



Yisro 5777

February 17, 2017

A Taste of Torah

Your Part of the Torah

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

It's just a few days before the Giving of the Torah, and Hashem informs Moshe that some prep work is necessary before the Jewish People can actually stand at Mt. Sinai. Hashem asks Moshe to tell the people to sanctify themselves for two days by avoiding any sort of impurity. On day three, Hashem would speak to them as they stood at the foot of the mountain. Moshe conveys these orders to the Jewish People, but, says Rashi, Moshe changes the details. Based on his own reasoning, he adds a third day of sanctification, effectively pushing off the Giving of the Torah an additional day! The Talmud tells us that although Moshe made this addition on his own, Hashem agreed with his decision.

The rationale behind Moshe's ruling is beyond the scope of this article, but there is a basic question that needs to be addressed: If Hashem agreed with Moshe that there ought to be a three-day preparation period, why didn't He say so in the first place? Why did Hashem tell Moshe two days, only to give His consent as Moshe added a third?

Rabbi Dov Schwartzman (1921-2011) explains that Moshe's addition provides us with an important insight into the Giving of the Torah, one that ought to reverberate in our lives, as well. True, Hashem provided a two-day preparatory period to ready the Jewish Nation for the Torah. But the very need for those two days, the fact that one must engage in self-sanctification to be able to receive

the Torah, should bring one to a point of realization, "I need to do more!" Hashem can inform Moshe of what steps are necessary to be ready for the Torah, but He cannot order him to have an epiphany. To truly be prepared for the Torah, to attain the levels of sanctity necessary to fully accept and internalize the Torah, it must come from deep within oneself. The two days proffered by Hashem were the means for Moshe and the Jewish People to touch those personal depths of the soul and realize that they needed yet one more day to get ready.

When I was a *bachur* (unmarried man) learning in yeshiva prior to my marriage, my rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo Avigdor Altusky, would sometimes give a special, small-group talk, known as a *va'ad*, to the young men who attended his *shiur* (lectures). But someone had to request that he give the *va'ad*. If no one asked, he did not offer, for, he explained, "*Men darf betten ruchniyus*," "You have to ask for spirituality."

Hashem provides us with the opportunities to permeate ourselves with Torah study and Torah life. But if we don't cultivate a feeling within that we need to refine ourselves, to sanctify our lives, to withdraw, to some degree, from the blandishments of this world and enter a more rarefied realm where we can truly make Torah part and parcel of our persona, we will fail to truly appreciate and utilize this great gift Hashem has given us.

Stories For The Soul

Hearing and Hearing

The Alter (Elder) of Slabodka, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel (1849-1927), was the *mashgiach* (spiritual guide) of the Slabodka Yeshiva in Lithuania. He was renowned as an educator whose sometimes-unorthodox methods created some of the greatest Torah leaders of the past generation. He once rebuked a student for something, but the student did not change his behavior. Several weeks later, the Alter again chastised the student, word-for-word, as he had earlier.

"Rebbe," said the student, "I heard the exact same words from you not long ago!"

"If you are walking down the middle of a main street in London," said the Alter, "and all the wagon-drivers are shouting at you to get out of their way, and you turn around, wave your hand and say, 'Thanks, I heard you' - have you really heard?"

In this week's parsha, the Torah tells us that Yisro "heard" of the miracles Hashem had performed for the Jewish People, and he decided to convert and join the fledgling nation. Entire nations had "heard" of these miracles, but only Yisro really heard what had happened - because he made changes in his life.

Kollel Happenings

IMMIGRATION & NATIONAL SECURITY AT MARCH 1ST T4T

Join Kenneth H. Stern, Partner, Stern & Curray LLC, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the issues of immigration and maintaining security. Wednesday, March 1st, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

KOLLEL 19TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION FEB. 28TH

The Kollel will celebrate 19 years of bringing Torah learning, Torah teaching and Torah living to Denver on Tuesday, Feb. 28th, 6:30 pm, at Aish Denver. Rabbi Daniel and Adina Krausz will receive the Betzael Award, and the Kollel will mark the opening of its new Southeast Torah Center and its temporary West Denver location. To reserve or place an ad in the commemorative journal, email journal@denverkollel.org, visit denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Which halachically controversial custom is associated with the Torah reading on Shabbos Parshas Yisro?

A: Generally, there are different opinions and customs regarding whether one should stand or sit during the Torah reading. Among those who generally sit, there are customs to stand during specific Torah readings, one of them being the *Aseres Hadibros* (Ten Commandments) in Parshas Yisro. Some authorities take issue with this custom, as this seems to unnecessarily highlight this portion of Torah. The Gemara (Berachos 12a) relates that the Sages

stopped the custom of daily communal recitation of the *Aseres Hadibros* due to those who would take this to mean that these commandments are applicable, but not the rest of Torah. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and other authorities, though, defended the custom.

(Sources: Orach Chaim 146:4, Igros Moshe Orach Chaim 4:22 and Piskei Tshuvos Orach Chaim 146:6)

This week's question: From what age was one obligated to provide the annual *machatzis hashekel* (half-shekel) to provide for the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple) service?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yosef Caro – the Bais Yosef Part XIII

Rabbi Shlomo Luria (1510-1573), known by the acronym of his name, Maharshal (Moreinu [our Master] Harav Shlomo Luria), opposed the *Shulchan Aruch* because Rabbi Caro did not take the opinion of the *Ba'alei Tosafos* (medieval French and German Talmudic scholars) into consideration in his decision-making process.

The Maharshal had a disciple, Rabbi Mordechai Yafeh (1535-1612), who wrote an alternative ten-volume compendium, titled *Levush* (lit., garment).

Despite the critics and opposition, the *Shulchan Aruch* was ultimately accepted by the Jewish world, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic, as an authoritative work of halacha. First printed in 1564 in Venice, it was reprinted nine times by 1597.

As he had done for the *Bais Yosef*, Rabbi Moshe Isserles, the Rema, wrote glosses on the *Shulchan Aruch* where Ashkenazic opinion differed with Rabbi Caro's decisions. The Rema did not write the glosses as a separate work. Rather, he placed his comments directly into the *Shulchan Aruch*, sometimes into sentences themselves, either to clarify Rabbi Caro's words or to change the meaning of the sentence to accord to the Ashkenazic

viewpoint. He named his glosses *HaMapa*, "the Tablecloth," humbly expressing that this was meant as an addition to the "Set Table" presented by the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Rabbi Isserles was one of the towering figures of Ashkenazic Jewry, and the fact that he accepted the *Shulchan Aruch* meant it would be accepted by Ashkenazic Jewry despite the reservations of others.

Later, other commentaries would be written on all or parts of the *Shulchan Aruch*, including the major commentaries of the *Taz* (an acronym for *Turei Zahav*, "Rows of Gold," written by Rabbi Dovid Halevi Segal [1586-1667]), the *Shach* (an acronym for its author, [Rabbi] Shabsi Cohen [1622-1663]), the *Magen Avraham* (by Rabbi Avraham Gumbiner [1634-1682]), the *Sma* (an acronym for *Sefer Me'iras Einayim*; written by Rabbi Yehoshua Falk [1545-1614]), *Chelkas Mechokeik* (by Rabbi Moshe ben Yitzchak Yehuda Lema [1605-1658]), and *Bais Shmuel* (by Rabbi Shmuel ben Uri Shraga Feivush [c.1640-c. 1700]). These commentaries are found on the sides of the pages of any modern-day volume of *Shulchan Aruch* (one on each side, with different commentaries appearing in different sections of the work).