



Vayeshev 5776

December 4, 2015

A Taste of Torah

All and Nothing

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

In case you haven't noticed, election season is well underway, and we are presented with people running for office who think they're G-d's gift to the world. But what does it really take for G-d to associate Himself with a human?

The gemara (Sotah 10b) states that there were two notable individuals, Yosef and Yehuda, who had letters of G-d's four-letter Name, the Tetragrammaton, incorporated into theirs. Yosef, says the gemara, overcame the enticements of Potiphar's wife, thus sanctifying G-d's Name in private, and merited to have the letter *hei* of G-d's Name added to his, as he is referred to as Yehoseif in Psalms (81:6). Yehuda, who publicly sanctified G-d's Name when he admitted that Tamar was innocent, and that he was the father of her unborn child, merited all four letters of G-d's Name.

Rabbi Gedaliah Schorr (1910-1979) asks the obvious question: while Yosef had a letter added to his name later, based on his actions, Yehuda's name was unchanged from birth; those letters were part of his name from the start!

Rabbi Schorr explains that the life missions of Yosef and Yehuda took two divergent paths. Yosef's challenge was to overcome temptation and remain pure and free of sin through his own efforts. Until he reached the point in his life when he reached a great level of righteousness, G-d's Name could not be incorporated into his.

Yehuda, on the other hand, had a very different mission in life: he needed to sacrifice his own ego before G-d, and recognize that all that he had came

from G-d. Yehuda's greatness lie not so much in what he achieved through his efforts but, rather, in his ability to submit himself completely before G-d. The very name Yehuda comes from the word *hoda'ah*, admission. It was given by his mother Leah as she expressed that she had received more than she deserved. Since the name Yehuda does not require achievements but, rather, is an expression of self-abnegation before G-d, it was unnecessary to wait for Yehuda to earn accolades that would entitle him to the name; that would contradict the entire idea behind the name! The only question remaining was whether he could live up to his name. By publicly admitting that he, not Tamar, was at fault, he lived up to that task.

The great Chassidic rebbi, Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha (1765-1827), commented that a Jew must walk around with a piece of paper in each pocket. One paper must say, "The world was created for me," while the other paper must say, "I am but dust and ashes."

Both Yosef and Yehuda became leaders, each one meriting that station due to their excellence in their respective roles. While some people out in the world believe they have what it takes by dint of their wealth, talents or brains, as Jews we recognize that a very different road leads to greatness. Both Yosef's charge of succeeding through personal efforts and Yehuda's duty of nullification of self are integral parts of sanctifying G-d's Name throughout our lives.

Stories For The Soul

Strings Attached

based on a story by Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

Zevulun* was in the sewing accessory business in Lucerne, Switzerland. His son, Daniel*, was an intelligent young man with a knack for the business world, and, at seventeen, he was brought into the business. At one point, Daniel took a week-long trip to Locarno, a five-hour train ride from Lucerne. The morning after Daniel left, Zevulun noticed that while Daniel had taken his tefillin with him, he had left his tallis behind. Wearing a tallis during prayers is a custom for many unmarried boys and men of German descent, and Zevulun was not sure if the tallis had been left by mistake or deliberately due to the lack of importance his son may have felt toward the custom.

Zevulun immediately appointed an employee to tend to his business, and he took a train to Locarno. He soon arrived at his son's hotel room; Daniel was quite shocked to see his father, and inquired if everything was okay.

Zevulun assured Daniel that all was in order, but told him that he had forgotten something at home.

"What did I forget?" said Daniel. "Perhaps an important document, or a sample?"

"No, you forgot this!" replied his father, handing him the tallis.

"You travelled all the way here to give me my tallis?!" said Daniel incredulously.

Zevulun said no more. He removed the tallis from his briefcase, gave it to his son and bid him goodbye.

Rabbi Mordechai Schwab, who knew the story, once related it to Rabbi Naftali Zev Leibowitz, and expressed how remarkable it was to make such a long trip just for a tallis. Rabbi Leibowitz replied, "That is not why he made the trip! He made the trip for generations. His descendants will treasure the custom of wearing a tallis!"

Yosef was sent into the spiritual morass of Egypt at the young age of seventeen. During his time there, he overcame numerous challenges, largely due to the strong spiritual influence his father, Yaakov, had imbued in him.

**name has been changed*

Kollel Happenings

FAMILY FUN AT JEWISH FAMILY EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25TH

Join the Kollel for family fun at the annual Jewish Children's Extravaganza on Friday, Dec. 25th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: \$15. Admission includes unlimited rides. Visit www.mazeltot.org to find out how to join for free until 12/23. For general information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

WINTER GARDENS WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT JAN. 12

The Kollel Women's Division is excited to announce that its 4th annual Women's Wellness Workshop will be held on Jan. 12, 2016. Winter Gardens Women's Night Out will feature bestselling author and keynote speaker Debra Fine, *Sense-ational: An Exhilarating Experience Engaging Each of the Five Senses*, great food and camaraderie, and other delights to help you achieve health in mind, body and soul. For more info, contact info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Why is *kaddish* recited on Shabbos morning before the *maftir* reading?

A: There is a halachic uncertainty regarding whether the seven *aliyos* of Shabbos include *maftir*. Although essentially, we rule that seven including *maftir* suffices, we add another *aliyah* to satisfy all opinions. In order to demonstrate that this final *aliyah* is not really required, *kaddish* is recited

following the first seven *aliyos*, signifying the end of the Torah reading, and we then add the *maftir aliyah*, which usually consists of the final verses read previously.

This week's question: When is *kaddish* recited after the entire Torah reading, but before the reading of the *haftarah*?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbeinu Gershom Me'or Hagolah – Part IV

continued from last week

During one of their conversations, Rabbi Gershom and Basil discussed the wondrous throne of King Solomon. Basil, familiar with Rabbi Gershom's skill as a goldsmith, pleaded with Rabbi Gershom to construct a similar throne for him. Though he tried to demur, insisting that he could not vouch for the honesty of the workers who would have to assist him in such a huge project, Basil left Rabbi Gershom with little choice, and the throne was made. Basil was thrilled with his throne, and the courtiers in the palace were duly impressed. But John, the anti-Semite, was green with envy, and continued to plot Rabbi Gershom's downfall. He insisted to Basil that his Jewish friend had certainly pocketed some of the gold used in the construction of the throne. Though Basil refused to hear of it, John's constant badgering eventually led the emperor to ask Basil how he intended to prove his claim. John responded that by weighing the throne against the weight of the gold and other materials supplied, any discrepancy could be determined. It was then that John realized he had no method by which to weigh such a large item!

In the meantime, Rabbi Gershom and his wife, Devorah, had been married for many years but had not merited children. Devorah encouraged her husband to take a second wife, with whom he

would hopefully have children. Rabbi Gershom took another wife, but she was more concerned with gaining prestige at the royal court. Aware of the emperor's predicament of weighing the throne, she convinced her husband to tell her how to do so – through water displacement. She duly gave the information over to John, who had the throne placed in a boat in the harbor. When the rise in water level did not match the rise caused by the amount of gold supplied by Basil, Rabbi Gershom was summarily arrested, his protestations that the workers had pocketed the missing gold ignored.

Due to their friendship, the emperor decided not to execute Rabbi Gershom; instead, he imprisoned him in a tower in a remote location, without food or water.

As he sat in the tower one dark night, he suddenly heard the voice of his wife Devorah, calling out to him. Rabbi Gershom went to the window of the tower and instructed her to tie a long, thin cord to an insect, which would then climb the tower wall. Once he had the cord, he had Devorah tie a thicker cord to it, which he hauled up to his cell. To this cord, she tied a thick rope, which he used to escape from the tower. The two of them fled back to Mainz, where he eventually became the head of the yeshiva.

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