

# A Taste of Torah

## Mind Over Matter

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Ever heard of Kelm? It's a little town in Lithuania, a mere speck on the map generous enough to mention it. But that's all in physical terms. Spiritually, Kelm was once a giant of a town, for it was the location of the Talmud Torah of Kelm. The Talmud Torah of Kelm was renowned throughout the pre-WWII Yeshiva world for producing some of the foremost mussar personalities – people who had reached the heights of perfection of character. As the famed Chofetz Chaim once remarked, "Other yeshivas produce soldiers, but Kelm produces generals!"

One of the hallmarks of Kelm was the ability to maintain calmness and composure in all situations. Pain, impatience, terror, panic – these experiences simply did not affect the demeanor of a true Kelmer. A case in point is Rabbi Nochum Velvel Dessler (1921-2011), who, while living most of his life in Cleveland, Ohio, was born in Kelm, and was raised in that lofty tradition. Rabbi Dessler once underwent a procedure on his leg, and was confined to a bed in the hospital during his recovery. The affected leg was still quite sensitive, and, one day, a visitor mistakenly bumped into it. A witness to the incident stated that for an instant a look of agonizing pain flitted across Rabbi Dessler's eyes, but vanished immediately; not a sound was heard from him. Complete composure under all circumstances.

But this idea didn't begin in Kelm; Moshe sought to impart its importance to the Jewish People during the final

week of his life. While recounting the events leading up to the Sin of the Spies, Moshe told the Bnai Yisroel, "And all of you approached me, and you said, 'Let us send men before us...'" (Devarim 1:22) Rashi (ibid.) comments that the term "all of you" indicates that the people came to Moshe as a tumultuous mass of humanity, with the young preceding the old, and the old pushing ahead of the leaders. This, said Moshe, was an indication that the mission was doomed to failure.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky (1891-1986) explains that it wasn't merely the lack of proper respect that presaged the tragic Sin of the Spies; it was the tumult and confusion and lack of serenity shown by the people that Moshe found disturbing. If the Bnai Yisroel merely wanted to invest the necessary human effort towards conquering the land by sending spies, they would have approached Moshe in a calm, cool, collected fashion to make their request. But their lack of composure was symptomatic of a lack of trust in G-d. One who has an awareness that Hashem controls all events will not be perturbed in trying circumstances; the failure of the Jewish People to exhibit poise under pressure demonstrated a lack of that trust.

While maintaining level-headedness at all times is a very exalted level, we can certainly aspire towards reaching some level of emotional tranquility. And remembering that it is Hashem, not us, Who is running the show is the best place to start.

## Stories For The Soul

### A Common Bond

One Friday night in Jerusalem, Rabbi Rafael Grossman heard the noise of an angry argument from his hotel room. He went outside and discovered a religious Jew standing in front of a taxi.

"Let me through!" the Israel driver demanded, followed by a stream of violent threats.

"It's Shabbos!" the religious Jew screamed.

Rabbi Grossman went over to the religious Jew. "You've made your point," he suggested. "You can leave him alone now."

He then went over to the taxi driver. "Please, don't use this violent language," he said softly. "It's not nice to see two Jews quarreling like this."

The taxi driver took out a tallis and siddur. "You see this?" he exclaimed. "Tomorrow morning I will go to shul with my children, the way my father took me. I work tonight so I can afford to send my children to religious schools."

"It's a pleasure to meet a man who's so concerned for his family's education," Rabbi Grossman said warmly. "Perhaps you and your family can join my wife and I at the hotel tomorrow morning for the Shabbos meal?"

The man stared at him in disbelief. "You're not serious," he responded and drove off.

Rabbi Grossman went back to the religious Jew, and likewise invited him and his family to join him for the next day's meal.

"No. I'm not coming," was the reply, and he walked off.

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## Kollel Happenings

### DERECH HASHEM

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for a philosophical series on "Derech Hashem", a sefer by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto. Discover and delve into the vital understanding of Hashem's world. The women's classes are held on Mondays, 7:45 p.m., at EDOS. For info, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.



### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issues, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesdays, 8 p.m. at Aish.



### COMMUNITY WIDE SIYUM HASHAS CELEBRATION

The Denver Jewish Community will gather on August 1st, 2012 to honor local Daf Yomi participants and celebrate Torah study in Denver. Celebrate with Denver's own devoted Daf Yomi participants, people who have taught us the meaning of commitment over the past 7 1/2 years. To register, or for more information, visit the Kollel's website, [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), or call 303-820-2800 ext. 7.

## Interpersonal Issues

### If the Lost Item Has No Valid Identifying Feature

If an item is found in an area where there are talmidei chachomim (Torah scholars), the rules differ for items that have no signs, as shall be discussed in future weeks. A talmid chochom is defined as a learned individual who is

known as one who never lies, or one who is known as a G-d-fearing individual who never lies.

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

## Ask the Rabbi

### Breaking Glass at a Wedding

David F. Scott asks:

I have a question for your "Ask the Rabbi" series. At a Jewish wedding the groom places the glass under his foot and smashes it into several pieces. What is the significance of this act? I have a friend who is soon to be married and he asked me this question.

Dear David,

One reason is in order to remember The Temple and the glory of Jerusalem during The Temple era, as it says in the verse in Psalm 137:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. Let my tongue adhere to my palate if I fail to recall you, if I fail to elevate Jerusalem above my foremost joy.

So even at a time of "foremost joy,"

we smash a glass in order to remember the destruction of The Temple.

Another reason is based on the Talmud in Tractate Berachos:

"[The Torah] says 'Serve G-d with fear and rejoice with trembling'... Rav Ashi made a wedding for his son. When he saw that the Rabbis were getting 'carried away' in their rejoicing, he brought out a crystal glass and broke it before them and they became subdued."

The authors of the Tosefos state that this is the source for the breaking of the glass at weddings. We learn from this that even at an occasion of great rejoicing, one must take measures to ensure that the celebration remains within bounds of propriety.

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## Stories for the Soul

*Continued from front*

The next day, Rabbi and Mrs. Grossman lingered over their meal. They were about to give up when in walked the taxi driver and his family.

"It was so nice of you to invite us. I felt that you were serious last night, and my family was excited about your offer. So here we are," he said.

Before long, the religious Jew and his family walked in. The taxi driver turned away, but Rabbi Grossman jumped up in delight at the arrival of his additional guests. The conversation continued. The women soon began talking and the children got acquainted. Before they

knew it, four hours had passed.

Rabbi Grossman accompanied his guests to the door, thanked them for coming and bid them farewell.

In due time, the two Jews became good friends, and the taxi driver increased his Torah observance. Years later, the two families became even closer, when they celebrated the wedding of their children to one another.

The Bais Hamikdash was destroyed because of sinas chinam, unwarranted hatred. If we bond with our fellow Jews, we can work through anything.

*Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.*

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