



# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Matos-Masei 5776

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## A Taste of Torah Positive Thinking

By Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

Newspapers in November of 1991 carried the story of Gulf War veterans being prohibited from donating blood. The cause: they had been exposed to a tiny sand fly that transmits a parasite that could infect the blood stream. One can imagine the precautions of the US military to ensure the health of the 900,000 men and women who made up the US-led coalition. This tiny sand fly is but one of many examples that faced the modern-day military as they entered the desert for an extended stay.

With this in mind, we can't help but be amazed at the miracle of survival of the fledgling Jewish Nation through their forty-year sojourn in the desert. Taking a step back and looking at the entry of the Jews into the desert, it seems incredible that a nation of men, women and children would be willing to take the plunge and enter the desert without much in terms of food, water, and shelter! Indeed, the prophet Yirmyahu proclaims (Jeremiah 2:2), "... so said Hashem, I remember the kindness of your youth and the love of your betrothal, as you followed Me into the barren desert." The Malbim has a beautiful explanation of this verse and its placement at the beginning of the book of Yirmiyahu. The book of Yirmiyahu contains many of the admonishments that were given to the Jewish People in the time period leading up to the destruction of the First Temple. As an introduction to the suffering being foretold to the Jewish People, says the Malbim, the message was first given by Hashem, "I will never forget the great love and devotion you displayed, following Me into the desert." Even when times are tough, Hashem's love is

always present. This gives the proper context to our collective national suffering throughout history: It is always Hashem, our Father, acting out of love, for our betterment.

We now find ourselves in the days leading up to Tisha B'av, the day that commemorates the destruction of both Temples and the subsequent exile that we are still suffering today. When we ponder the sins that caused it all, and as we strive to rectify our mistakes and merit the final redemption, we can sometimes fall into a state of semi-depression. We may even feel that this time of year calls for depression. Rabbi Yehuda Halevy, in his classic work Kuzari, writes (3:11) that just as we are enjoined to have a positive frame of mind with regard to our personal travails, we are supposed to think the same of our national suffering. Excessive sadness will preclude us from serving Hashem properly, as we can only serve Hashem with joy when we feel truly grateful. The feelings of depression and hopelessness destroy our ability to feel thankful.

Our Sages teach us that the Sin of the Spies was the origin of the suffering of all the subsequent exiles. What was the Sin of the Spies? The Seforno (Rabbi Ovadiah Seforno; c. 1475-1550) explains that the Jewish People were presented with an amazing opportunity to appreciate Hashem's goodness. Instead, they worried that their sins had caused them to lose favor in Hashem's eyes. This explanation leads to an obvious question: Their reaction seems to be a manifestation of fear of Hashem, so why did it lead to such severe consequences? Perhaps we can suggest that the Jews neglected to focus on the tremendous goodness

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## Stories For The Soul

### Speech Therapy

A man once came to the Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avraham Yeshiaya Karelitz; 1878-1953) to annul a vow he had made. The Torah allows, under certain circumstances, a vow to be annulled in the presence of three people.

Another individual was in the room with the Chazon Ish and the petitioner, and the Chazon Ish asked him to summon a third person. The man returned with someone moments later, and the Chazon Ish, along with the other two men, annulled the vow. As the petitioner was about to leave, the Chazon Ish asked him to remain behind, as he had something to tell him.

After the third person who had been pulled in from the street had left, the Chazon Ish turned to the petitioner and said, "The third man, who just left, was not sufficiently versed in the laws of vows to be able to perform the annulment. I did not say anything so as not to embarrass him, but now that he has departed, please go find another person so we can redo the annulment."

In this week's parsha, the Torah teaches us the laws of vows: how they are made, what they impose, and how they can be annulled. From an ethical standpoint, these laws teach us the effect one's words can have on oneself and others - and that responsibility for what one says extends far beyond the laws of vows.

## Kollel Happenings

### SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM

Attention boys entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade and older! The Kollel is once again holding its Summer Night Seder for Bachurim at the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash. Sunday-Thursday, mincha 7:45 pm, followed by learning. Ma'ariv at 9:10 pm. Stipends available for boys who maintain the schedule. For info or sponsorship opportunities, please contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org).

### SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE WITH RABBI BINYOMIN HALPERN

The Kollel will hold its Summer Scholar-in-Residence program for the coming week, August 7-11. Rabbi Binyomin Halpern, Rav of Cong. Bais Halevy and father of Kollel Scholar Rabbi Shmuel Halpern, will deliver classes and talks for both men and women in a number of venues. For more details, visit the Kollel website, [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### A SECOND LOOK AT TU B'AV

Ever wonder what the holiday of Tu B'Av (the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av) is really about? Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for a second look at this enigmatic holiday. At two locations: Sunday, August 7<sup>th</sup> at the Kollel West Side building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 10 am, for women only, and Monday, August 8<sup>th</sup> at Aish, 7:45 pm, for men and women. For more info or sponsorship opportunities, contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org).

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** Which custom is associated specifically with the Torah reading of *Parshas Masei*?

**A:** The Mishna Berurah (428:21) quotes the Tzror Hamor (written by a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish scholar) that the *ba'al koreh* (reader from the Torah) should not break during the readings of the 42 *masa'os* (stops along the Jews' journey through the desert). This is especially relevant during the infrequent occurrence when *Parshas Masei* is read on a separate week instead of together with *Parshas Matos*. Although most *chumashim* note the end of the first *aliya* in middle of the *mas'aos*, many (though not all) have the custom to make the break

elsewhere, in accordance with the Tzror Hamor. This year, only Eretz Yisroel will read *Parshas Matos* and *Parshas Masei* separately. This is to allow the communities of the Diaspora to "catch up," as they are lagging a week behind, not having read the weekly parsha on Shabbos, the eighth day of *Pesach*, which was celebrated in the Diaspora only.

**This week's question:** In many *chumashim*, *Megillas Eichah* (Book of Lamentations) is followed by a strange mnemonic, *YaTKaK*. What does it stand for? (Hint: 4/24)

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### The Rambam - Part XII

Ultimately, the debate regarding the Rambam's works would be reconciled by another Moshe, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (1194-1270), better known by the acronym of his name, the Ramban. The Ramban was the greatest Torah authority in Spain and a master kabbalist, and he was respected by Jews world-wide. While the Ramban often disagreed with the Rambam's positions, he had tremendous respect for the man and his Torah knowledge.

The universal respect the Ramban

commanded allowed him to mediate between the two sides of the dispute. He posited that the Rambam's works were necessary for the communities where philosophy was being studied regardless, and the bans against the Rambam's works ought to be removed. Nonetheless, he opposed the widespread and public study of the Rambam's works, saying the Rambam himself had never intended that philosophy be studied by the masses. The Ramban succeeded in quelling the flames of controversy, and things settled down for some fifty years.

## A Taste of Torah

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of Hashem, which led them to question the promise He had made to bring them into the Land of Israel against all odds. Of course, we must fear Hashem, but we can never lose sight of the fact that in the greater scheme of things, all is truly for the best. As we mourn the destruction of the Temple, let us also appreciate the miracle of our survival

through the desert all those years ago and the miracle of our survival through this exile, as well as all the wonderful gifts that we are personally grateful for. With this positive mindset, we can rectify the sins that brought the exile and look to a future of Hashem's complete benevolence.