

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Toldos

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A Taste of Torah Simply Doing What's Right

by Rabbi Nesanel Kipper

The Torah describes our forefather Yaakov in the beginning of our parshah: "And Yaakov was a *tam* (wholesome) dwelling in the tents. (Toldos 25:27). The term *tam* normally refers to a simpleton, describing one who does things without much intellect. It seems puzzling for the Torah to capture the essence of such a great person in this way.

Even more puzzling, the Torah later describes Yaakov as quite the opposite. In next week's parsha, upon first meeting Rochel, Yaakov tells her (Bereishis 29:12) that he is her father's brother. Rashi, noting that Yaakov was Lavan's nephew, not brother, cites the Medrash which explains that Yaakov was telling Rochel that if her father acted toward him with deceit, Yaakov would be his "brother" and respond in kind with trickery. Indeed, Yaakov gave special signs to Rochel to ensure that he wouldn't be tricked into marrying her older sister Leah (see Rashi *ibid.* 29:25). We also find that Yaakov outsmarted Lavan, manipulating the offspring of Lavan's sheep that he shepherded to ensure that he would receive maximum profit as his wages. All of this seems to portray Yaakov as one who was quite capable of behaving with cunning when necessary. How does this fit the Torah's description of Yaakov the *tam*?

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander explains that a *tam* is indeed one who serves Hashem without using his intellect to make calculations of what Hashem wants from him. Not because he is lacking the ability to do so; on the contrary, this individual is, in fact,

quite clever. As a result of using the intellect to consistently make the right choices, this person has reached a point where G-d's will is part of who he is, and he no longer needs to rely upon his intellect to think through what G-d wants from the situation. So, too, when we refer to Yaakov as a *tam*, it is not to be understood as a lack of intelligence, but that Yaakov personified this *midah* (trait) of subjecting his entire being to perform Hashem's will.

It is our job to carry out Hashem's will in every area of our lives. Sometimes, though, whether due to the Evil Inclination or due to personal hardships, it becomes extremely difficult to rise above ourselves and remain aware of what Hashem really wants from us. Once doing the right thing becomes ingrained in a person, one can find within himself the innate understanding and strength to remain in sync with G-d's will.

The Maharal (Rabbi Yehuda Loew; 1512/1526-1609) (Nesivas Olam, Nesiv Hatimimus ch. 1) explains this concept further. The verse in Proverbs (2:12) says, "The *yashar* (one who is straight in his ways) will dwell in the land, and the *tam* will remain in it." What is the difference between these two traits of *tam* and *yashar*?

The Maharal explains that there's a time for being a *tam*, acting directly to fulfill the will of God, without making calculations. A *yashar*, explains the Maharal, means using one's intellect to figure out the best approach, and there is a time for that approach, too. With regards to one's

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Stories for the Soul

Time to Learn Torah

Rabbi Nissan Kaplan was very close to Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach (1899-2001). In 1988, Rav Shach decided it was necessary for the Lithuanian yeshiva community to create its own political party in Israel, and he directed Rabbi Kaplan and some others to get involved in the creation of the new party, Degel HaTorah. So vital was this undertaking, said Rav Shach to Rabbi Kaplan, that he was to completely involve himself with it until everything was arranged.

Rabbi Kaplan was busy with this mission from morning until night, and, at the end of an exhausting day, he returned to his rebbi, Rav Shach, and reported what had been accomplished that day. After he completed his report, Rav Shach asked him, "Nu, so what did you learn today?"

"Rebbi," replied Rabbi Kaplan, "I was busy all day with organizing the new party! I simply didn't have any time to study Torah!"

Rav Shach, who was known for his tremendous devotion to Torah study, replied, "Did you eat? Did you drink? You should have learned!"

Yaakov is described as a man of the tents, and Rashi tells us this refers to the tents of Torah. Indeed, he spent fourteen years studying without ever lying down in a bed!

Kollel Happenings

T4T CLE CONFERENCE FRIDAY 12.6

The Kollel's first ever T4T CLE Credit Conference will take place on Friday, Dec. 6 at the Wells Fargo Center, 1700 Lincoln St., from 8:15 am-12:30 pm. Three classes running from 9-12, offering one general and one ethics CLE credit per class, will be presented by AG Phil Weiser, Mr. Ted Gelt, and the Honorable Daniel M. Taubman, along with Kollel presenters. Breakfast & light refreshments will be served. \$50 for entire event if registered by 12/1; \$72 entire event/\$25 per class thereafter. To register, visit www.denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

REB SHALOM SOMMERS SEFER TORAH CAMPAIGN

A Sefer Torah is being dedicated in memory of Reb Shalom Sommers, father of Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers. Dedication opportunities for the Sefer Torah at all price levels are available. Proceeds from the campaign will fund the continued growth and expansion of the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissachar. For dedication opportunities or more info, visit www.denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

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.

Parsha Quizzers

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

- 1) Better than the king's gold
- 2) Pig's feet
- 3) Pesach offering
- 4) Garden of Eden
- 5) Italy
- 6) Died during the engagement

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk - Part I

One of the great Torah luminaries of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was Rabbi Meir Simcha haKohen of Dvinsk, often referred to eponymously by the name of one of his most famous works, *Ohr Sameyach*.

Meir Simcha was born in Butrimonys (Baltrimantz), Lithuania, in 1843. His father, Shamshon Kalonymous, was a wealthy merchant.

Meir Simcha grew up during the

tragic and terrible era of the Cantonist decrees. Enacted in 1827, these laws demanded a certain number of Jewish boys be conscripted into the Czar's army for 25 years. Though the boys taken were supposed to begin army service at age 18, they were first sent at age 12 to the homes of Russian peasants to "prepare" them for army life. It was not unusual for boys as young as 8 to be snatched away and sent to peasant farms.

A Taste of Torah

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personal service to G-d, it is indeed praiseworthy to be a *tam*. However, when it pertains to dealing with others, one must use the intellect. This can mean assessing how to properly help someone or how to deal with friends and spouses. Ensuring that one deals properly with others requires a great deal of shrewdness and forethought.

With regards to serving G-d and learning Torah, Yaakov was a *tam*, dwelling in the tents, which, says Rashi, refers to the tents of Torah. However, when Yaakov met up with Lavan, Yaakov carefully sized him up. He understood that Lavan was a trickster through and through, and the way to deal with a corrupt man was to protect himself by outsmarting

him. The Talmud (Megilla 13b), when discussing Yaakov's approach in dealing with Lavan, cites the verse in Samuel II (22:27), "With the pure act purely, with the corrupt act perversely."

Indeed, Yaakov possessed both the trait of *tam* as well as *yashar*. Even while he was intelligent and astute enough to be considered a "brother" to Lavan, Yaakov still subjected his whole self to the will of Hashem and was a complete *tam*. May Hashem give us the strength to use our intellect and wits to discover how we can best help one another. But when it comes to serving G-d, we must strive to put our intellect aside and to submit ourselves to simply doing G-d's will.

- 1) Better than the king's gold 26:13 s.v. ki gadal
- 2) Pig's feet 26:34 s.v. ben arba'im
- 3) Pesach offering 27:9 s.v. shnei
- 4) Garden of Eden 27:27 s.v. waymachi
- 5) Italy 27:39 s.v. mishmanai
- 6) Died during the engagement 28:9 s.v. achos

Parsha Quizzers - Answers