



Beshalach 5774

January 11, 2014

A Taste of Torah It's You I Can't Stand

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

They make the perfect villains. In Egypt, they informed Pharaoh that Moshe had murdered an Egyptian, nearly costing Moshe his life and forcing him to flee to Midian. They didn't leave Egypt with the rest of the Jewish People, but came later. They spread manna in the desert on Shabbos, hoping (ultimately in vain) to disprove Moshe's prophecy that no manna would fall on that sacred day. Later, they would be among the primary antagonists during Korach's rebellion.

Who are these scoundrels? They are Dasan and Aviram, two brothers who reappear time and again to cause trouble. But wait! Before we write them off as wicked, no-good rabble-rousers, let's take a closer look.

Our Sages tell us that there were many Jews who really weren't spiritually prepared to leave Egypt and become G-d's Chosen Nation. Those Jews perished in Egypt during the plague of darkness. If Dasan and Aviram were as terrible as they appear to be, why didn't they perish, as well? To make matters even more confusing, our Sages tell us that, in fact, they didn't join the Jewish People upon their exodus from Egypt, but left much later. And, when they came to the Red Sea, it *split a second time to allow them to pass through!* Clearly, there is a lot more to these two fellows than meets the eye.

Truth be told, if you follow the exploits of the infamous duo, they never do anything directly against G-d; their gripe is always with Moshe.

They inform on Moshe; they rebel against Moshe; they don't leave Egypt with Moshe or cross the Red Sea with Moshe; they attempt to discredit Moshe's prophecy regarding the manna. And here we discover a startling fact about Dasan and Aviram: They were out to get Moshe, not G-d. They could, therefore, have been individuals very devoted to G-d, ready to leave Egypt, prepared to accept and observe the Torah and its laws, *but they didn't like Moshe!* Their personal righteousness was apparently enough to get them out of Egypt, to Mount Sinai, and through the desert. That is, until they joined forces with Korach, and got in over their heads – literally. They, along with Korach, were swallowed up by the ground.

Dasan and Aviram may have been exceedingly pious individuals, but it didn't save them from eternal infamy. And here we come to the crux of our discussion: It takes more than personal piety to make a worthy Jew. You have to accept the authority of the Torah leader of your generation. Dasan and Aviram got into trouble because they refused to accept Moshe as the leader of the Jewish People. Our Sages tell us that every generation has its Torah leaders, and their word is law, even if they haven't reached the saintliness or scholarship of past leaders. So quit trying to reinvent the wheel – or re-split the sea. Heed the words of the Torah Sages of our generation, and avoid the tragic error of Dasan and Aviram.

Stories For The Soul

Who Cares?!?

The son of the Baruch Taam (Rabbi Boruch Frankel Thumim [1760-1828]) became engaged to a girl from a wealthy family. The parents of the bride and groom met to work out details of the upcoming marriage. They planned on holding a festive engagement party following their discussion.

At the meeting, the mother of the bride noticed that the Baruch Taam looked distressed, and asked him privately why this was so. The Baruch Taam replied that he was upset because the water carrier in his city was ill, and would thus be unable to participate in the celebration of the newly-engaged couple.

The woman, who would be the mother-in-law of the Baruch Taam's son, replied, "What's the big deal? So he's sick! Why should that take away from the happiness of your son's engagement!?"

The Baruch Taam immediately called off the match. "Someone who is unable to feel the pain of another Jew is not someone whose family I want my son to marry into," he stated.

In this week's parsha, the angels wished to sing praises to G-d upon witnessing the drowning of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, but G-d refused to allow them to do so, stating, "My creations are drowning, and you wish to sing praises!?" At all times, we must be sensitive to the plight of others.

Kollel Happenings

**WOMEN'S WELLNESS WORKSHOP
WITH LORI PALTNIK JAN 15TH**

Don't miss the Kollel's Annual Women's Wellness Workshop at the Daniels Fund, 101 Monroe St. (in Cherry Creek), on January 15th at 5:30 pm. Discover how to achieve optimum health in mind, body and soul. As always, there will be great food and camaraderie. Early bird reservation (until Jan. 10th) is \$36. To reserve, email info@denverkollel.org, visit www.denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855. For details on the presenters and presentations, visit www.denverkollel.org.

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

PARSHA ON THE MALL

Wish you could learn more about the weekly parsha? Looking to add some Torah study and inspiration to your busy day? Then here's an opportunity you won't want to miss! Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher explores several parts of the weekly parsha at this exciting and intriguing class. The class takes place Thursdays from 12:30-1:30 pm in downtown Denver at 910 16th St., 2nd floor. Refreshments are served. To have your name added to the email notification list (as the class doesn't take place every Thursday), please contact Rabbi Fleisher at rmf@denverkollel.org.

Interpersonal Issues

The Laws of Lashon Hara (Slander)

If one is able to achieve his goal, such as steering someone away from a bad business partnership or prospective match, without having to share the negative information about the other party, he may not share the information. Sometimes, though, the information must

be shared and the relevant person must be allowed to make his or her own decision to move forward with the match, deal, etc. Even in such a case, one should attempt to share the bare minimum information needed for the interested party to make an informed decision.

Ask the Rabbi

Courage and Cowardice

Smile wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

In the Torah, where can I find a definition of courage?

Dear Smile,

The best place to go to get an answer to this question is the Mishna in Pirkei Avot: Ben Zoma said: "Who is a strong person? Someone who subdues his evil inclination, as we find expressed in the verse: 'Someone who doesn't lose his temper is better than a strong man, and someone who controls his spirit is better than someone who conquers a city.' "

The Mishna is describing a trait that applies only to people: Courage. Animals exhibit physical strength. But courage, spiritual strength, only applies to people.

Physical talent can be developed, but the potential is basically inborn. Either you have the potential to play professional basketball or you don't. The basic talent must be there.

But when it comes to spiritual strength, everyone has the same opportunity to excel. Wherever you stand spiritually, there is a challenge. Though some

people, due to place of birth, education, etc., would seem to have it easier, in actuality each person has his own tests which are perfect for him.

An amazing story is recorded about Rabbi Chaim Vital (16th century) and the Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria). The Arizal was the great teacher of Kabbala in modern times. Rabbi Chaim Vital was his primary student, who recorded almost all of the Arizal's teachings. Once Rabbi Vital asked the Arizal the following question: "If the Talmudic Sages with all their greatness and levels of holiness weren't able to bring the Mashiach (Messianic Era), then how are we going to be able to?"

The Arizal's answer is even more understandable today that it was then. He answered: "In the time before the Mashiach it will be so challenging to correctly observe mitzvot that the mitzvot done in those times will have more power than they did in the earlier times. Even though those mitzvot may not be done as completely, but because they will be so difficult they will have the power to bring the mashiach."

Sources:

Tractate Avot 4:1

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