

A Taste of Torah

Standing Together

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

No man is so tall as when he stoops to help a child. The origins of this thought, often ascribed to Abraham Lincoln, are blurred, but it conveys an important idea: What we may think of as a belittling endeavor of helping another is, in fact, an exercise in reaching to new heights of greatness.

Like many great ideas, we can find this notion in the Torah. One of the 74 mitzvos listed in this week's parsha is the obligation to assist one whose animal has fallen, or whose animal's burden has slipped off, in getting the animal back on its feet or burden back on the animal's back.

The language used by the verse for this commandment is, "You shall surely stand them up, with him." (Ki Seitze 22:4) The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905) notes that besides the mitzvah being given over, there is a powerful message contained in the words of the verse.

He points out that while the simple reading of the verse commands the bystander to assist in standing the animal up, it can also be understood as referring to the passerby himself; the verse thus instructs, "Stand yourself up, with him." The Torah is telling us that when a spectator decides to assist another in distress, when the on-looker connects "with him" and takes a part in bearing the load of another's troubles, he is, in fact, raising himself up! Growth occurs through stooping to help carry the burden of others.

The idea of being *nosei b'ol*, of placing the yoke that someone else is bending under on oneself, is a quintessential Jewish approach. Axiomatic to Judaism is that all Jews are spiritually connected to each other. Even if one cannot materially assist in alleviating the distress of another, the mere fact that one mentally decides to focus on the pain and suffering and identify with

the tribulations of another will provide relief for the afflicted party.

But the Sfas Emes teaches us that being *nosei b'ol* is much more than just alleviating the pain. By helping another in need, we reach new heights in our own growth. More than the wealthy person helps the poor person, says the Sfas Emes, the poor person helps the wealthy person.

I believe we can take the lesson of the Sfas Emes a step further. The Talmud (Bava Metzia 32a) infers from the closing words of the aforementioned verse - "with him" - that one is obligated to help only if the owner is working to get the animal back on its feet, as well. If the owner says, "Well, you have an obligation to stand the animal up, so I'll sit here and watch," the bystander is exempt and can remain a bystander.

It thus emerges that the halachic teaching of the need for the owner to be part of the process and the ethical lesson of growth through sharing the burden are inferred from the same words, "with him." When we are faced with challenges in life, they generally provide opportunities for becoming a greater person. Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger - if you're willing to put in the effort and flex those spiritual muscles. Don't just sit there and wait for someone else to save the day - it is your task and your responsibility to rise to the challenge.

At the same time, the Torah teaches that it is incumbent upon others to pitch in and help. It is everyone's responsibility to see that this obstacle is overcome, this test passed, this misfortune used as a means to reach ever-higher. And when one decides to lend a hand and a shoulder, you also share in the personal growth that occurs through rising to meet the challenge!



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories For The Soul

A Weighty Matter

It was not uncommon for a Jew in Eastern Europe to own an inn/tavern, where he would serve food and drinks to the local peasantry and put up travelers, and try to thereby eke out a living.

It once happened that a Jew stopped at such an inn and spent the night. The next morning, he arose and went down to the tavern area, where he observed the Jewish owner preparing for the morning prayers. The innkeeper had just donned his *tallis*, when suddenly a man entered and demanded a glass of beer. The innkeeper measured out a glass and gave it to the fellow, who promptly began to haggle over the price. The innkeeper took the beer, poured it back into the barrel, and proceeded with his prayers.

The Jewish guest was most puzzled by the innkeeper's behavior, and, after he had concluded his prayers, he asked him to explain his actions.

"When the man asked me for a glass of beer," he explained, "I was presented with the opportunity of ensuring that I maintain honest weights and measures. I carefully measured out the proper amount of beer and presented it to the customer. Once he started to bargain with me, it became a business transaction, and one does not do business before reciting the morning prayers. I therefore had no choice but to return the drink to the barrel and to deal with the issue later!"

In this week's parsha, the Torah demands that we maintain honest and proper weights and measures. For some, this is a condition of doing business; for others; business is merely a means to performing a mitzvah.

Kollel Happenings

SYMBOLIC FOODS PLATTER FOR ROSH HASHANA

There is a widespread Rosh Hashana custom to eat simanim, foods that symbolize a good year. The Denver Community Kollel is proud to offer a simanim platter containing 10 items presaging a sweet, new year. For more info, or to order yours for just \$25, email info@denverkollel.org, visit the Kollel website at www.denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855. Be sure to leave method of payment and contact information. **Order deadline extended until September 25th.**

KOLLEL ANNUAL DONOR APPRECIATION EVENT SUNDAY, OCT. 9TH

The Kollel will hold its annual Donor Appreciation Event on Sunday, October 9th, 6:45 pm at the offices of Altura Periodontics, 3690 S. Yosemite St., Denver, CO 80237. For more info or to reserve, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

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. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Which mitzvah can ideally be performed on a Wednesday or Thursday only?

A: *Eruv Tavshilin* is a mitzvah which the rabbis enacted to allow preparation of food on Yom Tov for the upcoming Shabbos. The procedure, including a blessing and declaration, is recited on Erev Yom Tov when Yom Tov is on Friday or both Thursday and Friday. Therefore,

Eruv Tavshilin should be performed on Wednesday or Thursday only. If one performed *Eruv Tavshilin* prior to Erev Yom Tov, it should preferably be redone without another blessing. (M.B. 527:45)

This week's question: How many of our daily or Shabbos prayers follow the order of the *Alef-Bais* (Hebrew Alphabet)?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Don Yitzchak Abarbanel Part I

The life of the Rabbi Don Yitzchak Abarbanel, commonly referred to simply as "the Abarbanel," is inextricably tied with the history of the Jewish communities of Spain during the 15th century.

The Abarbanel was born in Lisbon, Portugal in 1437, but the history of his life began in 1391.

In 1391, there were widespread pogroms against the Jews of Spain and Portugal. Over seventy Jewish communities were destroyed, and approximately 50,000 Jews were killed. As a result of these pogroms, tens of thousands of Spanish Jews converted to Christianity - the only time such a mass defection occurred in Medieval Christian Europe. Many, if not most, did so under duress and superficially, maintaining their Jewishness behind closed doors.

One of these "converts" was a man by the name of Shmuel Abarbanel of Seville. His son, Yehuda, was smuggled to Lisbon, Portugal, where he was raised and lived as a Jew. Yehuda was a very successful merchant, and he eventually became the treasurer of King Alfonso of Portugal.

Yehuda's son, Yitzchak, studied under Rabbi Yosef Hayun, one of the leading Torah scholars in Lisbon.

From a young age, he was well-versed in Torah. In addition, young Yitzchak was knowledgeable in Latin, Greek, philosophy, astronomy and mathematics, and mastered finance, banking and mercantile credit.

In 1471, Yehuda passed away. Rabbi Yitzchak's financial skills did not go unnoticed by King Alfonso, and he was chosen to succeed his father as royal treasurer of the king of Portugal.

During this time, Rabbi Yitzchak taught Torah at the main synagogue in Lisbon, and, between his political positions and his Torah scholarship and teaching, he emerged as the leader of Portuguese Jewry.

Rabbi Yitzchak's success continued and, by the year 1481, he was the most powerful person in Alfonso's court. He used his many political connections on behalf of his brethren. In one instance, King Alfonso captured the city of Arzila, in Morocco, and the Jews who lived there were captured to be sold as slaves. Rabbi Yitzchak arranged for the ransom of hundreds of Jews, giving large sums of his own money toward the funds needed and collecting the remainder from other Jews in Portugal. In addition, he provided for the captives after their release until they were able to stand on their own feet.