



# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Beshalach 5776

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## A Taste of Torah Of Songs and Fruits

By Rabbi Eli Mozes

They were caught between a rock and a hard place, the Egyptian army was closing in fast, and there was nowhere to go but east, into the sea. The faithful among them cried out to Hashem (Exodus 14:10), while the wicked among them turned to Moshe and sarcastically asked, "Are there not enough graves in Egypt that you had to bring us here to die?" (ibid:11) Some even contemplated jumping into the water so as not to give the Egyptians the pleasure of killing them. (Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel ibid:13) Just when things looked their bleakest, Hashem made a miracle, a miracle far greater than all of the plagues that He had wrought upon the Egyptians. Hashem caused the sea to split, so that the Jews could pass through on dry land. The Egyptians recklessly chased after them, only to have the sea walls collapse upon them, drowning them. On top of all that, Hashem had the corpses spit out of the sea at the feet of the Jews so that they could see G-d's judgment; the very Egyptians who had thrown the Jewish babies into the Nile came to a watery end. After witnessing all this, the Jewish People - under the leadership of Moshe - burst out in collective song, expressing the joys of that moment for all eternity.

This song has earned a place in the Jewish liturgy and is recited daily during the morning *shacharis* prayers. Rabbi Shalom Wallach points out that if you inspect the text, you will notice that there is something odd. Instead of the Jewish People discussing their personal salvation, they only talk about what Hashem has done, with statements like "I will sing to Hashem for he is exalted," "Hashem is master of war," "Your

right hand, Hashem, is glorified with strength," and "Who is like You among the heavenly powers."

There is an important lesson to be learned from this. Instead of the Jewish reaction being, "Wow, that was amazing! Now I will live another day to eat *matza*," their reaction was, "Wow, that was so cool! Now the name of Hashem will be glorified throughout the world!" In a similar vein, in the Pesach Haggadah we list, in ascending order, all of the great things that Hashem has done for us - the famed *Dayenu*. The pinnacle of this poem is not that the Jewish People were able to settle in comfort in the Land of Israel but, rather, the building of the Temple, a place where Hashem's presence is experienced and we can serve and connect with him.

In our time, we have experienced the return of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel. Let us take a lesson from our forefathers and realize that the greatest value of the Land of Israel is not in the creature comforts that it provides, nor in the freedom from persecution which it may provide, but rather that through the Land of Israel we can bring about *Kiddush Hashem* (Sanctification of the Name of Hashem) in this world. To quote the words of a contemporary singer, "It's not about the land or the sea, not the country, but the dwelling of His Majesty."

Another application of this is in the upcoming holiday of Tu B'Shvat (the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Shevat, the New Year for the trees). One would think that the proper time to celebrate the New Year of the trees would be when they start blooming or, perhaps, when they bring forth

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## Stories For The Soul

### Bread from the Window, Manna from Heaven

*based on a story on revach.net*

Reb Yosef Friedenson (1922-2013), a noted Jewish activist, writer and historian, was a Holocaust survivor, and he wrote extensively about his experiences during those terrible years. Before being sent to Auschwitz, he lived in the Warsaw Ghetto. He wrote that one of the most pitiful sights in the ghetto was the hordes of homeless children wandering around in rags, barefoot, with their stomachs swollen from hunger. They would wander the streets begging for *ah pizele broit* (a crumb of bread). In those precarious times, no one had a crumb of bread to spare, and people usually ignored the cries of these starved children. But Reb Yosef's father, Rabbi Eliezer Gershon Friedenson, would cut up little pieces of bread, wrap them in paper, and throw them out the window. The news spread quickly that a "rich man" was giving away bread, and every night, a group of children would crowd around the window.

One evening, as the children were starting to crowd around, Rabbi Friedenson started cutting up the last loaf of bread in the house. He handed out the entire loaf to the children. There was no bread left in the house for supper or for breakfast the next morning, nor was there any money in the house to buy more. When Rabbi Friedenson realized what he had done, he did not show distress. Instead, he began humming an old Jewish song, "*Oif morgen vet G-tt zorgen*- G-d will worry about tomorrow." He then sat down with his sons, Yosef, Shimshon, and Raphael, and discussed the laws of charity with them - particularly the obligation of everyone, even the poor, to give to others.

