

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Naso

June 14, 2019

A Taste of Torah

Heavenly Message

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

Rabbi Akiva Palmer, a rebbi, teacher, and financial administrator at Ezra Academy in Queens, NY, did not grow up in a religious home. His divorced mother was a bank teller in the Glen Oaks neighborhood of Queens, and she struggled to make a living. Akiva attended public school. One day, Mrs. Palmer was informed that the bank she worked for was transferring her to a different neighborhood. Mrs. Palmer was frightened and disappointed, because that particular neighborhood had a reputation as an unsafe area, especially at night, when Mrs. Palmer would finish work. As the only other option was to leave her job, Mrs. Palmer resigned herself to her fate and began working at her new location, parking her car near a street light to enhance her safety when she would return to her car in the evening. Mrs. Palmer asked her manager to please transfer her as soon as possible, but in the meantime, she felt lonely and isolated.

One day, a man came to the bank where Mrs. Palmer was working, holding a wad of cash to deposit. Mrs. Palmer noted that the name on the account sounded Jewish; "Ezra Academy." She asked the man if there was something Jewish in the neighborhood. The man explained that he worked for a school quite a distance from the neighborhood, but that the school ran a fundraiser nearby. He would use a bank close by to deposit the money raised, as he was nervous to traverse the unsafe area carrying a large sum of money. The next week, the man, a Mr. Forsher, returned to the bank to deposit more money. He got into a conversation with Mrs. Palmer, in which she disclosed that her boys were attending public school, as she was not aware of a Jewish school nearby, nor could she afford to pay for one. Mr. Forsher explained that the benefits of the fundraiser he was depositing money from were specifically designated to help pay for

tuition for those who cannot afford it, and, as such, Ezra Academy would be happy to take her sons. After much persistence on the part of Mr. Forsher, Akiva was enrolled in Ezra Academy a few weeks later. From there, he attended the Rochester branch of Chofetz Chaim Yeshiva, and went on to become the special person he is today. Amazingly, Mrs. Palmer was transferred back to Glen Oaks the next week! (The above story is related by Rabbi Paysach Krohn in his book *In the Spirit of the Maggid*, Artscroll/Mesorah Publications.)

In the above story, Mrs. Palmer could surely have asked why she had to be put into such a difficult situation. However, in hindsight, Divine providence was clear.

Rav Tzadok Hakohen Rabinowitz (1823-1900) takes the idea of Divine providence even further in this week's parsha to explain a puzzling Rashi. Rashi quotes the Talmud (Sotah 2a) that explains the juxtaposition of the parsha of the *sotah* (unfaithful wife) to the parsha of the *nazir* (one who has taken a vow that includes, among other things, abstention from wine). The Talmud explains that this is to teach us that anyone who sees a *sotah* as she is disgraced will vow to abstain from wine, the vice that brought about her downfall. The obvious question is, why does someone who sees the terrible end of a sinner specifically need to precaution himself against that sin? Seemingly, seeing the destructive punishment of the *sotah* should be the greatest deterrent to following in her ways; it is those who did not see this debacle who should take this vow!

Rav Tzadok explains that, based on the concept of Divine providence, we are never somewhere that we are not destined to be. If Hashem puts us into a certain situation, there must be a Divine purpose, message, or opportunity for growth awaiting us. Therefore, the Gemara is teaching the one who witnesses the demise of the *sotah*

continued on back

Stories for the Soul

A Lovely Blessing

Rabbi Sholom Schwadron, known as the Maggid (Preacher) of Yerushalayim (1912/21-1997), would pray *shacharis* at a particular synagogue daily. One day, Rabbi Schwadron was seen exiting a different synagogue. Someone spotted him and asked why, on this day, he had chosen to change his usual routine.

Rabbi Schwadron explained that as he had been walking to his usual place of prayer, he looked through the window of the shul he had just exited and had seen his beloved brother-in-law and close friend, the great Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, praying there.

