



# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Chayeisara 5777



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

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## A Taste of Torah Insight and Outside

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Hindsight is 20-20. It may be cliché, but it is so very true in so many areas of life. From betting on the right horse to saying the right words at the right time, we often look back and wish we had done things differently. In this week's parsha, though, we gain an insight into how to avoid having to grimace as we peer in the rearview mirror.

Eliezer, Avraham's trusted servant, is sent on the mission of his life, a quest to find a wife for Yitzchak. Avraham's entire life is invested in Yitzchak, who will carry on his mission and be the next link in the chain of establishing the Jewish People. It is imperative that the right woman to achieve that task be found, and Avraham enlists Eliezer as the man to discover that special person. Avraham, taking no chances, makes Eliezer take an oath that he will not take a wife for Yitzchak from the nation of Canaan, for Canaan was cursed by Noach. Rather, he is to go to Avraham's birthplace, Aram Naharayim, and find a wife from among Avraham's extended family members.

Eliezer has an important question, though: "Perhaps the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land; shall I take your son back to the land from which you departed?" (Chayeisara 24:5) Avraham responds that Yitzchak may not leave the Land of Canaan; having been brought upon the altar as a sacrifice, he cannot depart from the rarefied sanctity of what would later become Eretz Yisrael.

The rest is history. Eliezer arrives at the well, offers a prayer to G-d with criteria for the perfect mate for Yitzchak, and

meets Rivka immediately thereafter. Rivka brings Eliezer to her home, where he recounts the events that led him there.

As Eliezer tells the story of his search, he relates his question to Avraham, "Perhaps the woman will not follow me?" (ibid.: 39) There is an important difference between the original question and the retelling, though. The Hebrew word for "perhaps" is *ulai*, and is normally spelled with the letters *aleph, vav, lamed*, and *yud*. This time, though, the *vav* is conspicuously absent, allowing the word to be read as *aylai*, which means "to me." Rashi (ibid.), quoting a Medrash, explains that Eliezer had a very eligible daughter, whom he thought could marry Yitzchak. Eliezer, continues Rashi, was looking for an opening to allow this dream to occur; his question of "What if..." contained the underlying hope that if Avraham's plans fell through, Eliezer's daughter would be a suitable Plan B. Avraham, though, dashed his hopes, telling Eliezer that he was descended from Canaan, and he and his descendants were cursed, while Yitzchak was blessed; the two could not unite.

It is noteworthy that the *vav* is absent only as Eliezer recounts his tale to Rivka's family; it is front and present when we read the initial discussion between Avraham and Eliezer. Why was the letter not already removed the first time around?

A superb explanation I once saw explains that Eliezer himself did not initially realize the motivation behind his question when he posed it. He did not sense that the hopes and dreams

## Stories For The Soul

### A Grave Situation

Some 30 years ago, fifteen-year-old Isamar Efraim Krausz was davening shacharis at a synagogue in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn. An elderly man, noticing the unusual name, told him that he also had members of his family named Isamar Efraim, and they must somehow be related. The elderly man eventually met the teenager's grandfather, Bumi Krausz. It turned out that they were descended from a common ancestor, Bumi's great-grandfather Isamar Efraim Krausz. The man told Bumi that he believed that the original Isamar Efraim's grave still stood in Kishvarshany, a village in eastern Hungary.

Bumi had a nephew living in Vienna, Moshe Shalom Grussgott, and he asked him to go see if the grave was indeed there. Moshe Shalom arrived in the remote village and discovered an abandoned cemetery; most of the tombstones were destroyed but, sure enough, he found his ancestor's grave.

The mayor of the village told Moshe Shalom that no one had visited the cemetery in years. A local law stated that if no one claimed a property within 25 years, it could be taken over by the local government and put to their own use. This cemetery, said the mayor, had one year left before the time was up!

Moshe Shalom arranged to have a wall constructed around the cemetery; the mayor, who is respectful of the site, possesses the key to allow visitors. Thus, Divine providence had orchestrated that one man's descendant, his namesake, be the instrument to save his burial place!

In this week's parsha, the Torah describes the burial of Sarah, and how Avraham goes to great lengths to secure a proper burial plot for his wife. Proper respect for the dead is an integral aspect of Judaism.

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# 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 Sunday, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: \$15 per child, \$7.50 per adult - includes entire facility; discounted group rates are available before 12/21. Visit [www.mazeltogether.org](http://www.mazeltogether.org) to find out how to join for free until 12/23. For general information, call 303-820-2855 or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

## C O R P O R A T I O N CONUNDRUM AT DEC. 7 T4T

Join Jay Kamlet, Managing Partner, Kamlet LLP, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the limits of corporations. December 7<sup>th</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

## LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** What is the reason for these starting dates of *BaHaB* fasts and prayers (i.e., the first Monday following the first Shabbos after Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan and Iyar)?

**A:** Since the months of Tishrei and Nissan (which contain the festivals of Sukkos and Pesach) are joyous ones, we delay the fasts until the following months of Cheshvan and Iyar. We won't even recite the customary prayers on the Shabbos preceding *BaHaB* during

Tishrei or Nissan or on Rosh Chodesh itself if it coincides with Shabbos, saying them (and thereby only beginning *BaHaB*) only following the first Shabbos after Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan and Iyar. (Source: Mishna Berurah Orach Chaim 492)

**This week's question:** What is the reason for the Western European custom of the *BaHaB* series of Cheshvan being delayed until the second half of the month?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Yosef Caro – the Bais Yosef

Rabbi Yosef Caro is one of the most influential individuals in Jewish life, observance, and Torah study from the era of the *Acharonim*. ("Acharonim" means "the latter ones," as opposed to the "Rishonim," "the first ones." The Torah authorities from around the year 900 until 1500 are generally referred to as *Rishonim*; all those who came after are referred to as *Acharonim*.) His works, especially his *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of

Jewish Law), formed the basis of practical Jewish law for future generations.

Rabbi Yosef Caro was born in Toledo, Spain in 1488, as the sun set on Spanish Jewry. In 1492, at age four, he left Spain along with his family and the many other Spanish Jews who chose exile to conversion. The Caro family initially settled in Portugal. However, the same Inquisition that had wreaked such havoc in Spain reared its ugly head in Portugal.

## A Taste of Torah

*Continued from front side*

he harbored for his daughter's future subconsciously bubbled to the surface as he innocently asked his master what to do in the event of a refusal. Avraham perceived the source of the inquiry, and he replied in kind. Eliezer himself, though, did not sense the personal interest that had snuck in between the lines. It was only later, after he had witnessed the Divine orchestration that led to him discover the perfect girl for Yitzchak, that he was able to honestly assess the chain of events. As Eliezer described the back-and-forth between himself and Avraham, he suddenly realized that, back at his master's home, his own two cents had somehow

infiltrated the proceedings!

How often do we say or do things in "all innocence," only to deal later with "unintended consequences?" How often could those results have been avoided if we had honestly evaluated our words and actions before they became reality? No, we usually mean no harm. But our vested interest has a nasty habit of subtly interposing itself in the way of clear thinking, so imperceptibly that we can easily miss it – unless we stop and seriously go over our course of action with a fine-tooth comb. Eliezer's error teaches us the need to be extra careful to examine our motives before they cause trouble we wish we'd have seen coming.