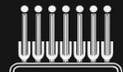




Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

Published by the
Sydenham Highlands North
Hebrew Congregation
Johannesburg, South Africa



30 Jun 2018 Parshas Balak 17 Tammuz 5778

Keeping Up With the Cohens by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

“That’s some new kitchen Sandra just had done. State of the art!” “Psst...Did you see the new car Mark just took delivery of? It’s got every gadget in the book!” Common conversation. Rather routine, everyday talk.

They tell of a rep on the road that had broken all records for sales in his company. When asked the secret of his success, he explained that the first thing he said when someone opened the door was ‘Did you see what your neighbor Mrs. Jones just got?’ That trick never failed him.

This was never the Jewish ethic however. We were taught differently, and our ancient value system is as relevant as ever in contemporary life. Privacy, modesty and discretion are all characteristics our people have cherished since we became a nation.

Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel dwelling according to its tribes. What was the infamous heathen prophet referring to? Rashi offers one interpretation of the verse to mean that the doorways of the Israelites in the wilderness were designed so that they did not face each other. That way, one person was not able to see into his neighbor’s tent and their privacy was protected. In fact, this is one of the explanations of Balaam’s famous praise of the Jews, *Ma Tovu Oholecha Yaakov - How goodly are your tents, O Jacob.* The pagan prophet was extolling the Jews’ virtues in their town planning whereby they took precautions in safeguarding their modesty and protecting their personal family lives from would be busybodies and peeping toms,

otherwise known as *yentas* and *nudniks*.

Another possible interpretation of “not looking into your neighbor’s tent” might be this. Do not look into your neighbor’s tent to help you decide what you should be doing. Your decisions in life should not be based on what other people are, or are not, doing. Certainly not on what your neighbors have or do not have.

Social workers today will painfully testify that family breakdowns are often a result of financial difficulties and the stress that puts on marriages. Many of those stresses are self- imposed. Their clients confessed that they didn’t really need the new kitchen or the new car, but once their friends were moving up in the status stakes they felt under pressure to maintain their social standing.

Whether it is the kitchen, car, vacation or the latest digital technology, if we allow ourselves to be judged by other people’s criteria, we lay ourselves open to a lot of unnecessary stress. Even a *simcha* - - wedding or Bar Mitzvah - - can get us into “keeping up with the Cohens” mode, from the 7-layered designer invitation hand delivered to every guest down to the posh dinner-dance replete with chopped liver sculptures.

Why? All because we are busy looking over our shoulders or peering into the next-door neighbour’s place.

The principle even applies to Tzedakah. There is an appeal for the Shul or a Jewish charity and how do we respond? “Well if so and so who is a multi-millionaire only gave \$10,000 then all I should give is \$10!” What difference does it make

Live & Laugh Shul Bloopers

1. Don't let worry kill you. Let your synagogue help.
2. Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our congregation.
2. For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
3. Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the Shul Hall. Please use the large double door at the side entrance.

**Shhhhh.....
Carnival City....
28 August!
Diarise now!
Watch this space!**

Calendar

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl 8:45 am
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall sponsored by **Dave Block** in honour of his 70th birthday.
- ◆ **Halacha of the Week: *The Three Weeks* by Rabbi Yossy Goldman**
- ◆ Mincha: 4:50 pm
- ◆ Pirkei Avos: Chapter 6
- ◆ Shabbos Ends: 6:01 pm
- ◆ Mincha next week: 5:20 pm
- ◆ **Fast of the 17th of Tammuz: Sun 1 Jul.**
Fast begins 5:42 am; Fast ends 5:45 pm

- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of I.deal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
- ◆ **Vehicles wanted. Any make, any condition. Best prices. Phone ARNOLD ORKIN 082 823 7826**
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- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.

to Egypt to redeem the people from Egypt. Ten plagues and one dramatic sea crossing later, Moses went up to Mount Sinai, where G-d communicated the 10 Commandments. Moses spent 40 days atop the mountain, during which G-d dictated and Moses recorded the Torah, the foundational book of Judaism, also known as the Five Books of Moses.