He explained that, as a *kohen*, he blessed the congregation daily. (In the Land of Israel, *Birchas Kohanim* [the Priestly Blessing] is recited daily at *shacharis*.) The blessing recited concludes "to bless His nation, Yisrael, with love."

"Whom could I love more than Rav Shlomo Zalman?" exclaimed Rabbi Schwadron. "I just had to go inside and confer my blessing upon him!"

This week's parsha features the mitzvah given to the *kohanim* to bless the Jewish People - with love.

Kollel Happenings

TORAH BY THE MOON

A night out for couples to engage in Torah learning! Men join Rabbi Shmuel Halpern for Tractate Brachos in Halacha and Aggada. Women attend Chassidus in Real Life with Rabbi Moshe Heyman. Mondays, 8-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St. For more info visit denverkollel.org or email Rabbi Heyman, rmh@denverkollel.org.

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

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

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 at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Who authored a large portion of a book in *Tanach* (Scriptures), yet did not merit to have it named for him?

A: Nechemia co-authored the book of Ezra along with Ezra Hasofer, yet the book is known as Sefer Ezra. The book of Nechemia is actually the second half of Ezra, and was only referred to as Nechemia after the book was divided by non-Jewish scholars and printers. The Gemara ascribes a certain statement of Nechemia which caused him to lose the merit of a book carrying his name. Interestingly, the Chida (Rabbi

Chaim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806; a great Torah scholar and kabbalist) writes that nothing is by chance, and perhaps the "sin" of Nechemia has been forgiven with the passage of time!

Sources: Bava Basra 16a; Sanhedrin 93b; Gilyon Hashas, Sukkah 12a; Chomas Anach, Nechemia I.

This week's question: When was one allowed to learn *Nevi'im* (Prophets) but not *Kesuvim* (Writings)?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part VI

Following this incident, Rabbi Silver decided that he needed to become more involved in the rabbinate, not just in his own city of Harrisburg, but in other communities, as

well. From Harrisburg, which was in eastern Pennsylvania, until Pittsburgh, on the western end of Pennsylvania, there was no other qualified rabbi.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

to ask himself: Why was I put into this situation? What is there that I can learn or grow from that could serve as the reason I have been put here? It may be that the destructive behavior and path of the *sotah* is something that I specifically need to work on. Therefore, I shall abstain from wine.

Rav Tzadok Hakohen adds the following observation. In the Written Torah, the parsha of *nazir* comes after the parsha of *sotah*, but in the Talmud, the repository of the Oral Law, Tractate Nazir precedes the Tractate Sotah. This is to indicate, says Rav Tzadok, that it is indeed a great level to perceive the messages of Divine providence after they have been revealed. However, an even greater level is for a person to be proactive and to deduce the message before it is Divinely sent. The truly wise one is he who abstains from wine by picturing the evil path and eventual destruction of the *sotah* well before the process has even started, and deters himself already then by abstaining from wine. As Rabbi Shimon taught (Avos 2:9), the straight path a person should attach himself to is the ability to see what will occur. This is the meaning of the Zohar (2:6b) which teaches that the reason

a *chacham* (wise person) is greater than a prophet is because a prophet only receives prophecy periodically, but a wise person is always inspired through Divine inspiration. According to the above explanations, a prophet here refers to someone who receives the prophecies of the Divine messages based upon the circumstances he finds himself in. A greater level, teaches the Zohar, is to always be looking ahead at the future consequences our actions may have and to act now accordingly.

The above message is one that is relevant to all of us. If we were put into a situation, there must be a reason. It may be to help us, it may be a Divine message, or it may be an opportunity for growth or mitzvah observance. We just need to be aware of our surroundings and to keep our eyes open to see it. An even greater achievement is to look ahead and anticipate in advance the results our actions can cause. This foresight may result in undertaking to work on what may seem to currently be a minor issue by realizing how detrimental it can be down the line, or by reinforcing the positive with the realization that small steps are those that lead to greatness.