This great man perished in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. But one of the lessons he leaves us - that G-d is the ultimate Provider - is the lesson of the manna in this week's Torah portion, and the reason why G-d commanded Moshe to store a jar of manna away for all time - to eternalize the lesson that G-d takes care of our needs.

## Kollel Happenings

### ORGAN DONATIONS & TRANSPLANTS AT NEXT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Brad Kornfeld, Managing Partner, The Kornfeld Companies and Board Chair, The Donor Alliance and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean, Denver Community Kollel, as they flesh out the parts of this vital topic. February 3, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

### CALENDAR DAZE AT A SECOND LOOK THIS SUNDAY

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher as he explores the deeper significance of two enigmatic events on the Jewish calendar: Tu Bishvat and the extra month of the Jewish leap year. Sunday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, will feature *Turning Over a New Leaf: What Does A New Year for Trees Mean!?*, and Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup> will feature *Leap of Faith: The Significance of the Extra Month*. For men and women, 7:30-8:30 pm at Aish Denver.

### RABBANIT MIZRACHI ON FEBRUARY 7<sup>TH</sup> AT AISH

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel and Aish Denver present a video for women, *Tu BiShvat: Lessons for Our Growth*. Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup> at 8 pm at Aish Denver. Rabbanit Yemima was voted one of the most influential women in Israel. She 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.

Lecture sponsored by Rhoda Reiss-Pitler for a refuah shelaima for Tziporah bas Tzirel and Chana Peshy bas Chaya Sura.

No charge, suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** Which halachically controversial custom is associated with Parshas Beshalach?

**A:** The Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 324:7) advises against the prevalent custom of feeding birds on Shabbos Shira (another name for Parshas Beshalach, based on the *shira*, or song [the Song of the Sea] read in the Torah portion).

This is due to the halacha that on Shabbos, one may not feed animals, fish

or birds that are not dependent upon humans for sustenance. There are other halachic authorities who upheld the custom, as well as some who changed the custom slightly by feeding them on Friday or on the following Sunday. (For a brief synopsis, see Piskei T'shuvos, *ibid.*)

**This week's question:** What words in the Torah have two possible sets of *nekudos* (vowelizations), both of them legitimate?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbeinu Tam, Part I

Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir Tam, known simply as Rabbeinu Tam, was born in the French city of Ramerupt in 1100. His mother, Yocheved, was Rashi's daughter, the eldest of three girls. His father, Rabbi Meir, was Rashi's student and a great scholar in his own right.

Rabbeinu Tam is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of the Tosafists, or *Ba'alei Tosafos*. These were scholars who lived in France and Germany (known as Ashkenaz) during the 12th- and 13th-centuries; many of the most prominent *Ba'alei Tosafos* were Rashi's grandsons. The writings of these great scholars were developed into a commentary on the Talmud known as *Tosafos*, or Additions, where Talmudic passages were analyzed, discrepancies resolved, and difficult passages explained.

The Tosafos commentary also examines (and often disagrees with) the opinions of earlier Talmudic commentators, especially those of Rashi.

Rabbeinu Tam became the leading Torah leader of his age in the Ashkenazic community, and his influence, both in terms of leadership and scholarship, is still felt today.

Rabbenu Tam was a wealthy financier and a personal friend of the governor of the province. After his father's death, Rabbenu Tam became the head of a great yeshiva in his native town of Ramerupt. He had numerous disciples, and at one time, his yeshiva included 80 of the authors of the *Tosafos*, noted scholars, and rabbis of large communities.

## A Taste of Torah

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their fruit, yet we celebrate in the winter when the trees are bare. In light of what we have learned, this fits beautifully. We don't celebrate what we gain from the trees - the fruit - but, rather, we celebrate what's in it for Hashem. The 15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat is a very significant time because this is the start of the new

year of tithes taken from the fruits of the trees. As Jews, we don't look at the world as our own personal smorgasbord, but as a canvas upon which to paint the glory of Hashem. As Yeshaya (Isaiah) prophesied, "This people which I fashioned for Myself, that they might declare My praise." (Isaiah 43:21)

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