

# A Taste of Torah

## Dancing in a Dangerous World

By Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

We all have our days - sometimes we wake up with a strong desire for all that is good, ready to control our base desires and fill our lives with something deeper and meaningful. However, there are occasions where it seems that our physical body has taken total control of the wheel, and we feel completely incapable of escaping the strong calling of the world around us. Possibly worse than the feeling of helplessness is the thought of, "Why wasn't I given the tools to deal with this?!" Let us explore this subject a bit.

The first step is to realize that Hashem created us like this. If so, He must have given us the tools to deal with these obstacles. The Talmud tells us that Hashem does not give us a challenge that cannot be overcome. So what is the hidden key?

In this week's Torah portion there are three *mitzvos* which, according to the *Sefer Hachinuch*, all have one common theme. We are commanded to 1) recite the *Shema* morning and night, 2) put *tefillin* on our arm and head and 3) affix a *mezuzah* to the door of our house. The *Chinuch* explains that G-d created us comprised of a body and a soul. The soul craves spirituality; however, the body is drawn very powerfully to materialism. The only way for the soul to prevail is to have constant reminders of what our purpose is this world is, and what we really want to achieve. Therefore, we are commanded to recite twice a day the *Shema* - a verbal proclamation of our acceptance of the yoke of Heaven

upon ourselves. We start off our day by donning one half of the *tefillin* on our arms, opposite the heart, to bind the heart to Hashem's will, and one on our head to bind the mind. On top of all this, we affix a *mezuzah* to the doorways of our homes, so that every time we walk in and out, we are reminded of our purpose in this world. If all this didn't do the trick, we wear *tzitzis* as part of our clothing all day, which serves as a constant, built-in reminder of the *mitzvos* we are obligated to perform. This is what the Talmud means when it says (Menachos 43b), "One who wears *tefillin* on his head and arm, *tzitzis* on his clothes and *mezuzah* on his door - it can be assumed that he won't sin." Let's take this one step further. The Talmud (ibid.) tells us that King David was in the bathhouse and, as he saw himself standing unclothed, he proclaimed "Woe unto me that I am without any *mitzvos* - no *tefillin*, no *tzitzis* and no *mezuzah*!" As soon as he remembered that he was circumcised, he was calmed. We see from this passage how far all this goes. We are surrounded by reminders, but we actually have a physical stamp on our body. Even if we have no other *mitzvos* on or around us, we still have a way of focusing on our loftiness and purpose.

Let us all open our eyes and focus on the message given to us by all these special *mitzvos*, and through this, we will all merit to achieve victory in the ultimate conflict, the struggle of the body and soul.

## Stories For The Soul

### Doctor's Orders

Rav Elazar Menachem Shach (1899-2011) was the leader of the Torah world for many years. He was renowned for his devotion to Torah study, despite the many responsibilities he bore on his shoulders. As Dean of the Ponovezh yeshiva in Bnai Brak, Israel, he would deliver a *shiur* (lecture) to the students every Tuesday. Come what may, he delivered the *shiur*.

It once happened that Rav Shach was ill, and the doctor examining him declared that he was too ill to deliver his weekly *shiur*.

Rav Shach replied that he must deliver the *shiur*, and if he could not walk, he would have his students carry him in on a chair. The doctor reiterated that he could not deliver the lecture, even if carried in by his students.

Undaunted, Rav Shach went to deliver his *shiur*, with the concerned doctor following close behind. For one hour, Rav Shach spoke, explained and argued in his enthusiastic, fiery fashion. After he finished and turned to leave, the doctor said, "According to normative medicine, the rabbi should not have been able to make it past the opening of his lecture. But what can I say? The rules of medicine simply do not apply to him."

In this week's parsha, Moshe tells the Jewish People of the importance of Torah study. Torah study is not just an ideal or a nice thing to engage in; it is the lifeblood of the Jewish People, and we must be prepared to sacrifice to ensure we continue to delve into its depths.

## Kollel Happenings

### SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM

Attention boys entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade and older! The Kollel is once again holding its Summer Night Seder for Bachurim at the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash. Sunday-Thursday, mincha 7:45 pm, followed by learning. Ma'ariv at 9:10 pm. Stipends available for boys who maintain the schedule. For info or sponsorship opportunities, please contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org).

### 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](http://www.denverkollel.org), email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### MOTZOEI SHABBOS NACHAMU KUMZITZ

Join the Kollel for an evening of inspirational singing this Motzoei Shabbos Nachamu, August 20<sup>th</sup>. The event will feature live music, refreshments and divrei Torah. The kumzitz will be held at the Joseph home, 1390 Tennyson St., at approximately 9:45 pm. For more information, please contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org).

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** In which year in Jewish history was the second *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple) destroyed? How many years ago was that?

**A:** There is a difference of opinion among the *Rishonim* (medieval Torah authorities) whether the second *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed in Year 3828 or 3829 (from Creation). Since we are currently in year 5776, this should mean we are 1,948 or 1,947 years after the destruction. However, this is not correct! Our current method of counting includes the first (partial) year of Creation, while our reckoning of

the date of destruction is based on the Talmud's dates, which begin only with the first complete year after Creation (what we currently refer to as Year 2). So we are actually only 1,947 or 1,946 years since the destruction. (Sources: Tosafos, Avoda Zara 9b, Pischei Teshuva, Even Haezer 127:16)

**This week's question:** Which one of the customs associated with the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash* continues until the end of the month of Av?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### The Maharil - Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Moelin - Part I

Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Moelin – know by the acronym Maharil, or *Moreinu* (Our Master) Harav Yaakov HaLevi, was born c. 1365 in Mainz, Germany. His father, Rabbi Moshe, was the rabbi of the Mainz.

Rabbi Yaakov initially studied under his father and his older brother, Rabbi Yekusiel. He later traveled to Vienna, where a number of great rabbis lived, and studied under Rabbi Shalom ben Yitzchak, known as the “*Sar Shalom*” (the Prince of Peace). Rabbi Yaakov married the daughter of another prominent Viennese rabbi, Rabbi Moshe Neumark. Rabbi Yaakov returned to Mainz in 1387 upon the passing of his father, and he succeeded him as the rabbi of Mainz.

Rabbi Yaakov headed a yeshiva in Mainz which attracted many students. He was beloved by the members of the community, as evidenced by the following story:

At one point, Rabbi Yaakov fell ill, and was bedridden with little hope for recovery. The community members accepted upon themselves to fast every Monday and Thursday (propitious days for penance) until Rosh Hashana as a

merit for their leader's recovery. Rabbi Yaakov did indeed survive, and he recovered before Rosh Hashana even arrived. Nonetheless, his congregants continued fasting Mondays and Thursday until Rosh Hashana.

In addition to serving as the rabbi of Mainz, Rabbi Yaakov also served as the *chazzan*, and he led the prayer services in that capacity. He composed many melodies for the prayers, some of which were still in use in pre-World War II Mainz. He also composed *piyutim*, liturgical poems that were recited as additions to the regular prayers. Despite his innovations, Rabbi Yaakov was a strong advocate of not changing the traditional texts or melodies that were already in use.

Rabbi Yaakov served as rabbi of Mainz for nearly forty years. Toward the end of his life, he was invited by the city of Worms to become the rabbi there and to help rebuild what was once a flourishing Jewish community. Rabbi Yaakov accepted, and he served there for about a year, until his passing in 1427.