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Hesped of HaGaon Rav Nota Schiller ז"ל Rosh Yeshivas Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Wiener Dean – Yeshivas Ohr Somayach

Harav Nota Schiller ז"ל was not just a Rebbe for his Talmidim, but rather he was really a father to his Talmidim. Torah Jews have both a biological father and also a spiritual father. Since most of Rav Schiller's many Talmidim had no Jewish education or mesorah from their secular families, he was their spiritual father. He taught them to revere Torah and Mitzvos, and how to approach life.

Rav Schiller ז"ל didn't just believe that a Baal Teshuva should be a person who is observant, i.e. keeping Shabbos, Kashrus, and putting on Tefillin. He wanted his Talmidim to be "regular" frum Jews that can fit in seamlessly into a frum community. His desire was that wherever his Talmidim end up living they are regular "card carrying" members of their respective Frum communities. Whether they live in Ramat Beit Shemesh, Passaic, Edison, Toronto, Chicago, London, Johannesburg or Melbourne they should be indistinguishable from their contemporaries who were raised observant. They should not have "Baal Teshuva" painted across their forehead.

How was the Rosh HaYeshiva ז"ל able to successfully achieve this goal? How was he able to get his Talmidim to be "regular" members of the frum community? He achieved this by stressing to his Talmidim the preeminence and importance of learning Torah. He insightfully understood that if the Baal Teshuva did not "catch up" to his Frum From Birth contemporaries in learning, he will be severely hampered in his ability to raise a frum family. That is why the Ohr Somayach graduates are so successful in staying observant after they leave Yeshiva, and that their children are also following in their parents' footsteps. When a Baal Teshuva can prepare Gemara with Rishonim by himself without using Artscroll and when he can open a Mishna Berura by himself, then he feels like a "regular" frum Jew, and he raises healthy frum children. That was part of the Hashkafa that the Rosh HaYeshiva established in Ohr Somayach.

But we must ask ourselves, how was the Rosh HaYeshiva ז"ל able to impart this tremendously valuable and important Hashkafa and message to his Talmidim? How was he successful in passing on this message to his many Talmidim? Part of the answer was due to his personal example. Whenever you walked into his office, he would immediately begin to tell you Chiddushei Torah. He would continue to tell you Chiddushim until you had to leave to give a shiur or to meet someone. That personal example was worth a thousand words! Secondly, the Rosh HaYeshiva always brought in the leading Talmidei Chachamim of the

generation to impress upon the Talmidim the importance and centrality of learning Torah. Great luminaries such as Rav Aharon Feldman Shlita, Rav Nachman Bulman, ztz'l, Rav Moshe Shapira z"tz'l, and Rav Dov Schwartzman z"tz'l all had major teaching roles in Ohr Somayach. Currently, Rav Yitzchak Breitowitz Shlita and Rav Asher Weiss Shlita have prominent roles in Ohr Somayach.

In Parshas Chaye Sarah, Avraham Avinu sends his servant Eliezer to find a Shidduch for his son Yitzchak. He makes two requirements for the shidduch to proceed. Firstly, the girl must be from his family in Chutz la'áretz, and not from the Canaanite girls who dwell in the land of Israel, and secondly, she must come to the land Israel to live with Yitzchak. What are the odds of such a shidduch being successful? Practically none! However, since Avraham Avinu believed that this was the right shidduch for his son, he didn't compromise in his principles. He demanded that Eliezer follow his instructions exactly, even if the odds were stacked against him. And since Avraham Avinu stuck to his vision and principles of what is right, HaShem Helped him to find the perfect shidduch for Yitzchak.

We find the same thing with the Rosh HaYeshiva z"tz'l and his lifelong partner in Ohr Somayach, Rav Mendel Weinbach z"tz'l. When they planned to start a Yeshiva for Baalei Teshuva, everyone discouraged them, and said that it is impossible to bring Jews back to teshuva. Today, we understand the reality of the Baal Teshuva movement as a given fact. In fact, 30% of the Torah community in Eretz Yisroel are Baalei Teshuva or the children of Baalei Teshuva! But when the Roshei Yeshiva z"tz'l started Ohr Somayach in the 1970's it was considered impossible that secular Jews would return to Torah observance. These two great Tzaddikim were discouraged in their efforts, and were told that they were wasting their time. But like Avraham Avinu, they persisted against all odds, and continued with their project. And look at the success which they achieved! Tens of thousands of families who have become Torah observant and true Bnei Torah through Ohr Somayach! Four generations of Talmidim where the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren have all remained observant and are Bnei Torah! We can learn from the example of these great Tzaddikim that we must persist with our Torah projects even when the task in front of us seems insurmountable. When we stick to our vision and principles, we are given great siyata dishmaya.

