



THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

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A Taste of Torah It's All About Priorities

By Rabbi Eli Mozes

Nobody is perfect; we all have our struggles, whether it be a mitzvah which seems to be out of our grasp, or an *aveira* (prohibition) which we find ourselves stumbling into again and again. It can be encouraging when we find a particular thing which the Torah proscribes that is so outlandish that we would never do it. We tell ourselves, "I may have my ups and downs, but when it comes to this one, I've got it covered."

Indeed, the Talmud teaches that Hashem says that it was worth redeeming the Jewish People from Egypt just for the fact that they refrain from consuming insects; the Talmud continues that one will reap eternal reward just for abstaining from *aveiros* that are naturally repulsive in the first place. However, we cannot assume that just because we don't find these things to be a challenge, we need not study them. Every subject which the Torah discusses has many valuable details which we can apply to our daily lives.

In this week's parsha, we find one such example. Moshe warns the Jewish People regarding the nations who inhabited the Land of Canaan. "Do not let yourself be drawn after them... for everything that is an abomination of Hashem, that He hates, have they done to their gods; for even their sons and daughters they burn in the fire for their gods." (Re'eh 12:30-31) This seems to be a rather easy mitzvah to fulfill. You may have threatened to wring your teenager's neck, but I doubt you ever seriously considered burning him alive as a sacrifice to some statue with six arms and an elephant trunk for a nose.

However, there is a Medrash which ought to give us pause. The Medrash (Pesikta Rabasi 21) relates an exchange between a priest of the idol Molech and a Jewish father. The priest comes

to visit Yankel and says, "The Molech has instructed me to order you to sacrifice one of your sons to him." The father replies, "I am sorry, but I just can't afford to part with any of them. You see, the oldest two help me in the shop and are indispensable. The next two are busy working in the field and I just don't know what I would do without them. Actually, now that I'm thinking about it, there is little Chaim. He just spends all day studying the Torah; I guess I can do without him. Why don't you wait until he comes home, and I'll give him to you." The Medrash concludes that Hashem says about an incident such as this, "About your needs you are concerned and you can't spare a child, but My needs don't trouble you at all."

Now, this account may seem patently ridiculous to us, but if we look at it with some soul-searching and intellectual honesty, we would realize that all too often, we are just like Yankel. We have our daily schedule; there are times that we set aside for our needs, such as a job, eating and sleeping; there are times we set aside for leisure; and there are times we devote to Hashem, such as praying, studying Torah and engaging in acts of kindness. But things come up which just don't fit in to our schedule, like that two-hour doctor appointment. Something has to get cut, but what? Should we leave work early, skip watching the game or maybe miss a Torah class? Sadly, sometimes, like Yankel, we put our own concerns before Hashem's. When it comes to our creature comforts, everything is a necessity, but when it comes to Hashem, we look at it as a luxury. If nothing else comes up, then I am available for Him. Let us take the lesson to heart and realize what our priorities really ought to be.

Stories For The Soul

Almost Everything is Everything

A man once came to the Satmar Rav, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum (1887-1979), crying that he needed money to marry off his daughter.

"How much do you need?" asked the Satmar Rav.

If you can give me \$1,000, that would be a big help in my efforts," replied the man.

The Satmar Rav, who was in possession of large sums given to him by many of his chassidim for charitable distribution, took out \$975 and gave it to the man.

After the fellow departed, those who had witnessed the exchange asked in surprise, "Rebbe, surely you could have given him the remaining \$25 to complete his entire request?"

The Satmar Rav explained, "If I would have given this man the entire sum he had requested, he would have left thinking, 'If I would have asked for a larger sum toward my expenses, I probably would have received it!' He would have been filled with regret for not requesting a larger amount. I therefore gave him a bit less than he asked for so that he not feel that way!"

In this week's parsha, the Torah speaks at length about the need to help the needy. But an integral part of *tzedakah* is taking all the needs of the poor into account - especially their emotional needs.

Kollel Happenings

MINERAL & SURFACE RIGHTS AT SEP. 7TH TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Avi Mehler, Land Manager for K.P. Kauffman Company, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they dig beneath the surface into the issues of mineral rights and surface rights. September 7th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

YARCHEI KALLAH THIS LABOR DAY WEEKEND

Join Rabbi Binyomin Halpern, Rav of Cong. Bais Halevy and father of Kollel Scholar Rabbi Shmuel Halpern, for two days of Torah study, September 4-5, at the Kollel's West Side Bais Medrash. Breakfast and lunch provided along with the study sessions and lectures. For men. Cost: \$20 (scholarships available). Shiur for women Monday night, 8-9 pm. For more details, visit www.denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

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 is September 20th.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: During which three months of the Jewish calendar is there a custom to blow the *shofar*? (Warning: this is a tricky question!)

A: Two are well known, one is not. During Elul, the Ashkenazic custom is to blow the *shofar* each weekday. In addition, during Tishrei there is a universally-accepted custom to blow the *shofar* as Yom Kippur departs. (The Rosh Hashana *shofar*-blowing is not included, as it is Torah-mandated.) There is, however, one more custom, practiced today in some communities, to blow the *shofar* on the last day of Av (the first day of Rosh Chodesh Elul), as well. This is not due to its association with Elul. Rather, this custom is based on the view of some *Rishonim* who maintain that Moshe went up to Heaven on that date to receive the second set of *Luchos* (Tablets). The *shofar* was then sounded to publicize the event and dispel the confusion regarding Moshe's length of departure that existed at the time of the first *Luchos*. At that time, the Jews erred in calculating Moshe's

return date and subsequently sinned with the Golden Calf. It thus became customary to blow the *shofar* on this date every year. There is a scholarly debate whether the custom to blow throughout Elul is related to the above-mentioned custom, or based on the need to awaken to *teshuva* (repentance) before Rosh Hashana. This year, due to this date coinciding with Shabbos, the *shofar* is obviously not sounded. (Sources: Orach Chaim 581:1 and commentators *ibid.*; Bais Yosef *ibid.* and commentators to Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer ch. 46; Orach Chaim 623:6)

This week's question: While the Sephardic custom is to recite *selichos* prayers during the entire month of Elul, the majority of Ashkenazim have two other Elul customs. They are the blowing of the *shofar* each weekday and the recital of chapter 27 of Tehillim (Psalms), which begins "L'Dovid, Hashem Ori." Which of these two Ashkenazic customs is of older origin?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

The Maharil - Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Moelin - Part III

Another catastrophic event occurred to the Jewish communities of Germany during the Maharil's lifetime. In 1420, a pastor by the name of John Huss broke with the Catholic Church over a number of issues. (This occurred some 100 years before Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of a church in Wittenberg to begin the Reformation; Huss was an influence on Luther's thinking.) Huss attracted many followers in his region of Bohemia. He travelled to Constance, Germany to engage in a debate with Church representatives. He was ultimately arrested and burned at the stake in 1415.

Huss's followers, known as Hussites, did not go down quietly. The Catholic Church declared a crusade against them, and the Hussite Wars raged during the early 1420s. As was usually the case in Europe, the Jewish communities were a target for the armies, and numerous

Jewish communities in Germany were in mortal danger.

The Maharil declared a three-day fast for all the communities of the region. All adults aged 20 and older were to fast for three days straight, both day and night (excluding those physically unable to do so due to illness or infirmity), while girls 12 and older boys 13 and older were allowed to break their fasts at night. The Maharil sent instructions regarding the prayers to be recited and other details of the fast.

Some communities witnessed salvation from the marauders, while others were attacked, resulting in loss of life, limb, and property; many Jews died sanctifying G-d's Name rather than abandon their Judaism.

The Maharil provided critical leadership and encouragement during and following this tragic period.