
אושפיזי קורונה

THE CORONA USHPIZIN



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סוכות תשפא



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of the

Jewish Educational Center

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משה תקן להם לישראל שיהו שואלים ודורשים בענינו של יום הלכות פסח בפסח הלכות עצרת בעצרת הלכות חג בחג

Dear Friends:

The Talmud (Megillah 32b) notes that Moshe Rabbeinu established a learning schedule that included both Halachic and Aggadic lessons for each holiday on the holiday itself. Indeed, it is not only the experience of the ceremonies of the Chag that make them exciting. Rather, when we analyze, consider and discuss why we do what we do when we do it, we become more aware of the purposes of the Mitzvos and the holiday and become closer to Hashem in the process.

In the days of old, the public shiurim of Yom Tov were a major part of the celebration. The give and take enhanced not only the part of the day identified as חצי לה' – the part of the day for Hashem, it set a tone for the other half, חצי לכם the half of the day set aside for celebration in eating and enjoyment of a different nature. Meals could be enjoyed where conversation would surround “what the Rabbi spoke about” and expansion on those ideas would be shared and discussed with everyone present, each at his or her own level. Unfortunately, with the difficulties presented by the current COVID-19 pandemic, many might not be able to make it to Shul, many Rabbis might not be able to present the same Derashos and Shiurim to all the different minyanim under their auspices. What will happen to our Yom Tov then?

The current booklet is presented to you to help solve the problem. In it, we present 8 ideas from 8 of the Torah leaders who have passed away during the current pandemic along with a short biography of just who these giants were. Some of these ideas would have been presented as more formal Derashos, others a shiurim and still others just as a basis for casual conversation between us. We've turned the ideas into short presentations and used them as springboards for deeper discussion in your Sukkah. I want to thank my wife and family for their input into the themes presented and to Zvi for encouraging me to be a “bit edgier” in presenting my ideas in Derashos. I hope the material herein meets his high expectations.

With best wishes for health, wealth (both spiritual and material) and all good things only and always,

Chag Sameach,

Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz PsyD

Theme # 1 – The Role of Routine



Personality – Harav Yisrael Moshe Friedman ztl. of Sadigura

Rabbi Yisrael Moshe Friedman was born on July 23, 1955 in Brooklyn, New York to Rabbi Avraham Yaakov (the Ikvei Abirim) and Rebbitzin Tziporah Feiga Friedman.[1] He was named for Rabbi Yisrael Friedman, the founder of the Ruzhiner dynasty, and Rabbi Moshe Friedman of Boyan-Cracow. At that time, his paternal grandfather, Rabbi Mordechai Sholom Yosef Friedman (the Knesses Mordechai), served as Sadigura Rebbe. He attended Yeshivas Ruzhin for yeshiva ketana and then the Ponevezh Yeshiva, where he became one of the top students. In 1993, on the yahrtzeit of the first Ruzhiner Rebbe, he opened the Ohr Yisrael shul in Golders Green, London, and developed close relationships with the community members. He also served as a dayan (Rabbinic judge) in London. Rabbi Friedman was known to be proficient in Torah, not just in Chassidic works, but in all areas. His broad knowledge of Shas and poskim was well known. He received semicha (Rabbinic ordination) from some of the leaders of Orthodox Jewry: Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Rabbi Chanoch Henoch Padwa, Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss (the Minchas Yitzchak), and Rabbi Shmuel Wosner. After the passing of his father on January 1, 2013, Rabbi Friedman left London for Israel where he was appointed as sixth Rebbe of the Sadigura chassidus, and settled in Bnei Brak, where the Sadigura court is headquartered. As Rebbe, one of his big focuses was making anyone welcome in the chassidus; that nobody would feel left out. He became known as one of the great rabbis in Israel, and was part of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah. Around 2018, Rabbi Friedman fell ill due to pancreatic cancer, and spent much of 2019 in Los Angeles, undergoing treatments. However, even from America, he led his court, ensuring his chassidim had what they needed, through the gabbaim. In the summer of 2020, he returned to Bnei Brak on a private flight, (as Covid-19 had halted all air travel); he wanted to be with his community for the Yamim Noraim. On August 10, 2020, Rabbi Friedman collapsed and was rushed to Sheba-Tel Hashomer Hospital, where he died, later in day.

