

PTDT

PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Once upon a time... and sadly, upon this time too

Put the title on hold. Or press pause on it. Whichever term suits you.

I want to look at another Once upon a time - not a sad one.

So - once upon a time - thirty years to the week, the then director of the OU Israel Center, Shai Solomon, asked me to prepare a sheet with the schedule of activities and programs, to distribute in shuls with a large English-speaking population. The idea did not sit well with me, but after a short think on the subject, I suggested that I put the schedule on one side of the page and a dvar Torah on the other side.

And so Torah Tidbits - in its current form - was born. That first issue was photocopied two-sided, 60 times on yellow A4 paper and distributed in two shuls, 30 copies each.

TT grew in number of pages and in number of copies.

Fast forward to September 30, 2019.

The date I was retired from the OU Israel Center. 38 years to the day from when I started working there. 19 years (to the day) at 10 Straus and 19

years (to the day at 22 Keren HaYesod. 28 years and 3 months of Torah Tidbits. For an additional 7 months, I continued contributing columns to Torah Tidbits, including ParshaPix, Sedra Summary, and a Lead Tidbit of sorts - called Torah Tidbits this and that. Then I was asked to stop submitting material to TT, to allow the new editor to develop outside of my shadow.

On that very day, PhiloTorah was born - a website in the style of the discarded ttidbits.com

Popular features of the "old" TT continued to be available at philotorah.co

With new features added.

Here is an reduced look at would have been the front page of this week's TT, if... (for the Gold family... and others)

24th most abundant element in the Earth's crust	\$8.64 in NIS		youngest US Senator	hath S A J N
	 τηλέφωνο	דוד מלך ישראל	 2 pts	
	Boaz	Cowboys Steelers 27-17	from A to Z in Belgrade	first sphenic number
113			Orlando 	
קדשם	קידושין	Yaakov's fourth	fax fix fox	
Alnair		832040	The sum of its interior angles is 5040°	

Phew! That took time.

Now, back to **Once upon a time... and sadly, upon this time too**

Most readers can probably guess the topic of a Sh'lach PTDT. Pretty easy, especially for veteran TT readers - it hasn't been just for Parshat Sh'lach that I've written about the Sin of the Spies of 3333 years ago and how that exact sin is sadly alive and well in 5782. Here's the way I choose to say my piece this time.

End of Parshat B'ha-alo-t'cha tell us of the "relatively mild" (if that term can ever apply to LH) Lashon HaRa that Miriam and Aharon spoke about Moshe. Miriam was stricken with TZORAAT and was isolated from the rest of the people for 7 days.

D'varim 24:9 commands us to Remember what HaShem did to Miriam. The previous pasuk deals with Tzora'at and the prohibition of removing a sign of that affliction from the body. Meaning, in a broader sense, not to ignore the affliction and not to ignore that seriousness of Lashon HaRa and Rechilut that is a major cause of Tzora'at.

The opening Rashi in Parshat Sh'lach asks why the portion of the Meraglim follows to one about Miriam. He answers that the Meraglim witnessed what happened to Miriam because of

the criticism of her brother's behavior and the belittling of Moshe's uniqueness as a prophet - and they didn't learn anything from it.

Does it not follow - KAL VACHOMER style - that we are commanded to Remember the whole episode of the Spies (78 p'sukim in Sh'lach are devoted to it, two thirds of the whole sedra - not to mention Moshe's review of the episode in Va'etchanan) AND LEARN FROM IT.

Miriam's Lashon HaRa was against Moshe Rabeinu. And, as I said earlier, it was relatively mild. The DIBAT HAARETZ RA'A had such devastating results: Dor HaMidbar wandering through the desert for 40 years. The entire adult male population dying during that period.

Lashon HaRa is sadly alive and well today. It is such a serious sin that people violate on a daily basis. Many Jews work hard to avoid speaking and listening to Lashon HaRa and gossip.

And, sadly, how many Jews haven't learned from Cheit HaMeraglim.

Israel - it's a great place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there. That's the Sin of the Spies. It's not enough to reject the Meraglim's words; we must embrace Kaleb's words when he said ALO NAALEH because, with G-d's help - we will succeed.