

# A Taste of Torah Look Again

By Rabbi Dovid Schwartzberg

Imagine, for a moment, that a story broke in the Israeli newspapers about a sensitive young man, the son of a great sage, who was the apple of his father's eye. The young man sat at his father's feet and drank in every word of wisdom the man uttered. His father bought him princely clothing in appreciation of his fine qualities, but his brothers became very jealous. They concocted a plan to get rid of him once and for all. They abducted him. He pleaded with them. He begged for his life. "I'm innocent," he screamed in desperation. "Be fair to me. Bring me back to my father and I will explain everything. Have mercy on me!" But all of his pleas fell on deaf ears. The brothers sold him to a band of Arabs who carried him off to Egypt where he disappeared. His old father is heartbroken and mourns his son every day. The story is reported in newspapers around the world.

What would you say to such a tale? Terrible story! You would be crying before you were halfway through the article. What a disaster! What a tragedy!

So why don't we cry when we read the story every year? Why, even little school children don't get too upset in the early winter, when the story of Yosef is read and retold. And after all, why should we cry? We know the ending, and it turns out beautifully. With hindsight, we know that when Yosef was led away to Egypt, he was really embarking on the journey to the Egyptian throne. He would rise to greatness and fame, and he would feed countless individuals during the years of famine. He would bring his entire family down to Egypt and take care of them. This is not a story that causes anguish. But at the time it

happened, it seemed a total disaster.

Now let us look at the other side. Imagine again a story in an Israeli newspaper. Big banner headlines: Old sage reunited with long-lost son after a separation of twenty-two years. You read the details of the story, and your heart is warmed. After grieving for his lost son for twenty-two years, the elderly father discovers that his son is still alive. Furthermore, he learns that his son has risen to the highest circles of power, and has become a viceroy, the ruler of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself. His son invites him to come down and join him in Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh sends special royal chariots to bring him there in a style befitting the viceroy's father. Pharaoh welcomes the father with great honor and settles his family in the finest area of Egypt. The old sage can now live out his final years in tranquility and happiness, reunited with his most beloved son. The royal palace will take care of all his family's needs. How well things have turned out for the old sage. A heartwarming story, you would say as you shed a tear of happiness. What a beautiful ending to such a sad story!

But is it really? We know with hindsight that when Ya'akov was going down to Egypt and bringing his family with him, he was embarking on a journey into exile in Egypt, a journey of death and bondage and suffering.

From here we can learn, teaches Rabbi Mattisyahu Salomon (Mashgiach [spiritual overseer] of Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood, NJ) that what seems to be bad might really be good, and what seems to be good might, in fact, be bad. We see it clearly in the story of Joseph. So what are we supposed to

## Stories For The Soul

### It Pays to Listen

Five hundred years ago there lived a great scholar known as the Mechaber - Rav Yosef Karo, who was perhaps the greatest Sephardic rabbi of the time. Late in his life, he undertook a monumental project, to write a clear, "user friendly," definitive work on halacha - the Shulchan Aruch. "Shulchan Aruch" literally means "Set Table," as if to say that now halacha was easily organized and clarified for all to partake.

Although the Shulchan Aruch was immediately accepted in Sefardic communities, it did not receive instant universal approval. Particularly, there were great Rabbis in the Ashkenazic community who opposed the Shulchan Aruch on principle. It was their contention that halacha was a dynamic process, that each case should be judged on its own merits applying appropriate Talmudic logic.

The Shulchan Aruch might never have gained the universal acceptance it enjoys today were it not for Rav Moshe Isserles. Rav Isserles was one of the greatest Ashkenazic Rabbis of his day. He endorsed Rav Karo's Shulchan Aruch. In fact, Rav Isserles wrote an Ashkenazic version of the Shulchan Aruch, but rather than publish it as a separate work, he published it as glosses, interspersed commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch.

He named his work, "HaMapah," "The Tablecloth." This name in and of itself reflects Rav Isserles' humility. As the title implies, it is meant as an adornment to the Shulchan Aruch,

## Kollel Happenings

### DENVER JEWISH CHILDREN'S ANNUAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Join the Jewish Community on December 25th from 11 am - 3 pm at South Suburban's Family Sports Center, 6901 South Peoria (at Arapahoe Road) in Centennial for a day of fun you won't want to miss! From ice skating, laser tag, and rock climbing for teens, to Lollipop Park for younger children, and much more, there's something for kids of all ages. For more info, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-668-1878.



### 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.



### TRUST THY FATHER

Join Rabbi Shachne 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 takes place on Tuesdays, from 7:55-8:25 a.m., at Aish. For more info, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

## Interpersonal Issues

### When Returning a Lost Item Involves a Loss

The finder is not obligated to incur expenses to return the item. For example, he needn't spend money on a cab to lug a heavy item home. However, if he is certain the owner will reimburse

the cost, he must spend the money and retrieve the item.

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

## Ask the Rabbi Today I am a Man

Sharon from Chickasha, Oklahoma wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My son and I are trying to research the Biblical age of accountability and the Bar Mitzvah. We would appreciate any help. Thank You.

Dear Sharon,

The age thirteen for a boy is derived from a verse about Yaakov's son Levi. Referring to Shimon and Levi, the Torah says "each man took his sword ...." At that time Levi was thirteen years old. He is thus the youngest person the Torah calls a "man." The Torah specifically referred to him as a "man"

in order to imply that thirteen is the age of male adulthood.

By age thirteen, it can be assumed that a boy has reached physical and mental maturity and is therefore responsible for his actions. For a girl this is at age 12. By Torah law, a 12 year-old girl or a 13 year-old boy can enter into legal contracts, incur legal obligations and must observe all the commandments, like keeping kosher and observing Shabbos.

Sources:

Rashi Tractate Nazir 29b  
Tractate Sanhedrin chapter 8 .

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## Stories for the Soul

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differ from the Sefardic ones. To this day, when one purchases a Shulchan Aruch, it contains the words of the Mechaber, with the words of the Mapah interspersed throughout. It is due to the humility and harmony of these two great men that the Shulchan Aruch attained universal acceptance.

Yaakov gathered all of his children together to tell them of the end of days. The twelve tribes stood in unity around their father Yaakov. When the Jewish people are in unity and harmony, amazing accomplishments can occur.

*Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.*

## A Taste of Torah

*Continued from front*

do? How do we look at things? The answer is that we must have faith in G-d's guiding hand, have faith that He does is goodness in one form or another. We must look closely at the

story of Yosef and come away blessing G-d for the bad just as we bless Him for the good.