

# B'NAI ISRAEL CONGREGATION

420 SPOTSWOOD AVENUE, NORFOLK, VA 23517 PHONE: (757) 627-7358 E-MAIL: OFFICE@BNAISRAEL.ORG

PARSHAS KORACH  
JUNE 27 — TAMUZ 5

## Shabbat Shalom



The Mishna teaches us that there is an opinion that the “mouth of the earth” that opened to swallow Korach and his group was created from the beginning of time. The idea here is that not only was this miracle built into nature itself to become operative at the right time and place but that the sin and rebellion that occasioned this disastrous phenomenon also is built into human nature from time immemorial.

Jealousy, the thrust for power at all costs, demagoguery and false piety are the stuff of our lives, certainly of our political and public lives. The rabbis stated that all humans feel “burned” by the honor, place and position afforded to others. This is, the rabbis teach us, even in the world to come! We resent the success of others especially if we feel that we are much more deserving of that honor and success.

Hitler was able to rouse the German people to terrible acts of war and bestial murder of innocents on the basis of jealousy, hatred and the feeling of deep resentment engendered in Germany by the results of World War I and the subsequent Versailles treaty. People feel cheated when they do not feel that they are receiving their just do even if they are wrong in what they feel entitled to.

That resentment can fester and lead to disastrous consequences as we see in this week’s parsha. The rage that Korach feels at being slighted as not being chosen for the priesthood and other honors finally boils over in

his attack against Moshe and Aharon. And in the midst of a complaining, despondent and rebellious people he finds ready allies for his confrontation with Moshe.

The key to avoiding this pitfall (no pun intended) is the avoidance of arrogance and hubris – in short, humility. Maimonides abhors extremism in anything in life yet he states that when it comes to humility extremism is permitted and in fact desired. Someone who trains one’s self in humility can ignore slights and insults, intended or unintended, and develops a strong self-image that can easily discount the apparent unfairness of reward and punishment in this world.

Korach complains out of weakness of his character and not out of true strength and belief in himself or in his alleged cause. Korach attempts to lower Moshe to his own level and refuses to try to raise himself to Moshe’s level. He willingly associates himself with known negative characters and troublemakers in order to buttress his own ego.

So the contest devolves into the struggle between Korach’s arrogance and hubris against Moshe’s abject unequaled humility. In such contests throughout human and Jewish history the unlikely victor is always humility and those who practice it. That is the meaning of the words of the rabbis that from the pit of Korach’s demise emanates a sound that declares Moshe and his Torah to be true. Korach’s tragedy is repeated in every generation. But we should not forget that so is Moshe’s triumph.

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### The quest for balance between our positive and negative traits.

*I sometimes struggle with the issue of trying to accept myself for who I am versus trying to change myself for the better. What is the happy medium? This often occurs after being criticized or when I feel like I should be better in some way.*

*I know that good self-esteem is a prerequisite to being able to be happy and to perhaps even grow. How do I keep my self-esteem strong when I feel criticized or sense within myself something left to be desired?*

*I would greatly appreciate your thoughts on this matter.*

Your quest for balance speaks to all of us. Self-rejection is never a good stance to take. Neither, however, is unqualified self-

approval. Accepting who we are is positive ground only if it consists of a clear assessment of both our strengths and weaknesses.

For starters, we need to understand that the unique characteristics that make up our person are not arbitrary, but are deliberately conferred upon us by the Author of our being. They are thereby geared to the work that each of us individually needs to do in our lifetime.

The blend of both positive and negative trait can be, if we are aware and sensitive to them, the substance of both the challenge and achievements of our life. It is thus not at all paradoxical that accepting oneself and trying to change for the better are not contradictory or mutually exclusive paths.

Recognizing a fault can be seen as a summons within oneself to discipline and self-perfection. Getting in touch with one's higher Godly soul provides a reservoir of strength to help one combat their lesser self.

Consider the following scenario: Debby, a lovely woman in her 40s, sat in my office teary-eyed, as she first recounted the heart wrenching story of abandonment by her ex-husband, followed by the trials and tribulations of trying to adjust to life with her current blended family.

After much painful soul searching, Debby concluded that her strong personality, outspokenness and firm opinions were not always an asset to achieving marital bliss. She realized that if she were to succeed this time around, she would have to work at tempering her tough demeanor with gentleness and tolerance.

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Most significantly, she was convinced that while the Almighty had indeed blessed her with formidable intelligence and competence, He had orchestrated the events of her life to draw her attention to the internal work that she still had to do. She felt very strongly that she was being urged and encouraged from Above to access her as-yet undeveloped traits of humility and patience.

First and foremost, we need to assume ownership of the vast potential that is legitimately ours. The warts, blemishes and demons that need to be dealt with do not diminish or negate the great power of the soul to reach for the stars.

It is important that we distinguish between recognition and resignation. Resignation writes us off and denies the exalted human capacity for growth.

Recognition serves as a point of departure, a reality check, an accurate picture of where we are at this given moment and where we would like to be down the road.

Every human being comes into this world imperfect and deficient, and it is our life's task to repair the void -- the lack in our person -- and thereby move on to "shelaimut," a state of wholeness.

This existential state of imperfection, of a deep sense that something within us is not whole, dare not be interpreted such that it leads to self-deprecation and feelings of inadequacy. Our self-esteem should acknowledge the fact that we are incomplete and we should stand up with all the dignity inherent in our being proclaiming, "I assume responsibility to fill this void and to deal with the shortcomings in my character, by drawing on the majestic endowment given to me by my Creator."

An instructive anecdote is told of a man who came into possession of a large uncultivated field full of weeds and wild growth. He set about the task of weeding, plowing, planting, and persistently tending the field until it bloomed and became a verdant garden of great beauty.

Proud of his hard work, he invited his friends to view his impressive accomplishment. A cleric in the group exclaimed, "What a magnificent garden the Almighty has here."

To which the owner replied, "Oh really? You should have seen it when the Almighty had it to himself."

