



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Presented by Rabbi Menachem Winter, Rosh Kollel

From our archives

In Parashas Shelach, we learn about the tragic episode of the spies. On the cusp of entering the Land of Eretz Yisroel, the nation of Israel dispatched twelve spies, great men and leaders, each one representing a tribe, to reconnoiter the Land and report back to the people. Upon their return 40 days later, they shared with the people a demoralizing report of the great might of the people of Canaan, its impregnable cities, and that the land "is a Land that devours its inhabitants." The Jewish people, instead of trusting in G-d, His power and goodness, accepted the slanderous report of the spies. They rebelled and demanded a new leader who would lead them back to Egypt. As a consequence of their rebellion and lack of trust in G-d, instead of entering the Land of Israel, the generation was decreed to wander the desert for 40 years until they would all die. Only their children would enter the Land. The spies themselves, for issuing this libelous report, were condemned to die immediately from a plague.

When we observe the report of the spies and their contention that the land "is a Land that devours its inhabitants," we wonder how such great leaders could say such a thing? A land that G-d calls 'a Land flowing with milk and honey' they should characterize as a miasma?

Rashi, based on the Talmud in Sotah, tells us that the spies encountered a great and unnatural number of funerals in Canaan. Everywhere they went, they observed people burying their dead and engaged in mourning. The Gemara tells us that G-d caused this miraculous spate of death in order to distract the local inhabitants so that the spies could carry on their surveillance undetected. The question becomes, however, why were the spies punished? Was it not a reasonable conclusion to reach based on what they had seen? Wasn't their contention that the land induced death a sensible assumption of what they had witnessed?

In truth, however, their conclusions were not legitimate nor reasonable. The spies had been part of the great Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the wonders of the manna, and the myriad of miraculous ways that G-d provided for them in the desert. They had seen demonstrably the great love that G-d had for His people. They witnessed G-d's fatherly concern for their welfare and willingness to alter nature for their benefit and comfort. In light of this history, their conclusion that the many deaths that they had seen, were a consequence of the land that G-d had lovingly promised them, was indeed neither legitimate nor reasonable. The bonds of love that had been formed, the G-dly experiences that they had, should have been due cause for them to contemplate what they saw, and come to a proper conclusion - that G-d was sheltering and protecting them, and that the death that abounded in the Land was indeed for their benefit.

This powerful lesson, that we must see what transpires, not in a vacuum but in a context of a long and loving relationship filled with care and devotion is relevant, not only concerning our relationship with G-d, but with all we love and cherish. How often would this perspective be valuable and appropriate in our everyday dealings with our parents, spouses, and so many others.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Moshe called Hoshea son of Nun "Yehoshua". (13, 16)

Moshe was praying for him, "Hashem should save you from the sin of the spies." (Rashi)

Everything is in the Hand of Heaven, besides Fear of Heaven. (Gemara Brachos 33b)

How could Moshe pray that Yehoshua be saved from sin? That is not a matter that is in the control of Heaven?

Parsha Riddle

It shall constitute tzitzis for you... I am Hashem your G-d Who has removed you from the Land of Egypt ... (15, 39 – 41)

What connection is there between tzitzis and our Exodus from Egypt?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Where is the source that fish do not require Shechita?

Answer: Can sheep and cattle be slaughtered for them and suffice for them or if all the fish of the sea be gathered...? (11, 22)

With regards to fish, Moshe only said 'gather' and not slaughter. This teaches us that fish merely need to be gathered from the sea, and do not need to be slaughtered.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

The first portion of parashas Shelach recounts the catastrophic episode of the spies. Ramban cites the position of the midrash and Rashi that the Jewish people were wrong to send the spies in the first place, since Hashem had promised them that the Land was good and they had seen that His salvation had been constantly provided to them, so they should simply have followed His directions to enter the Land and take possession of it, without needing to first investigate it for themselves. Ramban himself disagrees, arguing that sending spies in preparation for a military campaign is standard operating procedure, and the Jews were thus entirely correct in doing so, since the Torah does not direct us to rely upon miracles, but rather to utilize all available military tactics in the pursuit of victory.

The principle that we ought not to rely upon miracles is expressed in several places in the Talmud, and the implication is that even in contexts where miraculous events were routine, such as certain aspects of the Temple service, it is still incumbent upon us to attempt to secure the desired ends through the means of human endeavor and not to rely upon miracles (Yerushalmi Shekalim 17b and Yoma 7a, Bavli Pesachim 64b).

The Talmud instructs us to avoid danger rather than rely upon miraculous salvation from harm, and this is codified by R. Moshe Isserles (Shulchan Aruch YD 116:5): And similarly should one beware of all things that are dangerous ... they have also written that one should flee the city when there is pestilence in the city ... and all these things are because of danger, and he who guards his soul will distance himself from them, and it is prohibited to rely upon a miracle or to risk his life in anything like this.

The Talmud (Kiddushin 39b0) is clear that one must not rely upon miracles even in the course of performing mitzvos, explaining that although there is a principle that "those on the path to perform a mitzvah are not susceptible to harm," this does not apply in the presence of established danger (such as climbing on a rickety ladder), in which case "one may not rely on a miracle."

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. I was the server.
2. Tentbound.
3. I got the tenth added.
4. My delay caused my death.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. I am knotty.
2. I am worn.
3. I am a reminder.
4. I protect from sin.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Korban Pesach (I have two chances, I was first in Egypt, I caused circumcision, I need you to be designated.)

#2 Menorah (I was from one, I had seven, Flowery, I am a bright idea.)

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