



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

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TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

No Gift Too Small

Presented by Rabbi Zechariah Schwartz, Kollel Adjunct

Parshas Ki Savo begins with the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* – bringing one's first fruits of the season to the Beis Hamikdash. The Mishna in Maseches Bikkurim (3:8) states that wealthy people would present their *bikkurim* in baskets made of silver and gold, while the poor would use wicker baskets. The Mishna concludes that while the Kohanim would return the expensive baskets to their owners, they would keep the cheap wicker baskets given to them by the poor people. Rav Yaakov Emden in *Lechem Shamayim* explains that the Kohanim kept the baskets given by the poor people as a demonstration of the value their offering held, meager though it may be, in the eyes of Hashem.

On the surface, the poor person may resent that the Kohen is not giving back the basket, thinking, "I have so little; I came here to give of what little I have, and even the basket they won't give back!" But the lesson is the exact opposite. Hashem is telling the poor person that He appreciates his gift so much that He even wants to hold on to the basket!

As we make our way through the month of Elul towards Rosh Hashana, we may feel like that poor person. How many times do we try so hard to improve, to grow, to accomplish, only to come up short? We may feel we have so little to offer to Hashem. But Hashem cherishes the efforts of the poor. Every effort that we make is noticed, and every improvement that we achieve, no matter how small, counts. May we merit to value our own achievements as much as Hashem does and let it inspire us to climb to ever greater heights.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

Point to Ponder

You shall take of every fruit of the ground... (26:2)

The produce of the Shivas HaMinim are subject to the laws of Bikkurim (Rashi).

As most of the Shivas HaMinim grow from trees, why does the Torah reference them as "fruit of the ground"?

TABLE TALK

Parsha Riddle

Where is there a reference to the mitzvah of Tefillin in this week's parsha?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

"When you will go out to war against your enemy..." (21:10) The final letters of these words in the Torah spell "Ohalecha"/ your tents (Chida). What is the Torah trying to teach us?

Answer: That it is in the merit of the "tents" - the Batei Midrashim - that the battles are won (Makos 10a).

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Ki-Savo* (28:6), the Torah states: "You shall be blessed when you come, and you shall be blessed when you depart." The Talmud (*Bava Metzia* 107a) cites R. Yochanan's interpretation of this verse: **"Your exit from the world should be like your entry into the world: Just as your entry into the world was without sin, so too your exit from the world should be without sin."** The Rashash (Vilna, 1794-1872) comments that this interpretation of R. Yochanan "somewhat contradicts" the doctrine of reincarnation. That doctrine asserts that a soul does not necessarily enter the world without sin, since it may have sinned in a previous incarnation – indeed, that is one of the primary arguments for the doctrine advanced by its proponents, that the suffering experienced by the righteous, and by children who are by definition free of sin, is best justified by the idea that it is a consequence of sins committed by their souls in previous incarnations.

The Rashash was not the first to note the apparent tension between R. Yochanan's statement and the doctrine of reincarnation; the question was raised a century earlier by R. Eliyahu HaLevi (Allesandria, 1713-1792), a staunch believer in reincarnation, who resolves it by explaining that the reference is to a soul's first incarnation, which is always without sin (*Saba Eliyahu* 1:23).

In the medieval period, the great Jewish rationalists who discuss reincarnation generally reject it (*Emunos V'Deios* 6:8; R. Yedaiah ha-Bedersi in *Shut. Ha-Rashba* 1:418; *Sefer Ha-Ikkarim* 4:29). The *Or Hashem* (4:7), however, after arguing against the concept of reincarnation based on his understanding of the nature of the soul, concludes that since it is a concept rooted in Kabbalah, it is not subject to rational analysis, "and if it is a received tradition, we will accept it cheerfully." Similarly, the Rosh (who was not a rationalist) raises various objections to reincarnation, including the assertion that our Sages "in many places" seem to deny it, but ultimately concludes "Therefore if it is a received tradition, we will accept it" (*Ta'am Zekenim* p. 66). Kabbalistic thinkers such as the Ramban (*Iyov* 33:3) unreservedly embrace reincarnation.

R. Levi ibn Chabib was asked whether there is an obligation to believe in reincarnation. He answers that although the rationalists reject the doctrine, the kabbalists accept it, "and we are all obligated to accept" their position "and to believe this belief without any qualm or doubt whatsoever" (*Maharalbach* 8).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. You tie me.
2. You bring me.
3. You wave me.
4. You save me.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I divided the people.
2. The bad for Evil.
3. I had blessings.
4. I had curses.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Eidim/Witnesses (I must be two, We can't be related, I must be questioned, In Shema I am large.)

#2 Exempt from War (I am for a new house, I am for a new vineyard, I am for a new wife, I am for fear.)

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