



While busily clearing out a year's worth of accumulated clutter, take a well deserved break from all the scrubbing and scouring and give your soul a spiritual lift.

Included are some delightful and thought-provoking essays on Pesach, Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei, Sefer Chovot Halevot, and more.

Enjoy our third edition of Torat Imecha!

## Pesach: The Prohibition of Chometz

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

By Dina Weiss

Why are there so many prohibitions regarding eating chometz on Pesach? The Sefer Hachinuch explains that chometz symbolizes haughtiness. In reference to a *ba'al gaavah*, a haughty person, Hashem says "I and he cannot dwell in the same place".

It is written that Moshe, the greatest of all prophets, was also the humblest of all men. Because he saw Hashem so closely, he realized he was nothing in comparison. By banishing chametz from our homes, we cultivate humbleness within us, to the point of

recognizing there is nothing besides Hashem.

The Egyptian exile was supposed to last 400 years but was shortened to 210 years because the Jews managed to correct their ways in half the time allotted. However, we are also told that when Hashem took the Jews out of Egypt, they were at the 49th level of impurity, and if He would have waited any longer they would've sunk to the 50th level. Were they righteous or were they at the brink of complete spiritual demise? There were those who were able to elevate themselves despite the torment of the

bondage and there were those who sank to the deepest depths.

We must also make proper use of the opportunities for growth in our lives. Let us use these weeks before Pesach, while scrubbing the grime from our homes, to work on polishing our middot too, especially the trait of humbleness. It is well worth the effort.

## CONDUIT OF HOLINESS Parshiot Vayakhel-Pekudei

Based on a Naaleh.com Parsha shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

By: Chanie Koplowitz Stein

Vayakhel and Pekudei are the last two of the four parshiot devoted to the construction of the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle in the desert), which was the precursor of the Holy Temple to be built generations later in Eretz Yisroel.

There seems to be a reversal in the order of construction between what Moshe instructed Bezalel, the chief contractor, and how Bezalel actually did the work. Moshe put the construction of the *keilim*, (the implements to be used in the Mishkan) first, while Bezalel understood that the Mishkan, the structure in which these implements would be used, should be built first.

These two approaches to the construction of the Mishkan represent the two intertwined functions the Mishkan was to serve. Spirituality flows in two directions. It flows from its Source in heaven down to earth. But it also flows upward from earth toward heaven, when mankind acts appropriately. While Hashem always had, has, and will continue to have an abode in heaven, His purpose in creating the world was to have an abode among men on earth. Prior to the sin of Adam and Chava, Hashem's Presence filled the whole world. His Presence was palpable. After the sin, Hashem removed this palpable Spirit from earth to heaven. Man could no longer access his Creator as readily. With our acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, we recreated the pristine world of creation. We sensed Hashem's presence not just in the manna but also in every atom of

our being and the world. However, this ideal situation did not last long. We sinned with the golden calf, and the connection that was meant to be intrinsic and omnipresent throughout the world was severed.

At this point, the role of the Mishkan became primary. Since the entire world could no longer be a vehicle to openly contain His Presence, Hashem, in His loving-kindness, created one place where we could reconnect with Him and become the spiritual beings we were meant to be. We needed a place that would exude God's Presence, where we could feel His loving-kindness warming us from above, so that we could rededicate our lives to reaching up from below to spiritual heights. This would be our "window of opportunity," along with Shabbos and Yom Tov, to forge our relationship with Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

We are physical beings living in a physical world. Therefore, we must concretize our abstract feelings and our spirituality with action. When our beings were consciously and subconsciously filled with knowledge of God's Presence, our service to Him could take place anywhere; all we needed were the tools. When we lost this sense, we needed to first energize ourselves by placing ourselves in the right environment so that we could serve Hashem with proper intent. This was Bezalel's argument to Moshe. Moshe, on the spiritual plane of his existence, didn't need a specific place to stir his spirit; he was indeed ready at

any time or at any place to do Hashem's bidding. Bezalel recognized that the rest of us are not on that level. Moshe acknowledged this characteristic of humanity and of our nation, and agreed that the Mishkan itself should be built before the implements for the service within.

We also need to acknowledge our humanness. We need to prepare ourselves properly to serve Hashem. Let us not "fall into" davening or saying our blessings by rote, but rather let us focus, or meditate, on the service we are about to do so that we can strengthen our relationship with Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Let us create our inner Mishkan to the service of Hashem, for Hashem wished to dwell within man. God created a world of curves and circles. God gave man the ability to create lines and angles. A body in motion will stay in the same path unless a force is exerted to change its path. (My apologies to Newton.) We will stay in the same circular path and get nowhere unless we consciously and willfully decide that what starts in our heart, with a passion for a relationship with the Creator, extends upward to our head, and then continues in a straight line directly to Hakadosh Boruch Hu. It is these actions that have an impact on ourselves, our world, and future generations.

## Rebbetzin's Perspective Part 4:

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

### Question

I've been fully observant for almost 11 years. However I realize there is a basic problem with my beliefs. I fear Hashem and I am grateful for His many blessings, but I do not understand the idea of loving Hashem. What is true ahavat Hashem supposed to mean and what are some practical ways to attain that level?

### Answer

The first step is awareness. In order to develop love for Hashem, you need to fine-tune your sensitivities to perceive Hashem's presence in this world. Open your eyes and see Hashem's life force in nature, your children, your body, and in the bountiful

profusion of food that He showers upon you. Study Hashem's intricacy of thought, His profound compassion, and the dazzling array of shades and colors He created. Marvel at the beauty of the human soul, the profound joy we experience when we feel ourselves completely alive. This feeling is your soul overtaking your body. You need to learn to love Hashem with your soul. The soul's favorite self expression is giving. Which leads to the second step. We read in Shema, "V'ahvata es Hashem-You should love Hashem. How does one reach this level? By letting feelings of gratitude and oneness be expressed through our heart and soul and through our resources. Just as a bond between two people grows by giving, so too a

relationship with Hashem develops by giving of oneself.

The Shema continues, "Bchol l'vovcha"-With all your heart. Love Hashem with the part of you that's creative and the part of you that's destructive, the part that needs to be rechanneled or possibly contended with. And love Him "Bchol Modecha"-With all your resources, with every character trait that Hashem endowed you with. Find a way to reach Hashem by expressing your deeper inner self to Him and this will ultimately lead to ahavat Hashem. For further reading, I recommend "The Beginning of Wisdom", an excellent English translation of the Gate of Love in Sefer Reishet Chochma, by Simcha Benyosef.

## Shabbat Scenarios-Using Water Filters

Based on a Naaleh.com Hilchot Shabbat shiur and demonstration, by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

It's a hot Shabbos afternoon and you've just returned home after a long trek to shul to hear a shiur. Your looking forward to unwinding and cooling off with a tall glass of sparkling filtered water.

You've got a dilemma. Can you use a filter on Shabbat or is that a violation of Borer?

Let's review the four principles of Borer:

- A. You need to take the good from the bad**
- B. It needs to be for immediate use**
- C. It may not be done with a specialized instrument**
- D. One may not select from a mixture of two species**

The answer depends on your personal preferences.

If you would drink the water even if it was unfiltered, then the water and the dirt particles contained therein are considered a mixture of one species and you would be allowed to use the filter.

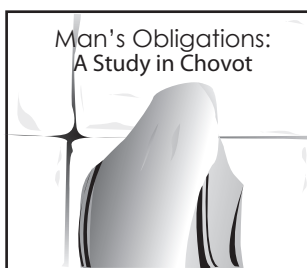
According to the Biur Halacha, if you would not drink the water unless it was filtered, then the water and its impurities are considered a mixture of two species and you would not be allowed to use the filter.

In regard to using a filter for bug-contaminated drinking water in New York City, there is a difference of opinion between the various Poskim. The Nishmas Adam holds that the water is still considered a mixture of one species, while other Poskim are of the opinion that when a halachic barrier is present, it is considered a mixture of two species and it would be prohibited to filter the water on Shabbat. Consult your local Rabbi on this question.

## Class Spotlight: Man's Obligation - A Study in Chovot Halevavot

Class 2: Learning from Creation

By: Devora Kaye



*Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen, born in the Midwest and educated at Yeshivas Torah Vodaath, is a well-known Mussar personality who has been inspiring hundreds of students at Yeshivas Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchonon and Camp Morasha for over thirty years. His impassioned message of devotion to G-d and uncompromising loyalty to Truth has impacted the lives of his many students and admirers in an astounding way. To date, Naaleh.com has featured four inspiring Mussar courses taught by Rabbi Cohen including Mesillat Yesharim I & II, Sefer Tomer Devora, and Chovot Halevavot.*

Sefer Chovot Halevavot, Duties of the Heart, was composed by Rabbenu Bachya ibn Pekuda in Spain during the 11th century. It is one of the most important Jewish ethical works and discusses Man's purpose in this world and his obligations to Hashem in areas of belief, behavior, and character. In his latest class, Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

explicates this fundamental work with passion and clarity. He discusses Shaar Habechinah, the Gate of Discernment. This chapter focuses on recognizing G-d in all areas of life and explains that closely examining the creations of the world, helps us discern G-d's presence and power.

The Navi Yeshayahu rebukes the Jewish nation, "Yada shor koneihu v'chamar avos balah v'yisrael lo yadah.." (An ox and a donkey know their master but the Jewish people do not know their Creator). The following question is posed: Nature forces an animal to subjugate himself before his master. How can the Navi expect emunah to be as natural to Man as an animal's instincts?

Rav Elya Lopian states that we commonly refer to emunah as emunah peshuta-simple belief. If one only stops to be misbonen-to contemplate the wonders of the world and the inherent greatness invested in creation, one cannot help but believe that there must be a Supernatural Being behind it all. It is as simple and natural as an animal following its master. King David writes in Tehilim "Lift up your eyes and see who created these". Just gazing at the vast firmament dotted with billions of stars and galaxies compels one to sing and praise the wonders of our awesome Creator.