



CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

January 13-14, 2017 ▪ 15 Teves, 5777 ▪ Shabbos Vayechi
Mincha: 5:25P / Candlelighting: 5:24P ▪ Shabbos Ends 6:33P

KIDDUSH this Shabbos is sponsored by the members of the Guarantee Kiddush Club: Wes & Tricia Sutkin, Yaakov & Susan Rich, Ben & Lauren Nise, Chana Esther Day, Ari & Naomi Goldberg, Eli Goldberg and Ibriy & Amy Martin. **SHALOSH SEUDOS** this Shabbos is sponsored by the shul.

Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016 if you are interested in sponsoring kiddush or shalosh seudos in the future.

■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

Friday Night, January 13th

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv – 5:25P
- » Candlelighting – 5:24P

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- » Shacharis followed by Kiddush–8:30A
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■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Sunday Shacharis–8A
- » Sunday Mincha/Maariv–5:30P
- » Weekday Shacharis–6:40A
- » Weekday Mincha followed by 20-min Chassidus shiur–5:30P
- » Weekday Maariv–8P

■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

MEN

- » Zoosav ben Lipke (Father of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Yechiel Mordechai ben Devorah (Brother of Ken Jarmel)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)

WOMEN

- » Leah Esther bas Yenta Leah (Lori Jarmel)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

■ A REASON TO LIVE: RABBI LABEL LAM

Yaakov called for his sons and said, “Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days. Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Israel, your father. Reuvain, you are my firstborn, my strength and the first of my might. [You should have been] superior in rank and superior in power. [You have] the restlessness of water; [therefore,] you shall not have superiority... (Breishis 49:1-4)

superior in rank: You were fit to be superior over your brothers with the priesthood... Rashi

and superior in power: [i.e. superior] with kingship... Rashi

You have] the restlessness of water: The restlessness and the haste with which you hastened to display your anger, similar to water which hastens on its course. Therefore- ... Rashi

you shall not have superiority: You shall no longer receive all these superior positions that were fit for you. – Rashi

How is all this a blessing? Reuvain’s beloved and holy father is telling him in his final moments that he could have become great if not for a certain character flaw. How much was fumbled, how much was lost because of what we would call “impulsivity”? He could have been the super star in a nation of super stars, but he acted hastily a few times with a vision clouded by emotion. That trait of impulsivity cost him plenty.

Unfortunately a person is often judged by and remembered for the mistakes he made and all the rest is evaporated and is forgotten like last year’s snow. That doesn’t sound like a blessing to me! How then was it a blessing?

The answer is- it was the truth- the absolute truth! It wasn’t that he just made a few mistakes. No, those missteps reveal a deep and continuous fault line in his personality.

He received from his loving father a very deep reading of the root cause for his not being granted leadership. Sure it must have stung terribly but it was the medicine he needed. How can a father withhold such critical information from his child if he knows it will affect a cure and save him from further harm!?

Reuvain needed desperately to know the truth even if it hurt. Harry Truman was nicknamed “Give’m hell Harry”. He is reputed to have said, “I never gave anyone hell. I just said the truth and it felt like hell!” So how was this dose of TRUTH a blessing? How is the condemning report a help for Reuvain?

I went to Rabbi Mordechai Schwab, the Tzadik of Monsey, with a personal problem, a character issue that was playing itself out in a few interpersonal relationships. He was rubbing his heart the whole time like he was polishing a diamond, listening empathetically, and reciting quietly to himself, (I’ll say it in English), “Purify my heart to serve You in truth!” (V’Taher Libeinu L’Avdecha B’Emes!)

He then told me something that both calmed my spirit and made me want to faint at the same time. While continuing to rub his heart, he said, “I have the same problem. I have been working on it for 50 years and it’s just starting to go away!”

That is him, a true Tzadik, working at it with his wisdom, extraordinary effort, and constancy. He’s working on this same issue for 50 years and it’s just starting to go away. I thought, “What hope is there for me?” I also realized it’s not something that’s going to vanish in an instant and I might just have to spend the rest of my life working on it.

