



A Taste of Torah

The King's Donkey

by Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Korach and his followers accuse Moshe of nepotism and greed. Moshe verbalizes his innocence and selflessness by saying, “*Lo chamor echad mehem nasasi,*” I haven’t taken (even) one donkey from them (the Jewish people!)” (Korach 15:16)

The Talmud (Megilla 9a) relates that the Jewish Sages were forced by King Ptolemy II to translate the Torah, for the very first time in history, into Greek. This is known today as the Septuagint. To minimize the chances of foul play on their part, Ptolemy separated the Sages during this project. Still, the Sages individually changed the text in several places which would have otherwise seemed blasphemous, strange or offensive. Miraculously, all the Sages came to the same conclusions and their translations were completely identical! One of those instances was our verse, where they switched the text to “I haven’t taken (even) one desired item from them.”

The need for the change is because this passage is, as Rashi (ibid.) explains, referring to Moshe’s original return to Egypt (Shemos 4:20) from Midyan, where Moshe and his family rode on a donkey from Midyan enroute to Egypt. Even the transportation expenses Moshe incurred on his return to Egypt to lead the Jews out were never billed to the Jewish Nation. The Sages were concerned that the verse may be misinterpreted to imply that Moshe didn’t take a donkey but would, in fact, take smaller items from the Jewish People.

Another explanation is given by Rabbi Chaim Berlin (1832-1912;

Chief Rabbi of Moscow; quoted by Iyun Tefilah, Otzar HaTefillos vol. 2 pg. 119). The Talmud (Bechoros 5b) relates that the Jews left Egypt with myriads of donkeys, a minimum of ninety loaded donkeys per person! The donkeys and their bountiful loads were the booty of Egypt that belonged to the Jewish People. Moshe, as their leader and king, was eligible to take a portion ahead of everyone else. Instead, he opted to forgo his portion entirely. He didn’t take any of the loaded donkeys for himself! Accordingly, the Sages wished to avoid the following question: Why was Moshe eligible for the riches of Egypt if his tribe (Levi) was not enslaved in Egypt? They therefore changed this verse to say that Moshe didn’t pilfer any of the Jews’ items for himself.

There is a fascinating point to ponder regarding our verse. In the *haftarah*, we read the story of Shmuel transferring the reins of power to Shaul, the first Jewish king. Shmuel expresses his displeasure with the people’s request for a king, saying, “Testify against me: Whose ox or donkey have I taken; from whom have I stolen or accepted bribery?” (Shmuel I, 12:3) It is eerily similar to Moshe’s statement in our parsha and was therefore chosen as the *haftarah* for this week’s parsha. The question begs to be asked; why was this chosen as the appropriate portion of *Navi* (Prophets) to sum up and highlight the parsha best? Isn’t *Navi* full of cases of rebels challenging leaders (Avshalom rebelling against his father King David, for example) and the specialness of the *Kehunah* (Priesthood), the uniqueness that was

continued on back

Stories for the Soul

Not Worth It

based on a story on achim.org

Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (1892-1953), one of the great *mussar* personalities of the past century, served as the leader of the Gateshead Kollel during the 1940s.

Rabbi Dessler once succeeded in obtaining what was then a very large contribution of £400. Subsequently, a representative of Gateshead Yeshiva solicited a contribution from the same benefactor, who responded that he had already given to the Kollel.

There was always some fear on the part of the Yeshiva that the Kollel would draw away money from the Yeshiva, and the matter created some tension.

The Vaad (board) of the Kollel voted not to return the gift on the grounds that it had been given personally to Rabbi Dessler. But Rabbi Dessler felt that the principle of avoiding any trace of dispute with the Yeshiva was more important than the money. He insisted that the gift that he solicited for his Kollel be handed over to the Yeshiva, and the Vaad of the Kollel complied.

This week’s parsha highlights the destructive power of *machlokes*, dispute. Whether or not one is right is often immaterial. The principle of maintaining peace outweighs standing up for many other principles.

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 and 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 or call 303-820-2855.

SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfas 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 general rule is that a derivative of a forbidden object is forbidden as well. Where do we have an exception to this rule?

A: Honey. The basis for the kosher status of honey is discussed by the Gemara (Bechoros 7b). The Gemara offers two explanations: One is that since bees do not secrete honey from their bodies but rather only convert the collected nectar, their honey is permissible. In its second opinion, the Gemara rules that there is a Scriptural exception which permits bees' honey. According to this opinion, honey from other insects is not included in

the Scriptural exception and is thus not kosher. Recently, there has been growing interest in a different bee product, royal jelly. This product is a secretion the worker bees produce as the unique diet of the queen-bee-designate. This product, exceedingly more expensive than honey, may be forbidden according to both of the Gemara's explanations. See Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 81:1,9.

This week's question: What food may not be consumed by non-Jews and Jews alike?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, the Noda BiYehuda - Part XI

Rabbi Landau published several collections of sermons. *Ahavas Tziyon* and *Doresh Litziyon* are two collections of halachic sermons. *Drushei Hatzlach* is a collection of aggadic sermons.

In addition, Rabbi Landau's eulogy for Empress Maria Theresa and Emperor Leopold were published, as well.

Rabbi Landau taught many students, some of whom became major Torah authorities and leaders: Rabbi Avraham Danzig, author of the famed halachic work *Chayei Adam*; Rabbi Betzalel of Regensburg (often known as Rabbi Betzalel Ranshburg), a Talmudic commentator whose most famous

work is the Talmudic glosses that appear on the side of modern editions of the Talmud; Rabbi Elazar Fleckels, author of the halachic collection of responsa *Teshuva Me'ahava*; and Rabbi Dovid Deutsch, author of *Ohel Dovid* on several Talmudic tractates.

As he grew old, Rabbi Landau had his son, Rabbi Shmuel Landau, assume some of his duties in Prague. Rabbi Shmuel Landau published the second volume of *Noda Biyehuda* (as well as some of his father's other works), and some of Rabbi Shmuel's own responsa are included therein. He published his own collection of responsa, titled *Shivas Tziyon*, among other Torah works.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

denied by Korach? Why wouldn't one of those subjects, seemingly the focal point of the parsha, be chosen?

My Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Avraham Ausband, explained that the quality of a leader's scrupulousness can't be underestimated. A leader must

have the ability to proclaim publicly that they have never benefited from anyone, public or private, communal or individual, in a manner which is not completely clean. Great Jewish leaders such as Moshe and Shmuel did so; this is truly a fundamental lesson of our parsha!