**Brooklyn torah gazette**

**For Parshas pekudei 5779**

Volume 3, Issue 27 (Whole Number 123) 2Adar Sheni 5779/ March 9 2019

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

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**Rabbi Zev Smith on**

**Who is a “Wise” Man**

**By Daniel Keren**

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The second speaker at the recent Flatbush Presidents’ Day Hakhel Yarchei Kallah Event was Rabbi Zev Smith, internationally renowned Maggid Shiur who addressed the topic of “Eizu Chacham [Who is a Wise Man?] or “If Only…” Hakhel is a Flatbush-based organization dedicated to promoting a greater awareness of Torah-true values in our community.

**Alexander the Great’s Question to Jewish Scholars**

Rabbi Smith began by saying that he wanted to talk about true chachma (wisdom.) He noted that Alexander the Great once chanced upon a group of Jewish Talmid Chachamim (Torah scholars.) He asked them for their definition of what is chochma, wisdom? And they answered he who can see into the effects of his actions. Such an individual is truly a wise person.

A Jewish woman once went to a doctor because she wasn’t feeling well and was administered a battery of tests to try and determine the cause of her ailments. The next day she got that unpleasant phone call from the doctor who sadly informed her that yes he had that dreaded machla (disease.) The good news was that is she started taking chemotherapy and radiation treaments, there was a strong possibility that the disease could be conquered.

You could imagine that the phone call was not at all what she wanted to hear and she was so shaken up that she was in no position to prepare supper that day for her husband and children. So she decided that they would go to a pizza shop instead. The children realized something was up and they were rather quiet while eating their pizza and French fries.

Another woman was in the pizza shop at the same time and she was so impressed by the exceptional behavior of the children that she felt impelled to go to the mother and compliment her and offer her a brocha that the mother should be gezunt (healthy) and always have nachas (joy) from her beautiful family.

**What Helped Her Survive Two and a Half Years of Painful Treatments**

This woman who heard those words then underwent two and a half years of very painful treatments that Baruch Hashem were ultimately successful. She later said that perhaps that most important force that kept her going during those difficult medical treatments were the sincere and kind words of the other woman in the pizza place.

Could that woman have anticipated the benefits of her thoughtful and nice words? Yet that is the awesome power of one who is an Eizah Chachom, one who able to foresee the results of their actions or words.

Rabbi Smith recalled a phone call he received from a woman who said that her son was undergoing difficult medical treatments and as a result was gaining weight and losing hair. It’s enough that her son is suffering such terrible pain. Must he also have to suffer the sharp retorts of kids in his classroom. True, the kids may not be aware of their classmate’s predicament. But before saying their sharp insults

Shouldn’t they think and reflect upon the consequences of their thoughtless barbs.

If someone loans money to another Jew and takes a pillow as a deposit, the Jew is obligated to return the pillow at nighttime to the borrower so he can sleep normally. This requires the loaner to be able to foresee the results of his actions and that he failure of his returning the pillow to the borrower might cause the borrower to be unable to sleep, thus endangering his health and most likely crying out to Hashem because of his great distress.

**Rav Shlomo Zalman’s Small Piece of Cake**

Close to 35 years ago, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in his old age would agree to accept a ride from a student from his yeshiva in Yerushalayim to his home. Once when he arrived in front of his house, he asked the driver if he could wait three more minutes in the car. The driver, of course, was happy to agree. Rav Shlomo Zalman took out a small piece of cake, made a brocha, ate it and then recited the al-hamichiya after blessing.

The driver was curious and asked Rav Shlomo Zalman why he ate a piece of cake just before entering his house. The explanation was that Rav Shlomo Zalman normally ate that small piece of cake in the late afternoon in the yeshiva so that when he got home he would not be hungry and susceptible to the yetzer hora (evil inclination) and lose his temper because of hunger and thereby destroy his shalom bayis with his wife. That day he hadn’t had the chance to eat the cake in the yeshiva before coming home. Rabbi Smith said that this is an example of an Eizah Chacham who can see the results of his actions.

The grandmother of Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkelman, the legendary Rosh Hayeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Yerushalayim was once asked by others how she merited to have such an incredible grandchild. She replied that she doesn’t know, but she always complimented Nosson Tzvi.

One can never, Rabbi Smith said, underestimate the power of kind words from a grandparent. Fortunate is the grandchild whose grandparents can see the results of the wise and encouraging words. [And the same is true for parents, siblings, uncles and aunts and concerned neighbors.]

