



The Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

G-d's Tithe: The Gift of Free Choice

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Director

"Aser ti'aser/ You must surely tithe all the produce of your planting..." (14:22)

The Gemara (Taanis 9a) recounts how the son of Reish Lakish once asked his uncle, Rabbi Yochanan, the meaning of the verse in this week's parsha (14:22), "*Aser ti'aser*." Rabbi Yochanan responded that it means, "*Aser/tithe in order that *tit'asher*/you become rich*" and told his nephew to test it. When the boy countered that the Torah forbids us from testing G-d (Devarim 6:16), Rabbi Yochanan explained that *maaser*/tithing is an exception, as it says in Malachi (3:10), "Bring the whole tithe into the storeroom... and test Me now by this... if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing..." The commentaries wonder why we are allowed to "test" G-d specifically with regards to the *mitzvah* of *maaser*/tithing.

Rav Yitzchak Hutner offers an incredible explanation. The Mishna in Avos (5:1) teaches us that the world was created with ten utterances – the final one being the creation of man. Of all the creations that preceded man, none were given the ability to choose. Even animals that are animate and reactive, act on impulse alone – not making choices freely. As a result, G-d maintains total control over all of these creations. But with respect to G-d's tenth statement, "Let Us make man," He "gave over" some of that control. Only man is endowed with free choice – the ability to choose good or to flaunt the Will of G-d. This *gift* of free choice, given with the *tenth* statement of creation, is like a form of *maaser* given by G-d. Part and parcel with the gift of free choice, however, is also a test for us because it is only through free choice that we are tested in this world. Rav Hutner concludes that just as through G-d's tithe to us – the gift of free choice, we are tested, so too and as a reflection of this, when we offer a "tithe to G-d" we are given permission to test Him.

This amazing gift of free choice is unfortunately not always utilized. Rav Mattisyahu Solomon explains that, at its core, free will is the ability to go against our nature and our desires. Even when doing the right thing, if we do it by rote and completely naturally, without pushing ourselves to do it in the most elevated fashion, we are not exercising our free will. It is only when we need to overcome our impulses, habits, and character flaws that we utilize our free will. A person who does only what comes naturally to them could go through their entire life never having exercised free choice!

The month of Elul is a time to consider whether we have fallen into negative habits, and where we have allowed impulse to take over, rather than exercising our free will.

I would like to bring your attention to a very special community-wide project that GWCK is spearheading: *The Elul Connection Challenge*. Most of us will admit that we have room to improve in the way we engage with our smartphones and social media. Overdependence, excessive use, and harmful content can be spiritually, psychologically, and socially detrimental. *The Elul Connection Challenge* is an exciting way to inspire us to real change whereby together as a community we can increase our mindfulness, sanctity, and intentionality in our smartphone and social media use. Each day, a *d'var chizuk*/inspirational message, presented by local Rabbanim, will be posted, along with a simple "challenge" that will help us grow. Please join us for this special opportunity. Information for registering can be found at the bottom of p.2 of the Shabbos Delights.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

"You shall open your hand to your brother, to your poor one, and to the destitute in your land" (15:11).

One should not give more than a fifth of his assets for tzedaka (Kesubos 50a). The mitzva of giving tzedaka only applies up to a fifth of one's possessions (Rambam Matnas Aniym 7:5).

Acts of kindness have no prescribed measure. This only applies to kindness that one does with his body; however, acts of kindness done with one's money have a prescribed amount - until one fifth of his possessions (Peah 1:1). Yet, one who wishes to act beyond the letter of the law may give more than a fifth of his possessions (Rambam Peah ibid.).

If one should not give more than a fifth of his money to tzedaka, why would it be permissible to act beyond the letter of the law?

Parsha Riddle

Rav Papa was walking up his steps, and the step broke under him... Chiya bar Rav asked Rav Papa, "Did a poor man com to your house and you did not give him money?" (Bava Basra 10)

Where is there a source our parsha that "steps break for not supporting the poor?"

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Don't say 'when I will have the time I will study.' (Avos 2:4)

Where is this hinted to in the parsha? Answer: And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? But to fear Hashem, your G-d... (10, 12)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Re'eh (12:2-3), the Torah commands: *You shall utterly destroy from all the places where the nations, that you shall possess, worshipped their gods, upon the lofty mountains and upon the hills, and under every lush tree. And you shall tear down their altars, smash their monuments, burn their asherim with fire, cut down the graven images of their gods, and destroy their name from that place.*

The Rambam (Avodas Kochavim 7:1) rules: *It is a positive commandment to destroy false deities, all their accessories, and everything that is made for their purposes ...*

With the return of Jewish sovereignty over Israel in the last century, contemporary halachic authorities have struggled to justify from a Torah perspective the national policy of tolerating the practice of other religions and their houses of worship. One rationale is based on the following language of the Sefer ha-Chinuch (436):

It is incumbent upon us to destroy the name of idolatry if we have the power to do so, but we are only obligated to pursue (idolatry) in order to destroy it in Eretz Yisrael, when we have power over its worshippers. And one who transgresses this and does not destroy it as long as he has the capability to do so, has violated this positive commandment.

R. Shaul Yisraeli accordingly writes: *We are not in the category of "the hand of Israel has power (over the worshippers of idols)," either due to the concern for entanglement in war ... or ... since most of (the nation of) Israel is not in the Land, and even the Land is not entirely in our hands, and Klal Yisrael does not have the possibility of fulfilling this commandment of entirely removing (idolatry) from the land, there is therefore no obligation (to do so) even with respect to those places over which Israel does have power...* (Amud ha-Yemini 12:18)

R. Yitzhak Isaac HaLevi Herzog offers a somewhat different justification of not eradicating Muslim mosques and Christian churches in particular: the monotheistic religion of Islam is certainly not considered idolatrous, and even Christianity may not be considered idolatrous at least within the context of the imperative to eradicate idolatry (Techumin 2). This justification, however, would obviously not extend to houses of worship of religions that are unequivocally idolatrous. (Cf. R. Yair Veitz, Biur Kneisiot u-Mikdashai Elilim be-Yameinu).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. We divided you.
2. We are on the sun's path.
3. Yehoshua led the people to us.
4. We had blessings and curses.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am the name this week.
2. I am for blessing and curse.
3. I am not a light wave.
4. My meaning is not an ocean.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Shivas Haminim (7 Species) (1. I am first for brachos, I have seven, I contain liquids, I am grainy.)

#2 Bentching (I am for full, Eat for me, Don't sit on me, I am for after.)

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This Elul, join a community-wide initiative to bring MINDFULNESS, SANGTITY, and INTENTIONALITY to our smartphone and social media use.

- 📱 Daily CHIZUK and INSPIRATION from local Rabbanim.
- 📱 Daily CHALLENGES that will put YOU in control of your smartphone.
- 👉 A LIFE-CHANGING experience for you and your family.
- ✅ SIGN UP NOW and receive each day's content via WhatsApp.



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