

Kehillah #25



THE PERTINENT PARASHA

On Rav Gershon Edelstein zt"l and Israel's U20 Soccer Team

Rabbi Yeshoshua Pfeffer | Rav of Kehillat Ohr Chadash, Ramot, Jerusalem

What is the connection between the life of Rav Gershon Edelstein zt"l, a great Torah luminary who passed away three weeks ago at the age of 100, and the surprise victory of Israel's soccer team over Brazil in the U20 World Cup in Argentina – Israel eventually placed third in the illustrious competition?

Rav Edelstein was able to pierce the superficial shell and see the goodness inherent in each of us. Therefore, he afforded deep respect to all human beings.

Admittedly, the answer is “not much.” Yet, when I saw a video clip of the young Israeli players' celebrations, I was reminded of Rav Edelstein and his legacy.

Alongside his brave leadership during the Covid-19 period, and together with his Torah teaching that continued unceasingly for seventy-five years (!!), Rav Edelstein's legacy is predominantly educational. He championed an approach of respect and goodwill for every Jew and especially emphasized the need for love and understanding concerning “off the derech” children.

In this, he was something of a maverick. He refused to accept parents who penalized their children for stepping off the path of parental and social expectations, tending to place responsibility on the parents rather than the children. He abhorred the practice of “kicking recalcitrant children out of the house,” even when their behavior posed an educational challenge for siblings. And he opposed coercion of any type. Within proper boundaries, he was a lifelong





THE PERTINENT PARASHA



proponent of “positive education.”

The foundation for this approach is seeing the good in people. Appreciating the goodness within others, even when they’re going through tough times, inspires us to strengthen and reinforce it, giving them hope and belief in their own goodness. Rav Edelstein would highlight the good in everyone. And highlighting the good is synonymous with highlighting the Godly – for Hashem is the source of all goodness.

Rav Edelstein was able to pierce the superficial shell and see the goodness inherent in each of us. Therefore, he afforded deep respect to all human beings. He would always strive to allow others to choose good from their own volition rather than force it upon them. Naturally, he was a staunch advocate for cooperation and coexistence, wherever possible.

The same disposition made Rav Edelstein sensitive to superficiality of any type. Sefarim in his home were found with superlative titles (which others bestowed on him) crossed out; he had no patience for such honorifics. When asked, at a gathering for youth, how one becomes a *gadol hador*, his immediate reply was that you first need to stop thinking about becoming the *gadol hador*. The interlocutor was so shocked that he initially misheard and failed to understand even after

being corrected.

Quite clearly, players in Israel’s U20 soccer team are not observant Jews in the full halachic sense. Yet, in celebration, the words of the songs they sang focused on trust in Hashem: *There is nobody for us to rely upon other than our Father in Heaven*. Some will see this as a meaningless cultural quirk. *Shtuyot*, I hear some peers sneering. I prefer to grant it deeper significance.

Over the past several months, the need for a deep common denominator among Israeli-Jewish society has become abundantly clear. Even today, protests in Israel and abroad continue to cross red lines, and Israel cannot afford to become a fractured society. We are strong united, and for Israel strength is an existential need.

Seeing these boys inspires hope that the great majority of Jewish society in Israel continues to share deep common values around which we can unite notwithstanding our differences.

One of Rav Edelstein’s last instructions was to object to a Charedi boycott of Angel’s Bakery, though the company’s chairman of the board demonstrated outside his yeshiva abode. He did this for the sake of national unity. I believe he would see our youth and our future in a similar light.



Finding Truth in Argument

Rabbi Yaacov Haber | Rav of Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun, Ramat Beit Shemesh

Many people enjoy a good argument. It can clarify the issues, create a passion, and challenge the mind. Much of the development of Judaism was through argument, and it was never considered a tragedy. I remember being challenged to memorize every argument between Abaye and Rava in the first chapter of *Bava Metziah*. Rashi's grandchildren dedicated their lives to arguing with their grandfather, and the tradition continues. So what was the problem with Korach?

A mitzvah is derived from this week's parasha. "It is forbidden to sustain an argument, as it is written, '...and you shall not be like Korach.'" Korach was a great scholar and a very holy man, one of the carriers of the Holy Ark. He stood up and challenged the leadership of Moshe.

The entire community stood watching in silence as a controversy grew. People were confused. Probably many were rooting for Korach in their hearts but were afraid to speak out. He had a point. He seemed to be more democratic, "for the entire congregation is holy and Hashem is among them. So then, why do you [Moshe and

Aharon] raise yourselves above the community of Hashem?" This all seems acceptable, even healthy. So what was the problem with Korach?

