

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Shemos

January 6, 2018

A Taste of Torah

The Gift of Persecution

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

One tends to view the fact that the Jews are not highly respected in today's world as a sad and unfortunate thing. If only we would be treated like all the other nations, some believe, that would be the best thing for us. However, if we study a section of this week's Torah portion carefully, we begin to understand that our belittled status is to our ultimate benefit.

Moshe was shepherding the sheep of Yisro. He guided the sheep far into the wilderness and arrived at the Mountain of G-d. An angel of G-d appears to him in a blaze of fire amid a thorn bush. Moshe wonders how it is possible that the fire is not consuming the bush. G-d then speaks to Moshe, instructing him to remove his shoes, for he is standing on holy ground.

The Medrash recounts that a non-Jew met Rabbi Yehoshua and asked him why G-d chose to appear to Moshe specifically in a thorn bush. Rabbi Yehoshua replied that it is to teach us that the Divine Presence is everywhere, even in a lowly thorn bush.

The Medrash continues that Rabbi Eliezer offered another approach. Just like the bush is the lowest of trees, so, too, the Jews were small, downtrodden and beaten in Egypt. It was due to their lowliness, concluded Rabbi Eliezer, that Hashem revealed Himself and redeemed them.

While it is certainly true that the Jewish People were oppressed in Egypt, Rabbi Eliezer seems to imply that this is the reason they were redeemed. Why was the lowly state of the Jewish Nation in Egypt a reason for their redemption?

The Shem Mishmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornshtain of Sochatchov; 1855 -1926) explains that the purpose of exile is to humble a person. Nothing is more humbling than being in a strange land, enslaved to a nation that shows you no respect, only scorn and derision. As soon as the message has hit home and one comes to the realization that Hashem is the only power in the universe and man on his own holds no power, redemption can begin immediately.

The biggest danger for the Jew is when he gets too comfortable in his place of exile and starts to feel as if he actually belongs here. If one looks through history, a pattern emerges; when the Jews started feeling too much at home in their host country, G-d's providence arranged for them to be exiled and persecuted once again.

Many wonder, how is it expected of our generation to bring Mashiach and the ultimate redemption. If the spiritual giants of previous generations could not bring it, what can we possibly do? If one understands that the purpose of a Jew in exile is to humble oneself, and ascribe all power and control to G-d, then one can, in this aspect, achieve the same as the Torah greats of previous generations. We may not be able to learn Torah and fulfill mitzvos at the level that they did, but we can humble ourselves all the same. The more the nations of the world make us feel like we don't deserve to exist, the easier it is for us to realize that we are not the ones in power, and everything is Hashem. If every Jew comes to this clarity, we can be assured that the ultimate redemption will be speedily on its way.

Stories for the Soul

Transforming

Based on a story on revach.net

Yair, a resident of Ramat Gan, had suffered many upheavals in his life. Many times, he had attempted to live his life as a fully-observant Jew. Inevitably, though, he would lose momentum and return to his old ways. Eventually, he completely separated himself from religious observance. His connections to fellow Jews in the field of outreach dissolved over time, as well.

One day, Yair suddenly came to an outreach professional and declared his firm commitment to immediately take on all facets of religious life. The outreach professional asked what had occurred to spur the sudden change. Yair told him that it all began that morning when he had passed the large landfill, Chirya, which had recently been undergoing a complete transformation. The area was being transformed into one of the largest parks in the entire Middle East, the South Ayalon Park.

Yair explained, "As I passed by Chiriya, I thought about this transformation, and suddenly I found myself thinking about the mountain of garbage which was still present in the area. I began to have doubts whether it was possible that a site which had become a symbol for refuse and filth could be transformed into a flowering garden. How could it be? These thoughts so affected me that I decided to enter the park and inquire how

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Kollel Happenings

CODE OF CONDUCT: CREATING BOUNDARIES IN THE WORKPLACE AT JAN. 10 T4T

Join Marc Cooper, President of Cooper Development, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel, as they discuss how to make the professional world a better place. Wednesday, Jan. 10, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfias Emes gives us a glimpse into the infinite depths of Torah and Jewish thought. Kollel Scholar Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky is an expert in this great work, and a master in bringing its timeless lessons into daily life. Join Rabbi Karnowsky on Thursdays, 8:15-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

THE LETTERS OF THE LAW: THE MELACHOS OF SHABBOS

Rabbi Shmuel Halpern received *semicha* (ordination) from Beth Medrash Govoha in 2016 and has spent the past four years receiving *shimush* (training in practical halacha) from Rabbi Micha Cohn of Lakewood. Rabbi Halpern now shares his halachic expertise in this weekly class that will help familiarize you with the laws of Shabbos. Monday evenings 8-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: The *Shir Shel Yom* (daily psalm recited each morning) is generally recited each morning at the end of *Shacharis*. What are exceptions to this rule?

A: 1) On Shabbos and Yom Tov, customs differ whether to recite the *Shir Shel Yom* after *shacharis*, after *mussaf*, or to delete it entirely. We will expound on these customs in the near future. 2) On Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, many communities recite the *Shir Shel Yom* before *shacharis*. This was likely instituted due to

time constraints later in the day. 3) On Tisha B'av, many communities recite the *Shir Shel Yom* at *mincha* (afternoon prayers). According to the Vilna Gaon, they are omitted entirely. (Sources: Ma'aseh Rav 200 and 216, Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 584:1, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 124:19)

This week's question: Which *Shir Shel Yom* (daily psalm recited each morning) is recited slightly differently than it was in the Temple?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz - Part I

Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz was born in Krakow, Poland in 1690. His father, Rabbi Nosson Nota, was appointed rabbi of Ivancice (Eibenschitz in German) in Moravia circa 1700. Rabbi Nosson Nota died a young man around 1702.

Young Yonasan was a child prodigy, and a wealthy Jew in Vienna initially

took the young boy in, undertaking to support him. Yonasan's mother, however, feared that the opulent surroundings would distract her son from his Torah studies, and she took him and settled in Prossnitz, also in Moravia. There, Yonasan studied in the yeshiva of Rabbi Meir Eisenstadt, author of the famed halachic work *Panim Me'iros*.

Stories for the Soul

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this transformation was taking place.

"Immediately upon entering the park, I met someone who introduced himself as the spokesman. He explained the details of the plan, and gave me a tour of the site. I saw the tractors and other heavy machines which were already digging at the site, preparing the earth for the trees and flowers which would be planted there.

"As I left the site, I knew that I was on the right path. I understood that Hashem had brought me here, to the site of Chiriya, to truly understand that such a repulsive place, completely

filled with garbage and refuse, can be transformed into a flowering park. If this is possible, then I, who was created in the *tzelem Elokim* (image of G-d), am also capable of transforming myself, even if I reek of sin. These thoughts propelled me directly from the garbage dump of Chiriya to the *bais medrash*."

The Jewish People in Egypt became very much assimilated into Egyptian life and culture. What saved them from being completely lost was their ability to preserve their identity, from which they could reattach and regrow themselves as G-d's Chosen Nation.