

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Va'eschanan

July 27, 2018

A Taste of Torah

Subtraction by Addition

by Rabbi Nesanel Kipper

Can there be too much of a good thing? When it comes to serving Hashem, the answer seems to be yes. In this week's parsha, the Torah commands Klal Yisroel, "Do not add on to the mitzvos that I have already commanded you and do not take away any part of the mitzvos which I have commanded you." (Va'eschanan 4:2) While the commandment of "do not take away from the mitzvos" is quite understandable, the commandment of "do not add on to the mitzvos" is harder to understand. What is wrong with one who wants to add on more to the mitzvos of Hashem? If anything, he should be praised for going beyond what is required of him and accepting upon himself even more!

The Rosh (Rabbeinu Asher; 1250/59-1327) and the Da'as Zekeinim both explain that one who adds on to the mitzvos of Hashem is in fact taking away from the mitzvah since the mitzvah was not done as commanded by the Torah. But this too, begs an explanation; why is the one who adds on to a mitzvah not performing it properly? Isn't he performing the mitzvah, *plus more*?

Perhaps we can answer with the following explanation: The Chizkuni (Rabbi Chizkiah ben Manoach; fl. 13th century) on the aforementioned verse cites an example for the commandment of "do not add on." In last week's parsha, Devarim, Moshe tells Klal Yisrael (Devarim 1:21), "Look, behold, I have placed before you Eretz Yisrael." At that time, Hashem was ready to lead Klal Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael. Klal Yisrael, however, decided to first send men to spy out the land. We all know the terrible outcome this journey had: many people in Klal Yisrael perished, and they did not end up going in to Eretz Yisrael for another forty years. What was so terrible about sending the spies? They simply wished to scout out

the land for the purpose of the upcoming battle. Didn't Yehoshua (Joshua) follow this same practice when he sent out spies to the city of Yericho (Jericho)? The Chizkuni explains that the root of their sin was that they decided to "add on" to what Hashem commanded them. The actual act of sending spies was not in of itself a sin, but being that it was not something that Hashem commanded them, it was considered adding on to the commandment of Hashem. The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman; 1194-1270), when discussing the Sin of the Spies in Parshas Shelach, tells us that part of the request to send spies came from a lack of faith in Hashem, and this is what led to the terrible tragedy of the Sin of the Spies.

We can see from here that although one's desire to add on to the mitzvos may come from a good place and may not even contradict Hashem's laws, we are still forbidden to add on to a mitzvah. Sometimes, hidden behind these seemingly innocent and positive actions, lurk one's personal motivations or shortcomings which can lead to perform actions which are completely against the Torah.

As long as we follow the Torah's instructions exactly as Hashem commanded us, we know that we are on the correct path, and we are safe. Once we start making our own calculations, regardless of how positive the intentions, we are venturing out into dangerous territory, for we are no longer following the Torah's lead one hundred percent, and we are at risk of making mistakes.

This is why the Torah commands us not to add or subtract but, rather, to follow the Torah exactly as it was given to us. The Torah is our guide to life. Let us adhere to its commandments - nothing more and nothing less.

Stories for the Soul

Out of Line

Based on a story on revach.net

A man was standing next to the door of a prominent rabbi in Bnei Brak, waiting his turn to speak to the Rav. Suddenly, another man entered, his countenance reflecting that he was under tremendous stress. He requested from the first man to let him speak to the Rav before him, promising him that he would only be with the Rav for a few minutes.

The man immediately agreed to the request, behaving with unusual generosity. Later, he related a story to those present, explaining why he had been so quick to concede his place in line.

"I'll tell you what once happened to me when I didn't agree to give up my turn in line," he said. "I was standing in a line for a *gemach* (free-loan society) in order to take out a loan for the wedding of one of my children. This *gemach* is only open for one hour a day, between ten and eleven at night. I had waited for a long time and the closing time was swiftly approaching when a man entered, breathing heavily. The man told me that he lived in Ashdod and had come especially to Bnei Brak to obtain a loan from the *gemach*. He pleaded with me to allow him to enter before me, knowing that since I lived in Bnei Brak, I could easily return the next day if I missed my turn. He, on the other hand, would be forced to travel from Ashdod once again if the *gemach* closed before he could enter."

"I considered his request, but I decided that I had been waiting in line for a long time, and I was not willing to concede my place. I told that man that I was unable to agree to his request. He continued to plead with me, but I didn't give in."

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

A: Rennet. Rennet is extracted from the fourth stomach chamber (the *kaiva*, or abomasum) of ruminant mammals. Chymosin, its key component, is an enzyme that curdles the casein in milk to create cheese. There is no halachic problem with using animal-derived enzymes in cheese (mixing meat and milk), since the amounts used are

miniscule. Moreover, the enzymes are not cooked with the milk, and they are flavorless. However, the rennet must originate from a kosher source. There is no issue of *davar hama'amid* (ingredient that gives a product its form, which is never nullified), as that only applies to non-kosher substances, and the enzymes are from a kosher source. (See Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 87:11)

This week's question: What halacha is based on the unique characteristics of rennet?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the Chasam Sofer - Part IV

Young Moshe became a devoted student of Rabbi Adler. At his rebbe's command, he left his father's home. It is said that the impetus for this was that young Moshe was delivering a talk in the *bais medrash* of Rabbi Adler, and he refuted an opinion of his grandfather, Rabbi Shmuel Schotten. Moshe's father, Rabbi Shmuel, himself a great Torah scholar, slapped his son for what he perceived as chutzpah. Thereupon, Rabbi Adler ordered that Moshe leave his father's home and receive instruction directly from him.

At the age of thirteen, Moshe began delivering public lectures. His brilliance was so extraordinary that Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz of Frankfurt (c. 1731-1805) requested that he become

his student. Rabbi Horowitz was a student of the great Chassidic leader Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch (known as the Mezeritcher Maggid), and he authored numerous seforim, including the well-known *Hafla'ah* on the Talmud and *Panim Yafos* on the Torah.

Moshe studied under Rabbi Horowitz for just one year. In 1776, he left for Mainz, where he joined the yeshiva of Rabbi Dovid Tebele Scheur, who served as the rabbi of Mainz. There, he studied under its Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) Rabbi Mechel Scheur, son of Rabbi Dovid Tebele. In 1777, he returned to Frankfurt at the request of Rabbi Adler. In 1782, when Rabbi Adler took the position of rabbi in Boskowitz, Moshe accompanied him there.

Stories for the Soul

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"I received a loan of ten thousand dollars, and left the *gemach*. I needed to change half of the sum to shekels, and I went straight to a money changer. The money changer handed me five thousand dollars in shekels and I began counting the shekels. While I was distracted by counting the money, I failed to notice a man reaching into my pocket and robbing me of the remaining five thousand dollars."

"It was only when I left the money changer with the shekels in my pocket

that I was dismayed to see that my other pocket was empty. I felt strongly that this was a punishment from Heaven for not conceding to the fellow from Ashdod. Now you can understand why I conceded my place with such generosity."

In this week's parsha, the Torah teaches us that one should strive to act beyond the letter of the law. We may be entitled to something, but that doesn't mean we need to always insist on what we feel is our right.