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**How Can You Find the**

**Joys of Olam Habah in**

**This Mundane World?**

**By Daniel Keren**



One of the highlighted speakers at the recent Hakhel Presidents Day Yarchei Kallah Event in Flatbush was Rabbi Zev Smith, internationally renowned Maggid Shiur who addressed the important topic of “Olam Haba…In this World!” He began by asking the eternal question of how do you find Olam Habah (the rewards of the World to Come for the righteous) in this mundane world? He admitted that often, one finds the problems in Olam Hazeh to be quite challenging.

In the Gemara (Ta’anis 22a-b) Rabbi Beroka Hoza’a met Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet) in the marketplace of Bei Lefet and asked Elijah the Prophet if there was anyone in the market at that time who was a ben Olam Haba, someone who was guaranteed a place of reward in the World to Come.

Eliyahu pointed to two people in the market place who were worthy of slots in Olam Haba. Rabbi Beroka went to them and inquired as to their profession and was informed that they were badchans, professional jesters who would make a point of approaching Jews who were sad or depressed and entertain them in order to cheer them up. They also worked to make shalom (peace) between people who were angry at one another.

Rabbi Smith pointed out that today we live in a generation that is supposedly dedicated to the unbridled pursuit of happiness. And yet it seems that there has never been a sadder or more depressed generation. Half of the world is on self-depressants and the other half should be taking self-depressants.

**The “Me” or “I” Generation at the Expense of One’s Spouse**

We live in a “Me Generation” or should we say an “I Generation.” That might explain why in the society around us, the divorce rate is almost 50%. If one lives only to satisfy the “Me,” then his or her spouse instead of becoming his or her closest friend becomes his or her enemy and a major obstacle in life.

Rabbi Smith recalled someone who is an accountant once worked for a client who was worth almost $20 million. This client concocted a sneaky business deal in which he betrayed many of his friends who he talked into becoming investors and certainly his Father in Heaven, the Ribono shel Olam.

Life is not about atzmi (oneself) but rather about living for others. One has to be a giving person. How does one become a giving person? To do so, Rav Avraham Pam, zt”l, said one should start giving.

And if one is persistent, one will come to enjoy giving to others and this will become one of the greatest pleasures that any Jew can have and this will allow one to become truly an Olam Habah in Olam Hazeh.

Another opportunity to be a giver is to utilize the countless opportunities to say pleasant words to others. Don’t be afraid to compliment others and cheer them up (like the professional jesters that Eliyahu Hanavi saw in the marketplace.) and give chizuk (encouragement) to others.

**The Jamaican Delivery Man’s Questions on Jews**

A Jamaican who worked in Brooklyn delivering orders for a Jewish supermarket once asked a customer if he could ask him a question that was puzzling him. The customer agreed. The delivery man said that once recently he left his key in the van and was stuck. A Jew seeing his problem called Chaverim (a local Jewish organization that helps members of our community whose cars breakdown or who lose their keys and can’t enter their homes.

Within minutes some Chaverim members came to the van and helped open the locked door which allowed the Jamaican delivery man to continue his round of deliveries. When he asked the Chaverim volunteers how much he owed them, they said nothing, that is was a mitzvah they were doing to help others in difficulty.

The Jamaican asked the man if that was true and was told that indeed it was the mission of the Chaverim volunteers to help others just for the sake of assisting another person and without the purpose of charging them money. The Jamaican than asked if all the Hatzolah EMTs he saw running around to help save the lives of others were also volunteers not taking any remuneration for their services. When the man said that was also true, the non-Jewish delivery man asked his final question, “If that is true, why does G-d bother to create the rest of us [goyim]?”

Rabbi Smith told of a man who worked in a restaurant where at the end of the day, the owner would throw into a dumpster all of the leftover food as it wouldn’t be fresh enough to serve the next day. The man thought that this was a terrible waste as not far from the restaurant was an area where homeless people congregated who certainly didn’t have enough healthy food to eat.

He asked the owner if instead of throwing the leftover food into the garbage, he the worker could bring it over to the homeless, The owner agreed and that same night the worker took the food and everyone in the homeless encampment was happy to enjoy the leftovers with the exception of a bitter woman who said that she didn’t want it.

**The Bitter Woman’s Accusation Against the “Dirty” Jew**

The next evening after the restaurant closed the man again brought the leftovers to the homeless and everyone enjoyed the food except for that same bitter woman. The man asked why she didn’t want the food and she said she wouldn’t take food offered by a dirty Jew. He told her that he wasn’t Jewish and she snidely remarked that he had to be Jewish because only Jews would do something as noble as giving food to homeless people.

Shortly thereafter he called his mother and told her about that crazy woman who wouldn’t take of the good leftover food because she thought that he was a dirty Jew. “Isn’t that crazy Mom, I’m not Jewish.” There was a long pause on the phone and finally his mother said that in truth she was hiding the fact that she was Jewish and that made him also Jewish. The worker with the good heart was so stunned that he decided that he wanted to learn more about the Jewish people and he eventually became a baal teshuvah, a religiously observant Jew.

Rabbi Smith said that the greatest pleasure in life is in sharing that pleasure with another person. If a person could live like Adam Harishon before the Ribono shel Olam had given him Chava as a partner in life, one would realize that all the pleasures in life would be meaningless unless he had someone else to share those joys with.

A rich man once came to the very sparse and poor apartment of the Chazon Ish, zt”l and was shocked by what he saw. He took from his wallet a large wad of bills and said to the gadol hador and tzadik, “this is for you.” The great Torah scholar politely refused the gift. The startled rich man asked the Chazon Ish: “How can you live like this?” He answered by declaring, “I get my greatest pleasure by doing chesed for others.”

**The Importance of Giving to One’s Own Household**

Giving is a simcha (joy) and the greatest giving is in one’s home where one won’t get acclaim like one would for doing chesed (kindness) outside of the home to others. A father once told his sons on the day of their chasanahs (weddings) to look for those unpopular bochurim (boys) who were not great learners and make sure to pick them out to dance with. These are the boys who are always ignored at chasanahs and feel terrible. On your wedding day try to make those bochurim happy too.

Parents are constantly giving and giving to their children and that is why their love is greater than the love of a child for his or her parents. The world around us tells us that those who are always giving to others are losers in life. Yet, the truth is that only by giving to others can one have the greatest pleasure in life.

*Reprinted from the March 6, 2020 edition of The Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller**

**On Fear of Death**



**QUESTION:** You said tonight that death is just a change, moving from one place to another? If so, why does everybody fear death? And how should we overcome that fear?

**ANSWER:** Why should we fear death? We have to fear death because that’s what we learn from Moshe Rabeinu. When Moshe Rabbeinu was told, הן קרבו ימיך למות – *Your days are coming to an end*, so it says: ואתחנן אל השם בעת ההיא — Moshe put up a fight, a big fight, begging Hashem that he shouldn’t die. He fought more than anybody else. Do you know why? Because more than anybody else he knew what life meant.

When you tell a person he’s going to die, so if he wants to show he’s a hero, he doesn’t get excited. He acts like a stoic — he’s willing to accept it like a hero. No, he’s not a hero – he’s a *shoteh!*

The Vilna Gaon passed away Chol Hamoed Sukkos. So when they brought the esrog and the lulav to him for the last time on his death bed where he was lying sick, he burst out weeping: “It’s the last time – the last time I’ll be able to *bentch* *lulav* and *esrog*.” He burst out weeping because he lived his life only to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu and to do *mitzvos!* That was the whole wealth of his life and now it was coming to an end!

That’s why Moshe Rabbeinu put up a fight – he didn’t want to pass away! “Look at all that I can still do!” I remember when Reb Aharon Kotler, *zichrono livracha,* was on his deathbed, he was weeping. He said, “*Ribono Shel Olam,* let me live! I can do so much in this world!” He wept.

People who understand the opportunity of life, they know that death is a great tragedy. ואחריתה כיום מר – The bitter day of death, a very bitter day. It’s not bitter because you won’t eat supper anymore, or because you won’t make money anymore. People who understand the true wealth of life know that death is the great tragedy of all tragedies.

However, as soon as the time comes, as soon as he passes into the Next World, he’s so busy now seeing the *ziv ha’Shechina,* the splendor of the *Shechina*, that he forgets it all. אשבעה בהקיץ תמונותיך – He gazes into the face of Hashem and he forgets everything. He forgets it all in the happiness of *Olam Habah.*

But while we’re still alive, we should keep in mind that this is the time of the greatest happiness. יפה שעה אחת – Every moment in this world is precious.

