

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Tzav/Hagadol 5777

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A Taste of Torah

Altar-ations

by Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Preparation for a holiday sometimes leaves the weekly parsha high and dry. With the many details in proper observance of the *seder* and subsequent mitzvos, trying to get into the proper mindset can often leave our daily and weekly Torah readings on the back burner. There is, however, a striking similarity between this week's parsha and the upcoming holiday of Pesach which is hard to ignore. Toward the beginning of our parsha, we are told (Tzav 6:10) that the parts of the *mincha* (meal offering) eaten by the *Kohanim* (priests) may not be baked as *chametz* (leaven). This is in addition to a commandment in last week's parsha (Vayikra 2:11) that the burnt part of the *mincha* may not be *chametz*, as neither sourdough nor fruit-honey may be brought as an offering on the *Mizbe'ach* (Altar). This must be related to the prohibition against eating or even possessing *chametz* during the week of Pesach! I'd like to present two trains of thought from our great commentators to help us connect the dots.

The *Chinuch* (a 13th-century anonymously-written classic) explains each mitzvah in our Torah with great detail, and generally includes an understanding of the concept behind it, as well. In explaining the aforementioned mitzvah of avoiding leavening and fruit-honey, he prefaces by writing that it's difficult to discover even a fraction of the understanding of the concept, but in order not to deviate from what he has done for most other mitzvos (to explain the concept) he will try here, as well, to scrape the tip of the iceberg! He then gives two different ideas behind this prohibition. The first is that in regard to *korbanos* (offerings), swiftness is

essential; leavened dough, which occurs through waiting, is contrary to this and is forbidden. Fruit-honey, a sweetener, signifies extras, additions to our basic needs, and are therefore unwarranted. Alternatively, he explains, leavened and sweetened items signify haughtiness and are therefore forbidden. Although he doesn't connect these prohibitions to *chometz* on Pesach, we can suggest that the Torah is giving us a special week every year to internalize this message. During this week, we bring this lesson from *korbanos* into our personal lives.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) suggests another approach, in which the Temple prohibitions are finely synced with those of Pesach. Unleavened bread is a paradigm of a lack of independence. It is the "bread of affliction," as it symbolizes the slave who has no time of his own to allow the bread to rise properly. The reason that we mark the redemption each year by eating matzah and disposing of *chametz* is that this declares our lack of personal independence; our freedom from slavery is granted so that we can be servants of Hashem. For this reason, leavened bread is forbidden on the *Mizbe'ach*. Our offering before Hashem must be something personal which we then dedicate for Hashem. Since leavening symbolizes our independence, something we don't really possess, it is not our own to present to Hashem. Similarly, sweet fruits, ready to eat right off the tree, are symbolic of the subjugation of the agricultural abilities of the earth to man. Fruit-honey is the product of fruits which nature furnishes, finished and ready for Mankind's immediate consumption and

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Stories For The Soul

Don't Forget the Small Things

A young man, married for barely a year, once came to Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach (1899-2001) to inform him that his wife had just given birth to a baby girl. He told the venerated Rosh Yeshiva that he was planning on making a "*kiddush'l*" (diminutive form of *kiddush*, a Shabbos celebration) in honor of the happy event.

After wishing the new father a hearty *mazel tov*, Rabbi Shach asked him, "Why do you only make a *kiddush'l*? Is the birth of a child a small thing? If you would have waited eight years for your first child to be born, you would have made a lavish celebration to thank the One Above for granting you a child! Now that you did not have to wait all that time, your gratitude should be even greater!"

In this week's parsha, the Torah introduces the *Korban Todah*, the Thanksgiving Offering brought when one has been saved from certain dangerous circumstances. Although we tend to feel much more gratitude to Hashem when He helps us overcome difficult situations, we must show gratitude for the problems that didn't happen, as well.

Kollel Happenings

RESPONDING TO ANTI-SEMITISM AT MAY 3RD 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 3rd, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP 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 or email info@denverkollel.org.

RABBI REISMAN WEEKLY IN DENVER

Join thousands around the globe in viewing the renowned weekly Navi shiur of Rabbi Yaakov Reisman! Rabbi Reisman's weekly Motzoei Shabbos class is shown at Beth Jacob High School, 5100 W. 14th Ave., at 9:30 pm. For sponsorships and info, contact info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is the reasoning behind the custom of some communities to read the *haftara* of Shabbos Hagadol only if coincides with Erev Pesach (Pesach Eve)?

A: The custom is based on the reasoning that this *haftara* is read due to the verses therein describing the separation and donation of *ma'asros* (tithes) of produce. Erev Pesach of the 4th and 7th year in the 7-year *shemita* cycle was the final time to finish tithing. It is therefore appropriate to read this *haftara* on this date (the 14th of Nissan), regardless of the year.

The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer; 1720-1797) agrees to the aforementioned reason for this *haftara*. Nevertheless, he argues that this *haftara* should be read every year except when Shabbos coincides with Erev Pesach! His reasoning is that reading this *haftara* can serve as a reminder to tithe for those who have not

already done so. However, one may not tithe on Shabbos, and a reminder on Shabbos Erev Pesach is too late! The Vilna Gaon's custom is currently practiced by some communities. Interestingly, the reason this Shabbos is called Shabbos Hagadol is erroneously believed to be linked to the *haftara*; as the closing section refers to "*yom hagadol*," the Great Day of the future redemption. This is simply untrue, as it's referred to as Shabbos Hagadol even by those authorities who read this *haftara* only on the rare years when it coincided with Erev Pesach.

(Sources: Levush Orach Chaim 429 and Ma'aseh Rav 176)

This week's question: How many times a year do we perform *Birchas Kohanim* (priestly blessing) in the Diaspora?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders The Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles - Part II

Rabbi Shalom Shachna was one of the greatest Torah scholars in Poland. He was a student of Rabbi Yaakov Pollak, the founder of the *pilpul* method of Torah study.

Pilpul is a method of study that connects disparate elements of Torah into large intellectual edifices through similarities that can be found in the different parts.

Pilpul was popular for some time, particularly during the 15th and 16th centuries, but it came under heavy criticism by many Torah scholars, in particular when it was taken to extremes and used to build houses of cards, impressive academic structures

of Talmudic and halachic thought that, while brilliant in concept, were predicated on flimsy foundations. Some who abused the system did so primarily to show their brilliance and erudition, which invited even sharper criticism.

The Vilna Gaon and the Maharal are two of the more notable critics of the approach; the Maharal wrote an entire section in one of his works (*Tiferes Yisrael*) where he sharply disapproved of *pilpul*. In this polemic, he wrote, "It would be better to learn carpentry or another trade, or to sharpen the mind by playing chess. At least they would not engage in falsehood, which then spills over from theory and into practice."

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enjoyment. It therefore represents the value of possessing and utilizing land. This also cannot be considered our own to donate to Hashem. After all, the land serves us only through our devotion to Hashem and His laws; if we fail, the

Torah tells us our efforts in working the earth will be met with failure. May these laws help us realize our lofty service of being Hashem's Chosen Nation, and may we merit to fulfill all the mitzvos properly!