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INSPIRE
Presents:Shabbos
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MONTHLY PARSHA SHEET

After Their Death

Our parsha begins with the death of Nadav and Avihu. The posuk states, "Bikarvusam Lifnei Hashem Vayamusu," - "When they drew near before ה', and they died." The Ohr HaChaim offers a unique approach to the reason for their demise. He explains that because of their great love of ה', Nadav and Avihu attempted to cleave to Him. They yearned to fuse their neshamos with the Divine, thereby leaving their corporal existence behind.

The Ramchal in chapter two of Derech Hashem explains that there is no greater pleasure than experiencing an intimate relationship with ה'. G-d is the source of all good; therefore, the greatest pleasure imaginable is to be close to Him. The Ohr HaChaim elucidates that Nadav and Avihu became overwhelmed with a desire to be one with ה'. They became so spiritually intoxicated that their Neshamos left their bodies.

There is a beautiful Chassidish approach that explains that G-d created us in this lowly, coarse existence to accomplish and to make a difference. It is not enough to just experience ה's transcendent reality; we must also draw from our innate G-dliness and strive to perfect the world.

In Parshas Vayeitzei Yaakov fell asleep on the road to Charan. "And he dreamt, and behold, a ladder stood on the ground and it extended heavenward. And behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it..." The Meforshim explain that one should strive to be like a ladder; anchored to the ground yet longing for transcendence. One must always yearn for G-dliness, yet be fully connected to this world. By doing so, man will fuse heaven and earth and achieve the intention of creation. The profound lesson of the dream teaches that one must reach for the stars, yet he must always ensure that his feet are firmly planted on the ground.

Once we appreciate the profound value and purpose of our lives, the next step is obvious: Appreciate the value of another's

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The Life Of A Jew

My father, at age 56, had a sudden, massive, fatal heart attack. It's been over a month and it still feels surreal. His death seems outside the boundaries of the natural world. He maintained an extremely healthy lifestyle in both body and mind. He was an athlete in tip-top shape. He ran marathons and triathlons. He organized his life so that he worked only a few hours each day and allocated the rest of his time to some of life's more meaningful pursuits: exercise, friends and grandchildren. My father was not "observant". However, many of the values that I hold so dear I was fortunate to learn from him. He taught me that life is not about how many acquisitions one makes but about meaning and relationships. We were very close.



A week before my father's passing, we were together at the shiva house of a family member. I asked my father the following question: The pasuk in Koheles says "tov leilech libeis avel mileches el beis mishte - It's better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of celebration". How is it "better", I wondered? My father answered without hesitation: at a house of mourning a person is more in tune with what life is really all about. My father got it. He knew that all of life's experiences are in order to help us recognize deeper meaning and gain appreciation for what we have.

My father loved Yiddishkeit and encouraged me to pursue my dreams and commitment. He supported me in my journey to greater and greater observance. Five years ago, I got married and went off to learn at Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem. Just this past summer, we moved back home to Toronto. ה' blessed me with these last precious months together with my father. B"H, I was able to witness almost daily the great nachas he had from my family.

The funeral and the subsequent shiva was a huge Kiddush Hashem. Since our move back to Toronto, we have noted the tremendous chesed that is commonplace in our community. Even so, the chesed shel emes of a funeral is on an entirely different level. As I sat with my mother in the limousine waiting to leave the funeral parlor, we observed the sea of black hats escorting the aron through the parking lot, reciting Tehillim in the merit of the nifter. My mother, in an emotional tone, said to me, "That's so beautiful!" I replied proudly, "Yes, that's what we do. We are in the business of life, and a part of life is death." In Yiddishkeit, every moment is to be infused with meaning and purpose.

At the burial, the large (mostly not observant) crowd looked on in amazement as the young men from my kollel in Toronto (Rabbi Bollag's kollel) dug their shoes into the mud, in honor of the nifter, toiling to make sure that the grave was entirely covered. (Unfortunately, at many secular Jewish burials only the aron is covered by dirt and often gentile gravediggers are left to fill the grave.) My first Kaddish was answered with a thunderous "yehei shmei raba", the likes of which most people at the funeral had never heard before.

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life. In the second Parsha of this week, Kedoshim, a stark command is issued: "... You shall not stand by idly as your friend's blood is shed." (19:16) The Minchas Chinach makes a Kal V'chomer: If we are commanded to save a Jew from physical death, how much more so are we obligated to save one from a spiritual demise!

The question may be asked: If I am unable to swim how can I save one who is drowning?

The answer is simple. You don't have to be able to swim. You just have to be able to throw the drowning person a lifeline.

When reaching out to a less affiliated Jew, you do not have to attempt to tame the choppy waters in a deep philosophical argument. Simply reach out with your neshama, your lifeline. Share with your neighbor, relative or

co-worker a little warmth, a little love. Open your heart and your home.

Show someone the splendor of Yiddishkeit. Many have no idea of the joy and relevance of their own tradition. Invite a fellow Jew to take pleasure in the scrumptious delicacies of a Shabbos seudah, while experiencing a transcendental taste of the next world. It is the perfect bridge between heaven and earth. Simply include a fellow Jew in your life, and give him a glimpse of a wonderful lifestyle that is shaped by the beauty of Mitzvos and the brilliance of Torah. **PI**

Good Shabbos,

Rabbi Moshe Zionce

Director, Project Inspire Toronto

You don't have to be able to swim. You just have to be able to throw the drowning person a lifeline.

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We sat shiva at my parents' house. The house was simply not large enough to avoid having a frum "take-over" throughout the week. The constant flow of people was astounding to my family. Most of the visitors had never met my father, and there were many who had not even met me formally. Their kindness and sensitivity touched a deep chord in my family.

Many frum Yidden who came to the shiva were taken aback at the irony of the kind of home I grew up in – a small non-observant Jewish home literally down the block from Bais Yaakov High School, in the heart of the frum community. Yet it was a community with which we had had no interaction for most of our lives.

I shared with visitors throughout the week how I had gotten involved in learning, and how my father had laid the groundwork for me on which to build a home of Torah. I showed them my father's quaint little work-desk, purposely nestled in the corner of the living room, a fulfillment on his personal level of "aseh Torascha kevah - to make set times for the learning of Torah." I shared with them how much my father would have loved to be more involved in the frum community. He had told me many times that the Torah's guidance for life was most definitely "right on." My father respected and appreciated deeply the Torah lifestyle I had adopted. However, he, like many other secular Jews, struggled for opportunities to make steps forward. They are often missing the love and encouragement they want and need from a community.

The Gemara, Bava Basra 10 b, says "haomer selah zu litzedaka, al manas sheyecheeu bni, harei zeh tzadik gamur - one who gives charity in order that his son shall live is a complete tzaddik". Why is the Jew here considered completely righteous? After all, he is doing the mitzvah for an ulterior motive. One answer is that when he is performing a mitzvah, in the heart of every Jew is the intention to cleave to Hashem. His intention therefore is sincere deep down. All Jews are thirsty to do 'ה's will. My father had a beautiful life, but a Jew anxiously thirsts for Torah. There are many Jews like my father who are thirsty for Yiddishkeit. They're simply waiting for the opportunity to drink the sweet mayim chaim - waters of Torah. If you give a thirsty man water, he'll drink.

I was struck by the comment of one of the visitors during the shiva: "If we only knew your father lived here." Our community is so beautiful and has so much to offer. "We are in the business of life" - can we afford not to let another Jew experience it? **PI** **By: Rabbi Aaron Krongold**

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