



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Every Life is Precious

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

Parshas Shoftim concludes with the topic of the *Eglah Arufah* (Axed Heifer), which describes the process to be undertaken in the event that a corpse is found between two cities. Members of the *Sanhedrin* (High Court) would be called on to determine which city was nearest to the corpse. The elders of that city would then bring a heifer to a valley and kill it by bringing an ax to the back of its neck as an atonement for the murder. They would then pray that innocent blood not be spilled in Israel.

Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman points out that the placement of this topic in our Parsha is puzzling. Prior to discussing the *Eglah Arufah*, our Parsha dealt with an array of topics relating to war, including: the appointment of a special Kohen to inspire the people in battle, laws exempting certain individuals from battle, the requirement to offer an enemy the chance to surrender, and the prohibition of destroying fruit trees when laying siege to a city. The topic of war continues at the beginning of next week's Parsha with the laws of the *Eishes Yefas Toar*, the female captive. Why does the Torah interrupt the laws of war with the topic of *Eglah Arufah*, which seemingly has nothing to do with war?

Rav Ruderman explains that the Torah is teaching us a fundamental lesson about the value of human life. A person is influenced by his or her experiences and environment. Someone who experiences battle and witnesses killing and death will inevitably become used to the idea of people dying and may become desensitized to the value of life. As a result, this person might even come to condone murder. For this reason, the Torah places the topic of *Eglah Arufah* in middle of the topic of war. The process of the *Eglah Arufah* serves to remind us of the sanctity of each life. The death of a single individual requires members of the Sanhedrin to travel from Jerusalem and the elders of the nearest city must go through a detailed and extended ritual – all because of the loss of one life.

The current pandemic has brought much death to the world. Our news outlets update us daily with the current number of deaths in each state, country, and the world at large. Hearing about so much death has the potential to desensitize us to the gravity of each loss – relegating the passing of many wonderful individuals to mere statistics. Our Parsha should remind us of the preciousness of every single soul and the importance of doing our utmost to preserve those lives when possible.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

By the testimony of two witnesses or three shall the condemned person be put to death (17:6).

The verse should read, "By the testimony of two witnesses or the acceptance of their testimony by three judges." (Rav Sa'adia Gaon)

This verse is referring to capital cases. Capital cases need to be judged by a Bais Din of twenty-three, not three (Sanhedrin 2a). How could Rav Sa'adya Gaon write that the testimony of the witnesses could be accepted by three judges?

Parsha Riddle

When is one permitted to transgress the prohibition of Ba'al Tashchis – destroying something useful?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What connection is there between Purim and Elul?

Answer: Elul is an acronym of 'Aleph – Ish, Lamed – L'reiyeihu, Vav – Umatanos, Lamed – L'evyonim. A man to his fellow and gifts to the poor.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Shoftim (17:11), Hashem commands us to obey Torah authorities: "According to the teaching that they will teach you and according to the judgment that they will say to you, shall you do; you shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you, right or left." Some understand that these commandments are limited to the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (Hilchos Mamrim 1:1-2; Yereim #31), while others extend them to the preeminent scholars and judges of every era. (Chinuch #495-96; Shut. Ha'Rashba 2:322)

Rashi interprets the phrase "right or left" to mean that the obligation to obey applies even if we are told that "right is left and left is right." This is a version of a passage in the Sifrei, where the text reads "even if it appears to you that [they are saying that] left is right and right is left." The Yerushalmi, however, says exactly the opposite of the Sifrei: "One might think that if they say to you that right is left and left is right, you shall obey them, so the verse elaborates "to go right or left" – that they say to you that right is right and left is left." (Horayos 2b) The commentaries suggest a number of ways to reconcile the Sifrei with the Yerushalmi (as well as an implication to the same effect of a parallel discussion of the Bavli):

- The Ramban explains that a scholar who believes that the Sanhedrin has erroneously issued a lenient ruling should initially not follow it but act stringently, but once he argues his case to the scholars of the Sanhedrin and they consider it and reject it, he should then follow their ruling. (Hasagos to Sefer Hamitzvos, shorsh
- The Be'er Sheva (Horayos p. 4a) explains that the Sifrei (as per its wording noted above) is referring only to one who merely thinks the court has erred, based on his judgment of the matter, whereas the Yerushalmi is referring to one who knows with certainty that it is mistaken.
- R. Chaim ibn Attar explains that although, as the Sifrei states, one is obligated to obey even a mistaken ruling, this applies only when not following the ruling would constitute a blatant flouting of their authority, but if one can passively decline to take advantage of a lenient ruling (e.g., to not eat something that has been mistakenly ruled to be permissible), he is obligated to do so, since the Sages are not requiring him to act leniently, and people often decline to avail themselves of leniencies granted by the Torah.
- R. Chaim ibn Attar alternatively suggests that the Sifrei is referring to an ordinary individual, who is not competent to determine with certainty that the court has erred, and therefore is required to accept their authority. An expert, however, is on the contrary forbidden to defer to a ruling that he knows to be erroneous. (Cheifetz Hashem Horayos 2b)

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. My beginning and end are the same.
2. I disqualify.
3. I am permanent.
4. I am not your mother.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am not a net gain.
2. I have messages.
3. Kill the fake.
4. Listen to me.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Har Grizim & Har Eival (I am not a bear, I am not "evil," We divided you, In Eretz Canaan.)

#2 Re'eh (See) (I am not an ocean, I am the name, I am for blessing and curse, I am not light.)

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

WIN a Claw Machine Arcade Game



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 raffle has been postponed until after the shuls are reopened. We are still accepting entries to the raffle.

KOLLEL BULLETIN BOARD

All regular GWCK classes are now on break for the summer.

Classes will resume Sunday, August 30.