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By the Hakham
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Didn't Realize There Was a Lewi in Synagogue

When there is Kohen in the Synagogue, but no Lewi (Levite), the same Kohen is called to read the portions of both Kohen and Lewi. If they make a mistake and think that there is no Lewi present, when there is one, and the Kohen starts the blessing for the second portion, he should not be stopped.

This assumes that he has already said G-d's Name in the blessing, because to stop him then would be to say G-d's Name in vain, Heaven forbid. If, however, he only said the Barkhu before the blessing, he should be stopped and the Lewi should be sent up. This is not considered demeaning to the Kohen, since he already read the first portion.

Neither is it considered demeaning to the Lewi either, if he is not called up, because people will assume that he either just walked in, or that they made a mistake and did not realize that he was in the Synagogue.

(See Shulhan 'Arukh, 135:7. Kaf HaChayyim, ibid., Oth 47, 48)



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Parashath Yithro: Why Were Humans Chosen to be the Priestly Nation?

וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קֹדֶשׁ It says in Parashath Yithro, "You shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests and a holy nation". It is asked in Ben Ish Hai Derashoth, why human beings were chosen for this rather than angels.

The answer is that angels, by their very nature, are spiritual. Therefore, there is nothing remarkable about their holiness. However, if a human being who is physical, nevertheless, manages to sanctify himself, this is indeed wondrous.

This can be compared to an artisan who makes a bird out of artificial materials, but fashions it so beautifully, that it looks real in every sense. The artisan could command a high price for this bird, whereas a real bird would sell for a fraction of the price. Why is this so? Because to create an object that looks like a real bird out of artificial materials is something very unusual and, therefore, commands a higher price.

That is why G-d says that YOU shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and not the angels. Because there are a plethora of angels, who by their very creation are holy, nevertheless, what is much more valuable is that rare commodity, that you, a human being, will sanctify yourself and make yourself holy.

(See Ben Ish Hai Derashoth, Parashath Yithro)

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Placing Cooked Dry Food Into Hot Water On Shabbath

There is no cooking after cooking (Ein Bishul Aḥar Bishul), for food that is dry. Therefore, if one were to put cold, dry, fully cooked food, such as a potato, into hot water on Shabbath in order to warm it up, it is permitted.

This is true even if the water is at a temperature of Yad Soledeth Bo. The Ben Ish Ḥai quantifies Yad Soledeth Bo, as too hot to eat or drink without waiting for it to cool down.

If the food is not fully cooked, however, it is not permitted. Therefore, a boiled egg that is still soft and not fully hard boiled, is forbidden to be placed in hot water on Shabbath.

(See Shulḥan 'Arukh, 318:4. Derekh HaTorah, 20:52)



Acknowledge Needing G-d's Help Before Any Action

A person should instill in himself the knowledge and belief that everything we achieve and do is from G-d. Obviously, we have to make the effort ourselves, but we have to realize that it is neither our brilliance nor the strength of our hand that brought us the success. There are many brilliant and capable people who, try as they might, do not see success, while others far less capable, seem unstoppable.

Hakham Ḥayyim Falaji, 'a"ḥ, says that before a person does any action, he should get into the habit of saying different verses before doing the action. For example, he says that one should say עֲזְרֵי מַעַם ה' עֲשֵׂה "My help is from G-d, the One who made Heaven and Earth" (Tehillim 121:2). Even for something small he should say, בעזרתו שמו, יתברך שמו, "with G-d's help" or "with the help of Heaven" and the like. When he does this, he will see success in all his endeavors.

Rabbenu the Ḥid"ā, 'a"ḥ, comments that whenever a person succeeds or makes a profit he should say, "I did it and I profited, because of His kindness, Blessed be He, and his Help".

(See Kaf Haḥayyim [Falaji], 21, Oth 2. Šipporen Shamir, 11, Oth 170)

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

Keeping Our Promises

At the time when the Beth HaMiqdash (the Temple) stood, people who made vows in their mind only, without actually uttering the words with their mouths, were held responsible to carry those vows out.

Think about all those small and big promises which we make to ourselves but do not end up keeping. One classic example is: "Tomorrow I'll start a ... diet". It goes without saying that when we make any promises to others, even small children, we must be extremely careful to fulfill those promises.

Hakham Mordechai Eliyahu, 'a"ḥ, (Dibre Mordechai, Parashath Maṭṭoth), poses the following question: We may fully understand why one is obligated to fulfill vows when it concerns holy matters (pledges for synagogue, for example), and even to one's fellow Jew, but why are we particular about vows or promises one makes for oneself?

The answer is that our speech is holy.

(To be continued)