



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Va'eschanan

July 23, 2021

A Taste of Torah

Current Events

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

There is a common misconception - perhaps myth is the better word -, possibly popularized by a singing and dancing farmer named Tevya, that the reason one should fulfill the mitzvos and observe the Torah's precepts is because of tradition.

It is indeed true that we must learn from our forebears, and carry on the holy customs that have developed and become part of the observance of the Jewish People. And it is indeed true that we have received the Torah from our forebears, handed down from generation to the next, in an unbroken chain going all the way back to Sinai. But one's observance of Torah and mitzvos should not be driven by a desire to keep traditions alive; rather, it must be a deeply personal experience created uniquely for one's life and times. A closer examination of a verse in this week's parsha bears this message out.

Moshe tells the Jewish People (Va'eschanan 5:3), "Not only with our forefathers did Hashem make this covenant; rather, also with us, here, today."

Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel (1437-1508) explains the verse: A Jew may think that the Torah is not pertinent to him in the modern world. After all, so much time has elapsed, so many generations have come and gone, the world has changed so much, since Hashem gave the Torah at Sinai. It's distant, it's ancient, and it's not relevant. It's a nice tradition, to be sure, but it just doesn't cut it in the modern world.

Wrong! says the Abarbanel. He offers

a metaphor to embellish his point. The Torah, says the Abarbanel, is akin to a watermill that one builds to harness the power of a river as it passes. It is extremely foolish to believe that the mill was built only to utilize water that is present at the moment the mill begins operating. Rather, the mill is meant to make use of all water that passes through it from the point it begins operating onwards. The first waters it catches just happened to be in the right place at the right time, but they ultimately are of no greater importance in relation to the watermill than water that passes through the mill years later.

Hashem did not give the Torah only to a group of Jews in the desert, continues the Abarbanel. In fact, it's impossible to believe that, as many of the mitzvos could not be fulfilled in the desert! Yes, that particular generation received the Torah, but they are like the first waters present when the watermill begins operating. The Torah they received is just as relevant to all Jews of all future generations.

Moshe imbues the Jewish People with this lesson, as he tells them that the covenant of the Torah was not with our forefathers, but with everyone who is here today. This is not a religion of commemorations and traditions, of wistfully recalling a grandparent's Shabbos, Seder, or Sukkah and trying to nostalgically recreate that experience and live in the past for a few fleeting moments before returning to modern, frenzied life. We receive the Torah - the very same Torah, unchanged and

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Stories for the Soul

Belief and Knowledge

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809) was one of the early great Chassidic leaders; he was renowned for his great love of his fellow Jew and for his fiery service of G-d.

During this era, the Chassidic movement was gaining traction among the Jewish People and engendered much opposition from many quarters in the Jewish world.

Reb Levi Yitzchak, renowned as an *ilui* (genius) and Torah scholar at a young age, married the daughter of Rabbi Yisrael Peretz of Levertov, himself a Torah scholar. Not long after his marriage, Reb Levi Yitzchak went to study under Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezeritch, a primary disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov (the founder of the Chassidic movement); the Maggid was primarily responsible for the rapid spread of the Chassidic movement.

Upon returning home from Mezeritch, Reb Levi Yitzchak was approached by his skeptical father-in-law, who asked him, "So, what did you learn in Mezeritch?"

"I learned that Hashem exists!" replied Reb Levi Yitzchak.

Reb Yisrael Peretz called the Jewish maid who worked in his home into the room. "Do you believe in G-d?" he asked her.

"Of course I believe in G-d!" she replied.

"See," said Reb Yisrael Peretz, "even the simple maid is aware of Hashem's existence!"

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Kollel Happenings

MOTZOEI SHABBOS NACHAMU KUMZITZ

The Kollel's annual Motzoei Shabbos Nachamu Kumzitz will take place this Motzoei Shabbos, July 24th, 10 pm, at the Kaplan home, 4750 S. Xanthia St. Live music, inspirational singing, refreshments and divrei Torah. Stay tuned for more info!

KOLLEL TORAH CENTER DEDICATION EVENT/ CHANUKAS HABAYIS ON AUG. 15

The Kollel will hold a Celebration of Torah with a Kollel Torah Center Dedication Event/Chanukas Habayis on Sunday, August 15. Harav Malkiel Kotler shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood, will grace the event and present the keynote address. Musical inspiration by Eitan Katz. Visit www.denverkollel.org for more details.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: How can the recitation of a single blessing prevent the need to repeat *Birkas Hamazon*?

Answer: If one forgot to recite *ritzei* or *ya'ale viyavo* during *Birkas Hamazon*, but remembered after completing the third blessing of *Birkas Hamazon* (which concludes "bonei birachamav Yerushalayim - amein") but before beginning the fourth blessing of *Hatov Vihameitiv*, one recites a special blessing (printed in many prayer books) to replace the omitted addendum. There is a unique text of this blessing for Shabbos, each Yom Tov, Rosh Chodesh, and for combinations of the above (if one omitted multiple addendums). In a situation where one would have to repeat *Birkas Hamazon*

due to the omission of the addendum, reciting this blessing would preclude the need to repeat *Birkas Hamazon*. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 188:6-7)

(Even if one began the fourth blessing, so long as one has not gotten past the words *Elokeinu Melech ha'olam*, he may simply use those words as the start of the special blessing. And if one remembered *ritzei* or *ya'ale viyavo* while still in middle of the third blessing, he should simply go back and recite the addendum in its proper place and continue as normal.)

This week's question: When would the need to repeat a blessing depend on whether one erred at the beginning or at the end?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part IX

Agudath Israel had been founded in 1912 in Kattowitz, Upper Silesia, a city in what was then the German Empire; today, it is known as Katowicz, a part of Poland.

Agudath Israel is a political organization intended to serve as an umbrella organization for Orthodox Jews who did not align with the Zionist movement.

A Taste of Torah

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unadulterated - just as our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents going all the way back to Sinai did. It is just as fresh, exciting and relevant today, in 5781/2021, as it was over three thousand years ago. We dare not forget the traditions of the past,

but we also dare not do nothing more than reenact them. Our job is to incorporate them into the Torah that we receive in the here and now, in today's world with all its complexities and challenges, as we make our own covenant with Hashem.

Stories for the Soul

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"Others may believe that Hashem exists," replied Reb Levi Yitzchak, "but I know that Hashem exists!"

In this week's parsha, while recounting the events of *Matan Torah* (the Giving of the Torah) and the direct experience of Hashem's presence there, Moshe

tells the Jewish People that they must know that Hashem is the only power in the world, and there is nothing else besides Him. It is one thing to believe in Hashem; it is another level to develop that awareness to the point of actual knowledge.

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