

# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Vayeshev

November 30, 2018

## A Taste of Torah Doing and Accomplishing

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

I meant well. Really. I'm not sure exactly where all this flew off the rails, but something went terribly wrong, and I am condemned to eternal disgrace in the Torah.

It all started one evening when I was stargazing, checking out the latest astrological arrangements for my future. Behold! I see that I am destined to have descendants from my husband's very talented and handsome slave, Yosef! A great and righteous man like that will be the father of my progeny... what an honor! What a privilege!

I needed to make sure that I did my part in making this prediction come about. Alas, Yosef refused to cooperate. Something about this being a terrible sin. Sin?! It was a great mitzvah! This was meant to be - I was actively helping Hashem bring about what needed to occur.

Perhaps you're reading this and are feeling skeptical about my narrative. You don't believe me, do you? Well, if you'll look at Rashi, he corroborates my story. In fact, Rashi points out that my tragic tale follows close on the heels of a similar story - that of Tamar and Yehuda. Tamar went through a very similar process - she wanted to bear children from the family of the great and righteous Yehuda, and tricked him into making that happen. I do admit, though, that the similarities between our tales end there. Because when Yosef refused me, I was very unhappy, and had him framed and thrown into jail. Tamar, on the other hand, acted far more nobly. She, expecting twins, was accused of adultery, as no one but she

knew that Yehuda was the father of the children. Rather than publicly shame Yehuda, she was willing to be executed for her supposed crimes. She sufficed with a hint to Yehuda as to her true identity, and it was only Divine intervention and Yehuda's courage to admit the truth that saved her.

So I ask - where did I go wrong? Should I have been more like Tamar, and realize when to stop? I felt I was carrying out G-d's Will - but the Torah reveals otherwise. Yes, I do have descendants from Yosef - because he married my daughter, Osnas. Too bad the celestial bodies didn't tell me that detail at the beginning. My inability to call it quits while I was still ahead has cost me dearly for all time.

Writing all this down has led me to realize something very important - that we, as humans, sometimes get so caught up in achieving a worthy goal, perhaps even a goal sanctioned by G-d, that we lose sight of G-d Himself. We forget that G-d is omnipotent and can take care of things on His own. That He, in His infinite kindness, provides us the opportunity to have a hand in the ultimate rectification of the world, but that He also gives us rules that we must obey in carrying out those missions. That the ends don't always justify the means. I guess Tamar realized that a long time ago. And I, apparently, did not. But you can learn from my mistake. Always remember that though you may decide something is very important, and something must be done, and a goal must be reached - make sure you are not stepping out-of-bounds in

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## Stories for the Soul

### Borderline Danger

*based on a story on reach1.net*

At the beginning of the Communist control in the Soviet Union, many Jews tried to flee to Romania. Once in Romania, the possibility existed of escaping to other countries, including the Land of Israel. However, there was a great risk in attempting to leave the Soviet Union; anyone caught trying to escape were either executed or exiled to Siberia. Russian soldiers were posted on the border to minimize the chances of anyone escaping.

The Skulener Rebbe, Rabbi Eliezer Zusia Portugal (1898-1982) lived in Chernowitz, which was close to the border, and he constantly risked his life to help Jews who were caught escaping from Russia. The colonel in charge of the border guard was visited more than once by the Rebbe to beg for his intervention in releasing these Jews. On one such visit, the colonel blew up. "I've had enough of you and your pleas! If I see you here again begging for these criminals, I'll kill you!"

Shortly thereafter, a large Jewish family was caught trying to escape across the border. This time, Rabbi Portugal tried to utilize other means to release them, including bribing other officials in power, but to no avail. The colonel was the only one with the power to release the family. Rabbi Portugal's family feared for his life and pleaded with him not to go, but the Rebbe felt he had to try. The colonel had threatened him, but it was not a certainty that he would fulfill his

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## Kollel Happenings

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR CAUSING A FIRE AT DEC. 5 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Matisyahu Rosen, former manager at Eli's Electrical, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they discuss this hot topic. September 5<sup>th</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

### JEWISH COMMUNITY EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25<sup>TH</sup>

Join the Kollel and JOI for family fun at the annual Jewish Community Extravaganza on Tuesday, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: 7.50/adult, \$15/child. Admission includes access to Lollipop Park, ice skating, and other attractions. To register, visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855.

### SAVE THE DATE FOR WINTER GARDENS - WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT

An event you don't want to miss! The Kollel Women's Division will hold its annual Winter Gardens - Women's Night Out on Tuesday, January 8, 2019. Featuring Mrs. Leah Rubashkin, who will share her personal story of faith, endurance and resilience during 8 years of trials and tribulations.

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** What is generally prohibited on Shabbos, but is permitted to do while learning about the prohibition?

**A:** One is prohibited to read by the light of a non-electric lamp on Shabbos, as it may lead one to inadvertently tilt the lamp (to draw the oil) when it flickers. An exception is made when reading *Bameh Madlikin* (the chapter in Tractate Shabbos dealing with candle lighting for

Shabbos, recited by many as part of Friday evening prayers); one may read this chapter by lamplight. Since the subject of the chapter is preparation of lights for Shabbos, we aren't concerned that one will tilt the lamp during this reading! Source: Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 275:7.

**This week's question:** What is permitted on Shabbos Chanukah but not on other Shabbasos?

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

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Moshe Sofer, Chasam Sofer Part XXII

The Chasam Sofer, as discussed previously, had 10 children (seven sons and three daughters) with his second wife Saril, daughter of the great Rabbi Akiva Eiger.

Perhaps his most famous progeny

was his oldest son, Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer (1815-1871), who succeeded his father as Chief Rabbi of Pressburg and head of the yeshiva there. He is better known as the Ksav Sofer, the name used in his many works Torah works.

## A Taste of Torah

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achieving that dream. Once you start breaking rules, your efforts are not merely tarnished, they are worthless! As one of the great *mussar* (ethical) leaders once pointed out (many millennia after I walked the Earth),

"One has to do, but one does not necessarily have to accomplish." Wise words, indeed. Tamar must have been prescient enough to figure that mantra out. And now you know it, too. Make sure to live by it.

## Stories for the Soul

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words. However, the fate of the family was certain death or exile if nobody interceded for them.

Rabbi Portugal bravely approached the colonel once again, and the colonel's reaction was not a calm one. He became furious, and threw the Rebbe down a flight of steps. The Rebbe was injured, but managed to pick himself up. He gingerly dragged his aching body up the steps and knocked on the colonel's door again. The colonel was astounded to see him again, and this

time, he actually remained calm. The hardened colonel could not help but be moved by the Rebbe's courage and sacrifice, and he agreed to release the family.

In this week's parsha, Yosef stands up to Potiphar's wife and refuses to succumb to the temptation to sin, despite the specter of the suffering he would have to endure for refusing her. It is necessary, at times, to sacrifice much to fulfill one's duty.

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