

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

Vol 6, #47

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PIRKEI AVOS

"Rabbi Meir says: Whoever occupies himself with the study of Torah for its own sake merits many things." (Avos 6:1)

QUESTION: Why doesn't it say "kal halomeid" - "whoever studies Torah"?

ANSWER: In every business, there is a primary difference between the employer and the employee. An employee is mainly concerned with his own tasks, and he does not need to think about the business during his off hours. Unlike the employer, who thinks about his business unceasingly, he has little concern for the business as a whole.

In Hebrew the word "eisek" means "business." Rebbe Meir teaches that a person's approach to Torah should be similar to an employer's attachment to his business. Even after he leaves the Beit Midrash and is home eating or sleeping, Torah should always be uppermost in his mind. (From: VeDibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky)

A Business Proposal

From the time that G-d said to our father Abraham, "Go from your land," and "Abraham went on, journeying southward," began the process of birurim—the process of extracting the "sparks of holiness" that are scattered throughout the universe and buried within the material existence.

By the decree of divine providence, man wanders about in his travels to those places where the sparks that are to be extracted by him await their redemption. The Cause of All Causes brings about the many circumstances and pretexts that bring a person to those places where his personal mission in life is to be acted out - Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch

The news passed swiftly through the city of Chernigov, leaving shock and sorrow in its wake. Reb Yekutiel, a wealthy businessman and pillar of the community, had been arrested on charges of tax evasion and misappropriation of government funds.

All who knew Reb Yekutiel had no doubt of his innocence. Reb Yekutiel was known for his honesty, charity and modesty. Despite his immense wealth and influential position, he regarded every man as his equal and was always ready to lend a helping hand and attentive ear. For this, he had earned the respect and trust of all Chernigov's residents, Jew and non-Jew alike. But this was czarist Russia, where a man could be arrested on a bureaucratic caprice or by the stroke of a vengeful commissioner's pen.

Inexplicably, Reb Yekutiel was convicted. Nothing—not his connections in the government, nor the numerous appeals by his expensive lawyers, nor the prayers of the community—could stave off the fate ordained for him. Reb Yekutiel was sentenced to ten years of hard labor in distant Siberia.

On the day before Reb Yekutiel was sent east, a man knocked on the door of Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Chein, rabbi of Chernigov. "Rabbi," said the visitor, who was none other than the warden of the local jail, "Reb Yekutiel requests that you come see him. Special permission has been granted for you to visit him in his cell, should you desire to come."

"Certainly," said the Rabbi, "of course I'll come," and hurried to get his coat.

Tears filled Rabbi Dovid Tzvi's eyes at the sight that met him upon entering the cell. Reb Yekutiel, too, was overwhelmed with emotion. The two men embraced and wept silently for some time. Finally, the prisoner began to speak:

"I asked you to come, Rabbi, not because I have any personal request to make, but because I want to tell you why I am here. Perhaps others can learn a lesson from my story.

"Several months ago, I was traveling to Petersburg for a series of meetings regarding my dealings with the government. As usual, I obtained a compartment in the first-class section of the train—a crucial necessity for any businessman seeking potential

contacts among government officials and fellow merchants. It was then that I learned that the Lubavitcher Rebbe] was on the train.

"I passed by the Rebbe's compartment, hoping to catch a glimpse of his holy face. The door was ajar, and suddenly I found myself gazing into his eyes—eyes that looked deeply into mine and seemed to know the innermost reaches of my soul. For a long moment I stood there, rooted to the spot. It was a while before I realized that the Rebbe was motioning to me to enter.

"With awe and trepidation I entered the Rebbe's compartment. But the Rebbe soon put me at ease, inviting me to sit and offering me a cigarette. He expressed great interest in our community, as well as in my personal life and business dealings. In parting, the Rebbe said to me: 'I'm sure you've heard of the railway that the government is planning to build across Siberia. I think this is a perfect business opportunity for you. As one who has close connections with Minister Potysukshnikov, you should be able to obtain a sizable contract as a lumber supplier.'

"I returned to my compartment in a state of confusion. The last thing I expected from the Rebbe was a business tip. On the one hand, I felt that the advice of a tzaddik should be followed. On the other hand, the proposal held no attraction for me, despite its great financial potential. My business affairs were going well, thanks to G-d; why should I leave my family and community and spend many long months, if not years, in far-off Siberia? At the end, I hesitated long enough for others to avail themselves of the opportunity—to my considerable relief, I must confess.

"And so, now I'm on my way to Siberia. I thought that the Rebbe was dispensing business advice, but he must have seen that there is something there, in Siberia, that I must achieve—some part of my mission in life that must be played out in the frozen east. I could have gone in comfort, as a wealthy businessman and government contractor. Now I am going in chains." (Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe by Yanki Tauber) – meaningfullife.org

This week's Torah portion, Shoftim, speaks about the cities of refuge whence a person would flee if he accidentally killed someone. There, the unintentional killer would dwell, protected from the wrath of the victim's relatives, until the High Priest who served in the Holy Temple passed away.