I realize that I now even find myself in great company and in the company of the great. That’s my mission! That’s my G-d given task to work on that aspect of my character. My success or failure in life is dependent upon this correction being made. The Vilna Gaon had stated, “If one is not improving his character then why is he alive!?” It turns out then, that stinging rebuke actually gave Reuvain a reason to live!

■ LEAVING LEARNING FOR LEVAYOS: RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

In Parshas Vayechi we are told of the colossal levayah (funeral) for Yaakov Avinu, from Egypt all the way up to his final resting place, Ma’aras HaMachpella in Chevron. Indeed, the respect and honor accorded to Yaakov Avinu on his passing was universal, and we find that even the Canaanite Kings, no friends of Bnei Yisrael, nonetheless joined in the massive levayah.

Although we cannot fathom such a gathering for a funeral, nevertheless, the recent spate of Levayos for Gedolim that engendered public turnout in the hundreds of thousands of mourners has left even the most jaded of secular pundits speechless. The passing of such Gaonim as Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt”l, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt”l, Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg zt”l, mv”r Rav Yaakov Blau zt”l, the Vizhnitzer Rebbe zt”l, and Rav Ovadia Yosef zt”l, over the last several years, has exemplified how much of a priority it is for us to pay our respect and show our esteem and reverence for these luminaries, as testament to their vast accomplishments as Gedolei HaDor.

Their vastly different backgrounds and constituents notwithstanding, each of these giants’ Levayos had attendance well into the tens and hundred thousands, consisting of the full spectrum of religious Jewry.

Indeed, the rewards for attending a levayah, and not just for Gedolim, are many. In fact, this Gemillas Chessed Shel Emes is referred to as a mitzvah that is ‘keren kayemes l’olam haba’ah’, an eternal one with rewards both in This World and the World to

Come, with no diminished returns.

Deceased's Needs Fulfilled? Yet, we find that according to the Gemara and codified as halacha, although 'Talmud Torah Kenneged Kulam', Torah study is the greatest of all Mitzvos, nevertheless, one is obligated to leave his Torah study in order to properly escort one who has passed on.

Although the Gemara qualifies this rule, and asserts that it is relevant only to one who does not have 'kol tzorcho', his required needs, nowadays this is fulfilled with a 'Chevra Kadisha', a Burial Society, and one should not abandon his Torah study to attend a random levayah when basic requirements are being met.

However, continues the Gemara, different people have different needs regarding their levayos. A basic minyan is deemed sufficient only for one who is not learned. Yet, for one who is learned, his basic needs for a levayah is an astounding 600,000 attendees, the same number as those present at Kabbolas HaTorah! This is due to the dictum of 'Netilasah K'Nisinasah'; the same number present at Kabbolas HaTorah should be present when the Torah departs, meaning when one who is filled with Torah passes away.

Lest one think that this halacha is referring to a Gadol HaDor or at the very least, a famous Rosh Yeshiva, the Rema explains that in his time, anyone with at least a rudimentary Jewish education (in Chumash and Mishna) is included in this category! Although the Aruch Hashulchan felt that this was possibly only true in the Rema's time, conversely, the Minchas Elazar of Munkacs remarked that in his day (around 85 years ago) this was certainly true; as 'who doesn't sit in shul over Shabbos and recite shnayim mikra v'echad targum?!"

The Gemara concludes that for one who teaches Torah to others, also not referring exclusively to a Gadol Hador or Rosh Yeshiva, but even a Rebbi, Rav, Posek, Maggid Shiur, or Rosh Chaburah, there is no limit, and everyone is obligated to attend his levayah!

Limud or Levayah? If so, why do we find such numbers of mourners only at Gedolim's levayos? In large cities wouldn't everyone be required to stop their talmud Torah many times a day, simply to escort their fellow man, whom they may not have ever met, to his eternal rest?

