



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

Kayin and Hevel (Cain and Abel), born to Adam and Chava (Eve), are inspired to bring an offering to G-d. Kayin, a farmer, brings his sacrifice from the earth's bounty, identified in the Medrash as flax seed. Hevel, a shepherd, chooses his offering from his flock. G-d accepts the offering of Hevel, while rejecting that of Kayin. The commentators, based upon the Torah's description of the different offerings, explain that Hevel selected from the finest of his flock for his offering, while Kayin proffered his inferior produce.

Smitten with jealousy and ignoring G-d's entreaties for repentance, Kayin rises up and kills Hevel. When G-d questions Kayin as to the whereabouts of his brother, he insolently responds, "Am I my brother's keeper?" G-d chastises Kayin for the murder of Hevel, saying that the "voice of your brother's bloods cries out to Me from the ground!" Commenting on the plural usage of blood in the verse, Rashi explains that it refers not only to the blood of Hevel, but to the blood of all his potential descendants.

This, says Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, should serve as a perspective for all our actions. We cannot evaluate what we do in an isolated way. All of our actions have consequences far beyond what we immediately perceive, and all those repercussions are attributed to us.

The story is told of Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, Rosh HaYeshiva (Dean) in Torah V'Daas. One wintry New York day, very heavy snow made travel all but impossible. Only a few students were able to gather for Rabbi Heiman's daily lecture. Rabbi Heiman began to expound passionately on the Talmud, his voice rising to a thunderous crescendo. One of the students expressed his amazement and wonder at the intensity and energy that his Rebbe mustered for just the few boys sitting in front of him. Turning to the boy, Rabbi Heiman said, "Do you think I only see the four of you sitting in front of me?! I see your children and grandchildren, your students and the students of your students."

This is the true power of our actions. A kind word, meant to give courage and hope. A small loan to put someone back on their feet. A Torah thought shared, to inspire and uplift. Who can accurately determine the impact of our deeds? Who can measure the reality of what we accomplish? As we reflect on the extraordinary, far-reaching effects and potential of all we do, may we be fortified and invigorated to carry on in devotion to man and G-d.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Hashem called the dry land "earth" and the gatherings of water He called "yamim" (1:10).

The word "yamim" is a contraction of the words yam and mayim. The floor of a body of water is called yam (see Yeshaya 11:9). Water is called mayim. An ocean is called yamim, which represents yam for the floor and mayim for the water in it (Ramban).

When Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim... The Yam saw and fled... (Tehillim 114:1-3)

According to the Ramban that the word yam refers to the floor of a body of water, where do we see that the floor of the ocean fled from Bnei Yisrael when they were running away from the Egyptians?

Parsha Riddle

Why is the sky blue?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Who wrote the last eight verses of the Torah? Answer: According to Rabbi Yehuda: Yehoshua Bin Nun/According to Rabbi Shimon: Moshe (Menachos 30a)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

From our archives

In parashas Bereishis, the Torah relates that "[Cain's descendant Jubal] was the first of all who handle the harp and flute." (4:21) Rashi (citing Bereishis Rabbah) explains that he did so in the service of idolatry.

It is striking that the first Biblical mention of music – the recording of its very invention, at the dawn of history itself – occurs in the context of idolatry. This presages the development of a complex and controversial literature on the Jewish attitude toward music in general, and in particular on the propriety of incorporating non-Jewish music, and even that of other religions, into our liturgy. Following are brief summaries of several famous responsa on the latter question.

In sixteenth / seventeenth century Poland, R. Yoel Sirkes justified the practice of (Jewish) cantors using the same melodies used in churches on the grounds that the music is not "exclusive" to the non-Jews, and it is therefore possible that we are not "learning from them." (Shut. HaBach HaYeshanos #127)

A couple of centuries later, R. Yisrael Moshe Chazan (a Sephardic scholar who served as rabbi in various Mediterranean cities, including Rome and Jerusalem) argued that R. Sirkes did not go far enough. R. Chazan insists that even borrowing music directly from the non-Jews and their houses of worship can be perfectly legitimate. He relates having observed that "the great, famous sages" of Smyrna – who were also great, technically skilled musicians – would enter the Christian churches (remaining "behind a partition") on (Christian) holidays in order to learn the ritual music, which they would subsequently utilize in the construction of "wonderful" kaddishim and kedushos for the Yamim Noraim liturgy. R. Chazan thoroughly approves of this, explaining that Christian church music evokes the desirable religious emotions of submission to and love of G-d. (Shut. Krach shel Romi #1)

A century later in Jerusalem, R. Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg found R. Chazan's position incredibly appalling. In light of the great theological gulf between Christianity and Judaism, he considers "unbelievable" R. Chazan's assertion that it is permitted (and even obligatory!) to study Christian melodies and incorporate them into our liturgy. (Shut. Tzitz Eliezer 13:12:6)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. I am two.
2. I am with or in.
3. I begin the beginning.
4. I sound like a house.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. I am not Yaakov's twin.
2. I am not moldy, yet I'm green.
3. I am from the third day.
4. You cut me to control me.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Torah (I am like rain, I am like dew, I am sweet like honey, I am for night and day.)

#2 Ha'azinu (I am like the Twin Towers, I am second to last, I am a song, Please listen.)

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