

A Taste of Torah

Share Your Location

by Rabbi Akiva Stern

One snowy morning last winter I rode a ski lift to the top of the mountain for the first time. I stood there, breathless, taking in the astounding panoramic view. Breathless; not only due to the high altitude but because I was simply blown away by the majesty and grandeur of the snow-covered Rocky Mountains. Whilst I stood there, I felt G-dliness, I knew deeply that this was the handiwork of our Creator and Maker, that I was in His presence. You can imagine, though, that after I arrived home later that day, tired out from a long day spent skiing, that euphoric feeling would have faded. Certainly, in the doorway of my own home I was not overwhelmed with the appreciation of G-dliness that I had experienced at 12,000 feet.

The Talmud, predicated on a term used in this week's Torah portion, teaches us that this outlook is not the most accurate one. The Talmud (Pesachim 88a) notes that our forefathers use three different ways to refer to a place of G-dliness. Our Forefather Avraham referred to the spot upon which Yitzchak was bound as a sacrifice - later to become the Temple Mount - as a mountain (see Bereishis 22:14). Later on, the Torah recounts that Yitzchak had gone out to the field to recite the evening prayers. The Talmud (ibid.), understanding that Yitzchak prayed at the same location, deduces from this verse that Yitzchak felt that a field was symbolic of the greatest point of connection with G-d. Finally, the Talmud notes that in our parsha, Yaakov named the very same place, where he had a G-dly vision as he slept, BethEl, literally, "the House of G-d." The Gemara

concludes that Yaakov's terminology is actually most correct, as a house is the greatest symbol of the connection that a human being can share with G-d.

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944-2001) explains the difference between these viewpoints. These giants, these great men, had different perceptions on a very deep matter: how to best connect with G-d. They were all correct to some extent. Avraham understood that G-d was so awesome, so lofty, a lowly human being would need to ascend to a figurative mountaintop if he or she was to have a meaningful connection with G-d. Yitzchak, on the other hand, understood that there could be a two-way interaction with G-d, similar to that of a field, where, in direct relation to how much effort a person invests in agricultural work, he reaps the benefits. So, too, Yitzchak understood that even in our mundane world, a human being could connect with G-d within the purview of his own reality. Finally, Yaakov taught us an invaluable lesson; that we could live with G-d. We can build a household within which each and every human being lives with G-d, in much the same way a husband and wife build a beautiful home together. A brief gander at Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs) brings this idea to life as Shlomo Hamelech (King Solomon) depicts our relationship with G-d in the most intimate and loving fashion. With this beautiful idea in mind, it behooves us to try and see our own homes as a place of unique G-dliness; to create a space in which G-d will feel welcome, and to remove and avoid those things that would distance Him from our abodes.



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories For The Soul

Run for Your Life

Life in Eastern Europe for the Jews tended to be rather precarious. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was not uncommon for police to randomly stop a Jew and demand to see his "papers," the documents that proved he was legally allowed to be present in the area. Failure to show proper documentation could bring severe repercussions.

The story is told of two yeshiva students who were going for a walk during their lunch break. As they strolled, they noticed a policeman rapidly approaching. One student turned in a panic to his friend, "I left my papers back in my room! What shall I do?!"

"Don't worry," said the other, "I'll handle this." He immediately turned around and took off in the other direction. The policeman, seeing one student fleeing, gave chase. The student who had forgotten his papers hastened back to his lodgings to retrieve them.

Meanwhile, the young man ran on, with the officer in hot pursuit. After a couple of minutes, the yeshiva student slowed, and the policeman immediately grabbed him and demanded to see his papers. The fellow pulled his papers out of his pocket and displayed them to the very confused officer.

"If you have your papers," said the policeman angrily, "why did you run away?"

"Run away?" said the fellow

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Kollel Happenings

JEWISH FAMILY EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25TH

Join the Kollel for family fun at the annual Jewish Children's Extravaganza on Sunday, Dec. 25th, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: \$15 per child, \$7.50 per adult - includes entire facility; discounted group rates are available before 12/21. For general information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org.

NEW! RABBI FRAND & RABBI REISMAN WEEKLY IN DENVER

The Kollel is offering the renowned weekly lectures of Rabbi Yissochor Frand and Rabbi Yaakov Reisman. Rabbi Frand's Thursday evening parsha shiur will be shown at the Kollel Southeast Torah Center, 9550 E. Belleview Ave., on Thursdays at 7 pm. Rabbi Reisman's Motzoei Shabbos Navi shiur will be shown at Beth Jacob High School, 5100 W. 14th Ave., at 8 pm. For sponsorships and info, contact info@denverkollel.org.

LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING THIS DECEMBER 25TH

Start your day off on the right foot with Torah study! Join the Kollel for learning at three locations around Denver. At the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash, breakfast at 9:15 followed learning. At the Kollel Southeast Torah Center, shacharis at 8 followed by breakfast and learning at 9, and at EDOS, shacharis at 7:30 followed by breakfast and learning at 8:30. Topic being studied is *Right on the Money: The Origins of Chanukah Gelt and Gifts*.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is unique about the *haftara* of Parshas Vayetze (according to Ashkenazic custom)?

A: The portion of Navi read on this Shabbos (according to Ashkenazic custom) ends with the verses of *Shuva* (from Hoshea 14:2-10, read, according to most customs, on the Shabbos between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, hence the name Shabbos Shuva), and the final verse speaks about the stumbling of the wicked. On Shabbos Shuva, we add additional verses to the *haftara*. According to most commentators, this

is done to end the *haftara* on a positive note. The Mishna Berurah (428:22) quotes the Chayei Adam (Chapter 118) (by Rabbi Avraham Danzig of Vilna, 1748-1820) who recommends appending two verses (Yoel 2:26-27) to Vayetze's *haftara* as well. This custom is followed by some communities.

This week's question: How is the starting date of *Tal U'matar* (the supplication for rain in our daily prayers) an indication of our belief in the Final Redemption?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Yosef Caro – the Bais Yosef Part III

Yosef's father, Efraim, was a great scholar in his own right, and he was appointed the chief rabbi of Nikopolis. Rabbi Efraim taught his young son Torah until his passing, whereupon Yosef was adopted by his uncle, Rabbi Yitzchak Caro, who continued to teach him.

Rabbi Caro married the daughter of Rabbi Yitzchak Saaba. She passed away, though, and he then married the daughter of Rabbi Chaim ibn Albalag. She, too, passed away, and he married the daughter of Rabbi Zecharia Sechsel later in life.

Between 1520 and 1522, Rabbi Caro lived in Adrianople. After some years there, he decided to emigrate to the Land of Israel (then Palestine). He spent several years journeying there, spending time in Constantinople and Salonica.

By the time Rabbi Caro departed for the Land of Israel, he was already renowned as a

great scholar, teacher, and pious individual. He had already begun working on one of his major works, his commentary of the *Arba'ah Turim*, titled *Bais Yosef* (to be discussed at length later).

At some point during this period of his life, it is said he met Shlomo Molcho, a mysterious and controversial figure. While it is questionable whether or not Rabbi Caro actually met this individual, he was clearly influenced by him. It is worthwhile to digress and explore this man's fascinating and tragic life and his influence on Rabbi Caro.

Shlomo Molcho was born in 1501 as Diego Peres, a member of a powerful and influential Portuguese Marrano family. A child prodigy, he was appointed secretary to the judicial advisers of the king at age twenty. He began to explore his Jewish roots, and taught himself Torah, including Talmud and Kabbalah.

Stories For The Soul

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innocently. "Why, my doctor gave me orders to exercise!"

"Well," said the officer, "didn't you see me running after you? Why didn't you stop when you saw me chasing you?"

"Chasing me!?" exclaimed the student. "I assumed your doctor had given you similar orders, and you were also getting your exercise!"

In this week's parsha, Yaakov goes into exile, living for twenty years with his treacherous uncle (and, later, father-in-law) Lavan. Yaakov's exile is the paradigm of how a Jew must conduct oneself in exile, and he declared at the outset that if Lavan wanted to act deceitfully, he would outmaneuver him.