The Rosh HaYeshiva z"tz'l was a man of many exceptional talents. He had an amazingly sharp mind and he possessed extraordinary leadership abilities. When he walked into a room, you immediately felt leadership and nobility. He also possessed an amazing command of the English language, utilizing words that most of us did not comprehend. He was also a very gifted writer. He really could have succeeded at anything in life, whether in Torah study, the world of commerce, politics, or anything else. Yet, he gave all of these extraordinary abilities to HaShem to bring His Children home as Baalei Teshuva. He knew that this was his mission in life, and he dedicated every fibre of his being to accomplish this mission. He never thought about himself for a minute. It was all for the Kevod Shamayim and how to bring Jews back to Torah and Mitzvos. Rav Wolbe z"tz'l said that the definition of a Gadol is a person that uses all of his abilities to serve HaShem. The Rosh HaYeshiva was certainly a Gadol who used all of his abilities to increase Kevod Shamayim.

At the end of the Chumash, the Medrash Rabbah says that the evil Bilam was a prophet who was on the same level as Moshe Rabbeinu. This is very very difficult to understand! How could the wicked and corrupt Bilam be a prophet on the level of Moshe Rabbeinu? To answer this question, the great Maharil Diskin explains that Bilam saw all of the same prophetic visions which Moshe Rabbeinu saw. However, those visions stayed in his mind, and were unable to penetrate his emotions and his body. Because his body and emotions were impure, the prophetic visions were not integrated into his being. On the other hand, Moshe Rabbeinu was able to fully integrate his prophetic visions into his being, and he was able to pass them on to the Jewish people. We could say the same thing about the Rosh HaYeshiva z"tz'l. Whatever thoughts that were in his brilliant mind were also in his heart and in his body. He was totally integrated, and therefore was able to pass on his Torah to his Talmidim.

That is why it is very fitting that we are reading the Parshios pertaining to the Mishkan during this period when the Rosh HaYeshiva was Niftar. Our Sages tell us that the Beis HaMikdash (and the Mishkan) are referred to as a "neck." This seems to be a very strange description of the holy Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash! However, we could explain this concept that the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash were the bridge between the spiritual and the physical in our world. Through them, spirituality was able to descend into our world. The neck of a person is also the bridge between the spiritual and physical parts of a person. The head is the more rational, spiritual part of the person, and the body is the more physical part. The neck is the bridge between the two parts. That is why it is truly fitting that we are reading these parshios during the period when the Rosh HaYeshiva z"tz'l was Niftar. Like the Beis HaMikdash, the spirituality of the Rosh HaYeshiva z"tz'l was fully integrated into all parts of his being.

It is also very fitting that the Rosh HaYeshiva z"tz'l was Niftar during the week that we are busy preparing for Purim. During Purim, the Jews did a major Teshuva for participating in the Seudah of Achashverosh. They not only did Teshuva, but they accepted the Torah a second time out of love. On Chag HaShavuot, we accepted the Torah out of fear, but on Purim, we accepted it a second time out of love. By doing so, the Jews merited the great miracles which occurred on Purim. Isn't it fitting that "The King of Teshuva", Rav Nota Schiller z"tz'l should leave us now? During the time of Teshuva! During a time of Kabbalos HaTorah out of love!

We have so much to learn from this great man, and hopefully, with HaShem's Help, we can follow in his giant footsteps. Yehi Zichro Boruch

From the Brooklyn streets of Brownsville and East Flatbush in the 1940's, a 10 year old public school boy immersed in stickball, basketball and with dreams of becoming a shortstop for his beloved Brooklyn Dodgers, enters a fledgling yeshiva katana eager for new students. While his generation is leaving Orthodoxy in droves, his loving rebbeim ignite a spark within him that grows in intensity as he progresses in his learning at Yeshivas Chaim Berlin, under the tutelage of HaRav Hutner and in Ner Yisroel Yeshiva under his rebbe, Rav Yaacov Weinberg. After his marriage, the young Rabbi Nota Schiller, moves to Eretz Yisroel to continue his learning in Rav Mordechai Elefant's Itri Yeshiva in Jerusalem. After a "chance" meeting with two secular, very bright young brothers (one a student at Harvard the other at Columbia), who are in Israel for a year on a secular Zionist study program, he and his chavrusah, Rabbi Noach Weinberg, make a decision that will change the Jewish World. They'll start a yeshiva for

