

* This Motzei Shabbos is Katanga's Pre-Selichos Shiur n' Snacks night. Details below.

* There will be a shiur (Gemorah Brachos) at Mark Franck's house on Shabbos afternoon at 4:40pm.

Katanga

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Caulfield
Beth Hamedrash Weekly Newsletter

D'var Torah

WHO ARE YOU...?

by Rabbi Stephen Baars (aish.com)

"Hi. I'm a doctor, what are you?"

"I'm a lawyer, what are you?"

In truth, I am anything but a lawyer or a doctor. I don't even want to be thought of as one. I am an individual. I'm me!

If you introduce yourself to other people as a "lawyer," then you take what is unique to you and disregard it. It is dangerous to define yourself as something you do from 9-to-5 (or any other time of the day). To think of yourself in terms of any single activity is to severely hamper your self-image. Comparing yourself with all other lawyers is making a clear statement: "I am not a person, I am a career."

Unfortunately, it's a problem we develop early in life. Every child is asked: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" It's a question fraught with subtle implications, extremely damaging to the developing personality of a child. Isn't the child who is asked that question going to grow up thinking: "What's wrong with being 'me'?" Is 'me' so terrible that I have to 'become' something different when I grow up?"

Many of us have spent the last 20-30 years trying to "be" somebody. Now we are starting to ask "Who am I?" Maybe, we are thinking, this whole rat race of "being somebody" isn't worth it. Maybe I am somebody valuable already, I don't need to be anybody else.

Hillel, the great Torah sage, said, "If I am only for myself, who am I" (Pirkei Avos 1:14). This is to say, if I ask the question "Who I should be?" I will eventually have to ask the question "What am I?"

Shakespeare's "To be or not to be" reflects the values of Western society. In Judaism, "To be or not to be" is not the question. Rather, "What to do and what not to do" - that is the Jewish question. Judaism says that only through "doing" will a person "be." In other words, the more we do, the more we become.

It is important to understand that "becoming more" is not defined in terms of man hours or production, but rather in terms of direction and purpose. The greater our purpose, the greater we become.



It is a natural consequence that whatever you believe in, like that thing you will become. Whatever you imagine as the highest expression of life is what you will idealize, imitate, seek and desire. If you think movie stars and professional athletes are the epitome of life, then it is they who you will emulate. If you hold them in high esteem because of their ability to toss a ball, then you will define your own life as well by such demeaning definitions. If shallow people are your idols, then shallow will you be. If you think the source of your energy is a dollar, then you'll become a hedonist.

It is no wonder, therefore, that in a world of rampant materialism, many people have no more depth than the money they believe will solve all their problems.

The greater our purpose in life, the greater we become.

To find fulfillment, a person needs guidelines and a strategy. The quest for purpose and meaning requires far more tools than is necessary to achieve emptiness. The laws of physics tell us that all bodies follow the path of least resistance. Therefore, since we are physical beings, we need a very effective strategy to break away from the "easy yet meaningless" path.

To reach those depths, we need tools. This is why the Torah - in this week's parsha (Deut. 28:9) - tells us to emulate God. This technique enables us to see the world with a "God like" vision.

Ask yourself: What would God do if He was in your position? Which path would He choose? This identification with God enables you to raise yourself up out of life's pettiness. It gives you a perspective that is impossible to achieve when you are trying to emulate a movie star.

If we are striving for the greatest "being" we can be, it has to be a "being like God." Such an achievement simply cannot be topped. How can a person be greater than that?

If the source of life is some primordial soup, then all a person can become is a great chef. But if the source is God Himself, then there is no limit to a person's reach.

Thoughts for the week:

"Wealth brings anxiety, but wisdom brings peace of mind." (Rabbi Ibn Gevirol)

"Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want."

"Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." (Chinese Proverb)

"Never apologize for showing feeling. When you do so, you apologize for truth." (Benjamin Disraeli)

"I get enough exercise just pushing my luck." (Anon.)

Other Developments

* After shule on shabbos, Yisroel Alter Pacanowski discussed the importance of preparing and eating all of our "Shabbosdikke" foods with the Kavanna "Lekovod Shabbos Kodesh". We place extra effort and Hashem puts a special blessing and taste into our Shabbos foods. Isi illustrated this with a story about R' Dovid of Lelov and Divrei Torah from the Stropkover Rebbe (heard at a "Tish" last Shabbos in Melbourne). Many of the shabbos foods we eat have a Gematria - numerical value - of 7, alluding to 7th day that Hashem has chosen as Shabbos. Yasher Koach.

