



# CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

May 10-11, 2019 ▪ 5 Iyar, 5779 ▪ Shabbos Kedoshim  
Mincha: 7:00P / Candlelighting: 7:58P ▪ Shabbos Ends 9:06P

**KIDDUSH** this Shabbos is sponsored by the members of the Guarantee Kiddush Club: Pinchas & Tricia Sutkin, Yaakov & Susan Rich, Ben & Lauren Nise, Eli Goldberg, Yerachmiel & Shira Martin, Josh & Lisa Rothstein. **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, May 10<sup>th</sup>

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-7:00P
- » Shabbos Candle Lighting-7:58P

### Shabbos Day, May 11<sup>th</sup>

- » Mishnayos shiur with Rabbi Reuven Wortrich-Canceled
- » Shacharis-8:30A
- » Chumash Shiur for Men & Women-6:15P
- » Beis Medrash Learning for Men-7:15P
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men-7:45P
- » Maariv/Shabbos Ends-9:06P

## ■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Sunday Shacharis-8:00A
- » Weekday Mincha/Maariv-8:00P
- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40A

## ■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

### Men

- » Refalal Tevya ben Sara (Uncle of Rebekkah Bodoff)
- » Yechezkel Yehuda ben Asnah Shaynah (Howard Denmark)
- » Matan Rafael Nasanel ben Esther (Matan Elfenbein)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)

### Women

- » Tikva bas Salima (Tikva Zbolon)
- » Rivka Basya bas Devorah (Rebekkah Bodoff)
- » Necha bas Leah (see Irwin Harris)
- » Leah Esther bas Yenta Leah (Lori Jarmel)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

## ■ WHAT'S NU

- » **Shabbaton with Rabbi Eliyahu Heller:** The community is invited to Congregation Toras Chaim, Shabbos, May 18, 2019, to hear a pre-Lag B'Omer/Shavuos Shabbaton from Rabbi Eliyahu Heller (formerly of DATA). Rabbi Heller is known for his erudition, and completely novel interpretations of the teachings of our Sages. **THE SHABBATON IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY BEN & LAUREN NISE.** All classes are for men and women. Shabbos hospitality is available. Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich, rabbi@toraschaimdallas.org if you would like to stay in our community for Shabbos. There is no charge for attending any of the classes. Sponsorships at \$250/class are available. Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich, rabbi@toraschaimdallas.org if interested. **Class Topics:** *Lag B'Omer: Love in the Night; Shavuos: Why Do We Learn Torah?; Torah: Who is Truly Free?; Ben Torah in the Workplace: A Fresh Perspective on Navigating the World at Large.*
- » **Programs Coming Up:** Lag B'Omer BBQ; and Shavuos All-Night Learning

## ■ FROM THE PROFANITY OF PROFANITIES: RABBI LABEL LAM

HASHEM spoke to Moshe after the death of Aaron's two sons, when they approached before HASHEM, and they died. And HASHEM said to Moshe: "Speak to Aaron your brother- he shall not come at all times into the Sanctuary, within the Curtain, in front of the Cover that is upon the Ark, so that he should not die. With this shall Aaron come into the Sanctuary..." (Vayikra 16:1-3)

Any man shall not approach his close relative to uncover nakedness, I am HASHEM... (Vayikra 18:6)

HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying, "Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, HASHEM, your G-d." (Vayikra 19:1)

Why are the instructions about entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur introduced in the context of the death of the two sons of Aaron's? What do the Laws of the Kohen Gadol entering the Holy of Holies have to do with the end of the portion dealing with forbidden relations? One couldn't be higher or holier while the other could be lower and more degrading. Why are they bound together?

When a call came to invite me to the 20th high school reunion, I didn't quite know how to respond. Toni (with an "i"), the class committee-head whose job it was to contact those who were wavering and urge them to come, was curious to confirm the rumor that she had heard about me. She started with, "I heard you became Rabbi! Is it true?" I answered blithely, "Don't believe everything you hear." Then she asked me with a rather exaggerated - Italian- flair, "How ya doin, Bobby?" (That's my English name. Please don't tell anyone.)

