



Vayeitzei 5776

November 20, 2015

A Taste of Torah

Sense & Sensitivity

By Rabbi Akiva Stern

Unity, *Achdus*, Oneness. We hear these words and wonder. How can the Jewish Nation, so spread out geographically, truly unite? How can a people so divided on culture, community and religious observance truly become one? It seems to me that *Leah Imainu*, our Matriarch Leah, holds the key to this one.

In this week's Torah portion, Leah gives birth to seven children. The first six are male and the Torah clearly states the meaning and source of their names. But when the Torah records the birth of Leah's seventh child, a daughter named Dinah, no mention is made of why her name was chosen and its significance. Rashi, as usual, comes to the rescue. He quotes the gemara in Brachos (60a) that addresses this discrepancy. The gemara notes that the verse telling of Dinah's birth states, "And afterwards, she bore a daughter." (Vayetze 30:21) The simple meaning of the verse tells us that following the birth of her son Zevulun, Leah bore a daughter. The gemara, however, offers another interpretation of "afterwards" that is hinted in the name Dinah, whose etymology traces to the word "*din*," judgement. The gemara elaborates that when Leah was expecting for the seventh time, she rendered a judgment concerning herself. She calculated that each of the maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah, had already given birth to two sons. If the child she was carrying would be male, then only one son would be left for her sister Rachel to complete the twelve tribes, dropping Rachel's status as mother to the Jewish Nation secondary even to the maidservants!

In consideration of her sister's pain, Leah prayed that the child she was carrying be born female, and her prayer was miraculously answered! She therefore chose the name Dinah, referencing the

difficult internal judgment she rendered regarding her sister's feelings.

My rebbi, Rabbi Nissan Kaplan, asked, why did Leah name her after her inner struggle? Why not name her after her decision to forgo the merit of mothering yet another tribe to assure that her sister wouldn't feel bad? Better yet, why not name her after the generous act of praying on her sister's behalf? Furthermore, let us consider that Rachel had selflessly allowed Leah to marry her husband-to-be on her very own wedding night! Certainly, the least Leah could do was begrudge her sister a minimum of two tribes! What was so special about Leah's actions?

He answers with a thought-provoking, meaningful lesson. Once it had occurred to Leah how painful it would be for her sister if she bore a seventh son, her next step was clear. Certainly she would forgo a seventh tribe for her sister who had given her so much! This was not what was remarkable. What was so remarkable was the fact that even in the midst of reveling in her own joy, she was able to recognize her sister's potential heartache. Leah put her finger on an important aspect of human nature. When we see others in need and empathize with them, naturally, we will reach out to support, comfort and help them as much as possible. But too often we miss the opportunity. Too often, we are so wrapped up in our own lives that we fail to see the needs, the pain, and the difficulties of our own brothers and sisters, our very own brethren!

We must follow in the footsteps of our holy Matriarch Leah and render judgment upon ourselves. Let us look around and really see one another clearly. Let us take the time to be sensitive to each other's needs and difficulties. When we do so, it will lead to great kindness and, ultimately, even greater unity!

Stories For The Soul

Hard to Swallow

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) was the rabbi of the Russian town of Luban for a number of years before he immigrated to the United States. His tenure as rabbi began while he was still single, so a local woman brought him food for lunch (the main meal of the day) on a daily basis.

One day, Rabbi Feinstein's sister came to visit him, and she joined him for lunch. When she tasted the food, she discovered that it was nearly inedible.

"How do you eat such terrible-tasting food?" she asked her brother.

"I force myself in order to avoid embarrassing the cook," replied Rabbi Feinstein.

Rabbi Feinstein later told his sister that she did him a great favor that day by stuffing all the food into her bag and taking it with her, so that at least for that day he didn't have to eat it. Yet he wouldn't give any indication to the cook that her food was awful.

In this week's parsha, Yaakov gives Rochel a special code to ensure that her father Lavan doesn't switch her for her sister Leah on her wedding night. But Rochel, seeing that Leah would be humiliated upon being discovered, gives her the information, thus allowing another woman into the house she would build with Yaakov. Despite the great self-sacrifice, great people go to great lengths to avoid bringing shame upon others.