While other prophets only heard from G-d intermittently, often in a dreamlike state, Moses would speak to G-d at any time in a most personal manner. In the words of the Torah: “And there was no other prophet who arose in Israel like Moses, whom the L-rd knew face to face.”

5. Balaam
It’s true that no prophet arose in Israel like Moses. However, the sages tell us, there was one such prophet among the gentiles. Thus, even though he technically does not belong on a list of *Jewish* prophets, we will still share a bit about Balaam.

Balaam was hired by King Balak to curse the Israelites on their way out of Egypt. Balaam ignored G-d’s warnings, the presence of an angel blocking his way, and even the miracle of a talking donkey as he eagerly hastened to help Balak with his diabolical scheme. But instead of curses, all Balaam was able to say were blessings for the people of Israel, including beautiful prophecies about the era of Moshiach. It is from Balaam’s prophecies that we have the famous verse “How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!” which many Jews say every morning at the start of their daily prayers.

6. Joshua
Joshua was Moses’ devoted student, who “never left the tent [of Moses].” When Moses chose 12 spies to scout out the Promised Land, Joshua was one of two scouts who remained faithful to the mission. And when Moses was nearing the end of his 120 years on earth, G-d told him to select Joshua as a successor. Joshua faithfully led the people into the Land. Through him, G-d orchestrated the miracle of the crumbling walls of Jericho and the vanquishing of the heathen tribes who occupied Canaan at the time. Joshua exhorted the people to remain faithful to the Torah and to G-d, and his leadership is recorded in the Book of Joshua.

what someone else gave or didn't give. You should give what you can, irrespective of what others gave.

How much resentment, bitterness, disappointment and *far্দrus* we would avoid if we didn't try to measure ourselves by other people's standards. We would be much happier people if we looked into ourselves and achieved what we could and should without drawing comparisons with others.

If you want to enjoy the blessing of "goodly tents" or even just good housekeeping, keep your eyes and your nose in your own tent. Then you will be content too.

Parsha Pointers

*Balak: Artscroll Chumash pg 856;
Living Torah pg 779*

Balak, the king of Moab, summons the prophet Balaam to curse the people of Israel. On the way, Balaam is berated by his ass, who sees, before Balaam does, the angel that G-d sends to block their way. Three times, from three different vantage points, Balaam attempts to pronounce his curses; each time, blessings issue forth instead. Balaam also prophesies on the end of the days and the coming of Moshiach.

The people fall prey to the charms of the daughters of Moab, and are enticed to worship the idol Peor. When a high-ranking Israelite official publicly takes a Midianite princess into a tent, Pinchas kills them both, stopping the plague raging among the people.

Can Wine Be Holy?

By Rabbi Aron Moss

Question:

I am a Muslim, but I have many Jewish friends. I was recently invited to a Jewish home for a Friday night meal, and was surprised by the "Kiddush" ceremony, which

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involved saying prayers over a glass of wine. In my religion, wine is forbidden. Does Judaism honestly believe that such a sensual indulgence can be considered holy?

Answer:

Each of us has a body and a soul. Our body is usually only interested in the material pleasures that this world has to offer - a good meal, an entertaining T.V. show, comfort and gratification. The soul has higher aspirations - it seeks true love, meaning, inspiration and a connection to what's holy.

All religions attempt to give us access to our souls. But as long as the body continues to chase the mundane, the soul is trapped. There are two methods to free the soul offered by different religions:

1) Suppression. By suppressing our bodily desires we can allow the soul to shine through. This means a life of asceticism and abstinence, avoiding the pleasures of this world.

2) Refinement. Alternatively, we can find spirituality within the mundane itself, by being involved with the physical world in a holy and refined way. Then the body no longer opposes the soul; on the contrary, it serves as a vehicle to express the soul's needs.

