

A Taste of Torah It's All About Family

By Rabbi Moshe Heyman

There is a well-known saying in the Jewish matchmaking world: “Yichus [one’s lineage] is like a stack of zeros. It’s only worth something if you put a one in front of it.”

This profound statement has its roots in this week’s Parsha.

The verse tells us, “They established their genealogy according to their families” (Bamidbar 1:28)

The Yalkut Shimoni, an aggadic compilation on the books of the Torah, explains that when the Jewish people received the Torah, the nations complained, wanting to know why the Jews had merited to receive it. Hashem answered that they were given the Torah in the merit of their yichus.

Every morning, we make a blessing on the Torah, “Asher bachar banu mi’kol ha’amim v’nasan lanu es Toraso,” “That He choose us from amongst all the nations and gave us His Torah.”

The Medrash tells us that all the other nations refused the Torah. So why do we use the term “we were chosen”?

The Vilna Gaon, the great 18th century Torah leader and rabbinic authority, explains that the words “we were chosen” does not refer to the Jewish people, but rather to our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, who created an eternal bond between Hashem and their descendents.

Rabbi Avraham Pam (1913-2001), Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, comments that from here we can learn how it is possible for people who have little or no Jewish background to become baalei teshuva and to have the ability to learn so much, so quickly. Rabbi Pam explains that once a person taps into Torah, the great yichus that is behind them gives them tremendous power to grow.

Hashem gave us His Torah based on our yichus. Like any good Jewish matchmaker will tell you, our job is to put the one at the beginning of all the zeros.

If we tap into the rich legacy of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, Hashem will enable us to grow in Torah.

Ask the Rabbi End-of-Life Treatment

Mark from Washington D.C. wrote: yourself??"

Dear Rabbi,

I was wondering about euthanasia and Jewish law. I know that it’s wrong to murder, but this is an act of mercy, and wouldn’t euthanasia be like the verse that says to “love your fellow person as

Dear Mark,

You are correct in your assumption that we are commanded to love another person, but, of course this care and concern for others must be expressed in a manner which is not contrary to

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

Kollel Happenings

TARGETING TERRORIST AT JUNE 1 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dr. Marc Sievers and Rabbi Shachne Sommers, Dean, Denver Community Kollel for "Targeting Terrorists: The Torah Perspective" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., June 1. Program will be at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. CLE credits pending. Cost \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., JUNE 5 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on June 5 at EDOS. Breakfast begins at 9 a.m. with learning following. For information, contact Rabbi Yehuda Amsel at 303-820-2855 or email rya@denverkollel.org



THE SEFIRA PROJECT

In conjunction with the Bais Havaad Insitutue of Talmudic Law, Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher is giving a seven-week series of shiurim on matters of bein adam lchaveiro (interpersonal law). Classes will be held on Thurs. night at the Kollel. Mincha is at 7:45, the shiur at 8, followed by ma'ariv and refreshments at 9. The shiur will also be held on Sun. at EDOS. Shacharis will be at 7:30, followed by the shiur & breakfast at 8:15.

Interpersonal Issues Returning Stolen Property Part V

If the victim is aware of the theft and the identity of the thief, the thief must inform the victim that he is returning his item and must ask his forgiveness.

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

Ask the Rabbi

continued from front Jewish law.

Jewish law forbids euthanasia in all forms, and it is considered an act of homicide. The life of a person is not "his" - rather, it belongs to the One Who granted that life. It may therefore be reclaimed only by the true Owner of that life. Despite one's noble intentions, an act of mercy-killing is flagrant intervention into a domain that transcends this world.

One source in the Chumash for this prohibition may be found the Book of Genesis:

"But your blood of your lives will I require; ...from the hand of man, from the hand of a person's brother, will I require the life of man."

The additional phrase "a person's brother" after having already stated "from the hand of man" is redundant. The author of the book HaKtav v'haKaballah explains that this verse refers to a prohibition against euthanasia. Although murder is the opposite of brotherly love, one might think

that euthanasia is in fact a permitted expression of brotherly love. This verse imprints on our conscience that this particular form of "brotherly love" is nothing more than plain murder.

This does not mean that one should be lax about relieving the other person's pain. Elimination of suffering is a commendable goal. In fact, this may permit even "aggressive" treatment of pain to a degree that is not standard medical practice. For example, heroin use for treatment of pain may be acceptable according to Jewish law, in spite of the risk of addiction. It may be prohibited, however, by civil law.

There are other considerations which are beyond the scope of this column, such as passive/active intervention, prayer for a suffering person's death, and the definition and treatment of a moribund patient (goses).

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Stories for the Soul

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Shabbos." Ironically, the reason Jews eat fish 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 to feel joy for a mitzva and create an atmosphere of love of mitzvos for our children.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.