



A Taste of Torah Set in Stone

By Rabbi Yossi Kaplan

It was an historic event. The waters of the Jordan River had miraculously halted their trek downstream to allow the Jewish Nation to cross into the Land of Israel. The waters instead piled up and towered high in the air above, standing over 180 miles tall. They rose higher and higher, threatening to drown the Jews standing on the now-dry riverbed.

And in those frightful moments, they took large stones and began writing and translating the entire Torah into seventy languages. It was as Hashem had commanded: "It shall be on the day that you cross the Jordan... you shall set up large stones... inscribe on them all the words of this Torah." (Devarim 27:2-37)

But wait! Was there no better time to complete this monumental task than during those turbulent moments? Couldn't it wait until they crossed over into the Land of Israel?

Bogdan Chmielnicki and his Cossack thugs swept through Europe during 1648-49 on a bold rampage. It was the Jews who bore the brunt of their drunken fervor; tens, even hundreds, of thousands of Jews were massacred by the Cossacks.

In the city of Vilna, the arrival of the Cossacks was imminent, and the Torah scholar and leader Rabbi Heshel and his family were aboard a wagon, fleeing for their lives. Traveling with them was a young

student, but, as there was insufficient room for him in the wagon, he ran alongside.

Under the looming threat of death, this young scholar had other things on his mind. He had with him Torah writings that he had authored, and he handed them now to his teacher, Rabbi Heshel, for his approval. And that's how they ran from the Cossacks – the teacher reading the student's Torah thoughts on the wagon, and the student running alongside.

This young scholar was the great Shach (Rabbi Shabsai Hakohen, 1621-1662) of Vilna. Indeed, one can find in his writings, "This I wrote while fleeing from the Cossacks."

But was this ill-fated timing? Could the Shach find no better time to discuss Torah thoughts with his teacher? The answer is no! This was a deliberate act. The Shach sought to sooth his teacher's mind, and could find no better way to do so other than Torah. As King Solomon said of himself: "It was the wisdom I studied with hardship that stayed with me." (Koheles 2:9)

This is the message of those stones in the Jordan. There could be no better time to write the Torah than that moment. With 180 miles of water threatening to topple atop the Jewish People, Hashem was teaching them that one can, and one must, study Torah in all situations.

Stories For The Soul

Final Thanks

The Torah commands us to bring the first fruits of the seven selected species of the Land of Israel to the Temple. An integral part of the mitzvah is to express our hakaras hatov, gratitude, to G-d for all he has bestowed upon us. Hakaras hatov is a basic trait vital to Judaism, and great people have gone to great lengths to display gratitude for seemingly small favors, as we can see from the following story:

When the great Torah sage and leader Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer passed away in 1953 and was buried on Har HaMenuchos in Eretz Yisroel, the section reserved for great people was still empty; Rabbi Meltzer was among the first to be buried there. Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach, who was very close to Rabbi Meltzer (and was married to Rabbi Meltzer's niece), purchased a plot not far from the resting place of his beloved mentor.

Some years later, a Torah scholar by the name of Rabbi Yitzchak Epstein passed away at a relatively young age. He had been a judge on the Tel Aviv Beis Din (Rabbinical Court) and had maintained a close relationship with Rabbi Meltzer during the latter's lifetime. At that time, there was no longer an open plot in the section where Rabbi Meltzer had been interred. Rabbi Shach felt a sense of gratitude toward Rabbi Epstein, because when Rabbi Shach had arrived in Eretz Yisroel in 1951, Rabbi Epstein, at Rabbi Meltzer's request, had come to pick up Rabbi Shach from Rosh HaNikra (on the northern border with Lebanon) to bring him to Yerushalayim. Therefore, Rabbi Shach gave the plot of land he had purchased for himself for the burial of Rabbi Epstein. His sense of gratitude for the favor of providing transportation years earlier upon his arrival in Eretz Yisroel was grounds to relinquish his burial plot!

Kollel Happenings

**KOLLEL'S DONOR APPRECIATION
EVENT SEP. 10TH**

The Kollel will be holding its annual Donor Appreciation Event on Tuesday, September 10th, 7 pm, at the home of Dov & Lara Mowszowski, 6656 E. Prentice Ave, Greenwood Village, CO 80111. To RSVP please email info@denverkollel.org.

**SYMBOLIC FOOD PLATTER FOR
ROSH HASHANA**

There is a widespread Rosh Hashana custom to eat simanim, foods that symbolize a good year. The Denver Community Kollel is proud to offer a simanim platter. For more info, or to order yours for just \$18, email info@denverkollel.org, visit the Kollel website at www.denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855. Be sure to leave method of payment and contact information.

LEARN 2 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 therest. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

Interpersonal Issues

The Laws of Lashon Hara (Slander)

If the person is known as a wicked individual who isn't careful to observe Torah law, one needn't judge him favorably.

Ask the Rabbi

Why is Honey Kosher?

From: Balint in Grinell, Iowa

Dear Rabbi,

I have the following question that no one could answer yet: Why is honey kosher?

I thought that the product of non-kosher animals was not kosher as well. Bees are not kosher, so why is honey kosher? I appreciate your time and hope you know the answer. Thank you.

Dear Balint,

The Mishna in Tractate Bechoros states: "That which comes from something which is *tameh* [non-kosher] is *tameh*, and that which comes of that which is *tahor* [kosher] is *tahor*." So you were right, Balint, the product of a non-kosher animal is not kosher. So why is bee-honey kosher?

The Talmud in the same tractate quotes a *Beraisa* (a Halachic teaching from the time of the Mishna) that says: "Why did they say that bee-honey is permitted? Because even though they bring it into their bodies, it is not a *product* of their bodies [it is stored there but not produced there]."

All the Sages of the Mishna agree with this ruling. One of them, Rabbi Yaakov, disagrees with the reasoning. He

claims that bee-honey is kosher based on his interpretation of *Vayikra* 11:21. According to him, the verse prohibits one from eating a flying insect, but not that which is *excreted* from it.

Maimonides codifies bee-honey as being kosher, as does the *Shulchan Aruch*.

You may wonder: How could one even think that bee-honey is not kosher; the Torah refers to the Land of Israel as "a Land flowing with milk and honey"! Certainly the Torah would not choose a non-kosher product as a means for describing the beauty of the Land of Israel!

This may come as a surprise, but the honey mentioned in the verse about "milk and honey" is not bee-honey, rather it is fig-honey. The Talmud in Tractate Brachos tells us that another verse, "It is a Land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates ~ a Land of olives and *honey*" ~ is referring to date-honey.

Sources: Tractate Bechoros, pages 5b, 7b; The Codes of Maimonides, Laws of Forbidden Foods 3:3; Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, 81:8; Tractate Megilla, page 6a, Rashi; Chumash, Book of Devarim, 8:8; and Tractate Brachos, page 41b, Rashi.

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A Taste of Torah

Fighting a Different Battle

continued from front

Indeed, it is through Torah that one can take his mind off a difficult situation. It was through Torah that the Shach calmed his teacher even while being faced with death at

the hands of the Cossacks. And it is through Torah study that we can sooth our minds in our turbulent times.