



פרשת במדבר

שבת מברכים סיון

אייר תש"פ

THE SUNDAY NIGHT FEATURE SHIUR

Each Sunday night, join us as a different presenter delivers a full-length topical shiur, exploring current and classic topics of interest.

The 48 Middos for acquiring Torah: A minimum of laughter

Sunday 8:30pm

With Rabbi Binyomin Cohen

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A 20-minute power shiur on the Midrashim of Matan. Cryptic teachings, deep insights and practical lessons.

Monday-Thursday 10:00am with

Rabbi Y. Johnson on Zoom.

See our website for full details.

PRE-SHAVUOS EVENINGS

Monday night

The Third Crown

At Matan Torah did we get 2 crowns or 3? What are they and where did they go?

Rabbi Y. Johnson

Tuesday 8:30pm

Halachos for Shavuos

In-depth study of some of the Shavuos Halachos and customs

Rabbi M. Stern

Wednesday 8:30pm

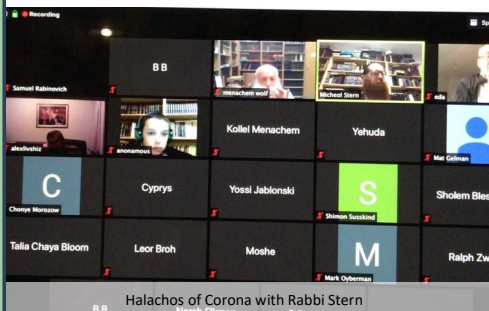
Dovid Hamelech

A study of the Midrashim

Rabbi Y. Gordon

A collection of Torah
thoughts produced by
Kollel Menachem

אין בית המדרש בלא
חידוש Chiddush



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Cantonists, COVID-19 and returning to Shule

The Chossid Reb Zalman Leib Astulin was exiled to a prison in Siberia for many years. When he was finally able to leave Russia, he travelled to Eretz Yisroel. His brother-in-law, Reb Yankele Galinsk took care Reb Zalman Leib on his arrival.

The next morning, Reb Yankele took Reb Zalman Leib to one of the local Shules in Bnei Brak to daven. Hours when by and Reb Zalman Leib had still not come home. Reb Yankele went out to search for his brother-in-law and found him in the same Shule where he had left him. Reb Zalman Leib was standing in the Shule with his broken body, but his face was radiating with pure joy.

Reb Zalman Leib explained "I just can't leave! After my Minyan finished, another one began, followed by another after that. Each Minyan gave me another chance to answer Amen Yehei Shmei Rabbah and Kedusha. After so many years without a Minyan, Hashem finally gave me this precious opportunity – and I should give it up for breakfast?"

One of the most unique Maamarim (Chassidic discourses) ever said, was a Maamar explaining the decree of the Cantonists enacted in Czarist Russia.

In 1827, Czar Nikolai enacted the horrific Gezeira known as the Gezeira of the Cantonists. Young Jewish boys were forcibly conscripted into the Russian army. They would be taken from their homes and sent to Cantonist schools. At age 18, they were enrolled in the military for a 25 years term.

The ultimate goal was to cause these boys to forsake their religion. In a confidential memorandum, Nikolai wrote "The chief benefit to be derived from the drafting of the Jews is the certainty that it will move them most effectively to change their religion."

Away from their homes and communities, in the educational care of the Christian educators, the Cantonists were unable to keep the Torah and its Mitzvos. Boys would be baptised and if they refused, they were tortured into submission. Many held strong, but alas many could not withstand the pressure.

Why was such a harsh Gezeira brought against the Jewish people? What could be the reason that these boys were subject to such a test?

In Kislev 5588 (1828), the Mitteler Rebbe delivered a Chassidic Maamar entitled; להבין ענין לקיחת אנשי (מישראל) "חיל (מישראל)", "To understand the concept of the taking of soldiers (from the Jews)". This was one of the last Maamarim delivered by the Mitteler Rebbe and it was said in the week before his passing.

(Chassidim have a tradition that this decree brought about the Mitteler Rebbe's Histalkus. Tradition relates that one night a mother cried outside the Rebbe's window "Rebbe! Rebbe!, they have taken my only child!" The pain on hearing her suffering brought on the illness from which the Mitteler Rebbe passed away).

In this Maamar, the Mitteler Rebbe explains the Divine intention that brought about this Gezeira.

Hashem gave us 248 Positive Mitzvos. These Mitzvos are expressions of the Divine Will. At the time of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, when the Jewish people were being exiled for their sins, Hashem took away many of these Mitzvo, which could no longer be observed.

