

A Taste of Torah

The Sky Is Not the Limit

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

One of the subjects that always leaves us confused is the timing of Moshiach's arrival. On the one hand, we are taught that there is a very specific time when he will come. On the other hand, we often state and firmly believe that he can arrive anytime, hopefully today.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 98a) opens up the subject by quoting a verse in Yeshaya (Isaiah 60:22), "I am Hashem; in its time, I will hasten it." Explains the Talmud, if we merit it, the redemption will be hastened. If not, it will come in its time. This seems to state that there is a very specific time that Mashiach will come, but it is possible, through our good deeds, to hasten his arrival. However, this in itself needs an explanation - if there really does exist a set time, how can one change and override it?

In this week's Torah portion, we are told how the *Meraglim* (Spies) went to scout out the Land of Israel. They came back with a very unsavory report, for which they received a severe punishment; they died then and there in a rather grotesque fashion and did not merit to enter the Land of Israel. The *Meraglim* were very righteous individuals, leaders of their tribes; it should be clear and obvious that they did not commit a simple blatant transgression. They must have had sound reasoning to say that the time was not ripe to enter the Land of Israel. The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Aryeh Yehuda Leib Alter of Gur; 1847-1905) tells us that it is indeed so; there are a number of sources from the Talmudic Sages that the Jewish People could not enter Israel for another forty years, and the spies knew this information. So what exactly was the mistake and sin?

The Sfas Emes reveals to us something powerful and fundamental. Shlomo Hamelech, the wisest of all men, writes in Koheles (Ecclesiastes 3:1), "Everything has its reason, and there is a time for everything under the Heavens." There is a time for everything specifically under

the Heavens, but above the Heavens there is no time and place - we can rise above it. The spies were absolutely correct that in this world of time and space, the time was not ripe for another forty years. However, the Jewish Nation has the incredible ability to transcend and rise above the Heavens, where we are not bound to time and its limitations. This is the deeper meaning of Calev's retort to the *Meraglim* (Shelach 13:30), "We shall surely ascend!" We can ascend above our limitations, and beyond the natural confines of the physical world, everything is possible.

One final point needs clarification. All this sounds amazing, but what is the key to entering this wonderful supernatural realm? The answer is: By simply awakening our desire to enter there! We are taught that our will has the ability to arouse (so to speak) G-d's will, and His will is not bound by anything. If we truly want something with an intense desire and out of a passionate love of Hashem, this will in turn awaken His desire and will to fulfill it, and then all options are open. The Jewish People could have entered the Land of Israel before the intended time based purely on their desire and will to ascend. But, tragically, the desire was not there, which left the Jewish People bound to this lowly world of time, able to ascend to their land in its correct time only after 40 years.

This profound idea is the secret and key to achieve Mashiach's arrival prior to the intended time. Yes, there is a preset point, but that exists under the Heavens; we can transcend that, and connect our hearts and minds to G-d. If we have an intense desire for the ultimate Redemption speedily in our days, we rise to a place higher than time, all the way to G-d himself. Once we are there, time and space cease to play a role, and the possibilities are infinite. As the Jewish aphorism goes, "Nothing stands in the way of the will!"



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories For The Soul

Sauerkraut in Gan Eden

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809) once visited an elderly, childless couple for Shabbos. His esteemed colleague, Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov (1745-1807) asked to come along for the trip, and Reb Levi Yitzchak, after warning Reb Moshe Leib that the Shabbos would be short on physical comforts, allowed him to join.

The two great men arrived at a broken shack, and were greeted with great respect and delight by the elderly couple. Friday night arrived, and, after singing the customary songs, making Kiddush, washing the hands and making a blessing on the bread, the woman brought out the main dish - sauerkraut! And, as Reb Moshe Leib quickly discovered by the putrid smell, it was quite spoiled.

The woman explained, "Honored rabbis, I have saved this for quite some time to serve to guests. When I heard you were coming, I excitedly prepared it!"

Reb Moshe Leib couldn't bring himself to eat from the horrible stuff, but Reb Levi Yitzchak placed a generous serving upon his plate, took a bite, and began exclaiming, "Gan Eden! Gan Eden!" as he ate the spoiled food with gusto.

Later, Reb Moshe Leib asked Reb Levi Yitzchak to explain his actions.

Reb Levi Yitzchak explained, "Do you see these wonderful people? They never had the opportunity to give to others. Finally, this poor woman has the chance to give to another - shall I embarrass her instead?!"

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Kollel Happenings

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch & Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

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.

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 or email info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What special event in Tanach (the 24 books of Torah) occurred on the 23rd day of Sivan?

A: In Megillas Esther (8:9), the decree against the Jews was formally reversed on this day. The Medrash notes that this was exactly seventy days after the decree was originally issued, and corresponds to the seventy days that the Egyptians mourned Yaakov Avinu's death (Bereishis 50:3). Some explain that there was a seventy-day merit for the non-Jews due to their participation in mourning Yaakov. Due to this merit, the reversal of the decree, which was to their detriment, was delayed for a full seventy days. Alternately, Rabbi Yehonasan Eibeshitz (c. 1694-1764) explained that a great person's merit for

protection of their living descendants and constituents begins to operate in full only after their mourning period has ended. The date of the conclusion of Yaakov's mourning coincides with the exact date of this decree's reversal, 23 Sivan!

(Sources: Bereishis Rabba 100:6, Ya'aros D'vash 2:2)

Part 1 of a 2-part Shabbos-Rosh Chodesh series

This week's question: What custom, followed today by most Ashkenazic communities in association with every Rosh Chodesh, was originally only practiced regarding Rosh Chodesh coinciding with Shabbos?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Shlomo Luria, the Maharshah Part IV

The Maharshah's strong personality and opinions meant he did not see eye-to-eye with many people, even among the great Torah leaders of his time.

However, he was a close friend of the Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles; as mentioned in a previous column, the two had studied together in the great yeshiva in Lublin in their youth. The two Torah giants maintained a correspondence.

Despite their friendship, the Maharshah was critical of the Rema, in particular, for the Rema's study of philosophy. While the Rema believed that the study of philosophy, when done with

the proper precautions and avoiding heretical material, complemented one's Torah study, the Maharshah strongly expressed his conviction that it ought to be avoided altogether. "You are turning to the wisdom of the uncircumcised Aristotle," he wrote to the Rema. "Woe unto my eyes that they have seen such a thing! This is a sin for such a prince in Israel."

The Maharshah was also critical of the Rema's practice of citing his halachic conclusions without discussing the process that had led him to derive his rulings.

Stories For The Soul

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"Imagine the Gan Eden I will receive for making this woman feel good about her efforts. As I took that sauerkraut, I imagined the Gan Eden I would receive for honoring this couple!"

The *Meraglim* (Spies) did not lie about what they saw in the Land of Israel.

Rather, they shared a negative view of their journey, leading to tragedy for themselves and the entirety of the Jewish Nation for generations to come. Looking at things in a positive light – even when they seem negative – goes a long way in making life better.

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