



# A Taste of Torah

## Jewish Origins

By Rabbi Eli Mozes

### Jew [joo]

1. a : a member of the tribe of Judah b : Israelite
2. a person belonging to a continuation through descent or conversion of the ancient Jewish people

We are all familiar with the term Jew; however, the origins of this title are not so well known or understood. The term comes from *Yehudim* (Judeans), which is derived from Yehudah (Judah), the fourth son of Jacob and patriarch of the tribe that bore his name. This raises the question: Why is the entire Nation of Israel named after one tribe? And why, out of all the tribes, was Yehuda's name chosen? Why are we not referred to as Zevulunites or Shimonim?

In this week's parshah, we read the blessings that Yaakov gave his children at the end of his life. These blessings are multilayered and the commentaries discuss many different aspects that they included. In the blessing that Yaakov gave to Yehudah, he said "Yehudah, your brothers shall acknowledge you." The etymologic root the Hebrew word for "acknowledge", *yoducha*, can also mean "admit". Based on this, Targum Yonasan (an Aramaic translation/elucidation of the Torah) translates this statement as, "Yehudah, you admitted your guilt in regard to the incident of Tamar; therefore, your brothers will acknowledge you and be called Yehudim after you". This is referring to the incident when Yehuda realized that it was he who was the source of Tamar's pregnancy, and publicly admitted his involvement, when he could have kept quiet. The Torah tells us that due to this act, the entire

nation inherits his name.

A person's name is more than just a way to refer to the individual; it represents the essence of the person. The name Yehuda is, in fact, very much related to the incident of Tamar. Yehudah is from the same root as *yoducha* which, as discussed earlier, can mean to acknowledge or admit. The name Yehudah thus means admitter. By referring to the entire Nation of Israel as Yehudim, we are defining them as a people who can admit that they did something wrong.

At first glance this doesn't seem like much; after all, what's the big deal about admitting one's guilt? However, if you think about it you will realize that it is exceedingly difficult for one to fully admit his own guilt. People have a need to find some excuse to qualify their actions as not really being so terrible. Why is it so tough to say, "My fault, I really messed this one up!" One part of the difficulty is that we tend to view ourselves as a finished product, and we don't really want to put in the effort needed to change. Therefore, if we admit guilt, we are, in essence, saying, I have faults, and I need to change. By saying it's not my fault or it's not so terrible, we avoid facing the reality that change is needed.

This is not the way of the Jew. To be a Jew means to be an admitter, one who can freely admit that he made a really big mistake, just like Yehudah. This is because a Jew is never allowed to view himself as a finished product; rather, one's entire life is but a work in progress. The fact that I made a mistake yesterday isn't an eternal condemnation of my persona, but just another step in the journey of life.

## Stories For The Soul

### Wash Out

Before modern washing machines and driers were invented, washing laundry was a time-consuming activity; all the clothes had to be scrubbed by hand and then hung on the clothes line outside to dry. One day, a woman put out a temporary clothes line in the front of a shared courtyard, where she hung her clothes. A short time later, her upstairs neighbor came home and was annoyed at the lines that had been temporarily strung. Angrily, she cut them down, and the clean laundry fell onto the muddy ground. When the first woman later went to take in her wash, she was dismayed to discover a disaster - all the clothes were dirty and would have to be rewashed. It was obvious to her what had happened. However, she said nothing; she took the muddy sheets back into her house and began the whole laborious washing process once again.

When her husband returned home, she made no mention of the afternoon's aggravation. But late that night, there was a frantic knocking at their door. There stood the upstairs neighbor, in tears. Her child had a sudden high fever, and she was asking forgiveness for the laundry incident. The husband, who had answered the door, was surprised to hear about the event. His wife immediately and wholeheartedly forgave the woman and wished her child a full and speedy recovery.

This particular women had been childless for many years. The woman's father, who lived in the apartment, was a great Torah scholar and Kabbalist. Upon hearing what happened, he said, "The fact that you didn't respond to her and prevented this from becoming a fight will be the merit you need to be helped. Your deed will grant you a child who will be great."

About a year later, this righteous woman gave birth to a son who grew up to be Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, one of the foremost

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## Kollel Happenings

### THE LIMITS OF SELF- DEFENSE AT NEXT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Daniel N. Recht, Shareholder, Recht Kornfeld and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the parameters and limits of self-defense. January 7th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@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.

### WOMEN'S WELLNESS WORKSHOP ON TUES., JANUARY 13TH

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, visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), 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:** There is a halachic discussion as to whether one may repeat a single word during the recitation of *Shema*. Can you find a proof to this question from the Shabbos prayers?

**A:** In one of the sections of the recitation of *kedusha* in the Shabbos *mussaf* prayer, the verse of *Shema* is recited, followed immediately by the prayer of *hu elokeynu*. In contrast, the earlier sections of the *kedusha* of *mussaf* contain a verse, followed immediately by a prayer which

begins with the same word as the final word of the verse of that section; this gives the prayer a poetic effect. The Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 286:introduction) explains that this is not done for the *Shema* section in order to avoid repeating a word from *Shema*.

**This week's question:** Besides the *haftaros* of Rosh Chodesh, the day before Rosh Chodesh and a fast day, which *haftaros* are generally recited more than once during the course of the year?

## Ask the Rabbi Kosher in College

Email@Withheld from Montreal, CA wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am currently a student at McGill University in Montreal, Canada and spent the past year at a yeshiva in Jerusalem. The contrast of a religious environment and a completely secular one has proved quite difficult for me. My Torah study has faltered along with many other aspects of Jewish observance. I am wondering if you can suggest a way for me to remain religious while striving socially and academically in this secular environment.

Dear Email@Withheld

Ever heard the old expression that "no Jew is an island," or something like that? An essential "survival technique" for any religious Jew is to be part of an observant

community. If you live in the dorms, this presents a problem. It would be much better if you could board with an observant family. It's very likely that such opportunities exist in Montreal; if at all possible, this should be your first step.

Secondly, you need steady Torah study as part of your daily life. It's essential to set aside some time every day and night to study Torah, preferably with a chavrusa study-partner. Wishing you success!

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## Stories for the Soul

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Torah scholars and halachic authorities of our time.

As Yaakov blessed Yosef's two sons Menashe and Efraim, he switched his hands so that his right hand rested upon Efraim, despite Menashe being the eldest child.

The commentators point out that although Menashe could have been insulted, he did not harbor any ill will at all. Our Sages teach us that overcoming one's base desires to avenge an insult is a source of great merit.