

Kiddush and Learning

On Shabbos, 19 of Tammuz, there was a kiddush and learning at the home of David and Linda Schlesinger. David Schlesinger led the learning that was in memory of his father, Rabbi Dr George Schlesinger. Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger, grandson of Rabbi Schlesinger gave us a preview of his upcoming lecture. The learning was all in memory of Rabbi Schlesinger and his 10th Yierhzeit.

David spoke about how a neshoma can be elevated by continuing to have an impact on earth. In particular, when we learn in memory of others, we help elevate their neshomas.

Humility, article by Rabbi George Schlesinger

David started at the beginning of the article, where Rabbi George Schlesinger talks about humility being the most important human trait. This suggestion comes from the Ramban who has said “the quality of humility, which is better than all things good.” Rabbi Schlesinger in his article, also points out that the character trait most mentioned about Moshe is humility.

David spoke about midas (character traits), and how we ideally want to have balance and moderation, except for humility. This idea comes from Rambam. For example, we want to have some anger when appropriate, but don’t want to be angry about everything. Another example, we want to take some things seriously, but we don’t want to take everything seriously. David pointed out that there is one exception to this idea of moderation, and this exception is the trait of modesty or humility.

In the article Rabbi George Schlesinger points out that it is difficult to define humility, and that many of the thesis of modesty that people believe have major flaws. For example, it is believed in order to be modest one should underestimate their worth. One can imagine a surgeon who underestimates his ability to his patients and the problems this would cause. Another example, it is believed one should not overestimate one’s worth. But in our economic system, one often has to make claims like “my restaurant is the best” in order to successfully market a product or service.

The article goes on, and Rabbi George Schlesinger proposes a definition of humility, that humility is believing that one’s traits or actions are no more important than someone else’s, just because the traits or actions are one’s own. Rabbi Schlesinger points out in the article that a humble man spends a lot of time focusing on other’s traits and accomplishments, and not just on one’s own.

Parsha Pinchas and Holidays

After discussing his dad’s article, David led a learning on the topic of holidays from the week’s parsha Pinchas. There are different ways that our holidays can be organized. One of these organizations is to group Passover with Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah with Yom Kippur, and Sukkot and Shemini Etzeras. The reason for this grouping is that Passover leads to Shavuot as we count down the Omer. Rosh Hashanah leads to Yom Kippur as we move from an initial judgement to a judgement that is sealed, and Shavuot leads to Shemini Etzeras, which is a one day holiday immediately after Sukkot.

We learn that the festival of Sukkot could belong to either the Passover/Shavuot group, as Sukkot is also a festival of the agricultural year. Sukkot can also be grouped with Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur, as Sukkos

is one the Tishrei holidays that run together. David spoke about his motivation and enjoyment setting up his succah immediately after Yom Kippur.

We learn that we generally sacrifice 1 bull on the 1 day holidays, and 2 bulls on 7 day holidays. Since Sukkot is both and belongs to more than one group of holidays, we sacrifice a constant 3 bulls every day during the 7 days of sukkot. However, in addition to the 3 bulls, we sacrifice a variable amount of bulls each day of sukkot. This variable amount starts with 10 and goes down by 1 each day, until on the 7th day a variable amount of 4 bulls are sacrifices. So, adding up the constant amount and variable amount, the total number of bulls sacrificed is 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7 bulls on the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 days of sukkot respectively.

We learn that the total number of variable bulls sacrificed adds up to 49, which is the same as the days in the Omer. However unlike the Omer, in which the numbers increase, with Sukkot the number decreases, from 13 down to 7. We discussed possible reasons for this decrease. David read from an article that proposed the reason for the decrease to be to represent our need to gradually return to normal life following our spiritual emersion and state of being during sukkot. David commented how this is similar to a space ship returning to earth. A space ship returning to earth has to gradually reemerge in our atmosphere, or it will "bounce back" or worse yet destroy itself by entering too rapidly.

Time, lecture by Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger

Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger, grandson of Rabbi George Schlesinger, gave a lecture on the topic of “time”. The lecture was given in honor and memory of his grandfather whose 10th yahrzeit was on this day. The lecture was given at Baron Hirsch Congregation in Memphis, TN. Rabbi Schlesinger spoke about how one of his grandfather’s favorite topics was time, and that he was going to speak on this topic.

The Rabbi spoke about how time to Hashem is different than the time we experience here in the world. Hashem existed first and had to create what would be “time” in our world. When was the beginning of this “time” for the world? The first of Tishrei commemorates the date of creation of man, but there are 5 “days” before this, in which acts of creation took place. The Rabbi spoke how about how there was additional time before this, that Hashem spent deliberating. Of course, we don’t know how to measure this deliberation “time” because the moons and sun were not yet created.

The Rabbi spoke about Hashem’s deliberations on what type of world he wanted. At first there was a world of judgement, and then hashem replaced this, or updated this, to also include a world of mercy. It’s not clear if the world of judgement was actually created or if it was created only in Hashem’s mind. But we do know it came into existence 5 days before the 1st of Tishrei. The 1st of Tishrei is the date for the creation of man. The world that included mercy was created on the 15th of Nissan.

Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger talked about how Hashem deliberates during the month of Tishrei. He pointed out that most of Tishrei is a month of judgement. Although we believe our fate is sealed on Yom Kippur, there are additional days between Yom Kippur and the 22 of Tishrei before our actual judgement is put into place.

The Rabbi spoke about what the concept of time means to Hashem, and how this differs from our perception of it. We here on earth have a perception that time is a never-ending line, with a direction of continually moving forward. But to Hashem, “time” is cycling through various intensities of different character traits and characteristics. Whatever the current character trait(s)/characteristics state we are in, determines the weather season, and the probability of events to occur.

As an example, Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger spoke about the observance of Pesach. The 15th of Nissan is not noteworthy because it is Pesach. Pesach happened because it was the 15th of Nissan. During this period in Nissan around the 15th, the world is in a state of freedom and rebirth of life. The reemergence of plant life, and season of the year, Spring, occurs because of this state. This is why it is so important that we add a leap year to the calendar – so spring is occurring during Nissan.

As another example, the Rabbi spoke about how the 9th of Av is a very bad day in our calendar. Both the first and second temple were destroyed on this date. It is also the date the spies returned with a bad report. There are many other reasons we mourn on these dates. The Rabbi spoke about how all these bad things happening on this single date is not a coincidence. During this time of year the world is in a state of bad fortune.

Parsha Pinchas, Levi and Shomone by Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger

Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger, grandson of Rabbi George Schlesinger, gave a lecture on the topic of Levi and Simeon. The lecture was given in honor and memory of his grandfather whose 10th yearzeit was on this day. The lecture was given during Seudah Shlishit at Young Israel of Memphis.

In the weekly Parsha, Pinchas who is a levite, kills Zimri who is from the tribe of Simeon. The Levites are the people who are most against and will not tolerate acts that disrespect the name of God. For example, in this week's parsha Pinchas, it is a Levite that pierces Zimri, who is a leader from the tribe of Simeon. The Rabbi spoke about how this is no coincidence that Pinchas was a Levite.

Although in the Parsha the Levites seem to be a more godly tribe than the Simeons, there are times in history the Levites appear to be "partners in crime" with the Simeonites. There is the role Levi and his brother Simeon played in getting Joseph sold into slavery. And there is the story involving the sister of Levi and Simeon, Dinah and the tricking of the Shechem into circumcision.

Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger pointed out that although Levi and Simeon did a lot of things together, there were always fundamental differences between them and their character. The Levites were much better at practicing Rambam's principle of moderation between 2 sides, and not being extreme in one way or another the Simeonites on the other hand, were extreme all the time.

The Rabbi pointed out that although both brothers played a role in selling off Joseph into slavery, only Simeon was held hostage and not Levi. Joseph knew that Levi's participation was different. Also the high priests and leaders of our nation all came from the tribe of Levite. This includes our new leader Joshua that is chosen in the Parsha, as well as Moses and the Kohanim.

David also led learning on the topic of holidays, which is found in the parsha parsha, Pincas. Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger, grandson of Rabbi George Schlesinger gave a lecture before Minchah on the topic of "Time". And for Seudah Shlisit, Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger gave a lecture comparing Levi and Shemon.

Humility, by George Schlesinger

Rambam - principle of moderation

Discussion of Holidays

Different ways to group them

1 day holidays – (1 bull) RH,YK,Shavuos

7 day holidays – 2 bulls (Passover, Sukkot)

Sukkot – 3 bulls all the time constant plus count down (gradually get back into normal life want a soft landing and not a crash. Its similar to how spaceships must gradually come back to earth.

Group Passover/Shavuos, Sukkot/Shemini Etzeras, RH/TK

Tishrei vs Nissan Holidays

Efroni talk about Time

God views time as cycles through characteristics or traits. Passover happened because it was 15 of Nissan, not the other way around. Efroni pointed out how we had 2 temples destroyed on the same day.

Efroni talked about Tishri and Nissan being the first of the year. He talked about the idea of a world of judgement and Nissan a world of mercy. He talked about Rosh Hashanah 1 being the day Hashem created man, and not necessarily the day man created the world. Nissan 15 the first year of jews freedom. Also first day god of mercy.

Efroni talked about how God deliberates, and how there is an additional period between teshrei 7 and teshrei 22, god can change his minds.

Efroni talked about how weather and everything is affected by the traits. Talked about winter and summer being more extreme traits.

Efroni talk about the parsha, Pincas, Levi Shemone

Comparison of Levi and Shemone

Although they both participated in slavery of Joseph, Joseph chose to punish Shemone

Levi mida was synthesis. His media is represented by number 3. He lives up to the principles of Rambam. It is understandable why he was chosen to get Torah and run services. Levi was always fiercely against the desecration of God's name.

Levi was extreme when necessary (for example killing someone), whereas Shemone was extreme all the time.