

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Parshas Ki Seitze

September 1, 2017

A Taste of Torah

Don't Lose Control

by Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

We don't always succeed in resisting our lower selves. Sometimes, one concludes that he is going to succumb to a temptation, whatever it may be. The big question becomes, what is one to do if he sees it's not happening? Just give up? Let's see what the Torah advises.

In this week's parsha, we find the story of the Jewish soldier and the *aishes yefas to'ar*, the captive woman. The Torah, recognizing the predicament a soldier in battle may find himself in, allows the soldier to bring the woman home and, after an elaborate process, marry her. Although the commentators disagree as to the exact details of the process, all agree that the Torah is making an allowance so that the soldier not sin outright.

There is no question that we, as individuals, may not tweak the Torah to our personal situation. Yet here, the Torah itself makes an allowance due to extenuating circumstances. The Torah is eternal, and we can learn life-lessons from each and every part of the Torah, so how can we apply this law to our daily lives?

To better understand this matter, let's take a look at the opening words of the parsha (Ki Seitze 21:10), "When you wage war against your enemies." The Sfas Emes and others interpret this homiletically as a reference to the war we wage with our internal enemy, the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination).

Following this approach, it would seem likely that we can infer strategies and methods in our dealings with the *Yetzer Hara*. Rabbi Yerucham

Levovitz (1873-1936) expounds on a very important point. As humans, we aren't infallible; the defining question isn't how we can succeed one hundred percent of the time, but, rather, how we deal with our failures. No one can always succeed, but if we are completely knocked out by a failure, that will prevent us from getting back up and recouping our losses. Taking the analogy of a wrestling match: in giving up the fight, you ensure total failure. Staying in the match, despite your opponent having the upper hand, allows you to make a comeback when the opportunity presents itself.

With regard to our moral struggles, when we find the *Yetzer Hara* gaining the upper hand, we have two choices; we can throw in the towel, or we can stay on and fight. Giving up completely not only ensures that we've lost this round, it gives our enemy completely free reign to hit us again and again until we're pretty much done. But how does one stay in the fight even when the *Yetzer Hara* has the upper hand? One important thing to bear in mind is that even if we cannot win, we can at least do damage control by performing the lesser of the evils or mitigating the effects our bad choice may have on others. The following story illustrates this idea:

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter had an acquaintance whose son attended a non-Jewish boarding school, and, as a result, was partaking of the non-kosher food at the school. Rabbi Salanter kept up a very extensive correspondence with this fellow, explaining in detail how he could diminish the sin of

Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories For The Soul

Free Lunch

When he was eleven years old, David Levitt, a Florida resident, decided he wanted to do something about feeding the hungry. He walked over to the principal of his school, Osceola Middle School in Seminole, Florida, and asked him if the school could donate its extra food to the hungry. The principal explained that the school board had to agree, so David wrote and then phoned each member. On his twelfth birthday, he addressed the board in person, and they approved the plan.

He convinced First Brands Corp., manufacturers of Glad products, to provide airtight bags and containers for the food to prevent spoilage.

When David celebrated his bar mitzvah, he asked his guests to bring food donations to support his project. This request brought over five hundred pounds of canned food.

The program gained publicity, and David and his sister, Jamie, decided to try and expand it to the entire state. They wrote a resolution, and a state representative created the legislative language for the creation of a law that would encourage food suppliers to donate leftovers. The law was unanimously passed in the state House of Representatives and Senate. Millions of pounds of food have been donated to the hungry thanks to what began as a local project.

Our Sages teach, based on the progression of mitzvos discussed in this week's parsha, that one mitzvah leads to another. Start doing a little bit of good, and you never know where it will take you!

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: September 10th.**

LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING THIS LABOR DAY

Start your day off on the right foot with Torah study! Join the Kollel for learning at three locations around Denver: At the Kollel West Denver Bais Medrash and Aish Denver, shacharis at 8 am followed by breakfast and learning, and at EDOS, shacharis at 7:30 followed by breakfast and learning.

RULES OF WARFARE ENGAGEMENT AT SEP. 6TH TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Chaim Shmuel Stitzer, Captain, United States Air Force, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they fight for the truth the Torah offers for proper wartime conduct. September 6th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Can you name items of doubles associated with Shabbos?

A: The Medrash (quoted by Daas Zikeinim, Bamidbar 28:9; a similar version can be found in Medrash Shocher Tov 92) relates that the *mussaf* (literally, additional) offering of Shabbos complained to Hashem that it is the smallest of all *mussaf* offerings, comprising just two sheep. Hashem replied, "This is perfect for you, as all your components are doubles: a double song (*Mizmor Shir*),

double enjoyment, double punishment (for transgressors) and double loaves." Rabbi Shimon Schwab (Rav Schwab on Prayer, page 163) notes that, based on this idea, there are 18 *mizmorim* (chapters of song) in the *Pesukei Dezimra* on Shabbos morning according to *Nusach Ashkenaz*, exactly double the usual nine!

This week's question: Who composed the *Nishmas* prayer, recited on Shabbos and Yom Tov at *shacharis*?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel – the Mordechai Part V

Estimates as to how many were killed during the terrible Rindfleisch massacres range from the tens of thousands to as high as 100,000.

Rabbi Mordechai wrote a work that is known as *Sefer HaMordechai* (the Book of the Mordechai), or, simply, the *Mordechai*. It is a compendium of Jewish law that uses the *Rif* (the codification written by Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi) as a starting point to introduce discussions of Jewish law. A word or sentence from the *Rif* is used as an opening for relevant material from the Talmud, the Jerusalem

Talmud, and later commentators - largely the French and German commentators - to be mentioned, discussed, and analyzed.

The *Mordechai* is, in a sense, a digest of the *Ba'alei Tosafos* (the German and French scholars of the 12th-14th centuries who are included in the various *Tosafos* [lit., additions] commentaries on the Talmud) who preceded Rabbi Mordechai; he himself was among the final Torah scholars of that group. Rabbi Mordechai also includes his own opinions in his work.

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eating non-kosher. In some letters, he went to great pains to explain just which scenarios were Rabbinically forbidden and which were of a Biblical nature. In other letters, he explained how to avoid transgressing multiple sins, keeping the damage to a minimum. The reason Rabbi Yisrael expended such effort on this correspondence was two-fold; one, simple damage control, and two, as a means of keeping the young man in the fight. Had he given up completely on keeping kosher,

he may have been lost to the Jewish People, but by struggling to observe some laws, he ensured that he would have a chance at a comeback.

In the course of our lives, we may struggle with our commitment to Torah study or to mitzvah observance. The key to ultimate success is to keep on striving, thereby ensuring that the *Yetzer Hara* doesn't have the opportunity to finish us off, G-d forbid.

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