



Parshas Bereishis

October 1, 2021

## A Taste of Torah

### Life Support

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

It seems as elusive as it does impossible. From Alexander the Great to Ponce de Leon to modern science, Mankind has sought to restore youth and become immortal since time immemorial. Ironically, one of humanity's longest-running obsessions was actually its reality at the dawn of time. Adam and Chava (Eve), the first humans to walk the Earth, were not meant to perish. It was only after eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that death became their fate.

Or were they always meant to die? A puzzling passage in the Ramban's commentary seems to indicate that death loomed large for Adam and Eve right from the outset. Commenting on the reasoning Chava gave for naming her firstborn son Kayin - "for I have acquired a man with Hashem" (Bereishis 4:1) - the Ramban explains Chava's intent: "This son shall be for me as an acquisition for Hashem, for after we die, he will serve Hashem in our stead." The Talmud (Sanhedrin 38b) teaches that Kayin and his brother Hevel were born before the catastrophic Tree of Knowledge debacle, yet Chava expresses her realization that death is a foregone conclusion!

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Bakst (1915-2003) explains based on an earlier passage of the Ramban's commentary (Bereishis 2:17), where the Ramban states that the opinion of "the men of nature" (i.e., scientists) is that Man was doomed to death from the outset since he is a composite of body and soul (and any composite must inevitably eventually break down into

its original elements). The Ramban continues, however, that our Sages teach that Man was only condemned to death after having sinned, but Hashem's original desire at the time of Creation was for humans to "cleave to Hashem constantly, and He would sustain him forever."

Here lies the key, says Rabbi Bakst. Indeed, from a strictly scientific view, no living being comprised of life force and physical body ought to be immortal. But by attaching oneself to Hashem, Who always has and always will exist and is the Source of life, eternal life can be achieved by a mere mortal.

So long as Adam and Chava observed Hashem's commandment, their attachment to Him was perfect and their eternity assured. By disobeying Him, they moved away from Hashem - and the decay and eventual death that was their natural state immediately began.

This idea is expressed in a much later verse in the Book of Devarim, notes Rabbi Bakst. "But you who cling to Hashem, your G-d - you are all alive today. (Devarim 2:4) It is the cleaving and clinging to Hashem that provides life! Many people, notes Rabbi Bakst, look at Torah and mitzvos as a yoke which negatively impact one's life. Yet here it becomes clear that the opposite is true - through Torah and mitzvos, one attaches himself to the ultimate source of life! One who is bereft of mitzvos has detached himself from life. Yes, he may still be physically alive, and he may even enjoy the "life" he creates for himself. But this

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## Stories for the Soul

### Take Your Foot Off the Pedal

Sam Zeitlin was a champion bicyclist born and raised in Brooklyn. After encountering anti-Semitism in his line of sport, he moved to Israel, where he continued training for the Olympics. With someone the caliber of Sam, the Israeli bicycling team could compete in the upcoming Olympics.

Meanwhile, Sam became interested in Judaism, and he enrolled in a yeshiva, eventually becoming fully observant. And so it was with great consternation that he discovered that the Olympic bicycling tryouts would be held on Shabbos! His pleas fell on deaf ears, despite his importance to the Israeli team; no exceptions would be made.

In a momentous decision, Sam, now Shimon, decided he would forgo the Olympics and instead keep Shabbos.

The Olympics that year, 1972, were held in Munich, and Palestinian terrorists took eleven Jewish athletes hostage, eventually murdering all of them. It was then that Shimon realized how his decision saved his life.

Shabbos is a testament that Hashem created the world and continues to run it at every moment. When we recognize this, our observance of the Shabbos earns us Divine favor.

## Kollel Happenings

### WAR OF WORDS: THE TORAH VIEW OF "POLITICAL CORRECTNESS" AT OCT. 6 T4T ON ZOOM

Join Scott Levin, Regional Director for the Anti-Defamation League, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they parse the points of "political correctness" on Wednesday, October 6th at 7:30 pm via Zoom. Visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) for details and Zoom info.

### AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON CONTINUES

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

### TALMUDOBIYADOGEMARA CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Learn, review, and acquire a masechta! Boys in grades 6-8 are invited to join Rabbi Chaim Gross at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor weeknights Mon.-Thu. from 8-8:30 pm for a Gemara shiur followed by review. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at [rnk@denverkollel.org](mailto:rnk@denverkollel.org) for further details.

## Halacha Riddles

**Last week's question:** When would erroneously reciting *al hamichya* instead of *borei nefashos* not require recitation of the proper *borei nefashos*?

**Answer:** Normally, reciting *al hamichya* instead of *borei nefashos* requires one to recite the proper *borei nefashos*. However, if one recited *al hamichya* on rice instead of the proper *borei nefashos*,

the obligation has been fulfilled (Birkei Yosef 208:7, cited in Sha'arei Teshuva 208:9).

**This week's question:** How is it possible for one to recite *hamotzi* and eat bread, yet recite separate blessing for the other food during the meal and not recite *Birkas Hamazon* after the meal?

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XIX

These terrible crises only increased when the Bolsheviks took control of Russia and installed a communist government. The communists, particularly the Jewish communists, known as the *yeveskztzia*, were virulently anti-religious, and they made religious practice extremely difficult in the Soviet Union.

Following the war, Rabbi Shapiro became the rabbi of Sunik, where he reopened his Bnai Torah yeshiva (which, as discussed previously, offered vocational training as well). He also helped rebuild Jewish religious life and infrastructure which had been ravaged by the war, as well as the subsequent Polish-Russian War.

It is related that when upon assuming the post of rabbi in Sonik, he delivered a fiery speech wherein he addressed the sad state of Jewish communal infrastructure. He invoked the words of the Prophet Isaiah (6:20): *Go, my people, enter your chambers, and lock*

*your doors behind you. Hide for a brief moment until za'am (wrathful fury) passes.* The Hebrew word *za'am*, said Rabbi Shapiro, consists of the letters *zayin*, *ayin*, and *mem*. These letters stand for *zevachim* (slaughter), *eruvin* (a structure around a community that allows carrying in the public domain on Shabbos in many cases), and *mikvah* (ritual immersion). That is to say, the three major communal issues that must be addressed are kosher slaughter, a proper *eruv* to ensure Shabbos observance, and a proper *mikvah* to ensure family purity. If these things are ignored, continued the new rabbi, Heaven's wrath is aroused. It is therefore my intent, he concluded, to fight that these three vital institutions of Jewish life are attended to and taken care of.

In 1922, many Torah leaders of Poland and Galicia gathered in Warsaw to discuss how to deal with the chaotic reality of the Jews in Eastern Europe.

## A Taste of Torah

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is a living death. He is disconnected, and thus slowly coming apart. In the World to Come, when body and soul reunite forever and bask in the eternal bliss of living with the Almighty, those who sought immortality through

scientific channels will not see their efforts bear fruit. Those who devoted their lives to achieving closeness to Hashem through Torah and mitzvos, however, will exist in that state of ecstatic attachment for all time.

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