The key concept is sustaining an argument *lechazik*, for the sake of argumentation itself. Credibility depends on the motive of the arguer. Everyone is entitled to articulate his or her point of view, but there comes a point when the argument is not for the sake of truth but for the sake of argument. When you argue to win – not to reach truth – you automatically lose. Besides losing the argument,

All spiritual growth takes place at the crossroads of challenge.

one violates a mitzvah of the Torah. "The argument between Hillel and Shammai was an argument for the sake of Heaven. The argument of Korach and his people was an argument for personal gain." (Avos 5)



TORAH INSIGHT FOR THE WEEK

In an argument for the sake of Heaven, both parties are interested only in discovering the truth. Each one is praying to know the truth. Each one is perfectly open to being proven wrong. The objective is not to win the argument, but rather to discover the truth. This was not the case in Korach's rebellion.

The Talmud (*Eruvin 13*) asks: If Hillel and Shammai were both arguing for G-d's sake, then why does the halacha remain with Hillel? The Talmud answers that there was a difference between Hillel and Shammai. When someone would ask a member of Beit Shammai for halachic advice, he would state only his opinion. However, when someone would ask a member of Beit Hillel for halachic advice, he would offer his opinion and the opinion of Beit Shammai. He would even state Shammai's opinion first!

Yet how does that prove that Hillel had the truth? The Talmud is teaching us a monumental lesson. If two people are arguing, and they both sound right – they both sound true – how do we choose which opinion to follow? We should listen carefully and choose the opinion that considers his opponent's position first. The person with the truth can fathom that perhaps his opponent is truer than he is. This can be explained mystically, psychologically, logically,

or ethically. The person who doesn't need to be right is probably the person who is right.

If we have something to say, we must say it. We must always question and even argue – for the sake of Heaven. But the moment we feel we must be right, we are probably wrong. "Don't be like Korach..."

We often obsess about those who have no place for us or our style of Judaism in their world. We are upset at the narrow-mindedness of those who cannot tolerate our path in Judaism. Yet perhaps we are guilty, too. Perhaps we feel that our brand of Torah and our priorities are so in order and our tolerance level is so high, that we become intolerant of anyone who is less tolerant than

**The moment we feel we must be right, we are probably wrong.
"Don't be like Korach..."**

us! It's not about who is more to the right and who is more to the left. Truth is on the side of the humble and those who are always ready to grow. If we can give equal or more respect to our opponents, then there is a chance that we are on the right side.



The Importance of Giving

Rabbi Asher Meir | Torah and Policy Researcher

The sedition of Korach and his allies necessitated re-emphasizing the unique status of the Kohanim. Hence, the end of our parasha clearly defines the entitlement of the Kohanim to the *matanot kehuna*: "All the sacred gifts that the Israelites set aside for Hashem I give to you, to your sons, and to the daughters that are with you, as a due for all time. It shall be an everlasting covenant of salt before Hashem for you and for your offspring as well."

The Levites are also entitled to their share, which is fair recompense for their work in the Mikdash: "And to the Levites, I hereby give all the tithes in Israel as their share in return for the services that they perform, the services of the Tent of Meeting."

From these tithes, the Levites are required to set aside *matnot kahuna* just like the other Israelites: "Speak to the Levites and say to them: When you receive from the Israelites their tithes, which I have assigned to you as your share, you shall set aside from them one-tenth of the tithe as a gift to Hashem."

This is a rather roundabout transfer.

Each farmer gives some of his produce to the Kohen; another part is given to the Levite, who gives yet another portion to the Kohen. If the objective was merely to ensure that the Kohanim get a bit over one percent of the produce, the farmers could have been commanded to give that some directly, rather than giving only *teruma* to the Kohen.

The same could be said about the

Giving tzedakah has great spiritual importance above and beyond providing the needy person with resources.

division of the spoils we will read about soon in parashas Mattos. Some of the spoils are assigned to the Kohanim, and some to the Israelites. In turn, the Israelites give a fixed fraction of their share to the Levites. It would have been easier just to divide the booty into three portions.



MEKOM AVODA Workplace Ethics & Halacha



However, the gifts to the Kohanim and the Levites are not just an allotment or a budget. Rather, great importance is given to the act of giving per se. Each farmer should understand his distinct sense of obligation towards both the Kohanim and the Levites; in turn, each Levite should internalize the feeling of showing honor and gratitude to the Kohen.

