

Coming up....

- Bnei Akiva are joining the Chief Rabbi's first night of Selichot at Hendon United, this year on the 24th of September.
- Commencing nights, starting 25th September, Selichot will be hosted at the Bayit beginning at 9:30.
- Limmud restarts at the London Bayit this Monday, beginning At 8:30

Volume 22 · No 46
21st Ellul 5776
24th September 2016



Shabbat Lashem



Ki Tavo - כ' תבוא

Serving Hashem With Joy- Yael Holder

In this week's Parsha it says that Bnei Yisrael would be punished

תחת אשר לא עבדת את יהוה אלהיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל

"because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with gladness and with goodness of heart..."(28:47).

These words sound very familiar, linking to the popular Bnei Akiva song Ivdu Et Hashem Basimcha Boi Lefanav Birnana - serve G-d with joy, come before Him in celebration. We often sing this song, but do we ever take a moment to actually think about what the words mean? Joy is something that is a feeling, not something that can be forced. How, therefore, can we possibly be commanded to serve G-d with joy?

Every time we do a mitzvah, we not only build a stonger relationship with G-d but we also have an impact on the world. Each mitzvah that a person does brings more spirituality into the world, which not only helps the person involved directly, but everyone else as well. If a person truly understands the effect they are having in the world then they will experience great joy when they do a Mitzvah.

However, even if we understand this, it is still hard to put into action. Earlier in the parsha it says

היום הזה יהוה אלהיך מצוך לעשות את החקים האלה

"This day, HaShem your G-D is commanding you to perform these commandments..."(26:16).

Rashi questions the use of the words "this day" since at the time that Moshe is saying this to Bnei Yisrael, G-d had been giving them commandments for the last forty years. Clearly this cannot be taken literally.

Rashi says that each day the commandments should be new in your eyes as if that very day, was the first day you received the commandment. This here is the key to maintaining joy when doing Mitzvot.

Whenever we start something new, like a new project or school year, we have a great excitement and enthusiasm, but as time goes on, this enthusiasm starts to lessen and we start to slack off. This is the same with mitzvot. This means that each time we perform a mitzvah we should strive to have the excitement as if it is a new thing that we have just been commanded to do.

The mitzvot should be as fresh as if they were given "this day". By making sure that we think in this way, not letting mitzvot become boring and routine, we can ensure that we will do them with Simcha and bring bracha onto ourselves and the world.

Yael Holder is in Shevet Eitan and was a Madricha on Aleph Chalutz 5776

The Week that Was...

We had the privilege of attending a Yom Iyun run by Yeshivat Eretz Hatzvi, (one of our Torani Partnered Yeshivot), with inspiring shiurim on Rosh Hashana -with a very engaging one on Shofars!!

Rav Ari also hosted an Oneg at his house for Bogrim on Friday night before all the Bogrim go off to University.

THIS WEEK'S SHABBAT TIMES

	ii	Ⓞ
London	18:42	19:41
Manchester	18:49	19:51
Birmingham	18:46	19:49
Leeds	18:41	19:49
Liverpool	18:49	19:56
Jerusalem	19:54	19:09

To receive Shabbat Lashem by email every Friday, or for sponsorship details, send an email to shabbat@bauk.org

סליחות
MIDNIGHT SELICHOT
LED BY THE CHIEF RABBI

"... a unique, spiritually energising experience - hundreds of people, in full voice, turning our hearts to Heaven with exceptional ruach."

Motzel Shabbat
24th September 2016

Featuring a shiur from Rabbi Eliyahu Silverman, Rav Mechanech of Mizrachi UK, at 10:30pm

Service commences at 11.30pm with a short address by the Chief Rabbi and concludes by 1.00am.

Hendon United Synagogue,
Raleigh Close,
London NW4 2SY

No advanced booking necessary

Introducing:
The Koren
Selichot for
the First
Night with
commentary
by Chief
Rabbi Mirvis
All attendees
will receive a
FREE copy

Office of The
CHIEF RABBI

In association with
MIZRACHI
UNITED KINGDOM

Join Bnei Akiva for an
Inspiring and Uplifting Selichot Service

Sunday through Thursday evenings
Maariv followed by Selichot at 9:30pm

חוסה על עמולד

At the London Bayit



Insight and Inspiration on the Parasha

Rav Ari Faust, Shevet Yechiam,
Rabbinical Shaliach for Bnei Akiva and the Jewish Agency

Selichot

This Motzei Shabbat, in preparation for the forthcoming holiday of Rosh Hashana, we recite Selichot – the penitential prayers. The custom amongst Jews of Sefardic lineage is to begin reciting Selichot from Rosh Chodesh Elul, nearly one-month earlier than those of Ashkenazic backgrounds.

The Sefardic custom is based on the tradition that this period is one of supplication and forgiveness: In the aftermath of the sin of the Golden Calf, Am Yisrael ultimately achieved forgiveness on Yom Kippur. For forty days prior to this – from Rosh Chodesh Elul – Moshe was engaged in prayer, leading to this eventual forgiveness.

The basis of the Ashkenazic custom is less clear. Ashkenazim begin Selichot on Motzei Shabbat, at least for days before Rosh Hashana. This custom is explained by Mishnah Berura (581 note 6):

“Since many people have the custom to fast for ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and there are always four days lacking to this amount when it is forbidden to fast ... It is therefore necessary to make-up these days before Rosh Hashana.”

