



# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Because Torah Is for Every Jew

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## A Taste of Torah Clean-Up Time

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

After spending two portions telling us about how the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and the priestly garments ought to be constructed, the Torah now spends the two sections that comprise this week's Torah reading discussing about the actual construction of the Mishkan. Which is a bit odd. Because after describing, in detail, all the specifics of the Mishkan, it should have sufficed for us to be informed that everything was created, fashioned, built, and constructed as ordered. This would have taken a few verses, tops. Not two entire portions of the Torah.

In addition to the double-portion of this week's Torah reading, we also read the section dealing with the Red Heifer. This cow is famous because the Torah describes it as a *chok*, a law whose understanding is beyond human comprehension. Yet, if one were to glance at Rashi's commentary on this section, one would discover a most peculiar thing: Rashi, quoting Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan, explains that the Red Heifer is meant to rectify the Sin of the Golden Calf. Rashi then proceeds to show how various aspects of the process of the offering of the Red Heifer parallel parts of the sorry episode of the Golden Calf. Which seems to say that there is a perfectly comprehensible idea behind the Red Heifer: to atone for the Golden Calf!

The Beis Halevi, Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik (1820-1892) casts light on the above difficulties. He explains that what led the Jewish People to create the Golden Calf was their belief that Moshe had died during his forty-day sojourn in Heaven. They weren't looking for a deity; they were looking for a replacement for Moshe, a go-between between themselves and G-d. Based on the Kabbalistic wisdom they possessed after the Splitting of the Sea and the Giving of the Torah, they believed that this Golden Calf was the best solution. Thus, their intentions were solely for the sake of Heaven. (There were idolatrous

elements, but they hailed from the Egyptians who joined the Jewish People at the time of the Exodus.)

They made one egregious error, though: G-d had not commanded them to create a Golden Calf. And innovation in Judaism is strictly off-limits if it is not within the parameters of Halacha. Golden calves, not being within the pale of Torah law, was a big no-no. Thus, we are left with the Sin of the Golden Calf. Caused by people who thought they knew enough to determine what should be done.

The rectification, then, is to recognize that despite the fact that I may be quite a scholarly fellow, my understanding of the Divine is still insignificant. And, therefore, I will follow G-d's orders to the letter, no matter what my personal opinion (informed or otherwise) on the matter may be.

This was the Mishkan. G-d gave orders - lots of them. He gave details - lots of them. And, by following all the specifications, down to the minutest detail, the Jewish People achieved some level of rectification for the error of taking matters into their own hands.

The Red Heifer, continues the Beis Halevi, presents us with a similar challenge. We seem to understand the reasoning behind it - to atone for the Red Heifer. But wait! That's quite impossible, for the Torah, including the Red Heifer, predates the Sin of the Golden Calf. How, then, could the reasoning of the Red Heifer be predicated upon an event which hadn't yet occurred? One must conclude that there are other, deeper reasons - reasons beyond human grasp - that require a Red Heifer. And yes, G-d arranged things so that the Red Heifer would also serve as an atonement for the Golden Calf. But don't be fooled - you still can't begin to grasp the true reasoning behind the Red Heifer. At this point, we arrive at the fullest atonement for the Golden Calf: the realization that I, a puny human, cannot try to second-guess G-d's orders.

## Stories For The Soul

### Avoiding All Doubt

It once happened that the renowned Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan (1838-1933), needed to leave early one morning to do a certain mitzva. Consequently, he was unable to attend the morning minyan that he normally attended at the Radin Yeshiva. He went, instead, to a small early minyan elsewhere.

As he was leaving to tend to the matter at hand, he saw people walking toward the regular minyan. He made it a point to go over to every person he passed and tell them that he had davened at an early minyan in order to take care of an important matter. He didn't want them to think that he had simply skipped services.

The Chofetz Chaim was known, literally throughout the world, for his great piety. Who would suspect him of cavalierly skipping out on services? It would never even dawn on anyone to think that. Nonetheless, we learn from here that we cannot take a chance that our actions would be misinterpreted. We should never allow the impression to be given that we are acting with any impropriety.

In this week's Parsha, the Torah gives a full and detailed list of all the contributions to the Temple, showing how everything was used. Even though Moshe Rabbeinu and the righteous Betzalel were in charge, and there was no way that anyone could suspect them of dishonesty or impropriety, the Torah gives an exact accounting so that there can be absolutely no doubt.

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

## Kollel Happenings

SHLOMO FRIED, JAY KAMLET, HARVEY AND STEPHANIE MILZER, RICH AND ROCHELLE SOKOL TO CHAIR BENEFIT EVENT ON MARCH 20

Shlomo Fried, Jay Kamlet, Harvey and Stephanie Milzer, and Rich and Rochelle Sokol will chair the Kollel's 14th Anniversary Benefit Event. The theme of the event is "Torah - Heartbeat of Our Nation" and will include an original musical experience composed and presented by the Kollel. Special guest speaker: Rabbi Yechiel Spero, author of the 'Touched by a Story' series.



### WEST SIDE NIGHT SEDER AT THE KOLLEL

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](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) or 303-820-2855.



### KNOW THY ENEMY TUES. AT AISH

Join Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers in studying the tactics and strategies of the Yetzer Hora, and develop your own battle plan for the greatest challenge of your life - the war against the Evil Inclination. Based on the classic work Chovos Halvevos. Tuesday mornings 7:55-8:25 at Aish. For information, please contact Rabbi Moshe Heyman at [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org) or 303-820-2855.

## Interpersonal Issues

### Returning Lost Objects

Even though the owner's giving up on the lost item allows the finder to keep it or leave it behind, if one wishes to be an upright and good individual, he will return the object. (If the finder is poor, and the loser wealthy, there is no requirement to go beyond the letter

of the law.)

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

## Ask the Rabbi

### White Lies

Carson Hughes wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Is a "white lie" a sin? This question was raised in our Sunday School class by a 7th grade student.

Dear Carson Hughes,

A "white lie" - a falsehood which does not cause any harm - is not as serious as cheating or being dishonest in business, but it is still prohibited. Rabbi Yona Girundi, in his classic "The Gates of Repentance", enumerates nine different levels of falsifying, beginning with dishonesty in crime and monetary matters and ending with a few types of "white lie." I very highly recommend the study of this passage.

In limited cases, lying is permitted; for instance, where it will bring peace between people. Moshe's brother Aharon is praised for the way he made peace between quarreling parties: Aharon would approach one of the people and say "The other person sent me to tell you that he apologizes and is truly sorry for the way he acted towards you." Then he would go to the other person and say the same thing. The next time the two people met on the street, they would ask each other for

forgiveness.

Even when it is permitted to lie, one should avoid it if possible, as illustrated by the following incident in the Talmud.

The wife of the great Talmudic sage Rav always did the opposite of what he requested. If Rav asked for lentils she made beans; if he asked for beans she made lentils. When Rav's son, Chiya, grew up, he tried to correct the situation. Chiya told his mother the opposite of what his father wanted, thereby tricking her into making the correct food. Rav, realizing what Chiya had done, chastised him by quoting the verse: "They have taught their tongues to speak falsehood." Rav meant that a person should avoid lying even where it is permitted, lest he become accustomed to lying and lose his integrity.

Sources:

The Gates of Repentance (c. 1100 C. Eyiddle.), Gate 3 notes 178-186  
Tractate Yevamos 63a, 65b  
Yirmiyahu 9  
Tractate Kalla Rabbasi 3:5

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