



פרשת תזריע מצורע
שבת ראש חודש
אייר תש"פ

A SPECIAL SIYUM

Just before Pesach, the ladies' in depth textual Chassidus shiur completed the study of Mitzvas Haamanas Elokus from Derech Mitzvosecha.

We spent a full year studying this lengthy Maamar, which explains the fundamental beliefs of faith according to Chassidus.

The shiur is led by Rabbi Y. Johnson. All women are invited to join us as we embark of our next project. Details to follow.

SOTAH SHIUR

It is customary to learn Mesechta Sotah during Sefiras Haomer.

Join the Rabbis of the Kollel each night of Sefirah to learn the daily daf.

7:45pm nightly on zoom.

RESUMING SHIURIM

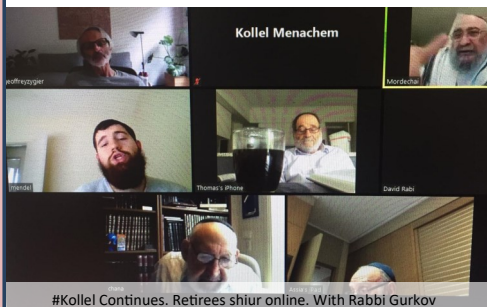
Shalos Uteshuvos: Sunday 10:00am with Rabbi Johnson. This week - Filling a Mikva with ice where there is no rain.

Nach Shiur: Wednesday 8:30pm with Rabbi Gordon

Likutei Sichos project: 8:30pm Thursday with Rabbi Aryeh Knapp

5710 for High School Boys: 4:00pm Monday with Rabbi Y. Johnson

For access details for these and more shiurim, email kollel@yeshivahcentre.org



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Going Viral

In social-media slang, "going viral" means to share something on social-media that spreads rapidly as it is forwarded on and shared exponentially by others. The term comes from the word 'virus', an infectious illness which spreads through the population as it is 'shared' from person to person.

Social media has revolutionised the way we communicate. Facebook, Blogs, WhatsApp, Twitter and a dozen other platforms, enable us to communicate our thoughts instantaneously across the world. And on social media we are always invited to "comment" and share our opinions.

Parshas Tazria focuses on the laws of Tzaraas. Metzora describes the purification of the Metzora. There are many negative qualities for which a person would be afflicted with Tzaraas, but the most famous is for the sin of Lashon Hora, slanderous speech.

The Metzora is treated Middah Kneged Middah. Just as Lashon Hora causes the person spoken about to become socially isolated, the Metzora had to experience the same isolation by being sent out of the city.

As part of their purification, the Metzora would bring 2 birds. Why birds? Says the Talmud (Arachin 16a), because like the speaker of Lashon Hora, they Twitter!

Guarding our speech is an important part of Yiddishkeit. At the end of every Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully.

Many great tragedies, including the sale of Yosef, the decree that Bnei Yisroel could not enter Eretz Yisroel and the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash and subsequent Golus, came about because of Lashon Hora. Even the snake in Gan Eden has its sinful behaviour attributed to Lashon Hora.

The Chofetz Chaim lists 17 Issurim Deoraisa which are possibly violated each time Lashon Hora is spoken.

Technology has changed our lives so much and brings with it its own halachic considerations. The Tzemach Tzedek said that a spoken word will reach rabim (not only those present). A written word reaches the entire world, and the printed word is for all generations.

This pishgam is applied in the positive sense; words of Torah which are written or printed will impact for all

time. It is also true on the converse. Lashon Hora which is spoken will have a limited reach. But Lashon Hora which has been printed is ledorei doros!

This is much more the case with social media. An email or blog can go viral, reaching literally the entire world within minutes. One click could lead to destroyed reputations, destroyed relationships and friendships, loss of parnasa, compromised shidduchim, and all too common with internet bullying, lead to loss of life R"L.

The digital "footprint" means whatever is uploaded or put into cyberspace remains forever. Spoken Lashon Hora will eventually be forgotten or become old news. But in cyberspace it remains forever and the damage is perpetuated. If we take the famous parable of the pillow and retrieving feathers, online it is a virtual impossibility.

