

Candle Lighting

7:14

S"Z Kriat Shema

10:25

Sunset

7:33

Motzei

Shabbat

8:07



Parshat HaShavuah

שמיני

SHMINI

MARCH 22,

2014

כ' אדר-ב תשע"ד

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Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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Sponsored in memory of Lana (Leah) D. Goldberg

BROTHERLY LOVE...FOR A CHANGE MRS. SHIRA ENGLANDER

Like children across the world, my children are obsessed with the movie Frozen. For those of you who haven't yet seen the movie, Frozen is a tale of two sisters, one with special powers

and the other with everlasting enthusiasm, who both find their way. Together, the girls face their darkest fears and discover their inner strength.

Throughout the Torah, we see story after story of sibling rivalry. Kayin and Hevel, Yitzchak and Yishmael, Yaakov and Eisav, Yosef and his brothers (to name a few) all had relationships of dysfunction and animosity. Parshat Shmini, however, highlights a much more positive sibling relationship.

The parsha opens following the inauguration of the Mishkan, but the *shechina*, Hashem's presence, has not yet descended to rest there. Although Moshe has been the only one involved with the Mishkan until now, Aharon assumes that the lack of Hashem's presence is his own fault as a result of his involvement with *cheit ha'egel*, the sin of the golden calf.

Moshe steps forward, offers a special prayer, and immediately the *shechina* rests upon Bnei Yisrael. Aharon then takes his rightful place as the Kohen Gadol and together they bless the Jewish people. There is no ego, animosity, or ill-will between the brothers.

Continued on page 4





BITTERSWEET

JASON MIZRAHI ('17)

Parshat Shmini begins with the word “*vayehi*” (and it was). Many commentators have tried to figure out why the Torah specifically uses this word. The Sages teach that when a pasuk opens with the word “*vayehi*” it indicates a sense of sadness or sorrow. According to this interpretation, we must ask what sadness could have been present at the beginning of our parsha, on the joyous first day of Nissan, the day the Mishkan was finally inaugurated?

One would expect that since it is Rosh Chodesh as well as the grand opening of the Mishkan, the first of Nissan would be a celebratory and merry day; however, this explanation of “*vayehi*” suggests otherwise.

R' Yisrael comments that until the sin of the golden calf, a need for a “dominant place of holiness” was unnecessary. Before the sin, every Jew was worthy of Divine Presence. After that major downfall, however, it became necessary to create something of great holiness that would help atone and compensate for the horrible sin and provide a resting place for the *shechina*. Therefore, the joyous opening of the Mishkan is laced with some regret. The celebration is mixed with memories of the terrible episode of the golden calf, along with the realization that the Jews have forfeited their ability to achieve even greater holiness.

From the wording of the pasuk, we learn that while Bnei Yisrael do sin, Hashem mercifully gives us a way to repent. We should take this gift from Hashem and apply it to our everyday lives. Even though we no longer have the Mishkan or the Beit Hamikdash, we are still able to do teshuva whenever we desire.

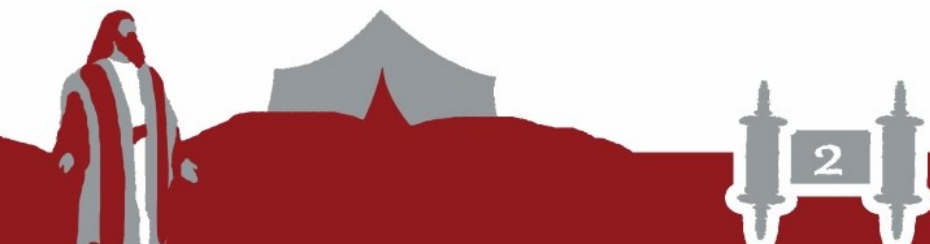
THERE ARE REASONS FOR EVERYTHING


YITZCHAK KAMINETSKY ('15)

In addition to this Shabbat being Parshat Shmini, it is also Parshat Parah. Parshat Parah is when we recite the special Torah portion in which we talk about the *parah adumah*. This commandment of the red cow is viewed as the quintessential *chok*, a commandment whose reason we do not know. This commandment is very odd for many reasons: Why would there be a commandment to sprinkle burned ashes on someone who has come into contact with a dead body? And why would the one who sprinkles these ashes then become impure?

