

A Taste of Torah

The Morning After

By Rabbi Mordechai E. Fleisher

The year was 1948. The Jewish People in Eretz Yisroel were in the midst of a war, the War of Independence. Realizing how grave the situation was, Jews across the country – and throughout the world – stormed the heavens, praying to G-d for a miraculous salvation from the armies who wished to annihilate them from the face of the Earth. Numerous less-observant Jews, who under normal circumstances wouldn't daven, beseeched and pleaded with their Father in Heaven to save them from the dire straits in which they found themselves.

The Brisker Rov, Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik (1886-1959), made an observation at the time that reverberates until this day. In this week's parsha, Pharaoh begs Moshe to implore G-d to rid Egypt of the frogs that have been plaguing it. Moshe replies that he'd be happy to do so; when, he asks Pharaoh, would you like the frogs to leave? Pharaoh responds that he wants them to leave on the morrow. Moshe prays to Hashem, and, sure enough, the frogs all croaked the following day.

At this juncture, one would have expected Pharaoh to submit himself to G-d's demand to free the Jewish People. Pharaoh, however, is not as cooperative

as we would have hoped. As soon as the frogs had gone and the pressure lifted, he reverted to his usual, stubborn self.

We'd like to think we'd be better, don't we? But, said the Brisker Rov, people haven't changed much. Sure, at this critical time, most everyone, observant or otherwise, is pleading with G-d. And, like Pharaoh, G-d will respond to the prayers and save His People. But after the pressure is off –after the battle is over – many people will ignore the miraculous salvation wrought by Hashem. They will credit their strategies, their weapons, their armies – but they will forget that it was Hashem who delivered them from the brink of disaster.

The Brisker Rov was absolutely correct in his analysis. The Jews were able to stave off the marauding Arab armies, not just in 1948, but time and again since then. And time and again, many Jews who begged, pleaded, and beseeched the One Above for deliverance subsequently forgot their devotion and credited everything and everyone but Him.

The sooner we recognize where the pressure –and the relief –really comes from, the sooner Hashem can stop prodding us to recognize that it is He, not Arabs, diplomats, or politicians, who ultimately determines our fate.

Ask the Rabbi

Letting Go

Eric Steinberg wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am having a lot of trouble within myself dealing with a question. If you

and I are fathers and we see our children in danger we scoop them up and carry them to safety. We would even give up our lives for them. If this is so then why does G-d not do the same for His children; after all, He is "our Father..."

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Stories For The Soul

Scales of Justice

The brief summons hanging on the milkman's door bewildered him. He was an honest man who always behaved appropriately. He had no idea why he had been summoned to court, but the baker knew.

The baker bought butter and cheese from the milkman for his baking. One day he suspected that the lumps of butter that the milkman sold him were under a kilo. The baker decided to check out the matter and for a period of time he consistently weighed every lump of butter that he bought from the milkman. He discovered that they were in fact less than a kilo. Sometimes they were 900 grams, or 950 grams, and once one was even 850 grams.

The milkman arrived at the court shaking with fear. He had never been to a courthouse and had never spoken to the judge. The judge evoked a sense of fear amongst the villagers.

"I assume you have a very accurate scale in your dairy," began the judge.

"No, your honor, I do not have a scale," said the milkman.

"So how do you weigh the butter? Do you just guess that it is one kilo?" asked the judge.

"No, G-d forbid, your honor - I am an honest man. I built myself a scale - the kind that needs a weight on one side to balance the butter on the other."

The judge nodded his head, and the milkman continued: "Every morning when I come to weigh the butter for the baker, I place a kilo loaf of bread on one side of the scale, and this way I know that the butter that I

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Kollel Happenings

THE STORY OF THE EXODUS WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers for a three-week series delving into the story of the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. For information, contact Rabbi Moshe Heyman at rmf@denverkollel.org or 303-820-2855



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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.



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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 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. at Barnes & Noble, 960 S. Colorado Blvd. Cost: \$80 for all six classes. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Returning Lost Objects

If one found an item in a safe, protected place, it is not regarded as a lost item, because it was probably placed there by the owner. It may not be taken, even for the purpose of returning it to the owner.

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

Ask the Rabbi

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I have asked a few rabbis about this, but the response was not helpful. I am not trying to turn away from G-d but I do need this answered so that I may be closer to Him...

Dear Eric Steinberg,

Have you ever taught a child to ride a bike? If you have you will realize that at some point you have to let go of the seat or the handlebars and let him ride himself, and fall himself. If you do not let go at some point, he will never learn to ride the bike.

The ultimate purpose of this world is for the human to develop the capacity to be G-dlike, similar and compatible with G-d. However, G-d is not controlled, influenced or "scooped up" by some outside force. He is completely independent - and in order for us to really be good (or evil, for that matter) it requires that our actions be from within

ourselves as a result of free will. Free will requires that we are not unduly influenced in our decisions. If every time I make the right choice morally, I succeed in this world, and every time I make the wrong choice morally, I fail in this world, then I no longer have free will, I am merely a rat in a Skinner maze being conditioned to press the correct lever. This means that even if I am righteous I may suffer, and I may suffer at the hands of the evildoers. It is only in this system that humanity can become great - a system with minimum Divine intervention, with no apparent connection between moral and physical success. G-d wants us to be able to "ride the bike," and that is why He lets go.

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Stories for the Soul

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will give to the baker will be exactly one kilo."

"Are you telling us that the amount of butter you give the baker is exactly the weight of the loaf of bread he supplies to you?" asked the judge.

"That is it exactly!" said the milkman.

The baker's face fell - and he lost the

case.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the quintessential leader. He embodied all the lessons he taught. He didn't practice one thing and preach another. Whatever he demanded of others, he did himself.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.