

Scratch the Surface



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A Jew once purchased a tin roof for his house. However, upon realising it wasn't the correct size, he sold it to another Jew. This second Jew took the roof home and noticed that while the outer layer of the roof was tin, inside it there was a layer of solid silver. News of this incredible find reached the first Jew. With a sense of burning injustice, he took the second Jew to the Jewish court of law, claiming that he had mistakenly undercharged for the roof; after all, he didn't know there was silver inside. He now claimed the remainder of the real value of the

roof from the buyer. So, who's right? Rabbi Yisrael of Krems (14th/15th centuries) tells us that the court ruled that the second buyer gets to keep the silver without paying for it. The first Jew, having never known the silver was there, never acquired the silver or the rights to sell it. It is the second buyer, the first one to scratch the surface of this sheet of metal, who is the only owner of the silver.











A famous scene in this week's Torah portion recalls how an angel appeared to Moshe in a burning bush. Upon seeing this, Moshe said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvellous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" (Shemot 3:3). The Midrash Tanchuma (early rabbinic teachings, *ibid.*) explains that Moshe's seemingly natural curiosity evokes a tremendous reaction from

God: "God said to [Moshe]: 'Because you troubled to look, be assured that... I shall reveal Myself to you.'"

One explanation given for why Moshe's curiosity is so powerful to God is that, in truth, the bush had been burning for years, however no one had stopped to look. Moshe was the first one to take a closer look and see the miracle for what it was. This is a man who can see past a tin exterior and discover the silver within.

Sadly, so many people look at Judaism as nothing more than a tin roof. Since they never scratch the surface of this beautiful religion, the tin is all they may ever own and pass on. But those of us who can look deeper, scratch the surface to find the silver underneath, will become truly wealthy.

Fill in the missing words...

1. Yaakov's household numbered  when they descended to Egypt to join Yosef.
2. Pharaoh decreed that all Jewish  were to be .
3.  and  were the siblings of Moshe.
4. Moshe said he could not relay God's message to the Jewish people because they wouldn't  and he had a .
5. As a sign to Pharaoh that God had sent him, Moshe's  turned into a .
6. Pharaoh made life harder for the Jewish slaves by refusing to give them  going forward.