



A Taste of Torah

Rising from the Ashes

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

Life is a constant cycle of ups and downs. One would assume that the best path through life is to keep moving forward and upward. If one slips, repent, get back up and keep going.

However, our Sages have revealed a concept which allows one to actually utilize his downfalls as an impetus to rise even higher. One of the places where this concept can be found is through an understanding a mitzvah described in this week's Torah portion. The Torah gives the *kohanim* (priests) very precise instructions for what to do with the ashes upon the *Mizbe'ach* (Altar). Every morning, a *kohen* removes some of the ashes that remain after the fire has consumed the offerings of the previous day and places them on the floor next to the *Mizbe'ach*.

One would assume that the main part of the offering is the animal being offered. If so, why does the Torah make such a big deal out of the consumed ash from the offering? Furthermore, the Torah prefaces this mitzvah of separating the ashes by writing "this is the law of the *olah*-offering" which seems to imply that the main purpose of the offering is separating the ashes. How is such an idea to be understood?

The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905) explains that the *olah*-offering, while not a sin-offering per se, atones for one's thoughts and desires to sin. The offering is completely burned, representing the burning of one's base desires and purification of one's thoughts.

However, that is not enough. One now

has an obligation to elevate the ashes. This signifies, explains the Sfas Emes, that after the fallout from one's sin and after burning it, the failure must be utilized to take the person to even greater heights than before. When one has fallen and feels badly about it, one should take that inspiration and use it as an impetus to become more elevated and pure than he was before he had fallen.

This is the great emphasis of separating the ash. The Torah is teaching that the main purpose of the offering is ultimately to have an elevation from it. Of course, one must first burn the offering, destroying the negativity within himself. But don't stop there. The ultimate purpose is for the person to take those ashes and use it as inspiration to not slip again, reaching even higher levels than before.

Of course, one cannot use this as a license to commit a sin, rationalizing that it will be used as a springboard for inspiration and growth. Sin is forbidden, and one must do whatever possible to stay away from it. However, if one has already fallen prey to temptation, he should not waste the opportunity he is presented. If one simply repents and moves on, he will have missed the chance to grow through his failure. Rather, one should contemplate the feeling he had after he slipped, how clear it was to him that doing this was not a good idea. That realization is a means to shoot for the stars. Take the ashes of the sin and use them as the inspiration to strive for more purity and holiness.

Stories for the Soul

Blessing of Relief

Rebbetzin Basya Bender (1913-1996) was one of the pioneers of the Bais Yaakov movement that revolutionized girls' Jewish education in America following World War II. Her passion for Judaism inspired thousands of students across decades, as well as many others who interacted with her.

During the pregnancy of one of her children, Rebbetzin Bender developed a severe kidney infection which nearly took her life. While she eventually recovered, she suffered from kidney issues for the rest of her life.

In 1963, the pain from her condition reached a point that necessitated surgery. During the procedure, doctors discovered that it was necessary to remove the entire kidney.

For the first several days after the operation, Rebbetzin Bender was not allowed to leave her bed to relieve herself. After a few days, she was able to go to the bathroom on her own. After exiting, she recited the *asher yatzar* blessing (recited after relieving oneself) softly but with great care, appreciating that Hashem had restored this ability to her after her kidney issues. This process repeated itself every subsequent time she used the facilities.

Rebbetzin Bender had three non-Jewish roommates in the hospital; one of them observed her intently every time she recited this blessing. Finally, after several days, this

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Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email 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.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@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)

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| 1) Clean change of cloths | 4) Fatty exception |
| 2) First and last | 5) A lot in a little |
| 3) Only when sent to pasture | 6) White-robe service |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk - Part XIX

In the introduction to the Sefer Mekor Baruch, written by Rabbi Nachum Baruch Ginsburg, the author relates that he once visited Reb Meir Simcha and saw that he was very happy. Upon inquiring about this joy, Reb Meir Simcha explained that the great 13th century medieval commentator the Rashba (Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderes) had asked a question on a difficult passage of Talmud in Tractate Chulin. The Rashba does not have a definitive answer, and instead concludes that there is a textual error. Reb Meir Simcha had worked on the problem and had come up with a definitive solution for this question.

Reb Meir Simcha continued that after finalizing the novel approach, he had dozed off. During his nap, he had dreamed that in the *Yeshiva shel Ma'ala* (Heavenly Academy), deceased Torah scholars were discussing the fact that there was a dearth of Torah scholars in the current generation who could develop novel Torah ideas. The Rashba announced "In the city of Dvinsk there lives a Rav who has understood and delved into the truth of the Torah even more than I was able to do!" The fact that his answer had received the approbation of the Rashba himself was a source of tremendous joy to him.

Stories for the Soul

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woman asked Rebbetzin Bender why she seemed to be talking to herself every time she exited the restroom.

Rebbetzin Bender proceeded to explain that she recites a special blessing thanking Hashem for the proper functioning of the human body after relieving herself. She then translated the blessing, word for word, for the woman.

The non-Jewish woman was amazed at the beauty of the blessing, and she engaged Rebbetzin Bender in

conversation often for the duration of their mutual stay. Even after returning home, this woman continued to write to Rebbetzin Bender.

In this week's parsha, the Torah discusses the *Korban Todah*, the Thanksgiving Offering brought when one has been saved from a dangerous situation. Appreciating the basic kindnesses that Hashem provides for us on a daily basis is an opportunity to connect with the deeper meaning of this offering.

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| 6) White-robe service 8:28 s.v. <i>vayakter</i> | 3) Only when sent to pasture 7:5 s.v. <i>asham</i> |
| 5) A lot in a little 7:3 s.v. <i>hakhel</i> | 2) First and last 6:5 s.v. <i>vi'arach</i> & s.v. <i>chehel</i> |
| 4) Fatty exception 7:24 s.v. <i>yai'aseh</i> | 1) Clean change of clothes 6:4 s.v. <i>ufashat</i> |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers