



Bereishis 5777

October 28, 2016

A Taste of Torah

Limited Access

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

I imagine you probably have a room somewhere in your house that you don't want your children to enter. How do you ensure that they remain safely outside the confines of said area? Generally, locking the room (and not leaving the key in a place where they will find it) suffices. Hiring a security guard would be a bit extreme... which makes a narrative in this week's parsha rather strange.

Adam and Chava have just been sentenced for their crime of eating from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Among the consequences of their actions is that they will be chased from the Garden of Eden, left to fend for themselves in a cold, cruel world, far from G-d. In order to ensure that they do not attempt to reenter the Garden, G-d places destructive angels and flaming, whirling swords at its entrance.

Why the need for an entire security detail at the entrance to the Garden of Eden? Just lock it up, and no one will be able to gain access!

And the remarkable answer: When you don't want anyone to be able to gain entry, you lock the door. If you want there to be *limited* access, you post guards.

Adam and Chava, prior to partaking of the Tree of Knowledge, existed primarily as souls, with a body dedicated to allowing the soul to exist in this world. Eating from the forbidden fruit created a completely new, terrible reality: The body now manifested itself as an independent entity, interested in its own needs, desires and passions. The soul would now struggle to get a word in edgewise, as Mankind descended into an existence focused on physical, not spiritual, achievement.

The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, the Gerrer Rebbe; 1847-1905) explains that the Garden of Eden is a place where a being whose primary existence is the soul, and whose body is secondary and subservient to the soul, lives. Once that

state was lost, the Garden of Eden was no longer the place for humanity. Adam and Chava and their offspring would now have to enter the world outside, a world where the spiritual is dominated by the physical, where holiness lays dormant while wickedness flourishes.

But all was not lost. Adam and Chava *could* return to the Garden – if they would return to their previous, pristine state. To do that, they would need to battle and overcome the evil they had unleashed in themselves and in Creation. They would need to conquer the earth from whence their physical selves sprang – and, by extension, conquer their personal earth, the physical component of themselves – and put it all back in its proper place. Their work was, and still is, to access and reveal the spiritual potential now buried deep inside, the Divine soul, and allow it to shine forth and cast light in a now-darkened universe.

Perhaps we can extend the idea of the Sfas Emes to understand the angels and swords standing at the entrance of the Garden of Eden. These agents of annihilation are a manifestation of the evil that prevents humanity from getting back to its original state. It is the evil that lies in the hearts of men. The path to the Garden is still there, but to get back in, we must overcome our own self-centeredness and lusts. When we triumph over our own malevolence, the external elements of eradication will be destroyed, as well. That achievement will occur as part of the Messianic Era, may it come speedily in our days.

This sounds like a wonderful idea, but it is far easier said than done. While we wait and hope for the day when we will once again enter that rarefied realm, for the meantime, we are on the outside looking at those angels and spinning blades of fire – and they seem more menacing than ever. Is there a way past them now?

The Sfas Emes says that there is. On

Continued on back side

Stories For The Soul

Kneads and Needs

In Warsaw there lived an old woman known as Chancha the Bagel Lady. Every morning, she would rise early and bake her delicious bagels, which she would sell to passersby.

Chancha's customers received more than just a mouth-watering bagel; she would bless them effusively, as well, and it was clear that she meant every word. When she wasn't occupied with a customer, she would recite Psalms from her worn prayer book.

A wealthy man once passed by Chancha, and was quite impressed by her piety and warmth. He told her that he wanted her to retire, and he would provide her a weekly stipend equal to what she earned selling bagels. She would thus be able to devote her time to reciting her heartfelt prayers instead of standing out in the street at her advanced age.

Not long afterwards, though, Chancha was back to selling bagels. She explained to her would-be benefactor, "I'm so sorry, but I simply cannot give up what I do. Every day, upon awaking, I look out the window of my apartment. If it's a nice day, I thank Hashem for the good weather, which will make it easier to do my work as I stand outside.

"As I knead the dough, I thank Hashem for giving me such a delicious bagel recipe that is enjoyed by all. I also thank Him for providing me with the strength and stamina to continue kneading, baking and selling my bagels, even in my old age.

"Once I've sold the day's merchandise, I thank Hashem for making me successful and for giving me the opportunity to provide such tasty bagels to my customers.

"Since I began my 'retirement,'" concluded Chancha, "I simply have not felt that special connection to Hashem that I experienced daily through my work!"

Continued on back side

Kollel Happenings

MAINTAINING JUDICIAL IMPARTIALITY AT NOVEMBER 2ND T4T

Join The Honorable David Richman, Judge, Colorado Court of Appeals, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they find balance in judicial conflicts of interest. This Wednesday, November 2nd, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. CLE credits available. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

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. Please note this class will resume after Sukkos break.

JEWISH LEADVILLE ON NOVEMBER 8TH

The M.B. Glassman GOLD Senior Division presents the latest in its Lifelong Learners series, Jewish Leadville. Presented by William Korn, founder and president of the Temple Israel Foundation of Leadville, this class will explore the Jewish history of the town of Leadville, Colorado. Class is open to men and women of all ages. There is no charge for the class. Tuesday, Nov. 8, 1:30 pm at the Mizel Museum, 400 S. Kearney St.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is the first *aliya* (public Torah-reading) of the yearly cycle?

A: If you answered Choson Bereishis (the *aliya* given on Simchas Torah for the first part of the Book of Bereishis), you are not completely correct! The custom of beginning the Torah anew immediately following its completion on Simchas Torah is mentioned by the Tur (Orach Chaim 669) (authored by Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher, 1270-c. 1340) and practiced nowadays in virtually every Jewish community. A notable exception is the communities of Italy, which do not have a separate Choson Bereishis *aliya*. Rather, the congregation recites aloud some of the Bereishis verses after

the *aliya* for Choson Torah (the final section of the book of Devarim), and only two scrolls are used for the Torah-reading, instead of the three most others use. The first halachically required *aliya* is either on Monday, Thursday or Shabbos, whichever follows Simchas Torah first.

This week's question: While the Torah refers to the months of the Jewish calendar by number only (e.g., the first month, the second month), during the time of the second Temple, the Jews began using Babylonian names for the months (e.g., Nissan, Iyar, Sivan). Which month is commonly referred to by a shortened version of its name?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

The Ran – Part II

The Ran is perhaps most famous for his commentary on the Rif (Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi; 1013-1103). The Rif had written a halachic work, based largely on the halachic portions of the Talmud, along with his own comments and opinions and the views of other Torah authorities that he incorporated. The Ran's commentary to the Rif was preserved for many tractates (though not all), and it is published alongside the Rif's work in the back of many modern-day editions of the Talmud.

The Ran also wrote a commentary to numerous tractates of the Talmud. His

most famous Talmudic commentary is that on Tractate Nedarim. There is no extant commentary of Rashi to Nedarim, and the Ran's commentary, while far lengthier than the usually terse style of Rashi, provides the line-by-line explanation to the Talmudic text. It is published alongside the Talmudic text of Nedarim in all modern editions of the Talmud.

The Ran wrote a series of discourses on subjects of Jewish philosophy and ethics, known as Drashos HaRan. This work is also widely studied and quotes by later lecturers, speakers and commentators.

A Taste of Torah

Continued from front side

Shabbos, when the physical world fades away, when the work of the other six days ceases and we can wipe away the sweat from our brow, the soul assumes a much more prominent position in our lives. If we take advantage of the power

of the day, if we indeed leave the vanities of the physical world behind and embrace the sanctity of the day, we can, to some degree, reenter that extraordinary, unsullied realm of the Garden of Eden.

Stories for the Soul

Continued from front side

As Hashem created the world, it lacked one thing: Someone who would recognize Who fashioned everything, pray to Him and thank

Him for His kindness. When Hashem blew life into Adam, a being who could come to that realization came into existence.