

Bo 5776

January 15, 2016

A Taste of Torah Fit for a King

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

If I ask you to name the most significant part of this week's Torah portion, you will likely respond that it is the long-awaited (it's been two weeks now) redemption of the Jews from Egypt. The firstborn die, Pharaoh lets the Jews go - or, to be more precise, he throws them out of Egypt - and that's all folks!

Except that there's a lot more. A cursory glance at a set of Talmud will reveal an entire tractate called Pesachim. This lengthy (120 pages!) tome focuses on the laws of Pesach (Passover). And what is the source for most of those laws? Why, this week's Torah portion! Most of the verses that deal with the laws of *chametz* and *matzah* are to be found here, as well as the laws of the Pesach offering - and there are a lot of them.

A number of the laws pertinent to the Pesach offering tell us how it needs to be eaten. One of those laws forbids breaking any bones of the offering, while another prohibits leaving the group with which one is eating the offering. I will refer you to aforementioned Tractate Pesachim for the minutiae of these prohibitions, but I'd like to focus on the idea behind these commandments.

The Sefer Hachinuch, a work that, among other things, provides some of the roots from whence spring the mitzvos, gives us a timely lesson for how we ought to approach mealtimes. He explains that as the Jewish People emerged from slavery and became G-d's Nation, they needed to transition into nobility, princes who are G-d's emissaries on Earth. To that end, the mitzvos and customs of Pesach, especially the Seder, are replete with aristocracy.

When a wealthy noble sits down to eat, explains the Sefer Hachinuch, he does so with dignity and refinement. He does not get up and move from one place to

another - everything he needs is brought to him, and he remains at his place throughout the meal. He does not break the bones of his meat in an effort to scrape a few morsels of marrow from within. And we, on Pesach, must instill this attitude into ourselves. We are nobles. We are princes. We are aristocrats. We are G-d's Chosen Nation! Pesach is the time, says the Sefer Hachinuch, for this idea to permeate our essence, so that we can carry it with us throughout the year.

It is said that the saintly Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum (1887-1979), would not bend his head to eat a bowl of soup; rather, he would sit ramrod straight, and bring the spoon to his mouth. I am not recommending this for most of us - unless you have several spare changes of clothes. But another incident comes to mind that is far more relevant. When I was single, learning in yeshiva in New York, a kosher restaurant opened in town, and advertised a Super Bowl party. The slogan they used to promote the event was "Fress like a fullback!" (For the uninitiated, *fress* is a Yiddish term indicating gluttonous eating.) My Rebbe was most disturbed by this advertising, because it promoted eating as a form of hedonistic pleasure, as if one could just leave his humanness behind for several hours and behave like an animal. It was anathema for a kosher restaurant to use such terminology.

It is important for us to remember that while we must eat, and while enjoying what we eat may also be an important part of maintaining a physically and emotionally healthy life, we are not animals - we are nobility! And, as nobles, we must conduct ourselves accordingly in all we do - even when involved in the most physical of endeavors, we must raise what we eat to our station, and not lower ourselves down to the food.

Stories For The Soul

Top Priority

Living in Jerusalem during the Israeli War of Independence was very precarious. The Arabs were attacking the Jews living in Jerusalem, throwing grenades and firing at them. It was terribly dangerous to be outside. Rabbi Yisroel Grossman (1923-2007) was running to the Bikur Cholim hospital to visit a student of his who had been mortally wounded by a grenade and lay dying, when he saw the legendary *tzaddik* Rabbi Aryeh Levine (1885-1969) enter the hospital with another man. Rabbi Levine went over to the corpses covered by white sheets, lifted the sheet off the face of a body, and had the man take a photograph! As Rabbi Grossman watched, the scene repeated itself several times. Rabbi Grossman was quite taken aback by Rabbi Levine's actions; perhaps he wanted to send images of the dead to the world to see the Arab atrocities, but where that did not take precedence to respect for the deceased!?

Rabbi Grossman asked Rabbi Levine what he was doing. Rabbi Levine replied, "Reb Yisroel, I heard that they are preparing a mass grave for these people who were tragically murdered. Some of the dead have wives who are unaware of their husbands' deaths, and if they cannot confirm this, they will be unable to remarry! I am taking photographs so these women will be allowed to remarry!"

Rabbi Grossman was awe-struck. Who else but the saintly Rabbi Aryeh Levine would think of this at such a calamitous time?

