

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

A LETTER AND A LIFELINE


Adapted from Touched by a Story by Rabbi Spero, with the permission of the copyright holders, Artscroll/Mesorah Publications, Ltd. (Artscroll)

Gitti and Sari were best friends, but in their late teens, they began to drift apart. Gitti married a kind and brilliant scholar from a wonderful family. They were blessed with beautiful children, each more special than the next. Sari was in *shidduchim* for many years and dated many young men, none of them right for her. She had trouble finding a job and keeping her friends; she lost touch with her family. She became a recluse and exuded bitterness.

One day, on the way into her lonely apartment, Sari checked her mailbox and was shocked to discover a personal letter. It was from Gitti. She had been reminiscing with her children and realized how long it had been since she and Sari had seen each other. She told Sari how much joy their friendship had brought her, and how she wanted to reconnect.

Sari read the letter over and over, and each time she cried even more. You see, on the way home, she had been carrying a bag filled with a cocktail of drugs, intending to end her life.

Sari began a new chapter. She and Gitti rebuilt their relationship, spending Shabbosos together and becoming close friends again. Sari became a beloved aunt to Gitti's children, showering them with gifts and love and participating in their milestones. Thanks to Gitti, she had new joy in her life.

We all have good friends who have drifted apart with time, distance. But you never know what a well-placed phone call, letter, email, or text can accomplish. At least it will bring a smile, and it just may just save a life. 



gem

OF THE WEEK

COUNTED BY G-D

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Based on the commentary of Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.

In every count, things are categorized under one common concept. *Pekudei bnei Yisrael* are all those who are categorized as *bnei Yisrael*, in whom the idea of “*bnei Yisrael*” is embodied. The moment someone is counted among them, he learns to value himself as a *ben Yisrael*. At that moment, he is called upon to learn a lesson.

Not by his mere existence, by living for himself, is there meaning to his soul, and not by his mere existence does he become an integral part of a nation. Only one who gives is counted; only one who contributes gains the right to go on; only one who does what is required of him has a rightful place in the community of his nation. Only one who makes his contribution is entitled to be counted in the numbers of the Children of Israel. The moment he seeks to be counted without making a contribution—at that moment he forfeits his right to exist.


But who can contribute and meet his obligation so completely that he can

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER 

HASHEM SFASAI TIFTACH:
A DIFFERENT OFFERING

In Tehillim *perek* 51, Nosson Hanavi comes to David Hamelech and rebukes him for his actions with Batsheva. The *perek* reflects David's desperate plea for forgiveness.

When he realizes that Hashem does not desire a *korban* as an atonement for this sin, David says “*Hashem sfasai tiftach, u'fi yagid tehilasecha!*” and pleads that his broken heart take the place of an offering. Our Shemone Esrei, which takes the place of the *korbanos* we can no longer offer, thus begins with that same plea. 

Adapted from the Beis Yosef, quoting the talmidim of Rabbeinu Yonah

**From our
readers...**

The lessons are profound and the stories well written;
they keep my children riveted.

- Mordechai P.

RASHI: ETERNAL BIRTHRIGHT

by Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

One of the greatest luminaries in Jewish history was Rabbeinu Shlomo Yitzchaki, known to the world as Rashi. A description of Rashi's accomplishments, and the profound impact he had on the Jewish people, could fill an entire book and still not be complete.

Rashi was born in the French city of Troyes in the year 1040, almost a thousand years ago. At the time, the main centers of learning were in the German cities of Worms and Mainz, under the leadership of Rabbeinu Gershom's disciples. Early in life, Rashi left his hometown to study under the great masters in these *yeshivos*. He would not return until he was 25. When he did, he created his own yeshiva, which soon became the main center of Torah for Ashkenazi Jewry. He headed the yeshiva until his death in 1105.

Through his clear and concise commentary on the Talmud and the Chumash, Rashi became the *rebbe* of the entire Jewish people. In a relatively short period in time, Gemara and Rashi became inseparable. Almost no copies of the Talmud were printed without Rashi's commentary on the page, bearing testimony to the eagerness of the Jewish people to learn—and to the greatness and merit of Rashi.

Rashi's commentary on Chumash rapidly became the birthright of the masses. Today, young children are introduced to his comments very early on in their education. Rashi's grandson, Rabbeinu Tam, is said to have felt that he could have produced a similar commentary on the Talmud, but never could he have hoped to write Rashi's commentary on the Chumash.

But Rashi's life was not free of the shadow of persecution. A mere nine years before his death, in the year 1096, the first Crusade began. The Church had decided to send an army to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim rule. A desire for adventure, spoils of war, and the eternity promised by the Pope enticed over a hundred thousand knights to join the Crusade. It soon occurred to the Crusaders that if they were seeking to overpower the heresy of faraway Muslims, it only made sense to overpower the heretical Jews living in their own backyards.

The Jewish communities in Germany were the first major victims of the Crusaders' atrocities. Always, they were offered the opportunity to convert and be spared, but they remained staunch in their faith and would not even pretend to comply. Those who are martyred *al kiddush Hashem* are granted the highest place in the World to Come; may G-d avenge their blood. 🕯

To be continued...

claim for himself the right to exist for even one minute? Where is the person who would not be betrayed by his imperfections and who would not require atonement? Therefore, *zeh yitnu*—when we count, it is not with what we have actually done for the common good, but with the symbolic expression of what we know is our duty.

There is no greater joy than to be among *pekudei Hashem*, those who are counted by G-d; to be remembered before Him—even for a fleeting moment, even if one lives in the most humble of conditions. Only one who resolves to do his duty will pass from the nondescript crowd of self-seekers into the noble circle of those counted before G-d.

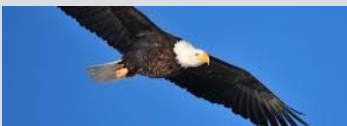
The contribution required of each individual is symbolized by one half-shekel. Objectively, one individual's efforts, no matter how perfect, cannot accomplish everything. To produce the whole, there must be an equally devoted investment on the part of his brother. No individual is asked to accomplish the entire task: *lo alecha hamelacha ligmor* (Pirkei Avos 2:16); he is simply asked to do his part.

One shekel is equal to 20 *gerah*. The individual is expected to contribute ten. No matter how small a fraction it is, he must spare no effort and no resource in promoting the accomplishment of the whole and furthering the welfare of the community. Although *lo alecha hamelacha ligmor*, nevertheless, *v'lo atah ben chorin lehibatel mimena*. 🕯



wonder WORLD

EAGLE EYED IV



What do bald eagles eat?

When a bald eagle is ready to eat, it waits patiently on its perch until it sees that a fish is nearing the surface of the water. Then the bald eagle swoops down and catches the fish with its talons. Holding its prey tightly, the eagle flies back to its nest or perch. It then uses its sharp beak to tear into its meal.

When fish are scarce, the bald eagle will set its sights on rabbits, squirrels, birds, and rotting animal flesh. Sometimes, this dignified symbol of the United States of America will even resort to stealing food from other birds. 🕯

Adapted from *Exploring the Wild World of Animals & Birds* (Israel Bookshop Publications)