



Parshas Nitzavim

September 7, 2018

# A Taste of Torah

## Use It or Lose It

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

It's never a good idea to push things off. If this is true in regards to getting things done, it's even more true when it comes to spiritual improvement. A look at this week's parsha will bear this out.

Moshe has just completed the recitation of 98 horrifying calamities that will befall the Jewish People if they fail to properly keep the Torah and its commandments. Moshe then warns the Jewish People that there may be some people among them, "when he hears the words of this imprecation, he will bless himself in his heart, saying, 'Peace will be with me, though I walk as my heart sees fit' – thereby adding the watered unto the thirsty. Hashem will not be willing to forgive such a person." (Nitzavim 29:18-19)

What is meant by "adding the watered unto the thirsty"? Rashi explains that this rebellious person's behavior and the deliberate sins he will perpetrate will lead Hashem to punish him for sins committed inadvertently, as well. Thirsty, explains Rashi, refers to sins committed without intent, while watered refers to those done deliberately and with intent.

The Chasam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Sofer; 1762-1839) notes that it is highly unusual for Hashem to be uninterested in forgiving a person. It is clear from many Torah sources that Hashem looks for opportunities to help a person return to Him. Yet this seems to be an exception.

The Chasam Sofer offers a novel interpretation of the verse. He says that this person's cavalier attitude is not as flippant as it seems; in fact, it

is carefully calculated. Our Sages teach that one who repents out of sincere love for G-d can have his sins turned into merits. (Why this is so is beyond the scope of this article.) If this is true for one's deliberate sins, says the Chasam Sofer, then it stands to reason that sins committed unknowingly also become merits, for why should one lose out for committing a sin only by mistake?

The person discussed in the verse, continues the Chasam Sofer, wants to have his cake and eat it, too. This person assumes that he can live and do as he pleases for a while, and then, later, he will get his act together and repent – thereby accruing many merits in place of the many sins he committed previously! "Peace will be with me, though I walk as my heart sees fit" – because I have a secret weapon to clean up the mess, the ability to repent. And then, even the "thirsty" sins, those done accidentally, will be added to the "watered" sins, those done purposely!

Too bad this fellow is unaware of another important teaching of our Sages: One who sins and says, "I will commit this sin and repent later" loses the ability to repent for the sin. Using repentance as a means to commit the crime means the repair kit cannot be used to fix the damage.

This is what is meant by, "Hashem will not be willing to forgive him." Since this sinner relied upon the gift of *teshuva* to enable his wrongdoing, he loses that ability to repent!

Hopefully, we do not commit sins in such a dismissive fashion. But human nature is to keep moving along,

## Stories for the Soul

### Forged by a Furnace

Rabbi Yaakov Dovid Wilevsky (1845-1913; known by the acronym of his name, the Ridvaz) grew up in great poverty. His father, who earned a living building ovens, paid a local *melamed* (Torah teacher) a monthly sum of one ruble to teach his young son Torah.

One year, business was bad due to a shortage of materials needed for building ovens, and the *melamed* had not been paid for three months. Young Yaakov Dovid arrived home one day with a note for his parents from the *melamed*. The *melamed* wrote that if he would not be paid soon, he would be unable to continue to teach the child. Yaakov Dovid's parents were very distraught by this news.

That evening, Yaakov Dovid's father went to the synagogue, where he overheard a local wealthy man complaining that the shortage of materials meant that the home he was building for his daughter and son-in-law would not have a furnace in time for the winter.

Yaakov Dovid's father returned home and told his wife what he had heard. They decided that they would disassemble their own oven and rebuild it in the new house for the wealthy man. After the deed was done, Yaakov Dovid's father returned home with six rubles, which he gave to his son to pay the *melamed* for the previous three months and for the next three.

The Ridvaz related that the family shivered that winter and wore coats and blankets to stay warm. But

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## Kollel Happenings

### THE ROAD BACK TO HASHEM: THE PROGRESSION THROUGH ELUL, ROSH HASHANA, YOM KIPPUR & SUKKOS

Join the Kollel for a special series for women during this special time of year. The final class will be given by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher on *Awe & Joy: The Repentance of Yom Kippur & Sukkos*, Sunday, 9/16, 7:45 pm at the Weiss home, 5012 S. Xenia St. Classes sponsored in memory of Alex Wappelhorst, Michel ben Baruch a"h.

### 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:** What category of food is forbidden to be eaten, but an exception is made due to the fact that it is Shabbos?

**A:** When someone's life is in danger, most prohibitions may be transgressed to save a life. The exact details are vast and beyond our discussion. If the patient is categorized as a *choleh she'ein bo sakana* (non-life-threatening), one may transgress Scriptural Shabbos prohibitions via a non-Jew. Thus, if the patient requires a meal to be cooked

for him, we would ask a non-Jew to do the cooking. Even if it is a *bishul akum*-sensitive food (i.e., it is inedible raw and fit for a royal meal), the patient is permitted to partake of the meal. This leniency does not apply during the weekdays (See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 328:17).

**This week's question:** How can a food be permissible to eat, but become prohibited based on the passing of time? We are not referring to sacrifices or *chametz* with the approach of Pesach.

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the Chasam Sofer - Part X

At its peak, the Pressburg Yeshiva numbered some 400 students. While many of these students became great Torah leaders, many others moved on to become *baalei batim*, lay members of the Jewish community. Their time in the yeshiva left an indelible mark upon them, though, and they were firmly committed to Torah Judaism. They also became supporters of the

yeshiva, helping to ensure its financial stability in future years. The yeshiva was integrated into the community, as evidenced by the fact that although the yeshiva held its own Shabbos morning services at 7 am, they would break midway, have a *kiddush*, study for some time, and then join the rest of the community for the rest of the services at the main synagogue.

## A Taste of Torah

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unchanging, figuring that there's plenty of time to make things right later, and this approach does border upon the behavior described in the verse. Our Sages teach us that this time of year, the month of Elul through Yom Kippur, is

an ideal time to repent, as G-d is close and waiting eagerly for our return. Let's not waste that opportunity by yet again pushing off our resolution to improve. Leaving the spiritual work for later can have devastating consequences.

## Stories for the Soul

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learn Torah he did, and he eventually grew to become on the greatest Torah scholars of his generation!

In this week's Torah portion, Moshe tells the Jewish People that the Torah is neither in Heaven nor across the sea; rather, it is close to them and

accessible. Rashi comments that if it were in Heaven or across the sea, one would be required to journey to study it. While Torah is readily accessible to us, we must sometimes make great sacrifices to be able to study it properly.