

A Taste of Torah

The Final Decision

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

The exile had reached a new low. Pharaoh had recently decreed that all newborn males be cast into the Nile. On top of that, Amram, the leader of the Jewish Nation in Egypt, had announced that he was separating from his wife, Yocheved. "If our children will be killed, why bother bringing them into the world in the first place?" he said. Upon hearing of their leader's actions, the rest of the Jews followed suit, and separated from their spouses.

But then, the strangest thing occurred. An announcement went out that Amram was remarrying Yocheved. And it wouldn't be a small ceremony, either – it was to be a gala wedding!

It seems that Miriam, Amram's daughter, had convinced her father that he had acted improperly. "While Pharaoh has issued a decree against male children, you have issued a decree against females as well!" she argued. "Pharaoh's decree deprives our children of this world, while you deprive them of entry into the Next World! And who says Pharaoh's decree will be carried out?! But if you take back your wife, your actions will surely be emulated by the rest of the Jews." (see Sotah 12a)

Well, as it turned out, after Amram remarried Yocheved, she bore him none other than Moshe, the one who would be selected by Hashem to take the

Jewish People out of Egypt and receive the Torah.

This tale, says the Chofetz Chaim, ought to bring an important lesson home to us: don't try to second-guess Hashem. In this particular instance, Hashem wanted people to marry and have children, despite the dire circumstances in which they may find themselves. Certainly, we must look to the Torah and our Sages for guidance in complicated situations, but, after the Torah has had its say, it is not for us to decide when it is worthwhile to carry out G-d's will and when it is counterproductive or "outdated". Had Amram kept to his initial decision, Moshe would never have been born. It took his young daughter Miriam to make him realize that despite the difficulties, there was still a purpose in bringing children to the world, in accordance with G-d's desire.

We live in a culture that champions independence above all, be it in thought or action. And while we must certainly cherish the freedoms we have and be thankful for them, let us not forget that when all is said and done, we must abnegate our opinions and conclusions, despite our certainty that they are correct, when the Torah tells us otherwise.

Ask the Rabbi

Malady or Medicine?

From: Jennie

Dear Rabbi,

What is the Torah's position on healing? Since everything is from G-d, do ailments have to be suffered because

that's G-d's will? Or can we try to cure the maladies sent by G-d? But doesn't that undermine His intentions?

Dear Jennie,

According to Judaism, everything

Stories For The Soul

The Broken Knob

When I was a boy, a knob once had broken off an appliance. There was just a metal stub sticking out with no knob to turn it. My father was very handy. He had cabinets with jars filled with nuts, bolts, tools, and widgets. He found a knob and used it in place of the broken one.

I remember being amazed because the replacement knob didn't look anything like the original. I asked my father how a different knob could work. He showed me that although the outside of the knob was different, if you looked inside, you could see that the inner space that fit over the metal stub was exactly the same.

This memory stuck with me. As I grew older, I realized it is the same with people. We may look and act different on the outside, but on the inside, we are all the same. We all have hopes, emotions and desires. They may vary, but they need to be validated and honored in the way that best suits the individual.

Moshe worked as a shepherd for Yisro when one day, a sheep ran away from the flock. Moshe found it drinking water from a brook. Instead of beating the sheep, Moshe said, "If you are thirsty, you are probably also tired," so Moshe lifted the sheep and carried it back to the flock.

Moshe realized that this little sheep needed to be treated with love and understanding. Hashem said, "If this is how he leads and cares for his own flock, I want him to lead and care for My flock – the children of Israel."

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

FREE CHOICE

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for a new three-part series for women exploring the Torah outlook on Free Choice. Wednesday January 2, 9 and 16, 7:15 pm at the home of Rabbi Yaakov and Rebbetzin Chaya Meyer. For more info, contact Chaya Major at chaya@manymajors.com



TORAH FOR TYCOONS ARMS UNDER FIRE: A SECOND LOOK AT THE SECOND AMENDMENT

Join Leo Pavlushkin, former Russian Special Forces Unit & Founder and CEO of Xcaliber Protective Services, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel as they take a shot at this hot-button issue. Wednesday, January 9th 12-1 pm @ESKD.



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. call 303-820-2855.

Interpersonal Issues

Creating a Private Lost & Found Policy

An institution or individual that is open to the public may create its own lost-and-found policy for all individuals entering the premises. Anyone who comes into the property are doing so on condition that anything left behind will be dealt with according to the rules of

the owner. However, this is only valid if the policy is prominently displayed so that people entering the premises can see it.

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

Ask the Rabbi

Continued from front

that happens, whether we perceive it as good or as bad, comes from G-d.

Of course, in the case of physical sickness, there are natural causes and venues through which the illness is contracted or occurs. But the root of the illness and a person's susceptibility to it are from G-d.

G-d often sends the sickness as a warning signal that something is not only physically out of balance, but spiritually out-of-sync also. This is not a curse, but rather a blessing in disguise, because it enables us to do spiritual reckoning and find out where we need correcting.

Would a person moving his hand toward fire resent the pain from the heat causing him to recoil before roasting his fingers? Would he complain, "Why did G-d have to cause me this pain?" Of course not! He'd be thankful for the pain that saved him from serious harm. So, too, sickness is viewed as a warning sign that he may need to adjust what he's doing wrong.

The converse is also true: Just as one wouldn't reconcile himself to the pain from the flame based on the reasoning that it's from G-d but would rather recoil, so too in healing. Our recognition that illness comes from G-d does not mean we are to reconcile ourselves to the pain. Instead, we must remove the malady - spiritually by recoiling from transgression and physically by seeking

a cure.

This is the meaning of the teaching of the Sages that G-d allows the doctor to heal. G-d brings sickness not because He wants there to be sickness, but because He wants there to be healing, physical and spiritual. A person's attempt to cure his body must be accompanied by an attempt to mend his ways.

The Torah describes how the People, audaciously complaining about their condition in the desert, were smitten by a plague of poisonous snakes in which many died. They realized they were being punished for their venomous speech against G-d and Moses and repented. G-d told Moses to fashion a snake and place it on a pole for the people to see, "and he would gaze upon the copper snake and live" (Num. 21:5-9).

Commenting on this, our Sages challenged, "And does the copper snake cause life or death? Rather, those who saw the snake and humbled themselves before G-d in repentance were cured" (Rosh Hashana 29a).

If we focus on a spiritual malady underlying a sickness, G-d finds favor in the doctor's attempt to heal. After all, the illness was only brought in order to alarm us to the need for spiritual realigning. With this approach, healing does not undermine G-d's intention; it brings us in line with His will

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