**How Do You Find Time for an Elderly Parent?**

How do you have time for an elderly parent when one doesn’t have enough time to breathe [or relax for a moment.] The answer can be learned from Eisav Harasha, the wicked brother of Yaakov. He held back from trying to kill his younger brother despite his boiling anger and disappointment of Yaakov’s “stealing” his brocha (blessing,) from their father Yitzchak because of Eisav’s great respect for his father and his desire to not cause his father any grief.

If you realize that your elderly parent always had time for you when you were a child, one will be able to realize that the opportunity to help an aging parent is not a burden, but rather a precious opportunity [mitzvah.] Rabbi Smith concluded his lecture by declaring that the greatest agmas nefesh (anxiety) that one can cause another person is often the result of thoughtless words that we carelessly say without realizing their consequences.

*Reprinted from the March 1, 2019 edition of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Homecoming?**

**By Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman**



**From: Jacob**

Dear Rabbi, I am in my early 20’s, have graduated college from a school in a big city where I became interested in my Judaism, but have now returned to my small hometown where there is very little Jewishness. My question is: How I can maintain a Jewish lifestyle when there aren’t any Jewish young people here, and all of my friends are non-Jews who have no interest in what I’ve found meaningful? Can I go out with my friends as I used to, to movies, to play sports, and to restaurants (I’ll only eat or drink what’s kosher there)? And what would be the main areas of Judaism to keep committed to if I’m not able to keep everything? I know you’ll say it would be better if I was not here in this place at all, but that’s non-negotiable for now. There are reasons why I have to be here, and it could be for a long time. Thanks for any guidance you might offer.

**Dear Jacob**, I congratulate you on your decision to come home to your Judaism, but going back to your hometown is not much of a Jewish homecoming. You are right, that given what you describe I would suggest your leaving there as soon as you can.

But if you can’t, for now I suggest the following: You will not be able to immediately and completely sever your relationship with your friends. And that might not be healthy anyway. So consider which of your old friends think and act in ways which are most compatible with what you know about Jewish values and practices, and which do not.

Of the time that you spend with friends, which should be limited, spend more time with the former, and less with the latter. And of the friends that you determine to be more compatible with your newfound interest in Judaism, make an effort to transform your friendship accordingly.

Find and make opportunities to discuss and do things which will be wholesome and productive. Obviously, you need to avoid going to parties, clubs, and bars.

Rather, seek to do things with them that will be more educational and enriching. Going to movies with them occasionally, given your situation, while not the greatest pastime, could be OK as long as it’s a “decent” movie. Sports and exercise are even better, as long as done in a wholesome setting.

About your suggestion of eating “kosher” in a nonkosher restaurant, this is not a good idea. A Jew may not do that, because by doing so he will either look un-kosher or will make the establishment look kosher. That being said, if you ever falter in this, you must at least make sure that signs which identify you as being Jewish, like a kippa or tzitzit, are not visible. Rather, a person would need to tuck in his tzitzit and wear a baseball cap. And even then, he may only eat and drink closed products like kosher soft drinks and pretzels, or cold, whole (uncut) fruits and vegetables.

But even more important than all this is what you should be doing to maintain at least a bare minimum of observance and connection to Judaism. The main areas in which you need to make a special effort in observing, and to continue learning about, are keeping kosher, studying and praying, and keeping Shabbat.

No matter where you are, the ubiquitous grocery chain stores carry nearly everything you need with the commonly-accepted kosher supervision symbols. Contact a rabbi in the closest established Orthodox community for detailed guidance in buying kosher food and setting up what you need in order to keep kosher at home.

As far as learning is concerned, there are so many online resources that there’s no reason you could not order and read books on your own or listen to Torah classes and lectures at least an hour a day. You can also arrange free, long distance learning sessions via phone, Skype, etc.

And praying regularly and wearing tefillin, even on your own, is a must. Finally, it is of utmost importance that you observe the Sabbath and holidays, which will also keep you connected and give you regular opportunities to read, reflect and grow.

You should seek frequent hospitality in the nearest Jewish communities in order to regularly observe these occasions in the supportive context of friends and families with whom contact and connection will be invaluable for you in so many important ways.

One last thing. Insofar as there are no other Jewish young people where you are, you need to safeguard against getting involved in personal relationships which would not only deflect you from your commitment to Judaism, but could result in a forbidden marriage and non-Jewish children.

So whatever dating you engage in, and it should be for the purpose of marriage, must be done within the Jewish community, for which there are kosher online venues as well.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayakhel 5779 email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**The Unlimited Divine**

**Service of the Jewish People**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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

Following last week's Torah reading, Vayakhel, in which Moses gathered the Jews together and relayed G-d's command to build the Sanctuary, this week's Torah portion, Pekudei, lists Moses' accounts of the precious metals used to make the Sanctuary's vessels and details how the offerings were made.

Finally, it relates how these actions brought G-d's Divine Presence to rest in the Sanctuary.

Usually, when a person builds a new house, he waits until it has been completed to fill it with furniture and implements. The dedication of the Sanctuary, however, was done in the exact opposite manner.

"And he placed the golden altar in the Sanctuary before the veil, and he burnt upon it the incense of spices...and he set up the court around the Sanctuary and the altar."

**The Sanctuary was Not Yet Fully Erected**

The Sanctuary was not yet fully erected when Moses offered the incense on the golden altar.

The Sanctuary, G-d's dwelling place on earth, contained a holiness so great that it existed above and beyond the laws of nature.

Its sanctity (and that of the Holy Temples that followed) is eternal, not subject to the concept of time, and continues today though we no longer have a physical edifice in which to bring offerings. The unusual manner in which the Sanctuary was erected, therefore, reflected this.

The Torah's command, "And you shall make Me a dwelling place," applied not only to the Sanctuary, but includes the obligation to erect the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.



**The Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt”l**

Moses' offering of incense on the golden altar dedicated not only the Sanctuary that traveled with the Jews in the desert, but the Temples that were yet to be built, including the Third Holy Temple when Moshiach comes.

According to Jewish law, offerings may be brought even in the absence of the Temple's physical structure if one knows the exact location of the altar.

**Moses Caused a Measure of Holiness to**

**Be Brought Down into this World**

When Moses burnt the incense, before the Sanctuary was completely built, he caused a measure of holiness to be brought down into the world that is not dependent on physical limitations. This holiness is eternal and exists forever.

This holds particular relevance for our generation, the last generation of exile before the Messianic Era.

No longer may we be satisfied with the measured norms of behavior that sufficed for previous generations; our times demand an extra measure of self-sacrifice on our part.

Our service of G-d must therefore also breach all limitations, so that we may merit the ultimate and Final Redemption with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our day.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Pekudei 5754/1994 edition of L’Chaim Weekly (Issue #357), a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**The Shmuz on****Parshas Pekudei**

**Where are the**

**Gadolim Today?**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheShmuz.com**



**Rabbi Bentzion Shafier (The Shmuz.com)**

(Shemos 38:21) “*These are the reckonings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of testimony, which were reckoned at Moshe’s request.*

Parshas Pikudei begins with a detailed accounting of all of the gold and silver that was collected for the Mishkan. A cursory reading would lead us to assume that while, of course, a man as great as Moshe was above question, he must have asked for this calculation because public leaders must remove any suspicion no matter how farfetched.

However, the Balei Tosfos explain things a bit differently. It seems that Moshe was in fact suspected of stealing money from the Mishkan. There were 16 Shekalim which were unaccounted for, and Moshe was suspect to have taken them. Therefore, Moshe asked for a formal accounting, to remove the suspicion. At which point they discovered that those 16 Shekalim were actually used in the construction of the hooks of the Mishkan.

The difficulty with this Balei HaTosfos is understanding how would anyone suspect that Moshe Rabbeinu of stealing? The Mishkan was to be the dwelling place of HASHEM on this earth. It was one of the holiest objects ever created. Monies that were separated for the Mishkan were consecrated and holy. How could anyone suspect Moshe of pilfering those monies?

Even more perplexing is that these people knew who Moshe Rabbeinu was. They saw him go up to Shmayaim and receive the Torah. They heard the sound of HASHEM’s voice speaking through him. From the time that he came down from Har Sinai his face shone like the sun—for that reason he constantly wore a veil. They understood him to be the greatest human ever created. How is it possible that they suspected him of petty thievery—16 Shekalim, no less?

This question becomes even more difficult when we take into account the circumstances of those times. This was the generation of the Midbar—all of their daily needs were taken care of. They ate Mon that fell from the heavens, they drank water from a huge rock that followed them through the desert, their clothes grew on the backs and their shoes never wore out—in short all of their needs were taken care of. They didn’t work for a living and had nothing to do with their money. There entire focus and occupation was growing in learning and Yiras Shamayim. It was the ultimate kollel community. If so, what possible motivation would Moshe have to steal the Shekalim?

The answer to this question is based on perspective.

**Appreciating Gadolim**

The story is told that one day a poor man came to the Chofetz Chaim’s door asking for Tzedakah. The Chofetz Chaim invited him in, and offered him a full meal. When the man was finished eating he left. As the Chofetz Chaim was cleaning up, he realized that this man had stolen a spoon. The Chofetz Chaim ran into the street after him calling, “Wait, wait, don’t forget the spoon is fleishig.”

While this is a beautiful illustration of the giving nature of a Tzadik, there is as subtle message here-- the man stole a spoon from the Chofetz Chaim. How was that possible? The Chofetz Chaim! The revered sage. The final word in Halacha. The teacher of generations. Could we imagine, anyone today being lowly enough to actually steal something from such a holy man?

The answer is that no one today would act that way to the Chofetz Chaim, because we have an appreciation of who the man was. But in his generation they didn’t. That stature was only something that he acquired long after he died. For most of his life, he was viewed as a regular man—maybe a Talmid Chacham but nothing extraordinary. And even when the world began hearing of the Chofetz Chaim, it wasn’t as some huge, towering, historic figure- a gadol maybe, but not someone who will shape history.

This seems to be a quirk in human nature- when we live in proximity to greatness it is hard to appreciate the size of the man, we tend to minimize the magnitude. It is far easier to lump him together with other people of the generation and assume that he can’t be that much greater. Acharei Mos- Kedoshim, it isn’t until the person has passed on that people begin to appreciate who he was.

**The View from that Generation**

This seems to be the answer to Moshe Rabbeinu. While the people living then knew of the greatness of Moshe, they still viewed him as a man of their generation. Granted he went up to the heavens and received the Torah, but he is a man like you and I, and what is to say that he didn’t just pocket some of the Shekalim? While later generations wouldn’t in their wildest dreams suspect such a man, to those living in the times that historical perspective wasn’t there, and they couldn’t see him for the lofty giant that he was.

This concept has particular relevance to us as we look at the leaders of our generation and say, “Where are the Gedolim today”? Where are the powerful beacons of the Mesorah? But we aren’t the first to utter that cry, it has been expressed by every generation since Har Sinai, and will continue through the generations. What we see from the Balei Tosfos is that this sentiment was expressed even in regards to Moshe – if they suspected him of pilfering funds from the Mishkan; they didn’t quite appreciate who the man was.

The correct attitude is that HASHEM provides Gedolim for each generation to guide the people living in those times. Chazal tell us that as “Yiftach in his generation, so too, Shmuel in his generation…” it is our job to seek out the Torah leaders of our times, take council from them, and learn the ways of HASHEM from those whom He sends to lead us.

*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/).*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parashat Pekudei**



One of the more popular buzzwords bandied about in current society is transparency. Loosely, this means that governments and financial institutions should have no secrets and that the public be allowed to know everything that occurs and to be able to see how money is being spent and allocated. This is a noble goal but like many goals it runs contrary to human nature and the goal is rarely if ever achieved.

In this week's Torah reading we have an example of complete transparency regarding the materials donated by the Jewish people for the construction of the Tabernacle. Additionally, it discusses the priestly vestments during the encampment of the Jewish people in the Sinai desert, after their exodus from Egyptian slavery. Moshe accounts for every piece of material that was collected for this holy and noble project.

Jewish tradition tells us that Moshe was unable to account for 1000 measures of silver that were donated but he did not remember for what they were used. Then, almost miraculously, the silver identified itself as being used for the hooks for the tapestries of the Tabernacle and Moshe’s accounting was proven to be accurate to the final degree and coin.

Such transparency is necessary for people are by nature suspicious of others and especially of government when it comes to handling money or other precious materials. There was always the suspicion – many times proven to be a correct – that somehow money was mishandled or worse, appropriated into private pockets instead of for the public good. Therefore, the accounting by Moshe to the Jewish people regarding the donations for the building of the Tabernacle is not to be viewed as an act of piety but rather one of absolute necessity.

To emphasize this point and to make clear where the Torah stands on issues of financial transparency is perhaps the reason that such space and detail is devoted in the Torah to this accounting of the funds and material used and donated in the building process of the Tabernacle.

The Torah could have allowed itself to merely state that after all the donations were collected and tallied and the work of the artisans and builders of the Tabernacle was completed, then Moshe gave a full accounting of this matter to the Jewish people. But such a statement, even from Moshe, would not have sufficed to allay the suspicious nature of the public, a nature that always judges its leaders harshly and suspiciously.

The rabbis point out to us that none of the garments that the priests wore while performing their holy duties in the Temple had pockets. This was the case so no one could suspect them of taking any of the property of the Temple or any public donations. Transparency therefore is a proactive undertaking and should be performed willingly and thoroughly without being given grudgingly as an answer to public demand. The standard is a high one, but the Torah never shirks from making lofty goals. The Torah reading of this week reminds us of this constant challenge.

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

**At What Age Does**

**Education Begin?**

**Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**



Parashat Pekudeh continues the Torah’s description of the Mishkan, its furnishings and the priestly garments, a project which was led by a man named Besalel.  The Torah tells us that Besalel was the grandson of Hur, a leader who was killed during the tragic incident of Het Ha’egel (sin of the golden calf). When the people approached Hur and demanded that he make for them an idol, he refused, and he was eventually killed for his opposition.

Why was specifically Hur’s grandson chosen for the job of constructing the Mishkan?

The answer, perhaps, is that Besalel’s illustrious background of firm faith and courage enhanced the sanctity of the Mishkan.  Besalel came from sacred stock, and this background helped infuse the Mishkan – his handiwork – with a greater level of Kedusha.

The Talmud tells that Rabbi Hiya credited himself with ensuring the perpetuation of Torah.  He explained that he took some flaxseeds, planted them, and used the flax which grew to make a trap for deer. He then trapped a deer, fed its meat to the poor, and used its hide as parchment on which to write the Torah.

Then he studied with five young students with these books. When Rabbi Yehuda Ha’nasi heard about Rabbi Hiya’s accomplishments, he exclaimed, “How great are the actions of Hiya!” Rabbi Hiya understood that the earlier in the process one is able to inject it with Kedusha, the greater an impact it will have.

The inspiration given to these five children was drawn not merely from their experiences in school, but from the origins of this enterprise.  Already the planting of the seeds for the trap for the animal from which the books were prepared was done with Kedusha.

And this brought the level of Torah learning to an entirely different level.  Just as Besalel’s righteous grandfather enhanced the sanctity of the Mishkan, similarly, the sacred origins of the books used by Rabbi Hiya’s students raised the level of Kedusha and inspiration which they received.

A father once asked a certain Rabbi at what age he needs to begin the process of his child’s Hinuch (education).

“The process should have begun many years ago,” the Rabbi replied.  “Hinuch begins when the parents are in school.”

Of course, this is not to say that a parent who did not receive a proper Torah education no longer has the ability to properly educate his or her own children.  It is never too late.  But it does mean that our children’s education begins with our own spiritual growth and training.

Building ourselves is a crucial component of our efforts to build our children.  By enhancing one’s own level of Kedusha, he is able to enhance his children’s level of Kedusha and help reach great heights of spiritual achievement.

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

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**“What Are Friends For?”**



**QUESTION:** Does one need to have friends or does a wife suffice?

**ANSWER:** That depends what you mean by friends. The Chofetz Chaim always took in guests. He was sweet and friendly. But he never associated with people. He didn't "*chaver*" with anybody. He didn't have friends. No friends. The Chofetz Chaim didn't need any friends. He had Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He had the Gemara. He had the Rishonim. The seforim were his very best friends.

Now, the Chofetz Chaim was very kindhearted. He travelled to help Jewish soldiers. He established kosher kitchens for them. He did very many things for the public. But to associate with cronies, with friends? It's not necessary. Who needs friends?

I told you once - your very best friend is yourself. You're your very best friend. I'll tell you why that is. You have ideals - to fill your mind with only thoughts of Hashem, to develop a Torah mind - other high ideals. So now you tell your ideals to your friend. So he looks at you funny - like you're a phony. And that's enough to cool you off. He laughs at your ideals. Most friends will laugh at your ideals.

And that's why it says, - "It should be for you alone, and strangers should not share it with you." Why should your ideas be for you alone? Because strangers won't appreciate your thoughts. You're trying to climb the ladder towards Hashem. But people aren't accustomed to that today. They'll laugh at you.

When Avraham Avinu came to Eretz Canaan why didn't he settle in Ir Shalem under the rule of the tzadik Malki-Tzedek? Do you hear that question? Malki-Tzedek, the king of Salem, was a tzadik and the city of Shalem was a beautiful place to be. Avraham Avinu should have settled there.

Why did Avraham set up his tent in the middle of the desert? The answer is that Malki-Tzedek was a great personality, but Avraham Avinu had already advanced far beyond Malki-Tzedek. Had Avraham Avinu remained with Malki-Tzedek it would have been a big loss for Avraham. Why? Because the ideals of Avraham - his greatness - would have seemed queer to Malki-Tzedek. And that would have cooled off Avraham - and anything that would hinder Avraham would be a big loss.

I explained here recently: Suppose a guest would come to Avraham Avinu's street. So Avraham would run out of his house and fall down on the street - he would fall down on his face to plead. *Al nah sa'avor,* please don't go away from me. Please, I want you to be a guest in my house. And if the guest would say, "No, it's fine. I don't feel like going inside to eat right now." Avraham would plead - "*al nah sa'avor,"* please don't pass by. Please don't go away. Avraham was lying on the street begging them.

Suppose the people of Shalem would see that. What would they think of Avraham Avinu?! They would think that he's, that he's - they would think that he's nuts. So Avraham Avinu had to be on his own because he was so great that others couldn't appreciate him.

Sometimes a tzadik is so great that others can't appreciate him. Or her. That's why Avraham Avinu had to be by himself. You only need a friend if he will help you come closer to Hashem. But a friend just for the sake of a crony? No. There's no need.

*Reprinted from a recent email of Toras Avigdor that was adapted from Rabbi Miller’s Tape #E-217.*

**R’ Yosef ibn Aknin**

**And the Rambam**

R’ Yosef ibn Aknin z”l born approx.1160 – died 1226. R’ Yosef ben Yehuda ibn Aknin was the person for whom Rambam wrote his Moreh Nevochim/Guide to the Perplexed.

R’ Yosef was born in Ceuta, Morocco, but fled from there due to Moslem oppression. He first settled in Alexandria, Egypt, where he began corresponding with Rambam, and later, the great sage invited R’ Yosef to Cairo to study with him.

When Rambam saw that R’ Yosef was troubled by the conflict between philosophy and the teachings of the Prophets, Rambam wrote Moreh Nevochim to resolve his student’s doubts.

In 1186, R’ Yosef moved to Aleppo, Syria, where he practiced medicine. He continued his correspondence with Rambam, and many of these letters are still extant. (Some of these letters refer to the attacks of other rabbis on Rambam. In them, Rambam explains that he is above caring about his personal reputation, especially when his attackers are unworthy of a response.)

In response to the attacks of R’ Shmuel ben Eli of Baghdad on Rambam’s Mishneh Torah, R’ Yosef wanted to move to Baghdad and open a yeshiva where he would defend his teacher’s views.

However, Rambam dissuaded R’ Yosef from giving up his medical practice and trying to earn a living as a rosh yeshiva. After Rambam’s death, R’ Yosef asked Rambam’s son, R’ Avraham, to excommunicate R’ Daniel Ha’Bavli (the leading student of R’ Shmuel be Eli) for his slights to the Rambam’s honor, but R’ Avraham declined.

R’ Yosef wrote a number of works, including a halachic work (in Arabic) and commentaries on Pirkei Avot and Shir Ha’shirim. (Sources: The Artscroll Rishonim, p. 88; Iggeret Ha’Rambam Le’Rav Yosef, pp. 130-133 -Hamaayan)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pekudei 5779 email of whY I Matter, the parshasheet of the Young Israel of Midwood edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld.*

**An Evening Out with Your Spouse: How to Ensure**

**That It is a Special, Enjoyable**

**And Memorable Experience**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**



As we head into the depths of winter, there is a tendency for the winter blues to set in.  The frigid cold and short span of sunlight tends to bring this on for many people.

While the best remedy for melancholy is certainly Torah and mitzvahs, it is also a good time to create special moments with your spouse.  Here are some tips to ensure that such attempts are successful.

