

# A Taste of Torah Holiness through Mundane

By Rabbi Yossi Kaplan

Delhi, India. 2013. Take a drive through today and you'll see "sacred cows" roaming the streets freely. In Nepal, cows are designated as National Animals. Paganism is clearly not dead.

In America, a different sort of cow worship is practiced. Fast food vendors nationwide offer bigger, better and cheaper beef. Meal sizes that would previously have been of Guinness World Record fame have now become standard dinner fare.

"...And they shall take to you a completely red cow...a pure man shall gather the ashes of the cow... it is for purification..." (Bamidbar 19:2-13) The Torah teaches us that one who becomes impure can be purified through a process using the ashes of a cow, the Red Heifer.

A question must be asked: can the Torah find no better purification process than a cow, at best used for gluttony and at worst for idol worship? One would expect that a fantastic spiritual process would be required to effect purification.

It is a fact that in many religions, the priests are forbidden to marry. The reason: marriage is too physical an institution for so spiritual a person. What does Judaism have to say about this?

The Holy of Holies in the Temple was entered by only one person, once a year. This person was the *Kohen Gadol*,

the High Priest. And the day he entered was Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. For seven days he prepared for that holy day.

But he couldn't carry out his duties until one last thing was arranged: he had to have a wife. And this one wife wasn't sufficient! No! He had to designate a second woman as a potential wife, lest his current wife die. A *Kohen Gadol* couldn't serve on Yom Kippur unless he was married. Indeed, Judaism places great importance on marriage, but why?

Can angels conceive? Do they have parents to honor? Can angels lust? No! It is clear, then, that those entrusted with keeping G-d's laws will not be angels, rather, physical beings. And as physical beings, keeping G-d's laws means engaging in physical, seemingly lowly actions - the way G-d wants it. Spirituality is reached not by separating from all things physical, but, rather, by heeding G-d's will.

The Red Heifer symbolizes this. The way to become pure is not through some spiritualistic process. It's transcending base physicality, through the physical, as G-d intended, that brings holiness.

We therefore take the ashes of a physical cow. A cow that's worshipped by some, devoured by others, and, most importantly, purified by the Jews. And we reach holiness through the mundane.

## Ask the Rabbi Give It All You Got

From: Stephanie

Dear Rabbi,

My husband and I are expecting a birth soon, and we were wondering, if it will be a girl, whether there are any special considerations or customs re-

garding giving a name. We are familiar with the name-giving for a boy at the bris, but is there anything like this for a girl?

Dear Stephanie,

## Stories For The Soul

### True Pride

In this week's parsha, the Torah teaches us that both the mighty cedar and the lowly moss must be used in the process of the red heifer, driving home the proper balance of humility and strength.

The following story illustrates this point.

Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky, noted author and Halachic authority, was once called in to court to defend shechita, ritual slaughter. Facing a possible ban in the country he resided - England - he presented the Torah viewpoint on the matter, and then rested his case.

The presiding judge, upon the Rabbi's conclusion, remarked, "I'd now like to hear the opinion of the supreme halachic authority."

"I am the supreme halachic authority", replied Rabbi Abramsky.

"Rabbi, a little humility!" replied the judge.

His response: "I am sorry your honor, but I am under oath."

When faced with a challenge, we must be, to an extent, 'brazen'. Humility is a very important concept, but it must not keep your achievements in check. Whether what we face is spiritual or not, by putting our resolve and energy together, we will put it behind ourselves and lead successful lives.

## Kollel Happenings

**FATHERS & SONS THIS SUNDAY!** The Denver Community Kollel invites all fathers and sons to the final two sessions of its Fathers & Sons program at the DAT Minyan, 6825 E Alameda Ave, on Sunday, June 16th and 23rd. Shacharis begins at 8 am, followed by breakfast and fathers-and-sons learning until 9:30. Coupons for a free Slurpee will be given to all boys in attendance. On July 23rd, don't miss making your own milkshake! There will be a raffle on July 23rd for a Ripstick for those who attended at least five sessions. In addition, there will be an exciting game with a chance for a ticket in the Ripstick raffle. For more info, email [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) or call Rabbi Dovid Schwartzberg at 732-779-1297.



### INSIDE THE ALEPH BAIS

There is a unique fascination with the Hebrew language and the aleph-bet. Mystical sources explain that the letters of the aleph-bet are the building blocks of the whole world. Discover the world of the aleph-bet with Rabbi Heyman in this informative, dynamic class. For time and location, contact [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).



## 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

*continued from front*

May you have a normal and healthy birth, and may you and your husband have much Jewish pride from this baby, as well as from all other children of yours.

According to Jewish teachings, parents are given special Divine inspiration in naming their children. It is described as one of the remnants of prophecy. This is because a name is bound with, and has an effect on, the spiritual character of a person. It is therefore of utmost importance to choose a name which fits this lofty purpose.

That being said, there are general guidelines for choosing a name which are traditionally adhered to, and which create proper context within which the prophetic nature of the name-giving can be realized and expressed.

One common practice is to name children after relatives or rabbis of outstanding spiritual and moral standing. Sefardim often do so for people who are still living; Ashkenazim do so only after the departed. In any case, this is viewed as establishing a spiritual connection between the child and the namesake. It is also considered a way of honoring the one being named after.

Another practice is to name children after righteous people mentioned in the weekly Torah or Haftarah portion of the week in which they were born. So, children born when the Book of Genesis is read publicly might be given the names of the Patriarchs, Matriarchs, or Tribes, while those born during "Exodus" might be named Moshe or Aharon, or Yocheved, Miriam or Tziporah.

A third practice, which is related

to the former, is relevant when a child is born during a specific time period or holiday throughout the Jewish year, where parents might name a child after righteous people associated with that time. So, a child born around Chanuka might be named Yehuda or Yehudit; while names associated with Purim would be Mordechai or Esther; and Shavuot would be Boaz or Ruth, for example.

Regarding the ceremony associated with naming daughters, it is usually done by calling the father for an aliya to the Torah, after which time a special blessing is recited for the health and well-being of the mother and baby, who are referred to by name. It is here that the first official pronouncement of the baby's name is made, as the daughter of so-and-so (either mother's name or father's or both). Some do this at the first possible opportunity after birth - even on a weekday. Others wait specifically until Shabbat. The name is usually not revealed until that time, except in order to consult with a rabbi.

Parents customarily give out cakes, sweets and make a "l'chaim" at this time in order to share the joy of the occasion with others, as a way of giving thanks to G-d and in honor of the mitzvah of giving a proper Jewish name. Those who do the name-giving particularly on Shabbat will generally host a festive kiddush after prayers for the community, and this is a type of "mitzvah meal" akin to the meal made in honor of the bris for a boy.

*Reprinted with permission of Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)*