



# Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

## TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

### *Rising Above the Tide*

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

Shortly before his passing, Yaakov gathers his sons around him and leaves each one with an individualized message. To Yehuda, his fourth son, he promises that the "scepter shall not depart" from him (49:10), meaning that the kings of Israel, beginning with King David, would descend from Yehuda.

Undoubtedly, Yehuda possessed numerous qualities of leadership that he would be able to pass on to his descendants. Nevertheless, Yaakov singled out one essential quality in particular. In the verse immediately preceding the promise of the monarchy, Yaakov says, "From the prey, my son, you elevated yourself." Rashi explains that Yaakov was referring to how Yehuda had stood up to his brothers who intended to leave Yosef to die in the pit and convinced them that they were better off selling him (37:26). In doing so, Yehuda elevated himself above the prevailing assumptions of his brothers and successfully reshaped their opinion to save Yosef's life.

The ability to rise above accepted norms and guide people towards more righteous conduct was one of the central roles of the Jewish king. In fact, one of the most prolonged and tragic examples of idol worship within the Jewish nation, the graven image of Micha, is described in the book of Judges as having been possible only because "there was no king in Israel." (Judges 18:1) Had there been a king at that time, he presumably would have been able to put a stop to the idolatry despite its enormous popularity amongst the people.

As a nation, we are faced with a task similar to the one that faced Yehuda and the kings who descended from him. As the whirlwind of public opinion sweeps up everything in its path, with its constantly reshaping definition of moral conduct, we are fortunate to have the Torah as a compass to guide us. By holding true to our traditions, clinging to the values of the Torah, and elevating ourselves above the waves of constant cultural change, we can act as role models for the world at large, as well as for each other.

*Wishing you a Good Shabbos!*

## TABLE TALK

### POINT TO PONDER

**There (in the Cave of Machpeila) they buried Avraham and his wife, Sarah; there they buried Yitzchak and his wife, Rivka; and there I buried Leah. (59, 31)**

One should not refer to a parent by their name, not during their life, nor after they have passed on; one should say, my father". (Yoreh Deah 240, 2)

*Wasn't Yaakov calling his parents by their names when he said, "there they buried Yitzchak and Rivka"?*

### PARSHA RIDDLE

**The scepter shall not pass from Yehuda... (49:10) When in Jewish history was this command transgressed?**

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

**Last week's riddle:**

How long did Serach bas Asher live?

**Answer:** She was taken into Gan Eden while yet alive. (Targum Yonasan, Bereishis 46:17)

## HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

### HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Vayechi*, the Torah relates that when Jacob died, his body was embalmed by the Egyptian physicians under orders from their master Joseph, whose own body was subsequently embalmed upon his death (*Bereishis* 50:2;26). As we have previously noted, *halachic* authorities infer from this that embalming is not forbidden by *halachah* (*Shut. Ha'Rashba* 1:369; *Shut. Radvaz* 1:484).

A particularly interesting invocation of this precedent is discussed by R. Yedidiah Tiah Weil (*Shut. YD* #100). He considers a case of capital murder, where the local law insisted upon a forensic autopsy of the victim (in order to ascertain that he had been previously healthy) as a condition for the execution of the murderer. The victim's relatives refused, on the grounds that this would constitute a desecration of the cadaver.

R. Weil initially argues that the autopsy should be permitted, and adduces as proof Joseph's allowing the embalming of his father. If the embalming of Jacob was permitted since it was done for the sake of his honor, so, too, should the autopsy of the murder victim be allowed, since it is a means toward the avenging of the murder, which is a *mitzvah*.

He subsequently rejects this argument, however, citing a passage in the *Zohar* that considers it inconceivable that the righteous Joseph could have allowed the violation of his father's bodily integrity. The *Zohar* explains that the embalmers did not open the cadaver, but merely applied "precious spices" externally. According to this understanding, we have no source for allowing the tampering with human remains even as a means to a noble end, and R. Weil indeed concludes that the autopsy in question is prohibited.

R. Eliyahu Kalatzkin, however, insists that it is wrong for relatives to object to forensic autopsies and thereby obstruct justice. The autopsy is in the victim's own interest, since he desires that his murderer be punished, and we should therefore aid the government in ensuring that justice is done (*Imrei Shefer* end of #82, and cf. *Shut Meoros Nasan* #79; *Gesher Hachaim* 2:27:3).

PRESENTED BY  
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

## KIDS KORNER

### WHO AM I?

#### #1 WHO AM I?

1. First of four damages
2. I am not sure.
3. I represent the eleventh.
4. Don't pair me with a donkey.

#### #2 WHO AM I?

1. Yaakov in Mitzrayim
2. Yosef before his sale
3. I equal good.
4. A year before Chupa

#### Last Week's Answers:

**#1 Serach bas Asher** (I am not Avraham's father; my father is not 'a share'; my music got me long life; I was the first news reporter.)

**#2 Wine** (I am for the order; the old like the old; I am for Kiddush; I am for the lots day.)

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

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Events  
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- ☆ **Potomac Shabbaton with GWCK:** Join us for inspiring divrei Torah, a ruach-filled Oneg Shabbos, and a community luncheon at YIEIP! January 5-6, Parshas Shemos
- ☆ **Judging Favorably: When and Why to Give the Benefit of the Doubt** - A Jewish Ethics Lecture by Rabbi Brahm Weinberg; Sunday, January 7 at 9:30am at Young Israel Shomrai Emunah, 1132 Arcola Ave.

For more information, email [info@gwckollel.org](mailto:info@gwckollel.org) or see [www.gwckollel.org](http://www.gwckollel.org).