

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Vayera

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A Taste of Torah Of Blessing, Trees, and Peace Treaties

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

Most of us are familiar with the phrase *Melech ha'olam*, King of the world, recited as part of the numerous *brachos* (blessings) we recite throughout the day. Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch (1806-1888) points out that in contrast to the *bracha* text instituted by our Sages, this reference to Hashem appears in *Tanach* only two times. The first of these is in this week's *parsha*. Avraham, after swearing not to harm Avimelech, king of the Philistines, or his descendants, plants a tree (referred to by the Torah as an *eishel*) and calls out in the name of "Hashem *Elokei Olam*," "Hashem, G-d of *Olam*." What is the significance of this particular juncture of swearing to maintain peace and tree-planting that Avraham associated specifically with this name of G-d?

Rabbi Hirsch explains that the word *olam*, literally translated as world, has a different meaning here and throughout *Tanach*. The root of *olam* is *alam*, which means hidden. Rabbi Hirsch explains that this refers to the future, which is hidden from man. Picture the scene: Avimelech, a great king, approaches Avraham, an old man of 102 years, seeking a peace treaty for future generations. What is the future of Avraham? None other than Yitzchak, at the time a baby of two years old. Why was it so important for Avimelech to secure peace from an old man and his baby son, if not because of the realization he must have had of the meaning of the birth of that son to his aged father.

A baby at the time, Yitzchak was the symbol of the birth of the future

mighty Jewish Nation, and Avimelech wanted to secure peace with that nation. In that light, Avraham, too, saw this event as the beginning of the fulfillment of all of G-d's promises for the future. Through this event, it emerged clearly that not only was Hashem the ruler of the present, but that He was also the complete ruler of the future, however distant.

This, explains Rabbi Hirsch, was the significance of planting a tree. A tree also begins as a small and vulnerable seed, but eventually, in the future, through the care and nurture of the master farmer, it grows into a mighty tree that produces delicious fruits to be enjoyed by all. Thus, Avraham's pronouncement of *Elokei Olam* indicates that Hashem is the One who tends to and nurtures all future developments.

Rabbi Hirsch points out that with regard to the *bracha* text instituted by our Sages, the world *olam* has a dual meaning. On the one hand, we acknowledge that Hashem is the G-d of the world. He is the One who rules all of nature, be it the growth and blossoming of vegetation and fruit, the amazing synchronization of the human body, or the dazzling flash of lightning and mighty clap of thunder. At the same time, there is a deeper acknowledgment; we recognize that Hashem is the Master of the hidden future. This means that all present events are much more than what's happening now; they are a part and a piece in the grand scheme of the future. All current events are leading toward a world that will be both spiritually and physically perfected.

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Stories for the Soul

Unwanted Guest

A vagrant Jew had acquired a reputation as a thief and was ostracized by society. However, when he came to the Polish hamlet of Radin, he encountered Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Trop (1871-1928), the Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) of the Radin Yeshiva. Rabbi Trop greeted the man warmly, invited him to eat by his table, and even offered him a bed to sleep in for the night in his home.

The Jews of Radin began murmuring among themselves, wondering why Rabbi Trop was exerting himself for this unsavory character.

Someone worked up the courage to ask Rabbi Trop why he was treating this thief with such warmth.

Rabbi Trop answered in surprise, "It's known that a thief pays back double the value of what he stole, and if he can't pay it back, he's sold as a slave. But where is it written that I'm exempt from fulfilling the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* (hosting guests)? Isn't he a Jew? Didn't Avraham Avinu fulfill the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* even with wanderers who worshipped the dust of their feet?

"It's true that it's risky to bring a suspected thief into my house, but I can watch over him carefully the whole time he's in my home. However, I have no excuse to exempt myself from the mitzvah."

Indeed, the word on the street was that Rabbi Trop remained awake the entire night, to keep an eye on his guest!

Kollel Happenings

T4T CLE CONFERENCE ON DEC. 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, all with CLE credits, 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 11/20; \$72 entire event/\$25 per class thereafter. To register, 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.

SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfias 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.

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) An agent for an agent
- 2) New judge
- 3) Wine available
- 4) Too dangerous to stay
- 5) Apple doesn't fall far from the tree
- 6) Satanic entanglement

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part XXVIII

In 1940, Rabbi Silver organized a second convention in Cincinnati. Rabbi Silver offered to pay the travel expenses of *rabbanim* attending, and the event was a great success. The fact that the convention was held in Cincinnati, the center for Reform Judaism in America, was itself a statement that Torah Judaism had arrived in America.

In subsequent years and decades, Agudas Yisrael of America grew to become the leading umbrella organization representing Torah Jewry in America that did not align itself with the Mizrahi movement. The Agudah has achieved much in ensuring that the Torah community of America can grow and enjoy the freedoms and opportunities of the United States without compromising its traditional values and mores. Today, it is one of the most influential

Orthodox organizations in America.

In 1949, Rabbi Silver founded the Chofetz Chaim Day School, also known as the Cincinnati Hebrew Day School, which thrives until this day. He also produced many students who later became leaders of American Jewry in their own right. One of his most famous students is Rabbi Shlomo Wahrman.

Born in Leipzig in 1927, Rabbi Wahrman witnessed Kristallnacht in 1938. He and his family fled Germany in 1939 and arrived in New York City. In 1940, the Wahrman family moved to Cincinnati, and young Shlomo became close with Rabbi Silver. Rabbi Wahrman later became the Rosh Yeshiva of HANC (Hebrew Academy of Nassau County), and was known as a great Torah scholar, educator, advisor and author of numerous Torah works.

A Taste of Torah

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And even if it is sometimes hard to understand why the pain and suffering of a particular moment or period are necessary, we do not look into the future for a better and easier time. Rather, we acknowledge that Hashem is the Master Orchestrator of both the

present and the future, and we realize that this present situation of challenge is a necessary part of that master plan.

We recite blessings all the time. Let us not only attribute the present world to Hashem, but the future, too!

- 1) An agent for an agent 18:4 s.v. yuchach
- 2) New judge 19:1 s.v. vilot
- 3) Wine available 19:33 s.v. vatashkena
- 4) Too dangerous to stay 20:15 s.v. hinei
- 5) Apple doesn't fall far from the tree 21:21
- 6) Satanic entanglement 22:13 s.v. bikamav s.v. me'etetz

Parsha Quizzers - Answers