



Shimini 5775

April 17, 2015

A Taste of Torah

Drink to Your Spiritual Health

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Wine. Spirits. Kiddush. Havdalah. L'chaim. We can't imagine a Shabbos, holiday or life cycle event without it. On the other hand, we seem to find abstention of wine praiseworthy, as well. The *Nazir* (Nazirite) is called holy by abstaining from all grape derivatives. In our parsha, as well, the *Kohanim* (Priests) are warned not to perform their duties in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) while under the influence of wine. Rashi (10:2) brings the statement of Rabbi Yishma'el that the deaths of Nadava and Avihu, the two sons of Aharon the High Priest, was due to their transgression of this halacha. Holy or Profane? Mitzva or Sin? What is it?

Perhaps the answer lies in understanding the significance of wine. Wine making is a relatively simple process, creating a special beverage from an everyday fruit. However, great care must be taken, for wine is also extremely fragile. If left to ferment for too long, or if stored improperly, it can spoil.

Halacha also has very strict laws regarding wine, and it can easily become non-kosher. It is due to this nature that Kiddush and Havdalah are recited over wine. When verbally sanctifying Shabbos, we declare the inherent difference between two forces: Holy and mundane. Like wine, this distinction is

beautiful and allows us to experience the best parts of our world. And like wine, if not properly observed, it doesn't bode well. As the age-old Yiddish saying goes, "If a Jew doesn't make Kiddush (literally: sanctification) the gentile will make Havdalah (literally: separation)." If we don't maintain our sanctity properly on our own, we may be compelled to be different through other means.

Tosafos (Pesachim 104a) explain that the Havdalah made when a festival coincides with the end of Shabbos contains seven different terms of separation instead of the usual four of the standard Havdalah, due to the special nature of this event. Continuing with our explanation above, we can understand this to mean that when continuing on to another day of holiness, albeit one of lesser sanctity than that of Shabbos, more insight is needed to perceive our distinctions and separations.

Wine, therefore, is the tool which, when used properly, elevates us and our actions, but has inherent danger and must be carefully used. May we merit the ultimate redemption and partake in the "wine preserved from the six days of Creation (Brachos 34b)!"

Stories For The Soul

The Strength to Continue

Mrs. Rochel Pollak was deported in 1944, at age 16, along with her parents and 6 siblings, from Hungary to Auschwitz. She was the sole survivor. Following the war, she made her way to New York, where she married and raised a family.

Today, Mrs. Pollak is a grandmother and great-grandmother many times over, and she never stops thanking G-d for having had the opportunity to take the ultimate revenge against Hitler - reestablishing the Jewish People.

On Tisha B'Av (the Ninth of Av) last year, she invited several of her grandchildren, all in their twenties, to her home to view the video interview of her experiences during World War II, explaining that she wanted them to see it while she was still able to answer any questions they might have.

After watching the video, Mrs. Pollak's granddaughter turned to her with the following question: "Bubby, how did you go through all this and remain an observant Jew?"

Replied Mrs. Pollak, "That's the only reason why I merited to survive - so that I could continue the legacy of my parents and rebuild Klal Yisroel."

In this week's parsha, Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, both outstanding righteous individuals, die. Aharon, as High Priest, was commanded by Hashem to continue his service in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The Torah tells us that despite the terrible tragedy, Aharon kept silent. Our Sages praise Aharon for his unquestioning faith in a time of great loss, and his ability to continue serving Hashem despite the calamity.

Kollel Happenings

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD ADOPT-A-BUBBY PROGRAM

Do you know of a senior – a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, fellow congregant – who would benefit from a weekly phone call to schmooze, share a thought on the parsha or Jewish calendar, or just say hello? Do you have a few minutes a week to call a senior in the community and make a difference in the life of another? Contact the Denver Community Kollel's M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Adopt-A-Bubby program! Call Joyce Litzman at the Denver Community Kollel, at 303-820-2855, or email jlitzman@denverkollel.org.

INSIDE THE ALEPH-BAIS

There is a unique fascination with the Hebrew language and the aleph-bet. Mystical sources explain that the letters of the aleph-bet are the building blocks of the whole world. Discover the world of the aleph-bet with Rabbi Heyman in this informative, dynamic class. For time and location, contact rmh@denverkollel.org. Class will resume after the Pesach break.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha for seniors and retirees at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St., at 11:30 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855. Class will resume after the Pesach break.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: How many times a year do those in Eretz Yisrael read a different Torah reading than those in the Diaspora?

A: 1) Every festival that forbids labor (except for Rosh Hashana) has a second day in the Diaspora, while in Eretz Yisrael, there is only one day. Thus, the Torah reading will differ since it is a full festival in the Diaspora, while in Eretz Yisrael it is either *Chol Hamoed* (Intermediate Days) or a regular, non-festival day.

2) On Shemini Atzeres (the eighth day following the seven-day Sukkos

festival), those in the Diaspora read "Kol Haba'echor" (Devarim 15-16), while in Eretz Yisrael, where Simchas Torah occurs on Shemini Atzeres, the reading is that of Simchas Torah, which is the final portion of the Torah.

This week's question: On which three days of the festivals is the portion of "Kol Haba'echor" (Devarim 15:19-16:17) read, and what custom is based on the reading of these days?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org

Ask the Rabbi

Count D'Omer

Wendy from Westcliff, UK wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

When counting *Sefirat HaOmer*, some people say *La'Omer* and some say *B'Omer*. Which is right? Doesn't the fact that EVERYBODY says "Lag B'Omer" prove that "B'Omer" is correct and not "La'Omer?"

Dear Wendy,

Rabbi Nachman Bulman zt"l explained that "everyone" calls the day "Lag B'Omer" because the main proponents of saying "B'Omer" are Rabbi Yitzchak Luria - the Arizal - and the Sephardi Kabbalists. Celebrating *Lag B'Omer* with bonfires, music and dancing is largely rooted in their kabbalistic teachings and traditions.

Most poskim say that "La'Omer" is correct. However, both ways are valid, so there is no reason to change one's custom. In fact, even if you say "today is day such and such" -

omitting any reference to the "Omer" - you fulfill the mitzva.

By the way, not everyone calls it "Lag B'Omer." The Shulchan Aruch refers to it as "Lag La'Omer."

Which reminds me of the two Jews who argued during their entire plane ride regarding the correct pronunciation of Hawaii.

Upon landing in Honolulu, they asked the first native on the island "Is it pronounced Hawaii or Havaii?" "Havaii," he replied. "Thank you," they said. "You're welcome," said the native.

Sources:

-Shulchan Oruch, Orach Chaim 489:1, 493:2.

-Mishneh Brurah 489:8.

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