



# A Taste of Torah

## A Matter of Trust

By Rabbi Akiva Stern

Imagine for a moment, if you will, a world where everyone was required to quit their jobs every seventh year. To further complicate things, all grocery stores would be closed for the duration of the year. How would everyone survive, with no money to buy food and no food available for purchase?

The Torah requires all Jews who live in Eretz Yisroel to allow their fields to lie fallow every seventh year. This mitzvah is called *shmittah*. While from a modern perspective, one may perhaps think it's not such a big deal, in an agricultural society this would be akin to having no job and no source of food! It is easy to understand that this mitzvah would strike fear in the hearts of many Jews. But in response to this logical fear, the Torah promises that G-d will bless the crop of the sixth year with triple the normal produce. A third for the sixth year, a third for the seventh and a third for the eighth (as no planting was done during the seventh year in preparation for the eighth).

Interestingly, the verse only states the promise of plentiful food as a response to one who would question, "What will we eat during the seventh year?" (see Leviticus 25:20-21)

This is very troubling! Why would G-d reward only those who fear for the future with this supernatural blessing? What of those righteous individuals who trust fully in G-d and don't question His methodology; are they to starve!!?

The S'forno teaches us an incredible lesson. He writes that in truth, every single individual who keeps the laws of *shmittah* will have the food he needs. Yet there are two distinctly different ways through which G-d would provide His blessing: in quantity or in quality. Those who question G-d will be blessed with

quantity, a triple crop during the sixth year. This will ease their concerns for the future, but it will also necessitate three times the effort to reap, harvest and store the large crop. Those who unquestioningly place their trust in G-d, however, will receive a blessing in the quality of their produce. They will gather in a standard crop, but this seemingly regular crop will have supernatural qualities; it will contain thrice the nourishment. Hence, the grain that normally lasts but one year will last three full years, because a third of a normal portion will provide the same satisfaction and strength. Those who unquestioningly trust G-d will do the work of one year and reap the profits of three.

Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian (1876-1970) posits that this system is not in effect only during *shmittah*, but all the time! Our financial state for the year is decreed by G-d on Rosh Hashana, yet the amount of effort we will need to expend to garner our livelihood is entirely dependent and proportionate to our true state of *bitachon*, trust in G-d. The more we trust in G-d, and the less we rely on our own devices to gain our needs, the less effort will be necessary!

Let us apply a greater focus, and trust in the complete capabilities of the Almighty. Let us utilize the realization that He is the cause of all that occurs, and thereby reduce our stress and workload.

## Stories For The Soul

### 'This Is G-d's House'

There was a certain synagogue in the Catskill region of New York that closed down in the 1950s. In the mid-1970s, a Jewish summer camp chose to hold prayers at the building, which was vacant, but still standing.

Upon entering, camp members were amazed to see that the interior was in working order, and that there was not a speck of dust on the furniture. More amazing, there was a shul calendar that was up to date. How could this be?

They inquired and finally found a man who told them the following: "My father, may he rest in peace, was one of the founders of this shul. He was a carpenter and literally built much of the building with his own hands.

"After WWII, many young people either moved out or were killed in the war. The membership dwindled till the shul closed. I came in once a month since then to dust the place, update the calendar, and do whatever else was necessary."

A counselor asked him, "Why did you bother doing all that?"

He replied with complete simplicity, "I figured this is G-d's house and I have to take care of it."

In this week's parsha, the verse tells us, "And My Sanctuary shall you revere" (26:2).

This simple man understood the holiness of a shul. We must have the same respect and reverence for any shul or yeshiva today, as we would for the Holy Temple itself.

*Adapted with permission from Shul-Week by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.*

## Kollel Happenings

### FATHERS & SONS

The Denver Community Kollel invites all fathers and sons to its Fathers & Sons program at the DAT Minyan, 6825 E Alameda Ave., Sunday, May 12th. Shacharis begins at 8 am, followed by breakfast and father and sons learning until 9:30. There will be a story and great prizes raffled off at 9:30. For more info, email [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) or call Rabbi Dovid Schwartzberg at 732-779-1297.



### LEARN TO LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. All classes take place in the Aish Bais Medrash 9550 Belleview Ave. There are other opportunities to join this program outside of the current program. For more info, email [rmm@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmm@denverkollel.org).



### A DEEPER LOOK

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issues, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights 7:40-8:30 pm at the Kollel, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at Aish Denver 8-9 pm.

## Interpersonal Issues

### The Laws of Lashon Hara (Slander)

The prohibition against speaking lashon hara applies regardless of whether one does so willingly or is pressured by another into speaking. Even a parent or teacher may not be told lashon hara

(although there are situations where one may share information with a parent or teacher; these situations will be discussed in later weeks.)

## Ask the Rabbi

### The Mitzvah System

Gregory Cissell, from Milwaukee, WI wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am taking a class at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, so that I can better understand Judaism. My question for you is this: Why is the mitzvah system (by mitzvah system, I mean the 613 commandments that Jews are obligated to observe) considered so important? It has not been my experience that these commandments carry the same significance in other religions as in Judaism. Thank you.

Dear Gregory Cissell,

G-d gave the 613 commandments to our nation at Sinai. They are so important because they are “the King’s decrees.”

Let me explain with a parable. Imagine that the president calls you to his office and gives you 10 million dollars and a strange gadget. He tells you to take the gadget home, put it by the open window, and turn it on every day between four and five in the afternoon, and that it’s a matter of national security. He tells you that the 10 million is yours so long as you continue to do your task faithfully every day. You would certainly do it, even though you didn’t understand why, because you know that the president has access to special information and technology that you don’t

have. You would feel sure that somehow this gadget has some function that, even though you don’t understand it, is crucial for national security.

So too, even though we don’t understand the ultimate reason for all the commandments, but since G-d Himself told us to do them and told us that they are so important, we certainly believe Him. He took us out of slavery in Egypt and gave us the Land of Israel in order for us to do the commandments; as the Torah says regarding the laws of keeping kosher, that we should observe them, “Because I am the Lord your G-d, who raised you up out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d.” (Leviticus 11:45)

We are not to “pick and choose,” but rather to do all the commandments, as G-d said: “You shall observe all My statutes and all My laws and do them, so that the Land to which I am bringing you to settle upon will not vomit you out.” (Leviticus 20:22) We see from this verse that our national security in the Land of Israel depends on fulfilling these laws. Not only that, but they are also our ticket to life in the Next World, as the verse says, “You shall keep My statutes and My laws, which a person will do them and live eternal life through them.” (Leviticus 18:5)

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