Spirituality in Tzedakah

The exact same insight applies to giving tzedakah, which has great spiritual importance above and beyond providing the needy person with resources. One example of this principle: The Navi Nachum prophesied (3:12): “Thus said Hashem: Even as those days were

One basic human need is to help others and give charity.

full and many, even so, are they shorn and passing. As surely as I afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.” Chazal (*Gittin 7a-b*) understand this

as follows: If your livelihood is full, you have enough to provide for your needs. ‘Many’ implies that there is some excess, and, in that case, you should shear it and give some to the poor. You will thereby merit passing, i.e., safely weathering threats.

Even if you are afflicted -- impoverished -- you must still give charity. This is ruled in the *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 248a): “Even a pauper who is himself supported by charity is required to give from what others give him.” Charity to the poor includes all their needs: one basic human need is to help others and give charity.

The Rambam in his commentary to *Avos* (3:15) writes: “Virtues do not come to a man according to the quantity of the greatness of the deed, but rather according to the great number of good deeds . . . by repetition of the good deeds many times. . . An example is when a man gives a thousand gold coins at one time to one man to whom it is fitting and he does not give anything to another man; the trait of generosity will not come into his hand with this great act, as [much as] it will come to one who donates a thousand gold pieces a thousand times and gives





each one of them out of generosity.

This insight also explains how Hashem responded to Korach's challenge. Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim* 614, cited by the *Kli Yakar Bamidbar* 17:1) tell us one way Korach incited people against the leadership of Moshe and Aharon: Korach told the story of a poor widow who, despite her meager belongings, was completely impoverished by the requirement to give the priestly gifts. Consequently,

reaffirming these gifts would seem only to deepen the resentment and weaken the status of Aharon.

However, the Torah emphasizes that these gifts are not a tax, which we might feel as a burden. Rather, they are sacred gifts that we set aside for Hashem; each such gift strengthens our consciousness of Hashem and our connection with Him. In this way, giving is transformed from a burden into a unique privilege.

PARASHA AND PARNASSAH



The Influence of Environment

Rabbi Tzvi Broker | Career Coach and Director of Pilzno Work Inspired

In this week's parasha, Rashi makes an astounding yet often-overlooked comment about those who joined in Korach's rebellion. When mentioning Datan and Aviram, Rashi explains that their tribes' physical location near Korach led to their joining the rebellion against Moshe. On this Rashi exclaims, "Woe to the wicked person and woe to their neighbor."

Rabbi Yaakov Goldberg, a rav of mine in Machon Lev, highlights

the relevant message of Rashi's insight. Datan and Aviram joined the rebellion because of their physical location! We know that they had a long history of instigating against Moshe going back to Egypt. Is it really because they were physically close to Korach that they were pulled into his rebellion? More likely, Datan and Aviram were actively looking for any opportunity and would have joined regardless of their proximity to Korach.



PARASHA AND PARNASSAH



Rabbi Goldberg answers that this is exactly the point. Rashi wants to show the power of one's environment. Even people like Datan and Aviram may have stayed clear of Korach's rebellion had they been surrounded by a better crowd. We experience the power of peer pressure in all areas of our lives. *Kiddushin* (83a) discusses the practical application of this influence in the workplace and lists professions that one should not pursue because the nature of those involved is to be dishonest in their business dealings.

One may ask: "What's the problem? I'm a person of integrity and morals

and can withstand challenging environments where people are not doing the right thing." Yet, the Torah's message is that the power of a negative environment can defeat even the most well-intentioned person.

Once a culture of dishonest or inappropriate behavior becomes the norm, it's a slippery slope toward rationalizing forbidden behaviors. We never would have imagined doing. Surrounding ourselves with the right crowd at work enables us to uphold our standards and create a Kiddush Hashem.



BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky: Rise of a Rabbinic Leader

Rabbi Dov Loketch

Born in 1886 in what is today Belarus, Rav Yechezkel Abramsky showed signs of genius as a youngster. His father, a timber merchant, had him memorize not only *Chumash* and *Mishnayos* but also *Nach*, which youngsters were not encouraged to master. As a result, Rav Abramsky throughout his life was proficient

not only in *Shas* and halacha but also in *Nach*, all of which were always readily accessible to him.

At the age of 17, he enrolled in the Novardok Yeshiva, led by the famous Alter of Novardok, Rav Yosef Yoizel Horwitz. He remained there for only a brief period, during which he





BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY



established a close relationship with the Rav of the town of Novardok, Rav Yechiel Michel Epstein, author of the *Aruch HaShulchan*. Rav Abramsky did not daven in the yeshiva on Shabbos, preferring instead to daven with Rav Epstein, from whom he eventually received *semichah*.

After his term of study in Novardok, Rav Abramsky transferred to the Telz Yeshiva, led by Rav Eliezer Gordon. This was a difficult period in Telz when the yeshiva was beset by controversy surrounding the inclusion of *mussar* as part of the curriculum. The idea to incorporate the formal study of *mussar* in yeshivos was, at that time, a radical innovation that sparked a great deal of debate. Rav Yehudah Leib Chasman – a close disciple of the Alter of Slobodka, who championed the formal study of *mussar* in yeshivos – was brought in to serve as mashgiach, and there was some opposition among the student body.

Rav Yosef Kahaneman, the future Rav of Ponevezh, learned in Telz at that time. He related that throughout this tumultuous period in the yeshiva when the students were embroiled in controversy, Rav Yechezkel never took his eyes off his Gemara.

In 1906, Rav Abramsky left Telz to avoid conscription into the Russian army. He was told that in Vilna, he would be able to find a wealthy patron to pay off the draft board so that he could remain in yeshiva and realize his potential for greatness in Torah scholarship. While in Vilna, he studied in the *kibbutz* (a group of outstanding disciples) of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzynski, and also in the Ramailles Yeshiva, which was run by Rav Chaim Ozer's brother, Rav Avraham Tzvi Hersh Grodzynski.

During this time, Rav Chanoch Henoch Eigis (author of *Marcheshes*), a member of the Vilna Beis Din, suggested a shidduch for Rav Yechezkel – the granddaughter of the Ridbaz (Rav Yaakov David Wilovsky). After the wedding, Rav Yechezkel was supported by his father-in-law, Rav Yisrael Yehonasan Yerushalimsky, who advised him to go to Brisk to learn under Rav Chaim Soloveitchik. He spent a considerable amount of time in Brisk and became an important disciple of Rav Chaim.

Rav Abramsky's reputation of greatness spread, and he received an invitation from the Lubavitcher Rebbe of that time, the Rashab, to teach in the Lubavitch Yeshivah,





BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

Tomchei Temimim. It was common for Lubavitch institutions to bring in a purebred Litvishe scholar to teach. Rav Abramsky accepted the invitation, but the arrangement did not succeed.

The yeshiva wanted to devote more time to studying Lubavitch works such as *Tanya* and *Likutei Torah*, as well as other Chassidic texts. Rav Abramsky felt that more time should be dedicated to classic study. It seems, however, that Rav Abramsky left the yeshivah on good terms, as the Rashab recommended him for the post of Rav of the Chabad community of Shmulesa.

Rav Abramsky's reputation continued to spread, and in 1914, he was appointed to a more distinguished rabbinic post. As Rav of Smalevich, near Minsk, he succeeded the renowned Rav Avraham Dovber Kahana-Shapiro (author of *Devar Avraham*), who left to become the Rav of Kovno.

This coincided with the outbreak of World War I, which displaced many Jewish communities in Europe, forcing them to migrate eastward to flee the German forces. This resulted in the presence of numerous outstanding Torah figures in the region of Minsk. Rav Abramsky took advantage of this opportunity, reuniting with his great *Rebbe*, Rav Chaim of Brisk, and renewing the close relationship forged during the time Rav Abramsky spent in Brisk.

It was during Rav Abramsky's tenure in Smalevich when he began writing his *magnum opus*, a monumental commentary on the *Tosefta* entitled *Chazon Yechezkel*. The work consists of two portions: a section of commentaries explaining the plain meaning of the *Tosefta* and his novel insights and analyses. The first volume would be published several years later, in 1925, and Rav Abramsky devoted the bulk of his time and energy to this project until his final days.



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Accepting Our Children's Journeys

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Relationships Coach and author of *The Moderately Anxious Everybody*.

When my eldest daughter was little, she came home from gan and, during her bedtime bath, began to sing a song. It was a very memorable event for me. I could not tell you what the words were or how the tune went. If you sang it to me today, I wouldn't even recognize it. But that was the point. I didn't know the song. She was singing a song that someone else had taught her.

