



Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

Presented by Rabbi Menachem Winter, Rosh Kollel

From our Archives

Avraham dispatches his trustworthy servant, Eliezer, on a sacred mission to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak. Avraham instructs Eliezer not to arrange a match with the local Canaanite tribes because they were steeped in idolatry. Rather, a mate should be chosen from Avraham's own homeland and family. Avraham then asks Eliezer to take an oath that he would not deviate from the instructions.

Avraham's insistence on an oath seems difficult to understand. Eliezer was not a simple servant, but a trusted person of great integrity and stature. Indeed, the Torah describes him as the senior executor of Avraham's household and possessions. If he could be trusted with Avraham's great wealth, he could surely be trusted to carry out this straightforward mission. If so, why was it necessary to extract an oath?

Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik answers that Avraham had no reservations about Eliezer's integrity and had full confidence in Eliezer's stewardship over his vast wealth. The mission to find a suitable mate for Yitzchak, however, was another matter. Eliezer was being sent to find the person who would complement this future Patriarch and be worthy to carry on the Jewish nation. Accordingly, Avraham implemented extra safeguards to ensure the integrity of the mission. Rabbi Soloveichik continues that this is characteristic of the conduct of the righteous. In regards to material concerns, reasonable assurances and protections are sufficient. In spiritual matters, however, the righteous take extra precautions and implement additional safeguards because of the great significance they attach to these important matters.

As parents, we are rightly concerned with the physical and emotional development of our children. We take pains to ensure that they receive proper nutrition and exercise sufficiently. We labor to shield them from harmful and toxic exposures, however small. And we make certain that our children are well-educated and well-read.

Are we equally concerned, though, about our children's spiritual development? Are we ensuring that they are receiving sufficient spiritual nourishment and shielding them from harmful exposures? Are we making sure they are sufficiently educated about their special heritage and deeply imbued with our timeless Jewish values?

Let us take the lesson of our forefather to heart and concern ourselves not only with our children's physical and emotional development, but with their spiritual development as well. Only in this way can we be sure that our great legacy and heritage will be passed on to the next generation.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

POINT TO PONDER

Now Avrohom was old... (24, 1)

Until the time of Avraham there was no such concept as old age. Avraham and Yitzchak looked exactly alike. One who wished to speak to Avraham would mistakenly speak to Yitzchak. Therefore, Avraham asked Hashem that he should give him the physical appearance of the elderly, so that he would be distinguishable from Yitzchak. (Sanhedrin 107b)

And Sarah laughed in her insides, saying, "After I have withered, shall I again have clear skin?" (Vayeira 18, 12)

Sarah wondered, "After my skin has wrinkled, will it smooth out?" (Bava Basra 87a)

If Sarah's skin had wrinkled and she had withered, what do Chazal mean when they say that there wasn't any concept of old age before Avraham davened for it?

PARSHA RIDDLE

What was Eliezer's other identity?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why is the halacha that one must tie their left shoe first?

Answer: Avraham refused to take even a shoe strap from the king of Sodom as payment for winning the war (Lech Lecha 14, 23) in order that the Sodomite king should not say he made Avraham wealthy. As reward for that sacrifice for Hashem's glory, Hashem rewarded B'nai Yisroel with the mitzvah of Tefillin. Since by means of shoe straps we merited the mitzvah of Tefillin, which is wrapped on the left hand, we tie our left shoe first. (Rav Akiva Eiger Orach Chaim 2, 4)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

The main topic of *Parashas Chayei Sarah* is the arrangement of the marriage between Yitzhak and Rivkah by Avraham and his trusted servant (often understood to be Eliezer). The Rabbinic tradition does not have much to say about the relative merits of arranged vs. autonomous marriages. We consider here one guideline that it does contain: the Talmudic prohibition against marrying a woman sight unseen, since he may subsequently find her repulsive, "and the Merciful One says 'thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'" (*Kidushin* 41a). Rabbeinu Tam suggests that this may not be normative (*Mordechai Kesubos* #179), but the consensus is that it is (*Shulchan Aruch EH* 35:1). The *Beis Yosef* (*ibid.*) states that viewing the woman beforehand is only required when it is feasible, but when it is not, due to geographic distance or other factors, it may be dispensed with.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, it was apparently common in Ashkenazic communities for marriages to be arranged without the couple having ever met. Various *halachic* authorities attempt to reconcile this practice with the Talmudic admonition:

- The *Derishah* (*ibid.*) notes that although the couple did not meet prior to the engagement, they did meet before the actual marriage ceremony.
- The *Beis Hillel* (*ibid.*) adds that this Talmudic concern may actually be the rationale behind the "*chasan mah!*" ("groom's meal"), a meal held the night before the wedding during which the groom and bride would see and converse with each other. [This meal is less common today, although it is still practiced in some Chassidic circles (see *Nitei Gavriel, Hilchos Nisuin* 1:4:2).] Some authorities argue, however, that the couple should really meet before the engagement, due to the binding nature of engagements (at least in certain societies) and the fact that breaking an engagement is humiliating to the jilted party (see *Nitei Gavriel, Shiduchin Ve'Tenaim* Ch. 3 nn. 2-3).
- The *Derishah* (*ibid.*, in an alternative justification) and *Beis Shmuel* (*ibid. s.k.* 2) suggest that since due to economic instability or demographic considerations a marriage that is not arranged immediately may wind up never coming to fruition, the requirement for the couple to meet may be dispensed with (as per the aforementioned position of the *Beis Yosef*).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am very Ogly.
2. Don't confuse me with Damascus.
3. Hashem helper
4. I meant 318 soldiers.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I was the mother's.
2. I was the wife's.
3. Cloud and light
4. I was doughy.

Last Week's Answers:

#1 Akeidas Yitzchak (Blow to remember; in a bind; I caused blindness; I am tenth.)

#2 Yitzchak (I made people laugh; I am the second; mincha is mine; korban.)

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

Win
LASER PEGS
HELICOPTER SET



Congratulations to Rabbi Biberfeld's 4th Graders and others for answering last week's questions correctly!

Visit gwckolle.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!

THE NEXT
RAFFLE WILL BE
DECEMBER 26th.

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with
GWCK

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