

In the previous Mishna we learnt that one may not place meat to cook close to Shabbat as one may come to stir the coals by mistake whilst it is Shabbat. This Mishna, the last in Perek Aleph will deal with exceptions, where we trust people not to stir the coals.

When the 14th of Nissan falls on a Friday, one must cook the Korban Pesach before Shabbat. However, our Mishna teaches us that we may lower the lamb into the oven (they had vertical facing ovens, like a saucepan) late on a Friday afternoon allowing it to cook on Shabbat. This is because when a group of people cook the Korban Pesach, they are diligent and aware of their actions and as such will remind each other not to increase the heat of the coals by stirring. In the Bet Hamikdash, there was a fire to allow

the barefooted Kohanim warm themselves. The Mishna here teaches that it is sufficient to light only some parts of the stacked wood just before Shabbat [even though the fire will not become strong until after nightfall], and we are not concerned that the Kohanim might relight the stack on Shabbat if it goes out.

However, outside the Bet Hamikdash, a bonfire lit before Shabbat must have time to catch. Rav Yehudah says that when lighting charcoal, once any of it is lit, it will all always catch. Therefore, one will not come to stoke it so one may light them just before Shabbat.

Progress may be slow but we have just finished Perek Aleph! Hadran Alach and we will start Perek Bet next week IY”H.

‘Parasha Digest – Shemot’

ראשון: Yoseph, his brothers and the entire generation die in Eretz Mitzrayim. A new Pharaoh came into power, imposed slave labour on the Jewish people and ordered the midwives to kill any Jewish males born. However the midwives let the baby boys live.

שני: Upon hearing this Pharaoh issued a decree that all male Jewish newborns be thrown into the River Nile. Moshe Rabeinu is born and the story of him travelling down the River Nile in a reed basket is told. Batya the daughter of Pharaoh adopts Moshe, whilst he is raised by his mother Yocheved.

שלישי: Moshe kills an Egyptian who was being cruel to a Jewish worker. He flees Eretz Mitzrayim, goes to the house of Yitro whose daughter Tziporah he eventually marries. Their first son Gershon is born.

רביעי: Moshe is lead to a bush with fire which is not being consumed. Hashem tells Moshe to remove his shoes as the ground is Kadosh (holy). Hashem tells him that he has seen the condition of the Jewish people in Eretz Mitzrayim and that Moshe will lead the people out.

חמישי: Hashem tells Moshe to go to Pharaoh with the Zekeinim (elders) of the Jewish people and to request that the Jewish people will be set free. Moshe doubts that he will be believed to have been sent by Hashem so Hashem turns his staff into a snake as proof. Also Moshe's hand turns from having leprosy to not having leprosy and if he takes water from the river Nile onto dry land then the water will turn to blood. And Aharon is chosen to be Moshe's spokesperson due to his speech impediment.

ששי: Moshe asks Yitro for permission to go on his mission. Moshe's son is circumcised and he gathers all of the Zekeinim with Aharon.

שביעי: Moshe and Aharon unsuccessfully confronted Pharaoh. Pharaoh punished the Jews by refusing to even supply straw for the making of his own bricks. The Jewish officers were held responsible and were beaten by the Egyptian taskmasters. The Jewish task men confronted Moshe and Moshe then confronted G-d. Hashem reassured Moshe that his mission would be successful.



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A Brother's Love

At a glance the blessing which the Kohanim recite before bestowing their blessings upon the congregation, which outside the land of Israel, takes place only on festivals seems fairly straight forward. However, upon closer examination, this blessing, - which is a Birkat mitzvah, a blessing prior to doing a mitzvah – seems unusual on 2 different accounts. Firstly, in a usual blessing of this nature, we simply state "... who has sanctified us with his commandments, and has commanded us", yet in this particular blessing, the Kohanim mention "the holiness of Aaron," their ancestor. Additionally, and perhaps even stranger, the blessing is ended with the word "*be-ahava*", "with love". In no other blessing over any mitzvah whatsoever do we find any other adjective within the Berachah! We do not say "... and has commanded us regarding washing the hands *with purity*, or *with joy*". In no other blessings do we find that we need to describe a facet of the mitzvah we are about to perform. So why is this blessing so anomalous, and what are the reasons behind these changes?

The answer lies in a pasuk in this week's Sedrah, as explained by the following Gemara, in Mesechet Shabbat, (77 קלט, amud א – 139 A). There is a Pasuk in Parshat Tetzaveh (Perek כח, Pasuk ל; chapter 28, verse 30) which says Aaron must put the urim v'tumim "*al libo*" - "upon his heart". The Gemara wants to know why "on his heart" and how did Aaron merit this great reward of having it "upon his heart"?

In this week's Sedrah, in chapter 3, G-D appears to Moshe, and commands him to go to the land of Egypt, speak to Pharaoh, and lead the Jewish people out of Egypt. At that point, Moshe says something truly remarkable, and is almost unrepeated in the 1000 year history of Jewish prophets. He says no. In fact, when G-D gives him a clear and unambiguous instruction, he refuses 5 times! However, Hashem says something to him, and according to Rashi on that pasuk, it was this that made Moshe finally acquiesce and go to Egypt. This pasuk (chapter 4, verse 14) reads: "*is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite? ... Behold, he is going out to meet you, and when he sees you he will rejoice in his heart*". Moshe was only refusing G-D's word, according to Rashi, because he thought it would

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cause Aaron to be upset that the younger brother was chosen over him, and he wasn't willing to cause his brother grievance. However, as soon as he was reassured that Aaron would be happy, not just externally, but "he will rejoice in his heart", then Moshe agreed to go along with it.

Herein lies the answer to the Gemara, and the reason why the Berachah for Birkat Kohanim has those special features. Aaron displayed here a unique character trait, he was genuinely happy for another person *even when that person was promoted over him!* This shows us the total opposite of jealousy, and personifies the total pursuit of harmony. The Kohanim, as they ascend to bless the congregation, recall this incredible character trait of Aaron to give selflessly, and not to be jealous of others. The word "with love" at the end of their blessing emphasises this exact attribute, and when conferring this blessing, they remind themselves of this essential quality to give and not to envy others. Additionally, this is the answer given in the Gemara. That very "heart" which was glad for his younger brother, which was so willing to sacrifice his own glory, merited the honour of having the "breastplate of justice" on that very generous and selfless heart.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (chapter 1, Mishna 12) says: "*be like the disciples of Aaron, loving peace, pursuing peace, loving people...*". How often, in a society such as ours, do we allow petty jealousies to get in the way of building successful relationships with our friends, families and colleagues? How often do we see someone else's success as a threat to our own, and immediately start resenting them? Here is an example of Aaron, who was a very righteous man in his own right, seeing his brother being picked over him for leadership. The seemingly natural course would be of extreme jealousy and even hatred from Aaron. Quite the reverse, as we see the exact opposite, with Aaron being happy for his younger brother. Genuinely happy. This is a perfect example of how to "*pursue peace*", by overcoming our natural "sink or swim" instinct, and truly rejoicing in the successes of others. "*Be like the disciples of Aaron.*" That is indeed a level we should all strive for.

By J.J. Kimche

How The Steipler Dealt With Snowy Winters

When Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky was around the age of 20, the Bolshevik Revolution began in the Soviet Union. Living in Ukraine, which at that time was part of the Union, he was drafted into the Red Army.

Throughout his time in the army, the Steipler, as he was later known, refused to transgress the Shabbos, despite being court-martialled several times for ‘failing to do his duty’. Years later, the Steipler would comment that the feeling of achievement that he experienced when honouring his religious commitments in the army, was never again equalled during the rest of his life.

One such occasion took place on a Friday night in the middle of an icy, cold winter. In the camp where his army division was based, the soldiers took turns to guard the front gate. In order to help them withstand the cold, there was a thick fur coat that the guard on duty would wear, before passing it on to his replacement. Having just said the Shabbos evening prayers in a private corner, the Steipler remembered that it was his turn to guard the gate to the base. Making his way outside into the snow and cold, blustering wind, he reached the sentry post, only to find that the previous guard, when taking off the coat, had hung it on the branch of a nearby tree.

Realising that according to Halacha, he was

forbidden to remove the coat from the branch, he began to debate in his mind whether or not he would be permitted in his circumstances. Deciding that since, as of yet, the situation was not life-threatening, he proceeded to stand by the post without the coat, braving the vicious cold. He thought that in a few minutes, once the frozen conditions became unbearable, he would take down the coat and wear it.

But when a few minutes had passed, the Steipler convinced himself that the situation was still not life-threatening and he could last a few more minutes without the coat. A few more minutes passed and then a few more, but he would still not take down the coat. Each time, he decided that he would take it down in just a few more minutes. He continued like this until his watch was over, and he could return to the warmth of the barracks.

Judging from this story, it is no wonder that the Steipler became what he did, a leader of Klal Yisrael, an unbelievable Tzaddik, and a shining role model to his disciples.

(This story is not intended to pressurise you into braving the cold yourself, and walking around in short sleeves because “I’m going to be like the Steipler”. On the contrary, here at the Living Torah, we actually do recommend that you wrap up warmly with the full works: coat, hat, scarf and gloves (maybe even balaclava). However, we can learn from the Steipler’s incredible *Mesiras Nefesh*, self-sacrifice, in order to keep the Mitzvot as best as he could).

