

A Taste of Torah

A Step in the Right Direction

By Rabbi Yosef Kaplan

A heart attack victim is in cardiac arrest. As the paramedics desperately try to save him, they finally get a heartbeat. Then they see his lips moving, so they bend down and hear him whisper, "You guys don't know what you're doing!" Bewildered, they continue working on the patient, and he suddenly says, "I can't stand being around you!" The verbal barrage continues as they attempt to save his life. But one does wonder how much longer the medics will bear the abuse before they walk off and let the guy die...

The *Sefer Tomer Devorah* (written by Rabbi Moshe Cordevero, 1522-1570), while discussing G-d's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, states that there isn't a moment that man is not sustained by a *shefa eloyonah* - Divine spiritual sustenance that gives a person existence. Even while a person sins, he's still receiving that sustenance from Hashem. Had it ceased, even for a moment, the sin would never have been committed.

When a sin is committed, it's comparable to the heart attack victim who abused the paramedics with the very breath he is being given by his saviors. Yet Hashem, amazingly, continues to sustain us as long as we live. There is a price, however, to sin - the spiritual sustenance is somewhat weakened.

Yet we don't always run to repent. Chances are if you ask someone what image the word *teshuvah* (repentance) conjures, he'll tell you fear or perhaps even sadness. In truth though we should be ecstatic at the thought of *teshuvah*.

Thinks about it in these terms. Did you ever experience a candlelight dinner? Or how about that exciting skiing trip you took last winter? The enjoyment you experienced then,

says the *Tomer Devorah*, is all through the grace of Hashem. *Teshuva* means returning to that direct source which powers all our enjoyment - G-d Himself. So why the fear and sadness? Wouldn't you want to return to that G-d?

Perhaps, the reason for this hesitation is that we don't know what *teshuvah* is. We think we have to become new people overnight. This thought is daunting and admittedly beyond our reach. But who says we have to become new people overnight?

In this week's parsha, Hashem tells Noach that he is planning to wipe out mankind, "for the land is filled with robbery." (6:13) Rashi points out that despite the many sins of the Generation of the Flood, what tipped the scales was theft, a sin between man and his fellow man. Had they done *teshuvah* on just the sin of theft, they may have been spared, all the other sins notwithstanding.

Teshuva, then, is one small step - that's all Hashem wants from us at the moment. One small step and then another, until we're plugged back into Hashem's line of direct sustenance.

Perhaps this is the reason we read Parshas Noach so soon after Succos. We may have thought that *teshuvah* is reserved for the Days of Awe. Yet here we see it's easy and it's for all year round. Let's continue the inspiration of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos as we head into the winter. Now that we have the true meaning of *teshuvah* in our hands, why not utilize it?

Stories For The Soul

Be the Best that You Can

"Noach was a tzaddik (righteous man), perfect in his generation" [Gen 6:9]

Rashi teaches us that there are two ways to understand this verse. One positive, and one negative. The negative way is that, had Noach lived in a better generation, the generation of Avraham for example, he would not have been considered anything special. Relative to his generation he was righteous.

The positive way is that despite living in a generation of sinners, Noach was not influenced by them and remained perfectly righteous. The bottom line is that we have to be responsible for our own success and happiness and not worry about, compare ourselves to, or be dragged down by others.

An elderly sage named Reb Zusha lay on his deathbed surrounded by his talmidim (students/disciples). He was crying and no one could comfort him. One student asked his Rebbe, "Why do you cry? You were almost as wise as Moshe and as kind as Avraham."

Reb Zusha answered, "When I pass from this world and appear before the Heavenly Tribunal, they won't ask me, 'Zusha, why weren't you as wise as Moshe or as kind as Avraham,' rather, they will ask me, 'Zusha, why weren't you Zusha?' Why didn't I fulfill my potential, why didn't I follow the path that could have been mine."

Adapted with permission from
ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

DERECH HASHEM

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for a philosophical series on "Derech Hashem", a sefer by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto. Discover and delve into the vital understanding of Hashem's world. The women's class is held at EDOS. For info, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.



WOMEN'S WELLNESS WORKSHOP

Save the Date! Women's Wellness Workshop November 11th Join The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel for an event you don't want to miss! Learn how to achieve health of mind, body and soul at the Denver Jewish Women's Wellness Workshop Sunday, November 11th, from 10 am to 2 pm. More details to follow. For more info, contact Esti Schwab at esti@denverkollel.org or at 303-668-1878.



FLAWLESS GEMS? THE ETHICS OF BLOOD DIAMONDS NOVEMBER 7TH

Join J.J. Slatkin, General Manager of (space added) Jay Feder Jewelers, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel, as they cut into this multi-faceted issue. Wednesday, November 7th, 12-1 pm at the East Side Kosher Deli \$20. For more information or to register contact the Kollel at 303-820-2855 or info@denverkollel.org.

Interpersonal Issues

Returning a Lost Object

In a larger area, such as a large town or city, notices should be posted near the area where the item was found. It is not necessary to post notices throughout the entire city, and finder needn't spend money for an ad in the newspaper.

Nonetheless, if there is a free lost-and-found listing, it should be posted there.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

Motion Sensor

Jeffrey B. Sidney, of Ottawa, Ontario, wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

More and more homeowners in North America are using front lights for their houses which are motion-activated. In other words, if you walk in front of the house, the light automatically goes on. And this may even apply in the daytime. It would therefore be possible to be in the situation in which all access routes to one's house would be "blocked" on Shabbos, because of the number and positioning of such lights.

Does that leave you in the position of having to either stay at home all Shabbos, or, alternatively, to leave before the start of Shabbos and not return until after Shabbos?

Dear Jeffrey B. Sidney,

The angle at which the motion-sensors are set determines whether or not a given action will activate them. The halacha varies accordingly.

Sometimes the sensors are set at such an angle that you can pass by without activating them - they only activate if you actually approach the house. In such a situation, it's permitted to walk by. This is based on the following rule: If a permitted action might or might not cause a prohibited result, the action is nonetheless permitted. This is provided that you're not purposely trying to cause the prohibited result.

However, many motion-sensitive lights are set at such an angle that

you can't walk past the house without activating them (unless you crawl past on your belly - something not recommended on Shabbos or any non-combat situation). In such a situation, the halacha generally forbids walking past. This is true even though you don't intend to turn the light on, and you derive no real benefit from the light - for example, there's adequate street lighting.

However, some authorities rule that if you don't intend for the prohibited result to occur, and you don't benefit from it, the act is permitted even though the result is sure to occur. Based on this and other factors, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashev, zt"l, ruled that if you're on the way to do a mitzvah - for example, going to and from Shul or the Shabbos meal - it's permitted to walk past these lights if there's no other way to go.

Sources:

Rabbi Natan Ba'al Ha'aruch, 13th Century Rome

Code of Jewish Law, Orach Chaim 320

Rav Elyashev's ruling is based in part on the fact that the lights are activated ke'lachar yad - in an unusual way.

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