

A Taste of Torah

Moral Compass

By Rabbi Shachne Sommers

Webster's provides two definitions for the word "compass". 1. A device for determining geographic direction. 2. A device used to draw circles. These are both handy tools, one for the sailor and explorer, the other for the student of geometry, but their connection is much stronger than their mere usefulness. They are both tools for determining a desired direction. Whether you are trying to chart the course of your ship, or of your pencil; your compass is the indispensable tool.

The Torah, which we begin once again this Shabbos, is our compass. It provides us with desperately needed direction in the stormy seas of life. The very first word of the Torah, "B'raishis", "In the beginning", is understood by our Sages (quoted by Rashi) to be alluding to the purpose of the entire creation - the Torah. This word, "B'raishis", actually functions much the same as the second kind of compass. When creating a circle, one first defines the focal point with the tip of the compass, and then draws the circle around that point. So, too, the

direction of our lives is to be defined by first determining the focal point of Creation, the Torah, and then building the direction of our lives around that focal point. This, too, may well be the reason why the Jewish year begins with the most intense month of the Jewish calendar. The High Holidays, followed by Succos and Simchas Torah, are the "tip of the compass", which provide us with the focal point of devotion to Hashem. We can then continue into the remainder of the year by building our "circle" of life around that focal point. This may also explain why during each day of Succos, and especially the final day of Simchas Torah, we circle around the *bimah*, the place in shul where the Torah is read. The message we are giving ourselves is that we are now completing the first stage in determining our year's direction, making the Torah our focal point. We are then ready to move through the year with the joy that comes from clarity of direction, the joy of the compass.

Ask the Rabbi

The 18 Minute Question

Mark Himelfarb wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

We light our Shabbos candles at least 18 minutes before the official sundown listed for our locale. Is there any significance for 18 minutes? If Shabbos begins at sundown, why should I light my candles 18 minutes before sundown and not just one minute before?

Dear Mark,

The Shulchan Aruch states that one should "add from the weekday onto Shabbat." (This idea is derived from a verse in the Torah.) This is called "Tosefet Shabbos" - an addition to Shabbat. The Shulchan Aruch suggests a variety of possibilities for how much time to add. It seems that the custom of 18 minutes arises from the Halachic time measure called a "Hiluch Mil,"

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Stories For The Soul

One Person...One World

The Mishnah (Sanhedrin) asks: "Why was the world created with only one man?" Hashem created many of all of the other creatures. Why then only one man?

The reason, the Mishnah answers, is to teach us that one who saves one life is as if he saved an entire world. One who destroys one life is as if he destroyed an entire world.

There was once a fifth grade teacher named Mrs. Thompson, who stood in front of her students on the first day of school and told them a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them equally. But that was impossible, because there in the front row, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard. Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. Mrs. Stoddard took a dislike toward Teddy and unfortunately took pleasure in his failures.

Once, while reviewing Teddy's files, Mrs. Thompson had a surprise. While his early records described a bright and successful child, later records told of the death of his mother and the toll it had taken on him and his performance.

Mrs. Thompson immediately realized the cause of Teddy's problem and was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her beautifully wrapped holiday presents, while Teddy's present was wrapped in the paper that he got from a grocery bag.

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Kollel Happenings

DERECH HASHEM

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for a philosophical series on "Derech Hashem", a sefer by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto. Discover and delve into the vital understanding of Hashem's world. The women's class will resume after Sukkos at EDOS. For info, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.



WOMEN'S WELLNESS WORKSHOP

Save the Date! Women's Wellness Workshop November 11th Join The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel for an event you don't want to miss! Learn how to achieve health of mind, body and soul at the Denver Jewish Women's Wellness Workshop Sunday, November 11th, from 10 am to 2 pm. More details to follow. For more info, contact Esti Schwab at esti@denverkollel.org or at 303-668-1878.



A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

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. The class will resume after Sukkos on Tuesdays at 8 pm at Aish Denver.

Interpersonal Issues Safeguarding a Lost Object

A finder has an obligation to attempt to locate the owner by publicizing the find. If it was found within a small area, such as in a synagogue, a mere announcement at the conclusion of the prayers or a note on the bulletin board may suffice. Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Stories for the Soul

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When Mrs. Thompson opened it among the other presents, some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing and a half empty perfume bottle. But she put on the bracelet and exclaimed at how beautiful it was while dabbing some perfume on her wrist. Teddy lingered after school to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to."

On that very day, she quit teaching reading, and writing, and arithmetic and began to teach children. She paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class. Despite her lie that she would love all the children equally, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."

Over the years, Teddy corresponded

with Mrs. Thompson and she celebrated his achievements with him, eventually rejoicing with him when his name became Theodore F. Stoddard, M.D.

When Teddy got married, he invited Mrs. Thompson to come and take the seat of the mother of the bride. Mrs. Thompson, of course, accepted the honor. And she wore the bracelet and perfume that had formerly belonged to Teddy's mother.

At the wedding, Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for showing me that I could make a difference."

Mrs. Thompson, with tear-filled eyes, whispered back, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me how to make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Ask the Rabbi

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(pronounced he-looch meel), which means the time it takes to walk a Mil. The word "Mil" is derived from the Roman "Miliarium" which was 1000 paces (approximately 3000 feet). According to the ancient American commercial this would be the amount one would walk for a Camel. The Halachic Mil and the Roman Miliarium differ only slightly in length. The time it takes to walk a Mil is 18 minutes.

Although the predominant custom

is to light Shabbos candles 18 minutes before sundown, there are other customs. For example, the custom in Jerusalem and in Petach Tikvah is to light candles 40 minutes before sundown. Wherever you find yourself for Shabbos you should light according to the custom of that place.

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