

THE KTM

DAF PARASHA

BRINGING A TASTE OF ISRAEL TO MONTREAL



TORAH תורה
מִצִּיּוֹן MITZION
KTM MONTREAL



GET BUSY LIVING

BY RAV ARI FAUST (ROSH KOLLEL)

In the timeless film, *The Shawshank Redemption*, Andy Dufresne sits across from his friend Red in the prison yard and articulates a simple but piercing truth: "Get busy living - or get busy dying." It is not just a clever line. It emerges from a man who has been stripped of freedom, dignity, and certainty, yet refuses to surrender his inner world. Andy is not speaking about biological survival alone. He is describing an understanding about existence itself. One can be physically alive and yet spiritually inert, or one can choose, even under the harshest conditions, to orient oneself toward life - to build, to hope, to affirm.

That line echoes deeply; and captures a fundamental idea that lies at the heart of our parasha. The Torah commands the Kohanim (Vayikra 21:1):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
לִנְקֹשׁ לֹא יִטְמָא בְּעַמִּי

Hashem said to Moshe: Tell the Kohanim, the children of Aharon, that they shall not become impure to a dead person among his people."

Why must the Kohen distance himself from death? What is it about this encounter that the Torah seeks to guard against?

One of the most important texts devoted to the customs and rituals of Jewish mourning is Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky's *Gesher HaChayim*. In the introduction, written during the devastation of World War II, Rabbi Tukachinsky offers a chilling diagnosis of his time. Humanity, he writes, has advanced tremendously - but in a distorted way. Human creativity has been devoted to refining comfort, efficiency, and external conditions, while neglecting the essence of life itself:

Already for some time it has been known that wisdom and science are no longer directed toward life itself. Man, whose talents are so rich, occupies himself almost entirely with the needs of living - making life easier and more comfortable - and invests all his thought in invention and achievement for that purpose. The knowledge he acquires serves only his livelihood and comfort. And if he has achieved all this—then the question remains: what of life itself? He has entirely neglected the essence of life and its content...

And the painful and humiliating fact is that all of human wisdom—the wisdom of creation, and the wisdom of the most distinguished being (man, the chosen of creation)—is today used through science to increase destruction and ruin, to invent all kinds of means that hasten the extermination of the

human race in masses.

When life is valued only for what it produces - comfort, success, utility - its inherent worth begins to erode. A human being becomes a function, a means, a number. And when that happens, the moral barriers collapse. A society that no longer recognizes the intrinsic sanctity of life becomes capable of unimaginable cruelty. The horrors of the Holocaust, Rabbi Tukachinsky suggests, were not born in a vacuum; they emerged from a worldview that had already hollowed out the meaning of life.

The greatest danger is not death itself - but a culture that forgets what life is.

In the language of halacha, the human corpse is described as: "אבי אבות הטומאה" - the ultimate source of impurity. Tumah - impurity - is not physical contamination. It is existential. It represents a blockage, a disruption in the flow of life.

And so the corpse is the deepest form of tumah - not because it is "unclean" in a superficial sense, but because it embodies the most radical rupture of life's presence.

Why, then, must the Kohen be removed from this?

Rabbi AY Kook (Notebook 13:25), reframes the entire question. The Kohanim are not only ritual figures; they are teachers who shape the moral and spiritual consciousness of the nation.

...המוסר שבתורה הוא מיוסד על אהבת החיים

The morality of the Torah is founded upon the love of life.

This is a striking claim. The foundation of Torah is not withdrawal from the world, not asceticism, not denial - but a profound, affirmative embrace of life. The natural, healthy desire to live - to experience, to grow, to connect - is not something to overcome. It is itself a reflection of spiritual wholeness.

But there is a danger. Exposure to death can subtly shape a person's worldview. It can lead to a quiet shift - a diminishing of life's value, a gravitation toward detachment, toward seeing existence as fragile, fleeting, perhaps even insignificant.

Rav Kook acknowledges that there are moments when such perspectives serve as a "רפואה מרה" - a bitter medicine in times of deep pain. But they are not the foundation of Torah living.

...על כן הרחיקה תורה את כהני ד' ממעמד המות

PARASHAT EMOR
CANDLE LIGHTING: 7:43 P.M.
HAVDALAH: 8:53 P.M.

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Therefore, the Torah distanced the Kohanim from the presence of death...

The Kohen must remain aligned with life - not abstractly, but existentially. His role is to embody and transmit a vision in which life is precious, sacred, and filled with purpose. To stand constantly in the shadow of death risks absorbing a worldview that subtly erodes that vision.

The Torah is not merely warning the Kohen against ritual impurity. It is articulating a deeper spiritual stance. One cannot remain neutral. Exposure shapes us. What we encounter, what we dwell upon, what we internalize - these mold our perception of reality. The Kohen is commanded to live in a state of intentional alignment with life - to cultivate a consciousness that sees its value, protects its dignity, and teaches its sanctity.

This is not a denial of death. It is a refusal to allow death to define life.

In a world that can so easily reduce life to function, to comfort, to utility, the Torah demands something more radical: To see life as inherently meaningful; to protect its dignity; and to love it - not sentimentally, but deeply, actively, and consciously.

Because in the end, the choice is always before us: We can drift toward a diminished vision of existence, where life is measured and weighed and eventually discarded. Or we can choose, again and again, to affirm its infinite value.

To get busy living - not just by surviving, but by recognizing what life truly is.



ENCOUNTERING THE GIANTS: RABBEINU BACHYA

BY CHAGAI SHREM

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher ibn Halawa (1255–1340) lived in Saragossa, Spain, and was one of the

great biblical commentators and thinkers among the Rishonim. He is renowned for his remarkable ability to weave together peshat (simple meaning), derash (homiletics), philosophy, and Kabbalah into a single, clear, and accessible work. Rabbeinu Bachya was a prominent student of the Rashba, but he also engaged deeply with the teachings of the Ramban, and was among the pioneers in making the mystical tradition accessible to a broader audience. His works—especially his commentary on the Torah, Kad HaKemach, and Shulchan Shel Arba—have become enduring classics due to their unique combination of profound ideas and practical moral guidance.

Question: Is it possible for a person to attain high levels of spiritual insight or divine inspiration (ruach ha-kodesh) without first refining their character traits?

Answer: Refinement of character is the “entryway” and essential condition for the Divine Presence to dwell within a person. Character traits are the vessels in which spiritual light resides; if the vessels are broken or impure, the light cannot enter. In the introduction to his commentary on the Torah (and also in his introduction to Parashat Vayera), he emphasizes:

“Prophecy and wisdom dwell only in one whose character traits are upright... for the traits are the foundation and preparation for the indwelling of divine inspiration.”

According to Rabbeinu Bachya, wisdom without good character—such as humility and fear of sin—is empty wisdom. For this reason, he was careful to open each section of his commentary with ethical teachings, to remind the reader that Torah and moral development are inseparable.

Question: If the Creator already knows the outcome of a person’s actions, what purpose does a test (nisayon) serve?

Answer: A test is not for the Creator, but for the person—to transform spiritual potential (koach) into actualization (po’el). Rabbeinu Bachya explains that a person’s reward is not for good intentions alone, but for the concrete effort to overcome challenges. In his commentary on the Torah (Genesis 22:1), regarding the Binding of Isaac, he writes:

“The test is for the person—to bring potential into action, so that the reward will be for actual deeds, not for the heart alone.”

A test provides the opportunity for a person to demonstrate their commitment within the real, practical world. Only when one acts within life’s complexity does one truly earn spiritual growth—not as a gift, but as an achievement.

Question: Is there value in studying secular knowledge and philosophy, or should one focus exclusively on Torah?

Answer: The Torah is the source and root of all wisdom, and human sciences serve as tools to help understand it. Rabbeinu Bachya formulated the principle that

external wisdoms are like “maidservants” serving the Torah, which is the “mistress.” In his introduction to his Torah commentary, he writes:

“Our Torah encompasses all wisdom... and all other forms of knowledge are like maidservants, approached through analysis and inquiry, while our Torah is from the Holy One, blessed be He, and is primary.”

The use of human intellect serves to show that Torah does not contradict reason. Understanding the laws of nature and engaging in intellectual inquiry enables a person to appreciate the greatness of the Creator—but always with the awareness that human intellect is limited, and that the Torah is the ultimate and eternal truth.

KEEPING UP WITH KTM

- The annual Yom Hazikaron-Yom Ha’atzmaut ceremony and celebration was attended by nearly 500 people from across our community. Thanks to the entire Mishlachat for their dedication, and to all our partners, for making the evening so meaningful.
- Mizrahi Canada & KTM hosted a delegation from Kfar Azza to speak about their experiences on October 7th 2023 - and especially on the efforts to rebuild their Kibbutz. Elinor and Ariel spoke at schools and community events, bringing so much inspiration to the various venues they addressed.
- Rav Ari returned from Poland, having served as educator for the Montreal delegation of March of the Living.
- **Save the Date:** Special Shabbat programming for Yom Yerushalayim! May 15-16. Details to follow.
- **Save the Date:** KTM annual all-night learning for Shavuot. May 21-22. Details to Follow
- **Save the Date:** End of year tish and farewell to our bachurim! June 19. Details to Follow.



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HALACHIC Q&A

BY RABBI YOSEF ZVI RIMON - NASI, WORLD MIZRACHI

Question: Can one who makes early Shabbos daven both mincha and maariv after plag hamincha?

Answer: The Mishnah in Brachot (26a) presents a machloket between Rebbe Yehuda and the Chachamim regarding the latest time one can daven mincha. Rebbe Yehuda holds that mincha can be said until plag hamincha, and the Chachamim say until nightfall. The Gemara points out that each opinion allows maariv to be said in the time period following the period for mincha. Therefore, according to Rebbe Yehuda, maariv can be said after plag hamincha, and according to the Chachamim, after nightfall. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 233:1) rules that one must choose one opinion and stick with it. We pasken like the timing of the Chachamim and daven mincha until nightfall and maariv after nightfall.

One exception to this rule is on Shabbat, where the Shulchan Aruch (OC 267:2) says that maariv can be said as early as plag hamincha. The Bahag and the Shulchan Aruch Harav explain that because there is a mitzvah to bring in Shabbat early, we can follow Rebbe Yehuda's opinion on Friday night and daven maariv after plag hamincha. There are a few other reasons as well brought down to explain why this is allowed. While there are poskim who do not permit this, the generally accepted custom is that we do bring in Shabbat early, and the Mishnah Berurah and Magen Avraham both allow for it. Nevertheless, one should not pasken like both Rebbe Yehuda and the Chachamim on the same day. Therefore, if maariv is being said as early as plag hamincha (like Rebbe Yehuda), one must be sure to daven mincha before plag hamincha (Mishnah Berurah).

B'shat had'chak (in a dire situation), if somebody davens mincha after plag hamincha and pushing off maariv will infringe on his oneg shabbat or shalom bayit, then he is permitted to daven maariv immediately

after (Mishne Halachot). Additionally, if there is a concern that waiting for Maariv will cause the minyan to disperse, maariv can be said immediately (Mishnah Berurah).

Question: Can one shave on Friday in honor of Shabbat during sefirat ha'omer?

Answer: Seemingly, all of the practices of mourning during sefirat ha'omer apply on Friday as well. Therefore one should not be able to get a haircut or shave in honor of Shabbat. However, my rebbe and teacher Rav Aharon Lichtestein zt'l provided many reasons that this should be permissible, and even thought that this may be required. Most poskim do not allow for this, but there are many legitimate reasons for one to, and if one wants to shave on Erev Shabbat during sefirah, he may do so if his intent is to honor Shabbat. Somebody who lives in a place where shaving is likely to cause disrespect or a more lax approach towards halacha should not practice this way.

Question: Very often, I am not yet finished with shema by the time the chazan says "Hashem Elokeichem Emet." What is the best thing to do? Should I say those three words again when I finish so that my shema reaches 248 words?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (OC 376:3) writes that the chazan repeats "Hashem Elokeichem Emet" in order that there should be 248 words of shema. The accepted practice, based on the Gra, is for the chazan to say "Ani Hashem Elokeichem" quietly before saying "Hashem Elokeichem Emet" aloud. According to the Pri Megadim, the chazan should say "Ani Hashem Elokeichem Emet" quietly before saying "Hashem Elokeichem Emet" (see MB 69:3). When davening alone, how does one reach 248 words? One option is for the individual to repeat "Hashem Elokeichem Emet", just as the chazan does in a tzibur. This

is the solution of the Kaf HaChaim, and a common practice amongst Sephardim (see

Yalkut Yosef). The Rema (OC 61:3) presents a different opinion, stating that an individual praying alone should add "El Melech Ne'eman" before saying shema. Now let's turn to your question. When the chazan says Hashem Elokeichem Emet, even if you are not yet at that part of shema, those extra words count for you as well (Sha'arei Teshuva). Some opinions hold that you should finish with saying "Hashem Elokeichem Emet" (Ben Ish Chai, Kaf Hachaim). The Sephardic custom is to say it over again, while the Ashkenazic custom is not to repeat it. If you would like to do even better, you have another option. The Shulchan Aruch writes that there is another way to reach 248 words: Immediately after kriyat shema, there are 15 words which begin with the letter "vav". The letter "vav" is 6 in gematria. $6 \times 15 = 90$. Hashem's name (Yud Kay Vuv Kay) is 26. With four letters of the name, the total is 30. Therefore, you can have kavanah when saying these 15 words starting with vav, which total 90, thus amounting to Hashem's name (30 total) 3 times, and those 3 extra get you to 248. (This is confusing for many people, and the other options presented earlier are good).

Question: I received medication for a chronic skin illness that other medications could not solve. The medication comes in a bottle which releases foam when you press on the top. Then, you rub the foam in and it's absorbed into the skin. Can this be used on Shabbat?

Answer: Rav Moshe Feinstein was concerned that creation of foam on Shabbat is prohibited because of nolad (see Revavot Efraim 8:154). However, the more accepted approach is that there is no issue of nolad, as the creation of foam is insignificant and does not hold its form for more than a short period of time. This is the approach of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Elyashiv. This same ruling applies to foamy hand soap.

PARNESS HAYOM :: IYAR

- 3 IYAR | Mrs. Jewel Shoham and Family, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her father, Harry Naimer z'l (Zvi ben Moshe Yosef).
- 14 IYAR | Adrienne and Shlomo Drazin, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his grandfather, Mayer Sand z'l
- 22 IYAR | Kamal Gabbay, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father, Menashi Gabbay z'l



Making Time Meaningful



Each day after school, the friends are bored when they wait to be picked-up

One day they decide it could be fun to do something while they wait



They decide to give it a try ...

... and realize how much fun it is!



One day they get distracted and don't play together after school – they're bored again

They realize how important it is to fill their time with worthwhile and positive things!

In Parashat Emor, the mo'adim teach us that holiness is not only found in things or places, but in time itself. Just like the kids discovered that the same few minutes could feel empty or meaningful depending on what they did with it, the Torah teaches that special times become holy when we recognize them and fill them with meaning. Hashem gives us the mo'adim, but it is our actions – "אשר תקראו אותם במועדם" – that bring their holiness to life.