The vast majority of the 248 Positive Mitzvos, which include the agricultural laws and the laws of the sacrifices and Temple service, became obsolete. Of an initial 248, only 87 positive Mitzvos remained.

Due to their sins, Hashem's desire for the Jewish people. The delight that He would receive from their fulfilling the Mitzvos was diminished. And so, the Mitzvos, signs of Hashem's favour and desire, were taken away from us.

In His great kindness, Hashem did not leave us empty-handed. He restored 87 Mitzvos to us, through which the world and our people could continue to endure.

But as time went by, the Jewish people sinned further. Even though our sages teach that "even the sinners of the Jewish people are filled with Mitzvos like a pomegranate", the accusatory forces argued that they only keep them by wrote or habit. They do not truly desire or appreciate the Mitzvos. They do not observe them with feelings of awe and love. If they actively transgress Hashem's will, how could they really care about His Mitzvos.

The accusatory forces demanded that Hashem remove His desire from the remaining 87 Mitzvos as

A lesson from the Cantonists as we return to Shule

well. If this were to happen, the Jewish people and world should 1"ן cease to be.

In order to refute this accusation, Hashem directed the hearts of the kings of the nations to enact Gezeiros against the Jewish people. These Gezeiros would make it impossible for those subject to them, to fulfil any of the remaining Mitzvos.

This would serve as a test to reveal what was truly in their hearts.

How would they respond when they would have their beards and Payos forcibly removed? How would they feel when they would be forced to desecrate the holy Shabbos?

They respond with great pain and anguish, crying out "My G-d, My G-d, why have You forsaken me?". "Why is it that Hashem has placed us in this position where we cannot keep His Mitzvos? We were created to serve Your will and now we cannot. Were we created for nought?"

The pain touches them to the very core of their soul and they cry bitterly inside, begging Hashem to bring them back. With the pain that they feel at not being able to fulfil the Mitzvos, Hashem considers it as though they had been kept.

The pain of being deprived of Mitzvos, evidences the great desire and pleasure that they feel for the Mitzvos. Their Mitzvos are not by wrote, but because they desire them with the very core of their soul.

And when they are finally presented the opportunity to fulfil even 1 Mitzvah, they do it with great passion and excitement and a deep sense of pleasure. Their spirits are revived.

Through this, the accusatory forces' accusation is nullified. Hashem will not remove the 87 remaining Mitzvos, keeping the world and Jewish people in existence. And this display of love and commitment has the power to bring about the redemption and the restoration of all of the Mitzvos once more.

The COVID-19 virus and ensuing social distancing requirements, have prevented us from keeping many Mitzvos and important aspects of Jewish life and observance. These include;

Davening with a Minyan, davening in Shule, going to Mikva, hearing Krias Hatorah, learning in a Beis Midrash, face-to-face Chavrusas, participating in farbrengens and uniting as a community in Simchas and festival celebrations (and perhaps even the occasional short Drosha).

We cannot really understand why Hashem put us into this situation. We are not prophets or Rebbes who can explain the reasons for Hashem's decrees.

But as Jews, we always need to look inside and introspect when things like this occur. What message is it telling me? What am I supposed to learn from this experience? How is this experience supposed to change me for the better?

Perhaps we can draw a lesson from the explanation of the Mittlerer Rebbe. Whilst our social isolation is in no way comparable to the suffering of the Cantonists ל"ר, perhaps, on a micro level, we are being given a similar type of test.

How much do we value and how committed are we to Tefillah Betzibbur and davening in Shule? How appreciative are we for Mikva and Krias Hatorah? To what degree do we engage in a farbrengen or look forward to sharing simchas?

In the past, we may have taken some of these Mitzvos for granted, under-appreciated their value and possibly even failed to keep them as best as we should. Are these too just done by wrote? Social norms? Communal pressure?

Our commitment to something and how much we value it, can only be tested when it is taken away.

We have all felt their absence. It bothers us that we cannot daven with a Minyan in Shule. Shabbos or Yomtov without a Minyan, without Krias Hatorah and Birkas Kohanim touches something deep within us and we feel the void. We miss the farbrengens on Shabbos, Shabbos Mevorchim and Yomei Depagra.

We are all eagerly awaiting the time that we will be able to fulfil these Mitzvos properly. Im Yirtzeh Hashem, very soon, we will be given the opportunity to engage in them once more. So, with the easing of restrictions beginning to kick in, we should stop to reflect, how will we go back to these things differently?

Our feelings of longing over the last 2 months should translate into an even greater level of commitment and enthusiasm for these Mitzvos. Our heightened appreciation in their absence, should be reflected in more respect and loving attention than we may have shown in the past.