Since this commandment is a *chok*, we will never truly know the reason behind it; however, if we look at it from a different perspective, we can better understand it and perhaps learn a valuable lesson.

Continued on page 3





Kaminetsky continued

Almost every commandment in the Torah shares a common theme—prioritizing our spiritual selves over our animal instincts. Whether it be getting up early in the morning to daven, only eating kosher food, or wearing tzitzit, each one of these cases challenges us to choose our spiritual being over our physical desires. So too, when it comes to the *parah adumah* one might say, “Why should I make myself impure to help some other person?” Even though this mitzvah does not apply today, it still teaches us the importance of helping our spiritual selves grow and not just giving in to our personal desires.

If we keep this thought in mind as we go through each day, our focus on spiritual growth will help us feel like we are constantly bettering our inner selves and creating a stronger relationship with God.

THE LOSS OF POTENTIAL LEADERS

COREY REICHENBERG (‘16)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Shmini, there is such exuberance among Bnei Yisrael due to the inauguration of the Mishkan. All of Israel's donations have paid off. God has even forgiven them for the sin of the golden calf, as seen by the fire that descends to accept their sacrifices.

In the midst of all this excitement, sudden tragedy strikes. Two of Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, die. Chazal claim this to be one of the worst misfortunes to ever happen to the Jewish people. The simple question is, why do our rabbis consider this event to be one of the most tragic in the entire Torah?

Moshe declares, "I knew that the inauguration of the Mishkan was going to be marred by the loss of the holiest member or members of Klal Yisrael." However, Moshe assumes it would be himself and/or Aharon who would die.

The Ponevezher Rav explains that the deaths of Nadav and Avihu are such a big deal because Nadav and Avihu are supposed to be the next leaders of Bnei Yisrael. These two men could have brought the nation into Israel! If Nadav and Avihu had lived, maybe their leadership would have prevented the sins that led to destruction of the Temple. We are therefore not only mourning their deaths as fellow Jews, but we are also mourning for them on a national level.

The same concept applies during sefirat ha'omer, which is when we usually read Parshat Shmini. Because so many of Rabbi Akiva's learned students died, so much Torah knowledge was lost and therefore was prevented from being spread to the rest of the world and generations to come.

Continued on page 4



Reichenberg continued

In today's day and age, as Iran poses such a threat to present and future Jewry, we must make sure that we do what we have to do to prevent our homeland of Israel from being destroyed by our enemies.

Be'ezrat Hashem we will continue to atone for the sins of Nadav, Avihu, and the students of Rabbi Akiva and continue to merit the land of Israel.

WITH PURE INTENTIONS

EVAN JACOBY ('17)

The Torah warns: "Do not drink intoxicating wine, you and your sons with you, when you come to the Tent of Meeting, that you do not die; this is an eternal decree for your generations" (10:9). Why is this prohibition necessary? What is so bad about being intoxicated while performing mitzvot?

Hashem wants us to enjoy performing the mitzvot, to obey the Torah with pure – and not artificial – joy. If the kohanim, the holiest of people, perform mitzvot while drunk, which is fake happiness, then what kind of example does that set for the average person, who is lower than they are?

God wants to emphasize that happiness comes from within, and not from other means such as alcohol. True happiness can last you a lifetime, while intoxication cannot. If we can be genuinely happy and do mitzvot with a pure and wholesome mindset, we can fulfill Hashem's commandments in their entirety.

Mrs. Englander continued

Clearly these brothers care for and love each other and can work together smoothly and seamlessly. As we approach Rosh Chodesh Nissan, we should take this lesson to heart and try to love all of our fellow Jews, our "brothers," unconditionally and without judgment.

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