young Jewish men with limited or no background in traditional Jewish learning. Despite a promising start and the strong encouragement of the Poseik Hador, Rav Yosef Elyashiv, they suffer a number of financial setbacks from a skeptical Orthodox Jewish World, which has almost given up hope of a revival of Halachic Jewry and they're forced to close. But, after a few years of indefatigable fundraising efforts, they manage to convince a few visionary philanthropists to share their dream and initially fund their enterprise. With just a handful of eager students and a passionate and stellar rabbinic staff they launch what will become the forefather of the Baal Teshuvah Movement that will sweep the Jewish World and change it forever. The Ohr Somayach Podcast featuring some of the most experienced personalities in Jewish outreach today, from Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem. Yeshivas Ohr Somayach located in the heart of Jerusalem, is an educational institution for young Jewish English-speaking men. We have a range of classes and programs designed for the intellectually curious and academically inclined - for those with no background in Jewish learning to those who are proficient in Gemara and other original source material.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Two Types of Rest

“And on the seventh day, a Shabbat of Shabbatot” (31:15)

There are two kinds of rest. The first kind of rest is a rest from weariness, a chance to recharge your batteries, to enable yourself to continue to work. For no one can work indefinitely. Everyone needs a break. The second kind of rest comes at the end of a project. The last brushstroke of a painting. The final sentence of a novel. The last brick in a new home. Then you take a step back and look at your work. You feel the satisfaction of completion. It's finished. It's done. A time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labor. "You shall labor for six days and do all your work." How can you do all your work in six days? Can you build an entire house in six days? The Torah teaches us that when Shabbat comes, even though you're halfway through your project, you should think of it as though it was finished completely. In other words, on Shabbat you should picture yourself as experiencing the sense of rest and satisfaction that comes after a good job well done, and not that you're just taking a break. In a sense, this is what Hashem did when the world was six days old. He looked at the Creation and saw that it was finished - the greatest building project ever - the Heavens and the earth were completed. Our rest on Shabbat is a commemoration of that rest.

This is the essential difference between our Shabbat and the secular idea of a 'day of rest.' The secular world understands the day of rest as a break so that you can return to the week revitalized and refreshed. It's only a break. Shabbat, on the other hand, is not just pushing the pause button on life. It's the creation of a feeling that everything in one's life is complete. There's nothing left to do — except sit back and enjoy the fruits of one's labor.

Source: Based on Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in L'Torah U'lamo 'adim

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Sanhedrin 100-106

Reward for Building a City

Rabbi Yochanan said, “Why did Omri merit to become a king? Because he added one city to the Land of Israel.”

Rabbi Yochanan continues this statement on our *daf* by citing a verse (in Kings I 16:24): “And he (Omri) bought the mountain of Shomron from Shemer for two talents worth of silver... he built up the mountain and called the name of the *city which he built*... Shomron.”

Omri merited a reward of being king despite his being quite evil, as it says in the next verse, “And Omri did what was evil in the eyes of Hashem, and he was more wicked than all those who preceded him.” (Kings I 16:25)

However, if we look at the verse before the one that speaks about his building a new city (Kings I 16:23), it appears that Omri already became king *before* he added a city to Eretz Yisrael. That verse states, “In the thirty-first year of Asa, the king of Judah, Omri ruled over Israel for twelve years; in Tirzah he ruled for six years.” Rashi comments that Omri ruled there as king for six years *before* he built the city of Shomron in the Land of Israel.

This question is posed by the Maharsha, who answers as follows: Rabbi Yochanan is not teaching the reason why the evil Omri merited being king of Israel. Rather, he is explaining why Omri merited a kingdom that would span for more generations than for previous kings of Israel. He merited that not only his son, but also his son’s son would sit on the throne of kingship. The Maharsha cites a Midrash Yalkut, which appears to support his explanation of our *gemara*.

Had the Maharsha not explained Rabbi Yochanan’s words in this manner, perhaps one might have thought to explain them differently, since Rabbi Yochanan’s words explicitly appear to be giving a reason for Omri *himself* meriting being a king. It was certainly known to the One Above that Omri would, in the *future*, when he would gain the power of being a king, add a new city to Eretz Yisrael — and this would be his merit for becoming king in the first place.

▪ *Sanhedrin 102b*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels and Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Betzalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels.

The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Shabbat, an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments.

The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems to be delayed, and so they force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. Hashem tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship, he smashes the Tablets and destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men.

Moshe ascends the mountain again to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's clouds of glory return. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but he is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new Tablets, and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy.

Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of Tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

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Q & A

Questions

1. How many "*geira*" are in a shekel?
 2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
 3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
 4. The Jews were counted after Yom Kippur and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19-year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
 5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
 6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called "*malachim*" ?
 7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* understanding), and *da'at* (knowledge)?
 8. Shabbat is a "sign." What does it signify?
 9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
 10. How many books are there in Tanach?
 11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
 12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
 13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
 14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
 15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
 16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
 17. In verse 33:2, G-d says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
 18. How did G-d show that He forgave the Jewish People?
 19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
 20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?
- All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

Answers

1. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the Mishkan.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven ingredients were used making the incense.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da'at* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between G-d and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (Pesach sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation which has estranged itself from G-d!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say "Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people."
16. 32:34 - Whenever G-d punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. G-d commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 9)

“The amount of sleep required by the average person is five minutes more.”
Wilson Mizener – American Playwright

The first paragraph of the Shema continues: “Teach them to your children and speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire (at night) and when you arise.”

The Chofetz Chaim asks how exactly are we supposed to teach our children the timeless and priceless values of the Torah? He answers that such vital life-lessons can only be taught by example. This sounds so incredibly simplistic and obvious. Yet, how many times do we expect our children to behave in an exemplary fashion, if we, ourselves, do not?

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky points out that it is a Torah obligation for parents to educate their children. However, he adds, parents must *influence* their children. In Hebrew, the word influence is ‘*hashpa’ah*,’ which is rooted in the word ‘*shapuah*,’ which means something that is inclined, like a slanted roof. Rabbi Kaminetzky explains that everything parents do and say flows down to their children. Everything they do and say makes an impact and influences their children. Unfortunately, there are many times when the impact made was not the one that was intended.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn relates a disturbingly sad story that he heard from a Rabbi who teaches seven-year-old boys in *cheder*. One of the boys was stealing things out of the other children’s backpacks. It reached the point where the Rabbi had no other alternative but to phone the boy’s father and ask him to come to speak with him about his son’s behavior. When he gently told the father that his son was stealing things, the father was completely shaken. He asked the Rabbi what his son had been taking, and the Rabbi told him that he was taking pencils and erasers. On hearing this, the boy’s father shock changed to incredulity. He told the Rabbi, “How can that be? He doesn’t need any of those things. I bring plenty of pencils and erasers back from the office where I work!”

He is teaching us that parenting is a twenty-four hour a day sacred undertaking. And the results are often a reflection of *our* behavior and not just our children’s behavior!

Rabbi Yisrael Eliyahu Yehoshua Trunk (1821-1893) from Kutno Poland, one of the Halachic authorities of his generation, had a delightful way of explaining the verse in Tehillim (116:10), “I believed because I spoke.” Rabbi Trunk would say that teaching our children Torah and speaking about proper behavior will reinforce our own belief!

The Maharal (Chiddushei Aggadatot, Kiddushin 134) writes that the word ‘teach’ in our verse is ‘*veshinantam*,’ which contains the letter ‘*nun*’ three times. The Maharal teaches that the Torah is comprised of three different categories of comprehension – *chochmah* (wisdom), *binah* (understanding), *da’at* (knowledge) – each one comprising fifty different “gates.” Each letter ‘*nun*,’ which has the numerical value of fifty, in the word ‘*veshinantam*,’ corresponds to one of the categories. We are being taught that it is our obligation to teach our children that *true* wisdom. The wisdom that brings us closer to our Father in Heaven can only be found in the Torah.

So all-encompassing is our obligation to build up our relationship with Hashem, such that the Shema commands to focus on it at all times. When we are at home and when we are out. When we go to sleep at night and when we wake up in the morning. So that every facet of our lives includes Hashem.

To be continued...

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Ki Sisa/Purim: Heavy Honors

One of the highlights of Purim is singing the song *La’Yehudim haysa orah v’simchah v’sasson v’yikar* — “And there was for the Jews light, and happiness, and gladness, and honor.” The lyrics for that song are taken straight from the Scroll of Esther read on the holiday (Est. 8:16), and that very verse is also traditionally recited every Saturday night as part of the *Havdalah* ceremony. The last word of that passage *v’yikar* (“honor”) seems to be synonymous with the word *kavod* in Hebrew, which likewise refers to “honor.” In this essay, we explore various ways of differentiating between these two apparent synonyms.

Before we try to distinguish between these terms, we should first establish that their respective roots YOD-KUF-REISH (from whence *yakar* derives) and KAF-BET-DALET (from whence *kavod* derives) both carry multiple meanings. The former can refer in Biblical Hebrew to something “precious,” “expensive,” or “honorable,” while the latter can refer to something “heavy/excessive” or “honorable,” as well as to the “liver.” The polysemous nature of these two roots can be understood through the thematic connection between physical weight, value, and honor. This connection reflects a conceptual metaphor deeply embedded in human thought — that is, substantiality equates to importance or worth.

