

# Family TORAH JOURNAL

ST. LOUIS  
**KOLLEL**

## PARSHA PERCEPTIONS

RABBI SHLOMO SOROKA



Depending upon your age you may or may not have heard of Zero Mostel but everyone knows the Broadway classic-turned-movie "Fiddler on the Roof" in which Zero's performance as Tevye catapulted the comedian/actor to stardom. "Zero" was not the name on his birth certificate, nor was it the name given to him at his Brit Milah, so where did the name "Zero" come from?

Zero Mostel was born in Brooklyn to an Orthodox Jewish couple who named him Shmuel. I recently heard that when Mostel was a child, his parents already recognized that little Shmuel was extremely perceptive and intelligent. They had plans for him to become a great rabbi. But, much to their chagrin, he often neglected his studies, preferring to doodle, play practical jokes, and performing antics to attract attention. As the seventh of eight children born to a struggling immigrant family, he may not have received the attention he needed. But as others would later recall, what led Mostel to leave his family's traditions were the tongue-lashings he received from his mother when he underperformed in his religious studies. She allegedly would yell at him in Yiddish, "*Du bist ah gornisht! You're a nothing!*" Labeled constantly as a nothing, a nobody, a zero, made an impact but not a good one. And so, one day he decided that his mother was right. He was "Zero" and was going to be proud of it.

Zero went on to become a witty entertainer and brilliant theatrical artist, but wasn't a particularly moral person nor was he faithful to his Jewish heritage. (Even "Fiddler on the Roof" mocks many fundamental Jewish values and observance.) His religion became communism and he married a gentile night club dancer. *(continued on next page)*

## MOMENTS OF GREATNESS

RABBI SHLOMO EISENBERG



Mark Samuels\* was an Orthodox Jew and successful businessman who was constantly traveling from city to city for business meetings and opportunities. One thing Mark was extremely careful about was to always keep his tefillin with him and to never check them with his luggage.

One early morning in September, Mark was headed on a cross country flight for an important and crucial business deal. As usual, Mark brought his tefillin with him and put them on the seat next to him while he waited for his gate to be called. Finally, his gate was called and Mark made his way to his designated seat onboard and started to get comfortable for the five hour flight.

After a few minutes, Mark suddenly realized that his tefillin were not with him and that he left them in the airport at the gate area. He hastily rushed to the front of the plane to retrieve his holy tefillin. However, the stewardess met him there and forbade him from leaving. "Once the door of the aircraft is closed we do not open it for any reason," she said rather nonchalantly. Mark was rather disturbed and asked politely if he could just run to the gate, get the tefillin, and run back in less than thirty seconds. This back and forth went on for a few minutes, until the pilot came to see what was holding the plane up. The pilot exclaimed "although we normally do not allow anyone off the plane, because you are holding everyone up, we will make an exception—but just know that once you leave you are not getting back on." Mark knew how important making this flight was for his business, but his tefillin were even more dear to him and he happily departed the aircraft to save his precious tefillin. That day was 9/11/2001 and Mark's flight was United Airlines Flight 175 that hit into the second World Trade Center. Mark's mesiras nefesh (sacrifice) for his tefillin saved his life. \*Mark's name has been changed.



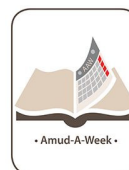
## UPCOMING WEEK'S SCHEDULE: YEAR 3, WEEK 5—BRACHOS 50A

Rabbi Mendy Rosner

R' Jonny Gordon

The maggid shiur of the week for the Amud is **R' Daniel Anton**

For more info, or to sign up to get the weekly video shiurim please contact Rabbi Yaakov Berkowitz



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## ALEF TO TAV: INSIGHTS INTO THE ALEF-BEIS

RABBI YAAKOV BERKOWITZ



Letter: Alef

Numerical Value: 1

Spelled: Alef, Lamed, Fei

Alef, the first letter has a numerical value of 1. As we say at the Pesach Seder, "one is Hashem of the heaven & earth". If you break up the letter, however, you find that there is a hidden number. The top arm and the bottom leg of the alef each represents the letter (י) yud and the body of the letter is a (ו) vav. If you add up the numerical value of these letters you get (10+10+6) 26, which is the same numerical value of Hashem's ineffable name (יהוה) which also equals (10+5+6+5) 26. Hashem is "One" in the world, as the singular Power, in the open and hidden world and both the open and hidden numerical value of the Alef alludes to this.

## PARSHA PERCEPTIONS (CONT.)

Towards the end of this week's Torah reading, we are introduced to the "blasphemer" who will be eternally remembered in infamy for publicly cursing G-d. He is identified as the son of a woman named Shlomit, daughter of Divri. Divri isn't a name. It's a description. It means "daughter of talk." She was a loose-tongued yapper who lacked certain sensitivities. Kids pick up on these things and her behavior resulted in a having a child that also would not control his mouth. The consequences proved catastrophic.

Words are powerful. Children are perceptive and impressionable. Words can break a person or make a person- at any age. But especially with children, we can't be too careful (and I'm talking to myself here too). When kids grow up, they won't do as you say. They will do as you do. They will probably also say as you say. They may even become what you say. Call a child "Zero" and he may wind up being just that. Call him "little tzaddik (righteous man)" and he may become a big tzaddik.

*Rabbi Shlomo Soroka was a Kollel member from 2005-2015, serving as Associate Rosh Kollel for the last three years of his tenure. He currently lives in Chicago, serving as Agudath Israel of Illinois' Director of Government Affairs.*

## KOLLEL KASHA KORNER

RABBI YAAKOV SILVERMAN



**Which Parsha in the Torah is also one of the 24 books of Tanach?**

Send in your answer to [ysilverman@stlkollel.com](mailto:ysilverman@stlkollel.com)

I DIDN'T  
KNOW THAT!

RABBI YITZCHAK KOWALSKY



**Q.** Is one allowed to listen to classical music during Sefira?  
**A.** The accepted custom is to prohibit all form of live or recorded music during the Sefira period. In general, music brings a person to happiness and this medium was prohibited during Seifra. Although typically classical music is cheerless and should therefore be allowed, however it is likely that while listening to a symphony, parts of it may meet the criteria of the mood markings of allegro, animato, or giocoso. However Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky shlit"a (KH 9:15) writes that it is not necessary to change ones cell phone ringtone during sefira even if it rings to a joyful tune.

**Q.** Can a woman cut, trim or set her sheitel during sefira?  
**A.** A sheitel is viewed as an article of clothing in halacha. Therefore it is permissible. (See KH Laws of Three Weeks 11:8-10: ff 9-10)

**Q.** I forgot to count sefiras haomer yesterday and remembered and counted 18 minutes after shkiah. Am I still allowed to count the rest of the days with a bracha?  
**A.** Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky shlit"a is quoted (KH 7:4:ft 5) as being of the opinion that until 19 minutes after sunset we can still consider it bein hashemashos for the halachos of sefira and therefore in the above mentioned case one would be allowed to continue counting with a bracha. For an interesting shiur with other scenarios of forgetting to count and still being able to recite a bracha see: <http://tinyurl.com/Sefira-shiur>.

*Please consult your Rav for a final ruling.*

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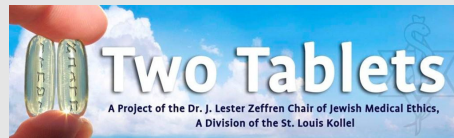
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