



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Matos-Masei

August 2, 2019

A Taste of Torah

The Jewish Home

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

The generation of the desert was known as the *dor de'ah*, generation of wisdom. The Medrash teaches us that this generation was free of all material concerns; they did not need to produce their meals, as they ate the manna. They did not need to fashion new clothing or shoes, as their clothing and shoes grew with their bodies and never wore out. They did not even need to relieve themselves, as the manna produced no waste. They lived in a spiritual oasis, completely free to dedicate their days and nights to the study of Torah. As such, the following observation of Chazal (our Sages) seems very surprising: In this week's parsha, the tribes of Gad and Reuven ask permission to settle the vast lands on the eastern side of the Jordan, conquered from the mighty kings Sichon and Og, on account of its being especially suitable for grazing their many animals. In their request, these tribes preceded the task of building corrals before the task of building dwelling places for their families; "We shall build corrals for our sheep here and cities for our children." (Matos 32:16) The Medrash (cited by Rashi *ibid.*) states us that Moshe, in his reply, pointed out that it should be the other way around, "Build for yourselves cities for your children and corrals for your sheep." (*ibid.*:24) As Chazal describe, they made the trivial important and the important trivial, granting more importance to their possessions than to the people. The tribes indeed corrected themselves following Moshe's implied criticism, as they told Moshe, "Your servants shall do as our master commands. Our small children, our wives, our livestock, and all of our animals shall be there in the cities of Gilad." (*ibid.*:26) Rabbi Yosef Salant in his work *Be'er Yosef* points out the impossibility of

explaining this Medrash at face value. How can it be that members of such an exalted generation, who spent their entire lives steeped in Torah learning and under the guidance of leaders such as Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam, be accused of valuing money more than humans, an accusation not even fitting for a common person in our much smaller generation?! Rabbi Salant offers an insight. He says that the tribes of Gad and Reuven were not blatantly favoring possessions over people. Rashi (Bamidbar 21:23) explains that when the Jewish People battled Sichon and Og and their armies, Hashem, in His kindness to the Jewish Nation, caused the attacking armies of Sichon and Og to abandon their cities and gather at the front lines of the battle. After miraculously wiping out those armies, the cities of these kingdoms were left wide open for the Jewish Nation to simply walk in and enjoy; fully-built cities and beautiful homes, just waiting for their new inhabitants. Thus, the tribes' placing the building of residences for their animals ahead of creating dwelling places for their families made much sense, as the brunt of the work necessary to settle those lands was to build suitable dwelling places for the animals. As for homes for their families, there wasn't much to do besides move in. Moshe, however, made the following point: A Jew's home is not a simple one. The Jewish home is a miniature *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple), a holy and sacred place. Although already physically ready for its new inhabitants, these fully built cities were missing much more work than just penning for animals. These homes and buildings, made to suit the decadent and idolatrous ways of their original builders, were in need of a complete spiritual makeover. Places of idolatry needed to be destroyed, and

continued on back

Stories for the Soul

Not the Same Old Grind

Rabbi Meshulam Igra (1742-1801) of Pressburg was one of Europe's leading scholars in the latter part of the 18th century. As a young man, he was engaged to the daughter of a prominent community leader in the city of Butzatz. At one point during the engagement, the young Meshulam ate a meal at the home of his future father-in-law. Dessert was served together with coffee, a delicacy the young man had never heard of.

The servant brought out a cup of brewed coffee together with sugar and milk. Meshulam didn't know what to do with these items, so he ate the sugar, drank the milk, then downed the black coffee. The father-in-law and prospective bride were taken aback at this man who did not know how to drink a cup of coffee, and they decided to terminate the engagement.

