



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

Chief Of Staff

Presented by Rabbi Yisrael Glassberg, Director of Kollel Alumni

Prior to striking the Egyptians with the ten plagues, Moshe and Aharon visit Pharaoh and beseech him to free the Jewish people from bondage. To convince Pharaoh that the command to emancipate the Jews truly comes from the Almighty, and therefore must be followed, Aharon throws his staff to the ground and Hashem turns it into a snake. The Egyptians, however, are not impressed. Hashem performs yet another miracle, turning Aharon's snake back to a staff and then causing Aharon's staff to swallow the Egyptians' staves. Despite this additional miracle, Pharaoh denies the request to free the Jewish people, thereby setting the stage for the ensuing plagues.

The Midrash comments that Aharon's staff had a critical role in the exodus story; not only in this first encounter with Pharaoh, but subsequently in the delivery of the plagues and in the splitting of the sea. The Midrash implies that there was something significant that occurred in that first incident in Pharaoh's court that served as a merit for the staff to be used on future occasions for the other miracles. What was it about that first miracle that was so noteworthy?

The *Techailles Mordechai* explains the Midrash by highlighting a detail in that first incident. Chazal comment that despite Aharon's staff swallowing the others, it remained just as skinny. This compounded the miracle as not only did the stick swallow the others, but it did not grow in size despite its recent repast. By remaining the same size, Aharon's staff symbolically taught that despite being involved in holy work, one should not let that be a cause for arrogance. Because of the staff's "humility," Hashem chose it as the vehicle through which more grandiose miracles would be brought in the future.

This is a timeless lesson for us with many practical applications. There are so many worthwhile endeavors for which we sacrifice our time and resources. Of equal importance, though, is to monitor our egos and not let our lofty work detract from maintaining our humility. This is the lesson that Moshe and Aharon embodied and that Pharaoh could not accept. May we be fortunate to stay true to this ideal and merit the ultimate redemption in our times!

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Hashem said to Moshe, "Say to Aharon, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Mitzrayim... and they shall become blood...' (7, 19)

Because the river protected Moshe when he was thrown into it, therefore, it was not smitten through his hand; neither at the plague of blood, nor at the plague of frogs, but it was smitten through the hands of Aharon. (Rashi)

Rava asked Raba bar Mari, "Where is the source for the adage, 'Do not throw something bad into a well you drank from' (something that you benefited from, do not embarrass)? From the verse, "You shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in his land" (Ki Seitzei 23, 8) (Bava Kamma 92b)

Why didn't Raba bar Mari point to Moshe's withholding his hand from smiting the Nile as the source?

Parsha Riddle

From where in this parsha do we learn the lesson of mesiras nefesh/martyrdom?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What is hinted to in the first verse of the parsha?

Answer: The word Shemos (שמׁשׁ) hints at the obligation to review the parsha - twice the verses and once the translation. (שׁ)Shnayim / twice, (מׁ)Mikra / verses, (י)V'echad / and once, (ת)Targum / translation

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parashas Va'eira recounts the attempts of the Egyptian sorcerers to match the supernatural feats performed by Moshe and Aharon. The Egyptians were indeed able to duplicate the first several ones, but ultimately failed to draw forth lice. This is one of two Biblical accounts of the apparent successful performance of sorcery, the other being the raising of the shade of the prophet Samuel by the necromancer of En-dor. (I Samuel 28:7-19)

The Torah categorically and repeatedly forbids the practice of sorcery, and even certain superstitious practices that are not necessarily sorcerous are forbidden under the category of darkei ha'Amori (the ways of the Amorites). The Talmud establishes one major exception to this latter category: "Anything that contains an element of healing and seems to be effective does not contain the prohibition against following the ways of the Amorite." (Shabbas 67a) This raises the obvious question of the criteria used to distinguish between practices "that contain an element of healing" and those that constitute prohibited superstition: is the distinction based on empirical evidence, theoretical scientific basis, or the cultural context from which the practice emerges? (See Moreh Nevuchim 3:37; Shut. Ha'Rashba 1:413; Tosafos Yom Ha'Kipurim 83a)

Even to the extent that certain therapeutic practices may be permitted due to their apparent effectiveness despite lacking a scientific basis, there is considerable dispute over whether they may be utilized where they involve a halachic infraction, even when a life is at stake. Although the saving of life generally overrides almost all halachic rules, many authorities maintain that this only applies to life-saving procedures that operate via natural law, but paranormal means, even insofar as they are permitted, cannot be utilized where they involve halachic infraction. (See Rambam's Commentary to Yoma 83a; Shut. Ha'Radvaz 5:1526; Tosafos Yom Ha'Kipurim ibid.) Many authorities thus forbid the writing of amulets on Shabbos, even if they are believed to be highly effective and life is at stake. (See Birkei Yosef OC siman 301 os 6; Shut. Maharsham 3:225; Nishmas Avraham (2nd edition) OC pp. 285-87)

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

Win a
NERF
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#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am not for beavers.
2. Don't confuse me with money.
3. I am life.
4. I killed the fish.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I was one yet many.
2. We were baked in a pie.
3. I caused hitting.
4. It was hopping.

Last Week's Answers

#1 **Bris Mila** (I caused swallowing, At ninety-nine for the first, I am at eight, I was missed in the desert.)

#2 **Basya bas Paroh** (I am not Hashem's daughter, I reached far, My conversion caused salvation, I went to the river.)

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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Beginning the 2nd perek (chapter) of Rosh Hashana this Sunday!

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