



A Taste of Torah

Hearing Aid

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

You have probably heard, at some point, of the great spiritual potential of a Shabbos or holiday. Or the supernal levels one can reach through performing a mitzvah, engaging in meaningful prayer, or applying oneself diligently to Torah study.

Hopefully, you have actually experienced this life-changing reality at some point. Many people, though, have a hard time consistently achieving a spiritual high when engaged in these activities. Going through the motions of a Shabbos, a prayer, a mitzvah, without really feeling much is frustrating, especially when you've been led to believe that living a Torah-observant life will give you great spiritual satisfaction. So, where do we go wrong?

There are a lot of reasons to explain why people struggle to connect to the practice of Judaism. This week's parsha offers one insight that can help us create a more meaningful experience.

Moshe, recounting the collective experiences of the Jewish People in the desert, discusses the creation of a multi-tiered justice system. Rather than having Moshe judge every case on his own, many judges were appointed to adjudicate cases. When a lower-tier court could not determine the law, the judges would go to the next level of judges for their opinion. Moshe relates he told the judges (Devarim 1:17), "And the matter which will be too difficult for you, you shall bring close to me, and I will hear it." The Baal Shem Tov (Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem; c. 1698-1760) wonders about the verbiage used in this verse. Why, he asks, is it necessary for Moshe to say "difficult for

you," when simply saying "a matter that will be difficult, you shall bring close to me" would have sufficed. Furthermore, why does Moshe say, "And I will hear it" - wouldn't it be more appropriate to say, "And I will make it known"? After all, Moshe's main point is that he will provide the solution, and that should be the focus of his message.

The Baal Shem Tov notes that in the teachings of our Sages, one often encounters the idea of a message that is conveyed regularly to humanity through a spiritual medium known as a *bas kol*, a Heavenly voice. The vast majority of people, observes the Baal Shem Tov, do not hear this voice, yet our Sages teach that it emerges regularly with a variety of important messages. The reason these messages are not audible to the average person, explains the Baal Shem Tov, is because most people lack the spiritual sensitivity to pick up these messages. Mired in a physical world, struggling to rise above the daily grind, our spiritual existence is covered by the grime of material pursuit and the like, and this blocks many from hearing the words of Heaven.

When a Jew in the desert had a hard time ascertaining what the Torah wanted in a particular circumstance, it was not because the answer wasn't there. It was because this person had not yet scaled the spiritual mountain to find the solution waiting there. Moshe expressed this reality when he said "difficult for you." Your inability to resolve the issue, says Moshe, starts and ends with your own spiritual shortcoming. The solution, said Moshe, is to "bring close to me." Moshe, the greatest prophet to ever

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Stories for the Soul

Dirty Laundry

Two women once came to Rabbi Aharon Yosef Bakst (1869-1941), better known as Reb Archik, the Rav of Lomza, with a bundle of laundry in tow. They were neighbors who shared a clothesline, they explained, and each woman claimed the clothes that had been on the line as her own. Reb Archik told them to leave the laundry with him, and he would present a verdict the following morning.

After the women left, Reb Archik took some of his own clothing and mixed it with the bundle of clothes they had brought. The next day, the women returned to his home. He called one of the women into the room that contained the clothes, and asked her to ascertain which items belonged to her. The woman selected the items that she believed belonged to her, and left Reb Archik's clothes behind, stating that they were not hers.

Reb Archik then called in the second woman. She looked over the laundry and confidently asserted that all the clothing was hers - sealing her fate as the dishonest party.

In this week's parsha, Moshe recounts how he provided instructions to the newly-appointed judges of the Jewish People. Being a judge is not only about knowing the law. A good judge must also know how to evaluate the validity of claims made before him and to sniff out those who are dishonest.

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) Tough person, tough place | 4) A modest reprieve |
| 2) Mob request | 5) Public communication |
| 3) Dies upon contact | 6) Service award |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael - Part XIV

In 1644, Rabbi Menashe met a Portuguese ex-converso Jew by the name of Antonio de Montezinos, or Aharon Levi. Montezinos had had travelled through the New World. During his travels, he had encountered the indigenous people of the Andes

Mountains in South America. Montezinos believed that these natives were the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, who had been exiled by the Assyrian ruler Sancheriv following his conquest of the Northern Kingdom of the Land of Israel.

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live, was completely removed from any connection to the physical. Indeed, when Hashem instructed Moshe, at the burning bush, to remove his shoes from upon his feet, He was actually ordering him to leave any connection to his physical self behind, and to become a spiritual being. When a judge would be lacking the spiritual readiness to ascertain the correct answer to a Torah question, he would bring the question "close" to Moshe. On a deeper level, says the Baal Shem Tov, this means the person would approach Moshe's level of moving beyond the constraints and detritus of physical existence. Once the person made this journey, he himself would be able to hear the answer on his own! It would not be necessary for Moshe to inform him of the solution to the problem. The individual's personal growth would enable him, with his newfound connection achieved through drawing close to Moshe, to arrive at

the correct answer. This is what Moshe meant when he said "and I will hear it." Like the aforementioned *bas kol*, the Torah was properly heard by Moshe, and, by extension, by the questioner himself!

This idea has great relevance when we seek to maximize spiritual growth through the many opportunities we encounter. Simply going through a Shabbos, a prayer, a mitzvah or a Torah study session but not really seeking to prepare ourselves beforehand for this great spiritual experience may well leave us feeling disappointed. This is not due to any shortfall on the part of the mitzvah, but may well be due to our own lack of readiness to receive the great content that is available for us. By putting oneself into the proper state of mind before engaging in any area of Jewish life, one can take far greater advantage of the opportunity for growth that it provides.

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| 1) Tough person, tough place 1:4 s.v. Sichon | 4) A modest reprieve 2:9 s.v. ve'al |
| 2) Mob request 1:22 vatkrivun | 5) Public communication 2:17 s.v. veyidaber |
| 3) Dies upon contact 1:44 s.v. ka'asher | 6) Service award 3:2 s.v. al tira |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers