

A Taste of Torah

In the Mind, In the Bones

by Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

This week we begin Sefer Devarim, the fifth book of the Torah. Moshe begins with a lengthy monologue, describing the Jews' travels thorough the desert and the many challenges they faced along the way. The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin; 1816-1893) explains that this book is the ultimate *mussar* (ethics) book for all time, and, through a careful study of Moshe's recounting of the story and rebuke, we can learn and acquire the necessary tools for success in life.

In addition to being a great work of *mussar*, Sefer Devarim has the distinction of being the bridge between the Written and Oral Torah. In this book, Moshe begins the process of elucidating the Torah (see Devarim 1:5). This elucidation process introduced the Jews to the methodology of the *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, the Oral Torah. In addition to laws that were transmitted orally, Hashem taught Moshe many rules through which one can derive new laws from the Written Torah. These rules allowed the **human intellect** to produce ideas and laws that have the status of **Torah**, a truly incredible feat! Moshe proceeded to put these methods to use in Sefer Devarim, teaching the Jews both the laws and the methods of derivation.

We have now learned that Sefer Devarim stands out among the other books of the Torah in two ways; one, as a work of *mussar*, and secondly, as an introduction to the *Torah Sheba'al Peh*. What might be the connection between these two elements of the book? Why is it that the beginning of the Oral Law must also be a *mussar shmuz* (ethical rebuke)?

The Netziv explains that the development of the human intellect through *Torah Sheba'al Peh* carries a great risk. As a person grows great in Torah, one may arrogantly

say, "Look how much information I've mastered! I can create Torah with this great mind of mine!" As an antidote, one must join Torah growth with character development (*mussar*). Otherwise, one may well end up intellectually great and morally bankrupt, a true recipe for disaster.

I'd like to develop this thought a step further based on the teachings of the Maharal (Rabbi Yehuda Loew of Prague; c. 1512/1526-1609).

The Sages have taught us that the miracle of human nature is the marriage of the spiritual soul to a physical body. To begin with, this presents a tremendous gap between the two human elements. The more we close that gap by perfecting ourselves, the more our physicality can serve as a proper vessel for our spiritual side. This presents a great challenge for the spiritually growing person. Should one focus exclusively on growing his spiritual side, he will have only increased the gap between his physical nature and the soul. While the soul will spiritually soar to great heights, the body receives less and less of the perfecting influence of the soul. The end result may be a spiritually great person with an increasingly corrupt character! The only way forward is to grow our spiritual side in tandem with our physicality. While exercise is important for our physical and emotional wellbeing, when we refer to physical growth we don't mean lifting weights, but character development. When we exercise our self-control, patience, humility, etc., we grow and refine our physical nature. Combined with growing our spiritual selves thorough *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, a Jew achieves true greatness.

Stories for the Soul

Good Judgment

Based on a story on nishimas.org

Rabbi Aharon Halberstam (1828-1893), son of the great Divrei Chaim (Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz; 1793-1876), once presided over a *bais din* (Jewish court) that rendered a decision against an individual. Not only did the losing party not accept the verdict against him, he demanded that the results be reversed, insisting that he would not take no for an answer. Reb Aharon, unmoved, refused to be influenced and called the case closed.

At that point the litigant, desperate for things to go his way, claimed that if the rabbi would not reverse the results, he would report him to the local authorities on some trumped-up charge and have him imprisoned. Reb Aharon did not budge, and the fellow reported him to the local authorities, who promptly imprisoned Reb Aharon.

Family and students came running to his father Reb Chaim to report the news, but, to their great astonishment, he was calm and surprisingly unconcerned. "If my son was sitting in jail because of some crime or indiscretion that he committed, that would certainly bother me," he told them. "But that he was thrown into jail because he rendered an honest and fair judgment upholding the sanctity of the Torah - it should only be so!"

When the family saw that they were getting nowhere with Reb Chaim, they went to see his *mehutan* (the father of a son or daughter's spouse) Rabbi Yehoshua Rokeach of Belz (1825-1894) and asked him to intervene; perhaps he would be able to convince Reb Chaim to use his influence to get his son out of jail.

Reb Yehoshua agreed to take on the

Kollel Happenings

MOTZOEI SHABBOS NACHAMU KUMZITZ

Join the Kollel for an evening of inspirational singing on Motzoei Shabbos Nachamu, July 28th at the home of Ari and Ruthie Krausz, 1675 Tennyson St. The event will feature live music, refreshments and divrei Torah. The kumzitz will be held at approximately 10 pm. For more information, please contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

POLICE BRUTALITY AT THE SEPT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Daniel Waitz, former law officer, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore they investigate this difficult subject. September 5th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM

Attention bachurim in Denver over the summer! The Kollel is once again holding its Summer Night Seder for Bachurim at the Kollel West Denver Bais Medrash. Sunday-Thursday. Night seder begins at 8 pm, with ma'ariv at 9:10 pm. Stipends available for boys who maintain the sederim. For further details, info or sponsorship opportunities, please contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: We are prohibited from eating meat and drinking wine on the weekday eve of *Tisha B'Av* (ninth of Av). Additionally, there is a custom to refrain from these items beginning from the first of Av. When else are these items not permissible for consumption?

A: 1. When *Tisha B'Av* is on a Sunday, Tuesday or Thursday, there is a custom not to consume meat or wine until midday of the tenth of Av. When it falls on Shabbos (as it does this year), however, the fast is observed on the tenth of Av. The custom then is to avoid these items only on the evening following the fast as well. 2. Some authorities mention a custom to avoid

these items on the evening following all fast days! 3. From the time of death of one's close relative until the burial, one is forbidden to consume meat or wine. This period is known as *aninus*; the mourning relative is called an *onein*.

Sources: Mishna, Taanis 26b; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 551:9, Yoreh D.e'ah 341:1; Magen Avraham 558:3, Mishna Berura 558:5.

This week's question: What item, used in the production of certain dairy products, originates from a mammal? No, we are not referring to milk!

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the Chasam Sofer - Part III

Rabbi Adler's Kabbalistic bent and other unusual practices frightened and unnerved others in the community, and, in 1779, a group of rabbis and communal leaders banned, under penalty of *cherem* (excommunication), the gatherings of students in Rabbi Adler's home. Rabbi Adler ignored the ban, however, and continued on as before, triggering the *cherem*.

Despite the controversy he stirred, Rabbi Adler's scholarship and piety became well-known, and he was appointed rabbi of Boskowitz in Moravia in 1782. He wasn't there for long, though, as his enemies succeeded in forcing him from his position in 1785, whereupon he returned to Frankfurt. In 1789, the ban and attendant *cherem* upon him were renewed, removed only shortly before his death in 1800.

Stories for the Soul

continued from front

mission and went immediately to speak with Reb Chaim. He related to him all that had transpired; from the case that had come before the court until the current tragic outcome. He explained how difficult it must be for a refined person like Reb Aharon to be in prison, and how important it was for his family as well as for the community to have him back. And last but not least, there was a *chilul Hashem* (desecration of G-d's Name) involved.

At that claim, Reb Chaim ignited and turned full force to Reb Yehoshua. "Do you really believe that if one is put into prison because he upheld the holiness of the Torah by rendering an honest and true judgment, that it is the cause of a *chilul Hashem*?! Would you label Yosef's sentence in the prison of Pharaoh a *chilul*

Hashem?! Were the twenty-two months that Reb Yisroel'tche (Rabbi Yisroel of Ruzhin, a contemporary of the Divrei Chaim, who had been imprisoned with no charges brought) spent in prison a *chilul Hashem*?! No! Just the opposite! It was a *kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d's Name)! Both Yosef and Reb Yisroel'tche sanctified the name of Hashem until the highest heights. My dear *mechutan*, listen to me! Anybody who calls himself a Jew and is not attached body and soul to his Creator every hour of the day - that is *chilul Hashem*!"

In this week's parsha, Moshe recounts his search for qualified judges - people who feared no one but G-d and whose integrity could be relied upon, regardless of the pressure brought upon them.