



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Vayeira 5771

October 23, 2010

A Taste of Torah Looking Forward

By Rabbi Levi Lebovits

Many people think that the greatness of man comes solely from the perfection of one's personal service of Hashem. This, of course, would limit one's spiritual sphere to one's own four walls, never to aid or influence others. However, when we look into this week's parsha we see that this is not quite the whole story.

The Torah tells of the city of Sodom, whose residents were notorious for their tremendous cruelty towards their fellow man. Due to the wicked behavior of its inhabitants, Hashem decrees that the entire city of Sodom be destroyed. However, before the actual destruction, Hashem discusses the issue with Avraham. The Torah tells us that

because of the close relationship shared by Hashem and Avraham, Hashem feels that it is only right to inform Avraham of the forthcoming calamity. When describing the reason for their close and intimate relationship, the Torah says that Hashem takes an interest in Avraham because he knows that he will instruct his children and household to follow the ways of Hashem. Amazing! When speaking of the greatness of Avraham, the Torah does not speak of his belief in Hashem or his fulfillment His will, but rather the fact that he will instruct future generations to follow Hashem. From here we can see that "greatness" does not end with one's own personal obligations, but rather expands to include a responsibility to influence others to serve Hashem.

Ask the Rabbi 613 Mitzvos- Why?

From: Gregory Cissell

Dear Rabbi,

I am taking a class at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, so that I can better understand Judaism. My question for you is this: Why is the mitzvah system (by mitzvah system, I mean the 613 commandments that Jews are obligated to observe) considered so important? It has not been my experience that these commandments carry the same significance in other religions as in Judaism. Thank you.

Dear Gregory Cissell,

G-d gave the 613 commandments to our nation at Sinai. They are so important because they are "the King's

decrees."

Let me explain with a parable. Imagine that the president calls you to his office and gives you 10 million dollars and a strange gadget. He tells you to take the gadget home, put it by the open window, and turn it on every day between four and five in the afternoon, and that it's a matter of national security. He tells you that the 10 million is yours so long as you continue to do your task faithfully every day. You would certainly do it, even though you didn't understand why, because you know that the president has access to special information and technology that you don't have. You would feel sure that somehow this gadget has some function that, even though you don't understand

Stories For The Soul

To Really Care

Avraham sat outside his tent in the heat, a mere three days after his bris milah. The pain was incredible, the heat was unbearable; yet there he stationed himself, waiting in readiness for the opportunity to perform the mitzvah of hachnosas orchim (inviting guests).

Rabbi Nossan Tzvi Finkel, who was known throughout Europe, Israel and America as the Alter of Slabodka, commented that to Avraham, hachnosas orchim was such a part of him - of the very fabric of his being - that not performing hachnosas orchim was more painful and distressing to him than the pain of the operation and the heat of the blazing sun.

Kindness and charity can and should change our very consciousness, as the following true story, recorded in the Talmud, illustrates:

Rav Pappa was climbing a ladder when he suddenly began to slip. He grappled for a moment, then caught himself before falling. He was gripped with trepidation because he understood this as a sign from Heaven that he had done something that was deemed worthy of the death penalty. Rav Chiya suggested that perhaps Rav Pappa had failed to give tzedaka to a poor person. The Talmud teaches, "One who hides his eyes from tzedaka is considered as one who serves idols." Idol worship is punishable by death. The Maharsha (Baba Basra 10A) says that Rav Chiya was hinting to the following incident:

Once a poor person came to Rav Pappa, who was in charge of the communal charity fund, for a

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Kollel Happenings

NEW SKILL BUILDING GEMARA CLASS MONDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS AT AISH

Join Rabbi Levi Lebovits and Rabbi Mordechai Mandel for a new skill-building, text-based Gemara class, Monday and Wednesday nights from 7:30 to 9:00 at Aish. The topic of study is Tractate Pesachim which deals with the holiday of Pesach. For information call 303-820-2855 or email rl@denverkollel.org



CHAVRUSA STYLE MORNING LEARNING AT AISH

After the new 6 o'clock Shacharis at Aish, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, join Kollel members for Chavrusa style learning. Participants are studying Tractate Sanhedrin, which deals with the Jewish court system. For information call 303-820-2855 or email rmh@denverkollel.org



SHAREHOLDERS VS. MANAGEMENT AT NOVEMBER 3 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Rob Klugman, Former Chief Global Strategy Officer at Molson Coorswill and Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers for "Shareholders vs. Management: Who has the Final Say?" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., Nov., 3. The program will be held at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Keeping it in the Family

A husband may not take his wife's personal belongings, such as her jewelry or clothing, without her consent.

A wife cannot give a donation for charity beyond an amount that the husband would approve of.

Therefore, one who solicits funds may not accept a donation from a

married woman that seems unusually large for someone of other financial means, unless she says that she is authorized by her husband to do so.

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

Ask the Rabbi

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it, is crucial for national security.

So too, even though we don't understand the ultimate reason for all the commandments, since G-d Himself told us to do them and told us that they are so important, we certainly believe Him. He took us out of slavery in Egypt and gave us the Land of Israel in order for us to do the commandments; as the Torah says regarding the laws of keeping kosher, that we should observe them, "Because I am the Lord your G-d, who raised you up out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d." (Leviticus 11:45)

We are not to "pick and choose,"

but rather to do all the commandments, as G-d said: "You shall observe all My statutes and all My laws and do them, so that the Land to which I am bringing you to settle upon will not vomit you out." (Leviticus 20:22) We see from this verse that our national security in the Land of Israel depends on fulfilling these laws. Not only that, but they are also our ticket to life in the Next World, as the verse says, "You shall keep My statutes and My laws, which a person will do them and live eternal life through them." (Leviticus 18:5)

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Stories for the Soul

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donation from the fund. Rav Pappa denied him because this man was also going from door to door for donations and the law stated, "When a poor person collects from door to door, he is not given a gift from the communal fund." Rav Samma rebuked him saying, "If you don't give him, then others will not give and he will die."

Rav Pappa responded, "What can I do? The law states, 'When a poor person collects from door to door, he is not given a gift from the communal fund.'" Rav Samma retorted, "He is not given a large gift, but he is given a token gift."

Rabbi Moshe Dov Harris explained that Rav Pappa could not be considered as

one who "hides his eyes from tzedaka" just because he did not know a law. Rather, Rav Pappa failed to deduce the law because he lacked the proper level of empathy towards the plight of the poor person. In addition to transferring funds, the mitzvah of tzedaka requires that one be sensitive to the plight of the poor person and to feel his pain. Had Rav Pappa put himself in the poor man's shoes, he would have realized that 'no gift' could not be an option and therefore a small token gift must be in order. Rav Pappa's failing was in the essential mitzvah of tzedaka and thus was tantamount to idol worship.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman