



A Taste of Torah My Glorious Belly

By Rabbi Eli Mozes

The mountain shook; there was thunder, lightning and the overpowering blast of a shofar. All of Israel witnessed the revelation of G-d; their physical bodies were blown backward, their souls departed, and they needed to be resurrected. But the Torah tells us (Exodus 24:11) that Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aharon, and the seventy elders were eating and drinking!

Rashi (ibid.) explains that they were looking at the Shechinah (Divine Presence) “with undue familiarity, while eating and drinking”. This sin was of such a magnitude that they should have died on the spot; however, so as not to interfere with the great joy of the giving of the Torah, Hashem only meted out this punishment at a later time.

Rabbi Shimon Schwab (1908-1995) says that although one might think that their crime was the insolence of eating and drinking during such an awesome time, a careful reading of Rashi seems to imply that the complaint was actually for the act of looking at the Shechinah “with undue familiarity”, for one needs to relate to G-d with great awe, not as if He’s a friend. If this is the case, however, one must wonder, why is it necessary to mention that they were eating and drinking?

Rabbi Schwab explains that had their eating and drinking been completely for the sake of Heaven, as an expression of joy for this momentous occasion, then it never would have led to an improper gazing at G-d’s presence, for when someone eats with perfect intentions, no bad will come from it. However, since their feasting had an element of self-gratification, slight as it may have been, that was a catalyst for the cavalier

attitude which led to the improper gazing.

With this, he explains a fascinating Talmudic concept. The Talmud (Chullin 7a) relates to us that Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair had a donkey that refused to eat barley that had not been tithed. The Talmud (ibid. 5b) extrapolates from this tale that if one sees a *tzaddik* (righteous individual) eating something, then we know that the item is kosher, for it is not possible that he would unwittingly eat something that isn’t kosher. After all, if Hashem prevents the animals of the righteous from eating that which is forbidden, He would certainly prevent the *tzaddik* himself from unwittingly eating that which is forbidden. Tosafos question this from other Talmudic sources where we find great individuals unwittingly transgressing prohibitions. Tosafos resolve this by stating that this Divine protection applies only to prohibited food, but not other prohibitions, because it is a disgrace for a *tzaddik* to have eaten a prohibited food.

Rabbi Schwab explains that the reason why it is exceptionally disgraceful to eat forbidden foods is because if the food was eaten only for the sake of Heaven, without one’s personal pleasure in mind, then that itself would protect the person eating from any negative repercussions. If he were to have eaten forbidden food, even unwittingly, that would prove that there was some ulterior motive involved in the eating, and that would be a disgrace for a *tzaddik*.

We see from here that when one eats solely for the sake of Heaven, without even a shred of self-interest, then nothing bad can come of it. Achieving this is exceedingly difficult; in the words of Rabbi Simcha Zissel

Stories For The Soul

Coming Back for Money

Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch (d. 1772), once asked his teacher, Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), to explain the passage in the Zohar on the opening verse of the Parshas Mishpatim, “These are the laws,” which it explains as referring to “the mystery of reincarnation”. The Maggid wondered: What connection is there between the straightforward meaning relating to the monetary and other financial issues discussed subsequently the laws of torts and the alleged mystical one of multiple incarnations of souls?

In reply, the Baal Shem Tov sent him to a forest and told him to seek out a certain tree next to a spring and to remain there until evening.

When the Maggid arrived at his destination, he saw there an armed man with a horse. The man was tired and had stopped to rest, eat and drink. When he moved on, he left his wallet behind. After a while, another man came, found the wallet and took it with him.

Shortly thereafter, a third man arrived. He was obviously poor and exhausted. He sat down under the tree, ate some bread, drank from the spring and lay down to sleep. However, just then the armored rider returned and demanded his wallet from the poor traveler. The latter knew nothing of the wallet, but the rider, not believing him, proceeded to beat him mercilessly before moving on.

As the sun set, Rabbi Dov Ber returned home and told the Baal Shem Tov what he had seen. The Baal Shem Tov explained:

The rider, in his previous incarnation, owed the second man a sum of money equal to that in the wallet but refused to pay him. The creditor then charged him before their local rabbi - none other than the third man in his previous incarnation. But the rabbi failed to investigate the claim as thoroughly as he should have and dismissed the charge.

That is why in their present reincarnation, the Baal Shem Tov concluded, the first man wound up ‘paying’ his debt to the second one and the third, rabbi-judge, received the punishment he deserved.

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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 visit denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

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 rmf@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 11:30 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Every *haftarah* we read on Shabbos or a holiday is followed by four blessings, and three when read on a weekday. What is the exception to this rule (besides Rosh Chodesh and Pesach)?

A: After the *haftarah* at mincha on Yom Kippur, most Ashkenazi communities recite only three blessings.

This week's question: Amen is not usually recited after one's own blessing. One exception to this is following the third blessing of *Birchas Hamazone*. What other exceptions can you think of?

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

Ask the Rabbi Dairy Bread

Name@Withheld from Teaneck, New Jersey wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Is there some halacha about bread not allowed to be dairy? I was reading an advertisement in a store in Brooklyn and it was written on the paper something about bread not being allowed to be dairy. Is this a halacha? I have never heard of this before, but I looked around and all the bread I saw was "pareve." Maybe this halacha just never came my way.

Dear Name@Withheld

Yes, it's prohibited to bake bread either with milk or with meat. That is, bread must be pareve. This is stated in *Shulchan Aruch* as follows: "It is forbidden to knead dough for bread with milk, in case a person should (accidentally) eat it with meat. It is similarly forbidden to bake bread in the oven with meat fat."

But if you mark the bread with some identifying symbol before baking, or if you bake it in an identifying shape so that it's clear that this bread is not pareve, then it is permitted to make it dairy or meaty. Since it's marked, you won't mistake it as pareve. (Marking it after baking doesn't help, and such bread may not be eaten.)

For example, I have heard that the Badatz Eida Charedit kashrut supervisory board in Jerusalem requires all dairy pastries to be either triangle or moon-shaped for this reason.

Sources:

-*Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 97*
-*Pitchei Teshuvah 97:3*

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A Taste of Torah

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Ziv of Kelm (1824-1898), one of the leading personalities of the Mussar movement, "it is far easier to fast for the sake of Heaven than it is to eat for the sake of Heaven". When one fasts, there is no physical gratification taking place wherein one could have misplaced intentions. But when one eats, even if the initial plan is with the most righteous of intentions, the physical gratification of the food allows the *Yetzer Hora* (Evil Inclination) to get his foot in the door and say, "There's something for me here, too". It is easy to buy the finest of wines and the choicest of

meats and say it's "likavod Shabbos Kodesh" (in honor of the holy Shabbos), but if we look carefully in the mirror, we can see that some of our intentions are "in honor of my glorious belly".

The lesson we can learn from Nadav, Avihu and the seventy elders is that whenever we are dealing with physical gratification, even if it's a mitzvah, we must be exceedingly careful, because once the *Yetzer Hora* gets involved, you never know where he will lead you.

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