Similarly, our sages point out that the name "Adam," assigned to the first human being on earth, shares a root with "adama," which means "earth" in Hebrew. According to Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsh, the inherent message is that just like the earth, which with the care and investment of time and energy, yields products that are both nourishing and pleasing to the eye, so too

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does "Adam," the human soul and psyche of man, respond to dedicated input and efforts towards growth.

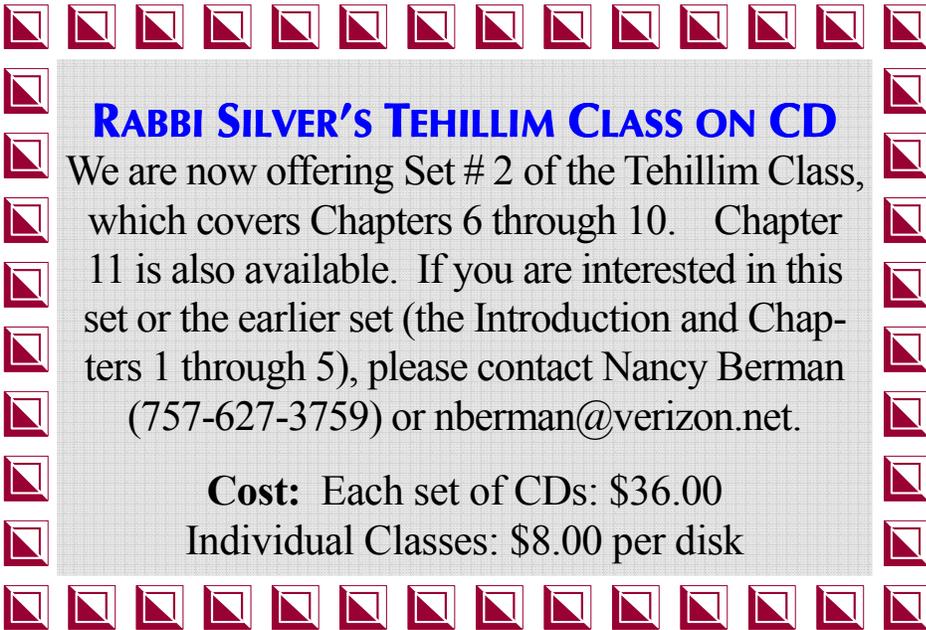
The hallmark of "Adam" is the capacity to grow and become, to look back at yesterday and see that bit-by-bit, we have progressed. We didn't anger as easily today; we were able to withstand an opportunity to gossip; we ate in a more disciplined fashion; we put a smile on our face for no special reason; we didn't get undone in stressful situations; we interacted cordially with people who are not necessarily our favorites.

These may appear to be small steps, perhaps, and few and far between, but they nevertheless represent positive movement up the mountain of self-growth.

Confronting our flaws is an exercise in humility that should not be confused with unworthiness and self-derogation. Humility is positive, constructive, affirmative and honest. Humility is a product of comparing ourselves exclusively with what we are capable of bringing into our lives. In stark contrast to the despair of self-deprecation, it fills us with joy at the prospect that every moment affords us the opportunity to access a better self.

Concurrently, every step towards realizing the potential that waits to be tapped builds our self-esteem. The journey that leads to lasting self-respect must, of necessity, be a dynamic one, of doing, moving, growing and becoming.

We need to look at the people that we admire and seek to emulate their behavior. We need to observe how they conduct themselves, i.e. how they interact with their Creator, their families and their friends. Our sages exhort that every person should ask himself or herself daily,



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"When will my deeds approximate those of my ancestors?" It is noteworthy that they do not suggest that we demand of ourselves to be like our ancestors, but rather to do as they did. To be is static. To do is dynamic.

If my goal is to be a scholar, a righteous person, a sage, an accomplished person in any field, I set myself up for ongoing frustration and disappointment. Because every moment that I fall short of that static goal, I am a failure.

But if I wish to do what a scholar does -- to learn, or do what a righteous person does -- good and meritorious deeds, their every act of emulation identifies me as a success. Success breeds success and builds self-esteem.

In a tribute dinner to my husband many years ago, our then nine-year-old son, Yanke, stood up and shared what he thought was the most powerful lesson his father had taught him. Yanke related that he would often come home downhearted, complaining that someone had criticized him. His father's counsel would always be "If the criticism is true then do something

about it and if it's not, then ignore it."

The wisdom of that advice applies to you, my dear reader, as well. If the criticism of others is on target, then let it be a call to action. Do something about it. Change does not require an overhaul of one's life. Change is evolutionary, not revolutionary. A small step in the right direction will boost your self-esteem like nothing else. It will make you feel alive and healthy. It will confirm the fact that you are choosing your God-given strength to fill your particular "void" and every acquisition, however modest, will bring you closer to your wholeness.

In the final analysis, just as physically our cells are constantly shedding and regenerating, so too, should we be changing and growing in the spiritual realm. Our character and our knowledge base should ever be increasing. The human condition was never meant to be a fixed status quo.

Human beings are referred to in Jewish sources as "holchim," walking and dynamic, in contrast even to the heavenly angels who are re-

ferred to as "omdim," beings that "stand" at a fixed level from the moment of their creation, unable to ascend beyond their station.

Pursuant to this thought, when going on a journey, the proper blessing to the traveler is go "l'shalom," towards peace, and not "b'shalom," in peace. The message conveyed is that as long as we live and breathe we are moving towards peace, wholeness and fulfillment. "In peace," a state of having arrived with no work left to be done, is a departing statement reserved only for the final departure of a deceased person.

For all of us, change, movement and growth are the marching orders for our lives. And if we are imperfect and limited today, as we all are in one way or another, our self-esteem will come from the fact that we have identified the behavior that we value and are moving, step-by-step, to integrate and incorporate it into our lives.

And for those who criticize the fact that we are not there yet and who think that we are not what we should be, we need to remember the words of Eleanor Roosevelt who said, "Nobody can make me feel inferior without my permission." Indeed, if one is on a productive and constructive path, one's self-esteem will not be threatened.

