

# A Taste of Torah

## Order from the Court

By Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

The mishna in Rosh Hashana (25a) relates a dramatic story. Rabban Gamliel the Prince established the start of the month of Tishrei on a specific day. Rabbi Yehoshua disagreed and calculated that the month began on a different day. The ramifications of this dispute were severe. The holidays that fall out in Tishrei – Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Sukkos – of that year would come out on different days based on the conflicting opinions.

One can only imagine what it would look like if half of the Jewish people observed Yom Kippur on one day and the other half of the people observed it on another day. Rabban Gamliel therefore sent for Rabbi Yehoshua. He commanded him to appear before him on the day Rabbi Yehoshua believed to be Yom Kippur carrying his walking stick and money belt – both strictly forbidden on Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Yehoshua was disturbed; the thought of desecrating the day he believed to be Yom Kippur was devastating. Rabbi Dosa comforted Rabbi Yehoshua by telling him that if he questions the ruling of Rabban Gamliel, then he may as well question all the decisions of all the Rabbinical Courts since the days of Moshe Rabbeinu. Rather, he (and we) must treat the Rabbinical Courts of every generation as if they were the court of Moshe himself. The story concludes with Rabbi Yehoshua arriving at Rabban Gamliel's doorstep carrying his walking stick and money belt on the Yom Kippur of his own calculations. Rabban Gamliel approached him,

kissed him and said, "Welcome, my teacher and my student. My teacher in wisdom, and my student, because you accepted my ruling."

At first glance, this mishna is difficult to understand. Rabbi Yehoshua apparently felt very strongly that Rabban Gamliel's court had erred. If so, what consolation was it to tell him that all the courts, back to the day of Moshe Rabbeinu, may have also made mistakes? This just compounds the problem; it doesn't solve it.

To answer this question, let's look in this week's Torah portion. The Torah tells us (Devarim 17:8) that if we have a matter of doubt concerning the law, we should travel to Jerusalem to consult with the Great Sanhedrin. We should then conduct ourselves according to what they tell us; "don't turn away from their word, not to the left and not to the right (Devarim 17:11)." Rashi comments on this verse, "Even if they tell you that right is left and left is right, listen to them." Even if you don't understand the ruling, you need to listen anyway.

To understand this verse, let's take a step back and look at the Torah in its entirety. There are numerous verses that are grammatically incorrect or ambiguous; for example, what acts are in the category of forbidden work on Shabbos? The Torah is replete with such questions. We must conclude that G-d gave the Written Torah along with an Oral Tradition, explaining and adding to the Written Torah, as well as a body of methods to decipher the Written Torah. (This general topic is beyond the scope of

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## Stories For The Soul

### Close, but No Cigar

The Imrei Emes (Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, the Gerrer Rebbe; 1866-1948) was once approached by a *chassid* of his. The man told his Rebbe that he was travelling to Paris on business, and he had come to say goodbye before leaving. The Imrei Emes said to the man, "I have heard that they have top-quality cigars in Paris. Can you please bring me a box of those cigars?" The man assured his Rebbe that he would bring the cigars with him.

Sure enough, the fellow forgot to obtain the cigars. As he sat on the train on his return home, he suddenly remembered his promise. At a stop in Belgium, the man got off the train, purchased the best cigars he could find, and continued his trip home. Upon returning, he brought the cigars to the Imrei Emes, apologizing, "Rebbe, I forgot to get the cigars in Paris, but I assure you, these cigars from Belgium are just as good!"

The Rebbe replied to the *chassid*, "Do you really think I need those cigars?! I asked you to purchase them because I wanted you, while in the spiritually decadent city of Paris, to remember that you have a Rebbe! And you forgot!?"

In this week's parsha, the Torah teaches us that we must bring our questions to the Torah authority of that time. In every generation, there are individuals sent by Hashem to serve as mentors and teachers for the Jewish nation. It is our responsibility to look to them for guidance at all times.

## Kollel Happenings

### A STICKING POINT: THE VACCINATION CONTROVERSY AT SEP. 2ND T4T

What is the Torah's view of vaccination? Is it optional, required, or perhaps frowned upon? Does the fact that others may be negatively affected by non-vaccination play a role? What about forcing individuals to become vaccinated? Join Noah Makovsky, M.D., and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they examine the issues. September 2nd, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### SYMBOLIC FOOD PLATTER FOR ROSH HASHANA

There is a widespread Rosh Hashana custom to eat simanim, foods that symbolize a good year. The Denver Community Kollel is proud to offer a simanim platter. For more info, or to order yours for just \$25, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org), visit the Kollel website at [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), or call 303-820-2855. Be sure to leave method of payment and contact information. Order deadline is September 5th.

### KOLLEL'S DONOR APPRECIATION EVENT SEP. 20TH

The Kollel will be holding its annual Donor Appreciation Event on Sunday, September 20th, 6:45 pm, at the home of Drs. Joel and Goldie Cohen, 12 Sedgwick Dr. Englewood, CO 80113. To RSVP please email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** On the seven Shabbosos between Tisha B'Av, we read special *haftarahs* known as the *Shiva Dinechemta* (the Seven of Consolation) that focus on consolement after the tragedies of Tisha B'Av. What part of our prayers are based on these seven *haftarahs*?

**A:** 1) During the *kedusha* prayer recited during the chazzan's repetition of

Shemoneh Esrei. 2) On Shabbos morning in *Av Harachamim*. 3) In the Motzoei Shabbos prayer of *Vi'yiten Licha*.

**This week's question:** : When do we mention verses of *K'suim* (Writings) followed by verses from *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and make note of the distinction?

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

## Ask the Rabbi

### Halacha and Philosophy

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have heard that Halacha is related to philosophy and you can learn philosophical ideas through Halacha, but I don't understand how, please help.

Dear Name@Withheld,

This is true. Here's an example: The Code of Jewish Law states the following: "It is customary to say to someone who has bought new clothing, 'May you wear it out and renew it.' And there are those who wrote that one should not say this for shoes or clothing made of leather, for if he does wear it out, another animal will have to be killed to make a new garment, and it states, 'His mercy is upon all His creations.' Now, although this reasoning is not conclusive, many people do not say this [blessing over leather shoes or clothing]."

That is the halacha. What is the philosophical lesson? Even though we

are allowed to use animals, we should nevertheless not celebrate their death. As Nachmanides says: The regulation of *shechita* (ritual slaughter), in all its details, is in order to reduce the pain that the animal registers, and it acts as a reminder that we are not dealing with things outside the law; they are not automatons devoid of life, but they are living beings.

This is just one of the examples of the connection between Jewish law and Jewish outlook. There are countless others. Perhaps the best exposition of this idea is found in a book called *Horeb*, by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Sources:

-*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 223:6 Rema  
-Nachmanides, *Deuteronomy* 22:6

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this article.)

The Ramban understands the commandment to listen to the Rabbinical Courts in Jerusalem as G-d entrusting the High Courts with the authority to explain the Torah. In the Ramban's words, "G-d gave us the Torah with the interpretation of the Sages as the intended meaning - with G-d intervening in miraculous fashion, to ensure that they don't make

mistakes." With this background, we understand Rabbi Dosa's statement, "If you question the authority of Rabban Gamliel's court, you can then question any of the Rabbinical Courts since the times of Moshe." If you don't recognize the courts as the correct tools for the final authority in understanding Torah, you have then frustrated G-d's plan that there be a central authority for interpreting the Torah.

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Denver Community Kollel: 1516 Xavier Street, Denver, CO 80204 Tel: 303-820-2855 Fax: 303-820-2806

Email: [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) Web: [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org)

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