

A Taste of Torah

A Matter of Trust

By Rabbi Mordechai E. Fleisher

Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik (1853-1918) once asked Rabbi Shimon Shkop (1860-1939) a most intriguing question: What would have happened if Yosef would have said only one word?

A bit of background: At the close of last week's parsha, Yosef successfully interprets the mysterious dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker, together with whom he is imprisoned. He tells the baker that he is to be executed, while the butler will be restored to his former position. Yosef then makes a plea to the butler. "If only you would remember me (zechartani) with yourself when he benefits you, and you will do me a kindness, if you please, and mention me (vihizkartani) to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building (40:14)".

At the start of this week's parsha, the Torah tells us that Yosef actually spent two more years in prison before he was recalled by the royal butler. Our Sages tell us that these two years were extra, beyond the period originally decreed by Heaven. What did he do to deserve these two years? He said two words to the butler: "Zechartani", (remember me), and "vihizkartani", (mention me). This request was considered excessive effort on Yosef's part; he should have relied on Hashem instead of the butler. (see Rashi 40:23).

Which brings us back to Rabbi Soloveitchik's question: What would have happened if Yosef would have said only one word?

Rabbi Shkop replied that since he received two years for two words, one

word would have resulted in one year.

Rabbi Soloveitchik disagreed; had Yosef only said one word, he wouldn't have been penalized at all! The reason, he explained, is that Yosef wasn't punished for putting in a basic request with the butler; one is obligated to make an effort to attain his material needs. However, for Yosef, at his tremendously refined spiritual level, two words were too much. Someone who had reached his heights should have sufficed with one word; beyond this minimal effort, he should have relied upon Hashem. When he uttered the second word, "vihizkartani", the entire endeavor was a failure, and he was held accountable for both words.

While most of us certainly cannot claim to have such trust in G-d as to rely upon such minimal levels of effort, we must still take an important lesson from Yosef. Since the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden, G-d decreed that mankind will have to work to make ends meet. Essentially, however, our livelihood and other material needs are provided in the same fashion as prior to Adam's sin: through Divine providence. The sole difference is that in the post-sin era, there's a Divine decree that in order for G-d to bestow us with His goodness, we must sweat. How much we sweat, however, depends upon our level of trust in G-d. To expend efforts beyond the pale of normalcy is to display a lack of basic trust that G-d will provide once we have done our part.

Stories For The Soul

Never Give Up

In 1933, Rabbi Dovid Leibowitz set out to do the seemingly impossible - to build a yeshiva in America, where assimilation was rampant and people believed Torah was for the ghetto.

In this hostile environment, and in the terrible economic environment of the Great Depression, Reb Dovid forged on despite incredible hardship, and built and built and built.

On December 5, 1941, a week before Chanuka, Reb Dovid passed away after a terrible illness. The burden of his dream fell on his 26-year-old son, Reb Henschel, who took over the helm of the Chofetz Chaim Yeshiva. He served for 20 years, but the yeshiva never quite got off the ground.

Reb Henschel considered going into a different area of Rabbinics which didn't have the same issues, pressures and problems. After much soul searching, he recalled that his father had told him that leading the yeshiva was within his grasp and was the greatest thing he could do. Reb Henschel strategized and revamped the methods by which he led the yeshiva. The yeshiva began to turn around.

Since then, the yeshiva has served thousands of students who have gone on to serve thousands more. They have established branches and affiliates of the yeshiva all over the world.

The Maccabim did not give up, and Reb Dovid and Reb Henschel did not give up. No matter how dark and desperate it seems, the light of Chanuka is there to nurture the light that is already deep within us.

Adapted with permission from Shul-Week by Rabbi Baruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

FAMILY FUN AT CHILDREN'S EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25

Join the Kollel for family fun at the annual Jewish Children's Extravaganza on Sun., Dec. 25, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. For the first time ever, the event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: \$13. Admission includes unlimited rides. Visit www.mazeltot.org to find out how to join for free. For general information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



WEST SIDE NIGHT SEDER AT THE KOLLEL

Join the west side community for vibrant Torah learning at the Kollel. Sunday- Thursday, except Wednesday, learning from 8-9 p.m. followed by Ma'ariv. For chavrusas or other information, contact Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher at rmf@denverkollel.org or 303-820-2855



LIBERATED PARENTS, LIBERATED CHILDREN WITH MRS. AVIGAIL STEINHARTER

Join Mrs. Avigail Steinharter for "Liberated Parents, Liberated Children: Your Guide to a Happier Family." This six part series for moms integrates the timeless wisdom of the Torah with the approach of the world-renowned Dr. Haim Ginott. Classes will be held on Tues., Jan 10, Jan 17, Jan 24, Jan 31, Feb 10, Feb 17 from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.. Cost: \$80 for all six classes. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Bal Tolin

Real estate rentals are subject to bal tolin according to many authorities. This is true only if the rental is due after, and not prior to, the rental. There is a difference of opinion among the authorities whether bal tolin applies only to building space, such as an

apartment or a catering hall, or to open spaces, as well, such as a parking space in a lot or a ball field.

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

Ask the Rabbi Menorahs 101

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

How soon after the Maccabean victory was Chanuka celebrated on an annual basis? When were the first menorahs created and used? When was the ban on constructing a seven-branched menorah rescinded?

Feldi3 wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have to do a project for my Torah teacher on the menorah, could you send me some pictures, and information on the menorah. Thank you for your time.

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Can you give me information on the significance of the 7-branched menorah, as opposed to the 9-branched chanukia?

Dear Feldi3 and Names@Withheld,

The original Menorah was the golden candelabra that G-d commanded the Jewish People to make and place in the Holy Temple. It had six branches and a stem, making seven lamps in all. The kohanim lit it once a day. The Torah relates its measurements and design in Exodus 25:31-40.

The Sages teach that the Menorah was the vessel that G-d used to blend

the spiritual light of the World to Come with the physical light of this world. For this reason, the windows in the Temple were narrow on the inside and wide on the outside - to spread out this blended light to the world.

There is a prohibition against making a metal seven-branched menorah. This prohibition is part of the general prohibition against making vessels like those of the Holy Temple, and it was never rescinded.

Chanuka was instituted as an annual holiday the very first year after the Maccabean victory (165 BCE) to celebrate the victory and the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days.

The Chanuka menorah has place for eight candles and for a ninth candle set off somewhat from the rest. The eight candles commemorate the miracle of the oil while the ninth candle, the shamash, is for light. The first use of an eight-armed menorah for Chanuka is not known, although there are some dating back over 500 years.

There's no absolute requirement to use a Chanuka menorah, because you can fulfill the minimal requirement with one candle per night. But since it's ideal to add a candle each night, the custom arose to use an eight-branched menorah. A friend of mine from Yeshiva used to line up eight soda cans as his menorah!

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