

יטה אותם היצר מדרכי אבותיהם, מתוך פיתוי שהם לא זקוקים לכך.

TORAH TAVLIN IS ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE TO VIEW ARCHIVES. STORIES, ARTICLES OF INTEREST OR TO SUBSCRIBE TO RECEIVE THIS TORAH SHEET WEEKLY. WWW.TORAHTAVLIN.ORG **ORSENDANEMAILTO**

SUBSCRIBE@TORAHTAVLIN.ORG מ״ח בעומר – פרק ו׳ דאבות

שבת פרשת במדבר / חג השבועות / זמן מתן תורתינו Parshas Bamidbar - Chag HaShavuos - Zman Toraseinu May 31-June 2-3, 2025 — תשפ״ה

נשא את ראש בני קהת מתוד בני לוי למשפחתם לבית אבתם ... (ד-ב) - במעלת ההליכה בדרד האבות

הנה על האדם לדעת. שעל פי הרוב אין היצר מסית את האדם לאיסור כמשמעו. היטב יודע הוא שגם אם יתאוה האדם מאוד לעבירה. לא יחטא חלילה בשאט נפש. שהרי כל יהודי מאמין שהקב״ה צופה ומביט במעשיו, וירא הוא מלמרוד בו, על כן עצתו להלביש על החטא גוונים של היתר, ואפילו גוונים של מצוה. ובכגון דא קשה מאוד על האדם להבדיל בין טוב לרע, מאחר שחושק מאוד באותו איסור, ולדעת יצרו הוא גם מאבד מצוה במניעתו... ורק בתחבולה זו מצליח היצר להפיל את האדם ברשתו. ומהי העצה לזה? הזהירות בכל מנהגי אבותיו ובהליכותיהם! וגם אם איז באלו המנהגים חובה מצד הדיז. וגם אם קשה להביז מה ענינם ופתרונם. כי כל הנוקט כלל זה בידו. שאינו זו מדרכי אבותיו. תהיה ביכולתו לעמוד מול פיתויי היצר ולהשיב לו, שגם אם הצדק עמו הרי קבלה בידו שלא לעשות דברים שלא ראה אצל אבותיו,

וכיון שלא ראה אצל אבותיו שעסקו במצוה זו, לכן רואה גם הוא לנכון למאן בה. אולם לפעמים מוצא היצר פתרון גם לזה, והוא שמפתה את האדם מלכתחילה שלא יאמץ כלל זה לעצמו. ולא ידקדק כל כך בהליכותיהם של אבותיו. ואם יתפתה האדם בזה שוב לא יהיה לו מענה אח"כ כשימציא לו היצר התירים לחטאים. בתחבולה זו מופיע היצר בעיקר אצל בעלי נפש, אנשים הדבוקים בתורה ומתעמקים להבין כל פרטי הדינים וטעמיהם, והוא משני טעמים, הא', כי יודע הוא שאצלם ימצא פתחוז פה לכר. כי שונים הם מפשוטי העם. שהללו איז דעתם רחבה כל כר. וסומכים בעינים עצומות על דעת אבותיהם, משא״כ חכמי התורה שמוכשרים הם להבין טעמו של כל דין ודיז. ובפועל גם מתעמקים להבין כל עניז. לכן קל לפתותם שאין שום ענין בקיום כל ההליכות שאין בהן חובה כל עוד שטעמם סתום, כי למה יעשה אדם רבר שאינו יודע למה הוא עושה זאת, ועצם הדבר שנהגו בה אבותיו אינה לדעתו סיבה להחזיק בה, ולדבריו אפשר שלא נהגו כך אלא מסיבה מסוימת שהכריחה אותם לכך.

הטעם השני שחפץ היצר שהללו יזלזלו במנהגי אבותיהם. כי הרווח בזלזולם יהיה בפול ומכופל. כי אחר שהתלמידי חכמים יזלזלו במנהגי אבותיהם ישמשו כדוגמא נם לאחרים ללכת בדרכיהם. וגם הם לא יראו שוב חשיבות בקיום מנהגי האבות. ולא רק במנהגים יבואו לזלזל כי אם גם במצוות חיוביות. כי כאמור ששמירת המנהגים היא סייג לשמירת כל המצוות. ובהעדר שמירה זו ימציא היצר להאדם התרים לכל חטא ועוון. והנה גם החכם ישיב מתחילה ליצרו שאינו כדאי לו לזלזל במנהגים. כי חפץ הוא להתמם במנהגי אבותיו כדי שישמשו אלו כסייג לשאר דיני התורה. ווכאמור. שעי"ז לא יצליחו לעקם דעתו גם בגופי תורה!. אולם היצר ישיבנו שאיז הוא זקוק לכך. מאחר שהוא עמקז גדול ומכיר היטב בכל דקדוקי התורה, ואת דעתו לא יצליחו להטות ולעקם. ולאמיתו של דבר אין אמת בפיהו, כי בשעת הנסיון

it was אסור to fast? The אכילת מצה fo ביטול עשה and not the עונג יו"ט and not the יערות דבש to fast? The יערות מצה fo ביטול עשה answers, that to be considered fasting one can eat up to a כייתב, which is larger than a כיים. But to be מוצא אכילת מצה. one need only eat a פאית. So, they were able to be אינצא מצה by eating a געיי"ש, yet were considered fasting because it was less than a געיי"ש. כותבת

> מאת הגאון מו"ר הרב ברוך הירטפלד טליט"א, ראש כולל עטרת חיים ברוד, קליבלגד הייטס

say "שלא יאכל כלום" like the מב"ם does. If so, according to this אירטה in גירסה when the swearer is in danger of dying, he may eat

The במרת קכא:] savs that it is possible to fast for three consecutive days and survive and brings a רציה from the pasuk in Megillas

Esther (יר-טיז), when the queen asked all the Yidden to fast for her to be successful when she goes to the king: "וצומו עלי ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו

שלשת ימים". So, we see that it is possible to fast for three davs straight. The שבו ערוד לגר savs this *Gemara* goes against a שלשת ימים on this

pasuk that says: since it's impossible to fast for three days, they must have eaten at night. מוזר תענית eaten at night. מוזר תענית asks: How could מרדכי

and wait מכשיעור and wait בכדי אכילת פרס and wait בכדי אכילת פרס and wait בכדי אכילת פרס and wait מכשיעור

A SERIES IN HALACHA LIVING A "TORAH" DAY

Monetary, Interpersonal Laws and Din Torah (32)

Halachic Consideration of Ona'ah. Last week, we began analyzing a halachic situation where a cab driver in Israel overcharged a gullible tourist in the amount of 700 NIS for a ride to the airport, a ride that should have normally cost 300 NIS, and it was paid for by credit card. Soon after the ride, the tourist realized that he was duped and canceled the charge on his card. Of course, the driver was wrong and did an aveira of Ona'ah (overcharging a customer by sales and rentals) but what is the halacha in this specific case - or in a case where he paid in cash rather than credit card - to get back the 400 shekel overcharge? The Beis Din that was consulted ruled that had he paid in cash he could not get his money back, but if he did not yet pay, or as in this case, he canceled the payment, he does not have to give more than the correct price of 300 NIS. Let us examine why.

- 1. The driver claimed that the passenger agreed to his quote of 700 NIS so he must pay the full amount. That claim is not valid because it was clearly a misunderstanding of the passenger so he is not at fault.
- 2. The driver also claimed that the price for rides is not finite and monitored, and each driver can charge at his will. That is also not a valid reason because even items that don't have exact prices do have limits that are clearly out of the normal price range for such an item, see Shevet Halevi (1).
- 3. There is, however, a reason to help the driver. There are certain items that are excluded from monetary obligations that

stem from overcharging, namely real estate, servants and documents (2), and even one who was overcharged more than a sixth for these items, cannot void the sale or get his money back. If there was an overcharge of more than double, there are two opinions in halacha (3) if it invalidates the sale. If one hires a worker "by the hour" who is somewhat like a servant for the hours he works, the Shulchan Aruch (4) considers him as a servant, where there is no ona'ah and it would go into the above-mentioned question of an overcharge more than double.

- 4. Whenever there is pay for a worker [where there is no ona'ah] and his equipment [whose rental does have ona'ah]. the **RMA** (5) writes that the portion of the labor has no *ona'ah* and the **Machane Ephraim** (6) says that there is no *ona'ah* on the entire amount because it is all considered work.
- **5.** A worker that is paid by the job and can work when he wants. is not like a servant in any way and the implications of *ona'ah* apply (7). In a case where he is hired to complete a full job for a certain rate, but has to do his work during specific hours due to the nature of the job, there is a debate if he is considered like a servant or not. The **RMA** does not consider him a servant and *ona'ah* does apply while the **Nesivos** (8) disagrees.

Due to all these doubts, Beis Din gave the above-mentioned ruling that the *muchzak* [the one holding the money] wins, which in this case is the passenger who canceled the credit card transaction. However, had he already paid the entire fare of 700 NIS in cash, the driver would not have to give it back.

(1) שו"ת שבט הלוי ה:ריח (2) בבא מציעא נו: (3) חושו משפט רכזיכט (4) רכזילג (5) שם (6) מחנה אפרים. הל' גזילה י"א (7)

R' Yehonosan Eibeschutz zt"l (Nefesh Yehonosan) would say:

ילד בן לנעמי ותקראנה שמו עובד"' - Everyone considered the birth of Rus' child as Hashem's reward to Naomi for leading Rus in the right path. In order to always remember that, 'a son is born to Naomi,' they called him Oved because the middle letter of Naomi (נעמה) is an "ayin", the word ben (בן) starts with "beis" and the final letter of 'yulad' (יכד) is a "daled." Thus, they gave him a name which 'לאמר' - the name would say, 'a son is born to Naomi.' They reversed the sequence of the letters and named him Oved as a blessing that the child would serve (עובד) Hashem with a full heart."

R' Avraham Weinberg of Slonim zt"l (Be'er Avraham) would say:

"Al pi Kabbalah, each month of the year corresponds to a different major body part. This month, Sivan, corresponds to the left ear. The reason is because all year long, the dvar Hashem goes in the right ear and out the other. However, when the

Torah is given on Shavuos, we must hear it and retain it with both ears - even the left one!"

אקב"ה You ARE really important to הקב"ה - Building That Relationship Matters! 855.400.5164 / Text 323.376.7607 / kvodshomavim.org

Special Mazel Tov to Rabbi & Rebbetzin Yehoshua Gold (Baal HanechemadimM'Zahav)onthe birth of a baby boy this week.

To place an ad or to dedicate in your city for a simcha, yahrzeit or any reason, please send an email to:Torahtavlin@vahoo.com

כבר ימציא היצר כמה וכמה פתרונות גם לאלו הדקדוקים שהת״ח בקי בהם... היוצא מדברינו אלו שהתלמידי חכמים צרַיכים הרבה יותר 'סייעתא דשמיא' שלא 📉 עם התורה הקדושה לא נתנו לנו כי אם מנהגים. כדי שנביז שגם אלו הם כ'גופי תורה'.

הנערים' וקריאת 'בראשית' תחת חופת טליתות. ולכל אלו המנהגים ישנם טעמים שונים. אבל אינם כי אם מצד המנהג ולא מצד הדיז. ואף שמקצת המנהגים מוזכרים בפוסקים, לא נזכרו כי אם בגדר מנהג, והוא מחמת היותם מנהגים קדומים עוד מימיהם. ולכן מובאים הם בחיבוריהם אבל אינם אפילו מדינא דגמרא. והדברים תמוהים כי למה ישתנו דוקא אלו המועדים שבו שמחים אנו בקבלת התורה ובגמרה של תורה. שלא יהיה בהם איזה חובה גם מז התורה? ועלה בדעתי לומר טעם נאה לדבר, והוא כדי להורות לנו שמנהג ישראל היא תורה ממש, ולכן דוקא באלו המועדים ששמחים אנו

פלא, שכל המועדים מחייבים אותנו במצוות מסוימות. ב'פסח' מצווים אנו על 'אכילת מצה'. וב'איסור חמץ'. וכז בכל המצוות שב'ליל הסדר'. וב'סוכות' אנו מצווים במצות 'סוכה' ו'ארבעה מינים', וב'ראש השנה' מצווים אנו ב'תקיעת שופר', וב'יום הכיפורים' אנו מצווים ב'חמישה עינויים', ואפילו ב'חנוכה' וב'פורים' שאינם כי אם מתקנת חז"ל. התקינו בהם מצוות מדבריהם. בחנוכה יש מצות 'נרות חנוכה' ובפורים ד' מצוותיה. שונים הם 'חג השבועות' ויום 'שמיני עצרת' שמלבד מצוות השביתה שהיא חובה כללית על כל המועדים אין בהן חיוב הקשור דוקא לזה החג. לעומת זאת מיוחרים שני המועדים הללו שיש בהם הרבה מנהגים. ב'חג השבועות' נעורים אנו כל הלילה ואומרים 'תיקוז ליל שבועות', קוראים 'מגילת רות', ואוכלים מאכלי חלב, ושוטחים עשבים בבית הכנסת ובבתים. גם ב'שמיני עצרת' מעורה בהרבה מנהגים, נוהגים להקיף הקפות ולשמוח בשמחת התורה, כמו כן נוהגים לכבד את כל אחר מהקהל לעלות לתורה, גם הילדים עולים אז לתורה, ישנה גם עליה של 'כל

דבר זה רמזה התורה בהמקראות המדברים בשבט לוי. כי הנה במניז כל שבט ראתר התורה לנכוז להדגיש שהיה מנינם למשפחותם לבית אבותם'. ורמז יש בזה שלכז נכללו כל בני השבט בכלל מנינם. כי כולם עבדו את בוראם באותו דרד שקיבלו מאבותיהם. כי כל שבט היה לו דרר מיוחד בעבודת ה' כדאיתא מהאר"י הקדוש זי"ע. אולם בבואינו לפקודת שבט לוי' השבט המקודש ביותר בישראל. אנו מוצאים שהתורה כתבה תיבות אלו לכל משפחה של השבט בפני עצמו. במקרא שלפנינו אנו רואים זאת ב'בני קהת', שהכתוב אומר 'נשא בני קהת וגו' למשפחותם לבית

אבותם' ובריש 'נשא' (ד-כב) מדבר אודות פקודת 'משפחת הגרשוני'. ושוב מזכיר שם 'לבית אבותם למשפותם', ובהמשך שם (ד. כט) כשמדבר ממנין 'בני מררי'. כתב שוב 'למשפותם לבית אבותם' וגו'. איז זה כי אם שרצתה התורה לדבר בשבח 'שבט הלוי'. כי על אף שהיו 'בני תורה' והיצר המפתה על זלזול במסורת אבות מצויה בעיקר אצלם. בכל זאת התגברו וכפו עצמו להחזיק בדרכי אבותיהם. ורצתה התורה גם כז שכל תלמיד חכם שהוא בבחינת שבט לוי' ילמד מהם איר לבטל דעתם לדעת אבותיהם. ויאמינו שאיז דעתם רחבה כל כר להביז כל מנהג על בוריו, ועליהם לסמוך על דעת אבותיהם הראשונים שהשכילו להבין שזהו רצון הבורא ב״ה. ובהיות שפרשה זו נקראת בדרך כלל בשבת שלפני חג השבועות, נימא מילתא הקשור הן לענין החג והן לענין מסורת המנהגים. דהנה מן הראוי לשים לב לדבר

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALED HISTORIAN

והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול הים אשר לא ימד ולא יספר ... (הושנ ב-א. הפמרה לסדר במדבר)

on Klal Yisroel to offering consolation, all juxtaposed in one statement. In fact, in Parshas Bamidbar itself we see this seemingly blatant contradiction in that first *Hashem* declares that Klal Yisroel are "Not His people" and then the Almighty says endearingly that the Jews, "cannot be counted because they are like the sand of the sea." How can it be?

D'vei Rav. He explains that Chazal (Pesachim 87b) say that at some point Hoshea HaNavi became so frustrated with Klal Yisroel's indifference to sinning that he blurted out to *Hashem, "Exchange them for another nation!"* Immediately, Hoshea regretted his statement and stood up and begged for people and our ever-growing numbers. ******************

It is amazing to see how *Hashem* flips from exacting justice Divine mercy. Rashi explains that this can be compared to a king who became angry with his wife and summoned a scribe to hasten and write a bill of divorce. However, before the scribe arrived, the king felt bad and reconciled with his wife. When the scribe arrived, the king decided to use the scribe's services to add to his wife's allowance.

Now we can understand the reason for the seemingly **Rashi** quotes and expounds upon the words of the **Sifri** contradictory juxtaposition. *Hashem's* love for *Klal Yisroel* runs so deep that even when He turns away from us, exiles us, and declares that we are "no longer His people." He still ensures that we multiply and grow in exile - for the way to Hashem's "heart" is through the continuity of the Jewish

ודמות פניהם פני אדם ופני אריה אל הימין ... (יחזקאל א-י. הפטרה ליום א' של חג השבועות)

Yechezkel HaNavi describes the incredible sight of the holy *shechina* sitting atop a Divine throne-like chariot - the Merkava - which was being held up by life-like creatures with wings. These creatures contained the faces of a man and a lion on their right side, and the faces of an ox and eagle on their left. While this was obviously reminiscent of the sight of the *shechina* at *Har Sinai* and truly appropriate for the Yom Tov of Shavuos what is the significance of the difference between the faces on the two sides?

R' Eliezer Ben R' Yehuda of Worms zt"l, the Rokeach, explains that the *pasuk* uses the terms "right" and "left" to hint at the Heavenly court of law where Klal Yisroel are

alternately prosecuted and defended. "The face of the ox to the left" symbolizes the angels who accuse Klal Yisroel of the Chet HaEigel - the sin of the Golden Calf, whereas the "face of the lion to the right" stands for the angels who speak up on behalf of the Jewish people. *Hashem*, in His mercy, will quickly turn from the left to the right and pay attention to the defenders in order to rule with mercy.

Amazingly, even as we sin and are being prosecuted in the heavenly court for our sins, Hashem always leaves room for ministering angels to come before Him and plead on our behalf. "מה הוא רחום אף אתה רחום" - we must live by Hashem's example and always give others the benefit of the doubt.

א"ר יוחנן האומר שבועה שלא אישן ג' ימים מלקין אותו וישן לאלתר - שבועות דף כה.

I he Gemara quotes מלסות hat says if one swears. "I will not sleep for three days". we give him מלסות and he may sleep right away. explains: This is a שבועת שוא, because it is impossible to stay up for three days straight.

The ה'כ' שבועות פ"ה, ה"כ] paskens like ה'נותנן) וה' שבועות פ"ה, ה"כ. רמב"ם ', ו' ימים') paskens like הל' שבועות פ"ה, ה"כ. and we don't say he should torture himself and not eat or not sleep until he can't survive and then be forced to eat or sleep, but rather מלקין אותו מיד for uttering a שבועת שוא and he may now eat or sleep immediately. The המוה says it's מלקין אותו מיד puts these two cases together, as they are not comparable. When one swears that he will not sleep for three days, it's a שבועת שוא אבועת שוא because he will בעל כרחו fall asleep. so it's א אפשר לקיימו and as a result. we are מלקיו אותו מיד. But if one swears he will not eat for 30 days, he could control himself and not eat and when he is about to die, his שבועה will be accuse of דרוה because of סכנת נפשות and he will be able to eat מו הדיז. So, it's not a שבועת שוא However, he concludes that the *halacha* is like the שברעת שוא that "שלא אוכל" is a שברעת שוא" is a שבועת שוא different reason. Since he swears not to eat for seven days. he's swearing to kill himself (suicide) which is נשבע לעבור על דברי תנורה. This constitutes a ועיין ט"ז יו"ד רל"ו. שבועת שוא who says the same svara.

The שבו **כסף משנה** brings the ר"ז and defends the רצב"ם. He explains: a שבו that "I will not eat". is comparable to swearing. "I will not sleep." because both are אי אפשר לקיינצו. The fact that the "r" savs he can fast until it's a סכנה and then eat, but still, since he will ultimately eat, it is considered a א"א לקיימו because it's א"א לקיימו. The ס' כא] explains the underlying *lomdus* between the מב"ם and the על אוי ה as there are halachic ramifications if a שבועה is classified as על that שבועה ל ד"ת. as there are halachic ramifications if a שבועה holds: even a על that שבועה holds: even a איא לקיימו one can't be מקיים, is still called a שבועת שוא because the bottom line is, it won't be completed. It's therefore מי דברי תורה. So, even though when he ultimately eats, it's ע"פ דין, but since שבועה can never be fulfilled, it's a שבועת שוא The שבועת שוא. The שבועת שוא holds that only a that במציאות can't be מקויים is not יה and is considered a שבועת שוא But not eating, which במציאות (he can starve himself) just the *halacha* doesn't allow it, is just considered a שבועה לבטל ד"ת, but not a [יעיין **מנח"ח** מצוה ל' אות ג']. שוא but not a [יעיין מנח"ח מצוה ל' אות ג'].

points out that when the "נשבע שלא יאכל ז' ימים" prings this *halacha*. it says: "נשבע שלא יאכל ז' ימים" but does not

וצי' במש"כ **הר"ש** במס' פרה פ"ר מ"א הביא בשם התוספתא וז"ל. "שהיה רבי יהושע אומר כל הלומד ולא עמל כאיש הזורע ולא קוצר". עכ"ל, הרי. שתכלית של לימוד התורה אינו רק עצם הלימוד שלמד, רק העסק והעמילות והיגיעה, שעמל לעמוד על עומק ואמיתת הדברים. ומי שלומד ואינו עמל. הרי הוא כמו הזורע ואינו קוצר! הרי. שאיז שום תכלית כלל וכלל מצד עצם הלימוד בלא עמילות. דנחשב כזורע בלי קצירה - הרי מבואר דהפירות של הלימוד. הוא אר ורק ע"י העסק והצמילות. ובלי צמילות בתורה. חסור בציקר לימוד התורה. דברים נוראים!

וכל זה מפורש בדברי **מרן המשגיח ר' ירוחם הלוי לביבוביץ זצוק"ל.** דהנה פי' רש"י על הקרא "אם בחקותי תלכו" וו"ל."שתהיו עמלים בתורה". וכתב המשגיח וז"ל: "כלומר: לא "ללמוד" לא "להבין", כי אם דוקא עמל,עד שאמרו בירושלמי (עייז קה"ר א. יג) שנגזרה עלינו לשכוח. כי אם לא היינו שוכחים לא היינו עמלים בתורה. הרי מוכרח כי כל התכלית היא רק העמל וכל מה שהעמל יותר "יבש" טפי מעלי". עכ"ל. ועי' שם באריכות דבריו שכתב לבאר העניז.

הנה בברכת התורה. אנו מברכים: "ברור אתה... וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה". וכבר עמדו כל המפרשים מדוע נקבע לשון של הברכה "לעסוק" בדברי תורה, ולא "ללמוד דברי תורה"? ולפי הנ"ל מובן הייטב, שהתכלית אינו רק ללמוד התורה. רק להיות עמל ביגיעה עצומה עד אין סוף. וא"כ נתקנה הלשון של הברכה דוקא "לעסוק" שזהו מהותו של המצוה להיות "עמל בתורה". ומצינו בכמה מקומות בש"ס שהגמ' למד עיקר מהותו של המצוה מלשון הברכה, ומבואר כנ"ל שזהו מהותו של המצוה. להיות עוסק בכל כחו בהתורה הקרושה. ולא רק ללמוד התורה הקרושה בלי צמילות ויגיעה רבה, ותז לחכם ויחכם עוד!

ועל פי כל זה נראה שיש לבאר הטעם מדוע נוהגים ללמוד כל הלילה. ולא לישו בליל שבועות. דכפשוטו. הטעם מנהג זה הוא משום שבליל מתז תורה כלל ישראל היו ישינים כל הלילה, והוצרר הקב"ה להעיר אותם, וע"כ לתיקן את זה אנו לומדין תורה כל הלילה. אמנם על פי הנ"ל יש לומר. שאנו מיכינים עצמינו לקבלת התורה. ועיקר התכלית בלימוד תורה כל הלילה הוא אר ורק להיות עמלר בתורה דמי שאינו הולר לישו. ויושב ולומד תורה כל הלילה איז לר עמילות גדול מזה!

שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר שמות כל זכר לגלגלתם (א-ב)

Sefer Bamidbar opens with Moshe Rabbeinu being commanded to count *Bnei Yisroel*. At first glance, it seems like a straightforward national census. However, the **Ramban** brings a *Medrash* that Moshe did not simply ask each head of household how many members were in their family. Rather, every individual passed before him to be him in a lie. But then it struck him that his *Tefillah* of counted personally. Why was this necessary?

R' Yakov Bistritz zt"l explains that this counting was not just about numbers; it was about identity. Every person in Klal Yisroel was counted, individually, one-by-one, to teach us a powerful message, that each and every single Yid matters, each and every single Yid has a unique tafkid, a distinct role and purpose that only he or she can fulfill. We often hear this concept mentioned and we nod in agreement, yet we must ask ourselves: do we really live by it? Do we diminish our own value, thinking we aren't as important, learned, or spiritual as others?

In order to answer this, let us relate a story that is very enlightening, about the holy Ribnitzer Rebbe, R' Chaim **Zanvil Abramowitz** zt"l. Late one night, the Rebbe was waiting to start *Maariv* but insisted on having a *minvan* of people who hadn't yet davened. One man there had davened earlier, but decided to stick around assuming it

זמן מתן תורתנו מקרא קודש זכר ליציאת מצרים ... (תפילה לשלש רגלים) - בענין הבנה לקבלת התורה

חר חג הפסח אנו מתחיליז ללמוד "פרקי אבות" – פרק לשבוע במשר ימי" הקיץ. וכן הובא בדברי הרמ"א (סי' רצ"ב ס"ב). וביאר הלבוש (שם) הטעם למנהג זה וז"ל: "ובמנחה מתחיליו לומר פרקים ממסכת אבות. ונראה לי הטעם משום זבמסכת הזאת יש חמשה פרקים ועם התוספתא שהוא שנו חכמים שהוא דומה הם הם ששה. שכולם מדברים בדברי תוכחה ומוסר לקבל עלינו עול תורה ומצות. וגם הפרק הראשוז הוא מדבר בשלשלת קבלת התורה מדור לדור ממשה רבינו ע״ה עד סוף כל התנאים. לכז אומרים אותם באלו הששה שבתות שהם מזמז גאולת מצרים עד יום מתז תורה. ויש מקומות שאיז אומרים אותם אלא פעם אחת עד שבועות. ויש מקומות שחוזרים ומתחיליו לאומרם אחר שבועות ואומרים אותם כל ימי הקיץ. שכיון שהפסיקו לומר ברכי נפשי אין חוזרין לומר אותו עד זמנו שהוא שבת בראשית", עכ"ל. מבואר מדבריו, שעיקר סיבת המנהג הוא ללמוד פרקי אבות מאחר חג הפסח לחג השבועות. והטעם לזה משום שזהו עיקר הכנה לקבלת התורה.

ובעזרת השם יתברר. נבאר על יסוד אחת ממס' אבות שנוגע לקבלת התורה. ונוגע לקבלת התורה, ללמוד התורה, ולקיים כל המצות. ולכל עבודת השי"ת. הנה תנז במתני' (אבות פ"ו מ"ד): "כר היא דרכה של תורה פת במלח תאכל ומים במשורה תשתה ועל הארץ תישו וחיי צער תחיה ובתורה אתה עמל ואם אתה טושה כן אשריך וטוב לך אשריך בעולם הזה וטוב לך לעולם הבא". ע"כ. הרי מבואר במתני'. שעיקר הצורה של תורה הוא אר ורק ביגיעה ועמילות. ומי שתורתו אינו ביגיעה ובעמילות אין זה ״דרכה של תורה״.

ויסוד דבר זה מבואר בדברי הגמ' בברכות (מג, ע"ב): "אמר ר"ל מניין שאין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה, שנאמר זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל". ע"כ. ומבואר מדברי הגמ'. דהקיום של התורה הקדושה אינו רק בלימוד בעלמא. רק דהתורה צריר יגיעה ועמילות הרבה לעצם קיום התורה.

GOLDEN NUGGETS ON THE PARSHA WITH A FOCUS ON LESSONS HOW TO SERVE HASHEM AND BE A BETTER JEW BY R' YEHOSHUA GOLD

would be quite difficult to find a tenth men at that late hour. When asked if he had *davened* yet, he denied having done so. That was not a smart idea as the holy *Ribnitzer* saw right through him, and refused to include him in the minyan. At first, the man was embarrassed that the *Rebbe* had caught Maariv, simple and unassuming, was indeed special. It had unique value before *Hashem*.

We say in the *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov Shemonah Esrei* as follows: "V'sein Chelkeinu B'Torasecha - Grant us our portion in Your Torah." What this means is that every individual Jew has a personal chelek, a unique piece of *Torah*, that only he can reveal. This is why every single member of Klal Yisroel was required to be present at Kabbolas HaTorah thousands of years ago on Har Sinai. One doesn't need to publish a groundbreaking sefer on esoteric topics, or deliver dazzling shiurim replete with exciting *chiddushim* in order to have an individual place in Hashem's Torah. On the Yom Tov of Shavuos, we all re-accept the Torah. Take a moment to reflect on your worth. Appreciate what you bring to *Torah* and to *Klal Yisroel.* No one else can do what you can do. You count. not just as a number, but as a soul with infinite value.

Shavuos is זמן מתן תורתנו, the time that Hashem gave us the Torah. Now, this seems difficult: Why do we celebrate Shavuos as זמן מתן תורתנו, if after the חטא העגל we lost the luchos, and the "Matan Torah" of Shavuos was in effect בטול? We should really celebrate Matan Torah on Yom *Kippur*, when we received the second *luchos* permanently! Why do we still celebrate Shavuos as זמו מתו תורתנו?

Says **R' Asher David May shlita**, the *posuk* states that the whole tachlis of Matan Torah was so that through the awesome display of "קולות וברקים וקול שופר חזק מאד" we should be inspired to great heights in viras shamayim - כי לבעבור נסות אתכם בא האלהים ובעבור תהיה יראתו על פניכם לבלתי "תחטאו". The יראה that they received then by Matan Torah remained indelibly etched upon our souls. It is that aspect of Matan Torah that we celebrate on Shavuos. Indeed, the Tur writes that Shavuos corresponds to Yitzchok Avinu. Now, that seems strange; wouldn't such a Yom Tov be more connected

קח את הלוים תחת כל בכור בבני ישראל ואת בהמת הלוים תחת בהמתם והיו לי הלוים אני ה' ... (ג-מה)

There is a fascinating *pshat* from the משך חכמה. The Gemara (Megillah 26b) makes a halachic distinction between items that come in direct contact with דברים שבקדושה, known as תשמישי קדושה (e.g. a Sefer Torah mantel), and items that are a step more removed, known as תשמישי דתשמיש (e.g. outside plastic for a *Tefillin* bag). The former retains its holiness and mustn't be discarded, while the latter may be discarded once no longer in use. What is the source for this differentiation? He says the *chiluk* can be extrapolated from this week's sedra, where the Torah refers to both, the Kohanim and the Leviim as "לי", belonging to Me, Hashem.