Years later, this same community leader visited the home of Rabbi Yeshaya Pick (1725-1799), the rabbi of Breslau. Upon entering the study, he noticed Rabbi Pick engrossed in a letter. When the man asked Rabbi Pick about the contents of the letter, Rabbi Pick told him that it was filled with very deep Torah insights. "I have to be totally immersed in Torah thought to begin to comprehend the level of this man's brilliance. In fact," he continued, "I do not think a man of this caliber has emerged in the last fifty years! And," he added, "one can note his amazing humility and fine character throughout every word he writes. His name is Rabbi Meshulam Igra - have you heard of him?"

The man fainted on the spot. When he awoke, he recounted the entire story of the engagement and its dissolution, how Rabbi Igra was meant to be his son-in-law until the match was broken over a cup of coffee.

Rabbi Pick looked up at him and shook

continued on back

Kollel Happenings

GOOD MOURNING: ATTAINING A DEEPER APPRECIATION OF TISHA B'AV

The Kollel presents *Good Mourning: Attaining a Deeper Appreciation of Tisha B'Av* for women. Monday, 8/5 8 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/ Ohel Yissochor, 4902 S. Xenia St. (back room), *Dislocated: Tisha B'Av on Shabbos and the Gid Hanasheh* with Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher.

MOTZOEI SHABBOS NACHAMU KUMZITZ

Join the Kollel for an evening of inspirational singing on Motzoei Shabbos Nachamu, August 17th at the home of Rabbi Yissochor and Avigail Steinharter, 1395 Utica St. The event will feature live music, refreshments and divrei Torah. The kumzitz will be held at 9:45 pm. For more information, please contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

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. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and 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: When is someone required to perform all mitzvos with the exception of tefillin, with no physical problem involved, and it is neither Shabbos nor Yom Tov?

A: One whose close relative has passed away is considered an *onein* and is generally exempt from all positive commandments until the burial. Once the burial has concluded, he is once again required to fulfill all commandments, with the exception of tefillin. According to the Mishna

Berura (38:16), relatives are exempt from tefillin until the following day, even if the burial did not take place on the day of death.

This week's question: Tefillin of the head and arm are two independent mitzvos; if only one is available, it is worn and a *bracha* (blessing) is recited. Nevertheless, they are generally worn together. Where do we find a custom of wearing one without the other, even when both are readily available?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part XIII

The lawyer representing those opposed to the mikvah was a man named Murray Seasongood. Seasongood was a member of the Reform community and a popular former mayor of Cincinnati. In fact, today there are a number of

public venues in Cincinnati that bear the name Seasongood, named after this lawyer. With the political clout and legal expertise of Seasongood, things looked bleak for Rabbi Silver's attempt to construct a new mikvah.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

houses of prayer and Torah study needed to be built in their stead. Accessories of sin needed to be removed from the homes and replaced with objects for mitzvah-use and holiness. Even the idolatrous names of the cities needed to be replaced with ones befitting a Jewish locale, as the verse (ibid.:38) informs us after the tribes of Gad and Reuven took over, "And Nevo and Baal Meon with altered names." Rashi (ibid.) explains that these names were idol-based, and were thus changed. This is what Chazal are teaching when they state that the tribes of Gad and Reuven favored money over people. Subconsciously, they were a bit too

focused on their possessions and were thus temporarily blinded from considering the great task of remodeling these cities of idolaters to fit the great spiritual needs and holiness necessary for the Jewish home. Once chastised, the tribes of Gad and Reuven indeed fulfilled that great task. The message here is an important one. Let us realize what the true meaning of the Jewish home and city is. It is a place of holiness and growth, mitzvah performance and respect for Torah and its scholars, and it must be created in such a fashion. May our homes and cities always reverberate with that holiness and sanctity!

Stories for the Soul

continued from front

his head sadly. "Is that so?" he exclaimed. "You gave up the opportunity for this great man because he did not know how to drink a cup of coffee? Faint again!"

In this week's parsha, Moshe criticizes the

tribes of Gad and Reuven for mixing up their priorities and discussing the needs of their animals before those of their families. Misplaced priorities can lead to great anguish.