



A Taste of Torah

Circular Reasoning

By Rabbi Shachne Sommers

We find a unique phenomenon in connection with the Sukkos holiday in general and Simchas Torah in particular. On each of the first six days of Sukkos, we take our lulav and esrog and make one hakafah-circuit around the bimah, the table upon which the Torah is read. On the seventh day of Sukkos, also known as Hoshana Rabba, we make seven such circular trips. Finally, on the last day of the holiday, Simchas Torah, we make fourteen of these trips, only now holding the Sefer Torah.

The practice of hakafos is unique to the Sukkos holiday; on no other holiday do we have such a ritual. On Pesach, we do not circle around the bimah holding our matzo, nor do we go around with the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. What is the idea behind the hakafos, and why are they exclusively appropriate during this holiday?

We can gain an appreciation of the significance of the hakafah circles by analyzing the definition of the common circle. A circle is a set of points that surrounds the focal point from the same distance.

The life of a Jew, too, should be a circle, with the Torah as its center. Wherever a Jew may find himself, and whatever situation he may be confronted with, the Torah should remain the focus of his life.

The hakafah-circuit around the place where the Torah is read symbolizes this concept. The message here is that in whatever position the person is standing, the Torah remains at the center.

We now have a bit of understanding

of the significance of the hakafah ritual. But why only during the Sukkos season?

Let us return to the circle. When one wishes to construct a circle, the method is to first define a center point and then form the circle around that point. The same is true for the circle of Torah life. A person must first clearly determine for himself what the goal and purpose of life is. Only then is it possible to build one's life around that focus.

The Jewish year begins on Rosh Hashanah. For the first ten days of the year, until after Yom Kippur, we spend much time and effort defining that goal and direction for our lives. With this we define the focal point of the circle of life in the new year.

Precisely at this time comes Sukkos and its hakafah-circuits. We are now ready to start forming the circle. We leave the hallowed atmosphere of the High Holidays and begin the more mundane day-to-day living around the goal that we have determined for ourselves. This is the secret of the hakafos of Sukkos. It is the forming of the circle around the focal point of the High Holidays.

A Jew's focus upon the Torah is what brings order and clarity to an often chaotic world. Just as the individual points of a circle are unified by their relationship to the center, so too, through the single focal point of the Torah, are all of the disparate parts of the human condition unified into one cohesive whole. This is the joy of hakafos, the joy of clarity in a world of confusion.

Stories For The Soul

One Person...One World

The Mishnah (Sanhedrin) asks: "Why was the world created with only one man?" Hashem created many of all of the other creatures. Why then only one man?

The reason, the Mishnah answers, is to teach us that one who saves one life is as if he saved an entire world. One who destroys one life is as if he destroyed an entire world.

There was once a fifth grade teacher named Mrs. Thompson, who stood in front of her students on the first day of school and told them a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them equally. But that was impossible, because there in the front row, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard. Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. Mrs. Stoddard took a dislike toward Teddy and unfortunately took pleasure in his failures.

Once, while reviewing Teddy's files, Mrs. Thompson had a surprise. While his early records described a bright and successful child, later records told of the death of his mother and the toll it had taken on him and his performance.

Mrs. Thompson immediately realized the cause of Teddy's problem and was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her beautifully wrapped holiday presents, while Teddy's present was wrapped in the paper that he got from a grocery bag. When Mrs.

Kollel Happenings

The Kollel is on Sukkos break. Programs resume Sun, Oct. 10.

FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., OCT. 10 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on October 10th 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



'ALLOW NATURAL DEATH?' AT OCT. 13 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dr. Lynn Taussig, Special Advisor to the Provost at the University of Denver, Retired President of National Jewish Hospital, and Kollel Dean Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab for "Allow Natural Death? End of Life Decisions and Dementia" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., Oct. 13. The program will be held at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



PARTNERS IN TORAH AT AISH TO RESUME WED., OCT. 13

The Kollel's Partners in Torah program for men at Aish Denver, which is on Sukkos break, will resume on Wed., Oct. 13. If you'd like to join - and learn the topic of your choice, at your own pace, with a knowledgeable mentor - please call the Kollel at 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org.

Interpersonal Issues Maybe Now You'll Learn

Generally, it is forbidden to steal something to teach the victim a lesson. For example, one may not steal his friend's bike, which he consistently leaves unlocked, in order to prove the point not to leave the bike unprotected.

There is one exception, however. A teacher may confiscate the item of a

student to teach the class a lesson. If possible, the item should be returned later. If necessary, however, the teacher may even destroy the item.

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

Ask the Rabbi In the Fold

Avrom from Ilford, UK wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Is it permitted to use origami on Shabbos? (Origami is the ancient art of paper folding.)

Dear Avrom,
Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l

prohibits making toys - like a boat, or hat - by folding paper, since it is like making a utensil. However, if the paper was folded into a toy before Shabbos, it is permitted to use it on Shabbos.

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Stories for the Soul

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Thompson opened it among the other presents, some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing and a half empty perfume bottle. But she put on the bracelet and exclaimed at how beautiful it was while dabbing some perfume on her wrist. Teddy lingered after school to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to."

On that very day, she quit teaching reading, and writing, and arithmetic and began to teach children. She paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class. Despite her lie that she would love all the children equally, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."

Over the years, Teddy corresponded

with Mrs. Thompson and she celebrated his achievements with him, eventually rejoicing with him when his name became Theodore F. Stoddard, M.D.

When Teddy got married, he invited Mrs. Thompson to come and take the seat of the mother of the bride. Mrs. Thompson, of course, accepted the honor. And she wore the bracelet and perfume that had formerly belonged to Teddy's mother.

At the wedding, Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for showing me that I could make a difference."

Mrs. Thompson, with tear-filled eyes, whispered back, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me how to make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.