



A Taste of Torah

Shabbos, House

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Shabbos. The name itself conjures images of tradition and law, customs and prayers. But what is so special about Shabbos that lends its unique place in Judaism? Why has the observant Jew been known for centuries as a “Shomer Shabbos”? This week’s parsha helps provide an understanding.

The Bais Halevi (Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, 1820-1892) points out a discrepancy between this week’s parsha and next week’s. In both portions, Hashem warns the Jewish People against desecrating the Shabbos; both times, this command is stated in conjunction with the building of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). Rashi (Ki Sisa 31:13) explains that the Torah is warning us that despite the prominence of the *Mishkan*, its construction is not reason to desecrate the Shabbos.

Yet, there is a difference. In our parsha, after discussing the building of the *Mishkan*, Moshe was commanded to guard the Shabbos. In next week’s parsha, however, Shabbos is mentioned first, followed by a lengthy discussion about the building of the *Mishkan*.

The Bais Halevi answers with a parable of a wealthy individual making a wedding for his son. Whether he dearly loves his son or not, the father

ensures that the son will look the part for the event. A careful observer will only be able to detect the amount of love the man has for his son by which purchases occupy center stage of the father’s attention. If the main focus is on the groom’s wardrobe, and only scant attention is given to the extras, we would generally assume that he is trying to carry out the bare-bones obligations, but not necessarily out of exceptional love. If, however, the first shopping trip he takes with his son is to choose the Rolex, his extreme love for his son is evident.

Shabbos, explains the Bais Halevi, is the most basic element of a Jew. The *Mishkan*, while very important, is of secondary importance to Shabbos. The section in this week’s parsha, Ki Sisa, is discussed prior to the sin of the Golden Calf; Hashem’s love for His Nation was evident by the placement of the extras - the *Mishkan* - before the basics - Shabbos. After the sin, however, the relationship was not quite the same. The first item on the list was therefore Shabbos, the mainstay of the Jewish Nation. Only afterwards were the Jewish People given the cherry on top - the *Mishkan*. May we all merit to observe the Shabbos properly and reap the benefits.

Stories For The Soul

No Rush to Judgment

The great Talmudic Sage Rav Ashi was planning on discussing the three wicked kings Yеровam, Achav and Menashe, of whom the mishna says they have no place in the World to Come. “Tomorrow,” said Rav Ashi, “we will begin to discuss our colleagues.”

That night, King Menashe appeared to him in a dream. “You dare to call us your and your father’s colleagues?!” exclaimed Menashe. “Tell me, from where do you need to begin eating bread after reciting the blessing?”

“I don’t know.”

“You haven’t even learned from where to take the first bite after the *hamotzi* blessing, and you call us your colleagues?!”

“Teach me,” said Rav Ashi, “and I will repeat it in your name in the yeshiva.”

“From the place where the bread first forms a crust.”

“Since you are so wise, why did you worship idols?” asked Rav Ashi.

“Had you been there, you would have lifted up your hem and run after me!” said Menashe.

The next day, when Rav Ashi began his lecture, he said, “Let us discuss our masters.”

Yes, the Jewish Nation was severely taken to task for creating a Golden Calf. But let us not rush to judge people who were greater than we can possibly imagine. Let us instead attempt to understand what their error was, and what we can learn from them. For if such great people can err, however slightly, we certainly have room to improve.

Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL'S 17TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION MARCH 17TH

The Kollel will hold its 17th Anniversary Celebration on Tuesday, March 17th, 6:30 pm at Aish Denver. The event will feature an exclusive new publication and video presentation, *From Sinai to Denver*. The Kollel will recognize Andy and Rana Kark with the Torah Partners Award. For ads and reservations email journal@denverkollel.org, visit denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

LABOR UNIONS AT NEXT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Scott Wasserman, Chief of Staff to Lt. Governor Joe Garcia and Former Executive Director of a Public Sector Union, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they work their way through this touchy topic. March 25th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP at info@denverkollel.org.

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 the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: When does eating something require one to recite twenty blessings?

A: If one neglected to say the additional *ata chonantanu* blessing at ma'ariv on Motzoei Shabbos, and then ate before making *havdallah*, he must repeat the *shemoneh esrei* prayer for ma'ariv - 19 blessings - and also make an after-blessing on what he ate.

This week's question: In the Diaspora, the Ashkenazic custom is for the *kohanim* to recite *Birchas Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessing) only on holidays, in contrast to the original custom of reciting it daily. There are two reasons given for the current custom - what are they, and is there a practical difference between the reasons?

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

Ask the Rabbi

Purim in Jerusalem

Eli from London wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why does Jerusalem have Purim on a different day than we do?

Dear Eli,

Most people celebrate Purim on the 14th of the Hebrew month Adar. But in a city which was walled in the time of Joshua's conquest of Israel, Purim is celebrated on the 15th. Here's why:

Haman decreed that all Jews be killed on the 13th of Adar. When the day came, the Jews miraculously defended themselves. On the following day, Adar 14, the Jews celebrated.

In Shushan, the walled capital city of the Persian empire, the Jews had an extra day to fight their enemies. They didn't celebrate until the 15th.

In remembrance of these events, Mordechai and Esther instituted two separate days of Purim, Adar 14 and 15. The 14th commemorates the national victory. The 15th - Shushan Purim - commemorates the victory of the Jews who lived in the walled city of Shushan.

So if you're like most Jews, you celebrate Purim on the 14th. But, if you happen to live in Shushan, or in any ancient walled city, you celebrate Purim on Adar 15th.

The definition of an 'ancient walled city' is any city surrounded by a wall in the days of Joshua. Logically, the definition should be a city that was walled in the time of Mordechai and Esther, but the Sages didn't want to exclude Jerusalem, whose walls were in ruins at the time of the Purim episode.

Some people keep two days of Purim because they are in doubt whether their city is considered 'walled.' One example is Hebron. The Jews in Hebron keep two days of Purim because it's doubtful whether the entire wall around Hebron existed at the time of Joshua.

Another example is Tiberias, a walled city on the shore of Lake Kinneret. Tiberias was walled from the time of Joshua. The doubt arises because Tiberias has no wall along the shore. Is Tiberias considered an 'open' city because it is unwalled along the shore? Or is the lake considered a 'wall' since it protects the city from attack? This question is left unresolved in the Talmud.

Sources:

-*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 688:1,3,4;
-*Mishna Berurah* 1,9

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