



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

It is an honor to present this week's Torah Minute from our archives. The following was penned by our founder, Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l.

In this week's Torah portion of Vayishlach, we read of the eternal struggle of our patriarch, Yaakov, and his brother Esav. The Torah records, in Chapter 32, Verse 25, "Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn." The midrash comments: "Who was this man? He was the angel Samael, the angel of death, who appeared to Yaakov in the guise of a man." He wrestled with him until dawn, which is interpreted to mean that his struggle would continue until the end of time — the coming of the Mashiach.

Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, a great scholar of the previous generation, asks why the angel delayed in striking. If his intention was to do eternal harm, why not attack Avraham, our first patriarch, or Yitzchak, our second patriarch? Rabbi Wasserman answers that from here we learn that the force of evil and destruction was directed primarily upon Yaakov alone and what he represented. Each of the patriarchs distinguished their service to G-d in a different fashion. Avraham, though observing all the traditions, carried out his service to G-d through kindness and philanthropy. Yitzchak, bound upon the altar, reflected his service to his Creator through prayer and sacrifice. Yaakov expressed his unique service to G-d through study and scholarship. Each of our patriarchs endowed their progeny, the Nation of Israel, with their special strengths and gifts. However, when the angel Samael evaluates his prospective target to determine where he can maximize his damage, it is Yaakov whom he chooses. The nation Israel can survive even if their social services wane. Our people can survive a first strike, even if our houses of prayer and worship are attacked and destroyed. However, a strike against our institutions of learning, study, and scholarship of Torah is a strike that is nuclear. It is the death knell of the Jewish nation. The angel of death waited patiently and precisely for the right moment in history, the moment when our third patriarch, Yaakov (and only Yaakov), would be alone. At that moment, he struck to kill and destroy the eternity of our people.

Through our long, difficult, and magnificent history, we have survived when our charitable institutions were under attack. We survived when our places of worship were assaulted. However, when the light of Torah is dimmed and the fountain of Jewish knowledge is drained, acculturation, assimilation, and intermarriage are certain to follow. Leading a moral life alone, devoid of our rich history of Jewish scholarship, law, customs, and traditions, aids and abets the work of those forces from above that attacked to destroy our patriarch Yaakov.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

**Rochel died and was buried on the road to Efrat which is Beis Lechem...
Yaakov set up a monument on top of her grave... (35, 19)**

Yaakov foresaw that Bnei Yisrael would be exiled from Eretz Yisrael and on the way out, would pass by on this road. He therefore placed a monument upon Rochel's grave to enable Bnei Yisrael to daven at her grave, so that she would beseech Hashem on their behalf, as the verse says, "A voice is heard on high, Rochel is crying for her children" (Yirmiyohu 31). (Breishis Rabba 82, 10)

When visiting graves of righteous people, one should not pray to the deceased. One should pray to Hashem in the merit of the deceased. (Maharil Hilchos Taanis)

Yaakov's setting up a monument in order for Bnei Yisrael to illicit Rochel to daven on their behalf does not seem to be a direct prayer to Hashem?

Parsha Riddle

**A Torah scholar should have an eighth of an eighth of haughtiness. (Sotah 5a)
What is the connection between the above statement of Chazal and this week's Parsha?**

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

How old was Rochel when she died?

Answer: 36

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Vayishlach*, Yaakov's household and all who were with him "gave to Yaakov all the alien gods that were in their possession, as well as the rings that were in their ears, and Yaakov buried them [*vayitmon osam*] underneath the terebinth near Shechem." As we noted a couple of years ago, this understanding of the word *vayitmon* in its normal sense of 'buried' is ArtScroll's, but R. Avraham b. HaRambam disagrees, explaining that Yaakov did not bury but actually destroyed the idolatrous items, in congruence with the *mitzvos* of the Torah and its monotheistic doctrines.

The Torah contains various stringent prohibitions regarding idols, including a prohibition against deriving any benefit from them. Idols have surely taken many forms over the millennia, but one particular item whose idolatrous status has been extensively discussed in rabbinic literature is the cross. The *Rema* (YD 141:1) rules that a cross that people bow down to is considered an idol, but "those that are hung from the neck as mementos" are not considered idols, and it is permitted to derive benefit from them. The *Shach* maintains that this leniency holds only if it is *known* that no one bowed down to the cross in question, but if we are uncertain, we must be stringent. Others reject this qualification and take the *Rema's* ruling at face value, and permit generally crosses hung from the neck, even crucifixes (crosses with a crucified figure upon them), and certainly those designed as jewelry. (*Chochmas Adam* 85:1 and *Nishmas Adam*)

There is also a prohibition of gazing at idols. R. Moshe Feinstein rules that stamps that include images of crosses are not considered idols and are not subject to this prohibition, since the stamps are not produced to be idols but for their aesthetic value and to serve as mementos. An additional reason for not considering stamps to be idols is that they are designed to be treated disrespectfully, by being defaced by cancellations and eventually discarded in the trash. (*Shut. Igros Moshe* YD 1:69)

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. We were "tough."
2. We caused a tri-response.
3. We caused fear.
4. We caused division.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I caused a limp.
2. I can't be eaten.
3. I am named for my displacement.
4. What a nerve!

Last Week's Answers

- #1 Maariv** (I am not an obligation, I am for the direction, I am the third, I am the first.)
#2 Leah (I was the first to thank, I was a weeper, I had half, I was soft-eyed.)

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

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Machine
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Game**



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**Answer as many as you can.
Each correct answer will entitle you
to another raffle ticket and increase
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*The raffle
has been
postponed until
after the shuls
are reopened.
We are still
accepting
entries to the
raffle.*

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The Beauty of Yefes in the Tents of Shem:

Judaism and Secular Wisdom

a virtual Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Yitzhak Grossman

Tuesday, December 8, 12:00pm

Online: <https://zoom.us/j/7464552195> Password: GWCK

Dial-in number: 301-715-8592 Meeting ID: 746 455 2195

