

# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Parshas Vayishlach

December 1, 2017

## A Taste of Torah Like Mother Like Daughter

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

In this week's parsha, we learn about the unfortunate abduction of Dina, the daughter of Yaakov. Rashi points out that when the Torah begins this story, it describes Dina as the "daughter of Leah." Why does the Torah portray Dina as the daughter of Leah if she was also the daughter of Yaakov? Rashi answers that it is due to the trait of "yatzanis," one who tends to put herself forward even when not wholly appropriate, which caused Dina to leave her home and explore the outside world. This trait was shared by her mother Leah, who, we find in last week's parsha, went out to Yaakov as he returned home to inform him that he would spend the night with her.

Rabbi Aharon Kotler (1895-1963), famed founder of Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood, offers an insight into Rashi's comments. The comparison that the Torah is making here is not to note a mere coincidence. It did not just happen to be that Dina "went out" just like her mother happened to have "gone out" to greet Yaakov. The fact that Dina acted in this way was a direct result of her mother's actions. All of the actions, thoughts, and words that a person engages in are not merely external experiences, explains Rabbi Kotler. These experiences are internalized. So internal, that they become a part of the person who engages in them and shape one's personality. These actions, thoughts, and words become so ingrained into that person's being and spiritual makeup that the qualities they create in the person can be passed down to future generations.

Rabbi Kotler illustrates this concept with a Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 71:5) that states that Leah engaged in the trait of *hodaya*, acknowledgement, when she named her fourth son Yehuda (based on the word *hodaya*) as an expression of acknowledgment to Hashem for granting her a fourth son. Leah therefore merited to have descendants who also excelled in this trait: her son Yehuda, who courageously admitted to being the father of Tamar's unborn child, thus saving her from death;

Dovid Hamelech (King David), who acknowledged and thanked Hashem (as expressed in his Psalms); and Daniel, who also declared his thanks to Hashem.

Leah's sister Rochel engaged in the trait of silence. This is most clearly evidenced when Yaakov came to marry Rochel after working for her father Lavan for seven years to earn her hand in marriage. Lavan tricked Yaakov and instead gave him Leah. Rochel knew of the deception but kept quiet, despite potentially missing her opportunity to marry Yaakov, so as not to embarrass Leah. Rochel therefore merited to produce masters of silence: Binyamin, who did not reveal the sale of Yosef; Shaul Hamelech (King Saul), who did not reveal that he had been anointed as king, and Queen Esther, who did not reveal her ancestry to Achashveirosh. The Medrash is clear that the traits displayed by Leah and Rochel were handed down and continued through their children. The actions that they engaged in became a part of them and carried over to their descendants.

Yet a third place where we see this phenomenon, points out Rabbi Kotler, is by the story of the Tower of Bavel. The Torah tells us that Hashem descended to see the city and tower that "the children of adam (lit., the man) had built." Rashi comments on the peculiar language, "the children of the man" - as opposed, wonders Rashi, to the children of donkeys and camels?! Rashi explains that this is an allusion to Adam himself, the first human, who denied the good that Hashem had given him by blaming his wife Chava for the sin of eating of the Tree of Knowledge. "So, too," says Rashi, "these denied the good, by rebelling against Hashem Who bestowed good upon them and saved them from the flood." Yet another example of how an action performed hundreds of years prior carried an effect to great-great-grandchildren generations later!

The message here is clear. The actions that we do, the words that we speak, and the thoughts that we think do not just

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

## Stories for the Soul

### An Honest Prayer

Based on a story on revach.net

Yaakov, a South African resident, went traveling in his car one day. As he drove, the car suddenly broke down; he barely had time to pull over to the side of the road. Emerging from the disabled vehicle, he found himself in a deserted industrial zone. He called a service to tow the car, but he knew it would take a long time for the truck to appear.

Yaakov waited and waited and dusk began approaching. He realized that it wouldn't be safe to remain in the abandoned area after dark; he would have to make his way to the main street and hail a taxi.

The closest main street was quite some distance away, and Yaakov realized he would need to traverse through some rather dangerous areas to reach his destination. With no choice, he locked his car and began his trek.

As Yaakov walked, wondering if he'd ever see his car again, he looked up and saw a giant man approaching him from a distance with a menacing look of hatred on his face. Yaakov made an intuitive decision to continue walking rather than turning around and fleeing, realizing that he would not be able to outrun the huge man.

The man drew closer, fists clenched. The dark street was completely empty. Yaakov continued walking, his whole body shaking from fear. He knew that a Jew is never alone, and he began mumbling verses from Psalms.

The man approached, looking right at Yaakov with a murderous gaze. But... he passed right by without touching him. Yaakov walked on and continued reciting Psalms. Finally, he reached the main street, and within a few minutes, he was in a taxi on the way home.

The next morning, Yaakov opened the newspaper and his blood froze once again. A picture of the very same man

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## Kollel Happenings

### 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 & Learn class on the weekly parsha at EDOS, 198 S. Holly St., at 12:00 pm. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! For more information, contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### SHOW THEM WHO'S BOSS: DEALING WITH UNETHICAL SITUATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Join neurosurgeon Fredric Sonstein, MD, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they discuss how to deal with ethical challenges in the workplace. This Wednesday, December 6, at 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights at Aish Denver (lounge area), 8:15-9 pm, for men and women.

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What city name 1) is mentioned hundreds of times in *Neti'im* and *Kesuvim* (Prophets and Writings), but never in Torah, and 2) in about 99% of its occurrences, its *K'ri* (read or pronounced version) is slightly different than the *K'siv* (written version)?

**A:** Yerushalayim. 1) The Torah refers only to "the Place which God will choose." Additionally, in Parshas Lech Lecha (14:18), the city of Shalem is mentioned, which according to the Sages (see Ramban *ibid.*) is Yerushalayim. 2) Yerushalayim is spelled without the second *yud* in all its 658 occurrences, with only a few exceptions (According to Mesorah, *Yirmiyahu* 26:18, there are five exceptions). The reason for

this is because it is a contraction of "Yeru" and "Shalem," and we preserve the original names (Tosafos, Ta'anis 16a), or because until our future redemption, the name is somewhat "missing" (Tzlach, Brachos 58a). For a practical discussion of whether to write Yerushalayim this way in halachic documents (such as *kesuba* or *get*), see Har Tzvi Even Haezer 127-28, Tzitz Eliezer 11:89 and Arzei Besamim, pg. 104.

**This week's question:** Most Shabbos mornings, the *maftir* (final *aliyah* in the Torah) repeats verses which have been read immediately prior to his *aliyah*. When else do we repeat the same verse(s) twice or thrice during one Torah reading?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Moshe Alshich, the Alshich Hakadosh - Part I

Rabbi Moshe Alshich, known as the Alshich Hakadosh (the Holy Alshich), is renowned for his work *Toras Moshe* on the Written Torah. He spent much of his life in Tzefas (Safed), and was part of the famed Tzefas community of

Kabbalists and Torah scholars who flourished during Tzfas's so-called Golden Era. He is one of a handful of great Torah personalities in Jewish history to be referred to as "Hakadosh," "the Holy."

## Stories for the Soul

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from the night before stared back at him from the front page. The front headline announced that a murder which had taken place the previous evening in the city's industrial zone. The man in the picture was the main suspect, and the police were asking anyone who recognized the man or had seen him in the area where the murder took place to come forward to testify.

Yaakov went to testify; his car, found in that very area, backed up his claim. After all the details were recorded, Yaakov had a request for the policemen before he returned home. He requested that they ask the criminal had not harmed him, only to murder someone else. The police officers

and Yaakov approached the cell, and the officers opened the door. After confirming that the prisoner recognized Yaakov, the officer asked him why he had not bothered Yaakov.

"If we had been alone, I wouldn't have hesitated to harm a Jew," he replied. But we weren't alone. Two armed guards were walking with him, one on the right and one on the left. How could I have gotten close to him?"

In this week's parsha, Yaakov is forced to confront his brother Eisav. Hashem sends *malachim*, angels, ahead of Yaakov to rough up Eisav and his thugs, ensuring that Eisav will be unable to harm Yaakov.

## A Taste of Torah

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disappear after we engage in them. They stay with us forever, as they become part and parcel of our being and shape who we are. And it doesn't stop with us. Our activities actually influence and shape the many following generations that come

after us. Let us live up to this awesome responsibility and do our best to better our actions and push away deeds that are less-than-desirable. Who we are and who our children will be depends on it.

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