Quite the contrary, the response that will resonate within your innermost being will be, "I am moving towards wholeness." And that is the best anyone can do.

**Biography:** *Rebbetzin Feige Twerski of Milwaukee, Wisconsin has devoted her life to Jewish education and Outreach, giving lectures worldwide on a myriad of Judaic subjects. She is a mother of 11 children, and many grandchildren whose number she refuses to divulge. She serves as the Rebbetzin along side her husband, Rabbi Michel Twerski, of Congregation*

*Beth Jehudah of Milwaukee.*



*A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult Rabbi Silver.*

**How long should the tzitzis strings [on a tallis gadol or katan] be? Is a tallis kosher if one or more strings tears either partially or completely?** Once the tzitzis strings are looped through the hole on the corner of the garment and knotted, the length of the strings - from the top of the first knot to the end of the string - should be no less than 11.4 inches. The first third, approximately, is the gedil, the top segment which is composed of wound and knotted strings, and the lower two thirds, where the strings hang loose, is the anaf.

But the strings need to be no less than 11.4 inches in length only when they are attached initially to the garment. Attaching strings that are shorter than the prescribed length onto the garment renders the tallis pasul. If, however, the strings were the proper length when attached to the garment, but only later were cut or shrunk, the tallis is still kosher as long as the anaf is at least 1.9 inches long.

The following rules apply to tzitzis strings that fall short of the original requirement:

\* If one - but not more - of the eight strings snaps off completely and loses its anaf entirely, the tallis remains kosher l'chatchilah and the proper berachah is recited when it is donned.

\* If more than one of the eight strings snaps off completely, or even if more than one string is less

than 1.9 inches long, the tallis should no longer be worn.

\* If one or two of the eight strings shrank but is still at least 1.9 inches long, the tallis remains kosher l'chatchilah and the proper brachah is recited over it.

\* If three or more [or even all eight] strings shrank but are still at least 1.9 inches long, the tallis remains kosher, but it should be replaced or repaired. If, however, this is the only tallis available, it may be worn and a brachah recited over it.

Note: Our discussion pertains to strings that were cut, got torn or shrank in the anaf portion of the string. If, however, even one string was severed at the point where the tzitzis are attached to the garment [until after the first knot], the tallis is pasul.

**What are the correct dimensions for a tallis katan?** There is a wide range of views in the poskim regarding the proper length and width of a tallis katan: Some hold that there is no minimum at all and a tallis katan of any length or width is acceptable, while others require an extremely long tallis katan, one that will reach below the knees.

The view of most poskim, however, falls somewhere in between these two extremes. The general consensus is that it is appropriate for a G-d fearing individual to wear a tallis katan which is two amos long and one amah wide. Using the middle-of-the-road view as to the exact length of an amah, it follows that the preferred tallis ka-

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tan is at least 42.5 inches long [front to back,] and 21.3 inches wide.

While this is the preferred size, Mishnah Berurah rules that one may wear a tallis katan which is only an amah-and-half long by three-quarters of an amah wide - 32 inches long by 16 inches wide. Note: Chazon Ish rules that each side (shoulder) of the tallis katan by itself must be wider than the opening for the neck. If, for instance, the opening is 15 inches wide, then each side of the tallis must be at least 15 inches wide for a total of 30 inches. Most other poskim do not mention this requirement.

***Should men recite the blessing of al mitzvas tzitzis when they put on their tallis katan in the morning or not?*** In order to understand the different rulings on this issue, the following background information will be helpful:

In past generations, the widely accepted practice was not to recite a brachah on a tallis katan at all; instead, the brachah that was said on the tallis gadol - which was put on later - was intended to retroactively cover the tallis katan as well.

While the concept of a brachah retroactively "covering" a mitzvah is quite unusual, the custom developed because many poskim were hesitant about reciting a brachah over a tallis katan. In order to avoid the risk of a brachah levatalah, they advised that the brachah over the tallis gadol include the tallis katan as well. The reasons for their reluctance to recite a brachah over a tallis katan were:

- \* Often, the tallis katan was of questionable size or material.
- \* The tallis gadol was usually

donned at home (before going to shul), right after the tallis katan was put on. The poskim felt that reciting two brachos [over the same mitzvah] one right after the other is akin to reciting a brachah she'inah tzrichah, an unnecessary blessing.

\* Many people go to sleep in their tallis katan. When that happens, it is questionable whether or not a brachah may be recited over the tallis katan the next morning upon arising.

\* Sometimes the tallis katan is put on either before daybreak, before using the bathroom or before washing the morning netilas yadayim. If so, the brachah is not recited at that time.

\* Because of these and other reasons, the blessing of Al mitzvas tzitzis over the tallis katan was hardly ever recited. Nowadays, however, conditions have changed and several of the reasons mentioned above no longer apply. Contemporary poskim debate whether we should continue a custom which was established long ago, or if the present circumstances warrant changing the custom and reciting a brachah over the tallis katan under the right conditions.

Harav S.Z. Auerbach opined that the custom should not be changed, and those who wear a tallis gadol should have in mind the tallis katan when they recite the brachah over the tallis gadol. Obviously, all those who do not wear a tallis gadol should recite the brachah over the tallis katan at the first possible moment.

The Steipler Gaon, Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky, however, made a distinction between those who go to shul to daven Shacharis as soon as they are dressed and ready, and those who rise early to learn [or re-

cite selichos, etc.] before davening. The first group should not recite a brachah over their tallis katan, since they are going to be reciting the other brachah in short order. The second group, however, who are not going to recite the brachah on the tallis gadol for quite some time, should recite the brachah over the tallis katan.

It seems that the opinion of Harav M. Feinstein was even more inclined toward reciting the brachah over a tallis katan. When asked whether or not to recite a brachah over a tallis katan if there will be a break of twenty minutes between donning the tallis katan and donning the tallis gadol, he answered in the affirmative.

But whichever opinion one follows, a brachah over the tallis katan cannot be recited before mishheyakir, which is approximately 45 minutes before sunrise. Nor can the brachah be recited if one has not used the bathroom and washed his hands for the morning netilas yadayim.

In the event that the tallis katan is put on before mishheyakir or before using the bathroom and washing the hands, the brachah is deferred until the appropriate time. At that time, there is no need to remove and put on the garment again; simply looking at the strings and touching them is sufficient.

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YOM KIPPUR 5734 / 1973  
by Rabbi Nota Schiller

**It's 2 O'clock In The Morning...**

There's a strangeness about writing in these times. On the one hand, there is the desire to share one's

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**If anyone has not been receiving the new Vaad HaKashrus updates via the email or know someone who would be interested in them, please let Rabbi Mostofsky know at: [smostofsky@vaadoftidewater.com](mailto:smostofsky@vaadoftidewater.com)**

thoughts and feelings with a friend; on the other hand, the pace and nature of events move so quickly as to render yesterday's insights musty, all but antiquated. And, of course, we still don't have the cool distance of perspective that lends the surgical ability to dissect feelings and responses. Still there's a kind of validity in trying to freeze a feeling or two. To catch it on the cooled slide and submit it to the scrutiny of analysis. None of this can yet be conclusion; it is all process.

#### **The First Thing We Knew...**

I close my eyes and I see my daughters running and screaming towards me as the siren screeches overhead to run for the shelters. The distance as I run toward them seems immeasurable. Praying together in a shelter adds a dimension to what we call kavana (concentrated feeling).

At 5:30 A.M., down at Shaarei Tzedek Hospital, now a military hospital, I have been waiting in line with the other volunteer drivers to pick up doctors and nurses. Public transportation is practically non-existent. The fellow next to me is a professor of psychology at the university. He studied at the

same yeshiva as I in the States. He has a lulav and etrog and a soldier comes over to say a prayer with them. The talk is not one of concern about losing, but one of what price must be paid to win. In one corner of my mind, I see a certain beauty in the breakthrough in the human dimension. Jews non-religious, religious, Western, and Oriental - are in it together and there is a camaraderie, a melting of the icy walls that at other times separate.

The radio says nine of the 11 bridges the Egyptians threw across the Suez have been knocked out. Then later we hear that these temporary pontoon bridges can be rebuilt in four hours.

Dayan sounds a lot more cautious in his appraisals than I would like him to sound. The radio also says that there is no need to hoard, yet the next morning people mob the corner grocery, buying up sugar, flour, noodles, as if planning for a siege. They rush to the bread bins as if it were gold. Later, other people go around asking if some families need bread; they will share what they have.

The blackouts have sapped the life from the city at night. People stay

close to home. Each night the HAGA (civil defense) come by blowing whistles and hollering for violators to douse their lights.

Even as you function one ear of your mind listens for the siren and you think about what would be the right thing to do - whether or not to listen to the school authorities when they say don't come for your child if there is a siren; they will lead the children to shelters, and parents should go to the ones nearest them.

A theme of being insignificant, as an individual, as a nation, as the giant meshing gears grind around us. Yet a certain sense of significance returns with being at the eye of the storm, with this devastating fulfillment for those lines in the Prophets. But this significance comes now mitigated with a fresh humility.

#### **Hakafot With Soldiers**

At the conclusion of Shmini Atzeres, which is the beginning of Simchat Torah outside of Israel, we drive in a few cars out to the Jordan Valley. It is a motley group that drives with us. We have gotten special permission to bring a band

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and some rabbis out to an army encampment to make Hakafot Shniot - a second round of dancing with the Torah Scrolls for the soldiers. Turning off the Jerusalem-Jericho road, we see soldiers from time to time, their khakis making them look like part of the desert-dry shrubbery that abounds here. Then we meet our military escort and we turn on to a dirt road built by the Romans that connects through to Jerusalem around Wadi Kelt. Conceivably, this could be used as a tank route, and of course, for armored divisions by the Jordanians. Our army hosts are there to watch out for that contingency. As we are told, they would blow up the road were the Jordanians to be moving.

But now we see some tents spread out over the sandy desolation. Stark emptiness, except for the presence of the soldiers. We are standing now at the center, which is nothing more than a few communications bunkers dug into the ground and the surrounding tents. We are told that the hills all around are dotted with our men. The first soldiers to greet us, as we pull up in a cloud of dust, are some former neighbors of mine: one, a Yemenite Jew; the other, a Hassidic fellow. It seems as if this is the first time I've seen the Yemenite fellow in uniform; and my first reaction to the Hassid was that it's the first time I've seen him out of uniform. I've never seen such a star-strewn sky - the brightness, the effervescence of the stars is overwhelming. And the sukka. That simple makeshift sukka in the middle of the desert. On the one hand, it seems to belong here more than a sukka belongs anywhere else. On the other hand, there is a certain strangeness in this festive booth in the middle

of the stark, empty desert.

One of the soldiers invites a rabbi to speak. This rabbi, an army chaplain, says the Arab attack is an attack upon our people. Our people have been sustained by our tradition throughout our history, a tradition which expresses our trust and belief in God, that He will see us through to victory. And so, when we dance now, with the Torah Scrolls, our dancing is an affirmation of this trust. A tractor, the few cars that we drove in with, and some army vehicles are formed into a circle and the headlights are turned on. A loud-speaker has been attached to one of the batteries of the cars. The Torah Scrolls are carried to the center of the circle. Two long-haired, young soldiers - one with a submachine gun, the other with a rifle slung over his shoulder - hold the Torah by the wood handles at the bottom, pushing it high into the air. The music explodes and soldiers come running to dance. The words of the song are a line from the Prophets expressing belief and trust in God and His Torah. The circle churns, the 15 of us in civilian clothes melding into the khaki swirl of movement. The voices reach and cry with a special kind of defiance. A defiance at those would-be conquerors. The soldier next to me screams, "Sing loud friend, let that mamzer Hussein try and figure this out."

"Nobody has ever made hakafot in this place," says one soldier. The sand fills up into our lungs as we dance, and we dance.

