

Kehillah

Chiddushim and Insights for Shabbos | 6 Shevat, 5783 | 6



Why Do We Need Yetzias Mitzrayim?

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer

Our great redemption from Mitzrayim is, without a doubt, the most covenantal event of the Jewish people. We mention it twice daily as part of reciting the Shema, and as the Ramban notes, many Torah mitzvos mean to recall it. The very giving of the Torah begins with its mention.

But the centrality of Yetzias Mitzrayim raises a simple difficulty. It was Hashem, surely, who put us there in the first place, promising Avraham Avinu that we would descend into Egyptian exile and realizing the promise with the descent of Yaakov and his sons. From our perspective, it seems we would have been better off without experiencing the harsh exile and without requiring redemption.

If Hashem exiled us into Egypt – unlike later exiles, the reason why we deserved it is not mentioned by the Torah – why then is the ultimate redemption such a big deal? How can our connection with Hashem and our entire religious identity be predicated on leaving Mitzrayim if Hashem put us there in the first place?

It seems the answer to this is that Egypt was substantively different from all other exiles. As the Passuk mentions, Egypt was the “iron furnace” in which we were nationally wrought (Devraim 4:20). Another Passuk mentions that we were born out of Mitzrayim: “And your birth, on the day that you were born” (Yechezkel 16:4). With signs and wonders, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, Hashem brought us forth as “one nation from within another” (Devarim 4:34).

Every birth requires a prior incubation period, including no small hardship of labor and birth. This is the basic meaning of the exile that preceded our redemption. Mitzrayim was the crucible in which we were formed. We had to go through a time of Egyptian exile, in the global center of idolatry and slavery, to become the nation of Hashem that represents the very opposite – the negation of idolatry and the negation of slavery.

From a society predicated on nothing other than power and control, realized in idolatry, sorcery, and slavery, we left Mitzrayim to form a society founded on trust, love,

and relationship. The wonders of Mitzrayim teach us Divine, unconditional love. The Ramban explains that the great miracles teach us that our lives, whether national or personal, are replete with concealed miracles of Divine supervision. We learn to love and trust Hashem, and we concurrently learn to love and trust each other.

Why did we come out of Mitzrayim? This question can be answered with a variety of formulations, but allow me to end by citing two Pesukim that present two sides of a single coin.

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One Passuk, in Yeshayahu, states: “This nation I have created for Myself, My glory they shall tell” (43:21). According to this statement, our birth out of Egypt made us into Hashem’s nation. Our task is thus to operate His “embassy,” to bring Divine elevation into the world and tell His glory.

The flip side is found in Tehillim: “I am Hashem, your God, who raised you from the land of Egypt – open wide your mouth and I shall fill it” (81:11). We came out of Egypt to open our mouths, to direct our hopes and aspirations at Hashem and allow Him to fulfill them within our relationship.

Both sides of this coin were initiated as we left Mitzrayim, in the moment of our redemption that coincided with the great revelation of Hashem. Hashem enters the world by means of our trust and our loyalty, by means of our unique relationship with Him. Its formation required a long process that included both exile and redemption. Yetzias Mitzrayim is thus with us always.

Truth and Privacy in Ancient Egypt Rabbi Asher Meir

According to the Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 14:3), as mentioned by Rashi (*Shemos* 10:22), when the *Bnei Yisrael* asked the Egyptians for valuables to take with them upon leaving Mitzrayim, the Egyptians sought to excuse themselves, saying, “We don’t have anything to lend you.” The *Bnei Yisrael*, however, had taken advantage of the plague of darkness to inventory the Egyptians’ household effects, and repulsed this excuse by detailing the household objects and their exact locations.

Is the Egyptian excuse permissible? There are several reasons why it might be.

The first is a general understanding that when someone asks a favor, a polite refusal may involve a somewhat imprecise reply. Rav Yaakov Fisch, in his monumental work on truth-telling “Titen Emes leYaakov” (example 129, pg. 349) brings examples of Torah leaders who justify such conduct. In particular, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ruled that if a person has a good reason to refrain from lending money to someone, he can state “I don’t have any money handy,” which is understood to mean “I don’t have any money handy for you, now.” Rav Fisch adds that Rabbi Auerbach personally conducted himself in this fashion.

According to this leniency, if the person asking a favor presses the issue and asks, “Do you really mean that you have no free funds at all?” explicitly ruling out the polite interpretation, it *would* be necessary to tell the truth. And this was indeed Rabbi Auerbach’s instruction.

A distinct leniency is a protective lie. As we mentioned in the column on parshat Veyechi, it is permitted to make up a cover story to avoid having to disclose information that would expose a person to undeserved consequences. One such consequence is being shamed into spending beyond one’s means to help a needy person. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 8b, ruled in SA, YD 248:7) applies the Biblical admonition (*Yirmiyahu* 30:20) “And I will deal with all his oppressors” to the case of a person who is pressured by charity collectors to giving beyond what he should be fairly assessed. And the Rambam (*Teshuvah* 4:4) considers “eating from a meal which is insufficient for its host” to be “bordering on theft” (*avak gezel*). The case is where the host is very poor and only agrees to share his food with the guest out of shame.

The conduct of the nascent Jewish People in this

Midrash equally requires justification. Intruding into someone’s privacy is generally forbidden. One halachic rubric for this is *hezek reiyah* – the tort of “seeing”: Neighbors are not only forbidden from paying attention to the private conduct of their neighbors but are in fact required to take affirmative measures to prevent themselves from such intrusiveness (SA, CM 154:7). Another relevant halachic category is *rechilus*. The usual definition of *rechilus* is indiscriminately spreading someone’s private information to others (as opposed to *leshon hara* which implies specifically defamatory information). However, Rav Yaakov Hagiz (*Yad Ketana* 276) concludes that spying on someone is halachically equivalent. “It seems to me that it is [already] forbidden to seek out the private affairs of one’s fellow, for what difference is there between ‘don’t go as a talebearer’ to other people and ‘don’t go as a talebearer’ to yourself”?

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The Midrash supports the idea that our forefathers in Egypt limited their search and demand to permissible scope; it states that the Egyptians felt reassured by the fact that the Bnei Yisrael could easily have despoiled them during the days of darkness, but refrained from doing so, instead only requesting voluntary gifts

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The ultimate harmonization of the Choshen Mishpat conduct of the Egyptians and the Bnei Yisrael seems to be as follows: the Egyptians were justified in giving a reserved reply to their Jewish neighbors, as they had a reasonable concern that the Jews might shame them into giving gifts beyond their means. But the Jews were equally justified in worrying that without proper verification of the facts, the Egyptians would give gifts that were unfairly stingy. Hence they limited their initial search and verification, and their subsequent demand, to gifts which were reasonable based on each neighbor’s wealth.

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Defining the Jewish Mission Rabbi Yitzchak Adlerstein

“Moshe called to all the elders of Israel and said to them: Draw forth and take for yourselves one of the flock for your families and slaughter the Pesach.”

What, exactly, were the *Bnei Yisrael* “drawing forth? The *Meshech Chochmah* sees this as the moment that they moved to an orientation completely foreign to the ways of the surrounding pagan religions. He takes the opportunity to define, in his eyes, the essential nature of the Jewish faith as distinct from other ancient religions. Below is a summary

The difference between the faith of Jews and everyone else, explains Rav Meir Simcha, is as simple as the difference between the mind and the heart. The heart is moved by what it experiences. We attach labels to some of the stirrings we feel and speak of love, beauty, and courage. Ancient man stood in awe of the strength of the forces that surrounded him and that raged within. How did he deal with those forces whose power he could not understand? He turned each one into a god. Hence, there was a god of love and a god of beauty, and a god of courage. A human who excelled in one of these forces was known as a son of the equivalent god.

To this day, the belief systems of other people rely upon and build upon the emotions they can evoke. The soaring cathedrals, the artwork and tapestries with which they adorn their holy places – all these tap into the emotional responsiveness of the worshippers, increasing their attachment to each particular faith.

Avraham’s way was different. He understood that Hashem is not part of the created world in any way. He is without boundaries, limits, or restraints. He cannot be comprehended or understood; if He could, He would perforce have some commonality with the physical world. His existence is necessary, and all existence is contingent upon Him. He brings everything into existence from absolute nothingness. His Oneness is unique, unlike anything else known to man.

These notions are intellectual, not emotional. Nothing that we touch or feel propels them. They exist in our rational selves. To get there, we had to choose the dictates of the mind over the tugs of the heart. Our understanding of Hashem is a product of cognition. Its depth is such that, as the *Chovos Halevavos* (*Shaar HaYichud*, chap. 2) puts it, only the philosopher or prophet can grasp it fully. Nonetheless, all of Israel fully believes in His existence and His Oneness and testifies to it twice daily, despite these being entirely conceptual notions. They disparage the alternative mindsets sourced in emotion, seeing them as part of a limited, changeable physical creation that is nothing but a tool in the Hand of its Creator.

But what, in the approach of Rav Meir Simcha, becomes of our emotional reactions? Surely they hold great promise for us as well! We find the mission of emotions fulfilled through apportioning them to different mitzvos,

which resonate with our emotional makeup. Love is channeled into love for our fellow man and to cement the family relationship and the commitment to peoplehood. Revenge is focused on the enemies of Hashem. Kindness is channeled toward helping those who need it.

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Every emotion that typically resides within the human heart is given its due. Beauty is appreciated on Sukkos when we take the *esrog*, the “fruit of the beautiful tree.” Significantly, it is savored only for a week – after which it is discarded, unlike other mitzvah material, teaching us something about appreciating the esthetic but not overvaluing its importance.

The roles of mind and heart are memorialized in the garb of the *kohen gadol*. On his forehead – the seat of the intellect – he wore the *tzitz*, upon which was emblazoned *kodesh le-Hashem*, sanctified to Hashem. Man’s rational faculties are to be kept holy, directed at Torah study and prayer, and free of competing influences that can lead us astray from the focus on Hashem. On the *choshen* (breastplate), however, the *kohen gadol* carried the names of the tribes of Israel. Man’s heart and all the forces within it are directed at the mitzvos, the majority of which serve the unity of the nation.

Effectively, we thus crown the head as king over the body! We opt to follow the rational faculty, through which we discern the absolute Oneness of Hashem – something outside the realm of human experience.

We can paraphrase what Chazal (*Tosefta, Berachos* 4:16) say about Yehuda and apply it to *Klal Yisrael* as a whole: “How did the Jews merit kingship? Because they jumped into the sea.” In other words, jumping into the sea was an act of crowning the mind, which follows the word of Hashem, over our emotions. The Oneness of Hashem is thus raised above all other reactions.

Our Pasik thus commands: “draw...and take.” Draw yourselves away from the way others approach the world, yielding to the dictates of emotions and imagination. Take those emotions and employ them in the life of the family and the love of fellow. Take a sheep for each household, which will also be shared with neighbors, stimulating the unity of the entire nation. In performing this *avodah*, all the feelings are channeled to the mitzvah, so that they are not free to challenge the faith of the mind and yield distorted images of Hashem.

Unconditional Giving, Unconditional Love ?!

Rebbetzin Tamar Pfeffer

Question

I have seven children, four are married. My son is in yeshiva and isn't home a lot. My issue is with the two younger girls, one is 18, and the other is 16.

I mainly have a hard time with the older girl. She is very angry with me and hardly talks to me, though I don't see any reason for this. I try to ask her what she's angry about and to make things better, but she doesn't answer.

She used to ask for large sums of money, and I didn't always give her what she wanted. Today, she isn't ready to take a shekel from me. I feel she says to herself: "You don't give me what I want, so I don't want anything." I wrote her a special blessing for her birthday and gave

her some, but she returned it. The atmosphere at home is very unpleasant and affects my younger daughter.

I should note that my husband has a good and easy-going relationship with the children and also generally gives them whatever they want. Today, however, she's angry even with him. It's a package deal. My question is how to react, how to manage the situation, and how to deal with things she does that I consider unacceptable – for example, her dress code isn't up to our standards. What do I do?

Thanks so much.

Response

Dear Mother,

Thank you for the candid and important question.

You raise a number of points, and clearly, it is a somewhat complex situation. I'll try to give a single answer or approach, however, because everything links to one branch, one source. That source is very simply: giving. More precisely: unconditional giving, giving without expecting anything in exchange. *Matnat chinam*.

I want to highlight one sentence in your question: "I feel she says to herself: 'You don't give me what I want, so I don't want anything.'" The key to unraveling your situation is in this simple line.

Children need unconditional love. It is an existential need. We, as parents, express this with unconditional giving, *matnat chinam*. When our children are young, it is clear to us that we give our children unconditionally, "for nothing." As infants, it is clear to us that the giving is pure, clean of any profit motive.

Over time, our giving is liable to change phase. We get tired of giving. We expect to receive something in return. We sometimes even feel our children are blackmailing us. And suddenly, the kids themselves have a say: "That's it? So I don't want anything." This is exactly the time to reflect on our gift: Is it a "real gift"? Is it a *matnas chinam*?

A *matnas chinam* has a very clear basic rule: it has to be for free. As a mother, I decide what to give, when to give, to whom to give, and how much to give. I control

the giving. It doesn't depend on what the child wants but on what I want to give him or her (I can, of course, take his wishes into account, but out of my own free choice).

When my giving is true, I don't depend on the child's response. Even if my child is angry about my giving, it remains a true gift because I chose to give it regardless of the reaction. "This is what I wanted to give you. It's waiting for you. When you want, you can receive it."

As we work on our giving, our kids need to work on their receiving. They need to learn to accept to receive rather than to take. A child who takes is a child who always asks, demands, and does not allow me to give him at all. My every giving comes as a response to his request, and if I don't give in the way and manner he demands, he gets angry. This is no longer a true, free gift. I don't have any freedom in giving but am rather bound to the child's will.

Take, for example, a woman who constantly asks her husband for jewelry so that every purchase of jewelry is a response to her demands. Such a woman does not know how to receive; all she does is take. She does not know the sweet taste of receiving, and the gifts cannot fill the void of giving and love. Only a *matnas chinam* can fill the void she feels.

It is the same with our kids. A child who constantly demands does not allow himself to receive. It will also be difficult for his parents to give him a real gift, a free gift. True giving needs to come from the giver and within

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appropriate boundaries. Giving without boundaries is not giving at all; it is simply extortion.

In your daughter's case, it seems to me that the issue of giving and receiving is poorly defined and certainly lacking clarity. As soon as it becomes clear to you, you will also be able to convey it to her – whether by words or by your confidence in your actions.

Find opportunities for true giving. It could be a birthday, but perhaps it's even better on just a regular day when you can give her a *matnas chinam*, a gift "just because" that nourishes her existential need for love – her "black hole."

Let's say you give her money, but she returns it to you. You can "reset" it to a *matnas chinam* by saying: "I give it to you from the bottom of my heart, and I'm keeping it on the shelf; it's waiting for you." This formulation ensures that you're not hurt by her not receiving the gift because your giving is still there, awaiting her receipt; you achieve what you wanted to achieve.

Over time, she will learn how to receive, and you'll learn how to give.

Your husband gives the children what they want, yet she is still angry with him. This is because true giving is not about giving kids "what they want." Such giving does not fulfill the child's need for *matnas chinam* and *ahavas chinam*. A *matnas chinam*, one fully directed at the child,

has to come within the boundaries appropriate for that child. Absent the boundaries, infinite gifts cannot be a vehicle for love.

You mentioned in your question that you don't know how to respond to matters that are "unacceptable" at home (such as modesty standards). It seems to me that your daughter has entered a swamp, a mental position in which she stands up to you and does things against you. In trying to give her unconditional gifts, solely for the sake of giving (make a record for yourself to ensure you give daily gifts, which can also be verbal: "Look, I made you your favorite soup"), she will feel that you are with her. You want to give even if she is unready to receive.

The fact that she did not receive the gift does not invalidate it. It doesn't place you in an angry or resentful position. You remain in the "giving" state of mind, expressing pure and unconditional love. Our children thus feel they have a place in their parents' hearts. They think about her, want to give her, and love her unconditionally. These feelings, wherever you are, will keep her close to you.

I have described a process, not an overnight fix. It takes time. But provided the direction is positive, the process itself can be a source of joy and well-being – which is what I wish you with your daughter and in all your relationships.

*Best wishes and good luck,
Tamar Pfeffer*

Manners or Gratitude? Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

When you're giving a ride to a bunch of little kids, it's easy to spot the chutznik. It's usually the one that stops to say toda rabba rabba, while all the others have obliviously scrambled out the car.

What's odd is that should you give a ride to an adult Israeli, be prepared to be showered with berachos. By the time they are out of the car, you will have collected nachas, simcha, health and prosperity and more for you, your family and your unborn great grandchildren.

When does the gratitude lever get pulled, I often wonder?

Talking of manners, I remember being extremely confused as a small child when a beloved aunt of mine told me off for saying please too often (no, she's not from the UK, obviously). We're family, she told me, why are you treating me like a stranger with all your formalities? I did not gain much from this interaction at the time. She was telling me off for saying please! I was unable to integrate that into any part of my

understanding of how things worked!

But I did learn, eventually, that cultures differ and that manners and gratitude are not the same.

When a bratty child who asks rudely for a piece of cake is told to say the magic word and then gets the cake, they have experienced a lesson in manners, not gratitude. If a child asks nicely for something, it's neither the lack nor the presence of certain words that determines whether they are speaking nicely.

Nor should we only insist on our children asking nicely when we have decided to grant them their request. If a child says, I want that cake, the appropriate response is to tell them to upgrade how they ask. It's irrelevant whether you're going to say yes or no. You can ask them to ask nicely and still say no. The lesson is in how you speak, not how you get me to give to you. And speaking nicely is not entirely determined by a magic word. After all, "Could I have some cake?" is probably better said than "I want that cake.... Please".





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As chutznik parents, we are sometimes a little thrown by the lack of manners our children are learning. But

maybe we ought to look past the cultural differences and focus on the values.

If the price of having children who communicate honestly, who understand what's important, who grow up to be grateful adults who know how to shower blessing, perhaps the forgoing of a little British please or an American thank you here and there is a price worth paying.

Goy Echad Ba'aretz: One Nation Upon the Earth

Rabbi Shmuel Kimche

We all remember the famous Gemara (*Brachos 6a*) about Klal Yisrael wears Tefillin (the last Passuk in Parashas Bo) and at the same time Hashem, too, "Wears Tefillin." Our Tefillin speak about Hashem, teaching Hashem's Oneness, and Hashem's Tefillin, as it were, tell about us, His People, and our uniqueness. We are גוי אחד בארץ, one nation upon the earth.

Listen to this Fantastic story about our *achdus* and Hashem's response.

Rafi was only 17, and he was looking for a mission. He had been reading about the Middah of Chesed and taking responsibility for fellow Jews, and he now wanted to put it into action.

And then it happened.

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"Hi, my name is Rafi. I was listening to your show. I heard the 10-year-old orphan. I will raise the money." With that, Rafi put the phone down.

He was sitting on the bus in Yerushalayim on the way to Yeshiva while listening (together with all the other passengers) to the bus driver's radio. Staring out of the window, he heard a sudden break in the program. "Dear listeners, we have to cut in with a live broadcast. A ten-year-old boy has come into the studio in crisis. Can people please listen to this and help!"

The boy gets onto the radio and starts crying: "I am

one of five children. My father died a year ago, and my mother is not coping. The Electricity Company just shut off our electricity because we owe 1,800 Shekel. Can anybody please help us?!" The radio host cut in and said, "Dear listeners, if anyone is listening and is able to help, please call our radio station." He gave the phone number, repeated it several times, and the show went on. (Only in Israel!)

Rafi sat frozen. Moments later, he sprang out of his seat and signaled to get off. Right after descending from the bus, he found himself at a payphone (this was before cellphones), dialing the number of the station. "Hi, my name is Rafi. I was listening to your show. I heard the 10-year-old orphan. I will raise the money." With that, Rafi put the phone down.

