



SHEVUOS

A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation



At the receiving of the Torah, Hashem said to the Jewish people: “For you are a Kingdom of priests and a Holy Nation”. What does this really mean?

The world has 4 basic levels of evolution. The first level is *DOMEM* – Dirt, Rocks, Water, etc. The second level of evolution is *TZOMEACH* – growing things, like plants and trees. The third level is *CHAI* - living creatures, from insects to elephants and monkeys. And the fourth level is *MEDABER* – Speakers; human beings. But *Chazal* tell us that there is a Fifth level – The Jewish People. We are literally an entire step up in the evolutionary ladder over regular human beings. Why is that? What makes us so special? After all, we also are born and die, we also eat, sleep and get sick. So what makes us so different, so much higher?

We are called a “Holy Nation”. Holy means separate and above our animal instincts. You see, human beings without the Torah are just complex animals. Yes, they are *MEDABER* – Speakers, but they are just really intelligent animals. Without the Torah, we follow our animal instincts, the same instincts that dogs and monkeys have. Of course humans are more polite and more “enlightened”, but at the end of the day, they are ruled by their desires. But Hashem wanted MORE from His Creation.

He had a plan for evolution to progress BEYOND just “intelligent animals”. Hashem envisioned a creature who was capable of rising above nature; a people who would rise ABOVE their animal instincts and be a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation - a nation with a connection and a RELATIONSHIP with Him!

The Rambam writes (Hilchos Issurei Biyah 22:17): “There is nothing in the entire Torah that is difficult to most people like abstaining from arayos and forbidden relations: Our sages say, that when the Yidden were commanded on the prohibitions of Arayos, they accepted these mitzvos with complaints and crying (as the Pasuk says “Bocheh Lemishpechosav”). And our sages have said, “theft and arayos, the nature of man desires them and craves them”. Yes, it is hard. But this is what DEFINES us. The rest of the world is steeped in their animalistic instincts. Lust is everywhere, displayed without shame, and the whole world revolves around it. But we, the Jewish people, are a Holy Nation. We are the pinnacle of Hashem’s Creation, precisely BECAUSE we work hard to overcome our natural instincts by following the light of the holy Torah!

So instead of complaining about it being hard (which it definitely is), we should rejoice in the great honor that we have been given to be a whole level higher than the rest of the world, and to represent Hashem’s ultimate goal in Creation.

SMILE! IT'S CONTAGIOUS



Wearing a mask inside your home is now highly recommended. Not so much to prevent COVID-19 but to stop eating.



Whoever owes you money, go to their house now. They should be home.



“I always arrive late at the office, but I make up for it by leaving early.”- Charles Lamb



“I’m in shape. Round is a shape.”- George Carlin.



No one should be allowed to drive again until there are no fatal accidents for 14 consecutive days. Then we can slowly begin to phase in certain classes of people who begin driving again, but at only half the posted speed limit.



I hope they also blocked the entrance to this slide and it’s not just full of kids trying to get out.



Our struggles strengthen us

A few years ago, Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast of the United States, and caused much damage. In Lakewood, on a new street that had only ten houses, with trees planted along the sidewalk and in people's yards, a surprising thing happened. Some of the trees were uprooted by the storm, others weren't. The surprising aspect was that there didn't seem to be any logical explanation or pattern why some trees were uprooted and others weren't. It wasn't like the trees of one side of the street were uprooted, or some other pattern, rather, it seemed like some trees fell randomly while others didn't. But then the reason behind the phenomenon was discovered. The trees that were connected to an irrigation system were uprooted. Those trees that weren't connected, survived because those trees needed to work harder to find water. Their roots dug deeply into the ground to seek moisture, and thus they were planted more firmly in the ground. The trees that got their water from an automatic irrigation system didn't need to dig their roots so deeply, they weren't as firmly planted, and they were easily uprooted by the strong winds. We learn from this that our struggles strengthen us immensely. Those who have struggled to get to where they are today will be able to weather even the most difficult storms and tests.



tagged at \$371,540,000! After just 40 years of existence WD-40 was found to be in 4 out of 5 American households, in use by 81% of professionals, and worldwide sales stood at 1,000,000 cans per week! The WD-40 company proudly showcases an expansive list of more than 2,000 (!) usages of this wonder lubricant; many of which were innovated by enthusiastic patrons. The range is phenomenal: from extracting a burglar trapped in a vent to removing crayon stains from walls, this oily concoction seems to be an almost magical fix-all for an endless host of problems.

The name of this product is as interesting as what it can do. WD-40 stands for, "water displacement, 40th formula". Larsen was feverishly trying to come up with a solution for the balloon-like fuel tanks of the Atlas Rockets that were being developed in the early 50's. These tanks were very thin. Rust and corrosion was a serious problem.



Larsen was charged with developing the water displacement formula that would protect them. After 39 failed attempts, he finally succeeded. Number forty was the big winner.

Forty attempts is quite tenacious, isn't it? **How many tries do we put forth before giving up?**

WD-40 and You

\$20,000 in 1956 would be worth \$175,000 today. That's the price point at which Norman Larsen – a self-educated chemist with only a high school diploma to his name – sold his newly invented water displacement formula. That is quite a bargain considering the fact that the WD-40 company's current yearly revenue is

One last thought... Larsen died in 1970. He never saw the explosive growth of his most famous brainchild. He probably never dreamed that his product would one day become a basic household item all across America, and that the company he founded would evolve into a multi-million dollar enterprise. It's impossible for us to know what will eventually come of our efforts. We do things in this world and the ripple effects reverberate throughout the Heavenly spheres. In a sense, we are all planting seeds. One never knows which seed will eventually go on to become a mighty cedar.

Rabbi Akiva, Turnusrufus and the Bris

The Gemara tells the story of Rabbi Akiva and Turnusrufus Harasha (who was the ruler of Israel in Roman times). Turnusrufus asked Rabbi Akiva why the Jews make a bris milah. After all, if G-d created man in

this way, why do the Jews come and change G-d's handiwork?

Rabbi Akiva asked him to bring a bundle

of wheat along with rolls of freshly baked bread, as well as a bundle of flax along with beautifully crafted flax-based clothing. When the items came before them, Rabbi Akiva asked Turnusrufus, "Which of these are nicer? G-d's handiwork or the handiwork of man?"

In other words, G-d created many things with the intention that man should come and perfect them into much more useful and beautiful things.

But on a deeper level, their argument was a reflection of the fundamental difference in attitude between the Jews and the Goyim. Turnusrufus was of the view of ESAV his forefather, that man is what he is and cannot be changed for the better. We are creatures of our instincts, and although we may be able to act with honor and restraint at times, it is only if it ultimately benefits us and our desires. We can't change our nature, we are just intelligent animals. But the Jew stands for the opposite. We were given the Torah, which allows a person rise ABOVE their nature and change their instincts and animalistic drives. A human may be part animal, but he is also part soul! The light of the Torah can actually change a person, and that is what the bris milah symbolizes. The bris symbolizes that Hashem gave us this animalistic body unperfected, with the intention that we perfect it and rise ABOVE our nature.

Why was this symbol given specifically on this organ? Perhaps because it is this desire that tests a man's animalistic desires



the most in this world. At the bris milah, a piece of our flesh must be painfully removed from our bodies, so too, the shmiras habris - the upholding of purity throughout our lives - is the true test of whether a person is ready to rise ABOVE their animalistic desires and fulfill their purpose. Upholding the bris can feel sometimes feel painful! That is why both the bris and the heart are sometimes called "arel" - uncircumcised, as the pasuk says "וּמַלְתֶּם אֶת עֵרְלַת לִבְבְּכֶם" - and you shall circumcise the "foreskin" of your hearts. When we uphold the bris throughout our adult years, we are in effect affirming retroactively how much we value the bris - the treaty - that was made between us and Hashem at eight days old (when we didn't yet have a say in the matter).

The Jew and the bris are inseparable. It is a symbol of what we stand for and of our unique place in creation.

INSPIRATIONAL IMAGE OF THE WEEK

LOOK AT ALL THE HAPPY FACES.



LOOK AT THE SAD FACES.



DID YOU NOTICE THAT ALL THE HAPPY FACES HAVE CLOSED EYES?

WHEN WE GUARD OUR EYES WE CAN BE TRULY HAPPY IN OUR LIVES!

From Refidim to Sinai

יָסַעוּ מִרְפִּידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי - On this day, they came to the desert of Sinai". Chazal say (Shabbos 86b) that we arrived at Midbar Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, TODAY.

The next Pasuk repeats: "וַיֵּסְעוּ מִרְפִּידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי וַיִּחַנּוּ" - And they traveled from Refidim, and they came to the dessert of Sinai".

The Torah ties the two together. Me'refidim - "from Refidim" can also be understood in the context of "through Refidim". We need to travel through our weakness/powerlessness" (as the word "Refidim / Rafu" implies), in order to get to Midbar Sinai - that true connection with Hashem. By "traveling" through the journey of our weakness we are able to arrive at Midbar Sinai.

Torah In The Desert

The Zohar in Parshas Tetzava brings an encounter between R' Shimon Bar Yochai and a old Holy Jew who came out of the desert. R' Shimon asked him why he had been in the desert and he replied that he dwells there the whole year round and learns Torah, explaining that he did this because the dessert belongs to the Sitrah Achrah (the Other Side). Therefore, by serving Hashem there, he was subjugating the "other" side. And the old man went on to say how the Torah can only settle in the dessert, for the following reason (here are the words of the Zohar translated):

For there is no light besides that which comes out of darkness. And when the "other" side is subjugated, the Master of the World is elevated and his honor is increased. And avodas Hashem can only be through darkness, and there can be no good, only though bad. And when a person goes into a bad path and then leaves it, the Master of the World's honor is elevated. And therefore, the "Shleimus" (completion) of everything, is good and bad together - and then to leave to the (side of) good. And there can be no good but that which comes through bad, and from such good, Hashem is elevated. And this is called an "avodah shleimah" (a complete service of Hashem).

Desires are an Illusion



Do these lines look like they are bulging outwards? They aren't. They are all perfectly straight!

Our eyes are a tremendous blessing that allow us to perceive the world around us. However our eyes can trick us as well, making us believe that we need things that in reality it may be very bad for us. Let's train ourselves to use our eyes for good and not let them trick us to turn after our hearts desires!

FOR THOSE WHO STRUGGLE WITH SHMIRAS EINAYIM. NOW IS HARDER THAN EVER!

Being confined to home without work, feeling anxious and stressed, as well as constantly checking our computers and phones, are breeding grounds for the Yetzer Hara.

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