



The Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

Small Gesture, Major Impact

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Adjunct

"Our hands have not spilled this blood, and our eyes did not see." (Devarim 21:7)

The last topic discussed in Parshas Shoftim is the topic called "Egla Arufa." When a murdered body is found outside a city, the Beis Din (Jewish court) is required to measure which city is closest to the corpse. Once that is determined, the elders of that city must take a calf and slaughter it. Afterwards, the elders wash their hands over the slaughtered calf and declare that they had no part in the murder.

The Gemara in Sotah (also brought by Rashi in our Parsha) asks: do we actually think that the elders of the city were complicit in the murder? The Gemara answers that the elders' declaration is understood as: "We did not have this person leave our city without food for the way and without accompanying him out of the city."

The Gemara's answer is still puzzling. How would a parcel of food or escorting the person have helped him at all? This person was murdered during his journey outside the city, long after the elders would have accompanied him out. What difference would the elders' actions have made such that they need to make such a declaration?

The Maharal answers with a powerful idea. Perhaps, if the person was sent off with the proper warmth and respect, his sense of self-worth and confidence would have been bolstered. Indeed, perhaps he would have had the poise to defend himself from his attackers and save his own life. Therefore, the elders of the city are required to engage in introspection to see if there was more they could have done to build up the person.

This teaches us a profound lesson about the power of even the smallest gestures of care and respect. A kind word, a show of dignity, or simply making someone feel valued can literally be life-giving. We never know how far the ripple effects of our encouragement and warmth may reach.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

There shall not be found among you... one who reads omens... (18, 10)

Rebbi Akiva said, "This refers to those who read by seasons and say, 'Such and such a season is propitious to begin the following project.'" (Rashi quoting Sanhedrin 65b)

Rav Yehuda the son of Rav Shmuel bar Shilas said in the name of Rav. "Just as when the month of Av enters, we minimize our happiness, so too when the month of Adar arrives, we increase our happiness." Rav Papa said, "Therefore, if a Jew has a court case with a non-Jew, he shouldn't schedule it during the month of Av because a Jew's mazel is weak. He should try to have the case heard in Adar when a Jew's mazel is stronger." (Taanis 29a)

Why isn't the rule of Rav Papa to delay one's court case with a non-Jew until Adar prohibited because of the ban of reading omens?

Parsha Riddle

Name four Mitzvos in this week's Parsha for which the Torah gives the reason why we are commanded?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's 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?"

Answer: The (trup) cantillation under the words "open you shall open" is darga sevir, which translates to 'the step should break' (Vilna Gaon)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Shoftim (20:19), the Torah commands: "When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to capture it, you shall not destroy (lo sash'chis) its trees by wielding an ax against them, for you may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down...." While the Talmud in various places asserts a prohibition of "bal tash'chis" ("bal" is an alternate form of "lo") against wanton destruction in general, the Biblical commandment in context is explicitly referring to cutting down trees, and Rambam (Melachim 6:10) seems to imply that the extension to wanton destruction in general is Rabbinic. Moreover, while Bechor Shor seems to understand that the Torah's admonition extends to all trees, even those that do not bear fruit, the Talmud and most commentators limit it to fruit trees. (Incidentally, Bechor Shor characterizes this admonition as an "eitzah (advice)," which suggests that he understands the plain meaning of the verse (pshat) to constitute a recommendation rather than a commandment, but the universal consensus of our tradition is that it is a commandment.)

The Talmud (Bava Kamma 91b) states: "Ravina says: if the lumber was greater in monetary value than (the tree's) fruits, it is permitted to cut it down." The Rosh extends this dispensation to where "one needs its place." The Taz (YD siman 116 s.k. 6) writes that based on this ruling of the Rosh, he permitted someone to cut down fruit trees on his property in order to build a residence.

Many authorities, however, are reluctant to be overly lenient, due to another Talmudic statement appearing immediately prior to the one cited above: "Rabbi Chanina said: My son Shivchas did not die for any reason other than that he cut down a fig tree before its time." They argue that surely Shivchas did not blatantly violate the Biblical prohibition, and they suggest that in his case the tree's lumber was greater in monetary value than its fruits, or he needed the tree's place, and accordingly from a pure halachic perspective he was permitted to cut it down – but he nevertheless died in consequence of so, either because as a pious individual Hashem held him to a higher standard, or because danger is attendant upon cutting down a fruit tree even where doing so is permitted by the halachah (see She'eilas Ya'avetz 1:76; Chaim Sha'al 1:23; Chasam Sofer YD 102).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. My forgiveness doesn't work
2. You shouldn't have even though I am a mitzvah.
3. I am not a scribe yet I need a scroll.
4. I was oiled.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am 2 or 3 but also 100.
2. I may be responsible for what I didn't do.
3. I make you stand.
4. Sometimes one is useful.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Har Grizim & Har Eival (We divided you, We are on the sun's path, Yehoshua led the people to us, We had blessings and curses.)

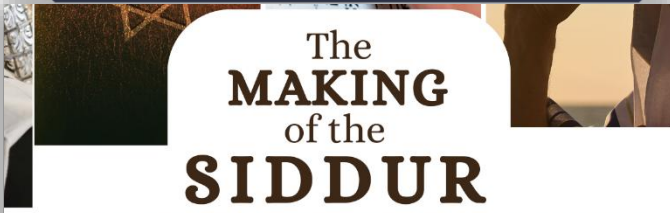
#2 Re'eh (See) (1. I am the name this week, I am for blessing and curse, I am not a light wave, My meaning is not an ocean.)

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