Thought for Sukkos – Role of Routine

In his Sefer Imrei Kodesh, the Rebbe tried to explain one of key messages of the Sukkah. The Gemara (Sukkah 2a) notes that the goal of the Mitzva of Sukkah is that man is to leave his דירת קבע, his permanent home and live in a דירת עראי, your temporary dwelling. The Rebbe ztl added that on a deeper level man needs to get out of his routine. Generally, throughout the year, we get into a set routine and tend to be firm in not changing it. When Sukkos comes, the holiday offers us the opportunity to change our routine, by shaking it up “a bit.” During Sukkos we can try out new ways of living and improve our lives. We might increase the amount of Torah study and Mitzva practice in our homes by starting in our Sukkah. The improvement might be useful in breaking the routine which in turn might lead to new and improved practice in our homes.

For discussion:

1. Do you think routine is a good thing in Jewish life or is it stifling? How? Why?

2. Check out [this](#) article from The Atlantic (3/19) which examined whether people who eat the same lunch every day for years are disciplined or are they limiting their creativity? Why might someone opt for routine? Why not?
3. Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop (Mei Marom 16:48) associated the routine or rote nature in religious practice with the coldness of Amalek. He urged people to be fervent in their observance of Mitzvos. How does one achieve that while maintaining consistency at the same time?
4. The Talmud similarly reminds us that each day we study Torah it should be seen in our eyes as new. How do we learn Torah with a freshness and, at the same time, become Talmidei Chachamim based on what we already know and build upon?

Theme #2 – The individual and the community



Personality – Harav Yaakov Perlow ztl – Noviminsker Rebbe

Rabbi Yaakov Perlow ztl (November 16, 1930 – April 7, 2020) was an American Hasidic rabbi and rosh yeshiva, and Rebbe of the Novominsk Hasidic dynasty. From 1998 until his death, he was president of Agudath Israel of America, a Haredi advocacy organization. He was also head of that organization's Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages). He was one of the most respected leaders of the American Orthodox Jewish community, known for his scholarly and oratorical skills. After his marriage, Perlow taught at Hebrew Theological College in Skokie, Illinois. He later moved back to Brooklyn and settled in Crown Heights, becoming a member of the administration of the mesivta of Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin. In 1969, he was appointed rosh yeshiva at the Breuer's yeshiva, Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, in Washington Heights, New York, a position he held for 11 years. He also served as the Rav of Congregation Bais Yosef in that city. After the death of his father on September 4, 1976, Rav Perlow began serving as Novominsker Rebbe. In 1980, he established the Novominsk Hasidic Center and founded his own yeshiva, Yeshivas Novominsk Kol Yehuda, named in memory of his uncle, Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Perlow of Novominsk-Williamsburg, in Borough Park, Brooklyn. In December 1998, Rav Perlow was named president of Agudath Israel of America, succeeding Rabbi Moshe Sherer, who had died seven months earlier. With his appointment, the presidential and leadership duties held by Sherer were divided between Rav Perlow, the new president, and a three-man executive. Rav Perlow was also head of the organization's Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages).

Thought for Sukkos – Individual vs. Community

As part of a larger shiur that will be delivered in Shul between Mincha & Maariv, the Rebbe discussed the difference between why we have concerns about the violation of Shabbos by those carrying a Megillah or a Shofar when Purim or Rosh Hashana fall out on Shabbos and our concerns about violations of Shabbos when individuals carry their Lulavim. While the first 2 cases are permitted in a Beit Din, the Lulav is only permitted in the Mikdash. Why? The Rebbe ztl. (Adas Yaakov III:36:2) suggested that usually the one blowing Shofar or the one reading Megillah is an expert if he is selected to represent the masses. It is unlikely that he will forget and accidentally carry the Megillah or the Shofar. If he might, the officers of the Beis Din would likely stop him. On the other hand, Lulav is never performed by one person on behalf of the masses. Therefore it is not to be expected that being in a Beis Din will help reduce the potential for violation of Halacha.

For discussion:

1. Although not directly connected to the Talmudic message of the Noviminsker Rebbe's Shiur, the idea herein raises the question of where the ideal focus of a Jew should be: Is the ideal Jewish focus on the self first and as member of the community later(See Ramban Bamidbar 1:3) ? Or does every Jew derive their own sense of self AFTER being a member of the community (See Rav Yerucham of Mir Chaver HaMamarim 58)?
2. Hashem created man alone. Why would he do that if being a part of a community was critical?
3. Hashem also noted that it was not good for man to be alone. Then why did He create man alone?
4. When and why is it important to be a part of a community? We DO place Nechama and Refuah WITHIN the context of others in Am Yisrael but what about other times? Do my personal or familial spiritual goals allow me or even require me to separate from the community? When? When not?
5. (Yaakov immediately after he leaves a place called Sukkos, camps outside the city of Shechem and helps the people establish themselves – how does this fit the role of the individual versus the collective?)

Theme #3 – Family Values



Personality -- Harav Chaim Dov Keller ztl- Rosh Yeshiva Telz Chicago

Rav Chaim Dov Keller (1930 – August 17, 2020) was a Haredi rabbi, Talmudic scholar, and rosh yeshiva (dean) of the Telshe Yeshiva in Chicago for six decades. He was also a member of the "Nesius" (Presidium) of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of Agudath Israel of America. Rav Chaim Dov Keller was born in New York City in 1930. He studied at Yeshiva University and subsequently attended the Telshe yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio, under the leadership of Rabbis Chaim Mordechai Katz and Eliyahu Meir Bloch. Rav Keller became a student and disciple of Rav Bloch in particular. In 1960, Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Levin and Rabbi Chaim Schmeltzer were hand-picked by Katz to open a new branch of the yeshiva in Chicago.^[1] Keller came to serve as rosh yeshiva of the Chicago branch the following year. The Chicago yeshiva became the main non-Hasidic Lithuanian yeshiva in Chicago. Keller led the yeshiva for six decades, presenting tens of thousands of shiurim (Torah lectures) and mussar talks, and producing thousands of students. He also maintained a personal relationship with each student, being a source of guidance for his choice of higher yeshivas, finding a shidduch, and advice after marriage.

Thought for Sukkos – Family Values

In the selected essay, Rav Keller (The Jewish Observer May, 1993) ztl. examines the choice of the section of Arayos (illicit relationships) as the selection for Leining on Yom Kippur afternoon. Rav Keller suggests that like a rose among the thorns, Bnei Yisrael are to stand out like the rose among the nations of the world. Even when society – supposed civilized society – acts and behaves in an immoral manner, the Jewish nation needs to rise above it. Rav Keller adds that in every period of Galus, there was a threat to the Jewish family and in the subsequent Geulah, there was a strengthening of the family unit. Mitzrayim had the immorality and the antidote was the Korban Pesach that was to be brought for the family. When the Jews were in Bavel, we find that the family suffered stress. Yet, when Ezra HaSofer brought them back, Ezra needed to insist that the people strengthen the family. Like the rose that is set aside for Shabbos and Yom Tov, the Jewish nation is set aside and being prepared for the impending Geulah.

For discussion:

1. What are the most important values that underscore your family?
2. How do we convey our sense of what is important to our children? Our spouses? Ourselves?
3. Are there changes that must be made in the attitudes and expectations (religious, personal, social, financial or otherwise) of our marriages and families? What are these changes and where did we “go wrong?”

4. What sort of impact is the current situation having on YOUR family? Is it similar to the stresses that [others are experiencing](#)? How might we incorporate our need for some space with our need to grow in a family unit?
5. How can we properly relate to an outside world whose values, especially about marriage and family, is very much on display and very much antithetical to traditional Torah values? Is a synthesis possible? A co-existence? How?

Theme #4 – At home in alienation



Personality: HaRav Dr. Norman Lamm ztl. – Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva University

Rav Dr. Norman Lamm (December 19, 1927 – May 31, 2020) was an American Orthodox rabbi, scholar, academic administrator, author, and Jewish community leader. He was the Rosh Hayeshiva and Chancellor of Yeshiva University until he announced his retirement on July 1, 2013. Rabbi Lamm served as the third President of Yeshiva University, the first to be born in the United States. He was a student of Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik ztl (one of Orthodoxy's most influential modern scholars), who ordained him at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, Yeshiva University's rabbinical school in 1951. In his youth, Rav Lamm attended Mesivta Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. At Yeshiva College, the men's undergraduate school of Yeshiva University, he obtained a degree in chemistry in 1949. Lamm spent almost 25 years as a pulpit rabbi. He was the Assistant Rabbi to Rabbi Joseph Lookstein of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in Manhattan, New York. His first pulpit was in Springfield, Massachusetts. He was appointed rabbi of the West Side Jewish Center (Congregation Beth Israel) in 1952, became assistant rabbi at the Jewish Center on the Upper West Side of Manhattan in 1958, then rabbi of the Jewish Center from 1959 to 1976. In 1959 he also became a professor in Jewish philosophy at Yeshiva University. In 1958 Lamm helped found *Tradition*, an academic journal of Modern Orthodox thought. He also launched the *Torah U-Madda Journal*. He obtained his Ph.D. in 1966, and was elected President of Yeshiva University in August 1976, succeeding Rabbi Samuel Belkin, YU's second president. He served as Rosh HaYeshiva until July, 2013. He died in May, 2020.

Thought for Sukkos – Sukkah: Portable Judaism

In a magnificent Derasha he delivered initially in 1966, Rav Lamm noted that the Sukkah is a symbol of Galus and as such, should symbolize disjunction, peculiarity and abnormality as these are the norms of a Galus which by definition connotes irregularity. However, the way we are to conduct ourselves in the Sukkah is anything but irregular. Rav Lamm suggested that the lesson of the Sukkah is how to continue a permanent culture in a temporary abode – how to remain grounded when we are homeless. And how does one do that? Rav Lamm suggested that we need to create the atmosphere of home even when not

able to be in it. The Ushpizin each represent a person who in some facet of his life needed to survive intact in some form of exile. The same needs to be true of today's Jews who need to be able to carry their Judaism proudly into the workplace, the college campus and anywhere else they may find themselves. Then they too, will have wholly understood the lesson of the Sukkah.

For Discussion:

1. When is it ok to "test" the strength of the spiritual Sukkah? Is it ok for us to send our children to secular colleges and universities hoping that 12 years of Jewish Day School education will protect them from outside influences that might harm their spiritual standing? Should we worry that secular campuses lead them astray? Is our lack of faith in the readiness of our students an indictment of the Yeshiva Day School system? Or is it an expression of an ideal?
2. What about when we enter the workplace? Where and how should we be fortifying ourselves so that our internal Sukkos can stand up to the pressures of a demanding job?¹
3. The Beis HaLevi (Shemos) suggests that the only way to protect Jews from assimilation when the Jews get too close to the general society is to revive hatred in the hearts of their opponents. Hashem sees the distinction between Jew and non Jew breaking down and Hashem increases the hatred to keep the distinction alive. The Netziv (Bamidbar 23:9) adds that when we live alone and do not mix with the other nations we live in peace and honor. Do you agree? Are we really supposed to live as part of society or apart from it?

Theme #5 – A world of blessing



Personality – Harav Eliyahu Bakshi Doron ztl. – Former Chief Rabbi of Israel

Harav Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron (1941 – April 12, 2020) was an Israeli rabbi who served as Rishon LeZion (Chief Rabbi of Israel) from 1993 to 2003. Prior to that he served as Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Bat Yam and Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Haifa. Rav Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron was born in Jerusalem to Ben-Zion Bakshi-Doron, a native of the city, and Tova, an immigrant from Aleppo, Syria. He had two brothers and a sister. As a young man, Rav Bakshi Doron studied in several prominent yeshivas of the Dati Le'umi, Religious Zionist movement. He continued his education at Yeshivat HaDarom, Hebron Yeshiva, and Kol Ya'akov. During this time he began to think of a rabbinic career, and established relationships with leading

¹ I think a perusal of Rav Aharon Lopiansky's "Ben Torah for Life" should be mandatory reading and then re-reading in depth for anyone entering secular society in any way.

halakhic figures Rabbis Yosef Shalom Eliashiv, Betzalel Zolty, and Ovadia Yosef. After his marriage at age 25, Bakshi-Doron was tapped to lead the upper class in Porat Yosef Yeshiva. At age 28 he was appointed Rav of the Ramat Hanasi neighborhood of Bat Yam, becoming the youngest Rav of an Israeli city. Two years after that he was named Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Bat Yam. In 1973, at the age of 34, he was appointed Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Haifa. At the same time, he was also named head of the rabbinical courts in the city, which supervised the kashrut of many large, local food factories. Throughout this time he gave public shiurim (Torah lectures) to strengthen the Sephardic community. In 1993, Rav Bakshi-Doron became the first Rishon LeZion (Chief Rabbi of Israel) of non-Iraqi extraction since Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel in 1954. He served his term concurrently with his Ashkenazi counterpart, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau. Following his term as Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav Bakshi-Doron continued his teaching and work as a halakhic arbiter. He also established the Binyan Av institutions, which include a central campus in the Ramat Shlomo neighborhood of Jerusalem.

Thought for Sukkos – When to make a Beracha

In an essay in Binyan Av (V:40), Rav Bakshi Doron sought to figure out if, when and how to make a Beracha of L'Eishev BaSukkah when one attends a Bris on Sukkos and sitting in the sukkah is an impossibility. As he examined the issue, he noted the difference of opinion between the Rambam and the Rosh as to whether one needs to actually stand until one makes the Beracha of Leishev BaSukka (Rambam's opinion) or whether one can sit right away because entering the Sukkah is the Mitzva and it continues throughout the time the person is sitting there (Rosh's opinion). He adds the position of the Torah Temimah that since one does not normally eat standing, one cannot fulfill the Mitzva of sitting in the Sukkah or make the Beracha, if he is eating standing which is consistent with the Rambam's opinion though the Rosh would disagree noting that the Mitzva of dwelling means to tarry. Rav Bakshi Doron adds that the main part of one's dwelling is the eating aspect and as such, one does not make a Leishev until eating in the Sukkah which would cover all of the other activities done there. He notes that the Mishna Berurah encourages eating when one comes home from Shul in order to recite Leishev immediately and cover other activities. Based on these and other factors, Rav Bakshi Doron did not encourage the Beracha at the Bris where people were standing.

For discussion

1. Rav Bakshi Doron's essay raises a number of interesting side points. First of all, when we recite a Beracha we are declaring a Kavana – an intention. If the intention is to fulfill the Mitzva why does it matter if I did eat or merely dwelled in the Sukkah? Is the action more important in Judaism or the intention? Is there a difference between Bein Adam L'Chaveiro and Bein Adam L'Makom?
2. The essay focuses on the ability to make a Beracha of L'eishev B'Sukkah. Why is that so important? If I do not make a Beracha is it so bad? Are actions without intentions meaningless?
3. The essay also sets a certain standard – that eating is the main activity for the Beracha. Why is there a universal standard based on eating? If I prefer sleeping or schmoozing to eating why wouldn't that be the standard for me to make my Beracha? And if I personally eat standing, why would I NOT be able to make a Beracha for the Sukkah?
4. What happens when society changes – today we attend many cocktail hours, Smorgasbords, Kiddushim etc where the people DO eat standing, does that change the rules? Are we wrong for eating that way?
5. While somewhat more removed, we might discuss the role of food in our lives. Are we “what we eat?”

