



# A Taste of Torah

## A Call to Action

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman

This week's parsha discusses many laws regarding our everyday conduct. This is a very important point to discuss, as a Jew's life is filled with many laws beginning from when one wakes up in the morning and recites *Modeh Ani* until one lays down at night and recites the *Shema*. It seems, at times, due to the abundant number of commandments, that we just go through the motions without feeling any connection in our relationship with G-d. Would we not be better off, some wonder, simply contemplating G-d, which would enhance our relationship?

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1839-1933) addresses this question and points to a verse which we recite every Shabbos afternoon at the end of the *mincha* prayers. The verse states (Psalms 36:7), "Your righteousness is like mighty mountains, and Your laws are deep waters."

This verse, simply understood, is praising Hashem for His righteousness and for His laws. However, the Chofetz Chaim suggests that the verse is teaching us a fundamental lesson. Sometimes, a person can feel very righteous due to a lofty spiritual level he has reached through inspiration; one can feel as if he has scaled the mountain of God and reached the summit. The verse therefore continues that without following the laws of the Torah, one will eventually fall to the deepest depths. Inspiration is great, but without action constantly strengthening the relationship, everything will inevitably fall away.

This same concept is true regarding the relationship of a husband and wife. It is not uncommon for a couple

to initially forge a bond of great closeness early on. However, if the couple banks on living their whole life based on the strong emotions they shared when they first met, they are setting themselves up for failure. The only way a relationship grows properly is if there is constant commitment and dedication toward the other party.

Now that we understand why it is so important to engage in and perform mitzvos, we are still left to explain how we can make our performance of mitzvos more meaningful. The answer for this is found in the Talmud (Bava Kama 17a), where there is a discussion of what is greater, the study of Torah or the practice of Torah. The conclusion is that study is greater for it leads to performance. The obvious problem is that if the greatness of study is only because it leads to action, then practice is really at the top, while study is a means to achieving it. The commentators explain that the Talmud is teaching us that when someone performs a mitzvah after studying the topic, the mitzvah is greater than someone who merely performs that same mitzvah. After studying and grasping an understanding and appreciation of the mitzvah, its performance takes on a whole new level. Besides having a deeper understanding of what is being done, the person has absorbed the mitzvah into himself through studying it; when he performs it, it is an expression of his appreciation of the mitzvah, which is far greater than simply going through the motions. Through Torah study, one inculcates the Torah within himself, and all mitzvos thus become an expression of self.

## Stories for the Soul

### Fiery Commitment

*Based on a story on revach.net*

One day, a fire began on the street where the home of the Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1839-1933) was located. The fire was spreading quickly, and all the houses in its path were in danger of being burned down. All of the residents began frantically gathering their most valuable possessions as they prepared to vacate their houses. The Chofetz Chaim, who was already an elderly man, sat in his chair amidst the turmoil, deep in thought. His family was puzzled by his behavior, but the Chofetz Chaim continued to sit and think with an anxious expression on his face, ignoring the tumult around him.

Fifteen minutes passed, and the Chofetz Chaim suddenly breathed a sigh of relief. He quickly arose from his chair, and walked toward the corner of his house, where a high shelf was situated. He stood on a chair to reach it and took down a small watch. He then gathered his other possessions and joined his family in vacating the house.

When his family questioned him, he clarified the reason for his mysterious behavior. "A *yeshivah* student had asked me to keep his watch in my house. Thank G-d, I found it; there's a specific mitzvah to guard anything given to one for safekeeping."

His family and students were astounded at his answer. During a time of crisis, when most

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## Kollel Happenings

### WINTER GARDENS WOMEN'S NIGHT THIS MONDAY!

The Kollel Women's Division 6<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Wellness Workshop, *Winter Gardens Women's Night Out*, will be held this 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](http://denverkollel.org), email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### POOR DEFENSE: THE ETHICS OF REPRESENTING A GUILTY CLIENT

Join Richard Kornfeld, Shareholder at RechtKornfeld PC, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they investigate the proper balance a defense lawyer must maintain in his work. Wednesday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, at 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### DENVER COMMUNITY KOLLEL 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND GROUNDBREAKING

20 years is a special milestone, and the Kollel will celebrate two decades of bringing Torah to Denver with a groundbreaking for its future home, the Kollel West Denver Torah Center, on March 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. For more info, to place ads and make reservations, visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org), email [journal@denverkollel.org](mailto:journal@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** Which songs were recited in the Temple on Shabbos, and how do we commemorate these songs?

**A:** On Shabbos, the morning *Tamid* sacrifice was accompanied with Psalm 92, the *Mussaf* (additional) offering with part of *Shiras Ha'azinu* (Devarim 32) and the afternoon *Tamid* with parts of the *Az Yashir* (Shemos 15) and *Ali Be'er* (Bamidbar 21) songs (Rosh Hashana 31a). The latter three songs are not commemorated today in any official way, while the first is recited as part of our Shabbos morning prayers. The Sephardic custom is to recite it during *Pesukei D'zimra*. Ashkenazim recite it at that point as well, and

repeat it later in the morning prayers: Some (*Nusach Sefard* as well as some German communities) recite it immediately following *shacharis*, as it was the song of the morning *Tamid* which *shacharis* parallels. Most *Nusach Ashkenaz* communities recite it after *mussaf*, so as not to differ from all other days where the daily song is recited at the end of the complete morning service.

**This week's question:** Which psalm(s) of song were recited in the Temple on *Yom Tov* (Jewish holidays), and how do we commemorate this?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz - Part VI

One amulet purportedly written by Rabbi Eybeschutz was brought to Rabbi Yaakov Emden, a great Torah scholar and Kabbalist who maintained his own synagogue in Altona. Rabbi Emden examined the amulet and concluded that Rabbi Eybeschutz was a follower of the notorious Shabbetai Tzvi.

Shabbetai Tzvi was a man who, during the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, convinced much of the Jewish world that he was the Messiah. Jews throughout the Middle East and Europe believed the Final Redemption had finally arrived. People sold their

possessions, their homes, and made travel arrangements to the Land of Israel.

Not everyone was convinced, though, and many Torah leaders believed Shabbetai Tzvi to be a fraud. The process dragged on for years. Eventually, Shabbetai Tzvi was arrested and brought before the Ottoman sultan, who offered him the choice between martyrdom and conversion to Islam. Shabbetai Tzvi chose conversion, sending most of his followers into the throes of disappointment, disillusionment and depression.

## Stories for the Soul

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people react with fear and panic, the Chofetz Chaim's first instinct was to save a student's watch!

Much of this week's parsha focuses on our responsibility toward the

possession of others. The importance of these laws and of being concerned with the possessions of others, not just our own, is something we must focus on in our lives, as well.

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