



Torah Bits

**This Week's Torah Bits is Sponsored By
Dr. Debra F. Fink, D.M.D. M.S.P.C. Adult and Child Orthodontics (314) 984-9900**

In this week's Parsha, the pasuk declares that "he who has built a new house, planted a new vineyard, or has just gotten married, let him return from the battlefield, lest he die and another man will establish them." Rashi comments that the tragedy of this man dying in battle would be compounded by the fact that someone else is taking over his role, and this would cause the soul great anguish. What exactly is the calamity of someone else capitalizing upon his accomplishments? Does the soul after death really care about the mundane aspects of its previous existence? Wouldn't the neshama of a person be glad that at least someone is benefitting from his work? Does he really want his widow to remain alone forever? Furthermore, what is it about these three specifically; the house, field, and wife, that are so critical that they alone exempt a man from war.

I'd like to suggest a novel approach based on the famous Gemorah in Sotah. Forty days before the fetus is formed, a heavenly voice declares, "The daughter of so and so will be this man's wife, such and such house will be his dwelling, and such and such field will be his livelihood". (Poetic license taken. Look up Sotah 2a for verbatim quote.) The Gemorah is telling us that every man has a unique mission in this world, and will need some tools to fulfill it. The three primary tools external to his existence that are unique to him are his wife, his location, and his job. Therefore, it is these three which

are "basherte", for he needs a woman who will truly complement him in his life's work. He also needs to be in a certain place in a certain time. Lastly, he needs a skill to help people, and to provide for his family.

A man who has just been granted the tools to succeed but has not yet begun to accomplish, is exempt from battle, because these tools are unique to him and no one else. The soul laments not over a mundane loss. This is a calamity of a spiritual nature. To be on the precipice of fulfilling one's mission in life only to die and have his mission and tools transferred to another, is a tragedy of such magnitude, and is so painful to the soul of man, that we aren't willing to risk it.

I believe this could be an understanding in the Mishna in Avos, "Jealousy, lust, and honor takes a man out of the world." If a man is jealous of another's worldly possessions, he fails to recognize that his possessions were given to him for his mission, and his friend was given what he needs for his success. He wants tools that are not useful for his job, and will ultimately fail in his life's purpose. If he looks for a wife who will satisfy his lustful desires, he will find himself without the partner he needs to help him navigate the test of life. If he views his job as a means to achieve prestige and status, he will fail in using it as an opportunity to sanctify Hashem's name. (*Rabbi Shlomo Soroka*)

Please Learn These Halachos at your Seudas Shabbos for a Refuah Shelaima for **Reuven ben Tova Chaya**

Plowing and Planting: Practical Applications

One may not dig up soil; therefore one may not drag a heavy chair on the lawn. One may, however, push a carriage or wheelchair even if they make marks in the ground (because the indentation is not digging up dirt, just depressing it.)

(Source: "Practical Halachos of Shabbos," Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum, pg. 5)

A community initiative in conjunction with:

Agudas Israel, Bais Avraham, Bais HaMedrash HaGodol Shaarei Chesed Shul, Nusach Hari, TICC, Young Israel

This week's parsha contains the mitzvah of the Cities of Refuge. If a person unintentionally kills, he must run to the nearest City of Refuge and remain there until the death of the Kohain Gadol. The Torah refers to this law in Parshas Mishpatim [Shmos 21:13] as well. "And concerning the one who did not hunt, but G-d brought (the victim) into his hand, and I will set up a place for him to flee there." The Rabbis point out that four consecutive words in this verse "...Eenah L'yado V'samti Lecha..." begin with the letters Aleph, Lamed, Vov, Lamed which spell out the name of the month of Elul. This is a hint to the month of Elul, which we are now beginning as a preparation to the High Holy Days.

It seems rather stretched and inappropriate, by comparison, to have a hinted connection between the concept of the City of Refuge, someone who killed by accident having a place to flee, to the month of Elul. What connection could there be? Rabbi Zev Leff explained that even when a person kills unintentionally, he needs some form of atonement. The reason for this is that even though the murder occurred by accident there is an indication that this person does not properly value human

life. Had he valued human life the way it should be valued, he would have taken the necessary precautions and would have been more careful. He is therefore punished by being sent to a City of Refuge.

Who lives in the Cities of Refuge? The Levites. What did the Levites do with their time? They devoted themselves to Holy Work. They worked in the Beis HaMikdash. They sang in the Beis HaMikdash. They were the teachers of Torah. The person who killed unintentionally would now have the opportunity to get an appreciation of what one can do with life. Such an experience would forever change the person. This is what living in the City of Refuge accomplished. It was not a jail sentence but rather a living classroom.

Now we can understand what this has to do with the month of Elul. That which the City of Refuge is supposed to be in space, the month of Elul is supposed to be in time. Just like there is a city of refuge to which one can run and contemplate what life is all about, the month of Elul is the month of refuge in which one must also contemplate what he can do with his or her life

"ASK THE RABBI"

Dear Rabbi:

One of my favorite performers who rarely makes a public appearance is scheduled to perform in my hometown. The only problem is that it is on a Friday night. I did some research and found out that I could reserve a hotel room right across from the venue. I could bring my Shabbos food in a crock pot, bypass the electronic doors at the hotel and use the stairs to access my room. If I could leave my ticket at the Security Gate, I can avoid the problem of not being within the eruv. My question is, under these circumstances, would Jewish law permit me to attend this concert?

The Rabbi Responds:

Wow! You really put me in a difficult spot here. I can really feel how badly you want to attend this rare performance and how much it means to you. You really raise three important issues: 1) Listening to non-Jewish music 2) Attending mass gatherings for non-Jewish entertainment 3) Doing so on Shabbos. I will only address the third. It seems as if you've anticipated every possible issue and solution in a brilliant way. However, there's a lot more to Shabbos than a litany of restrictions and prohibitions. It is a day that was given to us as a gift to contemplate our relationship with God and to spend time with our families in a most uplifting and enjoyable way. To navigate Shabbos like an obstacle course is to miss the point of Shabbos entirely. You see, we really are all performers, and we perform all week long. On Shabbos, the stage is reserved for God. He is the sole performer, and we all sit back and watch with marvel how He really runs it all. And the inspiration we get out of God's weekly dazzling performance keeps us going all week long. The mere fact you've gone through so much trouble to be able to avoid any Shabbos desecration tells me that as much as this opportunity means to you, Shabbos means even more. I have no doubt you will be compensated in some way. Music has the power to stir the soul, but Shabbos will make your spirit soar.

Rabbi Shlomo Soroka

*Torah Bits is distributed to all of the St. Louis area Orthodox shuls. Torah Bits is compiled by Rabbi Davidovits under the direction of the Rosh Kollel, Rabbi Greenblatt. Torah Bits has Torah content; please treat it respectfully (and yes, you may take it home with you). To sponsor Torah Bits or place an announcement, please contact the Kollel office. **Sponsorship Rates:** Cover \$50 per issue **Inside page:** \$36 for announcement box. Four weeks in a row ~ \$30 per box. Eight weeks in a row ~ \$25 per box.*

Candlelighting: 7:05 P.M.
**End of Z'man Krias Shema-
 Gra: 9:46 A.M.**
Magen Avraham: 9:10 A.M.



St. Louis Kollel
8200 Delmar St. Louis, MO 63124 314-726-6047
 To subscribe to the free weekly e-mail edition,
 e-mail your request to webmaster@stlkollel.com.

HALACHA

MA'ASER MONEY

(THE WEEKLY HALACHA)

May one pay for his seat in shul with Ma'aser money (the 10% of one's income that one sets aside for charity)?

There is much discussion among the Poskim as to whether it is an obligation to give ma'aser money or only a custom. The consensus of opinions is that it is a custom.

The Ramah Y.D. 249:1 writes that one is not permitted to utilize his ma'aser money to fulfill a mitvah, such as buying candles for the shul, but he must give it to the poor. However, the Shach and the Taz cite the opinion of Rabbenu Menachem that one may spend the money on any mitvah if he does not have the ability, and would not have done the mitvah otherwise.

According to both these opinions, it should be forbidden to buy a seat with ma'aser money. However, the Chofetz Chaim writes that one is permitted to buy books of learning with ma'aser money if poor people will also benefit from them. Therefore, since most shuls have needy people as members of their congregation and they will benefit from the money, it should be permitted.

There remains one more problem, and that is that one may obviously not buy fruit from a poor person and pay him with ma'aser money because he acquires an object with this money.

Similarly, buying a seat should be forbidden as he is acquiring an object (the seat). However, if one would pay more than the normal price to the poor person for his fruit, one may subtract the extra amount from his ma'aser. Likewise, one may give a big wedding present to a poor person adding the amount above the normal from ma'aser money.

So too, regarding a seat in shul. The price that is charged is not in reality the actual price of the seat. One may therefore pay a minimum from one's own money for the seat, and the remainder, even if it is the majority from ma'aser money (as long as there are poor people in the congregation). The same halacha would apply to money paid for an aliya.

(Adapted from Ohr Hahar in the name of HaRav Rubin)

WATCH YOUR MAIL!

Dr. Fred Rosner

World-Renown Expert on Jewish Medical Ethics and Author of 35 Books

Wednesday, September 17th, 2008

"Pulling The Plug - When Is It Permitted, If Ever?"

8:00 p.m. —Young Israel—8101 Delmar
Light Dessert Refreshments Will Be Served
Co-Sponsored by St. Louis Kollel
& Young Israel of St. Louis

~

YOM TOV WINE ORDER FORMS ARE IN THE MAIL...STOP BY OR CALL (314) 726-6047
ORDERS DUE BY MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH

Exciting new varieties to complement our already fantastic selection... Alfasi, Bartenura, Baron Herzog, Golan, Kedem, Rashi, More!

Nusach Hari B'nai Zion Presents...
LION'S DEN "CARRY OUT" PIZZA NITE
"HOT PIZZA WAITING FOR YOU TO PICK UP"
Wednesday, September 17th...5PM to 6:45PM
(Cholov Yisroel) (Call Sandie to Reserve 314-991-2100 Ext. 2)
Plain Cheese \$12 ~ Each Additional Topping \$.75
Next Dine In Pizza Night Sunday, Sept. 28th



**It's Kollel Raffle Time!
Purchase Your Raffle
Tickets For A Chance
To Win
\$10,000!
Call (314) 726-6047
To Purchase Your
Raffle Tickets or Visit
Our Website
www.stlkollel.com**

Yom Tov Necessities Sale at the Kollel
Jewelry, Candy, & Flowers

Seagreen Expressions



Amazing handmade designer jewelry with real pearls, gold and sterling silver, semi-precious and precious stones customized by local artist, Lori Laird.

**Flamenco Flowers
& Sweets**

Sample and order an array of unique taste sensations & artistic floral creations from St. Louis's own, Elishevah Heit.



SALE HOURS:

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH
11:00 AM TO 5:00 PM**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH
11:00 AM TO 7:00 PM**

LOCATION:

**ST. LOUIS KOLLEL
8202 DELMAR
UNIVERSITY CITY**

*PROCEEDS BENEFIT
THE ST. LOUIS KOLLEL*