The idea that something physically “heavy” is substantial aligns with the notion that something “valuable” or “expensive” is also substantial in a financial or symbolic sense. In ancient societies, objects made of heavy materials like gold, silver, or stone were often considered precious because of their rarity and durability. Thus, physical weight became a metaphor for financial or intrinsic worth. The more substantial something is—whether in terms of physical weight, financial value, or social importance—the more respect or honor it

commands. A “heavy” object was difficult to carry and thus required effort to move, symbolizing its importance. Similarly, something “expensive” or “precious” required significant resources to obtain and hold onto, showing it to be something worth expending those efforts.

Rabbi Eliyahu Bachur in *Sefer Tishbi* already linked the two meanings of *yakar* in the sense of “precious” and “expensive,” explaining that everything “precious” becomes “expensive.” Indeed, economists now know that the law of supply and demand dictates that the more precious something is, the rarer it becomes because there is a lower supply, which causes its price/value to rise.

Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh of Carpentras (in *Aholei Yehuda*) connects the word *kaved* (“liver”) to this idea by noting that the liver's function is to filter the nutrients that enter the body and distribute them to one's various limbs and organs according to their needs. This form of distribution is considered an “honorable” way of divvying resources, and thus the very liver is associated with honor. Alternatively, he explains the connection between “liver” and “honor” based on the Talmud (*Brachot* 60b), which teaches that the liver is the body part that causes “anger.” Given that most cases of anger result from a person perceiving something as slighting or disregarding the honor they feel is due to them, this means that the liver — “the limb of anger” — is intimately tied up with the concept of honor, so it makes sense why the Biblical Hebrew word for “liver” would derive from the same root as the Biblical Hebrew word for “honor.”

In Rabbinic Hebrew, the verb *l'chabed* not only means “honoring,” but also carries the sense of “sweeping” or “cleaning.” In contemporary discourse, the term *kibud kal* refers to “light refreshments” or a “repast.” Both concepts — cleaning and providing refreshments — are understood as ways of honoring one's guests or attendees.

In his introduction to *Yeriot Shlomo*, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau speculates that perhaps the triliteral root KAF-BET-DALET was formed as a fusion of the two biliteral roots KAF-BET (“extinguishing”) and BET-DALET (“aloneness/individual”). He does not, however, intimate how this portmanteau could be thematically explained, and in his works *Yeriot Shlomo* and *Cheshek Shlomo*, he never revisits this supposition. Perhaps we may posit how these two roots connect back to the idea of “honor” by appealing to the notion of honor as a social construct, as it is society as a whole that determines what deserves honor and how honor may be shown. This emphasis on the social aspect perhaps can be said to “extinguish” or “diminish” individuality in some ways.

As Rabbi Eliyahu Bachur in *Meturgaman* notes, Targum tends to translate instances of the Hebrew KAF-BET-DALET both when it appears as “heavy” (Ex. 4:10, 7:14, II Sam. 14:26)

and “honor” (Ex. 20:11, I Sam. 2:29, Isa. 43:23) into the Aramaic YOD-KUF-REISH. In light of that fact, a simple way of differentiating between *kavod* and *yakar* might be that while the former is a Hebrew word, the latter is an Aramaic word. In this way, the difference between the two synonyms is not semantic, but rather linguistic/etymological. The problem with this solution is that declensions of the root YOD-KUF-REISH (from which *yakar* derives) appear

many times in the Bible, even in sections written in Biblical Hebrew. This makes it difficult to say that *yakar* is not a Hebrew word, but is only an Aramaic word.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau traces the word *yakar* to the biliteral root KUF-REISH (explaining the initial YOD as radical to the word's core root). He sees the principal semantic meaning of that root as relating to a "strong impact" that results from extreme weight or velocity. The way he explains it, something that may be branded as *yakar* is something whose mere mention can yield a great impact. For example, a precious gem is called *yakar* (Ezek. 27:22) because simply mentioning such gemstones impresses people and elicits strong reactions. In the same way, this term can be applied to anything that is considered especially "important" or "honorable."

In the Scroll of Esther, the related term *yikar* refers to "excellence," "esteem" or "honorableness." Examples: when Achashverosh's showy party was meant to demonstrate his "honor" (Est. 1:4); when Achashverosh issued a decree demanding that all women give "honor" to their husbands (Est. 1:20); when the king wanted to give "honor" to Mordechai (Est. 6:3, 6:6); and, finally, in the story's resolution after the Jews were saved from Haman's decree, they were happy and were said to have *yikar* (Est. 8:16). We have discussed the two-letter root KUF-REISH in Rabbi Pappenheim's etymological system many times over the years.