The Leviim, however, as the Torah states, are "נתונים לאהרן" "ולבניו". So while the Kohanim are "קדשים יהיו", a תשמיש קדושה, the Leviim are a תשמיש. And the halacha is that if a Kohen commits certain aveiros, he becomes defiled, and is prohibited from eating *Teruma*. A *Levi*, on the other hand, in the same scenario, is still permitted to eat from his *maaser*. The reasoning can be because a *Levi* is a lower *kedusha* than a Kohen. This is the source for the aforementioned contrast between a direct תשמיש and a secondary one. (He uses this to explain other distinctions עיין שם.)

"ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים, In Parshas Yisro, the posuk says, "ואתם תהיו לי "וגוי קדוש. The **Beis HaLevi** (drush 17) explains that through קבלת התורה, Klal Yisroel attained an elevated level of kedusha. Similarly, there are two types of kedusha in hekdesh. One is קדושת דמים - hekdesh will use the value of the designated item. The other is קדושת הגוף, an intrinsic holiness that exists not only in the monetary aspect but in its entire essence (e.g., a korban). Hence, when Klal Yisroel became a holy nation, which degree did they receive? The rule is that if someone is מועיל, he uses a money related

Throughout davening on Shavuos we declare that to Yaakov, the consummate איש תם יושב אהלים? The answer is as above, that *Shavuos* is not about the *Torah* that we received per-se, so much as the יראת שמים that we got then. Hence, it certainly corresponds to Yitzchok, the עמוד היראה.

> In truth, however, this *virah* is not something unconnected to *Torah*. The **Maharal** zt" asks, why is it that *Hashem* had to hold *Har Sinai* over the Jewish people's heads and force them to accept the *Torah*, when they had already said נעשה ונשמע? He answers that *Hashem* was teaching them that Torah does not depend on their current desire to learn and observe it. Torah must be learned with yirah, with the recognition that even if right now I am not in the mood and don't enjoy my learning, I must learn anyhow, as that is what Hashem commands me to do, period! That is the giluy of *yirah* we got at *Matan Torah*.

> The Aibeshter should bentch us that we should come to קבלת with a firm commitment to rededicate ourselves to למוד and through that, yes, to come to love Torah, too!

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"L hekdesh incorrectly, the object reverts back to חולין. However, regarding kedushas haguf, the rule is, יש מועל אחר מועל. The kedusha remains intact. Regarding Hashem's nation, Hashem says, "בנים אתם למקום". Even when you sin, you are still Mine. In other words, our holiness is part of our DNA, a קדושת הגוף so to speak, and can never be lost. Let us take pride in this realization and live up to what's expected of a גוי קדוש, and show the world what it means to be a *yid*.

אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים ... (שמות כ-ב)

Why are these opening words of the עשרת הדברות, which speak to all of Klal Yisroel, said בלשון יחיד, singular form? Chazal sav מעמד הר סיני was not just a communal event. It was a קבלת התורה for each *yachid* as well, in their own unique and individual way. Hence, the *posuk* is talking to each person: I am your (singular) Hashem - אלקיכם not only אלקיכם.

The Gemara in Shabbos describes the scene at that monumental occasion. "זיתיצבו בתחתית ההר". Hashem was עליהם הר כגיגית, and told the Yidden, "If you're mekabel the Torah, great. But if not, שם תהא קבורתכם." There are two obvious questions. First, Klal Yisroel had already declared "נעשה ונשמע", so what was the need for this open threat at this time? Second, why is the word "שם" used? It should have said "פה" - right here you will be buried. Again, the following vesod is part of our mesorah, has been passed down for generations, and complements the above *machshava*.

Granted, Klal Yisroel in unison, "כאיש אחד בלב אחד", had already proclaimed "נעשה ונשמע". But Hashem came to them again on Shavuos and said that is not sufficient. I don't need only a communal commitment. I need each of My children's steadfast pledge as well. Because each yid has his private

"On that first Shavuos, when Bnei Yisroel were all gathered at Har Sinai, the Jews took a binding oath to keep the mitzvos of the *Torah*, and that oath has been in effect ever since. I want to learn the laws of oaths so I can understand how important it is to keep a promise and how serious it is to break one." The young boy spoke with such earnest innocence.

But he was not finished. "In fact," said young Shmelke, "there are forty-nine blatt (double pages) in Meseches Shavuos and forty-nine days between *Pesach* and *Shavuos*. If we learn one *blatt* every day, we will finish it in time for *Yom Tov*."

R' Tzvi Hirsh was pleased with his son's erudite reasoning and he happily agreed to learn according to this suggestion. They studied intensely and when Lag B'omer arrived, they even reached a daf which mentions a halachah in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. By the time the Yom Tov of Shavuos arrived, they had finished the masechta entirely.

The following year right before Pesach, the Tchortkover Rebbe again asked his two sons what they wished to learn in preparation for the holiday of *Shavuos*. This time the younger child, Pinchos, answered: "I think we should learn *Kesubos* (marriage contracts) and *Kiddushin* (the laws of marriages)."

The Tchortkover Rebbe was surprised. "Okay, but please explain. What do these Masechtos have to do with Shavuos?"

Now it was young Pinchos' turn to respond, much like his older brother did the previous year. He smiled and said, "Tatte, by Kabbolas Hatorah, Hashem took the Jewish people to be His chosen Nation and said the words, 'I have betrothed you to Me forever.' He held Har Sinai over our heads like a marriage canopy. The holy words of the Torah were like our marriage contract, and He gave us a gift as well - תורה שבעל פה - the Oral Torah. That is why I think we should learn the laws of marriage contracts and betrothals - so we will know that the 'wedding' of Klal Yisroel and the Ribono Shel Olam was a valid one and that both He and His people are obligated to fulfill all the points of the contract."

R' Tzvi Hirsh couldn't help beaming with pride from his son's well-reasoned words. The three scholars learned the two masechtos in record speed - finishing close to 200 blatt - until forty-nine days later, they celebrated both the holiday of Shavuos and the successful completion of their studies. "Ashreinu Mah Tov Chelkeinu U'Mah Naim Goraleinu."

למה הדבו

שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר שמות כל זכר לגלגלתם ... (א-ב)

respectable yeshivah, doing quite well, and understanding sure that you'll be able to connect well with them." what a ben Torah is. Unfortunately, he got himself caught up with a bad group of friends. Although he had been a good *bachur* in the past, now he began taking his life in a far different direction. He soon found himself totally lost I'll give you till Monday." and on his own. He grew his hair long, his clothes were disreputable rags, and he was living in the dumps - with no financial support in his new "lifestyle."

One day, he found an advertisement for a job as a janitor in a local *yeshivah*. Due to the lack of a better option, he called to apply. The young man showed up to the interview and was ushered into the office of the esteemed **Rosh** Yeshivah, R' Shlomo Freifeld zt"l.

He sat down to discuss his viability for the job and before he knew it, the Rosh Yeshivah had him waste deep in a discussion about his origins and where he grew up. After disclosing that he was a former yeshivah student from a respectable *yeshivah* and had been a full-time learner at one point in his life, R' Freifeld smiled and told him that he found a better paying job than the janitorial work.

"What is it?" the young man asked eagerly.

"I want you to become a maggid shiur!"

"What? A maggid shiur?! Me?!"

"Yes!" R' Shlomo confirmed. "You've learned in a what it takes to give a good *shiur* on *Gemara*. I have a couple of wild guys here in *yeshivah*, and even some that I

There was once a boy who was learning in a have difficulty connecting to, but if you give the shiur, I'm

The young man tried to protest but R' Shlomo wouldn't hear of it. "The *veshivah* is learning *Bava Metzia*." R Shlomo finally said firmly. "Go home and get working on it.

His confidence restored, the young fellow started preparing a *shiur*. He knew he couldn't come to the *yeshivah* in his current state of attire, so he went out and bought a yarmulke, tzitzis, etc. He put himself together - after all he was going to teach *Torah*!

Today this "off the deep-end boy" is married with a large family of his own while simultaneously running a Kollel in Yerushalayim!

R' Shlomo Freifeld was a *Tzaddik* with a penetrating understanding of people. He saw a sterling neshama and knew that here was a human being worthy of respect, worthy of acknowledgement, and worthy of being loved! That outlook saved this young man's life, and B"H he was zoche to build a beautiful family.

נמסל: In Parshas Bamidbar the Torah recounts how each and every Jew was accounted for. This parsha is read immediately before the holy Yom Tov of Shavous and for good reason: there is a deep connection between the two. Every Yid stood at Har Sinai and said "נעשה ונשמע" - he is respectable *yeshivah* for years, and you undoubtedly have therefore worthy of learning *Torah*. Every *Yid* counts, and is worthy of dignity and respect. Shavuos is the Yom Tov that teaches us to maximize this reality.

birthday cards out of obligation. I'm all alone."

He paused. Then he said something I'll never forget. "You know, Rabbi, you're going nowhere ... but you're really going everywhere. I'm flying all over the globe. I know exactly where I'm going. I have my itinerary for the next year and a halfdeparture times, arrival gates, routes, everything. But you? You're going around in circles on a little train with your children. And you're going somewhere. Because you have a life. You have a family."

And with that, he walked out. I sat there with those words echoing in my mind. You're going nowhere - but you're going everywhere. (Excerpted from Rabbi Yaakov Astor's column in the Monsey Mevaser)

ויסעו מרפידים ויבאו מדבר סיני ויחנו במדבר ויחן שם ישראל נגד ההר (שמות ימ-ב)

The Medrash (Bamidbar 1:2) notes that Hashem chose the Midbar (desert) to give the Torah and create the Jewish nation because He knew that in the *Midbar* they would greet Him appropriately. **R' Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi** zt''l explains that people in the desert have both no distractions, nor nothing to hide, from the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. They reach out to Him and accept His command fully. They long for this interaction and prepare constantly for it. In the process, the personal withholding that takes place in many relationships when people are not open to sharing a piece of themselves, did not exist when Klal Yisroel sojourned in the midbar. The result was an honest, open and loving Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shomayim.

Ray Elazar M. Teitz zt"l, longtime rabbinic leader of Elizabeth, NJ, would relate a great story about the Gaon, R' Yaakov Meshulam Orenstein zt"l, author of Yeshuos Yaakov. It seems that the Yeshuos Yaakov was invited to be the Rav of Zalkava. Upon arriving at the city and taking residence, his first major challenge arose one *Shabbos*, right before *Shavuos*.

Apparently, there was some discussion about whether the residents of Zalkava are supposed to say the tefillah of "Av HaRachamim" on the Shabbos before Shavuos, when that day falls out on "Yom HaMeyuchas" (2 Sivan). The Yeshuos Yaakov was then relatively young and observed the various factions as they fought it out in shul. One group insisted that since the day was a day that Tachanun was not recited, Av HaRachanim must not be said. At the same time, the other group argued that due to the tragedies of the period, Av HaRachamim must be recited as it is on Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Sivan. (Rav Teitz added that this must be the source of the famous joke about the *shul* that said that their *minhag* was to fight about it).

Eventually, both sides came to the relatively newly installed Ray, the Yeshuos Yaakov, seeking his opinion. He heard both sides and recognizing the basis for such a minhag on both sides, did not rule on the matter. He tried to bridge the gap and create a compromise that would satisfy both sides. In a way, his idea worked for the two factions united and together decided to remove R' Yaakov Meshulam from his position for not issuing a firm decision that was in their favor.

Now unemployed and having heard of the recent petiral of R' Tzvi Hersh Rosen zt"l, Ray of Lemberg, the Yeshuos Yaakov traveled to that large city seeking employment. When he got there, someone recognized him and sought to advance his candidacy for the position of *Rav* in the city (which he eventually won and accepted).

The individual was curious and asked him, "HaRay Orenstein, what brings you to our fair city of Lemberg?"

Without missing a beat, the Yeshuos Yaakov answered: "Obviously, it was none other than the Av HaRachamim!"

People tend to get caught up in the mechanics of *minhag* and assume that everything is a *minhag*. While *minhagim* are important and have a special *mesorah* to them, they are important when they are utilized to bring about a closer relationship with Hashem and his Torah and mitzvos. Merely creating minhagim that do not fit that bill - like a minhag to fight about something specific - are in fact, Minhagei Shtus (foolish practices). Often when we think about our religious connection to Hashem, we get bogged down in silly questions of identity and practice which focus more on our own selves and do not represent the true experience of our interpersonal relationship with the Av Harachamim. We can do better and achieve more.