There is a break, and one of the soldiers runs up to the mike and says, "There is another reason for our simcha tonight." and explains that one of the soldiers' wives had had a boy only that morning. Somebody brought the message

from Jerusalem with our caravan. The father is dragged out into the center. A handsome, rugged-looking young man. Two friends lift him on to a third fellow's shoulders and the singing and dancing erupt again. At the next pause, some cases of wine, brandy and soda and home-baked cake are brought out. The new father's mother and mother-in-law had sent them along for the occasion. This, of course, is a Jewish army. I learned that the best way to open a Coca-Cola in the desert is with the back of an Uzi rifle. As if it were measured to size, a perfect bottle opener. Somebody turns on a transistor on the side - the fighting at the Suez, the clashes at the Golan are intense, vicious - blood is being spilled. Somebody's brother, somebody's father, is being maimed, killed. Who knows, maybe Hussein will come down this Roman road tomorrow and we too will get our chance. For now it is quiet and the huddled group around the transistor, as if by consent, decide to fill that quiet with a song, a song that is a prayer, a song that is a declaration.

A soldier says to me, "I am not religious, but I would forget my name before I forget these hakafot." And deep down in my heart, I know that just as I have never seen the stars so clearly, so brightly, as I am seeing them now through the pure ether of this high desert mountain overlooking the wadi, I know that I have never seen these Jews so brightly, so effervescently as I see them now. Their eyes burn with an intensity as cold and as new as the stars. On the road home through the Arab habitations around the Mount of Olives down through east Jerusalem, the blackout is still in full force. There is an

erie quality to the thick darkness that envelops the city.

### **Back Home...**

The usual post-Sukkot vacation has been called off at our yeshiva. The American and Canadian boys have all remained despite pleas from many of their parents to return home. Learning is a dimension of prayer for us, a ritual of devotion. This is no time for vacation. Some of the boys are doing part-time volunteer work at the post office or at the pharmaceutical factories. We hang up blankets on the windows to keep the blackout regulations, and I begin a lecture in the tractate of the Talmud that we have decided to learn this semester. The Rabbi, the instructor, in the class across the hall arrives in his uniform. The tzitzit hang out at his sides - somehow, all part of the uniform.

A few new students have come to the yeshiva. They come as volunteers and find there is no need for them. One is an ex-marine from Virginia, another, a paramedic, and a third, a graduate student who "just felt he had to be here now." None can read Aleph-Bet, but something in them wants to know now what is this thing called Judaism. They register for our three-month beginners program.

People in the streets talk about the Russians coming; we read that portion of the Haftarah that talks of the war of Gog and Magog in the end of days preceding the coming of the Messiah. The storekeeper, the policeman, the cab driver, the nurse, say maybe this is it. The count-down between America and Russia.

A few great rabbis are quoted as having made predictions and then we hear denials of the quotes.

There is criticism, unhappiness,

about the lack of having been prepared. There is mistrust of the cease-fire. Why didn't we stall a few days till we could deal a severer blow to Egypt. Obviously the Russians only wanted a cease-fire because this blow seemed imminent. And what does it mean? How soon will the next war be? The soldiers are still away. The Arabs will not give POW lists. Europe has buckled to Arab oil pressure. America has helped. But...

### **Encounter On The Golan**

Then past the evacuated refugee camps, beyond Jericho, speeding through the arid desert of the Jordan Valley, through the naked desolation. Two hours drive on towards Beit Shean, where the Jordan slithers into the Kinneret and the low-lying lands suddenly erupt with greenness and vegetation. The Kinneret like a shimmering, silver pearl set in its ring of lavender mountains.

Climbing the twisting mountain roads to Rosh Pina. There receiving our Army Rabbinate guides and passes to visit the outposts on the Golan. We need a special pass to go beyond the "purple line" that designates the new bulge into Syria, because there is till a "dripping" of artillery fire falling there. From the moment that we cross over the Bnot Yaakov Bridge an ironic calm grabs us. The first tanks we see are remnants of the Six Day War, when our soldiers had to walk up a wall imbedded with Syrian bunkers to get the Golan. The Syrian Customs House, now a check point for soldiers leaving the Heights, military police inspecting for booty. The armored division camps "Storm" and "Hurricane", their tanks resting as if exhausted from the raging clashes. Soldiers wave us down,

they want prayer books, Tehilim (Psalms) and tefilin.

Out in the fields the twisted, broken steel of burnt-out war machines. Syrian tanks ironically immobile, tranquil. The mountain air is exhilarating, the day brilliantly clear: it seems the wrong place, an impossible scene for so much death. We meet the Hevra Kadisha - mostly religious soldiers who had retrieved bodies and limbs from smoldering tanks for burial. It was nasty work and the secular kibbutznik with the sun-browned face says the "Hevra" are great men.

Through the ghost town of Kuneitra: this once-was city. the shambles, the parts of walls that still stand, pierced with gaping holes. A vanished civilization. The extroverted camaraderie catches you, the vestiges of formality have been left down below; here up on the Golan, the immediacy, the quickness, the closeness of communication. The snow-capped Hermon majestically dominating the horizon: we're back up there now. Perhaps more purple that hue, it has been stained with young blood.

Khan Irnava, a primitive Arab village, mud and straw huts, discs of drying cow dung piled for building, the maze of interconnecting courtyards, no plumbing. In the improvised synagogue, a side wall ripped apart from the shelling, the roof of bamboo reeds open in spots, a small ark has been set on overturned empty ammunition boxes. We pray, I speak, and as I speak the 40 or so soldiers huddle together in the hardly lit, unheated cold of the Syrian night, their faces cast a strange spell over me. By all accounts and measurements these men have acquitted themselves superbly. They are unquestionably superior soldiers. But these boys

and men do not have the eyes of warriors. These sons of King David know that if there is a time to fight they must fight, but David wrote the Psalms as well and that was the distilled essence of his soul, of a Jew's soul. They do not hate the Arabs. But they are outraged at stories of torture and murder of POW's.

