

A Taste of Torah Torah IS For Every Jew

By Rabbi Levi Lebovits

In this week's parshah, the Torah discusses the the building of the Tabernacle and its holy vessels. The Kli Yakar, a 16th-century Torah commentary, points out that when the Torah speaks about the construction of the Tabernacle itself and the other vessels, with the exception of the Holy Ark, Hashem commands Moshe specifically to build them. However, when referring to the building of the Ark, the verse says, "And they shall build the Ark" (Shemos 25:10) Why the distinction?

The ark was the home for the holy

tablets and symbolized Torah study. The Kli Yakar explains that the lesson the Torah is teaching us is that Torah is pertinent to each and every Jew. The fact that Hashem commanded the entire Nation of Israel to build the Ark, which symbolized the study of Torah, attests to the ability each Jew has to connect to the Torah. The greatness of the Torah is not that it is a book to be understood only by those of (high) intelligence, but a book whose lessons are relevant and attainable by every Jew from all walks of life. Our job is to work to find our special place in His Torah.

Ask the Rabbi Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

C.E.K. wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Despite numerous debates with a learned cousin of mine on the topic of the truth of the Torah, I still am not convinced.

Dear C. E. K.,

First let's start with a fact everybody agrees upon: There exists today a group of people, the Jews, who claim the following: "3,300 years ago, millions of our ancestors experienced what they felt was G-d talking to them. We, their descendants, have an unbroken chain passed on through the millennia that tells us two things: (1) That the event took place, and (2) The contents of the message." The Jews are the only people to ever make such a claim.

Let's first look at point number one. How can you explain a group of

people who claim to be descendants of millions of people experiencing the splitting of the sea, the manna and the Revelation at Sinai? How did the first generation start believing it? A charismatic leader? A slowly evolving story? Mass hypnosis?

Could a leader rewrite the oral history of a people and get them to believe it happened to their own ancestors? Imagine Napoleon telling the French "In the year 750, G-d split the Rhine river for your ancestors, commanded them a set of all-encompassing laws, and they passed that experience down from generation to generation." The people would say "What? Dad never told us that!" Remember: We not only believe in the Exodus and Sinai, we also believe that we have an unbroken chain back to those events.

Or the slowly evolving story: The people ate sap from bushes that grew

Stories For The Soul

The Lesson of the Cake

A young boy was once complaining to his grandmother how "everything" was going wrong. He hated school, had problems with his friends, and didn't get along with his sister.

His grandmother, meanwhile, was baking a cake, stirring the batter as she listened to his tale of woe.

"Would you like a snack?" she suddenly asked him.

"Yes," he eagerly responded.

"Here, have some cooking oil," she said.

"Yuck," came the reply.

"How about a couple raw eggs?"

"Gross, Grandma!"

"Would you like some flour then?"

Or maybe baking soda?"

"Grandma, those are all yucky!"

"Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves," she replied, "but when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake!"

Hashem works the same way. Many times we wonder why He would let us go through difficult times. But Hashem knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good. We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful.

The Menora was fueled by olive oil. Olives produce their wonderful pure oil only after being beaten, pressed and crushed. Similarly, the persecutions and tribulations that the Jewish people have suffered serve to strengthen and purify us. Difficulties in life actually make us greater.

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Kollel Happenings

JOY IN RELATIONSHIPS SERIES TO BEGIN

As part of our "Year of Joy" the Kollel will be offering a four part series on "Joy in Relationships." The first class, "Joy in Community" given by Rabbi Levi Lebovits will be on Mon., Feb. 14 at 7 p.m. at the home of Ken and Chaya Major. For information or to RSVP, contact Rabbi Moshe Heyman at 303-820-2855 or rmh@denverkollel.org



PURITY OF CHARACTER AT FEB. 15 BAIS YAAKOV FOR ADULTS

"Purity of Character," a Bais Yaakov for Adults class for women, will take place on Tues., Feb 15. The class, led by Mrs. Chaya Meyer, will be held at Aish Ahavas Yisroel, and will take a deeper look at Pirkei Avos. Cost is \$5 or \$25 for all six upcoming classes. To RSVP, contact Mrs. Esti Schwab at 303-668-1878 or estischwab@denverkollel.org



STEINHARTERS TO CHAIR BENEFIT EVENT ON MARCH 15

Rabbi Yissochor and Avigail Steinharter will chair the Kollel's Benefit Event, Wed., March 15, at District 475. Dr. Marc and Dale Sievers will receive the Community Leadership Award. The theme of the event is "Joy: Awakening the Power Within." To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or visit www.denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Borrowing Without Permission Part VIII

According to some authorities, it is permitted to use a sefer that is in the Beis Medrash for a short time. However, one must be careful to use it gently, and not for an extended period of time, which could cause wear and tear. As by talis and tefillin, if one knows that the owner of this sefer is the type of person who

may object, or if the sefer is in an out-of-the-way place or in a cubby or locker, one may not use it without permission.

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

Ask the Rabbi

continued from front

in the desert, but used to say "G-d sent us food from heaven" because they wanted to express the idea that all of nature comes from 'Above.' One day, Johnny comes home from kindergarten and says "Dad, the teacher told us that food fell from the sky." The father, preoccupied, grunts "Uh-huh," and Johnny grows up with a misconception. Eventually, Johnny's misconception becomes the predominant belief. Slightly absurd.

Now we come to a second problem. No matter what theory you concoct to imagine how such a belief got started, you must answer the following question: Why are we the only ones in history ever to make such a claim? Why didn't any other world leaders make this claim? They all could have 'propheted' greatly. Nobody at any time ever claimed that G-d convened their nation and spoke to them. Except us. Why?

Is it that the Jews were simply the most ignorant, superstitious, stupid, and gullible people ever? But then, having accepted this belief, they became the most scholarly, unyielding, skeptical people in the world, earning the title 'People of the Book,' surviving the ideological onslaughts of Christianity and Islam, giving their lives to pass on this belief, and spreading morality and monotheism to all humanity?

The Torah itself predicts that no one else in history will ever make a similar

claim.

Now, how do we know that the events and laws were transmitted faithfully? We see Jewish communities dispersed across the globe for millennia. Although they had no central authority and limited means of communication, Torah scrolls around the world are identical down to the last letter.

Obviously, therefore, we have a remarkably faithful method of transmission. And the reason is obvious: We never treated the Torah like a party-game or a 'telephone message.' Rather: "He heard it from his teacher 40 times." "One who studies a chapter 101 times is incomparable to one who studies it only 100 times." "His father left him hundreds of ships, hundreds of fields, but he never saw any of them - rather, he traveled from teacher to teacher and studied Torah." "Rabbi Akiva studied 40 years, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai studied 40 years..."

The Talmud is replete with examples of the Jewish People's total dedication to Torah study, sometimes suffering even torture and death for it. It's easy to see how such a nation kept the message intact.

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