Now, how do you overcome the fear of death? Who said that you shouldn’t be afraid of death? Let people be afraid of death! But not in such a fear that they should walk around morbid and sad. No. They should be full of joy that they’re alive. That’s the greatest fear of death — you’re enjoying the wealth of opportunity of this world and you don’t want to part from that happiness.

Every minute should mean something! You’re never bored! Anybody who is bored shows that he doesn’t know what life is. Here’s a man sitting on his porch with no place to go. It’s Sunday; “Where shall I go today?” He’s bored!?

You’re alive! You can go every place in the world in your mind. You can to go to Hakodosh Boruch Hu; open a C*humash,* open a *Gemara!* So many wonderful things to think about! Think about *Yetzias Mitzrayim* if you want! Think about the *mann!* Think about *Kriyas Yam Suf!* Think about the *tzaddikim* of all the *doros!* So many things you can think about! The most interesting things in the world are waiting for you if you voyage with your mind. A person who is bored, it means he has no mind. He doesn’t know what life is. TAPE # 826

*Reprinted from the February 4, 2020 email of Toras Avigdor adapted from Tape #826 (April 1984).*

**The Shmuz onParshas Tzaveh**

**Hashem and Man:**

**Master and Servant**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



“*The Kohain shall don a garment of linen, and he shall don linen breeches on his skin, and he shall remove the ashes.*” — Vayikra 6:3

One of the daily activities in the *Mishkan* was **taking out the ashes***.* The *Chovos Ha’Levavos* explains that HASHEM commanded Aaron to do this action each day “to lower himself and rid himself of the arrogance in his heart.”

This statement seems to imply that Aaron was arrogant, and that HASHEM felt he needed specific work to get rid of that sense of superiority. The problem with this is that it is difficult to imagine that *Aaron* *Ha’Kohain* was a haughty individual. This concept becomes even more problematic when we focus on the Torah’s description of Aaron.

**A Man of Sterling Character Traits**

When HASHEM appeared to Moshe and said, “I want you to lead the Jewish people out of *Mitzrayim*,” Moshe refused. He was afraid that Aaron would feel slighted. Up until that point, Aaron had been the leader of the nation, the one who brought the word of HASHEM to the people. Now his younger brother, unheard of for sixty years, would usurp that position. As great as Aaron was, Moshe knew that he was still human and would feel the pain of being displaced. Therefore, Moshe wanted no part of it.

HASHEM explained to Moshe that while this might be a well-founded fear in regards to the average person, because of Aaron’s great spiritual stature, he was above jealousy and competition, and this wouldn’t cause him any pain. He had so eliminated bad character traits from his heart that he would feel nothing negative. In fact, when Moshe assumed this position and Aaron set out to meet him, the *posuk* says, “It was with **joy in his heart**.”

HASHEM was telling Moshe was that Aaron was in a different category of people. He had mastered his nature. He was like a *moloch* in human form.

Of all men, Aaron wouldn’t be haughty and overbearing. So why did HASHEM feel that it was necessary for him to take out the ashes each day to eliminate arrogance from his heart?

The answer to this question is based on understanding the underpinnings of our relationship with HASHEM.

**A Servant Needs a Master and**

**A Master Needs a Servant**

The *Chovos Ha’Levavos* (*Shaar Ha’chnah*) explains a basic truism: *a* *servant needs a master, and a master needs a servant*. By definition, a servant can’t be a servant without a master, and a master can’t be a master without a servant. They are mutually dependent. With that, he explains the danger of arrogance. The arrogant person feels powerful, mighty, and independent. These are not the traits that one finds in a servant; quite the opposite, these are the traits of superiors, people who rule. These are the traits of the master. For that reason, the arrogant person can’t be a servant of HASHEM.

HASHEM alone has the right to wear the trait of Ga’avah. He alone is mighty, He alone is powerful, and He alone is independent. Anyone else who harbors these thoughts in his heart is “wearing the King’s robes*.*” He views himself in a manner that is false and delusional. More significantly, in that state, he cannot serve HASHEM. “How can a person as mighty, significant, and important as I possibly have a master? I am the master!” For this reason, arrogance utterly skews the relationship of man to his Creator. Its opposite, humility, is central to all *Avodas* HASHEM.

This seems to be the answer to the question. In no sense was Aaron haughty or overbearing; he was amongst the most modest of men. The problem was that his role required even more. As the representative of the nation, he was going into the Holiest of the Holies; any imperfection in his intentions would have spelled an imperfect *avodah*, so he needed to be perfect in his humility. To attain that state, he needed a physical exercise. He had to so to speak, **take out the****garbage** each day. By doing this, any trace of independence was eliminated from his heart, and he was able to reach that most elusive understanding: I am utterly, completely, and totally **dependent** upon HASHEM. I am the creation, and He is my Creator. As great as Aaron was, he still needed improvement in this area, and it was only through concrete, physical actions that he could reach a state of true humility.

Humility is the core of being an Eved HASHEM

This concept is very applicable in our lives. All of our *avodas* HASHEM hinges upon accepting HASHEM as our Master. While we may not be haughty, unless we have worked on acquiring humility, there will be trace elements of arrogance in our hearts, and these will greatly impede our being subservient to HASHEM. They stop us from standing as servants in front of our Master.

The only way to achieve true humility is by being exposed to life situations that allow us to grow in humility. By being subjected to the various situations in life, where we come to recognize that we are not mighty, powerful, and independent, the reality starts to seep in. I am a mere mortal. Here for a few short years, unable to even control my own existence, I am but a creation dependent upon my Master for my very existence.

To help us grow, HASHEM will often custom-tailor situations for us. Not every circumstance in life is pleasant, and not every condition is something would we wish for. Some situations may be demeaning. It may feel like you are being asked to take out the garbage*.* You might even feel indignant. “HASHEM why are You subjecting me to this? What have I done wrong to deserve this?”

The answer may well be nothing. It wasn’t something wrong that you did that brought this about. Rather, it was something you did **right**, some merit that you have that allowed you to have this opportunity to acquire that rare commodity – humility.

Recognizing our need for situations that bring us to a sense of dependence upon HASHEM can help us understand life, and then we can use these situations to grow and to accomplish our purpose in Creation.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the*[*Shmuz on the Parsha book*](https://theshmuz.com/product/shmuz-on-the-parsha-book/)*.*

**The Importance of the High Priest’s Garments and the**

**Connection of the Jews to G-d**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah portion, Tetzave, describes the special garments worn by the high priest during his service in the Holy Temple, and enumerates eight separate items of clothing.

The Torah makes two provisos: First, the high priest may not perform his service unless he is wearing all eight garments, and second, he is not allowed to even enter the Sanctuary unless he is wearing three of them -- the breastplate, ephod, and robe.

The high priest is the emissary and representative of the Jewish people, and as such, his function is to connect them to G-d.

The relationship between the Jew and G-d exists on two levels simultaneously: One is the result of the Jew's service through Torah and mitzvot, the other stems from the Jew's innate connection with G-d by virtue of his essence. Both levels are reflected in the Torah's instructions concerning the high priest's garments.

Set into the breastplate were twelve precious stones, each inscribed with the name of a different tribe, which the high priest was required to wear "upon his heart." The breastplate therefore symbolizes the highest level of connection between the Jew and G-d, as these names were actually inscribed on the holy object itself.

The next level of the Jew's bond with G-d is expressed in the ephod, which also contained stones inscribed with the names of the tribes, but with a difference: The stones of the ephod were not worn "opposite the heart" but rather, "upon the shoulder - pieces," in the back of the garment.

The ephod therefore symbolizes those Jews who wage a constant war against their Evil Inclination, a type of service of G-d that falls into the category of "back."

The third level is expressed in the high priest's robe, the hem of which was adorned with "pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarn."

Our Sages commented that even the most estranged Jew is as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate; the ephod therefore symbolizes this level.

The high priest must wear all three garments -- representing all three levels of Jews -- if he is to be allowed into the Sanctuary, the place where the Divine Presence rests. For it is when all Jews stand together in unity that the deepest bond with G-d is forged -- "a remembrance before the L-rd continually."

This contains a lesson for us to apply in our lives:

Every single Jew is an essential part of the Jewish people and is therefore a "remembrance before the L-rd continually."

For the true essence of the Jew is not his external appearance but his G-dly soul, "a veritable part of G-d," and all Jews are children of the same Father.

*Reprinted from the Issue #355 of L’Chaim Weekly (Parashat Tetzave 5755/1994)*

**Rabbi Berel Wein**

**On Parashas Tetzaveh**

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The Torah reading of this week establishes for us the commandment of having an eternal flame burn in the *Mishkan* and later in the Temple in Jerusalem as well. This commandment is repeated regarding the Alter in the *Mishkan* and in the Temple where an eternal flame was also to be present on the Alter of sacrifices.