Kollel Happenings

EAST SIDE KUMZITZ THIS MOTZOEI SHABBOS

Join the Kollel for an evening of inspirational singing this Motzoei Shabbos, November 21st, at the home of Shlomo & Raacheli Fried, 311 S. Magnolia St., at 7:30 pm. For more information, please contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & HALACHA AT NEXT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Daniel J. Sherwinter, Esq., partner, Marsh Fischman & Breyfogle LLP, and adjunct faculty at University of Colorado – Boulder, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they delve into the challenges posed by artificial intelligence. December 2nd, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING THIS THURSDAY

Start your day off on the right foot with Torah study! The Kollel is offering learning at three locations: at the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash and at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, shacharis at 8 am followed by breakfast and learning at approximately 9, and at EDOS, shacharis at 7:30 am followed by breakfast and learning at approximately 8:30. The topic will be *Singing His Praises: Whole-Hallel vs. Half-Hallel*. For more information or sponsorship opportunities, please contact info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: When may one recite *kaddish* twice in close succession without a *minyan*?

A: If a *minyan* began praying the *Shemone Esrei* together, and some people left, thus leaving those remaining without a *minyan*, the *chazzan* nevertheless repeats *Shemone Esrei* out loud and recites any *kaddish* usually recited as part of the *Shemone Esrei* section of the prayers, including the *Chatzi Kaddish* (Half-Kaddish) following *tachanun* at *shacharis*, and *Kaddish Tiskabel* recited after *Ashrei-U'va Letzion* recited at *shacharis*. (At *mincha* and *maariv*, only *Kaddish Tiskabel* would be recited, as by a standard *mincha* or *maariv*.) Thus, at *shacharis*, *kaddish* is recited twice without a *minyan*. (It should be noted that any *kaddish* usually recited after *Aleinu* or the other final sections

of the services is not recited in such a case, since they are not part of the *Shemone Esrei* section, and the *minyan* was present only during *Shemone Esrei*.) 2) On *Motzoei Shabbos*, if the *minyan* dissolved before the *kaddish* following *Shemone Esrei*, a similar situation arises, for the *Chatzi Kaddish* is recited, followed by *Ashrei- Ve'ata Kadosh*, followed by *Kaddish Tiskabel*. (See Mishna Berurah 55:10. See also Aruch Hashulchan 55:7, where he disagrees regarding reciting *Chatzi Kaddish* when the *minyan* is lost.)

This week's question: Why is *kaddish* recited after reading the Torah on weekdays but not at *mincha* on Shabbos?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbeinu Gershom Me'or Hagolah – Part II

Another well-known ruling of Rabbeinu Gershom concerned Jews who had converted to Christianity under duress. He ruled that when these Jews returned to the fold, they were not to be punished or treated differently than their brethren who had remained loyal Jews, including not demeaning them for their lapse.

Rabbeinu Gershom was personally affected by forced conversions. In 1012, the Jews were temporarily expelled from Mainz, and, during this period, his son was forcibly converted to Christianity. Rabbeinu Gershom observed *shiva* (the seven-day mourning period) for his son twice: when he converted, and again when his son died.

Rabbeinu Gershom also rendered a number of important halachic decisions regarding business and commerce in Christian Europe. These decisions were vital to enabling the Jews to earn a living in a fervently Christian society.

Rabbeinu Gershom's many rulings and enactments became the bedrock for

Ashkenazi Jewry of future generations. Indeed, so accepted did they become, that the great Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel (1250/59-1327; better known by the acronym of his name, the Rosh) wrote that "his rulings are permanent fixtures as if they have been handed down from Mount Sinai."

Rabbeinu Gershom's first wife passed away, and he remarried a widow named Buna. Her name is known from a replacement *kesuba* (marriage contract), written in 1013, that apparently was available to the public. There is some speculation that perhaps the first marriage contract was lost when the Jews were temporarily expelled from Mainz in 1012.

There is some question as to when Rabbeinu Gershom passed away. Some say it was in 1028; others say in 1040. He taught up to the moment of his death, for the words of Torah uttered just before his passing are quoted by his students. He was buried in Mainz.

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the

Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z"l.

Denver Community Kollel: 1516 Xavier Street, Denver, CO 80204 Tel: 303-820-2855 Fax: 303-820-2806

Email: info@denverkollel.org Web: www.denverkollel.org

To receive Torah Weekly by email, send an email to torah-subscribe@denverkollel.org