1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

PARSHAS SHEMINI – HE DIDN'T HAVE A PRAYER

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Moshe called upon his brother to perform the inaugural service in the Mishkan as part of his induction into the Kehuna Gedola. Although Aharon was hesitant because of his role in the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe encouraged him to proceed. After all of the sacrifices had been brought, Aharon was upset that the Shechina had not come to rest on the Mishkan as a sign that his sacrifices were accepted. Rashi tells us that Aharon turned to Moshe and said, "Moshe, my brother, is this what you have done to me that I entered [the Mishkan] and have been embarrassed?" Immediately, Moshe entered with him. They prayed and the Shechina descended.

Why, indeed, did the Shechina not descend when Aharon finished his Avodah? Did Moshe not assure Aharon that he was the right man for the job?

I believe the answer lies in the necessity for prayer. Nothing worthwhile can succeed without beseeching Hashem for His assistance. Rashi in Parshas Bereishis (2,5) relates that when Hashem created the world He did not immediately provide rain for the vegetation to grow. Only after He had created Man who would pray for the rain could the earth yield its bounty.

The Mishna in Ta'anis (26a) describes the Ma'amados – gatherings of representatives of Klal Yisrael which took place each week when the Bais Hamikdash was in existence. Rashi explains, "They gathered in their [respective] cities and prayed that the sacrifices offered by their brothers be accepted favorably." The bracha of Retzei in Shemoneh Esrei, at the time of the Bais Hamikdash, was a supplication to Hashem to accept our korbanos. Even the sacrifices offered daily in the Bais Hamikdash are only accepted by dint of the prayers offered for them. Even prayers need prayers, thus we say Shema Koleinu – "Please accept our prayers."

The fault did not lie with Aharon for the failure of the Shechina to descend. The problem was that although he was worthy and his sacrifices were favorably received, there was one ingredient missing – prayer. As soon as they prayed the Shechina came to rest on the Mishkan.

The Gemara (Nidda 70b) relates that the people from Alexandria asked Rebbi Yehoshua ben Chananya various questions regarding worldly matters: "What should one do to become wise? He answered, "He should spend more time studying in Yeshiva and minimize his business affairs." They replied, "Many did so to no avail." He responded, "Rather let them beseech the One to Whom wisdom belongs." "What should one do to become wealthy?" they queried. He answered, "He should engage a lot in business and conduct himself with honesty." They replied, "Many did so to no avail." He responded, "Rather he should beseech the One to Whom wealth belongs."

Whether the earth's produce, sacrifices, prayer, Torah study or business, nothing succeeds without prayer. Even in our ability to serve Hashem, prayer is vital. The Gemara (Kiddushin 30b) states that "A person's Yetzer Hara renews its assault every day, and if not for Hashem's help one cannot defeat it." How do we enlist Hashem's help? Through prayer. Hama'avir Sheina, Ahava Rabba, and Hashiveinu Hashem Eilecha are but a few examples of such prayers.

Aharon learned the hard way: Nothing succeeds without prayer.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: I have a build of wax in my ear and my doctor advised me to use an ear oil which loosens up the wax and helps extract the wax. May I use this oil on שבת?

ANSWER: There is an איסור רפואה on שבת which means, in certain situations one may not heal themselves. When one is not feeling well to the point that one feels the need to lay down, or if one has pain all over their body, then one is allowed to heal themselves with medicine or even ask a גוי to do an action to heal you. For example, if you have a major migraine or terrible stomachache, you are allowed to take medicine to get relief. One may also use a hot water bottle to relieve stomach pain. However, if you are not sick to the point of laying down, even though you are in pain, you are not allowed to heal yourself on שבת. For example, if you have a mild headache or mild heartburn, you may not take Advil or tums. If one has a stuffed nose, one may not take decongestants for it, but one is definitely allowed to blow their nose. Blowing the nose does not heal the symptom. The same is true for an ear that is stuffed with wax. Using oil to soften it to extract it does not heal it and rather just clears out the wax. (Be careful not to squeeze when wiping the excess oil with a tissue.)

עי' סימן שכ"ח סעי' א' וסעי' י"ז

Weekly question: Where does one do shechita on the neck of the giraffe?

DID HE BLOW IT?

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's parsha talks about the mitzvah of Yom Kippur. We know that at the end of Yom Kippur, we blow the shofar. This leads us to the following story.