מנין שנשבעין לקיים את המצוה. שנאמר נשבעתי ואקיימה לשמור משפמי צדקך, והלא מושבע ועומד מהר סיני הוא ... (נדרים ה.) Two of the most renowned Gedolim of the past few centuries, the Rebbe, R' Shmelke zt" of Nikolsburg (Divrei Shmuel) and R' Pinchos zt''l of Frankfurt (Baal Hafla'ah) were brothers, sons of the Tchortkover Rebbe, R' Tzvi Hirsh Halevi Horowitz zt". Even as small children they were known as prodigies and their father was forced to assume the duty of teaching them *Torah* himself. It was a challenging job and he taught them as quickly as their brilliant minds could absorb. When they were both well below ten years of age, they were already learning *Gemara* with several commentaries.

As part of their study schedule, father and sons would learn together the laws which pertained to the next approaching holiday. Thus, when the Yom Tov of Chanukah ended, their father began the study of Meseches Megilla. Having completed it by *Purim*, they began learning the areas of *Meseches Pesachim* dealing with the laws of *Pesach*, which they finished right on target; the day before *Pesach*. At this point, Shmelke, the elder of the two boys said to his father, "*Tatte*, we must begin learning Meseches Shavuos if we want to finish it by the time the Yom Tov of Shavuos comes along."

Their father smiled tenderly. "Shmelke, mein tayera, Meseches Shavuos does not deal with Chag HaShavuos."

"I know, father," replied young Shmelke, "it deals with the laws of oaths; but I have a reason why we should study it now.

cheilek in Torah which no one else has! At times, this concept gets distorted and people tend to look around at others G-d-given talents and capabilities, then "שש" - there, you'll wistfully wishing they had their strengths. If only I had the cause your own demise. Meaning the concept of "שש" - there, talents, brains, passion, of "*yenem*" then I would really *shteig* and be able to accomplish. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says that's not what I need from you. I need you to fulfill your tafkid HaTorah on a personal level; each person committing to using your unique characteristics that I provided you with.

If however, you are not "tzu-frieden" with your own I wish I was someone else, will only harm you.

May we be zocheh, b'siyata dishmaya, to be mekabel actualize his own kochos, bringing Hashem a nachas ruach.

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ויעשו בני ישראל ככל אשר צוה ה' את משה כן חנו לרגליהם וכן נסעו איש למשפחתיו על בית אבתיו ... (ב-לד)

In Parshas Bamidbar, we are introduced to life in the desert. It's not exciting. It's not glamorous. It's not exotic travel. It's the same cloud, the same camp, the same man - day after day. But it was also the greatest training ground in history. It's where *Hashem* shaped us into His nation. And that's what *Sefer Bamidbar* is all about. Desert life is not about destinations. It's about formation. It's about forming and forging ahead with a mission and purpose in life. We might not always know where we're going, but if we're with our families, with *Torah*, with *Hashem*, we're going everywhere that counts.

Rabbi Fischel Schachter tells the following story with his signature blend of humor and heart: It was Chol Hamoed Pesach. Now, Chol Hamoed with a large family is anything but "chol." It's packed. It's hectic. It's loud. Baruch Hashem! So there I was, erev the second days, trying to survive the Pesach whirlwind when my wife - how shall I put this politely -"suggested" that I take the kids out for a while. Now, I know how this works, so I preemptively turned the request into a command to myself. I clapped my hands together and announced, "Everyone into the van! We're going on an excursion!"

"Where?" the kids asked. "You tell me," I said cheerfully, "where do you want to go?" That was a mistake.

The older kids groaned, "If we see the Prospect Park Zoo one more time, we're going to turn into monkeys!" Another yelled, "Not the Aquarium again!" And then, I had a brainstorm. I quickly swerved and turned onto the Belt Parkway.

"Tatty, are we going to the airport? Are we flying somewhere?" Noon on Chol Hamoed? No, we're not flying anywhere. So what were we doing? We were going to the airport. Why? Because the AirTrain at JFK goes from terminal to terminal

and guess what? It's free. You get a great view. It's quiet. Quality time with the kids. And ... it's free! Did I mention that?

"Listen," I explain to the kids, "typically, you wait on line for four hours and pay twenty bucks to ride something for thirty seconds. This ride is longer and costs nothing. What more do you want?" They were skeptical. But their only alternative was going home to help their mother with the dishes, so they agreed. Suddenly, one of my kids asked loudly, "Tatty, you're wearing your shtreimel and bekeshe ... you know, there aren't going to be a lot of other Yidden at the airport right now."

I retorted, "You've seen the way other people dress? I think we're the least of anyone's fashion concerns."

And then - relief! We pull up to the platform, and what do I see? Yidden! Everywhere! Boro Park, Flatbush - we were all there. The platform was tile-to-tile covered in macaroons, orange peels, and *matzah* crumbs. I felt like I had just arrived at the Mirrer Yeshiva on Chol Hamoed. Baruch Hashem, I wasn't the only one with this brilliant idea.

We boarded the AirTrain, and my kids were in heaven. They waved at every other AirTrain full of Jewish families. They were pointing at planes, giggling, clapping. It was a 10-minute loop around the airport, and we stayed on for over an hour.

At one point, the train stopped, and a man boarded. A real live pilot - wings on his uniform, rolling suitcase, the whole look. He stood there, taking it all in. You could tell he'd flown to distant war zones and survived typhoons, but this? This Chol Hamoed mob on the AirTrain? This was new. I quickly told one of my kids to give him a seat.

The pilot waved it off. "Nah, I've been sitting for 16 hours. I don't need to sit anymore."

I asked him where he flew in from. "China," he said. Then he looked at me and asked, "Mind if I ask you something?" Whenever someone says that, you always mind - but you can't say so. "Sure," I said, dreading the next question.

"Are these all your kids?" I smiled, "Nah. Some are in Israel. Some are at home helping my wife."

We started schmoozing. Then he asked, "So, Rabbi, which terminal are you heading to? Maybe I can help you find it." I hesitated, "Eh ... I'm not sure." He offered to look at my ticket. I stammered, "You can't. It's ... an electronic ticket."

I was spiraling. The more he asked, the deeper I was digging myself into this fictitious flight. Finally, I confessed. "To be honest, we're not going anywhere. We're just riding the AirTrain going around the airport. Been here about half an hour."

There was a long pause. He looked at me confused and asked, "Why?"

"Well," I hesitated before plunging ahead, "These kids don't have TV at home. They don't play computer games. They don't even own their own phones. So it's up to me to give them quality time, something wholesome and fun. It's not easy finding places that meet our standards. So ... here we are."

He nodded. Then he got real. "I fly the world. Three weeks out, one week home. Sometimes not even that. If I end a flight in Australia but live in Denver, by the time I get home, I have to head back. My wife left me years ago. My daughter sends me