

* This week's speaker after davening in the Youth Minyan, will be Danny Karp.

* There will be a shiur at Mark Franck's house (Gemorah Brachos) @ 4:05pm on Shabbos afternoon.

* There will be a kiddush in the Youth Minyan this shabbos in honour of Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av.

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Caulfield
Beth Hamedrash Weekly Newsletter

D'var Torah

IF I HAD A MILLION DOLLARS...

by Rabbi Shraga Simmons

In this week's Parsha, the Jewish people are in final preparations for entering the Land of Israel. Two of the tribes, Reuven and Gad have been blessed with such an abundance of flocks and herds, that they anticipate not having enough grazing land in Israel. So they propose the following: Instead of taking our regular portion of land within Israel proper, we'll instead stay here on the Eastern side of the Jordan River.

Moses' lambastes them - not because they were choosing to stay outside Israel but because when making their request, Reuven and Gad blatantly disregard the needs of their children - and mention their cattle only. (Numbers 32:4)

We've all met people who are working overtime to "give their kids something extra" - while ruining that very relationship by not spending enough time with the kids!

Imagine the case of Mr. Schwartz, an investment banker who spends most of his days trying to reach his lifelong goal of earning \$10 million. When a wealthy philanthropist makes him an offer of \$10 million dollars in exchange for the rights to adopt one of his children, he finally realises that there are things in life you can't put a price tag on.

Now imagine - Schwartz has just shut the door on a cool 10 million, he rushes home where his kids are playing on the living room floor. With tears in his eyes, he runs over and gives them each a big hug and kiss. "You darling creatures are worth more than all the money in the universe!"

Then he stops and realizes: "Where have I been all their lives? I have something at home that's worth more to me than all the money in the world - and I'm working so hard I barely spend one hour a week with them!" Schwartz calls the office, announces he's taking a two-week vacation, and sends the maids, nannies and babysitters away. He's going to spend two blissful weeks with his kids.

After struggling for an hour to get the stroller open, Schwartz finally makes it to the park. He and the kids are having a grand time. But then comes dinner, bath and story time. After enduring food fights, floods in the bathtub and endless readings of "Babar Goes to the Circus," Schwartz flops down on the couch, turns to



his wife and says, "Perhaps I was a bit hasty about that vacation. You know I have a lot of responsibilities at work..."

Schwartz is making a big mistake. More than presents, children need your presence.

The Torah tells us to recite the "Shema" prayer twice each day. It says: "And you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources."

Typically the Torah presents a series as a progression from easiest to hardest: Love God emotionally ("heart"), and even be willing to give up your life if necessary ("soul"), and even be willing to spend your money, too! Yet if this is a progression, are there really people who consider money more important than life itself?!

And the answer is yes. The Talmud speaks about someone who walks across a thorny field, and picks up his pants in order to avoid getting them ripped. Of course, the person's legs get all cut up and scratched - but at least the pants are saved!

Priorities.

In our Parsha, after travelling through the desert for 40 years and enduring countless trials and tribulations, the Jewish people are now standing across the Jordan, ready to enter the Promised Land. It is one of the defining moments in all of Jewish history.

But Reuven and Gad say they'd rather take good grazing land than enter Israel! They had come so far, but they only went halfway. They were distracted by material goals when it really counted. The Talmud says that when Reuven and Gad later saw the rich life in the Land of Israel, they regretted their decision.

It happens to all of us from time to time. Objectively, we can know our priorities. But sometimes we get distracted.

May we have the strength and clarity to connect our heart to our mind - and to act upon that which we intellectually know to be right.

Thoughts for the week:

"The tongue is the pen of the heart."
(Bachya Ibn Pekudah)

"Those who find fault with others are often themselves at fault."

"The one who relies on authority during a discussion does not use his mind but his memory."
(Leonardo da Vinci)

"Many people will walk in and out of your life, But only true friends will leave footprints in your heart."
(Eleanor Roosevelt)

"My son has taken up meditation - at least it's better than sitting doing nothing."
(Max Kauffmann)

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

Other Developments

* Last shabbos after shule, Eli Lebovits spoke eloquently about the significance of the reward which Pinchas received for his zealous act. Moshe did not merit with the priesthood because there was a "blemish" in his ancestry. Pinchas' reward, however, represented a change in the perception and attitude toward priesthood, whereby the service of a priest with 'questionable' lineage, could nevertheless be accepted. Yasher Koach.

MAZAL TOV!

Y A very hearty Mazal Tov to Isi & Miriam Pacanowski on the bris of their son, Shimshon, this past Sunday. Sheyigdol leTorah, leChuppah, uleMa'asim Tovim.

Y Katanga would like to wish the parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and extended families much naches and simchas in the future.

Bickering While the Temple Burns

by Rabbi Nachum Braverman

A 1983 report to the Federation Council showed that only 25 percent of Los Angeles Jewry affiliates with the Jewish community. Statistics compiled by the Harvard Center for Population Studies indicate that if intermarriage continues at its current rate of 50%, 5 million Jews will disappear in America in the next 50 years.

But, perhaps what is more troubling is that the bitter factionalization of the 25 percent who do care and affiliate makes any effective response nearly impossible.

Most Jews today have little connection with Israel and no intention of ever living there. They are indifferent to the issues which form the nexus of intra-Jewish strife. Religious pluralism in Israel, the Law of Return - for the majority of American Jews these are sectarian issues with all the immediacy of Hindi-Sikh violence in India. The majority have a simpler and more relevant question: Why be Jewish at all? We can't answer their question because we're too busy fighting among ourselves. We are bickering while the Temple burns.

We can't pretend we don't have differences. We differ greatly in our understanding of God and revelation, the authority of Torah and of Jewish law. We can't finesse these issues away but we must remember we're in a time of great crisis. If we want the Jewish people to survive the next 50 years we'll have to put the sectarian issues aside. We simply don't have time to fight amongst ourselves.

Announcements

- This shabbos is Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av and marks the beginning of the Nine Days. At this time we observe a higher level of mourning with additional prohibitions to those of the three weeks (haircuts and shaving, celebrations and music) which are; meat, wine, laundering (and wearing newly laundered garments) and bathing for pleasure.

Parsha Overview – Matos
Matot includes the laws of making and annulling vows, the surprise attack on Midian, the dedication of a portion of the spoils to the communal good and the request of the tribes of Reuben and Gad for their portion of land to be east of the Jordan river. After assuring Moshe that they will take part in the conquering of the land of Israel, Moshe concedes to their request.

Parsha Overview – Masei
Masei includes the complete list of journeys in the desert. God commands to drive out the land's inhabitants, to destroy their idols and to divide the land by a lottery system. God establishes the borders of the Land of Israel. New leadership is appointed, cities of the Levites and Cities of Refuge (where an accidental murderer may seek asylum) are designated. Finally, the laws regarding accidental and wilful murder as well as inheritance laws for property, are defined.

Because we have differences doesn't mean we can't love and be committed to one another, learn together, and work together for Jewish survival. Our differences don't mean the other side is less intelligent, less well motivated, or less desirous of truth than ourselves. Our differences mean we disagree. Men of good will can and must disagree about matters of great importance without questioning their love or commitment for one another. Two people who learn together will battle passionately, says the Talmud, and end more passionately committed to their friendship because their disagreements express a common search for truth. If we can see our differences as the honest disagreements of intelligent, well meaning men we can work together to confront the issues which face us all.

- Welcome back to Yaron Gottlieb (wedding -America), and to Jack & Sharona Zacks (recent honeymoon). Sholom Aleichem and Bruchim Atem Bevoiachem.

- Last week the main shule enjoyed its traditional Shabbos Mevorchim Kiddush. Yasher Koach to all those involved.

- Minyanim times for this coming week are: Mornings: 6:40am and 7am. Mincha at 4:45pm followed by a shiur and Ma'ariv.



Chodesh Tov Umevorach & A Gutten Chodesh Shabbat Shalom & Gut Shabbos to all!
"The Editors"