The concept and symbol of an eternal flame has been repeated throughout Jewish history and is found to be present in all Jewish synagogues throughout the world and throughout the ages.

I have often wondered as to the significance of a flame of fire somehow representing eternity. I think that this has to do with the fact that the Torah instructs us to imitate our Creator to the extent that is humanly possible

The first creation of G-d, so to speak, was light, energy, fire if you will. The first invention of man according to Midrash was at the conclusion of the Sabbath when human beings first learned how to create fire. It is the origin of our custom in the *Havdala*service to have a fire lit, over which we bless G-d for allowing us to create this most necessary of all human inventions.

Fire is a double -edged sword. It warms and lights and it damages and destroys. Like all human inventions, especially those of our modern world over the past century, the use of all inventions contains ambivalence. The invention can be used for great and good things and it also can destroy all that has been accomplished.

Fire therefore represents the human capacity for good and for evil. The Torah teaches us that this capacity is an eternal one and that the challenge of having good triumph over evil never disappears.

Good provides eternal energy and drives the engine of morality and holiness. Evil also contributes to the advancement of civilization though it must always be controlled and dominated by the good sense of morality that is innate within us.

Most advancements in medicine have occurred through discoveries made in trying to heal the wounds of war and violence and the prevention of the spread of plagues and epidemics. In effect, the fire of creativity that is the hallmark of human beings, from infancy onwards, is an eternal gift that the L-rd has bestowed upon us. This is perhaps part of the symbolism of the eternal flame described in this week’s Torah reading.

Our sense of creativity is symbolized by the eternal flame that burns in our houses of worship. But that flame also burns deep within the the soul of human beings. It is that internal flame that can and should be converted to an eternal flame by good deeds, moral values, and good intentions.

Human beings require symbols to actuate noble values and ideas. All the symbols that appear in the *Mishkan*come to reinforce the value system that the Torah teaches us. An eternal flame represents much more than the burning wick of a candle.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Rabbiwein.com*

**Moshe, Noah and Us**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**



One of the intriguing features of Parashat Tesaveh is the fact noted by our Sages that Moshe’s name appears nowhere in the Parasha – making this the first Parasha since Parashat Shemot (which tells of Moshe’s birth) not to mention Moshe Rabbenu.

The Sages teach us that Moshe’s name was “removed” from this Parasha in response to his plea to G-d after the sin of the golden calf, “And now, if You will, please pardon their sin, and if not, then please erase me from the book that You have written!” (Shemot 32:32).

G-d had decided to annihilate Beneh Yisrael because of the golden calf, and to produce a new nation from Moshe.  However, Moshe refused, and told G-d that if Beneh Yisrael are “erased,” then he wants to be “erased” with them.

Hashem, of course, forgave Beneh Yisrael, but given the extraordinary power of a Sadik’s words, Moshe’s proclamation, “erase me from the book” had to be fulfilled in some fashion.  Therefore, his name does not appear from Parashat Tesaveh. Different reasons have been given for why Parashat Tesaveh in particular was chosen for this purpose.

Moshe’s response to G-d’s decree to annihilate Beneh Yisrael stands in stark contrast to the response of another righteous figure who failed to pray or help the people of his generation who were condemned due to their wrongdoing.

The prophet Yeshayahu refers to the flood that destroyed the world in Noah’s time as “Meh Noah” – “the waters of Noah” – as if to blame Noah for the devastating deluge. The Zohar explains that the flood is blamed on Noah because when he heard about the impending catastrophe, he did not pray to G-d for mercy or try to inspire the people of his time to change.  He instead simply complied with G-d’s instructions to build an ark to save himself, his family and the animals.  He rescued himself without trying to rescue the people.

The Arizal teaches us that Moshe Rabbenu was a Gilgul (reincarnation) of Noah’s soul, which returned to this world for the purpose of correcting this grave mistake which it had made. By sacrificing his own future for the sake of Am Yisrael, refusing to be rescued as the people are destroyed, Moshe rectified the mistake of Noah.

The Hid”a (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1807) comments that the letters of the word “Meheni” (“erase me”) also spell the words “Meh Noah,” alluding to Moshe’s role in rectifying Noah’s mistake. In truth, G-d had already foretold that Noah’s mistake would be rectified by Moshe, when He commanded Noah to enter the ark just before the onset of the flood.

