

# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Nitzavim-Vayelech

September 15, 2017

## A Taste of Torah Mission Possible

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman

The entirety of the Jewish Nation is gathered to listen as Moshe discusses the new covenant they are entering. Surprisingly, Moshe elaborates to specify many types of individuals who entered the covenant, from elders to children to water-drawers. This is puzzling, since the Torah is written very concisely, without any extra words.

The Netziv (Rabbi Naftoli Tzvi Yehuda Berlin; 1816-1893) suggests that the Torah is implying that there wasn't one universal covenant for everyone; rather, every person entered his own personal covenant with Hashem to accomplish his or her mission in this world.

In Parshas Eikev (Devarim 10:12), the Netziv elaborates on the idea that every person has a unique role in the service of Hashem. He writes that we can basically categorize everyone into four divisions. The first comprises the leaders who are preoccupied with the needs of their constituents. Their mission is merely to be focused on Hashem's will as they make their decisions. The second group is the scholars, who have a long list of responsibilities; they are expected to be involved in study, prayer and kindness. They must serve as a reflection of Hashem's image on a constant basis. The third type of person is the working class, those who are fulfilling the obligation of providing for one's family. Despite the fact that such a person is busy with his livelihood, Hashem expects him to designate time during his busy schedule to pray and study. The fourth group are the women of valor, who have the very special role of setting the tone in their homes and for their families in focusing on Jewish ethics and kindness.

This message is very important to internalize. Every one of us possesses a

unique purpose in this world, and one should not be jealous of somebody else, for every one of us has a personal mission. Instead, one must strive to accomplish his own mission to the fullest extent. There is a very interesting story that the Netziv related about himself which is very encouraging.

As a young boy, the Netziv constantly struggled in *cheder* (school), as he was a poor student. One night, he overheard his parents discussing what they were going to do with their little Naftali. They decided that he would be best served if he would stop attending *cheder* and would be apprenticed to a shoemaker. Little Naftali begged his parents to give him another chance. He applied himself to his studies and succeeded. The end of the story is that he ended up becoming one of the biggest Torah scholars of his time, and he authored numerous *sefarim* (books), still widely studied, on all parts of the Torah. After he published his first work, he made a festive meal. Everyone was wondering why he had chosen to make such a big deal over the publication of his first *sefer*. During the meal, he explained that as a boy, he had nearly left Torah study to engage in a trade. Had that occurred, he would have left this world and, upon arriving in Heaven, would have been questioned, "Where is the *sefer* you were supposed to write?"

"Now that I published this *sefer*," he concluded, "it is a joyous occasion, for I was able to accomplish my mission in this world."

The words of the Netziv and his story are a powerful lesson to all of us, and should encourage us to strive to reach our potential and become the best people we can be.

## Stories For The Soul

### Returning by Returning

Based on a story by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair on [ohr.edu](http://ohr.edu)

My daughter lost a wallet containing a large sum of money in Jerusalem. She realized that the wallet was gone when she tried to pay the taxi that brought her home. My wife went back with her and retraced her steps, but to no avail. The wallet was gone. We called around to all the shops she had gone to. Nothing. After a couple of days, we thought we'd seen the last of the wallet.

About a month later, a man telephoned our house and spoke to my wife. He said he had seen the wallet in the street and picked it up. He was a poor person, struggling to keep his head above an ever-rising tide of bills and debts. The sight of such a large sum of money overwhelmed him. His son's school had told him that unless he paid the previous term's tuition, his son would not be able to return at the end of the summer. He looked down at that full wallet and the temptation was too much for him; he took half of the money and paid for his son's tuition.

Two days before *Tisha b'Av*, is when he called our home: "How can I fast on *Tisha B'Av* with this on my mind?" he asked. He promised to pay us back as soon as possible. In any event, he wanted to return the rest of the money together with the wallet. My wife said to him, "Don't worry! Pay us back when you can! Thank you so much for calling!" She suggested he leave the wallet in a nearby store to avoid embarrassment.

This week's parsha discusses, according to some opinions, the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*, repentance. Even if one has succumbed to temptation, one can repair the damage by taking steps to undo the damage and sincerely returning to G-d.

## Kollel Happenings

### USE GOOD JUDGMENT SERIES

The Kollel is offering a two-part series for women in two different locations titled *Use Good Judgment: The Nature of Rosh Hashana & Yom Kippur*.

Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup> will feature *Exult in Trepidation: The Ultimate Juggling Act* with Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky and *Essential Information: Touching the Essence of Rosh Hashana* with Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman at the Erlanger home, 1555 Vrain St., 9:45 am and at the Michaels home, 9820 E. Grand Ave., 7:45 pm.

*Why Is This Day Different?: The Repentance of Yom Kippur vs. Year Round* with Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher will take place on Sunday, September 24, 9:45 am at the Hoffman home, 1582 Winona Ct., and on Wednesday, September 27, 8 pm at the Meyer home, 9532 E. Grand Pl.

### DONOR APPRECIATION EVENT MONDAY, SEP. 25

The Kollel will hold its annual Donor Appreciation Event on Monday, September 25, 6:45 pm at the Beth Jacob High School of Denver Educational Building, 5100 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Ave. For more info or to reserve, visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### 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](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** According to most customs, *selichos* prayers are recited during the period before *Yom Kippur* (called *selichos* of *Yamim Nora'im*), and on *ta'aniyos* (public fast days). What are the primary differences between the two?

**A:** 1. *Selichos* of *ta'aniyos* are incorporated into the *shacharis* prayers, generally after the *chazzan's* repetition. According to one custom mentioned in *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 566:4), *selichos* are recited during the *chazzan's* repetition of the blessing *Selach Lanu!* This custom is still followed by German-Jewish communities. *Selichos* of *Yamim Nora'im*,

however, are generally recited before *shacharis*, and are independent of any of the fixed daily prayers. They are followed by *Tachanun* and *Kaddish Tiskabel*, like all our fixed prayers. The reason for this is that these *selichos* are considered their own, self-contained, prayer. (For a more detailed explanation, see *Selichos Be'er Ya'akov*, Yerushalayim 1995, pp. 24-26)

**This week's question:** On which day of *selichos* (of the period surrounding the *Yamim Nora'im*) are the least amount of *selichos* recited?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel – the Mordechai Part VII

At the time of his murder, Rabbi Mordechai had written the material for his work, but had not yet organized it. His students took on the task of bringing their martyred teacher's writings together into a single, cohesive work. This led to a great deal of confusion, as two different editions of the Mordechai emerged.

One edition, known as the Rhenish Mordechai, circulated in the Rhineland and in Eastern Germany, France, Italy and Spain. The other edition, known as the Austrian Mordechai, was studied in Austria, Moravia, Bohemia, Styria, and Hungary. Each edition contained things the other did not, material that is consistent between the two versions is often found in different locations, and the main authorities quoted differ; Rhenish and French Torah authorities have primacy in the Rhenish edition, while Austrian authorities are more frequent in the Austrian edition. The Austrian Mordechai is about three times longer than its Rhenish counterpart, which indicates it is likely much more similar to the original material compiled by the Mordechai. The Rhenish edition would seem to be the product of extensive

editing.

The Rhenish edition became the basis for the printed edition of the Mordechai that came to be used throughout the world, while the Austrian edition is still extant in manuscript form in museums in Budapest and Vienna.

Some sixty years after Rabbi Mordechai's death, Rabbi Shmuel ben Aharon of Schlettstadt wrote glosses to the Rhenish Mordechai. These glosses, called *Hagahos Mordechai* (Glosses on the Mordechai), were extracts Rabbi Shmuel made from the Austrian Mordechai to supplement the Rhenish Mordechai.

Despite the confusion, the Mordechai became a major work for future Torah scholars and halachic authorities. The great Torah scholars of the 15<sup>th</sup> century studied and utilized the Mordechai as a major authoritative source of halacha.

The Mordechai was included in the first printed edition of the Talmud in 1482, and it is printed in current standard editions of the Talmud, as well. Its popularity meant that a large amount of Torah literature was produced commentating on the Mordechai.

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Denver Community Kollel | 1395 Wolff Street, Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855  
[info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) | [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org)

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