



Eikev 5776

August 26, 2016

A Taste of Torah

We Have Nothing to Fear If We Have Fear Itself

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

I'm sure you're wondering about the title of this article. After all, didn't Franklin Delano Roosevelt make a fair point when he said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself?" Yet it appears as if I'm contravening the entire intent of that statement with my irreverent paraphrase.

Please don't blame me. I'm just repeating what I learned, from no less a person than Moshe Rabbeinu. He's the one who put fear on a pedestal. And no matter how staunch a Democrat you are, Moshe Rabbeinu trumps FDR.

In this week's parsha, Moshe informs the Jewish People (Eikev 10:12), "And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only that you fear Him..."

The Talmud (Brachos 33b) notes that Moshe seems to indicate that fear of G-d is an easily-attained level to achieve. "All that Hashem asks is that you fear him, no big deal!" But, the reality is that fear of G-d is a lot more difficult for the vast majority of us than Moshe would have us believe.

The Talmud is bothered by this, and it likens Moshe's statement to one who is asked if he can lend his pot. If one is asked to borrow a large pot, and he has it in his possession, it seems to him as a small pot. But if one requires a small pot and he hasn't got it, it appears to him like a large pot. Moshe, continues the Talmud, possessed fear of G-d, so for him, it's not a great matter. But for us, we who have not achieved Moshe's supernal level, it appears far more difficult.

The Talmud's answer creates more problems than it solves. True, for Moshe himself fear of G-d was easy,

but Moshe surely realized that the rest of the Jewish People were not his equals. Humble as he was, he was the leader of the Jewish People, and a pragmatic one at that. To claim that Moshe thought the rest of the Jewish People were as pious and righteous as he is to claim that Moshe was simply out of touch with his flock!

I saw an explanation a few years ago (though I do not recall from whom) that puts fear – all fear – in its place. G-d has endowed us with a natural emotional state of fear and awe. Fear, when left unchecked, can paralyze and incapacitate. When utilized properly, it can galvanize a person into action, accomplishing that which was thought to be impossible. Ultimately, how we channel this trait will determine whether it is positive or negative.

But the very best way to use fear is to recognize where everything that scares us comes from - G-d Himself. Instead of being anxious about terrorists, stock market volatility, self-centered politicians and airline punctuality, we should contemplate Who is really pulling the strings – and direct our fear to the source of where all of these problems originate. Recognize that our fate is in G-d's hands, not the puny hands of mere mortals, bombastic and belligerent as they may be.

This was Moshe's directive to the Jewish People. Moshe was telling them that just as he possessed the "large pot," every one of them did, as well. The challenge is to tap into that fear and understand that its purpose is to create a proper relationship with G-d – that He is the One calling the shots, and we

Continued on back side

Stories For The Soul

You're Being Watched

In 1991, the United States led a coalition against the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Hussein made good on his threats to rain destruction down on Israel, and a total of 39 Scud missiles fell on the tiny country. Due to pressure from the United States, the Israeli military could not even retaliate, as it would provoke the Arab members of the coalition to abandon the fight! And so Israelis sat in terror, night after night, as air raid sirens rang throughout the country.

While there was a great deal of property damage, only two people died directly due to the missiles. Every life is a tragedy (and there were others who died due to missile-related issues such as heart attacks due to the assaults), but to put it in perspective, when a single Iraqi Scud missile fell on a U.S. army barracks in Saudi Arabia, tens of soldiers were tragically killed. It was eminently clear that Hashem was keeping a close eye on His People.

When one secular Israeli politician was asked about these apparent miracles, he replied, "These are not miracles! Stuff like this happens in Israel all the time!"

In this week's parsha, the Torah informs us that Eretz Yisroel is a land upon which Hashem focuses His eyes constantly. It is up to us to recognize the special spiritual level of Eretz Yisroel and to merit continued Divine protection by living in it accordingly.

Kollel Happenings

YARCHEI KALLAH ON LABOR DAY WEEKEND

Join Rabbi Binyomin Halpern, Rav of Cong. Bais Halevy and father of Kollel Scholar Rabbi Shmuel Halpern, for two days of Torah study, September 4-5, at the Kollel's West Side Bais Medrash. Breakfast and lunch provided along with the study sessions and lectures. For more details, visit the Kollel website, www.denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

MINERAL & SURFACE RIGHTS AT SEP. 7TH TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Avi Mehler, Land Manager for K.P. Kauffman Company, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they dig beneath the surface into the issues of mineral rights and surface rights.

September 7th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Which one of the customs associated with the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash* continues until the end of the month of Av?

A: The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 551:1) tells us that since the month of Av is associated with bad *mazel* (omen) for Jews, one should avoid litigation with a non-Jew during that time. The Mishna Berura (ibid.) rules that this

extends, ideally, throughout the entire month of Av. In cases of need, rules the Mishna Berura, one should try to avoid litigations at least until after Tisha B'av.

This week's question: During which three months of the Jewish calendar is there a custom to blow the *shofar*? (Warning: this is a tricky question!)

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

The Maharil - Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Moelin - Part II

Rabbi Yaakov lived during a very tumultuous time for the Jews in the Ashkenazic communities of Europe. During the first half of the 14th century, the Black Death – bubonic plague – swept through Europe, killing between one-third and one-half of the population. The disease was carried by fleas that lived on the rats that infested these areas. Ignorant of basic medical treatment as well as the causes of disease, complete lack of hygiene, leaving the dead unburied for long periods and other factors contributed to the terrible death toll.

The Jewish communities, while also hard-hit by the plague, did not experience the same severity as the general populace. This was mostly due to the more hygienic lifestyle that Torah law mandates, as well as the halachic requirement to bury the dead quickly. Nonetheless, the gentile population

decided that the higher survival rate of their Jewish population proved that the Jews were the ones behind the Black Death, and they accused the Jews of poisoning the wells. (That the Jews drank from the same wells, and that many Jews died, did not enter their thought processes.)

From 1348 through 1351, the gentiles wreaked terrible pogroms upon the Jewish communities, wiping out communities, devastating others, killing, maiming, destroying property and plundering the possessions of the hapless Jews.

While the Maharil appeared on the scene some years after these calamities, he nevertheless was tasked with helping the Jewish communities to rebuild and with encouraging the Jews to carry on and maintain their faith in the face of their many troubles.

A Taste of Torah

Continued from front side

need to apply ourselves to meeting His expectations. Moshe achieved that, and he was informing everyone else that they, too, already had the potential – it just needed to be developed and actualized.

So if something scary goes bump in the night, don't panic. And don't flee in abject terror when fear comes knocking. Just remember that whatever happens is coming from G-d, and He is the One before Whom we should quake.