



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.

This week's Torah portion, Ki Savo, speaks to the nation of Israel of the blessings they would enjoy for their observance of the commandments and the curses they would endure for their failure. Chapter 28, verse 13 relates the following blessing: "You shall be only above and you shall not be below." The Kotzker Rebbe, of blessed memory, interprets the verse as follows: G-d created a ladder from which the souls of the upper world would descend to the world below into the bodies of human beings. As soon as the souls descend, the ladder from above is removed. From Heaven the call goes forth to the souls: "Return, return!!" The souls, heeding the call, desire to return, but alas, there is no ladder.

Three groups of souls emerge. One group, observing there is no ladder, gives up immediately in its quest to return Above. The second group is more tenacious and jumps Heavenward repeatedly in an attempt to go back to its roots Above. However, with time, it too succumbs to its earthly abode below, acclimating itself to its new environment. The third group remains determined to soar Heavenward and return to its place of origin. With every failure, it regroups with new vigor and strength. What distinguishes this group is that it continuously hears the Heavenly voice from Above, "Return, return!!" unabated. Eventually, the Lord Himself turns to this third group and lifts it above. As the Rabbis say, "One who comes to purify himself is Divinely assisted." Heavenly assistance is commensurate with the measure of the desire and sincerity we exhibit in our effort to return to our spiritual roots. G-d lifts, "with both hands," those whose will it is to meet the challenge and go forth. With assistance from Above, there is no limit to our capacity for growth and ultimate success. Ours is but to do and G-d will do the rest.

This, then, is the meaning of the blessing "You shall be only above and you shall not be below." Our aspirations should always be Heavenward, never complacent and acclimated to those values which are below.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

You shall take from the first of every product of the ground... (26, 2)

Not from all produce must one bring the first of its fruit... only from the shivas haminim (seven species). (Rashi)

The majority of the shivas haminim grow on trees. Shouldn't they be referred to as 'products of the tree' rather than 'products of the ground'?

Parsha Riddle

How many curses are there in Parshas Ki Savo?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

How many times do we mention Hashem in Shema?

Answer: 18 (Brachos 28b)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *Parshas Ki Savo*, the Torah enumerates the terrible calamities that will befall the Jewish people if they do not hearken to the voice of Hashem, among which is exile from Eretz Yisrael (28:64): "Hashem will scatter you among all the peoples, from the end of the earth to the end of the earth ..."

The fate of exile is not just descriptive, but normative; our Sages teach that G-d adjured the Jewish people with several oaths to accept their exiled state (*Kesubos* 111a; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 2:7). There are various different accounts of exactly what these oaths were, but the oath most widely discussed in the later literature is the admonition "that the Jews should not ascend to Eretz Yisrael as a wall (*ke-chomah*)." Rashi explains *ke-chomah* to mean "together, by force;" later authorities vary in their understanding of the scope of the prohibition.

R. Yitzchak de Leon, in explanation of the position of Rambam, who does not count the *mitzvah* of settling Eretz Yisrael among the six hundred and thirteen Biblical commandments, argues that the prohibition against ascending *be-chomah*, along with the related prohibition against rebelling against the nations of the world, suspend the applicability of the *mitzvah* until the coming of the Messiah (*Megillas Esther to Mitzvas Aseh* #4 of Ramban). He is not entirely clear as to whether he believes that the oaths apply even to peaceful *aliyah*, but if they do not, it is difficult to understand why they would render the *mitzvah* to settle Eretz Yisrael inapplicable until the coming of the Messiah.

R. Shmuel Yoffe Ashkenazi suggests that collective *aliyah* even with the consent of the world's governments is prohibited: "Since Hashem has scattered us to the corners of the world, we have no permission to gather together and to be like a wall to ascend together to Eretz Yisrael until Hashem will gather us via the Messiah" (*Yefeh Kol* p. 71a). R. Chaim Palagi, however, counters that insofar as the nations of the world allow collective *aliyah*, and it is a positive *mitzvah*, why should it matter that Hashem has scattered us to the four corners of the world? (*Shut. Nishmas Kol Chaim YD* #49)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. I am almost a hundred.
2. I am quiet.
3. I result from not listening.
4. I am not wanted.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. I get tied.
2. I get brought up.
3. I am the first.
4. I am waved.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Shiluach Haken (Sending away the mother bird) (I am scary, I am not for foot, I am not empty nested, I am only for a mother.)

#2 Kilayim (Prohibited mixtures) (I am for plowing, I am for clothing, I am for planting, I am not for tzitzis.)

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