rabbirnic Community for Bedikas Tolayim, for sharing his expertise.

N’shei Bais Yitzchok is pleased to invite the women of the community to the first in a series of shiurim for the month of Elul. We are honored to have Rebbetzin Tobie Teller for the first shiur - 5:00 PM this Shabbos, Parashas Shoftim, at Congregation Bais Yitzchok, 6716 W. Nipple.

The Skokie Community Kollel invites you for a Shabbos with world-renowned speaker and author, Rabbi Jonathan Rosenblum, next Shabbos, Parashas Ki Seitzei (September 14). Rabbi Rosenblum will speak at Kiddush (10:30-11:30 AM) after 8:30 AM Shacharis, on the topic of “Raising Enthusiastic Jewish Children,” and again after 6:00 PM Mincha, 6:35-7:35 PM, on the topic of “Happiness Cannot be Pursued: It Must Ensue”. Maariv at 7:43. Questions? info@skokiekollel.org.


We invite the entire community to join us this Motzaei Shabbos for a Tzeischem LeShalom Open House in honor of Rabbi and Mrs. Ephraim and Yitty Friedman as they transition to their new position in Miami. 9:15 PM at Mikor Hachaim (2849 W. Chase). Short Program at 9:45. Looking forward to greeting you there. - Chicago Community Kollel, cRe, Mikor Hachaim, Chicago Choshen Mishpat Kollel, and Hannah Sachs Bais Yaakov.

This Tuesday evening! NILI-Chicago Institute of Women’s Learning is excited to introduce our new Community Scholar, Mrs. Emma Katz. Join us for a special Inaugural Event to meet and welcome Emma to our community. Tuesday, September 10, 8:00 PM. At Florence + Graham Floral Design (4142 Dempster Street, Skokie).

Get ready for Tishrei! An Evening of Inspiration with Rabbi Moshe Weinberger. Monday, September 16, 8:00-9:45 PM, at Arne Crown Hebrew Day School (4600 Main Street, Skokie). For men and women. Presented by the YU Torah Mitzion Kollel's Aron and Rivka Friedman Living Torah Series. For more information, call the Kollel office. 773-973-6557.

Going to college? Check out Chabad on Campus, your home away from home. Visit https://chabadoncampus.org/connect/ for a full listing of Chabad centers on campuses worldwide, including 10 in Illinois.

Jerusalem Science Contest: 11th and 12th graders are invited to learn and compete internationally with other Jewish high school students exploring Neuroscience and its Judaic relevance. Participants study selected readings and compete through a series of 8 exams and a final project. Awards include prize money, a full college scholarship, and a trip to Israel! Sign up/info: http://walderlab.org/content/, jsc@walderlab.org, or 773-649-5360.

“The Lessons of Israel’s Start-up Society: The Role of Scientific Education in Developing Prosperity and Opportunity”. Join the Walker Science Center on Wednesday, September 18, at the Adas Yeshurun social hall, 3050 W. Touhy Avenue, for a community lecture by Dr. Ronen Mir, an international leader in science education. There will be a refreshments reception from 6:30-7:00 PM, the keynote presentation from 7:00-8:00 PM, followed by Q&A.
Answers:

1. The number “three” alludes to the fact that the Sanhedrin was located in 3 places (ירושלים, ראביד ו pnamek הנקיה). This also indicated that there were three rows of students who sat in front of the Sanhedrin. (See Sanhedrin 86b and 37a)

2. Because the Torah says “וְלִקְרָא אֶלָּא וְלִקְרָא אֶלָּא וְלִקְרָא אֶלָּא” (“from that place that Hashem will choose”), this implies that the designated place of the Sanhedrin helped the Sanhedrin judge בני ישראל properly. 

3. Rashi says that horses came from Egypt and there is a prohibition against returning to Egypt. Ramban says that there are ways to obtain horses from Egypt in a permissible manner (as King Solomon did). However, the prohibition is for a king to build up his cavalry and thereby indicate a certain lack in trust in Hashem to win battles.

4. There are nine דְּכַלּות listed, from the strictest to the most lenient. The first one is punishable with קָטֵּנס (“death”). The rest are punishable with lashes.

5. The Cohen must speak in Hebrew. This is learned from the term חֲדָרָה (“and he shall speak”), which is also used in the case of a כִּסְפֵּר, and that must be in Hebrew.