

A Taste of Torah

Keep It Going

By Rabbi Mordechai Mandel

It's an old problem. We all have moments of inspiration throughout our lives; times that we feel our hearts and minds are open for spirituality. We make commitments to do only good... live a life of purity... forgive and forget. These moments may last for a few minutes, a day, a week. Then it's all gone, we're back to usual, life goes on as if it never occurred. How do we hold on to those times and have them last for a little longer than a few fleeting moments?

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (1902-1979) points out a powerful insight from the parsha to help us deal with this issue.

The Bnai Yisroel are on the verge of redemption from Egypt. The verse states, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, vayetzavem- and He commanded them - to the children of Israel" (Shemos 6:13). The Jerusalem Talmud explains that Moshe was told to command Bnai Yisrael regarding the mitzvah of freeing slaves when their term of servitude ends.

This was a critical time for the Jewish Nation; wasn't there anything more pressing for them to be commanded? Why was it necessary, at that particular moment, to be told that specific

commandment? And furthermore, the commandment wouldn't be applicable until almost half a century later, when they entered the Land of Israel!

Rabbi Shmuelevitz explains that Hashem was working with the psychology of a human being. Freeing a slave, one whom the owner considers an intrinsic part of his own estate, would be an extremely difficult commandment for the Jewish People to appreciate and carry out. The only way to have them fully accept the commandment was by utilizing the emotions that they felt on the day that they themselves gained freedom. Had Hashem waited until the giving of the Torah to command them concerning this mitzvah, it would have been beyond their ability to accept. That is why they were given the mitzvah of freeing slaves at the time they were freed from their slavery.

This is an incredible tool, enabling us to capitalize our moments of inspiration. We are taught that we must do something concrete, commit to something practical, and put that overwhelming spiritual feeling into something tangible. In that way we will be able to extend those fleeting moments for a longer period of time.

Ask the Rabbi

The Last Straw

From: Joe Seruya

Dear Rabbi,

In Parashas Bo, Pharaoh reacts more strongly to the locusts than to any other plague, saying to Moses, "just take away this death." How come, of all the

plagues, Pharaoh reacted this way only to the locusts, calling them "death" and saying "just take them away?"

Dear Joe Seruya,

Great question. Locust was the eighth of the ten plagues. I think in a

Stories For The Soul

A Lifesaving Prayer

There was a religious family vacationing in Teveria, Israel. The wife and two daughters were swimming in the Kineret, when the older daughter was swept into a current and began to go under.

The mother couldn't swim. She ran onto the highway, desperately trying to flag down help. Finally, an elegant car stopped and a well-dressed man asked what was wrong. When he heard the girl was drowning, he threw off his jacket and ran into the water.

The man dove to the bottom and began to drag the girl's limp body to the shore. By now, there were several people there. They screamed, "Her head is still in the water! Lift it out!" He lifted her head and put her on his shoulder and brought her ashore.

An ambulance arrived and rushed the girl to the hospital. But she was comatose, and since her head had been under water for so long, the doctors had no hope for her. All the family could do was pray for a miracle.

A short while later, a doctor ran in with MRI results in hand. "I can't believe it, regular brain activity resumed," he cried.

The girl woke up, and two days later she left the hospital.

After a long search, the parents found the man who had rescued their daughter. He was an attorney from a non-observant kibbutz. At the seudas hoda'a, thanksgiving meal, he told his story.

He was recovering from a heart attack, and he and his wife were returning from a vacation up north. He had once been an Olympic swimmer, but hadn't swam in years. Recently, as

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Kollel Happenings

TRUST THY FATHER

Join Rabbi Schachne Sommers for "Trust Thy Father," a series based on Chovos Ha'Levavos/Duties of the Heart. Discover and delve into vital Jewish concepts of Bitachon. The classes take place on Tuesdays, from 7:55-8:25 a.m. at Aish. For info email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.



KOLLEL'S 15TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION FEB. 26TH

The Kollel will be celebrating fifteen years of bringing Torah to Denver Jewry on Tuesday, February 26th, at 6:30 pm, at the newly-renovated McNichols Building, 144 W. Colfax Ave. (corner of Colfax & Bannock). Tribute journal in honor of Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, who will be present at the event to receive an award. Ad deadline: Feb. 8th. Ads for Rabbi Amsel, as well as other Kollel personnel, can be emailed to journal@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855. To reserve, visit www.denverkollel.org or contact 303-820-2855.



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

If the Item Isn't Claimed

If the item will spoil, be ruined, or become obsolete with the passage of time, the finder must sell it as soon as necessary, and reimburse the owner

with the money obtained from the sale.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

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simple sense we can say that the plagues built one upon the other until they finally became too much to bear. We also see this from Pharaoh's advisors, who finally urged Pharaoh, prior to the locusts, to let the Jews go by saying, "Don't you realize that Egypt is destroyed?"

And remember that the locusts were eating everything that the hail left over, creating a total famine. Even if food were imported, perhaps the locusts would eat that too.

That having been said, I'll tell you a beautiful insight from my colleague. Citing Rav Tzadok Hakohen, he said that between the hail and the locusts, the land began to bud again. As awful as the hail was, the sign of renewed life

gave the Egyptians renewed hope.

We have experienced this phenomenon in our own times: Some Holocaust survivors have reported that during times of desperation, seeing grass and leaves budding gave them renewed hope and courage in their own ability for renewal. The first thing Kovna Jews did after emerging from weeks of hiding in underground cellars was to bend down and feel the grass with amazement.

So, when the locust came and ate every blade of grass, leaf and bud, it totally wiped out the Egyptians' last bit of hope. It was the "last straw."

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Stories for the Soul

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part of his therapy, he started to swim laps, which is why he had been in good enough shape for the rescue.

"But when I got home," recalled the man, "I cried to my wife, 'I killed that girl. I'm so stupid, I didn't take her head out of the water.'"

"I ran back to the place where I had rescued her and cried, 'G-d, I was raised on a kibbutz and laughed at prayer. This is the first time in my life I'm praying to you. I won't be able to go on. Please consider it as if I prayed to you my whole life, and combine all those prayers that I could have said, and use them to save

this girl.'

"I went back home and called the hospital, and they told me that an hour ago (as I was saying this prayer) she woke up!"

There are moments in life that we think we "blew it." Those very moments, if used correctly, can turn into the seeds for redemption.

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