



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Shemini

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A Taste of Torah

The Shiva Call

by Rabbi Chaim Gross

Just imagine: A young fellow is driving a car under the influence of alcohol. In his intoxicated state, he loses control of the wheel and, G-d forbid, suffers a fatal collision. One can only imagine the intense, crippling pain the parents of the boy endure when informed of the sad news, the tears and complete brokenness... A short while later, during the period of mourning, a man walks into the house where the father and mother sit, grieving, lost in memories of a child no more. He settles down in front of them and begins to speak. However, instead of offering soothing thoughts and comforting words, he launches into a full-blown lecture on the dangers and evils of drunk driving. Could anything be more preposterous and insensitive?

And yet, this seems to be what takes place in this week's Torah portion. Aharon's two saintly sons, Nadav and Avihu, were tragically consumed by a heavenly fire as they brought a sacrifice to Hashem during the inauguration of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). One of the reasons, Rashi explains, is because they had entered the *Mishkan* after having consumed wine. And then, almost immediately after this double loss, Hashem addresses Aharon and begins to tell him of the severity of the prohibition to enter the *Mishkan* even slightly intoxicated, punishable by death! Is this the way to comfort a grieving father?

To add fuel to the fire, Rashi takes this a step further. The Torah tells us that after the tragedy, Aharon did not utter a single complaint to G-d, did not question His ways. "*Vayidom Aharon*" (Shemini 10:3), Aharon was silent. Rashi comments that Aharon received a reward for this noble behavior - and what was that? His REWARD was a prophesy communicated to him directly by Hashem relating the harsh punishment that awaits those who do what Aharon's two sons had just done!

This is the payback for Aharon's incredible reaction? How do we comprehend such a thing?

To fully understand what transpired here, we need to first take a step back and contemplate for a moment the general topic of tragedy and the difficulty we have coping with them. When, G-d forbid, these things occur, the immediate reaction is one of, "How can this be? It seems so wrong, so unjust... he was so young, it wasn't time for him to go... why did it have to be in such a terrible way... they were such good people, so innocent... where is the perfection in G-d's Universe?" The questions torment us, gnaw away at our insides, without a moment of respite. And, while eventually the pain lessens, we never truly make peace with what took place.

Imagine, though, if in the aftermath of those heartbreaking stories, we would receive a special visitor. An angel suddenly appeared from Heaven, sat down with us, and explained in minute detail exactly why each part of the story was necessary, proper, complete and whole... exactly how this incident fits into G-d's Masterplan. Could there be anything more soothing, more calming than that? Could there be a better, more cooling balm for our searing questions? Indeed, this would be the greatest consolation for tragedy.

Aharon, in his incomprehensible greatness, did NOT ask the questions. He did not challenge, did not doubt. Said Hashem, "You didn't demand explanation. You didn't call for justice. You believed it to be proper. And so, I will reward you by showing you that it is so. I Myself - not a prophet, not an angel - will come and personally explain to you how this "tragedy" was just, whole, and utterly in sync with the perfection of My Universe. I will grant you the ultimate gift - the clarity that will resolve all those

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Stories for the Soul

A Little Girl's Tears

Rabbi Dovid Halevi Segal (1586-1667) was one of the greatest Torah authorities of his time. He wrote a commentary the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) called *Turei Zahav*, or *TaZ*, and he is known as the *Taz* after his work.

During the terrible Cossack uprising of 1648-49, when entire Jewish communities were wiped out, the *Taz* and his wife fled for their lives. They eventually arrived safely in a small village in Poland, and he decided to remain anonymous so he could study Torah undisturbed. However, he needed to earn some money to support himself and his wife, so he hired himself out as a *menaker* (one who removes the halachically forbidden parts of a slaughtered animal) at the local kosher slaughterhouse. It didn't take long for the *shochtim* (ritual slaughterers) to realize their *menaker* was a learned man, and they began bringing him their halachic questions that arose with the slaughtered animals.

After some time, the local rabbi realized he was receiving very few questions from the slaughterhouse, and inquired as to the cause. He soon discovered that the new *menaker* was answering the questions normally reserved for the rabbi!

