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**Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein Discusses the Obligation**

**Of Each Jew to Help Others**

**By Daniel Keren**



 Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein, internationally renowned educator and Menahel of Ohr Naava, was the third speaker at the Presidents’ Day Hakhel Yarchei Kallah Event and he spoke on the topic of “The Whats and Whys of Life.”

 In Parshas Shemos we come across the story of Moshe Rabbeinu and how he became a leader of the Jewish people. His parents [Amram and Yocheved] named their third child Tuvia. And when they could no longer hide him, the baby was put into a wicker basket on the banks of the Nile River. And his sister Miriam stood nearby to see what would become of her youngest brother.

**The Miracle of Bas Paroh**

 Rashi writes that when Bas Paroh (the daughter of Pharaoh) spotted the basket with the Jewish baby it had moved from the banks of the Nile to the middle of the river. Bas Paroh stretched out her arm and it miraculously stretched all the way to the middle of the Nile and she was able to grab hold of the basket and rescue the baby.

 Rabbi Wallerstein asked why did Hashem have to cause such a strange miracle? Why couldn’t the basket have simply remained close to the bank of the Nile so that Bas Paroh could have more easily saved the baby Moshe in a natural and non-miraculous manner.

 One of the three reasons why the Jews merited to be saved from their harsh enslavement was because they never during their bondage take non-Jewish names. And yet we primarily know Moshe through the Egyptian name that was given to him by Bas Paroh who adopted him and raised him in Paroh’s Palace.

 The name Moshe referred to the miraculous manner in which Bas Paroh rescued him by stretching out her arm which logically didn’t make any sense. And a Jew’s name is the essence to his mission in life. Therefore to be a leader of the Jewish people or to be a game changer, one must like Moshe Rabbeinu be prepared to make life-saving efforts even when such efforts don’t make any sense.

**The Lesson Should Teach a Jew**

**to Make the Effort Anyways**

 Hashem caused the miracle of Bas Paroh rescuing Moshe in an unnatural manner in order to teach a Jew the lesson that even when it doesn’t seem possible for you to help or rescue another Jew, one must still make the effort. The reward for Bas Paroh was that she had the merit to go directly to Shomayim (heaven) while still alive, a reward that wasn’t even given to our Matriarchs Sarah, Rivka, Rochel and Leah.

 Each of us has that spark of Moshe Rabbeinu. So when you see another Jew in danger of going off the derech or losing their lives (either spiritually or physically) don’t just say “nebach (how awful)” or “hazit” (what a pity!) Just like Bas Paroh, a Jew has to put out his or her hand and do your best, realizing that ultimately it is only Hashem who will cause your goal of rescue to be accomplished, even if logically there is no way that you can have mazel (success).

 Later on when Moshe Rabbeinu was a shepherd in Midian for his father-in-law and passed by the Burning Bush, he stopped to wonder why the bush wasn’t consumed. The lesson for us today, Rabbi Wallerstein said is that if you see somebody in trouble, it is easy to make the mistake of getting distracted by the symptoms. If you see a young lady who is wearing a skirt that is too short, or a young man who is taking drugs or is addicted to the wrong websites, those terrible actions are not the real problem but merely the symptoms. Unless you can work on healing the actual problems, your solving those symptoms will only be replaced by other equally or even worse symptoms.

Reprinted from the February 29, 2019 edition of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.

**The Power of the**

**Perpetual “Tamid” Offering**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



 This week's Torah portion, Vayikra, which begins the book of Leviticus, deals with the service of offerings and sacrifices which were brought in the Sanctuary and the Holy Temples. Although today we cannot bring physical sacrifices, the Torah Is eternal and applies in any day and age. In fact, each Jew is likened to a sanctuary, whose purpose is likewise to bring G-dliness Into the world. We may therefore apply the lessons we learn from these offerings to guide us in our own worship of G-d.

 The "tamid" (perpetual) offering was the foundation of the entire daily service, for it was the first to be offered in the morning and the last one to be brought at the end of the day.

 The tamid was relatively cheap, consisting of a lamb, a little oil, and some flour and salt. The tamid was not brought by individuals, but rather, all Jews contributed a small amount of money every year with which to buy the necessary items. This offering brought down G-d's blessings for all Jews, wherever they might live.

 We learn from this that G-d does not require us to give up all of our material possessions without leaving anything for our own use. What is required, however, is that whatever we do offer, must be given wholeheartedly and with sincerity. Quality is more important than quantity, and our service of G-d should be conducted with joy and enthusiasm.

 Another lesson to be learned is that although the tamid was offered only twice each day, it was called a "perpetual" offering because its influence was felt throughout the rest of the day.

 The same is true in our own lives. Most of our daily tasks are devoted to necessary and mundane matters, and we are often too busy to sit and contemplate G-dliness a whole day long. That is why, as soon as we open our eyes in the morning, we bring our own "perpetual offering," to express the same utter devotion and dedication to G-d that was expressed by the tamid: "Modeh ani lefanecha, Melech chai ve'kayam" -"I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King." With this declaration, we not only thank G-d for having restored our soul, but designate Him as our King, whose sovereignty we willing accept.

 The recitation of "Modeh ani," the saying of which takes only a moment, sets the proper tone for the rest of the day. Thus do we bring our own tamid offering even today, enabling us to remain connected to G-dliness even when occupied with our daily affairs, and ensuring that all our endeavors will be blessed with success.

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**The Shmuz on****Parshas Vayikrah/Parshas Zachor**

**They Don’t Make Anti-Semites Like They Used to**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheShmuz.com**



“*In the third year of his reign, he made a party for all of his officers and servants, the rulers of Paras and Madai, the Partamim and rulers in front of him*.” – Esther 1:2

 The Megillah opens with a description of Achashverosh’s vast empire, “He ruled over one hundred and twenty seven nations.” The common assumption is that he was in the height of his glory. However, Chazal tell us that shortly before this, he had ruled over an additional one hundred and nineteen nations. At this point in time, he was still a powerful ruler, but almost half of his kingdom had been taken from him.

 In his commentary on the Megillah, the Nesivos (Megilas Sisarim) explains that by all rights, Achashverosh should have been in mourning. He had just suffered a striking loss. He had been the ruler of the earth, and now his power and glory were stolen from him. Yet he was joyful and made a party because he understood the ways of HASHEM, and he had a sign from the heaven.

 Chazal tell us that throughout our long exile, HASHEM has kept the Jewish people scattered across the globe so that if an evil king would come to power and attempt to kill us, a portion of the nation would be living in other parts of the world not under his control. Never are all the Jews under one ruler.

 Yet that rule was clearly broken. When Achashverosh reigned over the entire world, every Jew alive had been under his sovereignty. Even now that he ruled over only half of the world, every Jew was still under his dominion. Whether he would keep or lose a province seemed to have been based on whether Jews were living there.

 It was almost as if a laser beam were carving out his monarchy. If there were Jews in a region, it remained under his control. If not, it was taken from him. When the rebellion was finished, every Jew was still under his control. Achashverosh took this as a sign that HASHEM was delivering His people into his hands and therefore he was joyful and made a party.

 This concept becomes very difficult when we focus on who this man was.

Achashverosh wasn’t the Pillsbury doughboy

 If you were to ask a school age child to describe Achashverosh, you would likely get an image of a short, roly-poly, fun loving guy who liked to drink – the Pillsbury doughboy. Chazal tell us that is not quite an accurate description. In fact, it couldn’t be more off-base.

 Rashi tells us that Achashverosh wasn’t born to nobility. He was an ego-driven lout who kicked, clubbed, and clawed his way into power. His ambition was nothing short of world dominion, and he had recently achieved his dream – Emperor of the Earth. When the Megillah opens, his honor and glory have been ripped out from under his feet. How is it possible that he made a party? How could he possibly be filled with joy?

 The answer to this question comes from a better understanding of what actually drove this man.

**Achashverosh was Evil**

 In the first posuk of the Megillah, Rashi explains that Achashverosh was consistent – consistently wicked from the first verse until the very end. Make no mistake; this man hated the Jews as much as anyone in his times. But he knew why he hated the Jews: the Jews represented HASHEM, and he was engaged in a war against holiness.

 As an example, the Nesivos explains why the Megillah delineates the details of the party that Achashverosh threw. We are told about the tapestries on the walls, the food served, and what the guests drank. Why, nearly twenty five hundred years later, do we need to know that the golden benches were covered with butz and agraman?

 The Nesivos explains that this was all part of the plan. The focus of the party was the last seven days when the “people of Shushan” were invited. Shushan then was the center of Jewish life. Mordechai met with the Sanhedrin there daily. It was the epicenter of religious Jewry, and that was Achashverosh’s target. He invited the Jews to his palace to get them to sin. Everything in the party was focused towards that goal.

 The benches were covered with butz and argaman, wool and linen, which is shatnez. The tapestries on the walls were placed there to get the Torah sages of the generation distracted. Maybe their eye would be caught and they would look at something inappropriate. The food at this affair was “according to each man as he wished.”

 It was kosher by design. Achashverosh knew that if he forced the Jews to eat treif food, it wouldn’t be considered a transgression; he needed to get them to sin willingly. So each invitee was given a private waiter and could ask for exactly what he wanted.

 Achashverosh even eliminated the ancient Persian custom of forced drinking. At this party the drinking was done willingly. No one was forced. Achashverosh knew that if the Jews were drunk, there would be much less of a complaint against them. He did everything in his power to get them to sin in as an egregious manner as possible. He knew that if he got them to sin, they would be his for the taking.

**The Farmer with the Dirt, the Farmer with the Ditch**

 When Haman came with his “plan” to kill the Jews, it wasn’t a difficult sell. Chazal give a parable: imagine two farmers with adjoining fields. One says to his friend, “I have this large pile of dirt in my field. Because of it, I can’t plow. You have a large ditch in your field. Because of it, you can’t plow. I would like to take my pile of dirt and put it in your ditch. For this, I will pay you handsomely.” The second farmer responds, “Pay me? You don’t have to pay me. I will gladly let you do it. You benefit, I benefit; there is no need to pay me. Go ahead with my blessings.”

 When Haman offered the ten thousand talents of silver to “pay for the killing of the Jews,” Achashverorsh’s response was, “The money is yours to keep. As to the Jews, do with them what you please.” He didn’t even accept the fortune of money being offered to him.

 The key to understanding this man is to recognize that as much as he was set on world conquest, he was engaged in an ideological war; a war against holiness, the Jews, and G-d.

 This seems to be the answer to the question. Granted Achashverosh had just recently suffered a great personal setback, the loss of half his empire. But he had been given something even sweeter – he was given the Jews. He had the ability to eliminate the ultimate source of holiness in the world – G-d’s people – and therefore he was joyful and celebrated. This man was a real Anti- Semite.

**They Don’t Make Anti- Semites Like They Used to**

 This concept is eye opening because for thousands of years, everyone has hated the Jews, yet the vast majority of our modern Anti-Semites couldn’t tell you why. If you were to ask one of them, “Why do you hate the Jews? You would likely see him take on the glassy-eyed look of the semi-conscious. “Why? Why do I hate the Jew? I hate him so much that I would drink his blood!” His hatred is quite clear, based on his fury and drive. But what is his reason? Your run-of-the-mill Anti-Semite can’t answer the question intelligently.

 Once upon a time, the Jews faced a different sort of enemy, men who hated them and could tell you why. “I hate the Jew because he represents everything holy. I hate the Jew because he stands for everything good. He has introduced conscience to mankind. But more than anything, I hate the Jew because he represents G-d.” Such a man was Achashverosh, and such men were common in earlier times.