Theme #6 – Happiness and Hollywood



Personality: Rav Adin Steinsaltz ztl. – Thinker, writer, philosopher

*Rav Adin Steinsaltz was born in Jerusalem on 11 July 1937 to parents who were ardent secular communists. Rav Steinsaltz became a baal teshuva during his teenage years and learned from Rabbi Shmuel Elazar Heilprin (Rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Toras Emes Chabad). He studied mathematics, physics, and chemistry at the Hebrew University, in addition to rabbinical studies at Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Lod and with Rabbis Dov Ber Eliezrov and Shmaryahu Noach Sasonkin. Following graduation, he established several experimental schools after an unsuccessful attempt to start a neo-Hassidic community in the Negev desert, and, at the age of 24, became Israel's youngest school principal. In 1965, he founded the Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications and began his monumental work on the Talmud, including translation into Hebrew, English, Russian, and various other languages which was completed in 2010. The Steinsaltz edition is widely used throughout Israel, the United States, and the world. Steinsaltz's classic work of Kabbalah, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose*, was first published in 1980, and now appears in eight languages. In all, Steinsaltz authored some 60 books and hundreds of articles on subjects including Talmud, Jewish mysticism, Jewish philosophy, sociology, historical biography, and philosophy. He established Yeshivat Mevor Chaim alongside Rabbis Menachem Froman and Shagar in 1984 and Yeshivat Tekoa in 1999. Rav Steinsaltz was also Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Hesder Tekoa. Rav Steinsaltz died in Jerusalem on 7 August 2020, from acute pneumonia, at the Shaare Tzedek Medical Center.*

Thought for Sukkos – Hollywood Happiness

Sukkos and Shimini Atzeres highlight the importance of Simcha – of happiness. In a famous essay on Hollywood, Rav Steinsaltz tried to develop an understanding of what makes Hollywood special. He describes Hollywood as a “great and very successful religion” made up of many “creators” and actors who are “mythical figures.” He noted that Hollywood has many idols who are “just bodies” manipulated by producers and actors and can cause riots among their worshippers. Trying to get to the main point of the “Hollywood religion”, Rav Steinsaltz notes that it is happiness. Happiness is the goal and or motivation for anything and everything in Hollywood and that happiness is defined as “comfort.” Hollywood glorifies mediocrity –not outstanding achievements or outstanding people. While not necessarily overtly bad, Rav Steinsaltz notes that this philosophy is one of shallowness where everything has to be within the audience’s grasp and that everything works out for everyone in the end. In that regard, Hollywood is the “opiate of the masses.” In a different essay (Sukkot: The Season of our rejoicing), Rav Steinsaltz notes that the joy of Chag HaSukkos, where the farmer at the end of his harvest must dwell in the sukkah in which one “sees life’s simple and basic graces and rejoices in what one has instead of making demands and recalling nonexistent rights. It is man’s humility and not in his belief that

“I deserve better” that allows man to attain happiness. Such joy grows from day to day with the recognition of the gifts that have already been bestowed on him.

For discussion:

1. What makes us happy? How do you decide what happiness is? Is it derived from social depictions of happiness? Should it?
2. Happiness seems to be demanded as part of the requirements of the holiday. IS happiness a state or an obligation? How can Hashem demand an emotion? Why would he do that?
3. Are we to understand that all happiness that is not religious, is shallow? Do you agree with that?
4. Is all shallowness void of religion? Is there no room for appreciation of the aesthetic in Torah life?
5. Does true happiness require a struggle? Why or why not?
6. Is a state of happiness the same for everyone? How? Why might it be different for different people?
7. Where does gratitude and humility help create happiness? Or does it?
8. Should we ever be content? Doesn't contentment breed complacency and lack of initiative?