The audacity. Some complete stranger (yes, I know, the lovely ganenet whom I had chosen to care

And I knew that. But that was just my rational brain. My maternal instinct was on fire. What else would this child learn, hear, see, or experience outside of my jurisdiction? It was the first time I realized that my control would not protect my child forever. We can't protect our children from everyone or everything. Every neshama has a story. Hashem has plans and messengers, and we're not always going to like them.

We will have to build our own emunah to accept that sometimes we will sorely disagree with our child's challenges. Sometimes, we will open our siddurim when we ask Hashem for help. Other times, we will find ourselves petitioning against Hashem as we stand there baffled and powerless.

What we can do as we go on our own journey of acceptance of our children's journeys is equip them. We can equip them with love. Children equipped with love have their reservoirs filled for when they need to cope with adversity. We can equip them with stability and consistency so that when things get

Children equipped with love have their reservoirs filled for when they need to cope with adversity.

for my child) had taught my child to sing a song. Now, you may be thinking, what did you expect, Ilana? It's gan! Of course, they will teach your child songs! That's what you pay them to do.





tough out there, they know they have somewhere safe to turn. We can equip them with a sense of their own capabilities so that when things or people disappoint, they don't immediately cast aspersions on their sense of self. We can teach them to be okay with discomfort so that when they feel their ship being

We have to work on ourselves to realize that Hashem loves them more than we ever could.

rocked, it won't capsize. We can teach them optimism so they know that tough experiences usually make way for better ones and that the challenges will build them.

We can believe in their ability to struggle and cope so that they don't always need to be rescued. We can love them when they fail so failure is seen as a learning experience, not as the end of the world or the condition to love.

We can give them feedback on how they handled things so they can use it in the future when they need

to handle further difficulty. As they get older, they can hear negative feedback so they can consider how to improve their responses. We can empathize with them so they feel seen in their difficulties. We can help them reframe things so they can see the good. And if they have really big challenges, we'll possibly have the humbling experience of them helping us reframe things that are too painful to watch them endure.

But perhaps above all, we have to work on ourselves to realize that Hashem loves them more than we ever could. If they're experiencing pain, difficulty, or challenge, it's because they have a story independent of us. We are not equipping our children against Hashem nor as a means to try to outwit Hashem.

Hashem is not only our Higher Power but also our children's Higher Power. We'll give them every advantage, privilege, and tool that we can, but we're raising them in the context of Hashem's plan, not in spite of it. If we can deeply internalize that our challenges are part and parcel of a plan tailor-made for us with love and surrender in emunah to that belief, we will have modeled for our children the most important lesson they need.



STORIES THAT INSPIRE

Doctor of the Forest

Rabbi Shmuel Kimche

Mashgiach Ruachni at Netzach Yisrael Elementary School, Ramat Beit Shemesh

Rav Zev Gustman (1908-1991) was a true genius and talmid chacham. Already, at the age of 20, he was a dayan and appointed to sit on the Beis Din of Vilna together with the famous Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky (1863-1940), leader of European Jewry in the years preceding World War II. (Rav Chaim Ozer wrote *Achiezer*, one of the most famous seforim of questions and answers on halacha.)

Rav Gustman managed to survive the war, and, after the establishment of the State of Israel, made aliyah and opened a shul and a yeshiva that still stand on the corner of Ramban St. and Ibn Ezra St. in Jerusalem. Once, one of his students came to pick him up and drive him to an important meeting. Rav Gustman got into the car, and the student started driving off.

Immediately, Rav Gustman cried, "Stop! I forgot to water the plants! Please take me back home." The confused student turned the car around and headed back. After a quick gardening session, Rav Gustman was back in the car, speeding off to his important meeting.

The student couldn't hold back and didn't realize his simple question – "Did the Rav really need to go back to water the garden?" – would elicit such a powerful response. Rav Gustman started telling a story that

How could my Rav, who knew everything, possibly make a mistake like this? But I knew better than to ask questions about the Gadol HaDor.

the student would never forget. (You can read about it in the Artscroll book *Rav Gustman*, p.91.) Here's what happened.

My Rebbe-Chevrusa

"I grew up in Vilna, Lithuania, the center of the Jewish world and the most learned and influential city. At a young age, I became a dayan on its prestigious beis din. The Av Beis Din was Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, and I was a Junior Dayan. Rav Grodzinsky took a liking to me, and we started learning together. At first, we just discussed the different cases. Eventually, he became my rebbe-chavrusa.



STORIES THAT INSPIRE

One day, we were learning together, and the great Rav turns to me and said, "Gustman, today I think we should take a walk in the forest together while we continue talking." And so we spent the morning walking and learning. Then the strangest thing happened. The Rav turned to me, pointed to a flower, and began explaining to me how useful this flower is, how it can be used as medicine, and how tea made from it can heal certain illnesses.

I was totally bewildered. A few minutes later, Rav Chaim Ozer pointed to a tree and explained how the leaves can be crushed to make pastes that can heal wounds. He pointed to some berries and said, 'These look like poisonous berries, but if you look closely, you'll see they are different and are edible.'

This went on for quite a few months. I was confused because the Mishnah teaches us not to interrupt our learning to comment on the beauty of a tree. How could my Rav, who knew everything, make such a mistake? But I knew better than to ask questions about the Gadol HaDor.

A few years later, I received my answer.

In 1939, Germany invaded Poland and made a pact that it wouldn't invade

Russia. On June 22, 1941, Germany broke its agreement with Russia and invaded Lithuania. By June 24, they were at the gates of Vilna, which was surrounded by a fence. My 9-year-old daughter convinced us that we had to escape. I found a hole in the fence, and our only hope for survival was to escape into the forest.

Another surprise was in store for us. One morning, we woke up to find a group of partisans surrounding us.

We left one night never to return. We started running through the forest and soon became hungry. I looked at my wife and daughter and realized what a wealth of knowledge about the forest Rav Grodzinsky gave me. Without this, we would not have survived.

Another surprise was in store for us. One morning, we woke up to find a group of partisans (groups of people who hid in the forest to save themselves from the Nazis) surrounding us. Without any niceties, they opened the conversation asking what use we were to them.

Without having to think much -



thanks to my great mentor and teacher, who must have had Ruach HaKodesh – I turned to the leader and said, ‘I am a doctor of the forest. I know every leaf and every berry in this forest. I am probably the most valuable person in your group.’ With that, we were given special status, and we survived the war as partisans in the forest.

Life-saving Berries

So, is it really so strange that I should want to give those plants some water? To give a little hakaras hatov to the very berries that saved my life? I try not to miss a day of watering these plants."

This Shabbos - Parashas Korach - is the yahrtzeit of Rav Gustman. He

understood the value and power of gratitude. He came to Eretz Yisrael and rebuilt. Korach was one of the most honored members of the Jewish people, a Levite from Kehas – the carriers of the ark. Yet Korach was not grateful. Rather, he was driven by crazy jealousy for the position of Kohen Gadol. Jealousy, which Moshe reminded Korach, takes man out of this world.

May we all learn from Rav Gustman’s remarkable story to recognize what we’re grateful for in our own lives and go the extra mile to express our gratitude.

Good Shabbos.



PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Washing a Kohen’s Hands

Josh and Tammy Kruger

The Story

Once upon a time:

Kedusha had just been recited in shul, and it was time to prepare for Birkas Kohanim.

Lior Levi turned to his best friend Koby Cohen.

“OK. Time for me to wash your hands.”

Koby smiled and began moving along





PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



the aisle toward the washing station. Suddenly, he stopped.

"What's wrong?" asked Lior.

"Mr. Goldberg is still praying Shemoneh Esrei, and he's blocking the aisle. It's forbidden to walk right in front of someone when they're praying."

Lior shook his head. "It's the only way to get to the washing station. What other choice do we have?"

The boys didn't know what to do.

Discussion:

Q: What should the boys do?

A: The answer is different for each of them! We are usually not allowed to walk right in front of someone who is praying, but an exception is made for a Kohen because he needs

to perform the mitzvah of Birkas Kohanim (*Eishel Avraham* 102). The Levite, however, does not actually have a mitzvah to wash the Kohen's hands. It is desirable that a Levite wash the Kohen's hands, but it is not required. If no Levite is available, a *bechor* can do the job. And if no *bechor* is available then the Kohen can wash his own hands. Koby should walk on, but Lior should not walk in front of Mr. Goldberg.

Q: What is the connection between our story and the parasha?

A: Parashas Korach teaches the need for Levites to be happy with their role in serving Kohanim. Lior is content with this role as a Levite and is excited to serve Koby. If only Korach had been as happy to serve Aharon!

Written in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer. Based on his article "The Levite Task of Washing Kohanim's Hands" at www.dinonline.org.



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