

A Taste of Torah It'll Take More Than A Miracle

By Rabbi Mordechai E. Fleisher

There's a story about a fellow who went to bed one night at 7:00. During the course of the night, he had seven dreams, and in each one he saw the number seven. Upon waking up in the morning, he immediately checked his bedside clock and saw that it read 7:00. Well, he immediately got dressed and headed for the racetrack, where he went to the seventh race of the day and bet on the seventh horse. And, sure enough, the horse finished... seventh.

Signs and wonders can be pretty hard to read sometimes, but people tend to be blown away when something truly unnatural occurs. And when a person arrives on the scene who can perform wonders, others tend to follow him like iron filings drawn to a magnet.

The Torah outlook, however, differs drastically. Our Sages throughout history have taught us not to be impressed by people who seem to have supernatural abilities; the true worth of a person is based upon his or her righteousness. And this week's parsha is a case in point.

Eliezer, Avraham's trusted servant, has just returned from his journey and has brought a bride, Rivka, for his master's son, Yitzchak. But before Yitzchak even meets his future wife, Eliezer has to tell Yitzchak a few things. No, he's not going to give him advice on marriage. But he does have to inform him about all the miracles that took place during his search for the right girl. How his trip was miraculously shortened. How

immediately after he finished praying to G-d to send him a girl suitable for the household of Avraham, Rivka came to the well where he, his men, and his camels were standing. How the water miraculously rose up the well towards Rivka when she approached it to draw water.

One would have thought that with a report like that, Yitzchak would have immediately agreed that this girl was a worthy individual, one who was suitable to enter the family of Avraham. But Yitzchak didn't agree. Not yet. Rather, says the verse, "And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of his mother, Sara." (24:66) Onkelos, in his Aramaic translation of the Torah, renders, "And he saw, and her deeds were as proper as the deeds of his mother Sara." It was then, continues the verse, that Yitzchok took Rivka as a wife.

The Brisker Rov, Rabbi Yitzchok Zev HaLevi Soloveitchik (1886-1959), points out that Yitzchok was unimpressed by the miracles. He didn't joyfully proclaim, upon hearing Eliezer's report, "It must be bashert (Divinely ordained)!" Yitzchok wanted to see if Rivka was a righteous individual, on par with his pious mother, Sara. Supernatural events did not tell him one way or the other. It was only after ascertaining Rivka's righteousness that he married her. Miracles did not determine his choice - rather, the righteousness he saw in Rivka was the determining factor.

Stories For The Soul

The Power of Belief

Gary was known throughout his Jewish school in Pittsburgh as a big behavior problem. One day he was sent to the principal's office (for about the 50 billionth time.) The principal spoke to him about proper behavior, values, goals, etc. It was pretty much the standard lecture.

The very next day, there was a noticeable change in Gary's attitude. He soon became a model student and a model citizen.

All of his teachers were wondering the same thing: What in the world did the principal say to him? No one had the nerve to ask - until the final staff meeting of the year.

The principal, however, said that he had no idea what had happened. Everyone's curiosity was piqued so they decided to ask the boy himself.

"To be honest, I couldn't really tell you what he said because I wasn't paying attention," responded Gary. "Then his intercom buzzed. It was his secretary telling him he had a phone call. He said he couldn't talk now because he was meeting with someone very important.

"I left his office with that one thought spinning through my head - the principal thinks I'm very important. The next day, I went to my first class, sat down feeling great, and things just took off from there."

Avraham and Sarah, with great belief and faith, revolutionized the world and established Judaism. One person, imbued with belief, can accomplish astounding things.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

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



REVISITING WOMEN OF THE BIBLE WITH MRS. ESTI SCHWAB

Join Mrs. Esti Schwab for "Revisiting Women of the Bible." This four-part series will help you gain a better understanding and a new appreciation of the great women of the Book of Genesis: Chava (Eve), Sara (Sarah), Rivka (Rebecca), Rochel (Rachel), & Leah. Classes will be held on Sundays from 11:30 am-12:30 pm at Barnes & Noble (960 S. Colorado Blvd.)



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., Nov. 1, Nov. 8, Nov. 15, Nov. 22, Nov. 29, & Dec. 6 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 Bal Tolin

A worker who provides a service on a steady, ongoing basis to a client does not usually mind if payment is deferred to the next time of service. Therefore, unless the worker specified otherwise, one does not transgress bal tolin if

payment is deferred until the next time.

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

Ask the Rabbi By Sun or By Moon?

Lauren Schiff wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My ArtScroll siddur says to add the words 'tal u'matar' [prayer for rain] starting the evening of December 4th. Later I saw in the Book of our Heritage that it says December 5th. Which date is correct?

Dear Lauren Schiff,

The Book of our Heritage is correct. In Talmudic times, the rainy season in Babylon started 60 days after the autumn 'tekufa' - i.e., the halachic equinox. That's the time of year when the Jews in Babylon started to pray for rain. The Sages fixed this date for all Diaspora Jews.

Whereas all Jewish holidays are based on the moon and don't correlate to the civil calendar, the 'tekufa' is based on the sun. That's why it's the only yearly Jewish occurrence associated with the civil calendar.

The Talmudic sage Shmuel approximated the year to be 365 and 1/4 days long. The 'tekufa' is based on this figure. The Roman calendar established by Emperor Julius Caesar is based on the exact same figure - 365 1/4 days. For a thousand years, everything was rosey.

But in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII changed the calendar to what is now

known as the Gregorian calendar, which is the one currently in use. According to this calendar, every fourth year is a leap year except those century years which cannot be divided by 400. For example, the year 1600 was a leap year, but the years 1700, 1800 and 1900 were not. The year 2000 is a leap year.

So the year 1900, which was a leap year according to the Julian calendar, was not a leap year according to the Gregorian. Therefore, the calculations made in the 1800s are no longer valid.

Most current English prayer books today are based on reprinting prayer books from the 1800s; hence, the mistake. Therefore, the words 'V'sein tal u'matar L'vracha' 'Give dew and rain for blessing' - should have been added this year on the fifth of December, and not on the fourth.

Which reminds me of a story of a very punctual Jew. On December 5th he calls his wife and tells her, "I'll be 3 seconds late for dinner tonight, dear, we are starting "Tal U'matar."

Sources:

Tractate Ta'anis 10a

Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 117:1

Iggros Moshe Orach Chaim 4:17 that the 'tekufa' is according to Shmuel

Rabbi Yedidya Menas, author of Luach Kir

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