Judaism insists on the second approach. Rather than suppress the body, refine it. Don't be celibate - but save sexuality for marriage. Don't fast all day - but only eat foods that are spiritually pure. Work with the body, not against it.

The path of refinement is a challenging one, but it is possible.

Just look at wine.

Wine has a unique property that demonstrates the fact that we need not afflict our bodies in order to tap in to our souls.

Wine improves with age.

Most foods decompose as time goes on. In fact, all physical things do - buildings crumble, clothes wear out, our bodies age. This is because anything physical is ephemeral - it doesn't last; while the world of the spirit is eternal, and gets stronger with time. The one exception is wine. Wine, although it is also physical, has the spiritual property of improving with age. It is wine that testifies

that even the physical can be refined.

Wine represents what Judaism is all about: the fusing of the holy and the mundane, the spiritual and physical, the body and soul.

What could be more holy than that?

6 Jewish Prophets Everyone Should Know

By Rabbi Menachem Posner

Prophets and prophecy are integral to Judaism. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the forefathers of the Jewish people, were prophets. Moses—the giver of the Law—was considered the greatest prophet who ever lived. In later generations, prophets and prophetesses guided the people, chided them when they did wrong and comforted them when things were tough. The Talmud tells us that there were 48 prophets and seven prophetesses of the Jewish people. Now, the Talmud qualifies that there were many more prophets—a whopping 1,200,000 prophets in fact—but only those prophets whose message was relevant for future generations made the list.

Here is our (somewhat random) selection of 20 of the greatest prophets of all times:

1. Abraham

“And the L-rd spoke to Abraham: ‘Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and from the house of your father, to the land that I will show you.’” With this simple instruction, we are introduced to Abraham and his seed, who take the central role in the Bible. The Bible is full of Divine communication with Abraham. When G-d told him that He was planning to destroy the evil cities of Sodom and Gomorra, Abraham pleaded with G-d, attempting to bargain with Divine justice. When Abraham was worried over his future, G-d promised him a son. However, the crowning achievement of the Abraham-G-d relationship came when G-d tested Abraham by telling him sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, and Abraham was ready to follow unquestioningly.

Yet, as great as Abraham was, the sages say that his wife was an even greater prophetess.

2. Sarah

As the wife of Abraham, Sarah was an equal partner in his efforts to spread monotheistic beliefs and morality. Abraham led the men, and Sarah shepherded the women. She was originally named Yiscah, but Abraham called her Sarai (“my princess/superior”) because she was superior to him in her prophetic abilities. When she was 89 years old, G-d commanded that her name be changed to Sarah (which means “princess”) and Abram (“exalted father”) become Abraham (“father of many nations”), and they were soon blessed with a son, Isaac.

Sarah was so holy that her bread would remain fresh all week, her Shabbat candles would burn until the following Friday, and a cloud would hover above her tent. In telling Sarah's age at the time of her passing, the verse states that her life was “100 years, and 20 years, and 7 years.” The sages explain that when she was 100, she was as pure of sin as a maiden of 20; and when she was 20, she was as beautiful as an innocent 7-year-old.

3. Miriam

Abraham and Sarah's descendants made their way down to Egypt, where they were enslaved by Pharaoh. In those bitter times, a little girl named Miriam (which means “bitter”) was born to Amram and Yocheved. Her father was the leader of the generation and her mother was a busy midwife. Determined not to have more children for Pharaoh to slay, Miriam's parents separated. Miriam divined that they were destined to give birth to the child who would lead the people out of slavery, and she convinced them to remarry. From that union came Moses, the redeemer of Israel.

Miriam continued to believe in a better future, even when her father doubted her prophecy. When the Israelites left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, leaving the Egyptians behind, Miriam led the women in song and dance. And due to Miriam's merit, G-d provided the people with a traveling well for most of the 40 years that they were in the desert.

4. Moses

Maimonides called him the “father of all prophets,” asserting that Moses alone was “chosen by G-d from all mankind.” G-d spoke to Moses from within a burning bush and told him to go