



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised (12:3).

The mitzvah of circumcision stands alone in its significance and importance, demonstrated by the fact that it supersedes the Shabbos, if it happens that the newborn's eighth day falls on Shabbos. The centrality of this mitzvah is further symbolized by the blessing made on this mitzvah. Upon the performance of the circumcision, the father of the baby recites, "Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to enter him [the baby] into the Covenant of Abraham our father."

What is the basis for the special stature of this mitzvah?

Perhaps the Medrash Tanchuma in our parsha provides an answer (Tazria 5). Recorded there is a debate between the great sage Rabbi Akiva and Turnus Rufus, a Roman governor posted in Judea during the second century C.E. Turnus Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva, "Why do you circumcise yourselves?" In response, Rabbi Akiva brought him wheat and cakes and said to him, "These are made by G-d and these are made by man. Aren't these cakes better than the wheat?" Turnus Rufus retorted, "If God wanted circumcision, why doesn't the baby come out circumcised from his mother's womb?" Rabbi Akiva responded, "Because G-d didn't give mitzvos to the Jewish People for any reason but to refine ourselves through them. As King David says in Tehillim, 'The commandments of G-d are for the purpose of refinement.'" (18:31).

The meaning and message of circumcision is clear: The beautiful world that surrounds us is not there simply to be gazed at in admiration of G-d's handiwork. It is rather an invitation to man to elevate himself and consecrate the world. Only man, through his actions, specifically with Torah and mitzvos, can bring the world to its intended and perfect state. In the words of the Sefer Hachinuch: *G-d desired to perfect the physical character of the Chosen People, and He wished that this perfection be effected by man. He therefore did not create man complete and perfect from the womb, in order to hint to him that just as his physical perfection is through his own efforts, so too is his spiritual perfection completed through the worthiness of his own actions.*

It is no wonder why this mitzvah, brimming with implication for a life of mission, purpose, and meaning, continues to mean so much to the Jewish people as it has throughout the millennia.

***Have a wonderful Shabbos,
Rabbi Menachem Winter***

TABLE TALK

POINTS TO PONDER

The Kohen shall quarantine the affliction for seven days... (13:4)

Rebbi Yossi ben Zimra said, "Tzara'as comes upon a person for the sin of Lashon Hara, as the verse says (Tehillim 101:5), "I will cause those who privately speak about their friends, to be locked up" (Erachin 15b).

Why did the gemara need to bring the source from a verse in Tehillim? The gemara could have brought the source from the incident with Miriam, who got tzara'as from speaking about her brother (Moshe)!

PARSHA RIDDLE

What do Rosh Chodesh Nisan and Rosh Chodesh Tishrei have in common?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What halacha do a posek and a Kohen have in common?

Answer: Both of them cannot drink wine before doing their job.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *Parashas Tazria* (13:45-46), the Torah decrees that one afflicted with *tzara'as* "shall put a covering upon his upper lip" and "shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." As we noted last year, some commentators understand these instructions epidemiologically: *tzara'as* is contagious, so the *metzora* is quarantined and covers his face to prevent its transmission to others. We also noted then that various contemporary authorities rule that medical professionals are permitted, encouraged, and even obligated to treat patients with contagious diseases, the risk of infection notwithstanding. They advance a number of rationales justifying this position, despite the general prohibition against self-endangerment, including the following:

• Visiting the sick, caring for them, and providing them with medical treatment entails the fulfillment of various *mitzvos*, and the performance of *mitzvos* provides protection against misfortune (*Shut. Nishmas Kol Chai chelek 2 choshen mishpat* end of #49; *Shut. Tzitz Eliezer* 9:17:5:4).

• The Torah (*Shemos* 21:19) declares that the perpetrator of an assault "shall cause [his victim] to be thoroughly healed" (*ve'rapo ye'rapeh*), from which the Talmud (*Bava Kama* 85a) derives that "permission is given for a healer to heal." This may constitute authorization for a physician's treatment of any afflicted individual, regardless of the possibility of contagion (*Tzitz Eliezer* #7).

• The provision of medical treatment to the ill, even to contagious patients, is normal and customary, and necessary to forestall societal chaos. Such activity does not fall under the general prohibition against self-endangerment (*Ibid.* #8).

• Many authorities assert that self-endangerment in the course of earning one's livelihood is permitted; this dispensation extends to the professional provision of medical care under dangerous circumstances (*Ibid.* #9).

• Doctors, nurses and other caregivers have knowingly chosen to enter professions that entail a duty to provide care to all patients, including those suffering from dangerous and contagious diseases, and should therefore be bound by their commitments (*Nishmas Avraham* (second edition) *Yoreh De'ah* 335:8 #22).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I cause a treasure hunt.
2. Visit the barber.
3. Wash your clothes.
4. I lock you up.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I cause 7 and 33.
2. I cause 14 and 66.
3. I require a Korban.
4. Mazal Tov!

Last Week's Answers:

#1 Para Aduma (I am a mystery to the wise; I am named for my color; I am similar to Esav; I purify the impure and impurify the pure.)

#2 The 8th Day (I am after a week; I am for a bris; I was for the Mishkan; on Sukkos I have my own Yom Tov.)

All children 13 and under who answer a "Who Am I?" correctly will be entered into a raffle to

win a pair of portable camping lantern flashlights!

The next raffle is April 12th.

Congratulations to Yosef Hollander and others for answering last week's questions correctly!

Visit gwckollel.org to submit your answers.

Answer as many as you can - each correct answer will entitle you to another raffle ticket and increase your chances of winning.

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