* Mazal Tov to Daniel Mainzer on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah and his first aliyah on Thursday morning. Wishing his parents, sisters, grandparents and extended family much naches and simchas in the future.

The True Litmus Test...

By Rabbi Yaacov Haber (ou.org)

"Today you have become a people." (Devarim 27; 10). Why only today? Moshe spoke these words to the Jewish people after forty years of remarkable Jewish history that took place in the desert.

Rashi explains: Moshe gave a Sefer Torah to the leader of every tribe in Israel. But first he gave a Sefer Torah to the heads of Levi. Alarms went off throughout the Jewish camp. Why did he give the Torah to Levi? Why does Moshe favor his own tribe? Why aren't we getting one? We were all present at Mt. Sinai; the Torah belongs to all of us! If they would have waited just a little bit they would have all received their very own Torah, but they couldn't wait - instead they gathered impatiently before Moshe and complained about the unfairness. Moshe smiled. "Today", he said, "I see you really are a people!"

Moshe was an astute observer of his people. He understood that to get a correct reading on the people it couldn't be at the moments of high and low. Mt. Sinai was not a normal situation nor was the golden calf. These were historical moments. Moshe needed to see a normal, everyday, human reaction. He needed to see some everyday envy in order to

Announcements

- Last week we welcomed back Family Katz after Nathan's wedding in America. Sholom Aleichem, Mazal Tov and Beruchim Atem Bevoiachem.

- From this Sunday (beginning with Motzei Shabbat selichot at 12am) we begin reciting selichot before shacharis in the morning. Katanga minyanim times are listed below.

- Katanga will be operating a crèche on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (including Kol Nidrei night). People wishing to enrol their children must do so by next Wednesday (12 September). Children must be pre-booked in order to participate so please register now. For details and bookings, please call Jordi Elkus on 9528 6958.

Parsha Overview – Ki Tavo
 This week's portion includes: Bringing to the Temple as an offering the first fruits of the Seven Species special to the Land of Israel, Declaration of tithes, The Almighty designating the Jewish people as His treasured people (Deut. 26:16 -19), The command to set up in the Jordan River and then on Mount Ebal large stones which had the Torah written upon them in 70 languages, The command to have a public ratification of the acceptance of the Law from Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal; The Torah then sets forth the blessings for following the Law and the curses for not following it, and concludes with Moshe's final discourse.

know what his people held important and what they really were. He needed to know if the Jews would be protective of their Torah when G-d's voice is not booming down at them, when there are no clouds, thunder and lightning. Today was the day. For a fleeting moment the Jews thought they were losing their Torah and they blew up! Tremendous, said Moshe. Today you are a people!

Life is not judged by its great moments nor is it defined by moments of weakness. Real life is defined by what is important every day, by what we value and by what we protect.

Love in a marriage is not determined by one's behavior under the Chupa, or at a moment of discord. It's the day by day reactions, agreements and disagreements that define a marriage.

Our own year is not defined by our behavior at Ne'ila or on Purim. It's how we act in everyday our offices and at home, and what we argue about over a cup of coffee, that indicates what we really are.

PRE SELICHOS SHIUR N' SNACKS
 This Motzei Shabbat (8 September), will be our traditional pre-selichot shiur n' snacks night. With an array of local and imported talents, it promises to be an inspiring and fitting lead into the midnight selichos. Speakers hail from Caulfield to Modi'in - with guest speaker, Rabbi Meir Rabi, Rabbi of Tiferes Yisroel Shule.
 The shiur night will be held at Jordi & Yirmie's house @ 1 Hume Road, Caulfield and begins at 9:15pm. Men and women invited to attend.
 We look forward to seeing you all there!

- Minyanim times for this coming week are: Mornings: first minyan @ 6:15am, second minyan @ 7am. Mincha at 6:00pm followed by shiurim. Ma'ariv at 6:40pm.

Suggestions or comments regarding our website or newsletter? Email us – we would love to hear from you.



Shabbat Shalom & Gut Shabbos to all!
"The Editors"