

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Bereishis

October 25, 2019

A Taste of Torah Self-Worship

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Haughtiness is not a particularly admirable trait, but most people wouldn't elevate it to a major-league sin on the level of idolatry. Yet that is precisely what our Sages teach us - "Whoever becomes haughty is regarded as having worshipped idols." (Shabbos 105b) How are we to understand this statement?

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Krakow (1595-1663), better known as "the Rebbe Reb Heschel," explains based on a passage in Rashi in this week's parsha. Hashem says "Let us make man," (Bereishis 1:26) prompting Rashi (citing a Medrash) to wonder why G-d says "us" when G-d alone created Man. Rashi explains that the Torah wished to teach us a lesson in humility. G-d was, in fact, consulting with the angels regarding the momentous decision to create Mankind. If G-d Himself took counsel with His underlings, how much more so must we mere humans make sure to listen to what others, even those below us on the societal or intellectual totem pole, have to say. Rashi adds that although a heretic could use this verse to adduce proof that there is more than one deity that created the world, Hashem nonetheless felt the risk worthwhile in order to convey this vital lesson.

Reb Heschel explains that so long as one internalizes the message of humility, he will not stumble and misunderstand the verse's true intent. However, if a person misses the message and becomes haughty, he will not interpret the verse as teaching a message of humility - and will ultimately take the faulty

approach to understanding the verse and conclude that there must be another divine power besides Hashem Himself! Thus, haughtiness and idolatry go hand-in-hand.

Truth be told, this explanation leaves room for a difficulty. Could one not correctly interpret the verse as teaching humility but simply choose to ignore its message?

The commentators provide another approach to the haughtiness-idolatry axis. Idolatry boils down to focusing on another power in Creation besides G-d Himself. Haughtiness can be boiled down to focusing on another power as well - the self. Humility is recognizing one's smallness before G-d, and failing to do so is essentially a person believing that he or she is great, important, the center of the world - instead of realizing that G-d is at the core of everything.

I believe this approach dovetails with Reb Heschel's explanation. When we discuss "interpreting the verse," we are not necessarily referring to the simple intellectual understanding of what the Torah is saying. Rather, our Sages are teaching us a lesson in making the Torah an essential part of one's psyche. To the extent that one truly internalizes the message of humility that the verse is giving over, one has fully and truly understood the verse properly. If a person falls prey to arrogance, however, he has not understood the verse's true intent to the nth degree necessary to preclude haughtiness - there is a trace of self-worship and, by extension, idolatry, lurking in his conceit. The alternate,

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Stories for the Soul

Coldly Calculated

Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievski (1899-1985), better known as the Steipler, was conscripted into the Russian Army. One Shabbos, on a frigid Russian night in 1918, the Steipler had guard duty. To protect the guard on duty from the freezing conditions, there was one special coat that was passed from the outgoing soldier to the incoming soldier.

Unfortunately, when the Steipler arrived at his post, he realized that the soldier who had been there before him had hung the coat on the tree next to where he was to stand guard. The Steipler was not willing to take the coat, as it is prohibited to remove anything from a tree on Shabbos. However, he reasoned, it is certainly permitted to remove the coat in a situation that is life-threatening.

Nevertheless, the Steipler did not don the coat to protect himself from the freezing conditions. "Yes," he thought, "it is permissible in a case that is life-threatening, but I can certainly wait another five minutes before I will be in danger." After five minutes, he again told himself that he could last another five minutes before the situation would be deemed life-threatening. He continued in this way all through the night, in five-minute increments, until morning, when his duty ended. He thus prevailed over the cold and did not transgress Shabbos.

In this week's parsha, the Torah tells us that Hashem created the

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Kollel Happenings

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS SCANDAL AT NOV. 6 T4T

Join Rick Kornfeld, shareholder, RechtKornfeld PC, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they examine this hot-button issue. Nov. 6th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@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.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at Edos, 198 S. Holly St. at 12:00 pm. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1) Best hidden away | 4) Ingratitude |
| 2) Nile River | 5) Flax seed |
| 3) Subtract by adding | 6) Died young |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part XXV

In 1937, Rabbi Silver led an American delegation to the *Knessia Gedolah*, a gathering of many of the great Torah leaders and lay leaders of the time, held by Agudas Yisrael in Marienbad, Czechoslovakia. Rabbi Silver had the opportunity to meet many of the great Torah leaders with whom he had corresponded by mail over the years.

While in Marienbad, Rabbi Silver met with Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, a great genius, tremendous Torah personality and the leader of European Jewry at that time; the latter influenced Rabbi Silver greatly

regarding the importance of the work of Agudas Yisrael.

Upon his return to America, Rabbi Silver set out to create a branch of Agudas Yisrael in America. His efforts met with significant opposition from much of the American rabbinate. This was due in large part to the fact that many American *rabbanim* were aligned with the Mizrachi movement. In addition, the idea of subjugating the American rabbinate to the opinions of European Torah leaders was not popular among a significant portion of the rabbinate.

A Taste of Torah

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idolatrous interpretation thus remains a possibility that is part and parcel of his persona.

Learning the lessons of the Torah is not a mere intellectual exercise of studying and comprehending. It is not about preaching morality or pontificating codes of ethics. It is about becoming the human G-d intended

when He said, "Let us make Man." It is about growing to live as the morally-perfected individual who achieves the full potential invested within Mankind when G-d blew a Divine soul into a body of earth. And at the very outset of creating Mankind, G-d teaches us a vital lesson - remain humble, and you will not fall into the trap of forgetting about G-d.

Stories for the Soul

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world in six days and rested on the seventh - and so must we, even when

it entails discomfort.

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| 1) Best hidden away: 1:4 s.v. vayyar | 3) Subtract by adding: 2:3 s.v. v'lo |
| 2) Nile River: 2:11 s.v. pishon | 4) Ingratitude: 3:12 s.v. asher |
| 3) Died young: 5:24 (all) | 5) Flax seed: 4:3 s.v. m'ipit |
| 4) Ingratitude: 3:12 s.v. asher | 6) Nile River: 2:11 s.v. pishon |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers