

* Mark Franck's Gemorah Brachot shiur will be at Eliezer Leibowitz's house at 4:20pm on shabbos.

* Katanga will be making a kiddush in shule on shabbos in honour of Shabbos Mevorchim and to celebrate the engagement of Ronnie Jacobs & Karli Ciechanowski. ALL are invited to attend.

Katanga

katanga@post.com

Caulfield
Beth Hamedrash Weekly Newsletter

D'var Torah

TOLERANCE...

by Rabbi Israel Kestenbaum

"And you shall love your friend as yourself," states the verse in this week's parshah. Rabbi Akiva said, "This is a great principle of the Torah."

In truth, however, we know that though loving may be the ideal, first we need to tolerate others, especially those different from ourselves. Even before the commandment, "Love your friend," there is the imperative-often easier spoken than achieved-"Do not hate your brother in your heart."

We live with all kinds of intolerances, and frequently harbor secret animosities. The smart struggle with the dimwitted; the competent resent the inept; the physically gifted are embarrassed by the uncoordinated. At work, at home, in the street, we typically treat people who are not as "beautiful" as we are as if they had chosen their looks. Schoolchildren pick on their "nerdy" or "fat" classmates, and their behavior does not always mature in time; it simply become more subtle.

The challenge remains: how do we develop tolerance for those different, and at times opposite, from us, a tolerance that not only permits them to exist but invites them to belong and to share in the community?

The Torah gives us a clue. In commanding the Jew to give charity, the verse ends, "...for there will never cease to be poor in the land." Rashi notes that this comment seems to contradict an earlier promise that as long as Israel observes the Sabbatical year "there will be no poor among you, for Hashem will bless you in the land that He gives to you."

The Chatam Sofer explains that giving tzedakah requires compassion and empathy. But one must not

The Month of Elul - The Countdown...

Elul - the month preceding Rosh Hashana - begins a period of intensive introspection, of clarifying life's goals, and of coming closer to God. It is a time for realising purpose in life - rather than perfunctorily going through the motions of living by amassing money and seeking gratification. It is a time when we step back and look at ourselves critically and honestly, as Jews have from time immemorial, with the intention of improving.



The four Hebrew letters of the word Elul (aleph-lamed-vav-lamed) are the first letters of the four words Ani l'dodi v'dodi lee - "I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me" (Song of Songs 6:3). These words sum up the relationship between God and His people.

Beginning the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul, it is the Ashkenazi custom to blow the shofar every morning after prayers, in order to awaken us for the coming Day of Judgement. The shofar's wailing sound inspires us to use the opportunity of Elul to its fullest. Also beginning in Elul, we say Psalm 27 in the morning and evening services (others recite the Psalm after the Mincha service).



relate so closely to the fate of the poor that he genuinely fears becoming poor himself; if that happens, he will actually be less generous. Over-identification can make one insecure in his own circumstances and therefore less forthcoming.

The Chatam Sofer therefore translates G-d's promise and blessing in a unique way: "there will be no poor within you." Poverty may always exist, but the challenge is to give without fearing poverty for oneself, and therefore to be generous.

The Chatam Sofer's insight corresponds to what we know about intolerance. Intolerance is born out of fear. That which I am afraid of for myself I resent in others. The thin person disdains the obese because he is afraid of becoming fat himself. This over-identification with others causes me to want to distance myself, often through impatience and disdain.

The challenge for all of us is to embrace this notion that "there will be no poor within you." We need to remain secure in our differences from others. If I am smart, I will remain smart. If I am competent, such is my gift. Others not like me will not jeopardize my talents and abilities.

Recognizing this allows me to be interested in people different from me rather than to feel threatened by them. It provides me not only with the tools to fulfill the mitzvah, "And you shall not hate your brother in your heart," it allows me to fulfill the ideal voiced in Avot to "learn from everyone."

Most important, this recognition creates a community of inclusiveness, where we all fully belong - with and because of our differences.

Thoughts for the week:

"If you think that you are always right, then something is wrong."

"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools."
(Ecclesiastes 7:5)

"Wisdom is to the soul, as food is to the body."
(Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra)

"To handle yourself, use your head. To handle others, use your heart."
(Eleanor Roosevelt)

"If you can't read this, you're illiterate."

