



The Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

Inspirational Messages Hiding in Plain View

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects for the Kollel

"Regarding this the poets would say: 'Come to Cheshbon – let it be built and established as the city of Sichon'" (21:27).

The Talmud (Bava Basra 78b) interprets this verse in a puzzling fashion. The word for poets, "*moshlim*," can also be translated as "rulers," while the name of the city referred to in the verse, "Cheshbon," also means "a calculation." In light of this, the Talmud states that "*moshlim*" alludes to those who rule over their inclinations. These people say "Come to Cheshbon," meaning "Come make a calculation – the loss for not doing a mitzvah versus the reward for doing one." The Talmud then proceeds to explain the rest of the verse along the same lines.

The message of the Sages – that one who is in control of his or her inclination contemplates and considers before choosing a course of action – is fundamental to spiritual development. What makes the interpretation of the verse so puzzling, however, is the context from which this message is derived. In this verse, the Torah is testifying to the total victory that Sichon and the Amorites achieved over Moav, establishing the city of Cheshbon as an Amorite city. How could the Sages derive a lesson of self-control and care in mitzvah observance from this seemingly unrelated verse?

While many commentators have proposed subtle connections between these two ideas, Rabbi Yaakov Niman suggests that perhaps there really is no specific link between the lesson of the Talmud and the context of the verse. A person who is focused on improving his or her service of G-d will inevitably extract life lessons from places that others would not. Ordinary events and familiar ideas can suddenly become sources of inspiration for those who seek it. Similarly, the Sages never intended that this verse was actually speaking about a spiritually developing individual making a calculation about how to act. Rather, in their constant quest for self-improvement, upon seeing the words "*moshlim*" and "Cheshbon," this lesson in character development naturally leaped off the page for them.

As we go through life, we often get caught up in the rush of our daily responsibilities. Perhaps if we could hit "pause" for just a moment, and focus on improving our service of G-d, we, too, could find meaningful and inspirational messages in places we previously never thought to look.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

POINTS TO PONDER

Take Aaron and Elazar, his son, and bring them up on Mount Hor. Strip Aaron of his vestments and dress Elazar, his son, in them; Aaron shall be gathered in and die there (20, 25 – 26).

Moshe craved a similar death for himself. When his time arrived, Hashem told him that he would die as Aaron (Rashi).

Simply understood, Moshe craved to die the “death by a Kiss,” as Aaron had died. If so, why did Moshe not desire this type of death upon seeing his sister, Miriam, dying in that manner (Rashi 20, 21)?

In addition, why didn't Moshe and Aaron pray on behalf of Aaron that he merit entering Eretz Yisrael, as Moshe prayed for himself in Parshas Vaeschanan?

PARSHA RIDDLE

What are the meanings of the word with the letters “nun” and “samech”?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why did Hashem choose the ketores as the means with which to stop the plague?

Answer: Since Nadav and Avihu died while bringing ketores, and the 250 men of Korach died while involved with the Ketores, people thought the ketores was “a murderer” so Hashem used it now to save their lives.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

“And Hashem said unto Moses, Make for yourself a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he shall look upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (*Parashas Chukas*, 21:8-9). Centuries later, the serpent was destroyed by King Chizkiyah: “And he did that which was right in the sight of Hashem ... and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nechushtan” (*Melachim* 2 18:3-4).

The Talmud wonders how King Chizkiyah's righteous predecessors Asa and Yehoshafat, who had destroyed “all idolatry in the world,” could have failed to destroy the serpent? It answers that “they had left place for him to be great,” and it derives from this a fundamental principle of the legitimacy of religious innovation: the fact that a novel idea was not advanced by the sages of earlier generations, who were admittedly greater scholars than contemporary ones, does not automatically render it unacceptable (*Chullin* 6b-7a, as explained by *Toras Chaim* there).

Various commentators explain that Asa and Yehoshafat had had concrete reasons for not destroying the serpent: they may have believed it prohibited to destroy an artifact commissioned by Hashem Himself (*Tosafos*), or they may have considered such destruction a flouting of Hashem's will, since He had given the serpent to the people to heal them, and it had retained this power throughout the generations (*Chidushei Agados* of Maharal). Alternatively, they may have believed that the idolaters had no power to cause it to require destruction, due to the principle that “a man cannot prohibit something that is not his” (Maharal). Nevertheless, King Chizkiyah realized that its destruction was necessary and appropriate, and he did not shy away from his conviction of his duty, despite its novelty.

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am one of ten.
2. I am not a book, but I am red.
3. For the wisest I am a mystery.
4. I was a reward for honor.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I was hurt for words.
2. I hurt for words.
3. My replica was the salvation.
4. Adding a 'saf' makes me copper.

Last Week's Answers:

#1 Korach (Maybe I am cold; perhaps I am bald; a split I enabled; a divide was caused.)

#2 Bechor (I am for humans; I am for animals; I am for the first; I am for the Kohen.)

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

win a

POPCORN
POPPER



The next
raffle is
September 6th.

Congratulations to **Yedidya Bensimon**
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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