Rabbi Pappenheim further writes that in the Bible something "rare" is also called *yakar*, like when the Bible relates that in Samuel's youth, prophecy was considered *yakar* - "a rarity" (I Sam. 3:1). Rabbi Pappenheim relates this back to the core meaning of the biliteral root in question by explaining that something which occurs only seldomly (making it rare) is more impressive and creates a greater "impact" on people than things that occur on a more regular basis. Additionally, something costly/expensive is also called *yakar* because that high price is related to either the great esteem in which that commodity is held, or the rarity of its existence. For example, the Psalmist says, "the death for His pious ones is *yakar* in the eyes of Hashem" (Ps. 116:15). As Rabbi Pappenheim explains it, this means that Hashem is "hesitant" to kill off righteous people without just cause, because such pious people are so "important" to Him that it is "costly" in His eyes for them to die indifferently.

Unlike Rabbi Pappenheim who sees *yakar* as meaning both "rare" and "honorable/important," Malbim (in *Sefer HaCarmel* and in *Yair Ohr*) splits the difference and uses these two discrete meanings to draw a distinction between the words *yakar* and *kavod*. Meaning, Malbim explains that *yakar* primarily refers to something "rare." In that way, *yakar* denotes something that is not *inherently* important, but is simply important due to the circumstances (i.e., that it has very few equals). Examples of this might be precious metals or gems, which are not particularly valuable in their own right, but rather their "importance" merely stems from the fact that they happen to be rare. On the other hand, *kavod* describes something which deserves to be honored and venerated because of its own *inherent* properties. Examples of this are Torah Sages, who have achieved their sagacity through hard work and making right decisions.

It should be noted, though, that the Vilna Gaon's son Rabbi Avraham Vilner (*Be'er Avraham* to Est. 1:4) writes the exact opposite of the Malbim: *kavod* refers to one's esteem or importance

vis-a-vis others, while *yakar* refers to one's *inherent* value without needing to be compared to others. Thus, we are back to square one in trying to differentiate between *yakar* and *kavod*.

In defense of the supposition we proposed above that *yakar* is the Aramaic equivalent to the Hebrew *kavod*, we point to a rabbinic tradition that sees the word *yakar* as quintessentially Aramaic: The Talmud (*Megillah* 9a) asserts that there are appearances of Aramaic in the Scroll of Esther, and one Amoraic sage adduces the following verse to bolster that assertion: “And all women should give honor [*yikar*] to their husbands” (Est. 1:20). The fact that Esther uses the seemingly-Aramaic word *yikar* rather than the Hebrew is seen by the Talmud as proof that Aramaic appears in Esther.

Likewise, in asserting that Adam’s spoken language was actually Aramaic, the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 38b) cites a verse from Psalms ascribed to Adam: “How honorable to me are Your thoughts, O God?” (Ps. 139:17). As commentaries like *Yad Ramah* (to *Sanhedrin* 38b), *Maharsha* (to *Bava Batra* 75b), and *Aruch L’Ner* (to *Sanhedrin* 38b) explain it, this verse uses the Aramaic word for “honorable” (*yakar*) found primarily in Targum, in lieu of the Hebrew word *kavod*. Since Adam used an Aramaic word, this means to the Talmud that he spoke Aramaic. The problem with this understanding, as has already been pointed out by Rabbi Benzion Meir Chai Uziel (in his glosses to *Megillah* 9a), is that the word *yakar* also exists in Hebrew, wherein we already have seen it means “precious.” [In an alternate elucidation of this Talmud passage, *Yad Ramah* explains that the Talmud’s proof was from the word “Your thoughts” (*ray’echa*), which he understands to be a cognate of the supposedly Aramaic word *ra’ayon* (“idea”).]

Interestingly, various commentators were bothered by why the Amoraic sage in question offered the appearance of *yikar* in Est. 1:20 as proof of Aramaic in Esther, if the word *yikar* already appears earlier in Est. 1:4 when describing Achashverosh’s banquet as showing his “honor.” That question is dealt with by Rabbi Efrayim Zalmen Margulies (responsa *Beis Efrayim*, *Orach Chaim* §70), Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Gur (*Sfat Emet* to *Megillah* 9a), Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes (in his glosses to *Megillah* 9a and *Sanhedrin* 38b), and Rabbi Eliezer Harstik (*Raglei Mevasser* to *Sefer HaTishbi*).

Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein (in *Safah La’ne’emanim* pages 34-35) proposes an answer based on the idea that a single word from a different language in a given corpus of text is unsurprising and cannot be sufficient proof that that text “uses” another language (because individual loanwords are used all the time). Rather, he asserts that only the use of multiple words from another language in a single sentence could constitute proof that a text “uses” another language, so the Amoraic sage in question preferred Est. 1:20 to Est. 1:4 as proof of the Scroll of Esther “using” Aramaic. Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathansohn (*Beit Shaul* to *Yadayim* 4:5) answers that the Talmud meant to seek out an instance of an Aramaic word being inflected in a Hebraized way, not just a word whose etymology lies in Aramaic (see also Rabbi Naftali Maskileison’s commentary *Miskenot Naphtali* to *Yadayim* 4:5). Before we conclude this essay, something would be amiss if I didn’t delve into my favorite topic —Jewish names. There were several Medieval rabbis named Rabbeinu Yakar or Rabbeinu Yakir (for examples, see *Tosafot* to *Eruvin* 40b, *Avodah Zarah* 68a, *Chullin* 47a). These sages include one whose son Rabbi

Yaakov bar Yakar was a teacher of Rashi, and another one whose son Rabbi Yehuda ben Yakar was a teacher of Nachmanides. It has been argued by scholars that Yakar/Yakir was not actually a given name, but was rather a nickname for people named Ephraim (although Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Kanarfogel wrote to me in private correspondence that this is not true across the board). There's even a female counterpart to this name, Yakirah.

The onomastic connection between Ephraim and Yakar/Yakir is based on a Biblical passage in which Hashem rhetorically asks if His son Ephraim (a metonym for the Kingdom of Israel, which was steeped in idolatry) is “precious” (*yakir*) to Him (Jer. 31:19). This punning is not a unique phenomenon, as other Medieval rabbis with given names from the Bible were also granted other nicknames associated with those Biblical names. Most famously, Rashi's grandson Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir was nicknamed Rabbeinu Tam because the Biblical Jacob (Yaakov) was described as a “wholesome man” (*ish tam*) who sat in the tent (Gen. 25:27). Similarly, Rabbeinu Porat (cited by *Tosafot* to *Shabbat* 17a, 26b, 28a 35b, 41a, 64b, 80a, 107b, 117b, 120a, 148a, 148b, 149a, 156b, *Yoma* 21a, 46a) was really named Yosef (see *Tosafot* to *Shabbat* 21b, 24b, 134b) based on the Biblical phrase *ben porat Yosef* (Gen. 49:22).

INSIGHTS INTO HALACHA

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

5785 – The Rarest Year of Them All

Part VII

Purim Meshulash

As detailed in previous installments in our series, our current year, 5785, is not only a rare one, but calendarically speaking, actually the hands-down **rarest** of them all. 5785 is classified as a *HaSh" A* year in our calendars. This abbreviation is referring to Rosh Hashana falling out on Thursday (*hei*), both months of Cheshvan and Kislev being *shalem* (*shin* - 30 day months instead of possibly 29; these are the only months that can switch off in our set calendar), and Pesach falling out on Sunday (*aleph*).

A *HaSh" A* year is the rarest of years, and out of the 14 possibilities in *Tur*'s 247-year calendar cycle, this year type occurs on average only once in about 30.19 years (approximately 3.3 percent of the time). Indeed, at times there are 71 years (!) in between *HaSh" A* years. The last time this year type occurred was 31 years ago in 5754 / 1994. The next time will be 20 years hence in 5805 / 2044. The next several times after that are slated to be 27 years further, in 5832 / 2071 and then a 51-year gap in 5883 / 2122.

The reasons and rules governing the whys and whens this transpires are too complicated for this discussion; suffice to say that when the *Mishnah Berurah* discusses these issues he writes “*ain kan makom l'ha'arich*,” that this is not the place to expound in detail, which is certainly good enough for this author.

Obviously, such a rare calendar year will contain many rare occurrences. This series sets out to detail many of them. As we get nearer to the actual events, we will perhaps discuss them in greater detail. Let's continue on our journey through our unique year.

Purim Shechal B'Erev Shabbos

As we are already up to discussing the Purim season, the next calendar quirk has significant importance. You see, in 5785, as the first of Adar was on Shabbos, then Purim, fourteen days later, will fall out on Friday. For most of us worldwide this will mean a rushed day to pack in all of the Purim-day Mitzvos before the onset Shabbos. Indeed, the *Rema* (O.C. 695:2) writes that on a *Purim Shechal B'Erev Shabbos*, we should start the Purim *Seudah* before *Chatzos* – *halachic* high noon. However, if that is not feasible, the *Mishnah Berurah* (ad loc. 10) cites the *Yad Efraim* quoting the *Maharil*, that in this situation; one has a bit more time to start his Purim *Seudah* - until the beginning of the tenth hour - three *halachic* hours before *shkiya*. This is due to the *halacha* that one may not eat a *Seudas Keva* – a set meal within three *halachic* hours prior to the onset of Shabbos, as this will impugn *Kavod Shabbos*.