Each one of us can think of Hachlotas that we can make to translate these feelings into action. Perhaps some suggestions to consider;

- ☞ Strengthen attendance at daily Minyanim - at least more than we may have previously.
- ☞ Be on time to davening to be able to daven with the Tzibbur.
- ☞ Make a strong commitment to not talk during davening, from beginning to end (as the Alter Rebbe requests) and during Krias Hatorah.
- ☞ Try to listen more attentively and answer Kaddish and other Devarim Shebikedusha out *loud* and with greater *Kavana*.
- ☞ Show more respect for our Shules in how we speak, sit and dress. Keep the Shule/Beis Midrash clean. See Halacha column on the back page of the Chiddush.
- ☞ Follow Krias Hatorah more carefully and quietly.
- ☞ Go to Mikva with more dedication (at least more often than we may have in the past).
- ☞ Stay at the farbrengen for a longer time; if not every week, at least once a month for Shabbos Mevorchim.
- ☞ Join the farbrengen – Really try to get into it and get involved. Enjoy the Sheves Achim Gam Yachad and really connect to those sitting with you.
- ☞ Join the Minyan for Shabbos Mevorchim Tehillim.
- ☞ Greet each person we see at Shule.
- ☞ Make greater effort to join communal shiurim, programs and activities.
- ☞ Share one another's Simchas with genuine joy. Dance. Get involved in the Simcha. Don't feel like it's an obligation.

ומחשבה טובה הקב"ה מצרפה למעשה - Hashem considers our positive intentions as though they were already done.

Perhaps, if we can all take on something extra to express our commitment and desire, Hashem will send us Moshiach to bring us back to Eretz Yisroel with the Beis Hamikdash Hashelishi.

ושם נעשה כמצות רצונך, "There we will perform (the Mitzvos) in accordance with the command of Your will." And we will once again have the full revelation of Hashem's desire towards us, with the restoration of all 613 Mitzvos once again and for all time.

The weekly Halacha analysis

Respecting our Shules - Part 1

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

On his journey to Charan, Yaakov spends the night on Har Habayis. He dreams of a ladder ascending to the Heavens, with angels going up and down. The Gemara (Chullin 91a) explains that the angels went up and gazed on the "Image of Man" above and then went down to gaze at Yaakov, the image of man below. According to the Gemara, the angels wanted to harm Yaakov and so Hashem stood above him to protect him.

Iyun Yosef on Ein Yaakov explains that the angels wanted to harm Yaakov because he had slept on Har Habayis. The halacha is that one may not sleep in a place that is designated for prayer such as a Beis Hakeneses. Certainly it was forbidden to sleep on the site of the Beis Hamikdash, the gateway to Heaven.

This is why the Torah tells us that Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said 'surely Hashem is in this place and I did not know!'. He understood that this is why the angels in his dream sought to harm him. Had he known that "Hashem is in this place", he would not have slept there.

Iyun Yosef references Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 151, the Halachos of Kedushas Beis Hakeneses. Below we will present a selection of Halachos recorded in that Siman.

Kedushas Beis Hakeneses

A Beis Kneses is referred to as a Mikdash Me'at, a miniature Sanctuary¹. Just as there is a Mitzvah to have reverence for the Beis Hamikdash on account of the One Who dwells there, so too one must treat a Beis Hakeneses or Beis Medrash with reverence².

According to some authorities³, having awe for the Beis Hakeneses is a Mitzvah Deoraisa. Most authorities maintain that the sanctity of a Beis Kneses is Derabbanan⁴.

One may not act in a Shule in a manner of Kalus Rosh – light headedness and frivolity⁵. The Sefer Mitzvos Katan⁶ writes that because people act with Kalus Rosh in a Shule, these Shules are transformed into houses of Avodah Zarah.

Speech

The Shulchan Aruch⁷ rules that one may not speak idle conversation or jest in a Shule. This refers even when the Tzibbur is not davening. The Zohar⁸ speaks very harshly about one who speaks mundane chatter in a Shule; that they are shaming the Shechina and prolonging the

Golus⁹. Magen Avraham records that the Ariza"l¹⁰ was careful to not say anything other than Tefillah in a Shule. He would not even say words of Mussar lest it lead to speaking mundane matters.

Mishna Berura¹¹ writes that even speaking about matters of Parnasa is forbidden in a Beis Kneses. The Mishna Berura continues that certainly one must take care not to speak Lashon Hara, Rechilus or word of Machlokes in Shule. Such speech is forbidden always. When it is done in a Holy place, one is also insulting the presence of the Shechina; just like one cannot compare one who sins in private to doing so in the king's palace¹².

