



Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

SPIRITUAL TRANQUILITY

Presented by Rabbi Yisrael Glassberg, Director of Kollel Alumni

In this week's Torah portion we read about the heroism and devotion of the Jewish midwives, Shifrah and Puah. In response to the perceived threat of the growing Jewish population, Pharaoh directed the midwives to kill all male babies born to the Jewish women. The Talmud (Sotah 11b) tells us that these women were none other than Moshe's own mother and sister, Yocheved and Miriam. These righteous and G-d fearing women refused to obey Pharaoh's evil decree and instead took great care to ensure the continued growth and success of the Jewish people. The Torah tells us that Hashem rewarded them for their courageous efforts by providing them with "houses." What exactly were these houses and why was this the reward designated for the midwives?

Rashi explains that these houses were the dynasties of Malchus and Kehuna (Monarchy and Priesthood). In this context, houses references permanence and eternity. In reward for their commitment to the continuity of the Jewish people, Hashem blessed them that their legacy will include the highest forms of leadership and responsibility. The Jewish kings and high priests had to govern the nation while always placing their fear of Hashem at the forefront, just as the midwives had done successfully in Egypt.

Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner Z" L, in his sefer Mei Hashiloach, offers another insight into the meaning of these houses. He explains that the midwives were given the blessing of Yishuv Haadaas – ultimate piece of mind. A house is a place where one feels settled and content, protected from life's threats and dangers. The midwives were in a situation where it was easy to become frazzled and distracted due to Pharaoh's edict. Notwithstanding the threat looming over them, they were able to act with great clarity and calmness. In fact, one of the key traits of a successful midwife is to bestow upon her patient a feeling of calmness during the stressful experience of childbirth. Their display of fear of Heaven during otherwise tumultuous times merited Hashem's blessing for everlasting tranquility.

In today's times, moments of peacefulness are a rare commodity. We lead frenetic lives, driven by societal demands and intense pressures. We may feel at times that our lives are out of control, a feeling that can create additional stress. Yet, there are opportunities to achieve serenity, where we can be more present, engaged, and mindful in our daily routines. When we invest time and energy in our spiritual pursuits and let them dictate our happiness, we can lead a more tranquil and meaningful existence. Miriam and Yocheved left us a wonderful gift by providing us the tools necessary to thrive in turbulent times. May we merit to find the inner strength to tap into this special inheritance!

WISHING YOU A GOOD SHABBOS!

TABLE TALK

POINT TO PONDER

Hashem said to Moshe in Midyan, "Go, return to Egypt, for all the men that seek your life have died. (4, 19)

They were alive but they had lost their possessions. One who is poverty stricken is as if he is dead. (Rashi)

Where is it alluded to in the verse that these people were still alive, yet penniless?

Furthermore, even if they were alive, how would this exempt Moshe from fulfilling Hashem's command to return to Egypt?

PARSHA RIDDLE

Where is there a hint in the Parsha to the custom of decorating a Shul with flowers and greenery on Shavuot?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

The scepter shall not pass from Yehuda... (49:10)

When in Jewish history was this command transgressed?

Answer: When the Chashmonaim made themselves kings.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *Parashas Shemos* (3:22), Hashem tells Moses that upon leaving Egypt, "Each woman shall request (*ve'shaalah*) from her neighbor and from the one who lives in her house silver vessels, golden vessels, and garments; and you shall put them on your sons and daughters, and you shall empty out Egypt." This translation (by Artscroll) of the Hebrew word *ve'shaalah* as "request" follows commentators such as Rashbam; others, however, understand it as "borrow".

In this latter sense was the verse (along with the cognate verses in 11:2 and 12:35-36) understood by the parties to a famous ancient lawsuit. The Egyptians sued the Jews before Alexander of Macedonia (Alexander the Great), claiming that the Jews had "borrowed" their property upon leaving Egypt, and demanded that they "return to us what is ours"! The Jews responded that the Egyptians had enslaved 600,000 Jews for several centuries – upon receipt of the wages to which the Jews were entitled, they would return the Egyptians' property. "[The Egyptians] left deeply disappointed" (and, according to some versions of the story, actually beat a precipitous retreat out of fear of the Jewish counterclaim for reparations for their enslavement) (*Megilas Taanis [Sivan]; Sanhedrin 91a; Bereishis Rabah 61:7*).

The claim and counterclaim described in the above narrative were clearly not directed at the actual perpetrators of the alleged crimes, who were certainly long deceased, nor to any specific assets alleged to have been illegitimately acquired. To the best of my knowledge, Judaism does not articulate a general doctrine of collective criminal or civil responsibility of nations or communities. One noteworthy example of such responsibility, however, occurs in the grim and troubling narrative of King David and the Gibeonites, in which the former granted the latter's request for the lives of seven members of his predecessor King Saul's family as retribution for a massacre he had ostensibly committed against them (*Shmuel II 21:1-10*).

The Talmud, apparently assuming that the executed individuals had not actually been complicit in King Saul's atrocity (see Radak *ibid.*), wonders: "But it is written: 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.' It responds: "It is better that one letter be uprooted from the Torah, and the Name of Heaven shall not be publicly profaned" (*Yevamos 79a*, and see Ritva there).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. For Mishna I am orders.
2. In Mitzrayim I was babies.
3. I am the week before Shabbos.
4. For Shabbos I am challos.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I call you.
2. I am not shame.
3. Write me on your tests.
4. I am this week's parsha.

Last Week's Answers:

#1 Ox (First of 4 damages; I am not sure; I represent the 11th; don't pair me with a donkey.)

#2 17 (Yaakov in Mitzrayim; Yosef before his sale; I equal good; a year before chuppah.)

Congratulations to Eliezer & Binyomin Kerchner 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!

THE NEXT
RAFFLE WILL BE
MARCH 6th.

KOLLEL BULLETIN BOARD

JOIN US FOR A JEWISH ETHICS LECTURE BY RABBI BRAHM WEINBERG THIS SUNDAY!
"JUDGING FAVORABLY: WHEN AND WHY TO GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT"

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7 AT 9:30AM AT YOUNG ISRAEL SHOMRAI EMUNAH, 1132 ARCOLA AVE.

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