The Chassidic Approach

Lashon Hora was traditionally a rarely discussed topic in Chassidic circles. This was not chas veshalom because the halachos are not important and need not be studied. Rather it is because Chassidus emphasises the assured way to control our speech – by increasing Ahavas Yisroel and speaking positively about others. In the Alter Rebbe's words;

"Therefore, my beloved and dear ones, I beg again and again that each of you exert himself with all his heart and soul **to firmly implant in his heart a love for his fellow.** And, in the words of verse "let none of you consider in your heart what is evil for his fellow."

Moreover, [such a consideration] should never arise in one's heart [in the first place]; and if it does arise, one should push it away from his heart "as smoke is driven away," **as if it were an actual idolatrous thought.** For to speak evil [of another] is as grave as idolatry and incest and bloodshed. And if this be so with speech, [then surely thinking evil about another is even worse]; for all the wise of heart are aware of the greater impact [on the soul] of thought over speech!" (Tanya Igeres Hakodesh 22).

The ultimate way to overcome negativity and darkness is by focussing on the positive and bringing light. In a Sichah on Parshas Emor (Likkutei Sichos 27), the Rebbe

The weekly Halacha analysis

Tachanun on a Tzaddik's Yartzheit

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

The month of Nissan is drawing to an end. After a month-long hiatus, we will begin reciting Tachanun once more. For many, this doesn't sound like an enjoyable prospect, and they look to the calendar for the next opportunity to be able to 'skip' it. With our current social distancing, they cannot even rely on the regular Mohel to give an exemption!

In some communities they do not say Tachanun on the Yartzheit of Tzaddikim. Chabad custom is that we do recite Tachanun on the Yartzheit of our Rebbeim. What is the basis of not reciting Tachanun on a Yartzheit of a Tzaddik and why do Chabad say Tachanun?

Sources for the custom

This custom is generally followed in Chassidic circles, where they will not say Tachanun on the Yartzheit of a Rebbe. The reason is because on the day of the Yartzheit, the Tzaddik's Neshama experiences an Aliyah.

Proof for this practice is brought from a Rashi on Yevamos 122a. Rashi quotes the Geonim that the days referred to as **ריגלא דאמוראים** are "the day on which a great man passes away which is established in his honour. Each year when this day arrives, the Talmidei Chachamim gather from around to visit his gravesite". Since this is referred to as **ריגלא** - a festival - we see that the day of the passing of a Tzaddik is like a Yomtov. Just like on Yomtov, on the Yartzheit of a Tzaddik, Tachanun should not be recited¹.

Others explain that the basis for this custom is from the Zohar². On the day of his passing, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai instructs his Talmidim to celebrate and rejoice on this day since it is his day of joy. As his bed was miraculously carried to burial, a heavenly voice announced "come and gather for the Hillulah of Rabbi Shimon."

The word Hillulah means a wedding. From this we see that the day of the passing of a Tzaddik is a joyous day, akin to a wedding. Just as Tachanun is not recited on the day of a wedding, it is not recited on the Yartzheit of a Tzaddik.

Opposition to the custom

But what does this practically mean? Every day of the year is certain to be the Yartzheit of a particular Tzaddik in history! Should we never recite Tachanun?

Following this logic, many Poskim vehemently challenged the custom of not reciting Tachanun on a Tzaddik's yartzheit.

In Teshuvos Yabia Omer³, Rav Ovadiah Yosef writes very strongly against this custom. He observes that on the contrary, the day of the passing of a Tzaddik is a sad day; a day of rebuke and a day of fasting⁴. This would make it even more appropriate to say Tachanun.

He adds that if one is in a Shule where Tachanun is not recited on the Yartzheit of a Tzaddik and he cannot protest and change the practice, he should recite Tachanun on his own.

He needn't be concerned for either **יוהרא** (arrogant piety) or **לא תתגודדו** (separateness created through observing a different custom to those around him). Rav Moshe Feinstein issued a similar ruling.

The Minchas Elozor of Munkatch⁵ (a Chassidic Rebbe himself) similarly writes that by following this custom one would never recite Tachanun, since among the thousands of Tzaddikim throughout history every day would be a Yartzheit of a Tzaddik. Indeed there are calendars printed which list the names of Tzaddikim who passed away on each day. The entire siman of Tachanun in the Shulchan Oruch would become irrelevant.

