

# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Parshas Vayikra/Hachodesh

March 16, 2018

## A Taste of Torah

### For the Birds

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Ever wonder why everyone loves the underdog? It's nothing new. In fact, the idea is sourced in the Torah itself. The Talmud (Bava Kamma 93a) states, "One should rather be the pursued than the pursuer, for there are no birds more pursued than pigeons and doves, and the Torah validates them for offering upon the Altar." The Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Yehuda Loew; 1512/1526-1609) points out that this idea applies to the other animal sacrifices, as well. The larger animals that the Torah allows to be offered as a *korban* (sacrifice) – sheep, goats, cattle – are also among the most hunted creatures on the planet.

Now that we've established that this human emotion of rooting for the underdog is perfectly normal and acceptable, even admirable, according to Judaism, we still need to understand why this is so. Why do people despise the team that always wins? Why does the David-type character steal our hearts while poor Goliath is always left to topple?

The Maharal explains that we live in a physical world, and the idea of offering an animal sacrifice is to elevate a very physical being to a higher plane, separating it from the corporeal existence that has defined it until now. However, says the Maharal, something which is too connected to this physical world simply cannot be brought upon the Altar - it is so much a part of this world that it cannot escape the pull of the earth from whence it came by its being offered up to G-d as a *korban*.

Very enlightening, to be sure, but how do we determine what creature is too much a part of this world and which is

not? The Maharal continues that the more success and power something has in this world, the more it is identified with the material existence it is mired in. Thus, concludes the Maharal, the pursuer, which seems to reign supreme over its victim, is inferior for that very reason – its victory in the moment spells its doom in the long run, for its success in this world means it will remain chained to the earth, unable to rise above it.

The animal that is pursued, on the other hand, has little in this world. It is far less physical than its aggressive nemesis, and is therefore fit to be brought as a sacrifice, whereby it transcends the limits of its earthly environs.

While we can debate whether a lovably losing sports franchise is more spiritual than its successful-but-despised opponent, there are other, far more relevant lessons to be culled from the Maharal's words. Society, deliberately or subconsciously, uses material success as the benchmark of someone who is to be respected and admired. Wealth, power and fame are the ambitions of many, for these things are seen as the hallmark of someone who has succeeded in life. Very true, if your goal in life is to be as far from G-d as possible. Yes, some measures of material success contain great potential to do great good. But, in of themselves, they pose a great danger, for they can pull a person away from spiritual growth. Let's take a lesson from the pigeon and dove – be the underdog.

Because Torah Is for Every Jew

## Stories for the Soul

### An Honest Living

based on a story in The Jewish Observer

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky (1891-1986), one of the great leaders of Torah Jewry in America for many decades, began his career in America in 1937 as a fundraiser for a yeshiva.

One of his stops was the Manhattan office of a manufacturer. Reb Yaakov produced a copy of the receipt for the previous year's donation, and then took a seat in the waiting room. After an unusually long delay, the manufacturer returned with a check made out for a smaller amount than the receipt had recorded for the previous year.

"It's really the same as last year's contribution," explained the manufacturer.

"But the receipt is for a larger amount."

"Yes, I know. It was purposely done that way by your office in the hope that I might duplicate that amount this year, but I knew that I had given less, so I checked my records. The amount on the check is correct."

Reb Yaakov was shocked. "I will not work for an institution that runs a dishonest office."

As he got up to leave, the contributor stopped him. "Here, take the check in the meantime."

"No, I am no longer the yeshiva's agent, as I resigned a minute ago. I am not authorized to accept monies on its behalf."

The manufacturer was dumb-struck. "Don't you have a family to support?" he asked.

"Yes, a wife and six children." "Then take this," said the man, whipping out \$200 from his wallet.

Reb Yaakov shrank

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## Kollel Happenings

### HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org) or email [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.

### LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** What other *halachos* apply to providing food for non-humans (livestock, pets or fish)?

**A:** 1. There is a halachic obligation to provide for one's animals before one's own meal. According to many authorities, one may drink before providing for one's animals. 2. One may not feed them *chametz* on Pesach since the owner is now benefiting from the *chametz*. This includes *chametz* not owned by a Jew. There is a halachic debate whether one may sell their pets to a non-Jew for the duration of Pesach. 3. One may not feed animals on Shabbos if they are not reliant on the person to do so. For example, feeding stray cats or loose ducks is not permitted. The Mishna Berurah

permits feeding another Jew's animal on Shabbos. 4. According to many authorities, one should not feed food fit for human consumption to animals. 5. If the food contains produce grown in Eretz Yisroel, one may be required to separate *terumos* and *ma'asros* (tithes) before feeding it to pets.

Sources: 1. Mishna Berurah 167:40 2. Ibid. 443:6, 448:33 3. Biur Halacha 324:11 4. Mishna Berurah 171:11 5. Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 331:88.

**This week's question:** How is it possible that through the action (not speech) of one Jew, he or she is forbidden to eat the food item involved, but others are still permitted to do so?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz - Part XI

It is not clear exactly who heard arguments in the case, but Rabbi Eybeschutz's innocence was established. Interestingly, Rabbi Eybeschutz was represented in the court by an apostate Jew named Carl Anton. Anton's real name was Moshe Gershon HaKohein, and he was an old disciple of Rabbi Eybeschutz's; he now returned to defend his former teacher. Following the decision of the

*Va'ad Arbah Aratzos*, the furor died down. In 1757, Rabbi Eybeschutz was confirmed once again as the rabbi of the three communities.

It is important to note that Rabbi Eybeschutz and Rabbi Emden were two very great Torah scholars and pious, G-d fearing individuals. Rabbi Emden felt he needed to speak out against what he perceived as a serious issue of heresy in the Jewish community.

## Stories for the Soul

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back. "I don't accept gifts." "It's a loan. Until you get another job." "Thank you kindly, but G-d will provide. I do not need a loan," Reb Yaakov returned his portfolio and lists to the yeshiva office. The following day, he bumped into an old colleague from his days as a student in the Slabodka Yeshiva in Europe, Reb Alter Poplack, who recommended him for the position

of interim rabbi for the Congregation Bikur Cholim in Seattle. Reb Yaakov took the position, and eventually grew to become one of the preeminent Torah authorities in the United States. The Torah teaches us that one may not bring a *korban* (sacrifice) from stolen goods, because such a thing is detestable in the eyes of Hashem. Noble intentions are no excuse for dishonest conduct.