



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Presented by Rabbi Menachem Winter, Rosh Kollel
From our archives

Sent away by his mother more than 30 years earlier to escape Eisav's wrath over the incidence of the blessings, Yaakov is finally journeying back to his beloved parents and homeland. Having spent the last twenty years working for his devious uncle Lavan, Yaakov travels home with a large family and great wealth. Still concerned about Eisav's abiding anger, Yaakov sends a message of conciliation and peace. Included in his message are the words "im Lavan garti" - I lived in the home of Lavan. Rashi cites a Medrash that Yaakov was sending a coded message. The numerical value of the letters of the word "garti" – gimmel, reish, toph, and yud – add up to 613. Yaakov was proclaiming that while he hoped his brother chose peace, should he choose war, he would be afforded Divine protection because he "kept the 613 commandments and never learned from Lavan's ways."

Yaakov's declaration that he didn't learn from Lavan's idolatrous ways in addition to keeping all the commandments seems redundant. Certainly if Yaakov kept the entire Torah, he didn't learn from Lavan's sinful conduct!

In truth, Yaakov understood that the Torah is not just a vast rule book of do's and don'ts. Yaakov knew that the technical fulfillment of the mitzvos is not sufficient. Rather, G-d desires that through the fulfillment of the Torah we become elevated. The Torah should mold our character and purify our nature, imbuing us with holiness and spirituality. Yaakov was declaring that not only did he fulfill all of the commandments, but his spirit remained the spirit of the Torah, uncorrupted by the influence of Lavan.

The lesson imbedded in Yaakov's words teaches us that we cannot content ourselves with the fulfillment of the mitzvos alone. We need to become elevated by the Torah and live a life of sanctity and lovingkindness. Our lives must be suffused and directed by the values of the Torah.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Hashem said to Yaakov, "Arise – go to Beis-El..." (35:1)

Since you delayed the fulfillment of your vow, (to give tithes to Hashem, Vayeitzei 28: 22) you were punished, and this incident (Shechem) came to you from your daughter. (Rashi)

"And I will return in peace to my father's home... whatever You shall give me, I shall surely tithe to You." (Vayeitzei 28:21 – 22)

Why was this considered a delay in fulfilling his vow? Yaakov had only promised to tithe his possessions after he returned safely home. Since he had not returned home yet, why would he be held accountable for tarrying in tithing his possessions?

Parsha Riddle

On which day of the year did Yaakov fight with the angel of Esav?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

The first one emerged red... so they called his name Esav. (25, 25). Besides Esav, who else was born red?

Answer: Dovid Hamelech

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parashas Vayishlach relates the massacre of the city of Shechem by Shimon and Levi. The Torah's perspective on the morality of this slaughter is not entirely clear. While their father, Yaakov, does criticize their actions, he does so not on moral grounds, but merely out of concern for potential annihilative retaliation. But while Bechor Shor explains that Shimon and Levi were so enraged by what Shechem had done that they decided: "Whether lawful or unlawful, we will take revenge upon them," the general consensus is that they were not murderers and therefore must have had legitimate justification for the killing. It is generally understood that Shechem's crimes of kidnapping and violating Dinah justified his execution, but commentators offer a variety of justifications for the massacre of the rest of the city:

- Some explain that the residents of the city were guilty of failing to judge Shechem, which they maintain is a capital crime under Noachide law (Rambam Hilchos Melachim 9:14; Moshav Zekeinim; Chizkuni; Ralbag). Others reject this classification of the failure to judge as a capital offense, and further argue that a non-Jew is not expected to judge someone whom he fears, and certainly not his ruler (Ramban; Gur Aryeh).
- Some explain that Shechem's subjects attempted to oppose Shimon and Levi's execution of their leader, or to avenge his death, and the brothers killed them in self-defense (Moshav Zekeinim; Or Hachaim). Some take this idea even further, suggesting that the massacre was intended to preempt eventual retaliation by Shechem's subjects for his execution (Ralbag).
- Some suggest that the residents of Shechem were complicit in his crime, by either failing to oppose him or even actively aiding him (Or Hachaim; Ralbag).
- Maharal explains that Yaakov's family and the Canaanites were considered two separate nations, and he provocatively asserts that the crime of murder is inapplicable in the context of a war between nations fought to avenge an outrage, in which case members of the enemy nation may be killed with impunity despite being personally innocent of the initial offense (Gur Aryeh; cf. R. Dr. Neria Gutel, L'Chimah B'Shetach Ravui Uchlusia Ezrachit).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. We caused aloneness.
2. We were small.
3. We were more precious than his body.
4. We could be for drinking.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I was for Efron.
2. I was for Esav.
3. I am not "tough."
4. I was for the years of affliction.

Last Week's Answers

- #1 The rocks Yaakov used** (We were many, We were one, We protected, We became a pillar.)
#2 Leah (I was older, I cried, I had six boys, I was buried in the double.)

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

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

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