

# ST. LOUIS KOLLEL Family TORAH JOURNAL

## PARSHA PERSPECTIVES RABBI ZVI SOROKA

“When I ascended the mountain to receive the stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant which the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water.” (Deut. 9:9)

Being that the Torah is infinite and it wouldn't be feasible to be understood or transmitted within a limited span of time, it is safe to assume that Moshe's acquisition of the Torah during his forty day marathon in heaven was nothing short of a miraculous occurrence. The question is that once we are dealing with miracles why was it necessary for Moshe to spend forty days learning the Torah when technically it could have been accomplished in a quick instant?

A wise man once bemoaned that there are those that want to learn the entire Talmud in one single night and also want to sleep on that very night! (There's a fairly well-known observation that there are three occasions when yeshiva students think that they will finish all of Talmud: the night of Shavuot, when traveling on an airplane, and during Chazaras Hashatz — the chazzan's repetition of the Amida Shemoneh Esrei prayer- when one ideally should be paying attention and not studying other things.)

The commentaries explain that it is evident from here that an integral part of Torah learning is relentless effort, self-sacrifice, exerting oneself, and great diligence. Without the toil and effort one will not merit to properly grasp and understand the intricacies of the Torah.

Moshe did not eat or drink during the time he was being taught the Torah by G-d. He did not ask for the “pill-of-all-wisdom-and-knowledge,” or wish to take the easy way out. He even had a difficult struggle with the heavenly angels in order to win the right to bring the Torah down to earth and to give it to the Jewish people. Only after Moshe toiled with immense intensity and sacrifice did he merit Divine assistance to receive and comprehend the entire Torah so that he could transmit it to us for all generations. This is the proper attitude regarding one's approach to Torah study.

We can now ask, what is the significance of the forty days? Why not a month or a year?

Perhaps we can suggest the following: Rashi in Parshas Noach explains that the Great Flood was for forty days as a punishment for the sin of creating illegitimate children to be born. Forty days is the time it takes for the formation of the human fetus from the time of conception (Tzurav Havlad). Interestingly, a sinner who wishes to attain a complete atonement for certain transgressions is not reached until forty (minus one) lashes are administered. The sinner is then considered a new man. As Moshe was in the upper realms, in a sense, the Torah was “being born”. As a human being studies Torah, he is transformed and so, in a sense, he too was being born. (Moshe was a “born-again Jew!”) That is why he needed 40 days to acquire the Torah.

*(continued on next page)*

## NOTE

As our Kollel Rabbis take time off to “reJewvenate”, please enjoy the next few week's editions of the Kollel's “Family Torah Journal” which has been adapted and revised to include a variety of enjoyable lessons from Torah sites and past editions of our Kollel newsletter. The Kollel will be back in session on Monday, August 13th and all classes and programs resume at that time. We wish all of our Kollel Rabbis a healthy and enjoyable summer together with their families.

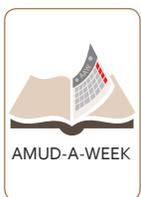
## MOMENTS OF GREATNESS

Reb Refoel Levine, the son of the renowned tzaddik, R' Aryeh Levine, was a remarkable tzaddik in his own right. Like his father, his tziddkus was most evident in his tremendous concern and love for his fellow Jews, especially those who were in need of support and encouragement.

One Motzei Shabbos, Reb Refoel was walking to the Kosel with a talmid when a man approached him to say hello. Reb Refoel answered him and asked him how his wife and children were doing. Apparently the man's family life was a difficult one because he spent the next few hours pouring his heart out. R' Refoel listened intently the entire time, and offered the man words of comfort. He sent him off with heartfelt brachos, and sent regards to his family. He reassured the man that he was davening for him as he said goodbye.

Reb Refoel's talmid was curious about who this man was, after seeing how much time R' Refoel had devoted to him. “Who was that man?” he asked.

R' Refoel responded, “I don't know. This is something I learned from my father. If someone greets you as if he recognizes you, you should respond to him in the same way.” (courtesy of Revach L'Neshama)



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## THE HARMONIOUS HOME RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

In this week's portion Moshe talks about what was perhaps the most traumatic moment of his career. After spending 40 days and nights on the highest level of spiritual elevation, he returned from Mount Sinai to a scene that filled him with horror. At the foot of the mountain the Jews were reveling around a golden calf.

Naturally Moshe was appalled. Here he was, holding the luchos (tablets), a G-d-given immortal gift, and he faced a nation plunged into an act of idolatry. He smashes the luchos.

But if we analyze the narrative there is an interesting word that Moshe inserts as he describes his actions on that day. "I descended from the mountain and the two tablet were in my hands. Then I saw and behold! You had sinned unto G-d; you made yourselves a molten calf. So I grasped the two luchos and I threw them from my two hands and smashed them in front of your eyes" (Deuteronomy 9:15-17).

Moshe was holding the tablets when descending the mountain. Why did he clutch them before throwing them from his hands? Weren't they already in his hands?

Shouldn't the verse tell us "Then I saw and behold! You had sinned and you made yourselves a molten calf. So I threw the tablets from my two hands and smashed them in front of your eyes." Why, and in what way did he grasp them...?

Moshe was upset. But he did not want to throw the luchos down in rage. He therefore grabbed them and held them tight before hurling them. Moshe, in his narrative tells us that he seized the luchos before breaking them. He wanted to send a clear message to the revelers below. That the mussar (ethical reprove) that he was affording with this action was not born out of irrational behavior or in anger.

Before smashing the luchos Moshe embraced them, just as a father hugging a child that he would soon admonish. Because Moshe wanted to tell us that before we let loose, we have to hold tight.

## PARSHA PERSPECTIVES CONT.

The verse in Mishlei (Proverbs) states, "Adam L'amal Yulad." — Man was created to toil. It is a well-known teaching of our Sages that a fetus is taught the Torah in his mother's womb before his emergence into the world. He is making the preparations for his life's mission. This is what it's all about and this is why he was created. An alternative answer can be that the Mishna in Avos (Ethics 5:21) states, "Ben Arbaim Lbinah." "At forty (years of age) one acquires wisdom and understanding." Rashi comments that to understand the essence of something and follow its practical application takes forty years. Rabeinu Yonah explains the Mishna to mean that one doesn't understand the authentic reasoning of his teacher's knowledge until age forty. This is the level of completeness or "Shleimus". Perhaps this is why it took forty days for the spies to formulate their report regarding Israel in Parshas Shilach. It would not be totally accurate until they spied for forty days straight.

Moshe needed forty days in order to reach a level of completion to understand the deepest levels of the Torah. The Jewish people would need the tutelage of Moshe in the desert for forty years before they would be ripe to enter Israel and have the ability to transmit their teacher's teachings to the next generation. Perhaps every year of the forty years corresponded to every day Moshe spent in heaven receiving the Torah.

## KOLLEL KASHA KORNER

**The parsha begins with the verse, "Vehaya Eikev Tishmeh'un" ("This shall be the reward when you hearken"...). Aside from meaning "reward," eikev also means "heel." Rashi explains that the reward for the mitzvos being referred to here are the mitzvos "hakalos" that man steps on with his heel. "Kalos" is commonly translated as meaning lenient, as opposed to more stringent mitzvos. It can also be also translated as "easy mitzvos." Why is there such great reward specifically for lenient or easy mitzvos as opposed to more stringent or more difficult mitzvos?**

(email answers to office@stlkollel.com)

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT

**Q** *Is the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kan obligatory or optional? In other words, if one observes a mother bird roosting on a nest but has no need for the eggs [or young birds] — is he still obligated to cast away the mother bird and take the eggs in order to fulfill the mitzvah?*

**A** A minority view holds that even one who has no need for the eggs [or young birds] is obligated to send the mother bird away and establish [at least temporary] halachic ownership of them. According to this view, the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kan is an obligation similar to the mitzvah of hashovas aveidah, returning a lost item to its owner. But most poskim reject this approach and rule that one is obligated to send away the mother only if he wishes to keep the eggs or baby birds. Still, while we rule that one is not obligated to send the mother bird away if he has no interest in the eggs or young birds, many poskim recommend that one do so nevertheless. In addition to fulfilling a mitzvah for which the Torah promises the reward of longevity, there are many other additional benefits and rewards that Chazal associate with the proper fulfillment of the mitzvah. Being blessed with children, finding the proper shidduch, being blessed with the means to buy or build a new house, and hastening the arrival of Moshiach are among some of the rewards that are promised to those who fulfill this mitzvah properly. (Adapted from Rabbi Neustadt.)

*For final rulings, please consult your Rav.*

SPOTLIGHT ON *Eishes Chayil Paint Night*

Everyone experienced being Picasso for a night as 41 women throughout the community gathered for a chance to schmooze, nosh and exercise their creativity over chocolate and cabernet. Special thanks to Jon Rubin and Miriam Schwab for the delicious pasta and salad bar, to Bar Rodin and Motek Jewelry for a chance to shop for bling, to Young Israel for hosting, and most of all, to Ruchie Usprich for her enormous talent, leading us through the entire colorful adventure!



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