

# PARSHAS KI SISA

## CHASSIDIC INSIGHTS, HIGHLIGHTS AND HAPPENINGS

פרשת כי תשא

כ' אדר א' תשפ"ד / February 29, 2024



### What's happening in Belz

The Belz Yeshiva Gedola in Beitar, one of eight Yeshiva Gedolas of Belz in Eretz Yisroel, was established a few years ago to accommodate the hundreds of Yeshiva Gedola bochurim (teen boys) learning in Eretz Yisroel from the country and abroad. The Yeshiva, led by its Rosh Yeshiva Harav Reb Shloma Bineth shlita, renowned Belz Dayan in Yesrushalyim, infuses in its talmidim (students) an enthusiasm towards learning Torah. The success is evidenced by the Kol Torah (sound of Torah), which emanates from within, and the budding Talmidei Chachamim (Torah scholars) and mentchlich (respectful) graduates it successfully produces.

Currently, the Yeshiva's students learn in adjoining caravans. They are undergoing significant renovations and expansion to accommodate its growing student body. The Yeshiva is adding another floor to house more dormitories, renovating the Beis Medrash --where the bochurim will have more place to learn, adding a new lunchroom, and reconstructing its disintegrating exterior.

The goal is to complete renovations in four months א"ה (G-d willing).

The Yeshiva's activists and many parents of bochurim (teen boys) learning in Beitar from abroad and Eretz Yisroel raised and contributed 8 million NIS towards the project.

Belz Institutions in Israel committed to contribute another 4 million NIS towards this vital project.

**Belz Institutions in Israel wish the "Projects Askanim" - activists much success!**



### Everyone loves a good story, especially a Chassidishe story...

כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל ונתנו איש כופר נפשו...ולא יהיה בהם נגף (כי תשא לזיב)

*When you take a census of the Yidden according to their numbers...so there will not be a plague among them.*

The Gaon Reb Yitzchak of Volozhin zt"l (the son of Reb Chaim of Volozhin zt"l) went on a fundraising trip to Minsk to raise money for the famous Volozhin Yeshiva. He arrived at the town's Shul, where he was supposed to deliver a drasha (speech). Many people arrived, and the Shul became so overcrowded that there was barely room to move.

When Reb Itzele (as he was fondly called) saw the packed room, he addressed the packed Shul: "Rabbosy! (gentlemen!) It says in the Torah...כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל ונתנו איש כופר נפשו...ולא יהיה בהם נגף. This verse begs the question: why was it necessary to bring a מחצית השקל to prevent a plague; in what way can money



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ameliorate a pandemic? The answer is as follows: Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל he should count the Yidden. Hashem understood that everyone would push themselves in front of the crowd to be the first to be counted since everyone wanted to fulfill the mitzvah. All this pushing and shoving could become dangerous, as some people might be hurt! Therefore, Hashem said, "ונתנו איש כופר נפשו" – everyone should bring money so that ולא יהיה בהם נגף – there will not be any harm from pushing, since when it comes to giving money, no one is in a rush; they'll assume that there is still plenty of time, so automatically there will not be too much pushing."

Reb Yitzchak concluded, "I want you to know that I didn't come here just to give a drasha; I came mainly for the "מחצית השקל" – to raise money for the Yeshiva."

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ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת (כי תשא לא:טז)  
*The Yidden shall observe the Shabbos.*

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l was once told that a Rav in Vilna was arrested for reprimanding a Jewish storeowner to close his shop on Shabbos. The Chofetz Chaim was taken over by the story and exclaimed, "I waited my whole life to be arrested for the sake and honor of Shabbos!"

The Chofetz Chaim was once summoned to a village to try and convince a wealthy manufacturer to keep his factory closed on Shabbos. The village Rav told the Chofetz Chaim that the factory owners claim their merchandise will be ruined if the heating system is switched off for two consecutive days – Shabbos and Sunday, when it's legally required to be closed. The Rav advised the Chofetz Chaim to be prepared to 'listen

attentively' to this claim, so he will gain the owner's confidence so that his reply will have the desired effect.

The Chofetz Chaim replied: "I will not go into a conversation with them about their business processes, as they understand their business better than I do. I will just lecture them about the greatness and holiness of Shabbos; I will explain to them that Shabbos is the essence of our Nation – without our precious Shabbos, there is no purpose in living! If they heed my words and take my advice about keeping Shabbos, they will figure out how to keep their merchandise from becoming ruined! I'm sure that no harm will occur to them in the merit of keeping Shabbos".

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ונתנו איש כופר נפשו (כי תשא ל:יב)  
*Every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul*

From this pasuk is sourced the Chassidic custom, which was started by the talmidim (disciples) of the holy Ba'al Shem Tov zt"l to accept a פדיון נפש (lit. redemption of the soul) in the form of a donation, which was handed to the Rebbe along with a Chassid'skvittel (lit. note – containing a personal request for a Bracha). Tzaddikim used this money for holy causes and in return, bestowed their blessing. The amount given depended on each person's means or needs. For example, for someone requesting a child, the equivalent of "בן" (a son) was given: \$52, or \$18 = חי for life.

R' Dovid Blum a"h was a wealthy chassid known to give tzedakah in abundance. When he used to come to Belz, he gave large donations to support the Belz court. Even when traveling to Belz in his wagon, he used to throw coins from the window to the children, who lined the street begging for money – even non-Jewish children. Every poor person who approached R' Dovid was graciously helped.



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When R' Dovid prepared for his next visit to Maran Reb Aharon of Belz zt"l, he set aside a nice sum to give as "Pidyon Nefesh" with his kvittel. However, from when he left the place he was staying until he reached Maran's home, lots of Yidden followed him and requested money. He ended up distributing all he had on him and wasn't left with any money to accompany his kvittel.

Having no choice, R' Duvid handed his kvittel to Maran Reb Aharon and apologized for not having any money for 'Pidyon Nefesh' – explaining: "איך – האב א טבע אז א איד בעהט, קען איך איהם נישט אפזאגען – "By nature, when a Yid asks, I can't refuse him!". When Maran heard this, he was visibly in awe of the generosity of this Chossid and said: "Really! Please repeat what you just said!"

When R' Duvid repeated himself, Maran insisted that he repeat the statement three times.

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ונתנו איש כופר נפשו (כי תשא לייב)  
*Every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul.*

The Gaon and Chassid Reb Tzvi Yair zt"l, the Rav of Reivitz, used to send money by mail to Reb Aharon of Belz zt"l to Eretz Yisroel before each Yom Tov. Once, when he was preparing to send money to his beloved Rebbe, his chassidim told him that the money would not arrive until after Yom Tov, so why bother rushing to the post office before Yom Tov?

The Reivitzer Rav replied, "I'm sure that when one sends money to a Rebbe by mail, from the very moment it is being sent – it is considered as if it has already arrived!"

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כי אות הוא ביני וביניכם (כי תשא לאיג)  
*For it is a sign between Me and you*

The Austrian Emperor Franz Josef was scheduled to visit various cities in Galicia, Poland. On his busy itinerary, he was to pass through Cracow, the ancient Polish kingdom's capital city, in Western Galicia. The Emperor announced that he would like to visit the main Shul in town, and the community duly prepared a lavish welcome as befitting His Royal Highness. The night before his intended visit, the 'Maskilim' (Reform Jews) snuck into the Shul and removed the picture of the Emperor that hung in the foyer.

When the Emperor arrived at the shul, one of the Maskilim approached the Emperor and whispered into his ear that the Chief Rabbi of Cracow, Rabbi Shimon Sofer zt"l, requested that the picture be removed, which evidences his hatred towards the government.

The Emperor approached Rabbi Shimon Sofer and demanded an explanation as to why he asked for his picture to be removed.

For a moment, Rabbi Sofer was shell-shocked; he understood very well the vile intentions of these antagonists, who were indeed behind this heinous act of deception. Without losing his composure, he replied to the Emperor's question: "Honored Emperor, your likeness has always taken up a place of honor on our synagogue's walls. I requested to remove it for the following reasons. Jews are commanded in the Holy Bible to don tefillin every day as a sign of our pact between Hashem and His people. On Shabbos, however, we are forbidden to lay tefillin since Shabbos itself signifies our bond: "כי אות הוא ביני וביניכם" – for it – the holy Shabbos – is a sign between Me and you, which connects us with Hashem."

Rabbi Shimon continued: "The same applies to today's honored visit by the Emperor. Year-round, we keep a picture of the Emperor in our Shul



