

Parashas Shemini

CHASSIDIC INSIGHTS, HIGHLIGHTS AND HAPPENINGS

פרשת שמיני - מברכים חודש אייר

March 10, 2026 / כ"ג ניסן תשפ"ו



מברכים חודש אייר

Friday & Shabbos, April 17&18 2026

The month of Iyur is a segula for Refuah – healing. The word אייר is the acronym for אני י' – I am Hashem, your Healer.

It is customary in Belz to eat matzah and kneidlach on the Shabbosim between Pesach and Shavuos

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ROUND – YELLOW CHALLAH

It is a minhag (custom) to bake round, yellow challoos this week. A reason for it is that round things don't have an end, alluding to Achdus and Ahavas Yisroel – when everyone holds themselves equal, no one is greater than his friend.

The Sefira days are when one needs to focus on Achdus and Ahavas Yisroel, for this is the main preparation for Kabalas HaTorah – accepting the Torah. As it says in Parshas Yisro: "ויהן שם ישראל – כאיש אחד בלב אחד" – The Yidden rested as one.

שליסל חלה – Challah in the Shape of a Key

It's also customary to pierce the dough with a key before baking the challah.

- Some people shape the whole challah into a key.
- Some form a key from the dough and place it on the round challah.

Maran Reb Aharon of Belz zt"l shared a reason for the "shlissel challahs." Until now, an enslaved person couldn't leave Mitzrayim since all exits were locked, and now, 600,000 Yidden left! The Yidden were locked into Mitzrayim and surrounded by a fortress, and to leave Mitzrayim, Hashem opened the fortresses with a 'key.' We make a 'shlissel challah' to commemorate this great miracle.



Since we count seven weeks of Sefira, which contains 49 days, and we go from שער to שער – gate to gate – which are equal to the מ"ט – שיערי בינה – the 49 gates to wisdom; every gate has its own key – therefore we make 'shlissel challa.'

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BELZ AND BEYOND

Behind the scenes of Belz Institutions in Israel's activities

SHIDDUCHIM INITIATIVES

With the conclusion of the winter term, several Rosh Yeshivas met together with the "Medor Dor" team and community shadchanim for a gathering to discuss approaches and tools related to the shidduch period for bochurim, and ways to increase more simchas within the Belz community, with siyata d'Shmaya.



EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD STORY

especially a Chassidishe story...



והתקדשתם והייתם קדושים כי קדוש אני (שמיני יא:מד)
You shall sanctify yourselves and you will be holy, for I am holy.

Chazal teach that the words "והתקדשתם" refer to Mayim Acharonim—the washing of one's hands before bentching after eating bread.

The Divrei Yechezkel of Shinova zt"l was exceptionally meticulous in the halachos of netilas yadayim, to the extent that even

his chassidim could not fully understand his many stringencies. He once explained his conduct:

"Recently, people have begun addressing me in letters with the title 'Harav HaKadosh.' I wondered to myself—how can one refer to a human being as 'hakadosh'? Then I found comfort in the words of Chazal (ברכות נג), who explain that 'והתקדשתם' refers to Mayim Acharonim, and 'והייתם קדושים'—this, too, refers to Mayim Acharonim.

Nu! If one is careful in the halachos of washing his hands, he can be called 'kadosh.' That is why I am so stringent in these halachos," concluded the Divrei Yechezkel.

זאת החיה אשר תאכלו (שמיני יא:ב)

These are the creatures that you may eat.

It is well known that the holy Rebbe Reb Zusha of Hanipoli zt"l would travel from city to city, conducting himself in a state of galus. On one occasion, he arrived in the city of Kotno, whose inhabitants were not particularly G-d-fearing. When they saw this unfamiliar stranger, who conducted himself with great stringency, they mocked him. Even the young children joined in, laughing at him and running after him.

Reb Zusha turned to the children and gently called out, "Dear children, come to me." The children gathered around him in the shul, and Reb Zusha stood in their midst and said, "My dear children, look at me." They assumed he was about to show them something entertaining—but instead, he simply gazed deeply into each child's face, silently and intently. After a few moments, he dismissed them and told them to go home.

That evening, when the mothers served supper, the children refused to eat. One cried out, "How can I drink chalav akum?"



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EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD STORY, ESPECIALLY A CHASSIDISHE STORY

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Another protested, "How can I eat non-kosher butter?" A third exclaimed, "We can't eat meat that wasn't properly salted!"

As the mothers spoke among themselves, each one was astonished to hear that the others were experiencing the same sudden change. "My son insists we must kasher the pots!" one said.

An uproar broke out in the town. Something had clearly stirred within the children—they refused to partake in anything not fully kosher. The townspeople soon realized that this must be the effect of the strange visitor. He must be a holy man, and since they had mocked him, they resolved to seek his forgiveness and ask him to guide them in teshuvah.

