



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

Parshas Vayeira begins with the narrative of Avraham the Patriarch convalescing from his recent circumcision at the advanced age of ninety-nine. G-d appears to Avraham in the spirit of the Mitzvah to visit the infirm and to show honor to Avraham for the great Mitzvah of Milah (circumcision) that he undertook. Avraham observes three men who appear to be Arab travelers approaching. Undeterred by his recent operation or the scorching heat, Avraham excuses himself from G-d's presence and runs to the wayfarers to greet them and extend an offer of hospitality. The Torah continues to record in great detail the compassionate and kindhearted care with which Avraham tended to the journeymen, and the lavish feast he provided for them. Indeed, the Rabbis teach us that Avraham was the paradigm of loving kindness, a characteristic that was a spiritual legacy ultimately bequeathed to his progeny.

The Talmud (Shabbos 127a) deduces from the narrative of Avraham excusing himself from G-d's presence that "extending hospitality is greater than receiving the Divine Presence." This Talmudic passage is extremely perplexing. We can readily understand that it is a great Mitzvah to provide for someone in need. But how is it possible that this deed transcends the experience of prophecy inherent in receiving G-d's presence?

Rav Shach of blessed memory explains the passage as follows. Prophecy transports a person to a realm where he or she is considered to be standing before the Almighty. When we emulate G-d by modeling his conduct, however, we are considered to be "clinging" to G-d Himself. G-d acts with loving kindness, compassion, and mercy, and Avraham was following His example. Through acting in G-d's beneficent ways we are able to embrace G-d in a fashion that surpasses even prophecy.

Let us immerse ourselves in the lessons of Avraham our Patriarch and conduct ourselves with kindness and compassion to those near and far. Doing so will place us in the most coveted of places - G-d's wonderful embrace.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

And Avrohom raised his eyes and saw – and behold a ram! – caught in the thicket... (22, 13)

It (the ram) was created for this purpose during the Six Days of Creation. (Rashi)

An old animal is not valid for being a korban. (Tosfos Yoma 65b)

Since the ram was 2,089 years old, how could it be brought as a korban?

Parsha Riddle

Which mitzvah is greater than greeting Hashem?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

How old was Avraham when he went to Eretz Yisroel for the first time?

Answer: 70 (Seder Olam)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In Parashas Vayeira, Sarah sees Hagar's son Yishmael "mocking," and she demands that Avraham expel them from their household. Avraham was "greatly distressed" by this, but Hashem told him to heed Sarah's demand, and he obeyed. (21:9-14)

R. Yaakov b. Asher explains that Sarah was punished for her expulsion of Hagar and Yishmael by the enslavement of her children, the Jewish people, in Egypt, from where they would eventually have to be expelled by Pharaoh (in reaction to the plague of the first-born – Shemos 11:1). He apparently understands that despite Hashem's endorsement of Sarah's demand, her conduct nevertheless contained an element of wrongdoing, for which she was punished. This can be understood in terms of an idea of R. Chaim Shmuelevitz that sinning against one's fellow man is like putting one's hand into a fire: negative consequences for the sinner are a law of nature, and his good intentions are utterly irrelevant. (This is the straightforward reading of Sichos Mussar #76, but see R. Avigdor Nebenzahl's Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li pp. 180-82 for a less radical explanation of his teacher's idea.)

A similar idea can perhaps be found in the Talmudic account of the preparation of the High Priest for the Yom Kippur service. The Mishnah relates that the elders would make the High Priest swear that he would not deviate from their instructions, and that he and they would then separately weep. The Talmud explains that he was offended at being suspected of being a Sadducee (who disagreed with the Pharisees on the correct manner of performing the service), and they were distressed over the possibility of having suspected a blameless individual. (Yoma 18b-19b) It was obviously necessary to suspect High Priests of that era of being Sadducees, and yet the elders wept at having suspected someone who was actually innocent!

There is even one instance where we find an act to be considered both righteous and sinful simultaneously even when no wrong to one's fellow man is involved. The Tosafos (Taanis 11a s.v. Amar Shmuel) explain the position of the Talmudic sage Shmuel regarding voluntary fasting to be that it is both a mitzvah and an aveirah: voluntary abstemiousness is an aveirah, but it is also a mitzvah, and on balance, the mitzvah is greater than the aveirah. This concept is certainly difficult to understand.

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I was for day eight.
2. I am the second of the three.
3. I am named for laughter.
4. My brother tried to kill me.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I happened on Purim.
2. I happened to cities.
3. I happened to the letter Nun.
4. Pick up your esrog...

Last Week's Answers

#1 A day (For us I begin at night, I usually have two dozen, This week (for them) I will have more, A hook differentiates between me and the sea.

#2 Bris Bein Habesarim (Covenant Between the Parts (I am cut in half, I caused sleep, I revealed, I attracted birds.)

The raffle has been postponed until after the shuls are reopened. We are still accepting entries to the raffle.

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

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Visit gwckollel.org to submit your answers.

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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