Thought for the Week—Things we can learn from snow:

Snow requires certain ideal conditions (temperature, level of moistness, etc). Otherwise, the snow will melt instantly on impact with the ground, and will be lost as if it was never there. However, if the required conditions are present, layers and layers of snow will build up quickly, and the result will be a beautiful snowy carpet on the ground. Torah is similar in this respect. Someone who opens himself up to Torah, offering the right conditions, will be rewarded with layers and layers of profound insights. However, if someone half-heartedly tries to learn Torah, without removing the sinful aspects of his lifestyle, the Torah will not be absorbed and will effectively disappear from his mind.

A Man Thinks, and G-d Laughs

כָּל־הַבֵּן הַיּוֹדֵד הַיְאֻרָהּ תִּשְׁלִיכֶהוּ

[א - כא]

“... ‘Every son that will be born - into the river you shall throw him!’ ...”

The Pasuk says that Pharaoh tried different methods to stem the tide of the Jewish population explosion. His first attempt was his instructions to the Jewish midwives to kill all the boys and save the girls.

However, Pharaoh saw that this did not work, so he invented another idea: "All sons that are born shall be thrown into the river...". Where did he get this idea from? Isn't there a more effective way than throwing the babies into the Nile?

The answer is that Pharaoh wasn't a fool. He was no reactionary; he acted on the advice of his advisers. Chazal tell us, based on the Gemara [Sanhedrin 101b] that the astrologers of Pharaoh saw that the saviour of Israel would meet his downfall through water. Therefore, Pharaoh, who had this inside ‘intelligence’ decided to throw the Jewish babies and eventually all boys into the Nile, in order to nip this pestilence in the bud and pre-empt and outwit the 'Jewish problem.'

The Steipler Gaon says that this act is a living example of a Pasuk in Mishlei:

רְבוֹת מַחְשָׁבוֹת בְּלִבֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְהָיָה תְּקוּמָתָם וְנִעְצְמוּתָם

"Many are the thoughts/ideas in the heart of man; but Hashem's plan will be established" [19:21].

The Malbim in his commentary on this Pasuk writes that a human being believes himself to be full of possibilities, potential modes of thought and courses of action, to choose as he wills. Yet the single counsel or plan that actually goes into practical effect is often decided by Hashem overriding a man's apparent freedom.

How ironic it is that the plan that was supposed to kill the saviour of Israel is in fact none other than the spark that sets Moshe on his journey. The plan, which was implemented on the advice of Pharaohs'

expert advisers, did not kill the saviour of Israel, it had the opposite effect. Moshe was placed into in his flimsy basket made of cheap inferior wood and was retrieved by none other than Pharaoh's own daughter who took this Moshe into -- of all places -- Pharaohs' household. He was saved by, and nurtured in, Pharaoh's house. He was supported by Pharaoh's money. He was educated at Pharaoh's expense. He was saved by the very plan that was intended to kill the Jewish saviour.

This is not only true with Pharaoh. We each have our own ideas, plans and calculations. We think we are going to be smart. We think we are going to outwit somebody. Foolishness! Our machinations are all for nothing.

There is an amazing gematria quoted in the name of Rav Auerbach ztl regarding these two plans:

הַבָּהָה נִתְּתָה לֹוּ פְּנֵי הַבָּהָה
“Let's come up with a plan lest they increase in population...”. The numerical value of this phrase is $12+523+36+130+217 = 918$.

Pharaoh wanted to bring down our population figures, however Hashem had a different plan: ... וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ
- לָהֶם אֱלֹקִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ
“and G-d said to them: Be fruitful and multiply”.

The numerical value of this phrase is $257+75+86+286+214 = 918$.

Similarly, when the first plan failed Pharaoh orders: כָּל־הַבֵּן הַיּוֹדֵד הַיְאֻרָהּ תִּשְׁלִיכֶהוּ
“all males born shall be thrown into the river.” The numerical value of this phrase is $50+57+55+221+771 = 1154$.

This plan also failed. Quoting the very same Pasuk in Mishlei used above:

"Many are the thoughts in the heart of man, but Hashem's plan prevails", וְנִעְצְמוּתָם הָיָה תְּקוּמָתָם = $566+26+16+546 = 1154$.

Shabbat Shalom

Riddle for the Week

Where is the first mention of snow in the Torah?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer To Last Week's Riddle:

Name an event in the Tanach in which exactly 300 animals participated?

Shimshon tied 300 foxes together and set fire to them, sending them into the Philistines' fields.