



Parshas Bereishis

October 5, 2018

# A Taste of Torah

## A Tree Grows in Brooklyn

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Everything was just perfect. When Adam and Eve were created and placed in the Garden of Eden, their food was provided for them, ready-to-eat. They would live forever. There would be no illness, no wars, no natural disasters. Alas, they ate from the Tree of Knowledge and lost it all.

There is another tree the Torah speaks of alongside the Tree of Knowledge, and that is the Tree of Life. In fact, G-d banished Adam and Eve from Eden so that they not eat the fruits of that Tree, for it would grant them eternal life; death had become a necessity to purge Mankind from the evil incorporated into itself. What is the nature of this Tree? Is it some magical item, akin to the legendary Fountain of Youth sought by European explorers in the Americas? Is there any way for us to access it? How do we understand, from a spiritual standpoint, the meaning of a Tree that grants life?

There is another puzzling passage in pre-Sin Creation. The Torah tells us that G-d placed Adam in the Garden of Eden "to work it and to guard it." (Bereishis 2:15) What work was necessary in the Garden? Didn't everything grow on its own? What human intervention was necessary?

Targum Yonasan ben Uziel translates the verse astoundingly, "To toil in Torah and to guard its precepts." Plan A for Creation was that humanity live in the Garden, study Torah and keep its commandments! This is quite strange, for this is what we are enjoined to do today, in the post-Sin world, as well. What difference is there between then and now?

Our Sages teach us (Brachos 63b) that Torah is established only in one

who kills himself over it. Taken at face value, this seems to be quite strange; is one indeed required to sacrifice one's life through the study of Torah? Should one ignore all physical needs and just study until he drops?

The Rambam (Laws of Torah Study, 3:12) states, "Words of Torah are not established... among those who study it in a state of physical indulgence, of eating and drinking. Only one who kills himself upon them, and strains his physical body constantly..." Killing oneself for Torah, explains the Rambam, means not indulging the physical self. One must remove himself from the blandishments of this world to connect with the spiritual entity that is the Torah.

The Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato; 1707-1746) in his work *Da'as Tevunos* (126) teaches that when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, they became much more physical beings as they incorporated desires and lusts into themselves. Had they eaten from the Tree of Life, they would have gone in the opposite direction, attaching themselves to G-d for all eternity.

Seemingly, that opportunity is gone, as Mankind was chased from Eden. However, the Talmud (Brachos 32b) teaches, "The Tree of Life is none other than the Torah, as the verse states, 'It (Torah) is a Tree of Life for those who grasp onto it.' (Proverbs 3:18)"

It emerges, says Rabbi Dovid Cohen, (Rosh Yeshiva [Dean] of the Chevron Yeshiva), that Adam's job prior to the sin, to study Torah, is one and the same as eating from the Tree of Life! Tragically, he ate from the wrong tree,

*continued on back*

## Stories for the Soul

### Pulling Teeth

Rabbi Yehoshua Gutman served as a rabbi in Rouen, France following World War II. During the war, he was placed in a labor camp in France. While not as terrible as the concentration and death camps in other parts of Europe, the work he was made to do was backbreaking and exhausting. At some point, Rabbi Gutman discovered that if he went to the doctor to have a tooth pulled, he was granted a day off to recuperate. Thus, whenever he felt he simply could not meet the physical demands, he would feign a toothache and have a tooth extracted.

By the time the war was over, Rabbi Gutman had sacrificed many of his teeth, and he obtained a set of false teeth. When he became engaged to his future wife, Yocheved, she was concerned that her husband-to-be would be uncomfortable with a wife who had a full set of healthy teeth while he, a young man, was forced to make do with false teeth. She went to a dentist and asked that he pull out her teeth and replace them with false ones. The dentist refused, thinking her to be mad. She did not give up, though, and went from one dentist to another until she found one willing to perform the procedure. All so that her husband not feel uncomfortable in their relationship!

In this week's parsha, Rashi tells us that before taking the rib from Adam to create Eve, Hashem put Adam into a deep slumber, so that he not see where his wife originated

*continued on back*

## Kollel Happenings

### DNA TESTING THIS WEDNESDAY AT 4T

Join Cody Glickman, Doctoral Student at CU Anschutz, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they analyze the various strands of this new frontier. October 10<sup>th</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@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 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.

### HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** What is the source of the idea that the awe of Shabbos causes people to speak truthfully?

**A:** When one grows produce in *Eretz Yisroel*, he is required to separate *terumah* (priestly portion) and *ma'aser* (tithes). When one purchases or receives produce grown in *Eretz Yisroel*, we require him to tithe the produce, since the growers don't always do so, even when they assure us they have, as there is financial loss involved. This rabbinic requirement is called *demai*, and there is an entire

tractate by that name describing its laws. The Mishna (*Demai* 4:1) provides an exception to this rule. If one forgot to tithe the produce before Shabbos (for tithing is prohibited on Shabbos), he may then ask the seller of its status and rely on his word. One of the reasons for this leniency is given by Talmud Yerushalmi: the awe of Shabbos prevents people from uttering an untruth!

**This week's question:** What is permitted on Shabbos but not weekdays?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the Chasam Sofer - Part XIV

Rabbi Sofer opposed many "innovations" in halacha, famously saying "*Chadash assur min haTorah*." This phrase refers to the prohibition on *chadash*, the new crop of grain, prior to the bringing of the *omer* offering on the second day of

Pesach during Temple times and, in post-Temple times, until the second day of Pesach has passed. The word *chadash* means "new," and Rabbi Sofer's play on words conveyed his opposition to the infiltration of new customs to Judaism.

## A Taste of Torah

*continued from front*

catapulting him and his descendants far away from that Tree. But we still have the opportunity to return to it, through studying the Torah. Today, though, this is a very different and far more imposing task, as we must first rid ourselves of the physical temptations placed upon us through ingesting the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Indeed, the Talmud teaches (*Shabbos* 30a) that as long as a person clings to the study of Torah, the Angel of Death has no power over him. The highest level of attachment to Torah, which would bring one to ever-higher levels of closeness to G-d Himself and render one completely impervious to death,

is unavailable in our post-Sin world. It was available to Adam, though, had he eaten from the Tree of Life instead of the Tree of Knowledge.

Torah and observance of its mitzvos is the means of rectifying the disastrous error of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Happily, we all have the opportunity to study Torah to the best of our abilities. The Tree of Life is accessible wherever we may be, not just the Garden of Eden. The more we "kill ourselves over Torah" by leaving our physical world and its temptations behind so as to engage in Torah study, the more that Tree flourishes in our lives.

## Stories for the Soul

*continued from front*

from and thus be disgraced in his eyes. While we may not go the extent of pulling teeth, great effort must be

expended to show respect to one's spouse at all times.

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z"l  
Denver Community Kollel | 1395 Wolff Street, Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855  
info@denverkollel.org | www.denverkollel.org

To receive Torah Weekly by email, email to info@denverkollel.org