

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Re'eh

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A Taste of Torah

Against the Grain

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

The harvest was finally complete, the grain processed and packed into large sacks. The farmer happily loaded his wagon and headed into town to sell his grain to the grain merchant. During his travels, he heard reports that the grain merchants were trying to cheat the farmers out of the earnings they had worked so long and hard for, and the farmer resolved not to fall prey to any fraudulent schemes. By the time he arrived, he had a plan in place.

Ushered into the merchant's well-appointed home, the farmer made a proposal to the merchant.

"I have many sacks of grain, and I am fearful we will lose track of how many I am unloading into your storehouse. But I have an idea. I will place my cap on the table in the storehouse, and for every sack I place in your possession, you will place a kopek into my cap. After we are done, we will count the kopeks, and we will know how many sacks I gave you. You can then pay me in full for the sacks."

The merchant agreed, and they began unloading the hefty bags of grain. After a while, the merchant excused himself and stepped out for several minutes. The farmer, seeing he was alone, stuck his hand into the cap, now brimming with kopeks, and helped himself to a handful, which he quickly hid away in his wagon.

True, it wasn't too honest, he thought to himself. But these grain merchants weren't too honest themselves! And so, smiling to himself for having one-upped the thieving merchant, he continued unloading the sacks

of grain, never realizing that he had cheated himself out of receiving the full payment for the kopeks he had just removed from the cap!

We laugh at this foolish farmer, says the Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1839-1933). But we make the same error! The Torah tells us in this week's parsha to make sure we separate the proper tithes from our grain. Based on the wording of the verse, Rashi teaches us that one who properly separates tithes from his produce will be blessed with wealth. By extension, say our Sages, one who is successful in business must ensure that he gives a befitting percentage of his earnings to the poor and to support Torah study.

The Talmud (Kesubos 67a) states, "The preservative for money is to diminish it." By giving away money to charity, one preserves his wealth, while one who thinks that holding tight to his fortune will cause him to have more money will find his prosperity more tenuous than he believed.

The farmer, says the Chofetz Chaim, fails to realize that by missing on the opportunity to make a few extra kopeks, he will see much larger sums of money come his way. But the one who fails to give the appropriate amount of charity makes the same mistake. By holding onto those few coins, he misses the opportunity for a far greater blessing that Hashem would have bestowed upon him for providing those in need.



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories For The Soul

The Bottom Line

In the early years of the 20th Century, prior to World War II, there were many different movements and groups of Jews, even within the religious community. Each group held certain beliefs, possessed a particular outlook, and practiced Judaism differently than other groups. Unfortunately, not all of the religious groups got along with each other, and this was the cause of discord within the religious community.

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1839-1933) was once asked which religious movements were bad and ought to be avoided.

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "I only know one thing! When we arrive in the Next World, we will not be asked, 'Did you belong to this group or to that movement?'"

"Rather, a Torah scroll will be brought out and opened in front of us. And we will be asked, 'Did you fulfill all that is written in here? Did you keep the Torah and its laws?' If we can answer yes, we will go to *Gan Eden*. If we answer no, we will be cast into the fires..."

In this week's parsha, we are commanded not to split into groups within one community. While different communities have varying customs and outlooks, we ultimately all believe in the same G-d and His Torah. We should continue to practice based on our traditions while respecting our fellow Jews and their Torah-based traditions. If we all focus on fulfilling G-d's will, we will be able to reach our common goal - a place in the World-to-Come.

Kollel Happenings

SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM

Attention bachurim in Denver over the summer! The Kollel is once again holding its Summer Night Seder for Bachurim at the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash. Sunday-Thursday. Night seder begins at 8 pm, with ma'ariv at 9:10 pm. Stipends available for boys who maintain the sederim. For further details, info or sponsorship opportunities, please contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch & Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What prayer is recited according to Ashkenazic custom on Shabbos only, while Sephardic custom recites it on festivals as well?

A: The blessing following *Barchu* during *shacharis* on Shabbos is significantly expanded from its weekday counterpart. The poetic *Kail Adon* as well as the paragraphs before and after it (with the exception of a few lines immediately following *Kail Adon*) are technically not related to Shabbos, but, rather, an

expanded version of the wonders of Hashem's Creation. They are recited on Shabbos due to the additional sanctity of the day, or due to the extra time that we can afford to spend on doing so. The Sephardic custom is to recite these prayers on festivals as well, omitting just the few lines which discuss Shabbos.

This week's question: Many details of Shabbos follow themes of two and/or double. Can you name customs of twos?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel – the Mordechai Part III

The Maharam MiRuttenberg was imprisoned by Emperor Rudolf I of Germany. Rudolf demanded an exorbitant ransom for the Maharam's release, and the Maharam famously ordered his followers, based on a Talmudic enactment, not to pay the ransom, out of concern that it would encourage future imprisonments of Jewish leaders.

The Maharam ultimately died in prison in 1293, but his refusal to be redeemed realized its purpose, and the ordeal he endured did not repeat itself. (His body was redeemed 14 years later by a wealthy Jew, Alexander Wimpfen, with the only condition being that he be buried next to the Maharam.)

With his rebbe imprisoned indefinitely, Rabbi Mordechai travelled to Goslar, a city in Germany, around 1291. However, he encountered difficulty there thanks to one Moshe Tako, who apparently was envious of Rabbi Mordechai and sought to run him out of town. Moshe Tako disputed Rabbi Mordechai's right of residence in the area, and the case came before the town magistrate. Rabbi Mordechai was vindicated, but the bitterness of the dispute led him to leave Goslar and settle in Nuremberg.

In Nuremberg, Rabbi Mordechai opened a yeshiva which attracted students from

across Europe, from countries such as France, Italy, Spain, Austria, Bohemia and Hungary. The yeshiva functioned for seven years, and then disaster struck in the form of the infamous Rindflesich massacres.

Following the death of Emperor Rudolf I, his son Albrecht sought to ascend the throne. However, Prince Adolf of Nassau also wanted to rule, and fighting ensued. Imperial authority generally protected the Jewish communities, but it broke down as the two parties warred with each other.

In 1298, a man named Rindfleisch (some say he was an impoverished knight, while others conjecture he was a butcher, as *rindfleisch* means "beef") gathered a mob around him to avenge a supposed desecration of elements of their religion by the Jewish community of Rottingen. Rindfleisch claimed that he had been chosen by heaven to avenge the Jews' sacrilege.

On April 20th, 1298 (22 Iyar, 5058 on the Jewish calendar), Rindfleisch and his mob burned the Jews of Rottingen at the stake. (It is noteworthy that according to contemporary sources, the Lord of Rottingen had sizable debts with Jewish lenders.)