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"Hi, my name is Rafi. I was listening to your show. I heard the 10-year-old orphan. I will raise the money." With that, Rafi put the phone down.

Rafi was energized. He started running from store to store, from person to person. It turns out that many people had heard about the orphan's plea – and many gave him small donations. Some 10 shekel, others 50. Slowly but surely, he started building up his own little private Kupah... The radio station put out more and more messages: "There is a boy named Rafi who is collecting in Yerushalayim for the orphan who came in yesterday... please open your hearts and purses!"

Wildfire. Rafi went into a furniture store, and the owner, after asking, “are you Rafi?” after verifying, pulled out seven 100 shekel bills. “I was waiting for a worthy cause to give to!” Soon enough, all 1,800 Shekel was raised, with a little to spare.

Rafi made his way crosstown to the Radio station, knocked on the door, and handed in the envelope. “What is your name?” “My name is Rafi. The last name doesn’t matter – we are all Jews, and we are all family.” With that, Rafi left.



Fast forward ten years.

Rafi is now married and learning in Kollel. Finances are not easy for many people who choose to dedicate their lives to learning Torah. For Rafi, it was doubly hard, and he had just received an astronomical electricity bill that he simply couldn’t pay. 3,800 Shekel!! And the IEC had just sent him a final warning before shutdown. The winter had been cold in Yerushalayim, and the heating had gone through the roof ☹️. He simply couldn’t pay.

While making himself a coffee in the Yeshiva dining Hall, Rafi was telling his friend about his predicament. As he was telling his friend, a stranger, also making a coffee, “couldn’t help but overhear.”

Rafi feels a tap on his shoulder, and the stranger says, “Could you please step outside for a moment? I have something I need to ask you.” Rafi obliges. “I couldn’t help overhearing your electricity bill. I have a strange family agreement. My aunt – Doda Shoshana – told me that if I ever hear of anyone who is having trouble paying their electricity bill, she would like to help them out. Do you happen to have the bill on you?” In a trance, Rafi pulls a well-thumped bill out of his pocket. “Of course.”

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Rafi looked at his wife and then at the lady. “Did this Rafi, by any chance, collect 1,950 Shekel for you?”
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The stranger takes the bill, goes out to make a short phone call to Doda Sarah, and comes back a few minutes later. “The bill has been paid in full. You need not worry about it any more!”

Almost crying at the crazy *hashgacha* and a little stunned at why Doda Sarah had made this strange request to her family, Rafi turns to the stranger: “I have

no words to thank you and your Doda Sarah! I would love to have her number and thank her in person!”

Rafi gets onto the phone with Doda Sarah and makes up a time to come with his wife to see her and thank her in person.



Rafi and his wife Devorah arrive at a well-furnished apartment, and the conversation begins. It turns out that Aunt Doda hadn’t always been a lady of means. Her fortune had come to her only relatively recently, and, in truth, when her husband had passed away many years earlier, she had been quite poor.

“But why specifically pay other people’s electrical bills? Sounds funny, but there are many ways to help people,” asked a suspecting and hopeful Rafi.

“Well, like I said, about ten years ago, I was a young mother of 5, and our electricity had been cut off. Someone anonymous collected money for us, and I was so touched that I made a promise to Hashem. If I ever hear of people who have trouble paying their electricity, it is part of my *shlichus* to help them out!”

Rafi, trembling, asked the lady his question – “Do you know who it was who collected for you?”

“All we know is that his name was Rafi.”

Rafi looked at his wife and then at the lady. “Did this Rafi, by any chance, collect 1,950 Shekel for you?”

The lady looked at him, shocked. “Yes. We needed 1,800 Shekel, but Rafi collected extra. How did you know?”

“I know, you see, because my name is Rafi.”



True story. Only among Klal Yisrael. One People. Together we left Mitzrayim. We became a Nation. The Korban Pesach is eaten “together” as a “chabura.” We are all counted. We are all one, part of the Klal. When we live up to that *achdus*, Hashem responds with special hashgacha, with special supervision.

