



Shemos 5776

January 1, 2016

# A Taste of Torah

## Don't Miss the Sequel

By Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

As we set out to begin the sefer (book) of Shemos, let's take a look at the essence of this sefer. Throughout the Torah, the name of an object or person expresses its very essence. When it comes to Sefer Shemos, there are several names given to this book. The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman; 1194-1270) calls it the Book of Redemption. More traditionally, it's called Sefer Shemos. What seems strange is that the Bahag (an important medieval halachic work whose authorship is unclear), although giving a specific name to the other four books of the Torah, refers to Sefer Shemos simply as "the Second Book." Was the Bahag unable to come up with a defining name for this book of the Torah?

The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin; 1816-1893) writes in his introduction to Sefer Shemos that the Bahag intends to teach us a powerful lesson. The first book in the Torah, Bereishis, describes the creation of the world and the development of Mankind. The second book, says the Netziv, is, in fact, part two of the story of Creation. Rashi, in his second comment on the Torah, expounds the very word Bereishis as teaching that the purpose of Creation is for the Jewish People and the Torah. What this means is that the world was created for the Torah, and the Jewish People are the ones charged with the responsibility of fulfilling it and revealing G-d's Presence to the rest of the world. As

the Gemara (Avoda Zara 3a) relates, at the time of Creation, G-d stipulated with the world that its existence would be dependent on the Jews accepting the Torah millennia later. It is for this reason, says the Netziv, that the second book of the Torah is the culmination of the first, for it's in this book that the Jews become a nation and accept the Torah.

Let's take this idea a step further. The Gemara (Bava Basra 16a) relates that Iyov (Job) said before G-d, "You created man with evil tendencies. Just as an ox cannot become a donkey, how can a man become righteous?" Iyov's friends responded, "G-d created the Torah as an antidote for the Evil Inclination." Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz (1873-1936), based on a Mishna in the third chapter of Pirkei Avos, explains that G-d used the Torah to create the world. This means that Torah has the power to create something where there was previously nothing (*ex nihilo*). Considering that the ultimate miracle is creation *ex nihilo*, the Torah certainly possesses the ability to change man's nature. This gives an entirely new dimension to the idea of the second book of Creation. The Book of Bereishis is the book relating the story of G-d creating Man. The second book of Creation contains the story of Man continuing to create and develop good character through the study and fulfillment of Torah.

## Stories For The Soul

### Blanket of Trust

by Howard Schultz, Chairman, Starbucks

When I was in Israel, I went to Meah Shearim, the ultra-Orthodox area within Jerusalem. Along with a group of businessmen I was with, I had the opportunity to have an audience with Rabbi [Nosson Tzvi] Finkel, the head of a yeshiva there [Mir Yeshiva]. I had never heard of him and didn't know anything about him. We went into his study and waited ten to 15 minutes for him. Finally, the doors opened.

What we did not know was that Rabbi Finkel was severely afflicted with Parkinson's disease. He sat down at the head of the table, and, naturally, our inclination was to look away. We didn't want to embarrass him.

We were all looking away, and we heard this big bang on the table: "Gentlemen, look at me, and look at me right now." Now his speech affliction was worse than his physical shaking. It was really hard to listen to him and watch him. He said, "I have only a few minutes for you because I know you're all busy American businessmen." You know, just a little dig there.

Then he asked, "Who can tell me what the lesson of the Holocaust is?" He called on one guy, who didn't know what to do-it was like being called on in the fifth grade without the answer. And the guy says something benign like, "We will never, ever forget." And the rabbi completely dismisses him. I felt terrible for the guy until I realized the rabbi was getting ready to call on someone else. All of us were sort of under the table, looking away - you know, please, not me. He did not call me. I was sweating. He called on another guy, who had such a fantastic answer: "We will never, ever again be a victim or bystander."

The rabbi said, "You guys just don't get it. Okay, gentlemen, let me tell you the essence of the human spirit.