 It is ironic that through the eyes of our enemies, we can come to understand the significance of the Jew, and the pivotal role that he plays in world history – that of G-d’s Chosen People.

 May HASHEM quickly redeem us, and may we regain our unique status of the Exalted Nation.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the [Shmuz on the Parsha book](https://theshmuz.com/product/shmuz-on-the-parsha-book/).*

**Thought on the Parsha**

He shall kill it on the side of the altar, northward, before G-d (1:11)

The person bringing the offering must be willing to sacrifice his own wants and desires for a higher cause. The offering is only a symbol of our willingness for self-sacrifice. This is alluded to in the Hebrew word for "north," which is related to the word meaning "hidden." Even our hidden thoughts and feelings must be dedicated to G-dliness. *(Chidushei Harim)*

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**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parashat Vayikra**

 

 As all of you are aware that the first word in this week's Torah reading is written in a different fashion in the scroll of the Torah itself. The word ‘vayikra’ is written with a small ‘alef ‘at the end of the word. This has been discussed widely over the ages by the great commentators and thinkers of Israel, who have derived many important lessons from this unusual writing of the word.

 I find a connection between this small letter and another idea that the rabbis advance regarding this third book of the Bible. It was somehow traditional amongst many communities in Jewish society that this book of Vayikra should be the first book that children study when they begin their biblical education.

 The words of the rabbis to describe this educational advice were that “let those that are completely pure study the laws of holiness and purity.” In other words, the laws and rituals regarding the service of the priests and of the Temple and of the sacrifices that were to be brought, either as donations or as atonement for sins or omissions, are the core holy sections of the Torah.

 And since young children are still not tarnished by the experiences of life and the maturity of physical growth, they should begin their Jewish education by studying this part of the Torah. The small miniature letter at the end of the word signifies that this section of the Torah has a special connection to young children beginning their education and their understanding of life.

 Holiness is not subject to human logic and understanding. It is removed from our sphere of rationality. The holy is not ordinarily found in the everyday world and mundane activities of human society. Holiness is an atmosphere created by goodness and devotion to the Almighty and to its value system. Holiness is something that human beings must create. It is ephemeral and intangible, difficult to define and yet it can be glimpsed and experienced.

 The fact that it is so inexplicable makes its pursuit in this world so difficult. All the sacrificial laws that appear in this book of Vayikra – laws that are so difficult to understand and far removed from our world and society – are tools to be used in the pursuit of holiness.

 Children have the gift of imagination and are not yet stifled by the realities that surround us. They can imagine and see things that we sophisticated but jaded adults are no longer able to envision. To children, nothing is strange, and nothing is impossible, and imagination and reality operate in the same sphere of their personality and understanding. To children, legends are real and imaginary characters are their friends. These laws that aim to direct us to holiness, to reach for the stars so to speak, have meaning and reality.

 Later in life, when childhood curiosity and imagination has been rubbed away by the harshness of reality, these laws will become more difficult to understand and appreciate, and the pursuit of holiness will become far more difficult. A small letter at the end of the word comes to remind us of this truth.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Rabbiwein.com*

**Thoughts that Count**

*And G-d called to Moses* (Lev. 1:1)

 We learn about the various offerings and sacrifices to teach us that we must be willing to make sacrifices, both monetary and otherwise, to afford our children a proper Jewish education. Furthermore, a child's earliest and most precious years must be devoted to Torah study, without regard for later professional choices. For this reason, young children just beginning their Torah studies start with the book of Leviticus. *(Avnei Ezel)*

*If any one of you bring an offering to G-d* (Lev. 1:2)

 Chasidic philosophy interprets this verse to mean that the personal offering each one of us brings to G-d must truly be "of us," from our innermost part. Yet a person might hesitate, thinking that a mere mortal can never bridge the gap between the finite and infinite.