מי כעמד ישראל גוי אחד בארץ.



Mezuzah Matters Josh and Tammy Kruger

The Story

In the city of Balagan, on a street named Gevalt, lived the Mevulbal family. This family was nice and funny and very, very mixed up. It was a special day for them because they had moved into a new home just down the road on Gevalt street.

"I'm so excited about our new home!" said Mr. Mevulbal. "Our old home was on 147 Gevalt Street and our new home is on 9 Gevalt Street. That means that every time we have to write our address we'll only have to write one digit instead of three! Think of all the time we'll save over the years!"

"Hello, everyone," said Mrs. Mevulbal as she entered the home. "I just picked bought some new mezuzos for the new home, and I also asked the rabbi to check our old mezuzos. We always make sure to have the mezuzos checked once every 13 years."

"It's amazing that the rabbi can fit a whole *Sefer Torah* in a box that small!" said Mr. Mevulbal.

Mr. and Mrs. Mevulbal went to the main entrance of their home. "Which side should we put it on? The right or the left?" said Mrs. Mevulbal.

"Let's take turns," said Mr. Mevulbal. "Hashem created both 'right' and 'left' so they both deserve the honor of a mezuzah.

We can put this one on the right side, the one for our kitchen on the left side, the one for our bedroom on the right side, and the one for Reuven's room on the left".

Mr. Mevulbal placed the mezuzah at the very highest point on the doorpost. "*Maalim b'kodesh v'lo moreedim*" he explained to Reuven.

"That's right," nodded Mrs. Mevulbal. "Also notice, Reuven, that Daddy is placing the mezuzah on a slant so that the top part is leaning toward the exit."

"Why do you make it diagonal?" asked Reuven.

"So that the mezuzah is bowing before Hashem!" smiled Mr. Mevulbal.

Once the mezuzah was nailed in place, Mr. Mevulbal made the beracha "Baruch atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam Hamotzei Lechem Min Ha'Mezuzah."

"Amen," said the others.

"I love *berachos*" said Reuven.

"Great" said Mr. Mevulbal. "We have another 3 mezuzos to place, so we still have another 3 berachos".

"Oh, look!" said Mrs. Mevulbal. "Rabbi Oyvey has come for a visit. Let's show him how nicely we have placed our mezuzos."

Mistakes

1) A mezuzah should be checked twice every seven years, not once every 13 years (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11:25). Some Poskim note that the time period can change depending on circumstances. Thus, a mezuzah exposed to the elements should be checked more often (*Aruch Ha-Shulchan* 291:1).

2) A mezuzah does not contain the entire text of the Torah. It contains the first two portions of the *Kriyas Shema* (*Shema- Ve'ahavta and Vehaya Im Shamoah*).

3) The mezuzah is placed on the doorpost that is on your right when you enter the house or a room (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11: 4) The mezuzah should not be placed all the way at the top of the doorpost. There should be a gap of at least of tefach. The lowest the mezuzah should be placed is one-third the distance from the top of the doorpost (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11:5).

5) The *minhag* of Ashkenazim is to place the mezuzah in a diagonal orientation. The top of the mezuzah should slant

towards the inner part of the room, not the exit (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11:6). Sefaradim place the mezuzah in a vertical orientation.

6) The reason for placing the mezuzah in a diagonal orientation is to achieve a compromise between the opinion of Rashi, who states that the mezuzah should be vertical, and Rebbenu Tam, who states that the mezuzah should be horizontal (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 289).

7) The beracha should be made before affixing the mezuzah and not after (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11:7).

8) The correct beracha is "Baruch atah Hashem Elokeinu melech ha'olam asher kideshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu likboah mezuzah" (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11:7).

9) If someone is going to place several mezuzos, one immediately after the other, then the beracha made before placing the first mezuzah counts for them all (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11:7).

Connection to the Parsha

In Parashas Bo the Jewish People are instructed to spread the

blood from the *korban pesach* onto the *mezuzos* (doorposts) and *mashkof* (doorway crossbeam) of their homes. Doing so protected the people in the home from *makas bechoros*.

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