Why, then, must we begin on Motzei Shabbat? Surely according to this explanation it is sufficient to count four days before Rosh Hashana and begin then? Mishnah Berura clarifies:

“And in order for there to be one single start day, they established beginning on Sunday each year.”

According to this, the Ashkenazic custom to start Selichot is completely random, and based solely on technical considerations. I would like to explore a novel interpretation to this custom, suggested by Rabbi Mordecai Elon:

What is the purpose of Teshuva? Why do we engage in Selichot during the days and weeks surrounding the High Holidays? Simply understood, Teshuva is the process of reconciling our wrongdoings; we confess our sins and resolve to behave better in the future. Teshuva is the process of achieving atonement for our sins. According to this, it is understandable and indeed expected that the recitation of Selichot is based on the atonement from the sin of the Golden Calf – the archetypical sin – as is practiced in Sefardic custom.

But there is another dimension of Teshuva: The Midrash teaches that Teshuva predated the creation of the world (Tanchuma Nasso 11). How can this be if there was no sin? What is the relevance of Teshuva before sin? Rav Kook explains in his work Orot HaTeshuva:

“Teshuva preceded the world, therefore it is the foundation of our existence ... The spirit of Teshuva hovers through the world and defines its nature ...”

Teshuva is not merely responsive – it is not merely the reaction to sin – rather the very theme of existence is Teshuva.

“Teshuva is the fulfilment of the relentless pursuit of all things to godliness ... The world is not stoic and fixated upon one point, rather it is continuously evolving.”

At the very foundation of our existence is the pursuit of the imperfect towards perfection, the un-godly towards greater godliness. This pursuit is not in response to any particular sin, but it is built-in to the nature of our existence – it is our very *raison-d’être*. Nor is Teshuva restricted only to mankind; all of existence yearns relentlessly for its godliness to become manifest. Rav Kook, based on the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 5), comments:

“At the onset of creation, the taste of the tree was to be identical to that of the fruit ... but the nature of the land – the oscillations of life, and the spiritual exhaustion – caused for only the taste of the fruit to be appreciated in its full pleasantness and beauty. This is the land’s sin ... But all flaws are to be amended and the day will come when creation returns to its initial nature – the taste of the tree will be identical to that of the fruit, for the land will do Teshuva.”

All existence is part of the pursuit of its natural godliness; all creation yearns to return to manifest its initial, godly state – and in fact the Hebrew word Teshuva means “return”. This is the second, more general and universal dimension of Teshuva: It is the relentless pursuit of all existence to return to its natural and essential godliness.

Based on this, Rabbi Elon explains the custom to begin Selichot on Motzei Shabbat specifically: We initiate the period of Teshuva on Motzei Shabbat – the first day of creation – to evoke the message that our particular repentance is part of the greater Teshuva process. It is not only our sins we seek to resolve, but the ultimate fulfilment of all existence – “to perfect the world under the kingdom of the Almighty” (from Aleinu prayer).

This Motzei Shabbat, when we join our Sefardic brothers in the recitation of Selichot, we elicit the utopian vision that all of our fractured world will be healed and perfected. And we empower ourselves with the notion that it is in our capacity to be instrumental in guiding this process



Digging into Davening



Delving deeper into the Tefillot of Shabbat and uncovering new meaning in familiar words

Mizmor Shiur I’yom HaShabbat - Nat Kunin

מְזוֹר שִׁיר לַיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת
טוֹב לְהַדוֹת לַה' וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵינוּ

These phrases begin perhaps one our most well-known Tehillim. As the Shir shel Yom for Shabbat, we say and sing it multiple times throughout the day as well as ‘Tov L’hodot Lashem’ being a cornerstone of any good Friday night or Seudat Shlishit tisch.

However, at first glance, the psalm’s words appear to have nothing to do with Shabbat. Instead, they seem to focus on providing an answer to the question of why good things happen to bad people and bad things to good people and why G-d, as an active participant in G-d’s own creation, doesn’t intervene in this. It explains that the success of the wicked is fleeting, “like grass”, whereas the righteous will live to see the wicked’s demise, having grown slowly but strongly, “like a palm tree and [...] like a cedar in Lebanon”.

But, while providing a solution to this theodicy [question of G-d’s existence/intervention in the world because of the existence of evil] is an important thing for our prayer to achieve, it is not clear how this relates specifically to Shabbat.

Rashi and The Malbim both offer explanations for this apparent disconnect. Shabbat, the Malbim proposes, is the day when we commemorate G-d’s resting on the seventh day of creation, it is when we are most keenly aware of G-d’s supernatural involvement in the world. It therefore makes sense that the psalm focuses on defending G-d’s role as an involved part of His creation as it is this idea that forms a cornerstone of why we celebrate Shabbat in the first place.

Rashi’s idea is a little different. He suggests that the psalm is not a reference to the weekly Shabbat, but to the spiritual Shabbat of the world to come. From the vantage point of this ultimate Shabbat, we will be able to be truly able to appreciate how insignificant and ‘like grass’ the evil-doer’s success actually is compared to the mighty, tree-like, rewards of those who do good.

Until that time however, reading this psalm prompts us to consider Shabbat both, as the Malbim highlights, as a symbol of G-d’s creation in בְּרֵאשִׁית and, as Rashi points out, as a reminder to think over the events of the previous six days, however negative they may seem, from the ‘cosmic’ perspective of העולם הבא.

Nat Kunin is in Shevet Neeman and was on Beit Midrash L’manhigut 5776