



# A Taste of Torah

## It's Not My Party, I Can't Cry

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Following the deaths of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, for bringing an unsolicited incense offering into the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), the Torah tells us that Aharon was silent, and did not mourn nor express sorrow over the terrible tragedy that had befallen him.

Rashi (Shemini 10:3) tells us that as a reward for his silence, Aharon was rewarded; shortly thereafter, Hashem commanded Aharon regarding the prohibition of entering the *Mishkan* after having drunk wine. While the rest of the Torah's commandments were given directly to Moshe, here, Hashem addressed Aharon (though Moshe heard the commandment, as well).

G-d does not simply disburse prizes randomly from a great big treasure box in Heaven. Punishments must fit the crime, and rewards must fit the good deed, too. Why is Aharon's silence rewarded with the merit to receive one of the mitzvos of the Torah?

People complain when they feel their needs are not being taken into consideration. Have you ever seen a die-hard football fan, painted in a variety of colors, attired in little more than a pair of shorts, screaming his lungs out through a multi-hour football game in sub-zero temperatures, complain about the weather? No? Why not? Because he realizes that the venue, the game, the circumstances, are not about HIM. He's there to support his team, and he does not think, for even a moment, that his needs are not being met (unless the ref makes a bad call...)

When Moshe asked Misha'el and Eltzafan, two of his Levite cousins, to remove the bodies of Nadav and Avihu, Rashi (Shemini 10:4) comments that this order is akin to a situation where a dead body is in the same area as a bride. We immediately remove the

deceased person so as not to spoil the rejoicing of the wedding party. So, too, as the Jewish People celebrated the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, these bodies needed to be removed.

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz (1873-1936) explains that although a terrible misfortune had occurred, Aharon was able to see a bigger picture: This was not about him. The world was created as a vehicle to display G-d's Glory, and the *Mishkan* was a manifestation of just that. While the death of Aharon's two sons was a great misfortune and an awful tragedy, the celebration had to go on, because the purpose of the world was being realized; the *Mishkan*, the place where G-d would reveal His Glory to the world, was being inaugurated, and Aharon recognized that his personal distress could not interfere with that rarefied moment.

Rabbi Levovitz quotes a statement of our Sages, "The wicked - they stand over their gods, while the righteous - G-d stands over them." He explains that although there are many wicked people who worship a deity of some sort, ultimately, they are interested in achieving their own ends; their chief concern is what the god can give them, not what they can give their god. The righteous, however, are concerned with what G-d expects of them - their relationship with G-d is not based on what they can get from Him.

A person who truly realizes and lives this axiom has a very special relationship with G-d, and he is certainly a vessel through which G-d can communicate His commandments to Mankind. Thus, Aharon, through ignoring his own personal situation in deference to the great celebration of the *Mishkan*, merited to be given on of the mitzvos.

One of the great dangers of religion

## Stories For The Soul

### Risky Illness

Aharon Chazan was drafted into the Soviet army in the late 1930s. Despite the virulently anti-religious attitude of the Soviet regime, Aharon scrupulously clung to his faith, including eating kosher. After the first morning of rigorous training, while his fellow soldiers went to eat lunch, Aharon roamed the hallways. He would not eat a lunch composed of non-kosher ingredients.

"Chazan, why are you here?" asked an officer whom he encountered. "Aren't you supposed to be eating now?"

Aharon replied that he had a stomachache, but the officer snarled that he did not believe him, and accused him of rendering himself unfit for his duties. Aharon stood his ground, much to the officer's dismay. He sent Aharon to the army doctor, warning him that if he turned out to be healthy, he'd be court-martialed.

Aharon was terrified, but he had several hours until his exam. He did his best to make himself ill, running around to raise his heart rate and drinking large amounts of water so that he would be bloated. Finally, he arrived at the doctor, not knowing what his fate would be.

The doctor read the officer's note, and discussed Aharon's symptoms with him. The doctor examined Aharon, then silently penned a note and sent it back with him in a sealed envelope.

Aharon returned to his unit and, trembling, handed the note to the officer, who eagerly tore open the envelope, looking forward to the trouble he would soon cause the hapless Jew. Only moments later,

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## Kollel Happenings

### RESPONDING TO ANTI-SEMITISM AT MAY 3<sup>RD</sup> TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Scott Levin, Regional Director for the Anti-Defamation League, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the proper response to anti-Semitism. Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### 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](http://denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### 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](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org). Class will resume following Pesach break.

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** Who is obligated in the mitzvah of *Birchas Kohanim* (priestly blessing) - the *Kohanim* only or the entire congregation?

**A:** The *Sefer Chareidim* (by Rabbi Elazar ben Moshe Azikri, 1533-1600) writes that this mitzvah is fulfilled by the *Kohanim* as well as the congregation. Among later authorities, some believe the view of the *Sefer Chareidim* is a minority one, while others say there

is no dissenting opinion! For further discussion, see *Minchas Chinuch* 378 and *D'var Avraham* 1:31)

**This week's question:** We now begin a 5-part series of related Q&As.

**Q:** Usually, the *bracha* (blessing) on a mitzvah is recited prior to the performance of the mitzvah. When do we recite a *bracha* specifically after the performance of the mitzvah?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### The Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles - Part IV

The Rema married a second time, taking the sister of Rabbi Yosef ben Mordechai Gershon HaKohen Katz of Krakow, a noted Torah scholar and author of the work *She'eris Yosef*, as his wife.

In 1550, at the age of 30, the Rema returned to Krakow, where he opened a yeshiva. He did not support the *pilpul* approach of study, preferring instead a focus on the simple meaning of the text. Being independently wealthy, he supported the yeshiva's students out of his own pocket. In 1553, the Rema joined the newly-formed *Bais Din* (Jewish Court) of Krakow. By this time, he was already recognized as a Torah scholar of note,

and halachic questions were being sent to him.

In 1550, for example, Rabbi Meir Katzenellenbogen of Padua (known as the Maharam Padua), a Torah scholar in his 80s, had published the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*. Subsequently, a spiteful non-Jewish competitor published a competing set of *Mishneh Torah* and offered it at a steep discount as a means of undercutting the Maharam's Padua's set. The Maharam Padua wrote the Rema, asking if there was a halachic basis to ban the purchase of the competing set; the Rema wrote several responses defending the Maharam Padua's position.

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is that it becomes self-serving. A person can be very scrupulous in adhering to every detail and nuance because he reaps benefits, be it honor, a sense of pride, belonging, or expectation of reward for fulfillment of the tenets of the religion. While the notion of observing Torah and

mitzvos for less-than-altruistic motives is permitted, even encouraged, as a stepping stone, we mustn't lose sight of the fact that our ultimate goal is to be concerned with what G-d wants of us, and not what we want of G-d.

## Stories For The Soul

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however, the officer stormed angrily from the room, leaving the note on the table.

Eliyahu looked at the note, which stated, "Mr. Chazan is unhealthy and unfit for army service."

In this week's parsha, the Torah discusses the laws of keeping kosher. Throughout the ages, Jews have sacrificed much to ensure that the food they eat is in accordance with the Torah's dictates.

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