After the lectures we talk deep into the night. They want to talk about death. About whether there is an afterlife. About how can the world be so callous and immoral to spill out blood to make room for oil. Walking through the mud and rubble, sipping coffee in tents, through the entire night jeeps and halftracks in constant movement in and out of the village. Why didn't the Syrians keep going? One thousand, five hundred tanks with no opposition left. Why did they stop? Can that be called a miracle. Nonsense, says the officer, we found their plans and they had no intention of going any further. Double-nonsense, say I, those plans were made before they knew how easy it was going to be for them to come through!

And what about their attacking on Yom Kippur, another soldier interjecting, that was calculated to catch us off guard. Yet, given our state of unpreparedness, the quick mobilization was only possible because it was Yom Kippur - that is the only day of the year that 85 percent of the country is either at synagogue or home and the roads are empty. We argue about the validity of secular Zionism, how values such as self-sacrifice and patriotism, if they are to be absolute and binding, must have their source in the Absolute. But even the arguments are within the family, and we can jostle each other affectionately to press our points, and paragraphs

are punctuated with swigs from the bottle of brandy that is passed around to relieve the sting of the night air chill. Stories of tanks blown out from underneath them, of wandering behind enemy lines for days.

Kinship with Jews all over the world is openly acknowledged and appreciated. They are fascinated at Jewish commitment. A few are cynical about money-giving as an easy way out - but most are sincere and proud that they can count on that commitment. The desertion by our allies and so-called neutral nations that shocked him into a new sense of his own Jewishness, says the division doctor. "Till now I was an Israeli, now I have become a Jew." It is a line in the Torah I offer: "There is a people that dwells apart, not reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23.9). Which has been understood to mean that if they forget this solitary destiny, then the reminder will come through nations not reckoning with the Jews.

### **Now, The Waiting Starts Again...**

Though the rumors of the number of casualties run much higher, the published reports are 1854 dead, and 1800 wounded. It hits me that the war lasted 18 days and we are abounding in multiples of chai. Without any pretense to being hot on the trail of a visionary revelation, it yet occurs to me to look at the 18th weekly portion in the Torah, the 18th line. I check it and it reads: "When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or a fist, and he does not die but has to take to his bed..." (Exodus 21:18). Looking further, I discover the Midrash (Shmot Raba 30) says that this is referring to Egypt attacking Israel: "gangsters entering the vine-

yard of the king." That Pharaoh will not be consoled for his losses at the Red Sea until he sees the massive destruction of Gog and Magog. And one of the commentators points out that this idea of Egypt attacking in the vineyard of the Lord - meaning Israel - has its origin in the line "...little foxes that ruin the vineyards" (Song of Songs 2:15), which is interpreted by the Midrash (S.R. 22) to be a reference to Egypt attacking Israel, an Egypt like "little foxes" because she is clever - always looking behind her to see who is there, to check on who is backing her!

Hospital wards are full of wounded soldiers, many amputees. A one-armed, black-eyed young soldier grins and asks for tefilin. "When I had two arms I didn't wear them. Now I have one arm left, I think it's time. What do you think?" I find it hard to smile and choke back the cry in my throat. Turning away so he shouldn't see my tears, I wind the tefilin around his arm.

Even now it is still in process. Mr. Kissinger is an artist, but artists tend not to be didactic. The beauty of their creation is self-justifying. We are but a part of this massive mural he is designing that will immortalize him. Is it really possible for a little dependent democracy to exist side by side with sprawling dictatorships? Can they afford paying the price of giving up a convenient scapegoat for all their internal problems? The morning papers have a photo of Kissinger smiling with Sadat, but the grocery man's son was killed yesterday, despite the cease-fire, despite the smiles. Men have died so that we may live. Their purpose in dying was that we might live. What is our purpose in living? And can a nation be purely secular and still call

upon its people to make superhuman sacrifices? Can idealism as whim suffice to sustain the galloping needs of our times? Today, tomorrow, the denouement is in process. Such are some of the questions, the options, the multiples of chai.

*Author's Biography: Rabbi Nota Schiller, dean and founder of Ohr Somayach wrote this diary during the Yom Kippur War. It was published in Shma Yisrael magazine.*



by Lori Palatnik

**Your handy guide to prepare and organize for a spectacular Shabbat.**

Preparing for Shabbat is a matter of learning and experience, which, in time, become as natural as breathing. Hang in there, and find the rhythm that's best for you.

As you go through this list, click on the links for more detailed "how-to" articles.

**DURING THE WEEK**

1. Plan your Shabbat menu early in the week. If you've invited guests, be sure to find out if they have dietary or health restrictions.
2. Make a list of what to buy and what to do, and cross things off as you do them.
3. Do the "heavy" chores early in the week. Leave only the surface cleaning for Friday.
4. If you find yourself with some extra time on your hands (an unexpected long phone call, kids playing quietly), check

grains, sift flour, etc. Then put them in a bag and freeze.

5. Double the recipe for challah, cakes, kugels, gefilte fish. Use half one week and freeze the other half. Be sure to label each item.
6. Give each of your children their own special task to be done in honor of Shabbat.

\* \* \*

Create a "before Shabbat" checklist to make sure all tasks are finished by candle lighting. This list may include any or all of the following:

**LIGHTS AND ELECTRIC**

1. *Ambient Lighting.* Since Shabbat is to be a "delight," make sure your home is comfortable. Sufficient light should be available, so decide which lights will be left on and off.
2. *Timers.* You can use timers so that lights will come on and off automatically throughout Shabbat. Simple timers that your lamps plug into can be picked up at most hardware or department stores and are quite affordable. Set them to go off Friday night about 11:30 or so (depending on your own sleeping schedule), and have them come on in the late afternoon Shabbat day, perhaps around 5:00, or whenever it begins to get dark.. For overhead lighting such as chandeliers, wall timers can be easily installed in your light switches.
3. *Switches.* Many people put a piece of tape over the light switches in high-traffic areas such as bathrooms, so that there is no involuntary switching on and off. Jewish bookstores sell special decorative light-switch covers.
4. *Fridge.* The most important

light is the one in the refrigerator and/or freezer. Unscrew the light bulb inside, so that it is off during the whole Shabbat. Otherwise, opening the fridge will be just like turning on a light, which is not permitted on Shabbat.

5. *Thermostat.* Set heat or air conditioning at the right temperature.
6. *Fans.* They can be moved without unplugging them during Shabbat, but they can't be turned on or off, so set the levels before Shabbat. Same with humidifiers.

**FOOD**

1. *Preparing.* On Friday afternoon, taste the food. If you taste the food before Shabbat begins, it will whet your appetite for the coming feast!
2. *Complete.* Is all cooking complete? Anything that will remain hot (on a blech or in a slow-cooker) should be cooked before Shabbat begins. Even though cold salads can usually be prepared on Shabbat, it's often nice to have everything done ahead. Also: Open all cans, bottles and containers of food.
3. *Warming Tray.* Cooking is not allowed on Shabbat, but keeping cooked food warm during Shabbat (and in some cases, warming up cooked food that is cold) is not only permissible, but considered part of the mitzvah of making Shabbat a delight. However, since there is a possibility that one may adjust the controls to regulate the degree of heat reaching the food, a reminder that this is not permitted on Shabbat is required. An electric warming tray is good for this; others cover their

stovetop with a blech (a simple piece of sheet metal). It is placed, before Shabbat, over the four burners. Usually one or two of the burners are left on fairly low underneath, and the food that you wish to serve hot that evening (or the next day) is placed on the blech to remain at a warm-to-low simmer until it is ready to be eaten. Also it's a good idea to heat up your food 30 minutes before Shabbat, so that things are hot before placing them on the blech to simmer. The beauty of a blech is that you can move the food around on top, either closer or farther away from the source of heat, depending on how hot you wish that dish to be. For example, if you have a vegetable soup in a pot on the blech that you served soup from for the Friday night meal, and you wish to serve it the next day for lunch, you simply leave it on the blech slightly off the area of immediate heat. That way, it will stay hot without boiling away. For more detailed laws, please speak to Rabbi Silver.

4. *Oven Technique.* If you do not wish to use a blech, or you have too much food to fit on the stovetop, you can use the inside of the oven in the following way: Heat up your prepared food ahead of time inside the oven (15 to 30 minutes). If you are serving this food Friday night, you may have at least a 1-hour delay between candle lighting and the time you actually sit down and eat (to say nothing of the preliminaries: songs, kiddush, washing, appetizers, and so forth). To be able to serve the food

hot, here's a good trick: Time the 15-to-30-minute reheating period to be just before candle lighting. At the last minute, put a challah wrapped in foil into the oven with the rest of the food, close it up, and turn the heat up very high for one minute. Then turn it off. Do not open it again until you're ready to serve the food. Everything inside should remain hot, if well wrapped to ensure minimal heat loss. It is also a good idea to make your meat with sauces, so they won't dry out. If you are serving hot vegetables, undercook them, because this warming period will do most of the cooking for you.

5. *Slow cooker.* This can be used instead of, or in addition to, a blech. Your soup or cholent stew can simmer effortlessly overnight in these "crock pots." As a reminder that we don't cook on Shabbat, it is proper to cover the controls with foil.
6. *Water urn or large thermos.* Because you can't boil water (which is cooking) on Shabbat, use a hot-water urn, such as the kind you see at parties, which is plugged in before Shabbat and will keep the water hot the whole Shabbat. (Or use a large thermos that was filled with hot water before Shabbat, or simply a large pot that will keep warm on the blech.) With the hot-water urn, making coffee and tea is quite simple. Just fill a clean, dry cup or mug with hot water, and pour that water into a second mug where you will add instant coffee, tea, and so forth. The reason for the intermediary mug is to cool the water down slightly so that again you don't transgress the

law against cooking on Shabbat. If you choose to use the thermos, no intermediary mug is needed, as the water was already poured from the kettle to the thermos, an act that serves the same purpose. Just be sure to boil the water before Shabbat and fill the thermos full.

7. *Washing dishes.* Since you can't use the hot-water tap (falling under the prohibition of cooking, since hot water removed from the hot-water tank is replaced by cold water, which then becomes hot), here's a good trick to have hot water for washing dishes: Just before candle lighting, fill one kitchen sink with hot water. Squeeze in some dishwashing soap and cover the whole sink with foil. After dinner (even hours later), simply remove the foil, and, voila, hot water to wash it all up!

## ATMOSPHERE

1. *Ready.* Some make a point of covering the table with a special Shabbat tablecloth early in the day, as well as placing the candles and challah on the table in advance to usher in a Shabbat atmosphere.
2. *Clean.* One should wash the floor, vacuum the carpet, take a shower, don special clothing, and even change the bed sheets -- all in honor of Shabbat.
3. *Flowers.* It's a nice custom to buy flowers to adorn the Shabbat table. They should be placed in water before Shabbat begins. Plants should also be watered, if necessary, ahead of time.
4. *Candlesticks.* It's nice to have special candlesticks to light candles on, especially if they were candlesticks handed

down in the family. But in a pinch, melt the candles on the back of a plate. It's nice to have extra candlesticks for guests to light as well. Polish your silver candlesticks and kiddush cups and set them out on a white tablecloth to give your home a beautiful Shabbat atmosphere.

5. *D'var Torah*. Set aside an hour on Thursday night or Friday to review the weekly Torah portion, and prepare a few words that can launch a discussion of a relevant spiritual topic.
6. *Make-up*. All makeup should be applied before Shabbat begins, as it falls under the prohibition of "dyeing." There is special Shabbat makeup available that can be applied on Shabbat (very loose powders, eye shadows, and others).
7. *Muktzeh* (literally, "set aside"). These are things that have no use on Shabbat and therefore shouldn't be handled, for example: money, pens, Palm Pilot. Place these items out of reach so you won't come to use them. Some people have a "muktzah drawer," into which things get thrown at the last minute. Also: Unplug the phone, and put away (or cover) the toaster, telephone, stereo, etc.
8. *Toys*. Crayons, modeling clay, scissors, etc., shouldn't be used by children on Shabbat. Try to put them away to avoid any problems.
9. Last-minute phone calls. Call someone and wish them "Good Shabbos!" -- "Shabbat Shalom!"

