

finer points of Talmudic teachings. However, in many schools there is the regular mussar shmues, in which a senior rabbi discusses issues pertaining to personal behavior, ethics and spiritual advancements (known as mussar, which literally means "rebuke"). In common parlance, when someone tells you off, you can say that they gave you a mussar shmues or mussar shmooze.

Live & Laugh

Rabbi Epstein, who shall we say was "humor impaired," attended a conference to help him improve his public speaking skills.

Among the speakers were many well known and dynamic speakers. One such speaker boldly approached the podium and, gathering the entire crowd's attention, said, "The best years of my life were spent in the arms of a woman that wasn't my wife!" The crowd was shocked! He followed up by saying, "And that woman was my mother!" - The crowd burst into laughter and delivered the rest of his talk, which went over quite well.

The next week, the rabbi decided he'd give this humor thing a try, and use that joke in his sermon. As he surely approached the bimah that shabbat, he tried to rehearse the joke in his head. It suddenly seemed a bit foggy to him.

Getting to bimah he said loudly, "The greatest years of my life were spent in the arms of another woman that was not my wife!" The congregation inhaled half the air in the room. After standing there for almost 10 seconds in the stunned silence, trying to recall the second half of the joke, Rabbi Epstein finally blurted out, "...and I can't remember who she was!"

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Calendar

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall.
- ◆ Smorgasbord of Shiurim
- ◆ Mincha: 5:00 pm
- ◆ Pirkei Avos: Chapter 4
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 6:08 pm
- ◆ Mincha next week: 5:30 pm

SydShul Shiurim

- **Sunday morning** 9-10 am: *Mishna (Brochos) & Mysticism with Rabbi Yossy Goldman* (boardroom).
- **Tuesday** 1:15-2:00 pm— *Ladies Shiur. Parsha & Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Yossy Goldman* (Elk Hall)
- **Tuesday** 7:45 pm - *Gemorra Sotab* with Rabbi Goldman (Rabbi's home)
- **Wednesday** 8:00 pm - *Gemorra Ta'anis* with *Rabbi Yehuda Stern* (Rabbi's home).
- **Thursday** 9:15 am (alternate) - *Young Mother's Torah Class* with *Rabbi Yehuda Stern* (Elk Hall).
- **Shabbos** 8:15 am - *Soulful Study* with *Rabbi Yehuda Stern* (Shtibl)
- *Smorgasbord of Shiurim*

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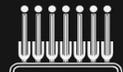
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75
Years Young!

Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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Ambassadors Wanted

by: *Rabbi Yossy Goldman*

These are heady days for the Jewish people. Our community - as Jews the world over - has observed the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day, and Yom Hazikaron where we paid tribute to the memory of Israel's fallen heroes, and then we celebrated Israel's 70th anniversary. This week, Prime Minister Netanyahu made some very dramatic revelations about Iran and its nuclear programme. I think it is appropriate to reflect on where each of us stands, how the individual Jew fits in to the bigger picture, and how we are all part of a greater whole. Not all of us will serve with distinction in Tzahal, become major philanthropists for the Jewish cause, or be an international defender of Israel. But every one of us can make a difference to the global stature and well-being of our people, each in our own little way.

There was a time when Jewish people's faith in the one G-d of Israel was challenged on a regular basis. During the Crusades, for example, many thousands of Jews were forced to choose between "the cross and the sword." Would they be prepared to deny their Judaism and embrace the dominant faith, or would they rather die than desecrate the name of G-d? Indeed, countless Jews gave their lives Al Kiddush Hashem - in sanctification of the name of G-d. They became martyrs for their faith and heroes for eternity.

Thankfully, today it doesn't often happen that we must make that choice. Tragically, we still have far too many martyrs nowadays; innocent pedestrians being mowed down by car-

ramming terrorists or soldiers being stabbed by Arab citizens while waiting for the bus. But these Jews were not asked to make a choice. They didn't choose martyrdom. It was forced upon them.