They approached Reb Zusha, asked mechilah, and were inspired to do sincere teshuvah. They resolved to strengthen their kashrus standards and escorted Reb Zusha out of the city with great honor and reverence.

THE REBBE'S TORAH



אך את זה לא תאכלו ממעלי הגרה וממפריסי הפרסה את הגמל
כי מעלה גרה הוא ופרסה איננו מפריס...ואת השפן כי מעלה גרה
הוא...טמא הוא לכם (שמיני יא:ד-ז)
But this is what you shall not eat from among those that bring up their cud or that have split hooves: the camel, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split...and the hyrax, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split – it is unclean to you.

The Torah lists several טמא (impure) animals

that display both סימני טהרה and סימני טומאה, such as the camel, the hyrax, and the pig. Some of them chew their cud but do not have split hooves, while others have split hooves but do not chew their cud—thereby rendering them impure.

We must understand: why does the Torah emphasize that they possess a sign of purity? It would seem sufficient to state that they have a סימן טומאה and are therefore impure.

The answer is that when someone is a complete rasha, there is little need for warning—his negative nature is apparent to all. However, when a person combines wrongdoing with positive traits—such as performing acts of kindness—the danger is far greater. His good qualities can mask and legitimize his faults, making him more influential and harder to recognize.

Thus, the Torah highlights that the pig displays a kosher sign, teaching us that even when something appears pure on the surface, it may still be inherently impure. This serves as a lesson: one must be cautious of a rasha who appears righteous, lest one be drawn after him.

THIS WEEK'S VORT



פרשת שמיני

ויקראו כל העדה ויעמדו לפני ה'. ויאמר משה זה הדבר אשר צוה ה'
תעשו וירא אליכם כבוד ה' (שמיני ט:ו)

And the entire assembly approached and stood before Hashem. Moshe said: This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do: then the glory of Hashem will appear to you.

The Rema writes: "לנגדי תמיד, הוא כלל גדול, הוא כלל גדול" – a person acts differently when he is at home as to when he stands

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THIS WEEK'S VORT

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before a great king. This is what the passuk alludes to: ויעמדו לפני ה' – they stood before Hashem in the tense of "שויתי ד' לנגדי תמיד" – this is what Moshe said: זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו: a person always has to know that he is always standing before Hashem.

וישא אהרן את ידו אל העם ויברכם (שמיני ט:כב)
Aharon raised his hands towards the people and blessed them.

The passuk writes "ידו," but it is read as "ידיך" – that Aharon bentedched – blessed the Yidden with both hands. Aharon lifted both his hands but held them together so it appeared as one hand; that is why it says the word "ידו."

ויאמר משה אל אהרן קרב אל המזבח... (שמיני ט:ז)
Moshe said to Aharon: Come near to the Altar...

Rashi says: "שהיה אהרן בוש וירא לגשת אמר לו משה למה" – "Aharon was embarrassed and hesitant to approach. Moshe said to him: 'Why are you embarrassed? It is for this that you were chosen.'"

Moshe explained to Aharon that shamefulness is a good trait, but it shouldn't keep you back from performing a mitzvah. Just the opposite. With this trait, you shall serve Hashem and fulfill His commandments.

זאת החיה אשר תאכלו (שמיני יא:ב)
These are the creatures that you may eat.

The end letters of זאת החיה אשר תאכלו spell the word תורה. This alludes to Yidden's preparation for Kabalas haTorah during the days of Sefira. Torah must be learned as

"זאת התורה"—with a G-dly chiyus. When one learns without enthusiasm and vitality, the learning lacks its true value. Just as a person must be careful about what he allows into his physical body—what he eats—so too must he be mindful of his ruchniyus, ensuring that what he takes in spiritually is pure and alive. tzadikim and special people, such as Moshe and Aharon.



כל ישראל יש להם חלק (אבות)
Every Yid has a portion.

Why does it say "יש" in the present tense, that we already have a portion in Olem Haba, when the Mishnah should use the future tense? There are times when a person can suddenly feel geshmak and pleasure in his Avodas Hashem. His heart is filled with joy in serving Hashem – this is Olem Haba in this world! Therefore the Mishna says "כל ישראל יש להם חלק." (Chasan Sofer)

מעשה ידי להתפאר (אבות א)
The work of My hands, in which I take pride.

Every Yid has a portion in Olam Haba, and within each Yid lies the potential to elevate himself and reach it. These strengths are inherited from the holy Avos, and there is nothing to boast about in them—just as one cannot take pride in an inheritance passed down from one's forefathers –"נצר מטער".

However, if a person attains Olam Haba through his own efforts—through "מעשי ידי," the deeds he performs that bring him to Gan Eden—then he may truly take pride in himself. This is the principle upon which Chazal based Pirkei Avos: the ultimate measure of a person's greatness is what he accomplishes through his own strengths and efforts.