

A Taste of Torah Naturally Miraculous

By Rabbi Mordechai Mandel

A king ordered a highly skilled craftsman to create a statue of his magnificent royal horse. It was to be displayed in the center of town for all to see. After months of work, the sculpture was complete and was placed in the marketplace for all to admire. Realizing that no one took notice of the beautiful masterpiece made the king extremely perturbed. "This piece of art is an extraordinarily perfect imitation of the royal horse. Why is it overlooked by all the townspeople?" wondered the king. "The sculpture is so realistic," exclaimed his advisor, "that it looks like an actual horse, and that is why no one pays attention to it! "Cut it in half, and everyone will surely notice it." The king did just that, and the beautiful sculpture indeed became the talk of the town, as everyone enjoyed its magnificence.

Says the Chasam Sofer, the world we live in is made by G-d and its detail befuddles the human perception. We don't notice the beauty and perfection that exists in every blade of grass, every drop of water, and virtually every atom in the universe. Only when G-d split the sea into two did we notice and understand that all is made by Him

and through His will. And only then were we able to appreciate the detail and exquisite beauty in every facet of creation.

The Ramban (Parshas Bo) relates a powerful thought which echoes this very sentiment. "One who delves into the power of a clear and open miracle will then be able to reach the level of emunah, belief, that what he considered to be part of nature is miraculous as well!"

The two verses describing Israel walking through the split sea seem to be written differently. One verse states, "The children of Israel came within the sea on dry land..."(Beshalach 14:22), while another verse states, "The children of Israel went on the dry land in the midst of the sea." (ibid. 29) The Noam Elimelech comments that initially, the Jews were amazed to find that they were walking through the sea as if it was dry land. The realization of that awesome miracle was the catalyst for them to reach a deeper level of perception of G-d's world. They now understood that the dry land that they walked on daily, and, in fact, the entire creation that they considered "natural," was as miraculous as walking within the sea!

Ask the Rabbi 2-Headed

Ephraim from Jerusalem wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Time magazine (March 25, '96) had an article about a six-year old girl, or two six-year old girls rather, with two

heads and one body. They're like 2 totally different people with different personalities and preferences. They have separate urges to eat, sleep and go to the bathroom. What, if anything, does Judaism say about such a situation?

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Stories For The Soul

'I Love Jews'

In 1942 America had just entered World War II, and Seymour Lederman was stationed in Biloxi, Mississippi, for basic training.

The small Jewish community in Biloxi arranged a Pesach Seder for the Jewish soldiers. The rabbi thanked the local parson's wife, saying that the Seder could not have been arranged without her help.

At the end of the Seder, Seymour thanked her. She told him it was no bother and said, "I love Jews."

"Many years ago," she explained, "I worked as an office manager for a hospital. The head doctor told me that there was a widowed Jewish woman who had run up quite an unpaid bill. I told him that her husband had been wealthy and had surely provided for her. When I went to speak to her, she revealed that the mounting medical bills had eaten up all her savings. She had no money and no hope.

"I remembered hearing of a prominent Jewish businessman in the region. I called him and gave him the details. We hung up.

"The next day, the man arrived. He found the woman and spoke to her with great kindness and respect. He paid her entire bill and told me to send the future bills to him. I was dumbstruck. This man traveled several hundred miles for the sake of a stranger, yet he took care of her like she was a queen. When I saw how Jews take care of each other, I knew that this was a truly special and blessed people. I love Jews."

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

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Kollel Happenings

The Kollel is on Pesach break. Programs resume April 5.

'WHITES LIES AND PROTECTING THE NOT SO INNOCENT' AT MAY 4 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dr. Ian Topelson D.M.D. Topelson Dentistry and Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, Denver Community Kollel for "White Lies and Protecting the Not So Innocent" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., May 4. Program will be at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. CLE credits pending. Cost \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., MAY 15 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on May 15 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



CHERRY CREEK MUNCH AND LEARN, MON., MAY 9

The next Cherry Creek Munch and Learn for men, led by Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, will be held on Mon., May 9 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.org

Interpersonal Issues Tantamount to Theft Part II

Saying a Torah thought heard from another without saying it in that person's name is tantamount to theft.

Although waking another is referred to as "gezel shainah," stealing sleep, is,

in fact, an act of damage, not theft.

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

Ask the Rabbi

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Dear Ephraim,

Ever hear the phrase, 'Nothing's new under the sun?'

The Talmud records an exchange in which Phlomo asked Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, "A person with two heads, upon which head does he place the tefillin?" Rabbi Yehuda thought Phlomo was merely jesting, when suddenly someone arrived and announced, "My wife had a baby with two heads! How much must I give for the redemption of the first-born?"

The Talmud concludes that the father must give double the normal amount. The Torah says the firstborn must be redeemed at "five sela'im per head." So here, where there are two heads, the father must give ten sela'im.

From the above, you can't necessarily extrapolate to other cases, because there are two opposite ways to understand it:

* Since the father gives double, they must be considered two people.

* They are one person who simply pays extra for the extra head.

According to the Midrash, a two-headed man lived in the time of King Solomon. He fathered six normal children and a seventh with two heads like himself. When the father died, the son with two heads came before King Solomon demanding a double share of the inheritance. King Solomon covered one head and poured hot water on the other. "Ouch!" both heads cried out. From this King Solomon meant to show that genetically, they are one, and

should be judged as one for inheritance purposes. The Talmud, however, does not record this incident.

The Zohar records a tradition about the descendants of Cain, stating that they were born with two heads.

Actual instances of conjoined twins are found in the works Sha'ar HaShamayim (Ralbag 1547), Cheshek Shlomo (1773) and Shvus Yaakov (Rabbi Yaakov Reisher of Prague, 1739) and others.

The Shvus Yaakov himself saw twin boys, normal in all ways, but whose heads were joined side by side. In such a case, he writes, they are certainly separate people. He distinguishes between this case and the case in the Talmud where the two heads share one body.

There's really nothing new under the sun: Adam and Eve, says the Talmud, were created as a single male/female being with two faces. The subsequent creation of Eve was actually the splitting of the male and female into two separate parts!

Sources:

* Tractate Menachos 37a, Tractate Berachos 61a

* Koheles 1:9

* Sefer Zohar quoted in Seder Doros, Tana'im and Amoraim, Phlomo

* Shita Mekubetzes to Menachos 37a, & Binyan Shlomo

* Shvus Yaakov, Orach Chaim 1:4 5:37:5

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