



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Yisro

February 14, 2020

A Taste of Torah Life-Changing Moments

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

We all know that Torah learning is important. It is clear from the Torah, our Sages and countless other Torah sources that one should spend as much time as possible studying Torah, expending effort to plumb its depths. One may even merit to uncover a new understanding in Torah that has never been revealed before.

Having said that, when one thinks back to life-changing moments, one doesn't generally look at the moment of understanding something new in Torah as life changing. Normally, the first thing that comes to mind is the point when one changed jobs, got married, had a first child, etc. But one doesn't normally think of the time that he sat down to learn for a few minutes as a life-changing moment; rather, it tends to be viewed as a special time that one merited to study Torah.

A look at the name of this week's Torah portion tells us otherwise. The name of this week's parsha is Yisro. Rashi points out that Yisro had seven names. He merited the name "Yeser" because a new section was included in the Torah based on his proposal, as he suggested that Moshe delegate most of his duties in judging the Nation to others. Rashi continues that the reason why the letter *vav* was added to the name Yesser, creating the name Yisro, was because he converted to Judaism.

Rabbi Leib Gurwicz (Rosh Yeshiva [Dean] of Gateshead Yeshiva; 1906-1982) points out that one would

assume that converting to Judaism was Yisro's greatest accomplishment, while the fact that he was the cause of a new section added to the Torah was something very special, but not on par with his conversion. However, we see that converting to Judaism provided a mere extra letter for his name, while his revelation of a new part Torah earned him an entirely new name.

This teaches that revealing a new understanding in Torah doesn't just elevate the person, but completely changes the very essence of the person, so much so that the person needs a new name! Torah is literally life transforming, and every extra level of understanding completely changes the person. How does Torah study effect such great change in a person?

King Solomon writes (Proverbs 6:23), "For a mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light." The difference between a lamp and light is that the lamp is a vessel that can hold light, but it's not the light itself. Fulfilling commandments creates lamps of light that surround the person, providing spiritual illumination of one's path through life. But studying Torah is in a different league, for it is the light itself. When one reveals a new aspect of the Torah, the person himself shines forth the light of the Torah into the world. This light completely transforms the person into an entirely new existence. He is not merely a lamp that enables light to illuminate, but a source of the light itself.

Stories for the Soul

Words Unspoken

The 1997 10th Daf Yomi Siyum Hashas, celebrating the completion of the 10th cycle of the worldwide folio-a-day Talmud study program, marked the first time that the main event was held in two locations in the New York-New Jersey area. While the previous siyum had been held in Madison Square Garden, this celebration offered a second location, Nassau Coliseum. The two venues had a live hookup with each other, with many of the major speeches and features taking place at one location - mostly at Madison Square Garden, the primary venue - while being viewed on screens at the other location. A major challenge for organizers was making sure the two events were coordinated, so that attendees at one venue would not have to sit around waiting for the other venue to begin its shared feature.

Rabbi Nosson Scherman, General Editor for Artscroll/Mesorah Publications, was planning on attending the event at Nassau Coliseum, and he was asked by one of the organizers to prepare some words of Torah to fill the time in case there was a delay from Madison Square Garden. Sure enough, at one point there was a delay, and Rabbi Scherman ascended to the podium and began speaking. Suddenly, in middle of his talk, he was told, "We need to cut back to Madison Square Garden right now!" Without missing a beat, Rabbi Scherman, mid-sentence, announced, "And now we return

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Kollel Happenings

SAVE THE DATE! KOLLEL 22ND ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION ON MARCH 24

The Kollel will mark 22 years of bringing Torah to Denver Jewry with its annual Celebration, 2020 Vision, on March 24 at Aish of the Rockies. Kerry and Mindy Berman will be honored with the Aish Tamid Award for their steady and unwavering dedication to Torah and the Denver Jewish community.

WHEN AN AGENT EXCEEDS AUTHORITY AT MAR. 4 T4T

Join Bob Weiss, Vice President/CFO of LCM Property Management, and Rabbi Shmuel Halpern, Program Director for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore this fascinating subject. March 4th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

TORAH BY THE MOON

A night out for couples to engage in Torah learning! Men join Rabbi Shmuel Halpern for Tractate Brachos in Halacha and Aggada. Women attend *Chassidus in Real Life* with Rabbi Moshe Heyman. Mondays, 8-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St. For more info visit denverkollel.org or email Rabbi Heyman, rmh@denverkollel.org.

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) Go back home | 4) Bedsheet |
| 2) Arrow protection | 5) Cannot make stone to gold |
| 3) Added a third | 6) Double blessing |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk - Part XII

Normally, the Torah leaders of the Jewish communities - the rabbis, heads of yeshivos, and Chassidic rebbes - were not invited to these conferences, but for the 1910 conference, the government invited the Rabbinic leadership to the conference. In advance of this conference, preliminary meetings of the Rabbinic leadership were held - one in Vilna, and another in Warsaw - to prepare and create an official platform for the St. Petersburg meeting. (It should be noted that these meetings were held in secret, as it was illegal to hold such a gathering in the Russian Empire without an official license from the government.) Forty-two rabbanim were present at the Vilna meeting, including some of the greatest Torah leaders of the time such as Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski and Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik.

One of the major issues discussed was an institution known as the *rav mita'am*. The Czarist government required that the official rabbi of a community had to be

licensed by the government. To obtain this license, the individual had to be fluent in the Russian language and be sufficiently educated in secular areas. Most traditional Jews in the Russian Empire spoke Yiddish and did not know much Russian and had minimal if any secular education; the government rules were part of an attempt to "acculturate" the Jews in the Empire and thus help assimilate them. These rules were supported strongly by the Jewish movements that wanted to "modernize" Judaism by abandoning traditional Torah Judaism and to create a new Judaism devoid of spiritual content.

Thus, the *rav mita'am* was an individual, usually not terribly learned but meeting the governmental requirements, who was appointed as the "rabbi" of the community for governmental needs, such as marriages, births, and the like. However, the community also had to hire a real rabbi who could serve in the capacity of being the Torah leader for his flock.

Stories for the Soul

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to Madison Square Garden!" and returned to his seat.

Our Sages teach us that Moshe, as the transmitter of Torah from Hashem to the Jewish People, was totally unconcerned about his own needs; he was solely devoted to doing what

needed to be done on behalf of the Jewish People. Those who follow in Moshe's footsteps, and become the transmitters of Torah, must also focus on their students' needs and not their own.

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| 1) Go back home 18:2 s.v. <i>achar</i> | 1) Go back home 18:2 s.v. <i>achar</i> |
| 2) Arrow protection 19:4 s.v. <i>al kanfei</i> | 2) Arrow protection 19:4 s.v. <i>al kanfei</i> |
| 3) Added a third 19:15 s.v. <i>heyu nichonim</i> | 3) Added a third 19:15 s.v. <i>heyu nichonim</i> |
| 4) Bedsheet 19:20 s.v. <i>vayered</i> | 4) Bedsheet 19:20 s.v. <i>vayered</i> |
| 5) Cannot make stone to gold 20:7 s.v. <i>lashav</i> | 5) Cannot make stone to gold 20:7 s.v. <i>lashav</i> |
| 6) Double blessing 20:11 s.v. <i>berach</i> | 6) Double blessing 20:11 s.v. <i>berach</i> |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers