



# A Taste of Torah

## Keeping It in the Family

By: Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Death. It's not something most people like to face or think about, but, along with taxes, we need to deal with it and prepare for it. One major area of preparing for the inevitable is bequeathing one's possessions. And while many secular societies allow a person to write a will and decide who will receive his worldly materials, the Torah, in this week's parsha, lays down the law as to whom inherits whom in the family. One may not change the order specified. There are ways to work around it, such as giving away possessions while one is still alive, but even if one does want to do so, Torah law states that is still not proper to reroute all of one's material possessions away from the Torah's designated heirs – even if they aren't the greatest people. Our Sages explain that even if the heir him/herself isn't worthy, he or she may have descendants who will be worthy recipients of the possessions. All this begs an explanation: Why can't I do what I see fit with my money? Why does the Torah demand that I leave it to specific people?

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953) explains that the idea of inheritance is not merely a means to decide where a deceased individual's possessions should go. Rather, we need to realize that when Hashem bestows a person with something, whether money, material goods or land, He has done so because He wants the recipient to achieve something spiritual with it. If a person passes on without having used that which Hashem has given him, the potential remains untapped; the question now becomes, who is best suited to bring the spiritual potential

that lies within the physical items amassed during the course of a lifetime?

The most reasonable place, says Rabbi Dessler, is an heir. For just as close relatives tend to share physical traits and personality, due to their common genetic makeup, their spiritual DNA is also closely related. The spiritual purpose one person is given by G-d in life, therefore, tends to be shared among close family members. And, by extension, the potential latent in material goods that was meant to be realized through one family member ought to now be expressed through his closest heir.

It emerges that passing on possessions is not a random selection of a lucky winner. It is, rather, a means for an individual's spiritual mission to be carried on by his heirs. The Torah does not allow tampering with this system, nor is it proper to try and work around it completely. Even if an heir is not suited for the spiritual mission at hand, it is possible that the heir will produce a child who is suitable, thus allowing the items to realize their full spiritual potential – within the family.

An idea like this should give us serious pause to reflect on how we view our material possessions. Are they merely "toys" through which we can have life, liberty and the endless pursuit of the ever-elusive happiness? Or are they a means to a much higher calling – real spiritual achievement, connection with G-d, which brings true satisfaction? The Torah, by setting up a very detailed system of laws of inheritance, teaches us to focus on the latter.

## Stories For The Soul

### Recalibrating the Compass

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk (1730-1788), with his colleague Rabbi Avraham Kalisker, emigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1777, along with 300 chassidim. After some time, one of his chassidim approached him with a dilemma. He has thought that upon arrival in Eretz Yisrael, he would have an easier time serving G-d, yet the opposite was occurring – it was more difficult!

Rabbi Menachem Mendel replied, "You're making a mistake. When you lived outside of Eretz Yisrael, your Divine service was tainted by pride. Since there was a vested interest in this service, you didn't feel the difficulties involved. But now that you are in the Holy Land, you have achieved a higher level of self-awareness and humility. You thus sense the lack of your service, and that is why it feels more difficult."

In this week's parsha, the daughters of Tzelofchad asked that they receive their father's share in Eretz Yisrael, as he had left no sons. Their interest was not merely to own a piece of real estate, but to be able to attain the spiritual greatness that every Jew can achieve by being a part of Eretz Yisrael.

## Kollel Happenings

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

### INSIDE THE NUMBERS

In Judaism, numbers are not simply a way to count things. Every number has a special significance. From gematria to Who Knows One? recited at the end of the Passover Seder, discover the world of numbers with Rabbi Moshe Heyman of the Denver Community Kollel. Every other Thursday from 2-3 pm Marathon Investments, 6565 South Dayton St., #1200. For more info, contact [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

### OUT OF THE ASHES: UNDERSTANDING SHABBOS NACHAMU

Gain a greater appreciation and understanding of Shabbos Nachamu, as Rabbi Fleisher delivers the final class of a three-part series focusing on the Tisha B'Av period. For men and women at Aish Denver, Monday night at 7:45 pm. For more info, please contact Rabbi Fleisher [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org)

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** What halachic stringency applies to half-Hallel but not to whole-Hallel, and in what way is it more lenient?

**A:** If one is in middle of *pesukei d'zimrah* and the congregation is reciting half-Hallel, one should recite it along with them (see Mishnah Berurah 422:16). This is not true for whole-Hallel. On the other hand, half-Hallel has a leniency, for although there are only a few situations where one may interrupt Hallel recitation,

there are more instances where this is permitted for half-Hallel.

**This week's question:** When one is required to buy at certain junctures during the prayers, one is supposed to do so to the extent that the "knots" of the spine protrude from the back. What is a situation where one is supposed to only bow slightly?

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

## Ask the Rabbi

### Ship-Shape for Shabbos

Gershon Minkow, Jerusalem

Dear Rabbi,

My family is planning its second family reunion for 1998, and they are considering having it on a small cruise ship (probably 100-200 people) over a weekend. If the ship were to take off on Thursday or Friday, would it be permissible to stay on it over Shabbos? Thank you for your response.

Dear Gershon,

The Talmud states it's forbidden to set sail within three days of Shabbos. The commentaries offer many explanations for this rabbinic prohibition. The Shulchan Aruch cites the reason offered by Maimonides, that there is a concern that one might become seasick and this will interfere with the celebration of Shabbos. It generally takes three days to 'get your sea legs.'

The Talmud, however, permits one to leave on a ship even within three days, if one is traveling for the purpose of a mitzvah. Some authorities rule that

in this regard, traveling for business or to visit a friend is considered a mitzvah, because it's a mitzva to provide for your family and to strengthen your bonds of love and friendship. Visiting your family is certainly no less of a mitzvah than visiting a friend.

Furthermore, ships today are more stable than they used to be and motion sickness is less likely. Based on this, Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, shlita, permits traveling on such a ship within three days of Shabbas.

So if your family plans a weekend cruise, you're on 'solid ground' if you participate. Just don't rock the boat.

Sources:

-Tractate Shabbos 19a

-Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 248

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