



Parshas Yisro

February 2, 2018

A Taste of Torah

Studying for Eternity

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Immortality. The goal of a significant portion of mankind for millennia, this elusive state was a reality for two short periods of world history. The first time was prior to Adam and Eve eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The second time is found in this week's parsha - when the Jewish People received the Torah.

Our Sages teach us that when the Torah was given at Sinai, the Jewish People achieved immortality. They infer this from the verse that describes the Ten Commandments inscribed upon the *Luchos* (Tablets) as being *charus*, or chiseled into the stone. The word can also be read as *cheirus*, freedom, which can be interpreted as freedom from the Angel of Death. The verse can thus be read as "freedom upon the *Luchos*" instead of "carved upon the *Luchos*."

What is the connection between the Ten Commandments carved into the stone of the Tablets and freedom from death? I believe we can answer this question based on the comments of Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner (1749-1821) in his famed work *Nefesh Hachaim*. The *Nefesh Hachaim* (4:16-17) brings numerous Talmudic, Midrashic and Kabbalistic sources indicating that one who is committed to the study of Torah is spared many of the travails of both this world and the next. The *Nefesh Hachaim* (ibid.:18) explains that one who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah study for its own sake has linked himself with Torah and Hashem, allowing himself to become sanctified to such a degree that he can rise above the natural world and its dangers. Torah is referred to as the Tree of Life, and one who clings to it is no longer subject to the havoc wreaked by the eating of its Garden of Eden

counterpart, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

How does this transformation occur? When one studies Torah for no other motive than the study itself, the Torah enters the person and becomes part and parcel of his persona. This engenders a life-altering change, as the personality and the Torah unite, creating an individual about whom the Talmud comments that just as one must rise for a Torah scroll, one must also rise for a Torah scholar, for he is a living, breathing, walking, talking Torah.

And this brings us full circle to the *charus-cheirus* paradigm. The Torah is telling us that by carving the letters of the Torah into ourselves, by allowing Torah to not just instruct us or be a spiritually uplifting activity, but by truly becoming one with the Torah, we are no longer quite a part of this world. At Sinai, the Jewish People achieved this so fully as a nation that they achieved complete freedom from death.

While it is true that the Jewish People fell from that lofty state of immortality by sinning with the Golden Calf, the *Nefesh Hachaim* (ibid.:16) makes clear that we still have the opportunity, as individuals, to commit fully to Torah and imbibe its life-giving waters. To the extent that a person succeeds in committing to Torah, one rises above the harsh realities and evils of this world. While true immortality may not be possible until the Messianic Era, when, as a nation, we will once again exist in a state that is above the natural condition of our current world, we retain the opportunity to reach for a higher reality through Torah study.

Stories for the Soul

Staying at the Mountain

Based on a story on revach.net

Rabbi Shlomo HaKohen Rabinowicz of Radomsk (1801-1866; known as the Tiferes Shlomo after the work he authored) initially refused to accept the burden of being a Rebbe. The week before Shavuot, he saw that large numbers of chassidim were arriving in his town to spend the festival with him. He warned them to return to their homes, adding that he was not a rebbe and had no intention of letting anyone come to him for the upcoming Yom Tov.

When he saw that the chassidim were not heeding his admonitions and the throngs of people were growing larger, he picked up and left. He traveled to his own rebbe, Rabbi Yechezkel of Kuzmir, to bask in his presence for the festival.

"Is it proper to abandon such a large number of Jews like sheep without a shepherd?" asked Rabbi Yechezkel in astonishment. "Rashi comments on the verse, 'And Moshe descended from the mountain to the people' (*Yisro* 19:14) that Moshe did not turn to his business but went directly to the people. Now, what kind of business did Moshe have that he needed to take care of?"

"The explanation," continued the rebbe, "is that Moshe did not turn to his spiritual business. Moshe surely needed to prepare for the Giving of the Torah as much, if not more, than the rest of Bnai Yisrael. Despite this, he didn't turn to his 'business,'

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Kollel Happenings

PUT TO THE TEST: THE ETHICAL ISSUES OF PRE-NATAL SCREENING

Join Dr. Reid Goodman, MD, obstetrician and gynecologist, Mile High OB/GYN and Rabbi Akiva Stern, Associate Scholar for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the ethical issues of pre-natal screening. Wednesday, February 7th, at 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP 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.

WINTER GARDENS WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT FEB. 12TH

The Kollel Women's Division 6th annual Women's Wellness Workshop, *Winter Gardens Women's Night Out*, will be held Monday, Feb. 12, 2018, and will feature noted speaker Esther Wein. Discover, taste and connect at the most unique event of the year! For more info or to reserve, visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: How many times each day was the daily psalm of song recited in the Temple?

A: The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 30b) seems to imply that the daily psalm was recited twice each weekday, once during the libation service of each *Tamid* sacrifice. The reason we currently recite the daily psalm only once (after *shacharis*) is because the afternoon recital wasn't completely consistent; if the libation was performed after nightfall, the psalm was omitted (Mishna Berura

132:16, quoting Magen Avraham). Alternately, some understand the abovementioned Gemara to mean that there was only an afternoon recitation of the daily psalm on Shabbos and Rosh Hashana, not weekdays! (See Aruch Laner, Rosh Hashana 30b).

This week's question: Which songs were recited in the Temple on Shabbos, and how do we commemorate these songs?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz - Part V

Rabbi Eybeschutz was greatly disturbed by the suffering of his brethren, and he interceded with governmental leaders on their behalf. It is said he contacted Jewish leaders in Rome to intercede with the Pope, and also appealed to Empress Maria Theresa of Austria to annul the expulsion order. He also expended great effort to raise funds in the French Jewish communities for their fellow Jews affected by the war.

Rabbi Eybeschutz, meanwhile, settled into his new post in Metz. He attracted many young aspiring Torah scholars to his yeshiva there, and his fame continued to grow and spread.

In 1750, Rabbi Eybeschutz was appointed chief rabbi of the three communities of Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbeck. These three communities

had created an umbrella communal structure to serve their needs. Not long after his arrival there, a great controversy erupted around Rabbi Eybeschutz that would drag European Jewry - and, indeed, European society itself - into its clutches.

It seems that a number of women were suffering miscarriages during this time. Having a great Torah figure who was known to be well-versed in Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) as well, some of these women came to Rabbi Eybeschutz for assistance in warding off any spiritual threats that may have contributed to their difficulties. Rabbi Eybeschutz wrote amulets with Kabbalistic incantations for these women to wear for protection. The writing of amulets was nothing new in Judaism, and is discussed in the Talmud.

Stories for the Soul

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but went straight to the people to prepare them for this historic event."

Rabbi Yechezkel then repeated his question, "How did you leave the Bnai Yisrael to come to here?!"

The Tiferes Shlomo answered,

"Moshe was by Mt. Sinai and therefore did not need so much preparation. I also want to be by Mt. Sinai." The Rebbe of Kuzmir did not answer, and the eventual Rebbe of Radomsk remained in Kuzmir for Shavuos!