

# The Shul

at the Lubavitch Center

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May 7, 2016

Acharai Mot – Shabbat M'vorchim

29 Nisan, 5776

## A Trophy

The trophy sits on the shelf. We forget about it, except once in a while, in passing, when we glance up or someone says something - then we remember. We remember the moment of victory, we remember receiving it. The joy, the triumph, the transportation beyond ourselves - how can one describe such emotions? If you've had the feeling, you know it - know it so deeply you can return to the moment and re-experience it. The swirling sensation, the sense of self-dominance, the assuredness of ascendancy over opponents and obstacles alike.

Yet the trophy, this symbolic success, questions the value of winning. At least, at times this thought come to mind: "Do not be like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward, but rather be like servants who serve their master without the intent of receiving a reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you." (That's Antigonus of Socho, Ethics of the Fathers 1:3).

The victory should be its own reward. Oh, I know the trophy's only symbolic - didn't I just say that? - but still, what does it symbolize? Something material, a competitive victory. And if we say, let the game or the sport be a metaphor for a mitzva, an analogy for action spiritual, then we're back to Antigonus of Socho. We struggle and wrestle with our yetzer hara - our evil inclination - for a trifle. We serve for the sake of a reward.

We pursue the token, the reward of our mitzvot - be it health, wealth, wisdom, long life, an after-life. Do we really keep kosher only and just because G-d says so? Well, yes, but - but do we in truth have no other motive, no trinket of superiority in sight?

This business of trophies, of rewards - of getting things for doing well - doesn't it seem a little bothersome, even once in a while? (Doing well, doing right, doing good - conquering adversity and conquering adversaries - the ideas are transferable. Athletics, sports, competition prepare you for life; they're a microcosm of the personal and social struggle. Etc. They teach discipline, responsibility. Etc. Etc. Effort, talent, persistence are rewarded, just like in the "real world." Etc. Etc. Etc. And the reward for all this? A cheap - or not so cheap - statue.)

So where's the altruism, the realization that "the reward of a mitzva is a mitzva"? (That's Ben Azzai, in Ethics 4:2.) Indeed, there's a story of the Baal Shem Tov being told that he lost his share in the World to Come, because he defied a heavenly decree to help out a fellow Jew. The Baal Shem Tov rejoiced for he knew then that he served G-d "as a servant who serves his Master without intent of receiving a reward." He could serve G-d simply and completely for G-d's sake, not his own. (Of course, he was later granted again a share in the World to Come.)

It seems to me that while we struggle against the animal within and the temptations without, we strive for a balance between the selfish and the selfless. If we are to follow the dictate to "set aside your will because of His will..." (Rabban Gamliel, Ethics 2:4) it means we have to have a will of our own to start with.

So maybe the trophy mentality isn't so bad. Maybe materialistic acknowledgment of achievement carries a spiritual significance. A gold star, a fancy car - a trophy. Maybe it's not the trophy itself, the sign, that matters, but what the trophy stands for - what is signified. What did we do to earn it, anyway?

There is a reward for our labors, our struggles. We earn the trophy, the World to Come, Redemption, the days of Moshiach. But to do so, our struggle has to be the right struggle. As Rabbi Elazar said (Ethics, 2:14): "Be diligent in the study of Torah; know what to answer an unbeliever; and know before Whom you toil, and Who your employer is that will pay you the reward of your labor."

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

## All You Need Is Love

*One of the most famous phrases in the Torah reading is (Vayikra 19:18), "You shall love your fellow as yourself." R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; Spain and Eretz Yisrael; 1194-1270) writes about this mitzvah:*

(continued on the other side)

What the Torah is expressing is the ideal, but a person's heart is not capable of loving another person as it loves itself. Moreover, Rabbi Akiva taught (Bava Metzia 62a) that saving one's own life takes precedence over saving another person's life. [Rabbi Akiva spoke of two people traveling in a desert, one of whom has water and the other doesn't. If there is only enough water for one to survive, he is not permitted to share, which would not be the case if he had to love the other as much as he loves himself].

Rather, Ramban writes, the mitzvah is to desire your friend's success as you desire your own. Typically, a person desires his friend's success in one area, but not in another. And, if one does desire that his friend have everything that he has himself, he still wishes to have more than his friend has. This mitzvah, however, requires a person to not be jealous and not compare his success to his friend's success. This is what the prophet means when he says about the love of Yehonatan, son of King Shaul, for the future King David (Shmuel I 20:17): "He loved him as he loved himself." [Yehonatan knew that only one of them—Yehonatan or David—could succeed Shaul as king, but that did not lessen his love for David.]

(by Rabbi Shlomo Katz from Project Genesis at [www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org))

Bikur Cholim of Baltimore's Annual Women's Brunch will be held Sunday, May 15 at Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion at 10:30 a.m. This year's honorees include Mrs. Devorah Schor, Mrs. Erica Kelemer, and Mrs. Rikki Klein. Minimum donation is \$25. Any contribution above \$36 will be listed in the Scroll of Appreciation (includes admission). The Weiskind Family will share their personal hakaras hatov story. For reservations call 410-999-3700 x103 or register at [www.baltimorebikurcholim.org](http://www.baltimorebikurcholim.org).

**Mr. Ephraim and Mrs. Brochi Siff**  
are sponsoring the kiddush this Shabbat  
in commemoration of the יאהרצייט of **Rabbi Aaron Felder**  
הרב אהרן בן הרב גדליהו זצ"ל



**Yahrzeits This Week:**

|                  |                                  |            |                                 |
|------------------|----------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Daniel Schechter | 29 Nisan - Friday night/Shabbat  | for father | Moshe ben Yehuda Tzvi           |
| Judy Elbaum      | 30 Nisan - Saturday night/Sunday | for father | Shlomo Yankov ben Mordechai Zvi |
| David Marks      | 3 Iyar - Tuesday night/Wednesday | for father | Moshe ben Yitzchak              |

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**Davening and Shiurim Schedule**

**Friday, 5/6— 28 Nisan**

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

**Shabbat, 5/7 — 29 Nisan**

Shacharit — 8:40 a.m.  
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:29 a.m.  
Berachot Gemora Shiur — 6:30 p.m.  
Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 7:30 p.m.  
Ma'ariv — 8:48 p.m.

**Sunday, 5/8 — Rosh Chodesh Iyar — 30 Nisan**

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.  
Shulchan Aruch Shiur — 8:45 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.

**Monday, 5/9 — Rosh Chodesh Iyar — 1 Iyar**

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.  
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.

**Tuesday, 5/10 — 2 Iyar**

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.

**Wednesday, 5/11 — 3 Iyar**

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.

**Thursday, 5/12 — Yom Ha'atzmaut — 4 Iyar**

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.  
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.  
Tanya Shiur — 9:00 p.m.

**Friday, 5/13 — 5 Iyar**

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
Candles — 7:54 p.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.