He said, “Go into the ark…because I have seen you as a righteous person before Me in this generation” (Bereshit 7:1).  The word “Ha’zeh” (“this”) has the numerical value of 17, alluding the 17th generation after Noah, when Moshe would emerge to correct his mistake.  And thus when Moshe was born, the Torah writes, his mother saw that “he was good” (“Ki Tob Hu” – Shemot 2:2).

The word “Tob” has the numerical value of 17, and indicates that Moshe’s mother sensed that he would be the one to rectify the mistake of Noah and be a selfless leader prepared to sacrifice everything for the sake of his nation. The omission of Moshe’s name from Parashat Tesaveh thus reminds us of the extent of Moshe’s selfless devotion to his people, how he corrected Noah’s mistake by refusing to rescue himself on an “ark” while the rest of the people perished.

In our times, we – the Torah observant community – live on an “ark” seeking to protect ourselves from the “flood” of immorality and decadence that is ravaging the world around us. As part of this effort, we must learn from the example set for us by Moshe Rabbenu, and not forget the others in our generation.

We cannot feel content rescuing ourselves without any concern for what happens to the others.  Our obligation is to do what we can to bring them with us onto the “ark” and help them pull themselves out of the “flood.”

And the most effective way of doing this is through personal example.  If we conduct ourselves in a kind, courteous, dignified manner, the people around us will take notice.  We cannot imagine how profound an effect we have on others by speaking politely, dealing with people honestly, avoiding anger, and being patient and kind.

If the people around us see Orthodox Jews acting in an especially respectful and courteous manner, they will begin to realize the benefits of Torah study and observance, and this, in turn, is the greatest catalyst to change.

It does not suffice to maintain our own level of observance.  It is our duty to raise the level of those around us, and the primary way we achieve this goal is through personal example, by conducting our day-to-day affairs the way Torah Jews are supposed and expected to act.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of The Edmond J. Safra Synagogue in Brooklyn.*

**A Closer Look – Olives**

**By Rabbi Sholom Ber Hendel**



**WHAT ARE OLIVES:**

Olives are small, green fruit that grown on trees in Eretz Yisroel and around the world. They are one of the Shivas Haminim mentioned in the Torah.

Olives are not edible raw due to their bitter taste. About 90% of the world’s supply of olives is crushed into olive oil. The remaining 10% is processed into green and black table olives. Olives have many health benefits and can be eaten as is or used in foods, such as salads, toppings and dips.

**HOW OLIVES ARE PROCESSED:**

Olives are harvested from the trees and transported to manufacturing facilities. Upon arrival, foreign materials such as dirt and leaves are removed and the olives are washed with water. The olives are then placed in large tanks or barrels with a brine made from salt water and other additives.

The olives are kept in the brine until the fermentation (curing) process is completed. The length of the process is dependent on the specific variety of the olives and the desired finished product.

During the fermentation process, additional salt is added continuously. At the end of the process, the olives are removed from the brine, rinsed with clean water and sorted according to size. At this point, the olives can be cracked, pitted and stuffed and are subsequently packaged in jars or cans with the previously used or new brine. Olives that are sold in retail packaging are usually sterilized in hot water, or preservatives are added to the final brine.

Although dissimilar in appearance, green and black olives come from the same tree. Green olives are essentially unripe fruit. If they are kept on the tree for a longer period of time, they turn purple and then black. At this stage, they are picked and processed. Some varieties of black olives are processed by soaking green olives in a lye (Sodium Hydroxide) solution until the desired color is achieved.

Some olives go through a dry fermentation process that consists of placing the olives in a barrel with dried salt, which breaks down the bitterness. The barrels are mixed daily for a few weeks until the fermentation process is  completed, after which they can be packed either dry, in a brine or processed further with vegetable oil.

Pimento (pepper in Spanish) Olives are pitted olives that are stuffed with pepper. Historically, strips of pepper were placed inside the olive and this method is still used today in some products. Presently, many pimento olives are stuffed with minced pepper, mixed with gelling agents.

**ARE OLIVES KOSHER?**

The olives themselves (unless they were grown in Israel [see below]) do not cause any kashrus concerns. However, most of the additives that are typically used in the fermentation or packaging brine pose kashrus concerns and care must be taken to ensure that they are sourced from a kosher approved supplier. The most common additives are citric acid, ascorbic acid, lactic acid, acetic acid or vinegar1. Vegetable oil and seasonings can be added to the packaging brine. The gelling agent in the Pimento Olives is another kashrus concern.

Kalamata Olives come from Greece and are often packaged in vinegar. Since much of the vinegar used in Greece is wine vinegar, these olives pose a greater kashrus concern.

Olives that are grown in Israel pose additional kosher concerns. We must ensure that the olives did not grow during the Shmitta Year, and that Terumos U’maasros were taken from them. Even though olive trees do not typically bear fruit during their first few years after planting, there are some varieties that can bear fruit in their third year and, therefore, we must ensure that the olives are not Orlah (fruit produced by a tree during the first three years after planting).

Olives should be purchased solely from companies with reliable kosher certification. The kosher certifying agency will ensure that all of the additives are kosher and that non-kosher is not processed on the same equipment without a proper kosherization (if required).

1. To read more about the kashrus concerns of vinegar, see page 7 in the Kislev 5778 Issue of the Kosher Spirit

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**Making Partner is Easier Than You Think**

***By Sandy Eller***

If Steve Savitsky had to correct one misconception about becoming a Partners in Torah mentor, it would be the notion that only seasoned educators are qualified to convey Judaism’s richness to a fellow Jew.

“When I first started encouraging people to volunteer with Partners in Torah, they would tell me they didn’t know enough, but the truth is most people know far more than they realize,” Savitsky told Jewish Action. “Of course it’s important to study something, but the main part of being a mentor is to share things about your life – why you light candles on Friday night, why you keep kosher, why you devote so much of your income to educating your kids.”

As chairman of Partners in Torah, Savitsky is passionate about the program that asks volunteers to donate their time, not their money, with a 30 minute, once-a-week phone conversation.  While he acknowledges that most people lead extraordinarily busy lives, Savitsky is adamant that anyone can carve half an hour out of their weekly schedule to enrich the life of another Jew.

“So many of us go through life as observant Jews and never stop and think how fortunate we are to lead religious lives,” said Savitsky.  “Those of us who have had the benefit of a Jewish education and a religious upbringing possess the tools to positively impact the lives of others.”

Hedge fund veteran David Magerman is one of Partners in Torah’s many success stories. Drifting away from the Conservative Judaism of his childhood, Magerman was reintroduced to his religious roots after marrying his wife, Debra, who wanted to keep a kosher home. A trip to Israel further piqued his interest and, following a friend’s advice, Magerman called Partners in Torah in 2004. The rest, as they say, is history, and Magerman is renowned for his philanthropic efforts that support Jewish education nationwide.



Among the over 76,000 people who have participated in Partners in Torah are some well-known names, including actress Mayim Bialik and her Partner in Torah, Allison Josephs, creator of Jew in the City and and Project Makom.  As Bialik progressed in her learning, she proudly proclaimed her religious observance, her refusal to work on Jewish holidays inspiring others to do the same.

More often than not, Partners in Torah mentors are typical members of the observant Jewish community, who like their students, go on vacations, read books, travel and play ball with their kids. Because they hail from all walks of life and have shared experiences with their students, they have what it takes to not only be role models but also to forge the personal connections that are essential for the student-mentor relationship.

As Partners in Torah founder and CEO Rabbi Eli Gewirtz emphasizes, the program’s primary focus is to help all Jews build a proud, lifelong connection to Judaism.  To that end, Partners in Torah will be launching an ambitious campaign this month to recruit thousands of new participants, increasing its staff and services to accommodate new mentors and help them in their journeys in learning with their students. Along with a digital library filled with study materials, mentors will have access to Partners in Torah staff who will be able to offer guidance and address any questions or concerns that may arise.

Rabbi Gewirtz recognizes that some people may be reluctant to become mentors because they may not know the answers to questions that might arise during conversations with their students.

“There is nothing wrong with telling someone ‘That’s a great question. I don’t know the answer, but I’ll do some homework and get back to you,’” observed Rabbi Gewirtz.

Rabbi Gewirtz describes the student-mentor partnership as a match made in heaven, connecting those who have Torah knowledge with others who are eager to learn more.

“So many Jews today are looking for a connection to Judaism and if we’re not there for them, they will look elsewhere,” said Rabbi Gewirtz. “In just 30 minutes a week, *you* can make all the difference in another Jew’s life and help shape the Jewish future.”

*Learn with a fellow Jew for 30 minutes a week and help shape the Jewish future. Sign up at*[*www.partnersintorah.org/mentor*](http://www.partnersintorah.org/mentor)

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