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**Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser Highlights the Importance**

**Of Promoting Shalom Bayis**

**By Daniel Keren**



 One of the featured speakers at last month’s Martin Luther King Jr. Hakhel Legal Day Yarchei Kallah Event was Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, internationally renowned Maggid Shiur and Rav of Congregation Bais Yitzchok. He spoke on the topic of “Halachich Perspectives for Current Times.”

 Rabbi Goldwasser quoted the Chiddushei Harim (Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, 1799-1866) who said that if a person makes an effort to study halacha to determine what one should do, he can separate kedusha (holiness) from tumah (spiritual impurity.) Rabbi Goldwasser noted that one of the major areas that he frequently get calls from people is regarding the subject of shalom bayis (harmony in the home). There is no greater zechus (merit) than to help restore harmony between a husband and wife.

**The Greatness of Being Mevater**

 Oftentimes, the quality of being mevater (giving in to satisfy another person) is essential towards promoting shalom bayis. A newly married wife grew up in a home when before Yom Kippur, the family would go together to perform the ritual of kapporas by shlugging (waving) a chicken over their heads while reciting verses from the Yom Kippur machzor.

 In the week before Yom Kippur she asked her husband to do the kapporas ceremony with her. He was a Litvak (a Jew whose family came from Lithuania) and he happily went to get the machzor and some money. His wife was shocked and said that this was not the way she wanted to perform the ceremony, but with real chickens.

**Seeking a Solution from the**

**Ponevezh Rosh Hayeshiva**



 Not knowing how to handle the crisis he went to Rav Elazar Shach, 1899-2001, the Rosh Hayeshiva of Ponevezh in Bnei Brak and was told to do kapporas as his wife desired. The husband complained that this would take up extra time from his learning Torah. He also asked Rav Shach how he performed kapporas. The Rosh Hayeshiva admitted that he also perform the ceremony with money but that for the sake of shalom bayis, the new husband should be mevater to the wishes of his wife. Rabbi Goldwasser explained that in order to ensure shalom bayis, a person may sometimes have to take a few steps back and swallow his pride.

 Rabbi Goldwasser recalls a person who stopped him on the street and told him that he was involved in a major business deal and if it would become successful, he would want to give Rabbi Goldwasser a large amount of money from his profits to distribute as the rav sees fit for tzedakah. Rabbi Goldwasser told the gentleman that if he wants a zechus (merit) that his business deal should indeed turn out well, he should give now a small amount of tzedakah and once the deals works out, follow through with his desire to give a larger amount to help Jews in need.

**The Chiloni Soldier’s Vow**

**To Become a Gerrer Chassid**

 Rabbi Goldwasser told a story about a chiloni (secular) Israeli reserve soldier who was sent into battle. He was confronted by an Arab enemy who had a grenade and was preparing to throw it at the helpless soldier. At that moment, this Jew who had no previous thoughts of becoming a baal teshuvah declared out loud in a vow to Hashem that if He would save his life, he would do teshuvah and become a Gerrer chassid. At that moment the grenade blew up in the hand of the Arab before he could throw it at the Jew and the soldier’s life was saved while his enemy died a very painful and deserved death.

**Discovered that Becoming Gerrer**

**Chasid Was Not Such a Simple Thing**

 Afterwards, this Jew when returning to civilian life discovered that being a Gerrer Chasid was maybe after all not such a simple thing. He still wanted to do teshuvah and become Torah observant. But did he have to go the whole route of wearing white socks and black clothes? Someone told him that if he would daven in the Gerrer shteibel once a week or once a month, that might qualify as his fulfilling his vow to Hashem to become a Gerrer chassid, while he could still dress in a more moderate but non-Chassidic manner without the white socks.

 However, when Rav Moshe Sternbuch, the Av Beis Din of the Eidah Chareidis in Yerushalayim heard of that solution, he disagreed. He said something more substantial was required. Before Jewish holidays this baal teshuvah must like other Gerrer chassidim come before the Gerrer rebbe and request a brocha and give tzedakah money. That would qualify as fulfilling his vow to become a Gerrer chassid.

*Reprinted from the February 5, 2021 edition of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**A Magnificently Decorated Ketubbah from Bombay, 1853**



 Ink and shell gold on paper (19 1/2 x 15 1/4 in.; 500 x 390 mm); written in Eastern Hebrew square (blessings at head and incipit) and semi-cursive (text body) scripts in black ink on twenty-four lines; witness signatures below. Text within multifoil arch and surrounded by floral decorations and pairs of peacocks and tigers. Minor cockling and flaking; small loss in upper-left corner; short tear in outer edge at left. Housed in a metal tube (15 1/2 in.; 400 mm).

 Celebrating the wedding of Reuben Hai [ben] David Sassoon Saleh and Khatun bat David Hai Ezekiel Abraham Matsliah on Monday, 6 Adar I 5613 (February 14, 1853).

 This splendid marriage contract records the wedding of Reuben David Sassoon and Catherine (Kate) Ezekiel (1838-1906), members of two of the greatest Baghdadi merchant families in India. The document, profusely ornamented with gold floral designs, opens with two panels containing decoratively penned blessings customarily found on marriage contracts from India. This traditional literary prelude to the main body of the *ketubbah* text offers good wishes to the bride and groom, as well as to the entire community. The pair of recumbent tigers protectively placed below the blessings are a motif exclusive to the *ketubbot* of the Baghdadi Jews of India and likely represent the special regard in which these exotic animals were held. The double pair of peacocks seen here can be found on other *ketubbot* from the Far East, where they are often employed as decorative paradisal elements.

 Elaborately decorated marriage contracts from Bombay rarely come to market. The present *ketubbah* is a superb witness to the traditions and artistry of the illustrious Baghdadi Jewish community of India.

**Literature**

 Shalom Sabar, “The Illuminated *Ketubbah*,” in Orpa Slapak (ed.), *The Jews of India: A Story of Three Communities* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1995), 167-202.

 The Ketubba was recently auctioned by Southeby’s Auction Company, headquartered in New York City with an estimate of between $10,000 - $20,000. It was sold at the auction for $63,000.

*Reprinted from the auction catalogue – “Sassoon: A Golden Legacy.”*

# Rav Avigdor Miller

# On Kosher Earrings



 **QUESTION:** Should frum girls have their ears pierced for earrings?

 **ANSWER:** Why not? If the earrings are kosher to wear, why not? Probably Jewish women have the right to wear earrings like anybody else. When Rivkah was given *nezamim* by her *chosson*, it was because Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants to make the bride more attractive to the *chosson.*Why not? He wants people to get married; and even after they marry, He wants women to be attractive for their husbands. It’s a mitzvah for a woman to be attractive for her husband.

 And therefore nothing can be considered as wrong if it is a matter of maintaining her appearance. Not for the street though. You don’t dress up for strange men. But to dress up for your own husband, absolutely.

*Reprinted from an email of Toras Avigdor. - TAPE # 788 (June 1990)*

**Seeking Hashem – Part Two**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**



**Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**

 In Tehillim, Dovid HaMelech declares, “Mi chocham v’yishmar aleh v’yisboninu chasdei Hashem – Who is wise and observes these things and meditates on the kindness of Hashem?” The Hebrew letters of the two words mi chocham, a mem, a yud, a ches, a chaf and another mem, make up an abbreviation for Yisro Kohein Midyan Chosein Moshe. As we mentioned last week it was Yisro who observed, “Atah yadati ki gadol Hashem mikol elohim ki badavar asher zadu aleihem – Now I know that Hashem is greater than all powers for that which the Egyptians plotted befell them.

 Many years before the exodus Yisro was one of the members present when Pharaoh had a meeting to decide the fate of the Jews. At that meeting Pharaoh determined that G-d’s way of retributions was always midah k’neged midah, measure for measure. He therefore decided to drown the Jewish babies since G-d promised that he wouldn’t bring anymore a flood upon the world. Now at the time of the drowning of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, Yisro marveled at how Hashem kept His promise and yet punished the Egyptians measure for measure by bringing them to the water instead of bringing the water to them.

**Paroh’s Diabolical Plot**

 He also observed that it was part of Paroh’s diabolical plot to kill the Jews and not sully his own hands. Rather he conspired to have Jew kill Jew, first by asking the Jewish midwives to kill the babies and then by demanding that the Jewish parents drown their own children. Therefore, measure for measure the Jews did not lift a finger against the nine million Egyptians that pursued them to the sea. Instead, the Egyptians drowned themselves by walking into the watery abyss of the Red Sea. But Yisro’s observation went further.

 When Yisro states that Hashem is greater than all elohim, he is referring to the fact that now he sees that G-d is greater even than the celestial angels. We are taught that even angels do not know what is going on in a person’s mind. They are not mind readers, but it is Hashem who is bochein kluyos balev, He knows innermost thoughts of a person, and was able to interpret the real meaning behind Pharaoh’s actions.

 As the commentators teach us, Paroh actually wanted to claim reward for his treatment of the Jews. He declared to G-d, “You told Avraham that his children would be strangers in a land not theirs and they would be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years.” Well Paroh exclaimed, “Didn’t I fulfill the Divine Will correctly? Don’t I deserve to be rewarded?” But as the Ramban explains, Paroh didn’t do it for that reason. Rather, as Yisro states, Ki badavar asher zadu, that which he did with willful intent, aleihem, they were punished.

**Yisro was a Great Student**

 So we see that Yisro was a great student of that which transpired around him. Dovid HaMelech refers to such perception as chochmah for as Ben Zoma teaches us in Pirkei Avos: Aizehu chocham? Halomeid mikol adam – Who is wise? He who learns from every person.” This speaks of the ability to observe and draw lessons from every situation.

 Rav Miller, Zt”l, Zy”a, used to walk around with seeds in his pocket. From a seed he was able to see and meditate upon the chasdei Hashem, the kindness of the Creator. He would say in the name of his father in-law, Rav Levin, that the peach pit is so hard that you cannot break it open even with a saw. If you put it in the ground, the chemicals of the soil dissolve the glue between the two halves and the case opens up smoothly and releases the seed inside. It’s a marvel of the plan and purpose of the Creator.

 Take a watermelon pit which is slimy to the touch. It’s not the juice of the watermelon that makes it slippery; rather it has its own slickness which ensures that it will evade the eater and live to plant another watermelon bush. So too in the core of the apple, the seeds are protected so they shouldn’t be disturbed and live to promote other apple trees.

 The seed is a remarkable coupon found in our fruit that proclaims, “Buy An Apple – Get Trees For Free!” The seed contains in it a mini-computer which ensures that no matter which direction we put the seed in the ground, the roots go down and the tree grows up. It’s not like the battery of a flashlight that if you put it in the wrong way the flashlight won’t work. Just the marvel of the fact that one seed in the ground generates a tree which has fruit with thousands of seeds for the next fifty years is an incredible observation. Once again the wise man who watches these things has a whole world of observations to meditate on the kindness of Hashem.

 May it be the will of Hashem that we achieve this wisdom and in that merit may we be blessed with long life, good health, and everything wonderful.

*Reprinted from the January 13, 2021 email of The Jewish Vues.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Yitro 5781**



One of the basic lessons learned from this week's Torah reading, though barely discussed by the commentators, is that there is no perfect system of justice if it involves human beings and judges. After the granting of the Torah to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, our teacher Moshe allows himself to become the sole judge regarding disputes that arise in the camp of the Israelites. He is besieged by claimants and litigants from early morning until sunset. Naturally, anyone who had the ability to appear before such a judge as Moshe would wish to take advantage of that opportunity.

**The Danger of a Sole Judge**

 Though Moshe possesses supernatural wisdom and insight, he is known to be incorruptible, fair, equitable and decisive. What other qualities can one expect or hope for in a human judge? None.  Nevertheless, as his father-in-law Yitro points out to him, the judge may be as perfect as can be, but the judicial system that Moshe has instituted is far from perfection. Yitro warns that by being the sole judge and having everyone wait their turn to have their claims adjudicated by him alone, both Moshe and the people will eventually become exhausted and wither away. What is needed is a tiered system of judges, courts, police, and other officials of the judicial system that must be appointed and empowered.

 This signifies the creation of a bureaucracy, with all the attendant fields that it contains and necessarily entails. But it is the only practical way of dealing with this issue of sustainability that will allow Moshe and the people of Israel to continue to function. In effect we are being taught that attempting to achieve perfection in this instance will lead to exhaustion and eventual destruction.

**The Great Lesson of the Revelation at Sinai**

 One of the great lessons of the Revelation at Sinai was and is a simple basic understanding of the true nature of human beings, both individually and in society. The Lord is perfection, while humans are doomed to operate within an imperfect and frustrating world.  Sometimes better is the enemy of good, in the attempt to achieve perfection, and only leads to greater imperfection, frustration and even violence.

 Moshe aspired to give every Jew who came before him a perfect answer, a judgment that would harmonize with ultimate truth and nobility. He realized that this could not be done through the establishment of a bureaucracy. Within that system, there would be many cooks in the kitchen, and power would be diffuse.  Personal interests could govern all decisions, no matter how noble the intent of the persons involved. His father-in-law agreed with Moshe's goal, but Yitro told Moshe, based upon his own life experience as being the chief executive priest of Midian, that Moshe's goal was unachievable in this world.

 In this world one can only deal with practicalities, and practicalities always spell imperfection, compromise and the possibility for error and wrong decisions. But that is the human condition, and one must operate within that condition and accept imperfection as one of the basic tenets of human life and society.

*Reprinted from the current website of Rabbiwein.com*

**Parshas Yisro**

**Learning to Enjoy this World**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



 *“And He does kindness to thousands of generations, to those who He loves and those who guard His mitzvos.”* – Shemos 20:6

 In the *Aseres Ha’Dibros* we are told that HASHEM pays back the wicked for four generations and the righteous for two thousand generations. Rashi explains that the ratio of two thousand to four comes out to be five hundred to one. This teaches us that the measure of *good* to *bad* in the world is five hundred to one.

**A Difficult Rashi to Understand**

 This Rashi is very difficult to understand. If the Torah is teaching us that HASHEM created the world with an operating principle that the good outweighs the bad by a measure of five hundred to one, this doesn’t seem to be consistent with reality.

 Granted life is good, but can anyone say that their “pleasures” outweigh their “pains” five hundred to one? Five hundred to one means that the rough spots in life are so overshadowed by the enormity of good that they are almost nonexistent. For every headache I endure, I enjoy five hundred times the pleasure. For every stomach cramp I suffer through, I benefit from five hundred measures of delight. The problem is that this just isn’t the way life is. How do we reconcile this Rashi with reality?

**A Perspective on Pleasure**

 If we study the world, we find many features that have no *functional* purpose, and if the world were created strictly from a *practical* standpoint, they would not be there. For example: *tastes* in food.

 Food is something that we need to maintain our energy levels and health. If its only function were nutrition and nothing more, then all food should be taste like soggy cardboard. Yet it doesn’t. There are so many variations, each with its own unique flavor, texture, and aroma.

 Why did HASHEM create food this way? Why not make it all same? The reason is for our pleasure. So that eating, which we have to do, shouldn’t be a chore but should be delightful. Taste is something that HASHEM added solely for our benefit – for us to enjoy.

**Rabbi Miller’s Description of an Orange**

 An awful lot of thought went into creating the different foods that we eat. Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt’l, once described an orange. When you peel an orange, you find wedges inside. If you look closely, each of these wedges is surrounded by a thin membrane. When you pull back the membrane, you see many tiny sacs. Inside each of those sacs is the juice of the orange. Why did HASHEM created an orange in that manner, with thousands of little sacs? So that when you bite into the orange, the taste is released in a *burst of flavor.*

 HASHEM created those sacs so that there would be another dimension to our enjoyment. The sensation of eating an orange would be different without this feature. It still would have tasted delicious, but this is an additional aspect that HASHEM wanted us to enjoy, so He designed the orange that way.

 Did you ever wonder why apples are red on the outside?

 HASHEM made apples red because it is nicer to look at, and that makes the process of eating an apple more pleasing. The presentation adds much to the enjoyment of the dish. So, HASHEM designed foods to have eye appeal to enhance our experience of eating.

 What happens when you bite into an apple? You don’t get that burst of flavor that you got when you bit into an orange. You get a crunch. Why is that? Why not design all fruit the same? The reason an apple is crunchy is because it is *fun* to crunch on food. So, when HASHEM made apples, He designed the cells to form hard walls, so that when we bite into it, we get that crunch. It didn’t have to be that way. It was designed that way so that we should enjoy it.

 What about aroma? Each of the assorted foods not only has varied tastes and textures, but markedly different smells, which contribute to our total enjoyment. When HASHEM created food, He added this dimension of wonderful aromas to even further enhance our taste experience.

 The food we eat comes in so many assorted flavors and textures, each one appealing to a different element of our tastes. HASHEM pre-planned and created all of this for us to enjoy.

**Hashem’s Creations for Our Enjoyment**

 And this is but one example of countless of features that HASHEM created strictly for our enjoyment. HASHEM created, sights, sounds, textures, colors, depth and so many other features in this glorious world so that our experience here should be more pleasure filled. If the world was created for practical reasons only, all of this wouldn’t have to be. But HASHEM put it all here, for us to enjoy.

It takes training to enjoy the pleasures of this world

 Yet how many times do we actually take the time to enjoy the foods that we eat? How much attention do we pay to the sights that we see? It takes training and concentration to consciously enjoy the life that we lead. If we do, we will see a tremendous amount of detail and concern put in for our benefit. And we will see a tremendous demonstration of the kindness that HASHEM shows to man.

**Our Lack of Training in Enjoying this World**

This seems to be what Rashi is saying. The ratio of 500:1 is accurate in *this* world. The problem isn’t the amount of pleasure in the world; the problem is that we lack the training to enjoy it.

 When we learn to live with *intention* and use this world as it was designed to be used, we come to recognize the love that HASHEM has for all of His creations, and we then lead a purposeful, pleasure-filled life.

*Reprinted from the website of Theshmuz.com.*

## Thoughts that Count

*You shall be unto me a treasure (segula) above all nations* (Ex. 19:5)

 A "segula," by definition, is something that has an intrinsic value but no logical, rational reason for it. G-d's love for the Jewish people falls into the category of "segula," as it has no rational basis; the only reason it exists is because it so arose in the Divine Will to select the Jews as His chosen people. *(Kadmonim)*

*Reprinted from the 5756/2996 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**The Reason for Not Committing Murder or Stealing**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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



 This week's Torah reading, Yitro, contains the Ten Commandments, the ultimate distillation of G-d's revelation to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai.

 The commandments themselves range from the highest theological and moral concepts -- "I am the L-rd your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" and "You shall have no other gods before Me" -- to "simpler," ethical concepts man would seemingly figure out on his own -- "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," etc.

 The juxtaposition of both types of commandments teaches us a very important lesson: All of G-d's commandments, be they of a "higher" or more mundane nature, must be carried out with the same intent, i.e., solely because G-d has so commanded us. The reason we do not commit murder or steal is only because the same G-d Who declared "I am the L-rd your G-d" is the One Who has commanded us not to -- not because the concepts make sense to our human intellect.

 The human mind is eminently pliant and malleable, its logic often determined by a wide range of factors. Relying on intellect alone can result in a person's convincing himself that an aveira, an out-and-out sin, is actually a very great mitzva!

 Without the foundation of "I am the L-rd your G-d," a Jew's observance of the "lower" commandments will be sorely lacking.

 For example, the spiritual corollary of "You shall not murder" is the prohibition against shaming another person in public, symbolically "shedding his blood." Likewise, the commandment "You shall not steal" applies equally to the theft of intellectual property and ideas.

 It states, "Self-love will cover up a multitude of transgressions." Just as a small finger can obscure the entire world when it is placed right in front of the eye, so too does a person's love for himself often blind him to the true reality. Accordingly, a Jew's obligation is to ensure that his observance of all of G-d's mitzvot is thoroughly permeated with a sense of "I am the L-rd your G-d," even if the reason for a particular commandment appears to be perfectly understandable and obvious. With this basic principle in mind, all our deeds and actions will truly be imbued with G-dliness and holiness.

*Reprinted from the 5756/2996 edition of L’Chaim Weekly. Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe Vol. 3*

**More Thoughts that Count**

*Moses spoke (yedaber), and G-d answered him* (Ex. 19:19)

 The word "yedaber" is actually in the future tense, implying "Moses will speak." It is also etymologically related to the word "yadber," meaning "he will lead and guide" -- a reference to the "reflection of Moses that exists in every generation ." (Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim)

*I am the L-rd your G-d* (Ex. 20:2)

 This first of the Ten Commandments was given in the singular ("your G-d"), as each individual's conception and understanding of G-d is different, depending on his capacity for spirituality, knowledge of Torah, and individual service. Accordingly, each person who was present at Mount Sinai understood the commandment differently. (Siftei Kohen)

*Six days you shall labor and do all your work* (Ex. 20:9)

 In truth, is it possible to complete all one's work in only six days? Rather, the intent is that a person must desist from labor on Shabbat, and consider it as if all his work was already done. (Mechilta)

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