I barely contained my first instinct to blurt out enthusiastically, "Boruch HASHEM!" but I tailored my response to a simple All-American, "Thank G-d! How are you?" to which she responded with a sort of terminal somberness, voice quivering and all, "Hanging in there Bobby, we're all hanging in there!" Needless to say I didn't go to the reunion despite the promise of an open bar and a DJ. If only it had not been scheduled for Shabbos Kodesh!

I hung up, though, with a lingering sense of sadness from that phrase, "hanging in there...we're all hanging in there..." It has occurred to me since that all of life hovers between two points, like the ladder in Yaakov's dream, "And he dreamt. And behold; a ladder was set earthward and its head was reached heavenward; and behold angels of G-d were going up and down on it. And behold; HASHEM was standing over him ..." (Breishis 28:12-13)

Somewhere between a glorious "Boruch HASHEM!" and "hanging in there...we're all hanging in there..." we lurch, lunge, and let loose. This is the full range of human potential, from the highest of mountain peaks to the deepest and darkest of canyons. Maybe that's why these subjects are clustered together. Even the highest and holiest is warned not to descend to the abyss and the lowest is encouraged to reach for the highest heights.

More important than a starting point on the ladder at any given moment is the direction. "Angels of G-d are going up and down". Traffic is going both ways on the ladder of life. Some may be tempted to step onto the slippery slope from even the Holy of Holies, while others are striving daily for holiness from the Profanity of Profanities.

## ■ THE TATOO TABOO AND PERMANENT MAKEUP TOO: RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

### Jews and Tattoos

There is a widespread myth, especially among secular American Jews, that a Jew with a tattoo may not be buried in a Jewish cemetery. This prevalent belief, whose origin possibly lies with Jewish Bubbies wanting to ensure that their grandchildren did not stray too far from the proper path, is actually a common misconception without basis in Jewish law.

One who gets tattooed has quite definitively committed a grave sin of Biblical magnitude, especially as its roots lie in idolatry and paganism. However, practically, a Jewish burial is not dependant on whether or not one violated Torah Law, and tattooing is no different in this matter than violating other severe Biblical prohibitions.

This erroneous belief was personally hammered home to this author several years back, when my chavrusa, the indefatigable Rabbi Jeff Seidel, requested our hosting several secular youth for

a Rosh Hashana meal. One stood out in particular, due both to his gargantuan buff size, as well as his every movement screaming military. This former U.S. soldier, in Jerusalem discovering his roots after returning from a tour of duty in Afghanistan, sported a few tattoos. Our then four-year old daughter stared fascinated at the artwork along his arms and asked innocently why he had colored on himself. He replied, (as he dipped his challah into sugar), that it was a “mistake”, but she shouldn’t worry because he was going to get them taken off since he wished to be buried in a Jewish cemetery.

#### **The Torah vs. Tattoos**

In Parashas Kedoshim, the Torah states: “You shall not etch a tattoo on yourselves, I am Hashem”. The term used by the Torah to refer to tattooing is “kesoves ka’ka”, literally “writing incisions”. This teaches us that this Biblical prohibition is transgressed only if an individual performs a two-step tattooing process: perforating the skin and filling the resulting hole(s) with ink, causing the mark to become (at least semi-) permanent.

The Mishnah and Gemara clarify that the Torah attached the extra “I am Hashem” to this proscription, demonstrating the significance that is inherent in this prohibition, as tattooing is fundamentally connected to idolatry. The Rambam, Sefer Hachinuch, and Tur explain that this prohibition originated as a Jewish response to idol worship and paganism, as it was common practice for heterodox adherents to tattoo themselves, essentially publically branding themselves as idolaters, enslaved to whichever god they served. Judaism prohibited tattoos entirely, in order to completely disassociate itself from other religions.

#### **Micro-pigmentation**

Micro-pigmentation, also known as derma-pigmentation or permanent make-up, is a recent development in the world of beauty aids. This process entails a needle depositing colored pigments into the skin’s dermal layer, the layer between the permanent base layer (where full tattoos are done, making them permanent) and the constantly changing outer layer, the epidermis. This procedure, usually done on the lips and around the eyes, giving a “just made-up” look, eliminates the need for tedious daily make-up application, and is semi-permanent, lasting between three to five years. The question becomes, is derma-pigmentation permitted by Torah law, or is it intrinsically just another form of prohibited tattooing?

The answer is based on understanding several nuances in the Biblical prohibition.

#### **What is Writing?**

As mentioned previously, the Torah refers to tattooing as “kesoves ka’ka”, literally “writing incisions”. The fact that the Torah calls tattooing a form of writing, leads many Rishonim to infer that the Biblical prohibition expressly refers to writing at least one actual letter. Others do not accept this conjecture, and maintain that all tattooing is assur min HaTorah. However, all agree that any other type of tattoo, such as a picture or shape would still be forbidden at least M’Derabbanan.

#### **Pondering Permanence**

One of a proper tattoo’s hallmarks is its permanence, with a lifetime guarantee. This is due to ink being injected deep in the subcutaneous dermis, and showing through the epidermis (outer layer of skin). Many Rishonim therefore conclude that the Biblical prohibition specifically refers to a permanent tattoo which will last a

lifetime; all other tattoos involving skin piercing would only be assur M’Derabbanan. However, it must be noted that other Rishonim make no mention of such a condition of permanence in their understanding of the original Biblical prohibition.

#### **Idolatrous Intent**

Additionally, it is possible that one only truly violates the prohibition of tattooing on a Biblical level if his intention is for idolatrous purposes. As mentioned previously, one of the objectives of this commandment was to noticeably keep the Jews separate from their paganistic and idolatrous neighbors. Several authorities, including the famed Chasam Sofer, surmise that if one would tattoo himself for an entirely different purpose, he would have violated a Rabbinic injunction against tattooing, as opposed to the full Biblical one. Yet, it is important to note that other authorities are hesitant to recognize this supposition and maintain that intent is irrelevant; all tattooing is assur min HaTorah.

#### **Managing Micro-pigmentation**

So where does that leave us with micro-pigmentation? It would seem to be that at the very least, it would fall under the Rabbinic prohibition of tattooing, if not the full Biblical one. Yet, dependant on how the Rishonim understood the Biblical prohibition, there are some mitigating factors. First of all, cosmetic tattooing of permanent make-up is not “written” in letters, nor is it actually permanent, instead lasting for several years. Additionally, since there is no idolatrous intent, rather it is performed in the name of beauty, has led several authorities to permit its use. However, the vast majority of contemporary authorities reject such leniency, with the near-unanimous view forbidding such procedures, maintaining that even with such rationales, derma-pigmentation would still at the very least, fall under the Rabbinic prohibition of tattooing.

Yet, in case of extraordinary circumstances, such as pressing medical need, or preserving human dignity (Kavod Habrios) such as scar removal or blemish correction, many contemporary authorities are inclined to permit such procedures, as according to most Rishonim cosmetic tattooing would merely violate a Rabbinic injunction, and the Gemara teaches that “one may violate a Rabbinic prohibition to preserve human dignity.” This would be similar to undergoing elective cosmetic corrective surgery, which would be permitted, even though there is a general prohibition against inflicting a wound upon oneself. However, the contemporary consensus is that “just for the sake of beauty” does not seem to be enough of a reason to allow a halachic dispensation for cosmetic tattooing.

To sum up the Torah perspective on the matter, I quote the words of my Rabbi Yonason Wiener in a related interview with the Jerusalem Post: “The ancient Greeks worshipped their bodies and tried to annihilate the small Jewish minority who saw man as more than muscle and flesh. This was a battle of superficiality against spirituality. Tattooing represents the Greek ideal that beauty is skin deep. We won the battle of Chanuka but the war continues to this day. The Jewish religion is more than skin deep!!”

# Good Shabbos

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#### **■ CLASSES**

- » Gemara Yevamos for men (M-Fr, 6-6:40A)
- » Professional’s Kollel–9:00A-11:00A
- » Gemara Nazir for men (Sunday-Wednesday 8:30P)
- » Menuchah Principle for Men: Thursday nights in shul
- » Gates of Prayer for Women: Sunday nights at home of Ariella Bush
- » Chumash for men & women (Shabbos: Check Schedule)
- » Beis Medrash Learning for men including “Shabbos Malkusa” Chaburah–(Shabbos: Check Schedule)