

A Taste of Torah

What a Gem

By Rabbi Levi Lebovits

When asked by his students how to deepen their emunah (loosely translated as “faith”) in Hashem, the famed “Mashgiach” (“overseer” or “guide”) of the pre-war Mirrer yeshiva in Poland, Rav Yerucham Levovitz, would tell them to study the commentary of Rashi (1040-1105) on the Torah. It is with this suggestion in mind that I work to reveal the gems that are to be found in his commentary.

In the beginning of this week’s parsha, Vayeishev, Rashi teaches us how we are to look at a passage in the Torah in light of our relationship with Hashem. Rashi points out that although in last week’s parsha, Vayishlach, the Torah recounts the entire history of the offspring of Esav, it does so in very short terms. However, when it comes to the story of the children of Yaakov, it speaks

about it at length. If I were presented with the above dilemma I would have answered that there wasn’t much for us to learn from the history of the offspring of Esav, whereas the story of the sale of Yosef has many eternal lessons.

Rashi takes a different approach to reconcile the above dilemma. He explains that what we are to take out of the lengthy tale of the history of the Jewish people and the terse account of the offspring of Esav is that Hashem is very interested in the Jewish people. Just as one who, after searching for a pearl in the sand and finally finding it, relishes it and spends time looking at its every detail, Hashem has similarly “found” His beloved nation after much searching, and He speaks at length about them. Now that’s a gem! May we all merit to learn the lessons of Rashi and to strengthen our connection with Hashem.

Ask the Rabbi

Missionary

From: Din

Dear Rabbi,

All major religions have missionaries to invite people to join their faith, apart from the Jews. Why?

From: Emily

Dear Rabbi,

I’ve been searching for the ‘one, true religion’ for some time, and when I came across Judaism, I knew this was

the religion for me. I also read briefly about conversion - that rabbis generally try to ‘discourage’ it. Is this true? And if so, why? I mean, I understand that it’s to test whether they are sincere enough to continue, but most other religions welcome converts with open arms. And how do I go about converting? I understand it can be a long and arduous process, but I’m willing to do it.

Dear Din and Emily,

It is true that other religions employ

Stories For The Soul

Guided with Precision

David Miller* [*not his real name], a pious observant Jew, was at Logan Airport, getting ready to board United Flight 175. He was going to LA on an important business trip and had to make this flight. A lot depended on it. He boarded the plane, watched the doors close, and sat down.

Suddenly he remembered that he left his tefillin (ritual boxes with straps worn by Jewish men in prayer) in the terminal boarding area. He politely asked the stewardess if he could go back and retrieve his tefillin, which were sitting just a few feet from the gate.

She told him that once the doors closed, no one was allowed off the plane. Not about to take this sitting down, he asked if he could speak to the pilot to obtain special permission. The pilot did not comply. He simply restated the policy.

David was not about to lose this precious mitzvah, or let the holy tefillin get lost like that, he uncharacteristically made a rather loud fuss.

Finally, he was making such a ruckus that the flight crew told him that they would let him off the plane, simply because he was a nuisance. Even though it would only take about 90 seconds to run out, grab his tefillin, and run back, they were not going to wait for him.

No matter. David was not about to lose his tefillin, even if it caused him great inconvenience or cost his business a loss. He left the plane, never to reboard.

His flight was United #175, the second flight to reach the World Trade Center. His devotion to a mitzva saved his life.

The consequences of David’s actions do not end there. Originally the terrorists wanted both towers

Kollel Happenings

THE ETHICS OF RECESSION AT DEC. 1 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Art Kleinstein, B.Sc., C.A., Managing Partner, Wintergreen Homes and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab for "The Ethics of Recession: A New Crop of Dilemmas" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., Dec. 1. 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



JEWISH CHILDREN'S EXTRAVAGANZA TO BE HELD ON DEC. 24

This year, the Kollel's annual Jewish Children's Extravaganza will be held on Fri., Dec. 24 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Funtastic Fun, 3085 S. Broadway. Cost: Children \$9, adults \$2. Admission includes unlimited rides. For free tickets, visit www.mazeltot.org. For early bird and group specials, visit www.denverkollel.org. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



KOLLEL KUMZITZ MOTZEI SHABBOS DEC. 4

The Kollel will hold a Kumzitz on Motzei Shabbos Chanuka, Dec. 4, at 8:30 p.m., at the home of Dr. Dimitri & Kathy Kaufman, 9500 East Grand Ave., Greenwood Village. The event will feature inspirational singing and light refreshments. The Kumzitz is free of charge and open to men and women. For information, call Rabbi Amsel at 303-820-2855 or email rya@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Refusing to Pay a Debt Part II

If one lacks sufficient funds to repay the debt, he has not transgressed anything.

"Insufficient funds" is defined as not having enough money to meet basic food needs for thirty days, basic clothing and shelter needs for twelve months, and having no assets except basic tools

and utensils that are necessary for one's profession.

The needs of a wife and children are not included in the above.

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

Ask the Rabbi

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missionaries to spread their religion. Over the centuries, throughout the world, their techniques of "inviting" others to join have varied in zeal from intense persuasion to outright coercion.

The essential idea behind this proselytizing is that the more people that ascribe to the religion, the more powerful it is and therefore the truer it is. The veracity of the religion, and by converse, the falseness of other religions, depends on the number of believers or followers. This offensive is basically predicated on uncertainty and insecurity.

Judaism is different. Its universal truth does not depend on how many people accept it, nor is its timeless veracity challenged by those who reject it. This stark truth is why Judaism has been such a bone in the throat of those who seek to contend with or replace it.

This is what governs Judaism's approach to conversion. The underlying principle is that a person must sincerely

believe in G-d and be committed to keeping all the commandments. For this reason, we don't proselytize. A person has to be sincerely interested on his own and approach conversion of his own volition. And more than that, we actually discourage the person from converting until we feel that the person is entirely sincere and committed to convert for the right reason – namely, out of clear, correct belief in G-d and a resolute commitment to keep the Torah.

For this reason, even after a person's sincerity is accepted, a long period of learning and trial Jewish living must ensue, under the supervision of authorized rabbis, to give the person the time to decide if this is really what he or she wants to do, and also to prepare one for the difficulties and challenges of Jewish life.

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Stories for the Soul

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struck simultaneously to maximize the explosive carnage. Later it was learned that due to this whole tumult, the takeoff was delayed, causing a space of 18 minutes between the striking of the two towers. This delay made it possible for many more people to escape alive

from both buildings.

Many lives were spared because one Jew would not forsake his beloved tefillin.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman