

עפרת השבוע

A Weekly Torah Publication from the Students of Mesivta Ateres Yaakov
Ruth & Hyman Simon High School

פרשת נשא
ד'סיון תשס"ה
June 11, 2005

מ"ח בעומר - יסוד שבמלכות

Candle Lighting:	8:09
First זמן קריאת שמע:	8:36
Second זמן קריאת שמע:	9:09
Latest שחרית:	10:25
Earliest הבדלה:	9:20

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ATERES HASHAVUA
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FRANK & ROSALYN
SNITOW AND FAMILY
in honor of
Avi Lieberman
Upon his graduation and
extraordinary service
to his yeshiva
and community

ACTING WITH PROPER INTENT *Rabbi Shlomo Drebin, Program Coordinator*

איש או אשה כי יפלא לנדר נדר נאיר להזיר לה'

Rashi, in the opening *pasuk* of the laws of the *nazir*, quotes the familiar Gemara in *sotah*, which asks why the topic of *nazir* immediately follows the topic of *sotah* in the Torah. The Gemara answers that anyone who sees a *sotah*, a wayward wife in her state of degradation (a *sotah* would suffer a very gruesome death if she drank from the *mei HaMiriam* and was guilty) should become a *nazir*, prohibiting himself from wine. Rashi also quotes the Medrash that says wine could lead a person to immorality.

One could question this rationale. If someone indeed saw the tragic results of immorality, would it still be necessary to implement a safeguard and become a *nazir*? After all, wouldn't the horrible sight of the *sotah's* debasement and ugly death be a sufficient deterrent by itself?

Rav Yosef Leib Bloch z"tl infers from this Chazal an amazing insight into human nature. When one witnesses the tragic effects of improper behavior, he indeed could be influenced in a positive manner and be motivated to stay away from that behavior. However, the opposite can also occur. The sight could also be a catalyst for the spectator to turn to evil. The dark side of the human being that remains concealed in the innermost recesses of the mind could apparently be aroused to sin by the sight of the tragic effects of improper behavior.

There was once a man who could not seem to control his intake of intoxicating drinks. He often was found drunk or in a stupor. His children, wishing to make an indelible impression on him and

(Continued on page 2)

INSIGHTS ON THE INSIGHTS

Avi Lieberman, 12th Grade

As I write this *D'var Torah* a few hours after returning from my twelfth grade graduation trip to the incredibly beautiful Lake George, I find myself with a most important message to end the last of this year's Ateres HaShavuas.

After finishing *Shacharis* at our stopover in Albany on Monday morning, Rabbi Yisroel Rubin, the diligent and assiduous Rav of the Chabad House of Albany for the past thirty-two years, began describing the history and present state of Judaism in Albany. He took us through the amount of Jews living there, as well as through the different programs and projects that have been developing over the years. Being that our Mesivta is named after the great Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky zt'l, Rabbi Rubin in passing noted that he was once privileged to hear a powerful message from the *gadol hador* personally regarding an *inyan* found in Parshas Vayeshev.

Not one to pass up such a *vort* – especially from my bar mitzvah *sedra* – I later approached Rabbi Rubin and inquired as to what was the message from Reb Yaakov? He replied that once while at a convention for Rabbonim, a few people were gathered around a small table while Reb Yaakov brought a *raiye* (proof) to the concept of learning *kol haTorah kulah*; all of Torah in its entirety. Reb Yaakov went on to note that Parshas Vayeshev goes through many different areas of importance to our history and lessons of growth. We gain a lot by discussing the *Shevatim's* hatred towards their brother Yosef, who was in effect sold down

(Continued on page 2)

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in memory of his father
יונתן בן נתן ע"ה

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>Acting with Proper Intent</i>	1
<i>Insights on the Insights</i>	1
<i>Focus on Greatness</i>	3
<i>Emes L'Yaakov</i>	4

convince him once and for all that drinking was ruining his life, decided to take him into the street to show him a drunk who was wallowing in his own filth. "Look, daddy how disgusting this man is! Do you wish to end up like him?" Whereupon, the man went over to the drunk, bent over, and remarked, "where did you get such fine liquor?" Not only did the father not take a lesson from the awful sight, but, in effect, it encouraged him to continue his drinking!

The lesson we learn from here is that when we see the effects of improper behavior, we should immediately strengthen ourselves by making appropriate safeguards. We should not rely on the assumption that the sight of the degradation brought on by sin will cause us to keep away from *aveiros*. We must make the necessary safeguards.

The Gemara in Nazir relates the following story of a particular *nazir* that should add insight into the workings of the *yeitzer hara* and the way in which we can subdue it. A very handsome *nazir* came to the Beis Medrash, and Shimon HaTzaddik noticed his beautiful eyes, fine complexion and rows of wavy hair. Shimon HaTzaddik asked him what compelled him to become a *nazir* which would force him to eventually cut his hair (at the conclusion of *nizirus*, a *nazir* must shave his head). He replied that one day he had noticed his reflection in the water and felt his *yeitzer hara* rush upon him, seeking to kill him through his haughtiness. He addressed his *yeitzer hara* and said, "Wicked one, how can you take pride in a world that is not yours and you will eventually end up among worms and maggots?" The man went on to swear that he would become a *nazir* and have his hair cut off only *lishem shomayim*.

The Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yehudah Zev Segal z'tl, explains that this Gemara is teaching us the tactic with which we must engage our *yeitzer hara*. Talk to yourself and convince yourself how false and worthless the urgings of the *yeitzer hora* are. The *Orchos Chaim LeHaRosh* calls this principle *ga'ar beyeitzer hara*, rebuke the *yeitzer hara* inside of you.

The Rosh Yeshiva, in his *Sefer Yirah VoDaath* sums it up by saying that we must think before we act, rather than acting without thinking. By analyzing a given situation, to arrive at a correct course of action, one develops a habit of seeing matters in light of Hashem's will, and for ignoring the temptations of the *yeitzer hora*. May we be *zoche* to strengthen ourselves against the *yeitzer hora* and consistently win the battles he poses to us each and every day.

to Egypt, attacked by *eishes Potiphar*, and thrown into jail until eventually rising to viceroy of *Mitzrayim*.

There is, however, one situation that doesn't seem to fit into the topics of Parshas Vayeshev in terms of importance and consequence – the story of Yehuda and Tamar. What is there to gain from mentioning this tale? What can we learn from such a situation?

Reb Yaakov went on to answer that we don't see the connection between this story of Yehuda and Tamar until hundreds of years later in *Megillas Rus*. The great grandmother of Dovid HaMelech, Rus, is a descendant of Peretz, the son of Yehuda and Tamar. Simply learning the Torah would not suffice in perception and appreciation in this area without delving through the books of *Kesuvim* as well. This was Reb Yaakov's *raiye*h to one who feels content with the little Torah he knows. As the *gemara* states, "דברי תורה עניים הם במקום אחד ועשירים הם במקום אחר" (ירושלמי ג:ה), *Words of Torah can be poor in one place and wealthy in another.*" It is not enough to be satisfied with knowing some of Torah in one area, while not caring enough to learn it in another. What is mentioned in one place might not be clear and lucid, while in another place it is brought out very beautifully and comprehensively. Therefore, how can one be satisfied with knowing only certain parts of Torah when one needs all of it to truly appreciate the other regions?

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz z'tl quotes this *Chazal* together with a statement found in the Medrash Tanchumah on *Parshas Chukas*. Over there it says that, "What one verse leaves unsaid the other elaborates." On this he asked, "Nu, is it then possible to manage without knowing the entire Torah?"

There was once a Jewish town that was in the process of writing a new Sefer Torah. All the men were involved in the writing, fundraising and the many aspects involved in making up the new Sefer Torah. The women of the town felt left out of the entire progression, and approached the rav asking for some part in this exciting event. The rav thought for a moment, and responded that the town would hold a contest for the women to design the *mantle* (cover) for the Sefer Torah, and whoever's design wins will get their piece used for the town's pride and joy. The women were very excited by this idea, and immediately jumped into the whole process.

The entire town felt the excitement surrounding everyone with the *hachnosas Sefer Torah* underway. Anyone who would enter the town could feel the excitement emanating from the townspeople. Finally, the day of the contest arrived and hundreds of women showed up to present their beautiful *mantlach*. After long hours of looking over the women's designs, eliminating and narrowing down the contestants, the rav finally found the winner. The *mantle* was beautiful,

(continued on page 3)

glowing with many different colors and designs. The rav took the *mantle* and placed it on the Sefer Torah, but behold! The cover was too small to fit on the Torah! Everyone was utterly dejected and distraught that this beautiful piece wouldn't be used for the Torah. After a few minutes, the lady called out, "I have an idea! Why don't we cut the sefer Torah down to size! You don't have to write everything in there – just put in the main stuff! You don't need everything in there, do you?" Some people feel that the laws of the Torah are something that can be moved and bent to fit the needs of their everyday schedule. Obviously, this is not so.

