

A Taste of Torah Out of This World

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

It's been said that the mediocre teacher tells, the good teacher explains, the superior teacher demonstrates, the great teacher inspires. But when it comes to teaching Torah, we discover a whole new level.

In this week's parsha, the Torah tells us of the offspring of Moshe and Aharon – yet, strangely, only Aharon's children are mentioned! Rashi (3:1), based upon the Talmud (Sanhedrin 19b), explains that Aharon's progeny are regarded as Moshe's children due to the fact that he taught them Torah – and one who teaches Torah to another's child is considered to have fathered him.

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 33a) teaches that if one chances upon two lost objects, one of which belongs to his father and the other which belongs to his rebbi muvhak (teacher who taught him most of his Torah), and he is only able to save one of them, the property of his rebbi muvhak comes first. The reason? Explains the gemara, "While his father brought him into this world, the rebbi muvhak brings him to the World to Come."

Our Sages are conveying a vital idea

to us: the physical life we are given in this world is of secondary importance; of far greater import is how we use it to get to the Next World. Thus, while the Torah obligates one to honor and respect his parents, due to the fact that he owes his life to them, first honors go to a rebbi muvhak, to whom one owes his spiritual life.

When Moshe stood at the Burning Bush, he asked Hashem what merit the Jewish People possessed to deserve freedom from Egypt. Hashem replied, "When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship G-d on this mountain." (Exodus 3:12) Rashi (ibid.) understands this to refer to the Giving of the Torah at Sinai. Hashem did not take the Jewish People out of Egypt merely to grant them freedom. He took them out in order that they stand at Sinai and receive the Torah. Because a life lived in the "pursuit of happiness" is not what it's about. But a life lived in the pursuit of spiritual greatness is why we are granted life. And as we complete our counting of Sefiras Ha'omer, a 49-day journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai, a period of preparation for G-d's greatest gift, let's remember why we're here in the first place.

Ask the Rabbi Sum-Buddies

From: Avi Ziskind in South Africa

,Dear Rabbi

When the Torah records the counting of the Jewish People, it rounds off the numbers to the nearest 50. I find this hard to understand. If one of the

purposes of the counting is for Hashem to show His love for each individual Jew, like a king who counts and recounts his precious jewels, how can the Torah round off the numbers just for "neatness" as it seems to be doing, seemingly disregarding the exact number of people, and rather giving us a general idea

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Stories For The Soul

'I Hate Shabbos'

Rabbi Yitzchok Chinn, Rabbi of Gemilas Chesed Congregation of McKeesport, PA, was once talking to an older Jewish man who said, "I hate Shabbos!"

Rabbi Chinn was sad to hear this, but intrigued. He had heard people say they don't appreciate Shabbos, don't understand Shabbos, don't love Shabbos, but he had never heard anyone go this far.

"Why do you hate Shabbos?" the Rabbi asked.

"When I was a boy I lived in a shtetl in Eastern Europe," the man began. "My father worked hard all week to eke out a living, and my mother labored round the clock to care for us.

"The crowning day of the week was Shabbos. All week long, my parents prepared for it to make it perfect. Even though my parents were far from wealthy, they had the finest Shabbos delicacies, including fish which was expensive. I, however, hated fish. I could barely tolerate the smell, much less the taste. Yet every Shabbos my father would force me to eat fish.

"When I told him I didn't want to eat fish, he would say, 'It is tradition to eat fish on Shabbos. It is written to eat fish on Shabbos. It's a mitzva to eat fish on Shabbos. My father ate fish on Shabbos, my grandfather ate fish on Shabbos; and you are going to eat fish on Shabbos!'

"All week long I would dread Shabbos," concluded the man, "Because I knew my father would force me to eat that fish. I hate Shabbos."

Ironically, the reason Jews eat fish

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SHABBOS MALKISA, TUESDAY W/RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Love Shabbos? Want to explore its depth and grandeur? Join Kollel dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers in this advanced, text-based class as he explores Rabbi Shimshon Pincus' sefer on Shabbos. Please call (303)257-1089 for time and location or email info@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues

Acceptable Signs for Identifying Lost Objects

The location can be used to identify the lost item. It must be a specific location, such as a bench in the park; saying it was found in the park is insufficient. Furthermore, it must be a location where such an item would not commonly be found. For example, if one left a towel on

a hook at the swimming pool, this would not be a valid sign, since towels are commonly left in that location.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

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From: Mel Friedman in San Antonio, TX

Dear Rabbi,

There is a census taken at the beginning and end of Bamidbar. The confusing part for me is why are all the numbers apparently rounded to the nearest hundred?

Dear Avi Ziskind and Mel Friedman,

When the Torah lists the number of people in each of the 12 tribes in Parshas Bamidbar, each number is a multiple of either 50 or 100. There are differing views regarding whether or not these numbers are exact.

One view is that the Torah rounded off the numbers. This isn't surprising considering that the Torah does this in other places as well. For example, the Torah says to "Count 50 days" between Pesach and Shavuot, when in reality there are only 49.

Counting the nation benefited the community and the individual. When the individual passed before Moshe and Aharon, Moshe and Aharon would bless the person and pray for him. This itself was a tremendous benefit for the person. Furthermore, each person was counted via his own half-shekel donation, and this served as an atonement for him. These individual benefits were in no way diminished by the fact that the Torah reports rounded numbers.

The communal benefit of the counting was similar to the benefit of any census, which helps the leaders decide how to best serve the needs of the community and tells how many people are available for military service. This was important for the Jewish People who were preparing to war against the Canaanites, and therefore needed to know their own military might. In this sense, round numbers suffice.

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Stories for the Soul

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on Shabbos is because it is a tasty treat to most people, but if one doesn't like fish, he shouldn't eat it on Shabbos. Indeed, Rabbi Chinn reflected, as a direct result of this father's ignorant, unbending rigidity, Shabbos put a bad taste in this man's mouth - literally.

With Shavuot approaching, how timely and important it is for us to understand the meanings behind our observances. How important it is for us feel joy for a mitzva and create an atmosphere of love for mitzvos for our children.

Adapted with permission from Shulchan Week by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.