



A Taste of Torah

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

by Rabbi Eli Mozes

A father was trying to teach his son basic math. “Johnny,” he asked him, “if there are ten birds lined up on a roof and I shoot one, how many will be left?” “One,” replied Johnny. “No,” said his father, exasperated that his son wasn’t getting it, “don’t you see, I have only shot one, so I have nine left.” “But Dad,” said Johnny, “as soon as you shoot one, the others will fly away, so all you have is the one that you shot.”

The Ben Ish Chai (Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad; 1835-1909) would relate this parable, and explain: Oftentimes, what you think you have isn’t there at all; it will fly away without a moment’s notice. All that you truly have left is what you have already given away for the needs of others.

“These are the reckonings of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle).” (Pekudei 38:21) The Ohr Hachaim (Rabbi Chaim ben Attar; 1696-1743) explains that the word “these” is exclusive, meaning to say that only those materials that have been donated to the *Mishkan* have any value; all other personal possessions aren’t reckoned at all. They may be yours now, but there is no guarantee that they’ll be around in the future.

Don Yitzchak Abarbanel (1437-1508) was perhaps the most prominent Jew in all of Spain. Aside from being one of the greatest Torah scholars of his time, he was also the minister of finance for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. His financial acumen and straight-up honesty earned him the respect of the monarchy, and he wielded the power which his position afforded him with wisdom and integrity. Other ministers, who had a hard time swallowing the fact that a Jew had achieved such prominence, decided to do away with him once and for all. They informed the

king that they were quite certain that Don Yitzchak was lining his pockets with money from the royal coffers. The king wasn’t fully convinced, but figured it wouldn’t hurt to investigate further. He had some of his advisors perform an appraisal on Don Yitzchak’s estate to determine what his wealth was. With this information in hand, he casually engaged Don Yitzchak in conversation, asking him, “So, how much are you worth?” Don Yitzchak, always quick with numbers, quickly spit out a figure. “You are a liar,” said the king. “And if you are lying to me about your worth, I have every reason to assume that the accusations of you having sticky fingers are also true. I have independently evaluated your estate and have ascertained that it is worth double the figure you are giving me.”

Don Yitzchak chuckled and said, “You misunderstood me. The estate to which you refer isn’t really mine, as there is no assurance that I will have it tomorrow. The number I gave you is the amount of money I have given to charity, for that is what is truly mine for all eternity.” (Tragically, his words proved prophetic, as he chose to leave Spain during the Spanish Expulsion, leaving most of his assets behind.)

When we wake up in the morning and need to face our day, we give different levels of priority to every activity we would like to do that day. The more important things absolutely have to get done, while the less important things will have to wait until there is time (Is there ever?). Unfortunately, our vision is often skewed. Instead of getting caught up in the moment, we need to step back and take a broader view of life. What is it that really matters to me? What do I want to take with me after I depart this world? At

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Stories For The Soul

For the King or for Soldiers

based on a story on jewishpress.com

A regiment of Austrian soldiers visited the city of Rimanov. Lacking proper facilities to house the troops, the commanding officer decided to use the main shul in the city for their quarters.

When the Jews of the city were notified, they became frightened. Their only house of worship would now be desecrated. The officials of the congregation pleaded with the officer, but to no avail.

In desperation, they ran to their Rav, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov (1745-1815), for help. While they were discussing the matter with him, one of the townspeople remarked, “There is yet a chance that the army will not use the shul.” Surprised, they turned towards him and asked, “Why?”

“They would be foolish if they did,” he replied. “The walls are shaky, the roof is leaking and the whole appearance of the shul is drab and dirty.”

When the rabbi heard this, he jumped up in anguish and exclaimed, “Now I know why Hashem punished us with the confiscation of our shul. If we ourselves have no consideration for Hashem’s house, if we do not respect it enough to keep it clean and tidy and in good order, then why should Hashem have consideration for us? He decided to turn it over to the army, for they may take better care of it.

“This I advise we do immediately,” continued the rabbi. “Hire carpenters and laborers to repair the shul. Beautify it until it becomes the holy place it is supposed to be.”

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Kollel Happenings

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.

A SECOND LOOK AT THE SPLITTING OF THE SEA THIS MONDAY

Get ready for Pesach! Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for a discussion on the purpose and impact of the Splitting of the Sea. For women, this Monday night, March 27th, 7:45 pm at the Sommers home, 4902 S. Xenia. For info and sponsorship opportunities, contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

RABBANIT MIZRACHI ON SUNDAY, APRIL 2ND

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel presents a video for women, *Getting Ready for Pesach*. Sunday, April 2nd at 8 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center-Ohel Yissochor, 4902 S. Xenia St.. Rabbanit Yemima is one of the most in-demand speakers today, attracting hundreds of women to her lectures, where she presents deep messages with a sense of humor. Suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Between the days that we read from two Torah scrolls (at one reading), which are Mishna/Gemara-based, and which are of later origin?

A: Only Chanukah (coinciding with Shabbos or Rosh Chodesh), the Four Parshios, and Shabbos which coincides with Rosh Chodesh are incidences of two Mishna/Gemara mandated Torah-readings at one time; hence, two scrolls are used. The custom of reading the verses of the *Korbanos Hayom* (special sacrifices of a holiday) from a second Torah scroll (as is done on Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, the first two

days of Sukkos, Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos, Shemini Atzeres, Pesach and Shavuos) is of later origin. It is first mentioned by Rabbi Amram Gaon (d. 875), and may have been practiced as early as the Rabanan Savorai (the Torah authorities who lived during the period immediately following the completion of the Gemara, circa 500 CE-600 CE).

(Sources: Tosafos Megillah 30b and Rosh Megillah 4:10)

This week's question: Which *haftara* is read on Shabbos Hagadol (the Shabbos preceding Pesach), and why?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yosef Caro – the Bais Yosef Part XVIII

Rabbi Caro's influence on the Jewish Nation cannot be overstated. His *Shulchan Aruch* is the standard that is relied upon for normative Jewish law. Countless works and innumerable responsa revolve around the *Shulchan Aruch*, the *Bais Yosef* commentary, and many of his other works. Among the Sefardic communities, who largely follow his rulings (as opposed to those of the Rema,

who is generally authoritative for Ashkenazic Jews), he is known as "Maran Bet Yosef," Our Master the Bais Yosef. To others, he is referred to simply as "the Mechaber," the Author, in recognition of his authorship of the *Shulchan Aruch*. He remains a paradigm of scholarship and piety for others who follow in his footsteps to emulate.

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my funeral, do I want them to talk about the money I made, or the family I loved? Should they talk about my devotion to my team, or my devotion to my G-d? If we keep this in mind, then perhaps we can prioritize family over money and mitzvos

over amusements. Don't get too attached to those things which will fly away, sooner or later, but will never last for eternity. Focus on those things which are eternal; after all, that is what we are here for in the first place.

Stories For The Soul

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The elders of the congregation rushed away immediately and engaged workers to repair and beautify the shul. They worked continuously, day and night, until the shul was once again a beautiful place to behold.

A few days later, the general arrived to inspect the shul and give final approval for its use. He spent many hours examining and measuring. Finally, he announced that the shul was too small to be used. Inasmuch as there was no

larger hall in Rimanov, they decided to move to the next town where there were larger quarters for the entire regiment.

The Jewish People generously gave of their resources and time to build a magnificent structure, the *Mishkan*, for Hashem to reside in. It is important that we dedicate ourselves to creating houses of worship fitting for the King of kings.