



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Shoftim

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A Taste of Torah Your Positivity is Contagious

by Rabbi Yisroel Kellner

The Torah teaches that certain categories of people are not to go out to battle, but rather are to return from the front lines. One who built a house but didn't yet inaugurate it; one who planted a vineyard but hasn't enjoyed its harvest; one who betrothed but did not yet complete the marriage. The Torah then adds one more person who is to return home (Shoftim 20:5): "The officers shall continue speaking to the people and say, 'Who is the man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, and let him not melt the hearts of his fellows...'"

The Ramban states that the Torah is presenting a prohibition that one must not negatively affect other soldiers and cause them to be fearful and to panic. The Rambam, however, does not count this as a prohibition, but rather understands that the Torah is merely stating that the outcome of someone who is fearful will affect the rest of the nation, and such a person will be held responsible for causing this negative outlook to develop in others. This mitzvah also teaches the general importance of being careful not to weaken others' positive state of mind. The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1838-1933) says that the opposite can be learned as well. We can see the importance of strengthening others in a time of distress, encouraging them and uplifting their spirits. The Chofetz Chaim further says that we find this concept by Dovid Hamelech (King David). Before becoming king, he was pursued by Shaul Hamelech (King Saul) since the latter believed that Dovid wished to replace him as king, and Dovid was in great danger. It was a difficult period of time for him, and Shaul's son Yonason, Dovid's close

friend, spent time giving him words of encouragement about trusting in Hashem before they departed when Dovid was forced to flee.

This concept can be applied in many settings. Rabbi Mordechai Pogromansky (c. 1904-1949) and Rabbi Mordechai Zuckerman (1912-2006) were in hiding from the Nazis in the Kovno Ghetto, and they were cramped with nine other people in a hiding spot behind a flimsy wall in a kitchen. Conditions were exceedingly difficult, and they were in constant danger of being caught; indeed, on a number of occasions, they were almost discovered. Rabbi Pogromansky, a great *tzaddik* in his own right, stated that it was Rabbi Zuckerman's constant words of *bitachon* (trust in Hashem) and *chizuk* (encouragement) that strengthened their spirits during those dark days.

The Talmud (Kiddushin 82a) states, "The best of the doctors will go to *Gehennom*." This statement demands an explanation, for a doctor is a person who does much good as he treats and heals ill people; why would the best of doctors suffer such a terrible fate? Rabbi Moshe Dovid Valle (1697-1777), a prominent student of the Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto; 1707-1746) was himself a doctor, and he explained that it often happens that a doctor, after examining the patient, gives a grim prognosis and offers little hope. This is not the role of a doctor, says Rabbi Valle. A doctor is supposed to provide encouragement and positivity to the patient, even if the situation seems dire. Dr. Valle testifies that he himself would give words of encouragement and optimism to his patient even though the situation looked bleak, and he would sometimes see that

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Stories for the Soul

Nothing is Ruled

Rabbi Sholom Eisen (1917-1988) was a *dayan* (judge) in Yerushalayim, and people frequently brought him their personal halachic queries, as well. One day, a very poor woman from the neighborhood brought the Rov a chicken which she thought might have an issue that would render it a *tereifah* and thus non-kosher. If it was indeed non-kosher, the woman would be unable to afford another one.

Rabbi Eisen looked at the chicken and said, "This is a very difficult question. Come back in an hour and I'll give you my answer." Rabbi Eisen's family members, who were present at the time, were taken aback, as they had seen their father rule on this case numerous times; the chicken was clearly not kosher.

As soon as the woman left, Rabbi Eisen called in his wife, and instructed her to immediately go to the local butcher with the chicken and exchange it for another chicken that was of the same size and appearance; this chicken should then be discarded, as it was not kosher.

A short while later, Rebbetzin Eisen returned with an identical, but kosher chicken. When the poor woman returned, Rabbi Eisen handed her the new chicken, saying, "This chicken is fine, but it was a very difficult question to decide. Be sure to return if another, similar question ever arises."

The Torah tells us that Jews must listen to the Torah authority who presides in their generation.

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Kollel Happenings

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION LIVE & LEARN LEARNING PROGRAM AT THE WEST DENVER KOLLEL TORAH CENTER

The Live & Learn Learning Program for seniors is held Tuesdays at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. Coffee and pastries at 10:30 am, two classes of 45 minutes each from 10:40-12:15 (including 5 minute break between classes), and lunch (including take-home option) at 12:15. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

KOLLEL EAST SIDE SHABBATON NEXT SHABBOS

The Kollel is excited to once again hold its pre-Rosh Hashana East Side Shabbaton next Shabbos Parshas Ki Seitzei, September 9-10. Stay tuned for classes and talks throughout the community that will inspire and inform as we approach the Days of Awe. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights on Zoom, 8:15-9 pm, for men and women.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: What connection does a yeshiva-style “black hat” have to *netilas yadayim*?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 159:4) rules that one should not use a stiff felt hat that can hold water (and the water will not leak out through the fabric) as a vessel from which to wash one’s hands for *netilas yadayim*, since it is not made to function as a receptacle. The Shulchan Aruch continues that in extenuating circumstances, one may use

such a hat. However, the Mishna Berura cites others who do not allow its use even in extenuating circumstances, and cites the Chayei Adam that one may use it if there is no other option, in which case one should not recite any blessing after washing his hands and should cover his hands with a cloth when eating the bread.

This week’s question: Why would one repeatedly open and close a spigot for *netilas yadayim*?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra - Part IV

It is believed that four of Rabbi Avraham’s children died young; his only surviving son, the youngest of the five, was named Yitzchak, who was, like

his father, a poet. Yitzchak caused his father much grief when he converted to Islam though there are indications returned to Judaism later in life.

A Taste of Torah

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the patient would recover because he was encouraged and felt positive about his situation. If the doctor communicates negativity and pessimism, however, and only relays the difficulty of the situation, then the patient’s outlook becomes one of hopelessness, and he is much worse off.

My Rebbi’s father-in-law once had a condition and went to a “top” doctor, and this doctor scared him off with a bleak prognosis. He went then for a second opinion to a “regular” doctor, who told him, “Rabbi, you will do fine.” He said that he got much inspiration from that doctor and his outlook brightened considerably, and he eventually recovered.

A friend of mine told me that at the start of the COVID19 pandemic, many people were fearful and not sure what to expect. This friend related that he was

speaking to a neighbor of his who was nervous, and my friend, who has worked a great deal on his positivity, was able to calm him down just by speaking to him and expressing a positive outlook on things, for his optimism was contagious. Another friend of mine was moving, and, being a popular fellow, had multiple goodbye parties held in his honor, as many people wished to bid him farewell. When I met him by the mail box the night before he was scheduled to move, I told him “It’s going to be a great move!” My friend stopped for a moment and said, “You know, I had a lot of people wishing me good luck on my move, but no one said those positive words to me that ‘It’s going to be a great move!’” He gained a lot of inspiration from it.

So talk positively, spread positivity and optimism to others and realize that your positive outlook is, indeed, contagious.

Stories for the Soul

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Throughout our history, Hashem provide the guidance and leadership provides us with individuals who needed for that place and time.

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