



## A Taste of Torah Survival of the Fittest

By Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab

Our forefather Avraham was just a small child when his pagan father Terach asked him to look after his idol store. While Terach was out, Avraham, the one who discovered monotheism, demolished all the idols in the store with the exception of the largest one. He then took an axe and propped it up against the largest idol. When Terach returned, he was fuming at his young son for destroying his beloved idols and his business. Avraham pointed to the large idol and explained, "While you were away a terrible thing happened. The large idol assaulted the rest and destroyed all of them." Terach, infuriated, shouted, "You foolish child! These idols have no power to fight! They can't move! They are just stone and wood." Avraham replied, "If you admit that they are powerless and inanimate, why do you treasure them and worship them?"

It sounds like our grandfather Terach was an old fool. His three-year-old son unraveled his entire belief system through a simple debate. I don't know about you, but I'm not comfortable saying that my ancestor Terach was a fool. So let's try to understand Terach and his idolatrous generation.

Terach probably retorted to Avraham, "You're the foolish one; you misunderstood the ideology of paganism. We know good and well that the idol that we had shipped to us with a "Made in China" label is inanimate and powerless. When we serve our idols, we don't serve stone images, but rather the celestial bodies that those idols represent. That round clay one

represented the power of fire, and the short glass one that used to sit over here represented the constellation that controls water."

We now understand that although our idolatrous ancestors were deviant, they were not fools. We now need to better understand the argument that Avraham posed and the message he was trying to communicate by shattering the idols.

Judaism does not deny the power of the celestial bodies; it recognizes that the flow of G-d's abundance and goodness to this world comes through the stars. But it focuses on the fact that their power is given by G-d and limited by G-d.

Avraham was conveying to his father a very important philosophical point. According to pagan belief, each celestial deity possesses autonomous control over a particular function of the world. If paganism would be the truth and each celestial entity would be a power on its own, they would all battle with each other and in the end, only the strongest one would survive and outlive the rest. Avraham was telling his father that if his ideology was correct, the entire world would look like Terach's ransacked store with only the greatest one surviving.

But why did Avraham deem it necessary to deliver this message to his father in so violent a manner? Would a discussion not have yielded the same results?

Sometimes, words alone will not suffice. And when teaching such a vital lesson, Avraham understood that only a dramatic metaphor would reveal the fallacy of polytheism.

## Stories For The Soul

### The Power of One

Avram was alone in the world. He believed in Hashem while everyone else worshipped idols. The mighty of the time were against him, and even his own father opposed him. Through his immense faith and tenacity he carried on and adhered to, upheld and publicized, the belief in Hashem (G-d). With dedication and love he planted the seeds of Judaism. As a result we now have a flourishing Torah nation. One fiery individual can have a massive effect, as the following true story illustrates:

A young soldier named Motti was stationed in Gaza near a small town called Netzarim during the most recent Intafada. As Yom Kippur approached, Motti felt compelled to conduct services in honor of the Day of Awe. Despite the danger involved, he convinced his commanding officer to let him travel by tank to Netzarim to borrow a Torah scroll from the community synagogue to take back to the base. And the Jews of Netzarim donated enough pairs of tzitzis for the whole platoon.

Still, Motti didn't know what kind of Yom Kippur service he could conduct. He was one of two Orthodox soldiers on the base and the other soldiers had never davened on Yom Kippur before. Nonetheless, Rabbi Kook advised him to just conduct the service and instruct the rest of the platoon to say "Amen" to each blessing.

Motti described the that Yom Kippur as the most incredible one of his life. "All the soldiers put on the tzitzis provided by the Jewish

## Kollel Happenings

### 'YOUR DAY IN COURT' AT OCT. 21 TORAH FOR FUTURE TYCOONS

Join Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab for "Your Day in Court: The Jewish Perspective on Dispute Resolution" at the upcoming Torah for Future Tycoons, Thurs., Oct. 21. The program will be held at noon in Room 305 of the Wolf Law Building at University of Colorado at Boulder. To RSVP, call 303-960-9369 or email [dmitry.vilner@gmail.com](mailto:dmitry.vilner@gmail.com)



### CHERRY CREEK MUNCH AND LEARN, MON., OCTOBER 21

The next Cherry Creek Munch and Learn for men, led by Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, will be held on Mon., October 21, 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](mailto:rya@denverkollel)



### SHAREHOLDERS VS. MANAGEMENT AT NOV. 3 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Rob Klugman, Former Chief Global Strategy Officer at Molson Coorswill and Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers for "Shareholders vs. Management" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., Nov., 3. 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](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)

## Interpersonal Issues

### Small-Time Theft

Taking something that belongs to a child is forbidden. For example, if candies were tossed out to children in shul, one may not take any of the candies away from a child once he has already taken them.

If a child found something, taking it from the child is only forbidden

Rabbinically. If the child inherited it or received it from an adult, it is theft on a Scriptural level.

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

## Ask the Rabbi

### Fear of Heaven

From: Stacey M.

Dear Rabbi,

I've recently encountered the concept of "fear of heaven." Could you please explain this? I've never heard it, and I did not know that we were to fear Heaven, just not to want to be there too quickly!

From: Marla D. in Campbell, CA

Dear Rabbi,

Although raised in a Jewish (Reform) home, I've only recently been introduced to the idea of "fear of Heaven." What is there about heaven to fear? I was taught that man's purpose was to live a life that reflected G-d's love of us toward others. Heaven was never taught as a place to be feared.

Dear Stacey M. and Marla D.,

By "Fear of Heaven" (Yiras Shamayim) we mean fear, awe, or respect for G-d, not fear of the place where the

soul goes after death. Why is G-d called "Heaven"?

Like the heavens, G-d is beyond comprehension. The universe is finite, but we don't see that. We perceive it as endless. I have a hard time visualizing six pickles, let alone an expanse of trillions upon trillions of miles. Just looking at the sky gives us a sense of endlessness. So "Heaven" refers to G-d's infinite existence.

Also, G-d is called Heaven because that's where G-d dwells. It's sort of like calling the US president "The White House" What does it mean that G-d dwells in Heaven? Isn't G-d everywhere?

Yes, G-d is everywhere, but on earth G-d's presence is hidden. This means that we have free choice and we can ignore G-d if we choose to. But in the Heavens, where there are no humans to exercise free choice, G-d's presence is not hidden.

*Adapted with permission from Ohr Somyach, Jerusalem, [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)*

## Stories for the Soul

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community of Netzarim. They listened attentively as I led the davening and answered "Amen" to my blessings. I read from the Torah and my friend and I took turns being called up to the Torah. Soon other soldiers requested

to be called to the Torah and I showed them which blessing to make. We ended calling up no less than 20 soldiers to the Torah that day."

*Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman*