

The Jewish Weekly

Special Help for Special Needs

By Rabbi Mendel Samuels

Our youngest son Refael Meir is a special-needs child. He is a very sweet boy, but due to his condition he cannot be left alone even for a minute. Every day a nurse comes to our home to assist in his care; this allows my wife to function in her many capacities as a mother for the rest of the household and as a shlucha (emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe).

Several years ago there were changes at our insurance. They started sending letters informing us that in their assessment, our son's condition did not meet the criteria for deserving a home nurse for 40 hours a week. These assessments were baseless and Refael Meir's doctors wrote letters stating unequivocally that he needed the nurses desperately.

After months of warnings, on the day before Rosh Hashana we were notified that the insurance would stop paying for the nurses indefinitely. We were devastated.

Instead of a trained nurse they were willing to provide us with an aide that would come for two hours each day to be with Refael Meir. It was difficult to find the right person for the job, but after some time we managed to find the perfect fit. Although this provided some measure of relief so my wife could catch her breath and do some basic chores each day, the new arrangement was extremely difficult for us all, especially for my wife.

After losing the much-needed funding, a representative from the appeals department was assigned to our case. She assured me on the phone that she would do everything in her power to get the nurse back to our home.

Towards the end of our conversation she asked me, "How is the rebbetzin doing?"

Taken aback at the unexpected use of this Yiddish term referring to the rabbi's wife, I blurted out, "Are you Jewish?"

"I can't tell you that information over the phone," she replied laughing. From then on this became a routine joke in our phone conversations. She would ask how "the rebbetzin" is doing, I would ask her if she is Jewish and she'd respond she was unable to divulge that information.

On the day before Passover she called me with the bad news that after trying everything in her power to appeal their denial of Refael Meir's nursing care, the final appeal had been rejected and the denial was final. We were broken by the news.

A few months later during the summer I was at the Ohel [burial structure of the Lubavitcher Rebbe] and as I prepared to enter, my wife called me in tears. The aide who had been coming for two hours each day for the past eight months found a better job and would not be returning henceforth. She was beside herself thinking how life would be without even this bare minimum of help.

I immediately assured her that everything will turn out for the best and asked her to write a letter to the Rebbe which I will read at the Ohel in a few minutes. Certainly the Rebbe will intercede that we overcome this challenge as well.

This is what she wrote:

Dear Rebbe,

Firstly, I thank the Aibershter ['the One above'] for the privilege of being given the responsibility of caring for such a special soul. But He created me of flesh and blood and there is only so much I can do. I desperately need the nurse. I'm begging for a blessing that we should get our nurse back for 40 hours a week. I'll take 20 hours but the truth is that we really need a nurse for 40 hours a week.

As I turned to leave after reading her letter and placing it at the Ohel, my phone rang.

"Hi Rabbi. How is the rebbetzin?"

I was shocked since I had never expected to hear from the insurance appeals department ever again.

"I never expected to hear from you," I said.

"Neither did I, Rabbi. Tell me, what did you do?"

"That's a loaded question. I have done a lot of things.

"Rabbi, whom did you speak to?"

"To many people. What's going on?"

"That's what I am wondering as well. Listen, in all my years working at this company I have never seen this happen. I am holding a letter here stating that the company is reversing all their denials and your son will have a nurse for 40 hours a week!"

Standing near the Ohel with the phone to my ear I burst out crying and said to her, "Do you know where I am standing now? I'm standing near the resting place of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Have you heard of the Lubavitcher Rebbe?"

"Yes, Rabbi. I was there last week."

"So you are Jewish!"

"I'm sorry I can't tell you that over the phone."

We were both very emotional and she started crying as well. An open miracle had just occurred in front of our eyes!

When I shared the news with my wife moments later she was in absolute disbelief, but so exhilaratingly grateful at the miraculous turn of events.

The story continues.

Although we had our funding back, finding the right nurse could be a serious challenge but I figured since we were already on a roll I would contact the nurse who had been coming up until Rosh Hashana and see if she was perhaps available to care for Refael Meir again.

"Rabbi," she said to me on the phone. "You are a man of faith. I knew G-d would bring me back to your family. I have been waiting by the phone all these months. I will be there on Monday."

Reprinted from an email of A Chassidisher Derher.

It Once Happened...

The True Foundation of The Ponevizher Yeshiva

By Rabbi Joey Haber

A beautiful example of this kind of faith is a story told of the Ponevizher Rav, Rav Kahaneman, who built the Ponevizh Yeshiva in Bnei-Brak. On the day the foundations of the yeshiva were laid, Rav Kahaneman sat on the stone and cried for a long while.

The next day, he explained to his students why he cried. "I cried," he said, "because the foundation of this building was laid not yesterday, but 57 years ago."

He told that 57 years earlier, he was a young boy living with two older brothers in Russia, in a state of utter destitution. Once, on a snowy, bitterly cold winter day, the family had only one jacket and one set of boots for everyone.

The mother turned to the boys and asked which of them wanted to go to yeshiva the following day. Because of the weather, and because there was only a single coat and pair of boots, only one would be able to get to yeshiva the next day.

All three said they wanted to go. The next morning, the mother took each child to yeshiva, one by one, wearing the boots and carrying the boy on her back with the jacket covering both of them.

Rav Kahaneman recalled hearing his mother sing as she carried him and trudged through the snow about how fortunate she was, how fortunate the family was, that they had three boys learning Torah.

"At that moment," Rav Kahaneman said, "I said to myself that I needed to build a yeshiva on her sacrifice. As I stood on that stone, I remembered my mother's sacrifice."

Let us imagine for a moment that none of this happened, that the Kahaneman family lived comfortably in Russia, and had boots and jackets for everyone, so that the mother that morning would have just bid her children farewell as they left to yeshiva, like all parents do.

This young impressionable boy would never have learned this priceless life lesson. Who knows if he would have grown to build a Torah empire if he had not had this remarkable educational experience? Hashem gave the Kahaneman family exactly what they needed to ensure that the Ponevezh Yeshiva would be built 57 years later.

And this is true of our lives, as well. Hashem always gives us what we need to do what we are supposed to do. We should rejoice over everything we have, without ever worrying about what we don't have. If we live this way, then we will live with genuine joy and contentment, each and every day, and will never feel the desire to exchange our life for anyone else's.

Reprinted from an email of iTorah.com



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Matot-Massei

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:12	8:29	9:05
Tel Aviv	7:28	8:32	
Haifa	7:20	8:33	
Be'er Sheva	7:28	8:30	

Laws & Customs: for the Nine Days (not including Tishah B'Av)

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According to Nitti Gavriel, Mishna Berurah and Shulchan Aruch Harav
All times listed are for Jerusalem only as per www.myzmanim.com

Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lescher's Halachah Sheets

Compiled by Yossi Fraenkel in memory of his grandparents

ר' ראובן בן הרב משה אליעזר הלוי ע"ה וחיה ברכה בת ר' נפתלי משה ע"ה רבינוביץ
ר' יוסף בן ר' אורי ע"ה ומלכה בת ר' יצחק צבי הלוי ע"ה פרנקל

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☞ THE MONTH OF AV

משנכנס אב ממעטים בשמחה – “When the month of Av enters, we reduce our joy.” The entire month of Av is considered inopportune. One who is scheduled to have a court hearing, or anything of a similar nature, should try to postpone it until after the month of Av, or at least until after the Nine Days.

☞ THE NINE DAYS

In addition to the activities prohibited in the three weeks, there are many additional prohibitions during the Nine Days, beginning on Friday evening at sunset (7:52pm).

One may not take a haircut. [Even so, a moustache may be trimmed if it gets in the way of eating. Similarly, a woman may groom her legs or eyebrows etc.]

An Opshernish should be deferred until after the Nine Days. [Other practices associated with an Opshernish – such as training the child to wear Tzitzit and recite Brachot, Shmah and Birchat Hamazon – should not be deferred.]

Weddings should not be celebrated during the Nine Days.

One may not eat new fruit, unless for health purposes.

One may not listen to live music. Listening to recorded music for enjoyment or festive purposes should also be avoided.

One should not build, remodel, renovate or paint one's home. [One may be lenient if repairs are urgent or constitute an emergency; when waiting carries a risk of significant financial loss; when a non-Jewish contractor who was engaged before the Nine Days insists on working during the Nine Days, and he even turns down a small bonus to delay the job; when necessary for a Mitzvah, such as a Shul, or for a couple's first marriage soon after the Nine Days.]

Moving into a new home should be deferred until the month of Elul, or at least until after the 15th of Av. However, one may enter into contract to purchase or lease property.

One may not plant trees or flowers for the sake of shade or fragrance, but one may tend to these if already planted prior to the Nine Days. One may also plant for the sake of producing fruit.

One should not arrange or attend a feast or party (such as a farewell party) – even for a Mitzvah that does not have a fixed time. Therefore, a Siyum Sefer Torah or Chanukat Habayit should be deferred until after the Nine Days.

One may arrange a gathering with light refreshments, especially if the gathering is associated with a Mitzvah.

Although one may become engaged during the Nine Days and even on Tishah B'Av, nevertheless, a festive meal should not be held until after the Nine Days. However, one may mark the occasion with light refreshments, but without singing and dancing.

Kiddush Levanah is postponed until Motzei Tishah B'Av.

When possible, medical procedures should be avoided, especially during the week of Tishah B'Av.

It is customary to avoid engaging in perilous activities during the Nine Days.

Similarly, it is customary to refrain from traveling during the Nine Days. If travelling is absolutely necessary, one should at least begin the preparations (such as packing) beforehand.

☞ SWIMMING & BATHING

One may not shower or bathe one's entire body, even in cold water. However, one may wash the face, hands, and feet in cold water. Similarly, one may rinse any soiled areas.

One should not go swimming.

One may bathe as usual for the sake of a Mitzvah (such as Mikvah) or medical purposes.

There is room to be lenient if one suffers from perspiration and the like, and he is not washing for pleasure. [Where possible, this should be done with colder water than usual, and only for as long as absolutely necessary, to minimize any unintended enjoyment.]

One may not use a spa or sauna.

One may cut nails. [Even those who are stringent permit it for the sake of *Shabbat* or for the sake of a *Mitzvah*.]

☞ NEW CLOTHING & ALTERATIONS

One should not purchase new clothing or shoes during the Nine Days – even if it will not be worn until after the Nine Days. [This applies even to children's clothing and shoes.]

One may be lenient if the item is substantially discounted and it cannot be purchased later for a similar price.

One may not wear new clothing during the Nine Days, even if it was purchased on sale, or before the three weeks began. Nevertheless, if one forgot to buy shoes needed for *Tishah B'Av*, one may do so during the Nine Days.

One may not engage a tailor or seamstress to create new clothing – even if it will not be worn until after the Nine Days. [One may be lenient if necessary for the sake of one's own wedding and there is not enough time after the Nine Days.]

One should not knit or embroider a new garment.

One may not make alterations to new clothing or shoes, but may make minor alterations to used clothing or shoes.

A tailor or seamstress by profession should consult a *Rav* regarding what may and may not be done.

☞ LAUNDRY

It is forbidden to launder or iron garments, undergarments, tablecloths, linens or towels – even if they will not be used until after the Nine Days. [Spot cleaning a stain should also be avoided where possible.] However, using a dryer and folding clothing is permissible.

One may not even give these items to a non-Jewish launderer or dry-cleaner during the Nine Days. [However, one may give it in before the Nine Days, even if it will be laundered during the Nine Days. Similarly, one may be lenient if he will otherwise not have clean clothing to wear on *Shabbat*.]

One may launder the clothing of young children – who soil their clothing constantly – as necessary. Similarly, a

married woman may launder and use *Levanim* as needed. [When washing by hand, it is best to launder only a few items at a time. However, when washing with a machine, it is best to reduce the number of loads by washing as many items together as possible. Even so, one may only include items which are permissible to wash.]

A launderer by profession should consult a *Rav* regarding what may and may not be done.

WEARING FRESH CLOTHING

It is forbidden to wear freshly laundered clothing or use freshly laundered tablecloths, linens and towels – even if laundered prior to the Nine Days. Accordingly, before the Nine Days begin, one should wear or use (even for a short time) all the items that one intends to use during the Nine Days.

If one neglected to do so, there is room to be lenient and allow these items to be worn or used after leaving them on the ground for a while.

The above does not apply to undergarments and socks; the accepted practice is to change them as necessary, even if they are freshly laundered.

One may provide a guest with fresh linens and towels. However, it is fitting for the guest to leave them on the ground for a while before using them.

One should not wear *Shabbat* clothing during the weekdays of the Nine Days, even if not freshly laundered. However, on the occasion of a *Brit*, freshly laundered *Shabbat* clothing are worn by the *Mohel* and *Sandak*, the parents of the newborn, as well as the woman who serves at the *kvater*. Similarly, in the event of a *Pidyan Haben*, the parents of the baby and the *Kohen* wear freshly laundered *Shabbat* clothing. Likewise, a *Bar-Mitzvah* boy and his parents may wear *Shabbat* clothing.

MEAT & WINE

Meat and wine are associated with joy. Additionally, the *Avodah* in the *Beit Hamikdash* – which was interrupted in the Nine Days – involved primarily meat and wine. Therefore, one may not eat chicken and meat, nor drink grape-juice and wine, unless there are health concerns.

One should not even partake of a dish which is merely flavored with meat or gravy, grape-juice or wine. [However, one may use wine vinegar.]

One may eat *Parev* foods that were prepared in a clean *Meaty* pot or utensil.

Other alcoholic beverages are permitted, but one should be mindful of the “spirit of the law”.

When performing a *Mezuman*, one should not use a *Kos*, even if he is ordinarily accustomed to doing so.

LEARNING & SIYUMIM

During these days, it is appropriate for both men and women to increase in one’s *Torah* studies, with special focus on the *Halachot* of the Nine Days, as well as learning about the *Geulah* and the *Beit Hamikdash* (e.g. chapters 40-48 of *Yechezkel*, tractates *Middot* and *Tamid*, and *Hilchat Beit Habechira* in the *Rambam*).

It is also appropriate to increase in *Tzedakah* and *Ahavat Yisrael*. These activities should especially be performed in association with *Siyumim*.

As we get closer to the days of *Moshiach*, we start to focus on the inner purpose of the destruction, which is to bring us to an even higher level – the third *Beit Hamikdash*. Therefore, we moderate the sadness with permissible expressions of joy. As such, one should try to participate in a *Siyum* every day of the Nine Days, including *Shabbat*, and if possible, until the 15th of *Av*.

The *Siyum* should preferably be done on a *Masechta* of *Gemara* (as opposed to *Mishnayot*). The *Siyum* may even be made by a child.

Some have the custom to recite the normal *Kaddish D’rabannan* at the conclusion of the *Siyum*, but most recite the “*Kaddish Hagadol*” printed in the back of the *Gemara*.

Ideally, the *Siyum* should be on a *Masechta* whose conclusion is easy for all the participants to understand. The one making the *Siyum* should present it in an easy and well-understood manner.

The *Siyumim* should involve as many participants as possible. On several occasions, the Lubavitcher Rebbe encouraged women, and even very young children, to participate in a *Siyum*.

If it is not possible to participate in person, one should at least strive to participate via telephone, or other communication methods.

If possible, the *Siyum* should be associated with food.

Many hold that one should eat meat and drink wine when celebrating a *Siyum during the 9 days*. The *Chabad* custom is not to eat meat or drink wine at the *siyum*.

SHABBAT CHAZAK – ROSH CHODESH AV

One may bathe on Friday in honor of *Shabbat*, don freshly laundered clothing, and use freshly laundered tablecloths. [However, one should not change the linens.]

Shabbat clothing is worn as usual and care is taken not to display any signs of mourning. In fact, one should be even more joyous than usual.

One may – and should – eat meat and drink wine on *Shabbat*.

As it is *Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av*, we take out two *Sifrei Torah*; seven *Aliyot* in first *Sefer Torah* from the weekly *Parsha*, *Matot-Massei*, *Maftir* reads in the second *Torah* from *Parshat Pinchas* the two paragraphs "וביום השבת" and "ובראשי חדשיכם"

The *Aliyah* of *Chazak* is given to a prominent person. The congregation stands for the last *Passuk*. The person receiving the *Aliyah* also recites “*Chazak Chazak vNitchazek*”.

When *Rosh Chodesh Av* falls on *Shabbat*, the *Haftora* is read as follows:

Ashkenazim: *Yirmiyahu* 2:4 - 28 and 3:4
Chabad & Sephardim: *Yirmiyahu* 2:4 - 28 and 4:1-2

some congregations add the first and last *Pesukim* of the *Haftora* for *Shabbat Rosh Chodesh* (*Isaiah* 66:1 “*כִּה אָמַר ה'*” and (*Isaiah* 66:23) “*וְהָיָה מְדִי חָדָשׁ*”

It is customary for the *Gabbaim* to arrange a *Kiddush* with the purpose of increasing resolutions in learning *Torah*, keeping *Mitzvot B'hidur*, and rejoicing in the completion of the *Torah*.

Havdallah is recited on wine. In the first instance, the wine should be drunk by a child who understands the concept of *Brachot* (the younger, the better). If that is not an option, the wine is drunk by the one who recited *Havdallah*.

Shabbat clothing is worn on *Motzei Shabbat*, as usual.

5TH OF AV

This day is the *yahrtzeit* of the *AriZal*. One should mark the day by increasing one’s efforts in spreading the inner dimension of *Torah*.