However, it is reported that Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv was *makpid lechatchilla* like the *Rema*'s ruling to start his Erev Shabbos Purim *Seudah* before *Chatzos*, unless the *Seudah* was not ready. Similarly, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach refers to this as '*minhag hamedakdekim*' to serve the Erev Shabbos Purim *Seudah* before *Chatzos*. The Steipler Gaon did so as well, even finishing before Mincha Gedolah, adding that '*Simchas Purim* continues afterwards.'

Yet, it is important to note that if one was unable to start his *Seudah* before the tenth hour on this Erev Shabbos Purim, he should still eat his Purim *Seudah* then since it is considered a "*Mitzvah B'Shaatah*," A Mitzvah in its proper time, which although not optimal at that specific time, nevertheless trumps the prohibition of not starting a *Seudah* within three *halachic* hours of Shabbos. However, one should not stuff himself at this *Seudah* and minimize bread consumption, in order to save some room for the upcoming *Seudas Shabbos*.

Purim Meshulash!

Yet, for those fortunate enough to live in Yerushalayim (or other walled cities from the time of Yehoshua Bin Nun) where Purim is celebrated on the next day, Shushan Purim, which falls out on Shabbos, this unique set of circumstances triggers the incredible *Purim Meshulash*, or "Triple Purim," a rare three-day Purim extravaganza. This last occurred four years ago in 5781/2021, and before that, thirteen years prior, back in 5768/2008, and prior to that in 5765/2005 and 5761/2001, and is next expected in 20 years, in 5805/2045, and then three years later in 5808/2048.

This rare occurrence is due to the famous *Gezeiras Chazal* regarding Shofar and Lulav, that due to the Megillah obligation, one may unwittingly carry it on Shabbos outside the permitted *Reshus* to an expert. This dictum is found throughout *Shas* – i.e. see the Mishnah and following Gemara in *Rosh Hashana* (29b), *Beitzah* (17b-18a), *Megillah* (4b), *Pesachim* (69a), and *Sukka* (42b).

Hence, the Megillah may not be read on Shabbos; ergo, Purim's *Mitzvos* get divvied up to the surrounding days.

It is important to note that this three-day *Purim Meshulash* is not an actual three-day Yom Tov. Each separate day possesses unique observances of Purim exclusive to it, with the different *Mitzvos* of Purim applying separately on Friday, Shabbos, and Sunday.

Friday's *Mitzvos* are the *Megillah* reading and *Matanos L'Evyonim* - following the rest of the world.

Shabbos, the actual day of Shushan Purim, has the recitation of *Al Hanissim* and the special *Purim Maftir* ("Vayavo Amalek"; *Parashas Beshalach*, *Shemos* Ch. 17:8), as well as the *haftarah* of *Parashas Zachor* ("Pakaditi"; *Shmuel I* Ch. 15:2) read a second time (two weeks in a row!).

There is also a special *inyan* to learn *Hilchos Purim* on this Shabbos Shushan Purim. As the Gemara *Megillah* concludes (32a), Moshe Rabbeinu enacted to be "*Sho'elin U'Darshin B'Inyano shel Yom*" – to learn each Yom Tov's *halachos* on the Yom Tov itself. Hence, since Shabbos is the actual day of Purim for those observing *Purim Meshulash*, this requirement is on Shabbos this year. Generally speaking, this requirement is fulfilled by reading the Megillah (which, toward the end, discusses the *Mitzvos Hayom*). But this year, as the Megillah is read on the same day of Purim as the rest of the world – it is not the actual '*Bo Bayom*' of Shushan Purim; hence the need to mention this as a distinct *inyan* of its own.

Sunday's *Mitzvos* are *Mishloach Manos* and the festive *Purim Seudah*.

Yes, as one who has celebrated a few over the years, there is nothing quite like the incredible joy of a *Purim Meshulash*. An exceptional holiday for an exceptional year. And, after this year, we will have to wait a full score until we will get a chance to experience it again.

Our fascinating journey detailing the many remarkable facets of our rare year will IY"H be continued...

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch famously wrote that "the Jew's catechism is his calendar." It is this author's wish that by showcasing the uniqueness of our calendar year and its rare *minhagim*, this series will help raise appreciation of them and our fascinating calendrical customs.

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