



A Taste of Torah Priorities & Stringencies

By Rabbi Mordechai Mandel

They both were making a wedding for their daughters; the wood chopper was able to afford the expenses, while his friend, a thief, was not. The woodchopper explained to the thief how he had saved up the money necessary for the wedding. When his daughter was first born, he built a box with a little hole on top, and he placed a lock on the box; whenever he had extra change, he would put it in the box. Eventually, he had accumulated enough money to make a wedding for his daughter. Even though there were times over the years when he was desperate for some extra cash, he was unable to use the money, as he was unable to open the box. He therefore had it all saved up for the wedding. The thief turned to his friend and replied, "That's a great idea, but it wouldn't work for me. You see, I'm a professional thief, and opening heavily-secured vaults is my livelihood. A small locked box wouldn't stop me from getting the money out when I needed it."

The Dubno Maggid uses this parable to explain the concept of the *nazir*. The Torah tells us about the extra vows and restrictions a nazir accepts upon himself. This includes prohibitions against consuming grape products,

contaminating oneself from a dead body, and cutting one's hair. Such restrictions are not required by the Torah, but are additional ones; they're extra credit. Who is worthy of taking on these extra, voluntary, prohibitions, asks the Dubno Maggid? Only someone who has full control of all that is required of him. If a person cannot fulfill and adhere to all the Torah commandments, he will surely not be successful in taking upon himself additional self-imposed ones. Much like the thief who regularly breaks into heavily-secured vaults, and would thus not be stopped by the small lock on the box.

It is important as we go through our daily lives as committed Jews to make sure to prioritize by first fulfilling what is truly required of us before accepting upon ourselves extra prohibitions.

On the other hand, once we are secure with the basic requirements, how beneficial it is to reach the level of being able to perform extra credit. We can become closer to G-d by restricting ourselves from things that may have even a slight chance of leading us to wrongdoings. For such a person, the benefits of becoming a *nazir* are tremendous!

Ask the Rabbi Prayer: Is Anyone Listening?

From: Sharon in London

Dear Rabbi,

I realize that G-d controls everything. Therefore I pray to Him that He help me in whatever I do, even for the small, insignificant things. The problem is, He doesn't seem to hear. Why isn't

G-d answering my prayers?

Dear Sharon,

It is very good that you realize the need to pray to G-d for help in whatever you do. Praying to G-d is a positive commandment mentioned many times

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Stories For The Soul

'Father of the Century'

Rick Hoyt was born 44 years ago in Winchester, Mass. He was strangled by the umbilical cord during birth, leaving him brain-damaged and unable to control his limbs.

"He'll be a vegetable the rest of his life," doctors told his father, Dick, his mother, Judy, when Rick was nine months. "Put him in an institution."

But the Hoyts weren't buying it. They noticed the way Rick's eyes followed them around the room. When Rick was 11 they took him to the engineering department at Tufts University and asked if there was anything to help the boy communicate.

"No, there's nothing going on in his brain," they told Dick.

"Tell him a joke," Dick countered. They did. Rick laughed.

Rigged up with a computer that allowed him to control the cursor by touching a switch with the side of his head, Rick was finally able to communicate.

And after a high school classmate was paralyzed in an accident and the school organized a charity run for him, Rick pecked out, "Dad, I want to do that."

How was Dick, who never ran more than a mile at a time, going to push his son five miles? Still, he tried. That day changed Rick's life.

"Dad," he typed, "when we were running, it felt like I wasn't disabled anymore!"

That sentence changed Dick's life. He became obsessed with giving Rick that feeling as often as he could.

Last year, at ages 65 and 43, Dick and Rick finished their 24th Boston

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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 fathers and sons learning until 9:30. There will be a story and great prizes raffled off at 9:30. Bring a friend, get a coupon for a free Slurpee! For more info, email rmf@denverkollel.org or call Rabbi Dovid Schwartzberg at 732-779-1297.



MOMS STUDY, DADS AT THE PARK

Take advantage of a unique weekly learning opportunity for mothers with young children. Given on Shabbos from 4:30-5:30 pm at the Mandel home, 4762 S. Wabash St., by Zeldy Mandel and Yehudis Heyman, this class will inform and inspire! Dads are invited to bring the kids to Wallace Park, right across the street from the Mandel home. For more info, contact Rabbi Moshe Heyman, rmh@denverkollel.org.



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.

Interpersonal Issues

The Laws of Lashon Hara (Slander)

One must be careful, when speaking about another, that his words not have the potential to be misconstrued in a negative light. For example, one may be asked, "Where can I get some food at this time of night?", and he replies, "Go to so-and-so's house, they always

have food." This may be negatively interpreted to mean that the people in the household eat excessively, or could be positively understood to mean that the members of the household always have food prepared for unexpected guests who might drop by.

Prayer: Is Anyone Listening?

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in the Torah, for example, "I command you this day to serve [Me] with all your heart" (Deut. 11:13). Our Sages clarified, "What is service of the heart? It is prayer". We are particularly commanded to pray to Him for help in times of distress (Num. 12:9).

The Torah warns, "Beware, lest you say in your heart, my strength and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:17). We must remember that while we need to strive for what we want, ultimately our success is from G-d. Praying to Him for success helps us to remember this. Conversely, since success depends on G-d, He may decide, either for our own good or because we lack merit, not to answer our prayers.

The Talmud teaches that one who is persistent in his prayers will ultimately be answered. Expecting G-d to answer our prayers, though, is wrong, and can cause "heart pains" when the prayer goes unanswered. In such a case, what should one do? Our Sages suggest study-

ing Torah, which will increase one's merit in order that the prayers be answered. Then pray again, as the verse suggests, "Wait on the Lord, strengthen your heart, and wait on the Lord" (Psalms 27:14).

That being said, often G-d answers, and it is we who don't hear: Once a man fell overboard and was in danger of drowning. He prayed to G-d, "Save me." A man rowed by and offered to pull him aboard. "G-d will save me," he replied. A sailboat passed and threw him a rope. "G-d will save me." A large ship approached and lowered a ladder. "G-d will save me." Eventually the man drowned and, standing before the heavenly tribunal, demanded, "I had faith in G-d, I prayed to Him, why didn't He answer me?" Came the reply, "He answered you three times but you weren't listening".

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Stories for the Soul

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Marathon.

"My dad is the Father of the Century," Rick types.

Dick got something extra out of this too. Three years ago he had a mild heart attack during a race. Doctors found that one of his arteries was 95% clogged.

"If you hadn't been in such great shape," one doctor told him, "you probably would've died fifteen years ago."

So, in a way, Dick and Rick saved

each other's lives.

In this week's Parsha, a *nazir* takes a vow to abstain from physical distractions and focus on an intense program of spirituality. He may be motivated by a strong desire to achieve sublime holiness.

One thing we see clearly is that when one has the motivation, he can achieve even things thought to be impossible.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the

Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z"l.

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