

A Taste of Torah

Lineage Thinking

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Someone once commented, "Yichus (lineage) is a bunch of zeroes. If you don't put your number in front of it, it won't get you very far." Let's examine the accuracy of this statement in light of a verse in this week's parsha.

Moshe exhorts the Jewish People not to engage in certain practices common among the idolaters, explaining that the Jewish People are children of Hashem. Moshe continues, "For you are a holy people to Hashem, your G-d, and Hashem has chosen you for Himself to be a treasured people." (Re'eh 14:2) Rashi explains the verse and says, "Your own holiness - is from your forefathers. And furthermore, 'and Hashem has chosen you.'" Rashi explains that while the Jewish People have a holiness bequeathed to them by their forebears, Hashem has chosen them in their own right, as well.

Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rokeach (1854-1926), the third Belzer Rebbe, points out an inherent contradiction in Rashi's explanation. How can Rashi refer to the holiness as "your own" holiness if it is, in fact, given to them by their ancestors?

Rabbi Rokeach explains that when a person attains great spiritual levels, he comes to realize his own personal insignificance. The greater one becomes, the more he will become cognizant of his frailties and shortcomings. A truly righteous individual will not pat himself on the back for his accomplishments; on the contrary, he will be more mindful of how little he has truly achieved and how much more ground he must cover in life.

Based on this idea, Rabbi Rokeach explains that in fact, the holiness has been achieved through the efforts of the Jewish People themselves. However, they do not take credit for this holiness, but rather see themselves as being insignificant. They attribute their spiritual greatness to what they have received from their forefathers.

Speaking to this mindset, Moshe continues that "furthermore, Hashem has chosen you." Indeed, you are humble enough to recognize that you have received spiritual treasures from your forebears - but don't let it end there! Hashem has chosen you! You must incorporate that spiritual richness into your life and use it to continue to grow and reach ever-greater heights.

Yichus is certainly of great import in Judaism. It provides a person with tools to forge a path through the jungles of this world. But if a person simply says, "I have such illustrious lineage, there is no need for me to do anything on my own. I can simply spend life maintaining the levels at which I began," he is making a tragic error. Every person must recognize his unique purpose in life. Lineage provides a good foundation from which to begin the journey. It provides a headquarters that one can look back to. But when all is said and done, if the lineage-less person who began much farther down the mountain took up the wanderers' staff and began the trek, while the lineage-rich individual sat back and took it easy, there is no question who will ultimately end up ahead when time expires.

Stories for the Soul

Defense Mechanism

based on a story from revach.net

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Broide, the son-in-law (and nephew) of the famed Alter of Kelm (Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv), had an orphaned girl who helped his wife with household work. It once happened that Rabbi Broide's wife believed the girl had stolen something from the house, and she began reprimanding her.

Rabbi Broide heard the commotion and informed his wife that since the girl was an orphan, great care must be taken not to hurt her feelings in any way. Rabbi Broide continued and told his wife that if she believed she had a real claim, she could go to a local *bais din* (Jewish court of law) and litigate the claim there.

Mrs. Broide prepared to leave the house and go to the *bais din*. As she got ready to leave, she saw her husband also getting ready to leave. Mrs. Broide told her husband that she would manage on her own and did not require his assistance.

Rabbi Broide informed his wife that he was not coming along to help her. He was going to the *bais din* to help defend the orphan girl, who had no one to defend her!

In this week's parsha, the Torah reminds us that when celebrating during the holidays, we must make sure that those who are reliant upon Hashem for their needs - the Levite, convert, widow, and orphan - are taken care of, as well.

Kollel Happenings

LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING THIS LABOR DAY

Start your day off on the right foot with Torah study! Join the Kollel for learning at three locations around Denver: At the Kollel West Denver Bais Medrash, shacharis at 8 followed by breakfast and learning, at Aish Denver, shacharis at 6:45 and 8 followed by breakfast and learning after each minyan, and at EDOS, shacharis at 7:30 followed by breakfast and learning.

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR A BLOWN CALL AT SEPTEMBER 4th TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Jesse Aragon, president, Ark Seal International, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they tackle this fascinating subject. Sep. 4th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfas Emes gives us a glimpse into the infinite depths of Torah and Jewish thought. Kollel Scholar Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky is an expert in this great work, and a master in bringing its timeless lessons into daily life. Join Rabbi Karnowsky on Thursdays, 8:15-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: How many ways do we traditionally publicize the coming or presence of Rosh Chodesh?

A: 1) *Birchas hachodesh*, the "blessing" of the new month recited on the preceding Shabbos. 2) At *ma'ariv* on the eve of Rosh Chodesh, "Rosh Chodesh" or "*ya'aleh v'iyavo*" is announced. 3) Ashkenazic custom is to recite the verses of the *mussaf*

offerings before the morning prayers to publicize that it's Rosh Chodesh.

Sources: Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 48:1, 236:2, 421:1 and Mishna Berura 417:1.

This week's question: How can a mixture be dairy, but when meat accidentally falls in it becomes parve (neither meat nor dairy)?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part XVII

In 1940, a man by the name of Hillel Kook arrived in the United States. Kook was a major activist for the Irgun in British Mandate Palestine, and he had come to the US to clandestinely promote and fundraise for the Irgun's goals. While he publicly denied any involvement with the Irgun, he led a group of some ten Irgun members under the pseudonym Peter Bergson. (It is said he took the pseudonym to avoid embarrassing his prominent family, which included his illustrious uncle, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, through his political involvements.) The cadre of devoted Irgunites he led became known as the Bergson Group.

As news of the full scope of the Holocaust emerged, the Bergson Group shifted its activities to raising awareness of the plight of Jews in Europe. Some of their more famous publicity campaigns included a full-page ad in the NY Times that read, "For Sale to Humanity: 70,000 Jews, Guaranteed Human Beings, at \$50 a Piece," in response to an offer by Romania to send their Jews to safety if the travel expenses would be paid. Another major project was a pageant in Madison Square Garden written by noted Hollywood personality Ben Hecht titled *We Will Never Die*, memorializing the two

million Jews already murdered by the Nazis. 40,000 people attended the performance on its first night, and it went on to play in five other cities, including Washington, D.C., where it was attended by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, six Supreme Court Justices, and some 300 members of Congress.

In 1943, Kook/Bergson created the Emergency Committee for the Rescue of European Jewry. This group included prominent public personalities such as writers and politicians, both Jew and non-Jew, and it worked to publicize what was happening to European Jewry and to pressure and lobby the U.S. government to take action to help European Jewry.

One of the major events organized by the Bergson Group was the Rabbis' March on Washington. Held on October 6, 1943, three days before Yom Kippur, it featured more than 400 rabbis, mostly members of the Agudas Harabbanim. The group marched toward the Capitol, and were greeted there by Vice President Henry A. Wallace and a large bipartisan group of Congressmen. President Franklin Roosevelt, however, was not present; on the advice of his aides, he chose not to attend, and left the Capitol through a back door.

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