

A Taste of Torah Tranquility Down Here?

By Rabbi Mordechai E. Fleisher

Ya'akov Avinu had a difficult life. Forced to flee his parent's home to escape the wrath of his brother Eisav's murderous intentions, exiled to his deceitful, treacherous uncle Lavan's house for twenty years, having his daughter abducted and attacked – not exactly an idyllic existence. And now, finally, twenty-two years after his forced departure, Ya'akov returns to his father.

At the start of this week's parsha, Rashi comments that Ya'akov, upon finally returning to his father, wanted nothing more than to relax and live a little bit. No, he didn't want to go skiing or get tickets to the Super Bowl. For Ya'akov, living it up meant being able to study Torah and serve Hashem undisturbed. But, alas, it was not to be; Yosef was sold into slavery by his brothers, who then told their father that Yosef had apparently been killed by a wild animal. And why, indeed, couldn't Ya'akov have his wish, some peace and quiet? Continues Rashi, the righteous attain tranquility in the Next World, not in this one.

Rashi's words require some explanation. It seems as if tzaddikim are undeserving of having a good life now, because all their reward is on hold until the Next World. And while it's definitely worthwhile to hold off on receiving one's reward until then, there are a number of individuals in our history who were exceptionally righteous, yet led a very fortunate existence here on Earth. How can this be? Wouldn't we expect such special people to suffer setbacks in this life so they can enjoy their eternal reward

in its fullness?

We're looking at this the wrong way. We presume that the "tranquility" and "suffering" being discussed are of the physical sort. Rabbi Akiva Eiger (1761-1837), however, explains that we are, in fact, discussing the worries that the righteous have regarding their fate in the World to Come. Because as long as a person is alive, he has the opportunity to do what is right, to grow closer to Hashem, and to earn a share in that world. And as long as a person is alive, the outcome is in doubt! Sure, one may have accomplished a tremendous amount, but perhaps more could have been done towards maximizing his potential. Perhaps there was a misstep along the way that slipped by unnoticed. The righteous, while certainly careful of the obligation to serve Hashem with joy, are never completely tranquil, because they are never assured of their place in the Next World. (Truth be told, none of us are – but most people tend to worry about matters that are far less important.)

Ya'akov, however, was an exception. He was guaranteed by Hashem that if the twelve tribes outlived him, he was assured that he would receive his portion in the Next World immediately without having to undergo any of the cleansing process of Gehinnom (Purgatory). As all of his sons were healthy, both physically as well as spiritually, Ya'akov had no reason to worry about his Olam Haba. But this is not a good state for a person to be in; it may lead one to slack off in his continued pursuit of perfection, a terrible thing even for someone of the stature of Ya'akov Avinu. The

Stories For The Soul

A Father's Love

A rabbi in Long Island was once approached by a young man to have kaddish recited for his recently departed father. Suddenly, the young man began showing up in shul and reciting kaddish. The Rabbi asked him what had changed.

"When I was growing up, my father never showed me any affection," the man explained. "One incident that epitomized this for me was when I was in fifth grade. We had a paper airplane contest in school. I worked hard to make a great airplane and wrote DAD on it with blue marker. The plane won 1st prize. I gave my dad the plane and told him I won. He didn't say a thing.

"That incident told me that my father didn't care a bit about me. When he passed away, I realized I had a kaddish obligation, so I came to you to arrange for someone else to say it.

"Yesterday I went to his office to clean out his desk, and I found the paper airplane. When I eyed the word DAD, a lump formed in my throat. At that moment, his secretary walked in and said, 'Your father used to stare intently at that plane with the exact same misty-eyed look you have now.'

"I realized that my dad cared about me all along," the man concluded. "He just didn't know how to show it. So today, I came to say kaddish for my dad."

Yaakov and Yosef were separated for 22 long years. Sometimes a father and son can be "reunited" even after death.

Adapted with permission from Shul-Week by Rabbi Baruch Lederman.

Continued on back

Kollel Happenings

FAMILY FUN AT CHILDREN'S EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25

Join the Kollel for family fun at the annual Jewish Children's Extravaganza on Sun., Dec. 25, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. For the first time ever, the event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: \$13. Admission includes unlimited rides. Visit www.mazeltot.org to find out how to join for free. For general information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



BAIS MEDRASH NIGHT OUT AT DAT

Join the Kollel for a night of Torah study for the whole family. Classes are being offered for men, women and boys on a variety of topics for a wide range of levels. 8-9 p.m., Tuesdays at DAT. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email rya@denverkollel.org



WEST SIDE NIGHT SEDER AT THE KOLLEL

Join the west side community for vibrant Torah learning at the Kollel. Sunday- Thursday, except Wednesday, learning from 8-9 p.m. followed by Ma'ariv. For chavrusas or other information, contact Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher at rmf@denverkollel.org or 303-820-2855

Interpersonal Issues Bal Tolin

Rent due at the completion of a rental for moveable (non-real estate) items, such as tables, chairs, or cars, is subject to bal tolin. This is true only if the rental is due after the rental is complete; if it is due prior to the rental's

completion, there is no bal tolin.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

A Taste of Torah

Continued from front

concern that one may lose it all must be a constant threat to drive a person to achieve greater heights. And to that end, Hashem brought about a situation where Ya'akov thought that one of his sons, Yosef, had departed from the world. Now, Ya'akov had to start worrying; perhaps he wouldn't merit the World to Come!

It is always rather ironic that it is the truly righteous who worry the most about whether or not they are living as they should. While we don't necessarily have to lose sleep over it, it behooves each and every one of us, at our level, to take some time and evaluate where we stand in our journey through life, and whether we are doing what's necessary to earn our share in the Next World.

Ask the Rabbi Chanuka in Color

Bob & Jeannie Roemmich wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

If one has a mixed colored set of small red, green, blue, and yellow Chanukah candles, does it matter as to the order that they are placed in the menorah?

And from which side do you light them, as you look toward the menorah?

Dear Bob & Jeannie Roemmich,

There's no tradition regarding the color of the candles; so any color is okay, including plaid and infra-red! And the color order is up to you.

Although there are other customs, the most common one for placing the candles in the menorah is as follows: On the first day place one candle on the right side of the menorah. On the second day put a candle there and another one to the left of it. On the

third day add the third candle to the left of those. And so on. Each night another candle goes on the left side of the last one.

But when lighting, you start with the new one, the one furthest on the left. You then move towards the right, lighting each one in order, the last candle being the one on the far right.

Note that the small colored Chanukah candles aren't long enough to use on Friday, because the candles must be lit before sunset and must remain alight for a half hour after dark. So Friday afternoon you should use big white Shabbat candles, or wicks and oil. The candles don't have to be placed in a menorah, but should be in a straight line.

Reprinted with permission of Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, www.ohr.edu

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z"l.

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

Email: info@denverkollel.org Web: www.denverkollel.org

To receive Torah Weekly by email, send an email to torah-subscribe@denverkollel.org