



# The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# SHABBOS DELIGHTS

## TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

### The Test of Today

**Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects**

Following Akeidas Yitzchak (the Binding of Isaac) and Sarah's death, Avraham seeks a place to bury Sarah. After a lengthy negotiation with the Chittites and Ephron, Avraham secures the purchase of a burial plot in the Cave of Machpeila. The Talmud (Bava Basra 15b) relates that the Satan lauded this episode as an example of Avraham's great faith: "Master of the world, I glided over the whole world and I did not find anyone as trustworthy as your servant Avraham, to whom You said, 'Get up and travel the length and width of the land for I will give it to you' (Bereishis 13:17) and when it came time to bury Sarah, he could not find a place to bury her, and yet he did not question Your attributes."

While Avraham's demonstration of unquestioning faith at this time is certainly worthy of praise, it seems strange that this would be held up as the prime example. Avraham had just passed the great test of Akeidas Yitzchak, where he had been willing to accept G-d's command to sacrifice his son without questioning Him. That certainly seems to have been a greater demonstration of faith than difficulty finding a burial place for his wife. Perhaps even more perplexing, though, is that Rabbeinu Yonah, when enumerating the Ten Tests of Avraham, names Akeidas Yitzchak as number nine, and the episode of Sarah's burial as number ten. Was it really necessary to further test Avraham's faith after Akeidas Yitzchak? Was there anything left to prove?

Rav Mattisyahu Solomon explains with an analogy similar to the following. If, G-d forbid, the government would issue a decree against Torah study, there certainly would be fasting and Tehillim for the decree to be rescinded. People would also begin to study Torah earnestly in secret at great risk, in defiance of the government. Those same people, however, despite their great appreciation for Torah study, will often struggle to make time to learn when conditions are normal, allowing other distractions to get in the way.

The difference, explains Rav Mattisyahu, is that when a person knows they are being tested, they rise to the occasion and strengthen themselves to persevere. In contrast, that same person may not have the same drive and fortitude to overcome the more typical challenges one encounters.

When Avraham was told to sacrifice his son, he knew he was being tested to see how far his passion and faith could take him and he proved his tremendous devotion to G-d *when put to the test*. The test of burying Sarah was for him to prove his faith in the day-to-day challenges. While still mourning over his loss, he is forced to negotiate and extend himself to acquire the land that was promised him. Instead of throwing up his hands and crying out, "What do you want from me?"; he accepts the circumstances given to him and even bows in appreciation to G-d.

Life is full of challenges and obstacles. At times we recognize them and make a decision to overcome them. Sometimes, though, it is the small bumps that hold us back from accomplishing more. If we take a moment to ponder what those might be, and set our minds to push through those as well, we can elevate our accomplishments to a whole new level.

**Wishing you a Good Shabbos!**

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## TABLE TALK

### Point to Ponder

**Avraham gave all of his possessions to Yitzchak, but to the children of the concubines he gave gifts... (25, 5 & 6)**

.... Do not take an inheritance from one child and give it to another child - even from a bad child to a good child... (Kesubos 53a)

If taking an inheritance away from a child is ill-advised, why did Avraham take the inheritance from the children of his concubines and give it to Yitzchak?

### Parsha Riddle

**On what day of the year did Sarah die?**

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

**Last week's riddle:**

**How old was Yishmael when he was sent away from Avraham's house?**

**How old was Yitzchak at the time of the Akeida?**

**Answer: 37, 37 (See Bereishis Rabba 48:9)**

## HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

### HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Chayei Sara*, in the course of Avraham's servant's recountal to Rivka's family of his journey, he states (24:42): "I came today to the spring." The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 95a) infers from this phrasing that Eliezer had left Canaan that same day, and thus must have experienced the miracle of *kefitzas ha-derech* ("contraction of the way"). *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (16) elaborates that the distance between his starting point of Kiriath-arba and his destination of Charan was a seventeen day journey, which nevertheless took him only three hours. It also adds that Eliezer experienced *kefitzas ha-derech* on his return trip the next day as well: he once again returned the same day as he left, with the journey again taking only three hours, in order to forestall his being in a state of seclusion (*yichud*) with Rivka at night (something which at least today is *halachically* prohibited).

The question of the general plausibility of *kefitzas ha-derech* and other extraordinary forms of travel appears in several *halachic* contexts, including the following:

The Talmud (*Yevamos* 116a) discusses the case of a *get* (bill of divorce) written in the city of Sura by "Anan bar Hiyya." There were only two known individuals of that name, one of whom was known to have been in Neharde'a on the date of the *get*. Rava rules that we cannot conclusively rule out the possibility that he may have been the (illegitimate) author of the *get* (i.e., rather than the husband of the wife for whom the *get* was destined), since even though the distance between Sura and Neharde'a was greater than a single day's journey using normal modes of travel, the man from Neharde'a may have utilized a "flying camel" or *kefitzah*, or may have given verbal instructions beforehand for the writing of the bill of divorce in a place where he was not physically located.

There is, however, considerable debate among the medieval authorities as to whether *halachah* really takes into account such extraordinary possibilities as flying camels, and if so, under what circumstances. One important opinion is that of Ra'avad, who maintains that Rava's ruling was primarily based on the third, more mundane possibility, and he broached the possibilities of flying camels and *kefitzah* only as supplements to the primary concern (see *Makkos* 5a and *Tosafos, Ramban, Ritva, Meiri, and Tosafos Shantz* there).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

## KIDS KORNER

### Who Am I?

#### #1 WHO AM I?

1. I was the price of a cave.
2. I was the time in a foreign land.
3. I am "tough."
4. I was for Esav's men.

#### #2 WHO AM I?

1. I was the second.
2. My brother nearly killed me.
3. My father nearly killed me.
4. I was bound.

#### Last Week's Answers

**#1 Lot's wife** (I was from Sodom, I looked, I am high in sodium, I am a pillar, though I don't hold up anything.)

**#2 Angels** (We were triple for Avraham, We come Friday night, We visited Lot, We were on a ladder.)

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