

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Shemini

April 13, 2018

A Taste of Torah

Timeless Actions

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

Moshe commands Aharon to bring special sacrifices on his and the Jewish Nation's behalf in anticipation of the revelation of the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) at the joyous occasion of the inauguration of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The Medrash (Toras Kohanim) asks, why did the sacrifice on behalf of the Jewish People - a calf and a sheep for an *olah* offering, and a goat for a sin offering - outnumber Aharon's sacrifices, which consisted of only a calf for a sin offering and a ram for an *olah* offering. The Toras Kohanim explains that the Jewish nation needed atonement for a "sin of the beginning" as well as a "sin of the end." The sin of the beginning is the sale of Yosef, which the Tribes concluded with the dipping of Yosef's coat in the blood of a goat to convince their father Yaakov that Yosef had been killed by a wild animal. The end refers to the sin of the Golden Calf. The male goat, explains the Medrash, would atone for the action with the goat (the dipping of Yosef's coat in its blood), while the calf would atone for the sin of the Golden Calf. Aharon, however, only needed atonement for his involvement in the sin of the Golden Calf.

This Medrash is rather cryptic. What is the connection between the sale of Yosef and the sin of the Golden Calf? Also, what is the meaning of the statement that the sin of the sale of Yosef is the beginning, and the sin of the Golden Calf is the end? Rabbi Tzadok HaKohein of Lublin (1823-1900), in his work *Pri Tzadik*, offers a revealing explanation. The sin of the Golden Calf was a product of the slavery of the Jewish Nation in Egypt. The ways of idol worship, an integral part of the Egyptian culture, had, over time, seeped into the consciousness of the Jewish Nation. Unfortunately, as is clear from other Medrashic sources, idol worship became common amongst the Jewish

Nation while they were in Egypt. Thus, the sale of Yosef, which led to the descent of the fledgling Jewish Nation to Egypt, was in essence the cause and the beginning of the sin of the Golden Calf! This is what is meant by the beginning and end. The sale of Yosef, which occurred hundreds of years prior, was the beginning of the sin of the Golden Calf, which happened in the end, more than two centuries years later. The Jewish Nation was being held accountable for the sale of Yosef not merely due to the kidnapping and sale of one of the Tribes, but due to the idol worship which developed because of that sale.

The following amazing story appears in the book *Echoes of the Maggid* (Artsroll/Mesorah Publications) written by Rabbi Paysach Krohn. In 1983, the rabbi of the Young Israel of Dallas, Rabbi Aryeh Rodin, was approached by a stranger. To Rabbi Rodin's surprise, the stranger, a man named Leonard, who seemingly had no connection to Orthodox Judaism, informed him that he would like to make a donation to the Young Israel. Expecting that Leonard would make a small donation, Rabbi Rodin was astonished when Leonard handed him a check for \$3,000! The surprised Rabbi Rodin asked Leonard what had prompted him to make such a large contribution to an institution that he had never been affiliated with. Leonard explained, "I had never heard or experienced anything about Orthodox Judaism until a recent trip to Israel. I saw all the sights in Israel, including, of course, the Western Wall. When I got to the wall, I closed my eyes and offered a silent prayer. After I opened my eyes, I noticed a Yerushalmi Jew deep in prayer. The sight of this special man, wrapped in his *tallis* and *tefillin*, as he prayed with such fervor to his Father in Heaven, left an indelible impression upon my soul. I knew that I wanted to have a connection

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Stories for the Soul

No One-Upmanship

The Bostoner Rebbe was renowned for his outreach efforts to unaffiliated Jews, as well as his efforts in keeping those who returned to their roots grounded during their process of growth.

A man once related to the Bostoner Rebbe that he doesn't eat a steak unless he first washes over bread. The man explained that a steak was such an enjoyable experience that he felt it improper to simply make the standard *shehakol* blessing before eating and the short *borei nefashos* blessing following his gastronomic experience. By washing over bread, he would now be obligated to recite the lengthy *birchas hamazon* blessings after eating the steak, a far-more-worthy method of thanking G-d for His goodness.

The Rebbe told the man that he was making a mistake. Our Sages instituted blessings, he explained, and they knew full well the value of a good cut of meat. Nonetheless, they instituted a mere *shehakol* and *borei nefashos*; they obviously felt this is sufficient. We, concluded the Bostoner Rebbe, have no business second-guessing our Sages.

In this week's parsha, Nadav and Avihu die by a Heavenly fire after bringing in an incense offering of their own volition, without being commanded to do so. Taking the initiative has its place, but one must recognize limits when engaging in mitzvah performance and not assume that more is necessarily better.

Kollel Happenings

LEARN-A-THON & SIYUM ON MAY 13TH

Join the communal completion of an entire tractate of Talmud in the course of one hour of Torah study! Men, sign up and study a preassigned section of a tractate with a class or chavrusah. Women, sign up and attend a special study session. Visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org, or call 303- 820-2855.

THE LETTERS OF THE LAW: THE MELACHOS OF SHABBOS

Kollel Scholar 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.

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 or email info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: How many verses are there in the Torah and where is the mid-point?

A: The Gemara (Kidushin 30a) states that there are 5,888 verses, with the mid-point in Parshas Tazria (13:33). In many Chumashim, however, there is a

Masoraic (Oral Tradition) note noting the mid-point in Parshas Tzav (8:8) and the verse count at 5,845.

This week's question: What is a practical halachic calculation based on where the mid-point of the Torah's verses are?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, the Noda BiYehuda - Part II

Yechezkel Landau was born in 1713 in Opatow, Poland to Rabbi Yehuda and Chaya Landau. His father was a Torah scholar in his own right. Rabbi Yehuda Landau was also a wealthy man who was the president of the Opatow Jewish community. In addition, he served as deputy on the Va'ad Arbah Aratzos, the Council of the Four Lands, which, as discussed in previous articles, was a governing body of four major Jewish areas of settlement.

Young Yechezkel studied under a local scholar, Rabbi Yitzchak of Ludmir. At age 14, he was sent to the city of Brody to study. Brody was a city of many Torah scholars, and Rabbi Landau remained there for four years. At age 18, he married Leibe, the daughter of a wealthy Jew known as Yakelko, who lived in Dubno. The young couple was supported by Yakelko while Rabbi Landau continued his studies in his father-in-law's hometown.

A Taste of Torah

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with something so holy. When I returned to Dallas, I went to the Jewish owner of a bakery I knew, and I asked him, "Where can I find a synagogue where a person like this would be comfortable praying?" The baker directed me to the Young Israel of Dallas."

The meeting was the beginning of a long-lasting relationship between Leonard and Rabbi Rodin. Leonard and his family made great strides in their Judaism. His untimely passing was the impetus for a large donation by his family to rebuild and renovate the Young Israel. At Leonard's *shloshim* (thirty days after his passing), Rabbi Rodin told the aforementioned story and made the following amazing point:

Imagine when the Yerushalmi Jew observed at the Western Wall will go to Heaven after he passes on from this world. He will go before the Heavenly Tribunal and will be shown a picture of a strange family and an unfamiliar *shul*. "You will be rewarded for bringing this family and its

future generations to Judaism," he will be told. "You shall be rewarded for building this beautiful *shul* and for all of the prayers, learning and outreach done within it. You will be rewarded for all of the families whose commitment to Judaism became stronger because of this *shul* that you built!" The Yerushalmi Jew will have no idea what the Heavenly Tribunal is talking about, but he will surely be rewarded for the enormous effect that he had upon so many people!

This is the message we learn from the sacrifices of Klal Yisrael in this week's parsha. We carry the responsibility, along with amazing potential, of all of our actions. A misdeed done can have untold ramifications for years and generations later. A good deed can have an unimaginable effect on an untold amount of people, possibly even without our knowledge! Let us recognize the power of our actions and deeds and unleash their power, bringing ourselves and others closer to Hashem.

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