

A Taste of Torah A Heavenly Sign

By Rabbi Mordechai E. Fleisher

It's been twenty-two years, but Ya'akov has just been informed his beloved son Yosef is, in fact, alive. And a ruler of Egypt, to boot! Yet the verse, when describing Ya'akov's reaction to the news, adds what would seem to be a trivial piece of information: that Ya'akov saw the calves sent by Yosef to pull the wagons. Rashi explains that this is a very pertinent fact. Yosef feared that Ya'akov would suspect the viceroy of Egypt of being an impostor. To that end, Yosef sent his father a sign to verify his claim. The final sugya (topic) of Torah that Yosef had studied with his father before his abrupt disappearance was the section dealing with the calf whose neck is broken to atone for the murder of a traveler found between two cities. The calves were an allusion to that topic. Upon seeing this sign, Ya'akov knew that this individual was, indeed, Yosef.

But a question still remains. If someone was, for some reason, impersonating Yosef well enough to convince the brothers that he was, indeed, Yosef, who's to say he didn't manage to discover what the last piece of Torah Ya'akov and Yosef studied was?

Rabbi Ya'akov Neiman answers with a true story. Many years ago, in the city of Vilna, a man disappeared immediately after his wedding. As nobody knew of his whereabouts, the poor wife was left an agunah, unable to remarry because she lacked a divorce from her missing husband.

Years passed, until one day, a man appeared in Vilna, claiming to be the long-lost husband. While the claim itself

was insufficient grounds to believe the man and allow him to grant the woman a divorce, he also provided a number of intimate details regarding what had transpired during the time the husband and wife had been together. The woman and her family, however, were suspicious that the man was, in fact, an impostor. How to determine the truth?

The people of Vilna presented the Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahi Kramer, 1720-1797) with their quandary. The Gaon instructed them that on Shabbos, they were to take the man to the shul where the missing husband had prayed, and ask him where his seat in the shul was. Sure enough, the man was unable to identify his place; it then became clear that it was a charade.

The Gaon explained that it was entirely possible that this evil man had met the husband and had obtained the details necessary to carry on the act. However, continued the Gaon, it would have never occurred to a wicked man scheming such a nefarious plot to ask for details of something associated with sanctity. Thus, the Gaon concluded, he would have never discovered the location of the husband's seat in shul.

Yosef, as well, knew that his father would not be satisfied with mere personal details of his life. It would be possible for another to discover these pieces of information. Torah study, however, was something that an impersonator would never have bothered to find out. Thus, Yosef was confident that his father would believe that the viceroy was, indeed, Yosef upon seeing the calves, as nobody but Yosef would have known the final sugya the two had studied.

Stories For The Soul

It Pays to Listen

Five hundred years ago there lived a great scholar known as the Mechaber - Rav Yosef Karo, who was perhaps the greatest Sephardic rabbi of the time. Late in his life, he undertook a monumental project, to write a clear, "user friendly," definitive work on halacha - the Shulchan Aruch. "Shulchan Aruch" literally means "Set Table," as if to say that now halacha was easily organized and clarified for all to partake.

Although the Shulchan Aruch was immediately accepted in Sefardic communities, it did not receive instant universal approval. Particularly, there were great Rabbis in the Ashkenazic community who opposed the Shulchan Aruch on principle. It was their contention that halacha was a dynamic process, that each case should be judged on its own merits applying appropriate Talmudic logic.

The Shulchan Aruch might never have gained the universal acceptance it enjoys today were it not for Rav Moshe Isserles. Rav Isserles was one of the greatest Ashkenazic Rabbis of his day. He endorsed Rav Karo's Shulchan Aruch. In fact, Rav Isserles wrote an Ashkenazic version of the Shulchan Aruch, but rather than publish it as a separate work, he published it as glosses, interspersed commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch.

He named his work, "HaMapa," "The Tablecloth." This name in and of itself reflects Rav Isserles' humility. As the title implies, it is meant as an adornment to the Shulchan Aruch. It highlights the Ashkenazic laws and customs when and where they

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Kollel Happenings

'ETHICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA' AT JAN. 4 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Bradley A. Friedman, JD. President, The Friedman Group and Kollel Dean Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab for "Ethics of Social Media: New Challenges of Contemporary Communication" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., Jan. 4. 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



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 or 303-820-2855



LIBERATED PARENTS, LIBERATED CHILDREN WITH MRS. AVIGAIL STEINHARTER

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 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.. Cost: \$80 for all six classes. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues

Returning Lost Objects

As soon as someone encounters a lost object, there are two Torah commandments that immediately come into effect: The commandment not to look away (ignore) a lost object, as well as the commandment to return the item.

If the finder picks up the lost item with the intent to keep it, the prohibition of theft is transgressed, as well.

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

Ask the Rabbi

Non-Kosher Animals

Anonymous from New York wrote:
Dear Rabbi,

How do I explain to a 10 year old public school student, whom I tutor, why G-d created both kosher and nonkosher animals.

Dear Anonymous,

The Sages of the Talmud ask the same question! They answer that every animal has a task to perform in the world, and there's something we can learn from them.

For example, say our Sages, we can learn modesty from a cat, and honesty and industriousness from an ant. Cats are discreet about taking care of their personal needs. Ants are hard-working, and they are "honest" in that they don't steal from each other.

King David tried to fathom the meaning behind each animal and he succeeded ~ with two exceptions: the spider and the wasp. So, G-d showed

King David very clearly the need for those two animals as well:

When running for his life from King saul, David hid in a cave. King Saul and his soldiers were searching everywhere. G-d sent a spider to spin a web over the opening of the cave in which David was hiding. When the soldiers came to his cave and saw it was covered with a spider's web, they moved straight past, it not imagining that the web was freshly made!

On another occasion David entered King Saul's military camp at night. Saul's general, Avner, turned over in his sleep and, unknowingly, trapped David with his legs. A wasp stung Avner, **causing him to open his legs, allowing David to escape!**

Another answer is that G-d made unkosher animals in order to reward us for following the commandment not to eat them.

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Stories for the Soul

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differ from the Sefardic ones. To this day when one purchases a Shulchan Aruch, it contains the words of the Mechaber, and with the words of the Mapah interspersed throughout.

It is due to the humility and harmony of these two great men that the Shulchan Aruch attained universal ac-

ceptance. Yaakov gathered all of his children together to tell them of the end of days. The twelve tribes stood in unity around their father Yaakov. When the Jewish people are in unity and harmony, amazing accomplishments can occur.

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