



A Taste of Torah

Bring the Kids Along

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

One of the most seldom-fulfilled commandments in the Torah, and one of the most intriguing, is the mitzvah of *hakhel*. Every seven years, on the first of the intermediate days of Sukkos following a *shemittah* (sabbatical) year, all Jews are commanded to gather in the Temple, where the king reads selected portions of the book of Devarim. And when the Torah says *all* Jews, it means all Jews - men, women, and children, even infants, are required to be in attendance. The purpose of this unique gathering, says the Torah, is "so that they will hear and they will learn, and they shall fear Hashem, your G-d, and be careful to perform all the words of the Torah." (Devarim 31:12) Well, that explains why men, women, and children need to be present, but there is still one group that requires explanation - why must the small children and infants be present? They have absolutely no idea as to what's going on! (And no, don't give me the "I couldn't find a babysitter so I brought them along" excuse for this.)

Rashi (ibid.) explains that the requirement for even the young members of the Jewish Nation is in

order that those who bring them receive reward. But this explanation is even more puzzling than the initial problem; are we to understand that the Torah imposed a meaningless requirement just to provide an opportunity for reward for those who carry out the pointless commandment!?

Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980) explains that the mitzvah of *hakhel* is not a mere gathering of all Jews into one area to listen to the reading of the Torah. Rather, it is a re-enactment of the Jewish Nation standing at Sinai to receive the Torah. He adduces this from a statement by Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah*, a compendium of halachic rulings. There Maimonides states, regarding the mitzvah of *hakhel*, "They are obligated to prepare their hearts, and their ears to listen to listen with fear, joy and trembling, as on the day it (the Torah) was given at Sinai... and he should see himself as if he was being commanded now, and as if he heard it from the Mouth of the Almighty."

All Jews, says Rabbi Hutner, stood at Sinai. It would have been impossible to receive the Torah had even one Jew been

Continued on back

Ask the Rabbi

Yiddels and Kittels

Alan Shear wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have read through the entire section of Rosh Hashana in the Mishna Berura, yet found no source which mentions the custom of the shaliach tzibbur (cantor),

the ba'al tokeah (one who sounds the shofar), or the ba'al korei (public Torah reader) to wear a kittel (white ritual robe) on Rosh Hashana. Is there in fact a source for this custom? Certainly on Yom Kippur, but no source for Rosh Hashana!

Continued on back

Stories For The Soul

Hand in Hand

A little girl and her father were once crossing a flimsy bridge. The bridge began to shake from side to side.

The father was growing increasingly nervous, so he asked his young daughter, "Sweetheart, please hold my hand so that you don't fall into the river."

The little girl replied, "No, Father, you hold my hand."

"What's the difference?" asked the puzzled father.

"There is a big difference," replied the little girl. "Father, if I hold your hand and something happens to me, chances are that I may let your hand go."

"But," she continued with a wisdom beyond her years, "if you hold my hand, I know for sure that no matter what happens, you will never let my hand go."

In the Yom Kippur *davening* we say the verse, "*K'rachem av al banim, kain Tirachem aleinu*," "Like the mercy of a father on children, may You (G-d) have mercy upon us."

On Yom Kippur we must remember that Hashem loves us with an infinite love and is waiting to hear our prayers and give us what we need. Even if our sins are black as night, Hashem is waiting with open arms to lovingly receive us, just as a parent will always yearn for a child to return.

May we pour our hearts out to Hashem on Yom Kippur with purity and deep sincerity. May Hashem grant us a happy, healthy new year.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

DERECH HASHEM

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for a philosophical series on "Derech Hashem", a sefer by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto. Discover and delve into the vital understanding of Hashem's world. The women's class will resume after Sukkos at EDOS. For info, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.



DONOR APPRECIATION EVENT

The Denver Community Kollel is celebrating its 15th year of bringing Torah to Denver at its annual Donor Appreciation Event. The event will take place at the home of Brad and Dana Licht, 6156 East Powers Ave on September 24 at 7:00 p.m. For more information or to donate, please visit www.denverkollel.org



A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issues, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. The class will resume after Sukkos on Tuesdays at 8 pm at Aish Denver.

Interpersonal Issues

Safeguarding a Lost Object

Although the finder is responsible for the item until it is claimed by the owner, if the finder knows to whom the item belongs, he may contact the owner and ask that he retrieve the item. It is not the finder's obligation to deliver the item to the owner, and once the finder notifies the owner, it

is the owner's responsibility to travel to the finder and retrieve the item.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

A Taste of Torah

Continued from front

missing. For the Torah and the Jewish People are inextricably connected, and if even one Jew would have been left out, the connection could not have been formed; the Torah could not have been given. Thus, for all subsequent generations, when the Jewish People gather for *hakhel*, and relive the Sinai Experience, every single Jew must be present. Of course, the mitzvah to bring

the small children is imposed upon those who bring them; thus, they receive the reward for allowing a re-enactment of Sinai. But it is far from a pointless effort; it is absolutely necessary for even the youngest infant to be present so that the connection between the Jewish people and the Torah be forged at the *hakhel* gathering.

Ask the Rabbi

Continued from front

Dear Alan Shear,

There are two reasons given why a kittel is worn:

1) The kittel, being a plain white garment, symbolizes purity from sin.

2) A person is buried wearing a kittel. Therefore, when a person wears a kittel he feels humble and remorseful for his sins, remembering the day of death.

According to reason #1, the kittel would only seem appropriate for Yom Kippur, when we are cleansed of our sins, but not for Rosh Hashana. Reason #2 is also not totally applicable to Rosh Hashana; although Rosh Hashana is a day of repentance, it is also a joyous holiday of solemn celebration and one should not display undue sadness.

In some communities the kittel is in fact worn on Rosh Hashana by all congregants. This custom is mentioned

by Mateh Moshe and has its source in a midrash which describes how the Jewish people wear white on Rosh Hashana, confident that their sins will be forgiven. Perhaps the custom you mention, namely that the shaliach tzibbur, ba'al tokeah and ba'al korei wear a kittel is based on this midrash, due to their crucial role in the Rosh Hashana services.

Sources:

Yalkut Shimoni 4:825

See Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 581:13

Reprinted with permission of Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, www.ohr.edu