



Parshas Lech Licha

October 19, 2018

# A Taste of Torah

## I Told You So

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

It is generally assumed that the more one understands and comprehends, the better off one is. If a person knows the underlying reason for what he is doing, he can make life decisions more effectively.

While in some areas this may be true, for mitzvah observance this may not be the case at all.

In this week's Torah portion, G-d instructs our forefather Avraham (Lech Licha 17:1), "Walk before Me and be *tamim*." The Hebrew word *tamim* means to be whole and complete. How is one to understand this instruction of G-d, that Avraham should walk before Him and be complete?

The Bais Halevi (Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik; 1820-1892) explains that this means following G-d completely, fulfilling His commandments purely because Hashem told him to do so. It's not commendable for one to say that he's keeping Shabbos because he understands its reason. One should keep Shabbos for the best reason of all - because that's what Hashem commanded us to do.

To be sure, one is certainly allowed to probe into a mitzvah, to try and comprehend its reasoning and depth to whatever degree possible. But one has to realize that the purpose of this examination and investigation falls under the category of studying Torah, and should not be the actual reason why the mitzvah is being performed. Rather, mitzvah performance is simply carrying out G-d's will.

One may think that doing mitzvos this way seems very elementary and

simplistic. In truth, though, this is a very high level of mitzvah fulfillment. Why is this so?

One who acts out of understanding is only following G-d's will because he thinks it makes sense to him. That's not true belief. The biggest act of *emunah* is the proclamation that I'm willing to listen without any comprehension, purely because He instructed me to do so. This is the meaning of "walk before Me and be complete." Throw away your own limited comprehension, and follow the Highest Wisdom with completeness.

King David writes in Psalms (36:7), "Man and beast You save, O Hashem". The Talmud (Chullin 5a) explains that this refers to people who are clever due to their wisdom but nevertheless make themselves like animals. What is the meaning of this seemingly bizarre statement?

The Bais Halevi explains that a human being who does a favor for a friend is doing so because he intellectually realizes it's the right thing to do. Even if he is doing it because his friend asked him to do it - he's only doing so because his brain says that it makes sense to do what your friend asks you to do. But an animal listens to its master without any reasoning. It blindly follows its master, without any involvement of the self at all.

This is the ultimate level of the Jew, to be overflowing with knowledge and comprehension, but nevertheless to follow G-d as an animal follows the dictates of its master. Simply because "I told you so."

## Stories for the Soul

### Cut a Path Back

Based on a story on [revach.net](http://revach.net)

Rabbi Chaim Berlin (1832-1912), who served for many years as the Chief Rabbi of Moscow, settled in Jerusalem later in life. He once related to his student, Rabbi Aryeh Levine, that when he was the Chief Rabbi of Moscow, a Jew approached him and asked him to perform a *bris milah* (circumcision) for his newborn son. However, the man wanted the *bris* to be performed in absolute privacy. The fellow lived in a non-Jewish area and earned a living selling Christian religious objects. None of his friends or acquaintances were aware of his Jewish identity, and if they would find out, he would lose his income, and perhaps his life. Rabbi Berlin agreed and performed the *bris* in absolute secrecy.

Rabbi Berlin asked the father what had compelled him to put himself at risk to perform a *bris* on his son when he was so distant from Judaism. The father's eyes filled with tears, and he shamefully said, "I know that I have moved far away from G-d, and I don't know if I'll ever be able to fully repent." He began crying uncontrollably, and then continued talking through his tears. "My son will probably be even further away from G-d, since he won't even grow up as a Jew, as I did. However, when he gets older, it's possible that he'll become interested in Judaism. If that happens, I don't want anything to hold him back, which is why I went out of my way to give him a *bris*."

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## Kollel Happenings

### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights, 8:15-9 pm, at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

### RABBI REISMAN WEEKLY IN DENVER

Join thousands around the globe in listening to the renowned weekly Navi shiur of Rabbi Yaakov Reisman! Rabbi Reisman's weekly Motzoei Shabbos class is shown at Beth Jacob High School, 5100 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Ave., this week at 8:30 pm. For sponsorships and info, contact [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

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# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** At mincha on Shabbos, we read the beginning of the following week's portion in the Torah. When is there an exception to this rule?

**A:** When Shabbos coincides with Yom Kippur, the reading at mincha is

that of Yom Kippur, not the regular weekly portion.

**This week's question:** Did the *mon* (manna) fall for the Jews in the Desert on Yom Tov (holidays), and what practical halachic application does this have?

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 XVI

Not long after, though, Rabbi Sofer remarried. His second wife, Saril, was the daughter of the renowned Rabbi Akiva Eiger, the rabbi of Posen and one of the leading Torah authorities of his generation. Saril was a widow, having lost her first husband, Rabbi Avraham Moshe Kalischer.

There was an age gap of nearly three decades between Rabbi Sofer and his new wife; Rabbi Sofer was, in fact, nearly the same age as his new father-in-law Rabbi Eiger! It is said that as Saril prepared to walk to the *chuppah*, she whispered to her illustrious father, "Father, he's so old!" Rabbi Eiger purportedly replied, "Walk quickly; he's getting older every moment!"

Despite the difference in age, the couple had eleven children together,

many of whom became respected Torah scholars and leaders in their own right, as will be discussed in a later column.

In 1833, the government granted Jews equality under the law. Many Jews rejoiced at this turn of events. The Chasam Sofer, however, expressed a different view.

Speaking in the synagogue, he compared the situation to a king who exiled his son due to his misbehavior. After a great while, the king sent construction workers and materials abroad to build a great palace for his son. The workers expected the prince to receive them with great joy, as he had been living in less-than-ideal conditions until that point. To their shock and consternation, the son burst into tears upon beholding them.

## Stories for the Soul

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Rabbi Berlin continued that this incident helped him understand a verse in *Shir Hashirim* (Song of Songs), "Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, behold you are beautiful. Your eyes are those of doves." (4:1) Our Sages note the repetition of "You are beautiful" and explain that the first "You are beautiful" refers to the Jewish People before sin, and the second to them after sin. But what is the beauty after sin? The answer is

found in the next words, "Your eyes are those of doves." A dove, unlike other birds, will never fly so far from her nest that she can't navigate her way back. A Jew, even when he sins and flies far from the Source, always makes sure he can find his way back.

In this week's parsha, G-d gives Avraham the mitzvah of *bris milah*, circumcision. This is the mark of a Jew, and it is thus the first commandment given to the first Jew.

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