Theme #7 – Don't be cruel – A Yizkor meditation



Personality – Rav Nahum Eliezer Rabinovitch ztl. – Rosh Yeshivat Maaleh Adumim

Rav Nahum Eliezer Rabinovitch was a Canadian-Israeli Religious Zionist rabbi and posek. Rav Rabinovitch was born in Montreal. After completing an eight-year course of studies under Rabbi Pinchas Hirschsprung, Rabinovitch received semicha from Montreal's Yeshivas Merkaz HaTorah in the city's first rabbinical ordination ceremony. After obtaining an honours degree in commerce from Sir George Williams College, he left for Baltimore to pursue a Master of Science degree in mathematics at Johns Hopkins University. While there, he studied at Yeshivas Ner Yisroel, where he received a second ordination from Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman Between 1955 and 1963, Rav Rabinovitch served as spiritual leader of the Brith Sholom Beth Israel Congregation in Charleston, South Carolina. In this role, he helped establish the city's first Jewish day school, of which he served as principal. He also held appointments as lecturer in mathematics at the College of Charleston and chaplain to the Sixth Naval District Headquarters. In 1963, he was called to serve as a community rabbi in Toronto, and assumed the pulpit of the Clanton Park Synagogue in Downsview. He completed a Ph.D. in the philosophy and history of mathematics at the University of Toronto in 1971. Rav Rabinovitch was appointed principal of Jews' College in early 1970, and settled in London that spring. Notable among his students at the College was Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, who has cited Rav Rabinovitch as his primary role model. Ten years

later, he accepted an offer to become rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe, a hesder institution in Ma'ale Adumim from 1982 until his death.

Thought for Sukkos/ Shimini Atzeres – Social Responsibility & Cruelty

The Torah reading for Shmini Atzeres focuses on social responsibilities (Aser Ta'aser) and the different holidays. Specifically in regard to the Mitzva of Simcha during this time we are commanded to rejoice with everyone – including the Levi, the Ger, the widow and the orphan. Shmini Atzeres is also the day we recite Yizkor as we recall loved ones who are not with us. In a Sichah delivered in his Yeshiva on Yom HaZikaron, Rav Rabinovitch noted that there is a need to mourn when someone dies. He cites the Rambam (Hil. Avel Chapter 13) who notes that one who does not mourn when there is a death is an Achzari (cruel). Rav Rabinovitch notes that the idea of cruelty seems a bit misplaced. Why is it cruelty when one doesn't join in the mourning? He adds that we find the same cruelty (Achzari) label applied to one whose community is suffering and s/he does not join in the prayers. Why? He explains that based on the Gemara (Sukkah 14a) we find that prayer has the ability to change Hashem's intentions of running with the midda of Achzariyut – of cruelty and changes it to Rachmanut – to mercy. Does this mean that Hashem runs the world with an intention toward cruelty? Rav Rabinovitch explains that Hashem DOES have creations that left to their own devices, can cause much damage. He cites bacteria and viruses as 2 examples. If these are left alone unchecked, they can cause much havoc in the world. Leaving these unchecked is an act of Achzariyut – of cruelty. The same is true for the person who sees mourning or pleading for mercy and does not respond. It is in essence as if we are saying, "let the world run on its own and I cannot be bothered." That lack of involvement is cruel. Rav Rabinovitch adds that there are 2 battles that we engage in. One is toward our enemies, it has cost us all a lot of blood and tears. But there is a second battle whose casualty rate is also high – and that is the battle for the Jewish soul. While we fight outside battles together, we need to also recognize that we also fight for one another. We, and all of the Kedoshim of the past, have been dedicated to the greater mission of brotherhood in Am Yisrael. Not to recognize, appreciate and build on that lesson is cruelty. But appreciating it and commemorating it promotes Hashem's mercy.

For discussion:

1. When we discuss social responsibility and collective memory what might we do to promote these ideals? How does one lead to the other? Why is it important?
2. How do we reconcile the lifestyles of those who have made religious choices of which we do not agree, with their dedication and sacrifice that we appreciate?
3. How do we handle "being with" a group that we think might provide a poor social influence on us with the need of being socially responsible and bring them close to us?
4. Is there ever a time we are supposed to look away? What about when Korach was punished? Were we supposed to daven for them too?
5. The Lubavitcher Rebbe ztl. (Likutei Maamarim 17 Tammuz 5747) noted that the walls of Yirushalayim were there to unite the people in it so that they would be united in a perfect love of Israel. However, he added that there is a benefit to breaking the wall from the side of Kedusha insofar as it ends the limitation of the walls. Is that an ideal or just a rosy way to look at an aspect of Churban?
6. What steps, especially in the face of the current virus, can we take to close the gaps between us socially while still maintaining a healthy social distance?

