



A Taste of Torah

Ruffle Your Feathers

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Have you ever had someone knock at your door, asking for some money? I hope you treat them nicely – even if they interrupt your dinner. “There but for the grace of G-d go I,” said someone famous at some point in history, and we would do well to remember that adage as we grumble and stumble to open the door. But I’m not here to preach to you about that today, because I am assuming that, at the very least, you smile and hand the poor person at your door a donation and wish him or her well.

Here is my main question: How do you *relate* to the beggar at your door? Do you look at the person as a peer, or as an unfortunate individual who is to be pitied? Even if you invite the person in from the cold for a hot cup of tea – even if you put him up at your house – would you sit next to him at the Shabbos Kiddush? Or would you hope he doesn’t come too close, considering he is shabbily dressed, unkempt, and not someone you’d like to associate with?

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz (1873-1936) teaches us how much we have much to strive for in our lives. In this week’s parsha, the Torah discusses the destitute person who, unable to afford the more respectable animal sacrifice, brings a bird as an *olah* (burnt offering). The Torah tells us that the feathers are to be offered upon the *mizbe’ach* (altar). Rashi points out that burning feathers produce a particularly unpleasant smell, yet Hashem wants this putrid plumage to go up in a puff of smoke

to show how dear the sacrifice of a poor person is.

There are a lot of ways to show your appreciation for someone’s willingness to go the extra mile, but it is a bit puzzling that Hashem chooses to show His affection for the impoverished by bringing a bad aroma into His house.

Rabbi Levovitz explains that the Torah wants to make a pointed, pertinent point to us: It is not enough to just show kindness to the less-privileged. You have to draw them close to you, even though you may think it unfitting. You don’t like the way he smells? You think she dresses too shabbily? You just want to hand him a check and send him on his way? It’s not in line with your social status and strata to be seen with her? Hang on a second, says Hashem. I am going to take the feathers and have them placed upon the pyre of the Altar. It smells, does it? That’s the whole point! The poor man is precious to Me, I am close to him, he stands with Me, even though it may not be particularly pleasant.

And so must it be with us. It is not enough to perform kindness for those less fortunate than us. We need to see how special a person is on the inside, despite less-than-attractive externalities, move past the superficial veneer that pushes us away, and truly bring that person close. It may not be an easy task, but Hashem sets an example for us to work toward.

Stories For The Soul

Sole Luxuries

The Ruzhiner Rebbe, Rabbi Yisrael Friedman (1796-1850), conducted his Chassidic court with great wealth and opulence. He lived in a palatial mansion, travelled in a stunning horse-drawn coach, and had the finest foods served in his presence. Some criticized his extravagance, but he was revered and acclaimed by many, who saw the great display of luxury as a means of bringing greater glory to G-d.

A classic example of the Ruzhiner’s use of affluence solely in the service of G-d occurred once during *Kiddush Levana* (the Sanctification of the New Moon). It was a cold, wintry night, and the ground was covered with snow. After standing outside, reciting the prayers, for some time, the Ruzhiner completed his supplications and left. His chassidim noticed some blood in the snow where he had stood, and proceeded to investigate its source. What they discovered stunned them. The Ruzhiner wore a pair of splendid boots, but, as the chassidim found out, the boots had no soles! The Ruzhiner did not enjoy the comfort of his boots, even in the freezing cold. The soles of his feet had become stuck to the ground as he stood outside, and when he departed, some skin came off, causing blood to fall into the snow.

This week’s parsha discusses the laws of the various sacrifices offered in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and, later, in the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple). One aspect of a sacrifice is of giving one’s personal belongings for Hashem’s glory, instead of simply using them for one’s own benefit.

Kollel Happenings

RABBANIT MIZRACHI THIS SUNDAY, APRIL 2ND

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel presents a video for women, *Getting Ready for Pesach*. This Sunday, April 2nd at 8 pm (doors open 7:45) 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. Sponsorship available. Suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

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 and 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.

RABBI REISMAN WEEKLY IN DENVER

Join thousands around the globe in listening to the renowned weekly Navi shiur of Rabbi Yaakov Reisman! Rabbi Reisman's weekly Motzoei Shabbos class is shown at Beth Jacob High School, 5100 W. 14th Ave., at 9:30 pm. For sponsorships and info, contact info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Which *haftara* is read on Shabbos Hagadol (the Shabbos preceding Pesach), and why?

A: There is a universal custom to read a special *haftara* from Malachi (the final section of Trei Asar, the Twelve Prophets) on Shabbos Hagadol. The Levush (c. 1530-1612) cites two customs regarding this reading, based on the reason for choosing this *haftara*. The first was to read this *haftara* every Shabbos Hagadol, regardless of the calendar date. This is due to the closing section of the *haftara*, which tells of Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet) heralding the future redemption. This

is closely related to Moshe heralding the redemption in Egypt, an appropriate pre-Pesach theme. This custom is followed by most communities today. The second custom, currently followed by some communities, is to read this *haftara* on Shabbos Hagadol only if it is Erev Pesach (the day preceding Pesach). We will examine this second custom, as well as a third one, next week.

This week's question: What is the reasoning behind the custom of some communities to read the *haftara* of Shabbos Hagadol only if coincides with Erev Pesach (Pesach Eve)?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

The Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles - Part I

Rabbi Moshe Isserles, known by the acronym of his name, the ReMA, is one of the greatest Ashkenazic Torah leaders of the past half-millennia. His glosses on the *Shulchan Aruch* immortalized him as one of the major halachic authorities, particularly for Ashkenazic Jewry.

Moshe was born to Reb Yisrael, a wealthy and learned individual, in 1520. Reb Yisrael, also known by the diminutive Isserl, lived in Krakow, where he was one of the leaders of the community. Rabbi Moshe's last name, Isserles, means "of Isserl."

It is told that Reb Yisrael was careful not to conduct business after midday on Friday, a custom observed by many Jews as a sign of respect for the incoming Shabbos, as well as to ensure that one has enough time to properly prepare and welcome the Shabbos as it arrives.

One Friday morning, a very wealthy man entered Reb Yisrael's shop, informing him that he wanted to purchase a large amount of goods. The size of the order meant Reb Yisrael would make a handsome profit, and he began to assemble the items. However, Reb Yisrael soon realized that he would not be able to complete the order before noon. He

asked the customer if he would mind returning after Shabbos to pick up his order, explaining that he never worked on Friday afternoon so as to properly honor and prepare for Shabbos. The customer became angry and shouted at Reb Yisrael. He threatened to take his business to a different store, which would result in a large loss for Reb Yisrael. Reb Yisrael, though, stood his ground and informed the customer that he could not fill the order until after Shabbos. The customer did indeed depart without making a purchase.

Not long after this incident of standing up for the honor of Shabbos, Reb Yisrael had a son, whom he named Moshe. The infant grew to become one of the great Torah leaders in Jewish history, and it is said that his last name, Isserles, is a reminder that Rabbi Moshe was born due to his father's sacrifice for Shabbos.

Young Moshe, after studying in his hometown of Krakow for some time, went to Lublin, then the third-largest Jewish community in Poland, to study at the yeshiva there. The yeshiva was the largest in Poland, and was headed by Rabbi Sholom Shachna of Lublin (c. 1510-1558).