

A Taste of Torah

G-d's Not for Sale

By Rabbi Yossi Kaplan

It was the night of the wedding, but the bride couldn't go home with her husband. Her father wouldn't let. No, he was no despotic fool; this was his only child, and he'd miss her too much. A solution was reached when the newlywed couple agreed to add a room onto their home. In this way, the bride's father could live close by and never have to separate from them.

Our Sages tell us that G-d refers to the Torah as His daughter. Thus, when He gave her to Klal Yisroel, he didn't want to separate from her. But he couldn't keep her; she was wedded to the Jews. He therefore requested, "...and they shall take (for) Me a portion... and they shall make (for) Me a Sanctuary." (Exodus 25:2, 8) The literal reading of the verses is "and you shall take Me" rather than "for Me", from which the Medrash infers that G-d was selling Himself, as it were, to the Jews.

An amazing Midrash indeed! But we're still left to ponder several questions: 1. How does G-d sell himself? 2. What's the connection between acquiring G-d and building a Sanctuary? 3. How does G-d remain close to the Torah through our "acquisition" of Him? 4. Finally, what need does G-d have for all this; is He not close to the Torah, His own creation, despite its being given to the Jewish People?

The Temple in its day was a city unto itself. Its majesty and splendor dwarfed all other structures near and far. Indeed, it was the crowning jewel of the Jewish people. But it wasn't the magnificence alone that was glorified; rather, it was the connection to G-d, through the sacrifices offered and services conducted there, that the Jewish People craved.

There's a deeper way to connect to

G-d, today and always, despite the lack of a Temple. It's through Torah study. This connection between the service of the Temple and Torah study can be seen in the name given to our *battei midrash* (houses of study): *Mikdash Me'at*, a miniature Temple.

One more piece is needed to understand the aforementioned Medrash. The Talmud (Kiddushin 32b) tells us that although the Torah belongs to G-d, when we study it, we acquire the Torah. We can therefore explain the Medrash as follows: Hashem wanted to enable us to connect to Him, so He gave us the Torah, His word.

So how does G-d sell himself? He doesn't. He allowed us to acquire the Torah, which forges a connection with G-d identical to His having sold Himself. But there's a catch. G-d can't be separated from the Torah; He therefore commanded "make for Me a Sanctuary," a place of service to G-d, service that is outlined very specifically by the Torah. There are those who erroneously believe they can serve G-d based on their own notions. The same holds true for Torah study; there are those who interpret it according to their own needs. But by building a Temple, a place where G-d is served on His terms, we can also learn to study Torah as G-d meant it.

What need does G-d have for all this? He doesn't. It's a message for us. Do you want the Torah? Do you want a connection to G-d? There is only one way: Learn the Torah as G-d gave it. The Torah is not for sale. No indeed, G-d is not for sale!

Stories For The Soul

The Lesson of the Cake

A young boy was once complaining to his grandmother how "everything" was going wrong. He hated school, had problems with his friends, and didn't get along with his sister.

His grandmother, meanwhile, was baking a cake, stirring the batter as she listened to his tale of woe.

"Would you like a snack?" she suddenly asked him.

"Yes," he eagerly responded.

"Here, have some cooking oil," she said.

"Yuck," came the reply.

"How about a couple raw eggs?"

"Gross, Grandma!"

"Would you like some flour then? Or maybe baking soda?"

"Grandma, those are all yucky!"

"Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves," she replied, "but when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake!"

Hashem works the same way. Many times we wonder why He would let us go through difficult times. But Hashem knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good. We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful.

The Menora was fueled by olive oil. Olives produce their wonderful pure oil only after being beaten, pressed and crushed. Similarly, the persecutions and tribulations that the Jewish people have suffered serve to strengthen and purify us. Difficulties in life actually make us greater.

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Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION FEB. 26TH

The Kollel will be celebrating fifteen years of bringing Torah to Denver Jewry on Tuesday, February 26th, at 6:30 pm, at the newly-renovated McNichols Building, 144 W. Colfax Ave. (corner of Colfax & Bannock). Tribute journal in honor of Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, who will be present at the event to receive an award. Ad deadline extended until February 15th. Reservations, as well as ads for Rabbi Amsel or other Kollel personnel, or in honor or memory of a loved one, can be emailed to journal@denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855.



TRUST THY FATHER

Join Rabbi Schachne Sommers for "Trust Thy Father," a series based on Chovos Ha'Levavos/Duties of the Heart. Discover and delve into vital Jewish concepts of Bitachon. The classes take place on Tuesdays, from 7:55-8:25 a.m. at Aish. For info email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.



A DEEPER LOOK

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 issues, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights 7:40-8:30 pm at the Kollel, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at Aish Denver 8-9 pm.

Interpersonal Issues

Items Found on Private Property

If one found an item in a store, and the item may be kept by the finder according to halacha, the item belongs to the finder, not the store owner. This is true only where it was found in an area open to the public; if found in a part of the store not open to the public, it belongs to the store owner. By the

same token, if it must be returned, it is the finder's responsibility to return it, not the store owner's, unless found in an area of the store not open to the public.

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

Ask the Rabbi

Wall Power

Eli from London asked:

Dear Rabbi,

Why does Jerusalem have Purim on a different day than we do?

Dear Eli,

Most people celebrate Purim on the 14th of the Hebrew month Adar. But in a city which was walled in the time of Joshua's conquest of Israel, Purim is celebrated on the 15th. Here's why:

Haman decreed that all Jews be killed on the 13th of Adar. When the day came, the Jews miraculously defended themselves. On the following day, Adar 14, the Jews celebrated.

In Shushan, the walled capital city of the Persian empire, the Jews had an extra day to fight their enemies. They didn't celebrate until the 15th.

In remembrance of these events, Mordechai and Esther instituted two separate days of Purim, Adar 14 and 15. The 14th commemorates the national victory. The 15th - Shushan Purim - commemorates the victory of the Jews who lived in the walled city of Shushan.

So if you're like most Jews, you celebrate Purim on the 14th. But, if you happen to live in Shushan, or in any ancient walled city, you celebrate Purim on Adar 15th.

The definition of an 'ancient walled city' is any city surrounded by a wall in the days of Joshua. Logically, the definition should be a city that was walled in the time of Mordechai and Esther, but the Sages didn't want to exclude Jerusalem, whose walls were in ruins at the time of the Purim episode.

Some people keep two days of Purim because they are in doubt whether their city is considered 'walled.' One example is Hebron. The Jews in Hebron keep two days of Purim because it's doubtful whether the entire wall around Hebron existed at the time of Joshua.

Another example is Tiberias, a walled city on the shore of Lake Kinneret. Tiberias was walled from the time of Joshua. The doubt arises because Tiberias has no wall along the shore. Is Tiberias considered an 'open' city because it is unwalled along the shore? Or is the lake considered a 'wall' since it protects the city from attack? This question is left unresolved in the Talmud.

Sources:

Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 688:1,3,4;
Mishna Berurah 1,9

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