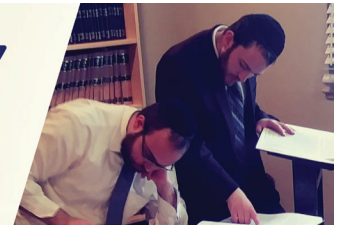




TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Chayei Sara

November 13, 2020

A Taste of Torah

Smart Servants

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

Built deep into the human psyche is the desire for freedom. It's part of the fabric of our culture and the countries where we reside. We feel restrained and shackled when we are subjected to following the orders and demands of others.

In a similar vein, we have a deep desire to relax and not have to work too hard. Many people devote most of their lives working endless hours just so that one day they will be able to retire and finally realize their life's dream - to sit back and enjoy life without needing to work at all.

Are these feelings correct and healthy feelings? What is the Torah view on these fundamental subjects?

In this week's Torah portion, we are told in great detail the story of Eliezer, the servant of Avraham. Eliezer was incredibly devoted to his master and spent his life assisting him in all his endeavors.

Our Sages, based on a verse in Proverbs, describe Eliezer as a "smart servant." What is the definition of a smart servant?

The Medrash explains that Eliezer made the following calculation: He knew that he was a descendant of Cham, who was told by his father, Noach, that all his descendants were destined to be servants to others. If so, thought Eliezer, I may end up being a servant to any random unsavory character from the street. Eliezer therefore decided to be proactive and make himself a servant to the great personality and leader Avraham. He would thus have the opportunity to serve a great person. This is the meaning of the description of Eliezer as a smart servant.

Rabbi Gedalia Schorr (1910-1979) expands on this Medrash and points out that this calculation applies to each one of us. Being smart means to be aware of one's options in a realistic way and to then make the best choices working with those options. Eliezer knew his options and, instead of scheming how to break free of those less-than-ideal possibilities, he instead submitted to his reality and decided to make the best possible life for himself within his reality. Instead of constantly trying to be his own master and eventually ending up being a servant to an Average (or less-than-average) Joe, he merited to live in the household of the righteous Avraham. Eliezer excelled under Avraham's influence, and he became his master's right-hand man and overseer of his estate. Our Sages teach us that Eliezer also grew to become a spiritual giant, teaching to others the lessons he learned from Avraham.

Rabbi Schorr continues that this way of thinking applies to all of us. As mentioned before, deep in the human psyche is a desire for freedom and relaxation. But if we would be smart, we would realize that either way we cannot be totally free, since G-d created us and took us out of Egypt, all in order that we should serve Him.

So, instead of spending our lives trying to be our own masters when that is ultimately not a true, realistic option, we would be a lot smarter to submit to our reality that we are here to serve G-d. We can then spend our lives being a servant to the best possible Master that one could dream of and, like Eliezer, that itself will provide us the avenue to achieving greatness.

Stories for the Soul

Right on the Money

The Ben Ish Chai (Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad; 1832-1909) related the following story:

A carpenter living in Jerusalem named Avraham had a large sum of money stolen from his house one night by a thief. The thief escaped to the Ein Gedi desert, where he got lost and died of thirst. A man named Eliyahu was travelling through Ein Gedi, found the body, and buried it as a *mais mitzvah* (a body with no one to bury it; the body must be buried in the spot it is found), taking the money for himself. Eliyahu returned home and hid the money in the hollow of a tree.

That very day, Eliyahu's father died, and Eliyahu forgot about the money. During the week of mourning, a big storm hit uprooted trees all over the neighborhood.

Following his father's passing, it fell upon Eliyahu to provide a livelihood for the family, and he traveled to Jerusalem, looking for a job. He was hired as an apprentice by none other than Avraham the Carpenter.

Avraham went to collect lumber from the lake, where the fallen trees were lying. Chopping open a tree, he found his money, still lying in its original container! He told Eliyahu the miraculous story of how the money stolen from him was returned in a tree. Eliyahu, amazed, then told him HIS part of the story.

Avraham insisted that Eliyahu take the money, as he felt that according to halacha, it truly belonged to him, but Eliyahu refused. Suspecting that

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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.

THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION ON ZOOM

The Story of Creation is one of the most cryptic parts of the Torah – yet it is also the very beginning of the Torah! Join Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky on Monday nights, 7:10-7:55 pm, for a seven-part Zoom series focused on achieving a deeper perspective of the Seven Days of Creation. These classes, based on the teachings of the brilliant Torah scholar and teacher Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, will allow you to get re-acquainted with some of the fundamentals of Torah in a deeper fashion. Visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org for more info.

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.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: When may something be thrown in the trash only if it's less than a *kezayis* (olive's-volume)?

Answer: It is forbidden to throw bread into the trash (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 180:43). However, this halacha only applies if the piece of bread is at

least the size of a *kezayis*. If the bread is moldy, even a *kezayis*-sized piece it may be thrown in the trash. In addition, bread may be wrapped in a plastic bag and placed in the trash (Vezos Habracha pg. 18).

This week's question: What do breadcrumbs have to do with poverty?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part III

The government refused to accept two Jewish communities with separate leadership. Anan resolved this problem by claiming that he and his followers actually had a different belief system from the other Jews, and thus needed their own community. This claim was accepted, and the Karaites (from the

word *kera*, or verse, as they believe only in the written verses of the Torah and not the Oral Law), was born.

The Karaites were a fringe movement for some years, but by the time Rav Saadia arrived on the scene, they had become a significant force in the Jewish world.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

The same is true regarding our desire to relax and not have to work hard. Since the Sin of Adam, Mankind was cursed that he would have to work hard and toil to produce his bread. A human is thus destined to a life of toil! Let us be smart servants and choose to do invest that toil in the study of Torah and fulfilling

its commandments. Instead of toiling in worldly matters, let us toil and invest all our efforts in the service of G-d. The dividends of this life-altering choice are immeasurable. We have chosen to serve a Master Who will give us the highest salary and benefits, including an eternal retirement fund!

Stories for the Soul

continued from front

Eliyahu was simply embarrassed to take the money, Avraham asked his wife to bake a cake and to hide the money inside. Eliyahu was scheduled to return home and take a break from his work, and Avraham presented the cake as a parting gift.

Eliyahu unsuspectingly took the cake and rode on his horse and wagon out of Jerusalem. A border guard searched his carriage, saw the cake and asked to buy it. Eliyahu sold it to him.

The guard, meanwhile, took that cake

and presented it as a gift at a wedding being made by Avraham the carpenter – who then discovered the money inside! By this point, Avraham was impressed by Eliyahu and proposed that he marry his daughter. The couple married, and the money was given to them as a gift.

In this week's parsha, Eliezer turns to Hashem to find the perfect wife for Yitzchak. As our Sages teach, Hashem is the ultimate matchmaker, and many people can relate the clear Divine providence in finding their match.

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