

DINNIM SHEETS

“Knowledge is power!” Power over the ignorant, power to influence and control the common people because they don’t know enough to question their masters. That’s one of the main reasons that priests and clerics always sought to keep their congregants in dark, superstitious ignorance. The clergy spoke in Latin, a language that the common people could not understand, for they wanted to keep knowledge, and power, to themselves. Until relatively recently, only a couple of centuries ago, most people could not read or write. Their rulers and religious masters were content to keep things like that for knowledge and education is power. The stained glass windows of the churches and cathedrals were not only to decorate these temples. These impressive windows are also a silent if colourful reproach to the pastors of bygone days. For it was through the stained glass windows that the churches taught the ignorant masses about the stories of the Bible and their morality tales, for the people could not read and their pastors were intent on keeping it that way.

See the stark contrast between that world and — a thousand separations! — the world of Torah and our Torah teachers. A Jew who cannot read or write has always been the unusually rare exception and the study of Torah and Talmud (written in the vernacular of the day so as to facilitate its study by the people) was the primary occupation — and indeed the sacred duty — of the Jewish People. As has been mentioned elsewhere (in connexion with the Sidra of the Week) it was our very first leader, Mosheh our Teacher, who, at the behest of HaShem, drummed it into us that we must constantly learn Torah and must teach Torah to our children. (See the first paragraph of the Shma.) For it is only by learning Torah that one can know what to do or how one is to live as a Torah Jew. “Great is study, for it leads to action,” say our Chachommim. If a person is ignorant of Torah, then even with the best will in the world and even if he is moved by the most deeply religious feelings, he cannot be a true servant of HaShem because, “The ignorant cannot be pious.” To the Jewish People, ignorance is anything but bliss.

The Gemorroh tells us that Mosheh our Teacher instituted that there shall be lessons and lectures (Shiurim) as long as “thirty days before a Yom Tov,” so that the people shall know what to do and how to fulfil the Mitzvos of the upcoming Yom Tov. It is with this intention that the Dinnim of the Yommim Tovim (and other Dinnim Sheets, too) are here presented so that people can better prepare themselves for the approaching Yom Tov by being informed and prepared.

There are comprehensive Dinnim Sheets for all the Yommim Tovim. In addition, there are related stories and articles, too. Simply click on the Dinnim Sheets of your choice. Remember, your questions, comments and suggestions are always welcome. The address: kishinev@seniors.org.uk.