



A Taste of Torah

Crystal Clear Vision

By Rabbi Mordechai Mandel

When facing what seems to be an unjust situation, we may find ourselves thinking, “That’s not fair!” Let’s analyze the following case and we will see that things are not always as they appear.

King Shaul was commanded by Hashem to kill out the nation of Amalek.

The Gemara (Yuma 22b) relates that Shaul was troubled by this command in light of the Mitzvah of Eglu Arufa. Eglu Arufa refers to the law that makes a city responsible for the killing of an individual found dead near that city. The Torah obligates the city leaders to decapitate a calf as an atonement for the individual’s death (Devarim 21: 1-4).

It seems incongruous, thought Shaul, that the same G-d who so values the life of an anonymous individual, to the point of holding an entire city responsible for it, would command the destruction of an entire nation!

The Gemara continues to relate that, at that point, a heavenly voice proclaimed, “Do not be overly righteous!” Ultimately, Shaul killed virtually the entire nation of Amalek, but had mercy on Agag, the king of Amalek, and let him live. Haman was a descendent of Agag.

The Torah requires us to remember what Amalek did to us on our way out of Egypt. “You shall erase the name of Amalek... do not forget...” The audacity that Amalek had by waging war with the Jewish People, immediately after their relationship with G-d was revealed throughout the world through the Splitting of the Sea, was testament to their brazen and sinful nature. For that

reason G-d commands us to bear eternal hatred towards Amalek and to wipe out their existence.

As Jews, our feelings and emotions are guided by Hashem and His Torah. Right versus wrong, mercy versus cruelty; these are not up to man’s perceptions but have to be governed by the Torah. Killing is a sin, but misguided mercy is also a sin. Just as the Torah commands us to feed the poor, visit the sick, and honor one’s parents, so, too, there is a mitzvah to wipe out Amalek.

An anecdote related by a Holocaust survivor sheds light on the extent of misguided emotions. When being liberated by the American army, he watched a German soldier being hurt, and for a moment he felt sympathetic towards the German. He then realized how foolish and mistaken one’s emotions can be. What looks like cruelty can really be kindness. Only through the lens of the Torah can one achieve the true perception.

Once we crystallize what is right and wrong, and eradicate Amalek, who epitomized sin and wrongdoing in the world, we can reach a sincere celebration of Purim. Purim is a time when we accept Hashem’s Torah out of love, and acknowledge its sovereignty over all our actions, thoughts, and feelings. It is for that reason that Purim always follows the Shabbos of Parshas Zachor, when we read “Remember what Amalek did to you”.

As we fulfill the verse, “You shall destroy the remembrance of Amalek,” may we merit Hashem’s promise that “I will surely erase the memory of Amalek,” by destroying all evil with the coming of Moshiach.

Stories For The Soul

Fringe Benefits

The Korbon Oleh (Elevation Offering) was brought when a man or woman wanted to express his/her love and closeness to Hashem. Although in the absence of the Beis HaMikdash, we do not have the opportunity to elevate our connection to Hashem in this manner, each of us is fortunate to have numerous opportunities to become more closely connected to the One Above. Each mitvah is an opportunity to demonstrate and increase our devotion to Hashem.

It is said that when the Vilna Gaon lay dying, he held on to his tzitzis and began to weep. His disciples, standing around, were astonished. “Surely after living such a pious life and contributing so much to Torah learning you cannot be afraid of what awaits you in the next world, Rabbi!” they said. “Why are you crying?”

He looked up and answered, “Because here on this earth, while alive, with just a little string I can fulfill one of G-d’s mitzvos, tzitzis.

No matter how wonderful the next world is, I will not be able to do that there.”

We can never overlook the small stuff. Here, on this earth, with the right mindset, everything is possible. You can even follow Hashem’s commandments with just a little string if you think of it.

Sometimes even just a penny fulfills the commandment of tzedakah. A simple smile can fulfill the mitzvah of chesed. This is a wonderful world of boundless opportunity.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., MARCH 27 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on March 27 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



'YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE!' AT APRIL 6 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dr. Stuart Senkfor, Partner, Denver Nephrologists, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean, Denver Community Kollel for "Your Money or Your Life!: Healthcare Funding Triage" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., April 6. The program will be held at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. CLE credits pending. Cost: \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



TUESDAY NIGHT TORAH AT AISH KODESH IN BOULDER

Join the Kollel for a dynamic one-on-one and small groups Torah encounter. Ma'ariv will be held at 8:15 followed by Torah study at 8:30. Program will be held at Aish Kodesh, 1805 Balsam Ave. For information, contact Rabbi Moshe Heyman at 303-820-2855 or rmh@denverkollel.org or Charles Fried at 917-499-4307 or charlesfried@gmail.com.

Interpersonal Issues

A Weighty Matter

One who cheats a buyer by using inaccurate weights as measures, besides being guilty of theft, also transgresses the prohibition against using dishonest weights and measures as well as a positive commandment to use honest weights and measures. This is true even

for a slight inaccuracy; however, if the law of the land allows for a slight margin of error, one is not accountable if he is within the legal boundary.

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

Ask the Rabbi

Sage Advice

Mr. Anon from the UK wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Can you expound on the extra wisdom our sages have?

Dear Mr. Anon,

I will start with some examples that most people know and perhaps can relate to. Mordechai's position in the Purim story is a good example.

Shushan's Jews, politically-correctly, attended Achashverosh's feast. (It's not PC to refuse a king's invitation.) Yet Mordechai, warned against it.

Later, when it was time for everyone to bow to Haman, again Mordechai "just doesn't get it." By his refusal to bow, he seems to be the one who brings a death decree on all the Jews.

However, as the Talmud says, it was attending the feast, which brought about the decree.

After Esther was selected by Achashveirosh to be the new queen, the Jews said to themselves: "We have a sister in the palace, Esther. Queen Esther will work to annul this bad decree." What would common wisdom say? "Let Esther tell the king that she's Jewish and we Jews will get favorable treatment." But again, Mordechai seems to miss the boat, instructing Esther to remain silent about her background. What could possibly have been his motive for this bizarre move?

We all know the end of the story. Precisely because Esther did not reveal her Jewishness, the Jews gave up on her and turned to Heaven alone, fasting and repenting. This intense prayer saved the Jewish nation.

We see that basically everything Mordechai did, although sometimes seeming to run against common sense, in the end brought good to the Jewish People. From where did Mordechai get this special insight and ability? From his sincere and total immersion in Torah study.

Another example is Moshe: When he went to Pharaoh the first time at G-d's command, things got worse for the Jews. Obviously, Moshe was imbued with supernatural insight, and the imperative to follow him was not lessened by the immediate result of his actions. Of course we all know the end of that story, and that Moshe eventually succeeded in a big way.

Note that, according to the midrash, 80 percent of the Jewish People were not willing to leave fertile Egypt for the uncharted desert. Because these millions of people were not ready to follow Moshe, they were forever lost to the Jewish People.

It is clear that the actions and decisions of our sages did and always will bring about good for the Jews.

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