



# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Acharei Mos 5776

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## A Taste of Torah From the Outside In

By Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

Impressed by a prominent, successful world leader? Read his biography. The fact is that the people who seem to have all the wisdom to actually live moral lives often fail miserably. What is it that prevents us humans from translating our knowledge into action?

While this question touches on a wide range of issues, I'd like to focus on one specific aspect. Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz (1873-1936) explains that while we may believe in an ideal, that doesn't necessarily mean that ideal has become a part of our very essence. There is, in fact, a great gap between our minds and our hearts, between our intellect and our emotions. The great secret to bridging this gap is action. When we act according to a moral truth that we've come to understand, we bring that knowledge from the realm of the abstract to the realm of the physical. When we do that repeatedly, that ideal becomes embedded within us - a very part of our essence. In the words of the Sefer Hachinuch, "Man is mostly influenced by his own actions."

The Rambam (1135/1138-1204), in his commentary on the Mishna, rules that it's better to give one dollar to one hundred people as charity than to give one hundred dollars one time. This is because each and every time we give charity, the ideal of loving-kindness becomes a deeper part of our essence. One might ask, "If we are acting out of habit, isn't there an inherent lack of meaning to

our actions?" Rabbi Levovitz explains that when we accustom ourselves to doing things correctly, with passion and energy, we make those correct actions a part of who we are. We can now focus on growing from this point onward.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller (1908-2001) further states that when one gets used to doing good deeds with ease, he is rewarded every time as if he had to struggle to perform that good deed. This is because it was one's own hard work that ingrained the good habit into the personality. As one educator noted, "I'd rather my kids get used to brushing their teeth when they're young, so that as they grow older they can focus on more important accomplishments." We tend to think this idea applies only to children, but, in fact, it applies to adults, too. The path to continued personal growth is to keep building a framework of good habits, which then gives us the freedom to focus on our next goal, confident that our earlier accomplishments are secure.

This idea is expressed in this week's Torah portion, when G-d tells the Jewish people, "Carry out My laws and safeguard My decrees, to walk in them." (Acharei Mos 18:4) Rabbi Levovitz explains that G-d is urging us to make His laws part-and-parcel of our personalities, using the very powerful tool of habit. May we all merit to inculcate within ourselves and our children the ideals that G-d set down for us in His Torah.

## Stories For The Soul

### Shelf Life

The Minsker Maggid (Rabbi Binyamin Shakovitsky; 1863-1938) was famous throughout Poland and White Russia for his eloquent oratory.

The Maggid was once asked to deliver a eulogy in a nearby town. Upon his arrival, he was informed by some of the local yeshiva students learning in the town that the local synagogue had a large collection of seforim, but they were locked up. Despite the requests of the yeshiva students to have access to the seforim, the community refused; they wanted the seforim to remain in good condition. The Maggid replied that he would address the issue.

During his eulogy, the Maggid related the following story: A mother lost her young son. Grief-stricken, she did her best to return to the routine of life, and threw herself into caring for her other children. Over the course of some months, her efforts were somewhat successful in diminishing her anguish. As she was cleaning for Pesach, though, she came across her deceased son's clothing, neatly pressed and unused. The poor mother burst into tears and cried out, "Hashem, until now I was able to ignore my pain. But when I see these clothes, which should have been messy and tattered, sitting here clean and perfect, the enormity of the tragedy weighs upon me!"

"I came into the synagogue," continued the Maggid, "and I saw so many beautiful seforim neatly lining the shelves. But this is not a sign of beauty - it is a sign of death! The splendor of seforim is when they are tattered and worn from constant use. The Torah (Acharei Mos 18:5) commands us, "And you shall live by them," and the Talmud (Yoma 85b) explains, "And not die by them!"

Needless to say, the students were given full access to the seforim. Because Judaism and Torah are vibrant and alive, not things with which to adorn the walls.

## Kollel Happenings

### ENSURING YOUR PHILANTHROPY ISN'T GOING WRONG AT MAY 4<sup>TH</sup> TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Bruce DeBoskey, J.D., Philanthropic Strategist with The DeBoskey Group, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel, as they generate an approach for your generosity. June 1<sup>st</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### RAV SCHWAB ON CHUMASH AVAILABLE FROM KOLLEL

The Denver Community Kollel is pleased to announce the publication and distribution of Rav Schwab on Chumash. The book is available through the Denver Community Kollel at a special discount rate of \$24. To order, call 303-820-2855, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org), or go to [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.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 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is the rarest *haftarah*?

**A:** The Rema (Orach Chaim 428:8) rules that when the *parshios* of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim are read together, as they are during every Jewish non-leap year, the *haftarah* read is the Acharei Mos selection, unlike the usual custom of reading the *haftarah* of the second parsha. This is the Ashkenazic custom. The reason for this is that the *haftarah* of Kedoshim contains words of disgrace about Jerusalem, and is therefore avoided when possible.

Accordingly, even when the above-mentioned *parshios* are read separately, if the *haftarah* of Acharei Mos was not yet read that year (such as if Parshas Acharei Mos was read on Rosh Chodesh, when the regular *haftarah* is replaced by a special Rosh Chodesh *haftarah*), the Acharei Mos

*haftarah* - which also has connections to Parshas Kedoshim - is read on the Shabbos of Parshas Kedoshim (see Mishna Berurah ibid.).

According to the prevalent custom of reading a special *haftarah* on Shabbos Hagadol (the Shabbos before Pesach), it is extremely rare to have these *parshios* both separate and available (not having either *haftarah* replaced by a special *haftarah* of either Shabbos Hagadol, Rosh Chodesh or Erev Rosh Chodesh). This last occurred in 5757/1997, and won't occur again until 5784/2024, followed by 5801/2041!

**This week's question:** What prayer, due to its special holiness, is recited on only one day of the year? (*Ne'ila* is not the correct answer!)

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi – the Rif, Part IV

The Rif had a yeshiva in Fez, and students flocked to study at his feet. The Rif's greatness and saintliness ensured that he was the primary Torah leader of the Jewish communities of Spain and North Africa. Although other great rabbis of his time were involved in other things, such as poetry and philosophy, the Rif devoted himself solely to Torah study.

At an advanced age, an anonymous, fabricated complaint was lodged with the government against the Rif in Fez. Some speculate that, as it was during a period of fighting between the Moslem Moors of North Africa and Christian rulers of Spain, the charges were connected to these wars.

Forced to flee due to the false charges, the Rif arrived in the province of Cordova, Spain in 1088, where he was warmly received by the Jewish community. In 1089, the great Rabbi Yitzchak ibn Gias (1020-1089), the rabbi of Lucena (a town in Cordova) passed away, and the Rif was selected to succeed him. In Lucena, the Rif opened a yeshiva, which attracted many students. A boy named Yosef ibn

Migash, twelve years old, came to study at the Rif's yeshiva, and, upon the passing of the Rif fourteen years later, became the head of the yeshiva - at the age of 26! Rabbi Yosef is known as the Ri Migash, and he became one of the leading Torah authorities of his generation. The Ri Migash, in turn, taught a scholar by the name of Rabbi Maimon, who had a son and disciple named Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, better known as the Rambam. Although the young Moshe was only six years old at the time of the death of Rabbi Yosef, it is said that he received a blessing from him, which served him well as he became one of the greatest Torah scholars and leaders in the history of the Jewish People.

We can now better understand the Divine orchestration of Rabbi Chushiel's arrival in North Africa after being captured by pirates. His captivity ultimately led to the great Torah personalities of Rabbi Chananel, the Rif, the Ri Migash, and the Rambam, individuals whose tremendous impact is felt until this day.