Lag Baomer is an exception. Even though it too is the Yartzheit of a Tzaddik - Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai - it is also the day when the Talmidim of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying. Additionally, the Yartzheit of the Rashbi has the unique status of being called a Hillulah. The same status is not conferred to the Yartzheit of other Tzaddikim.

The Munkatcher writes about a Rabbi who justified being lenient in reciting Tachanun so as not to arouse accusations and Dinim against the Jewish people. On the contrary says the Munkatcher (quoting the Ariza"l): By reciting Tachanun one has the status of someone who is Modeh - who confesses to his wrongdoings and is therefore exempt from a Knas (penalty). Further, through Tachanun the sins of Klal Yisroel are forgiven.

Skipping Tachanun is not something to take lightly. Even though in Halacha Tachanun is considered a reshuv (literally optional), according to the Ariza"l, based on Kabbalah, Tachanun is a Chiyuv. The Munkatcher points out that Maariv is also technically only a reshuv, but we

would never use this as basis to skip it.

The Zohar speaks about the tremendous power of reciting Tachanun in gaining atonement. The Baal Shem Tov taught that the words **ואת מעכה** at the end of Parshas Vayeira is an acronym for **וידוי אחר תפילה מגעת עד כסא הכבוד**, confession recited after Shemoneh Esrei (Tachanun) reaches to the Kisei Hakovod.

Limitations on the Minhag

Nonetheless, there are Poskim who do not discount the custom entirely.

In answer to the question that one would never recite Tachanun, Mishmeres Shalom explains that the exemption is limited to the followers of the particular Tzaddik, who were subservient to his will and would spend time in the Tzaddik's presence during his lifetime.

Similarly Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach⁶ is quoted as saying that the dissatisfaction of the Poskim towards this practice does not include the followers of the Tzaddik who are connected to him - those who "go by his light". This is particularly so when a Seudah is made in honour of the Yartzheit. (Other Poskim suggest that where a Siyum is made on the Yartzheit Tachanun may be skipped.)

Darkei Chaim Veshalom (Minhagei Munkatch), based on the Rashi quoted above, limits the dispensation of Tachanun to the city itself where the Tzaddik is buried and people travel to his gravesite to daven there on the day of the Yartzheit. On any other Yartzheit, Tachanun should be recited.

Chabad custom

For Chabad Chassidim, the minhag is that Tachanun is recited on the day of a Yartzheit such as Yud Shevat.

In a letter, dated 9th of Tammuz 5713, the Rebbe writes that he asked the Frieddike Rebbe concerning reciting Tachanun on the Yartzheit of a Tzaddik.

The Rebbe's response was: "When is there a better time to request and to be answered as on these days?."

In another letter, dated 17th of Nissan 5717, the Rebbe responds to the question

as to what one should do if he is in a Shule which is not reciting Tachanun 'such as on the Yartzheit of a Tzaddik'.

The Rebbe responded that in general, conduct in a way that stands out as being overly pious is not favourable. (This is in contrast to the position of Harav Ovadiah Yosef who writes that there is no issue or standing out by reciting Tachanun).

The Rebbe explains the possible reason for the deviance of custom between Chabad and other Chassidic circles relates to the fundamental difference in their manner of Avodah.

Other groups of Chassidus follow the path of צדיק באמונתו יהיה - אל תקרא יהיה אלא יהיה. Literally the Posuk means that a Tzaddik lives

with his Emunah. The Chassidic interpretation reads the word Yichye (lives) as Yechaye (gives life), that the Tzaddik gives life to others through his own Emunah.

The Tzaddik through his lofty service of Hashem, elevates and vitalises those who are connected to him. Accordingly, Tachanun is not recited on the Yartzheit since the Chassidim are elevated along with the Neshama of the Tzaddik as they were during his lifetime.

In contrast, Chabad Chassidus demands that the Chossid use his own efforts to study Chassidus and engage in personal Avodah to cleave to Hashem, not relying on the Rebbe to do it for them. The Rebbe guides and inspires us, giving us the tools to be able to apply in our own Avodah.

As such, the Aliyah of the Tzaddik's Neshama is merely a catalyst for our personal Avodah. Therefore Tachanun should be said.

