



Acharei Mos-Kedoshim

May 5, 2017

# A Taste of Torah

## Think Holy

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

It's pretty safe to say that maintaining personal holiness, avoiding immorality and controlling our desires are among the hardest commandments to keep. We're in good company. Maimonides (Hilchos Issurei Bi'ah 22:18) himself quotes our Sages who say that there is nothing in the entire Torah which is as difficult to observe, for the average person, as resisting the urge for immoral behavior. He goes on to say that when the Jewish Nation was given this commandment, they accepted it with complaints and crying.

In this week's Torah portion, we are commanded to be holy and abstain from all immoral and forbidden acts. The commentaries explain that there is a fundamental difference between purity and holiness. Purity is in action - one must act in an elevated manner. Holiness, however, is in one's thoughts - changing one's entire psyche to only think moral and holy thoughts. This is quite a tall order! How can we, mere human beings, accomplish such a feat, to overcome this incredibly strong desire with which we are created? If the Torah commands us to do something, we must have been provided with the tools to accomplish it - so what is the secret?!

Fortunately for us, Maimonides himself, at the end of the previously quoted chapter, provides us with the answer. "One should clear one's mind for words of Torah study and

increase one's wisdom, for thoughts of immorality only exist in a heart empty of wisdom." Such illuminating words! Our hearts and minds can be filled with one of two types of things: lusts and desires or Torah and wisdom. Maimonides has revealed to us that the two things are inversely proportionate - thoughts of immorality exist in a heart empty of wisdom, and to the extent that we fill our minds with meaning, all other desires will leave.

The Talmud (Kiddushin 30b) tells us that if the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination) strikes, one should drag him into the Bais Medrash! What is the meaning of this cryptic statement? The *Yetzer Hara* thrives outside the Bais Medrash; he can only exist in the vacuum of the empty and meaningless world outside. There is only one solution - drag him inside the halls of Torah study! Fill yourself with meaning, with Torah, prayer and elevated thoughts, and the *Yetzer Hara* ceases to exist.

Now we can understand how the Torah can command us to be holy. The tool to combat our lower natures is the words of Torah itself. Like the Talmud (ibid.) tells us, Hashem states, "I have created the *Yetzer Hara* and I created the Torah as its antidote." The idea is to fill the hole with wholeness. With that, we can attain true holiness.

## Stories For The Soul

### Grudge Money

The Tepliker Rav, Rabbi Shamshon Aharon Polansky (1876-1948) the Tepliker Rav, lived in Jerusalem, where he was the rav of the Bais Yisrael neighborhood. Some of the greatest halachic authorities of the following generation were his disciples.

Although Rabbi Polansky lived in poverty, he collected and distributed large amounts of charity for others.

He was once placing money into envelopes for distribution to poor families. A grandson was watching, and could see how much money was being placed into the envelopes, though he did not know for whom the envelopes were intended. The grandson noticed that while most of the envelopes contained similar sums of money, one envelope contained noticeably more than the rest, and he asked his grandfather about the discrepancy.

"I lived in Russia during the Great War (WWI)," said Rabbi Polansky. "Following the war, I returned home penniless. The *gabbai tzedakah* (individual charged with distribution of charity funds) would distribute money to the poor weekly, but, for some reason, he never gave me anything. Now, this man lives here, and our roles have reversed. He is destitute, and I am giving out funds! I am concerned that deep inside, I may harbor a grudge against him. To guard against this, I always give him some extra from the money I have collected."

The Torah warns us against bearing a grudge or taking revenge. While avoiding revenge simply requires abstaining from actions, removing any ill will from one's heart may take more effort on one's part.

## Kollel Happenings

### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SOMMERS & RABBI FLEISHER

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 8-9 pm, for men and women. Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher presents Sunday nights at the West Denver Bais Medrash, 8-8:45 pm, for men.

### LEARN-A-THON & SIYUM ON MAY 28<sup>TH</sup>

Join the communal completion of an entire tractate of Talmud in the course of one hour of Torah study! Men, sign up and study a preassigned section of Tractate Kiddushin with a class or chavrusah. Women, sign up and attend a special study session. Visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org), email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org), or call 303-820-2855.

### HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** What is the reason that the *bracha* (blessing) recited when washing one's hands for bread is said only after the washing, not prior to it?

**A:** Since on many occasions, one's hands are not clean and are in need of a washing (physically or halachically) before reciting a *bracha*, the custom developed to always wash and then recite the *bracha*. In addition, it is not in total contradiction with the *halacha*, which requires that all blessings be recited prior to their *mitzvah*, as the *bracha* is recited prior to drying one's hands, which is considered part of the *mitzvah*, as well.

Obviously, if one mistakenly recited the *bracha* prior to washing, he need not repeat the *bracha*, as long as one did not speak or interrupt unnecessarily between the *bracha* and the washing.

(Sources: Orach Chaim 158:11 and Mishna Berurah *ibid*.)

**This week's question:** When washing one's hands for bread, is it more halachically problematic to speak unnecessarily between the washing and its *bracha* (blessing) of *Al Netilas Yadayim*, or between the *bracha* and the *bracha* of *Hamotzi*?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### The Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles - Part VI

The Rema began working on a commentary on the *Arba'ah Turim* called *Darchei Moshe*. As discussed in the past in this column, the *Arba'ah Turim* or, as it is colloquially known, the *Tur*, is a compendium of the major halachic opinions on all areas of Jewish life in the Diaspora. The Rema intended to discuss the opinions recorded in the *Tur* and introduce other opinions, as well as to note the practical halachic rulings and customs of Ashkenazic Jewry.

In the meantime, though, Rabbi Yosef Caro published his commentary on the *Tur*, *Bais Yosef*, which achieved some of the goals of the Rema's *Darchei Moshe*. The Rema therefore modified his work so as not to repeat what had already been accomplished by the *Bais Yosef*.

In a contemporary edition of the *Tur*, one will find an abridged version of the *Darchei Moshe*, with the lengthier, full version in the back of the book.

Rabbi Yosef Caro completed his magnum opus, the *Shulchan Aruch*, in 1563; it was published two years later. Intended to provide the final ruling on halachic matters, it was predicated on the Sephardic customs and rulings.

Rabbi Caro relied largely on three great

medieval authorities, the Rif (Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi), the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, or Maimonides), and the Rosh (Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel). Of the three, only the Rosh was of Ashkenazic origin, and likely was a source for Rabbi Caro because he later emigrated to Spain, where he was accepted as a halachic authority by Sephardic Jewry.

The Rema wrote glosses on the *Shulchan Aruch*, noting where the Ashkenazic ruling or custom differed from what Rabbi Caro had codified. The glosses were embedded into the text itself, and they allowed Ashkenazic Jewry to utilize the *Shulchan Aruch* as a source of practical halacha for their communities. The Rema's glosses were usually written to disagree with Rabbi Caro's rulings, but they simultaneously provided an approbation of the *Shulchan Aruch*, for he implicitly agreed with the rest of the rulings contained therein. The Rema's glosses thus made the work relevant for Ashkenazic Jewry.

The Rema titled his work *Hamapa*, "the Tablecloth." The Rema indicated that the *Shulchan Aruch*, which translates to "Set Table," now had a tablecloth to complement and complete it.