In this week's parsha, as the Jewish People prepared to leave Egypt, they asked the Egyptians for their valuables and were thus greatly enriched. But, says the Talmud, Moshe was busy recovering the body of Yosef, so it could be buried in the Land of Israel. Our Sages apply the verse "A wise man takes mitzvos" (Proverbs 10:8) to Moshe's actions - for mitzvos were his top priority.

Kollel Happenings

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Join Brad Kornfeld, Managing Partner, The Kornfeld Companies and Board Chair, The Donor Alliance and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean, Denver Community Kollel, as they flesh out the parts of this vital topic. February 3, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD ADOPT-A-BUBBY PROGRAM

Do you know of a senior – a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, fellow congregant – who would benefit from a weekly phone call to schmooze, share a thought on the parsha or Jewish calendar, or just say hello? Do you have a few minutes a week to call a senior in the community and make a difference in the life of another? Contact the Denver Community Kollel's M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Adopt-A-Bubby program! Call Joyce Litzman at the Denver Community Kollel at 303-820-2855, or email jlitzman@denverkollel.org.

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Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Which verse is supposed to be the final verse recited as part of Az Yashir (Song of the Sea) recited every morning?

A: This is a matter of dispute. The Mishna Berura (51:17) quotes the Arizal who says to conclude the morning recital of Az Yashir with the verse of "Ki va" (Shemos 15:19), while the Vilna Gaon omits it and stops one verse earlier. (The verses recited afterwards, before the blessing of Yishtabach, are not part of Az

Yashir). The dispute would seem to center on the meaning of the verse, whether it is a continuation or description of the rest of the song. For further reference, see Rambam (Hil. Sefer Torah, end of ch. 8) and glosses of Rabbi Z.H. Berlin to Gittin (90a, printed in the Vilna Shas).

This week's question: Which halachically controversial custom is associated with Parshas Beshalach?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rashi - Part VI

Rashi lived in the Rhineland communities, and, for most of his life, the Jewish communities there experienced relative security and prosperity. Toward the end of his life, though, it all came to an end.

In early 1096 Pope Urban II called for a military expedition to wrest the Holy Land from the Muslims. Huge Crusader armies marched east in response to his appeal. Stirred to religious fervor by itinerant preachers and led by violent and greedy men, these fighters decided that Jews should suffer Christian vengeance. Beginning in May 1096, for nearly two months, these Crusaders massacred the major Rhineland Jewish communities. The great Jewish communities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz, known as Shum, the acronym of their Hebrew names, which had served as Rashi's place of Torah study during his younger years, were destroyed.

There is a well-known story connecting Rashi to the Crusades. According to the work Shalshales Hakabbala (first edition: Venice, 1587) by Rabbi Gedaliah ben Yichye, a French nobleman named "Gottifrido of Bolyon" - Godfrey of Bouillon - described in the work as a "terrible man of war, a destructive man," heard of Rashi's wisdom and demanded his personal appearance. (Godfrey is quoted as having committed "to go on this journey only after avenging the blood

of the crucified one by shedding Jewish blood and completely eradicating any trace of those bearing the name 'Jew.'") Rashi refused; the nobleman marched into Rashi's Bais Medrash only to find it empty. He then heard Rashi's voice state that he would appear only if Godfrey guaranteed his safety. After doing so, Rashi emerged. Godfrey told Rashi of his intent to seize Jerusalem from the Muslims, and asked Rashi's opinion of whether he'd be successful.

Rashi predicted that Godfrey would conquer and rule Jerusalem for three days, then lose it on the fourth day. He would then return to "this city" (Troyes) with but three horses (and their riders) from all his host.

Godfrey, enraged, swore that he would kill every Jew in France if Rashi's prediction did not come true.

Some years later, Godfrey returned from Jerusalem. All had occurred as Rashi had forecast, with one exception: Godfrey had four horses. Four was one more than three, and Godfrey had returned to wreak his revenge on Rashi. As he approached the city gate of Troyes, a large stone fell from the gate, killing the the fourth horse and its rider - just before Godfrey entered the city. Properly chastised, Godfrey sought out Rashi to humble himself before him - only to discover that Rashi had already passed away.

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Denver Community Kollel: 1516 Xavier Street, Denver, CO 80204 Tel: 303-820-2855 Fax: 303-820-2806

Email: info@denverkollel.org Web: www.denverkollel.org

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