The commandments to sanctify the name of G-d and never to desecrate it are found in this week's Parsha (Leviticus 22, 32). Generally, today, the concept of Kiddush Hashem, sanctifying the name of G-d, is observed not by dying as Jews but by living as Jews. How does a Jew give G-d a good name? When he or she behaves as a good Jew should. When other people see a Jew behaving honestly and uprightly that gives Jews and Judaism a good reputation. And ultimately it all goes back to Torah, the word of G-d. G-d Himself gets the credit for the noble behaviour of His people.

It doesn't necessarily require major heroics or martyrdom. There are little things that make a discernible difference. Some classic scenarios would be returning money to a shopkeeper if you were given incorrect change in your favor or calling attention to the fact that a client overpaid you. Although it is only right to do these things, the fact is that others might have kept quiet about it and when a Jew acts with honour he brings honour to his faith and his G-d.

I remember the story only a few years ago of a young rabbi in Connecticut, Noah Muroff, who bought a used desk on Craigslist for \$150 and discovered that it wouldn't fit through the door into his study. As he took the desk apart to get it inside, a bag containing no less than \$98,000 in cash fell out! The next day, with his four kids in tow, he took the money back to the desk's original owner. The woman was totally speechless when she got a

call from Muroff at 11:30 p.m. that night to let her know what they had found. She was so shocked and touched that anyone would call. He could have kept the money, and nobody would have ever known. It was her inheritance money which she had hidden so well that she forgot where she had put it. Rabbi Muroff was all over American TV news that day for his noble deed. That was a real Kiddush Hashem.

Sadly, it also works in the reverse. Bernie Madoff seems to be more remembered than Noah Muroff. Nor do Jewish slumlords give Jews, or the G-d of Israel, a good name. "Look at those greedy, miserly Shylocks!" is not something we want to hear - especially when there may be some grounds for the accusation.

Albert Einstein is reputed to have once stated, "If my theories prove correct, the Germans will claim me as a German, the French will say I am theirs, and the Americans will call me their own. If my theories are incorrect, they will all say I am a Jew."

How proud we are when one of our own does something especially noteworthy like winning a Nobel Prize or performing a valiant humanitarian act. Conversely, how ashamed are we if there is a moral or financial scandal involving one of our own.

I once protested to the General Manager of a well-known radio station in our community because I felt he was giving far too much exposure to Jews and Judaism in relation to our numbers and, unfortunately, the publicity wasn't always flattering. At first, he denied it. But when I presented him with statistical proof, his plain and honest answer was "Jews are news."

Fair or not, the fact of life is that Jews are scrutinised far more carefully than others. Like it or not, every Jew represents our faith, our people and our G-d. Ultimately, how we act

will bring fame or infamy upon all of us. Please G-d, we will all be successful ambassadors.

Parsha Pointers

*Emor: Artscroll pg 672;
Living Torah pg 611*

The Torah section of Emor ("Speak") begins with the special laws pertaining to the *kohanim* ("priests"), and the Temple service: A *kohen* may not become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, save on the occasion of the death of a close relative. A *kohen* may not marry a divorcee, or a woman with a promiscuous past; a *kohen gad-d* can marry only a virgin. A *kohen* with a physical deformity cannot serve in the Holy Temple, nor can a deformed animal be brought as an offering.

A newborn calf, lamb or kid must be left with its mother for seven days before being eligible for an offering; one may not slaughter an animal and its offspring on the same day.

The parsha then lists all the Chagim beginning with Shabbos and including Pesach, the Omer, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Shmini Atzeret.

Next the Torah discusses the lighting of the menorah in the Temple, and the showbread (*lechem hapanim*) placed weekly on the table there.

Emor concludes with the incident of a man executed for blasphemy, and the penalties for murder (death) and for injuring one's fellow or destroying his property (monetary compensation).

