

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Parshas Behar-Bechukosai

May 11, 2018

A Taste of Torah

Nothing but the Truth

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman

When contemplating *Yetzias Mitzraim* (the Exodus), we typically think about the unbelievable miracles which Hashem performed for us when He redeemed us from Egypt. In this week's parsha, however, we are introduced to a completely new outlook on the redemption. This is found in regards to the prohibition of *ribbis*, lending money with interest. As the verse states (Behar 25:37-38), "You must not lend him your money with interest. I am Hashem, your G-d, Who brought you out from the land of Egypt."

Rashi is bothered by the obvious question as to what connection there is between lending money with interest and the Exodus from Egypt. To answer, he cites a passage in the Talmud (Bava Metzia 61b) that expounds on the words of the aforementioned verse, "I am Hashem, your G-d, Who brought you out from the land of Egypt." The Talmud explains that G-d is telling us, "When I took you out of Egypt, I distinguished between those who were firstborn and those who were not. I also distinguish and exact punishment from one who lends money to his fellow Jew with interest and falsely claims that the money belongs to a gentile." (Lending money to gentiles with interest is permitted.)

In the same vein, the Talmud explains two other verses which connect the redemption of Egypt with other mitzvos. The second is in regards to the prohibition of keeping accurate scales, where the verse states (Vayikra 19:36), "I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land

of Egypt." The Talmud expounds, "When I took you out of Egypt, I distinguished between those who were firstborn and those who were not. And I am the One Who can be trusted to exact punishment from one who [secretly] stores his weights in salt [to cause their weight to change] to cheat people."

The third is in regards to the strand of *techeiles* (wool colored blue by a dye extracted from a marine animal known as the *chilazon*) that is to be used as part of the *tzitzis* attached to the four corners of one's garment. In concluding the section of *tzitzis*, the Torah again states (Bamidbar 15:41), "I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt." And again, the Talmud explains, "When I took you out of Egypt, I distinguished between those who were firstborn and those who were not. So, too, I will identify and punish one who hangs a strand of *kala ilan* (a plant-based blue dye that looks like *techeiles*) and claims that this is *techeiles*."

Rabbi Shimon Schwab (1908-1995) offers a beautiful explanation to understand these passages. He says that the Exodus from Egypt was the ultimate demonstration of truth in the world. How is one supposed to know a firstborn from a non-firstborn? There is absolutely no physical way to make the distinction. The ability to discern who is firstborn and who is not is the ultimate display of clearing away the obfuscation and revealing the true origins of something. The Master of the Universe, by killing the firstborn, revealed Himself as the ultimate Source of truth.

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories for the Soul

No Return on Investment

based on a story on revaich.net

There was a money lender in Posen who ignored the Torah prohibition against usury and lent money with interest to other Jews. When this man passed away, the heads of the community refused to allow him to be buried in the town's cemetery unless his family paid an exorbitant sum.

The outraged family reported this to the city council, and the council ordered Rabbi Akiva Eiger (1761-1837), the Rov of the city, to their chambers to explain why the deceased and his relatives were being treated in this way.

Rabbi Eiger explained that under normal circumstances, the families of the deceased are asked to pay a reasonable sum for a burial plot. This, he explained, is because Jews believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the cemetery plots are therefore only being leased on a temporary basis. However, our Sages teach us that one who lends money with usury will not merit to be resurrected, and the plot of this man was not being leased but was being sold permanently; it was thus far more expensive.

The Torah warns us in this week's parsha - and elsewhere - against charging interest. It is a serious infraction, tempting though it isto do so.

Kollel Happenings

LEARN-A-THON & SIYUM ON MAY 13TH THIS SUNDAY

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 Tractate Beitza and Mo'ed Katan with a class or chavrusah. Women, sign up to take part in a special study session. Sponsorship opportunities available with all proceeds to go to Tomchei Shabbos of Denver. For more info, to sign up or to sponsor, visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855.

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.

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 and Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: We have quite a number of *targumim*, authoritative translations of *Tanach*. Who is the author of Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel?

A: The translation of *Nevi'im* (books of Prophets) with that name was authored by Yonasan Ben Uziel, in the Tannaitic era. The Gemara (Megillah 3a), however, implies that Yonasan Ben Uziel did not translate Torah itself. Many authorities assume the translation of Torah with that

name was not authored by Yonasan Ben Uziel, and is another version of Targum Yerushalmi. (For further reference, see *Shem Hagedolim*, Seforim, Tav, 96.)

This week's question: What is prohibited throughout the year, but may be permissible on the holiday of Shavuot?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, the Noda BiYehuda - Part VI

The yeshiva in Prague attracted many students, who flocked to learn at the feet of one of the greatest Torah authorities of the generation. One of Rabbi Landau's most famous students was Rabbi Avraham Danzig, who authored the well-known and much-used halachic work *Chayei Adam*.

As chief rabbi of Prague, Rabbi Landau became one of the most influential Jewish leaders of the time. He encouraged patriotism toward the government. During the Seven Years' War that engulfed Europe (1756-1763), he mobilized Jewish support of the government of Empress Maria Theresa, which ruled over Prague and the surrounding areas.

Until that time, the Empress had been quite anti-Semitic in her views and actions. She heavily taxed her Jewish subjects and even attempted

to have them expelled from her lands. The support of the Jewish communities during the war seems to have caused a reversal of her attitude toward them. At the war's end, the Empress visited Prague, where she accepted Rabbi Landau's blessings at an official reception. Her policies toward the Jewish communities under her rule underwent a transformation for the better, as well.

Rabbi Landau thus came into contact with numerous government officials. His intelligence, broad knowledge, and sage wisdom earned him great respect from these officials, many of whom occupied high ranks within the government. He was given the title of Chief Rabbi of the Austrian Empire. His close relationship with the government enabled him to do much good for his fellow Jews who lived throughout the empire.

A Taste of Torah

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Rabbi Schwab continues that these three mitzvos of *ribbis*, honest weights and *techeiles* share one common denominator: They all represent attempts to deviate from the truth.

The verses are teaching us that since Hashem is the essence of truth, He cannot tolerate anyone who deviates from the truth.