As we approach the Yom Tov of Shavuot and the year comes to a close, I want to end off the season with the message of "ועשירים הם," that the words of Torah are wealthy and pleasant. One should never stop learning and growing in Torah, for there is no time in the process for a person to say, "I'm done and fully accomplished." What we cannot fully understand in one place is elaborated in another, and our true achievement in Torah is to never decide we have no need for more. May we all be *zoche* to constantly gain and *shteig* in our learning throughout all areas of Torah, ultimately meriting the greatest enjoyments this world has to offer – *ahavas HaTorah*, which ultimately leads to the decisive *ahavas Hashem*. Good Shabbos!

FOCUS ON GREATNESS

Part II / Conclusion

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky *zt'l*
Leader of Polish Jewry
5623 / 1863 – 5700 / 1939

by Avi Lieberman

• Reb Chaim Ozer was one of the founders of Agudath Israel and the pillar of the movement throughout his life, participating in every Knessia Gedolah as long as health permitted.

• When the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah was established, he was the first chairman and remained so throughout his life.

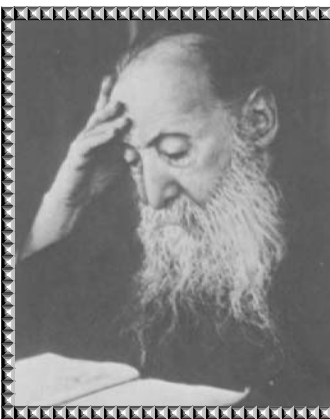
• The Chofetz Chaim would not initiate any public action, or sign any public document, until he consulted with Reb Chaim Ozer. The Chofetz Chaim considered him a living embodiment of Torah and showed him the utmost respect.

• Reb Chaim Ozer would write each *teshuvah* personally, not entrusting this to a secretary. His mind was so disciplined, that he would simultaneously write a *teshuvah* in halachah, give orders to two secretaries, and speak on the telephone.

• Reb Chaim Ozer was known to use an electric bulb in place of a havdalah candle; "People think that electricity is not a fire, and thus they permit themselves to put on electric lights on Shabbos," he explained. "So I make a point of saying the blessing 'Borei me'orei ha'eish - He created the lights of the fire' on an electric bulb, to demonstrate that electricity is, indeed, a fire."

• For four years, only Reb Chaim Ozer and his immediate family knew that he had cancer. He showed no visible signs of his terrible suffering; a smile was always on his face. He refused to enter a hospital, for he was aware how much world Jewry had rested on his shoulders for fifty-five years - how could he possibly spare time for a hospital stay?

• When he finally did enter the hospital, Reb Chaim Ozer's *klal* work went with him - including the burden of answering the steady stream of *sha'alos*



from all over the world.

• On the last Thursday night of his life in his 77th year, he issued orders regarding the dispersal of all the *tzedakos* in his care. To the many visitors in his room he said, "Good night," then whispered, "Who can be *zoche* to having a good night? Even so, I have no *taynes*, *chas veshalom* to the Ribono Shel Olam."

• On Erev Shabbos before noon, two men were at his bedside, Reb Yechezkiel Mishkovsky and the Lomza Rav; Reb Moshe Shatzkes - whispering, so as not to disturb the sleeping *tzaddik*, not realizing that he had already passed on.

• When word spread that the leader of World Jewry was *niftar*, the three kilometers from the hospital to the city became filled with people. Bnei Torah were assigned to transport Reb Chaim Ozer's remains on their shoulders until the city limits, then to place them on a wagon, fearing the reaction of Soviet authorities to any unusual demonstration.

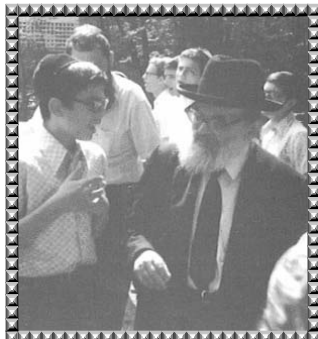
• Reb Chaim Ozer was placed in the room where he had learned Torah, rendered decisions and helped so many people through his *chesed* and wisdom for fifty-five years. There, until Sunday, Klal Yisroel said Tehillim and pored over his sefarim day and night.

• On the day of the *levaya*, there were close to forty *hespedim*! Literally thousands of *tzetlach* (pieces of paper) with all sorts of requests were thrown into the grave before it was closed, pleading for Reb Chaim Ozer to still be a source of strength for World Jewry. May those prayers be answered and may we merit such leaders to continue guiding us with compassion and strength, *ad biyas go'el*.

אמת ליעקב

Weekly Insights from Moreinu HoRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l

At the end of *Parshas Bamidbar*, we read about the duties of the various Levite families in the *Mishkan*. The *parsha* concludes with a discussion of the family of *Kehas*. The beginning of this week's *parsha*, *Parshas Naso*, continues with the jobs that the families of *Gershon* and *Merari* maintained in the *Mishkan*. The order in which the families are listed seems to be somewhat strange. Normally, the Torah honors the *bechor* by listing him first. However, here the family of *Kehas* is listed before that of *Gershon*, despite the fact that *Gershon* was older. The *Midrash* solves this problem by explaining that since *Kehas* was the family that was responsible for carrying the *aron* which contained the *luchos*, they were given precedence in the listing. The honor that we must accord to the Torah supercedes even the natural privileges that are awarded to the *bechor*.



R' Yaakov zt"l in Camp Agudah Toronto in 1973

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l explains how the concept of *kavod haTorah* is crucial during the period of *sefiras ha'omer* in which we now find ourselves. The *Midrash* describes how *Bnei Yisroel*, upon leaving *Mitzrayim* immediately asked Moshe when they would receive the Torah that they had been promised. Moshe responded that in another fifty days, they would receive the Torah from Hashem. *Bnei Yisroel* spent the next fifty days in intense anticipation, counting down to the day that they would merit the gift of the Torah. In the *zechus* of *Bnei Yisroel's* eagerness to acquire the Torah, Hashem awarded us with the opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *sefiras ha'omer* every year. This *Midrash* reveals the

notion that the counting of the *omer* is an expression of our love and honor for the Torah.

This concept can be used to better understand the famous Gemara in *Yevamos*, which discusses the tragic story of the death of the twenty-four thousand *talmidim* of Rebbe Akiva. The Gemara relates that Rebbe Akiva had twenty-four thousand *talmidim*, throughout the length and breadth of *Eretz Yisroel*, all of whom died during the weeks between Pesach and Shavous. The reason given for these terrible events is that they failed to show proper respect for one another. However, the Gemara relates that the way in which they died was the same punishment that is usually meted out to those who commit the sin of *bitul Torah*. Based on our previous discussion, Rav Yaakov explains that the lack of mutual respect amongst Rebbe Akiva's *talmidim* represented a lacking in proper *kavod* and *ahavas HaTorah*. Had they achieved greater *kavod HaTorah*, they would have recognized that they must respect their peers, the great *talmeidi chachamim* who represented the Torah itself. Had they shown true *ahavas HaTorah*, they would have run to hear even one word of Torah from each other. Because of the extremely high *madreigah* of *limud haTorah* they had reached, they were seen as lacking in these two areas, and were punished with the penalty that can be inflicted on one who fails to recognize the significance of the Torah.

As we approach the Yom Tov of Shavous, let us strive to achieve proper *kavod HaTorah*, *ahavas HaTorah*, and *ahavas Yisroel* so that we may be *zoche* to be truly deserving of *kabolas haTorah* on Shavous.

Upon leaving the *levayah* of the *Sfas Emes*, Rebbe Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter, his son Reb Moshe Betzalel stated to his brother, "How privileged our father was that he merited *arichas yomim!*" The brother was shocked by Reb Moshe Betzalel's comment. "How can you say such a thing? Our father only lived for fifty two years, and you say he merited *arichas yomim*, a long life?"

Reb Moshe Betzalel replied back to his brother, "You are mistaken. I didn't say he merited *arichas shanim*, long years. I stated he merited *arichas yomim* - our father the *Sfas Emes* was *zoche* to live long days.

As this is the last edition of the Ateres HaShavua before our summer editions begin, I would like to thank everyone who has made this publication such a great success. From in-depth biographies of gedolim, insightful *gematrios*, together with inspiring and well structured Divrei Torah, the greatest lesson to gain from everyone involved in this two thousand copy a week distribution is to work towards *arichas yomim* - making all the time count to the fullest. May we be truly *zoche* to use the opportunity of time that Hashem has granted us for the sake of Heaven in all instances, ultimately meriting Mashaich's arrival when **מלאה הארץ דעה את ה'**.

M.A.Y.
of Greater L.I.
516 · 374 · 6465

1170A William Street
Hewlett, NY, 11557
AteresHaShavua@aol.com

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor In Chief
Avi Lieberman

Asst. Editor
Reuven Davies

Emes L'Yaakov
Ephraim Weiss

Contributing Editors

Ariel Charnowitz

Yoni Feder

David Gerber

Moshe Golombeck

Yishai Kadry

Tzadok Picker

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Menahel

Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe

Faculty Advisor

Rabbi Shmuel Oratz

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