 We must therefore remember that our relationship with G-d is, in actuality, dependent only on our initiative. Once that initiative is taken, nothing can stand in the way of communion between man and G-d. *(The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

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**The Small Aleph**

**Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**



 The Book of Vayikra receives its name from the first word in the Sefer – “Vayikra” (“He called”).  The Sefer begins with G-d calling Moshe and summoning him into the newly-constructed Mishkan, to issue the commands relevant to the Korbanot (sacrifices).

 Anyone who looks at the way this word – “Vayikra” – is written in the Torah will immediately notice something peculiar: the final letter, “Alef,” is written considerably smaller than the other letters of the Torah.  This in itself requires explanation, but the significance of this small letter might be even more far-reaching than it at first appears.

 Although the numerical value of the letter “Alef” is 1, if we spell the word “Alef” (“Alef,” “Lamed,” “Peh”), and combine the values of its letters, we arrive at 111 – the number of verses in Parashat Vayikra.

 This might allude to the fact that the message of this small “Alef” is the essential message of this Parasha.  If we understand the small “Alef,” then we can understand the fundamental concept underlying all of Parashat Vayikra.

 The construction of the Mishkan served to rectify the sin of the golden calf.  Anytime a Jew commits a sin, he drives the divine Presence from his soul; he banishes the spark of Kedusha, the piece of G-d within him, and sends it away to exile.

 Teshuba (repentance) means making ourselves worthy of once again receiving that spark, and being a repository for the Shechina.  And thus after the sin of the golden calf, G-d’s presence left Beneh Yisrael, and they needed to build the Mishkan in order to bring Him back.

 But this process needed to unfold gradually, step by step.  Beneh Yisrael could not receive the divine presence all at once.  After falling so low after the sin of the golden calf, the process of the Shechina’s return had to proceed slowly. A person leaving a dark room needs time to adjust to light.  He cannot have the lights turned on all at once instantaneously. His eyes are simply unable to handle the drastic transition.

 The Tasher Rebbe of Montreal, in his Abodat Aboda, explained that this is the symbolism underlying the small “Alef” at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra.  Moshe Rabbenu was at the 50th level of Kedusha, the highest stature attainable by a human being.

 G-d instructed Moshe that in order to bring Beneh Yisrael back to where they needed to be, he would have to lower himself so the spiritual light he radiated would be smaller.  After the darkness of the golden calf, Beneh Yisrael could not immediately receive the brightest spiritual light.  And thus G-d appeared to Moshe on a lower level of prophecy, symbolized by the small letter “Alef.”

 This explains the comments of Rashi to the first verse of Sefer Vayikra, where he writes that the word “Vayikra” is a “Lashon Hiba” – a term that connotes love and affection.

 The Tasher Rebbe explained that the entire concept of Parashat Vayikra, G-d’s willingness to restore His Shechina among Beneh Yisrael in the Mishkan, is a great act of love.  Beneh Yisrael betrayed Him in the worst way, worshipping a foreign deity just weeks after receiving the Torah, and yet He was still prepared to return to them. He always gives us the opportunity to return and repair our relationship with Him. And He even ensures that the process will unfold at the right pace, step by step, so that it will be effective.

 This is why the small “Alef” embodies the essence of the Parashat Vayikra.  The concept underlying Korbanot is that we have the ability to restore our relationship with Hashem after falling.  This entire book is a “Lashon Hiba,” an expression of great love by G-d, who is always prepared to welcome us back in Teshuba, and is always prepared to help us along this process.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of the Edmund J. Safra Synagogue in Brooklyn, NY.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Television and Cocaine**



 **QUESTION:**What should a married woman do with no Television in the house all day long?

 **ANSWER:**What did my mother, *ole’ha hasholom*, do all day long? Television is an acquired addiction. You can also say what should a person do if he cannot take cocaine every day? People take cocaine every day too; what can they do? It’s a legitimate question. The answer is, do without it! Television is cocaine.

 There are so many good things to do if you’re healthy. Boruch Hashem you don’t have to go for treatments; you don’t have to go for dialysis, you could live a normal life. There are so many things to do, what is the question, what to do?

 When you go shopping for your family, isn’t it a happiness? You have money in your purse, you have places where you can buy the things you need. You don’t have to stand in line like in Russia, all day long, and you don’t have to take whatever they want to give you; you can shop wherever you want. There are so many kosher foods today! If you like to eat, there are so many good things to eat today that are glatt kosher.

 And then, there are good hobbies. What’s wrong with making dresses for your grandchildren? And for yourself? Many women save a lot of money making beautiful dresses, making things for the children.

 There are a lot of other things to do. There’s no lack of things to do. You can make cakes and send them to parties for yeshivos. A lot of yeshiva boys will appreciate your chocolate cakes. There’s no end of good things to do.

 There are women who hang wallpaper in their own homes, and do painting jobs to beautify their homes. If worse comes to worse, take up gardening in the back of your house. There are all kinds of good things to do. If you want, you can read good *seforim* today, and you can listen to tapes. And therefore there’s no reason why a woman has to occupy herself with television.

*Reprinted from Toras Avigdor based on Rabbi Avigdor Miller’s TAPE # 512 (June 1984).*

**Creating a Proper**

**Purim for Our Family**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**



 We all know the saying, “Every generation has its challenges.” This is also true when it comes to the holiday of Purim. In ancient Spain, the Marranos were fearful about celebrating Purim for fear of detection by the dreaded Inquisition. During the Holocaust, the Nazis, may their memory perish, robbed our ancestors any vestiges of any Purim celebrations. At other stages our history, we were too impoverished to make any meaningful Purim festivities. During our times, thank G-d, none of these obstacles are in evidence.

 Yet, there are challenges galore of different stripes. Firstly, in many neighborhoods, more people are home from work on Thanksgiving than on Purim. Of course this is not by choice. Merely, many breadwinners ‘have-off’ on Thanksgiving, while on Purim they must use a precious sick or vacation day, which they can ill afford to use up.

 And, since nowadays a large percentage of our women are also part of the workforce – to help shoulder the burden of tuition, camp and rising insurance costs, in many homes children find themselves alone with sad instructions like, ‘Make sure not to open the door. You’re home alone and we have nothing to give back (shelach manos) anyway.’

 I would like to strongly advise that everyone should make a courageous effort to take off from work this Purim.

 When it comes to the mitzvah of mishloach manos, giving gifts to one another, it was the desire of Mordechai and Esther to correct the accusation of Haman that there was too much divisiveness amongst our people. Therefore, they created the beautiful mitzvah of mishloach manos to increase the friendship and achdus amongst our people.

 Indeed the Rambam says about this mitzvah, “Kol hamarbeh, harei zeh meshubach — The more one does of this mitzvah, the more they are praised.” You might recognize this statement. We also say it in Avodim Hayinu in the Hagaddah — that the more we say about Mitzrayim in the sedar, the more we are praised. And we all know how we take this quite literally, staying up until the wee hours of the night, joyously retelling the narrative of the Exodus.

 How sad, that when it comes to the beautiful mitzvah of mishloach manos, people don’t want to ‘dirty’ their hands and houses. Rather, they send out postcards saying, “In lieu of mishloach manos, we have given a gift to this-and-this institution.”

 Or, they give money to a yeshiva and people are sent commercialized and impersonal mishloach manos with a list of many names included inside. I very much fear that this in not exactly what Mordechai and Esther had in mind.

 Oh yes, I know, this was started righteously by people figuring that there was too much bal tashchis, waste of food. Also, people said it was getting out of hand, everyone trying to outdo each other with ostentations shelach manos, full of themes like everything-that-fits-on-a-boat, or a breakfast theme, a fruit theme, etc. So finally, many got disgusted by the race to live up to the Joneses and did away with even trying to compete.