"As you know, during the Holocaust, the people were transported in the worst possible, inhumane way by railcar. They thought they were going to a work

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## Kollel Happenings

### ISSUES OF CLONING AND CLONES THIS WEDNESDAY AT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Marc Cooper, President, Cooper Development and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they delve into the ethical issues of cloning. January 6, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

### WINTER GARDENS WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT JAN. 12<sup>TH</sup>

The Kollel Women's Division will hold its 4<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Wellness Workshop will be held on Jan. 12, 2016. *Winter Gardens Women's Night Out* will feature bestselling author and keynote speaker Debra Fine, *Sense-ational: An Exhilarating Experience Engaging Each of the Five Senses*, great food and camaraderie, and other delights to help you achieve health in mind, body and soul. For more info, contact info@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.

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: When did the custom of having multiple mourners recite *kaddish* in unison begin?

A: Originally, *Kaddish Yasom* (Mourner's *Kaddish*) was recited by one mourner only, just as only one individual leads the prayers. The custom of a joint recital began in the Sefardic communities during the 18th century, and that is the custom in most communities today. The custom was supported by Rabbi Yaakov Emden (1697-1776), but criticized by

Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger (1798-1871; author of the *Aruch La'ner*) and others.

**This week's question:** After reciting *Bameh Madlikin*, which discusses the laws of kindling the Shabbos lights, on Friday night, we insert a seemingly unrelated paragraph that begins "Amar Rabbi Elazar." At the close of *Ein Keilokeinu*, which deals with the incense offerings in the Temple, the above paragraph is again recited. Why is this paragraph inserted in these places?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rashi - Part IV

Rashi had no sons, but he did have three daughters: Yocheved, Miriam and Rochel. There are legends that Rashi's daughters put on tefillin, but there is little if any evidence for this. Rashi's daughters married illustrious Torah scholars who were students of his. Rashi's grandsons, the children of these marriages, were among the most prominent of the Baalei Tosfos ("Authors of the Additions"). The Baalei Tosfos most notably authored a commentary on the Talmud known as Tosfos; after Rashi's commentary, it is the most-studied commentary on the Talmud. Tosfos dissect and examine Talmudic passages, asking questions and providing solutions, creating many Talmudic and halachic novella. Tosfos, including Rashi's own grandchildren, frequently disagree with Rashi's opinions.

Yocheved married Rabbi Meir ben Shmuel, and they had four illustrious sons: Shmuel ben Meir,

known as the Rashbam; Yitzchak ben Meir, known as the Rivam; Yaakov ben Meir, known as Rabbeinu Tam, who became the greatest leader of Ashkenazic Jewry after the passing of his grandfather; and Shlomo Hamedakdek (the Grammarian). Their daughter, Chana, had a child, Rabbi Yitzchak of Dampierre, who was known as the Ri, another of the most prominent Baalei Tosfos.

Rashi's middle daughter, Miriam, married Rabbi Yehuda ben Nasan (known as the Rivan), who completed the commentary on Tractate Makkos which Rashi was working on when he died. Their son Rabbi Yom Tov later moved to Paris and headed a yeshiva there, together with his brothers Rabbi Shimshon and Rabbi Eliezer.

Rashi's youngest daughter, Rochel, married (and divorced) Rabbi Eliezer ben Shemiah.

## Stories For The Soul

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camp. We all know they were going to a death camp.

"After hours and hours in this inhumane corral with no light, no bathroom, cold, they arrived at the camps. The doors were swung wide open, and they were blinded by the light. Men were separated from women, mothers from daughters, fathers from sons. They went off to the bunkers to sleep.

"As they went into the area to sleep, only one person was given a blanket for every six. The person who received the blanket, when he went to bed, had to decide, 'Am I going to push the blanket to the five other people

who did not get one, or am I going to pull it toward myself to stay warm?'"

And Rabbi Finkel says, "It was during this defining moment that we learned the power of the human spirit, because we pushed the blanket to five others."

And with that, he stood up and said, "Take your blanket. Take it back to America and push it to five other people."

In this week's parsha, Moshe, though living as a prince in Pharaoh's palace, goes out of his way to join in the suffering of his brethren and help them in any way he can.

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