

**HALACHA V'HALICHA...** By Rav Chaim Schabes

Rashi explains that every time Hashem spoke to Moshe, he would precede the conversation by calling him, indicating affection. The mere act of calling someone by their name is an expression of love, as we find by the *mal'achim*, who call each other, ויקרא זה אל זה, because of their nearness to each other. Rav Yechezkel Avramsky ZT"l writes, that it is an obligation upon us to treat our friends in the same way, to call them by their name, thereby fulfilling the Mitzvah of ואהבת לרעך כמוך.

There is a *minhag* to give 3 half-dollars before the reading of the Megillah as a *zecher* to the *machatzis hashekel*. The main custom is for every male above 20 yrs. old to give; however, there are many who also give for all ladies and children. If one starts that custom, he must continue in the following years, unless he specifically says that he does not want it to remain as a *nedder* (vow). This year, when Purim comes out on Sunday, and Taanis Esther is on Thursday, the *minhag* of *zecher l'machatzis hashekel* should preferably be fulfilled on Thursday, between *mincha* and *ma'ariv*; if one forgot, or was not aware that it should be done on Taanis Esther, it should be given on Sunday morning, Purim day, before the reading of the Megillah.

In a *bais haknesses* or a *bais midrash* one may not behave in a lightheaded way, such as by playing, joking around or chatting idle talk. One also may not eat and drink, or take a walk in them (OC 151:1). Poskim explain this to mean that one may not go to *shul* to pass the time for his enjoyment, or for no purpose at all, and even when one is sitting there for davening or learning, one must sit in a manner of awe and honor, and not place one foot over the other or lay back in a way of disrespect (Kesef Mishne ch. 11 of Hilchos T'fillah). Needless to say, one is not allowed to perform in these places disrespectful tasks such as giving a haircut or slaughtering an animal, and MB (1) adds that one should not do any work in them. Therefore if a bench or table needs to be fixed, although it is for the benefit of the *bais hamidrash*, it should be carried outside, because we should avoid any work in them which is not necessary. Shl"ah Hakadosh speaks strongly against bringing to shul or *bais midrash*, children that did not reach the age of *chinuch*, since they just play, dance, and soil and thereby profane the *k'dusha* of the place, and also disturb the *mispaelim*, and even when they mature, they do not stop these behaviors which denigrate the sanctity of a *bais haknesses* (MB 98:3). At all times one should refrain from doing an activity that is considered a lack of respect in them, and in nowadays we must include refraining from reading newspapers (even religious ones) (Piskai Tshuva 276 in a letter from the Imrei Emes), and the absolute prohibition of entering with a cell phone that rings (Mishnas Yosef 4:13 who writes that one transgresses explicit halachos), and smoking cigarettes (Sha'arai Tshuva 154:8, Ben Ish Chai Vayikra 5, Kaf Hachayim 10, Yachave Da'as 2:17, although there may be some flexibility only for someone who learns there permanently) besides the fact that they cause dirt with the cigarette butts, and one must care very much for their cleanliness (OC 151:17). One should not say: who am I to be strict about refraining from talking and being careful with all the above, since many who are better than I don't show proper care; just the opposite, where many are lax one should try to strengthen himself and he will thereby merit to add honor to Hashem and bring His divine presence, as a bit of light pushes away a lot of darkness. Moreover, he will become a vessel which is suitable to receive the positive flow that he will cause to come down from heaven (Peleh Yoetz, Bais Haknesses). All the above applies as well to a private *bais hamidrash* which was made with the explicit condition that they are nothing other than a *bais vaad l'talmidai chachamim* (meeting place of Torah scholars), because although they are less strict concerning eating, drinking, sleeping and respectable talk (even though they have an *aron hakodesh* and *sifrai Torah*) there is still no leniency on lightheaded activity. Shulchan Aruch continues that one is not allowed to reckon accounts unless they are related to *mitzvah*, which would include selling *sifrai kodesh* (Rav Pe'alim OC 24), and selling the *chametz* before *pesach*. However, exchanging money is prohibited by the Shulchan Aruch in a *bais haknesses* and *bais hamidrash*, but in a *bais vaad l'chachamim* it would be permitted, as long as it is done in a private and respectful manner.

**THOUGHTS ON THE HAFTARAH ...** By Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro (**Yeshayahu 43:21-44:23**)

In this week's *paresha* we find details of many of the *korbanos* that were brought in the time of the Bais Hamikdash. Similarly, in the beginning of our haftara we find the navi speaking about various *korbanos*, but in unflattering terms: לא הבאת לי שם עולותיך. While Yeshayahu is clearly chastising the people regarding *korbanos*, what he is referring to is a bit vague. Rashi and Radak explain that the navi is speaking to the Jews of his era and specifically of Achaz who, while he was king, prevented the *korbanos* from being brought in the Bais Hamikdash and instead erected many altars for *avoda zara* throughout the city. The Ibn Ezra, on the other hand, says that Yeshayahu was chastising the Jews of the Babylonian exile for not bringing *korbanos* at all! While Abarbanel dismisses this approach since it was impossible for the Jews in exile to have brought *korbanos* when there was no Bais Hamikdash to bring them to, perhaps we can explain the Ibn Ezra as follows: there are *mefarshim* that say that this nevu'ah of Yeshayahu was in general directed to the Jews who were in Bavel. During that *galus* they would beg Hashem for mercy and ask Him to return them to Eretz Yisrael so that they could once again bring the *korbanos* as they did when the Bais Hamikdash existed. But Yeshayahu points out their hypocrisy and, as he did in an earlier prophesy (see 1:11), reminds them that the *korbanos* they brought lacked the true sincerity necessary and therefore was as if they had not been brought at all! The haftara concludes with words of comfort מחיתי כעב פשעיך וכו'. The Malbim explains that the *geulah* for which we yearn is, from Hashem's perspective, already here but hidden by the 'clouds' of our sins! All that remains is for us to repent with all our hearts, and as easily as the wind blows away the clouds and the brightness of the sun is once again revealed, so too will the *geulah* be revealed to us.

**A GIGANTIC LITTLE SECRET" ...** By Rabbi Yosef Schwab

Why may bird offerings be only pigeons or turtledoves? These two species are unique in that they can find their way home and that they remain true to one specific mate. So, too, Klal Yisrael; they always find their way back to הקב"ה, and remain faithful to Him.