 This is a great shame for we, as children, were raised with the delight of relatives and friends coming to our door, of happily going out to all of the houses of the neighborhood, sharing hamentashen and nosh, and eating the whole day from a veritable treasure trove of once-a-year sweets scattered around the home. What will be our legacy of Purim to our children? Postcards and a couple of commercial Tupperware’s filled with institutionalized shelach manos?

 A new way to celebrate Purim has evolved for our yeshiva bochrim. A stretch limo is rented for them, they are decked out in tuxedos, and they go around collecting for their yeshiva or another worthy charity. One can detect the sage advice of our leaders here.

 Having seen that Purim can be easily lost in a meaningless drunken stupor, wasted with levity and emptiness, they instead chose to fill the day with the eternal mitzvah of tzedakah following the lead of the Rambam – at the end of Hilchos Megilah – who says that there is no more glorious mitzvah on Purim, and no greater joy, than to gladden the hearts of the poor and the needy.

 Yet, there are still some subtle dangers lurking in this custom. First of all, we caution our dear readers that, when you are visited by a troupe of such dedicated yeshiva bochrim, please don’t break out your best bottle of Blue Label and offer them a L’chaim. For, if they have just one drink in every house they visit, they will look like a bottle of Blue Label themselves by the time they get to their fiftieth house.

 Furthermore, there is a real concern that, if they spend their formative years collecting the entire Purim, when they get married – and have to create a regular Purim with shelach manos, matanos le’evyonim, costumes for the children, and sumptuous Purim feasts, it will be foreign to them – having spent all their formative years collecting in limos on Purim. Perhaps, we might try to find a happy balance for our own children.

 Another dangerous issue – which I implore my reading audience to discuss with their children before Purim, is the hideous practice of bochrim taking a puff of a cigarette on Purim. Recently, a national survey concluded that one could get hooked with a nicotine addiction from just one cigarette.

 Since we know that cigarettes kill many, many people, this discussion is truly a matter of life and death. And of course, make sure you don’t deliver just one more shelach manos, or drive around the block to catch a Maariv, after you have taken a couple of drinks.

 I’d like to take this opportunity to wish all of my readership family a very healthy happy, safe, and joyous Purim. May we merit together through the zechus of our Torah, to greet the Moshiach Tzidkeinu, speedily in our days.

*Reprinted from the Pashas Pekudei 5779 email of The VUES.*

**Why Does Judaism**

**Forbid Tattoos?**

**By**[**Baruch S. Davidson**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12148/jewish/Davidson-Baruch-S.htm)



 The source of this prohibition is [Leviticus 19:28](https://www.chabad.org/9920#v28): “You shall not etch a tattoo on yourselves.” This prohibition applies to all tattoos besides those made for medical purposes, such as to guide a surgeon making an incision.

 Although some of the commentaries1 seem to believe that this is one of the Torah’s *chukim*, the commandments whose rationales transcend the ken of human intellect, other commentators do offer several explanations for this prohibition:

 The human body is G‑d’s creation, and it is therefore unbefitting to mutilate G‑d’s handiwork. It is especially unbefitting for members of G‑d’s chosen nation to mutilate their bodies. One must believe that G‑d, the greatest artisan of all, formed him or her in the most fitting way, and one must not change this form. Changing one’s body (unless it is for health reasons) is tantamount to insulting G‑d’s handiwork.2

 In ancient times, it was customary for idol-worshippers to tattoo themselves as a sign of commitment to their deity—much like an animal that is branded by its owner. On many occasions the Torah forbids practices that emulate pagan customs, considering that following their traditions is the first step towards subscribing to their idolatrous beliefs and services.3

 The covenant of circumcision is unique in its being a sign in our bodies of our relationship with G‑d. Making other signs in one’s body would weaken and cheapen this special sign.4

. *Reprinted from the Parshas Pekudei 5779 email of Chabad.Org Magazine*

**Can a Person With a Tattoo Be Buried in a Jewish Cemetery?**

**By [Chani Benjaminson](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/1639/jewish/Benjaminson-Chani.htm%22%20%5Co%20%22Browse%20more%20articles%20by%20Benjaminson%2C%20Chani)**



 **Question:** Is it true that if I have a tattoo I cannot be buried in an Orthodox cemetery? I’m not referring to Holocaust markings.

