

# Pulse OF Emunah

ANI  
MAAMIN  
Foundation

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life

LESSONS

## A MANNER OF SPEAKING

For weeks, a local gang had been harassing the *bachurim* of Yeshivas Toras Chaim of Denver, shouting threats and calling them names. Hateful graffiti had been scrawled on the yeshivah building. When the situation persisted, the *hanhalah* decided that it was time to call the police.

A police officer arrived at the yeshivah and asked to hear a detailed account from the *bachurim* of their experiences. "Depending on what the gang members have been saying, their actions might be classified as a hate crime," he explained. "That is a much more severe crime than a simple conflict between teenagers."

But the policeman was surprised to find that the *bachurim* could not bring themselves to repeat the profanities the gang had hurled at them. Each simply replaced the expletives with "beep." The policeman threw up his hands. "How am I supposed to write a police report?" he exclaimed. "I can't report that the boys called you 'beep-beep-beep Jews!'" Then his tone softened. "But the truth is, that's why we like you so much. With your refined speech, you seem more human than other teenagers on the street."

The Chovos Halevavos states that the mouth is the "quill" of the heart; it gives expression to the thoughts and feelings buried within a person's heart, exposing them for the world to see. Through our speech, we reveal the *tzelem Elokim*, the Divine spark hidden within each of us. When a religious Jew speaks with refinement, with respect for others, or in a way that demonstrates his elevated moral standards, he reveals the workings of his heart.

*Adapted from A Life Worth Living by Rabbi Shragee Freedman at LivingKiddushHashem.org, with the permission of the publisher*



gem

OF THE WEEK

## INVIOLEABLE TRUTHS

*By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow*

With the instructions to build the Mishkan and with the handing over of the Luchos, Matan Torah was completed. Now it was necessary to plant the nation's soul, the Torah, in its midst. From the Mishkan, the Torah would radiate out to the entire nation, and its spirit would fill the heart of each individual, to realize the promise: *Vasu li mikdash, veshachanti besocham*.

But as all this was transpiring on Har Sinai, events were taking place in the camp below that attested only too realistically to the vast gulf between the reality of the people and the heights of the Torah they were to receive.

Hashem's threat—"Achaleim, v'e'eseh oscha l'goy gadol," that the nation established to receive the Torah would be destroyed, while Moshe and the Torah were assured of a future—demonstrated the absoluteness of the Torah's destiny, which comes from Hashem, and like Him, is timeless.

No one should ever imagine that the Torah should be adapted to changing times. On the contrary, each generation is entitled to a present and a future only while it accommodates itself to the Torah. The Torah is the absolute,

*continued on reverse side*

powerful  
PRAYER

KRIAS HATORAH:  
THE TREE OF LIFE



Before *krias haTorah*, we proclaim that our goal is to fulfill the Torah in theory and practice. Afterward, we express our gratitude for the gift of "eternal life."

The Torah is our spiritual lifeblood. In the first half of the *bracha*, it is called *Toras emes*, which refers to the absolute and unchanging Written Torah. The second part of the *bracha* points to the Oral Law, which G-d "implanted in us" as an *eitz chaim* to grow and thrive, producing new knowledge and ideas. Through it, we, too, grow and develop, and gain eternal life.

*Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk*

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## BEYOND OUR REASON

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

Chazal took many steps to ensure that we would never forget the Beis Hamikdash or the practices that were performed there. In preparation for bringing the *korban Pesach*, every Jew needed to be purified from defilement caused by contact with a deceased person (*tumas meis*), which was achieved through the sprinkling of the ashes of the *parah adumah*. To commemorate this, our Sages designated a special Shabbos to read the section about the *parah adumah*: Parshas Parah.

The mitzvah to slaughter a reddish-brown cow, mix its ashes with a few ingredients, and sprinkle it on a person who has somehow come in contact with a dead body is a mitzvah mystery. We call it a *chok*, a command we fulfill without knowing why, but continue to do because it is so inscribed in our Torah. Similarly, the laws of *kashrus*, *shaatnez* and cooking meat in milk are *chukim*, among others.

Many people find it harder to accept *chukim* than *mishpatim*, which are logical *mitzvos* we can find reasons to obey. But Rashi tells us in the name of the Midrash Tanchuma that there is really no difference. “Since the Satan (represented by our inner voice of doubt) and the nations of the world taunt Yisrael saying, ‘What is this mitzvah, and what reason is there for it?’ therefore the Torah writes ‘It is a *chok*.’ It is a decree from before Me, and you have no permission to have any second thoughts about it.”

We don’t need to use our judgment to see if these mystery *mitzvos* sit right with us. We rely exclusively on Hashem’s. He commanded, and He knows what is right and wrong, whether we understand or not.

Imagine that there was a mitzvah not to drink milk without first cooking it. It would have remained a *chok* for thousands of years, subject to accompanying scorn from our gentile neighbors and our own wonderment as well. All that would have come to an end when a French chemist, Louis Pasteur, discovered that there are germs in uncooked milk that cause sickness, but which are neutralized when the milk is boiled. Today it is taken for granted that milk must be pasteurized. What was once a *chok* becomes a *mishpat* when we are filled in on what Hashem has known all along. We are confident that the wisdom is there.

Most people who fill a prescription have no idea what is in the medicine, or why that particular mixture was chosen over another. They rely on the expertise of the doctor. So too do we rely on the expertise of our Creator, and take His mitzvah medicines with total confidence that they are just right for us. 🕯

ultimate goal of the Jewish nation. And the generation of Matan Torah was still infinitely far from it.

If, the Torah, with its unalterable ideals, nevertheless came down to that generation, the implication is this: the Torah was not given to the people to suit their convenience. Rather, it was given to *klal Yisrael* so that the nation should shape itself, elevate itself, to the moral and spiritual heights of the Torah.

As soon as the Torah came down to *klal Yisrael*, over whom it was meant to reign supreme, *cheit ha'eigel* presented it with its first challenge. The Torah was to demonstrate Divine power by training this people to accept it out of complete submission, and its resting place was to be first and foremost a place of education toward a better and purer future.

In Devarim 9:20, we are told that Aharon committed a serious sin in playing along with the *cheit*. He should have opposed the people, even at the risk of his own life. Aharon thought, however, that it would be prudent to yield. He reasoned that if he were to fall victim to the mob, they would lose all restraint. By taking control of the events, Aharon believed he would be able to stall until Moshe’s return and limit the scale of the people’s sin.

In the aftermath, the man designated as the first *kohen gadol* learned, and taught all future generations, that a Jewish leader cannot try to be clever. The truths of the Torah are not his own to concede. He may not give up part of them to save the rest.

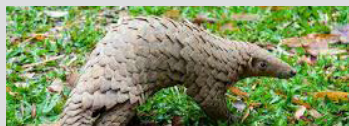
G-d’s testimony is inscribed on granite rock. One can acknowledge it, or, at his own peril, reject it. But no one, not even the *kohen gadol*, can alter so much as one letter. 🕯

Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



## wonder WORLD

### A MAMMAL WITH SCALES II



#### How do pangolins digest their food?

Full-grown pangolins have armor to keep them safe, but baby pangolins don’t have scales yet and are vulnerable to attack. If there is danger, the children slip under their mothers’ stomachs, where they are small enough to fit into the protective ball of spikes they roll up into.

Like birds, pangolins have no teeth, but they still need to chew their food. Birds eat rocks and pebbles, which sit in a place in their stomachs called a gizzard and grind the food before it is digested. Pangolins have a similar type of stomach with spiny spikes that break down the food. Like birds, they also eat pebbles to aid in the grinding. 🕯

*Adapted from the Niflaos HaBoreh Explorer series by Rabbi Yaakov Lubin*

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