



Parshas Ki Seitzei

August 20, 2021

## A Taste of Torah

### Setting the Tone

by Rabbi Nesanel Kipper

The opening sections of Parshas Ki Seitzei discuss three seemingly unrelated topics. The first section discusses the laws of the *yefas to'ar* (the "beautiful woman"), where the Torah permits one to marry a non-Jewish woman captured during war (under specific circumstances). Acknowledging the strong *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination) the soldier has in this situation, the Torah provides a permissible path for marrying the non-Jewish woman (see Rashi 21:11).

The second section discusses a scenario of a man married to two wives, one of whom is beloved and one of whom is despised. Both women have born him a son, with the eldest child being the son of the despised wife. The Torah forbids taking away the rightful double inheritance reserved for the first-born son from the child of the despised wife.

The third section of the parsha focuses upon the *ben sorer umoreh*, the wayward and rebellious son, where the Torah details the laws for handling a particular case of a child who exhibits very sinful and rebellious behavior involving theft from his parents and excessive eating and drinking.

What is the connection between these three adjacent topics? Rashi explains that these three seemingly disparate subjects are actually all different components of one connected sequence of events: One who marries a non-Jewish *yefas to'ar* (subject 1) will eventually come to despise her (subject 2), and will have a child from her who will evolve into a *ben sorer umoreh* (subject 3).

This explanation seems to imply that the act of marrying a *yefas to'ar* is the catalyst for the subsequent terrible chain of events that occurs in this marriage. How can something explicitly permitted by the Torah be the cause of such catastrophe?

The Shem Mishmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain of Sochatchov; 1855-1926) asks an additional question. When the verses discuss the topic of the two wives, it also teaches the law of the firstborn son taking a double portion in the inheritance. Why is this law placed specifically in the middle of these subjects?

The Shem Mishmuel answers by first addressing why the Torah rewards the firstborn with a double portion in the inheritance. He explains that a firstborn's actions set the tone for the rest of his siblings. The way the eldest child conducts himself sets the tone for his younger siblings, for better or for worse; this places a great responsibility upon his shoulders. It is for this reason that the Torah gives a double portion to the firstborn, since his responsibilities are that much greater. The firstborn's actions have double impact, as they impact not just himself, but also his siblings, and so he receives a double inheritance. This concept can be applied in a more global sense, such as when one begins a new project or embarks on a new journey. The beginning of the endeavor is doubly important, as it sets the tone for everything that follows.

Knowing the importance of starting something off with the proper foundation, we can now understand the mistake of one who married a *yefas to'ar*. When one marries such a woman, although technically permitted, he begins his marriage in a less-than-ideal way. This sets the tone for the rest of the marriage and can lead to eventually despising her and having a child who is a *ben sorer umoreh*. It is especially important that, when beginning something new, one have an extra level of sensitivity to do what Hashem truly wants, regardless of whether it is technically permissible

continued on back

## Stories for the Soul

### Modestly Successful

Jews throughout Europe converged in Vienna, Austria for the 1929 *knessia gedolah*, a massive gathering of Torah leaders and rabbanim (rabbis) to address the pressing issues of the day. People of Chassidic, Yeshiva, and *Yekkish* (German) backgrounds came together to hear the words of the leading Torah sages of the era. But, as often occurs at such events, there arose a debate. Although men and women were seated in separate areas, there was a question as to whether a *mechitza* (barrier) ought to be erected between the men and the women. Some said it was a necessity, others said absolutely not, while others were unsure.

The various parties agreed to present the question to the saintly Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1838-1933), and to abide by his ruling. The Chofetz Chaim replied that although the strict letter of the law does not require a *mechitza*, nonetheless, if there are those who want one, it should be provided. The Chofetz Chaim then explained the reasoning for his answer. The Torah states in this week's portion, "And there shall not be any matter of *erva* amongst you and turn away from behind you." (Devarim 23:15) The term *erva* means a shameful thing, and alludes to, among other things, a lack of *tznius* (modesty). Thus, the greater the degree of sensitivity there is to this area, the closer Hashem comes to us. When there is less sensitivity, while perhaps technically permitted, Hashem distances Himself.

*Tznius* is more than just a set of technical rules that must be abided by. It is a mindset, a sensitivity, and an awareness to the proper attitude one must have towards such matters.

continued on back



## Kollel Happenings

### MUST ONE GET THE COVID VACCINE? AT SEPTEMBER 2 T4T ON ZOOM

Is vaccination during a pandemic optional? Is it a mitzvah? And just how skeptical of the mainstream medical community should one be? Join Dr. Daniel Mogyoros, MD, Infectious Diseases Specialist, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they take a shot at pinpointing the proper approach to this problem at the Thursday, September 2 T4T. Visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org) for further details.

### WELL READ: EXPLORING THE TORAH READINGS OF THE TISHREI HOLIDAYS

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher and explore the holiday connection of the Torah reading of Rosh Hashana, the Book of Yonah of Yom Kippur, and the Book of Koheles of Sukkos on Mondays 8/23, 8/30, & 9/13. In-person classes in Southeast Denver and via Zoom. Visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org) for more details.

### SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. For sponsorships and more info, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

## Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: When would recitation of *al ha'eitz* (normally recited on fruits of the Seven Species) on a beverage fulfill the *bracha ucharona* obligation?

Answer: If one erroneously recited *al ha'eitz* after drinking wine or grape juice

instead of *al hagefen*, the blessing is not recited again (Kaf Hachaim 208:89).

This week's question: When would one recite an after-blessing of *borei nefashos* after eating food that normally requires *me'ein shalosh* (i.e., *al hamichya* or *al ha'eitz*)?

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XIII

The reality of the time was that other movements of the Jewish world - notably Zionism - was organized into a political structure, and the smaller, unorganized non-Zionist groups and communities would be unable to effectively present and promote their positions, fundraise, intercede with governmental bodies

and charitable institutions, obtain governmental recognition for religious schools and other similar political needs unless they united under one banner. Ultimately, each community retained its own policies and positions, while simultaneously uniting under the overarching banner of Agudath Israel.

## A Taste of Torah

*continued from front*

or not. It is thus apropos that the law of the firstborn's double inheritance be taught here, thus conveying the idea of starting something off with the proper foundation.

This idea is also demonstrated by the *ben sorer umoreh* himself. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 72a) explains that although the crimes of a *ben sorer umoreh* - theft and gluttony - are not worthy of capital punishment, he is nevertheless killed because his behavior indicates that he will continue to spiral downward and will eventually end up murdering in order to maintain his terrible habits. It is preferable that he die now rather than continue down this sinful path that will lead to much more terrible acts.

Now, bear in mind that this boy, per the Talmud, is merely three months after his bar mitzvah. Shouldn't this child be

given some time to see if he will improve? But here again, the Torah is testifying on the importance of beginnings, for the beginning of something is what sets the tone for everything that follows. Again, we see the importance of starting something off on the right foot. This boy, who has just entered adulthood, has displayed behavior that indicates he is on a path of destruction.

We all have many beginnings throughout our lives. Becoming a bar/bas mitzvah. The beginning of a marriage. The beginning of a job. Every week and every day is a new beginning. Every new year, too, is a new beginning. As we approach Rosh Hashana, let us strive to put in our best effort to begin the year on the right footing and, with Hashem's help, we will merit a favorable judgment and see success in the coming year.

## Stories for the Soul

*continued from front*

Certainly, a community must take the spiritual level of its members into account when making decisions as to what demands should be made of the local residents. But at the same time, those who may not be at

that level ought to appreciate the idealism and dedication of those who seek to live beyond the letter of the law, and who want to follow a lifestyle that enables the Divine Presence to reside in close proximity.

To sponsor Torah Weekly, delivered weekly in print and via email to thousands of Jews worldwide, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)  
Denver Community Kollel | 5080 W. 14th Ave., Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855  
[info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) | [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org)

To receive Torah Weekly by email, email to [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)