



# A Taste of Torah Hair Raising

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

While facial hair has come into vogue lately, its roots in the Torah run quite deep. But what is the Jewish value of a beard? What is it about facial hair that makes it such a focus in Judaism?

When the brothers come down to Egypt to purchase food and they stand before their brother Yosef, they are completely clueless as to his identity. All they know is that they are being harassed by the viceroy of Egypt. But why didn't they recognize their long-lost brother? Our Sages tell us that when they had last seen Yosef, he had not yet grown a beard; now, however, he had one. Thus, they failed to discern his true identity.

But it's still odd; after all, the brothers had lived together with Yosef for seventeen years. It shouldn't have been that difficult to see past the whiskers to determine that their tormentor was their brother - especially when you take into account that this viceroy mysteriously knew an awful lot about the brothers, (although he did attribute that knowledge to his divination skills). Rabbi Yissochor Rothschild explains that there is more going on here than meets the eye. A person, he explains, can either be a *mashpia*, one who influences or bestows upon others, or a *mekabel*, one who is influenced by, or receives from, others. A beard, explains Rabbi Rothschild, is an expression of being a *mashpia*; a beard comes from within and pushes outward. A young boy

receives from and is influenced by others; as he matures, he becomes capable of giving and influencing others. This change of modes is signified by the appearance of facial hair.

Yosef had dreamed that he would rule over his brothers; in other words, he would become a *mashpia*. The brothers strongly disagreed, so much so that they felt Yosef had the status of a *rodef*, someone pursuing another to kill him, as they believed he wanted them to be spiritually removed from the Jewish People, as had occurred to Eisav due to his spiritual shortcomings. When Yosef was sold, he was a *mekabel*, studying and learning from his father; he thus had no beard.

As viceroy of Egypt, having become the sole distributor of food to the lands of Egypt and Canaan, he was now a *mashpia* par excellence. But the brothers felt that Yosef's role wasn't that of a *mashpia*; that was why they had sold him in the first place! So Yosef, now with facial hair that displayed his status as a *mashpia*, was unrecognizable, in a spiritual sense, to his brothers.

In our lives, we have opportunities to both receive and be influenced by others, as well as to influence and bestow upon others. It is vital that one have clarity as to when to be a *mashpia* and when to be a *mekabel*. Using the wrong mode in the wrong situation can bring disastrous results.

## Stories For The Soul

### Miraculous Victory

It was June 1967, and Yisrael, a cab driver, was part of the paratroop unit assigned with conquering the Straits of Tiran.

The Israeli soldiers didn't have to parachute out of the airplanes that took them to the Tiran Straits. No, they were able to land in the airport, because the Egyptian regiment which was on guard there fled before the Israeli planes were visible on the horizon.

After landing, Yisrael was sent with another reserves soldier, an electrician, to patrol the area. Suddenly, an Egyptian half-track appeared, filled with soldiers and mounted with machine guns on every side. The two men had only light weapons, nothing sufficient to combat the half-track. With nowhere to go and nothing to do, they stood, waiting for the first shot; for lack of a better idea, they aimed their guns at them.

The half-track stopped, and the two soldiers carefully approached it. Inside were eighteen armed soldiers, guns in hand, a petrified look on their faces. They looked at the two Jewish soldiers with great fear as though begging for mercy. Yisrael shouted, "Hands up!"

As they marched the Egyptian prisoners away, Yisrael asked the Egyptian sergeant, "Tell me, why didn't you shoot at us?" He answered, "I don't know! My arms froze - they became paralyzed. My whole body was paralyzed, and I don't know why."

Chanukah does not celebrate military might or the personal prowess of human warriors and heroes. It celebrates the Hand of G-d that victory against the mighty a ragtag group of Jewish men victory against the mighty Assyrian-Greek army. In our day, as well, we must recognize that success is not due to our efforts, but to Divine Intervention on our behalf.

## Kollel Happenings

### FAMILY FUN AT JEWISH FAMILY EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25TH

Join the Kollel for family fun at the annual Jewish Children's Extravaganza on Thursday, Dec. 25th, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: \$13; discounted group rates are available before 12/21. Admission includes unlimited rides. Visit [www.mazeltot.org](http://www.mazeltot.org) to find out how children 5 and under can join at a discounted rate until 12/24. For general information, call 303-820-2855 or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING ON DECEMBER 25TH

Start your day off on the right foot with Torah study! The Kollel is offering learning at three locations: at the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash and at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, shacharis at 8 am followed by breakfast and learning at approximately 9, and at EDOS, shacharis at 7:30 am followed by breakfast and learning at approximately 8:30. The topic will be *Think Fast: The Origins of the Fast Days and Their Laws*. For more information or sponsorship opportunities, please contact [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### WOMEN'S WELLNESS WORKSHOP WITH NOTED SPEAKER AND EDUCATOR MRS. DEBBIE SELENGUT

Don't miss the Kollel's 3rd Annual Women's Wellness Workshop at Cableland, 4150 Shangri-La Drive (at Leetsdale Dr. and Cedar Ave.), on January 13th at 5:00 pm. Discover how to achieve optimum health in mind, body and soul. As always, there will be great food and camaraderie. Cost is \$54; reserve by Jan. 9th and receive a free copy of Dr. David Lieberman's book *Seek Peace and Pursue It*. To reserve, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked:

**Q:** The prayer of *aleinu* is recited at the conclusion of every prayer, with the exception of *shacharis* when followed by *mussaf*, as *mussaf* is regarded as the conclusion of the prayers. The Mishna Berurah (132:7) notes that some congregations have the custom to omit *aleinu* following *mincha* when it is followed immediately by *maariv*. Can you name other times that *aleinu* is omitted for the same reason?

**A:** Following *mussaf* on Yom Kippur, *aleinu* is not recited, since *mincha*

follows *mussaf* without much of a break. Similarly, it is not recited following *mincha*, as *ne'ilah* follows with minimal time in between.

**This week's question:** The *haftarah* of Shabbos and Yom Tov is generally related to the topic of the Torah portion being read that week, with the notable exception of the weeks from the 17th of Tammuz through Sukkos, when the *haftarah* is related to the season. What other exceptions can you think of?

## Ask the Rabbi Dove, Symbol of Peace

Barry Pogrund from Cape Town, South Africa wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

We often talk about the dove and the olive branch as symbols of peace. Is there any Talmudic source for such a notion, and if not, from where do we arrive at the contention that the dove and the olive branch are symbols of peace? Many thanks for your wonderful and elucidating series.

Dear Barry Pogrund,

There's no reference in the Talmud identifying the dove or olive branch as symbols of peace.

However, Noah's flood is compared to a "war" between G-d and Mankind. This idea is seen in the symbol of the rainbow. After the flood, G-d showed Noah a rainbow as a sign that there would never again be a world-wide flood. The rainbow looks like an archer's bow pointing up

towards heaven. The Ramban explains that the "upside-down bow" symbolizes that G-d will no longer "shoot arrows" at the earth in the form of a flood, just as a warrior turns his bow towards himself as a gesture of peace.

In this sense, the dove returning to the ark could be seen as peace symbols, indicating that the "war" between G-d and Man had ended.

By the way, the "olive branch" is a misconception. The dove returned to Noah with an olive leaf in its mouth, not a branch.

Sources:  
-Ramban, *Genesis 9:12*