Eliezer was the ba'al toke'a, the person who blows the shofar, on Rosh Hashanah. As everyone was preparing to hear the shofar for the first time, Eliezer noticed Daniel standing next to him at his shtender, dozing off. Eliezer recited the bracha, and just as he was about to blow the shofar, a silly idea popped into his mind. Daniel, still standing and asleep next to him, hadn't stirred. Eliezer thought, "What if I move the shofar closer to this guy's ear and blow it? It'll definitely wake him up!" After all, the shofar is meant to symbolize a spiritual awakening, so why not make it a physical awakening as well for this poor fellow?

So Eliezer moved the shofar close to Daniel's ear and began to blow. Daniel jumped up, clearly startled and visibly shaken. Eliezer continued blowing the shofar as required. After Eliezer finished, Daniel turned to him and said, "I completely forgive you for waking me up and startling me. I know you didn't mean to hurt me, but I want you to know, I actually can't hear anything out of my ear right now. You may have caused some hearing damage. I forgive you, but you should know that you might have committed an aveirah (a transgression)." Daniel continued: "We know that a mitzvah done through a transgression, a mitzvah haba'ah b'aveirah, is not considered a valid mitzvah. For example, if someone steals money to buy matzah, he does not fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah.

The same goes for a stolen lulav, it doesn't count. So if you hurt me, possibly causing physical harm while performing the mitzvah, then your blowing of the shofar might not have been valid. And if that's the case, it's possible that no one else fulfilled their obligation by hearing your shofar either. So I think you should find out from a Rav whether everyone who heard your shofar might need to hear it again."

What do you think? Is this considered a mitzvah haba'ah b'aveira that would invalidate the mitzvah, not just for Eliezer, but for everyone who heard the shofar? On one hand, one could argue yes: the mitzvah was performed by harming someone, and therefore it shouldn't count. But maybe you could argue that this case is different from a stolen lulav or matzah, because here, the shofar itself was kosher. The transgression wasn't in the object but in a separate action that happened at the same time. Or perhaps maybe you could say that the exact sound of the shofar, the one used to fulfill the mitzvah, was also the source of the harm. That same sound caused both a mitzvah and an aveirah, so perhaps it should be considered a mitzvah haba'ah b'aveirah. What do you think? Would this disqualify the mitzvah for the one who blew the shofar, and for everyone else who heard it? See Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 234Regarding the pre-break question about the person who fell down the steps and grabbed his friend, causing his friend to break his leg: Rav Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 208) answered that even though it was a complete accident when he reached out and grabbed his friend, the friend likely helped prevent him from being more seriously hurt. That benefit makes him obligated to compensate his friend for the damage. However, he concluded that it is still tzarich iyun (requires further analysis).

RABBI, I ALSO WANT SPECIAL MILK LIKE YOU DRINK

An administrator of a Brooklyn yeshivah once related the following story:

One year, the city sent us a new bus driver, a broad-shouldered fellow named "Richie." Richie quickly became the leader of all the drivers, and I realized that if I did not treat him royally, I would be in for trouble. One of my ways of keeping him happy was to give him a cup of coffee every afternoon before he drove the children home. One day, Richie said to me, "You know, you're not a holy rabbi."

I asked Richie to explain what defined someone as a "holy rabbi," and why I did not fit into this category. This was his response:

"I used to drive a bus for the girls' school on Ocean Parkway and Avenue O. The principal's name was Rabbi Manis Mandel, and every afternoon, he would offer me a cup of coffee just like you do. After a while, I began to notice something. When he prepared a cup of coffee for himself, he would use a special container of milk. One day, I said to him, 'Rabbi, I also want special milk like you drink.' The rabbi laughed and said, 'Richie, the milk in your coffee is just as special as mine. You see, the milk we have in school is subsidized by the government. It's only for students and bus drivers like you. But as the dean of the school, I am personally not comfortable using it. That's why I bring milk from home for my coffee.'

"Yes, Rabbi Mandel is a holy rabbi."

(From Rabbi Manis Mandel: A Legendary Mechanech and Tzadik by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, published by Artscroll Mesorah. Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.)

Answer to this week's question(s):

The giraffe is a kosher animal because it has split hooves and chews its cud. Contrary to popular (childish) belief, the length of the neck does not impede the shechting process. In fact, the longer neck provides additional space, making shechting easier and more efficient. The גמרא חולין מ"ה says " כל הצואר כולו כשר לשחיטה" The whole neck is kosher for Shechitah.

The ריטב"א קידושין מ"ט ד"ה תשעה (and other ראשונים) quote a חז"ל (which we don't have today): The חזיר will be returned (להחזירו אלינו) to us and will become a kosher animal. Shechting pigs can be tough because they don't have a clear neck like other animals. This makes it harder to find the right spot for the cut.

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Good Shabbos!