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By the Hakham
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Why the Ben Ish Hai Cried

The nephew of Hakham Yoseph Hayyim (the Ben Ish Hai) tells of how one 'Ereb Shabbath he went to see his venerable uncle and found him crying. He asked him why he was crying. The Ben Ish Hai explained that approximately an hour earlier, the man who's job it was to clean the trash from the yard had come. The man came into the house and members of the household offered him some food from the delicacies that they had prepared in honor of Shabbath. The man refused them, saying that he was particular not to derive any pleasure from that which was not his.

Hakham Yoseph Hayyim, 'a"n, said that he was so emotional when he heard this, that he was even jealous, seeing this simple man who, he said, was even greater than he was. The Gemara states that one who benefits from his own hard labor is greater than a Yerei Shamayim (one who fears Heaven). That, he said, is why he was crying.

We see from this that despite his greatness and importance, his humility was even greater. A powerful lesson for us all.

(See Hakhmei Babel, Hakham Yoseph Hayyim)



מדרש בן איש חי
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5780 פרשת וַיְחִי

Wayhi: The Meaning of Jacob's Blessings to Efraim & Menashe

וַיִּדְּנוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ "And they shall multiply abundantly, like fish, in the land" (Bereshith 48:16). This portion of the blessing that Jacob (Ya'qob Abinu), 'a"n, gave to Efraim and Menashe, is the physical side to the blessings that they received. It means that

1. They will proliferate in abundance, like fish do, and
2. The evil eye ('Ayin Hara') will not have any dominion over them.

Rabbenu the Hida, 'a"n, writes that the descendants of Joseph (Yoseph HaShaddiq, 'a"n) merited to receive this blessing, that the evil eye would not affect them, because when Jacob went to meet Esau, Joseph hid his mother (Raḥel Immenu, 'a"n), behind him, so that Esau would not see her. This is hinted at in the Hebrew word for "abundantly" (larob), which in Gematria equals 238, which is also the numerical value of Raḥel.

There is another opinion which says that the blessing that they should multiply abundantly, also refers to the spiritual side. According to this opinion, Jacob is also blessing his grandsons that they should abundantly multiply their Torah knowledge and good deeds, for the future of the Jewish people ('Am Yisrael).

(See 'Od Yoseph Hai Derashoth, Parashath Wayhi.

Penei Dawid, ibid. Dibrei Mordekhai, ibid)

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Leaving out an Ingredient in Piṭum HaQeṭoreth

The Rama states that Piṭum HaQeṭoreth should be recited during Shaḥrith and Minḥa (it is not read at 'Arbith because the Qeṭoreth [incense] was not offered at night). He adds that there are those who say that it must be read from the text and not recited by heart. This is because it says that if one of the spices were missing one would be liable for death.

He adds that this is the reason why [some] people have the custom of only saying it on Shabbath but not during the week. The fear is that since everyone is in a big rush on weekday mornings, they may leave out one of the ingredients.

Sephardim and some Ashkenazim, especially those who pray according to the Sod (Qabbalah) recite it every day.

(See Rama 132:2. 'Od Yoseph Ḥai, Parashath Miqqeṣ, Oth 7)

No Time for Ashrei Before Minḥa

If one got delayed and did not pray Minḥa and finds that it is getting too late, or finds that the congregation have already started the 'Amidah, he should not read the Ashrei, but should start the 'Amidah immediately.

After he finishes his 'Amidah, there is a difference of opinion as to what he should do about the Ashrei that he missed. There are those who say that he should read it then. However, according to the holy Zohar and the Mequbbalim (Kabbalists), Ashrei must not be said after the prayer. Therefore, if it was not said before the 'Amidah, it is not said at all during Minḥa.

As such, one should make the effort, whenever one can, to read it before the 'Amidah.

(See Kaf Haḥayyim 234:6. Qışur Sh. 'A. of Ḥ' Rafael Baruch Toledano 227, Oth 7)



Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"ḥ

Tell Me Who Your Friends Are

Ḥakham Yehudah Ftaya (*'Aṭereth Raḥel*), 'a"ḥ, tells a story about three people who found themselves together one Shabbath. In preparation for Shabbath on Friday afternoon, each one put away his wallet. On Shabbath, one of them stole his friends' wallets and buried them somewhere. When Shabbath was over and they could not find their wallets, they began fighting, suspecting each other of stealing the money.

They went to King Solomon for advice. In his great wisdom he told them the following: "My mind is preoccupied with another question which was posed to me by the Queen of Sheba, which I would like to tell you about". The king told them about a young boy and girl who swore that they would marry each other without their parents' knowledge. A few years later, the girl's father married her off to another man.

On the wedding night the girl refused to have any physical contact with her newlywed husband, confessing that she had vowed to marry someone else.

(To be continued)