

The Shul
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February 13, 2021

Mishpatim – Parshat Shekalim – Rosh Chodesh Adar

1 Adar, 5781

Stay Focused

There's a story told by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev about a particularly pious shochet (ritual slaughterer). One time he was preparing to slaughter a chicken. Now, the laws of kosher are quite strict about all aspects of the process. The knife has to be free of any nicks, the stroke has to be a single motion, severing the jugular vein and nerve instantly, etc. Needless to say, taking the animal's life cannot be done casually, indifferently. The shochet must concentrate, approach his task with a degree of trepidation. A shochet must be a G-d-fearing individual.

Since slaughtering an animal according to the laws of kosher is a mitzva (commandment), naturally, a shochet has to say a blessing beforehand. Not only this, but, as with every mitzva, the act contains mystical elements and reveals deep spiritual truths. We can well imagine that someone who has studied the mystical literature would meditate on these hidden, awe-inspiring, Divine aspects of an otherwise mundane task.

And so it was with our shochet. In preparation for reciting the blessing, he began to meditate on the kabbalistic implications of the act. This in turn brought him to a state of rapt *deveykut* - attachment to the Divine. His soul soared, his whole being, it seemed, concentrated on its connection with G-d. When his meditations had at last plumbed the mystical depths of the act he was about to perform, he opened his eyes, prepared to recite the *brocha* and - discovered that in the meantime the chicken had taken advantage of his other-worldly pre-occupation to make its escape.

The startled shochet looked around and, in amazement cried, "Where's the chicken?"

The simple meaning of the story is obvious: stay focused on the task at hand. For all of the shochet's lofty meditations, when it came time to perform the mitzva, to slaughter a chicken so that a family could have a kosher meal, for Shabbat, let's say, it didn't happen. Indeed, even the chicken that flew the coop - its spiritual purpose went unfulfilled; perhaps it was supposed to feed a poor family?

It's not that the shochet did anything wrong - on the contrary! He was trying to reach sublime spiritual levels. We can even say that he was trying to elevate the "spark of holiness" residing in the chicken he was about to slaughter.

But, because he got distracted, because he forgot his primary task - nothing happened.

The point is, it's easy to lose focus even, especially when concentrating on good things. We can't fault the man's intentions. And he did, in fact, obtain high mystical insights. But - where was the chicken?

In this regard, we need to also remember that each of us has a Divine task, a part of the world to transform into a dwelling place for G-dliness. That is our goal - with our Torah study, our mitzvot, our encouragement of others to "live with the Torah."

If we get side-tracked, for whatever reason or secondary purpose, we may end up asking ourselves, in our own way, "Nu, where's the chicken?"

As the Rebbe had emphasized on numerous occasions, the main thing is - action!

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

Eternal Medicine

"...and he shall provide for healing" (21: 19)

The Torah records that among the compensatory damages which a person who has inflicted bodily harm on another must pay, are the medical bills. The Talmud derives from this verse that "nitna reshus larofeh lerapos" – "The Torah grants permission to a doctor to heal." If Hashem has blessed a person with the power to heal, why would a verse be required to permit him to utilize this talent?

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The Ibn Ezra's comments on this verse are perplexing. He notes that the Torah juxtaposes the verse regarding a physician needing permission to heal to the verses which discuss various types of external wounds inflicted upon a person. Therefore, he deduces that a physician may only heal external wounds; all internal maladies are in the hands of Hashem. The Mateh Moshe finds the Ibn Ezra's comments unfathomable, citing numerous references in the Talmud to medical procedures and medications which were given to treat internal ailments. He therefore concludes that a physician is required to treat internal ailments and if he refrains from doing so, causing the death of his patient, he will be held responsible. How do we reconcile the comments of the Ibn Ezra with the treatments mentioned in the Talmud?

To begin resolving the aforementioned difficulties, we must first reexamine the statement "nitna reshus larofeh lerapos". The dictum is generally understood to be granting permission to a physician to heal. However, an alternative definition of the word "reshus" is "domain" or "realm". The Talmud is stating that Hashem has placed the ability to heal entirely in the realm of the doctor. He is completely equipped to deal with the malady in a "derech hatevah" – natural manner; we do not view the malady or its cure as a supernatural phenomenon which requires Hashem's intervention. To this, the Ibn Ezra comments that only external ailments are completely within the realm of medical procedures, while internal ailments are not subject to clear cut medical diagnoses and cures. Although a physician must tend to internal ailments as well, these maladies require Hashem's hand to insure full recovery. Treatments offered by the Talmud for internal ailments are not completely scientific in nature and are often accompanied by amulets, incantations and the like, which supports the Ibn Ezra's assertion.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)



Rabbi Kaplan is holding a weekly Thursday evening (8:30pm) online shiur on the Shaar HaBitachon section of Chovos Halivavos. Shaar HaBitachon has been effective in giving strength and encouragement to people facing difficult and challenging situations in everyday life. What a perfect topic, presented by a gifted teacher, for these times. This online shiur is open to anyone who would like to attend and can be joined at: <https://cutt.ly/join-shiur>

Yahrzeits This Week:

Laurie Margolies	4 Adar - Monday night / Tuesday	for father	Ze'ev ben Yitzchak
Yechiel Rubin	4 Adar - Monday night / Tuesday	for mother	Etel Ruchama bas Yehoshua
Howard Elbaum	6 Adar - Wednesday night / Thursday	for mother	Chaya bas Yisrael Pinchas

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE 322996

Friday — Rosh Chodesh Adar, 2/12 — 30 Shevat

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.
 Shabbat Candles — 5:22 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:20 p.m.

Shabbat, 2/13— 1 Adar

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:38 a.m.
 Beitzah Gemora Shiur — 4:40 p.m.
 Minchah — 5:10 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 6:23 p.m.

Sunday, 2/14 — 2 Adar

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:30 p.m.

Monday, 2/15 — 3 Adar

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, 2/16 — 4 Adar

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, 2/17 — 5 Adar

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, 2/18 — 6 Adar

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:30 p.m.

Friday, 2/19 — 7 Adar

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Shabbat Candles — 5:30 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:30 p.m.