Theme #8- Setting temporary and permanent goals in life



Personality – Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztl. – Rosh Yeshiva, Dayan, Posek, Gadol

Harav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg was a rabbi, posek, and rosh yeshiva in Israel. The scion of a Lithuanian Jewish family, Goldberg was also a son-in-law of Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. Harav Goldberg was a halachic authority and Chief Justice of the Rabbinical High Court in Jerusalem, where he made rulings on the issues of gittin, ketubot, artificial insemination, and the commandment of living in the Land of Israel. He co-authored the Jewish prenuptial agreement sponsored by the Rabbinical Council of America together with Mordechai Willig. Harav Goldberg was the rosh yeshiva of both the Sadigura Hasidic yeshiva and the Jerusalem College of Technology (Machon Lev), and headed the Institute for the Higher Study of Halacha (Machon Iyun Ha'Halacha) in Jerusalem. He lectured extensively in many different Yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael. Harav Goldberg became the editor and chief of Encyclopedia Talmudit in 2008. It was said of his genius that "there are 3 ways people write an entry for the Encyclopedia Talmudit 1. a month of research from a vast library 2. using databases to aid in a month of research. 3. Rav Zalman Nechemia, would sit at a 1930's era typewriter and write the entry in a half-hour."

Thought for Sukkos/Simchas Torah – Temporary & Permanent Life Goals

Many of the different themes of Sukkos focused on the temporary structure we call Sukkah and the awareness and enhancement of our faith in Hashem even when in this temporary state. However, on Simchas Torah it is appropriate to also look at the priorities we set in our lives. In a shiur he gave in a few locations, Rav Zalman Nechemia ztl. examined a Machlokes in a Gemara (Berachos 35b) that notes a Machlokes between Rav Yishmael and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai as to whether one may stop learning in order to work. Rabbi Yishmael indicated that it would be ok while Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai noted that if we stopped learning for every single excuse, when will we ever study Torah? Abaye seems to side with Rabbi Yishmael with a cryptic comment that many followed his path and it worked for them. Rav Zalman Nechemia noted that the text does not indicate a clear Machlokes nor does Abaye's statement indicate a Psak choosing one position versus the other. Why? In developing his answer, Rav Zalman Nechemia categorized 2 types of Mitzvos – the Din and Lifnim M'Shuras HaDin. In the former, everyone is obligated equally, in the latter there is more latitude and there are exemptions. A similar concept is found in the imperative to "do the right and the good". Rav Zalman Nechemia classifies these Mitzvos (Doing the right and the good and Lifnim Meesuras HaDin) as "Mitzvos Klaliyos" or general Mitzvos. He argues that Talmud Torah is also a Mitzva Klalit and therefore the requirements differ for each person

(beyond the basic saying Shema twice a day). Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai argued that everyone needs to give his uncompromising all to Torah study as if we were living in the days of Moshiach as we set priorities that are more permanent than temporary. Rabbi Yishmael disagrees and maintains that in the days of Moshiach we will need to give it our all (but there will be no challenge then as all creature comforts will be afforded to us) but now, we are allowed to work as well. Rav Zalman Nechemia adds that it is incumbent upon each of us to properly assess our personal requirements when it comes to a Mitzva Klalit like Torah learning which will bear itself out when choosing activities when one is not “busy working” (e.g. learning on Shabbos or Yom Tov – see Rema OC 290 and Chasam Sofer OC 208).

For Discussion:

1. How ARE we supposed to figure out personal priorities in life? What guidelines should each of us use?
2. Is there any room for leisure in the equation of priorities and goals? Where?
3. What about Chessed? And other Mitzvos? If I am always learning where and when am I supposed to do those?
4. What if I do not think I am cut out for learning – what am I to do then? When can a person decide that s/he is not “cut out” for a particular aspect of Jewish life? What are the ramifications then? How should those things get accomplished?