Other Developments

*At a wonderful kiddush on shabbos to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah of Shimon Susskind, Katanga's President, Mr Tom May spoke of the dedication of the Susskind family to the building, maintenance and running of the Shule. He wished Shimon to follow in the illustrious footsteps of his family.

*At Shalosh Seudot on shabbos, Zac Abeles spoke about the outstanding qualities of the recently niftar Rabbi Abranok and how they relate to the Parsha. Zac spoke about how Rabbi Abranok concentrated on the 'little' Mitzvos and how he was always joyous and concerned about a person's well-being. Yasher Koach.

Embrace the Challenge...

Rabbi Avraham Feigelstock

In Parshas Re'ay, G-d tells the Jewish people, "See, I put before you today blessing and curse." The blessing will go to those who keep the Torah and its mitzvos. The curse, G-d forbid, will affect those who do not heed the Torah.

Additional significance is found in the word nosain, translated above as "put." G-d puts the opportunity for blessing and curse before us and allows us to choose. But nosain stems from the word mattanah, a gift. If we focus carefully on all that happens to us during our lifetimes, we will recognize all the gifts we have received from G-d.

Even the challenges of life are gifts given to us as opportunities to elevate ourselves and grow to greater spiritual heights.

G-d stresses that He has put this knowledge "before us," indicating that we are in control of our individual and collective destinies. It is we who determine what our future will be. Will it be a blessing or, G-d forbid, a curse?

Announcements

- This week is Shabbos Mevorchim as we bless the coming month of Elul. Rosh Chodesh Elul is this Sunday and Monday (19-20 August). Just a reminder concerning the daily requirements of shofar and Psalm 27, 'Ledovid Hashem Oiri'.

- This Sunday morning (19 August), come along and enjoy a gala Boys Minyan Rosh Chodesh breakfast. The Seudas Mitzva will take place at Shule after Shachris at 8:45am. A Siyum Mishnayes Mesechte Pe'ah will be held celebrating the completion of another Mesechte by the daily Mishna Shiur. Volunteers wishing to assist, please contact our caterers, Eli May and Ezra Susskind.

- Welcome back to Moshe (Mossy) Aurbach after his European tour - looking forward to him resuming his laining. Sholom Aleichem and Baruch Atah Bevoiecha.

Parsha Overview – Re'eh

The Parsha begins with choice and respective outcomes. The portion continues with rules and laws for the land of Israel primarily oriented towards staying away from idol worship and the religions in the land. Moshe warns the nation against copying the ways of the other nations. The source of the Chosen People concept (14:1-2): "You are a nation consecrated to God your Lord. God has chosen you from all nations on the face of the earth to be His own special nation." We are chosen for responsibility, not privilege - to act morally and to be a "light unto the nations." The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succos.

It all depends upon how we perceive life. If we take the challenges that are presented to us as opportunities to grow spiritually, then our lives become a blessing. But if we view events from a negative perspective, seeing any inconvenience as an unwelcome burden, then life becomes a curse.

G-d teaches us how to maintain this positive attitude that will bring blessing to our lives. He said, "See, I put before you today blessing and curse."

All too often we become overwhelmed by all the challenges that we have to take on and all the obstacles that we must overcome. G-d gives us sound advice: Hayom - today! Take it one day at a time.

Focus on each day's challenges and you will not become overwhelmed. But do keep focused and never allow the truth to fade away.

- This Monday (20 August), 2nd Day Rosh Codesh Elul, there will be an international day of solidarity for Israel. There will be a live video link to major cities through the Asia-Pacific Region, England and Israel. Speakers will include; Rabbi Lau (Chief Rabbi of Israel), Rabbi J. Sacks (Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth) and members of the Israeli Government. The event will be held at Caulfield Shule at 572 Inkerman St, Caulfield and doors open at 6:45pm. We strongly encourage everyone to attend.

- Minyanim times for this coming week are: Mornings: early minyan @ 6:15am, late minyan @ 7am. Mincha at 5:50pm followed by shiurim. Ma'ariv at 6:30pm.

- Interested in presenting a shiur in the Youth Minyan? Speak to Ezra May or email us here.

- Interested in attending our Katanga weekly Squash game on Sundays? Please let Yirmie Elkus know.

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"