But not only unintentional killers sought refuge in these cities; even someone who committed murder intentionally was expected to flee there as well. The court would then convene and issue its ruling on the death. The cities of refuge offered protection, if only temporarily in some cases, to anyone who had caused a loss of life.

After the destruction of the Holy Temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people, the cities of refuge ceased to exist in the physical sense. Yet the Torah is eternal, and its lessons apply in every generation. In our times, therefore, the concept of cities of refuge finds expression in the spiritual dimension.

Our Sages taught that "the words of Torah absorb." In other words, the Torah itself is the refuge in which all may seek asylum. In the spiritual sense, "killing" symbolizes the act of committing a sin, causing a spiritual death to the G-dly soul, for the Torah's 613 mitzvot are the "ropes" that bind the soul to G-d. Transgressing the Torah's commandments damages those ties, and threatens to cut the soul off from its G-dly source.

We learn from this week's Torah portion that it is never too late to do teshuva, to repent, no matter how grave a transgression has been committed. Even the person who deliberately sinned can do teshuva and seek protection in the refuge of Torah.

In one sense, nowadays we have a distinct advantage over our forefathers who lived during the times of the Holy Temple. In those days, repentance alone was not enough to atone for a sin. The unintentional killer had to remain exiled in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest, and the intentional murderer (as defined by the Torah) received capital punishment. Yet after the destruction of the Temple, teshuva alone can atone for even the gravest sin.

Years ago, when Jewish courts had ultimate authority, a judge could only rule on what he himself had seen. G-d, however, can look into the heart of man and judge whether or not his repentance is sincere.

In the same way, the month of Elul, during which we take account of our actions of the previous year, is a "city of refuge" in time, offering us the same opportunity to clear the slate and merit a good and sweet year to come. (Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, From: LChaum 5760, #634 - lchaimweekly.org)

The Children of Israel are called eretz cheifetz,¹ for they possess numerous "precious articles"² in the love and fear of Gd, and in fine character traits. Bringing these traits to the surface depends entirely upon the individual stimulating them. It is clear that throughout the earth are well springs of living water; the difference between them is only that some are near the surface, others far. Everything therefore depends on the well-digger, his patience and perseverance.

Now since ratzon ("will") is a superior faculty that "issues decrees," rules over all the other faculties,* and compels them to act according to its orders - it follows that the essential avoda is to arouse one's will to exercise its effect - both upon the person himself and upon others. (From Rebbe's Hayom yom 2 el ul).

1. "The desired Land." Malachi 3:12; see Iyar 17.
 2. Heb. chafeitzim, ("articles"), related to cheifetz in the phrase eretz cheifetz.

The common conception of how the system works is faulty.

They see a career as "making a living". A career doesn't "make" anything. What you receive is generated above, in a spiritual realm. Your business is to set up a channel to allow all that to flow into the material world.

From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Tzvi Freeman

PARTICIPATE IN DAILY CLASSES

<u>Sunday</u>	8:00 AM	Gemara-Tractate Rosh Hashana (men)
<u>Monday</u>	8:30 PM	Chumash (men and women)
<u>Tuesday</u>	8:00 PM	Gemara-Tractate Makos (men)
<u>Wednesday</u>	8:30 PM	Halacha and Tanya (women)
<u>Thursday</u>	10:00 AM	Chassidus (women)
	8:00 PM	Class for Beverly Hills Highschool Students
<u>Daily</u>	6:45 to 7:15 AM	Chassidus
	Between Mincha and Maariv	Halacha

SHABBOS PARSHAS SHOFTIM
 August 29, 2003

Candlelighting: (Los Angeles) 7:07 PM
Friday Mincha: 7:20 PM
Early Minyan: 5:55 PM

LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA: 9:39 AM

SHABBAT MORNING

- **Tanya** **8:45 AM**
- **Shacharit** **9:30 AM followed by Kiddush & Cholent**
- **Pirkei Avos** **6:05 PM**
- **Mincha** **6:50 PM followed by Seuda Shlishit**
- **Shabbat ends** **8:07 PM**

There will be no class on Tuesday September 2.

DAILY MINYONIM:

Shacharit: Mon-Fri 6:00 AM and 7:30 AM
Sunday 9:00 AM
Mincha/Maariv: 7:20 PM

Monday, Sept. 1 – Labor Day
Shacharis: 7:30 AM & 9:00AM

Kiddush this week is being sponsored by the Pazuelo family in honor of the aufruf of David and Raymonde.

Seudah Shlishit is being sponsored by Jerry and Shelly Tanenbaum in memory of Joseph Bodenstein – Shelly's father's – yartzheit.

Happy Birthday to Shimshon Mishael, Rebecca Molayem

Mazal Tov to the Pazuelo and Barishman family on the upcoming wedding of Raymonde to David.

Happy Anniversary to Rabbi and Mrs. Hertzell Illulian, Haim and Celia Katzir & Shimshon and Dora Mishael.

GOOD SHABBOS!