



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

A Most Fitting Reward

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz, Kollel Adjunct

“And G-d bestowed good upon the midwives and the nation increased...and He made for them houses” (1:20)

After instituting his program of slavery and oppression, Pharaoh goes a step further towards his goal of destroying the Jewish people by commanding the Jewish midwives to kill every baby boy as soon as he is born. Nevertheless, the righteous midwives refuse to obey Pharaoh's evil decree and instead ensured that each baby received proper post-natal care. The Torah declares the righteousness and G-d fearing nature of these women and tells us that Hashem rewarded them and they became the matriarchs of some of the most illustrious families of the Jewish people.

The Torah's presentation of the midwives' reward is a bit strange. The Torah first tells us that “G-d bestowed good upon the midwives”, and then informs us “and the nation increased,” and only then does it go on to describe what the reward actually was (“and He made for them houses”). Isn't the phrase “and the nation increased” out of place?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein answers that we see from here that the real reward for the midwives' efforts was the very fact that the Jewish people increased. He explains that the midwives could have been tempted to wish that the Jewish babies would not survive given the grave danger that they would be in if they were caught disobeying Pharaoh's orders. The Torah is teaching us, however, that they instead wanted nothing more than to see the nation flourish and be successful, so much so that it could be said that they considered this very success a sufficient reward in and of itself.

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Hashem said to Moshe in Midian, "Go return to Egypt, for all the people who seek your life have died." (4, 18)

One who is sent to perform a mitzva does not get harmed. (Pesachim 8b)

Since Moshe was being sent to perform a mitzva of redeeming Bnei Yisrael from Egypt, it should protect him from all harm. If he would have been protected anyway, why did Hashem have to tell Moshe, "The people who seek your life have died?"

Parsha Riddle

Who did Basya bas Pharaoh marry?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What did Yosef merit as a reward for going to Eretz Yisrael to bury his father?

Answer: That Moshe would bring Yosef's coffin up to Eretz Yisroel.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Shemos* (2:15), the Torah relates that "Pharaoh heard" of Moshe's vigilante killing of the Egyptian, and sought to execute him, and the *midrash* (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:30) explains that Dasan and Aviram had informed upon him. The *midrash* also interprets Moshe's earlier declaration (2:14) that "Indeed, the matter is known!" as an expression of his dismay at their willingness to expose his dangerous secret: "now I know the cause of Israel's enslavement" - "such *lashon ha'ra* [evil speech] is amongst them, how would they be worthy of redemption?"

As we have previously discussed, the special case of *lashon ha'ra* that endangers Jewish persons or property by informing upon them is termed *mesirah* ("giving over"), and is considered one of the most heinous of sins (*Rosh Hashanah* 17a). One who threatens to do so may be extrajudicially executed (*Bava Kama* 117a). According to the Rosh (*ibid.* 10:27), this is due to the concern that the rapacious enemy will eventually, after seizing all the victim's property that he can find, torture and even kill him in the attempt to extract even more from him. The *moser* is therefore classified as a "pursuer," who may be killed in order to save his victim.

In light of this understanding, R. Yaakov Blau initially suggests that in modern, civilized countries, insofar as it is clear that the government will not kill someone who falls into its hands, although *mesirah* is certainly still prohibited, a *moser* may be classified merely as a tortfeasor, but might not be subject to the various stringent rules that apply to a classic *moser*. He counters, however, that perhaps the contemporary *moser* does retain his classic status, since prison entails lethal danger to its inmates. Additionally, governmental interrogation can be lethal (*Pischei Choshen Nezikin* ch. 4 n. 1).

R. Blau's latter concern, while perhaps credible in a national security context, does not seem quite plausible in the context of ordinary criminal and civil matters. R. Ezra Batzri, however, dismisses this attitude as dangerously naive, arguing that "only the external appearance [of governmental conduct] has changed ... Even if they bring all matters to court, it is clear that, through interrogation and the police, government can destroy people and in many places they do, in fact, destroy people." (cited by R. Michael J. Broyde, *Informing on Others for Violating American Law: A Jewish Law View*)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I was silent.
2. I rejoiced for my brother.
3. I was a peacemaker.
4. I was my brother's equal.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. My food is dusty.
2. I tricked the Mother Of All Life.
3. I almost swallowed the humble.
4. When I was copper, I healed.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Maadanei Melech (I am on Rabbeinu Asher, I am for Asher, I am by Tosfos Yom Tov, I am a delicacy.)

#2 Yosef (I was an orphan, I was a slave, I was in jail, I was a king.)

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