



THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Shmini 5776

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A Taste of Torah Soul Food

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

I'm fairly certain all those reading these words are familiar with the saying, "You are what you eat." The health-food industry thrives on this belief, and the trends indicate that people are eating it up, literally. According to a 2015 organic industry survey, U.S. consumer sales of organic products exceeded \$39 billion!

In this week's parsha, we learn of the details of the kosher diet. We are introduced to laws governing which cattle, birds, fish and insects may or may not appear on our tables. The question begs to be asked: What is the reason for these laws? Is USDA grade A bacon really harmful to us? The Abarbanel (Rabbi Don Yitzchok Abarbanel [1437-1508], in his commentary to Shmini 11:13) states unequivocally that the Torah isn't a mere guide to healthy living. Many dangerous species of plants exist that are technically permitted to be eaten. Furthermore, many people consume forbidden foods, yet live healthy lives. It must be, writes the Abarbanel, that these laws are for the benefit of our spiritual well-being only. The Torah provides us with a comprehensive diet to keep us in shape spiritually.

Perhaps we can explain this concept by examining the very essence of food. Isn't it a wonder how a physical object such as food can sustain our bodies, which are a hybrid of both physicality and spirituality? Aren't we using the wrong currency for our souls, akin to pumping orange juice in a gasoline tank? Rabbi Chaim of

Volozhin (1749-1821), in his work Ruach Chaim (3:3), explains that every physical food has elements of spirituality in it and is therefore also a hybrid food! The verse in Parshas Eikev (8:3) states that G-d provided the manna "to let it be known that not on bread alone does man live, but on all emanations of G-d's mouth does man live." This means, says the Ruach Chaim, that we don't exist on the physical bread alone, but, rather, on the spiritual part of the bread, as well. Understanding our daily eating exercises in this light, we can appreciate the need for the restrictions given to us. If we want to be spiritually active, we must maintain the recommended diet.

In light of the above, we can appreciate many other mitzvos, as well. The many mitzvos associated with crops (i.e. tithing, *shemita*, *kilayim* [mixing species], etc.) are closely connected with the spiritual aspects of the food as well. Offerings can also be viewed in a new light. The verse (Vayikra 3:11) refers to them as "the food of the fire for Hashem." Don't food and Hashem sound paradoxical? He doesn't need to eat! Based on our discussion, we can begin to appreciate this aspect as well - it is reconnecting the spiritual side of the food with its Source. May we merit to use our G-d-given eating habits properly and merit all the benefits associated therein!

Stories For The Soul

A Little Girl's Tears

Rabbi Dovid Halevi Segal (1586-1667) was one of the greatest Torah authorities of his time. He wrote a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) called Turei Zahav, or TaZ, and he is known as the Taz after his work.

During the terrible Cossack uprising of 1648-49, when entire Jewish communities were wiped out, he and his wife fled for their lives. They eventually arrived safely in a small village in Poland, and he decided to remain anonymous so he could study Torah undisturbed. However, he needed to earn some money to support himself and his wife, so he hired himself out as a *menaker* (one who removes the halachically forbidden parts of a slaughtered animal) at the local kosher slaughterhouse. It didn't take long for the *shochtim* (ritual slaughterers) to realize their *menaker* was a learned man, and they began bringing him their halachic questions that arose with the slaughtered animals.

After some time, the local rabbi realized he was receiving very few questions from the slaughterhouse, and inquired as to the cause. He soon discovered that the new *menaker* was answering the questions normally reserved for the rabbi! Not knowing who the *menaker* really was, the rabbi felt that he had to take a stand to ensure that people came to the rabbi with their halachic issues, and did not go to just any person they deemed worthy. He brought the Taz before a Jewish court and explained what had occurred. The Taz remained silent, and the court determined that the punishment for the *menaker's* insolence was that he stand in a box in the main shul, and all would see the man who had dared challenge the rabbi's authority in town. Shortly after, as the Taz stood in his box, a young girl came to the shul to ask the rabbi a question regarding the kashrus of a chicken. The rabbi ruled the chicken to be not kosher. The girl came from a very poor family, and this chicken was to be their food for the entire week! The girl was in tears as she left the shul, and, as she passed the Taz, he asked her to show him the chicken. The Taz looked at the

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Kollel Happenings

SHOW ME THE MONEY AT A SECOND LOOK THIS SUNDAY NIGHT

Ever wonder why it was so important for the Jewish People to acquire fabulous wealth during the Exodus from Egypt? Join Senior Educator Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher this Sunday night, April 3rd, 7:30 pm at Aish Denver for *A Second Look* at the Egyptian exile and redemption, and gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of Pesach. For men & women.

DEVELOPING TALENTS AT NEXT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Charlie Miller, Co-Curator of Off-Center at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the responsibility of utilizing one's talents. April 6th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

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.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is the source of the selection of *haftaros*?

A: The Mishna (Megillah 21a) tells us that after the Torah reading on Shabbos, Yom Tov and fast days (see there 30b and 31b), we read a portion from the prophets called *haftarah*. The *haftaros* of Yom Tov and other special occasions are recorded in the Gemara (Megillah 31a-31b). Most of the weekly Shabbos *haftaros*, though, weren't codified, and were chosen by the reader. Later, communities developed customs to appropriate specific portions of Prophets

to correlate with the content of the weekly Torah portion. The three primary sources for most of our *haftaros* are: the Rambam (1135-1204), the Abudarham (by Rabbi David Abudarham, 14th-century Spain) and the Levush (by Rabbi Mordechai Yoffe, 1530-1612).

This week's question: What is the longest time span during the year that we don't recite Hallel at all?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

The Rashba Part II

Spanish Jewry was quite enamored of secular philosophy, and many Jews applied themselves to its study. The great Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon; 1135/1138-1204) had popularized philosophy, but there had been much opposition to his approach for decades. While the flames of controversy had died down somewhat, they reignited during the Rashba's time. While in the past, many had fought over the status of the Rambam himself, by this time, the Rambam's towering scholarship and leadership were beyond question; the disagreements focused on his approach to secular philosophy.

At the beginning of the 14th century, a man by the name of Rabbi Abba Mari (1240-1315), horrified by some of the views produced by Jewish study of secular

philosophy, demanded a complete ban on the study of philosophy. Strong opinions and vehement disagreements flared in the Jewish communities, and things threatened to spiral out of control.

The Rashba, the accepted leader of Spanish Jewry, was approached by Rabbi Abba Mari. Although the Rashba agreed in principle, he felt that a blanket prohibition on philosophy would not be accepted, as it was quite entrenched. He therefore issued a ban against the study of philosophy for those under the age of 25. Furthermore, the Rambam's works were completely excluded from the ban, as were other areas of practical science such as medicine (which had come to be lumped together with philosophy).

Stories for the Soul

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problem and told her, "Please go to the rabbi and tell him that he will find that the Taz in this-and-this location permits this problem."

The girl returned to the rabbi, and the rabbi duly checked the source and discovered that the great Taz permitted the chicken! The rabbi immediately asked the girl who had told her of this, and she innocently replied that the insolent *menaker* had informed her.

The rabbi summoned the Taz and demanded to know who he really was. The Taz had no choice but to reveal his identity. The rabbi begged forgiveness for having humiliated one of the greatest rabbis of the generation, but the Taz

comforted him, saying that the rabbi had done what needed to be done under the circumstances.

"I was willing to endure the shame and embarrassment so as to remain anonymous," explained the Taz, "but for the tears of a little girl, I could not remain quiet. I had no choice but to reveal my identity."

Nadav and Avihu felt they knew the best way to draw closer to Hashem. However, Hashem had other expectations of them, and they paid with their lives for their error. One must always examine one's course of action, even the ones that seem very righteous.

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