

# A Taste of Torah

## A Mitzva Never Done Before

By Rabbi Shachne Sommers

This week's parsha includes one of the most unusual sections in the Torah. Generally, the Torah is extremely concise. A single word, or even a letter, is often the source for multiple concepts. In the section dealing with the offerings of the Nesi'im, however, the opposite is true. While describing the gifts that the nasi (leader) of each of the twelve tribes brought at the inauguration of the Mishkan, the Torah goes to the extreme, repeating the exact same description of the gift twelve times, once for each of the twelve nesi'im. What is the reason for this uncharacteristic repetition?

The answer to this conundrum can be drawn from the Midrash. The Midrash expounds on the symbolism inherent in the various components of the Nesi'im's gift. And herein lies

something fascinating. Although the gifts of each of the Nesi'im were identical, the symbolism the Midrash attaches to each of the tribes' gifts is different.

In light of this Midrash, we can begin to see that the message of the repetition of the twelve gifts is a powerful one. Many individuals can all perform an identical act. But the similarity is only on the surface. The thought, feeling and power that lie beneath the surface make each of these acts unique.

Sometimes one may feel that his or her mitzvos are nothing special. They are the same that thousands of others are doing. But the repetition of the Nesi'im's gifts teaches us that this is not the case. Each individual creates, through his thoughts and feelings, a totally unique mitzva that was never done before and will never be repeated.

# Ask the Rabbi

## Going Up?

Ed Halper from, the University of Georgia wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I had thought that one could ride any elevator on Shabbos, as long as it did not make a special stop for you. Then someone recently told me that Shabbos Elevators are specially constructed. Is this correct? How does one construct a Shabbos Elevator?

Dear Ed Halper,

A Shabbos elevator is essentially an automatic elevator which operates according to a preset program, and is not influenced by the passenger(s) in any way. Such an elevator stops for a fixed predetermined time at each floor. A buzzer sounds to warn the passenger(s) not to interfere with the doors when they are about to close because it would influence the program.

Note, however, that not all automatic elevator systems are Shabbos elevators, per se. Because there are many Halachic

## Stories For The Soul

### A Watchful Eye

Eli is an ambulance driver for Ezer Mizion, an organization in Israel that helps the sick and needy. He spends most of his day transporting sick and handicapped people to hospitals, medical appointments or other destinations.

One morning, after dropping a patient off at Hadassah Hospital in Ein Kerem, Eli was approached by a man who asked him if he was heading towards central Jerusalem.

Eli said yes, and offered the man a ride. During the drive, Eli found out that the man travels from Hadassah Hospital to central Jerusalem every morning.

A few days later, Eli was in Hadassah again, and another man came over to him.

"Did you give someone a ride from here to central Jerusalem a few days ago?" the man asked.

"Yes," Eli recalled.

"That person was my brother," said the man, "and you saved his life. My brother takes the #19 bus every morning from Hadassah. Because he got a ride with you, he didn't take his usual bus the morning of the #19 bus bomb."

More than 3,300 years ago, Hashem gave us the most precious gift - The Torah. We became Hashem's nation and He has watched over us ever since.

We need to train ourselves to have hakaras hatov, gratitude, for all the big things - and all the little things - Hashem does for us.

*Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.*

## Kollel Happenings

### DERECH HASHEM SERIES MON. NIGHTS

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for "Derech Hashem: Who is G-d and Why Did He Create the World?", a series for women based on Derech Hashem by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato. The classes will be held on Mondays at 7:45 p.m., locations to vary. The class on June 5 will be at the home of Mrs. Jody Crane. For info, call 303-257-1089 or email [pit@denverkollel.org](mailto:pit@denverkollel.org)



### THE SEFIRA PROJECT

In conjunction with the Bais Havaad Insitutue of Talmudic Law, Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher is giving a seven-week series of shiurim on matters of bein adam lchaveiro (interpersonal law). Classes will be held on Thurs. night at the Kollel. Mincha is at 7:45, the shiur at 8, followed by ma'ariv and refreshments at 9. The shiur will also be held on Sun. at EDOS. Shacharis will be at 7:30, followed by the shiur & breakfast at 8:15.



### FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., JUNE 5 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on June 5 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)

## Interpersonal Issues Returning Stolen Property Part VI

If the stolen item is still in the thief's possession, that is what must be returned. However, if the stolen item was lost or stolen, or is no longer in its original form, the thief must pay the

owner for the item.

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

## Ask the Rabbi

*continued from front*

issues surrounding the use of elevators on Shabbos, one should familiarize oneself with all of them before the particular elevator in question can be used.

One of the common misconceptions about how elevators work, is that they are moved by a powerful motor which works equally hard no matter how many passengers have boarded, or even if no passengers have boarded at all. If this were the case, then the added weight of the passenger is not a contributing factor in any of the functions of the elevator, and he wouldn't be considered responsible for those violations of Shabbos caused by use of the elevator. This assumption, though, is false.

The assumption is false because elevator motors do not use the same amount of power regardless of the number of passengers or weight. The following is an explanation of how the majority of elevators work, illustrating just a small number of Halachic issues surrounding the use of elevators on Shabbos:

Most elevators are the traction type: consisting of a car and a counterweight on opposite ends of a cable hanging from a pulley;

The pulley raises or lowers the car by using a motor, and stops by using a mechanical brake;

The motor only requires enough power to lift the difference between the counterweight and the car, and to

overcome friction;

The weight is equal to half the capacity of the car; thus, the motor operates to counteract the pull of the weight when the elevator is less than half full, and does not operate when the elevator is more than half full, when the car is descending.

Since the weight of the passenger is partly responsible for the motion of the elevator, he becomes liable for any infractions caused by the elevator's descent. In a typical non-Shabbos elevator, these are some of the many problems that one could encounter:

Letting your weight trigger the mechanism that slows the elevator down and stops it at the next floor.

Causing the light that indicates the floor that the elevator is presently on to illuminate.

Activating the system (resistance sensitive pads, photoelectric device, or proximity detector) that opens the elevator doors.

The Institute for Science and Halacha has spent many years working out the various Halachic problems and have designs for Shabbos elevators that meet the most rigorous Shabbos standards. Don't just use any automatic elevator - check with a local Halachic authority and find out whether it really is Shabbos safe.

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