

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



FINDING HASHEM'S KINDNESS IN EVERY SITUATION

There are two types of holidays on our calendar. The ones that are prescribed by the Torah and the ones prescribed by our Sages. The former receive their kedusha, sanctity, with the pronouncement of the Court. Every 29 or 30 days the court would establish the beginning of the new month. With the court's establishing the new month their pronouncement creates the sanctity for that day and for any holidays that will occur that month.

The Sfas Emes explains the Talmudic passage in Shabbos 21b that the method by which our Sages sanctified Chanukah was through Hallel and Hoda'ah, through our praise of HaShem and our gratitude to Him which is expressed on Chanukah we extend kedusha to the holiday. The Sfas Emes continues; the extent to which we express our Hallel and Hoda'ah to HaShem on Chanukah, to that extent we are able to expose the illumination and inspiration of Chanukah. With this he explains why we find in halacha that by singing songs of Hallel at Chanukah meals we make them into a seudas mitzvah. This is because we are actually bringing sanctity into the holiday through these expressions.

What is the distinction between Hallel and Hoda'ah?

The Sfas Emes explains that Hallel is the praise that one offers for the support that HaShem gives to a person. Hoda'ah is the acknowledgement that those times when it appears that HaShem had abandoned him and caused him difficulty were in reality only for his good and they occurred for his best interests.

As we live through this extremely difficult period of Jewish history, I believe that we have much to offer in Hallel and Hoda'ah. The daily miracles that occur to individual soldiers as well as to platoons of troops are truly wondrous gifts of chessed showering

THE SANDEK'S PRAYERS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weimer

This week is Shabbos Chanuka. We know that during the times of the Yevanim, the Syrian Greeks tried to forbid and stamp out the practice of Bris Milah, circumcision.

This leads us to the following true story.

Avraham was asked to be a sandek at the bris of someone he knew in his neighborhood. Avraham's friend, named Eli, heard that Avraham was going to attend. Eli came to Avraham and said, "I heard that you're going to be a sandek tomorrow. Can I please ask you a huge favor?" Avraham said, "Of course." Eli said, "My father is scheduled to have surgery around the same time as the circumcision. It is known that the sandek has a great power of prayer because the sandek is like the mizbeach, the altar, that supports a korban as it's being offered to Hashem. Therefore, can you please daven for the success of my father's surgery that'll happen at the same time that you're the sandek?"

Avraham said, "Of course, it will be my pleasure." Then, without any further discussion, Eli pulled out 500 shekels and said, "Here, I want you to have this in exchange for your efforts."

Avraham needed the money and was very grateful for the kind gesture.

The next day, Avraham attended the bris, and it went smoothly as planned. While he was the sandek and the baby was on his lap, Avraham davened with tears and an extremely heartfelt prayer that Eli's father should be healthy and go through the surgery successfully.

Shortly after the bris, Eli called Avraham with great joy, "You're never going to guess - my father's surgery was successful! It was clear that your tefillos worked. My father is going to be on a good trajectory for recovery. Thank you so, so much for your prayers and for helping me and my father." Avraham said it was his pleasure and was delighted to have done it.

Later that afternoon, however, Avraham got a call from the mohel. The mohel said, "You're not going to believe this, but we finally got some information that I've been trying to get for a while. It turns out that the mother of the baby, in fact, never underwent a proper conversion. She's not Jewish, and therefore it turns out that there was really no mitzvah of bris milah, and it turns out that you were not a sandek. Therefore, even though normally a sandek would not say tachanun, by Mincha, in this case, because you're not a sandek, you should say Tachanun."

Avraham was shocked, but he then faced the following dilemma: For whatever reason, even though he wasn't the sandek, the patient who had the surgery did well. Eli thinks that it was in merit of his prayers as a sandek that he was successful. Now that he was not a sandek, and in fact there was never a bris, would he be allowed to keep the money? Eli wouldn't give the money to just any person; he was planning on only giving it to a sandek. He wouldn't give it to any random neighbor. Now, because he wasn't a sandek, perhaps it was given under false pretenses.

So, the question Avraham had was, did he have an obligation to call up Eli and tell him, "By the way, I was never really a sandek," or could he keep the money? What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 189



down to us from HaShem.

In terms of Hoda'ah I would like to suggest that as we pay attention to finer details of what transpired on October 7, we have much to be grateful for as follows.

Hamas and Hezbollah were planning to strike Israel simultaneously; Hamas from the south and Hezbollah from the north. As we can now see in hindsight, Israel was seriously unprepared for such an attack. Hezbollah has enough rockets to fire 3,000 rockets daily for over a month non-stop, HaShem y'rachem! If their plan would have materialized the West bank Arabs would have joined in and wreak havoc on the settlements.

To only imagine what Israel would look like if their plan was carried out as planned would not allow a person to sleep. We should never have to contemplate the absolute devastation our people would find themselves in. HaShem in His infinite kindness woke up the people of Israel without allowing Hamas to carry their plans to completion.

How much Hallel must we give to HaShem for protecting us all these years until now. For granting the economic growth and the allowance for us to go about our lives. Now that we have been struck and we are waking up we must thank HaShem for limiting our losses. How much Hoda'ah must we give to HaShem.

As Chanukah arrives this Thursday evening may all the children of our beautiful people turn to HaShem in Hallel and Hoda'ah and plead to Him to end this impossible situation.

On the first Chanukah, the first 25th of Kislev, when we were in the desert Moshe told HaShem that all the components of the Mishkan were ready to be assembled. "Can we establish the Mishkan?" HaShem replied that this date is reserved for the reinstallation of the Beis Hamikdosh in the times of Chanukah.

May our Hallel and Hoda'ah reach a crescendo which will usher in the ultimate salvation when HaShem will make this 25th of Kislev the return of the final Beis Hamikdosh,

Have a wonderful Shabbos and a illuminating Chanukah!

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE HEALING POWER OF LIGHT

We know that the main mitzvah of Chanukah revolves around the light of the Menorah. Let's learn a bit about how light can impact not only our wellbeing and physical health but also our mood and behavior.

Circadian Rhythms. Our circadian rhythms (our internal biological clock) are significantly influenced by exposure to natural light. Light early in the day helps us feel awake and alert, while darkness triggers the brain to release melatonin, making us sleepy. Exposure to natural light, especially in the morning, can improve sleep quality and regularity. Better sleep, in turn, leads to improved mood and increased alertness. Inconsistent light exposure can disrupt these natural rhythms and negatively impact our mood.

Vitamin D. Sunlight is a primary source of Vitamin D, essential for bone health and immune function. Exposure to natural sunlight allows our bodies to produce Vitamin D. Low levels of Vitamin D have been linked to mood disorders like seasonal affective disorder during darker winter months or depression.

Sunlight can boost our mood. Exposure to natural light has been shown to increase the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that plays a role in mood regulation. Serotonin is often referred to as the "happy hormone" because it helps promote feelings of well-being and relaxation. In contrast, a lack of natural light can alter hormone production, including serotonin levels, which influences mood disorders. Total darkness for extended periods leads to depression and anxiety for many people. Light therapy, particularly with full-spectrum natural light, is a recognized treatment for seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a type of depression related to seasonal changes.

Sunlight can reduce stress. Exposure to natural light has been shown to reduce stress levels by lowering the production of cortisol, the stress hormone. Cortisol is released in response to stress, and high levels can lead to various health problems, including anxiety, depression, and heart disease.

Enhancing Cognitive Function. Studies have shown that exposure to natural light can improve cognitive functions, including attention, memory, and problem-solving. This is because natural light helps increase the production of dopamine, another neurotransmitter that plays a role in cognitive function. This is particularly relevant in educational and workplace settings.

Natural light can increase productivity. Studies have shown that exposure to natural light can increase productivity by improving concentration, mood, alertness, and cognitive function. This is why many companies are now designing their offices to maximize natural light exposure. Bright, naturally lit rooms and workspaces are linked to better mood, increased productivity, fewer anxieties, and lower rates of absenteeism for workers and students.

Influencing Social Interactions. Brighter light can increase arousal and alertness, which in turn can influence social behaviors.

For example, people may be more likely to engage in conversation and social activities in well-lit environments.

Modulating Appetite and Eating Habits. Some studies suggest that different lighting conditions can affect how we perceive food and even our eating patterns, potentially influencing weight management and eating disorders. For example, warm, bright lighting may make food look more appealing and stimulate hunger. In contrast, dim or cooler lighting might make food appear less appealing, possibly reducing the desire to eat.

Impacting Perception and Experience. Lighting can alter how we perceive and experience spaces. For example, warm lighting can create a cozy, inviting atmosphere, while cool lighting can make a space feel more sterile and efficient.

Influencing Shopping Behavior. In retail settings, lighting can affect how consumers perceive products and make purchasing decisions. Bright, focused lighting can draw attention to specific products and influence consumer behavior.

Altering Perception of Time. In environments without natural light, like casinos or certain workplaces, the absence of cues like daylight can alter the perception of time, potentially leading to longer periods of engagement or work.

Overcast and Gloomy Skies. Overcast skies and specific weather patterns with less natural light, like cold, gray, cloudy winter days, can contribute to a more negative mood state for some susceptible individuals and result in higher rates of depression and suicide.

Harmful Light. Some light can have a negative effect. Exposure to artificial light, especially blue light from screens, can disrupt sleep by suppressing the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep. This highlights the importance of reducing screen time before bed.

Eye Strain. Too much artificial light can also lead to eye strain. Bright artificial light from screens can cause eye strain, which can lead to headaches, fatigue, and blurred vision. It is important to take breaks from looking at screens and to use artificial light that is dim enough to be comfortable.

Artificial light can also have a positive impact on our mood and behavior. When used correctly, artificial light can help create a desired mood or atmosphere. For example, warm-colored light can create a cozy and inviting atmosphere, while cool-colored light can create a more stimulating and alert environment.

Artificial light can be used to improve task performance. The type of light used can also affect task performance. For example, bright, direct light is best for tasks that require visual attention, while softer, indirect light is better for tasks that require creativity or relaxation.

Thank you Hashem for creating light that benefits us in so many ways!

NOT A POSHUT YID

Rav Dovid Kaplan related the following story.

Naming a baby is often tricky. Meir and Ahuva finally had a boy after a number of girls and decided to name him after Ahuva's grandfather.

Ahuva then started having second thoughts. "My grandfather was a very nice man and a fine person," she said to her husband, "but he wasn't a talmid chacham. He was just a 'poshut Yid.' Maybe it would be better if we name the baby after a gadol."

Meir went to ask his rav, a major rosh yeshiva.

"When did her grandfather live?" The Rosh Yeshiva asked.

"He came to America in the thirties and worked in the curtain business. He was niftar a few years ago," Meir told him.

"And where are his children today?" the rosh yeshiva persisted.

"All of them are frum and all his grandchildren are bnei Torah."

The rosh yeshiva gave Meir a piercing look. "Anyone who lived in America in the thirties and forties and raised a family that produced bnei Torah is not a 'poshut Yid.' Name the baby after him.

Rav Kaplan concluded: I think the same could be said for anyone who lived in America in the fifties, sixties, seventies..."

(From Lasting Impact By Rabbi Dovid Kaplan, Published By Shanky's Publications)



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the extra case of wine, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryu Matok Vayikra page 145) answered as follows. Because the borrower wanted to borrow wine, but it turned out to be spoiled, it ended up that the borrower never took possession of the bottle. Therefore, the lender was always the owner of the bottle, and therefore the extra case should go to the lender, not the borrower.

I wish to thank the Baltimore community for taking every one of our 900 TableTalks that we print weekly to use at your Shabbos tables. Reb Yitzi and I appreciate the opportunity to grace so many Shabbos tables with beautiful conversation. We do need sponsors to cover our cost of printing. Please consider sponsoring an issue for only \$250. To do so contact me at paysach@achim.org.

Paysach Diskind



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