 **Answer:** The Torah1 forbids us from tattooing our bodies. Nonetheless, one who has had tattoos can still buried in a Jewish cemetery.

 That said, every Jewish burial society has the right to enact its own criteria for who may and may not be buried in their plot. This stems from people’s desire (or right?) to be buried in proximity to others of their choosing.

 So while technically there is nothing in Jewish law which prohibits a tattooed person from being interred in a Jewish cemetery, certain burial societies—not the majority of them, or even close—will not bury among their own a person who willingly tattooed him- or herself, as it is a permanent exhibition of violation of Jewish Law.

 This practice by certain burial societies led to the common misconception that this ban was an inherent part of Jewish law.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pekudei 5779 email of Chabad.Org Magazine*

**Rabbi Shimon Yehudah HaCohen Shkop**



 HARAV HAGAON R. SHIMON YEHUDAH HACOHEN SHKOP ZT”L1860-1939 was born in Toretz, Minsk. At age 12, he studied in the yeshiva in Mir for two years. He then traveled to Volozhin and studied with the Netziv zt”l. He was part of an extraordinary group of students with whom Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik zt”l interacted.

 In 1884, he became a Reish Mesivta at the yeshiva in Telshe, where he taught Torah for 18 years and became well-known for his style and distinctive chiddushim. In 1903, he was appointed rabbi of Meltch, replacing the gaon Rabbi Zalman Sander zt”l (who became rabbi in Krinki).

 In 1907, he became the rabbi of Breinsk, where he founded a yeshiva known as Yeshivat Rav Shimon Breinsker. During World War I he remained in Breinsk, which was captured by the Germans, and helped assiduously to look after his townspeople.

 Since his yeshiva was forced to close during the war, he used his spare time to arrange his chiddushim and shiurim in a sefer. This is the popular Sharei Yosher, which was published in 1928. In 1920, Rabbi Shkop was urged by the leading rabbis of the time, led by Rabbi Chaim Ozer zt”l of Vilna, to accept the position of rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Sharei Torah in Grodna. Rabbi Shkop was successful in turning the yeshiva into one of the largest and most popular in Europe.

 In 1928, he traveled to America in order to alleviate the difficult financial situation of his yeshiva and was received there with the highest honor. After the passing of the Meitscheter Illui, Rabbi Shlomo Polachek zt"l, he became a rosh yeshiva at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, where he taught for one year.

 Although he wanted to remain, the leading rabbis of Europe, led by the Chofetz Chaim zt”l and Rabbi Chaim Ozer zt”l, felt it imperative for him to return to Grodna and to his yeshiva there. Rabbi Shkop answered their call, albeit with some misgivings. When World War II broke out, he moved with his yeshiva to Vilna, where he died shortly thereafter.[www.yu.edu]

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**Who's Who?**

**Eliyahu (Elijah) Hanavi**

 The great prophet Eliyahu (Elijah) lived in approximately the Jewish year 3,000 (760 Before the Common Era) and lived at a time when the Jews were greatly tempted by idol worship.

 He pitted himself against 450 priests of the Baal cult on Mount Carmel when he successfully demonstrated the veracity of G-d. When the prophet Yonah died as a young boy, Eliyahu was able to bring him back to life.

 Taken by a fiery chariot, he was one of the seven saints who went into the next world alive. Tradition names Eliyahu as the one who will announce the advent of Moshiach.

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