



A Taste of Torah Polished Speech

By Rabbi Mordechai Mandel

A young man was discussing a certain topic with the Chazon Ish, Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz. In the midst of his conversation, he blurted out, "It's sheker (false)!" The Chazon Ish, with his highly sensitive ears, turned to him and said, "It's better to say it's not emes (true)."

As the Bnai Yisroel make their way in the direction of Eretz Yisroel, conquering the nations they pass through, Hashem warns them that they should not attack certain nations. The possuk (Devarim 2:9) recounts, "You shall not distress Moav and you shall not provoke war with them...and you shall not approach the children of Ammon, and you shall not distress them, and you shall not provoke them, for I shall not give any of the land of the children of Ammon to you as an inheritance, for to the children of Lot I have given it as an inheritance."

Rashi points out a subtle difference between the way Bnai Yisroel are commanded to act toward Ammon versus Moav. With regard to Moav, they were only forbidden to wage an actual war, but they were permitted to threaten and harass them by showing them weaponry, as opposed to the nation of Ammon, whom they weren't able to provoke in any way or form.

The Gemara (Bava Kama 38b)

Ask the Rabbi Grave Gravel

Eytan M. Rodin from St. Louis, MO writes:

What is the significance behind the fact that we put stones on graves

explains the reason for this difference. Four centuries earlier, after the destruction of the city of Sodom, Lot and his two daughters fled to the mountains. Thinking that the entire world had been destroyed, they came up with a plan of how to continue the human race. They intoxicated their father Lot for two consecutive nights, and conceived from him. The older daughter brazenly named her child Moav which means "from father." The younger daughter named her son Ammon which means "son of my people," a euphemism for her father.

The Gemara continues to explain that Hashem doesn't withhold reward for even a seemingly slight meritorious deed. The brazenness of the older daughter to speak openly about who the father of the child was resulted in her descendants, the Moabites, not being spared harassment by the Jewish people. The younger daughter, although she did an improper act, spoke about it in a modest and refined manner. Therefore, her children, the nation of Ammon, were protected from any provocation from the Jews.

Refined speech is a sensitive attribute that we as Jews can relate to. Let us bond together to rectify this unique quality as one, which will enable us to bring closer the rebuilding of the Third Bais Hamikdash.

that we visit? I've always done it, but never understood what this represents. I know that rather than flowers, we are supposed to give money to tzedaka

Stories For The Soul

An Everlasting People

In the 1800's, the Emperor Napoleon passed by a synagogue in the Jewish Quarter in France. The day happened to be Tisha B'Av.

From within the synagogogue could be heard the mournful sound of the reading of the Megilla of Eicha. Then followed the tearful recitation of Kinnos, lamenting the destruction of the Bais Hamikdosh and the horrors and sorrows that have befallen the Jewish people since the Churban so many years before.

Napoleon listened to the sounds of weeping and wailing coming from within the synagogue. Intrigued by what he had heard, he summoned over one of the Jews and asked, "What is everyone crying about?"

With tears in his eyes, the Jew answered, "We are lamenting the destruction of our Holy Temple (Bais Hamikdosh) in Jerusalem."

"When did this happen?" asked Napoleon, aghast. "I didn't hear anything of this and my ministers report to me twice daily of all the current news and events around the world."

"Sire, our Temple was destroyed in 70 B.C.E. by the Romans," was the response of the mourning Jew.

"And you still weep and mourn its loss today, so many years later?" wondered Napoleon.

Said Napoleon, "A people that passionately mourns a national tragedy that took place over 17 centuries ago - is ETERNAL."

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

'QUESTIONABLE UNIONS' FOR WOMEN AUG. 7

Miss Dasi Indich will be leading a pre Tisha-B'Av class for women entitled "Questionable Unions: The Surprising Origins of Moshiach" at 7:45 p.m. on Sun., Aug. 7, at the home of Leah Mehler at 101 Grape St. in East Denver. To RSVP, contact Mrs. Tzippy Sommers at 303-257-1089 or at pit@denverkollel.org



KNOW THY ENEMY TUES. AT AISH

Join Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers in studying the tactics and strategies of the Yetzer Hora, and develop your own battle plan for the greatest challenge of your life - the war against the Evil Inclination. Based on the classic work Chovos Halvevos. Tuesday mornings 7:55-8:25 at Aish. For information, please contact Rabbi Moshe Heyman at rmh@denverkollel.org or 303-820-2855.



TORAH IN THE MORNING AT AISH

Join Rabbi Mordechai Mandel and Rabbi Levi Lebovits for an exciting and dynamic Talmud class for early risers. Grab a cup of coffee and start your day off right! Tues., Wed., and Fri., Shacharis at 6 a.m., followed by learning of Gemara Sanhedrin from 6:50-7:30. For information call 303-820-2855 or email rmh@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Making it Work Part V

An employer may pay in advance and thus avoid bal tolin, since the worker agreed to this form of payment. However, according to many authorities, the employer misses the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of bal tolin. To avoid this, the employer may stipulate that

although the money is being given in advance, it doesn't actually belong to the worker until the payment is actually due. *Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)*

Ask the Rabbi

continued from front

(charity), which makes sense. It's the stones that puzzle me.

Cosette Sullivan from San Angelo, Texas wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Shalom. I've been asked why Jews place rocks on graves...I don't know! Will you please give me the answer?

Dear Eytan M. Rodin and Cosette Sullivan,

A very early reference to this custom is found in a commentary to the Shulchan Aruch, written by Rav Yehuda Ashkenazi (early 1700s) called the B'er Heitev. He quotes the Maharash, who explains that the custom of placing stones or tufts of grass on the grave is for the honor of the deceased person by marking the fact that his grave has been visited.

Once, when I was touring the Mount of Olives cemetery, my Yerushalmi tour guide told me the following story, a story that purports to explain this custom:

Sometime during the Turkish occupation of Israel, on a Shabbat, an Arab was murdered in Jerusalem. Quickly, the rumor spread that he was killed by a Jew, and an immediate expulsion order was declared. The Jews of Jerusalem had to pick themselves up and leave or be killed. A noted kabbalist (mystic) came upon the scene of the crime, which was crowded with Arab onlookers. Even though it was Shabbat, the kabbalist wrote one of G-d's names

on a piece of paper and placed it upon the body of the dead man. The dead man rose and pointed to one of the Arabs standing in the crowd who became violently afraid and admitted that he had done the killing. The expulsion order was rescinded.

Shortly afterwards the kabbalist, who was an elderly man, approached the chevra kadisha (burial society) and asked that his tombstone be pelted with stones after his death because he had written during Shabbat. He understood that due to the danger to life he had been permitted to desecrate the Shabbat, but he felt that some form of repentance was in order nevertheless. Stoning his grave would symbolize the stoning penalty meted out to Shabbat desecrators. At first the chevra kadisha refused because of the implied dishonor the stoning would represent to so righteous a Jew, but the kabbalist persisted. Finally, they agreed to place stones on his grave, but only if they would institute the custom that all graves would have stones placed on them in the future. If stones were placed on everyone's grave, it would not be a dishonor to the kabbalist. From then on, stones were placed on the graves of all Jews buried in Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem the custom spread, and today Jews all over the world place stones on tombstones when visiting a grave.

This may not be the actual source of the custom, but it's an interesting story.

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