



Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

Counting the Uncountable

Presented by Rabbi Yonatan Zakem

Kollel Scholar and Director of Community Outreach

Parshas Ki Sisa begins with the instructions of how to conduct a census of the Jewish people. Hashem instructs Moshe not to count the Children of Israel directly, but rather to collect a half-*shekel* contribution from each individual, thereby allowing a census to be taken by tallying the coins collected. The Torah provides that by following the proper census procedure, a plague will not be visited upon the nation. Indeed, in the days of King David, this procedure was not followed, with tragic results. Therefore, everyone from the age of twenty must contribute a coin, and the coins will be counted.

The connection between counting the individual members of the Jewish people directly and the outbreak of a plague seems enigmatic. Why is a plague the consequence of not heeding the appropriate census methodology?

I once heard an inspiring explanation of this concept. When one counts a number of objects, items are only grouped if they are essentially interchangeable. For example, if one were tallying the number of chairs at their table and forks in the drawer, they would not say "we have twenty-four forks and chairs," but rather "we have twenty forks and four chairs." The twenty forks, separate objects though they may be, can be summed up because they are functionally identical, but they cannot be combined with the chairs, with which they are not interchangeable.

So, too, with the Jewish people. If the census was conducted by counting the actual individuals, the implication would be that they are all essentially interchangeable. If they are all basically the same, says Hashem, then it isn't necessary to have so many of them. Thus, the consequence is a plague. Therefore, we each submit a representative item which *is* interchangeable, and the census is completed in that way.

The lesson for us is both an inspiring message and a charge. No Jew is dispensable in Hashem's eyes. We are each uniquely valued by our Creator. We each have our unique role to play, and the contribution of every individual is irreplaceable. We should merit to approach each challenge in life with the awareness that the impact we make is unique and treasured.

Have a Good Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

POINT TO PONDER

Everyone who passes through the census, from twenty years of age and up, shall give the portion of Hashem (30:14).

Since the shekalim payment served as atonement, men under twenty years of age were not obligated to pay the shekel, because the Heavenly Court does not punish them (Chizkuni).

The Rambam (Mishnayos Sanhedrin 7:4) maintains that people under the age of twenty are not punished with *kares* because it is a Heavenly punishment, and Heaven does not punish people younger than twenty.

A minor who becomes thirteen between the first and second Pesach must bring a *korban pesach* on the second Pesach. If he does not, he is punished with *kares* (Pesachim 93b). This implies that Heaven does punish people under the age of twenty!

PARSHA RIDDLE

Why was the Machatzis HaShekel collected in the month of Adar (during the time of the Bais HaMikdash)?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

How can an ordinary Jew become as holy as a member of Shevet Levi?

Answer: Through committing oneself to the study of Torah (Rambam Hilchos Shmita V'Yovel).

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

During the episode of the Golden Calf, Aharon seemingly goes along with the mob's frenzy, to the point of proclaiming that "Tomorrow is a feast to 'Hashem'" (32:5), apparently intending an idolatrous feast. The Ibn Ezra struggles greatly to reconcile Aharon's conduct in this episode in general, and in this proclamation in particular, with his holy and pious character, in the course of which he reports that "many say" that what Aharon actually meant by "Tomorrow is a feast to 'Hashem'" is that the worshipers of the calf would be executed by Moshe. The Ibn Ezra vigorously rejects this solution, declaring that a blasphemer (*megadeif*) and one who incites others toward idolatry (*meisis*) are executed based solely upon their verbal utterances, irrespective of their internal intentions. He makes the following analogy: Suppose someone asks his friend in court "Are you my friend to whom I lent such and such a sum?" and the friend replies "I am." The respondent cannot then retreat from his concession and explain that he meant merely that he is his friend, but nothing more.

The claim that a *megadeif* cannot defend himself with the claim that when he blasphemed against "G-d" he really meant some other deity seems to be contradicted by a Talmudic assertion that when Moshe charged the Jews to "obey what G-d (*elokah*) says," it was necessary for him to expressly stipulate that the oath he was imposing upon them was to be interpreted from the perspective of Hashem and Moshe, since otherwise it could have been interpreted as referring to an idol, since the Hebrew word *elokah* sometimes has that meaning. Similarly, the Talmud entertains the possibility that when a debtor swears that he has repaid his creditor, without the express stipulation that the oath the court is imposing upon him is to be interpreted from its perspective, the taker of the oath could plead that he really meant that he had given him some [worthless] tokens (*iskundri*), which he has chosen to refer to as "coins" (*zuzi*) (Shevuos 29a).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

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



Mini Table
Top Pool
Table Set



#1 WHO AM I?

1. Moshe's writing
2. I raised a king.
3. I am not a cow.
4. I created "God".

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I was Esav's sale.
2. I was the Firstborn's loss.
3. I was Reuven's.
4. I am Aaron's.

Last Week's Answers:

- #1 *Shemoneh B'gadim / The eight clothing articles of the Kohan Gadol* (Shatnez; we could be oil replacement; uniform; we are called "gold".)
- #2 *Olive oil for the Menora* (I was in last week's; I was crushed; only use my first; clearly clean.)

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

Visit gwckollel.org to submit your answers.

KOLLEL BULLETIN BOARD

Join the GWCK for CLAS

Chavrusa learning, nightly classes on a variety of topics, and refreshments!

Mondays - Thursdays, 8:00-9:00 pm, at Young Israel Shomrai Emunah.

For more info, contact Rabbi Zakem at yzakem@gwckollel.org