Not knowing who the *menaker* really was, the rabbi felt that he had to take a stand to ensure that people came to the rabbi with their halachic issues and did not go to just any person they deemed worthy. He brought the *Taz* before a Jewish court and explained what had occurred. The *Taz* remained silent, and the court determined that the punishment for the *menaker's* insolence was that he stand in a box in the main shul, and all would see the man who had dared challenge the rabbi's authority in town.

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Kollel Happenings

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM CONTINUES THIS SHABBOS

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program begins this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. Program ends 15 minutes before mincha in Southeast Denver, at mincha in West Denver. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

LEARN 2 LEARN GESHMAK

You may have limited experience learning Talmud. You may think that you don't enjoy serious Talmud study, that it's just not for you. But you haven't tried Learn 2 Learn Geshmak. A Gemara program crafted to give you the satisfaction and joy of learning, Learn 2 Learn Geshmak is taught by Kollel Scholar Rabbi Yossi Ephrathi. Contact info@denverkollel.org for further details.

M.B. GLASSMAN DIVISION GOLD SENIOR LUNCH & LEARN MONDAYS AT EDOS

The GOLD Lunch & Learn for seniors is back at EDOS, 198 S. Holly St., on most Mondays at 12 noon. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Class is available on Zoom, as well. For info, to confirm there is a class or for Zoom link info, email rmf@denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: If there is a certain minimum number of people, you cannot split from the others. If the number of people increases enough, you may split. If it increases too much, though, you cannot. What is this referring to?

Answer: As often mentioned, a group of three adult males who eat a bread meal together must hold a *mezuman* and cannot simply recite *Birkas Hamazon* separately. This is true for a group of four or five men,

as well; they must all be part of the *mezuman*. If there are six men, however, they may split into two groups of three each, each holding its own *mezuman*. However, once there are ten men, they cannot split, since a group of ten must hold a *mezuman* that incorporates Hashem's Name. If there are twenty men, they may split into two groups of ten (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 193:1).

This week's question: When is there a mitzvah to invite the waiter to eat something?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XLIV

Rabbi Shapiro returned to Poland after some 13 months traversing the United States and Canada. Upon returning to Lublin, he discovered that five of the six floors of the yeshiva building were

completed; only one floor had been completed when he departed. Thrilled at the progress, he rededicated his efforts to complete the sixth and final floor, the roof, as well as the interior of the structure.

A Taste of Torah

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gnawing questions and doubts - and will enable you to make complete peace with what I did."

And we can be sure that when G-d explained it, Aharon understood.

May we merit speedily in our days that Time

when we, too, will merit that ultimate gift, when G-d will come and explain to us the perfection of every painful situation, every tear-filled moment, every broken heart - with the coming of Mashiach and the Final Redemption.

Stories for the Soul

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One day, as the Taz stood in his box, a young girl came to the shul to ask the rabbi a question regarding the *kashrus* of a chicken. The rabbi ruled the chicken to be not kosher. The girl came from a very poor family, and this chicken was to be their food for the entire week! The girl was in tears as she left the shul, and, as she passed the Taz, he asked her to show him the chicken. The Taz looked at the problem and told her, "Please go to the rabbi and tell him that he will find that the Taz in this-and-this location permits this problem."

The girl returned to the rabbi, and the rabbi duly checked the source and discovered that the great Taz permitted the chicken! The rabbi immediately asked the girl who had told her of this, and she innocently replied that the insolent *menaker* had informed her.

The rabbi summoned the Taz and demanded to know who he really was, and the Taz had no choice but to reveal his identity. The rabbi begged forgiveness for having humiliated one of the greatest rabbis of the generation, but the Taz comforted him, saying that the rabbi had done what needed to be done under the circumstances. "I was willing to endure the shame and embarrassment so as to remain anonymous," explained the Taz, "but for the tears of a little girl, I could not remain quiet. I had no choice but to reveal my identity."

Nadav and Avihu felt they knew the best way to draw closer to Hashem. However, Hashem had other expectations of them, and they paid with their lives for their error. One must always examine his course of action, even the ones that seem very righteous.

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