

# THE YIOP NEWSLETTER

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Young Israel of Ocean Parkway

Volume 6, Issue 3

**From The Rav's Desk**  
**Rabbi Avrohom Stolzenberg**  
**Reaccepting the Torah through Simcha**

Shavuos is the Chag of Mattan Torah. This Chag has meaning for us now, just as it did at the original Maamad Har Sinai. It is a time to celebrate a renewed appreciation and acceptance of Hashem's Holy Torah. In this sense we are all a nation of collective Chozrim Bitshuva, renewing our commitment to the Torah. There is however one seemingly difficult aspect. Shavuos is a Chag. A Jew is commanded to rejoice on a Yom Tov. How can he repent and celebrate simultaneously?

The Gemora Bava Metzia relates the following incident.

“One day R' Yochanan was bathing in the Jordan River. Resh Lakish, (prior to his repentance and acceptance of Mitzvos), saw him and sprang in after him. R' Yochanan said to him, 'You should utilize your strength for the Torah.' ”

The accepted explanation of this well known Chazal, is that R' Yochanan is pleading with Resh Lakish to harness his enormous strength, which has been abused until now, to the pursuit of Torah greatness.

It would seem as if Resh Lakish is being encouraged to turn his back on his past, and view it as an unproductive and regrettable period.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the proper way to understand this Gemora is with the Sfas Emes' interpretation of the Talmudic declaration, “Where the Baalei Teshuva stand, even the most righteous may not stand.” The Sfas Emes says that a Baal Teshuva brings a passion for a cause that an otherwise righteous Jew never experienced. The Baal Teshuva can redirect his enthusiasm for worldly pleasures to pursue true performance of Mitzvos as well as Torah wisdom. Rather than view the past as a total loss, the Chozer Bitshuva may rest assured that the cumulative effect of all previous experiences were the foundation which allowed him to embrace Torah and Mitzvos with passion and fervor. As R' Yochanan consoled Resh Lakish, “Your earlier years were not wasted!”

May we be Zoche to celebrate this most holy Yom Tov with true Simcha Shel Mitzvah.

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## **Schedule of Classes:**

- ◆ Shabbat Morning — 8:15 A.M.  
Navi Shiur  
Rabbi Avrohom Stolzenberg
- ◆ Shabbat, 2 hours before Mincha  
Maseches Shabbos (Daf Yomi)  
Rabbi Avrohom Stolzenberg
- ◆ Shabbat, 1 hour before Mincha  
Pirkei Avos  
Rabbi Avrohom Stolzenberg
- ◆ Weekday Morning Before Shacharis  
Daf Yomi — 7:00 A.M.  
Rabbi Avrohom Stolzenberg
- ◆ Weekday Afternoon Half Hour Before Mincha  
Parshas Hashavua  
Rabbi Avrohom Stolzenberg

**Weekday Shacharis:** 8:00 A.M.

## **Announcements:**

- ◆ Please see Mr. Louis Bernstein or call the office at (718) 376-6305 to arrange for Seudah Shelishis or Kiddush Sponsorship.



## From The President's Desk

Eli Wiesel

### A Lesson From Ruth

Boaz, the leader of the Jewish people, praised Ruth, the Moabite princess who married Naomi's son, for two great attributes. First, he commended her kindness towards her widowed mother in law. Second, he praised her self-sacrifice in leaving the palace of her father to accompany her mother in law to the land of Israel and to a life of abject poverty.

It seems that the priorities are reversed. It is only natural that a young lady feels mercy for her widowed mother-in-law and shower her with kindness to ease her difficult life situation. It is surely commendable, but also expected behavior for anyone with common decency. But to leave the lap of luxury of the royal palace in order to live a life of poverty is truly a test that most would fail and therefore, truly commendable. The fact that these two reasons are stated together and this particular order teaches us a great lesson.

The Torah places the attribute of kindness first so that we would learn and appreciate the value of kind deeds in the eyes of Hashem. Says Rabbi Henach Leibowitz, "A small chesed done in a meticulous and loving manner, with strong and sincere kavanah, intent, to do the will of Hashem, can have a spiritual impact greater than Ruth's monumental sacrifice to become a Jew. It is this act of heartfelt chesed that was the primary reason for her deserving the eternal reward of the royal dynasty of Dovid Hamelech and his descendants."

We have just completed our count to perfection – The Omer. As we approach the holy days of Shavuot we should realize that acts of kindness are much more than just good deeds. They serve as the Mitzva to emulate Hashem. May we all increase our benevolence towards others with sincerity and generosity and bring the coming of Moshiach, the descendant of Ruth, speedily and in our days.

Wishing all my fellow members and friends a truly Simchas Yom Tov!

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**YIOPNewsletter.tripod.com**



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## **From The Gabbai's Desk**

**Mel Feinberg**

### **Akdamus**

On the first day of Shavuos, we read a special poem called "Akdamus". It was written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Rabbi Meir ben Yitzchak of Worms, Germany, which is about 50 miles southwest of Frankfurt. Rabbi Meir's name is found in the initial letters of the last double lines of Akdamus.

The first 2 words are "Akdamus milin", which means "in introduction to the words". This refers to the reading of the 10 Commandments, which will follow as part of the Torah portion of the first day of Shavuos. Therefore, Akdamus is read right before the Torah reading, following the calling up of the kohein, but before the kohein says the first bracha.

The custom used to be that Akdamus was read after the first verse of the Torah portion, but because the rabbis considered that an interruption of the Torah reading, Akdamus was moved to before the Torah reading.

Akdamus praises G-d, Israel and the Torah. Each verse ends with "אך", representing the first and last letters of the aleph-bais. This signifies that the cycle of Torah study is endless and as soon as we finish studying the Torah (ך, the last letter), we have to begin again (א, the first letter) That is a fitting message on Shavuos, the day we received the Torah.

Akdamus ends with praise to G-d for presenting us with the Torah. Let us take to heart the message of Akdamus and increase our Torah study throughout the year.

A Happy Shavuos to all!