Aruch Hashulchan¹³ notes that nowadays people are seemingly lax in these Halachos, sitting after davening to Shmooze in Shule. He seeks to justify this practise based on the view of the Ramban¹⁴ that if the Shule is built with the express condition¹⁵ to allow so, one may do certain necessary mundane activities in the Shule. This could include certain conversations such as business and the like¹⁶.

Entering the Shule

A person should not enter a Shule for personal needs other than davening or other Mitzvah purpose. If one needs to enter the Shule to call a friend or other similar purpose, they should say/learn some Pesukim or teaching of Mishna or Halacha and only then call their friend¹⁷. Alternatively one may ask another person to share a teaching, or may even sit down for a few moments¹⁸ as just sitting in a Shule is a Mitzvah.

One may not enter a Shule or Beis Medrash to take shelter from the rain or sun.

If a Shule or Beis Medrash has multiple entrances, one may not use it as a short-cut¹⁹. Mishna Berura²⁰ writes that the leniency of sitting or learning something in Shule also works in this case. Many Acharonim²¹ argue, maintaining that this 'heter' is limited to the case of entering a Shule to call someone.

Eating

The Shulchan Aruch rules that one may not eat or drink in a Shule²², even for a snack²³. Talmidei Chachamim and their students may eat even a meal in a Shule or Beis Medrash²⁴. Poskim write that anyone learning in Shule, even for a short amount of time, may have tea, coffee and a snack if required. The rationale is that if they were not able to eat or drink in the Beis Medrash, this would force them to pause their learning.

The Shulchan Aruch²⁵ rules that if it is for the

needs of the Shule, one may eat or sleep there. This would include guards and the like. Similarly one may eat in Shule for other Mitzvah purposes. Magen Avraham²⁶ qualifies that this does not apply to meals, even a Seudas Mitzvah, that there is likely to be Kalus Rosh (and drunkenness²⁷).

The Mishna Berura writes that the custom is to be lenient to celebrate Siyumim in Shule with a meal. This is the basis for those who are lenient and allow Seudos Mitzvah to be held in a Shule or Beis Medrash²⁸, such as a Shalosh Seudos or Melave Malka or serving Lechaim and Mezonos on a Yartzeit. It is also the basis for holding a Seudah / farbrengen in a Shule or Beis Medrash in honour of a Tzaddik's Yartzeit and the like where Yidden gather to hear words of Torah and Chassidus and sing songs in praise of Hashem.

If the Shule or Beis Midrash was built with a stipulation permitting eating drinking, there is more grounds for leniency to host Seudos Mitzvah such as a Bris, Pidyon Haben, Barmitzvah or Sheva Brachos or even a Shalom Zachar and Shabbos Kiddush in the Shule or Beis Medrash²⁹. In all cases, one should take care that the behaviour and conduct is befitting for a holy place.

1. Yechezkel 11:16
2. Mishna Berura 151:1
3. Yereim 324, Chayei Adam 17:6, Rav Pealim 2:20 and others.
4. See Sdeh Chemed Klalim Maareches Beis 43, Maharsham 1:10, Pri Megadim 151 M.Z. 1. Divrei Chaim 1:3 and others. Pri Megadim writes that the obligation to treat a Shule with awe could be Biblical if it is because of a Neder – communal vow.
5. Megillah 28b, Shulchan Aruch 151:1
6. Siman 11 quoted by Magen Avraham 151:1
7. ibid
8. Vayakhel 2:205b
9. Chid"i in Pesach Enayim writes that it would be better not to come to Shule at all then to come and speak mundane matters.
10. Shaar Hakavanos 5:1
11. 151:2 based on Pri Megadim 151 Eshel Avraham 1.
12. See there for a continuation of his words how such gatherings can create fires of Machlokes, leading to cursing, public embarrassment and physical blows, even in the presence of the Sefer Torah itself.
13. 151:5
14. Megillah 26b. This is a Machlokes Rishonim – see
15. In Chitz Laaretz, the presumption in Halacha is that Shules were built with such a stipulation in mind.
16. See Shaar Hatziyun 20 that such a condition does not allow completely idle chatter
17. Shulchan Aruch 151:1
18. One should sit for the amount of time it would take to enter a length of 2 doorways – Levush 151:2.
19. Shulchan Aruch 151:5
20. Biur Halacha לעשותו
21. Shiurei Tahara 2:28, Or Sameach on Hilchos Tefillah 11:10
22. 151:1
23. Aruch Hashulchan 151:2. See however Biur Halacha ויהו ואין אכילין who writes that snacking may be permissible.
24. Shulchan Aruch and Rem"i ibid
25. 151:4
26. 151:5
27. Pri Megadim Eshel Avraham 5
28. Ketzos Hashulchan 29:12
29. See Igros Moshe OC 1:45