**1.** Dress according to your spouse’s taste.  On this evening, you are dressing for your mate, not yourself!

**2.** Before you go out, prepare some topics to speak about.  This way there won’t be some stretches of silence that might make you feel you don’t have much to do with each other!

**3**. Steer clear of sore subjects.  This is an evening to have a special time and NOT to negotiate!  Thus, stay clear of such topics as: When are we remodeling the kitchen? Or, why can’t there be less screaming?  Or, when are we going to pay-off the butcher’s bill? etc.

**4**. Children and grandchildren are fine subject matter.  Just make sure you stay away from argumentative topics such as: Why don’t you learn with your son? Or, I wish you’d be home more for the kids, etc.

**5.** Don’t monopolize the conversation with the topic of your work.  This is an evening to get away from work!

**6**. Without pressing demands, it’s nice to dream together about things you’d like to do together one day.  Speaking about a trip, a vacation, or a special project is enjoyable.

**7**. If going out is a rare luxury, don’t be frugal.  In this spirit, don’t park five blocks away from the restaurant so that your wife will need to walk in her evening clothes just to save money on parking.

**8**. Similarly, each of you should choose what you really like to eat, and not what you think you can share, or what you think you will save money on.  Remember, your aim is to give your spouse the nicest time possible!

**9**. If you see other couples you know, be polite but don’t fraternize with them.  This is a rare opportunity, away from the home, for some private time exclusively shared by the two of you.  Don’t risk hurting your spouse with the implication that you’d rather converse with others more than with him or her!

**10**. Make sure the children are properly cared for so that you’re not a nervous wreck thinking about them throughout the entire evening.

**11**. Shut off your beeper and cell phone.  If possible, even a Hatzolah member should try to sign-off for these few hours (your wife deserves it!).

**12**. Make sure you pick a time when you won’t feel rushed.  Thus, make sure to have davened Mincha already, and plan on attending a late minyan for Maariv.  You can even plan so that you don’t have to get up early the next day!

**13**. Of course, don’t eat shortly beforehand or you’ll sit there saying you’re not hungry.  Similarly, be well rested so you won’t hurt your spouse by yawning throughout the evening!

**14**. Definitely, a special evening is not the time to discourage your mate away from dessert because of his or her diet!  Let this go, just this once.

**15**. Do not, under any circumstances, make your spouse feel you are anxious to leave!  This can ruin a beautiful evening.

**16.** Don’t fight about the tip!  Avoid comments like, “You’re so stingy” or “Stop throwing money away” or even worse “With strangers you all of a sudden give freely!”  Don’t complain how expensive the meal is!

**17**. Be liberal with compliments throughout the evening.  Comments such as, “You look ravishing this evening,” or “You really run a beautiful home,” or “The kids are so lucky to have you as a Mother/Father,” or “I feel so secure with the way you handle the finances,” or “I was really smart to marry you,” make the evening even more memorable and meaningful!

**18**. Tell your spouse what a good time you’re having, and afterward, repeat what a good time you had.  This is so important for your mate to hear!

**19**. Be expansive in your appreciation of the money spent on the evening.  (Don’t take it for granted!)

**20**. Finally, make time to go out occasionally!  The Torah calls the special obligation between husband and wife ‘Onah.’  Simply translated this means TIME.  Especially at the frenetic pace we live, we need to find time to foster the bonds between ourselves.

If we aren’t vigilant, the routine and grind of daily life threaten to erode the spirit of marriage and replace it with dullness and boredom.  Dining out is one way (there are many others) to rejuvenate the animation of our marriage.

May Hashem bless us all with long life, good health, harmony at home, and everything wonderful!

*Reprinted from the January 25, 2015 website of Matzav.com*

**Who's Who?**

**Rabbeinu Gershom**



Rabbi Gershom ben Yehudah Hakohen (960-1040), who became known as "Meor Hagola," the Light of the Exile, lived in France.

He was one of the greatest scholars of his time, and was famous for his Talmudic commentaries, legal responsa, and Selichot [penitential prayers], but especially for the social legislation dealing with family life which he enacted.

Among others, he forbade the practice of having more than one wife, and of opening another person's mail.

This legislation was accepted by all the Jews of Europe and is binding on us to this very day.

He established the first yeshiva on the Rhine, which attracted the greatest scholars.

*Reprinted from Issue #309 (Pekudei 5754) of L’Chaim Weekly.*