



# A Taste of Torah I'm Just Too Busy

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

What does it take to be worthy to receive the Torah from G-d Himself? There are lots of terms and conditions, but one of the ingredients mentioned by our Sages is a bit puzzling: You have to eat the *mon* (manna). Puzzling, because while we can understand the need for unity among the Jewish People in order to receive the Torah, or the need to achieve a high degree of ethical perfection, eating *mon* wouldn't strike me as a prerequisite for bringing the Torah into this world.

In this week's parsha, when Hashem tells Moshe that He will rain down *mon* from Heaven for the Jewish People, He says, "Let the people go out and pick each day's portion on its day, so that I can test them, whether they will follow My teaching or not." (Shemos 16:4) Hashem doesn't specify how exactly He will test the Jewish People through the *mon*; Rashi (ibid.) explains that the test is whether they will keep the various laws that Hashem imposed regarding the *mon*.

The Klei Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz; 1550-1619) offers another approach. He explains that when it comes to studying Torah, there are three things that tend to get in the way: First, our physical bodies. When we eat, we are spiritually pulled toward physicality, thus taking us away from interest in the spiritual pursuit of Torah. Additionally, food, especially when consumed in abundance, weighs us down and deadens our intellectual capabilities, thus making Torah study difficult.

The second distraction is the need to make a living. Because we are constantly engaged, both mentally and physically, in making sure we can provide for our needs and the needs of those we are responsible for, we are unable to make

space in our schedules and our minds for Torah study.

On the flip side, one who is very wealthy and has more money than he knows what to do with is often preoccupied with managing his wealth, again leaving little time or brain space for serious focus on the Torah.

All three of these things were obviated through the *mon*, explains the Klei Yakar. The *mon* was a spiritual food. Thus, the usual challenge of avoiding being dragged into physicality when eating was a non-factor when consuming the *mon*. As far as food's physical effects on the human body, this, too, was taken care of, as the *mon* did not have any negative effects on the body; it was such a refined spiritual item that it did not even produce waste!

Regarding the distraction of running around like the well-known barnyard fowl recently deprived of its noggin, an activity that many engage in thanks to the need of providing for self and family, the *mon* fell every day (except Shabbos, whose portion fell on Friday) without fail; there was no need to expend any additional effort to attain sustenance. At the same time, no one ever got more than he or she needed; worrying about getting more *mon* and managing it was thus irrelevant, as well.

Thus, the Jewish People had no excuse to explain why they weren't spending their days engaged in the study of Torah. If someone failed to do so, it was for one reason, and one reason only: He didn't want to! The *mon* was thus a test to determine the connection every Jew had with the Torah.

The approach of the Klei Yakar also explains why the *mon* was a necessary component for receiving the Torah. With the *mon*, every Jew had the opportunity to fully devote himself to Torah study.

## Stories For The Soul

### Underperforming

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter (1810-1883) once stayed at an inn. While there, he noticed that the innkeeper's religious observance left much to be desired. Rabbi Salanter broached the subject with the fellow, wondering why his devotion had declined.

"Well," explained the innkeeper, "there was a heretic staying at my inn not so long ago, and he sat down to eat. He took a piece of non-kosher meat and announced, 'If there truly is a G-d, I should choke on this meat!' Nothing happened to him, and his actions caused my faith in G-d to weaken. After all, if there is a G-d, why was this person left unscathed?"

Rabbi Salanter noticed a diploma hanging on the wall of the inn. Upon inquiry, he was told that the innkeeper's daughter was an accomplished musician, and the diploma attested to her degree in music.

Rabbi Salanter asked the young woman if she would play the piano for him in order to prove her prowess.

"Why should I perform?" she responded. "I have a diploma that shows that I am a master musician!"

"I don't want to rely on your diploma," retorted Rabbi Salanter. "I need to hear it for myself!"

"What do you mean you don't believe it!?" the daughter snapped back. "My diploma proves it! I don't have to perform for every skeptic!"

Rabbi Salanter turned to the innkeeper and said, "The Torah testifies to the fact that Hashem performed miracles. That is His proof. He doesn't have to perform for every skeptic!"

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## Kollel Happenings

### CONTAGIOUS DISEASES AT FEB. 11 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dr. Daniel M. Mogyoros, infectious diseases specialist, and Rabbi Eli Mozes, Community Scholar of the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the ethics of treating contagious diseases. February 11th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

The weekly parsha is replete with halachic issues. Every week, Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher will choose one topic based on the parsha, and lead an in-depth exploration of the sources and practical halachic conclusions of that issue. The class takes place Sunday mornings at EDOS, 198 S. Holly St.

Shacharis is at 7:30 am, and is followed by breakfast and the class at approximately 8:15 am.

For more info, please contact Rabbi Fleisher rmf@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 mh@denverkollel.org.

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Which Torah readings are repeated yearly six or more times?

A: 1) Rosh Chodesh (even if it is on Shabbos)  
2) The *maftir* reading of Pesach is repeated every day of Pesach. 3) On Sukkos, the verses detailing the sacrifices of the fifth day of Sukkos are repeated six times. 4) The section of Parshas Ki Sisa that is read on fast days is read 10 and as many as 12 times a year:

at mincha on the five (non-Yom Kippur) fast days, at shacharis on four of those fast days (Tish B'Av has a different shacharis reading).

**This week's question:** How is it possible, under some circumstances, to read the same Torah reading eight times in one year (besides Rosh Chodesh and Pesach)?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

## Ask the Rabbi

### The Write Mezuzah

Gloria Weber from Sherman Oaks, CA wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am making a needlepoint cover case for a mezuzah and there are two inserts available. One is hand-written, the other one is reproduced. Is there a religious difference, or just a price difference?

Dear Gloria Weber,

The "insert" is the actual mezuzah, and it must be handwritten.

The laws of mezuzah are precise and complex. For example, the mezuzah must be written by a knowledgeable, qualified Jewish scribe; it must be written with special ink upon animal parchment set aside expressly for this purpose. Only certain erasures are allowed.

All these conditions and more make a valid mezuzah considerably more expensive than an invalid one. This, plus rampant ignorance, has opened the mezuzah market to a flood of bogus mezuzahs. A recent study found upwards of 90 percent of all mezuzahs were invalid. Any "Judaica" dealer who sells photocopied "mezuzahs" is either totally ignorant about mezuzahs or is simply dishonest. Either way, any mezuzah he sells, even a handwritten one, is certainly not going to be valid. The only way to get a valid mezuzah is to buy it from a qualified, knowledgeable, G-d fearing scribe or retailer.

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## A Taste of Torah

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And full, unmitigated devotion to Torah is certainly a necessary condition to be worthy of receiving the Torah.

Unfortunately, we are not graced with *mon* falling from Heaven - and the snow that does fall tends to be another element that we need to overcome in our daily lives. Inasmuch as we, in the post-desert era, need to overcome

the challenges of the daily grind and make room for Torah study, our busy lives make a convenient excuse for our lackadaisicalness. An honest assessment is certainly in order: How much of my inability to make more time for spiritual matters is real, and how much is because I'm not as connected to the Torah as I should be?

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