



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

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7 -13 May, 2017
11 - 17 Iyyar, 5777
Leviticus 21:1 - 24:23
Omer: 34 - 39
Haftarah:

Ezekiel 44:15-31

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Giving It Right

There once lived a wealthy man, a miser, who was known far and wide for his refusal to contribute to charity of any kind. He lived in Krakow during the time of Rabbi YomTov Lipmann Heller, the Rabbi of the city, known as the Tosfos YomTov. Although he was chastised and scolded strongly and frequently by leaders in the community as well as many other community members for being so stingy, his refusal never waived.

After this miser died, the Chevra Kaddisha, the Jewish burial society, felt that he was unworthy of being buried next to any upright and respectable person and buried him, instead, in the area of the cemetery called "Hekdesh," reserved for society's outcasts and destitute.

A couple of weeks after the funeral, a tumult began to develop in Krakow. The butcher and baker, two prominent members of the community, who had always been extremely charitable, giving funds as well as free meats and baked goods to all who were in need, suddenly stopped. The poor people, who had relied on the benevolent pair for their sustenance, now were in a state of uproar. Things were becoming so heated that the matter was finally brought before the Rabbi of the city, the Tosfos YomTov.

He asked the two why they had so abruptly stopped their worthy acts.

At first they avoided the question and refused to explain their sudden change in behavior. Finally the Tosfos YomTov compelled them, by the power of his position as Rabbi of the city, saying, "Discontinuing such consistent and widespread acts of kindness and generosity is no simple thing, and I insist that you explain your actions to me."

The two gave in: "In the past this 'miser' would continuously supply us with funds to distribute," they explained. "He strongly warned us, however, not to disclose our source, since he wanted no one to know that the charity was in fact coming from him. Now that he is departed, unfortunately, we can no longer afford such tremendous amounts of charity."

The community was in shock. How greatly had they misread this secret saint. Awed by the unassuming 'miser's' behavior, and pained by the fact that the community had unfairly treated him with an outcast's burial, the Tosfos YomTov requested that he be buried next to this humble individual. He wanted this merit even though it meant being interred in a disreputable section of the cemetery.

There are several ways for a

Parshat Emor

person to give charity, all of which would qualify as the Mitzvah of Tzedakah. The best way, however, and the most honorable way to give, is when both the giver and the receiver are anonymous.

The Torah instructs all Jewish farmers in this week's Parsha to leave certain parts of their fields and harvests "for the poor and the stranger." This Mitzvah is actually mentioned twice, repeated from the previous Torah portion.

When a farmer harvests his crop, he is commanded to leave an entire corner untouched so the poor can help themselves. Additionally, while bundling the stalks together, whatever falls away must also be left as ownerless. And the same applies, should the farmer forget even entire bundles. Whatever is forgotten, is to be left up for grabs.

Sensitivity plays a big role in a life of Torah. There are times when a person's luck is down, and he or she may be in need. But receiving handouts can be demeaning or flat out humiliating. Many would prefer to take anonymously.

The Torah's wording of the Mitzvah makes it clear that the intention is not for the farmer to distribute the now-ownerless stalks to the poor. Rather, he is to leave them available for anyone and everyone, even those who might be too shy or embarrassed

to accept charity when it is distributed to them.

Giving charity is always right, but can be done without the sensitivity to the feelings of the recipients. Torah teaches us to keep them in mind, not just only fulfilling the mitzvah, but in the most refined way possible.

By Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel

Holiday of The Weeks

The holiday of Passover, referred to in Torah as “the Festival of Matzot,” is celebrated with the traditional Matzot. The holiday of Sukkot, similarly, is celebrated by living in a traditional Sukkah for eight days. The essential part of the holiday is apparently implied in its name.

What, then, is supposed to be the celebration of Shavuot, which simply translates as “weeks”? Torah makes no mention of how it is celebrated, nor what the holiday itself commemorates! The Torah simply states, “You shall count seven complete weeks... and on the 50th day you shall sacrifice... this day shall be holy.” No explanation, no traditions, no traditional foods.

Our wise sages derive a wonderful idea from this Mitzvah. The celebration of receiving the Torah cannot simply be celebrated at only one designated time, on one day. G-d is constantly giving the Torah to us anew, we are constantly discovering new messages and receiving renewed blessings from the Torah. In fact, in the daily blessing recited over Torah and its teachings, the terminology used is “Blessed are You... who GIVES the Torah” - present tense.

In truth, receiving the Torah ought to be celebrated every time we open a Torah book, and every time we involve ourselves with Mitzvot. Indeed, living with Torah in our lives, the receiving of the Torah should be celebrated constantly!

The explanation is as follows: Commemorated on the holiday of Shavuot, the holiday of weeks, is just that: weeks.

The counting of the omer in the weeks leading up to Shavuot, is G-d's way of helping us prepare for the anniversary of the original giving of the Torah. On this day our capacity to commit to a Torah life is renewed and reinvigorated. The focus, however, is what was done for the past seven weeks.

We spend this time refining ourselves, our behaviors and our characters in anticipation of the climax, the day of Shavuot. It is then time to put our preparation to the test throughout the coming year. Put to the test the strength of our commitment. Put to the test our spiritual conviction, with our newly refined character traits guiding the way towards a better, holier and more refined life.

By Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel

In Jewish History

Wednesday, 14 Iyar, 5777 - May 10, 2017

“Second Passover” (1312 BCE)

A year after the Exodus, G-d instructed the people of Israel to bring the Passover offering on the afternoon of Nissan 14, and to eat it that evening, roasted over the fire, together with matzah and bitter herbs, as they had done on the previous year just before they left Egypt. “There were, however, certain persons who had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, and could not, therefore, prepare the Passover offering on that day. They approached Moses and Aaron ... and they said: ‘...Why should we be deprived, and not be able to present G-d’s offering in its time, amongst the children of Israel?’” (Numbers 9).

In response to their plea, G-d established the 14th of Iyar as a “second Passover” (pesach sheini) for anyone who was unable to bring the offering on its appointed time in the previous month. The day thus represents the “second chance” achieved by teshuvah, the power of repentance and “return.” In the words of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, “The Second Passover means that it’s never a ‘lost case.’”

Rabbi Meir (2nd Century CE)

Rabbi Meir, a second century scholar and scribe, was among the foremost disciples of Rabbi Akiba. His colleagues called him Meir because he “enlightened the eyes of the sages” with his genius and scholarship (“Meir” comes from the Hebrew word “Or,” light).

Rabbi Meir’s long life was rife with personal tragedy. Aside for his personal travails, he lived in the troubled times following the destruction of the second Holy Temple. After his beloved teacher, Rabbi Akiva, was executed by the Romans, he fled to Babylon until the persecutions eased up.

His wisdom and teachings are so often quoted in the Mishnah and Talmud that every anonymous teaching in the Mishnah is attributed to him.

His wife, Beruria, was also famous for her Torah knowledge, piety, and wisdom.

He is buried in the holy city of Tiberias.

Jews of Bisenz Massacred (1605)

The Jews of Bisenz, Austria were massacred on the 14th of Iyar, 5365 (1605).