

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

## Total Kindness

RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER

THIS WEEK'S PARASHA BEGINS WITH THE COMMANDMENT to light the *menorah* in the Temple. The Midrash comments that Hashem doesn't really need our lights, but He nevertheless commands us to light so all the nations will see that the Jewish People are, so to speak, "providing light" for Hashem.

The Midrash says that this is analogous to a blind man walking down the road supported by a seeing man. When they finally enter the house, the seeing man says to the blind man, "Please help me and light a candle to illuminate the house for me, so you shouldn't feel too indebted to me for helping you."


Rav Leib Bakst, ז"ל, explains this Midrash, and points out that the Torah shows us here how to perform kind acts in their perfect form. He cites the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Orlah* 6a) quoting Rabbi Yudan bar Chamin, who says that one who eats from his friend's table is embarrassed to look him in the face. Rav Bakst explains that there is a natural tendency for one to feel uncomfortable before or indebted

to someone who does a favor for him.

Hashem is constantly illuminating the world and showering us with good, which leads us, the recipients, to feel indebted and ill at ease for constantly receiving and not giving anything in return. To that end, Hashem, in his infinite kindness, allows us to "return the favor" and light the candles of the *menorah* for Him, thereby removing our feelings of discomfort that we are *just* recipients. This is true kindness.

Rav Bakst relates that when he was younger in the Mir Yeshiva in Shanghai, he once fell sick, and Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, ז"ל, invited him to his house to eat until he regained his health. Rav Bakst agreed on one condition: If he could pay for every meal. Rav Levenstein said "Is my house a restaurant?! You will eat here for free until you get better!" Rav Bakst refused to come.

Later, Rav Levenstein told Rav Bakst that he would be willing to take payment. He explained, "I thought about it, and now I understand our difference. You wanted to pay a few dollars per meal, but I wanted much more. Ultimately, subconsciously, I wanted you to feel indebted to me, but now, I agree to your terms, and I even forgive the 'thank you'."

Keeping the feelings of the recipient in mind is what makes an act of kindness complete. Something as simple as accepting a drink from someone we have helped can allow the recipient keep his or her self-respect. This is total kindness. 

## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Recently, there were reports about a certain robber who had a very cunning method of stealing from cab drivers. He would hail a taxi, start traveling to a different city, and on the way, he would ask the cab driver to stop by a kiosk to grab a cold drink.

As they continued traveling, he would put sleeping pill in the drink, then "kindly" offered the driver a drink, telling him, "It's really hot today, don't get dehydrated." The driver would usually accept the offer, take a drink, and would begin to lose his senses. The robber would promptly steal the cab driver's money and run away.

The question then arises, when the cab driver later regains his senses, must he make a *bracha achrona*, the after-blessing for the drink he had? On one hand, he enjoyed and his thirst was quenched. On the other hand, this drink caused him a loss of money; had he known the contents, he would never have drunk.

**Q** Must he make the blessing?

**A** Seemingly, he should make the blessing, as the Talmud states that a blessing over good fortune must be made even if it may lead to something

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## GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL

## JWRP Women's trip to Israel

Almost fifty local moms have taken advantage of Kollel-organized JWRP [Jewish Women's Renaissance Project] Israel trips. [NOTE: Another trip is now in the works for this summer!]



### IT HAD TO BE HASHEM

ON AUGUST 15, 2003, EL AL FLIGHT 004 WAS on its way to Tel Aviv from Kennedy Airport. In mid-flight a smoke detector sounded on the airplane. The decision was made to land in Athens, Greece to evaluate the aircraft. All the 324 passengers and crew had to deplane, as technicians would have to be flown from Tel Aviv to Athens to inspect the plane. The mood of the general passenger was to be a bit disgruntled upon finding out that they would have to stay the night in Athens. One passenger however, would be forever grateful for the surprise stopover. Twenty minutes after deplaning Meir Goldberg was walking through the airport when he felt a sharp pain in his chest. Immediately seeking medical attention, Meir was whisked to the hospital and treated for a heart attack. The speed in which he received medical care saved his life. Thanks to the onboard smoke detector, Meir Goldberg lived to see another day. 🥂

### THE RABBI WAS ASKED

CONTINUED

bad, because now, it's good for him (see *Brachos 60a; Mishna Berura 222:6*). Here too, the driver benefitted at the time, so he should be required to make the blessing although his drinking ultimately caused him a loss.

On the other hand, we may suggest he shouldn't make the blessing since the drink was damaging to the body. The Talmud (*Berachos 35b*) rules that one does not make a blessing upon drinking olive oil because drinking it (straight) is damaging. Here too, the tasty drink was damaging, so he shouldn't have to make

the blessing.

However, we may refute the last claim by saying that this drink is comprised of two components: the drink and the sleeping pill. Granted he does not need a blessing for the sleeping pill, but for the drink he does.

This story has a moral lesson as well. We must be on watch for our evil inclination, who is similar to this robber. He entices us to hang out with the wrong crowds and gives us "delicious drinks," but inside lies poison of grave sins. 🥂

### A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

In the *parasha* of *bigdei kehuna*, where is reference made to a piece of clothing not worn by a *kohein*? Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🥂

### BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

#### THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

The earliest voice of traditional Judaism in America was that of Isaac Leeser. Leeser first received national attention in 1828 for his response to a famous attack on Jews which had been printed in American newspapers. At first titled "The Richmond Whig," Leeser's response was later published as the book, *The Claims of the Jews to an Equality of Rights*. Leeser was hired in 1829 as *chazan* at the Mikveh Israel Synagogue of Philadelphia. It was from this position that Leeser took on a leadership role, not only in his community but across the United States. Leeser introduced several innovations in his synagogue, including weekly sermons in English and a Sunday school. Although Leeser was a proponent of creating an independent Jewish school, he was not successful in that endeavor. What Leeser is most remembered for is the monthly (and for a while weekly) journal known as *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*. This journal served as a platform for the earliest defenders of traditional Jewish practice in America and also to protest anti-Semitism in America and throughout the world. *The Occident* had global circulation. It was even reported that Moses Montefiore was a subscriber, and that the journal was also sent to Australia and New Zealand. 🥂

SOURCE: Kiron, Arthur. "Biographical Sketch of Isaac Leeser." University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

"The Occident and American Jewish Advocate." National Library of Israel, Tel Aviv University. Retrieved from <http://web.nli.org.il/>

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