

# A Taste of Torah

## Soul Food

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Anti-climatic. There's really no other term to describe the initial reaction one has to Hashem's command to the Jewish People immediately following the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Hashem tells Moshe, "Go tell them, 'Return to Your tents.'" Hashem orders the Bnai Yisroel to go home and resume normal family life. And as your jaw drops, you can't help but wonder why Hashem couldn't come up with a more uplifting, inspiring commandment following the most momentous event in world history.

Let's turn for a moment to this week's parsha. The Torah tells that the Bnai Yisroel complained about the manna, saying, "Who will feed us meat; we recall the fish that we consumed in Egypt for free; the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onion and the garlic. But now, our life is parched, there is nothing; we have nothing before our eyes but the manna." (Bamidbar 11:5)

The Jew's complaint is mind-boggling. We're talking about a people who reached tremendous spiritual heights; who perceived G-d at a higher level than some of our greatest prophets; who stood at Sinai and heard G-d speak; how could such an exalted nation sink to demanding a good steak?

The Alter of Slabodka, R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel, explains that the motives of the Bnai Yisroel were, in fact, pure. A person who has reached sublime levels of the spirit has the ability to elevate all his actions, all aspects of his life, by

using them in his service of G-d. Eating and other physical activities actually become acts of tremendous sanctity, as Hashem's glory is manifested through the seemingly most mundane acts.

The Jewish People, while eating the manna, a spiritual food, didn't have the opportunity to sanctify ordinary physical food. Their demand was that they be granted the opportunity to make ordinary food into a spiritual entity.

Nonetheless, says the Alter, they were taken to task. They should have realized that if G-d gave them manna, it was His will that they suffice in their spiritual endeavors with heaven-sent food. The failure to come to this realization indicated a larger issue; that deep down, there was a slight desire for the sheer physical pleasure of eating ordinary food. This desire, slight, subtle and imperceptible as it was, blinded them to the realization that Hashem's will was that they serve Him without sanctifying ordinary food.

The challenge of observing the Torah is not merely living as a spiritual being. It is living a normal, physical life and, at the same time, sanctifying and elevating the seemingly mundane daily activities by using them to serve Hashem. When Hashem ordered the Jewish People, immediately following the Giving of the Torah, to return home, He was conveying a vital lesson: Sure, you just reached tremendous spiritual heights at Mt. Sinai; but now, you need to use that in your regular daily activities. That's what a true Torah life is all about.

## Stories For The Soul

### Perfectly Wired

The Jews traveled through the desert on pure faith and trust in Hashem (G-d). The Divine Cloud protected and guided the Jews throughout their journey. They moved ahead when the Cloud moved and they encamped when the Cloud stopped. They never knew how long each encampment would be. They might be staying for a day or a year or ten years. They never knew in advance.

There may have been times when they thought the best thing to do would be to go, but the Cloud stood fast. There may have been times when they thought they should stop, but the Cloud pushed on. We might have gone crazy from anxiety if we had to live under such uncertainty, but that generation understood with total conviction that Hashem would always do what was good for them - whether or not it seemed to make sense.

In 2001, a bomb was found in an attaché case in a garbage can. The man who found the bomb quickly disarmed it, preventing a disaster and saving countless lives.

One morning a woman went out to her balcony and noticed a man throwing an attaché case in the garbage.

"Oy, vey," she thought. "That man stole that bag from some Jew here in the neighborhood and it probably has his tallis or tefillin in it. The poor Jew is now without them; he must be so worried."

She looked over to the side and saw her brother-in-law fixing his car.

## Kollel Happenings

### FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., JUNE 12 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on June 12 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](mailto:rya@denverkollel.org)



### CHERRY CREEK MUNCH AND LEARN, MON., JUNE 13

The next Cherry Creek Munch and Learn for men, led by Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, will be held on Mon., June 13 at 12:30 p.m. at Colorado Capital Bank, 55 Madison Ave. The class focuses on Pirkei Avos. For information, contact Rabbi Amsel at 303-820-2855 or at [rya@denverkollel.org](mailto:rya@denverkollel.org)



### PARSHA AT DENVER TECH CENTER, THURS., JUNE 15

Want to add meaning to your workweek - and Shabbos? Rabbi Yehuda Amsel's 'Parsha at the Denver Tech Center' for men will be held on Thurs., June 15. The biweekly class will be held at 2 p.m. at 6565 S. Dayton, Suite 1200. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email [rya@denverkollel.org](mailto:rya@denverkollel.org)

## Interpersonal Issues Returning Stolen Property Part VII

Theft done as a minor need not be repaid. However, if the stolen item is still in the one-time thief's possession, it must be returned..

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

## Ask the Rabbi All Nighter?

Sam from Chicago wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

This is my first time experiencing Shavuot in a yeshiva environment. I'm told that everybody stays up all night studying Torah, which sounds fun but at the same time I'm a little wary of doing so. How important is it to stay up all night on Shavuot and why; or perhaps it's more important to get a good night's sleep?

Dear Sam,

Many, especially in the Yeshiva world, have the custom to stay awake and study Torah the entire night of Shavuot.

Shavuot celebrates the day when

G-d gave us the Torah on Mount Sinai. By studying all night, we show our love and enthusiasm for this precious gift.

Another explanation is that the Jews at Mount Sinai slept late on that historic Shavuot morning! G-d had to "wake them up" to teach them the Torah (sound familiar?). We rectify this by staying up all night, to ensure that we won't sleep late on this day.

Staying up all night is not a halacha or a Jewish law, but rather a custom for those who feel they are physically up to it. If you won't function properly the next day, you should not stay up the whole night.

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## Stories for the Soul

*Continued from front*

"Go over there and take that bag out," she called. "There's probably a tallis and tefillin in there, and some poor Jew has probably lost it."

Without a moment's hesitation, he went to retrieve the bag. He opened it and found a cellular phone and a bunch of wires. He realized it was a bomb and disconnected it. A minute later the phone rang - and a near tragedy was averted.

How did this man, a Chassidic Jew living in Meah Shearim, know that this was a bomb? And how did he know how to disconnect it without blowing himself up? The answer goes back fifteen years.

Fifteen years earlier, ten Chassidim from Meah Shearim suddenly got drafted into the army. Everyone was up in arms; they should have been covered by a religious exemption.

The ten families used all their connections to enable nine of the draftees to be exempted. One Chassid was left, but no matter what his family tried, the army refused to exempt him from service.

This, of course, was the very Chassid in the story above. He was in army for six months. Guess what he learned there? Bomb diffusion.

*Adapted with permission from Shul-Week by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.*