## SUPPLIES

1. *Kerchiefs*. When a married woman lights candles, it is proper for her to cover her head

when saying the blessing. So have pretty kerchiefs available for yourself and for guests.

2. *Kippot*. Men and boys should wear a kippah at the Shabbat table, so it's nice to have some extras around, in case your guests didn't come with their own. (BYOK-Bring Your Own Kippah) Also called yarmulke (in Yiddish).
3. *Kiddush cup*. It's nice to have a special cup to make kiddush with. This can be an expensive silver goblet, or an affordable yet attractive wine glass, or anything in between. The cup must hold a minimum of 4 ½ ounces.
4. *Small kiddush cups*. After the blessing over the wine, the wine is poured into smaller glasses to be passed around to all those seated at the table. Sets of these (in silver or glass) can be purchased at local Jewish book or gift stores, or simply substitute small "shot glasses" or plastic cups.
5. *Washing cup*. Two-handled cups can be purchased at Jewish book or gift stores, or a quick substitute can be a large mug or glass.
6. *Washing sign*. You can print out a sign with the blessing for washing hands in Hebrew and phonetics. It simplifies the washing process and helps those who may not know the blessing.
7. *Challah board*. There are bread boards and knives made especially for the Shabbat table, often made out of olive wood or stone. Or use any kind of cutting board.
8. *Challah cover*. This can be a pretty napkin, or it can be a

specially made challah cover, which is draped over the challah before and during ha-motzi. This is symbolic of the dew that covered the manna that fell for the Jewish people in the desert.

9. *Mayim Acharonim*. This is the "final water" that is passed around to wash your fingertips with. You can purchase a cup and saucer designed especially for this, or simply use a cup in a small bowl.
10. *Bentchers*. These are small books that contain blessings for candles, Kiddush and Grace After Meals. Many bentchers also contain songs for the Shabbat table. It's good to have enough for each person to have his or her own.
11. *Havdalah candle*. A braided candle is used for the Havdalah ceremony that officially ends Shabbat. They can be purchased at most Jewish bookstores and come in decorative colors and varied lengths. If you don't have one, simply use two candles, putting their wicks together while they burn.
12. *Spice box*. Cloves or sweet pepper used in the Havdalah ceremony can be beautifully encased in a decorative spice box made of silver, ceramic, wood, or other materials (available at Jewish book and gift stores). If you don't have one, just use the bottle that the spice came in.
13. *Complete Havdalah sets* -- kiddush cup, candle holder, and spice box -- are often purchased together. Makes a terrific gift!
14. *Facial tissues*. Make sure there are tissues or pre-torn toilet paper in all the bathrooms.

15. *Foil and paper towels.* You may want to pre-tear plastic wrap, foil, and /or paper towels, if you think you'll be needing them on Shabbat. Foil can actually be purchased in pre-torn sheets in a large boxed dispenser. For a neat paper-towel substitute, just use inexpensive paper napkins.

*Adapted from "Friday Night and Beyond" by Lori Palatnik (Jason Aronson Pub.)*

*Author Biography: Lori Palatnik is an author and Jewish educator who has appeared on television and radio and has lectured in North America, the U.K., South Africa and Israel, illuminating traditional practices and life-styles for our contemporary world.*

## Upcoming community events...

This week's Kiddush is being sponsored by Rabbi Mordechai and Ariella Loiterman and family in honor of our wonderful community who has been so supportive and caring to our family this past year, especially these last two months. A special thank you to our esteemed Rabbi and Rebbetzin - Rabbi and Mrs. Silver.

This week's Shalosh Seudos is co-sponsored by: Gershon Rothman in honor of Chana Leah's birthday and their 21st wedding anniversary and Allan and Nancy Berman and family, with gratitude to Hashem for the many Nissim he performed this past Sunday.

### PIRKEI AVOS FOR WOMEN

We are now in the "second round" of Pirkei Avos (Chapter 3). All women and girls are welcome to join. This week's class will be held at the home of Helen Schloss-Griffin at 5:00 PM. Please bring your own Pirkei Avos.

### TEHILLIM CLASS ON CD

We are now offering Set # 2 of the Tehillim Class, which covers Chapters 6 through 10. The set is \$36.00. Chapter 11 is available for \$8.00. If you are interested in this set or the earlier set (the Introduction and Chapters 1 through 5), please contact Nancy Berman.

## The Coming Week in a Glance

### Davening Times

#### Shabbos 6/27

Shacharis	9:00 AM
Mincha	7:55 PM
Maariv/Havdalah	9:15 PM

#### Sun. 6/28

Shachris	8:00 AM
Mincha	8:10 PM

#### Mon. 6/29

Shachris	6:45 AM
Mincha	8:10 PM

#### Tues. 6/30

Shachris	7:00 AM
Mincha	8:10 PM

#### Wed. 7/1

Shachris	7:00 AM
Mincha	8:10 PM

#### Thurs. 7/2

Shachris	7:00 AM
Mincha	8:10 PM

#### Fri. 7/3

Shachris	7:00 AM
Mincha	6:45 PM

**One cannot accept Shabbos or light candles before 6:57 PM**

<b>Candle Lighting</b>	<b>7:15 PM</b>
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### Class Times

#### Shabbos

Daf Yomi	6:10 PM
Sefer Shmuel	7:10 PM
Boy's Learning	7:20 PM

#### Sunday

Daf Yomi	7:00 AM
Gemara Rosh Hashanah	9:00AM
Halacha Class:	cancelled

#### Monday

Daf Yomi	6:00 AM
Parsha class:	cancelled

#### Tuesday

Daf Yomi	6:00 AM
Ladies Class:	cancelled

#### Wednesday

Daf Yomi	6:00 AM
Partners in Torah (M)	7:00 PM

#### Thursday

Cantorial Class	7:00 PM
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#### Friday

Daf Yomi	6:00 AM
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