



THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Matos-Masei 5772



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

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A Taste of Torah With All the Extras

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Halachic stringencies. How are we to relate to them? Are we to look for them? Ignore them? Try them on for size and see how they fit? While much ink has been spilled on this important, but sometimes confusing, subject, an important source for this discussion can be found in this week's Torah portion.

The Torah at the beginning of the parsha discusses the laws of vows. One has the ability to create a vow through the mere utterance of his lips, and, presto, he must now adhere to the terms of his vow. Want to make sure you don't eat that piece of cake? Make a vow that it's forbidden. Want to make sure you don't spend money you don't have on that new outfit that's really tempting you? Make a vow that it's forbidden. You get the idea.

We find that our Sages had mixed feelings about accepting vows upon oneself. The Talmud records what seems to be a dispute on the matter. One opinion refers to one who accepts a vow as a *kadosh*, a sanctified individual. The dissenting view opines that one who accepts a vow and fulfills its terms (instead of nullifying the vow in a halachically acceptable manner) is considered to have built a personal altar and offered a sacrifice upon it, something strictly forbidden once the Temple was constructed.

Rabbi Aharon Bakst (1867-1941) resolves the paradox with a Gemara

(Chullin 105a) that quotes the sage Mar Ukva as having referred to himself as "vinegar the son of wine", for while his father waited 24 hours after consuming meat before consuming dairy (that's a long time to wait for a coffee!), Mar Ukva himself merely waited until the next meal to consume dairy. (For practical halacha, please consult your Rabbi.) Thus, he felt inferior to his father's level of scrupulousness.

This passage is troubling, for if Mar Ukva realized that waiting 24 hours is truly a higher level of observance, why didn't he adhere to this stringency? Could he not hold off on the cappuccino until the next day?!

The answer, explains Rabbi Bakst, is that Mar Ukva refused to accept a stringency he was not on the spiritual level to observe. His father, realized Mar Ukva, felt that it was spiritually productive for him to abstain from dairy for 24 hours after imbibing meat; he, on the other hand, was not spiritually sensitive enough to feel a need to keep such a stringency.

This is the difference between a positive vow and a negative one. One who feels that accepting a vow to forbid a particular item upon himself will advance his spiritual growth is to be commended for doing so. But a person who takes on extras when there will be no real spiritual benefit is frowned upon.

stocks in some companies that are not doing too well these days. (What stock is?) Anyway, some of these companies just announced massive layoffs, in the

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Stories For The Soul

An Eternal Nation

In the 1800s, the Emperor Napoleon passed by a synagogue in the Jewish Quarter in France.

The day happened to be Tisha B'Av. He heard the sounds of weeping and wailing coming from within. He couldn't help but wonder what was going on.

He summoned one of the Jews and asked, "What is everyone crying about? Has a tragedy struck?"

"We are lamenting the destruction of our Holy Temple in Jerusalem," came the reply.

"When did this happen?" asked Napoleon, aghast. "I didn't hear anything of this," he continued, "and my ministers report to me twice daily of all the current news and events around the world."

"Sire," the Jew replied, "our Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E. by the Romans."

Napoleon was taken aback - and impressed - by this response.

"A people that passionately mourns a national tragedy that took place over 17 centuries ago is ETERNAL," he replied.

Napoleon was correct in his assessment. We are eternal, yet without the Bais Hamikdash, we remain incomplete.

As we soon enter the Nine Days, may we recapture an appreciation of the spirit and significance of the Bais Hamikdash, and truly mourn its destruction. And may we merit to soon see the rebuilding of our Holy Temple, speedily, in our days.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Baruch Lederman.

Ask the Rabbi Taking Stock

Marvin Peyser wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Here is a question for you. I own

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 womens classes are held on Mondays, 7:45 p.m., at EDOS. For info, email 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, or call 303-820-2800 ext. 7.

Interpersonal Issues

If the Lost Item Has No Valid

Identifying Feature

If one discovers an item with no identifying signs, and knows he will be unable to return it, there is a dispute amongst the authorities whether one is obligated to pick it up. Regardless, once

it is picked up, it cannot be put back down.

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

Ask the Rabbi

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tens of thousands. This will result in lower costs, therefore greater profits, and I'm liable to make some money on it when the stock subsequently rises.

My question is: I would like to feel joyful that my stock will rise, but then I am reminded that tens of thousands of families will have lost their income. This is a dilemma. Is there any Torah insight on this?

Dear Marvin Peyser,

First, I'd like to say that your question shows a great deal of sensitivity, compassion, and market savvy.

How should you feel when others lose their jobs while your stock rises? Bad and good. Feel bad that others have lost their jobs, and glad that your stocks went up.

The Talmud actually deals with this idea of relating to contradictory emotional stimuli. The Talmud's example regards how to relate to a parent's death when at the same time that death brings financial relief to the child.

If someone hears that his father has died, leaving him and his brothers an inheritance, what blessing does he say? Should he say, "Blessed is G-d, the True Judge," which is the blessing accepting G-d's will upon hearing sad news? Or, should he say "Blessed is He Who is good and Who bestows good," which is the blessing for good news which benefits him and others, such as here where he and his brothers have become

wealthy?

The Talmud states that he should say both blessings. First the blessing for the bad news, and afterwards the blessing for the good news.

This can be understood as recognition that people can feel contradictory emotions; an event which has positive and negative aspects can be experienced as such. I think an important part of this lesson is that a person shouldn't feel guilty for experiencing the happy aspects of a bad situation. It doesn't necessarily mean that he is insensitive.

With that, I would like to tell you a true story. A rabbi I know once called the police to report his teenage son, last seen riding his bicycle, missing. Later that day the police phoned asking the rabbi to come and view the body of a boy, matching his son's description, who had been hit by a car while riding his bike.

The Rabbi later told that while he and his wife were in the car on their way to identify the body, he had hoped for a fleeting moment that the sight which would greet his eyes would not be that of his son. "But if it's not my son," he realized, "then it will be someone else's son, and my joy will be someone else's tragedy. If it is my son, others will be spared."

That thought gave him courage and helped him accept the sight that did greet his eyes, the sight of his beloved son.

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