



Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

Self-Sacrifice or Self-Preservation?

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz

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In this week's Parsha we learn about the first 7 of the 10 plagues that Hashem visited upon the Egyptians as retribution for their oppression of the Jewish people. In the second of these plagues, the plague of frogs, Hashem fills the land of Egypt with frogs. Frogs fill the Egyptians' houses, their food, and some even make their way inside the very bodies of the Egyptians. When the King Paroh has finally had enough, he begs Moshe to ask Hashem to get rid of the croaking invaders. Moshe obliges and the very next day all of the frogs die.

Our Sages tell us, however, that not all of the frogs died. Some frogs had jumped into the Egyptians' hot ovens, and each of these frogs remained alive and returned safely to their home in the Nile. The *Chizkuni* explains that because these frogs risked their lives in order to fulfill the command of Hashem, they alone were spared.

Fulfilling the will of Hashem is not always easy. It can often be cumbersome, costly, or even dangerous to do what we know to be what Hashem wants from us. Yet we see from the words of our Sages that sometimes it is precisely our sacrifice for Hashem that ends up being our saving grace. To anyone viewing the situation at the time, it would have seemed that the frogs that jumped into the ovens were being overzealous. Why not just suffice to jump into the Egyptians' beds or cake batter, rather than into the ovens? Yet, at the end of it all, the only frogs to survive were the ones that took the risky move to jump into the ovens.

As stated above, fulfilling the will of Hashem is not always easy. And no, we do not always see the results as openly and obviously as was seen by the frogs. Nevertheless, we learn from the words of our sages and the *Chzkuni* that, ultimately, we never lose by fulfilling the will of Hashem.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

POINT TO PONDER

And I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov... (6:3)

Hashem said to Moshe, "Woe to us to for those that are lost and cannot be replaced. Many times I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov with the name 'Kel Shakai'... and they did not doubt Me. And you (Moshe), from the beginning of your leadership, you have doubted Me" (Sanhedrin 111a).

Isn't there a difference between the Avos and Moshe? Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov did not complain to Hashem because their difficult experiences were personal. However, Moshe was lamenting the difficulties Bnai Yisrael were experiencing. Is it not appropriate that a leader should speak up and try to protect his flock? Why was Moshe rebuked for his behavior on behalf of Bnai Yisrael?

PARSHA RIDDLE

What does the magical axiom 'abra kadabra' mean?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why do we say in Kiddush on Friday night 'remembering our exodus from Mitzrayim'? What is the connection between Shabbos and our redemption from Mitzrayim?

Answer: Pharaoh made Jews perform thirty nine types of work. We commemorate this on Shabbos by being free from thirty nine types of work (Tosafos Pesachim 117b, Shemos Rabba 1:28).

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

The *midrash (Shemos Rabbah 9:11)* relates that "Israel became wealthy from the plague of blood," explaining that any water procured by the Egyptians during the plague transformed into blood, and the only way they were able to obtain water was by purchasing it from Jews.

The Egyptians obviously richly deserved this comeuppance. In general, however, price gouging the desperate raises several *halachic* considerations:

✦ There is a Biblical prohibition against overcharging for goods ("*onaah*"). The fundamental rule of *onaah*, however, is that the legitimate price is defined based on the specific time and place of the transaction (see *Rosh Kidushin 1:17*). When a particular market establishes an exorbitant price for an extremely scarce good, that price would be considered the "fair" one (cf. Case Studies in Jewish Business Ethics, from p. 157).

✦ When an item is sold to a particular individual to whom its value is greater than the price established for it by the market, there is debate over whether *onaah* is calculated with regard to the general market price, or with regard to the item's value to this particular buyer (see *Ketzos Hachoshen 227:1*). [I am somewhat perplexed by the economic underpinnings of this discussion: its participants seem to be assuming that they are discussing a special case, but in actuality, most ordinary items will be worth more to their buyers than their market prices, since (using the language of modern economics) the market-clearing price for a good resulting from the intersection of its supply and demand curves will generally be lower than the willingness to pay of most buyers of the good, yielding individual consumer surpluses for them.]

✦ Within the view that the "fair" price of an item depends on its value to a particular buyer, there is further dispute over whether this applies even in the context of a deal made "under pressure," such as an agreement by a sick individual to pay an exorbitant price for medicine (*Ketzos ibid.*).

✦ Distinct from the Biblical law of *onaah*, there is a Rabbinic ordinance against a seller profiting more than twenty percent from the sale of (certain) staples, after accounting for his expenses and efforts (*Shulchan Aruch CM 231:20, Pischei Choshen Hilchos Geneivah Ve'Onaah 14:11-12*).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

All children 13 and under who answer a "Who Am I?" correctly will be entered into a raffle to

Win a super prize

Answer as many as you can. Each correct answer will entitle you to another raffle ticket and increase your chances of winning!

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am not the Hoover.
2. I made the river 'douglass'.
3. I am not in vain rather in
4. I caused wealth.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I was one.
2. I was many.
3. Don't hit me.
4. Use your earplugs.

Last Week's Answers:

#1 The Shem Hamiforush (I am the explicit one; I cause His honor to be blessed; I kill; you don't know me.)

#2 The signs for Bnai Yisrael that Moshe would take them out of Mitzrayim (I was spots; for me was a 'sticky' snake; I will be that will be; show them.)

Congratulations to Aharon Hoffman for winning the last raffle! Stay tuned for the next raffle...

Visit gwckollel.org to submit your answers.

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