Although there are several approaches and rationales given to answer this question, it is important to note that many Gedolim grappled with this issue, implying that the question is still better than the answer.

The main rationale for leniency is actually based on a machlokes in Even Ha'Ezer regarding attending a wedding Chuppa, where the halacha parallels that of a levayah regarding stopping learning to attend. The Chelkas Mechokek writes that this halacha only applies to one who sees a Chuppa occurring, who must stop his learning to attend the wedding. Yet, if one merely knows about a wedding taking place, he is not obligated to do so. The Beis Shmuel, however, argues that even if one knows about a wedding, one is obligated to attend, even at the cost of his learning.

The famed Netziv, Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin zt"l, Rosh Yeshivas Volozhin, maintains that regarding levayos the halacha follows the opinion of the Chelkas Mechokek. He cites proof of this from the words the Gemara in Brachos (and later codified by the Shulchan Aruch) uses in referencing levayos that refers to

attending one as 'HaRoeh es HaMeis', seeing one who passed away. The Netziv explains this to mean that unless one actually sees a levayah occurring, he is not obligated to stop his learning to attend. Although several authorities seem reluctant to rely upon this, nevertheless, the vast majority of decisors rule this way, that one is not required to attend a levayah and abandon his learning simply because he is aware of one taking place.

Other rationales for leniency include: that only Talmud Torah of an individual needs to be halted for a levayah, not public Talmud Torah; that nowadays many levayos do not start at the appointed time, and one needs only to stop learning and attend when he is certain that the levayah is taking place; and that the halacha was referring to when everyone in the city was part of one unified kehillah; ergo, nowadays in large cities, where there is a plethora of kehillas, some with no interaction with another, the ruling would not apply. Additionally, as Rav Ezriel Auerbach recently averred to this author, this issue would potentially fall into the category of 'Ais La'asos Lashem, Heiferu Torasecha', a time to act for Hashem to prevent the Torah from being forgotten, as otherwise nowadays, especially in large communities, if one is running all day from levayah to levayah, 'Torah, mah t'hei aleha?', there will be no time left to learn!

But one thing is certain. Many Gedolim stress that if one does come across a levayah, he is obligated to stop what he is doing and attend, accompanying the niftar at least four Amos along his final journey.

Bitulo Hee Kiyumah Another interesting related issue is that the Tur and Shulchan Aruch rule that the only constituency that should never stop its learning for any levayah whatsoever is Tashb"ar, Tinokos Shel Beis Rabban, or cheder school children. Yet, nowadays, it is accepted that for the passing of a Gadol, Talmudei Torah are let out, with the children being urged to participate in the levayah as well. How is this allowed?

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l, when asked this question, replied that the Gedolim of previous generations felt that having children stop learning to attend the levayah of a Gadol was acceptable in order to show honor to the Torah. He added that, anyway, children nowadays have intersession and vacation on other days when they are not learning. If so, paying last respects to a Gadol is certainly no worse than Bein HaZmanim. Others add that it is purposely done so that the children will learn to appreciate the greatness of Torah. Moreover, in this case 'bitulo hee kiyumah', this brief break for a Gadol's levayah, will undoubtedly engender more and greater Torah learning on the children's part.

In the final analysis, if one is attending a levayah, he should not bemoan the fact that he is missing seder. On the contrary, he should focus on the great Mitzva he is performing. By escorting the recently departed to his eternal rest, he is earning his own eternal reward.

Good Shabbos

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■ CLASSES

- » Hilchos Niddah for men (Sunday 7-8A)
- » Before Shacharis Gemara Yevamos for men (M-Fr, 6-6:40A)
- » NQ Daf HaYomi Kesuvos for men (Sunday-Thursday 8:15P)
- » Learn to Learn Gemara (Tue & Thur 7-8P)
- » Chassidus (10 mins after weekday mincha)
- » Pirkei Avos/Chumash for men & women (Shabbos 60 mins before mincha)
- » Marriage Chaburah for women (TBD)