The Purpose of Freedom

By Rabbi Zalman Posner

The period between Pesach and Shavuot, the festivals of liberation and the giving of the Torah, is marked by the Counting of the Omer. In a sense the festival of Shavuot is a fulfilment, a climax, of Pesach. In terms of the Jewish people, the significance is obvious - Israel was not a nation by virtue of freedom alone but by virtue of the Torah. What does this mean to the individual?

Torah gives life a purpose, a pattern that gives significance to the commonplace. The *mitzvot* impart spiritual importance even to the ordinaries of living; they make the Jew conscious always of his interested Creator. At no time is the Jew ever "free"; there is always a standard by which every action is judged. He has no privileged sanctuary as

a refuge from responsibility. During work and meals and worship and recreation equally, the pattern of Torah makes these activities avenues to G-d.

Freedom for the Jew is release from oppression but not from self-control. Pesach permits man to develop freely, with no interference by anyone with his religious activities. This freedom became real only when it was given direction, when the Torah showed man what man can become. Pesach and Shavuot are complementary festivals, deliberately connected by the Counting of the Omer to stress their inseparability. Together they teach us that achievement in this world is not abandon, but adult discharge of productive obligations.

Todah: Showing Gratitude

By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum

We generally don't really appreciate that which we have until it looks like there's a risk of losing it. When you're going through financial difficulties, that's when you learn the value of wealth. When sick or injured, that's when you learn to value your health; and you really appreciate the gift of family only after they've gone.

There is a special blessing, *HaGomel*, to be said after surviving danger. One who has been sick, or in another perilous situation, will come to the synagogue and say a blessing of gratitude at the Torah. In Temple times they'd also bring a *korban todah* (thanksgiving offering), to show their appreciation to G-d for saving them from danger. We make this public affirmation of thanks because when you've nearly lost everything, you know how much you have to be grateful for, and you wish to openly show your appreciation to G-d for His gifts and miracles.

The person offering a *korban todah* would also bring 40 large loaves of bread to the Temple, following which the meat and bread would be taken home and eaten. The Torah warns that "it shall be eaten on that day; leave none of it over to the next morning."

There was no way that a single person, or even his extended family, could possibly consume such a large amount of food in such a short amount of time; so, obviously they'd have to

invite their friends and neighbours over to join the meal. It is almost as if the Torah is forcing you to share your *simchahs* with the community. You'd sit together in company, rejoicing in G-d's blessings and recounting over and over the story of your escape from danger.

However, more than just a way of publicizing your personal miracle, the act of inviting others over to share in your bounty demonstrates the Jewish attitude to gratitude. When you have been personally blessed, seek to share your blessings with others.

Your wealth is a gift from G-d- the jackpot won in the great lottery of life- and it is your responsibility to make sure that everyone else is looked after. If you enjoy good health, be thankful, and then actively seek to bring that comfort to other people who are waiting for their own blessing.

What Does "Schmooze" Mean?

To *schmooze* is to "chat" or "converse." This is an English mangling of the Yiddish word *shmuves*, which is apparently an adaptation of the Hebrew word *shemuos*, "tidings."

In Yiddish, this word is both a noun and a verb. So you can *shmuves* with someone, and you can also *halt* (hold) a *shmuves*, or even *chap* (catch) a *shmuves* with them.

When Not to Schmooze

It's often very tempting to schmooze with your neighbors in synagogue, especially during the breaks throughout the Torah reading. But speaking in shul is a no-no. Instead, save your pent-up schmooziness for the post-prayer kiddush Brocha reception, when you can gab to your heart's desire.

Shmuessen

The plural of *shmuves* is *shmuessen*. For much of the latter half of the 20th century there was a Jewish children's magazine- published in a number of languages, including English, Yiddish and Hebrew- whose Yiddish-language version, *Shmuessen mit Kinder un Yugend* ("Conversations With Children and Youth"), was most commonly called *Shmuessen*.

The Mussar Shmuess (Schmooze)

In many *yeshivahs*, the lion's share of the lecturing is a highly nuanced and intense parsing of the

Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.

Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810

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