1. Mishmeres Shalom Siman 12:4
2. Zohar Idra Zuta, Haazinu
3. Volume 3, siman 11:9.
4. Such as the Yartzheit of Moshe Rabbeinu 7th of Adar. See Orach Chaim siman 580 for other dates of Taanis Tzaddikim. Concerning why we rejoice on Lag Baomer but the minhag is to fast on Zayin Adar, the Rebbe explains that there is a difference between the Yartzheit of those who were connected to the dissemination of the hidden parts of Torah such as the Rashb"i, and those connected to the revealed aspects of Torah.
5. Nimukei Orach Chaim 131
6. Halichos Shlomo 131

Going Viral

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observes;

The Midrash teaches that Lashon Hora kills three people – the one who speaks it, the one who hears it and the one of whom it is being said. It is understandable why the ones who hears or speaks Lashon Hora is affected negatively because they are involved in a sin. But why should the innocent person about whom it is said be affected?

The Rebbe explains that speech reveals that which was hidden. When we speak negatively about others, we harm them by bringing their faults into the revealed state. Until then, their faults may have been hidden and unexpressed. When we 'reveal' it through our speech, we bring that fault into the "world of speech", activating it and bringing it out into the open. This is the negative impact on the one spoken about. The label becomes self-fulfilling.

The Torah is interpreted in a manner of מכלל לאו אתה שומע הן, from the negative we can deduce the positive; and the good is always infinitely more powerful than the negative.

Speaking positively about others and complimenting their strengths and qualities creates an infinite goodness. When we make a point to focus on and emphasise the virtues of another person and reveal that in our speech, we reveal it within them and help them to actualise those very virtues.

In his famous Tefillah the Noam Elimelech writes Place into our hearts that we should see the qualities of our friends and not their shortcomings. And that each of us should speak about their friend in a way which is upright and favourable before You.

Shlomo Hamelech says, Life and death are in the hands of the tongue (Mishlei 18:21). Our tongues, our blogs, online comments and social media accounts are powerful tools which literally hold the balance between life and death, between Golus and the Geulah which we are all awaiting. How

we use them and what we use them for is in our hands (or fingertips).

The Metzora's social isolation was to give him time to reflect on his speech and treatment of others, to appreciate the impact of his words and to empathise with the feelings of one who has been slandered. The current social isolation that we are all confined to, should help us to introspect and empathise on the manner and content of our speech and online comments, and the impact that it has on others.

We should also try to think about and be more aware of the experience of those who suffer social exclusion in our community and take upon ourselves to be more embracing and inclusive.

Instead of sledging and bashing, let's unleash a revolution of Lashon HaTov and go viral with words of positivity. Let's print words which will impact generations with Ahavas Yisroel and Achdus Yisroel. Let's see and focus on the good qualities in others and always try to judge them favourably. Remember to compliment others and praise their actions. A word of support, acknowledgement and encouragement can go a long way.

The Corona virus has shown us the power and impact of something "going viral". One person can infect thousands and it doesn't take long until the virus literally goes global, causing untold damage and destroying lives. The same can happen with a viral comment or post.

But מכלל לאו אתה שומע הן. We can choose to create a wave of viral goodness and kindness; an infectious spread of positivity and Ahavas Yisroel. Not a virus that isolates people, but one that brings us closer together.

The next time you "tweet", post to a WhatsApp group or leave a comment on a Facebook page, fill it with words that promote peace and harmony, respect and love and do your part to eradicate the world of negativity and darkness. Those keystrokes just may have the power to tip the scales and bring the Geulah.

BEIS IYAR SHIUR

On the Birthday of the Rebbe Maharash, join Rabbi Johnson in learning one of his Maamarim:

The Omer and the Sotah - A Chassidic explanation of the Midrash of two sisters and the Sotah water, one who is guilty and one who is innocent.

Sunday Beis Iyar 7:30pm. Zoom details to be advised.

KINNUS TORAH

Last Sunday, Kollel together with Yeshivah Gedolah hosted our annual Kinnus Torah.

A nice crowd participated in the online Kinnus. Rabbonim and Shluchim from interstate, Kollel Yungeleit and YG Shluchim and Talmidim addressed a variety of topics in Halacha, Chassidus and Jewish thought.

FULL PROGRAM

The Kollel program of Shiurim for term 2 will commence next week.

The program offers dozens of weekly shiurim, covering a broad range of topics and at various times of the day. A comprehensive schedule of shiurim for men and women will be shared in the next few days. We invite you to join us.